While plant motifs abound in Islamic art, rarely are they portrayed as growing organisms. Two instances of such representation occur in the early fifteenth century, but they are widely separated geographically. In Samarkand three buildings built by female relatives of Timur around 1400 featured naturalistic mural paintings of landscapes, executed primarily in lapis blue on a white ground. In Damascus, between 1420 and 1430, an extensive dado of hexagonal tiles with naturalistic images of plants painted in cobalt blue on a white ground was mounted in the mausoleum and funerary masjid of a military official in Damascus. Indeed, the sudden appearance of ceramic dado tiles in Syria at this time calls for explanation, as it was not a local tradition. The possibility that potters from Tabriz were involved, as suggested by an inscription on a panel of tiles in the masjid, does not entirely answer the question. There is no evidence for the manufacture of blue-and-white underglaze hexagonal tiles in Tabriz, or in fact anywhere in Iran, in the fifteenth century. We must explore the traditions from which the Samarkand and Damascus mausoleums stem and try to explain how they could have been related.

The Damascus tiles. The Damascus tiles (figs. 1–4) have always been discussed as one of three groups of blue-and-white tiles, which include the Muradiye Mosque of Edirne (1435–36), an assortment of undated tiles in Cairo, and dispersed groups of tiles in various museums, the most notable being those in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The most recent discussion of the tile groups by John Carswell recognizes the Syrian group to be the earliest.1 Forming a grid of hexagons and equilateral triangles, a total of 1,362 glazed tiles make up the dados of the tomb chamber and adjoining mosque built for the vizier of Damascus, Ghars al-Din al-Khalil al-Tawrizi, who died in 1430. The mausoleum was actually completed before 1420.2 The major groups of designs are geometric, based on the star; vegetal, based on a central rosette; and quasi-naturalistic, unidirectional plant motifs. The first group derives from the international style for ceramics, widespread at the end of the fourteenth century and continuing to the mid fifteenth. The second may derive from late Yuan porcelains but through the mediation of pattern books or a local ceramic tradition which had already absorbed and modified Chinese sources. These potters

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Fig. 1. Blue-and-white hexagonal tile, ca. 1430. Found at Damascus, Damascus National Museum. (Photo: from Atl, 1981, no. 86)

Fig. 2. Blue-and-white hexagonal tile, ca. 2430. Found at Damascus, Damascus National Museum. (Photo: from Atl, 1981, no. 88)
do not seem to have had access to the Chinese porcelains themselves. The third group is also derived from the plant motifs found on Yuan porcelains (lobed and spiked leaf and banana plant, as well as flying cranes) but from yet another second-hand source, one which combined these motifs with the repertory of the Persian illuminator, as we shall see later on. That these images do not derive directly from contact with Chinese porcelain is further suggested by Carswell’s observation that practically no Chinese porcelain contemporary with the tiles, that is, of the early fifteenth century, has been found in Syria.  

The Edirne tiles. Three walls of the mosque of Murad II at Edirne, completed in 1435–36, have dados of blue-and-white underglaze painted hexagonal tiles, and the mihrab has blue-and-white painted muqarnas cells. The designs are of two major types: geometric patterns based on the hexagram; and designs consisting of six units around a center, relating either to a geometric scheme or to a plant formation, and sometimes made unidirectional through the indication of a “ground” from which the plant springs. Some of the individual elements derive from Yuan ceramics, such as the lotus blossom and the peony with shaded petals. Of particular interest is the triple cypress with swirling ferns which move in front and in back of the trees. These designs only distantly relate to those of Damascus, and stylistically they are far less naturalistic. They lack many of the allusions to Yuan porcelain found in the Syrian tiles, and the few they do include could have been derived from Syrian and Persian imitations of Chinese porcelains.

Cairo and Victoria and Albert groups. The Victoria and Albert Museum’s 106 hexagonal tiles constitute a group related to those in the Arab Museum in Cairo. The painting is free and, in some cases, quite masterful (Carswell, C2, C43–44). Several types of designs relate to Persian pottery of the fourteenth century. Heraldic or radial plant or geometric motifs are surrounded by a white margin, as in Persian lusterware. The fields are often filled with a scale pattern or feather pattern with interspersed “peacock eyes” (Carswell, C30, C34, C70, C79, C100). A type of Timurid pottery produced in Khurasan around the middle of the fifteenth century also has motifs surrounded by a white margin and scale or feather patterns for filler. A second type, characterized by a large central rosette with vine curling around it, probably originated in Yuan porcelain (C49). Also from Yuan porcelains come the plant motifs in reserve (Carwell, C13, C130). The most impressive designs are those that relate to the paysage theme, the wavy trees and ferns, a pair of dragons (C2), and religious buildings and ships (C3, C95–97).

The three groups of blue-and-white tiles pose two problems: (1) Ceramic tile dadoes in Syria and Egypt represent a foreign import. While ceramic tiles had long been in use in Anatolia, the underglaze technique was not widespread in the fifteenth century. How did this tradition come to the Levant? (2) The palette, cobalt blue and white, suggests inspiration from Chinese porcelains, but the tiles as a group include designs from other sources, such as local ceramic traditions, as well as Persian manuscripts. Did the tilemakers have access to all of these sources simultaneously and in the place of manufacture (Damascus, Cairo, Edirne)?

Mural paintings with pastoral scenes. The five Timurid mausoleums with paysage imagery are: (1) the Shirin Bika
Aqa, Shah-i Zinda complex, Samarqand (d. 1385–86; mausoleum may be somewhat later) (fig. 5); the Saray Mulk Khanum, attached to her madrasa, Samarqand (ca. 1397) (figs. 6–7); the Tuman Aqa, attached to her masjid, Shah-i Zinda complex, Samarqand (1404–5); (4) Tuman Aqa madrasa complex at Kuhsan (near Herat, built in 1440–41) (fig. 8); (5) and finally the “Gunbad-i Sayyidan,” built for descendants of Ulugh Beg at Shahrisabz (1437) (fig. 9).

The mausoleum of Shirin Bika Aqa (1385–86 or later). The mausoleum of Shirin Bika Aqa, sister of Timur, is one of some thirteen cube-like mausoleums lining the corridor leading to the shrine of Qusam b. Abbas built on the ascending slope of the mound which was the site of the pre-Mongol city of Samarqand. This royal cemetery of the Timurids continued an older tradition, which has recently been found to go back at least to the eleventh century.

Unlike the earlier Timurid mausoleums of the Shah-i Zinda complex, only the dado is tiled. The rest of the interior is plastered. The white walls are painted in red and
blue. The paintings follow architectural lines and delineate rectangular panels conforming to these lines. On the pilasters which support the squinch arches are large panels in which festooned arches are inscribed. The profile of the arch consists of complex reverse curves, giving the appearance of a human torso and head. This type of arch is often referred to as an “ogee” arch. It is used throughout the decoration of this period in all media.

Within the panels little trace remains of the paintings, but a description of two was published by Denike. In the southeast corner, on the left, were depicted four magpies sitting on treetops (fig. 5). Below run streams between two trees, sometimes taking a dragon-like form. In the other panel a tree with many branches bends in front of a straight tree-trunk, which stands in the center of the panel. Denike remarks on the unusual realism of the trees. The squinch niches have muqarnas hoods, and on the wall space below are rectangular panels following the lines of the muqarnas pattern. These are filled with either diaper patterns in reserve or vertical arabesques. Above the squinch zone is a sixteen-sided zone consisting of eight corner niches with muqarnas hoods, alternating with stained-glass windows. The niches themselves have either three wide panels or nine narrow ones.
In the wide panels remain traces of the plant forms that are similar to those in the pastoral scenes below.

In addition to these remarkable paintings, no source for which is known in the architecture of the region before this time, the first appearance of two other significant architectural features, the double dome and the radial muqarnas, can be documented in this mausoleum. Both of these features had been used in Iran in the preceding period. Also of likely Iranian origin was the mosaic faience, of a particular style and technique which was quite different from that of nearby Kharazm, from which Timur is known to have drawn workmen. Even the proportions of the rectangle of the portal compare well with the attenuated Muzaffarid portals of southern Iran. Since so many of the architectural features point to a south or central Iranian source, the presence of builders and decorators from those areas has been suggested. It is therefore reasonable to suggest a similar source for the mural paintings. In 1939 Denike had already suggested that the anthology of poetry signed by a calligrapher from Bibihewan in the Shiraz region and dated 1398 (figs. 10–11) bore a close resemblance to these paintings and others in Samarkand. This comparison opens up new avenues to explore in the pursuit of the relationship between the mural paintings and the tiles, to which we shall return following a discussion of the next three mausoleums.

Saray Mulk Khanum (ca. 1397). Timur’s chief wife, Saray Mulk Khanum, built a large madrasa opposite her husband’s masjid alkarnat, the popular name for which, Bibi Khanum, refers to her. The madrasa has disappeared, but the mausoleum which was attached to its remains, although in very poor condition. Its plastered interior has paintings executed primarily in blue on a white ground, but certain elements were done in green, yellow, turquoise, brown, black, and red. Although a considerable amount of the painting remains, little has been published. The scheme of the painting follows architectural lines, particularly the panels based on the corner muqarnas hoods, as in the previous building. One large panel shows two groups of trees and plants, each growing from a rugged ground line (fig. 6). The branches of the trees wave realistically. Another panel shows four different trees, each growing from a ground line, surrounded by ferns and bushes (fig. 7). Two of the trees have a “wispy” look and are bent into an S-shaped curve. This panel is flanked by a pair of narrower panels, filled with a diaper pattern (based on equilateral triangles), on which has been set the silhouette of a handled ewer containing flowers. The silhouette is outlined by a white margin. Framing elements around these panels are decorated with geometric patterns.

Tuman Aqa mausoleum at Samarkand (1404–5). Tuman Aqa was the daughter of a Jalayirid princess and was married to Timur at the age of eleven, in 1377–78. She built this mausoleum and an adjoining masjid opposite the shrine of Qusam b. Abbas, the focal point of the Shah-i-Zinda complex. The portal of the mausoleum refers to its builder as a woman who was still living, but her name has disappeared. She is, however, mentioned in the inscription over the portal to the masjid, which also bears the name alluded to in the mausoleum inscription, the Nuriyya, that is, the illuminated shrine (or madrasa).
Each part of the complex has its own door. Behind the tall portal of the mausoleum stands a small dome chamber, one of the first examples of a dome resting directly on the four wall arches rather than on an octagonal squinch zone. Its introduction into Central Asia at this time is attributed to foreign architects, probably from Shiraz. In the technology of its vaulting and mosaic facade, the mausoleum is closely related to that of Shīrīn Bīka Aqa. The inscription on the mausoleum portal is signed by a calligrapher from Tabriz. The paintings also show a close relationship to the other two mausoleums, and all three may have been done by the same hand.

The interior has painted decoration on the panels below the muqarnas similar to the other buildings. The wider panels are filled with a diaper pattern in an ogee arch with festooned shoulders. The arches in the narrow panels are crowned by an unusually complex point, a broken-headed arch above an S-shaped curve, forming a narrow neck and then widening out to form the shoulders. It is not unlike the shapes of the mountains in the Bihbchan anthology discussed below. These panels are filled with naturalistic plant and tree motifs. The trees include some of the "wavy" variety. Cypress trees appear along the ground. One of the panels decorated with a diaper pattern has motifs standing out against a white margin and has filler ornament consisting of tight spirals, giving it the appearance of one class of hexagonal...
tile found on the Damascus tiles (Carswell, D1) and the Cairo tiles (Carswell, C30, C34, C70, C79, C100, C90, C91). These tile series also contain images of ewers, although none are of the same type as those depicted in Samarqand.  

Tuman Aqa complex at Khusan (1440–41). Tuman Aqa, who had built a mausoleum in Samarqand in her youth, moved to Khurasan after the death of Timur and of her second husband to lands which Timur had given her. On these lands, between the new Timurid capital of Herat and the holy city of Mashhad, she built a madrasa, including a domed chamber for her mausoleum, which is dated by tile inscription to 844 (1440–41). In the panels below the muqarnas, we meet again the painted arch (fig. 8), but it now takes on the appearance of a pair of brackets. Each panel contains about three large trees of different species. They grow from various planes in the picture space. In some panels a foreground is indicated, consisting of a free-form rock or a small mound. The rocky middle ground in one panel may even suggest a mountain formation. The three types include a wispy tamarisk (?), a wavy fruit-bearing tree, and the cypress.

Before turning to the last occurrence of paysage imagery in Timurid mausoleums, let us look at the suggested manuscript source for these paintings, the Bibehkan anthology. This unusual manuscript caught the attention of scholars through the detailed description published by Mehmet Aga-Oglu in 1936. Aga-Oglu published nine of the twelve paintings contained in the 642 folios of the manuscript. All of the paintings feature detailed landscapes, filled with mountains, rivers, lakes, and various forms of vegetation and birds. With the exception of the last painting which appears to have been modified at a later date, none of the paintings have representations of human beings. Aga-Oglu interprets these paintings as illustrations of a Zoroastrian myth. Leaving aside his argument for the moment, several points must be made that have been overlooked.

First, it is important to note where in the text these paintings occur, namely, at the end of one book and the commencement of another. The paintings which are smaller than full size always mark the end of a book (see 26a, 85b, 128a, 180b, 250a), in much the same way as illuminations often fill left-over space in non-illustrated manuscripts (fig. 10). These filler paintings are always followed by a full-size landscape painting except the first, which is followed directly by the first page of the next book (in this case, Nizami’s Khusraw and Shirin). The next end-of-book illustration (85b) is followed by a single full-page landscape (86a), but because the two illustrations are on facing pages, they should be viewed as a double-page composition. The next picture group begins with an end-of-book painting (128a), and the two following pages again form a double-page composition; this time both pages are full-size. The next group (180b, 181a) consists of a filler painting and a full-size painting, marking the end of the Hafiz Peykar and the beginning of the Iskandar books, Sharafnama and Isfahnama. The Sharafnama is concluded with another series of three paintings, one which ends the previous book (250a) and a double-page composition (250b, 251a) (fig. 11). The final book of the Khamsa begins with an illuminated title and concludes with the single-page landscape on which a hunt scene has been imposed. The style of the figures is not in keeping with the period or place, and the landscape, while similar to the others, is not executed by the same fine hand. It is not even described by Aga-Oglu.

Immediately after this painting comes a shamsa with points on the vertical axis, containing the table of contents for the next text, the Khamsa of Amir Khusraw Dihlavi. There are no further paintings, although each new “book” begins with an illuminated title. On folio 464b within an inverted triangle is the colophon giving the name of the scribe and the date, together with a pious verse.

Two conclusions must be drawn from these observations. First, the paintings do not occur in the usual places for Nizami’s often-illustrated work. Evidently, the patron did not want an illustrated version of the poems. The paintings should rather be compared to frontispieces. While it was not common to introduce such paintings into the body of a manuscript to separate individual texts, it was not unusual to find full-page illuminations serving the same function. It was even more common for the illuminator to fill in left-over space at the end of chapter with illuminations, as in the famous anthology made for Iskandar-Sultan, grandson of Timur and governor of Shiraz, in 1410–11 (British Library, London, Add. 27261). Manuscripts produced in Shiraz were particularly known for these practices. The many anthologies made for Iskandar at Shiraz are replete with illuminations; they are worked into every spare space. These anthologies also share with the landscape anthology the filling of the margins with supplementary text unrelated to the central work and writing in diagonal lines which change direction below the thumbpiece. Finally, the double-page composition seems to have been a hallmark of Shiraz, as pointed out by Eleanor Sims. Thus, the manuscript conforms to traditions of illumination that
became characteristic of the Timurid school of Fars and indicates that these traditions go back to pre-Timurid times.

There is another aspect of these anthologies that relates to our question. One of the most interesting is an anthology of Uighur and Persian poetry, copied in 1431–36, now in the British Library (Or. 8193). This anthology was commissioned for Jalal al-Din Firuzshah, supreme commander of Shahrubkh’s military forces and a great patron of the arts and architecture. The main body of the text is written in Uighur, and the Persian text is written on the diagonal in the margins, as we have noted, a practice common in poetic anthologies from the southern provinces of Iran in the Timurid period. Throughout the manuscript are frequent pairs of facing pages on which the central text space is occupied by pairs of similar images. Many of the designs are geometric or arabesque, but there are also vases with trees or flowers growing from them, groups of trees, a pool with a water channel, and, in some of these, various fish, fowl, and animals. Of interest for this study are the folios with different types of trees, their combination perhaps having some iconographic significance, such as the wavy tree flanked by cypresses.

This anthology is typical of a group of known manuscripts of Timurid date, some of which also share the characteristic of being oblong in shape and bound along their width rather than their length, as they were intended to be portable, perhaps tucked into the boot-top.

THE PAYSAGE AS ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM IN A FUNERARY CONTEXT

The use of landscape imagery in the mausoleum is not surprising, as many scholars have pointed out. The only remarkable feature of the paintings and tiles is the realism of the representation. Most references to Paradise in Islamic architectural decoration are either highly stylized, as in the “tree-of-life” motif, or occur in arabesque transformations of plant life. These are so conventionalized and ubiquitous that any symbolic intent may be questioned. With the naturalistic landscape images, however, the references to specific species of trees and to physical space through delineation of planes suggest that actual descriptions of paradise, whether Qur’anic or from another religious source, are intended.

Another peculiarity about these realistic allusions to paradise is that in all cases — the mural paintings, the tiles, and the anthologies — two other types of motifs are also found. Alongside the realistic paysage are geometric and diaper designs (fig. 7). Many of the tiles are decorated, not with plant life, but with pure geometric designs (fig. 3). In the anthologies, geometric designs are interleaved with images of plants. The second motif that is commonly found alongside the natural plant life is the vase or ewer, with or without flowers in it. Two spouted and handled ewers with flowers flank a landscape panel in the mausoleum of the Saray Mulk (fig. 7). Six different ewers are depicted on tiles from Damascus and Cairo (fig. 4). Vases with flowers commonly appear as the major motif of pages in the British Library anthology described above. While it is easy to appreciate the appropriateness of the paysage for the decoration of a mausoleum, and also, perhaps, of the geometric designs (as non-figural decoration or even as references to the Cosmos, the Divine Creation), it is difficult to explain the role of the ewer or vase in this triad. One may suggest that the vessels contain water, allusions to the rivers of paradise, but some of the landscapes show the actual rivers. Perhaps Sufism holds the key to the meaning of the vessel, which can refer to the human being, allowing himself to become filled with the spirit of the Divine. While the full meaning of these three themes escapes us for now, they constitute an iconographic program. Aside from its direct reference to religious subjects, e.g., paradise, the program is pietistic in its very conception. It respects the more stringent attitude toward the making of images by avoiding representation of most living forms. It is this aspect of the program that made it most suitable to the ornamentation of poetic anthologies. The poetic work which had most inspired Persian painters of narrative images, Nizami’s Khosrow and Shirin, was instead ornamented with colorful and romantic images of mountains, valleys, streams, and vegetation. Some of the anthologies include several narrative images, but most limit figural representation to angles. Some include fauna, and birds appear in the mural paintings and in the landscape anthology. The origins, then, of the images found on the tiles and in the mausoleums were not to be found in a strictly funerary context, but rather in a pious attitude toward religious imagery. The socio-religious context may have been Sufism.

THE MERGING OF THE MURAL-PAINTING AND THE TILE TRADITION

How did what seems to have been an Iranian painting tradition, transformed in Central Asia into mural painting for mausoleums, come to the Arab world in yet an-
other guise, ceramic tiles? Did the Damascus tilemakers borrow directly from the manuscript source, or did the idea of using this imagery on tiles already occur to potters in Timurid lands? To prove the latter, one would have to find blue-and-white ceramic tiles in the Samarqand region. To prove the former, one would have to show the importation of two Iranian ideas — the use of tile dadoes and the manuscript tradition — as independent arrivals in Damascus conjoined by the local potters. What follows now is a speculation based on two further pieces of evidence: Chinese tiles found in Samarqand and the mural paintings of Shahrisabz.

The Chinese tiles from Samarqand. Tiles similar to those of Damascus have never been found in Samarqand. However, excavations of the site believed to have been the chini-khana (porcelain pavilion) of Ulugh Beg uncovered real porcelain tiles, painted in underglaze cobalt blue, of hexagonal and rectangular shape. Only two of these are known to have survived (fig. 12). The transparent glaze had a bluish tinge, and the cobalt painting was quite dark. The tile has a narrow painted border. The design on the face consists of a central rosette of nine petals, surrounded by a ring of small trefoil leaves linked by semicircular arcs. The outer frieze consists of reversing lotus panels which are indented at the top. From this point springs an elongated leaf. These leaves reach into the corners of the hexagon. From the corners of the lotus panels spring short tendrils which look like horns. These give the design a Far Eastern, perhaps even South-East Asian, look, though the design itself could well have originated in the Timurid world. In fact, the design resembles the geometric tiles of the Damascus and Edirne series (fig. 3).

These "Chinese" tiles pose a series of questions that relate to our problem. Hexagonal wall tiles were not used in China for either monumental or domestic purposes. As we have explained earlier, the use of tile dadoes originated in Iran and was very popular in Timurid Central Asia. The tiles would have to have been ordered, as they were not normally produced by the makers of porcelain in China. One would have expected, however, that the tiles would display the latest in Ming porcelain decoration. This was not the case. In fact, it is as if Ulugh Beg specified the form of decoration, which was to be Islamic, as well as the shape of the tile. He may have sent to China an actual Samarqand tile or pages from a pattern book. The Chinese tiles could thus reflect the phase of Samarqand wall revetment which we are missing in our investigations. In this phase Samarqand tilemakers would have used traditional designs, but painted them now in cobalt under the glaze, following the lead of local potters. The ranks of these local potters were supplemented at this time by craftsmen from Syria, brought by Timur to found what was probably the first workshop in Central Asia to imitate Chinese blue-and-white pottery. The products of this synthesis — blue and white pottery and tiles with Chinese-like painting — could eventually have served as models for potters returning to the West. But before we discuss the return of these potters to Damascus and Edirne, let us consider the second piece of evidence in this hypothesis.

The Ganbad-i Sayyidan at Shahrisabz (1437). This mausoleum was built by Ulugh Beg for his descendants; it adjoined the shrine of Shaykh Kutal, who had been the mentor of Timur's father Taraghay. The mausoleum is dated by a painted inscription in the dome to 841 (1437–38). Panels containing diaper patterns, here assuming the form of a trellis with plant filler, continue in this later mausoleum. Within the lower panels the ogee arch is filled with a geometric design based on the twelve-pointed star. These are outlined in a thicker line and thus stand out as if they were tiles (fig. 9). They contain individual wavy trees. In the spandrels of the ogee arch is a grid of hexagons, perhaps an allusion to tiles. These references to tiles, or "tile-consciousness," suggest the possibility that actual blue-and-white tiles, some of which bore images borrowed from the paysage repertory, once ornamented many religious buildings in the Samarqand.
region. This phase of blue-and-white tilemaking follows
the one represented by the Chinese tiles, during which
time the imagery from the mural paintings migrated
onto the tiles.

It was at this point that all of the concepts embodied in
the Damascus and Edirne tiles were bundled for export.
The paintings in the mausoleum at Shahrisabz show the
loss of the great “Master of Landscape” in their refer-
ence to a derivative form of his work, the painted tile.
The very close resemblance between this master’s work
at Samarqand and the paintings at Kuhus suggest that
Tuman Aqa took him with her when she emigrated to
Herat. The Shahrisabz paintings also suggest that insuffi-
cient funds were available to revet the mausoleum with
actual ceramic tiles and so they were simulated in wall
paintings. There is also the possibility that the tilemakers
themselves had left the region.

THE DISPERsal OF TIMUR’S CRAFTSMEN

At least two pieces of evidence exist for the return home
of craftsmen brought to Samarqand by Timur following
(the painter or decorator), left Bursa with the armies of
Timur after they had routed the forces of the Ottoman
Sultan Beyazid. 38 By 1419  "Ali had returned to Bursa with
a group of tilemakers calling themselves the Masters of
Tabriz, as inscriptions in the Yeşil Cami of Bursa testify.
When he arrived in Samarqand, work on the Tuman Aqa
and Saray Mulk Khanum mausoleums was probably in
progress. Before  "Ali left, Ulugh Beg may already have
built his chini-khana, and the process of transfer from
mural to tile painting would have begun.

The second piece of evidence for the return of crafts-
men to their homes lies in a decree of 1411 issued by
Ulugh Beg, then governor of Samarqand. The decree
released those craftsmen who had been forcibly brought
to Samarqand by Timur. 39 Perhaps  "Ali and the Masters of
Tabriz left at that time, or they may have waited some
years. To insist that all of the blue-and-white tiles made in
the west were done by the same group of craftsmen is not
necessary. Different craftsmen, all trained in the Samar-
qand tradition, could have brought the idea independ-
ently to Damascus, Cairo, and Edirne, as indeed is sug-
gested by the diversity of styles. Still another group,
specializing in cuerda seca although knowledgeable in un-
derglaze technique, could have worked at Bursa, where
cuerda seca tiles predominate. That the blue-and-white
tiles are linked to a tradition of mural landscape is fur-
ther supported by the little-known remains of such paint-
ings on the very same walls as the tiles in Edirne. The
plaster walls above the dado have traces of several peri-
ods of painting. The earliest — possibly pre-dating the
tiles — consists of a series of life-size trees of the same
species as appear in Timurid paintings. They are de-
picted behind what seems to be a garden wall, which dis-
appears beneath the tiles. Although the trees are also
lifelike, their scale and the composition make them
appear very different from the Timurid murals. The artist
would probably not have seen the Timurid model but
may have heard about it from the potters returning from
Samarqand. Perhaps the program of mural paintings was
only a temporary measure, until the tiles could be manu-
factured.

That blue-and-white tiles as an idea traveled so far and
to a place where the local architectural tradition was not
sympathetic is a measure of the prestige of this form of
decoration. Just what its connotations were, other than
the symbolism discussed above, can be surmised from yet
another parallel in a far-flung place. Several mosques in
Java, which was being colonized by Muslims during the
fifteenth century, have porcelain tiles painted in under-
glaze cobalt blue. These tiles are known to have been
ordered from Vietnam. Unlike those of Damascus and
Edirne, however, they were never used as dados. The
tiles had hollow backs and were set individually either in
the wall or in wooden partitions as objects of special
interest. 40 The general designs are similar to the Chinese
tiles from Samarqand, and some of the details may be
compared with the Damascus and Edirne tiles, 41 thus fur-
ther suggesting a local tradition of blue-and-white tiles in
Samarqand.

One observation should be made here about the func-
tion of the tiles imported by Muslim colonies in Java; 
there they are found exclusively in a Muslim context.
Because blue-and-white tiles had entered the conscious-
ness of Muslims forced to live abroad as a most presti-
gious form of decoration, the tiles came to symbolize
Islam. Similarly, today the turquoise-tiled dome, once
exclusively Iranian, is used everywhere in the world to
identify a religious monument of Islam. In Java it did not
matter how the tiles were placed, whether correctly as a
dado or set into a wooden screen. There these tiles
served a metonymous function, that is, they symbolized
Islam through association with Timurid mosques. So it
was that, when the colonists wished to build a mosque in
Java, they included such tiles even though the indige-
nous architectural tradition did not call for tiles.

In Damascus, however, the presence of Islam was not
an issue, and the reason for employing a foreign device,
the tile dado, must be sought elsewhere. Perhaps the Iranian nisba *al-Tauriz* ("from Tabriz") of the patron can explain the taste for Iranian forms of decoration, especially one so prestigious as blue-and-white tile, which had special meaning for the Syrians, as it recalled the actual porcelains imported from China before the conquests of Timur.

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**NOTES**


4. Riefstahl, "Edirne"; Carswell, "Six Tiles."

5. Riefstahl, "Edirne", fig. 9.

6. Ibid., fig. 12.

7. Ibid., fig. 13.

8. References cited in parentheses in the text refer to illustrations in John Carswell’s article cited above, n. 1.


15. See Golombok and Wilber, *TAIT*, pp. 233–36, for the early history of this funerary complex.


19. E.g., the Masjid-i Jam′ in Yazd, built in 1364 (Golombok and Wilber, *TAIT*, no. 221, pp. 414–18, with bibliography).

20. Ibid., pp. 188–89.

21. See above, n. 18.


27. These fillers at the end of chapters and books within an anthology have not been published; see, for example, folls. 28a, 89b, 190a.


31. Such images are found on, for example, folls. 3b–4a, 12b–11a, 24b–25a, 86b–87a.

32. For example, in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, ms. 122, *Lama’at* of Iraqi and other poems, dated 835/1432; ms. 127, ghazals, dated 855/1449; ms. 159, Anthology, undated. An unpublished anthology in the Israel Museum (Rabenou 3685.9.64) contains numerous stenciled and painted images found in the Uighur anthology. Like this manuscript, it too contains images of vases, arabesques, and others, on which verses are written, in diagonal lines.

33. An additional stimulus for the Damascus tiles may have been the existence in that city of two monuments ornamented with landscape imagery in mosaics, the Great Mosque of Damascus (710) and the mausoleum of Baybars (1277–81), which was probably modeled on the early mosque. In both, however, pavilions are prominent in the composition, and although architecture is represented among the Cairo tiles (images of mosques, minbar, etc.), none are found in the surviving Damascus series.

34. Such as the mystical journey through a physical environment described by Farid al-Din ʿAttar, *Conference of the Birds (Manṭiq al-ʿotūs)*, which Deborah Blumberg-Salter suggests is illustrated in the margins of the Jalayirid Sultan Ahmad’s Divan ("A Sufi Theme in Persian Painting: The Divân of Sultan Ahmad ʿAlī in the Freer Gallery of Art," *Kunst des Orients* 11 (1976–77): 43–84). This manuscript is contemporary with the Bhībhanī landscape anthology discussed above.

35. One is on display in the Historical Museum in Samarqand (unlabeled; illustrated in Rempel’, *Arkhiitekturhnyi Ornament Uzbekistana*, fig. 153), and the other is in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, attributed to the sixteenth century by T. Arapova, who was not aware of its Samarqand provenance, *Kniazskii Farfur v sobranii Ermitazha* (St. Petersburg, 1977), fig. 11. On Ulugh Beg’s chinikhana, see Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p. 229.

36. Evidence for the existence of this workshop is presented in a
forthcoming monograph I have written together with Robert Mason and Gauvin Bailey.


38. Gülru Necipoğlu, “From International Timurid to Ottoman: A Change of Taste in Sixteenth-Century Ceramic Tiles,” Mucarnas 7 (1990): 136; she also suggests that the Masters of Tabriz may have been taken to Samarqand by Timur as well and returned in the company of Ali to Bursa.


40. These tiles were apparently commissioned for use in Java at Demak, Kudus, Japara, and Gerebon. The largest group comes from the Masjid Agung of Demak and can be dated stylistically to ca. 1450. These tiles do not interlock, but serve as single decorative entities and may have come from other sources (John Guy, “The Vietnamese Wall Tiles of Majapahit,” Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society, 1988–89, p. 38).

41. Ibid., fig. 15; compare with Riefler, “Edirne,” fig. 9.