

Action sheet B

How were images used in predominantly Islamic cultures?

This is about cultural diversity in predominantly Islamic countries. Their approach to images is also diverse. Take a close look at the info sheets Objects with and without Images.



WHAT WERE IMAGES WITH FIGURES USED FOR; WHAT DID THEY REPRESENT? WHAT CHANGES WITH THE USE OF IMAGES?



IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT WERE THE REASONS TO DISPENSE WITH IMAGES? WHAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF IMAGES WITH FIGURES HAD BEEN USED?

Info sheet Part 1

Objects with and without Images



Info sheet A Part 2

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM THE UMAYYAD PERIOD (40–132 AH/ 661–750 AD)

#1

Object	Dirham (silver coin)
Inventory no.	I. 12/71
Period	103 AH/721-22 AD
Place	Wasit, Iraq
Material	Silver, stamped
Size	Diameter 2.5 cm, weight 2.93



Coins are important for expressing power. Coins from ancient times mostly bore symbols of the rulers or images of emperors. This tradition was initially continued by the young Islamic empire. This was changed by the coin reform of the Umayyads in 77 AH/696 AD: instead of images or symbols, the coins were now stamped with verses from the Koran or the Shahada. A non-figurative coin thus highlighted the faith, not the ruler.

#2

Object	Wall painting
Inventory no.	I. 1264
Period	Last quarter of 1st century AH/ 1st quarter 8th century AD
Place	Qusair 'Amra, Jordan
Material	Plaster with white, red, black and blue painting
Size	210 cm tall, 101.5 cm wide



The figurative depictions also built on the earlier traditions: Byzantine, Coptic and Sasanian elements were adopted u.a. This is evident in the Palace of Qusair 'Amra, where this wall painting originated. The paintings there create a magnificent atmosphere and indicate the power of the caliph. In one painting that is still on site today, all rulers of the empires known at that time are shown with less power.

You can scan the image with the TAMAM app to see a reconstruction.

Info sheet A Part 3

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM THE ABBASID PERIOD (132–656 AH/750–1258 AD)

#3

Object	Bowl
Inventory no.	I. 26/60
Period	3rd or 4th century AH/ 9th or 10th century AD
Place	Nishapur, Iran or Afrasiyab, Uzbekistan
Material	Earthenware, painted white and brown with transparent glaze
Size	Diameter 37.5 cm, 11.5 cm tall



During the time of the Abbasids, ceramics became a preferred medium for images. But this bowl is only decorated with a dark inscription. It was created in Khorasan (Central Asia). It's remarkable that the inscription "The free one is free even if he encounters losses. Good luck!" was not written in the local language, Persian. This shows the high significance of the Arabic language at that time and also refers to the caliphate in Baghdad. Additionally, this artistically produced object shows that the princely courts wanted to depict their position with increasing splendour.

#4

Object	Aquamanile (vessel)
Inventory no.	I. 5623
Period	Around 180 AH/around 800 AD
Place	Iraq or Iran
Material	Copper and silver, engraved and inlaid
Size	234.5 cm tall, 35 cm wide



This vessel may have been a water jar for washing hands (aquamanile). The art form of sculptural design was controversial, since some theologians believed that only God was permitted to perform the act of creation. But since this is a utilitarian object, the risk of veneration was low. The earliest preserved handwriting with paintings originated towards the end of the Abbasid period. As far as can be seen today, there were no great changes in how images and artworks were dealt with between the first and second rulers.

Info sheet A Part 4

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM THE FATIMID PERIOD (296–567 AH/909–1171 AD)

#5

Object	Fragment of a tablet with flowering Kufic
Inventory no.	I. 4466
Period	4th–5th century AH/ 10th–11th century AD
Place	Egypt
Material	Marble, relief
Size	65 cm tall, 45.7 cm wide



The fragment shows flowering Kufic, a variation of the usually rigid, straightforward writing style. A linear writing style is better suited for working with stone than a curved version. In order to still give it decorative embellishment, a method was developed early on to ornament the straight letters with botanical elements – leaves, flowers and tendrils. Although the flowering Kufic was used predominantly in Egypt at this time, it can also be found in other regions. This is because there was a flourishing cultural exchange, even though the Fatimids had established a counter-caliphate to the Abbasids.

#6

Object	Decorative moulding
Inventory no.	I. 6375
Period	5th–6th century AH/ 11th–12th century AD
Place	Egypt
Material	Ivory, cut and embossed
Size	26.5 cm tall, 30.3 cm wide, 5.8 cm deep



The mouldings depict court life, by which the owner intended to show an affiliation to this upper class. The detailed design further reinforces this sign of luxury. This style of creating figures became ever more refined under the Fatimids. Court scenes that depict grandeur and wealth are particularly common. Perhaps this belonged to a competition between the caliphates as to where the more beautiful objects were made? You can scan the image with the TAMAM app to see a few theories of where these mouldings might have been attached. No one knows this with certainty today.

Info sheet A Part 5

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM AL-ANDALUS AND THE MAGHREB

#7

Object	Koran
Inventory no.	I. 7163
Period	9th century AH/ 15th century AD
Place	Spain or Morocco
Material	Paper, ink and gilding
Size	26.5 cm tall, 30.5 cm wide



As early as in 92 AH/711 AD, Muslims crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and conquered large parts of present-day Portugal and Spain. Early on, this western part of the empire already took its own course in many respects. The writing style of this Koran is called Maghribi. It's a script that was only used in this style in the Maghreb and European regions. The flower shapes on the sides framing the script are also an attribute of the Islamic West. The forms shown here create a so-called sebka ornament. It was applied to many artworks in the region. Even after the Christian conquest of Spain in the late 9th century AH/15th century AD, this unique art style continued to be applied in the Maghreb.

#8

Object	Lion Fountain in the Alhambra
Period	Around 780 AH/1380 AD
Place	Granada, Spain
Material	Marble, embossed and pierced
Size	Diameter about 3 m, about 1 m tall



The Alhambra is located in Granada and was the seat of the last Muslim rulers on the Iberian Peninsula. At the same time, it is a masterpiece of art from the west of the predominantly Islamic regions. The Lion Fountain is inside a palace built around 780 AH/1380 AD in the Alhambra. Twelve marble lions carry a marble bowl with inscriptions and ornaments. The fountain is in the centre of this part of the palace, although only few figurative depictions are known in the Islam-influenced Western world. The image is a reproduction based on an early photo.

Info sheet A Part 6

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM AL-ANDALUS AND THE MAGHREB

#9

Object	Oil lamp
Inventory no.	I. 3681
Period	5th–6th century AH/ 11th–12th century AD
Place	Syria or Iraq
Material	Copper alloy, cast and engraved
Size	9 cm tall, 13.5 cm wide



Many images were often applied to oil lamps in Antiquity. This example from the Seljuk period completely dispenses with figurative depictions. Instead it is embellished with leaf-shaped ornaments and engravings. It's not known where this lamp was used – in a house, a palace or elsewhere. The material indicates upper classes. During this time, more Sasanian elements were adopted and refined in the artworks. The Seljuk empire ranged from Central Asia to present-day Turkey. That was where the Ottomans emerged from the Seljuks.

#10

Object	Relief of a lute player
Inventory no.	I. 7168
Period	1st half of 7th century AH/ 1st half of 13th century AD
Place	Turkey
Material	Marble, cut
Size	36.5 cm tall, 20.1 cm wide, 11.6 cm deep



In Anatolia, the Seljuks were the successors of the Byzantines, who left a lot of figurative art behind – one way to explain why the human figure suddenly appears on buildings again. The object seems to be from a building. In the same region in Konya, a lute player in the same position appears on a palace. The motif of the lute player represented court life. You can scan the image with the TAMAM app if you want to hear what a lute sounds like.

Info sheet A Part 7

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM AL-ANDALUS AND THE MAGHREB

#11

Object **Square tile**
 Inventory no. I. 1989.39
 Period 788 AH/1386 AD
 Place Samarkand, Uzbekistan
 Material Quartz frit, painted and glazed
 Size 34 cm tall, 34.5 cm wide, 3 cm deep



The tile bears the name of the prophet Mohammed in linear script called square Kufic. It comes from a mausoleum in Samarkand, which was built in 788 AH/1386 AD. The Timurids were patrons of the arts. Architecture, calligraphy and painting continued to develop under their rule. The tile shows a Timurid design of the Kufic script. The text is written in three rows of rhombuses: the outer ones in blue, the inner one in yellow with red decorations.

You can scan the image with the TAMAM app if you want to understand the arrangement of the letters.

#12

Object **Miniature of Humai in front of the image of Humayun**
 Inventory no. I. 4628, p. 629
 Period 823 AH/1420 AD
 Place Shiraz, Iran
 Material Paper, ink
 Size 28 cm tall, 19.5 cm wide



This is an illustration from the story of Humai and Humayun. Humai sees the image of Humayun, which he falls in love with and which overwhelms him so that he falls to the ground. A powerful effect is attributed to images in other stories as well. Starting in the 7th century AH/13th century AD, book illumination occupies a special position in the Iranian area. Many motifs from the Chinese area were integrated into Islamic-influenced art under the Timurids, just as under the rulers before them. This can be seen especially in the faces, flowers or cloud shapes.

Info sheet A Part 8

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM THE MAMLUK PERIOD (648–922 AH/1250–1517 AD)

#13

Object **Knotted carpet**
 Inventory no. I. 1891,26
 Period Late 9th century AH/
 15th century AD
 Place Egypt
 Material Wool, dyed
 Size 197 cm tall, 128 cm wide



The carpet bears geometric ornaments with floral elements. A star shape is turned into an approximately octagonal shape towards the outside, enclosed by a rectangle with borders. The carpet is one of the small Mamluk carpets that were exported to Europe in large quantities. In terms of ornamentation and colourfulness, this is an outstanding example of carpet production. The Mamluks prevailed against the Mongols and drove the Crusaders from the region. They were thus considered powerful defenders of Islam. During the Mamluk period, the ornamentation and design were refined and became more complex.

#14

Object **Shadow-play puppet**
 Inventory no. I. 1642
 Period 8th–9th century AH/
 14th–15th century AD
 Place Egypt
 Material Camel leather, cut and sewn,
 and parchment
 Size 91 cm tall, 61 cm wide



This figure was composed of various pieces of leather. In the 9th century AH/15th century AD, Cairo was a centre for leather processing. But shadow theatre had existed for a long time before then. However, hardly any tangible proof has survived, which makes this figure one of the oldest artefacts of this. There are no figurative representations on the buildings from the Mamluk period. However, this puppet shows that they also existed at this time. You can scan the image with the TAMAM app if you want to see how this puppet was probably moved.

Info sheet A Part 9

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM THE SAFAVID PERIOD (906–1150 AH/1501–1737 AD)

#15

Object **Astrolabe**
 Inventory no. I. 6919
 Period 2nd half of 11th century AH/
 2nd half of 17th century AD
 Place Mashhad, Iran
 Material Copper alloy, cast and engraved
 Size 36 cm tall, 26.3 cm wide



An astrolabe makes it possible to perform various calculations. It can be used to determine the time of day as well as the exact position on earth and distances. Although instruments actually show data and factors, images are particularly important to astronomy – namely the constellations. However, there are no images on this magnificent astrolabe. Even the stars could have been represented with symbols. But the artist Mohammed Zaman decided to enter the name of the star on every indicator. The astrolabe comes from the peak period of Iranian art under the Safavids.

#16

Object **Bottle**
 Inventory no. I. 4202
 Period 11th century AH/
 17th century AD
 Place Isfahan, Iran
 Material Quartz frit, embossed with green glaze
 Size 17 cm tall, 10.4 cm wide, 13.4 cm deep



The bottle shows two figures. One in a European costume and one in Persian clothing. On the one hand, by the 11th century AH/ 17th century AD, paintings started to feature new themes, such as farmers and costumes. On the other hand, contact with Europeans and their art intensified. This object combines both of these trends. The Safavids supported architecture, painting and ceramics. In addition to the advancement of existing art forms, one can see increasing contact with Europeans. European-inspired motifs, new art forms and other techniques start to emerge. There was a large amount of figurative art during the Safavid period.

Info sheet A Part 10

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM THE MUGHAL PERIOD (932–1274 AH/1526–1858 AD)

#17

Object	Helmet
Inventory no.	I. 6134
Period	1st half of 11th century AH/ 1st half of 17th century AD
Place	India or Iran
Material	Copper alloy and gold, forged, riveted and gilded
Size	Diameter 21 cm, 13.5 cm tall



This steel helmet with gold inlays and the neck protector made of chains is an artistic object from the military field. It is elaborately decorated with Surahs from the Koran in cartouches and fine ornaments. The nose guard and slip-on coupling to the right, into which a feather was placed, have ornamental decoration. The Koran verses were presumably meant to protect the pious warrior and ask for divine assistance. During the time of the Mughals (932–1274 AH/1526–1858 AD), Islamic, Persian and Indian art traditions were mixed. At the beginning of the 11th century AH/ 17th century AD, the Indian and Islamic art of the Mughals was flourishing.

#18

Object	Knotted carpet
Inventory no.	I. 6/74
Period	10th–11th century AH/ 16th–17th century AD
Place	Lahore, Pakistan
Material	Cotton and wool
Size	298 cm tall, 768 cm wide



The carpet shows the close link between Indian art and the Iranian region, since it is heavily influenced by Persian flower design. Animals such as antelopes, leopards and tigers are interspersed in the tendrils, along with mythical creatures, such as the Qilin stag. The high quality indicates that the carpet was created in the vicinity of the emperors. Nature studies were important for painting in the Mughal period, which is why so many natural depictions of plants, animals and people can be found.

You can scan the image with the TAMAM app if you can't make out the spiral tendrils.

Info sheet A Part 11

Objects with and without Images

OBJECTS FROM THE OTTOMAN PERIOD (700–1340 AH/1300–1922 AD)

#19

Object	Tile fields
Inventory no.	I. 1891,102 and others
Period	10th century AH/ 16th century AD
Place	Iznik, Turkey
Material	Quartz frit ceramics with underglaze painting
Size	Different sizes



Iznik was the centre of Ottoman ceramic production. Initially blue and white were used for the ceramics, as in China. Then other colours were added and a unique style emerged. Up until the 13th century AH/19th century AD, Ottoman art is mostly not figurative. Due to its Seljuk origin, Ottoman art was influenced by Iran, but was enriched by other forms through conquests.

You can scan the image with the TAMAM app if you want to see two examples of where these tiles were installed.

#20

Object	Portrait of Sultan Mehmet II by Gentile Bellini
Period	Around 885 AH/1480 AD
Place	Istanbul, Turkey
Material	Cotton and wool
Size	298 cm tall, 768 cm wide



Through the Mediterranean, the Ottoman Empire was in contact with the Italian city states, especially Venice. Around 885 AH/1480 AD, a famous Italian artist, Gentile Bellini, came to Istanbul and created several paintings. One of these is the portrait of Sultan Mehmet II. Some portraits of the Ottoman court are inspired by the Italian style. However, a Persian-Ottoman style rather than that of Italian portraits tends to predominate in Ottoman paintings. Ottoman art was increasingly influenced by European styles later. Among other things, this led to so-called Ottoman Baroque or Turkish Rococo.

Action sheet C Part 1

What are the different positions on using images?

You have addressed how images are dealt with in predominantly Islamic cultures in different regions of the world and at different times. You have already found arguments for or against using images. Now you can test the different positions in a performed discussion below.

I'm against it

I'm for it

I'm observing

YOU CAN ASSUME A FICTITIOUS POSITION –

feel free to choose the opposite of what you personally think about the subject! Try to understand your discussion partner.

SIT ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER IN PAIRS AND DISCUSS THE QUESTION:

Is the handling or use of images in predominantly Islamic countries clearly defined?

How do you interpret it? What do you recommend?

Use examples in your arguments!

ASK QUESTIONS!

Respond to the arguments of the other person. Represent your “assigned” role with your own arguments. The goal is to either come to a mutual agreement through convincing arguments or conclude the discussion with respect and understanding of the other person's stance.

Observation points could be:

- How is the person listening?
- Is the person referring directly to what was said before?
- What does their body language say?
- Does the person refer to the examples
- (clear reasoning)?
- Is there an attempt to understand and respect the other person?
- Do both people let each other finish speaking?

Action sheet C Part 2

 ROLE CARDS TO CUT OUT

I'm against it

I'm for it

I'm observing