

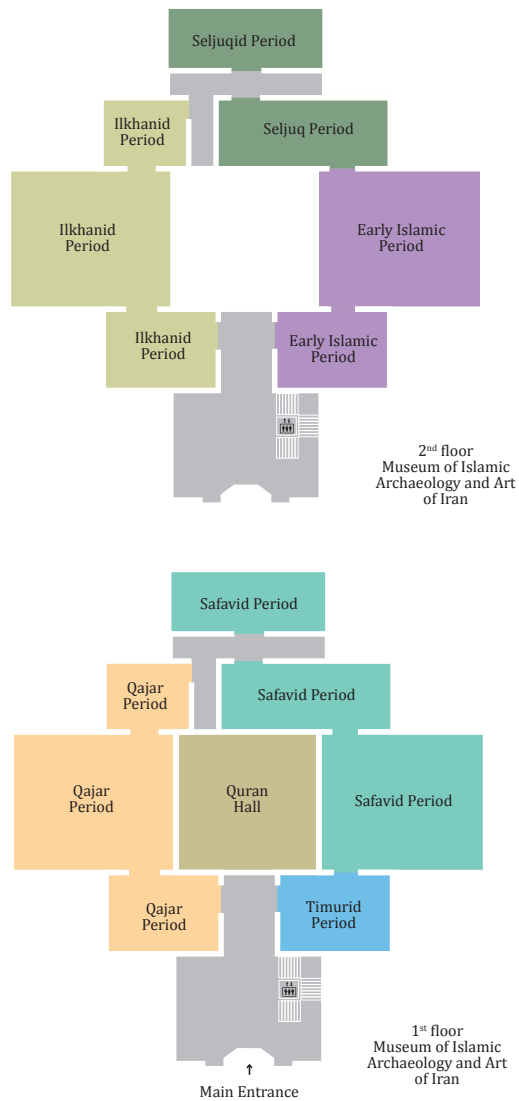


National Museum of Iran

Museum of Islamic Archaeology and Art of Iran



The octagonal plan of the Museum of Islamic Archaeology and Art of Iran is inspired by the Sassanid palace at Bishapur and covers some 4000 square meters with three floors as a state Museum and a part of National Museum of Iran belong to Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handi Crafts and Tourism Organization. The building was renovated and reopened in 1996. In the summer of 2006 another restoration and reconstruction phase began and the new museum was reopened in 2015. The ground floor was allotted for the auditorium and the temporary exhibition hall. The Islamic artifacts are exhibited chronologically in first and second floors. The second floor contains the early Islamic, Saljuq and Ilkhanid periods and the first floor houses the holy Quran hall, and artifacts of the Timurid, Safavid, Afshar, Zand and Qajar periods. A large number of objects in these exhibition halls come from scientific excavations and famous collections such as those from Sheikh Saffi Al-Din Ardebili.



A general view of Museum of Islamic Archaeology and Art of Iran

The early Islamic artifacts show remarkable influenced by the Sassanian art, which makes it difficult to distinguish the early Islamic style from that of the Sasanian. During the late 8th and early 9th A. D., artists utilized the Kufic inscriptions of the Quran as the first decorative element of the Islamic art. This period was contemporary with the formation of the Iranian dynasties such as the Taherid, the Buyid, the Samanid, and the Ghaznavid, among which the art of the Buyid was superior. The copies of the Quran of this period were written with the Kufic inscriptions on Parchment with gilded decorations. In early Islamic times Nishabur, Rey, Gorgan, Susa and Siraf became trade centers for different artistic and utilitarian crafts such as pottery, glass work and



Stucco plaque with Kufic inscription 9-10th centuries AD

Double-faced silk cloth double - wefted Rey style 10th century AD



textile. In architecture, most of the early Islamic period buildings were decorated by stucco working technique and fresco. Sabz Pushan palace in Nishabur and Rey Arg, near Tehran are two such examples.

The art of pottery making reached its zenith. Molded decorated pottery, glazed and plain as well as painted decorations covered with transparent glaze, splash and lustre wares



Ummayyad Coins (Valid - ebn Abd al Malik), 707-717 AD



Pottery deep bowl
Neyshabur, 9th-10th centuries A.D.



Pottery deep bowl
Neyshabur style
10th century A.D.

Islamic coins with the name of rulers, kings and places are shown.

Rey and Nishabur were two important cities for textile industry. Rey was well known because of its silk and double wefted fabrics, while Susa and Shushtar became famous for their "Taraz" textiles.

The oldest textile in this hall is a piece of double face silk cloth that was discovered from the Rey excavations; this fabric was decorated with Sassanid motifs alongside the Kufic inscriptions.



Pottery bowl
Neyshabur
9th-10th centuries AD

are among the achievements of the early Islamic potters. In this period, the Persian Gulf port of Siraf port was one of the most important centers for glass work, and Nishabur became a main trade center in northeast of Iran. The glass artifacts of this city were imported to faraway cities such as Gorgan and Rey.

The metalwork of this period followed the former Sassanian style in Tabarestan and Rey. In the year 640 AD a type of silver coins (Arab-Sassanid) was produced, on which the face of the Sassanian king was accompanied by Kufic inscriptions of "Bismillah" and "Bismillah-e Rabbi" that is, "in the name of God" and "in the name of God, our Lord." On the obverse of such coins the name of Sassanian king with Pahlavi inscriptions was retained. A few decades later, coins were minted without the face of Sasanian kings. During the year 696 AD the Dinar gold coins were minted on which the Tohid sura was written on one side. From the year 698 AD production of the Arab-Sassanid coin was abandoned. In this hall the visitor can see types of the early Is-

The beginning of the Seljuq dynasty on the 11th century AD ushered a new period in the social and political arenas in Iran. The Seljuq converted to Islam and began a magnificent period in art and architecture. Drawing of the art and craft tradition they inherited, the Seljuqs developed new styles in art and architecture. Pottery and glass ware industries flourished in Gorgan, Rey and Kashan, with Rey as one of the well known art centers of this period.

Utilizing the frit (glass paste) in pottery industry was one of the most important techniques, which was used in numerous fine vessels with milky-color glaze.



Fragment of a brick
work inscription
Nezamiyeh School
Khorasan Razavi
11th century AD

The Minaii ware or over glazed painted decoration with different motifs developed. Most of the motifs had been inspired by Persian stories and were influenced by the Seljuq School of painting. Metal objects inlaid with gold and silver as well as fenestrated objects and vessels were manufactured in Khorasan, Hamedan and Azerbaijan workshops. Furthermore, astronomical instruments such as astrolabes and brass globes were exquisitely made.

Very exquisite inlaid and gilded Qurans with the innovative Iranian Kufic inscription were produced. The oldest example in this hall, the Dastur-ol Lohat (Al-Khallas), dates to 1161 AD The specific coloring method of Seljuq's textiles, especially silk textiles, known as "tone and half tone", is noteworthy. In this method the wefts of rugs were rendered in low relief and brilliant in colors. Brickworks and stucco working were two common decorations in the Seljuq architectures.



Brass Astrolabe
inlaid with silver
1162 AD



Glass Decanter
Gorgan
11th century AD

The art of the Ilkhanid period illustrates a deep influence of the Persian on the non-Iranian cultures. The Mongol invasion in the early 13th AD caused a setback in art; however, beginning with the rule of Qazan Khan, a development in the social and economic spheres, the artistic productions were increased. With the Mongol invasion, most of the industrial art centers were damaged or lost their importance, resulting in the relocation of artists moved to northern Mesopotamian cities. In addition, the art metallurgy, which was formed in eastern Iran, developed in the western regions and the Iranian style in metallurgy was expanded in some cities such as Mosul. Bronze objects inlaid with gold and silver decorations were prevalent. The motifs consisted of royal scenes accompanied with Kufic and Naskh inscriptions. In addition to the Minaii ware, the most beau-

tiful lustre glaze wares were produced in Kashan, Rey and Soltan Abad. The motifs on the vessels show humans with Mongol faces and geometric decorations accompanied with Persian poems. A limited number of the Seljuq styles such as the gilded lustre glaze painted and Minaii wares and glass objects were also produced in this period. Furthermore, a type of reticulated double shelled vessel was also produced during the Ilkhanid period.

Moreover, the most beautiful lustre glaze painted tiles were used in the construction of the "Gate of Paradise" Mihrab, created by Yusef ben Ali Ibn-e Mohammad Ibn-e Abi Taher.

Kashan was one of the most important centers where lustre glaze painted tiles were produced during the 12 to 13 AD centuries. The Abi Taher clan was one of the families who were engaged in the production of such tiles. In this period, the lustre glaze monochrome painted tiles were also used in the decoration of buildings. Beside Kashan, this such tiles were also found in Takht-e Soleiman and Gorgan.

Coincided with Khajeh Rashid-al Din, the Persian minister of the Mongol dynasty of Ilkhanids, the art of book-binding was developed and a number of exquisite decorated books were created. Calligraphers such as Ahmad Sohrevardi, Yaghut Mosta'semi and Arghon Kameli played an important role in the

development of calligraphy. One of the magnificent books on geography, written by Abu Eshaq Ebrahim ben Mohammad Farsi Estakhri (alias Karkhi), was Masalek al Mamalek. Abolmahasen Mohammad Ibn-i Nakhjavani (alias Ibn-e Savoji) rewrote the book in 1347 AD. This book was registered in 2008 as a word heritage.



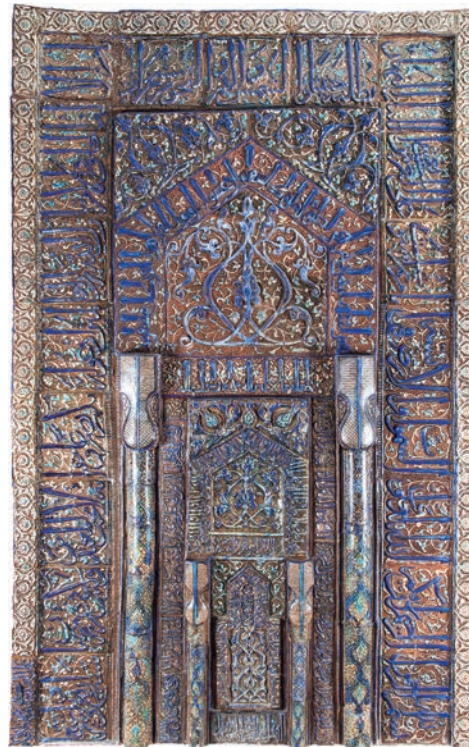
Bronze candlestick
inlaid with silver
Bouzinjerd
Hamadan
12th-13th centuries AD



Masalek-al Mamalek
1347 AD
This book was
registered in 2008 as
a word heritage.



Stucco mihrab
Jame' Mosque
Oshtorjan
Isfahan
1308 AD



Tile mihrab
luster painted
known as Paradise Gate
1333 AD



Double - shelled pottery jug
Gorgan
12th-13th centuries AD

The First Floor

With the formation of the Timurid Dynasty in the late 14th and early 15th A.D., its capital city Samarqand became a major center for art and architecture. Timur invited most of the contemporary glassblowers to Samarqand; consequently Samarqand became the glass art center of the period.

Timur's sons, Shahrokh, Ologh Beyk and Baysonghor Mirza encouraged different industries and arts, especially bookbinding. The apex of these arts were calligraphy, illuminating, bookbinding and paper industry. One of the most important achievements of the Timurid period was emergence of the Herat School in painting.

During this period, Herat, Tabriz, Kashan and Kerman were the most important centers for textile and carpet industries. At the end of the Ilkhanid period and the following early Timurid period, the art of tile making reached its most sophisticated stage by the development of the "Moarraaq" technique. In this technique, artists used white, dark blue, yellow, turquoise and green colors. The technique of Moarraaq flourished during the 15th century A.D. in Mashhad and Esfahan. Under glazed painting, monochrome and blue and white potteries with different Iranian and Chinese motives were also common.



Holy Quran
Mohaqqaq Script
Signed by Ahmad
Sohravardi
14th century A.D.

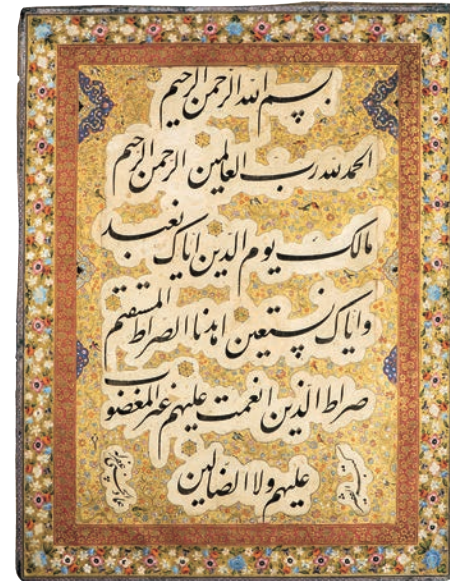
The center of art and architecture was relocated from Herat to Tabriz and then to Qazvin and finally to Isfahan with the rise of the Safavids in the 16th century AD. During this period, in addition to academic and literary texts with beautiful calligraphies and the Herat and Isfahan schools of paintings, very exquisite Qurans were written in the Naskh and Solth styles of calligraphy with gilding decorations were produced. Calligraphers such as Emad Al-Hasani (Mir Emad) and Alireza Abbasi created wonderful works of art. One of the most beautiful Nastaliq calligraphies was the Quranic Hamd sura by Mir Emad.

The beginning of the oil painting was contemporaneous with the end of

Miniature paintings in this period. Exquisite pen cases and mirror frames were produced. The Isfahan school of painting developed, which was an Iranian school and was different from the Timurid schools.

During the Safavid period calligraphy either directly written (calico/ghalamkar) on or woven into textiles developed.

In this hall a piece of textile with Quran verses is shown, in which the sentences are written in the Kufic, Solth, Ghoobar and Naskh script and is decorated with lapis lazuli, vermilion, gold and saffron. This textile was created by Yusof Al-Ghobari by the order of the king Shah Tahmasb as a votive of Abol-



Page of calligraphy
signed by Emad
al-Hasani
17th century AD



Shah Abbas victory
garment
17th century AD

fath Mirza Shah Esmail Safavi in order to present it to the shrine of Sheikh Saffi Al-Din Ardebili, his ancestor tomb.

Another example is related to calligraphy on textile, the famous Shirt of Ayat Al-Korsi (victory of garment), also known as "Nad-e Ali" Shirt. This shirt had phylactery function and was used in the case of sickness,

problems and even in wars under armors to protect its owner from dangers.

Carpet weaving industry and art decorated with images of flowerpots, garden scenes, inscriptions, Mihrab (prayer niche) as well as bergamot motifs reached their zenith. Carpets made of silk, metal tread and wool were also made and developed.

In addition, a number of beautiful metal repoussé and fenestrated works were created in the workshops of western Iran and Isfahan. Furthermore, the in-



Tile, Neyshabur
Khorasan Razavi
16th-17th centuries AD

ters to Iran to recreate this art and industry in Shiraz and Isfahan.

Also presented in this hall are a number of beautiful Moarraḡ tiles, which were different from the former Timurid types, were produced. The "Haft Rang Tile" or seven colors tile was characteristic in this period. Generally a number of different colors were utilized to paint this type of tile.

Cotton cloth
Kufic, Thulyth and
Ghoḡar script
1538 AD



dustry of blue and white pottery was common in Kerman, Mashhad and Yazd.

Shah Abbas was interested in the blue and white porcelain and started to collect exquisite examples. He endowed all these vessels to his ancestor's shrine, Sheikh Saffi Al-Din Ardebili. Most of the vessels exhibited in this hall bear the Shah Abbas's endowment seal.

During the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods the glass working art was forgotten in most of the cities in Iran. When Shah Abbas was presented with Venice glasses, he invited the glassblower mas-

Although the Qajar period artifacts do not show the high level of elegance of their Safavid predecessors. Nevertheless, Shiraz, in a limited way, played a similar role to Isfahan during the rule of Karim Khan Zand, who built a number public, citadels, and religious buildings in Shiraz.

Some of arts such as carpet weaving industry developed noticeably. The workshops in Kerman, Kashan, Arak, Isfahan produced beautiful carpets. In Isfahan velvet weaving and cashmere art in Kerman and Qalamkari Qalamkar (Calico) were common.

The short inter-episodes of political events during the Afshar and Zand dynasties had profound impact on formation of the Qajar period. The Afshar and Zand art styles had deep relationship to their former cultures on the one hand, and were influenced by social and political situations of their era, on the other.

In the 18th and 19th centuries some arts such as inlay and mirror-work on wood as well as gilded iron and Minakari (enamel working and decorating metals with colorful and baked coats) were produced. During the Qajar period metallurgy, especially steel working and weapon technology also developed. The Safavid art of "seven-color" glazed tiles continued into this period as well.



Pair of Gold Earring
Enameled and Inlaid
North of Iran
19th century AD

Steel Statue
Inlaid with gold
13th century AD



Historical themes, portraits of kings and princes and natural scenes were the main subjects of painting, but he style was heavily influenced by the contemporary European style. Such subjects also appeared on pen holders, mirror frames and murals. In the style of painting known as Qahveh Khaneh (Coffee shop style), epic scenes from the Shahnameh, particularly those of the battle of Rostam and Sohrab, were common, and became a separate artistic genre. The art of calligraphy further developed by the invention of the cursive Nastaliq script. The appearance of stone press resulted in the production of illustrated books.

In the Islamic culture, Quran is considered as the main base of different activities of the believers. For this reason the space under the central dome of the Islamic museum's first floor is allocated to the Quran. In this hall, some copies belong to the early Islamic period and were written on parchment. One of the most interesting Qurans has Ali-Ibn-i Abitaleb's signature. The Qurans in this hall are written in Kufic, Naskh, Reyhan, Mohaghegh, Solth and Ghobar script.

In the center of this hall, a large page of the Quran, written by Baysonghor Mirza, is shown. This Quran was brought by Nader Shah from Herat to Ghuchan. It is assumed that he carried the Quran in front of his army for protection. Unfortunately, some of the pages of this Quran were burnt in his wars and other pages are scattered in various museums.

Folio from Holy Quran
probably signed by Baysonghor
Mirza
15th century AD

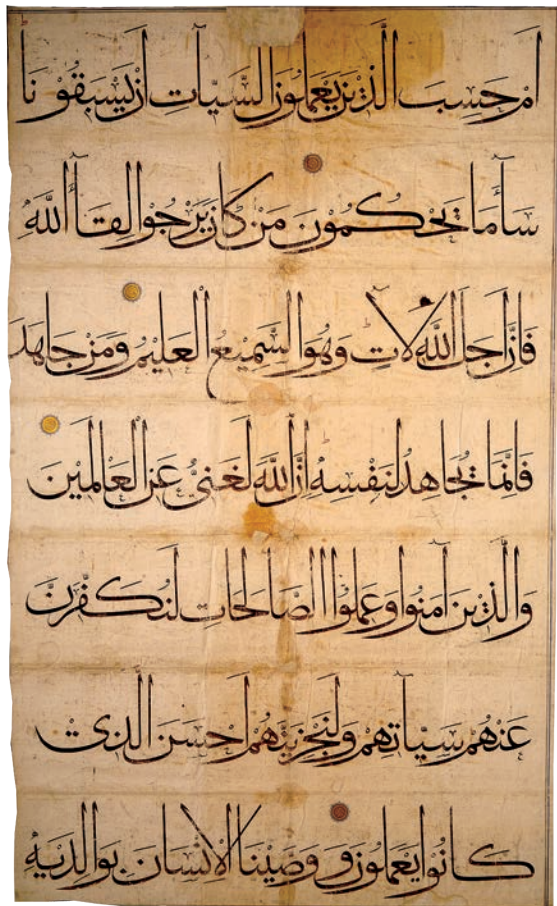


Table of Islamic periods in Iran

Periods	Dates (AD)
Tahirids	821-873
Saffarids	867-1002
Samanids	875-999
Ziyarids	928-1043
Buyids	934-989
Ghaznavids	963-1050
Saljuqs	1037-1157
Khwarazmshahids	1097-1220
Ilkhanids	1256-1336
Timurids	1370-1506
Qara Qyunlu	1380-1468
Aq Qyunlu	1378-1508
Safavids	1501-1722
Afsharids	1736-1796
Zands	1750-1794
Qajars	1789-1925
Pahlavis	1925-1978
Islamic Republic of Iran	1979

Reference:

- Birashk, A. (1988) A Three Thousand Year Comparative Chronological Tables of Iranian, Muslim Lunar, and Christian Calendars, Scientific and Cultural Publications Company, Tehran.
- Daryaei, Touraj (ed.), (2012) The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History, pp. 391-400, Oxford Publication.



Wooden door - Inlaid
Isfahan
19th century AD

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Opening hours

Spring and Summer: Daily
09-19

Fall and Winter: Daily 09-17



Bowl with underglaze slip
Nishabur, Khorasan
9th -10th centuries AD



Location map and access routes to the National Museum of Iran

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