

Keshk & Malaka, 2016

Volume 2 Issue 1, pp. 86-102

Year of Publication: 2016

DOI- <http://dx.doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2016.s21.86102>

This paper can be cited as: Keshk, S. E. A. E. & Malaka, M. A. (2016). The Islamic Decorations on Safavid Copper Coins between the Unity and Diversity in its Illustrated Decorations "Selected Models from Fujairah Museum". PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 2(1), 86-102.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

THE ISLAMIC DECORATIONS ON SAFAVID COPPER COINS BETWEEN THE UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN ITS ILLUSTRATED DECORATIONS "SELECTED MODELS FROM FUJAIRAH MUSEUM"

Shadia Eldesouky Abd El-Aziz Keshk

Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt
shdsoky@cu.edu.eg

Mohamed Ahmed Malaka

Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt

Abstract

The Museum of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates contains a collection which includes of 13 copper coins dating to the period of weakness and crisis at the end of Safavid Dynasty, during the reigns of Shah Suleiman "Safi II" (1077-1105 H./1666-1694 C.) and Shah Sultan Hussein I (1105-1135 A.H/1694-1722). The Study aims to discuss the illustrated drawings on these coins throughout the Iranian cities, the theme of the study, and other cities during the Safavid period in general; and this historical period especially which was the beginning of the end of Safavid Dynasty; with the origins of these drawings of the Safavid copper coins "Fulus" through the early Islamic Coins, and through its inclusion on the applied artifacts, such as pottery, textile, metal, wood, carpets, stone and glass during the Islamic Age. The

Study shows that the Safavid artists included the decorative elements which represent Sasanian traditions, because the Safavid Dynasty attempted to revive Persian nationalism and regain its previous glory. The Study ends with the results which shows that the decorative elements on these coins are considered an expansion of the decorative elements which adorned different applied artifacts with drawings on pottery; or carving on wood, stones or marble; or enameling on glass; or printing on textile, that occurred in all Muslim countries since the first century A.H, either in Andalusia, Egypt, Iraq, Levant, and Turkey assuring the unity of decorative elements on coins and different applied artifacts in the frame of Islamic art with the diversity in the decoration methods.

Keywords

Copper Coins, Decorations, Fujairah, Islamic, Safavid

1. Introduction

Safavids attribute to sheikh Safy Al-Din Al-Ardabil (Al-Sayed, 2005), 650-735A.H/ 1252-1334A.D, as he is the grandfather and the founder of this dynasty which was firstly ruled by Shah Ismail the Safavid (Hasanain, 1989), who was enthroned on Persia and titled “Abi Al-Muzafar Shah Ismail Al-Hady 907A.H/1502A.D, and coins were struck under his name (El-Khawley, 1976), also he declared the Shiite to be the official doctrine of the country, which caused many problems as Persia was following the Sunnite doctrine.

The collection of the copper Safavid coins (Dafter, 1982) –subject of study- includes 12 pieces, which attributed to the weakness and confusion period late in the Safavid dynasty, in the era of both shah Suleiman (Safey the Second) 1077-1105 A.H/ 1666-1694 A.D, AND Shah Hussein the First 1105-1135 A.H / 1694-1722 A.D.

The main reasons why I had chosen this subject are three; first the collection of this copper coins are firstly to be studied and published, second, shedding more light figures inscribed on the copper coins used between different Persian cities during the Safavid Era generally and particularly the concerned period of study which declared the beginning of the end of the Safavid Dynasty, and third rooting the decorations represented on the copper Safavid coins through the early Islamic coins beside those same figures represented on different kinds of applied antiques.

2. The Description Study

In representing this decorative study the alphabetical order was put in consideration for the struck cities, and it's obvious that many of the inscriptions and figures of coins were obliterated due to the quality of the copper which rusts easily thus eroded.



Figure 2.1: A Copper Coin Struck in Esfahan

Table 2.1: The Inscriptions (Esfahan)

Darb	A predator such as a lion trying to
Esfahan	attack an animal such as a deer which
Flus	appears panicking and both heading right



Figure 2.2: A copper coin struck in Esfahan

Table 2.2: The Inscriptions. (Esfahan)

Esfahan	A predator such as a lion standing on its
Flus	Back legs and laying on the back of a deer which
(Dar)b	Is trying to escape and both heading right



Figure 2.3: A Copper Coin Struck in Esfahan

Table 2.3: The Inscriptions. (Esfahan)

(Es)ahan	A lion standing on its
(Fl)us	Back legs and laying on the back of an animal which
Darb(11)28	Obliterated in the front part and trying to prey
	It, and both heading right



Figure 2.4: A copper coin struck in Yerevan dated in 1133 A.H.

Table 2.4: The Inscriptions (Yerevan)

Yerevan	A camel standing steady heading right
(Fl)us	And surrounded with floral branches and leafs
(Dar)b(11)33	

Obverse



Reverse



Figure 2.5: A copper coin struck in Sari dated in 1097 A.H.

Table 2.5: The Inscriptions. (Sari)

Sari	An ibex standing steady heading right
(Fl)us	And surrounded with floral branches and leafs
(Dar)b 1097	

Obverse



Reverse

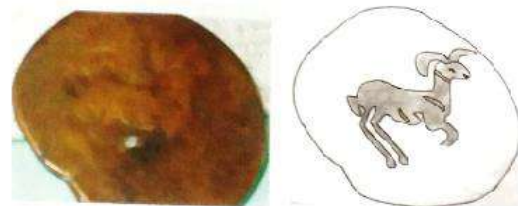


Figure 2.6: A copper coin struck in Shiraz dated in 1087 A.H.

Table 2.6: The Inscriptions. (Shiraz)

Shiraz	An ibex heading right which has
Flus	Bigger horn than the former ibex
Darb 1087	



Figure 2.7: A copper coin struck in Shuster

Table 2.7: The Inscriptions. (Shuster)

Shuster	A cypress lined with veining from inside
Flus	And from both sides there is a floral leaf
Darb	



Figure 2.8: A copper coin struck in Shuster dated in 1120 A.H., with a frame of pearl grains

Table 2.8: *The Inscriptions. (Shuster, with a frame of pearl grains)*

Shuster	A cypress lined with veining from inside
Flus	And from both sides there is a floral leaf ended with a bird head,
Darb 1120	And this figure is surrounded by a frame of pearl granules.

Obverse



Reverse



Figure 2.9: *A copper coin struck in Qom, with a frame of pearl granules*

Table 2.9: *The Inscriptions. (Qom)*

Qom	A horse
Flus	-
Darb	-

Obverse



Reverse



Figure 2.10: *A copper coin struck in Kaashan dated in 1121*

Table 2.10: The Inscriptions. (Kaashan)

Kashan	A peacock standing steady and looking up, raising his tail and there is a floral leafs in front of it.
Flus	-



Figure 2.11: A copper coin struck in Herat

Table 2.11: The Inscriptions. (Herat)

Herat	A predator standing on its
Flus	Back legs and laying on the back of a bird
(Dar)b	-

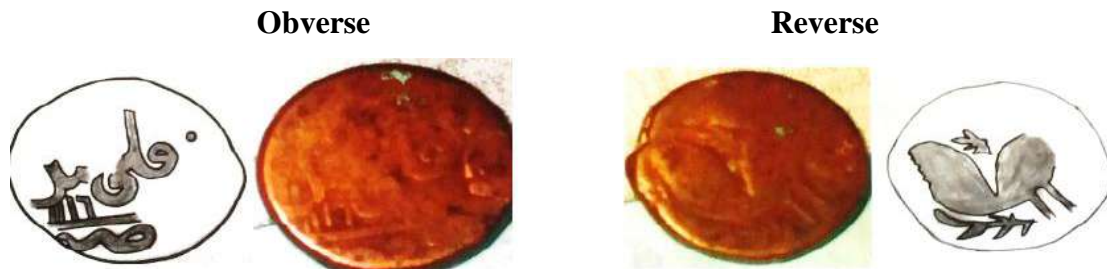


Figure 2.12: A copper coin struck in 1116 A.H.

Table 2.12: *The Inscriptions. (1116 A.H.)*

Flus	A peacock standing steady and looking up, raising his tail and there is a floral leafs and scrolls in front of it.
1116	-
Darb	-

3. The Annalistic Study

The annalistic study includes the inscriptions on the obverse which states the mints and sometimes the date of struck, concerning the reverse there are figures such as animals including camel, ibex, and horse, beside birds such as peacock, and the floral motives such as: cypress, and floral leafs witch end with abstract bird head, also, floral scrolls and leaf surrounding the main decorative motif, with another decorative motives such as successive circles which known as the pearl granules.

3.1 The Obverse

The inscription of the obverse includes the mints which varied in this collection and goes back to the late Safavid Era, and its eight cities as the following: Esfahan, Yerevan, sari, Shuster, Shiraz, Qom, Kashan, Herat, and these mints are dedicated specially to struck copper coins, as there were mints to struck the golden and silver coins only which were under the direct supervision of the country (Masoud, 1998). The inscriptions include the kings' names and their titles, and the praising phrases, also the Shiite phrases all with the dates and mints (Farah bakhsh, 1975). Concerning the copper coins struck, it is known that it was allowed to some of the cities princes to strike it, and the value of it was appreciated by those princes, and every city was characterized with specific features of birds or animals or any other motives.

3.2 The Reserve

It is known that the kind of decorations of birds and animals was struck on the copper coins since the Omayyad Era, such as fish, lion, scorpion, or horse (El-Sayed, 2007), or the spread eagle wings, and others. And these decorative motives were inscribed on the copper coins struck in the different cities of Iran during the Safavid Era such as:

3.2.1 Attack Scenes (Prey)

These scenes represent a predator such as a lion trying to attack an animal such as a deer which appears panicking and both heading right, done with different shapes on the reverse of the copper coins struck in Esfahan. And Esfahan as a mint was known as Dar Sultanate (Farahbakhsh, 1975), and the golden and silver coins were struck in it. Those attack scenes were always preferred by the Muslim artisans to be done on the different applied arts such as:

An eagle attacking a goose on a Persian luster pottery plate dated in 6th century A.H/ 12th century A.D, preserved in the collection of Walter Hawser (Hassan). Also, the attack scenes was done on the metal works such as a brass ewer that has a lion attacking a deer dated 1089A.H/ 1678A.D (Abdullah). Concerning the Islamic carpets, there is a woven Safavid carpet that has an attack scene of a tiger attacking a deer (Wilson, 1957).

Previously, it is shown that attacking scenes are a great part of the Sassanid art, that continued to be a part of the Persian art during the Islamic era. Also, the attacking scenes made on the Safavid copper coins are considered as an extension to the Sassanid decorations.

3.2.2 Animals Scenes

Among the kinds of animals and birds which were penetrated on the reverse of the copper Safavid coins are: the camel, the ibex, the horse and the peacock.

3.2.2.1 The camel

The camel symbolizes moderation, and the ability to endure thirsty and hunger for long times, and it was one of the old means of transportation for the Arabs, it was also an evidence of greatness and charisma.

On a reverse of a copper coin, the camel was inscribed standing and heading right and this coin is dated 1133 A.H. and struck in Yerevan. Concerning the applied arts during the

Islamic era, its noticed that the camel was inscribed on textile and pottery and other kinds of applied arts such as: an over glaze and gilded pottery plate, from kashan dated in 6th century A.H / 12th century A.D and preserved in mortemershif collection(Swailam, 2002).

It seems that the camel was one of the preferred figures for the Safavid artisans such as “Moeen Al-Mosawer”, who pictured the camel on one of his dated artworks in 1089A.H/1678A.D. (Hassan). As shown above the camel was inscribed on different kinds of Islamic applied arts during different eras which assures and reflects the unity of the Islamic decorations regardless of the material of the applied arts.

3.2.2.2 The Ibex

The ibex is a kind of the mountain goats which was represented on the reverse of a copper coin struck in Shiraz (Al-Hamowi, 1995) in 1087 A.H, and on another piece struck in Sari, in 1097 A.H. Since the Sassanid era, the ibex was represented on the different kinds of applied arts such as a figure of two affronted ibexes engraved in stone and goes back to Iran in the Sassanid era (Sabry, 2000).

3.2.2.3 The Horse

The horse is among the animals that have a great state in the Islamic thought (Yassin, 2006), as Allah vowed with it in His verse: “By the high spirited horses that run, with puffing”, and they were referred to in many verses. The horse was also in the care and interest of Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H., and it was said that he used to wipe the horse with his clothes (Yassin, 2006). In fact, many Prophetic sayings referred to the importance of this animal, while Muslims prayed for it in Heaven (Yassin, 2006).

The horse was carved on Islamic coins in big forms, especially on Seljuk coins. Also, the influence of horses' figures can be traced in Bnoortq coins in Sassanid Art, as their kings were famous for their hunting parties. The horse figure on the Islamic noismatics either reflects the importance of knighthood and horse riding or their use in transportation from one place to another, along with using it in fighting and wars (Al-Sayed). The horse figure was smoothly designed in a near nature way, while running towards the right; it appears on a piaster minted in Qom City. The mint in Qom City was entitled “Dar al-Moemeneen” (Farah bakhsh, 1975), and among its issues are the gold coins minted under the name of Ismail First Shah and Tahmasp First Shah(Masoud, 1998), while the silver coins carved in Qom mint were

for Ismail First Shah, Tahmasp First Shah, Ismail Second Shah, Muhammad Khodabandah Shah, Abbas First Shah, Sultan Hussein Shah, and Tahmasp Second Shah dated 1106 A.H.

The horse inscription was also at the reverse of the piaster minted in other mints as: two piasters minted in Qandahar, dated 1080 A.H. and 1108 A.H. (Valentine, 1911), as for the horse shapes on the coins: one was running towards the right, while the second was running towards the left and a piaster minted in Urmia dated 1120 A.H. (Kutelia, 1990) , with the horse backed by the rising sun in assimilation with the lion figure with the sun at the back. This decorative figure – the horse with the sun behind it – appeared on the reverse of a piaster minted in Tabriz (Kutelia, 1990, no. 341) , a piaster minted in Caspian (Kutelia, 1990, no. 439), and another one minted in Caspian (Kutelia, 1990, no. 440) with the figure of a horse and behind it a knight waving with his right hand, and a piaster minted in Shamakh dated 1120 A.H.(Valentine, 1911), with a horse turning towards the left with plant leaves on the floor, and coins minted in Kanga, dated 1131 A.H., 1132 A.H. (Kutelia, 1990, no. 471), and 1158 A.H. (Valentine, 1911, no. 1), and other coins had the horse figure minted in Kanga but were not dated(Kutelia, 1990), and a piaster minted in Herat dated 1134 A.H. (Valentine, 1911). It is noted that the date is carved on the reverse above the horse which is unfamiliar, as the date was normally inscribed on the obverse of Safavid coins.

As for the appearance of the horse figure on the applied antiquities, it started from the Sassanid Age, as it was one of the animals that had great importance for the Sassanid (Sabry, 2000), and it was represented on their artistic products in the form of hunting on silver plates, and the coronation and hunting trips on stones and plasters (Sabry, 2000). In the Islamic age, the horse was either inscribed individually or with a knight riding it, or in the form of a statue, for example: it was inscribed with water colors on the floor of the hall of the Western Al-Heir Palace in Sham, dated back to the 2nd century A.H./the 8th century A.D. in Damascus museum (Hassan). It also appeared on textile parts related to Egypt in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.H. / the 8th and 9th centuries A.D., and on another highly decorative textile part related to Iran. Traces of horse figures were found on Fatimid pottery parts designed in a near nature way in Islamic Art Museum (Sabry, 2000). The horse was perfectly designed with a knight over it on ivory boxes related to Andalusia in the 6th century A.H. (12 A.D.), among which a box preserved in Tortosa Cathedral in Spain (Hassan, Fig. 420), and also on an ivory

box related to Sicily in the 7th Century A.H. (13 A.D.) preserved among one of the collections in Paris (Hassan, Fig. 433). A horse running on a floor of plants and leaves was inscribed on ceramic with metallic spark, related to the island countries in the 4th and 5th centuries A.H. (10, 11 A.D.) in Berlin Museum (Hassan, Fig. 82). It was precisely designed on a pottery plate with metallic spark in Victoria and Albert Museum (Pope, plate 632), and a horse with a knight riding it was drawn on a pottery plate over the painting related to Iran dated 604 A.H. and preserved in Kelkayan collection, and on another plate of pottery dated 607 A.H. with the signature of its designer Sayed Shams El-Din El-Hosny preserved among the Emerphoblos collection (Swailam, 1994), and on a pottery pot related to Ray city in the 7th century A.H. / the 13th century A.D., preserved among the Mortmershef (Swailam, 1994).

The horse appeared on many of the artistic products in the Safavid Age, as on a pottery plate drawn under the painting known as the Kobjy pottery in Iran dated back to the 11th century A.H. / the 17th century A.D., and on a bottle of the same pottery, in which the movement and expression of the horse are clear. The horses were drawn in hunting scenes on a collection of pottery floors under the painting, dated back to the 11th century A.H. / the 17th century A.D., and on a wooden vase decorated in colors and lacquered, along with on a pectoral of copper dated 1051 A.H. / 1643 A.D., in addition to the inscription of the twelve Imams names on top, preserved in Art and Industry Museum in Vienna. The running horse design was designed as a decorative element on an ax of concrete dating back to the 11th century A.H. / the 17th century A.D. The horse was presented in different positions as running and jumping on a pottery bottle in Safavid Turkey in the second half of the 10th century A.H. / the 16th century A.D..

3.2.3 Birds Figures

The peacock is one of the main birds figures that decorated the reverse of the Safavid copper piasters designed in a near nature way. It was inscribed on the reverse of two piasters; one dated 1116 A.H. in which the mint is not clear, and the other minted in Kashan, dated 1121 A.H, and another piaster minted in Kashan, while the peacock was inscribed in small and abstract form over the horse on the reverse of Qom mint.

Kashan was a Safavid mint city known as “Dar al-Moemeneen”, as were the mints of Qom, Astrabad, and Shuster named (Farahbakhsh, 1975). Among the other figures inscribed

on piasters minted in Kashan was a piaster dated 1132 A.H. with a lion heading right and behind it a human figure with rays, representing the shining sun (Valentine, 1911). The same figure was on another piaster dated 1137 A.H. (Valentine, 1911), and a third piaste that only had the human figure with rays without the lion, along with the peacock with stable feet and a little crown over its head in splendor (Valentine, 1911).

3.2.3.1 The Peacock

It is a common bird, entitled Abu Hassan and Abu Elwashye, and was regarded as a symbol of greatness, heaven, happiness, and eternity. Its feathers are regarded as a sign of power and royalty. In Islamic art, it was a symbol of happiness as it was always colorful and usually drawn in the middle of flowers. One of the oldest inscriptions of the peacock on coins is found on a coin with the Abbasid Caliph al-Watheq be Allah name (227-332A.H./1132-1137A.D.), with two peacocks facing each other with a running lion, but the date and place of minting were not stated, within Henry Awad's collection in Cairo. The peacock figure was inscribed on several Safavid piasters in different mints, among which. Two piasters minted in Tabriz dated 1044 A.H. (Kutelia, 1990), in which in one of them the peacock is turning towards the right with a crown on its head and its tail spread in a semi-circle form, and in the second on the peacock is walking – as shown from the feet position – heading towards the right with a crown and his tail heading high. The third piaster is minted in Tabriz dated 1081 A.H. (Valentine, 1911), with a peacock standing still and leaning to the right and his head towards the back, and a fourth piaster (Kutelia, 1990) in which on the obverse the statement “Tabriz Mint Sultana” is inscribed in a rectangle, which was the place of the King and rule. It was regarded as the first capital for the Safavid State since Ismail First Shah era, and Sultana Mint is a title given to the mint in Tabriz, along with the mints in Esfahan – as stated earlier – Shamakhi, Tehran, Qazwen, Kayel, and Heart (Farahbakhsh, 1975), and the reverse contains two peacocks facing each other. The fifth piaster minted in Tabriz dated 1119 A.H. (Kutelia, 1990), and a sixth one dated 1137 A.H. (Kutelia, 1990). The peacock was inscribed on two piasters (Valentine, 1911) minted in Shamakhy, one dated 1110 A.H. and the second not dated. It was also found on a piaster minted in Qezween (Kutelia, 1990), two piasters (Kutelia, 1990) minted in Nakhchivan, one dated 1118 A.H, and the second not dated, and on piaster minted in Yerevan dated 1108 A.H., 1114 A.H., and 1117 A.H. (Kutelia, 1990), in which the

peacock is either standing still with raised tail with plant leaves in front of it or standing on its left foot and raising the other with a crown on its head.

As noted from the above, the peacock was one of the most common birds inscribed on many different applied arts in Iran from the Sassanid era, all along until the Islamic era, and especially during the Safavid era, not only on coins, but also on the different kinds of the applied arts in the main cities of the Safavid State.

3.2.4 Floral Elements

One of the most common floral elements inscribed on the reverse of the Safavid copper coins was the cypress with a floral scroll than ends up with a bird head or a floral scroll gradual in a fish, like in two copper coins struck in Shuster, one of them is dated in 1120 A.H., and the other one is undated. And as it is well known that the Safavid artisans used the cypress in many of his artworks.

4. Conclusion

Finally, the research concludes with the following results: first, The Safavid artist designs the decorative elements that represent the Sassanid heritage, like the attack scenes and the animals and birds figures, along with the pearl parts and more, since the Safavid State attempted to revive the Persian nation, restore Iran's old glory, and follow the Shiite doctrine as the official one of the State.

Second, light has been shed on the Safavid Fils mint cities – the focus of the study– like Asfahan, Yerevan, Sari, Shiraz, Shuster, Qom, Kashan, Herat, and other mint cities that are distributed around the Safavid State and that were mentioned through examples of their assimilated figurative inscriptions and others in Estrabad, Ardabil, Aromy, Tabriz, and Tbilisi.

Third, despite the financial importance of the Safavid copper Fils in the first place, they also represent an individualized type of antiquities for what they contain of figurative scenes and decorative inscriptions similar to those that decorated the different applied antiquities of drawing, inscriptions on copper, glass designs, engraving on wood, inscriptions on stones and ceramic, weaving, decorating or printing textile and carpets, molding, or metal designing or decorating and more, in different areas of the Islamic world since the 1st Century A.H. / the 7th Century A.D., whether in Egypt, Sham, Iraq, Andalusia, or Iran, which ensures

the unity of the diverse decorative elements between numismatics and other different applied antiquities in the Islamic Art Institution

References

- Abdullah, Seham. Safavid metal works through applied arts and miniatures, M.A. thesis, Cairo University. Al-Hamawi, Yaqout (1995). *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, Beirut.
- Al-Sayed, Abas Al-Mawsawy, Kamal (2005). *the establishment and fall of the Safavid State*, Tehran.
- Dafer, Nahed (1982). *the numismatics*, Baghdad.
- El-Khawley, Ahmed (1976). *The history of safavids and their civilization*, Cairo.
- El-Sayed, Duaa (2007). *Organisms pictures on Islamic coins until the end of the sixth century A.H.*, M.A thesis, Cairo University.
- Farahbakhsh, H (1975). *Iranian Hammered Coinage 1500-1879, CE 900-1296 A.H.*, Berlin.
- Hasanain, Abdel-Naeem (1989). *Iran under Islam during the Sunni and Shiite eras*, Cairo.
- Hassan, Zaky. *Atlas of the decorative arts and Islamic miniature*, Baghdad.
- Kutelia, T. (1990). *Catalogue of the Iranian copper coins in the state museum of Georgia*, Tbilssi.
- Masoud, Mahmoud (1998). *The golden and silver safavid coins preserved in the Islamic national museum*, M.A. thesis, Cairo University.
- Pope. *A Survey of Persian art vol.5*, London.
- Sabry, Al-Araby (2000). *the Sassanid effects on the Islamic arts*, M.A. thesis, Cairo University.
- Swailam, Abdel Monem (1994). *Ideological and intellectual trends during the Safavid era and its effect on islamic art*, PHD. Thesis, Ain shams university, Cairo.

Swailam, Adel (2002). Persian poetry on the Iranian pottery tiles, Cairo.

Valentine (1911). modern copper coins of the Muhammadan States of turkey, Persia, egypt, Afghanistan, Morocco, Tripoli, London.

Wilson, R.P. (1957). Islamic Art, London.

Yassin, Abdel Nasser (2006). The religious symbolism in the Islamic decoration, Cairo.