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datum prijema / date of receipt: 10.03.2022.
datum recenzije / review date: 10.04.2022.
datum prihvatanja / date of acceptance: 20.04.2022.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52510/sia.v3i1.35>
UDK: 28:008]:316.722
Original scientific paper – Izvorni naučni rad

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QADAR/ŠINĀ'AT – karakterizacija nekih suštinskih okcidentalno-vesterniziranih pogleda na tradicionalni islamski kreativni izraz

QADAR/ŠINĀ'AT – characterization of some essential Occidental-westernized views on traditional Islamic creative expression

Abstract

The intention of this analysis is to continue the discussion (from the previous issues) of some parts of the history of what is declared or titled „Islamic art”, within the critical and theoretical framework of both Occidental-Western and (some) Muslim perspectives. The analysis and establishments of limits in line with the prevailing authorities will contribute to the vital modalities of *qadar/şināʿat* discourse which are resolutely *Islamic* and in line with their source (ar. *al-marjaʿ* or *al-maṣḍar*). Particular attention is drawn to advocating differences, due to Occidental-westernized academic efforts to ignore the *spirit of unity and the self-reflective Islamic constants* of *qadar/şināʿat* discourses and impose the artificial dichotomy of the sacral and profane, and due to paradigmatic views on the evaluation of the aestheticized achievement of the originator/designer of representation, (i.e. *homo islamicus*) as absolute *western ownership*.

Finally, it should be noted that the Occidental-westernized manner of academic thinking in this area, and of any other theories applied within the borders of index order and taxonomy, including the concept of current globalization, also represent systematic patterns of authority, control and evaluation, and thus exclusion of others.

However, such a form of imposing a linear or cyclic way of interpretation still faces very real challenges typical of writing a global “history of art” and the complete absence of understanding other and different forms of creative expression.

Key words: *islām, Islamic civilization, Islamic culture, art, homo islamicus, qadar/şināʿat, globalization of culture.*

QADAR/ŠINĀ'AT – characterization of some essential Occidental-westernized views on traditional Islamic creative expression

If we take an additional look at Occidental-westernized academic narratives and endeavors, it seems that at one moment everything was done for the codification of the „new spirit” (Ger. *Geist*) and the „new Occidental essence of Islamic creative expression” to become reality. Unfortunately, almost everything that was done focused on ignoring, or disrespecting, the spiritual initiation of the originator/designer¹, i.e. disrespecting *qadar/šinā'at*² as a possible form of the action discourse characteristic of *homo islamicus*'s aesthetic actions/*šinā'at*³. **

Suzanne Marchand (b. 1961), U.S. intellectual and historian of the culture of modern Europe, in her paper on the popularization of the *Orient* (in the meaning of the synthetic concept of the '*Eastern Islamic world*') in German intellectual contexts of the late 19th and early 20th century, clearly showed that there was a strong desire for supervising the organization and characterization of the huge number of artifacts when of new archeological artifacts originating from the Islamic world. Indeed, it is something that the academic community of the time could not accept as an expression of *homo islamicus*'s

¹ The term *originator/designer* of aestheticized representation is here used for persons who are involved in creative aestheticization and are at the same time sincere followers of the Islamic road, i.e. followers of *Qiblah* (Ar. *ahl al-qiblah*). They are persons who are able to control their own destiny and life environment as a result of using certain tools based on their own insights (Ar. *al-ma'rifah*) and beliefs (Ar. *al-i'tiqād*) in the reality of coherent faith (*cohaerentia religare*), fitting them in the institution of a unique history (*historiae autonoma*). The nature of such zeal corresponds to the essence of things, i.e. each *homo islamicus* – *originator/designer*, in his engagement, follows the road prescribed by his essence. In line with this, he lives and works in full harmony with the way of life, behavior and ideal that Prophet Muhammad laid before him, striving to respect and carry out instructions for his own life and the life of his people (Ar. *al-ummāh*).

For the definition and use of the term *homo islamicus*, that is, the *originator/designer* see: Akšamija, A. Mehmed: *An analysis of the use of terminological determinants 'Art of Islam' and 'Islamic Art'*. *Illuminatio/Svjetionik/Almanar*, Al-Wasatiyya Center for Dialogue, Sarajevo, Spring 2020., Volume 1, №. 1, p. 63, fn. 8 and pp. 69, 71, fns. 15, 16, 17 and 18.

² For the reasons and use of the term *qadar/šinā'at*, see *Ibid.*, pp. 39-102.

³ *Actions*, i.e. *act*, as opposed to *doing*, i.e. *do*, implies man's certain spontaneous conscious engagement that has become fully self-aware as opposed to something which was done in reality due to the need to be active, i.e. it is the achievement of the particular character and effect of an anticipated kind of work. There is no action (Ar. *šinā'at*) without the awareness of zeal and *qadar* that the originator/designer of aestheticized representation also considers real in line with the breadth and depth of his insight into the Sovereignty of the Almighty.

** Expressions are marked in red, concepts and words transliterated from Arabic terms according to IJMES methodology to English; they are written in the *italic* of the used font.

Expressions are marked in blue, concepts and words that are transliterated expressions from Persian, Ottoman-Turkish and New-Turkish. In addition, all the expressions used are written in *italic* of the font used.

A shade of blue signifies web addresses of sources.

conscious aestheticized actions/*ṣināʿat*, due to the strongly advocated Occidental beliefs within the given area. For this reason, part of the analyzed Islamic world is either popularized or understood, according to Suzanne, in ... 'a simplified way' in which a coherent vein of interpretation was still given to the entirety of the „new spirit”.⁴

Indeed, it should be noted that the use of the German word *Geist* had previously been useful in European discussions on maintaining the Romanticist spirit at the time of mass production. High European culture doubtlessly had the ambition to offer itself as a „package” of **moral conviction**, which still also concealed the **ideological tool**, despite attempts to prove otherwise.

In this complex matrix, Islamic aestheticized expressions were therefore defined as a „field” and were assigned *their own Occidental Geist*, to at least seemingly imitate a possible **monolithic character**, without respecting the unique Islamic cultural value based on the dimension of *Tawhid* (Ar. *al-tawḥīd*), i.e. self-reflective Islamic constants (Ar. *al-thawābit al-islāmiyyah*). Such a view and attitude contributed to the formulation of an allegedly *encompassing concept* which legitimizes the term „Islamic art” – rooted in the traditional Occidental-Eurocentric patterns of thought concerning both „the Other” and, unfortunately, „Us” as well. It seems that this dialectic of the constructed, though unfounded monolithic creative expression by *homo islamicus* thus provides a clear distinction between what an Occidental-Eurocentric perspective termed as *progressive* and *rational-secular*, and the *regressive world*, which is still in the possible infancy of the observed Islamic aestheticized actions – *ṣināʿat*. It is evident that this thesis attempts to rapidly and powerfully discard essentialist terms such as the lexeme 'Islam' from its own academic jargon and, as a result, constantly search for a 'more subtle', though more distant and less acceptable terminological difference. Still, as Shalem observes, the present *academic anxiety* contributed to the „fractalizing of the unified Islamic field” into a world of subfields.⁵

Indeed, a prominent aspect of more recent fractalizing could be observed after 2000, with an increasing number of publications on modern, contemporary and traditional issues in „Islamic art”, though with a significantly smaller number of academic historical positions that are ensured by modest modern non-Western as well as Muslim attitudes, views and paths, against the permanently active – the Occidental-westernized ones. The separation of the postmodern from the Occidental-westernized modern is based

⁴ Marchand, Suzanne: *Popularizing the Orient in Fin de Siècle Germany*. *Intellectual History Review*, volume 17, no. 2, Taylor & Francis, Oxford, 2002, pp. 175-200.

⁵ See Shalem, Avinoam: *What do we Mean When We Say 'Islamic Art'? A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam*. *Journal of Art Historiography*, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, no 6 (6-AS/1), Birmingham, June 2012, p. 13 and footnote 45;

See also, Rabbat, Nasser: *What's in a Name*. *Artforum* – International Magazine, Soho Press, New York City, January 2012; Lewis, J. Michael: *Islam by Any Other Name*. *New Criterion* – Literary magazine, Foundation for Cultural Review, New York, December 2011; Häntzschel, Jörg: *Nicht jede Glaskaraffe hat religiöse Bedeutung: Umbenannt, umgebaut : Die 'islamische' Kunst im Metropolitan Museum in New York in völlig neuer Präsentation*. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Monday 21 November 2011, p. 12.

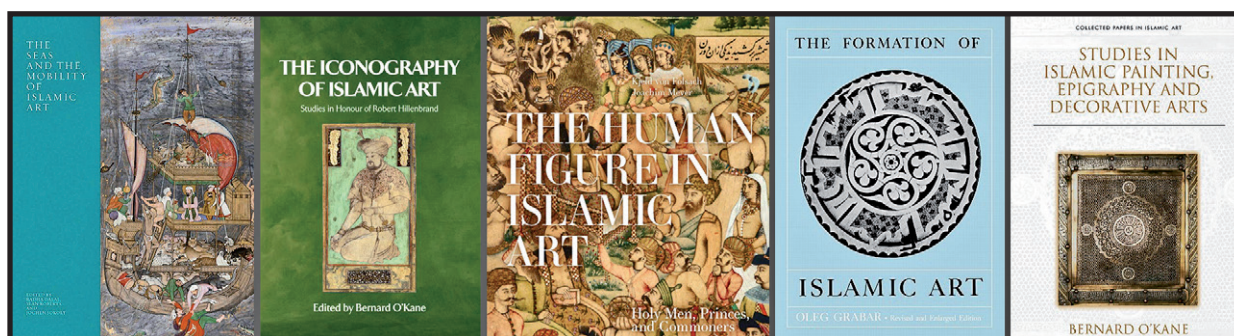


ILLUSTRATION ~ Publications with modern, contemporary and traditional problems in "Islamic art" - examples of permanently active Occidental-Westernized attitudes, views and ways.

on the assumption that the transition to forms inspired by Western models signalize a broader adoption of the existing Western cultural norms, thus associating 'Western-style art' with the triumphant secular modernization. However, as some authors continue to initiate discussion of the multiple and often conflicting relations between, as called in the West, *elite* and *popular* culture, religious and secular expression and the demarcation of tradition (Ar. *al-sunnah*) and heritage (Ar. *al-turāth*), it becomes increasingly obvious that within cultural production, including products of *homo islamicus*'s *qadar/ṣinā'at* recognitive⁶ and cognitive⁷ inner assimilation, a latent need arises to observe them in terms of intercultural negotiation, translation of characteristic terms, and adjustment and possible reinterpretation, but not only as a means of hegemonic domination. However, the dual encounter with widespread generalizations about Islam which, on the one hand, *limit* Islam to origin and orthodoxy and, on the other, attempt to erase the religious essentialization and exclusivity of the implicit word 'Islamic' contributed to the further creation of new forms of opposing views. What „Islamic history of art” means for the West could be used as an understanding of diverse views on *Islamic subjectivities* expressed in modern Islamic societies, and at the same time it could include a discussion of inner and mutually referent discourse of unbreakable religious and cultural meanings, respecting and not ignoring the **religious** (Ar. *al-dīn*). We are convinced that, instead of separating culture (Ar. *al-thaqāfah*) and the inevitably present tradition of believing (Ar. *al-sunnah*) when discussing „Islamic art”, public academic encounters could have the potential to *open the door* to understanding Islam. It would create the essential conceptual backgrounds through which one could understand the multiple subjectivity of the defined and functioning Muslim world, both that of the past and of the present, as well as the conceptions existing within conservative, traditional and modern visual expression.

⁶ Otherwise, the term *recognitive* refers to mental processes aimed at recognizing phenomena and forms, which in terms of experience and reproduction are related to the productive-reflective characterization of the assimilative character of the originator/designer of representation; they can be simple and complex, and also include illustrating, argumentation, research and explanations.

For more, see Akšamija, A. Mehmed: *An analysis of the use of terminological determinants...*, pp. 63-65.

⁷ In this paper, the term *cognitive* refers to all psychic processes which are the basis of *homo islamicus*'s behavior, and which are related to the productive-reflective representation of the collaborative orientation or disposition – a kind of informative association (collaboration) aimed at attaining a particular substantive goal of *qadar/ṣinā'at*.

For more, see *Ibid*.

For the purpose of *peace at home*, it seems necessary to attempt to also provide an answer to the accentuated current issue of the alleged *Muslim reduction of culture to religion*, although it was present in those activities even at the time when such a presence was considered the natural state, which cannot be denied in some cases even today. We do not object to establishing the realistic *complexity of possible ethnic and creative contributions* to cultures under past or present Islamic influence, or of other cultures in relation to their general impact on Islamic culture and civilization, and the creative contribution within the *qadar/ṣināʿat* itself.

Studies by Gustave E. von Grunebaum (d. 1972) on the search for the explanation of the spiritual development of the phenomenon of man and mankind in general prove that Islamic history was a *mirror of the world*. During one of the panel discussions led by von Grunebaum at the University of Chicago (1945), he spoke about Islam as having been established as a **religion, culture and state organization** and about different angles of contact of the features of medieval Islam. He presented his own original view on the Islamic concept and the areas that surround it and views taken from others. Most importantly, he spoke about **Islamic motivational values**. In the end, he concluded that the medieval reduction of religion, culture and social organization led to the progress of both the Islamic world and European civilization:

*'... there is no area of human experience wherein Islam did not participate and thus enrich the heritage of Western traditions. Take for example food, drink, medicines, weapons, armor with their inscriptions; the artistry of manufacturing, trade and navigation, artistic sensitivity and thematic orientations, never mind the huge terminology of astronomy and mathematics. Altogether, the list of Islamic contributions in all these areas could be many pages long, but would never be complete.'*⁸ *The very existence of the Muslim world has done much to mold European history and European civilization. The Crusades were, in many ways, the greatest and most consequential adventure on which medieval man embarked. Muslim narrative and poetical imagery, Muslim eschatology and the boldness of Muslim mysticism, all have left their traces on the medieval West. Without doubt, the greatest theologian and greatest poet of the European Middle Ages are deeply indebted to Islam for inspiration as well as material.'*⁹

We wonder what could be bad in the *homogenization* of manifest forms in general within any civilizational structure, even within *qadar/ṣināʿat* itself compared to the heterogenization of cultural practices through the temporal dimension of empirical things – time or *zēmān* (Ar. *al-zamān*) and space (Ar. *al-makān*), if the roots of uniform characters are incorporated with the traditional understanding of creativity, in which

⁸ Cf., 'Isa, Ahmad Muhammad: *Islamic Art Terms: Lexicon, Explained and Illustrated = Muṣṭalaḥāt al-fann al-Islāmī*. Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, Istanbul, 1994; *Dictionnaire des arts de l'islam* (ed. Roux, Jean-Paul). Réunion des musées nationaux: Fayard, Paris, 2007; Bloom, M. Jonathan and Blair, S. Sheila: *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic art and architecture*. Oxford University Press, Oxford: New York, 2009.

⁹ Grunebaum, Gustave Edmund von: *Medieval Islam : A Study In Cultural Orientation*. University of Chicago Press, 5th Impression edition, Chicago, 1962, p. 342. The first edition of the work was published in 1946.

homines islamici persist? It is wrong to think that they, together with other *Muslims*, endeavor to stop time; on the contrary, within their own orientation, without coercion or any suggestive influence, they only attempt to celebrate the Almighty at any given time. Such an attitude does not justify the existence of a possible *temporal anachronism*; for *homo islamicus*, the mutual relationship between the rigid, i.e. invariable, and the variable has been a parallelism between the contradictory (Ar. *al-ta'āruḍ al-lafẓī*) and the incompatible (Ar. *ghayru mutawāfiq*).¹⁰

Despite the above description, some uninventive Occidental-westernized alternatives propose that the coinage „Islamic art” be removed from any contemporary cultural context and be placed in the historical

Islamic motivational values enriched by the legacy of Western traditions.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Ibn al-Haytham, Abu 'Ali al-Hasan (Alhazen) – *Opticae thesaurus, Kitab tanqih al-manazir li dhawi al-absar wa'l-basair* / 'The Book of Correction of Optics for those who have Sight and Mind' (autograph copy, 1309) and *Kitab al-Manazir* (latine).

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Ibn al-Haytham, Abu 'Ali al-Hasan (Alhazen) – sinonim za optiku, *Kitab Tanqih al-Manazir li dhawi al-absar wa'l-basair* / 'Knjiga ispravljanja optike za one koji imaju vid i um' (kopija s autogramom, 1309.) i *Kitab al-Manazir* (latinski).

¹⁰ *Homo islamicus's* tolerance and his open attitude toward the possibility of imported form or expression, and his ability to assimilate can probably create the wrong impression that he lacks an innovative solution. However, it should be noted that even the originality of aestheticized actions /*sin'at* can be manifested in his ability to formally adjust to such imported forms, to use them for his own needs. In fact, he again builds a new aestheticized manifestation, i.e. a form which he qualified with his unique character within self-reflective Islamic constants and, at the same time, rejected all unadjustable elements.

dynastic context; a collision with the aesthetic romanticization of political upheaval against dictatorship with a long history of Western support. One such view permanently repeats the opposition between the East and the West and explains one of the existent academic views of such a situation:

*'... to grasp Islamic aesthetics, Westerners must upend their sense of ornamentation as a **minor art**... Certain ambient pleasures merge with sanctity in **Muslim styles**'* (emphases by the author), and thus, by authoritative self-confirmation the essential distance between the East and the West seems even more prominent. Therefore, the same authority expresses the opinion that „Islamic art“ offers *'adventures in difference'* which leads to the awakening of *'latter-day scion(s) of the Renaissance wedding of Greek and Roman with Judeo-Christian traditions'*.¹¹

The described *academic anxiety* has also given birth to other terms such as **islamicate**,¹² and has pressed Eurocentric art historians to 'break' the single field of 'Islam' into possible subfields, by means of a „new“ method. Rationale for such a form of 'contribution' has allegedly been woven by means of an *original term* that should describe cultural manifestations resulting from the Arabic and Persian written tradition. In the efforts to find a possible justification of such a procedure, it was pointed out that the use of this term does not pertain directly to the *Islamic religion* but rather to the *social and cultural complex which was historically associated with Islam and Muslims, even when what was found appeared among non-Muslims*,¹³ though, in any case, the religious component is excluded. Despite the increased attention to the so-called regional forms and practices in studying „Islamic art“, a general consensus seems to have

¹¹ See Schjeldahl, Peter: *Old and New: The reopening of the Islamic wing at the Met*. Weekly The New Yorker, New York, US, 7.11.2011, pp. 88-89.

¹² There are suggestions that Marshall Hodgson lays claim to launching this concept in the introduction to his history, *The Venture of Islam*. Volume 1: *The Classical Age of Islam*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

For example, Hodgson claimed that there are different *artistic, architectural and literary styles* indicative of the alleged culture *Islamicate*. He also asserted that regardless of where these *aesthetic styles* are found, this term would allow their obvious identification, i.e. that they originate not from Islamic but rather from **Islamicated** cultural complexes, even when they can be identified among Muslims or non-Muslims.

It should be noted that *style* (Lat. *stilus* from Gr. *stylos* — writing implement) is a way of expression, i.e. individuality, that is manifested in manuscripts and works by a person, „school of art“, trend or „artistic movement“ (for which it is a synonym), as well as an „artistic age“, in the sense of their differentiation in terms of content and history. This was the case with Renaissance, Gothic, Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassicism, Cubism, Fauvism, Expressionism, Orphism and Suprematism, while within „Islamic art“ such signification is neither generally known nor applicable. Thus, to speak about style, in any meaning, within the modalities of *qadar/ṣinā'at* discourse is not justified; it is absurd.

Besides, attributes such as *classical, medieval, contemporary etc. 'art'*, according to the comparative opinion of leading Moroccan historian and expert in political theory Abdullah al-Urvī (Laroui), are meaningless and unnecessary. There is no difference between „classical Islamic art“ and „medieval Islamic art“ and Islam itself, nor (any difference) between 'art' with no attributes of temporal meaning.

Laroui, Abdullah: *Pour une méthodologie des études islamiques: l'Islam au miroir de Gustave von Grunebaum*; in: *Diogenes*, no. XXXVIII, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1973, pp. 30-41.

been achieved that diverse visual cultures grouped by adopting cultural forms created in the Muslim world, independent of religious identities, still have the same affiliation in many ways. Such manifestation is particularly visible within Occidental academism, which deals with the possible inter-cultural reception of '*artistic forms and practices*' that appeared in the Muslim civilization. The challenge is, thus, how to explain transregional and transtemporal aspects of '*artistic production*' in Muslim countries, taking into account and highlighting the historical and regional differences. We believe that a possible approach to describing cultural manifestations resulting from Islamic tradition (Ar. *al-sunnah*) could even be justified, under the condition of not ignoring or bypassing the foundation of self-reflective Islamic constants (Ar. *al-thawābit al-islāmiyyah*)¹⁴. Unfortunately, for many Occidental-westernized academic structures the answer to this question lies only in the need for recognizing a dialectic between transregional and regional, as well as between diachronic and synchronic '*artistic forms*' and practices, and the productive tension which has nothing to do with the foundation of self-reflective Islamic constants. Dealing with the explanation of geographic and historical factography illuminates the recognized persistence of certain '*artistic forms*' without their true foundation and characterization of cultural practice through time and space. Indeed, one could claim that the need for arbitration processes between the local and trans-local is the already lived experience and the ideal of such a structured „newcomer Islamic community” attempting a global reach, with the allegedly consistent characteristics of different Muslim cultures. Unless such Occidental-westernized attempts conceive a truly original, built-on alternative which will take into account the necessary characterization and explanations, we are convinced that such a form of adopting cultural forms created in the Muslim world will still have to be ignored, despite the allegedly established general consensus. But in fact, giving way to „Islamic art” as the Occidental-westernized cultural intermediary in the international arena seems inevitable, at least for the Occidental-westernized space.

Still, there remains an open possibility that challenging regional forms and practices by the grouped adoption of cultural forms created in the Muslim world actually found its basic grounds in the trilingual monograph published in Istanbul (in Ottoman-Turkish, French and German) on the occasion of the *World Exhibition in Vienna* held in 1873¹⁵, or in the short-lived bilingual journal in French and Ottoman Turkish titled *Le Miroir de l'art Musulman* („The Mirror of Muslim Art”) or, with a somewhat different title in Ottoman-Turkish *Mir'ât-i şanâyî-î Islāmīye* („The Mirror of Islamic Art”).¹⁶ Indeed, the use of the adjectives '*Islamic*'

¹⁴ Among others, and according to Terry Allen, any conscious *homo islamicus* within the *qadar/şinā'at* discourse modality respects self-reflexive discourses within the traditional Islamic understanding.

Cf., Allen, Terry: *Five Essays on Islamic Art*. Solipsist Press, Sebastopol 1988., p. 30.

¹⁵ In the exhibition in Vienna of 1873, see the treatise Bozdoğan, Sibel and Necipoğlu, Gülru: *Entangled Discourses: Scrutinizing Orientalist and Nationalist Legacies in the Architectural Historiography of the 'Lands of Rum'*; in: Bozdoğan, S. and Necipoğlu, G. (ed.): *Historiography and Ideology: Architectural Heritage of the 'Lands of Rum'*. Muqarnas, An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World, volume 24, pp. 1–6, Brill, Leiden, 2007. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Heghnar_Watenpaugh/publication/315622631_AN_UNEASY_HISTORIOGRAPHY_THE_LEGACY_OF_OTTOMAN_ARCHITECTURE_IN_THE_FORMER_ARAB_PROVINCES/links/5a3a8cb1a6fdcc3d07afa6a4/AN-UNEASY-HISTORIOGRAPHY-THE-LEGACY-OF-OTTOMAN-ARCHITECTURE-IN-THE-FORMER-ARAB-PROVINCES.pdf. Accessed on: 20.2.2016.

¹⁶ Türker, Deniz: *Hakky-Bey and His Journal Le Miroir de l'art musulman, or, Mir'ât-i şanâyî-î Islāmīye* (1898). Muqarnas, An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World, volume 31, no. 1, Brill, Leiden 2014, pp. 277–306. Available at: <https://archnet.org/>

and '**Muslim**' in both cases of presenting the entirety of the aestheticization of diverse visual cultures with their varied fusions of transregional and regional elements, which resulted from the Ottoman Sultanate's laying claim to the universal *caliphate* (Ar. *al-khilāfah*), can generally further complicate the state of the assumption that the term *islamicate* was only the invention of European Orientalists.

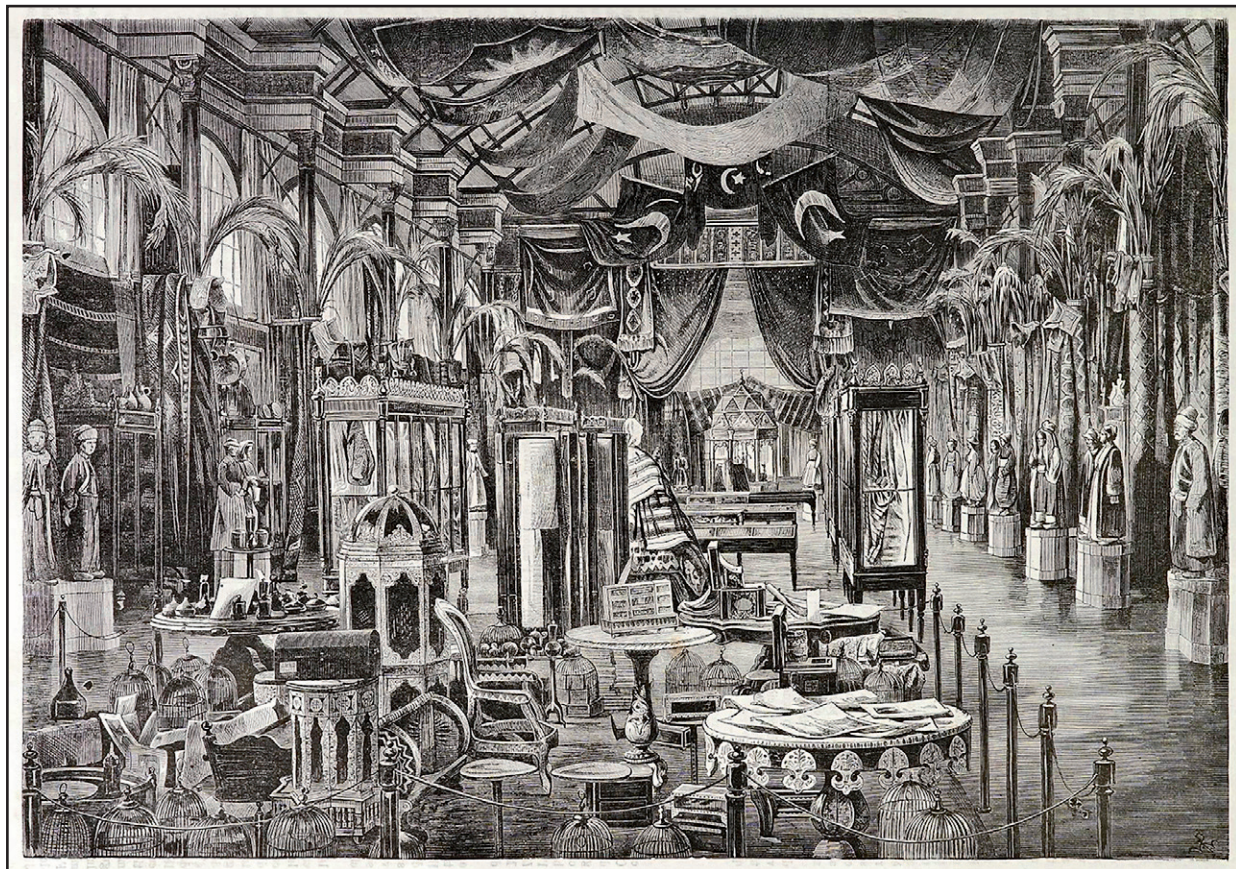


ILLUSTRATION ~ Part of the interior of the Ottoman pavilion at the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Dio interijera osmanskog paviljona na Svjetskoj izložbi u Beču 1873. godine.

However, discussions on the new name of the *Gallery of Islamic Art* as a separate wing of the Metropolitan Museum in New York (MET) are the best evidence and support for some authors and their (Muslim) supporters, who selflessly adopted this kind of substitution when explaining Islamic phenomena (Ar. *al-zawāhir al-islāmiyyah*) of this area.¹⁷ Actually, it was favoring **beauty** over **meaning** and blurring

[publications/14146](#). Accessed on: 22.2.2016.

¹⁷ Actually, instead of the previous name „Gallery of Islamic Art – MET”, the official name of the rearranged area was changed to *The Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia*. According to Nasser Rabbat, “The curators justified such an act of the change saying that it was done to ... convey the variousness of Islamic art and its geographically distinct expressions, as well as to deemphasize the religious identity associated with the old name, since Islamic art, like any other art, has many nonreligious manifestations. He goes on to say that... This rationale seems sound enough and resonates with the prevalent

the presence of **faith** and **believing** in the attempt to inaugurate the non-understanding of Islam as a unitary frame, imposing a form of evaluation by means of the unfounded possibility of a shared Judeo-Christian-Graeco-Roman heritage;¹⁸ the introduction of *regionalism* through establishing a new name for the department, and using **pleasure** as a stage-set for the *viewer's Oriental fantasy*. Among other things, but for this reason as well, Wendy Shaw, a professor of the *History of Art of Islamic Cultures* at *Freie Universität* (The Free University) in Berlin insists on repeating the very tropes that caused the elimination of the term '**Islam**' from the title of the gallery, which was supposedly created under the cover of '*necessary improvement of the meaning*'.¹⁹ However, it seems to us that it was done rather under the cover of geopolitics and invisible sponsorship. The content of the „Islamic art” under the new title: „The Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia” – (ALTICALSA), unfortunately does not become a means for understanding another culture. This gesture reaffirms a form of cultural narcissism in which the collective „self”, replete with a complex heritage, is set against the simplified alterity in which it takes its *pleasure* – and in which the possibility of a shared Judeo-Christian-Graeco-Roman heritage is necessarily nowhere to be found.

Regardless of the validity of the previously described motivations, the shift to a more fragmented regional taxonomy leads to the question: what is the thread that permeates the '*art*' of all these regions, one that could tie or integrate them or, if there is no coexistence between them, no dialogue, system of values, discourse, worldview, why does '*art*' created in all these *diverse regions* have a separate gallery space, and why are all of them, within this and such a space, presented together? Besides respect for the character of a possible answer, we would like to say that such an act could be considered as a return to

unease with the term *Islamic art*, which many scholars find both limited and limiting – although no other academic or cultural institution has taken such a bold step to jettison the phrase entirely.

Rabbat, Nasser: *The New Islamic Art Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. *Artforum* International Magazine, New York, January 2012, pp. 75-78. Available at: <https://www.artforum.com/print/201201/the-new-islamic-art-galleries-at-the-metropolitan-museum-of-art-29813>. Accessed on: 4.3.2014.

See also, Carey, Moya and Graves, S. Margaret: *Introduction: the historiography of Islamic art and architecture*. *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 6 June 2012, p. 3, where they point out that the concept 'Islamic art' definitely reaches apotheosis in the renaming.

Metropolitan Museum to Open Renovated Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia. Opened: November 1, 2011. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/press/exhibitions/2011/renovated-galleries-for-the-art-of-the-arab-lands-turkey-iran-central-asia-and-later-south-asia>. Accessed on: 4.3.2014.

¹⁸ The Islamic vision of the world as both a spiritual and civilizational expression, with its almost fifteen centuries-long processes of wondrous intertwining and permeation of spiritual-religious and socio-political heritage, remained a **spiritual vision** throughout the Middle Ages. Naturally, in the nature of things, it was not and could not exist in the primordial, i.e. unburdened, condition as part of the eastern world. During the passage of time and contact with other cultures it assumes other mental impacts. Although it developed and proceeded under the pressure of different influences, this worldview is, as far as possible, still **distinct**, defined by its own natural-social frameworks and constituted in an original way. Indeed, there have been epochs in the evolution of this worldview when some imported influences (e.g. elements of the Ancient Age) were more or less widespread; however, they still disappeared sooner or later in the continuity of the original Islamic vision of the world, leaving in it a smaller or greater trace but never radically threatening its essential determinants, and therefore its spiritual nature still remained dominant. It should also be noted that some elements of the Judeo-Christian-Graeco-Roman heritage remained either marginalized, external, at the information level, or else were '*sifted*' and disappeared in the endless breadth and flow of Islamic thinking.

¹⁹ Shaw, M. K. Wendy: *The Islam in Islamic art history*. *Journal of Art Historiography*, Glasgow Iss. 6, (Jun 2012), p. 12.

past epochs in the history of the field, when terms such as „Arabic” and „Persian art” preceded the more universal categories of „Muhammadan” or „Islamic art”. We believe that it still spurred the historical unease with the religious implications of ‘Islam’ in „Islamic art”. It seems that Islam, presented through the form of „Islamic art” under the changed name of the galleries, which instead of the necessary view towards the East looks to the West, could best be understood as a predetermined void against which the westernized West can reaffirm its own **unitary identity**. In simple terms, it is an increasing trend toward interpreting the phenomenon of materiality in terms of historical contextualization, rather than primarily in terms of formal properties.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Highlights of the collection include: *the Damascus Room* in Metropolitan Museum. Originally constructed in between 1119 and 1707, this is a residential winter reception chamber, typical of the Ottoman Empire.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Posebnosti kolekcije uključuje *sobu u Damasku* u Metropolitan muzeju. Prvobitno izgrađena između 1119. i 1707. godine, ovo je rezidencijalna zimska prijemna soba, tipična za Osmansko carstvo.



ILLUSTRATION – Na'im al-Din Ahmad: *Shahnama* (*Book of kings*) by Firdawsi (detail). Safavid period, 1518, Iran, Shiraz.
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, acc. num. S1986.58.1.

The obvious aesthetic canonized connections of „Islamic art” across broad temporal and spatial locations and regions exclusively based on the materiality of cultural exchange (without the inevitably needed hermeneutical keys) evidently decrease the complexity of the network of all other forms of culture they served and belonged to and allowed the inauguration and development of the concept of a classical Muslim world, and thus the modalities of the *qadar/şināʿat* discourse. Through an unacceptable epistemological structure, within the value of Islam evidently historically presented in this way, which was built and defined according to the principles of its own Western historiography, the field of „Islamic art” both immorally and absurdly refracted Islam itself through a **secular point of view**.

Besides, the endeavor to present „Islamic cultures”, rather than a **unitary Islamic culture**, as existing in their own time (or even, according to a few, beyond time as well) is one of the main factors that motivated the traditional segregation of „Islamic art” by contemporary post-medieval epochs in studies of the *‘global history of art’*. This denial of equivalence can clearly be seen in studies of „world art”, in omitting Islamic aestheticized works created in the 18th or early 19th century, as well as in anachronous medievalization of masterpieces of the early modern period. Therefore, the latter works are often included in chapters on the Middle Ages, instead of being provided with the chronology to which they belong.²⁰

Unlike this kind of discourse, the Occidental-westernized view traditionally treats late Antiquity and the Middle Ages as *equal* in the family relationship with the Western understanding of tradition (Byzantium, Romanesque and Gothic). It seems that the integration of the early centuries of „Islamic art” in the Eurocentric historiographic thick-book forms of the global „history of art” was nevertheless a certain problem *behind the scenes*. Interestingly, such a problem is also incorporated in the dubious viewpoint of the 19th century that the classical Mediterranean „artistic heritage”, the so-called common to early and medieval „Islamic art” became the exclusive reservation of Europe after the Renaissance. Evidently, the root of the problem *behind the scenes* is the traditional conceptualization of Renaissance humanism as a mark of the great cultural breakup between Christian Europe and its Islamic neighbors, a unique phenomenon *sui generis* which ignored the East to direct modernity only toward the West. Still, recently, due to the revisionist approaches by European scholars who attempt to „redirect” the Renaissance between the East and the West, the former academic procedure was challenged.²¹ Although one can no

²⁰ Different criteria for the schemes of periodization in Occidental-westernized history of art, including political geographic, cultural and artistic, are discussed in the journal *Perspective: La revue de l'INHA* of 2008. The chronology of „Islamic art”, with its problematic omission of the modern period, is discussed in this part of the journal.

See Volait, Mercedes: *L'art islamique et la problème de périodisation*; in: the journal *Perspective: La revue de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA)*, no. 4, Paris, 2008, pp. 783-786. Available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/perspective/2726>. Accessed on 20.1.2020.

²¹ Alexander Nagel uses a Renaissance painting by Andrea Mantegna which depicts the adoration of the Magi to show that it is possible to inform our knowledge of the terms „Antiquity” and the „East”. What was antiquity in this period and how was *eastern* understood? He claims that tracing these two terms not only refines what „Renaissance” might mean but also illuminates how the designation „Europe” came into being, that is, how a geographical destination was transfigured into a cultural identity.

See Nagel, Alexander: *Some Discoveries of 1492 : Eastern Antiquities and Renaissance Europe* (Volume 17 of Gerson Lectures).

longer doubt the participation of the Islamic world in the European „Renaissance“, global resonances of „Islamic art“ beyond its relationship with Europe before and after 1250 should be studied in more detail. Indeed, case studies are in progress and promise to broaden world horizons even beyond its traditional Eurocentric focus.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Andrea Mantegna, *Adoration of the Magi* (detail), 1460, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Mantegna's painting is set in **antiquity**. Yet nothing shown in the painting can be strictly identified as an antiquity. The standing Magi wear turbans familiar from contemporary Ottoman dress. The Marquis of Mantua Francesco Gonzaga, Mantegna's patron, owned such a turban, given to him by the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II. Many Italian artists used pseudo-Arabic script in their paintings of holy figures, but here Mantegna seems to be emulating specifically Syriac scripts comparable to those found in biblical manuscripts. The eldest king, finally, proffers a porcelain cup of a type produced in fifteenth-century China. Porcelain was a relatively recent invention and just beginning to reach western collections, yet here it is in the hands of the biblical Magus. Thus we have a scene set in antiquity but filled with items from much later centuries, produced in locales stretching from China to the Mediterranean.

A similar issue pertained to the theorizing of Islam as a civilization which is „intermediated“, imprisoned in the „Middle Ages“ between classical Antiquity and its „re-emergence“ thanks to the early definition of modern European humanists. It leaves „Islamic art“ (if not Islamic culture in general as well) permanently

The Gerson Lectures Foundation, Groningen, 2013. Available at: <https://books.ugp.rug.nl/index.php/ugp/catalog/view/18/17/82-1>. Accessed on 26.12.2018.

While searching abroad for confirmation of who *they* are and why they were defined as „civilized“, Europeans came across the rearview of what is nowadays called the *East*, with particular attention to the powerful Ottoman Empire. Portable artefacts provided a form of powerful tools for studying cultural currents between East and West. Ultimately, their study offers a radical and broad rethinking of Renaissance art.

See Jardine, Lisa, and Brotton, Jerry: *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West*. Reaktion Books, London, 2005.

An example where authors discuss what can too often seem as a resolved certainty, such as the difference between East and West, the unchanging conflict between Islam and Christianity and the „rebirth“ of European civilization from its roots in ancient Greece and imperial Rome.

See MacLean, Gerald (ed.): *Re-Orienting the Renaissance : Cultural Exchanges with the East*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, England, 2005.

Historian Deborah Howard claims that many Venetians gained an insight into Islamic culture through personal contact with their Muslim trade partners. Based on extensive multidisciplinary studies, she researches the mechanisms that governed the exchange of visual culture through ideological borders before the age of the printing press.

See Howard, Deborah: *Venice and the East : The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000.

fixed and completely incapable of overcoming the already recognized creative zenith in the Middle Ages. The example of institutionalizing Islamic studies in Germany was one of the progressive forms of integrating Islam into Europe, though only as a possible „middle link” in the global history.²² Nevertheless, it was a form of promising significance where Renaissance humanism was reaffirmed as a permanent cultural breakup between Western Europe and the Islamic world.²³ Such a perspective is still present in the spaces and among the collections of the *Pergamon Museum* in Berlin.²⁴ The so-called *Islamic wing* of the museum physically occupies an intermediary position between ancient archaeology and the late antique to medieval collections, which reach a climax in the modern age.²⁵ It can be concluded that the idea of the so-called self-determination of the fields of „Islamic art” affiliation as ‘*medieval art*’ consequently favors formative origin over the processes of evident historical development.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Aleppo Room.
© Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin –
Photo: Georg Niedermeiser.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Soba u Alepu.
© Muzej islamske umjetnosti u Berlinu –
Foto: Georg Niedermeiser.

²² One of the leading advocates of this position was Carl Heinrich Becker (d. 1933), an Orientalist who institutionalized Islamic studies in Germany at the time, and founded the still influential journal *Der Islam*. In his hierarchical order of civilizations, Becker positioned Islam below Europe and above Africa, assigning it a central position in his notion of world history; i.e. Islam was assigned a position of intermediary between East and West.

²³ For more details on Becker's theory of civilizations, see Haridi, Alexander: *Das Paradigma der 'islamischen Zivilisation' – oder die Begründung der deutschen Islamwissenschaft durch Carl Heinrich Becker (1876-1933) : eine wissenschaftsgeschliche Untersuchung*. Ergon, Würzburg, 2005. Available at: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/214034699?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>. Accessed on 23.5.2016.

²⁴ Actually, by moving the collection of the museum of Kaiser Friedrich (now the Bode Museum), founded in 1904, to the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, opened by a ceremony in 1932, the newly formed entirety of the medieval Islamic collection was founded on such a position.

²⁵ On Becker and the Pergamon Museum, see: Necipoğlu, Gülru: *The Concept of Islamic Art : Inherited Discourses and New Approaches*; in: Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber and Gerhard Wolf (ed.): *Islamic Art and the Museum*. Saqi, London, 2012, pp. 17-23. Available at: <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/necipoglugdoc.pdf>. Accessed on 10.10.2018.

The previously described forms of approach led to the withering away of the undoubtedly grounded causal matrix of works of „Islamic art” so as to prevent the discovery of the corresponding expression of intellectual abilities of a sincere process of belief by many, even the anonymously present originators/designers of aestheticized representation through the existent forms of *qadar/šināʿat*. This denial of religious contexts can be argued to produce an essential de-intellectualization of historic Islamic culture (Ar. *al-thaqāfah al-islāmiyyah*). Not only does this model of discourse support Western hegemonic norms of understanding other visual cultural traditions through denatured aestheticized tropes that are set in opposition to religion as a *static realm* allegedly absent of *creativity*. As claimed by Wendy Shaw, Islam has thus been reduced to a ‘*static regression*’ to its origins,²⁶ since all methods are used to downplay the cultural tradition that emerged after attempts to integrate Classical Greek philosophy into Islamic culture; it is forgotten that Islamic civilization and culture was the most progressive world civilization for several centuries, and that it was this very driving spirit that helped the West to overcome its thousand-year long backwardness. With a humane gesture, Muslims do not warn the West that their developmental foundation of prosperity was nonetheless established thanks to the transferred and integrated knowledge and artistry of Islamic civilization and culture. Consequently, raising awareness of *religiosity* as informing the consumer position within which Islam deals with visual culture is imposed by calling up the primordial Muslim voice from the past: the voice of those who may have commissioned, made or used works based on the corresponding modalities of *qadar/šināʿat* discourse, but whose interpretative world became underground through practices of western history of ‘art’ and current understandings.

Besides, challenging the appropriate modality of *qadar/šināʿat* discourse as an atemporal category (Ar. *al-sarmad*) is actually an act which stands against the essentialization of Islam, threatening the very opposition between East and West which underpins so many contemporary stalemates and conflicts. Rather than engaging with the fundamental complexities of Islam, which Wendy Shaw insists on,²⁷ the new, even more unwieldy ‘*regionalist labels*’ revert to the original geographic and ethnic terms. In such a situation, the ‘art’ of Muslim countries was categorized in the late 19th century, when Occidentally-oriented art historians first began to collect and reflect on the material culture of the East under the rubric of ‘art’.²⁸ A separate form of characterization is present in treating Islam as a ‘false’ and ‘*degenerate religion*’, while the issue of the originator/designer’s visual representation as constructed in the early Islamic historiography remains a point of contention within academic conceptions. Of course, the problem is not that such a misconception was not corrected at the very beginning of its active

²⁶ Volait, Mercedes: *L’art islamique et la problématique...*, pp. 783-786.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁸ Blair, S. Sheila and Bloom, M. Jonathan: *The Mirage of Islamic Art : Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field*. The Art Bulletin, College Art Association, New York, volume 85, no. 1, March 2003, p. 153.

signification,²⁹ but that perennial resuscitation of the issue reflects an ongoing misalignment between Occidental-westernized assumptions about the modalities of *qadar/şināʿat* discourse and practices developed within the Islamic worldview.

Not to leave open the question as to what caused the first shift from **regional** to **religious terminology**, and what meanings this shifting terminology engendered, we will present Wendy Shaw's view on how examining the discipline historiographically can enable us to re-evaluate contemporary approaches to themes of Islam within „Islamic art” history.³⁰

When speaking about how categorization of the term **‘art’** for the material culture of Muslim countries was conducted, it should be noted that the first term used, „**Muhammadan art**”³¹ was current in Europe as early as in 1910. It can be assumed that it actually served as a corrective for introducing the term „**Fine Islamic Arts**” (Ott.-Tur. *Sanāyi-i Neffse-i İslāmi*), which had been employed as early as in 1889 in the founding documents of the *Ottoman Imperial Museum* (Tur. *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi*), before the label „**Islamic art**” was used in Europe.³² One could also encounter the frequent use of the term **‘Mussulman’** at exhibitions of the modalities of *qadar/şināʿat* discourse in France and Algeria between 1893 and 1907. Instead of the already active „Oriental” or regional terms, it underscored French imperial

²⁹ On the described misconceptions, see Arnold, Thomas: *Painting in Islam : A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1928. (reprint New York: Dover, 1965); Creswell, Keppel Archibald Cameron: *The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam*. *Journal Ars Islamica*, University of Michigan Press, volume 11/12, 1946, pp. 159-166. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4515631?seq=1>. Accessed on 22.3.2015.

³⁰ Shaw, M. K. Wendy: *The Islam in Islamic Art History ...*, p. 13.

³¹ In Munich in 1910, the exhibition *Die Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst* („Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art”) was held, and it played a crucial role in introducing and cementing the secular categorization of the field, and the scope of objects, regions and interests which this designated. Curators promoted an 'artistic-reverential' attitude towards the exhibited works, which were characterized with limiting textual information as *art of marketplace crafts and decadent ornamentalism*. The aestheticization of the objects was presented as a rarity by further exoticizing their place of origin as mysterious and unknown sources for objects that, in the museum context, functioned as 'pure craft art', tamed from their distant origins. Not only did the aesthetic emphasis of the exhibition coincide with a contemporary interest in „Islamic art” as a source for design, but it also served to justify its presence in a Western context in which the 'object faces its beholder as pure exhibit'.

Still, such a mode of presentation was a shift from the previous quasi-ethnography to one that attracts the formal qualities of a work. It was this way of avoiding issues of context and iconography that allowed the selective 'elevation' of Islamic artefacts, placing them side by side with canonic works of Occidental-westernized modernism on the reciprocity of formalism.

Cf., Troelenberg, Eva-Maria: *Framing the Artwork : Munich 1910 and the Image of Islamic Art*; in: Andrea Lerner and Avinoam Shalem (ed.), *Islamic History and Civilization : After One Hundred Years*, Brill, Leiden: Bosnon, 2010, p. 38;

See also, Kröger, Jens: *The 1910 Exhibition 'Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst' : Its Protagonists and its Consequences for the Display of Islamic Art in Berlin*; in: Andrea Lerner i Avinoam Shalem (ed.), *After One Hundred Years : The 1910 Exhibition 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst' Reconsidered*, Leiden : Brill, 2010, p. 67.

³² Cezar, Mustafa: *Sanatta Batiya Açilis ve Osman Hamdi*. Erol Kerim Aksoy, endowment for culture, education, sports and health, Istanbul, 1995, p. 548.

Among many museums developed by the government of the late Ottoman Empire, those that were involved with „Islamic art” reflected the construction of nationalistic visions that responded to the slow dispersal of the empire and heralded Turkish nationalistic responses to its religious past. While, on the one hand, exhibits designated as *Islamic* rather than *Ottoman*, transformed religion into belonging to the empire, rather than to Arabs, on the other hand the exhibited, decontextualized objects were shown out of their given context and in this way opened the way to a secularized vision of religious identity. Still, it can be claimed that the collection of „Islamic art” in the *Imperial Museum* was the first to directly show a contemporary identity.

ambition to lead in the understanding of Islam and the *development of a properly modern, civilized, and colonial Muslim world*.³³ However, the advent of the scientific study of the so-called „art of the Islamic world”, as has already been said, dates to the late 19th century, bringing together the older discipline „philological Orientalism” with the neophyte discipline of „European art history”. The initiators included Henri-Michel Lavoix, keeper of coins and medals in the Louvre, who still proposed a central form of contradiction between Islam and the Occidental understanding of art.³⁴



ILLUSTRATION ~ The catalog *Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art* (*Die Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst*, Munich 1910) whose key role was in introducing and cementing the secular categorization of "Islamic art".

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Katalog *Majstorska djela muhamedanske umjetnosti* (*Die Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst*, Minhen 1910.) čija je ključna uloga bila u uvođenju i cementiranju sekularne kategorizacije „islamske umjetnosti“.

³³ Stephen Vernoit (ed.): *Discovering Islamic Art : Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850-1950*. I.B. Tauris, London, 2000, p. 20.

³⁴ Lavoix, Henri: *Les arts musulmans : de l'emploi des figure*. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, J. Baer, Paris, August-November 1875, p. 100; See also, Lavoix, Henri: *Les arts musulmans : de l'ornementation arabe dans les œuvres des maîtres italiens*. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*: la doyenne des revues d'art, Paris, 1877, pp. 15-29. Available at: https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/gba1877_2/0021. Accessed on 19.4.2015.



ILLUSTRATION – A page of the Dastan-i Amir Hamza – *Hamzanama*. Mughal (detail), c. 1567-1582.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, acc. num. AS12-1978.

Unfortunately, through the newly established characterization in Western history of art and broader Christian discourse of the time, Islam and the modalities of *qadar/ṣināʿat* discourse became a historical civilizational category which differed from any approach of possible interpretation of religion and aestheticized activity – ‘art’. In fact, it was proposed that because Islam fails to visualize theological objects such as *deity* in the way understood through the Christian aspect (*deus* from Latin word *deitas*), and because it was claimed that Islam *inherently opposes* the visual representation of any character, it was believed that there were necessary assumptions for so-called „**universal Islam and its art**” – viewed through the lens of Western thinking and understanding of the time. Actually, the so-called *historical criticism* was no longer guided by an issue or a text itself, but was rather chosen as a principle of *genealogical derivation of the text*. This radicalized the separation being drawn between Islam as a **principle** and as a **historical text**. In its extensive contents, Islam was freed from history since, according to such an opinion, history itself only offered *hermeneutical underpinnings for religious experience* (knowledge) as a sense of experiencing transcendence. Canonical texts were thus excused from historical critique and were re-conceptualized.³⁵ In the early European 20th century, such a situation had a profound impact on the totality of Occidental-westernized academic views of Islam itself; the interpretation of basic principles based on re-conceptualized translations of the Qurʾan. The paradigmatic example would be the first philological academic translation of the Qurʾan, which was undertaken by the Hungarian connoisseur and alleged admirer of Islam, Ignáz Goldziher (d. 1921),³⁶ though in line with Biblical scholarship of the time.³⁷ The Islam that he ‘discovered’ became – in the opinion of American historian of culture and literature Sander L. Gilman (b. 1944) – the model for the *new spirit of Hebraism* of the late 19th century.³⁸ However, Goldziher’s approach, which favored the historical and cultural over the spiritual, or perceptual analyses of the Qurʾan, led to the emergence of the prominent *doctrine of subordination* of original texts within translation of the Qurʾan and interpretation of *Hadith* (Ar. *al-ḥadīth*). Of course, it did not leave aside all the other syncretic practices that were a constituent part of the cultural plenitude of the Muslim world, including Sufistic, regional and folk practices.

³⁵ Schulze, Reinhard: *Islamwissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*; in: Graf, Friedrich Wilhelm and Voigt, Friedemann (ed.): *Religion(en) deuten Interpreting Religion(s) : Transformationen der Religionsforschung*. De Gruyter, Berlin, 2010, p. 96.

³⁶ Together with German Theodor Nöldeke and Dutch Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, Goldziher is considered the founder of *modern Islamic studies* in Europe.

Goldziher's works have recently received renewed attention due to the critical views of Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*. Goldziher's work was an exception in that he appreciated the Islamic tolerance towards other religions, although his aversion was undermined by the interpretation of anthropomorphism in the Prophet Muhammed's thinking, as well as of what Said calls „too external Islamic theology and jurisprudence”.

See Said, Edward: *Orientalism* ..., pp. 18 and 209

³⁷ McAuliffe, Jane Dammen: *Introduction*; in: McAuliffe, Jane Dammen (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to the Qurʾan* (Cambridge Companions to Religion), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 9.

³⁸ Gilman, Sander: *Can the Experience of Diaspora Judaism Serve as a Model for Islam in Today's Multicultural Europe?*; in: Schenker, Hillel and Ziad, Abu Zayyad (ed.): *Islamophobia and anti-Semitism*. Markus Wiener, Princeton: New York, 2006, pp. 59-74.



ILLUSTRATION – Some of Goldziher's works that have recently received renewed attention.

Acceptance of Goldziher's approach of favoring the **historical and cultural** over the **spiritual** led to the emergence of various Occidental-westernized academic approaches and interpretations of Islam. It was a form of analogy (*analogia legis*), which had never before existed, with a complete lack of epistemological positive identification which could, or could attempt to, define it. The accompanying manifestation of such excess approaches and their determination in the overall presence of the characterization and classification of the culture of Islam, which was implicitly or even explicitly said to have emerged only due to the existent *degeneration* and abandoning of *own religious ideals*, actually became a *powerful secularistic paradigm*.³⁹ Unfortunately, this is where a great tragedy of the reality of Occidental-westernized institutionalization of the alleged '*sterile secularized religion and its art*' in the pre-global era occurred. At the time, this alleged '*orientation*' of Occidental-westernized academism doubtlessly made both Islam and *qadar/ṣinā'at* known as a *compensating placebo* without any emancipating intentions.

If we look for an additional rationale of how else those and similar attitudes toward Islam were constructed or made, we will encounter wondrously impressive explanations about how it is allegedly a *static religion* and that its essential principles were not subject to questioning and change, i.e. to *interpretive variance*;⁴⁰ about a need to redefine '*art*' as part of cultural production rather than religious practice; about the Germanic sphere of the search for the original religion (*Urreligion*); about the study of '*mythology*' separated from the rationalized science of religion – a schematization through an epistemological model offered by linguistics; about the idealized origin of religion – considering all

³⁹ In the 19th century, such a relationship of the assumed contradictions between „Islam and its art” functioned in the form of *false secularized religion*, which also served to define its '*art*'. The basis of this construct is related to the insight that the first *khalifs* (Ar. *al-khilāfah*), the Prophet's companions, took his austere life as a role model, and that their virtues were reminders of his modesty, which future sultans and emirs, regardless of Qur'anic warnings, conceived in a wondrous luxury of dishes and vases made of the most precious metals in their palaces. It is also pointed out that Abū Baqr's charity and 'Alī's humility were no more than a tradition without potency, which did not find followers in later times. Thus defined as an oxymoron in relation to Islamic orthodoxy, '*art*' comes to represent, as was believed, the *inherent degeneracy of Islam*. According to the given opinion, it could be characterized as a form of secularism.

Ibid.

⁴⁰ Schulze, Reinhard: *Islamwissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*; in: Graf, Friedrich Wilhelm and Voigt, Friedemann (ed.): *Religion(en) deuten : Transformationen der Religionsforschung*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2010, p. 90.

later practices as aberrant from the original model; about historicizing the study of Islam – moving away from the study of discursive meaning in favor of the study of origins; about developing a nationalistic equation of ethnicity within language reconceptualization – the idea of „linguistic tribes” became a metaphor for „cultural tribes”; about the radicalization of the separation of religion as a principle and as a historical text, etc.

However, to reach the above listed views, the rationale for their foundation can, among other things, be found in the relations between some phenomena in Islam itself. Indeed, there are claims that the experience of revivalist movements in Islam [which are loosely referred to as *Wahhabism* (Ar. *al-wahhābiyyah*) and *Salafism* (Ar. *al-salafiyyah*)] and their reconceptualization of Islam in the search for the „true” Islam, were actually what contributed most to these views. In parallel to this phenomenon of seeking a stronghold for their own views, they also considered current revivalist responses against modern Western inclusion (whether it was conducted by colonial powers or local West-oriented Muslims secularizing elites), which was often done by a complex combination of Western positivist methodologies and Islamic interpretive frameworks. All in all, everything that was done represented the degeneration of traditional Islam and Islamic law – *Shari’a* (Ar. *al-sharī’ah*), imagined as fixed (*static religion*). Such a view also contributed to limiting the very geographical scope of the Islamic world to the Arabic peninsula, with the additional form of a superstructure consisting of Ottomans, Turks, Turkish peoples, Persians, Afghans, Southeast Asians, Indonesians, Malaysians, Filipinos and Korean Muslims, and in the contemporary world European adherents also found and secured their place.⁴¹

Since the idea of **unity** could ‘no longer’ be taken for granted (*praesumo presumo*), the acquired traditional Islamic knowledge (Ar. *al-‘ilm*) of certain facts and material objects, other minds and past events, within any attempt to set the criterion for such knowledge either as *conscientia* or *scientia*, was no longer valid in line with this fact (*commonsensism*, „critical cognitivism”). It meant that, at a given moment, the entire „field” of the history of aestheticized actions / *ṣinā’at* was deconstructed in a postmodernist way; generally, it pertained to the critique of absolute Islamic truths (Ar. *al-ḥaqīqah*, pl. *al-ḥaqā’iq*), identity (Ar. *al-huwiyyah*), discourse (Ar. *al-ḥiwārāt*) and main values established by the unavoidable following of the tradition (Ar. *al-taqlīd*). Besides, this endeavor, i.e. the Eurocentric „art-history” approach, positioned all forms of creative activities, and thus *ṣinā’at* as actions as well, according to the *illuminated centers* of European cultural power which, due to their own academic narcissism, could reach the periphery with their ‘rays of influence, interpretation and verification’. In such a constellation of interests, the marginal status of any modality of *qadar/ṣinā’at* discourse can look only like an echo of some ‘artistic creations’ which are defined in the centers, while within

⁴¹ Cf., Albertini, Tamara: *The Seductiveness of Certainty : The Destruction of Islam's Intellectual Legacy by the Fundamentalists*. Philosophy East and West, volume I. 53, no. 4, University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 2003, pp. 455-470.

this hybrid transmission the significant places of power play the main role in seeing updated creative expressions and justified ways of characterization, and in making classifications according to ‘isms’, forms, ethnicities, ‘styles’ (Ar. *al-uslūb*, pl. *al-asālīb*)⁴² defined by themselves. However, products of aestheticized actions constructed in many so-called ‘marginal’ areas, though not *illuminated*, still expose the fact that it is often the *margin* that takes the leading aesthetic role. It is evident in the case of the modalities of *qadar/ṣināʿat* discourse, and in this case the imposition of the *peripheral artistic production* or ‘*peripheral particularity*’, i.e. the status of *subordination* to the so-called centers makes it necessary both to challenge this paradigm and completely ignore it.

We believe that it is not too exaggerated to conclude that different levels of the relationship between the **center** (*viscus*) and the **periphery** (*peripheriae*) occupied many Occidental approaches to the ‘*history of art*’ as a Eurocentric academic discipline for the most part of the 20th century. Geographic, national and certainly religious approaches⁴³ were some of the basic starting points, inevitably, in all attempts to identify the center and the periphery in a given historical period, and then interpretations of their mutual relationship. Latently or explicitly in many methodological orientations of philosophy, ‘*history of art*’ and culture, the **phenomenon of dimensions** – from Herder, Hegel, Schnaase and Taine, for instance, then Riegl, Dvořák and other members of the *Vienna School of Art History*, to Focillon, Kubler, Pevsner and Białostocki – essentially defined the interpretation of individual periods of creative activities, corpuses, orientations of form and ‘*style*’ (*stilus*), or individual opuses and monumental values.⁴⁴

Center (*centrum*) and **periphery** (Lat. *peripheria* from Old-Gr. περιφέρειν = *periphēreia*) were the key concepts both in interpretations of modernism and the avant-garde and in attempts to weave the narration of creative activities and actions/*ṣināʿat* of cultural environments that were considered peripheral to the position of the center, regardless of the categorization of the phenomenon (Gr. φαινόμενο = *phainómenon*), and accordingly, of inferior value. In this case, in the mid-20th century the „Western” perspective on ‘art historiography’ was notably established, which highlights the transnational quality of „Islamic art history”. Of course, it does not bypass the current modernism and historical

⁴² See footnote 13.

⁴³ In this sense, it is worthwhile to mention the concept „geohistory of art” by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, published in the collection of papers: *Time and Place. The Geohistory of Art*, (ed. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Elizabeth Pilliod), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005; Piotr Piotrowski developed the model of „horizontal history of art” in several papers, including Piotrowski, Piotr: *On the Spatial Turn, Or Horizontal Art History*. *Umění/Art*, no. 5, journal Ústavu dějin umění Akademie věd České republiky, Prague, 2008, pp. 378–383. The same paper was later published in Polish: *O horyzontalne historii sztuki*. *Artium Quaestiones XX*, Instytut Historii Sztuki UAM, Poznań, 2009, 59–73; This author also published a postcolonial theory in the studies of visual culture: Piotrowski, Piotr: *East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory*; in: *Non-site.org*, no. 12, 2014, pp. 62–76, Available at: <http://nonsite.org/article/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory>. Accessed on 18. 10. 2019.

⁴⁴ For the historical overview of the phenomenology of ideas in philosophy and Occidental history of art, i.e. an actual distinctive brief history of the geography of art, see: Kaufmann, Dacosta Thomas: *Toward a Geography of Art*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2004, pp. 17–104.

„Western” avant-garde but understands all of them in a limited way, primarily affirming the concepts of ‘artistic progress’ and emission of „progressive” tendencies from the center to the periphery. Such a perspective – which becomes dominant when establishing ‘artistic canons’ of transnational quality – has a privilege in terms of value and everything else. ‘Art’ of the Western cultural circle, as well as the explicit redefinition of the phenomenon which the West calls „Islamic art”, specifically of the forms where local particularities of creative production were more prominent, were designated/defined by inappropriate valorization of emanating values. Although it was these „peripheral singularities” that primarily guaranteed the alleged transnationality as the basic feature of „Islamic art”, as well as of Central-European and Eastern-European modernism and avant-garde, the processing of canonized creative phenomena and identities did not leave much space for a different evaluation of ‘artistic yields’ from beyond the **current centers**.

Some evidence of such a view can also be found in the analysis of Prof. Rudolf Klein (b. 1930) from Harvard University, who presents his opinion on the prominent tensions between the center and the periphery, i.e. of the projection of West toward East, and then the deconstruction of these concepts:

*... The 19th century used the Oriental style (as well as the entire Orient) as a ‘tutti frutti’; a distinctive concoction against which the sovereignty of Occidental art (and civilization) was clearly confirmed. In reality, however, it was the West that turned into a ‘tutti frutti’ while the periphery remained compact for some time longer, as was discovered by structuralists in the mid-20th century. Poststructuralism challenged the validity of the terms center and periphery, which led to the general confusion that we call the **globalization of culture**.⁴⁵ (emphases by the author).*

If the artistry of creative activity, i.e. the suitable modalities of *homo islamicus*’s *qadar/ṣināʿat* discourse, endeavor to promote aestheticization within what is titled ‘art’ and, in an anticipated way, to designate it as a shared „world of life” understood as the „rule of original obviousness”, which is certainly not the case, then the hidden difference within the part of ‘art’ which it has „overcome” *exudes* the horrifying radiation of its „ignoring, or existence”. From the angle of ‘the other in art’ it could be described as a collective singularity, and *homo islamicus* as an individual who could possibly be interesting in a particular relationship with the universal, i.e. in supplementing *Geist*.⁴⁶ His individuality

⁴⁵ Klein, Rudolf: *Ludwig Försterov Dohány-Tempel u Pešti: Maurska katedrala za 'Azijate Europe' = Ludwig Förster's Dohány Tempel in Pest: Moorish Cathedral for the 'Asiates Of Europe'*. *Prostor – Znanstveni časopis za arhitekturu i urbanizam / A Scholarly Journal of Architecture and Urban Planning*, 17 [2009], 2 [38], Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Arhitektonski fakultet / University of Zagreb, Faculty of Architecture, Zagreb, 2009, p. 225.

⁴⁶ *Geist* means „spirit, wit, mind, shrewd, reasonable” in German. In most languages, „spirit” refers to mental content, while from the psychological aspect it signified the part of human life, i.e. the content that is found in reason or the mind, as well as thinking in a reasonable way.

Unfortunately, implying what was called *Geist* in the European tradition, high culture doubtlessly had the ambition to offer itself as a „package” of moral belief, which certainly concealed an ideological tool, although it assures us that it is free from it.

(without the spirit of initiation) could then be a „medium of the universal” and it would bridge the singularities which ‘art’ insists on in the process. While for ‘art’ they are identified and personalized coincidences, for modalities of *qadar/ṣināʿat* discourse, on the other hand, almost all, even the anonymous „facts of life” are certainly „not accidental” but consciously determined on this road in earthly – *dunjālučki*⁴⁷ space and time.

In the early Middle Ages, it was a well-known fact that *homo islamicus* had a rare and unique expression of intention, i.e. of confirming his authorship with his personally written name on the creations of ornamental and cognitive *qadar/ṣināʿat* orientation, which confirmed his identity in the form of an autograph. Unfortunately, there are also assumptions about the unwillingness of the originator/designer of aestheticized representation to sign their works, i.e. that *homines islamici* in „Islamic countries” were mostly *illiterate laborers*, cut off from the context of the intellectual environment of high culture that illuminated them. It is unclear how such claims could be recorded at all, despite the presence of signatures, but also of unsigned works on medieval creations (which is nevertheless in line with the established trope related to *homo islamicus*’s unwillingness to sign their works – the conviction and testimony that everything in our universe was created by God) and evidence that medieval tile setters created verses which they inscribed in their aestheticized works.⁴⁸



ILLUSTRATION ~ Illuminator by Muhammad ibn Taj al-Din Haidar Muzahhib Shirazi, 1562–83.; Painting attributed to Bihzad, ca. 1480.;

Calligrapher and painting by Maulana Azhar, ca. 1430.; Painting by Riza-yi 'Abbasi, 1630.; Painting by Shaikh Zada, 1524–25.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Iluminator Muhammad ibn Taj al-Din Haidar Muzahhib Shirazi, 1562–83.; Slika koja se pripisuje Bihzadu, ca. 1480.; Kaligraf i iluminator Maulana Azhar, ca. 1430.; Slika Riza-yije 'Abbasija, 1630.; Slika Shaikha Zade, 1524–25. © The Met Fifth Avenue.

⁴⁷ *Dunjāluk* – Ar. *al-dunyā* + Ott.-Tur. suf. *-lik* – meaning „this world”, the „earthly world”.

⁴⁸ See Mayer, Leo Ary: *Islamic Architects and Their Works*. Albert Kundig, Geneva, 1956. = The Art Bulletin, The Bulletin of the College Art Association, volume 38, no. 4, CAA, 1956. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00043079.1956.11408344>. Accessed on 30.11.2016.

At the International Congress of Orientalists in Istanbul in 1951, Mayer reported that he was identifying hundreds of individual artists and craftsmen, revealing names of previously anonymous *homines islamici*. Also see: Blair, Sheila S.: *A Brief Biography of Abu Zayd. Muqarnas*, an Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World, volume 25, no. 1, Brill, 2008., pp. 155–176. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261776583_A_BRIEF_BIOGRAPHY_OF_ABU_ZAYD. Accessed on 30.11.2016.

Inscription (confirmation of authorship):

“The likeness of the one who takes refuge in [God’s] mercy and forgiveness, the deceased, the one whose abode is paradise, my master Reza, the ‘Abbasi painter, God’s mercy and forgiveness be upon him. [It] was copied [from an original drawn] in the year 104[?] and was completed on the ffth of the month of Safar of the year 1087, which concluded in success and victory, as a keepsake (?) for insertion in an album, may it be blessed.

Drawn by Mu’in Musavvir, may God forgive his sins.”

Natpis (potvrđivanje autorstva)

„Sličnost onoga koji se utječe [Božijem] milosrđu i oprost, umrl, onaj čije je boravište džennet, moj gospodar Reza, 'Abbasi slikar, Božija milost i oprost neka je na njega. [To] je kopirano [iz originala nacrtanog] 104.[?] godine i dovršeno je petog u mjesecu Safaru 1087. godine, koja je završila uspjehom i pobjedom, kao uspomena (?) za umetanje u albumu, neka je blagoslovljen.

Nacrtao Mu'in Musavvir, Allah mu oprostio grijeha.”



عالمی وادی علم و ادب کے لیے
مفتاحیہ کتب خانہ
پیشکش
1087ھ 5 صفر
میں مکمل کیا گیا
میں نے اسے
میں نے اسے
میں نے اسے

ILLUSTRATION ~ Portrait of the *homo islamicus* Reza 'Abbasi by Mu'in Musavvir, Isfahan, Iran, signed and dated 5 Safar Ah 1087/19 April 1676 AD.

© Christie's Images Ltd 2018.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Portret *homo islamicusa* Reze 'Abbasija od Mu'ina Musavvira, Isfahan, Iran, potpisan i datiran 5. Safar Ah 1087/19.04.1676.

© Christie's Images Ltd 2018.

The true essence of the issue is that the Occidental-westernized content of 'art' uses the **particular** and the **individual**, while the *qadar/šīnā'at* discourse uses the **particular** (Ar. *al-khāṣ*) only as a carrier of the **universal** (Ar. *al-kullī*), and in this way 'art' would testify to the common spirit, but without the presence of the general spirit of *homo islamicus*'s initiation. If *homo islamicus*'s individuality were elevated in a particular way to his European essence, which is still not justified, universality would inevitably be freed from his abstraction, as well as from his sincere spiritual support (Ar. *al-madd al-rūhī*) to conscious aestheticized actions/*šīnā'at* within the modalities of *qadar/šīnā'at* discourse. It seems necessary to note that **disrespect**, which is not easy to get rid of, makes a crack in possible universalist „pretensions“ on the one hand, and the totalization of universalist pretensions on the other. It seems that the **differentiation** of Occidental-westernized academic content of 'art' is necessary, not for the purpose of „burying“ secularity but for the purpose of the „factual“ equality of 'art' and the modalities of *qadar/šīnā'at* discourse, keeping in mind the obvious conditions *in the field*. Indeed, it is only by *différance* (Fr. *différance*), i.e. through a game of traces, that the present disproportion of different sign units is outlined.

Nevertheless, one should not guarantee any absolute privilege for the criterion of *différance* in 'art' detrimental to **fidelity** in general. It is another fidelity and evaluation and assessment between two fidelities. It seems that 'art' should try and be as **true** as possible. The reason is not a caring for calculable accuracy, but that it will be called upon to also follow the law of another way of fidelity to a particular aestheticized expression, to its commission, to its identity, its text, to the other event inasmuch as it has already happened and should be responded to. Modalities of *qadar/ṣinā'at* discourse are here and they should be analyzed, studied, investigated, perceived, before us, although we cannot see the reason why not also today, in front of and with „us“. Antonymy is willing to accept the law of the other, not by passively yielding to it but by cosigning it in its **distinctive causation**, so as to be able to respect the **authentication of aestheticized actions** of any *homo islamicus*. Unfortunately, things seem to be completely different. By all accounts, there is an academic orientation to align, in some way, the allegedly „incommensurable“ modalities of *qadar/ṣinā'at* discourse with 'art', and possibly *certify* the distinctive situation of the „law of the other“. It is certainly necessary for establishing a relationship with any other aestheticized activity, or even with actions/*ṣinā'at* as such. It is the tension between *homo islamicus's qadar/ṣinā'at* strategy on the one hand, and the almost '*sacred fidelity of the artist's art*' on the other. This tension is at work in most academic anxious thoughts when reviewing, perusing, interpreting, viewing from the outside, it is even present as vocabulary identification. Such thinking should be allowed to last, and one should understand it, get closer to it, possibly indicate it and, if needed, explain the fundamental issue of the inside of *homo islamicus's* actions/*ṣinā'at*, while still leaving it intact in its anxiety. *Homines islamici* prefer theosophic wisdom (mystic or esoteric gnosis) which strives toward inner contemplative visualization (Ar. *al-moshāhadah*), and which is not achieved by the totality of definitions or expressiveness of syllogisms, but rather by the power of eastern light (Ar. *al-ishrāq*) which is born in the East of the soul. It is a well-known fact that knowledge (*doctrine*) and even apodictic arguments are based on testimony (*martyrium*). The sequence of arguments in all sciences, as Derrida claims, *assumes some layer of faith*.⁴⁹ However, over this abysmal foundation, a powerful construction has nonetheless built the conditions for a stable autonomy of what is titled 'art'.

⁴⁹ *Fidélité à plus d'un: Derrida, Celan, Brenner, Cixous, Blanchot*. Érudit Journals, *Spirale* magazine culturel inc., no. 195, Montréal (Québec), March–April 2004; Available at: <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/spirale/2004-n195-spirale1057121/>. Accessed on 20.4.2020. = *Vjernost 'više nego jednom' : Zaslužiti nasljeđivanje tamo gdje genealogija manjka* (translated from French by Ugo Vlaisavljević). *Tvrđa*, časopis za književnost, umjetnost, znanost, Hrvatsko društvo pisaca, Ivanić-Grad 2011, 1/2, pp. 11-46. Available at: <https://katalog.kgz.hr/pagesResults/bibliografskiZapis.aspx?currentPage=1&searchById=30&sort=0&spid0=30&spv0=ljudsko+tijelo+--umjetni%C4%8Dk+e+teme+i+motivi&selectedId=245003966&nbf=1>. Accessed on 20.4.2020. Translation in author's manuscript, p. 49.

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