LE CORAN DE GWALIOR

POLYSÉMIE D’UN MANUSCRIT À PEINTURES

sous la direction de
Éloïse BRAC DE LA PERRIÈRE
et Monique BURÉSI
ECLECTICISM AND REGIONALISM:
The Gwalior Qurʾan and the Ghurid Legacy to Post-Mongol Art

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Abstract

With its exuberant illuminations, the Gwalior Qurʾan, the first dated north Indian Qurʾan, is paradigmatic of the ‘global’ nature of the art of the Eastern Islamic world following the collapse of the Pax Mongolica around the middle of the 13th century. The phenomenon is especially well documented in architecture; in the north Indian milieu in which the Gwalior Qurʾan was produced, the decoration of the monuments erected by the Tughlaq sultans of Delhi during the course of the 14th century offers numerous points of comparison for the manuscript’s decorative eclecticism. Such tangible reminders of horizontal cultural flows between India, Iran and regions to the West should not, however, obscure the existence of more enduring and geographically circumscribed modes of artistic production; to paraphrase the anthropologist James Clifford, we need to consider both routes and roots. This paper locates the Gwalior Qurʾan at the intersection of contemporary ‘horizontal’ transregional circulations and the ‘vertical’ axes of earlier, rooted and regionally specific traditions of manuscript production. Based on certain structural idiosyncrasies of the Gwalior manuscript, it raises the possibility of continuities with Qurʾan manuscripts (maṣāḥif) produced two centuries earlier in the Ghurid sultanate of Afghanistan and north India (ca. 1150-1210). It speculates that the artistic patronage of the Kardīt rulers of Herat (ca. 1245-1389) may provide a ‘missing link’ between the Gwalior Qurʾan and earlier Ghurid maṣāḥif.

Résumé

Éclectisme et régionalisme: du coran de Gwalior et de l’héritage ghuride à l’art post-mongol

With its eclectic and exuberant illuminations, the Gwâlîr Qur’ān is in many respects paradigmatic of the ‘global’ nature of the art of the Eastern Islamic world in the 14th century. This quality is most obviously manifested in its juxtaposition of forms and motifs deeply rooted in regional (primarily Indic) traditions with those of non-indigenous origin that ultimately were mediated by contact with Ilkhanid prototypes, as were those in the Maridânî mosque in Tabriz (ca. 1310) or in the iwan of the Altînbugha al-Mustafî at Maragha (ca. 1296). In attempting to sketch a broad cultural context for understanding the remarkable variety of the illuminations in the Gwâlîr Qur’ān, it is also important to acknowledge the paradoxical fact that, however successful the Fox Mongolīca may have been in reconfiguring established artistic and cultural geographies, the collapse of the Mongol system, and the decline of the Ilkhānīs of Iran after the 1330s, in particular, may have provided a far greater stimulus than Ilkhānī patronage to artistic practices and techniques over an arc ranging from the West to the East. This is manifest on the one hand in the rise of regional courts and patterns of artistic patronage in the power vacuum that resulted from the collapse of the Ilkhānī state, whether the Injîdis (1305-1357) or Muzzafarīds of Shirāz (1335-1399), the Jâlâyiids of Iraq (1335-1357) or the Muzaffarids of Tabaristan. On the other, we have the reception of Ilkhānī forms even in areas that had never been under the political control of the Ilkhāns.

Sultan Ḥasan’s complex offers a particularly dramatic example of an artistic eclecticism that exploited ‘global’ cultural flows, but a similar trend is manifest during the same period as far East as north India, which, like Egypt, had never been incorporated into the Mongol empire. This lack of incorporation was in itself conducive to the circulation of artistic forms, as refugees from the Mongol conquests brought their skills to Delhi in the course of the 13th century, leaving a palpable mark on the development of contemporary architectural decoration. It is, in fact, architecture that offers the most useful indicator of the transregional circulations and connections of the 13th and 14th centuries that are so palpable in the illuminations of the Gwalior Qur’ān.

The architecture of the Tughluq dynasty that ruled north India from 1321 to the period of Timur’s invasion in 1399 (the year in which the Gwalior Qur’ān is dated) is particularly marked by the introduction to North India of forms and techniques from the wider Islamic world to the West. These include the precious glazed tile ornaments in the tomb of Rukn al-Dīn Alam of Multan (ca. 1320), itself a monument possibly inspired by the tomb of the Ilkhanid sultan Öljeitü built at Sultanānīya in western Iran less than a decade earlier. To this might be added the first appearance of the four-iwan plan and carved stucco ornament at Tughluqbad, the new Tughluqid capital near Delhi built by the Kumi (Anatolian) architect and vizier Ahmad b. Ayāz, the tentative appearance of blue-glazed tiles in the rebuilt Friday Mosque of Bada’i (roughly 150 miles from Gwalior) in 1326, and the engaged paired minarets, blue-glazed elements and carved stucco ornament in the Friday Mosque of Jahangārah, the new capital built by Muhammad b. Tughluq around 1343 (figures 2–3). This receptivity to Persianate forms and motifs continued even in later Tughluq architecture, for the spectacular stucco ornament in the tomb of Firūz Shāh Tughluq (d. 1388) at Haṣṣ Khas in Delhi (figure 4) shows affinities with the illuminations of Ilkhanid manuscripts produced a few decades earlier, which have themselves been cited as comparanda for the illuminations in the Gwalior Qur’ān.11 In view of this filiation between north Indian architectural ornament and the illuminations of highly portable manuscripts from both India and Iran, it is worth noting reports that the madrasa adjoining Firūz Shāh’s tomb was provided with carpets from Shiraz, Yemen and Damascus.12

10. Welch, Crane (1983), 130–133.
11. See, for example, the illuminations in a copy of the Majmūʿ al-rashīdiyya produced in Tabriz between 1307 and 1310 (BnF Arabe 2512a: Chains (2012), 255–261, figs. 4b–5c).
Figure 3 – Friday Mosque of Jahanpanah, Delhi, remains of blue-glazed lotus flower in spandrels of exterior arches, ca. 1343. [© Photograph: F. B. Flood]

Figure 2 – Friday Mosque of Jahanpanah, Delhi, general view of entrance to the prayer hall, ca. 1343. [© Photograph: F. B. Flood]

Figure 1 – Friday Mosque of Jahanpanah, Delhi, general view, ca. 1343. [© Photograph: F. B. Flood]
In short, the architectural projects of north Indian sultans not only attest to the enduring mobility of artistic forms and techniques from the Persianate world to the West during the 13th and 14th centuries, but also indicate contemporary receptivity to western artistic forms and techniques from the Persianate world to the West during the 13th and 14th centuries. This phenomenon was mediated by the patronage of a Muslim from the Rasulid sultan's name, who sometimes facilitated the transcontinental exchange of artifacts and artistic forms across remarkably long distances. Among them one might mention the Rasulids sultans of Yemen (r. 1229-1454), who reportedly sponsored the construction at least one Friday Mosque in China in which the khuṭba was read in the Rasulid sultan’s name, and also exchanged embassies with the Yuan and Ming dynasties, contacts perhaps attested by reported finds of ‘re-gifted’ Mamluk enameled glass as far East as China.15 The chinoiserie of fourteenth-century Ilkhanid and Mamluk art even finds a counterpart in what might be termed the occidentalism of Islamic architecture of this period in China. In the Sheng-Yu Si Mosque (Mosque of the Holy Friend) at Quanzhou on the Southern coast of China, forms from the central Islamic lands were mediated by the patronage of a Muslim from Shiraz, who renovated the mosque in 1310. It was presumably then that what is clearly a stone approximation of a muqarnas semi-dome was set in place over the main entrance to the mosque (figure 5).16

The practicalities or pragmatics of artistic mobility between the central Islamic lands and India were undoubtedly tied to the role of mediators, both dynastic and individual, who sometimes facilitated the transmission of artifacts and artistic forms across remarkably long distances. Among them one might mention

15. See, for example, the enameled glass vase now in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/singleObject.cfm?ObjectNumber=41901.19, accessed September 25, 2013. On the Rasulids and China see Vallet (2007), 158.
Figure 5 – Sheng-Yu Si Mosque (Mosque of the Holy Friend), Quanzhou, detail of entrance...


Shiraz was of course a fulcrum for the circulation of things and persons along the maritime routes, a key nexus between the Gulf, India and the port cities of Southern China that lay beyond. This relationship is manifest in the close relationship between Shirazi manuscripts and some of the illuminations in the Gwalior Qur’an.17 The possibility of an earlier relationship between Shirazi and Indian illustrated manuscript traditions is raised by the striking use of a red ground in Injuid manuscripts, a feature documented in both Shirazi and Indian illustrated manuscripts and some of the illuminations in the Gwalior Qur’an.18 Analogous to that of many folios in the Gwalior Qur’an, the common feature may serve as a reminder that artistic scripts in both regions.18 Further, sometime in the fourteenth century, the adoption of this feature in both the sultanate painting of India derives from Shirazi sultanate painting and fourteenth-century manuscripts produced on the West coast of southern Gujarat. The idea that Shiraz was of course a fulcrum for the circulation of things and persons along the maritime routes, a key nexus between the Gulf, India and the port cities of Southern China that lay beyond. This relationship is manifest in the close relationship between Shirazi manuscripts and some of the illuminations in the Gwalior Qur’an.17 The possibility of an earlier relationship between Shirazi and Indian illustrated manuscript traditions is raised by the striking use of a red ground in Injuid manuscripts, a feature documented in earlier Jain manuscripts produced on the West coast of India, including Gujarat, a region long important to long-distance trade. Although it has sometimes been assumed that the use of a similar red ground in the sultanate painting of India derives from Shirazi prototypes, the adoption of this feature in both sultanate painting and fourteenth-century manuscripts produced in Fars is more likely to reflect the common impact of north-Indian, especially Jain, artistic traditions that can be documented a century or two earlier.18 Hinting at dimensions of culture contact whose significance awaits further investigation, this common feature may serve as a reminder that artistic contacts between Iran and India during the 14th century were characterized by a multi-directionality or mutuality conducive to innovation in both regions.

17. See, for example, a Shirazi Qur’an from the 1340s in the Nasser D. Khalili collection (Qur182, fols. 26v–27r), in which text blocks are framed by a wreath of foliage in a manner analogous to that of many folios in the Gwalior Qur’an: Wright (2003), fig. 19.
Perhaps more importantly for understanding the eclecticism of the Gwalior Qurʾan, the circulation of manuscripts between Shiraz and India during the second half of the 12th century is attested by a report in the Maṣālik al-ʿabṣār (d. 1154) with its imported Syrian manifestation of the four-iwān plan associated with the Persianate East, or the coins minted around the Masālik al-ʿabṣār weighing 120 dinars (22.4 g). The ephemeral nature of the Ghurid sultanate (ca. 1150–1220) makes it difficult to evaluate its artistic legacy, but the paucity of manuscripts and other portable objects obscures the fact that those artistic traditions in the broader context for understanding the ornamentation of this pre-Islamic manuscript are never simply brought into discussions of the Gwalior Qurʾan is a four-volume leather-bound Qurʾan completed for the Ghurid sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Waḥīd. Unfortunately, the colophon does not seem to provide a place of production, Firuzkuh (the probable site of the Jam minaret) or Nishapur are possible but Herat is likely; in the second half of a major metalwork school was centered in the city, whose Friday Mosque was rebuilt in 1200, during a period of political and epigraphic evidence attests the participation of its denizens in Ghurid architectural projects as far away as the Indo‑Gangetic plains and north India. Ghazna and Bust are less likely, since these fell within the territories governed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s brother, Muʿizz al-Dīn. The Ghurids may be especially germane to this consideration, the revival of the authority of the Abbasid caliphate, and the restoration of Sunni hegemony, particularly auspicious for the circulation of artistic forms and practices over an area extending from the Indus Valley and north India. 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The Ghurids may be especially germane to this broader context for understanding the ornamentation and structure of the Gwalior Qurʾan. This manuscript’s four-iwān plan is centered in the city, whose Friday Mosque was rebuilt in 1200, during a period of political and epigraphic evidence attests the participation of its denizens in Ghurid architectural projects as far away as the Indus Valley and north India. Ghazna and Bust are less likely, since these fell within the territories governed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s brother, Muʿizz al-Dīn.

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The monuments. The presence of an interlinear Persian characterizes the monumental epigraphy in Ghurid naskh, thuluth, and New Style, a combination that also of the material Qurʾan of the Ilkhanid and 30% larger than the Gwalior Qurʾan is anticipated in the Ghurid Qurʾans are a penchant for eclecticism in the fourteenth. is written in ʿan, this division that recurs within the single volume Gwalior Qurʾan, which was integrated into the repertoires of artists and artisans working in the Islamic world only after the Mongol conquests of the 13th century. Among the most obvious parallels between the Ghurid and Ghurid Qurʾans are a penchant for eclecticism in the illuminations, manifest in the variety of scripts used in sura headings, ranging in the Ghurid Qurʾan from kufic (in both foliated and non-foliated varieties), to New Style and naskhī, while the sacred text itself is written in tawā’il. In the Gwalior Qurʾan, we find a similar taste for variety in the use of foliated kufic and muhaqqaq for juʿ markers and thuluth for sura headings, with bihārī used for the sacred text. Like the Gwalior Qurʾan, the Ghurid Qurʾan has been provided with an interlinear Persian gloss, one of the first dated Qurʾans to include such a feature. In addition, the text of the opening folios of the first volume of the Ghurid Qurʾan is surrounded by a cloud of illumination that swirls around the interstices of the text, anticipating the dense elaboration of a similar feature in the Gwalior Qurʾan (figures 6–7).

None of these features is of course unique. What does suggest a more specific relationship to the Gwalior Qurʾan is the unusual division of the Qurʾan. Qurʾans of this period tend to be single volume or divided into two volumes, while the Ghurid manuscript is divided into four, each volume bearing some or all of its original tooling (see table). Such a division is rare, although four-volume divisions of tawāʾif are known, and might conceivably have informed the division of the Qurʾan text. Whatever the reason that this division of the revelation was favored, the four-fold division of the Ghurid Qurʾan may well have been employed in other Qurʾans produced in Afghanistan and north-western regions of South Asia in the 12th and 13th centuries.

The persistence of this unusual division may help explain a peculiarity of the Ghurid Qurʾan that is common in other sultanate period Indian Qurʾans (all undated). This is a distinction conferred on suras 1 (al-Fātihā), 7 (al-ʻIṣraʾ), 19 (Maryam), and 38 (Sād) by the provision of heavily illuminated double-page frames that do not announce the opening of any other suras. The presence of elaborate double-page illuminations around these four suras (and no others) articulates, in effect, a four-fold division of the Ghurid Qurʾan that may well have been employed in other Qurʾans produced in other sultanate period Indian Qurʾans (all undated). The Gwalior Qurʾan thus certainly provides a model for the Ghurid Qurʾan, and we might wonder if this model might have been followed by other sultanate period Indian Qurʾans (all undated).
Figure 6 – Ghurid Qur’an of 1189, vol. 1, recto of double opening containing Sura 1, al-Fātiḥa (Iran Bastan Museum 3500, p. 5). [© Iran Bastan Museum, Photograph: F. B. Flood]

Figure 7 – Ghurid Qur’an of 1189, vol. 3, double opening framing Sura 19, Maryam (Iran Bastan Museum 3496, folio unknown). [© Iran Bastan Museum]
Figure 8 – Ghurid Qurʾan of 1189, vol. 1, recto of double opening containing Sura 2, al-Baqara (Iran Bastan Museum 3500, p. 7) [detail]. [© Iran Bastan Museum, Photograph: F. B. Flood]

Figure 9 – Ghurid Qurʾan of 1189, volume 4, double finispiece (Iran Bastan Museum 3507, fols. 195r-196v). [© Iran Bastan Museum, Photograph: F. B. Flood]
In addition, in both the Ghurid and Gwalior Qur’ans (and also in MS W563), the double frame that opens suras 1, 7, 19 and 38 (figures 6 and 8), is more heavily illuminated and more richly gilded than those found in pre-Mongol Qur’ans.27 This is entirely possible: the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait (LNS 274) that exists and circulated eastward to India before or during the fourteenth century, if not the 13th.27

Nevertheless, it is entirely possible that this use of a decorative double geometric form was repeated for reasons, in the Qur’an perpetuates a tradition favored, for as yet unknown reasons, in the Qur’an produced for the Ghurids and their successors. If this is the case, we are dealing with a more complex scenario than the simple reception of Ilkhanid or Mamluk modes of manuscript illumination, a scenario in which the basic structure of the Gwalior Qur’an perpetuates an earlier, perhaps even archaic, regional tradition, while the specific forms of its ornament are shaped by the transitional flow of artistic forms and practices across a wide swath of the Islamic world from Egypt to India, during and after the period of Mongol hegemony in the 13th and 14th centuries. In other words, while the illuminations and ornament of the Gwalior Qur’an are clearly informed by relatively contemporary traditions that flowed horizontally across the Islamic world in the 14th century, the division of the text itself may be an archaism that perpetuates a less immediately visible inheritance from earlier regional traditions, documented in the Ghurid Qur’an produced 200 years earlier. Such a perpetuation of earlier traditions would be very much in keeping with the archaism mentioned in fourteen-th century sultanate painting that has been noted elsewhere by Elise Brac de la Perrière.9

The Ghurid Qur’an never traveled to India, since it was endowed to the shrine of Shaykh Ahmad b. Abi al-Hasan (d. 1141) at Turbat-i Shaykh Jam, now an Iranian border town to the West of Herat, in 1256 and remained there until it was taken to Tehran in the early 20th century. Nevertheless, it seems highly unlikely that this was the only such Qur’an ever made in Ghurid Afghanistan, especially when one considers that it was completed in 1189, a decade or two even before large amounts of Indian gold and booty started flowing into the Ghurid sultanate to fund major artistic projects, such as the rebuilding of the Friday Mosque of Herat in 1200. One possibility, therefore, is that other such four-wage Qur’ans existed and circulated eastward to India before or after the collapse of the Ghurid sultanate and the emergence of Delhi as the capital of an independent sultanate around 1290.

There is, however, an alternative possibility that should be considered, one that relates to the revival of the legacy of the Ghurid sultanate in the 14th century under the Khati or Kardt dynasty of Herat, which ruled between roughly 1278 and 1383. The rise of the Kardts, who claimed descent from the Shanaband clan of Ghur, ruled as Ilkhanid vassals, and were

27. I am very grateful to Nahla Nasser of the Nasser D. Khalili Collection for drawing my attention to QUR237 and providing images of the manuscript, and to Sue Kouchok of the al-Sabah Collection for permitting me to study LNS 274 MS during a visit to Kuwait in May 2015.
eventually defeated by Timūr, underlines the point made earlier about the possibilities for realizing regional political ambitions after the collapse of Ilkhanid power in the 1330s. Although often over-
looked, the Kartids were contemporaries of the Jalay-
irds, Muzaffarids, and Injuids, whose rule bookended the disintegration of the state from the collapse of the Ilkhanids to the rise of the Timurids, at whose hands the Kartid
dynasty met its end, the last of its scions put to death. The Kartids of Herat laid claim to the legacy of the Ghurids, claims apparent not only in the name of Ghiyāth al-Dīn who ruled over Herat between 1307 and 1328, the Kartid namesake of the great Ghurid sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muhammad b. Sām (r. 1313–1334). Although often confused and confused the two. The restoration of the Herat
Mosque by the Kartid ruler in 1320 reenacted one of the central acts of the Ghurid sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s patronage; the rebuilding of the Friday Mosque of Herat around 1200. It was next to the Ghurid sultan in his tomb in the same mosque that the Kartid malik Ghiyāth al-Dīn was eventually laid to rest.36

More relevant to the broader contest for the Gwalior Qurʾan is evidence for the continued role of Herat as a center for book production under the rule of the Kartids in the 14th century. A leather-bound Persian translation of the second rule s of al-Ghazālī’s Iḥyā ʿulūm al-ʿawārīd written by the scribe Nāṣir al-Harawī in Herat in 1325 is now preserved in the Semeyon Collection of the Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe. The colophon invokes praise on Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the Kartid ruler, and tells us that the manuscript was completed on the Southern platform of Herat’s Friday Mosque (dar majāl al-ʿulā maṣṣaṣ fī jālī). It indicates that the Herat mosque functioned as a center for the production of religious texts.37 That mosques were a locus for manuscript production in both Afghanistan and India is confirmed by a fourteenth-century North Indian Hamzi ṣafi manual, which specifically censures the activities of calligraphers and copyists (ṣūraṭa) in mosques.38

The Herat manuscript of the Ḥāfiz’s ʿulīm al-dīn is executed in black ink with headings in red, and shows no signs of illuminations, but its scale is unusual: the paper is large in size, 30.5 × 25.5 cm, just slightly smaller than the folios of the Ghurid Qurʾan of 1189, which measure 39 × 29 cm. On the basis of the survival of this manuscript, Lola Dodkhudoeva has plausibly suggested that the Kartid rulers may have fostered the production of certain kinds of texts designed to enhance their appropriation of the Ghurid legacy.39

Textual evidence indicates the production of illus-
trated manuscripts under the Kartids,40 and it seems probable that ʿAwārīd were among the manu-
scripts that they commissioned, like the Ghurids before them. Given the instrumentalization of the Ghurid legacy by the Kartids, any such ʿAwārīd would, like so much of Kartid art and architecture, invariably have followed Ghurid precedents. Such a revival of Ghurid forms and practices offers a possible, if hypo-
thetical, link between the manuscript traditions of the Ghurids, and the four-fold division of the Gwalior Qurʾan. This hypothesis is perhaps strengthened by the fact that Kartid artistic patronage not only reen-
acted that of the Ghurids, but mediated between the artistic legacy of the Ghurids and the innovations of the Timurids. The great brass basin that the Kartid Malik Fīr ᾲ Allī commissioned for the Friday Mosque of Herat in 1374 provided, for example, the inspiration for that ordered by Timūr for the shrine of Ahmad Yasavi in Turkestan city in 1399.41 In addition, Dodkhu-
doeva raises the intriguing possibility of continuities between the patronage of the Kart rulers and the artistic patronage of the Timurids, including Shih ʿarūkh of Herat (r. 1405–1447), a likelihood signaled earlier by Terry Allen and Lawrence Potter.42

The suggestion that the structure of the Gwalior Qurʾan may perpetuate a tradition pioneered in earlier South Asian Qurʾan manuscripts in no way contradicts the evidence for a simultaneous relation to Ilkhanid, Injuid, Mamluk and Muzaffarid book production. What it does, however, remind us of is the need to be aware not only of spatial but also temporal dimensions of artistic patronage; to be aware not only of the horizontal flow of artistic forms across remarkable distances, but also the need to consider the more vertical inheritance of regional traditions transmitted across time. In the case of the Gwalior Qurʾan, one might signal the need to be aware of both the potential legacy of earlier regional (Eastern Iranian, Afghan, and north Indian) traditions of manuscript produc-
tion and the new artistic possibilities opened by the upheavals that led to the disappearance not only of the Ghurids, but also of a whole world order during the course of the 13th century.

The enhanced cultural flows that followed pro-
vided the necessary conditions for the marked eclec-
ticism of the illuminations in the Gwalior Qurʾan. These raise interesting questions about the extent to which this heterogeneity would have appeared as such to the late fourteenth-century users and viewers of the manuscript, and whether its geographic or spatial

35. Potter (1998), 158.
implications would have been apparent. Questions of cognition and perception relating to the circulation of manuscript production and the dynamic transregional temporalities, brought into constellation in a single object. This is no less true of the Gwalior Qurʾan, which I have argued represents a point of intersection between older, regionally inflected traditions of manuscript production and the dynamic transregional cultural flows that characterized much fourteenth-century art. Moreover, even anachronisms can be useful heuristic devices, helping to provoke or stimulate our thoughts on particular artworks. What we might take away from the juxtaposition of illuminated Qurʾan and painted tomb is not simply a matter of thinking about the Gwalior manuscript.

The paintings constitute an “encyclopaedia of the kinds of patterns and motifs” in contemporary use, as Richard Turnbull has noted;42 they appear “as manuscript pages writ large.”43 The juxtaposition of the Gwalior Qurʾan illuminations with Anatolian tomb paintings executed seven decades later is admittedly superficial and shamelessly anachronistic, but Georges Didi-Huberman has argued persuasively that all artworks are necessarily anachronistic to the extent that they manifest diverse temporalities, brought into constellation in a single object.44

However, the spiritual sovereignty of Sufis, wilayat manifest in an opposition between region and transregion: “Whereas husūlat, royal authority, was always limited in reach, and never coincided with the entire Muslim world – far less than that – the spiritual sovereignty of Sufis, wilayat was theoretically unlimited in territorial extent, and hence far greater than the worldly sovereignty of sultans.”45

Such a reading of wilayat would fit well with the transregional resonances of the Gwalior Qurʾan and its dazzling array of painted ornaments. By way of conclusion, I have to admit that on first viewing, the vibrant visuality of the Gwalior Qurʾan, its dizzying combinations and variegated palette, immediately set the painted walls of a building far distant from Gwalior, and separated from our Qurʾan manuscript by almost a century. In their eclecticism, luminosity, vivacity, and variety, the ornamentation of the illuminations of the Gwalior Qurʾan immediately reminded me of the molded plaster ornament and paintings (kulem-i şahs) executed in the interior of the mausoleum of Seljuk Süleyman and Cem Sultan in the Mausoleum of the Ottoman royal cemetery at Bursa, far to the West, in the 1470s (figure 10). Like the illuminations of the Gwalior Qurʾan, these also offer a kaleidoscopic repertory of new and established techniques and forms drawn from over a wide geographical area. The Bursa paintings include calligraphic medallions, faux marble, flowers and vegetation, vases with floral sprays, mosque lamps, arabesques and interlace borders; many show the continuing impact of earlier Timurid manuscript illuminations.46 Like the illuminations of the Gwalior Qurʾan, the Ottoman paintings constitute an “encyclopaedia of the kinds of patterns and motifs” in contemporary use, as Richard Turnbull has noted, they appear “as manuscript pages writ large.”

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syncretism, which imply an uneasy and often a rather unstable juxtaposition of things that in some fundamental sense do not really belong together. Unlike the architectural spaces which Foucault imagined in developing his idea of the heterotopia, the Gwalior Qurʾan is of course highly mobile. In this sense, the Gwalior Qurʾan is abundantly clear, it would be a mistake to think of it as a monument. Whether it is a tomb or a mausoleum or palace or madrasa or something else, it is also the case that both the Gwalior Qurʾan and the painted tomb at Bursa stand at the end of a series, on the cusp of an emerging world in which the hegemony of new world empires would ensure the dissemination of more canonical, more standardized artistic forms and practices. What the Gwalior Qurʾan offers, perhaps, is a reminder that in many cases the cultural or geographic conditions were such that had often been used in exuberant combinations and in many ways more homogeneous or uniform elements and forms that had existed earlier, and in many cases indeed, the roots of these phenomena of mobility – of cultural and geographic conditions – of the diachronicity of the cultural or geographic conditions – are to be found in early encounters with other traditions.

Figure 10 – Tomb of sultan, Muradiye, Bursa, detail of upper walls with painted ornament, 1470s. [© Photograph: F. B. Flood]