

## A Journey through Medieval Dar al-Islam

### Overview

Students will visit stations for medieval cities scattered throughout Africa, Asia, and Europe that were predominantly Muslim. For each city, they will analyze architecture, artifacts, and/or primary sources and will complete a journal of their experiences there. To conclude the lesson, they will focus on similarities and differences between the regions to answer the central historical question: What was life like in the Medieval Islamic world?

### Grade

9

### Subject

World History

### Essential Standards

- WH.H.3 - Understand how conflict and innovation influenced political, religious, economic and social changes in medieval civilizations.
- WH.H.1 - Apply the four interconnected dimensions of historical thinking to the Essential Standards for World History in order to understand the creation and development of societies/civilizations/nations over time.

### Essential Questions

- How does an individual benefit from living in a diverse society?
- How did religion influence political power and cultural unity in regions of Europe, Asia and Africa that were predominantly controlled by Muslims?
- How did innovations in agriculture, trade and business impact the economic and social development of Medieval Islamic societies?

### Materials

- Journey through Dar al Islam slides (attached)
- Travel journal sheets for each student (attached)
- Printed station sheets in envelopes or folders for each locale (attached)
  - Includes sheets for each of the following cities: Cairo, Baghdad, Delhi, Granada, Timbuktu

### Preparation

Students should be familiar with the Golden Age of Islam and Feudal Europe.

### Duration

90 minutes

### Procedure

#### Introduction (5-10 Minutes)

1. As a warm up, ask students what is meant by “diversity.” List various aspects of what makes a community diverse on the board. Ensure students consider differences in racial and ethnic, socioeconomic, geographic, and academic/professional backgrounds; as well as opinions, social experience, religious

beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientations, heritage, and life experience. After the class has developed a shared understanding of diversity, ask students to quietly brainstorm the ways that living in a diverse community positively impacts their lives.

2. After allowing students to brainstorm for a few minutes, solicit responses from students and write them on the board or on a separate piece of chart paper. Once students have finished sharing their responses, discuss the following questions:
  - How does diversity lead to innovation and creativity?
  - How does diversity lead to conflict?
  - If you didn't live in a diverse society, how might your life be different?

#### **Dar Al Islam (5 Minutes)**

1. Introduce life in the Medieval Islamic world with the 'Journey through Dar al Islam' slides. Explain to students that by 1300 CE, Islamic civilization stretched from the Atlantic coast of West Africa across northern Africa and southern Europe, throughout the Middle East, and even beyond India to Southeast Asia. These diverse regions constituted the Dar al-Islam, or the "House of Islam." In the medieval era, this community was expanding dramatically (slide 3). Using slide 4, point out the different parts of the world that were predominately populated by Muslims during the Middle Ages.
2. Introduce Ibn Battuta and his achievements (slide 5). Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan Muslim scholar and traveler who traveled over 75,000 miles throughout the Islamic World in the 14th century. Upon returning home to Morocco, Ibn Battuta dictated his story to a scribe, who wrote the account in a classical narrative style, published as *The Rihla* (journey). Tell students that they are going to follow in Ibn Battuta's footsteps and explore Dar al Islam of the Middle Ages (slide 6). For each place they visit, they will explore architecture and artifacts from the medieval Islamic world.

#### **Journey around the Muslim World (55 minutes)**

3. Pass out journals to students with handouts for each locale. (Alternatively, if you have less time you can do this as a jigsaw activity where students visit only one city, then share what they have learned with the group.) Put the printed station sheets for each city in envelopes or folders, and place them around the room in stations.
4. Model filling out part of the journal for Cairo. Project "Ibn Battuta's Visit to Cairo". Read it out loud to students, modelling historical thinking skills and making historical inferences based on evidence.
  - For example, highlight phrases and numbers in the "Arrival in Cairo" section that hint at how densely populated and huge Cairo is, such as "whose throngs surge as the waves of the sea," "twelve thousand water-carriers," "thirty thousand hirers of mules," and "thirty-six thousand boats." Point out that all of these people are involved in some sort of trade, which reveals that Cairo is a massive economic hub. Then model for students how they could put that in their journal. Under details, they could write some of that evidence and then in giant letters, "GIANT TRADE CITY!"
5. As a class, examine one artifact from Cairo, with the teacher modelling how to look at the artifact and make inferences. Project the "Mosque Lamp of Amir Qawsun," so all students can see it. Using observation and reflection think historically about this artifact.
  - For example, "When I look at this, I notice it is says it is made for mosques, hospitals, and schools. Yet it is also very beautiful. There are vibrant colors, and beautiful calligraphy. If I look closely, I notice ornate designs covering every part of the glass. Considering how fragile and decorative it is, this definitely seems like a luxury item. If they are using pieces like this in public spaces, it means there are people with enough wealth to invest in the city. Trade must be lucrative. I also noticed Ibn Battutta

mentioned a incredible schools and hospitals. It seems like culture and learning are also very important in this city.” Show students how they could record this in their journal. “I really am fascinated by the intricate design of this vase, so I could sketch it real quick in my book so I can remember it later.”

6. Let students know they will have 10 minutes at each station, and that they should choose to look closely the artifacts they find most intriguing. Give students time to rotate through the 5 stations. Set a timer for each round. (50 minutes)

**Conclusion (20 minutes)**

7. Have students return to their seats. Give them ten minutes to quietly answer questions 1-4 in the reflection section of their travel journal:
  - What type of trade, agricultural, or other business transactions did you encounter on your trip?
  - Were they similar in each locale or different? Why do you think that is?
  - What evidence can you find of cultural diffusion between the places you visited?
  - If someone from a feudal manor in Europe came to one of these cities, what would surprise them the most?
8. Discuss responses to the questions as a class. Leave time to introduce the final question in their travel journal: Using evidence from your trip, how would you explain what life was like in the Medieval Islamic world?
9. For homework, have students complete the final question, highlighting the fact that they should use evidence from their analysis. Remind them that they details from their journal will support their response and transform it from a mere opinion to a historical interpretation.



# Journey through Dar al-Islam

*Historical Question:*

**What was life  
like in the  
Medieval Islamic  
world?**



# Dar al-Islam

- By 1300 CE, Islamic civilization stretched from the Atlantic coast of West Africa across northern Africa and southern Europe, throughout the Middle East, and even beyond India to Southeast Asia.
- These diverse regions constituted the *Dar al-Islam*, or the “Abode of Islam.”
- People in the whole *umma*, or community of people believing in one god and his sacred law, shared doctrinal beliefs, religious rituals, moral values, and everyday manners.
- Across this wide region, inhabitants maintained their distinctive local and traditional customs, too.
- In the medieval era this community was expanding dramatically.

# Expansion of the Islamic World to 1500



- Islamic world at the end of the Umayyad dynasty
- Extent of the Islamic world 1250
- Extent of the Islamic world 1500
- Area reconquered by Christians 1250
- Area reconquered by Christians 1500
- Extent of Christian crusading principalities in 12th century
- ✂ Site and date of important battle

# Ibn Battuta

- Ibn Battuta (1304 – 1368) was a Muslim scholar from Tunisia.
- He began his Hajj in 1325; nearly 3 decades and 75,000 miles later he returned home.
- He is considered one of the most well traveled individuals in history. Upon his return at the age of 50, he wrote a book of his travels.
- If we consider bias, we recognize some of his tales may have been embellished to sell more copies. Yet his accounts still offer a valuable glimpse into the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



# *Journey through Dar al Islam*

- Today you are going to follow in Ibn Battuta's footsteps and explore Dar al Islam of the Middle Ages.
- For each place you visit, explore the architecture and artifacts.
- Record your experiences in your Journey Journal.
- Remember to use specific evidence!



# My Journey



Name:

# our trip to cairo

Details:

What surprised me most:

Drawing of the Day:

Coolest thing we saw:

Something unique about this place:

What looked familiar:

Details:

What surprised me  
most:

Drawing of the Day:

Coollest thing we saw:

Something unique about  
this place:

What looked familiar:

*Making memories  
in Baghdad*

Today I visited

**Delhi**

I'll never forget:

So surprising

So cool

This reminds me of:

Details to remember:

Drawing of the Day

# A VISIT TO GRANADA

What surprised me most:

Something unique about this place:

Coollest thing we saw:

Details:

Drawing of the Day:

What looked familiar

Drawing of the Day:

Details:

Something unique about this place:

What surprised me most:

Coollest thing we saw:

What looked familiar:

Today I made it all the way to **STANBÜRK**

# Journal Reflections

Using textual evidence from your exploration, answer the following questions.

1. What type of trade, agricultural, or other business transactions did you encounter on your trip?
2. Were they similar in each locale or different? Why do you think that is?
3. What evidence can you find of cultural diffusion between the places you visited?
4. If someone from a feudal manor in Europe came to one of these cities, what would surprise them the most?

# Journal Reflections

5. Using evidence from your trip, how would you explain what life was like in the Medieval Islamic world?



# Cairo

“He decided to be a tourist and visit Cairo, the largest capital of the Arabic-speaking world and the largest city anywhere in the world except those in China! Its population was estimated to be about 600,000 people.” “Life inside the walled city was crowded and frantic. The narrow streets were filled with people, camels, and donkeys and lined with thousands of shops and markets. Armies of peddlers and vendors also jammed the streets.

Ibn Battuta goes on to describe the city's many mosques, colleges, hospitals, and convents which housed the poor. They were built by the **amirs** (military commanders) who competed "with one another in charitable works and the founding of mosques and religious houses."

# *Ibn Battuta's visit to Cairo, 1326*

## Arrival in Cairo

I arrived at length at Cairo, mother of cities and seat of Pharaoh the tyrant, mistress of broad regions and fruitful lands, boundless in multitude of buildings, peerless in beauty and splendour, the meeting-place of comer and goer, the halting-place of feeble and mighty, whose throngs surge as the waves of the sea, and can scarce be contained in her for all her size and capacity. It is said that in Cairo there are twelve thousand water-carriers who transport water on camels, and thirty thousand hirers of mules and donkeys, and that on the Nile there are thirty-six thousand boats belonging to the Sultan and his subjects which sail upstream to Upper Egypt and downstream to Alexandria and Damietta, laden with goods and profitable merchandise of all kinds.

## A pleasure garden

On the bank of the Nile opposite Old Cairo is the place known as The Garden, which is a pleasure park and promenade, containing many beautiful gardens, for the people of Cairo are given to pleasure and amusements. I witnessed a fete once in Cairo for the sultan's recovery from a fractured hand; all the merchants decorated their bazaars and had rich stuffs, ornaments and silken fabrics hanging in their shops for several days.

## Religious institutions

The mosque of 'Amr is highly venerated and widely celebrated. The Friday service is held in it and the road runs through it from east to west. The madrasas [college mosques] of Cairo cannot be counted for multitude. As for the Maristan [hospital], which lies "between the two castles" near the mausoleum of Sultan Qala'un, no description is adequate to its beauties. It contains an innumerable quantity of appliances and medicaments, and its daily revenue is put as high as a thousand dinars.

# Mosque Lamp of Amir Qawsun

Large glass lamps of this type were commissioned by sultans and members of their court for mosques, schools, tombs, hospitals, and other public buildings in fourteenth-century Cairo.

This example bears the name of its patron, and it was probably intended for one of his two architectural commissions in Cairo—a mosque or a tomb-hospice complex.



Maker: 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Barmaki?

Date: ca. 1329–35

Geography: Attributed to Egypt

Medium: Glass

Patron: Sultan al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf ibn 'Umar

Date: ca. 1250 - 95

Geography: Attributed to Egypt

Medium: Brass; cast, chased, inlaid with silver and black compound



# Brazier

Braziers served as portable grills and heaters. The lionheaded knobs with rings provided room for handles to transport the heated unit, while the dragon heads on each side functioned as spit brackets. The names in the inscription identifies the ruler; his dynastic emblem, a five-petalled rosette upon a circular shield, features prominently on both sides of each corner bracket.

# Talismanic Scroll

Centuries before block printing was introduced in Europe, the technique was used in the Islamic world to produce miniature texts consisting of prayers, incantations, and Qur'anic verses that were kept in amulet boxes. The text on this amulet is in the angular kufic script. The six-pointed star, a familiar symbol in Islamic art, is usually called "Solomon's seal."

Date: 11th century

Geography: Attributed to Egypt

Medium: Ink on paper; block-printed

Dimensions: 9 1/16 x 3 5/16in.



# al-Azhar



Al-Azhar, which means “The Flourishing,” was established as the central mosque of Cairo in 970 CE. In 989 it acquired the status of a college with the appointment of thirty-five scholars and went on to become central to Islamic scholarship in Egypt and one of the principal theological universities of the Muslim world.

# Pierced Globe

Designed as an incense burner, this globe once hung from a chain. Inside the hinged body is a small cup, slung on three rings (gimbals) to stabilize the burning coal or incense in the suspended container. The inscription bands do not name the object's owner, but repeat a string of epithets lauding him.



Date: late 13th–early 14th century  
Geography: Attributed to Syria  
Medium: Brass; spun and turned, pierced, chased, inlaid with gold, silver, and black compound  
Dimensions: H. 6 1/4 in.



# The 'Simonetti' Carpet

Named the "Simonetti" carpet after a former owner, this majestic weaving is among the most famous of all Mamluk carpets. One of the larger floor coverings of its type, this example has five medallions instead of the more customary one or three, and it displays a slightly brighter and more varied palette. Likely produced in Egypt under the Mamluk dynasty, such carpets are surprisingly rich in appearance considering their relatively coarse weave and limited color range. The overall effect is that of a luminous mosaic.

Date: ca. 1500

Geography: Attributed to Egypt, probably Cairo

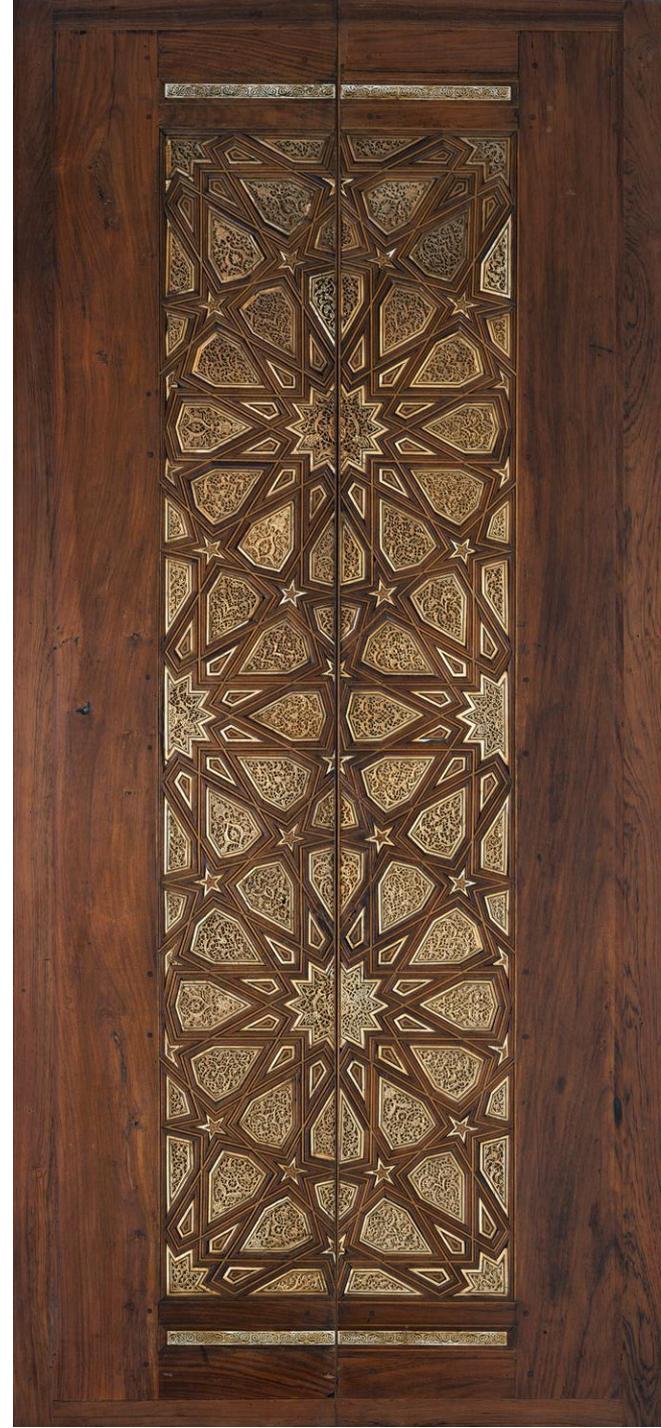
Medium: Wool

Dimensions: L. 353 in. by W. 94 in

# Pair of Minbar (Pulpit) Doors

The furnishings of Cairo's mosques were decorated with intricately constructed polygons and strapwork. Often, the polygons were of wood, either carved or inlaid with ivory or colored woods. These doors exhibit a great variety of patterns, most of which are also found in other media, such as stone carvings, marble mosaics, and stucco window grilles. The accurate cutting required to make such patterned objects is remarkable, since every piece affects the whole.

Date: ca. 1325–30  
Geography: Cairo, Egypt  
Medium: Wood (rosewood and mulberry); carved, inlaid with carved ivory, ebony, and other woods  
Dimensions: H. 77 1/4 in. by W. 35 in. by D. 1 3/4 in.



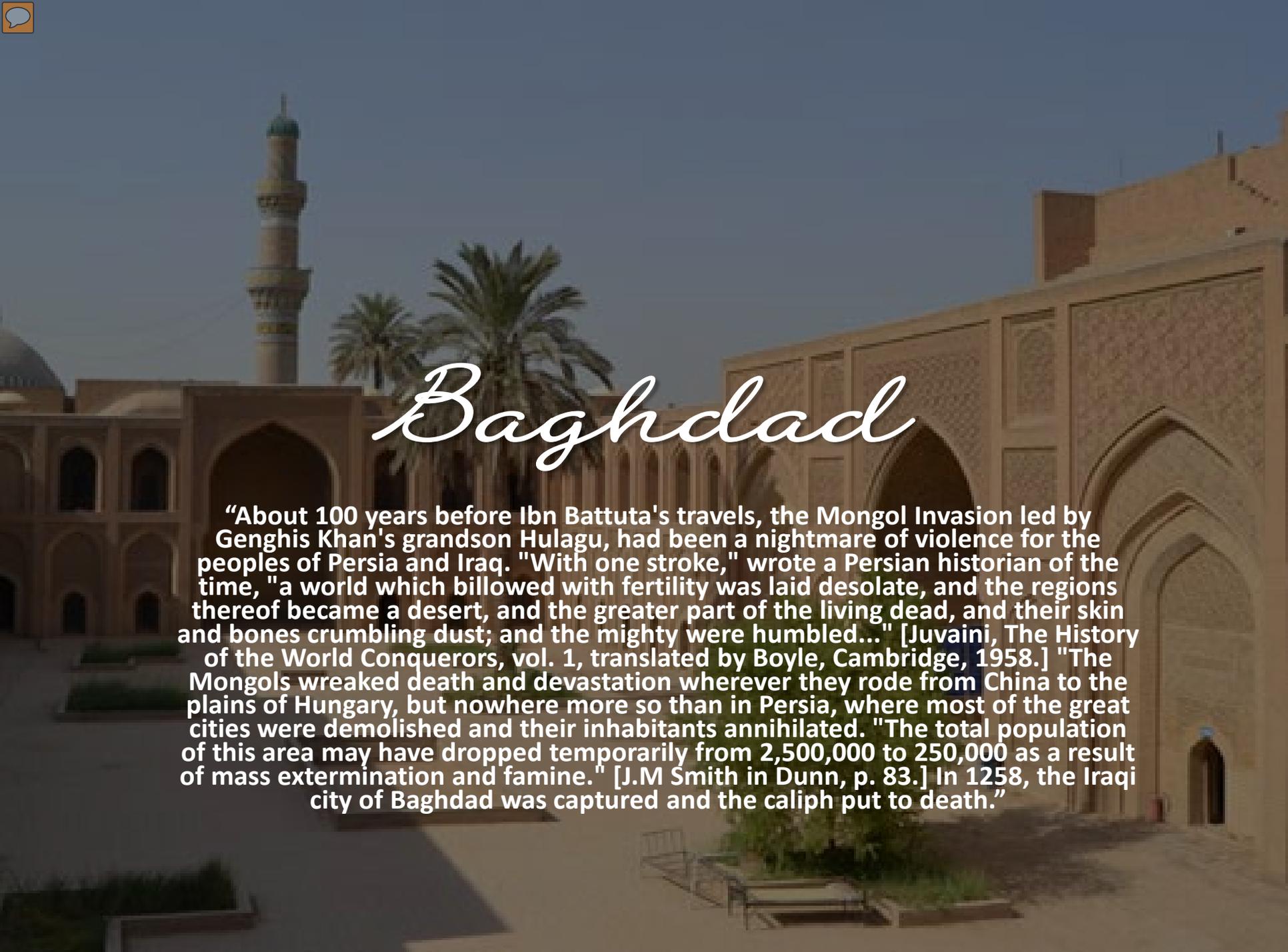


## Tray Made for the Rasulid Sultan al- Mu'ayyad Da'ud ibn Yusuf

Date: early 14th century  
Geography: Cairo, Egypt  
Medium: Brass; engraved  
Dimensions: Diam. 28 in.



A sultan from Yemen commissioned this tray, which includes his name and titles in a large band surrounding a central medallion with the twelve signs of the Zodiac and personifications of the seven planets. The sign of Pisces, called al-hut ("the big fish") in Arabic, is sometimes shown as a single fish. When its Planetary Lord Jupiter is also illustrated, this male figure sits cross-legged, floating above the curved back of the fish. However, the constellation of Pisces (al-samaktan, "the two fish") also influenced the iconography of the Zodiac sign, which often took the form of the more familiar image of two fish arranged in a circle.



# Baghdad

**"About 100 years before Ibn Battuta's travels, the Mongol Invasion led by Genghis Khan's grandson Hulagu, had been a nightmare of violence for the peoples of Persia and Iraq. "With one stroke," wrote a Persian historian of the time, "a world which billowed with fertility was laid desolate, and the regions thereof became a desert, and the greater part of the living dead, and their skin and bones crumbling dust; and the mighty were humbled..." [Juvaini, *The History of the World Conquerors*, vol. 1, translated by Boyle, Cambridge, 1958.] "The Mongols wreaked death and devastation wherever they rode from China to the plains of Hungary, but nowhere more so than in Persia, where most of the great cities were demolished and their inhabitants annihilated. "The total population of this area may have dropped temporarily from 2,500,000 to 250,000 as a result of mass extermination and famine." [J.M Smith in Dunn, p. 83.] In 1258, the Iraqi city of Baghdad was captured and the caliph put to death."**



## *Ibn Battuta visits Baghdad, 1326*

Thence we travelled to Baghdad, the Abode of Peace and Capital of Islam. Here there are two bridges like that at Hilla on which the people promenade night and day, both men and women. The town has eleven cathedral mosques, eight on the right bank and three on the left, together with very many other mosques and madrasas, only the latter are all in ruins.

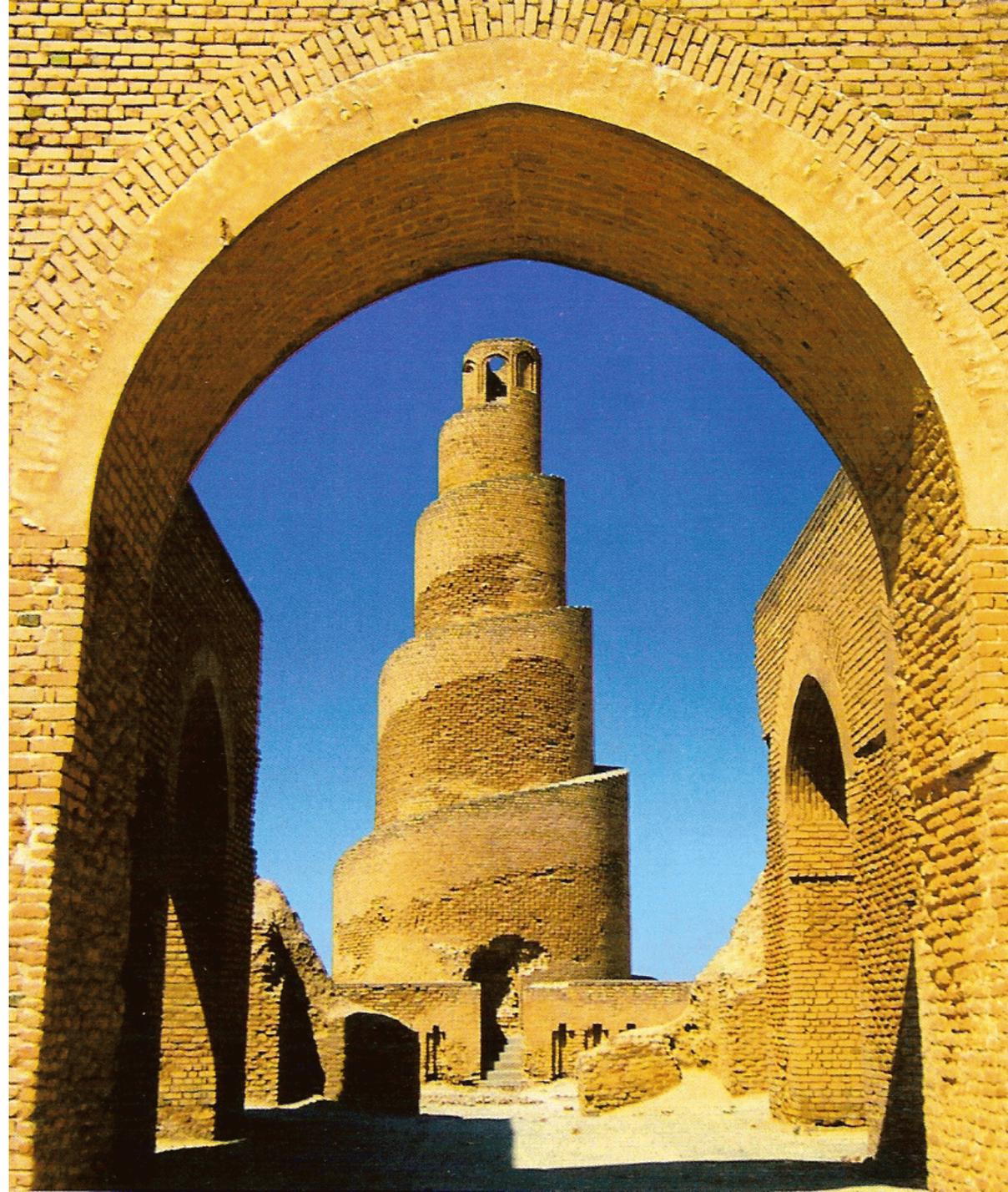
The baths at Baghdad are numerous and excellently constructed, most of them being painted with pitch, which has the appearance of black marble. This pitch is brought from a spring between Kufa and Basra, from which it flows continually. It gathers at the sides of the spring like clay and is shovelled up and brought to Baghdad. Each establishment has a large number of private bathrooms, every one of which has also a wash-basin in the corner, with two taps supplying hot and cold water. Every bather is given three towels, one to wear round his waist when he goes in, another to wear round his waist when he comes out, and the third to dry himself with. In no town other than Baghdad have I seen all this elaborate arrangement, though some other towns approach it in this respect.

The western part of Baghdad was the earliest to be built, but it is now for the most part in ruins. In spite of that there remain in it still thirteen quarters, each like a city in itself and possessing two or three baths. The hospital (maristan) is a vast ruined edifice, of which only vestiges remain.

The eastern part has an abundance of bazaars, the largest of which is called the Tuesday bazaar. On this side there are no fruit trees, but all the fruit is brought from the western side, where there are orchards and gardens.

# Great Mosque of Samarra

About 75 miles north of Baghdad on the banks of the Tigris stood the sprawling Great Mosque of Samarra and its signature spiral minaret. Covering about 409,000 square feet, it was the largest mosque in the world until destroyed by the Mongols four centuries later.





# Astrolabe of 'Umar ibn Yusuf ibn 'Umar ibn 'Ali ibn Rasul al-Muzaffari

For an object produced during the medieval period, this astrolabe is unusually well documented. Its inscription attributes it to a Muslim prince, 'Umar ibn Yusuf, a few years before he ascended to the throne (r. 1295–96). 'Umar compiled a number of scientific treatises, including one on the construction of astrolabes, an autographed version of which, preserved in Cairo, contains certifications by his teachers as to his competence as a maker of such devices and a description of this very piece.

Date: 1291 CE

Geography: Yemen

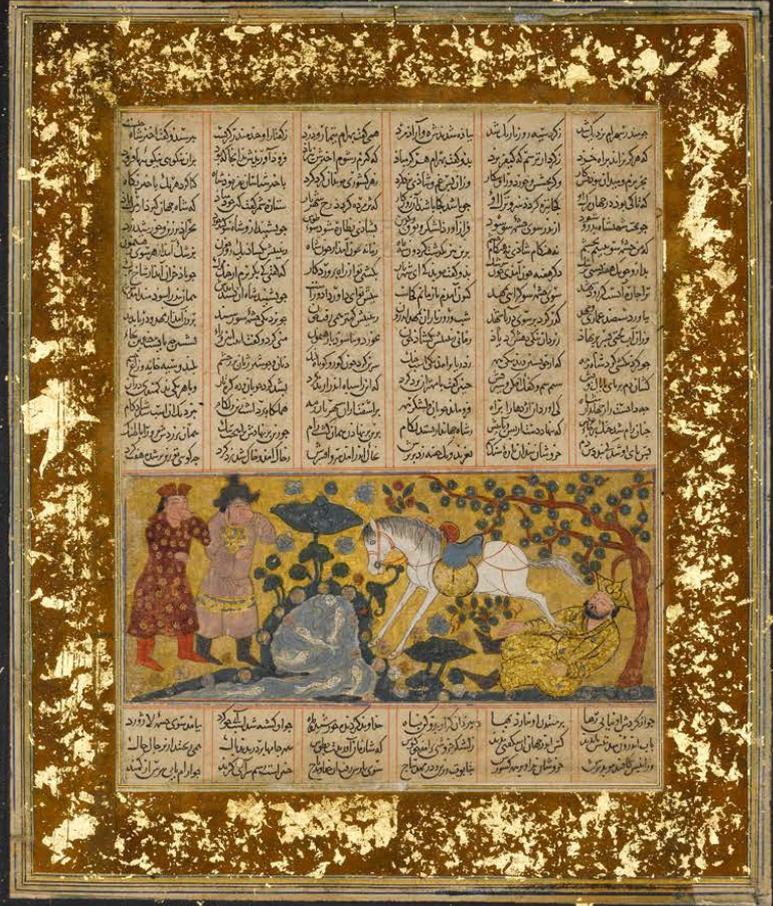
Medium: Brass; cast and hammered, pierced, chased, inlaid with silver

Dimensions: Diam. 6 1/8 in

# "Yazdegird I Kicked to Death by the Water Horse"

The legendary death of the king Yazdegerd I is depicted in this leaf from a copy of the Shahnama (Book of Kings). The decoratively curving tree and the grass which rings the water are traditional; the funguslike growths are derived from Chinese art and the costumes are Mongol. The gestures of the figures at the left register astonishment and dismay.

Author: Abu'l Qasim Firdausi (935–1020)  
Date: ca. 1300–30  
Geography: Northwestern Iran or Baghdad  
Medium: Ink, opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper  
Dimensions: H. 14 in. by W. 10 13/16 in



# Folio from a Qur'an Manuscript

A series of magnificent, large-scale Qur'an manuscripts were produced. While few can be directly linked to royal patronage, the size and quality of their paper, along with their splendid calligraphy and illumination, suggest they were produced for members of the court. This folio from the "Anonymous Baghdad Qur'an" provides not only its date and place of production, but also the name of its masterful calligrapher and illuminator.

Author: Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi al-Bakri

Date: 1307–8

Geography: Baghdad, Iraq

Medium: Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Dimensions: 20 3/16 x 14 1/2in.





# Tile with Phoenix

After the Mongol conquest of Persia in the thirteenth century, an extensive trade network opened from China to the Mediterranean, allowing goods to move more freely than in prior centuries. Artists readily adopted Chinese imagery such as lotus flowers, dragons and other mythical creatures. This image of a soaring phoenix with crested head and elaborate trailing plumage exemplifies the adaptation of Chinese imagery by Persian artists.

Date: late 13th century  
Geography: Iran  
Medium: Stonepaste; painted in blue and turquoise  
Dimensions: 14 3/4 in



# "The Funeral of Isfandiyar"

The details of the painting follow the story of the funeral of Isfandiyar faithfully. Members of the procession, with distinctly Mongol features, are shown wailing and tearing their hair in grief. As a sign of mourning, Isfandiyar's horse has its mane and tail shorn, and the saddle, with his mace, quiver, and helmet hanging from it, is reversed.

This illustration of a royal Mongol funeral procession is rendered with smooth calligraphic lines that derive from Chinese painting, as do the clouds above, with the three geese that, in Buddhist belief, would bear the soul to heaven. This Persian painting is one of the first examples to convey a realistic sense of individual emotion.

Author: Abu'l Qasim Firdausi (935–1020)  
 Date: ca. 1300–30  
 Geography: Northwestern Iran or Baghdad  
 Medium: Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
 Dimensions: H. 22 13/16 in. W. 15 3/4 in.



بیاورد تیغ و بالور کیش  
 بر لب زینتی بکشتن کده  
 چرا که شده با درو خواران  
 زان از او زینت آید  
 جهان را همی داشت زجای پیش  
 تیغ کاه تاج معنی ز نو  
 از ایوان بر قند با دختران  
 ز کسان ایران که قند ختم  
 سرت از تاج کبان شرم باد  
 بر همه شروای و بزرگواران  
 از زدم کشتن آب بکشد چشم  
 بر زمین بی اختیار زدم باد  
 تن بر همه جاها کرده خاک  
 باور کند که ای تو بخت  
 بر قند بکشد ایوان او  
 بیون همی زلف کنایان  
 جوان فنداری تو از بهر بخت  
 بر خاک شد خاک و مینا ای  
 بیست تابوت و اسب سیاه

# Mihrab (Prayer Niche)

This prayer niche, or mihrab, was originally set into the wall of a school built in 1354 Iran. The mihrab was created by joining a myriad of cut glazed tiles to produce its intricate arabesque and calligraphic designs. The result is one of the earliest and finest examples of mosaic tilework.

Arabic Inscription:

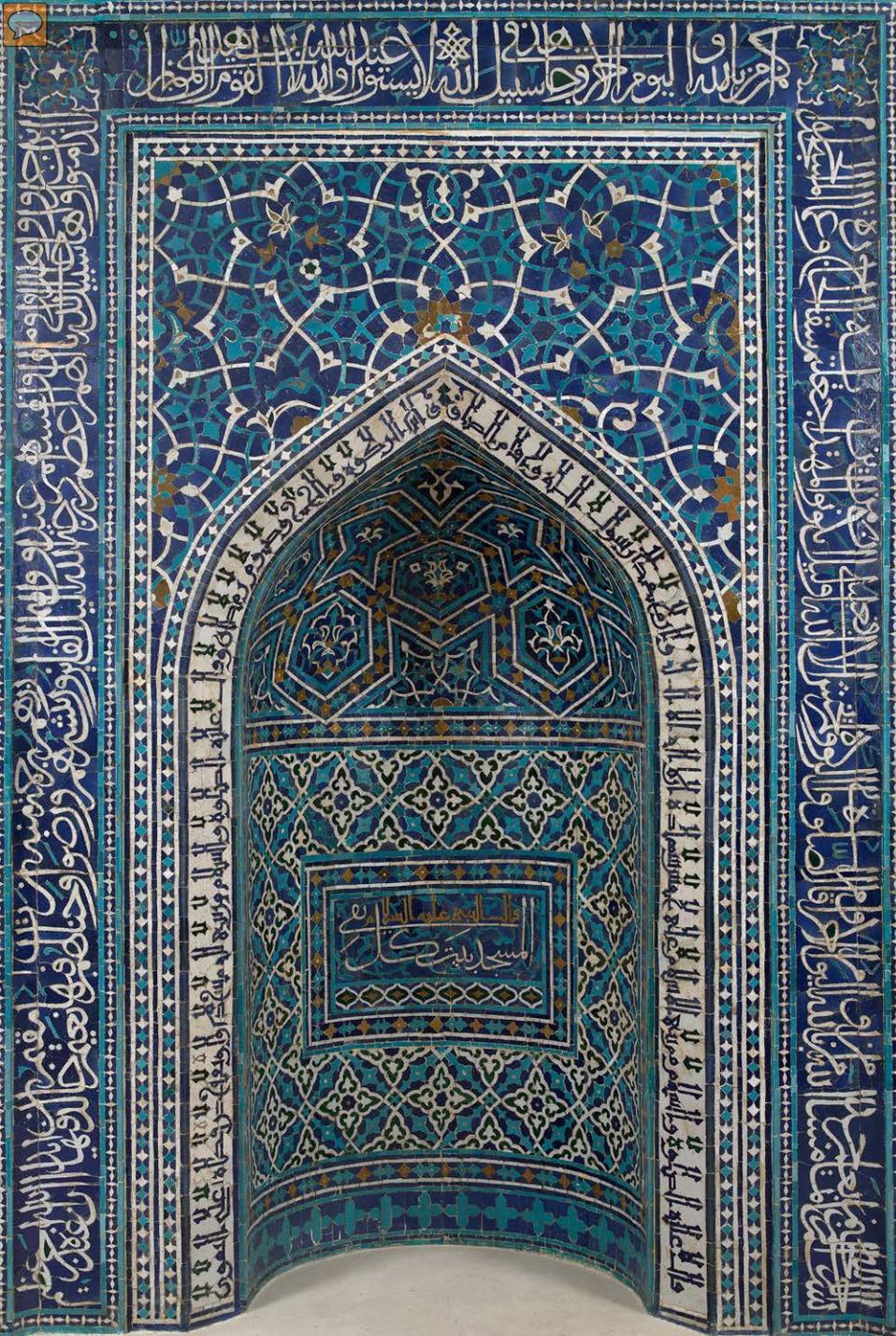
"Said [the Prophet] (on him be blessing and peace): . . . witness that there is no God save Allah and that Muhammad is his Apostle and the Blessed Imam, and in legal almsgiving, and in the pilgrimage, and in the fast of Ramadan, and he said, on him be blessing and peace."

Date: 1354–55 CE

Geography: Isfahan, Iran

Medium: Mosaic of polychrome-glazed cut tiles on stonepaste body

Dimensions: 135 1/16 x 113 11/16in



# Book of the Images of the Fixed Star of al-Sufi

The preface to this book discusses the studies available to the author, including those of Ptolemy, 'Utarid, and al-Hajjaj, but points out the errors within them that led al-Sufi to make his new and improved study. He then describes the forty-five constellations, in order of those in the northern hemisphere, the zodiac belt, and the southern hemisphere. For each constellation, he lists the position, brightness, magnitude, and color of the stars within them, provides corrections to Ptolemy's observations, and adds details from the Arab Beouin tradition. Next to each description are two illustrations of each constellation. The first shows the constellation as seen from the earth, the second from above, the way it was shown on a celestial globe. These illustrations must have been based partly on the classical depictions of the constellations and the figures they resembled, but some changes were introduced because the Greek illustrator misunderstood mythological characters or al-Sufi incorrectly read Ptolemy's original text. Sometimes elements from the Arab descriptions of the constellations were also included in the illustrations, such as for Andromeda, who is shown with a fish across her waist.

Author: `Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi

Date: late 15th century

Geography: Iran

Medium: Ink and gold on paper;

Dimensions: H. 10 3/16 in. W. 7 1/8 in.



# “Preparation of Medicines from Flowers and Consul”

Maker:

Date: 1224

Geography: Baghdad, Iraq

Medium: Illustration





# Delhi

“Ibn Battuta entered India through the high mountains of Afghanistan, following the footsteps of Turkish warriors who, a century earlier, had conquered the Hindu farming people of India and established the Sultanate of Delhi. That first wave of Muslim soldiers looted towns and smashed the images of the gods of the Hindu worshipers. But later warrior kings set up a system to tax, rather than slaughter the peasants. They replaced the local Hindu leaders with Turks from Afghanistan and conquered and united a large area almost to the tip of the subcontinent. But these Muslim sultans in Delhi were not safe. They faced continued opposition from the Hindu majority in India who rebelled against their conquerors, and they were threatened with periodic Mongol invasions from the north. The Chagatay Khan (whom Ibn Battuta visited on his way to India) had invaded India and threatened Delhi, the new capital city about 1323. But the armies of the feisty Sultan Muhammad Tughluq in Delhi had chased them back across the Indus River.”

## *Ibn Battuta visits Delhi, 1334*

Ibn Battuta and the other newcomers went to greet the ruler with their gifts. On a gold-plated throne sat a tall, healthy, white-skinned man.

*“I approached the sultan, who took my hand and shook it, and continuing to hold it addressed me most kindly, saying in Persian,... 'Your arrival is a blessing; be at ease; I shall... give you such favors that your fellow-countrymen will hear of it and come to join you.' ... Every time he said any encouraging word to me I kissed his hand, until I had kissed it seven times, and after he had give me a robe of honor, I withdrew.”*

The next day the Sultan paraded into the city of Delhi. On some elephants were catapults that threw out gold and silver coins to the crowd of on-lookers.

# Humayun's Tomb



Humayun's Tomb was the first of the grand mausoleums that were to become synonyms of Mughal architecture that inspired later examples like the Taj Mahal. Persian and Indian craftsmen worked together to build the garden-tomb, far grander than any tomb built before in the Islamic world.

# Buffaloes in Combat

Artist: Miskin

Date: 16th century

Geography: India

Medium: Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper

Dimensions: 6 7/8 x 9 1/2in.



Animal combats were a favorite form of entertainment at the Mughal court, viewed by the emperor, his courtiers, and guests from a terrace or rampart. Miskin, Akbar's best animal painter, may well have sketched this scene from life. While he has captured the excitement of the fiercely partisan royal servants on the ground, they look unsubstantial compared to the thrusting power of the buffaloes' bodies. The rounded haunch, the long straight line of the back, the bulging muscles of shoulder and neck of the animal on the left all point to inexorable victory, already sensed by the other, pushed off balance, with a foreleg curling under him. Only a great artist could give the struggle such a palpable presence.



The nilgai, though known as a blue bull, is a type of antelope found in central and northern India and eastern Pakistan. This study was painted probably after observing the animal in a zoological garden. While great detail is lavished on the depiction of the animal, down to the distinctive swirl of hair where his neck meets his body, the background makes no reference to the nilgai's natural habitat. As in portraits of people, a neutral or harmonious setting prevailed in Mughal animal paintings.

# "Study of a Nilgai (Blue Bull)"

Artist: Mansur

Date: 16th century

Geography: India

Medium: Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper

Dimensions: 15 5/16 in. W. 10 1/16 in.



# "Shah Jahan on a Terrace, Holding a Pendant Set With His Portrait"



The presentation of the emperor amplifies the formula evolved during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir. Shah Jahan, the orthodox Muslim leader, is exquisitely dressed and richly adorned with jewels, his imperial rank emphasized by his radiating halo and the hovering angels borrowed from European art. The skills of many craftsmen and designers of the Mughal court—jewelers, weavers, architects, feather workers, armorers, stonecutters, and others—are represented here.

Artist: Chitarma

Date: ca. 1530–50

Geography: India

Medium: Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper

Dimensions: 15 5/16 in. W. 10 1/8 in.



# Talismanic Shirt

Date: 15th–early 16th century

Geography: India

Medium: Cotton, ink, gold; plain weave, painted

Dimensions: Textile: L. 25 in. W. 38 3/4 in.



This talismanic shirt was believed to be imbued with protective powers and may have been meant to be worn under armor in battle. Its surface is decorated with painted squares, medallions, and lappet-shaped sections with the entire Qur'an written inside; these areas are bordered by the ninety-nine names of God written in gold against an orange background. A panel at the center of the reverse contains a proclamation in gold script stating, "God is the Merciful, the Compassionate."

# BIHARI QUR'AN

Date: late 14<sup>th</sup> to early 15<sup>th</sup> century CE

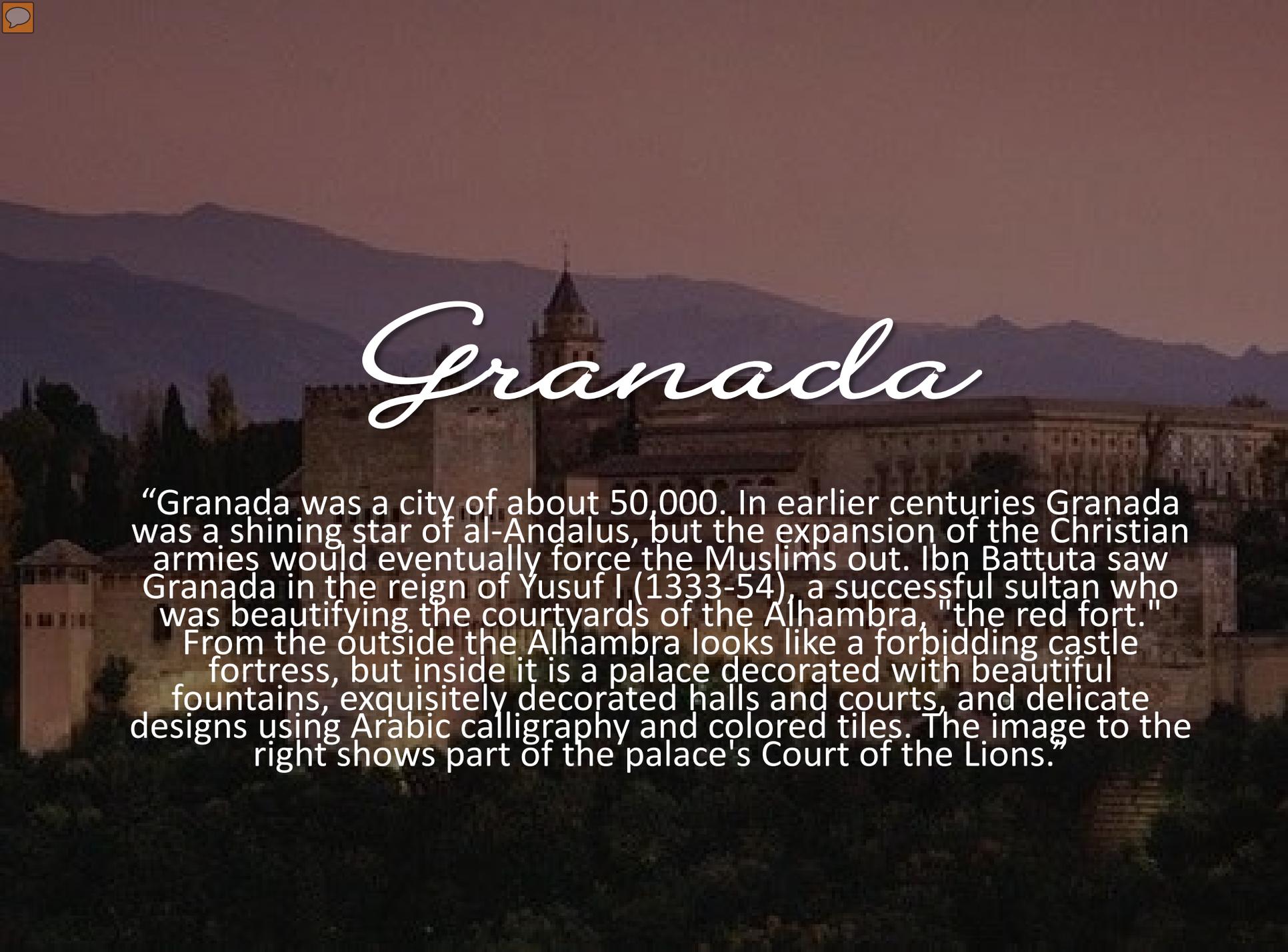
Geography: India

Medium: Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper

Dimensions: 23x21 cm

Beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Delhi is home to a distinct tradition of book production. At this time, a new style of calligraphy called Bihari emerged, This page is written in bihari script with marginal commentaries in Persian language and naskhi script written diagonally to the main text.





# Granada

“Granada was a city of about 50,000. In earlier centuries Granada was a shining star of al-Andalus, but the expansion of the Christian armies would eventually force the Muslims out. Ibn Battuta saw Granada in the reign of Yusuf I (1333-54), a successful sultan who was beautifying the courtyards of the Alhambra, “the red fort.” From the outside the Alhambra looks like a forbidding castle fortress, but inside it is a palace decorated with beautiful fountains, exquisitely decorated halls and courts, and delicate designs using Arabic calligraphy and colored tiles. The image to the right shows part of the palace's Court of the Lions.”

## *Ibn Battuta visits Granada, 1349*

Thence [from Malaga] I went to on the city of Gharnata [Granada], the metropolis of Andalusia and the bride of its cities. Its environs have not their equal in any country in the world. They extend for the space of forty miles, and are traversed by the celebrated river of Shannil [Xenil] and many other streams. Around it on every side are orchards, gardens, flowery meads, noble buildings, and vineyards. One of the most beautiful places there is "Ayn ad-dama" [the Fountain of Tears], which is a hill covered with gardens and orchards and has no parallel in any other country.

The king of Gharnata at the time of my visit was Sultan Abu'l-Hajjaj Yusuf. I did not meet him on account of an illness from which he was suffering, but the noble, pious, and virtuous woman, his mother, sent me some gold dinars, of which I made good use. I met at Gharnata a number of its distinguished scholars and the principal Shaykh, who is also the superior of the Sufi orders. I spent some days with him in his hermitage outside Gharnata. He showed me the greatest honour and went with me to visit the hospice, famed for its sanctity, known as the Outpost of al-Uqab [the Eagle]. Al-Uqab is a hill overlooking the environs of Gharnita, about eight miles from the city and close by the ruined city of al-Bira.

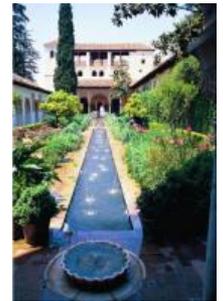
There is also at Gharnita a company of Persian darwishes [dervishes], who have made their homes there because of its resemblance to their native lands. One is from Samarqand [Samarkand], another from Tabriz, a third from Quniya [Konia], one from Khurasan, two from India, and so on.



# Al - Andalus Agriculture

The Muslim conquest of Iberia prompted the introduction of new agricultural technology, innovative irrigation practices, and many new crops to Al-Andalus. This dramatic agricultural transformation was known as "The Green Revolution." The Andalusí people took their cues from eastern lands which saw themselves as part of a huge trading network that extended across the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the Silk Route.

Arab Muslims effectively introduced technology such as the *noria* (waterwheel), the *qanat* (underground water channel) the *aljibe* (cistern), and other structures from the east. These innovations increased the amount of water available for irrigation throughout the year and overcame the limits of previously used gravity-fed irrigation. During the height of Umayyad rule, historic sources indicate over 5,000 waterwheels were built along the Guadalquivir River alone.



The use of precise water management techniques, coupled with multi-seasonal planting and harvesting, increased agricultural output. Rulers and merchants alike sponsored the introduction of a vast new array of crops that originated in such countries as China, India, and Persia. The Andalusí people enjoyed many foods previously unknown in Iberia, including sugarcane, citrus, melons, figs, spinach, eggplant, and rice.

At the same time, cotton and mulberry trees for silk worms were introduced. Learned botanists, such as Ibn Bassal and Ibn al-Awwam, would first acclimatize new plants in royal gardens.

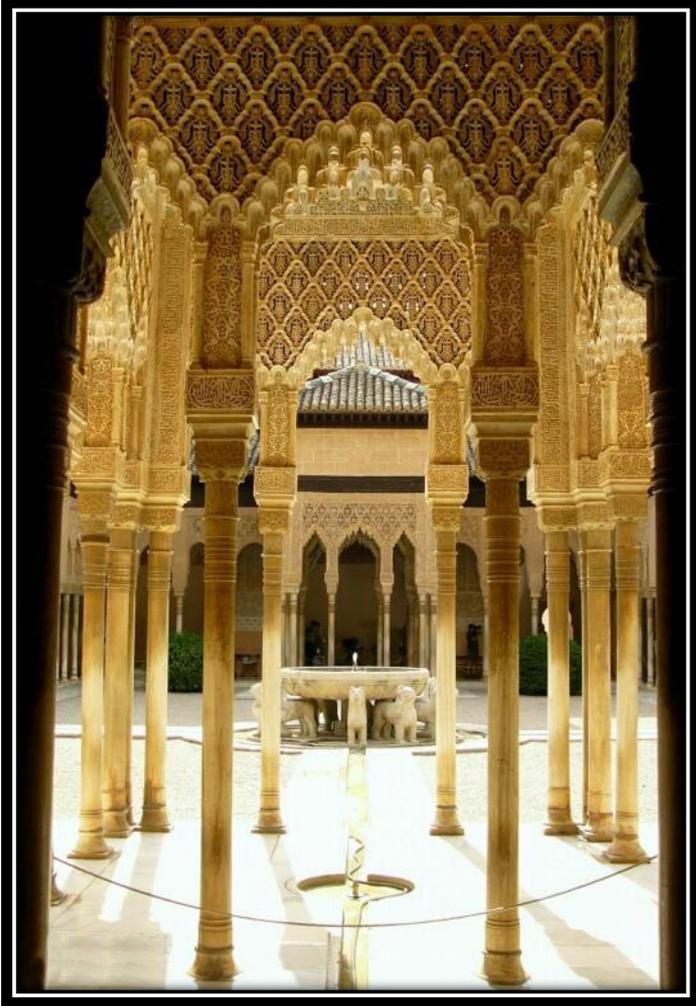
This agricultural explosion served as a foundation for an expanding population and greater prosperity throughout Al-Andalus. Arabs acquired newfound wealth in Andalusí cities. The formation of this new elite further stimulated acculturation to Arab-Muslim norms. Soon, the masses at large were emulating the elites' lifestyle and cultural preferences, including culinary habits, intellectual and artistic expression, and leisure pursuits such as chess and backgammon. They desired clothing, jewelry, and material objects communicating an upwardly mobile status.



# Alhambra



# Alhambra



# Qur'an case



This pouch, decorated with the Nasrid shield and motto, "There is no Victor but God," may have held a section of a small Qur'an. A French inscription on a piece of paper found inside the pouch at the time of purchase claimed that it belonged to the last sultan of Granada, Muhammad XII, known in Europe as Boabdil (r. 1486–92).

Date: second half 15th century

Geography: Attributed to Spain, possibly Granada

Medium: Leather; embroidered with gilt-silver wire

Dimensions: 4 1/4 x 4 7/8 in. (10.8 x 12.4 cm)

# Incense Burner

Date: 11th century  
Geography: Attributed to Spain, Andalusia  
Medium: Bronze; cast, chased, and pierced  
Dimensions: H. 9 3/4 in. W. 10 in. D. 4 1/4 in.



Long-handled, footed incense burners are known throughout the Islamic Near East, but the square body, high domed lid, and horseshoe arches on the low register of this example suggest Western, probably Spanish production. Incense played an important role in al- Andalus, as it did throughout the medieval world, and the international trade in aromatic substances was a lucrative one.

# Pyxis

This exquisitely carved cylindrical box is believed to be one of the most accomplished works of a master from the who ruled most of the Iberian peninsula. Islamic pyxides [small, decorative box], were exclusively secular and were used to store jewelry and cosmetics. The incorporation of birds, lions, and gazelles amid carved vine scrolls is typical of dense symmetrical Islamic design, which, in turn, influenced the decoration of European art.

Date: ca. 950–75

Geography: Made in Cordoba, Andalusia, Spain

Medium: Elephant ivory

Dimensions: 4 5/8 x 4 1/8 in.



# Helmet

This helmet is the only known example of armor to survive from the entire Nasrid period in Spain (1230–1492).

The helmet has the form of a typical Spanish style of with cutouts over the eyes inspired by Islamic examples.

The decoration, however, is extraordinarily rich and distinctive. The steel is covered entirely in a layer of gold leaf that is finely engraved with geometric and foliate designs; the edges are trimmed with silver. Delicate cloisonné enamels are inset overall, further distinguishing this helmet as one of great rarity, quality, and beauty.



Date: calate 15th–early 16th century

Geography: Spanish, possible from Granada

Medium: Steel, gold, silver, enamel

Dimensions: H. 7 7/8 in.; W. 8 1/8 in.; D. 10 1/2 in

# Folio from a Qur'an Manuscript

This folio was once part of a two-volume Qur'an produced during the Nasrid period in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Although paper had reached the Middle East by the tenth century, it did not become widespread in Islamic Spain and North Africa until much later. Despite its conservative use of parchment, this folio displays many characteristics that differentiate it from earlier Qur'an manuscripts. Headings in gold script stand out in contrast with the distinctive script of the text, and gold medallions serve as ornate verse markers.

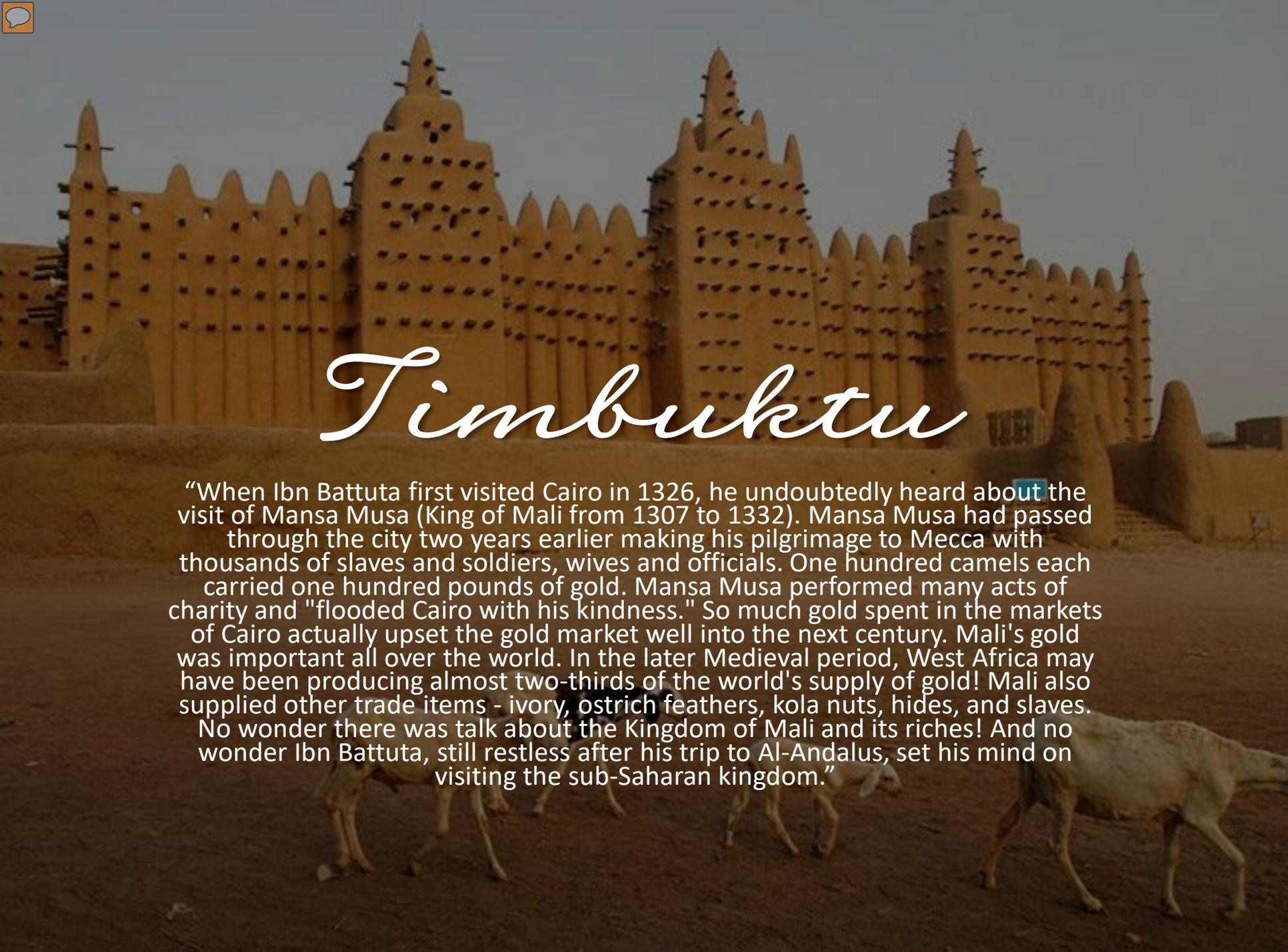
Date: late 13th–early 14th century

Geography: Spanish

Medium: Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on parchment

Dimensions: H. 21 1/16 in. by W. 22 in.





# Timbuktu

“When Ibn Battuta first visited Cairo in 1326, he undoubtedly heard about the visit of Mansa Musa (King of Mali from 1307 to 1332). Mansa Musa had passed through the city two years earlier making his pilgrimage to Mecca with thousands of slaves and soldiers, wives and officials. One hundred camels each carried one hundred pounds of gold. Mansa Musa performed many acts of charity and "flooded Cairo with his kindness." So much gold spent in the markets of Cairo actually upset the gold market well into the next century. Mali's gold was important all over the world. In the later Medieval period, West Africa may have been producing almost two-thirds of the world's supply of gold! Mali also supplied other trade items - ivory, ostrich feathers, kola nuts, hides, and slaves. No wonder there was talk about the Kingdom of Mali and its riches! And no wonder Ibn Battuta, still restless after his trip to Al-Andalus, set his mind on visiting the sub-Saharan kingdom.”

## *Ibn Battuta visits Mali, 1350*

"[The sultan] has a lofty pavilion, of which the door is inside his house, where he sits for most of the time. . . . There came forth from the gate of the palace about 300 slaves, some carrying in their hands bows and others having in their hands short lances and shields. . . Then two saddled and bridled horses are brought, with two rams which, they say, are effective against the evil eye. . . . Dugha, the interpreter, stands at the gate of the council-place wearing fine garments of silk brocade and other materials, and on his head a turban with fringes which they have a novel way of winding. . . . The troops, governors, young men, slaves, the Masufa, and others sit outside the council-place in a broad street where there are trees. . . . Inside the council-place beneath the arches a man is standing. Anyone who wishes to address the sultan addresses Dugha and Dugha addresses that man standing and that man standing addresses the sultan. If one of them addresses the sultan and the latter [the Sultan] replies he uncovers the clothes from his back and sprinkles dust on his head and back, like one washing himself with water. I used to marvel how their eyes did not become blinded."

# Sankore Mosque



The Sankore Mosque is a pyramidal structure dotted with wooden support beams. Built as a center of learning, “its imams were regarded with unequalled respect; its school attracted the noble and the rich as students. Indeed, mentors and scholars alike are said to have flocked to Sankore’s ...university, from as far afield as the Arabian Peninsula.” Eventually, it became the most important center of Islamic scholarship in Africa.



Date: late 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century

Geography: Mali

Medium: Terracotta

Dimensions: 27 ¾ in

# Equestrian Figure

The horse is equipped with a bridle and ceremonial adornment around its neck. Early Arabic documents attest to the importance of the court's cavalry and describe riders wearing wide-legged pants, close-fitting caps and anklets and carrying quivers.

The equipment and adornment on these sculptures provide evidence of another kind. Mansa Musa's cavalry was reported to have been 100,000 strong. The manufacture of all this equipment requires a prosperous economy with access to a wide variety of materials, either through indigenous production or through trade to supply the craftsmen with the materials to make the equipment



# Cache-Sexe

This carefully crafted object is part of a rare group of female "modesty skirts," which are thought to have been worn low on the hips and held in place with a fiber cord. Commonly called a "cache-sexe," these fiber skirts are the oldest of their type to have survived the tropical climate of West Africa. The remarkable state of preservation of this example is due to the favorable climatic conditions of the cave in which it was found...

This cache-sexe consists of three interconnected layers and is constructed from a sophisticated combination of plating and twining techniques. These fabrication methods are closely related to techniques that were used to construct nets, snares, and baskets.

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century

Geography: Mali

Medium: Fiber

Dimensions: 3 x 7 1/2in



# Seated Figure

This haunting figure huddles with its leg hugged to its chest and its head dropped on its knee. It simultaneously conveys the knotted tension of anxiety and the sublime absorption of deep prayer. Created over 700 years ago, in the Inland Niger Delta region of present-day Mali, it grips us with an intense emotional immediacy that blurs the boundaries of time and place.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> century

Geography: Mali

Medium: Terra Cotta

Dimensions: 10 x W. 11 3/4in





ate: 13<sup>th</sup> century  
ography: Mali  
edium: Terra Cotta  
ensions 5 1/4 x  
m. 6 1/8 in.

# Vessel: Footed Base

Footed pottery bowls were not unique to the Tellem, and their wide geographical distribution is a testament to the early intercultural trade and migration that linked diverse populations over vast distances in West Africa. The oldest examples of this pottery type date to the seventh century and were found in a former capital of the Mali empire. Footed bowls were dispersed throughout the ancient trading networks of this region, particularly along the Niger River, which linked it with Timbuktu in northern Mali.