ABRİ* PAINTING

R. ETTINGHAUSEN

When compared with the historiography of European or Chinese Art, that of the Islamic world is remarkably deficient in treatises on the arts, artists (other than calligraphers), places of manufacture and techniques as well as on connoisseurship in general. It is true there exist comments of this nature, sometimes even in the form of lengthy passages but they never developed into a specific literary genre — a fact clearly demonstrated that when such data exist they are usually found as chapters in compilations of a different kind, such as those dealing with gemology1 or calligraphy,2 even with such unexpected subjects as mathematics3 or statecraft.4 In addition, what we have so far recovered from the immense body of literature in Near Eastern languages suffers from two other handicaps. There is first the imprecision of the technical terms used or our inability to establish their precise meanings5 and secondly the impossibility of matching the technical terms with actual objects. A clear

2 The final chapter in Galistān-i humrār ("Rosegarden of Art") published in English under the title Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qāddī Ahmad, Son of Mihrābīnāh (circa 1015-1066), transl. from the Persian by V. Minorsky, with an Introduction by B.N. Zakhoder (transl. from the Russian by T. Minorsky) (Washington, 1959) (Freer Gallery of Art, Occasional Papers no. 2) — henceforth C. & P.
indication of this situation is provided by the late L.A. Mayer’s book on *Manhāk Costume,* where it was often not feasible to coordinate specific words used in Arabic sources with the garments shown in great profusion in 12th to 14th century miniatures and other figurative representations. The recent identification by S.D. Goitein of such a technical expression, and an obscure one at that, with an actual type of dress is an unusual and a particularly perspicacious achievement.6

The following is meant to be an endeavor to solve one facet of the just-mentioned problem in its double aspect, the finding of the precise explanation of a term and the surveying of objects to which it applies. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Gaston Wiel, a great scholar and devoted friend, who in his active lifetime — besides many other successful endeavors — made the correlation between written documents and artifacts his special concern.

The term here to be investigated is *abr* or *abat.* It is most likely to be encountered in various sources dealing with painting and illuminations. It occurs specifically in chapter IV “On Painters, Gilders, Masters of Gold Sprinkling and Decoupé Work, Dyers of Paper and other Cognate Matters” of the treatise *Gulistan-i hunar,* of circa AH 1015/AD 1606, by Qadi Aḥmad, the son of Mir-Munshi. The pertinent passage runs like this: “As in writing there are six basic styles, so in the art of painting seven (manner) is known: *islami, khīfī, firangī, qāsī, abr, akraha, salīmi.*”7 To the term in question, the editor of the text, the late V. Minorsky, comments: “. . . According to Dr. M. Bayani, *abr* (abat) refers to the technique of covering the paper with designs shaped like clouds (. . . a cloud).” To this Professor Minorsky adds: “Perhaps it refers also to the wisps of clouds (Chinese *ch'î*) figuring on Persian miniatures.” Neither scholar referred to specific examples. Before elaborating on the technical designation under discussion, it should at least be remarked that, on the basis of our present knowledge, the most puzzling aspect of Qadi Aḥmad’s list of the various types of painting is that it does not seem to designate clearly the type of painting which is exemplified by the Iranian miniatures of his period and those painted in earlier styles. As to *abr,* both Dr. Bayani and Professor Minorsky readily recognized that the Persian term meaning “cloud” must have something to do with a cloudlike motif. This is certainly correct, only that Dr. Bayani’s reference is too general to be readily understood and to make it possible to correlate the designation with specific phenomena. On the other hand, this writer, with all due respect for a scholar of immense learning, can hardly concur with Professor Minorsky’s interpretation which refers to “wisps of clouds on Persian miniatures”, thereby implying that a minor and not too frequent detail in pictures had formed a specially recognized aspect of painting. The terms *abr* and *abat,* therefore, still need further explanation.

To get possibly a proper lead to its specific meaning, it is necessary to quote the two other passages of the treatise in which the term is used. The first of these states:

Maulānā Muḥammad Amin, a specialist in ruling the frames encompassing the text (jāvīl-kash) and illuminator (mudhakkib) was from Mashhad. He had no peer in ornamental gilding, no rival in the art of repairing books (vaṣal), gold sprinkling and tinting of paper, especially in various abrat. He was the teacher of this humble one. . .7

The second passage, the final one of the original version of the text, is unfortunately fragmentary but still worth quoting:

Maulānā Yahlū is a native of Qazvin. In the restoration of books, tinting of papers, and in abrat he is very . . . with regard to the abrat paper? he has good achievements and abrat . . . And the greater part of his time (he spends) in the cathedral mosque of the capital city in the service . . . .8

The conclusion to be drawn from these passages is that the more usual term is apparently *abrat,* that it has something to do with the image of clouds, that it represents an aspect of illumination, and a rather humble one at that but one widely used and recognized as a separate specialty of which there are various forms, that it is a type of painting related to gilding, gold sprinkling and tinting of paper and that, being an activity pursued by a religious person, it seems to be primarily of a non-figural character. Finally, it should be mentioned that this art of painting, in its unpretentious form, was practiced at the time when the first version of the treatise of Qadi Aḥmad was finished, by AH 1005/AD 1596-97,9 though it was taught already by a mudhakkib of the preceding generation. Our task then is to determine to which art form all these data apply.

8 C & P, 178.
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If we look at calligraphically written and illuminated pages in Iranian style from the end of the 16th century, for instance at one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art allegedly written by Yaqūt al-Musta'sī, but decorated in the period with which we are concerned, the one aspect of ornamental painting to which all the enumerated features would fit is the interlinear painting in the form of gilding, found between the cloudlike white contour panels which closely follow the outlines of the text and capsule it (pl. XVIII, 1). Due to its large script and the wide gilded interstices between the lines, a Qur'ān written in AH 830/AD 1427 by Ibrahim Sulṭān ibn Shāh Rukh, the grandson of Tīmūr, but again illuminated only at the end of the 16th century, makes this identification of abri even clearer (pl. XVIII, 2). A slightly earlier calligraphic exercise by the first Ṣafavid ruler, Shāh Ismā'īl (1502–24), sets off three lines of bold Muḥaqqaq letters surrounded by the usual cloudlike contour lines by means of a monochrome colored (or gilded?) interstitial space. On the other hand, monochrome coloring between the cloudlike contour lines around Qur'ān texts continued into the 19th century as a copy in the British Library, probably written in Shiraz, indicates.

Three of the just cited examples introduce the abri phenomenon in connection with texts which, by association with famous calligraphers or by being from the hands of royal scribes, must have been held in highest esteem so that their presentation must be considered of the finest. Still, one cannot help thinking that their evenly repetitive and rather unsophisticated form of plain interlinear illumination would hardly deserve special recognition, a specific term and regard as one of the seven aspects of painting. However, if we survey the development of illumination, especially of Qur'ān manuscripts, it becomes clear that what we find at the end of the 16th century is only the very much reduced form of an always subtle, but originally much more evolved form of ornamental design. It also becomes evident, from the examples so far cited, and will be even more so from those to be introduced as evidence in the following, that the abri type of painting usually differs from the other forms of illumination applied on the same page and elsewhere in the manuscript. Abri painting is much more subtle and discrete and is clearly destined to decorate the text in a pleasant way, thus unobtrusively bringing out the quality of the writing as the major aspect of the page.

A page from a Ḥāẓ painting of Manuscript AH 929/AD 1523, in the Freer Gallery of Art, shows that at the beginning of the century abri painting was more sophisticated. Then, the cloudlike areas around the writing had fine curving extensions in which little stylized flowers were placed, making this type of illumination more lively than the uniformly tinted interstices of the later manuscripts (pl. XIX, 1). One hundred years earlier, floral forms were larger and rendered in delicate Chinese fashion, as can be seen in a Qur'ān with contemporary illuminations in the library of Imām Riẓā in Mashhad, written in AH 827/AD 1423 by Ibrahim b. Shāh Rukh (pl. XIX, 2). If we go still further back, into the Il-Khanid period, we note that even the colophon page of a Qur'ān from Marāğer, finished in AH 739/AD 1339, has well-defined colorful floral elements on a cross-hatched ground in the interstitial areas (pl. XIX, 3). On the other hand, the Qur'ān text itself has a precisely drawn Chinese wave pattern between the contour lines (pl. XIX, 4). But the finest examples of this period are provided by the giant Qur'āns written for Sulṭān Uljaytu, of which several versions have come down to us. Such interstitial spaces, with large skillfully drawn arabesques on delicate stems changing from page to page, are, for instance, to be found in the copy written in Baghdad in AH 706/AD 1306 and now kept in the Municipal Library, Leipzig, and in the British Library, London.

In the preceding Seljuk period, in a Qur'ān written in Hamadan in Jumādā I AH 559/ April AD 1164 (now in the University Museum in Philadelphia), abri painting with arabesque rinceaux on gold ground is also a distinctive feature, while a Qur'ān manuscript written in Ghazvī in AH 566/AD 1170 presents large arabesques on winding stems in the wide areas between the contour lines. By contrast, a Qur'ān of AH 1359/AD 1741, also from Ghazvī, shows how this type of illumination can be adapted to the requirements of space and text, so that the unobtrusive quality of the abri painting is all the more striking.

12 Another Qur'ān attributed to Yaqūt al-Musta'sī, said to have been copied in Baghdad in AH 685/AD 1286–87, but illuminated 300 years later, is in the Toledo Museum in Toledo, Ohio [L. & S. No. 151, illustration on p. 87].
13 Armin Saksian, La miniature persane du Xe au XVIIe siècle (Paris–Bruxelles, 1929), fig. 130; E. Kühnel, Islamische Schrifffärbung (Graz, 1972), fig. 53.
14 L. & S., No. 151, illustration on p. 87.
17 B. Moritz, "Arabic Writing," PPI, 388, pl. va.
592/AD 1195 in the Chester Beatty Collection shows very delicately rendered arabesque rinceaux on a ground enlivened by series of three closely grouped dots.18 The tradition of abt painting is found even in the 5th century AH, as shown by a Qur'ān written in AH 455/AD 1073 where the interstices between the large letters and between the Thulūth of the colophon page are filled with closely packed, tiny scrolls.19 Of unknown date, but within the range of the later 11th or the early 12th century, is a well-known Qur'ān written in large Eastern Kūfic letters, whose detached pages are in many libraries. Here the wide abt units are filled with beautifully winding scrolls ending in large palmette leaves: they are executed in a brown ink (now in certain cases apparently re-drawn) which effectively sets off the delicately shaped abtī from the dark lettering of the text (pl. XX, 1).20

The earliest dated use of abtī painting between cloudlike contour panels so far discovered in an Arabic manuscript is to be found on the colophon page of a small Qur'ān manuscript by the famous calligrapher 'Ali b. Hīlāl, called Ibn al-Bawwāb, written in Baghdad in AH 391/AD 1000-01.21 It consists of very delicately drawn winding stems carrying leaves, a design further enriched by dots along the edges of the leaves (recalling the drill holes in stucco decorations) and also by other widely applied dots, often occurring in a combination of three. Nowadays these dots stand out more strongly than the rest of the design, which may possibly have faded. The abtī device appears only once more in the manuscript of 284 folios, with its many novel calligraphic and ornamental features, a fact which may perhaps indicate that this was a fairly new decorative element, still of an experimental nature. Both ornamental elements used — the floral rinceaux and the all-over design of dots — occur in later abtī paintings, so that Ibn al-Bawwāb has indeed founded a tradition. In any case, it established the custom of using abtī painting for the text of the colophon (see pl. XIX, 3).


20 SPA v, pl. 931; Kühl, *op. cit.* (above, n. 13), fig. 12; Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Leiden, 1970), pl. viii.


As far as we know, practically none of the horizontally oriented parchment Qur'ān pages with Kūfic writing show abtī painting,22 so that the dated Qur'ān manuscripts of the 11th century seem to indicate that this type of interlinear decoration came into common use in that century. The majority of those so far cited are from Iran, with most of the early examples coming from Khorasan where they were written in Eastern Kūfic. However, the phenomenon exists also elsewhere in the Muslim world.

The earliest case outside Iran and Iraq is a Qur'ān written in AH 427/AD 1036 for the Shālayḫīd ruler of the Yemen, 'Ali b. Muhammad; it is in the Tūrk ve İslam Esleri Müzesi in Istanbul.23 Its abtī painting is very close to that of the colophon page in the Ibn al-Bawwāb manuscript of AH 391/AD 1000-01, only that there is now only a small of three-dot combination over the delicate rinceaux with leaves or flowers. Since the Shālayḫīd ruler was under Fāṭimid suzerainty and had a Fāṭimid title, one can assume that the style found in the manuscript was prevalent also in Egypt. Unfortunately, no Fāṭimid Qur'āns have been preserved to substantiate this hypothesis. However, as the plates of B. Moritz's *Arabic Paleography* of 1905, and the recent Qur'ān catalogue of Martin Lings and Yasin Hamid Safadi, make it abundantly clear, the superb giant Mamlūk Qur'āns and de luxe manuscripts of other texts made frequent use of the abtī form of ornamentation (pl. XX, 2).24 The same applies to Turkish Qur'āns of the 14th and 15th century, where abtī is found with very delicate and yet complex floral rinceaux in the areas between the large lettering in Muḥaqqiq script.25 Finally, abtī is also found in Qur'ān manuscripts produced in India in the

22 Moritz, *op. cit.* (above, n. 12), pls. 1-44; L. & S., color pls. 1-82 and figs to Nos. 15-23; for an exception see Schimmel, *op. cit.* (above, n. 20), pl. iwa. The abtī principle was also not yet fully used in a religious treatise written between AH 440 and 442/AD 1049 and 1051, came from a Ghaznavid library. The words of the captious in an ornamental setting show only very narrow contour lines which sparte the Naḥṭī writing from the rich background with arabesque rinceaux (S.M. Stern, *A Manuscript from the Library of the Ghaznavid Amīr 'Abd al-Rasūl* in *Painting from Islamic Land*, ed. R. Pinder-Wilson) ([Oriental Studies v] [Columbia, S.C., 1969], figs. 2 and 3).

23 Rice, *op. cit.* (above, n. 21), 31/32, Pl. xvi.

24 Moritz, *op. cit.* (above, n. 12), Pls. 99, 54-55, 60, 64, 67-70, 73, 76 and 80; L. & S., Nos. 73, 75, 83, 90.

25 F.R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey from the 8th to the 14th Century* (London, 1912), Pls. 266-67; Arberry, *op. cit.* (above, n. 19), pl. 10; Kühl, *op. cit.* (above, n. 13), fig. 52.
14th century during the Sultanate period, as well as under the Mughal regime.  

To complete this account of abri painting, it should be pointed out that this ornamental device occurs also in Hebrew Biblical manuscripts from Egypt and Palestine now in the Public Library in Leningrad, particularly in a Pentateuch of AD 951 from Jerusalem and a complete Bible from Cairo of AD 1010. These would, therefore, be the earliest dated instances of this type of decoration, executed either with floral designs in blue and two tones of gold or with scrollwork in gold on red sizing. The Jewish parchment pages differ, however, in several ways from the Muslim ones. The Hebrew writing forms figural designs which delineate arches with suspended lamps; the spectacular and conspicuous abri type decoration in the interstices of these configurations underline this structural aspect. In addition, the writing is of small size and the contour lines, when present, are not cloudlike but straight and placed around the plain contour panels. Although all three constituent elements of abri painting are present, the general impression is, in view of the different arrangement, quite unlike the Muslim examples. There seems little likelihood that one type of illumination influenced the art of the sacred book of the other, each seeming to have developed in its own way. If there was an outside source of inspiration, it was from the secular field — for instance, from the pottery types to be discussed in the following paragraphs.

This leaves us only the task of investigating two further questions: whence did the abri type of painting originate and, secondly, what was its purpose? The answer to first problem is that the earliest use of the abri principle in the Islamic world is apparently to be found in the polychrome luster pottery of 9th century Samarra; 28 for instance, the famous eagle plate in the Berlin-Dahlem Museum shows various forms of abri painting — dense floral patterns as well as cross-hatchings — beyond the narrow contour lines (fig. 1). One can readily see why such a device and varied background designs were applied since, for esthetic and optical effects, the potter covered the bowl with as many varied patterns in the shiny metal coating as he possibly could. Since the outline of the design here is of a more evenly continuous nature, its edge is not like the curvaceous cloud form it was later to be in the case of writing of consecutive consonants of different heights, with their vowels. The abri principle — though usually still not yet applied between cloudlike forms — continued in use on the monochrome luster pieces appearing at the end of the Samarra period — Kühlle places them from circa 880 on 29 — and persisted in the 10th century. Following the more unified aspect of the main designs, now mostly rendered in silhouette style, the background pattern beyond the contour lines consist of a simple, single repeat, usually of dots or little hook-like units.

26 Catalogue, Hayward Gallery, No. 635 illustrated; L. & S., No. 140, illustrated on p. 81; Kühlle, op. cit. (above, n. 13), fig. 57.
27 David Gung and Vladimir Stassoff, L'Ornement islamique (Berlin, 1905), pl. vi, vii (Cairo, 1010), x (Egypt, early 11th century), xx (Cairo, beginning of 11th century), xvi, xvii, 57-58 (Jerusalem, 951). The abri principle was apparently used only for the small lettering of the Massoreotic text, not for large inscriptions which are reserved from a colored or patterned gold ground without surrounding contour panels (loc. cit., ph. viii, ix, x).
28 F. Sarre, Die Keramik von Samarra (Berlin, 1925), pl. xii; Catalogue, Hayward Gallery, No. 258, illustrated; Ernst Kühlle, “Die 'abbasidischen Lüsterfayences',” Ars Islamica 1 (1934), fig. 4. For abri painting applied to pottery, see also Aly Bey Böhagat & Félix Massoul, La Céramique musulmane de l’Egypte (Le Caire, 1930), pl. iii, No. 2.
29 Kühlle, op. cit. (above, n. 28), 157, fig. 6.
It is apparently from this 10th century group of monochrome luster pieces that the eventual transfer to manuscript illumination took place. The first cause of this development was provided by the fact that among the main decorative motifs of the monochrome group were occasional pieces with a central inscription in Kufic lettering, the uneven outline of which necessitated cloud-like contour lines beyond which the usual ground-covering pattern was applied (pl. XXI, 1).30 The second conditioning factor was the fact that the potteries manufactured at the capital, especially the monochrome luster pieces, were in the Samanid period exported to Iran and were then subsequently imitated in the slip-painted technique of 10th and 11th century Khurasan; that is, their color scheme and iconography, including the abrit principle.31 A third inducement to apply and develop abrit painting was provided by the Nishapur potters’ preference for the often exclusive use of Arabic writing, and to execute it in local Eastern Kufic (pl. XXI, 2). Finally, these calligraphic written texts reproduced common proverbs and addages which must have made these beautifully rendered pieces of pottery even more popular, thereby increasing the demand for them. The “democratization” of this type of painting eventually made its transfer to another medium possible, that of the more austere and refined sphere of manuscript painting.

Abrit painting occurs on Persian pottery in later periods as well, for instance, in what is called the “first Kubachi” style, with floral painting in black under a green glaze.32 Here the abrit painting, as usual of an interstitial nature between contour panels, consists of scroll work incised in the black ground. Pieces of this ware, of which a particular fine example is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (dated AH 873/AD 1468), range in date from 1469 to 1495.

The abrit principle was also employed on two other types of pottery which were based on the monochrome luster pottery of Samarra and its 10th century continuation. Fātimid luster pottery followed not only the luster technique (as now applied to a loosened-up silhouette style) but at times also used the abrit principle (pl. XXI, 3).33 The silhouette style was also taken up by the potters of Raqqa in Eastern Syria, and it is here that the abrit principle found perhaps its most elegant and sensitive execution, in both luster and underglaze painting (pl. XXI, 4).34 There remains only the question of why abrit painting came into being. The eagle plate in Berlin-Dahlem (fig. 1) seems to indicate that it is at least partially the result of horror vacui, that is, the psychological fear of empty space. On the other hand, the fact that the style of the abrit painting differs from that of the main design implies that esthetic considerations were also at stake, for the potter sought to set off the main motif by a contrasting background which would not encroach upon it and was of a reticent nature. These two reasons equally apply to the decoration of Qur’ān pages. Here, however, a third point of view — of a religious nature — may have entered the picture. The sacred text of the divine word was sacrosanct and no fanciful embellishments of the human hand were allowed to interfere with it. Since human piety and the urge to decorate competed with this principle, a “cordon sanitaire” was established around the pure, holy text and it was only beyond this protective zone that human artistic endeavor was allowed to come into play. This assumption is borne out by the fact that, frequently above or below a Qur’ānic text with delicate abrit painting, one finds ornamental panels whose inscribed texts of a less sacred nature are placed directly on a decorated background and therefore lack the cloud-like contour lines which alone distinguish abrit painting in the strict sense of the term (pl. XVIII, 1; XIX, 2; XX, 1–2). Another indication of the religious connotation of abrit painting is the fact that figural design hardly ever seems to occur with this type of decoration, since it would have been forbidden in its most frequent application, in Qur’ān manuscripts.35

Psychological, esthetic and religious impulses in the ornamentalist’s mind are of such a basic nature, one can assume, that they must have been effective long before the advent of Islam. Indeed, if we behold a very early document of Iranian art, a pottery vase from pre-historic Persepolis (fourth millennium BC), we find all the elements which led to abrit painting were present in a rudimentary fashion: that is, the main design, white edging surrounding it and a filling background pattern

30 Fig. 1 is after Sarre, loc. cit. (above, n. 28), fig. 180 and pl. xiv; see also p. 39, No. 151 and p. 86, No. 12; Ernst Herzfeld, “Epigraphisches,” in Sarre, ibid., p. 86, restores the inscription to read [ناپاسک|خلیف|محاور].
33 Catalogue, Hayward Gallery, Nos. 264 and 276, both illustrated; Lane, loc. cit.
34 Catalogue, Hayward Gallery, Nos. 301 and 306, both illustrated.
35 One of the rare cases of abrit painting with human figures painted in Iran at the end of the 15th century is in the E. Curtier Collection; see Kühl, loc. cit. (above, n. 13), fig. 69.
(fig. 2). Hence, the long history of this type of background ornamentation, the need felt for its application, and its specific artistic character, all make it clear why Qādi Ahmad should state that *dbr* was regarded a special sort of painting.

Fig. 2. Fragment of small luster bowl. Samarra, ca. AD 880.

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**SUFI ELEMENTS IN THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY PAINTING OF HERĀT**

**R. MILSTEIN**

To what extent did the subject matter of Persian miniatures influence iconographic and stylistic elements? Was a picture conceived of as a one-dimensional, decorative (or at most narrative) unit, so that formal conventions might subserve any content in a given period? Or would a particular period construct a stylistic integrity of its own, in which formal elements might functionally upon the subject element? The logical connexion to be sought between dimensions of meaning and functional relationships amongst the elements of a work is treated in detail by Kuhns, who has summed the matter up in two statements:

A minimum condition for admitting a dimension of meaning to the interpretation of a work of art is the demonstration that a functional relationship obtains between the principles defining one dimension already established and the principles defining the second dimension to be introduced by reference to the work of art.... A set of principles defining a dimension is complete if it is capable of producing thoughts, images and/or affective states which are neither vacuous nor trivial and allows the development of a style.

The late fifteenth century AD school of Herāt can serve as a case study for these questions, with the Sufi element as the point of departure for the entire dimension of subject.

The social background of the emergence of the "Helayí school" differs somewhat from that of earlier Persian schools of painting, in its encompassing contradictory licentiousness and mysticism. The long reign of the Timurid Sultan Husayn Mirzâ (1469-1506) saw many years of peace and prosperity; Herāt, the capital of Khorasan, had become a

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STUDIES
IN MEMORY OF
GASTON WIET

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GASTON WIET

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PREFACE

Gaston Wiet, one of the three scholars elected Honorary Members of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was in his own way even closer to this centre of Islamic studies than this honour bestowed on him would indicate. His associations with numerous Jerusalem scholars, his continuous help, advice and encouragement — to both established scholars and the up-and-coming generation — revealed his deep concern for their problems and fields of interest; it was not for him to remain an outsider, but to become a true colleague.

The deep attachment and indebtedness to Wiet felt by many scholars here underlies the enthusiastic response towards participation in this memorial volume, dedicated to Wiet the Man and the Scholar. It was further felt that this homage should also express the acknowledgement and friendship of his friends and admirers abroad, as well as reflect the wide range of fields of research and interests which the long list of Wiet’s writings illustrates. We regret that, in the meantime, several of those who expressed their readiness to contribute to this publication have died; Père J. de Ménasche, Professor M. Plessner and Professor M. Avi-Yonah had all submitted titles but were unable to complete their manuscripts; and the death of Professor Otto Kurz adds to our burden of sorrow, though, fortunately, his article was received and is printed here.

The very character of Wiet and his scholarly career dictates the nature of any publication dedicated to his memory. Even so, contributors could readily tie their subject — be it history, literature, art or archaeology — to one facet or another of Wiet’s broad interests. The chronological range, too, of the various subjects submitted is considerable, making it most appropriate to arrange the articles according to chronological order. Thus, the volume encompasses studies concerning the pre-Islamic Sassanian empire, and proceeds through practically every significant chapter of Islamic history, down to and including modern times.

The devotion of Mr. Nathan Efrati, secretary of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University, toward realizing the publication of this volume is fully appreciated. Most precious help was
provided by Mr. R. Grafman, who was involved in all the manifold activities of preparing the manuscripts, translating Miss Milstein’s article, laying out the plates and bringing the entire volume through the press.

Finally thanks should be expressed to Professor M. Maoz, former Head of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University, who initially encouraged this enterprise; and to the present Head of the Institute, Dr. Y. Friedmann, who has been equally encouraging in its subsequent stages.

M. R.-A

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**IN MEMORIAM**

The death of Gaston Wiet may well spell the end of a period, the disappearance of a particular type of scholar — besides being a great loss to Islamic studies and to all who knew him. His activities were varied, all of them bearing the unmistakable stamp of a scholar. He was of that particular class of Islamist whose mastery was in no way limited to one field — one of the last of a generation who did not “specialize” but who studied Islam as a whole, and whenever he worked on a specific subject it was not because of specialization but because it was one of the phenomena of Islamic culture.

Gaston Louis Marie Joseph Wiet was born in Paris on December 18, 1887. His formal academic training was practically completed by the age of 21. Already in October 1908 he graduated in Law (Licence en Droit) and simultaneously obtained diplomas at the École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes, both in Classical Arabic and in Colloquial Arabic, as well as in Persian and Turkish. He was then offered a scholarship as “Pensionnaire” at the Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, from 1909 to 1911. In the latter year he was invited to start a teaching position in Arabic and Turkish at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Lyon, where he remained until 1926, except for the period of the First World War, in which he served, winning the Croix de Guerre with bronze star. Toward the end of the war, his orientalist background brought him to serve as an interpreter in the Georges Picot negotiations.

In 1926 a major change occurred in the life of Gaston Wiet, for he was asked by King Fuad I of Egypt to take over directorship of the Museum of Arab Art in Cairo, which important position he retained until 1951, combining his activities at the Museum in Cairo with his academic teaching in Paris. For in the meanwhile he had successively been appointed Professor of Geography and History of the Near East at the École des Langues Orientales in Paris (1931) and Professor of Islamic Art at the École du Louvre (1936). From 1938 on, however, he remained mainly in Egypt. During the Second World War, he was a militant