Textiles

The Islamic world has a long history of excellence in the field of decorative textiles. And this is not surprising when one considers that the religious and intellectual foundations of Islamic art tended to give it a natural bias towards two-dimensional, repetitive, infinitely extensible patterns, which is precisely what is required for textile design. Moreover, as the Islamic world commanded not only an abundance of the essential raw materials – silk, wool and dyes – but also the technological skills to exploit them, it was in a position, in addition to supplying local needs, to export considerable quantities of luxury textiles to non-Islamic areas, including Europe. Thus many of the patterned silk stuffs used in Europe during the Middle Ages were produced by Islamic weavers; there are superb examples of these exports in the present exhibition. Similarly, during the Renaissance and down to the present day, Oriental carpets have been exported in vast quantities to the entire civilised world; of these also many fine specimens are displayed here.

Techniques and Designs Decorative textiles are produced in a variety of ways. One familiar method is that of embroidery or needlework, in which a pattern is worked with needle and thread on a plain material. Islamic embroideries in gold thread have long been admired in Europe as well as in their native lands; a fine example shown here, a gold embroidered Turkish saddle-cloth which was given to King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in 1626 (no. 27), also illustrates the European taste for rich Oriental horse-furniture. The great variety of silk needlework produced, in local styles, in many parts of the Islamic world, lies largely outside the scope of the exhibition, but one sample has been included – a powerfully stylised 18th century piece from the Caucasus (no. 92).

In nearly all the finest Islamic textiles, however, the pattern is not added to the cloth with the needle after weaving, but is actually incorporated in the textile by the weaver during the weaving process. Of the various ways in which this can be done, one of the most important in the Islamic world is that of carpet-knotting. In this technique, warp threads are stretched on the loom and weft threads are interlaced with them at right angles as in weaving a plain cloth, but after every few weft threads additional lengths of thread are knotted or looped round the warp threads, so as to form a pile which stands more
or less erect on the plain woven foundation. The two principal types of knot employed are commonly known as the Persian and Turkish knots, in accordance with the preference of the two countries, but both types are in general use and neither is confined to the area from which it takes its name.

The technique of carpet-knotting is well adapted to pattern making, for each knot produces a coloured spot in the pile, like a cube in a mosaic, and by using threads of different colours, the thousands or even millions of knots in a carpet can form designs of every degree of refinement and complexity.

Knotted carpets with complex patterns were made in Western Asia long before the advent of Islam, as is strikingly demonstrated by the superb example of about the 7th century B.C. found at Pazyryk and now in the State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. A celebrated carpet of Sassanian Persia, the so-called 'Spring of Chosroes', discovered by the Muslim conquerors in the palace of Chosroes in the 7th century A.D., depicted a garden with flowers, fruit and shrubs. The idea of a garden in perpetual springtime – the flowers, the trees, the sounds of water and of birds – has remained especially pleasing to the peoples of Islam, many of whom dwell in relatively arid climates, and it is constantly evoked in their carpets and textiles. It is prized not only for its appeal to the pleasure of the senses, but also for its refreshment of the spirit, and it may even assume religious and cosmological significance by its allusion to the ultimate garden, that of Paradise. A type of design with a more specific religious purpose is the motif of the arch (or arches) often found in the prayer rugs upon which the devout Muslim, turning towards Mecca, recites his prayers. This arch evokes the niche or mihrab in the Mecca-facing wall of the mosque and with it is sometimes associated a representation of a mosque lamp, suggesting divine illumination, or of a cistern or ewer, suggesting the purity required of the individual. Apart from prayer rugs, carpets are used in the Islamic world primarily as decorative floor-coverings, much as they are in Europe and America, but since traditionally the Oriental house was otherwise very sparsely furnished the carpets were seen unencumbered and played a more dominant role in the effect of an interior. It was normal practice in the East to remove shoes before walking on carpets and a further difference from Western usage lies in the fact that the Oriental traditionally sat or knelt directly on the carpet, or on a low divan or cushion, so that he was not so much above, but rather in the carpet, and was thus more conscious of its tactile qualities and saw its design from a lower viewpoint, in sharper recession. Carpets were not, of course, designed to be hung on the wall like pictures, though unfortunately it is often necessary to exhibit them in this way.

The designs of carpets and other textiles were originated, not by weavers, but by designers, who might be professional painters or miniaturists. It is true that in tribal and village rugs, or in large-scale commercial production such as that of the Ushak area in Anatolia, a design, once established, might be repeated and adapted by the weavers for generations, even for centuries, without further recourse to a designer. But in the carpets and silk textiles produced in the work-shops of courts and cities, for palace use, for diplomatic gifts, or for the luxury trade, there was an incessant demand for new designs. The carpet weavers were executants, but necessarily highly trained, since the translation of the design into knotted pile depended on their skill of eye and hand. In making a small or narrow rug a weaver would normally work alone, but for a wide carpet several weavers would work together side by side; the idea of a single craftsman working alone for many years on a large carpet is a product of Western imagination. The weavers were part of a commercial system involving investments, markets, reasonable financial returns and a number of ancillary industries, notably that of the dyers, whose contribution to the finished carpet or textile is absolutely fundamental.

Unlike woolen rugs, which were often woven in a village house or a tribal tent, textiles of silk and gold thread (generally consisting of a gilt metal or gilt membrane strip wound spirally on a silk thread) were invariably produced in the workshops of courts and cities. Those woven by the tapestry technique, in which weft threads of various colours were interlaced with the warp threads only where each particular colour is required by the design, are akin to carpets, in that the weaver, relying on his skill of hand and eye, constructs the pattern bit by bit as a mosaic or map of differently coloured patches; fine examples of various periods are exhibited here (nos. 8 and 63).

Most of the silk textiles in this exhibition, however, were woven in a different way, with the aid of a relatively complex mechanism known as the drawloom, which came into use from about the 3rd century A.D. onwards. On this apparatus the weaver interlaces the coloured weft threads with the warp threads across the whole width of the loom, while an assistant operates a system of cords to ensure that each individual thread appears on the front of the textile only where its colour is required to contribute to the pattern, while elsewhere it is rejected to the back. The drawloom is essentially a device for the precise and automatic repetition of a basic unit of pattern across the width and along the length of the textile, so that it naturally produces repeating patterns, generally though not always, smaller in scale than the patterns of carpets, which need not be repetitive. Silk and gold textiles of this kind were used chiefly for dress, for domestic furnishings – hangings, cushion covers and the like – and for other luxury goods such as saddle covers.

**Medieval Islamic Textiles**

The two main textile traditions existing in the territories conquered by the invading Arab armies in the 7th century were that of the Sassanian Empire in Persia and the Byzantine Empire in the Mediterranean area. These continued to cater for the needs of the indigenous populations and subsequently, as the conquerors began to acquire a taste for such luxuries, for the Muslims also. Thus two of the earliest silk fragments in the exhibition (nos. 1–2), found in Egypt and datable between the 7th and 9th centuries, derive from earlier Mediterranean traditions and apart from their Arabic inscriptions show no particular Islamic characteristics, although in one case (no. 1) the inscription indicates that the silk was
produced in a "kirda" or official weaving factory, established in North Africa to supply the textile needs of the Islamic state. Two splendid silks which were used to wrap the relics of saints in Europe (nos. 3–4) were produced at the eastern extremity of the Islamic world, one of them in the Bukhara area and the other, datable to the middle of the 10th century, in Khurasan. They illustrate the Islamic inheritance from the Persian textile tradition. Their patterns of great beasts seem strange to modern eyes but are characteristic Persian symbols of absolute power. These two silks with their patterns surrounded by borders also give some hint of the appearance of contemporary carpets, though no actual carpets have survived from this period.

A remarkable group of silks from the 10th–12th century was discovered about 50 years ago in a necropolis near Rayy in Persia. Two pieces probably from the original find are shown here (nos. 5, 9) together with two others which became known somewhat later, but are believed to come from the same site (nos. 6–7). They illustrate the characteristic Islamic feeling for the decorative value of fine calligraphy and a growing refinement in the ornamental detail of the patterns, in which mythical birds and monsters continue to play a leading role.

Related patterns of beasts and birds, often enclosed in circles, appear in silks of the 11th–13th century from Southern Spain (nos. 10–12) and Anatolia (nos. 13–14). An added technical refinement, introduced about this time, enabled the silk weavers to replace the uniform flat texture of silk compound weaves with the two-textured effect of the lampas weave, in which a raised, loosely textured pattern stands out against a smoother background. At about the same period the silk weavers began to make increasing use of gold thread.

The Mongol invasions disseminated a taste for Chinese dragons and other Chinese motifs, as seen in a famous Central Asian silk exhibited here (no. 15). Other silks of the 14th and 15th centuries from the Near East (nos. 16, 19, 20), Spain and North Africa (nos. 17–18) show how the old patterns of animals and birds in circles were replaced in this period by patterns of stripes or interface and by lattice patterns with plant ornament.

**Carpets and Textiles of Ottoman Turkey**

Similar ogival — or wavy — lattice patterns enclosing tulips and other flowers continued to be produced by Turkish silk weavers through the 16th century and beyond (nos. 23–6), along with other characteristic Ottoman patterns such as tiger stripes, leopard spots and crescents (nos. 21, 22, 29). Turkish taste in such matters was evidently conservative and very similar designs were repeated over long periods. The strong and simple lines of the patterns, often rendered in gold on a background of crimson, give an impression of immense confidence and power. The weavers made great use of the new technique of velvet, chiefly for large hangings or covers (no. 28) saddle covers (no. 27) and especially for djam cushion covers (nos. 29–30). At the same time they continued to employ the traditional lampas weave for the silk and gold stuffs made for the striking caftans of the Ottoman court and for the inscribed stuffs which were used for tomb covers and for other religious purposes (nos. 32–3).

Unlike the silks, which were chiefly intended for use within the Ottoman Empire, the production of carpets was geared to a large export trade to Europe. Again the designs, which were notable for the powerful simplicity of their ornamental effects, were extremely traditional and remained in use for long periods. The oldest Turkish rug shown here has a design of octagons — inspired by the circle patterns of medieval silks — containing the motif of the combat of dragon and phoenix, introduced from China by the Mongols; it probably dates from the 15th century, when rugs with this pattern were depicted in Italian paintings (no. 34). The superb Mamluk carpets of Egypt and the related pieces which continued to be made under the Ottomans (nos. 35–6) have geometrical patterns of octagons and stars, related to the interface patterns of medieval textiles. A similar geometry is seen in the Turkish rugs generally associated with the name of Holbein, although they were also depicted by many other artists; the two principal types, the large-pattern Holbein (no. 37), and the small-pattern Holbein (no. 38–40), were both current in the 15th and 16th centuries. Related to these were the so-called Lotto carpets, depicted by that painter and many others during the 16th and 17th centuries; though most of these were certainly woven in Anatolia (no. 42), others are now thought to have been produced in European Turkey (no. 41). Numerous large carpets with more elaborate floral patterns are believed to have been produced during the 16th and 17th centuries in the area of Ushak in Anatolia and are generally known by that name; the type known as "star Ushak", from the star-shaped compartments in the pattern (no. 43), as well as other varieties (nos. 44, 46) are illustrated in the exhibition. Another popular class were the white "bird rugs", named from the bird-shaped leaves in the pattern, of which one variety is shown here (no. 50).

Unlike the foregoing types, which were extensively exported to Europe, prayer rugs were primarily produced for the Islamic market. Some beautiful examples from the 16th and early 17th centuries, probably produced for the Ottoman court, have patterns which are close in style to the contemporary ceramic tiles of Istanbul (no. 45). Popularised versions of these designs can be seen in many later prayer rugs. The Ushak area, besides large carpets, produced handsome prayer rugs (no. 47), many of them double-ended (nos. 48–50).
48-9), in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Transylvanian rugs, so-called since so many of them were used in that area, are likewise double-ended and are depicted in many European 17th century paintings (nos. 51-2). Prayer rugs with three arches or six columns (nos. 53-4) are clearly derived from the earlier court style, as are the well-known prayer rugs of Ghiordes (no. 55).

In the 19th century a new Ottoman court workshop at Hereke produced finely knotted rugs in styles derived from early Persian carpets. Many of these pieces, like that shown here (no. 56), were at one time mistakenly classified as Persian 16th-century work.

Textiles and Carpets of Safavid Persia. The Turkish products tend to be sumptuous, powerful and severe, with an ornamental repertory restricted to geometry and plant forms, whereas the Persians combine richness of effect with delicacy and elegance, and make extensive use of human and animal subjects, often in more or less naturalistic landscape settings.

These characteristics are well illustrated in a fine group of 16th century carpets in the exhibition, showing animals among scrolls (no. 61) or in landscapes (nos. 59-60), sometimes pursued by hunters (nos. 57, 58). Unlike the exact repetitions of Turkish carpets, the motifs are here constantly re-combined in new compositions by the designers, who were probably miniature-painters and were certainly strongly influenced by the arts of the book. The basic compositional framework of a central medallion and quarter-medallions in the corners – from which such carpets are sometimes classified as ‘medallion carpets’ – is derived from book-covers and ornamental pages. It has recently been suggested that the medallion represents the dome of Heaven and it has already been mentioned above that these parkland scenes may refer to Paradise, an interpretation which is sometimes reinforced by the presence of houris (no. 60). The dragons, phoenixes and other creatures, as well as the hunters, may represent the forces of good and evil and symbolic interpretations of this kind can be extended to many of the motifs. It would certainly be an error to ignore such symbolic resonances, but we must also take care not to fall into the opposite error of attempting to read these ornamental compositions as if they were philosophical or theological treatises.

Though most carpets in Persia as elsewhere were knotted in wool, a few of the most splendid of the 16th century carpets have a silk pile (no. 57). Under the reign of Shah ‘Abbás I, in the late 16th and early 17th century there was a growing taste for carpets in sumptuous materials, not only silk but also gold and silver thread. A group of very beautiful small silk rugs of this period are generally attributed to Kashan (no. 62). Both Kashan and Isfahan produced luxurious rugs in silk and metal threads, which are often known as ‘Polish’ or ‘Polonaise’ owing to a mistaken attribution current in Europe in the 19th century. Most of these rugs are of metal thread and knotted silk pile (nos. 64-6), but some are woven throughout in the tapestry technique (no. 63). The exhibition also includes an important silk rug, signed and dated 1671, from the mausoleum of Shah ‘Abbás II at Qum (68). A curious and interesting group of 17th century carpets of uncertain attribution are the ‘Portuguese’ carpets, so-called because they include a scene of European seamen (no. 67). The vase carpets, named after the vases which appear in the designs, are attributed to Kirman and can be better studied in the concurrent exhibition of Kirman carpets at the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield, though one unusual example is shown here (no. 69). The so-called dragon carpets from the Cacus combine plant forms from the vase carpets with dragons and other creatures from the animal carpets in characteristically stylised compositions (no. 70). The admirable rugs of the Turkoman tribes, with their fine rich colouring, are also represented here by a single example (no. 71).

Just as Persian carpets of the 16th and 17th centuries represent the summit of excellence in the design and weaving of carpets, so too the Persian silks and velvets of that period stand in a class of their own in the history of silk weaving. It is a rare and significant phenomenon that the directors of the production workshops were men of such standing that they appended their signatures both to the carpets (nos. 58, 68) and to the silks (nos. 79-83). The silk weavers, thanks to the delicacy of their techniques, could even surpass the carpet weavers in the execution of naturalistic designs and this is one of the few periods in history when patterns of human figures were the leading theme of silks and velvets. There are superb 16th century examples in the exhibition, among which the remarkable velvet tent-ceiling with hunting scenes (no. 73) and the finely preserved silk from Rosenborg Castle (no. 74) may be singled out for special mention. In the early 17th century, effects of even greater luxury and magnificence were achieved in such pieces as the extraordinary velvet from Delhi with large-scale figures of women (no. 85) and the splendid velvet coat which was a gift to Queen Christina of Sweden (no. 84). An unusual use for these fine silks and velvets is illustrated by the small pieces which were used as envelopes for diplomatic letters (nos. 86, 90). Besides the figure subjects, many superb silks and velvets were woven with floral designs (nos. 79, 87-9) and inscriptions (nos. 80-2); although the quality of the work tended slowly to decline after the middle of the 17th century an excellent
standard was maintained in such works as the silk coat (no. 89) and the large 19th century banner displayed here (no. 91).

 Carpets and Textiles of Mughal India  The fine textiles produced in the Mughal Empire cannot be omitted from any survey of Islamic art, though it is not possible to represent their full variety in a general exhibition. Some of the skilled textile craftsmen were imported from Persia and it is natural that the products are very closely related to those of that country, so much so that the origin of some examples remains controversial. Nonetheless the Persian prototypes were quickly adapted and transformed in a characteristically Mughal style.

 In carpets, for example, the Mughal designers carried Persian naturalism a stage further by abandoning the symmetry and repetition which give a certain formality to all Safavid carpet designs. Instead, they treated the carpet as a picture, with excerpts from nature freely and arbitrarily disposed in a pictorial space defined and framed by the borders. This is well seen in the famous rug with birds and trees from Vienna (no. 98) and the animal carpet formerly at Belvoir Castle (no. 99). Fine prayer rugs with flowering plants under arches are also characteristic of Mughal production (nos. 100–1). Similar floral motifs are also found in silks (no. 92) and velvets (nos. 94–5) and in the beautiful sashes of silk and gold thread which were worn at the Mughal courts (nos. 96–7).

 1 Silk cloth with circles and inscription
 Two pieces, lengths 50.7cm and 21.5cm, width 30.5cm and 15.2cm Victoria and Albert Museum, London, nos. 21.54–1888, 21.13–1960 Tunisia, Umayyad period, late 7th–mid 8th century
 The inscription embroidered in yellow silk reads, on the smaller piece, Allah murrade amir al umr . . . (the servant of God, Marwan, Commander of the Faithful) and, on the larger piece, PT Tahrirjassa (So the factory of Tahirjasa). A further scrap of the inscription is in the Brooklyn Museum. The reference is to an Umayyad caliph, either Marwan I (744–50) or Marwan II (744–50). The latter, who was killed in Egypt, where these pieces were found, is generally thought more likely. This is one of the oldest extant inscriptions of the official factories (744) which played such a large part in the textile production of the Islamic world. Tahirjasa refers to the area of modern Tunisia. The woven pattern comprises, on the smaller piece, a band of pears, jewels and hearts and, on the larger piece, circles containing bunches of grapes and flowers with heart-shaped petals. These elements, some of which were inherited from Sassanian art, were common in early Islamic ornament. The weave is compound twill, with warp of red silk and weft of silk in four colours. The technical characteristics are identical with those of silks woven in the east Mediterranean area from where, no doubt, the Tahirjasa factory derived its technical traditions.
 Published: Guest (1906, pp. 900–1); Guest and Kondstrik (1933, pp. 187–91); Day (1935, pp. 59–63)

 2 Silk band with running figures, trees, birds and inscriptions
 Length 51.8cm, width 9.5cm Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 21.50–1900 Egypt or Syria, Umayyad or Abbasid period, 8th–9th century
 This piece belongs to a class of two-coloured silks, woven as trimmings for tunics, which have been found in considerable numbers in Egyptian graves, especially at Athishn. Some examples include Greek or Coptic names and were evidently made for the Christian market, while others in an identical style, derived from late Hellenistic art, have Islamic inscriptions. The inscription below the figures in this example is generally agreed to be in Arabic script of the 8th–9th century. No satisfactory reading of it has yet been proposed. The weave is compound twill, with warp of undyed silk and weft of silk in two colours.
 Published: Falke (1913, L. p. 47); Kühlert (1935, pp. 91–2); Day (1935b, 2, pp. 540–7)
3 Silk cloth with lions and palm-trees in circles
Length 95cm, width 64.5cm
Musée Historique Lorrain, Nancy, no. 92-734
Central Asia (Bukhara area), 8th-9th century
This splendid silk is thought to have been associated with the relics of St. Amos in the cathedral of Toulu, possibly at the time of the translation of the relics in 820. It is a masterpiece of large-scale pattern weaving and is the most distinguished example of a group of silks of which several have been found in European shrines and others at Ctesiphon-fu-ting in Kanara. One piece, at Huy in Belgium, has a hand-written inscription in Sogdian which refers to the village of Zandane near Bukhara and has been dated, on palaeographical grounds, to the beginning of the 8th century. The conception of the design of the present piece owes much to Sasanian art and some of the details, including the tree and flower forms, have parallels in the designs found on Sasanian silver objects. Other elements, such as the frill of foliage round the circles and the stylization of the lion, dog and fox, are characteristic of the Central Asian school of textile design. The remains of a border of beasts on the left suggests that the cloth, like other examples of the group, had borders all round in the manner of a carpet. The weave is compound twill; the warp is of beige silk and the weft is of silk in six colours, now dyed, but originally bright and lively. The use of fugitive dyes is characteristic of this group of silks.

Published: d'Ardenne (1877, pl. 147); Fiske (1913, l. pp. 98-101); London (1931, no. 192; Roethel (1961, nos. 286-86)).
Shepherd and Henning (1939, pp. 15-40).

4 Silk cloth with elephants and inscription, the "shroud of Saint Josse" Larger piece, length 82cm, width 94cm. Smaller piece, length 24.5cm, width 26cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, no. 7526
Persia (Khurasan), Sasanian period, mid-3rd century
This majestic textile, known as the "shroud of Saint Josse", is the major landmark in early Islamic silk weaving. The inscription reads 'The son of the Prophet has given me this cloth, Josse the merchant of Damascus, to wear on Fridays. In the second year of the Hijra, 622 AD... The person named here was a Turkish commander in Khurasan who was arrested and put to death by order of his Sasanian sovereign, 'Abd al Malik b. Nuh in 691. The superbly assured design with its richly caparisoned elephants, potently symbolic of power, has an almost baroque splendour and a stylistic reminiscence of jewellery or enamel. It is generally agreed that the complete design comprised two tiers of elephants, with inscriptions top and bottom, and a border of cacti all around with cock-s at the four corners - a composition like that of a carpet. Sasanian elements, such as the cock and the flying scarves of the cacti, are associated with Central Asian elements, such as the dragon and the Buddhist cacti themselves. The weave is compound twill; the warp is of red silk and the weft of silk in seven colours. The textile is a masterpiece of large-scale pattern weaving, testifying to the high quality of the silk industry in Khurasan, with its main centres at Merv and Nishapur. The pieces were found in the reliquary of Saint Josse at Saint-Josse-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais). It has been suggested that they were a gift from Eufrosine de Blois, patron of the abbey and one of the commanders of the first crusade.

Published: Ebert (1920, pp. 129-38); London (1931, no. 121; Roethel (1961, IV, pp. 154-5, no. 174)); Pope and Ackerman (1968-9, III, pp. 202-3, 2028-31); Berman, Marchal and Vial (1972, pp. 22-77, 228-31); Paris (1971, no. 234).

5 Silk cloth with inscriptions
Several pieces, length 130cm, width 295cm overall
Mesopotamia or Persia, Buyid period, about 1000
The large kufic inscription in yellow on blue reads 'The son of the Prophet has given me this cloth, Josse the merchant of Damascus, to wear on Fridays. In the second year of the Hijra, 622 AD... The person named here was a Turkish commander in Khurasan who was arrested and put to death by order of his Sasanian sovereign, 'Abd al Malik b. Nuh in 691. The superbly assured design with its richly caparisoned elephants, potently symbolic of power, has an almost baroque splendour and a stylistic reminiscence of jewellery or enamel. It is generally agreed that the complete design comprised two tiers of elephants, with inscriptions top and bottom, and a border of cacti all around with cock-s at the four corners - a composition like that of a carpet. Sasanian elements, such as the cock and the flying scarves of the cacti, are associated with Central Asian elements, such as the dragon and the Buddhist cacti themselves. The weave is compound twill; the warp is of red silk and the weft of silk in seven colours. The textile is a masterpiece of large-scale pattern weaving, testifying to the high quality of the silk industry in Khurasan, with its main centres at Merv and Nishapur. The pieces were found in the reliquary of Saint Josse at Saint-Josse-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais). It has been suggested that they were a gift from Eufrosine de Blois, patron of the abbey and one of the commanders of the first crusade.

Published: London (1931, no. 73); Guittard and Kosslick (1923, pp. 185-6); Wirt (1931, p. 22); Roethel (1961, VI, pp. 66-67, 177-81); Pope and Ackerman (1968-9, III, pp. 202-3, 2028-31); Paris (1971, no. 234).

6 Silk cloth with two-headed eagles carrying human figures
Length 126cm, width 65cm
Cleveland Museum of Art, no. 62.164, purchase from the H. Wade Fund Persia, early 11th century
This cloth, almost complete in length and breadth, is believed to have been found in a tomb at Naqarra Khana, an ancient necropolis near Rayy. An inscription at the top is a verse from a Diva dedicated by the poet Baha'i to the Abbai at al-Muwattalid (347-91) to congratulate him on an escape from drowning. It reads: 'You remain the Abbai of the Faithful and your preservation for the officer of event of excellent quality.' The striking pattern of the silk consists of a great two-headed eagle, repeated six times, grasping in its talons a pair of quadrupeds. This ancient motif goes back to Sumerian times and is here combined with the theme of the human figure carried off by an eagle, familiar in the west through the Gnyanemede myth. The cocks in the wings of the great bird are inscribed with the word 'pity'. The elaborate ornamental treatment of details seen in this silk is characteristic of a number of pieces thought to have come from this site. The weave is lampas with warp-faced tubby ground and web-faced tabby pattern. Warp and weft are of silk.

Published: Wirt (1926, pp. 55-63); Durand and Wirt (1951); Shepherd (1963, pp. 63-70, and 1974); Lamborg, Vial and Hofmann-de Gaud (1973).
7 Silk pall with inscriptions
Length 21 cm, width 10 cm
Cleveland Museum of Art, no. 34.786, purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund
Persia, mid-11th century

This pall is reported to have been found together with part of a wooden coffin in a tomb on a mountain not far from Tebriz. It is presumed to have come from the necropolis on the hill called Naqsh-e Khusta near Rayy. See also no. 6. The curved inscription at the top, designed to encircle the head of the deceased, reads

"Forgiveness from the Merciful, the Compassionate, for the slaves, the sinner," Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Shahrizad ibn Rashid ah Diabati.

The inscription within, intended to cover the face

"May God make my face white on the day when the face becomes black. I hope that God will render me radiant on the day of resurrection."

This seems to refer to Koran Sura LXXV, 22-4, which describes the faces of the righteous as shining (sidqay) at the resurrection, whilst that of the unrighteous are frowning (ba'ara'a). A small circular inscription placed near the heart reads

"May God make my heart steadfast to his religion in honour of Muhammad and his family."

The long vertical inscription

"Oh God, I confide my heart which I bring to you in accepting the Prophet Muhammad, the blessings of God be upon him and his family and in accepting the imams upon whom be the peace. You are the most reliable and the only one [with authority]. At the moment of the question of Munkar and Nakir, I hope for your mercy, oh most merciful of the merciful!"

The reference to the imams indicates that the deceased was a member of the shia sect. Munkar and Nakir are two angels described in the Hadith who are believed to question the dead in the tomb concerning their beliefs. The inscription placed near the right hand

"May God give my book into my right hand and make the reckoning easy for me."

That near to the left hand

"May God not give my book into my left hand and may he not let it be attached and hung from my neck."

These inscriptions refer to Koran Sura XVII, 71 and LXIX, 19 and 35 describing how, on the day of judgement, the righteous man will get his record (book) in his right hand, while the unrighteous gets his in his left. The reference to records being hung round the neck appears to be to Sura XVII, 13.

The inscriptions placed by the legs

"May God make my legs steady in the bridge of Steel."

"The day when the legs tremble there."

The bridge of Steel is believed to be suspended across the eternal fire; the righteous pass quickly over it, but the unrighteous miss their footing and fall into the fires of hell. The weave is compound tabby, with warp and weft of silk. The colours, now ivory and dark brown, were originally two shades of red. The textile was woven to shape, with selvedge all round and long tassels of cut wool.

Published: Shepherd (1965).

8 Linen cloth, the 'veil of Saint Anne', with tapestry ornaments
Length 71 cm, width 150 cm
Church of Saints-Anna, Aegyptus
(classical historical monument)
Egypt (Damietta), Fatimid period, 1066-7

This fine linen cloth is decorated with three bands of silk and gold tapestry, the central band has three circles containing pairs of adorned sphinxes. Above the top circle was an inscription, now destroyed.

"In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. There is no God but God, alone, without associate; Muhammad is the apostle of God."

Around the top circle is the inscription

"All is the friend of God, may God grant him blessing. The imam Abū al-Qāsim al-Munṣarrī billsah, commander of the faithful, may the blessings of God be upon him, on his pure ancestors and his very honourable descendants."

Around the second circle

"His very honourable descendants."

The most illustrious lord al-'Alî, the lord of the imam, the illustrious of Islam."

Around the third circle

"His very honourable descendants, the most illustrious lord al-'Alî, the nobility of humans."

The two side bands show birds, animals and inscriptions including

"This is what was made in the private weaving factory at Damietta in the year... p."

The Fatimid caliph al-Mustârdsân reigned 1054-1101 and the damaged date must have been 1066 [1066 AH] or 460 [1067 AD]. The caliph was little more than a cipher and his chief minister al-'Alî al-Munṣarrī was the effective ruler of Egypt. This cloth, traditionally known as the 'veil of Saint Anne', was perhaps originally intended to serve as a robe of honour, worn with the central band at the back and the other two bands at the front. Both the lord and the bishop of Aegypt, where this cloth is preserved, took part in the first crusade and it has been suggested that the cloth may have been part of the plunder taken from Jerusalem in 1099 or from the defeat of al-'Alî at Ascalon in the same year.

Published: Marçais and Wiet (1930); Elsberg and Guest (1936); Repertory (1937, VIII, pp. 367-70, 368-9).

9 Silk cloth with sphinxes and plant forms
Length 61 cm, width 24 cm
Textile Museum, Washington D.C., no. 1, 212
Persia, 11th-12th century

This cloth is believed to have been found in the necropolis on the Naqsh-e Khusta hill near Rayy. The pattern in green on red, now faded, was of considerable size and only part has been preserved. Interlacing bands form angular compartments of various shapes, of which one contains four pairs of confronted sphinxes; others contain foliage ornament and one shows forths which presumably formed part of a large bird. The textile is notable for the elegance of the design and the refinement of the execution. The weave is sashim, with warp-faced tabby ground and weft-faced twill pattern; warp and weft are of silk.

Published: Ashton (1935); Pope and Ackerman (1938), pp. 2035, 5235; no. 38; Welbœuf (1935), p. 316; no. 113;
10 Silk cloth with lions and harpies in circles
Length 42cm, width 30cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, no. 23.377
Southern Spain, about 1100

This silk comes from the tomb of Saint Pedro de Osma (died 1100) in the cathedral of Burgos de Osma. The design of harpies on the backs of lions, within circular frames showing men attacked by griffins, is strikingly inventive and finely detailed. The small medallions linking the circles bear the inscriptions which read 'Allah umma al ma’ blanks [neither text visible].

'This is one of the things made [in Baghdad] ...'

Despite this inscription the silk belongs to a group of textiles which are proved by abundant evidence to have been worn in southern Spain. Moreover, the spelling of the inscription is peculiar to the western Mediterranean area and is not found in the eastern Islamic world.

Evidently the inscription was designed to mislead, presumably for commercial reasons. The weaves in lampas, with warp-faced tabby ground and weft-faced tabby pattern. The warp is of silk, the weft is of silk with brocaded gilt membrane thread.

Published: Elsberg and Guest (1916); Reperoire (1935, VII, no. 2363); Day (1954); Shepherd (1975, pp. 358-81)

11-12 Two pieces of a silk vestment with confronted peacocks, the 'cope of King Robert'.

a Length 151cm, width 143/2cm; b length 148cm, width 143.3cm
Church of Saint Severin, Toulouse (clarified historical monument)
Southern Spain, 12th century

A record prior to 1791 states that the two pieces were a charnel used to wrap the relics of Saint Euphrius in 1258. Later sources, however, refer to the vestment as the 'cope of King Robert', meaning Robert of Anjou, King of Naples (died 1248). Small fragments of the same silk are also to be found in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, the Museo de Cluny, Paris, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. On a dark blue ground the pattern shows pairs of confronted peacocks in six rows, with colours alternating in successive rows, together with trees, antelopes, birds and an inscription 'perfect blessing'. An attribution to Sicily has often been proposed for this silk, but most of the available comparative evidence points to southern Spain as the place of manufacture. The ornamental style belongs to the 12th century. The weave is compound twill. The warp is of beige silk, the weft in silk of seven colours.

Published: Folk (1913, I, p. 224); Shepherd and Viol (1955); Paris (1971, no. 237)

13 Part of a silk chasuble with lions in circles and inscription
Length 102cm, width 74.5cm
Musée Historique des Trôns, Lyon, no. 22.473
Turkey (Anatolia), Seljuk period, 12th century

This piece is said to have come from an abbey in Annecy. The inscription reads '[Abi al duniya tu'] [dis Abi al Faqit Kaykubaid] [ibn]
Kaykhuswar Bârân [anir al ma’mâr].

'... Abi al Faqit Kaykubaid son of Kaykhuswar Burân ...'

There were several Seljuk sultans of Rum called Kaykubaid, but the first name Abi al Faqit and the father’s title identify this ruler as Kaykubaid I of Konya (1219-37). The pattern, in gold on pink, is notable for the power and energy of the style. The weave is compound twill; the warp is of tan silk, the weft of pink silk and gilt membrane thread.

Published: Linsen (1966, pp. 17-23); Folk (1913, I, p. 106); Henneler (1930, pl. 10); Sukanis (1953); Rice (1961, pp. 270-2)

14 Silk cloth with two-headed eagles in shields
Length 38cm, width 22.5cm
Staatliche Museum Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstickkabinett, Berlin, no. 81.475
Turkey (Anatolia), Seljuk period, 13th century

This silk comes from the shrine of Saint Apollinari, in the church of Saint Servatius in Siegburg, where another piece of the same cloth is still preserved. The vivid luster of the design is related to that of no. 13 and this silk is likely to have been woven in the same area. The two-headed eagle had heraldic significance for the Seljuks of Rum and appears on their buildings in Konya and elsewhere; see also a dragon relief from Konya (Rice, 1961, fig. 57). The weave is compound twill; the warp is silk, the weft silk and gilt membrane thread.

Published: Folk (1913, I, pp. 106-7); Rice (1961, p. 271)
15 Silk cloth with birds in dodécaegons and dragons between
Length 72 cm, width 56 cm
Staatliches Museum Prussianischer Kulturbesitz, Kunstsammlungen,
Berlin, no. 72-238
Central Asia, early 14th century
This silk was formerly part of a cope in the Marienkirche, Damp. An inscription on the wing of the bird reads 'śīr bī-mansūlān al-sulṭān al-mālik al-dālāl al-šālim Nāşir [3]
'Glory to our lord the sultan, the king, the just, the wise Nāşir... This probably refers to Muhammad Ibn Qalāwūn, the Mamluk sultan of Egypt 1299-1340. The weave is lampas, with warp-faced twist ground and weft-faced tabby pattern. The warp is silk, the weft silk and flat gilt membrane strip. Gilt strip of this type is a characteristic feature of a large group of silks used in the 14th century throughout the Islamic world and also in Europe. Many show Chinese motifs, like the dragon in this example, symptomatic of the westward flow of Chinese ornament under the Mongol domination. The place of origin of these silks is uncertain and both China and Persia have been suggested, but Central Asia is perhaps the most likely; they may well be the textiles known in Europe as 'Tartar cloths'. It is of interest that Abū al-Filda records a gift in 1324-4 from a Mongol Khan to Muhammad Ibn Qalāwūn which included seven hundred silk cloths, some of which had titles of the sultan woven in them.
Published: Kanbach (1874), Sarre and Martin (1912, III, p. 180); Fulek (1913, pp. 111-117); Pope and Ackerman (1939-40, III, pp. 153, 205; 1945, no. 14).

16 Silk cloth with inscriptions and floral arabesques in stripes
Length 23 cm, width 28 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. T.222-1924
Egypt or Syria, Mamluk period, early 14th century
This silk was found in Egypt; other fragments of the same cloth are now in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, and the Benaki Museum, Athens. One stripe has a leopard attacking a gazelle beside a tree. Others are inscribed 'īzī bī-mansūlān al-sulṭān al-mālik al-dālāl al-šālim Nāşir... 'Glory to our lord the sultan... This is a fairly early example of the striped cloths with inscriptions which were woven in large numbers throughout the Islamic world in the 14th and 15th centuries. The weave is double cloth; the warp is silk, the weft silk with a little gilt membrane thread.
Published: Guest (1913, pp. 404-7).

17 Silk cloth with inscriptions and floral arabesques in stripes
Length 57 cm, width 89 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 2197-1900
Southern Spain, Nasrid period, 14th-15th century
The inscription reads 'īzī bī-mansūlān al-sulṭān, repeated. 'Glory to our lord the sultan'. This silk is a characteristic southern Spanish version of the type of striped and inscribed silks that were produced throughout the Islamic world at this period, compare no. 16. Granada had a reputation for striped cloths. The weave is lampas, with satin ground and weft-faced tabby pattern; warp and weft are of silk. Unpublished

18 Silk cloth with geometrical interlace
Length 57 cm, width 47 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 1712-1864
Southern Spain or North Africa, Nasrid period, 14th-15th century
Geometrical interlace, a very widespread type of decoration on Islamic textiles, was employed in silk weaving chiefly in Southern Spain and North Africa and gave rise to a series of boldly conceived and brilliantly coloured silks. This example was bought in the 19th century in Florence, where it formed part of a hanging behind a large wooden statue of the Virgin. The weave is lampas, with satin ground and weft-faced tabby pattern; warp and weft are of silk. Unpublished

19 Silk cloth with palmes, foliage and inscriptions
Length 114 cm, width 103 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 753-1904
Egypt or Syria, Mamluk period, 14th-15th century
This silk, which has been used as the orphrey of a vestment, is of a type which was much used in Spain but was probably imported from the eastern Mediterranean. The pear-shaped ornament is inscribed 'īzī bī-mansūlān al-sulṭān, 'glory to our lord the king. The small octofoil inscriptions are inscribed al-'Ashef; the suggestion that this title refers to Qalāwūn, Mamluk Sultan of Egypt (1465-156), is inadmissible, since textiles with this pattern are depicted in paintings of the early 15th century. The weave is lampas, with satin ground and weft-faced tabby pattern. The warp is of silk, the weft of silk and gilt metal thread.
Published: Fulek (1913, II, p. 64); Kendrich (1944, p. 61, no. 97); Schmidt (1958, p. 165).
22 Child's silk kaftan with tiger stripes
Length 71 cm, width 78.3 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 753-1882
Turkey, Ottoman period, 18th century
This garment shows the motif often identified as tiger stripes, in blue, white and gold on a red background. It is said to have been removed from a royal tomb in Istanbul or Bursa. The weave is lambswool with a satin ground and weft-faced twill pattern. The warp is silk, the weft silk and gilt metal thread.
Published: London (1950, no. 12)

23 Silk cloth with flowers and leaves in an ogival lattice
Length 142 cm, width (overall) 134 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 1356-1877 and 1358A-1877
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th century
This is a particularly fine example of the large group of Turkish silks with ogival lattice patterns. Here, a delicate design of pomegranates, flowers and leaves appears in gold, blue, red and white on a green background. The weave is lambswool, with satin ground and weft-faced twill pattern. The warp is silk, the weft is silk, with brocaded gilt metal thread.
Published: London (1950, no. 5)

21 Velvet with tiger stripes and discs
Length 76 cm, width 62 cm
Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., no. 1:77
Turkey, Ottoman period, 15th–16th century
This fragment presents a pattern almost identical to that of the kaftan of Mehmet the Conqueror (1451–81) preserved in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul. The colours, however, are different and in this example maroon velvet is brocaded in silver and gold. The motif of tiger stripes and discs, separately or together, were extremely popular in Turkish textiles, especially for royal garments. The origin of these devices, particularly the three discs, can be traced back many centuries. They are supposed to have derived from the markings of tiger and leopard skins. The velvet is based on satin weave; the warp and weft are of silk, with brocaded wefts of silver and gilt metal thread.
Published: London (1950, no. 12)

20 Silk chasuble with lattice of leaves enclosing foliate medallions
Length 127 cm, width 72 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 664-1896
Egypt or Syria, Manial period, 19th century
The chasuble was made up in Spain from a silk whose origin is uncertain, but whose restrained formality of design, couched with the richness of the materials, reflects the refined taste of the 19th century in the Near East. The type and scale of the pattern fore-shadow Ottoman silks of the 16th century (compare no. 22). The weave is lambswool with satin ground and weft-faced tabby pattern. The warp is of silk, the weft is of silk and gilt metal thread.
Published: Folke (1913, II, p. 68)

24 Silk cloth with an ogival lattice containing pointed medallions
Length 161 cm, width 67 cm
Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., no. 1:79
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th century
This is a handsome example of the large group of Turkish silks with ogival patterns. Within the scalloped gilt medallions is a central white leaf bearing gilt carnations and tulips with a blue Chinese cloud band above and below. The background is red and the pattern is rendered mainly in gold with details in blue and white. The weave is lambswool, with satin ground and weft-faced twill pattern. The warp is silk, the weft silk and gilt metal thread.
Published: Mackie (1973, no. 5)
25 Velvet with ogival lattice enclosing artichokes
Length 166cm, width 137cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 1357-1877
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th century
This is one of the many 16th-century Turkish velvets whose designs show clear traces of Italian influence. On a red velvet background, artichoke-shaped motifs in gold thread are framed in an ogival lattice in gold and silver. The weave is velvet, based on satin, with pattern in weft-faced twill. The warp is silk; the weft is silk and cotton with brocaded silver and gilt threads.
Published: London (1950, no. 16)

26 Velvet with tulips and carnations in an ogival lattice
Length 284cm, width 63.7cm
American Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th-17th century
The pattern of a large ogival lattice enclosing flowers and leaves is characteristic of Turkish textiles of this period and may be compared with contemporary tiles. The velvet has a satin ground and weft-faced twill pattern. The warp is silk; the weft is silk and cotton, with brocaded silver and gilt thread.
Published: Geiger (1953, p. 176, no. 204)

27 Velvet saddle-cloth with leaves and flowers
Length 81cm, width 122cm
Royal Armoury, Stockholm, no. 3812
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th-17th century
This cloth forms part of a complete set of saddle-furniture given to King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in 1606 by his brother-in-law, Berthold Gaber, Prince of Transylvania. The velvet cover is embroidered with fine silver and gilt wire padded with cotton yarn and is edged with a tablet woven fringe of silk and gold thread.
Published: Geiger (1953, p. 176, no. 204)

28 Part of a velvet cover with foliate stars
Length 183cm, width 63.5cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 932-1878
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th-17th century
This is a complete lozenge piece destined for a cover which, when completed, would have been made up of two or more similar pieces. The pattern consists of gold foliate stars of two sizes on a background of red velvet in the main field and of silver used for the border. The weave is velvet based on satin, with pattern in weft-faced twill. The warp is silk; the weft is silk and cotton, with brocaded silver and gilt thread.
Published: Geiger (1953, p. 176, no. 204)

29 Velvet cushion cover with crescents and tulips
Length 134.5cm, width 86cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 42.7-1889
Turkey, Ottoman period, 17th century
This typical divan cushion cover of red and green velvet has large gold crescents, a recurring motif in Turkish textiles, enclosing garlands of tulips. The borders at each end consist of lappets, alternatively gold and silver, enclosing flowers. The weave is velvet with a satin base and the brocaded wefts are bound in weft-faced twill. The warp is silk; the weft is silk and cotton, with brocaded silver and gilt threads.
Published: Geiger (1953, p. 111, no. 69)

30 Velvet cushion cover with eight-pointed star
Length 180cm, width 67cm
Royal Armoury, Stockholm, no. 3661
Turkey, Ottoman period, early 17th century
This cushion cover is one of a pair presented to the King of Sweden, Fredrik I, by `Abd Allah Pasha of Algiers in 1731. They are the only precisely datable examples of their kind. An eight-pointed star is enclosed in a medallion within a rectangle and is framed by a large border of foliate stars. Both ends of the cover have lappet borders with stylised tulips. The velvet has green and red pile on a white satin ground. The warp is silk, the weft silk and cotton with details brocaded in silver thread.
Published: Geiger (1953, p. 111, no. 69)
Silk tomb cover
Length 24 cm, width 13.4 cm
Antakya Collection
Turkey, Ottoman period, 18th century
The silk is of a type commonly used for tomb covers and is woven with religious inscriptions in zigzag bands in white on green. Compare no. 33.
Top narrow band
Kudja Allah uz-azm' un Ahh Bah a
wla 'Omar wla 'Uthman wla 'Abd wla 'an-baqiyat ul-sahiba afnunun
'May God be pleased with Abu Bakr and 'Umar and 'Uthman' and
'All and with all the other companions of the Prophet.'
Top broad band
Alih wla le sanawlu Muhammad
'God there is none but He—Muhammad.'
Second narrow band
Alhambama ya [sic] n sa lam 'a in' asr irfi' yu'mi al-asabiyad n al-marmulun
'Oh God, bless and give peace to their nobilities all the prophets and missionaries.'
Second broad band
Al-ammumma nul-sanawlu la'sayk ya rasul Allah
'Blessing and peace upon you, the Prophet of God.'
The weave is lamplight, with satin ground and tabby pattern. Warp and weft are of silk.
Unpublished

Silk cloth with inscriptions
Length 21 cm, width 68 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 169-1900
Turkey, Ottoman period, 18th century
This red silk shows parallel zigzag bands, alternately broad and narrow, with verses from the Koran and pious invocations.
Top narrow band
sahban Allah al-azim, rahman
Allah wla li-handih? [7]
'Glory to that mighty God, glory to God and to his praise.'
Second band, circles
yul sahum yu sajir
'Oh glory — oh authority.'
Second band, pandants
yul mases yu bani
'Oh benefactor! Oh tender one.'
Third narrow band
qada narfi taqadda waqiah fi al-samam
falahatul-wahabik qubla thuqil fal-ha shaw al-mazgal al-kurum
'We see the turning of thy face [for guidance] to the heavens: now shall we turn thou to a qibla that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in that direction of the sacred mosque.' (Koran, Surat II, 144.)
Fourth wide band
La ilah illa Allah Muhammad
ra'sal Allah
'There is no god but God and Muhammad is His prophet.'
Such cloths were used as covers for the tombs of sultans and other eminent persons. The weave is lamplight, with satin ground and well-faced twill pattern. Warp and weft are of silk. A similar silk is in the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., no. 1.84. See Denney (1935, p. 65).
Unpublished

Animal rug
Length 172 cm, width 90 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Islamisches Museum, no. 1.14
Turkey or the Caucasus, first half 18th century
This is the earliest carpet in the present exhibition and one of the oldest complete carpets in the world as well as one of the most famous. Originally from a church in central Italy, the carpet was acquired by Iode for Berlin in 1886. Only one other comparable carpet survives: this is the Marly rug, from a Swedish church, now in the Historiska Museum, Stockholm.
This carpet has a pattern in which stylised dragons are locked in perpetual combat with phoenixes. These creatures together with the latch-hook motifs throughout the design suggest comparisons with later Caucasian carpets. This example is a little coarser than the Marly rug and the patterns differ, but both share the same technical features including a line of knotting at intervals on the back of the carpet. Such carpets with more or less stylized animals in octagonal appear in 14th century paintings from the mid-14th century onwards and some may even be European copies, in various techniques, of oriental imports. A carpet very similar to this example appears in a Siennese fresco by Domenico di Bartolo, 1440-4. Their continuing popularity in Europe can be judged from the portrait of Dorothy, Lady Cary, who stands on an unknown carpet with a simplified version of the phoenix motif, attributable to William Larkin, c. 1654. See Strong (1979, fig. 254). The carpet has a woollen warp and two shoots of brown woolen weft after each row of knots, 7.5-8.3 Turkish knots per square cm.
Published: Sarre and Trenkwald (1946, 1. pl. 60).

Mamluk design carpet
Length 120 cm, width 134 cm
Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna, no. 7.8172
Egypt (Cairo), 16th century
Carpet-knotting in Egypt developed independently of the industry in Turkey, for the carpets of Cairo in the 19th and 19th centuries were made with the Persian type of knot. When the Ottomans conquered the Mamluks in 1517, the carpets in production were of halásidic patterns mainly in white-red, blues and greens. Two pieces bordered with interlace patterns make decorative use of a blazon appropriate to some thirty arms at the court of Qbildiybi, 1480-96, see Ellis (1997, figs. 1 and 2). The oval and rounded borders of this present carpet may be indicative of 16th-century manufacture. The emphasis on the great central star-in-octagon-in-square with hands of subsidiary pattern towards the ends is characteristic of the Mamluk designs, as are the tiny umbrella-shaped leaves. Later Cairene carpets incorporated floral designs in Turkish style. In 1555 the Saltua brought eleven weavers from Cairo to found the workshop which produced the Ottoman court rugs (see no. 45) retaining elements of technique and colouring from the Mamluk carpets. The warp of this example is lustrous yellowish wool with three shoots of red-brown wool after each row of knots, 7.5-8.3 Turkish knots per square cm.
Published: Sarre and Trenkwald (1946, I. pl. 50).
36 Compartment carpet
Length 7'7" cm, width 2'4" cm
Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., no. 129.131.5 (old no. R. 7.10)
Turkey, Ottoman period, early 17th century

Technically and stylistically, carpets of this type were hybrids. The field
pattern, so strongly marked in squares that it attracted the name 'compartment',
in this respect is similar to the fragment of an Austrian carpet from the mosque
depicted by Ehrenfeld, see Erdfmann (1970, pl. 44). The interlace star is
related to the Holbein carpets, but the tiny trees and fragmentary ornament
around the stars have associations with Mamluk designs and the border
turns the corners with an elegance found in Cairene or Persian carpets.
As in the carpets made in the Ottoman court manufactories by Cairene
workmen, the knot used is the Persian type and the warp is spun
and plied in the opposite direction to warp made in Egypt. The
sophisticated court products, however, were made with a silk warp
whereas the "compartment" carpets were made from local material, goat hair.
Attempts have been made to equate these carpets with pieces described
as 'Rhodian' in inventories of the late 15th to 17th centuries, but this
identification has not been proved. Fifteen knots of the Persian type per
square cm in nine colours are tied on a warp of white goat hair. Pile and weft,
with two shoots after each row of
knots, are also of goat hair.

37 Large-pattern Holbein rug
Length 9'0" cm, width 1'1" cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Islamicische Museum, no. 1.29
Turkey, Ottoman period, 18th century

Not only were an increasing number of Turkish carpets imported into
Europe from the late Middle Ages, but they were also depicted with
increasing frequency and realism by European painters. Their designs
have been classified rather misleadingly by painters' names. The
so-called Holbein carpets date from the mid 15th to the early 17th century.
This example with a large octagon within a square is of a type less
common than that with small interlaced octagons (see no. 38). Bold, bright,
primary colours seem typical of these larger patterned Holbein carpets.
Details and borders vary but all are characterized by interlaced and
knotted ornament. Such a carpet
appears in Crevillé's Annunciation in the National Gallery, London, and
another is seen in Two Young Princes attributed to Parmigianino; see
London (1965, no. 96). Other
simplified versions appear in several early 17th century portraits, notably
that of the 3rd Earl of Derwent at Knole, Kent, attributed to Van Somer.
Many later Bergama rugs strongly resemble his
design, prompting the attribution of the earlier group to this region of
Turkey. This example is woven with a woolen pile with Turkish knots,
a woolen warp and two shoots of red woolen weft after each row of
knots.

Published: Kühnel and Bellinger (1957, pp. 75. pl. XLIII, XI.14)

38 Small-pattern Holbein rug
Length 10'0" cm, width 1'4" cm
Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, no. 1.478
Turkey (Anatolia), Ottoman period, 16th century

The geometrical pattern of this carpet, with octagons of interlace
alternating in rows with cross-shaped devices of angular foliage, was
reproduced in innumerable Anatolian rugs and carpets, many of
which were exported to Europe. The centres of production are not
precisely known, but are generally thought to have been in the Ushak
area. These rugs were depicted in European paintings from the late 15th
century, on ornamental grounds may be seen in Timurid miniatures as early as the
15th century, by the following century several different styles of border were
current. Unlike the majority which are based upon angular half-scrip, the border of
this carpet has a stylized floral design.

This small-patterned Holbein carpet
in Timurid miniatures as early as the
15th century, by the following century several different styles of border were
current. Unlike the majority which are based upon angular
half-scrip, the border of
this carpet has a stylized floral design.

39 Small-pattern Holbein rug
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Islamicische Museum, no. 1.29
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th century

This small-patterned Holbein carpet
is typical of the large numbers imported into Europe from Turkey
for about 150 years (see also nos. 38, 40). While interlaced octagons
appear in Timurid miniatures as early as the
15th century, by the following century several different styles of border were
current. Unlike the majority which are based upon angular
half-scrip, the border of
this carpet has a stylized floral design.

The geometrical pattern of this carpet, with octagons of interlace
alternating in rows with cross-shaped devices of angular foliage, was
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Published: Bode and Kühnel (1970, pp. 39-40). While interlaced octagons
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half-scrip, the border of
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39 Small-pattern Holbein rug
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Islamicische Museum, no. 1.29
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th century

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century, on ornamental grounds may be seen in Timurid miniatures as early as the
15th century, by the following century several different styles of border were
current. Unlike the majority which are based upon angular
half-scrip, the border of
this carpet has a stylized floral design.

Published: Bode and Kühnel (1970, pp. 39-40). While interlaced octagons
appear in Timurid miniatures as early as the
15th century, by the following century several different styles of border were
current. Unlike the majority which are based upon angular
half-scrip, the border of
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39 Small-pattern Holbein rug
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Islamicische Museum, no. 1.29
Turkey, Ottoman period, 16th century

This small-patterned Holbein carpet
is typical of the large numbers imported into Europe from Turkey
for about 150 years (see also nos. 38, 40). While interlaced octagons
appear in Timurid miniatures as early as the
15th century, by the following century several different styles of border were
current. Unlike the majority which are based upon angular
half-scrip, the border of
this carpet has a stylized floral design.

The geometrical pattern of this carpet, with octagons of interlace
alternating in rows with cross-shaped devices of angular foliage, was
reproduced in innumerable
Anatolian rugs and carpets, many of
which were exported to Europe. The centres of production are not
precisely known, but are generally thought to have been in the Ushak
area. These rugs were depicted in European paintings from the late 15th
century, on ornamental grounds may be seen in Timurid miniatures as early as the
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