An Illustrated Shiʿi Pilgrimage Scroll in the Collections of

the Royal Asiatic Society

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Abstract

The collections of the Royal Asiatic Society hold an illustrated pilgrimage scroll apparently dating from the first half of the nineteenth century. The scroll's hand painted images relate to the journey that a pious Shiʿi Muslim would have undertaken after the performance of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Its visual narrative continues, first to Medina and then to the Shiʿi sanctuaries in present-day Iraq, concluding in the Iranian city of Mashhad at the sanctuary of the eighth imam of the Twelver-Shiʿi creed, imam Riḍā (d. 818). The scroll was likely prepared in the early nineteenth century and acquired by the Royal Asiatic Society from its unknown previous owner sometime after 1857. In terms of chronology the pilgrimage scroll fits neatly into the period between the Niebuhr scroll, bought in Karbala in 1765, and a lithographed item most likely dating from the latter half of the nineteenth century, both of which depict a corresponding journey. The present essay's initial survey of the scroll's visual dimension, by Ulrich Marzolph, adds hitherto unknown details to the history of similar objects. The concluding report, by Mathilde Renauld, sheds light on the scroll's material condition and the difficulties encountered during the object's conservation and their solution.

Keywords: Pilgrimage scroll; Shiʿi Sanctuaries; Mecca and Medina; Mashhad; Paper conservation

Introduction

The collections of the Royal Asiatic Society hold an illustrated pilgrimage scroll apparently dating from the first half of the nineteenth century. Unread in the collections for more than a century, the item has recently come to light in the course of the preservation measures undertaken by Mathilde Renauld during her final year of a Masters of Conservation of Fine Art on Paper at Camberwell College, London University of the Arts. Currently in fragile, albeit stable conditions, due to creasing and localised corrosion of the paper the scroll has parted into two pieces of unequal length at an unknown time in the past. Its overall dimension is 25.3 x 262.7cm (Fig. 1). The only indication of the scroll's provenance is a

Fig. 1. Overview of the scroll's two sections

short note written on its back by the unknown previous owner, likely a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. The owner's note comprises five lines that read as follow:-.

> This roll containing pictures of the principal places visited by / him in the course of his pilgrimage to Kerbela, Bagdad, / Medina, Mecca etc was given to me by Syed Lootf Ali / Shah. July 1857. Mecca is the end of the roll which begins with / Ali + his steed Dooldool.

No biographical information is available about the mentioned 'Lootf Ali Shah' (Luṭf-ʿAlī Shāh), whose given name was fairly common in the period and whose title 'Syed' (Sayyid) distinguishes him as a descendant of the Prophet Mohammad, thus historically a member of a privileged stratum of Muslim society, albeit a populous stratum. There is also no definitive clue as to whether the scroll was acquired in the Middle East, probably during the British owner's residency in Iran or Iraq, or whether its original Iranian owner passed it on to his British acquaintance during a visit to the UK. The owner's note, however, suggests that he was not familiar with Middle Eastern languages. He assesses the scroll as beginning with the image of ʿAlī, the fourth of the 'righteous' caliphs and first *imam* of the Twelver-Shiʿa, and ending in Mecca, thus reversing the direction in which the scroll would customarily be read, i.e. from right to left. In addition, the statement misidentifies the character standing in front of ʿAlī's steed Duldul as ʿAlī himself, while the caption identifies him as ʿAlī's faithful servant Qanbar (sometimes spelled Ghanbar), who is stereotypically depicted as clad in dervish dress. These fancy misinterpretations suggest that the scroll's British owner never resided in the Muslim Middle East for an extensive period, as otherwise he should at least have been familiar with the direction of reading. Most of the Persian captions to the images and their details have additionally been rendered in a simplified contemporary Latin transcription. As the scroll's British owner did not read Persian himself, the Iranian donor is likely to have supplied pronunciations of the Persian captions which the former would write down as heard. The Latin captions supply a vague idea of how the relevant words or terms should be pronounced without translating their meaning.

The Scroll's Visual Layout

The scroll consists of twelve images of irregular width depicting architectural structures, buildings, or precincts sacred to, or venerated by, Shiʿi Muslims. Whereas the sacredness of the initial locations in Mecca and Medina are common to Muslims of all creeds, the

more the visual journey progresses, the more the places selected reflect a particular relevance for Shiʿi Muslims. With the exception of the holy precinct in Mecca to which the first image is devoted, most of the subsequent images depict mosques or mausoleums in a fairly stereo-type manner, usually showing a golden or tiled dome flanked on both sides by a varying number of minarets. The interior of the sanctuaries would stereotypically show the vener-ated person's tomb enclosed by a silver lattice structure (*ḍarīḥ*). Most of the buildings are framed by a wall with entrance doors to the sacred spaces. On the scroll, these walls also serve to demarcate a given space against the neighbouring ones. The scroll is painted in an appealing array of watercolours, predominantly yellow/orange, red, and green, with the almost total absence of blue. In particular the tile-work on domes and minarets is exe-cuted with considerable care, while at other times the work lacks accuracy and refinement. A particularly noteworthy feature is the emptiness of most spaces inside the depicted buildings in which, except for the chandeliers in the last image, only the venerated person's tomb is shown. As recent publications discuss the images on similar scrolls in considerable detail,[1] the following description is limited to a basic identification, followed by a discussion of the object's position in the historical context.

The sacred precinct (*ḥaram*) in Mecca in the scroll's first image (Fig. 2) is presented in a way that is conspicuously similar to that on tiles of the later Ottoman period.[2] The *ḥaram* is depicted as seen from outside the portal on the northeastern side, the *bāb al-salām*. While the precinct's outer enclosure and the circled wall surrounding the centrally placed Kaʿba are viewed from above, all of the architectural structures inside the precinct are viewed from the side. Although there are no captions, most of the structures can unambiguously be identified. Entering the sacred precinct through the *bāb al-salām* at the image's lower midst, the pilgrim would first encounter the pavilion with wooden lattice sides covering the *maqām Ibrāhīm*, i.e. the place where Abraham is said to have stood during the construction of the Kaʿba. The pavilion to the left of the *maqām Ibrāhīm* covers the well Zamzam. The other larger pavilions surrounding the Kaʿba belong to three of the four legal schools of Sunni Islam, i.e., reading counterclockwise, the Hanbali, Maliki, and Hanafi schools. The pavilion of the Shāfiʿi school appears to be missing but probably overlaps with one of the buildings on the image's lower side. The centrally placed Kaʿba is covered, quite unusually, with a coloured draping in red and green and ornamental bands on the angles, instead of the usual black cover (*kiswa*) with an embroidered or wove textile band (*ḥizām*) containing the *shahāda* executed in golden letters. Clearly visible are the black stone (*al-ḥajar al-aswad*) protruding from the build-ing's lower left side, and the gutter (*mīzāb*) on the building's upper right side. To the right side of the Kaʿba, there is a small wall (*ḥaṭīm*), usually depicted as semi-circular, but here rendered as a double semi-circular shape resembling the number 3. This wall denotes the *ḥijr*, i.e. the place where according to tradition Abraham's son Ismāʿīl and his wife Hagar are buried. Other than these clearly identifiable structures, the space is filled with a somewhat fanciful arrangement of pulpits, small pavilions, minarets, and large chandeliers.

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[1]U. Marzolph, 'From Mecca to Mashhad: The Narrative of an Illustrated Shiʿi Pilgrimage Scroll from the Qajar Period', *Muqarnas* XXXI (2014), pp. 207–242; M. Chekhab-Abudaya, A. Couvrat Desvergnes, and D. Roxburgh, 'Sayyid Yusuf's 1433 Pilgrimage Scroll (*Ziyāratnāma*) in the Collection of the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha', *Muqarnas* XXXIII (2016), pp. 345–407.
[2]K. Erdmann, 'Kaʿbah-Fliesen', *Ars orientalis* 3 (1959), pp. 192–197.

Fig. 2. The sanctuary in Mecca

The scroll's second image shows the Prophet Muḥammad's mosque in Medina (Fig. 3).
The large dome covered with coloured tiles in the middle hovers above a single tomb, that
of Muḥammad himself. The tombs of the first two of the 'righteous' caliphs, Abū Bakr and
ʿUmar, that are often depicted next to it, are not displayed here. A caption identifies a smal-
ler dome on the right side as belonging to the tomb of Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima.
Another caption denotes a still smaller dome on the left side as that of Jabr[ā]ʾīl,[3] implying
the place where Muḥammad encountered the archangel Gabriel who took him on his noc-
turnal voyage to the heavens, the miʿrāj.[4] The building's architectural base is formed by an
inscription in square Kufic script rendering the Islamic profession of faith, the shahāda, read-
ing lā ilāha illā Allāh, Muḥammad rasūl Allāh (There is no god but God, Muḥammad is God's
messenger). The inscription reads from right to left and is then mirrored on a bilaterally sym-
metrical vertical axis as reading from left to right, with the final Allāh framing the Prophet's
tomb on both sides as well as supporting the large dome. The shafts of all of the letters lām

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[3]The Latin transcription on the image's bottom left reads this as 'The tomb of Ayrus', a misreading probably
resulting from the owner's own attempt to decipher the caption.
[4]For the miʿrāj, see C. Gruber and F. Colby (eds.), The Prophet's Ascension: Cross-Cultural Encounters with the
Islamic Miʿraj Tales (Bloomington, 2010).

Fig. 3. The Prophet Muḥammad's mosque in Medina

and *alif* are extended to the top so as to serve as support of the minarets and domes. Other available items suggest that the execution of the building's architectural base in square Kufic script was particularly popular during the later Ottoman period.[5] As a matter of fact, the present image looks like a simplified copy of the same topic, albeit executed with much greater care, on a 'Hajj map' dated 1223/1808 that is now preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar.[6] The Hajj map's section corresponding to the lower quarter of the image on

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[5]M. Aksel, *Türklerde Dinî Resimler: Yazı-Resim/Religious Pictures in Turkish Art* (Istanbul, 1967), pp. 32–33; J.-J. Marcel, *L'univers pittoresque*, vol. XLV: *Égypte depuis la conquête des Arabes …* (Paris, 1848), plate 21, after p. 62 (here erroneously identified as the mosque in Mecca).

[6]M. Chekhab-Abudaya and C. Bresc, *Hajj – The Journey through Art: Exhibition Album* (Doha, 2013), pp. 132–133.

the present scroll also identifies the items depicted therein. These are, from right to left, the Ottoman-period prayer niche (*miḥrāb*), the Prophet Muḥammad's pulpit (*minbar*), the Prophet's prayer niche, a small orchard of date palms, and the *biʾr ḥāʾ*, a well from which the Prophet is said to have drunk.

The scroll's third image (Fig. 4) depicts a large building with three tiled domes and four tiled minarets, two on each side of the domes. Inside, there is a total of eight tombs, arranged

Fig. 4. The cemetery Baqīʿ in Medina with the graves of Ḥasan (II); ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn 'Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn' (IV); Muḥammad al-Bāqir (V); Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (VI)

in two horizontal rows of four each. The caption identifies the building as one of those in the ancient cemetery known as Baqīʿ al-gharqad or simply (al-)Baqīʿ, implying a shrine for a number of persons from the Prophet's family, the *ahl al-bayt*. Today, the shrines of Baqīʿ no longer exist, as they were destroyed by iconoclast Wahhabites in 1926.[7] According to the famous traveller (and translator of *The Thousand and One Nights*) Richard Burton, who clandestinely visited Mecca in 1853, the names of the people buried in the shrine were "subjects of great controversy".[8] Even so, it is commonly agreed that the shrine housed the tombs of four of the early *imam*s of the Twelver-Shiʿa, viz. the second *imam*, Ḥasan (d. 661); the fourth *imam*, ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, known as the *imam* Sajjād (d. ca. 713); the fifth *imam*, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. ca. 733); and the sixth *imam*, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765). Their tombs are probably the ones with a silver lattice structure depicted in the upper row. Whereas the available photographic evidence prior to the shrine's destruction shows an impressive octagonal building with a large dome flanked by small towers on each of its corners, the artist's interpretation of a building with three domes appears to derive from fantasy. The British owner's caption reads 'Nukba', rendering the term *nakba* (calamity), with somewhat enigmatic implications.

The shrine of the Twelver-Shiʿa's first *imam*, ʿAlī ibn abī Ṭālib (d. 661), is located in the city of al-Najaf in present-day Iraq (Fig. 5). It is rendered as a building with a golden dome flanked by two large minarets that are also covered in gold. The dome is topped, as are all domes of the following larger mausoleums, with the standard of a hand with five fingers. Generally known as 'the hand of Fatima',[9] in Shiʿi Islam the hand symbolises the five members (Persian *panj tan*) of the Prophet's intimate family, i.e., Muḥammad himself; ʿAlī, Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law; ʿAlī's wife, Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima; and their sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. In contrast to most of the other sacred precincts (except for the following one), ʿAlī's shrine is framed by an arcade composed of pointed arches.

The next image is devoted to the mosque in Kufa (Fig. 6). In its upper half, it displays the relatively small shrines erected for a number of faithful Shiʿis who died in the larger context of the battle at Karbala in the year 680. The two shrines on the outer sides have small tiled domes while the third one in the middle appears to be a simple rectangular structure. The shrines are devoted to Muslim ibn ʿAqīl, Ḥusayn's emissary to the people of Kufa; Hānī ibn ʿUrwa, the person who sheltered Muslim ibn ʿAqīl who was being sought by the caliph's troops; and Mukhtār ibn abī ʿUbaydallāh, who, in the aftermath of Karbala, led a rebellion against the caliph to avenge Ḥusayn's death and who is known for the harsh torture of Ḥusayn's enemies. The image's lower half shows the inner courtyard of the ancient mosque in Kufa. Two of the items depicted on the image's bottom side are particularly noteworthy. The ship on the left indicates Noah's ark, as according to Muslim tradition Noah constructed the ark in a location that was later destined to become the site of the mosque in

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[7] W. Ende, 'Steine des Anstoßes: Das Mausoleum der Ahl al-bayt in Medina', in H. Biesterfeldt and V. Klemm (eds.), *Differenz und Dynamik im Islam: Festschrift für Heinz Halm zum 70. Geburtstag* (Würzburg, 2012), pp. 181–200.

[8] R. F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah & Meccah*, (ed.) I. Burton (London, 1893; reprint New York, 1964), ii, p. 40.

[9] F. Suleman, 'The Hand of Fatima: in search of its origin and significance', in id. (ed.), *People of the Prophet's House: Artistic and Ritual Expressions of Shi'i Islam* (London, 2015), pp. 173–187.

Fig. 5. Najaf, mausoleum of ʿAli (I)

Kufa.[10] And the red item just left of the entrance gate is likely to represent the well or pit from which the water of the Deluge is said to have sprung forth.

Together, the five sites mentioned so far form the shorter section of the scroll, measuring just less than a metre. The remaining seven sites are depicted on the second, longer section, followed by the image of Duldul and Qanbar. The quality and construction of the paper used for the final image differ from the rest of the scroll, which could imply its later addition. However, both the Persian and Latin captions are in the same hands, suggesting that the image was added before the captions were written.

The shrines on the three following images are, with one exception, located in Karbala. The first large shrine with a tiled dome flanked by two tiled minarets is devoted to Ḥusayn's half-brother Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbbās (Fig. 7). Abū al-Faḍl was the standard bearer at the battle of

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[10]K. Sindawi, 'Noah and Noah's Ark as the Primordial Model of Shīʿism in Shīʿite Literature', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* N.S. I (2006), pp. 29–48.
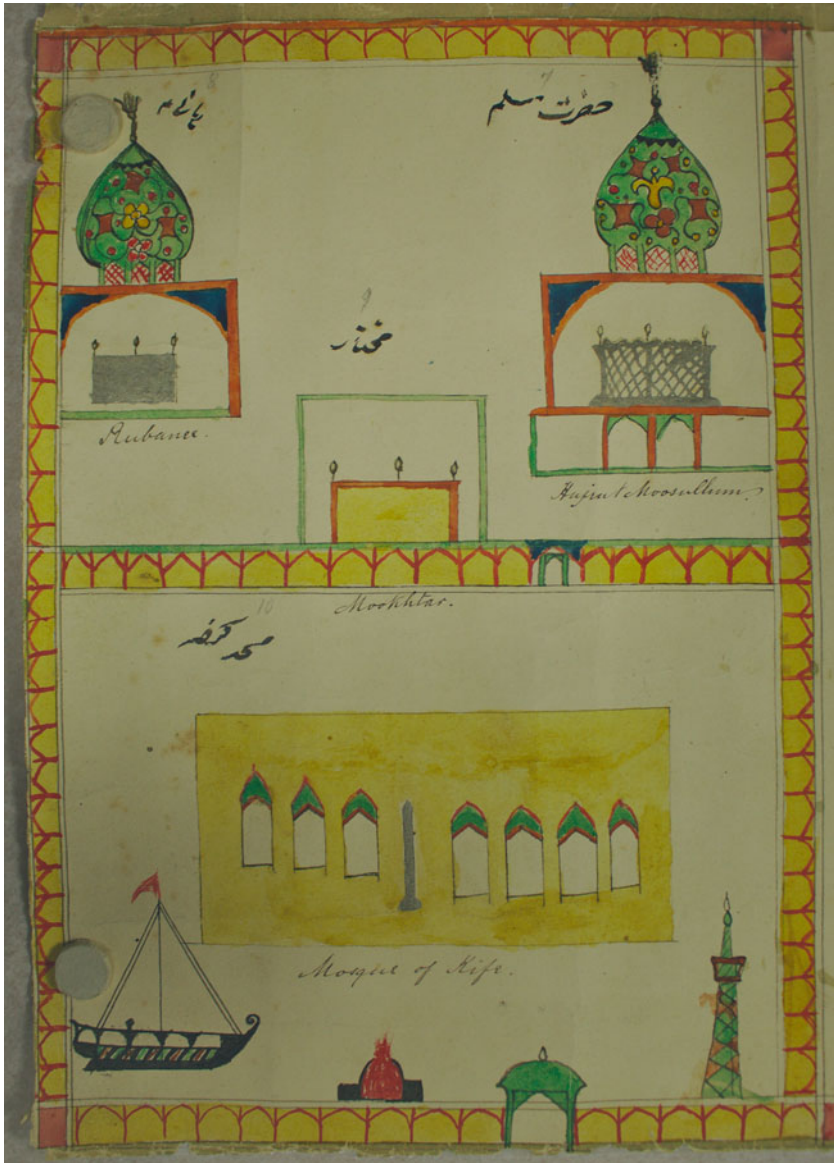
Fig. 6. The mosque in Kufa

Karbala. He was mutilated by the enemy when attempting to fetch water for his party's thirsty children. According to Shiʿi tradition, he was buried at the spot where he fell from his horse. Hailed as 'The full moon of the descendants of Hāshim' (*qamar banī Hāshim*), Abū al-Faḍl is celebrated in popular Shiʿism as the quintessential warrior and valiant hero.[11]

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[11]U. Marzolph, 'The Visual Culture of Iranian Twelver-Shiʿism in the Qajar Period', *Shii Studies Review* 3 (2019), pp. 133–186, at pp. 161–164.

Fig. 7. Karbala, mausoleum of Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbbās

The following shrine with a golden dome flanked by two tiled minarets and a third tiled minaret at the side is devoted to the third *imam*, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAli, who died on the plains of Karbala when trying to make his way to Kufa whose inhabitants had promised to support his cause against the caliph (Fig. 8). The peculiar shape of the lattice structure surrounding Ḥusayn's tomb is clearly visible, with a smaller structure to the side of the larger one. The caption identifies the shrine as that of *janāb-e Abā* [!] ʿAbdallāh, referring to Ḥusayn's common epithet. The small tomb in the vault to the lower left of Ḥusayn's tomb is probably

Fig. 8. Karbala, mausoleum of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAli (III)

that of Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir, a Kufan who joined Ḥusayn's party and who is known to be buried inside Ḥusayn's mausoleum.

The next image is divided into three vertically arranged sections of equal size (Fig. 9). The upper section depicts a small shrine with two tiled domes devoted to Muslim's two young sons (*ṭiflān-i Muslim*) who, following their father's death, were sought out and killed by the caliph's men. Their memorial building is situated in the vicinity of Kufa. In the image's middle section, there is a small shrine whose upper structure is vaguely reminiscent of the famous spiralling minaret of the great mosque at Samarra. This shrine is devoted to Ḥurr

Fig. 9. Vicinity of Karbala, mausoleums of the sons of Muslim and of Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Thaqafī; Khayma-gāh

ibn Yazīd al-Thaqafī, identified by the caption as 'the martyr Ḥurr' (*Ḥurr-i shahīd*). Ḥurr initially served as a commander of the caliph's army that attacked Ḥusayn and his party. According to Shi'i tradition, Ḥurr soon realised the terrible injustice that was about to

occur, switched sides to support Ḥusayn, and died in battle defending Ḥusayn's cause. For this reason, Shiʿi tradition regards him as the first martyr (*shahīd*) to enter paradise.[12] The image's lower section contains the layout of an orchard or garden with several small shrines, identified by the caption as *khaymah-gāh*, i.e. the place where Ḥusayn's party at Karbala had pitched their tents.

The next shrine (Fig. 10) in Kāẓimayn ('the two Kāẓims'), today a quarter of Baghdad, houses the tombs of the seventh *imam*, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799), and the ninth *imam*, Muḥammad al-Taqī, also known as al-Jawād (d. 835). It is shown with two golden domes that are flanked by four large tiled minarets and two small golden minarets in between.

This is followed by a building with a tiled dome and no minarets whose side view into the building's lower interior shows a staircase leading down to the vaults (Fig. 11). This shrine is built over the underground chamber in Samarra where popular Shiʿi tradition supposes the Ṣāḥib al-Zamān, the twelfth *imam* Muḥammad al-Mahdī, to have gone into occultation (*ghaybat*) in the year 941 and where he will appear again at the end of time.

The shrine of ʿAskarīyayn ('the two ʿAskarīs'), located in Samarra in the vicinity of the preceding shrine (Fig. 12), is devoted to the tenth *imam*, ʿAlī al-Naqī, also known as al-Hādī (d. 868), and of the eleventh *imam*, Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 873 or 874). The shrine's dome is covered in silver and flanked by two tiled minarets.

Our visual journey ends at the shrine whose caption identifies it as that of 'imam Gharīb', i.e. the eighth *imam*, ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (d. 818), in Mashhad (Fig. 13). The shrine's golden dome is flanked by two golden minarets. This is the only image in which the two small chambers adjacent to the actual tomb on both sides are filled with two large chandeliers.

The locations where shrines devoted to the twelve Shiʿi *imam*s were erected are seven in number, including Baqīʿ, Najaf, Karbala, Kāẓimayn, Samarra, ʿAskarīyayn, and Mashhad (Figs. 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13). As the number twelve has a strong symbolic appeal for adherents of the Twelver-Shiʿi creed, the scroll's artist consciously expanded the scope of the virtual pilgrim's travel to comprise a total of twelve destinations. Since the initial images of Mecca and Medina (Figs. 2 and 3) were an indispensable given, another three destinations were added, including the mosque in Kufa (Fig. 6), the shrine for Ḥusayn's half-brother Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbbās in Karbala (Fig. 7), and several smaller shrines in the vicinity of Kufa and Karbala (Fig. 9). In making the number of images correspond to the symbolic number twelve, the artist also structured his composition symmetrically. First and foremost, the composition is framed by the two sacred sites that are most important for the Shiʿi pilgrim, i.e. the holy precinct in Mecca and the shrine of *imam* Riḍā in Mashhad. And second, the artist ingeniously placed the shrines of Abū al-Faḍl and Ḥusayn in the centre of the scroll's architectural segment, with five images both preceding and following, hereby putting a strong emphasis on the two characters linked with the tragic events at Karbala that are most revered

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[12]U. Marzolph, 'Images of Paradise in Shiite Popular Iconography', in S. Günther and T. Lawson (eds.), *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, ii: *Continuity and Change: The Plurality of Eschatological Representations in the Islamicate World* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 1057–1067, at p. 59.

Fig. 10. Kāẓimayn, mausoleums of Mūsā al-Kāẓim (VII) and Muḥammad al-Taqī (IX)

in popular Shiʿi tradition. As Abū al-Faḍl is the quintessential warrior, the one who fought valiantly until his bitter end, Ḥusayn is the quintessential martyr, the *sayyid al-shuhadāʾ*, or 'Prince of the Martyrs', who from the beginning accepted his inevitable fate to die at the enemy's hands.[13]

At the end of the scroll there is a picture of a different nature that does not directly relate to the previous series of sanctuaries, although it is also of a Shiʿi import (Fig. 14). Starting with the image of a bush with large blossoms in orange and light red whose purpose is apparently purely ornamental, the picture shows *imam* ʿAlī's steed Duldul and his servant Qanbar. Duldul originally was the Prophet Muḥammad's steed that after his death came to belong to ʿAlī. Although Duldul is historically known to have been a grey mule, the steed is commonly rendered as a horse, probably for the simple reason that a horse makes
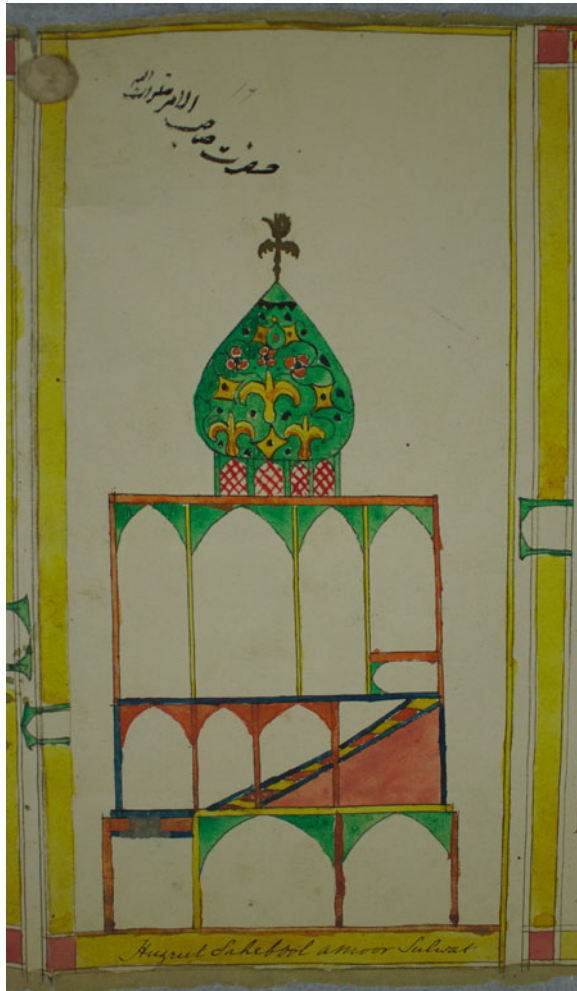
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[13]Marzolph, 'The Visual Culture', p. 164.

Fig. 11. Samarra; mausoleum devoted to the Ṣāḥib al-Zamān Muḥammad al-Mahdī (XII)

a nobler appearance. Whereas the horse in modern devotional images is often a white one,[14] the artist has here chosen to paint it black. Moreover, instead of the historical she-mule, he specified the horse as a stallion. The steed is shown in a lively mood, probably even in motion as it follows its master's servant. The caption *Duldul-e amīr* qualifies Duldul as belonging to ʿAlī whose common denomination is *amīr al-muʾminīn*, 'commander of the faithful'. Although ʿAlī is not physically present, his spiritual presence is indicated by the large flaming halo emanating from the horse's saddle. At the far left, in front of the horse, stands ʿAlī's servant Qanbar. As usual, Qanbar is depicted in dervish dress, holding

[14]P. Centlivres and M. Centlivres-Dumont, *Imageries populaires en Islam* (Geneva, 1997), p. 47, no. 38; E. Puin, *Islamische Plakate: Kalligraphie und Malerei im Dienste des Glaubens* (Dortmund, 2008), ii, pp. 510–512; iii, pp. 891–892, nos. H 23–24.
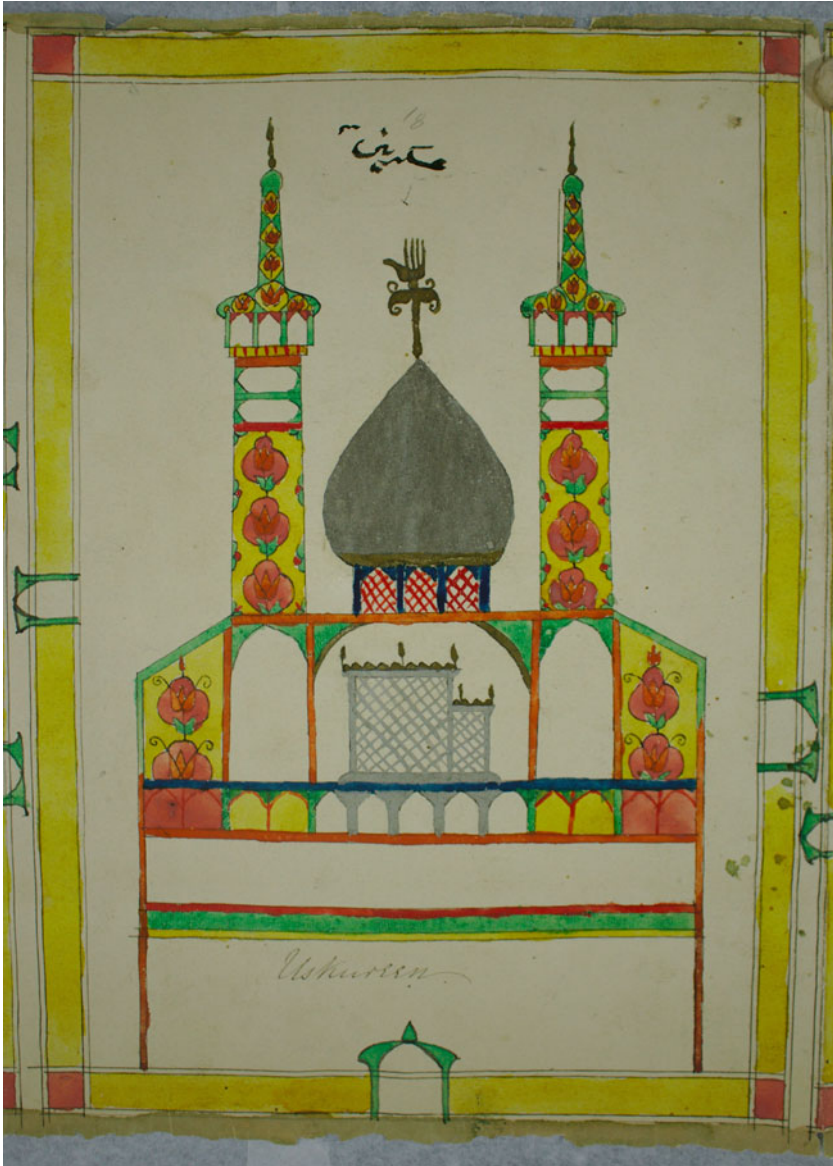
Fig. 12. ʿAskariyayn, mausoleums of ʿAlī al-Naqī (X) and of Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (XI)

a dervish's ceremonial axe (*tabarzīn*) in his left hand.[15] In his right hand, he carries a small branch with large blossoms, probably picked from the bush at his back. As the final picture does not relate to architecture, it has no frame. Instead, the ground is covered with a lush green lawn. The picture's background is empty, as it is on all of the other images.

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[15]See images nos. 1, 9, and 10, in M. Ekhtiar, 'Exploring *Ahl al-bayt* imagery in Qajar Iran (1785–1925)', in Suleman, *People of the Prophet's House*, pp. 146–154. Note that Qanbar is here identified as 'a dervish' of the Niʿma-tullahi order.

Fig. 13. Mashhad, ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (VIII)

The Scroll in Historical Context

The scroll was most likely prepared early during the first half of the nineteenth century, in terms of chronology the present scroll fits in neatly into the period between two other published Shiʿi pilgrimage scrolls depicting a similar journey. These are the painted Niebuhr scroll, bought by the German traveller in the service of the Danish king, Carsten Niebuhr, in Karbala in 1765,[16] and a lithographed item probably dating from the latter half of the

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[16]A. H. Hansen, *Niebuhr's Museum: Artefacts and Souvenires from the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia 1761–1767* (Copenhagen, 2016), pp. 204–209; U. Marzolph, 'The Niebuhr Scroll', in A. H. Hansen (ed.), *Arrivals: The Life of*

Fig. 14. ʿAlī's steed Duldul and his servant Qanbar

nineteenth century.[17] Although some of the locations on the scrolls differ from those on the present one, both of them visually depict a corresponding journey whose essential stations are the journey's beginning at the sanctuary in Mecca and its end at the shrine of *imam* Riḍā in Mashhad, and its way passing the shrines devoted to all of the remaining eleven *imam*s of the Twelver-Shiʿa in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the latter being known as ʿ*atabāt* (thresholds), and the shrines of a varying array of other characters venerated by Shiʿi Muslims, predominantly the martyrs (*shuhadāʾ*) of Karbala. In particular, the present scroll is closely linked to the Niebuhr scroll being the only other known scroll where the final picture is similarly appended. In addition to Duldul and Qanbar, the Niebuhr scroll depicts al-Būrāq, the legendary beast that carried Muḥammad during the *miʿrāj*; a camel with a *maḥmal*, presumably the one delivering the new *kiswa* for the Kaʿba; a lion represening ʿAlī, one of whose epithets is *shir-e khudā*, 'God's lion'; Muḥammad's birthmark designating him as a prophet; and ʿAlī's famous double-pointed sword, Dhū al-Fiqār. Compared with this scroll's illustrated narrative, the present scroll's final picture displays limited imagery, hereby documenting the gradual reduction of previous complexity in favour of the later scroll's easier and faster production.

Visual documents of a pilgrim's visit to the holy sites of Islam, whether actual pilgrimage certificates or else tourist objects sold to pilgrims as proof that they had actually been there,[18]

the *Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia 1767–2017* (Copenhagen, 2017), pp. 69–73. For other discussions of the Niebuhr scroll, see J. W. Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shiʿism: Iraq, Iran and the Indian Sub-Continent* (London, 2012), pp. 95–96, pl. 3.11; L. Mols and M. Shatanawi, 'Back to the Source: Pilgrimages to Islamic Sacred Places', in *Sacred Places: Pilgrimages in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Antwerp, 2014), pp. 100–137, at pp. 130–131, 180, no. 111.

[17]Marzolph, 'From Mecca to Mashhad'.

[18]Allan, *Art and Architecture*, p. 96.

have been preserved from as early as the tenth century, both in relation to the pilgrimage to Mecca[19] and to a following visit to Medina.[20] The historical documents predating the eighteenth century, whether small or large, were exclusively prepared in a vertical format. Some of the smaller documents were probably kept as talisman, i.e. folded and preserved in a container kept close to the body as items sharing the beneficial properties of the visit to the holy sites with their owners or bearers. The question how the large vertical documents, some of them as long as seven or even nine metres, were displayed, has not yet been solved to a satisfactory degree.[21] At least as of the eighteenth century, the previously practiced vertical format changed into a horizontal one, thus facilitating the object's display in the modest atmosphere of a private home where it would be relatively easy to find suitable space for such an item.[22]

This feature went together with an increasing commodification as another important feature all of the horizontal scrolls share. Although it is known that already in the Seljuk and Ayyubid periods, pilgrimage certificates were massed-produced items (then prepared as block prints),[23] the large vertical scrolls documented from historical periods are precious objects of fine art prepared for individual customers.[24] The painted horizontal scrolls again made the documents available to a large variety of customers, as their stereotype, casual, and to a certain extent careless execution clearly indicates that they were produced in large numbers. In terms of execution, the scrolls' artistic merits are second to their value as souvenirs. In his travelogue, Richard Burton preserved a unique testimony suggesting that it was mainly Indian artists who made a living from producing and selling those scrolls.[25] Concerning the present scroll, this would also explain why Qanbar's facial features are distinctly Indian, although Qanbar is generally depicted with a dark complexion.

At present, the earliest known pilgrimage scroll with Shiʿite tendencies is the one preserved in Doha, dating to the early fifteenth century.[26] At that period, it might still have been common customs for many Muslims, whether Sunni or Shiʿi, to visit the shrines of

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[19]D. Sourdel and J. Sourdel-Thomine, 'Une collection médiévale de certificats de pélerinage à la Mekke conservés à Istanbul', in J. Sourdel-Thomine (ed.), *Études médiévales et patrimoine turc* (Paris, 1983), pp. 167–273; Ş. Aksoy and R. Milstein, 'A Collection of Thirteenth-Century Illustrated Hajj Certificates', in İ. C. Schick (ed.), *M. Uğur Derman Armağanı* (Istanbul, 2001), pp. 101–134; D. Sourdel and J. Sourdel-Thomine, *Certificats de pèlerinage d'époque ayyoubide: Contribution à l'histoire del'idéologie de l'islmm au temps des croisades* (Paris, 2006).

[20]H. N. Barakāt, N. Šawqī and S. Maghāwarī, *al-Bardīyāt al-ʿarabīya bi-Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya/Arabic Papyri in the National Library of Egypt* (Cairo, 2007), inv. no. 513; F. B. Flood, 'Faith, Religion, and the Material Culture of Early Islam', in H. C. Evans with B. Ratcliff, *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition 7th–9th Century* (New Haven, 2012), pp. 244–258, at p. 249; Chekhab-Abudaya and Bresc, *Hajj – The Journey through Art*, p. 130; É. Bouffard (ed.), *hajj: le Pèlerinage à la Mecque* (Paris, 2014), p. 27. M. Chekhab-Abudaya is currently preparing an article about the Medina certificates, provisionally titled 'Medieval *ziyāra* to Medina: preliminary notes on three certificates depicting the Prophet's mosque'.

[21]Chekhab-Abudaya, Couvrat Desvergnes and Roxburgh, 'Sayyif Yusuf's 1433 Pilgrimage Scroll', p. 348.

[22]Marzolph, 'From Mecca to Mashhad'.

[23]On the history of block printing in Arab lands, see K. R. Schaefer, *Enigmatic Charms: Medieval Arabic Block Printed Amulets in American and European Libraries and Museums* (Leiden, 2006).

[24]D. Roxburgh, 'Sacred Topographies: Visualising the Sites and Monuments of Islamic Pilgrimage', in *Treasures of the Aga Khan Museum: Architecture in Islamic Lands* (Exhibition Catalogue 2012), pp. 33–65, at pp. 62–65 no. 11; Mols and Shatanawi, 'Back to the Source', pp. 120, 189, no. 221; Chekhab-Abudaya, Couvrat Desvergnes and Roxburgh, 'Sayyif Yusuf's 1433 Pilgrimage Scroll'; Marzolph, 'Shiʿi Perspectives on Hajj: Illustrated Pilgrimage Scrolls of Hajj and *Ziyārat*', in Nasser D. Khalil, Qaisra Khan, Nahla Nassar, and Venetia Porter (eds.), *Hajj and The Arts of Pilgrimage* (forthcoming).

[25]Burton, *Personal Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 342.

[26]Chekhab-Abudaya, Couvrat Desvergnes and Roxburgh, 'Sayyif Yusuf's 1433 Pilgrimage Scroll'.

ʿAlī in Najaf and of Ḥusayn in Karbala. With the advent of the Safavid dynasty and the elevation of Twelver-Shiʿism to the status of official creed in Iran at the beginning of the sixteenth century, visits of the sacred sites in Iraq are bound to have increased, as would the need of pilgrims to bring home some kind of documentary proof or commemorative object of their visit. The Niebuhr scroll is the earliest known document with unequivocally explicit Shiʿi tendencies known so far. Although the depicted sites on the Niebuhr scroll as well as the style of its paintings differ from the present object, this scroll displays a certain continuity, particularly in the image of Qanbar and Duldul added at the end. The artistic merit of the horizontal Shiʿi pilgrimage certificates might be modest in comparison to that of the large historical scrolls. Their importance in addition to attesting a growing Shiʿi consciousness and assertiveness lies in an increasing commodification of the objects that, rather than being 'for the privileged few',[27] now became available to a larger array of customers because of their mass production and, presumably, cheaper price. The introduction of lithographic printing to Iran that became a wide-spread practice in the latter half of the nineteenth century added greater dynamics to this process, as a single print-run would result in hundreds of copies.[28] In this regard, the pilgrimage scroll in the collections of the Royal Asiatic Society is an intriguing historical document attesting to the final stages of hand painted items that bear a particular relevance for the study of Shiʿi Islam in the modern Middle East.

Conservation Report

The scroll was presented for conservation in April 2018, as its physical condition had been identified by the Royal Asiatic Society as unstable. While conservation treatment aimed to stabilise the object so it could be housed and consulted safely, the scroll's physical condition and materials gave further clues as to the nature and making of the object.

The scroll is made of sheets of thick wove paper of irregular dimensions, adhered together along their short edges, overlapping by approximately 4mm. Brown adhesive residues on the verso of the joints appear to be an animal glue. The last sheet of paper has laid lines and much foxing, as well as more severe verdigris corrosion, indicating differences both in its making and in its inherent quality.

As already mentioned, the object had severed on the joint between two images (between images 5 and 6) due to creasing exacerbated by localised copper corrosion. There are regular deep creases along the scroll, as well as less pronounced creases at different regular intervals. The deeper creases appear to result from the scroll having been folded for transport or safekeeping, while the less pronounced ones are related to the scroll's storage at the Royal Asiatic Society. Indeed, the scroll's two segments were tightly rolled on themselves with no support core, and had apparently suffered from flattening. The initial examination and handling of the object was difficult as it naturally returned to a tight roll. Creasing in the scroll was overall not severe thanks to the good quality of the paper. However, in certain areas the creasing, coupled with localised copper corrosion and tensions due to double-layering of paper, led to damage such as splitting and segmenting.

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[27]K. Von Folsach, *For the Privileged Few: Islamic Miniature Paintings from The David Collection* (Copenhagen, 2007).
[28]On the history of lithographic printing in Iran, see U. Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books* (Leiden, 2001).

The scroll suffers from further copper corrosion throughout, as the borders and many other areas are painted in verdigris, severely damaging the object's edges and making them brittle as well as the borders of each image. There is also great damage caused by verdigris corrosion in the first image on the verso of which is the inscription by the scroll's likely donor to the Royal Asiatic Society. The last image's lower edge depicts grass, painted in verdigris, causing large-scale degradation and many vertical fractures due to the object's rolled storage.

Verdigris is a term used for any blue-green pigment obtained from the oxidation of copper, most notably with acetic acid, resulting in copper acetates of differing molecular structure.[29] The pigment was easily available to artists for centuries and is found in manuscripts, printed books, maps, and fine art.[30] Verdigris is known to damage cellulose—the molecular component of paper—in several stages. Damage starts with colour changes (going from bright green-blue to dull brown) and bleeding, then progresses to degradation and destruction of both media and substrate. This causes the support to become brittle and can lead to loss.[31] This scroll displays each of these stages in several areas, from the darkening of the paper on the back of the images, to cracks and losses.

Verdigris was a popular pigment thanks to its availability, and was known to Persian artists. In fact, its corrosive nature as a pigment has also been known for long. Saffron is known to have been used in historic paint-making for its anti-corrosive properties, as well as to achieve 'almond green'.[32] As the scroll contains two distinct shades of green and as only the dull green resulted in any paper corrosion, the bright green used in the scroll's making likely is indeed 'almond green'.

Copper being a transition metal, it can exist in two oxidation states, Cu(I) and Cu(II), switching between the two states thanks to reductive-oxidative reactions with surrounding molecules. In paper, cellulose becomes the receiver and giver of electrons, hence cellulose also undergoes reductive-oxidative reactions.[33] Copper ions are water-soluble, implying that any aqueous treatment potentially transports them further into areas perhaps not yet degraded.[34]

Verdigris corrosion can be slowed or avoided through conservation treatment, as well as by managing the affected object's storage conditions. For example, the oxidation of cellulose due to copper is likely exacerbated with light and humid conditions.[35] Affected paper can also be supported and locally treated in order to prevent further degradation. This is most commonly done by adhering a layer of supporting Japanese tissue, the most common

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[29]N. Easthaugh, V. Walsh, T. Chaplin, and R. Siddall, *The Pigment Compendium* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 385–386.
[30]C. Hofmann, A. Hartl, K. Ahn, K. Druceikaite, U. Henniges, and A. Potthast, 'Stabilization of Verdigris', *Journal of Paper Conservation* XVII:3–4 (2016), pp. 88–99.
[31]G. Banik, 'Discoloration of Green Copper Pigments in Manuscripts and Works of Graphic Art', *Restaurator* X (1989), pp. 61–67.
[32]M. Barkeshli and G. Ataie, 'pH Stability of Saffron Used in Verdigris as an Inhibitor in Persian Miniature Paintings', *Restaurator* XXIII (2002), pp. 154–164.
[33]J. Malešič, J. Kolar, and M. Anders, 'Evaluation of Treatments for Stabilization of Verdigris and Malachite Containing Paper Documents', *Restaurator* XXXVI:4 (2015), pp. 283–305.
[34]G. Banik, H. Stachelberger, and O. Wächter, 'Investigation of the Destructive Action of Copper Pigments on Paper and Consequences for Conservation', *Studies in Conservation* XXVII: suppl. 1 (1982), pp. 75–78.
[35]C. Hofmann, A. Hartl, K. Ahn, I. Faerber, U. Henniges, and A. Potthast, 'Studies on the Conservation of Verdigris on Paper', *Restaurator* XXXVI:2 (2015), pp. 147–182.

material for paper repairs in conservation. While standard adhesives in paper conservation are water-based, non-aqueous methods should prevail when delivering adhesives to verdigris corroded paper. Using re-moistenable repair tissue—tissue pre-coated with an adhesive which is left to dry—prevents the addition of excess moisture which could lead to the migration of copper ions.[36]

Common adhesives in paper conservation include animal protein, such as isinglass (sturgeon glue) or gelatin, made from boiling bones and connective tissue of—usually—pigs. Gelatine has the potential to complex copper ions thanks to its amino-acid chain, making it a particularly suitable adhesive for copper corrosion repairs.[37] However, to respect the cultural sensitivity of objects originating from the Muslim world,[38] a certified bovine gelatine (Type 1 B) was considered, as well as isinglass. These choices were discussed with the director of the Royal Asiatic Society, who favoured the use of sustainably-sourced isinglass and bovine gelatine. After testing the adhesion strength of each adhesive under differing pH conditions and a comparative analysis of their amino acid composition, bovine gelatine was found to be most effective.

A discussion arose regarding whether to keep the two severed sections of the scroll separate, while keeping them stored together. Re-uniting the two sections would have a bearing for the scroll's visual appearance and respect the historical making of the object, while leaving the two sections apart would have a positive impact on mechanical stability and handling. Indeed, adding repair materials such as tissue and adhesive to an already fragile area could lead to future degradation. Further, two shorter scrolls are more easily viewed than one long scroll. This option was discussed with the Royal Asiatic Society who expressed a preference for keeping the two sections separate.

Aside from the structural damage to the scroll, some of the design was also at risk as the gilding was flaking in several areas, sometimes severely. Cracks and powdering of the metals was visible under magnification, while missing flakes were discernible with the naked eye on some images. The object's gilding is likely imitation gold and silver, as neither has tarnished. With the available equipment, non-destructive identification was not possible. Hypothetically, the former could be brass and the latter could either be lead, aluminium, or tin—all of them replacement metals commonly used by Persian artists.[39] There is no visible degradation of the paper where those metals are found, but a green hue can sometimes be seen in the binder of the gold imitation, which could confirm it is a copper-based alloy.

When a medium cracks and flakes, it is of utmost importance to conserve these areas to preserve what is left. To do so, an adhesive is re-introduced to bind the media to the support,

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[36]C. Hofmann et al., 'Stabilization of Verdigris'; T. Stanley, 'A Conservation Case Study of Persian Miniatures', *Restaurator* XXVII (2006), pp. 162–177.

[37]F. Meyer and A. Neumann, 'Recombinant Proteins: A New Material for the Chemical Stabilisation of Copper Pigment Corrosion on Paper?' *Restaurator* XXX (2009), pp. 96–130.

[38]L. Wilson, 'Middle Eastern Manuscripts: Identifying Cultural Sensitivities and Establishing Procedures for Their Care', Symposium Collaboration and Connections: AICCM Paper, Books and Photographic Materials Special Interest Group, Sydney, 1–3 April 2004, Art Gallery of NSW; available at https://aiccm.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/BPG2004/Wilson_BPG_2004.PDF (accessed 2 September, 2018).

[39]M. Barkeshli, 'Paint Palette Used by Iranian Masters Based on Persian Medieval Recipes', *Restaurator* XXXIV:2 (2013), pp. 101–133; S. M. Mousavi, H. Ahmadi, A. Abed-Esfahani, M. Mortazavi, and M. Aceto, 'Identification and Analytical Examination of Copper Alloy Pigments Applied as Golden Illuminations on Three Persian Manuscripts', *Restaurator* XXXVI:2 (2015), pp. 81–100.

a process called consolidation.[40] When adding a consolidant to an existing image, the wrong choice of adhesive can produce negative effects such as high gloss. This is especially true when dealing with metals. Because the scroll will be stored rolled, it was important for the consolidant to be flexible and not to become brittle with age. At the same time, it must have good adhesion strength and be reversible. Due to the unknown nature of the metals, a non-aqueous adhesive and delivery method was crucial to prevent any reaction between the adhesive and the metal. The consolidant chosen for the flaking metallic paints was the synthetic adhesive Aquazol, at different molecular weights, and dissolved in ethanol at 2.5%. This choice was guided by the adhesive's flexibility in ageing, its solvation in readily-available polar solvents (important both for application and for clearing),[41] low viscosity, and low shrinkage.[42] Besides its physical properties, Aquazol is non-toxic, has a neutral pH, and is stable to thermal and light ageing. The Aquazol was applied by brush to flaking areas under magnification, followed by a delivery by ultrasonic mister to create a homogeneous layer of consolidation to protect media from mechanical stress.

When studying the media on the scroll during first investigations of their conditions, it was found that some design motifs seem to have been marked using pin-pricks to create outlines, which could have been copied, several at a time, from a cartoon or preparatory drawing to guide the artist when inking the designs. The pricking is fairly unprecise in this case, and does not always match the inked lines perfectly (Figs. 15, 16). This feature, and its hasty nature, might serve as an additional argument towards the commercial nature of the scroll's making. One can imagine the repetitive pricking of paper images, which were then inked and joined to make scrolls sold to visitors.

Treating an object of such a scale was not an easy task, and was made more complex by the flaking media. Any movement, such as rolling and unrolling, risked further damage to the gilding. To prevent this, the scroll was kept flat at all times, mounted temporarily onto purpose-cut rigid board using magnets. This also promoted relaxation of the scroll, which was noticeably less tense after six weeks. After ten weeks, the shorter section would lie moderately flat without weights. This was previously impossible as the scroll would naturally spring back to a tight roll.

After an initial surface cleaning, consolidation of the flaking gilt, and repairs to the scroll, the final conservation issue remaining was its storage and housing. The maximum storage space at the Royal Asiatic Society available for the object dictated that the scroll would be stored rolled, although it would best be kept flat to prevent future media flaking and other inevitable mechanical stress during rolling and unrolling. The object being difficult to handle due to its tight-rolled history, several storage solutions were envisaged, but discarded as unrealistic or hazardous. Finally, it was decided that a conventional box solution would be used, with a rigid inner tube support system for the scroll. A bespoke box

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[40]S. M. Rodgers et al., 'Consolidation/Fixing/Facing', in *Paper Conservation Catalogue*, ed. American Institute for Conservation Book and Paper Group (Washington, D.C., 1988); http://cool.conservation-us.org/coolaic/sg/bpg/pcc/23_consolidating-fixing-facing.pdf (accessed 2 September, 2018).

[41]Although alcohol is forbidden for consumption in Islam, the use of IMS is permissible as it has been denatured and cannot lead to intoxication (Muslim Consumer Group, 2015).

[42]J. Arslanoglu, 'Evaluation of the Use of Aquazol as an Adhesive in Paintings Consolidation', *WAAC Newsletter* XXV:2 (2003), pp. 12–18.

Fig. 15. Detail of Kufic script from Fig. 3 showing pin-pricks through transmitted light

Fig. 16. Detail of the verso of Fig. 3

which can house both tubes side-by-side was made from acid-free fluted board. The tubes rest on an inner cradle shape at each short end of the box, to support the object without it touching the box, and allow easy access to the tubes. Handling instructions and a visual guide enable viewers to unroll the relevant section desired to view without unrolling the scroll entirely. The librarian at the Royal Asiatic Society was briefly trained in handling the scroll.

The scroll's conservation was crucial as it had been neglected to a point of active damage. The fundamental issues prior to treatment were the following: the object was in two sections which needed re-assembling; both sections had been stored rolled tightly, and thus sprung back when unrolled; the edges of the roll were severely degraded throughout due to

verdigris corrosion; similar damage had led to a loss on the first image; and there were severe vertical tears at intersections between two paper sheets, exacerbated by verdigris corrosion. Finally, metallic paints in several areas were flaking, some of it leading to important losses. Without conservation, these issues would aggravate, and especially so if the scroll would be consulted as it was not in a state to do so safely.

Preliminary research into repair materials enabled the best choices to be made, with the final aim of stabilising each section of the scroll, by repairing and supporting brittle verdigris-corroded paper and consolidating flaking and at-risk media. The final decision not to rejoin the two sections further enables the object to be stored, handled, and exhibited safely. The bespoke storage box creates a safe environment for the scroll, away from light, dust, and pollutants.

Initially, the nineteenth-century scroll depicting holy sites of Shiʿi Islam was an uncatalogued object in an unstable condition. Thanks to collaboration with the Royal Asiatic Society, a better understanding of the scroll is now possible. Further, after undergoing full conservation treatment with a bespoke housing solution, it is now in a viewable condition, making it more accessible for further research.

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