Both carpets show the same design. The field contains a central sunburst surrounded by sixteen pendants, with two mosque lamps hanging from the pendants on the longitudinal axis. Each corner of the field repeats a quarter of the central composition. Worked in ten colors—black, three blues, green, three reds, white, and yellow—these elements seem to float above a deep blue ground strewn with arabesques. A cartouche at one end of each carpet contains a poetic couplet, followed by the signature ‘amal-i bandah-i dargah Maqṣūd Kashānī, sunah-i 946, that is, "work of a servant of the court, Maqṣūd of Kashān, in the year 946," which corresponds to 1539–40. Both carpets are knotted in wool on silk warps and wefts; three shoots of two-stranded silk follow each row of asymmetrical knots. The two carpets are said to differ, however, in knot count, texture, and pile length. The London carpet has fewer knots per square centimeter (46 vs. 62, or 324 vs. 400 knots per square inch) and its pile is reportedly harsher, shorter, stronger and more densely packed than that of the Los Angeles one, which is described as silkier, softer and longer.

Since they were brought to the West, these huge medallion carpets have been the subject of a continuing stream of publications, many of which deal with their history and their common name, the Ardabil carpets. Both carpets were acquired in the late 19th century from the London firm of Vincent Robinson and Co. The London firm, in turn, had supposedly acquired them from the Manchester firm of Ziegler and Co., which reported that the carpets had come from the shrine at Ardabil in northwestern Iran. This was the shrine for the Sufi Shaykh Ṣafi al-Din (d. 735/1334), the eponymous founder of the Safavid dynasty, rulers of Iran from 907/1501 to 1105/1694. The attribution to Ardabil was generally accepted, and 19th-century travelers' reports lent weight to this attribution. Most noteworthy was the evidence left by two English travelers who visited Ardabil in 1843. In describing the shrine, William Richard Holmes mentioned the remnants of a once magnificent carpet bearing a date of manufacture of some 300 years earlier. It lay on the floor of the lofty antechamber to the principal tombs. Holmes' published account was corroborated by notes left by his traveling companion, Keith Edward Abbott, the British council in Tabriz. He specifically mentioned the date, writing that "in the apartment devoted to prayer there is a carpet bearing the date 946 of the Hejira woven in with the pattern—as it is now the 1259th year of that era the carpet must have been manufactured 313 lunar years ago." Despite the general acceptance of the name "Ardabil carpets," however, doubts about their provenance quickly arose. It was recognized that dealers often put forward an attribution to a famous place to enhance the pedigree of their wares and thus increase their sale value. Scholars added dissenting voices based on other evidence. A. H. Morton, for example, pointed out that the carpets were not recognizable in an inventory compiled by the superintendent (mutavalli) of the Ardabil shrine in 1172/1759. Martin Weaver, following a detailed survey of the shrine in 1969 and 1970, noted that the London carpet was larger than most of the rooms at the shrine, such as the main prayer hall known as the Dīr al-Haţfūs (8.9 by 5.8 meters) or the chini khanah (porcelain house; 9.7 meters square). These questions raised sufficient doubts that alternative provenances for the two carpets were suggested. One was the shrine of Imam Riza at Mashhad in eastern Iran. It too had been restored in the Safavid period, and several rooms there were large enough to accommodate the two carpets. In her review of the carpets' history, May Beattie concluded that the question of provenance was intractable: since valuable historical information had been distorted and lost in the tangled web of the carpet trade, further speculation was fruitless. Two further analyses of the carpets by scholars at the Victoria and Albert Museum in the 1990s, however, suggested that the carpets themselves might add further information to the argument. Jennifer Wearden analyzed the design and repairs to the London carpet. She identified the three steps in laying out the design. The designer first set out the central medallion, the corner medallions, and the two lamps. He then traced a swirling pattern of tightly

6 Beattie 1986, 368a.
7 Beattie 1995.
coiled leafy stems. These thin stems, executed in yellow green, bear a mixture of naturalistic and composite blossoms. On top of this, the designer placed a second pattern of swirling leafy stems. This second set of stems, which are thicker and less densely packed and executed in reddish brown, bears only palmette blossoms.

Weardens’s technical examination also showed that the designer had made subtle adjustments when weaving the design so that the upper half of the carpet (the end with the inscription) was slightly different from the lower half (the end without the inscription). The mosque lamp in the upper half, for example, is slightly longer than that in the lower half. To judge from photographs, the oval pendants in the top half are also larger. This alteration in scale seems to have been intentional, probably done to create an optical illusion so that the two lamps and pendants would appear the same size when viewed from the bottom end. Masons used the same technique when building minarets: the bands at the top are usually wider and in higher relief than those at the bottom, so that they appear the same size to the viewer standing on the ground.

Weardens also identified seven areas where the London carpet had been repaired, using pieces from the second carpet in Los Angeles. The most significant repair was to the lower border where some 13 centimeters (5 inches) of the field was missing. Based on the areas of repairs, she estimated that the carpet had originally measured approximately 10.67 meters (or some 35 feet long) and therefore that the width was one-half the original length.

Donald King then matched Weardens’s data on the design and repairs of the London carpet to the history of the shrine at Ardabil, arguing that the well-known attribution to Ardabil was correct. He noted that the two carpets, when laid side by side, would have formed a square some 10.67 meters on a side and would have fit perfectly within the Jannat Saray at Ardabil. To judge from the plan reproduced in Morton, this domed hall measures over 16 meters in diameter and can comfortably accommodate the two carpets.

King’s attribution of the large medallion carpets to the hall known as the Jannat Saray with the shrine at Ardabil is correct, and to the evidence of design and repairs to the carpets, we can add the evidence of the writing on them. The cartouche at the top end of each carpet contains the opening distich from a ghazal by the 8th/14th-century lyricist Háfiz:

King 1996.
King (1997) also summarized his argument in a letter to the editors of Hali, accompanied by a new plan of the shrine in which he corrected the scale of the carpets as shown in the Jannat Saray.

Translation

Other than thy threshold I have no refuge in the world
My head has no resting place other than this doorway.

The inscription in the cartouche was meant to be read and appreciated by someone seated on the carpets, for the text is written facing upwards at the top. The cartouche provides direction to a design that might otherwise seem symmetrical and confirms Weardens’s suggestion, made on the basis of the design, that the carpets were meant to be viewed from the lower side.

Furthermore, virtually every noun in the verse has, in addition to its meaning in the poem, an association with the shrine at Ardabil and specifically the Jannat Saray. The distich opens with the noun āstān, literally threshold and the common Persian word for shrine. The opening words of the couplet immediately situate the reader sitting on the carpet in his current context as visitor to a shrine. Such shrines often accorded sanctuary or asylum (bast). The first shrine to be so recognized was precisely the one in which the carpets lay: that of Shaykh Šafi at Ardabil. Timur granted this right as a boon to Khvājā ‘Alī, Shaykh Šafi’s grandson and chief Shaykh at the shrine, in 806/1404.

The second line of the distich on the carpets relates not just generally to the shrine at Ardabil but specifically to the Jannat Saray. To parallel the threshold (āstān) and refuge (panah) mentioned in the first line, Háfiz juxtaposed doorway (dar) and resting place (houwālah ‘goh). The doorway is further specified by the adjective “this” (in), so the person reading the poem while seated on the carpet in the Jannat Saray could immediately take the phrase “this doorway” as a direct reference to his actual situation in front of the main doorway leading from the Jannat Saray to the courtyard.

Similarly, the reader could interpret the resting place (houwālah ‘goh) as an allusion to the room’s function as the intended resting-place of Shāh Ṣanmūs (r. 930–84/1524–76), the Safavid Shāh who substantially enlarged the shrine in the 10th/16th century. Morton first identified the Jannat Saray as Ṣanmūs’s tomb in his lengthy and thorough analysis of the shrine based on the description in the Sarth al-milk, the list of properties owned by the shrine

Háfiz 1994, 155, no. 75.
King (1997) also summarized his argument in a letter to the editors of Hali, accompanied by a new plan of the shrine in which he corrected the scale of the carpets as shown in the Jannat Saray.

11 Hāfiz 1994, 155, no. 75.
12 The shrine for Σanmūs at Mashhad, for example, is properly known as the Āstān-i Qudr-i Razavi; see Mawlawi, Mustafawi and Sakhradžā 1987.
13 Calmand 1989. For the description of Timur’s granting this boon, see Appendix II in Minorsky’s translation of the Tabākrist al-mukāl (1943, 189–95).
drawn up on 1 Shawwāl 977/9 March 1570. The term used there for the Jannat Saray is maqārah, often used to describe part of a mosque, and indeed Morton found evidence that the Jannat Saray was later used as a mosque. On formal grounds, however, he rightly rejected the original designation of the Jannat Saray as a mosque, for the building is octagonal, and the center of the qibla wall is filled not by a prayer niche but by a doorway. Rather, he argued, the octagonal shape suggested that the large room must have been designed for some ritual function special to dervishes or as a tomb. Had it been a tomb, its huge size suggested that it was meant for Tāhmasb.18

Robert Hillenbrand's architectural analysis of the Jannat Saray underscores its function as a tomb.3 The single largest building on the site, it represented an unusually munificent effort on the part of the patron. Furthermore, it occupies a commanding position at one end of the great inner courtyard. The octagonal hall also fits within the tradition of domed octagonal mausolea in Iran, beginning with the monumental tomb of the Mongol Sultan Uljai, at Sultaniyya, in which a spacious two-story interior was opened with eight niches. At Ardabil the architect worked to open the exterior as well, with deep external bays that invite entry into the building, and this idea of opening up the octagon became a trend in Safavid funerary architecture.

Though a tomb, the Jannat Saray was undoubtedly used for prayer as well, as shown by the tomb opening the second line of Hāfiz's couplet on the carpets: sar-i marv (my head). Anyone praying on the carpets within the Jannat Saray would face the couplet and the doorway beyond, which opens to the southwest and the qibla. While bowing in prayer, his forehead would touch the carpet, a realization of the reference in the verse to the resting place of his head.

Along with layout and design, the inscription, then, confirms that the Ardabil carpets were made for use as prayer carpets. The designation of these carpets for a religious setting differentiates them from other contemporary carpets, such as a medallion carpet with hunting scenes in Milan. Although smaller than the Ardabil pair (it measures 5.7 by 3.65 meters) and different in style, the hunting carpet is equally splendid in technique, design and execution. The design shows a red medallion in the center filled with cranes and cloud bands. The medallion is surrounded by a lively hunting scene, in which figures wearing the distinctive Safavid turban fight lions, deer, and other animals set against a dark blue ground.

In addition to the figural motifs, the design makes the hunting carpet inappropriate for a religious setting. Like the Ardabil carpets, the hunting carpet is designed so that each corner is a repeat of the other three. In this case, however, the carpet is not meant to be seen from one end but from the center, for the design is laid out in radiating tiers of animals, figures, and other motifs. The centrifugal design of the hunting carpet is emphasized by the cartouche in the center with the name of the designer, Ghayyān al-Dīn Jami, and the date 949 [1542–3]. The location of the signature is not a sign of the artist's hubris, but of his humility, for the king would have sat enthroned in the center of the carpet, viewing the radiating tiers of decoration. The artist's signature would have been literally under the king's foot.

A similarly placed signature can be seen in a contemporary painting showing “The celebration of ‘Id” (Fig. 2). The painting has been detached from a celebrated manuscript containing the collected poems of Hāfiz, probably made for Tāhmasb and then given to his brother Sām Mirzā.21 The two couples inscribed in cartouches along the parapet of the palace describe the festivities of ‘Id-i Fīr, the celebration marking the breaking of the fast during Ramadān. After sighting the new moon, participants are encouraged to look upon a beautiful face to ensure good luck in the month to come. In the poem, Hāfiz encourages viewers to behold the new moon in the king's face, a clever conceit praising the ruler.

The painting depicts the celebration. Three courtiers on the roof top await the new moon. Other courtiers below gaze upon the enthroned monarch, intended to represent the reigning Safavid Shah Tāhmasb, whose name and titles were once inscribed above the door.22 The artist signed his work in a cartouche at the base of the throne, ‘amal-i Sulṭān Muḥammad ‘Īrāqī, “the work of Sultan Muhammad of ‘Iraq.” The artist was lauded by Dūst Muḥammad, the Safavid court librarian and chronicler, as the master of his age and the

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18 Although he was actually buried at Mashhad.
20 Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum, no. 154, see Arts of Islam 1976, 98, no. 58 and color plate no. 60.
21 Once in the Cartier collection, this magnificent manuscript has recently been cut up and the pages dispersed. This page in the Art and History Trust Collection is now on loan to the Sackler Gallery in Washington DC, see Soudavar 1992, 159–61, no. 59. Soudavar (1997, 54–60) and Soucek (1990, 58–69) give slightly different interpretations to the manuscript based on the various signatures, inscriptions and styles of painting.
22 The inscription over the doorway now reads: al-Hādī Abī al-Muṣaffār Sām Mirzā (the guide, the victorious Sām Mirzā), but the title Abī al-Muṣaffār was reserved for Tāhmasb and the hastily written text was probably substituted for the original when the book was given to Sām Mirzā.
foremost painter in Ṭahmāsb’s studio. The location of Ṣultan Muḥammad’s signature shows his subservience to Ṭahmāsb: like Ghiyāš al-Dīn Jāmī’s signature on the hunting carpet, Ṣultan Muḥammad’s signature on the throne puts the artist’s name literally under the ruler’s feet. Ḥafīz’s poem was a clever encomium eulogizing his patron, the Muzaffarid ruler Shāh Shujā’ī, and similarly Ṣultan Muḥammad’s signature on the painting is a clever visual conceit connecting the painter with his patron, Shāh Ṭahmāsb.

Such witty allusions, both written and visual, clearly delighted the Safavid audience. Thus, an illumination to a manuscript of Ḥafīz’s poems made for Ṭahmāsb shows a carpet that resembles contemporary ones, for the design of the carpet in the painting, with an arabesque scroll sprouting pomegranates and other flowers, recalls that of the Ardabil carpets. In the same vein, contemporary carpets were decorated with a couplet from Ḥafīz that runs on their place and function. These examples show how fruitful it can be to match texts, inscriptions and objects. Objects, like texts, are valuable historical documents which can help us reconstruct political and social settings. And texts, in turn, can help us explain the function and meaning of objects. It is to the credit of Iraj Afshar that he appreciated both sides of the question.

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23 Dāst Muḥammad’s celebrated account of past and present scribes and painters, written in 951/1544 as the preface to the album he prepared for Ṭahmāsb’s brother Bahā’īn Mūzā (Istanbul, Tokapi Palace Library, Hazine 2154) has been translated by Thackston (1990, 335–50).

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Fig. 1. The Ardabil carpet. Iran, 946/1540. Wool and silk. No. 53,50.2. Gift of J. Paul Getty, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 23 1/2 x 13 feet = 716.3 x 396.2 cm. By permission of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.


SOUCEK, PRISCILLA. 1990. Sultan Muhammad Tabrizi: painter at the Safavid court.


IRAN AND IRANIAN STUDIES

Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar

EDITED BY KAMBIZ ESLAMI

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EDITOR'S NOTE

For over fifty years, Iraj Afshar has been writing and publishing on Iran. The sheer volume of his output (more than 130 books, 500 articles, and growing) is prodigious and its impact on current and future studies on Iran is indisputable. Sometimes as a bibliographer, sometimes as an editor or a publisher, but always as a resourceful scholar, he has made tremendous contributions in such fields as Persian manuscripts and bibliographies, Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar history, as well as local histories of Iran. He has been the editor of several important periodicals, one of which, Farhang-i Iran zamin, is still active.\(^1\) Most students of Iranian studies are indebted to his informative and illuminating work in one way or another.

The twenty-two essays gathered in this volume represent a sincere acknowledgment of the importance of Iraj Afshar's body of work, and a mark of respect for a truly remarkable scholar of Iranian studies. As some of the contributions are actually based on, or closely related to, specific projects carried out by Iraj Afshar,\(^2\) they also attest to the wide-ranging and significant effect of his work. The scope of the essays reflects as diverse a scope as Ustād's own interests and achievements, and ranges over such general rubrics as Iranian historiography (Melville), local history (de Blois), foreign relations (Piemontese, Matthee, Vahman, Floor, Savory), fine arts and cultural studies (Soucek, de Fouchécour, Estami, Haarmann, Soudavar, Blair, Ghanoonparvar, Robinson, Witkam, Roper), as well as political, literary, and linguistic studies (Afary, Clinton, Lazard, Perry, Sprachman). Mainly because of this varied makeup, I found another form of presentation (one based on a more-or-less chronological order of the subject matters covered) to be more appropriate.

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\(^1\) Periodically, he was the editor, co-editor, or managing editor of Mīhr (1331–2 Sh./1942–4), Shāhān (1332–6 Sh./1953–7), Kitābahā-yi māh (1334–40 Sh./1955–61), Rāhnānā-yi kāh (1337–57 Sh./1958–78), Noḵāhā-hā-yi khāṭī (1339–52 Sh./1960–83), Irānshāhā (1349–50 Sh./1970–1), and ʿĀyandah (1358–72 Sh./1979–94).

The transliteration system used here for Persian and Arabic words is that of the Library of Congress. Non-Roman place and proper names have in general been transliterated, with very few exceptions (e.g., Tehran for Tibrân; or Iraj Afshar for Iraj Afshâr). Vernacular terms and honorific titles have also been transliterated according to the specific context in which they appear, so the reader will find va'ezir, va'ezir, and va'ezir appearing where the text refers to Persian, Arabic, and Turkish chief ministers, respectively. Throughout the book, an oblique stroke is used to separate the Hijri date from its Christian equivalent. Where only a Christian date was available or known, corresponding Hijri date(s) was/ were supplied following the stroke.

I am deeply grateful to all the authors of the essays for their support and willingness in participating in this project. My thanks go also to Svat Soucek who translated the contributions by C.-H. de Fouchecour and Angelo Piemontese, and to Mark Farrell who made very helpful stylistic suggestions for some of the essays. I would also like to thank Ehsan Yarshater, Heath Lowry, Hossein Modarresi, Bernard O’Kane, Farhad Eslami, Yahyá Zúka’, Mark Becker, and Heshmat Mosyad, whose assistance is acknowledged at appropriate points in the book. I am particularly thankful to Farhad who also compiled a bibliography of Iraj Afshar and was gracious enough to allow me to include only a selection of it here. Karim Emami, Jochen Twele, and Fred Plank helped me to have access to certain resources, and Maryam Zandi kindly provided the photograph of Iraj Afshar. I am indebted to Jalal Matini who was extremely helpful in answering my questions about two very difficult Persian texts. Finally, for giving so willingly of her expertise to help design the format of the volume, I am very grateful to Marion Carthy.

Kambiz Esmaili
Princeton
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For a full description of those schemes, see ALA-LC romanization tables: transliteration schemes for non-Roman scripts, Washington, 1997, pp. 10–9, 171–7. One minor deviation from the LC scheme for Persian transliteration is the interchangeable usage of ū and u in certain titles and poetic citations.

Considerations of space and balance forced me to limit the bibliography to titles published in book format and in monographic collections of articles, as well as those published in the journal Farhang-i Iran zamin.