



## Globes in the Collection

### ***Indo-Persian celestial Globe, 1362-3*** ***Inventory No. 44790***

The Islamic tradition of the celestial globe was originally based on the work of Ptolemy, in particular translations into Arabic of his mathematical treatise *Almagest*. The practice of astronomy flourished in the early centuries of Islam with a number of significant observatories and Muslim astronomers contributing the growth of astronomical knowledge. A peculiar feature of Islamic globes is the way in which the constellations are depicted as if seen from earth even though the celestial sphere as a whole represents a viewpoint from outside the sphere. The tradition of constructing terrestrial globes is not established until the early European Renaissance period, again building initially on translations of Ptolemy's *Geography* into Latin.

This is a Persian celestial globe, dated 764 A.H. (1362-3 A.D). It is made of brass, probably for a wealthy patron given the elaborate silver inlay. It is signed, '... Made by Ja'far ibn 'Umar ibn Dawlatshāh al-Kirmanī' and dated, 764 A.H., 732 of the era of Yezdigird, and 1674 of the era of Alexander.



The globe shows the constellations and the ecliptic. The stars are represented by inlaid silver discs whose sizes correspond to the magnitude of the stars. The axis of the globe can be adjusted for various latitudes in the northern hemisphere. The inscription which records the maker's name and the date, also states that the constellations on the globe have been drawn according to the 'Book of the Fixed Stars' of Abū-l-Husain 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sūfi and that the increase of the longitudes of its stars has been computed for the time when the globe was made. Abū-l-Husain 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Umar al-Sūfi al-Rāzi (903-986 A.D.) was one of the greatest Muslim astronomers, and his illustrated 'Book of the Fixed Stars', 'one of the three masterpieces of Muslim observational astronomy' (Sarton). The inscription mentioned is engraved over another inscription which was partially erased. This records that the globe was made by Ja'far for a certain Muhammad ibn A(tm)il. The globe is on display at the Museum.