Dialogues in Art History, from Mesopotamian to Modern: Readings for a New Century

Edited by Elizabeth Cropper

Frontispiece: Simone Martini with Lippo Memmi,
detail of Gabriel from *Annunciation with Saints*,
1333, tempera and gold
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; photograph Scala/Art
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Islamic Identities and Islamic Art: Inscribing the Qur'an in Twelfth-Century Afghanistan

lmost every survey of Islamic art begins with a paradoxical attempt to deconstruct the term itself, an endeavor that reflects a widespread unease with a rubric that must accommodate a vast array of artistic production spanning almost fourteen hundred years and several continents.[1] Among the many recent developments in the field that have helped redefine and refine the problematic notion of "Islamic" art is an interest in the nature of art produced at cultural interfaces, chief among them Andalusia, Anatolia, Central Asia, and north India. Analyzing artistic production as integral to processes of cross-cultural exchange, this work has done much to complicate the cultural monolithism implicit in the term *Islamic art*. Yet much of this work is concerned with the relationship between Islam and its non-Muslim "others": there have been far fewer attempts to analyze or deconstruct the nature of the Muslim self, even when the adjective entails a reference to religious identity. Instead, particular (and often competing) religious identities are subsumed under the generic terms *Islamic* or *Muslim*, assuming and producing a homogeneity characterized by what Stephen Campbell has identified in another context as the "transhistorical reification of categories of belief or philosophical allegiance."[2]

Recent scholarship on the rivalry between the Sunni 'Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad and its Shi'i Fatimid rival in Cairo (from the fourth/tenth through the sixth/twelfth cen-

turies A.H./C.E.) provides a welcome exception to this general trend. When it comes to Sunni Islam, however, there is still a general tendency to retroject a notion of religious consensus that is itself a cultural artifact. As the historian Richard Bulliet has noted: "The mutual tolerance of different legal and doctrinal interpretations of Sunni Islam that characterizes the later centuries [that is, the thirteenth century and later] belies the bitter factional conflicts between Sunni law schools that marks the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries." Bulliet emphasizes that in the absence of detailed synchronic studies at the local or regional level, "it is difficult to erase the image of Islamic social and religious homogeneity that becomes an article of belief in later centuries and suffuses general accounts of Islam and Islamic history," and, one might add, Islamic art history.[3]

Favoring what Clifford Geertz characterizes as "thin" descriptions over "thick," the reification of medieval identities in ways that ignore their protean character has significant implications not only for our understanding of Islamic history or medieval religious identity but also for the artistic production of medieval elites.[4] Studies on 'Abbasid–Fatimid rivalry have demonstrated that within the context of Sunni-Shi'i antipathy, architecture, inscriptions, numismatics, and even textiles could be deployed to bolster competing claims to authority. The impact of intra-Sunni doctrinal disputes on

premodern artistic patronage, however, has received far less attention.

In seeking to address a perceived neglect, this essay also engages another significant development of the past few decades in the field of Islamic art: an increased attention to the aesthetic and iconographic function of nonhistorical inscriptions, especially Qur'anic texts, previously dismissed as meaningless religious formulas.[5] Analyzing the role of Qur'anic citations inscribed on monumental architecture and portable objects, it seeks to demonstrate that the factional conflicts referred to by Bulliet are integral to understanding the choice of Qur'anic inscriptions on certain medieval artifacts, which functioned as discursive statements deployed in the service of medieval intra-Muslim (and specifically intra-Sunni) polemics.

The Shansabanid or Ghurid sultanate of Afghanistan, which forms the focus for this study, is not particularly well known even among Islamicists. The reasons for this neglect include the relatively small number of surviving Ghurid monuments, their geo-graphic remoteness, the dearth of extant objects that can be securely attributed to Ghurid patronage, and the ephemeral nature of the sultanate itself, which flourished for just a few decades at the end of the twelfth century. By contrast, the prominence of the Ghurids in modern South Asian politics reflects their importance and political utility as the first Muslim dynasty to bring large parts of north India under their sway (fig. 1).

The floruit of the sultanate, which corresponds with the period of expansion into north India, was marked both by heated sectarian disputes and by changing patterns of artistic and religious patronage. These shifts can be understood as part of a dynamic process of self-(re)fashioning on the part of the Shansabanid sultans as their fortunes rose and their territories expanded. The undertaking was shaped by tensions arising from the strong regional associations of the dynasty and its transregional pretensions, tensions that included Shansabanid support for a localized, pietistic sect of Sunni Islam.
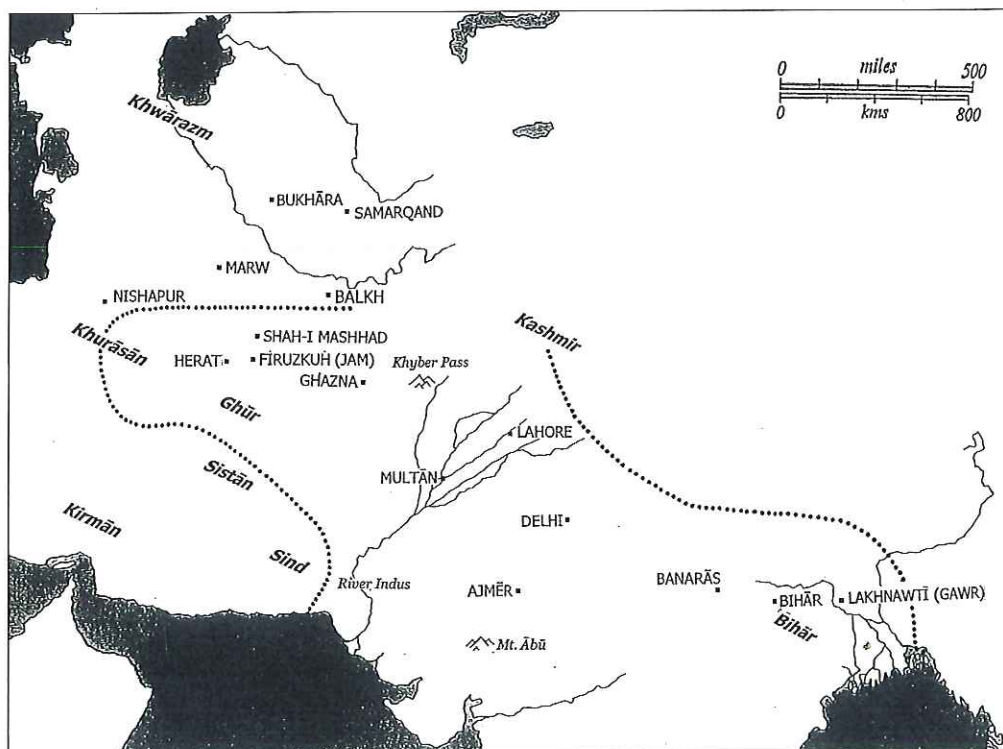
1. Map showing the territories of the Ghurid sultanate at their greatest extent in dotted outline

Heterodoxy

The twelfth-century minaret at Jam in central Afghanistan (roughly midway between Herat and Kabul) is one of the most spectacular medieval monuments in the Islamic world (fig. 2). Constructed of baked brick, the exterior elevation comprises three cylindrical shafts of decreasing thickness set on an octagonal socle and crowned with a small (and remarkably well-preserved) pavilion. The exterior is lavishly decorated with terracotta, stucco, and blue-glazed tiles. The minaret stands sixty-five meters high in the narrow confines of a remote mountain valley that is difficult of access and susceptible to flooding by spring meltwaters: its existence came to the attention of Afghan and foreign scholars only in the 1950s.[6]

2. Minaret of Jam, central Afghanistan, twelfth century, general view from the southeast
Photograph courtesy of David Thomas and the Minaret of Jam Archaeological Project

Isolated today, the mountainous province of Ghur, in which the minaret is located (see fig. 1), was a rather marginal region of the medieval Islamic world that converted to Islam only in the ninth or tenth century, much later than many of the surrounding areas.[7] Ghur enjoyed a brief moment of glory in the half century after 1150, when one of the *maliks* (chiefs) of the region sacked Ghazna, the eponymous capital of the Ghaznavid sultans who had dominated the eastern Islamic world for almost 150 years, and assumed the title of sultan.[8] This dramatic event, which earned its perpetrator the sobriquet *Jahan-suz* (World Burner), marked the abrupt entry of these mountain chiefs onto the wider political stage and the beginning of their meteoric rise from regional obscurity. Three lines of the dynasty exercised authority from Firuzkuh in Ghur, Bamiyan in central Afghanistan, and Ghazna in the east.

The Ghurid sultanate reached its apogee under the reign of sultans Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam (558–599/1163–1203) and Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam (569–602/1173–1206), *maliks* of the Shansabanid clan. The brothers ruled in a condominium, with Ghiyath al-Din the elder statesman of the pair, *al-sultan al-'azam* (the greatest sultan) in comparison to Mu'izz al-Din, *al-sultan al-mu'azzam* (the great sultan), who acquired the former title only after Ghiyath al-Din's death in 599/1202-3.[9] From Firuzkuh in west-central Afghanistan, Ghiyath al-Din oversaw the westward expansion of the sultanate. Mu'izz al-Din was based in Ghazna, from where he expanded the sultanate's reach into the former Ghaznavid territories in the Indus Valley and into north India after 588/1192.

At its zenith in the last decade of the twelfth century, the Ghurid sultanate extended from the Iranian metropolis of Nishapur in the west to the Indian city of Benares (modern Varanasi) in the east, and from the steppe of Central Asia in the north to Sind in the south (see fig. 1). The floruit of both

dynasty and region was short-lived: the death of Mu'izz al-Din in 1206 effectively marked the end of Ghurid power and the disintegration of the sultanate.
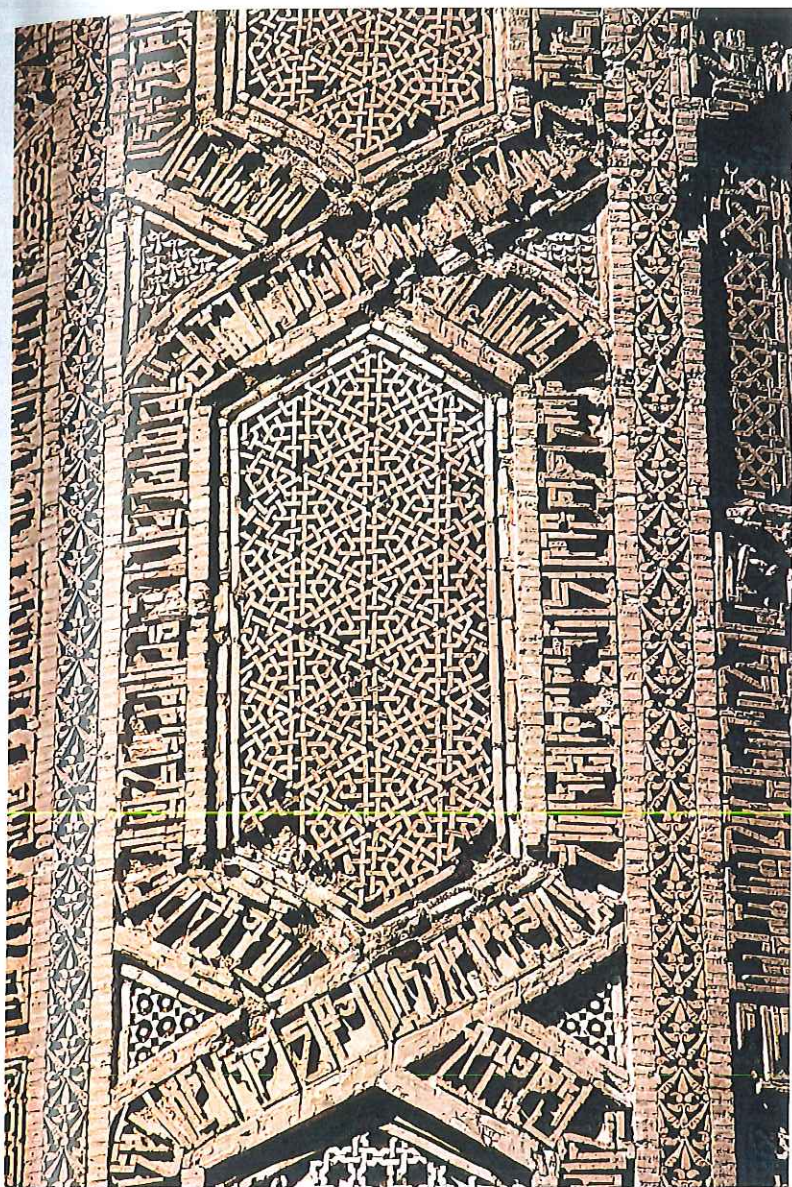
The minaret of Jam can be associated with this period, for it bears the name of the elder Ghurid sultan, Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam, and is believed to mark the site of his summer capital, Firuzkuh. Recent research suggests that the minaret, which today stands isolated, was once associated with a major mosque built of more ephemeral materials, presumably the Friday Mosque of Firuzkuh.[10] Since its initial publication, the minaret has been recognized as the chef d'oeuvre of Ghurid patronage, the high aesthetic values of which are today attested by only a handful of fragmentary monuments scattered across Afghanistan, Pakistan, and north India.[11] The Jam minaret is believed to be a precursor of the most famous of these, the Qutb Minar in Delhi (1199 onward; see fig. 19). In addition to its importance for the history of Ghurid architecture, the monument has become a national symbol in Afghanistan, while among art historians it has assumed canonical status as a cynosure of medieval Persianate architecture —an image of it is now de rigueur in any self-respecting textbook on Islamic art. Despite its renown, the monument has remained enigmatic, its date uncertain, its function disputed, and its immediate architectural relationships elusive.

Demonstrating a consistent trait of Ghurid architecture, much of the minaret is covered by script, contained in bands ranging in width from 0.5 to 3 meters that either encircle it or inscribe a series of geometric patterns on its surface.[12] The two uppermost bands of the minaret contain religious texts, with the culminating inscription the *shahāda*, the Muslim profession of faith. Below this is an extract from Qur'an 61:13–14: "And (He will give you) what is dearest to you—help from God and early victory. So give good tidings to those who believe. O you who believe."[13] The three lower bands are occupied by increasingly elaborate and bombastic renditions of the name and titles of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din. A concern with legibility reveals itself in their positioning and in the use of turquoise blue glaze for the letters of the central historical text. The most extraordinary inscription appears, however, on the surface of the lowest shaft of the minaret (fig. 3). Here the entire text of the Surat Maryam, or Chapter of Mary, a Qur'anic sura (chapter) relating to Mary the mother of Jesus, appears in a series of narrow ribbon-like bands that overlap and intersect each other to form panels filled with geometric ornament. The form and content of the inscription are unique in the Islamic world. In his review of the comprehensive 1959 publication on the minaret, Oleg Grabar noted that the presence of the sura "must be related to some specific event commemorating the building of the minaret."[14] Since that time the raison d'être of this long inscription has been one of the enduring mysteries of Islamic art history.

Although the minaret bears a foundation text, scholars have long been divided about its interpretation, with opinion split between readings of 570/1174–5 and 590/1193–4; the confusion arises in part from the absence of diacritical marks, which renders the Arabic words for ninety and seventy difficult to distinguish.[15] The later date has long been accepted in most of the literature on the minaret. Consequently it has been identified as a commemorative monument erected after a major Ghurid victory against a confederation of Indian rulers in 588/1192, which paved the way for the conquest of northern India. In light of this interpretation, references to idolatry and unbelief in the Chapter of Mary inscription have been read as allusions to the conquered Hindu subjects of the sultan. Epigraphy has thus come to play a central role in constituting the minaret as a symbol of Muslim victory over the conquered Hindus, taking it as a given that references to idolatry and unbelief in the chosen verses alluded to those who were literally outside the fold of Islam.[16]

A recent study of the minaret by Janine Sourdel-Thomine, the doyenne of Islamic art in France, has suggested that the correct reading of its date is 570/1174–5. This redating has significant implications for our understanding of Ghurid architecture and epigraphy. Redated to 570/1174–5, the minaret is shorn of any obvious Indian associations, as it antedates the first Ghurid incursions into north India by at least a year.[17] Sourdel-Thomine suggests that the

3. Minaret of Jam, twelfth century, detail of lowest shaft
Photograph courtesy of Warwick Ball

as ruler of Ghazna and elevated to the rank of sultan, sharing the sovereignty of his elder brother and consolidating the political structures of the state. Identifying the likely commemorative function of the minaret does not, however, resolve one of the central mysteries surrounding it: why was it felt necessary to cover the surface of this remote structure with the entire Surat Maryam?

Sheila Blair has noted that Ghurid patronage of religious monuments (mosques, minarets, madrasas) was "part of a coordinated campaign to champion Islam . . . both to convert the heathen and to counter internal heresies."[19] There is an intrinsic association between the suppression of heresy and the chastisement of unbelievers in the royal titulature of the period and in the "Mirrors for Princes" genre of literature that proliferated in the eastern Islamic world during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[20] A concern with both is revealed in the titulature of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din, as preserved in the colophon of an extraordinary Qur'an dated 584/1189, the sole surviving manuscript that can be ascribed to Ghurid patronage (fig. 4). This bombastic rendition of Ghurid titulature combines titles used earlier by both the Seljuq and Ghaznavid sultans to whom the Ghurids had previously been subject:[21] "The chief and great sultan, the greatest king of kings, ruler over the necks of nations, sultan of the sultans in the world, succor of the world and religion, the glory of Islam and the Muslims, victor over the unbelievers and the heretics, suppressor of innovation and the seditious, the supporting arm of the victorious state, crown of the radiant people, glory of the shining nation, order of the world, Father of Victory, Muhammad ibn Sam, partner of the commander of the believers [that is, the ʿAbbasid caliph in Baghdad]."[22]

The emphasis on the sultan's role as the promoter of orthodoxy and scourge of heretics is reflected in contemporary antipathies toward the Ismaʿili Shiʿis. Patronized during the reign of ʿAlaʾ al-Din Jahan-suz (r. 544–556/1149–61), the Ismaʿilis were persecuted by his son and successor, Sayf al-Din Muhammad ibn Husayn (556–558/1161–63) and by subsequent Shansabanid sultans.[23] This shift in religious policies points to the protean attitudes of the Shansabanid elites toward

minaret commemorates not the later Indian victories but the capture of Ghazna, the former capital of the Ghaznavid sultans, from the Ghuzz Turks in 569/1173–4. The presence of Qur'an 61:13–14 on the minaret, with its invocation of the victory given to the believers, might offer support for such a reading, especially as many of the Ghuzz were pagans.[18] The capture of the former Ghaznavid capital was not merely a matter of regional significance but a pivotal event for the development of the Ghurid sultanate. After the victory, Muʿizz al-Din was installed

religious matters and prefigures later more dramatic shifts in religious affiliation that will be discussed below.

The insistence on orthodoxy in this document may also be a product of the close association between the Shansabanid elite and the Karramiya, a somewhat enigmatic Sunni pietistic sect known for its implacable hostility toward Isma'ili Shi'ism. Born in Sistan, the eponymous Muhammad ibn Karram (d. 255/869) had studied in Mecca, Jerusalem, Nishapur, Herat, and Merv before seeking more remote regions of the eastern Islamic world, including Gharjistan and the recalcitrant region of Ghur, which his preaching is said to have been instrumental in converting from paganism to Islam.[24] The affiliation between the Ghurid sultans and the Karramiya reflects the dominance of the sect among the population of Ghur in the second half of the twelfth century.[25]

Although the disappearance of the Karramiya in the early thirteenth century, in the wake of the Mongol invasions, has led scholars (especially those concerned with material culture) to overlook them, they enjoyed widespread popularity in the eastern Islamic world during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Karrami madrasas (religious schools) and khanqahs (convents) were established in all the major cities of eastern Iran and Transoxiana, including Herat, Merv, Nishapur, and Samarqand.[26] The sect (which was not homogeneous but comprised as many as twelve different subsects) competed for patronage, material resources, and spiritual

adherents with representatives of other legal and theological traditions, chief among them the Hanafi and Shafi'i madhhabs (schools of jurisprudence), two of the four law schools of Sunni Islam.[27] Factional rivalry between these various sectarian traditions was intense, and contemporary polemical exchanges, conducted within the frame of heresy, unbelief, and sedition, sometimes degenerated into violent civil strife and even architectural desecration in the cities of eastern Iran during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[28]

Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the survival of several Karrami texts, ranging from works on fiqh (jurisprudence) and qisas (prophetic stories) to a Qur'an commentary.[29] As Josef van Ess notes, the discovery of these materials suggests that the Karramiya left more traces on the historical record than formerly thought.[30] But because studies of the sect have been mainly the preserve of textual historians, the question of the survival of material artifacts, including manuscripts (as opposed to their textual contents), associated with the Karramiya has not been addressed. There can be little doubt, however, that Ghurid patronage of the Karramiya informed contemporary artistic production, for we are told that Sultan Ghiyath al-Din founded madrasas and khanqahs for the Karramiya and other groups and provided them with waqfs (endowment deeds) and Qur'ans.[31] Here I would like to suggest that at least one extant Qur'an manuscript and several key Ghurid monuments, including the minaret of Jam, constitute

Karrami documents even if they have not been recognized as such.

The importance of the royal Qur'an manuscript mentioned above lies not only in the evidence that it offers for the development of Ghurid titulature, or in its unique status as the sole surviving object that can be securely ascribed to Ghurid patronage, but also in its astonishingly high production values (figs. 5–9).[32] The four-volume Qur'an is a superlative example of the arts of binding, calligraphy, and illumination, composed of good-quality, large burnished sheets of paper (with a page size of about thirty-nine

5. Ghurid Qur'an of 584/1189, sura 113, the penultimate chapter of the Qur'an, with the exegetical text of al-Surabadi in the lower panel
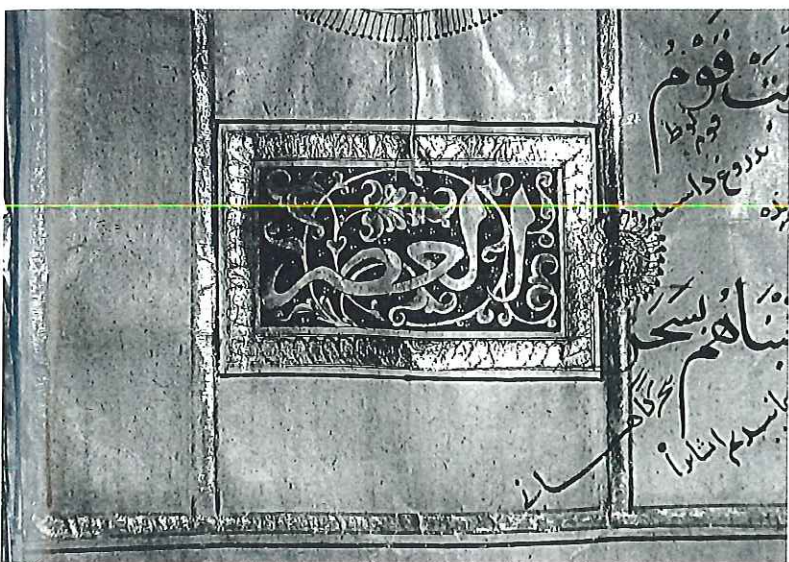Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, MS no. 3507, fol. 195a

by twenty-nine centimeters and a text block size of twenty-seven by sixteen centimeters, it is among the largest Qur'ans of the period), lavishly gilded and illuminated (see figs. 7–9).[33] The illumination culminates in the final volume of the manuscript and reaches a crescendo toward its end, where the short penultimate chapters possess the largest and most elaborate chapter headings (see fig. 5), a foretaste of the dazzling double finispiece of the final volume.

The manuscript is also unusual in a number of other respects, not least the amount of information it provides regarding its own production. This is contained in an extensive colophon (containing the titles cited earlier), which gives a date of 8 Rabi' II 584/6 June 1189 for completion of the manuscript. It took five years to complete, and the text was copied by Muhammad ibn 'Isa ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Nishaburi al-Laythi. The *nisba* (toponymic) of the scribe suggests that he or his family hailed from Nishapur, one of the four great cities of the eastern Iranian province of Khurasan. Nishapur was evidently a major artistic center at this period, for the architect responsible for the construction of the Jam minaret also seems to have hailed from that city.[34] The calligraphy combines a variety of angular and cursive scripts (including *naskh*, *thulth*, and New Style), a combination that also characterizes the monumental epigraphy in Ghurid monuments at Herat and Shah-i Mashhad (see fig. 11).[35] It is unlikely that the calligrapher was also the illuminator, as was sometimes the case, for the spectacular illumination and marginal ornaments (which show formal links to contemporary architectural decoration) appear to be the work of several hands.

The Ghurid Qur'an is perhaps the most spectacular Qur'an manuscript to have survived from pre-Mongol Iran and will be the subject of a separate study, but here I want to call attention to a number of its idiosyncrasies that shed light on the religious life of the Ghurid elite. The first of these concerns is its form: unusually for Qur'ans of this period, which tend to be single volumes or else divided into thirty, seven, or, more rarely, six or two volumes,[36] the manuscript is divided into four volumes, each bearing some or all of its original tooled leather

6. Ghurid Qur'an of
584/1189
Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran,
MS no. 3507, fol. 82b

7. Ghurid Qur'an of
584/1189, detail
Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran,
MS no. 3507, fol. 118a

8. Ghurid Qur'an of
584/1189, detail
Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran,
MS no. 3507, fol. 144b

9. Ghurid Qur'an of
584/1189, detail
Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran,
MS no. 3507, fol. 78a

binding. The presence of an interlinear Persian translation of the sacred Arabic text is not unique (although this must be among the earliest dated occurrences), but the inclusion of a Qur'anic commentary (tafsir) at the end of each chapter is of considerable interest and highly unusual for the period. The tafsir is a known one; in fact it is one of the texts recently identified as a Karrami document, written by Abu Bakr 'Atiq ibn Muhammad al-Surabadi (d. c. 495/1101), a leader of the Karramiya of Nishapur.[37] The popularity of al-Surabadi's tafsir in twelfth-century Khurasan is evident from the fact that two earlier copies, dated 523/1129 and 535/1140–1, survive.[38]

Both the manuscript and the exegetical text that it contains have multiple associations with the western fringes of the areas under Ghurid control. The author of the tafsir, al-Surabadi, had close biographical associations with the areas of Khurasan later controlled by the Ghurids: while he lived in Nishapur, according to some authorities, he bore the nisba al-Harawi, suggesting connections with Herat.[39] The post-Ghurid history of the manuscript itself is also closely connected with the border region between Iran and Afghanistan, for in 654/1256, just decades after the demise of the Ghurids, the Qur'an was presented to the shrine of Shaykh Ahmad b. Abu'l-Hasan (d. 536/1141) at Turbat-i Shaykh Jam (now an Iranian border town to the west of Herat), a place with which al-Surabadi himself had been associated.[40]

The date of the Qur'an places it firmly within the period when Ghiyath al-Din supported the Karramiya of Ghur,[41] and its inclusion of a Karrami tafsir raises the possibility that the manuscript was among those commissioned by Ghiyath al-Din for a Karrami institution. The structure of the Ghurid Qur'an suggests that a particular value was ascribed to al-Surabadi's tafsir, for while its four-volume form is unusual for a Khurasani Qur'an of this period, contemporary tafasir (exegetical texts) were sometimes produced in four volumes, raising the possibility that the presence of the exegetical text may have determined the unusual structure of the Qur'an itself. Although the place of production is not specified, Herat is a likely contender. In the second half of the twelfth century, an important metalwork school was centered in the city, and Herat's Friday Mosque was rebuilt in 597/1200, during a period when stylistic and epigraphic evidence attests the participation of its denizens in Ghurid architectural projects as far away as the Indus Valley and north India.

The importance of the manuscript can hardly be overstated. As a unique royal manuscript, it fills a major lacuna in the history of the material Qur'an between the introduction of paper and cursive scripts in the early eleventh century and the celebrated

"royal" Mamluk and Ilkhanid Qur'ans of the fourteenth.[42] Equally important is its ability to illuminate the complex religious life of twelfth-century Ghur and its relationship to artistic patronage. In this respect, the manuscript can help shed light on the epigraphic program of the Jam minaret, as we shall see.

Several studies of the minaret at Jam (see fig. 2) have in fact raised the possibility of a Karrami connection but have been hampered in their pursuit of this idea by a relative dearth of information on the sect.[43] In addition to the Karrami documents brought to life recently, however, basic details of Karrami beliefs are contained in medieval Arabic heresiographies. Combining these with a recent careful reconstruction of the spatial relations of the epigraphic bands on the minaret, it is, I believe, possible to demonstrate an association with the sect. In order to do so, we first have to broach the rather arcane world of Karrami *kalam* (speculative theology) and the issue of anthropomorphism in particular.

Among the most theologically problematic verses in the Qur'an are those that seem to imply the divine possession of corporeal attributes and qualities, apparently contradicting or undermining the notion of an eternal and uncreated deity that was central to Islamic thought.[44] The opponents of the Karramiya depict them as taking a particularly literalist or anthropomorphist approach to these questions, with the result that they were sometimes known as *mujassima*, those who ascribe *jism* (body) to God.[45] One of the key problems was whether (and which) divine attributes were extrinsic or intrinsic to God's essence. In light of these anthropomorphizing verses, divine speech was one of the attributes aggressively contested by various sects. The issue was central not only to the question of God's nature but also to the ontological status of the Qur'an itself as the textualized trace of a speech act. At one extreme of the argument stood the Mu'tazilite opponents of the Karramiya, who asserted that the Qur'an consisted of words and sounds and therefore was not eternal but originated in space and time. At the other end of the spectrum were those scholars of the orthodox Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence who argued that the

sounds, the words, and even the material fabric of the Qur'an were eternal and enduring.[46] The Ash'ari theological tradition that was closely associated with the Shafi'i law school sought to mediate between the two poles, distinguishing between the meaning of God's words, which constituted a kind of internal speech (*kalam nafsi*)—part of his divine essence and therefore eternal—and revealed commands, promises, and threats spoken by prophets, iterated in stories about them, or transmitted in revealed books, all of which are created expressions of his eternal word.[47]

The Karramiya also steered a middle course between extremes, judging from the account of their beliefs in the book of Muslim sects and divisions written by Muhammad ibn' Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani (d. 548/1153), a resident of Khurasan who had firsthand experience of them:

They hold that there are many incidents (*ḥawādith*) in God's essence; such as, for example, information about past or future events, the books revealed to the prophets (peace be upon them), stories, the Promise and the Threat, and commands. In this category also are acts of hearing and seeing in regard to things audible and visible. Bringing into being and annihilation consist of God's Word and Will; for example, his saying "Be" (*kun*) to the thing that He wills to be and His willing the existence of that thing. . . . Muhammad ibn al-Haysam [Karrami theologian d. c. 409/1019] explained bringing into being and annihilation as Will and Choice, this being connected with His Word by the testimony of the Qur'an: "To anything which We have willed, We but say to it 'Be' and it is (*kun fayakūn*)" [Qur'an 16:40]; or, again, "Verily, when He wills a thing, His command to it is 'Be,' and it is (*kun fayakūn*)" [Qur'an 36:82].[48]

In their attempt to distinguish between eternal attributes and temporal acts, the Karramiya differentiated between attributes of essence (such as power and knowledge) and attributes of acts (such as creation). Although God has eternal power to act, acts themselves are contingent and temporal incidents (*ḥawādith*) facilitated by his power; every originated thing and every temporal event is created and annihilated by the incidents that arise in God's eternal essence.[49] The heresiography of Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi (d. 429/

1037) puts the matter succinctly: "Ibn Karram and his adherents hold that the Object of their Worship is a subject in which created entities exist. They believe that His utterances, His will, His visual and auditory perceptions, His contiguity to the uppermost surface of the Universe, are all accidents originated in Him and He is the place for these creations which originated in Him."[50]

Crucially, however, and most controversially for the opponents of the Karramiya, God's power extends only over those things that originate in his essence.[51] These created things and temporal events are called into being not through power, which is intrinsic to the divine essence, but through the divine command *kun* (Be!). On this point, al-Shahrastani again quotes the well-known Karrami theologian Muhammad ibn al-Haysam (d. c. 1019): "At the time He creates, He wills whatever He creates with a contingent will (*irāda ḥāditha*); and to everything that comes into being by His command He says 'Be!' (*kun*) and it becomes."[52]

God's power to speak and his utterances (including the divine command *Be*, by means of which creation is effected) are temporally and ontologically distinct phenomena.[53] The former is eternal; the latter is originated (but as a reflection of power, which is an eternal and enduring attribute) and composed of phenomena such as the words of the Qur'an and those revealed in commands, promises, prophetic stories, and warnings. The Qur'anic phrase *kun fayakūn* (Be! And it is.) occupied a central position in Karrami polemics on the relationship between divine nature and the created universe. The phrase occurs eight times in the Qur'an, including in verse 35 of the Surat Maryam.[54] This verse falls at a key point in the decorative scheme of the Jam minaret, offering tangible support for the suggestion of a Karrami connection.

In her recent study, Sourdel-Thomine detected an axial hierarchy to the decorative scheme of the lowest shaft of the minaret. She noted that all the inscriptions on the minaret terminate on its western face (fig. 10, face 8) and demonstrated that the eastern and western faces of the minaret (fig. 10, faces 4 and 8) constitute the fulcrums around which the entire decorative program is articulated.[55] The observation is of considerable importance, for it suggests that the Karramiya

shared the conventional designation of a westerly *qibla* (Mecca orientation) with their Hanafi contemporaries in Afghanistan and Central Asia. That common ground should exist between the two on such a fundamental matter is perhaps not surprising, in view of reports that the citizenry of Ghur adhered to Karrami doctrines in matters of religion (*din*) and Hanafi precepts in matters of law (*fiqh*).[56]

The eastern section (face 4), which a viewer would have faced while oriented toward a westerly *qibla*, is further distinguished by the presence of an arched panel resembling a *mihrab* (a directional indicator of prayer) surmounted by a knotted rhomboidal pattern that is unique among the geometric panels of the minaret. It is precisely here, at what is clearly the visual and iconographic fulcrum of the minaret (what Barthes might have identified as its punctum), that verse 35 falls. There is no numerical logic for this positioning. The verse is not the midpoint of the chapter but the thirty-fifth verse in a series of ninety-eight; considerable care was thus taken to ensure that it fell precisely within the unique forms on the eastern facade. The verses that begin within the bands of the knot (fig. 10: face 4, between I and J above panel 3), then run down the left-hand frame of the arched panel below and the right side of the star beneath, read as follows:

This was Jesus, son of Mary:
A true account they contend about. (34)
It does not behoove God to have a son.
Too immaculate is He! When He decrees a
   thing
He has only to say: "Be," and it is (*kun
   fayakūn*). (35)

The chapter then continues:

[Jesus only said:] "Surely God is my Lord and
   your Lord,
so worship Him.
This is the straight path." (36)
Yet the sectarians differed among themselves.
Alas for the unbelievers when they see the
   Terrible Day! (37)

The same verses appeared in the interior of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (72/692) almost five centuries earlier.[57] There, the emphasis on the mortality of Jesus had a literal relevance, revisiting a locus classicus of doctrinal difference between Islam

and the Christian majority of the city (Muslims believe in the prophecy of Jesus but not in his divinity).[58] There is little evidence, however, for a Christian population in medieval Ghur, and it seems unlikely that the entire epigraphic program of the Jam minaret was designed to address the tiny community of Jews known to have existed there.[59]

In an analysis of the way in which modern preachers deploy specific Qur'anic verses, Richard Antoun has argued that to consider Qur'anic verses divorced from their "spatial, social and diachronic contexts" is to confer upon them "a false semantic content."[60] This is especially true of Qur'anic texts inscribed on monumental architecture, each of which constitutes "an interpretive moment given permanence," a reflection of the particular valences acquired by sacred scripture in specific historical contexts.[61] To read the verses inscribed on the minaret of Jam as a literal address to Christians and Jews is to indulge a literalism, an assumption of transparency, that ignores the complex nuances and resonances that specific verses acquired not only within contemporary (and sometimes contrary) exegetical traditions, but also within *kalam* and the polemical exchanges of medieval theologians and jurists.[62] As studies of Qur'anic recitation have reminded us, scripture is not reducible to a physically or conceptually static artifact but is rather constituted by sacred text "in its relationship to persons and communities of faith."[63]

Rather than an address to some nebulous monotheist or polytheist other, then, the central epigraphic program of the minaret should be understood as a bold address to the fractious monotheist self. At the heart of the decorative scheme, in the focal inscription of the minaret, appears a distillation of the themes of prophecy, revelation, promise, and warning central to Karrami belief. The same themes are reiterated at regular intervals throughout the Surat Maryam, which invokes a dazzling array of ancestors and prophets, including Aaron, Adam, Abraham, Idris (Ezra), Isaac, Isma'il, Jacob, John, Jesus, Moses, Noah, and Zachariah. Indeed, it is hard to think of another Qur'anic chapter in which such a vast array of prophets appears.[64] The theme of the revealed book is also

10. Minaret of Jam, schematic diagram of the epigraphic bands containing the Surat Maryam
Drawing by Claire Hardy-Guilbert, from Janine Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām: Un chef d'oeuvre du XIIe siècle*, Mémoires de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, vol. 29 (Paris, 2004), fig. 55; reproduced with permission
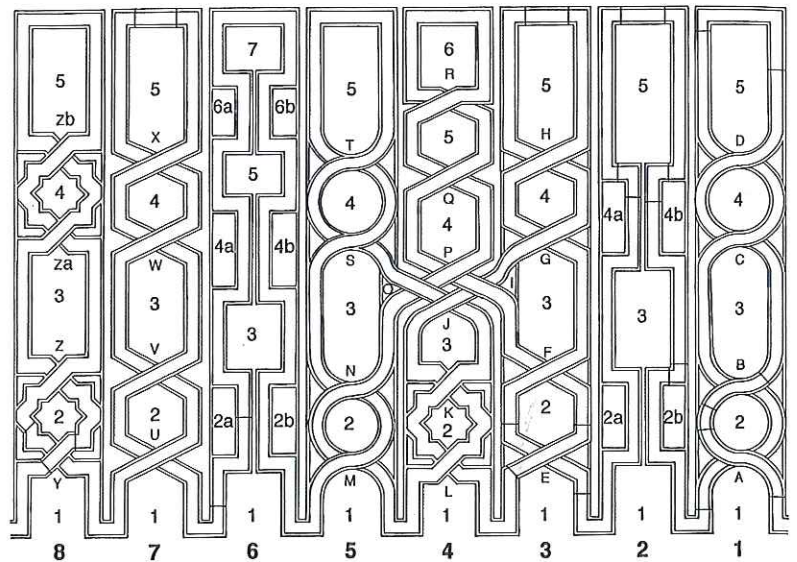
repeatedly emphasized, often in conjunction with the commemoration of these saintly figures, and dire warnings are visited on those who deny the unity of God or disbelieve in him.

The care taken to position verse 35 provides the clinching argument, for it evidently reflects the centrality of the Qur'anic phrase *kun fayakūn* in *kalam* concerning the complex relationship between divine will and word, power and creation. While the occurrences of the phrase *kun fayakūn* in the Qur'an all appear amid elucidations of God's creative abilities, the linkage between the person of Jesus and the creative power of the divine command *kun* throws these issues into high relief, as the Virgin Birth (in which Muslims believe, and which is alluded to in verse 20 of the Surat Maryam) offers one of the ultimate proofs of God's ability to call into being with his command *kun*.[65] However, the highlighted verses also reject Christian belief in Jesus' divinity, which contradicts the notion of *tawhid*, the oneness of God, that is central to Islamic thought. Indeed, four of the eight Qur'anic occurrences of the phrase *kun fayakūn* (including that in the Surat Maryam) relate specifically to the creation and nature of Jesus, asserting his mortal character despite the unusual circumstances of his conception, and denying his divinity.[66] The Qur'anic commentary of al-Surabadi constitutes a key document for
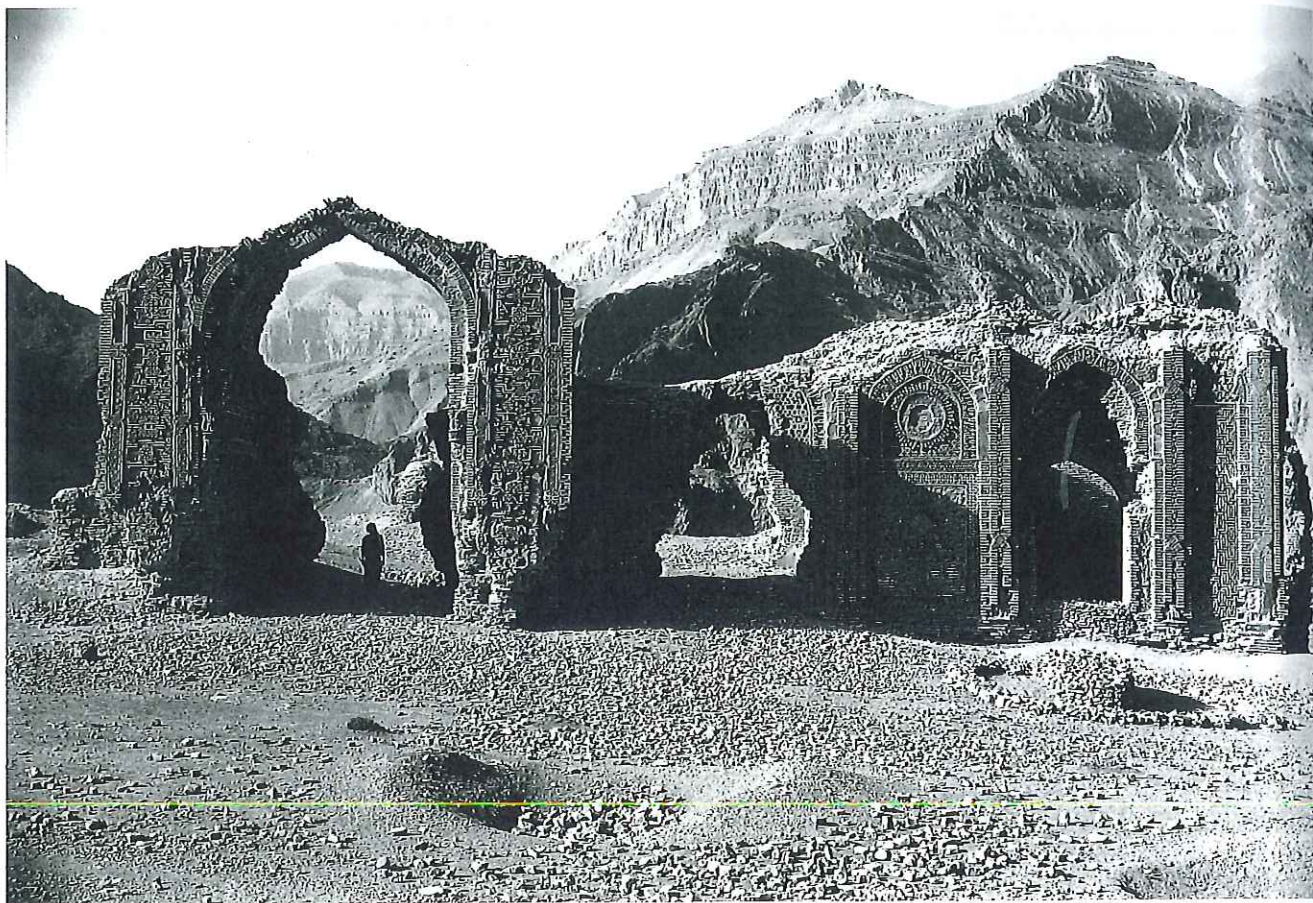
evaluating how these verses were understood in a contemporary Karrami milieu, for its inclusion in the royal Qur'an of 584/1189, a Qur'an probably commissioned for a Karrami institution, indicates its currency at the Ghurid court. In his exegesis of Qur'an 19:35, al-Surabadi links the phrase *kun fayakūn* with the creative power of God, while emphasizing that the verse contains a rebuttal to those who assert that Jesus was his son.[67] Rather than making a transparent allusion to a hypothetical Christian community, this emphasis on the mortality of Christ in the Qur'anic verses highlighted on the Jam minaret is likely to reflect contemporary criticisms that certain of the anthropomorphist views of the Karramiya had a Christian origin. Such criticisms are found in the work of scholars such as Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037) and Abu'l-Muzaffar al-Isfara'ini (d. 471/1078).[68]

Considered within the frame of Karrami theology (as far as we can reconstruct it), Qur'an 19:34–35 addresses the relationship between God's eternal essence and his temporal creative powers, while underlining that the latter did not extend to the production of divine progeny. If the choice of the Surat Maryam reveals the entire program of the minaret as a doctrinal exposition of Karrami theology, the focal verse highlights the issue of anthropomorphism, establishing its appropriate limits in a manner that serves as a rebuttal to the critics of the Karramiya. The discursive deployment of Qur'anic citation on the minaret thus reflects the ability of the timeless text to acquire particular valences that inflect its deployment in historically specific contexts. Assuming (as seems likely) that the verses were chosen for their ability to reflect contemporary concerns, the polytheists and unbelievers referred to in the Surat Maryam are more likely to refer to the Ghuzz Turks, or the Muslim opponents of the Karramiya, who depicted the Karramiya in turn as heretics and spreaders of sedition,[69] than the far-distant Hindus.

Seen in this light, the minaret represents a remarkably sophisticated synthesis of architectural form, decorative elaboration, and epigraphic content that opens a unique window onto the complex entanglements of architectural patronage, dynastic aspirations,

legal proscriptions, and theological disputations in the turbulent marches of the eastern Islamic world. Construction of the minaret was not a heuristic enterprise but one that reflects a great deal of planning and probably active collaboration between artisan, *khatib* (preacher), or *qadi* (judge), and patron.[70] However deliberate the choice and positioning of the Qur'anic verses on the lower shaft of the minaret may have been, their legibility (and hence their utility as discursive statements) was somewhat circumscribed by their elevated placement, scale, and use of a fancy script.[71] The need for modern photographic technology to read many of them suggests that their presence was intended as a "symbolic affirmation" of Karrami doctrines to be apprehended monoptically rather than painstakingly deciphered.[72] This being so, the minaret may have been intended to provide a focal monument for the Karrami self as much as to convey a message to its Shafi'i or Hanafi opponents, the epigraphic content and meaning of the monument being known to a learned few and susceptible of oral transmission to those not cognizant with the arcane theological milieu and abstruse doctrinal disputes that informed both.[73] There is no reason to assume that these meanings were perpetuated much beyond the generation following the minaret's construction; the "short charge" of epigraphic semiosis in Islamic architecture, the ability for the interpretive moment to be subsumed in the diachronic reception of the monument, has been noted elsewhere.[74] In any case, the pietistic inclinations of the Shansabanid sultans were soon to shift away from the Karramiya, as we shall see shortly.

The evidence identifying the preeminent architectural monument of the Ghurid sultans as a Karrami document suggests the possibility that other known Ghurid monuments might also have been constructed for the sect. Although none of the madrasas that Ghiyath al-Din built for the Karramiya is known to survive, it is possible that the fragmentary and richly decorated madrasa at Shah-i Mashhad in Gharjistan, dated 571/1176 (fig. 11), was dedicated for their use. Gharjistan, like Ghur, had historical connections with the Karramiya, for it was among the areas in which Abu 'Abd Allah

11. Shah-i Mashhad madrasa, Gharjistan, 571/1176, general view from the south
Photograph courtesy of Bernt Glatzer

Muhammad ibn Karram, the founder of the sect, had preached during his lifetime.[75] To judge from the decorations of the Jam minaret, the Karramiya adopted a conventional westward *qibla* orientation, like their contemporaries in the orthodox Hanafi *madhhab*. The fragmentary state of the Shah-i Mashhad madrasa makes its *qibla* orientation difficult to determine, but suggestions that it was occidented leave open the possibility that it was among those constructed for the sect by the Ghurid elite.[76]

If the identities and personalities of the religious scholars of Firuzkuh who may have shaped the epigraphic program of the Jam minaret are elusive, medieval texts and inscriptions are a little more forthcoming on the architectural patronage of the Ghurid elite. The foundation text of the Shah-i Mashhad madrasa, for example, refers to its female patron as "the great wise queen" (*malika al-mu'azzam al-'alima'*), and it has been suggested that the lady in question was Malika Taj al-Harir Jawhar Malik, the wife of sultan Ghiyath al-Din.[77] Given that the wife of the Seljuq sultan Sanjar had restored the royal caravanserai at Ribat-i Sharaf in eastern Iran in 549/1145, this is by no means implausible.[78] Little is known about Ghiyath al-Din's queen, however, and two prominent Ghurid royal women known to have acted as architectural patrons are more plausible candidates. The first is Malika-i Hajji, the mother of Ziya' al-Din, sultan Ghiyath al-Din's cousin and son-in-law, who held the appanage of Nishapur and eventually succeeded Ghiyath al-Din as sultan at Firuzkuh.[79] Malika-i Hajji had made the pilgrimage to Mecca with her son, founded a *khanqah* in the holy city, and is reported to have founded mosques, pulpits, and religious schools in the Ghurid territories.[80] An alternative patron for the Shah-i Mashhad madrasa would be Mah Malik or Malika

al-Jalali, Sultan Ghiyath al-Din's daughter, the wife of Ziya' al-Din and a woman famed for her religious learning and piety.[81] The bestowal of a robe of honor (an honorific device often associated with the conferral of political authority) on Mah Malik by her uncle, Sultan Mu'izz al-Din, suggests that she was a figure of some importance, an impression reinforced by a recent report that illegal excavations in the vicinity of the Jam minaret had uncovered a foundation text bearing her name.[82] Her husband, Ziya' al-Din, was one of the most fervent supporters of the Karramiya in Firuzkuh, representing their interests in the turbulent events of 595/1199, to which I now turn briefly in conclusion.

Orthodoxy

The association between the Shansabanids and the Karramiya was not an enduring one. In 595/1199, the Ghurid sultans abruptly ended their patronage of the sect, with its regional and rather backwoods associations, and embraced instead the orthodox (and more transregional) Hanafi and Shafi'i law schools of Sunni Islam. Whereas Ghiyath al-Din became a Shafi'i, building Shafi'i madrasas and a mosque at Ghazna, Mu'izz al-Din became a Hanafi, embracing what was in effect the preeminent *madhhab* among the population of Ghazna.[83]

The historian Minhaj al-Din Juzjani, who was raised at the Ghurid court in Firuzkuh, attributes this dramatic shift in Ghurid piety and patronage to a dream in which the eponymous founder of the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence appeared to the sultan.[84] According to Ibn al-Athir (d. 630/1233), however, the sultan's conversion was occasioned through the mediation of the Shafi'i *faqih* (jurisprudent) Shaykh Wajih al-Din al-Marvarudhi, invited to Firuzkuh by the court poet Fakhr al-Din Mubarakshah who had realized the errors in Karramiya doctrine.[85] The notion of a reinvention of the royal persona resulting from the agency of a single individual (whether visionary or incarnate) is suspect, but the idea of mediation by individuals with strong connections to a wider Islamic world is quite plausible. In 594/1198, just a year before these events, the 'Abbasid caliph al-Nasir (d. 622/1225) had dispatched the famous Shafi'i *faqih* Yahya ibn Rabi', of the celebrated Nizamiyya School in Baghdad, to Ghur. There he reportedly remained for four years, strengthening the ties between Baghdad and the Ghurid sultanate.[86] The timing is suggestive, as is the concentrated presence of other major Shafi'i thinkers and Sufi preachers in Firuzkuh at this time.[87]

These shifts in pietistic affiliations were not without consequences. On the contrary, we are told that the feelings of the inhabitants of Ghur were sufficiently inflamed that a *fitna 'azima*, or great civil disturbance, broke out in Firuzkuh.[88] The disturbances were not confined to Ghur, where the Karramiya and their supporters were a majority. The Karrami imam of a madrasa at Afshin in Gharjistan, an area with historical links to Ibn Karram, penned a series of polemical verses criticizing Sultan Ghiyath al-Din, which were sufficiently inflammatory to earn the writer a year's exile to Nishapur.[89] Civil strife between the Karramiya and their opponents was common during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the violent events of 595/1199 in Firuzkuh were foreshadowed by a number of earlier disturbances in eastern Iranian cities, including Bayhaq (Sabzevar), Herat, and Nishapur. The role of architectural desecration and destruction in these disturbances provides a striking reminder of how heterogeneous and potentially fractious the Muslim self could be.[90]

However unpopular at home, the events of 595/1199 coincide with the emergence of the Ghurid sultans as major players on the world stage, the result of rapid territorial expansion westward into Khurasan and eastward into north India. Occurring just seven years after the conquest of major north Indian cities such as Delhi (a point to which I return), the development reflects the changing nature of the Ghurid sultanate. I suggest above that the titulature of the Ghurid sultans hints at a capacity for reinventing the self (or at least its "official" manifestations) in tandem with the shifting fortunes of the sultanate. This capacity for self-fashioning was already apparent to medieval observers, for Ibn al-Athir observes that when the Ghurid sultans became rulers of Khurasan (that is, of the wider Iranian world), they learned that the Karramiya were considered theologically unsophisticated and therefore

decided to alter their doctrinal allegiances and embrace Shafi'ism.[91]

Among the events of 595/1199 was a concerted attack mounted by the Karramiya on the celebrated Shafi'i theologian Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, another thinker who came to preach in Firuzkuh and Ghazna at the invitation of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din and later served as an envoy to India.[92] In his speech from the *minbar* (pulpit) of the Great Mosque of Firuzkuh opposing al-Razi, the leader of the Firuzkuh Karramis, Ibn al-Qudwa, who belonged to the Haysamiyya subsect of the Karramiya, denounced the *faqih* as espousing the unbelief of Ibn Sina, and the philosophy of al-Farabi, two of the great thinkers of the wider Sunni world whose work Fakhr al-Din al-Razi had studied and commented on.[93] As a religious faction with strong regional ties, the Karramiya were evidently opposed to the sorts of theological cosmopolitanism that the Shafi'is and Sufis represented. The timing of the switch to a more transregional form of Sunni Islam suggests that it was this very cosmopolitanism that rendered the orthodox schools of jurisprudence attractive to the Ghurid sultans.[94]

Although it has escaped notice, the theological volte-face of 595/1199 was also reflected in significant alterations to the "official" self-representations of Ghurid sultans and the media that bore them. In 596/1200, one year after the Firuzkuh riots, major changes were instituted to Ghurid gold and silver coinage. Before 595/1199, in addition to the ubiquitous "bull and horseman" coin type of northwest India, Ghurid mints had also issued coins of traditional epigraphic type, consisting of a central field with superimposed horizontal lines of script and a circular marginal legend (fig. 12).[95] From 596/1200 onward, however, these were supplemented by two new coin types, introduced in a variety of weight standards as both gold dinars and silver dirhams: one bore a distinctive concentric-circle (or "bull's-eye") motif, the other a square-in-circle design (figs. 13 and 14).

Both types had originated in the Fatimid and Almohad polities of North Africa during the tenth and twelfth centuries, respectively, and had thence been adopted by the Sunni rulers of the eastern Mediterranean.[96] The introduction of these new coin types thus

12. Ghurid epigraphic dirham struck at Ghazna in 590/1193–4, obverse
Tübingen University Collection, 2003.16.177

13. Ghurid dirham of "bull's-eye" type, struck at Ghazna in 596/1200, obverse
American Numismatic Society, ANS 1991.40.2

14. Ghurid dinar of "square in circle" type, struck at Ghazna in 600/1203–4, obverse
American Numismatic Society, ANS 1922.216.7

linked the Ghurids more directly with their Sunni contemporaries in the wider Islamic world. It is even possible that the contemporary Ayyubid sultanate of Syria, which had adopted these coin types a few decades earlier, provided the specific models for the new coinage (figs. 15 and 16).[97] The fame of the Ayyubid sultan Salah al-Din (known to Western sources as Saladin) was then at its zenith. Having ended the rule of the Fatimid caliphs in Egypt in 567/1171 (thus bringing the eastern Mediterranean back into the Sunni fold), Salah al-Din recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 582/1187. Minhaj-i Siraj Juzjani, who was raised at the Ghurid court in Firuzkuh, explicitly compares the military victories of Salah al-Din against the Isma'ili Fatimids and Christian Franks in the West with those of the Ghurid sultan Mu'izz al-Din against the Ghaznavid and Hindu kingdoms of northern India in the East during the same period.[98] The Ayyubids also championed the cause of the Shafi'i *madhhab*, promoting themselves as upholders of Sunni orthodoxy and employing Qur'anic inscriptions to this end.[99]

The internationalist turn in the Ghurid polity was indicated not only by the connotative value of the coins but also by their denotative content. It is on these newly introduced Ghurid coin types that Qur'anic quotations appear, apparently for the very first time. On both types the quotation consists of Qur'an 9:33, a relatively common numismatic inscription that had appeared on the Afghan coin issues of the Ghaznavid and Samanid predecessors of the Ghurids: "It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the true faith in order to make it superior to other systems of belief, even though the polytheists may not like it."[100]

The prolific gold and silver issues minted in Ghazna from 590/1194 onward probably reflect an influx of Indian gold after a major victory in India two years earlier,[101] and it is tempting to relate the presence of this verse to those contemporary Indian campaigns. However, this Qur'anic assertion of orthodoxy is intimately associated with the minting of new "international" coin types that follows hard on the heels of the Ghurids' radical shift away from the Karramiya in 595/1199 and to which it is likely to be related. Rhetorical accusations of heresy and

unbelief were the stock-in-trade of the internecine theological disputes that wracked Khurasan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, leveled with equal alacrity at Sunnis and Shi'is, Shafi'is and Karramis.[102] It is precisely within the rhetorical frame of heterodoxy, innovation, and polytheism that the disputations between the representatives of the Karramiya, the Shafi'iya and the Hanafiya in 595/1199 were reportedly conducted.[103] Conversely, despite their popularity in Khurasan, the Karramiya had long been depicted as a heretical sect and anathematized both within and without the region.[104] The sudden appearance of a Qur'anic verse on Ghurid coins, and the choice of verse in particular, suggests that a

tradition of using selective Qur'anic quotations for polemical purposes, a tradition that had previously been harnessed to the promotion of the Karramiya *madhhab* favored by the Ghurid sultans, was deployed in favor of the other *madhhabs* after 595/1199.

Alterations to the form and epigraphic content of Iranian coins have been correlated with the conversion of the Ilkhanid sultan Uljaytu from Shiʿism to Sunnism in 709/1308, an event that sparked riots reminiscent of those that followed the Ghurids' abandonment of the Karramiya a century earlier.[105] In the later case, however, the numismatic changes reflect shifting patterns of royal patronage and resulting alterations to the power balance between rival Sunni groups. The numismatic dissemination of a Qur'anic quotation, one chosen for its ability to promote the position of a particular Sunni faction, finds more germane precedents in the eastern Iranian coin issues of the Ghaznavid and Seljuq sultans whom the Ghurids succeeded.[106]

Medieval Heterodoxies and Modern Orthodoxies

The shifting pietistic inclinations of the Ghurid sultans call into question any notion of a unitary Muslim self, even among elite strata of medieval societies, while the epigraphic program of the Jam minaret offers a very concrete paradigm for understanding the ways in which intra-Muslim doctrinal disputes inflected elite material culture. Perhaps more significant, it illustrates how a failure to interrogate the adjective *Muslim* or *Islamic* can obscure or relegate such inflections in favor of more essentializing interpretations. This point has ramifications well beyond the often arcane worlds of medieval theology and modern art history.

In traditional historiography (and art historiography), it has been taken as axiomatic that Ghurid expansion into north India in the 1190s constituted a "Muslim" or "Islamic" conquest (in fact *the* Islamic conquest) of India, in which a reified Muslim self defeated a hypostatized Hindu other largely constructed in opposition to it. The material instantiations of the medieval past, chief among them the mosques erected in north India in the wake of the Ghurid conquest,

have served to validate this reading. These mosques, among them well-known monuments such as the Qutb Minar (1199 onward) and its associated mosque in Delhi (1192 onward), were largely constructed from spolia taken from temples and other structures, and their reception in colonial and postcolonial scholarship has been characterized by the Manichaean division between "Hindu" and "Muslim" traditions that pervades much writing on the period. Despite its geographic and art historical obscurity, the Ghurid sultanate thus occupies center stage in modern polemical and rhetorical representations of medieval South Asian history and their reflections in contemporary Indian politics.[107]

For medieval observers who wrote about their experience of the Qutb Mosque in Delhi, the most celebrated of the Indo-Ghurid mosques, the extraordinary ubiquity of Qur'anic inscriptions covering the facade of the prayer hall and the adjoining minaret (figs. 17–20) left a far greater impression than the recycled architectural materials. The proliferation of epigraphy in this and other Indo-Ghurid mosques follows a tradition established in the Ghurid monuments of eastern Iran, Afghanistan, and the Indus Valley, which have been compared to "huge billboards proclaiming various messages at those who enter them."[108] As we have seen, the programmatic nature of the Qur'anic inscriptions on Ghurid monuments can hardly be doubted (even if they are imperfectly understood), suggesting that what was exported to India in the last decade of the twelfth century was not only a penchant for monumental epigraphy but also an established tradition of employing Qur'anic quotations discursively.[109]

Studies of the Qur'anic inscriptions in the Indo-Ghurid mosques have highlighted their emphasis on idolatry and unbelief, assuming that their content constitutes them as discursive statements addressed to the conquered Hindu population in some unexamined sense. As with the minaret of Jam, a rhetorical emphasis on infidelity in the inscriptions of these mosques has been among the factors that have constituted them as symbols of "Muslim" victory, contributing to a modern polemic of the medieval.

Construction of Indo-Ghurid mosques like the Qutb Mosque straddled the period of sec-

17. Qutb Mosque, Delhi, 1192 onward, arched screen forming facade of prayer hall, 594/1198
Author photograph

18. Qutb Mosque, Delhi, detail of the Qur'anic inscriptions on the screen added to the prayer hall in 1198
Author photograph

tarian conflicts in the Ghurid homelands, in which architecture was no less instrumental than epigraphy. Just as architectural patronage had been integral to the Ghurids' promotion and support of the Karramiya, the patronage of monumental architecture also served to signify the realignment of the Ghurid polity after 595/1199. In 597/1201, for example, when a fire provided Sultan Ghiyath al-Din with the opportunity to undertake a major renovation or rebuilding of the Great Mosque of Herat (funded at least in part by Indian booty), the imamate of the mosque was bestowed on the Shafi'is in perpetuity.[110]

The instrumentality of both architecture and epigraphy to the internecine disputes between different Sunni factions is integral to understanding the architectural patronage of the Ghurid sultans and their Turkic generals in north India. Although it was the product of territorial expansion, construction of the Indian mosques should also be understood as part of an extended program of Ghurid architectural patronage in the last decade of the sixth/twelfth century. Based on the evidence from contemporary Afghanistan, it seems likely that the multiple references to error, falsity, and unbelief in their Qur'anic inscriptions constituted an address to audiences that may have included the Hindu unbeliever but also addressed the heterogeneous Muslim population.[111] The question

of religious identity is further complicated by the existence of communities of Muslims of various sorts in north Indian cities before the conquest, communities that included Muslims who did not necessarily share the confessional affinities of the Ghurids or their Turkic soldiery.[112] Doctrinal schisms and their correlates in architectural violence continued to be part of the cultural life of the Muslim communities of north India even after the conquest, following a pattern familiar from eastern Iran and Afghanistan in the preceding two centuries. In 634/1236, for example, riots broke out at the Qutb Mosque in Delhi, reportedly involving Isma'ilis and Shi'is.[113]

The connection between campaigns against heresy and rhetoric about it in contemporary manuals on statecraft, a linkage reflected in the titles of the Ghurid sultans, is central to understanding the discursive function of the Qur'anic citations in Ghurid architecture as a whole, not just those in north Indian mosques. The eastward expansion of the Ghurid sultanate began with a successful campaign against the Isma'ili Shi'is of Multan and Sind by Mu'izz al-Din in 569/1174 and effectively ended with his murder by one of their number in 603/1206.[114] The rise and fall of the Ghurid sultanate is thus circumscribed by questions of orthodoxy, heterodoxy (or even heresy), and self-definitions made in relation to the rhetorical claims of both. The last decade of the sixth/twelfth century is particularly marked by convulsive sectarian disputes and shifting patterns of religious patronage in the Ghurid heartlands. Contemporary as they are with Ghurid expansion into north India, these shifts undermine the notion of a singular and stable self, defined through religious affinity. They also provide a context for understanding contemporary architectural patronage that is at once more nuanced and historicizing than the generic tropes of "Muslim" victory or "Hindu-Muslim" antipathy.

Returning to the terminological problem with which I began, it might be argued that the use of the qualifying adjectives *Islamic* or *Muslim* by historians of medieval art and architecture has produced a coherence effect that both assumes and produces the *umma*, the Muslim community, as a homogeneous or monolithic entity. Despite their undoubted

19. Qutb Minar, Delhi, 1199 onward, general view
Author photograph

20. Qutb Minar, Delhi, 1199 onward, detail of inscription
Author photograph

convenience, the use of these terms obscures the fact that, at any given moment, the Muslim self was never an entirely unitary or static entity, but rather comprised multiple complementary or competing selves constituted dynamically and relationally in response to shifting cultural, historical, and political conditions. The evidence from the remote mountain valleys of Afghanistan suggests that these alternative selves can be intrinsic to an understanding of premodern artistic production, highlighting the need for future research rooted in specific historical conditions rather than generic rhetorical representations.

One final point concerns the interplay of text and artifact in synchronic deployments of Qur'anic scripture. Studies of Qur'anic inscriptions on medieval monuments have generally been undertaken using epigraphic compendia that ignore the materiality of monumental inscriptions, thereby privileging textual content in a way that betrays the genealogical origins of Islamic art history in Oriental studies. Any hypothesis regarding the meaning of the minaret of Jam and its enigmatic epigraphic program, for example, must address both context and content, formal and textual aspects of the monument. Although one can agree wholeheartedly with Carole Hillenbrand's observation that in the analysis of monumental Qur'anic inscriptions, "the focus of scholarship must shift from mere epigraphy to Qur'ānic studies," one might therefore also emphasize the need for scholars of both religious ideas and Qur'anic epigraphy to engage with the materiality of their sources.[115]

NOTES

This essay expands on a theme first articulated in Finbarr Barry Flood, review of *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jâm: Un chef d'oeuvre du XIIe siècle* by Janine Sourdel-Thomine, *Art Bulletin* 87, no. 3 (September 2005): 536–543 and n. 202. Some of the material that it contains was discussed in the *Indian Economic and Social History Review* in the same month (see n. 20 below). I express my sincere thanks to Mohammad Reza Kargar and Zohreh Rouhfar of the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, for their generosity in facilitating access to the Ghurid manuscript discussed here. I am also grateful to Michael Bates of the American Numismatic Society and to Lutz Ilisch of Tübingen University for making the Ghurid numismatic material available to me, to Bernt Glatzer for supplying images of Shah-i Mashhad, and to Everett Rowson, New York University, for helping to clarify my understanding and translations of the relevant theological doctrines.

1. For an overview of the problem, see Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art 1.1: Definitions," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (New York, 1996), 16:99–110.

2. Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner, eds., *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City* (Cambridge, 2004), 271.

3. Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York, 1994), 124, 173.

4. Irene A. Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley, 1998); Yasser Tabbaa, *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival* (Seattle, 2001), especially chapter 1.

5. The key text is Erica Cruikshank Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Qur'anic Verses in Islamic Art*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1981). For a cogent critique, see Sheila S. Blair, *Arabica* 31, no. 3 (1984): 37–42.

6. Its basic elements and historical context were sketched in a brief early study: André Maricq and Gaston Wiet, *Le minaret de Djâm: La découverte de la capitale des sultans Ghôrides XIIe–XIIIe siècles*, Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan, vol. 16 (Paris, 1959). Since then, a number of short articles have supplied further details. For a full bibliography of pre-1982 publications on Jam, see Warwick Ball and Jean Claude Gardin, *Archaeological Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1982), 2:133–134. An important article by Ralph Pinder-Wilson has done much to illuminate our understanding of the minaret: "Ghaznavid and Ghūrid Minarets," *Iran* 39 (2001): 155–186.

7. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghūr," in *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (London, 1977), 116–133 (hereafter Bosworth 1977a).

8. Minhaj al-Din Abu 'Umar al-Uthman Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, ed. 'Abd al-Hayy Husayni Habibi, 2 vols. (Kabul, 1963–1964), 1:341–349; H. G. Raverty, trans., *Ṭabakāt-i Nāṣirī*, 2 vols. (reprinted, New Delhi, 1970), 1:347–363; and Clifford Edmund Bosworth "Ghūrids," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al., new ed. (Leiden, 1986–2002), 2:1099–1104.

9. A series of silver coins issued from an unknown mint between 569/1173 and 581/1185 is exceptional in naming Mu'izz al-Din as *sulṭān al-aẓam*, hinting at divergences between the assumption and bestowal of royal authority: William F. Spengler, "Some New Numismatic Evidence Regarding Royal Nomenclature and Titulature in the Ghurid Period," *Numismatics and History*, Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, Inaugural Seminar, January 8–10, 1984 (P.O. Anjaneri, Maharashtra, 1984), 114–115. It should also be noted that Ghiyath al-Din retained the title *al-sulṭān al-mu'aẓẓam* among his many other titles even in the inscriptions executed late in his reign, among them the Friday Mosque of Herat and the Qutb Minar in Delhi.

10. Janine Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jâm: Un chef d'oeuvre du XIIe siècle*, Mémoires de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, vol. 29 (Paris, 2004), 31–32. On the question of the identification of the site, see Pinder-Wilson 2001.

11. Robert Hillenbrand, "The Architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids," in *The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand, vol. 2 of *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth* (Leiden, 2000), 124–206.

12. Sourdel-Thomine 2004, 127–157.

13. The same verses appeared two centuries earlier on Samanid silver dirhams from the mint at Badakshan in Afghanistan. See Michael Mitchiner, *The Multiple Dirhems of Medieval Afghanistan* (London, 1973), 51.

14. Oleg Grabar, review of Maricq and Wiet 1959, *Ars Orientalis* 4 (1961): 419.

15. In the absence of diacritical marks (which were often omitted in medieval inscriptions), the words for seventy (*sab'īn*) and ninety (*tis'īn*) in Arabic are virtually indistinguishable. Ralph Pinder-Wilson (2001, 169, figs. 22–24) has argued for a reading of 590/1193–94, and this date has been cited in most literature on the minaret. Using photographic material garnered in 1960, however, Sourdel-Thomine (2004, 135–139) reads the inscription as *bi-ta'rīkh sana sab'īn wa khamsami'a* (on the date of the year five hundred and seventy [1174–1175]) rather than *tis'īn wa khamsami'a* (five hundred and ninety). Everything rests on the question of whether or not the *hasta* of the initial letter of the disputed word extends horizontally leftward at its terminal point, as Pinder-Wilson suggests in his text and accompanying drawing. This would identify it as the Arabic letter

tā, rather than the first of the three *hastae* of the letter *sīn*. Sourdel-Thomine argues that Pinder-Wilson has been misled by the decay of the horizontal brick frame above the inscription. Although she does not note them, several factors support her reading. First, where such horizontal extensions do occur in the inscriptions surrounding the dating panel, they are similar in thickness to the *hastae*, which is not the case here (hence the ambiguity). Second, the three initial strokes of the disputed word decrease in height as one reads from right to left; careful examination of the three vertical strokes of the letter *sīn* in the preceding word *sana* show the same characteristic (although it is not as pronounced), supporting a reading of *sīn* rather than *tā*.

16. Pinder-Wilson 2001, 170–171.

17. Fakhr-i Mudabbir, *Ta'rīkh-i Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārakshah*, ed. E. Denison Ross (London, 1927), 1920.

18. Raverty 1970, 1:376–377; Maricq and Wiet 1959, 26–27; Pinder-Wilson 2001, 168; Sourdel-Thomine 2004, 128–129.

19. Sheila S. Blair, "The Madrasa at Zuzan: Islamic Architecture in Eastern Iran on the Eve of the Mongol Invasions," *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 83.

20. Finbarr Barry Flood, "Ghurid Monuments and Muslim Identities: Epigraphy and Exegesis in Twelfth-Century Afghanistan," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 42, no. 3 (September 2005): 263–294.

21. Maricq and Wiet 1959, 51–53; Ann K. S. Lambton, "Quis Custodiet Custodes: Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government," in *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government* (London, 1980), 129.

22. "Al-malik wa'l-sulṭān al-muʿaẓẓam shahanshāh al-aʿẓam mālik riqāb al-umam sulṭān al-salāṭīn fi'l-ʿālam ghiyāth al-dunyā wa'l-dīn muʿizz al-Islām wa'l-muslimīn qāhir al-kafara wa'l-mulḥidīn qāmiʿ al-bidʿa wa'l-mutamarridīn ʿaḍud al-dawla al-qāhira tāj al-milla al-zāhira jalāl al-umma al-bāhira niẓām al-ʿālam abū al-fatḥ Muḥammad ibn Sām, qasīm amīr al-muʾminīn." Iran Bastan Museum, MS 3507, fol. 198a.

23. Juzjani 1963–1964, 1:349, 351–352; Raverty 1970, 1:363–367.

24. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Karrāmiyya," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 4 (Leiden, 1978), 4:667–679; Bosworth 1977a; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "The Rise of the Karāmiyyah in Khurasan," in *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (London, 1977), 5–14 (hereafter Bosworth 1977b); Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clarke (Notre Dame, Ind., 1997), 175–183.

25. Raverty 1970, 1:363, 1:365–366; Bosworth 1977a, 132–133; Bosworth 1977b, 7.

26. Bosworth 1978, 668.

27. On the subdivisions of the Karramiya, see Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *Al-Milal wa'l-niḥal* (Cairo, 1977), 111; Kate Chambers Seelye, *Moslem Schisms and Sects (Al-Farḳ Bain al-Firaḳ)* (New York, 1966), 38; Bosworth 1978, 668.

28. Margaret Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan: The Karramiyya in Nishapur," *Iranian Studies* 17, no. 1–4 (1994): 37–51. See also n. 90 below.

29. Josef van Ess, *Ungenützte Texte zur Karrāmīya* (Heidelberg, 1980); Aron Zysow, "Two Unrecognized Karrāmī Texts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 4 (1988): 577–587. I am grateful to Bernard Haykel for the latter reference.

30. Van Ess 1980, 81.

31. ʿIzz al-Din Ibn al-Athir, *Al-kāmil fi'l-taʾrīkh*, 13 vols., ed. C. J. Tornberg (reprinted, Beirut, 1965–1967), 12:151; Zakariya ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-ʿibād* (Beirut, 1960), 430.

32. The third volume was exhibited in Boston and New York in 1949, and another or the same volume was seen in London in 1976: *Rahnāma-yi Ganjīnah-i Qurʾān dar Mūzah-i Irān-i Bāstān* (Tehran, 1949), part 2, nos. 30–33, 16–17; Mehdi Bahrami, *Iranian Art: Treasures from the Imperial Collections and Museums of Iran* [exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art] (New York, 1949), 23, no. 52; Dalu Jones and George Mitchell, eds., *The Arts of Islam* [exh. cat., Hayward Gallery] (London, 1976), 320, no. 509. The Qurʾan was referred to in passing by Richard Ettinghausen in a study of medieval Islamic book bindings and has been mentioned by Priscilla P. Soucek in a survey of eastern Islamic calligraphy: Richard Ettinghausen, "The Covers of the Morgan *Manāfiʿ* Manuscript and Other Early Persian Bookbindings," in *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene* (Princeton, 1954), 470; Priscilla P. Soucek, "The Development of Calligraphy," in *The Age of Achievement: A.D. 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century, Part Two: The Achievements*, vol. 4 of *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth and M. S. Asimov (Paris, 2000), 494, fig. 18. Qadir Afround has published an excellent brief discussion: "Qurʾān-i mauqūfah-i Turbat-i Shaykh Aḥmad Jāmī," *Mīrāth-i Farhangī* 15 (1996): 4–14. In view of its singular importance, I hope to undertake a major study of the manuscript.

33. The nearest dated Afghan comparandum is a Qurʾan executed at Bust in 505/1111–12, the pages of which measure 20.2 by 15.1 centimeters: François Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran du Maghrib à l'Insulinde*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, catalogue des manuscrits arabes II: Manuscrits musulmans I:2 (Paris, 1985), 121, no. 522, plates 7a and 25a. Two Iranian Qurʾans in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin and the Nasser D. Khalili Collection in London are closer in size: the folios of the former measure 39 by 33 centimeters, the latter 39.2 by 32.4 centimeters. Although both are undated, on stylistic grounds they are datable to the end of the

twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth: David Lewis James, *Qur'ans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library: A Facsimile Exhibition* [exh. cat., Chester Beatty Library] (London, 1980), no. 23; David Lewis James, *The Master Scribes: Qur'ans of the 10th to 14th Centuries AD*, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, vol. 2 (London, 1992), 34, no. 5.

34. Sourdel-Thomine 2004, 133–134.

35. Hillenbrand 2000, 143.

36. James 1992, 14.

37. Van Ess 1980, 73–74.

38. Gilbert Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane* (Paris, 1963), 91–94.

39. Leonardo Capezzone, "Alterità e Islamizzione: Iblīs e il pavone nel commento Coranico di Sūrābādī," *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 31, no. 3 (1992): 17. The language of the work is indicative of a Herati connection: Lazard 1963, 94. According to other sources, al-Surabadi hailed from Turbat-i Shaykh Jam, where the manuscript came to rest before its removal to the National Museum of Iran.

40. The shrine had been built or rebuilt in 633/1236 by the Kart ruler of Herat, who claimed descent from the Ghurid line: Lisa Golombek, "The Chronology of Turbat-i Shaikh Jām," *Iran* 9 (1971): 28, 31.

41. Claude Gilliot, "L'exégèse du Coran en Asie centrale et au Khorasan," *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999): 146; A. Paket-Chy and Claude Gilliot, "Works on *hadīth* and Its Codification, on Exegesis and on Theology," in Bosworth and Asimov 2000, 107.

42. See François Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'rans of the 8th to 10th Centuries AD*, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, vol. 1 (London, 1992); David Lewis James, *Qur'rans of the Mamluks* (London, 1988); and James 1992.

43. Maricq and Wiet 1959, 49–51; Anthony Welch, Hussein Keshani, and Alexandra Bain, "Epigraphs, Scripture, and Architecture in the Early Delhi Sultanate," *Muqarnas* 19 (2002): 14; Sourdel-Thomine 2004, 153–157.

44. Josef van Ess, "Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh," in Gibb et al. 1986–2002, 10:341–344.

45. Bosworth 1978, 667; Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (New York, 1988), 41.

46. L. Gardet, "Kalām," in Gibb et al. 1986–2002, 4:469.

47. For an overview of these controversies, see Yasin Ceylan, *Theology and Tafsīr in the Major Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Kuala Lumpur, 1996), 136–146; Roger Arnaldez, *Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî: Commentateur du Coran et philosophe* (Paris, 2002), 62–64. For the relationship between Ash'ari and Karrami theology on these matters, see Ahmad Muhammad El-Galli, "The History and Doctrines of the Karrāmiyya Sect with Special Reference to ar-Rāzī's Criticism" (M.Litt. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1970), 75.

48. Al-Shahrastani 1977, 113; Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *Livre des religions et des sects*, trans. Daniel Gimaret and Guy Monnot, 2 vols. (Paris, 1986), 1:352–353; A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn, trans., *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (London, 1984), 93–94.

49. Madelung 1988, 41–42; El-Galli 1970, 101, 667.

50. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century* (New Delhi, 1961; new ed., 2002), 51.

51. Bosworth 1978; El-Galli 1970, 98, 113–114, 118–120.

52. Al-Shahrastani 1977, 116; Al-Shahrastani 1986, 1:359.

53. El-Galli 1970, 104–106. The idea is similar to but distinct from the internal speech (*kalam nafsi*) of the Ash'ari theologians mentioned above: El-Galli 1970, 119.

54. Qur'an 2:117, 3:47, 3:59, 6:73, 16:40, 19:35, 36:82, 40:68. On the role of the phrase in *kalam*, see Ceylan 1996, 143–144.

55. Sourdel-Thomine 2004, 93–95.

56. Madelung 1988, 40; Bosworth 1977a, 8; Zysow 1988, 584. On the Hanafi elements in Karrami theology, see Paket-Chy and Gilliot 2000, 123–124.

57. Oleg Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 54–55.

58. On the figure of Jesus in the Qur'an, see Claus Schedl, *Muhammad und Jesus: Die Christologisch Relevanten Texte des Korans* (Vienna, Freiburg, and Basel, 1978).

59. Andrea Bruno, "Notes on the Discovery of Hebrew Inscriptions in the Vicinity of the Minaret of Jām," *East and West*, n.s. 14 (1963): 206–208; Gherardo Gnoli, *Le inscrizioni Giudeo-Persiane del Ġūr (Afghanistan)* (Rome, 1964).

60. Richard T. Antoun, *Muslim Preacher in the Muslim World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton, 1989), 234. See also Holly Edwards, "Text, Context, Architext: The Qur'an as Architectural Inscription," in *Brocade of the Pen: The Art of Islamic Writing* [exh. cat., Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University], ed. Carol Garret Fisher (East Lansing, Mich., 1991), 70–71.

61. Edwards 1991, 68–69. See also Ralph Pinder-Wilson (2001, 170) on the difficulties of accommodating the various prophetic references in the Surat Maryam within an interpretative paradigm that emphasizes victory alone.

62. Blair 1984, 339.

63. William A. Graham, "Qur'ān as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin (Tucson, Ariz., 1985), 27.

64. It is precisely the proliferation of such familiar Old Testament figures that reportedly led Ja'far b. Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, to recite this sura to the Negus of Abyssinia to win his sympathy and support for the nascent religion of Islam and the community of Muslims who sought shelter at his court. See Trevor Le Gassick, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad: A Translation of al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 5 vols. (Reading, 1998), 2:13.

65. A. J. Wensinck–[Penelope Johnstone], "Maryam," in Gibb et al. 1986–2002, 6:629.

66. Qur'an 2:117, 3:47, 3:59, 19:35.

67. Abu Bakr 'Atiq b. Muhammad al-Surabadi, *Tafsīr-i Sūrābādī*, 5 vols. (Tehran, 2002–2003), 2:1476–1477.

68. Bosworth 1978, 667; El-Galli 1970, 73.

69. Wilferd Madelung, "Māturīdiyya," in Gibb et al. 1986–2002, 6:847.

70. Sourdel-Thomine 2004, 154, 160. For a speculative attempt to reconstruct the sorts of collaborative processes that the minaret's epigraphic program suggests, see Richard Ettinghausen, "Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation," in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. Dickran K. Kouymjian (Beirut, 1974), 307–308. See also Welch, Keshani, and Bain 2002, 14. The orchestration of the epigraphic program so that a key verse both describes and coincides with the nodal point of the decorative program hints at an early use of paper notation, documented only from the thirteenth century onward.

71. Note that the *shahāda* is set at the summit of the minaret, precluding easy legibility, yet this is arguably the most important of all the inscriptions, a basic affirmation of the core beliefs that unite the Muslim community, the *umma*.

72. This distinction and the idea of a monoptic perception (apprehension at a glance) is borrowed from Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Bollingen Series 38 (Princeton, 1992), 103.

73. Ettinghausen 1974, 308; Edwards 1991, 65, 70. For a discussion of the question of legibility in relation to Ghurid and early sultanate inscriptions in India, see Sunil Kumar, "The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate, 588–685/1192–1286" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1992), 223–224. It is important here to bear in mind the centrality of the aural and oral transmission of the Qur'an, to which the written text generally functioned as a kind of aide-mémoire for those who already knew it by heart: Graham 1985, 34.

74. Ettinghausen 1974, 308; Edwards 2001, 65, 70. Both note the consequent tendency for awareness of the particular meanings of complex epigraphic programs to be lost over time, as did Grabar in his foundational essay on the Dome of the Rock (1959, 60–61).

75. Bosworth 1978, 667.

76. Michael J. Casimir and Bernt Glatzer, "Šāh-i Mašhad: A Recently Discovered Madrasah of the Ghurid Period in Ġargistān (Afghanistan)," *East and West*, n.s. 21 (1971): 54; Bernt Glatzer, "The Madrasah of Shah-i-Mashhad in Badgis," *Afghanistan* 25, no. 4 (1973): 47–48. Blair (1985, 90 n. 35) suggests that this may have been a Shafi'i foundation with a southerly orientation. With the principal entrance apparently sited on the south facade, this would produce the very unsatisfactory arrangement of entering the building and then being compelled to double back to access the prayer chamber.

77. Blair 1985, 81.

78. André Godard, "Khorāsān," *Āthār-é Irān* 4, no. 1 (1949): 56–57.

79. Juzjani 1963–1964, 1:340–341, 1:369, 1:382; Raverty 1970, 1:346, 1:392–393, 1:417–418; Kumar 1992, 10, 12–14.

80. Juzjani 1963–1964, 1:340–341; Raverty 1970, 1:346–347.

81. Juzjani 1963–1964, 1:319–320, 1:340–344, 1:369–370; Raverty 1970, 1:301–302, 1:346, 1:391–392. We are told that Mah Malik perished during the Mongol invasions of Iraq. Assuming that she was in her twenties or thirties in 571/1175–6, when she founded the madrasa, she would have died in her seventies or eighties.

82. Raverty 1970, 1:487–488; Rory Stewart, *The Places in Between* (London, 2004), 169.

83. Ibn al-Athir 1965–1967, 12:151–152, 154; Qazwini 1960, 430. In their shifting affiliations, the Ghurids show the same religious eclecticism and equivocation as their Ghaznavid predecessors. Mahmud of Ghazna had, for example, espoused the Karramiya before shifting his allegiances to the Shafi'is, and the Ghaznavids generally inclined toward the Hanafi *madhhab*: Bosworth 1977b.

84. Juzjani 1963–1964, 1:362; Raverty 1970, 1:384–385.

85. Ibn al-Athir 1965–1967, 12:154; Qazwini, 1960, 430.

86. 'Ali ibn Anjab ibn al-Sa'i, *Al-Jāmi' al-mukhtasar fī 'unwān al-tawārīkh wa 'uyūn al-siyar* (Baghdad, 1934), 45. See also Ibn al-Athir 1965–1967, 12:221; Raverty 1970, 1:243.

87. Also relevant is Muhammad Ibn al-Munavvar's dedication of the *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, a biography of the Sufi saint Abu Sa'id ibn Abi'l-Khayr of Mayhana, who had clashed with the Karramiya, to Sultan Ghiyath al-Din: Bosworth 1977b, 11. The author's emphasis on the fundamental unity of the Shafi'i and Hanafi *madhhabs* may reflect the growing strength of both in the Ghurid domains in the second half of the twelfth century: see *The Secret of God's Mystical Oneness, or, the Spiritual Stations of Shaikh Abu Sa'id*, trans. John O'Kane (Costa Mesa, Calif., 1992), 588.

88. Ibn al-Athir 1965–1967, 12:154; Ibn al-Saʿi 1934, 4–6; El-Galli 1970, 24. *Fitna* is a theologically charged term that denotes "disturbances, or even civil war, involving the adoption of doctrinal attitudes which endanger the purity of the Muslim faith": L. Gardet, "Fitna," in Gibb et al. 1986–2002, 2:931.

89. Raverty 1970, 1:385.

90. Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), especially 28–47 and 253; Bulliet 1994, 141; El-Galli 1970, 56; Madelung 1988, 36–37; Bosworth 1977b, 13. In his study of the rivalry between the rival *madhhabs* of Nishapur, the epicenter of internecine strife during the period, Bulliet has argued that the *madhhabs* constituted not only schools of legal interpretation but also "political parties" united by "a vision of the right ordering of society," which were "vying for possession of key political posts within the city and ultimately for the city itself" (Bulliet 1972, 38–39).

91. Ibn al-Athir 1965–1967, 12:154.

92. G. C. Anawati, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in Gibb et al. 1986–2002, 2:751–755; Salah al-Din Khalil ibn Aybak al-Safadi, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi'l-wafayāt*, 29 vols. (Leipzig, 1931–), 4:249; Paul Kraus, "The 'Controversies' of Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî," *Islamic Culture* 12 (1937): 134–135; Bosworth 1977a, 131.

93. Ibn al-Athir 1965–1967, 12:152; Ibn al-Saʿi 1934, 5–6; Fathalla Kholeif, *A Study on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxiana* (Beirut, 1966), 19; El-Galli 1970, 58. For al-Razi on the Karramiya, see *Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-muslimīn wa'l-mushrikīn* (Cairo, 1978), 101–102.

94. Bosworth 1977a, 130–131.

95. For pre-595 Ghurid issues from this mint, see Edward Thomas, *The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi* (Delhi, [1871] 1967) 12, nos. 1 and 2, plate 1, no. 2; Florian Schwarz, *Gazna/Kabul XIV d Ḫurāsān IV, Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tübingen* (Berlin, 1995), no. 539. Coins of traditional linear epigraphic form continued to be minted in both Ghazna and Firuzkuh after 595: Schwarz 1995, nos. 539–557, 812–814; Michael Bates and Robert E. Darley-Dorn, "The Art of Islamic Coinage," in *Treasures of Islam*, ed. Toby Falk [exh. cat., Musée Rath] (London, 1985), no. 553.

96. Bierman 1998, 62–70; Norman P. Nicol, "Islamic Coinage in Imitation of Fāṭimid Types," *Israel Numismatic Journal* 10 (1988): 58–70; Jere L. Bacharach, "Thoughts about Pennies and Other Monies," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 35 (2001): 9–11.

97. Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Ayyūbids* (London, 1980), 66–67, pl. 3, nos. 33–35; Bates and Darley-Dorn 1985, 353, 372–374; Nicol 1988; Cécile Bresc, "Les monnaies des Ayyoubides," in *L'Orient de Saladin: L'art des Ayyoubides*, ed. Sophie Makariou [exh. cat., Institut du monde arabe] (Paris, 2001), 33, no. 3; 36, no. 8; 37, nos. 11–12.

98. Raverty 1970, 1:214.

99. Claude Cahen, "Ayyūbids," in Gibb et al. 1986–2002, 1:802–803; Hillenbrand 2000, 282–284.

100. For earlier usage on Afghan coin issues, see Mitchiner 1973, 49, 122.

101. Spengler 1984, 115.

102. Note Bulliet's distinction between "official" pronouncements and unofficial rhetoric: 1972, 30.

103. Ibn al-Athir 1965–1967, 12:151; Bosworth 1977a, 132.

104. Richard Bulliet, "The Political-Religious History of Nishapur in the Eleventh Century," in *Islamic Civilisation, 950–1150*, ed. D. S. Richards (London, 1973), 77; Madelung 1988, 43; Zysow 1984, 584.

105. Sheila S. Blair, "The Coins of the Later Ilkhanids: A Typological Analysis," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 26 (1983): 397, 310; James W. Allan, "'My Father Is a Sun and I Am the Star': Fatimid Symbols in Ayyubid and Mamluk Metalwork," *Journal of the David Collection* 1 (2003): 41.

106. Richard W. Bulliet, "A Muʿtazilite Coin of Maḥmūd of Ghazna," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 15 (1969): 119–129; Richard W. Bulliet, "Local Politics in Eastern Iran under the Ghaznavids and Seljuks," *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978): 43–44.

107. Finbarr Barry Flood, "Signs of Violence: Colonial Ethnographies and Indo-Islamic Monuments," in *Art and Terror*, special issue of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 5, no. 2 (2004): 20–51.

108. Hillenbrand 2000, 173.

109. Robert Hillenbrand, "The Ghurid Tomb at Herat," in *Cairo to Kabul: Afghan and Islamic Studies Presented to Ralph Pinder-Wilson*, ed. Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow (London, 2002), 140. Titles emphasizing the role of the Shansabanid sultans as promoters of orthodoxy and extirpators of polytheism are conspicuous by their absence from surviving monumental inscriptions in India and anywhere else in their domains. Qur'anic rather than historical inscriptions seem to have assumed a primary rhetorical function.

110. Muhammad ibn Khavandshah Mirkhvand, *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1996), 2:787. For earlier examples of shifts in the imamates of medieval Khurasani mosques occasioned by changes in royal patronage, see Madelung 1988, 32. On the Ghurid inscriptions of the mosque, see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Eastern Iranian Architecture: Apropos of the Ghūrid Great Mosque of Herāt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33 (1970): 322–327.

111. Sunil Kumar, "Qutb and Modern Memory," in *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of Memory*, ed. Suvir Kaul (New Delhi, 2001), 157.

112. See, for example, a tombstone from Nagaur in Rajasthan, dated 545/1150 and belonging to the son of an Isma'ili missionary (dā'ī): Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Nagaur: Sultanate and Early Mughal History and Architecture of the District of Nagaur, India* (London, 1993), 8.

113. Juzjani 1963–1964, 1:461; Nizami 2002, 309–310; Kumar 2001, 157. See also Sunil Kumar, "La communauté musulmane et les relations hindous-musulmans dans l'Inde du nord au début du XIIIe siècle: Une réévaluation politique," *Annales, économies, sociétés, civilisations* 90, no. 2 (March–April 2005): 239–264.

114. Fakhr-i Mudabbir 1927, 29; Juzjani 1963–1964, 1:403; Raverty 1970, 1:485.

115. Carole Hillenbrand, "Some Reflections on the Use of the Qur'ān in Monumental Inscriptions in Syria and Palestine in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Islamic Reflections, Arabic Musings: Studies in Honour of Professor Alan Jones,* ed. Robert G. Hoyland and Philip F. Kennedy (Oxford, 2004), 289.