pour ce texte aussi, et que les manuscrits étaient loués successivement, par petits morceaux, aux amateurs de lecture distraîts. L’un d’eux précisément même le prix qu’il avait payé par jour pour la location d’un gusz de ce texte14.

Ce témoignage est confirmé par celui de P. Guillaume, qui tient d’un enseignant syrien, âgé aujourd’hui d’une soixantaine d’années, qu’on trouvait encore à louer, à Damas, il y a cinquante ans, des fascicules d’une centaine de pages qui contenaient des contes ou des récits populaires. Ceux-ci portaient encore le nom de gusz et se terminaient systématiquement au beau milieu d’une histoire. Dans ce cas particulier, on comprend bien l’intérêt pour le libraire de faire en sorte que le gusz s’interrompe à contretemps par rapport aux divisions logiques du texte.

Pour inclure ces fonctions du gusz dans la précédente définition (qui était seulement codicologique), je propose de la compléter de la façon suivante : avoir eu, pour un texte, l’honneur d’être copié par gusz semble indiquer que le texte (ou une certaine version du texte) a connu à un moment donné un succès tel qu’il a été copié sous une forme susceptible d’en faciliter la circulation et la lecture, privée ou publique15.

En conclusion, on peut dire que nombre de questions, que j’ai à peine effleurées, mériteraient d’être développées, qu’il s’agisse de l’origine du gusz, de son domaine d’utilisation et, dans le détail, des modalités de son emploi. Mais il me semble que les quelques observations que j’ai présentées sont déjà ressortir l’importance et l’originalité du gusz : importance pour mieux saisir la structure de certains manuscrits arabes, surtout dans les cas d’imitations, importance pour établir l’histoire des textes, puisque la division en gusz survit parfois au gusz lui-même ; importance enfin et surtout pour comprendre comment le livre arabe a circulé et a vécu.

14. Je dois ce renseignement à A. Chraibi. Le gusz évoque dans ce cas la « livraison ».
15. Le rapprochement entre le gusz et la copie « à la peçe » des manuscrits latins médiévaux est assez tentant mais, comme le souligne J.-P. Gumbert (« Quelques remarques autour de la peçe », GLM 15, p. 8-11), ce système de copie a été limité aux grandes universités européennes des xiiie et xiiiie siècles, tandis que les manuscrits arabes étaient généralement des imitations. Il me semble donc, en l’état actuel de nos connaissances, que les différences entre les deux pratiques sont plus nombreuses que les analogies.
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 (tāḥkīb) 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 technical or stylistic development and influence. 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 –salmās, 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'an that is most likely to come to mind. For Muslims the Qur'an is the Book, and the glories of Qur'anic 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'anic tadhhib, on which Martin Lingi has written so profoundly.

Let us first look at one or two examples in which the art of the muhakhib 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 Mamluk produced in Mamluk Egypt. 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'an. As well as ornaments marking the beginning of each of the thirty juz' into which the Qur'an is classically divided, the illuminator also had scope to embellish the text division markers for Hijr, Safar, Rabi', Sajdah, 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'an dated Mubas 710 1321, which was commissioned by the Mongol Ilkhân Muhammed Khudâbânda, also known as Ubuyyid.

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

Fig. 1. Illuminated Hadîth text. MS. London, BL, Or. 11925, f. 7r.

2. Add. 22407, 1v-2r. All manuscripts cited are in the British Library, unless otherwise stated.
3. Add. 22400, 3r.
4. Or. 4945, 2r.
5. Add. 7214, 1v; 3v-3r.
6. Add. 7214, 1v-2r; 3r-4r.
7. Add. 7214, 3v-4r.
8. Or. 31986, 1v.
9. Or. 11925, 7r.
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 Maghribi treatise has a fine title page illumination (Fig. 2). Equally interesting is the use of gold for the purpose of rubrication: picked out in gold are the following: below the opening Basmad, the name Muhammad; within the illuminated panel, the name of the author with a prayer for him; the phrases al-‘Ilah li-Llah; wa a’udhu; wa nasbada; and finally anna 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.

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-Rahmān al-Suyūṭī's work al-Wasā’il ilā ma’rifat al-‘Ushur (Fig. 3). The manuscript opens with a grand illumination announcing that the copy was made for the library of the great Sultan Qānsūh. It closes with a fine illuminated colophon wherein the calligrapher, or at very least the writer of the colophon, is named: he is none other than the Mamlūk Sultan Qānsūh.

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 Maqādīrīs, a compendium of Sunnī doctrine in Ottoman Turkish by Quṭbuddīn Izārī. Here is a table of names of the 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 left. Next, the schema on this page represents the acts and articles of faith required to earn salvation. Here we see the double Banner of the Prophet (Lišā‘-i ‘Ilāh) over the Celestial Pool of Kawthar; the names beneath are those of Prophets, and of members of the
Family and other Companions of the Last Prophet. There are more illustrative illuminations than we have time to consider. My last example is a tabular representation designed to show Sunni Muslims that all the madhabs or schools of jurisprudence, including those which are no longer followed as such, are linked with the core of the Shari’ah.

This is the text opening from another unmistakably Ottoman manuscript. The roundel contains the names of Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Caliphs Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Aṭīf. 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.

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 sources. 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 Rāṣīh or special liturgy of the Mahdī of Sudan shown in this slide. Ornamentation of at least the title page is quite often found in collections of invocations and prayers, such as copies of al-Jazzārī’s Dala’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 Ya Ṯāni al-ḥabīb wa ʾl-Qamar, “O Light of the Sun and Moon.” 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 Sumemep on the island of Madura. 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 Ya Ṭaff al-Hajjat are surmounted by a western-style crown at the top of which stands a sizeable and conspicuous crescent.

Although produced by Muslims, this epistle was written in the name of the Dutch Governor General de Clerk in Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1782. 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 special 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 firmān surmounted by the tugra, a monogram composed by stylizing the name of the reigning Sultan, which itself was sometimes illuminated.

15. Or. 14636, 6r.
16. Or. 14636, 9v.
17. Or. 13977, 1r.
18. Malay and Arabic manuscript from Dayah Tenah Abes, Aceh, folio number unknown.
19. Or. 11995, 1r.-2r.
Firman and kerats 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/19th century firman23 (Fig. 4). It is likely that much of the illumination was added later by a professional illuminator who was paid by the owner of the document to add lustre—and hence perhaps make the firman look more imposing and authoritative. Even the magic words Muschebıce 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.

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 Loqmán’s Qaṣaf il-lı-insanıyye, 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 guiding 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 İ: 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 waqf, 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 rondel 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 Kulliyát or Ḍalāl 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 Šīrqī 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 Allahu ‘a `l-Rasūl.

23. Or. 14877 C (detail).
25. Add. 7880, 1v.
26. Add. 7880, 32v.
27. Neve’s, Geväb 38-hejjer: Or. 13061, f. 1r. 
Fig. 5. NizāmI, Gāstāb taš-e-šihr. MS. London, BL, Or. 1385, f. 1r.

This is one page of a double frontispiece from a 9th h./15th century copy of the *Iskandernāme*, perhaps the best of the Turkish versions of the Alexander Romance, by Ahmedī. 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 ‘變ī-i ‘Ali. 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 gliding and hatching. 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 *Divān* of Mirzā Husayn Bāyqarā, the renowned Timūrid prince and patron who also wrote verse in Chaghātay Turkish under the rather transparent *fakehī*.

28. Or. 13857, 2v.
29. Or. 13857, 3r.

Fig. 6. Page of the double frontispiece of a 9th h./15th century copy of the *Iskandernāme*. MS. London, BL, Or. 13857, f. 2v.
of Huseyni. At some point it was felt that the manuscript required more ornamentation, and so an illumination was transplanted: not perhaps an improvement in this instance\(^{30}\).

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 Divâns, this time in Pashho. Somebody has used yellow paint to enliven the first page\(^{31}\). 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 Allâh Munshi's Persian rendering of the animal fables of Kalîla ve Dîmna, in an early 7th h/13th century copy. The inscription in naṣkhî on both upper and lower panel of an illuminated frontispiece\(^{32}\) is continued in the lower panel of the first page of text\(^{33}\). It is in Arabic and appears to consist of praise for Kalîla ve Dîmna 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 imâmâra, one can be almost certain that it is from Lucknow\(^{34}\).

The next literary manuscript to be discussed was produced for a ruler. It contains the Divans of a man named Qadu Burbânedîn, who seized power over part of Asia Minor during the late 8th h/14th century. Besides being a judge and a highly ambitious politician, Burbânedîn produced good poetry. In this contemporary copy of the Divân, each poem is preceded by a heading in gold praying for a long reign for the ruler-poet: “Khâliqa ‘Ilâhu sâlînâhû or miqâkatu’\(^{35}\). In many poetical manuscripts of high quality, colours or gold are used to pick out the tahâlûy of the poet in the last line, or the name of the person praised in the poem.

By contrast, the artist of the Ilkhânîd period who illuminated this early collection of Persian poetical Divânî provided less lavish headings\(^{36}\). 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 Malîk al-shir’âr Niẓâm al-Dîn Mahmûd Qamar of Isfahân. It goes on to state that Niẓâm al-Dîn came

---

30. Or 3493, f. 2r.  
31. Or 394, 6v (top).  
32. Or 13506, 4r.  
33. Or 13506, 4v.  
34. Or 14126, 2v.  
35. Or 4125, 1v-2v.  
36. IO Islamic 132, 7v (top).  

Fig. 7. Page of a copy of Sa’dî’s collected works, dated 974 h/1566. MS. London, BL, Add. 24944, f. 24v.
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 *jāfsul* or text and column frame. This feature plays an especially important part in the successful *mise en page* of texts such as *Kulliyāt* 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’dī’s collected works, produced at Shiraz and dated 974 h/1566 (Fig. 7).

---

37. Add. 24944, f. 8v.
On every page of a 10th h./16th century manuscript of Jàmi’s Sufi classic *Lavà’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 commentary 38.

We have already seen how roundels are used as text markers, especially in copies of the Holy Qur’àn. 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 *hülayfî ta’ bār* 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.

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 *dâ’ıran*, or circles indicating the relation between different poetical metres and their variants, are presented in a highly decorative and colourful form 40. 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 paper 41.

Again, there are charming little manuscripts in the oblong *safina* form, whose illuminations often feature some figurative elements 42. The finest of these date mainly from the Timurid 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 ‘Ubaydullah Hân, nephew of the Uzbek ruler Şyöbûn Hân, in Chaghatai Turkish was produced at Herat circa 1510, the calligrapher being the famous Sultan ‘Ali Mashhad 43.

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

---

38. Add. 16820, f. 7v–8r.
39. Or. 14011, 22v.
40. Or. 4110, 152v–153r.
41. Or. 3891, 14v–15r.
42. Or. 12976, 2v.
43. Add. 7907, 2v.
kitábkhāna of the Moghuls, at that time located in Agra, circa 1605. 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 Hafiz, 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 Sultan-All Mashhadi.

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/15th century. Here are two illuminations from the manuscript (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 Khāṣānī made in the 6th/12th century (Fig. 11). Here is a second ornate colophon, from a 16th century manuscript whose binding we saw at the beginning of this lecture.

**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 Siwelmas's study, based on the holdings of the Royal Library in Rabat, has shown in relation to Maghribi 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 1890) at Yogyakarta for, and perhaps by, a Javanese prince. 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 poems.

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 fûtuhat (Turkish fiṭrat) or spiritual chivalry.

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-ḥurūfī, as these points are called, are indicated in two diagrams in the manuscript of the Muqaddimah of Qūṭbeddin which we looked at earlier. Here is one of them (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 wells.

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-636) dated 878 or 879 h/1474 in the Library of the Institute of Oriental Studies at St. Petersburg, al-Khütallī's Kitāb al-Maḥbūbīn fī jāmīlī.
al-fusūn. 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 collection. The next picture is one of the numerous technical illustrations found in an Indian textbook of archery dating from the early 12th h./18th century. 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 manuscript.

The famous Miscellany of the Timurid prince Iskandar Sultan, completed in Southern Iran in 814 h./1411, is adorned with a wealth of fine illumination including these two tables. 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 again. Manuscripts of astronomical works such as ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sūfī’s Ṣawār al-kawāfīr quite commonly feature small gold roundels highlighting the position of stars in their constellations.

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 ʿAlāʾ Ebrāhīm’s Maʿrifat al-nam, a kind of encyclopedia of natural science and traditional Muslim doctrine. First, here is a table of contents in which the panels are highlighted with illumination. 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 phenomena. A map in the same manuscript shows the Eastern and Western hemispheres; and on the opposite page is a gazetteer. 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.

54. Add. 20756; illuminations on folio 91r-92r.
55. Or. 1414, 7v.
56. Add. 12372, 60r-61r.
57. Add. 27261, 594r-533v.
58. Add. 27261, 365r.
59. Add. 7488, 51r.
60. Or. 12964, 1v.
61. Or. 12964, 35v-36r.
62. Or. 12964, 89v-90r.
Before we finish with this interesting Ma‘rifatnâme 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-İståkhri’s geographical work in Arabic entitled Musâliḳ al-mavliḳ. 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 Dalîl al-Shayratî, the book of prayers on the Holy Prophet compiled by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Jazuli of Marrakesh. Fine examples, however, are also to be found as illustrations to copies of Telqîf al-Haramayn, a poetical work in Persian describing the Holy Places by Muḥyî al-Din Lârî. 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-Madîna. The final illuminated image to be shown in this presentation is an illuminated representation of al-Masjîd al-Ḥarâm, the Sanctuary in Makkah, 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 tâlîbîh 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, 2v-24r.
64. Or. 5005, 18r.
65. Or. 343, 17v.
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.

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.