Making Sense of Islamic Art & Architecture
Adam Barkman

200 colour illustrations
15.0 x 15.0cm
224pp
ISBN 978 0 500 291719
Flexibound
£9.95
May

Thames & Hudson
CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1
Mosques, Mausoleums and Madrasas

CHAPTER 2
Calligraphy and Paintings

CHAPTER 3
Glass, Metal, Wood and Stone Works

CHAPTER 4
Ceramic and Textiles

CHAPTER 5
Castles, Palaces and Bazaars
Great Mosques, Mausoleums and Madrasas

Great Ziggurat of Ur

More than 4,000 years old, the Great Ziggurat of Ur (present-day Iraq) was a temple to the moon goddess Nanna, the patron goddess of Ur. As with the Malwiya Tower, the Great Ziggurat of Ur was made from mud bricks that were stacked upwards in the direction of the heavens, and thus the divine.

Samarra

In our ancient books … [Samarra] means the city of Shem, the son of Noah.

Al-Masudi, Arab Historian and Geographer

When one thinks of the Tower of Babel, the first images that come to mind are the medieval paintings of an immense round structure with levels winding upwards as in the imagined Mesopotamian ziggurats. It is possible that the artistic inspiration for these depictions, however, came instead from the minaret of the Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq. The design for the Malwiya Tower, as the minaret is called, demonstrates some influence from the square ziggurats of Mesopotamia with the exterior stairs and ramp winding around several times on their way up to the top. Constructed of sandstone between 848 and 852, its ascending spiral conical design is not only impressive, it is also unique. The minaret, which gets its name from the Arabic word for ‘snail shell’, is 55 metres (180 ft) high, with stairs winding anticlockwise five times around the spiral. The primary function of a mosque’s minaret is to call Muslims to prayer, but the Malwiya Tower is too high to be used for this – in reality it is merely for show and visually declares Islam’s presence in the area. In fact, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil built the whole mosque as a statement piece and for many centuries it was the largest mosque in the world. The brick and stucco mosque featured sixteen gates, seventeen aisles in the prayer hall and an area of 38,000 square metres (410,000 sqft). The stucco carvings with floral and geometric designs are particularly representative of Islamic decoration and have been influential in the region. The mosque itself was destroyed in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion of Hulagu Khan and only the minaret and outer wall remain.

When one thinks of the Tower of Babel, the first images that come to mind are the medieval paintings of an immense round structure with levels winding upwards as in the imagined Mesopotamian ziggurats. It is possible that the artistic inspiration for these depictions, however, came instead from the minaret of the Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq. The design for the Malwiya Tower, as the minaret is called, demonstrates some influence from the square ziggurats of Mesopotamia with the exterior stairs and ramp winding around several times on their way up to the top. Constructed of sandstone between 848 and 852, its ascending spiral conical design is not only impressive, it is also unique. The minaret, which gets its name from the Arabic word for ‘snail shell’, is 55 metres (180 ft) high, with stairs winding anticlockwise five times around the spiral. The primary function of a mosque’s minaret is to call Muslims to prayer, but the Malwiya Tower is too high to be used for this – in reality it is merely for show and visually declares Islam’s presence in the area. In fact, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil built the whole mosque as a statement piece and for many centuries it was the largest mosque in the world. The brick and stucco mosque featured sixteen gates, seventeen aisles in the prayer hall and an area of 38,000 square metres (410,000 sqft). The stucco carvings with floral and geometric designs are particularly representative of Islamic decoration and have been influential in the region. The mosque itself was destroyed in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion of Hulagu Khan and only the minaret and outer wall remain.

Great Mosque of Samarra

848–52 CE Samarra, Iraq

COMMISSIONED BY Al-Mutawakkil ARCHITECT Not known MATERIALS Sandstone DIMENSIONS 239 x 156 m / 784 x 512 ft

When one thinks of the Tower of Babel, the first images that come to mind are the medieval paintings of an immense round structure with levels winding upwards as in the imagined Mesopotamian ziggurats. It is possible that the artistic inspiration for these depictions, however, came instead from the minaret of the Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq. The design for the Malwiya Tower, as the minaret is called, demonstrates some influence from the square ziggurats of Mesopotamia with the exterior stairs and ramp winding around several times on their way up to the top. Constructed of sandstone between 848 and 852, its ascending spiral conical design is not only impressive, it is also unique. The minaret, which gets its name from the Arabic word for ‘snail shell’, is 55 metres (180 ft) high, with stairs winding anticlockwise five times around the spiral. The primary function of a mosque’s minaret is to call Muslims to prayer, but the Malwiya Tower is too high to be used for this – in reality it is merely for show and visually declares Islam’s presence in the area. In fact, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil built the whole mosque as a statement piece and for many centuries it was the largest mosque in the world. The brick and stucco mosque featured sixteen gates, seventeen aisles in the prayer hall and an area of 38,000 square metres (410,000 sqft). The stucco carvings with floral and geometric designs are particularly representative of Islamic decoration and have been influential in the region. The mosque itself was destroyed in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion of Hulagu Khan and only the minaret and outer wall remain.

Great Ziggurat of Ur

More than 4,000 years old, the Great Ziggurat of Ur (present-day Iraq) was a temple to the moon goddess Nanna, the patron goddess of Ur. As with the Malwiya Tower, the Great Ziggurat of Ur was made from mud bricks that were stacked upwards in the direction of the heavens, and thus the divine.

In our ancient books … [Samarra] means the city of Shem, the son of Noah.

Al-Masudi, Arab Historian and Geographer

When one thinks of the Tower of Babel, the first images that come to mind are the medieval paintings of an immense round structure with levels winding upwards as in the imagined Mesopotamian ziggurats. It is possible that the artistic inspiration for these depictions, however, came instead from the minaret of the Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq. The design for the Malwiya Tower, as the minaret is called, demonstrates some influence from the square ziggurats of Mesopotamia with the exterior stairs and ramp winding around several times on their way up to the top. Constructed of sandstone between 848 and 852, its ascending spiral conical design is not only impressive, it is also unique. The minaret, which gets its name from the Arabic word for ‘snail shell’, is 55 metres (180 ft) high, with stairs winding anticlockwise five times around the spiral. The primary function of a mosque’s minaret is to call Muslims to prayer, but the Malwiya Tower is too high to be used for this – in reality it is merely for show and visually declares Islam’s presence in the area. In fact, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil built the whole mosque as a statement piece and for many centuries it was the largest mosque in the world. The brick and stucco mosque featured sixteen gates, seventeen aisles in the prayer hall and an area of 38,000 square metres (410,000 sqft). The stucco carvings with floral and geometric designs are particularly representative of Islamic decoration and have been influential in the region. The mosque itself was destroyed in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion of Hulagu Khan and only the minaret and outer wall remain.

When one thinks of the Tower of Babel, the first images that come to mind are the medieval paintings of an immense round structure with levels winding upwards as in the imagined Mesopotamian ziggurats. It is possible that the artistic inspiration for these depictions, however, came instead from the minaret of the Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq. The design for the Malwiya Tower, as the minaret is called, demonstrates some influence from the square ziggurats of Mesopotamia with the exterior stairs and ramp winding around several times on their way up to the top. Constructed of sandstone between 848 and 852, its ascending spiral conical design is not only impressive, it is also unique. The minaret, which gets its name from the Arabic word for ‘snail shell’, is 55 metres (180 ft) high, with stairs winding anticlockwise five times around the spiral. The primary function of a mosque’s minaret is to call Muslims to prayer, but the Malwiya Tower is too high to be used for this – in reality it is merely for show and visually declares Islam’s presence in the area. In fact, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil built the whole mosque as a statement piece and for many centuries it was the largest mosque in the world. The brick and stucco mosque featured sixteen gates, seventeen aisles in the prayer hall and an area of 38,000 square metres (410,000 sqft). The stucco carvings with floral and geometric designs are particularly representative of Islamic decoration and have been influential in the region. The mosque itself was destroyed in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion of Hulagu Khan and only the minaret and outer wall remain.

When one thinks of the Tower of Babel, the first images that come to mind are the medieval paintings of an immense round structure with levels winding upwards as in the imagined Mesopotamian ziggurats. It is possible that the artistic inspiration for these depictions, however, came instead from the minaret of the Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq. The design for the Malwiya Tower, as the minaret is called, demonstrates some influence from the square ziggurats of Mesopotamia with the exterior stairs and ramp winding around several times on their way up to the top. Constructed of sandstone between 848 and 852, its ascending spiral conical design is not only impressive, it is also unique. The minaret, which gets its name from the Arabic word for ‘snail shell’, is 55 metres (180 ft) high, with stairs winding anticlockwise five times around the spiral. The primary function of a mosque’s minaret is to call Muslims to prayer, but the Malwiya Tower is too high to be used for this – in reality it is merely for show and visually declares Islam’s presence in the area. In fact, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil built the whole mosque as a statement piece and for many centuries it was the largest mosque in the world. The brick and stucco mosque featured sixteen gates, seventeen aisles in the prayer hall and an area of 38,000 square metres (410,000 sqft). The stucco carvings with floral and geometric designs are particularly representative of Islamic decoration and have been influential in the region. The mosque itself was destroyed in the 13th century during the Mongol invasion of Hulagu Khan and only the minaret and outer wall remain.
Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi
1389–1405 CE  Yasi, Kazakhstan

COMMISSIONED BY  Timur  DIMENSIONS  38.7 m/127 ft high; 813 m/2,667 feet long  MATERIALS  Granite

This unfinished mausoleum in Kazakhstan was commissioned by Timur (also known as Tamerlane), ruler of the Timurid Empire. It was originally started in 1389, but was left unfinished when Timur died in 1405. It replaced a smaller 12th-century mausoleum for Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the Turkic poet and Sufi mystic, and head of Sufism in the region. It marks the beginning of the Timurid architectural style; its experimental and innovative design of vaults, domes and glazed tiles made it the prototype for all Timurid buildings, particularly in the capital of Samarkand, but across the whole empire and beyond. The fact that the mausoleum is unfinished at the entrance, as well as parts of the interior, does not diminish its grandeur, but adds to its uniqueness, and it even gives clues to its construction. The main conic-spherical dome is the largest in Central Asia, although the smaller similar dome is equally as distinctive, with its glazed turquoise ribbed tiles and ornate geometric designs. The thirty-five-roomed building made of fired brick is considered to be one of the greatest Islamic mausoleums. Khoja Ahmed Yasawi is greatly admired for popularizing Sufism throughout the Turkic-speaking world and for founding a theological school that transformed the city into a medieval centre of education. His tomb has become an important pilgrimage site for Muslims, especially those in this part of the world who find it difficult to travel to Mecca for the hajj. However, it is considered blasphemous to equate a pilgrimage to Yasi with one to Mecca.

‘I have reached the age of the prophet [Muhammad], for me this is enough, no need to live beyond the time allotted to the prophet.’
KHOJA AHMED YASAWI

Rumi
Under the Turkish Seljuk leaders who ruled over Asia Minor, Sufi philosophy and poetry flourished not only in the works of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, but also in the writing of arguably Islam’s greatest mystical poet, Rumi. His beautifully transcendental poetry enjoyed fame far beyond Islamic circles, and was heard in churches, synagogues and even Buddhist monasteries.

[Illustration of a mausoleum]

‘I have reached the age of the prophet [Muhammad], for me this is enough, no need to live beyond the time allotted to the prophet.’
KHOJA AHMED YASAWI
If those books are in agreement with the Qur'an, we have no need of them; and if these are opposed to the Qur'an, destroy them.

GREGORY BAR HEBRAEUS, REPORTING THE ALLEGED WORDS OF UMAR IBN AL-KHAN

Alexander the Great founded more than eleven cities in his name, the most famous in Lower Egypt on the Mediterranean coast. This Alexandria was developed by Alexander's general in Egypt, Ptolemy, whose family was responsible for building not only the famous Lighthouse of Alexandria, but also the greatest library and centre of learning in the ancient world, the Museum of Alexandria. The Museum or ‘House of Muses’ (named after the Greek goddesses who inspired poets and thinkers) hosted many of the most famous thinkers of antiquity, including Euclid, Archimedes and Plotinus; however, its library, the largest in the world at the time, was eventually destroyed in fire, an event still considered one of the greatest tragedies in the history of human thought. No one is quite sure who started the fire or fires, although both Julius Caesar and the 6th-century companion of Muhammad and second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khan, are two possibilities. In any event, the eventual decline of Alexandria under Islamic control has signalled for some throughout the centuries, the apparent hostility of Islam to non-Islamic learning. Such notions, however, have less plausibility in the wake of the newly built Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the trilingual – French, English and Arabic – library designed by the Norwegian architectural firm Snøhetta and largely funded by Arab nations. The library’s emphasis on universality and diversity is further emphasized not only by the 120 different types of scripts that decorate its granite walls, but also by housing the world’s only mirror and external backup of the Internet Archive – a collection of knowledge currently exceeding 400 billion pages.

Bibliotheca Alexandrina
2002 CE  Alexandria, Egypt

ARCHITECT Snøhetta  MATERIALS Glass, grey Aswan granite
AREA OF MAIN READING ROOM  70,000 sq m/750,000 sq ft
This Qur’anic manuscript, dating from the period of the Fatimid caliphate, is one of the best examples of delicate Islamic calligraphy and manuscript design. The pages are made from vellum, a parchment made from calf skin, and have been dyed with an indigo or blue colour, which gives this specific Qur’an its rather unique quality and from which it also receives its name: the “Blue Qur’an.” The process of dying a luxury parchment blue or purple originated in the Byzantine Empire and was eventually adopted by Muslims in their own manuscript production. The text of this manuscript is written in Kufic script, one of the oldest forms of Islamic calligraphy, with the words being displayed in golden ink and the spaces between the verses being separated by silver ink dots, which have long since turned black due to oxidization. The Arabic script—which is always written from right-to-left, from top-to-bottom, from the “last page” to the “first page”—is also very difficult to read in this manuscript since the words are distorted in order to fit the text evenly onto one page. While many scholars consider this Qur’an to have originated in Tunisia for use in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, some scholars have argued that specific details in the verse markers indicate that this Qur’an may have been produced in Spain during the Umayyad period (661 – 750 C.E.). Several centuries after its production—during the Ottoman period (1299 – 1923 C.E.)—the manuscript’s approximate 600 original pages were widely dispersed and now reside separately in various museums worldwide.

“The superiority of the Qur’an over the rest of words, is like the superiority of Allah over His creations.”

HADITH NARRATED BY MUSTADRAK AL-WASAIL
Shape-shifter
One of Kamala Khan’s powers is her ability to shape-shift. Some scholars find a similarity in this concept to *tāqiyya* – the notion that a devout Muslim can justly deceive, through words or appearance, a hostile interrogator. If Khan’s power has to be a metaphor, perhaps the quest for identity in a complex cultural landscape is more credible.

“This is not evangelism. It was really important for me to portray Kamala as someone who is struggling with her faith.”

*G Willow Wilson*, *New York Times* Interview

---

**Ms. Marvel #1**

2014 CE USA

**CREATORS** Sana Amanat, G Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona

**MEDIUM** Comic book

The Islamic East has a long tradition of illuminated or painted manuscripts – essentially books containing both the written word and miniature paintings. Many illuminated manuscripts, such as the Persian Shahnameh, tell fantastical stories about mythical creatures and brave heroes. Although the comic book – in particular, the superhero comic book – developed out of a Judaeo-Christian worldview particular to the United States in the 1930s, the superhero is in many ways a familiar figure to those who know Islamic art. However, because of their Judaeo-Christian origins, most superheroes have been written in ways that are comfortable for Jews and Christians, but less so for Muslims, who would not identify with the Christ-type imagery of Superman or the baptized pagan imagery of Marvel’s Thor. This and other forms of Islamic cultural isolationism in the West hit new heights post-9/11, when waves of prejudice against Muslims broke out. It took more than a decade and a long-standing ‘war against terror’ for the United States and the West to start to recognize the problems and injustices their ignorance of Islam were creating, especially in regard to their own Muslim citizenry. One of the fruits of this awakening is Marvel Comics’ introduction of Kamala Khan, the newest ‘Ms. Marvel’. Created by editor Sana Amanat, writer G Willow Wilson and artist Adrian Alphona – two of whom are themselves Muslim Americans – Kamala Khan is, in the words of Amanat, born ‘out of a desire to explore the Muslim–American diaspora from an authentic perspective’. This authenticity is evident in Ms. Marvel #1, making it entirely successful as modern Islamic art.
The First Crusade

Hearing reports—some true and some false—of Muslim hostilities against Christians in the Holy Land and responding to a call for help from the Christian Byzantine Empire, Pope Urban II preached a “holy war” or “crusade” (literally, a mission “taking up of one’s cross”) against Muslims in the Levant.

“... I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy The first Crusade

ORIGIN Iran  
DIMENSIONS 94 x 52 cm / 37.01 x 20.47 in

Although this shroud bears the name of a Saint Josse, a 7th century Catholic hermit from northern France, this delicate piece of fabric was taken to Europe by the French crusader Etienne de Blois after the First Crusade (1096-99 C.E.)—its origin being eastern Iran, where it was produced sometime during the mid-10th century. Depicted on the front of the shroud is a pair of confronted elephants, as well as an Arabic inscription which has been written in Kufic script, one of the oldest forms of Islamic calligraphy. A border of geometric patterns outlines the shroud and depicts repeated smaller images of camels along the edge. The cloth itself is composed of rich silk samite, a type of luxury fabric used mostly during the Middle Ages. As a distinguished type of fabric, samite was typically used for luxury interior decoration and ornamental purposes, but was also used for ecclesiastical and royal robes. The practice and development of samite fabrics originated within the Byzantine Empire of Eastern Europe during the 9th century C.E. and soon after disseminated throughout Europe and into the Islamic world. According to the Kufic script present on the shroud, this particular shroud was woven in Iran for Abu Mansur Bakhtegin, who was known as the “Camel Prince”—the “Prince” part of the name, referring to his title as “general” or “emir,” which is a powerful office, though one subordinate to the “sultan” or “king” (the office of sultan having replaced the office of the “caliph,” which was the supreme Islamic office, held by individuals who can trace their authority back to Muhammad himself).
MARKETING PLANS

• Email to approx. 609 tutors of art history + archaeology in colleges and universities in the UK, detailing all three titles.

• We are also aiming to have this title featured in special marketing to teachers via the OCR exam board – whether this will go ahead is still TBC.