



Illumination and its functions in Islamic manuscripts

Muhammad Isa WALEY

British Library, Londres

Cette communication, qui n'a pas pour propos d'apporter des nouveautés en ce qui concerne les techniques ou l'histoire de l'enluminure islamique, examine un certain nombre d'exemples dans le contexte des manuscrits qui ont reçu une ornementation. L'étude d'un choix de types d'enluminures peut accroître notre compréhension de la culture manuscrite en terre d'islam.

Les principaux types d'enluminure rencontrés dans les manuscrits islamiques nous sont familiers: ils comprennent les décors en pleine-page, les shamsas, les sarlawhs, les décors de section, les colophons, les signes de division du texte, les encadrements, le décor des reliures et doublures ainsi que les miniatures. Les tables, cartes et diagrammes peuvent également comporter des éléments d'enluminure; la même chose vaut pour les documents et les lettres. Dans le cadre de cette présentation, il est impossible d'énumérer les variétés de style – ou de forme – créées par les enlumineurs musulmans. On insistera ici sur les différentes façons dont leur art rehausse des livres ou documents de différents types.

Pour les besoins de l'étude, les manuscrits islamiques enluminés sont divisés en quatre larges catégories – bien qu'il soit indubitablement possible d'imaginer des classements plus fins. D'abord viennent les textes religieux, spécialement le Coran, en divers styles. Ici, l'enluminure peut être classée comme un art sacré. On rencontre ensuite l'enluminure dans de nombreux textes scientifiques ou techniques, par exemple sous forme de diagrammes, de tables ou de graphiques en étoile. Dans des œuvres de littérature ou d'érudition, l'art du *mudhahhib* offre un accès visuel au monde de l'imagination créative. Enfin, des enluminures qui ornent les documents ou lettres officielles symbolisent la puissance et le prestige du commanditaire.

Introduction

The aim of this talk is to offer a rapid tour d'horizon showing the variety of purposes served by the art of illumination (*tadhhib*) in Islamic manuscripts and documents. Illumination is acknowledged to be one of the glories of Islamic art, but here there will be no analysis of technique or of stylistic development and influences. Important research has been carried out in recent years by specialists in Islamic art; but given the long history and wide geographical diffusion of the arts of the book among Muslims it is not surprising that much remains to be done in this field.

However, the present writer's work on illumination, such as it is, does not have a great deal to do with art history. It is more concerned with what one might call "the culture of the manuscript". For such investigations it is vital not to look only at the more exquisite material but also at work of second-rate, and sometimes even of third-rate quality. It is hoped that some of the images presented here will convince the reader that these too include work of merit and importance.

What do I mean by "illumination"? This presentation focuses mainly upon non-figurative ornamentation involving the use of gold and/or silver with or without colour. However, there are also many instances where ornamentation in colour without precious metals can reasonably be regarded as illumination. The same applies, less often, to some kinds of figurative or quasi-figurative ornamentation. I have included examples of those categories as well. By "Islamic manuscripts" I mean codices or leaves produced by, or for, Muslims.

The scope of this discussion is inevitably limited, I am afraid, by the range of illustrations presently available to me. Although aware and appreciative of the riches held in other collections the writer is here restricted to slides of material from the British Library, except for some Southeast Asian items. I am grateful to my colleague Annabel Gallop for these slides and for her expert advice on the material; to Salim Quraishi for his advice and help; and to our photographers at the British Library for their excellent work.

Most readers will need no introduction to the standard forms of decorative illumination – *shamsa*, frontispiece, title page, section or episode heading, border, colophon, interlinear gilding, gold-flecked paper, decorated borders, paintings, and so forth. Perhaps one might also add the gilding of bindings and doublures. But here and now the material will instead be categorized according to the *types* and *subjects* of the manuscripts in which it is found. I hope that rather than merely being different, such an approach will also be found at least in some sense illuminating. For the uses to which the illuminator's art can be put are more varied, and the relationships between text and ornament more meaningful, than might be supposed by those familiar only with the more classical material.

What, then, are the functions of illumination in Islamic manuscripts? Obviously any ornament is intended to add beauty, but beyond that I would offer, for present purposes, the following somewhat portentous answer: "To glorify; to dignify; to amplify; and to clarify". Illumination can do all of these things for manuscripts in any of the four categories.

According to the schema adopted here, however, the functions just enumerated apply above all as follows. To sacred and religious texts, illumination adds *glory*; on state letters and documents it confers *dignity*; illumination can *amplify* the imaginative force and aesthetic lustre of literary compositions; and it is used to *clarify* technical details in specialized treatises on the natural and human arts and sciences, from astronomy to toxicology.

Religious and sacred illumination

Taking these four applications of illumination in turn, then, let us begin with examples found in sacred and other religious works. When we speak of Islamic illumination, it is the magnificent adornment of so many copies of the Holy Qur'ān that is most likely to come to mind. For Muslims the Qur'ān is *the* Book, and the glories of Qur'ānic illumination and calligraphy are known to many non-specialists. Despite the importance of the subject, there is no time here to dwell on the symbolism of illumination in connection with doctrines such as that of Unity in Multiplicity and *vice versa* as reflected in many of the masterpieces of Qur'ānic *tadhhib*, on which Martin Lings has written so profoundly¹.

Let us first look at one or two examples in which the art of the *mu-dhahhib* or illuminator both reminds the reader of the majesty of the Sacred Book and provides clear signs of the location in that text of the passage being read. This example is from one of a great many glorious *Mushafs* produced in Mamlūk Egypt². In work of this calibre, gold is used not only for the decoration but sometimes also for the script itself – as in this example from another volume of the same seven-part Qur'ān³. As well as ornaments marking the beginning of each of the thirty *Juz'* into which the Qur'ān is classically divided, the illuminator also had scope to embellish the text division markers for *Hizb*, *Sūra*, *Āya*, *Sajda*, and more. Sometimes, too, there are panels or whole pages of pure ornamentation, and /or statements of patronage and /or *waqf* dedication. Here is the dedication from a famous Qur'ān dated Mosul 710 h/1310, which was commissioned by the Mongol Ilkhān Muḥammad Khudābanda, also known as Ūljāytū⁴.

The cumulative effect of even second-rate illumination in a Qur'ān can reflect something of the intensity of the believer's encounter with the Holy Text. Here is an example from the 5th h/11th century. It opens quietly with a page or two of frontispiece⁵, followed of course by the *Fātiḥa* and beginning of *al-Baqara*. Near the end of the Qur'ān, where the shortest *Sūras* are found, the text markers come closer and closer together, producing a visual reflection of the compelling intensity of the early Makkan Revelations⁶. Finally the manuscript ends with two more tranquil illuminations accompanying the *Mu'awwidhatayn* and colophon, followed by an ornate concluding page more similar to those at the beginning⁷.

1. Martin Lings, *The Quranic art of calligraphy and illumination*, London, 1976; especially Chapter 3, "The Principles of Qur'ān Illumination", p. 71-78.
2. Add. 22407, 1v^o-2r^o. All manuscripts cited are in the British Library, unless otherwise

stated.

3. Add. 22408, 3r^o.

4. Or. 4945, 2r^o.

5. Add. 7214, 1r^o; 1v^o-2r^o; 2v^o-3r^o.

6. Add. 7214, 72v^o-73r^o.

7. Add. 7214, 73v^o-74r^o.

Finely illuminated Qur'ān commentaries are less in evidence. The opening folio of this copy of the *Tafsir* of Abū 'l-Futūḥ al-Rāzī was intended to receive a fairly modest ornamental heading. A pencil sketch was made for it, but the *tadhhib* itself never materialized⁸.

Hadīth manuscripts, on the other hand, while normally handled with some reverence, tend to be produced more to function as reference books. Their illumination is rarely very lavish. Exceptions to this generalization include the single-page *Hilya* describing the Prophet, of which countless numbers were inscribed and decorated, especially in Ottoman times. Indeed, fine *Hilyas* are still produced today.

My example of an illuminated *Hadīth* text is from an Ottoman collection of calligraphic specimens, mainly *Aḥādīth* texts, probably during the 12th h/18th century⁹. There is an interesting point about this one (Fig. 1), *Qāla Rasūl Allāh, Khayārukum alyanukum*, meaning "Said the Envoy of God, 'The best of you are those who are kindest'". The illumination was added after the page had been calligraphed: a normal safeguard against the possibility of waste if the copyist's work came out below standard. Yet this text actually does contain a minor error – one can see the correction in the ornamentation

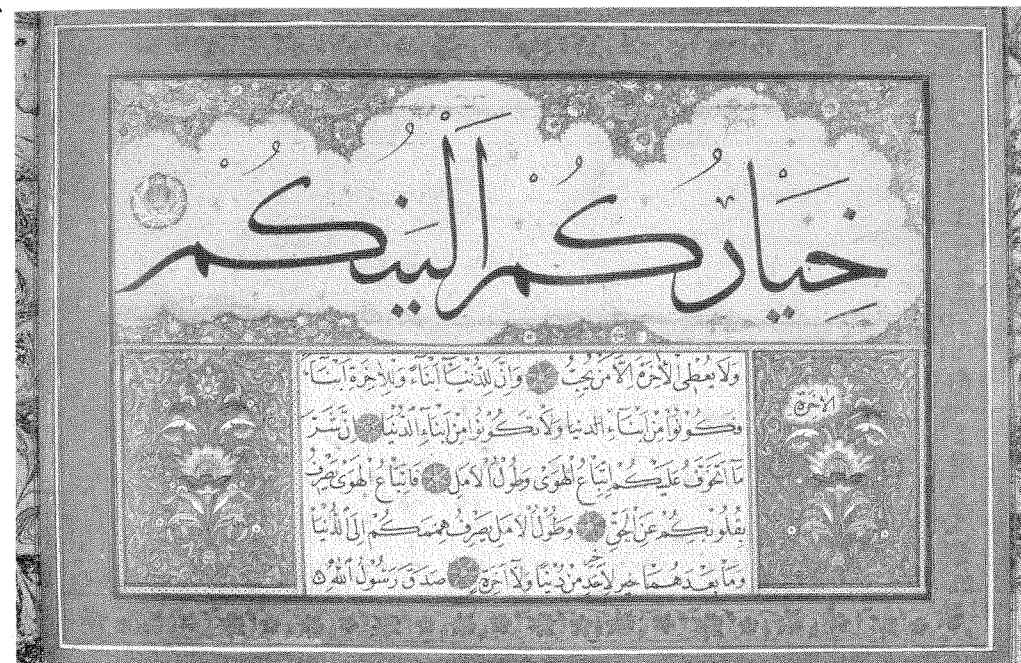


Fig. 1. Illuminated *Hadīth* text. MS. London, BL, Or. 11925, f. 7r^o.

8. Or. 11986, 1v^o.

9. Or. 11925, 7r^o.

to the right; but the text was kept for use and illumination added in spite of the copyist's slip.

Besides the canonical sources of Islam, other religious works are also sometimes embellished with illumination. This 13th h/19th century Maghribī treatise has a fine title page illumination¹⁰ (Fig. 2). Equally interesting is the use of gold for the purpose of rubrication: picked out in gold are the following: below the opening *Basmala*, the name *Muḥammad*; within the illuminated panel, the name of the author with a prayer for him; the phrases *al-Ḥamd li-'Llāh*; *wa ashhadu*; *wa nashhadu*; and finally *ammā ba'd*. No other ornamentation is to be found in this manuscript until we reach the colophon, which is a lovely specimen of its kind.

92

As is well known, a good many Muslim rulers practiced the art of calligraphy. A fine example in the British Library contains an Arabic text on a religious subject: 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī's work *al-Wasā'il ilā ma' rifat*

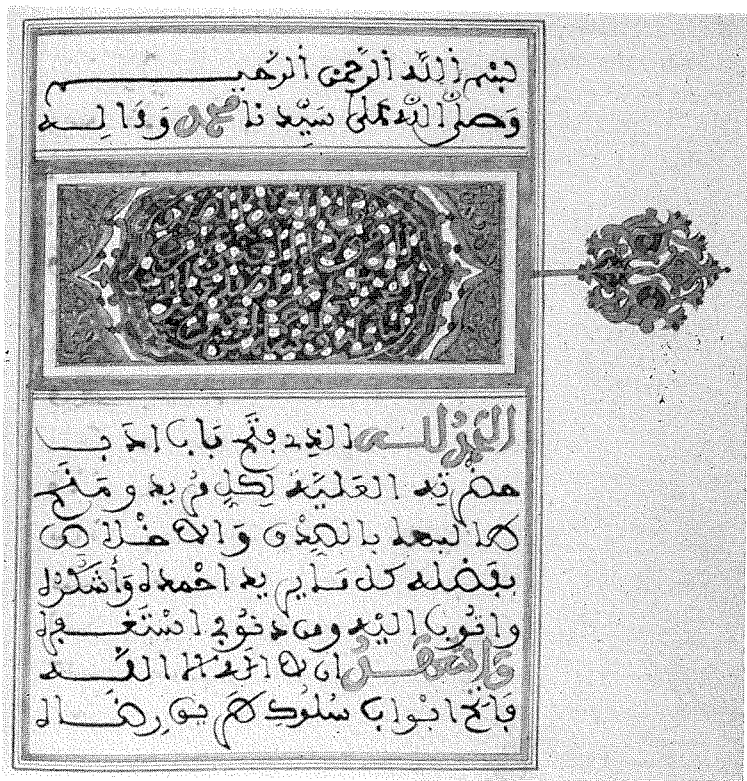
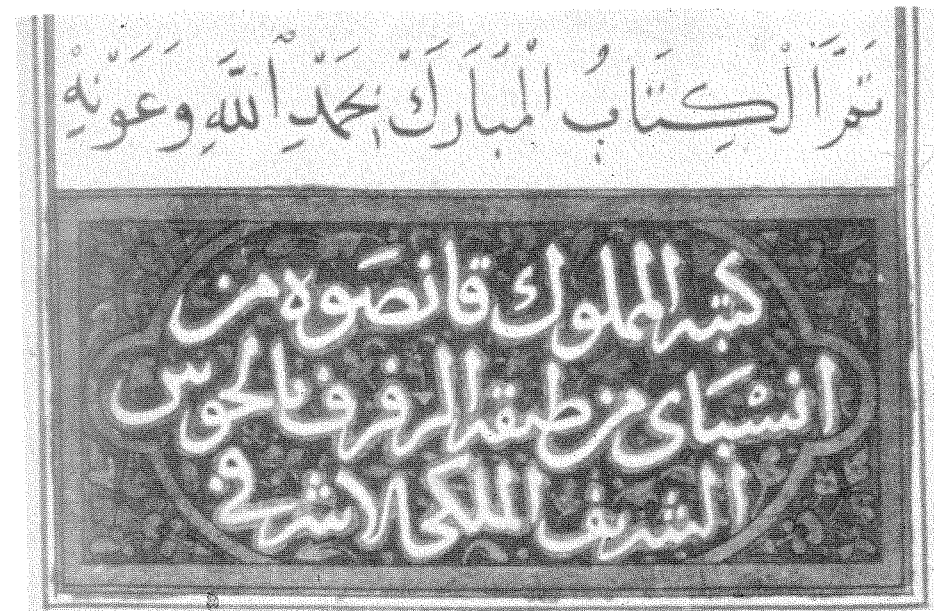


Fig. 2. Title page of a 13th h/19th century Maghribī treatise. MS. London, BL, Or. 12539, f. 2v^o.

10. Or. 12539, 2v^o-3r^o.

al-awā'il. The manuscript opens with a grand illumination announcing that the copy was made for the library of the great Sultan Qānṣūh¹¹. It closes with a fine illuminated colophon wherein the calligrapher, or at the very least the writer of the colophon, is named: he is none other than the Mamlūk Sultan Qānṣūh¹²!



93

Fig. 3. Illuminated colophon with the name of Mamlūk Sultan Qānṣūh. MS. London, BL, Or. 12012, f. 55.

During recent centuries a relatively small number of didactic religious texts have been embellished with illuminations. Some interesting examples are to be found in a 12th h/18th century manuscript, acquired recently by the British Library, of the *Muqaddime*, a compendium of Sunnī doctrine in Ottoman Turkish by Quṭbeddīn Iznīqī. Here is a table of names of those ten Companions of the Prophet who were assured of Paradise; the names are adorned with peony flowers; some attributes of the Prophet himself are written in the flower at the top left¹³. Next, the schema on this page represents the acts and articles of faith required to earn salvation¹⁴. Here we see the double Banner of the Prophet (*Livā'i Ḥamd*) over the Celestial Pool of Kawthar; the names beneath are those of Prophets, and of members of the

11. Or. 12012, 1r^o.
12. Or. 12012, 55r^o.

13. Or. 14836, 2v^o.
14. Or. 14836, 3v^o.

Family and other Companions of the Last Prophet¹⁵. There are more illustrative illuminations than we have time to consider. My last example is a tabular representation designed to show Sunnī Muslims that all the *madhhabs* or schools of jurisprudence, including those which are no longer followed as such, are linked with the core of the *Sharī'a*¹⁶.

This is the text opening from another unmistakably Ottoman manuscript. The roundel contains the names of Allah, the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Caliphs Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī¹⁷. According to the text, contemplation of this figure bestows protection from evil influences. As regards the form of this illumination one is reminded, not for the first time perhaps, of certain architectural elements.

94

To return for a few moments to the Sacred Law of Islam, this colourful page is from a treatise on *Tahāra*, or ritual purity. The manuscript is dated 1233 h/1817-1818 and was produced in Aceh in Indonesia. This particular panel seems to be a table of sources¹⁸. And here are the explicit and colophon from the same manuscript. Especially in regions where gold and silver are not customarily applied to the arts of the book, it seems to me that one is justified in classifying this kind of application of colour as illumination.

The same applies to the copy of the *Rātīb* or special litany of the Mahdi of Sudan shown in this slide¹⁹. Ornamentation of at least the title page is quite often found in collections of invocations and prayers, such as copies of al-Jazūlī's *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* from the lands of the Sahara.

Illumination of state letters and documents

At this point one may move on to consider the second of our four categories: illumination as applied to state letters and documents. Decoration with precious metals –or failing that with colours– has long been favoured by rulers (as well as their functionaries) as an outward mark of prestige and power. Illumination as applied to statements of patronage and suchlike has already been mentioned.

When searching for slides of illumination from this category in the British Library I found that relatively few exist, even though Oriental and India Office Collections span the usual dichotomy between archives and manuscript collections. We have many illuminated letters from the

Subcontinent, but few slides. This implies that little research has been done on this material and few examples have been published. Because Southeast Asian illumination still remains little known outside the region, it seemed justifiable for present purposes to select examples from Malay state letters.

This is the illuminated heading from a state letter sent in 1225 h/1811 by Sultan Mahmud Syah, ruler of Johor in what is now Malaysia, to Sir Stamford Raffles. Like many royal missives from that region it is headed with a motto: in this case *Yā Nūr al-shams wa 'l-Qamar*, "O Light of the Sun and Moon"²⁰. The choice of motto and its position on the page were determined by rigid conventions of protocol: a term which itself originally pertains to manuscripts. The next item is a letter of farewell to Raffles, dated 1231 h/1816; the sender was the ruler of the principality of Sumenep on the island of Madura²¹. As you can see, European influence had made itself very apparent in the region by this time. This Muslim Sultan's illuminated heading boasts two elaborate scrolls resembling "horns of plenty". What is more, the scrolls and the invocatory inscription *Yā Qādī al-Ḥājāt* are surmounted by a western-style crown at the top of which stands a sizeable and conspicuous cross!

95

Although produced by Muslims, this epistle was written in the name of the Dutch Governor General de Klerk in Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1782²². Representatives of European powers customarily followed local practice in sending letters both in the Malay/Indonesian language and in the decorative style of the region. This was a matter of diplomatic expediency, not a sign of benevolence. In complying with this custom, the Dutch Governor General used especial gilded paper as did the rulers with whom he corresponded. This letter is written on paper made from jute and has illumination resembling that commonly found in India, which suggests that the paper was imported from there ready illuminated.

Illumination is also, of course, commonly found throughout the centuries in decrees and other administrative documents issued in the name of royalty or other holders of power. Its function in heightening the instruments and emblems of power is readily apparent and calls for little comment. Among the more familiar forms is the Ottoman imperial *firman* surmounted by the *tuğra*, a monogram composed by stylizing the name of the reigning Sultan, which itself was sometimes illuminated.

15. Or. 14836, 8r°.

16. Or. 14836, 9r°.

17. Or. 13977, 1v°.

18. Malay and Arabic manuscript from Dayah Tanoh Abee, Aceh; folio number unknown.

19. Or. 11995, 1v°-2r°.

20. MS. Eur. F. 148/4, f. 105. On the art of the Malay letter see Annabel T. Gallop, *The legacy of the Malay letter = Warisan warkah Melayu*, London, 1994.

21. Letter to Raffles: BL. MS. Add. 45273, f. 28v°.

22. British Library MS. Eur. D. 742/1, f. 58.

Firmans and *berats* were often written in gilt lettering or adorned with flecks of gold or silver. The example I am going to show you is a later 13th h/19th century *firman*²³ (Fig. 4). It is likely that much of the illumination was added later by a professional illuminator who was paid by the owner of

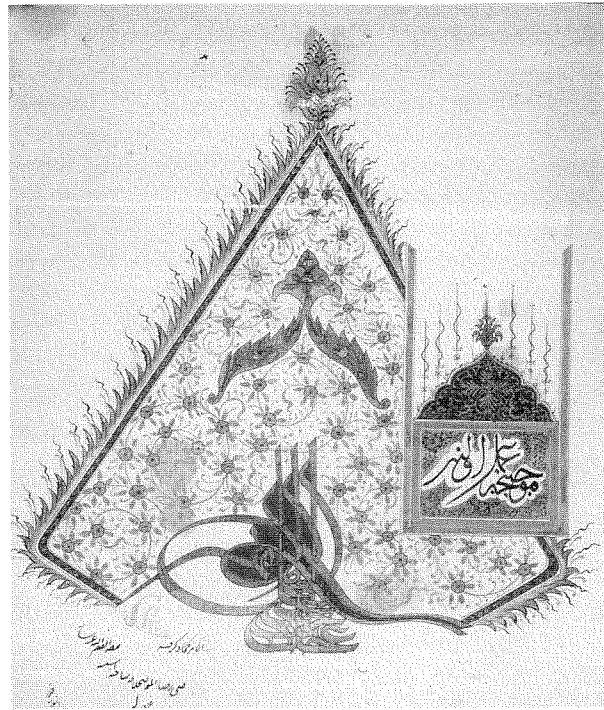


Fig. 4. 13th h/19th century firman. MS. London, BL, Or. 14877 (c).

the document to add lustre –and hence perhaps make the *firman* look more imposing and authoritative. Even the magic words *Mucebince amel oluna*, meaning “to be acted upon as required”, are probably not original.

There are certain other types of documents in which illumination is often to be found. These include marriage certificates; deeds of *waqf* in book form; certificates of performance of *Hajj*, and presentation letters or certificates. A fine example of the latter was recently acquired for the Bibliothèque nationale de France at a London auction. It was given to Pierre Loti in 1336 h/1917 when he was granted the freedom of the city of Istanbul²⁴.

23. Or. 14877 C (detail).

24. Sotheby's, Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures, London, 27 April 1994: Lot 90.

Before turning our attention to the functions of illumination in literary manuscripts we may note again that illumination as a token of prestige is also found in the chronicles of rulers and dynasties, and in works such as Seyyid Loqmān's *Qiyāfet ül-insāniye*, a study of the physiognomy and character of the Ottoman Sultans. This is the lavish text opening of a copy of that work²⁵. I would like to draw your attention to one of the features on this page: the interlinear gilding which surrounds each line of text in a kind of cloudband. On another folio in the same manuscript is this excellent portrait of Sultan Murād I: the background of illumination in silver heightens the impression of pomp, although unfortunately silver rarely if ever reproduces well on slides²⁶.

There are numerous other aspects of the use of gold and silver in miniature painting which cannot be examined here. Otherwise there would be a danger of encroaching too far upon the related but distinct field of pictorial art.

Literary texts

Literary manuscripts, too, of course lend themselves to the art of the illuminator. Every piece of creative literature is like a world. Many literary manuscripts are adorned with pieces of illumination which seem to resemble ceremonial gateways into the world of the creative imagination, or magic carpets on which to fly away from the humdrum concerns of everyday life. When I see the façade of a railway terminal like the Gare du Nord I sometimes think of a grand *'unwān*, whereas that of the Gare de l'Est, for example, represents a small one.

At the beginning of a fine Persian or Turkish literary manuscript one sometimes comes across an illuminated *shamsa* or roundel giving the name and titles of the patron. Or if the codex includes several separate works or parts there may be a more elaborate form including the names of the works –or sections– which make up a *Kulliyāt* or *Dīwān* comprising the whole manuscript²⁷ (Fig. 5).

The opening of the literary text itself is often preceded by a double-page opening of pure decoration, sometimes by a miniature painting depicting Sulaymān and Bilqīs and their unrivalled range of courtiers human, *jinn*, and animal: a paradigm of sovereign power. Otherwise, there may be a painting which depicts a patron being presented with a book. After that, or instead, there is likely to be an ornate headpiece containing the title of the work or perhaps an inscription such as *Allāh wa 'l-Rasūl*.

25. Add. 7880, 1v^o.

26. Add. 7880, 32v^o.

27. Nevā'i, *Garā'ib us-ṣiḡar*: Or. 13061, f. 1r^o.

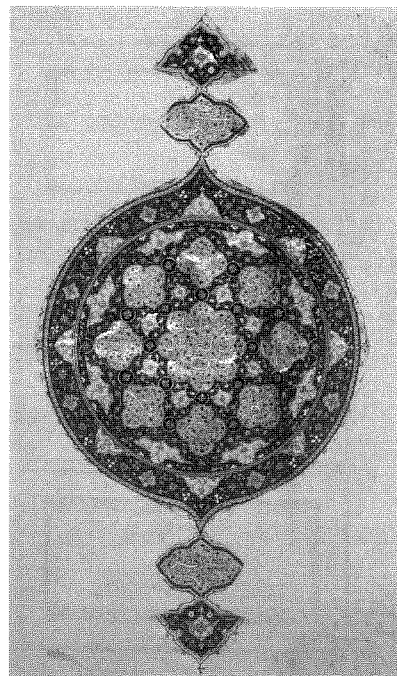


Fig. 5. *Nevā'ī, Ġarā'ib uş-şığar*. MS. London, BL, Or. 13061, f. 1r°.

This is one page of a double frontispiece from a 9th h/15th century copy of the *Iskendernāme*, perhaps the best of the Turkish versions of the Alexander Romance, by Aḥmedī²⁸. While examining this work closely I was surprised to discover that the name of the illuminator responsible has been inscribed in very small writing in a tiny roundel at the centre of the right hand page (Fig. 6). It reads '*amel-i 'Alī*'. For an illumination to bear an attribution is very rare. It would have been interesting to learn the rest of the artist's name, and whether he wrote it himself. I could not resist the temptation to show you this quite superb page which contains the opening of the text. Note, amongst other features, the inventive variety of arabesque ornamentation; the Kufic inscription in red at the top and bottom; and the interlinear gilding and hatching²⁹.

The absence of any illuminated heading, or the presence of one that is of substandard quality, has been known to prompt the owner or vendor of a manuscript to enhance it by adding to it an illuminated panel taken from a different volume. An example we have at the British Library is a *Dīvān* of Mīrzā Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, the renowned Tīmūrid prince and patron who also wrote verse in Chaghatay Turkish under the rather transparent *takhalluṣ*

28. Or. 13837, 2v°.

29. Or. 13837, 3r°.

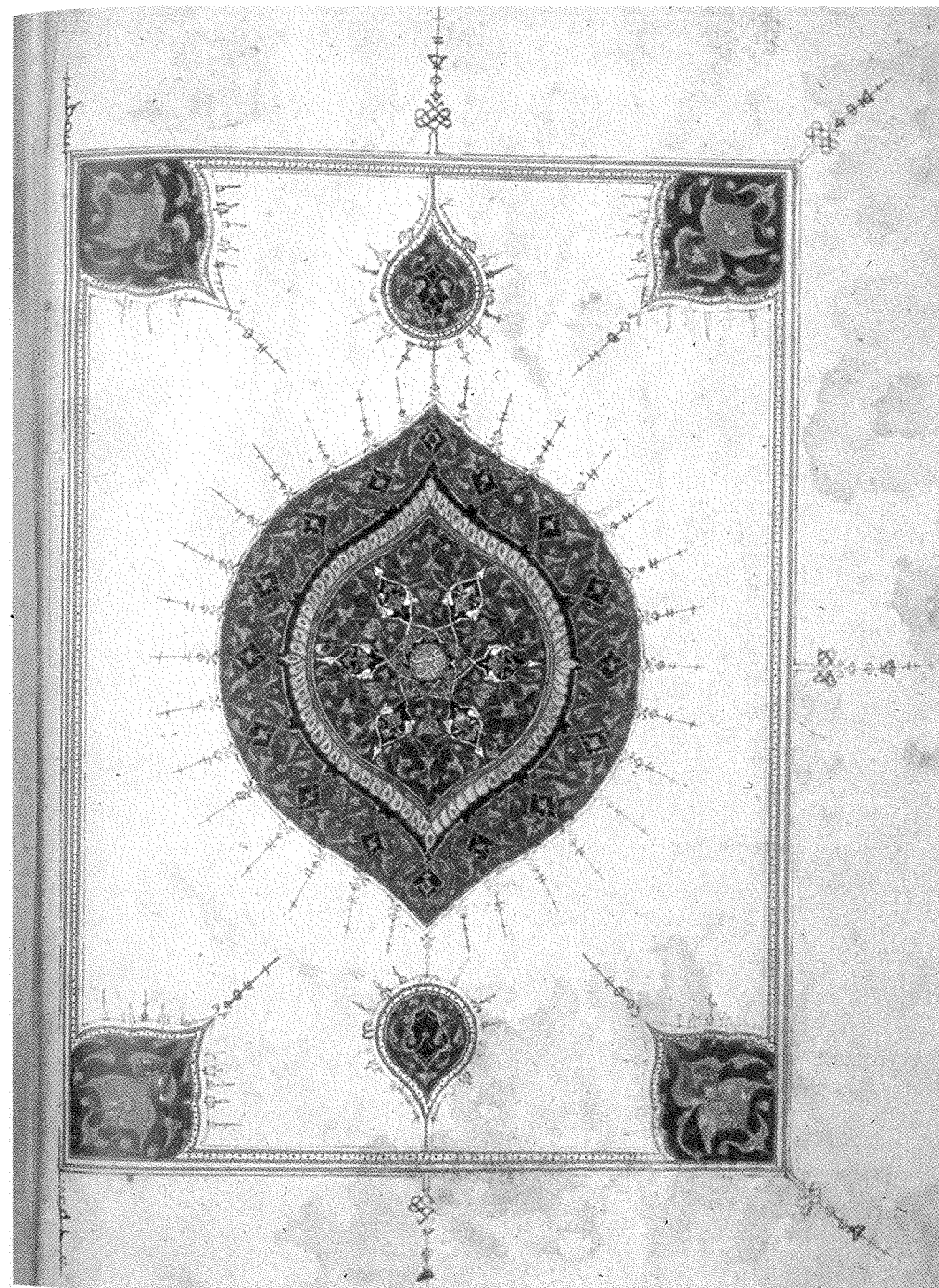


Fig. 6. Page of the double frontispiece of a 9th h/15th century copy of the *Iskendernāme*. MS. London, BL, Or. 13837, f. 2v°.

of Ḥuseynī. At some point it was felt that the manuscript required more ornamentation, and so an illumination was transplanted: not perhaps an improvement in this instance³⁰!

Even in regions where no substantial tradition existed, efforts were made on occasion to embellish at least the opening of a manuscript. Here is another poetical *Dīvān*, this time in Pashto. Somebody has used yellow paint to enliven the first page³¹.

Also common are inscriptions in which the work and/or the author are praised, in panels at the top and bottom of one or both of two facing pages: in this case, both. Here the work being lauded is Naṣr Allāh Munshī's Persian rendering of the animal fables of *Kalīla ve Dimna*, in an early 7th h/13th century copy. The inscription in *nashḥī* on both upper and lower panel of an illuminated frontispiece³² is continued in the lower panel of the first page of text³³. It is in Arabic and appears to consist of praise for *Kalīla va Dimna* as enjoyable reading for the wise.

Figurative headpieces for title pages, being as a rule executed in a very specific style, can impart an immediate sense of the place where the manuscript was produced. Take this copy of a love story in verse: it could only have been produced in India –and because of the particular style and the structure which is almost certainly an *imāmbāra*, one can be almost certain that it is from Lucknow³⁴.

The next literary manuscript to be discussed was produced for a ruler. It contains the *Dīvān* of a man named Qaḍī Burhāneddīn, who seized power over part of Asia Minor during the late 8th h/14th century. Besides being a judge and a highly ambitious politician, Burhāneddīn produced good poetry. In this contemporary copy of the *Dīvān*, each poem is preceded by a heading in gold praying for a long reign for the ruler-poet: "*Khallada 'Llāhu sulṭānahu* or *milkatahu*"³⁵. In many poetical manuscripts of high quality, colours or gold are used to pick out the *takhalluṣ* of the poet in the last line, or the name of the person praised in the poem.

By contrast, the artist of the Ilkhānid period who illuminated this early collection of Persian poetical *Dīvāns* provided less lavish headings³⁶. But he allowed space for a visual context to be put forward in the form of miniature paintings showing poets examining and discussing each other's work, perhaps in the presence of a patron: a powerful reminder of the context in which much mediaeval Islamic literary composition took place. The text in the illuminated heading first names the author as *Malik al-shu'arā* Nizām al-Dīn Maḥmūd Qamar of Isfahan. It goes on to state that Nizām al-Dīn came

30. Or. 3493, f. 2v°.

31. Or. 394, 6v° (top).

32. Or. 13506, 4r°.

33. Or. 13506, 4v°.

34. Or. 14126, 2v°.

35. Or. 4126, 1v°-2r°.

36. IO Islamic 132, 76r° (top).

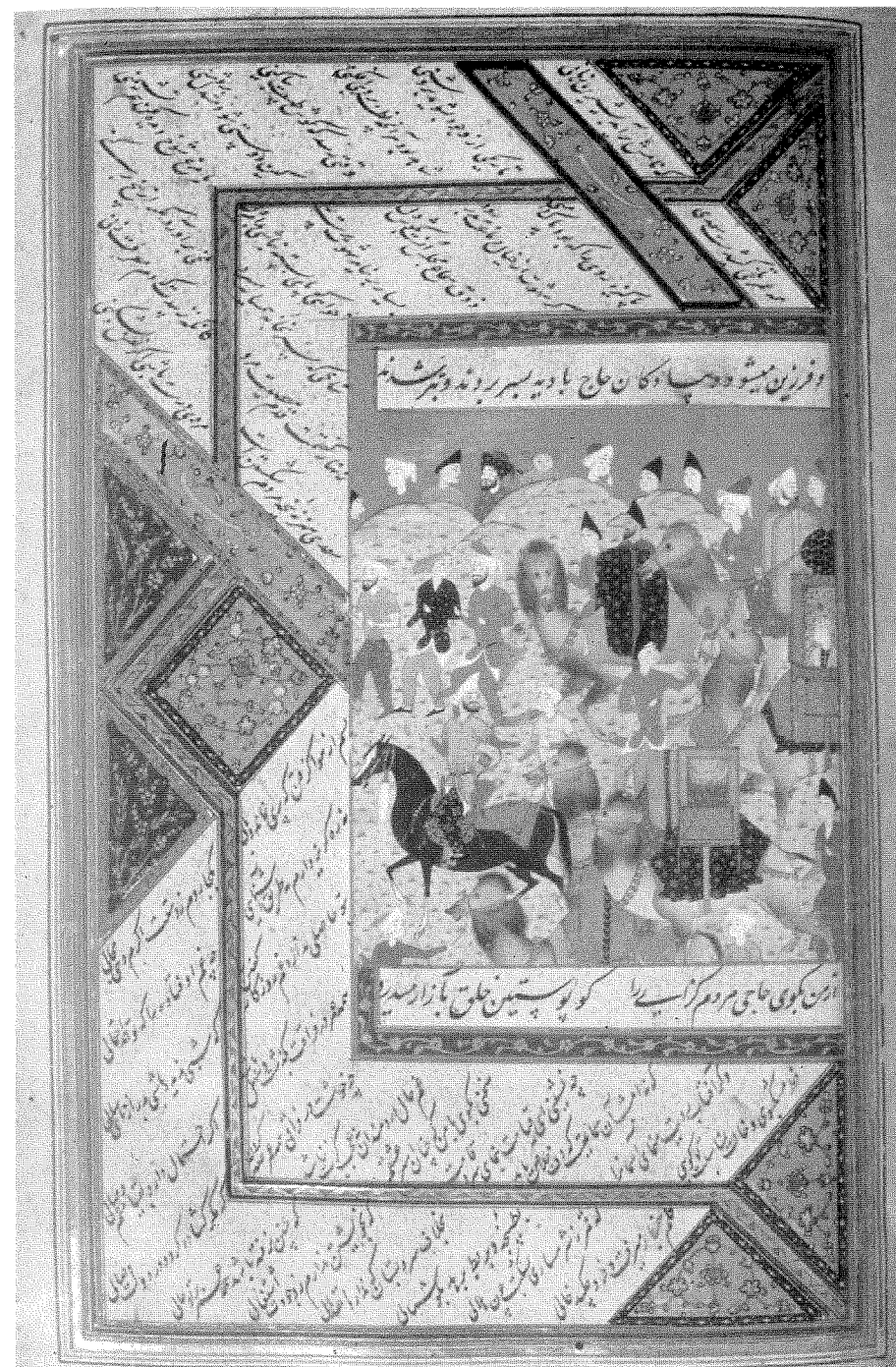


Fig. 7. Page of a copy of Sa'dī's collected works, dated 974 h/1566. MS. London, BL, Add. 24944, f. 245r°.

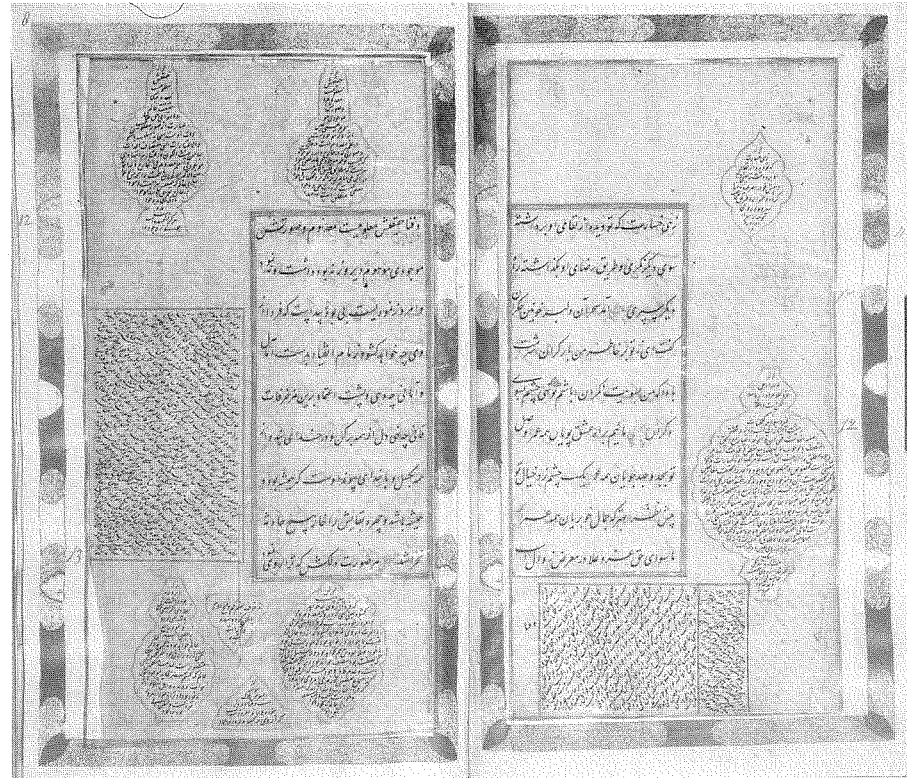


Fig. 8. Double page from a 10th h/16th century copy of Jāmi'ī's Lavā'ih. MS. London, BL, Add. 16820, f. 7v^o-8r^o.

from Isfahan; that the existence of several copies of Nizām al-Dīn's poems are known to the writer; and lastly that nothing further could be found out about him.

Another important facet of illumination is the *jadwal* or text and column frame. This feature plays an especially important part in the successful *mise en page* of texts such as *Kullīyyāt* in which one work occupies the central part of the page while a second and perhaps a third, written diagonally, occupy panels to one side of the page. Arranging the works of a prolific author must have called for considerable skill. Often triangular panels of illumination are introduced, to highlight the separation of the respective texts (or text and commentary) and impart balance to the page layout. The interweaving of verses with decorative panels gives rise to a complex but effective page layout. This particular example is from a large-format Safavid copy of Sa'ādī's collected works, produced at Shiraz and dated 974 h/1566³⁷ (Fig. 7).

37. Add. 24944, 245r^o.



Fig. 9. Page of an Ottoman poetical anthology. MS. London, BL, Or. 14011, f. 22v^o.

On every page of a 10th h/16th century manuscript of Jāmī's Sufi classic *Lavā'ih*, an illuminated frame of light ornament surrounds not part but all of the text (Fig. 8). Moreover, it is enhanced by the text frame and by illumination which highlights the presence of marginalia in relation to the points mentioned in the commentary³⁸.

We have already seen how roundels are used as text markers, especially in copies of the Holy Qur'ān. One of the Ottoman poetical anthologies in the British Library is of interest because of the use of silver ornamentation: the roundels in the margin are labels bearing the names of poetical figures of speech such as *hüsn-i ta'bir*³⁹. The labels indicate the point in the text where each figure of speech occurs (Fig. 9). Note as well the stencilled ornament in colour.

104

The next slide is also concerned with technical aspects of literature. Here is a folio from a manuscript from Sultanate India, dating probably from the later 9th h/15th century. In it, the various *dā'iras*, or circles indicating the relation between different poetical metres and their variants, are presented in a highly decorative and colourful form⁴⁰. In Sultanate manuscript decoration the use of gold is comparatively uncommon.

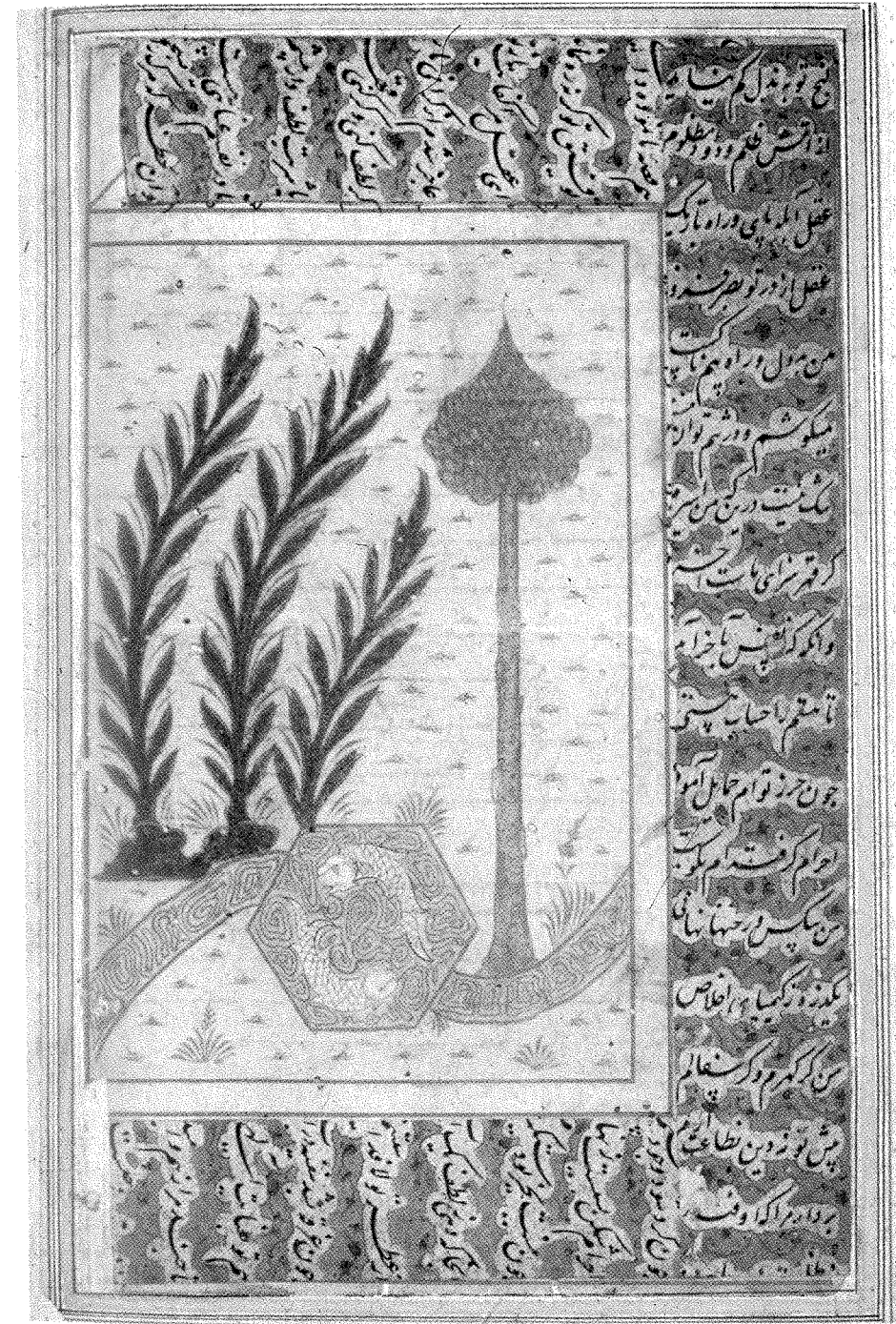
Before we conclude this discussion of the illumination of literary manuscripts, a few more decorative elements remain to be considered, however briefly, to give a broader picture of the kinds of applications found for illumination.

Between the lines of text frames or columns one often finds decoration, as for example in this manuscript which also contains illustrated margins on tinted paper⁴¹.

Again, there are charming little manuscripts in the oblong *safina* form, whose illuminations often feature some figurative elements⁴². The finest of these date mainly from the Tīmūrid period in Iran.

And as Richard Ettinghausen pointed out, figurative margin decoration helps relate miniature paintings to the accompanying text. This beautiful manuscript containing the poems of 'Ubeydullāh Ḥān, nephew of the Uzbek ruler Šeybānī Ḥān, in Chaghatay Turkish was produced at Herat *circa* 1510, the calligrapher being the famous Sulṭān-'Alī Mashhadī⁴³.

Copied during the later 9th h/15th century, this manuscript of the poems of Ḥāfiẓ had illuminated borders added to it at the imperial

38. Add. 16820, f. 7v^o-8r^o.39. Or. 14011, 22v^o.40. Or. 4110, 152v^o-153r^o.41. Or. 3491, 14v^o-15r^o.42. Or. 12976, 2v^o.43. Add. 7907, 2v^o.

105

Fig. 10. Illumination from a poetical anthology produced at Yazd first half of the 9th h/15th century. Ms. London, BL, Or. 8193, f. 178v^o.

kitābkhāna of the Moghuls, at that time located in Agra, *circa* 1605⁴⁴. Many of the illuminated cartouches in the margins contain vignettes depicting aspects of daily life in and around the Moghul court. Wholly irrelevant to the message of Ḥāfīz, these works are nevertheless of very considerable artistic and documentary interest. I must not forget to mention that the calligraphy in this manuscript too, as in the previous one, is by Sulṭān-ʿAlī Mashhadī.

Rather more abstract, but altogether more evocative of the world of poetic imagination, are the numerous landscape-like elements of decoration in a very rare and extraordinary poetical anthology produced at Yazd, southern Persia, in the first half of the 9th h/15th century. Here are two illuminations from the manuscript⁴⁵ (Fig. 10).

Finally, to avoid a visual anticlimax, manuscripts adorned with sumptuous frontispieces and title pages are sometimes completed with lavish colophons. This is a very unusual illuminated panel colophon, from a copy of the poems of Khāqānī made in the 6th h/12th century⁴⁶ (Fig. 11). Here is a second ornate colophon, from a 16th century manuscript whose binding we saw at the beginning of this lecture⁴⁷.

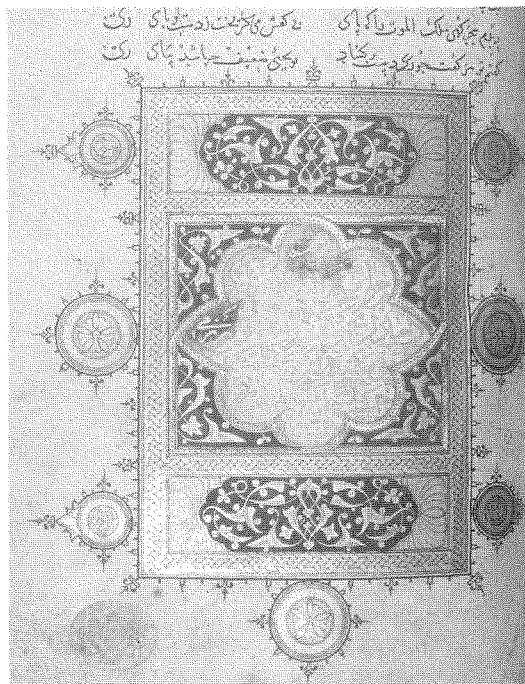


Fig. 11. Illuminated panel colophon 6th h/12th century. MS. London, BL, Or. 7942, f. 223r^o.

44. Or. 14139, 5r^o. 45. Or. 8193, 24v^o-25r^o; 178v^o.

46. Or. 7942, 223r^o.

47. Or. 13061, 224r^o.

Scientific and technical illuminated works

And so to the last of the four categories of illumination: the application of colour, often but not invariably accompanied by gold or silver, to manuscript texts of a technical and/or scientific character. Mohammed Sijelmassi's study, based on the holdings of the Royal Library in Rabat, has shown in relation to Maghribī manuscripts numerous interesting ways in which illumination –especially the opening of the text– can be made to reflect the subject and scope of the work in question. Here I am simply going to show, very rapidly, some of the ways in which illumination enhances, and in some instances clarifies, works of a technical or scientific nature.

Where better to begin than with a manuscript treatise on the art of manuscript illumination? This extremely rare example was produced (*circa* 1860) at Yogyakarta for, and perhaps by, a Javanese prince⁴⁸. It includes two types of highly ornamental frontispiece for each of the classical Javanese verse genres. Here are a number of motifs approved as suitable for the headings of cantos or sections of narrative poems⁴⁹.

The background of the roundel seen here is silver which, as in the portrait of Sultan Murad seen earlier, has oxidized. This figure, from the same Ottoman manuscript as the roundels marking poetical devices, is designed to show connections between the virtues and the practice of *futuwwa* (Turkish *fütüvvet*) or spiritual chivalry⁵⁰.

Correct pronunciation when reciting the Holy Qur'ān necessitates, for Arabs and especially for non-Arabs, a clear understanding as to where in the mouth and throat each of the Arabic letters should be enunciated. The *makhārij al-hurūf*, as these points are called, are indicated in two diagrams in the manuscript of the *Muqaddime* of Quṭbeddīn which we looked at earlier. Here is one of them⁵¹ (Fig. 12).

Better known is the use of colour to enhance the technical drawings showing the moving parts of mechanical devices, the subject of a number of important works especially in Arabic. This example, from a manuscript probably produced in Egypt, represents a mechanism for drawing water from wells⁵².

Technical illustrations also played an invaluable part in manuscripts on the arts of war. Surely amongst the best examples are the elaborate illuminated designs used to explain tactical manoeuvres contained in a manuscript (C-686) dated 878 or 879 h/1474 in the Library of the Institute of Oriental Studies at St. Petersburg, al-Khuttalī's *Kitāb al-Makhzūn fī jāmi'*

48. *Buk renggan wadana utawi pada sekar*, Royal Asiatic Society MS. Javanese 46.

50. Or. 14011, 20r^o.

51. Or. 14036, 11r^o.

49. Royal Asiatic Society MS. Javanese 46, p. 17.

52. Add. 14055, 157v^o.

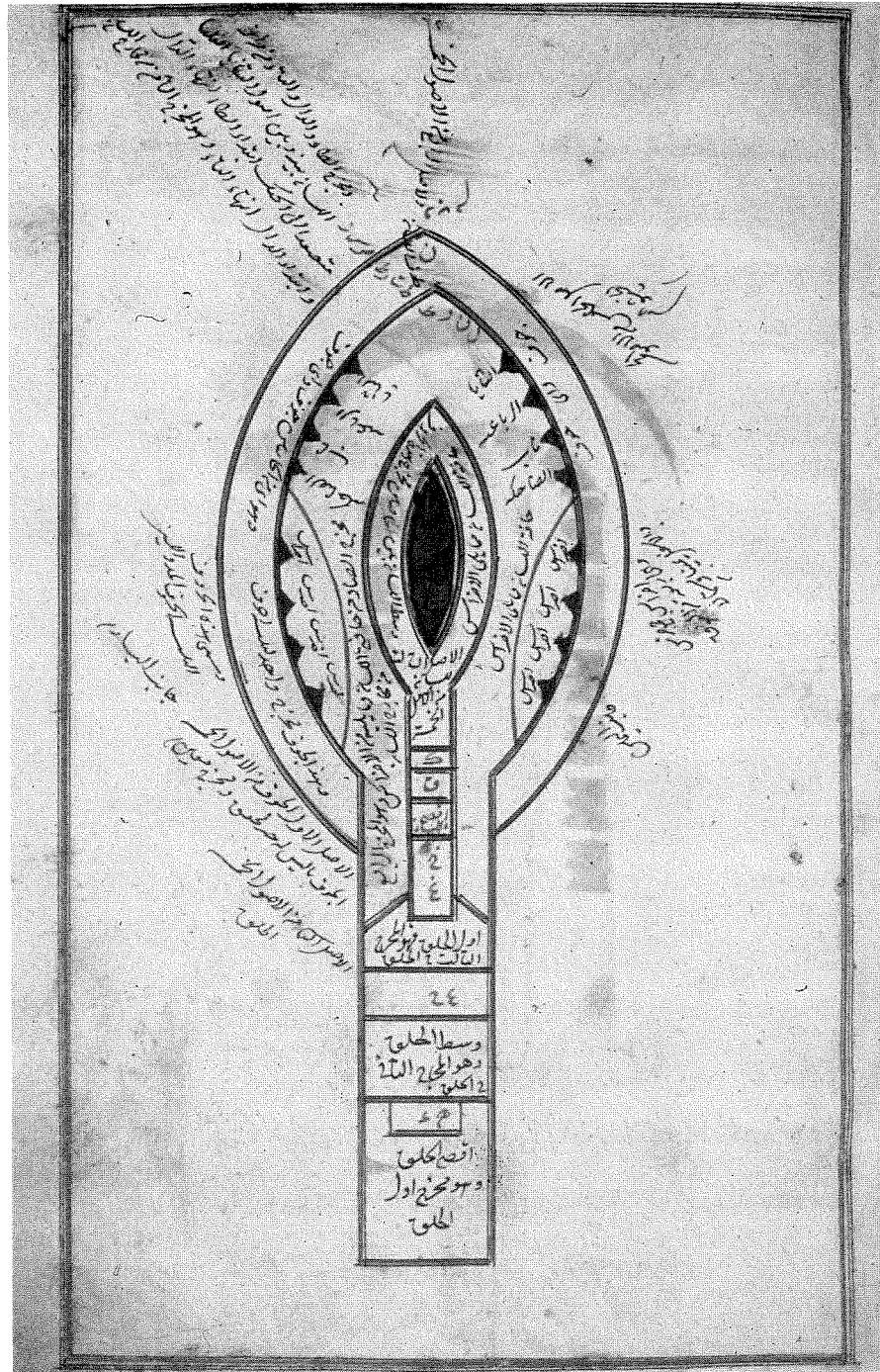


Fig. 12. Diagram showing the place of the mouth and throat where each of the Arabic letters should be enunciated. MS. London, BL, Or. 14836, f. 11r^o.

*al-funūn*⁵³. Each soldier or group of soldiers is represented by a pennant, and the formations consist of swirling curves and circles and of serried lines and rectangles. Less impressive but rather similar in kind are the figures in a 16th century Arabic manuscript on military tactics in the British Library's collection⁵⁴. The next picture is one of the numerous technical illustrations found in an Indian textbook of archery dating from the early 12th h/18th century⁵⁵. The bow itself bears illuminated ornamentation and the different parts of the bow are labelled with captions enclosed in small illuminated cartouches.

At the risk of causing readers to suffer mental jetlag from this cosmopolitan and eclectic presentation, we here return momentarily to Southeast Asia. This colourful chart in a Buginese manuscript from Indonesia is designed to explain with comforting simplicity which days and times of the week are believed to be auspicious and lucky, and which are not. This might perhaps be described as a quasi-Islamic manuscript⁵⁶.

The famous Miscellany of the Tīmūrid prince Iskandar Sultan, completed in Southern Iran in 814 h/1411, is adorned with a wealth of fine illumination including these two tables⁵⁷. But what did the workshop responsible for its production do when a mistake was made, as appears to have happened here? If you were wealthy enough, you simply covered the mistake up with gold and started again⁵⁸. Manuscripts of astronomical works such as 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Šūfī's *Šurwar al-kawākib* quite commonly feature small gold roundels highlighting the position of stars in their constellations⁵⁹.

Moving on from the 9th h/15th century to the first half of the 13th h/19th, the British Library has a manuscript of Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqī Erzurūmī's *Ma'rifetnāme*, a kind of encyclopaedia of natural science and traditional Muslim doctrine. First, here is a table of contents in which the panels are highlighted with illumination⁶⁰. Elsewhere in the same manuscript, colour is used in several different ways. First, as here, in charts and diagrams illustrating the physical causes of eclipses and other phenomena⁶¹. A map in the same manuscript shows the Eastern and Western hemispheres; and on the opposite page is a gazetteer⁶². Now, in the gazetteer two columns, respectively indicating place name and location on the globe, are repeated three times each across the width of the page. For ease of use they have been "colour-coded" to make it easier for the reader to distinguish between the two sets of data.

53. See the catalogue *De Bagdad à Ispahan*, Lugano: ARCH Foundation, 1994, p. 170-177.

54. Add. 20736; illuminations on folios 9v^o-23v^o.

55. Or. 14143, 7v^o.

56. Add. 12372, 68v^o-69r^o.

57. Add. 27261, 504v^o; 533v^o.

58. Add. 27261, 365r^o.

59. Add. 7488, 81r^o.

60. Or. 12964, 1v^o.

61. Or. 12964, 35v^o-36r^o.

62. Or. 12964, 89v^o-90r^o.

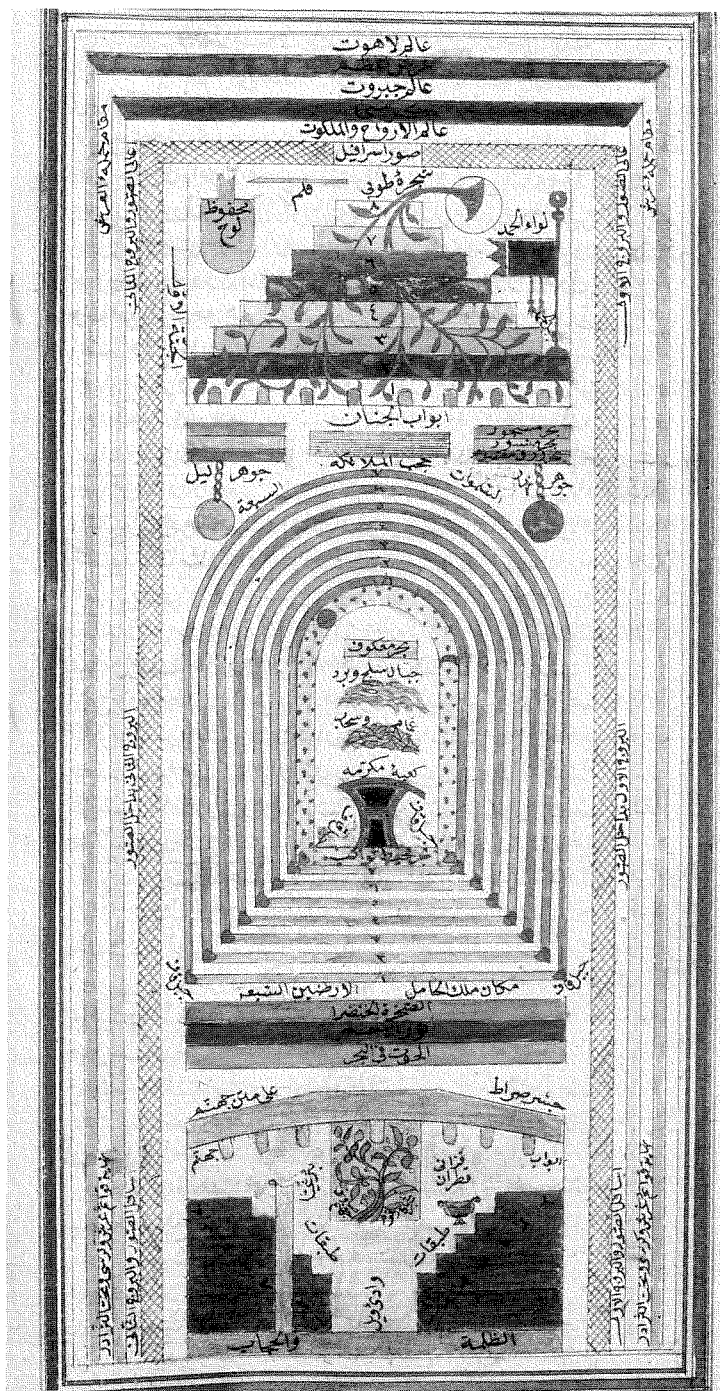


Fig. 13. Representation of the cosmos from a copy of the *Ma'rifetnāme*. MS. London, BL, Or. 12964, f. 23v^o.

Before we finish with this interesting *Ma'rifetnāme* manuscript I must show you these two tables: they are schematic representations of the cosmos according to traditional doctrines⁶³ (Fig. 13).

The map illustrated here is one of a number found in al-Iṣṭakhrī's geographical work in Arabic entitled *Masālik al-mamālik*. Important features of the landscape are highlighted in gold⁶⁴. The Nile Delta is at the bottom of the map, and the Pyramids, also in gold, are very prominent.

Finally, we come to the Muslim heartland. Schematic plans of *al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*, the two principal Sanctuaries of Islam, occur in a great many manuscripts of *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, the book of prayers on the Holy Prophet compiled by Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jazūlī of Marrakesh. Fine examples, however, are also to be found as illustrations to copies of *Tuhfat al-Haramayn*, a poetical work in Persian describing the Holy Places by Muḥyī al-Dīn Lārī. The British Library has a good example which dates from the 11th h/17th century. One schema shows the layout of the Mosque and Tomb of the Prophet, in al-Madīna. The final illuminated image to be shown in this presentation is an illuminated representation of *al-Masjid al-Harām*, the Sanctuary in Makka, with the Ka'ba, the House of God, at its centre, and other holy places⁶⁵.

Conclusions

In the course of this rapid tour, we have glanced at a variety of applications of the art of the illuminator. Some types are well known and need little clarification. Others merit further study and here my observations are tentative. Applications of *tadhhīb* appear to have been more diverse in recent centuries, especially since the 12th h/18th century and in particular regions such as Ottoman Turkey, India, Maritime Southeast Asia, and the Maghrib.

As regards the standard ornamental forms and uses, illumination arguably tends to conform to trends in the development of the other decorative arts as practised by Muslims. Where the more specialized and technical applications are concerned it seems likely that the influence of European books, charts, maps and so forth helped to stimulate some of the developments which have been noted.

63. Or. 12964, 23v^o-24r^o.

64. Or. 5305, 18r^o.

65. Or. 343, 17v^o.

At the same time it is important to bear in mind that Islamic calligraphy and illumination are living art forms, for they continue to be practised today. At the Turkish National Library (Milli Kütüphane) in Ankara, for example, members of the public attend practical courses in the art of illumination. Incidentally, two courses on European manuscript illumination along traditional lines were being run during the summer of 1994 at an abbey not far from Poitiers. It is to be hoped that the revival of fine and rigorous calligraphy and illumination in the Islamic tradition likewise will in time result in the revival of the classic illuminated book by Muslims. One sees evidence from various countries, such as a video from Iran, which suggests that this may already be happening.

112

Just as calligraphy, which basically contains the textual meaning, is also decorative, so appropriate illumination, though basically decorative, heightens meaning to the extent that it responds sensitively to the textual content and cultural context of a given manuscript or document.