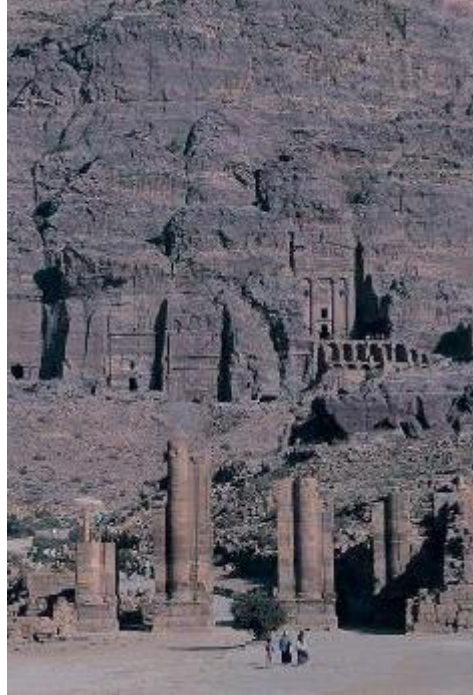


# ISLAMIC ART

Chapter 10  
AP Art History

# ***BIG IDEAS & ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS OF ART HISTORY***

<u>Big Idea</u>	<u>Essential Question</u>
<b>Artists manipulate materials and ideas to create an aesthetic object, act, or event.</b>	What is art and how is it made?
<b>Art making is shaped by tradition and change.</b>	Why and how does art change?
<b>Interpretations of art are variable.</b>	How do we describe our thinking about art?



# 181. PETRA, JORDAN: TREASURY AND GREAT TEMPLE

**Petra is the greatest city of the Nabataeans.  
Who are the Nabataeans?**

- A great trading people who occupied the Sinai and Negev.
- Controlled luxury trades in incense during the late Hellenistic & early Roman periods

**What happened in the late Roman era?**

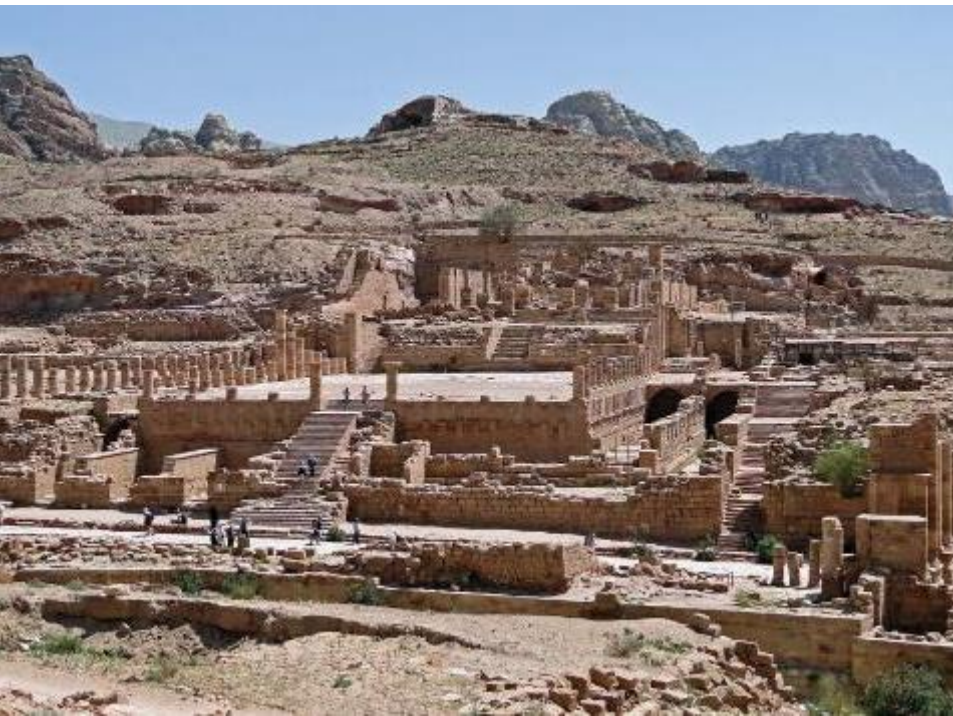
- Ruled in this region until 106 CE
- Emperor Trajan moved the capital to Bosra – creating the province of Arabia

**What did scholars originally think this was?**

- A necropolis – there are many at Petra

**What do we know today?**

- Petra was a Hellenistic-style metropolis
- The treasury façade reveals the influence of Alexandria (broken pediment/central tholos/Corinthian columns)





**The sculptural decoration also underscores a connection to the Hellenistic world.**

**On the upper level, Amazons (bare-breasted) and Victories stand, flanking a central female figure (on the tholos), who is probably Isis-Tyche, a combination of the Egyptian Goddess, Isis, and Tyche, the Greek Goddess of good fortune.**

**The lower level features the Greek twin gods, Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, who protected travelers and the dead on their journeys.**

**There are other details from the artistic traditions of the Hellenistic world, including eagles, the symbols of royal Ptolemies, vines, vegetation, kantharoi (vase with large handles), and acroteria (architectural ornaments on a pediment).**

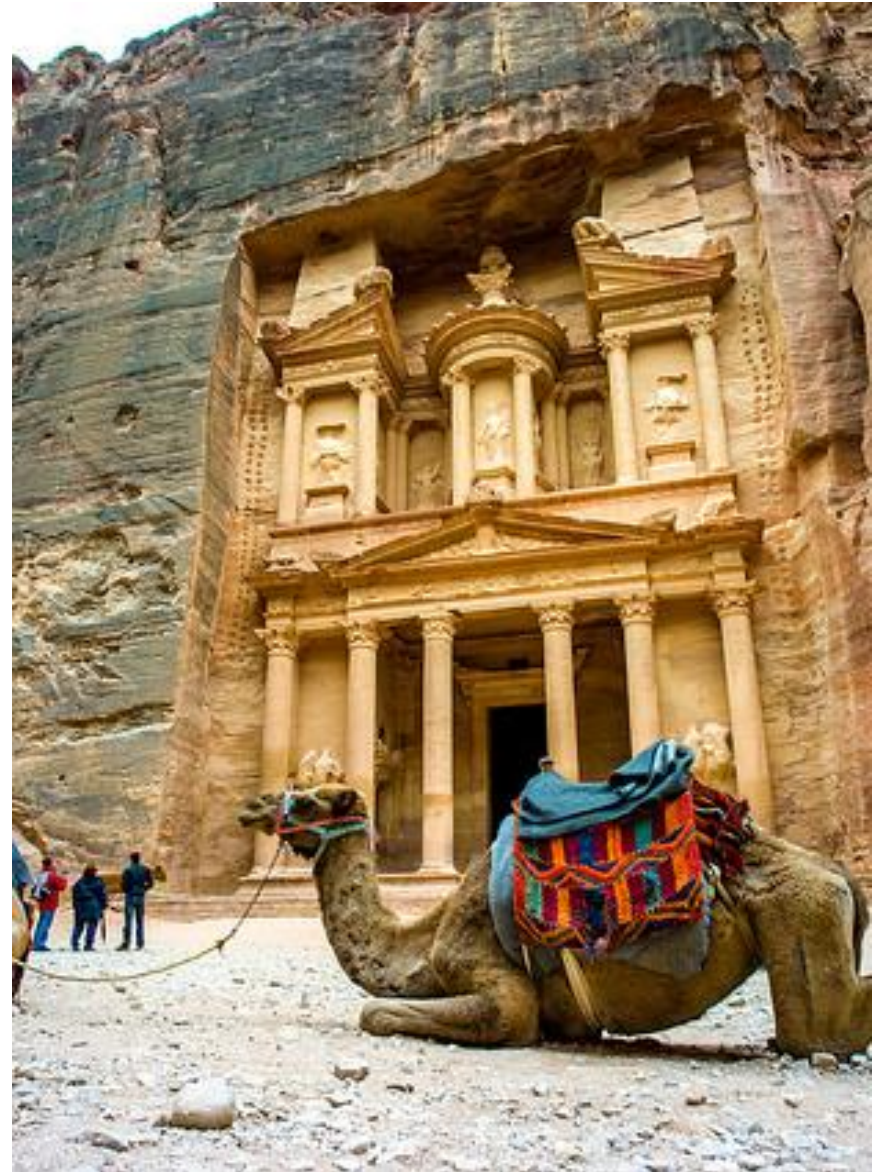
**The tomb also features rosettes, a design originally associated with the ancient Near East.**



The treasury was exceptional for its figurative detail and ornate Hellenistic architectural orders.

Most tombs did not have figurative sculpture—a legacy of the Nabataean artistic tradition that was largely aniconic, or non-figurative.

Many of the smaller tombs were less complex and also drew far less upon the artistic conventions of the Hellenistic world, suggesting that the Nabataeans combined the artistic traditions of the East and West in many different and unique ways.







# SACRED ARCHITECTURE

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# 183. THE KA'ABA

Pilgrimage to a holy site is a core principle of almost all faiths.

The Kaaba, meaning cube in Arabic, is a square building elegantly draped in a silk and cotton veil.

Located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, it is the holiest shrine in Islam.

All Muslims aspire to undertake the hajj, or the annual pilgrimage, to the Kaaba once in their lives if they are able.

Prayer five times a day and the hajj are two of the five pillars of Islam, the most fundamental principles of the faith.

Upon arriving in Mecca, pilgrims gather in the courtyard of the Masjid al-Haram around the Kaaba.

They then circumambulate in hopes of kissing or touching the Black Stone in the corner of the structure.



# 185. DOME OF THE ROCK

The Dome of the Rock is a building of extraordinary beauty, solidity, elegance, and singularity of shape... Both outside and inside, the decoration is so magnificent and the workmanship so surpassing as to defy description. The greater part is covered with gold so that the eyes of one who gazes on its beauties are dazzled by its brilliance, now glowing like a mass of light, now flashing like lightning.

—Ibn

Battuta (14th century travel writer)







**One of the most iconic images of the Middle East is the Dome of the Rock shimmering in the setting sun of Jerusalem.**

**Sitting atop the Haram al-Sharif, the highest point in old Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock's golden-color Dome and Turkish Faience tiles dominates the cityscape of Old Jerusalem and in the 7th century served as a testament to the power of the new faith of Islam.**

**The Dome of the Rock is one of the earliest surviving buildings from the Islamic world.**

**This remarkable building is not a mosque, as is commonly assumed and scholars still debate its original function and meaning.**

**Between the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 and 691/2, when the Dome of the Rock was completed, there was intermittent warfare in Arabia and Holy Land around Jerusalem.**

**The first Arab armies who emerged from the Arabian peninsula were focused on conquering and establishing an empire—not building.**

**The Dome of the Rock was one of the first Islamic buildings ever constructed.**

**The Dome is located on the Haram al-Sharif, an enormous open-air platform that now houses Al-Aqsa mosque, madrasas and several other religious buildings.**

**Few places are as holy for Christians, Jews and Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif.**

- **It is the Temple Mount, the site of the Jewish second temple, which the Roman Emperor Titus destroyed in 70 C.E. while subduing the Jewish revolt; a Roman temple was later built on the site.**
- **The Temple Mount was abandoned in Late Antiquity.**



# 186. GREAT MOSQUE, ISFAHAN (MASJID-E JAMEH)

Most cities with a sizable Muslim population have a congregational mosque.

Congregational mosques are often expanded along with the growth and needs of the *umma* (Muslim community)

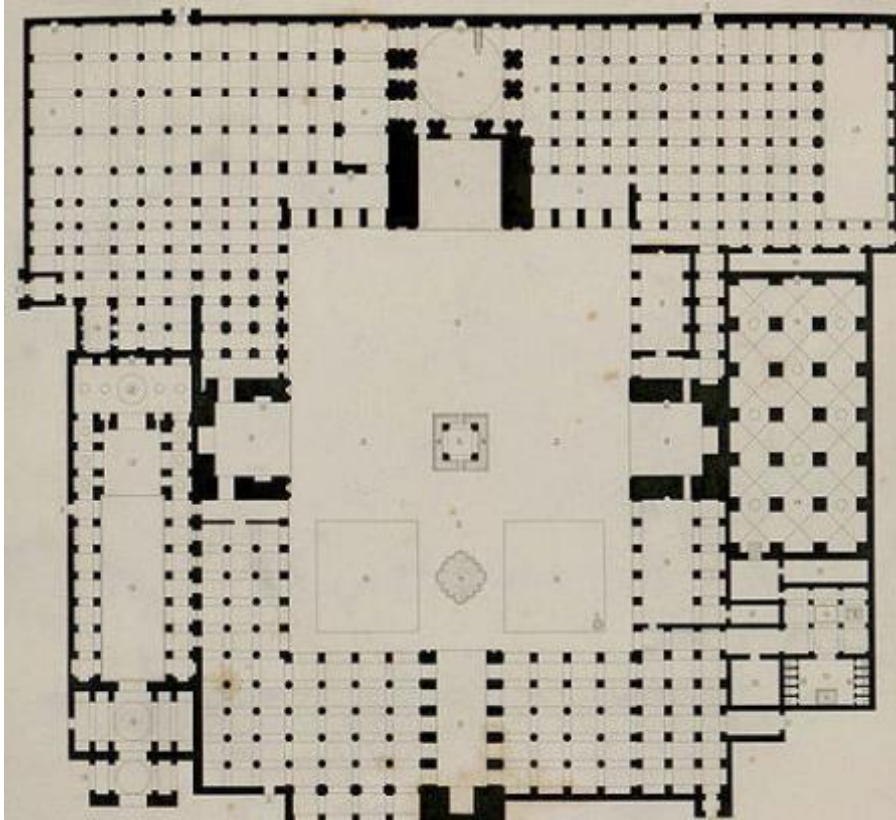
## The Great Mosque of Isfahan

- Found in Iran
- Unique in that it has changed from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- Found at the center of the old city
- Shares wall with surrounding structures
- This is a place for prayer!

## Who began construction of this work?

- The Seljuk Turks c. 11<sup>th</sup> Century
- Isfahan became their capital at this time.





## Who continued construction on this work?

- The Il-Khanid, Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar rulers

## What kind of design is found in this structure?

- Four-ivan design: an iwan is a vaulted space that opens on one side to a courtyard
- Great Mosque of Isfahan is considered the prototype for future four-ivan mosques

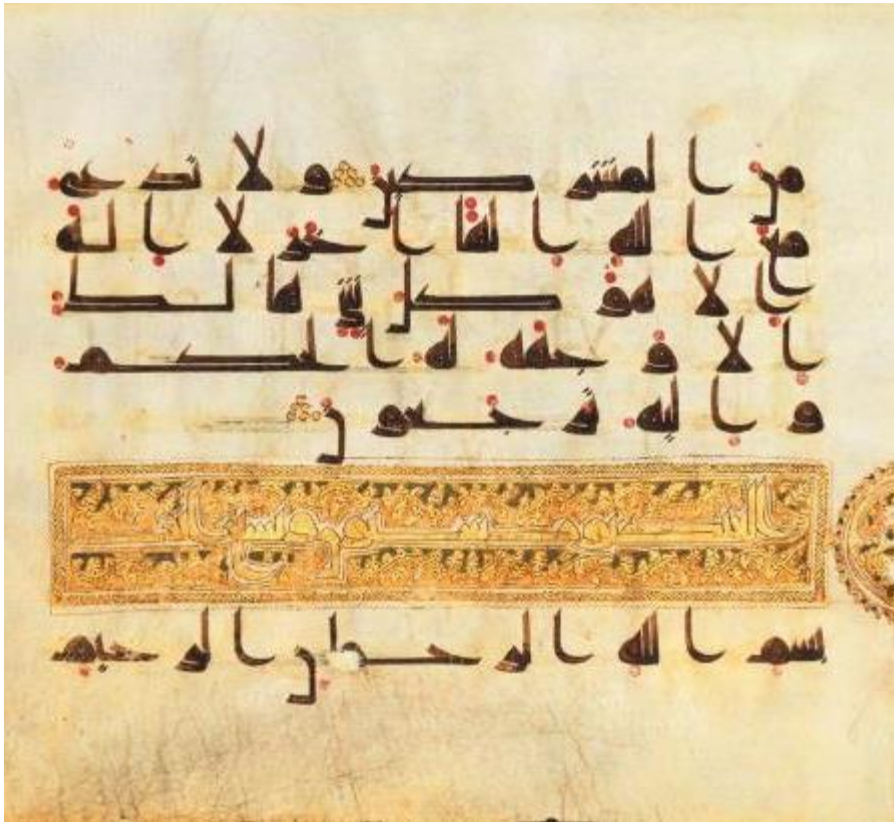
## What links the four iwans?

- The central courtyard
- Providing a tranquil space





# ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS



## 187. FOLIO FROM A QUR'AN

The Qur'an is the sacred text of Islam.

Over the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and a half of Islam, the form of the manuscript was adapted to suit the dignity and splendor of this divine revelation.

However, the word Qur'an, which means "recitation," suggests that manuscripts were of secondary importance to oral tradition.

In fact, the 114 *suras* (or chapters) of the Qur'an were compiled into a textual format, organized from longest to shortest, only after the death of Muhammad, although scholars still debate exactly when this might have occurred.



**This two-page spread (or bifolium) of a Qur'an manuscript, which contains the beginning of *Surat Al-'Ankabut* (The Spider), is now in the collection of The Morgan Library and Museum in New York.**

**Are there any remaining pages from this same Qur'an?**

- YES! Some portions survive in the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin), the Topkapı Palace Museum and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art (Istanbul), and the National Museum of Syria (Damascus).

**One page includes an inscription, which states that 'Abd al-Mun'im Ibn Aḥmad donated the Qur'an to the Great Mosque of Damascus in 298 A.H. (July, 911 C.E.), although we do not know where or how long before this donation the manuscript was produced.**





## A ROADMAP FOR READERS

The main text of the *mushaf* is written in brown ink.

Arabic, the language of the divine word of Islam, is read from right to left.

Several consonants share the same basic letterform, and these are usually distinguished from each other by lines or dots placed above or below the letter.

Short vowels such as *a*, *u*, and *i*, are not normally written in Arabic, but in order to avoid mis-readings of such an important text it quickly became standard to include vowels in the Qur'an.

In this manuscript, these short vowels are marked with red circles positioned above, next to, or below the consonants, depending on the vowel.



The text of each sura is further divided into verses by triangles made up of 5 gold circles located at the end of each verse (left).

The title of each sura is written in gold ink, and surrounded by a rectangle, filled here with an undulating golden vine (below).

Combined with a rounded palmette extending into the margin of the folio, it allows readers to quickly locate the beginning of each sura.

Because figural imagery such as human or animal forms was considered inappropriate for the ornamentation of sacred monuments and objects, artists relied on vegetal and geometric motifs when they decorated mosques and sacred manuscripts.

Vines and palmettes like the ones that surround the sura heading here appear alone in sacred contexts, but they also accompanied animal and human forms in the secular decoration of palaces and textiles.





## PLANNING THE PROPORTIONS OF THE PAGE

### How is the work planned?

- The dimensions of each page were calculated before the parchment was cut
- the text was carefully situated relative to the edges of the pages.
- the pages of this manuscript are wider than they are tall.
- the text-block of this manuscript has a height-to-width ratio of 2:3.

The height of each line of text was derived from the first letter of the alphabet, *alif*, which was in turn derived from the width of the nib of the reed pen used by the calligraphers to write the text.

<https://smarthistory.org/making-manuscripts/>



# THE SHAHNAMA (CONNECTED TO 189 & 190)

**Persian Book of Kings: one of the largest epics in world literature!**

- Epic Poem narrating the history of the ancient kings of Iran
- Mythic beginnings to the Arab conquest in 651
- Completed c. 1010 by Abu'l Qasim Firdausi (Ferdowsi)
- Dedicated to the Ghaznavid ruler Mahmud of Ghazni
- This king appears to be the long-awaited ruler who could end the dynasty of strife – reunify the region!

**How is the book divided?** 3 successive dynasties

- The Pishdadiyan: early shahs who fought forces of evil
- The Kayanids: those who fought with Turan
- The Sasanians: last glorious dynasty

**Human experiences:** moral struggles, romantic interludes, and death of protagonists

**This is the model for conduct of rulers...to be a GOOD ruler...**



# THE SHAHNAMA: SMARTHISTORY

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# 189. BAHRAM GUR FIGHTS THE KARG (HORNED WOLF)

*Illustration from the Shahnama*

*Completed in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century (400 years after the original text was completed)*

*Story: Bahram V (Bahram Gur – a Sasanian Empire king)*

- gur = “wild ass” one of the world’s fastest running animals
- Known as a great hunter, talented warrior, chivalrous, and romantic
- King of India (Shangal) recognized Bahram Gur’s abilities – asked him to help rid India of the fierce Karg (rhino/wolf combo)
- Bahram Gur slays the beast alone – his men were scared!
  - Uses arrows to weaken animal – sword to slay animal







## ***The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp***

- One of the most luxuriously illustrated copies of Firdausi's epic
- Made of fine paper enriched with large gold-sprinkled borders
- 759 folios of text written in *nasta'liq* script
- 258 paintings of exquisite quality and artistic originality

## **190. COURT OF GAYUMARS**

***Artists involved:*** Sultan Muhammad, Mir Musavvir, and Aqa Mirak

***Shows harmony between man & landscape***



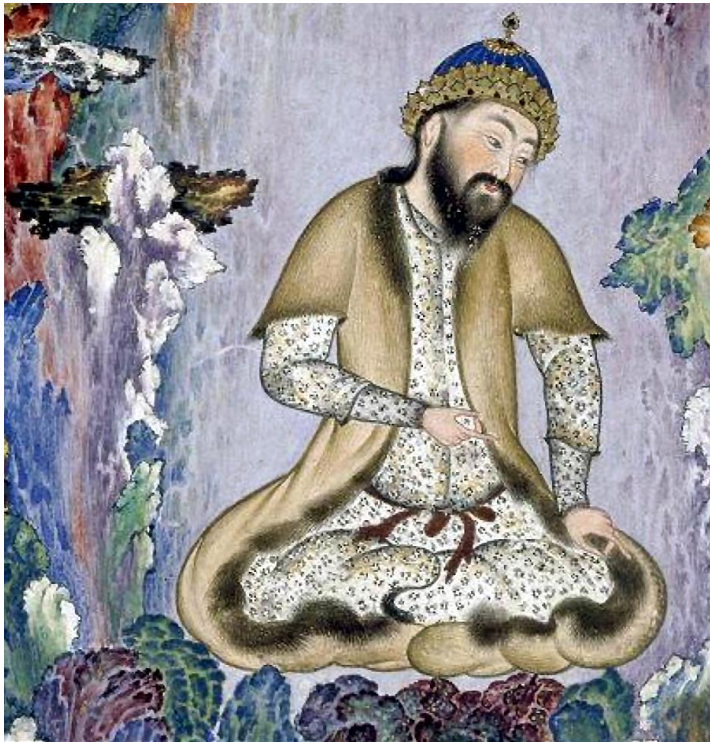
## WHY IS THE SHAHNAME OF SHAH TAHMASP I IMPORTANT?

### *Part of the Book of Kings (Shahnama)*

- Painting styles are blended from Tabriz and Herat
- This copy stands out among Central Asian productions
- This copy was begun for the 1<sup>st</sup> Safavid ruler (Shah Ismail I) and completed under his son (Shah Tahmasp I)

*Images in Islamic Arts?* Depends on the culture and period!





**King Gayumars (1<sup>st</sup> Persian king) rises above his courtiers (at the base of the work)**

- Taught the people to wear leopard pelts
- Siyamak (son) stands on cliffs
- Hushang (grandson) seated right

**Gayumars has just been told (by angel Shurush) that his son will die at the hands of the Black Div**

- Who is the Black Div? The son of demon Ahriman
- This is good v. evil!!!

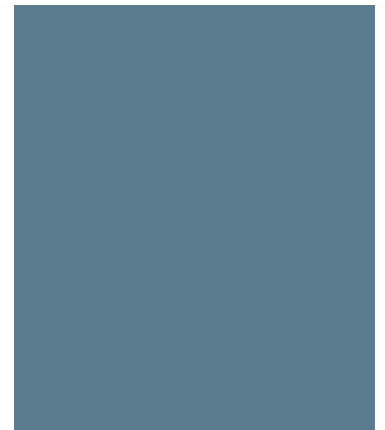
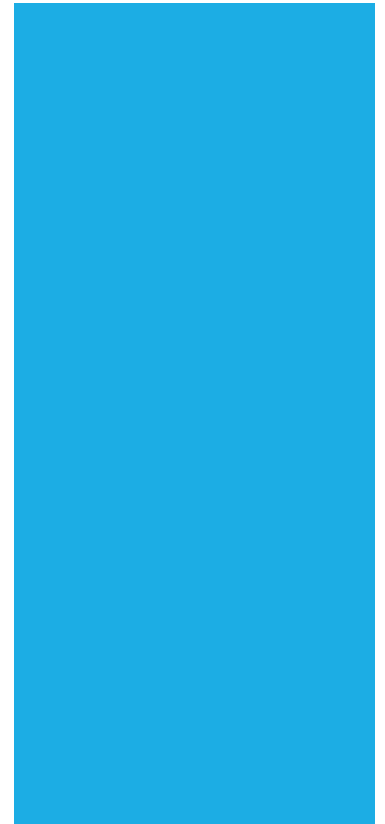
**Gayumars has also been told that his grandson will avenge Siyamak's death...killing the Black Div.**





# LUXURY OBJECTS

**188. BASIN  
(BAPTISÈRE DE ST. LOUIS)**







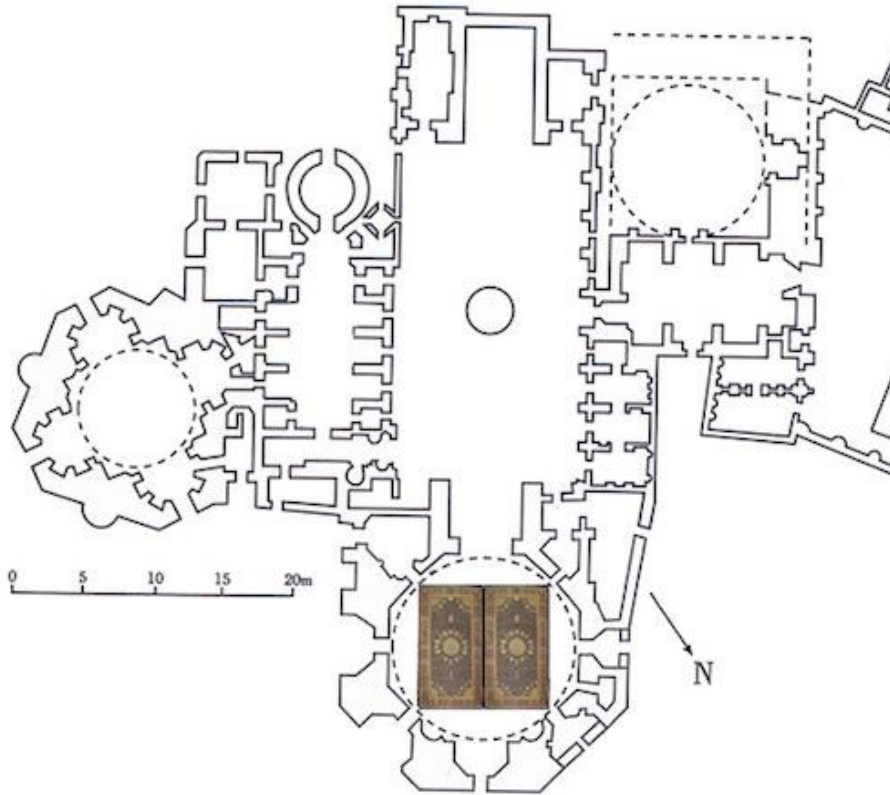
# 191. ARDABIL CARPET

***One of the OLDEST Islamic carpets!  
The carpet is named for the city of  
Ardabil: home to a Sufi saint (Safi al-  
Din Ardabili)***

- Shah Ismail (descendant of Sufi saint) gained power in 1501
- Shah Ismail's rule began the Safavid Dynasty) – one of the MOST important periods for Islamic arts!

***This carpet was one of a matching pair  
– laid side by side in the Shrine of  
Ardabil!***

- Made from wool – holds dye better than silk
- Dyes were made from pomegranate rind and indigo – 340 knots per square inch
- Geometric patterns, vegetative scrolls, floral flourishes
- Thoughtfully laid out and executed design
- Series of cartouches found on the frame and 4 lines of inscription at one end (a poem)



## HOW DID THE CARPETS LEAVE IRAN?

**1843: visitors noted at least one carpet remained.**

**Within ~30 years, an earthquake damaged the shrine, and the carpets were SOLD!**

- The damaged carpets were purchased by the Manchester-based Ziegler & Co. and restored
- The larger carpet was placed for sale by Vincent Robinson and Co. in 1892.
- The company persuaded the Victoria and Albert Museum (The V&A) to purchase the carpet in 1893.
- J.P. Getty bought 2<sup>nd</sup> carpet and donated it to LA County Museum of Arts (LACMA) in 1953.

