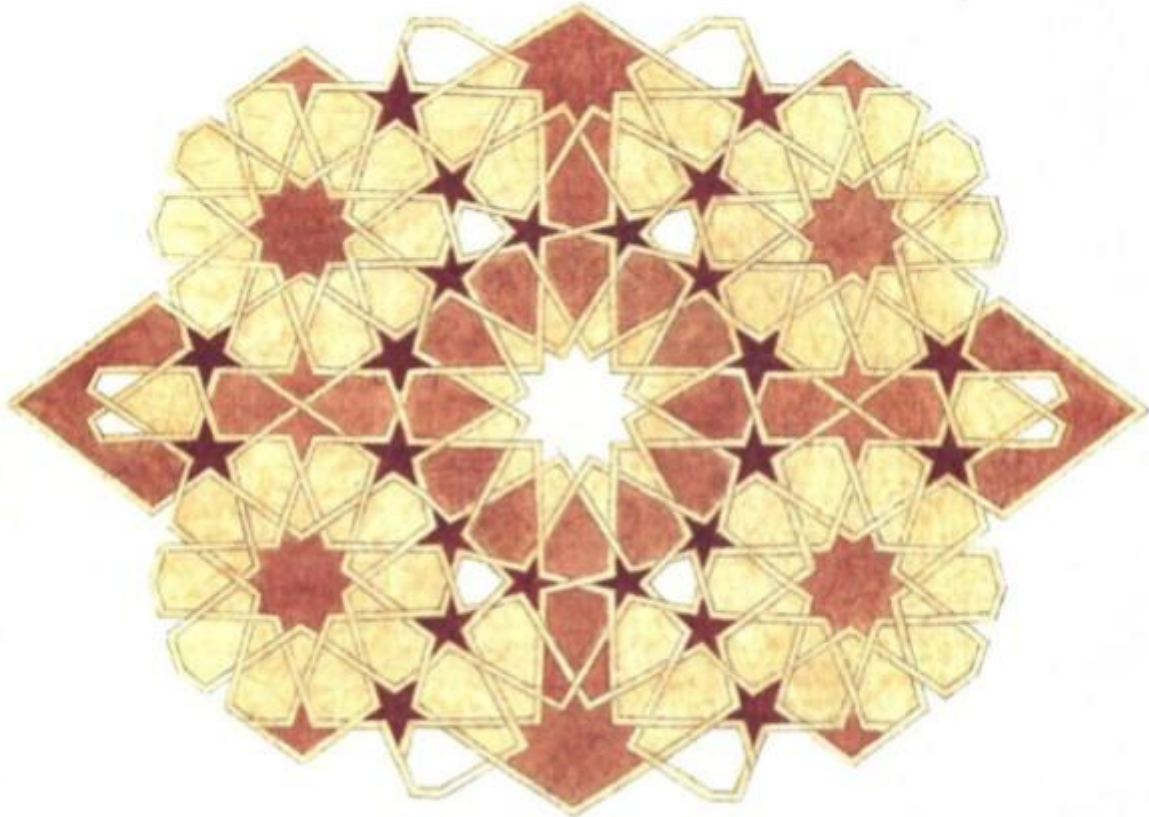


Cosmos as Order and Adornment

A Commentary on the cover design for Temenos 10

KEITH CRITCHLOW



Geometry, number and harmony are part of the objective languages shared by the sacred art forms of Christianity, Buddhism, Shintoism, Islam, Hinduism, and more sparingly Judaism.

This cover design is an exercise in the Islamic pattern tradition and as such it is different than the 'other' traditions of sacred art. Yet we have incorporated within it, the other sacred traditions through the objective language of number. Echoes, we might call them, of the shared objective aspects of the Unity of Being and the mysterious Oneness within the magnificent variety and wonder of diversity.

(a) The main character of this pattern is made up of a central 'heart' flower of twelve petals flanked by four radiant tenfold flowers.

(b) As with all Islamic patterns they are parts of repeating geometrical orders that can extend indefinitely indicating thereby a sense of the infinite within the finite. Hence geometry acts as a bridge between the outward and sensible and the inner or intelligible.

(c) The outer limits of the pattern are bounded by a large diamond body within which the two diagonals form a right-angled cross meeting at the twelvefold heart of the design. Alluding to both Buddhism and Christianity respectively.

(d) As the 'wheels of time' we can see the rhythms of the cosmic order represented in the intervals or symmetry of the 'flower' patterns. Twelve in the centre represents the monthly intervals created by the moon against a single annual cycle of the sun which in turn has created our twelve zodiacal positions.

(e) The four tenfold 'flowers' flanking the central twelve can be taken in a special sense of representing the forty days and intervals of forty that recur throughout the Judaic and Christian Bibles. Ten are the commandments shared by their two revelations. Four and ten are also the fundamental aspects of the Pythagorean sacred diagram of ten dots in four levels which was called by them the Tetraktys.

(f) The five-pointed stars that lie between these wheels are twenty-four in number which represent the hourly intervals in one full day's cycle. This image is sometimes taken as an image of 'natural' humanity.

(g) The fan form at the base of the design is made up of seven petals (one of which is darker as it helps form the cross). This seven-ness reflects the rhythm or quarter of a moon cycle that we call a week. Each of the seven petals can be taken to represent a planetary archetype. The same sevenfold fan reflects symmetrically at the top.

(h) The central twelvefold 'flower' can also be taken as the 'heart wheel' or chakra which is the central meditation of the unitary principle of Advaita in the Vedic tradition. Buddhism shares the vision of the subtle body with the heart centre being represented by the twelve 'petals'.

(i) In the Christian tradition the pattern of twelve around the centre has been taken to represent the 'round Dance' of Jesus. The twelve disciples surrounding Christ as the central controlling figure — which in the pattern is in itself a radiant pattern of twelve although one.

(j) Each pair of the tenfold flanking 'flowers' with their central 'eleventh' aspect together make twenty-two — the number of the root intervals of the sacred alphabets of Judaism, Christianity and Islam inherited from the Phoenicians.

(k) As the five-pointed stars are to the pentatonic scale in music, so the eight arrows are to the diatonic scale and the central twelve 'flower' is to the chromatic scale.

(1) Finally, the central flower or twelvefold-ness with its 'heart of light' can be taken to represent the companions of the prophet (Mohammed) on the one hand and the twelve-ness of Shia' terminology on the other, the central light representing the Prophet of Islam. The pattern is in the discipline of visual Islamic art yet it has been devised to reflect the universality and Unity of Divine Being.

May it not offend and may it be an instrument of Peace.