

The Quranic Verses As A Source For Legitimacy Or Illegitimacy Of The Arts In Islam

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Introduction

Dealing with the religious attitude of Islam towards the arts, researchers have generally concentrated on one main issue, figurative art. Their chief conclusion has been that Muslims throughout their long history rejected all kinds of figurative art, holding the Traditions ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad as legal grounds for this rejection¹). In other words, no obvious connection between this prohibition and any of the Quranic verses is to be found. Still, this attitude towards figurative art (*taswīr*) has been used by modern researchers as evidence for the negative or, at most, the neutral attitude of Islam towards all art. However, *taswīr* is only a part of the whole, and such generalization must be avoided. In order to know the real position of Islam regarding the arts we need to investigate the issue within its historical as well as its religious context.

In this article I intend to investigate only the attitude of the holy Quran towards the arts. Thus, the main question of this paper is: Does the Quran present definite positions on the arts? For an answer we have to study the verses which may have some connection with the topic.

First we must make a general survey of the Quran to extract the art-related verses, then classify them according to the arts of Islam, and then discuss them from two aspects: (a) their direct meaning; (b) their classical interpretations.

Richard Ettinghausen, in his article²), stated that pre-Islamic Arabs knew nothing about art having no use for them in their lives and that the

¹) T. Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Dover Publication, London 1965), pp. 4 -5. See also O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (Yale University Press 1973), pp. 75--76.

²) R. Ettinghausen, "The Character of Islamic Art," N. Fares (ed.), *Arab Heritage* (Princeton 1944), pp. 251 -267.

origin of any artistic expression in their environment or in their language lay outside Arabia. Hence, the Prophet received a heritage devoid of any noteworthy art, a circumstance reflected in Mohammad's attitude towards art through the Quran and his Traditions and personal life. This attitude was determined by four principle factors of Islam: (a) the human nature of Muhammad; (b) the total subjection of all to Almighty God; (c) the basic importance of the Quran as the Book of God given in Arabic; (d) fear from the Day of Judgment. From these principle factors many moral and ideological rules were developed, such as the renunciation of pleasure, abstinence from excess, contentment with scarcity, belief in the oneness of God and abjuration from anything that might compete with His oneness or with His omnipotence. These principles and others reflected negative positions towards forms of art such as *taṣwīr*, the use of precious objects, splendid building and so forth. The principal conclusion that Ettinghausen reaches is that the principles which developed from the Quran led to uncompromising attitudes towards art, including precious materials or figures of living creatures. This view has been criticized by two scholars, Mehmet Aga-Oglu³) and Isma'īl R. al-Fārūqī⁴). What concerns us is that in his article Ettinghausen does not refer to all art-related verses.

Most of the Quranic verses can be divided into two categories (a) Verses on the life of believers in Paradise as a reward for their faith. These verses describe the gardens and the benefits that will accrue to true believers in Paradise. (b) Verses dealing with life on earth. Here we find instructions and teachings that should be followed by believers in order to win Paradise. We will discuss only those verses related to art.

I. Verses describing life in Paradise

There are relatively many verses about Paradise that include terms and expressions from the fields of art. They can be classified into: personal clothing, jewelry, vessels, furniture and bedclothes. The subjects of the verses are in the masculine gender, a fact that may be used by classical exegetes and theologians as one of the proofs of the abundance of prohibitions and hated acts (*makrūhāt*) which were placed upon men on earth such as donning silk clothing and binding (wearing) gold and silver jewels.

³) M. Aga-Oglu, "Remarks on the Character of Islamic Art," *The Art Bulletin* (Sept. 1954), pp. 157–202.

⁴) Isma'īl R. al-Fārūqī, "Misconceptions of the Nature of Islamic Art," *Islam and Modern Age*, I/1 (1970), pp. 29–49.

1. Personal clothing

In this group of verses we read the expressions: *thiyāb sundus*, *istabraq*, *thiyāb khudr* and *thiyāb harīr*⁵). Such are the garments or bedclothes that will be used by believers in Paradise.

sundus and *istabraq*: Both are arabized names of silk materials. *sundus* refers to fine silk. *raqīq al-dībādī* or *bazyūn*. and *istabraq* is thick silk (brocade) or satin⁶). Both kinds of splendid silk were known to pre-Islamic Arabs, appearing in the poems of al-'A'shā and al-Muraqqash⁷).

thiyāb khudr: Green garments that will be worn by the dwellers of Paradise. Green is also the color of their *rifrif*, carpet or bedclothes⁸). The term *akhḍar* (green) is also present in other verses speaking about God's power of growing green plants and vegetation⁹). Therefore, green color symbolizes on the one hand the renewal of life on earth and the goodness of God, and on the other the continuity and eternity of life in Paradise, abundant with vegetation and flowing rivers. These uses of green provide the source for the preference for this color in Islam from its beginnings until the present. Green flags are the symbol of nearly all Islamic movements today.

Lastly, it is important to point out that the verses express only the glorious quality of the clothing in Paradise and say nothing about its shape or decoration. If we add to this the fact that the verses are written in the masculine gender, as well as the theologians' (*fuqahā'*) belief that what exists in Paradise is prohibited on earth, then we may conclude that these verses were used as a legal proof of the prohibition of silk clothing for men and its approval for women. One of the explanations for this judgment is that God promised His believers in Paradise what He forbade on earth.

⁵) *Quran*, 18:31, 76:12, 21, 22:23.

⁶) Ibn Manzūr. *Lisān al-'Arab* (Dār Sāder, Beirut n. d.), VI, p. 107, art. *sundus*. X, p. 5; al-Zabīdī. *Tādj al-'Arūs fī djawāhir al-Qāmūs* (Dār al-Turāth, Cairo 1950), art. *sundus*.

⁷) See these names in the poems of al-'A'shā in his *Dīwān*, edited by: Fawzī 'Aṭawī (Beirut 1968), p. 108, 124. See also *al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt*, edited by: A. Shāker and 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Dār al-Maārif, Egypt 1371/1952), p. 279. See the poems of al-Muraqqash in Ṭabarsī, *Madjma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Quran*, edited by: H. al-Rasūlī and F. al-Yazdī al-Ṭabāṭbā'ī (Dar al-Mārifah, Beirut 1406/1986), VI, p. 720.

⁸) *Quran*, 55:76. See *Lisān*, IX, p. 125–127, art. *rifrif*. The term carries many meanings. We are interested only with the meaning of the Quranic text.

⁹) *Quran*, 99:6, 80:36, 43:12, 63:22.

2. Jewelry and gold and silver vessels

Some of the verses describe jewels and precious stones that will be worn by Paradise dwellers, such as: *'asāwir al-dhahab wal-fiddah* (gold and silver bracelets), *'asāwir min lu'lu'* (pearl bracelets). Rubies and coral are used metaphorically for the hours of Paradise. The servants of Paradise are described as *al-lu'lu' al-maknūn* or *al-manthūr*, hidden and scattered pearls.¹⁰

In addition to jewels, Paradise dwellers will enjoy drinking and eating from *'āniyah min fiddah*, *'akwāb waqwārīr min fiddah*, *siḥāf min dhahab*, vessels of silver, goblets of transparent crystal made of silver and platters of gold¹¹).

Here too gold, silver and pearl jewels and vessels are mentioned as heavenly joys for all believers in Paradise, men as well as women. Obviously, these precious objects will be given in Paradise to believers as a reward and compensation for forgoing them or for being unable to acquire them on earth.

3. Furniture and bedclothes

There are at least ten verses that speak of *'arā'ik*, *surur*, *rifrif*, *'abqarī hisān*, *namāriq* and *zarābī*¹²): couches, druggets, cushions and carpets that will be used by Paradise dwellers as furniture and bedclothes.

'Arā'ik (pl. of *'arīkah*): Lisān al-'Arab defines it as *sarīr* or *farsh* an upholstered and decorated bed or couch used by Arabs inside bride pavilions and in their usual residences for sitting or reclining¹³). The reference to it as furnishing in Paradise means that it is superfluous on earth and worth waiting for in Paradise.

Surur (pl. of *sarīr*): sitting and reclining throne or couch. Verse 56: 15 described it as *surur mawḍunah*, meaning close-wrought couches (couches of wrought gold, gems and pearls)¹⁴). In other words, these are unusual couches whose fineness surpasses those of earthly kings. *Rifrif khudr*: *farsh*-like, carpets, curtains, and bedclothes, all green. Others explain the phrase as the green gardens of Paradise¹⁵). Nearly the same meaning is given to *'abqarī hisān*. These are thick and decorated carpets of woven silk with

¹⁰) *Quran*, 18:31, 76:19–21, 22:23, 56:23, 55:58.

¹¹) *Quran*, 76:14–17, 43:71.

¹²) *Quran*, 18:31, 76:12, 36:56, 83:23, 56:15–16, 55:75, 88:13–15, 37:44.

¹³) *Lisān*, X, pp. 389–390, 'art. 'ark.

¹⁴) *Lisān*, IV, p. 361; Ṭabarsī, ix, pp. 323–325.

¹⁵) *Lisān*, IX, pp. 126–127.

decorations spun in them (*dībādīj*). It is possible that the *'abqarī* refers to 'Abqar, a village in Yemen where they were woven and decorated with high quality¹⁶). Another kind of carpets are the thick and colored *zarābī*¹⁷). *Farsh* also include *namāriq* (pl. of *namraqah*), a cushion¹⁸).

As to the possible explanations of these verses and their classical exegesis, we have noted that all are in the masculine gender. This suggests a general message of the verses: the promise to male believers of what was forbidden them or what they could not acquire on earth. These include all kinds of gorgeous silk, gold and silver jewels, precious stones and a range magnificent bedclothes and furniture that distinguished kings and wealth on earth. Still, these verses cannot be regarded as a legal basis for clearcut judgments on the making or use of these luxuries. This is not the position adopted by classical exegetes and theologians. Many of them resorted these verses in order to make judgments of prohibition, sanction or alternation of unfavorable things mentioned in the verses.

While explaining verse 22:23 ("God shall surely admit those who believe and do righteous deeds into gardens underneath which rivers flow; therein they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold and with pearls, and apparel there shall be of silk")¹⁹), the Shi'ī exegete, Ṭabarsī said that all these things were forbidden to men on earth and by this verse God intended to make them hunger for these things in Paradise²⁰). For ibn Kathīr this verse and its like are legal basis for the prohibition of gold and silk to men on earth. He supports this judgment with Traditions of the prophet and his companions such as: "Do not wear silk clothes because you shall wear them in Paradise." According to Ka'b al-'Aḥbar, there is an angel in Paradise specializing in purifying jewels, an activity that he has performed since the Creation and will go on performing forever²¹). In his interpretation of verse 18:31, Ṭabarsī says that every dweller of Paradise will receive three bracelets, one of gold, one of silver and one of pearls and other gems²²). He also tells about special kinds of silk and silver that exist only in Paradise, whose

¹⁶) Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'djam al-Buldān* (Dār Sāder, Beirut n. d.), IV, pp. 79–80, art. *'abqar*; *Lisān*, IV, pp. 534–536; *Tadj al-'Arūs*, art. *'abqar*.

¹⁷) *Tadj al-'Arūs*, art. *zrb*; *Lisān*, I, p. 447.

¹⁸) *Lisān*, X, p. 360, art. *nmrq*.

¹⁹) The Translation of the verses is after Arthur Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1982).

²⁰) Ṭabarsī, II, pp. 124–125.

²¹) Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm* (Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo 1408/1988), III, p. 207.

²²) Ṭabarsī, VI, pp. 720–721.

quality surpasses what exist on earth. The silver of Paradise is transparent like glass. The underlying idea is only the enjoyment of these objects, not their value, as on earth²³). According to ibn Kathīr, silk garments are granted to the common people in Paradise in reward for their patience and abandonment of ambition on earth; silver is the adornment of *al-abrār* (the righteous) and gold and pearls are the adornment of *al-muqarrabūn* (the attendants), who hold the highest rank in Paradise²⁴).

As to verse 43:71 ("There shall be passed around them platters of gold, and cups, therein being whatever the souls desire..."), Qurṭubī says that Paradise dwellers shall eat and drink from *ṣiḥāf w'akwāb min dhahab* (platters and cups of gold) because they did not use these utensils on earth; whoever eats or drinks from them and attires himself in silk clothes will be forever forbidden to use them in the world to come. Qurṭubī also relied on Traditions expressing the prohibition of gold and silver vessels on earth, like the one saying: "Do not drink from gold and silver vessels and do not eat from its platters, both – gold and silk – are forbidden for the males of my people and permitted for its females."²⁵) Qurṭubī might have reached this conclusion from that verse. But in fact, the verse says nothing about any prohibition. Qurṭubī tried to base the clearcut judgment of the Tradition on a Quranic foundation. He used the same method in interpreting the other verses²⁶). Ibn al-'Arabī in his exegesis *Aḥkām al-Quran* applied the same method and arrived at strict judgments concerning the use of gold, silver and silk. Referring to the same verse (43:71) he said that gold, silver and silk were specially for the use of Paradise dwellers; there was a consensus regarding their prohibition on earth but disagreement about the details of what exactly is forbidden and permitted. He also tried to base his judgments on the Quran in addition to Traditions, and on views of earlier theologians²⁷).

Reclining on a couch (verses 83:23, 56:16, 56:36) was explained by most of the exegetes as the appearance of royal luxury which is forbidden or at least disliked on earth but it will be proper behavior in Paradise²⁸).

²³) See op. cit., X, pp. 618–623.

²⁴) Ibn Kathīr, IV, pp. 456–457.

²⁵) Qurṭubī, *al-Djami' li-'Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, Maktabat al-Riyād al-Hadīthah, Riyād 1372/1952), XVI, pp. 111–113.

²⁶) See op. cit., XII, p. 29.

²⁷) Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Quran*, edited by: A. M. al-Badjāwī (Dār al-Djīl, Beirut 1408/1988), IV, pp. 1684–1689.

²⁸) Nasafī, *Tafsīr* (Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyyah, Cairo n. d.), III, p. 12. See also al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashāf*, edited by: M. M. 'Amir (Dār al-Muṣḥaf, Cairo 1397), III, p. 206.

In fact, all judgments reached by the exegetes are inspired by Traditions which obviously expressed the attitude of Muhammad towards the uses of gold, silver and silk. In the verses themselves there was no clear indication of the judgments made, but we can still gain a legal idea from the verses: gold, silver and silk are perishable luxuries and pleasures and they should be forgone on earth. This legal idea alone could not form a solid basis for formulating strict judgments.

As to art, in general we may say that the Quran considers silk and gold and silver jewels and vessels as pleasures and luxuries that every believer will possess in Paradise. On earth art represents material luxuries that kings and wealthy people pursue. This idea will be elucidated later.

II. Verses describing the life on earth

There is a large number of verses in the Quran that may be somehow associated with various arts. One group of verses is indirectly connected with them. Another contains expressions and terms from the various fields in the arts.

In the first group, many verses repeat the term *matā'* in its various forms. Lisān al-'Arab defines the word as: the furniture of the house and everything offering people comfort and benefits, including money²⁹). Mostly, the term occurs in the expression *matā' al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* (enjoyment of earthly life)³⁰). In all these cases the expression has a negative connotation compared with what may be expected in the world to come, this being the chief target of every believer through his life on earth. Verse 3:14 details things included among the earthly *matā'*: "love of lusts, women, children, heaped-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle and tillage. That is the enjoyment of the present life; but God remains the fairest resort." All are perishable things, and are nothing compared with the eternal enjoyment of the world to come. This meaning recurs in verses 185:3, 2:36, 7:24, 4:77, 16:117. Another explanation of *matā'* is given in verses 28:60–61: "Whatever thing you have been given is the enjoyment of the present life and its adornment; and what is with God is better and more enduring. Will you understand? What, is he to whom We have promised a fair promise, and he receives it, like him whom We have given the enjoyment of the present life, then he on the Resurrection Day shall be of those that are arraigned?". The main idea of these verses is that what God has produced for peo-

²⁹) *Lisān*, VIII, pp. 333–332.

³⁰) *Quran*, 3:14, 10:23, 61:28, 35:43, 70:10, 60:28, 77:4, 26:13.

ple is only for enjoyment and adornment on earth and it is better for them to take heed of what God has promised in the life to come, because it is eternal³¹). In all these and other verses the term *matā'* means everything in the present life, an explanation which was also accepted by the classical exegetes.

In some other verses the term *matā'* has more specific meanings. The verse on divorce (2:236) stated: "... yet make provision for them, *-wamat-ti'ūhin* – the affluent man according to his means, and according to his means the needy man, honourably – an obligation on the good-doers." The verse orders him who divorces his wife to "provide for her enjoyment," meaning to pay her for living. The payment may be money, raiment or anything necessary for living³²). In verse 15:88, "Stretch not thine eyes to that We have given pairs of them to enjoy," the verb "*matta'nā*" is explained as meaning "We conferred" on them money, children and every kind of life's amenities³³). Some exegetes explained this verse by reason of revelation: the Muslims saw caravans of banu Qurayza and banu Naḍīr (Jewish tribes) carrying a variety of clothes, perfumes, jewels and other goods. They wished to have these *amti'ah*. The verse relates that God confers on the Muslims the Quran, while on others He confers ephemeral pleasures, like garments, and jewels³⁴). Thus, *matā'* in this and other verses³⁵) means the various enjoyments of this world: children, money, perfumes, jewels, fine clothes and many other things. The attitude of the Quran towards these delights is undoubtedly very negative and mostly they are considered as particular to unbelievers.

A practical and positive meaning of *matā'* exists in the other group of verses. Verse 5:96 says: "Permitted to you is the game of the sea and the food of it, as a provision *-matā'* for you and for the journeyers." Most of the exegetes explained *matā'* as the benefits resulting from permitted sea-food³⁶). The word has the same meaning in verse 79:33³⁷). In verse 16:80 *matā'* is a synonymous with *'thath* (furniture). Both, mean the benefits that one may derive from skins, wool, furs and the hair of cattle³⁸).

³¹) Zamakhsharī, IV, p. 231; Ṭabarsī, VII, pp. 406–408.

³²) Ṭabarsī, II, p. 595. See also verses 2:241, 33:28.

³³) Ṭabarsī, VI, p. 531.

³⁴) *Quran*, 15:87. See also Zamakhsharī, III, p. 138; Nasafī, II, p. 278.

³⁵) See verses: 25:18, 21:44, 43:29, 14:30, 47:12, 16:55, 51:43.

³⁶) Nasafī, I, pp. 303–304; Zamakhsharī, II, pp. 48–49; ibn Kathīr, II, p. 96.

³⁷) Ṭabarsī, X, pp. 667–668.

³⁸) Zamakhsharī, II, p. 158; Nasafī, II, p. 295; Ṭabarsī, VI, p. 581.

In general, the term *matā'* in the Quran has no direct connection with the arts. In most cases it means everything in this world that diverts the attention of people from the world to come. In this we may say that *matā' al-dunyā* covers all kinds of art. This may also be construed from the definitions of the term given by dictionaries and exegetes. In both cases the term is generalized to several things: money, furniture, bedclothes, clothing, perfumes and gold and silver jewels. All these items provide comfort and enjoyment for people on earth, but in the end they are censured. Even in the "positive" verses there are warnings of the perishable nature of every kind of *matā'*.

Verse 16:6 supplies us with another "artistic" expression: "And the cattle, He created them for you; in them is the warmth, and uses various, and of them you eat, and there is beauty – *djamāl* – in them for you . . ." *Djamāl* here is considered as one of the possible benefits of possessing cattle. It means beauty and ornament in the sight of cattle coming back from the pasture and bringing happiness to their owner³⁹). Verse 8 of the same sura tells about another use of cattle: horses, donkeys and mules being ridden offer beautiful and graceful scene in the eyes of spectators⁴⁰). It is obvious that this beauty and grace in both verses stem from the ownership of many cattle, which constituted the main means of transportation and imparted the appearance of wealth in early Islamic times. Anyway, we cannot speak of any direct connection between the aesthetic idea of the verses and the world of art, but art is still one of the fields included in that idea. In conclusion, wealth enables people to acquire precious and excellent things. Thus, we may infer a positive position of the Quran towards every beautiful object; and Muhammad himself attests: "God is beautiful and He loves beauty."⁴¹)

Below I discuss the Quranic expressions according to their classification in the fields of art.

1. *Crafts and Occupations*

In general, there are many verses in the Quran encouraging work and earning. Verses 62:8–10 call on believers to leave their work in order to take part in Friday prayer; afterwards they may return to it. Even the pilgrims in Mecca are permitted to work and earn before and after performing

³⁹) *Lisān*, XI, p. 126, art. *djml*; *Ṭabarsī*, VI, p. 539.

⁴⁰) *Qurān*, 6:8. See also *Ṭabarsī*, VI, p. 542.

⁴¹) *ibn Mādjah*, *Sunan*, edited by M. Fuād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Dar al-Ḥadīth, Cairo n. d.), I, p. 1270. See also *Lisān*, XI, p. 126.

the pilgrimage rite⁴²). In these verses there is no indication of any preferred kind of work or craft. For this reason we may say that every kind of legal livelihood is permitted. This positive attitude towards work is no doubt one of the important changes that the Quran intended to effect in pre-Islamic (*ḍjāhilī*) society. That society despised handicrafts and they eschewed them⁴³).

In the eyes of exegetes these verses carry broader meanings, on the basis of Tradition and *Qisaṣ al-'Anbiyā'* (tales of the prophets). Verse 73:20 says: "... He knows that some of you are sick, and others journeying in the land, seeking the bounty of God. So recite of it so much as is feasible..." According to exegetes God equates *ḍjihād* (holy fighting) with *al-kasb al-ḥalāl* (legal earning); the latter may be a religious duty that surpasses holy fighting⁴⁴). In addition, some exegetes noted preferred occupations and crafts according to Quranic verses. For example, in verses 2:198, 267 the expression *kasb* was explained as the occupation with trade which was the principal means of livelihood for Quraish just before Islam⁴⁵). Al-Qurṭubī believed that verse 25:20 ("And We sent not before thee any Envoys, but that they ate food, and went in the markets; and We appointed some of you to be a trial for others: 'Will you endure?' Thy Lord is ever All-seeing") is the legal source for obligation of earning laid upon every believer. This could be through engaging in commerce, crafts, and any other field, like all Envoys Muhammad: they worked in commerce and crafts (*kānū yutḍjirūn wayaḥ-tarifūn*)⁴⁶).

A few verses mention certain crafts. Verses 34:10–11 say: "And We gave David bounty from us: 'O you mountains, echo God's praises with him, and you birds!' And We softened for him iron: 'Fashion wide coats of mail, and measure well the links.' And do ye righteousness, for surely I see the things you do." These verses relate God's goodnesses to David. He softened iron for

⁴²) *Quran*, 2:198. With the same meaning see verses: 67:15, 30:23, 28:73. See also Nasafī, II/2, p. 256; Qurṭubī (edition of Dār al-Sha'b, Beirut n. d.), VII, p. 6587; ibn Kathīr, IV, p. 367.

⁴³) See I. Goldziher, "Die Handwerke bei den Arabern," *Gesammelte Schriften* (Georg Olms, Hildesheim 1967–1973), III, pp. 316–318; R. Ettinghausen, op. cit., pp. 251–267.

⁴⁴) Nasafī, op. cit., p. 306. According to ibn Kathīr, this verse was received in Mecca before the confirmation of ḍjihād obligation upon the believers, ibn Kathīr, VI, p. 439. See also Zamakhsharī, VI, p. 174; Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-'Iktisāb fī al-Rizq al-Mustaṭāb*, edited by 'Izat al-'Aṭṭār (Cairo 1375), pp. 14–15.

⁴⁵) Ibn al-'Arabī, op. cit., I, pp. 136, 235; Zamakhsharī, I, p. 119; Nasafī, I, p. 102; ibn Kathīr, I, p. 302–303; Ṭabarsī, II, pp. 527, 656.

⁴⁶) Qurṭubī (Riyāḍ ed.), XIII, pp. 12–14; ibn Kathīr, III, p. 302.

him and taught him how to make coats of mail to defend himself in wars. Verse 57:25 declares: "... And We sent down iron, wherein is great might, and many uses for men." Actually, this verse tells of the various uses of iron in war and peace, such as making weapons, armors, kitchen utensils and tools. In sum, these verses present a very positive position on the uses and crafts of iron. This attitude undoubtedly contradicts the contemptuous view of pre-Islamic Arabs towards crafts and artisans in general and smithery and smiths in particular. The mention of iron and its uses in the Quran may be considered as another stage of the new religion in rejecting pre-Islamic disdain of crafts and artisans.

The exegetes attributed special importance to the verses concerning David. According to them, verses 34:10–11 were sent down after David's reprimand by the angels on account of his reliance on the treasury and not his own earnings. So David asked his God to teach him a craft for a living; God taught him the craft of armorer (*san'atan labūs*). By this, David was the first to produce armors of links (*halaq wazarad*)⁴⁷. al-Qurtubī considered these verses as legal ground for the legality of crafts and arts in Islam. He added: The biblical prophets had their special crafts: Adam was a plowman, Noah was a merchant and David was an armorer⁴⁸). Interpretating verse 57:25, most exegetes said that God sent down iron, fire, salt and water. With Adam He sent down five iron tools used by smiths: an anvil, two tongs, a hammer, a whetstone and a needle. These are the basic tools needed to make the implements used in daily life⁴⁹).

In all these verses the Quran adopts a positive attitude towards all crafts and does not prefer one to another. In other words, all crafts and arts are permitted as sources of livelihood.

2. Architecture and building

In the verses of the Quran there are many terms and expressions that we can classify in the field of architecture, such as *binā'* (building), *djidār* (wall),

⁴⁷) Ṭabarī, op. cit., X/22, p. 46; Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 92; Qurtubī (Riyād ed.), XI, p. 320, XIV, pp. 265–268; ibn Kathīr, III, pp. 505–506; al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-'Asrār al-Ta'wīl* (Dār al-Djīl, Cairo 1329), p. 566; Zamakhsharī, VI, p. 68, v, p. 61; al-Khāzen al-Baghdādī, *Libāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, (al-Maṭba'at al-Maymaniyyah, Cairo 1312), III, p. 267.

⁴⁸) Qurtubī (Riyād ed.), XI, pp. 320–321.

⁴⁹) Ibid., xvii, p. 260; al-Khāzen al-Baghdādī, III, p. 332; Ṭabarsī, IX, p. 361; ibn Kathīr, IV, p. 315.

ṣarḥ (palace or edifice), *ḥuṣun* (fortresses), *qaṣr* (palace), *'umud* (pillars), *miḥrāb* (niche in the mosque), *dār* (house), *burdj* (tower) and *bāb* (door)⁵⁰).

The verb *banā* (to build) and its grammatical forms recur in many verses. In verses 5:91, 6:50; 12:78, 51:47, 79:27 the term refers to God's perfect building of heaven. In the remaining verses the term applies to what is built by people on earth. The expression *bunyān marṣūṣ* in verse 61:4 describing the array and tenacity of Muslim fighters in holy war, means a building strongly constructed with well cut stones. This explanation was accepted by most exegetes and some of them added the possible meaning building of lead (*raṣāṣ* = lead)⁵¹. In verses 26:128–129 God reprimands the ancient people of 'Ād, saying: "What, do you build on every prominence a sign, sporting, and do you take to you castles, haply to dwell forever?". This reproach is because the people of 'Ād built on every place or hill a tower or an architectural monument (*'āyah*) for sporting and castles (or palaces), thinking they would live forever!⁵²) Ṭabarsī considered this verse as indicating repugnance at every unnecessary building, and he supported this view with the behavior of Muhammad when he turned his face away from a dome built by a man of the Anṣār in al-Madīnah. For this reason the man removed his dome, whereupon Muhammad said: "Every unnecessary building will harm his owner in the Last Day."⁵³) The same view is expressed by Ibn Kathīr. He based his view on the reaction of Abu al-Dardā', a friend of Muhammad, on seeing the plethora of buildings and gardens constructed by the Muslims in Damascus. He stood in the Great Mosque reprimanding the Damascenes, saying: "Shame on you, shame on you, you treasure what you do not need and build what you do not dwell in," then he reminded them of the devastation that God brought down on the palaces and castles of the ancient people of 'Ād⁵⁴). It is obvious that the last-cited verse expresses a negative position on opulent and unnecessary building on earth. This idea may be confirmed by another verse, 39:20: "But those who fear

⁵⁰) See these names and terms in the *al-Mu'djam al-Mufahras li-'Alfāz al-Quran* (the Index of the Quran), edited by M. Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo 1404/1987).

⁵¹) Nasafī, I/1, p. 28; Zamakhsharī, i, p. 48, v, p. 188; ibn Kathīr, I, p. 55. Ṭabarsī added the meaning *bunyān marṣūṣ*, i. e., a lead building, I, p. 155.

⁵²) Mukātil bin Sulaimān, *Tafsīr*, edited by 'Abdallāh M. Shihāta (al-Hay'at al-Miṣriyyat al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb 1984), III, p. 274. Nasafī, III, p. 191; Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 310; Zamakhsharī, IV, p. 176; ibn Kathīr, III, p. 330; Abu al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wal-'Uyūn, Tafsīr al-Māwardī* (Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, Beirut 1412/1992), IV, pp. 180–181.

⁵³) Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 310.

⁵⁴) Ibn Kathīr, III, p. 330.

their Lord – for them await lofty chambers, underneath which rivers flow – God’s promise; God fails not the trust.” According to this verse God has promised His believers magnificent and many-storeyed palaces and houses in Paradise. Some exegetes described these buildings as built and decorated with gold, silver, pearls and corundum⁵⁵). From these verses we can conclude that splendid and unnecessary building is disliked, but we cannot consider this as a strict judgment stated directly in the verse. Nor ibn al-‘Arabī consider these verses as *‘ayāt al-‘ahkām*, verses with legal implications⁵⁶).

Verse 38:57 describes the builders and divers subjected to Solomon as Satans. According to exegetes these were employed by Solomon to build great buildings, *mihhrābs* (houses of worship), statues and huge porringers and cooking pots that could not be made by man⁵⁷) (these objects are mentioned in verses 34:12–13, which will be discussed below). This verse corresponds with verses from sura 27 relating what God made submissive to Solomon⁵⁸). Sura 27 tells the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Verse 44 says: “It was said to her, ‘Enter the pavilion.’ But when she saw it, she supposed it was a spreading water, and she bared her legs. He said ‘it is a pavilion smoothed of crystal.’” The mentioned pavilion (*ṣarḥ*), it is supposed, was built by Satans (*djinn*) at Solomon’s order. Two meanings were given to the word *ṣarḥ*: an entire pavilion built of glass with water and fishes in it⁵⁹), or the throne hall made of smoothed glass (crystal)⁶⁰) – in either case a most exquisite building. The main intention of this building was to stupefy Queen Balqīs of Sheba and convince her to believe in the religion of Solomon.

From all these verses we understand that God sanctioned Solomon to build great and splendid buildings. The wanted question arising in this context is: If all this was permitted to Solomon, does it mean that it is also permitted to the rest of people? The answer may be supposed to be affirmative since the deeds of the Prophets were considered behavior that should be copied. But this rule was not applied by exegetes. Apparently, they explained this by saying that what the Satans built for Solomon was not at Solomon’s will but at God’s will. In other words, these deeds were miracles sent down by God as a proof of the faith.

⁵⁵) al-Ṭabarsī, VIII, p. 770; al-Nasafī, III, p. 54. Ibn Kathīr used many Ḥadīths describing the buildings in Paradise, IV, p. 50.

⁵⁶) Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām*, IV, pp. 1656–1658.

⁵⁷) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 46, III, p. 275; ibn Kathīr, IV, pp. 39–40.

⁵⁸) *Quran*, 27:17–43.

⁵⁹) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 308–309; *Zamakhsharī*, IV, p. 202.

⁶⁰) Qurtubī (Riyāḍ edition), XIII, p. 208–213; ibn Kathīr, III, pp. 354–355.

Moreover, the negative attitude towards opulent and unnecessary building is repeated in other verses. Verse 26:149 says: "Will you still skilfully hew houses out of the mountains?" The verse reprimands the ancient people of Thamood for their unbelief and their extravagance in hewing houses⁶¹). The same information is given in verse 15:82, saying that hewing houses out of the mountains did not save them from God's anger⁶²). The same people are addressed in verse 7:74: "And remember when He appointed you successors after 'Ād, and lodged you in the land, taking to yourselves castles of its plain, and hewing its mountains into houses." In the last three verses the word *naḥata* means to build, while its original (direct) meaning is to hew or to cut in solid substances, like wood, metals, stones and so forth⁶³). The exegetes said that the *naḥt* action in these verses means the erection of stone building in mountain regions for use as winter houses, while summer houses were built of mud and bricks⁶⁴). The importance of this interpretation is double: on the one hand it somehow reflects the forms of architecture and construction materials used in Islamic world in the time of the exegetes. On the other, it was taken by the aristocracy of Islamic society, especially the Umayyads, to impart legitimacy to their magnificent stone palaces. They said: If God permitted the ancient people to construct glorious houses, it should also be permitted to Muslims. They added to this view verse 7:32, mentioning *zīnat al-llah* (God's adornment) by believers on earth⁶⁵). But this pretence was rejected by the friends of Muhammad and later by the exegetes⁶⁶). In fact we should construe the verses about Thamood according to their original contexts. Then we may deduce a general, negative view of opulent and unnecessary building.

A more detailed description of such buildings is found in verses 43:33–35: "And were it not that mankind would be one nation, We would have appointed for those who disbelieve in the All-merciful roofs of silver to their houses, and stairs whereon to mount, and doors to their houses, and couches

⁶¹) See *Quran*, 26:141–152.

⁶²) *Quran*, 15:80–84.

⁶³) *Lisān*, II, pp. 97–98.

⁶⁴) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 46, 435, III, 275; Nasafī, II, pp. 60–61; Ṭabarsī, IV, p. 679, VI, p. 529, VII, p. 313; ibn Kathīr, II, p. 537, III, p. 332; Zamakhsharī, II, p. 116.

⁶⁵) *Qurtubī*, op. cit. VII, p. 239.

⁶⁶) Qurtubī used these Ḥadīths within the comparison that he made between the opponents and the supporters of magnificent buildings. See Qurtubī, op. cit., VII, p. 239, XIII, p. 123. See also ibn Kathīr, III, pp. 330–332. On the Umayyad royal buildings see K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford 1969), I; O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, pp. 141–178.

whereon to recline, and ornaments; surely all this is but the enjoyment of the present life, and the world to come with thy Lord is for the Godfearing.” Most of the exegetes explained this as meaning that God can provide all people with houses with silver and gold walls, roofs, stairs, doors and furniture. But He refrains from this lest people choose the mean life on earth instead of Paradise⁶⁷). Actually, these verses present a general description of what might be called a splendid house or palace: it is a single storey floor building with stairs reaching its roof. Every part and the furniture inside it are made of or decorated with gold and silver. The term *zukhruf* was explained as gold, ornament, variegation or furniture⁶⁸). The term is repeated in the Quran four times. The expression *zukhruf al-qawl* in verse 6:112 has been explained as blinking of facts⁶⁹). In verse 17:93 Quraish asked Muhammad to have for himself *bait mīn zukhruf*, a house of gold ornament as a proof for his prophecy⁷⁰). Verse 10:24 mentions *zukhruf* as the ornament and beauty of earth resulting from the colorful vegetation created by the will of God⁷¹). In addition, the term has been used as the name of sura 43. As to art, it may be said that these verses reflect an aesthetic idea in the fields of architecture, architectural decoration, gilding, silvering and furnishing. It is likely that this idea was known to Arab society when the Quran was set down.

Some exegetes gave these verses wider meanings. In their exegesis, ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qurṭubī raised the issue of the legal right to the roof and the foundations of multi-storeyed buildings belonging to several proprietors. They reached the following judgment: The owner of the ground floor has no right to make changes that would endanger the entire building, but the owner of the upper storey has the right to make slight changes in his property without endangering the entire building⁷²). Note that these judgments were reached after the fourth century of the Hijra and by exegetes who sought Quranic solutions to contemporary issues. Therefore, these judgments may reflect developments that occurred in the architecture of Islam.

Another architectural term worth mentioning is *qaṣr*, which appears in the Quran three times (7:74, 22:45, 25:10). According to *Lisān al-‘Arab* and Ṭabarsī it is a walled masonry building with *maqṣūrah* used for the

⁶⁷) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 794; ibn al-‘Arabī, IV, p. 1682; Ṭabarī, XI/25, pp. 41–43; Qurṭubī, op. cit., XVI, pp. 84–87; Ṭabarsī, IX, p. 72; Nasafī, IV, p. 118; al-Māwardī, op. cit., V, pp. 224–225.

⁶⁸) *Lisān*, IX, pp. 132–133.

⁶⁹) Ṭabarsī, IV, p. 545.

⁷⁰) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 550; Ṭabarsī, VI, pp. 678–679.

⁷¹) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 234; Ṭabarsī, V, p. 155.

⁷²) Ibn al-‘Arabī, IV, p. 1682–1683; Qurṭubī, op. cit., XVI, pp. 85–87.

haram's (women) dwelling⁷³) Verse 22:45 mentions *qaṣr mushayyad* (a tall palace), meaning the large and high buildings of kings and civic dignitaries constructed or decorated with plaster and stucco⁷⁴). Many of these buildings belonging to ancient people were destroyed by God because of their impiety, meaning that the palaces of Paradise are permanent⁷⁵).

Until now our discussion has concentrated on the Quranic attitude towards secular architecture. The conclusive point of that attitude is that only unnecessary building with its decorations and amenities is undesirable. But the overall attitude towards architecture cannot be gauged without our knowing the position on sacred architecture, that is, construction for religious purposes such as mosque, *muṣalla*, *madrasah*, *ribāṭ*, and cemetery buildings.

There are at least three expressions in the Quran meaning religious institution: *masdjid*, *bait* and *miḥrāb*.

Masdjid means place where the worshiper places his face on the ground as a part of the prayer. In Islamic theology this may be anywhere, an open space or a building in which the devotional act of bowing and praying takes place. The only condition for being in this place is chastity. The basis for this explanation is the Ḥadith of Muhammad saying: "God made for me the whole earth as a mosque,"⁷⁶) or "The whole earth is a mosque except cemeteries and bath houses."⁷⁷) The term is repeated in many verses. Some of them contain the expression *al-masdjid al-ḥarām*, meaning the mosque of Mecca, the Ka'ba⁷⁸). Nothing is stated in these verses about the shape, design, decoration or building techniques of mosques. Verses 9:17–18 refer to those who will inhabit (*yu'ammir*) the mosques of God and the Ka'ba. The key word *yu'ammir* carries the senses building or renewing the building, visiting a place and renewing the life in it by inhabiting it. According to this, *ta'mīr masādjid al-llāh* means to preserve the building, to keep it clean and to keep it ready for prayers. In any event, the mosque intended in these verses is that of Mecca⁷⁹). Verse 22:40 presents the mosque as the Muslim house

⁷³) Ṭabarsī, IV, p. 677; *Lisān*, V, p. 100, art. "qṣr."

⁷⁴) Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 140; *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 131; Nasafī, II, p. 105; ibn Kathīr, III, p. 220; Zamakhsharī, IV, pp. 86–87.

⁷⁵) This is the interpretation of verse 25:10, in which the name *qaṣr* is mentioned. See Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 254.

⁷⁶) Muḥammad bin 'Abdallāh al-Zarakshī, *Flām al-Sādjid bi Ahkām al-Masādjid*, edited by M. al-Marāghī (al-Madjlis al-'A'lā lil-Shu'on al-'Islāmiyyah, Cairo 1412/1992), pp. 26–28; *Lisān*, III, pp. 204–205, art. *sadjad*.

⁷⁷) Ibn Mādjah, *Sunan*, op. cit., I, p. 246.

⁷⁸) *Quran*, 2:144, 155, 9:28, 17:1, 22:25.

⁷⁹) Zamakhsharī, II, p. 185; Nasafī, II, p. 119–120; Ṭabarsī, V, pp. 23–24; ibn Kathīr, II, pp. 326–327.

of worship parallel to the Christian church (*ṣama'ah*) and the Jewish synagogue (*ṣalawāt*)⁸⁰).

Another name for the mosque is *bait*, mentioned in many verses, such as 24:36: "In temples -*buyūt*- God has allowed to be raised up -*turfa'*- and His Name to be commemorated therein." The term carried no less than thirteen meanings, but in our verse the exegetes agreed on the meaning of mosque or any structure for worship. The verb *turfa'* in this verse has at least three meanings: to build, to purify from dirty and to magnify⁸¹): Most of the exegetes said in this verse that God ordered the Muslims to build mosques, to purify and preserve them; in this they will be magnified⁸²). Some exegetes spoke about the legitimacy of building, decorating and glorifying mosques. In his exegesis, ibn Kathīr used many Ḥadīths and Traditions to prove that building of mosques is desired, but decorating them is an undesirable action⁸³). In any case, this verse most probably refers to the real construction of mosques, particularly because the verb *rafa'a* appears in verse 2:127 with the meaning of building the Ka'ba by Ibrahīm and his son Isma'īl⁸⁴).

Hence, the Quran urges the Muslims to build mosques and to fill them with worshipers magnifying the name of God. Although nothing is said about the design and decoration of these mosques, these verses inform us of at least two principal elements that should be present in any Islamic mosque: an area that can contain a maximum number of worshipers in order to perform the five daily prayers, especially the Friday prayer, and the *qibla* direction in which the worshiper prays⁸⁵). The Islamic mosque was developed around these elements. In fact, they might be found in any building and even in open ground, so they are inadequate to attribute to the mosque its architectural and decorative characteristics. In other words, many other

⁸⁰) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 129; Ṭabarī, *Djāmi'* (Dār al-Fikr, Beirut 1408/1988), X/10, pp. 175–178; Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 139; Nasafī, III, p. 146.

⁸¹) Abū 'Abdallah H. al-Damaghānī, *al-Wudjūh wal-Nazā'ir li-Alfāz al-Quran*, edited by Muḥammad H. al-Zafitī (al-Madjlis al-'A'lā lil-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, Cairo 1412/1992), pp. 153–155, 390–391; ibn al-'Arabī, op. cit., III, p. 1389.

⁸²) Ṭabarī (Beirut edition), X/17, pp. 144–148; ibn al-'Arabī, III, 1390; Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 227; ibn Kathīr, III, p. 282.

⁸³) Ibn Kathīr, III, pp. 282–284; Zamakhsharī, III, p. 128.

⁸⁴) Ṭabarī (Beirut edition), I, pp. 546–552.

⁸⁵) The Quran includes many verses on the obligation of prayer, for example, verses: 2:43, 2:238, 4:103, 62:9. Verses 2:144, 149 informed Muhammad of the new direction, towards which Muslim worshipers must direct their prayer *qibla* of Mecca, this *qibla* replaced the first one, that of *al-Masdjid al-Aqsā* in Jerusalem.

elements of the mosque developed gradually through the first Islamic century⁸⁶).

A permanent architectural element in the mosque is the *miḥrāb*. It is a niche set in the *qibla* wall and its only function is to signify the direction of the Ka'ba. Traditionally, the Imam (leader of prayers) used to pray before it. Mostly, there is one *miḥrāb* in a mosque and it received a great deal of artistic treatment, especially of decoration. To discover whether there is any Quranic instruction concerning the shape or decoration of the *miḥrāb*, let us examine the term in its context in the five verses of the Quran where it appears (3:37, 3:39, 19:11, 34:13, 38:21). First we observe that in none of these verses is the *miḥrāb* presented in the sense of the architectural niche known to us in Islamic mosques. In all the verses the prayer niche is mentioned within tales of ancient Prophets and peoples. Verse 3:37 describes the *miḥrāb* as the sanctuary where Miryam (the virgin Mary) was sitting when Zachariah came to her. In verse 39 of the same sura, the *miḥrāb* is described as the sanctuary where Zachariah used to pray. Nearly the same meaning is given to the *miḥrāb* of David when he was visited by two angels in the form of two disputants. Verse 34:13 mentions the *miḥrāb* as one of the things made for Solomon by *djinn*.

In Arabic dictionaries *miḥrāb* has been variously defined: a high chamber inside the house, the palace or the mosque. *Miḥrāb* inside the house called also *ṣadr al-bait*, the front of the house, which is the most honorable place in it. In the mosque, *miḥrāb* is a high chamber, called by the *āmmah* (the common people) *maqām*; in it sits the Imam, separated from the other worshipers. The *miḥrāb* of the palace is a private room of the king used for isolation remote from the people⁸⁷). Ibn Manzūr, in his *Lisān al-'Arab* added: *miḥrāb* is the most sacred place in the mosque, it is the *qibla*. The ancient Arabs called the fortified palace *miḥrāb* also, for example the *miḥrābs* of Ḥimyar in Yemen. The *miḥrāb wal-tamāthīl* of Solomon (verse 13:34) are explained as figures of angels and Prophets depicted in houses of worship in order to be seen and to impress worshipers⁸⁸). All these definitions are also based on poems mentioning *miḥrāb* with secular meanings. The Yemenite poet Waddāḥ al-Yaman described the *miḥrāb* as the first floor room to which he ascends in order to meet his

⁸⁶) O. Grabar, op. cit., p. 105.

⁸⁷) *Tādīj al-'Arūs* (Cairo 1306), I, p. 206. See also R. B. Serjeant, "*Miḥrāb*" *Studies in Arabian History and Civilization* (Variorum Reprints, London 1981), pp. 439–440.

⁸⁸) *Lisān*, II, pp. 305–306, art. "ḥrb." See also al-Fayruzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (al-Mu'assasat al-'Arabiyyah, Beirut n. d.), I, p. 55.

mistress (*rabbat al-miḥrāb*). The famous pre-Islamic poet, Imru' al-Qays speaks of *miḥrāb aqwāl*, meaning palaces of Yemenite princes (pl. of *qayl*)⁸⁹. al-A'shā described *miḥrāb* as *madjlis* (meeting) of well-dressed notables taking place in Yemenite *Ghāmadān*⁹⁰. Obviously, there is no real connection between the *miḥrāb* of pre-Islamic Arabs and that of the Islamic mosque. All pre-Islamic definitions give a secular meaning to *miḥrāb*. The religious meaning is based on its uses in the Quran and especially in its exegesis.

If we go back to the verses and to their exegesis we find clear differences between the Quranic meaning of *miḥrāb* and its architectural one in the mosque. According to Nasafī the *miḥrāb* of Miryam was a first-floor room built by Zachariah inside the sanctuary in Jerusalem⁹¹). Ṭabarī considered it a church and added other possible meanings: the front of every sitting place, *muṣallā* (house of worship), the most honored places, a mosque. He also based his explanation on a poem by the pre-Islamic poet 'Adiy bin Zaid, who spoke of the ivory dolls inside *miḥrābs* (*ka-dimā al-'adji fi al-ma-hārīb*)⁹²). It seems that this poetic usage is closer to the sense of the Islamic *miḥrāb* than that in the Quran. "Dolls inside the *miḥrāb*" may indicate niches containing statues in palaces or churches. Ṭabarsī gave a similar definition and added the poem by Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman mentioning *rabbat al-miḥrāb* (the lady of the *miḥrāb*)⁹³). According to ibn Kathīr all *miḥrābs* mentioned in the Quran have the same meaning: a room for private prayer or for seclusion, like that of David and Solomon in Jerusalem⁹⁴). Another explanation is given by Ṭabarī and Zamakhsharī: it is a fortified palace, mosque or house that people used to fight for, and the name *miḥrāb* is a derivation of the verb *yuhārib* (to fight)⁹⁵).

⁸⁹) *Lisān*, II, p. 305. See also R. B. Serjeant, *op. cit.*, pp. 439–459.

⁹⁰) *Lisān*, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

⁹¹) Muqātil bin Sulaimān explained *miḥrāb* only as *masdjid*, II, p. 623. See also Nasafī, I, p. 155; Zamakhsharī, I, p. 172.

⁹²) Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, III/3, p. 246, said: 'Adiy bin Zaid was a Christian from Hira. In the pre-Islamic days the people used to put a small sculpture inside their worship houses.

⁹³) Ṭabarsī, II, p. 793.

⁹⁴) Ibn Kathīr, I, p. 341.

⁹⁵) See Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, XII/22, p. 70; Zamakhsharī, V, p. 62. Ibn al-'Arabī explained *miḥrāb* according to the observation that he made to *miḥrāb Dāwūd* in Jerusalem. According to his description *miḥrāb Dāwūd* was a great and very high stone building, with three walls around. It has a small door and large stairs. The whole building included houses and dwelling rooms and on his top was the *masdjid*, IV, p. 1597.

Despite this disagreement among the exegetes on the exact meaning of *mihrāb*, we can form a general idea: it is the most important and sacred room or corner inside a palace or a house of worship, used for prayer or for religious retreat. In any event, in all the exegeses that we surveyed we found no direct relation between the Quranic *mihrāb* and that of the Islamic mosque. The *mihrāb* as the praying place of the Imam is most probably a later meaning developed in the light of the architectural development of the mosque. The Imam praying in front of the *mihrāb* might have originated in the secular pre-Islamic *mihrāb* used by rulers in their palaces. Rulers in Islam continued this architectural usage and religious in the mosque⁹⁶). R. B. Serjeant has a similar view about the origin of the *mihrāb*. According to him *mihrāb* was known to the people of South Arabia before Islam. There it was a row of pillars found in the ancient stonebuildings of Ḥaḍramout. This design was adopted in Umayyad mosques and it became the *maqṣūrah*, a roofed portico (*riwāq*), in front of the *qiblah* wall, which opened towards the *ṣahn* (yard) of the mosque and served as a private praying place for the Khalif or his representatives⁹⁷). Hence it is possible that the *mihrāb* before of which stands the Imam, usually also the ruler of the community, derived from the *maqṣūrah*.

3. Figurative art

Under this title we will discuss any possible connection between figurative arts and the verses of the Quran.

Verse 34: 13 is a principal one on this issue. It says: "And of the *djinn*, some worked before him by the leave of his Lord . . . fashioning for him whatsoever he would – places of worship, statues, porringers like water-troughs, and anchored cooking-pots." The main term in this verse is *tamāthīl* (pl. of *timthāl*): any thing made in the shape of God's creatures such as the figures of Prophets⁹⁸). Exegetes gave this term different meanings: brass, glass and marble statues of human and likenesses of every living creature⁹⁹). Exegetes

⁹⁶) O. Grabar, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁹⁷) R. B. Serjeant, *op. cit.*, pp. 439–453.

⁹⁸) *Tādj al-'Arūs*, art. *mthl*.

⁹⁹) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 527; Niẓām al-Dīn al-Naysābūrī, *Tafsīr Gharā'ib al-Quran wa-Raghā'ib al-Furqān*, in the margins of Ṭabarī (Cairo 140/1984), XII/22, p. 47. See also Qurtubī, *op. cit.*, XIV, p. 272; ibn al-'Arabī, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 1599; Zamakhsharī, V, p. 63.

knew also the historical context of these *tamāthīl*. They were pictures or statues of animals, birds, angels, Prophets and saints which had been permitted in pre-Islamic sanctuaries in order to stimulate fear of God. Some exegetes described these *tamāthīl* in detail: two lions under the throne of Solomon, two eagles above it, peacocks, crows and eagles on the steps to his bed (or throne). This richness was meant to enhance the majesty of Solomon in the eyes of his viewers¹⁰⁰). Qurtūbī added that *tamāthīl* were talismans in the shape of flies, gnats and crocodiles; they were fixed in a certain place and it was forbidden to pass by them¹⁰¹).

The importance of this verse is its presentation of Solomon as a Prophet for whom works of unusual art were fashioned at God's bidding¹⁰²). This concept might have been used as legal grounds for those who believed in the legitimacy of figurative art in Islam. Exegetes who rejected figurative art found the *tamāthīl* of Solomon a serious obstacle contradicting their decisive prohibitions adduced from other verses. Many exegetes argued that from the time of Solomon until the advent of Islam making figures was permitted. This permission was rescinded by Muhammad for two reasons: first, Muhammad said that God would command those who made figures of living creatures to breathe life into them: they would fail, and then He would torture them. The second reason was to prevent the return of paganism to the memory of Arabs¹⁰³). Zamakhsharī said that in the different religions making figures (*taṣwīr*) is a contradictory issue because it is considered to fall within *muqabbahāt al-ʿaql*, an action that common sense rejects, like lying and injustice¹⁰⁴). In other words, he considered *taṣwīr* as belonging among abhorred deeds exclusively. Qurtūbī mentioned a similar but more clearcut opinion ascribed to Imam al-Shāfī, who held that *taṣwīr* on hanging curtains (*al-stāʿir al-muʿallaqa*) and on sculptured objects inside buildings was not prohibited but abhorred (*walam yakhtalifū ʿana al-taṣwīr fī al-sutūr al-muʿallaqah makrūhah ghaīr muḥarramah wa-kadhālika ʿindahum mā kāna kharṭan ʿaw naqshan fī bināʾ*). Qurtūbī added that one sect permitted making figures, according to verse 34:13 and verse 3:49 in which Jesus says: "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I will create for you out of clay as the likeness of a bird; then I will breathe

¹⁰⁰) Nasafī, III, p. 320; ibn al-ʿArabi, IV, p. 1599; Qurtūbī, op. cit., XIV, p. 272; Tabarsī, VIII, pp. 599–600; al-Māwardī, IV, pp. 438–439.

¹⁰¹) Qurtūbī, op. cit.

¹⁰²) O. Grabar, op. cit., pp. 81–82.

¹⁰³) Ibn al-ʿArabi, IV, p. 1600; Qurtūbī, XIV, pp. 272–274.

¹⁰⁴) Zamakhsharī, V, p. 65. The same idea is found in al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī (Cairo 1312), III, p. 484.

into it, and it will be a bird, by the leave of God.”¹⁰⁵) In any case, views permitting *taṣwīr* were generally rejected by the exegetes, who said that any supposed permission found in the Quranic verses was voided by Ḥadīths of the Prophet¹⁰⁶). Still, even the declared *tahrīm* (prohibition) was impaired by disagreements on subsidiary issues, in particular regarding figures painted on garments, bedclothes and curtains. Ibn al-‘Arabī ruled that Islam forbade *taṣwīr* except *mā kāna ruqman fī thawb*, that is embroidered figures on clothes, provided they were done with defect. This kind of figuration was abhorred only¹⁰⁷). By contrast, Qurṭubī said that the prohibition was against every kind of *taṣwīr*, including animals and plants. This inclusive ban could be concluded from verse 27:60: “And We caused to grow therewith gardens full of loveliness whose trees you could never grow” and from the saying of Muhammad: “Exalted and magnified may He be said: the most oppressive who try to create things like what God creates – could they create a seed or a grain of barley?”¹⁰⁸). Despite this judgment, the majority of exegetes believed that drawing plants was permitted, according to a tradition of ibn ‘Abbās: when someone asked his permission to draw figures inside his house, he answered him, if you insist, be satisfied with drawing plants because they have no soul¹⁰⁹).

Verse 3:49 as stated above concerns the figurative issue. The speaker is Jesus. While answering the Children of Israel, he created out of clay a figure of a bird as a proof for his truthfulness. The verb *‘akhlīq* (I will create) in this verse was explained in the meaning of making figure (*‘uṣawwir*) or evaluating (*‘uqaddir*), all in the sense of making the figure of bird¹¹⁰). Indeed, the whole verse relates at the miracle wrought by Jesus before the Children of Israel. Exegetes explained this miracles according to the tradition: Jesus made the figure of bat and he let it fly until it disappeared from the eyes of the viewers, then it fell down dead. In other words, the human Jesus performed a miracle that he received from God. Some scholars took this verse

¹⁰⁵) Qurṭubī, *op. cit.* Verse 3:49, will be explained later.

¹⁰⁶) The term *naskh* means copying. It was used by exegetes to highlight the contrasts in the Quran and those between the Quran and the Ḥadīths. See Qurṭubī, XIV, p. 273; ibn al-‘Arabī, IV, p. 1601.

¹⁰⁷) Ibn al-‘Arabī, IV, p. 1902.

¹⁰⁸) Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁹) Qurṭubī, XIII, pp. 221–222; Zamakhsharī, V, p. 62; Naysābūrī, *op. cit.*, X/22, p. 47.

¹¹⁰) Ṭabarī, III, p. 275; Nasafī, I, pp. 158–159; Ṭabarsī, II, p. 752; Qurṭubī, IV, pp. 93–94; al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī, *op. cit.* I, p. 236.

as proof of sanction of *taṣwīr* in Islam. This position could be countered by the fact that the verse clearly declares God to be the real and the only *muṣawwir*: what Jesus did was only by God's will in order to answer the challenges of the Children of Israel¹¹¹).

Verse 5:90 likewise has been applied by scholars to the figurative question. It says: "O believers, wine and arrow-shuffling, idols and divining-arrows are an abomination, some of Satan's work; so avoid it; haply so you will prosper." The term *'anṣāb* (pl. of *nuṣb* – idols) in the verse was explained according to the pre-Islamic rite in which immolations were offered to stones set up around the Ka'ba or near the tribe's camps symbolizing goddesses¹¹²). The same term is mentioned in two more verses (5:33, 70:43), in which believers are commanded to refrain from offering sacrifices to *'anṣāb*, such as the 360 of them around the Ka'ba in pre-Islamic times¹¹³). According to a tradition from ibn Ḍjuraydj, *'anṣāb* differ from *aṣnām*, which are engraved and sculptured stones (statues). The intention of the Quran is to forbid sacrifices to them and pouring the blood of sacrifices on them. These rites give sanctity to plain stones¹¹⁴). Ibn al-'Arabī included these verses in his legal exegesis, but he disregarded the explanation of *'anṣāb*, apparently in order to refrain from mentioning anything that might remind Muslims of the pagan past¹¹⁵). Similarly, most of the exegetes noted only the prohibition against the rites conducted around these rough stones¹¹⁶). An important fact in the exegesis of these verses is that none of the exegetes considered any relation between the *'anṣāb* and the figurative and sculpture issues. They found the connection to these issues in other verses, especially those containing the term *timthāl*, while some scholars held that there was a connection between the *'anṣāb* of these verses and the figurative issue!¹¹⁷)

¹¹¹) O. Grabar has the same idea. He said that the verse expresses God as the only *muṣawwir* and what Jesus did was only a miracle from God. See pp. 82–83.

¹¹²) Lisān, I, p. 759–760. The Arabic term is equivalent to the Hebrew term *mat-sevah* which means tombstone or monument. See T. Noldeke, "Arabs" (ancient) in *The Encyclopedea of Religion and Ethics*, I, pp. 664–665.

¹¹³) *Quran*, 5:3, 90, 70:43. See also ibn Kathīr, II, pp. 2–12.

¹¹⁴) Ṭabarī, op. cit., IV, pp. 74–75; Zamakhsharī, II, p. 13; al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī, op. cit., I, p. 434; al-Qurṭubī, op. cit., VI, p. 57; ibn Kathīr, II, p. 12; Naysābūrī, op. cit., IV/6, p. 52.

¹¹⁵) Ibn al-'Arabī, II, pp. 537–544, 556.

¹¹⁶) Naysābūrī, op. cit.

¹¹⁷) See T. Arnold, op. cit., pp. 4–5; O. Grabar, op. cit., p. 83. See also the exegesis of: Qurṭubī, op. cit., VI, pp. 285–293; ibn Kathīr, II, pp. 87–92; ibn al-'Arabī, II, pp. 255–258; al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī, I, pp. 490–491.

Another term relating to sculpture and figurative art is *'aṣnām* (idols). It appears in five verses (6:74, 7:138, 14:35, 21:57, 26:71), all are narrating the stories of the Biblical prophets Abraham, Noah and Moses. None of these verses has any connection with the pre-Islamic *'aṣnām* of the Arabs. According to Lisān al-'Arab *ṣanam* is an Arabized noun and it means any carved or fashioned wood and metal with body and figure¹¹⁸). Ibn al-Kalbī in his Kitāb al-'Aṣnām said: *ṣanam* is a human figure when made of wood or gold, but if it is of stone it is also called *wathan*, meaning a huge and stable statue¹¹⁹). Islam defines it as anything that is worshiped as a goddess. Apparently, the term *ṣanam* is a derivation from the Hebrew *tselem* which means human figure, and it is very likely that the same meaning endured in Arabic¹²⁰).

Verses 6:74, 21:57, 26:71 mention *'aṣnām* as the object that Abraham's family worshiped. Muqātil bin Sulaiman said that these were 72 idols made of gold, silver, brass, iron and wood¹²¹). For Ṭabarī *ṣanam*, *wathan* and *timthāl* have the same meaning: a statue made of stone or wood, or any other portrayal of the human figure including wall paintings¹²²). Zamakhsharī in his exegesis to verse 14:35 ("And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this land secure, and turn me and my sons away from serving idols'") described these *'aṣnam* as stone statues that pre-Islamic Arabs used to encircle¹²³). Another meaning for "*'aṣnām*" is given in verse 7:138: "And We brought the Children of Israel over the sea, and they come upon a people cleaving to Idols they had. They said 'Moses, make for us a god, as they have gods.'" Here all exegetes spoke of idols in the form of statues of cows, that the Children of Israel imitated when they fashioned the Golden Calf¹²⁴).

The word *'awthān* (pl. of *wathan*) also appears in three verses connoting idols that people must not serve. For example, verse 22:30 says: "And eschew the abomination of idols – *wathan* –" (see also verses 29:17, 29:25). *Wathan* is a derivation of the verb *wathana* – became fixed or immovable,

¹¹⁸) Lisān, XII, p. 349, art. *ṣanam*.

¹¹⁹) Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-'Aṣnām*, edited by Ahmad Zaki (dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 2nd ed., 1343/1924), p. 34, 33. See also Lisān, XII, p. 349, XIII, p. 442–443; *Tādj al-'Arūs*, art. *wathan*.

¹²⁰) It is possible that the origin of the term *ṣanam* is of the Hebrew term *tselem* that means figure of human being. See EI¹, art. *ṣanam*.

¹²¹) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 83.

¹²²) Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, V/7, p. 244; al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī, *op. cit.*, V, p. 159. He added that *ṣanam* was of human form and could also be made of iron, gold and silver.

¹²³) Zamakhsharī, III, p. 122.

¹²⁴) Nasafī, II, p. 73; Zamakhsharī, II, p. 131; ibn Kathīr, II, p. 233.

and *wathān* is an immovable object, like a stone or wooden *ṣanam* in human form fixed in place to be worshiped¹²⁵).

In verse 37:95: “Do you serve what you hew?” there is a clear indication of sculpture as an art applied by ancient peoples to produce objects of worshipping objects¹²⁶).

To sum up the verses about idols, *’asnām*, *tamāthīl*, *’ansāb* and *’awthān* all obviously carry the same meaning: idols made to be served as symbols of goddesses. In none of these verses is there any indication to the shape or the identity of these idols. To the exegetes it was clear that they were sculptures of humans and animals made by ancient peoples as idols to be served. A possible judgment deriving from these verses is that religious service before these idols is absolutely forbidden, but nothing is said about their production for secular purposes. The same conclusion was reached by most exegetes¹²⁷).

Lastly, note that the main Arabic term for figurative arts, *taṣwīr*, is never used in the Quran in this sense. Outside the Quran the term is used to indicate figures without shadow, flat pictures, and those with shadow, sculptures¹²⁸). In the Quran this word is very frequent, a large use of this term, but without any direct or indirect connection with figurative arts¹²⁹). In most of the verses God is called the Sole *Muṣawwir*, who creates all figures of mankind, animals and the other creatures. For example, verse 59:24 says: “He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper.” These three names of God describe the three stages of the divine creation: first, God estimated things, second He created them out of nothing, and third He determined their shapes and reality, all according to His Will¹³⁰). Man can only make a statue of what God created, and this has nothing to do with real *taṣwīr*, which is the highest stage of the act of the divine creation. There is no doubt that the Quranic meaning of *taṣwīr* constitutes a principal factor underlying the negative attitude towards figurative art held by most exegetes and theologians. They considered the fashioning of figures as straying into the divine function and intervening in God’s realm¹³¹). Still, the

¹²⁵) Nasafī, III, pp. 253–255; Zamakhsharī, IV, pp. 83, 243–245; ibn Kathīr, III, pp. 393–395. See also *Lisān*, XIII, pp. 442–443.

¹²⁶) Ṭabarī, XII/23, p. 74; al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī, IV, p. 21.

¹²⁷) For example, see the explanation of verse 6:74 of Ṭabarī, V/7, p. 244.

¹²⁸) See also *Lisān*, IV, p. 473, art. *sur*.

¹²⁹) See verses 40:64, 64:4, 7:11, 3:6, 83:8, 59:24.

¹³⁰) See al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār*, op. cit., p. 728; ibn Kathīr, IV, p. 344.

¹³¹) See ‘Isa Salmān, “Islam and figurative art” *Summer*, XXV, nos. 1–2 (1969), pp. 61–62; T. Arnold, op. cit., p. 6; O. Grabar, pp. 84–85.

verses contain nothing to indicate a prohibition of *taṣwīr* art or the secular use of its artifacts.

4. Jewelry

At the beginning of this paper we considered the verses mentioning the jewels and ornaments of believers in Paradise. Here we will discuss only verses relating jewelry on earth.

Firstly, we note that in the Quran there is no mention of any name or term for the craft of jewelry such as: *ṣiyāghah* and *djawāhir*. However, terms belonging to jewelry, such as the names of ornaments and precious stones, do appear.

Verse 13:17 says: "He sends down out of heaven water, and the wadis flow each in its measure, and the torrent carries a swelling scum; and out of that over which they kindle fire, being desirous of ornament or ware, out of that rises a scum the like of it. So God strikes both the true and the false." Here the verse uses the act of preparing metal jewelry and wares and the scum swelling out of it as an example of God's separation of true from false. Exegetes spoke about gold, silver, brass, iron and other metals being smelted. In this process the scum swells up and is removed, being of no value, while the refined metal settles and is used to making ornaments and wares¹³²). The importance of this verse for our purpose is its reference to the refining of metals and the possibility of making jewelry from them. It, obliquely indicates goldsmithing and blacksmithing as common crafts among the Arabs at the beginning of Islam.

In verse 16:14 we find more direct mention of the manufacture and use. It says: "It is He who subjected to you the sea, that may eat of it fresh flesh, and bring forth out of it ornaments for you to wear." The term *hilyah* in the verse means all kinds of jewels made of gold, silver, pearls and precious stones worn by women and used as ornaments for garments, belts, weapons and other objects used by men and women¹³³). It is clear that the verse

¹³²) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 374; Ṭabarī, VIII/13, pp. 134–138; Ṭabarsī, VI, pp. 440–441; Qurṭubī, IX, pp. 304–305; *Zamakhsharī*, III, p. 103; Nasafī, II, pp. 246–247.

¹³³) Lisān, XIV, pp. 194–195, art. *hlā*. This verse is repeated in sura 35:12 and 55:22. See discussion of these verses and of others in Ahmad Ghabin, "Jewelry and Goldsmithing in Medieval Islam: The Religious Point of View," *Jewelry and Goldsmithing in the Islamic World*, International Symposium (the Israel Museum, Jerusalem 1987), pp. 83–91.

means only jewels taken from the sea, such as pearls and corals, without specifying their use by men or women. Some exegetes said that the intention is only jewels worn by women as adornment for their husbands¹³⁴). Others adhered to the direct meaning of the verse, that is, jewels in use by all¹³⁵). In any event, this verse undoubtedly contains divine permission to engage in jewelry crafts and to make use of their products.

The most important verse on the use of jewels is 24:31, which determines rules of behavior for women. The verse is long, and we will confine ourselves to what concerns to jewelry. It says: "And say to the believing women, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment save such as is outward; and let them cast their veils over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment save to... not... nor let them stamp their feet, so that their hidden ornament may be known." In its apparent meaning the verse commands women to protect their purity and to refrain from revealing parts of their body and their adornment to strangers, except for that which it is permitted to reveal. An exception is made for those who may not marry them, such as fathers, brothers and the like. For us, the main in this verse is *zīnah*, which is repeated three times. Most exegetes said that *zīnah* was anything used by women for adornment, but they disagreed on the particular sense of *zīnah* in this verse. Some spoke of the *zīnah* of the face, the palm (as a part of the hand), the place of bracelets (wrist) and the place of the ankle ring¹³⁶). Others noted about two kinds of women's *zīnah*. First, *zīnah zahīrah*, exterior adornment that includes clothes, palms (hands) and the jewels on them, such as rings and bracelets, cosmetics, like *kuhl* (eye powder) and *khidāb* (dye). With this kind of *zīnah* women could appear before strangers. The Second kind is *zīnah bāṭinah*, interior adornment that women must hide from the eyes of strangers. It include: ankle ring (*khulkhāl*), earring (*qurt*), armlet (*dumlidj*), necklace (*qilādah*), crown (*tādij*) and scarf (*wishāh*)¹³⁷). It is obvious that the intention in this verse is the parts of the woman's body where jewels and adornment are placed and not the materials of the adornment. Thus, the parts of the woman's body to be hidden are: the head, the ear, the neck, the chest, the upper arm, the arm and the leg; on these are placed, in order: crown, earring, necklace, scarf, armlet, bracelet and ankle ring. The parts of woman's body that

¹³⁴) Nasafī, II, p. 282; ibn al-'Arabī, II, p. 1148; Qurtubī, X, pp. 86–89.

¹³⁵) Ṭabarsī, VI, p. 545; this question was not discussed by Muqātil, *op. cit.*, II, p. 461, and Ṭabarī, VIII/14, p. 88.

¹³⁶) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, pp. 196–197.

¹³⁷) Ṭabarī, X/18, pp. 118–120; Ṭabarsī, VII, p. 217; Zamakhshārī, IV, p. 124; ibn Kathīr, III, p. 247.

may be revealed are the face, the palms and the feet¹³⁸). According to ibn al-‘Arabī there are two more complicated types of *zīnah*. First, *al-zīnah al-muk-tasabah*: the artificial beauty produced by elegant attire, jewels, eye powder and dye makeup and various cosmetics. This type includes the exterior and the interior *zīnah*. The second type, *al-zīnah al-khuluqiyah*, is present in the face and it is the origin of real beauty because it is based on good qualities¹³⁹).

In verse 60 of the same sura there is a continuation of the *zīnah* issue: “Such women as are past child-bearing and have no hope of marriage – there is no fault in them that they put off their clothes, so be it that they flaunt no ornament; but to abstain is better for them; and God is All-hearing, All knowing.” This verse gave permission to old women to divest themselves of some of their clothes, but not to reveal the interior *zīnah*¹⁴⁰). In this verse we find a new expression connected to *zīnah* and jewelry, namely *tabarrudj*. The word is repeated in verse 33:33 which refers to the wives of the prophet Muhammad: “Wives of the Prophet, you are not as other women . . . Remain in your houses; and display not your finery as did the pagans of old.” Muqātil bin Sulaimān explained *tabarrudj* as releasing the veil and revealing the earring and the necklace, a known custom in the *Djāhiliyyah* period¹⁴¹).

Later exegetes defined *tabarrudj* as women’s intentional revelation of their adornment or parts of their body to the extent of seducing men¹⁴²). An example is a woman who wears a fine gown set with precious stones and passes by men in order to seduce them. Some added the noted pre-Islamic custom of women wearing whistling jewels in order to declare their beauty to men¹⁴³).

According to the preceding verse *zīnah* is womanly behavior that includes all permitted kinds of adornments: jewels, dresses and cosmetics. Actually, the main intention of these verses does not concern the material and technical aspects of the *zīnah* but the moral one. So, a possible judgment deriving from these verses is that *zīnah* is permitted to women within the moral boundaries.

¹³⁸) Nasafī, III, p. 140.

¹³⁹) Ibn al-‘Arabī, III, p. 1368; Qurtubī, XII, p. 229.

¹⁴⁰) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 208; *Zamakhsharī*, IV, p. 135; ibn al-‘Arabī, III, pp. 1400–1401; Qurtubī, XII, p. 309; Nasafī, III, p. 154.

¹⁴¹) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, III, p. 488.

¹⁴²) Ṭabarī, XII/22, p. 4; Nasafī, II, p. 302; Ṭabarsī, VIII, p. 558; *Zamakhsharī*, VI, p. 135; Qurtubī, XII, p. 309. See also *Lisān*, II, p. 212, art. *brdj*.

¹⁴³) Qurtubī, XIV, p. 180; Nasafī, III, p. 141; ibn Kathīr, III, p. 464; abu Bakr al-Djaṣṣās, *Ahkām al-Quran* (al-Maṭba‘ah al-Bahiyyah, Cairo 1374), III, p. 393.

In two other verses gold and silver are mentioned as expression of wealth. Verse 9:34 say: “O believers, many of the rabbis and monks indeed consume the goods of the people in vanity and bar from God’s way. Those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not expend them in the way of God – give them the good tidings of a painful chastisement.” In this verse exegetes encountered many difficulties that gave rise to different explanations. They took issue on three main points: (1) The people intended: are they the Jewish rabbis and the Christian monks or also the Muslims? (2) The meaning of *yaknizūn*, to treasure. (3) The shape of the treasured gold and silver. All exegetes discussed these issues but said nothing about the production and use of jewels. They adapted the same position respecting verse, 3:14 which mentions gold as highly coveted by people¹⁴⁴). Thus we find nothing in these verses related to the jewelry art and use of jewelry except the fact itself that gold and silver money and jewels could be treasured.

An ancient and royal use of golden jewelry is indicated in verse 43:53. It tells of Pharaoh, who rejected the mission of Moses. His answer was: “Why then have bracelets of gold not been cast on him, or angels not come with him conjoined?” Exegetes said that the Pharaohs used to wear gold bracelets and collars as symbols of domination¹⁴⁵). This explanation matches the meaning given in the aforementioned verses of gold and silver as expressions of wealth and power¹⁴⁶).

To sum up the Quranic view of jewelry:

- 1) In no verse is there any reference to the craft or material of jewelry. Therefore, they cannot serve as grounds for determining the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of this craft and its artisans. Still, we may conclude that in general the attitude towards the craft and its uses was not negative, especially the verse concerning the use of jewels taken from the sea.
- 2) All kinds of jewels are expressions of the women’s *zīnah* and women should use them within the legal limits. In other words, men must abstain from the use of jewelry, although the verses do not state this.
- 3) In general, the verses express a negative attitude to the exaggerated use of gold and silver jewels and money on account of their luxurious aspect, but this does not mean a total *tahrīm* (prohibition).

¹⁴⁴) See for example Ṭabarī, VI/10, pp. 117–122. ibn al-‘Arabī, dealt with no less than eleven issues that in his opinion are found in this verse, II, pp. 927–937. See also Ṭabarsī, V, pp. 39–41. See my discussion of this verse, *Ghabin*, *op. cit.*, pp. 85–86.

¹⁴⁵) Ṭabarsī, IX, p. 78; Nasafī, IV, p. 121.

¹⁴⁶) See Muḥammad al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-‘Ulūm* (al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Amirah), 1324, IV, p. 429.

5. Clothing and Furniture

Under this heading I will discuss only the verses directly related to clothing and furniture. Verse 16:80 details what God created on earth in favor for the benefit of mankind: houses for living, hides, wool, fur and hair of animals to make tents and a variety of furnitures for the house¹⁴⁷). It says: "And it is God who has appointed a place of rest for you of your houses, and He has appointed for you of the skins of the cattle houses you find light on the day that you journey, and on the day you abide, and of their wool, and of their fur, and of their hair furnishing and an enjoyment for a while."

Indeed, this verse gives clear permission to benefit from the remains of the slaughtered animals. Hides of camels, cows and sheeps could be used for making "light houses" (leather tents), like those of Tā'if in pre-Islamic Arabia. It is supposed that Muhammad had a leather tent, implying that it was used by nomads townsmen alike¹⁴⁸). Animal hides also have wool, fur and hair which may be used for making furniture (*'athath wamatā'*), as well as garments, bedclothes, rugs and receptacles¹⁴⁹).

Verse 81 of the same sura continues this theme: "And He has appointed for you shirts to protect you from the heat, and shirts to protect you from your own violence." Here exegetes spoke of wool, cotton and linen shirts, in addition to coats of mail¹⁵⁰).

According to these verses it is God who created all kinds of clothing in order to protect people from heat and cold and still more to cover their private parts, as stated in verse 7:26: "Children of Adam! We have sent down on you a garment to cover your shameful parts, and feathers; and the garment of Godfearing – that is better." Exegetes said that *rīsh* (feather) means bedclothes, pillows, cushions and all kinds of bedding. It also means everything that covers, beautifies and socially protects the human body¹⁵¹).

The term *zīnah* in two other verses was explained in the sense of clothing. Verse 7:31 says: "Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every place of worship; and eat and drink, but be you not prodigal; He loves not the prodigal." God orders the worshipers in the mosques to wear fine clothes and to

¹⁴⁷) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 480; Ṭabarī, VIII/14, pp. 153–154; Ṭabarsī, VI, p. 581.

¹⁴⁸) Ibn al-'Arabī, III, p. 1167.

¹⁴⁹) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 480; Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, VIII, pp. 153–154; Qurṭubī, X, pp. 152–159; ibn Kathīr, II, p. 561; ibn al-'Arabī, *op. cit.*, pp. 1167–1168.

¹⁵⁰) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, pp. 480–481; Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, VIII, pp. 155–156; Ṭabarsī, VI, p. 583; ibn al-'Arabī, III, p. 1171; Nasafī, II, p. 295; Zamakhsharī, III, p. 158.

¹⁵¹) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, p. 33; Ṭabarī, V/8, pp. 146–148; Ṭabarsī, IV, pp. 630–632.

use perfumes, but not in excess way¹⁵²). The next verse in the same sura says: "Say: Who has forbidden the ornament of God which He brought forth for His servants and the good things of His providing? Here too *zīnah* was explained as good clothing to be worn at feasts and a happy occasions, such as visits to relatives and friends¹⁵³).

From these verses we learn of at least three major functions of clothing. First, it is to protect the body from heat and cold. Second, it is to cover the private parts which is a main principle in the Islamic religion. Third, it is to beautify oneself in the eyes of others, as did al-Ḥasan bin 'Alī when he dressed elegantly, and answered his critics by saying: "God is beautiful and He loves beauty, so I am beautifying for my God."¹⁵⁴)

The conclusion is that engagement in crafts and arts related to clothing, bedding and "*zīnah*," such as spinning, weaving, tailoring, tanning and dyeing, is legal and desirable. It is also obvious that God gave permission to all to use clothing and other means of *zīnah* in order to appear beautiful¹⁵⁵).

Concluding Remarks

1. An important fact arising from this survey of Quranic verses is the mention and use of many names, terms, actions and lingual forms taken from the fields of art and craft, such as building terms and materials, names of jewels, precious stones and garments. This implies that the Arabs at the time of Muhammad understood these expressions. This understanding was mainly based on their knowledge or practice of the fields of arts and crafts.
2. Many of these verses describe the abundance of jewels, precious stones, silk garments, gold and silver wares and the like, all of which will be at the disposed of the believers in Paradise. This description serves to encourage and induce believers to perform God's commands if they wish to enter Paradise and to enjoy its riches. Most exegetes said that the intention of the verses was to guide believers to what is forbidden or undesired on earth. They took these verses as evidence of what was forbidden or undesirable, such as the use of gold and silk by men. This conclusion

¹⁵²) Ṭabarī, V/8, pp. 159–161; Nasafī, II, p. 50; Zamakhsharī, II, p. 105; ibn Kathīr, II, p. 201; Ṭabarsī, IV, p. 637.

¹⁵³) Qurṭubī, VII, pp. 195–196; ibn Kathīr, II, p. 202; Ṭabarsī, IV, p. 638; Nasafī, II, p. 51.

¹⁵⁴) Ṭabarsī, IV, p. 637.

¹⁵⁵) Fakhr al-Dīn al-Razī is quoted by al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī, II, p. 84.

also emerges from the many other verses attacking *al-hayāt al-dunyā* and describing it as ephemeral enjoyment. These verses undoubtedly express a negative attitude towards precious jewels, splendid attire and the other luxuries. But this attitude remains very general and it cannot be considered grounds for conclusive judgments.

3. An opposing attitude may be deduced from the verses dealing with life on earth. Many of these encourage believers to enjoy the grace of God. Verse 15:20 reads: "We caused to grow therein of every thing justly weighed, and there appointed for you livelihood, and for those you provide not for." This means God created all kinds of livelihood for people and animals¹⁵⁶), and He created all the crafts and arts to be conducted by people. He created iron that its products may be manufactured by people, and He taught David the craft of armour making. He taught Solomon how to treat brass and to produce what he needed from it, as noted by verse 34:12: "And We made the fount of Molten Brass to flow for him." Some said that *'ayn al-qatr* (Molten Brass) exists in Yemen and people continued to extreat brass from it¹⁵⁷).

Other crafts and arts to be inferred from the verses are: building, tanning, spinning, weaving, tailoring and trading. However, intimation of these crafts and arts does not mean that they are preferred to others. Moreover, no prohibition or dislike is expressed regarding any of the crafts and arts. But behind the legitimacy of the various crafts and arts stand the religious moral and social values that should be adopted.

4. In the verses there is no direct discussion of the arts. We find indirect mention of them as means of livelihood or within wide questions of principle. From this it is possible to say that it is permitted to engage in the arts as source of income and as useful occupations for society; an example is the arts of jewelry.
5. As to figurative art we can be certain that the Quran says nothing about their prohibition. Also the relation between the verses and the Traditions on figurative art is very superficial and a result of the dogmatic nature of the exegetes. Many modern exegetes and 'Ulamā' of al-Azhar hold this view. Sheikh M. Rashīd Riḍā said that there was no need in the Quran to prohibit *taṣwīr* and sculpture. The Prophet Muhammad did this in his Traditions in order to distance away his community from its pagan past. In other words, his intention was only to prohibit idolatry. The so-called prohibition on account of imitating God's creation is un-

¹⁵⁶) *Tafsīr Muqātil*, II, pp. 426–427; *Zamakhsharī*, III, p. 130; *ibn Kathīr*, II, p. 426–427.

¹⁵⁷) *Ṭabarī*, XII/22, pp. 68–70; *Zamakhsharī*, V, p. 61; *ibn Kathīr*, III, p. 506.

true for in such a case the depiction of plants, also created by God should likewise be forbidden. He adds that God's prohibition should be in force in all times, but in the time of Solomon it was not¹⁵⁸). Sheikh al-Azhar said that the prohibition related to verse 5:90 is untrue because we must separate between the act of worship and the worshiped statue. The *nus̄b* mentioned in the verse is merely a simple stone set up as an altar. The verse requires only the prohibition of the offering rite done before it¹⁵⁹). In any case, it seems to us that some Western scholars attached exaggerated importance to this verse when they said that it was the source of the prohibition suggested by classical exegetes. In fact, exegetes did not discuss the figurative issue when they explained this verse, or verse 5:3. In addition, those scholars explained *'anṣāb* in the same sense of statues and they translated both as representation, painting and statue¹⁶⁰).

6. The Quran symbolizes the beginning of new era in the life of the Djāhilite Arabs. In the verses we have discussed there are indications to the situation existing in the pre-Islamic period and elucidations of what should be in Islam. Many verses call on Muslims to pursue crafts which God created and taught His messengers. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the verses sought to change the negative pre-Islamic attitude towards crafts, especially that of Quraish towards crafts such as smithing, tanning and weaving.

¹⁵⁸) See *Fatāwā Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*, edited by S. al-Dīn al-Mundjīd (Dār al-Kitāb al-Djadīd, Beirut 1971), III, pp. 1142–1144.

¹⁵⁹) 'Isā Salmān, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–62.

¹⁶⁰) *Encyclopaedia Universale dell'Arte*, VII, art. *Images and Iconoclasm*, sec. *Islam*, col. 816; T. Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5; O. Grabar, *op. cit.*, p. 33.