

GOD IS THE BEST GUARDIAN:
ISLAMIC TALISMANIC SHIRTS FROM THE GUNPOWDER EMPIRES

Rose Muravchick

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Supervisor of Dissertation

Jamal J. Elias

Professor, Religious Studies and South Asia Studies

Graduate Group Chairperson

Anthea Butler, Associate Professor, Religious Studies

Dissertation Committee:

Renata Holod
E. Ann Matter

Professor, History of Art
Professor, Religious Studies

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For M + D:

Drs. Arlene Olson and Stanley Muravchick

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ABSTRACT

GOD IS THE BEST GUARDIAN: ISLAMIC TALISMANIC SHIRTS FROM THE GUNPOWDER EMPIRES

Rose Muravchick

Jamal J. Elias

Islamic talismanic shirts are fragile and highly ornamented textiles that feature Qur'anic text, magic squares, and other complex design elements common to talismanic objects of smaller, more portable form. The way in which these garments invoke the human body and thus differ from other talismans is of primary importance in understanding their creation and potential use. This study is based on data from over 80 Islamic talismanic shirts that is used to support a fuller articulation of the sartorial systems of robing common to the Ottoman and South Asian worlds within which they circulated. Two of these systems, the *khila'* (robe of honor) and the *khirqā* (the Sufi cloak) provide important insights into how garments become the physical markers of bodily interactions. By reinforcing the relationship between textiles and the human body within these systems, it becomes clear that Islamic talismanic shirts amplify the protective function of Qur'anic text through preserving the fleeting traces of human contact.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XI
INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>Situating the Gunpowder Empires</i>	2
<i>Technical Specifications for the Corpus of Islamic Talismanic Shirts</i>	4
<i>Exhibition History</i>	9
<i>Publications and Review of Literature</i>	15
<i>Chapter Summary and Organization of Project</i>	18
CHAPTER 1- OBJECT AS SUBJECT: TELLING THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS THINGS.....	21
<i>Mounting the Exhibition: Objects on the Wall</i>	21
<i>Religion, Material Culture, and the History of Things</i>	26
<i>Epistemology and Heideggerian Things</i>	30
<i>The Sensational Regime: In Defense of the Corpus</i>	36
<i>From Biography to Routine: Enter the Index</i>	41
<i>Objects without Texts</i>	45
<i>Case Study: A South-Asian Talismanic Shirt at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts</i>	46
CHAPTER 2: THE MAGIC ERASER.....	52
<i>Into the Fog: Regulating the Scope of Human Agency</i>	54
<i>Magic: Evolution and Periphery</i>	57
<i>Mauss's Magic: A Bridge Towards Foundational Texts for Magic in the Islamic World</i>	60
<i>Edmond Doutté: an early 20th century French Historian of magic and religion</i>	66

<i>Magic as Religious Technique: al-Būnī's Shams al-Ma'ārif</i>	72
<i>A New Road Forward: From Magical to Vernacular</i>	83
CHAPTER 3: 'ADHA AND APOTROPAIOS	87
<i>Talismans and Amulets: A Note on Terminology</i>	88
<i>E.A. Wallis Budge: Amulets, Talismans on the Road to the Museum</i>	92
<i>Magic on the Licit Spectrum: Textual Opinions on the Use of Talismans</i>	98
<i>Seeking Refuge: Textual ta'wīdh</i>	103
<i>Non-Qur'ānic Text as Talisman: The Use of al-Būnī's Qaṣīdat al-Burda</i>	107
<i>Cosmic Characters: The Science of Letters</i>	113
<i>Invoking the Science of Letters in a Single Breath: yā budū</i>	120
<i>Conclusion</i>	124
CHAPTER 4: THE HONORIFIC BODY	125
<i>Introduction</i>	125
<i>Beginning with the Body</i>	128
<i>Toward a Working Definition of Dress</i>	137
<i>The Linguistic Analogy and the Structuralist Approach</i>	139
<i>The Khil'a in Ceremonies of Honorific Robing</i>	144
CHAPTER 5: THE SAINTED BODY	172
<i>A Coat of Many colors: The Visual Vocabulary of the Khirqa</i>	173
<i>The Invisible Khirqa</i>	181
<i>Khirqa and Bodily contact: The Transfer of Baraka</i>	187
<i>The Sultan in Shaykh's Clothing: The Shirts of Murad III</i>	194
<i>Not Wearing the Word: a Post-script on Materials</i>	195
CONCLUSION	198

<i>A Case Study, Revisited</i>	198
<i>Magic, Religion, Technique</i>	198
<i>Text, Ta'wīdh, and Touch</i>	200
<i>Recovering the Sartorial Routine</i>	202
<i>Bitā Ghezalayagh's Felt Memories</i>	204
APPENDIX A: COMMONLY APPEARING VERSES	206
APPENDIX B: CATALOGUE ENTRIES BY STYLE CATEGORY	208
Group A: South Asian Styles of Same Layout	208
Group B: Nested/Complex Square patterns	216
Group C: Linear/Stacked Square Patterns	234
Group E: Ogival/Floral Patterns	257
Group F: Star Patterns	263
Group G: Other	267
APPENDIX C: OTHER SHIRTS, HATS, AND BANNERS	279
BIBLIOGRAPHY	283

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Primary Materials: p.5
2. Surface Materials: p.7
3. Provenance Attributions: p. 8
4. Current Location: p.9
5. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts 2000.9, Front and Back: p. 47

INTRODUCTION

In Bess Allen Donaldson's classic 1938 work, *The Wild Rue*, she recounts the following anecdote:

If the whole of the sura *Ya Sin* be written on a white muslin shirt, no bullet can penetrate it. There is a story that when one of the border tribes was causing trouble several years ago in Khorasan, troops were sent to capture the leader, who had become notorious. When he was located, and the soliders took aim to fire upon him, their guns would not go off. This is said to have happened repeatedly, until it occurred to one of the soliders that he was, perhaps, protected in some magical manner. The captain of the force then aimed at the brigand's hand. His rifle responded, the brigand's hand was shattered, and they were soon able to capture him. They declared that he was protected by one of these bullet-proof shirts, and only his hands were vulnerable.¹

This bit of folklore from 20th century Iran contains within it many of the more fascinating questions that surround the remarkably far-reaching phenomenon of talismanic shirts from the Islamic world. In this account, a white muslin shirt covered with Qur'anic text can – and does – prevent any harm from coming to the body that it protects. That protection is magical, and this shirt is bulletproof.

The protection that a talismanic shirt offers its wearer can go beyond this bulletproof function; these garments can help ward off illness, prevent nightmares, cement the bond between spiritual master and disciple, and solidify political alliances. Each one of these functions occurs through the interaction between the material form of these objects (garments), their decorative and textual program, and the encounters

¹ Bess Allen Donaldson, *The Wild Rue: A Study of Muhammadan Magic and Folklore in Iran* (London: Luzac and Co., 1938), 136.

between human agents who leave their traces on the very fabric of these shirts. In order to begin to understand how it is that a talismanic shirt comes to be a bulletproof vest we must untangle this closely woven network.

Situating the Gunpowder Empires

Marshall Hodgson's landmark introduction to the history of the Islamic world, *The Venture of Islam*,² has left a lasting imprint on the field of religious studies. His coinage of the term, "Gunpower Empires,"—used to refer to the Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid Empires—has remained a useful shorthand to discuss three of the most important and far-reaching political and cultural entities of their respective epochs. This shorthand, however, excludes several of the shorter-lived regional powers (particularly in South Asia) who played a role in the story of Islamic talismanic shirts. The two primary components of Hodgson's term, the use of gunpowder technology and empire, are not necessarily definitional for all of the contexts within which we can place the production and use of Islamic talismanic shirts. For example, the Safavids were not heavily reliant on artillery, making the designation "Gunpowder Empire" a bit of a mismatch for their dramatic accomplishments.³

Speaking in terms of purely chronological bounds, this study is shaped by the dates of the garments themselves, though earlier historical materials are an important part

² Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 3 vols.

³ Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

of the analysis that follows. This historical context begins a few hundred years before the earliest dated shirt in the catalog, which is from the third quarter of the 15th-century (though there are shirts in the collection which may date from the beginning of the 15th century and perhaps slightly earlier). The end date for the historical context falls in the early 19th century with a group of Ottoman materials dating to this period.⁴ The bulk of this timeframe, (from about 1350-1700) is often referred to as the “early-modern” period, a term borrowed from European History. While this term has obvious flaws, most critically in its foundation in a Western teleology aimed towards the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, it has not been easy to find a substitute term when discussing the Islamic world.

A productive, though admittedly cumbersome term, is Stephen Frederic Dale’s coinage of “patrimonial-bureaucratic empires.” This title reflects the structure and the nature of power amassed during this period in Iran, Central and South Asia and Anatolia. In this age of patrimonial-bureaucratic empires, there was a commonality behind that ruling structure that further served to link the regions of South Asian, Iran, and Anatolia. This is found in the shared (though admittedly retroactively constructed) cultural heritage of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals:

“Osman, Ismā‘īl and Babur, the founders of the Osmanlı, Safavi, and South Asian Timuri states, were joint legatees of the Turco-Mongol, Perso-Islamic political and cultural heritage of the preceding centuries. All three men traced at least part of their lineage to earlier Turkic commanders or rulers; Osman... to Oghuz Khan, Ismā‘īl to the Aq Quyunlu Turks, and

⁴ Several talismanic shirts from the late 19th and perhaps early 20th century are included in the appended catalogue, though they are not directly addressed in this work.

Babur to Temür.”⁵

This common cultural and political Turkic background (however aggrandized and romanticized throughout official histories) creates a backdrop against which the study of diverse objects like Islamic talismanic shirts can be discussed together. In the chapters that follow, particular threads from earlier Turco-Mongol or Perso-Islamic settings are traced through to their iterations within the patrimonial-bureaucratic empires.

Technical Specifications for the Corpus of Islamic Talismanic Shirts

The corpus of talismanic shirts from the Islamic world presented in the accompanying catalogue contains upwards of 100 objects. Of these objects – which include banners and hats—there are 89 talismanic shirts. Within this group, there is tremendous stylistic variation, while the materials and technical aspects of their construction appear to be relatively limited. The smallest shirt in the collection is an Ottoman shirt (TSM 13/955) which measures only 54 cm in length and may have been made for a child. The largest shirt in the collection measures 135 cm in length and is styled after a caftan (TSM 13/1391). Dating these garments has proved to be a significant challenge, and so most attributed dates are given as ranges. There are a few Ottoman shirts which bear specific dates and can thus be placed in a firmer timeline. The earliest dated garment has an inscription bearing the date of its beginning (March 30, 1477) and

⁵ Dale (2010), 49. While Dale is focused on the Mughals in South Asia, much of his description applies as well to the pre-Mughal sultans at Delhi, who were of the same (largely Turco-Mongol) descent and thus part of a similar cultural heritage. The difference extends to the scope of their rule and the duration of their influence in the subcontinent.

its completion on the 16th of Muharrem 885/March 29, 1480.⁶ The most recent garments in the collection date from the early 20th century.

Given the significant number of shirts sold at auction each year that then enter into private collections, a fully comprehensive catalogue of Islamic talismanic shirts may not be possible. The catalogue appended here is the first attempt to present a corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts to be evaluated together. Within this variety, common elements with regards to materials, dimensions, and attributed country of origin create some metrics that allow for the comparison of objects.⁷

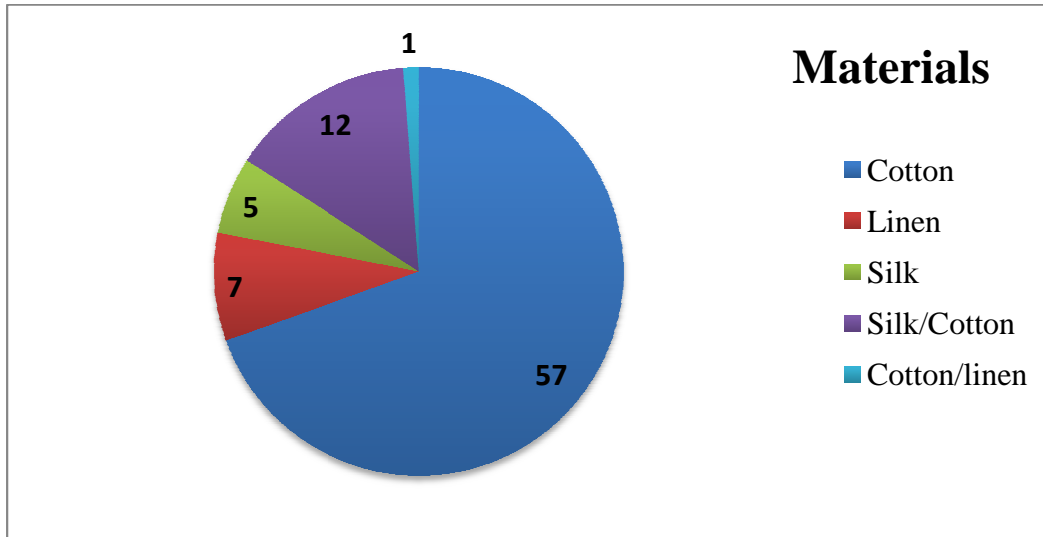


Figure 1: Base Materials

The vast majority of these shirts are constructed of cotton. Some garments are constructed from cotton and then lined in silk, while some shirts have linen ties or

⁶ TSM 13/1404. These are the dates given in: Hulya Tezcan *Şifalı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: BİKA, 2006), 59.

⁷ Not every object entry in the catalogue is complete, given the current dispersal of these shirts around the world. Moreover, many of the shirts catalogued here are only known through auction records whose individual details vary and cannot be fully authenticated. Given the constraints on the data, only a few basic criteria are analyzed here from the general corpus.

closures. In many cases, it is impossible without chemical analysis to determine whether a garment is purely cotton, linen, or a mix of these two cellulose fibers. In other cases, the fabric may actually be *mulām* (sometimes called “half-silk”) which is a fabric constructed from silk warps and a weft of another fiber, most frequently cotton. Many of these shirts are coated in a kind of starch, sizing, or other preparatory substance which allows for the application of ink or paint.⁸ The nature of these sizing media is as of yet undetermined, as only chemical analysis would reveal their composition.⁹

The elaborate decorative programs on these shirts are rendered in a combination of media, and the chart below demonstrates the proliferation of materials used:¹⁰

⁸ The technique is akin to applying gesso (traditionally a mixture of glue, chalk, and white pigment) to a canvas prior to painting. The effect of this surface treatment is to seal the spaces left between the warp and weft threads in a plain weave fabric so that the surface is smooth and sealed, and ready to receive paint.

⁹ Anecdotal evidence suggests that the sizing on some of the early shirts might be an albumen based product. This treatment is used on silk ikat garments from Central Asia in order to stiffen the fabric and allow it to catch the light, thus showing off the detail of the warp-faced fabric. My thanks to Louise Mackie of the Cleveland Museum of Art for pointing out this technical detail.

¹⁰ As I have not been able to physically inspect each shirt in the catalogue I have relied on the specifications given in museum database entries, exhibition catalogues, or auction reports. It is my understanding that the attribution of either ink or paint given for the majority of these objects is based on visual analysis. The only way to definitively discern between ink and paint would be through chemical analysis; to the best of my knowledge these studies have not been conducted for any talismanic shirts.

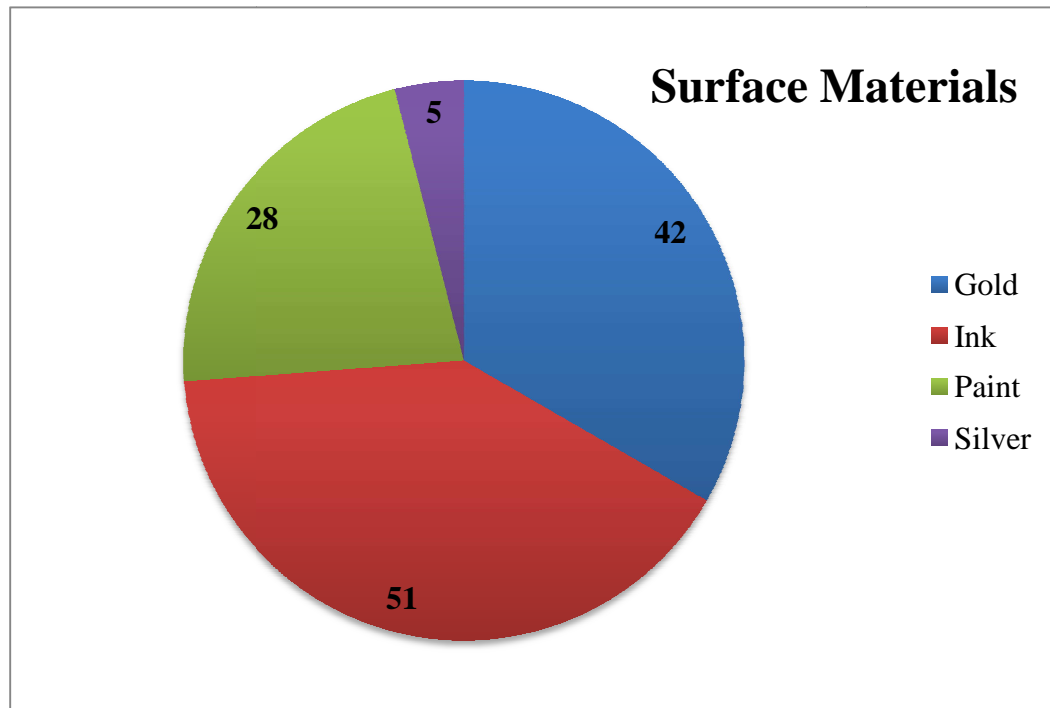


Figure 2: Surface Materials

As in the case with the base materials chart above, some shirts use multiple decorative materials, while others feature only ink designs. Gold in the form of applied leaf or paint is highly prevalent, while silver is much less common and appears only in the Ottoman examples.

Of the 89 shirts in the appended catalog, the overwhelming majority are Ottoman and are currently housed in the Topkapı Saray Museum in Istanbul. There are only four attributed groups in this study, and the category of “other” contains only one shirt from Myanmar:

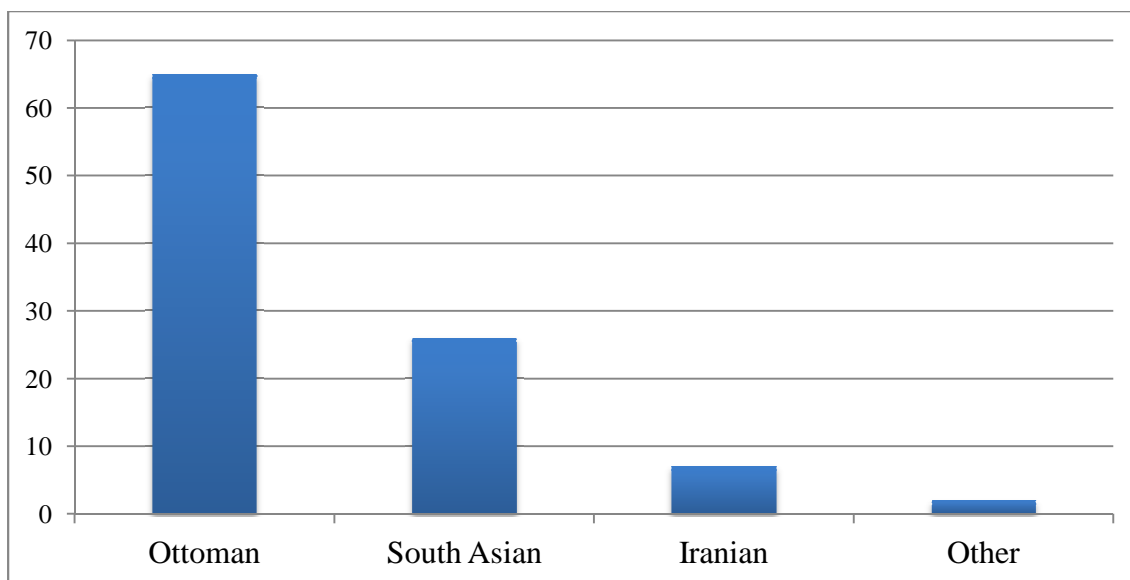


Figure 3: Attributed Provenance

The table below illustrates the current location of the 89 shirts within worldwide collections including the many shirts currently held in private collections or sold at auction that have not been acquired by major museums.¹¹

¹¹ Those shirts which are here listed as held in private collections are those for which sale records from public auctions were used for the basis of their analysis. It is possible that some of these shirts have subsequently made their way into museum collections that this author is not aware of, or that some of these records indicate shirts that were sold more than once. Wherever possible, efforts have been made to cross-check sale records with museum accession information.

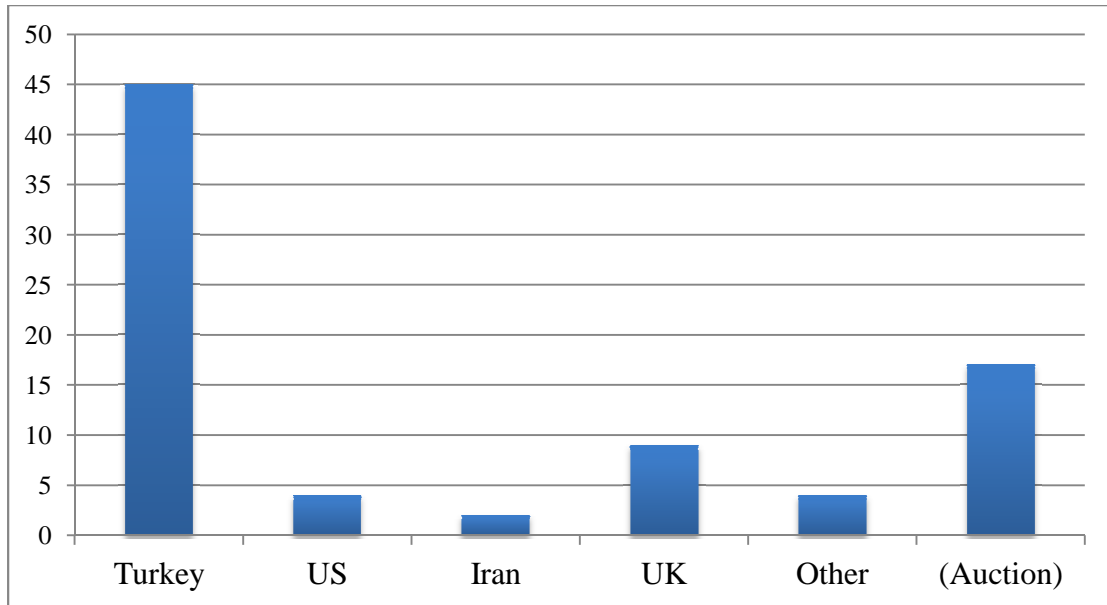


Figure 4: Current Location

Exhibition History

As the charts above demonstrate, the overwhelming majority of Islamic talismanic shirts are Ottoman examples from the collections of the Topkapı Palace (Saray) Museum in Istanbul. While major scholarship devoted to these shirts has remained limited, many hundreds of thousands of people outside of Turkey have had the opportunity to view these objects when they appear as part of major international exhibitions. Many of these exhibitions focus on a particular historical context, and thus include these shirts as part of the general aesthetic of, for example, the Ottoman court. Some shows are thematically arranged around the issue of magic or divination, while still others present these shirts alongside arms and armor. In all of these cases, talismanic shirts have been displayed as part of an effort to contextualize something else.

One of the most recent of these thematic exhibitions took place at the Sackler

Gallery of the Smithsonian from October of 2009 through January of 2010. This show, “Fālnama: Book of Omens” (curated by Massumeh Farhad) included an Ottoman shirt as part of its extensive catalogue of loan items. The bulk of the exhibition was devoted to the display of pages from the “dispersed” *Fāltnāma*, of which 20 of 29 folios were presented. This talismanic shirt, while undated and not attributed to a specific member of the Ottoman court, is remarkable for its lavish blue and gold decorative program which includes magic squares, Qur’anic text, and excerpts from al-Būḫārī’s famous *Mantle Ode* poem.¹² This shirt was displayed (flat, with the front side on view) in one of the first galleries of the show and placed in the ensuing catalogue under the heading of “Word as Protection.” The other objects catalogued along with this shirt are three military standards, divination bowls, a few copies of the Qur’ān, and a dīvān of Ḥāfeẓ. The majority of the objects on display in the *Fāltnāma* exhibition were either Ottoman or Safavid in provenance.

The curatorial prerogatives that are involved in mounting a show like the *Fāltnāma* show largely revolve around creating the correct “fit” between the exhibition’s chosen theme, and the objects selected as representational of that theme.¹³ Placing an Ottoman talismanic shirt in the exhibition in order to better flesh out the theme of “word as protection” indicates a curatorial desire to highlight the object’s talismanic function within a divinatory context. Larger connections between the divinatory practices associated with *Fāltnāma* manuscripts and the Safavid and Ottoman courts are also forged

¹² Shirt: TSM 13/1184. This shirt is described in detail in Chapter Three.

¹³ Irit Rogoff & Beatrice von Bismarck, “Curating/Curatorial: A Conversation between Irit Rogoff & Beatrice von Bismarck,” in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff & Thomas Weski, eds., (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012) 22.

through the exhibition of this shirt within this particular show's context. This object was presented primarily in terms of its connections to divination and astrology, though the *Fālnāma* show also suggested – through the visual connections between objects within the gallery—that Qur'ānic text has a powerful talismanic function. What was missing from this suggestion, however, was any indication of the body which this talisman was intended to protect.

Where the *Fālnāma* show succeeded in harnessing the connection between thematic and object forged by the curatorial process in order to draw attention to multiple related spheres of influence, other exhibitions which have featured these objects have been relatively less successful in presenting Islamic talismanic shirts as anything other than luxurious curiosities. The highly successful show “Suleyman the Magnificent” which toured from 1987-1990 internationally, was entirely comprised of Ottoman objects. This show, which first opened at the National Gallery in Washington DC in 1987 featured 130 loan items from the Topkapı Palace Museum, including a shirt attributed to the prince Selim Bayezid (d. 1561) and signed and dated (972 AH/ 1565-6 CE) by “the dervish Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān.”¹⁴ This shirt is one of the few in the world which is signed and dated and can be attributed to a royal patron. After the National Gallery, this show went on to travel to Chicago, New York, London, and Paris, and further this talismanic shirt was used as the cover image for Hülya Tezcan's 2011 book, *Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Talismanic Shirts).¹⁵

¹⁴ Shirt: TSM 13/1133

¹⁵ *Tılsimli Gömlekler Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi koleksiyonundan* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2011).

Another Ottoman-focused exhibition, “Topkapi à Versailles,” opened in 1999 in the palace of Versailles to coincide with the 700th birthday of the Ottoman Empire. While still focusing exclusively on the Ottoman Empire, this exhibition featured a caftan-style shirt within the context of military objects.¹⁶ In the catalogue which accompanied the exhibition, the object is described primarily in terms of its decorative program: “inscriptions written in *naskh* and *thulūth* in a range of hues, dominated by gold, enhanced with red, black, and green inks and geometric forms such as circles, squares, trapezoids, and zigzags.”¹⁷ But the predominant descriptive mode of this entry focuses on the mysterious conditions of the object’s manufacture and use, which do not seem to bear any connection to a military context: “The lengthy and careful fabrication of [these] special clothes was not left up to chance and was based on the decisions of astrologers and specialists in numerology and onomancy... the recipients of these vestments remain unknown.”¹⁸ In this exhibition, like most of those described here, the chief aspects of the talismanic shirts highlighted by the label text or the catalogue entries are the decorative program and the insinuation of a larger, and more complex, magical or divinatory system within which these objects are believed to participate.

¹⁶ Shirt: TSM 13/1391

¹⁷ “...d’inscriptions écrites en nesih et sülüs dans une gamme [range] chromatique à dominante or, rehaussée [enhanced] d’encre rouge, noire, verte, et dessinant des formes géométriques telles que cercles, carrés, trapèzes, zigzags.” *Topkapi à Versailles* (Paris: Association française d’action artistique, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1999), 60.

¹⁸ “La confection longue et minutieuse de des vêtements particuliers n’était pas laissée au hasard et reposait sur les décisions d’astrologues et des spécialistes en numérolgie et en onomancie... les destinataires [recipients] de ces vêtements restent inconnus.” The noted exceptions to the last part of this description are Cem Sultan, Mehmet II, and Selim II. *Topkapi à Versailles*, 60.

None of this is to say that objects on display are intended to be merely passive illustrations of the intended thematic. The hope is that the inclusion of a talismanic shirt within the context of this exhibition, or any other, might, “start to instantiate and embody and draw out the thematic with different meanings than it may have had originally.”¹⁹ When talismanic shirts are presented in a military context, the chances that these objects might help to *embody* – literally – a thematic appear to be substantially increased. A South Asian shirt from the Furusiyya Foundation’s collection was displayed in a military context, in the 2007 show “L’art du Chevaliers en pays d’Islam” at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris (curated by Bashir Mohamed).²⁰ This show was entirely dedicated to the arts of warfare and equestrianism, and so the inclusion of a talismanic shirt in this context implies that this object naturally belonged in that environment. That natural fit was picked up by one reviewer of the show, who remarked, “Beneath this armor, the knights wore a simple shirt for spiritual protection, one inscribed with Koranic verses invoking God’s protection and providing the spiritual aspect of the duties the knight had toward his community.”²¹ Unlike some of the other exhibitions considered above, it is clear that the Furusiyya show presented talismanic shirts in such a way as to encourage the audience to imagine these shirts being worn and used, as opposed to suggesting only how they might have been made and for whom.

Several other exhibitions have featured Islamic talismanic shirts from the collections at the Topkapı Palace Museum as part of a section on Ottoman textiles. These

¹⁹ Irit Rogoff, *Cultures of the Curatorial*, 22.

²⁰ Shirt: (R-785).

²¹ Simone Fattal, “Knights in the Islamic World: Collection from the Furusiyya Art Foundation,” *Al-Jadid* 13/14, (no. 58/59): 56.

include: a shirt similar to the one displayed in the *Fālnāma* show as part of the 2009 exhibition, “À la cour du Grand Turc: Caftans du Palais de Topkapı;”²² a shirt for Cem Sultan in the 1991 exhibition, “Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration;”²³ and a caftan attributed to Sultan Mehmed II in the 1999 exhibition, “Palace of Gold and Light: Treasures from the Topkapı.”²⁴ The shirts featured in these exhibitions are among the most famous and well-traveled of the Topkapı’s collection, including the shirt made for Cem Sultan – a figure whose tragic story no doubt plays a role in the presentation of his garment – that is one of the oldest dated talismanic shirts (1480).

That exhibitions and books or articles are different categories of intellectual production goes without saying. But curators frequently champion the didactic component of museum exhibitions. In speaking of the Suleyman the Magnificent show, curator Esin Atil remarked, “my purpose in doing this is to educate the public; that’s what a museum curator does.”²⁵ Precisely what it is that museum attendees learn about these talismanic shirts (or any other individual object) is unclear, especially when the attendee’s encounter with each individual object in an exhibition may be less than thirty seconds.²⁶ While education is often the professed goal of a curatorial team, the imaginative aspect of seeing objects placed side-by-side with other objects and

²² *A la cour du Grand Turc: Caftans du Palais de Topkapı* (Paris: Louvre Museum, 2009). Shirt: TSM 13/1182.

²³ Jay A. Levenson, *Circa 1492: Art in the age of exploration* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1991). Shirt: TSM 13/1404.

²⁴ *Palace of Gold and Light: Treasures from the Topkapı, Istanbul* (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art & Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, c. 2000). Shirt: TSM 13/1408.

²⁵ Esin Atil, “The Golden Age of Ottoman Art,” *Saudi Aramco World Magazine*, (July, 1987). Accessed Online. Print: pp. 24-33.

²⁶ Jeffery K. Smith & Lisa F. Smith, “Spending Time on Art,” *Empirical Studies of the Arts* 19.2 (2001): 229-236.

envisioning the people and stories behind them is what continues to captivate most audiences. Islamic talismanic shirts seem particularly adept at filling this imaginative space and enticing museum-goers to consider these objects which are entirely foreign to them.

Islamic talismanic shirts resist a single categorization or contextualization, as evidenced in the exhibition history sketched here. These objects are just as comfortably displayed alongside swords and shields, divination bowls and manuals, or cut-velvet caftans. Their shifting allegiances within the museum's walls begin to illustrate the multi-layered systems within which they must have operated, as well as the new areas of comparative research that might highlight the fullness of their conception and use.

Publications and Review of Literature

Talismanic shirts have yet to be given extended consideration in print with two important exceptions. The first is the work of Hülya Tezcan, the former Curator of Sultan's Costumes and Textiles at the Topkapı Palace Museum. Her first book, *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki siyahlı gömlekler*, (2006), offers an overview of the shirts held in the Topkapı Palace Museum's collections (believed to be upwards of 100 shirts) 87 of which she covers – to greater or lesser extent—in this book. The bulk of the work is a catalogue of the collection's most interesting shirts. Tezcan's research was completed entirely within the archives and collections of the Topkapı Palace Museum, often using information from 19th century labels and documentation within the museum itself. The

result is that is work that is narrow and localized and that seeks to showcase these objects as hallmarks of Ottoman court life and Turkish cultural heritage.

This first book's title, "Healing Shirts," (*sıifalı goımlekler*) differs from the typical attribution of these shirts as talismanic. This talismanic attribution appears in Tezcan's subsequent 2011 book, *Tilsimli Goımlekler Topkapı Sarayı Muızesi koleksiyonundan*. This work includes more introductory text than the 2006 volume, as well as a brief discussion of the textual sources on talismanic shirts, which here include Turkish epics such as the Turkish epic Dede Korkut and the Qur'ān.²⁷ The remainder of the introductory section includes Tezcan's commentary on the methods of construction and the astrological significance of start-dates for particular shirts, as evidenced by those shirts which bear the date of their creation, like the one made for Cem Sultan.²⁸ These two large-format, lavishly illustrated monographs²⁹ are both framed in much the same way. Tezcan's books are clearly the work of a textile curator who has spent her career within the walls of the Topkapı museum's collections. Tezcan presentation of Ottoman talismanic shirts focuses almost entirely on their decorative programs, their layout, and other technical aspects of their surfaces and structures.

The only other instance of sustained scholarship on Islamic talismanic shirts comes from Eloıse Brac de la Perrière, whose 2009 article in the *Journal Asiatique*, "Les

²⁷ Hülya Tezcan, *Tilsimli Goımlekler Topkapı Sarayı Muızesi koleksiyonundan*, (Istanbul: Timaş, 2011) 11. For an English translation of the Dede Korkut epic, see: Geoffrey L. Lewis, trans., *The book of Dede Korkut*, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Classics, 1974)

²⁸ Tezcan, *Tilsimli Gömlekler*, 16-17.

²⁹ Tezcan has recounted that the photography alone for the second book took an entire year. (Private correspondence.)

Tuniques Talismaniques Indiennes d'Époque Pré-Moghole et Moghole à La Lumière d'un Groupe de Corans en Écriture Bihārī," examines in detail a group of South Asian shirts.³⁰ Brac de la Perrière's article centers on a shirt from the Guimet Museum in Paris, but also presents the first attempt to catalogue these objects. Her 15 item catalogue (pages 62-63 of the article) served as the model for the catalogue which accompanies this project. Brac de la Perrière's argument focuses on placing these shirts within the realm of the arts of the book, by comparing the script types used here to those found in South Asian Qur'ān manuscripts. Through these formal comparisons, Brac de la Perrière convincingly demonstrates that these shirts are not, as was previously asserted, Mughal, but rather from the pre-Mughal sultanates.

My project departs significantly from both Tezcan's and Brac de la Perrière's, most notably in the attempt to describe the Islamic talismanic shirt as a phenomenon across Islamic societies from the patriarchal-bureaucratic periods, but also across new paradigms of material culture studies. While the technical aspects of their decoration – including a detailed description of the placement of Qu'rānic text, magic squares, and painted motifs – are an important part of these objects' efficacy, this work seeks to go beyond that (literal) surface description. Through outlining new ways of conceptualizing the role of objects in the lives of religious people and the agency that objects have within social structures, this project offers a deeper contextualization for Islamic talismanic shirts.

³⁰ Eloïse Brac de la Perrière, "Les Tuniques Talismaniques Indiennes d'Époque Pré-Moghole et Moghole à La Lumière d'un Groupe de Corans en Écriture Bihārī," *Journal Asiatique* 297.1 (2009): 57-81.

Chapter Summary and Organization of Project

This project is composed of two major parts. The first part (Chapters One through Three) outlines the major thematic issues which the study of Islamic talismanic shirts presents within the field of religious studies today. The role of material culture within the study of religion has become increasingly amplified, and the resultant sub-genre of material religion aims to address religious traditions primarily through a focus on objects. The second major area of interest for the field of religious studies is the study of magic in the Islamic world, and the implications of viewing so-called magical practices from the Islamic world through the filter of 19th and early 20th century anthropological forays.

Chapter One presents a discussion of the study of material culture within the context of religious studies generally and expands upon a definition for material culture that supports studying Islamic talismanic shirts, regardless of provenance, as part of a single corpus. This definition, taken from the inaugural remarks from the journal *Material Religion*, posits three central foci for the study of material culture: their epistemologies, routines, and sensational regimes. Each one of these foci is explored along with authors whose work contributes to the explorations that follow. A case study of a South Asian talismanic shirt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, framed by this definition of material culture, concludes this chapter.

Chapter Two investigates the deployment of the term *magic* in the study of objects from the Islamic world, both throughout the early 19th century and into

contemporary studies of talismanic shirts. In this chapter, magic is presented as a term whose value lies not in description but in rhetorical terms. Talking about magic is, as will be shown here, a way to draw divisions between perceived categories of difference in an effort to maintain the boundaries around protected categories like *religion* or *science* or even *rationality*. The second section of this chapter attempts to reframe a notion of magic in the medieval Islamic world that is of a different order of magnitude than *religion*; magic becomes a technique and thus a mode that can operate within the sphere of religious practice.

Chapter Three explores textual talismans, the potential of Qur'anic text to function as protection, and the tradition of written talismans within prophetic medicine (*al-ḥibb al-nabawī*). This chapter presents an investigation of the terms *talisman* and *amulet* as they have been applied to both smaller objects and talismanic shirts. The application of Qur'anic text is one of the few unifying elements across the corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts, and the healing and protective properties of particular verses which appear on some of these shirts are explored. Qur'anic text offers powerful protection to those who know how to manipulate it properly, given the elevated status of Arabic as the language of revelation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the science of letters and the application of letter magic in talismanic objects.

The second half of this project moves away from texts and towards the analysis of these objects as garments that evoke and cover the human body. In an attempt to move beyond surface-level questions about decorative programs, Chapters Four and Five retrace specific instances of the exchange of garments through pre-Mughal South Asia,

late ‘Abbāsid Baghdad, and Central Asia. Chapter Four attempts to place talismanic shirts back on the bodies of the people for whom they were constructed. This chapter begins with a discussion of religion and the body, and presents a definition of dress that takes into consideration the interplay between garment and body as part of a larger sartorial system. The phenomenon of the *khil‘a*, the robe of honor, is explored as a productive lens through which to apprehend the use and distribution of Islamic talismanic shirts.

Chapter Five continues with a focus on the body and garments. Here, the Sufi robe known as the *khirqā* is considered as part of a sartorial system similar to that of the *khil‘a*. One of the critical aspects of this system is the importance of the body within the garment, and the unique ability that a garment has of preserving the faintest traces of human contact. As a post-script, this chapter considers the implications of this robing system even if, as is suggested by the careful inspection of some of these objects, these shirts were never in fact worn.

The bifurcated structure of this project is intended to highlight the way in which a formal stylistic analysis of garments from the Islamic world only reveals a fraction of the potential significance of these objects. The form and style of a garment mean little, if anything, when separated from the content of that garment: the body. While talismanic shirts have to date been presented – either on gallery walls or in print – as two-dimensional objects which reflect the arts of the book more than the world of textiles, objects are shirts and need to be contextualized as such. To understand how a cotton cloth covered with Qur’ānic text can be a bulletproof vest, we must take that garment out of its glass vitrine, and place it back on the body that it once clothed.

CHAPTER 1- Object as Subject: Telling the History of Religious Things

Mounting the Exhibition: Objects on the Wall

In 1998, the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired an object described in their bulletin as a “talismanic shirt.” This shirt is made of cotton, covered with red, blue, and brown ink as well as gold pigments, and 38.5 inches in width.³¹ The shirt is covered in miniature text which contains the entirety of the Qur’ān, as well as a number of red and blue medallions featuring the *basmalla* and the short invocation, “*yā budū!*”³² It is also attributed to India -- either the northern region, or the Deccan -- between the 15th or early 16th century.³³ In the descriptive entry which accompanies the photograph in the museum’s bulletin, Daniel Walker explains why and how this geographical and temporal attribution was made:

Although technically a textile, this work speaks more eloquently as a representative of the art of the book: its decoration consists entirely of calligraphy and illumination... In style and colors the shirt bears a close resemblance to the few manuscripts attributed to Sultanate India...³⁴

Now a part of a major museum collection, this object no longer speaks for itself. As soon as we are confronted by it, our ability to apprehend what this object might be and who the people are who might have made it, is immediately impeded by virtue of its presentation

³¹ Accession number: MMA 1998.199

³² This exclamatory phrase is interpreted as an invocation of the practice of letter magic, a topic dealt with at length in subsequent chapters.

³³ Stefano Carboni, J. Kenneth Moore & Daniel Walker, “Islam,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s. 56.2, New Acquisitions: A Selection from 1997-1998 (1998): 12

³⁴ Carboni, et al. “Islam,” 12.

as an object in a gallery.

That this particular object is in fact a textile and not a manuscript is noted and described as a technicality in the selection quoted above. In reality, this object is a specific type of textile; it is a garment -- a shirt. But these details recede into the background by virtue of the fact that we are viewing this shirt no longer as a shirt, but as a thing in a gallery. The “shirtness” of this entity, or the function which the entity has by virtue of its form, has all but disappeared and, with the loss of that function, this object has become a thing. The difference between the object and the thing happens in this space of function: when an object no longer works for us, we are faced with trying to understand its thingness.³⁵

This kind of confrontation -- what happens when we begin to see something outside of its functional or utilitarian context -- can render something otherwise familiar entirely strange. When the item being confronted is something altogether foreign to begin with (as is the case with the corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts studied here) a unique opportunity for reflection arises. By asking, repeatedly and in different contexts, the very simple question of, “what manner of thing is this?” it is possible to suggest a reconstruction of the functional life of these things and the societies and sets of practices within which they were once objects.³⁶

³⁵ Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” in *The Object Reader*, Fiona Candlin & Raiford Guins, eds., (London: Routledge, 2009), 140.

³⁶ One could argue that objects become things the moment they cease to have a functionality in the world at large, much like the moment an object enters a museum collection, and that it is the constant task of the museum to try and restore the “objecthood” of the thing that they now possess. By creating inventive display modes,

As we encounter them today, Islamic talismanic shirts reside in museum and library collections. Upon entering those collections, these shirts have been subjected to curatorial processes which have their origins in art historical methods and a kind of connoisseurship reaching back into the 19th century. The practical goal of these processes, explored below, is to place the recently acquired piece within a museum or library database, and eventually on the wall of a gallery space. This rests largely on deciding on a satisfying place and time of origin for each individual object. Each time we hang an object on a gallery wall, we freeze that object in time (and potentially render it a thing rather than an object) and present just one of the many moments in which that object has existed.³⁷ In the case of the shirt from the Metropolitan Museum of Art that serves as an illustration here, the bulletin article from which my information is taken bears the heading “Islam” which immediately places this object within a certain wing of the museum’s physical space. That gallery space serves as the container for the convenient fictions about peoples and cultures that the museum, as an institution, continually presents as truths.³⁸ Using religion as the primary criterion for cataloguing and subsequently displaying this object communicates to viewers, however subtly, that there is a meaningful descriptive cohesion in calling an object “Islamic.”

The details of geography and historical period given in this bulletin entry help

situating things with other like things, and utilizing label text and didactic panels, museums help us as viewers to imagine what it must have been like when that thing was an object.

³⁷ Avinoam Shalem, “Histories of Belonging and George Kubler’s Prime Object.” *Getty Research Journal* 3 (2011): 5.

³⁸ Donald Preziosi, “Hearing the Unsaid: Art history, museology, and the composition of the self,” in *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, Elizabeth Mansfield, ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 37.

narrow down the specific gallery and even section of wall upon which this object can be confidently placed. At the moment this object enters the museum's permanent collection, it ceases to have any visible connections to the world outside those gallery walls. The data attached to the object through this process of cataloguing (a date, a location, material composition, and the like) freezes that object within both time and space, preserving it like a time capsule for future museum visitors to inspect behind glass. On the other side of that glass, enshrined alongside that object is an entire set of assumptions about time, memory, history, and identity and how those forces shape the interactions between human beings and objects. These assumptions "rest upon very particular dialogic or dialectical relationships imagined to exist between ourselves as social subjects and the object-worlds we build ourselves into."³⁹

The act of placing objects on the wall begins with the process of categorization supported by the practice of attribution. Comparative attribution as a formal pursuit in the realm of painting began with the work of Giovanni Morelli (d.1891), an Italian doctor who published under the Russian pseudonym (and anagram of his own name) Ivan (or Iwan) Lermolieff.⁴⁰ Morelli argued that attributing a painting to a particular artist could best be achieved by paying attention to very small details that might fall under the heading of "idiosyncrasy" rather than style, and thus revealed particular hallmarks of an individual painter.⁴¹ He concentrated on the rendering of human anatomy in painting,

³⁹ Donald Preziosi, "Hearing the Unsaid: Art history, museology, and the composition of the self," in *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, Elizabeth Mansfield, ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 28.

⁴⁰ Mark K. Roskill, *What is Art History?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 20.

⁴¹ idem, 20.

eventually generating a kind of taxonomy of individual body parts as generated by particular artists. This earliest phase of attribution through comparison is what gave rise to the notion of connoisseurship within the field of art history, as particularly evidenced through the work of Bernard Berenson.⁴²

These early forays sought to attribute individual works to a single painter, relying on expert knowledge of styles, techniques, materials, and even fashions and popular literature. In a sense, when presented with a painting of unknown provenance, the expert's task is to seek out the traces of the hand of the artist who created it and, relying on a set of comparative points, ascribe the piece to that individual maker. This process of comparative attribution has since expanded well beyond the field of European painting. The Islamic talismanic shirt which is described at the opening to this chapter has been subjected to this very process, even in the absence of a known artist (or even a type of artist) for talismanic shirts as a category, or of a set of well-defined comparative points with which to begin positing attribution.

The absence of known artists for Islamic talismanic shirts is the second and the lesser of the two critical problems which this study attempts to correct.⁴³ The first, and most critical problem, is the rendering of these objects as things, an issue briefly introduced above. In this chapter, the question "what manner of thing is this?" serves as an introduction to the study of material culture and the history of things. Viewing Islamic

⁴² Michael Hatt & Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: a Critical Introduction to its Methods* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 40.

⁴³ As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, some Ottoman talismanic shirts bear the name of Sufi shaykhs credited with the creation of the shirts. The named individual may or may not have been the person tasked with the production and design of the shirts, since it is very possible that the names served an invocational purpose.

talismanic shirts through the lens of material culture opens up the possibility of better answering how it is that they might have been made and understood to function.

In what follows, a definition of material culture as put forward by the editors of the journal *Material Religion* serves as the framework to organize recent approaches to the study of material culture. By breaking this definition into three critical constituent elements (epistemologies, sensational regimes, and routines), I argue that a corpus of talismanic shirts can be discussed *in toto* regardless of differences in geographical and temporal provenance. I locate the study of these peculiar objects firmly within discourses about religious material culture and the “History of Things” following the work of George Kubler and others. Similarly, Alfred Gell’s concept of an object index helps to contribute to a study of Islamic material culture that goes beyond the processes of categorization and towards an active envisioning of context and agency.

Religion, Material Culture, and the History of Things

In the inaugural issue of the journal *Material Religion*, the editors present their study of material culture as one of many potential lenses through which to view religion.⁴⁴ The study of religion has, they remark, “largely been pursued as the study of

⁴⁴ The journal *Material Religion*, which has largely set the tone for the field, is less than 10 years old. Studies into material culture and religion have been undertaken since the early 1980s, but a sustained discussion of the nature of material religion as an approach in its own right cannot truly be traced back that far.

texts.”⁴⁵ While textual traditions are crucial to the study of religion and an understanding of the role of authority and transmission of religious knowledge, they are not the only source for tradition in the lives of religious people. The role of objects in religious life, the editors argue, is central to understanding how religion functions within the lives of religious people and communities: “Religion is what people do with material things and places, and how these structure and color experience and one’s sense of oneself and others.”⁴⁶ The study of texts and objects alongside each other is validated but expanded here to now include: “spaces, images, and all the practices that put these items to use in order to arrive at a more robust account of how religion works in the lives of its adherents and in the societies that shape and are shaped by a religion.”⁴⁷ What the editors are striving for in this enumeration of material religion is a better way to present religion through a focus on what people do with objects and how those objects influence the people that use them. This definition is expansive enough to cover both objects and the places in which those objects construct a religious life.

In addition to identifying objects as critical data for the study of religion, the approach championed by scholars of material religion emphasizes the role of the body in the practice of religion as well. Materiality and corporeality are necessarily linked in the notion that “any treatment of religion that fails to consider bodies is guilty of ignoring the

⁴⁵ S. Brent Plate, Birgit Meyer, David Morgan & Crispin Paine, “Editorial Statement,” *Material Religion* 1.1 (2005): 6.

⁴⁶ Plate, et al. “Editorial Statement,” *Material Religion* 1.1 (2005), 5.

⁴⁷ Plate, et al. “Editorial Statement,” *Material Religion* 1.1 (2005), 6.

materiality of religions.”⁴⁸ Early studies into material culture in terms of religion seem to have been guilty of the failure to recognize the importance of bodily interactions with objects, which often led to the creation of works that read like biographies of the objects themselves.⁴⁹ Within the broader context of material culture studies (that is, those studies which do not explicitly concern themselves with the study of religion), the consideration of objects often leads to a formal analysis of representation, rather than a substantive engagement with objects and bodies. As Nicole Boivin has lamented:

What we frequently find instead is a far from novel emphasis on ideas, on human thought, and on representation. What we often find is a model, either implicit or explicit, of material culture as a text or as a language, as something that represents something else, and that is there to be interpreted.⁵⁰

In addition to the problem of the linguistic analogy (one that is explored in detail in what follows) such a model posits that material objects are simply passive receptacles of meaning.

The biographical tendency, while object-focused, often fails to take into account the larger human networks within which individual objects operate.⁵¹ This can largely be

⁴⁸ Birgit Meyer, David Morgan, Crispin Paine & S. Brent Plate, “Introduction: Key Words in Material Religion,” *Material Religion* 7/1 (20), 6.

⁴⁹ Editors, “Visual Culture and Material Culture: Paradigms for the study of religion.” *Material Culture* 5/3 (YEAR), 355. The biographical model is explored in detail in the sections that follow.

⁵⁰ Nicole Boivin, *Material Cultures, Material Minds: The Impact of Things on Human Thought, Society and Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20.

⁵¹ The failure of the biographical model for writing about objects is taken up at length and in a variety of different contexts in Hans Peter Hahn & Hadas Weiss eds., *Mobility, Meaning, and the Transformation of Things* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013). In the epilogue (pp. 183-195), David Fontijn suggests that a more profitable analogy is that of the itinerary, which can trace multiple modes of human interaction with objects. A primary distinction that Fontijn makes between the metaphor of biography and the

a function of the fact that object biographies are obsessed with the end-of-life moment for an object, rather than the more complex (and simultaneous) associated pathways with which an object can be associated.⁵² In alternative definitions of material culture, that is, those that move away from assuming a biographical approach, the role of human interaction with objects is described as one of two potential points of departure: “Contemporary material culture studies may take as their principal concern, and starting point for analysis, particular properties of objects and things... [or] material culture studies may take the human subject or the social as their starting point...”⁵³ Here, objects can be evaluated based on their “properties,” which implies a kind of timeless set of attributes, or the moment at which they come into contact with human actors. By removing an emphasis on language or biography, this kind of approach avoids common pitfalls but brings one no closer to a practically deployable definition.

The editors of *Material Religion* propose a definition for material culture that is applicable to this study of Islamic talismanic shirts, as well as the larger category of talismanic objects from the medieval Islamic world. In it, they offer three primary foci for investigation in order to elucidate the work that objects do within the lives of religious people: “... material culture may be defined as the cultural work of objects and the

metaphor of itinerary is the association of human life inherent in the use of the biography as metaphor (192). This distinction is addressed at length below in the much earlier work of George Kubler, who is absent from Fontijn’s discussion.

⁵² Hans Peter Hahn & Hadas Weiss, “Introduction: Biographies, travels, and itineraries of things,” in Hahn & Weiss, eds. *Mobility, Meaning, and the Transformation of Things* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), 4.

⁵³ Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands, & Patricia Spyer, eds., *Handbook of Material Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 3-4.

routines, epistemologies, and sensational regimes that engage them and are mediated by them.”⁵⁴ The three components which here mediate and engage objects, and therefore constitute their cultural work (i. e., the routines, epistemologies, and sensational regimes) serve to structure the investigation that follows by re-ordering them in terms of the questions that they shape. First, exploring an *epistemology* of objects themselves helps to underscore the fundamental commonalities that Islamic talismanic shirts (regardless of their provenance) possess. This helps to answer the question of why these materials can be profitably explored together. Second, these objects will be shown to represent a corpus through their participation in a shared set of *sensational regimes*. This provides an answer to the question of what kind of corpus these shirts comprise. Finally, the mechanism through which these sensational regimes are constructed (and thus the answer to the question of how) can be identified through the examination of their attendant *routines*.

In the larger framework of this definition for material culture, objects are bound up in the relationships between people, in the experiences of individual bodies, and in the process of conceptualizing and dispersing knowledge and beliefs. These three components (routine, epistemology, sensational regime) outline a course of investigation which necessarily understands material culture as the resultant product of the combination of objects and their environments.

Epistemology and Heideggerian Things

⁵⁴ Editors, “Visual Culture and Material Culture: Paradigms for the Study of Religion.” *Material Culture* 5/3(2009), 356.

Asking the question, “what kind of thing is this?” is the first step in a classificatory process which aims to place unknown things into a useful framework.⁵⁵ The next question often centers on how the knowledge used to answer that question is formed. Some preliminary attempts at better grasping the epistemological structures which govern the study of Islamic talismanic shirts come from recent attempts to formulate a philosophy of material culture. In her work to generate such an outline, Beth Preston suggests that the most fruitful avenues might come from the realm of technology, rather than that of aesthetics.⁵⁶ And yet, as Preston points out, most forays into the philosophy of technology have defined themselves in opposition to aesthetics, choosing to focus on those objects which are useful. This distinction, “between art and instrument (or between the practical and the aesthetic/contemplative)...” is not present in the ancient Greek notion of *technē*, of which both objects are a part.⁵⁷ The division between art and artifact, based on utility, is more or less nonsensical in the investigation of talismanic objects which appear to have been created for an explicit purpose. The problematization of their place as *artifact*, then, only arises from the fact that we seem to have lost the

⁵⁵ In a study of how archaeology students engage with unfamiliar objects in the field, Charles Goodwin discusses in detail the kinds of questions students ask when sifting dirt or silt through a screen. This process is in itself a good analogy for the intellectual work that happens when appraising an unknown object. Charles Goodwin, “Things and Their Embodied Environments,” in Lambros Malafouris & Colin Renfrew eds., *The Cognitive Life of Things: Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind* (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2010), 103-104.

⁵⁶ Beth Preston, *A Philosophy of Material Culture: Action, Function, and Mind* (New York & London: Routledge, 2013), 3.

⁵⁷ Preston, *Philosophy of Material Culture*, 3.

instruction manual (if it ever existed) which may have outlined these objects' utility.⁵⁸

In order to better understand the pivotal role that utility (or functionality) has come to occupy in discussions of material culture and its philosophy, as well as the role that utility plays in the analysis of these talismanic shirts, the question of "what manner of thing is this" can be rephrased, in a Heideggerian framework, as "how is this a thing?" Heidegger makes frequent appearances in discussions of material culture and objectness, either as excerpted essays in anthologies or in extensive footnotes.⁵⁹ Heidegger's obsessive focus on one thing (a jug) demonstrates both how far an epistemology of things can be pushed, and how a focus on the possibility of containment by a vessel is constituent of that vessel's identity.

Heidegger's philosophical exercise on the jug begins in earnest after the creation of the jug as a thing, not with the creative or artistic impulse of the artisan.⁶⁰ This point, while convenient in the study of talismanic shirts whose artisans may never be known, allows the definitive characteristics of the thing to be born out by its function and

⁵⁸ Preston questions whether it is, in fact, appropriate to deploy the term "artifact" to refer to man-made objects in general. She asserts that within anthropology the word is taken to mean things that are the result of human activity and interaction. This broad definition, she notes, generally brings to mind the kinds of objects often found in museum vitrines and not, as would be accepted under this heading, larger constructions like roads and canals. She describes this tendency as "baggage" associated with the term, and therefore chooses *material culture* as the subject of her work. See Preston, *A Philosophy of Material Culture*, 5.

⁵⁹ Heidegger appears throughout contemporary studies on material culture, if most often through his existence in footnotes or in references to later philosophers who continue from his neologisms of *Dasein*, *zuhanden*, and *vorhanden*. For a recent example of studies in this vein, see Lambros Malafouris & Colin Renfrew, eds., *The Cognitive Life of Things: Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind* (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2010).

⁶⁰ Heidegger, "The Thing," in *The Object Reader*, Fiona Candlin & Raiford Guins, eds., (London: Routledge, 2009), 115.

potentiality, rather than by human invention. The jug cannot be understood, as Heidegger explains, by thinking about the idea (the *eidos*) of a jug in any Platonic sense. When we fill a jug with liquid, we are now confronted with that jug as a vessel whose thingness rests in the fact that it holds something. And yet, Heidegger insists, it is not the jug that is doing the holding, but rather, emptiness.⁶¹

If, as Heidegger argues, the void “is what does the vessel’s holding,” then the part of that thing which created the space, the sides and bottom of the jug (that is to say, the material form of that thing) are not what defines it or how we come to understand its function. The presence of that void, within the form of the jug, allows liquid to be held and, most importantly, to be poured out from the jug. For Heidegger, it is this “outpouring” that brings the jug before our eyes and makes it present: “and in the poured gift the jug presences as a jug.”⁶² This is, on one level, an argument about functionality and as such it reinforces the conceptual problems that one encounters when we view a thing in a context where it has been stripped of its functionality. This is precisely what has happened in our encounters with Islamic talismanic shirts in museum and library settings.

Let us compare this Heideggarian jug to a shirt. The jug belongs to the higher order category of vessel and, as we have already seen, a vessel is defined by the void which it surrounds. A shirt belongs to the higher order category of garment, which is defined by the body which it encompasses. Both are, after a fashion, containers and both are equally defined not by their outward form but by the thing which they contain. For

⁶¹ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 115.

⁶² Heidegger, “The Thing,” 118.

the Heideggerian jug, we come to experience the jug as a thing in the moment when its contents are poured out to us in a flash of generous outpouring. For our shirt, we come to view it as a thing in the moment when it is filled with a body that it frames and gives shape to.

The task for this entire study of talismanic shirts then, is nothing less than attempting to re-presence the shirts as things by imagining the bodies which once allowed these shirts to fulfill their function as vessels for the human body. This effort, which is difficult enough given the space of time between the present and the creation of these things, is further complicated by approaches to the study of things in these intervening years. Heidegger's philosophical forebears viewed a world of physical objects that was, "imagined primarily as spectacle—a series of tableaux or a play staged before us."⁶³ But as the brief exercise of the jug has demonstrated, physical objects, things, are not laid before us for us to view at a distance. In describing this jug as a thing, Heidegger recalls the Old High German *dinc* or *thing* meaning "a gathering specifically for the purpose of dealing with a case or matter," and thus, "something that comes of itself and bears upon man."⁶⁴ Things have bearing upon human existence, and they attend to functionality within the world of human affairs.

Heidegger's assertion of a view of objects that values their utility as constituent of their participation in the world of meaning helps frame the seemingly heterogenous corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts as a single and unified object of study on the basis of

⁶³ Stephen Mulhall, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time* (Routledge, London and New York: 1996), 39.

⁶⁴ Heidegger, "The Thing," 119.

their very thingness. Making the explicit connection between a Heideggerian jug and a shirt brings the very materiality of the corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts into sharp relief. The epistemological component of the definition for material culture adopted here points towards the way in which objects both construct knowledge about the world as well as how that knowledge can begin to be identified through the objects themselves.

How things interact with human agents forms the next area of inquiry here, but there is one human agent who will be swiftly pushed to the margins, thanks again, in part, to Heidegger's little jug. The person who makes the jug, the artist or the artisan, plays very little role in explicating what the jug's function is and how that function has social value. As Heidegger remarks "But its being made by the potter in no way constitutes what is peculiar and proper to the jug insofar as it is *qua* jug. The jug is not a vessel because it was made..."⁶⁵ Heidegger's dismissal of the potter here is more than just a convenient analogy by which we can abandon the search for the artists who may have been responsible for the creation of these talismanic shirts. Rather, it highlights just how little that information might contribute to understanding what these shirts actually are and what they actually do. Far more important in the pursuit of this understanding is the re-imagining of that which filled the void: the bodies contained in these garments.

In the bulletin entry which introduced this chapter, the very thingness of this talismanic shirt, the fact that it is a shirt, is overlooked in favor of discussing stylistic and technical aspects of its composition and decoration. In doing so, its functionality is occluded and it has ceased to be present to us. Reconstructing that presence, begun here

⁶⁵ Heidegger, "The Thing," 115.

in the contemplation of the shirt as thing, includes reconstructing the systems within which this thing served a function.

The Sensational Regime: In Defense of the Corpus

The epistemological systems within which things participate are only one small component of this project. Identifying and elucidating the “sensational regimes” of Islamic talismanic shirts occupies the bulk of what follows in this study. Ottoman talismanic shirts and talismanic shirts from pre-Mughal South Asia were created and used in strikingly different contexts, and yet their interactions with human agents and the body itself can be considered in much the same way, given the definition of material culture outlined here. Delineating sensational regimes implies a move away from the linear project of biography and toward a network of relationships centering on the interaction between objects and people. Considering these examples of Ottoman and pre-Mughal South Asian material culture together here is not, as it might otherwise appear, an ahistorical endeavor. Talismanic shirts from these two different parts of the Islamic world will be shown to participate in similar sensational regimes, and thus as part of a similar embodied process.

If the epistemologies of objects are how we come to generate knowledge about the nature of objects and, in turn, what objects help us to know about the world around us, then the sensational regime encompasses the set of experiences that objects generate in human actors. While human actors are living, sentient beings with a life-span and

consciousness, things have a radically different relationship to time and space. This radical difference is increasingly effaced in studies on material culture, and the effacement of that difference undermines the force of the sensational regime. In order to best articulate the vectors of those experiences, the stories of objects must be uncoupled from descriptions that paint objects in the light of living things.

The biographical model for the study of objects has deep and particularly intractable roots. In *The Shape of Time*, the art historian George Kubler makes the case to abandon object biographies on the basis that the biographical model implies biological principles of little import for the world of things. One particularly robust arena for the proliferation of the biological model is that of style. According to Kubler, prior to his study, works of art had been discussed in terms of style which followed notions of evolution and flourishing which were clearly derived from the natural world. Giovanni Morelli's taxonomies of anatomical renderings organized by individual European painter underscores the connection between the evaluation of the work of art and the natural sciences. Artistic styles were discussed and evaluated in terms of their birth, flowering, and decay. Kubler observes that, "However useful it is for pedagogical purposes, the biological metaphor of style as a sequence of life-stages was historically misleading, for it bestowed upon the flux of events the shapes and the behavior of organisms."⁶⁶ One of the primary shapes that this model bestows upon objects, and the most potentially detrimental, is that of linearity.

This linear approach to the study of things has not yet been relinquished in all

⁶⁶ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 8.

aspects of the study of material culture. Ever since Igor Kopytoff's influential article, "The Cultural Biography of Things"⁶⁷ the idea of writing object biographies has been increasingly popular. In the introduction to a recent edited volume devoted to the study of things, this idea of biography (as it pertains to objects or things) is defined in the following way: "a biography covers a life span, representing a basic linearity of ageing that unfolds a multiplicity of attached stories, meanings, and so on."⁶⁸ This definition allows for a notion of multi-linearity, which embraces the potential for multiple trajectories or outcomes, but it continues to assert a biological model for the study of things. This biological model then implies both a birth moment and a point of decay.

Objects are often said to have "lives," although they are not living things, and it is their relationship with time and within time that generates some of Kubler's most elucidating claims. For Kubler, historians are responsible for giving time an intelligible shape and that shape was often a life-cycle, with a formative period, growth, and subsequent decline. In this shaping process, a historian,

is committed to the detection and description of the shape of time. He transposes, reduces, composes and colors a facsimile, like a painter, who in his search for the identity of the subject, must discover a patterned set of properties that will elicit recognition all while conveying a new perception of the subject.⁶⁹

By making the histories of things recognizable through the model of the biography, the

⁶⁷ In Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64- 91.

⁶⁸ Hans Peter Hahn & Hadas Weiss, "Introduction: Biographies, travels, and itineraries of things," in Hahn & Weiss, eds., *Mobility, Meaning, and the Transformation of Things: shifting contexts of material culture through time and space* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), 4.

⁶⁹ Kubler, *Shape of Time*, 12.

historian engages in an interpretive project that recapitulates an ideal artistic notion of virtuosity.

As the previous section on the epistemologies surrounding objects suggests, there is little room within this study for such a notion that valorizes the role of the artist over the materiality of the thing itself, especially given the absence of information about the artists responsible for the creation of these talismanic shirts. Moreover, this scheme does little to highlight the active properties of things themselves, their interaction with other objects, and/or their interaction with human agents.

Adopting the model of the sensational regime instead of that of biography liberates the study of objects from these linear confines. Doing so also highlights how by very dint of their “non-livingness,” visual and material culture from religious traditions, “configure social relations, over time and space and between one life world and another.”⁷⁰ Objects are not the same as living things, no matter how tempting analogizing language might be in the service of their explication. In order to better articulate the participation in sensational regimes in the context of Islamic talismanic shirts, that distinction deserves to be underlined.

Utilizing the term “sensational regime,” is a way to address the way in which sensory experience within the body itself is a networked process. In the ten years since the first issue of the journal *Material Religion* (the birthplace of this notion), the editors have reflected on the efficacy of discussing sensation in this way. Crispin Paine puts it quite succinctly by stating, “a human being is not a giant eyeball or an ear. The individual

⁷⁰ Morgan, *Sacred Gaze*, 9.

senses need to be put back into the body.”⁷¹ That a study of the senses needs to be coupled with a study of the body itself seems a fairly absurd point to make, but studying the senses apart from the body is a scholarly pursuit that reaches back into the sixteenth century.⁷² But a consideration of the sensational or sensorial regime is more than just a consideration of the body, as Paine’s sentiment confirms. Attending to sensational regimes means studying the body and its senses as part of an inextricable system of apprehending the world.⁷³

Just as an understanding of the regimes of sensory experience is inextricable from a larger discussion about the body as a whole, doing cross-cultural comparisons of clothing or adornment is predicated upon thinking about bodies and their coverings as part of a single whole. One coinage for this assemblage, the “body set,” presents the body, clothing, and methods of adornment as an interconnected medium.⁷⁴ It is this interconnectivity between the body, its sensory organs (and their resulting sensations), clothing, and methods of adornment that structures human interactions and governs social exchanges, and is in turn shaped itself by those systems. Talismanic shirts participate in these interactions and practices – a fact only perceived by exploring the moments when the relationship between sensory experiences, the body, and textiles may have influenced the use and production of these objects.

⁷¹ Birgit Meyer, David Morgan, Crispin Paine, & S. Brent Plate, “Material Religion’s First Decade,” *Material Religion* 10.1 (2014): 109.

⁷² Margaret Lock & Judith Farquhar, “An emergent canon, or putting bodies on the scholarly agenda (Introduction),” in *Beyond the Body Proper*, Margaret Lock & Judith Farquhar, eds., (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2007), 19.

⁷³ The body and the sartorial practices around that body are the focus of chapters 4 and 5.

⁷⁴ Ted Polhemus, “Introduction,” in *The Body Reader*, Ted Polhemus, ed., (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 29.

The body is that which is contained by the shirt as vessel, just as liquid or emptiness is what is contained in Heidegger's jug. This content, the body, participates in a host of sensory experiences which are mediated and modified by the vessel which contains it. Focusing on these sensory experiences, as well as the imagined connections forged through those sensory experiences, is what fundamentally ties together the study of these shirts across the span of space and time in a way that mere biography cannot.

From Biography to Routine: Enter the Index

The final component of the definition of material culture explored here is the routine. Routines are here understood as the sets of practices which accompany the use (and potentially creation) of objects within a social context and the way that those routines are described rhetorically. For clothing, the routine most associated with these objects is dressing and textual descriptions of dressing. Where the sensational regime is concerned with how sight, smell, and touch influence our perception of objects and the imprints of that perception on material goods, the routine is here concerned with the dialogue around objects. What it is that people do with objects, and particularly how people speak about objects, is at the heart of this notion of the routine.

Discourse about objects, particularly art objects, often functions through analogizing language. Early approaches to the study of art objects utilized a linguistic

approach which relied on the aesthetic judgments of an individual.⁷⁵

Studies of art and objects are not the only areas of academic study where this linguistic approach has flourished. The use of language as a model for all manner of human actions (including societal formations and even thinking) has been applied across the humanities and social sciences broadly.⁷⁶ Using a linguistic model led to studies focused on semiotics and representation where material culture was understood to create structures that both created and communicated meaning.⁷⁷

Much in the same way that the use of a biological model for “lives” of things translates into a problematic interpretation of objects’ existence as linear or evolutionary, linguistic analogies for objects carry with them problematic structures surrounding semiotics and communication.⁷⁸ To say that material culture can communicate meaning posits that the type of work needed to apprehend that meaning is translation; the simple

⁷⁵ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9. This grammatical approach prevails in discussions of textiles and other patterned objects, such as ceramics or tile surfaces. By utilizing this grammatical model, cross-cultural comparisons based on design motifs are quite easily achieved. For an extended discussion on the ‘grammar of design,’ see: Dorothy K. Washburn & Donald W. Crowe, *Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 30-34.

⁷⁶ Nicole Boivin, *Material Cultures, Material Minds: The Impact of Things on Human Thought, Society and Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13.

⁷⁷ Boivin, *Material Cultures*, 11-13.

⁷⁸ Adherents to this linguistic and semiotic influenced approach contend that objects signify in the same way that language, and by extension text, signifies. Two examples of this can be found in: Christopher Tilley, *Material Culture and Text* (London: Routledge, 1991), and Ian Hodder, “This is not an article about material culture as text,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 8 (1989): 250-269, an article whose title evokes the famous surrealist painting of Magritte.

ferrying of meaning from one medium into another.⁷⁹ And yet nothing in the definition of material culture used here seems to imply that such a fixed meaning exists. Moreover, by looking at material culture through the lens of the routines generated by use, our focus has shifted from meaning to mechanism.

One move away from this concept of symbolic communication through objects, comes from the work of anthropologist Alfred Gell who defines an approach that focuses around agency rather than meaning. He states, “In place of symbolic communication, I place all the emphasis on *agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation*. I view art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it.”⁸⁰ For Gell, and the many scholars within religious studies who have found his work instructive,⁸¹ it is the frequent conflation of symbol with sign that causes analytical problems. When symbols are understood to signify some basic underlying notion of meaning, every symbol requires interpretation and translation. Gell seeks to move as far away as possible from linguistic modes when talking about art objects, which leads him to drop the notion of an “art object” all together. This is a

⁷⁹ On the issue of translation problems, see George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 3rd Edition.

⁸⁰ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency*, 6.

⁸¹ Alfred Gell’s work has been very influential within the study of material religion, as well as within the field of anthropology. For a recent collection of essays focusing on Gell’s influence in multiple fields and traditions, see Liana Chua & Mark Elliot, eds., *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Matter after Alfred Gell* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013). For recent studies within the field of religion see: Jamal J. Elias, *Aisha’s Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Kenneth M George, *Picturing Islam: Art and Ethics in a Muslim Lifeworld* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); and Erin L. Hasinoff, *Faith in Objects: American Missionary Expositions in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

particularly helpful move for studies of Islamic textiles and garments, which have often been analyzed according to grammatical models of pattern and decoration.⁸²

For Gell, much like for the editors of *Material Religion*, the object as bearer of meaning is a less profitable framework for study than has been previously suggested. In order to generate a new kind of discussion that evades a quest for underlying meaning, Gell offers the index in place of the art object.⁸³ The index, for Gell, is a physical thing in the world that can have agency and that operates through the process of abduction, rather than communication.⁸⁴ This move is more than a terminological shift; it is a decentering effort that places emphasis on agency and therefore on interactive processes that occur between humans and objects. By utilizing the concept of abduction, Gell is invoking the world of formal logic and developing a way to talk about the relationship between an object and a prototype that side-steps the linguistic trap. For Gell, indexes are material things in the world which cause people to produce inferences, through abduction.⁸⁵ Already, a significant quantity of agency has been ascribed to the material object in this scheme, which is the added benefit that Gell derives from escaping linguistic models in a discussion of material culture.

Gell's potentially alienating discussion of the index in lieu of the more familiar term of art-object is of considerable value for the study of material culture generally, and

⁸² Miriam Ali-de-Unzaga applies Gell's theories to her study of Moroccan textiles in useful effect in the article, "The Captivating Power of Textiles," in *Islamic art, architecture and material culture: new perspectives*, BAR International Series 2436, Margaret S. Graves, ed., (Oxford: Archeopress, 2012), 15-37.

⁸³ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 13.

⁸⁴ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 14.

⁸⁵ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 26.

the study of material religion specifically. By focusing on the agency of objects and the transformative power that they may enact on the persons who come in contact with them, the use of the concept of the index shifts attention away from style or morphology and towards function and use. Gell's work has been particularly influential within the fields of material culture studies and material religion, and some of his observations clearly prefigure the constituent elements of the definition for material culture that is deployed here. The resultant object of study for Gell is not, generally speaking, the object, but rather the theoretical study of "social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency."⁸⁶ In effect, Gell is concerned with the routines attendant to material objects.

Objects without Texts

The point of departure for this extended discussion of objectness and material culture, Daniel Walker's comparison between the Metropolitan Museum of Art's talismanic shirt and manuscripts from the Deccan peninsula mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, emphasizes an important absence in the information about Islamic talismanic shirts: that of texts. The absence of texts from the medieval Islamic period that describe any theory of efficacy or the creation or use of talismanic shirts has been viewed as a major hindrance to their academic study.⁸⁷ However, according to the framework

⁸⁶ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 7.

⁸⁷ Emilie Savage-Smith, "Introduction," in *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, Emilie Savage-Smith, ed., (Aldershot: Ashgate, Variorum, 2004), xxviii. Other magical objects which she notes are not mentioned in the literature from their respective periods are: magic bowls, mirrors, padlocks, and miniature Qur'āns. She notes that it is only through

outlined here, the absence of texts which describe these objects is not taken to be a complete impediment to their study. In contradistinction, this absence removes the compulsion to attribute each object in the appended catalogue to a particular maker, place, and time. The very process of attribution is one which privileges artistic or artisanal intention over the richly interconnected matrix of interactions that appear when one attempts instead to apprehend the routines and sensational regimes around material culture. Moreover, this absence of texts proscribing particular functions and timelines reinforces the anti-biographical stance asserted here by removing the possibility of attribution and thus occluding the moment of birth.

Case Study: A South-Asian Talismanic Shirt at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The three primary components of the definition for material culture expounded here at length (epistemologies, sensational regimes, and routines) form the overarching structure through which to view each Islamic talismanic shirt individually, as well as in a corpus. Applying these lenses to one individual shirt reveals how profitable lines of inquiry may continue to stem from this approach.

the combined study of texts and objects that we can better understand the kinds of practices associated with these so-called *magical* items.



Figure 5: VMFA 2000.9 (Front and Back)



The Virginia Museum of Fine Art's shirt was acquired through purchase at Christie's auction house in 2000.⁸⁸ As is the case with many shirts of similar design and provenance, the answer to the epistemological question of how we know what we know about the thing is frustratingly opaque. If we forego the standard set of provenance details contained in the catalogue entry and instead focus on the thing which currently confronts us in the museum's storerooms, we can make a limited set of conclusions.

The thing presents itself clearly as a shirt, and the conservation staff at the museum have stored the garment in such a way as to preserve some of the body which was once contained therein by stuffing the interior with acid free tissue to give the shirt

⁸⁸ Accession number: VMFA 2000.9. All of the data provided on this object comes from research undertaken by the author in 2012 at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

some fullness. The textile from which the garment is created has been identified by conservationists as cellulose based, meaning the fabric is either cotton or linen or a blend of the two fibers. The weave structure of the fabric is a fairly loose plain-weave treated with a sizing agent which allowed the surface to be covered in blue, red, gold and brown ink or paint.

The shirt shows considerable damage to this painted surface along a rectangular grid-like pattern, which indicates that the shirt was folded for a considerable period of time. Here we are immediately confronted with a potential problem in asserting that this thing is “a shirt” when called on to answer the question, “what manner of thing is this?” If indeed this object was folded into a small parcel for any given length of time, it was not a shirt – properly speaking – during that period, and it is unclear exactly what manner of thing it might have been.

In terms of the sensational regimes within which this thing operated, certain aspects of the decorative program of the shirt lead us toward potential answers. The shirt is covered in the entire text of the Qur’ān, as well as small roundels at the shoulders and on the front pectoral panels which feature the *basmala*, the name of *Allāh*, and the exclamation, “*yā budū*□!” The sensational regime of the presence of Qur’ānic text in relation to the body as well as the invocation of the science of letters is addressed at length in the chapters that follow, but the general sensations of hearing, speaking, and seeing as they relate to Qur’ānic text are all invoked through these features.

The way in which these features are organized on the surface of this shirt speaks

to a further avenue within the field of sensational regimes. The text of the Qur'ān is divided into a patch-work like arrangement of squares seemingly stitched together with multi-colored boxes. The lobed border designs on the front and the back bottom sections which also contain Qur'ānic text are highly evocative shapes which potentially recall other garments and the sensational regimes which these associated garments evoke in turn. As is posited in Chapter 5, these stylistic features are potential referents to a Sufi garment called a *khirqā*.

Details about the routines attendant to the making and wearing of the thing itself can also be gleaned from close inspection of the object. Given the appearance of shoulder seams which cut through the Qur'ānic text described above, it is clear that the text was applied to the surface before the fabric was sewn into the form of the garment. The lack of seams along the sides of the body suggest that the shirt must have been secured by the addition of something like a belt, or that it was worn underneath another garment. Finally, the presence of intersecting semi-circles in dark brown ink on the shoulders underneath the polychrome painting indicates that the surface designs were traced out before the painting was undertaken.

As this very cursory case study has begun to demonstrate, a significant amount of information about this shirt can be presented through focusing on the thing in itself in detail with an eye to the kinds of categories that are definitional to the study of material culture. Without even comparing this shirt to others within the corpus, let alone to other types of things, and thus beginning the traditional process of categorization, the contours of this thing are beginning to be made present to us. Without reference to an individual

artist or artisan, we can still perceive the outlines of the routines responsible for the object's creation and even potentially its use. Most importantly, we can use this methodology to move now from "what manner of thing is this?" to the question of, "what is it that makes this thing a talismanic shirt?"

CHAPTER 2: The Magic Eraser

A great disappearing act is performed in the moment that an object is deemed “magical.” Like a magician who waves his wand and makes the rabbit disappear, the scholarly application of the word “magic” effaces connections between objects and texts which go further to illuminate an object’s lived context than the label “magic” ever could. When the word “magic” is grafted onto an object, or a text, a host of assumptions and associations, telling us less about the object itself and more about 19th and early 20th ideas about religion, take root and obscure the nature of the object itself. By the end of this magic show, the audience is tricked into believing that all magical objects bear an association with each other. The fact that Islamic talismanic shirts are magical objects is typically taken for granted from the outset, even in the most learned studies.⁸⁹ When these objects are entered into museum catalogues they are ascribed magical functions.⁹⁰ When they are described to textile collectors, they are hailed as tangible examples of “white magic.”⁹¹ Talismanic shirts are placed side by side with astrolabes, divination bowls, and manuscripts of grimoires in exhibitions and exhibition catalogues.⁹²

⁸⁹ “Mais que sait-on des objets à caractère magique de l’Inde musulmane avant le XVII^e siècle?” Éloïse Brac de la Perrière, *Les Tuniques Talismaniques Indiennes d’Époque pré-Moghole et Moghole à la Lumière d’un groupe de corans en écriture Bihārī* *Journal Asiatique* 291.1 (2009): 57. Later she refers to the shirts more generally as “magic garments” (*vêtements magiques*) (70).

⁹⁰ The object MPE 30842 in Rome’s Luigi Pigorini Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico contains the following entry for function: “magic protection in battle.”

⁹¹ Hülya Tezcan, “Topkapi Talismans” *HALI* 125 (2002): 105.

⁹² A talismanic shirt was included in the recent *Fālnāma* exhibition at the Freer/Sackler Gallery. For the catalogue, see: *Falnama: the Book of Omens*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009). The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, which publishes thematic collections of objects from their holdings features their talismanic shirts in the

To say that an object is magical begins a conversation not about the object, but instead about the relationship between religion and magic, magic and science, magic and rationality, and above all, agency. Deploying the term magic to describe an object or a practice is an attempt to regulate the scope of human agency, and an attempt to push to the margins those practices that challenge the construction of taxonomic boundaries. This chapter takes up a three-pronged examination into the definition and application of the word “magic” as it has pertained to the (lack of) study of Islamic talismanic shirts. The lack of prolonged attention to these objects can be ascribed to their designation as “magic” insofar as “magic” functions as a dustbin for less-convenient examples of divergence in religious practice. This phenomenon is traced in the first section below which takes up how the term “magic” is deployed throughout the works of late 19th through 20th century scholars, some of whom have come to define approaches to talismanic objects from the Islamic world. The second focus here reframes a discussion of magical efficacy in terms of one of the most popular Arabic texts on magic: the *Shams al-ma‘ārif* of Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 1225). This text has become increasingly popular in discussions of magic within the Islamic world, and is often mentioned in passing during discussions of talismans and objects covered in magic squares.

Finally the term *vernacular* is offered as a potential alternative intended to take the place of “magic” when describing talismanic shirts. Whereas magic serves to erase connections, *vernacular* emphasizes the relationships between practices, individuals, and

volume: *Science, Tools, and Magic* (Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, v. 12) (London: The Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1992).

objects which inform the creation and use of those objects. At the heart of debates about magic, we can uncover attempts to delimit human agency in the world and to create a division between what humans can do and what only God can do.

Into the Fog: Regulating the Scope of Human Agency

Attaching the adjective *magical* to an object often does little to describe that object. Randall Styers asks: why has something as amorphous as *magic* continued to be meaningful in anthropology, sociology and religious studies and how is the category still intellectually useful?⁹³ In his work, Styers demonstrates how magic is repeatedly deployed in debates about religion by virtue of its being such a flexible rhetorical tool.⁹⁴ The fact that magic serves as a useful sparring opponent in a host of conflicts, be it between “civilized” and “savage” or “rational” and “irrational” means that one must always seek out magic’s sometimes hidden opponent in order to learn what is really at stake.

Debates purporting to be about magic are often debates about what constitutes orthodoxy and what is heretical. In the case of contemporary Islam in the Persian Gulf, this tension can be traced within popular texts decrying magical practices and condemning sorcerers. One such text, *al-ḥārim al-Battār* (The Cutting Edge) by the Saudi shaykh Wahid ‘Abd al-Salam Bali, clearly espouses that nearly every practice

⁹³ Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic and Science in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8.

⁹⁴ Styers, *Making Magic*, 96.

which a sorcerer undertakes is, at its heart, an act of *shirk*.⁹⁵ Sorcery and magic have become woven into the fabric of everyday life within the contemporary Muslim world as evidenced in the proliferation of amulets, talismans, and charms covering everything from the backpacks of school-age children to taxi-cabs.⁹⁶ In the face of this proliferation, countries like Nigeria and Saudi Arabia have made the practice of sorcery illegal and potentially punishable (on the grounds of apostasy) by death.⁹⁷ In this contemporary context, as in the historical ones taken up below, magic is the ideal battleground on which to defend a notion of “orthodox” Islam by virtue of magic’s malleability as a category.⁹⁸

What is being regulated in this use of the term magic is the “proper reach of human agency.”⁹⁹ Proscribing what is and is not the appropriate application of human agency in the world is just one of the kinds of border patrolling functions that discourses on magic can take. In the 19th century, probing the boundaries of what constitutes magic also allowed many scholars to define and refine their own concept of modernity.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, “in the colonial period, works on magic experienced an hour of glory, all the more significant since they also placed within an evolutionist theory the ideas of magic as an inferior or primitive stage of an evolution of beliefs.”¹⁰¹ For anthropologists conducting research during this age of colonialism, the fact that science had come to

⁹⁵ Remke Kruk, “Harry Potter in the Gulf: Contemporary Islam and the Occult,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32.1 (2005): 64.

⁹⁶ Gregory Starrett, “Religious Commodities in Cairo,” *American Anthropologist* 97.1 (1995): 53-4.

⁹⁷ Kruk, “Harry Potter,” 48.

⁹⁸ Kruk, “Harry Potter,” 51.

⁹⁹ Styers, *Making Magic*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Styers, *Making Magic*, 4.

¹⁰¹ Constant Hamès, “Magic, Islam and Scientific Research,” *ISIM Newsletter* 3/99: 40.

supplant magic was a given, and they themselves were the authoritative sources of this new knowledge.¹⁰² Studies from this period, which still perdure in the footnotes of many contemporary texts, present a double devaluation of magic, as both peripheral and evolutionarily inferior.

This is not to say, however, that nothing at all can be salvaged or learned from these 19th and early 20th texts. These studies proved to be foundational for the study of magic in the Islamic world in that they have largely determined how and when we apply the word “magic” to objects like these talismanic shirts. The work of the early 20th century French scholar Edmond Doutté still makes frequent appearances in the footnotes of contemporary exhibition catalogues and works of scholarship.¹⁰³ And yet his methodology, sources, and scope are rarely (if ever) discussed in these studies. As a result, Doutté has become a recurrent, and often invisible, co-conspirator in the production of “new” work in the field. Doutté’s definition of magic, which is explored in detail below, is often overlooked, and instead his text is mined for details about various

¹⁰² Adam Becker, “Doctoring the Past in the Present: E. A. Wallis Budge, the Discourse on Magic and the Colonization of Iraq,” *History of Religions* 44.3 (2005): 180.

¹⁰³ Edmond Doutté is a frequently cited source in encyclopedia entries on topics having to do with magic in the Islamic world, including the entry for “Amulets, Fortune-telling and Magic” in Brill’s *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, as well as the entry for “Popular and Talismanic uses of the Qur’ān” in Brill’s *Encyclopedia of the Qur’ān*. Doutté’s *Magie et Religion* is used at length as a reference text to support chapters on magic in Michael Dol’s *Majnūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). In his review article about the state of research within the field of magic in the Islamic world, Edgar Walter Francis IV cites Doutté as a useful source, though he urges some caution at too frequent reliance on Doutté’s *Magie et Religion en Afrique du Nord*.

Doutté also makes appearances in the footnotes of two recent works cited elsewhere in this chapter: Musegh Asatrian’s 2003 article “Ibn Khaldūn on Magic and the Occult,” and Remke Kruk’s 2005 article “Harry Potter in the Gulf: Contemporary Islam and the Occult.”

magical practices. By locating a text like Doutté's literally on the margins of current scholarship, in footnotes and encyclopedia references, his work continues to separate the study of magical objects in the Islamic world from larger discussions about the relationship between religion and magic.

Magic: Evolution and Periphery

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, magic played a role in creating boundaries between practices observed in the anthropological field and the study of religion with a capital "R." Authors from this period, "bestrode the world like so many Aristotles, confidently categorizing all they beheld."¹⁰⁴ The urge to categorize, to compartmentalize and to create borders, is evident in the deployment of the term magic which became "a means of demarcating the boundaries of religion and as a rhetorical and strategic tool for articulating a vision of religion's ultimate provenance."¹⁰⁵ An early proponent of the evolutionary trajectory of the history of religion, E. B. Tylor, remarks in his classic work *Primitive Culture*¹⁰⁶ that this "ultimate provenance" was animism. This in turn fueled countless studies into the magical practices of so-called "primitives" in an effort to trace religion from its nascent stage.¹⁰⁷ Studying magic in the present became a way of understanding religion's pre-history, thus rendering men like Tylor more like time-

¹⁰⁴ Michael D. Bailey, "The Meanings of Magic," *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 1.1 (2006): 3.

¹⁰⁵ Styers, *Making Magic*, 72.

¹⁰⁶ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (London: John Murray, 1871) 2 vols.

¹⁰⁷ Styers, *Making Magic*, 75.

travelers than historians. Many of these studies took place during the age of colonial expansion, when the attitudes like Tylor's on the evolutionary nature of religion were almost entirely dominant.¹⁰⁸ For the study of Islam in particular, North Africa became a fecund territory for European scholars to conduct research into magical practices.

From the beginning of the study of magic, religion was always offered a seat at the table as if the relationship between the two concepts was natural and unquestioned. But a third interlocutor was soon offered a place within the magic/religion debate: science. The works of the nineteenth-century "intellectualist" scholars like James Frazer, and E.B. Tylor cast magic as a kind of proto-science.¹⁰⁹ James Frazer's masterpiece *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1890)¹¹⁰ presents magic as a mechanistic way to interact with nature, free from the occasional intervention of divine beings.¹¹¹ Frazer considers magic in its relation to science, and concludes that it is merely science's "bastard sister."¹¹² Even with the addition of science into the discussion on magic, magic still plays the role of proto-somethingness; in Frazer it simply becomes an aborted branch in the family tree of science.

The triumvirate of science/magic/religion is most famously known through

¹⁰⁸ Adam Becker, "Doctoring the Past in the Present: E. A. Wallis Budge, the Discourse on Magic and the Colonization of Iraq," *History of Religions* 44.3 (2005):181.

¹⁰⁹ Cunningham uses the term "intellectualist" to refer to Herbert Spencer, E.B. Tylor, and James Frazer because these three men saw that religion had its origins in man's attempt to explain events by attributing them to divine agency. For Spencer, Tylor and Frazer, primitive man is inherently rational, even if the resulting explanations for the causality of events appear crude and incorrect to modern man.

¹¹⁰ James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1890).

¹¹¹ Styers, *Making Magic*, 79.

¹¹² Cunningham, *Religion and Magic*, 19.

Bronislaw Malinowski's 1925 essay, "Magic, Science, and Religion,"¹¹³ and this grouping still looms large as an organizing principle for collected volumes, conferences, or courses.¹¹⁴ For Malinowski, much like Frazer, magic was associated with the material world as part of a practical means to an end.¹¹⁵ Here, magic is a strategy than can be deployed to meet the needs of an individual or a group.¹¹⁶ Viewing magic in this technical way, it is easy to see how magic becomes the first step up the ladder from primitive modes of achieving results in the natural world to more sophisticated scientific ones.

That magic can be strategic implies the presence of a form of rationality. But rationality has served as an important foil to notions of magic.¹¹⁷ Yet again, turning to Frazer's *Golden Bough* yields a persistent and problematic definition of rationality in regard to magic. In elaborating the terms of this rationality, Frazer was attempting to understand how magic might function as a strategy in its own right. Frazer takes up a

¹¹³ Bronislaw Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion," in *Science, Religion and Reality*, Arthur James ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

¹¹⁴ Stanley J. Tambiah traces the origins and impact of this holy triumvirate in the Morgan Lectures which were compiled into the work: *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Other notable examples include *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and Conflict*, Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs & Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)... Courses on magic, science, and religion have been recently taught at the University of California (Berkeley), the University of California (Los Angeles), Boston University, the University of Massachusetts (Boston) and many others. Recent symposia on this triumvirate have been organized at Indiana University's Medieval Studies Institute (March, 2014), and the University of London (February, 2013).

¹¹⁵ Graham Cunningham, *Religion and Magic: Approaches and Theories* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 28-9.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Styers notes that it is also in the 19th century that magic goes from being viewed as sinful to being viewed as a kind of aberrant mode of thought or "psychological impairment" which served as a marker of cultural inferiority (*Making Magic*, 27).

discussion of magic as a rational practice, but he equated rationality with a means/ends approach; it was merely a mechanism.¹¹⁸ It is this flattened, almost technical, understanding of rationality that may have imparted the most damage to the study of magic during this period.¹¹⁹ In keeping with Frazer's view of nature as ordered and uniform,¹²⁰ magical practices were simply a way to achieve specific outcomes from the natural world. Magic was thus a rational approach, but a narrowly defined rational approach which rendered rationality purely instrumental.¹²¹ Understood in this way, magic (while rational) is a rigid system that seems unlikely to allow for change over time, and thus a system which eventually will fossilize and decay as yet one more artifact of primitive approaches to the natural world.

Fully untangling the various threads by which these interlocutors are woven into the larger discussion of magic within the Islamic world may be beyond the bounds of this study, but identifying and discussing their origins is a crucial step towards better understanding the objects that we dub "magical" today.

Mauss's Magic: A Bridge Towards Foundational Texts for Magic in the Islamic World

¹¹⁸ Penner in *Religion, Science and Magic: in concert and conflict* Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs & Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 13.

¹¹⁹ Penner in Neusner et. al., 13. Frazer's 1891 expanded edition contains the full elaboration of his concept of "sympathetic magic." This is divided into *homeopathic* magic and *contagious* magic.

¹²⁰ Styers, *Making Magic*, 79.

¹²¹ Penner in Neusner et. al., 22.

These classic texts of the 19th and early 20th centuries do not deal with the study of Islam or magic in the Islamic world directly. Indeed the study of magic in the Islamic world is still an emerging field whose major theoretical and historical tomes have yet to be written.¹²² In order to move into a deeper examination of those works which do treat the subject of magic within Islam, we must first track their origins in their own intellectual ancestors. The work of Marcel Mauss is a classic example of one such ancestor which has come to inform those that follow, particularly in terms of the problematic relationship between magic and religion as it was articulated at the turn of the 20th century.

Mauss first took up the subject in earnest in a series of lectures titled “Magic and Its Relationship to Religion” delivered at the École Russe des Hautes Études in 1904.¹²³ Mauss was indeed concerned with better articulating the boundaries of the category of religion and religious practices and found in the concept of magic a testing ground for

¹²² Two dissertations in the last few years demonstrate the interests of emerging scholars in investigating magic and the occult as part of the larger project of the history of science and the development of Islamic intellectual thought. Both of these dissertations take their primary source materials from Iran. See: Alireza Mohammadi Doostdar, “Fantasies of Reason: Science, Superstition and the Supernatural in Iran” (Ph.D. Dissertation: Harvard University, 2012) and Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of ʿĀ'in al-Dīn Turka ʿIḥfāhānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran” (Ph.D. Dissertation: Yale University, 2012). While an English language narrative history of magic in Islam has yet to be written, collected volumes currently take the place of canonical reference works. For the early period, see: Emilie Savage-Smith ed., *Magic and Divination in Early Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variation, 2004). Other scholars have made steps to present studies about magic in Islam as part of a larger project on magic in the Middle Ages in Europe. Charles Burnett’s collection of articles published as *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages: Texts and Techniques in the Islamic and Christian Worlds* (Variation, 1996) is certainly a step in the right direction.

¹²³ Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss: A Biography*, translated by Jane Marie Todd (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2006), 133.

articulating some criteria for inclusion and exclusion. He observed that magic takes up a “‘unique,’ ‘uncertain’ place among religious phenomena, since it ‘resembles religion by its modes of action and notions.’”¹²⁴ But what Mauss really seems to have been testing was not the relationship between religion and magic, but rather the limits of his own sociological methodology. Magic provided Mauss with the chance to push the bounds of his sociological analysis further because magical practices happened outside of the public sphere, and thus begged the question, “in what way were these facts social?”¹²⁵ This is not to say that Mauss and his colleagues were not concerned with defining or studying magic itself or better observing and understanding magical practices. But Mauss’ approach underscores just how often magic serves as a proxy battleground for broader struggles with scholarship.

In his seminal text, *A General Theory of Magic*,¹²⁶ Mauss takes up some of Frazer’s ideas about the relationship between magic and religion, though Mauss was critical of Frazer’s highly simplified notion of magic and his “inadequate definition of religious phenomena.”¹²⁷ And yet in his own work on magic, Mauss still maintained the similar distinction between religion as the public pursuit of abstract aims and magic as the private means through which to attain immediate and practical results.¹²⁸ That they

¹²⁴ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 135.

¹²⁵ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 135.

¹²⁶ This work had its origins in the 1902-3 article “Outline of a General Theory of Magic” in the *Année Sociologique* which Mauss co-wrote with Henri Hubert. See Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 133. Original article: Henri Hubert, and Marcel Mauss, “Esquisse d’une Théorie Générale de la Magie,” *L’Année Sociologique* 7 (1902-1903) 1-146.

¹²⁷ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 136. Mauss wrote a review of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* in *Année Sociologique* 5 (1902).

¹²⁸ Bailey, “The Meaning of Magic,” 4.

are separate categories, or at least two distinct enterprises, seems for Mauss to be a given. In the introduction to the text, Mauss laments the indiscriminate blending of words like “religion and magic,” “prayer and incantation,” “sacrifice and offering,” “myth and legend,” and “god and spirit.”¹²⁹ In his earlier work with Hubert, Mauss had begun by attempting to differentiate between “the magical rite and the religious rite” which they recognized to bear keen similarities.¹³⁰ But in the subsequent *General Theory*, Mauss chose to side-step the “controversial” question of the relation between magic and religion in favor of examining the “natural classes of facts” which comprise magical practice.¹³¹ As a result, Mauss supported Frazer’s clandestine notion of magic, saying that magical rites take place in secret, outside of organized cults, and on the borders of that which is prohibited.¹³² Of course, Mauss’s primary concern and his primary field of study is practice or the performance of an act, rather than the discourse surrounding that act. Perhaps it is due to this feature that, over time, Mauss’s work itself has been credited with contributing to the demise of “magic” as a category within scholarly discourse.¹³³

In Mauss’s estimation, magic is too poorly defined and too insufficiently organized (even according to its own practitioners) to be considered an institution.¹³⁴ It is important to note that Mauss takes as his source materials customs from as far afield as Australia, Melanesia, North American Native groups including the Iroquois, Cherokee,

¹²⁹ Mauss, *General Theory*, 7.

¹³⁰ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 137.

¹³¹ Mauss, *General Theory*, 7-9.

¹³² Mauss, *General Theory*, 24.

¹³³ David Pocock, “Foreword” in Marcell Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic* (London: Routledge, 1972), 1.

¹³⁴ Mauss, *General Theory*, 10.

Huron, and the Algonquin/Ojibwe, Mexico, Malaysia, and the Indian “Brahmans,” as well as some Greek and Latin myths, and German, Celtic, and Finnish folklore. In his second section, “Definition of Magic,” Mauss provides more descriptors than definitions for the term, many of which reinforce the idea of a strict division between religion and magic. The emphasis on secrecy, and the “anti-social” nature of magic,¹³⁵ serves to push it further and further away from what Mauss understands as religion. Where magic is concrete, religion is abstract.¹³⁶ Where magic is centrally concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, religion is preoccupied with conceptualized metaphysical natures.¹³⁷

The force of Mauss’s discussion suggests that magic functions as a science¹³⁸ and that the magician possesses a technical and practical knowledge of the same nature as that of blacksmiths, doctors and shepherds.¹³⁹ In keeping with Frazer’s understanding of the role of rationality in magic, Mauss’s magic is similarly instrumental, and almost utilitarian. Here we see at work the notion of magic as proto-science, but also as a vocation complete with a specialized skill set and apparently rational parameters.

The relationship between magic and technical pursuits has been addressed more recently by Alfred Gell who changes the relationship from one of analogy to one of commentary: “Magic consists of a symbolic ‘commentary’ on technical strategies in production, reproduction, and psychological manipulation.”¹⁴⁰ By commentary, Gell means the kind of commentary generated by children at play who narrate each successive

¹³⁵ Mauss, *General Theory*, 89.

¹³⁶ Mauss, *General Theory*, 141.

¹³⁷ Mauss, *General Theory*, 143.

¹³⁸ Mauss, *General Theory*, 63.

¹³⁹ Mauss, *General Theory*, 29.

¹⁴⁰ Alfred Gell, “Technology and Magic” *Anthropology Today*, 4/2 (1998): 8.

step of their actions during the process of make-believe. This kind of commentary is the kind which contains the desired set of outcomes from a series of practices which may not be able to sustain such outcomes in reality. And yet, according to Gell, this commentary is still meaningful. He clarifies with, “The same is true of magic, which sets an ideal standard, not to be approached in reality, towards which practical technical action can nonetheless be oriented.”¹⁴¹

Gell’s work provides a convenient bridge between Mauss, Frazer, and Tylor and the small canon of authors from a proximate time period come to play a crucial role in defining magical practices within the Islamic world. Mauss, Frazer and Tylor have continued to be important foils for contemporary discussions of magic and its relation to religion, science and the natural world. Similarly authors who were the rough contemporaries of Mauss, Frazer, and Tylor, but who did work on the Islamic world, continue to serve as critical references for the contemporary discussion of magic within that field. As mentioned earlier, the work of one author in particular, Edmond Doutté, has persisted in his use for well over a hundred years. Thus a system of nearly closed references to these texts has emerged within the footnotes of dozens of modern and contemporary articles about magic in the Islamic world.¹⁴² As a result, when using these

¹⁴¹ Gell, “Technology,” 8.

¹⁴² Doutté is listed as a resource in the bibliography that concludes the introductory article in the collection of essays that is most frequently cited in studies of Islamic magic: *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, Emilie Savage-Smith, ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2004), xlv. Other recent works include: Alan Dundes, *The Evil Eye: A Casebook* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Albany: State University of Albany Press, 1994), Corinne Fortier, “Le corps comme mémoire : du giron maternel à la férule du maître coranique.” *Journal des africanistes*. 68.1-2 (1998): 197-224. Constant

kinds of sources to ascertain the function or creation of Islamic magical objects, new scholarship sometimes is hardly new at all. Moreover, the frequent use of these sources to place objects within their “lived contexts” has led to a misguided satisfaction which can only be corrected through turning our attention away from the bulk of these works and towards texts about magic from within the medieval Islamic world itself.

Edmond Doutté: an early 20th century French Historian of magic and religion

Edmond Doutté came to study Islamic magic through circumstances that were the result of a combination of his own ill health and his interests in sociology. His *Magie et religion en Afrique du Nord* (1908) is still one of the most frequently cited works on magic in the Islamic world to date. The original 1908 text became so difficult to obtain by the 1980s, when interest in the topic reemerged in France and elsewhere, that the work was reprinted in 1990. Doutté (d. 1926) was born in Châlons-sur-Marnes in 1867 but moved to Algeria in his twenties to seek relief for his tuberculosis symptoms.¹⁴³ By 1898 he had obtained a professorship and in 1899 he began cataloguing the Arabic manuscripts held in various mosques in Algiers.¹⁴⁴ Despite his continually bad health, he traveled extensively in Algeria and elsewhere in North Africa conducting sociological research,

Hamès's edited volume, *Coran et Talismans: textes et pratiques magiques en milieu musulman* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 2007) acknowledges that Doutté's work is one of the few monographs devoted to its topic and aims to re-invigorate studies like Doutté's within a contemporary set of academic paradigms.

¹⁴³ Alain Messaoudi, “Doutté, Edmond,” in Francois Pouillon, ed. *Dictionnaire des Orientalistes de Langue Française* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2008), 310.

¹⁴⁴ Messaoudi, “Doutté,” *ibid.*

often accompanied by his two “indigenous collaborators” sî ‘Allāl ‘Abdī and sî Būmediān ben Ziān.¹⁴⁵ He wrote several books on Islam in North Africa including *L’Islam Algérien en l’an 1900* (1900), and *Les Minarets et l’Appel à la Prière* (1900). When he first presented his *Magie et Religion en Afrique du Nord* (1908) the work was “greeted with certain reservations” by the *Année Sociologique*,¹⁴⁶ though it would go on to become immensely popular in the years that followed. In the preface, Doutté states that his general aim in the work is to apply the recent theories of the English anthropological and French sociological schools to his own observations of religious practices in North Africa.¹⁴⁷

Magie et Religion can be described as a simplified form of, or perhaps a caricature of Durkheim’s conception of the evolution of the sacro-religious applied to Muslim practices.¹⁴⁸ That is to say, Doutté is participating (along with a number of authors already encountered) in an evolutionary approach to the study of magic and religion. And yet Doutté himself seems to understand the potential limits of applying an evolving sociological theory to his observation of the varieties of Muslim religious

¹⁴⁵ Messaoudi, “Doutté,” 311.

¹⁴⁶ Messaoudi, “Doutté,” *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ “L’idée générale de cet enseignement était l’application aux phénomènes religieux observés dans l’Afrique du Nord des théories élaborées depuis un demi-siècle par les ethnographes et spécialement par l’école anthropologique anglaise et par l’école sociologique française.” Edmond Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l’Afrique du Nord*, (Paris: J. Maisonneuve et P. Geuthner, 1984), 1. Doutté was a follower of Durkheim, a fact that Constant Hamès points out in his review of the 1990 reprint of *Magie et Religion*. See Constant Hamès, “Magie et religion dans l’Afrique du Nord by Edmond Doutté,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 60.2 (1985): 249.

¹⁴⁸ “Il n’empêche qu’on a là, sous une forme simplifiée (presque caricaturale?) le fonds évolutionniste de la pensée de Durkheim à propos du sacré-religieux et son application (ou tentative) au domaine des pratiques musulmanes.” Hamès, “Magie et Religion,” 250.

practice. As he clearly states in his preface,

...perhaps you will deem that I have a little artificially placed these things in modern sociological categories, or even that many of the explanations proposed here are weak. I accept these criticisms, [and] I apologize for the undeniable usefulness of a provisional systemization.¹⁴⁹

It is clear from Doutté's own assessment of his work that he understands the potential pitfalls of his method as well as the potential re-writing that these theories may undergo in the ensuing years: "...no doubt many of the current theories will be modified in a short time."¹⁵⁰ That is, of course, precisely what has happened and yet there is still a reason to re-read *Magie et Religion* now.¹⁵¹

In keeping with the late 19th and early 20th century notion that magic is usually proto-something, we can find in Doutté evidence that seems to suggest that magic is proto-science. He recounts that medicine is the "daughter" of magic and pharmacy is the specialty of magic.¹⁵² Just as in Mauss, Doutté asserts that many professions also have a

¹⁴⁹ "...peut-être jugera-t-on que nous avons parfois un peu artificiellement placé ceux-ci dans les cadres de la sociologie moderne; ou encore que beaucoup des explications proposées sont en sommes fragiles. Nous accepterons ces reproches, en nous excusant sur l'utilité incontestable d'une systématisation provisoire..." Doutté, *Magie et Religion*, 1.

¹⁵⁰ "... beaucoup des théories actuelles devront être modifiées à bref délai..." Doutté, *Magie et Religion*, 1.

¹⁵¹ As Hamès concludes: "If times have changed in Europe, then they are changing again, and a return to the study of other religious practices and of other religions under the aegis of the social sciences is emerging." "Si les temps ont changé en Europe, ils changent à nouveau et le retour à l'étude d'autres pratiques religieuses et d'autres religions, sous l'égide des science de la société, se fait jour." Hamès, "Magie et Religion," 250.

¹⁵² *Magie et Religion*, 36-7. It is interesting that in both Frazer and Doutté magic is seen as female, either as a "bastard sister" (Frazer) or "daughter" (Doutté) as if to emphasize the fact that that magic cannot be the legitimate primogenitor for any modern scientific pursuits.

magical character: blacksmiths, undertakers, executioners, and barbers.¹⁵³ According to Doutté, a barber in North Africa sounds much like the titular character in Rossini's opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia, ossia L'inutile Precauzione*, complete with a quick-tongue and endless schemes. But much in the same vein as Rossini's barber, these barbers also perform small surgeries and set bones.¹⁵⁴ This anecdotal evidence points towards a definition of magic as a precursor to science, though Doutté gives a more detailed definition in subsequent chapters.

In attempting to formulate a definition for magic, as he understands it to operate in North Africa, Doutté calls on both Frazer and Mauss. Doutté firmly rejects Frazer's notion that magic is proto-religion, and also dismisses Frazer's idea that the law of sympathy, "which appears to dominate magic [as is] the conclusion of the English anthropological school" is the driving force behind magic.¹⁵⁵ In his estimation, it is emotion and desire that define the life of the "primitive" and thus the primitive's worldview. Doutté even launches a small attack against the virtues of rationality when he asserts that there is a "logic of emotions" that may have rational conflicts but no inherent emotional contradictions.¹⁵⁶ This leads him to a set of definitions for magic gleaned from Mauss and Hubert:

- Magic is the domain of desire.

¹⁵³ *Magie et Religion*, 38.

¹⁵⁴ Doutté attributes the magical character associated with barbers in North Africa to their use of iron tools and a stone-age era taboo against the use of iron. *Magie et Religion*, 41.

¹⁵⁵ *Magie et Religion*, 308-309. Doutté rejects Frazer with this remark: "Qu'y a-t-il de plus invraisemblable, par exemple, que cette thèse de Frazer d'après laquelle l'homme n'aurait édifié la religion qu'après avoir reconnu l'impuissance de la magie?" (309).

¹⁵⁶ *Magie et Religion*, 311-2.

- Magic is a system of inducement *a priori* operating under the pressure of need by groups of individuals.
- Magic is thus, before anything else, a technique; in many languages the word which designates it comes from the significant root, “to do, to act.”¹⁵⁷

Doutté’s assertion that magic is a technique is a critical step towards moving magic out of the realm of proto-somethingness, and into different domain of study all together. While Frazer, and Mauss hint at the technical nature of magic, Doutté is explicit in naming magic as a technique in its own right. That technique, for Doutté, is at the heart of all human agency, and can be evaluated independently of religion or science.

Doutté’s work provides many surprising moments, and yet this study has become a work outside of time, an enterprise entirely divorced from the context of its creation and, more frustratingly, from the provisional parameters set out by the author himself in his preface. As is clear from his introductory remarks, Doutté well understood that the theories he was employing would change over time and saw their application as a useful structure which served the purpose of creating a framework for his study. A significant quantity of the information in Doutté’s text is gleaned from personal encounters, often with Berber and Tuareg peoples, and his own musings about how what he experienced related to contemporary anthropological and sociological theories. The plates of illustrations throughout the text, primarily of textual amulets and magic squares are often reproductions of amulets that the author himself collected while in North Africa, making

¹⁵⁷ “La magie est le domaine du désir... La magie est un système d’induction *a priori* opérées sous la pression du besoin par des groupes d’individus... La magie est donc avant tout une technique; dans beaucoup de langues le mot qui la désigne vient de la racine “faire, agir”” *Magie et Religion*, 312.

them most likely 19th or 20th century.¹⁵⁸ In reality, *Magie et Religion* is a kind of hybrid text, somewhere in between a textual study, an ethnography, and sociology text.

In the intervening years between Doutté and the present, magic in a contemporary Islamic context in Africa continues to be a popular subject, and talismanic shirts are still a topic of scholarly interest. Contemporary talismanic shirts (sometimes referred to as “charm gowns”) are particularly prevalent among the Hausa of Western Africa. Recent studies of these objects are based almost entirely on ethnographies, where the idea of a particular Islamic notion of magic continues to be invoked.¹⁵⁹ In his 1988 dissertation, *The Lore of the Traditional Malam*, Saleh El Mohammad Hassan discusses the phenomenon of making the *allo* or Qur’ānic board among the Hausa. This practice is linked to the creation of talismanic shirts in the emphasis put on the material efficacy of the writing of Arabic script in ink which can either be diluted in water and consumed as a medicine or applied to amulets. Hassan notes that a common thread running through both early studies on magic in North Africa and contemporary studies of these phenomena is “the appeal of Islam for outsiders [as] ‘magico-religious.’”¹⁶⁰ These contemporary studies seem to confirm Doutté’s assertion of magic as a kind of technique, and thus as a pursuit

¹⁵⁸ The exception to this, of course, are those plates from the text of the *Shams al-Ma‘ārif* or al-Tilimsānī’s *Shumūs al-Anwār* that are included. These are, however, the only two medieval texts which appear to be consulted with any frequency.

¹⁵⁹ Laurence Douny, “Silk-Embroidered Garments as Transformative Processes: Layering, Describing, and Displaying Hausa Material Identities,” *Journal of Material Culture* 16 (2011): 401-415. Douny writes, “The efficacy of the charm gown – and by extension of amulets – is achieved through implicit practices of power that materialize in the great number of geometrical motifs and inscriptions that are magically loaded...” (411).

¹⁶⁰ Saleh El Mohammad Hassan, “Lore of the Traditional Malam: The ‘Material Culture of Literacy’ among the Hausa,” (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 1988), 21.

potentially within the bounds of religion as opposed to outside of it.

Magic as Religious Technique: al-Būnī's Shams al-Ma'ārif

The newfound scholarly interest in magic and matters of the “occult” has thankfully generated a turn to Arabic texts from the Islamic world that can shed more light on what magic might have meant and mean within that context. By looking at one of the most well-known authors of this type, it becomes clear that the boundary between magic and religion that seems so natural within 19th and early 20th century European accounts of Islam is precisely the useful fiction that Doutté himself hoped would soon be rewritten. No clear boundary between “religion” and “magic” exists in the *Shams al-Ma'ārif wa-La'ā'if al-'Awārif* of Ahmad al-Būnī (d. c. 1225).¹⁶¹ But, as is the case with texts that achieve a certain level of popularity, manuscript research (such as research undertaken by Noah Gardiner) provides some background on al-Būnī and his oeuvre. In his recent work on the topic, Gardiner utilizes the paratexts which accompany the dozens of manuscripts of al-Būnī's work to piece together his story. In doing so, Gardiner has

¹⁶¹ In his dissertation on al-Būnī, Edgar Walter Francis IV attempts to piece together a biography from details gleaned from Būnī's own texts and the practically non-existent records in biographical dictionaries. Francis attempts to work through the *silsilas* found in some manuscripts of Būnī's most famous text in an effort to reconstruct his teachers but ultimately deems this source of biographical information to be unreliable. See *Islamic Symbols and Sufi Rituals for Protection and Healing: Religion and Magic in the Writings of Ahmad ibn Ali al-Buni (d.622/1225)* (Ph.D. Dissertation: UCLA, 2005), 101-3. In his subsequent work, Noah Gardiner has worked with the *silsilas* in a great number of Būnī manuscripts and has been able to fill out a tentative map of Būnī's intellectual heritage. His findings were presented at MESA in 2011 in “New Information on the Life, Education, and Major Works of Ahmad al-Buni” (Session P2785: Sufism and the Occult Sciences in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods), Washington, DC, 12/02/11.

revealed that al-Būnī, and his body of work, are in no way marginal to the history of Islamic intellectual thought of the 13th century and beyond.

Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Yūsuf al-Qurashī al-Būnī was an important Sufi *shaykh* in Cairo during the 1220’s as evidenced by *ijāzāt al-samā’* (the audition certificates) present in a number of his manuscripts.¹⁶² These *ijāzāt al-samā’* are records or certifications that an individual has studied (or listened to the teaching of) this particular instructor’s text. That al-Būnī’s works were auditioned on multiple occasions, during his lifetime and in his presence indicates both the status of the author and the importance of his work in its own time. Furthermore, this organized and public study of al-Būnī’s works flies in the face of Mauss’s conception of magical knowledge being acquired in secret.¹⁶³ These were texts which were studied in the same manner as texts on theology or law and whose value must have been based not only on their content but on the powerful figure of their author. This point is significant, and as Gardiner points out, though the content of al-Būnī’s texts today seems unusual, these texts were transmitted through the same channels as conventional works and were studied in the same manner.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² In addition to the full name given here, al-Būnī is also frequently given the following epithets: Tāj al-Dīn, Shihāb al-Dīn, Muḥyī al-Dīn, or Quḥb al-‘ārifīn. Noah Gardiner. “Forbidden Knowledge? Notes on the Production, Transmission and Reception of the Major Works of Aḥmad al-Būnī,” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 12 (2012), 86.

¹⁶³ This detail also provides us with important information about the way magical knowledge was transmitted in the medieval Islamic milieu in general. This is an area of Islamic intellectual history which Constant Hamès has lamented that we know almost nothing about. Hamès, “Magic, Islam and Scientific Research,” 40.

¹⁶⁴ Gardiner, “Forbidden Knowledge,” 95.

Much work still remains to be done on the so-called *Corpus Bunianum*.¹⁶⁵

Gardiner has identified five texts which he believes to constitute the authentic production of the historical al-Būnī.¹⁶⁶ Of these five, two deal with the making of talismans and the science of letters: The *Shams al-ma'ārif wa-la'ā'if al-'awārif* and *La'ā'if al-ishārāt fī al-'urūf al-'ulwiyyāt*.¹⁶⁷ These two texts are also the most widely copied and survive in the greatest number of manuscripts, and they are often confused for each other given the similarity of their subject matter.¹⁶⁸ Both of these texts include detailed charts for talismans in the form of magic squares—*wafq* (pl. *awfāq*). But along with examples of magical figures and schematics is the elaboration of a complex conception of the cosmos and all of creation in which the line between what can be called “religion” and what can be called “magic” is blurry, if it even exists at all.

¹⁶⁵ The term *Corpus Būnianum*, as coined by Jan Just Witkam, refers to those works which have been associated with al-Būnī, including the many differing recensions of his most famous work, the *Shams al-ma'ārif*. Given the popularity of this one work, it is possible that at least some of the texts which today bear al-Būnī's name were not actually produced by him, but rather attributed to him at a later date. The use of this term helps to emphasize how al-Būnī's texts have helped to contribute to an entire genre. See: Jan Just Witkam, “Gazing at the Sun: Remarks on the Egyptian Magician al-Būnī and His Work” in *O ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literature in Honor of Remke Kruk* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 183-200.

¹⁶⁶ Much has been made about the three so-called “versions” of Būnī's most famous text. While the *Shams al-Ma'ārif al-Kubra wa La'ā'if al-Awārif* (frequently referred to as “the long recension”) is by far the most commonly known, and consulted, of al-Būnī's works, Gardiner makes the compelling case that this work is actually pastiche. While it contains some of the original text from the *Shams*, nearly all of the printed editions of this work contain later additions which could not have been the work of the author. This has largely to do with the late date of the manuscripts which are used for these printings. In some printed editions, the text even makes reference to *Amrīka*, “America,” which reasonably excludes these sections as being the work of al-Būnī himself.

¹⁶⁷ From here forward, these texts will be referred to in a short form as the *Shams al-ma'ārif* and the *La'ā'if al-Ishārāt*.

¹⁶⁸ Gardiner “Forbidden Knowledge,” 95. It is highly likely that many more excerpts or sections from these two texts are reproduced as part of *majmū'āt* and circulated even more widely.

While the *Shams al-ma'ārif* is frequently referred to as a grimoire,¹⁶⁹ the text is far more complicated than this term suggests. In his book *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, Owen Davies briefly describes al-Būnī's *Shams al-Ma'ārif* as essentially a grimoire, calling it "a book of charms and magic number squares."¹⁷⁰ In addition to chapters on the creation and use of magic squares and cryptograms, which one might expect to find in such a book, there are sections describing the divine throne, the elements and spheres, and angels and jinn. But there are also extended discussions about Sufi devotional practices.¹⁷¹

In many ways, it is in discussions of letter magic that the relationship between magic and religion is most clearly articulated within al-Būnī's writings.¹⁷² In the *Shams al-Ma'ārif*, al-Būnī remarks that those who seek to use letter magic have one of two aims: profane/mundane (*dunyawī*) or religious/next-worldly (*ukhrawī*).¹⁷³ From the outset for

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, the overview of magic in the Islamic world found in Edgar W. Francis's "Magic and Divination in the Medieval Islamic World," *History Compass* 9/8 (2011): 622-633.

¹⁷⁰ Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27. The traditional definition for a grimoire is a magic manual, or a textbook for the application of magical recipes.

¹⁷¹ Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 104.

¹⁷² This phenomenon, in scholarship on al-Būnī and magic in the Islamic world more generally, is variously referred to as *isopsephia* (from the Greek *isos* and *psephos* meaning "equal pebbles"), *gematria* (from the Hebrew), *'ilm al-ḥurūf* (Arabic science of letters) or the Persian equivalent *elm-e ḥuruf*. The use of the term *gematria* is the least preferable as it most accurately refers to a Hebrew tradition with its own highly developed system of correspondences. *Isopsephia* is the term employed by Pierre Lory in his discussion of al-Būnī and his work and generally refers to the practice of adding up the numerical values of the letters which make up a word or phrase. The generic terms "letter magic" or "the science of letters" are both acceptable translations of the Arabic or Persian, which is indeed what appears in these magical texts themselves. This topic is taken up in detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁷³ Pierre Lory, "La magie des lettres dans le *Shams al-Ma'ārif* d'al-Bunī," *BEO* 39/40,

al-Būnī, magic and religion cannot exist in a center/periphery relationship. One can use magic (in this case letter magic) in the service of devout religious aims and similarly one can use magic to accomplish profane ends. For al-Būnī, magic's relationship to religion is not oppositional; the two concepts cannot be opposed because they are of different orders of classification. Letter magic here is a technique, or an act that can be performed towards a variety of ends. Religion is a sphere within which the technique of letter magic may or may not be performed. In one sense, this scheme echoes Malinowski's distinction between magic as a means to an ends, and religion as the sphere within which those ends may be achieved. But for al-Būnī, one may even go so far as to say that the two terms "magic" and "religion" cannot truly be compared or discussed in terms of each other; the terms on either side of the equation are simply of different natures.

Within the corpus of al-Būnī's texts no obvious distinction appears between those texts intended for a Sufi or "religious" audience, or those intended for occultists or a "magical audience."¹⁷⁴ The *Shams* itself can be read as a passionate defense of the religious import of magical practices and the immense spiritual benefit derived from the focused and devout employment of letter magic. As Pierre Lory notes, in the *Shams*, letter magic is inserted into a world-view and an understanding of Islam that is entirely coherent for al-Būnī.¹⁷⁵ In short, utilizing letter magic is a way to understand the "parole" of the universe.¹⁷⁶ But a cursory understanding of the parlance of the universe cannot lead

(1989): 99. Lory translates these two terms as profane and religious, whereas it might be more conventional to understand them as mundane and celestial.

¹⁷⁴ Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 109.

¹⁷⁵ Lory, "La Magie des Lettres," 99.

¹⁷⁶ For a detailed investigation of al-Būnī's views on letter magic in relationship to the

one to any ultimate understanding without the intervention of some religious enlightenment as well. And so al-Būnī enjoins his readers to practice, in addition to the letter magic contained in his talismans, supererogatory fasts and prayers in order to truly perceive the “mysteries and wonders of God’s creation.”¹⁷⁷ Al-Būnī further reinforces the interrelation between the practice of letter magic and devout religious undertakings through this entreaty to his readers. Again, magic (here, letter magic) is a technique which, though arguably effective in its own right, can be amplified through its combination with religious practices in order to bring the practitioner to his desired outcome.

For al-Būnī, the knowledge required to participate in this system is not the type of scientific knowledge found in books. Rather it is one which “comes from a intimate relationship between a servant and his God.”¹⁷⁸ In such a system, divorcing magic from religion is utterly non-sensical. Lory, in his analysis of this text goes so far as to dub al-Būnī a “sufi-magician.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, the emphasis on the Sufi themes in al-Būnī’s text is important for understanding the inextricably linked nature of magic and religion within the text. The presence of a large group of readers, copyists, auditors, and patrons of al-Būnī’s works who self identified as a Sufi in the paratexts that accompany so many of the

cosmos, see Chapter 3.

¹⁷⁷ Gardiner, “Forbidden Knowledge,” 105.

¹⁷⁸ Lory, “La Magie des Lettres,” 106.

¹⁷⁹ Lory, “La Magie des Lettres,” 108. The addition of the title Sufi here is intended to stress the difference in the relationship between a Sufi and God and a magician and jinn or angels. Learning the names of God and manipulating them in pursuit of magical aims is a fundamentally different operation than that of a magician imploring the names of jinn and angels. For the “Sufi-magician” there is a spiritual reward in the undertaking of a magical act that is not present in that of the magician utilizing the power of jinn or angels.

manuscripts supports the notion that al-Būnī's audience was also largely made up of Sufis.¹⁸⁰ The composition of al-Būnī's likely audience serves to set his own proscriptions towards fasts and prayers within a context that further de-emphasizes any perceived disjuncture between magic and religion. He is merely telling his audience something that they already know: the relationship between a devout practitioner and God is the *sine qua non* around which all other practice revolves.

One of the primary magical techniques found within al-Būnī's *oeuvre* is the utilization of God's divine names. The invocation of the divine names and the eventual recitation of the supreme name can only be efficacious in so far as the participant is in a suitable state of spiritual focus. The external practice of magical acts can only be brought about through effective internal preparations. Thus Lory says:

“The knowledge of the supreme name confers a prodigious power on the saint-magician, but he cannot obtain it through divine grace nor through human apprenticeship. Ultimately, this thaumaturgic power does not belong to him; it comes directly from the power of the Divinity over his creatures.”¹⁸¹

That true power comes directly from God does not, as it might seem, countermand the instructions and designs of the man-made plans that fill al-Būnī's text. Rather, it seems that man may learn how to construct talismans and magic squares, but only God may imbue those objects with the power to affect the desired outcome within the world. Thus

¹⁸⁰ Gardiner mentions that one third of all of the names found in and around Būnī's manuscripts either are followed by *al-Faqīr* or, more rarely, an association with a specific order. Gardiner (2012), 112-113.

¹⁸¹ *La connaissance du Nom Suprême confère un pouvoir prodigieux au saint-magicien; mais il ne peut l'obtenir que par grâce divine, et non par un apprentissage humain. En définitive, ce pouvoir thaumaturgique ne lui appartient pas; il dérive directement du pouvoir de la Divinité sur ses créatures.* Lory, “La Magie des Lettres,” 109.

the knowledge contained in al-Būnī's texts is foundational for the practice of magic, but it is only God's will that determines whether one's aims will be achieved.

As the manuscript evidence has demonstrated, through the existence of lengthy *ijāzāt*, there seems to have been no sense during the 13th century that al-Būnī's texts were necessarily "illicit" or that what he produced was meant to be read in secret. In contrast, the existence of at least one luxury manuscript with *awfāq* executed in gold and blue ink points to a high level of patronage and scholastic investment.¹⁸² So why is it that al-Būnī has been so often relegated to the margins of the history of Islamic intellectual thought and his most famous work branded as a grimoire? There are perhaps two answers to this question, one from the medieval period and one from the modern.

In the two hundred or so years that followed the publication of al-Būnī's seminal text, his work was disparaged in what would become one of the most popular texts to assign in contemporary courses about the Islamic world: Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima*. The *Muqaddima* is the introduction to the magnum opus the *Kitab al-'Ibar* (The Universal History) of Ibn Khaldun, (d. 1406), an Andalusian historian, sociologist, and philosopher. For Ibn Khaldūn, magic was defined as: "the capacity of human beings to influence the world of elements by supernatural means."¹⁸³ This seemingly innocuous definition masks Ibn Khaldūn's true feelings of distaste for the larger category of "occultism" which he saw as a threat to the well-being of the state.¹⁸⁴ In order to get a better sense of his views on magic, Musegh Asatrian examines the work of the Ash'arite theologian Abū Bakr

¹⁸² Süleymaniye MS Nuruosmaniye 2822. In: Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 114.

¹⁸³ in Musegh Asatrian, "Ibn Khaldūn on Magic and the Occult," *Iran and the Caucasus* 7.1/2 (2003): 94.

¹⁸⁴ Asatrian, "Ibn Khaldūn," 76.

Muḥammad b. al-ḥayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) whose work presumably influenced the Ashʿarite Ibn Khaldūn.¹⁸⁵ For al-Bāqillānī, as in Ibn Khaldūn, magic is real but the action that results from magical practice is the work of God and not of the magical practitioner.¹⁸⁶ Thus magic is a kind of “accident” in the Ashʿarite sense of an accident as an act that occurs according to God’s pleasure.¹⁸⁷

Ibn Khaldūn’s discussion of magic in the *Muqaddimah* distinguishes between four major categories of magical practice: sorcery, the making of talismans, prestidigitation, and letter-magic. In contrast to the somewhat nuanced discussion of letter magic in this section, sorcery, talismans and prestidigitation are all soundly rejected as forbidden: “...religious law puts sorcery, talismans, and prestidigitation into one and the same class, because they may cause harm. It brands them as forbidden and illegal.”¹⁸⁸ And yet talismans are nonetheless effective, says Ibn Khaldūn, because of their ability to tie together high natures (such as the stars) and low natures (such as the body).¹⁸⁹ It is in his discussion of talismans and number magic that Ibn Khaldūn makes reference to the work of al-Būnī, and also to a legendary account of a Persian banner emblazoned with a magic square.¹⁹⁰

Each of these sub-types of magic are discussed in terms of their potential efficacy,

¹⁸⁵ Asatrian, “Ibn Khaldūn,” 73.

¹⁸⁶ Asatrian, “Ibn Khaldūn,” 76.

¹⁸⁷ Asatrian, “Ibn Khaldūn,” 103.

¹⁸⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History*, trans. Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 3:170.

¹⁸⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, 3:166 and 3:174.

¹⁹⁰ This banner, the *Darafsh-i Kāviyān* is mentioned in the *Shahnameh* as a gilt-embroidered banner carried into battle by Kaveh the Blacksmith. It was said to bear a magic square with more than 100 fields. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal 3:168.

which for the most part is accepted as true. The relationship between these various practices and religious law is where Ibn Khaldūn begins to distinguish between practices that, however potentially effective, are nonetheless prohibited. Letter-magic operates according to the above scheme of the Ash‘arite accident, as Ibn Khaldūn relates: “...the activity of people who work with words, on the other hand, is the effect of the divine light and the support of the Lord, which they obtain through exertion and the removal [of the veil].”¹⁹¹ Letter magic is clearly distinguished from the making of talismans in Ibn Khaldūn on the basis of their relative sources of power.¹⁹² Letter magic is successful only through divine grace¹⁹³ whereas talismans draw on the properties of stars, lower natures, and the unique characteristics of specific human souls.¹⁹⁴ And yet Ibn Khaldūn concludes his lengthy discussion of letter magic with a dismissal of the practice and the authors who espouse it by saying that letter magic is, essentially, just another kind of sorcery.¹⁹⁵

The possibility that al-Būnī and other “magical” authors were disparaged by Ibn Khaldūn for reasons other than the contents of their texts seems valid. Gardiner posits this, remarking:

I would put forward the proposition that, at least with respect to his attack in *al-Muqaddima* on al-Būnī and Ibn ‘Arabī as promulgators of the science of letters, Ibn Khaldūn may have been responding to the more tangible and immediate threat of millenarian and occult scientific ideas circulating at

¹⁹¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal 3:175.

¹⁹² The fact that letter magic plays a critical role in the creation of actual talismans, particularly through the creation of magic squares, seems not to have affected Ibn Khaldūn’s analysis.

¹⁹³ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal 3:176

¹⁹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal 3: 156-166.

¹⁹⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal 3: 182.

the Cairene court and in elite circles orbiting it.¹⁹⁶

The threat assumed to come from magical or occult works is likely the same type of threat supposed to exist in works on astrology. Astrological works significantly predate the magical texts of al-Būnī's type, but work along similar modes of correspondence between planets or spheres and presuppose man's ability to comprehend and utilize these powers. By the time of Ibn Khaldūn's *al-Muqaddima*, astrology was increasingly viewed as an "impious" enterprise, due to the rise in popularity of particular Shī'ī groups in the period immediately prior to his time.¹⁹⁷

That Ibn Khaldūn may have been responding to a perceived contemporary political issue rather than the precise content of al-Būnī's works, further strengthens the position that al-Būnī's work enjoyed within Mamluk circles. His ideas could only have been understood as potentially threatening if his works were in common circulation within a relatively high social stratum. Thus, in disparaging al-Būnī's texts on the grounds that they reflected some well-known and dangerous undercurrents in popular religious thought, Ibn Khaldūn actually serves to put al-Būnī back into his appropriate courtly context.

This placement of al-Būnī's work within elite circles, even in an effort to disparage it, is contrasted with the modern position of al-Būnī's work, which is known but only studied along the margins of Islamic intellectual history. In many ways, this phenomenon recapitulates Mauss's association between magic and secrecy which, as

¹⁹⁶ Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 120.

¹⁹⁷ George Saliba. "The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society" *Bulletin D'Études Orientales* XLIV (1992): 51.

noted above, does not accurately reflect the historical circumstances under which al-Būnī's works were actually produced or consumed. A significant contributing factor to this position must certainly be the relative inaccessibility of his texts, which have not yet been compiled into critical editions. The modern printed versions of his works are based on individual manuscripts and are published cheaply for a mass audience.

The study of magical texts, and in particular the creation of talismans and the use of the science of letters has, until only recently, been viewed as tangential to the study of science in the Islamic world, and especially marginal in the study of religious practice during the medieval period. In defense of his own project, and very much in keeping with Randall Styer's conception of the study of magic, Gardiner concludes his study by saying: "the scholarly misapprehension of al-Būnī has also been the result of a major failure of textual scholarship conditioned by a modern academic predisposition to downplay the historical importance of the occult sciences."¹⁹⁸

A New Road Forward: From Magical to Vernacular

While the popularity of modern anti-sorcery books, like the one described above, points to an increased fear of magic as a "heretical" practice, the popularity of al-Būnī's text from the 13th century on attests to an earlier view of magic that was very different. When taken at face value, al-Būnī's own concept of magic can hardly be described as

¹⁹⁸ Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 129. While Gardiner's criticism is well-taken, a fresh interest in the serious study of the occult in Islam seems to be underway.

heretical. Magic in his *oeuvre* is part of the pious practice of Islam and the success or failure of any magical endeavor is entirely in God's hands. Ibn Khaldūn's dismissal of al-Būnī and his kind of magical practice is a perfect example of the kind of negotiation between orthodoxy and heterodoxy as outlined by Robert Langer and Udo Simon. Contrary to its assumed status, the idea of orthodoxy within Islamic societies is highly heterodox itself. As Langer and Simon note, orthodoxy can be constructed out of various moving parts including *sunna* or the *ijmā'* of a select group of jurists.¹⁹⁹ Thus just as magic can be used to better define a shifty object like religion or science, magic is a foil to help refine what orthodoxy means within Islam at a particular place in time. This is precisely what is at stake in the case of Ibn Khaldūn's criticisms.

What might the alternative be then, in removing magic as a useful category within which to examine a set of objects or practices? One possible path is that of *vernacular religion* as outlined by Leonard Norman Primiano.²⁰⁰ Primiano borrows the term "vernacular" not directly from linguistics, but from architecture, and stresses the role of personal interpretation within lived religious experience. His definition, at length, emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinarity:

Vernacular religion is, by definition, religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it. Since religion inherently involves interpretation, it is impossible for the religion of an individual not to be vernacular. Vernacular religious theory involves an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the religious lives of individuals with special attention to the process of religious belief, the verbal,

¹⁹⁹ Robert Langer & Udo Simon, "The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy. Dealing with Divergence in Muslim Discourses and Islamic Studies," *Die Welt des Islams* 48 (2008): 274-5.

²⁰⁰ See Leonard Norman Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife," *Western Folklore* 54.1 (1995): 37-56.

behavioral, and material expressions of religious belief, and the ultimate object of religious belief.²⁰¹

According to Primiano in this definition, it is the way in which each individual utilizes a set of practices or material objects towards his or her own expression of faith in a “ultimate object of religious belief” that primarily defines vernacular religion. Al-Būnī’s use of letter magic as a kind of technique meant to better understand the complex language of God’s creation is thus better understood as *vernacular* rather than *magical*. Using the term *magical* tells us less about al-Būnī’s cosmic view and more about our own theories about the relationship between magic and religion.

Similarly, talismanic shirts from the Islamic world ought to be considered as expressions of vernacular religion rather than magical objects. Moving away from the use of the term *magic* helps remove their analysis from discussions of what is or is not orthodox religious practice and instead toward a deeper understanding of their participation in the epistemologies, routines, and sensational regimes that constitute human interaction with material culture. Additionally, this move allows us to distance ourselves from the notion that these objects are part of some secret, private enterprise according to a Malinowskian (et al.) scheme. Calling talismanic shirts magical, or displaying them as part of a group of magical objects serves to separate them even further from their context both within the realm of arts of the book and the realm of textiles. Much in the same way that works like that of al-Būnī, which were of great intellectual significance during their time, have been swept to the margins of contemporary historical

²⁰¹ Primiano, “Vernacular Religion,” 44.

studies, such objects continue to be held apart from the worlds of textile and book arts of which they so clearly were an integral part.

CHAPTER 3: ‘Adha and Apotropaia

“Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak
From the evil of what He has created,
From the evil of a darkness when it envelops,
From the evil of the women who blow on knots,
From the evil of an envious man when he is envious.”
Q 113 (Sūrat al-Falaq)²⁰²

While the corpus of talismanic shirts presented here contains within it many variations, decorative schemes and components, these shirts all feature (in some manner) an element of text in Arabic. Most of the shirts also feature Arabic numerals, or individual Arabic letters. It might be said then, that the primary defining characteristic whereby we designate these objects as “talismanic” is directly tied to the presence of Arabic letters and numbers on them. The textual and talismanic properties of these objects are closely linked and play a key role in their function, but understanding that relationship requires an investigation into these two features separately. To put it directly, the defining question here is: what is the relationship between text and talisman as it pertains to these objects, and when might we assert that a text has become talismanic? In order to begin this answer, we must first ascertain what a talisman is and disambiguate its usage from other terms both in English and in Arabic. The second part of this investigation centers on the content of the textual excerpts featured on some shirts, as well as the use of letters and numbers to create magic squares.

²⁰² *The Qur’an*, translated into English by Alan Jones (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 597.

Talismans and Amulets: A Note on Terminology

The English words “talisman” and “amulet” are often used interchangeably today with both terms referring to the variety of magical objects which can bring protection or good fortune to their possessor. The etymology of each word may account for the differences in meaning that have been ascribed to each term over time. The English word amulet comes from the Middle French *amulette* which in turn comes from the Latin *amulētum*, to which Pliny ascribes three definitions: “an object which preserves a man from some trouble, a medical or prophylactic treatment, a substance used in medicine.”²⁰³ In Arabic, the two terms most frequently translated as amulet are *ʿirz* (pl. *aʿrāz*) and *tamīma* (pl. *tamāʾim*), though *ʿamāʾil* is sometimes used as well. All of these terms seem to have the distinction of referring to that which is worn close to the body, or suspended on a cord around the neck.²⁰⁴ *ʿamāʾil*, from the verb *ʿamala* (to carry) echoes this sense of something carried about on one’s person. The word *ʿujub*, coming from *ʿajaba*, brings with it the notion of covering, as in a protective covering or a screen from some manner of harm.²⁰⁵

While the word amulet has a Latin etymology, *talisman* comes into English from the Arabic *ʿilasm* (pl: *ʿalāsim* or *ʿilasmāt*) which consequentially is derived from the

²⁰³ Cited after E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Magic: the Evil Eye in Western Asia, Egypt, Nubia, and Egypt*, (London: Kegan Paul, 2000), 12.

²⁰⁴ Toufic Fahd, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd Edition) s.v. “Tamīma.”

²⁰⁵ For additional terms and usages, see Tewfik Canann, “The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans,” in *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, ed. Emilie Savage-Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2004) 125-177.

Greek *telesma*, from a stem which means “to endow a thing with potency.”²⁰⁶ The word *ṭilasm* appears with some frequency both in Persian and Arabic texts and can indicate a wide range of objects which might include statues, rings, scrolls, tablets or garments.²⁰⁷ The most common Arabic word for talisman is *ta‘wīdh* (Persian: *ta‘wiṭ*), which comes from the verb *‘ādha*, meaning “to seek refuge.” The entry given for *ta‘wīdh* in Lane’s Arabic-English lexicon reads:

A kind of amulet, phylactery, or charm, bearing an inscription, which is hung upon a man (or woman or child or horse etc.) to charm the wearer against the evil eye and against fright and diabolical possession, and which is forbidden to be hung upon the person, {source: Lisan al-Arab} unless inscribed with something from the Kuran or with the names of God, for in this case there is no harm in it...²⁰⁸

Lane’s basic defining characteristics for *ta‘wīdh* thus include the inscription of (most frequently Qur’ānic) text, the use for the prevention of possession or harm, and protection against the evil eye. These general components do fit the majority of objects from the Islamic world that might be categorized as talismans, though there are a few exceptions. In South Asia during the 13th and 14th centuries, for example, a *ta‘wīdh* could be the inscription of Qur’ānic verses on a person’s skin, provided that the verses were inscribed by a *shaykh*.²⁰⁹

While the noun *ta‘wīdh* does not appear in the Qur’ān, the verbal form appears

²⁰⁶ Savage-Smith, *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, xxiii.

²⁰⁷ Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven: Yale, 2011), 120.

²⁰⁸ Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863), I: 2192.

²⁰⁹ Amina Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action: Islamic Learning and Sufi practice in the life of Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī Makhdūm-i Jahāniyān* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 90.

frequently in the familiar invocation “*a‘ūdhu billāhi*” (I seek refuge in God). Thus a *ta‘wīdh* is definitionally linked to the text of the Qur’ān and to seeking and receiving protection from God. While the traditional definition of “seeking refuge” is widely attested to, the verb *‘ādha* can carry an additional protective sense when the definition from John Penrice’s nineteenth century Qur’ānic dictionary and glossary is added. He gives the following: “to be next to the bone (flesh).”²¹⁰ While this definition does appear in Lane as well, Lane designates it as “tropical” and thus a less “proper” definition for the term.²¹¹ A parallel definition in English might be the verb “to cleave” which can be understood both as a term referring to a person’s devoted attachment to someone or something, but also in terms of meat cleaving to bone.

The multiplicity of terms in Arabic which are rendered in English as *amulet* or *talisman* provides an additional obstacle in attempting to more closely define either of these terms. Similarly, the stumbling points that are encountered in the process of trying to pin down definitions and terminology for categories of objects called today “amulets” or “talismans” contrasts sharply with the comparative ease with which these talismanic shirts have received the descriptor “talismanic” in the first place. While they are occasionally referred to as “healing shirts,”²¹² they have been largely accepted under the title of “talismanic shirts.” That designation, while not necessarily arbitrary, demands a better understanding both of what talismans were thought to *be* and to *do*, but also about how these objects were talked about and defined in contradistinction to other so-called

²¹⁰ John Penrice, *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Quran* (Chicago: Library of Islam, 1998), 102.

²¹¹ See Lane’s Preface for his distinguishing between multiple definitions.

²¹² As in the title of Hülya Tezcan’s 2006 work: *Şifalı Gömlekler* (Healing Shirts).

magical objects.

In the face of such ambiguity with respect to vocabulary and terminology, some authors argue convincingly that there is in fact no difference between the terms amulet and talisman in English usage today.²¹³ In the case of the adjectival form, the term *talismanic* seems to be used with greater frequency than the term *amuletic* when it comes to studies of objects or texts from within the Islamic world.²¹⁴ Conversely, the most recent study of magical objects which heavily utilize text (from within the medieval West) prefers the term amulet in English usage.²¹⁵ Putting this one prominent example aside, it is generally accepted that in discussing Arabic terms for this whole category of objects, amulet can be subsumed under the category of talismans.

One caveat deserves, however, to be made. E. A. Wallis Budge, the distinguished scholar of ancient texts and objects alike, who is discussed at length in the following section, asserts that there is a difference in these terms which stems from the purpose of the object's creation. An amulet, writes Budge, has a continuous protective power which serves to generally protect its owner, whereas a talisman is created for one specific

²¹³ Emilie Savage-Smith says that there is “virtually no distinction between the two English terms” in *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, xxii.

²¹⁴ The argument might also be made that, for a large group of objects today known as amulets from the Islamic world, the term *apotropaic* is a more accurate designation. Apotropaic comes from the Greek *apotropaios* meaning “to turn away from” and specifically refers to objects intended to ward off evil. Many amulets were created and used for the explicit purpose of repelling or averting the evil eye, and thus the term *apotropaic* is an appropriate descriptor.

²¹⁵ See Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Skemer asserts that talismans do not require text at all (p.8) but instead require a much broader range of knowledge in the fields of astrology, and the “lapidary arts” as well as training in specific rituals. Textual amulets are a much simpler and more common object, according to Skemer, within the medieval West.

purpose.²¹⁶ Budge's assertion is largely circumstantial, and based on his own observations about the objects in his own collection and that of the British Museum. For the purposes of this study, the English term *talisman* will be preferred over *amulet* and used to refer to the broad category of objects which fall under both of these rubrics. While the term *talisman* is here preferred, the definitions ascribed to the Arabic *ḥirz*, *ḥamā'il* (pl), and *ḥujub* (pl) which emphasize an object's suspension, carrying, and covering are all crucial components of the way in which the term talisman is deployed throughout this study. Talisman is here defined as: *an object which provides some manner of protection for the object's possessor through that object's perdurance on a body.*

E.A. Wallis Budge: Amulets, Talismans on the Road to the Museum

While fine-tuning terminology and the vocabulary used to discuss objects that we label "talismans" is an important part of their study, talismans are material objects with a lived context all their own. The lived context for a large number of talismans from the Islamic world today is that of the museum, where large collections amassed through purchase and private donations are displayed in small, well-lit cases.²¹⁷ The cases at the British Museum were largely filled through the efforts of E. A. Wallis Budge (d.1934)

²¹⁶ Budge, *Amulets and Magic*, 14.

²¹⁷ In a paper given at the conference, "Making Things Speak" at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Avinoam Shalem convincingly argued that objects in museum collections today do not have a lived context. Rather, these are dead things displayed akin to the trophy collection of an avid hunter. In order to be in a museum, Shalem argues, an object must die. Avinoam Shalem, "For Your Eyes Only," Paper given on 24 June 2011, Berlin.

who worked for the British Museum from 1883 until shortly before his death. Budge was primarily an Egyptologist and Assyriologist and his travels took him through Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and North Africa throughout the late period of British colonialism.²¹⁸ Budge was a prolific writer, producing not only translations and academic works but also memoirs of his own travels.²¹⁹ During these travels, Budge purchased numerous amulets and talismans, for his own collection, in markets or from private sellers.²²⁰

These objects, along with many of those in the British Museum's holdings, formed the bulk of the subject matter for his immense work *Amulets and Magic*.²²¹ Budge traveled within the Middle East extensively over the course of his career, and spent at least a month every year in Egypt during his tenure at the British Museum.²²² While Budge was versed in dozens of languages (including Coptic, Syriac, and Hebrew) it is unclear to what extent he could read (if at all) Arabic or Persian. Over the course of his long career, Budge wrote over 100 monographs, and many more articles and pamphlets;

²¹⁸ Adam Becker, "Doctoring the Past in the Present: E. A. Wallis Budge, the Discourse on Magic and the Colonization of Iraq," *History of Religions* 44/3 (2005): 182.

²¹⁹ See: E. A. Wallis Budge *By Nile and Tigris: A Narrative of Journeys in Egypt and Mesopotamia on behalf of the British Museum between the years of 1886 and 1913*. (London: J. Murray, 1920). One of Budge's earlier works is a kind of guidebook based on personal experience: *The Nile: Notes for Travellers in Egypt* (London: T. Cook & Son, 1897).

²²⁰ Becker, "Doctoring the Past," 200.

²²¹ The following reprint has been consulted here: Sir E. A. Wallis Budge *Amulets and Magic: the Original Texts with Translations and Descriptions of a Long Series of Egyptian, Sumerian, Assyrian, Hebrew, Christian, Gnostic and Muslim Amulets and Talimans and Magical Figures* (London: Kegan Paul, 2001). The work was originally published as *Amulets and Superstitions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930).

²²² M. Smith, 'Budge, Sir Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis (1857–1934)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) Accessed online: 6 June 2013.

history (and his own lack of revisions) has not proved kind to all of them.²²³ While the majority of his works were on ancient Egypt, a number of his monographs display his general interest in magical objects; his 1899 work *Egyptian Magic* begins with a section on amulets and contains chapters of magical symbols and figures.²²⁴

Amulets and Magic is a book which arose out of Budge's own collecting prerogatives and the museum context within which he spent most of his life. Encouraged by a colleague, Budge kept careful notes of all of the questions which museum visitors asked of him and the objects which he curated. The resulting pastiche of answers was compiled into *Amulets and Magic*.²²⁵ In the case of the Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern materials, these answers were to be found in Budge's own translations and archaeological field work. But for answers about objects from the Islamic world, Budge turned to his own personal experiences from traveling or interviewing traveling companions. He asserts in his preface that he has first hand knowledge of the working of talismans and provides colorful stories to illustrate his point:

In the Near East amulets are used universally and unashamedly. The old camel postman who guided me from Damascus to Baghdad attributed our safe arrival to the five blue beads which were fastened on the foreheads of each of his camels. [...] When the Shammar Arabs pillaged our caravan and stole our food and clothes and carried off our beasts they discussed the question as to whether they should cut our throats or strip us naked and turn us loose into the desert for God to kill by thirst and cold. They did neither, but Muḥammad Amīn assured me that we escaped only because he was wearing on his breast an agate plaque engraved with the Throne Verse from the Qur'ān, and I had another in my cigar case. From this it

²²³ Idem.

²²⁴ See: E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic* (New York: Dover, 1971) (reprint). First printing: London: Kegan Paul & Co, 1899.

²²⁵ Budge, *Amulets and Magic*, xiii.

seems that Muslim amulets are tolerant of Christians.²²⁶

Anecdotal evidence such as this plays a role, albeit fairly small, in this massive work on amulets which is introduced by the (tellingly titled) chapter, “The Universal Use of Amulets Due to Man’s Belief in the Existence of Demons and Evil Spirits.”

Due to the disparity of the source materials Budge relied on for the sections on Egypt, the ancient Near East and the Islamic world, the magical objects and the magic they are supposed to be evidence of is presented entirely outside of time. Budge’s presentation of a universal and general world of magical objects is more than just anachronistic; it flattens the historical record. For Budge, the information gleaned from a Beduoin guide about how a talisman works can be justifiably applied to the analysis of an object from 16th century Iran. Likewise, the impetus to create an ancient Egyptian amulet is comparable (if not identical) to that of a late 19th century Egyptian one, regardless of the thousands of years, and introduction of a wholly different religion, which intervenes between the two. For Budge, “the use of amulets and talismans is universal and has been so since the existence of man.”²²⁷ In espousing such ubiquity, Budge does little to dispel the then-popular notion that magic is proto-something, be it religion or science. Of course Budge is not concerned with talking about magic as a category, magic’s relationship to religion, or even magical practices. *Amulets and Magic* is a work about objects themselves and as such it is cited²²⁸ as a kind of repository for general descriptions of

²²⁶ Budge, *Amulets and Magic*, xxxiv.

²²⁷ Budge, *Magic and Amulets*, 11.

²²⁸ Budge appears among the list of primary sources in the entry for “Amulets, Fortune-telling and Magic” in the *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (Brill Online,

magical objects.

Budge's *Amulets and Magic* is in many ways indicative of the same ethos of his era as can be found in Mauss's pick-and-mix anthropological data in *A General Theory of Magic*. The desire to catalogue and generalize about cultures and practices was not merely the work of museum employees. But Budge's body of scholarship reveals something of the trend towards collecting magical objects from the around the world, regardless of provenance, into a kind of early Industrial era *Wunderkammer*. Rather than looking to magical objects in the hopes of better understanding the concept of magic within a particular milieu, Budge merely describes and presents the objects *en masse* in keeping with his assumption that amulets are, in fact, universal. In this way, his work echoes the layout of the very galleries he was entrusted to fill. Upon the opening of the Egyptian Gallery of the British Museum in 1847, the *Illustrated London News* described the room in this way:

It has cases ranged on each side, filled with Egyptian dieties, sacred animals, statues, household furniture, and other large objects; besides vases, lamps, bowls, cups, agricultural elements, boxes, baskets, spoons and bricks, tools, musical instruments, playthings, &... in short, a variety of most interesting illustrations of the industrial arts and domestic life of the Egyptians -- all especially attractive, and so devoid of the mysticism usually attached to the antiquities of Egypt, as to render this Room one of the most frequented in the Museum.²²⁹

From his Victorian predecessors, Budge inherited this gallery and at least some of the character of their collecting ethos.

Exhibited in this way, talismans were wrenched from the bodies which they were

2009).

²²⁹ "The British Museum" *Illustrated London News*, February 13, 1847, 108.

intended to protect and placed on tiny pedestals in glass cases where they could be admired for their exotic beauty. But beyond this, examining groups of Islamic talismans together is often thought to reveal something fundamental about the nature of Islamic magic and the relationship between magic and the religion of Islam writ large. In the 1981 catalogue of the seals, stamps and talismans in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ludvik Kalus maligns the lack of study of talismans from the Islamic world saying:

But publications about talismans themselves are far less numerous, or otherwise sporadic, which does not allow the undertaking of a thorough classification within this category of objects, which would serve as the base for a study of their evolution over time. This study, which would allow for a better understanding of the objects in question, and eventually their more precise attribution to a place or a period, would at the same time be an excellent contribution to the study of Islamic magic in general, and thus to the evaluation of the relationship between magic and the Islamic religion.²³⁰

The study of Islamic talismans that Kalus envisions forces talismanic objects to virtually line up and be counted according to classificatory standards that aim to place them within tidy little boxes. And yet, as will be explored in the chapters that follow, talismans may not be understood properly without first contextualizing them on the very bodies that they are intended to protect.

²³⁰ *Mais les publications des talismans eux-mêmes sont beaucoup moins nombreuses, sinon sporadiques, ce qui nous permet pas d'entreprendre, dans l'état actuel de nos recherches, une classification approfondie à l'intérieur de cette catégorie d'objets, qui servirait de base à une étude sur son évolution dans le temps. Cette étude, qui permettrait une meilleure compréhension des objets en question, éventuellement leur attribution plus précise à un milieu ou à une période, serait en même temps une excellente contribution à l'étude de la magie islamique en général ainsi qu'à l'évaluation du rapport entre la magie et la religion islamique.* Ludvik Kalus, *Catalogue des Cachets, Bulles et Talismans Islamiques* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1981), 69.

Magic on the Licit Spectrum: Textual Opinions on the Use of Talismans

That a talisman can serve to successfully protect the body of its wearer takes for granted the idea that the creation and wearing of a talisman is a licit activity in the eyes of a particular community. This has not universally been the case within the history of Islamic civilizations, and there are a number of contemporary vocal opponents of the tradition.²³¹ From the earliest days of Islam, we can find both supporters of the practice of using Qur'ānic text for talismanic purposes and those who firmly reject it. Martin Hinds has suggested that soldiers at the battle of Ḥiḥfīn wore sheets of parchment inscribed with Qur'ānic phrases as amulets around their necks.²³² Still other early sources record the strong opposition to the use of Qur'ānic text for talismanic aims.²³³ But as Travis Zadeh has demonstrated, those who opposed the use of Qur'ānic text in talismans were not simply opposed to the idea of textual amulets. Rather, they were participating in a much broader debate over the place of scripture within the early Muslim community and the relationship between writing, “which is bound to material existence” and ritual/spiritual purity.²³⁴

²³¹ One particularly vocal opponent of all things “magical” is the Saudi *shaykh* Wahid ‘Abd al-Salam Bali (also known as Ibn al-Salam). An account of his work can be found in Remke Kruk, “Harry Potter in the Gulf: Contemporary Islam and the Occult” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32.1 (2005): 47-73.

²³² Martin Hinds, “The Ḥiḥfīn Arbitration Agreement,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17.1 (1972): 95-6.

²³³ Travis Zadeh, “Touching and Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qur’ān,” *JAOS* 129.3 (2009): 465.

²³⁴ Zadeh, “Touching and Ingesting,” 466.

Given what is often at stake when considering the use of talismans, thinking about them in terms of a licit/illicit dichotomy does not accurately reflect this variety of opinions. And these differing opinions may help to account for the huge amount of variation within the corpus of surviving talismanic objects. If the use of talismans was simply deemed either licit or illicit within the majority of historical moments, one would expect to find a far more cohesive group of surviving objects that might fall along the lines of “licit talismans.” That is to say, if certain types of talismans were widely accepted as licit, we would expect to find a more homogenous group of objects that adhered to similar stylistic patterns. As the corpus of talismanic shirts presented here demonstrates, this is far from the case. Thus the varied attitudes towards what constitutes a more or less licit talismanic object might help to account for the variation that we find within the material record.

As with many other practices within the Muslim community, the first source to turn to for authority on this (and nearly any other) subject is traditionally the Qur’ān, with the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections filling in any gaps. The Qur’ān offers little help on the topic, as the words most frequently used to indicate talismans or amulets (*ta’wīdh*, *ṣirz*, *amā’il*, *uḥub*, and *ilasm*) are all absent from the text. As has been noted previously, the verb *‘ādha* does appear frequently, but never in explicit reference to the use of an object. Documenting a comprehensive list of the opinions on the creation and use of talismans from *ṣaḥīḥ* collections is outside the scope of the project, though the opinions of some *muḥaddiths* as they appear in later texts can provide a useful survey.

The genre of Prophetic medicine or *al-ṣibb al-nabawī* contains many examples

of specific uses for talismans and the kinds of cures and protections that they are expected to effectively produce. In looking at the work of the Ṣanbalī scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya (d. 1350) we find a discussion of medicine from the point of view of a religious scholar relying on the Qur’ān, Ṣadīth, and legal opinions. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya is primarily concerned with spiritual well-being (rather than health in the modern medical sense), and as such he makes a distinction between medicine for the heart and medicine for the body. For Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, the heart serves as the locus for spiritual concerns and pursuits.²³⁵ As such, his concern over bodily medicine, and thus the treatment of bodily ailments, is secondary to his primary goal of providing his readers with the keys to a spiritually sound heart. His volume, *al-Ṣibb al-Nabawī*, features an alphabetized appendix (a kind of *materia medica*) that contains a short section on the medicinal application of written talismans. He also includes references to cures obtained through the reliance on talismans, or talismanic symbols, for specific ailments with the main body of his text.

The second half of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya’s text is arranged alphabetically, with a set of entries for each letter of the Arabic alphabet. In his entry for the letter *kāf*, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya relates the variety of opinions about the licitness of the use of written talismans for the treatment of particular ailments. Two grammatical notes are important to include from the outset. The first is that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya’s entry is specifically for a *kitāb* (lit. “book”), or a “written amulet.” The insistence on the written, textual nature of the object in question is in keeping with Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya’s emphasis on

²³⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Medicine of the Prophet*, tr. Penelope Johnstone (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1998), xxvi.

the curative properties of the Qur'ānic text itself. He states that words are acceptable for use on talismans only, "if it is from God's Book or words from God's Prophet."²³⁶

Second, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya uses the words *ta'wīdh* and *tamīma* relatively interchangeably throughout this section. Near the end of his discussion of written amulets for treating a fever, we find a question asked about amulets (*tamā'im*) answered using the word *ta'wīdh*.²³⁷

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya mentions that opinions on the use of talismans vary considerably, and he offers three examples of these positions gleaned from *adīth* and legal sources. He states that 'Ā'isha was lenient on them, while Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was not very strict, and Ibn Mas'ūd disliked talismans greatly.²³⁸ This spectrum of opinions from famous *muḥaddiths* and legal scholars can be compared to the relatively ambivalent attitude of the famous Christian physician Qusṭā ibn Lūqā (d. 912) who thought that talismans probably served to generally strengthen the health of patients, even if he could not confirm their role in the healing process.²³⁹

These relatively ambivalent attitudes towards the creation of talismans can be contrasted with the staunch opposition to the practice offered in Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima*. Ibn Khaldūn clearly states that talismans are real and effective. In his

²³⁶ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Medicine*, tr. Johnstone, 253.

Arabic: *ān ā'laqa al-ta'wīdhā, fa qāla ina kāna min kitāb Allāh ow kalām 'an nabī Allāh*. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Al-ḥibb al-Nabawī* (Cairo: Dar al-Turāth, 1978), 402.

²³⁷ "When asked about amulets (*tamā'im*)... Said al-Khallāl: ...I saw my father write a talisman (*ta'wīdh*)." Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Medicine*, tr. Johnstone, 253. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Al-ḥibb al-Nabawī*, 402.

²³⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Medicine*, tr. Johnstone, 253.

²³⁹ Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 146.

discussion of talismans and sorcery, Ibn Khaldūn declares both practices to be sciences which show, “how human souls may become prepared to exercise an influence upon the world of the elements.”²⁴⁰ He then goes on to say that talismans do, in fact, work because they tie together the higher natures (stars, the heavenly spheres) with lower ones (the body, the natural world).²⁴¹ Thus, according to Ibn Khaldūn, talismans are effective means of influencing the events within the natural world. But even though talismans can be efficacious, they are forbidden and illegal, just like sorcery or prestidigitation, because they can cause harm.²⁴² One must bear in mind, however, that Ibn Khaldūn’s distaste for all such pursuits that veer into the realm of the occult can be attributed, in part, to the political climate of his time, wherein various millenarian and apocalyptic groups were threatening the stability of the state.²⁴³

As these brief examples show, thinking about the creation of talismans along a strict licit/illicit binary is not reflective of commonly cited opinions on the matter. Persis Berlekamp has suggested that it is more accurate to think instead of a continuum of opinions on the matter.²⁴⁴ Berlekamp notes that this continuum is very much in keeping with the graded scale for legal rulings common to Islamic legal theory.²⁴⁵ While looking to the realm of law for models of what is and is not permissible may be helpful in taking

²⁴⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, tr. Franz Rosenthal, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) 3:156.

²⁴¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, tr. Rosenthal, 3:174.

²⁴² Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, tr. Rosenthal, 3:170.

²⁴³ Musegh Asatrian, “Ibn Khaldūn on Magic and the Occult,” *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 7, no. 1/2 (2003): 76. See also the discussion of Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddimah* in Chapter 2.

²⁴⁴ Berlekamp, *Wonder*, 145.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*

stock of written opinions, it is only the return to the material record that reveals the extent and variety of practice as preserved through objects. The objects which are currently identified as talismans or amulets reflect far more than just four or five general “types” that might correspond to the analogous *ḥukām* of obligatory, recommended, neutral, abominable, and prohibited. The tremendous variations found within this corpus do not seem to correspond at all to the textual accounts we find concerning either magical objects, the medicinal use of talismans, or legal viewpoints on these objects. The use of talismans and amulets as a widespread practice is clearly evident through the objects which survive today, in spite of the paucity of their attestment in textual sources.

Seeking Refuge: Textual ta‘wīdh

Having now established that there was a variety of opinions about the acceptability of making talismans, we can begin to look more closely at the texts utilized to cover them and thus imbue them with protective powers. Turning once again to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya’s *al-ḥibb al-Nabawī*, we find textual talismans indicated for use in cases of fever and difficulty in childbirth. In the case of childbirth, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya relates instructions which include writing the following verses on a clean bowl or vessel. If need be, these may be drunk as a medicine as well:

In the name of God, the Beneficent the Merciful/ Praise be to God the Lord of the Worlds (1:1-2). On the day when they behold it, it will be as if they had but tarried for an evening or the morn thereof (79:46)... On the day when they see that which they are promised [it will seem] as though

they had tarried but an hour of daylight (46:35).²⁴⁶

These verses refer to the anticipation of the believers who wish to see the garden of paradise. The parallel between that anticipation and the anticipation of a healthy birth after a long labor seems an obvious and fitting parallel.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya includes Qur'ānic texts and other general exhortations to be used for a variety of other predicaments and ailments including: nosebleed, scurf,²⁴⁷ a severe fever, sciatica, thrombosis, toothache, and an abscess. To create a talisman for a nosebleed, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya recommends a particular passage which Ibn Taymīya was said to write on the forehead of the sufferer: "It was said, O earth! Swallow up thy water; and O sky! Withhold thy rain, and the water abated, and the matter was ended... (Q11:44)"²⁴⁸ The text chosen here provides a clearly analagous link between a flood and a nosebleed. The same analagous relationship between the Qur'ānic text and the desired cure is present in the text of the talisman recommended to heal an abscess: "Say: 'My Lord will scatter them as ashes, and leave them as an empty plain, in which you will see no crookedness nor distortion (Q. 20:105-7)'"²⁴⁹ These two textual talismans are noteworthy in their specific relationship to the ailment for which they are proscribed, given that many Qur'ānic talismans take up as their text general passages which refer to God's power, or the supplication of a believer.

The idea that the content of the Qur'ānic texts chosen for a talismanic object

²⁴⁶ *The Qur'ān*, tr. Alan Jones (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 295.

²⁴⁷ dandruff, or seborrhea.

²⁴⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya, *Medicine*, tr. Johnstone, 254.

²⁴⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya, *Medicine*, tr. Johnstone, 255.

parallel the circumstances under which that talisman may be employed may strengthen the argument that the majority of talismanic shirts in this corpus were intended for some military function.²⁵⁰ A shirt from the Library of Congress, which dates from around the 18th century, features parts of two verses from *sūrat al-Fatḥ* prominently over each pectoral:

We have given you a clear victory... and God may help you with a mighty help.
*innā fataḥnā laka fatḥan mubīnan... wa yanḥuraka Allāhu naḥran ‘azīzan.*²⁵¹

The opening verses of *sūrat al-Fatḥ* also appear on numerous shirts from the Topkapı. A plainly executed shirt with few decorative flourishes, includes the first sixteen verses of this *sūrah* fashioned into a pronounced square-shaped border all around the front panel of the garment.²⁵² Similarly, we can find *sūrat al-Fatḥ* used in a bordering motif along the front of a luxurious caftan-style shirt.²⁵³ The list of shirts featuring some or all of *sūrat al-Fatḥ* as part of the primary design on the front panels is extensive.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ This is often stated as fact, as in the object report on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's shirt, that in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection, and others. In her study of shirts from South Asia, Éloïse Brac de la Perrière notes that these shirts are often associated with use in battle.

²⁵¹ Q 48:1 and 48:3. *The Qur'ān*, tr. Alan Jones (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 471.

²⁵² TSM 13/1164.

²⁵³ TSM 13/1183.

²⁵⁴ Notable examples include: TSM 13/1389 the back of which is covered in designs which emulate chainmail. TSM 13/1135 features a forked sword whose blades, filled with the text of *sūrat al-Fatḥ*, form the borders for the rest of the Qur'ānic text. TSM 13/1185 has two eight-pointed stars which are filled with verses from *sūrat al-Fatḥ* which are rendered in mirror-symmetrical gold text. TSM 13/1409 has a collar which is banded in blue and gold ink with verses 16-24 of *sūrat al-Fatḥ*. The first 28 verses of the *sūrah* also form the collar on TSM 13/1148. On TSM 24/2074, verses 1-3 appear in a very large hand inside a circle on the shoulder. The border for the entire garment, both on

A similar layout using verses from *Sūrat al-Fatḥ* is seen on the front of TSM 13/1184 and 13/1182, the shirts discussed below in the context of the Qaḥidat al-Burda. The presence of multiple types of text presented in various registers on shirts of this type underscores the way in which talismanic shirts cannot be fully understood as simply “magic” objects, “healing” objects, or even spiritual armor. The many layers of texts and talismanic invocations on these shirts echo the multiple registers of text and pattern that one often finds on monumental architecture, such as in the interiors of the Topkapı palace itself. The parallel between these shirts and these monumental structures emerges when the legibility of the text is seriously considered. Much in the same way that a monumental inscription cannot be clearly read due to its size and conformance to a building’s curvature, these minuscule inscriptions present a similar problem with legibility.

As must be assumed from the style of their presentation, legibility must not be a central concern when it comes to the placement and style of the texts inscribed on these talismanic shirts. When examining the South Asian examples, we find multiple instances of Qur’ānic text that is hastily written in increasingly erratic style in order to conform to the borders laid out prior to the shirt’s inscription. On the South Asian shirt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the bottom bands of flag-like shapes contain unevenly distributed blocks of Qur’ānic text (the final short *sūrahs* of the Qur’ān) that are cramped and tilted so as to nearly preclude their reading, even under magnification. Across the entire corpus of talismanic shirts, the predominate use of the *ghubūrī* (dust-like) hand

the front and back, of TSM 13/1146 is formed from the text of *sūrat al-Fatḥ*. TSM 13/1407 uses large-format *thulūth* red script for the execution of verses from the *sūrah* to form the collar. Other shirts which use verses from *sūrat al-Fatḥ* to form borders include TSM 13/1134 and TSM 13/1169.

makes reading even carefully vocalized text nearly impossible from the slightest distance.

Taking this aspect of the presentation of Qur'ānic text into consideration, it must be the case that the talismanic nature of this text is not inherently linked to legibility. This is very much in keeping with the larger corpus of talismanic objects, such as small metal or carved stone amulets, which feature microscopic text. The very presence and detailed inscription of Qur'ānic verses conveys protective power regardless, or perhaps because of, its illegibility. If the Qur'ān is, like Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya would assert, the best medicine for the hearts of men, then it is its proximity to the heart itself, regardless of legibility that provides the required respite.

Non-Qur'ānic Text as Talisman: The Use of al-Būḥārī's Qaḥḍat al-Burda

While the Qur'ān does not contain many verses specifically about garments, the few verses that do refer to garments occasionally appear on talismanic shirts, forming a kind of meta-referential circle about the power of text and the power of clothing. The most common example, which serves as the title for this project, comes from *sūrat Yūsuf*: “God is the best guardian and the most merciful of the merciful.”²⁵⁵ As is obvious, the verse itself does not mention a garment; one must know the story of Yūsuf (Joseph) to

²⁵⁵ *fa-Allāhu khayrun* □ *āfi* □ *an wa-huwa ar* □ *amu ar-rā* □ *imīn*. Q12:64. This verse can be found on two other Ottoman shirts (TSM 13/1164 and 13/1182) while four Ottoman shirts feature other verses from *sūrat Yūsuf*: TSM 13/1389, 13/1139, 13/1408 and 13/1394 where the verse appears on the back of the garment. This verse also appears between the shoulder blades on the South Asian shirt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA 2000.9).

know that these are the words of Yūsuf’s father Ya‘qūb (Jacob) when he admonishes his other sons for their treatment of him. Jacob does not know, of course, that God was Yūsuf’s guardian at the moment when ‘Azīz’s wife (Zulaykha) set her mind to seducing him. When Yūsuf’s garment was ripped from the back, and not the front, Yūsuf’s innocence was proven and his character left untainted. The appearance of this verse on the back of the South Asian talismanic shirt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts recalls both the context of the quotation within the story of Joseph and the notion that a garment can serve as the *burhān* (proof) of God’s protection.

While this example underscores the connection between the talismanic power of Qur’ānic text and special garments, it is in non-Qur’ānic sources that the connection between the garment as object and the power of text is most strongly felt. One of these non-Qur’ānic sources is Sharaf al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd b. Ḥammād al-Ḥanhājī al-Būḥārī (d.1297)’s famous *qaṣīda*, *al-Kawākib al-Durrīya fī Madḥ khayr al-Barīya* (better known as the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, or *The Mantle Ode*). The poem’s colloquial title, *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, is derived from the famous mantle which served as the impetus for the poem’s creation. According to the accounts of various biographers and details from al-Būḥārī’s own corpus of poems, we learn that al-Būḥārī had begun the composition of a poem in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad when he fell gravely ill. During the worst of his illness, al-Būḥārī had a vision where the Prophet came to his bedside, stroked his head, and then wrapped him in his cloak (*burda*). When al-Būḥārī awoke, he was completely cured.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, “From Text to Talisman: Al-Būḥārī’s *Qaṣīdat al-*

The mantle that the Prophet wrapped al-Būḫārī in was quickly associated with another mantle (and another Mantle Ode): the *Bānat Su‘ād* of Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr.²⁵⁷ The mantle in Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr’s poem had belonged to the Prophet Muḥammad, who took it off his own back and presented it to the poet in recognition for his exceptional poetic skill.²⁵⁸ Through the miraculous healing powers associated with al-Būḫārī’s poem and through the miraculous appearance of one of the most famous garments in all of Islamic history and poetry, verses from *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* were endowed with powerful amuletic qualities typically reserved only for the text of the Qur’ān or the names of the holy family.

The use of verses from *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* in the creation of amulets or talismans is well attested in early-modern commentaries as well as in modern discussions of the poem.²⁵⁹ Particular verses were proscribed as specific treatments for illness, some were inscribed on buildings to protect the inhabitants from harm, while others were instructed to be written onto paper or stone talismans for a wide variety of cures, solutions and benefits. The 19th century gloss by Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Bājūrī instructs that the first two verses, when dissolved in water, can help you train an unruly animal and, when

Burdah (Mantle Ode) and the Supplicatory Ode,” Journal of Arabic Literature 37.2 (2006): 151-2.

²⁵⁷ Stefan Sperl & Christopher Shackle, eds. *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, vol. 2: Eulogy’s Bounty, Meaning’s Abundance, an Anthology (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 470.

²⁵⁸ Suzanne Stetkevych has argued, rather convincingly, that this poem is responsible for generating the myth of the material object (the *burda*) which then spawned the creation of the object itself. See: Stetkevych, “From Text to Talisman,” 161-162, n.28. The object of the *burda* (as opposed to its image) is discussed further in Chapter 5.

²⁵⁹ Stetkevych, “From Text to Talisman,” 146. See also the final chapter of Rose Aslan’s MA Thesis “Understanding the Poem of the Burdah in Sufi Commentaries” (American University of Cairo, 2008).

written on a kind of *bāzuband*, can teach a foreign slave to speak Arabic.²⁶⁰

Two talismanic shirts from the corpus studied here bear selections from al-Būḫārī's famous poem.²⁶¹ The sixteenth-century Ottoman shirts TSM 13/1182 and TSM 13/1184 bear striking similarities to each other, and TSM 13/1184, is examined here in detail.²⁶² The verses from *Qaḥḍat al-Burda* appear along the front panels of the shirt, with each hemistich framed within a green cartouche. These cartouches run above, below, and in-between bands of Qur'ānic text and surround three major decorative features on each side which include magic squares, a large-format rendering of the *basmala*, and calligraphic roundels. On the right panel, this roundel or rosette is formed by the text of *sūrat al-Ikhlāḥ* and filled with the first four verses of *sūrat al-Isrā'*.²⁶³ Like the Qur'ānic text which covers most of the shirt, the text of al-Būḫārī's poem is also fully

²⁶⁰ Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Bājūrī al-Kharḥūṭī, *Hādhā Kitāb al-āshiyat Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī al-Kharḥūṭī... 'alā matn al-Burdah li... al-Būḫārī*, Istanbul: n. p. 1872. In Stetkevych, "From Text to Talisman," 146 n.1. Al-Bājūrī's gloss is one of the most widely printed commentaries on the poem, though there are many much earlier glosses, expansions, and commentaries on the work.

²⁶¹ One talismanic hat in the Topkapı's collection also features verses from al-Būḫārī's famous poem. The hat TSM 24/1784 is a white cotton hat decorated with green embroidery. The top of the hat features outlines of the Prophet's holy footprints, between which the word *mā shā'a Allāh* is embroidered. Around the band of the hat one finds, in Arabic, the following verse from *Qaḥḍat al-Burda*: *āshāhu an yaḥrima al-rājī makārimahu / aw yarji'a al-jāru minhu ghayra muḥtarami*, "Far be it from him that a supplicant should be deprived of his gifts / Or that a neighbor seeking his help should remain unprotected." Translation by Stefan Sperl, in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, Sperl and Shackle, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 405.

²⁶² TSM 13/1182 differs from 13/1184 primarily in terms of execution. TSM 13/1184 is far more finely executed and thus easier to study here.

²⁶³ The rosette is formed by exaggerating the extenders of the letters in *sūrat al-Ikhlās* which form small lozenges that are filled with verses from *sūrat al-Isrā'*. The text of *sūrat al-Ikhlās* is beginning from the bottom of the rosette, while the text of *sūrat al-Isrā'* begins in the position of 3 o'clock. Perhaps due to the constraints of this form, the last half of the fourth verse of *sūrat al-Isrā'* is missing, meaning that the last lozenge simply contains the unresolved clause: *wa-qaḥḍaynā ilā banī Isrā'īl...*

vocalized. Many of the verses which appear on the right front panel of the shirt are taken from Part Five of the poem, which recounts the miracles of the Prophet Muḥammad, and Part Four which includes details of the Prophet's life.

It would appear that the entire text of al-Būḥārī's poem is inscribed on the shirt, and that the placement of the individual verses is determined by the constraints of spaces and registers created between Qur'ānic text panels, rather than by some feature of their content. For example, the verses which appear immediately beneath the intricate rosette described above are:

Struck by disease, an eye may fail to see the sun,
And mouths may be too ill to know the water's taste
O best of all whose courtyard ever supplicants sought
Running, or riding she-camels with sturdy hooves.²⁶⁴

No obvious correspondence can be read between these verses and either the Qur'ānic text which surround them, or to the placement of the verses on the upper part of the chest. The general association between the poem and miraculous healing, as well as its history of use in the preparation of talismans is, however, very much in keeping with the overall program of the shirt.

The miraculous healing that compelled al-Būḥārī to compose his famous work involved more than just the Prophet's cloak; it occurred during a dream. Dreams of the Prophet have played a significant role within the Islamic intellectual tradition, often as

²⁶⁴ *qad tunkiru al-'aynu ḥū'a al-shamsi min ramdin / wa-yunkiru al-famu ḥa'ama al-mā'i min saqmi // yā khayra man yammama al-'ārifūna sā'atahu / sa'yan wa-fawqa mutūni al-aynuqi al-rusumi.*

Tr. Stefan Sperl in *Qasida Poetry*, Stefan Sperl & Christopher Shackle, eds., 403.

the validation of personal piety.²⁶⁵ As Nile Green as shown, the dream in the Islamic tradition is rarely characterized as prophetic in terms of bearing a vision of the future or things to come. Rather, dreaming in Islam is mostly about “bringing the past alive into present experience.”²⁶⁶ By inscribing the text of this praise poem on an object, which is analogous to the very object which the Prophet presented in a dream to the poet al-Būḥārī, a tangible connection between past and present dreamers is made. These two shirts are more than just talismanic; the use of the *Burda* also carries with it the potential incubation of dreams of the Prophet, especially if one takes seriously Oleg Grabar’s claim that many of these shirts were used as nightshirts.²⁶⁷

The *Ketāb-e menāmāt* of the Ottoman Sultan Murād III (to whom multiple talismanic shirts are attributed) records his own desire for such prophetic dreams, and his attempts to incubate them. Murād III was a disciple of *shaykh* Süçā Dede (d.1588),²⁶⁸ a member of the Halvetī order that required devotees to record, in written detail, their dreams and visions. The *Ketāb-e menāmāt* is the result of this practice by the Sultan.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ Nile Green, "The Religious and Cultural Roles of Dreams and Visions in Islam," *JRAS*, 3/13 (2003): 291.

²⁶⁶ Green, "Dreams and Visions in Islam," 288.

²⁶⁷ Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 111. Grabar cites the example of the caftan-style talismanic shirt belonging to Süleyman I (TSM 13/1183).

²⁶⁸ He is also referred to as Shaykh Süçā‘uddīn. For a brief discussion of his involvement with Murad III and the Halvetī order see: John J. Curry, "The Meeting of the Two Sultans: Three Sufi Mystics Negotiate With the Court of Murad III," *Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World*, ed. John J. Curry & Erik Ohlander (Milton Park: Routledge, 2012), 223-242.

²⁶⁹ The *Ketāb-e menāmāt* contains the text of Murad III’s letters to his *shaykh*, but almost none of the *shaykh*’s return correspondence. For a complete account of this work and its contextualization within the relationship between the Sultan and his *shaykh* see Özgen Felek, "Re-Creating Image and Identity: Dreams and Visions As a Means of Murād III’s

As Özgen Felek has demonstrated, dream visions are an important part of both a monarch's public and self-image due to the association between dreams that come true ("good" dreams) and prophecy.²⁷⁰ Multiple talismanic shirts from the Topkapı Palace collection are attributed to directly to him and others to his reign.²⁷¹ While the shirts that bear the text of *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* cannot be definitively attributed to the reign of Sultan Murad III, the presence of this poem must be understood in terms of this Sufi/courtly context. The inclusion of the text of the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* on some Ottoman talismanic shirts must be interpreted as *doubly* talismanic. The text of the poem itself protects the wearer from illness and misfortune while the legend of the poem helps ensure the incubation of good dreams, which are their own reward.

Cosmic Characters: The Science of Letters

Inscribing Qur'ānic text, the names of the Prophet's family, or praise poems onto the very fabric of a garment can, on the one hand, be interpreted as an act of personal piety intended to bring the wearer immediate and physical talismanic benefits. But the majority of Islamic talismanic shirts are inscribed with much more than extracts of text or names. They are often covered in individual letters, numbers, and even symbols. What is the significance behind the inscription of letters and numbers and their organization into

Self-Fashioning" (Ph.D diss: University of Michigan, 2010). The work was assembled by one of Süçā Dede's disciples after his death. It was deposited in the Nuruosmaniye Library in the 18th century. John J. Curry, "The Meeting of the Two Sultans," 226.

²⁷⁰ Özgen Felek, "Re-Creating Image and Identity," 9.

²⁷¹ TSM 13/1135 (dated 1582), TSM 13/1185, TSM 13/955.

magic squares? Letters and numbers appear on a wide variety of metal, stone, and paper talismans from across the Islamic world, and their inclusion on talismanic shirts must be considered as part of the much larger sphere of talismanic objects in general. By examining the precedents for manipulating letters and numbers we can begin to explore how their use in talismanic objects fits within the larger framework of the science of letters.

The notion that language in general (and letters and phonemes in particular) has a kind of cosmic power was a common one throughout a variety of ancient and medieval Middle Eastern traditions.²⁷² Within the Islamic world, a whole “science of letters” flourished around the concept that Arabic letters were inherently powerful. That power could be utilized, both for positive and negative ends, through the manipulation of those letters into potent forms either as words (or their numerical equivalents) or magic squares. The science of letters within the Islamic tradition is variously referred to as: *al-sīmiyā*’ (Arabic), *‘ilm al-urūf* (Arabic), *isopsephia* (Greek), or *‘elm-e oruf* (Persian). As Pierre Lory has noted, the Arabic *al-sīmiyā*’ bears striking phonological similarity to *al-kīmiyā*’, a similarity that is much more than coincidence. He writes, “*Al-sīmiyā*’ was from the start perceived as a science of the transmutation of words, like alchemy was that of material transformation.”²⁷³ It is worth noting that in modern Arabic today, the term,

²⁷² Karin C. Ryding, “Alchemical Phonology: Science, Sound and Mysticism in the Arab Middle Ages,” *History of Linguistics: Papers from the Sixth International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences*, Kurt R. Jankowsky, ed. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995), 84.

²⁷³ Pierre Lory, *La science des lettres en Islam* (Paris: Éditions Dervy, 2004), 37.

al-sīmiyā' has come to mean "white magic" (i.e., licit magic).²⁷⁴

In addition to seeing the science of letters as one of transmutation, one can also view *al-sīmiyā'* as the process by which invisible or "suprasensible" objects and phenomena are made visible through their legibility.²⁷⁵ Letters are the key to this process due to the Qur'ānic connection between speech and cosmogenesis. This connection can be seen in context of Qur'ānic utterances, like the following quotation from *sūrat*

Maryam:

"It befitteth not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is.

*mā kāna lillāhi an yattakhidha min waladīn subḥānahu idhā qaḥḥ amran fa-innamā yaqūlu lahu kun fa-yakūnu. (Q19:35)*²⁷⁶

Here, God's utterance of *kun* is in and of itself the act of genesis and the generative and creative power of the utterance of *kun* was often associated with the *awliyā'* as well.²⁷⁷

According to the epistles of the Ikhwān al-ḥafā', it is the two constituent letters of the word *kun* which contain the mechanism by which this genesis occurs. The *kāf* extends from the upper realms and joins with the *nūn* which descends into the lower thus knitting together the two realms. The *kāf* is also the bringer of completion.²⁷⁸ By highlighting the cosmic ramifications of the visual form of a word, individual words are themselves

²⁷⁴ Lory, *La science des lettres*, 39.

²⁷⁵ Lory, *La science des lettres*, 38.

²⁷⁶ *The Qur'ān*, tr. Alan Jones, (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 284.

²⁷⁷ Sara Sviri, "Kun-- the Existence Bestowing Word in Islamic Mysticism: a Survey of Texts on the Creative Power of Language" *The Poetics of Grammar and the Metaphysics of Sound and Sign*, S. La Porta and D. Shulman, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 35.

²⁷⁸ Sviri, "Kun," 46.

transformed into images of divine action.

The strong connection between words (in this case spoken) and God's actions is also found in Ibn Khaldūn's discussion of letter magic within both the *Muqaddima* and his treatise on Sufis, the *Shifā' al-sā'il li-Taḍdhīb al-Masā'il* (the cure for one who asks for the improvement of questions). In the *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldūn ascribes all of the efficacy of the science of letters to God's will, or "divine grace."²⁷⁹ In his *Shifā'*, he again grants the effectiveness of letter magic, but he conceives of it as a form of divine revelation.²⁸⁰ Even in his condemnation of the practice, Ibn Khaldūn further strengthens the notion that letters and their manipulation have a resounding connection to God's power and intercession, and thus potentially to affecting change within the cosmos.

The relationship between letters and the cosmos is fully articulated in al-Būnī's *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*. It begins with a full account of the creation of the cosmos, and of man, in which the alphabet, that is to say letters themselves, serve as the building blocks for all creation.²⁸¹ As Noah Gardiner explains:

The whole is a remarkable exposition of a cosmos inextricable from the letters of the alphabet and the divine names. That the accompanying talismans are, in part, intended as aids in gaining supra-rational understandings of the reality of this cosmos gives the lie to any notion that al-Būnī's work, even in their 'practical' aspects, were devoted solely to mundane ends.²⁸²

In both of al-Būnī's primary works on talismans, it is the larger structure of the cosmos

²⁷⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, tr. Rosenthal, 3:176.

²⁸⁰ Asatrian, "Ibn Khaldūn on Magic," 102.

²⁸¹ Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 105.

²⁸² Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 106.

and the role of letter magic (*‘ilm al-urūf*) that takes precedence over the creation of talismans in his discussion. Al-Būnī’s primary concern is not a practical one; this is not a “recipe book.” The idea that talismanic magic squares and objects could be created or understood without being explicated as part of this larger cosmic system is anathema for al-Būnī. The inscription of individual letters and numbers on the surface of talismanic shirts must likewise be considered as part of this broader understanding of the efficacy of letter magic and the special status of the Arabic language as the interlocutor between man and cosmos.

In al-Būnī’s most famous work, the *Shams al-Ma‘ārif, al-sīmiyā’* is part of a larger view of cosmic organization and divine power. Al-Būnī highlights three 3 primary concepts which shape this coherence. The first of these is the assertion that everything in the universe has a number and that each of these numbers are contained in the numbers of “the divine word.” This is a reference to the practice of letter magic, whereby letters have numerical values. The sum of the values in “the divine word” is the aggregate of all of the values of all of the names of objects within the universe. Second, al-Būnī claims that the structure of the universe is not simply comparable to language but that it is language itself. The implication behind this second assertion stems from the first, by suggesting that the organization of the cosmic spheres creates a kind of syntactic relationship between all of the universe’s named components. Finally, for al-Būnī, human language is “the condensed reality” of the universal language.²⁸³

Through the use of letter magic, man can thus begin to understand “la parole de

²⁸³ Lory, “La Magie des Lettres,” 100.

l'univers."²⁸⁴ By picking apart the numerical values of names and words for objects within the universe, man is able to perceive, in some small way, that *parole*. By extension, the creation of talismans which utilize text or letters, becomes much more than a meditation on the language of the universe. Rather,

[in] this visionary praxis, instructions are given whereby certain of the designs and various *awfāq* can be rendered as talismans, the wearing of which will afford the bearer more down-to-earth benefits, such as freedom from fear, provision of sustenance (*rizq*), etc...²⁸⁵

The mechanism through which this method is imbued with power is none other than God's divine speech, and particularly His divine name. Language, and naming in particular, appears to have a latent power which can be harnessed by an individual who has the proper training.

While assessing the sum of all of the names of all of the objects in the universe, in order to determine God's divine name is a life-long pursuit, harnessing the power of some of God's names seems to have been a pragmatic offshoot of this effort. God's ninety-nine names, the *asmā' al-ḥusnā*, appear time and time again within the corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts. In many cases, these names are used to create borders around the very edges of the garment. In looking just at the shirts from South Asia (which have, for the most part, nearly identical decorative programs) we find that the overwhelming majority of them feature the ninety-nine names as a border in red ink.²⁸⁶ Such is the case

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Gardiner, "Forbidden Knowledge," 105.

²⁸⁶ Éloïse Brac de la Perrière, "Les Tuniques Talismaniques Indiennes d'Époque pré-Moghole et Moghole à la Lumière d'un Groupe de Corans en Écriture *Bihārī*," *Journal Asiatique* 297/1 (2009): 60.

in the South Asian shirt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, where these names are rendered in very large red and gold-outlined script. Presented in this way, it is God's beautiful names that provide the very framework within which the text of the Qur'ān is presented in the hopes of creating a garment that is an effective talisman.

God's beautiful names can also be subjected to the mathematical manipulation and amplification inherent in the magic square. The creation of a magic square (*wafq*, pl. *awfāq*) relies on the *abjad* system of numerological equivalents for each of the 28 Arabic letters, where *alif* = 1, *bā'* = 2, *jīm* = 3 and so on. The basic premise behind a magic square involves creating an arrangement of numbers whereby the sum of those numbers is the same when added up vertically, horizontally, and diagonally.²⁸⁷ Magic squares appear on a huge number of Ottoman talismanic shirts and are often given pride of place in their position in the center of the back panel or on the front pectoral panels. When some of these squares are investigated in detail, it becomes clear that they function on these shirts much in the same way that minuscule text does; "legibility" is not the primary

²⁸⁷ Schulyer Cammann explores the history of the magic square in China, the Islamic world and India in a series of three articles which are still considered the standard investigation of the phenomenon in the Islamic world: "The Evolution of Magic Squares in China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80.2 (1960): 116-124; "Islamic and Indian Magic Squares, Part 1," *History of Religions* 8.3 (1969): 181-209; "Islamic and Indian Magic Squares, Part 2," *History of Religions* 8.4 (1969): 271-299. Magic squares also appear within the large corpus of mathematical texts in Arabic in what appears to be purely theoretical context. These magic squares are magic not in the sense that they contain supernatural powers, but in the sense that their mathematical principles are extraordinary. This type of "experimental" mathematics appears to have its origins in all three of the major mathematical predecessors to the Islamic tradition: Mesopotamia, India, and Greece. For a summary of this phenomenon, as well as an edition and French translation of one such anonymous mathematical work, see Jacques Sesiano, *Un Traité Médiéval sur les Carrés Magiques: de l'Arrangement Harmonieux des Nombres* (Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, 1996).

condition for their inclusion. TSM 13/1404, the shirt attributed to Cem Sultan, is almost entirely covered with a wide variety of magic square types which contain letters, numbers and words. But not every square is filled completely and some squares are left entirely empty. It is possible that this shirt is partially unfinished; though the relatively heterodox character of its composition is very much in keeping with the variety of magic square types within the corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts. It seems likely that, much like the way in which textual inscriptions are presented irrespective of their legibility, similarly here the magic square is being displayed both for its inherent effectiveness, and the *image* of effectiveness that its inclusion implies.

Invoking the Science of Letters in a Single Breath: yā budū □

As has been demonstrated in al-Būnī's text, letter magic was understood as an effective tool which could draw on the power of the universe through the use of the Arabic language to influence change within the world. This magical practice seems to have been viewed within the context of religion – not outside of it—in contradistinction to discussions of magic where its separation from what might be called *religion* is assumed and maintained through reinforcing a notion of categorical difference. The magic square serves as one of the primary manifestations of this magical practice, and its frequent appearance throughout the corpus of talismanic shirts indicates that letter magic played a key role in generating their talismanic powers.

Of the shirts which make up the catalogue included here, the bulk belong to either

Ottoman or South Asian provenance. While these two sets of shirts are separated by a significant distance geographically and stylistically, they both utilize aspects of letter magic in their designs to greater or lesser degree. As the South Asian shirts form a kind of cohesive group based on their design elements, they provide a concrete group within which to study this phenomenon. While the shirt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts does not contain any actual magic squares, its design includes one particular feature which references this phenomenon in general: a roundel inscribed with the words *yā budū*. In order to understand this invocation, an closer investigation into the science of letters within particular Sufi movements is necessary.

In his recent dissertation, Matthew Melvin-Koushki traces the earliest threads of the science of letters (which is part of a larger phenomenon that he calls “lettrism”) through early Shī‘ī and Sufi groups. He identifies two primary trajectories for the science of letters within the works of these circles: the first being cosmological, Hellenic and hermetic and the second metaphysical, spiritual, eschatological and ultimately, Qur’ānic.²⁸⁸ Here, Melvin-Koushki addresses the problem of classification that plagues texts which deal with the science of letters and the science itself. Texts dealing with the correspondences between letters and bodies and the cosmos were inextricably woven through with ideas of metaphysics, cosmogony, and science.²⁸⁹ Three of the most enduring (and frequently cited) authors, or authorial circles, within the science of letters genre, if one may be circumscribed, are Ibn al-‘Arabī, the Ikhwān al-‘afā’, and

²⁸⁸ Matthew Melvin-Koushki “The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of ‘afā’ in al-Dīn Turka Iḥfahānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran (Dissertation: Yale University, 2012), 171.

²⁸⁹ Melvin-Koushki, “Quest,” 176-199.

Faḡlallāh Astarābādī.

Among the many Sufi groups active in South Asia during the 15th and 16th centuries were groups influenced by Shaykh Faḡlallāh Astarābādī (who was executed in 1394), the founder of the so called “ḡurūfī” movement. In ḡurūfī understanding, the body and the cosmos were linked through series of correspondences which the science of letters (here: ‘*elm-e ḡoruf*’) revealed through their reading and manipulation. As Shahzad Bashir has noted, Faḡlallāh, “saw the cosmos and the human being as parallel entities, one being the macrocosm and the other the microcosm.”²⁹⁰ For Faḡlallāh, both the human body (the sensory) and the cosmos (the supersensory) were aspects of God’s self-manifestation in the material world.

In ḡurūfī understanding, it was the ‘*elm-e ḡoruf*’ which allowed man to read God’s true meta-language. And this language was something that the ḡurūfīs read quite literally on faces and bodies. This meta-language was made material throughout the sensible world but, in order to understand it, Faḡlallāh’s followers broke down words into their smallest constituent parts (letters and even sounds) and analyzed them in order to discover their true referents. This process is what Bashir has dubbed “religious linguistics.” Facial features were read as strokes of the pen, most importantly the seven lines which comprise the hairline, the eye brows, and the top and bottom lashes on each eye.²⁹¹ In an anecdote recounting a debate between the Timurid Ulugh Beg (d. 1449) and one of Faḡlallāh’s followers, this correspondence is evidenced through the correlation of

²⁹⁰ Shahzad Bashir, *Faḡlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 45.

²⁹¹ Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 33.

the twelve constellations and the body's twelve openings: the ears, eyes, nostrils, mouth, bellybutton, excretory points, and nipples.²⁹² Moreover, as Bashir notes, as one grew and sought deeper knowledge of the self, the body was read in a physiognomic sense from the outside inwards just as the Qur'ān was read from the *āhir* to the *bā'in*.

If the body is the microcosm, then the inscription of sacred text on the body can be seen as an attempt to make manifest in the microcosm the talismanic power of the divine text. But text also has the power to connect important bodies to each other, especially when names become emblematic of holy bodies. Nowhere can this be more strongly seen than in the name of the Prophet Muḥammad which becomes the focus of exquisite calligraphic designs under the Ottomans. The Prophet's name is inscribed on numerous talismanic shirts, including: TSM 13/1146, TSM 13/1184, and TSM 13/1408. Here the highly-stylized presentation of the Prophet's name recalls the whole of his person, and the prominent placement of this emblematic name-image reinforces the connection between the wearer of the garment and the figure of the Prophet.

That text, and particularly Arabic text, is constitutive of all objects in the universe is most strongly demonstrated in the example of images on talismanic shirts created out of microtext. A relatively late example, the 18th or 19th century shirt TSM 13/1139, depicts a sword on the back of the shirt created out of microtext. TSM 13/1148 also uses microtext to form a sword; in this case the weapon is clearly intended to be *Dhū al-Fiqār*, the legendary two-pointed sword associated with 'Alī. By depicting such a famous weapon using only (Qur'ānic) text to generate its form, the powerful protective

²⁹² Shahzad Bashir, *Fazallah Astarabadi*, 98.

and defensive nature of text is even further emphasized. In order to achieve either victory in battle or protection from harm, the wearer of these shirts needs only the image of a sword rendered in the text of God's word.

Conclusion

The calligraphic meditations on the name of the Prophet Muḥammad which feature so prominently in Ottoman talismanic shirts emphasize the connection between text, image, and body. On one level, the letters in the Prophet Muḥammad's name become a proxy for contemplating the Prophet's own body and *sunna* as they are draped over the body of the shirt's possessor. Second, the Prophet's name stands in the first position in many of the *isnāds* which recount the chain of transmission for knowledge of the very science of letters which allows powerful magic squares to be effectively created.²⁹³ Finally, the homology between body and cosmos that is made manifest through the science of letters casts the revolution of the four letters of Muḥammad's name through two-dimensional space as a meditation on the very relationship between man and the universe.

²⁹³ Matthew Melvin-Koushki has compiled and standardized (from secondary sources) the *isnāds* given for al-Būnī's four major categories of knowledge as they appear within his corpus of magical texts: *shahāda*, *'ilm al-bā' in*, *urūf*, and *awfāq*. In many cases, Muhammad stands at the head of each list. Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of 'ā' in al-Dīn Turka I fahānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran." (Ph.D. Dissertation: Yale University, 2012), 193-197.

CHAPTER 4: The Honorific Body

“Man is born naked but everywhere in clothes”

- Terrence S. Turner

Introduction

Islamic talismanic shirts are enigmatic objects, existing somewhere in between the manufacturing worlds of textiles and books, but also in between the sartorial frameworks of armor and shirts. They have been dubbed “magic,” or “healing,” or “talismanic” shirts primarily through superficial analysis of their decoration and through speculation about their intended functions. Creating a lived context for talismanic shirts within the Islamic world necessitates a deeper understanding of the ways in which clothes are understood to function in relation to the body, as well as the role of the body and clothing within particular courtly settings and among Sufi groups. This focus helps to highlight how talismanic shirts, through their form as garments, operate in a manner different from their amuletic and talismanic counterparts of smaller form and thus must be understood according to a different set of paradigms. While smaller talismans are often worn on the body, perhaps as necklaces or as *bāzubands* around the arm, their form does not directly recall the shape of the body which they are believed to protect. Their effectiveness in protecting the body comes either through the perceived cosmic affinities of their physical materials or through the power of the verses, names, numbers or symbols inscribed on them. In the case of talismanic shirts, some of these factors must be assumed, but the possibility of their actual wear as garments, and their visual form as objects evocative of the body as a whole implies an additional set of criteria for

generating the protection that these objects are believed to convey.

This chapter takes as its premise the idea that a system of robing, which draws on a set of recognizable aesthetics developed over centuries, created a visual paradigm that can be traced within the period leading up to and through the production of talismanic shirts in the Islamic world. More specific than general attitudes toward the body, personal adornment, or garments within Ottoman, Mughal, or Sultanate courts, this sartorial system conveyed crucial power relationships and worked to transform the body inside the robe in terms of both political and spiritual power. Talismanic shirts are garments, but they are clearly *special* garments and thus require a discussion of other special garments participating within this system throughout the patriarchal-bureaucratic Islamic contexts which generated them. When understood in terms of other, similar garments participating in this system of robing, talismanic shirts appear to be a far more cohesive group than the variety of their decorative programs might otherwise suggest.

The primary articulations of this system of robing, the *khil'a* (the robe of honor)²⁹⁴ and the *khirqā* (the sufi cloak),²⁹⁵ both participate in the act of giving special garments as gifts. Throughout the medieval Islamic world, the gift of a garment created a political and/or spiritual bond, between two people or two polities, which was considered valid from the moment the garment was put on and in many cases validated through the act of wear. Gifts of textiles and their display were a key feature in all of the Islamic courts of the medieval and patriarchal-bureaucratic period, and the examples discussed

²⁹⁴ The transliteration of *khil'a* given here is the one most commonly found in English language texts and will be used throughout. The plural form used here will be the Anglicized *khil'as*.

²⁹⁵ The *khirqā* is taken up at length in the following chapter.

below provide an important backdrop for understanding the layers of significance accorded to textiles.²⁹⁶ Tents, carpets, curtains, and cushions were often used as extensions of a ruler's own garb, "dressing" his court in the livery appropriate to a particular occasion. The accounts of foreign travelers or court historians of such opulent scenes convey the power that such an appearance had on a viewer or participant.

The first garment to be explored in these terms, the *khil'a* or "robe of honor," helps provide a framework for understanding a key contextual component of exchange and acceptance of talismanic shirts within the medieval and patriarchal-bureaucratic Islamic world. A *khil'a* is an honorific garment which conveys a whole host of benefits upon its recipient while at the same time solidifying a meaningful connection between the recipient and the bestower. Throughout the history of gift-giving in Islamic societies, the presentation of a gift (like the robe of honor) in all its parts including procession, display, and public wear were modes of communication.²⁹⁷ The receipt of a *khil'a* could signal a military promotion, the resolution of a dispute in governance, or the imposition of vassalage by a more powerful ruler. The colorful descriptions of the *khil'a* ceremony from a variety of historical periods demonstrate the wide array of forms which the actual garment could take, while still showing that a general aesthetic operating so as to make a *khil'a* recognizable as such by a wide audience. This opens up the possibility that talismanic shirts could have themselves been presented as *khil'as* or at least presented in

²⁹⁶ For an excellent and richly illustrated volume on the history of gift-giving within an Islamic courtly context, see Linda Komaroff & Stefano Carboni, eds., *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

²⁹⁷ Linda Komaroff, "The Art of the Art of Giving at the Islamic Courts," in Komaroff & Carboni, eds., *Gifts*, 20.

such a way as to draw on the ceremonial power present in the bestowal of a *khil'a*.

The *khil'a* (and the *khirqā*) both took on tremendous stylistic variations over the centuries intervening between the early expansion of Islam and the height of Ottoman power from which the majority of talismanic shirts hail. However within particular historical periods, it is possible to identify particular design and material elements which are indicative of a garment's status as either a *khil'a* or *khirqā*. Comparing these key features to features found on individual talismanic shirts reveals that these seemingly mysterious objects may actually have been a part of a fairly common sartorial project. Furthermore, the *khil'a* and the *khirqā* both functioned as literary and artistic leitmotifs, coming to stand in for either the bodies that were absent from them or the connections between bodies that they represented.

Beginning with the Body

Any analysis of garments must necessarily begin with the body since a study *of* the body is a necessary precursor to the study of what goes on the body.²⁹⁸ As obvious as this statement may be, the fact remains that “dress cannot be understood without reference to the body, and while the body has always and everywhere to be dressed, there has been surprising lack of concrete analysis of the relationship between them.”²⁹⁹ This

²⁹⁸ Ted Polhemus, “Preface,” in Ted Polhemus, ed., *The Body Reader: Social Aspects of The Human Body* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 11.

²⁹⁹ Joanne Entwistle, “The Dressed Body,” in *Real Bodies: A Sociological Introduction*, Mary Evans & Ellie Lee, eds. (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 135. Entwistle notes that,

problem is amplified in the case of museum collections where garments are the purview of textile departments and thus summarily lumped together with rugs, curtains, and tapestries. While the material difference (materials often being a primary organizing criterion for collections) is often slight, the functional difference between a rug and a coat is quite significant. Beginning with the body demands the exploration of the paradigms for explicating the body within contemporary scholarship. In order to talk about clothing at all, one must take into account the three following objects of study: bodies, gestures, and discourses about clothing.³⁰⁰ Given the diverse contexts of both geography and time within which these garments emerged, this investigation must begin by situating the concept of the body and discourses about clothing within a broader theoretical framework that will allow them to be analyzed and discussed in concert.

As Talal Asad has noted, there has been a recent resurgence of studies about the body, particularly within the field of anthropology. This interest, he asserts, stems from an “urge to aestheticize modern life.”³⁰¹ Thus much in the way that the modern pre-occupation with magic says more about modernity than the proposed object of study (that is to say, magic or so-called magical practices),³⁰² these newer investigations about the body might be read with an eye toward the contemporary fascination with the aesthetic.

“there are no examples of cultures that leave the body unadorned, although what constitutes ‘dress’ varies from culture to culture” leaving room in her definition of dress for things like tattoos, jewelry, and body paint (*ibid.*, 134-5).

³⁰⁰ Odile Blanc, “The Historiography of Costume: A Brief Survey,” in *Ottoman Costume: From Textile to Identity*, Suraiya Faruqi & Christoph K. Neumann, eds. (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), 59.

³⁰¹ Talal Asad, “Remarks on the Anthropology of the Body,” in *Religion and the Body*, Sarah Coakley, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 43.

³⁰² See the discussion undertaken in Chapter 2.

Many of the more influential authors on the topic of dress and the body within the field of anthropology are hardly contemporary (Marcel Mauss and Mary Douglas in particular), and yet they have made continuous re-appearances within modern scholarship. Many of their ideas still hold important currency as tools for cross-disciplinary investigations and, as such, Mauss and Douglas have been read, re-read, and re-modeled multiple times in the last decades.

A key feature from the work of Mary Douglas that has been revived in contemporary work is that of embodiment. A focus on *embodiment* rather than ‘the body’ appears as part of a move away from viewing the body as a static set of symbols or as a carrier of *purely* semiotic meaning and toward an understanding of the body as a generator of new meanings. Douglas’ understanding of embodiment encompasses the dual nature of the body: the physical body and the social body. The social body is what shapes and acts on the physical body in order to influence our experience of embodiment.³⁰³ The use of the term embodiment in Douglas is intended to place the body back within a social context from which it cannot truly be excised, and thus permit her largely sociological analysis. Thus the focus turns to the body as a whole, and particularly the boundaries of that body, and its relation to other bodies and to the world. Particularly in works like *Purity and Danger*,³⁰⁴ it is the boundary of the body that forms Douglas’s primary concern, as that boundary is where social interactions take place.³⁰⁵ Indeed,

³⁰³ Entwistle, “The Dressed Body,” 138.

³⁰⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Kegan Paul, 1978).

³⁰⁵ Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 15.

talking about the body outside of society is in itself inherently problematic, as bodies do not exist outside of a social construction of reality.³⁰⁶ However, still operative in Douglas' embodiment is the fundamentally symbolic approach to the body, no matter how socially constituted and influenced it may be.³⁰⁷

Insofar as Douglas' primary concern is the social role of the body, and the potential results of social control enacted on the physical body, her work is less instructive for tracing the genealogies of the particular objects that interact with bodies that are talismanic shirts. But the social dimension of embodiment is an important factor in piecing together the background that may allow for the creation of such a genealogy. While the social dimension of the body constructed by Douglas has proved a useful tool, the most prevalent aspect of Marcel Mauss's embodiment to pervade modern scholarship, particularly through the later lens of Pierre Bourdieu, is the employment of the concept of *habitus*.³⁰⁸ Considering *habitus* for Mauss means viewing the body as "an assemblage of embodied aptitudes"³⁰⁹ rather than as a set of symbols or potential symbols. For Mauss, this is a way of speaking about the "total man" and thus viewing the body from a set of perspectives like the mechanical, biological, physical, psychological, and sociological in

³⁰⁶ Ted Polhemus gives a succinct overview of the ways in which social values are embedded in discussions of the body in his essay, "Social Bodies," in *The Body as a Medium of Expression*, Jonathan Benthall & Ted Polhemus eds. (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1975), 13-35.

³⁰⁷ Herman Roodenburg, "Pierre Bourdieu: Issues of Embodiment and Authenticity," *Etnofoor* 17.1/2 (2004): 217.

³⁰⁸ For an excellent discussion of Mauss and Douglas on the idea of *habitus*, see: "The Social Body," in Strathern, *Body Thoughts*, 9-23. For his discussion of Bourdieu see "Habit or Habitus? Theories of Memory, the Body and Change," in Strathern, *Body Thoughts*, 25-39.

³⁰⁹ Asad, "Remarks," 47.

dialogue.³¹⁰ Moreover, man's first (and most natural) tool is the body itself.³¹¹ All human beings have a set of bodily adaptations to physical needs, such as the act of drinking when thirsty or laying down when tired. But it is the manner in which these actions are carried out that constitutes the "assemblage" of bodily action that is here construed as *habitus*.³¹² These acts are deeply influenced by society and by individual education, and thus understanding these actions necessitates considering the body within a societal context.

Beginning with Mauss's *habitus* is particularly instructive when considering talismanic shirts and armor from the Islamic world which are so heavily covered in symbols, text, and patterns. This decorative program seems to imply that they are best understood in terms of symbols and semiology, and this has indeed been the first approach taken in scholarship in the past. The lure of identifying a shape or an image as a "symbol" of some ancient persistence of pre-Islamic beliefs has often been too strong to resist for many writing about these types of objects. The sun is a symbol that is allegedly found often on Islamic armor or textiles, and that can conveniently be seen in a host of circular objects. Writing about a 16th century Ottoman engraved chest-plate of cuirass armor for the *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, David G. Alexander plainly states: "It is tempting to suggest that these disks originally had a solar significance."³¹³ Alexander

³¹⁰ Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," in Lock & Farquhar, eds. *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 53. Reprinted from Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," *Economy and Society* 2 (1973): 70-88.

³¹¹ Lock & Farquhar, "Bodies on the Scholarly Agenda," in *Beyond the Body Proper*, 21.

³¹² Mauss, "Techniques," in Lock & Farquhar, 56.

³¹³ David G. Alexander, "The Guarded Tablet," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 24 (1989):

quickly succumbs to this temptation a few pages later, writing that the presence of Q 76:11-12,³¹⁴ “...supports the view that these disks retain in a veiled form, their original significance long forgotten, the solar associations probably attached to them in pre-Islamic times.”³¹⁵ The support for his hypothesis comes in the form of “large numbers of surviving pectoral armors [that are] engraved, incised, or embossed with lines radiating from their centers.”³¹⁶

A circle with radiating lines could be any number of things: perhaps a wheel, a marker for the cardinal directions, or a depiction of a shield. But a circle of heavy, embossed metal on the center of an armored chest-plate inscribed with a verse about the rewards for the faithful has a function of direct relevance for the body that should not and cannot be subverted in favor of a symbolic discussion of decorative programs. To do so ignores the form of armor (and most importantly its relation to the body) and by extension that of talismanic shirts, as *garments*. As the sections below on the *khil’a* and the *khirqā* will demonstrate, garments play a crucial role in generating meaning that is critically linked to the presence of the body (or bodies) and the interplay between textile (or armor) and person. Thus Mauss’ identification of an “assemblage” of embodied behaviors within a social, psychological, and physical context helps create a more

199-207.

³¹⁴ “So God has protected them from the evil of that day and granted them radiance and joy / He has recompensed them for their patience with a garden and silk.” *The Qur’ān*, tr. Alan Jones (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 549-50.

³¹⁵ Alexander, “The Guarded Tablet,” 201-2.

³¹⁶ *ibid.*, 202. The circular metal components to cuirass, lamellar, or composite chain-mail armor which Alexander is referring to here are indeed very common. It may be significant that circular forms recalling these plates appear on talismanic shirts from South Asia of the same period. The connection between talismanic shirts and Islamic armor will be explored in my future research.

nuanced framework for understanding how it is that a talismanic garment can be so polyvalent.

Critics have noted that there are two major drawbacks to the employment of Mauss's scholarship in modern work, largely within the field of anthropology. The first is its distinctly timeless, grand, and "cosmological" feel.³¹⁷ The second is the palpable rift between Mauss (and arguably his body) and the bodies of his subjects. Mauss's text makes clear the distance he understands between himself and the subjects of his anthropological investigations. The timeless feel of Mauss' writings stem in part from his bringing together wildly diverse cultures within one investigation. In his *General Theory of Magic*, for example, he brings together sources from Australia, Melanesia, Mexico, Malaysia, India, Greece, Rome, Germany, Ireland, and Finland as well as the Iroquois, Cherokee, Huron, Algonquin, and Ojibwe nations.³¹⁸

A turn toward issues of personal and social agency or practice in relation to garments and away from those of hierarchy and social structure has partially grown out of the move away from studies like those of Mauss.³¹⁹ One of the strongest interlocutors in this respect to emerge as a kind of bridge between the field of anthropology and other disciplines has been Pierre Bourdieu, particularly through his *Outline of a Theory of*

³¹⁷ Lock & Farquhar, "Putting Bodies on the Scholarly Agenda," in *Beyond the Body Proper*, 21.

³¹⁸ Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, tr. Robert Brain, (London & Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1972), 15.

³¹⁹ For a good overview of the issue of dress in the field of anthropology (with particular emphasis on African cultures) see Karen Tranberg Hansen, "The World in Dress," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 369-92. Hansen surveys the principle works which have pushed the field in new directions and also outlines the key themes being explored in a variety of geographical areas and subfields.

*Practice*³²⁰ and later *The Logic of Practice*.³²¹ Bourdieu's work has been similarly influential in the field of ritual studies, primarily at the hands of Catherine Bell.³²² That being said, it is often overlooked that Bourdieu's own ethnographic work among the Kabyla Berbers in Algeria and peasants in rural France is what shaped his theories which have been so liberally lifted from their original context and transplanted into other fields.³²³

In his extensive writings, Bourdieu employed the term *habitus* in a manner slightly different from Mauss, and his own definition of the concept was not static throughout the whole of his corpus. While Mauss saw *habitus* as "an assemblage of embodied aptitudes," Bourdieu describes it as "an acquired system of generative themes."³²⁴ What comes across quite strongly in Bourdieu's discussions of *habitus* is the dynamic ("generative") quality of the concept and thus the tremendous possibility for creative expression inherent in it. In his *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu explains that *habitus* is the resulting state of a set of conditions governed by the following three characteristics:

³²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

³²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

³²² See especially Catherine Bell, "The Ritual Body and the Dynamics of Ritual Power," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4.2 (1990): 299-313.

³²³ This background echoes that of Mauss's own subject matter, and it should be pointed out that Bourdieu felt just as free to generalize about marriage customs among the Kabyle on the one hand and French peasants on the other as Mauss did with regard to the Melanesians and Iroquois.

³²⁴ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, tr. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 55. While the differences between these two particular definitions might seem quite small, in elaboration their systems are quite different. Mauss's definition strikes a more passive note, while Bourdieu's anticipates the active and generative qualities that his larger system entails.

- Systems of durable, transposable dispositions
- Structured structures pre-disposed to function as structuring structures
- Principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.³²⁵

Here, systems and structures and the orderly nature of Bourdieu's conditions would seem to hinder the potential that the *habitus* has for generating new forms or concepts.³²⁶ And yet, as the third characteristic shows, there is no expressed teleological aim in this system. Moreover, these principles can be molded and adapted over the course of time. The result is a *habitus* which has tremendous developmental potential but that is also delineated; the free production of thoughts within the bounds of the historical and social conditions of production is thus possible.³²⁷

It should be noted that nowhere thus far in the discussion of Bourdieu's *habitus* has the body itself come up. This absence is perhaps where some of the conflation between the reception of Bourdieu and that of Mauss's ideas happens most frequently. That is to say, Mauss's body techniques are often implicated in Bourdieu's expressed system of *habitus* in a way that is not explicitly present in Bourdieu's own definition (and vice versa). The body does have a place in Bourdieu's *habitus*, but it is not the only primary actor in the system; it is frequently the site of action rather than the actor. For this distinction, Bourdieu employed the Greek *hexis*³²⁸ when referring to the "bodily

³²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 53.

³²⁶ This is perhaps one of the loudest criticisms of Bourdieu's early work: that *habitus* "reproduces itself over time unless external events intervene, perhaps." See Strathern, *Body Thoughts*, 28.

³²⁷ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 55.

³²⁸ Properly speaking, this *hexis* derives from Aristotle's term for the "acquired ability," a

dimensions” of habit, whereas for Mauss this bodily dimension was inseparable from *habitus* itself.³²⁹ In short, *habitus* in Bourdieu is “embodied history” and “the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product.”³³⁰ This project of investigating talismanic shirts in the Islamic world is thus one that aims to generate such an “embodied history” by paying close attention to the conditions which generate a *habitus* for their construction, as well as the role of the body in responding to and participating in that *habitus*.

The processes which govern the bestowal and receipt of robes within the Islamic world make up a *habitus* in Bourdieu’s sense. Robing has its own vocabulary of sartorial elements, as well as modes of physical presentation and body modification which generate new meanings from within an established system of long-standing principles. Robing has a structure which is transposable and adaptable, but nevertheless recognizable due to the persistence of specific systems. By describing the *habitus* of robing in the Islamic world, the way in which special garments act upon the body and the affect that bodies in special garments have within a society becomes a crucial building block in explicating the role of the talismanic shirt.

Toward a Working Definition of Dress

term that Mauss identified but ultimately dismissed much like the term *habitude*. Strathern, *Body Thoughts*, 12.

³²⁹ Herman Roodenburg, “Pierre Bourdieu: Issues of Embodiment and Authenticity,” *Etnofoor* 17.1/2 (2004): 217-8.

³³⁰ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 56.

Talking about dress and the body for the purposes of understanding a phenomenon like Islamic talismanic shirts necessitates a definition of dress which is both broad and meaningful. The definition adopted here comes from the study of gender, which constructs dress as “an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements.”³³¹ Here, the similarities between “dress” and “habitus” are powerfully clear. Viewing dress as that which both modifies and supplements the body affords it the kind of agency that allows for an active and dynamic interpretation. Adding to this active (as opposed to the more often employed passive) characterization of dress, is the idea that clothing is “labor expended on the body.”³³² Thus the working definition of dress employed throughout this chapter is a set of objects which serve to supplement or modify the body upon which they operate. Rather than viewing clothing as a passive or static object, this definition accepts that dress has the power to act on the body itself. Furthermore, it acknowledges the communicative nature of dress.

Dress is central to an active conception of the body because, as Karen Hansen notes, “it both touches the body and faces outward toward others; dress has a dual quality.”³³³ The bodily contact inherent in clothing and dress has been emphasized even more strongly by Joanne Entwistle who states, “Dress, then, forms part of our epidermis - it lies on the boundary between self and other.”³³⁴ That dress can function not just as a second skin, but as an actual physiological component in the body’s interaction with the

³³¹ J. B. Eicher & M. E. Roach Higgins, “Definition and Classification of Dress: Implication for Analysis of Gender Roles,” in *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning*, R. Barnes & J. B. Eicher, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 1992), 15.

³³² Odile Blanc, “Historiography,” 60.

³³³ Hansen, “World in Dress,” 372.

³³⁴ Entwistle, “Dressed Body,” 133.

world is an important aspect of the relationship that human beings have with clothing. As will be seen below, clothing can be used as a stand-in for the bodies of those who are deceased or absent from the community, and the interaction with that clothing functions much like the interaction with a present human being. The experience of touching a particular garment, or the touch of a ruler's hand on a garment, is thus a very real laying-on of hands that transmits something durable between two bodies. As a boundary, dress is often responsible for the protection of the body through physical means such as heavy outerwear or fortified armor. But as will also be explored below, dress can confer protection through other means, be they magical, spiritual, or politically symbolic.

The Linguistic Analogy and the Structuralist Approach

That dress maintains a kind of communicative power is a mainstay of most discussions of clothing, from the academic to the main-stream. The 1980's women's "power suit" is a clear example of how a particular garment was understood to *say* something in terms of women's increased presence in the workforce, as well as to *speak for* (metonymically) the people in charge: "The suits are here." The semiotic turn, as elaborated by Roland Barthes, has perhaps been the most powerful lens through which fashion and dress have been analyzed in the modern period.³³⁵ This is clearly reflected in

³³⁵ For an excellent overview of the development of Barthes' ideas on fashion and various modern critiques of his work, see Andy Stafford's concluding essay "Clothes, Fashion and System in the Writings of Roland Barthes: 'Something Out of Nothing,'" in Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2006).

the numerous titles of works on dress such as *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*.³³⁶

While Barthes certainly has his critics,³³⁷ his adaptation of de Saussure's *langue/parole* distinction for the field of fashion does have a useful application when it comes to the study of dress in a non-contemporary context. That is to say, when one must rely on material and textual evidence alone (as opposed to interviews with makers and wearers, or observations of garments on a living body), there is something to be gleaned from Barthes' structuralism.³³⁸ The complete explication of his distinction is as follows

[emphasis added]:

I would suggest developing this opposition in the following way: *dressing* (*parole*) would include the individual dimensions of the clothing item, the degree of wear, of disorder or dirtiness, partial absences of items (buttons not done up, sleeves not rolled down, etc.), improvised clothes (ad hoc protection), the choice of colors (except those colors ritualized in

³³⁶ Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper & Bruce Ingham, eds., (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1997). Other examples include Steeve [sic] O. Buckridge's 2004 work: *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890* (Kingston, Jamaica : University of the West Indies Press, 2004); Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: the Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Myong-suk Han, *The Language of Korean Dress* (Seoul: Sang-Myung University Press, 1996); Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Random House, 1981). There are dozens more titles which begin with the word "Reading." This panoply of titles suggests that "reading" clothes or "speaking" through clothes is ubiquitous and natural, and that all that is required to understand the dress or clothing customs of another time or society is to decipher their sartorial "grammar."

³³⁷ Barthes wrote extensively about fashion in essays and short articles, though his 300 page tome *Système de la Mode* is sparingly referenced. The 1983 translation, *The Fashion System*, was dubbed "the most boring book ever written about fashion," by Brian Moeran, in "A Japanese Discourse of Fashion and Taste," *Fashion Theory* 8.1 (2004): 36. His essay *Éléments de sémiologie*, which has a brief section on the vestimentary system is often utilized instead.

³³⁸ In an essay entitled "Langage et vêtement" (Language and Clothing) Barthes takes as a starting point the idea of the linguist Nikolai Trubetskoy who applied the *langue/parole* opposition found in de Saussure to the concept of clothing in his *Principes de Phonologie* (1949). See Roland Barthes, "Language and Clothing," in *The Language of Fashion*, 21-32.

mourning, marriage, tartans, uniforms), the incidental derivations of how an item is used, the wearer's particular way of wearing clothes. *Dress (langue)*, which is always abstract and only requiring a description that is either verbal or schematic, would include the ritualized forms, substances and colors, fixed uses, stereotyped modes, the tightly controlled distribution of accessories (buttons, pockets, etc.), obvious systems ('ceremonial' dress), the incongruencies and incompatibilities of items, the controlled game of undergarments and overgarments, and finally those dress phenomena which are artificially reconstituted in order to signify (theatre and film costumes).³³⁹

The proper object of most of what follows in this chapter, and the next, is *dress* rather than *dressing* insofar as the historical records maintain descriptions of garments within a system (such as the *khil'a*) or the regulation in the production of fabrics intended for particular garments (such as in gold thread brocades). And yet when considering individual talismanic shirts, much of what is addressed is an issue of *dressing*. It is only when they are taken together that one can gain a better understanding of how these objects were created and how they were used.

Discussions of what Islamic talismanic shirts might "mean" would be a non-starter in many ways for Barthes, as an individual item of clothing often has no meaning outside of the system within which it is intended to function. Here the linguistic emphasis is clear: a shirt by itself has no syntax. In addition to the definition of dress expounded above, Barthes' enumeration of the "garment system" underscores the key difference between clothing as described in a text and clothing on the body.³⁴⁰ As he outlines, when

³³⁹ Barthes, "The Language of Fashion," 27. The field from which Barthes drew his conclusions was that of French ladies' fashion magazines. It could be argued that a large part of his work is discourse analysis.

³⁴⁰ While his *Système de la Mode* is a full volume on the topic, his essay "Éléments de Sémiologie" *Communications* 4 (1964): 91-135 contains a single page on the concept

clothes are written about, they are used as part of a systematized group of signs and rules, and thus a language in a pure state:

In a 'written garment,' that is to say, described in a fashion magazine with the help of articulated language, there is (as it were) no '*parole*': the garment which is 'described' never corresponds to an individual execution of the rules of fashion. It is a systematic group of signs and rules: it is a language in a pure state.³⁴¹

To the contrary, when clothing is worn, "the language in the garment system is made 1) by the oppositions of pieces, parts of a garment and details..." and 2) "by the rules which govern the association of the pieces among themselves..."³⁴² This distinction will be of prime importance for the following sections which deal with textual descriptions of garments, or the body itself and their potential relation to actual garments as objects. Following Barthes, when garments are discussed within a text, they serve as symbols and signifiers of something purely literary in nature. Thus, for Barthes, a passage which describes at length the nature of a shirt should not and cannot be read as a meaningful description of an actual object in the sensible world. The true object of such a passage are

(p.99). For a translation see: Roland Barthes. *Elements of Semiology*, Annette Lavers & Colin Smith, trans., (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 25-7.

³⁴¹ "...Dans le vêtement écrit, c'est-à-dire décrit par un journal de Mode à l'aide du langage articulé, il n'y a pour ainsi dire pas de '*parole*': le vêtement qui est 'décrit' ne correspond jamais à une exécution individuelle des règles de la Mode, c'est un ensemble systématique de signes et de règles: c'est une Langue à l'état pur." Roland Barthes, "Éléments de Sémiologie," 99.

³⁴² Barthes in Polhemus, *The Body Reader*, 249. Barthes explains: "...la Parole vestimentaire comprend tous les fait de fabrication anémique... ou de port individuel (taille du vêtement, degré de propreté, d'usure, manies personnelles, associations libres de pièces)..." *Langue* is defined in two parts: "la Langue vestimentaire est constituée: 1) par les oppositions de pièces, empiècements ou 'détails' dont la variation... 2) par les règles qui président à l'associations des pièces entre elles, soit le long du corps, soit en épaisseur..." Barthes, "Éléments de Sémiologie," *Communications* 4 (1964): 99.

the rules which govern dress at a particular historical moment. In contrast, a shirt existing by itself in the sensible world should not and cannot be taken to mean something in a symbolic sense. It is only when viewed in combination with a body, or with another garment that a shirt can begin participate in the sensational regime.

The next level of extrapolation from Barthes's system is that the relationship between a text about an object and the object itself is suspect. As is the case with many other magical and talismanic objects from the medieval Islamic world, texts detailing the production and use of talismanic shirts do not appear to have survived. As Persis Berlekamp has remarked, texts about talismans which do detail the efficacy of their materials or opportune moments for their creation describe objects which are frustratingly dissimilar from the material objects which survive.³⁴³ This absence of text has led many scholars to abandon the study of textiles like these talismanic shirts, pursuant to the assumption that without a textual record there can be no definitive conclusions. But if Barthes is to be taken seriously about the fundamental difference between writing about garments and actual garments, then the presence of texts describing talismanic shirts would be of only limited import for the study of the objects themselves.

Given the limitations on historical studies of textiles when it comes to surviving materials, the following sections necessarily incorporate the examination of texts. Barthes's dissatisfaction with the veracity of textual accounts of fashion has the luxury of stemming from a contemporary perspective, where other avenues (such as subject

³⁴³ Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 135-136. Berlekamp does, however, contend that, "... the recipes and the [objects] are different interpretations worked out within the same theoretical framework."

interviews) might be available, though one might argue that Barthes would be uncomfortable with any linguistic (even oral) description of fashion. While Barthes' concerns are an important caution against faithfully ascribing to written descriptions of garments, the inclusion of written materials regarding garments is both unavoidable and useful for the purposes of this chapter. The texts referenced here describe various phenomena surrounding the body, the giving of textiles as gifts, and the interactions between bodies as mediated through objects. Above all, these texts elucidate the system of robing which informs a more nuanced conception of talismanic shirts. This system can alternatively be referred to as a routine, in keeping with the operative definition of material culture introduced in Chapter One. These texts should be understood then, as descriptive of a *habitus* or a routine, rather than of particular objects. In using texts which talk around the central object of this study, Islamic talismanic shirts, these objects are allowed the freedom to speak for themselves in a milieu which begins to approximate the lived context from which they are now separated.

The Khil'a in Ceremonies of Honorific Robing

While textiles in general served a critical function throughout the history of Islamic societies, either through the modification of architectural space or as portable goods conveying status and wealth, it is when textiles are formed into garments that they take on their most powerfully transformative roles. Through their form as garments, talismanic shirts necessarily evoke a constellation of important gifting and vestimentary

practices in the Islamic world. The first of these addressed here is the *khil'a*. As is the case with many, if not all, luxury textiles in the Islamic world, great spectacles were made of the giving and wearing of such desirable items. Manuscript paintings from the period concurrent with the bulk of talismanic shirts depict these scenes with a careful attention to detail that demonstrates a keen awareness of the power of textiles in the service of political aims. A bi-folio painting known as the “Presentation of Gifts by the Safavid Ambassador to Selim II at Edirne” in the 1591 Ottoman *Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān*³⁴⁴ shows members of the Safavid embassy laden with gifts, half of which are luxury textiles or garments. The painting also depicts particular members of the Safavid embassy already dressed in their robes of honor. As Linda Komaroff notes, “The Iranian’s wearing of the Ottoman robes and the subservient posture of Shah Quli suggest an Ottoman comprehension of the shah’s gifts as a form of tribute, rather than an exchange between equals, as indicated by the use of the Persian word *pishkash* in the adjacent text.”³⁴⁵ This word, *pishkash*, is specifically used to refer to a gift given from an inferior to a superior, and was often the result of an *ad hoc* tax.³⁴⁶ The carefully displayed elements in this scene suggest that the Ottomans not only thought the Safavid embassy to be tributes, but that they consciously manipulated this exchange through the support of luxury textiles to bolster their own status during the presentation.

Though not all surviving talismanic shirts were produced with luxury materials, the overwhelming majority of Ottoman examples (and therefore the bulk of the corpus)

³⁴⁴ TSM Library A.3595, fols. 53b-54a. Reproduced in Komaroff, *Gifts*, 17.

³⁴⁵ Komaroff, *Gifts*, 18.

³⁴⁶ *ET*², s.v. “Pishkash”

were produced in a manner consistent with luxury status, as examples below will demonstrate. Understanding the ways in which the institution of the *khil'a* developed over time helps to better elucidate the circumstances under which these talismanic shirts were likely given, and the potential audience for their bestowal. The South Asian shirts, which though not produced with the premier level of luxurious materials and craftsmanship as their Ottoman counterparts, are still examples of high-status objects, particularly in their use of blue and gold pigments. These high-status materials can be taken as hallmarks of the participation of these objects in a system of garment exchange that was similar to their Ottoman analogs. Moreover, luxury textiles were frequently included within inter-regional gift exchange; a feature that helps to explain how talismanic shirts have today ended up in such a globally ranging assortment of state treasuries or armories. The movement of these high-status textiles in and around the Islamic world underscores the vast and yet communicative potential of this vestimentary system.

As an institution, the sartorial feature known as the “robe of honor” is an ancient Near Eastern institution pre-dating Islam.³⁴⁷ Perhaps the earliest commonly known reference to the robe of honor, comes from the biblical story of Joseph who obtains two robes of honor in Genesis. The first is the garment (commonly called a “coat of many colors”) that Joseph received from his father who selected him over his brothers for a position of favor.³⁴⁸ The implication from the text is that the garment is a visible symbol

³⁴⁷ *EF*², s.v. “*khil'a*.”

³⁴⁸ (Genesis 37:3) The Hebrew calls the garment a *ketōnet ha-passīm*. The meaning of this term is still debated, though *ha-passīm* is most often taken to mean “many colored”

of Joseph's elevated status. The second robe of honor comes from Pharaoh, who gives Joseph fine linen garments, a gold chain, and his own signet ring in honor of his new appointment within the royal administration (Gen. 41:42).³⁴⁹ In the Qur'ānic story of Yūsuf, there is no mention of either robe of honor. Yūsuf's garment (his *qamī*) nevertheless plays an important role in the Qur'ānic text. When this garment is ripped from behind, it serves as the proof of his sinlessness in the face of 'Azīz's wife's sexual advances. Later, when Yūsuf is reunited with his father, his *qamī* becomes the vehicle through which Ya'qūb's sight is restored (Q 12:96). The belief that "God is the best guardian" (espoused by Ya'qūb in Q12:64) appears on the back of a number of talismanic shirts from South Asia, precisely in the spot that served as the proof of Yūsuf's innocence.

The earliest legendary example of the bestowal of a *khil'a* in an Islamic context is that of the mantle (*burda*) which the Prophet bestowed upon the poet Ka'b ibn Zuhayr as a token of honor after his recitation of a poem in praise of the Prophet.³⁵⁰ The Arabic term, which comes from the verb *khala'a* meaning "to take off/ remove," as well as "to

or "striped." It is also rendered as "ornate." One interesting variation in translation takes it to mean "long sleeved." The Oxford Study Bible reads: "a long robe with sleeves." E. A. Speiser's interpretation favors the "ornamented tunic" translation, based on cuneiform evidence describing ornamented garments draped over the statues of goddesses which were heavily ornamented with gold. In any of these cases, the implication is that the coat is one which is strikingly visually different from the clothing of Joseph's brothers and that its luxurious appearance is intended to be a mark of status. See: E. A. Speiser's commentary in *Genesis: A New Translation with Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, ca. 1963), 289-290, n. 3.

³⁴⁹ The fact that Pharaoh takes a ring off of his own finger and places it on Joseph's finger has strong resonances with the early uses of the term *khil'a* described at the end of this chapter.

³⁵⁰ Patricia L. Baker, "Islamic Honorific Garments," *Costume* 25.25 (1991): 25.

don,”³⁵¹ does not appear until the 8th century, when the act of bestowing robes of honor became a key part of the administrative system and an important symbol of favor on the part of the caliph, the sultan, or even a regional governor.³⁵² As the verb *khala‘a* implies, a *khil‘a* could often be a garment worn by the ruler himself who ceremonially removed it to bestow upon a favored subject. In the case of the *burda* given to Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr, the legend maintains that the garment belonged to the Prophet himself.³⁵³ This mantle would become an important symbol for the rulers of Islamic polities as the Prophet’s mantle served as a metonym for his physical body.³⁵⁴

The term *khil‘a* often included the bestowal of much more than a single garment; jewels, weapons made of precious metal studded with gems, and even horses were frequent inclusions in the practice.³⁵⁵ The elaborate ceremonial elements of this bestowal, as well as the detailed inventories and registers of gifts and materials were hallmarks of some of the most bureaucratically-minded Islamic societies, chief among them the Ottomans. The fact that so many talismanic shirts are preserved under the Ottomans is just one mark of the remarkable Ottoman proclivity for record keeping, inventories, and the preservation of their treasuries. These tendencies have an obvious parallel in a much earlier Islamic context: the ‘Abbāsids.

Under the ‘Abbāsids, the investiture of the *khil‘a* was both a financially and politically significant moment for the recipient. During the height of Būyid administrative

³⁵¹ This verb is among the *a□dād* verbs, implying both an action and its opposite.

³⁵² *EF*², s.v. “*khil‘a*.”

³⁵³ Baker, “Islamic Honorific Garments,” 25.

³⁵⁴ Josef Meri, “Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam,” *Past and Present*, Suppl. 5 (2010): 113.

³⁵⁵ Other commonly included items were perfumes, exotic foods, and coins.

power in the central Islamic lands, the *khil'a* ceremony is well documented to have taken on a lavish and highly extravagant quality. In Hilāl al-Ḥābi's *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah*, a short 12th century handbook for officials at court, the author describes the bestowal of the *khil'a* in a number of situations. During the Buyid period, the 'Abbāsīd caliphs were essentially relegated to the role of ceremonial figureheads. To this end, the 'Abbāsīds utilized the sartorial power of clothing themselves through wearing the symbolically charged garments of the Prophet. The account of the investiture of the Būyid emir 'Aḥud al-Dawla (d. 983) preserves the symbolic flourishes with which the caliph appears at the moment of investiture. The caliph al-Ḥābi' appears separated from the rest of the court audience by a screen so that 'Aḥud al-Dawla will be the first to see the caliph during the ceremony.³⁵⁶ Al-Ḥābi' is attired in his most impressive regalia wearing the *ruḥāfīya* (a kind of tiara or diadem) and black robes, and he is draped with the mantle (*burda*) of the Prophet.³⁵⁷ Additionally, he holds 'Uthmān's copy of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's sword. These three objects, the *burda*, the Qur'ān, and the sword (or alternatively the Prophet's *qaḍīb*, or staff), "represented first and foremost the power and authority of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs which derived from the personhood of the Prophet."³⁵⁸

With the caliph appearing in such grand fashion, and after many exchanges of commands, 'Aḥud al-Dawla is led into the audience hall and after he prostrates several

³⁵⁶ Hilāl al-Ḥābi', *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah* (*The Rules and Regulations of the 'Abbasid Court*), trans. Elie Salem (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1997), 65.

³⁵⁷ This is believed to be the same *burda* that was given to Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. After the sack of Baghdad in 1258 the *burda* went missing but was rediscovered and subsequently kept under the control of the Ottoman sultans who added it to their imperial treasury of holy relics. See below for a discussion of the *burda* in the Ottoman period.

³⁵⁸ Meri, "Relics," 112.

times at the edge of the carpet under the caliph's seat, al- \bar{a} 'i' orders that he be given the robe of honor and "crowned."³⁵⁹ At this, 'A \bar{u} d al-Dawla is led to a separate hall with four of the royal clothiers who dress him in robes of honor and a jeweled turban.³⁶⁰ Upon his return to the audience hall, 'A \bar{u} d al-Dawla walks, "with slow, heavy steps because of the burden of his robes and jewels."³⁶¹ 'A \bar{u} d al-Dawla's labored steps must be taken as somewhat of a literary device to heighten the perceived value of the *khil'a*, but they underscore the transformative nature of the gift of garments. The weight of his robes here is also used to underscore both the politically charged atmosphere of his investiture, as well as the symbolic weight of his new status and position with respect to the 'Abbāsid caliphate. Here, both parties at the investiture (the caliph and the emir) manipulate the system of robing to their own ends. In order for al- \bar{a} 'i' to confer authority upon 'A \bar{u} d al-Dawla, he must appear suitably authoritative; by wearing the Prophet's symbolic garments, his authority is clearly conveyed. As for 'A \bar{u} d al-Dawla, the weight of his investiture is expressed through the physical weight of his *khil'a*.

We learn from the *Rusūm* just how calculated this moment of investiture has become, particularly with respect to 'A \bar{u} d al-Dawla's manipulation of the ceremony toward his own ends. While being dressed for his return to the audience hall, 'A \bar{u} d al-Dawla arranges for two locks of his hair to be threaded with a "weighty and glorious

³⁵⁹ *yā arīf, tufā'u 'alayhi al-khila' wa-yutawwaju*. Mikhā'il 'Awwād (ed.), *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah* (Baghdād: Maṭba'at al- \bar{A} ni, 1964), 84.

³⁶⁰ Al- \bar{a} bi', *Rusūm*, tr. Salem, 67. Ar: *wa-ulbisa al-khila' wa-'uiba 'alayhi al-tāj*. *Rusūm* (1964), 84. The verb ['- \bar{b}] means to wind or wrap, as in a turban. Thus the use of *tāj* should be construed here as a turban and not as a crown in sense of a single rigid, metal headpiece. Two-piece crowns consisting of a tall cap (either fabric or metal) with a turban wound around were common by the late 12th century in the central Islamic lands.

³⁶¹ Al- \bar{a} bi', *Rusūm*, tr. Salem, 67.

jewel” (*bi-l jawahir al-jalīl al-fākhir*) so that this will hand down when he is clothed by the royal clothiers.³⁶² Upon re-appearing in the audience hall, the caliph tucks the loose lock of hair into the turban,³⁶³ giving the appearance to those assembled that the caliph himself has crowned the new emir. Thus the caliph visually seals the investiture through laying his own hands on the body of ‘Aḥud al-Dawla and the transfer of a highly politically-charged garment.

This moment, which the author is clear to note was pre-arranged through the agreement of the caliph and not a trick on ‘Aḥud al-Dawla’s part, demonstrates the power that garments have to cement relationships, particularly when invested within sight of powerful people. It is quite clear from this passage that a simple shipment of a gift of clothing would have had a different meaning than the courtly announcement and subsequent donning of a set of clothes. While the robes themselves are carriers of meaning, and thus retain a semiotic function, the “robe of honor” is a garment which must be *activated* in order to fulfill its function. Here the routine or *habitus* which is formed out of the conditions which generate the overarching principles for the bestowal of the *khil’a* is clear. ‘Aḥud al-Dawla’s newly robed and adorned body is, in many ways, a different body than that which entered the hall prior to his *khil’a* investiture. As an emir, he is now burdened with both the riches and the responsibilities which were bestowed upon him by the ceremonial figurehead of the Islamic polity of the era. This

³⁶² *ibid*, 67.

wa-urkhiyat iḍḍā dhu’ābatayhi al-manḍūma bi-al-jawhar al-jalīl al-fākhir. Rusūm (1964), 84.

³⁶³ *wa-akhadha al-dhu’āba al-murkhā fa-‘aqadahā ‘alā al-tāj fī mawḍi’ kāna qad a‘adda li-‘aqdihā.*” *Al-ḥābi’*, *Rusūm* (1964), 84. *Rusūm*, tr. Salem, 68.

transformation takes place both through the wearing of a new set of caliphally bestowed robes, and through the direct contact with the hand of the caliph upon his head.

A few of the Ottoman talismanic shirts in the Topkapı's collection seem to indicate that they were similarly intended to be viewed by an audience, though perhaps only that of the innermost court, and perhaps presented to high ranking people in a fashion similar to the *khil'a* investiture described above. The use of trompe l'oeuil painting techniques on these garments were meant to mimic fine embroidery, woven brocade, gold-couched thread, and even jewels. While the *Rusūm* does not preserve exact descriptions of the garments which 'Aḥud al-Dawla wears at his investiture, it can be inferred through the incident with the lock of hair that jewels factored in the overall look of his *khil'a*. Furthermore, the weight of his garments implies their heavy embroidery with precious metal threads. Manuscript paintings and European engravings from later periods show elaborate and heavily ornamented robes received as a *khil'a*. Ottoman garments in the palace collection which were given in this way are covered in large-format gold brocade, indicating what one might aesthetically expect from an Ottoman investiture.³⁶⁴ Two talismanic shirts from the Topkapı Palace collection feature large panels of gold painting or applied gold leaf intended to mimic the look of gold brocade or embroidery. A 16th century shirt TSM 13/1184 (arguably the most famous talismanic shirt in the museum's collection) has its lower border on both the front and back covered

³⁶⁴ The famous Slovenian diplomat Sigismund von Herberstein (d.1586) was given many robes of honor during his travels, a good number of which he wore for portraits that would serve as the frontispieces to his published works. For one such example, as well as others of an earlier date, see Tim Stanley's article "Ottoman Gift Exchange: Royal Give and Take," in Komaroff & Carboni, *Gifts of the Sultan*, 151.

in a gold floral pattern evocative of chintz,³⁶⁵ and executed with such precision as to mimic the use of either a stencil or a stamp in order to perfectly duplicate a woven textile with a bilaterally symmetrical pattern repeat.³⁶⁶

Evidence for the use of stamps or stencils, or a common pattern model, is further bolstered by TSM 13/1182 which features a nearly identical lower border to that of 13/1184, again on both the front and back of the garment. Both garments have very similar overall design patterns, and tracing the images reveals that their overall design program is essentially identical. Both garments exhibit large areas of this simulated brocade, as well as polychrome bands (primarily in cobalt and red) accented in gold that mimic appliqué or applied jewels. This *trompe l'œil* painting gives both shirts a luxe overall appearance and is highly evocative of the kinds of luxurious garments bestowed as part of the investiture with the *khil'a*. It is important to underscore, however, that they are (like all of the known talismanic shirts) entirely painted and not woven. The virtuosity of the hand employed to execute such keen mimicry of woven and appliquéd designs speaks volumes toward the preciousness of these garments and also the specificity of the aesthetic which they were created to imitate.

These similarities support the identification of a general “aesthetic of robing”

³⁶⁵ Chintz is a printed cotton fabric, often with floral or vegetal motifs. The word is Urdu or Hindi in origin. The fabric was exported from India and was popular in Ottoman Turkey and Europe.

³⁶⁶ Hülya Tezcan describes 19th century shirts of a similar style which she asserts were stenciled with designs, though she remarks that these were cheaper production garments and ultimately not successful. Hülya Tezcan, *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki sîifalı goşmlekler* (İstanbul : BİKA, 2006), 111. After careful examination, this earlier shirt does not appear to have been stamped or stenciled. The skill of the painter is such that these hand-painted patterns appear identical to the gold-thread brocades that were popular during the period.

whereby important robes and garments from a given milieu all participate in a common visual vernacular. While this does not necessarily imply that these particular talismanic garments were intended to be given as actual *khil'as*,³⁶⁷ it does point to the kind of visual expectation that the persons involved in the giving and receipt of such a garment might have had. Richly woven gold brocades, large fields of embroidery worked in precious metal threads, and applied gems were common features in high-status textile gifts, and were frequently present in garments given as *khilas*. These features can be viewed -- given the correct audience and the appropriate routine -- as indicative of markers of status even when separated from the gift-giving context and trappings of a formal investiture. In other words, if these talismanic objects were given to someone of very high rank, either bestowed by the sultan or to someone else on his behalf, those viewing the exchange (and particularly the recipient himself) would have immediately recognized the multiple valences inherent in giving such a richly decorated textile.

Speaking of a common vernacular for textiles such as these does not presuppose, of course, that there is simply one correct interpretation of such a decorative program. It is equally probable that the visual tropes associated with a garment bestowed as a *khil'a* which invoke the superior status of the giver over the recipient could be extrapolated to refer to a spiritual relationship. In the case of diplomatic gifts, *irāz* panels on many *khilas* list the names and titles of the ruler bestowing the gift and are intended to mark the protection or authority of the ruler over the recipient. In a similar vein, Islamic talismanic

³⁶⁷ The only functional attribution given to 13/1184 in Tezcan's study captions the shirt with "Şifalı gömlek; üzerinde belaları ve afetleri def'etmek için hazırlandığı yazılıdır, klasik kitap tezhibiyle bezelidir." [Healing shirt: prepared to repel plagues and disasters, decorated with classic book illumination.] Tezcan, *Şifalı go□mlekler*, 111.

shirts are overwhelmingly covered with Qur'ānic passages that are clearly designed above all else to impart God's protection upon the wearer. Whereas the *khil'a* could often function as a livery visually marking the recipient's place within the domain of the ruler, these talismanic shirts could likewise be understood as a kind of "livery of the believers" intended to designate the wearer's complete faith and trust in the protection of his spiritual patron: God.

This parallel is very much in keeping with the textual program of the shirt 13/1184. In addition to the Qur'ānic passages, this shirt and the similar and possibly related³⁶⁸ shirt 13/1182 both contain excerpts from al-Būḥārī's famous poem *Qaṣīdat al-burda*. After praying and imploring God for help, he dreamt that the Prophet came to him and wrapped him in the same mantle that the Prophet had given to Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, the author of another famous poem, the *Bānat Su'ād*.³⁶⁹ Having been wrapped in this special garment, al-Būḥārī awoke the next morning, cured and determined to write a praise poem for the Prophet.

While in the years following the *Burda*'s composition the majority of commentaries were of the *takhmīs* (poetic expansion) form,³⁷⁰ by the later middle ages and the patriarchal-bureaucratic period there were a number of texts which remarked on

³⁶⁸ The similarities between these two garments in layout, design and execution are strong enough to posit that they were created in similar contexts and potentially from the same master template.

³⁶⁹ Stefan Sperl & Christopher Shackle, eds., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, vol. 2, *Eulogy's Bounty, Meaning's Abundance: An Anthology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 470.

³⁷⁰ Sperl & Shackle, *Qasida Poetry*, 474.

the healing powers of al-Būḫīrī's verses.³⁷¹ That al-Būḫīrī was healed through both a vision of the Prophet and the act of being wrapped in his own garment served to reinforce the healing properties of the poem when written on amulets carried on or close to the body. The poem, like the mantle itself, was thus imbued with healing powers. The Prophet's mantle, which had been an important symbol of religious and political power for the early 'Abbāsids who donned it at important ceremonial appearances, maintained its importance as a physical reminder of the Prophet's presence. To put it even more broadly, "Muhammad's award to the poet became the material out of which was woven a network of metaphysical significance."³⁷² In effect then, the appearance of verses from al-Būḫīrī's famous ode on these Ottoman talismanic garments stands as a kind of memorialization to the first *khil'a* (that presented by the Prophet to Ka'b ibn Zuhayr), the most prized and significant robe in the history of Islamic gift giving practices.

As the *burda* and the 'Abbāsīd *khil'a* description demonstrate, garments have played a powerfully transformative role in Islamic civilization from the earliest period. Lavish textiles, but also humble textiles with important provenance, could both generate and cement relationships of many kinds through their transfer from one party to another. Within the corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts, there are both richly decorated examples

³⁷¹ One well known example is discussed in Suzanne Stetkevych's article, "From Text to Talisman: Al-Būḫīrī's *Qaḥīdat al-burda* (Mantle Ode) and the Supplicatory Ode," *JAL* 37/2 (2006): 145-189. The text utilized is Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Bājūrī al-Kharḫūṭī, *Kitāb al-āshiyat 'alā matn al-burda lil-Būḫīrī* (Istanbul: N.P, 1872). There are multiple modern printed editions.

³⁷² Anthony Cutler, "The Emperor's Old Clothes," in *Byzance et le monde extérieur: contacts, relations, échanges* (Actes de trois séances du XXIème Congrès international des Études byzantines, Paris, 19-25 Août 2001), Paule Pagès, ed. (Paris: Sorbonne, 2005), 209.

as well as more simply executed ones. This variation helps to underscore both the varied circumstances under which they may have been created and distributed, but also the wide variety of ways in which meaningful vestiture could be achieved. While ‘Aḥud al-Dawla’s investiture account is a striking example of how the *khil’a* was used in the service of a complex power relationship like that between the Būyid emirs and the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, military appointments provide additional examples of the cementing of a person’s status within a stratified society. That military garments should have a kind of sartorial power is hardly revelatory; modern regalia and medals have evolved out of hundreds of years of manipulation of this very power. What the ‘Abbāsīd model helps to demonstrate is how the military investiture is in many ways merely an amplification of the modality of the *khil’a* as previously outlined.

Military appointments of the highest rank often came with their own *khil’a*, though the set of garments and accompanying gifts were different than those given to the administrative ranks. At the ‘Abbāsīd court, the *khil’a* for army generals comprised a complete set of black garments including a turban, a silver handled sword sheathed in red, arrow quivers and a military standard.³⁷³ The final element of this bestowal was a horse, often with its own set of fine garments and tack. While dignitaries, *qāḍīs* and generals were permitted to wear the black robes of the ‘Abbāsīd state, lower ranking military and civilian officials were prohibited from wearing this color.³⁷⁴ Achieving the

³⁷³ al-ḥābi’, *Rusūm*, trans. Salem, 75.

³⁷⁴ The wearing of the color black at the ‘Abbāsīd court was a privilege allowed only to those of the most elite rank. For more on the predominance of the color black and the adoption of the black standards of the ‘Abbāsīds see Khalil ‘Athamina, “The Black Banners and the Socio-Political Significance of Flags and Slogans in Medieval Islam,”

rank of general, and receiving these items as part of a *khil'a*, visually set the general apart from all those soldiers below him.

In a sense, the *khil'a* of the 'Abbāsid general operates even more like a livery than does the set of garments lavishly bestowed upon 'Aḡud al-Dawla. While 'Aḡud al-Dawla's investiture with layers of luxurious robes as his *khil'a* in many ways serves to set him apart from nearly all other officials in the caliph's service, the investiture of an 'Abbāsid general is an *entrée* into an elite circle of the military. Here, there is a system of *inclusion* rather than one of *exclusion*. This difference is underscored in many ways by the type and quality of garments given. The general's *khil'a* still transforms his body, in that it marks him as visually distinct from those that serve below him and points to his inclusion at the highest level of military rank. But by wearing a full black *khil'a*, carrying a red-sheathed sword and weapons emblazoned with the 'Abbāsid military standard, his garments mark him as subservient to the caliph and a member of the 'Abbāsid military service. Furthermore, receiving the order to remove one's black garments, or the forcible revoking of an official's garments was tantamount to dismissal from office and public disgrace.³⁷⁵ While certainly of an elite nature, the general's *khil'a* as described in the *Rusūm*, is a livery nonetheless.

Using the concept of livery³⁷⁶ is a useful tool for understanding some of the variety of ways in which the *khil'a* was employed in later medieval Islamic societies.

Arabica 36.3 (1989): 307-326. Interestingly, 'Athamina notes that the caliph al-Manḡūr decreed that courtiers and members of the caliph's inner circle be dressed in black garments with a Qur'ānic verse inscribed on the back.

³⁷⁵ 'Athamina, "The Black Banners," 321.

³⁷⁶ An extended investigation applying the medieval and early modern concept of livery to a milieu outside of its native England does not appear to have been undertaken to date.

While the *khil'a* became a kind of hallmark of courtly procedure under the 'Abbāsids, the tradition was greatly amplified and altered after the Mongol invasions which fundamentally changed the character of Islamic civilization in Central Asia, Iran, and India as well as parts of Eastern Anatolia; the regions where the tradition of the talismanic shirt flourished. Mongol ceremonial traditions prior to the invasions already utilized textiles as key components of public ceremonial and private investiture.³⁷⁷ Generally speaking, textiles occupied a place of tremendous importance within Central Asian and steppe society. Their portable nature and high status as luxury items made them valuable trade goods as well as useful displays of wealth and power. Tents, perhaps the most important physical structure within all of Central Asian and steppe society, were centers of social gatherings and political intrigues and were constructed out of the most lavish fabrics, jewels, and precious metals available. By the time of Timur, tents as showcases had reached lavish heights:

The largest [tent] was square, one hundred feet per side, and again about three lances or 10 m high. Twelve poles supported the interior and arcades on the exterior were supported by a further twenty-four poles. Crimson and gold appliqué work decorated much of the interior and exterior, and four eagles were depicted at the four corners.³⁷⁸

The elaborate portable structures were built to house and display the wealth of Timur, but also to frame the physical presence of his army. Such a luxurious tent is, in many ways, a robe of honor for a whole community.

³⁷⁷ Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11.

³⁷⁸ Bernard O'Kane, "From Tents to Pavillions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 250.

While tents were by far the showiest example of the Central Asian penchant for textiles, the Mongol *jisūn*, or robe of one color, contributed significantly to the development and expansion of the *khil'a* tradition after the great invasions. The *jisūn* played a critical role in the public display of a ruler's authority and was a way of "fashioning chains of clientage that was at the very heart of Mongolian princely politics."³⁷⁹ During times of political transition, and particularly in times of a succession crisis, Mongol khans would give lavish gifts of clothing to those soldiers and men of standing whose support would be crucial for their succession.³⁸⁰ Once a khan was successful in his bid for power, the public *jisūn* feast was a display of the khan's power but also of a newly formed collective identity.³⁸¹ An account of such an event is preserved in John of Plano Carpini's mission of 1245-7 on behalf of Pope Innocent IV. Having been granted an audience with Güyük Khan, he recounts that a huge white velvet tent is erected and that on the first day, the entire court appears dressed in garments of white velvet.³⁸² This visually striking and very public display was in many ways an advertisement of the khan's control not only over craft production and material assets, but over his subjects as well.³⁸³ Here again, the employment of *khil'a* as livery is an effective comparison; in the same way that the 'Abbāsid decree demanded high-level courtiers and military officials to wear all black, Güyük Khan's all-white court is a similar display of authority and forced uniformity at the hand of the ruler.

³⁷⁹ Thomas Allsen, "Robing in the Mongolian Empire," in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, Stewart Gordon, ed. (New York : Palgrave, 2001), 307.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*

³⁸¹ Allsen, in Gordon, *Robes and Honor*, 309.

³⁸² Christopher Dawson, *Mission to Asia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 61.

³⁸³ Allsen in Gordon, *Robes and Honor*, 306.

A similar account of the public spectacle of Mongol robes of honor as a visual indicator of royal power comes from Marco Polo, who writes:

And quite ten thousand barons and knights who are called the faithful companions of the lord are dressed afterwards with him in a color and fashion like that of the robe of the great lord... they are all of one color and all are cloth of silk and gold, and those who are robed have great girdles of great value, of leather worked with thread of gold and silver very cunningly, given them, and a pair of shoes of leather worked with silver thread very skillfully. And the great lord gives them all these robes which are of very great value. [...] And from this you can see that it is a very great thing, the great excellency of the great kaan [sic] for there is no other lord in all the world who could do this nor continually keep it up, but he alone.³⁸⁴

While Marco Polo's numbers (like most found in medieval travelogs or histories) are necessarily suspect, Thomas Allsen has demonstrated quite clearly that the amount of gold-thread garments given by Mongol rulers to members of their household and armed forces must have been a staggeringly high amount.³⁸⁵ Indeed the regulation of the production of gold thread required to weave this fabric was undertaken at an official governmental level by the Mongols from a very early period.³⁸⁶

This tradition of robing and ceremonial investiture at the Mongol court is just one colorful example of the practice of a system of robing which was prevalent throughout the medieval world and later throughout the period of the patrimonial-bureaucratic states. Thus it forms a common backdrop against which the presentation of special garments like talismanic shirts, from both South Asia and Ottoman Anatolia, can be viewed and

³⁸⁴ Marco Polo in Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19-20.

³⁸⁵ Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, 26.

³⁸⁶ Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, 38.

analyzed in common. The universal nature of robing practices is such that,

it was the common property of many peoples and cultures, an
'international' institution that readily crossed political, religious, social,
and ethnic boundaries. Muslims robed Jews and Christians, Byzantines
robed Armenians, Armenians robed Abkhaz...³⁸⁷

The common occurrence of this practice does not, however, diminish its importance as a sartorial system.³⁸⁸ In the later middle ages and the patrimonial-bureaucratic period, the bestowal and acceptance of elaborate ceremonial garments within Islamic civilization reached its most luxurious height. This is due in part to the combination of the Mongol *jisūn* practice, the earlier 'Abbāsīd model of the *khil'a*, and the strong influence of ancient Persian courtly modes and aesthetics. The Sasanian kings were particularly well-known for doling out large numbers of garments during the festival of *nawrūz* that they themselves had previously worn during important ceremonial functions.³⁸⁹

The later middle ages and the beginnings of the patrimonial-bureaucratic period saw tremendous upheaval in the governance and control of Iran, Central Asia, and large swatches of the central Islamic lands. Early in the period, powerful, regional rulers sought to strengthen their claims to legitimate authority through the obtaining of titles from the caliphs who, for a time, still nominally appointed political leaders from their seat in

³⁸⁷ Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, 85-6.

³⁸⁸ In the conclusion to his edited volume on investiture in the Medieval period, Stewart Gordon outlines just how common this practice is and how the simultaneous ubiquity and ambiguity of robing practices validates the attempts by scholars to conduct cross-disciplinary investigations. Stewart Gordon, "Robes, Kings, and Semiotic Ambiguity" in *Robes and Honor*, 380-385.

³⁸⁹ Al-Jāḥiṣī recounts that at Nowruz, the Sasanian monarchs would give their courtiers the garments that they wore in the winter of that year, and that during the Fall they would similarly give away their Spring clothing. Cutler, "The Emperor's Old Clothes," 203.

Baghdad. One of the most notorious of these regional warlords was Maḥmūd of Ghazna, who understood the power that an official investiture with the *khil'a* could convey upon him, as well as the political ends his bestowing of the *khil'a* might accomplish. Maḥmūd was invested by the caliph al-Qādir as the “Sultan of Khurāsān” as well as the *walī amīr al-mu'minīn yamīn al-dawla wa-amīn al-milla* (friend of the commander of the faithful, right hand of the state and trustee for the community) in 1027.³⁹⁰ His investiture is described as follows:

... the caliph sent a *khil'a*, such as had never before been heard of, for the use of Sultan Sayf al-Dawla... the Sultan sat on his throne and robed himself in his new *khil'a*, professing his allegiance to the successor of the prophet of God. The *amīrs* of Khurasan stood before him in order, with respectful demeanor, and did not take their seats till they were directed. he then bestowed upon the nobles, his slaves, his confidential servants, and his chief friends, valuable robes and choice presents, beyond all calculation... and vowed that every year he would undertake a holy war against Hind.³⁹¹

This anecdote underscores the calculated nature of moments of investiture with the *khil'a* during politically turbulent periods. Here, Maḥmūd robes *himself* in the absence of the caliph; a move that both co-opts and subverts the caliph's political (and perhaps also even religious) authority even in the face of his public vow of allegiance to the caliph. Next, Maḥmūd's immediate subsequent bestowal of robes to his chosen court capitalizes

³⁹⁰ Gavin Hambly, “From Baghdad to Bukhara, from Ghanza to Delhi: The *Khil'a* Ceremony in the Transmission of Kingly Pomp and Circumstance,” in Gordon ed., *Robes and Honor*, 200.

³⁹¹ C. E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay, the Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India, 1040-1186* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 136. A famous miniature painting in an Ilkhanid manuscript (c. 1305-1314) of Rashid al-Dīn's *Jamī' al-Tawarikh* depicts Maḥmūd donning his *khil'a* in front of his court (Edinburgh University Library, MS Arab. 20).

on his newly elevated symbolic status and cements his relationship to the people whose loyalty he requires.³⁹² Finally, his vow to engage in battle with India on a yearly basis implies the need for the renewal of such forms of investiture, and thus the need for his retinue to annually renew their vows of protection for his person and his cause.

Subsequent Muslim rulers on the Indian subcontinent continued to utilize the *khil'a* investiture in a manner similar to Maḥmūd of Ghazna, particularly while an 'Abbāsīd caliph still nominally retained his status in Baghdad. Moreover, these rulers brought with them (and welcomed as exiles) many highly skilled craftspeople and textile workers from across Khurāsān, the central Islamic lands, and China in order to produce increasingly fine garments to meet the needs of their courts.³⁹³ The Mamlūk Sultan of Delhi, Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish (d. 1236)³⁹⁴ received his caliphal investiture as the "Sultan of Hindustan" in 1231 via an embassy from the caliph al-Mustanṣir. Much like Maḥmūd of Ghazna, in his urgent need to convert his new-found status into durable allegiances, Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish immediately invested his son Rukn al-Dīn Fērōz with a robe of honor and declared him successor. Iltutmish, however, went a step further than

³⁹² Patricia L. Baker has noted that the refusal to accept a *khil'a* from a ruler was tantamount to an open expression of hostility. Thus, Maḥmūd's immediate move toward bestowing garments serves as a kind of loyalty test, by which he could attempt to ascertain if any of his chosen retinue had designs against him. Baker, "Islamic Honorific Garments," 28.

³⁹³ The three main centers of settlement for these workers between 1211 and 1287 were Multan, Lahore, and Delhi. See Roshen Alkazi, *Medieval Indian Costume: India and Central Asia* (New Delhi: Art Heritage, 2008), 14.

³⁹⁴ The Sultan's Turkish name made for difficult transliterations and frequent scribal errors which led to a number of misspellings and disagreements over proper pronunciation and form. For an excellent study of this phenomenon based on manuscript, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence, see Simon Digby, "Iltutmish or Iltutmish? A Reconsideration of the Name of the Delhi Sultan," *Iran* 8 (1970): 57-64. Digby concludes that Iltutmish is the correct form of the name and is thus the form used here.

did his predecessors in having the caliph's name read in the *khuṭba* as well as having al-Mustanṣir's name struck on the coinage of Delhi Sultanate.³⁹⁵

By the middle of the 13th-century, the 'Abbāsid caliphs had been deposed following the sack of Baghdad by Hülegü and Mongol forces in 1258. Thus the investiture of the *khil'a* which had relied on the authority of the caliph, however nominally, underwent a subtle change. In South Asia, the lavish distribution of robes and highly orchestrated ceremonial increased in scale and splendor, particularly under the Tughluqids and the later Delhi Sultans. In terms of their design, these garments were increasingly influenced by Turco-Mongol styles, a feature which would remain relatively stable until the middle of the 16th century.³⁹⁶ The first Tughluqid Sultan, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq (d. 1325) was a Qara'una Turk³⁹⁷ and a member of the dispensation or *ulus* of the Golden Horde.³⁹⁸ While Berke Khan (d.1267) converted to Islam around 1257, the Golden Horde did not "officially" become Muslim until the conversion of Özbeg Khan near the beginning of his reign in 1313.³⁹⁹ The Tughluqids would come to control large portions of the Deccan plateau, largely through the help of their military bands which

³⁹⁵ Hambly, in Gordon ed., *Robes and Honor*, 210.

³⁹⁶ Alkazi, *Medieval Indian Costume*, 153.

³⁹⁷ Sunil Kumar, "The Ignored Elites: Turks, Mongols and a Persian Secretarial Class in the Early Delhi Sultanate," *Modern Asian Studies* 43/1 (2009): 51.

³⁹⁸ David Morgan, *The Mongols*, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 125. The title "Golden Horde" is a later, likely Russian attribution, for the Mongol empire under Jochi's son Batu which centered around the Qipchaq steppe. There were almost certainly more Turks than Mongols under the dispensation of the Golden Horde.

³⁹⁹ Morgan, *Mongols*, 127. For an excellent account of the spread of Islam within the Golden Horde and the role of conversion within the community, see Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1994).

were set up to defend the borders of the Tughluqid territory from incursions (often by other Mongol descendants). The garrison towns set up along these borders were largely staffed by Turkish mamlūks.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, Ghiyāth al-Dīn's army was largely made up of Turks (particularly Western Turks), Rus, Mongols and Persians from Khurāsān.⁴⁰¹ Thus the military elites and provincial governors, those most often on the receiving end of the *khil'a* investiture, were Turks or Mongols who highly valued the gift of robes and carried with them deep and meaningful understandings of the significance of contact with the body in such exchanges. Furthermore, given the influx of textile artists from Central Asia and Turkic provinces, the garments themselves were being increasingly manufactured in Turco-Mongol fashion.

While the Mongols' destruction of the ceremonial figurehead of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate changed the nature of ceremonial investitures in subsequent Islamic polities, the long-standing traditions of robing and livery among the Mongols combined with ancient Perso-Iranian traditions amplified the *khil'a* bestowal. The Tughluqid sultans may not have received the *khil'a* from a caliph, but they nonetheless bestowed the *khil'a* in a manner much in keeping with their status as the military and political leaders of their realms. Here again there is a clear demonstration of Bourdieu's *habitus* surrounding the investiture of a robe of honor which allows for change over time, while still ensuring the perseverance of past modes and structures. Ghiyāth al-Dīn's son, Muḥammad ibn Tughluq gave one particular robe to a special appointee which is highly reminiscent of the kinds of garments most prized among the Mongols. The robe was made of silk and a

⁴⁰⁰ Kumar, "The Ignored Elites," 46.

⁴⁰¹ Kumar, "The Ignored Elites," 55.

lion was embroidered using tremendous quantities of gold thread; the exact quantity of gold thread was indicated on a label affixed to the garment at the moment of its presentation.⁴⁰² Cloth of gold was the gift *par excellence* among the Mongols, and the passion for gold cloth would only intensify in those parts of the Islamic world where peoples of Mongol descent migrated and accrued wealth and power.

One account from the *Masālik al-abṭār fī mamālik al-amṭār* (The Paths of Vision in the Principalities of Regions) of Shihāb al-Dīn al-ʿUmarī (d. 1348) demonstrates the institutionalization of the bestowal of robes of honor in India during the period which intervened between the Mongols and the Mughals:

The Sultan has a *kārkhāna* (workshop) where embroidery work is done. There are 4,000 silk-workers, who manufacture different kinds of cloth for robes of honour and garments [for army personnel]. Besides, they also embroider the cloth which is imported from China, Iraq and Alexandria. The Sultan distributes every year to all, complete garments, namely, 1,000,000 in the winter and 1,000,000 in summer. The garments of the winter are made mostly from the Alexandrian stuff, while those of the summer are all of silk, made in the *kārkhānah* of Delhi as well as the stuff from China and Iraq. The royal garments are distributed among the saints of the *khānqāhs* as well. The Sultan has 4,000 embroiderers who prepare brocades for him and his *harem*. They also make robes of honour which the Sultan bestows upon the nobles and their wives.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² Hambly, in Gordon ed., *Robes and Honor*, 213. One must assume that the inscription on this label was read out loud at the investiture, given the fact that the author of the text does not claim to have been present at the ceremony and thus heard it second hand. The scene is then not unlike a contemporary parallel in which a gift-giver, in the hopes of impressing the recipient, deliberately leaves the price-tag on an expensive item which is intended to be opened in a group setting. While the gift has been given out of respect or gratitude, it is the giver and not the recipient who becomes the focus of the exchange, and the status of the giver is subsequently publicly elevated over that of both the recipient and the audience.

⁴⁰³ Shihāb al-Dīn al-ʿUmarī, *A Fourteenth Century Arab Account of India under Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (Being [the] English Translation of the Chapters of India from Shihāb al-Dīn al-ʿUmarī's Masālik al-abṭār fī mamālik al-amṭār)*, tr. Iqtidar Husain

While the numbers in this account are perhaps equally as suspect as those gleaned from Marco Polo's extract cited above, they nonetheless provide a window to the volume of luxury textiles circulated at the Tughluqid court. The garments distributed there were constructed of the finest quality materials available through international trade, and embroidered and embellished locally through a devoted "imperial" *kārkhāna*.

While pinpointing surviving garments which may have been *khil'as* produced in a Tughluqid *kārkhāna* is outside the scope of this project, understanding the scale of luxury textile production in southern India during the period immediately prior to the earliest known talismanic shirts from this region is instructive. The evidence outlined above indicates a proliferation of artists of Turco-Mongol and Central Asian extraction arriving in the Deccan during this period and assimilating into the textile production centers of Delhi and elsewhere. The styles of textiles created during the 13th through 14th centuries maintained their popularity in the ensuing periods of political upheaval all the way through the era of the Lodhi Sultans (1451-1526).⁴⁰⁴ The highly contested frontiers during the Delhi Sultanates would have housed thousands of soldiers (themselves of mixed ethnicities) in the precise social positions to be on the receiving end of special textiles, and undoubtedly desirous of additional protection while on the front lines. These soldiers, particularly those who had migrated from the steppes, likely possessed notions

Siddiqi & Qazi Mohammad Ahmad (Aligarh: Siddiqi Publishing House, 1971), 16. The final sentence of this quotation is potentially significant for the section which follows concerning the relationship between sultans and shaykhs with respect to the exchange of gifts or *tabarrukāt*. The following chapter deals with this process at length.

⁴⁰⁴ Alkazi, *Medieval Indian Costume*, 234. Due to the paucity of surviving textiles from this period (which do not survive well largely due to the climate of South Asia), evidence for textile and garment styles comes from other media such as painting and sculpture.

of the expression of power through the bestowal of garments which would have mapped quite neatly on to the tradition of the *khil'a* and the acceptance of a livery.

Understanding the wide-ranging implementation of the *khil'a* bestowal, and thus the semiotics of robing, throughout this period serves to link the evaluation of talismanic shirts from both Ottoman and South Asian milieux, even in the face of stylistic and material differences. While the *khil'a* may have taken on a wide variety of physical forms throughout the hundreds of years intervening between the 'Abbāsid court and the last Delhi Sultans, the circumstances of its bestowal and the visual typology of the garments constituted a sartorial system that remained fairly stable. The *habitus* of the robe of honor, complete with a structuring notion of luxury goods and the roles of giver and recipient thus allowed for the persistence of traditions through time while still supporting novel expressions of the practice.

While the ceremonial act of bestowing the robe of honor was clearly used as a moment to exercise power, it was the recipient's act of wearing the garment that was often equally as important as the garment itself. The wearing of a *khil'a* could encompass many political functions. It could serve as a contract between an official and the ruler, it could act as a kind of bribe, it could seal contracts between two rulers, and it could also serve as a visual symbol of subordination between subject and sultan. This made the act of putting on a *khil'a* symbolic in its own right. Ceremonial activities accompanied the distribution and acceptance of the robe of honor, often with incredibly lavish displays of power on the part of the leader and humility (however feigned) on the part of the recipient. But while the act of giving a garment implies an asymmetrical power

relationship between the giver and the recipient, the recipient often stood to gain significant benefits from the exchange as well.

In the ‘Abbāsīd case discussed above, the caliph’s “superior” status in bestowing the *khil’a* on ‘Aḡud al-Dawla was symbolic given the reality of the relationship between the Būyids and the ‘Abbāsīds in the 11th century. It is precisely during this period that investiture ceremonies at the ‘Abbāsīd court became even more luxurious, with “the caliphs seeking to compensate the loss of their powers by a greater magnificence, and the chief emirs piling up honorific distinctions, the better to prove their legitimacy.”⁴⁰⁵ ‘Aḡud al-Dawla stood to gain far more from the exchange than the caliph, quite in contrast to the examples from the Mongol court of the 13th century. There the recipients of the *khil’a* were bound, through the receipt of the garment, to total fealty to the khan and the divestiture of royal robes was tantamount to public dismissal. These two early examples demonstrate that, though the practice of bestowing garments as an exchange of power was commonplace throughout the medieval Islamic world, the circumstances of that exchange were highly proscribed by historical circumstance.

The significance of contact with, and an image of, the body in the giving and receiving of garments lurks under the surface of these discussions about the *khil’a* in a medieval Islamic context. Through touch and through contact with other bodies, garments are imbued with a powerful sense of both the presence and absence of the body. Similarly, when garments are viewed on their own (that is when they are not worn) they evoke the body that once filled them, often in poignant ways. This phenomenon is a

⁴⁰⁵ Dominique Sourdel, “Robes of Honor in ‘Abbāsīd Baghdad during the 8th-11th Centuries,” in Gordon ed., *Robes and Honor*, 139.

common experience for anyone who has had to sort through the clothes of a loved one who has died; the empty garments are the marker of the person who is no longer there.⁴⁰⁶ Such is the case with trying to understand the talismanic shirts which survive today. In trying to recover the bodies that once filled these garments, one must take into consideration the variety of traditions and practices which governed the giving and receiving of clothing and the circumstances of wear which governed their creation, design and use.

⁴⁰⁶Entwistle, "The Dressed Body," 137.

CHAPTER 5: The Sainted Body

“Abandon fame and any distinguishing signs and put on the mantle of reproach. Do not forget, there are many sultans disguised in this *khirqā*.”

- Ismail Ma‘ṣūqī (d.1529)⁴⁰⁷

Just as the *khil‘a* is an excellent example of the communicative power of robes and robing, another equally charged garment emphasizes the power of textiles to evoke the body: the *khirqā*. Though a carrier of semiotic power in its own right, the *khirqā*’s evocation of the body and preservation of the body’s ephemeral traces imbue this garment with an additional set of meanings. The *khirqā* can function like the *khil‘a* in the transference of power and cementing of political relationships, and thus it participates in many ways in the same satorial system of ceremonial robing. However in the case of the *khirqā*, the addition of *baraka*, the concept of saintly blessing, amplifies the importance of the presentation of the the *khirqā*. These garments are sanctified through the presence of *baraka*, particularly amplified through the direct contact with saintly bodies. The ways in which the body is intrinsic to notions of *baraka* throughout the Islamic world forms the central focus of this chapter.

⁴⁰⁷ Cited after Hakan T. Karateke, “Controversies about Sufi garments in the Ottoman Empire,” *El Sufismo y la normas de Islam: Trabajos del IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Juridicos*. (Murcia: Edition Regional de Murcia, 2006): 344.

A Coat of Many colors: The Visual Vocabulary of the Khirqa

Much in the same way that there is a visual vocabulary for the *khil'a*, the *khirqa* is a garment with its own aesthetics; it is one of world-renouncing and memorializing the saintly body. Whereas the *khil'a* is often marked by the use or imitation of luxury materials and labor intensive techniques, the *khirqa* is equally marked by the absence of such things. The *khirqa* created a tangible expression of a spiritual lineage and became, in effect, a symbol for the ascetic path. A Sufi robe passed from master to disciple, this shirt or cloak also maintained stylistic variations, though of a less lavish sort than that of the *khil'a*. The garment, often made from rough wool (□ūf), was intended to act as a physical reminder of the world-renouncing turn common within many orders and circles. Much like the *khil'a*, the variation in appearance among examples of the *khirqa* was nevertheless bounded by a set of typological features that allowed them to be just as recognizable. While the *khil'a*'s transformative power over the body was most often of a political nature, the *khirqa* was often intended to be an outward marker of an internal state. Nevertheless, the *khirqa* also generated connections between bodies (living, dead, or even imaginary) which allowed it to function as a symbol for asceticism and piety both in literary contexts, and through the preservation and enshrinement of hallowed textiles.

There are enough similarities between the *khirqa* and the *khil'a*, at least in terms of their distribution and status for the recipient, that some distinction between these two terms must be made from the outset. In South Asia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there was a particularly strong correlation between the two concepts, so much so that Mu□ammad ibn Tughluq himself voiced his distaste for sufi robes on a account of

Asia, there seems to have been a similar variety of garments which fall under the heading of *khirqa*, including (but not limited to): wool or camel-hair garments in red, blue, white, green or black, quilted (*sawzanī*), parti-colored (*mulamma'*), "1,000 lines" (*hazār-khaṣṣī*), buttoned (*jawz-girin*), patched (*muraqqa'*), or simply "ragged" (*khirqa*).⁴¹²

While the *khil'a* bestowal has at its core the historic traditions of robing in the ancient Near East, the tradition of the *khirqa* appears to be more localized to the early period of the Islamic polity. The term *khirqa* (pl. *khiraq*)⁴¹³ comes from the verb *kharaqa* meaning to rend or to tear apart. The *khirqa* was closely associated with prophetic figures, and the *muraqqa'a* (patched) nature of the *khirqa* was said to invoke the *sunna* of the Prophet Muḥammad who preferred patched garments.⁴¹⁴ Furthermore, the *khirqa* was also believed to be the garment which Adam and Eve fashioned for themselves in the Garden of Eden.⁴¹⁵ This attribution makes the *khirqa* the first garment worn by human kind, and thus the first clothing to be draped over the human body. Adam's status at the first prophet underscores a connection between the *khirqa* and closeness to God, while the garment's status as the first to touch human skin underscores the importance of bodily contact in the transmission of *baraka* and saintly authority.

By the later medieval period, the language used to describe the giving of a *khirqa* reflects the relationship created by the bestowal more so than the nature of the object

of which are reproduced in Atasoy's article.

⁴¹² Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 100. The "1,000 lines" type is still somewhat uncertain but may be a heavily repaired garment or one created out of sewing together many strips of fabric.

⁴¹³ For ease of reading, the plural will be rendered here as *khirqas*.

⁴¹⁴ Jamal J. Elias, "The Sufi Robe (*Khirqa*) as a Vehicle of Spiritual Authority," in Gordon ed., *Robes and Honor*, 277.

⁴¹⁵ Elias, in Gordon ed., *Robes and Honor*, 276.

itself. Two commonly used verbs for the bestowal of the *khirqa* in South Asia are *paywant kardan* and *ta'alluq dādan*, both meaning “to join.”⁴¹⁶

The physical presentation of the *khirqa*, as noted above, could vary widely. But it often maintained a set of visual paradigms which can be observed in the surviving objects themselves as well as attested to in written sources. The patchwork or *muraqqa'a* form of the *khirqa* is a common trope for asceticism and functioning as a mark of the devotion of the wearer through the insistence on frugality and re-use of old or worn-out garments. Such patched *khirqas* could, however, have a highly stylized appearance as is the case with the Topkapı's TSM 24/1774. This 17th -century robe is patched together from two cotton textiles (one black and the other blue and white checked) sewn onto a plain coarsely-woven cotton lining. The patches are identical squares arranged in alternating colors to form a checkerboard.⁴¹⁷ The strong geometric appearance of this pattern, coupled with the starkly alternating colors of the patches, makes for a highly visible garment that would have clearly stood out from the brightly colored delicate cotton and silk caftans that were the fashion of the age.⁴¹⁸

Another example from the Topkapı's collection demonstrates how the appearance

⁴¹⁶ Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 93. Alternatively, the verb for the investiture of a *khirqa* can be rendered *khirqa pōshānīdan* (lit. to dress in a *khirqa*). See: Elias in Gordon.

⁴¹⁷ Hülya Tezcan, “Dervish and Sufi Costume in the Topkapı Palace Collection,” in *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies VII: Selected Papers from ICOC X, Washington 2003 and ICOC XI, Istanbul 2007* (2011): 194.

⁴¹⁸ Here it is important to note that in the sixteenth century edicts determined that certain colors were to be worn by non-Muslims only (black and dark blue). The relative brightness of other colors (particularly red, purple and blue) was largely determined by one's income and the quality of fabrics that they could afford. Suraiya Faruqi, “Introduction, or why and how one might want to study Ottoman clothes,” in *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*, Suraiya Faruqi & Christoph K. Neumann eds., (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), 26.

of patchwork could be fabricated from the outset in the creation of a textile itself. The shirt TSM 24/2120 is also made of cotton in a cream and blue color scheme. From a distance, the garment appears to have patches of roughly woven fabric applied to the sleeves, sides and front. But textile analysis reveals that these areas were actually generated on-loom, through the addition of supplemental wefts with a significantly higher EPI count⁴¹⁹ than both the warp and main weft threads.⁴²⁰ This not only generates a visible pattern, but it also creates a difference in textures which contributes to the overall appearance of a patched garment. These two Ottoman garments, understood as *khirqas*, are significant in that they demonstrate how important the *appearance* of patchwork ultimately became in associating a garment with a Sufi group or individual. Much in the same way that the literary trope of *muraqqa'a* robes was a marker of asceticism, the visual trope of *muraqqa'a* robes came to serve as a marker of belonging to or association with the Sufi orders. Here again, special robes like the *khirqa*, can also be read as a livery; their donning indicates the belonging to a particular special group and their allegiance to a particular authority figure.

Viewing the *muraqqa'a* style as a visual trope allows an even greater connection to be drawn between the tradition of the *khirqa* and a number of the Ottoman talismanic shirts. A large number of these garments are covered in fields of geometric patterns rendered in alternating colors, and these patterns bear striking resemblance to the checkerboard motifs and large applied patch designs of the two robes just discussed

⁴¹⁹ Ends per inch; a marker of textile fineness based on the number of threads measured per inch at the reed end of the loom.

⁴²⁰ Tezcan, "Dervish and Sufi Costumes," 194. The date of this garment is not given.

(TSM 24/2120 and 24/1774). In fact, when tracings are made of the main fields of pattern, they appear more like patched garments than painted ones.⁴²¹ There is a clear aesthetic preference within a large part of the Ottoman shirts for square fields of gridded letters or numbers, or long strips of text arranged in concentric patterns. Given that these designs are all painted by hand and thus freed from the traditional constraints of on-loom design, one must conclude that this style is deliberate.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from within the corpus of South Asian shirts which, unlike the Ottoman examples, all feature nearly identical designs. They are painted and therefore similarly open to any potential decorative scheme. And yet they all bear layout features which call to mind the second highly prevalent trope for Sufi garments: the tattered robe. Much like a patched robe, a tattered robe was seen as a symbol of world-renouncing and a mark of the preponderance of inner concern in contrast to outward vanity. Talismanic shirts from South Asia recall the idea of the tattered garment through a design layout which features a bottom border (on both the front and back) of flag-like lozenges of text. These shapes, in some cases rounded and in others pointed, are highly evocative of a garment that has been shredded or torn at the edges, as would be the case with a garment worn without mending for many years.

While the overall scheme of the layout for the Qur'ānic text on these shirts uses a grid pattern, the bottom borders on all of the South Asian shirts have been rendered in this same kind of lobed design. Within this lobed design blank space is left in some areas

⁴²¹ The appended catalogue features line drawings of the primary fields and motifs on most of the Ottoman talismanic shirts discussed here. These line drawings emphasize this feeling of patchwork in many examples.

while others are highly crowded with the text of final *sūras*. In the case of a shirt at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the text of the final *sūra* is sloppily added on the bottom border of the garment, totally outside of the applied pattern, indicating that the design was created first and then the text filled in subsequently. This suggests that the choice to create this layout with a lobed border superseded the importance of clearly displaying the text itself. Much in the same way that the patched appearance of the Ottoman examples can be clearly viewed from afar and is evocative of the patched *khirqā*, these South Asian shirts appear as tattered and worn *khirqas*.

Sufi shaykhs, dervish orders, and sultans had a close and often tempestuous relationship with each other during the early Delhi Sultanate, as established in the work of the late Simon Digby.⁴²² During the mamlūk dynasty of the Delhi Sultanates (the years prior to the rise of the Tughluqids) the Chishtī *silsila* that had been established in the early part of the 13th century began to flourish. Originally centered around Ajmer, the order was moved to Delhi by Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī in the middle of the 13th century during the reign of Iltutmish.⁴²³ The early period was marked by asceticism and detachment from the ruling class on the part of the Chishtīya. Yet under Bakhtiyār Kākī's successors, the order became increasingly close to the Tughluqid Sultans particularly during the time of Naṣīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd (*Chirāgh-i Delhī*), Bakhtiyār Kākī's son.⁴²⁴ According to the history commissioned for Fērōz Shāh (the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī* of

⁴²² Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaykh and the Sultan: a Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval Islam," *Iran* 28 (1990): 71-81.

⁴²³ Aziz Ahmad, "The Sufi and the Sultan in Pre-Mughal Muslim India," *Der Islam* 38 (1962): 142.

⁴²⁴ Ahmad, "Sufi and the Sultan," 147.

Shams-i Sirāj al-‘Afīf), “Naṣīr al-dīn Chirāgh of Delhi accompanied Muḥammad ibn Tughluq on his expeditions and on his death, administered the oath of office to his successor Fīrūz Tughlaq.”⁴²⁵ But this closeness between shaykh and sultan was certainly not the standard for the Chishtīya who more often than not maintained a distance from the ruling elite.

The suspicions harbored on the part of Sufīs when it came to interactions with the sultans are clearly evidenced in an anecdote recounting the audience of the Suhrawardī shaykh Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī (d. 1384) with Muḥammad ibn Tughluq. After being summoned to this audience, Bukhārī expresses his anxiety surrounding this meeting with the sultan who had been pursuing a policy of removing “dervish clothes” from the Sufī orders in his domain.⁴²⁶ Prior to his audience, Bukhārī is dressed in a “robe of blessing” by the aforementioned Shaykh Naṣīr al-dīn Maḥmūd. The shaykh assures Bukhārī that this garment will protect him from the schemes of the sultan, whose intent is to “defrock” the sufi and re-vest him with the *khil‘a* of a government official. This robe becomes a *ta‘wīz* (amulet) and Bukhārī is spared from this courtly investiture.⁴²⁷

An anecdote like this one demonstrates how the *khirqā* became a symbol in South Asia during this period for the constantly changing relationship between rulers and sufi orders. The strength or absence of this relationship varied from order to order and from shaykh to shaykh. For the Suhrawardīya, a “cordial” relationship with the Delhi Sultans was the answer to the following conundrum facing the Sufī orders in South Asia:

⁴²⁵ Shams-i Sirāj al-‘Afīf, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī*, ed. Vilāyat Husain (Calcutta: n.p., 1890), 29, in Ahmad, “Sufi and the Sultan,” 151.

⁴²⁶ Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 30.

⁴²⁷ Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 30-1.

“Should the saint be the sultan’s spiritual adviser in the guidance of the Muslim state; or should the saint in his own right rule over the spiritual élite and the Muslim intelligensia, an inward, unwordly rule which did not need the alliance of and did not brook any compromise with the state or its ruler?”⁴²⁸

Historical accounts preserve anecdotes that demonstrate how the gift of textiles from shaykh to sultan served to bridge some of these concerns and assuage both parties involved in the exchange. The gift of textiles, as has been discussed above, could serve as a legitimization of temporal authority, a conveyance of spiritual authority, and also as conveyance of *baraka*. In one such incident, the 13th- or 14th-century Chishtī *shaykh* ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī Aḥmad Ḥābir Kaliyārī (d. 1325), reportedly gave a bolt of unsewn cloth to the first Tughluqid Sultan, the length of which corresponded to the length of his rule.⁴²⁹ Through the period of the Bahmani and Bijapuri sultans, the investiture of a set of garments from *shaykh* to sultan served as a guarantee of *baraka* and created a filiation between the two. Texts from the period reveal that once this special garment was treated with disrespect (e.g., by the last Bahmani Sultan, Sultan Maḥmūd Bahmanī) the *shaykh* then bestowed the garments on the new sultans at Bijapur, thus signaling the beginning of a new sultanate.⁴³⁰

The Invisible Khirqa

Just as with the *khil’a*, the person bestowing the garment was of paramount

⁴²⁸ Ahmad, “The Sufi and the Sultan,” 147.

⁴²⁹ Digby, “Sufi Shaykh and Sultan,” 77.

⁴³⁰ Digby, “Sufi Shaykh and Sultan,” 78.

importance in the ceremony of receiving a *khirqā*. The act of giving a gift in public is, “a total scenario of exercising power, instigating astonishment, and memorializing the event as exclusive and unique.”⁴³¹ And yet the *pīr/murīd* relationship did not necessarily require a living (or even historically real) person in the role of the *pir*. One particularly important figure in the *silsila* of a number of historically significant Sufis is Uways al-Qaranī, an early mystic (and largely mythical) figure associated with the lifetime of the Prophet. Uways al-Qaranī was depicted from an early period as being a world-fleeing ascetic, particularly in the early works of Ibn Sa‘d (d. 845).⁴³² As part of his depiction as an ascetic, Uways’s garments became a key trope in describing his world-shunning nature. Uways is said to have given away his clothes to the needy, even if this meant leaving his own body naked.⁴³³ Both Ibn ʿAnbal (d. 855) and Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200) comment on the nature of Uways’s clothing, and both descriptions reflect the tropes of poverty and asceticism that one might expect to find in the biography of a legendary Sufi: woolen and tattered.⁴³⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī uses a particular attribution, *dhū ʿimrayn* indicating that Uways possessed only two tattered old garments.⁴³⁵

⁴³¹ Avinoam Shalem, “Performance of the Object,” in *Gifts of the Sultan*, Komaroff & Carboni eds., 111.

⁴³² For a detailed study of the hagiographical traditions surrounding Uways including selections from an unicum manuscript, attributed to Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabi titled *Maqāmāt al-Uḍabā’ bayna yaday al-Umarā’*, see Katia Zakharia, “Uways al-Qarni: Visages d’une légende,” *Arabica* 46, no. 2 (1999): 230-258.

⁴³³ Zakharia, “Uways al-Qarni,” 243.

⁴³⁴ Zakharia, “Uways al-Qarni,” 251.

⁴³⁵ Zakharia, “Uways al-Qarni,” 251. Zakharia translates this attribution as “vêtu de deux défroques superposées”, but there is no indication in the word *ʿimrayn* that the two garments were worn simultaneously. Dozy’s still reputable *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes* contains no specific entry for this term which leads this author to conclude that there is no particular understanding of the *ʿimrayn* as a

Dozens of Sufi lineages retain figures “initiated” by Uways, either through dreams or visions of the legendary figure without the actual physical investment of the *khirqā*. And yet material objects associated with the figure, particularly garments are preserved in the Topkapı palace museum in Istanbul. The Topkapı’s collection of garments “belonging to”⁴³⁶ Uways is largely made up of hats. Their association with Uways appears to come from a long history of attribution from within the palace, in the form of silk covers embroidered with phrases like “*tac-ı şerif Hazreti Üveys al-Karani*” (Holy crown of the blessed Uways al-Qarani).⁴³⁷ It is important to note that these covers most likely were created for the objects at the moment they entered the palace’s collection, and thus cannot be used as proof of the authenticity of the hats which they protect.⁴³⁸

In addition to the hats in the collection of the Topkapı Palace, there are two famous garments associated with Uways which are also preserved in Istanbul. The most famous of Uways’s supposed garments is the cloak preserved today in the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque in Istanbul,⁴³⁹ a structure commissioned by Sultan Abdulmecid (d. 1861), who

specific single garment.

⁴³⁶ Hülya Tezcan, “Dervish and Sufi Costume,” 196. For Uways’s biography, Tezcan uses Abidin Sönmez, *Veysel Karani ve Hırka-i Şerif* (Istanbul: Hırka-i Şerif Camii Hizmet Vakfı, 1989).

⁴³⁷ Tezcan, “Dervish and Sufi Costume,” 196-7.

⁴³⁸ While Tezcan does not note the date for these covers, in discussing the other important Sūfī garments in the Palace collection, she notes that their custom-fitted cases and tags were made during the 19th century. Tezcan, “Dervish and Sufi Costume,” 192.

⁴³⁹ The Hırka-i Şerif of Uways is not to be confused with the other Hırka-i Şerif sometimes referred to as the *burda* (also the Hırka-i Sa’ādet) of the prophet which is housed in the Topkapı Palace. Both mantles are associated with the Prophet, though the mantle attributed to Uways was brought to Istanbul in the 17th century and housed in a private home until the 19th century. The Prophet’s holy mantle was part of the Palace

may have himself been a Naqshbandī.⁴⁴⁰ This garment is made of embroidered cotton, and has a “Mamluk character.”⁴⁴¹ Putting aside the highly problematic nature of the garment’s physical characteristics (for example, the possibility of a cotton garment from the 7th century surviving for more than 1,000 years in pristine condition, or the clearly anachronistic nature of its construction and decoration), it is nonetheless significant that a garment associated with one of the most important early ascetics has come to occupy such a prominent place. The mantle is perhaps the “ultimate” *khirqa* as, according to legend, it was given to Uways by the Prophet himself.⁴⁴²

The second notable garment associated with Uways currently held in Istanbul is TSM 24/2023, a white cotton garment with short sleeves, has been dubbed a “talismanic shirt” by Hülya Tezcan in her extensive work on the collection. Again, the attribution that this shirt belonged to Uways comes from information on the garment’s 19th-century labeling. Under the reign of Abdulhamid II (d. 1909) the shirt was placed in a velvet box which bears the label “Uwais Qarni Hazretleri’nin kisve-i şerifleridir, sene 1896” (Holy Dress of Hazrat Uways al-Qaranī, year 1896).⁴⁴³ The garment itself is very simple, and is covered primarily in long lines of Arabic numerals. The front and back sections each

collection of holy relics and used regularly by the Ottoman Sultans for ceremonies from the early 16th century when it was brought to Istanbul from Mecca. For disambiguation between the two garments see *EF*², s.v. “K□h□ir□a-yi S□h□erīf.”

⁴⁴⁰ Tezcan, “Dervish and Sufi Costume,” 192. If he himself was not actually a Naqshbandī, he certainly lent a considerable amount of state support to the order. Notably, the Sultan financially supported the building of a dome over the Damascus tomb of Mawlāna Khālīd Baghdādī (d. 1827), the founder of the Khālīdī-Naqshbandī order. See Hamid Algar, “Devotional Practices of the Khālīdī Naqshbandīs of Ottoman Turkey,” in Lifchez (ed.), *The Dervish Lodge*, 212.

⁴⁴¹ Tezcan, “Dervish and Sufi Costume,” 196.

⁴⁴² *EF*², s.v. “K□h□ir□a-yi S□h□erīf.”

⁴⁴³ Hülya Tezcan, *Şifalı Gömlekler*, 91.

feature very large magic squares filled with words and numbers. The sleeves bear additional magic squares. The whole of the design is executed in black or dark brown ink, with the exception of the lines delineating the magic squares which have been laid in faint red ink.

The fact that this group of garments associated with Uways appears to have been at least formally accepted into the collection of the palace in the middle of the 19th century highlights the powerful significance of Uwaysī initiation through the use of the *khirqā* as well as the continuing representative role of the garment as a symbol of the ascetic. The Hırka-i Şerif remains on display at the mosque in Istanbul, for a few months a year, as a symbol of Uways himself and marker for the absent body of the saint who played a tremendously important role in the lives of Turkish Sufis for hundreds of years.

Both the *khil'a* and the *khirqā* demonstrate how garments placed on and taken off the body can be used to create and strengthen the relationships between peoples and polities. Both cases similarly underscore the importance of performance in the exchange of objects, and the power relationships behind the process of giving gifts. But the *khil'a* and the *khirqā* could not have endured as such crucial conveyors of meaning were it not for their contact with and evocation of the body itself. In the most general sense, the *khil'a* provides political protection through the safeguarding of two bodies: the giver and the recipient. The one bestowing the *khil'a* is attempting to guarantee his own bodily protection through the service of the one receiving the robe of honor. In accepting the *khil'a*, the recipient also accepts the rule and political protection of the bestower and thus attempts to guarantee the safety of his own person.

In the case of the *khirqā*, it is the garment as the *remembrance* of the body which serves as the basis for its ability to generate meaning and confer authority. This feature is underscored by the preservation of a number of Mevlevi caftans embroidered with Qur’ānic verses and sayings from the *aḥādīth* that were created in the 18th or 19th century and labeled with the names of 13th century shaykhs.⁴⁴⁴ Such garments are *khirqas* in a purely commemorative way, as they were never directly in contact with the body of the *shaykh* and were created hundreds of years after his death. Additionally, the *khirqā* became a literary trope for the perfected body of the ascetic, and the safeguarding of a particular physical *khirqā* functions as a safeguarding of an entire line of ascetic tradition. In preserving the physical vestiges of a spiritual lineage, the *khirqā* becomes both a vehicle for and a symbol of the continued investiture of saintly bodies.

Saintly bodies that are connected through a spiritual lineage created through the *pīr/murīd* relationship become sealed together through the investment of the *khirqā*, which then becomes a symbol of that bond. Symbolic use of the *khirqā* as metonym for spiritual virtue is frequently found in poetry, and the poetry of Ibn ‘Arabī contains some particularly clear examples. In both examples, the *khirqā* is the physical proof (and thus symbolic trope) of the disciple’s investiture at the hand of the master:

A maiden was wrapped at our hand
 In a *khirqā* with which she attained
 The essence of perfection
 An exalted religious *khirqā*

⁴⁴⁴ One such caftan, a red silk garment with over-long sleeves, is preserved in the Mevlana Museum in Konya as having belonged to Sultan Veled, though it is of 18th or 19th century origin. Atasoy, “Dervish Dress,” 267-8.

Elevating her to the station of men

God wrapped her in a robe of glory, acceptance, and beauty
Illumination, radiance, temperance, splendor, and majesty...⁴⁴⁵

I bestowed upon my daughter, Safari

A *khirqa* possessed by the people of refinement [*adab*]

I clothed her in a robe of piety

Comprised of every pleasing virtue

“Oh, daughter!” I said, “Follow my path and my *madhhab*

My way is the *Sharī‘a* of the Arab Hashemite prophet

Thus the garment that I bestowed on her

Encompasses [the knowledge] of every noble teacher

I say this and I am Muḥammad Ibn al-‘Arabī.⁴⁴⁶

Saintly power transfers through the receipt of a *khirqa* in much the same way that political power transfers in the exchange of a *khil‘a*. The garment becomes an outward sign of the inward transformation that occurs through the initiation into discipleship, and changes the very body of the recipient into that of an enlightened figure.

Khirqa and Bodily contact: The Transfer of Baraka

The final section in this chapter focuses on the physical aspects of a saintly body and the ways in which those aspects can have effects on other members of the spiritual community after the death of a master. Through the retention of saintly *baraka*, objects

⁴⁴⁵ Sa‘diyya Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn Arabi, Gender, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 136.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, 231.

brought into physical contact with the body of a *shaykh* were understood to bring good fortune as well as avoid misfortune. In the case of the Ottoman collection of talismanic shirts, the names of *shaykhs* appear on some of these garments themselves, underscoring the primary importance of memorializing physical contact with saintly figures and highlighting the apotropaic power of the saintly presence.⁴⁴⁷ The remembrance of bodies through the physical acts of touching, sharing a meal, or wearing a garment, could thus be reenacted through centuries. Of particular interest here are the ways in which material objects become imbued with *baraka* and how *baraka* transmitted from body to body can serve as powerful, physical protection.

Defining *baraka* for the purposes of discussing the objects associated with it presents a series of problems tied to the current literature on the topic. As is the case with the discussion of magic in Chapter Two, many secondary sources which attempt to define the concept of *baraka* do so in the context of ethnography, both contemporary and historical. The resulting definitions include references to “power,” “blessing,” and some notion of saintliness that is so general as to be nearly impossible to apply with any discernment.⁴⁴⁸ A standard example of this kind of approach comes from Omid Safi, who remarks: “*Baraka* is, as much as anything else, about power: the spiritual power of the saint, the power of the saints to interact with mighty rulers, and the power to lend them

⁴⁴⁷ See below.

⁴⁴⁸ *Baraka* is a notoriously tricky word to translate, and some authors occasionally look for comparative terminology from other religious traditions, notably Christianity. In one such example, *baraka* is defined as “divine grace and/or blessing.” Amber Gemmeke, “Marabout Women in Dakar: Creating Authority in Islamic Knowledge,” *Africa* 79.1 (2009): 138.

legitimacy.”⁴⁴⁹ Other attempts to define *baraka* similarly invoke the general notion of spiritual power as transmitted by God through Sufi “saints.”⁴⁵⁰

The notion that *baraka* has something to do with power does not bring us any closer to an understanding of the concept that can account for the role that material culture plays in its exchange. Moreover, these discussions about *baraka* in terms of the exchange of spiritual power are abstracted away from the very bodies of the individuals present in that exchange. In a different vein, Josef W. Meri has put forth a loose definition of *baraka* in two parts which addresses both the material and ephemeral aspects of its nature. He begins by remarking that *baraka* is, “...an emotive force perceived and apprehended through the senses and the devotee’s experiencing and interacting with the holy...”⁴⁵¹ He goes on to clarify saying “It may be said that *baraka* is the emanation and perpetuity of holiness in the person of a saint, which manifests itself in objects, or persons with whom he has come into contact posthumously or during his life.”⁴⁵² According to Meri’s definition, *baraka* is a force which occurs both within the experience of the devotee, and through the holiness of the saintly personage. *Baraka* then is an interaction between two parties that is frequently mediated through material objects and their exchange. Both the *khil’a* and the *khirqā* are garments which symbolize and contain an exchange of power, and in both cases the perceived source of that power can

⁴⁴⁹ Omid Safi, “Bargaining with Baraka: Persian Sufism, ‘Mysticism’ and Pre-modern Politics,” *The Muslim World* 90 (Fall 2000), 275.

⁴⁵⁰ Camilla C. T. Gibb, “Baraka without Borders: Integrating Communities in the City of Saints,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 29.1 (1999): 94.

⁴⁵¹ Josef W. Meri, “Aspects of *Baraka* (Blessings) and Ritual Devotion among Medieval Muslims and Jews,” *Medieval Encounters* 5.1 (1999): 46.

⁴⁵² Josef W. Meri, “Aspects of *Baraka*,” 63.

be a kind of *baraka*.

Unlike the exchanges in the giving of a *khil'a*, the power of *baraka* is one that comes first and foremost from God.⁴⁵³ The power of *baraka* is, however, often clearly located in objects, places, and persons. From an early period, the desire to gain *baraka* from objects, often relics, was evident in the many *aḥādīth* reports which contain anecdotes about the preservation of objects that came into contact with the Prophet, or with materials which stemmed from his very body such as hair or nail clippings.⁴⁵⁴ One particular *ḥādīth* clearly demarcates the relics (*āthār*) of the righteous (*al-ṭāḥiṣīn*), including their garments (*malābis*) as licit vehicles of *baraka*.⁴⁵⁵ The transfer of *baraka* from one person to another, or from a person to an object, or vice-versa, is one which necessitates contact and proximity. Still following with Meri's analysis, it is possible to identify four primary modes for the transfer of *baraka*: physical contact, the acquisition of learning or knowledge, relics, and seeing a saint in a dream and touching him in that dream.⁴⁵⁶ All four of these modes have a bearing on the stories about the *khirqā* discussed below. The fourth mode, vision in a dream, became a central principle for many Sūfī orders who trace their *silsila* through the legendary figure of Uways.⁴⁵⁷ The importance of physical contact underscores the critical role that objects have in discussing the

⁴⁵³ Josef W. Meri, "Aspects of *Baraka*," 65.

⁴⁵⁴ Josef W. Meri, "Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam" *Past and Present* (2010, Supplement 5) 104-5.

⁴⁵⁵ Meri, "Relics of Piety and Power" (2010): 105.

⁴⁵⁶ Meri, "Aspects of *Baraka*," 63. There is no explicit understanding that any one of these modes is superior to another, and at various times and in various places certain modes were more popular than others. They are also not mutually exclusive. A devotee who studied directly under a revered *shaykh* often desired to acquire his relics (often garments) upon his death

⁴⁵⁷ This is discussed at length below.

transfer of *baraka*.

The physical transfer of *baraka* from a living *pīr* or *shaykh* to a disciple, or supplicant, occurred, in part, through the bestowal or bequeathing of an object which was charged with the *shaykh*'s *baraka*, an act known as a *tabarruk*. Certain personal possessions became standard *tabarrukāt* and seven of these are identified in literature from South Asian *khānqāhs*: a staff (*‘asā*), a prayer-rug (*musallā* or *sajjāda*), a begging bowl (*kāsa*), a turban (*dastār*), a finger-ring (*angushtarī*), a rosary (*tasbī*□, *sub*□*a*), and a *khirqa*.⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, medieval South Asian sources make a distinction between types of *khirqas*, noting that the *khirqa* for a disciple is the *khirqa-i irādat* and the *khirqa* given as a token of blessing is the *khirqa-i tabarruk*.⁴⁵⁹ All of these objects have a close connection to the body of the *shaykh* involved in the bestowal. Particularly evident from this list is the preponderance of objects associated with the hand of the *shaykh* (i.e.: ring, staff, bowl, and rosary). The ring is a particularly charged object, and often served as an important symbol for the “legitimization” of military action or regional control by a *shaykh*.⁴⁶⁰ The remaining three objects are textiles which would have been in close contact with the body of the *shaykh*.

⁴⁵⁸ Riazul Islam *Sufism in South Asia: Impact on 14th Century Islamic Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 308. In: Digby “Tabarrukāt and Succession among the Great Chishti Shaykhs of the Dehli Sultanate” in *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History* ed. R. E. Frykenberg (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986) p. 63-103. Not all of these *tabbarukāt* seem to have been standard from an early period. This list comes from early modern South Asia in order to reflect one of the milieu from which the talismanic shirts which are the bulk of this study.

⁴⁵⁹ Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 93.

⁴⁶⁰ Omid Safi “Bargaining with Baraka,” 272. Safi recounts a story in which Tughril Beg received a ring from Bābā □āhir ‘Uryān before an important conquest. Safi stresses the importance of the ring as a symbol for both kingship and saintliness. Tughril Beg went on to wear this ring during all subsequent battles as a *ta‘wīdh*.

The particularly porous nature of textiles allows them to soak up the more ephemeral relics of the body, namely smells and fluids. Thus the garments and textile accoutrements of saintly figures were literally saturated with the more fleeting physical essences of their hosts.⁴⁶¹ In the case of Central Asian and Steppe cultures, the smells of the human body have a strong association with the soul and a person's essence.⁴⁶² Body odor, "like shadows, reflections, and breath... is insubstantial yet detectable and is therefore identified with the soul in some cultures."⁴⁶³ As Thomas Allsen has further demonstrated in the case of the Mongols,

"the transfer of clothing, an unwashed receptacle of residual body odor, also transmitted some of the vital essence of the original wearer... Indeed, such transference was a common feature of North Asian religious belief, in which the various spiritual forces inhering in a shaman's costume could be imparted to another when properly acquired and consecrated."⁴⁶⁴

Thus in the case of textile *tabarrukāt*, the physical object which was intended to recall the absent figure of the important person who once possessed it, was further charged with the remnants of that figure's non-physical essence.

Viewing the gift of clothing or garments such as these as physical evidence of the

⁴⁶¹ The precious nature of the bodily fluids of a saint is similarly found in the medieval Christian milieu of roughly the same period. A well-known example comes from the martyrdom of St. Thomas Beckett whose head was smashed into the floor of Canterbury Cathedral. A monk rushed to mop up the blood and bits of brain matter with a rag which was then carefully rinsed and the water collected in a flagon. This water was believed to have healing practices and could be drunk by the sick for cures.

⁴⁶² Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: a Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 89.

⁴⁶³ Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, 89. See also D. Michael Stoddart, *The Scented Ape: The Biology and Culture of Human Odor*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴⁶⁴ Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, 90.

transmission of *baraka* is in keeping with these types of historical anecdotes. These anecdotes also highlight the important role that sufis played as distributors of *ta'wīz*. In the *Malfūz-e Naqshbandiya* (a *taqkira* centering around the lives of Baba Palangposh [d.1699] and Bābā Musāfir [d.1714]), we find an account of a talismanic garment. A *murīd* of Baba Musāfir, Mīr Nazar Khān, received a short-sleeved coat (called a *nīma*) from the *shaykh* which he kept folded and tied into a bundle. This *tabarruk* brought him wealth and good fortune so long as it was in his possession. This *tabarruk* then also functions as an amulet, protecting and blessing him due to the contact between the object and the *shaykh*. Making *ta'wīz* like this was often a key source of income during this period in South Asia for *khānqāhs* which recieved gifts from petitioners in return.⁴⁶⁵ Prior to the 14th century, many amulets were produced through block-printing, whereas during the 14th century, a correlation between the hand of the *shaykh* and the amuletic objects was seen as a key component in obtaining blessings and good fortune.⁴⁶⁶

In the same *taqkira*, at the site of a subsequent battle, a fellow *murīd* remarks that he should like to have a *tabarruk* from the *shaykh* to keep with him as a talisman for the battle. At this, Mīr Nazar Khān tears one of the sleeves off of the coat and gives it to the man who keeps it in his turban as an amulet. Mīr Nazar Khan then takes the one-sleeved garment and wears it on his “own body.” While there were many causalities, he notes that neither he nor his fellow *murīd* were injured at all on account of their possession and wearing of the *tabarruk* of Bābā Musāfir.⁴⁶⁷ Here, the role of a *tabarruk* in the protection

⁴⁶⁵ Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 90.

⁴⁶⁶ Bulliet in Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 90.

⁴⁶⁷ Simon Digby, *Sufis and Soldiers in Awrangzeb's Deccan* (New Delhi: Oxford

of the body is explicit. This connection is amplified in earlier accounts that relate how a *ta'wīz* could be generated simply by having a *shaykh* write Qur'ānic verses on your hands or other body parts. The efficaciousness of this type of act stems directly from the holiness of the *shaykh* undertaking the writing.⁴⁶⁸

The Sultan in Shaykh's Clothing: The Shirts of Murad III

While a *tabarruk* can provide an important link between a living disciple and a dead master, talismanic shirts can also be understood as a link between a living disciple and a living master. Among the Topkapi's vast collection of Ottoman Talismanic shirts are at least three associated with the Sultan Murad III, and one with Sultan Süleyman I, some of which preserve the names of their makers. The shirts associated with Murad III highlight two important aspects of the creation and use of talismanic shirts that are directly related to preserving the holy body of the Sultan. In the first case, Murad III's relationship with an important Halveti *shaykh* shows how the creation and wearing of talismanic shirts might have been part of a larger product of personal piety in which the *shaykh* played a key role. In the second, we can examine one aspect of Murad III's personal life which led directly to the use of "magical" means to solve a very personal bodily problem, when the Sultan found himself suddenly impotent.

University Press, 2001), 163.

⁴⁶⁸ Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action*, 90.

Not Wearing the Word: a Post-script on Materials

This chapter took as its starting point the assertion that garments must necessarily be understood in terms of their interaction with the body, which is a key component of their lived context. And yet, given the material evidence presented for a large number of the talismanic shirts around which this study focuses, there is a strong possibility that many talismanic shirts were not only not worn, but that they were *never intended* to be worn. In addition to the lack of wear on many of the textiles, there are some whose fragility, rigidity, and dimensions seem to indicate that wearing them would have been impossible. To add additional complexity to this situation, there are at least a few textual accounts which seem to describe talismanic shirts as being actually worn.

There are a number of possible explanations for this seeming contradiction between object and text. The South Asian shirts and the *tañkiras* discussed above provide one test case for such explanations. In this case, the result of the gap in time of a few hundred years between the object and the story is certainly enough time to posit a change in convention. Perhaps these shirts were intended to be worn from the beginning, with the understanding that they would not physically survive the wear and tear, thus explaining why there are only a handful of shirts extant from this time and place. Indeed it is possible to imagine that the fragility of these shirts served to underscore the fragility of the human body. But equally possible is that the shirts were never made to be worn in the first place, and that their intended function has been lost over time and later “reclaimed” or even invented through anecdotes.

The Ottoman examples of Uwaysī garments, including those venerated as the Hırka-i Şerif or Hırka-i Sa‘ādet, underscore how garments serve as stand-ins for the bodies that are absent from them over the course of time. Uways’s mantle is both commemorative of Uways’s saintly body and also of the Prophet’s own body, as the mantle was given as a gift. Thus garments play a key role in the project of memory and memorialization. Talismanic shirts from the Ottoman period can be viewed along similar lines of commemoration and the memory of saintly bodies through their resemblance stylistically to some Sufi *khirqas*. They are thus evocative of the aesthetic of asceticism, while at the same time often preserving the hand (and thus physical presence) of the *shaykh* who created them, in the case of those shirts which bear signatures. Even for those shirts which do not have signatures, the form of the objects as garments retains some sense of the *baraka* of the saintly figures associated with their creation, and above all, with the figures who presented and were presented with such talismanic garments.

While commemoration and memorialization can happen without recalling the body directly, there is a difference between talismans made of metal or stone and worn as necklaces and bands, and these shirts. This difference is one that holds true even if these shirts were not actually worn. The importance of the *khil’a* and the *khirqa* as symbols for courtly interaction, political and military power, as well as saintly contact and the commemoration of holy bodies remains in effect for a garment that is displayed or presented and yet not worn. In both the case of the *khil’a* and the *khirqa*, it is the moment of the exchange and the act of presentation that carries the meaning and charge of power or *baraka*. The object, while integral to that exchange, is not the locus of the change

inherent in such interactions; it is the body itself.

CONCLUSION

A Case Study, Revisited

Chapter one closed with a description of one particular talismanic shirt – that held in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (hereafter referred to as VMFA 2000.9). By way of a conclusion, we can return to that same object and look at it through the four main foci of this project: approaches to the study of magic and magical objects in the Islamic world, the function of textual (and primarily Qur’ānic) talismans, the practice of bestowing robes of honor, and the aesthetic and corporeal significance of the Sufi *khirqā*. These four areas of study have served to apply an approach to material objects that reflects the current study of material religion as the way in which objects gain their cultural meaning – through their own epistemologies, their sensational regimes, and their attendant routines. Rather than attempting to situate each talismanic shirt identified in the accompanying catalogue within a specific framework that reflects each of those systems, these garments have been presented as a corpus unified through their instantiation of a set of embodied practices.

Magic, Religion, Technique

As this project has sought to argue, magic and religion are not separate areas of influence when it comes to the study of Islamic material culture from the patriarchal-bureaucratic empires. The notion that magic and religion are separate categories is, in

fact, a rhetorical strategy employed within the last few hundred years in order to strengthen partisan arguments about influence and agency. But it is not entirely anachronistic to describe the manipulation of text, numbers, letters, and even God's names on an object like VMFA 2000.9 as magical. If we understand magic as a technique – a religious technique, in keeping with the approaches of Douuté and al-Būnī – then these shirts demonstrate the application of this technique in the service of corporeal protection.

One of the most prevalent magical techniques during the period in which this shirt was produced was the use of letter magic in general, and the copying and adorning of God's beautiful names. God's beautiful (or divine) names form the borders of VMFA 2000.9, rendered in a large gold *bihārī* script set on a dotted ground in red. We can interpret the application of these names as an appeal to God's omnipotence and the desire to harness, through invocation of that omnipotence, some of that divine power for physical protection. Moreover, the placement of these names surrounding the text of the entire Qur'ān presents a kind of visual commentary to the relationship between God's creative power and the received text of God's speech. This arrangement is designed to underscore the fact that the Qur'ān's potential protective power is ultimately derived from God's will. In al-Būnī's discussion of the power of God's beautiful names we are reminded that it is God's will alone that generates the efficacy of even the most carefully wrought talismans.

While VMFA 2000.9 does not feature magic squares or other typical evidence of letter magic as part of its decorative program, it does invoke the power of letter magic

through the shoulder roundels that read: *yā budū*□. Roundels of deep blue pigment with gold script enclose this appeal to the *abjad* alphabet, and the subsequent numerical value of Arabic letters and their potential power to generate protection. The evidence of tracing lines underlying the shapes of the roundels and their adjacent decorative motifs indicates that these designs were sketched out prior to the application of the Qur’anic text.

However brief this textual invocation might be, its importance for the overall composition of the garment is clear; this expression was not an afterthought, but a critical portion of the shirt’s design. This invocation of *ya budū*□ is visually and physically set apart from the rest of the garment’s design, and when draped over the body, it would have been one of the few potentially legible elements of text on this object.

Text, Ta’wīdh, and Touch

While the *yā budū*□ roundels are rendered in a relatively large and legible hand, and the names of God are clearly outlined and framed, the remainder of the shirt’s text presents a significant challenge to read. The fact that VMFA 2000.9 is covered with the entirety of the text of the Qur’ān is a fact only perceived under close scrutiny, and at times with the use of a magnifying glass. This miniscule text is rendered in *ghūbarī* script, a hand intended to recall the minutiae of dust particles. Even with magnification and many hours spent diagramming the placement of said text, it is clear that the hand that rendered this text was not particularly precise. What then can be said about the role of legibility in the service of using text talismanically? Is it the presence of any Qur’anic

text, no matter how illegible, that helps to generate the feeling of deriving refuge inherent within the idea of a *ta'wīdh*? One of the primary elements of the sensory regime evoked in the placement of Qur'ānic text on a shirt like VMFA 2000.9 is touch. The placement of the text of the Qur'ān as close as possible to (if not directly on) the skin recalls the use of written and then washed Qur'ānic verses drunk as medicine.

The composition of VMFA 2000.9 indicates that the main priority of the person responsible for executing the Qur'ānic text on the object was simply to get the entirety of the text on to the surface. Given the presence of tracing lines for the general outline of the text boxes and shoulder roundels, the major plan of the shirt was set first and then someone was tasked with fitting the Qur'ānic text to that plan. The extra space left in the lobed sections on the bottom row on the back of the shirt, as well as the inscription of the last two short *sūras* outside the pre-drawn plan on the bottom of the front of the shirt seems to suggest that a careful measuring of the space for text was not particularly important.

These features should not necessarily be read as carelessness or lack of skill on the part of the object's creators. Rather, these details indicate that priority was given to making sure that the shirt's program was covered with the entire text of the Qur'ān. Thus it is the appearance of Qur'ānic text, and not necessarily the legibility of Qur'ānic text, that must carry the force of protective power for the makers and wearers. The overall effect of this decorative program is that the body itself is clothed in sacred text that is in turn bounded by God's beautiful names. Given the importance of individual Qur'ānic verses for healing ailments (as discussed here in the context of Ibn al-Qayyim al-

Jawziyya), and the selection of specific Qur'ānic verses for victory in battle found on Ottoman talismanic shirts, VMFA 2000.9 seems to have potentially covered many misfortunes. This shirt is, perhaps, a *ta'wīdh* for all seasons.

Recovering the Sartorial Routine

Prior to its acquisition by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, this shirt must have spent a considerable part of its life folded into a neat package. The surface is marked by particularly clear crease lines that indicate it was folded into a small rectangular parcel, and perhaps kept in a box, as some of the folded sections indicate far less surface damage than others. The appearance of these fold marks suggests that the shirt was intended to be given as a gift, though the details of this exchange will likely remain a mystery. This places VFMA 2000.9 squarely within the routine of gift giving that formed a critical part of the role of the *khil'a* discussed in Chapter Four. Giving a talismanic shirt like this one as a gift would have created a link between the gift-giver and the recipient that amplified the connection between their two bodies through the form of the gift as a garment itself.

Other stylistic details in the composition of VMFA 2000.9 connect this object to the world of the *khil'a*. The polychrome roundels on the front pectoral panels and on the shoulders are highly evocative of the kind of *tirāz* inscriptions often found on the courtly garments bestowed by rulers. Red, blue, and gold circles with white centers and black and white edges dot the surface of the front and back of the shirt, mimicing the appliqué of pearls or jewels in a kind of *trompe l'oeuil* painting. From a distance, these small

painted features would recall the richly embroidered fabrics popular among court officials and the elite classes. The red, blue, gold, and white borders that surround the front center seam and the neckline participate in a similar evocation of time-consuming textile decoration of embroidery or thread couching.

The visual parallels between a *khirqā* and VMFA 2000.9 – and indeed all of the shirts from South Asia, which feature a similar program – are particularly strong. The overall layout of the Qur’ānic text divided into tiny boxes is clearly evocative of a patched garment. Gold lines traverse the surface of the shirt, breaking the entire text of the Qur’ān into small boxes patched together like small scraps of fabric. The lobed designs that form the bottom bands on the front and the back of the garment appear like the tattered edges of a well-worn robe.

Enumerating these stylistic, formal, surface details is only one part of connecting VMFA 2000.9 to the sartorial systems of the *khil’a* and the *khirqā*. These details cannot account for the material nature of the talismanic shirt as a garment. Both the *khil’a* and the *khirqā* presuppose physical or symbolic contact between bodies, and both the *khil’a* and the *khirqā* are believed to transform those bodies through their physical contact. In the absence of more information about the body or bodies associated with this shirt, we can only suggest the kinds of interactions that it might have participated in. Just as the *khirqā* became a literary symbol for embodied piety and initiation into a particular *silsila*, the physical appearance of the *khirqā* in South Asia during the early patriarchal-bureaucratic period may too have become static and symbolic. To date, every shirt believed to come from the region and period of VMFA 2000.9 bears nearly identical

traits. This suggests that a kind of synthesis between a patched and humble Sufi robe and a more luxurious ceremonial robe of honor came to be recognized in a new form as a talismanic shirt.⁴⁶⁹

Bitā Ghezalayagh's Felt Memories

In 2009, the London gallery Rose Issa Projects hosted the European solo-exhibition debut of the Iranian artist Bitā Ghezalayagh. The Rosa Issa Projects' gallery has been a major site for the exhibition of contemporary Middle Eastern art since the 1980s. Ghezalayagh's show, *Felt Memories*, featured tunics made from heavy felt covered in a variety of found objects including small metal talismans, keys, and coins. Multiple decorative techniques including embroidery and silk-screening were used to apply text to the surface – mostly the sayings of soldiers and the names of military campaigns. The shirts were also embroidered with short phrases (in Persian) such as: “martyrdom is the key to Paradise.”⁴⁷⁰ Ghezalayagh's contemporary designs are highly evocative of the significantly older talismanic garments considered here, but they were never intended to be worn. Nevertheless, her work captures the same haunting feeling of absent bodies by presenting garments flat on a wall bathed in spotlights. Those garments, just like this corpus of Islamic talismanic shirts, memorialize human exchanges and

⁴⁶⁹ In a forthcoming piece specifically about the shirt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, I hope to find roughly contemporary examples of both Sufi *khirqas* and garments presented as gifts in a court setting in order to draw these two paradigms even closer together.

⁴⁷⁰ Press release, Rose Issa Projects. Accessed: <http://www.roseissa.com/past%20exhib/2/past-exh-press2.html>

participate in – or evoke through association — the sensational regimes that shape human experience.

Islamic talismanic shirts have become their own *āthār*; vestiges of a set of routines of dressing, of sensory experiences inherent in corporeal interactions, and of the cosmic resonances between man and universe. Our own perception of these objects is hindered by our struggle to accept an alternate epistemology that apprehends objects as part of a system that does not participate in a linear or comfortably biological notion of time. Where Heidegger's jug becomes an object through the void that gives it shape, a shirt like VMFA 2000.9 becomes an object present to us once the body that no longer fills it can be historically resurrected. Woven through the fabric of that object are the interactions between Qur'ānic text and the body, the exchanges of *Baraka* or political power, and a system of sensational experiences that allow a talismanic shirt to become a bulletproof vest.

APPENDIX A: Commonly Appearing Verses

The chart below presents the text of some of the more common Qu’ranic excerpts and the shirts upon which they appear. All translations are from *The Qur’an*, translated by Alan Jones (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007).

God! There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired by guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty. (2:255) Surat al-Baqara (The Cow) “The Throne Verse”	13/1133; 13/1394; 13/1396; 13/1134; 13/1140; 24/2023; 13/1408; Sotheby's Sale L11223 (2011) Lot 82;
(48) Surat al-Fath (Victory) Complete Surah	13/1150; 13/1140; 13/1394; 13/1396; 13/1404; 13/1146; 13/1184; 13/1184; 13/1186; 13/1407; 13/1137; 13/1389; 13/1391; 13/1169; 13/1170; 13/948; Sotheby's Sale L11223 (2011) Lot 82; Khalili TXT 77; Sotheby's Sale L12223 (2012) Lot 28;
We have given you a clear victory, that God may forgive you your past sin and your sin which is to come, and that He may complete His blessing to you and guide you on a straight path, and that God may help you with a mighty help. (48:1-3) Surat al-Fath (Victory)	24/2074; LOC
48:1-25 Surat al-Fath (Victory)	13/1134
48:1-28 Surat al-Fath (Victory)	13/1148
God is better as a guardian, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy. (12:64) Surat Yūsef	VMFA 2000.9; Christie's (1993) Sale 4959, Lot 38; 13/1182;

Say: He is God, One, God, the Eternal, who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him. (112) Surat al-Ikhlās (Sincerity)	13/1178; 13/1168; Sotheby's Sale L11223 (2011) Lot 82; 13/1404; 13/1184; Khalili TXT 77; 13/1401; Sotheby's Sale L12223 (2012) Lot 28;
Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak, from the evil of what He has created, from the evil of the darkness when it envelops, and from the evil of women who blow on knots, and from the evil of an envious man when he is envious. (113)- Surat al-Falaq (Daybreak)	13/1178; 13/1168; 13/1404/ 13/1170; Sotheby's Sale L12223 (2012) Lot 28;
Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men, the king of men, the God of men, from the evil of a slinking whisperer, who whispers into the bosoms of men, -- of <i>jinn</i> and men. (114) Surat al-Nas (Mankind)	13/1178; Sotheby's Sale L11223 (2011) Lot 82; Sotheby's Sale L12223 (2012) Lot 28; Sotheby's Sale L10220 Lot 46
When God's help and victory comes, when you see men entering God's religion in throngs, glorify your Lord by praising Him and seek His forgiveness. He is always ready to relent. (110) Surat al-Nasr (Help)	13/1168; 13/1394; 13/1396; 13/1134; 13/1404; 13/1391; 13/1169; 13/1170; Khalili TXT 77;
The hands of Abu-Lahab will perish and he will perish. His possessions and gains will be of no avail to him. He will roast in a flaming fire, and his wife, the carrier of firewood, with a rope of palm-fibre on her neck. (111) Surat al-Masad (Palm-fibre)	13/1168; 13/1401;

APPENDIX B: Catalogue Entries by Style Category

All drawings here were made by the author and are based on photographs. All of the Ottoman examples here are drawn after the works of Hülya Tezcan: *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki sîifalı goşmlekler*, (Istanbul: BİKA, 2006) and *Tilsimli Goşmlekler Topkapı Sarayı Muşzesi koleksiyonundan*, (Istanbul: Timaş, 2011). Page numbers for each photograph appear in the publications notes.

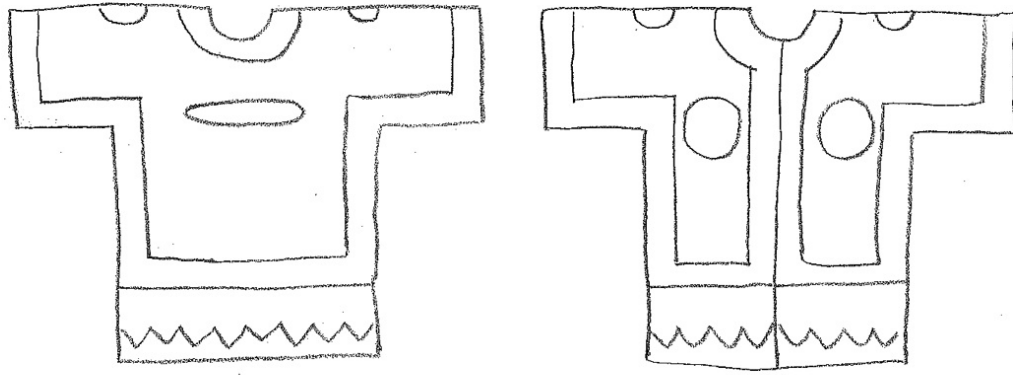
Group A: South Asian Styles of Same Layout

The single most consistent style-group of the corpus of talismanic shirts presented here comes from South Asia. These shirts feature nearly identical decorative programs, with the entire text of the Qur'an inscribed in a grid-like arrangement of boxes across the front and back. The text continues in a lobed border (either rounded or pointed) along the front and back bottom edges. Two large roundels in blue, red, and gold ink appear over each pectoral and contain the text of the *shahada*: *lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh muşammad rasūl Allah* (There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God). Over each shoulder there are interlocking circles in red and blue ink, with a central medallion that reads: *ya būduş*.

There are many shirts from this group for which photographs were not available for consultation, due to their current provenance in private collections. Only those for which photographs were available are presented here.

(1) Metropolitan Museum of Art: 1998.199

India, Deccan 15th-16th Century



Materials: Cotton, gold, ink

Dimensions: 98 cm long

Text Excerpts:

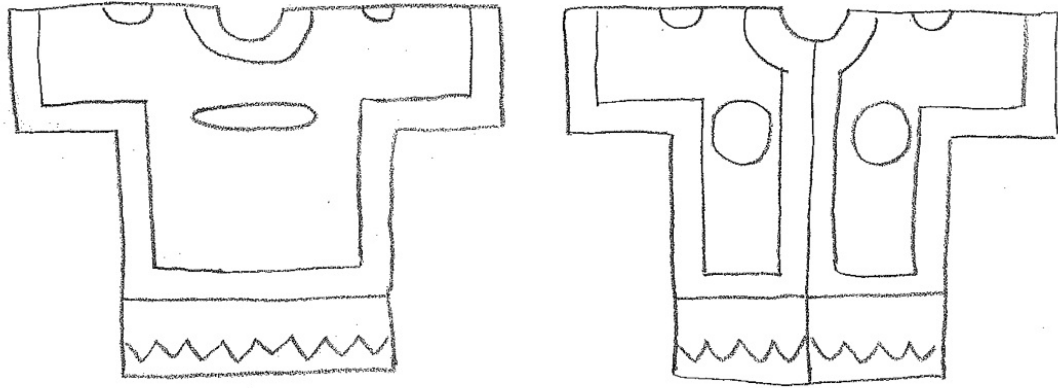
Entire Qur'an

Publications:

Carboni, Stefano J. Kenneth Moore, and Daniel Moore. "Islam," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series* 56.2 (1998): 11-13.

(2) Virginia Museum of Fine Arts: Indian 2000.9

India, 1400-1550



Materials: Cotton, gold

Dimensions: 63.5 cm x 97.1 cm

Text Excerpts:

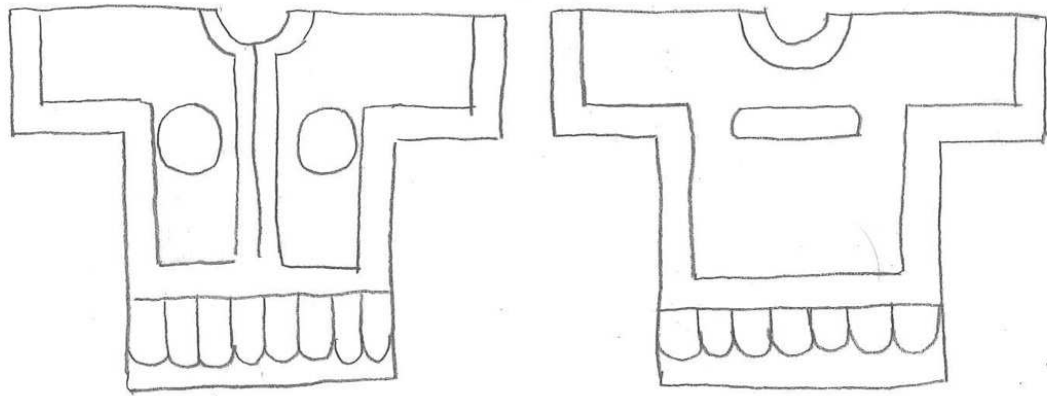
Entire text of the Qur'aⁿ. Cartouche on back panel has Q12:64.

Publications:

N/A

(3) Khalili Collection: TXT 87

India, 16th-17th Century



Materials: Cotton, gold, ink

Dimensions: 140 cm x 97.5 (H unfolded)

Text Excerpts:

Entire Qur'an

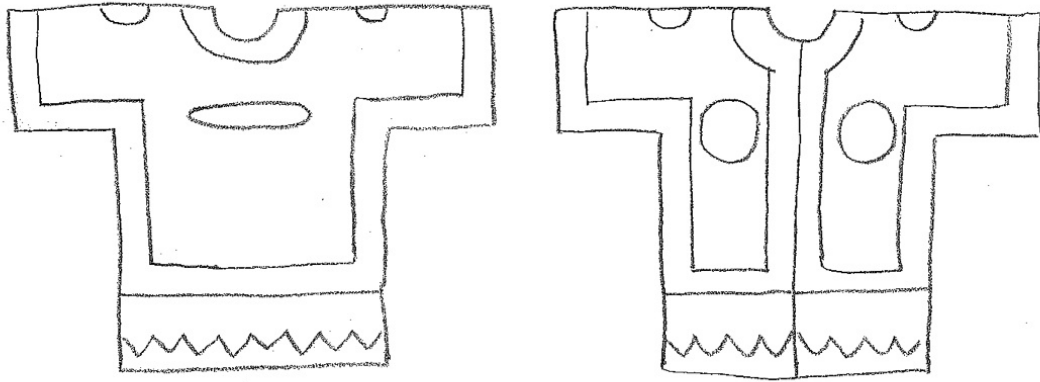
Publications:

Maddison, Francis, et al. *Science, Tools, and Magic*. (London: Nour Foundation/Azimuth Editions/Oxford University Press, 1997).

(4) Guimet Museum: 5680

India, Deccan. 15th or 16th Century

Significant wear and deterioration of front motifs.



Materials: cotton

Dimensions: n/a

Text Excerpts:

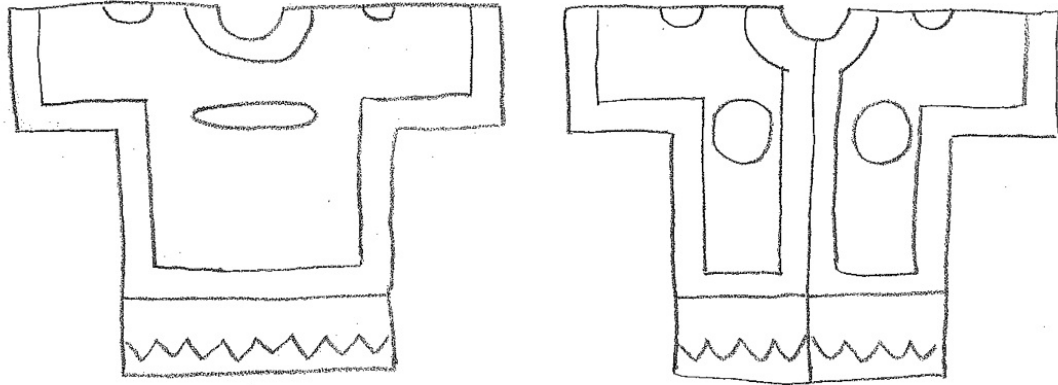
Entire Qur'an

Publications:

Brac de la Perrière, Eloïse. "Les Tuniques Talismaniques Indiennes d'Époque Pré-Moghole et Moghole a□ la Lumière d'un Groupe de Corans en Écriture Biha□ri□"
Journal Asiatique 297.1 (2009): 57-81.

(5) Tareq Rajab Museum

India □ 17th- 18th century



Materials: Cotton

Dimensions: 66 cm x 96 cm

Text Excerpts:

Entire Qur'an.

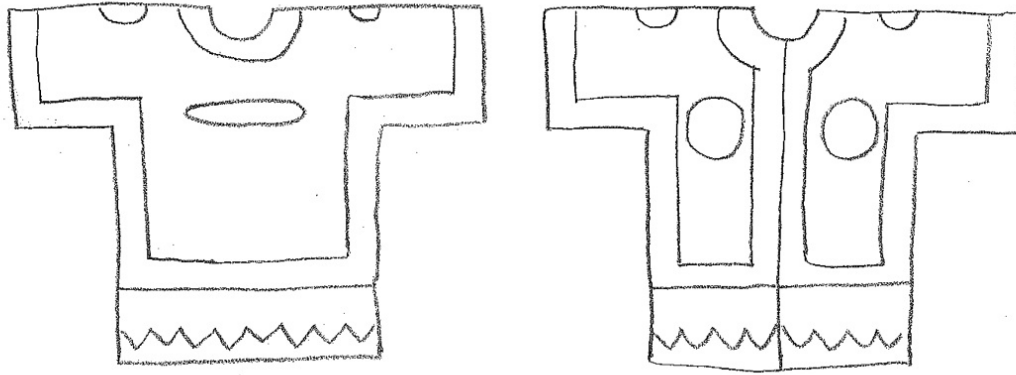
Publications:

Tareq S. Rajab, *Tareq Rajab Museum (a handbook)* (Kuwait: Tareq Rajab Museum, 1994), 109.

(6) Furusiyya Art Foundation: R-785

India □ 15th Century

Ties added under the arms, and along the sides. Significant wear.



Materials: Cotton

Dimensions: 89 cm x 102 cm

Text Excerpts: Entire Qur'an.

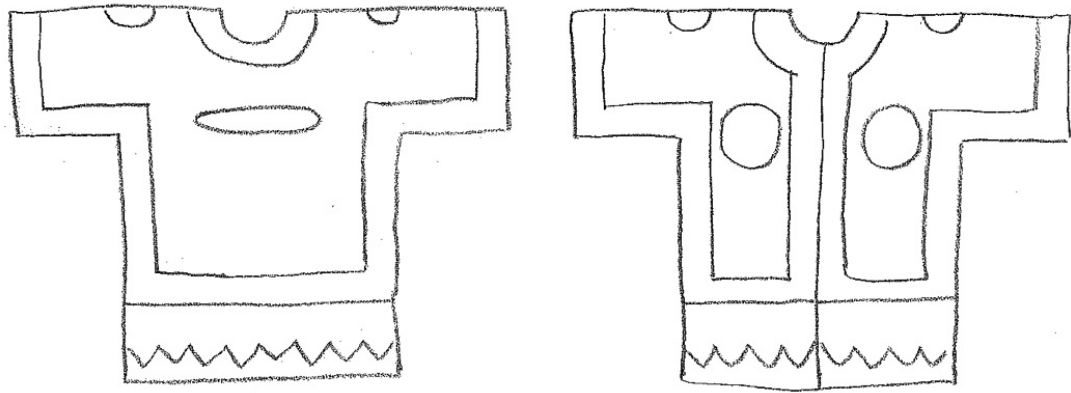
Publications

Mohamed, Bashir. *L'art des chevaliers en pays d'Islam : collection de la Furusiyya Art Foundation*. (Milan: Skira, 2007)

(7) Christie's Sale 7959: Lot 251

India □ late 15th Century

Good condition. No photograph of back available (diagram made from textual description).



Materials: Cotton

Dimensions: n/a

Text Excerpts:

Entire Qur'an.

Publications: n/a

Group B: Nested/Complex Square Patterns

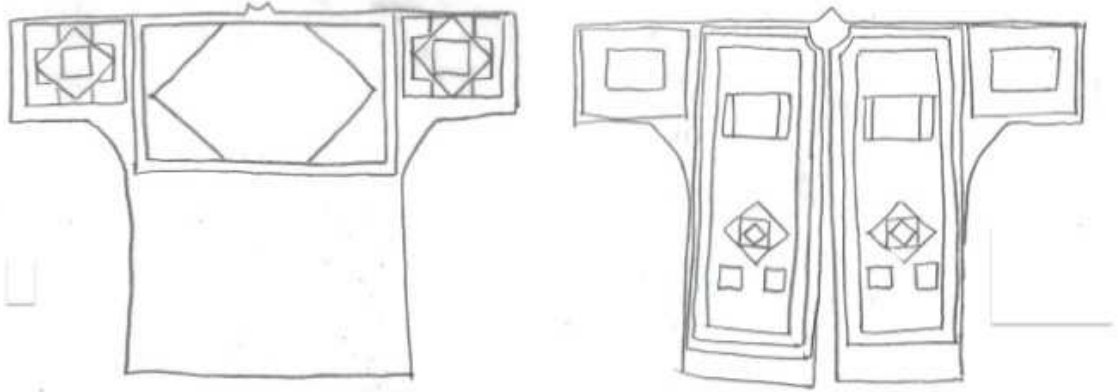
The largest group of talismanic shirt styles in this corpus is made up of Ottoman examples of complex patterns involving the layout of magic squares. These square motifs are often rotated, stacked, nested, and layered within each other to create strong geometric patterning on the shirt surfaces. A use of multiple colors is also indicative of this group, with blue, red, and gold predominating. Due to the use of the form of the square, many of the overall layouts of the shirts are bilaterally symmetrical. Many of these shirts have clear stylistic relationships with one and other, perhaps suggesting that there was a preferred aesthetic for these types of patterns within the Ottoman *atelier*.

All of these shirts, with two exceptions, are currently housed in the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul.

(8) Museum of Turkish and Ottoman Islamic Arts (TIEM): 539

Ottoman, 16th- 17th Century

Attributed to Sultan Selim II (1566-1574).



Materials: Silk, ink, gold and silver paint **Dimensions:** 100 cm long

Text Excerpts

Q36, 10

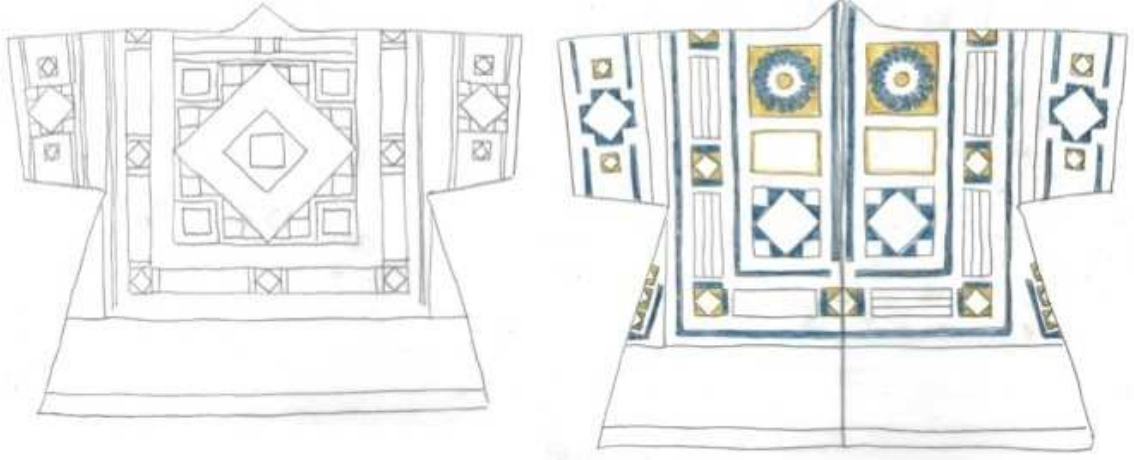
Publications:

Ölçer, Nazan. and Danış Baykan. *Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art: A History of the Museum*, (Istanbul: Akbank, 2002), 248-9. Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 136.

(9) Topkapi Saray: 13/1184

Ottoman □ late 16th century

Very similar in style and layout to TSM 13/1182



Materials: Cotton, gold, ink.

Dimensions: 86 cm long Q48, 36, 17, 112.

Text Excerpts: Selected verses from the poem, Qasida al-Burda.

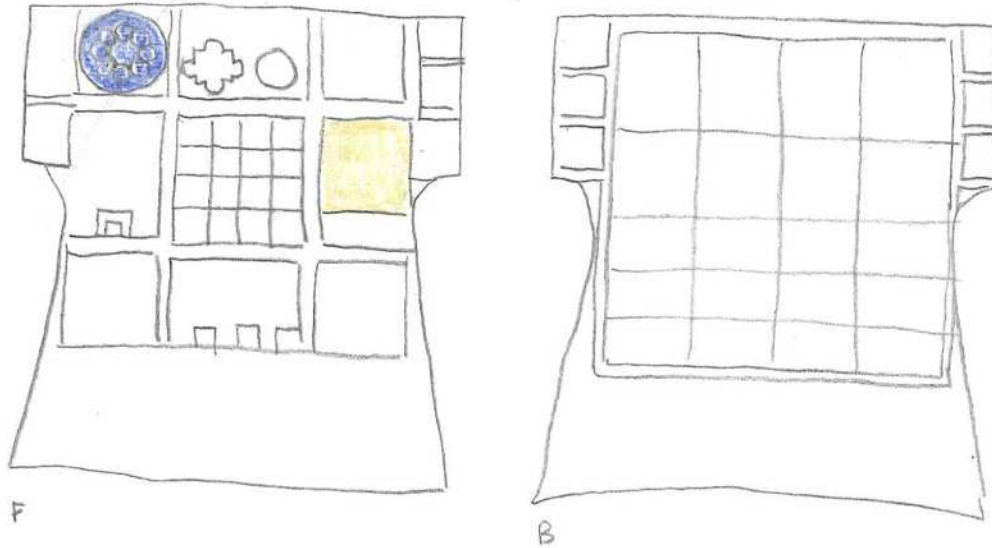
Publications:

Farhad, Massumed, Sepril Bag □ cı, and Maria V. Mavroudi. *Falnama: the book of omens*. (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2009), 82-3. Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Timas □, 2011), 114 + 178-181; Tezcan, Hülya. *Silks for the Sultans: Ottoman Imperial Garments from the Topkapi Palace* (Istanbul: Ertug □ & Kocabiyik: 1996), 238-243; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapi Saray'ındaki S □ ifalı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 108-11

(10) Topkapi Saray: 13/1404

Ottoman, 29 March 1480 (completed)

Made for Cem Sultan.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold

Dimensions: n/a

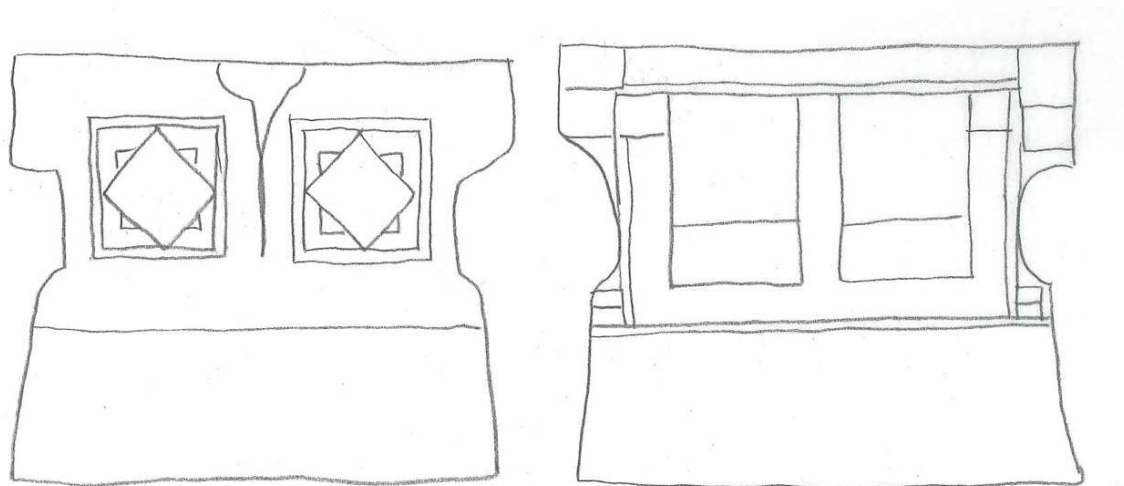
Text Excerpts: Q3-5, 7, 9, 14, 48, 54, 61, 110, 112-113

Publications: Çağman, Filiz. *Les Collections médiévales turques du Musée de Topkapı Saray et d'autres musées de Turquie* (N.P., c. 1983), 120; Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Gergedan* (1988), 76; Tezcan, Hülya. *Silks for the Sultans: Ottoman Imperial Garments from the Topkapı Palace*. (Istanbul: Ertug & Kocabiyik: 1996), 228-233; Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *P* (Spring 2003), 68-9; *Elemterefis: Anadolu'da Büyü ve İnanışlar* (Magic and Superstition in Anatolia) (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Vedat Nedim Tör Müzesi, 2003), 36; Sharif, Ja'far. *Islam in India; or the Qanuni Islam*, translated by William Crooke and Gerhard Andreas Herklots (London: Humprhey Milford, 1921); *The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations (a guidebook)* (Ankara: Dönmez Offset, c.1997); Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Türk Folkloru Arastırmaları Yıllığı* v.7 (1977), 95; Levenson, Jay A. *Circa 1492: Art in the age of exploration*, (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1991), 199; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Saray'ındaki Süslü Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 26-7+ 54-9, 82; Tezcan, Hülya. "Development of Art in the Islamic World" in *Islam: İnanç ve İbadet / Islam: Faith and Worship*. (Abu Dhabi: Emirate Palace, 2009), 51; Rogers, J. M. and R. M. Ward. *Süleyman the Magnificent* (London: British Museum, 1988), 175-77.

(11) Whitworth Gallery: T. 9780

Turkey or India, 19th Century

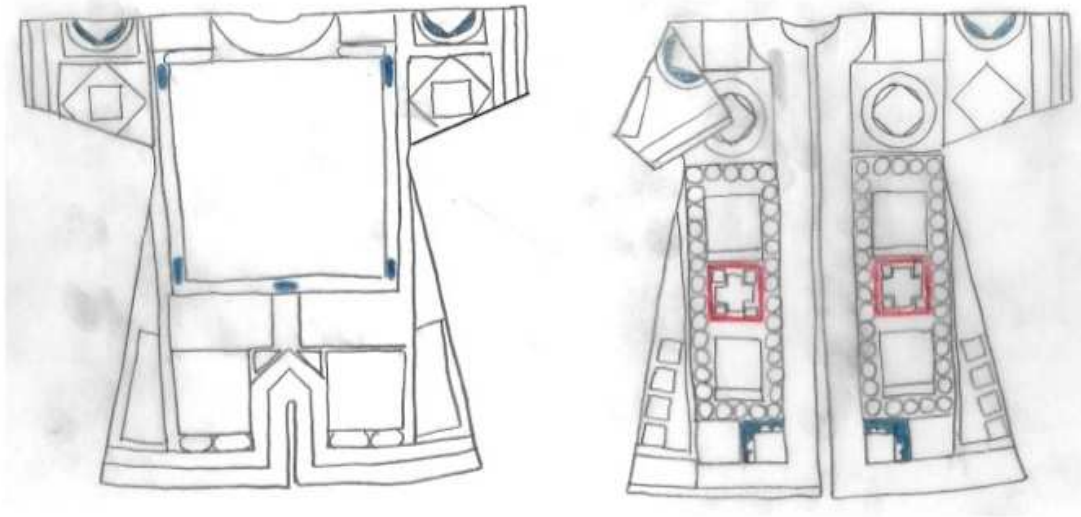
Almost entirely composed of magic squares with some gold paint. Bottom section on both front and back is blank. A photograph was available with no accompanying description of the object. There are no known publications.



(12) Topkapi Saray: 13/1391

Ottoman, 1500-1525

Caftan style. Some indications of wear.



Materials: Cotton, silk, ink, gold

Dimensions: 135 cm long

Text Excerpts: Q48, 61, 68, 110, 112, 108

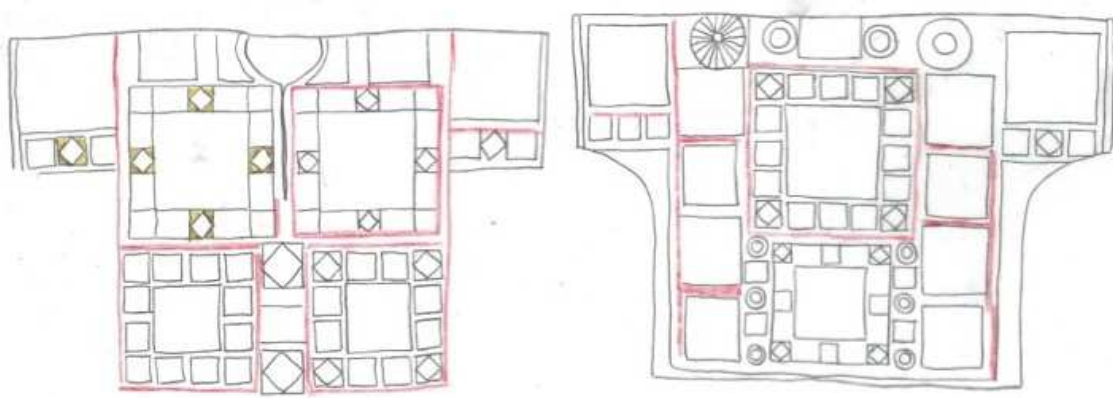
Publications:

Aubaile, F. and Anne Sefrioui. *Topkapi à Versailles: trésors de la cour Ottomane*. (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1999), 60; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımsaş, 2011) 160; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sıfıf Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 38 (detail), 102-4.

(13) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1771

Ottoman.

Possible astrological diagrams in roundels at back shoulders. Almost entirely composed of magic squares.



Materials: n/a

Dimensions: n/a

Text Excerpts: n/a

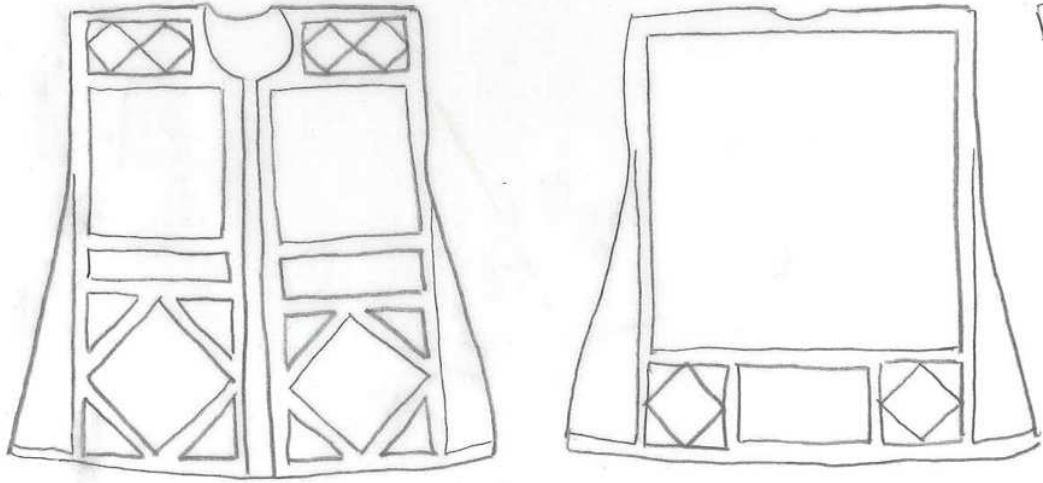
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sembolik Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 82 (detail) 84-5.

(14) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1177

Ottoman, 1532.

Label text attributes this garment to the 12th-century Persian Sufi shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani; with presentation box. Sleeveless. Back central field is a magic square.



Materials:

Dimensions: 63 cm long

Text Excerpts: n/a

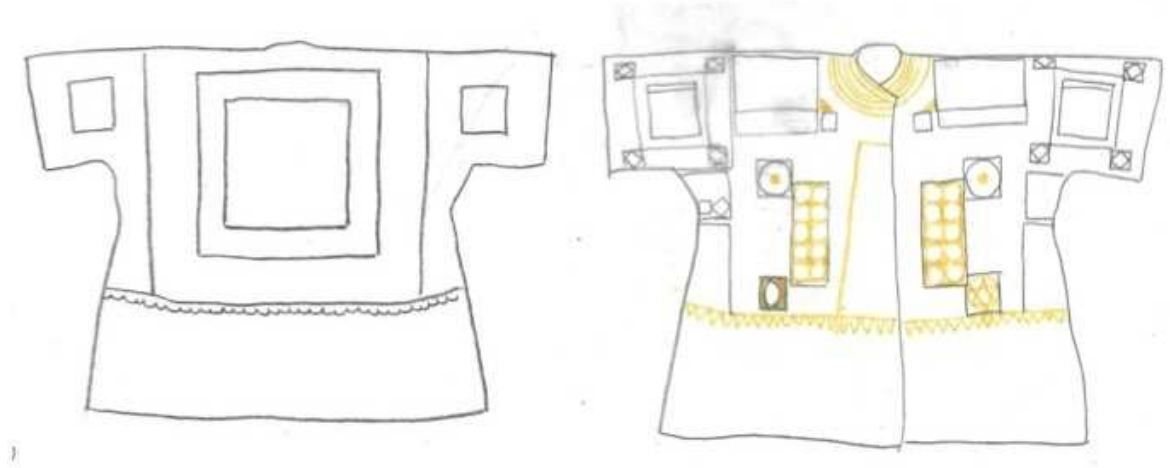
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süîifalı G  mlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 92-5.

(15)Topkapi Saray: 13/1396

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century.

Mostly gold decorations. Back is reproduced twice (no front image) in Tezcan 2011.



Materials: Cotton, Ink, gold leaf

Dimensions: 77 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q2:255, 48, 3:1-3 +18 + 159-160, 4:81, 56, 110, 64:1, 6:163.

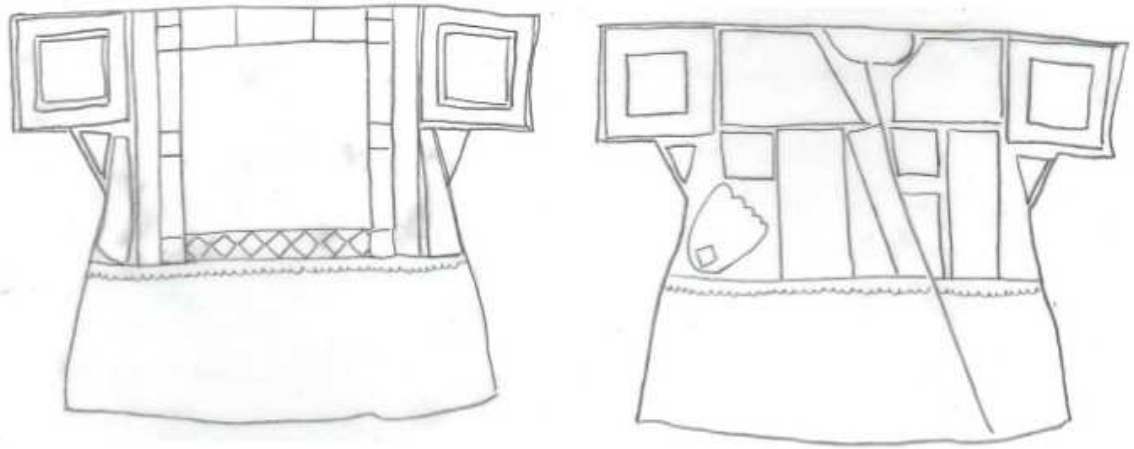
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 45 (detail) 120 (detail), 118 -21; Tezcan, Hülya. "Development of Art in the Islamic World" in *Islam: İnanç ve İbadet / Islam: Faith and Worship* (Abu Dhabi: Emirate Palace, 2009), 392-5.

(16) Topkapi Saray: 13/1178

Ottoman, 16th-17th century.

Wear along collar and some stains; outlined footprint on front right panel. Similar to 24/2011



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf

Dimensions: 88 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q112, 110, 114, 113

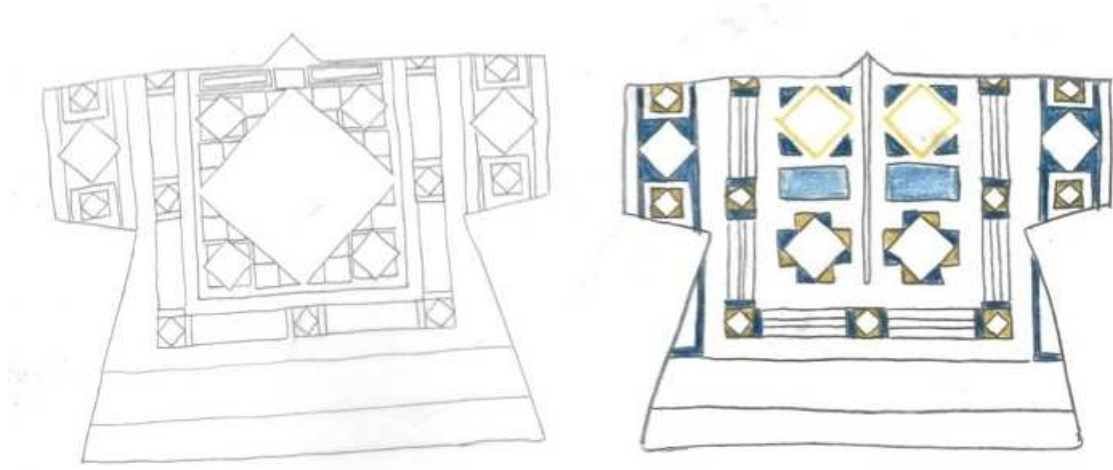
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapi Saray'ındaki Sıifalı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 124-6.

(17) Topkapı Saray: 13/1182

Ottoman, 16th Century

Full turkish translation in Tezcan (2011) p. 31-2. Similar to 13/1184.



Materials: Cotton, ink, paint, gold leaf.

Dimensions: 82 cm high

Text Excerpts:

Q48, 1:6, 3:18-19, 4:87, 6:102, 6:106, 7:158, 21:87-88, 23:116, 28:70, 28:88, 35:3, 6:144-5, 8:17, 12:64.

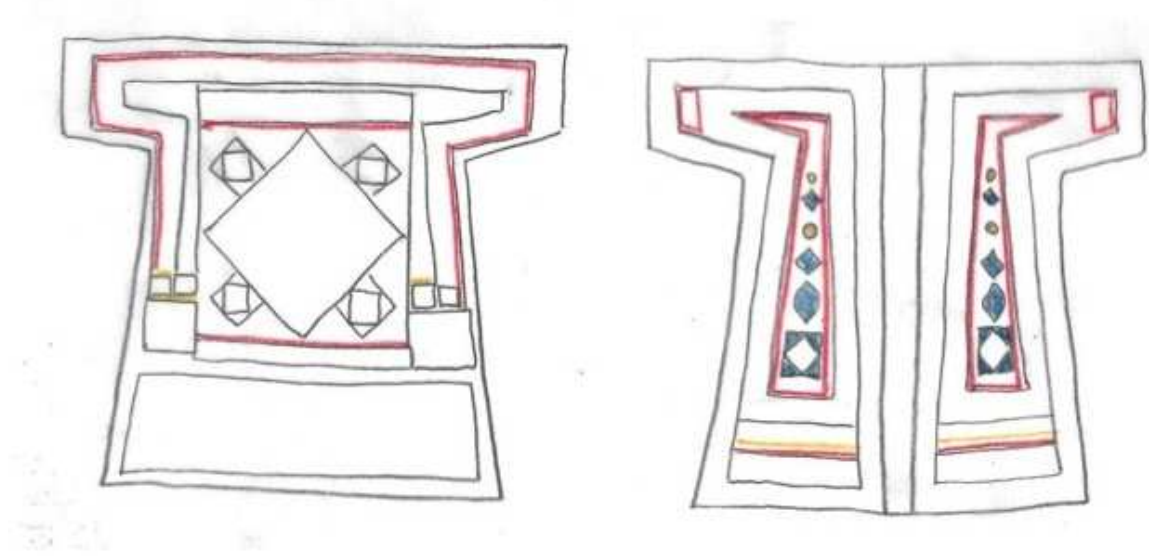
Publications:

Soliman le Magnifique. (Paris: Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 1990), 107; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Saray'ındaki Süslü Gönlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 110 (detail), 112-113; Tezcan, Hülya. "Les vêtements talismaniques" *A la cour du Grand Turc: Caftans du Palais de Topkapı* (Paris: Louvre, 2009), 138; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gönlekler*. (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 118 +168-73.

(18) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1183

Ottoman, 1500-1550.

Caftan Style



Materials: Cotton, silk, ink, gold leaf.

Dimensions: 112 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48, 2:76, 5:52, 7:89, 7:96, 8:19, 34:26, 6:59, 6:44, 7:89, 61:13, 17:45, 17:46, 27:30-1, 9:51, 10:107, 11:6, 11:56, 29:60, 35:2, 39:38, 62:6-8

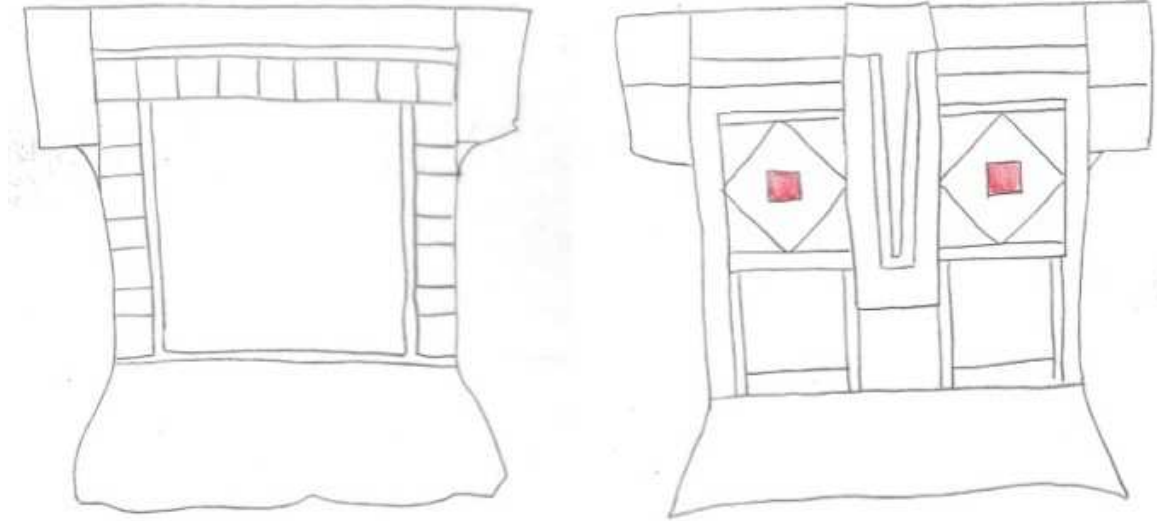
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 156; *Soliman le Magnifique* (Paris: Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 1990), 106; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 99-100.

(19) Topkapi Saray: 13/1170

Ottoman, 1703

This shirt is attributed to "Morali Hasan Pasha" who was dismissed from the position of vizier in 1704, indicating that this shirt dates to before that year. Similar layout to 13/1145.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold, colored paint

Dimensions: 71 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48, 110, 36, 113

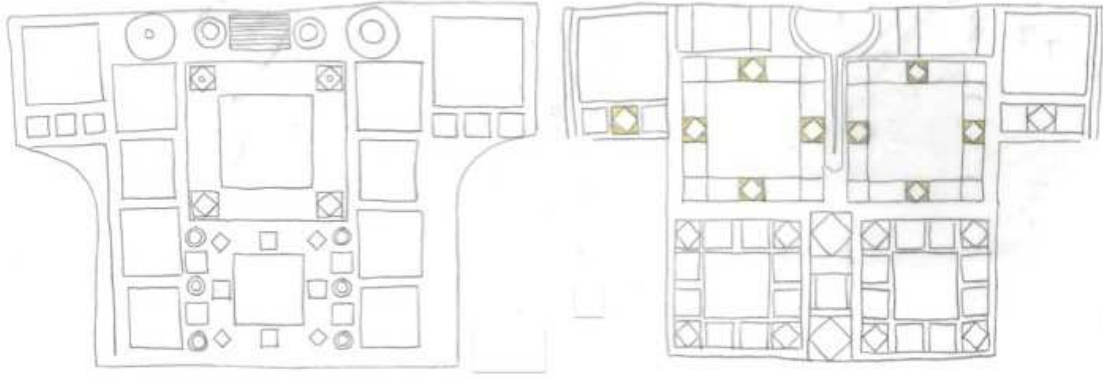
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Saray'ındaki Sıfıfalı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 83.

(20) TSM Avadancılar Bölümü: 24/1771

Ottoman, early 17th C.

Associated with Painter Hasan Pasa. The box that is associated with the shirt is 19th century. Dates to before or during the campaign against Poland in 1620.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf and colored paint

Dimensions: 60 cm long

Text Excerpts: n/a

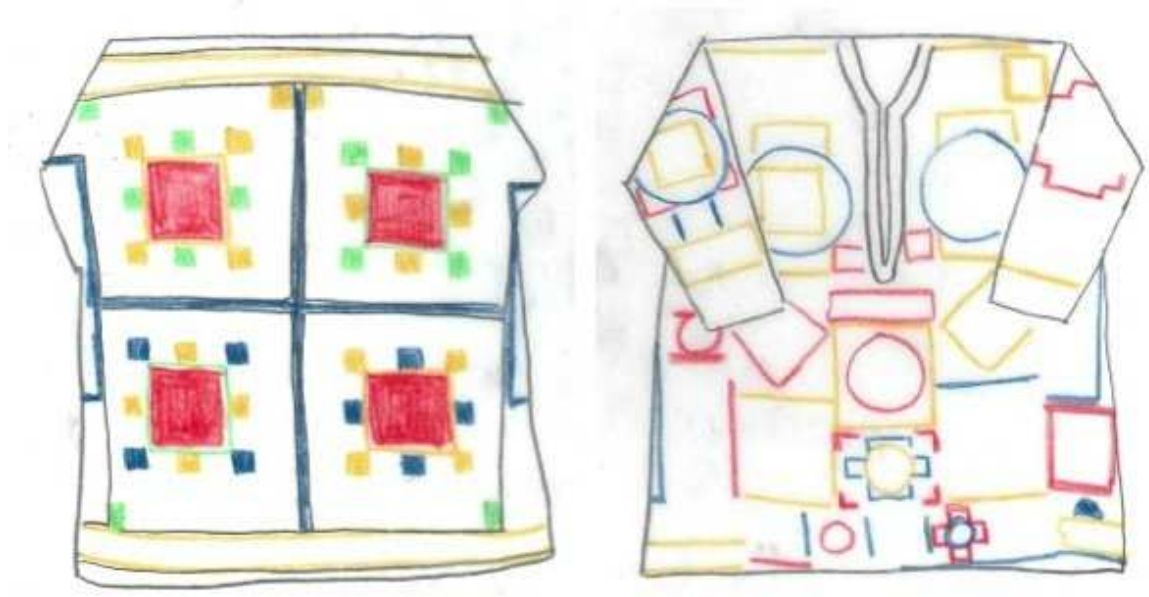
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 28 (detail), 82, 84-7; Tezcan, Hülya. "Development of Art in the Islamic World" in *Islam: İnanç ve İbadet / Islam: Faith and Worship* (Abu Dhabi: Emirate Palace, 2009), 396-7.

(21) Topkapi Saray: 13/1394

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century

Multi-colored on both front and back with multiple script styles. Unique among all Ottoman examples.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf, colored paint

Dimensions: 98 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q2:255, 3, 2, 33, 110, 68, 42, 9, 112, 1, 108, 48, 42, 12.

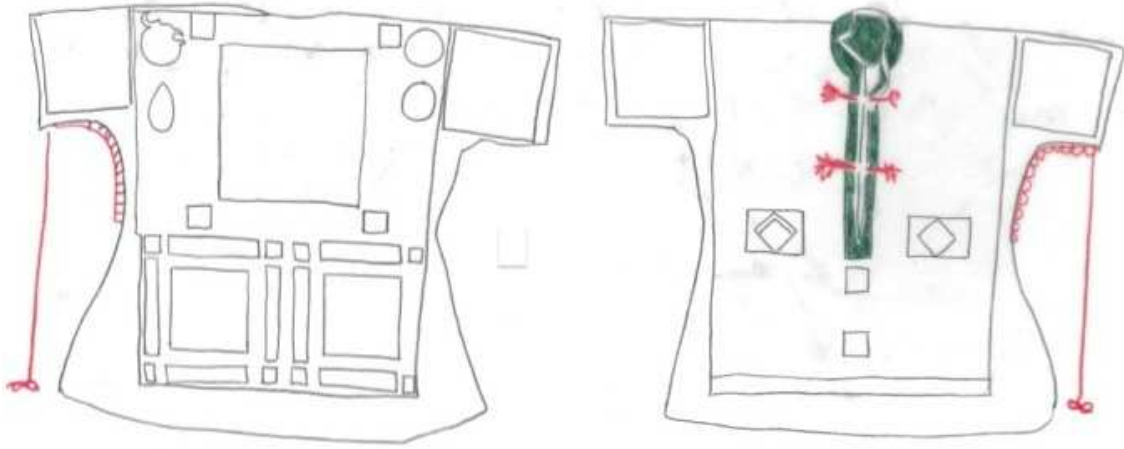
Publications:

Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Gergedan* v. ? (1988), 71; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 110.

(22) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1168

Ottoman, 16th Century

Red silk closures at front and along sides. Lined in green silk.



Materials: Cotton, silk, ink, gold paint

Dimensions: 81 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q112, 113, 114, 102, 110, 111, 101 (some repeated)

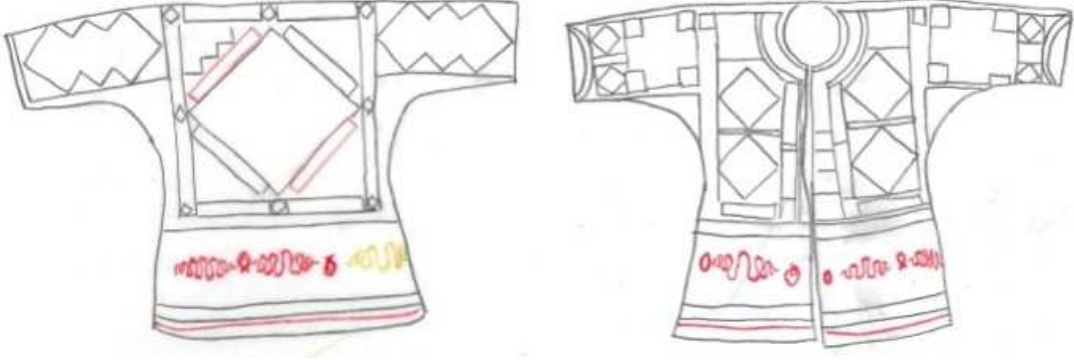
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımas, 2011), 142.

(23) Topkapi Saray:13/1169

Ottoman, 16th Century.

Large floral border on front and back bottom.



Materials: Cotton, silk.

Dimensions: 78 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48, 110, 1.

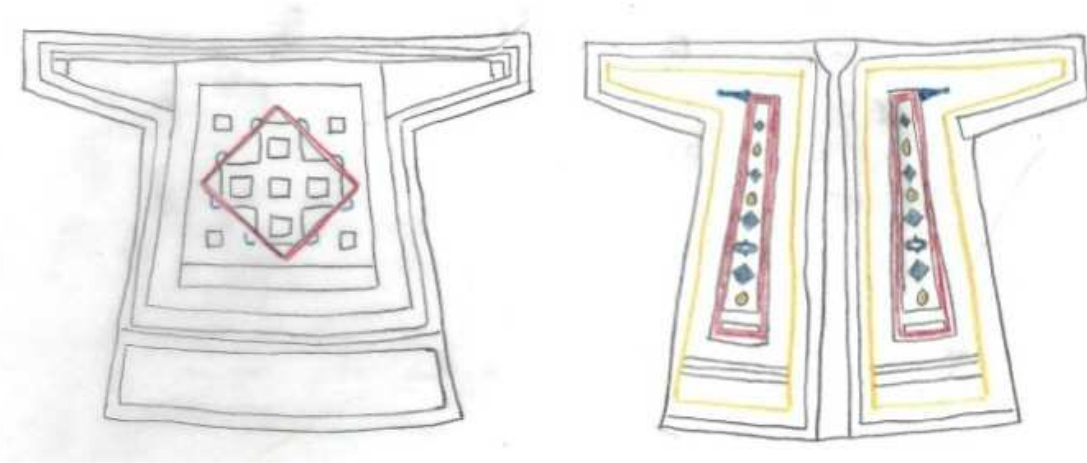
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımas, 2011), 150.

(24) Topkapi Saray: 13/1150

Ottoman, 1500-1550

Caftan style. Central design motifs on the front panels feature small areas of trompe l'oeuil painting that mimic enamel jewelry of the period.



Materials: Linen

Dimensions: 131 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q18, 36-46, 48, 50.

Publications:

Atil, Esin. *The Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 196; Baker, Patricia. *Islamic Textiles*. (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 103; Rogers, J. M. and R. M. Ward. *Süleyman the Magnificent*. (London: British Museum, 1988), 175; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımsaş, 2011), 154; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 98-99.

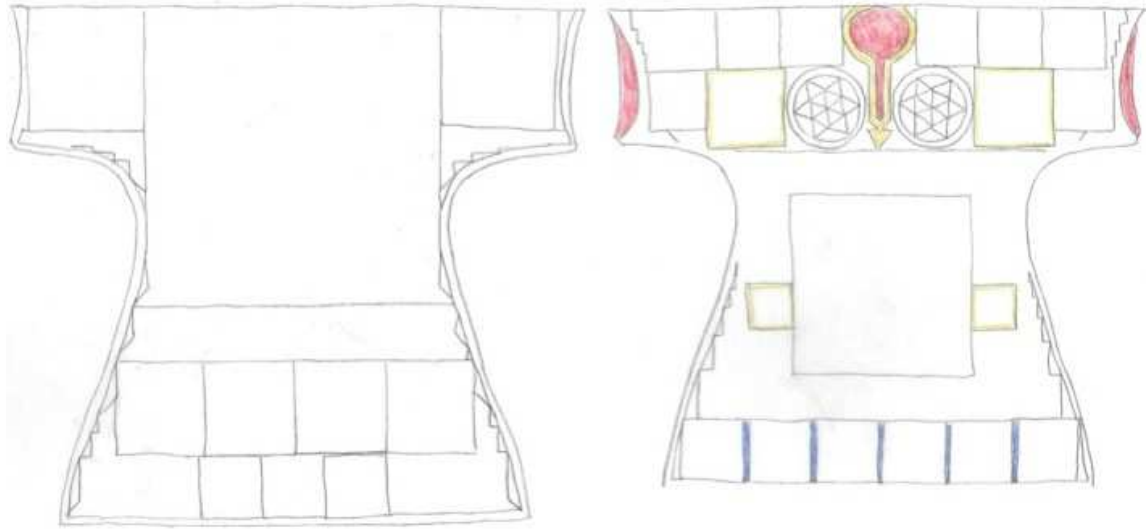
Group C: Linear/Stacked Square Patterns

The shirts in Group C, much like those in Group B, are also predominated in their design by the use of magic squares. Unlike the previous group, however, these squares are presented in rows or lines, or stacked to fit an area of the shirt surface. The resulting visual program is very different than that of Group B. Many of these shirts also feature plain lines of text without borders to delineate space, or have strong vertical or horizontal arrangement of magic squares and text.

(25) Topkapi Saray: 13/1133

Ottoman 1564

Attributed to Shehzade Selim; red lining; signed with the name of the dervish Ahmad b. Suleyman in 972, who is purported to have made the shirt.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold

Dimensions: n/a

Text Excerpts:

Q2:255

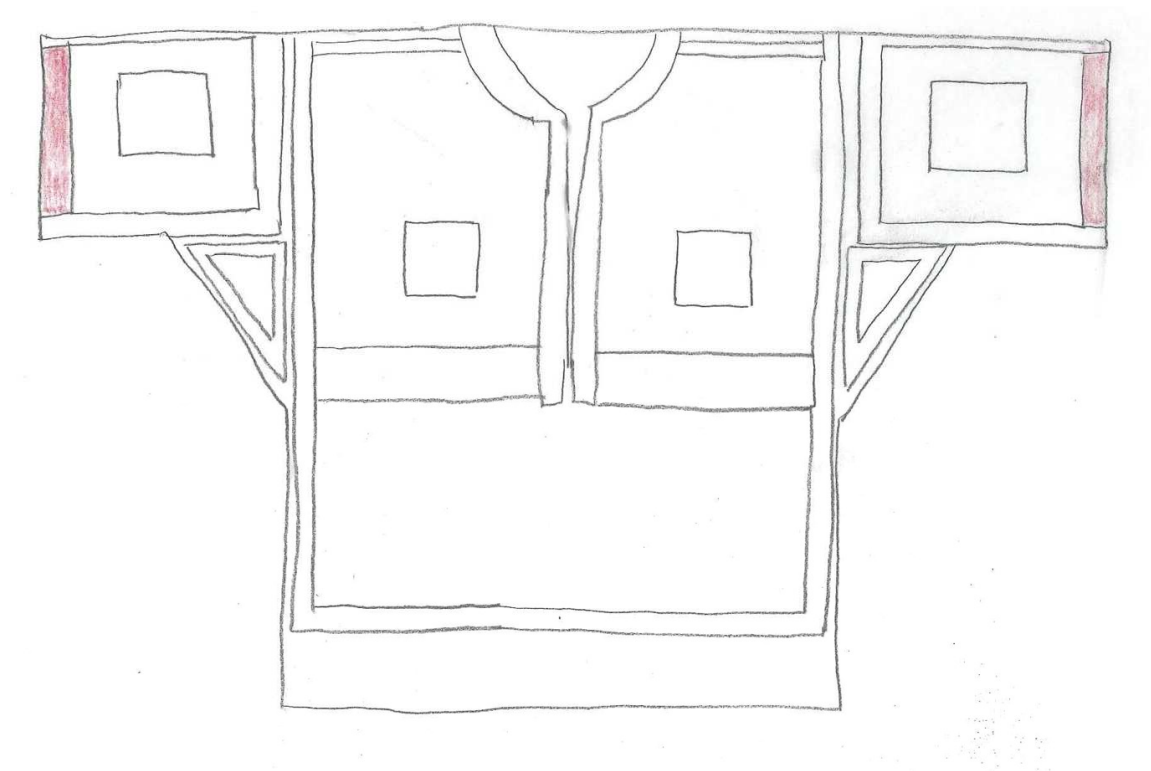
Publications:

Atil, Esin. *The Age of Süleyman the Magnificent* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 198; Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Gergedan* (1988), 74-5; Tezcan, Hülya. *Silks for the Sultans: Ottoman Imperial Garments from the Topkapi Palace*. (Istanbul: Ertug & Kocabiyik: 1996), 234-7; Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *P* (Spring 2003), 66-7; *Elemterefis*: *Anadolu'da Büyü ve İnanışlar* (Magic and Superstition in Anatolia) (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Vedat Nedim Tör Müzesi, 2003), 66; Tezcan, Hülya. "Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi'nde Bulunan Sultanlara Ait Sıifalı Gömlekler" *Uluslararası Tıp Tarihi Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı* 38 (2005), 918; Tezcan, Hülya. "Talismanic Shirts in the Topkapi Palace Museum" *ETN Textile Forum* 1 (2005), 36; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapi Sarayı'ndaki Sıifalı Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 60-3; Tezcan, Hülya. "Development of Art in the Islamic World" in *Islam: İnanç ve İbadet / Islam: Faith and Worship*. (Abu Dhabi: Emirate Palace, 2009), 52.

(26) Khalili Collection : TXT 77

Iran, 1500-1700

Magic squares predominate on sleeves and center pectorals. Back image unavailable.



Materials: Cotton, ink

Dimensions: n/a

Text Excerpts:

Q61:13, 48, 112, 24:13, 2:255, 110, 36:58, 3

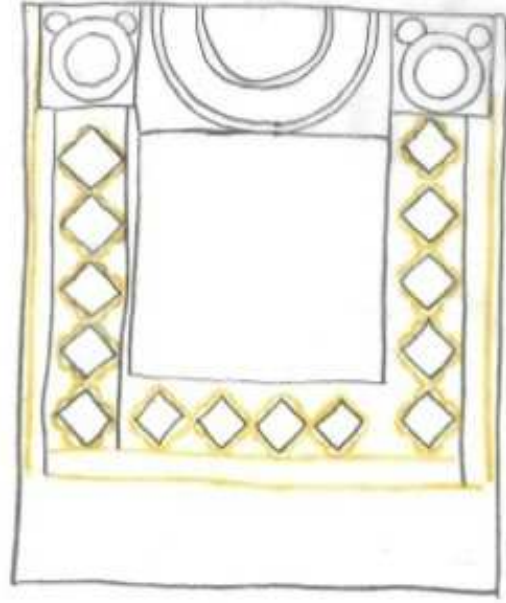
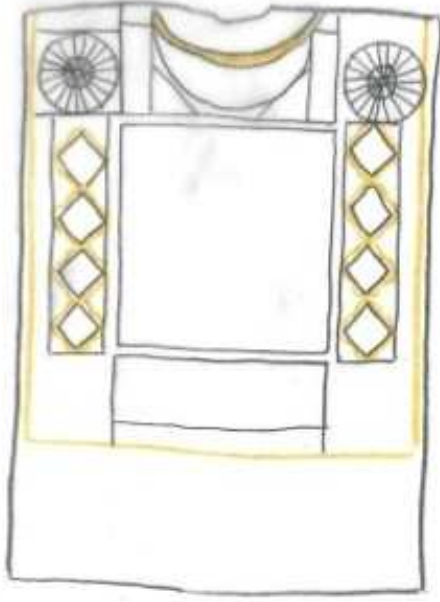
Publications:

Maddison, Francis, et al. *Science, Tools, and Magic* (London: Nour Foundation/Azimuth Editions/Oxford University Press, 1997).

(27) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1142

Ottoman, 17th Century

Sleeveless.



Materials: Cotton, silk, ink, gold and silver

Dimensions: 72 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q2:255

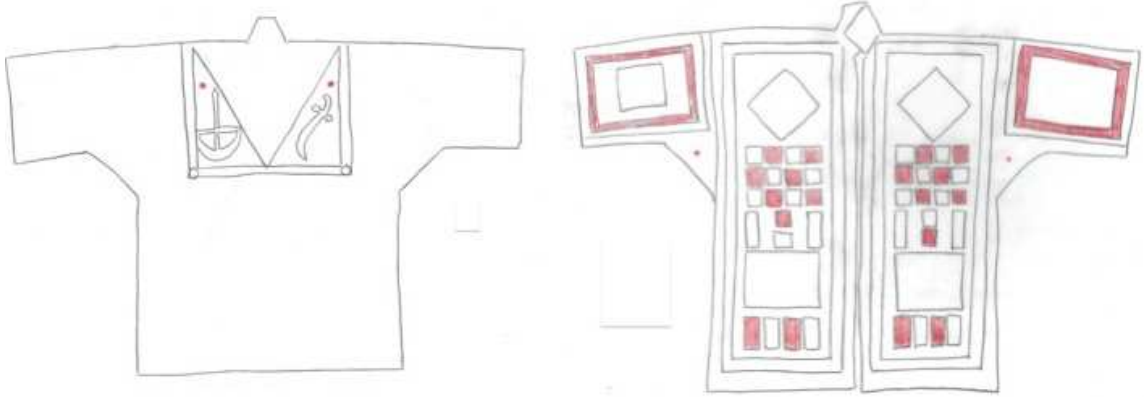
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımsaş, 2011), 166; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 36-7.

(28) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1139

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century

Micro text forms a sword and a standard on the back. Rest of the back is blank.



Materials: Cotton, ink, silver paint

Dimensions: 91 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q 12, 20, 9

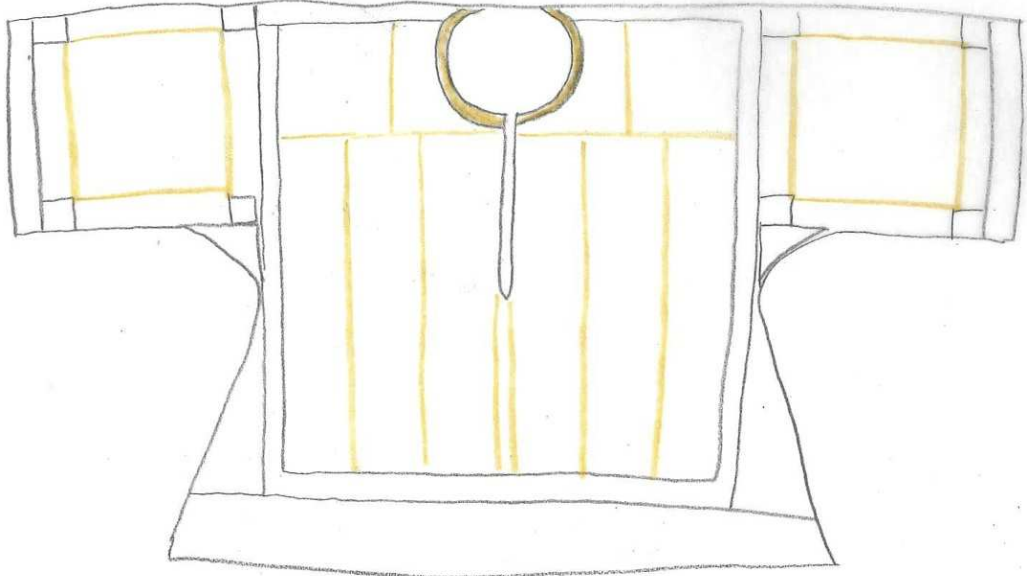
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sıifalı G mlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 46-7.

(29) Topkapi Saray: 13/1164

Ottoman, 1575.

This well-attributed shirt was made for Murad III by the Mevlevi dervish Sinan Dede (signed). A complete translation of shirt in Turkish is found in Tezcan (2011) p. 27-30



Materials: n/a

Dimensions: n/a

Text Excerpts: n/a

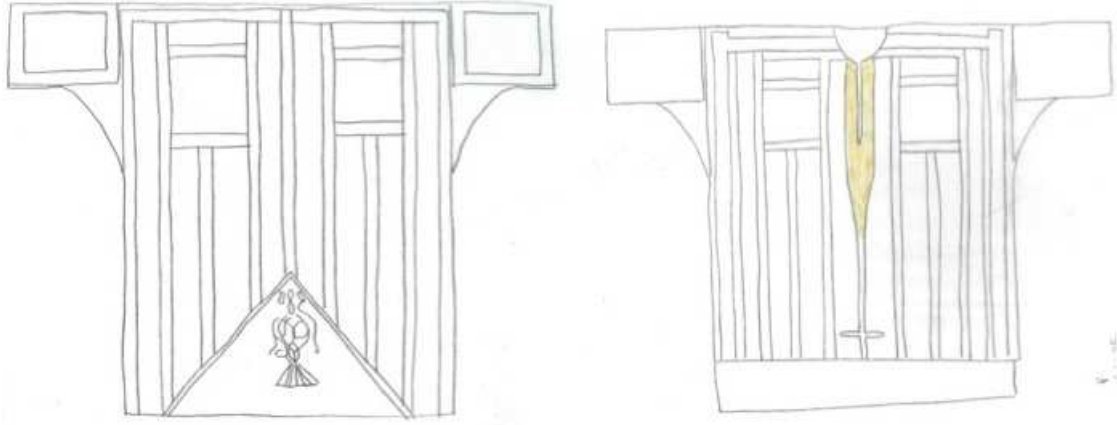
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 64-7.

(30) Topkapı Saray: 13/1135

Ottoman, 1582

Front neck opening takes the shape of Dhu'l Fiqar, painted in gold. Remainder of motif is long lines of text. Back features painted floral bouquet and tassel.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold, colored paint

Dimensions: 84 cm long

Text Excerpts:

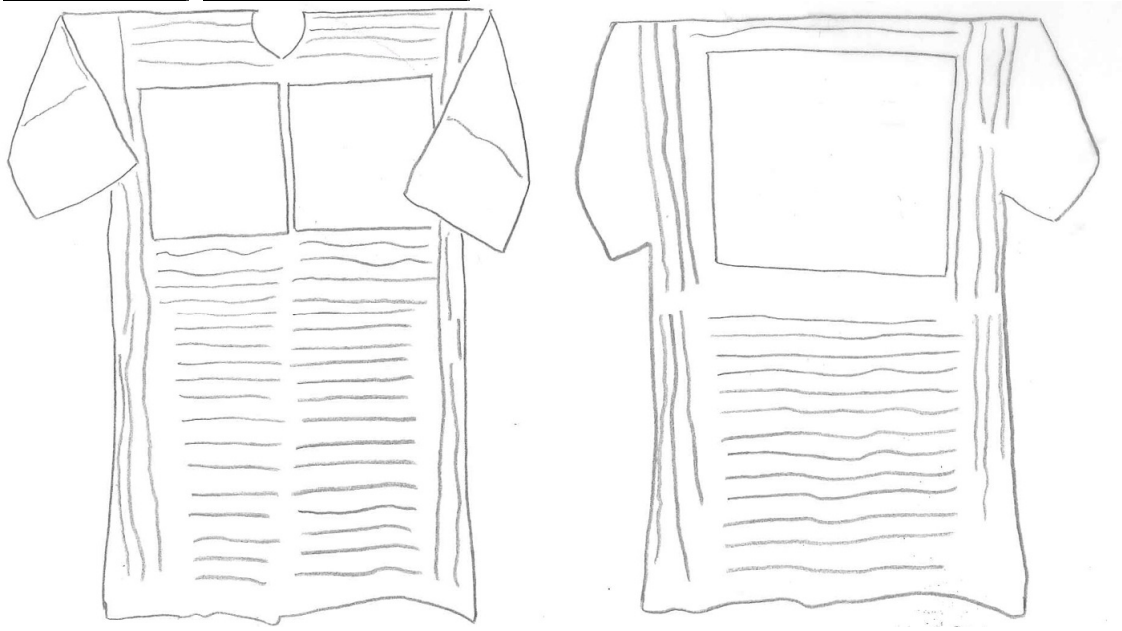
Publications:

Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Gergedan* (1988), 74-5; Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *P* (Spring 2003), 68-9; Tezcan, Hülya. "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi'nde Bulunan Sultanlara Ait Sıfıf Gömlekler" *Uluslararası Tıp Tarihi Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı* 38 (2005), 919; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sıfıf Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 25 + 68-71.

(31) Topkapi Saray Avadancılar Bölümü: 24/2023

Ottoman, 1896

This design is mostly individual lines of numbers, script, and unconnected letters. Two large (unruled) magic squares are arranged over each pectoral. TSM cataloguing info calls this: "The shirt of Uways [Veysel Karani]" in spite of the 19th century label text.



Materials: Cotton, Ink

Dimensions: 120 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q106, 105, 2:255.

Publications:

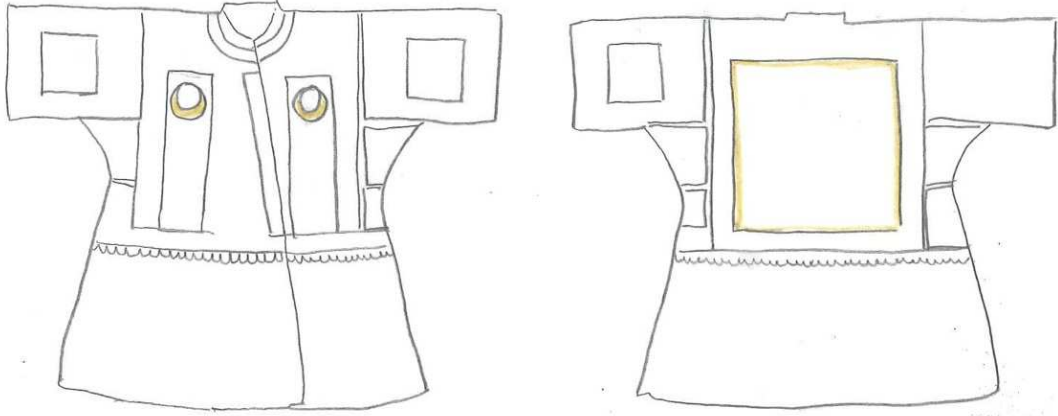
Tezcan, Hülya.

ıfalı G mlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 90-1.

(32) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1140

Ottoman, 16th-17th C

Long plain white border along front and back bottom sections; similar to 13/1396. Back is divided into 784 smaller magic squares.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf

Dimensions: 88 cm long

Text Excerpts:

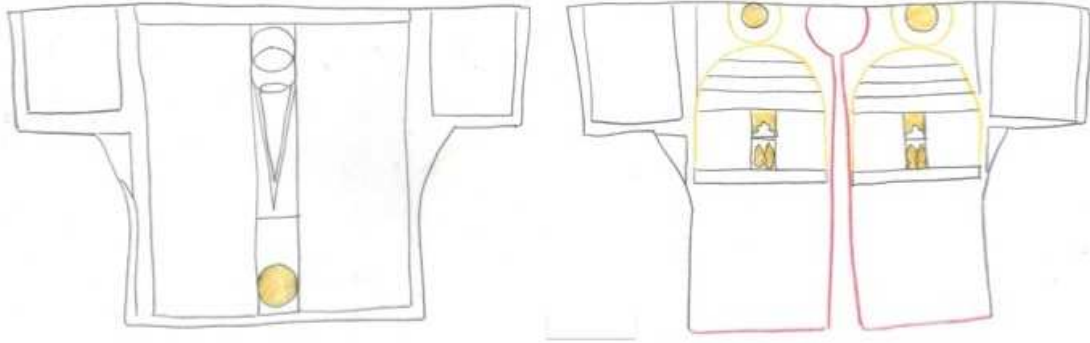
Q2: 255, 3:19, 48, 6:102, 4: 88, 36.

Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Şifalı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 122-3.

Ottoman, 17th century

Two small gold footprints in niches over each pectoral. This shirt is highly similar to Konya's Mevlana Museum #706.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf, colored paint. **Dimensions:** 65 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Angel's names: Israfil, Mikail, Gabriel, Azrail...Q21:87, 48:1-3, 68:51.

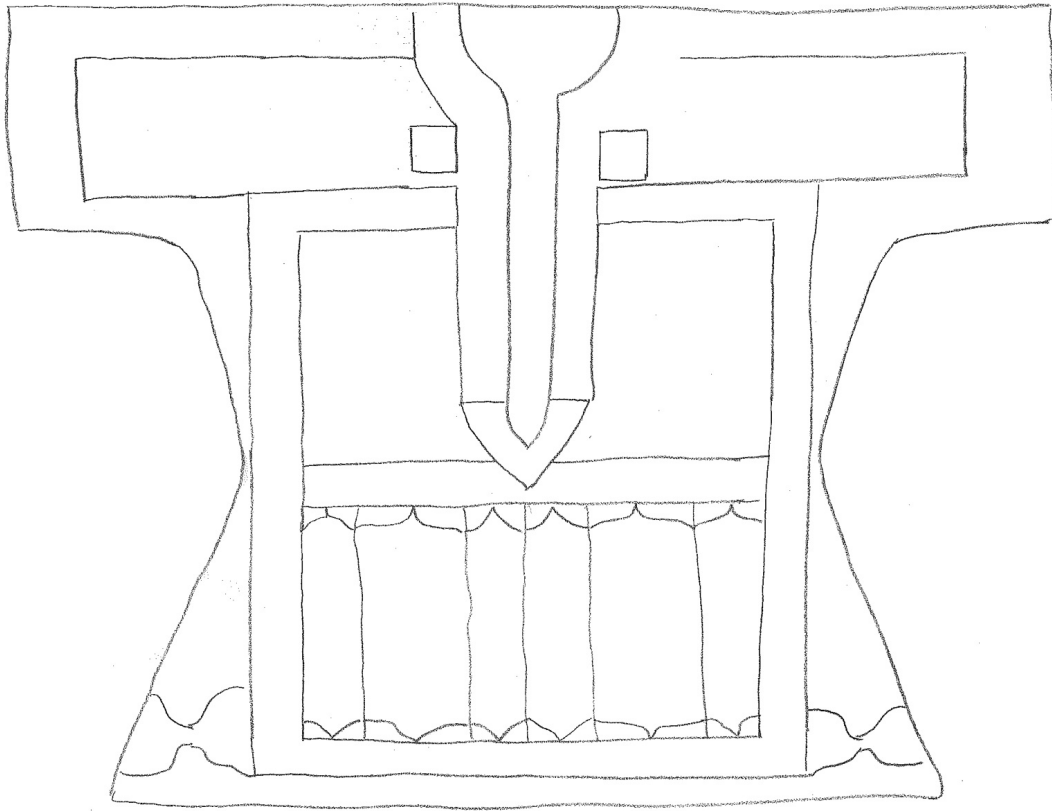
Publications

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslenmiş Gönlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 127-129. Tezcan, Hülya. "Development of Art in the Islamic World" in *Islam: İnanç ve İbadet / Islam: Faith and Worship* (Abu Dhabi: Emirate Palace, 2009) p. 388-9.

(34) Sotheby's Sale L12223 (2012): Lot 28

India, □ 18th Century

Indian attribution is not clear. There is one other shirt of unusual design attributed to South Asia that has come to market. This stylistically has more in common with Ottoman examples.



Materials: n/a

Dimensions: 96.5 cm x 75 cm □

Text Excerpts:

Selections from Q2, 3, 24, 56, 48, 66, 71, 94, 93, 109, 112, 113, 114. Has quatrain from Na'd 'Ali: "There is no youth [as brave as 'Ali, no sword [as sharp as] dhu'l fiqar"

Publications: n/a

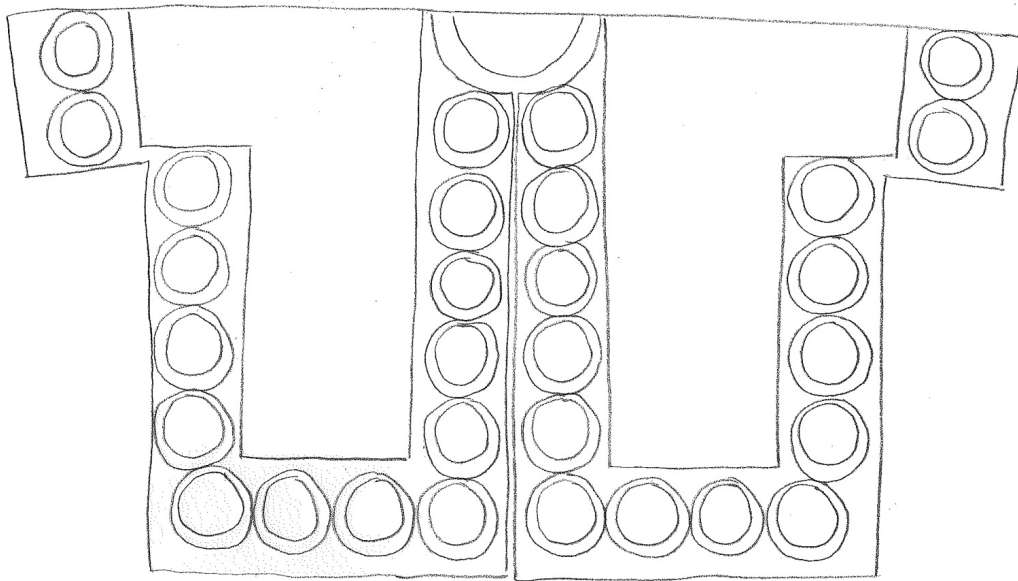
Group D: Circle Patterns

Circular motifs dominate this group of talismanic shirts, primarily from the Topkapı Palace Museum. A few shirts appear to have identical layouts, while others use borders composed of circles that contain excerpts of Qur'anic text. Several notable examples have large fields of circular motifs, and others feature only these circular designs and no magic squares.

(35) Christie's Sale 5334: Lot 160

Ottoman, 18th Century

This is likely a child's shirt. Similar to 2 other examples: Smitskamps 299, and Christies 5708 Lot 257. Central areas on front and back entirely filled with magic squares; circles contain text.



Materials: n/a

Dimensions: n/a

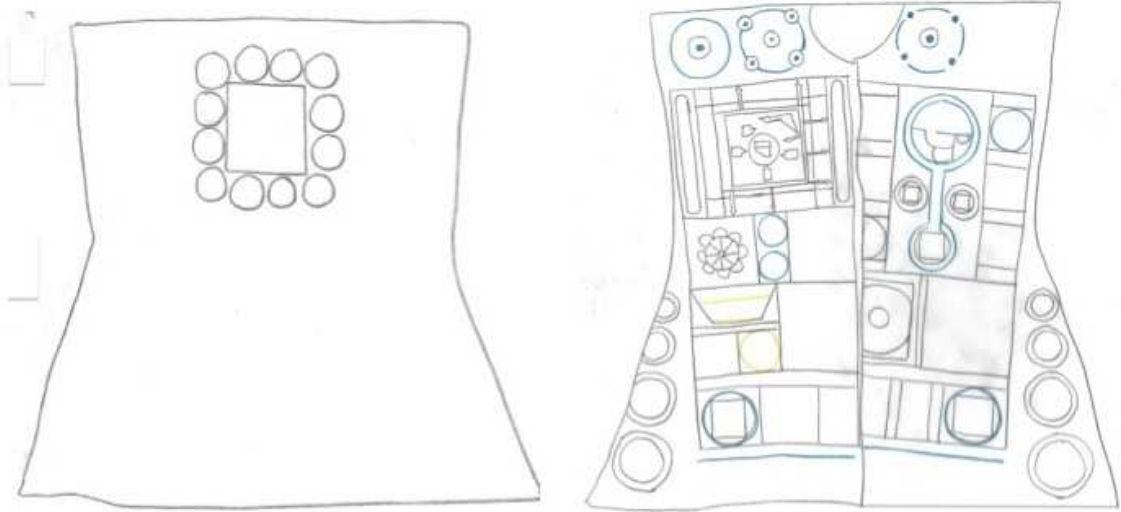
Text Excerpts:

Publications: n/a

(36) Topkapı Saray: 13/1401

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century

Diagram of Ka'ba over right pectoral; sleeveless. Back is mostly blank except for magic square surrounded by small circles of text.



Materials: Silk, ink

Dimensions: 69 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q93, 112, 108, 94, 2:255, 94, 109 106, 105, 55, 111, 33.

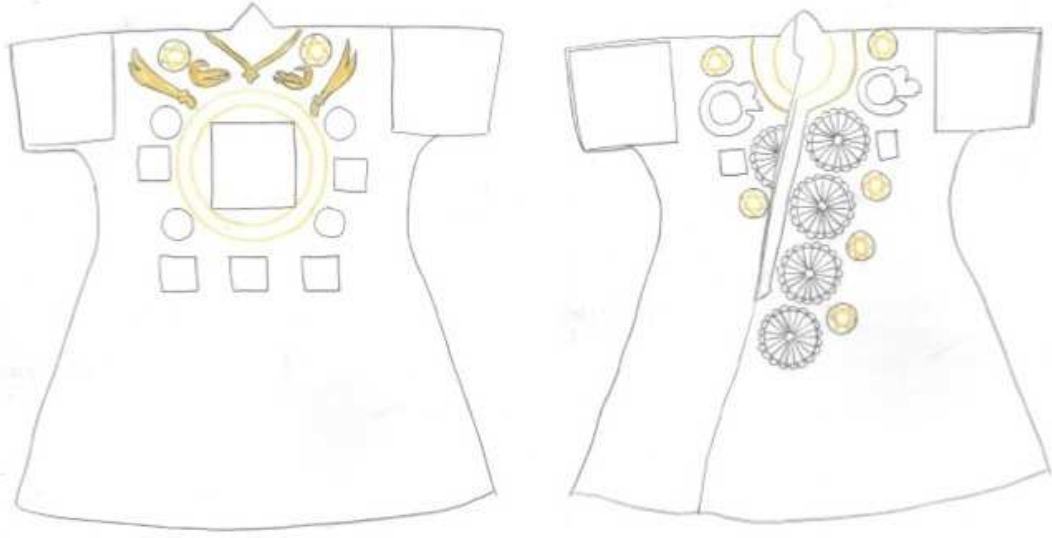
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Şifalı Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 50-1;
Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 120.

(38) Topkapi Saray: 13/1148

Ottoman, 19th century

Dhu'l fiqar rendered in opaque gold paint with gold paisleys on front. Similar style to 13/1138.



Materials: Linen, cotton, ink, gold leaf, paint

Dimensions: 98 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48:1-28. Angel names including: Mikha'il, Tahtah'il, Semkak'il.

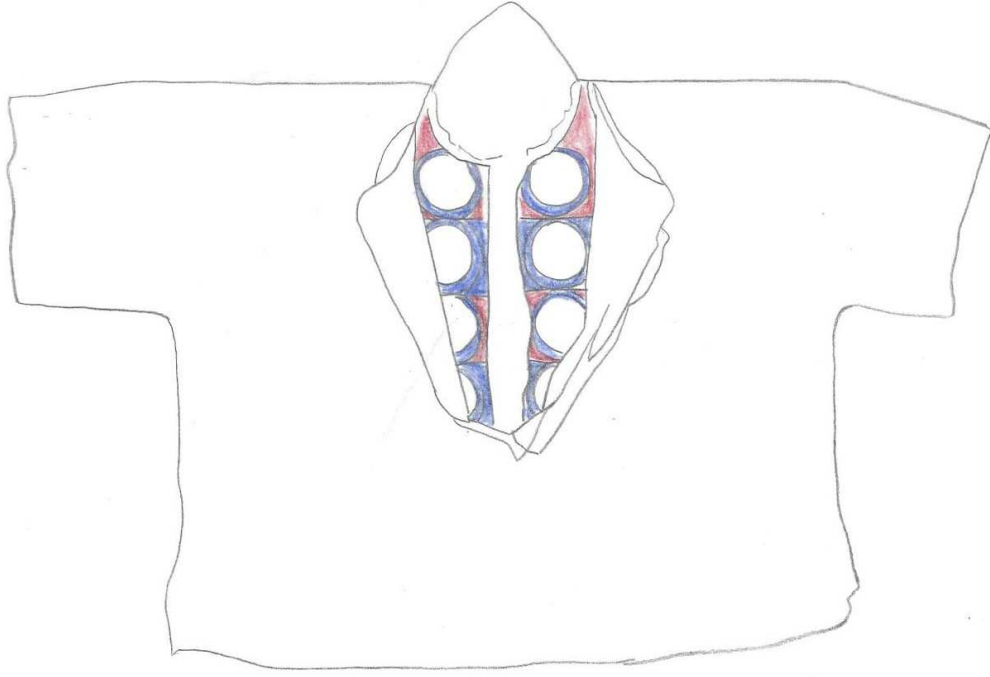
Publications:

Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Gergedan* v. ? (1988), 72-3; Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *P* (Spring 2003), 71-3; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sıfıf Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 114-7; Tezcan, Hülya. "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi'nde Bulunan Sultanlara Ait Sıfıf Gömlekler" *Uluslararası Tıp Tarihi Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı* 38 (2005), 921; Tezcan, Hülya. "Development of Art in the Islamic World" in *Islam: İnanç ve İbadet / Islam: Faith and Worship* (Abu Dhabi: Emirate Palace, 2009), 400 -3.

(39) Topkapi Saray: 13/955

Ottoman, 16th Century

Attributed to Murad III. Shirt is constructed in two layers. Red and blue ground with circular motifs visible around neckline. Outer body of shirt (front and back) made of a loosely woven plain brown fabric.



Materials: linen, ink, gold, colored paint **Dimensions:** 54 cm long

Text Excerpts:

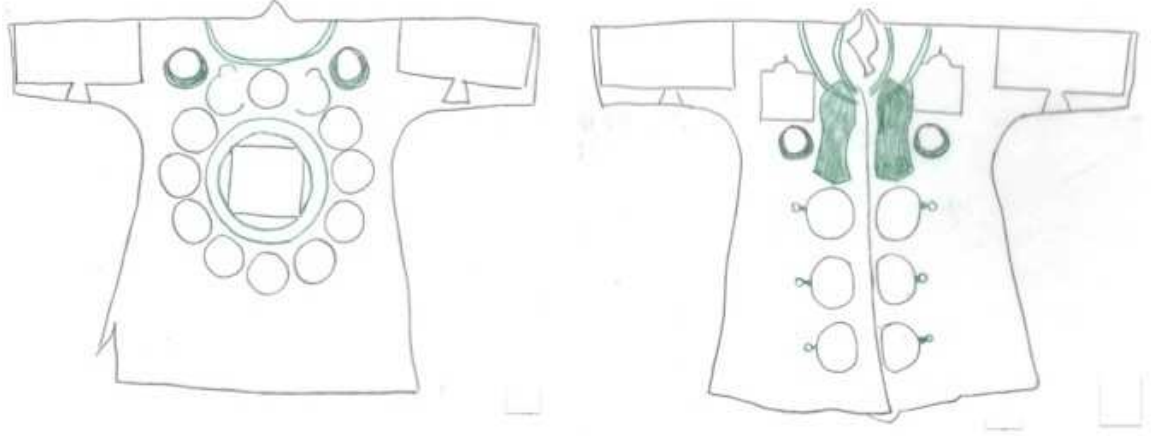
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tımas, 2011) 60-61.

(40) Topkapi Saray: 13/948

Ottoman, 19th century

Footprints in solid green along front; heavily stained. Similar to 13/1148.



Materials: Cotton, ink

Dimensions: 90 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48. Names of the participants in the Battle of Badr.

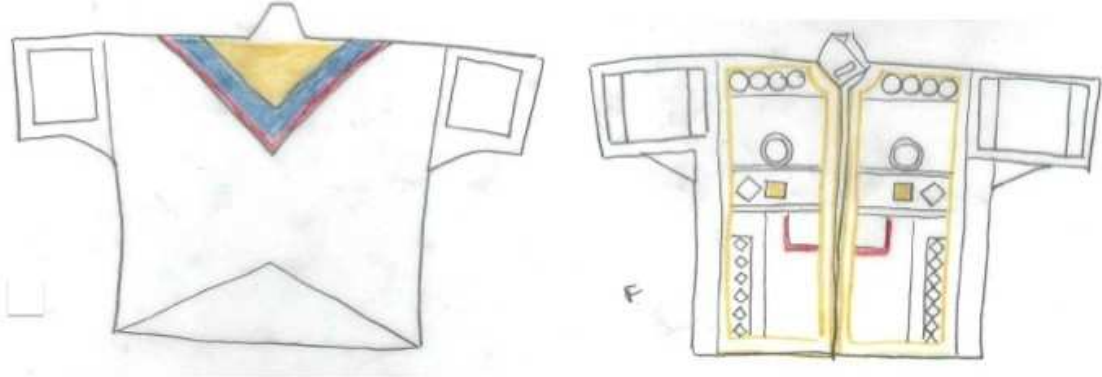
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. “Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi’nde Bulunan Sultanlara Ait Şifalı Gömlekler” *Uluslararası Tıp Tarihi Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı* 38 (2005), 216; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (İstanbul: Tımas, 2011), 98.

(41) Topkapi Saray: 13/1389

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century

Circular motif on back which looks like chain mail. The text and placement of all Qur'anic verses are diagrammed (in Turkish) by Murat Su lu n in Tez an 2011.



Materials: Cotton, ink, silver paint

Dimensions: 74 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48, 6, 138-158, 86, 100, 90, 27:30, 91, 12, 57:4-6, 39:66, 48:3, 57:9-10, 39:61-64, 39:73, 37:7, 37:84, 37:116-8, 37:134, 37:171-3, 37:60-1, 39:73-4, 65:2-3, 65:4-5, 73:20, 61:8-14, 41:30-33, 16:98, 61:13, 10:57, 3:174, 60:4, 37:7, 3:8, 15:9, 38:35-7, 16:99, 17:45, 3:31, 17:84, 17:81, 37:134, 62:4, 16:18, 17:65, 39:33-34,

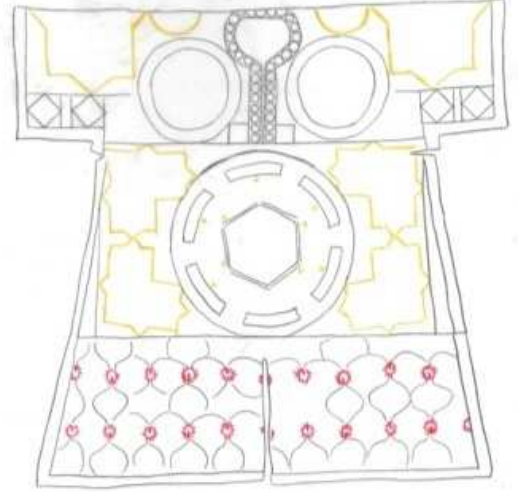
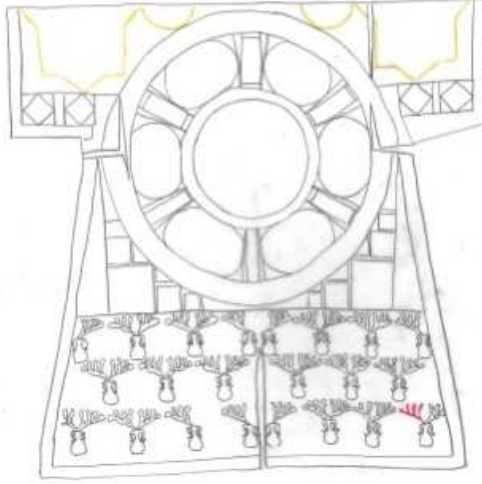
Publications:

Tezcan, H lya. *Topkap  Sarayı M zesi Koleksiyonundan T lsıml  G mlekler*. (Istanbul: T mas , 2011), 140; Tezcan, H lya. *Topkap  Saray'ındaki S ifalı G mlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006).

(42) Topkapi Saray: 13/1406

Ottoman, 16th Century

Gold cartouches in circle on the back read: "Ya Allah, Muhammad, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Ya Ali" Back bottom motif is vases with flowering branches. Front bottom motif is a floral that evokes cut-velvets of the period.



Materials: Cotton, silk, ink colored paint

Dimensions: 108 cm long

Text Excerpts:

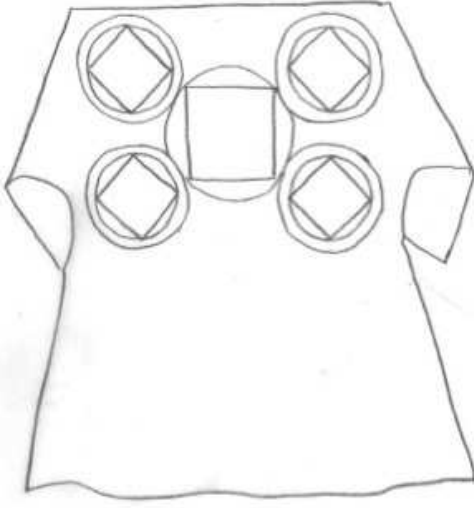
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımas, 2011), 146.

(43) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1147

Ottoman , 1500-1525

Largely undecorated silk with isolated squares and circles.



Materials: Silk, cotton, ink, gold

Dimensions: 101 cm long

Text Excerpts:

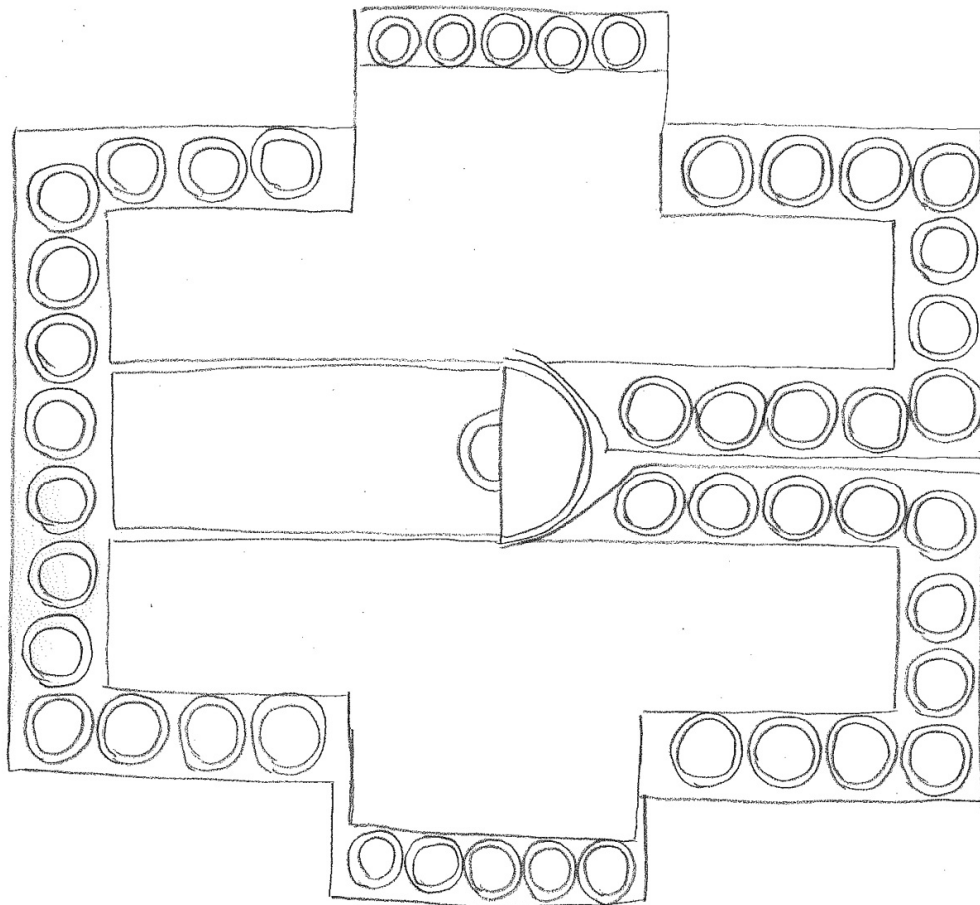
Q2:255

Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (İstanbul: Tımsaş, 2011), 162; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sımsımsı Gömlekler*. (İstanbul, BİKA: 2006), 149-151.

Ottoman, 18th century

Both Turkish and Arabic excerpts.



Materials: linen

Dimensions: 100 cm x 90 cm

Text Excerpts:

On inside: "man kataba 'l-kha□ tam wa-kataba ḥawlaha□ 'l-hafaza qa□ la 'l-shaykh al-Sha□ dhili□ nawwara 'Lla□ h qabrah wa-ḥamalaha□ fi□ 'l-khiṣa□ [m] wa'l-safar fa-inna la□ yuṣi□ bu jarḥ wa-la□ nabl wa-la□ sayf wa-la□ rumḥ... bi□ -idhn Alla□ h ta'a□ la□ ... al-anwa□ r" Signed by Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥman Erzinja□ ni□.

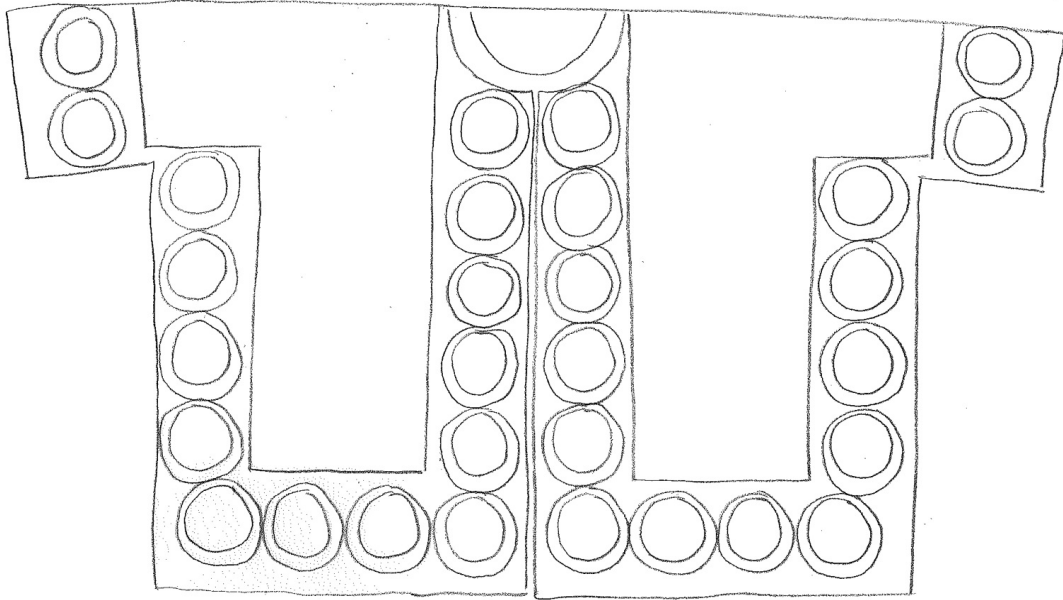
Publications:

Nico van den Boogert ed., *Islamic Manuscripts (Smitskamp Oriental Antiquarium Catalogue 635)* (Leiden: Smitskamp, 2002) 271-2.

(45) Christie's Sale 5708: Lot 257

Ottoman, 18th Century

Central fields are filled with magic squares, circles with text. Similar to Smitskamp Collection shirt.



Materials: n/a/

Dimensions: 49.9 cm x 87.1 cm

Text Excerpts: Descriptions of the Prophet, 'Umar and 'Uthman. Alphabetical listing of the Prophet's companions.

Publications: n/a

Group E: Ogival/Floral Patterns

A small group of talismanic shirts feature unusual layouts that revolve around repeated interlocking ogival forms, foliate forms, or floral forms. All of the examples from this group are Ottoman, and there are clear visual parallels to the cut-velvet textiles that are distinctive of the Ottoman visual landscape.

(46) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1137

Ottoman, 16th Century

Micro text background; similar to 13/1167.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold and silver leaf

Dimensions: 78 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48, 50, 61.

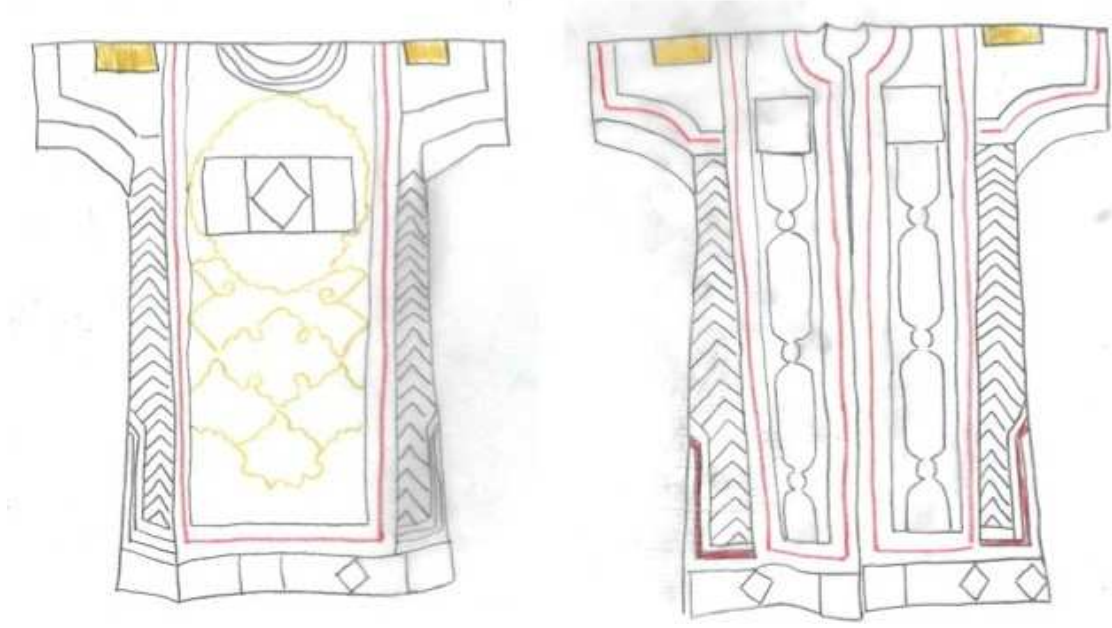
Publications:

Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Gergedan* v. ? (1988), 78-9; Gökyay, Orhan S. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *P* (Spring 2003), 62-3; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sıfırlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 40-2 + cover; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tıms, 2011), 128.

(47) Topkapı Saray: 13/1408

Ottoman, 1500-1525

Attributed to Sultan Mehmet.



Materials: Cotton, silk, ink, gold paint **Dimensions:** 135 cm long

Text Excerpts: Q60, 2:255, 18, 6, 3, 23:18, 18:45, 12, 19

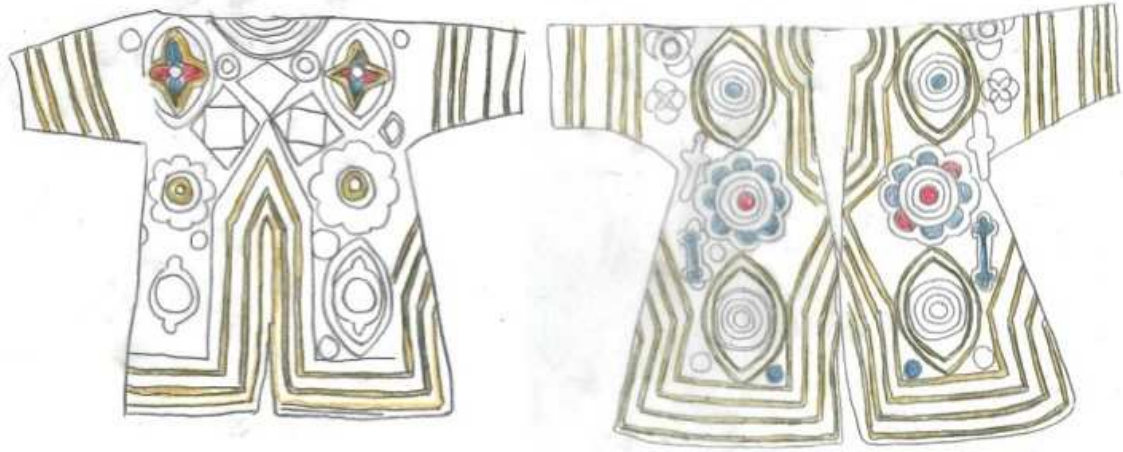
Publications:

Çagman, Filiz. *Les Collections médiévales turques du Musée de Topkapı Saray et d'autres musées de Turquie*. (N.P., c. 1983), 121; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 158; Tezcan, Hülya. *Silks for the Sultans: Ottoman Imperial Garments from the Topkapı Palace* (Istanbul: Ertugul & Kocabiyik: 1996), 244-248; *Elementerfisi*: *Anadolu'da Büyü ve İnanışlar* (Magic and Superstition in Anatolia) (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Vedat Nedim Tör Müzesi, 2003), 182; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 106-7; Palace Arts Foundation, *Palace of Gold and Light* (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2000), 66-69.

(48) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1402

Ottoman, 17th Century

Unusual shape, somewhat similar to a caftan. Very colorful design based on oval and floral motifs. Gold, blue, and red predominate. Shapes filled with microtext.



Materials: Silk, ink, colored paint

Dimensions: 96 cm long

Text Excerpts: n/a

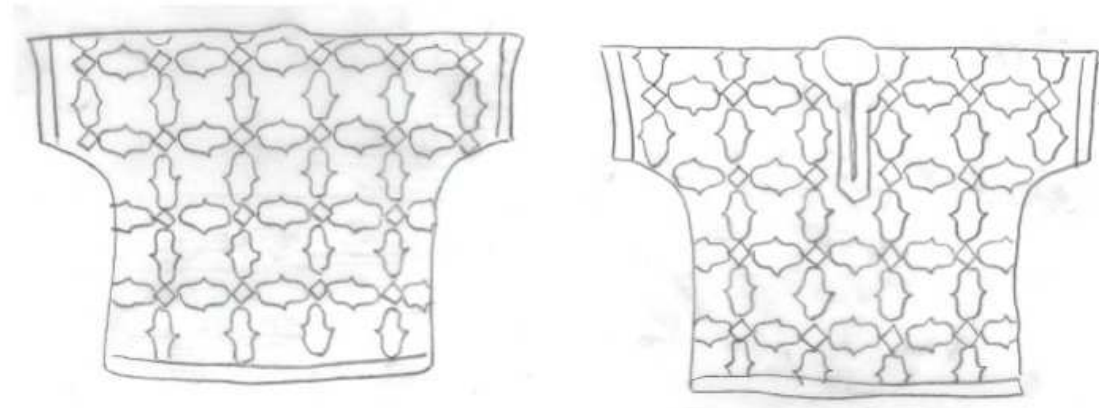
Publications:

Gökyay, Orhan Sıaik. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *Gergedan* (1988), cover; Gökyay, Orhan Sıaik. "Tılsımlı Gömlekler" *P* (Spring 2003), 71-73; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tımas, 2011), 164; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Süslü Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 52-53.

(49) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1136

Ottoman, 16th Century

Similar to 13/1137. This shirt is very brightly colored in blue, red, and gold, with text filling the ogival motifs.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf

Dimensions: 78 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48, 24, 67:1.

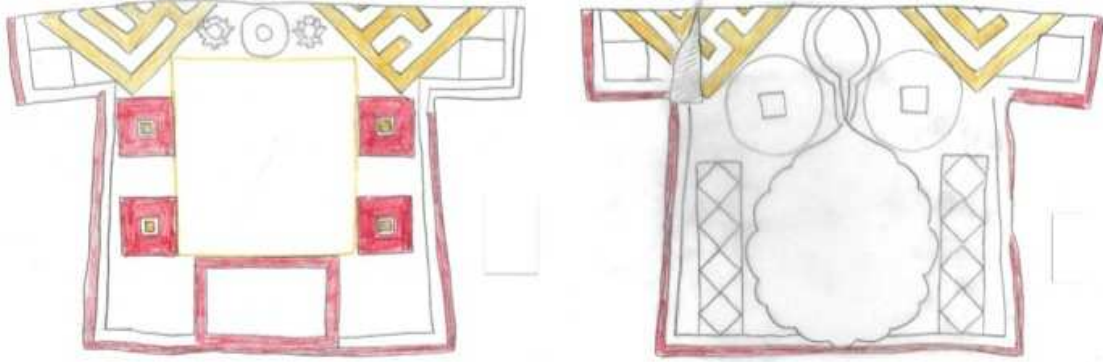
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tılsımlı, 2011), 130; Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sıfırlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 34; Tezcan, Hülya. "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi'nde Bulunan Sultanlara Ait Sıfırlı Gömlekler" *Uluslararası Tıp Tarihi Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı* 38 (2005), 918.

(50) Topkapi Saray: 13/1186

Ottoman, 16th Century

Uses a large variety of scripts including square kufic; large calligraphic designs fill center and back center fields.



Materials: Cotton, silk, ink, colored paint

Dimensions: 82 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapi Saray'ındaki Şifalı Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006); Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 152.

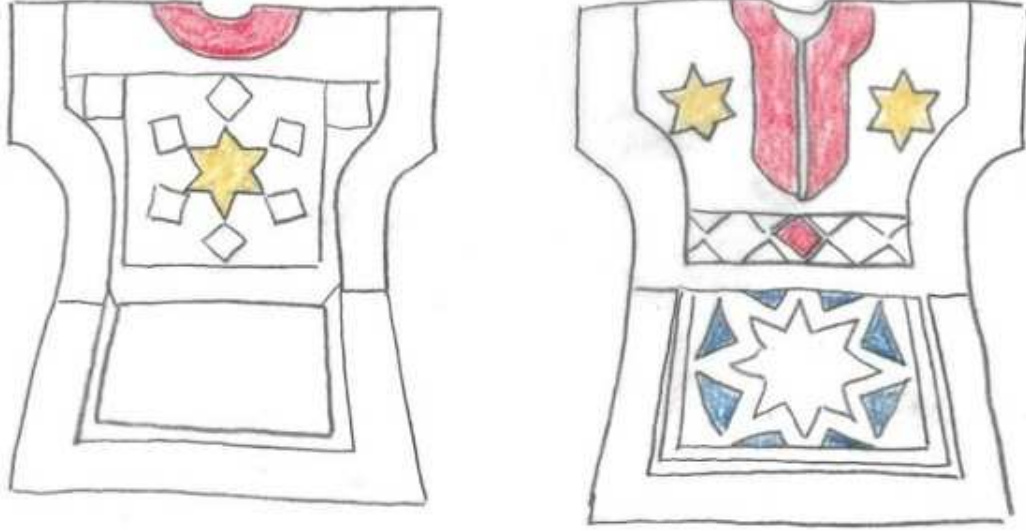
Group F: Star Patterns

Three Islamic talismanic shirts have a very strong star motif that dominates their design. While small star motifs appear on other shirts in this corpus, these particular examples have star shapes that govern their overall composition. Six-pointed stars are common in amulets from across the Islamic world and are associated with Süleyman (Solomon).

(51) Topkapi Saray: 13/1407

Ottoman, 16th Century

Predominated by star motifs.



Materials: cotton, ink, gold leaf, colored ink.

Dimensions: 107 cm long

Text Excerpts:

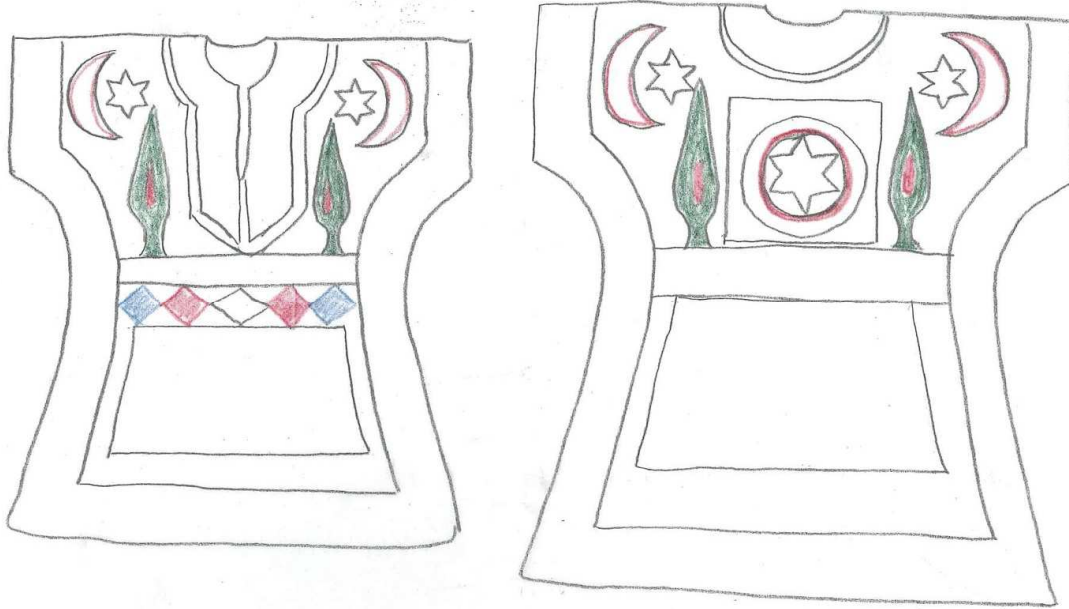
Q48, 36

Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Sıifalı Gömler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 32-3;
Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömler*. (Istanbul: Tımsı, 2011), 112.

(52) Sotheby's Sale L12220: Lot 419

Turkey, 16th Century



Materials: cotton

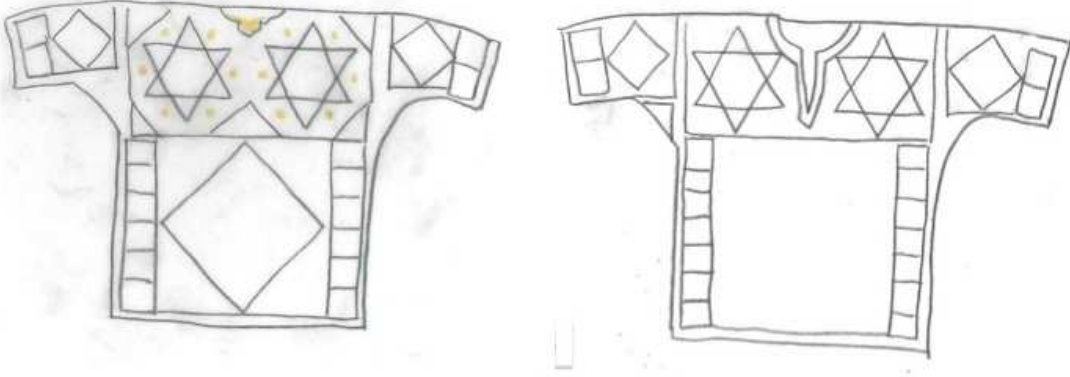
Dimensions: 89 cm x 81 cm

Text Excerpts: n/a

Publications: n/a

(53) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1134

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf, colored paint

Dimensions: 94 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q2:255, 48:1-25, 110

Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Şifalı Gömlekler* (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 22;
Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 124.

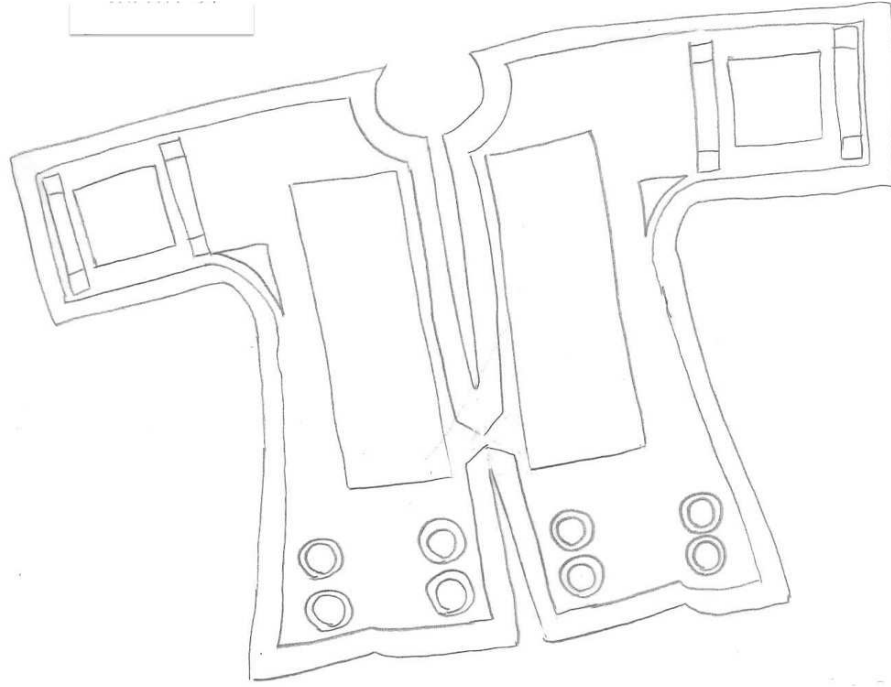
Group G: Other

Several Islamic talismanic shirts have decorative programs which are difficult to categorize, or which feature a combination of styles categorized above. A few shirts in the Ottoman group have no over-arching decorative program whatsoever, while others feature designs and text only on a portion of their surfaces.

(54) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1409

Ottoman, 16th Century

Attributed to Sultan Mehmet III.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold, colored paint

Dimensions: 88 cm long

Text Excerpts: n/a

Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımas, 2011), 62-3.

(55) Library of Congress: N/A

Iran, Qajar 18th Century

Micro-text background forms the excerpts listed here in the negative space.



Materials: linen

Dimensions: 70.5 cm x 80 cm

Text Excerpts:

Q61:13, 48:1, 48:3, 85:21-22

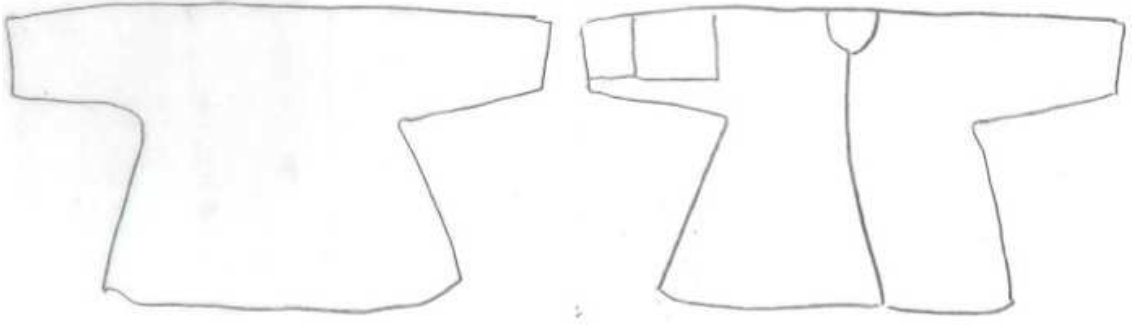
Publications:

Gruber, Christiane. ed. *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition: 10 Centuries of Book Arts in Indiana University Collections*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 90

(56) Topkapi Saray: 13/1392

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century

Little decoration/non geometric layout. Many lines of text scattered across front and some of the back in haphazard arrangement. All black ink.



Materials: Cotton, ink

Dimensions: 70 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q59:21, 2:243, 15:9, 17:81, 86:15-17, 97, 2:255, 94, 108, 106.

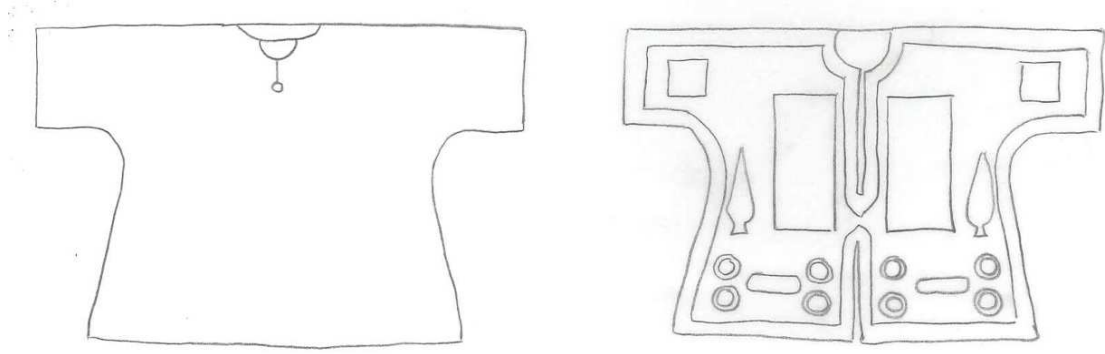
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Şifalı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 30 +48. [Abu Dhabi 2009 p. 398-99] Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımsaş, 2011), 126.

(57) Topkapi Saray: 13/1165

Ottoman, 1600-1650

Decorated front only; sword shaped lozenges on the front panels. Associated with Sultan Murad I.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold, colored paint **Dimensions:** 95 cm long

Text Excerpts: n/a

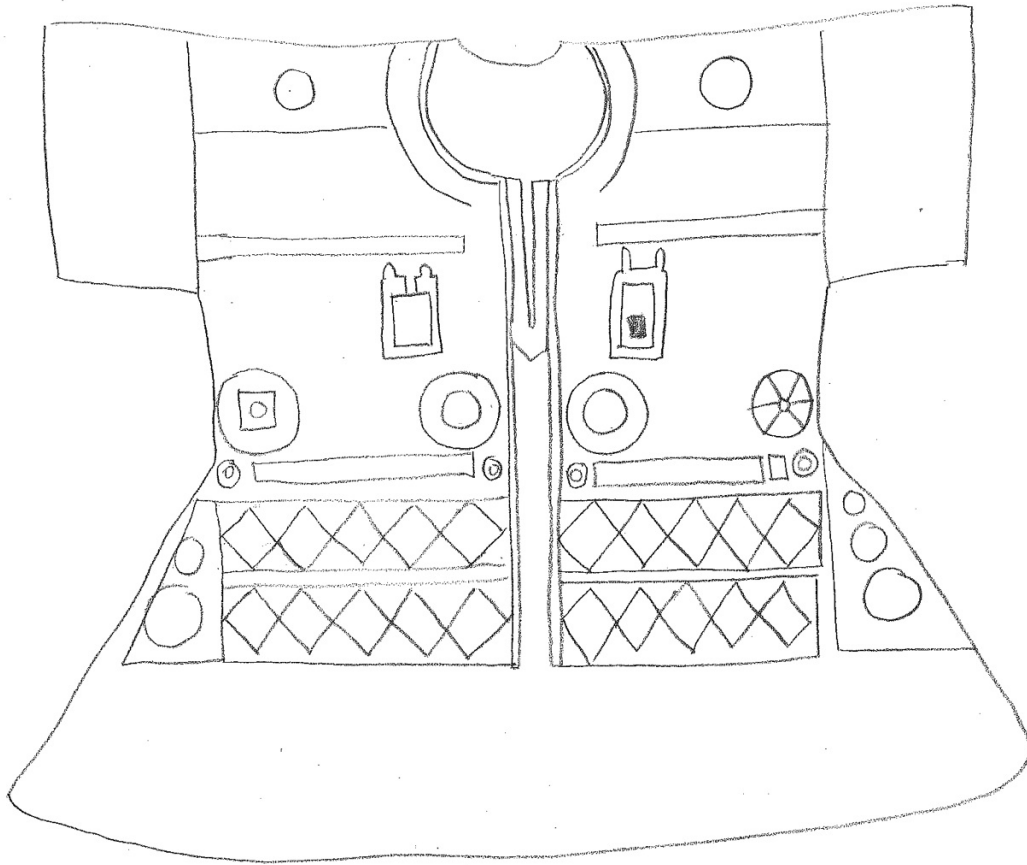
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Silahlı Gönlekler*. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 76-79.

(58) Sotheby's Sale L11223 (2011): Lot 82

India, Deccan 16th- 17th Century

Images of mosques of Mecca and Medina over front pectorals. Inscribed with the name of Caliph 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. Significant differences from other South Asian shirts, and no image of the back of the shirt is available.



Materials: Cotton, gold, ink

Dimensions: 69 cm x 90 cm

Text Excerpts:

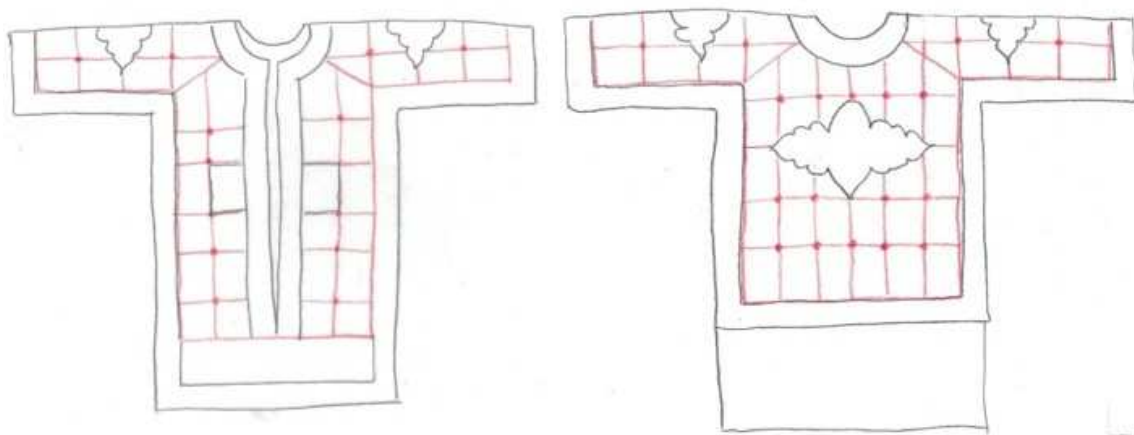
Q2:225, 24:35, 36:58, 42:19, 48, 109, 112, 114

Publications: n/a

(59) Michael Backman LTD (seller): Inv. No. 685

India, □ 19th century

Similar to an unphotographed example in the Tareq Rajab (Kuwait). Held in private UK collection since colonial times, according to seller. Also similar in layout to South Asian group shirts, with different style of central back motif, and shoulder decorations.



Materials: Cotton, gold, ink

Dimensions: n/a

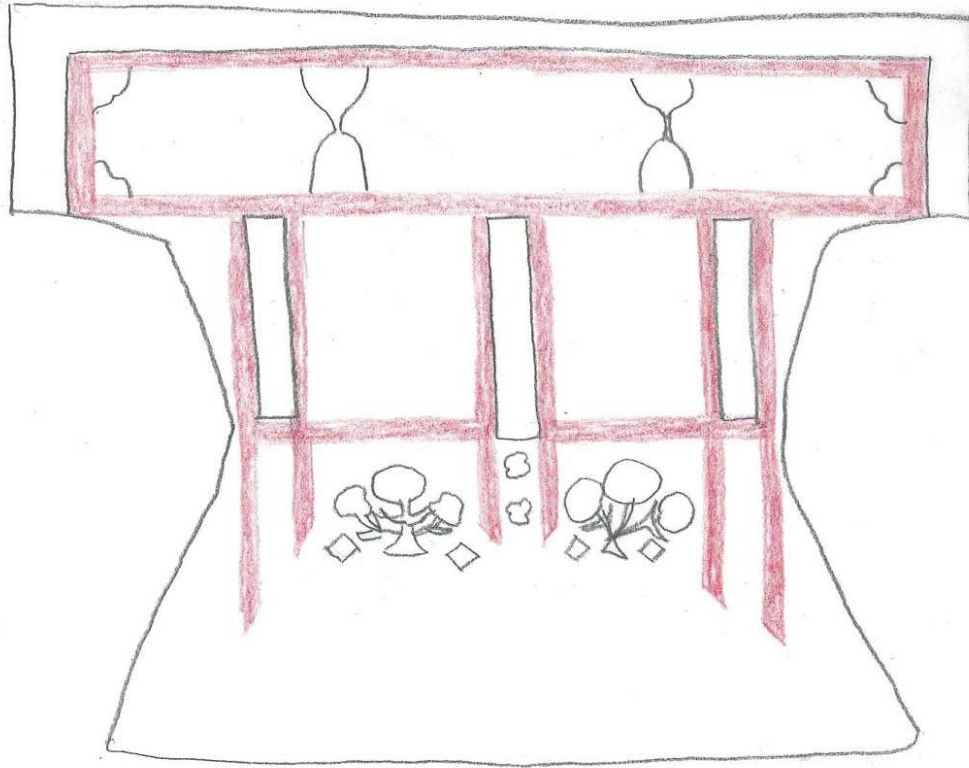
Text Excerpts: n/a

Publications: n/a

(60) Amir Mohtashemi (Dealer): N/A

India, □ 18th Century

Front photograph unavailable. Small floral motifs on front bottom. Blank bottom hem area.



Materials: Linen

Dimensions: n/a

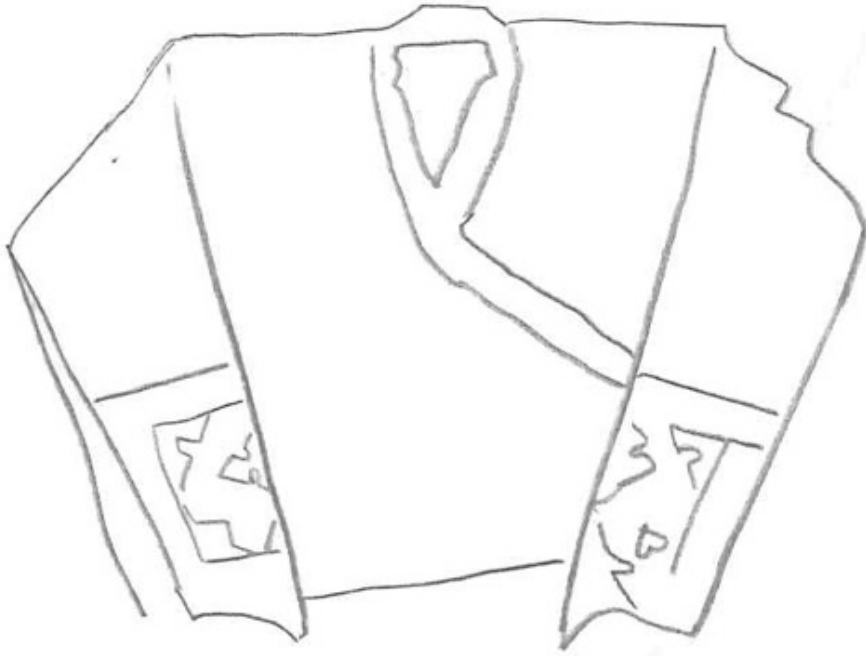
Text Excerpts: n/a

Publications: n/a

(61) Topkapi Saray: TIEM 538

Ottoman, 14th-15th Century

Unusual garment form resembling a closely-fitting short caftan. Heavy damage to surface. Attributed to Bayezid I (d. 1403). This is potentially the earliest example of an Ottoman talismanic shirt.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold, colored paint **Dimensions:** 48 cm long

Text Excerpts: n/a

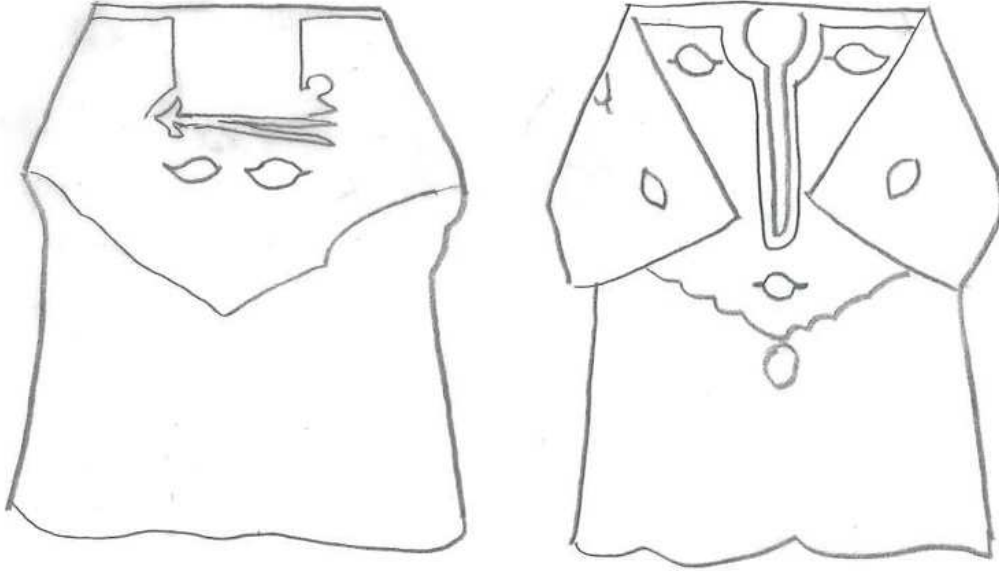
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler*. (Istanbul: Tımas, 2011), 68-9.

(62) Topkapı Sarayı: 13/1146

Ottoman, 16th-17th Century

Long blank borders front and back; Dhu'l Fiqar in calligraphy on back between shoulder blades.



Materials: Cotton, ink, gold leaf, colored paint

Dimensions: 120 cm long

Text Excerpts:

Q48

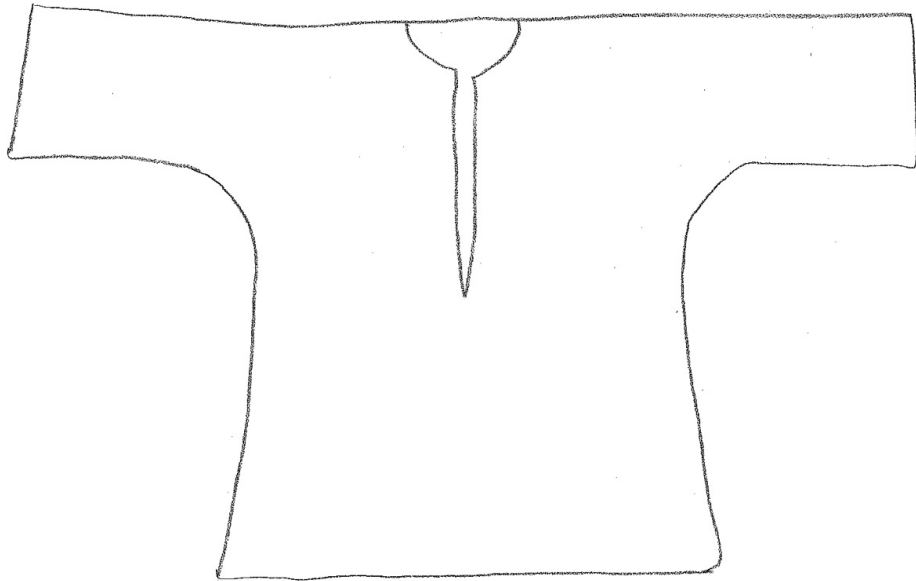
Publications:

Tezcan, Hülya. *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Tılsım, 2011), 112.

(63) Bonhams Sale 20834: Lot 49

Persia or India, 16th- 18th Century

No overall decorative program; clear signs of wear. Isolated numbers and letters.



Materials: n/a

Dimensions: n/a

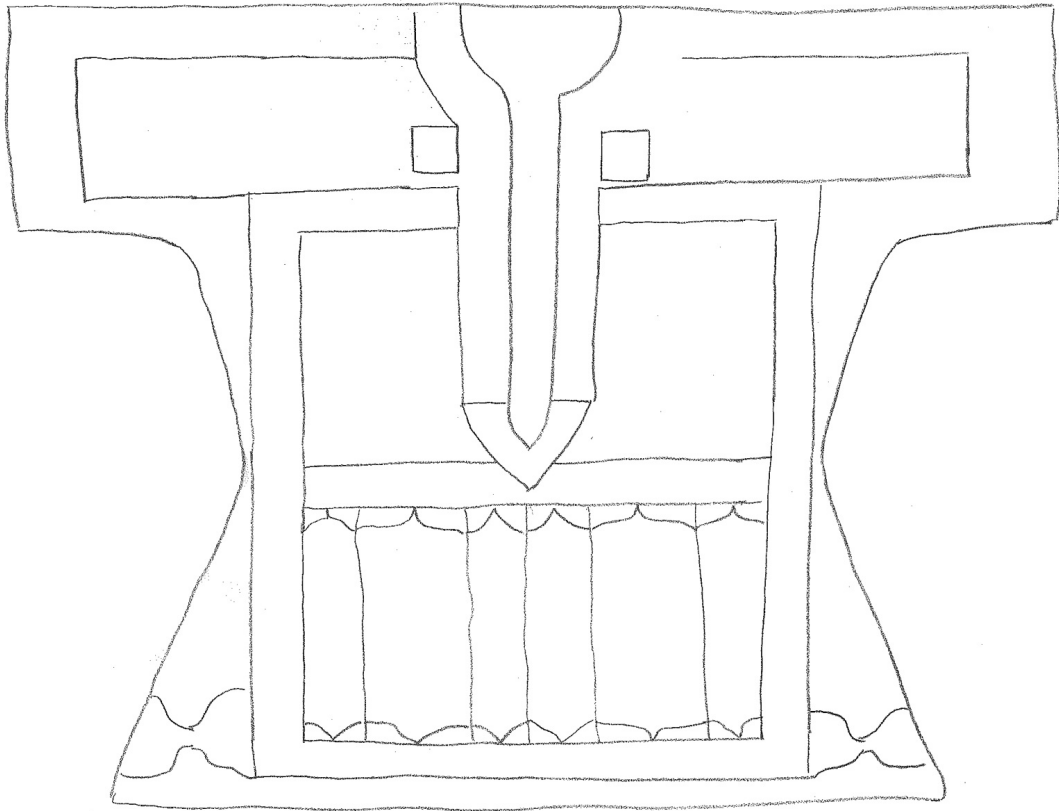
Text Excerpts: n/a

Publications: n/a

(64) Sotheby's Sale L12223 (2012): Lot 28

India, □ 18th Century

Indian attribution is not clear. There is one other shirt of unusual design attributed to South Asia that has come to market. This stylistically has more in common with Ottoman examples.



Materials: Cotton

Dimensions: 96.5 cm x 75 cm □

Text Excerpts:

Selections from Q2, 3, 24, 56, 48, 66, 71, 94, 93, 109, 112, 113, 114. Has quatrain from Na'd 'Ali: "There is no youth [as brave as 'Ali, no sword [as sharp as] dhu'l fiqar"

Publications: n/a

APPENDIX C: Other Shirts, Hats, and Banners

Current Collection	Accession Number, Type	Date, Provenance	Size	Notes / Publications
Al-Sabah Collection	n/a, Shirt	Late 15th Century, India		
Bodleian Library	Or. 162a, Shirt	before 1653, India		
Christie's (1993) Sale 4959	Lot 38, Shirt	17th Century, India	66 cm x 91.5 cm	
Christie's (1986) Sale	No. 84, Shirt	1693 or 1780, unknown	61 cm x 89 cm	Named and dated: "Abd al-Mugni, 4 Dhu'l Qa'dah 1175"
Christie's (1992) Sale	No. 78, Shirt	17th Century, India	56 cm x 96.5 cm	
Christie's Sale 4743	Lot 78, Shirt	16th Century, Ottoman		
Christie's Sale 7428	Lot 11, Hat	15th Century, Iran (Timurid)		
Christie's Sale 7564	Lot 359, Shirt	19th Century, Iran (Qajar)		
Collection of Theron J. Damon	n/a, Shirt	1583, Ottoman		Science, Tools and Magic; Pope, Arthur Upham. Masterpieces of Persian Art. (New York: Dryden Press, 1945).
Criterion Wandsworth (UK)	Lot 1079, Shirt	Ottoman		Description in auction catalogue: An Ottoman talismanic shirt (Jama) with extracts from the Qur`an and prayers Turkey, the cotton shirt covered with text written in a variety of scripts including Thuluth and square Kufic in assorted colours arranged in numerous panels, roundels,

Current Collection	Accession Number, Type	Date, Provenance	Size	Notes / Publications
				cartouches and lines with carbon dating test.
Mevlevi Museum, Konya	Fabric, 706, Shirt	19th century, Ottoman	62 cm long	Has footprints of the prophet and a sun design. Attributed to Sultan Veled'e. Similar to TSM 24/2074.
Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini"	MPE 30842, Shirt	17th Century, Ottoman	76 cm x. 108 cm	Signed "Husayn ibn Nāsir al-din ibn Gabāwrā. Acquired after the 1661-1664 Ottoman/Austrain campaign. Photograph unavailable. Bulletino di Palentologia Italiana, vol. 91-2 (2000-2001).
National Museum of Iran, Islamic Museum	8503, Shirt	17th Century, Ottoman		Noted in Tezcan (2011) 10 n. 9
National Musuem of Iran, Islamic Museum	8375, Shirt	16th Century, Ottoman		Noted in Tezcan (2011) 10 n. 9
Salar Jung Museum	177, Shirt	16th-17th Century, India		
Salar Jung Museum	178, Shirt	16th- 17th Century, India		
Sotheby's (1993) Sale	Lot 38, Shirt	17th Century, India		
Sotheby's (2010) Sale	Lot 42, Shirt	14th- 15th Century, India		Fehérvári, Géza, and Yasin Hamid Safadi. 1400 Years of Islamic Art: a descriptive catalogue

Current Collection	Accession Number, Type	Date, Provenance	Size	Notes / Publications
				(London: Khalili Gallery, 1981) no. 164
Sotheby's (2014)	Lot 27, Shirt	19th Century, Ottoman	69 cm x. 100 cm	Woven; repurposed textile
Sotheby's Sale L10220	Lot 46, Shirt	18th Century, Ottoman		This is a silk lampas caftan; red ground with gold thread. Repeated diagonal pattern alternates text and foliate forms.
Spink and Sons (1986) Sale	no. 78, Shirt	India		
Textile Museum (D.C.)	2009.15.3, Shirt	late 19th-early 20th C, Myanmar (Burma)		
Topkapi Saray	13/1329, Detached Collar	Ottoman		Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapi Saray'ındaki Şifalı Gömlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006)
Topkapi Saray	24/1997, Hat	Ottoman		Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapi Saray'ındaki Şifalı Gömlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006)
Topkapi Saray	13/617, Hat	Ottoman		Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapi Saray'ındaki Şifalı Gömlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006)
Topkapi Saray	24/1784, Hat	Ottoman		Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapi Saray'ındaki Şifalı Gömlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006)
Topkapi Saray	13/1172, Banner	Ottoman		Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapi Saray'ındaki Şifalı Gömlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006)
Topkapi Saray	13/1173, Banner	Ottoman		Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapi Saray'ındaki Şifalı Gömlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006)
Topkapi	13/2291b, Hat	Ottoman		

Current Collection	Accession Number, Type	Date, Provenance	Size	Notes / Publications
Saray Topkapı Saray Padişah Elbiseleri	13/1179, Shirt (uncut)	18th-19th century, Ottoman	90 cm long	This is an uncut piece of cotton, presumably that would form a sleeveless talismanic shirt. Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler. (Istanbul: Timaş, 2011), 168; Tezcan, Hülya. Topkapı Saray'ındaki Şıfalı Gömlekler. (Istanbul, BİKA: 2006), 148-9.
Victoria and Albert Museum	134-1873, Shirt	15th-16th C, India (?)	68.7 cm L x 102 cm W (with sleeves)	South Asian group
Victoria and Albert Museum	T. 59-1935, Shirt	15th- 16th C, India	64 cm L x 103 cm W (with sleeves)	South Asian Group
Victoria and Albert Museum	943-1889, Shirt	1750-1850, Iraq (Karbala or Najaf)	83 cm L x 104.1 cm W	Note in register says "A hadji's garment"
Victoria and Albert Museum	T.8-1945, Shirt	1750-1900, Iran	74.9 cm L x 91.4 cm W (with sleeves)	gift c/o Imperial Bank of Iran

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