

## THE GIRDLE FIGURED IN THE PERSIAN *INTEXTUS* POEM

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### 1. Rhomb

A very old and artistically-created form of poem, the *carmen intextum* or *figuratum* (“interwoven” or “figurative” poem), combines letters or words to create a sentence which produces a drawn object or figure by the use of geometrical principles, rhythmical metres and complex rhetorical devices such as acrostics. The Persian medieval *muwashshah* belongs to the genre of *intextus* poem.<sup>1</sup>

P. Porphyrius Optatianus, a well-known Latin *poeta neotericus*, of African origin and panegyrist of the emperor Constantine I (AD 306-37), carried the art of the Roman *intextus* poem to perfection. Among the many fine figures created by Optatianus we may note his poem VII, which features a central square combined with four hexagons, and poem no. XII, featuring a double rhomb.<sup>2</sup>

This Latin artistic tradition was further developed by several poets of the Carolingian age. Figures of crossed rhombs appear in interwoven poems by Josephus Scotus (no. 3), Alcuinus (no. 6) and Theodulfus the Bishop (no. 23). The “Versus Hrabani”, a particularly notable poem by Rabanus Maurus, draws a twinned square.<sup>3</sup>

Rabanus, known as Maurus (Mainz, 780-856), was an exponent of the science of letters, a form of painting with words, supported by geometry. In *De inventione linguarum* (“The invention of languages”, in other words alphabets and letters) Rabanus depicts – “as painters usually do”, he says – examples of *litterae monogrammae* or monograms: four or more capital letters “interwoven” and depicting eighteen names and epithets of important persons extending like gems and flowers from a central rhomboid axis, the stem.<sup>4</sup> In *Liber de laudibus sanctae crucis* (“Book of the lauds of the Holy Cross”) and other works Rabanus composes splendid *versi intexti* (“interwoven verses”) according to the rules of Porphyrius Optatianus, but he also introduces technical innovations, such as the combination of alternate black and red characters in the manuscript, and a new way of representing patterns and figures. Some geometrical poems seem to imply a reading in the manner of gematria, the cabbalistic method in which Hebrew letters were imbued with meaning as words.<sup>5</sup>

The practice of creating acrostics in ingenious ways was associated with secret traditions that sought solutions to archaic riddles through making use of “the magic alphabetic square” and “the chess-board of numerical

symbols”.<sup>6</sup> Abu’l-‘Abbās Ahmad al-Bunī (d. 622 H./ AD 1225), a native of Bona/Annaba in present-day Morocco, deals with the magical uses of the Arabic alphabetic-numerical system (*abjad*) within “the board” (*jadwal*), a kind of geometrical labyrinth wherein the rhomb functions chiefly as a means for arranging diagrams like talismans. The pattern of this magic square and chess-board is the “so-called Latin square”.<sup>7</sup>

Tegumentary and material talisman-jewellery as worn by Moroccan tribal women feature necklaces, armlets and “forearmlets” having a central row of two / three rhombs. The rhomb is also a key figure in traditional carpets made by tribal women from Turkey to Turkmenistan, such as the Turkish Qashqai nomads of Iran.<sup>8</sup>

A secret message, an inner refrain contained within a sonnet, was interwoven by Nicolò de’ Rossi (Treviso, c.1290-1348) in one of his Italian “interwoven” poems which features a “*zonē*” in the form of a fabric or jewelled girdle “*in quadris et circuleis*”, with little rhombs and circles.<sup>9</sup>

In European literary practice the figural poem as “depicted speech” often appeared in a medium other than that of the book. The most typical figures of “iconic-alphabetical poetry”, which may also involve numerical values, are classified as “square poem”, “isopsephic poem” and the *technopaegnon* that is shaped as a “calligram” in a modern manner. Guillaume Apollinaire (1897) wrote a *calligramme* for his friend Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1914), a leading figure of the Futurist movement.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Ornament

The Persian *muwashshah* emerges between Eastern Iran and Transoxiana in the early 11th century as a specific form of *intextus* poem. In its most classical form it represents the main text, the thread of a sentence, in the form of a rhomboid microtext, a short lozenge-shaped poem. At first sight the Western Arabic *muwashshah* forms as they existed in Iberia and the Maghrib appear to be rather different. The basic etymological derivation is the Arabic term *wishāh*, “a belt or girdle of leather adorned with jewels, worn by ladies round their waists; a string of pearls, and one of other jewels, plaited together; a baldrick”.<sup>11</sup>

For al-Layth ibn al-Muzaffar (d. c.180 H./ AD 800), a distinguished Arab philologist and jurist who wrote in his native Khurasan in north-eastern Iran, the exemplary type of *wishāh* was the women’s ornament consisting of “two bracelets made out of two strings of pearls and precious stones, placed in opposite ways, one of the two strings being inclined towards the other; the verb *washshaha* is therefore used to express the action of wearing the above-mentioned ornament”. We also find the term *muwashshaha* denoting “a woman or thing ornamented with bracelets set in pearls and jewels”.<sup>12</sup>

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The girdle could be furnished with a text, at least as a textile article. The anthologist al-Washshā' (860-936) describes a slave girl wearing a *muwashshah* blouse (*qamis*) and a girdle (*wishāh*) upon which an amatory message formed by a pair of Arabic hemistichs was embroidered in golden letters.<sup>13</sup> Nothing new under the sun.

The Greek *Anthologia Palatina* contains an epigram about the purple “zone” around the bosom of the beautiful Hermione, daughter of Helen and Menelaus. The girdle, written in golden letters, bore a poetic love-message. This epigram was imitated by Decimus Magnus Ausonius of Burdigala (Bordeaux), a renowned Christian poet of the 4th century who worked for a time at the imperial court of Valentinianus I in Treviri. Ausonius’s epigram “De titulo qui Hermiones zonae scriptus erat”, indicates that the text of her message, an elegy, was to be read upon the textile girdle:

Hermiones: zonae textum elegeon erat:  
qui legis hunc titulum, Paphie tibi mandat, ames me  
exemploque tuo neminem amare vetes.<sup>14</sup>

There were also examples of cartographic “zonēs”, in other words special maps embroidered upon bands, girdles, clothes, carpets, silken atlases etc, an ancient and mediaeval practice attested by historical and literary sources, including both Arabic and Persian authors. The *hizām* “zone” or “band” provided with a lengthwise inscription is also traditionally the sole ornamentation of the mantle covering the Ka’ba, an embroidered *tirāz* “emblem” displaying a pattern that provided a model for the whole of Islamic calligraphy.<sup>15</sup>

We also have the Arabic twin armband, a twin belt or collar suitable for both sexes. The scholiast al-Wāhidi mentions “a twin collar” (*wishāhayn*) consisting of right and left bands like a twin girdle or baldric, Latin *baltheus*, English *belt*. The Syrian historian Abu’l-Fidā records that the Abbasid caliph al-Wathiq presented Ashnās with a crown and a twin belt in recognition of his services (228 H./ AD 842). [Ashnās / Afshin, a warrior from Transoxiana, had put down dangerous riots in Azarbaijan and the Maghreb.]<sup>16</sup>

According to a classical definition by the Persian prosodist Rāmi (c. 1359-75) poetry consists in “coloured wind” (*bād-e rangin*); the poet who “depicts the speech on the wind” is “the painter-embroiderer of the image (*naqsh-band*)”; and the poetical word “is a precious jewel” like “the pearl of a necklace (*selk*)” or the earring for a virgin bride, her nuptial gift and ornament.<sup>17</sup>

In the medieval Persian science of precious stones the term “girded” (*kamar-dār*, *mozannar*) was used to denote the pearl set right at the centre of a *kamar*, “girdle”, or *zonnār*, “belt”. There was also the “rhombic girded” pearl known as *lowzi*, having the shape of an almond.<sup>18</sup>

The *zonnār* referred particularly to the cord worn by the Magi, Zoroastrians, Eastern Christians and Jews living in Iran under Islamic rule. The Persian noun *lowz* / *lōz* denotes both “a rhomb” and “an almond” < Arabic *lawza* “an almond”; *lowze* “anything sweet, nice and delicate”; *lawzine* / Arabised form *lawzinaj* < *lowzēnak* “a confection of almond; any food in which almonds form a part”.<sup>19</sup>

This Persian-Arabic terminology seems to connect to the word *lozenge* (Provençal *lausā*) used since the Middle Ages to denote the rhomb, an important emblem used in European heraldry, on shields etc. With careful multiplication of the basic figure the shield can be provided with a check or chess-board pattern.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Design

From the early formative days of the new literary expression (9-10th century) in Eastern Iran and Transoxiana, where the social and literary milieu was bilingual, the Persian arts of poetry and prosody were based on the Arabic canonical system. The loss of manuscripts means that a great number of works written up to the 11th century have to be included on the large international list of lost items. However Persian poetry was a flourishing art, with original themes, images, modes and forms – most particularly the quatrain. The rythmical units and typical orders of the early quatrains seem to have been sufficiently geometrical to enable the creation of triangular and rectangular schemas.<sup>21</sup>

Farrokhi (d. 429 H./ AD 1037), an outstanding lyric poet, panegyrist and native of Sistan, first revealed his talent at the camp of Abu'l-Muzaffar, Amir of Chaghaniyan, located between Tirmidh and Qobadiyan in Transoxiana. Later Farrokhi, who compared his poetry to the art of textiles (in which he was an expert), went off to the court of Sultan Mahmud, the Turkish ruler in Ghazna and conqueror of north-western India. Farrokhi mentions a *wishāh* ornamented with agate stones (*'aqiqin*), a silky green *muwashshah* and a Rumi textile *muwashshah*, fit to “put up the tent of power” (*kheyime ye dowlat*).<sup>22</sup>

The collection of poems by ‘Onsori of Balkh (d. 431 H./ AD 1039), *Malik al-Shu‘arā* (“The King of Poets”), at the court of Sultan Mahmud, comes down to us in an incomplete and fragmentary state. It contains the narrative poem *Vāmik u ‘Adhrā* (“The Suppliant and the Virgin”), based on the translation of the quasi-lost Hellenistic novel *Methiokos and Parthenope*. So, a question was opened for modern scholarship: Did the heroine ‘Adhrā’ (Parthenope) remain a Virgin? It appears that she did. Eustathios (12th century), a scholar who knew the full text of the Greek novel, in his *Commentaria* on the *Oikoumenes periegesis (Orbis descriptio)* by Dionisios Periegetes (1st century AD), states that when Parthenope reached the end of her long adventure she arrived reached safe, sound and virgin in Neapolis in Campania.<sup>23</sup>

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‘Onsori praises Sultan Mahmud in a *qasida* (ode) which affords textual evidence that the *muwashshah* was a figural genre of poetry practised and highly appreciated in his day:

The spring effigies are like ingenious (*badi’*) poems, one filled with the *muwashshah*, the other painted in the form of a tree (*tashjir*).<sup>24</sup>

This latter form was properly known as *mushajjar* (see section 5 below). The earliest extant Persian treatise on prosody, *Tarjumān al-balāgha* (“The Interpreter of Eloquence”) by Rāduyāni (shortly after 481 H./ AD1088), offers a survey of poetic techniques that “extends to acrostics, word squares, ‘circular’ verses, and the like”.<sup>25</sup> Rāduyāni, who is unknown apart from the sole manuscript of his book and who perhaps worked in Farghana (Central Asia), defines the technique of the *muwashshah* in these brief clear terms:

The etymon of *muwashshah* is *wishāh*, namely [in Persian] *gardan-band* (a necklace).

This is what the *muwashshah* consists in: the poet arranges a speech, letter by letter, at the beginning of the verses of a *qasida* and straight up to the core of the poem. The full speech emerges when the scattered letters are linked together. That mostly occurs in the *qasidas*.

The prosodist then quotes a few verses from a long *qasida* by the poet Movaqqari “The Venerable” (perhaps first half of the 11th century) in order to show that the *muwashshah* is a poem having “two aspects” (*do-ruye*), characterised by having both an inner and an outer form, in other words containing a microtext within the macrotext. Rāduyāni does not specifically describe Movaqqari’s rhetorical device because “the rest of the verses comes out likewise’ and ‘a learned man understands a slight indication excellently well’”.<sup>26</sup>

In using the phrase “comes out” (*birun āyad* – a term also used by later prosodists) Rāduyāni is referring to the outcome of the poem, its inner text, when the excerpt is extracted and set apart from the main structure. This excerpting process seems to be a kind of equivalent to the *kharja* (“exit line”), the last rhyming *qufl* (“lock”) in the Western Arabic *muwashshah*. Movaqqari’s poem is recorded as an example of the Persian *muwashshah* without the explanation of its poetical figure.<sup>27</sup>

Here the fragment of Movaqqari’s *qasida* as transmitted by Rāduyāni, in four lines forming a kind of stanza, appears to contain a neat acrostic:

*Deldozd o delrobā-ye man ān sa’tari posar*  
~ *k-āvārd ‘omr-e man ze gham-e hajr-e khwod be-sar*  
*Rasm-i nehād ‘eshq-ash bar man ke sāl o māh*  
~ *show sabr-e khwod forush o gham-e ‘eshq-e man bekhar*

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*Yā jān be-chang-e 'eshq sepār o majuy jang*  
~ *yā yāfa kon to jān o del o din-e khwod godhar*  
*Ari ke-rā forugh-e del o jān bovad cho to*  
~ *chāre nabāshad-ash ze gham-e jān o dard-e sar.*

Taking the words at the start of each verse – *Del* “the heart”, *Rasm-i* “a habit, custom”, *Yā* “o”, *Ārī* “yes” – we find that they render an acrostic – *Daryā* (“the Sea”).

If I may be allowed to render these amatory verses into English, with an attempt at an acrostic, we might have the following:

Who steals hearts, my heart-ravishing, is the gifted boy who put an  
end to my solitary life.<sup>28</sup>  
His love brought me a habit for months and years. Go, sell thy  
endurance and buy my love.  
Either cast the soul into the love harp, not warring, or miss life and  
heart, forsaking thy religion.  
Yes, who has the soul flame and heart like thou, does not escape the  
care of soul and the trouble.

Wherein the acrostic would appear as the English *whey*, denoting the serum of milk.

#### 4. Interlacement

The poet Rashidi of Samarqand, a refined practitioner of the Persian *muwashshah*, became *Sayyid al-Shu'arā'* (“The Lord of Poets”) (472 H./ AD 1080) at the court of Khedr Khan b. Ibrāhīm, a sovereign of the Turkish Ilkhan / Qarakhanid dynasty ruling in Transoxiana and Kashgari (Sin-kiang). Literary critics often quote from an important source, the classical prosodist Shams-e Qays (see section 6 below), citing a particular *muwashshah* as an example of Rashidi's skill.<sup>29</sup>

We shall show that the poet was able to create a sort of stanzaic poem within the structure of a panegyric *qasida*. Modern scholarship has not paid sufficient attention to the Persian strophic poetry which, since ancient times, had existed in two main orders, the *tarji'-band* “return-tie” and *tarkib-band* “composite tie”. The grounds for comparing these with the structure of the “interwoven” poem are provided by the key-term *band* “a band, tie, string, chain, a knot, a trick”, denoting the feature of the stanzaic poem, its “interlaced” string of verses.<sup>30</sup>

This term *band* can be found in many composite words, such as the aforementioned *gardan-band* (“necklace”), *kamar-band* (“cummerbund”, “belt”), *bāzu-band* (“armlet”) and so on. [Incidentally, the etymology of the

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dance known as *saraband* is more likely to derive from the name and wandering life style of the Sarābandi / Sarbandi, a tribal people settled mainly in the area that is now Iran.]<sup>31</sup>

In writing his *muwashshah*, Rashidi fills alternately the second/first halves of the twin hemistichs of his panegyric *qasida* (26 lines) with three chains of mesostichs to be scanned in different metres. Hence he is interlacing six structural sequences. These are: (a) a pair of opening verses, (b) first set of mesostichs, (c) second set of mesostichs, (d) a pair of intermediate verses, (e) third set of mesostichs, (f) a pair of concluding verses.

In order to achieve the required technique of poetic interweaving composition took place in two stages: first the clew-lines were written and arranged; then the text of the surrounding lines was added. The remainder of the poem provides the framing structure, here: a+d+f+collateral halves of the hemistichs that can be read both separately and connectedly.

Here I have extracted the core of the poem from Rashidi's panegyric (*muwashshah*, lines 3-6, 9-18, 21-4) consisting of three strings of mesostichs entailing (i) a quatrain, (ii) a five-line stanza, and (iii) a shortened quatrain:

I.			
<i>Bish az andāze-ye in tāyife</i>	<i>bar bande nehād</i>	<i>jud-e to bār-e gerān</i>	<i>z-ān do kaf-e gowharbār</i>
<i>Digarān-and chu man-e banda o</i>	<i>man bande ze shokr</i>	<i>'ājez-am chun digarān</i>	<i>v-az khajeli gashte fekār</i>
<i>'ajz yak-su neh o angār ke</i>	<i>kardastam jorm</i>	<i>su-ye 'afv-at negarān</i>	<i>mānde o del pur timār</i>
<i>to xodāvand-i ehsān kon o</i>	<i>in jorm be-fadhl</i>	<i>z-in rahi dargodharān</i>	<i>z-ānke to-yī jormgodhār</i>
II.			
<i>abr key khwānam-at ey khwāje chu</i>	<i>shod abr-e matir</i>	<i>nazd-e to heyrān</i>	<i>dar dast-e to sargashte o khwār</i>
<i>shams key khwānam-at ey khwāje chu</i>	<i>shod shams-e monir</i>	<i>pish-e to penhān</i>	<i>v-az ruy-e tu āsime o zār</i>
<i>hast dar bakhshesh u dar binesh u</i>	<i>dar dānesh o fadhl</i>	<i>ān del-e pāk-at</i>	<i>bahr-i ke va-rā nīst godhār</i>
<i>balke az rashk-e kaf u ān del</i>	<i>chun bahr-e qa'ir</i>	<i>gasht bi pāyān</i>	<i>andūh-e del-e jumla behār</i>
<i>chun to khwāhad ke bovad xasm-at</i>	<i>nat(a)vānad bud</i>	<i>mar to rā hargez</i>	<i>dar hich honar n-āyad yār</i>

<i>hast har chiz to rā ellā</i>	<b>hamtā o nazir</b>	<b>dar hame keyhān</b>	<i>v-in khalq na-dānad hamvār</i>
<i>az kaf-e to hame mohtājān</i>	<b>āsude shodand</b>	<b>bā kaf-e rād-at</b>	<i>v-in kholq beh āyad z-ahrār</i>
<i>az navāzidan-e besyār-e to</i>	<b>az shoghl-e haqir</b>	<b>shā'erān yaksān</b>	<i>rasetand ze 'aysh-e doshvār</i>
<i>dar panāh-e kaf-e ehsān-e to</i>	<b>mansur shodim</b>	<b>bar morād-e del</b>	<i>hamvāre hame dowlatyār</i>
<i>dowlat o nosrat o piruzi o</i>	<b>yazdān-at nasir</b>	<b>bād jāvidān</b>	<i>k-az jāh to-yi barkhwordār</i>
III			
<i>in niku nām-i v-in rādi</i>	<b>farkhonde konād</b>	<b>bar to mowlā</b>	<i>o bedārād to rā dar zenhār</i>
<i>ba-salāmat ba-salām āmād</i>	<b>ey Sa'du'l-Mulk</b>	<b>'id-e adhā</b>	<i>haq(q)-e u rā be-seyādat begudhār</i>
<i>shādemānī kon o khorram zī</i>	<b>v-ān kas ke ba'id</b>	<b>madh-e to guft</b>	<i>bar-u gostar az ekrām se 'ār</i>
<i>she'r-i mā hast be-hangām- e to</i>	<b>bar rafte ze jāh</b>	<b>tā be-she'rā</b>	<i>ke shakibad ke naguyad ash 'ār</i>

String I

*Bar banda nehād jud-e to bār-e gerān ~ man bande ze shokr 'ājez-am chun digarān  
kardastam jorm su-ye 'afv-at negarān ~ in jorm be-fadhl z-in rahi dargodharān*

Thy generosity laid on me a heavy burden. As a servant I am unfit for  
thanking, but brave.

I did a misdeed, looking for thy pardon. Overlook by thy virtue the  
misdeed of this slave.

String II

*Shod abr-e matir nazd-e to heyrān ~ shod shams-e monir pish-e to penhān  
dar dānesh o fadhl ān del-e pāk-at ~ chun bahr-e qa 'ir gasht bi pāyān  
nat(a)vānad bud mar to rā hargez ~ hamtā o nazir dar hame keyhān  
āsude shodand bā kaf-e rād-at ~ az shoghl-e haqir shā'erān yaksān  
mansūr shodim bar morād-e del ~ yazdān-at nasir bād jāvidān*

The rainy cloud was amazed near thee. The shining sun hid before thee.

For science and virtue thy pure mind was like the deep endless sea.



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There can never be thine equal or similar person anywhere in the world.

For thy bounteous hand the poets all one refreshed their low work.

We succeeded in reaching our aim. May God eternally succour thee.

String III

*Farkhonde konād bar to mowlā ~ ey Sa'do'l-Molk 'id-e adhā*

*v-ān kas ke ba'id madh-e to goft ~ bar rafte ze jāh tā ba-she'rā*

May the Lord rejoice in thee, O Success of the State, on the Sheep Day.

Who far sang thy praises from this rank ascended to the Dog-star.

Thus Rashidi's *muwashshah* fashions a whole poem, a solemn laud-like hymn, after the stanzaic genre, mentioning his patron (whose name perhaps was Nasir, if this is the person alluded to in the previous line) by the institutional epithet Sa'do'l-Molk, (end of string III).

### 5. Variation

Later Rāduyāni's work was to prove an important source for *Hadā'iq al-sihr fī daqā'iq al-shi'r* ("The Gardens of Magic in the Subtleties of Poetry") (c.551-568 H / AD 1156-73), a work of prosody written by the well-known Persian man of letters, poet and polemicist Rashid al-Din Vatvāt.

In Vatvāt's preface he says that he found a copy of the *Tarjumān al-balāgha* in Khiva, at the court of Atsiz, king of Khorasmia and rival of the Seljuk sultan Sanjār. He declares that he "disliked very much" the specimens of verse selected by the earlier prosodist, whose name he does not mention.

By this time new aesthetic trends were coming into play. For Vatvāt the *muwashshah* could contain a bilingual text, probably according to an older tradition. Moreover he applied the technique in superficial and spurious forms. Vatvāt (nicknamed "Swallow", from the Arabic *watwāt* – he was a scribe by profession, hence his designation *al-Kātib*), allows for the arbitrary alteration of a text (*tashif*) by means of changing the sign/signification of its original script.

In the poetry of his day there was a technique known as *tashif*. This was an "ingenious figure depending on the diacritical points which serve to distinguish so many letters of the Arabic alphabet. By changing these points, without interfering with the bodies of the letters, the meaning of a sentence may be completely altered". For instance, in a Persian "ingenious poem" quoted by Vatvāt himself "the meaning of each verse is changed from praise to blame by a slight alteration of the diacritical points".<sup>32</sup>

This is what the prosodist Vatvāt has to say about the *muwashshah*, a genre in which he excelled:

The Persian gloss of *wishāh* is *bar-band* (a breast-band, collar or girdle) studded with gems. The *muwashshah* is the girded *wishāh*.<sup>1</sup>

This technique involves the poet arranging at the beginning of the verses, or at their core, a number of letters or words. When the letters or the words are linked together, exactly or by their alteration, a verse, a proverb, an epithet or a name emerges. This technique, having many applications and branches, occurs in the *qasidas*.

Here I quote some of my verses. From an Arabic poem:

*yā sāhibī qad marra ayyāmu 'l-amānati wa 'l-hayā'i*  
*talla al-qadhā 'u damī fa-tāla lisānu dhamiyyi li 'l-qadhā'i*  
*yā sāhibī kun wāfiyan bi 'l-'ahdi wa 'mur bi 'l-wafā'i.*

If one extracts from this fragment the words that are written in red letters [rendered here in boldface], some of them exactly, the rest by alteration, and one proceeds first from the top downwards, then from the bottom upwards, the following hemistich emerges: **mardomi kon mardomi beh** (“treat the neighbour with humanity; humaneness is best”).<sup>33</sup>

The example of a Persian poem, which I have composed myself, and this time referring to the letters, not to the words, is:

*Ma'shuqe del-am be-tir-e anduh ~ Hayrān shodam o kas-am*  
*bekhast namigirad dast*  
*Meskin tan-e man ze pā-ye mehnat ~ Dast-e gham-e dust posht-e*  
*shod past man xord shekast.*

[Trans: The sweetheart wounded my heart with the dart of grief. I am astonished but nobody takes me by the hand.

My poor body falls low by the feet of distress. The friend's grievous hand broke my back.]

If one links the letters written with red characters at the start of each hemistich [M, H, M, D], the name **Muhammad** emerges. If the object created by interlacings of this kind (*tawshih*) is composed like a tree it is called *mushajjar* (figured with trees). If it is shaped is like an animal, it is called *mujassam* (rendered like a body) or *musawwar* (illustrated). If it is formed like a circle, it is called *mudawwar* (round).<sup>34</sup>

The *muwashshah* quatrain containing the acrostic Muhammad is a common form of poem, extending from Rashidi of Samarqand to a poet by name of Ānand cited in a recent Lexicon of Iranian Music.<sup>35</sup>

The Persian literary tradition concerning “Kalila and Dimna”, the famous

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Eurasian mirror for princes based on the Sanskrit fables of talking animals, includes a lost dialectal version by general Marzbān b. Rostam b. Shahryār b. Sharvin, “a margrave” (*marzbān*) working at the turn of the 10-11th century. A man by name of Varāvini, probably a scribe or chancellor by profession, translated this version in a refined Persian-Arabic style, calling it “The Book of the Margrave”, and presented it to Abu’l-Qāsim Rabīb al-Dīn b. ‘Alī, vizier of Özbek b. Muhammad b. Ildeñiz, Turkish Atabeg of Azerbaijan (in office 1210-25). About Varāvini nothing further is known.

In his artistic preface Varāvini quotes from a panegyric *muwashshah qaṣida* composed by himself a verse that evokes a woman’s necklace, once again a stock feature in Persian figural poetry:

*Javāheri-ke beyoftad ze sā’ed-e ~ barand dast be-dast az barāy-e*  
*qalam-ash* *gardan-e hur*

The jewels falling down from the armband of his reed / slip from hand to hand and are taken for the neck of the Hourī.<sup>36</sup>

## 6. Illustration

To gain a better understanding of the complex forms of the *muwashshah* it would be useful if we were able to reproduce illustrations, but this crucial pictorial element is lacking in the surviving manuscripts of the early Persian prosodists and poets. However the gap is filled in *al-Mu’jam fī ma’āyīr ash’ār al-‘Ajam* (“Critical Lexicon on the Standards of Persian Poetry”), the classical Persian treatise on prosody by Shams al-Dīn Mohammad b. Qays al-Rāzī (614-630 H./ AD 1217-32), the man known to modern scholarship as Shams-e Qays.

He began writing his book in Marv, in Arabic, but as a result of the Mongol attacks he lost the rough draft. So he resigned himself to writing it again, in Shiraz, and this time in Persian. He dealt with Arabic poetics in another volume, the lost *al-Mu’rab fī ma’āyīr ash’ār al-‘Arab*.

In the *al-Mu’jam* of Shams-e Qays “we have a fuller treatment of the science of poetics than in the works of Rāduyāni and Vātṡāt. Not only are the metres and rhetorical figures analysed in greater detail, but the illustrations are far more copious and are often given at length. One section discusses with explanatory drawings such poetic eccentricities as odes composed in the shape of a tree or a bird”.<sup>37</sup>

Such poems were not eccentric fancies but pretty evocative fashions – *muwashshahāt*. In addition to the forms already mentioned by Vātṡāt, Shams-e Qays speaks of the micro-poem “inserted” (*muḥayyaz*) in the “cell” (*hayyiz*) of the hemistichs and examines the “*mutayyar*” (ornithomorph, bird-figured) and “*handasi*” (geometrical) figurative types of the *muwashshah*. The

main kinds of “interweaving, interlacement” (*tawshih*) are the “variegated” (*mutarraḥ*) and the “interwoven” (*muzallaʿ*). The latter “can be read horizontally and vertically” as on a square board. The exemplary design of the poem represents a (twin) girdle, its emblem.<sup>38</sup>

The term *muzallaʿ* means “Woven in the shape of ribs; (a bridle) marked with stripes; (cloth) partly woven, partly not”.

The word *mitraḥ* / *mutraḥ* is “a kind of garment of coarse silk ornamented with a border”, and shares its root with *mutarraḥ* “(a horse) having its head and tail white or black, and the rest of its body different”.

The term *muwashshah* in Persian linguistic use denotes “Clad with anything, especially obliquely, as a scarf or baldrick from the shoulder to the opposite side; ornamented; (verses) arranged so that the initials of each line being put together form some word or verse, an acrostic; odes with varied rhymes”.<sup>39</sup>

The “square” (*murabbaʿ*) poem, able to be read both horizontally and vertically, corresponds to the Latin *carmen cancellatum*. The Persian quatrain, an epigram, is appropriately *murabbaʿ*. Another figurative type is the *muʿaqqad* or “knotty” poem.<sup>40</sup>

Amir Khosrow, the foremost Persian poet from India, dealt with prosody in the preface to his main collection of poems, *Ghurrat al-kamāl*, and extensively in his treatise on letter-writing *Eʿjāz-e Khosravi* (Delhi, 1282-1319). He described the “new” (*jadid*) application of the “old” (*qadim*) *muwashshah* technique to the *muʿammā* “puzzle”, an intricate rhetorical figure and poem which he often composed in the form of a quatrain.<sup>41</sup>

When the Mongol Ghazan Khan reigned over Persia (1295-1304) the *muwashshah* was used to elaborate the king’s epithets in an artistical way for the royal seals.<sup>42</sup> It is likely that this diplomatic usage in the Mongol royal chancellery goes back to a tradition predating the reign of Ghazan Khan.

A good illustrated manuscript of Shams-e Qays’s *al-Muʿjam fī maʿāyir ashʿār al-ʿAjam*, copied by Mahmud Tāj al-Dīn b. Hosayn b. Yusof al-Hoseyni (Saturday 29 *jumādā al-awwal* 739 H. / 14 November 1338), shows a crossword poem displayed as a chess-board, together with a *mushajjar*-type *muwashshah*, and also an example of the “geometrical” type.<sup>43</sup>

In the first scene (see **Plate 1** below), a couple of high-ranking people are playing with amatory words while a quatrain hangs from the tree like a sign-board. The alternating words in black and red, mostly repeated and contrasted by *bi*, “without” / *bā*, “with”, create a perfect cross-reading, thus:

<i>az ferqat-e</i>	<i>ān delbar</i>	<i>man dāyem</i>	<i>bimār-am</i>
<i>ān delbar</i>	<i>k-az ʿeshq-ash</i>	<i>bā-dar-ham</i>	<i>o bidād-am</i>

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<i>man dāyem</i>	<i>bā-dar-ham</i>	<i>bi-munes</i>	<i>o bi-yār-am</i>
<i>bimār-am</i>	<i>o bidād-am</i>	<i>o bi-yār-am</i>	<i>o ghamkhwār-am</i>
	***	***	
For the absence of	<i>the sweetheart</i>	myself always	<i>I am infirm</i>
<i>The sweetheart</i>	for whose love	<i>I am upset</i>	and oppressed
Myself always	<i>I am upset</i>	friendless	<i>without the lover</i>
<i>I am infirm</i>	and oppressed	<i>without the lover</i>	and afflicted.

### 7. Perspective

When he deals with the “*handasi*” (geometrical) type, Shams-e Qays quotes a panegyric by an anonymous poet who created a suggestive figural poem by having lines that were written in every direction, then partly upside down, and tracing a labyrinthine course (see **Plate 2** below).

We may view this figure in several perspectives: as a play on isometric, symmetric-specular, architectural or tridimensional forms; as an *intextus* poem falling within the category of “objectual” or “concrete” poetry; and as a poetic work created as an art-object.

The course of the script, which in **Plate 2** can be read as an allegorical figure of a person holding a big rhomb in his hands, or the mapped stages of a journey, proceeds in boustrophedon fashion; some strips and words are written upside down. The reader is advised to rotate the page slowly through 360°, so that both the symmetrical design and the twofold text become fully apparent.

Its clue can be disentangled when one observes the red reference-points marking the micropoem contained in the main crossing area, the centre of which is in the shape of a large rhomb. The principal figure appears as the rhomboidal buckle of the interlaced belt, the core of the poem and the eventual arrival point of the journey.

The core text of the geometrical panegyric is the following single mesostich:

*ānkaṣ k-az bakht rawshanāyi juyad ~ bā hājeḥ Nasr āshenāyi juyad*

Who from the wheel of Fortune seeks the light, seeks the acquaintance  
with Victory’s might.

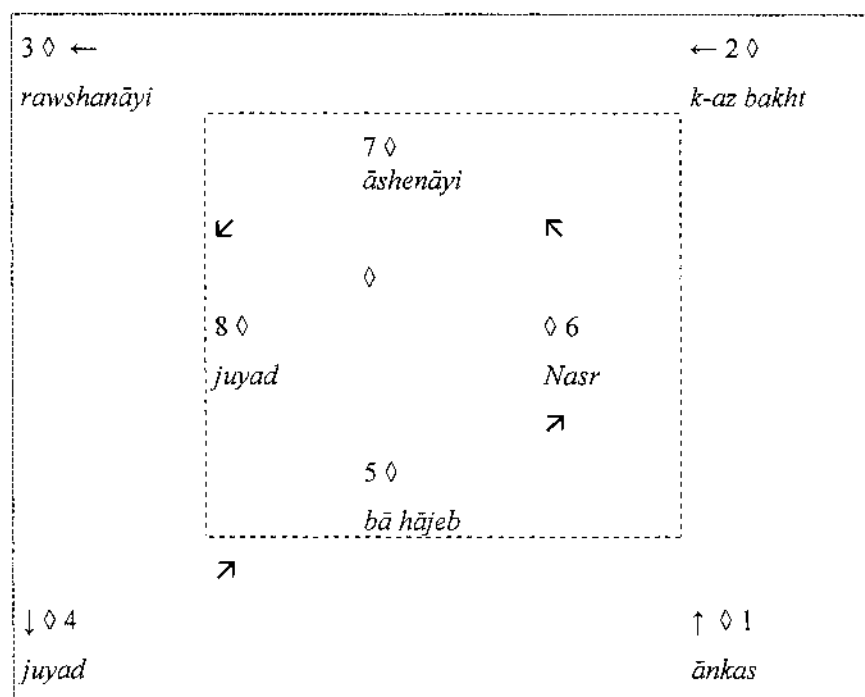
This motto probably evokes the prosperous sign of a royal investiture. For

instance the Persian historian Gardizi (AD 1050) informs us that “Nasr the chamberlain (*hājeb*) carried the ring, the rod and the mantle of the Prophet Muhammad beside the new Abbasid Caliph al-Hādī” (169 H./AD 785) when he stayed in Tabaristan, the Caspian mountain region of Iran.<sup>44</sup>

Another famous personage, Nasr b. Qatib ruler of Mecca, met the conqueror Alexander arriving in Arabia from India via Egypt, or so Ferdowsi relates (c. AD 1000) in his Alexander-romance.<sup>45</sup>

The central rhomb of the *intextus* panegyric may recall implicitly “the square house of light” (*murabba' khāne-ye nur*), in other words the Ka'ba. The discovery of the message set at the heart of the poem involves searching it out along a labyrinthine route. This may involve hopping across squares, a bit like the game of snakes and ladders.

The red words forming the emblematic mesostich are to be found by easy stages, as they are located in eight little squares  $\square$  appearing as rhombs  $\diamond$  where the words are written diagonally and upside down (2, 4, 5, 8). The following diagram indicates the way in which the text should be read:



The vertical and diagonal arrows indicating the direction of travel suggest the direction of movement of rooks and bishops on a chess-board. It is known, incidentally, that the poet Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zuhr (Iberia,

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12th century) combined the vocation of being a writer of Arabic *muwashshahāt* with that of being a keen chess-player.<sup>46</sup>

**8. Pattern**

We find a neat example of *muwashshah* as figural poetry contained within the two columns of a 23-line bilingual and panegyric *qasida* dedicated to an unnamed King in celebration of the unveiling of his castle or palace (see **Plate 3** below).

This poem – a poem which Shams-e Qays (without naming the author) offers as his main model for the *muwashshah* and for standard *tawshih* technique (see **Plate 4** below) – features a belt secured by a rhomboid buckle or a lozenge-shaped baldric.

The upper twin string, a vertical line in Arabic, introduces the rhomboid Persian text, while the lower twin string states its quality. We point out the 23 clew-lines of the two-faced *muwashshah*, a quite symmetrical twin poem: (a) one telestich, which takes in order the final letters of the words ending the lines; (b) one acrostic; (c) a twin mesostich; a+b+c forms a double girdle or twin baldric, as the model is didactically repeated.

The poetic structure is as follows:

Column A	Column B
In the area of the <i>Hemistichs</i>	
The final letters form one Arabic telestich	The initial letters form one Arabic acrostic
The <i>Upper band</i> holding the inner poem carries its heading	its heading
In the area of the <i>Memostichs</i> we have A rhomboid Persian quatrain	A rhomboid Persian quatrain
The <i>Lower band</i> holding the twin quatrain states the technique being represented	the genre of poem being represented

The text can thus be read as follows:

(Note that Column A represents the right-hand column in the illustration at **Plate 4**)

Column A	Column B
<p>[Telestich]</p> <p><i>Hadhā al-banā banā al-majd wa al-karam</i></p> <p>This is the building, the building of glory and virtue.</p>	<p>[Acrostic]</p> <p><i>Lā zāla murtafi'an fī al-'izz al-nu'm</i></p> <p>May he [the King] not cease raising in glory and prosperity!</p>
<p>[Heading]</p> <p><i>Fī wasf qasr al-malik dāma mulkuhu</i></p> <p>On praising the castle of the King, may his reign persist!</p>	<p><i>Fī madh al-malik 'azza nasruhu abadan</i></p> <p>On commending the King, may his glory eternally triumph!</p>
<p>[Mesostich]</p> <p><i>Gu'i hame hāl nāz āmad bāz</i></p> <p>~ <i>k-az khold be-juz nāz na-shod paydā rāz</i>  <i>in farrokh qasr khold-e naqd āmad bāz</i>  ~ <i>k-az khold basi nikutar-ash āmad sāz</i></p> <p>Anyway, thou would say, the grace was unveiled, as from paradise did not appear a mystery but the grace.</p> <p>This lucky castle like an earthly paradise is opened, set up in a much finer way than the heavenly one.</p>	<p>[Mesostich]</p> <p><i>Mohr-e malek asl-e 'ezz o jāh ast ma-rā</i></p> <p>~ <i>fakhr-e hame 'omr madh-e shāh ast ma-rā</i>  <i>del bā tarab ast o nāz gāh ast ma-rā</i>  ~ <i>v-az bakht-e be-farr-e madh rāh ast ma-rā</i></p> <p>The King's seal is the root of honour and rank for me, the boast of lifetime is the praise of the King for me.</p> <p>The heart is joyful and the place a grace for me, as by chance the way is that glorious praise for me.</p>
<p>[Statement]</p> <p><i>Sefat-e tavshih in-ast</i></p> <p>This is the form known as <i>tavshih</i>.</p>	<p><i>Methāl-e muwashshah in-ast</i></p> <p>This is the model known as <i>muwashshah</i>.</p>

As an item of apparel the inscribed fabric belt was suitable for both men and women. If we view the twin rhomboid figure upright, it appears as a kind of lozenge-shaped collar; if we view it horizontally, moving the page through 90°, it appears as a girdle. As a vertical "zonē" the twin monumental inscription would have been suitable for decorating the twin towers of a castle or the doors of a palace.

This figure can also be found elsewhere. For instance as a written girdle on a Qur'an in the archaic scroll form; also as a rhomboidal medallion with



pendants, to be found on the central decoration of bookbindings (the “doors” of a manuscript), classically since the 14th century.<sup>47</sup>

It should be noted that during this epoch Persian poets came to prefer the short lyric *ghazal* to the panegyric *qasida* and its *muwashshah* form. As a result the classical figural poem fell into disuse.

## NOTES

*Abbreviation:* Steingass = F. Steingass, *A comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary including the Arabic words and phrases to be met with in Persian literature*, London 1892 (7th impression 1984).

1. Ed Emery kindly offered me the opportunity of attending this Conference, for which I have selected, reworked and varied the contents of an earlier paper ‘Muwaššah carme intessuto’, in *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Aurelio Roncaglia a cinquant'anni dalla sua laurea*, Modena 1989, III, pp. 1037-55.
2. *P. Porphyrii Optatiani Carmina*, ed. by G. Polara, I, Torino 1972, pp. 27, 50. Rhomb: an equilateral parallelogram; lozenge.
3. *Monumenta Germaniae Historicae, Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, ed. E. Duemmler, I, Berlin 1881, pp. 153, 225, 482; IV, ed. M. Strecher, 1923, p. 929.
4. Rabanus Maurus, *Opera Omnia*, in J. P. Migne (Ed.), *Patrologia Latina*, 112, Paris 1851, columns 1579-84. Reprint Turnholt (Belgium), 1977.
5. Giovanni Pozzi, “Gli artifici figurati del linguaggio poetico e l'iconismo”, *Strumenti Critici*, X, 1976, pp. 349-83, at pp. 358-9.
6. Giorgio Raimondo Cardona, *Storia universale della scrittura*, Milano 1986, pp. 66-9, pl. 14.
7. Michel Lagarde, *La Magie Arabe*, Pontificio Istituto di Studi Orientali, Roma 1981, pp. 17, 19-20, 34, 36. Also Alexander Fodor, “A Talismanic Chart in the Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait”, in G. Canova (Ed.), *Quaderni di Studi Arabi. Studi e testi.3. Scienza e Islam*, Roma 1999, pp. 93-111, figs. 1-2, 4. I was not able to see Charles Burnett's paper “The ‘translation’ of diagrams and illustrations from Arabic into Latin”, presented at the Conference *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts* held in London on 17-18th September 2004.
8. J. Herber, “Les tatouages des bras de la Marocaine”, *Hespéris*, XXXVIII, 1951, pp. 299-325, pl. II, IV-VI. Also Barbara Fiore, “Arabe arabescate. Note sul simbolismo dei tatuaggi maghrebini”, *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 4, 1981, pp. 33-41; and Taher Sahabi, *Tappeti d'Oriente, arte e tradizione*, Novara 1986 (patterns pp. 21, 35, 51; glossary, 432; “ertmen gul”, 444; Kasin-Ushang, 448; Tsiteli-Tskaro, 456; Qashqai carpet, 160, 163, 170-1; Iran, 182-90).
9. Nicolò de' Rossi, *Canzoniere Sivigliano*, ed. A. Salem Elsheikh, Milano-Napoli 1973, pp. 158-60. Also Furio Brugnolo, *Il Canzoniere di Nicolò de' Rossi*, Padova 1977, II, pp. 258-68.
10. Giovanni Pozzi, *La parola dipinta*, Milano 1981, pp. 26, 43, 242-4, 297, 340, 349. Idem, *Poesia per gioco. Prontuario di figure artificiose*, Bologna 1984, pp. 16, 39-47, 71-7. Armando Petrucci, *La scrittura. Ideologia e rappresentazione*, Torino 1980, pp. 127-30, 178-9.

11. Steingass, p. 1468.
12. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain: extracted from the Nafhu-t-tib [...] by [...] al-Makkari*, transl. Pascual de Gayangos, London 1840, I, p. 409, note 14. Also R.P.A. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes*, Amsterdam 1845, pp. 429-30.
13. Al-Washshā', *Kitāb al-Muwashshā*, ed. by R. E. Brünnow, Leyden 1886, p. 167. Also R.B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles. Material for a history up to the Mongol conquest*, Beirut 1972, p. 203.
14. Friedrich Dübner, *Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina*, Parisiis 1864, I, p. 82, epigram V.158. *Decimi Magni Ausonii Burdigalensis Opuscula*, ed. Sextus Prete, Leipzig 1978, p. 325, epigram XCVI.
15. A.M. Piemontese, "Aspetti magici e valori funzionali della scrittura araba", *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 5, 1982, pp. 26-55. Also idem, "L'Atlante di seta", *L'Uomo. Società tradizione sviluppo*, n. s. III/2, 1990, pp. 387-94.
16. *Abulfedae Annales Moslemici arabice et latine*, ed. Iohannes I. Reiske and Iacobus G.C. Adler, Hafniae 1790, II, p. 179 and note 167 at p. 689.
17. Sharaf al-Dīn Rāmi, *Anisu al-'usshāq va chand asar-e digar*, ed. Mohsen Kayāni, (Mirā) Tehran [1376/1989], pp. 96-7, 157.
18. Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Tansukh-nāme-ye Ilkhāni*, ed. Modarres Razavi, Tehran 1348/1969, p. 94. Also Ž. Vesel, I. Afshar, P. Mohebbi, "'Le Livre des Pierres pour Nezām [al-Molk] (Javāher-nāme-ye Nezāmī) (592/1195-6)': La source présumée du Tansukh-nāme-ye Ilkhāni de Tūsī", in N. Pourjavady and Ž. Vesel (eds.), *Nasir al-Din Tūsī philosophe et savant du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Téhéran 2000, pp. 145-76.
19. Steingass, p. 1131. Also I. Mohammad Amin Adīb-e Tusi, *Farhang-e loghāt-e adabi*, Tabriz 1346/1968, II, pp. 814-15; and V. Mozaffarian, *A Dictionary of Iranian Plant Names: Latin, English, Persian*, Tehran 1996, p. 542.
20. Piero Guelfi Caiamani, *Dizionario Araldico*, Hoepli, Milano 1940, pp. 342-7, figs. 363-70.
21. A. Pagliaro and A. Bausani, *Storia della letteratura persiana*, Milano 1960, pp. 527-40. Also Jan Rypka, *A History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht 1968, pp. 91-8, 133-48, 432-3; and L.P. Elwell-Sutton, *The Persian Metres*, Cambridge 1976; and Jerome W. Clinton, "Court Poetry at the Beginning of the Classical Period", in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Persian Literature*, New York 1988, pp. 75-95.
22. Farrokhi-e Sistāni, *Divān*, ed. M. Dabir Siyāqi, Tehran 1349/1970, pp. 95, 270, 315, lines 1811, 5350, 6344.
23. Bo Utas, "Did 'Adhra remain a Virgin?", *Orientalia Suecana*, XXXIII-XXXV, 1984-1986, pp. 429-41. Also Dick Davis, *Panthea's Children: Hellenistic Novels and Mediaeval Persian Romances*, New York 2002, pp. 29-36. In my review of this book (*Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, LXXVI, 2002, pp. 282-4) I cite the relevant texts of Dionisios Periegetes and Eusthatios from Carolus Müllerus, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, Paris 1882, II, pp. 124, 280.
24. 'Onsori-e Balkhi, *Divān*, ed. M. Dabir Siyāqi, Tehran 1342/1963, p. 28, line 328.
25. L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "The foundations of Persian prosody and metrics", *Iran*, XIII, 1975, pp. 75-97, at p. 95.

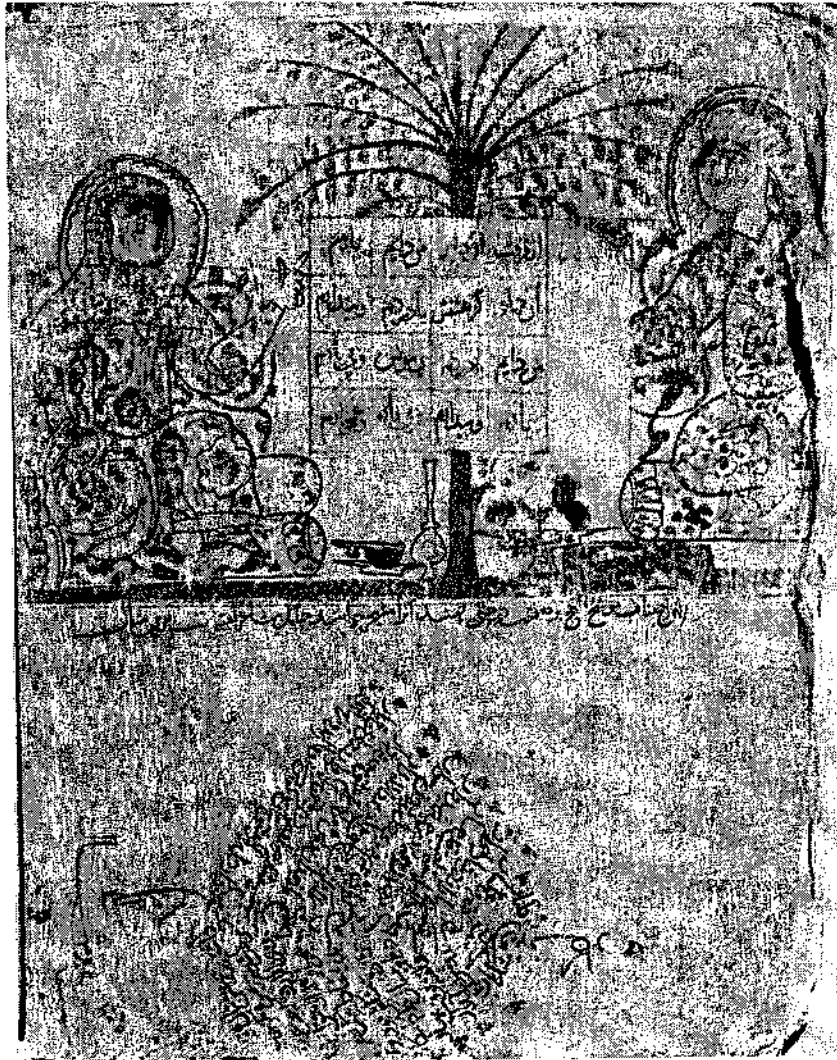
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26. Mohammad b. 'Omar al-Rāduyāni, *Tarjumān al-balāgha*, ed. Ahmed Ateş, Istanbul 1949 (repr. Tehran 1362/1983), pp. 105-6.
27. Mohammad Ja'far Zarrinkub, *Sabk-e Khorāsāni dar she'r-e fārsi*, Tehran [1342/1993], pp. 20, 144, 404.
28. I use "gifted" to translate the textual term *sa'tari*: "Lascivious (woman), one who uses a dildo; the practice itself"; *sa'tar* "A dildo, or artificial penis; a woman that loves a woman" < Arabic *sa'tar* "Origan, marjoram" (Steingass, p. 682).
29. Dhābiḥollāh Safā, *Tārikh-e adabiyāt dar Irān*, II, Tehran 1336/1957, pp. 547-51.
30. A.M. Piemontese, "La proporzione dipinta nel canone persiano", *Critica del testo*, III/1 (2000), pp. 111-43.
31. 'Abdo'l-Hoseyn Sa'idiyān, *Mardomān-e Irān* [The Peoples of Iran], Tehran 1375/1996, pp. 638-9.
32. Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge 1928, II, pp. 80-1.
33. Of course according to the author's text the term *beh* "better, best" comes out altering the Arabic letters <n> vs <b>, the *tā' marbūta* <f> vs <h> and the vowel <a> vs <i> in the former word *amānati*.
34. Rashid al-Dīn Vatvāt, *Hadāyiq al-sihr fī daqāyiq al-shi'r*, ed. 'Abbās Eqbāl, Tehran 1362/1983, p. 60.
35. Mehdi Setāyeshgar, *Vāzhe-name-ye musiqi-e Irān-zamin*, Tehran 1375/1996, II, p. 463.
36. Sa'd al-Dīn Varāvini, *Marzbān-nāme*, ed. M. Rowshan, Tehran 1368/1989, I, pp. 14-15. Also *The Tales of Marzuban*, transl. Reuben Levy, Bloomington 1959.
37. A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, London 1958, pp. 242-3.
38. Shams al-Dīn Mohammad b. Qays al-Rāzi, *al-Mu'jam fī ma'āyir ash'ār al-'ajam*, ed. Mohammad Qazvini and Modarres Razavi, Tehran 1338/1959 (formerly 1314/1925), pp. 390-400. First edition by Mirzā Mohammad Qazvini, London 1909.
39. Steingass, pp. 1258, 1260, 1345.
40. On this, see Friedrich Rükert, *Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser. Nach dem siedende bande des Heft Kōlzum dargestellt*, ed. by W. Pertsch, Gotha 1874 (reprint, Onasbrück-Wiesbaden 1966), pp. 144-84.
41. Amir Khosrov-e Dehlavi, *E'jāz-e Khosravi*, Lucknow 1868, II, *Risāla* III, pp. 100-4.
42. Rashid al-Dīn Fadlallāh Hamadāni, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, ed. M. Roushan, Tehran 1373/1994, I, p. 8; II, pp. 1278-9, 1404.
43. Tehran, Ketābkhāne-ye Majles-i Shourā-ye Eslāmi shomāre-ye 2 (Senā-ye sābeq) [Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly Number 2, old Senate Library], miscellaneous MS 1417, ff. 102v, 103r. Also Iraj Afshār, "Do tasvīr az al-Mu'jam", *Rahnemā-yi Ketāb*, XII, 1953/1974, pp. 141-5; and Mohammad Taqi Dāneshpazhuh and Bahā al-Dīn 'Elmi Anvari, *Fehrest-e kotob-e khatti-e Majles-e Shourā-ye Eslami shomāre-ye 2 (Senā-ye sābeq)*, Tehran 1359/1980, II, p. 250.
44. Abu Sa'id Gardizi, *Tārikh-e Gardizi*, ed. 'Abd al-Hayy Habibi, Tehran 1363/1984, p. 156.
45. Abou'l Kasim Firdousi, *Le Livre des Rois*, ed. and transl. J. Mohl, vol. V, Paris 1866 (reprint 1976), pp. 155-8.

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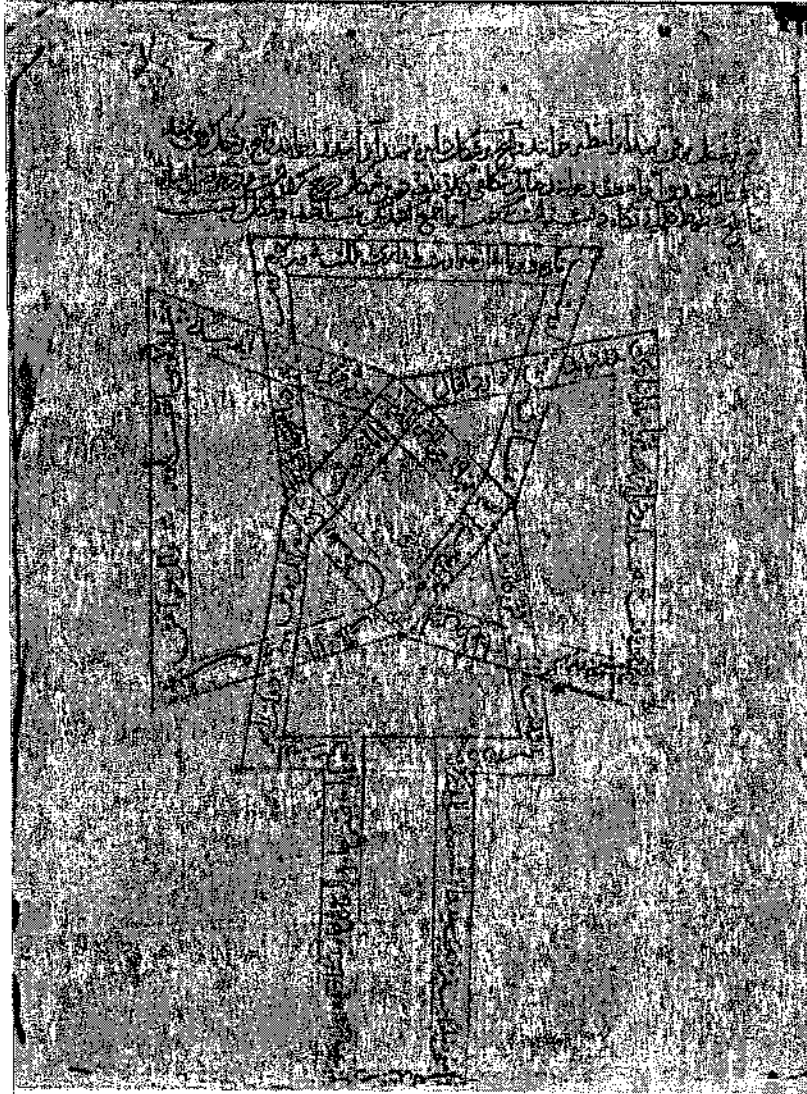
46. R. Arnaldez, 'Ibn Zuhr', in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, III, Leiden-Paris 1971, p. 1003.

47. Yasin Hamid Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, London 1978, p. 20. See also Oktay Aslantapa, "The Art of Bookbinding", in B. Gray (Ed.), *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia 14th-16th Centuries*, Boulder, Colorado, 1979, pp. 59-91.



**PLATE I**

The *muwashshah* sign-board on the tree. Beneath it, a *mushajjar* type of *muwashshah*.  
Source: Shams-e Qays. Tehran, Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly number 2 (old Senate Library), MS 1417, f. 102v; copyist Mahmud Tāj al-Din al-Hoseyni, 739 H. / AD 1338.



**PLATE 2**

A geometrical form of *muwashshah*. Source: Shams-e Qays. Tehran, Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly number 2 (old Senate Library), MS 1417, f. 103r; copyist Mahmud Tāj al-Din al-Hoseyni, 739 H. / AD 1338.

خوش چربی و شکر فی صنما باذہ بجواه	خطه بی صافی	منشین عمر مگاہ
تا کتم لودیل و جان و من ریخ و زلف ترا	از برای طرب و میح می و عشر تکاہ	
خوش در ای خوردن تصویر ملک خرم و شاذ	ز تکبر لمن اللاک چه خوانی بر شاه	
نرسد خوردن لکن اللاک درین قصر ترا	اکرت چند بود غمز و فرود خوبی چوہ	
ہم رہائی دہد از دام دو زلف تو مرا	لطف مذاحی شہ نصو دین ظل الہ	
آنک و قفست بود ملک و تا بید و جلال	ملک العرش مرود ابد اللہ پرنساہ	
چون بچا شد کوفہ این است لرب	روشش بر کند از ہر دلیا طخواہ	
ہمہ جوست ہمہ لاکر قوج شہ لزان	تا بود ملک ازو طرب و میمون گاہ	
رو فوق حال جلال در قصر شہ ما	فرش او اصل الہ است بفصل دیہ	
روض خلد ست کز انجی خلد ست سلب	عالم عجز سعاد شد و ناز اینت براہ	
سزنا آناز کند دہر دین نقد جنان	از پی جاہ و فی فخر و شرف گاہ بگاہ	
فرخ آمد چو بکند خرد آمد شہ	فرخ است آری کین زینت ملک است و چاہ	
ناز بسیار رسد در صفتش با از مرا	یا مرا کردن با عقل کی شد مرا گاہ	
کمر چنین وصف کہ مکتب کرد دل	آورد فخر ہم عاقل از این روز راہ	
غل خلد از شونایر فن در خلد نعیم	لیچند ہمہ را تا ازہ کند بخت جاہ	
خود بجز ملک شہ ایسی دیدم هیچ	عالم از عمر نکو روی ہر از اشاہ	
خاصہ ناز در لہر بلخ ناگو نبود برد	زانک ہم بلخ کلاہ دارو بلخ کلاہ	
ہر کہ بر بلخ شد شاد و ترش روی شداد	واضعین شہ است راہ انبساہ	
ہر چہ رقیہ بید اول آمد ہر ما	ارجمہ ز بلوغاد است گناہ است گناہ	
کرده او ایاقی راز است جلال	لشکرش مرا مرا را یکہ باد افراہ	
شہ فرزدون صف آری و خصم خد	ناصحن شیر لکشا آمد و حاسد بر بولہ	
تا بود صنعت تو شیخ ز ضمین بصیر	عدل شہ باذ شیخ بدعا از افواہ	
فلاک گفته کہ ایست بحق شاہ مدام	ملکش گفته کہ ایست ملک بی آکراہ	

PLATE 3

The most typical Persian *muwashshah qasida* according to the prosodist Shams-e Qays.

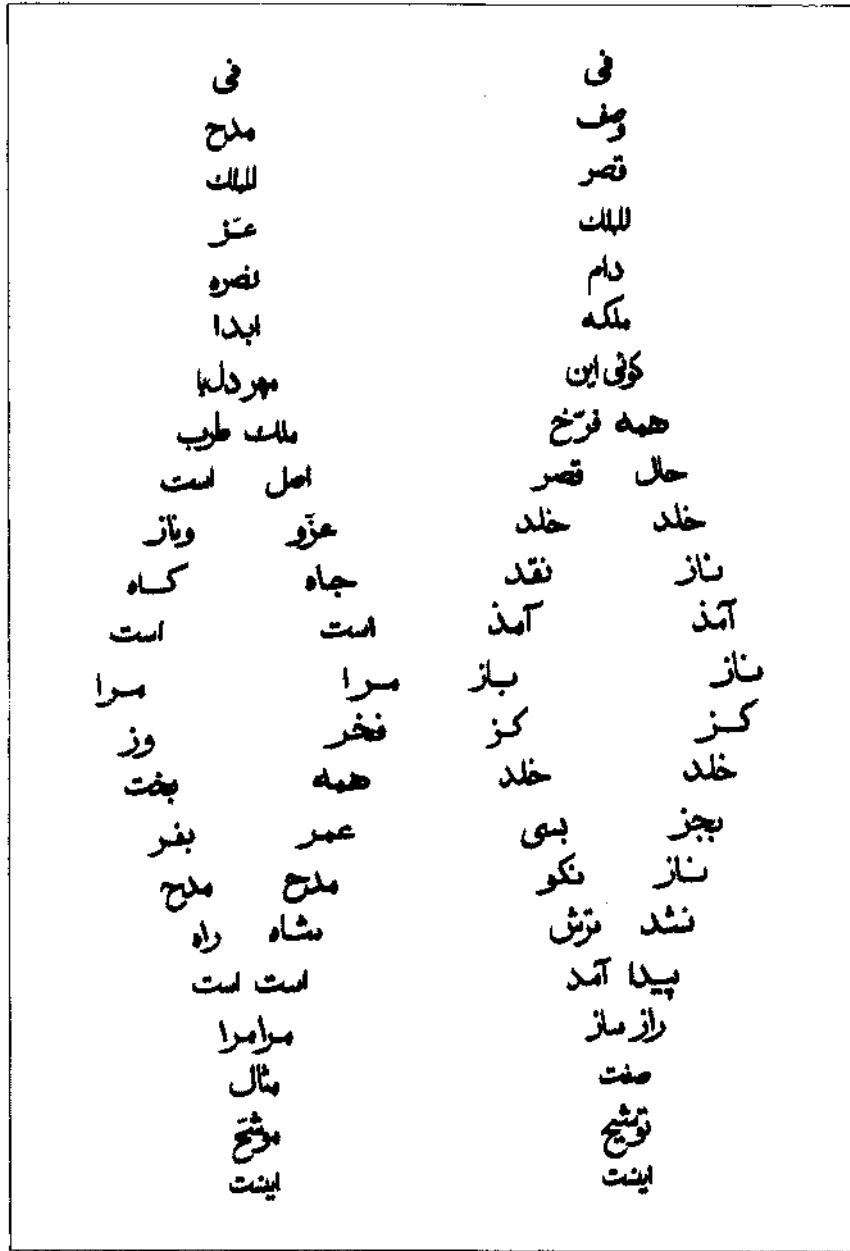


PLATE 4

The pattern of the girdle, extracted from Plate 3.

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