A Collection of Talismanic Bāzūbands from the Safavid and Qajar Epochs: A Descriptive and Analytical Study

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ARTICLE INFO  

ABSTRACT

Keywords: 
Amulets; Talismans; Bāzūbands; Safavid; Qajar; Magic; Superstition; Divination.

No doubt, every nation had possessed a set of deeply rooted beliefs, these rendered into variant practices and traditions, establishing civilization aspects. The belief in magic, superstitions and divinations are categorized under these beliefs. Mankind had tremendously believed their ability to hurt, bring bad destiny, and on other hand, trusting their capacity to bestow protection and guarantee good luck, thus, motivated the appeal to possessing amulets and talismans. This research paper deals with ‘Bāzūbands’; a form of amulets and talismans, worn by warriors to, morally, safeguard them and ensure triumph through Qur‘ānic inscriptions, invocations, besides other magical texts. The research tackles some important aspects related the Safavid and Qajar bāzūbands, like the belief in magic, its roots in the Persian culture, an etymological study for the different terms; ‘amulet’, ‘talisman’ and ‘bāzūband’, to reveal their roots and consequent development. This is followed by a preview for the Shi‘ītes’ attitude regarding amulets and talismans, and the main elements that should be exploited in fashioning them, and the influence of the Shi‘ī belief on its mounting and ornamentation. In addition, a detailed description for a special collection of talismanic ‘bāzūbands’ from world-wide museums and private collections; some of which are to be published for the first time, is enclosed. Thenceforth, a concise analysis for the described samples is incorporated.

Research plan

I. The belief in magic
II. Roots of magical beliefs in Persian culture
III. Etymology of amulets, talismans, and bāzūband
IV. Shi‘ītes’ attitude regarding amulets and talismans
V. Fashioning amulets and talismans with Shi‘īsm indications
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I. The belief in magic

Persia or Iran, also known as the land of Aryans, was the home of one of the unique human civilizations. The political history of Persia (later Iran) dates to near 6000 B.C. Through this long history, religion has always served as both a means of dominance and a popular force of resistance to the political authority.

Persia was the birthplace of several major world religions; the ancient Mithraism (God of Good and Justice), Zoroastrianism (the Persian adopted religion founded by prophet Zoroaster in the 17th century B.C., and the radical sect of Islamic Religion, Shi'ism. Politically, three major powers preceded Persia in Iran: Susa, Elam, and Media. Susa (Persian Shusha) was one of the oldest sites of ancient civilization with a political life on a massive scale beginning around 6000 B.C. or earlier. Another early Iranian people, the pre-Aryan federated state of Elamites raised in 3000 B.C. and continued for about 2500 years as a massive scale controlling a large territory comprising present Iran, the Caspian Sea region, Afghanistan, and a major part of the Near East including Babylonia and Assyria.

A remarkable achievement of the ancient Elamites was the development of their own script, the proto-Elamite script, the designation applied to the earliest pictographic stage in contrast with the later Elamite ‘linear script’. Their empire had been suppressed by the Medians (of the Aryan branches) in 600 B.C.

The Aryans established a World-State Persian Empire of two branches; the first was the Medians who overwhelmed the Elamites. Under their control, the Iranian influence had expanded to beyond the Mesopotamia. Median empire in turn, did not sustained more than 40 years, defeated by the Persians, Aryans’ other branch, under Cyrus the Great in 559 B.C. Through the Achaemenid Persian empire played a major role in the governance process of the vast territories with numerous nationalities and ethnic characteristics. This vast controlling empire continued until 330 B.C. when defeated by Alexander the Great. This was followed by the Sassanian dynasty in 224 B.C., which continued until 651 A.D. when overwhelmed by the Arab Muslim conquest.

It is worth mentioning that the Zoroastrianism was the state religion through the previous epochs. Accordingly, it took more than 300 years for Iran to accept Islamic religion. When it happened, it created a new aspect in Islamic religion. This is designated in the Shi'a sect as an independent radical branch of the Islamic religion. Shi'ism is an ideology and a sociopolitical movement originated due to disagreement towards the legitimate successor of Prophet Muhammad. Persia, later Iran, is its heartland. A fundamental difference between Shi'ī and Sunnī Muslims is that Sunnī followers believe in the selection of the prophet’s successors, while Shi'a followers believe that 'Ali ibn 'Abi-Tālib the son-in-law and cousin of the prophet Muhammad is the legitimate successor.

Whatever theoretical and ideological differences there may be within the Shi'īs the undisputed fact remains that Shi'ism has grown in the number of believers, in its populism, and its radicalism regarding society, politics, and humanity.
During the late Umayyad Caliphate, Shi‘ism continued to play a minor role in social and political protest, and thus led to the Shī‘a revolution that toppled the Umayyad Caliphate and brought to power the ‘Abbāsīds in the middle of the 2nd century A.H./8th century A.D. However, the ‘Abbāsīds turned away from Shi‘ism and many Shī‘i movements were suppressed.10

In the 5th century A.H./11th century A.D., the Iranians established the Great Saljugh Empire, they revived the Sasanian traditions of religious, political, and administrative aspects under the new banner of Islam, and Shi‘ism have initially spread. Such aspects had been reinforced by the Safavid Empire, at the turn of the 10th century A.H./16th century A.D., particularly, the Persian tradition of the divine rulership, thus considered themselves descendants of the pious Imāms.11

The declaration of the Shi‘ism as the state religion under the Safavid Empire (906-1149 A.H./1501-1720 A.D.) had revived it, and thus, contested to the neighboring Sunnī Ottoman Empire. In addition, it gave the religious leaders, Ulamā, the opportunity to gain greater power and independence from the state.

Since the middle of the 13th century A.H./19th century A.D. Shī‘a radicalism has played a more distinct role in Iranian politics than before.12 The Ulamā had owned a massive support and formidable weapon from all social classes against the Qajar’s regime and its foreign supporters. This means that the Ulamā were in continuous conflict with the Qajar monarchy who tried to grant concessions to foreign governments in Iranian lands.

Consequently, being the homeland of the Shi‘ism; Iran presents a different national and religious character in its internal and international politics from the middle East and Europe as well. It presents a practical traditional religious leadership supporting and leading the modernization and constitutional revolution.13 It is meaningful here to refer that such religious sect had ever influenced all aspects of the Iranians’ life and their social beliefs, such as magic, divination, and superstition. This resulted in their refuge, like other nations, to the use of several forms of amulets and talismans. Nevertheless, in several cases, their religious sect, the Shi‘ism, was extent to express their unique personality.

II. Roots of magical beliefs in Persian culture

Since the antique ages, man had lived days of misery and terrible fear of several reasons around, such as, plague, pestilence, sunstroke, death by lightning and the attacks of beasts, wounds in battles, drowning, etc. In addition, early man used to attribute all his ailments or any misfortune to the evil spirits. As time went on, his fear of evil spirits did not diminish.14 Thus, the use of amulets was due to man’s belief in the power of Evil Eye and its effect on both human and animals, besides, his confidence on the protective power of amulets and talismans against all dangers. Man used to evaluate amulets by results; that when he adopts a special amulet, if his affairs prospered and all his status sounds good, this assures his belief in its power, and vice versa.15

In the magical worldview, the need for a magical act rises when a misfortune occurred, or a positive target is greatly required.16 Thus, the chief motivation for
possessing talismanic devices was the fear of Evil Eye or Evil Look. The reason for this is that the various human races in all the world since thousands of years convinced that both animate creatures and inanimate objects possess the power of causing several bad effects to their fellow-creatures and any kind of property through a mere glance of the eye, astonishing, or wonder look. The oldest mention of the Evil Eye occurred in texts of the Sumerians from the 3rd millennium B.C., Babylonians, and Assyrians.\textsuperscript{17}

In pre-Islamic cultures, images of lions, serpents, and scorpions were imaged on magical artefacts, such as amulets and magic-medicinal bowls. Other samples of magical signs widely employed in talismanic artefacts were the representations of the twelve zodiacal signs and the seven planets. Furthermore, exploring occult properties of substances, such as stone, glass, metals, etc. was taken into consideration when modeling talismanic artefacts. Such artefacts were considered to bestow protection due to the involved images or the natural substances’ properties, thus, it almost did not include prayers or invocations.\textsuperscript{18}

Since the early times of Islam, magic was used for seeking God’s goodness.\textsuperscript{19} In addition, Muslims have believed in the influence of the Evil Eye through all periods of their history, they called it as ‘\textit{\textit{ain al-ḥasad}.} It is worth mentioning that Evil Eye possessor may or may not know that he has. He may have been born with it, due to the sign of the zodiac into which he was born, or the star which was rising through his birth. \textit{Sūrat al-Falaq} (n. CXIII) of the Holy Qur’ān was often written on scrolls or cut on agates and carried as a protection against the Evil Eye.\textsuperscript{20} Another motive for possessing amulets and talismans is the fear of all spiritual creatures known as \textit{Jinn}, whom existence was recognized in the Holy Qur’ān and referred to as fire creatures. \textit{Jinn} were assumed to have the ability to pass through any substance and can take the form of anything even of tiny sizes. Several forms of amulets were used by persons who are subject to fits, of these; iron discs with strange marks scratched on. Additional talismans were composed of certain verses of the Holy Qur’ān as charm against \textit{Jinn}. Besides, amuletic boxes with tiny versions of the entire Holy Qur’ān and special prayers were worn either to protect against maleficent spiritual creatures.\textsuperscript{21}

Further form of amulets was used by Muslim soldiers, they always felt their need to the amuletic protection. The common form of military amulets is a strip of paper inscribed with an extract from the Holy Qur’ān, the name of Allah, prophet \textit{Muḥammad}, ‘\textit{Alī}, besides the names of the seven archangels. In other cases, the amulet takes the form of a long roll of paper tied to the warrior’s breast or any part of his body.\textsuperscript{22}

Concerning the Iranians, they have a tradition that ‘Evil Eye puts the camel into the pot and mankind into the grave’. As a result, their fear of the Evil Eye greatly increased the use of superstitions and talismanic objects.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{III. Etymology of amulet, talisman, and \textit{bāzūband}}

The word amulet had several meanings and interpretations. It was said to be borrowed from the Latin ‘\textit{amolētum}’ which referred to the country-folk name of the cyclamen which is famed to prevent harmful influence of poisonous drugs where it is grown.\textsuperscript{24}
thus interpreted as means of defense.

Another concept referred to the word amulet as synonymous to ‘phylactery’, though, others stated that it is derived from the Arabic word ‘himāla’, which means the cord by which an amulet is suspended from the neck, as well as for the amulet itself. Furthermore, the word amulet had several equivalents differ from place to another, in Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Syria; amulets were known as ‘tamīmah’ literary means perfection and refer to kalimāt Allāh at-Tāmmāt, ‘Ūdzah’ and ‘ta‘wīzah’ which meaning an invocation for the protection of God. In North Africa, the word ‘Khurza’ was the synonyms for an amulet. In Morocco the word ‘hirz’, which means refuge, is used to refer to amulets, in Egypt, ‘hijāb’, which means covering or sheltering something, is referring to charm, in Iran, India, and the Ottoman empire, the term ‘mūhr’ which refers basically to earthly clay tablet of a sacred place; also used to refer to amuletic purposes.

Nonetheless, a talisman is any object that is imbued with protective powers, and almost associated with zodiacal influence. The word talisman is synonymous to the Greek word ‘telesma’ and the Arabic ‘ṭilasm’ and ‘ṭalāsim’, which means to make marks like magician. This is used to include all charms and amulets, and the popularly known as prayers. Another definition for ‘ṭilasm’ is: ‘An inscription with astrological and other magic signs or an object covered with such inscriptions, especially also with figures from the zodiacal circle or the constellations and animals which were used as magic charms to protect and avert the evil eye. The Greek name is evidence of its origin in the late Hellenistic period and gnostic ideas are obviously reflected in the widespread use of such charms’.

Furthermore, talismans can be of two sorts: complete ‘tāmm’, and non-complete ‘gair- tāmm’. According to the theory of the organic unity of the universe; complete talismans can only be modelled when all the elements on earth, for instance; stones, trees, metals, are represented in them and the planetary arrangements are prosperous. However, this could be hardly ensured almost at least every 100 years. Thus, the non-complete talismans should be satisfying to human being.

Argue is originated to define whether ‘amulet’ and ‘talisman’ are equivalent terms or not. The concept that they are differ from each other outlined that amulet is an object which is endowed with magical powers, and of its own accord uses these powers continuously on behalf of the person who carries it, laid on his house, or attached to any of his valuable belongings for protection from the Evil Eye. While talisman is more complicated, since its modelling was based on special astrological arrangements and was intended to perform more specific purposes. Though, the line which separates the two terms ‘amulet’ and ‘talisman’ has been rarely observed because both are part of the machinery of magic. Nonetheless, the term ‘amulet’ considered more effective.

In Muslim concept the word ta‘wīd is, as well, synonym to charm, amulet and talisman. It is used to refer to four short Sūras (al-kāfirūn n°. 109, al-Īḥlās n°.112, al-Falaq n°. 113 and an-Nāṣ n°.114) of the Holy Qur’ān. Those are called the ‘Four Declarations’ or ‘A refuge with God’.
Talking about the emergence of amulet and talisman; they are antiquely rooted, since the time when animism satisfied man’s spiritual needs. Primitive man seems to have adopted them because of an internal urge and desire to protect himself. Thus, he required amulets to give himself power to overcome his enemies, whether visible or invisible. When man believed in the existence of God; he ascribed to his Divinity the authorship of the magical powers which he believed to be inherent in his amulets and believed that his God needed them as much as he himself did. Though, later, man regarded his God as the granter of magical powers. Since amulets benefits its wearer with a sense of comfort besides bestowing protection, they have been globally working. Neither cultural improvement nor advanced education managed to liberate mankind from the believe in amulets and divination systems.\(^{42}\)

Prehistoric Hebrews possessed a far-reaching system of magic, which is known from the Hebrew Bible. They inherited much of their magic from the Sumerians and Babylonians. Like their nearby nations, they possessed uninscribed amulets modeled from both precious and semi-precious stones. In ancient Egypt, amulets were, likewise, widespread. In the dynastic period \textit{mk-t} which means ‘protector’ and \textit{udjau} which means ‘keep-safe’ were the common words for amulet. In this period, inscribed amulets predominated, they were considered more powerful than plain ones. Such inscriptions are, as well, varied in value; the utmost ones were those extracted from the funerary texts, known as the \textit{Book of the Dead}.

During the period of the Sassanids from about 226-632 A.D., amulets and amuletic seals used in western Persia (Iran) were commonly known as ‘Pehlevi gems’ due to the \textit{Pehlevi} characters applied on. These were derived from a \textit{Semitic} alphabet, which was probably \textit{Syriac}. Through a contemporary period, but in a different region; Egypt, with the emergence of Christianity in the 1\textsuperscript{st} century A.D., the power of magic still effective. This is rendered in the form of several Coptic amulets and talismans. They discarded the hieroglyphic, hieratic and demotic scripts, and had their own Coptic scripture; based on Greek alphabet and several old Egyptian characters.

For the Arabs, specifically, through the first six centuries A.D., before the emergence of the Islamic Faith, they possessed amulets and talismans simulating their ancestors, associated with them ideas borrowed from Hebrew, ancient Egyptian, and Gnostic writings.\(^{43}\) However, the Islamic magical theory looks like an organic unity composed of the planets, the zodiacal signs, the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire), and the four qualities (cold, warm, dry and humid). These ideas had been deeply rooted in the sciences of Late Antiquity of which Islam became its transmitter. Other occult sciences like astrology and alchemy have shared the same concepts of the surrounding world’s mechanism together with magic. The idea of unity is displayed in geometrical aspects, using concentric circles - representing the cosmos- or by magic squares.\(^{44}\)

After the emergence of Islam in Arabian and Persian lands, although amulets and talismans were still in use, they had completely renovated. They had been composed of short \textit{Sūras} of the Holy \textit{Qur'ān}, some invocations, the 99 names of Allah and short prayers. The inscription must be written by a holy man, on a chosen material with black ink.\(^{45}\)
Focusing on the Persians after Islam; they had used amulets and talismans in a wide range. They did not adhere to measures found in the Holy Qur’ān and prophetic traditions. They had believed in the existence of special protective power in respective objects, of these, shells, stones, mother-of-pearl, and various parts of animals. These all become recognized talismans.\textsuperscript{46}

A further term to be illuminated here is ‘bāzūband’. It is a Persian word composed of two syllables; ‘bāzū’ which means upper arm, and ‘band’ which means bracelet, thus, the term ‘bāzūband’ means armlet or armband.\textsuperscript{47} The terms bhujiang, dand and joshan are, as well, corresponding to bāzūband.\textsuperscript{48} In Pahlavi language,\textsuperscript{49} it is also known as bahuand, and bāhūvand.\textsuperscript{50} In addition, the word ‘bāzūband’ refers to a village in Hurāsān e-Razavī province, Iran.\textsuperscript{51}

According to the Burhān-I Qāṭi’, bāzūband (armlet) is classified among the ornamental jewelry of the Iranian society as one of nine items. These are: āvīz (jeweled hair ornament), gūshvār (earrings), Sīlsīla (chain and pearl necklaces), gatlūband (choker), halqā-i-bīnī (nose-ring), dast-birinjān (bracelet), khalkhāl (anklet), and angushtarī (ring). These nine items probably of Indian origin, because the standard reference of the Burhān-i Qāṭi’ was compiled in India in about 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.H./ 17\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. However, if these ornamental jewelry were fashionable on one time, they are subject to change from time to another.\textsuperscript{52}

Furthermore, bāzūband’s usage did not limit to ornamental purposes, it was sometimes reinforced by Qur’ānic inscriptions, the 99 names of God and several invocations. Thus, it was regarded as talismanic objects for warriors, due to the belief in their ability to protect and grant them victory as well.\textsuperscript{53}

In this case, bāzūband should be in contact with the skin; and to be worn on several parts of the body as possible.\textsuperscript{54} Such duty resulted in special composition of bāzūbands to fulfill. Sometimes, they take the form of amulet cases, of precious metals, silk, linen cloth, or leather, which were tied to the upper arm.\textsuperscript{55} The idea of using bāzūband in the first place being to protect it from injury and contamination, and to keep it out of the sight of maleficent spirits and human body with Evil Eyes. This is also the case for a paper scroll containing magical formulae, miniature full copies of the Holy Qur’ān, or even particular verses, are all regarded as talismans.\textsuperscript{56}

It could not be stated, in precise, where and when this fashion began, though it has been suggested that it may have originated at the Mughal court as evidenced by their appearance in Mughal paintings.\textsuperscript{57}

### III. Shi’ītes’ attitude regarding amulets and talismans

The attitude of Islamic religion towards magic is determined by the fact that the Holy Qur’ān acknowledges its existence. Words relating to the idea of magic ‘sihr’ occur more than 50 times in different Sūras. The most relevant is recorded in sūrat al-Baqarah (verse n°, 102), which refers to the evil demons ‘Ṣaitāns’ who taught people witchcraft, and how this resulted in unwanted evil effects, such as separating between the married, only by God’s permission. Hence, magic is not allowed to be practiced for evil purposes, so black magic is prohibited. Another important condition specifies that the consultant of magical formulae should only invoke God’s support. However,
magical handbooks, ignore this prohibition, they are full of demons with unknown names whose assistance is petitioned.\textsuperscript{58} This action was practiced by Jews, Christians, and later by Muslims.\textsuperscript{59}

The Jewish Rabbis and some of the Christian Fathers condemned the use of amulets; because they associated them with magic and regarded their use as an indication of distrust in the divine providence. But their condemnation had no lasting effect except to incite men to do what was arbitrarily forbidden and formulating of amulets went on as before. Since the oldest civilized nations believed that their Gods had need of and made use of magic, it is not surprising that men and women had turned to magic in periods of stress and difficulty and used to wear amulets and talismans to protect themselves, and in the other hand safeguard the life and strength which had been granted to them by the Gods, although their belief in divine powers seemed abstracted. Looking back over the history of amulets; it is difficult to understand why most clerics had condemned their use.\textsuperscript{60}

Though, how was the attitude towards using amulets and talismanic objects in Islam? There has been a wide-ranging debate about what is allowed in Islam, and what is prohibited.\textsuperscript{61}

It was stated that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ permitted using talismans against the Evil Eye. When he was asked for using spells against Evil Eyes, he ﷺ said: ‘yes, for if there were any thing in the world which would overcome fate, it would be an evil eye’.\textsuperscript{62}

However, amulets and talismanic objects used by Muslims, appeal to God in the first instance. Muslims are differed from Byzantine, Roman, early Iranian, and other pre-Islamic magic which was basically addressed demonic forces or spirits of the dead. These objects did not confine on magical symbols; there were evocations, prayers, and verses from the Holy Qur’ān. The main function of these objects was to ward off misfortune and the Evil Eye to gain good fortune. Although these objects are varied according to regions; they are almost encompassing certain idioms and symbols.\textsuperscript{63} There are many verses from the Holy Qur’ān, which are believed to afford protection against the Evil Eye, of these sūrat Yūnūs verse n°. 81.\textsuperscript{64}

\section*{IV. Fashioning Amulets and Talismans with Shi‘ism indications}

The description of the actual amulet is almost simple, because in most cases, each amulet or talisman explains itself.\textsuperscript{65} They are applied on several forms: amulet cases, mirrors, boxes, weapons, talismanic shirts, armbands ‘bāzūbands’ and standards. Those objects were designated as means to safeguard its possessor from maleficent forces. In addition, some physicians recommended them as devices for curing various ailments. Once, modelling of talismanic objects was based on Muslims’ knowledge in astrology, their power in warding off evil was introduced by combining between magic and religious texts.\textsuperscript{66}

Configuration of amulets and talismans differs according to the purpose of using them. They, sometimes, appeared in cylindrical boxes, when intended to enclose a scroll of written protective invocations. Others were in rectangular shape to suit the codex form of documents. Other ones were of triangular shaped cases; these were to
simulate the antique symbol of female fertility. It is worth mentioning that amulet holders in themselves are considered magically effective, so they can be used even without containing written spells.\textsuperscript{67}

Regarding the materials exploited in modelling amulets and talismans; they were, occasionally, made of semi-precious stones, such as carnelian (‘aqīq) and chalcedony,\textsuperscript{68} though, metals are basically exploited, iron and steel predominated.\textsuperscript{69}

In Iran (Persia) in the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.H./ 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D., two amulet forms dominated. Silver sheet amulets in the form of body parts known as ‘nazār’ meaning gaze upon, made for healing,\textsuperscript{70} the other type was in the form of brass sheet inscribed with magical idioms accompanied with figural representations, which are linked to Sabaean magical figures imported by early Islamic writers. Composing these amulets had been based on magical practices using astrology.\textsuperscript{71} The most powerful talisman was a tiny sized print of the Holy Qur’ān within iron boxes. Iranians’ belief in the magical power of iron is derived from Aristotle’s speech, according to Qazwīnī, that ‘wearing a piece of iron gives its wearer strength, increase his ambition, and became honorable among people’.\textsuperscript{72} Furthermore, its potential magical force is implied in the Holy Qur’ān in sūrat al-Ḥadīd (verse no. 25). In addition, due to the connection between using fire in modelling iron by hammering and the belief that the demons are creations of fire, thus iron is valued as superior to warding evil demons off.\textsuperscript{73}

In addition, steel was among the honorable metals as possessing magical powers. It was usually used in casting rings which were often inscribed with a name of God or the names of the ‘Five’ or some magic numbers or formulae. This is emphasized by the steel ring which Imām ʿAlī \textsuperscript{69} used to wear, this was said to be the reason for his mighty strength. Lead was also employed in both medicine and magic. Iron and silver were frequently used in talismans, in the contrary, using brass and copper was uncommon, they were only exploited as bases where magical formulae were inscribed. Despite the prohibition of using gold in utensils; golden artefacts have also appeared among the magical objects. According to Qazwīnī, Gold was said to have the ability to cure seizures and insanity, besides endowing audacity.\textsuperscript{74}

Certain colors of magical artefacts might have played a basic role in their selection. The golden tone, which was in most cases characterizing the representation of royals, confer feelings of dominance. Red was associated with blood, the mysterious sign of life, so it had positive role in discouraging negative impressions. Green as widely known to be symbol of paradise when color of trees and flowers being; thus, it is also marked as a source of positive psychic influence. Blue, as well, is highly praised as the most effective means of protection against Evil Eye.

Amulets and talismans as prophylactic devices; sometimes are plain, though their importance and influence is increased when bearing inscriptions.\textsuperscript{75} Talismanic inscriptions applied by magicians were particularly composed of groups of letters of the alphabet arranged in an order, which was not necessarily alphabetic; to some of them they assigned meanings or symbolisms, but of others they regarded the meanings as inexplicable to the human.\textsuperscript{76} Thus, became complicated and need further
clarification. This is known as ‘ilm al-ḥurūf (the science of the letters). The Shi‘ī Imām Ja‘far as-Ṣ̣ādiq had the head start of this science which had entered the Sunnī and Sūfī contexts since the 3rd century A.H./9th century A.D., and continued widely in an advanced form with the Sūfī rite in the 7th century A.H./13th century A.D. Special groups of letters are of great significance, of these the mysterious 14 letters of the Holy Qur‘ān, which are repeatedly found in the beginning of about 29 sūras, those are called as al-ḥurūf al-fawātīḥ.77

Each of the Arabic alphabet has a numerical value; calculated according to their arrangement in old Semitic ‘abjad’ numeric system.78 The magical power of some of the alphabetic letters were greater than others. Alif, for instance, is of greater value for being the first letter of the name of Allah, and the One God. Thus, talismanic inscriptions can be composed of letters only, numbers only, and in other cases have both. For instance, the names of the attributes of God known as ‘al-Asmā’ al-husnā and the Archangels, might be written with letters or with numerical values of the letters which formed the names, and in either form they construct protective amuletic inscriptions.79 Other forms of amulets and talismans are inscribed with short texts, though, of talismanic power, such as al-basmallah.80

Basically, Arabic language with its varied scripts (linear kūfic, cursive rounded Nāṣīḥī, thuluth, raihan, muhaqqaq, riq’a, tawdī’, besides nasta‘īq) had almost predominated, because of applying Turkish, Persian, and Urdu inscriptions in Arabic alphabet.81 Nevertheless, in some cases, talismans were bearing inscriptions in ancient-Hebrew, Syriac, or Greek- languages. This was ascribed to be more effective than Arabic ones,82 for instance, talismans using the ancient alphabet of Ibn Waḥšiyyāh,83 known as lunette script (Figure 1).84

A defined sign of amulets and talismans is a structure known as ‘magical squares’, frequently composed of the mysterious letters of the Holy Qur‘ān. Preceding the 7th century A.H./13th century A.D., simple form of 3X3 design squares of 9 cells was applied. These were arranged to have letters or numbers, in a special order that resulted in equal sum of 15 as the sum of each, row, column, and the two diagonals.85 This magic square is of Chinese origin named ‘buduh’.86 In the 6th century A.H./12th century A.D., magic squares had been increased to 28X28, the status that had continuously improved through later centuries to became larger, until completed 100X100 ones. Hence, magical squares became, almost, a basic element for amulets and talismans since 7th century A.H./13th century A.D.87 Such ‘magical squares’ had attracted the attention of historians of mathematics and puzzles, for the method of composing their numerical values in such astonishing order.88

Another form of squares has no mathematical properties, thus lack the magical formula. These are appeared into two forms; false magic square, each row, and each column of it contain the same group of signs in an order, differing from row to another, and the same in columns as well. The other case of non-magic squares known as the verse square, almost referring to verses of the Holy Qur‘ān, where the cells of the square are filled with words or phrases set in a form that each row begins
with a word and ends with another until the whole verse ends, composing a square shape.\textsuperscript{89}

Several geometrical shapes had great existence on amulets and talismans. The pentagram shaped star or the hexagonal, known as ‘seal of Solomon’ is among the items, frequently, incorporated with amulets and talismans.\textsuperscript{90} In addition, Circles and squares were repeatedly found on both metallic and stone talismans. Other shapes, but to a lesser extent, were triangle, star, cross and swastika.\textsuperscript{91}

Astrological iconography had been commonly accompanying several texts on amulets and talismans since the 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.H./ 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. ahead. The existence of these signs ascertains that modeling such amulets was achieved in accordance with astrological conditions.

Nonetheless, the employment of identical magical items is a major difficulty in classifying amulets and talismans’ homeland, though, some features in texts could be helpful.\textsuperscript{92} When amulets have clear indication to the Twelver Shi‘īsm, this refers to Iran (Persia) as the amulets’ homeland, particularly in the Safavid period (1501-1722A.D.). Other Shi‘ī idioms on amulets was the insertion of the names of the so-called the ‘pure Five’, referring to Prophet Muḥammad, his daughter Fātima, his son-in-law ‘Alī, and his grandsons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain, or the Twelve Imāms who added to Prophet Muḥammad, and his daughter Fātima called the fourteen immaculate ones.\textsuperscript{93} Other sign of Shi‘ī amulets is the phrase ‘Nadī ‘Aliyan’ which means call upon ‘Alī as a sort of invocation to Imām ‘Alī. Further sign is the phrase ‘there is no youth ‘fata’ except ‘Alī and no sword except for Dhū’l Faqār,”.\textsuperscript{94} In addition, the last two sūras of the Holy Qur‘ān known as Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat an-Nās are, as well, among the significant talismanic elements since they were the main texts which Imām al-Husain was wearing around his neck before his martyr in the famous battle of Karbala in 61 A.H.\textsuperscript{95} Despite the strong relation of all these signs with the Shi‘ī rite, it is undeniable that Āl al-Bait are almost honored by Sunnī and Sūfī associations as well.\textsuperscript{96}

Amulets and talismans since their emergence, onwards, had encompassed a vast variety of symbols. These are grotesque figures, figures of archangels, astrological signs, mythological beasts, linear designs, geometrical patterns, and very frequently the human hand stretched out. All these drawings are inherited from the ancient Egyptians, Copts, Gnostics, and Hebrews. Though, for Muslims, their employment had differed from a doctrine to another. The Sunnī Muslims only employs some of these, however the Shi‘īs, or "free thinkers" adopt them all. As a rule, Persian amulets are more artistic than those of the Arabs.\textsuperscript{97}

\textbf{V. Descriptive study for a chosen collection of Safavid and Qajar bāzūbands}

\textbf{1. A Large Safavid engraved hematite octagonal bāzūband (Figure 2) (Published for the first time)}

\textbf{Date:} 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.H./17\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.- Safavid dynasty

\textbf{Material and Technique:} Octogonal bāzūband made of hematite and silver, high – relief inscription with chamfered reverse frame
**Conservation**: Christie’s, Auction 7428-2007

**Item (piece) No**: Lot 437

**Dimensions**: 5.4 cm height

**Description**

This is a hematite octagonal shaped bāzūband of 5.4 cm high, with a chamfered reverse silver frame. Two heart-shaped loops are hinged to the frame. Those are usually meant to the insertion of such kind of ropes to fastening the bāzūband on the upper arm, but here is nonexistent. This piece dates to the 11th century A.H./17th century A.D.- the Safavid dynasty Iran. Its decoration consists of a nastā’iṣiq script with the verses nos. 51 and 52 from sūrat al-Qalam from the Holy Qur’ān, the inscription is elegantly adorned with some tiny five and six-petalled flowers.

2. **A pair of Safavid steel bāzūbands, Persia, (Figure 3)**

(Translated for the first time)

**Date**: 11th century A.H./17th century A.D.- Safavid dynasty

**Material and Technique**: Steel- Inscription carved in high-relief

**Conservation**: Bonhams, Auction 24198

**Item (piece) No**: Lot 103

**Dimensions**: 8.5 cm long

**Description**

Two oval-shaped bāzūbands of steel, with two side hollow loops, designated to the insertion of fastening rope, each bāzūband is 8.5 cm long. The upper bāzūband is inscribed with the phrase ‘ḥashbūnā Allah wa ni’ma al-wakīl’ (part of verse no. 173 sūrat al-‘Imran), while the lower one is inscribed with the phrase ‘ni’ma al-mawlā wa ni’ma an-Naṣīr’ (part of verse no. 40 sūrat al-Anfal), all are in thulth script.

3. **A Safavid engraved silver-gilt amulet case (bāzūband) (Figure 4)**

(Translated for the first time)

**Date**: 11th century A.H./17th century A.D.- Safavid dynasty

**Material and Technique**: Silver gilt- engraved inscription

**Conservation**: Bonhams, Auction 20833

**Item (piece) No**: Lot 56

**Dimensions**: 5.2 cm diameter

**Description**

This is a circular-shaped amulet case (bāzūband) of gilded silver of 5.2 cm in diameter. It dates to the Safavid dynasty, precisely 11th century A.H./17th century A.D. Two circular hinged lugs, hollowed with palmettes motifs inside are attached to the two sides. This amulet case is adorned from both sides; the upper lid is adorned with a central rounded frame; where we can read subdivided into five lines inscribed in nāshī script, surrounded by a frieze of scalloped semi-circular motifs crowned by palmettes. However, the base face displays a magic 4X4 squares surrounded by
inscriptions from all sides. The inscription on the upper lid is the names of the fourteen innocents\textsuperscript{101} as follows:

\begin{verbatim}
alahuma šalī 'alā Muḥammad
wa 'Aļī wa Fātima wa'l-Ḥasan wa'l-Ḥusain
wa 'Aļī wa Muḥammad wa Ja'far wa Müsā
wa 'Aļī wa Muḥammad wa 'Aļī wa'l-Ḥasan
wa al-Hujja al-Qasīmī
\end{verbatim}

However, the base face displays undefined symbols accompanied with numbers as a talismanic formula. This is surrounded by the verse no. 35 of \textit{sūrat an-Nūr}.

The talismanic formula consists of repeated Arabic letters that have positive attributes in Arabic magic which are (Ḥā’, ‘ain, sad, mīm and wāw), called “Letters of Light”, in this bazūband, the letter (‘ain) is repeated many times in a grid of sixteen squares, ‘ain relates to a specific Name of God, “‘ālim al-ḡaib wa'l-šahāda” (He who knows the Invisible and the Visible), a magic square composed of the letter ḥā’ alleviates fear of the dark. It’s noteworthy to mention that the latter letter was usually written to destroy magic, to free one who is bound and to make difficult things easier.\textsuperscript{102}

4. A Safavid steel bāzūband, 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.H./ 17\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. (Figure 5)
(Published for the first time)

\textbf{Date}: 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.H./17\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.- Safavid dynasty.
\textbf{Material and Technique}: Steel- inscription carved in high relief
\textbf{Conservation}: Bonhams, Auction 12051
\textbf{Item (piece) N\textsuperscript{0}}: Lot 526
\textbf{Dimensions}: 6.3 cm width

\textbf{Description}
This is a simple armband (bāzūband) of steel. It is composed of three plaques; the central one is the largest. Two small, filigreed lugs are attached to both sides, where a round braided rope is riveted.\textsuperscript{103} The central plaque is inscribed with a part of the verse no. 13 of \textit{sūrat al-Ṣaff} in \textit{nasta’liq} script over a pierced (arabesque) ground saying:

\begin{quote}
'nasrun min Allah wa fathun qarīp'.
\end{quote}

The two side plaques are also inscribed with the name of 'Aļī.

5. Two Safavid openwork steel bāzūbands (Figure 6)
(Published for the first time)

\textbf{Date}: 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.H./17\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.- Safavid dynasty.
\textbf{Material and Technique}: Steel – Inscription in high -relief
\textbf{Conservation}: Bonhams, Auction 23436
\textbf{Item (piece) N\textsuperscript{0}}: Lot 87
\textbf{Dimensions}: 9.3 cm long

\textbf{Description}
Two Safavid armbands (bāzūbands) attributed to the Safavid dynasty; approximately from the 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.H./ 17\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Each armband is composed of one
lobed plaque, with two hinges terminating with two hollowed lugs, each is totally 9.3 cm long. Both armbands are inscribed with special Shi’ite phrases applied in Dīwāni, thulth protruding script. The upper armband is inscribed with the phrase ‘la fata illā ‘Alī’, referring to the bravery of Imam ‘Alī ibn ‘Abī Ṭālib’. The lower armband is inscribed with the phrase ‘la saif illā dhu’l-faqār’, referring to the famous sword of Imam ‘Alī ibn ‘Abī Ṭālib’ that Prophet Muḥammad, had given it to Imam ‘Alī during the ḡazwa of Badr. These inscriptions are applied over an openwork plate riveted with brass pins over the steel ground. Two confronted fishes, somewhat unique, are shown on the top and bottom of each bāzūband’s plaque.

6. **A pair of Safavid cut steel bāzūbands, Persia, (Figure 7)**  
(Published for the first time)

**Date:** 11th century A.H./17th century A.D. - Safavid dynasty.  
**Material and Technique:** Steel, Gold, Inscription chiseled in high-relief  
**Conservation:** Sothebys, Auction L12220  
**Item (piece) No:** Lot 555  
**Dimensions:** 8 cm width  

**Description**  
This is a pair of cut steel armbands (bāzūbands) attributed to the Safavid dynasty, almost the 11th century A.H./17th century A.D. These bāzūbands are made particularly for Muḥammad Qulī Ḥān. Each armband (bāzūband) is composed of a circular plain plaque, with an openwork plate riveted on with brass or gold pins. Two hollowed hinges are attached to the terminals of each armband; the whole width of each bāzūband is 8 cm. Each armband’s circular plaque is divided into four lines in cursive script. The two bāzūband’s inscriptions are as follows:

\[
\text{be-jehat-e sarkar-e 'alijah}  
\text{mu'aalla jaygah sahibi}  
\text{Muḥammad Quli Ḥan be-etmam}  
\text{rasid raqimahu Muḥammad Šāliḥ}  
\]

'It was completed for the one of exalted rank, with elevated position, my master Muḥammad Quli Ḥān. Its scribe, Muḥammad Šāliḥ.'

This is one of the famous quatrains of the Sūfī poet Abū Sa‘īd Abī’l Ḥair.

7. **Two Safavid cut steel armbands, Persia, 1109 A.H./1697-8 A.D. (Figure 8)**  
(Published for the first time)

**Date:** 11th century A.H./17th century A.D. - Safavid dynasty.  
**Material and Technique:** Steel - inscription amongst leafy scrolls  
**Conservation:** Sothebys, Auction L12223  
**Item (piece) No:** Lot 190  
**Dimensions:** 17.7 cm length  

**Description**  
These two steel armbands are dated back to 1109 A.H./1697-8 A.D. Each armband is 17.7 cm length, composed of a central lobed plaque flanked by two smaller ones.
Two-palmettoes shaped loops are attached to the terminals. Both armbands are inscribed over a leafy scrolls background. The first large plaque is bearing the first part of al-Šahāda ‘lā-illah-illāh Allah’, the two side plaques are displaying invocation to God; the right-hand side is inscribed with the phrase ‘yā fattāḥ’, the left one is inscribed with the phrase ‘yā ma‘būd’ all are in thulth script. The lower armband’s central plaque is displaying the second half of al-Šahāda ‘Muḥammad rasūl Allah’, the two side plaques are displaying invocation to Imam ‘Alī; the right-hand side one is inscribed with the phrase ‘yā ‘Alī’ all are in thulth script, the left one is inscribed with the maker’s name Kamāl al-Dīn only in nastā’līq script. These are used for both decorative and talismanic purposes.

It was stated that using the invocations to God as ‘yā fattāḥ’ and ‘yā ma‘būd’ together is unusual. In addition, all the plaques of the two armbands are inscribed in thulth script, except one is in nastā’līq, thus it was suggested to be detached and wrongly reassembled.

8- Three plaques silver bāzūband (Figures 9 A-B)

Date: 12th century A.H./ 18th century A.D. - Safavid dynasty.

Material and Technique: silver- Inscription engraved over an incised background

Description
This is an arm amulet of silver, dated back to 12th century A.H./ 18th century A.D., and attributed to Iran. It is composed of three plaques; the central one is octagonal, bordered with two undetermined shaped plaques. The border band is inscribed with the verses nos. 51-52 from sūrat al-Qalam in nāshī script. The octagonal plaque is occupied by a central roundel containing verse no. 13 of sūrat aṣ-Ṣaf in nastā’līq script over an incised ground. The two side plaques are decorated with frames containing five names from the Beautiful names of Allah, of which one written twice. In addition, both side plaques are inscribed with Ayat al-kursī (verses nos. 255-256 of sūrat al-Baqara). They are attached on two fringes ending in two tassels with flowering bud shaped mount.

9- Armband Amulet (bāzūband) Inscribed “In the Name of God” (Figure 10) (Published for the first time)

Date: Late 12 century A.H./ 18th century A.D. – Qajar dynasty

Material and Technique: Steel with pierced decoration and inscription

Conservation: Art Institute of Chicago

Item (piece) No.: 1932.157

Dimensions: 3.6 cm long, 6.3 cm width, 0.8 cm thick

Description
This is an oval shaped armband amulet (bāzūband) of steel. It dates to 1248 A.H./1832 A.D., thus attributed to Iran- Qajar dynasty. Two hollow-shaped loops are riveted on both sides, where rose-colored rope is attached to be used in fastening the armband. It displays a simple inscription in thulth script as follows” Bismallah al-
10- Circular-shaped amulet case (bāzūband) with Qur’ānic inscription (Figure 11) (Published for the first time)

Date: Early 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty.
Material and Technique: Silver – incised and engraved decoration and inscription
Conservation: Ashmolean Museum – Youssef Jameel Centre for Islamic & Asian Art
Item (piece) №: EA2012.95
Dimensions: 1.5 cm height, 9.1 cm wide, 5.9 cm diameter

Description
This is a circular amulet case (bāzūband) of silver with two almond shaped side lugs. It is attributed to Iran from the Qajar dynasty. It is engraved with incised decoration. This elaborated box used as amulet case was employed to store miniature copy of the Holy Qur’ān, or selected verses to bestow protection. This bāzūband’s upper face is inscribed with al-Basmallah in the center, surrounded with two outer circles; the inner one displays (the verse №. 111 of sūrat al-Tawba) that talking about the paradise as a reward for whom fight ‘jīhād’ for the victory of God’s religion. While the outer circle is inscribed with the verses №. 51-52 from sūrat al-Qalam talking about the bad effect of the Evil Eye. While the reverse face is engraved with a central embellished circle displaying six foliating petals penetrated with trilobed floral leaves. A braided frieze with semicircular tiny pendentives is adorning the outer frame of this reverse face.

11- Circular-shaped amulet case (bāzūband) with Qur’ānic inscription (Figure 12) (Published for the first time)

Date: Early 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty.
Material and Technique: Silver – incised and engraved decoration and inscription
Conservation: Ashmolean Museum – Youssef Jameel Centre for Islamic & Asian Art
Item (piece) №: EA2012.118
Dimensions: 1.8 cm height, 8 cm width, 5.1 cm diameter

Description
This is a circular shaped bāzūband in the form of amulet case of silver with two hollowed almond shaped lugs with terminals are interlaced to the inside. It is attributed to the Qajar dynasty. This form of bāzūbands was used to preserve a miniature copy of the Holy Qur’ān or paper scrolls with special verses of Qur’ān that are famed with their use as protective talismans. Such type of talismanic objects was tied to the arm by strings. Both sides of this bāzūbands are incised with stamped decoration. The upper face is adorned with a protruding octagonal star medallion
adorned with trilobed floral leaves and centered with a circle occupied by al-Basmallah in thuluth script. The outer edge is occupied by part of surat an-Nās, the last of the Holy Qurʾān, invoking God’s protection from satanic temptation. The reverse or base face of this bāzūband is adorned with six floral shaped lobes in the center, with a thin zigzag frieze adorning the outer frame.

12- Five silver octagonal Qajar amulet cases (bāzūbands) Iran, (Figures 13 A- E) *(Published for the first time)*

**Date:** 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty.

**Material and Technique:** Silver - incised and engraved decoration and inscription

**Conservation:** Christies- Auction 5830

**Item (piece) No:** Lot 281

**Dimensions:** 5 cm diameter

**Description**

This is a group of octagonal amulet cases (bāzūbands) attributed to Iran, 13th century A.H./19th century A.D., all are of silver with two side loops, which are different from one to another, the bāzūbands A and E had hollow semicircular side loops, B and D had hollow almond shaped loops, while bāzūband C is unique: with rectangular shaped loops. Each bāzūband is about 5 cm in diameter. As mentioned before, such type is of talismanic nature, that meant to bestow protection on its wearer through the outside inscriptions, the miniature copy of the Holy Qurʾān, or only paper scrolls with special verses of Qurʾān, all kept inside these box shaped amulets. The upper face of each bāzūband is inscribed with verses of the Holy Qurʾān.

[Figure 13 A] It is embellished with three octagonal frames; the two outer ones are inscribed with the verses no. 51-52 of surat al-Qalam beside the phrase ‘fa-Allah Ḫār ḥāfazan’, while the smaller inner octagonal frame is occupied by the phrase ‘nasrūn min Allah wa fathun qarīb’.

[Figure 13 B] It is embellished with two octagonal frames; the interior one is occupied with al-Basmallah, while the outer is probably occupied by surat an-Nās but unfortunately it is not clear enough to be sure.

[Figure 13 C] This bāzūband is adorned with two octagonal frames, the outer octagon is occupied by part of the Holy Qurʾān verses saying: ‘wa yaqulūn inahu lamajnūn wa ma huwa ʾillā zikrun lil ‘ālamīn’.

[Figure 13 D] This bāzūband is adorned with two octagonal frames, the outer octagon ground is filled with scattered floral leaves, while the inner octagonal frame is occupied by a lobed shape with the phrase ‘nasrūn min Allah wa fathun qarīb’.

[Figure 13 E] It is embellished with three octagonal frames; occupied by the verses no. 7-8 of surat al-Baqara. The larger outer octagonal began with al-Basmallah and the verse no. 7 saying ‘Ḫatm Allah ’alā qulūbihim wa ’alā samʾihim wa ’alā ’absārihim gišāwa wa lahum…’, the next octagonal frame complete the verse no. 7 and part of verse no. 8 ‘azabun ’azīm wa min an-Nās man yaqūl ’āmanā bi-Allah ..’, the
verse is completed in the central octagonal frame as follows; ‘wa al-yawm al-Aḥir wa ma hum bim.’, the word bi-muʿminin is incomplete.

13- Parcel-gilt silver octagonal amulet-case (bāzūband), Iran (Figures 14 A- B)

**Date:** 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty  
**Material and Technique:** Gold, silver – inscription engraved in gilded section over the silver case.  
**Conservation:** Michael Backman Ltd.  
**Item (piece) N°:** 5745  
**Dimensions:** 4.7 cm diameter, 1 cm thick

**Description**  
This is an engraved silver amulet case (bāzūband), partially gilded, dated back to 13th century A.H./ 19th century A.D., attributed to the Qajar dynasty. It is octagonal shaped amulet case (bāzūband) of 4.7 cm in diameter and 1 cm thick. The octagonal box is terminating with two hollow semicircular loops on both sides, where a dark rose cord, with gold thread and elaborate knots, is attached. This cord is used to fasten this device on the upper arm, usually for soldiers. Due to the talismanic nature of this device, it often contained a miniature copy of the Holy Qur’ān, or selected verses of it. The slightly domed cover is embellished with eight gilded sections each engraved in Farsi Arabic with one of the 99 names of God (Figure 14 A).

The reverse (lower) face of this bāzūband is engraved with a solar emblem, an emblem that was used in some parts of northern India, and either Persia (Figure 14 B).

14- Inlaid and enameled armlet (bāzūband), Iran, (Figures 15 A- B)

**Date:** 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty.  
**Material and Technique:** Gold- inlaid and enameled with cords of cotton and metal thread  
**Conservation:** The David Collection- Copenhagen- Denmark  
**Item (piece) N°:** 23/2010  
**Dimensions:** 8.3 cm high, 6.5 cm width

**Description**  
This is a gold armlet (bāzūband) inlaid and enameled, attributed to Iran from the 1st half of the 13th century A.H./ 1st half of the 19th century A.D. This armband had two side openwork loops with a cotton cord with metallic thread attached. As mentioned before, this cord was used to fasten the armband on the upper arm for talismanic purposes.

Armlets were worn by both men and women in India and Iran since the 11th century A.H./ 17th century A.D. Thus, the purpose may be differed from case to another, between protection and adornment as well. The lavishly adorned armbands were designated particularly for princes and the elite, these were formed of numerous gemstones, and were worn as jeweled bands.
According to the inscriptions, the upper face of this armlet (Figure 15 A) depicts prince Tahmasp Mirza, grandson of the grandson of the ruling Fath‘Alī Šāh. The name of the enamellist is applied on the armlet’s left side as ‘Alī ḡulām Ḥanizād. The reverse side (Figure 15 B) is as well lavishly adorned with colorful -pink, light blue and white with green leaves-flowers over a golden ground. This armlet (bāzūband) was almost possessed by one of the subjects of the Qajar family in this Iranian province.123

15- Three- part engraved silver Talismanic bāzūbands, Iran, (Figure 16)

Date: Late13th – early 14th century A.H./ 19th- 20th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty  
Material and Technique: Silver- Decoration and inscription engraved  
Conservation: Michael Backman Ltd.  
Item (piece) No: 3503  
Dimensions: 12.5 cm length  

Description  
This is a silver armband (bāzūband) composed of three parts, it is attributed to Iran from the 13th –early 14th century A.H./ 19th- early 20th century A.D.124 Two semicircular hollow loops are attached to each side; these are designated for the insertion of some sort of cords for fastening on the upper arm. This bāzūband is composed of a central lozenge-shaped box with a cover kept closed by a small silver latch, the central piece is flanked with two side silver scalloped sheets, the upper face of the three plates is embellished with talismanic inscriptions from the Holy Qur‘ān.125 Small pieces of paper with protective Qur‘ānic verses would have been kept inside.

16- A gold carnelian engraved Qajar talismanic bāzūband – Iran, (Figure 17)  
(Published for the first time)

Date: 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty.  
Material and Technique: Gold – Inscription engraved on carnelian  
Conservation: Christies – Auction Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds  
Item (piece) No: Lot 72  
Dimensions: 20 cm long  

Description  
This is an elaborated Qajar bāzūband composed of five panels of carnelian, set in gold filigree mounts with suspended pearls.126 Each panel is engraved with small lines of nāṣīḥ script as follows: from right to left:

The first one from the right is occupied by the verses of sūrat al- Ilhās, the outer part of the second is adorned by ‘nidā ‘Alī’ quatrain as follows:

nādī ‘Alā, nādī ‘Alī, nādī ‘Alī, nādī ‘Alīyyan mazhar al- ‘ajā’ib, taqīdahu ‘awnan lakā fi ’l-nawā’ib, Kullu hammin wa ġammin, sayanj-i ‘Alī Bi wilayatika, yā ‘Alī! yā ‘Alī! yā ‘Alī!
The central panel holds the verse n°. 87 of sūrat al- Anbiyāʾ; the fourth panel is decorated by the verses of sūrat al- Fātiha and the last one is a replica of the first with the verses of sūrat al- Ḥādīth.

17- A gold carnelian engraved Qajar talismanic bāzūband – Iran, (Figures 18 A-B) (Published for the first time)

**Date:** 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty.

**Material and Technique:** Gold – Inscription engraved on carnelian

**Conservation:** Christie’s – Auction Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds

**Item (piece) N°:** Lot 72

**Dimensions:** 10.4 cm

This is an oval bāzūband, made of carnelian and surrounded by small quatrefoils and contained within a cartouche, set in a gold mount with cusped edges and two palmettoes shaped loops attachment. The carnelian holds an elegant nastaʿlīq Qur’ānic inscription of sūrat an-Nās, (Figure 18 A).

The back is engraved with a talismanic grid of 49 squares filled with magical letters, bordered on each side by a line giving the name of the patron, the maker, and the date of the mount.

The upper line on the mount around the edge, is adorned with the following inscription:

‘ḥasab al-ʿamr nawwab-i aʿ zam Husain ʿAlī Mīrzā farmanfarma hukmran-e velayat-e fārs be-sināʿat rashīd adāma Allah dawlatahu wa jalālatahu wa shawkatahu sanaʿahu Muḥammad Ḥasan Šīrāzī sanat 1221’.

It was made on the order of the greatest deputy, Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmanfarma, Governor of the Province of Fars, may God perpetuate his wealth, splendor and glory. Muḥammad Ḥasan Šīrāzī made it in year 1221 A.H./ 1806-07 A.D., (Figure 18 B). 127

From the inscription we know that this talisman was made for the son of Fath ʿAlī Šāh Qajar. He was a long-term governor of Fars and briefly the self-styled king of Persia.

18- A Qajar pierced silver bāzūband, Iran, late 19th century (Figure 19) (Published for the first time)

**Date:** Late 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.- Qajar dynasty.

**Material and Technique:** Silver – pierced inscription on a floral background

**Conservation:** Auction Fr-Ventes aux enchères d’objet d’art – France

**Item (piece) N°:** Lot 454

**Dimensions:** 7 cm diameter

**Description**

This is an oval- shaped silver arm bracelet, adorned with four lines of Qur’ānic inscriptions in thuluth script, showing the verse n°. 256 of Sūrat al-Baqarah known as ‘Ayat al-Kursī’ the throne, over a background of spiral arabesques, this armlet has two side openwork loops with a motif of trilobed florets. 128
Analytical study

- In terms of the survival of amulets, few samples can be attributed to before the 6th or the 7th centuries A.H./ 12th or 13th centuries A.D.\textsuperscript{129}
- The magical vocabulary found on the earliest surviving examples reflect pre-Islamic magical symbols; of a complex design composed of a scorpion, rampant lion or dog, a canopy of stars, and a frame of pseudo-\textit{kūfī} writing that occurs on Iranian amulet objects of the 3rd century A.H./ 9th century A.D. or early 4th century A.H./10th century A.D.\textsuperscript{130}
- From the mid of 6th century A.H./ 12th century A.D., other elements prevailed, these are verses from the Holy \textit{Qur'ān} and invocations to God or revered figures in Islam: the prophet \textit{Muḥammad}, Hebrew Prophet mentioned in the Holy \textit{Qur'ān}, Moses (\textit{Mūsā}), Abraham (\textit{Ibrāhīm}), Ishmael (\textit{Ismā'īl}), and Solomon (\textit{Sulāṁān}), the names of the seven sleepers of Ephesus, whose story is told in the Holy \textit{Qur'ān}, the names of the Archangels (\textit{Jibta'il} (Gabriel), \textit{Mīkā'il}, \textit{Isrāfil}, and ‘\textit{Aṣrā'īl}) were also used.\textsuperscript{131}
- Furthermore, the ‘Beautiful names of God’, or the ‘ninety-nine names of God’ whether written in alphabet or transformed into numerals through the use of abjad alphabet,\textsuperscript{132} besides the names of the Prophet \textit{Muḥammad} and the Shī’ī imāms are among the widely dignified magical vocabulary.\textsuperscript{133}
- In the Muslim world, talismans were to bear \textit{Qur'ānic} verses, images of prophets, astrological signs, and religious stories.
- There is a strong belief in the power of any talisman inscribed with the word ‘\textit{Allah}’ in protecting its wearer from any evil.
- Talismanic objects were carried in a pocket, or rolled and placed in an amulet case, or to be worn as clothing.\textsuperscript{134}
- Muslims regard the whole \textit{Qur'ān} as a powerful amulet, though, certain \textit{sūras} are considered of special importance; of these verse no. 256 of \textit{sūrat al-Baqarah} known as ‘\textit{Ayat al-Kursī}’ (the throne verse), the last two verses no. 128, 129 of \textit{sūrat al-Tawbah} also known as ‘\textit{Ayat al-’Arš}’, \textit{sūrat al-Fātīha}, the short \textit{sūras} no. \textit{CXII} known as \textit{sūrat al-Iḥlās}, \textit{sūra} no. \textit{CXIII} known as \textit{sūrat al-Falaq} and no. \textit{CXIV} known as \textit{sūrat an-Nās}.\textsuperscript{135}
- The written story of prophets was, as well, employed as a protective tool. However, the representations of certain prophets are more effective than others, as prophet Solomon for instance, due to his fame with wisdom and his ability to talk to animals and supernatural beings. Thus, his six-pointed star was famed to be an apotropaic seal occurred on several talismanic objects.\textsuperscript{136}
- Wearing amulets bearing texts of the Holy \textit{Qur'ān} is regarded as a religious habit, that placed the wearer into communication with \textit{Allah}, so that \textit{Allah} may afford his protection. This practice of wearing amulets of this kind is entitled under the Harmless or White Magic.\textsuperscript{137}
Materials and techniques

- Several materials were used in making bāzūbands, the most common were, steel, iron, besides brass and copper, but in lesser extent. In addition, silver and gold were widely used especially under the Qajars.

- Two stages of production can be distinguished; the first covering the Safavid dynasty, from the mid 16th century A.D. to the mid 18th century A.D., and the second stage is related to the Qajar dynasty covering the 19th century A.D.

- The Safavids mostly used yellow copper that was very shiny like gold, also, they used the combination of red copper and tin like silver.

- It was in this age that the artists excelled in lattice work and were able to bring it to the fullest, creating masterpieces.

- Such objects are engraved all-over with patterns of spiraling split-leaves or zigzag bands, besides lozenge-shaped cartouches filled with vegetation arranged to emphasize the sleek contours of the form.

- During the Qajar dynasty, most of the bāzūbands were made of silver and gold, however, a new stage of decoration took place where high relief inscriptions, enamel, and precious stones were largely in use.  

- The main method used to shape the bāzūbands was Casting (molding), during this process, the bāzūband was shaped by pouring the metal splash into a casting mold.

- Many decorative techniques were used; such as engraving, latticework, forging, damascening, inlay, and enameling.

- **Etching and engraving:** in this method, the artist creates troughs and ridges on the bāzūband’s surface by scraping with special etching tools.

- **Latticework:** It consists of an open framework consisting of a criss-crossed pattern of strips in the metal, created by crossing the strips to form a grid or weave, a purely decorative method used on bāzūbands, especially to forge a floral background, over which another layer, would be added.

- **Inlay (Damascening)** in this method, the metal is corrugated by gold and silver, also known as “damascening”; the term "damask", in Arabic "takfīt", refers to a technique producing decorative effects by contrasting the colors of the different metals chosen. These effects are obtained by encrusting by hammering threads, usually gold or silver, small plates or sheets of metal, in a different metal background, usually copper or steel, on which grooves and surfaces have been engraved beforehand.

- **Enameling:** Enamel is a melting material, composed of different minerals (silica, kaolin and metallic oxides), used to paint and decorate gold and silver bāzūbands, by special glazed color that is fixed on highest temperature.
The inlay and enameling techniques were rarely applied on Safavid bāzūbands, however, during the Qajar dynasty, especially in the second half of the 19th century A.D., they were much elaborated and largely in use.\textsuperscript{142}

Decoration
- A variety of floral and geometrical motifs were used in decorating bāzūbands, in addition to the inscriptions considered pivotal on bāzūbands due to its function.

- **Floral motifs** were of undeniable importance, flowers (especially roses and irises) and foliage, were both used as central motifs and background supports (Figures 6-8). Rare are the pieces without floral decoration (Figure 15 B). Painting flowers as an independent and unique way in Qajar age defines new source of inspiration, the plant motifs in the shadow of naturalism in this age has changed with the intrusion of European influence on art, therefore, realistic designs can be depicted like rose, clove, acacia and lily flowers.\textsuperscript{143}

Iconography (figurative motifs)
- Under the Safavids, we can depict the artistic freedom in representing figurative motifs like human, animals and plants, this characteristic is considered of particular importance in Qajar art, recognized by the richness of its iconography; the figures are placed in medallions, with rounded angles, polylobed, pointed or in rhombus, and defined by a vividly colored background (Figure 15A).
- It is noteworthy that in the Qajar dynasty, the decor is characterized by an exuberant style and a flamboyant use of color, with a European taste during its second half, where technological mastery made some elaborated forms of decoration possible.\textsuperscript{144}

Calligraphy
- Besides the floral motifs, a dominant part of the ornamentation is confined to calligraphy, bāzūbands were often decorated with a wide variety of Qur’ānic verses and pious invocations, which functioned as a call for protection and victory, while offering visually pleasing ornaments.
- Under the Safavids, Arabic verses in honour of ‘Alī, blessings sought from the Imāms and the owner’s name can be noticed, an aspect that will still be in use under the Qajar dynasty.
- Inscriptions of the Safavid period can be distinguished from those of the Qajar period as from the middle of the 16th century A.D., inscriptions show that the most common used script was nastāʿīq and the quality of execution was significantly inferior to that in the 17th and early 18th centuries A.D., nevertheless, thulūḥ and nasiḥī scripts,\textsuperscript{145} were mostly used in the late 18th and 19th centuries A.D.
- The arrangement of the inscriptions on bāzūbands changes. In the 17th century A.D., the words of the inscription fill the entire space, leaving no gaps between letters, along the line and elements of floral decoration appear between words and letters. The tendency for ornamentation to occupy the background of inscriptions intensifies in the 18th century A.D., when the background is filled by...
twisting stems with leaves and flowers. It is also noticeable that this background is worked exclusively in hatching, this technical process is simplified, under the Qajar, from the middle of the 18th century A.D. onwards, the background to the ornamentation and inscriptions is no longer worked in hatching; it is punched, which clearly speeded up the production process, but also simplified it.  

**Conclusion**

- Characteristics of Islamic art reveal the continuity of traditions, revival, besides the appearance of new artistic forms, variety, and unity.  
- The amulets and talismans of Muslim epochs based mainly on invocations to God, through employing Qur’ānic Quotations and prayers. Thus, it differs from the Byzantine, Roman, early Iranian, and other pre-Islamic cultures.  
- This world-wide belief in amulets and talismanic devices might have been related to the nature of races to bestow self-protection. As a result, it can be said that the use of amulets and talismans was, and still, universal.  
- Different materials were used in mounting Safavid and Qajar bāzūbands, steel, silver and rarely gold were the most used materials.  
- We can deduct from this study that the use of specific material was most probably related to the rank of its holder, steel talismans which were largely in use were designated for army soldiers, nevertheless, silver might be used for high ranks army officers and gold was mainly used for princes or governors.  
- Most of the bāzūbands bear inscriptions, whether it is a Qur’ānic verse or an invocation for ‘Alī, those invocations, rooted in the Shi‘ī belief, held a great importance and value on bāzūbands, since they guarantee a sort of salvation and victory during hard times and wars.  
- Some specific Qur’ānic verses were used on bāzūbands like ‘Victory from God and conquest is near’ which reflects enthusiasm and protection to the soldiers in battles.  
- Magical formula took their share on the Safavid and Qajar bāzūbands, Arabic letters’ ciphers symbolizing protection or representing one on the ‘Greatest Names’ of God were widely in use.  
- Different kinds of scripts were used on bāzūbands, like nasta‘liq, widely in use under the Safavids, along with nashī and thulth scripts that slowly replaced nasta‘liq script under the Qajars.  
- Regardless of the kind of script used on bāzūbands, it is noticeable that the inscriptions were stiffer, proliferated and more schematized under the Safavids in the 17th and early 18th centuries A.D.  
- During the 17th century A.D., the floral decoration was divided among interlocking and overlapping compartments, but the motifs are abstracted, and the calligraphy is more prominent.  
- These elements of floral ornamentation found in the Safavid period are either absent in 19th century A.D. objects, or they are treated differently. On the other
hand, images of people, animals, become more common, being, indeed, the typical decorative elements in the 19th century A.D., with an elapsing vibe of European inspiration especially in the second half of the 19th century A.D.

− Some bāzūbands had hexagonal shape, which may refer to the eight gates of the Paradise.

− It is evident that there was a difference in mounting, materials used and decorations of bāzūbands made under the Safavid and those made under the Qajar dynasty, since the latter dynasty offer a wide range of silver and gold bāzūbands, much more elaborated than those of the Safavids.

− Some elaborated Qajar bāzūbands, dedicated to the Šāhs bore their images like the example of the bāzūband made for Fath ‘Ali Šāh.

Figures

(Figure 1) Ancient magical alphabet of Ibn Waḥšiḥah

*Ibn Waḥšiḥah (Aḥmad Ibn-‘Alī): Kitāb Šauq al-mustahām fī maʿrifat rumūz al-aqlām, Constantinople, 1791, p. 32*
(Figure 2) A Large Safavid engraved hematite octagonal talisman (bāzūband)
https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-4979750/?intObjectID=4979750&lid=1
Accessed: March 21st, 2021 (First Publishing)

(Figure 3) A pair of Safavid steel bāzūbands, Persia, 11th century A.H./17th century A.D.
https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/24198/lot/103/?category=grid
Accessed: March 21st, 2021, 23:45 UTC (First Publishing)
(Figure 4) A Safavid engraved silver-gilt amulet-case (bāzūband), Persia, 11th century A.H./17th century A.D.
https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/20833/lot/56/
Accessed March 21st, 2021, 23:55 UTC (First Publishing)

(Figure 5) A Safavid steel bāzūband, Persia, 11th century A.H./17th century A.D.
https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/12051/lot/526/
Accessed: March 22nd, 2021, 00:07 UTC (First Publishing)

(Figure 6) Two Safavid openwork steel bāzūbands, Persia, 11th century A.H./17th century A.D., Private UK collection, https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/23436/lot/87/
Accessed: March 22nd, 2021, 00:14 UTC (First Publishing)
(Figure 7) A pair of Safavid cut steel bāzūbands, Persia, 11th century A.H./17th century A.D.
https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2012/arts-of-the-islamic-world/lot.555.html Accessed March 22nd, 202, 00:30 UTC

(Figure 8) Two Safavid cut steel armbands, Persia, 1109 A.H./1697-8 A.D.
James W. A., and Brian J.J.: “Persian Steel: The Tanavoli Collection”, p. 264
https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2012/arts-of-the-islamic-world-2012/lot.190.html Accessed: March 21st, 2021, 23:34 UTC
(Figures 9 A-B) Silver bāzūband, Iran, 12th century A.H./ 18th century A.D. Fodor, A.: Sufism and Magic- Amulets from the Islamic World, 129, fig. 54

(Figure 10) Armband Amulet (bāzūband) inscribed “In the Name of God”
https://www.artic.edu/artworks/92944/armband-amulet-bazuband-inscribed-in-the-name-of-god Accessed: March 11, 2021, 3:14 UTC.
(Figure 11) Circular-shaped amulet-case (bāzūband) with Qur'ānic inscription
http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/object/EA2012.95 Accession n°. EA2012.95, Accessed: March 21st, 2021, 22:29 UTC (First Publishing).

(Figure 12) Circular-shaped amulet case (bāzūband) with Qur'ānic inscription
http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/object/EA2012.118 Accession n°. EA2012.118 Accessed: March 21st, 2021, 22:45 UTC (First Publishing)
(Figures 13 A-E) Five silver octagonal Qajar amulet cases (bāzūbands) Iran, 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.
https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-five-silver-octagonal-qajar-arm-amulet-cases-5186628/
Accessed March 22nd, 2021, 00:35 UTC (First Publishing).
(Figures 14 A-B) Parcel-gilt silver octagonal amulet-case (bāżūband), northern India or Iran 13th century A.H./19th century A.D. 
https://www.michaelbackmanltd.com/object/parcel-gilt-engraved-silver-octagonal-amulet-case-bāżūband/ accessed: March 22nd, 2021, 00:51 UTC
(Figures 15 A-B) Inlaid and enameled armlet (bāzūband), Iran, 1st half of the 13th century A.H./ 1st half of the 19th century A.D.
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Inv. n°. 23/2010 accessed: March 17th, 2021, 22:13 UTC
Kjeld von Folsach: Flora Islamica: Plantemotiver i Islamisk kunst, cat.n°. 61.

(Figure 16) Three- part engraved silver talismanic bāzūbands, Iran, 13th - early 14th century A.H./ 19th- early 20th century A.D.
https://www.michaelbackmanltd.com/archived_objects/silver-persian-bazuband/
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Bala Krishnan, U.R., and Kumar, M.S.: Dance of the Peacock: Jewelry Traditions of India, 1999.
(Figure 17) Five panels gold carnelian engraved *Qajar bāzūband*- Iran, 13th century A.H. / century A.D. 
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(Figures 18 A-B) Gold mounted carnelian engraved Qajar bāzūband - Iran, 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.
Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds, Christies Auction Catalogue, 21 April 2016, Lot. 127.

(Figure 19) Qajar bazūband – Silver pierced armlet - Iran, late 13th century A.H./19th century A.D.
https://www.auction.fr/_fr/lot/bazuband-qajar-iran-fin-xixe-siecle-bracelet-de-bras-en-argent-ajoure-de-17290160

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مجموعة من البازوبند الطلسمية من العصور الصفوي والقاچاري (دراسة وصفية تحليلية)

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ملخص
ما من شك في أن كل أمة من الأمم تمتلك مجموعة من المعتقدات المتصلة، والتي تتضح وتمثل في ممارسات ومعتقدات ترسخ مظاهرهم الحضارية. فالاعتقاد في السحر، العرافة والتنجيم جميعها تندرج ضمن هذه المعتقدات وما ينطوي عليها من ممارسات. فقد اعتقد الإنسان في الأعمال السحرية وقرنها على الإبقاء وجهب سوء الحظ، بالإضافة إلى قدرتها على توفير الحماية وجلب الحظ من جانب آخر، فكان ذلك هو الباعث والمحفز الأساسي لاقتناها ما يُعرف بالتمائم والتعاويذ.

يتناول هذا البحث أحد أنواع هذه التمائم والتعاويذ الذي يُعرف بـ "البازوبند" وهو سوار لعضد الذي كان يرتديه المحاربين لاعتقادهم بقدرته على توفير الحماية لهم وجلب النصر في حروبهم ومعاركهم حيث كان يحتوي على العديد من الكتابات القرآنية والادعية الدينية المختلفة، فضلًا عن بعض الكتابات أو الطلاسم السحرية. يتناول البحث عدد من النقاط المتعلقة بالبازوبند مثل الاعتقاد في السحر من حيث بداياته وملامحه في الحضارات المختلفة، وتتبع لأصوله وسنته في الحضارة الفارسية. كما يوضح البحث المصطلحات الأساسية؛ وهي "التميمة"، "التعويذة"، و"البازوبند" في محاولة لاقناع أثرها وتتبع أصولها وما طرأ عليها من تطورات. يلقي البحث الضوء على موقف الشيعة من استخدام التمائم والتعاويذ كما يركز على أهم السمات والعناصر التي تتوافر في التمائم والتعاويذ بشكل عام وأهم ما يميز تلك التي تنتسي للشيعة. يضم البحث دراسة وصفية لمجموعة مختارة من البازوبند الطلسمية المعروضة في العديد من المتاحف العالمية والمجموعات الخاصة والتي منها ما يُنشر لأول مرة. ويختم البحث بدراسة تحليلية مفصلة للعناصر البارزة ضمن الدراسة الوصفية للتمائم المختارة.

معلومات المقالة
الكلمات المفتاحية
التمائم، التعاويذ؛ البازوبند؛ العصر الصفوي؛ العصر القاچاري؛ السحر؛ العرافة؛ التنجيم.

المجلد 20، العدد 4، (2021)، ص 83-123.

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