Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World

Edited by Eva R. Hoffman

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Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World

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Series Editor's Preface

The Blackwell Anthologies in Art History series is intended to bring together writing on a given subject drawn from a broad historical and historiographic perspective. The aim of each volume is to present key writings, while at the same time challenging their canonical status through the inclusion of texts that provide different approaches, interpretation, and ideas. *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* brings together a new and important synthesis of fundamental texts for the study of art history from the third to the thirteenth centuries CE. The combination of texts in this volume responds to the purpose of the series by working to promote an integrated study of the art and culture in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean. The anthology presents material that has usually been separated, both spatially and temporally, through adherence to the traditional subcategories including "Early Christian," "Byzantine," "Romanesque," and "Islamic." This division of the artifacts, texts, and histories of art from these periods has isolated Late Antique from Medieval, East from West, Byzantine from Islamic, Jewish from Christian, and Christian from Muslim, and this volume seeks to break down these discrete categories to enable fresh interpretations and perspectives. The novel configuration of the material in this volume provides a stimulating resource for students and teachers alike. Moreover, through its originality and questioning of established approaches, *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* makes a very welcome addition to the series.

Dana Arnold
London 2006

Preface and Acknowledgments

This volume is about exploring connections and interactions. Its focus is on historical encounters in the Mediterranean and, fittingly, it is the direct product of parallel present-day collaborations and exchange. The collection of essays here attests to the growing cross-disciplinary interests of scholars today. These scholars, specialists in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Islamic art, are no longer content to remain within their disciplinary boundaries. They now attend each other's conferences and often discover that their most interesting research overlaps. What has emerged, above all, is a milieu of collaborations and interactions. I am very grateful to the authors whose work, collected here, provides the multiple vantage points necessary to observe and understand the dynamic interplay between boundaries and crossroads in the medieval Mediterranean, between the third and thirteenth centuries.

The volume has evolved quite naturally through my own teaching, both at my home institution, Tufts University, as well as at Harvard University, where I have taught occasional seminars. I am ever grateful to both undergraduate and graduate students for their eagerness and enthusiasm, and for their questions and challenges. Over the years, their responses and discussions of these and other essays have inspired me in the collection here. These articles can and are meant to be read and reread, with new discoveries in each reading. Of course, there were many other articles that, for reasons of copyright, space, and other complications, could not be included. The number of illustrations, unfortunately, has been strictly limited to keep costs down. I thank Blackwell Publishing for their support in this endeavor to reconceptualize the time-worn rubric of Early-Christian and Byzantine art.

I wish also to acknowledge my great debt to colleagues and friends, especially to Madeline Caviness, Eleanor Hight, Gulru Necipoglu, Eric Rosenberg, and David Roxburgh, for their support and friendship. I am especially grateful to

Cristelle Baskins for reading a draft of the introduction. My everlasting thanks to my family; Mel, Julia and Eitan, Claire, and Alexander, who have accompanied and sustained me through all my journeys.

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E. H.
September 2006

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Acknowledgments to Sources

1 Jás Elsner, "The Changing Nature of Roman Art and the Art-Historical Problem of Style," pp. 15–23 from *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire AD 100–450* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Copyright © 1998 by Jás Elsner. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

2 Annabel Jane Wharton, "Good and Bad Images from the Synagogue of Dura Europos: contexts, subtexts, intertexts," pp. 1–25 from *Art History* 17:1 (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, March 1994). Copyright © 1994 by Association of Art Historians. Reprinted by permission of Blackwell Publishing.

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5 Henry Maguire, "The Good Life," pp. 238–57 from G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (ed.), *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). Copyright © 1999 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Reprinted by permission of Harvard University Press.

6 G. W. Bowersock, "Hellenism and Islam," pp. 71–82 from *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990). Copyright © 1990 by The University of Michigan. Reprinted by permission of The University of Michigan Press.

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17 Robin Cormack, "But is it Art?," pp. 219–36 from Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (ed.), *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990* (Aldershot, UK and Brookfield, VT: VARIORUM, 1992). Copyright © 1992 by the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Reprinted by permission of Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

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21 Deborah Howard, "Venice and Islam in the Middle Ages: Some Observations on the Question of Architectural Influence," pp. 59–74 from *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* 34 (Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 1991). Copyright © 1991 by Deborah Howard. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Introduction: Remapping the Art of the Mediterranean

The primary objective of this volume is to promote an integrated study of the art and culture in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean from late antiquity through medieval times (3rd–13th centuries CE). I have sought to bring together material that routinely had been separated, both spatially and temporally, by traditional subcategories within Medieval art such as "Early Christian," "Byzantine," "Romanesque," "Islamic," resulting in the study of these periods in isolation, dividing late antique from medieval, East from West, Byzantine from Islamic, Jewish from Christian, and Christian from Muslim, and so on. There are many reasons for these classifications, ranging from the practical organization of a complex body of knowledge into manageable units, emphasizing depth and specialization, to the self-interested structure of Western scholarship, which was founded on and invested in the creation of hierarchies of knowledge and disciplines. In all instances, however, it must be acknowledged that these categories are anything but transparently obvious. Rather they result from an active process of "mapping," whereby cultural boundaries are defined through inclusion and omission. The collection of essays in this volume presents a strategy for remapping the art of the Mediterranean, employing a model that opens up political, religious, and stylistic boundaries in European, Islamic, and Byzantine realms. The premise here is that there is more to be gained by studying the art and culture of the Mediterranean holistically than by carving it up into historical and geographical categories and studying each grouping separately.

Since the 1970s, late antique (*spätantike*, coined by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl in the late nineteenth century) has become the common appellation for the period between the third and seventh centuries CE.[1] While it is not completely unproblematic, through its link to antiquity, the term "late antique," to some extent, serves to avoid associations with the disparaging reference to the decay and fall of the Roman Empire. The term also subsumes labels such as "Early Christian," "Coptic," and "Late Roman," each of which represents only selective components and interests within the diversity and multicultural breadth

1

that characterize the art and culture of the period as a whole. Finally, the broader designation late antique has allowed for the expansive geographical consideration of the late Roman Empire alongside the Sasanian Empire, as well as chronological continuities from the third to the seventh centuries CE and beyond. More and more evidence suggests that the Islamic conquests during the seventh century did not represent a dramatic break from the preexisting late antique culture.[2] As observed by the editors of *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, "From the world of Constantine to the seemingly different world of Damascus of 'Abd al-Malik [the reader] may be surprised to see that not everything had changed."[3] These scholars have further proposed an extension of late antiquity, pushing the end date to the year 800, including not only the first Islamic Empire, the Umayyads, but also the establishment of Baghdad under the succeeding Abbasid Empire. The particulars of the debate over the precise dates for the beginning and end of the period of late antiquity matter less than what this debate suggests about the blurred transitions and overlaps between periods and the enduring continuities between antiquity at one end of the continuum and the medieval world at the other.

There has also been growing acceptance among scholars of greater fluidity between late antique and medieval art.[4] Herbert Kessler, in his evaluation of the state of the field, observed: "history offers no clear break."[5] Concerning the problem of the marginalization of Byzantine art within the sphere of medieval art, Robert Nelson has advocated more inclusive strategies within medieval art that would incorporate the artistic cultures of the many regions of Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, and the Christian and Muslim lands of the Levant. Nelson asks: "What if issues in medieval art were pursued beyond our traditional disciplinary subcategories of artistic medium, chronology or geography?"[6] This challenge provides the guiding spirit for this volume. What follows here is a practical and theoretical contribution toward addressing this issue.

This volume does not provide a comprehensive survey of the material, nor attempt to integrate all of medieval art or even all of medieval Mediterranean art. It is, instead, an anthology comprising selected texts on late antiquity, and the Byzantine, Islamic, Venetian, and Norman Mediterranean realms, as well as minority cultures within these governing political states. The collaborative format of the anthology lends itself perfectly to the challenge of the cross-disciplinary approach, while providing the necessary scholarly expertise and resources. Taken together, the collection of essays allows us to reimagine and remap the Mediterranean along an interactive network of connections. Instead of fixed categories, I would propose a model of dynamic geographical and chronological continuities. Along with these continuities comes an understanding of context; of what came before and of pathways of exchange and intersection within the broader sphere of medieval art in other centers. This rethinking is informed by the current postmodern mentality of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, characterized by flexible global reconceptualization, much as the taxonomy of categorization spoke to the earlier twentieth-century modern models.

I can think of no more appropriate focus for this model of dynamic continuity and cultural exchange than the Mediterranean world. The name "Mediterranean" (the Middle Sea) first appeared sometime during late antiquity, to emphasize the sea's centrality to the coastlines and surrounding landmasses.[7] The longevity of this label speaks to a continued perception of the Mediterranean as the "sea in the middle." Major studies have shown the Mediterranean region as a site of remarkable continuities. Klavs Ransborg has presented archeological evidence for relatively unchanging patterns of settlement and material culture around the Mediterranean from late antiquity until roughly the eleventh century.[8] The emphasis on the *longue durée*, the fact that changes in Mediterranean society occurred only gradually over long periods of time rather than by political upheavals, is an idea long ago advanced by Fernand Braudel.[9] And, in their more recent study, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell have advanced the notion of systems of local exchange, and of shared environmental, biological, and anthropological factors, in shaping and connecting the Mediterranean world.[10]

Along with continuity, the Mediterranean is also defined through interaction. From its location in the middle, the Mediterranean has always maintained a delicate balance, and a paradoxical position. On the one hand, this great body of water served as a natural boundary, separating lands across the sea and allowing for the development of independent polities; on the other hand, the sea served as the crossroads of Europe, North Africa, and Asia, as the obvious connector of its coasts as well as the intermediary islands in between. David Abulafia and S. D. Goitein have emphasized the history of the Mediterranean, not in terms of the individual societies that developed around the sea, but rather in terms of "interactions across space," and the exchange of ideas and culture through movement across the sea.[11] As we shall see, during medieval times between the tenth and twelfth centuries, the major players included the Republic of Venice, Norman Sicily, Fatimid Egypt and North Africa, al-Andalus (Islamic Spain), and Byzantium. There was constant travel between these polities across the Mediterranean. Each of these centers was inhabited by a mix of populations of Jews, Muslims, and Christians who maintained networks of trading partners among coreligionists throughout the region, exchanging not only goods, but also ideas and texts. The constant traffic of peoples and goods proved an effective recipe for sustaining a fragile coexistence and a delicate balance of power. Furthermore, the Mediterranean provided expanded possibilities for exchange well beyond its shores, through connecting bodies of water that formed their own networks of exchange as well as passageways for the Mediterranean itself. Some, such as the Adriatic or Aegean Seas, were nearby, while others, such as the Black Sea, which connected the Mediterranean to Eastern Europe and the Steppes, were more distant; David Abulafia has posited other "mediterraneans," that expand the Mediterranean exchange network even further.[12]

The Mediterranean, at the nexus of three continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa, was the perfect medium to stimulate these complex intersections and

continuities. Like the Mediterranean, where communities of Jews, Christians, and Muslims exchanged ideas and goods in such centers as Cairo, Palermo, and Cordoba, this volume serves as a meeting point for writings on art and culture across the disciplinary boundaries of late antique, Byzantine, Islamic, Norman, and Venetian arts, to name a few.

The essays here have been chosen not only because they represent material related to each of these fields, but also because they bring to life the complex visual intersections and formations that took place across the religious and political boundaries of the Mediterranean in European, Islamic, and Byzantine realms. To be sure, individual visual and cultural distinctions existed among these spheres and these, as well as cultural transformations and changes, will be addressed here also. Yet despite the emergence of clear and distinct individual identity, the remapping here speaks to the permeability of boundaries in the Mediterranean. It is my contention, furthermore, that the parameters chosen here not only allow for a contextualization of a shared Mediterranean culture, but also allow us to sharpen our focus on each of the individual cultures.

An important aspect of this anthology is the inclusion of earlier "classic" writings. These texts remain important touchstones as pioneering contributions, both in their approaches and interpretation, even if a few points of information in these works might warrant modification. They help to create a dialog with more recent works, offering opportunities for comparison, but also serving as foundations for the discourse of continuities and cultural interaction. Most of these articles dispel widely held misconceptions, such as the prohibition of figural images in Jewish and Islamic art (Parts I and III). All of the texts chosen demonstrate an awareness of and sensitivity to wider social and cultural contexts. They deal with major issues and pose questions about the complexities of functions and meanings of art, and how identity is expressed visually. In particular, I have selected articles that employ global and interdisciplinary approaches, as I believe these approaches deepen our understanding as well as make the material more accessible and relevant to the way we study art and history today.

The material is organized both thematically and in a general chronology, in order to accommodate the needs of university courses and a range of approaches. At the same time, the headings suggest pedagogical direction and inquiry. I have used these texts in my own classes, with positive reception from my students, whom I would like to acknowledge. Of course, there are many other possibilities and the texts presented here do not represent any definitive selections. What this volume will provide is access to a body of material that will inspire thinking across periods, cultures, and disciplines. My hope is that it will serve as a launching pad for a holistic study of medieval art in the Mediterranean and will encourage readers to seek out relationships and connections beyond disciplinary boundaries.

Part I focuses on the art of late antiquity, from the third to the seventh centuries, and includes articles on pagan, Jewish, and Sasanian art. Individually, as well as collectively, these articles demonstrate a shared late antique visual

language and exchange in the context of a multiplicity and diversity of cultures and religious cults. In his essay, Jás Elsner puts to rest, once and for all, the idea of decline and the conventional boundaries between Roman art and late antique art. He defines the scope of late antique art, not only through its continuities with the Roman art of the past but also through its links to the Christian art of the future. Annabel Jane Wharton focuses our attention on the wall paintings of the synagogue at Dura Europos, arguably the largest surviving above-ground program of late antique wall painting from the third century CE. In so doing, she situates this Jewish monument into the central discussion of the art of late antiquity, dispels notions of the absence of figural imagery in Jewish art, and explains the politics of the obscurity of this work. She also explores its complex relationships to both Persian art (Parthian and Sasanian art) and early Christian art, and analyzes its visual discourse in terms of its particular Jewish identity. The essays by Anna Gonosová and Richard Ettinghausen bring Sasanian art into the discussion of late antique art. Both articles demonstrate a shared visual vocabulary between the Roman and Sasanian world, and the need to consider art beyond the Mediterranean borders. Anna Gonosová provides a concise summary of Sasanian art and the issues of exchange with the Mediterranean world. Ettinghausen's essay is a case study. When he wrote his essay in the 1970s, the terminology of "influences" and "borrowings" was commonly used. Today we would judiciously avoid these terms because of the imbalanced power relations implied between the Greco-Roman "lender" and Sasanian "recipient." We speak, instead, in terms of coeval reciprocal "interactions." Nevertheless, Ettinghausen's engagement with the process of cultural translation, a mainstay of this volume, may be brought into dialog with the texts in Part II.

Part II continues to engage with processes of continuities and cultural translations. In "The Good Life," Henry Maguire explores the interchangeability of propitious visual themes among pagans, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Similarly, G. W. Bowersock explores continuities of Hellenism on the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, and Jordan, drawing on visual evidence of paintings and mosaics discovered in excavations since the 1980s. Both Maguire and Bowersock emphasize that not all adaptations of Greco-Roman vocabulary are the same. What is important is how this vocabulary is used in their new contexts and in the formation of new cultural identities. Another theme in Part II is the status of textiles, discussed by Maguire in the context of its function in late antiquity, and then by Lisa Golombek, in her fascinating analysis of the "textile mentality" and its central role in Islamic art and its permeation throughout Islamic society. The possibilities of intermedia exchange are creatively explored here.

Part III examines the visual representation of the holy in the European Christian, Byzantine, and Islamic spheres. The intention is that the explanations of religious imagery in these essays be considered in dialog. These writings explore the devotion of visual images known as icons, the relationship of visual images to scripture, and the use of figural and non-figural images. These articles will also dispel a number of misconceptions relating to the prohibition of images in

Islam (parallel to the misconception relating to Jewish art as discussed in Part I) and the role of Islam in Iconoclasm (the destruction of images). Most of all, the articles here contextualize Mediterranean Muslim and Christian attitudes, so that they are not reduced to simple binaries.

To begin this part of the book, John Lowden brings a fresh perspective to the old question of the origin and role of visual images in early Christian bibles. In "Sacred Image, Sacred Power," Gary Vikan explains the critical role of an icon as "a window or door *through* which the worshipper gains access to sanctity," an understanding that has largely been lost by contemporary viewers. "What defined an icon in Byzantium was neither medium nor style, but rather how the image was used, and especially, what people believed it to be." Perception is what created its aura and, at the same time, made icons so threatening that eventually they would be banned and destroyed during the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm (725–80 CE and 814–43 CE).

Focusing on the dialog between early Islam and Byzantium, the essays by Oleg Grabar, Erica Dodd, and G. R. D. King demonstrate the role of visual imagery in formulating religious and cultural identity in the early medieval Mediterranean world. The articles by Oleg Grabar and G. R. D. King point to visual imagery as a weapon in the battle for the holy sphere, used by both Muslims and Christians to assert their doctrine and to refute the offensive doctrine of the other. The anti-Trinitarian message in the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock responded to the Christian claim of the divinity of Jesus, while the Christians, as King notes, counterclaimed, with their crucifix which was "more objectionable to the Muslims than any picture." And finally, the coinage reform by 'Abd al-Malik asserts the message of the unity of God, once again, refuting the legitimacy of the Christian Trinity. In all of this, it is the shared Mediterranean background that made it possible for these visual polemics to be comprehensible to both sides of the Christian/Muslim debate. In her classic article, Erica Dodd explains the shared Mediterranean philosophical and theological foundations for the development and expression of attitudes toward figural and non-figural images in Jewish, Islamic, and Byzantine spheres. Ultimately, the choices of imagery that would be made by the Christians and the Muslims related to the needs of each faith and culture.

Part IV explores the art of minority cultures, the indigenous Jewish and Christian cultures in Islamic lands, between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Robert Nelson and Rachel Milstein demonstrate the virtues of closely focused study on individual works, in providing insights into context and identity and in opening up a range of visual connections. The authors have both pointed to the strong relationships between the works serving the sacred realms of these minority communities and the works from the broader Islamic culture at large. What can this tell us about the status of these minority cultures? To what extent can works like these be labeled as "minority art," and how can we define the balance between ethnic/religious identity and broader cultural identity? Robert Nelson questions the usefulness of the labels "Muslim" and "Christian" altogether.

Part V considers the luxury arts and the paradigm of the Byzantine court between the tenth and twelfth centuries. On the surface this may seem like a straightforward unproblematic category, but these essays raise questions about authority, tradition, and the category and function of "art" at the highest level of production and patronage. Henry Maguire and Robin Cormack demonstrate how the Byzantine court projected its own flattering image and how it communicated with its ruling counterparts in other polities, through a system of shared but controlled imagery. In the "Image of the Court," Maguire illustrates the image of *taxis* (harmonious order) at the court through the rigid and minute construction of the person of the emperor and the orchestration of an elaborately encoded system of hierarchies, whereby the emperor is positioned as the earthly counterpart to Christ. Robin Cormack explores the extension of court hierarchy beyond the Byzantine sphere and the potential of art to affect diplomacy and politics. Ioli Kalavrezou focuses on a single celebrated luxury object, the so-called "San Marco Cup," to dismantle the long-standing theory of the revival of art from classical antiquity to explain the appearance of mythological subjects on luxury secular art. In so doing, Kalavrezou opens up the possibility for more flexible "divergent styles" of fashionable luxury objects, that included ancient mythological representations as well as others, such as pseudo-kufic script, making visual connections with the Islamic realm as well. The contact between Mediterranean courts is further explored in Part VI.

Part VI focuses on visual and cultural exchange in the Mediterranean between the tenth through thirteenth centuries. The essays chosen focus on three critical sites of cultural intersection: Islamic Spain, Norman Sicily, and the Republic of Venice. While each individual site was home to a mix of populations representing the ethnic and religious peoples of all the other Mediterranean centers, by grouping these sites together, I wish to raise the possibilities for broader interchange among these spheres in defining a shared culture. When traveling anywhere within the Mediterranean, S. D. Goitein noted that "one was, so to speak, within one's own precincts." If indeed, we can speak of a "Mediterranean Society," as Goitein suggested, how did this network of cultures work, and what can their art tell us about the relationship between these centers? And how was it possible to negotiate the complexities of local and regional identities and meanings? In "Pathways of Portability," I argue that, visually, it was the portable works in circulation that defined their familiar surroundings and imparted the "Mediterranean" feeling and look. The key to understanding portable works in all of these centers is not necessarily through the identification of specific localization where objects were made, but through the study of the arenas in which these works were circulated and viewed. Jerrilynn Dodds points out that, in Spain, the appropriation of Islamic art by the Christian conquerors could carry meanings of both triumph and admiration. In the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, William Tronzo argues that the choice of "Islamic" or "Byzantine" modes of decoration depended on how these visual motifs were used within the Norman context. Deborah Howard suggests that the use of "Islamic" motifs in Venetian architecture speaks

to a number of possible associations: The ever-present mindfulness of the Holy Land in the context of the Crusades; the admiration of Islamic art and architecture; and last but not least, the assertion of Venice as the greatest trading capital of the world.

Notes

1   Beginning with Peter R. L. Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971). Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395–600* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); *Late Antique. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), with full bibliography.

2   Garth Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman, Jordan: American Center of Oriental Research, 1993).

3   *Late Antique. A Guide*, xi.

4   Among these are Robert Nelson, "Living on the Byzantine borders of Western art," *Gesta* 35, No. 1 (1996), pp. 3–11; Herbert Kessler, "On the state of medieval art history," *The Art Bulletin* 70, no. 2 (June 1988) pp. 166–87; and *Reading Medieval Images. The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. Elizabeth Sears and Thelma K. Thomas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

5   Herbert Kessler, "State of medieval art," p. 168.

6   Nelson, "Byzantine borders," p. 8.

7   Geoffrey Rickman, "The creation of Mare Nostrum: 300–500 AD," in *The Mediterranean in History*, ed. David Abulafia (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), pp. 127–53. The Romans called the Mediterranean the "Great Sea," around which their world quite clearly and literally revolved. It was also known more intimately as "Mare Nostrum" – our sea.

8   Klavs Randsborg, *The First Millennium A.D. in Europe and the Mediterranean: An Archaeological Essay* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

9   Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, translated from French by Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

10 Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).

11 Abulafia, "Introduction," *Mediterranean in History*, pp. 11–27 and S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society; The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–93).

12 Abulafia, pp. 17–18.

Part I

Late Antiquity: Converging Cultures, Competing Traditions. Pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Sasanian Art

1

The Changing Nature of Roman Art and the Art-Historical Problem of Style

Jás Elsner

This article explores the way art both reflected and helped precipitate the cultural changes of the Roman world. Moving from a period of political stability to one of greater uncertainty, from the supreme self-confidence of the imperial establishment during the Second Sophistic to the religious conversion of late antiquity, we will observe the functions, forms and transformations in visual images – in their uses, their appearance, and their scope. One, perhaps surprising, element in the story – given the tremendous changes in the period – is how much, especially in the imagery and social functions of art, proclaimed continuity. The stylistic and thematic eclecticism, the veneration for the classical arts of the past, and even many pervasive visual motifs (from the arena to pagan mythology, from hunting to the illustration of literary themes) – all these characteristics of second-century art are equally true of the arts of the Christian fourth and fifth centuries, despite the changes of meaning and emphasis which some of these motifs underwent.

Usually the story of Roman art in late antiquity is told as the narrative of a radical transformation in the *forms* and *style* of visual images. The period with which this study opens produced some of the greatest and most influential masterpieces of naturalistic sculpture which have survived from antiquity. It was by such magnificent marble statues as the Apollo Belvedere (probably made in the first third of the second century AD, or the Capitoline Venus (dating also

from the mid-second century) that the Renaissance's love affair with naturalism was inspired. The Apollo Belvedere, probably a copy of a bronze original by Leochares of the fourth century BC, was one of the most celebrated and influential of all Classical sculptures during the Renaissance. After its discovery (sometime in the later fifteenth century), it found its way by 1509 into the papal collections, where it remained one of the prize exhibits in the Belvedere courtyard of the Vatican. It was through such images that the history of the rise of classical naturalism has been written. There were other supremely skilful variations on and creative copies of great sculptures made by Greek artists, like Leochares or Praxiteles, in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Likewise our period saw the creation of some of the most magnificent 'baroque' sculptures of the Roman period – for instance, the Farnese Hercules, itself a version of a famous statue by the fourth-century Greek artist Lysippus, or the Farnese Bull (both from the early third century AD, and found in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome) – spectacular carvings which played with the full scope of naturalistic imagery, extending its limits to flamboyant and 'mannerist' effect.

Yet, by the fourth century AD, the outstanding classical heritage of the arts which imitated nature and created an impression of lifelike realism began to be replaced by non-naturalistic modes of representation. For example, compare the roundel of the emperor Hadrian sacrificing to the goddess Diana (Figure 1.1), originally carved for a public monument in the AD 130s (about the same time as the Apollo Belvedere) and later incorporated in the Arch of Constantine, with the bas-relief frieze of the emperor Constantine addressing the Roman people from the rostra in the Roman forum, sculpted for the Arch of Constantine nearly 200 years later (Figure 1.2). Both scenes are symmetrical compositions, but note the spatial illusionism of the Hadrianic tondo with its clear marking of foreground and background figures (Hadrian – whose face was later recut – on the viewer's right-hand side, stands in front of the statue of Diana with a cloaked attendant behind him to the right). The draperies of the figures on the tondo fall naturalistically about their bodies giving an illusion of volume and mass, of limbs and space. The plinth of the cult statue, which is placed in the open in front of a tree, is itself offset at an angle, giving an impression of perspective which is reinforced by the disposition of the figures.

By contrast, the Constantinian *adlocutio* (or address to the populace) has eschewed all the visual conventions of illusionistic space and perspectival naturalism so elegantly embodied by the roundel. Background is indicated simply by placing a row of equal-sized heads above the foreground figures, who stand in a line with little hint of naturalistic poise or posture. Draperies, far from exposing the forms of the bodies beneath them, are rendered as drill lines incised into the flat surface: they stand as a sign for clothing but they neither imitate real dress, nor emphasize the physical volumes of the bodies they clothe. There is no sense of perspective, just a flat surface with the most important figures clustered on the raised podium around the emperor, who stands beneath two banners at the centre. In the Hadrianic tondo, the statue is obviously a statue –

Figure 1.1 One of eight marble roundels depicting Hadrian hunting, executed in the 130s and subsequently incorporated into the Arch of Constantine. The series of eight combines a celebration of hunting (an activity for which Hadrian was famous) with a focus on piety and the careful rendering of a rustic setting. Four of the eight scenes depict the act of sacrifice at an altar before the statue of a deity. In this relief (from the south side of the Arch of Constantine), Hadrian, the first figure on the right-hand side, pours a libation to the goddess Diana. Alinari Archives, Florence

differentiated in scale from the other figures and placed on a plinth. By contrast, the two seated figures to either side of the rostra in the *adlocutio* relief are not obviously different from the other figures, yet they represent not human figures but *statues* of Constantine's deified predecessors, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius. The fact that the three highest figures in the relief are Constantine (had his head survived) and the two deceased emperors, works to make the political point that

Figure 1.2 *Adlocutio* relief, *c*.315, from the Arch of Constantine, showing the emperor addressing the people. This image is famous for its intimations of late-antique style, including centralizing symmetry, the frontality of the emperor, the stacking of figures, and the elimination of illusionism in depicting space. The setting is the Roman forum. Constantine speaks from the rostra. Behind are the five columns of Diocletian's *decennial* monument, of AD 303, crowned with statues of the four tetrarchs and Jupiter in the center (beneath whom Constantine stands). To the right is the Arch of Septimius Severus (erected in 203); to the left, the arcades of the Basilica Julia and the single bay of the Arch of Tiberius, both now lost. Alinari Archives, Florence

Constantine is their successor, even their embodiment. Both reliefs were displayed together as part of the same monument during the Constantinian period (and thereafter), as the Hadrianic tondo was incorporated into the decoration of the Arch of Constantine in Rome. The tondo (one of eight), with Hadrian's head recut to resemble Constantine or his father Constantius Chlorus, as well as other sculptures from monuments of Marcus Aurelius and Trajan, became part of a complex visual politics designed to legitimate Constantine in relation to the great emperors of the second century.

The arts of the late third and the fourth centuries – not only political images like those on the Arch of Constantine, but also (perhaps especially) the sacred arts – were the crucible in which the more 'abstract' forms of medieval

image-making were created. The great variety in the visual forms of the arts in late antiquity makes our period simultaneously the ancestor of medieval and Byzantine art on the one hand, and of the Renaissance (which replaced and rejected medieval styles of image-making) on the other. Indeed, the juxtaposition of styles in the reliefs of the Arch of Constantine proved a principal basis for the Renaissance's formulation of artistic 'decline' in late antiquity in the writings of Raphael and Vasari. One of our difficulties as students of the period is that we approach it, inevitably, with preconceptions formulated by the kinds of more recent art we ourselves may enjoy: medieval 'symbolism', Renaissance and post-Renaissance 'naturalism', modernist 'abstraction' and 'expressionism', post-modernist 'eclecticism'. One of the riches of the Roman imperial art explored here is that not only did it have elements of all these qualities, but it is in many ways their direct ancestor.

The stylistic challenge of the juxtapositions of the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine has led scholars in a search through the history of Roman art to explain how and when the Classical conventions governing representations like the Hadrianic tondo gave way to the proto-medievalism of the Constantinian frieze. In many ways the history of late-Roman art has become a quest for the first moment of decline. Among the candidates have been the arts of the Severan period (193–235), those of the Antonine dynasty (in particular, reliefs and sarcophagi from the reigns of Marcus Aurelius, 161–80, and Commodus, 180–92), and even earlier art from the lower classes, like the remarkable Trajanic circus relief from Ostia. The overwhelming burden of this stylistic story has been a narrative of incremental decline, leading to radical change. It has married perfectly with the traditional and oversimplified historical picture of crisis in the third century followed by the end of Classical antiquity and the onset of the Christian middle ages. Both history and art history have insisted on change, and both have seen formal structure (whether the stylistic forms of images or the administrative ordering of the empire) as responses to a social and stylistic crisis.

However, to examine the visual material with such a strong emphasis on stylistic change has led to a number of errors, or at least overexaggerations. First, the transformation from the illusionistic arts of the second century (and before) to the symbolic arts of late antiquity has invariably been represented as 'decline': decline from the hard-won naturalism of Greek classicism into hierarchic images that no longer imitate what they represent but rather gesture toward their meaning as signs or symbols; decline from the elegant illusionistic evocation of space and perspective in the Hadrianic tondi to the flat surfaces, the stacked, ill-proportioned, and schematically realized figures of the Constantinian friezes. Yet 'decline' is a modern value judgement (specifically a post-Renaissance posture) revealing a particular strand of modern prejudice (or 'taste') – it certainly does not reflect how the Roman world saw its image-making at the time. On the contrary, the designers of the Arch of Constantine appear to have been quite happy to juxtapose images which are stylistically contrasting, even jarring, to

modern eyes. Second, while it is true that the Constantinian *adlocutio* relief was an affirmation of an hierarchic and ritualized vision of empire (looking back in visual terms beyond the relatively abstract arts of the tetrarchs as far as the frontal portrayals of the emperor on the column of Marcus Aurelius and in Severan times), it is impossible to demonstrate that any apparent break in visual forms was dependent on any simple or wholesale change in social structures. True, the whole period from the later second century to the fifth was one in which very profound changes took place; but it was a slow and incremental process lasting several centuries.

Third, the selection of objects for stylistic comparison is always dangerously arbitrary. Had the designers of the Arch of Constantine chosen a different series of second- and fourth-century objects for their juxtapositions, the Arch would have occasioned far less scandal in later centuries. Take, for instance, one of the two *decursio* scenes from the base of the column dedicated by the co-emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus in AD 161 to the memory of their deified predecessor Antoninus Pius. Although its small figures are rendered realistically enough, this sculpture – which represents one of the rituals at Antoninus' funeral and deification – ignores the classicizing illusions of perspective and space characteristic of most contemporary sculpture in order to give a rather more schematic rendering of a sacred ceremony. The galloping figures and the stan-dard-bearers around whom the horsemen ride are seen, as a composition, from above (a bird's-eye view, as it were), but each figure is carved as if we were looking at it from ground level. The sense of encirclement is achieved, not by illusionism, but by the stacking of rows of figures. There is a fundamental discrepancy (from the naturalistic point of view) between the compositional arrangement – which demands that we be shown only the tops of the riders' heads, since we are looking down from a height – and the depiction of the figures, which would suggest that all three rows should be shown in a single plane. Compare this scene with the fourth-century porphyry sarcophagus of St Helena, mother of Constantine, dis-covered in the remains of her mausoleum in Rome and depicting the triumph of Roman soldiers over barbarians. Despite the fact that it was much restored in the eighteenth century, the sculpture of this object – with its realistic figures but non-illusionistic spatial and perspectival field – is close to the spirit of the Anto-nine column base. Even the military subject matter and the penchant for stacking rows of figures against an undetermined background is similar in both sculp-tures. Had carvings like these been juxtaposed on the Arch of Constantine, we might never have imagined them to be over 150 years apart. Beside other, much more coherently naturalistic, Antonine works – including the famous relief of imperial apotheosis carved for the very same column base from the very same block of stone possibly by the very same artists – the *decursio* panel looks decid-edly out of place, if one uses purely stylistic criteria for judgement. Beside the *adlocutio* relief of the Arch of Constantine, the sarcophagus of Helena looks intensely classicizing. Clearly there was a great deal more stylistic variation within the arts of any particular moment in our period – even in objects produced spe-

cifically for the imperial centre at Rome – than any straightforward stylistic comparisons of single objects will allow.

Another approach to the arts of late antiquity – that espoused traditionally by historians of early Christian and Byzantine art – has been to see them teleologically, with the visual changes as part of a wider cultural process which led naturally to the triumph of Christianity and Christian art. To some extent, of course, this is valid as a retrospective way of looking at the material: by (say) the eighth century AD pretty well all pagan themes and naturalistic forms had been extirpated from the canon of visual production. However, the triumph of Christianity (indeed, even its very theological definition) was too haphazard and uncertain, at least in the fourth century, for any attempt to eradicate classicism. Indeed, well beyond our period – into the sixth and seventh centuries – there was a flourishing production of pagan imagery and naturalistic styles on the textiles and silverware used not only by isolated pagan groups in the peripheries of the empire, but even by the imperial Christian court at Constantinople. Also, it was not just Christian art, but also the arts of other mystical or initiate sects in the period before Constantine's legalization of Christianity which encouraged increasing (non-naturalistic) symbolism; and it was pre-Christian imperial art – the art of the tetrarchic emperors of the late third century AD – which imposed the first systematically simplified and schematized forms on the visual propaganda of the Roman world.

My own approach in this article, signalled by choosing the dates with which it starts and ends, is twofold. First, I reject the notion of decline. There are obvious changes between AD 100 and 450 in the styles and techniques used for art, as well as in the kinds of objects produced (for example, late antiquity saw a rise and rapid development in the art of high-quality ivory carving). But there are also profound continuities between the visual productions of the pagan and Christian empires. Take, for example, the beautiful gold-glass medallion from Brescia, which could have been made at any point in our period – its transfixing naturalism gestures towards the second century, while its technique is more typical of objects from the fourth (Figure 1.3). Perhaps from Alexandria, since its inscription is in the Alexandrian dialect of Greek, it probably found its way early to Italy – at any rate, it was incorporated there in the seventh century in a ceremonial, jewelled, cross. Whenever it was made, and for the duration of its use in antiquity, the imagery of this gem speaks of the continuity and values of family life, of the wealth and patronage of aristocratic élites, of the high value placed on exquisite workmanship from the second century to the fifth.

Second, I have ignored the historiographic divide (virtually a wall of non-communication) between those who write about 'late-antique art' from the point of view of the Classical heritage and those who write about 'early Christian art' from the stance of its medieval and Byzantine inheritance. While the dichotomy is understandable – given the different trainings and expectations with which its upholders were educated – it is, quite simply, false. There was a multiplicity of

Figure 1.3 Cross of Galla Placidia (called "Desiderio"); detail showing gold-glass medallion of a family group, perhaps from Alexandria, dated anywhere between the early third and the mid-fifth centuries AD. This family group of a mother, in a richly embroidered robe and jewels, with her son and daughter, bears the inscription BOUNNERI KERAMI. This may be an artist's signature or the name of the family represented. Brescia, Museo Civico dell'Età Cristiana. © 1990. Photo Scala, Florence

cultures in the world of the later Roman empire which – far from being exclusive – saw themselves (especially after the legalization of Christianity) as part of a single political entity. The arts of that world were inextricably interrelated. If I have one overriding aim, it is to show how early Christian art was fully part of late antiquity, how – for all its special features – it developed out of, and reacted to, the public and private, religious and secular, visual culture of the later Roman empire.

2

Good and Bad Images from the Synagogue of Dura Europos: Contexts, Subtexts, Intertexts

Annabel Jane Wharton

Historiography of Absence[1]

In the case of certain icons, mechanical reproduction does not diminish effectivity.[2] The miraculous weeping image of Our Lady of Chicago in the St Nikolaos Albanian Orthodox Church has a number of equally lachrymose copies. Photographs and postcards of the miraculous image are empowered to weep by being touched by swabs taken from the tears of the original Virgin in Chicago.[3] Reproductions of the Mona Lisa, in so far as they refer to The Great Artwork, are apparently effective whatever the quality of the copy. . . . Certainly, most images lose their aura in reproduction. However, beautiful reproductions help ease the absence of the artefact; at least a nostalgia for originality clings to a wonderful copy. Equally, a terrible facsimile is likely to corrode the quality of the original and consequently to inhibit attendance to it. These are the familiar reasons why art historians take the reproduction of their objects of study very seriously.[4] Good plates are absent from this piece. The first part of my paper considers the politics and ideology of this lack.[5] The second section attempts to fill the gap between bad reproductions and interesting originals with some words.

The site of my subject is Dura Europos, an ancient city located in north-east Syria.[6] No single site provides more material evidence about the diversity of

religious expression in late Antiquity than does Dura Europos. Among the large number of monuments unearthed there are several temples, a mithraeum, a large synagogue and the earliest known, securely dated Christian building, all retaining remarkable fresco decoration. Europos, a Hellenistic foundation of around 300 BCE, and known as Dura by the third century CE, occupied a strategic position on a bluff overlooking the alluvial plain of the middle Euphrates. From the late second century BCE to the early second century CE, the city was an important political centre of the Parthian Empire. The province of Parapotamia was probably governed by the *strategos* of Dura. With the expansion of the Roman Empire in the West, the city came within a zone of hostile contention. In 116–17, and again from 165 to 256 CE, the Romans occupied the city; during the Roman occupation a *dux*, described as the commander of the Euphrates limes and probably also the civil governor of the Middle Euphrates, resided in the city.[7] In 256, after a siege that is remarkably well documented in the archaeological residue of Dura, the Sasanians conquered the city and apparently dispersed its populace.

Dura remained unmolested until March 1920, when British troops reported the discovery of well-preserved frescoes.[8] Shortly thereafter, on 3 May 1920, a one-day excavation was undertaken by James Henry Breasted, director of the newly founded Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. During the course of that day the frescoes of the Temple of Bel were completely unearthed and photographed. The 1,500-year-old paintings, left without adequate cover, were subsequently largely obliterated.[9] This act of historical sabotage was then published under the title *The Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Art*.[10] This book and the history of Dura's subsequent excavation, written by their overseer Clark Hopkins, indicate how the frescoes of Dura were effaced by what has been named 'Orientalism'.[11]

The preface of *The Oriental Forerunners* offers as clear a demonstration of Orientalism as any found in Edward Said's various presentations of the subject.[12]

> The region to which the Oriental Institute proposes to devote its chief attention is commonly called the Near East, by which we mean the eastern Mediterranean world and the adjacent regions eastward, at least through Persia. It is now quite evident that civilization arose in this region and passed thence to Europe. In the broadest general terms, therefore, the task of the Oriental Institute is the study of the origins of civilization, the history of the earliest civilized societies, the transition of civilization to Europe, and the relations of the Orient to the great civilizations of Europe after the cultural leadership of the world had passed from the Orient to European peoples.[13]

The East is presented as important in so far as it was the originating source of the superior Western culture which superseded it. The Roman imperial past is re-read in terms of the Western colonial present. Hopkins writes:

In ancient times *also* the foreigners came to rule, first Greeks, then Parthians, Romans, and Sasanians. The local people of Dura, then as now, came out of the desert with their primal desert ways and accepted the technical culture of the foreigners and wondered at it, much as the contemporary Arab views the extraordinary achievements of European cultures. . . . The modern Arab renaissance doubtless will derive tremendous advantages from the European impact, but the old conservative language, religion and tradition still will dominate.[14]

The political message encoded in such a construction of culture is repeated and amplified in the text's plates, which purvey a sense of hostility and remoteness. The exotic East, which is static, immutable and primitive, is finally subject to the West, which introduces progress.

Breasted and Hopkins represented Dura as a remote desert frontier post.[15] 'Buried in the heart of the Syrian desert', writes Breasted on page one of his book. The agonistic isolation with which Dura was represented in these literary and visual images has framed subsequent scholarly and popular characterizations of Dura. The site is almost inevitably rendered as 'a small Roman garrison in Mesopotamia' or 'a Roman frontier station'.[16] Joseph Gutmann quite rightly states that it is 'shared opinion' that 'Dura was not an intellectual centre, but an undistinguished frontier town whose Roman garrison was posted there to stave off a Sasanian attack.'[17] But the image of Dura as a desert Roman outpost in antiquity is deceptive. Dura is not *in* the desert; it is sited directly above the luxuriant alluvial plain of the River Euphrates, a central trading position in the heart of one of the richest agricultural areas in the ancient world.[18] Nor, for most of its existence, was Dura either Roman or a frontier town. At least by some accounts it was a middle-sized city, similar in scale to Priene.[19] It was Roman for less than a century, during which time it was the residence of the *dux* of the limes; before that the Parthian governor of Mesopotamia was situated there. Dura's characterization as a frontier station continues the early twentieth century's reading of the present into the past. Although Dura was not marginal in antiquity, it was in the 1920s. After World War I this part of Mesopotamia lay between the French and English protectorates in an area still contested by the Arabs. In other words, the representation of the city as marginal is historiographically conditioned.

Dura's artworks are seriously compromised by the Orientalist understanding of the site's location as liminal. Art historians of the later twentieth century who are not obviously implicated in colonialism have continued to treat Dura's paintings, *as a matter of habit*, as the unimaginative production of the periphery: traditionless, derivative, homogenized by their lack of quality. Or, as one scholar put it: 'As is to be expected in a garrison town located on a frontier, the paintings show both an eclecticism of subject and style, and a provincialism manifested in the generally mediocre level of execution.'[20] This point is important: the absence of good-quality reproductions of the frescoes of Dura is excused by the aesthetic unimportance of the original. Simultaneously, this lack of good reproductions

makes negative assessments of the monuments of Dura apparently true. Each of the monuments of Dura has its own particular set of explanations – involving Orientalism and other academic practices – for an unavailability of adequate reproduction. In this piece I want to address in greater detail how politics erased one particular set of photographs: those of the Dura Synagogue.[21]

The most immediate reason why good reproductions of the Dura Synagogue are not present in this article is that I was not allowed to photograph them. The frescoes are presently installed in a full-scale reconstruction of the synagogue in the National Museum in Damascus. Last Spring I was given permission to photograph anything in the Museum, except the Synagogue frescoes. Such a denial could, of course, be ascribed to the micropolitics of institutions with which all art historians are familiar. However, I think that this instance of veiled images is more likely attributable to the macropolitics of the state. Though accessible upon request, the presence of the Synagogue frescoes in the museum is nowhere announced. Even in foreign guide books, the Synagogue itself is censored in the plans of the museum's galleries. There are good reasons for this. The Israelis and Syrians have been in a state of war since Israel was introduced in the East by the West in 1948. Consequently, Jewish production is not celebrated in Syria. The frescoes' lack of presence might even be said to protect them from assault. After all, they can be seen, if not photographed. It should be pointed out that these images have been maintained in Damascus in a way that the frescoes of the Christian building, shipped by the excavators to Yale, have not. Those works, in contrast to the paintings of the Synagogue, can be photographed but not seen; like the frescoes of the Temple of Bel, they are virtually destroyed.[22]

There are more subtle (though no less political) reasons for the unavailability of good reproductions of the Synagogue paintings. The elaborate narrative programme of decoration of the synagogue was painted probably in 244–5 CE, buried in 256, excavated in 1932 and published in 1933 (an inauspicious moment for things Jewish). The Synagogue programme – one of the most extensive painting cycles salvaged from antiquity – disturbed received Western wisdom in a way few other archaeological discoveries have: the paintings protest the construction of Jews as aniconic and non-visual. These images threaten the neat, nineteenth-century formulation, still very much with us, of the Jews (the East) as verbal and abstract and the Greeks (the West) as visual and figural.[23] The Synagogue paintings unsettle traditional notions central to the ordering of the 'Judeo-Christian tradition'. This familiar construction is ideologically loaded, as Daniel Boyarin's criticism of the term suggests:

> The liberal term 'Judaeo-Christian' (*sic*) masks a suppression of that which is distinctly Jewish. It means 'Christian', and by not even acknowledging that much, renders the suppression of Jewish discourse even more complete. It is as if the classical Christian ideology – according to which Judaism went out of existence with the coming of Christ, and the Jews are doomed to anachronism by their refusal to accept the truth – were recast in secular, anthropological terminology.[24]

Another cultural supersession may be identified in a deconstruction of 'Judeo-Christian': not only does one religion absorb another, but also the West purges the East. 'Judeo-Christian tradition' is an alternative identification of 'Western tradition', not only spiritualizing the notion, but also construing its Eastern component as alien or at least residual. The threat posed by the frescoes of the Dura Synagogue to the conventional understanding of the Western or Judeo-Christian tradition has been countered in at least two ways. Particularly in the earlier literature dealing with the frescoes, the community which produced them was often treated as aberrant and/or unorthodox. The most powerful of such interpretations was that of Erwin Goodenough, who posited a non-normative (non-rabbinic), mystic Judaism at Dura.[25] More insidiously, the frescoes of the Dura Synagogue have been discreetly (unconsciously) dislocated, on an Orientalist model, either by Western images or by texts.

It is this second move which interests me. Here I limit my analysis to the most recent monograph on the Synagogue *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* by Kurt Weitzmann and Herb Kessler.[26] This keeps criticism, in a sense, within the family: Kessler studied with Weitzmann at Princeton; my first graduate course in Art History was a seminar on Dura Europos with Herb Kessler at Chicago. The volume is composed of two discrete parts. In the shorter, final section, Kessler deals with the programme of the Synagogue paintings. He describes the selection and arrangement of images. The pictorial complex centres on a messianic theme of deliverance, represented symbolically with the temple and elements closely associated with the temple (prophets, ritual implements, an abstracted rendering of the sacrifice of Isaac). This focal theme, in Kessler's construction, is complemented by the biblical narratives of the lateral walls of the assembly hall. Having fashioned the Synagogue's decoration in a form familiar from medieval church programming, the author points to the structural resemblance between this arrangement and the decorations of San Paolo Fuori le Mura and Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. He concludes that there are 'ties binding the Dura Synagogue to later Christian buildings', despite the fact that the Dura frescoes were buried in the rubble of the city many generations before the Christian buildings in far away Rome were conceived.[27] Kessler's text, like Breasted's, situates the interest and importance of the Synagogue frescoes in their function as forerunners of Christian art, though here Dura is presented as a programmatic rather than stylistic herald. Further, Kessler postulates that the Synagogue programme was developed in response to the Christian threat to Judaism in the third century. Here, it would seem, the generally privileged place of the 'cause' in an assessment of an Eastern, Jewish work is accorded to Western Christianity. Thus, in Kessler's construction, Christianity not only provides the Synagogue with its ultimate legitimacy, but also with its originating impulse.

Weitzmann's first and longer section of the volume is devoted to what preceded rather than succeeded the Synagogue. He claims that the narrative images found in the Dura Synagogue were copied from densely illustrated texts purportedly produced in the Greek/Hellenistic (Western) ambiance of Antioch. As no

such early illustrated text survives, even in a fragmentary form, Weitzmann presents the Dura frescoes as evidence for their missing archetypes. He suggests that, 'the agreements of the Dura Synagogue iconography with that of miniatures in various Byzantine manuscripts' proves 'the dependence of both Jews and Christians on a common Greek/Hellenistic tradition . . .'.[28] Cogent arguments against this thesis have been offered elsewhere.[29] Here it is enough to point out that the Dura frescoes seem to be important to the author only in so far as they allow him to reconstruct an otherwise non-existent Western, Greek/Hellenistic model. This exercise is founded on the unstated assumption that Western, Greek/Hellenistic artists were enormously original and creative while Eastern, Durene and later Byzantine artists were unoriginal and slavishly dependent on their earlier Western models.[30] Deviations from the Greek/Hellenistic narrative mode were due to incompetence or to the 'intrusion' of Orientalizing figures, characterized as standardized, static and hieratic. The volume's plates offer the visualization of Weitzmann's interpretive strategies and reveal their historiographic origins. These reproductions of the photographs taken during the Yale Expedition in the 1930s are arranged according to the biblical texts that their hypothetical archetypes reportedly illustrated.

The volume is symmetrical. For Kessler the paintings are a premonition of the rational programmes of later Christian buildings. For Weitzmann, they are a corrupt reflection of lost Hellenistic models. Kessler displaces the Dura frescoes by later Western works with which they are fictively linked; Weitzmann displaces them by fictive Western archetypes. The Weitzmann–Kessler book illustrates the displacement of the Synagogue frescoes by alternative Western artworks through fictive genealogies.[31] In the end, what seem to be missing in the latest monograph on the Synagogue frescoes of Dura Europos are the Synagogue frescoes of Dura Europos.

Weitzmann's systematic reconstruction of densely illuminated books of the Bible is an extreme formulation of a widely held assumption of the priority of text to image. Like the reproductions in his own volume, Weitzmann treats the paintings of the Synagogue as *illustrations* of a text. The assumption of a hegemonic text which forms the basis of Weitzmann's construction is symptomatic of most interpretive work done on the Synagogue frescoes. The hegemonic text takes a variety of forms in the literature on Dura. In most cases, it is scripture. For example, Kraeling concludes his volume on Dura with the observation that 'the bulk of the pictures was first conceived for and rendered in illustrated manuscripts of parts of the Bible. . . . From the manuscripts they passed into mural decoration.'[32] Others have argued for illustrated versions of rabbinic midrash (homiletic interpretations of scripture often involving narrative elements such as parables and folklore).[33] The paintings have even been suggested as a means of dating (reifying) texts upon which they, as illustrations, are assumed to depend.[34]

The inevitable result of promoting the text is the effacement of the image. In other words, by identifying the text – not the image – as the locus of meaning,

signification is literally moved *outside* the visual representation. Indeed, the privileging of the text in most assessments of the Synagogue frescoes might be interpreted as another form of resistance to the pressure exerted by the paintings of the Synagogue to revise stereotypes of Semitic non-visuality. I want to offer here a brief critique of the primacy of the text in the interpretation of the Synagogue's images, and begin to suggest how meaning might be relocated *in* the image.

An Excess of Image

The Jews of Dura are regularly presented as ghettoized, on the model of early modern Europe.[35] On the contrary, the Synagogue was located near the main gate of Dura in a neighbourhood that seems to have been a largely domestic, 'middle-class' section of the city; there is no evidence for its common identity as 'a quarter of the poor'.[36] Several conventional houses were remodelled to form a community centre. A number of other cult centres in the city had been realized in the same way: both those recently introduced like the Christian building and the Mithraeum, but also well-established local cults like the Temple of the Gaddé, one of the larger sacred precincts in the city.[37] Dipinti, graffiti and inscriptions in the Synagogue in Aramaic, Greek and Middle Iranian suggest a cosmopolitan, polyglot Jewish community.[38] The single most important space in the complex was the Assembly Hall, a very large room, approximately 7.5 × 14 × 5 metres, lavishly decorated with frescoes. On the west wall, off-centre but on axis with the great door to the east, was an aedicula for the display of the Torah (Figure 2.1). The face of the arch of the aedicula was ornamented with representations of cult objects, a temple façade and an emblematic rendering of the sacrifice of Isaac.[39] Over the niche were heraldic images, perhaps relating to the genealogy of kingship, flanked by individual prophets.[40] The remainder of the interior was filled with figured fresco panels of different lengths arranged in three registers above a painted dado.

Scholars have sought the meaning for the various images in this complex programme as well as for the programme as a whole in texts. Joseph Gutmann provides a useful survey of this activity, compiling a list of the panels, each with the various texts assigned to it and their scholarly attributers. This inventory makes it clear that even where there is agreement on a general text, inconsistencies between the image and the master text require either the suppression of alternative texts or the increment of texts in an attempt to circumscribe the meaning of the image. For example, the panel in the lowest register to the right of the torah aedicula is identified as Samuel anointing David (I Samuel 16). However, the appearance of six rather than the canonical seven brothers in the image requires a second explanatory text, I Chronicles 2:13–15, supported by a third, Josephus *Antiquitates* VI, 8, I, 158–63.[41] To resolve the contradiction

(a)

(b)
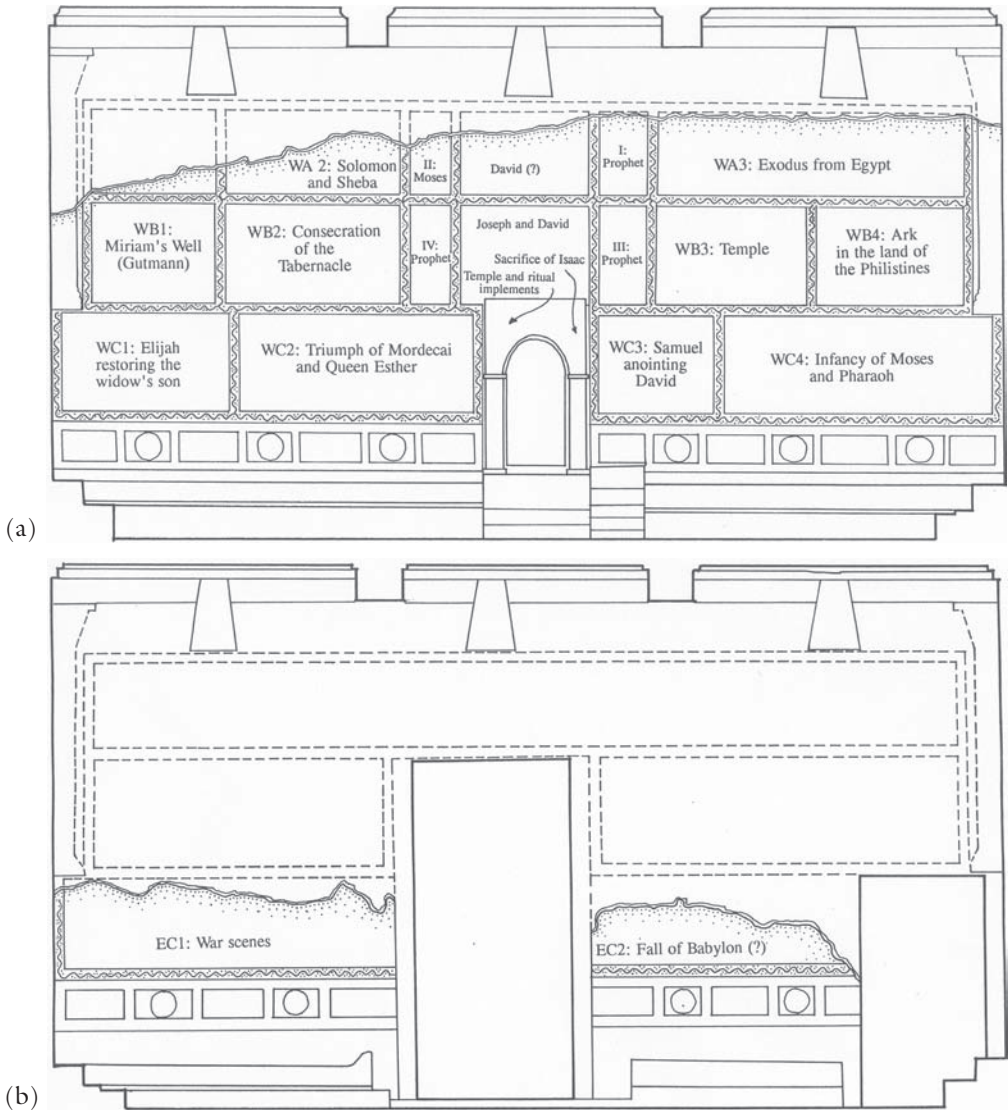
Figure 2.1 Dura Europos, diagrams of the programme (by Annabel Jane Wharton after Kraeling). (a) west wall; (b) east wall; (c) north; (d) south. New Haven, CT, Yale University Museum of Art. © Annabel Jane Wharton

between Samuel and Chronicles, Gutmann introduces a fourth, Christian text, the ninth-century Pseudo-Jerome, on which he bases his postulation of a fifth and ultimate source, a missing midrash.[42]

Another panel demonstrates both these interpretive strategies. The image in the lowest register of the west wall to the immediate left of the torah shrine is commonly acknowledged to be a representation of events chronicled in the Book

26

(c)

(d)
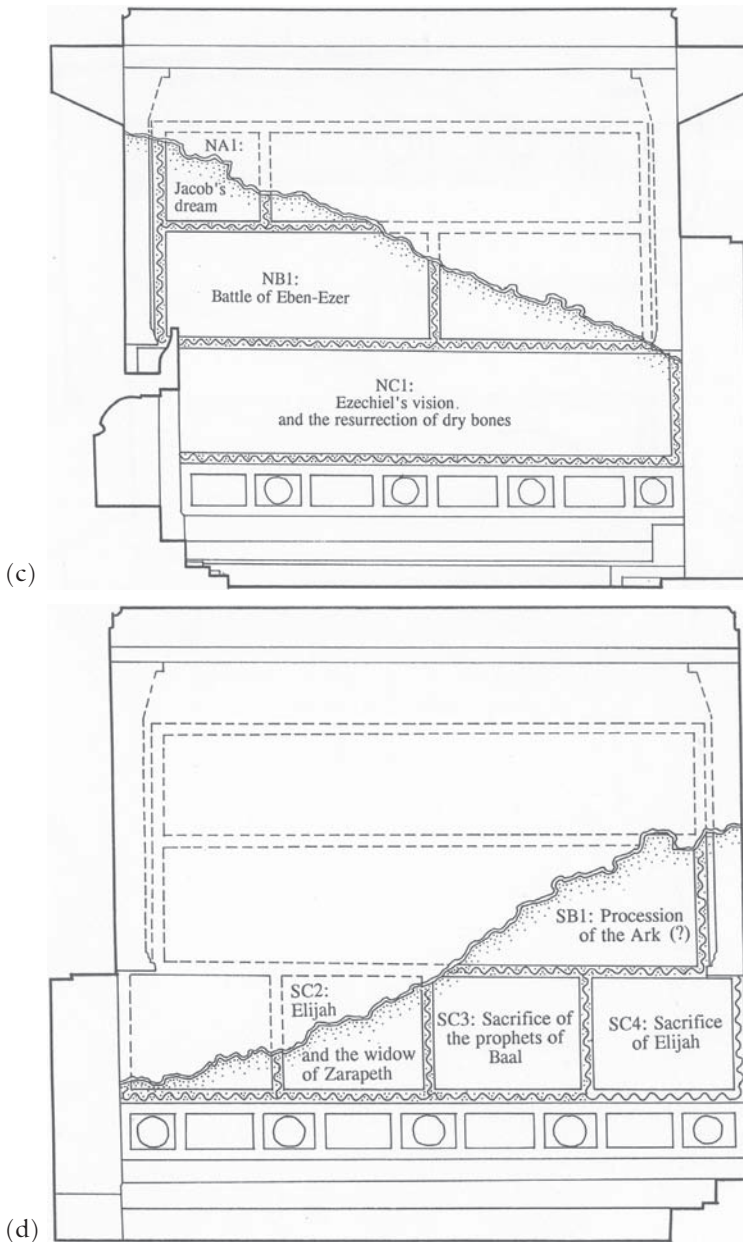
Figure 2.1 *Continued*

of Esther and associated with the Jewish holiday of Purim (Figure 2.2). Indeed, the principal figures of this image are labelled. Within the single frame, Mordecai, dressed in Persian attire, rides a white stallion led by the bare-legged Haman. A group of four figures dressed in chitons and himations raise their hands in acclamation. To the right, overlapping the last of these men, a small figure

Figure 2.2 Dura Europos, Mordecai and Esther panel, right section. New Haven, CT, Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

exchanges a text with King Ahasuerus who, clothed similarly to Mordecai, sits on a monumental throne. Queen Esther sits to the right, her maidservant standing behind her. Scholars have agreed to confine the meaning of the left-hand side of the panel to 'The Triumph of Mordecai'. Haman, the vicious enemy of Mordecai and the Jews, is asked by King Ahasuerus, 'What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?' (Esther 6.6). Thinking these honours were meant for himself, Haman proposes that such a man be publicly acclaimed by having a prince lead him through the city astride the king's horse and dressed in royal robes. But the honour is meant for Mordecai, and, adding insult to injury, Haman himself is obliged to implement his own suggestions.

In contrast, there is no scholarly consensus concerning a proof-text for the right-hand side of the panel. A text is exchanged, but the direction (does the king receive or dispatch?) and object of the exchange (is the text a letter, a chronicle, a report, or a petition?) remains open to multiple interpretations. Detailed arguments have been made that the image depends on *one* of several specific passages in Esther. Schneid identified the scene with Esther 3.8–15 (Haman requests and receives a decree against the Jews).[43] Du Mesnil du Buisson argues for 6.1–3 (Ahasuerus orders the book of memorable deeds to be read).[44]

Grabar suggests 8.4–8 (Ahasuerus recalls the extermination order at Esther's request).[45] These texts are all rejected by Kraeling, who insists that only one passage, Esther 9.11–14 (at Esther's behest, an edict is issued by which the sons of Haman are hanged and their followers slaughtered), adequately explains the image.[46] In this image, as in the Anointment fresco, scholars have been preoccupied with identifying *the* text which explains the image. The priority of the text is again reasserted; meaning is restricted to the written word. This preoccupation with identifying *the* explanatory text seems to be a peculiarly scholarly form of controlling meaning. Sometimes the discrepancy between the text and the image is represented, as in Weitzmann, as a translation problem; the artist fails adequately to render the meaning of the text in a visual language. Alternatively, the artist himself is represented as a text scholar equivalent to the modern interpreter: the brilliance of the producer in encoding texts in the image is matched only by the brilliance of the scholar in decoding those same texts.

I will come back to this panel to suggest that the readings of the left-hand part of the panel have not attended to texts closely enough and that readings of the right-hand side have been over-assiduously textualized. But for the moment I want to turn to the programme as a whole. Just as scholars have circumscribed the meaning of individual panels, so one meaning has been sought for the programme as a whole. Indeed, a considerable academic effort has been made to compensate for the perceived loss of the originating metanarrative by producing modern alternatives. Among the most masterful is Kraeling's. Kraeling finishes his enumeration of scenes with the remark: 'The tabulation . . . shows that the material is of a single cast, and bears upon a single theme. . . . It begins with the patriarchs . . . and extends to the re-establishment of the exiled and dispossessed nation in the Land of Promise in the Messianic era.'[47] Joseph Gutmann more subtly articulates the scholarly assumption that, though it might not now be recoverable, the Synagogue programme originally held one ('full') meaning:

> As some forty per cent of the cycle of paintings has been destroyed, and no similar cycle of synagogue paintings has yet been discovered, we may, at this time, not be able to unravel the *full* meaning of the entire cycle. However, recent research on the second, and largest, of the three bands of the Dura synagogue reveals a series of paintings that may have been analogous to contemporary Palestinian liturgical practice . . .[48]

Messianic, liturgical, mystical and historical metanarratives have been produced to order the Synagogue's copious chaos.[49] The complex work of locating meaning in an image legitimately involves the scholarly exercise of text-tracking.[50] But treating images as illustrations whose completion requires the restoration of a lost text leads to serious epistemological problems.[51] The search for the encompassing text is inevitably frustrated by the excess of the image. Nothing in scripture or commentary explains the particulars of the painting: not just the choice of the subject, but the relative scale of the figures and compositions, the

asymmetries, the colours and markings, etc. Indeed, the assumption underlying such a collection of texts – that meaning resides exclusively and exhaustively in the *written* word – is peculiarly philological and academic. In other words, there is a scholarly desire to explain away the apparent incoherence of the paintings rather than attend to it. Nevertheless, the experience of the monument tends to disrupt the fragile order imposed on it by scholarly glosses. A glance at a diagram of the Synagogue suggests that the surfeit of meaning in the individual panels is complemented by a lack of ostensible order in their arrangement. The pro-gramme as a whole is patently a narrative bricolage. While identifiable stories are 'told' within single or multiple frames, these isolated narratives do not appear to participate in a monologic whole. The programme is a pastiche.

I am arguing that the 'disorder' of the images and the programme should no longer be read as incompetence or incompletion, but rather as itself an organiz-ing principle of the Synagogue's visual discourse. Although this mode of dis-course was not determined by texts, certain Jewish texts exhibit a suggestive equivalence. Like the frescoes of the Synagogue, the Bible itself has been and continues to be similarly presented as univocal by those for whom it constitutes *the* truth, though its 'disorder' and multiple voices are inevitably revealed both indirectly in the very varied positions taken by pious commentators and directly in scholarly ones. Roland Barthes, for example, read the Genesis account of Jacob wrestling with the angel as 'a metonymic montage', characterized by 'the abrasive frictions, the breaks, the discontinuities of readability, the juxtaposition of narrative entities which to some extent run free from an explicit logical articulation'.[52]

The bricolage of scripture was not suppressed by the Jews in Antiquity. The rabbis' exposition of the torah, preserved in scriptural commentaries, like the Synagogue frescoes, exploited and promoted the disjunctions and incoherencies of the biblical text. Midrash provides a vehicle by which to explore the congru-ence of visual and textual discourses. This example from *Midrash Rabbah Esther*, chosen for its brevity, should give you some sense of how a new narrative might be constructed from fragments of old ones:

VII.22. THEN WERE THE KING'S SCRIBES CALLED . . . AND AN EDICT, ACCORDING TO ALL THAT HAMAN COMMANDED, WAS WRITTEN TO THE KING'S SATRAPS . . . (Esther 3.12). It is written, *And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying: Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river* (Ex. 1.22). Pharaoh commanded, but God did not command. What can you quote [to this effect]? *Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?* (Lam. 3.37). What then did He command? *For by a strong hand shall he let them go* (Ex. 6.1); and so it came to pass, and moreover, *He overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea* (Ps. 136.15). Similarly, ACCORDING TO ALL THAT HAMAN COMMANDED: he com-manded, but God did not command. Haman commanded *To destroy, to kill and to cause to perish*, but God commanded not so. And what did He command? *Let his wicked device, which he had devised against the Jews, return upon his own head* (Est. 9.25). And so it came to pass, *And they hanged him and his sons on the gallows.*

It is written, *He that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction* (Prov. 17.19). If one exalts the gates of his mouth and brings out from them words that are not right, God breaks him, and he is boiled in his own pot, and so Jethro said, *For* [He punished them] *with the thing with which they dealt proudly against them* (Ex. 18.11).[53]

Midrashic didactic commentaries on scriptural readings given during services, like the Synagogue frescoes, celebrate disjunction and incoherence. The wit (and power) of rabbinic exposition lay in the development of a meaningful linkage between proof-texts combined by the chance of liturgical cycles.[54] According to the *Cambridge Encyclopedia* the midrash is:

teaching linked to a running exposition of scriptural texts, especially found in rabbinic literature. The scriptural interpretation is often a relatively free explanation of the text's meaning, based on attaching significance to single words [indeed, even single letters], grammatical forms, or similarities with passages elsewhere so as to make the text relevant to a wide range of questions of rabbinic interest.[55]

James Kugel summarizes the play of the interpreter and the text:

There is often something a bit joking about midrash too. The ultimate subject of that joke is the dissonance between the religion of the Rabbis and the Book from which it is supposed to be derived – and . . . more precisely the dissonance between that book's supposedly unitary and harmonious message and its actually fragmentary and inconsistent components.[56]

Included in the midrashic exposition of scripture are not only other scriptural passages, but also fragments of history, fables and personal experience. A few other examples from *Midrash Rabbah Esther* offer some sense of the richness and variety of this non-scriptural material: Trajan's destruction of the Jews is attributed to his wife's anger – the Jews mourned when she bore Trajan a son on the night of the ninth of Ab (when the Jews annually commemorated the destruction of the temple with lamentation and fasting) and lit lights when the infant died (an event which coincided with the celebration of Hanukkah) (*Midrash Rabbah Esther*, 1.3). An explanation of Haman's temporary elevation is provided by a parable: a filly complains to an ass that while they work hard but are fed sparingly, a lazy sow is given all she can eat. At Calends the sow is slaughtered and the filly worries about eating at all. The ass points out to the filly, 'My daughter, it is not the eating which leads to slaughter, but the idleness' (*Midrash Rabbah Esther*, 7.1). In describing how Ahasuerus was thwarted in his attempt to use Solomon's throne, R. Eleazer b. R. Jose is quoted as having seen its fragments in Rome (*Midrash Rabbah Esther*, 1.12). The heterogeneous juxtaposition of scriptural and non-scriptural fragments provided new space – an intertextual space – for the production of responses relevant in some way to the contemporary community.

I am not here repeating an argument for the priority of midrash to fresco. Like most of the targum and midrashic texts which have been cited as explanations of the Synagogue frescoes, *Midrash Rabbah Esther* was compiled in the fifth or sixth century CE, long after the Synagogue was decorated and destroyed. Rather, there appears to be a coincidence in the intertextual practice of the midrash and the Synagogue frescoes. The midrashic text cited above begins with a verse (Esther 3.12) which has been identified by one scholar and rejected by another as the subject of the right-hand side of the Mordecai–Esther fresco. The presupposition that an image can legitimately have only one 'true' subject is opposed by the midrash, which provides a model for an alternative relationship between text and meaning. This other reading allows the images to have a particular verse from Esther as its subject at one moment and a different narrative at another moment, depending on how it operates for its reader/viewer.

Both midrash and fresco exemplify how the juxtaposition of narrative fragments produces a new text. In the midrash, quotations from Esther, Exodus and Psalms present an analogy between Haman's frustrated plan to destroy Mordecai and the Jews and Pharaoh's thwarted attempt to destroy the Jews with his army. Similarly, the non-sequential arrangement of the Synagogue frescoes promotes an itinerant gaze which readily links the Pharaoh's destruction by Moses in the upper right-hand panel of the west wall with Haman's fall at Ahasuerus's command. In both verbal and visual narratives, the pastiche re-enacts for its audience a Jewish past under Persian and Egyptian domination and thus constructs an historical morality tale. But like all morality tales, this one reframes the present. It promises a variety of possible restorations – from national restitution after the tyrannies of Roman domination to personal recompense for the oppressions of daily life.

Other aspects of the midrash offer useful analogies for an understanding of the relationship between the image and the sacred text.[57] Just as the midrash comments on fragments of scripture – letters of the alphabet, words, phrases, episodes – so in the fresco, details invite associations outside the narrative. The elaboration of the throne of Ahasuerus as a parallel to that of Solomon (who also appeared on the west wall) offers no less a commentary than does *Midrash Rabbah Esther*, 1.12, cited above. Similarly, just as the midrash depends on a variety of sources beyond scripture – earlier commentary, history, fable, practice – so the paintings invoke for their viewers a variety of shared experience, from familiar ritual to habits of costume. Finally, the objectives of the midrash and painting are equally multiple and disparate. Lessons drawn by the rabbis and collated in both midrash and image address all parts of experience, ranging from ethical admonition and ritual precedence to messianic promise and celebrations of revenge on the enemies of Israel. One theme rarely articulated but inevitably present in both verbal and visual commentaries is the power of the author, the rabbi, over his sources and coincidentally over the community. The manipulation of images may have been as important then in the constitution of authority in the Synagogue as it is now in a public lecture on the history of art.

Arguing for the correspondence of midrash and fresco has implications for the production as well as for the reception of the Dura Synagogue programme. Instead of treating the frescoes as illustrations of scripture or midrash, it is possible to read the frescoes as *prior* to the written text. Although it is historically improbable that the Jewish community at Dura contrived the first or only painted synagogue, it does not follow that the images are slavishly dependent on a hypothetical earlier model. Details, even sequences, might participate in an *oral* tradition intimate with both the sacred texts and the narrative embellishments which so effectively integrated scripture with the daily life of the community. Indeed, evidence of local engagement is found in the only texts which can be claimed with certainty to be associated with the Synagogue – those contemporaneously written *into* the building. A first set of such texts consist of Aramaic and Greek inscriptions, painted on ceiling tiles, which name the elder of the Synagogue and the members of the community appointed to oversee the project.[58] These men, working in conjunction with a local painting workshop, may have been the authors of the fresco.[59] Multiple authors inevitably involve multiple voices and multiple meanings.

Other texts provide a different sort of evidence against univocal interpretations of the Synagogue's paintings. These texts, mentioned earlier as being largely ignored in art-historical interpretations of the Purim fresco, were written *on* and *in* the paintings themselves. Ten Middle Persian inscriptions, added to the frescoes before the building's destruction in 256, within the first decade after the execution of the decoration, record the day and month in which a *named* visiting (?) scribe viewed the paintings.[60] Although the exact translation of these dipinti is contested, they augment the meaning of the work in a way familiar from the signatures in certain modern painting, such as Barnett Newman's *Fourth Station of the Cross*. Like the signature of the Barnett Newman, the dipinti affect the work on several levels of signification. They act on a formal, visual plane, changing the look of the image. These authors wrote themselves into the foreground, not the background of the painting. As in the modern work, the name and its ground contrast. In Dura, the inscriptions are written in black for the most part on the light flesh of the body.[61] At the same time the 'signature' is not disruptive; it participates in the structure it occupies, reasserting rather than contradicting the integrity of the form. Again like the Barnett Newman, the writing on the image also introduces a distinct socio-economic frame which affects the work's evaluation.[62] These texts, obviously countenanced by the community, involve a complementarity of status: the act of inscribing the paintings permanently affirms the authority of the authors at the same time that it confers the distinction of their acknowledgement on the images. The dipinti thus presume strata of meaning independent of religious texts within the Synagogue frescoes, contradicting the notion that these images were closed or canonical in their signification.

One final text may further attest to the indeterminacy of the meaning of these images. In the ground above the billowing cloak of the triumphant figure of

Mordecai is a graffito in Parthian which reads: 'This is I(?), Aparsam, the scribe.'[63] Perhaps this inscription represents an ancient version of 'Kilroy was here.' Alternatively, it might be read as the author's identification of himself with the powerful horseman. Such projection is a familiar enough experience, though now it is more readily associated with movies, television and advertising than with 'art'.[64] The breakdown of distance between the viewer and viewed is, indeed, thematized in such works as Woody Allen's film *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), and Cindy Sherman's self-portraits. Idiosyncratic acts of identification do not erase the meanings of the image provided by historical narratives, but rather supplement signification.

Recognizing the local, open quality of representation in the Dura Synagogue frescoes undermines basic art-historical conventions relating to this and many other pre-modern monuments. The scholarly prejudice in favour of *the* canonical text is disputed, and in this case a vast hypothetical library of illustrated manuscripts and elaborate model-books is eliminated. More fundamentally, it calls into question scholarly assumptions of non-originality. In the instance of the Dura Synagogue, such assumptions in modern interpretation were initially ideologically framed; they have been maintained at least in part because the poor quality of the available reproductions offered no resistance.

Just as a visit to the site provoked a re-evaluation of Dura's topographic status, so, for me, seeing the Synagogue frescoes and registering the professional quality of their execution (the agility of the brushwork, the varied palette, the direct address of the figures) stimulated a rethinking of their art-historical status. I am sorry that I cannot simulate something of that experience for the reader with high-quality colour reproductions of the original. But I have tried to mark the modernist (totalizing, essentialist, global, Orientalist) historical practices by which good originals were superseded by bad copies. By so doing, I hope I have allowed some room for reinventing the images of the Dura Synagogue as postmodernist (deconstructive, circumstantial, local and multicultural).

Notes

1 An article by the deceased Professor Warren Moon, 'Nudity and Narrative: Observations on the Frescoes from the Dura Synagogue', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 60, no. 4 (Winter 1992) appeared in Spring 1993, after the submission of this article for publication. Also J. R. Branham, 'Sacred Space under Erasure in Ancient Synagogues and Early Churches', *Art Bulletin*, 74, 3, 1992, pp. 375–94. Some of the issues I have discussed – particularly orality and a critique of conventional ideas of the relationship between text and image – are intriguingly treated from a distinct perspective.

2 For the classic statement on this subject, W. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in H. Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, New York, 1969, pp. 217–51; for its postmodern application, S. Buck-Morss, *The Dialects of Seeing.*

Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Projects, Cambridge, MA and London, 1989, especially pp. 341–75.

3 'The Newest Weeping Icons', *Sacred Art Journal*, vol. 9, no. 3, September, 1988, pp. 72–7.

4 The literature on the subject of image, illusion and truth is immense, ranging in time and ideological location from E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, New York, 1961, to B. E. Savedoff, 'Transforming Images: Photographs of Representations', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1992, pp. 93–106.

5 'Ideology', a word with more meanings daily, perhaps requires some explanation. I use 'ideology' here not to refer to rigidly held, extremist political views, but rather habits of thought which naturalize idiosyncratic social practice and mask the structures of authority which those social practices empower. R. Williams, 'Ideology', in *Marxism and Literature*, New York, 1977, pp. 55–71. For the intellectual and social history of the term, see T. Eagleton, *Ideology, an Introduction*, New York and London, 1991.

6 Publication on Dura is extensive. The best brief introduction, which includes bibliography, is S. B. Matheson, *Dura Europos. The Ancient City and the Yale Collection*, New Haven, CT, 1982. In addition to the preliminary and final reports of the excavation published by Yale, several older studies remain standard: for example, M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europus and Its Art*, Oxford, 1938. For the extremely interesting reassessment of the site offered by the Franco-Syrian excavations now being undertaken, see the important series of articles in *Syria. Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie*, vol. 65, 1988.

7 A. R. Bellinger, M. I. Rostovtzeff, R. E. Brown and C. B. Welles (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Preliminary Report of the Ninth Season of Work*, 1935–1936, Part III, The Palace of the *Dux Ripae* and the Dolicheneum, New Haven, 1952, pp. 93–4.

8 Salihiyah is the modern village at the site, located between the larger cities of Deir ez-Zor and Abu Kamal.

9 The surviving fragments of the Konon frescoes are on display in the National Museum in Damascus.

10 J. H. Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting, First-Century Wall Paintings from the Fortress of Dura on the Middle Euphrates*, University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, vol. 1, Chicago, 1924.

11 C. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, edited by B. Goldman, New Haven and London, 1979.

12 E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1979 and more recently, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, 1993. *Orientalism*, despite [because of?] its apparent limitations, has had an enormous impact on historical thinking in humanistic and social scientific fields. By dismissing *Orientalism* as 'intellectually insignificant', E. Gellner (*TLS*, 9 April, 1993) reveals himself to be the ideologue which he claims to be criticizing.

13 Breasted, op. cit., p. 5.

14 The italics are mine. Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 10–11.

15 The other early writers on Dura represented it similarly. Rostovtzeff wrote, 'Dura-Europos . . . was never an important centre of ancient life . . . [The city] played no momentous part in the history of its time; nor was it ever distinguished for

independent creative activity.' Rostovtzeff, 1938, op. cit., pp. 1–2. In his masterful final report, C. H. Kraeling begins and ends the section on Interpretation with reference to this quote. A. R. Bellinger et al. (eds.), op. cit., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos*, Final Report VIII, Part I, New Haven, 1956, pp. 321, 401–2.

16   E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, London, 1972, p. 89; H. W. Janson, *History of Art*, New York, 1991, p. 252.

17   J. Gutmann, 'Programmatic Painting in the Dura Synagogue', in J. Gutmann (ed.), *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-Evaluation (1932–1972)*, *Religion and the Arts*, vol. 1, Missoula, Montana, 1973, p. 140.

18   B. Geyer, 'Le site de Doura-Europos et son environnement géographique', *Syria, Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie*, vol. 65, 1988, pp. 285–95.

19   W. Hoepfner and E. L. Schwandner, *Haus und Stadt in klassischen Griechenland*, Wohnen in der klassischen Polis I, Munich, 1986, pp. 207–10. Their assessment is, however, criticized by E. Will, 'La population de Doura-Europos: une évaluation', *Syria. Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie*, vol. 65, 1988, pp. 315–21.

20   A. Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europus*, Oxford, 1973, p. 33.

21   The supersession of the object by its reproductions is also treated by M. Camille, 'The *Très Riches Heures*: An Illuminated Manuscript in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17, 1990, pp. 72–107. In the case of the *Très Riches Heures*, the archetype is too elite to be displayed; with Dura, the original is too modest to require scrutiny.

22   Susan Matheson, Curator of Ancient Art at Yale University Art Museum, summarized for me the recent history of the frescoes of the Christian Building. They were treated on site in Syria with a consolidant which, in interaction with the environmental conditions in New Haven, caused serious scaling of the paint surface. The reconstruction of the Christian Building at Yale was dismantled in the 1970s when the Ancient works in the Yale collection were moved to air-conditioned quarters. At that time it was determined that little of the original paint surface remained intact.

23   On the modern construction of Jews as verbal and not visual see Kalman P. Bland, 'Medieval Jewish Aesthetics: Maimonides, Body, and Scripture in Profiat Duran', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54, no. 4, 1993, pp. 533–59.

24   D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, Bloomington, 1990, p. xi.

25   For example, E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, abridged edition, Neusner (ed.). Princeton, 1988, pp. 249–65.

26   K. Weitzmann and H. O. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, Washington, DC, 1990.

27   Weitzmann and Kessler, op. cit., p. 174.

28   ibid., p. 150.

29   For example, the criticisms of Weitzmann's method made by J. Gutmann already in 1987 remain unanswered by Weitzmann in the *Dura Synagogue* volume. 'The Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings: The State of Research', in L. I. Levine (ed.), *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, Philadelphia, 1987, pp. 61–72.

30   Apparently the Byzantines, being more western, were more faithful to their 'Hellenistic' models: 'Whenever a figure or a group of figures agrees with Byzantine miniatures it shows the Hellenistic mode, and where it differs usually the oriental mode is used.' Weitzmann and Kessler, op. cit., p. 147.

31 A model for an Orientalist critique of Weitzmann's method as exemplified in *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, Princeton, 1947, was provided by A. Taylor, 'Picture Criticism and an Invisible East', *Abstracts and Program Statements*, College Art Association of America, Chicago, 1992, p. 175.

32 Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 394–5. The author explicitly acknowledges his dependence on Weitzmann.

33 Joseph Gutmann deals extensively with this material; for example, 'The Illustrated Jewish Manuscript in Antiquity: The Present State of the Question', *Gesta*, vol. 5, 1966, pp. 39–44; 'The Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings and Their Influence on Later Christian and Jewish Art', *Artibus et historiae*, IX/17, 1988, pp. 25–9; also see R. Stichel, *Die Namen Noes, seines Bruders und seiner Frau. Ein Beitrag zum Nachleben jüdischer Überlieferungen in der ausserkanonischen und gnostischen Literatur und in Denkmälern der Kunst*, Göttingen, 1979, esp. pp. 103–13.

34 J. Gutmann, 'The Illustrated Midrash in the Dura Synagogue Paintings: A New Dimension of the Study of Judaism', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. 50, 1983, pp. 91–104.

35 For a discussion of the interaction of Jews and non-Jews within urban communities during the late Empire see L. V. Rutgers, 'Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and non-Jews in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 96, 1992, pp. 101–18.

36 Kraeling, op. cit., p. 3; Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1975, p. 28.

37 S. B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture, Alexander through the Parthians*, Princeton, 1988, pp. 115–18, with earlier bibliography. She characterizes Dura's temples as 'original creations based on the principles of Babylonian architecture', p. 179.

38 J. Neusner, 'Judaism at Dura Europos', *History of Religions*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1964, pp. 81–102; B. Goldman, 'Foreigners at Dura-Europos: Pictorial Graffiti and History', *Muséon. Revue d'études orientales*, vol. 103, 1990, pp. 5–25; Fergus Millar, 'Paul of Samosata, Zenobia and Aurelian: The Church, Local Culture and Political Allegiance in Third-Century Syria', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 61, 1971, pp. 1–17, for the heterogenous population of the region.

39 For a summary of discussion, see A. St Clair, 'The Torah Shrine at Dura-Europos: A Reevaluation', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 29, 1986, pp. 109–17.

40 The identification of the subjects of the central panels as 'David, King over all Israel' and 'The Blessings of Jacob and David' are broadly but by no means universally accepted by scholars. The prophets have also been variously named. Most recently, H. L. Kessler, 'Prophetic Portraits in the Dura Synagogue', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 30, 1987, pp. 149–55; J. A. Goldstein, 'The Central Composition of the West Wall of the Synagogue of Dura-Europos', in his *Semites, Iranians, Greeks, and Romans. Studies in their Interactions*, Atlanta, 1990, pp. 67–114, first published in *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, vols. 16–17, 1984–5, pp. 99–141.

41 Kraeling, op. cit., p. 168.

42 J. Gutmann, 'Early Synagogue and Jewish Catacomb Art and its Relation to Christian Art', in Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und*

Niedergang der Römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung, II, Berlin and New York, 1984, p. 1320.

43 N. Schneid, *The Paintings of the Synagogue of Dura-Europos* (in Hebrew), 1956, p. 23.

44 Comte du Mesnil du Buisson, 'Les nouvelles découvertes de la Synagogue de Doura-Europos', *Revue biblique*, vol. 43, 1934, pp. 546–63, esp. p. 553.

45 André Grabar, 'Le Thème religieux des fresques de la synagogue de Doura (245–256 après J. C.)', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, vol. 123, nos. 2–3, 1941, pp. 143–92; vol. 124, no. 1, 1942, pp. 5–35, esp. p. 18.

46 Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 162–4.

47 ibid., p. 350.

48 Gutmann, op. cit., 1987, pp. 62–3. The italics are mine.

49 I use this term as it is being redefined by chaos theorists. See N. K. Hayles, *Chaos Bound. Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science*, Ithaca, 1990, pp. 209–35.

50 Considering the centrality of the text in traditional iconographic studies, it is worth noting that the Synagogue frescoes were discovered the year after Panofsky began teaching at New York University. C. Eisler, '*Kunstgeschichte* American Style: A Study in Migration', in D. Fleming and B. Bailyn (eds.), *The Intellectual Migration. Europe and America, 1930–1960*, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 554–629; E. Panofsky, 'The History of Art', from W. R. Crawford (ed.), *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, Philadelphia, 1952, pp. 82–111, reprinted as 'Epilogue: Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Garden City, 1955, pp. 321–46.

51 For a related critique of Panofskian iconology, C. Harbison, 'Meaning in Venetian Renaissance Art: The Issues of Artistic Ingenuity and Oral Tradition', *Art History*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1992, pp. 19–37.

52 R. Barthes, 'The Struggle with the Angel', in L. A. Wagner (ed.), *Image Music Text*, trans. Laurence Scott, Austin, 1977, pp. 125–41. The piece ends with an apt statement: 'The problem . . . is exactly to manage not to reduce the Text to a signified, whatever it may be (historical, economic, folkloristic or kerygmatic), but to hold its *significance* fully open.'

53 *Midrash Rabbah Esther*, trans. M. Simon, London, 1939; third impression, Hertford, 1961, pp. 100–1.

54 For a discussion of the construction of the midrash and targum, A. Shinan, 'Sermons, Targums, and the Reading from Scriptures in the Ancient Synagogue', in L. I. Levine (ed.), *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, Philadelphia, 1987, pp. 97–110.

55 *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 792.

56 J. L. Kugel, 'Two Introductions to Midrash', in G. H. Hartman and S. Budick (eds.), *Midrash and Literature*, New Haven, 1986, p. 80.

57 A detailed discussion of the rabbinic sources used to explain details in the Synagogue frescoes is provided by Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 351–60.

58 Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 263–317.

59 The maker of the torah shrine and perhaps even the painter are named in the graffiti in Aramaic which appear under the menorah: 'I, 'Uzzi, made the repository of the Torah shrine.' and 'Joseph, son of Abba, made the . . .', Kraeling, op. cit., p. 269.

60   The inscriptions (nos. 42–51) are translated and discussed in detail by B. Geiger in Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 300–11. Reference is given to alternative readings. I want to thank Professor Victor Mair for his helpful comments on these inscriptions and for bibliographical references. I wondered whether *dipîwar*, translated commonly as 'scribe' might be more broadly interpreted as 'writer'. However, it has been argued that writing was so limited and specialized that scribesmanship (*dipîrêh*) was equivalent to membership in an exclusive guild. D. A. Utz, 'Language, Writing, and Tradition in Iran', *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 24, 1991, pp. 8–11.

61   I benefited from discussions about writing-on-the-body with Professors Kristine Stiles and Carol Mavor.

62   On signatures, J. Derrida, 'The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Peter Brunette and David Wills', in P. Brunette and D. Wills (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*, New York, 1994, pp. 9–32.

63   Kraeling, op. cit., p. 314.

64   For example, J. Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements. Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, London and New York, 1978.

3

Exotic Taste: The Lure of Sasanian Persia

Anna Gonosová

The Antioch floor mosaics have long served as a useful gauge of iconographic and stylistic tastes and trends (visual and thematic ins and outs, expected as well as unexpected) of the Roman and early Byzantine periods because of their nearly five hundred years of uninterrupted production. A powerful lion on one of the many floors would have counted among the expected representations of the king of beasts had it not been for a long ribbon, identified as a *pativ*, a Sasanian royal symbol, fluttering around its neck. This Antioch lion is not the familiar animal of the lion hunts and Roman amphitheater games but a captive of the royal hunting preserves of one of the empire's powerful neighbors and adversaries to the east, the Sasanian Persians (Figure 3.1).[1] The mosaic, assigned to the early fifth century, was made during a rare pause in the centuries-long conflict between the two empires marked by the Sasanian sacking and destruction of Antioch by Shapur I in 256 CE and by Chosroes I in 540 CE.[2] It is also an instance of the direct influence of Sasanian art on Roman art. Sasanian Persia was the most important intermediary for luxury goods such as silk and spices reaching Rome from as far as China, and from the early fifth century on it was also a source of both artistic motifs and luxury goods, among which textiles, especially silks, would have been much sought after.

The appearance of the Sasanian motifs in the Roman and Byzantine repertory coincided with the maturing of Sasanian art in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries. The Sasanian state came into existence with the overthrow of the Parthian Arsacids by the founder of the dynasty, Ardashir of Fars, in 224 CE and

Figure 3.1 Striding lion mosaic, Antioch (building in Sector 10-Q), fifth century. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Antioch Subscription Fund, BMA 1937.139

lasted until its collapse by the advance of Islam in 651. The Sasanian kings ruled over a vast territory between Mesopotamia in the West and the Indus River to the east, which at times included Syria, the Holy Land, and Byzantine Egypt (Figure 3.2). The Sasanian dynasty, ideologically allied with the ancient Persian line of the Achaemenians, ruled over a highly centralized state in which all the power was in the hands of the divinely chosen kings and the princes of the royal family. The purity of the ideological line was maintained by a powerful Zoroastrian priesthood.[3]

Sasanian art grew out of the successful merging of several Near Eastern traditions with roots extending back to the Achaemenian period. The Hellenistic-Roman presence is further explained by the direct participation of Roman craftsmen in the creation of Sasanian art. The Hellenized Roman style was brought into Sasanian Persia by the Syrians captured in periodic territorial raids. These raids not only brought plunder and other gains but also led to the founding of the new cities Vek-Andiyok-Shapur of Gundeshapur (Better than Antioch Shapur Built This) and Vek-Andiyok-Khusrau (Better than Antioch Chosroes Built This). The Roman-style floor mosaics and other classically inspired

Figure 3.2 Map of the Sasanian empire, from Anna Gonosová, "Exotic Taste: The Lure of Sasanian Persia", in Christine Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City* (Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 131. © Princeton University Press

architectural decoration of Bishapur, another city founded by Shapur I, clearly demonstrate the appeal of Roman art to Sasanian kings. A similarly strong Roman overtone has been recognized in the decorative system of Sasanian coinage. The resulting Sasanian art can be best understood as reflecting both the complex history of the vast Sasanian-controlled territory and receptivity to new and different artistic forms and ideas suitable for assimilation into the dominant culture.[4]

The extant Sasanian art primarily chronicles royal patronage and communication of the royal ethos and glory, *xvarnah*, as represented through royal investitures and triumphs. The most important in this respect are the rock reliefs commemorating the investitures and victories of Sasanian rulers. Shapur I's victories over the Romans, including the capture of Antioch, were celebrated in no less than five reliefs; a trilingual inscription in a sanctuary at Naqš-í Rustam mentions the capture of Antioch. The royal themes are communicated by hierarchical compositions in which the centrally placed king and the god are the largest figures. As the most important expression of the king's *xvarnah*, each king wore a distinctive crown, as seen on numerous coin issues. The royal crowns combine the attributes of several protective deities, such as the eagle and wings of Anahita or the ram's head of the war god Verethragna worn by Shapur II at the siege of Amida in 359.[5] The kings and deities also wore multiple pleated ribbons whose fluttering surrounded them with a visual and physical aura.

Concern with royal themes also dominates the imagery of the best-known category of Sasanian art, silver plates: the kings, on foot or mounted and identifiable by their unique crowns, triumph over their prey, be it lions, boars, or tamer rams and wild goats. On several plates a royal banquet is represented (cat. no. 24 [all references are to *Antioch*). Such plates were produced in royal workshops and functioned as official gifts and display pieces.[6]

Stucco, the main medium of architectural decoration, is another important source of information for the appearance of Sasanian art. Although Sasanian kings founded many cities, Sasanian architecture is known only through several excavated royal palaces, whose splendor is alluded to in the Byzantine accounts of Emperor Herakleios's victorious advance against Chosroes II in 626 CE. The palaces, built of brick and rubble masonry, contained multiple courtyards and vaulted areas; throne rooms or audience halls were particularly prominent. In the Parthian tradition, brick walls were profusely decorated with figural and ornamental stucco designs in the form of molded and carved panels. These panels were painted and formed large framed fields of repeat patterns enclosed in multiple borders. Extant animal and figural fragments hint at thematic compositions similar to the early-seventh-century royal hunts of the Taq-i-Bustan rock-cut reliefs of Chosroes II. Most panels, however, consist of alternating geometric and vegetal patterns with figural and animal motifs unique to Sasanian art. Many motifs are associated with Zoroastrian divinities and auspicious powers, amplifying the royal and ceremonial function as well as the sacredness of architectural spaces. The Worcester beribboned ram panel (*Antioch*, cat. no. 20) and the ram's protome-and-wings pattern block from Kish (*Antioch*, cat. no. 20) were used in

this way. The ram and wild boar, another common motif in stucco, were sacred animals of the war god Verethragna, while the wings, arranged in pairs, were shared with the goddess Anahita. The fluttering ribbons in both reliefs signal sacred and royal associations.[7]

Floor mosaics from the palace of Shapur I in Bishapur doubtless belong to the Hellenistic-Roman tradition and might even be the work of craftsmen exiled from Antioch. The heads of maenads and satyrs and other motifs from the Dionysiac *thiasos* and geometric ornament are especially Roman. The half-nude female musicians and dancers and the richly dressed court ladies, on the other hand, reflect stylistic adjustments to the Sasanian formal mode that correspond to the court and royal representations in other media of Sasanian art.[8]

Two categories of Sasanian art, the jewelry and rich vestments of Sasanian kings and courtiers, are most frequently commented on by Roman and Byzantine sources. It is in these categories that the art of display and luxury arts can be seen as signs of sociopolitical status within the Sasanian hierarchies. Only a few examples of jewelry survive – rings, necklace pieces, and belts. Representations on Sasanian coins, seals, sculpture, and silver plate are our main sources of what was worn by the Sasanian royalty, nobles, and courtiers.

The art of Sasanian weavers is often mentioned in Roman and Byzantine sources, with the clothing of Persian men in one source described as "gleaming with many shimmering colors."[9] Until recently knowledge of Sasanian textiles was based mainly on literary sources and on the representation of elaborately patterned textiles of the king and the courtiers of the royal hunt reliefs at Taq-i-Bustan; and many textiles, some woolen but mainly silks, found in the Byzantine graves of Antinoë in Egypt were also assumed to be Sasanian primarily on the basis of their exotic patterns and their similarity to the Taq-i-Bustan reliefs.

Comparisons of the late antique weaving techniques has confirmed that many of the Antinoë silks belonged to the costume worn by the Sasanians.[10] The silk filament is particularly suitable for dyeing, and this property was fully exploited in these weavings. Because weaving was mechanized, designs with repeated patterns could be produced. The repertory of motifs includes many elements known from Sasanian stucco and silver: rams and rams' heads, winged horses, birds, especially cocks and peacocks, and *senmurws* (fantastic creatures). Beaded borders resembling pearls are known from jewelry and the written sources. Specifically Sasanian are composite forms arranged in self-contained units, such as an elaborate flowerlike palmette or an animal arrangement with only the heads and foreparts, finished with a crest motif such as pairs of wings or floral or foliate finials (cat. no. 20). These composite forms may be repeated in rows, alone or combined with framing. The presence of potentially meaningful elements, such as wings, sacred animals, and plants, suggests that even this patterned decoration may have had a significance beyond simple ornamentation. Many of these motifs were imitated in a variety of media outside the Sasanian culture, from floor and wall mosaics to architectural sculpture and silver vessels, in the late Roman and Byzantine periods.

The Sasanian motifs found in late Roman and early Byzantine monuments fall into two categories. One comprises motifs imitating the official royal art using sacred motifs such as wings and animal protomes. This is not surprising because portable luxury objects with royal symbols were exchanged through court gifts and embassies. The Antioch mosaics are among the earliest extant examples in Roman art to carry these "exotic" motifs. The evidence of Sasanian art in Antioch is demonstrated by the mosaic of the beribboned lion, the borders with ram's heads and wings from two neighboring houses in Daphne (cat. no. 20), and the mosaic of beribboned parrots (cat. no. 25), all three dating from the late fifth or early sixth century. In all of these examples Sasanian elements, such as the fluttering ribbons and ram's-head protomes with wings, can be identified.

The second category of motifs is more likely found in the patterns of textiles (silks and wools). Many examples of such borrowings exist, especially in Byzantine textiles, which are best found at Byzantine burial sites in Egypt. Many less direct cases of borrowings from Sasanian art are evident in the popular "diaper" patterns, which are rich with floral filling motifs. Such all-over designs may well have been inspired by patterned woven textiles, specifically silks produced by the Sasanian state. The closest example to a putative silk model would be the Louvre mosaic of the beribboned parrots (cat. no. 25). In the case of the parrot mosaic, the parrots' regular arrangement in the main field undermines their naturalistic appearance. The arrangement of the birds recalls a silk from Antinoë that employs peacocks rather than parrots to similar effect.[11]

Although Sasanian motifs did not appear in the ornamental repertory of Roman and early Byzantine art until the fifth century, their impact was long-lived. The attraction to Persian art can be found in many examples of medieval Byzantine textiles, jewelry, and architectural sculpture.[12] The fifth-century vault mosaics in the Saint George Rotunda in Thessaloníki and the architectural ornamentation in the church of Saint Polyeuktos in Constantinople of 528 demonstrate the influence of the Sasanian decorative repertoire on early Byzantine artists. But by far the richest selection of these is found among the fifth- and sixth-century floor mosaics of Antioch.

Notes

1   Levi 1947, pp. 313–15, pl. 70. On the presence of Sasanian motifs at Antioch, see ibid., and Morey 1938, pp. 41–5.
2   Yarshater 1983, esp. pp. 124–62, 568–92.
3   Ibid., pp. 359–83.
4   For an overview of Sasanian art, see Ghirshman 1962, pp. 119–254; Harper 1978; Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.
5   Yarshater 1983, pp. 324–6, 345–7. For Shapur II at Amida, see Ammianus Marcellinus 9.1.3.
6   Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire 1993, pp. 95–108; see also Harper 1981.

7   For a useful survey of Sasanian stucco decoration, see Harper 1978, pp. 101–4; see
    also Kröger 1982.

8   Ghirshman 1962, pp. 140–7, figs. 180–6; see also Musées Royaux d'Art et
    d'Histoire 1993, pp. 67–9.

9   Ammianus Marcellinus 23.6.84.

10 The best recent survey is Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire 1993, pp. 113–22.

11 Martiniani-Reber 1986, pp. 52–3, no. 19.

12 Mango 1977, pp. 316–21; Grabar 1971, pp. 679–707.

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    and Sasanian Periods*. Cambridge, MA.

4

Dionysiac Motifs

Richard Ettinghausen

Introduction

This study of the impact of Classical art – specifically that preserved by Byzantium – on Sasanian Iran and eventually on the Islamic world deals with one aspect of a two-sided issue of major historical proportions. That is to say, the reverse phenomenon (the Byzantine encounter with Iranian art and later with Islamic art) is not considered here. This is due not so much to space limitations; rather, it is because that aspect of the issue has already been investigated by a most competent scholar.[1]

The time period considered here also requires some comment since the problem is chronologically open-ended. Strictly speaking, Byzantine and Sasanian art coexisted for only a little more than three hundred years, from the founding of the new East Roman capital at Constantinople in AD 323 until the collapse of the Sasanian kingdom and the death of Yazdigird III in 651. However, Iran had received influences from Hellenistic and Roman art prior to this period – both under the Sasanian kings and preceding them during the Parthian and Seleucid eras, not to mention the impact of the Greeks on the Achaemenids; then, for centuries following this period Byzantine artistic concepts mingled with those of Sasanian inspiration, expecially once the Umayyad caliphs had usurped not only the power of the Iranian rulers but their ceremonial trappings as well. Nevertheless, the artistic products of this exceedingly long period of cultural interchange – and therefore the particular questions asked here concerning their interpretation – come primarily from the relatively short period of actual political and therefore artistic confrontation between Sasanian Iran and Byzantium or from the century immediately following.

It is not our intention in this inquiry to survey *all* the Iranian monuments that betray Byzantine influence, nor is it to deal specifically with chronology, style, iconography in general, or artistic trends. Rather, we shall present, in three specific cases, three archetypes of artistic influence, or modes of acceptance, that appeared even while the two civilizations were hostile to each other for political, military and religious reasons, and that continued to be operative even after one of the two partners, Iran, had lost its independence, though not its cultural identity.

One form of reception – and the most limited one – was *transfer*, the taking over of shapes or concepts as they stand, without change or further development, possibly because reinterpretation proved impossible; such motifs are rather rare, are found only in isolated cases, and did not have an extended life. A more fundamental transformation was achieved by *adoption*. Just as a child may be adopted and brought up in a milieu entirely at variance with that of his original home so that his whole personality may thus be modified, though biologically he remains the same human being, so may artistic forms transferred from one region to another and remodeled according to novel principles differ so much from their original configurations that their true identities become obscured. The third and most far-reaching form of cultural reception involves the ready acceptance, owing to special conditions, of major artistic forms from another civilization and their creative combination with indigenous elements, in what might best be called a process of *integration*; being a form of artistic interchange, it is difficult to say which is the giver and which the receiver. Peculiar to this mode is the fact that such a felicitous co-equal intermingling could occur in an off-beat, marginal region. Still another of the concomitant results of this interaction was that it could lead to the selection of secondary or unusual features that suddenly took on a new significance in their new historical setting.

In our three chosen case histories, it seemed inadvisable simply to refer to the pertinent material, since this body of evidence is still too little known, and to a large extent even misunderstood at present. Therefore the reasons for our proposed identifications or reinterpretations had first to be given and only then could further deductions be made. An additional task was to establish the effectiveness of the impact of the Classical heritage on its neighbor. This formed the clue to our understanding of the productive afterlife of the visual imagery well beyond the heyday of its initial acceptance. This examination, in turn, will help us to gauge the dynamic quality of the original meeting of the two artistic traditions and the intercultural usefulness of certain motifs, be it in Iran or later in the Islamic world.[2]

Case Study: Dionysiac Motifs

The first subject of inquiry, exemplifying the limited mode of transfer, is the reception of Dionysiac motifs in Sasanian art.[3] These motifs occur particularly,

though not exclusively, on partially gilt silver bottles whose shape when found in Iran is typically and perhaps even exclusively Sasanian, although it is itself of Roman origin.[4] There is therefore no doubt that we are dealing with objects of Iranian origin dating from the period between the third and seventh centuries AD.

The most informative piece of this group is a bottle of the typical shape in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington. One of its three relief figures shows the god himself, nude except for a cloak thrown over his shoulders and holding two identifying symbols, the *thyrsos* (or a staff derived from it) in his right hand and a panther on a leash seized by his left hand (Figure 4.1). Any hesitation over this identification is dispelled by comparison with a Byzantine knife handle in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, attributed to the fourth century, on which Dionysos takes the same stance, has one of the attributes and is clothed in the same manner. There is still an earlier parallel in a third-century Roman figure of Bacchus in the Walters Art Gallery pointing to the persistence of the iconographic tradition in time and space.

The same religious context can be claimed for the second figure on this bottle, a maiden holding in her left hand two stalks with buds or fruits. Her Dionysiac

Figure 4.1 Dionysos, a *thyrsos*, and a panther on a partially gilded Sasanian silver bottle, Iran, fourth century AD. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Purchase, F1965.20

association is again made clear by the presence of a panther, whose leash is held by her right hand; this relationship is brought out even more specifically because the animal is seen drinking from a large jar, which is a motif symbolizing a Dionysiac revelry.[5] The young woman is obviously a maenad, one of the female followers of the god. Again Western parallels can be established. From Byzantium there is the pseudo-Oppian manuscript, now in Venice, which has the same elements, though the maenad and the animal are here separated.[6] This example is from the tenth or eleventh century and therefore much later than the Sasanian bottle, but it is obviously based on an earlier prototype.

The third figure is that of a youth leaning forward to receive a child, which as a subject is perhaps not quite so obviously Dionysiac in character. The theme is nevertheless part of the same iconographic cycle as Roman art offers similar scenes of the initiation of children into the Bacchic mystery cult.[7]

On other Sasanian bottles or plates we find scantily dressed women engaged in rapturous dancing, at times to the accompaniment of their own music (Figure 4.2) which indicate other aspects of this imagery. But it is well to remember that

Figure 4.2 Sasanian bottle with dancing female figures. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Purchase, F1966.1

this popularity of certain figural types does not extend to the god himself as the scenes with one to five figures are usually limited to his female companions.

The case is different with regard to two closely related Sasanian plates, one in the Historical Museum in Moscow, the other in the Freer Gallery of Art,[8] as they present a more complex iconographic theme: the triumph of Dionysos in the company of his followers (Figure 4.3). In the shade of a richly laden grape-vine, the god is seen seated on his chariot where he is joined by his consort Ariadne; his escort consists of two maenads, a satyr, and four putti. The exergue underlines the main theme by means of secondary figures. We find here two small musicians and a feline (leopard or panther) which is again greedily drinking from a large wine jar.

The triumphal scene is, of course, common in Roman and Byzantine art,[9] although as elsewhere in Sasanian art a basically narrative episode or an event in motion has been turned into a static, monumentalized spectacle. It suffices here to mention as a parallel a Byzantine silver bowl tentatively attributed to Constantinople of the fifth or early sixth century, which is in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection.[10] It shows the same cortege in a more elaborate, freely moving version, with the two maenads dancing ahead of Dionysos, the smaller female figure seated with her back to him, a male follower behind the chariot, and the star-shaped wheel spokes all point to a common prototype. The general character of this model is suggested by a Roman cameo of the second century AD in the Naples Museum. That Sasanian artists did not rely for such imagery on nearly contemporary Western pieces (or at least not exclusively) is demonstrated by a much earlier Iranian version of this scene in the British Museum, which is probably Parthian and has been dated to about AD 200.[11] This Iranian object, which

Figure 4.3 The triumph of Dionysos, in the company of his followers, Sasanian period, silver and gilt, Iran, fifth–seventh century. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Purchase, F1964.10

is both pre-Sasanian and pre-Byzantine, is our first indication of the open-endedness of the problem to which we drew attention at the beginning of this investigation.

If further proof of early Iranian familiarity with Dionysiac imagery is still necessary, we need only mention the floor mosaics in a triple eyvan of the third-century palace of Bishapur, discovered by Roman Ghirshman.[12] The masks and female figures were originally explained as "portraits of members of the royal family and the aristocracy" or as representations of "court ladies", but the horns and long donkey ears on one mask and the Pan's pipe, as well as the *pedum* (the curved staff favored by satyrs and other followers of Dionysos)[13] placed near two other masks leave little doubt that we are confronted with renderings in Iran of various aspects of the Dionysiac cult. Of special additional interest in this connection is the parallel between one of the maenads in this mosaic who is fully clothed and holds sprays of flowers, and the second figure on the Freer bottle and the miniature in the pseudo-Oppian manuscript.

All the bottles and plates so far discussed have in common that they are decorated with figural subjects whose Dionysiac origins and original meanings are clear. In addition there are other silver plates and vessels that are only partly decorated with figures such as dancers, musicians or drinkers, or with a primarily non-figural iconography. In both types the grapevine often plays an essential part; besides this suggestive element and other similarities between these figured scenes and the Dionysiac milieu, it is, however, difficult to prove a specific connection. By the way, while these motifs are more frequently found on silver vessels, they also occur elsewhere. Thus the dancer and the musician are to be found among the sixth-century stucco reliefs of various sizes discovered in Ctesiphon.[14]

To this more problematic group belongs a clearly recognizable series of vessels, most of them bottles or ewers and thus connected with drinking events, whose decoration consists of scantily clothed female figures always shown in motion. The stress is on the sexual aspects of their bodies, their coiffures crowned with hair knots, their rich jewelry, and the wide range of vegetal or other offerings that they hold in both hands (Figure 4.4).[15] Certain aspects connect them with Dionysiac concepts. Thus their offerings include branches with vine leaves and grapes; the figures sometimes hold small children and what is particularly significant, in some cases they pour liquid from vessels into the mouths of diminutive felines, thus echoing a motif which occurs in representations of the god himself. Particularly enlightening with regard to the last mentioned feature are the relief figures on an ivory medicine box of the second half of the fourth to fifth century AD in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection which for iconographic reasons should be attributed to Egypt. Standing between a maenad (or, possibly, Ariadne) and a satyr we find the figure of Dionysos who holds in his left hand a thyrsos and in his right a small mixing bowl towards which a small panther is raising his head to catch the drops of wine. The manner in which the vessel is held in an outstretched arm and the eager attitude of the diminutive animal are

Figure 4.4 Sasanian silver rhyton with female figures making offerings, Iran, fourth century. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2003. Gift of Katharine Holden Thayer, 1962.294

the same in the ivory box and in the Sasanian vessels where this motif occurs. On the other hand, the strong stress on the agricultural character of their proffered offerings and possibly also the frequent presence of pigeon-like birds and other animals may indicate a specific connection with more general Iranian fertility beliefs. In any case, the inclusion of small children and the pouring of wine to felines seem to exclude an interpretation of a purely secular meaning. What we should expect and what has apparently happened is that one limited group of Dionysiac figures – the maenads – has been reinterpreted in Iran and elaborated visually beyond its initial significance. It is quite likely that the maenads have been transformed into figures of a fertility cult, possibly priestesses or devotees connected with the main Iranian goddess, Anahita. Thus while the iconographic and conceptual connections with an iconographic Dionysiac type are clear, the ultimate meaning of the images remains hypothetical and problematic. On the other hand, the iconography of the basic Dionysiac group is remarkably pure and unadulterated, as is demonstrated particularly by the Parthian and Sasanian renderings of the god himself, expecially in the triumphal scenes. It is this unchanging acceptance by the Iranian artists of a very specific Western vocabulary that has induced us to label this process a mere *transfer*.

Three questions must, however, still be answered if we are to understand the historical significance of this artistic encounter. What elevates it above the mere accidental? How was it that Iran accepted this foreign imagery associated with the god of wine in the first place? How can we explain the introduction of these Western motifs into Iran? And finally, was there some recognizable aftereffect of this particular meeting of two civilizations?

The Parthian plate showing the triumph of Dionysos indicates that the original impact occurred in that period of Iranian history when the entire country, but especially the court, was under the strong influence of Greek ideas. On Parthian coins not only are there Greek inscriptions, but at least ten kings have also labeled themselves *Philhellene*. They are Mithridates I, Artabanus I, Mithridates II, Artabanus II, Phraates III, Mithridates III, Orodes II, Phraates IV, Phraataces and Gotarzes.[16] We also have to recall Plutarch's remark that "when Alexander was civilizing Asia, Homer was commonly read and the children of the Persians, of the Susianians, and of the Gedrosians became acquainted with the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides."[17] The same author gives us further evidence of this Hellenizing process in his *Life of Crassus* (XXXIII), in which he describes a performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* at the court of the Parthian King Orodes III (57–38 BC) in which the actor playing the role of Agave appeared on the stage with the actual head of Crassus.[18] Furthermore, there was in Iran a definite predilection for wine, so that the Western concepts connected with Dionysos must have seemed quite acceptable. For instance, Herodotus says of the Iranians during the Achaemenian period:

> It is their custom to deliberate about the gravest matters when they are drunk; and what they approve in their counsels is proposed to them the next day . . . when they are now sober; and if being sober they still approve it, they act thereon, but if not, they cast it aside. And when they have taken counsel about the matter when sober, they decide upon it when they are drunk.[19]

This custom continued in the Sasanian period when, according to al-Jahiz, King Bahram Gur ordered his chamberlain to receive from the people petitions and to present them to him when he was drunk.[20] Finally, the national epic of the Iranians, the *Shah-nameh,* the stories of which end with the Sasanian period, also describes widely held drinking customs.[21]

We can only speculate on how Dionysiac motifs may have been introduced, though we have both literary evidence and monuments to support our conjectures. It is known that Shapur I, after his victory over Valerian, installed 10,000 Roman prisoners in Bishapur, Shushtar, and Gundeshapur, and that among them were engineers, architects, masons, and other craftsmen.[22] It is not too difficult to imagine that having twice conquered Antioch, with its splendid floor mosaics, Shapur desired such decorations in his own palace. Happily these mosaics have been partially preserved and their theme is precisely of Dionysiac character, as would have been appropriate for a banquet hall.

Other sources of evidence are actual Roman objects with Dionysiac decoration that are said to have been found in Iran. The most important example is a silver handle from a dish of the second century AD in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This handle, which shows the Indian triumph of Dionysos, is also remarkable for having been executed in a relief technique akin to that used by Parthian and Sasanian silversmiths.[23] The probability of such an import into Iran is corroborated by one other Roman piece with a Dionysiac theme, a small silver statuette reminiscent of the bronze Bacchus in the Walters Art Gallery, although its raised hand has lost the thyrsos that it originally held. It appeared in New York among the holdings found in Iran of a Persian importer of curios and antiquities and is now in a private American collection.[24]

Other Western motifs have been discovered in recent years either on imported pieces or in native paraphrases. The most important of these two groups shows the figure of Heracles, who appears in every conceivable shape and medium, from monumental rock reliefs to small statuettes discovered in the vast region stretching between Iraq and Afghanistan.[25] Although a further investigation of this motif would lead us too far afield here, we can at least surmise that the popularity of this image may be explainable by the probable identification of Heracles with a national god or heroic figure;[26] it should also be recalled that in Iran Heracles at times took on a Dionysiac aspect.[27]

A more isolated manifestation of foreign influence is represented by an imported bronze, now in the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, of Poseidon reclining on a chariot on which he is accompanied by other nautical figures.[28] What makes this singular find, which is said to be from the Island of Kharg in the Persian Gulf, significant in this context is the similarity of its iconographic setting to the triumphal ride of Dionysos (Figure 4.3). Finally, it is important to note that the largest group of adopted Classical motifs, those found on some forty ivory rhyta from the first Parthian capital of Nyssa, included Dionysiac themes.[29] The appearance of the classical god of wine on Sasanian silver bottles and plates is, therefore, just one phenomenon in a broader artistic context.

As the figure of the youthful male god Dionysos apparently had no equivalent in Iranian myths, he did not experience a transfiguration that would have provided him with a new lease on life in Iranian guise. Only secondary figures around the god could be evolved further as we noted in the case of the maenads. Yet despite the usual Muslim eagerness to employ Iranian motifs the image of a scantily dressed female figure could not have lasted long in the Islamic period. Still, the theme of the fully clothed female dancers as depicted in the Jawsaq Palace of Samarra and in subsequent periods must be thought to derive from the Sasanian transformations of Dionysiac models. On the other hand, although drinking scenes abound in Islamic art, especially in Iranian courtly art, just as they do in Persian literature, our present knowledge of the material indicates that this motif does not seem to have had a specific prototype in the Sasanian period or was at least not a major artistic theme.

Curiously enough, there was, however, a minor element of the Dionysiac iconography which was readily adopted and used long after its significance was forgotten. It was, though, to be deployed in a disjointed fashion: the motif of the panther (or other feline) drinking from a jar (Figure 4.3). In Roman and Byzantine art the various attitudes of the drinking animal were rendered realistically.[30] Animal handles were used in the Achaemenian period; but in the art of this period the animal head does not usually touch the vessel itself and at times it even looks away from it.[31] In the Parthian period, too, the feline animal serves merely as handle without it being concerned with the content of the vessel. However, in the new Sasanian iconographic associations, the feline is closely attached to jars and ewers and is placed close to the lip of the vessel as if he were eager to reach its precious liquid – a pose which is prefigured by Roman handles of the first to second centuries.[32] This arrangement was soon formalized in Iran especially in the post-Sasanian period and the body of the panther became stylized and elongated. Even after its meaning had been long forgotten this pose continued in Seljuq times, although it may be that some of these feline handles have become detached from their original ewers through burial and have now been joined to other vessels. We also find metal or pottery jugs on which the felines appear only as small figures on the tops of the handles as unlikely thumb rests; sometimes they are placed even more incongruously at the bottom of the handles; or only a tiny vestigial head may be stuck atop a handle. Still other examples, especially big-mouthed pottery jugs of the later twelfth and early thirteenth century, use two feline handles, probably for reasons of symmetry. In another stage of development the animal leaves its usual connection with the handle and is joined to the neck of a vessel. Or, the feline becomes attached to the handle of other types of vessels, which had nothing to do with the drinking or mixing of beverages, for instance on a kettle used for pouring water in the bathhouse. Apparently the basic association between vessel and feline was so strong that it persisted in rudimentary or variant forms even though the original iconographic idea and its appropriate rendering had long ago passed into oblivion.

In reviewing the material discussed so far, we are at first struck by the abundance of Dionysiac scenes in Iran. The basic images of the god himself, with thyrsos and panther or in triumphal procession are, however, few and at best only copies of Classical motifs. We have here an example of a mere transfer of scenes without further translation into Iranian idiom. The underlying concepts were too complex and alien to be adopted. Only the secondary, more universally understandable themes of female musicians and dancers lent themselves to various degrees of transformations in Iran. It also seems significant that the image that could most readily be abstracted and divested of its Dionysiac connotations – the panther at the wine jar – is still to be found in the twelfth and thirteenth century art of that country, and even then in connection with vessels which had a more ordinary, middleclass function without pretensions to a noble Sasanian pedigree.

Notes

1 André Grabar, "Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens," in *L' Art de la Fin de l' Antiquité et du Moyen Âge*. Paris, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 265–90; *idem*, "Eléments sassanides et islamiques dans les enluminures des manuscrits espagnols du Haut Moyen Âge," *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 663–8.

2 The author regrets that the very important publication *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei Anno CCCLXVIII, Roma, 1971, reached him too late to be referred to in this publication. This applies especially to the articles "Le rayonnement de l'art sassanide dans le monde chrétien" (pp. 679–707) by André Grabar which should be added to the other publications by this author given in note 1; "Art et religion sous les sassanides" by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (pp. 377–88); and, "Sources of Certain Female Representations in Sasanian Art" by Prudence Oliver Harper (pp. 503–15) which would have been considered here.

3 R. Ettinghausen, "A Persian Treasure," *Arts in Virginia*, vol. 8, Richmond, Fall–Winter, 1967–8, pp. 29–41. On the basis of our very limited archaeological knowledge of Iran, the dates given here and elsewhere to Sasanian objects are to be regarded as only hypothetical.

4 Harald von Petrikovits, "Die Herkunft einer sasanidischen Silberflaschenform," *Trierer Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst des Trierer Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete,* vol. 32, 1969, pp. 323–32, especially pl. 6, 1.

5 Carl Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs*. Berlin, 1904, vol. 3, 2, pl. 70; Karl Lehmann-Hartleben and Erling C. Olsen, *Dionysiac Sarcophagi in Baltimore*. Baltimore, 1942, pp. 12, 36, figs. 3 and 4; Friedrich Matz, *Die dionysischen Sarkophage*. Berlin, 1968, vol. 1, pls. 34, 44; vol. 2, Beilage 29, pls. 100, 122; vol. 3, pls. 208, 217, 224.

6 Kurt Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art*. Princeton, 1951, p. 138, pl. 43, fig. 157.

7 Emily L. Wadsworth, "Stucco Reliefs of the First and Second Centuries still Extant in Rome," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol. 4, 1924, pl. IX; Martin P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*. Lund, 1957, pp. 106–15 ("The Child in the Bacchic Mysteries, Initiation of Children etc. . . ."); Matz, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pl. 1 A; vol. 2, pl. 107.

8 A. P. Smirnov, "Novaia nakhodka vostochnogo serebra v Priurale," *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo Muzeia*. Moskva, 1957; Ettinghausen, *op. cit.*, fig. 17.

9 Lehmann-Hartleben and Olsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–15, fig. 7; Matz, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pls. 69/71; vol. 2, Beilagen 30–41, 66–75, pls. 94, 96, 101–3, 106, 108, 110–12, 116, 121, 124–8, 134–8, 142–5, 152; vol. 3, pl. 239.

10 Marvin C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, vol. 1, Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting*. Washington, 1962, pp. 5–7, pls. VI–VII.

11 O. M. Dalton, *The Treasure of the Oxus with other Examples of Early Oriental Metalwork*. Third ed. London, 1964, pp. 49–51, pl. XXVII. This is the first and basic analysis of the theme in Iran.

12 R. Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*. vol. 2. *Les Mosaïques sassanides*. Paris, 1956, pp. 37–77, 111–41, frontispiece, pls. A, B, V–XIV; *idem, Iran. Parthians and Sasanians*. London, 1962, pp. 140–6, figs. 180–6.

13 Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*, pls. A, IX, 1 XIII, 3, 4; *idem, Parthians and Sasanians*, fig. 185.

14 J. Heinrich Schmidt, "Figürliche sasanidische Stuckdekorationen aus Ktesiphon," *Ars Islamica*, vol. 4, 1937, pp. 175–7, figs. 1, 4 and 8 where the connection with the maenads has already been pointed out. See also K. Brisch, J. Kröger, F. Spuhler and J. Zick-Nissen, *Katalog 1971, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kunstbesitz*. Berlin-Dahlem, 1971, p. 40, No. 105 (with full bibliographic references).

15 Y. I. Smirnov, *Argenterie orientale*. St. Petersburg, 1909, No. 79; J. Orbeli and C. Trever, *Orfèvrerie sasanide*. Moscou-Leningrad, 1935, pls. 44–7; Yedda Godard, "Bouteille d'argent sasanide," *Athār-é Īrān*, vol. 3, 1938, pp. 291–300; R. Ghirshman, "Notes iraniennes V. Scènes de banquet sur l'argenterie sassanide," *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 16, 1953, pp. 51–76; *idem*, "Argenterie d'un seigneur sassanide," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 2, 1957, pp. 77–82; *idem, Parthians and Sasanians*, figs. 256–8; Dorothy E. Miner, "A Newly Acquired Sasanian Vase," *Archaeology*, vol. 17, 1964, p. 61; Dorothy G. Shepherd, "Sasanian Art in Cleveland," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 51, 1964, pp. 83–8; Oleg Grabar, *Sasanian Silver. Late Antique and Early Mediaeval Arts of Luxury from Iran*. Ann Arbor, 1967, pp. 60–7; Camilla Trever, "À propos des temples de la déesse Anahita en Iran sassanide," *Iranica Antiqua*, vol. 7, 1967, pp. 121–34; Ettinghausen, "A Persian Treasure," pp. 29–41, O. Grabar, "Sasanian and Islamic Art Through the Ages (in the Cincinnati Art Museum)," *Apollo*, vol. 93, 1971, p. 260, pl. II.

The Dionysiac connections of this group have been first stressed by J. H. Schmidt, Mme. Godard and Miss Shepherd.

16 E. T. Newell, "The Coinage of the Parthians," *A Survey of Persian Art*, ed. A. U. Pope. London-New York, 1938–9, vol. 1, pp. 477–90. W. Wroth, *British Museum Catalogue, Parthia*. London, 1903.

17 *Plutarch's Moralia*, ed. and tr. Frank Cole Babbitt (*The Loeb Classical Library*), Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1957, vol. 4, pp. 394–5 (328 D).

18 *Plutarch's Lives*, ed. and tr. Bernadotte Perrin (*The Loeb Classical Library*), London-New York, 1916, vol. III, pp. 420–1. The significance of these passages were brought out by Kurt Weitzmann in his "Three 'Bactrian' Silver Vessels," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 25, 1943, pp. 323–4.

19 Herodotus, ed. and tr. A. D. Godley (*The Loeb Classical Library*). London-New York, 1920, vol. 1, pp. 172–5, quoted in E. Yarshater, "The Theme of Wine-drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 13, 1960, p. 45.

20 Al-Jahiz, *Kitab al-Taj*, ed. Ahmad Zaki Pasha, Cairo, 1914, pp. 29–30; see Yarshater, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

21 Yarshater, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

22 Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*, p. 25; for sources see: Mas'udi, *Les Prairies d'or*, tr. C. Barbier de Maynard and P. de Courteille. Paris, 1914, vol. 2, pp. 185f; *Chronique de Séert*, ed. and tr. Addai Scher in *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 4, pp. 220–3, see J. Gagé, *La Montée des Sassanides et l'heure de Palmyre*. Paris, 1964, pp. 315–16.

23 Christine Alexander, "A Roman Silver Relief. The Indian Triumph of Dionysos," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, new series, vol. 14, 1955–6, pp. 64–7.

24 See also the Hellenistic bronzehead of Dionysos found in Hatra ("The Treasures of Mesopotamia: Baghdad's New Museum," *The Illustrated London News,* Dec. 3rd, 166, p. 30).

25 W. van Ingen, *Figurines from Seleucia on the Tigris.* Ann Arbor, 1939, pp. 106–9, pl. XVIII; Weitzmann, "Three 'Bactrian' Silver Vessels," pp. 322–3; Klaus Fischer, "Ein Śiva-Buddha-Herakles Stein von Saozma Kala," *Archäologischer Anzeiger. Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, vol. 72, 1957, cols. 415–36; Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, fig. 79; Tania Ghirshman, *Archéologue malgré moi.* Neuchâtel-Paris, 1970, fig. A opposite p. 400.

26 Richard N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (Mentor Book). New York, 1966, pp. 183 and 225, figs. 69–71, 87; Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, p. 29.

27 Frye, *op. cit.*, figs. 69–70.

28 David T. Owsley, "Two New Ancient Bronzes," *Carnegie Magazine*, vol. 45, 1971, p. 62. The identification of the main figure as Poseidon was made by Professor Kopcke.

29 M. E. Masson and G. A. Pugachenkova, *Parthianskiye Ritony Nissy.* Album of 120 plates with text in Russian, Turcoman, French and Tajik. Moscow, 1956; Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, p. 31, fig. 41.

30 See note 5. After this paper had been finished we noted that this subject has been briefly treated in Prudence Harper, Andrew Oliver, Jr., Nora Scott and Christine Lilyquist, "Origin and Influence, Cultural Contacts: Egypt, the Ancient Near East, and the Classical World," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 29, 1971, p. 325.

31 R. Ghirshman, *The Arts of Ancient Iran from its Origins to the Time of Alexander the Great.* New York, 1964, figs. 104, 222, 307, 308 and 333.

32 See now also Umberto Scerrato, "Brocca bronzea iranica con ansa zoomorfa in una collezione privata a Roma," *Arte Orientale in Italia*, vol. 1, Roma 1971, pp. 61–75, especially fig. 3.

Part II
Continuities: Tradition and Formation of Cultural Identities

5

The Good Life

Henry Maguire

In his tenth homily on Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, John Chrysostom, at that time patriarch of Constantinople, gave a vivid description of the good life as it was flaunted by the wealthy and powerful of his day. The preacher criticized the extravagance of the rich man's house, with its display of porticoes, columns, and precious marbles, its gilded ceilings, and its pagan statues. He spoke of the elaborate confections served in the dining room, made to satisfy the pleasure and vanity of the host. He complained of the clothes of the well-to-do, costing a hundred pieces of gold and worn in many layers, so that the wealthy appeared sweating beneath their finery. Finally, he ridiculed the rich men's wives, weighed down with jewelry and decked out like their mules and horses with gold.[1] This characterization of the prosperous lifestyle during late antiquity was not mere rhetorical exaggeration, for archaeology has shown that the picture painted by John Chrysostom was true. This essay reviews a selection from the abundant material evidence of domestic prosperity in late antiquity, including the interior furnishings of houses, the silver vessels used for eating, drinking, and bathing, silk clothing, and jewelry. I also look at imitations of these objects made in cheaper materials, through which the less fortunate emulated the success of the rich. The second part of the essay turns from the objects themselves to the images used to decorate them, which evoked the idea of prosperity in various ways, primarily through personifications, motifs drawn from nature, and mythology. Finally, I consider the attitudes toward those images that were adopted by Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and the degree to which each religion opposed, assimilated, or rejected the visual expressions of domestic prosperity in late antiquity.

In the Roman and Byzantine worlds, marble was always an important emblem of wealth and consumption. The effect of this material upon the clientele of the wealthy aristocrats of Rome was described in scathing terms by the 4th-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus: "Idle gossips frequent their houses, people who applaud with various flattering fictions every word uttered by those whose fortune is greater than their own . . . In the same way they admire the setting of columns in a high facade and the walls brilliant with carefully selected colors of marble, and extol their noble owners as more than mortal" (Amm.Marc. 23.4.12). Such late antique houses, featuring arcades with marble columns and walls expensively clad with marble revetments, have survived in nearby Ostia; a well-preserved example is the House of Cupid and Psyche, which featured a marble-lined dining room and a columnar arcade, as well as statuary of the type criticized by John Chrysostom, including the group of Cupid and Psyche that gave the house its modern name.[2] Many wealthy homes had floors covered with colorful tessellated mosaics. Among the best preserved are the 6th-century pavements discovered in the Villa of the Falconer at Argos in Greece, which had a dining room looking out onto a courtyard that was surrounded on two sides by columnar porticoes. The floor of the *triclinium* (dining room) was decorated with a mosaic of Dionysus with satyrs and maenads, which was placed so that it could be admired by diners reclining on the couch set at the back of the room. The position of the semicircular couch is marked on the mosaic floor, together with that of the sigma-shaped table in front of it. Even the meal of two fish on a platter was indicated in the center of the table. The porticoes of the courtyard also were paved with mosaics. In front of the dining room were scenes of hunting with dogs and falcons, activities which provided food (ducks and hares) for the table. The other portico was decorated with personifications of the months holding their seasonal attributes.[3]

Textiles were very important in the decoration of late antique houses, although their effect is more difficult to visualize today than that of the splendid mosaic floors that have survived in their original locations. A luxurious copy of the poems of Virgil, possibly produced in Ravenna during the 6th century, contains a painting of Dido entertaining Aeneas in her palace which gives some idea of the contribution made by textiles to the late antique dining room: blue, green, and red hangings and swags cover the walls, white and purple cloths decorate the couch.[4] A number of domestic wall-hangings executed in tapestry weave, some of considerable size, have been excavated from graves in Egypt, where they had been used to wrap corpses for burial when they were no longer needed in the house. The rich imagery of these tapestries includes beneficent personifications; bearers of gifts; servants; trees, fruits, and flowers; animals and hunting scenes; and figures from mythology. Houses were also decorated with curtains, which were hung in doorways and between the columns of arcades. Curtains were made of a lighter weight material than the wall-hangings, being typically woven of linen with intermittent repeat patterns executed with dyed woolen threads.[5] Such a curtain, decorated with a repeating pattern of flowers on a neutral ground, may be seen hung

across a doorway in the 6th-century mosaic of Empress Theodora and her retinue from the church of S. Vitale in Ravenna.[6]

Diners in late antiquity well appreciated the aura of luxury that finely woven textiles brought to a dining room. In one of his poems, the 5th-century Gallic aristocrat Sidonius Apollinaris wrote how his experience of a feast was enriched by the red- and purple-dyed cloths of wool and linen that adorned the couch. He describes a textile woven with hunting scenes, showing hills and "beasts rushing over the roomy cloth, their rage whetted by a wound well counterfeited in scarlet," so that "at the seeming thrust of a javelin, blood that is no blood issues." On the same textile he admired the motif of the Parthian shot, in which "the Parthian, wild eyed and cunningly leaning over with face turned backwards, makes his horse go [forward] and his arrow return, flying from or putting to flight the pictured beasts" (*Epistulae* 9.13.5; trans. W. B. Anderson). Such couch-covers, woven with scenes of horseback riders hunting in landscapes, are depicted on the lids of some 3rd-century Attic sarcophagi.[7] As for the Parthian shot, it is depicted in surviving textiles, such as a fragment of draw-loom silk now preserved in the treasury of St Servatius at Maastricht, which dates to the 8th century.[8] Besides hunting scenes, textiles used to cover household furnishings were woven with many other figural subjects, as may be seen in a fragment of wool and linen tapestry weave, which may have come from the border of a couch cover showing a series of beneficent personifications.[9] A rich 4th-century silk, depicting the Nile in his chariot accompanied by *putti*, aquatic creatures, and waterfowl, could also have been part of a spread or a cover, although its original function is uncertain.[10]

One further element of the furnishing of the late antique houses should be mentioned here, even if it is preserved only in the imagery of poets and weavers: in the aristocratic dining room a profusion of greenery and flowers provided color and fragrance, as is described in the poem by Sidonius: "Let the round table show linen fairer than snow, and be covered with laurel and ivy and vine-shoots, fresh and verdant. Let cytisus, crocus, starwort, cassia, privet, and marigolds be brought in ample baskets and color the sideboard and couches with fragrant garlands" (*Epistulae* 9.13.5).

Another feature of entertaining in late antiquity was the display and employment of a large variety of silver vessels for serving drink and food. The discovery of several hordes of late antique silver has shown the astonishing richness and variety of this ware; the 4th-century treasure discovered at Kaiseraugst, on the river Rhine in Switzerland, for example, included a big rectangular salver, large circular and polygonal platters, dishes specially shaped for serving fish, bowls of various sizes, long- and short-handled spoons, wine strainers, beakers, an elaborate candlestick, a handbasin, and even toiletry implements such as toothpicks and ear cleaners.[11] Other treasures have contained silver jugs of various shapes and sizes, as well as sauce bowls equipped with lids and handles. A painting of Queen Dido's banquet shows some of this ware in use. The servant on the left offers a silver beaker of wine to the guests, which he has filled from the silver

jug in his right hand (the artist has indicated the purple liquid at its brim). The servant on the right, who holds another silver jug and a long-handled silver bowl, is probably preparing to pour water over the hands of the guests to clean them. A good host was expected to keep his silver well polished, as we learn again from Sidonius Apollinaris, in a letter praising the Gothic king Theoderic II: "When one joins him at dinner . . . there is no unpolished conglomeration of discolored old silver set by panting attendants on sagging tables . . . The viands attract by their skillful cookery, not by their costliness, the platters by their brightness, not by their weight" (*Epistulae* 1.2.6). Much of this silver tableware was decorated, either with chasing or with motifs executed in relief; often the designs were enriched with niello or gilding. Fine examples of such pieces are the great platters from the Kaiseraugst and the Mildenhall treasures, which portray, respectively, scenes from the early life of Achilles and a Bacchic revel surrounding a central mask of Ocean.[12] This kind of decoration, also, was described by Sidonius: "Let the attendants bend their heads under the metal carved in low relief, let them bring in lordly dishes on their laden shoulders" (*Epistulae* 9.13.5). Nor should one forget the repeated pleasures of the food that was served with such splendor: "I have overextended myself by eating everything," wrote the poet and bon vivant Venantius Fortunatus in the 6th century, "and my belly is swollen with various delicacies: milk, vegetables, eggs, butter. Now I am given dishes arranged with new feasts, and the mixture of foods pleases me more sweetly than before" (*Carmina* 11.22).

Silver vessels also played a prominent role in bathing, another luxury enjoyed in the houses of the rich. Late antique villas were frequently equipped with their own private bathhouses, some of which contained floor mosaics illustrating the rituals of cleanliness and beautification. One such mosaic has been preserved in the baths of a large villa discovered at Sidi Ghrib, in Tunisia. The mosaic, which dates to the late 4th or early 5th century, shows the lady of the house at her toilette. On the left, a maid proffers jewelry in a silver tray, while her mistress tries on an earring. Another maid holds up a mirror, so that the resulting effect can be admired. On either side of the mosaic appears the silver that has been used in bathing: to the left is a scalloped washbasin, similar to one that survives in the Kaiseraugst treasure, and a silver-gilt chest containing a towel or a garment.[13] A similarly shaped gilded chest was preserved in the mid-4th-century treasure found on a slope of the Esquiline hill in Rome.[14] Such silver vessels, made expressly for bathing, were described about one hundred and fifty years earlier by the early Christian writer Clement of Alexandria, who wrote scornfully that women went to the public baths with "a great paraphernalia of vessels made of gold or silver, some for drinking the health of others, some for eating, and some for the bath itself . . . Parading with this silverware, they make a vulgar display of it in the baths" (*Paedagogus* 3.31).

Another way of publicly displaying one's wealth was through clothing, and especially through the wearing of patterned silks. Both pagan and Christian writers criticized the extravagance of such garments. Ammianus Marcellinus

described the extreme fineness of the mantles worn by the Roman senators, which "were figured with the shapes of many different animals" and which shone when their wearers moved (14.6.9). A contemporary of Ammianus, Asterius, bishop of Amaseia, condemned the luxury of silks and the vanity of those who wore garments decorated with "lions and leopards, bears, bulls and dogs, forests and rocks, hunters and [in short] the whole repertory of painting that imitates nature." He also castigated those who wore garments decorated with scenes from the gospels. Such people, he declared, "devise for themselves, their wives and children gay-colored dresses decorated with thousands of figures . . . When they come out in public dressed in this fashion, they appear like painted walls to those they meet."[15]

The fashions evoked by these texts are borne out by images and by survivals of the textiles themselves. The mosaic of Theodora with her retinue in S. Vitale shows the ladies of her court wearing draw-loom silks with repeating patterns, including flowers and ducks. The empress herself has a gospel scene, the Adoration of the Magi, embroidered into the hem of her cloak. As for the male garments, a late 4th-century silk tunic has been preserved in relatively good condition in the church of S. Ambrogio in Milan. Even if it may not have been the garment of the saint himself, as tradition would have it, the textile is almost certainly of his date. The tunic had a linen lining, over which was an outer layer of white silk damask woven all over with repeating designs of lions being hunted by men and dogs in a landscape evoked by trees and bushes.[16] Less expensive tunics had applied bands and roundels of silk rather than a continuous surface of the costly material, but the effect of these garments could still be rich.

As in the villa at Sidi Ghrib, late antique floor mosaics demonstrate the importance of jewelry in the self-image of the rich. A similar scene appears in the famous late 4th-century mosaic of Dominus Iulius, which was found in a house at Carthage. Here scenes of the life of an estate revolve around the main house, depicted with its columned porticoes and its domed baths (Figure 5.1). At the lower left appears the mistress of the domain, leaning on a column and gazing at herself in a mirror, while she stretches out her hand languidly to receive a necklace proffered by a maid who holds the box containing her jewelry.[17] Magnificent examples of jewelry from late antiquity still survive, such as two necklaces from the 7th century, one composed of eleven openwork plaques of gold set and hung with pearls and precious stones, and another adorned with a pendant portraying a golden Aphrodite in a lapis lazuli shell.[18]

The accouterments of the good life – the marbles, the silver, the silks, the gold, and the gems – were well enough appreciated to inspire imitation in cheaper materials. In North Africa, for example, panels of floor mosaic frequently imitated the veining of marble, which was a more expensive material. A mosaic of the second half of the 4th century found at Thuburbo Majus reproduces green "cipollino," a marble imported from Greece.[19] Such false marble panels were frequently installed at important places in the floor, such as at thresholds. On occasion, mosaic itself might be imitated in the medium of fresco. This occurred

Figure 5.1 Estate of Dominus Iulius, floor mosaic from Carthage. Tunis, Bardo Museum. akg-images/Gilles Mermet

in the early Islamic period at the Umayyad palace of Qaṣr al-Hayr West, where there are floors paved with frescoes whose designs, characterized by hard-edged contrasts of color, imitate the effect of tessellated pavements (Figure 5.2).[20] Even the great tapestry wall-hangings, luxurious in themselves, imitated the greater luxury of spacious marble arcades and porticoes. This emulation explains the popularity of textile compositions that framed their subjects beneath arches or between columns.

The imitation of silverware in ceramic is a phenomenon well attested for many periods and cultures, but it was especially pronounced in North Africa during late antiquity. Here potters decorated their earthenware vessels with raised motifs in imitation of the repoussé decoration of silver, and even went so far as to reproduce the shapes of rectangular silver vessels in clay, a form that could not be manufactured on the potter's wheel. They also copied the iconography associated with silverware, which reconstructs part of a rectangular earthenware tray decorated in relief with scenes from the life of Achilles, similar to those appearing on the 4th century polygonal dish from Kaiseraugst. Even though these

Figure 5.2 Personification of Earth, floor fresco, Qaṣr al-Hayr West. Damascus, National Museum. akg-images/Jean-Louis Nou

pottery dishes were cheaper imitations of more precious models in silver, they were prized by the poorer folk who owned them; in several cases there is evidence that the ceramics were repaired in antiquity.[21]

Silk-weaving was often imitated in less precious materials, as is shown by a medallion of the 7th century showing two mounted lion hunters which originally adorned a domestic textile such as a tunic. This piece, a tapestry weave of dyed woolen threads on linen, carefully reproduces the bilateral symmetry characteristic of silks produced on the draw loom.[22] The red ground and the border containing floral motifs are also copied from silks; compare the fragmentary silk medallion at Maastricht. The manufacturers of tapestry weaves even went so far as to imitate gold and jewelry in their humble materials. A particularly striking example is a fragment of a tunic woven in linen and wool with gold threads.

This garment was decorated with two imitation necklaces at the neckline, one of which has pendants like the real piece of jewelry.[23]

The houses and objects possessed by the rich and the would-be rich were adorned with images that expressed the prosperity projected and desired by their owners. It would be inaccurate to call these motifs decoration, which implies they had no function other than to provide visual delight to the beholder. Often these designs were invested with a stronger significance, which approached a numinous power; that is, the images were both an expression and an assurance of abundance.

In many cases the prosperity of the late antique house was illustrated literally, in compositions such as the Dominus Iulius mosaic from Carthage (Figure 5.1). In this mosaic the activities of the estate are focused on the ease and comfort of the owners, in a cyclical composition that evokes the gifts of the seasons. Immediately above the representation of the villa sits the lady, fanning herself as she receives offerings from her servants: ducks and a basket of olives on the left, and a lamb on the right. At the lower left she is presented with jewelry, as we have seen, and also with a fish and a basket full of roses, while on the right sits the master of the estate, who receives birds, a basket of grapes, and a hare. Similar imagery of servants or personifications bringing gifts can be found on tapestry hangings. In one example we find two attendants under jeweled arches, one carrying a fish and three pomegranates, and the other holding a bowl and a small elongated flask of a kind that could have contained scent for sprinkling over the hands of guests. (This recalls the line "iuvat ire per corollas/alabastra ventilantes" ["It is pleasant to pass through garlands while swinging perfume boxes"] in Sidonius's description of a feast, *Epistulae* 9.13.5.) A fragment of another hanging shows a servant pulling back a curtain hanging between two columns; it evokes a privileged setting, where, at the appointed time, curtains are drawn aside by the hands of half-hidden minions.[24]

Beneficent female personifications were a popular presence in the household. While many of these personifications alluded to moral qualities, and may have had Christian overtones, they also evoked material wealth, prosperity, and security. They include Ktisis (Foundation or Creation), Kosmēsis (Ordering or Adornment), Ananeōsis (Renewal), and Sotēria (Security or Salvation). To these may be added personifications more directly associated with physical prosperity, such as Tychē Kalē (Good Fortune), Apolausis (Enjoyment), and Hestia Polyolbos (the Blessed Hearth). The last-named is depicted in a splendid 6th-century wool tapestry that was woven to be fitted into an arched niche. As often with these personifications, Hestia Polyolbos is richly dressed. She wears a heavy jeweled necklace and pendant earrings, and is enthroned like the mistress of an estate flanked by her attendants. The six boys who approach her on either side hold disks inscribed with her blessings, namely "wealth," "joy," "praise," "abundance," "virtue," and "progress."[25] Hestia Polyolbos is clearly identified by an inscription above her head, but frequently the richly attired female

personifications were left unnamed, as unspecific beneficent presences. Such a figure, wearing a pearl headband, a pearl necklace, and pearl pendants on her earrings, can be seen in a fragment of tapestry band.

Another group of propitious personifications evoked nature and its cycles: the earth, the ocean, the seasons, and the months. The seasons and months were often depicted in floor mosaics, as in the 6th-century villa at Argos, where each of the personified months holds the attributes appropriate to it. Since many of these attributes are in the form of seasonal produce enjoyed by the owner of the villa – such as ducks from February, a lamb from April, a basket of flowers from May, and grain from June – the months in effect take the place of the servants who catered to the owners' pleasure on the Dominus Iulius mosaic from Carthage (Figure 5.1). A similar promise was embodied in the personifications of the earth and the ocean, which occurred not only in floor mosaics but also on a smaller scale in textiles worn as clothing. A fragment of silk originally formed half of one of the two sleeve bands of a tunic. The complete band depicted the earth surrounded by the ocean; Earth was personified by four repeated busts of a crowned woman wearing a heavily jeweled collar and holding up a fruit-laden cloth in front of her chest, and the ocean was signified by means of fishes and water plants in the border. A similar personification of Earth was portrayed elsewhere on the garment, in medallions at the ends of the four bands that descended from the shoulders, and in four small circles that were affixed to the lower part of the tunic at the level of the knees.[26] These motifs, which miniaturized the abundance of the whole earth into a small charm repeated sixteen times on the same garment, illustrate the magical potential of these personifications of the power of nature. A silk tunic band shows at the bottom a similar female personification, wearing a crown and a jeweled collar; here she accompanies birds, plants, and hunting scenes, which signify the terrestrial domain.[27] Ocean, also, appeared on household objects, such as the magnificent platter from the 4th century Mildenhall treasure, where he appears as a mask with dolphins leaping from his hair and beard at the center of a marine *thiasos* of nereids riding upon sea beasts. Like the personification of Earth, Ocean had both a metaphorical and a magical value. According to John Chrysostom, in 4th-century Antioch a public benefactor could be compared by grateful citizens to the ocean on account of his generosity: "he in his lavish gifts is what the Ocean is among waters."[28] But it was also possible for the personification to have protective value, as is demonstrated by a mosaic discovered at Ain-Témouchent, near Sétif, in Algeria. Here a head of Ocean with enlarged eyes is accompanied by an inscription invoking the gaze of the mask as protection from the misfortunes caused by envy.[29]

Another subject that conveyed good fortune was the river Nile with its flora and fauna, for the flooding of the Nile was seen as emblematic of prosperity not only in Egypt itself but in much of the Mediterranean world. The imagery of Nilotic abundance was evoked in a pagan hymn, written around the year 300:

> Fishes and not oxen dwell in the plain,
> for the Nile inundated the land formerly accessible by foot . . .
> Dark earth, you flourish in your water which produces corn.
> Be gracious king of the rivers, Nile nourisher of children . . .
> You are present bringing to mortals full baskets.[30]

The motifs of this hymn – the fishes, the children, the baskets, the abundance of produce – were reproduced on textiles, on tableware, and on floors. In a 4th-century silk, the personified river is accompanied by *putti* holding wreaths and garlands and by a variety of aquatic creatures. Sometimes the Nilotic subject matter is accompanied by an inscription specifying its propitious value. This can be seen in the case of a large 5th- or 6th-century mosaic, recently excavated in a secular building at Sepphoris, in Galilee. It displays a variety of conventional motifs, including the personified Nile accompanied by the usual aquatic plants and birds; a personification of Egypt reclining on a basket full of fruit and holding a cornucopia; and boys engaged in engraving the high-water mark on a nilometer. All of this is accompanied by an inscription in the border enjoining the viewer to "Have good fortune."[31]

The wealth of earth and sea was invoked not only by personifications, but also by the numerous portrayals of animals and plants throughout the home. The rich acanthus borders of the floor mosaics in the Villa of the Falconer at Argos are inhabited by a variety of creatures, including birds such as ducks and waders, reptiles such as snakes and lizards, and mammals such as rabbits and deer, together with fruits and vegetables. While these motifs undoubtedly provided visual pleasure to the beholder, they also gave an assurance of continuing life and prosperity. Birds were especially favored as a decoration on textiles, whether curtains or the silks worn by the ladies at court. Plants and their products appeared in numerous guises. Large tapestry hangings portrayed lines of trees – in one case at least eight in a row.[32] The significance of such representations is indicated by a fragment of a curtain which depicts a tree in full leaf with the invocation *Euphori* ("Flourish!") written upon its trunk.[33] Sometimes the imagery of plants was enhanced by the richness of gems, as can be seen in the case of a 6th- or 7th-century tunic band, where the central motif, a stylized plant crowned by a pomegranate, rises from a jeweled vase.

In this evocation of plenty and abundance through images drawn from nature, there was a supporting role for the old pagan deities, even if the patrons were Christian. The domestication of pagan gods in Christian households can be seen both in art and in literature. The epithalamia of Dioscorus of Aphrodito, a 6th-century Egyptian lawyer whose father had founded a monastery, strikingly combine references to Zeus, Ares, Apollo, Heracles, Dionysus, Ariadne, Demeter, and other deities with invocations to the Christian God. In the poem for the wedding of Count Callinicus and Theophile, for example, which he wrote some-time before 570, he declared: "You [the bridegroom] raise up the honey-sweet grape-cluster, in its bloom of youth; Dionysos attends the summer of your

wedding, bearing wine, love's adornment, with plenty for all, and blond Demeter brings the flower of the field . . . They have woven holy wreaths round your rose-filled bedroom." In another epithalamium, for the wedding of Isakios, Dioscorus invokes "garlanded Dionysos" and "the Nile with his many children," before exclaiming "Go away, evil eye; this marriage is graced by God."[34] This easy combination of nature imagery with the evocation of pagan deities in the context of a Christian wedding finds a parallel two centuries earlier in the reliefs on the casket of Projecta, where the toilette of the bride is mirrored by a marine Venus portrayed on the lid. Here, in spite of the explicit evocation of the pagan goddess, the Christian orientation of bride and groom is not in doubt, for on the rim of the casket's lid appears the inscription *Secunde et Projecta vivatis in Chri[sto]* ("Secundus and Projecta, may you live in Christ").

The appearance of pagan deities on domestic furnishings from late antiquity should not, therefore, necessarily be taken as evidence of outright paganism on the part of their owners; rather, the pagan motifs should be read as embodying ideas of plenty and good fortune. The 4th-century treasure from Mildenhall in Suffolk contained both spoons engraved with the Christian Chi-Rho monogram and dishes decorated with figures from pagan mythology. The latter included the great platter with its central mask of Ocean surrounded by a Bacchic revel portraying the drinking contest of Dionysus and Hercules in the company of dancing satyrs and maenads. These subjects, in the eyes of many Christians as well as pagans, evidently signified the respective gifts of the waters and the earth, the seafood and the wine that should accompany a feast.[35] Likewise, the woman of the 7th century who wore the gold and lapis lazuli pendant portraying Aphrodite was probably a Christian; but she may, nevertheless, have hoped that her charm might bring her some good things. Such a wish is expressed by a 5th-century mosaic discovered in a bath building at Alassa on the island of Cyprus, which depicts the goddess beautifying herself under the inscription EP AGATHOIS ("for a good cause").[36]

The late antique repertoire of images drawn from nature was not confined to the homes of pagans and Christians; some of it survived into the decoration of early Islamic palaces. It formed a common cultural frame of reference, evocative of well-being and prosperity, which was not the exclusive preserve of one faith. For example, the offering of the products of the land, a theme depicted in floor mosaics and textiles (see Figure 5.1), also appears in the 8th-century stucco reliefs set into the courtyard façades of Qaṣr al-Hayr West, where there are attendants holding, among other things, pomegranates, birds, lambs, and vases filled with flowers.[37] One of the frescoed floors in the palace at Qaṣr al-Hayr West even portrays a personification of the Earth (Figure 5.2). As in the silk tunic orna-ments discussed above, she is portrayed in a medallion as a bust-length figure holding a scarf in front of her, while the surrounding ocean is evoked by aquatic creatures, in this case marine centaurs. The fresco is bordered by vine scrolls containing bunches of grapes, a motif also frequently encountered in pre-Islamic

art (compare the borders of the casket of Projecta). Although it would certainly be possible to read into this fresco a political meaning of conquest and hegemony, given its presence in a palace of the Umayyad rulers, its motifs also belonged to a common vocabulary of abundance inherited from late antiquity.[38]

Even though the evidence of material culture demonstrates that many Christians were perfectly happy to accept pagan imagery into their houses, there was also an undercurrent of opposition and unease. Sidonius Apollinaris, in a description of a villa at Avitacum, praised its bath building because its walls were unadorned concrete: "Here no disgraceful tale is exposed by the nude beauty of painted figures, for though such a tale may be a glory to art it dishonors the artist . . . there will not be found traced on those spaces anything which it would be more proper not to look at; only a few lines of verse will cause the new-comer to stop and read" (*Epistulae* 2.2.5–7). This somewhat puritanical viewpoint, with its disapproval of nudity and pagan myth, finds some confirmation in the archaeological record, for there are a few instances in which figural images were removed from the floor mosaics of houses. A case in point is the so-called House of the Sea Goddess at Seleucia, near Antioch. In one of the rooms of this villa, the late 5th- or early 6th-century floor mosaic exhibited the heads of four female personifications set in medallions, which were excised at a later period and replaced with slabs of marble.[39] A similar intervention occurred in a pavement of the baths of a Roman house at El Haouria, in Tunisia, where there was a frontal mask of Ocean accompanied by an apotropaic inscription against envy, similar to the mosaic of the same subject at Ain-Témouchent. Some time after the setting of the mosaic at El Haouria, the face of the mask was carefully picked out, leaving behind only Ocean's curved beard and the claws that had projected from his hair. The images that had framed the mask in the four corners of the composition, *erotes* and hippocamps, were allowed to remain, presumably because they were deemed to be more innocuous.[40]

Such archaeologically attested instances of the destruction of mosaics with pagan connotations in private houses give credence to certain stories in the saints' lives that might otherwise be dismissed as pure fantasy. One is found in the biography of St. Eutychius, a 6th-century patriarch of Constantinople, which was written by his pupil Eustratius. It relates the story of a young artist residing at Amaseia in the Pontos, who was made to remove an old mosaic representing the story of Aphrodite from the walls of a private house. The mosaic was inhabited by a demon, who got his revenge upon the young man by causing his hand to become so severely infected that it had to be amputated. Eventually, the hand was restored through the agency of St. Eutychius, after which the grateful artist set up the saint's image in the house, in the place of the pagan goddess.[41] The story demonstrates that some Christians of the 6th century opposed and feared the pagan imagery that was still current in domestic contexts, even while other Christians were prepared to accept it.

In addition to these instances of domestic iconoclasm, there are other cases in which it may be possible to speak of private patrons manipulating traditional

iconographic schemes so as to avoid the representation of pagan deities. For example, a curious mosaic survives on the floor of one of the three apses of a luxurious dining room attached to a large house north of the Antonine baths in Carthage. According to the latest investigations, the mosaic probably dates to some time after the beginning of the 5th century. The central subject of the floor was an open domed *tholos*, beneath which four boys danced with a garland held in their outspread hands against a background scattered with flowers. On either side of the *tholos* were projecting wings, above which grew fruiting vines.[42] This scene, which appears to make the domed building the central focus of the design, has no direct parallels in North African art. It is, however, reminiscent of later mosaics from Christian Monophysite and Islamic contexts, which eschewed portrayals of sacred figures in favor of buildings and plants.[43] The mosaic at Carthage can be related to a composition that was relatively frequent in North African mosaics of the 4th century, namely a central shrine containing the image of a pagan deity, flanked by motifs such as creatures, plants, and dancers that were suggestive of abundance. Such a mosaic was excavated in another house at Carthage. Dating to the first half of the 4th century, it shows Venus sitting on an island beneath an open domed structure supported on columns, with flowers and garlands spread at her feet, and with a chorus of dwarfs and musicians dancing in boats on either side.[44] We know that pagan art was an especially sensitive subject in Carthage at the turn of the 4th and the 5th centuries; archaeology shows that at this time it was even necessary for some householders to hide their pagan statuary in the basement.[45] It is possible, therefore, that the mosaic of the *tholos* represents one patron's solution to the problem. He has preserved the ebullient motifs of the frame – the elaborate domed building, the flowers, and the dancers – but the offending deity has been removed.

If Christians were occasionally unsure about the suitability of personifications and pagan deities as decoration for their houses, it might be assumed that they would be even more reluctant to admit such images to their places of worship. However, after a brief phase at the end of the 4th century during which aniconic floors were in favor, the repertoire of images from nature that had expressed domestic well-being began to make itself increasingly at home in churches.[46] By the 6th century, in spite of earlier condemnations of domestic luxury, ecclesiastical buildings were displaying much of the visual splendor that was characteristic of a magnate's villa or palace.[47] They avoided explicit portrayals of pagan myths, but minor pagan deities such as Pan might occasionally slip into the decoration of church pavements.[48] The naves and aisles of church buildings, which Christian cosmographic interpretations identified with the earth, exhibited nature personifications as well as a rich repertoire of creatures and plants, motifs that could be subject to Christian allegorization on the part of the patron or the viewer.[49] A good example of such decor is provided by the newly excavated church at Petra, in Jordan. Here the nave, the sanctuary, and the central apse were covered with an expensive *opus sectile* pavement of purple sandstone and imported marble, but the two side aisles were carpeted in the 6th century with the cheaper medium

of tessellated mosaic. The mosaic in the north aisle displayed a vine scroll filled with a rich assortment of motifs evocative of the earth and its produce, including birds and beasts of various kinds, trees, baskets and fruits, and vases, goblets, and bowls. The south aisle portrayed more creatures of land, air, and sea, together with personifications of the earth, the ocean, the four seasons, and wisdom. The season of summer appeared as a bare-breasted woman wearing earrings and brandishing a sickle, while Ocean was portrayed as a half-nude man distinguished, as in the domestic mosaics, by claws growing from his hair.[50] These bold personifications have parallels in other 6th-century churches, for example in the nave mosaic of the East Church at Qaṣr-el-Lebia in Libya, dated to 539–40, where the four rivers of Paradise (Gihon, Pishon, Tigris, and Euphrates) are portrayed as reclining nude figures, in the same manner as pagan river gods; they are joined in this composition by the pagan oracular spring Castalia, now converted by the power of Christ.[51] Several churches preserve Nilotic scenes, among the finest examples being the 5th-century floor mosaics in the transepts of the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes at Tabgha in Galilee,[52] and the carvings on the westernmost of the wooden beams over the nave of the church at Mount Sinai, which date from between 548 and 565.[53]

Such evocations of the powers of nature in the context of Christian churches became possible because of a new way of thinking which saw them as subjects, rather than as rivals, of Christ. In one of his epithalamia, the 6th-century poet Dioscorus of Aphrodito bound the power of the Nile to Christ in order to convey a blessing on the bride and groom: "Easily protecting . . . the Nile with his many children, may God grant a superlative marriage free from the accursed envy of others."[54] A 6th-century papyrus from Antinoe in Egypt contains a hymn addressed to the Nile which begins in a manner reminiscent of pagan invocations, but closes with an appeal to the Christian deity:

> O most fortunate Nile, smilingly have you watered the land;
> rightly do we present to you a hymn . . .
> you are full of wonders in all Egypt, a remedy for men and for beasts;
> [you have brought] the awaited season . . .
> the fruit of your virtue is very great . . .
> you have displayed to us a strange miracle;
> you have brought the benefits of the heavens . . .
> True illumination, Christ, benefactor, [save] the souls of men, now and
>   [forever].[55]

There is nothing explicitly Christian about most of this poem. Only at its end is there a prayer to Christ, the true source of the river's power. It is as if the supplicant is appealing to the river as Christ's agent, almost in the same way one might appeal to a saint.

By the 5th century a nave pavement decorated with creatures and plants was considered to be a typical part of a church, as is demonstrated by a tomb mosaic from a church at Tabarka, in Tunisia. The mosaic depicts a basilica labeled

Ecclesia Mater, symbolizing the reception of the deceased into the eternal repose of the church. In an "exploded" view, we are shown the apse, the altar, the interior colonnades, the clerestory windows, and the tiles of the roof. Only the further line of columns, on the south side of the building, is depicted at full height, from the bases to the capitals. The nearer line of columns, on the north side of the church, is cut off at half height, so as not to obscure the south side of the church from the spectator's view. Between the truncated columns appear glimpses of the floor mosaic, which is composed of different types of birds and plants.[56] While one might assume that the creator of this panel, being himself a mosaicist, would have a particular interest in floors, it is striking that the pavement, with its motifs drawn from nature, is the only part of the building's decoration to have been shown. But such motifs, as we have seen, were not confined to floors. They flourished also on the fittings of the church, whether they were carved in wood, such as doors and ceiling beams, or in stone, such as chancel screens, pulpits, and capitals. Walls and vaults also received decoration evoking the profusion of terrestrial creation, as is shown by the mid-6th-century mosaic that arches over the chancel of S. Vitale in Ravenna.[57] This composition in green and gold, with its scrolling plant rinceaux bearing fruit and flowers and framing several species of beasts, birds, and reptiles, is a richer version of the borders of the mosaics in the provincial villa at Argos.

A similar imagery of abundance was incorporated into the decoration of Jewish synagogues during the late antique period, although with a somewhat more restricted repertoire than in Christian churches. A popular composition for the floors of synagogues, which has been found at several locations, is represented by a 4th-century pavement discovered at Hammath Tiberias. Here the widest of the four aisles of the hall, leading to the raised alcove that contained the Torah chest, displays a handsome mosaic divided into three sections (Figure 5.3). The southern section, closest to the Torah niche, contains signs of the Jewish faith, such as the Ark of the Law, menorahs, and other ritual objects. The northern section contains inscriptions naming founders or donors, flanked and watched over by two lions which also serve as guardians of the entrance. The largest of the sections represents at its center Helios, shown as a young man with a halo, riding in his chariot within a circular frame containing the signs of the zodiac. The circular border is itself framed by a square, in the four corners of which appear personifications of the seasons holding their attributes.[58] Thus the biggest section of the floor evokes the cycle of the year and the good things brought by the seasons. Even though it is set beside a panel containing cultic images and another invoking blessings upon members of the congregation, it has few specifically Jewish elements; most of its subjects can be found depicted in the houses of the pagans.[59] A similar composition – Helios surrounded by the signs of the zodiac and the four seasons, the Ark of the Law, and the menorahs – is found in the 6th-century floor mosaic of a synagogue at Na'aran, but here with the addition of a geometric carpet of octagons and circles filled with fruits, baskets, and creatures of earth, sea, and air. In addition, this pavement contains a biblical
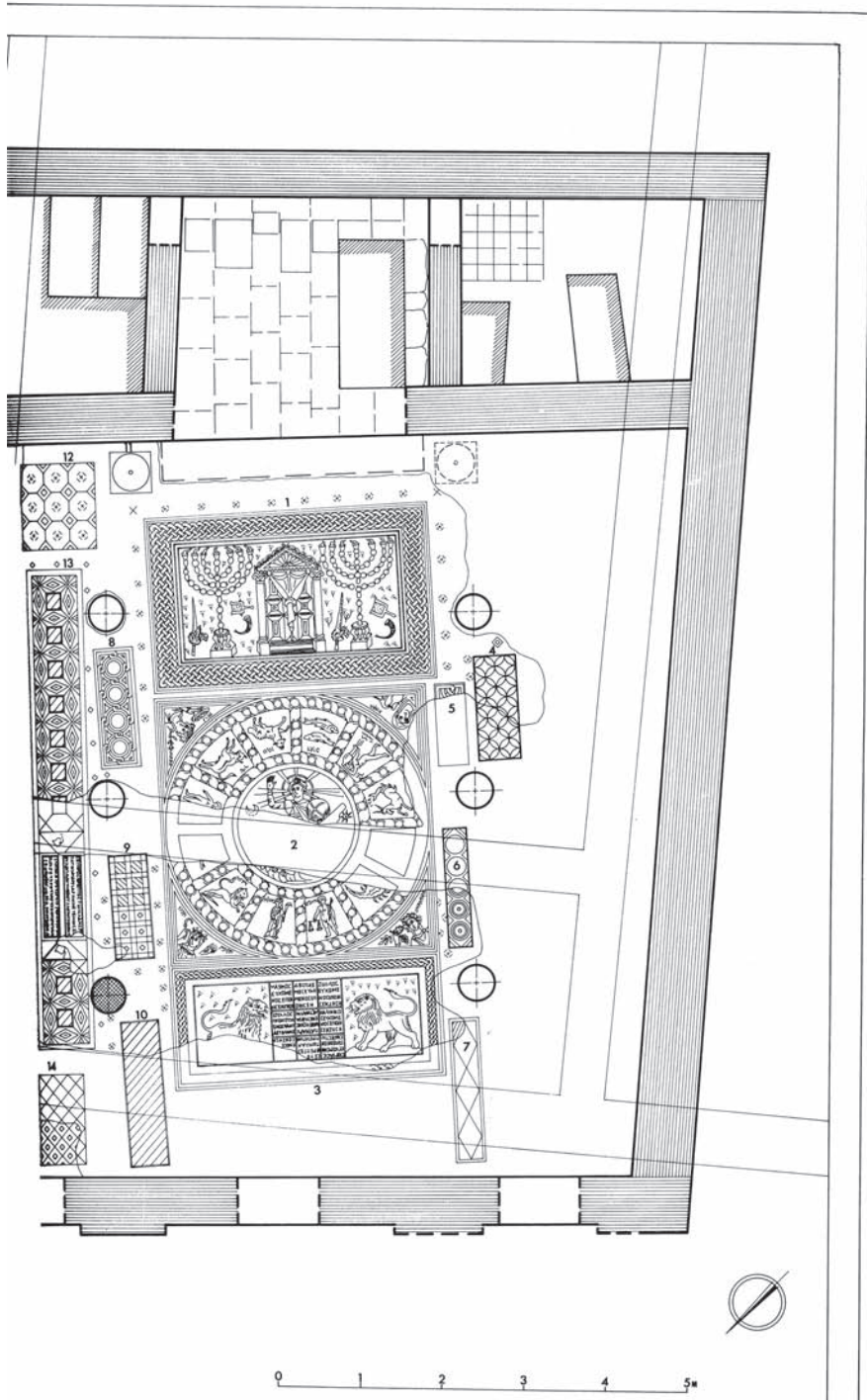
Figure 5.3   Floor mosaic in principal aisle, synagogue, Hammath Tiberias, from Moshe Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias* (Jerusalem, 1983). Courtesy of Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem

subject: the Prophet Daniel is depicted standing in prayer in front of the Ark, flanked by two large lions.[60]

Another composition that is found on several synagogue floors is the inhabited vine scroll, which occurs at Gaza, Ma'on, and Beth Shean. The medallions framed by these vines contain a wide variety of creatures, both the more common species such as snakes and hares, and relatively exotic ones such as zebra and giraffe. In addition, the vines at Ma'on and Beth Shean contain specifically Jewish symbols, such as the menorah. Other motifs displayed on these floors include bowls, vases, baskets, and fruit. Inscriptions set into the medallions of the mosaics or adjacent to them commemorate the donors of the pavements and, at Beth Shean, the artist ("Remembered be for good the artisan who made this work").[61] These floors, which all date to the 6th century, closely resemble depictions of inhabited vines appearing in Christian churches, such as the basilica discovered at Shellal, which is dated by an inscription to the year 561–2.[62]

Such figured floors were not confined to synagogues in Palestine. A pavement presenting a large repertoire of creatures was found in a synagogue at Hamman Lif (Naro), eleven miles from Tunis. Here the main hall was carpeted with mosaics depicting, among other motifs, fishes hooked on lines; ducks, quails, and peacocks; a lion, a hare, and a bull; as well as palm trees and baskets of fruit and possibly bread. All of these images surrounded the inscription of the donor, Juliana, which stated that she had at her own expense provided the mosaic for her salvation.[63]

As in the case of the Christian churches, these motifs from nature were capable of specific symbolic interpretation on the part of the faithful. Lions, for example, could represent Judah, or, as at Na'aran, they could refer to the salvation of Daniel. The continuing underlying message, however, was always of well-being and prosperity. And among the Jews, as among the Christians, there was a current of opposition to these motifs. In a recently discovered synagogue at Sepphoris there is a pavement depicting the chariot of the sun surrounded, as at Hammath Tiberias, by the signs of the zodiac and the seasons. In this case, however, the chariot is not driven by the personified Helios, but instead carries the sun itself, represented by a circle surrounded by rays.[64] It may be surmised that those who commissioned the mosaic were uncomfortable with the portrayal of the sun as a human figure. In this case an image redolent of paganism was avoided at the initial creation of the mosaic, but there were also several cases of floors whose images were removed after they had been laid, as can be seen in the mosaics at Na'aran, where not only the human figures but even the beasts and the birds were carefully picked out of their frames. The date at which these interventions took place has not yet been determined, but since the iconoclasts were often at pains to preserve the Hebrew letters, it seems to have been the Jews themselves who undertook the destruction.[65]

Islamic attitudes to figural representations excluded much of the late antique imagery of abundance from their religious architecture, where the portrayal of living creatures was scrupulously avoided. This absence of figural motifs left only

plants and vegetation to evoke the fecundity of organic nature within the confines of cult buildings. Such a decoration may be seen in the late 7th-century wall mosaics of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, where plant forms of various kinds spring from jeweled vases and cornucopias.[66] In their design, some of these plants and gems recall the ornaments of tunics. The most extensive employment of plant forms in the decoration of an early Islamic religious building is to be found in the courtyard mosaics of the Great Mosque at Damascus, which date to the early 8th century. These mosaics, which present lines of trees, some with fruit and some without, interspersed with buildings, are devoid of any portrayal of living creatures, but show a striking variety of arboreal species.[67] Their overall effect recalls not only the earlier floor mosaics of villas set in bucolic surroundings (Figure 5.1), but also the tapestry hangings, displaying different varieties of trees together with architectural features such as columns, that were displayed on the walls of wealthy houses.[68] Whatever the symbolic meanings that could be projected upon the Jerusalem and Damascus mosaics by Muslim viewers, their ancestry lay in the imagery of well-being that had characterized the domestic environment of late antiquity.

At Damascus portrayals of living creatures were avoided, but in mosques there were also instances in which figural elements were deliberately destroyed. This happened at the Great Mosque of Kairouan, constructed in the 9th century, which contained sculptures appropriated from earlier Byzantine buildings, most of which must have been churches.[69] Many of the reused Byzantine capitals were of the two-zone type with projecting animal protomes at the corners. The Islamic builders of the mosque carefully cut off the features of the birds and beasts of the protomes, ingeniously converting them into nonfigural elements of the capital, such as volutes. The other decorative elements of the capital, however, such as leaves and cornucopia filled with fruits, they allowed to remain; in some cases the wings of the birds were recut and redrilled to become leaves. As in the mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus, some elements of the late antique imagery were preserved – the foliage and the horns of plenty – while the objectionable figural motifs were excised.

The material trappings of the good life in late antiquity, especially as it was enjoyed in the domestic sphere, displayed a rich imagery of personifications and motifs drawn from nature that evoked prosperity in the homes of the well-to-do. This imagery was a common frame of reference for pagans, Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike, but it was not completely neutral; it was sufficiently powerful to provoke opposition, demonstrated both by texts and by iconoclastic interventions in the monuments themselves. Nevertheless, many of the motifs that expressed abundance and well-being were eventually incorporated into the decoration of cult buildings after the removal of elements that were deemed unacceptable – such as the major pagan deities in the case of the Christians, or living creatures in the case of the Muslims. The Christians went the furthest in introducing the imagery of abundance into their places of worship; their permissiveness in this

respect may even have contributed, by way of reaction, to the later adoption of stricter stances on the part of Jews and Muslims.[70] Borrowing much of the iconography of secular abundance and pleasure, the Christian authorities converted the good life dominated by the late Roman aristocrats into a good life that was controlled by the church. Thus, while the deities changed, the rich frames within which they had been presented survived.

Even among the Christians, however, there was an undercurrent of unease at this assimilation, and in the end the frames themselves came under increasing suspicion. The iconoclastic controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries, although primarily concerned with sacred portraiture, sensitized Christians anew to the issue of the suitability of motifs drawn from nature as a decoration for churches. John of Damascus wrote in the 8th century: "Is it not far more worthy to adorn all the walls of the Lord's house with the forms and images of saints rather than with beasts and trees?"[71] A famous passage in the iconodule Life of St. Stephen the Younger accuses the iconoclast Emperor Constantine V of scraping the pictures of Christ's miracles off the walls of the church at the Blachernae, and replacing them with mosaics representing "trees and all kinds of birds and beasts, and certain swirls of ivy leaves [enclosing] cranes, crows, and peacocks," thus turning the building into a "store-house of fruit and an aviary."[72] After iconoclasm, there was little place in medieval Byzantine churches for elaborate tessellated floors with animals and personifications from nature; these motifs were, in many churches, replaced by aniconic compositions in intarsia, which did not compete with the sacred company depicted upon the walls.[73] Hereafter, the good life was to be lived with the saints, not with the wealth imaged by the material world.[74]

Notes

1 *PG* 62.259–64.
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3 Gunilla Åkerström-Hougen, *The Calendar and Hunting Mosaics of the Villa of the Falconer in Argos* (Stockholm, 1974).
4 Vatican Library, ms. lat. 3867, fol. 100v. Facsimile and commentary: Carlo Bertelli et al., *Vergilius Romanus, Codex Vaticanus Latinus 3867*, 3 vols. (Zurich, 1985–6).
5 Eunice Dauterman Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House* (Urbana, 1989), 48.
6 Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes,* vol. II, 2, *Kommentar* (Wiesbaden, 1976), 180–7.
7 Friedrich Matz, *Die dionysischen Sarkophage* (Berlin, 1968), vol. 1, nos. 11–11A, pls. 18, 22.
8 Annemarie Stauffer, *Die mittelalterlichen Textilien von St. Servatius in Maastricht* (Riggisberg, 1991), 102–3.

9   Maguire, *Art and Holy Powers*, 51.

10 Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, *Textile Conservation* (Bern, 1988), 412–20.

11 Herbert A. Cahn and Annemarie Kaufmann-Heinimann, *Der spätrömische Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst* (Derendingen, 1984).

12 Ibid., 1: 225–315; K. S. Painter, *The Mildenhall Treasure* (London, 1977), 26.

13 Abdelmagid Ennabli, "Les thermes du thiase marin de Sidi Ghrib," *Monuments et Mémoires*, Fondation Eugène Piot, 68 (1986): 42–4.

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15 *Homilia I; PG* 40.165–8; trans. Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972), 50–1.

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19 Margaret A. Alexander et al., *Corpus des Mosaiques de Tunisie*, vol. 2.4. *Thuburbo Majus* (Tunis, 1994), 100.

20 Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* (Geneva, 1962), 33–5.

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26 Margaret T. J. Rowe, "Group of Bands Adorning a Tunic: Dossier," *Bulletin de Liaison du CIETA* 17 (1963): 9–13.

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41 *Vita S. Eutychii*, 53; *PG* 86.2333–6.

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49 Henry Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park, Pa., 1987); Marek-Titien Olszewski, "L'image et sa fonction dans la mosaïque Byzantine des premières basiliques en Orient: L'iconographie chrétienne expliquée par Cyrille de Jérusalem (314–387)," *Cahiers archéologiques* 43 (1995): 9–34.

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North Africa, 160, pl. 159), and another from the *oikos* of a villa at Bir-Chana showing the planetary deities surrounded by the signs of the zodiac (ibid., 161, pl. 162).

60   Michael Avi-Yonah, "Na'aran," in Ephraim Stern, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1993), 3: 1075–6.

61   A. Ovadiah, "The Synagogue at Gaza," in Lee I. Levine, ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981), 129–32; Dan Barag, "Ma'on," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 3: 944–6; D. Bahat, "A Synagogue at Beth-Shean," *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, 82–5.

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69   K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford, 1940), 2: 220.

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71   *De imaginibus oratio I*, *PG* 94.1252.

72   *Vita S. Stephani iunioris*, *PG* 100.1120; trans. Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 152–3.

73   On the archaeological evidence for the destruction of such motifs in the pavements of churches in Jordan, which seems to have occurred not earlier than the 8th century, see Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman, 1993), 41–2, and Michele Piccirillo and Eugenio Alliata, *Umm al-Rasas Mayfa'ah*, vol. 1, *Gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem, 1994), 121–64. See also Urs Peschlow, "Zum byzantinischen opus sectile-Boden," in R. M. Boehmer and H. Hauptmann, eds., *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Kleinasiens: Festschrift für Kurt Bittel* (Mainz, 1983), 435–47, pls. 89–93.

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6

Hellenism and Islam

G. W. Bowersock

The rise of the Prophet Muḥammad in the seventh century AD and the extensive Muslim conquests that followed the proclamation of Islam as a pan-Arab faith must be reckoned, on any accounting, among the most significant events in the history of the world. The religious affinity provided to tribal peoples of great diversity transformed the hegemony and society not only of the Near East but of North Africa, Spain, and Southeast Asia. The consequences of the Islamic revolution are clearly with us today, in some ways more than ever. The reasons for the success of Muḥammad and his faith are neither simple nor obvious. Historians have long tried to juggle in their assessments the charismatic leadership of the Prophet, the spiritual receptivity of his people, and the inherent weaknesses in the Byzantine and Persian empires.

There seems, however, to be general agreement that the Muslim armies were able to achieve such rapid success after the Prophet's death in part because the Hellenization of the Near East had been essentially superficial. It could therefore provide no substantial resistance. The spectacular defeat of Heraclius in 636 at the Battle of the Yarmûk seemed to represent a collision of cultures. The Byzantine troops were engaged in an unfamiliar terrain: the Yarmûk wadi symbolized the Syrian countryside and indigenous Semitic traditions, among which the Byzantine forces were helpless. In his pioneering and still fundamental *History of Arabs*, Philip Hitti wrote, "The Hellenistic culture imposed on the land since its conquest by Alexander was only skin-deep and limited to the urban population. The rural people remained ever conscious of cultural and racial differences between themselves and their masters."[1] The same sort of thing can be found as recently as 1981 in Fred Donner's important study of the early Islamic conquests.

According to Donner, "The Hellenistic impact on Syria was, however, always a bit artificial, and Hellenistic culture always something imposed on Syria from above. Even after nearly ten centuries of exposure to Greek language and Graeco-Roman culture, the great mass of the Syrian populace remained thoroughly Semitic." He goes on to say, "Among the great masses in Syria who could neither read nor write, Hellenism had sent down only very shallow roots before striking the solid Semitic bedrock."[2]

There is both factual and conceptual error in opinions such as these. It is simply wrong, as we have seen, to maintain that Hellenism in Syria, or in the Near East more broadly understood, was confined to the cities. Obviously the high culture of Greek rhetoric, philosophy, and law was centered in the major cities, just as high culture normally shows up as an urban phenomenon in any state or society. But the use of Greek as a language, however corrupted into local dialects, and the adaptation of Greek myths, gods, and images for local purposes were an integral part of rural paganism throughout the Near East. The misconception of Hellenism as an urban phenomenon rests very largely on the failure to explore the multivalence of the word Hellenism (*Hellênismos*), its designation of "paganism" in general as well as Greek culture both Christian and pagan. It was with reference to paganism that it was particularly applicable to the countryside, as local cults and local burial places attest. The Greek pantheon gave strength to rural pagans by serving as a paradigm of polytheism and by representing obscure and unfamiliar deities in the universally recognizable forms of Greek mythology.

But the real problem in the simplistic view of the superficiality of Hellenism in the Near East is conceptual. There is an unspoken presupposition that Hellenism and what Donner calls "Semitic bedrock" are fundamentally incompatible. And yet it is clear that what gave late antique paganism its strength and coherence was the extraordinary flexibility of Greek traditions themselves in responding to local needs. At the local level Greek culture provided a means of expression to indigenous peoples as well as a pagan model. Without the common denominator of assimilation into Greek deities, the Egyptian poet Nonnos would have been unable to broadcast the exploits of the "god of the Arabs" or of Melqart, the ancestral god of Tyre.

The rural Christians, no less than the pagans, made use of Greek mythological iconography to adorn both their churches and their homes with mosaics that evoked, in a reassuring and still meaningful way, the old local cults of the region. So in the Church of the Virgin at Mâdabâ in Jordan we find an elegant representation of Aphrodite, the Greek form of the ancient Arab goddess al-ʿUzzâ, or in the Church of the Apostles a portrait of the goddess Tethys symbolizing the sea, with her right hand raised in that characteristic gesture associated with a Semitic pagan divinity.[3] Such scenes provided a local habitation for the universalizing Christian religion without compromising it. In short, for both pagans and Christians alike in the Near East, Hellenism was not something different from the Semitic bedrock: it *was*, in a certain sense, the Semitic bedrock.

It is perfectly true that, when the Arabs heeded the call of Muḥammad in the seventh century, the high culture of Hellenism had few strong roots in the eastern Mediterranean outside the major cities, especially those on the coast. Many of the great colonnades and agoras had disappeared. The Neoplatonists of Qennishrîn and Apamea had died out. But the legacy of Hellenism in other respects was stronger than ever and contributed to creating the foundations of Arab nationalism upon which Muḥammad was to build.

In many ways Hellenism prepared the way for Islam by bringing the Arabs together and equipping them with a sense of common identity. At the beginning the pagan pantheon of the Arabs had been very small. Herodotus was aware of two divinities, who were essentially a god and his consort.[4] By the time the Prophet arrived in Mecca in 630, he was able to destroy 360 different idols of Arab paganism.[5] The proliferation of Arab gods and goddesses was a direct response to the polytheism of the Greeks. The worship of these deities at international festivals, held on a regular basis, was borrowed directly from the tradition of fairs and festivals celebrated by the Greeks. In the best Hellenic tradition, these pagan festivals of the Arabs included a statutory truce among all participating tribes. Nonnosos, an Arabic-speaking diplomat at the court of Justinian, reported in detail and in Greek to the Byzantine court on the festivals and cultic observances of the Arabs.[6] These were, as he knew, indigenous ceremonies that would be understood in Constantinople because the very traditions of Constantinople had been their model.

As Toufic Fahd, the best modern chronicler of the pre-Islamic Arabian pantheon, has observed, Hellenism, with its myths, rites, and mysteries, introduced into the theodicy of Semitic paganism numerous elements that could potentially corrupt its purity and falsify its perspectives.[7] It was perhaps to protect the Arabs from an excessive transformation of local paganism on the Hellenic model that the organization of the pantheon was reformed and its observances codified in the third century AD by a certain ʿAmr ibn Luḥayy. It would seem that the carefully elaborated language for distinguishing iconic from aniconic representation of the gods was then first worked out, to be perpetuated in Muslim historiography later.[8] But at the same time the normalization of cults represented a pan-Arabism that was quite new to the Near East. It mirrored, in fact, the pan-Hellenism that had for so long kept all peoples of Greek culture in touch with one another. Without the cohesion fostered by the religious observances of the pagan Arabs in late antiquity, it is arguable that the Prophet would have had no audience for his great message.

In recent years the most arresting illustration of Hellenism in the service of indigenous Arab culture has been the excavation of the city of Faw in the interior of the Arabian peninsula. The work has been carried out by the King Saud University of Riyadh under the able direction of ʿAbd al-Raḥman Al-Anṣary.[9] The site of Faw lies on the route north from Mârib in the south through Najrân to al-Yamâma. It would have been traversed by traders going to and from the Persian Gulf as well as to and from Transjordan along the route that joined Hâ'il

with al-Yamâma. The city lay at the center of the famous kingdom of Kinda, known from literature to have been situated in just this area. As a result, this single excavation has transformed the name of Kinda from a name in literary texts into brilliant reality. Its buildings, paintings, sculpture, coins, and pottery illustrate a prosperous urban environment, and its graffiti and inscriptions show that this was a literate society. Inscriptions at Faw were written in the Musnad script that served equally for the south Arabian kingdoms and for the caravan traders and bedouin who traversed the northern desert all the way into southern Syria. Although the language has hitherto been best known from texts in the south, the variety found at Faw shows distinctive features of northern grammar and traces of the emergent Arabic language, which the local citizens may well have spoken among themselves.[10]

The inscriptions show that we are dealing with a thoroughly Arab society. The gods that they commemorate show equally an exclusively Arabian pantheon. Allât, al-ʿUzzâ, Manât, and Shams take their place alongside attestations of these divinities throughout other parts of the Arab would in the centuries before the Prophet. There is a special deity of the city, Kahl, who is new to history. The Arab character of the population is unambiguously documented in theophoric names such as ʿAbd al-ʿUzzâ and ʿAbd al-Shams, "The Slave of al-ʿUzzâ" and "The Slave of Shams."[11]

Much of what survives in this indisputably Arab city of the Hellenistic and Roman periods may actually be contemporaneous with the alleged reforms of ʿAmr ibn Luḥayy in the third century AD (Figure 6.1).

The wall paintings of Faw have produced one of the most haunting images of the Roman/Byzantine East to have come to light in modern times. An eminent local citizen is being crowned by two young persons, one on either side. His head is being draped in grapes, of which a large bunch is suspended over him. His face is round with large bulging eyes and a drooping moustache. His name, written in the Musnad script to the side, is the good Arab name of Zaki. These representations, in a society to which anthropomorphism was fundamentally alien, dramatically demonstrate the extent of Hellenic influence. Here, as earlier in Nabataea to the north, anthropomorphism had been taken over from the Greek tradition, but the faces and figures are distinctively local. The bunches of grapes are undoubtedly another Hellenic touch, a reflection of the ubiquitous and widely assimilated god, Dionysus. The whole idea of honoring a local notable in this way, with attributes that are evidently divine and with figures who may well be in priestly robes, is nothing less than an Arab transformation of the Hellenic institution of *euergesia* – "public benefaction" with all the attendant honors lavished upon the benefactor by his city. Yet the face, the figures, the Musnad script, and the name are all unmistakably Arab. Here in the center of the Arabian peninsula Hellenism inspired a hitherto unsuspected commemoration of local prosperity and culture.

Equally startling is the appearance of the Graeco-Egyptian god Harpocrates with a double crown on his head. His presence at Faw may perhaps reflect the
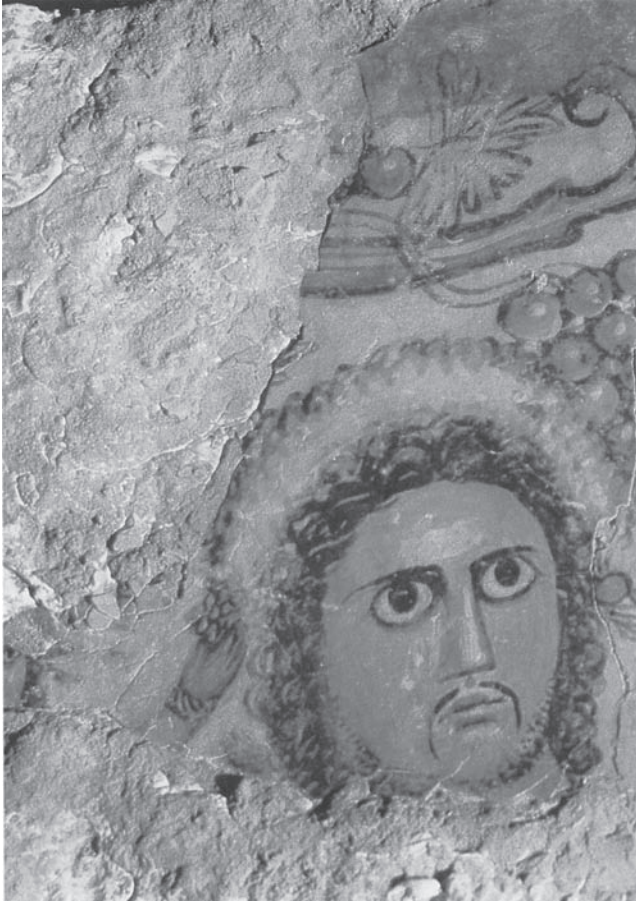
Figure 6.1 Qaryat al-Faw: painting of local benefactor (left), from G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990, fig. 12

trading activity of the city, but equally it could evoke a syncretistic subculture of Greek late antiquity, as best known to us in the Hermetic treatises. Whatever the correct interpretation of this figure, it draws the city of Faw into the orbit of Hellenic paganism. Yet nonetheless the city preserved everywhere its fundamentally Semitic character; its graffiti are as eloquent as its inscriptions.

The Hellenism of Faw prefigures the growth of Arab paganism in the three centuries between ʿAmr ibn Luḥayy and the Prophet. It consisted in the anthropomorphic polytheism of Faw's pagans, but it was not a Hellenism in the sense of using the Greek language or of assimilating all deities to Greek ones. The Greeks would undoubtedly have been hard put to match the 360 gods that were worshipped when Muḥammad went to Mecca in seventh century. But Hellenism had played its irrevocable part in assisting the Arabs to discover a sense of their own national identity.

In the more northerly parts of the Near East, the Greek language itself had served as a bridge when Palmyrene and Nabataean declined. Although Syriac prospered among the Christians, its identification with the Church rapidly made it inappropriate for the pagans. Arabic, which had probably been spoken for centuries even though it was rarely written (even in the days of the Nabataeans and the Palmyrenes), only gradually took over as the common language that bound the Arabs together. Its first appearances in writing, on a graffito in Nabataean letters of the first or second century AD and again in an inscription in Nabataean letters of the fourth century AD, provide precious clues to the spread of Spoken Arabic in the first three centuries of the Roman Empire.[12]

The use of Arabic in late antiquity at cult centers such as Petra, and presumably at the sixteen pilgrim fairs mentioned by the Arabic sources, shows that the Arab's common language was at last becoming an instrument that could be used for some high purpose. The great shaikhs at the courts of the Arab confederacies of the Ghassanids and the Lakhmids, who constituted the principal Arab allies of the Romans and the Persians respectively, provided congenial environments for some of the earliest known poets in classical Arabic.[13] The odes they composed for their princely patrons, largely on military and erotic themes, were known to the Greeks and described by the Greek word *ôidai* ("odes").[14] It would not be at all unreasonable to suppose that the emergence of Arabic court poetry was inspired by the Hellenic model in the same way as the cultivation of anthropomorphic gods. Certainly, in Semitic terms pagan Arab poetry is in its complexity and rhythmic virtuosity the equal of the great Christian hymns in Syriac by Ephraem. Although both Syriac and Arabic are Semitic languages, outside traditions impelled them both to new eloquence. In the sense in which it may be said that Ephraem's hymns were Christian, the Arab odes were Hellenic.

In a recent and powerful study Patricia Crone has challenged the notion, tenaciously held until now, that Mecca and the family of Muḥammad derived their strength and influence from extensive trade.[15] This means that the mercantile origins of the Islamic revolution in the seventh century must probably be abandoned, or at least given far less weight. The removal of commerce from our understanding of the rise of Islam opens up to clearer view the enormous role that Arab paganism played in bringing together the disparate tribes, precisely as the growth of the Arabic language enabled them to communicate more easily with one another. Because Greek practices had helped the Arabs to find their identity in the centuries before the Prophet, it should now be less surprising that some of those practices persisted conspicuously after the Prophet's death. It was not only that old ways die slowly: it was that the new ways had, in important respects, their roots in the old ones and could therefore scarcely be expected to eliminate them overnight.

The Greek language itself held on tenaciously under the early Umayyad caliphs in areas where it had not already been supplanted by Arabic before the arrival of Islam. In other words, Arabic prospered where it had already prospered before Muḥammad, whereas Greek was taken over as the language of the Muslim

bureaucrats where it had been the standard language before them. The papyri from the little town of Nessana in the Negev Desert are the principal illustration of such persistence of Greek under the Umayyads. They show the use of the language to the end of the seventh century, not only, as might be expected, among the Christians of the town, but equally among the bureaucrats employed by the caliph at Damascus. A shortage of Arabic scribes cannot be the explanation of this phenomenon. Some documents, notably the requisitions known as *entagia*, are bilingual in Greek and Arabic.[16] Yet none is uniquely in Arabic.

Perhaps the most striking of the Nessana papyri is a long text that emanates from the highest level of Umayyad officialdom, making reference to the celebrated caliph at Damascus, ʿAbd al-Malik, who ruled at the end of the seventh century.[17] The papyrus, a record of accounts involving orders from both Damascus and Egypt, is entirely in Greek, although replete with Arabic names and words. It makes reference to institutions of the Muslim army, such as rations of food (*rizq* in Arabic), represented in Greek as *rhouzikon*, as well as to cash allowances called *rhoga* in Greek, corresponding with an Arabic calque (in this case *rajʿa*). ʿAbd al-Malik himself is named in Greek as Abdelmalech, and he bears in Greek letters the designation Amir al-Moumnin, "Lord of the Believers." All the personal names in the document are Arab names. But the accounting procedures and terminology are Greek throughout.

The document mentioning ʿAbd al-Malik can be dated to about 685. It is among the last of the Nessana papyri. The naming of ʿAbd al-Malik in a Greek document has more significance than might at first appear, for it was this caliph who took formal steps to put an end to the use of Greek in the Muslim bureaucracy. He – or according to some sources his son – called for the language of the public registers (*dîwân*) to be changed henceforth from Greek to Arabic. He seems equally to have been responsible for the creation of a genuinely Arabic coinage.[18] The Umayyads had relied hitherto on Byzantine coin types. The Arabic writer al-Balâdhuri explains the mandatory change from Greek to Arabic as a reaction to an unfortunate incident in which a Greek scribe urinated into an inkwell.[19] The real reason must evidently be that the use of Greek in areas where it still survived showed no signs of yielding on its own to Arabic.

Undoubtedly in the fullness of time, even without the impetus provided by ʿAbd al-Malik, Arabic would probably have spread just as it had previously in Syria, Jordan, and the Peninsula. Less easily eliminated were the nonlinguistic traces of Hellenism to which the Umayyad rulers were heir. In a strong reaction against the Hellenized anthropomorphism of the Arab pagans, Muḥammad had strictly forbidden his followers to depict the human face or form. The intricate decorative patterns of early Islamic art are an obvious response to the Prophet's prohibition. It was a deliberate repudiation of the Hellenic past and, in a monotheistic setting, a return to the nonrepresentational devotions of the earliest Arab tribes. Nothing could have been more surprising, therefore, to students of early Islam than the discovery, toward the end of the last century, of a cluster of

Umayyad buildings containing on the walls of a bath representational paintings of the most cheerful and abandoned sensuality.

The building, known as Qaṣr al-ʿAmra, appears to have been a kind of desert retreat for jaded princes and superior administrators.[20] Within a century or so of the Prophet's death these Muslim leaders evidently took pleasure in relaxing amid illustrations of naked women, lively and benevolent animals, and scenes from Greek mythology. The Hellenic inspiration of the decorations on the walls of ʿAmra is underscored by the Greek names attached to certain of the figures shown. In this beguiling desert chateau there is little sign, apart from the architecture of the buildings themselves, that the region is now firmly in the hands of an Islamic administration (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2   Qaṣr al-ʿAmra, near Amman, Jordan: painting, from G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity.* Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990, fig. 15

The paintings do not show any trace of embarrassment. They are certainly not pornographic, but they are exuberant. They are undoubtedly inconsistent with the tenets of Islam, but they are fully consistent with the cultural inheritance of the region. If this kind of thing had been an alien accretion in the Near East, like the colonnades and agoras that had disappeared long since, it would not have reappeared under the Umayyads. What we see at ʿAmra is an indigenous Hellenism that is local, not alien. The Dionysus that appears on the walls of ʿAmra is the Arab Dionysus of the Nabataeans, the Dionysus whom Nonnos brought to Arabia, and the Dionysus of the Sepphoris mosaic. ʿAmra is neither a sign of Muslim toleration nor of secret and forbidden pleasures. It is simply a sign of the Muslims' own world.

Oleg Grabar, the most acute and subtle of all the interpreters of the ʿAmra paintings, has stunningly confirmed the local character of its motifs in a recent study of the hunting scenes.[21] He points out that four separate scenes, including a butchery, depict what appear to be wild horses and wild cattle. In substance and form Grabar can find no parallel to these images at ʿAmra in the huge repertoire of hunting scenes in the ancient world. There is nothing comparable at Piazza Armerina, Constantinople, or the palaces from Spain to Syria. But each of the scenes can readily be explained in terms of the nomadic culture of the region. Early Arabic poetry provides parallels for the wild cattle. In Grabar's words, "The specificity of the image and the quasi-automatic possibility of situating the event depicted within the immediate context of the representation renders superfluous any external model. One can go further and suggest that in each case it is a concrete and local event that is represented."[22] The true character of the ʿAmra paintings, in which a Greek visual language is employed to commemorate an Arab way of life, could not be better described.

Christians under the Umayyad caliphs might more naturally be expected to have persisted in the use of Greek where Syriac was not spoken, at least until the dissemination of the Bible and other sacred texts in Arabic. But the discovery a few years ago of a church at the site of Umm er-Reṣâṣ in Jordan went far beyond what anyone had expected. A mosaic inscription, written in Greek, is dated clearly to the year 785.[23] That means it belongs no longer to the Umayyad caliphate but to the time of the Abbâsids, who came to power in 750 and ruled from Baghdâd. We are well beyond the early days of Islam. The dating of the text is, moreover, according to the years of the province of Arabia, a system of reckoning that one would have thought had disappeared along with the Roman and Byzantine province that it named. Even more remarkable than the text is the series of illustrations that accompanies it. The mosaic contains a series of carefully designed illustrations of the great cities of the Near East.[24] The schematic representations are reminiscent of the famous mosaic map at Mâdabâ of a considerably earlier date.[25] But here there is no map, only the schematized depictions of the cities with their identifications, again in Greek.

At Umm er-Reṣâṣ we have a form of mosaic that represents the best of Greek traditions of several centuries before. This work appears in a context dated toward

the end of the eighth century by the year 680 of the province of Arabia – when there was no province of Arabia. Nothing could be more startling, or more revealing. The mosaic at Umm er-Reṣâṣ shows more eloquently than anything hitherto that the Hellenism of this part of Jordan was deeply rooted and expressed a local pride. There is nothing superficial about it. It is part of the bedrock. If it were not, it would certainly not have survived after a century of Islamic rule. The representation of the cities, by this means and with their Greek names, helped in the late eighth century, as it had in earlier times, to provide a sense of the community of the inhabitants of the eastern cities. The cities appear to be identified not so much by the representation of churches as ecclesiastical centers but by the reference to the most conspicuous buildings that would distinguish one urban center from another.

The papyri at Nessana, the chateau at ʿAmra, and the mosaic floor at Umm er-Reṣâṣ all point to a remarkable continuity of Hellenism in both its cultural and pagan aspects. This is in no way a repudiation of the momentous changes wrought by the Prophet and the conquests of the early Islamic armies. Quite the contrary: it is proof of the indigenous character of Hellenism in that part of the new Islamic world, and it is proof that at least some of the roots of Islam were embedded in that local Hellenism.

But even as the Abbâsids consolidated their hold on the bureaucracy and culture of the Near East, the Arab scholars in Baghdâd began gradually to realize how much they needed to learn from the Greeks. Under the leadership of a certain Ḥunain ibn Isḥâq, they undertook a prodigious program of translations of the great Greek classics, particularly in philosophy and medicine, into Arabic (sometimes by way of Syriac versions).[26] This infusion of Greek culture of a kind that was palpably not local came hard on the heels of the disappearance of the traditions we have examined here. Ḥunain and his colleagues were concerned with Greek high culture and absorbed it out of the same sense of need that had driven the early Syriac church to resort to wholesale translations many centuries before.

The story of the Arab transmission of Greek texts, many of them now lost in the original, has often been told. It shows a fruitful encounter of the scholars of Baghdâd with Plato, Aristotle, and Galen. But it is fundamentally unrelated to the more pedestrian Greek elements that were at the heart of Near Eastern Hellenism at the time of the Prophet. The Arabic translations from Greek made in Baghdâd were works of scholarship from ancient times that transmuted the glories of classical Greece into terms that scholarly Arabs could comprehend. This was a very different thing from the living Hellenism, treated here, of Nessana or ʿAmra.

I have often asked myself how it must have felt to have lived through the Islamic conquest with all the accumulated baggage of the Hellenic-Semitic East, both Christian and pagan. How different would one have felt looking back? How would the passage of time have affected one's view of the past and one's sense of continuity with it? As in all great transitions in human history, it is unlikely

that anyone realized then the importance of what was happening. That comes later. But if one lives long enough, one can see the whole process – what was there before and what was there after.

To acquire such perspective, one must look at the events from a great height. The scribe who wrote the accounts at Nessana in the days of 'Abd al-Malik must have felt somewhat like Marcel Proust when he reached the end of his master-work, *A la recherche du temps perdu*:

> There came over me a feeling of profound fatigue at the realization that all this long stretch of time not only had been uninterruptedly lived, thought, secreted by me, that it was my life, my very self, but also that I must, every minute of my life, keep it close by me, that it upheld me, that I was perched on its dizzying summit, that I could not move without carrying it about with me.
>
> My head swam to see so many years below me, and yet within me, as if I were thousands of leagues in height.
>
> I now understand why it was that the Duc de Guermantes whom, as I looked at him sitting in a chair, I marvelled to find shewing his age so little, although he had so many more years than I beneath him, as soon as he rose and tried to stand erect, had tottered on trembling limbs (like those of aged archbishops who have nothing solid on them except their metallic cross, with the young divinity students flocking assiduously about them) and had wavered as he made his way along the difficult summit of his eighty-three years, as if men were perched on giant stilts, sometimes taller than church spires, constantly growing and finally rendering their progress so difficult and perilous that they suddenly fall.
>
> I would therein describe men – even should that give them the semblance of monstrous creatures – as occupying in time a place far more considerable than the so restricted one allotted them in space, a place, on the contrary, extending bound-lessly since, giant-like, reaching far back into the years, they touch simultaneously epochs of their lives – with countless intervening days between – so widely sepa-rated from one another in time.

High on those Proustian stilts at a dizzying elevation over the vast panorama of the past, one can see the whole flowing stream of historical change from one end to the other. An old man at Nessana, some Arab Duc de Guermantes whose life may be imagined to have spanned most of the seventh century, could have looked down upon the many separated epochs through which he had lived, so as to apprehend them all together, only with the aid of the powerful lens of Hellenism.

Notes

1   P. Hitti, *A History of the Arabs* (London, 1970), p. 153.
2   F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 92 and 94.
3   See F. Zayadine, "Peintures murales et mosaïques à sujets mythologiques en Jordanie," in *BCH* Suppl. 14, *Iconographie classique et identités régionales* (Paris,

1986), pp. 407–32. See fig. 14 for Aphrodite in the Church of the Virgin and fig. 13 for Tethys in the Church of the Apostles.

4 Herod. 3.8.3.

5 Ibn al-Athîr *Kâmil* 2.192.

6 Nonnosos, *FHG* Müller 4:179–80.

7 T. Fahd, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Inst. fran. d'arch. de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque arch. et hist. vol. 88 (Paris, 1968), p. 253. For the use of statue types associated with the eastern imperial cult as models for representations of kings in Yemen in the late third century AD, see the two extraordinary bronze statues discussed by K. Weidemann in *Könige aus dem Yemen: zwei spätantike Bronzestatuen* (Mainz, 1983), a publication of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentral- museum. Note especially pp. 21–2. I am very grateful to Paul Zanker for drawing my attention to this publication.

8 Fahd, op. cit. (n. 7 above), pp. 250–1.

9 A. R. Al-Anṣary, *Qaryat al-Faw: a Portrait of Pre-Islamic Civilization in Saudi Arabia* (Riyadh, 1982).

10 Ibid., p. 28.

11 Ibid.

12 A. Negev, "Obodas the God," *IEJ* 36 (1986): 56–60 (graffito of first or second century); J. A. Bellamy, "A New Reading of the Namârah Inscription," *JAOS* 105 (1985): 31–48 (most recent publication of the fourth-century inscription).

13 Cf., for a general introduction, H. Gibb, *Arabic Literature* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 13–31 ("The Heroic Age").

14 Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* 6.38: παρὰ δὲ Σαρακηνοῖς ἐν ᾠδαῖς ἐστιν.

15 P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987).

16 C. J. Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana*, vol. 3, *Non-Literary Papyri* (Princeton, 1958). The *entagia* comprise nos. 60–7, pp. 175–97.

17 Ibid., no. 92, pp. 290–9.

18 Cf. Hitti, op. cit. (n. 1 above), p. 217.

19 Al-Balâdhuri *Futûḥ al-buldân*, p. 193.

20 M. Almagro et al., *Qusayr 'Amra* (Madrid, 1975). Cf. F. Zayadine, "The Frescoes of Quseir 'Amra," *Archaeology* 3 (1979):19–29.

21 O. Grabar, "La place de Qusayr Amrah dans l'art profane du Haut Moyen Age," *Cahiers archéologiques* 36 (1988): 75–83.

22 Ibid., p. 81.

23 M. Piccirillo, "Le iscrizioni di Um er-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa in Giordania I (1986–1987)," *Liber Annuus* 37 (1987): 177–239. The text dated to 785 is no. 4, presented and discussed on pp. 183–6.

24 Cf. the undated brochure by M. Piccirillo, *Um er-Rasas Kastron Mefaa in Giorda- nia* (Jerusalem), published by the Franciscan Printing Press.

25 H. Donner and H. Cüppers, *Die Mosaikkarte von Madaba*, Abh. des Deutschen Palästinavereins (Wiesbaden, 1977).

26 Cf. R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic* (Harvard, 1962), pp. 116–19. Of the major studies of Ḥunain, see for example G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain ibn Isḥâq. Über die syrischen und arabischen Galenübersetzungen* (Leipzig, 1925).

7

The Draped Universe of Islam

Lisa Golombek

Although many of Richard Ettinghausen's articles dealt with specific groups of objects and have become classics in art-historical literature, his last work showed a return to those broader but elusive questions that were first raised by such individuals as Strzygowski and Riegl at the turn of the century.[1] In his article "Taming of the Horror Vacui," which seeks an explanation for the alleged "fear of empty spaces" so characteristic of much of Islamic art, Ettinghausen resurrected the concept of Weltanschauung.[2] In recent years few scholars have attempted to publish their ideas about the nature of Islamic art; there has been a tacit moratorium on such questions. As a reaction against the racist doctrines that surfaced during World War II, the topic of "national style" became virtually taboo. Rather, in the postwar information explosion the emphasis has been on documentation. But this new body of information has of itself brought about greater sophistication and sensitivity. The time may be ripe to return to these questions and follow Ettinghausen's lead.

What is presented here is the working hypothesis that textiles in Islamic society fulfilled far more than the functions normally expected of them in other societies.[3] This obsession with textiles, if one may call it so, can account for some of the major characteristics of Islamic art in general. Many of the details in this hypothesis will take time and new information to work out, and what follows is an attempt to sketch it only in broad strokes.

It is difficult to understand how such monumental sites as the excavated palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar could have represented the ultimate in luxury living in the

early eighth century, with its bare, cold stone walls and its nondescript quarters affording little privacy beyond the open doors. Even when buildings have remained intact and are elaborately decorated, such as the Alhambra, something seems to be missing.

When we study Islamic architecture, we tend to forget that doorways were hung with curtains; that hangings made the open colonnade a private place; that the bare floors, sometimes unpaved, were laid with carpets and mats; and that through these halls marched a continual procession of richly clothed personages. Outside in the gardens, royal spaces were created by spreading a cloth or rug and erecting over it a tent of brocade, or a baldachin. We are struck by the fact that textiles played not only a large role in the life of Islam but perhaps even an exaggerated one.

Data for evaluating the role of textiles in Islamic society can be gleaned from various sources: numerous medieval texts, representations in illustrated manuscripts and on objects, the surviving archaeological textiles, and certain ethnographic information. The bibliography on each of these sources is extensive and will not be discussed here in detail. It is essential, however, to assess the value of each type of source for the specific purposes of this study and to touch on some of the precautions that must be taken in using them. Already in 1845, when Dozy published his dictionary of Arab costume, the problem of correlating these different sources in order to form an idea of the history of costume was apparent.[4] Under each heading Dozy had no choice but to reproduce several differing and sometimes contradictory meanings. Yedida Stillman's recent catalogue of Palestinian costume makes it clear that fashions change faster than the terminology on which they are hung.[5]

The medieval texts have been gathered by Serjeant according to geographical region.[6] His material is presented in a raw state with little attempt to analyze the data or to reconcile contradictions. Since his publication, new sources have come to light, such as the *Book of Gifts and Treasures* by Ibn al-Zubayr,[7] a source used by Maqrīzī. For the most part the medieval sources speak of the use of textiles by the court and the production of certain textiles in specific locales. The account is balanced, however, by the documents of the Cairo *Geniza*, which are a rich fund of information about the life of the bourgeoisie.[8] Despite the quantity of detail that comes from all these textual sources, they are not very helpful for the study of costume and textiles per se, for there is little description of the individual garment.

More elusive than costume is the vast terminology used to distinguish types of cloth. A few attempts have been made to match the terms with surviving textiles, by Dorothy Shepherd and others,[9] but there is little likelihood that much further progress can be made in this direction. Certain terms that describe the technique of manufacture can with some certainty be identified with actual textiles. For example, the *ikat*-dyed cottons of Yemen, achieved through the process of tie-dyeing the warps, are described as ʿaṣb, or "bound (thread)" cloths.[10] Further complications are introduced by the use of geographical terms to describe textiles

coming from particular regions. This information is of no help in matching the text with the textile, though it is, of course, of interest for other purposes.

First, the terminology tells a great deal about the movement of textiles as objects of trade, and second, the sheer quantity of the terminology is significant. Following the axiom that a society will invent an extensive vocabulary to distinguish variations in areas that are most important to it, one may conclude that textiles were of primary importance to the average resident of the medieval Islamic world. The Islamic use of textile terminology may be compared with the Eskimo's differentiation of some forty types of snow, or the Bedouin's insistence on multiple terms for the camel.

It is the quantity of terms rather than the specific terms themselves that is of central interest here. What motivated this society to distinguish so finely between one type of scarf and another, between one type of cushion and another? What were the considerations necessitating such a wide variety of textile objects?

The representational arts of Islam comprise wall paintings, for the pre-Islamic, Umayyad, and Abbasid periods (with a few later examples); objects with figural imagery, from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; and the arts of the book, from the thirteenth century on.[11] Not all of these sources are of equal value for this study. Some representations, such as the striped garment worn by men on a minai bowl, are too generic to be useful, whereas the costume on the man in the Dioscorides frontispiece is so accurately depicted that the gusset under his arm is shown. The fact that his *ṭirāz*[12] arm bands do not fully encircle the upper arm is most interesting; few representations bother to show this detail when depicting such bands. *Ṭirāz* bands on the turban ends have been tucked in. It would be fair to conclude that this is an accurate description of a type of garment actually worn by a scholar living in Syria or Iraq in the early thirteenth century. Later Persian paintings are a rich source for costume and textile study and are particularly important because they illustrate the manner in which contemporary furnishings were used.

Archaeological textiles themselves pose many problems.[13] Because of their fragmentary nature, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine to what kind of garment most of the fragments once belonged. The bulk of the fragments come from Egyptian burial grounds, where their use as shrouds may not have been anticipated when they were first produced. Because the find-spots of these textiles were never recorded in detail, we do not even know who finally used them as shrouds. Was it the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie? The textiles themselves do give some information. As a group they convey a picture of a highly developed and complex industry, producing for a diversified range of tastes and functions. Many contain inscription bands like those in the Dioscorides painting, which identify them as products of the *Dār al-Ṭirāz*, the royal textile workshops, under the control of the caliph. Some inscriptions record a place and date of manufacture.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the ethnographic data mentioned above, it can be most enlightening to look at some of the more traditional cultures of

the Muslim world today. Westernization has introduced new habits, but traditional attitudes toward dress and codes of behavior are still evident in such areas. Anyone visiting more traditional Islamic societies, such as those of North Africa or Uzbekistan, will be struck by the quantity of clothing an individual wears. Women appear to be bandaged in scarves, cloaks, and headdresses. Each of these items is of a different fabric, weave, and color, appearing haphazardly chosen. The fact that historically many garments were worn simultaneously may have stimulated the development of many terms for clothing. The use of many layers of clothing appears to have been most popular in regions where garments were not tailored. Many were worn just as they had come off the loom, with little or no sewing. They were draped over the body and held in place by pins. Insulation was achieved by adding more layers beneath loosely fitting outergarments.

Following the assessment of the sources that can be employed to study the uses of textiles in Islamic society, these functions can be enumerated. Some are utilitarian, whereas others were the result of the values attached to textiles by the people who used them. I shall deal first with garments and then with furnishings.

The preference for loosely draped clothing was evident in the Mediterranean region before the advent of Islam, although the turban appears to be an Islamic innovation. The preference for draped garments appears then to have gradually spread to more eastern areas during the Islamic period, a diffusion that has yet to be investigated. In pre-Islamic Iran, textiles were woven on a loom of smaller format than that used in the Mediterranean area, and tailored garments were favored. With fitted garments multiple layers were not needed, especially when the outermost layer, a coat, was padded, as was frequently the case. In the Islamic era fashions changed. Clerics and scholars adopted the flowing gowns popular in Arabia, and women acquired the face veil and body envelope. Later, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, fitted garments had a renewed popularity through the influence of peoples from the east, another phenomenon that deserves further documentation.

According to the evidence from the *Geniza* documents and other texts, the clothing in wide use during the medieval period was much the same as that still used in North Africa today.[14] It consisted of four elements: headgear, undergarments, gowns, and a wide variety of mantles, wraps, and veils. For women, some of these outer garments were for insulation, others for modesty. Because the garments did not conform to the body's shape, they were to some extent interchangeable. One gets the impression from the *Geniza* letters of traders that the larger garments were sold as a form of bulk goods that could be modified by the purchaser.[15]

Certainly one of the functional considerations behind the elaboration of the garments was the change of seasons. The archaeological evidence suggests that the wide range of weights and variation in fineness of weaves distinguished fabrics used for winter and summer apparel. Numerous texts confirm an almost ritualized change of clothing from winter to summer. For example, in May the

Mamluk sultan discarded his woolen clothing and put on white, including a white silk ʿabāʾ (a one-piece mantle that enveloped the body and was closed at the shoulders). He returned to his woolen garments in November.[16] A semiannual change was also the practice in Spain, until the musician Zaryāb came from Baghdad in 821–2. He introduced a spring costume, a *mulḥam* or colored silk *jubbah*, and marked the arrival of autumn with a *minsha* (cloak) from Marv.[17] These refinements no doubt had as much a psychological significance as they had functional value, much as pastel colors are still favored in summer.

Another category of costume tied to specific functions consisted of garments that were to be worn only out-of-doors, such as the modesty veils of women.[18] Certain activities demanded garments designed especially for them, particularly those requiring freedom of movement, such as the *jūkānīyah*, presumably a polo costume.[19]

Apart from these functional considerations were the many facets of social behavior in which textiles played an important role. Textiles could reflect social values and codes of behavior, but they might also be actual tools of the social system.

Wealth was measured in terms of one's textile possessions, and certainly the largest wardrobes were to be found at court. An inventory of the Caliph al-Amīn for the year 809 lists 8,000 *jubbahs* (coats), half of which were silk lined with sable, fox, or goat hair, and the other half figured cloth (*washshī*); 10,000 shirts and tunics; 1,000 pairs of pants; 10,000 caftans, 4,000 turbans; and 1,000 cloaks.[20] It is difficult to surmise how many people this wardrobe would have served. If one assumes the allotment of two pairs of pants per person, it would clothe 500. The caliphal wardrobe was obviously larger, so perhaps the figure of 100 wearers is more likely. That would still provide each with some 40 outer coats for winter and another 40 for summer, with 100 caftans to rotate through the year. These figures should not be taken as definitive, but a study of such lists together with the trousseaux lists could give some idea of the quantity of each type of garment needed by the various classes of society. A wealthy Jewish middle-class bride had in her trousseau a mere 18 dresses, while a more modest trousseau included only eight.[21]

"Clothes made the man," and uniforms identifying rank in the court and bureaucracy certainly focused attention on costume. The conspicuous consumer invested heavily in headgear; as Goitein has remarked, "Luxury in turbans was the passion of the medieval Oriental."[22] Not all wearers of luxurious turbans achieved the status they had sought, as this poem indicates:

> O, you who cover your empty head with a beautiful
> white turban of Marv fabric, everything which is beneath
> is hideous: It (meaning the the turban) is as a light
> shining in the darkness.[23]

Many of the luxury fabrics were intended for special occasions. The wedding costume was perhaps the most elaborate of these. The *Geniza* letters often convey

the personal concern of the client or merchant with regard to such orders. The urgency of the merchant of Fez writing to Spain on behalf of a certain Abraham whose wedding was imminent demonstrates the importance of having the proper garment for the occasion.[24] In this case the merchant was ordered to buy a custom-made garment if none was available on the market. Time was an important factor.

Funerals also called for specific dress – not garments made for the occasion but rather a different mode of wearing one's ordinary garments. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah observed that people had put their own clothing on inside-out and covered it with coarse cotton robes.[25] In Samarqand the population put on *jāmahs* of black and blue for the mourning of Tīmūr's son Jahāngīr.[26]

Religious holidays for all faiths required special garments. A *Geniza* document records an order for such a costume for the Day of Atonement. White was worn during Ramaḍān.[27] It should also be borne in mind that the preparation for the spiritual change that was to come with the pilgrimage to Mecca was effected through a change in costume. The discriminatory sumptuary laws, dictating the types and colors of garments to be worn by minority groups, were yet another example of how textiles were used as instruments of the social system.[28]

The use of textiles to confer as well as identify status is also well known. Robes of honor, often inscribed with the name of the caliph, were bestowed on officials of the court, prominent visitors (including ambassadors), and private individuals whom the caliph wished to honor. Although referred to as "robes," these gifts often included full sets of clothing as well as numerous other items.

In the art-historical literature there has been a tendency to view the large body of very fragmentary archaeological textiles that bear the *ṭirāz* of a caliph as "robes of honor."[29] A review of the relevant texts, however, has suggested that these textiles, with some exceptions, do not fit the descriptions. The texts that speak of "robes of honor" generally mention fine materials – silks, brocades, and furs – although the very fine linens, *sharb* and *dabīqī*, or *qaṣab*, woven with metallic threads, were also suitable as gifts. The archaeological examples are primarily linen or cotton, some quite coarse, with wool, silk, or linen wefts, embroidered or tapestry-woven. Some of the cottons are painted or stamped.

One is therefore led to conclude that this large body of material, found in museums all over the world, should not be identified as the so-called robes of honor mentioned in texts. The surviving textiles appear to belong to the standard wardrobe of the court, such as the one described above, and represent the numerous undergarments, and perhaps some of the lighter summer mantles. That they were widely used as shrouds may possibly be accounted for by a distribution of court garments to the general populace from the looting of the Fatimid treasury in the years following 1060.[30]

It is most curious that among the large number of such textiles now in Toronto there are numerous fragments of ornaments cut in the shape of rectangular panels and sewn as insets into coarsely woven linens, often with the inscription reversed. The stitching is also sometimes crude. Some occur below distinguish-

able necklines and appear to be chest panels like those depicted on a *Coronation of the Virgin* by Paolo Veneziano. These panels may be the forerunners of the *qabbah* on nineteenth-century Palestinian wedding dresses.[31] The reuse of precious stuffs is also attested to in texts and in the *Geniza* documents, where "old" garments are considered the "best."[32] This appreciation of textile antiques was applied to furnishings (discussed below) as well as garments.

To sum up: in addition to their functional value, garments were the means by which an individual identified his changing status. Clothing reflected not only his public state (that is, his religion, his occupation, and his rank within society) but also his private state (that is, his passage through the life cycle). Clothing provided the opportunity for an individual to emphasize any chosen aspect of his inner or outer state at any given moment.

The utilitarian and social aspects of furnishings in the Islamic world have recently been treated in great detail by J. Sadan.[33] According to his study, the Islamic world developed a set of behavior patterns concerning sitting and reclining that precluded the creation of a wide variety of movable, rigid furnishings: chairs, tables, and beds. Although these existed, they were always supplemented by cushions, pillows, spreads, and carpets. More often, these ad hoc furnishings sufficed alone. Most activities took place on or close to the floor. Cushions served as seats and propped up the back, the head, and even the elbow. Carpets and cloths spread on the floor served as tables. Trays set on tripods or on the floor bore vessels containing food and drink.

It could be argued that the climate in the Mediterranean required warm floor coverings in the winter to insulate against the cold of stone floors. Many Roman mosaics, as well as their Umayyad successors, have tassels depicted around their edges.[34] These tassels have generally been taken as evidence that the beautiful mosaics were replicas of floor coverings that have not survived. The level of textile technology at the time does not make this possibility very likely, but the tassels may well be an allusion to winter mats of less ambitious design that would have covered the mosaics until spring.

One can also argue that the origin of textile furnishings should be sought in the nomadic life. Although floor coverings and wall hangings are associated with both indoor and outdoor space, one could say that the indoor use of carpets is a tautology. A house already has a floor and walls. Outside these must be created. It is therefore in the use of textiles out-of-doors that one must seek the origins of rugs and drapes for the interior.

Various forms of nomadism have persisted within and around the Islamic world since its beginnings.[35] When one reads the history of the Mongol or Timurid princes, it is never clear whether the change of quarters has a military or an ecological objective.[36] The sultan moves between city and country, often taking his whole household with him. The setting of the "encampment" has been a celebrated theme of many painters.[37] In these encampments textiles are used not only for furniture and decoration but even for the domicile itself, the tent. The carpet is the floor. The curtain is the door. An ambiguity of intention

on the part of the Persian painter can be seen in a sixteenth-century painting. Is he depicting a seasonal dwelling or a summer holiday? Descriptions of the great tents of Tīmūr, both in texts and in paintings, indicate that tents eventually came full cycle. In every detail – crenellations, porticoes, silver cords imitating metal grilles – they simulated real architecture.[38]

Sadan has also suggested that the ascetic strain in Islam may have reinforced the existing Oriental tradition of close-to-the-ground living, just as it had rejected vessels of precious metal.[39] Whatever the cause, it is clear that textile furnishings were a very important concern for both indoor and outdoor life.

The well-to-do sitting room, according to al-Azdī, writing in the early eleventh century, had four different kinds of floor coverings, three types of cushions, and at least two expensive textile draperies, such as *sūsanjīrd* or *būqālimūn*.[40] The royal precincts were, of course, totally draped and spread with textiles.

Paintings illustrate well the ways in which textile furnishings were used. Curtains could be hung, knotted, or drawn aside. They served primarily as temporary room dividers, providing privacy where needed. In Abraham's tent, depicted in the Rashīd al-Dīn manuscript of 1314, a curtain blocks the visitors' view of his wife, as would be expected in the normal Muslim domicile.[41] In later Persian paintings one cannot fail to appreciate the importance of textile elements in the interior setting: the drapery, the cushions, and the floor coverings.

Like costume, furnishings were appreciated for various reasons. As purely functional objects, they provided insulation and comfort. They were also a means of transforming the character of a space without altering its structure. But they could do far more. They could create an ambience through the quality of the material, and this ambience could be changed at will. Changes might entail a mere seasonal rotation of fabrics. The Fatimid Caliph had brocade curtains for his *majlis* in the winter and fine linen ones in the summer.[42] Floor coverings were likewise suited to the season.

The need for a change in scenery might arise in anticipation of a special occasion; furnishings were chosen to impress and delight the individual guest. Visits of ambassadors to the court provided an opportunity to display the choice objects of the royal textile collection, which was itself symbolic of the empire's wealth. When the Byzantine ambassadors made their famous visit to Baghdad in 305/917, some 38,000 curtains were hung in the palace.[43] On the occasion of the reception of the Emperor Basil, the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim ordered his keepers of the treasury to find something remarkable for covering the entire *īwān*. They discovered twenty-one textiles of brocade stippled with gold, brought by al-Muʿizz from Qairowan. With these they covered the whole floor of the *īwān* and draped all of its walls.[44] When the sovereign of Ferghana paid a call on his vassal in Bukhara, the entire city was repainted and draped with rich stuffs, banners, and silk tents to impress him.[45]

Guests were impressed not only by the normal luxury fabrics but also by curiosities. As al-Ḥākim's preparations indicate, antique furnishings were particularly cherished. Among the 38,000 curtains displayed in the palace at Baghdad

were 12,500 bearing the names of five earlier caliphs dating back a hundred years. Another curiosity were the textiles with recognizable images. The Baghdad palace was also hung with curtains of brocade bearing "representations of goblets, elephants, horses and camels, lions, and birds."[46] This category of furnishing is most interesting because it relates to a series of other unique textiles, both carpets and curtains, on which were depicted themes belonging to royal iconography, including historical or quasi-historical narratives.

The tradition of iconographic textiles which begins with the first century of Islam had roots in the Byzantine and Sasanian past. According to Ibn Rustah, the tent of the Prophet was made of a woolen textile decorated with fabulous beasts, eagles, confronted lions, human figures, and Christian crosses.[47] The tent commissioned by the Fatimid vizier, al-Yazūrī, portrayed all the animals in the world.[48] Another tent, made for the Hamdanid prince Sayf al-Dawlah and celebrated in an ode by Mutannabī in 947, had all this and more. It was erected to receive Sayf al-Dawlah after his capture of the Byzantine fortress of Barqūyah. Inside was a scene depicting the Byzantine emperor paying homage to Sayf al-Dawlah, surrounded by a pearl-lined border containing images of wild and tame beasts and vegetation. The poet refers to the border as a garden, which is animated by the fluttering of the tent walls.[49]

Tents with images of animals and vegetation can be related to two traditions, Sasanian and Early Christian. These images can be found in the Sasanian Paradise theme as it occurs as part of the royal hunt, for example, at Tāq-i Būstān. The hunt also appears contemporaneously in the imperial imagery of Byzantium and in the Early Christian iconography expressing the Triumph of Good over Evil. The Western version, studied by Veronika Gervers in the series of Coptic linen curtains with tapestry-woven images of huntsmen and wild beasts,[50] suggests a close parallel for the Prophet's tent, which may itself have come from the furnishings of a church.

The second theme occurring in the Hamdanid tent – human figures identified as historical personalities – relates these textiles to images found in wall paintings, such as the painting of the six kings at Quṣayr ʿAmrah.[51] A similar example would be the famous *sūsanjīrd* carpet on which the Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil was murdered; this had a border of compartments enclosing portraits of the Sasanian and Umayyad rulers, all identified by Persian inscriptions.[52] This was probably an heirloom from the Umayyad dynasty. An equally extraordinary silk curtain was found in the Fatimid treasury on which were depicted all of the nations of the world, their rulers, years of reign, and remarks on their state of affairs.[53]

Textile furnishings could therefore be used in two ways by a person wishing to impress his visitors. The costliness of the fabric or its rarity testified to the sheer wealth of the host, whereas the textile itself might be the bearer of a more specific message through its imagery. Iconographic textiles have the obvious advantage of versatility over wall paintings since textile display could be varied according to the intended message.

The selection of draperies and floor coverings, just as seating arrangements for guests, reflected a host's assessment of his visitors. Protocol as reflected in seating arrangements is a matter of grave importance in all societies, but in the Islamic world, because the seating was on the floor, the focus was again on textiles. Sadan has demonstrated that the social rank of a guest was indicated by the placement of his mat within a room, especially in relation to other persons present, and by the size and quality of the cushions assigned to him.[54] The variations possible with a range of cushions is far greater than can be imagined for a dining hall with table and chairs. (In the European tradition guests could be honored or offended only by their placement; the furnishings remained uniform.) Using a mat or carpet for definition of personal space was a tradition so ingrained in the life of the Middle East that it could not fail to be of continuing symbolic importance under Islam. Pre-Islamic Central Asian paintings show a group of nobles, seated on small mats arranged to reflect the social hierarchy, just like the courtiers of later Persian miniatures. Even the monster-deities in a Manichaean illustration are seated on a carpet according to protocol.[55] Given the strength of this symbolic aspect of carpets, it is not surprising that the earliest ritual object in Islam was the prayer rug.

Curtains also had symbolic as well as practical functions. As in the Byzantine world, the ruler was to be kept aloof from his subjects, and this ideal was expressed tangibly through the presence of a curtain placed between them. Such curtains concealed the thrones of the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatimid caliphs and were placed around the *miḥrāb* in the mosque.[56] On certain occasions the curtain was used as a means of attaining dramatic surprise. The caliph, dressed in his regalia, made a sudden appearance as the curtain was drawn. The visitor was devastated by this splendor.

A unique use of curtains to both honor and protect a structure is the *kiswah*, the veil draped over the Kaʻbah at Mecca.[57] Although one tends to think of the *kiswah* as a drab black veil with gold inscriptions, it was not always so. When Ibn Jubayr visited in the late twelfth century, he saw the Kaʻbah clothed in varicolored silk.[58] The four sides were draped in a set of thirty-four curtains of green silk that had cotton warps. It was inscribed in its upper part with the Koranic verse 3:90, invocations to the Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir, and the image of a colonnade of *miḥrābs*. It was customary for the old *kiswah* to be cut up and sold as relics to pilgrims.

The last item to be mentioned here, the *mandīl*, or napkin, was used both as a garment and a furnishing. According to F. Rosenthal's fascinating study, the *mandīl* was used for drying the hands and face, wiping tears, blowing the nose, for massage, for covering things, wrapping things, and was worn as various garments, such as loincloth, apron, belt, turban, and kerchief.[59]

The *mandīl* was remarkable for being an instrument of communication, so closely was it associated with the sensual organs – the mouth, the eyes, the nose, the ears, and the hands. Messages were inscribed on *mandīls*, such as,

> I am the *mandīl* of a lover who never stopped
> Drying with me his eyes of their tears.
> Then he gave me as a present to a girl he loves
> Who wipes with me the wine from his lips.[60]

A number of such verses are recorded by al-Washshāʾ in the early tenth century, but to my knowledge no actual fragment of such a textile has survived. To these inscribed textiles may be added the *mandīl* or *dastār* with the lover's portrait. Most famous is the portrait of Khusraw sent to Shirīn in the *Khamsah* of Niẓāmī.[61] The motif recurs in many Persian stories.

As a background, one may consider the pre-Islamic traditions of Central Asia. Manichaean paintings on silk have survived, and the wall paintings at Kutscha show such a textile depicting the life of the Buddha, being held by a woman.[62] The notion that images and even inscriptions on textiles could have magical power – that is, the ability to make happen what is portrayed or foretold – is reflected in the story of the silk inscribed by the Sasanian king Anūshīrvān with the prophecy of the execution of Hormizd.[63] These iconic and magical uses of textiles prefigure the mystique that was later attached to the writing of invocations in the *ṭirāz* of Islamic textiles.

In this essay I have attempted to evoke a world submerged in textiles, where textiles played a role in every facet of life, for everyone, rich or poor. They served far more than a purely functional role and were incorporated into codes of social and religious behavior at every level of society and in every phase of human existence. The important role textiles played in the economic life of the Middle Ages is revealed in the *Geniza* documents. S. D. Goitein has demonstrated that textiles were the primary object of trade, the cash-in-hand, negotiable anywhere in the world. The economic and political role of textiles in the Islamic world has long been studied. The government often controlled textile production, which constituted a large sector of the economy. The inclusion of the ruler's name in textile inscriptions was an acknowledgment of suzerainty tantamount to the inclusion of his name on coinage, and in the Friday *Khuṭbah* (sermon).[64]

Not only was the social, economic, and political life of the Islamic world caught up with textiles, the individual himself was fully cognizant of the technical aspects of textile production even though he was not a weaver. The medieval client was far more conscious of the technology involved in manufacturing goods than the consumer today. Textiles were so vital that the average man could not afford to be without some knowledge of their manufacture. A merchant could expect his client to provide detailed instructions regarding the choice of threads.[65] In one documented case, the client had sent a merchant linen and cotton threads to make a set of clothes. But the merchant discovered, after the garments were partially completed, that not enough of the finer threads remained to make the other garments. The leftover linen threads were too coarse to weave with the cotton. He wrote to his client asking whether to buy more threads to go with

the linen or finer linen to go with the cotton. This inquiry reveals that a surprising degree of expertise was expected of the client. Expertise in textiles comes from another unexpected quarter, the eleventh-century historian of Isfahan, al-Māfarrūkhī. He expresses amazement that some 1,000 inhabitants of a *bidonville* on their way to the *muṣallā* to celebrate the *ʿīd* were "wearing fine turbans of gold-embroidered linen, *Tūzī*, *Bamī* and *Baqyār* cloths, Egyptian wool and garments of *Siqlātūn* and *ʿAtabī* . . ." – that is, all of the normal luxury textiles.[66] This historian's ability to identify and differentiate between the various luxury fabrics as they paraded by is characteristic of the middle-class concern and familiarity with textiles.

Color-consciousness is yet another aspect of this obsession with textiles that has been documented. No doubt the size of the textile vocabulary is in part due to a heightened sensitivity to colors and patterns. The *Geniza* speaks of pistachio green, iridescent peacock, chick-pea, wax-, tin-, pearl-, and sand-colored. There is a pomegranate red, a flame-colored, a lead-gray, and many varieties of stripes and ornaments, such as *muṭayyar* (ornamented with birds).[67] Color preferences seem quite pronounced in the personalized orders recorded in the *Geniza*. The archaeological textiles also exhibit a wide range of colors and motifs, although it must be remembered that the most elaborate overgarments are, for the most part, missing.

It was on the strength of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's comparison of luster pottery to *būqālimūn* textiles that Grabar concluded: ". . . much of the contemporary world acquired its aesthetic judgement through textiles."[68] I would like to carry this idea further by suggesting that a "textile mentality" was responsible for the development of certain characteristic idioms in Islamic art. In other words, if textiles penetrated so deeply into all aspects of life, can they not be expected to have had some impact on the formation of aesthetics as well? My conclusions are presented here as a series of six cases.

The first case concerns the transfer of the term *ṭirāz* from garment ornamentation to the ornamentation of other things. Maqrīzī often refers to the inscription band on the facade of a building as a *ṭirāz*.[69] The term came to be used metaphorically. Learning and culture "embroidered" a person's character, as a *ṭirāz* band gave class to a fine piece of cloth.[70]

The next case demonstrates that the compulsion to drape everything is implicit in certain art objects. Animals had to be dressed, like the rooster aquamanile with its medallion copied from garment types, such as the so-called Veil of St. Anne *ʿabāʾ* in Apt Cathedral, or like the goat from a Samarra painting. An incense burner in the form of a cheetah is robed in a textile pattern, bordered with *ṭirāz* bands, and even has the rectangular chest panel, or *qabbah*, discussed above. There was something in the nature of a "textile-reflex" – whatever could be draped should be draped.

The third case refers to architecture. If one studies the evolution of surface decoration, it becomes increasingly clear that the practice of hanging the walls with textiles led to the development of mosaic faience and polychrome painted

panels. The walls were broken up into small rectangular panels, as if they were products of the loom. The pattern changes abruptly from one panel to the next, as if the eye were moving from fabric to fabric. Many of the large tile panels reproduce carpet designs, and their large expanse may be a reflection of the increasing size of carpets. A corner column in the Mosque of Yazd, revetted in mosaic faience in a chevron pattern, appears to be imitating the *ikat*-dyed cottons of Yemen, even with regard to the brown, blue, and white color scheme. The lacy quality of the deeply carved stucco ornament in Western Islamic monuments such as the Alhambra may not be fortuitous.

The final three cases show the imprint of the technique of weaving itself. One is the use of decorative brickwork in eastern Iran, first popular in the tenth century. Brick patterns had much in common with textiles, in that they conform to some kind of grid involving a vertical and horizontal axis. In weaving, these are the warp and weft. The warp, or vertical element, is static. The weft moves and makes the pattern by changes in color and variations in the number of warps covered. In brickwork, the horizontal axis dominates. The design is always worked in the vertical. One of the terms used to describe this kind of decoration is *hazār-bāf* (a thousand weaves). This woven decoration allowed the architect to virtually swathe his forms, and thereby bring out the volumetric quality of the architecture, as if it were, in fact, draped with textiles.

The fifth case concerns Samanid epigraphic pottery of the tenth century.[71] On one class of this pottery the only decoration is a band of Kufic writing. The absence of any further decoration on the stark white background caused Etting-hausen some alarm because it seemed to be an exception to the rule of *horror vacui*. A plate from the Freer Gallery poses still another problem. The majority of bowls and plates in this class have inscriptions encircling the rim – that is, respecting the circular character of the object. This one violates it outright. The calligrapher simply ignored the shape of the object. Or did he?

One is struck by the resemblance of this format to the archaeological textiles with their *ṭirāz* bands. The plate is like a pure-white linen cloth across which runs a thin *ṭirāz* band. This comparison may seem farfetched, but not if one considers the custom of covering serving objects with napkins (*mandīls*). Consider the following scenario. (Although this reconstruction is a fantasy, there are numerous texts describing the serving of beverages from covered vessels.)[72] A servant brings his master a goblet of water or other drink carried on an inscribed plate. The goblet is covered by a *ṭirāz*-ornamented linen *mandīl*. The servant removes the goblet and gives it to the master. The inscription on the plate is now visible. The napkin is then replaced, but directly over the plate. The inscriptions on the napkin and the plate spatially coincide.

The final case, which consists of two parts, illustrates ways in which the very grammar of ornament was affected by weaving technology. The dynamic in question is the interlace – the basic over-and-under process whereby loose threads become bound together. The early history of Islamic ornament shows an increasing interest in ever more complex geometric compositions. By the middle of the

ninth century, the lines of the geometric grid took on a life of their own and became more important than the compartments they delineated.

At the same moment, in the Yemen, a strange form of calligraphy began to appear on the famous *ikat* cottons:[73] The Kufic letters of the inscription became knotted. The horizontal bars in the letter *dāl* of Muḥammad are twisted around each other like threads of a chain stitch. Vegetal ornaments erupt amid this chaos. The textile mentality has triumphed.

When I first began to study plaited Kufic Samanid pottery, I came to the conclusion that it had been invented by the potters and exported westward to the Yemenite weavers.[74] This conclusion was based on two observations: the earliest dated examples were to be found on the coins of Rayy and Khurasan, and the plaited Kufic alphabet appeared in monumental art in the East at least a century before it did in the West, where it never became as popular. However, in the light of the present evidence, the reverse now seems more plausible. Such an idea was more likely to have been the brainstorm of a weaver than a potter. Textiles are more portable than pottery, and no Samanid wares appear to have been exported to the Red Sea, to judge from excavated examples.[75] We know from texts, however, that the *ikat*, or *ʿaṣb* of Yemen, was exported to Iran, and that it was in fact imitated at Rayy,[76] where the earliest coin with plaited letters was minted in 324/936.

This love for interlace even penetrated architecture, for it is seen in the arched screens that cordon off the bays at the entrance to al-Ḥakam's additions to the Mosque of Cordova and in front of its *miḥrābs*. Whether the metaphor can be carried further is debatable, but it might be suggested that the architects saw in these compositions a vertical, stable "warp" in the form of the arches. The surface produced is more like a woven textile than tracery, for, as Ewert's study has shown,[77] many of the spaces between the arches are blocked to provide a surface for a different pattern on the reverse. A most bizarre version of interlacing arches occurs in the Aljaferia Palace at Saragossa a century after Cordova.[78]

Interlace dominated the *Grammatik* of ornament of the tenth–eleventh centuries, if one may borrow Riegl's expression. It provided a means of penetrating two-dimensional space and opened the way for the development of the multilevel arabesque, which Ettinghausen compared with "polyphonic music" in his article on the *horror vacui*.

It would seem that the origins of this love for the interlace may be found in the "textile mentality" that in certain ways possessed the society. The heightened importance of costume and the preference for soft furnishings made the development of textiles practically a cult in itself. The preeminence of textiles also helps to explain why it was possible, and perfectly acceptable, in Islamic art for different media to share the same decorative treatment – why it is that bookbindings, wood carving, architectural faience, and Koran pages all look like carpets.

Notes

1 A. Riegl, *Stilfragen, Grundlegnungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*, Berlin, 1893; Riegl, *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*, post. ed. K. M. Swoboda and O. Pacht, Graz-Köln, 1966; J. Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst*, Augsburg, 1930 (hereafter, Strzygowski).

2 *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, CXXIII, no. 1, 1979, 15–28.

3 I owe my introduction to textile studies to my dear friend Dr. Veronika Gervers, who was curator of the Royal Ontario Museum Textile Department from 1968 until her death in 1979. Her enthusiasm, generosity, and insight will always be remembered.

4 R. P. A. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms de vêtements chez les Arabes*, Amsterdam, 1845 (hereafter, Dozy).

5 Y. K. Stillman, *Palestinian Costume and Jewelry*, Albuquerque, 1979 (hereafter, Stillman, 1979).

6 R. B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles: Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest*, Beirut, 1972 (hereafter, Serjeant): collection of articles originally published serially in *Ars Islamica*, IX–XIV, 1942–51 (hereafter, Serjeant, *Ars Islamica*).

7 Aḥmad b. al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr, *Kitāb al-Dhakhāʾir wa-al-Tuḥaf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh, Kuwait, 1959 (hereafter, Ibn al-Zubayr).

8 "'Cairo *Geniza* documents' refers to material dating from the 10th through the 13th centuries AD, written mostly in Hebrew characters but in the Arabic language, and originally preserved in a synagogue, and partly also in a cemetery at Fustat." S. D. Goitein, "Cairo: An Islamic City in Light of the Geniza Documents," *Middle Eastern Cities: A Symposium*, Berkeley, 1969, 80. See also Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, Berkeley, 1967. Among the documents are official, business, and private correspondence, contracts, accounts, receipts, and inventories.

9 E.g., D. G. Shepherd and W. B. Henning, "Zandanījī Identified?" *Festschrift für Ernst Kühnel, Aus der Welt der Islamischen Kunst*, Berlin, 1959, 15–40.

10 C. Lamm, *Cotton in Mediaeval Textiles of the Near East*, Paris, 1937, Class 9, 144 ff. (hereafter, Lamm); A. Bühler, *Ikat-Batik-Plangi: Reservmüsterungen auf Garn und Stoff aus Vorderasien, Zentralasien, Sudosteuropa und Nordafrika*, Basel, 1972; L. Golombek and V. Gervers, "Tiraz Fabrics in the Royal Ontario Museum," *Studies in Textile History in Memory of Harold P. Burnham*, ed. V. Gervers, Toronto, 1977, 82–125 (hereafter, Golombek and Gervers, "Tiraz Fabrics").

11 A. von Le Coq, *Chotscho, Königlich-Preussische Turfan-Expedition*, Berlin, 1913; Le Coq, *Bilderatlas zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Mittel-Asiens*, Berlin, 1925 (hereafter, Von Le Coq, *Bilderatlas . . .*); E. Herzfeld, *Die Malerein von Samarra*, Berlin, 1927; M. Bussagli, *Painting of Central Asia*, Geneva, 1963 (hereafter, Bussagli); illustrations on objects in Pope, *SPA*; A. Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, London, 1965; E. Atil, *Ceramics from the World of Islam*, Washington, D.C., 1973; numerous illustrations in *Islam and the Arab World*, ed. B. Lewis, New York, 1976.

12 "*Ṭirāz* bands" refer to the narrow strips of ornament (serving as arm bands or borders) that often bore inscriptions. The term *ṭirāz* is borrowed from the Persian word for embroidery but was used for other techniques of decoration as well. On the manufacture of such textiles for the court, see below.

13 For bibliography, see N. P. Britton, *A Study of Some Early Islamic Textiles in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston, 1938; E. Kühnel and L. Bellinger, *Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics: Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.*, Washington, DC, 1952; Golombek and Gervers, "Tiraz Fabrics."

14 Y. K. Stillman, "The Importance of the Cairo Geniza Manuscripts for the History of Medieval Female Attire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, VII, 1976, 579–89 (hereafter, Stillman, 1976); Stillman, "The Wardrobe of a Jewish Bride in Medieval Egypt," *Studies in Marriage Customs*, Folklore Research Center Studies, Hebrew University, IV, 1974, 297–304 (hereafter, Stillman, 1974).

15 S. D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, Princeton, 1973, nos. 11, 64 (hereafter, Goitein, 1973).

16 L. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume*, Geneva, 1952, 18, no. 2.

17 al-Maqqārī, cited by Lamm, 246.

18 Stillman, 1974, 304.

19 S. D. Goitein, "Two Arabic Textiles," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, XIX, part 2, 1976, 221–4.

20 Ibn al-Zubayr, no. 302.

21 S. D. Goitein, "Three Trousseaux of Jewish Brides from the Fatimid Period," *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, II, 1977, 77–110.

22 S. D. Goitein, "Sicily and Southern Italy in the Cairo Geniza Documents," *Archivio storico der la Sicilia orientale*, LXVII, 1971, 14.

23 *Kitāb Yatīmat al-Dahr*, cited by Lamm, 199.

24 Goitein, 1973, 265.

25 Lamm, 210.

26 Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Yazdī, *Ẓafar-nāmah*, Tehran, 1336s./1957–8, I, 199.

27 Goitein, 1973, 141.

28 Stillman, 1976, 582; Dozy, 28.

29 Numerous references in Serjeant, see *khilʿa*.

30 The importance of this event for the history of Fatimid art has been suggested by O. Grabar in "Imperial and Urban Art in Islam: The Subject Matter of Fatimid Art," *Colloque International sur l'Histoire de Caire*, Cairo, 1972, reprinted in *Studies in Medieval Islamic Art*, London, 1976, no. VII (hereafter, Grabar, VII).

31 Stillman, 1979, 32–3.

32 Goitein, 1973, no. 11.

33 J. Sadan, *Le Mobilier au proche orient mediéval*, Leiden, 1976 (hereafter, Sadan).

34 E.g., in the "Dīwān" of the Bath at Khirbat al-Mafjar, cf. R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, Geneva, 1962, 39 (hereafter, Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*); mosaics as substitutes for textiles, Strzygowski, 441.

35 On nomadism in the Mediterranean, see F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, London, 1972–3; on Iran, see the works of V. Barthold, C. Cahen, J. Aubin, and on a specific dynasty, J. E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation and Empire*, Chicago, 1976.

36 Seasonal movements of Timurid princes were recorded by the Spanish envoy, Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlaine*, trans. Le Strange, London, 1928 (hereafter, Clavijo).

37 E.g., found especially in illustrations of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, in Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, 112; and in scenes from Niẓāmī's *Laylā and Majnūn*, e.g., L.

Binyon, *The Poems of Nizami*, London, 1928, pl. 12; and E. Grube, *The World of Islam*, New York, 1966, 127.

38 Cf. Clavijo, 238; D. Wilber, "The Timurid Court: Life in Gardens and Tents," *Iran*, XVII, 1979, 127–33.

39 Sadan, 7 ff.

40 Lamm, 185.

41 B. Gray, *Persian Painting*, Geneva, 1961, 25.

42 M. Canard, "Le cérémonial Fatimite et le cérémonial Byzantin," *Byzantion*, XXI, 1951, 360 (hereafter, Canard, 1951).

43 J. Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages*, Detroit, 1970, 88–99 (hereafter, Lassner); Ibn al-Zubayr, 134.

44 Ibn al-Zubayr, 150–1.

45 Ibid., 141–5; other "scenery changes" are described in A. Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, Oxford, 1937, 65.

46 Lassner, 88–9.

47 Lamm, 78.

48 T. Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, Oxford, 1928, rpt., New York, 1965, 21 (hereafter, Arnold); al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār*, Būlāq, 1854, I, 419 (hereafter, al-Maqrīzī).

49 Arnold, 21.

50 V. Gervers, "An Early Christian Curtain in the Royal Ontario Museum," *Studies in Textile History*, 56–81 (see note 10 for the complete reference).

51 O. Grabar, "The Six Kings at Qusayr Amrah," *Ars Orientalis*, I, 1954, 185–7.

52 al-Mas'ūdī, cited in Pope, *SPA*, 2276–7; Lamm, 57.

53 Ibn al-Zubayr, 254.

54 Sadan, 14–17.

55 Bussagli, ill. frontispiece.

56 On the ceremonial role of curtains, see D. Sourdel, "Questions de cérémonial Abbaside," *Revue des Études Islamiques*, 1960, and Canard, 1951. For curtains placed around the *miḥrāb*, see Canard, 1951, 376.

57 See "*Kiswa*," *EI*¹, s.v. The custom of covering idols and shrines may be traced to ancient Semitic usage (cf. Bosworth, 42, al-Tha'ālibī, text discussing "first persons" to cover Ka'bah, see note 76 below).

58 *Riḥlah*, Leiden, 1907, 83.

59 F. Rosenthal, *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam*, IV: "A Note on the Mandīl," Leiden, 1971 (hereafter, Rosenthal).

60 Ibid., 93.

61 E.g., Niẓāmī, *Khamsah*, Brit. Mus. Add. 27261, ill. F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, London, 1912, pl. 53; also Niẓāmī, *Haft Paikar*, trans. C. E. Wilson, London, 1924, 175, 198.

62 Von Le Coq, *Bilderatlas . . .* , fig. 157 (Kutscha), fig. 63 (actual painting on silk).

63 al-Tha'ālibī, *Histoire des Rois des Perses*, ed. and trans. H. Zotenberg, Paris, 1900, 640.

64 Serjeant, *Ars Islamica*, IX, 71 ff.

65 Goitein, 1973, 134.

66 al-Māfarrūkhī, Pers. trans. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Riḍā' Āvī, *Maḥāsin Isfahān*, ed. A. Iqbal, Tehran, 1327, 75.

67 Stillman, 1974, 302.
68 Grabar, VII, 45.
69 E.g., al-Maqrīzī, II, 79.
70 Examples cited in "*Ṭirāz*," *EI¹*, s.v.
71 L. Volov (Golombek), "Plaited Kufic on Samanid Epigraphic Pottery," *Ars Orientalis*, VI, 1966, 107–33.
72 Rosenthal, 81, 83–4, 86.
73 Lamm, 144 ff.; Golombek and Gervers, "Tiraz Fabrics."
74 L. Volov (Golombek).
75 I have been informed by George Scanlon that no Samanid wares have been found in the excavations of Fustat.
76 al-Thaʿālibī, *The book of Curious and Entertaining Information* (*Laṭāʾif al-Maʿārif*), trans. C. E. Bosworth, Edinburgh, 1968 129.
77 C. Ewert, *Spanisch-Islamische Systeme sich Kreuzender Bögen*, Berlin, 1968.
78 R. A. Jairazbhoy, *An Outline of Islamic Architecture*, London, 1972, pl. 31.

Part III

Image and Word:
Early Medieval, Byzantine, and Islamic Art

8

The Beginnings of Biblical Illustration

John Lowden

When Saint Matthew began his Gospel with the words "The book of the genera-
tion of Jesus Christ," he wrote Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. And when Saint
John ended his Gospel by informing us that if everything that Jesus had done
were to be written down, "the world itself could not contain the books that
should be written," his final words were τὰ γραφόμενα βιβλία. Thus the Gospels
open and close with the words Βίβλος and βιβλία in Greek (*Liber* and *libros* in
Latin). Every scribe who copied the sacred text of the Gospels to produce another
book began and ended his task by writing the word "book" and "books." Chris-
tianity in the manuscript era was truly a "Religion of the Book" at a number of
levels.

The modern English word "Bible" comes from the Old French *Bible*, itself
the vernacular version of the Latin *Biblia*, which was merely a transliteration of
the Greek βιβλία. Βιβλία is the plural of βιβλίον, meaning "a book," originally
"a small book." It is derived from βίβλος or βύβλος, terms for the outer skin of
the Egyptian papyrus reed, the material from which books were most commonly
made in antiquity. The most common Greek term for the Bible from Late Anti-
quity to the present day has remained βίβλος.[1] The word "Bible" may have
remained graphically similar to its predecessors over two thousand years, but
semantically it has passed through several transformations. The βιβλία, or books
of antiquity, were written on papyrus scrolls. The βίβλος and *Biblia* of Late
Antiquity and the Middle Ages were written in parchment codices. Modern
Bibles are mechanical productions printed on paper (or digitized on computer-

Figure 8.1 The beginnings of biblical illustration, from John Lowden, "The Beginnings of Biblical Illustration" in John Williams (ed.), *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 10. © 2006 by The Pennsylvania State University. Reproduced by permission of the publisher

legible disks). Even if the sacred text has stayed more or less the same over the centuries, each Bible's makers and users, their intentions and expectations, their attitudes and aspirations, most certainly have not. The journey of understanding from Bible to *Bible* to *Biblia* to βιβλία to βίβλος (or βύβλος) is thus a much longer and more difficult one than it might at first appear. There are constant temptations to extrapolate evidence from one context to fill gaps in another, and to make connections on the basis of bold imaginative leaps.

Only a fool leaps into the unknown. This chapter is intentionally unimaginative in undertaking a review of early biblical illustration, a topic that has long been the subject of intense study.[2] Nonetheless it has turned into a reassessment of that topic, which gives it, I hope, some claim to boldness.

The subject of early biblical illustration is a large one, and it is necessary to define parameters for the present inquiry. "Early" will be taken to mean the entire period from the beginnings of Christianity (and before, if appropriate) up to approximately the early seventh century. The later terminus is suggested by a pronounced gap in the material, sometimes associated with the end of Later Antiquity and the start of the Middle Ages. The formula "biblical illustration" will be understood to refer to all images to be found in biblical manuscripts, and the appropriateness of terming these images "illustrations" will later be considered briefly. In terms of geography, we shall need to look at the production of the entire Christian world of the time (the location of sites mentioned is indicated on Figure 8.1). In terms of language and culture, we shall need to consider not only Greek, the original language of the Christian Bible, but all the many languages into which the Bible was translated in those centuries. What it will not be possible to do here, however, is to pay close attention to the images from biblical narratives that are found, for example, on textiles, mosaics, or ivories, whether they date from the early period or later, although these are often considered germane to the subject of early biblical illustration. I shall attempt to justify this exclusion in due course.

It is appropriate first to look in turn at each of the surviving illustrated biblical manuscripts. Many – it needs to be emphasized – have been the subject of important new studies in recent years, and most are tolerably familiar to specialists. Yet all of them remain – and will remain – imperfectly understood for a variety of reasons, and somewhat surprisingly they have never previously all been considered together.[3] These illustrated biblical manuscripts will be surveyed here within subgroups defined by the language of their text, starting with books written in Greek. This is a considered alternative to looking, let us say, at all the Gospel Books together, or to attempting to arrange the material in chronological order. In every case I will draw particular attention to features of each book's planning and construction, particularly as these connect to the provision of images, for reasons that will, I trust, become clearer as the evidence mounts up.[4] This focus on issues of production as they relate to entire manuscripts will be

partly at the expense of traditional stylistic and/or iconographic analyses of specific images, approaches that are well tried for most of the manuscripts under consideration and allow only limited scope for further refinement. I shall then consider more generally what these manuscripts, when viewed together, reveal or do not reveal about the beginnings of biblical illustration.

[. . .]

Reconsidering the Beginnings of Biblical Illustration

We have two Genesis manuscripts, which between them might originally have had some 550 miniatures. We have one Pentateuch, with originally probably sixty-nine miniatures in Genesis–Numbers (plus whatever it had in the missing book of Deuteronomy). We have one Book of Kings, with four pages of miniatures out of a total that has been posited as over sixty. We have nine Gospel Books or fragments of Gospel Books (ignoring the Gothic Gospels at Uppsala), with at present a total of sixty-one illustrated pages out of an original total that cannot even be guessed. And we have part of one Bible with twenty-two surviving images. Obviously we have lost very large parts even of the books that survive, especially – and this point can hardly be overemphasized – of their opening pages, where we might expect their images to have been concentrated. And of course many other illustrated books must have been lost without trace.

It would now be possible to pursue the question of early biblical illustration in various directions, following paths some of which others have explored more or less systematically. We could try to flesh out the evidence by looking, for example, at a range of other works of the early period that use biblical images: sarcophagi, ivories, floor and wall mosaics, wall paintings, textiles, silver plates, and so on.[5] Or we could remain within the confines of manuscript illustration and consider the surviving nonbiblical material from the early period, such as the Ambrosiana Iliad or Vienna Dioskurides (both in Greek) or the Vatican Vergil and Roman Vergil (both in Latin).[6] Yet another alternative would be to look at later biblical manuscripts that have been thought in some fashion to reflect lost biblical works of the early period: the Codex Amiatinus, for example, or the Utrecht Psalter, the Vatican Book of Kings, or the Vatican Cosmas, the Sacra Parallela or the Octateuchs, to name a few well-known subjects.[7] What all of these approaches have in common is that they imply the reconstruction of lost biblical illustration on the basis of various deductions and assumptions about what survives. To assess the potential value of such reconstructions, it is appropriate to conduct two brief experiments. Both will require the reader's active participation.

First, suppose that no fragment of the Vienna Genesis had survived. Now reconstruct in your mind's eye an illustrated sixth-century Genesis manuscript on the basis of your knowledge of the art of the period. Result: a manuscript that will resemble the Cotton Genesis to some greater or lesser extent, and may have some elements from the Ashburnham Pentateuch, but definitely not the Vienna Genesis. The Vienna Genesis could not be hypothesized on the basis of other early biblical manuscripts.

Now we can try the second experiment. Reconstruct in your mind's eye an illustrated sixth-century Gospel Book. What features does it have? Suppose it has a frontispiece miniature of the Virgin and Child, like the Rabbula Gospels, and/or marginal illustration, like the Sinope Gospels, and/or a full-page miniature divided into compartments with scenes from the life of Christ, like the Saint Augustine's Gospels. Now suppose the Rabbula Gospels or Sinope Gospels or Saint Augustine's Gospels had not survived: the reconstruction would have to lose its Virgin and Child and its marginal illustration and its multiscene frontispiece, for there would no longer be any firm evidence that such features could have been included in a sixth-century Gospel Book. What is remarkable about the surviving early biblical manuscripts, even the nine Gospel Books, is thus not the degree to which they resemble one another but the extraordinary extent of their differences.

I hope the two "experiments" indicate the dangers, even the impossibility, especially in these early centuries, of extrapolating accurate visual ideas of what we do not have from what has survived. The material is profoundly un-predictable. The use of later evidence as the basis for reconstructing the images in lost early biblical manuscripts is equally questionable, and the results even more uncertain. Imagining the past can be instructive, but the pervasive element of fantasy that is inevitable must always be recognized and acknowledged.

Early biblical illustration provides a restricted body of material, if we think in terms of the types of books that received images, but in every other way its evidence is remarkably varied. It is this variety that can, in my view, provide the opening for further consideration. Let us accept our continuing ignorance and set aside for the present all the usual art-historical questions about the surviving books: the whens and wheres, the by whoms and for whoms, the whys and the wherefores. Let us also ignore the enticing byway of hypothetical reconstructions based on surviving analogous material, whether of the early period or later. Let us instead return to the surviving early biblical manuscripts and ask how, in practical terms, the Bible was illustrated. This is a subject that has, I think, been less carefully considered than it merits.

In deciding to include images in a biblical manuscript several crucial choices had to be made before pigments were ever placed on the parchment. These choices are no less important because they had to be addressed at an early stage in the making of any illustrated book. The *Belles Heures* of the Duc de Berry now in the Cloisters Museum, New York,[8] or the St. Albans Psalter now in the Diocesan Museum of St. Godehard, Hildesheim (to cite two examples),[9] just like

the Rossano Gospels or Ashburnham Pentateuch, could not have been produced until such questions had been satisfactorily answered.[10] The first issue to be considered here will be that of the possible layout of the images and their relationship with the physical structure and text of the book. Where were the images to be placed? Would they be on separate leaves, perhaps gathered together as a cycle? Would they be integrated with the text in spaces left by the scribe? Would they perhaps be placed around the text's margins? Would they be large or small, of a consistent or varied format? Would a framed area hold a single image, or be subdivided to include several distinct scenes? The number of possible responses to such questions is large, but not unlimited, and the manuscripts themselves indicate in how many different ways they were answered.

The full-page miniature on a specially reserved folio is found in the Rossano, Rabbula, Diyarbakir, Ejmiatsin, and Saint Augustine's Gospels, as well as in the Ashburnham Pentateuch (the examples are listed in the order in which the manuscripts were surveyed, so as to avoid questions of relative chronology). The full-page image divided into various smaller units is found in the Rabbula Gospels (Crucifixion), Quedlinburg Itala, Saint Augustine's Gospels, and Ashburnham Pentateuch. The marginal image is exemplified by the Sinope Gospels and (if we include Canon Tables) by the Rabbula Gospels and Paris syr. 33. The double-page opening is found in the Rossano Gospels (Communion of the Apostles). The frontispiece cycle is found in the Rossano, Rabbula, and (perhaps) in the Ejmiatsin Gospels. Integrated illustration, with images occurring within the text as and when they are required, is found in the Cotton Genesis, Quedlinburg Itala, and Ashburnham Pentateuch. Incipit illustration (as it might be termed), with images incorporated before the start of each section of a text, is found in the Syriac Bible. The colophon (or explicit) image is found in the Wolfenbüttel Gospels. The picture book with text adjusted to keep pace with half-page images is found in the Vienna Genesis.

Inseparable from planning the physical layout of an illustrated biblical manuscript were decisions about the conceptual relationship between the images and the text they accompanied. Would they illustrate the biblical text in a fairly literal way? Or would they take the opportunity to comment on and interpret it at the same time? Would all images fall into the same category? Would images that had no explicit connection with the text but that were desired for other reasons be included? Again there is a vast range of possible answers, and the early biblical manuscripts provide numerous alternatives.

The illustration of a single event recounted in the adjacent text in a fairly literal way is found in the Cotton Genesis, the Vienna Genesis, and the Sinope Gospels. The combination within one image of a sequence of events is found in the Cotton Genesis, Vienna Genesis, and Ashburnham Pentateuch. The inclusion of lengthy texts within the image is found in the Ashburnham Pentateuch. In the Wolfenbüttel Gospels text is even arranged within the image so as to form a sort of *carmen figuratum*. The combination of several separate images to preface a number of subsequent texts is found in the Quedlinburg Itala. The addition of

extrabiblical figures or scenes to the main event, implying a modified reading of the biblical narrative, is found in the Vienna Genesis and Ashburnham Pentateuch.[11] The addition of images in the frame so as to amplify the meaning of the main composition is found in the Ejmiatsin Gospels (Baptism). The selection of an image of a single event to represent the content of an entire book is found in the Syriac Bible (e.g., Job on the dung hill). The use of the author portrait as an appropriate generic image for a text is found in the Syriac Bible and with modifications in Saint Augustine's Gospels. The full-page prefatory image that has no direct connection with the textual content of the book is found in the Rabbula Gospels (e.g., Pentecost). The "devotional" image as a frontispiece and as a presumed focus for prayer is present in the Rabbula and Diyarbakir Gospels, and as a tailpiece in the Wolfenbüttel Gospels. The presentation image, relating self-referentially to the book, is also found in the Rabbula Gospels.

Putting these observations together we can say first that the early manuscripts show that there was no single normative procedure for biblical illustration alongside numerous variants. Every surviving manuscript differs from every other in important aspects. This is a crucial point to bear in mind when lost works are hypothesized. The Vienna Genesis and Cotton Genesis manuscripts differ by intent, not by incompetence or mere contingency. There are no internal grounds for supposing there was ever a Cotton Exodus, a Vienna Leviticus, a Rossano Numbers, a Sinope Deuteronomy, a Rabbula Joshua, and so forth. Second, it can be said that although the volume of surviving evidence for early biblical illustration is undoubtedly limited, it is a remarkable fact that most of the principal methods and procedures for including images in biblical manuscripts, methods that would continue to be used throughout the Middle Ages, had already been tried by the early seventh century.

It can be acknowledged, nonetheless, that some techniques of biblical illustration are absent: the historiated initial, which plays a crucial role in the Western tradition from around the eighth century onward, is missing.[12] It has no precise equivalent or precedent in the early period.[13] Nor, I think, do we find *Wortillustration* – the visual rendering in isolation of individual words or phrases – such as can be found, for example, in the Chludov, Stuttgart, or Utrecht Psalters in the ninth century.[14] The absence of the latter, if genuine, merits further consideration in terms of the hypothetical early sources of Psalter illustration.[15] And although all Christian art is propaganda of a sort, we do not find in the early period highly charged images, such as those against Iconoclasts and others in the ninth-century Byzantine marginal Psalters.[16] Typological parallels (linking the Old and New Testaments, for example, the Sacrifice of Isaac and the Crucifixion), whether or not organized in some diagrammatic form, are not a major concern in the manuscript images of the early period, although the Old Testament figures with their texts in both the Rossano and Sinope Gospels address the question of typology, and it was explored visually in the Wisdom image of the Syriac Bible.[17]

Having observed the presence of most (but not all) of the fundamental techniques of biblical illustration in our surviving early witnesses, it is appropriate, if risky, to pursue the discussion yet further. We can ask whether it is possible to say how or when some of these procedures first came into use.[18] We can start with the least problematic. There is no doubt that author portraits at the start of texts were occasionally included in papyrus scrolls of pagan writers long before Christians began using images early in the third century (as is currently assumed).[19] Biblical illustrators in this case, therefore, were simply adopting a current Greco-Roman formula or tradition, much as they did, for example, by using sarcophagi or displaying the image of the Good Shepherd. Yet it does not follow from the fact that Christians could have had author portraits in their biblical manuscripts in any century before (say) the sixth that they necessarily did. The approximate date for the adoption of the formula is not established merely by identifying its conceptual precedent, and should remain open.

By around the year 300 the book in roll form was overtaken by the more durable, and doubtless much more costly, parchment codex.[20] And a number of decisions about the use and layout of biblical images presuppose the codex rather than the roll form in order to be effective. The frontispiece cycle, for example, exploits the practicalities of the bound book; it must therefore be a later development than the author portrait. But can we say whether the frontispiece cycle is more likely to have been first devised for illustrating a biblical or a non-biblical manuscript? Here again the evidence is problematic. The prime nonbiblical witness is the Vienna manuscript of Dioskurides, made in Constantinople around 512.[21] The content of its prefatory cycle, however, indicates that it must have been an ad hoc creation for this particular compilation volume. Whether this cycle was included in imitation of the sort of prefaces then being made for biblical manuscripts, or vice versa, is thus another question best left open. The introduction of prefatory cycles into codices cannot, I feel, be closely dated at present.

Still further questions of planning and layout are probably also best left unanswered, for the time being, at least. The formula of marginal illustration, for example, could have been invented or reinvented at almost any time and in the context of almost any writing. The concept of fitting the narrative image into the scheme of scribal guidelines (as in the Cotton Genesis) also can hardly be tied to a particular time or text: some scientific, technical, or mathematical works, it can be accepted, were in all likelihood conceived from the outset as requiring diagrammatic illustrations, even if the Bible was not.[22]

This line of inquiry thus peters out in uncertainty. An alternative approach is to consider the content rather than the layout and physical location of biblical images. Most images in biblical manuscripts are, broadly speaking, narrative in character. The Quedlinburg Itala inscriptions (those that underlie the paint surface) give clear guidance regarding how such images could have been devised on the basis of a paraphrase of the biblical text and then executed in terms of an artist's accustomed formulas for figures, gestures, landscape, and so forth.

Such images could then be "read" and understood with the help of further inscriptions (those that lie over the paint surface) and the adjacent biblical text itself. This need not have been the only way of devising narrative images, but it is certainly an obvious one. Yet once again as a procedure it cannot easily be harnessed to a close dating.

More difficult to explain in terms of content, I believe, and hence perhaps more valuable as evidence, is the type of full-page image found in prefatory cycles, whether accompanied by text, as in the Rossano Gospels, or standing on its own, as in the Rabbula or Ejmiatsin Gospels. In the Rabbula Gospels, as we have seen, there are even narrative images of events that are not recorded in the Gospel text (such as Pentecost), as well as devotional or cult images (using these terms loosely and perhaps anachronistically), such as the Virgin and Child, which are best considered nonnarrative. To explain their presence in a biblical manuscript, it is necessary to advance a hypothesis.

These large miniatures, I suggest, were made for viewers or readers who were already familiar with biblical images unmediated by texts – other than inscriptions – because they saw them constantly on the walls of churches, on textiles, on ivories, on painted panels, in their homes, and so forth. (This is not, however, to imply that images in manuscripts are to be understood merely as "copies" of images in other media.)[23] An awareness of the profusion of such images in the fifth and sixth centuries has been a major development in art-historical writing of recent decades.[24] Thus the iconlike "devotional" or "feast" scene (the latter an image relating to one of the great feasts of the church), I would argue, found its way into books in response to a demand created by its familiarity in other contexts. To judge from written as well as surviving visual sources, this degree of familiarity implies a date after c. 400 for the transfer.[25] Seen against this background, the donation, or presentation, image in a book is perhaps best understood as an adaptation of the type of donor image familiar in monumental art, as, for example, in the mosaics at S. Vitale in Ravenna.[26] The bold public statement of piety and generosity, with its ex-voto connotations, readily comprehensible in, for example, an apse mosaic, looks a little odd when transferred into the closed and private world of the manuscript. Does it serve a related purpose? The question is problematic when the precise function and audience for such books (the Rabbula Gospels perhaps excepted) is so uncertain.

If this working hypothesis for the inclusion of full-page iconlike images is entertained, it follows that the motive for including more strictly narrative biblical images, and those integrated within the text of biblical manuscripts, ought also to be pondered. Were these included in the surviving fifth- and sixth-century books for reasons broadly similar to those for the full-page frontispieces? This would be fully in accord with the surviving evidence. And it is supported by the conclusions of, for example, Geyer in her study of 1989.[27] She argues on somewhat different grounds for an origin of narrative book illustration in the fifth century. Yet it must be acknowledged that the proposal contradicts a pervasive view of the period, most familiar through the works of Weitzmann.[28] According

to Weitzmann's theory, the early centuries were ones of extraordinary fertility in the invention of vast cycles of narrative illustration in biblical manuscripts. This inventiveness was found by him to be exemplified primarily not by the scant survivals of early illustrated biblical manuscripts themselves – those we have looked at – but by the innumerable imitations, reflections, or shadows of lost illustrated manuscripts that he found in other media and at other times. Biblical narrative art in every medium, according to this theory, was permeated with the techniques and modes of book illustration, for it was in books that these images had been invented and developed.[29] Fifth-century viewers, we are told, would have recognized in the biblical cycles of the great churches of, for example, Rome the kind of historical painting associated with text illustration.[30]

Fundamental to this theory is the tendency to assimilate narrative art in a simplistic fashion with the written word. Throughout this paper I too have often used the terms "narrative" and "illustration" in a very loose way. It is time to acknowledge that they are strongly tendentious. They imply a dominance of the word over the image, and of literate over visual modes. Intensive work on issues of literacy and orality in recent years, but going back to the pioneering studies of Milman Parry in the 1930s, should have made us all aware of aspects of narrative apart from the written one.[31] Biblical narratives, by the fifth century to be sure, can be said to have their origin in the biblical text, but many of these stories – most obviously of the principal events in the life of Christ – were undoubtedly known by vast numbers of people who would have been unable to read them. They would have seen them frequently (but not in books) and heard them repeatedly. What does this imply?

It has been proposed that the assimilation of monumental biblical cycles with book illustration of the early period is exemplified in a text generally regarded as crucial in the history of European art, namely Pope Gregory the Great's justification of religious images.[32] The crucial passage, in a letter to Bishop Serenus of Marseilles, reads as follows: "It is one thing to adore a picture, another through a picture's story to learn what must be adored. For what writing offers to those who read it, a picture offers to the ignorant [meaning here the illiterate] who look at it, since in it the ignorant see what they ought to follow, in it they read who do not know letters; whence especially for gentiles a picture stands in place of reading."[33] Further support has been found in the observation that Gregory was himself applying an argument employed already in the early fifth century, as we can judge from Neilos of Ankyra's advice in a letter to the Eparch Olympiodoros: "Fill the Holy Church on both sides with pictures from the Old and New Testaments, executed by an excellent painter, so that the illiterate who are unable to read the Holy Scriptures, may, by gazing at the pictures, become mindful of the manly deeds of those who have genuinely served the true God, and may be roused to emulate their feats."[34] The authenticity of this particular passage in Neilos's text, however, which was quoted by the Iconophiles in the Council of Nicaea (787), is highly questionable.[35] Even if we accept it, we must ask whether these passages really support the notion that the techniques and

modes of biblical book illustration were ubiquitous in the early period. Do they not imply the exact opposite conclusion? Gregory and Neilos nowhere say, "Put up biblical images in churches because they are like the images we have in biblical books." Instead, they make the clearest possible distinction between the biblical book, which contains the text, which you have to be able to read to understand, and the church, which contains the image, which you can understand at some level without being a proficient reader. The position they adopt is very similar to that of Augustine (of Hippo), who c. 400 castigated those who seek Christ and his apostles "not in sacred books but in pictures on walls."[36]

A further proof text cited by those who wish to assimilate early monumental biblical cycles with book illustration also needs to be reconsidered for present purposes. It is the description by Gregory of Tours of how, in the middle of the fifth century (about one hundred years before the time of writing), the wife of Bishop Namatius of Clermont in the Auvergne organized the decoration of the church of Saint Stephen that she had built.[37] In the translation by O. M. Dalton the key passage reads: "As she wished [the church interior] to be adorned with paintings, she used to hold a book upon her knees, in which she read the story of deeds done of old time, and pointed out to the painters what subjects should be represented on the walls."[38] Dalton noted that the book in question might have been "an early illuminated Bible."[39] The passage, in this translation, does indeed conjure up the pious patron, seated in the church with her precious illuminated book, turning its pages and pointing to the images that the artists are to take as their models. But is this what Gregory of Tours wrote or implied?

The second part of the passage could be more literally translated as follows: "She used to hold a book on her lap and, reading the stories of events of old, would make known to the painters what should be represented on the walls."[40] The crux is the precise meaning in this context of the participle *indicans* (from a common verb whose primary meaning is not merely "point out" but also "inform," "make known," "declare," and so forth). It is my contention that Gregory of Tours did not intend to imply by his choice of language that the book held by Namatius's wife was illuminated, merely that she read passages from it to instruct the artists. The stories she recounted could have been exclusively biblical, but equally they might not have been. Very likely Gregory of Tours's knowledge did not extend beyond the main lines of this particular account into questions of iconography. This passage too, I suggest, is fully in accord with Augustine's distinction between "sacred books" and "pictures on walls."[41]

The principal implication of these texts, I suggest, is that most biblical manuscripts in the early period did *not* have images in them. If this point is accepted, Gregory the Great, Neilos (supposing his statement worth consideration), Augustine, and Gregory of Tours are all in accord with the surviving evidence in suggesting that the illustration of early biblical manuscripts developed late as a response to the ubiquitous presence of biblical imagery in other media, not vice versa. Gregory the Great and Gregory of Tours would certainly have seen images

in biblical manuscripts (Neilos and Augustine probably not), but this is not apparent from what either wrote in the context under discussion. Indeed, for Pope Gregory to have discussed or alluded to illustrated biblical books in his letter to Bishop Serenus would have seriously weakened his argument.

In conclusion, I propose that the illustrated biblical manuscript was a response to a Christian demand for and love of sacred images that had been developing with increasing momentum through the fourth and fifth centuries. I think public art, in the form of the large and conspicuous cycles of biblical images that began to appear in churches around 400, must have changed attitudes. And I believe biblical manuscript illustration was a fifth- and sixth-century response to those changes. The idea that narrative illustrations in classical manuscripts prepared the way for a similar phenomenon in Christian manuscripts is not borne out by the evidence, and both are better considered as parallel and broadly synchronic developments.[42] Quite possibly images were introduced into Christian books only at a relatively late stage due to a combination of factors among which can be numbered resistance to innovation, lack of need, fear of idolatry, and possible devaluation of the sacred. As the demand for illustrated books grew through the fifth and sixth centuries, their producers felt at liberty to experiment with a great variety of approaches and techniques. Probably those techniques were not used very widely, however, and I certainly assume that illustrated books in these centuries were much rarer than in the Middle Ages, when they remained most definitely the exception rather than the rule.

Whereas the massive loss of biblical manuscript material from the early period is beyond question, it needs to be constantly borne in mind that the illuminated books considered here have not survived by mere accident, but by a process of ruthless (although not Darwinian) selectivity over many centuries, involving the concomitant loss of more workaday volumes. The Sinope Gospels, for example, should not be considered the tip of an irretrievable iceberg of lost illustrated sixth-century Gospel Books all written in gold on purple parchment. It is precisely because the Sinope Gospels was so much more costly and remarkable than innumerable other manuscripts – or so I would argue – that it was treasured and preserved while they were allowed to perish. It would thus be better to consider such a book in metaphorical terms as a surviving fragment of the thin icing from a large cake of which we now have but a few remaining crumbs. All historical reconstruction has to take due account not merely of the loss of evidence but of the unpredictable and unrepresentative nature of what has survived.

Christianity was established and developed as a religion of the book, or rather of many books. But by the early seventh century it had been transformed to a remarkable extent into a religion of the image, or rather of many images. The inclusion of images in biblical manuscripts was not the agent of that change, I suggest, or even the catalyst that facilitated and accelerated it, but rather one reponse to it. The Iconoclast Controversy was another, albeit very different, response, but also another story.

Notes

1 Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Paris, 1968, 200–1, s.v. βύβλος; Basile Atsalos, *Lay terminologie du livre-manuscrit à l'époque byzantine*, Thessaloniki, 1971, 46–87.

2 For an earlier survey, see Ruth L. Kozodoy, "The Origin of Early Christian Book Illustration: The State of the Question," *Gesta*, X.2, 1971, 33–40; more recent but less helpful is Robert G. Calkins, "Pictorial Emphasis in Early Biblical Manuscripts," in *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, LXXXIX, ed. Bernard S. Levy, Binghampton, NY, 1992, 77–102. The subject was considered by André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*, Bollingen Series XXXV. 10, Princeton, 1968, 87–94 (but contrast its absence in Maria Giovanna Muzj, *Visione e Presenza: Iconografia e teofania nel pensiero di André Grabar*, Milan, 1995). It occurs in broader surveys, such as Walter Cahn, *Romanesque Bible Illumination*, Fribourg, 1982, 11–34, and Otto Pächt, *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages*, London, 1986, 10–31, as well as in dictionary or encyclopedia entries, such as Herbert L. Kessler, "Early Christian Art," in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, New York, 1982–9, IV, 348–64, esp. 355–7; H. L. Kessler, "Bibbia," in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, III, 1992, 468–87 (more general in focus); various authors, "Buchmalerei," in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, II, 1983, cols. 837–89, esp. cols. 837–9, 867–84; Barbara Zimmermann and Jürgen Hammerstaedt, "Illustration," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, XVII, cols. 953–4 esp. cols. 979–94. It sometimes plays a surprisingly insignificant role, or is entirely absent, in articles with promising titles: e.g., Françoise Monfrin, "La Bible dans l'iconographie chrétienne d'Occident," in *Le monde latin antique et la Bible*, ed. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Pietri, Paris, 1985, 207–41 (brief consideration of the Quedlinburg Itala on 233); Pierre du Bourguet, "Premières scènes bibliques dans l'art chrétien," in *Le monde grec ancien et la Bible*, ed. Claude Mondésert, Paris, 1984, 233–56; Johanne Autenrieth, "Bücher im Übergang von der Spätantike bis zum Mittelalter," *Scriptorium*, XLIX, 1995, 169–79. See also the remarks in note 3 below. The most familiar and widely available survey is Kurt Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, New York, 1977, which considers ten of the fourteen biblical manuscripts considered here, with the addition of five nonbiblical or later manuscripts. Most recently the material has been surveyed by Sörries (1993). He includes all but one of the manuscripts considered here, and adds more than twenty others of nonbiblical material or later date. The collection is useful, in particular for its color reproductions, but the text is uncritical. I have surveyed the material for different purposes in "Early Christian and Byzantine Art: Manuscripts," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, London, 1996, IX, 602–19, and "Miniatura: area bizantina," in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, VIII, 1997, 452–62.

3 Sörries's publication comes closest: it adopts a comparable strategy, but achieves different results. A striking lack of interest in integrating early illustrated biblical manuscripts into broader surveys can be judged by the relatively insignificant role they play in, for example, Beat Brenk, *Spätantike und frühes Christentum*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, Supplementband I, Frankfurt am Main, 1977; *Age of Spirituality:*

A Symposium, ed. Kurt Weitzmann, New York, 1980; Arne Effenberger, *Frühchrist-liche Kunst und Kultur: Von den Anfängen bis zum J. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig, 1986; *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II.12.1–3, Berlin, 1981–5, and 12.4 (forthcoming); Frédérick Tristan, *Les premières images chrétiennes*, Pairs, 1996; or the various volumes of *Actes* of the *Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne*. Sabine Schrenk, *Typos und Antitypos in der frühchristlichen Kunst*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband XXI, Münster, 1995, is more generous (e.g., on 90–107). But early illustrated biblical manuscripts are omitted entirely in, for example, Jaś Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, Cambridge, 1995; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, New Haven, 1995; Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, Princeton, 1993. For the position adopted by Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, Cambridge, Mass., 1977, see note 21 below. I have tried to redress the balance in the early chapters of *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, London, 1997.

4   A more narrowly codicological survey of the Latin material is provided in the useful article by Patrick McGurk, "The Oldest Manuscripts of the Latin Bible," in *The Early Medieval Bible*, ed. Richard Gameson, Cambridge, 1994, 1–23, with brief remarks on illustrated material at 16.

5   This approach is deemed essential by Kurt Weitzmann, "The Selection of Texts for Cyclic Illustration in Byzantine Manuscripts," in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, Washington, DC, 1975, 70, with further references in n. 2. In general, see Brenk (as in note 3), and *Age of Spirituality*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann, New York, 1979. An important new discovery in the field of textiles is discussed in Lieselotte Kötzsche, *Der bemalte Behang in der Abegg-Stiftung (Bern) mit alttestamentlicher Bildfolge vom Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts*, Monographien der Abegg-Stiftung, XIV, Bern (forthcoming).

6   For reproductions, see the following: *Ilias Ambrosiana*, Fontes Ambrosiani, XXVII, Bern, 1953, and the commentary volume by Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, *Helle-nistic-Byzantine Miniatures of the Iliad*, Bern, 1955; *Wiener Dioscurides, Codex Vindobonensis Med. gr. 1 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Codices Selecti, XII, Graz, 1965, and *Kommentarband*, by H. Gerstinger, Graz, 1970; *Vergilius Vaticanus*, Codices Selecti, LXXI, Graz, 1984, and *Kommentarband*, by David H. Wright; David H. Wright, *The Vatican Vergil*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993; *Vergilius Romanus*, *Codex Vaticanus Latinus* 3867, Codices e Vaticanis Selecti, LXVI, Stuttgart/Zurich, 1985, and *Kommentarband*, by Carlo Bertelli et al., Zurich, 1986.

7   Some of these manuscripts appear in Sörries, 133–47. For the Codex Amiatinus, see Lawrence Nees, "Problems of Form and Function in Early Medieval Illustrated Bibles from Northwest Europe," in John Williams (ed.), *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, University Park, Pa., 1999, 121–78. See also S. Dufrenne, *Les illustrations du psautier d'Utrecht, sources et apport carolingien*, Association des publications près les universités de Strasbourg, CLXI, Pairs, n.d. (and see note 14 below); Jean Lassus, *L'illustration byzantine du livre des Rois*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques, IX, Paris, 1973; Kurt Weitzmann, *The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallela, Parisinus Graecus* 923, Studies in Manuscript Illumination, VIII, Princeton, 1979; John Lowden, *The Octateuchs*, University Park, Pa., 1992.

8   Partially reproduced in color in *Les Belles Heures de Jean Duc de Berry*, by Millard Meiss and Elizabeth H. Beatson, New York, 1974.

9   It is a pity that there is no facsimile of this manuscript. Otto Pächt, C. R. Dodwell, and Francis Wormald, *The St. Albans Psalter (Albani Psalter)*, Studies of the Warburg Institute, XXV, London, 1960; Kristine Haney, "The Saint Albans Psalter: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LVIII, 1995, 1–28.

10 See also Hélène Toubert, "Illustration et mise en page," in *Mise en page et mise en texte du livre manuscrit*, Paris, 1990, 353–420.

11 See first Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Bible illustration and the Jewish Tradition," in Williams (ed.) (see note 7 above). K. Schubert, "Die Illustration der Wiener Genesis im Lichte der Rabbinischen Traditionen," *Kairos*, XXV, 1983, 1–17; M. Friedmann, "On the Sources of the Vienna Genesis," *Cahiers archéologiques*, XXXVIII, 1989, 5–17; M. Friedmann, "More on the Vienna Genesis," *Byzantion*, LIX, 1989, 64–77; J. Gutmann, "The Jewish Origin of the Ashburnham Pentateuch Miniatures," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XLV, 1953, 55–72; K. Schubert, "Die Miniaturen des Ashburnham Pentateuch im Lichte der Rabbinischen Traditionen," *Kairos*, XVIII, 1976, 191–212.

12 A convenient starting point is J. J. G. Alexander, *The Decorated Letter*, New York, 1978.

13 Carl Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Zierbuchstaben*, Stockholm, 1970.

14 The statement may need correction in light of current work by Rainer Warland, who does find *Wortillustration* in manuscripts of the early period: see his "Text und Bild im Vergilius Vaticanus," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, CCXLIV, 1992, 187–206, esp. 202–4 (remarks on the Vatican Vergil and Quedlinburg Itala). The term *Wortillustration* may need clarification or redefinition. For reproductions of the later manuscripts, see M. V. Shchepkina, *Miniatyury Khludovskoi Psaltiri*, Moscow, 1977; *Der Stuttgarter Bilderpsalter*, 2 vols. (facsimile and commentary), Stuttgart, 1965–68; *Utrecht Psalter*, Codices Selecti, LXXV, Graz, 1983; E. T. De Wald, *The Illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter*, Princeton, n.d.

15 E.g., Dufrenne (as in note 7).

16 Kathleen Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters*, Cambridge, 1992. See also Koert van der Horst, William Noel, and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David*, Utrecht, 1996.

17 On typology, see first Schrenk (as in note 3).

18 For a fuller discussion of these techniques and their origins, see Angelika Geyer, *Die Genese narrativer Buchillustration*, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, 29–104.

19 Kurt Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination*, Martin Classical Lectures, XVI, Cambridge, Mass., 1959; in general, on the beginnings of Christian art, see Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art*, New York, 1994.

20 Colin H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, London, 1983; *Les débuts du codex*, Bibliologia, IX, ed. Alain Blanchard, Turnhout, 1989; Gamble (as in note 3), 42–81.

21 See note 6 above. It should be observed that the Constantinopolitan origin of this manuscript, with its classical content and naturalistic style, appears to have generated the astoundingly simplistic assumption that Constantinopolitan illumination in the sixth century must have been generally characterized by classicism and naturalism, and hence that the surviving illuminated biblical manuscripts, with their very different stylistic agendas, must necessarily be products of some other centers: compare, e.g., the remarks of Weiztmann

(as in note 2), 21. Some perceptive critics of style have avoided the issue by omitting the manuscripts entirely from their discussions: e.g., Kitzinger (as in note 3); see his disclaimer on p. 6.

22 I would also include under this broad heading works with full-page images such as the fourth-century Roman pictorial calendar in codex form (known from seventeenth-century copies) generally termed the Calendar of 354 or Filocalus Calendar: see Henri Stern, *Le calendrier de 354*, Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, LV, Paris, 1953; Michele Renee Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley, 1990.

23 Contrast the remarks of William C. Loerke, "The Monumental Miniature," in Kurt Weitzmann, William C. Loerke, Ernst Kitzinger, and Hugo Buchthal, *The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art*, Princeton, 1975, 61–97, with some discussion of the older literature on 61–5.

24 Some starting points are Hans Belting, *Likeness and Image* (the English version of his *Bild und Kult*), Chicago, 1994, esp. chaps. 1–7; Mango, esp. secs. 1–4; still valuable is Ernst Kitzinger, "Byzantine Art in the Period Between Justinian and Iconoclasm," *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongreß*, IV.I, Munich, 1958; helpful general orientation is provided by Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, Chicago, 1982; idem, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, Madison, 1992.

25 Note that Marek-Titien Olszewski, "L'image et sa fonction dans la mosaïque byzantine des premières basiliques en Orient: L'iconographie chrétienne expliquée par Cyril de Jérusalem (314–387)," *Cahiers archéologiques*, XLIII, 1995, 9–34, is concerned solely with floor mosaics with "nonbiblical" subject matter.

26 Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Frühchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna*, Baden-Baden, 1958, pl. 353.

27 Geyer (as in note 18). The book is problematic for other reasons: see the review by Rainer Warland (as in note 14), 187–206, and that by Franz Rickert in *Gnomon*, LXIV, 1992, 507–10.

28 E.g., Kurt Weitzmann, "The Illustration of the Septuagint," reprinted in his *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler, Chicago, 1971, esp. 48–9. The position is by no means limited to Weitzmann and his students: see, for example, Otto Pächt, *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages*, London, 1986, 30, or most recently Franz Richert, "Beobachtungen an den Quedlinburger Itala-Fragmente," in *Stimuli, Exegese und ihr Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband, XXIII, Münster, 1996, 578–9.

29 The synagogue paintings at Dura are crucial to this discussion: see Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Bible Illustration and the Jewish Tradition," in John Williams (ed.), *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, University Park, Pa., 1999, 61–96. For the putative use of illuminated manuscripts as a source, see Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, XXVIII, Washington, DC, 1990; the contrary view is presented briefly by Joseph Gutmann, "The Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings: The State of Research," in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine, Philadelphia, 1987, 61–72, esp. 66–9.

30 The position is usefully summarized in Herbert L. Kessler, "Pictures as Scripture in Fifth-Century Churches," *Studia Artium Orientalis et Occidentalis*, II, 1985, 17–31, esp. 18–20; Kurt Weitzmann's *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, Studies in Manuscript Illumination, II, Princeton, 1947, underpins the argument. A different perspective is suggested recently in Brian Brennan, "Text and Image: 'Reading' the Walls of the Sixth-Century Cathedral of Tours," *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 6, 1996, 65–83.

31 A useful guide, albeit focused primarily on a later period, is M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 2d ed., Oxford, 1993, 185–345; for the early period, see also Gamble (as in note 3), 1–41.

32 E.g., by Kessler (as in note 30), 19; the contrary view is stated briefly by Geyer (as in note 18), 35 and n. 83.

33 In general, see Celia M. Chazelle, "Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles," *Word and Image*, VI, 1990, 138–53; Laurence G. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?" *Word and Image*, V, 1989, 227–51.

34 Mango, 33; other early texts are discussed in Duggan (as in note 33), 228–9; see also Christa Belting-Ihm, "Zum Verhältnis von Bildprogrammen und Tituli in der Apsisdekoration früher westlicher Kirchenbauten," in *Testo e Immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, XLI, Spoleto, 1994, 839–84, esp. 843–7.

35 H. G. Thümmel, "Neilos von Ankyra über die Bilder," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, LXXI, 1978, 10–21.

36 *Non in sanctis codicibus sed in pictis parietibus quaesierunt*; see Chazelle (as in note 33), 146, citing Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum* I. 10, in *Patrologia Latina*, XXXIV, col. 1049; see also Guglielmo Cavallo, "Testo e immagine: Una frontiera ambigua," in *Testo e Immagine* (as in note 34), 31–62, esp. 35–6 and 46–8.

37 E.g., Kessler (as in note 30), 19. Herbert L. Kessler, "Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul," *Studies in the History of Art*, XVI, 1985, 75–91, esp. 76.

38 *The History of the Franks by Gregory of Tours*, ed. and trans. O. M. Dalton, Oxford, 1927, II, 59. The text is widely available to art historians, reprinted in Caecilia Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art, 300–1150*, Sources and Documents in the History of Art, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971, 59.

39 Dalton (as in note 38), II, 495, where he also refers to the link between the Cotton Genesis and S. Marco, and the fact that the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore "probably reproduce the miniatures of an illuminated manuscript."

40 *Quam cum fucis colorum adornare velit, tenebat librum in sinum suum, legens historias actionis antiquae, pictoribus indicans, quae in parietibus fingere deberent.* See Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Libri Historiarum X*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum, I.1, Hannover, 1951, 64–5 (book II, 17).

41 See note 36.

42 A more extended discussion, involving all the manuscripts with images from this period, whatever their textual content, is not possible in the present context. Some useful signposts are given by Warland (as in note 14).

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9

Sacred Image, Sacred Power

Gary Vikan

The icon is the legacy of Byzantium (AD 330–1453), the Christian, East Roman Empire governed from Constantinople. In Greek the word *eikon* simply means "image," and today it is usually understood to mean an abstract religious portrait painted in egg tempera on a gold-covered wooden board (Figure 9.1). But an icon could also be a mosaic, or even a coin; it could be elaborate or simple, one of a kind or mass produced (Weitzmann, 1978, 13 ff.). What defined an icon in Byzantium was neither medium nor style, but rather how the image was used, and especially, what people believed it to be. An icon was, and in the Orthodox Church remains, a devotional image, one deserving special reverence and respect (*Byzantine Art*, 1964, 269). This is so because an icon is believed to be a *holy* image, one which literally shares in the sanctity of the figure whose likeness it bears. The accepted Orthodox view was succinctly stated nearly twelve centuries ago by St. Theodore the Studite (Mango, 1972, 173):

> Every artificial image . . . exhibits in itself, by way of imitation, the form of its model . . . the model [is] in the image, the one in the other, except for the difference of substance. Hence, he who reveres an image surely reveres the person whom the image shows; not the substance of the image . . . Nor does the singleness of his veneration separate the model from the image, since, by virtue of imitation, the image and the model are one. . . .

In the eyes of Orthodoxy, Christ and his icon, the model and its image, are one. Yet, the divinity of Christ (his *ousia* or "substance," as opposed to his *prosopon* or "person") remains distinct from the wood and paint of the panel, which if

Figure 9.1 Christ "the wisdom of God," panel painting, *c.*1400. Greek Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Receipt Fund, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki

covered over loses both picture and holiness. From the point of view of "devotional utility," the panel as a palpable thing therefore necessarily disappears. For on the one hand, because of imitation (the fact that it looks like what people think the historical Jesus looked like), the icon becomes one and the same with what it portrays, whereas on the other, because of veneration (the Christian's devotional attitude toward it), the icon becomes effectively transparent – it is transformed into a "window" or "door" *through* which the worshipper gains access to sanctity. In the words of St. Basil (Mango, 1972, 47), "the honor shown to the image is transmitted to its model."

What does this reveal about the art of icon painting? First, it is remarkable that the icon as a category of object, aesthetic or otherwise, is ignored; there are no

qualifications placed on what constitutes an icon, what a good icon is, or a bad one, or how close to the accepted portrait type a painting must come in order to qualify as an icon. Theodore the Studite goes on to note that an icon will lose its "iconness" through obliteration, and thereby revert to base substance, but he begs the more fundamental question of what it takes for substance to become icon in the first place. To him and those around him it must have been obvious: an icon was simply what they all *recognized* to be an icon. Term and object were, for them, affectively defined: a painting became an icon at the moment when it began to function as an icon. In this sense, it was created "in the eye of the beholder," which suggests that natural phenomena, like clouds, could become icons too. And in fact, that seems to have been true, at least to judge from stories like that preserved in the diary of a fifteenth-century Spanish visitor to Constantinople named Clavijo, who describes Christians of that city venerating a slab of richly veined marble in Hagia Sophia that they thought looked like the Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist (*Clavijo*, 1928, 75):

> These figures as I have said are not drawn or painted with any pigment, nor graven in the stone artificially, but are entirely natural and of its substance; for the stone evidently was formed thus by nature with this veining. . . . These sacred figures on the stone appear as if standing on the clouds in the clear heaven, indeed it is as though a thin veil were drawn before them. . . .

In Byzantium the theory of sacred images and the artistic form they took were closely intertwined; many have called icons "theology in colors." When a Byzantine Christian stood before an icon of Christ he believed himself to be standing face-to-face with his Savior; this, for him, was a sacred place and moment of encounter with God. Frontality and direct eye contact were therefore essential; references to earthly time or "real" space were potentially distracting, and in any case, irrelevant. Gold backgrounds, bust-length portraits, over-large eyes, gestures of blessing, "otherworldliness," timelessness, a sense of transcendental power – these defining characteristics of icons were all dictated by the theology of sacred images and, more specifically, by the nature of the icon experience itself. And so, too, was the intense psychological "dialogue" with the beholder that the style of many icons seems to imply. Christ, through his image, dramatically confronts the worshipper; he sees into the soul to comfort or condemn. "His eyes . . . ," so begins a Byzantine description of an image much like that illustrated in our Figure 9.2, "His eyes are joyful and welcoming to those who are not reproached by their conscience . . . but to those who are condemned by their own judgment, they are wrathful and hostile" (Maguire, 1974, 133: Mesarites, ca. 1200). The right side of Christ's face (our left) is open, receptive, and welcoming, whereas his left side – Byzantium's traditional side of judgment and condemnation – is harsh and threatening, the eyebrow arched, the cheekbone accentuated by shadow, and the mouth drawn down as if in a sneer. Christ's judgment, whether comfort or condemnation, is here literally created in the eye and conscience of the beholder.

Figure 9.2   Christ, sixth century. Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai

Not all Byzantine icons are portraits; many instead show Gospel scenes, especially those sacred events evocative of major church holidays, such as Easter, Christmas, and Epiphany. Because most of these icons have a specific story to tell, the figures portrayed must somehow be shown interacting, yet at the same time the image as a whole is subject to the same principles of frontality and timelessness that, much more easily, shaped the format and style of portrait icons.

On the restrictive two-dimensional surface of a panel the solution was to suppress anecdotal detail and to set the actors in three-quarter frontal poses, so that in effect they *are* looking out of the picture plane, and thereby engaging the beholder, at least obliquely, in a shared sacred space (Demus, 1947, 6 ff.). Mural icons, on the other hand, were subject to more flexible rules, insofar as their supporting architectural surface need not be flat. The Byzantine response, exemplified by the Annunciation mosaic at Daphni, was ingenious: the Virgin Mary is shown frontally, yet at the same time she faces the Archangel Gabriel across the void created as the squinch which supports them recedes into space – a sacred space now dramatically charged by the spiritual power they share.

What did the theology of sacred images mean for the artist? When a Byzantine painter painted an icon, the model before him and the panel in his hands had to be, in all essential characteristics, identical. Like a scribe transcribing the Gospels, an icon painter was bound by sacred tradition; he could neither add nor take away. For an icon to be an icon it must be easily recognizable; its "image" could no more be subject to change than could a saint, or Christ himself. Thus, necessarily, an icon of Christ "Almighty" from the fourteenth century (Figure 9.1) is, in all of its most salient qualities, essentially like one from the sixth century (Figure 9.2); eight hundred years separate the two, but on first view they seem virtually identical. In actuality, however, they are not identical, for Byzantine painters of talent, as these two certainly were, could distinguish themselves even within a strictly circumscribed iconographic tradition, much as scribes, through expert calligraphy, could set themselves apart even in transcribing the Gospels. But by any standard, the icon painter's art was one of subtleties, which strove for perfection only over an extended time. Originality and self-expression as we know and value them in modern art had no counterparts in Byzantium; there were not "better" icons, or those that were judged inferior, nor was there talk of originals or copies. And from the point of view of image theory it could be no other way, since, as Theodore the Studite observed, "every artificial image . . . exhibits in itself, by way of imitation, the form of the model," and the model is "the person whom the image shows." By definition, then, the real model behind a Byzantine icon was not another icon (that was the proximate model only), but rather the deity or saint represented. This means that every sacred image was a copy, and that none was closer than another to the prototype (Vikan, "Ruminations").

But to view Byzantine art simply as an art of copies is, on the one hand, to misunderstand its broader role in Byzantine culture generally, and on the other, to misrepresent and grossly undervalue its achievement. Continuity through replication was not simply a Byzantine workshop practice, nor even was it distinctive to the theology of sacred images; it was a broadly-based religious ideal governing the actions and relationships of all Christians. Jesus was himself the ultimate prototype, and the individual – by way of chains of "copies," from biblical heros to saints to holy men to local monks – was charged to be his imitator (Brown, 1983). St. Basil gives the following advice (*Saint Basil*, 1961, I, 15 ff.):

> [In the scriptures] the lives of saintly men, recorded and handed down to us, lie before us like living images . . . for our imitation of their good works. And so in whatever respect each one perceives himself deficient, if he devotes himself to such imitation, he will discover there, as in the shop of a public physician, the specific remedy for his infirmity.

Basil's two key words, image and imitation, are already familiar from icon theory, and this was no accident, for just a few lines later he draws an explicit parallel between the workshop practice of artists and the appropriate mimetic behavior of Christians generally:

> . . . just as painters in working from models constantly gaze at their exemplar and thus strive to transfer the expression of the original to their artistry, so too he who is anxious to make himself perfect in all the kinds of virtue must gaze upon the lives of saints as upon statues, so to speak, that move and act, and must make their excellence his own by imitation.

For an artist as for a Christian, copying was both normative and good; indeed, it was among the central ingredients in a millennium of Byzantine piety.

Stated in this way it seems as if the icon painter were little more than a craftsman, but this is correct only if icons are judged anachronistically, according to modern aesthetic notions. For while it is true that originality, self-expression, and even beauty were not the icon painter's main goals, other still loftier aims were in their place. An icon was not simply a work of art, it was a door to heaven; but even more than that, an icon was heaven's door to earth – literally, a channel through which Christ, the Virgin, or a saint could exercise sacred power among men. The "spiritual traffic" of sacred images thus moved in both directions, and icons frequently functioned not simply as devotional images, but as miraculous images, for converting the heathen, for preserving the Empire, and especially, for healing the sick (Kitzinger, 1954, 100 ff.). A characteristic icon miracle is recounted in Chapter 118 of the *Life* of St. Symeon Stylites the Younger (AD 521–92), a column-dwelling holy man whose pilgrimage shrine near Antioch was renowned for its supernatural healings (van den Ven, 1962/1970): A hemorrhaging woman in Cilicia (i.e. far from the saint's shrine) invokes Symeon's aid with the words: "If only I see your image [icon] I will be saved." How, one wonders, can this be? Because "the Holy Spirit which inhabits Symeon covers it with its shadow." Thus it is through a spontaneous "spiritual infusion" not unlike that of the Incarnation that a picture painted by man is believed capable of healing. Certainly the label "craft" is inappropriate for an art form like this, which opened vistas to heaven and brought heaven's power down to earth; and certainly the makers of this art, anonymous though they were, should not be considered mere craftsmen.

The idea that iconic verisimilitude alone was enough to gain access to sacred power was slow to develop in the Byzantine mind. Only by the sixth and seventh centuries was it well accepted (Kitzinger, 1954, 95 ff.), and this was long after

the belief had taken firm root that holy objects (relics) and holy places (pilgrimage sites) could channel and deliver miracles (Delehaye, 1933, 50 ff.; Vikan, 1982, 1 ff.). Moreover, it is remarkable that even at that relatively late period images were often believed sacred only because their substance was believed sacred. This hybrid object type might best be called a "relic-icon," and it came in at least two distinct but closely related forms. On the one hand there were a few famous *acheiropoietai*, icons "not made by human hands," foremost of which was the Mandylion of Edessa: Christ wiped his face with a towel, and the towel miraculously retained his image. It is an icon because of that image, but it is also a relic because of Christ's contact. (And it was the source of miracles, including the defeat of the Persian army at the gates of Edessa in AD 544; Cameron, 1980.) On the other hand, there were the many types of pilgrim *eulogiai* ("blessings") that were then becoming popular (Vikan, 1982, 10 ff.). Usually these were small portions of earth, wax, oil, or water which had been sanctified by contact with a relic or holy person, and then mechanically impressed by a stamp (into the solid material itself, or onto the vessel containing the liquid) with an appropriate image of whatever or whoever was the source of the sanctification. They are icons because of that image, but they are also relics because of sacred contact. The most characteristic representatives of this category of relic-icon are Symeon Tokens – hardened bits of earth from the "Miraculous Mountain" of Symeon Stylites, sanctified by direct contact with the saint (or his column), and stamped with an image of Symeon atop his column.

The surprising fact about the Edessa Mandylion and Symeon Tokens is that both are known to have existed first simply as sacred objects, without images. Averil Cameron (1980) has shown how the Edessa "towel" – which according to early texts was not a cloth at all, but a papyrus letter from Christ to Edessa's King Abgarus – literally "acquired" its sacred image in the later sixth century, long after it had become a popular and potent non-iconic relic. And regarding Symeon Tokens, one need only read the saint's *Life* to discover how frequently his miracle-working earth was dispensed without its stamped icon. For both towel and token, images were associated with sacred power, but this association came only after the fact. Apparently relics without images were good, but relics *with* images were even better. Why? One senses at least part of the answer in the intimate link, even from the earliest years of the cult of relics, between miraculous imagery and the quasi-mystical relic experience. St. Jerome's account of Paula's first encounter with the wood of the True Cross (ca. 400) is typical (Wilkinson, 1977): "she fell down and worshipped . . . as if she could see the Lord hanging on it." Proximity to a holy object evoked in Paula a profound spiritual experience, and that experience had a strongly visual dimension; one even suspects that her vision was somehow a necessary condition for her experience of the deity's physical presence – a presence which was certainly potential, but perhaps not fully realized, in the relic itself.

The evidence from Symeon's "Miraculous Mountain," about two centuries later, is much more explicit. Chapter 231 of the saint's *Life* describes the

misgivings of a father who is told to return home from his pilgrimage with his still gravely ill son to await Symeon's cure (van den Ven, 1962/1970). "The power of God . . . is efficacious everywhere," assures the saint. "Therefore, take this *eulogia* ["blessing"] made of my dust, depart, and when you look at the imprint of our image, it is us that you will see." The father is being offered – in the form of a Symeon Token – two distinct assurances that his son will eventually be saved: the blessed earth, a well-known *eulogia* whose powers he must already have recognized, and the saint's image impressed on it. Somehow, when they return home and gaze on that image, father and son will in effect be confronted with a vision of the saint himself. But why should that be reassuring? The answer comes later in the same story. The man's third son falls ill and he, too, asks to be taken to the "Miraculous Mountain." But his father recalls the instructions of the saint and assures him that Symeon will come to visit him there, at home, and he will be healed. At this point – assumedly with Symeon Token in hand – the young man gasps and calls out, "St. Symeon, have pity on me." He then turns to his father and cries, "Get up quickly, throw on incense, and pray, for the servant of God, St. Symeon, is before me. . . ." In that moment Symeon appears in a vision, attacks (through his *eulogia*) the demon that has tormented the youth, and saves him.

Other Symeon miracles suggest the same scenario – namely, that a vision of the saint was instrumental in making effective the miraculous powers of his earthen *eulogia*, and that the vision could be induced by a man-made image. And the same was true at other Early Byzantine *loca sancta* ("holy sites"). As incubation (sleeping near relics) was instrumental to miraculous healing at "Holy Doctor" shrines like those of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John, and Artemios, so a dream-like vision of the saint was instrumental to successful incubation (Vikan, 1984, 73). And this vision seems most often to have been induced by images of the saint set up around the shrine. The common denominator is clear: seeing the saint through his icon ensured his presence, and his presence ensured the miraculous efficacy of his relic. In other words, the power of the relic was being "triggered" and released by the saint's icon.

But this seems not to have been the sole, or perhaps even the main reason for adding images to relics. One need only survey the iconography of these "added pictures" to discover that most of them share something surprising in common: they repeat distinguishing architectural elements of the relic shrine from which they were issued. This is especially prevalent among the so-called Palestinian Ampullae – small pewter flasks of sixth- to seventh-century date which, having been filled with oil sanctified by contact with the True Cross, were carried home as medico-magical pilgrim *eulogiai* from the Shrine of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Vikan, 1982, 20 ff.). Nearly all, as one might expect, bear some imagery evocative of the two major biblical events that had taken place at that famous *locus sanctus* – namely, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. But surprisingly, most interpose between the two Marys and the Angel in the scene of the Women at the Tomb a small piece of architecture that clearly corresponds in its

most salient features (columns, pointed roof, grilles) to what we know the Holy Sepulchre itself looked like at the time. Certainly this was not simply a visual reminder of what the pilgrim had just seen, nor could it have been intended literally to illustrate the Gospel narrative, which describes a simple rock-hewn grave. The point must instead have been to capture, through iconic verisimilitude, a portion of the sacred power, the *eulogia*, which emanated on-site from the Jerusalem shrine.

For the pilgrim the *eulogia* was the spiritually-charged "blessing" received from a holy place, holy object, or holy person (Vikan, 1982, 10 ff.). Most often it came through physical contact, which could either be direct but fleeting, for example, by kissing the wood of the True Cross, or indirect but concrete, for example, through oil that had itself touched the True Cross. Both modes, of course, depended for their spiritual efficacy on the commonly held conviction that sanctity and its power were in some measure transferrable through touch (Vikan, 1982, 5). But there were other, more "iconic" ways of gaining the power of the *eulogia*. For example, an anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza, traveling south through Palestine around 570, describes the following scenes at Mount Gilboa (Wilkinson, 1977, 85):

> . . . when we had travelled straight down for twenty miles [from Jerusalem] we came to Mount Gilboa, where David killed Goliath. [. . .] Goliath's resting-place is there in the middle of the road, and there is a pile of wood at his head. There is also a heap of stones – such a mountain of them that there is not a pebble left for a distance of 20 miles, since anyone going that way makes a gesture of contempt by taking three stones and throwing them at his grave.

In the Valley of Gethsemane this same pilgrim lies on each of the three couches upon which Christ had reclined during the night of his betrayal, ". . . to gain their blessing." Similarly, at Cana he reclines at the wedding table where Christ had reclined, fills with wine one of the two surviving jugs in which Christ had transformed water into wine, then lifts it to his shoulder and offers it at the altar – again, ". . . to gain a blessing." In each instance the Piacenza pilgrim performs an appropriate imitative action at the appropriate *locus sanctus*; the sacred spot provides his stage and the relics his props.

From these and many other similar stories it is clear that the ritualized reenactment of biblical events was a central ingredient in the pilgrim's experience (Vikan, "Pilgrims"). The reenactment might be performed privately, as it was at Mount Gilboa and Cana, or it might be performed communally, as it frequently was in Jerusalem as part of public liturgical processions. On Palm Sunday, for example, a special afternoon service held on the Mount of Olives would conclude with the Gospel account of the Triumphal Entry (Wilkinson, 1971, 74, 132 f.). Then the entire congregation, with palm fronds in hand, would escort the bishop down from the Mount and into the city along the path once followed by Jesus. A similar dramatic reenactment was staged each Sunday morning in the Anastasis

Rotunda before the Holy Sepulchre; a late fourth-century Spanish pilgrim, Egeria, describes the scene (Wilkinson, 1971, 125):

> . . . at [the first cock crow] the bishop enters, and goes into the cave of the Anastasis [i.e. the Holy Sepulchre]. [. . .] After [the recitation of] three Psalms and prayers, [the clergy] take censers into the cave of the Anastasis so that the whole . . . basilica is filled with the smell. Then the bishop, standing inside the screen, takes the Gospel book and goes to the door, where he himself reads the account of the Lord's resurrection. At the beginning of the reading the whole assembly groans and laments at all the Lord underwent for us. . . .

Such a highly theatrical event must have left the pilgrim with a deep spiritual and visual impression. The service was celebrated on the day of the Resurrection in the shrine which was taken to be its proof, and from the very spot where the angel once announced the good news to the two Marys, a bishop now announces the same news to the assembled congregation.

Such reenactments might be taken as a natural extension of the mandate for Christian *mimesis* expressed by, among others, St. Basil. But more specifically, these were the ritualized actions and the empathic identification which gave shape and meaning to the pilgrim's day-to-day existence; this was how he experienced the *locus sanctus* and this was how he secured for himself the transfer of its *eulogia*. It was as if that congregation in the Anastasis Rotunda, the bishop and clergy, and the Holy Sepulchre itself converged for a moment to become a "living icon" of the Resurrection. For like an icon, they, by virtue of iconographic verisimilitude, collectively joined the chain of imparted sanctity leading back to the archetype, to the sacred biblical event itself. And in doing so they achieved what Theodore the Studite said all icons achieved: identity of image and model. These pilgrims did not merely touch the holy site, nor were they satisfied just to take away its blessed oil; they wanted to be, at least briefly, iconically one and the same with it. And this, at least in part, is how they gained access to its sacred power.

This, too, is one way they took that sacred power home with them: in the form of *eulogia* images that were (as they just had been) iconically one and the same with the *locus sanctus*. These were not simply "triggers" to enhance the efficacy of the relic; they were potent forms of spiritual power in their own right. This is clear from the frequency with which such images began to appear alone, without relics, yet still in contexts which presuppose the presence of sacred power. Especially revealing are many Early Byzantine amulets, which bear iconography originally developed for and popularized among pilgrim *eulogiai*. In this case, the sanctified oil of the Palestinian Ampulla is gone, but the site's distinctive image remains – though now it is simply impressed into a copper disc with a hole at the top to allow for its suspension around the neck as amuletic jewelry. Side by side, amulet and *eulogia* look much the same, but what has

happened to distinguish them is profound in its implications for the cult of sacred images. For the sanctity and miraculous power formerly thought transferrable only through physical contact is now believed transferrable simply by iconic verisimilitude. The theology of sacred images implicit in such objects is the same as that explicit in the contemporary *Life* of Symeon Stylites: "If only I see your image [icon] I will be saved . . . [for] the Holy Spirit which inhabits Symeon covers it with its shadow." Relics have helped to give birth to icons, and those icons – now fully liberated from their relics – are free to function and develop on their own.

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10

The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem

Oleg Grabar

It is a commonplace of classical Islamic religious writing that the Prophet himself considered Mekkah, Madīnah, and Jerusalem as the three holiest places of the faith. All three centers were places of pilgrimage and in them liturgical requirements, sacred memories, and traditions acquired a monumental expression.[1] Medieval writers and modern scholars and travelers have often described the religious topography of the Muslim holy places and the significance of the numerous structures erected on these sacred spots. But the problem is not only one of description and identification. The question must also be raised whether the current identifications of holy places and their present architectural expression date from the earliest times of Islam, and, if not, when and why these identifications were made and the monuments built. In other words the major sanctuaries of Islam must be considered in their historical context. For the mosque of Madīnah, for instance, we possess the masterly study by J. Sauvaget, who succeeded, on the basis of texts and a limited archeological documentation, in reconstructing in detail the nature of this central monument of Islamic religious architecture in the Umayyad period.

In the case of Jerusalem, the problem presents itself differently. First, in dealing with the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, we are not dealing with a new holy area, as in Madīnah, but with one of the most ancient sacred spots on earth. Second, in Jerusalem, the monuments themselves are better known. The Dome of the Rock is still essentially the Umayyad building. The Aqṣā mosque, to be sure, has undergone numerous reconstructions, but recent studies by K. A. C. Creswell,

J. Sauvaget, and especially R. W. Hamilton, have given us a good idea of the nature of the Umayyad mosque. The problem, therefore, is neither reconstruction nor dating, but essentially interpretation: if we consider the long tradition of Mount Moriah as a sacred place, what was its significance in the eyes of the Muslims? The *faḍāʾil* or religious guidebooks for pilgrims of later times provide us with an answer for the period which followed the Crusades, but it may be questioned whether all the complex traditions reported about the Ḥaram at that time had already been formulated when the area was taken over by the Arabs. Through its location, through its inscription, and through its mosaics, the Dome of the Rock itself provides us with three strictly contemporary documents, which have not so far been fully exploited in an attempt to define the meaning of the structure at the time of its construction. The Dome of the Rock is especially important in being not only the earliest remaining monument of Islam, but, in all likelihood, the earliest major construction built by the new masters of the Near East. The first mosques in Kūfah, Baṣrah, Fusṭāṭ, and Jerusalem were certainly not very imposing structures; little is known about Muʿāwiyah's secular constructions in Damascus, but it is not likely that they were done on a very lavish scale. The Dome of the Rock, on the other hand, has remained to this day one of the most remarkable architectural and artistic achievements of Islam. It is therefore important to attempt to understand its meaning to those who lived when it was built.

Discussion of the meaning of Jerusalem, and especially of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, in medieval times is greatly simplified since most of the geographical and descriptive texts dealing with the city have been gathered by Father Marmarji,[2] and since many of them have been translated into English by G. LeStrange,[3] into German by Gildmeister,[4] into Russian by Miednikov,[5] and into French by Father Marmarji.[6] Furthermore, the inscriptions found on the Ḥaram have been published and analyzed by Max van Berchem in the second series of his *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscritpionum Arabicarum*.[7] But, except for Miednikov, whose conclusions have been summarized and by and large accepted by Caetani in his *Annali dell'Islam*, and to a certain extent by van Berchem, these authors have dealt largely with purely descriptive texts, for the most part taken from geographers, and have only too rarely tried to set the building up of the Ḥaram area by the Muslims within the historical circumstances of the time.

The Dome of the Rock is dated in the year 72 AH/AD 691–2 and there is some evidence that it was begun in 69.[8] It has been described many times and its location (on a platform to the north of center of the vast artificial esplanade of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf), as well as its plan (an octagonal structure consisting of two octagonal ambulatories and a circular area within which lies the Rock; Figure 10.1), is familiar to all travelers to Palestine and to all students of Muslim archeology. K. A. C. Creswell and Mademoiselle van Berchem have dealt in great detail with the character and the origins of the building and of its mosaics,[9] and Creswell has analyzed the purpose of the building, but only briefly and, as will be shown, incompletely. In this study, as far as possible, only texts earlier than

Figure 10.1 The Dome of the Rock: general view. akg-images/Jean-Louis Nou

the Crusades will be used, for the Crusades superimposed over the earlier Jewish and Muslim traditions a whole series of more or less artificial Christian ones which confuse all problems connected with the Ḥaram and often prevent certain identifications. As Max van Berchem has shown in a number of cases,[10] the conscious attempt by Saladin to reconvert all buildings to their ancient usage was not always successful and has at times led to extraordinary misunderstandings.[11] It is also quite certain that the numerous legends and traditions which are associated with the Ḥaram in the group of *faḍāʾil* of the Mamlūk period were not introduced in the Umayyad period.[12] The comparative simplicity of the legends accepted even in Ayyūbid times is now fully shown by the published and translated *K. al-Ziyārāt* of al-Harawi.[12a] Except in a few cases it is almost impossible to determine exactly when a specific tradition or identification of a holy place with a sacred event became sufficiently common to be accepted and propagated by the spiritual Baedekers of a given time, but in the early period of Islam the religious system and the spiritual life of the faithful were yet too simple – or too disorganized – to allow for as definitive and complete a system of religious-topographical associations as appears in later writing. More often than not later traditions tend to confuse rather than clarify the essential issue of the purpose and origin of the Umayyad structure.

As far as the Umayyad Dome of the Rock is concerned, two explanations are generally given for its construction. The first has the apparent merit of agreeing quite well with the historical circumstances of the years 66–72 AH, and it has been adopted by Creswell after having been introduced by Goldziher. This interpretation is based on texts of al-Yaʿqūbī (260 AH/AD 874),[13] a shiʿite brought up in Baghdad who had traveled widely throughout the empire, and Eutychius (d. 328 AH/AD 940),[14] a melkite priest from Alexandria, It is also found in other

authors before the Crusades such as al-Muhallabī[15] and Ibn 'Abd Rabbih,[16] but there are indications (a series of errors with respect to attributions and dates about which more will be said below) which suggest that in reality we are dealing with one major tradition, or possibly two, which have been passed on through specific historiographic channels. All these authors claim that the reason for building a sanctuary in Jerusalem was that, since Ibn al-Zubayr was in possession of Mekkah, 'Abd al-Malik wanted to divert pilgrims from the Ḥijāz by establishing the Palestinian city as the religious center of Islam. And it has been asserted that the plan of the Dome of the Rock, with two ambulatories around the Rock itself, originated with the liturgical requirements of the *ṭawāf*.[17]

This interpretation of the Muslim sanctuary has been very recently criticized by S. D. Goitein in a brief communication on the background of the Dome of the Rock.[18] His argument is partly negative. He points out that the statements of al-Ya'qūbī and Eutychius are unique in the annals of early Muslim historiography and that as momentous an attempt as that of changing the site of the *ḥajj* could not have been overlooked by such careful historians as al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhuri, and especially not by a local patriot like al-Maqdisī. Furthermore it would have been politically unsound for 'Abd al-Malik to have "marked himself as Kāfir, against whom the Jihād was obligatory." The theologians of his entourage were not likely to have approved of it. Al-Ya'qūbī does say that 'Abd al-Malik leaned on the testimony of al-Zuhrī to justify his decision, but the statement is hardly creditable, since al-Zuhrī was barely 20 years old at the time.[19] An important point of Goitein's article is to have brought attention to the unfortunately still largely unpublished *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* of al-Balādhurī. In the description found there of al-Ḥajjāj's operations around Mekkah, it is made clear that the Syrian forces considered Mekkah as the center for pilgrimage. Before starting for Mekkah the soldiers are told that they must be ready for the pilgrimage; during the fighting al-Ḥajjāj requests permission for his troops to make the *ṭawāf*; and there appears to have been a fairly constant stream of people going on pilgrimage in spite of the fighting.[20] It may also be pointed out that al-Ḥajjāj would not have taken such pains to restore the Ka'bah to its original shape, had it been replaced in the mind of the Umayyads by the new building in Jerusalem. And a statement in Ṭabarī to the effect that in 68 AH at least four different groups went on pilgrimage shows beyond doubt that, at that time at least, the bitter factional strifes between Muslims were held somewhat in abeyance during the pilgrimage.[21] Goitein also shows that the accounts of al-Ya'qūbī and of Eutychius contain errors which indicate that they were highly partisan in their opposition to the Umayyads and not always in full control of the facts. Eutychius and al-Muhallabī attribute to al-Walīd, 'Abd al-Malik's successor, an attempt to divert the pilgrimage to Jerusalem,[22] while al-Ya'qūbī adds that the practice of having the *ḥajj* in the Palestinian city continued throughout the Umayyad period. Finally it is doubtful whether the comparatively small area of the Dome of the Rock could have been conveniently used for the long and complex ceremony of the *ṭawāf*;[23] and it may be argued that, had 'Abd al-Malik wanted to replace Mekkah, he

would have chosen a type of structure closer in plan to the Ka'bah than the Dome of the Rock, since the sacramental and inalterable character of the Mekkan sanctuary is fully apparent in its several reconstructions, and, in particular, in that of al-Ḥajjāj.[24]

The second explanation for the Dome of the Rock was destined to become the one that was, and still is, generally accepted by the faithful. It is connected with the complex problem of the exegesis of *sūrah* 17, verse 1, of the Koran: "Glorified be He Who carried His servant [*i.e.*, Muḥammad] by night from the *masjid al-ḥarām* [*i.e.*, Mekkah] to the *masjid al-aqṣā* [*i.e.*, the farthest place of worship]." As early as the first part of the second century, the biographer of the Prophet, Ibn Isḥāq, connected this Night-Journey (*isrā'*) with the no less complex Ascension (*mi'raj*) of Muḥammad, and claimed that the *masjid al-aqṣā* was in fact in Jerusalem and that it is from Jerusalem that the Prophet ascended into heaven.[25] Al-Ya'qūbī mentions in his account the fact that the Rock in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf is "the rock on which it is said that the Messenger of God put his foot when he ascended into heaven."[26] Furthermore all the geographers describing the area mention a great number of *qubbahs*, *maqāms*, *miḥrābs*, etc. . . . connected with the events of Muḥammad's Ascension. It might thus be suggested that the Dome of the Rock was built as a sort of *martyrium* to a specific incident of Muḥammad's life.[27] The arguments could be further strengthened by the fact that, without doubt, the architecture of the Dome of the Rock follows in the tradition of the great Christian *martyria* and is closely related to the architecture of the Christian sanctuaries in Jerusalem, one of which commemorated the Ascension of Christ.

But, just like the first one, this explanation leads to more problems than it solves. A. A. Bevan has shown that among early traditionists there are many who do not accept the identification of the *masjid al-aqṣā*, and among them are to be found such great names as al-Bukhārī and Ṭabarī.[28] both Ibn Isḥāq and al-Ya'qūbī precede their accounts with expressions which indicate that these are stories which are not necessarily accepted as dogma.[29] It was suggested by J. Horovitz that in the early period of Islam there is little justification for assuming that the Koranic expression in any way referred to Jerusalem.[30] But, while Horovitz thought that it referred to a place in heaven, A. Guillaume's careful analysis of the earliest texts (al-Wāqidī and al-Azraqī, both in the later second century AH) has convincingly shown that the Koranic reference to the *masjid al-aqṣā* applies specifically to al-Ji'rānah, near Mekkah, where there were two sanctuaries (*masjid al-adnā* and *masjid al-aqṣā*), and where Muḥammad sojourned in *dhū al-qa'dah* of the eighth year after the Hijrah.[31] A. Guillaume also indicates that the concepts of *isrā'* and *mi'raj* were carefully separated by earlier writers and that Ibn Isḥāq seems to have been the first one, insofar as our present literary evidence goes, to connect them with each other. A last argument against accepting the association between the Ascension and the Dome of the Rock as dating from the time of the construction is archeological in nature. As has been mentioned, all early writers enumerate a series of holy places on the

Ḥaram area, many of which still stand today, most having been rebuilt after Saladin's reconquest of Jerusalem. Next to the Dome of the Rock stood – as it still stands today – the *qubbah almi'raj*, the *martyrium* of the Ascension. Had the first and largest of all buildings on the Ḥaram (outside of the congregational mosque on its southern end called al-Aqṣā) been built as a *martyrium* to the Ascension of Muḥammad, there would certainly not have been any need for a second *martyrium*. And the Persian traveler Nāsir-i Khusraw, one of the first to attempt a systematic explanation of all the buildings of the Ḥaram, still considers the Rock under the Dome simply as the place where Muḥammad prayed before ascending into heaven from the place where the *qubbah al-mi'raj* stands.[32]

It appears then that the textual evidence is incomplete and cannot provide us with a satisfactory explanation of the purpose for which 'Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock. It is, therefore, necessary to turn to the internal evidence provided by the building itself. The Dome of the Rock can be analyzed from three different points of view: its location, its architecture and decoration, and the inscription (240 meters long) inside the building, which is the only strictly contemporary piece of written evidence we possess. While none of these could alone explain the Dome of the Rock, an analysis of all three points can lead to a much more complex and, at the same time, much more precise explanation than has been offered hitherto of the reasons which led to the erection of the first major monument of the new Islamic civilization.

The first question to be raised is that of the location of the building. More specifically, since it can be shown that the Rock was not considered at the time as the place whence Muḥammad ascended into heaven, why was it chosen as the obvious center of the structure? In order to answer this question, we must ask ourselves what significance the Rock had at the time of the Muslim conquest and whether there is any evidence for a Muslim explanation of the Rock at the time of the conquest or between the conquest and the building of the Dome by 'Abd al-Malik.

The exact function of the Rock in the earliest times is still a matter of conjecture. While there is no doubt that the Ḥaram was the site of the Solomonic temple, there is no definite Biblical reference to the Rock. Whether it was "the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (I Chron. 3:1; II Sam. 14:18), whether it was an ancient Canaanite holy place fitted by Solomon into the Jewish Temple, perhaps as a *podium* on which the altar stood,[33] or whether it was the "middle of the court" which was hallowed by Solomon at the consecration of the Temple (I Kings, 8:63–4) cannot be certainly determined.[34] The Herodian reconstruction of the Temple is not any clearer, as far as the Rock is concerned. From the *Mishnah Middoth* it would appear that the Rock was only a few inches above the level of the terrace and that it was used as a cornerstone in the Herodian building.[35] Nowhere have I been able to find definite evidence for an important liturgical function of the Rock.

But in medieval times Mount Moriah in general and the Rock in particular were endowed in Jewish legend with a complex mythology. Mount Moriah,

through its association with the Temple, became the *omphalos* of the earth, where the tomb of Adam was to be found and where the first man was created.[36] But another, more specific, tradition was attached to the Rock, that of the sacrifice of Abraham, through a confusion between the land of Moriah (Gen. 22:2) and Mount Moriah.[37] It is not possible to say when the confusion first occurred, but it is already found in Josephus in the first century AD, and it became common throughout Talmudic literature.[38] In other words, in the Jewish tradition, the Rock and the area surrounding it acquired mystical significance as the site of the Holy of Holies and became associated with a series of legends involving major figures of the Biblical tradition, especially Abraham and Isaac. The importance accorded to the Ḥaram and to the Rock by the Jews is evidenced in early medieval times by the statement of the Pilgrim of Bordeaux who mentions a *lapis pertusus* "to which the Jews come every year and which they anoint,"[39] probably a reference to the Rock itself which appears here to be thought of as a tangible remnant of the Temple.

During the Roman and Byzantine period, the whole Ḥaram area was left unoccupied,[40] but, under Christian rule, the Holy City itself witnessed a new and remarkable development. This development took placed in the "New Jerusalem," and no Christian sanctuary appears to have been built on the area of the Ḥaram, since the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple had to be fulfilled. There is some evidence in patristic literature that the Jewish associations were accepted by some Christians.[41] But, with the building of the Holy Sepulchre, the *omphalos* of the earth was transferred to another hill of Jerusalem, Golgotha, and together with it were also transferred the associations between Jerusalem and Adam and Jerusalem and Abraham.[42]

Such then appears to have been the situation at the time of the Muslim conquest: the Jewish tradition considered the Ḥaram area as the site of the Temple and the place of Abraham's sacrifice and Adam's creation and death, while the Christian tradition had moved the latter two to a new site.

The main features of the chronology of the conquest of Jerusalem are fairly clear and have been fully stated by chroniclers and discussed by scholars.[43] That the taking of the Holy City was a major moment in the conquest of Syria is apparent both in the fact that the Christians demanded the presence of 'Umar himself for the signing of the treaty of capitulation and in the fact that 'Umar acquiesced. Once the treaty was signed, 'Umar, accompanied by the patriarch Sophronius, was led through the city. But as this "tour" of the Holy City was endowed by later writers with a series of more or less legendary incidents, it is not very easy to ascertain what happened. There are two points on which most sources, early or late, Muslim or not, seem to agree. First it seems that 'Umar was definitely intent on seeing one specific site in the Holy City. All sources agree on that, and, in later traditions, his quest and the patriarch Sophronius' opposition to it were transformed into a dramatic contest.[44] Second, the early sources do not refer to the Rock as the main object of 'Umar's quest, but to the Ḥaram area in general, which is seen as the place where the Jewish Temple stood, the

miḥrāb Dāwūd of the Koran (38:20–1), the *naos tôn Ioudaiôn* of Theophanes.[45] The Greek text only mentions ʿUmar's interest in the area of the Jewish Temple and adds later that a Muslim sanctuary was built on the place of the Jewish Temple.[46] The tradition transmitted by Ṭabarī does mention the Rock, but it plays no part in the prayer and recitations (Kor. 38) made by the caliph when he reached the Ḥaram area, and ʿUmar rejects the suggestion made to him by Kaʿb, a Jewish convert, that the Rock be on the *qiblah* side of the Muslim sanctuary. His reason is that this would be reverting to the Jewish practice. Eutychius also mentions the Rock and implies that Sophronius succeeded in persuading ʿUmar to take over the Jewish Temple area in exchange for a treaty which would leave the rest of Jerusalem free of mosques. In his relation of the discovery of the Rock and of the construction of the mosque, he follows a tradition similar to Ṭabarī's, but without naming Kaʿb.[47] Al-Musharraf emphasizes the fact that ʿUmar was looking for the place where the Temple of Solomon stood; he does mention the Night Journey of the Prophet, but not the Rock.[48] Agapius of Manbij, a contemporary of Eutychius, does not mention either Rock or Ascension, but simply states that ʿUmar ordered the building of a mosque on the site of the Jewish Temple.[49]

Whenever it is mentioned in these texts, the Rock, together with the whole Ḥaram area, appears as the symbol of the Jewish Temple. But the Rock itself is not taken into any particular consideration by ʿUmar. It may be, as is suggested by Eutychius, that ʿUmar was merely looking for a large area on which to build a mosque and that Sophronius used the Jewish background of the Ḥaram to try to persuade the caliph to build the mosque in the empty space of the Ḥaram. But it is perhaps more likely in the face of the enormous impact of Jewish traditions on early Islam, and specifically on ʿUmar at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem,[50] that ʿUmar was genuinely interested in reviving the ancient Jewish holy site, inasmuch as it had been the first Muslim *qiblah*.[51] At any rate, the Muslims took over the Ḥaram area with a definite knowledge and consciousness of its implication in the Jewish tradition as the site of the Temple.

But the later chroniclers are very clear in pointing out that the caliph withstood pressures to transform the site into a major center of Muslim worship. This fact in itself has important implications. It shows, on the one hand, that ʿUmar was subject to many pressures from Jewish and Christian groups to take up their religious quarrels. The caliph wisely remained aloof from these and thereby emphasized the unique character of the new faith in the face of the two older ones. But, at the same time, in building anew on the Temple area, even though in primitive fashion, the Muslims committed a political act:[52] taking possession for the new faith of one of the most sacred spots on earth and altering the pattern imposed on that spot by the Christian domination, without restoring it to its Jewish splendor. But, in all these undertakings the Rock itself played but a minor part.

Some sixty years after the conquest of Jerusalem, however, the Rock will become the center of the whole area. The question is what occurred between

the time of ʿUmar and the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik. The texts, so far as I have been able to ascertain, are silent on this score and we will have to turn to other sources to find a solution. If we consider only the location of the building and the traditions which were associated with it, two possible solutions can be envisaged, since neither the Ascension of Muḥammad nor the imitation of the Kaʿbah can be accepted. One would be that ʿAbd al-Malik decided to commemorate the Jewish Temple, and therefore built a *ciborium* over what was thought to be the only tangible remnant of the structure. There is no evidence for this, nor is it likely that ʿAbd al-Malik had such an idea in mind at a time when the Islamic state was fairly well settled. A second reason might be that the Muslims had brought back to the Rock and to Mount Moriah in general the localization of some biblical event of significance to them, for instance the sacrifice of Abraham. As such the hypothesis is not impossible. The importance of the "Friend of God" (*khalīl Allah*) in the Koran is well known and it is equally well known that Abraham was considered as the ancestor of the Arabs.[53] In later times the major events of his later life were associated with Mekkah or the neighborhood of Mekkah;[54] and it is interesting to note that the life of Adam was also transferred to the Holy City of Arabia, just as Abraham and Adam had moved together from Mount Moriah to the Golgotha in Jerusalem. But is there any definite evidence about the localization of the sacrifice of Abraham in the early Islamic period?

Our only almost contemporary source is John of Damascus. In his account of heresies, he has several extremely interesting pages on Islam. As far as Abraham is concerned, he relates that the Black Stone in Mekkah was supposed to have been either the place where Abraham had intercourse with Agar or the place where he tied his camel when he was about to sacrifice Isaac.[55] Neither one of these stories is a common Muslim interpretation of the Kaʿbah and it may be wondered whether this text does not reflect a calumnious Christian tradition. On the other hand the insistence with which John of Damascus "disproves" that the sacrifice of Abraham took place in Mekkah should be construed as indicating that the idea was fairly common at the time in Muslim circles. In the Muslim tradition itself the problem is complicated by uncertainty whether Isaac or Ismāʾīl was the object of the sacrifice.[56] Ṭabarī, after a lengthy consideration of the problem, leans toward Isaac, both in his history and in his *tafsīr;* so do al-Kisāʾī[57] and Ibn Qutaybah.[58] It seems true that in the early period the official Muslim tradition tended to consider Isaac as the *dhabīḥ.*[59] Ṭabarī does not try to give a specific place for the event, but he does bring out one tradition which maintains that the sacrifice took place two *mīls* from Jerusalem at a place called Quṭṭ or Qaṭṭ.[60] Al-Yaʿqūbī, as usual, relates the standard hagiographical tradition and puts the event at Minā. But he acknowledges that the People of the Book set the sacrifice in the "land of the Amorites in Syria."[61] Al-Kisāʾī relates that the dream of Abraham took place in Jerusalem, but omits any specific mention of the place of sacrifice.[62] Many other writers have omitted any reference to the location. In other words, as far as one can gather, it is impossible to say that the sacrifice of Abraham was, in early Islamic times, definitely connected with any one specific

place, whether around Mekkah or Jerusalem. Both identifications were made and the tradition is obviously uncertain, but the majority of the early traditionists and chroniclers have tended to think of Isaac as the sacrificed one and hence of Palestine as the place of sacrifice. The evidence of John of Damascus can be explained through the common polemical device of attacking the opponent's position, even when it is uncertain, in its weakest side. Furthermore there are indications, in the known descriptions of Jerusalem, that certain places on the Ḥaram were definitely associated with Abraham.[63] And one writer, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, some 50 years before the Crusades, recorded that the footprints on the Rock were those left by Isaac when, together with his father, he came to the Temple area.[64] Thus even in the eleventh century there still was a lingering memory in Muslim circles of a relationship between Abraham and the Rock.

It is not possible, with the evidence in our possession, to prove that the early Muslims considered Jerusalem as the place of sacrifice; but, since the Muslim knowledge of Jewish traditions was mostly derived from Talmudic and other para-Biblical sources,[65] and since a great number of Jews were converted to Islam in the first decades of the new religion, it is very likely that the early Muslims did know of the association between the Rock and Abraham's sacrifice.[66]

One might suggest then that ʿAbd al-Malik, in accord with his well-known policies, would have "islamized" the holy place and chosen the one symbol associated with it which was equally holy to Jews and Muslims, that of Abraham. It was a symbol which would, in Muslim eyes, emphasize the superiority of Islam, since in the Koran Abraham is neither a Christian nor a Jew, but a *ḥanīf* (Kor. 3: 58 ff.) and the first Muslim.[67] This suggestion finds support in one interesting feature of the Christian polemic against the Muslims. John of Damascus and others after him always insist on the fact that the new masters of the Near East are Ishmaelites, that is, outcasts; and it is with this implication that the old term *Sarakenoi* is explained as meaning "empty (because of or away from?) of Sarah" (*ek tes Sarras kenous*) and that the Arabs are often also called *Agarenoi*, obviously in a pejorative sense.[68] It is true that already Jerome, for instance, when writing about nomadic incursions in Palestine and elsewhere, mentions the posterity of Abraham,[69] but his terms are very vague; and, while of course the term Ishmaelites goes back to Biblical times, there seems to appear in Christian writing with the arrival of the Muslims a new and greater emphasis on the sons of Agar.[70] Whether this new emphasis on the posterity of Abraham in Greek and Syriac writers was the result of Arab claims to descent from Abraham (and the resulting building up of Ismāʿīl) or whether it derived solely from a Christian attempt to show contempt for the new masters of the Near East is difficult to say. But granting Abraham's importance in early Islamic thought and in the traditions associated with the Rock, ʿAbd al-Malik's building would have had an essentially polemic and political significance, as a memorial to the Muslim ancestor of the three monotheistic faiths.

But the problem of Abraham in early Islamic times can also be discussed in a purely Muslim context. It will be recalled that one of the most interesting acts

of Ibn al-Zubayr in Mekkah was his rebuilding of the Kaʿbah, after it had been destroyed during the first Umayyad siege. The important point is that he reconstructed it not as it had been built in Muḥammad's youth and with the Prophet's participation, but differently. A later well-known tradition transmitted by ʿAyshah says that he built it as the Prophet said it was in the time of Abraham.[71] Al-Ḥajjāj, on the other hand, rebuilt the Kaʿbah as it had been at the time of the Prophet. This curious attempt by Ibn al-Zubayr to use the prestige of Abraham to justify his building may be brought into relation with another tradition reported by al-Azraqī. The Mekkans were apparently attempting to disprove the contention that Jerusalem was "greater than the Kaʿbah, because it (Jerusalem) was the place to which Prophets emigrate (*mahājar al-anbiyāʾ*) and because it is the Holy Land."[72] Within the Muslim *koiné*, therefore, it may be suggested that ʿAbd al-Malik, while "islamizing" the Jewish holy place, was also asserting a certain preeminence of Palestine and Jerusalem over Mekkah, not actually as a replacement of the Kaʿbah, but rather as a symbol of his opposition to the old-fashioned Mekkan aristocracy represented by Ibn al-Zubayr.[73] The symbol was chosen from the religious lore which had not yet been definitely localized, but which was important to the new faith as well as in the beliefs of the older People of the Book. It was not, however, infringing – as any change of center for the pilgrimage would have done – on the very foundations of Islam.[74] The opposition between Jerusalem and Mekkah and ʿAbd al-Malik's involvement in it may have given rise to the tradition transmitted by al-Yaʿqūbī and others about the *ḥajj* and Jerusalem. What had been a religious-political act entailing an unsettled point of religious lore would have been transformed by them into a religious-political act of impiety intended to strike at the very foundation of one of the "pillars of Islam." Thus did the propaganda machine of the shiʿite and ʿAbbāsid opposition attempt to show the Umayyads as enemies of the faith.

Thus, from the consideration of the location of the Dome of the Rock, it would appear that, at the time of the conquest, the main association was between the Jewish Temple and the Ḥaram area, but that this association does not in itself explain the building of the Dome of the Rock. It is only through the person of Abraham[75] that the ancient symbolism of the Rock could have been adapted to the new faith, since no strictly Muslim symbol seems to have been connected with it at so early a date. In itself this hypothesis cannot be more than a suggestion. There is no clear-cut indication of Abraham's association with the Rock of Jerusalem at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik. Furthermore the question remains whether the monument should be understood within a strictly Muslim context or within the wider context of the relationship between the new state and faith and the older religions of the Near East. For clarification we must turn now to the other two documents in our possession.

The second contemporary evidence we can use for understanding the Umayyad Dome of the Rock is in the building itself, its decoration and its architecture. These two features have been painstakingly analyzed by K. A. C. Creswell and

Marguerite van Berchem. But circumstances did not permit the latter to complete a thorough examination of the mosaics, so that, so far, there is no exhaustive publication of all the mosaics with a definitive statement concerning which parts of the decoration are without doubt Umayyad. As far as the architecture is concerned, the question is fairly clearly resolved: the Dome is a *ciborium* or "reliquary"[76] above a sacred place, on a model which was fairly common among Christian *martyria* throughout the Christian empire, and which was strikingly represented by the great churches of Jerusalem itself.[77] In other words, the architecture confirms the symbolic quality of *place of commemoration* of the Dome of the Rock, but it does not provide us with any more specific clue with respect to its meaning at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik.

As far as the mosaics are concerned, most of the decorative themes consist of vegetal motives interspersed with vases, cornucopias, and what have been called "jewels."[78] All these elements, except the "jewels," are common enough and their significance in late seventh-century art has been analyzed more than once. But the "jewels" present a peculiarity which may help to explain the meaning of the structure. It must be pointed out first that we will not be dealing here with the gems and mother-of-pearl fragments set on tree trunks, fruits, rosettes, and cornucopias, which belong to a purely decorative scheme. We are only concerned with jewels that are worn, such as crowns, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, and breastplates.[79] We shall not try to solve all the problems connected with these jewels, inasmuch as J. Deer has announced that he is preparing a special study of their importance for our knowledge of medieval and especially Byzantine royal ornament. We shall restrict ourselves here to a few remarks which bear directly on the problem of the significance of the Dome of the Rock.

Mademoiselle van Berchem has already noted that the jewel decoration does not appear uniformly throughout the building, but almost exclusively on the *inner face of the octagonal colonnade*.[80] The reason for that, it has been suggested, is that the decoration will appear more brilliantly when seen against the light.[81] It can be pointed out, however, that the difference between this part of the mosaic decoration and the rest of it does not lie in the usage of a jewel-like effect, but in the type of jewels used. Had the intended effect been purely formal, gems and mother-of-pearl, as used elsewhere in the building, would have served equally well here. It may rather be suggested that these actual crowns, bracelets, and other jeweled ornaments were *meant* to be shown as surrounding the central holy place toward which they face, and that it is in this sense that they contrast with the purely decorative gemlike fragments seen throughout the building.

A second point to be made about these jewels is that, although in most cases they have been adapted to the vegetal basis of the decorative scheme, they are identifiable. There are crowns, some of which were discussed by J. Deer, either diadems with hanging and encrusted precious stones, in many cases topped with triangular, oval, or arched forms, or diadems surmounted by wings and a crescent. There is also a variety of breastplates, necklaces, pins, and earrings, almost all of which are set with precious stones either as incrustations or as hangings.

These ornaments can all be identified either as royal or imperial ornaments of the Byzantine and Persian princes, with the former largely predominant, or as the ornaments worn by Christ, the Virgin, and saints in the religious art of Byzantium.[82] Recent studies, in particular those of A. Grabar, J. Deer, and P. E. Schramm, have shown that these were all, in varying degrees and in different ways, symbols of holiness, power, and sovereignty in the official art of the Byzantine and Persian empires.[83] In other words, the decoration of the Dome of the Rock witnesses a *conscious* (because of its position) use by the decorators of this Islamic sanctuary of representations of symbols belonging to the subdued or to the still active enemies of the Muslim state.

What can the significance of such a theme be in the decoration of an early Muslim holy place? We must ask ourselves first whether there is any evidence in other places for the practice of hanging crowns or for representations of crowns and jewels in sanctuaries. The representational evidence is limited. A group of Gospels, mostly Armenian and Ethiopian, but certainly harking back to early Christian and Byzantine models, show, in the pages devoted to the representation of canon tables, structures, *ciboria* or *tholoi*, at times with hanging curtains between the columns. In a number of cases hanging crowns also appear between the columns or on the side.[84] Professor Nordenfalk has suggested that these *tholoi* represented the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.[85] The well-known Pola casket shows such a crown in the sanctuary of St. Peter's in Rome.[86] Crowns are also shown hanging over the hands of the bishops of Ravenna in San Apollinario in Classe[87] and over the head of an emperor on an ivory.[88] All these crowns, in a number of cases difficult to distinguish from lamps with holy oil, serve to emphasize the greatness or sanctity of either person or place. Actual crowns and jewels have also survived to this day. The unique group of Visigothic crowns discovered in Spain,[89] many of which bear such a remarkable resemblance to the crowns of the Dome of the Rock, are among our best examples.[90] A number of texts have also preserved for us evidence for this practice of hanging votive crowns. In Christian Egypt, the builders of a church hung a crown over the altar of the church opposite a gold and silver cross in the center of the edifice.[91] In Constantinople emperors are known to have ordered crowns to be suspended over or around the holiest spot in the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia.[92] Although less precise, similar practices seem to have been common in the Mazdean world as well.[92a] In all these cases we are dealing with an emphasis on the holiness of a sanctuary – or, as in the cases of Ravenna and the Visigoths, of a personage – through suspending around it or over it royal insignia. This explanation might be offered for the use of the decorative theme in the Dome of the Rock. It could be argued that, perhaps under the impact of the Christian sanctuaries of Jerusalem, and in particular the Holy Sepulchre,[93] the Dome of the Rock was decorated with votive crowns to emphasize the holiness of the place.

Yet such an explanation would lead to difficulties. It would not explain the inclusion of a Persian crown within the decorative scheme. Moreover, this explanation, while agreeing with the purely formal aspect of the decoration, agrees

perhaps less well with the historical and cultural milieu of the Umayyads and of Islam. It is no doubt true that the early Muslim civilization owed most of its ideas and a great deal of its art to the cultures which preceded it in the conquered areas; but it would be a mistake to consider that the imitation and copying which took place were absolutely blind. It should be possible to explain an early Islamic monument in Muslim terms. In other words, we must ask ourselves whether there is any evidence in the early Islamic period for the use of crowns and other royal objects in religious buildings and, if so, for what purposes. Were they really ex-votos? Or did they have a different significance? An essential piece of evidence is provided by the list of objects sent to Mekkah and kept there in the Kaʿbah.[94] This list can be made up from different authors, especially from al-Azraqī,[95] whose early date is of particular significance to us.

In older times the Mekkan sanctuary had had paintings and sculptures, which were destroyed on the Prophet's order, as a well-known story tells. Apparently until the time of Ibn al-Zubayr the shrine also kept the two horns of the ram which had been sacrificed by Abraham and other prophets.[96] When he destroyed the Kaʿbah, Ibn al-Zubayr tried to reach for them, but they crumbled in his hands. In Islamic times a new series of objects was brought into the Temple. ʿUmar hung there two crescent-shaped ornaments taken from the capital city of the Persians. Yazīd I gave two ruby-encrusted crescents, belonging to a Damascene church, together with two cups.[97] ʿAbd al-Malik sent two necklaces (*shamsatayn*) and two glass cups. Al-Walīd I also sent two cups, while al-Walīd II sent a throne and two crescent-shaped ornaments with an inscription.[98] Al-Saffāḥ sent a green dish, while al-Manṣūr had a glass cup of an ancient Egyptian type[99] hung in the shrine. Hārūn al-Rashīd put there two gilded and bejeweled cases (*qaṣbatayn*) containing the celebrated oaths of allegiance of his two sons to the complex system he had established.[100] Al-Maʾmūn sent rubies attached to a golden chain, while al-Mutawakkil had a necklace of gold with precious stones, rubies, and topazes hung on a chain of gold. At a later date, the agreement between al-Muwaffaq and al-Muʿtamid about the division of the empire was also sent to the Kaʿbah.[101] But the most important group of objects from our point of view is that which was sent by al-Maʾmūn.

The text of al-Azraqī is somewhat confused on this score. This is not the place to define the exact historical circumstances involved, but it would seem that two more or less contemporary sets of events were mixed up by the chronicler. First, an unnamed king of Tibet had an idol of gold with a crown of gold and jewels set on a baldachin throne of silver covered with a cloth with tassels in the shape of spheres. When this king became a Muslim, he gave the throne and the idol to the Kaʿbah. They were sent to Mekkah in 201 AH and exhibited at the time of the pilgrimage with an inscription[102] emphasizing the fact that the throne was given as a gift to the Kaʿbah as a token of the king's submission to Islam.[103] In 202, during a revolt, the throne was destroyed,[104] but the crown remained in the Kaʿbah certainly until the time of al-Azraqī. Second, the Mekkah sanctuary also acquired the spoils of the Kābul-shāh, who submitted and became converted

in 199. His crown seems to have been taken to Mekkah immediately, as is ascertained by an inscription of that date.[105] The throne was kept for a while in the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) of the Orient, but then was also moved to Mekkah in 200.[106] The inscriptions which were put up together with these two objects are quite revealing in showing the extent to which the nature of an inscription in a religious sanctuary is related to the circumstances of the time. They emphasize, on the one hand, the victory of the "righteous" prince al-Ma'mūn over his perjured brother and, on the other hand, the victory of the "Commander of the Faithful" over the unbelievers.[107]

All these objects found in the Ka'bah can be divided into three categories. Some were merely expensive gifts whose purpose was to emphasize the holiness of the place and the piety of the donors. Just as in Byzantium, there was, in this category, a preponderance of royal jewels. Another category of objects need not concern us here: the statements of oaths were put in the sanctuary not to enhance the sanctuary's holiness, but to acquire holiness and sacredness from it. But there was also a third category of objects, from 'Umar's gift, acquired in the palace of the Persian kings, to the throne and crown of Kābūl-shāh. Such objects had an uplifting value to the beholders, used as they were to symbolize the unbeliever's submission to Islam through the display of the *Herrschaftszeichen* of the unbelieving prince in the chief sanctuary of Islam.

If we return now to the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, two possibilities are open. One can argue, first, that the crowns and jewels reflect an artistic theme of Byzantine origin which, also in an Islamic context, used royal symbols in a religious sanctuary to emphasize the sanctuary's holiness. But one can also suggest that the choice of Byzantine and Sasanian royal symbols was dictated by the desire to demonstrate that the "unbelievers" had been defeated and brought into the fold of the true faith. Thus, in the case of the mosaic decoration, just as in the problem of the choice of the location of the building, one can present at the same time an explanation of the Dome of the Rock which would be purely religious and self-sufficient in Islamic terms alone (even though it may reflect practices found in other civilizations) and an explanation which brings up the relationship of the non-Muslims to the new faith. The third document in our possession, the inscription, will give us a definite answer.

The Dome of the Rock is unusually rich in inscriptions,[108] of which three are Umayyad.[109] The major one, 240 meters in length, is found above the arches of the inner octagonal arcade, on both sides. With the exception of the well-known place where al-Ma'mūn substituted his name for that of 'Abd al-Malik, this inscription is throughout contemporary with the building. The other two inscriptions are on copper plaques on the eastern and northern gates. They, too, have been tampered with by the 'Abbāsid prince, but Max van Berchem has shown that they should be considered as Umayyad.

The content of the inscriptions is almost exclusively religious, the exception being the part that gives the name of the builder and the date, and to a large

extent it consists of Koranic quotations. The importance of this earliest Koranic inscription we have lies in the choice of the passages and in the accompanying prayers and praises. That Koranic excerpts were used in Islamic times to empha- size or even to indicate the purpose of a structure can easily be shown by a few examples. For instance, the Nilometer of Rawḍah contains Koranic inscriptions from the ʿAbbāsid period, which refer to the importance of water as a life- bringing element (42:27–8; 14:37; 16:10–11, and so on).[110] In the mosque of al-Ḥākim a passage was chosen which refers to an *imām* (28:4).[111] Much later the hospital of Nūr al-Din in Damascus contained various quotations dealing with the art of healing (10:59; 16:71; 26:78–80).[112] Most mosques generally contain in some obvious place 9:18, which specifies the duties of those entering sanctuaries. It is thus perfectly legitimate to infer from the tenor of a Koranic inscription the purpose and the significance of a building. Often, as in the Dome of the Rock, these inscriptions can in fact be read only with difficulty. However, Max van Berchem has shown in numerous instances that the significance of inscriptions was essentially symbolic and this is particularly evident in the Dome of the Rock, since otherwise there would have been no reason for al-Maʾmūn to replace ʿAbd al-Malik's name with his own.[113]

   The inscription in the interior of the building can be divided into six unequal parts, each of which begins with the *basmalah*. Each of these parts contains a Koranic passage, except for the one that has the date. The first part has *sūrah* 112: "Say: He is God, the One; God the Eternal; He has not begotten nor was He begotten; and there is none comparable to Him." The second part contains *sūrah* 33:54: "Verily God and His angels bless the Prophet; O ye who believe, bless him and salute him with a worthy salutation." The third passage is from *sūrah* 17: verse 111. This is the *sūrah* of the Night Journey, but the quoted passage is not connected with the *isrāʾ* of the Prophet, a further argument against the belief that at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik the Rock of Jerusalem was already identified with the place of the Night Journey whence Muḥammad ascended into heaven. Verse 111 goes as follows: "And say: praise be to God, Who has not taken unto Himself a son, and Who has no partner in Sovereignty, nor has He any protector on account of weakness."[114] The fourth quotation, 64:1 and 57:2, is a simple statement of the absolute power of God: "All in heaven and on the earth glorify God; to Him is the Kingdom; to Him is praise; He has power over all things." The last part is the longest and contains several Koranic passages. First 64:1, 67:2, and 33:54 are repeated. They are followed by 4:169–71: "O ye People of the Book, overstep not bounds in your religion; and of God speak only truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and His Word which he conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him. Believe there- fore in God and his apostles, and say not 'Three.' It will be better for you. God is only one God. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. His is whatever is in the heavens, and whatever is on the earth. And God is a sufficient Guardian. The Messiah does not disdain being a servant of God, nor do the Angels who are near Him. And all who disdain His service and are filled with

pride, God will gather them all to Himself." This quotation is followed by a most remarkable invitation to prayer: "Pray for your Prophet and your servant, Jesus, son of Mary."[115] But this is followed by 19:34–7: "And the peace of God was on me (Mary) the day I was born, and will be the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised to life. This is Jesus, the son of Mary; this is a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It beseems not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him. When He decrees a thing, He only says to it 'Be,' and it is. And verily God is my Lord and your Lord; adore Him then. This is the right way." And the inscription ends with the exhortation and threat of 3:16–17: "God witnesses that there is no God but He: and the angels, and men endued with knowledge, established in righteousness, proclaim there is no God but He, the Mighty, the Wise. The true religion with God is Islam; and they to whom the Scriptures had been given, differed not until after the knowledge had come to them, and through mutual jealousy. But, as for him who shall not believe in the signs of God, God will be prompt to reckon with him."[116]

The two inscriptions on the gates are not as explicit. The one on the east gate bears a number of common Koranic statements dealing with the faith (2:256; 2:111; 24:35, 112; 3:25; 6:12; 7:155) and a long prayer for the Prophet and his people. The inscription on the north gate is more important since it contains two significant passages. First it has 9:33 (or 61:9): "He it is who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, so that he may cause it to prevail over all religion, however much the idolaters may hate it." This is the so-called "prophetic mission" which has become the standard inscription on all Muslim coins. But, while it is true that it has become a perfectly commonplace one, its monumental usage is rarer and this is its first known example. And second, this inscription contains an abridged form of 2:130 (or part of 3:78), which comes after an enumeration of the prophets: "We believe in God, in that which was passed down to Muḥammad (this is not Koranic) and *in that which the Prophets received from their Lord. And we make no distinction between any of them and unto Him we have surrendered*."

These quotations emphasize three basic points. First the fundamental principles of Islam are forcefully asserted, as they will be in many later inscriptions. Then all three inscriptions point out the special position of the prophet Muḥammad and the importance and universality of his mission. Finally the Koranic quotations define the position of Jesus and other prophets in the theology of the new faith, with by far the greatest emphasis on Jesus and Mary (no Old Testament prophet is mentioned by name).[117] The main inscription ends with an exhortation, mingled with the threat of divine punishment, pointing to Islam as the final revelation and directed to the Christians and the Jews ("O ye people of the Book"). These quotations do not, for the most part, belong to the usual cycle of Koranic inscriptions on monuments. Just as the Dome of the Rock is a monument without immediate parallel in Islamic architecture, so is its inscription unique. Moreover it must be realized that even those quotations which will become commonplace were used here, if not for the first time, at any

rate at a time when they had not yet become standard. Through these quotations the inscription has a double implication. On the one hand it has a missionary character; it is an invitation, a rather impatient one, to "submit" to the new and final faith,[118] which accepts Christ and the Hebrew prophets among its forerunners. At the same time it is an assertion of the superiority and of the strength of the new faith and of the state based on it.

The inscription also had a meaning from the point of view of the Muslims alone. For it can be used to clarify the often quoted statement of al-Maqdisī on the reason for the building of the Dome of the Rock. One day al-Maqdisī asked his uncle why al-Walīd spent so much money on the building of the mosque of Damascus. The uncle answered: "O my little son, thou hast not understanding. Verily al-Walīd was right, and he was prompted to a worthy work. For he beheld Syria to be a country that had long been occupied by the Christians, and he noted there the beautiful churches still belonging to them, so enchantingly fair, and so renowned for their splendor, as are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the churches of Lydda and Edessa. So he sought to build for the Muslims a mosque that should be unique and a wonder to the world. And in like manner is it not evident that 'Abd al-Malik, seeing the greatness of the *martyrium* (*qubbah*) of the Holy Sepulchre and its magnificence was moved lest it should dazzle the minds of the Muslims and hence erected above the Rock the Dome which is now seen there."[119]

It is indeed very likely that the sophisticated Christian milieu of Jerusalem had tried to win to its faith the rather uncouth invaders. And it is a well-known fact that eastern Christianity had always liked to use the emotional impact of music and the visual arts to convert "barbarians."[120] That such attempts may have been effective with the Arabs is shown in the very interesting, although little studied, group of accounts dealing with the more or less legendary trips of Arabs to the Byzantine court in early Islamic times, or sometimes even before Islam.[121] In most cases the "highlight" of the "guided tours" to which they submitted was a visit either to a church where a definite impact was made by the religious representations or to a court reception with similar results. In the pious accounts of later times the Muslim always leaves impressed but unpersuaded by the pageantry displayed. One may wonder, however, whether such was always the case and whether the later stories should not be considered, at least in part, as moral stories intended to ward off defections. That the danger of defections existed is clearly implied in Maqdisī's story. From a Muslim point of view, therefore, the Dome of the Rock was an answer to the attraction of Christianity, and its inscription provided the faithful with arguments to be used against Christian positions.

A priori, as we have seen, two major themes must be present in the construction of the Dome of the Rock. First, the building of a sanctuary on Mount Moriah must be understandable – and must have been understood – in terms of the body of beliefs which had been associated with that ancient holy spot, since Islam was

not meant as a totally new faith, but as the continuation and final statement of the faith of the *People of the Book*. In other words, the Dome of the Rock must have had a significance in relation to Jewish and Christian beliefs. Second, the first major Muslim piece of architecture had to be meaningful to the follower of the new faith. These two themes recur in the analysis of all the three types of evidence provided by the building itself. Its location can be explained as an attempt to emphasize an event of the life of Abraham either in order to point to the Muslim character of a personage equally holy to Christian and Jews or in order to strengthen the sacredness of Palestine against Mekkan claims. The royal symbols in the mosaics could be understood as simply votive or an expression of the defeat of the Byzantine and Persian empires by the Muslims. Finally the inscriptions are at the same time a statement of Muslim unitarianism and a proclamation to Christians and Jews, especially to the former, of the final truth of Islam.

But in the inscriptions the latter theme is preponderant and it is in the inscription, with its magical and symbolic significance – far greater than that of representational art in Islam from the very inception of the new faith[122] – that we find the main idea involved in the erection of the Dome of the Rock. What the inscription implies is a forceful assertion of the power and of the strength of the new faith and of the state based on it. It exemplifies the realization by the Umayyad leadership of its own position with respect to the traditional heir of the Roman empire. In what was in the seventh century the Christian city *par excellence* ʿAbd al-Malik wanted to affirm the superiority and the victory of Islam. This affirmation, to which was joined a missionary invitation to accept the new faith, had its expression both in the inscription and in the Byzantine and Persian crowns and jewels hanging around the sacred Rock. But its most immediately striking expression was the appropriation for Islam of the ancient site of Mount Moriah. Thereby the Christian prophecy was voided and the Jewish mount rehabilitated. But it was no longer a Jewish sanctuary; it was a sanctuary dedicated to the victorious faith. Thus the building of the Dome of the Rock implies, on the part of ʿAbd al-Malik, what might be called a *prise de possession* of a hallowed area, in the same sense that, as Max van Berchem has shown, the substitution of al-Maʾmūn's name for that of ʿAbd al-Malik in the inscription was not the act of a counterfeiter or a vainglorious prince but had a political aim: "détourner à son profit le prestige religieux et politique attaché aux créations de ses prédécesseurs."[123] In meaning, therefore, the Dome of the Rock should not so much be related to the monuments whose form it took over, but to the more general practice of setting up a symbol of the conquering power or faith within the conquered land. Such were the *tropaia* of the Roman empire.[124] Such were, in a different way, the inscriptions in the Christian basilica of Bethlehem.[125] Such were the well-known inscriptions of the Nahr al-Kalb north of Beyrouth. Such was probably the meaning of many an Assyrian sculpture, whose brutality was really meant to strike fear in the heart of the subdued. And even today such commemorative inscriptions or monuments are not uncommon within the

territory of the conquered peoples. The forms may change according to the time, place, and circumstances, but the monumental expression of an essentially political idea is as ancient as the existence of empires. And in Umayyad Islam this affirmation of victory is bound with a definite missionary spirit.

Two points remain still to be discussed. We must see first in what ways such an interpretation of the Dome of the Rock agrees with the Byzantine–Umayyad relations of the time. Then we must try to find out at what time the Dome of the Rock and the area surrounding it acquired the significance which became prevalent in later times.

The years 69–72 were not very favorable for the fortunes of the Umayyad caliphs. They were fighting Muslim forces in Arabia and Iraq. They were paying an enormous tribute to the Byzantines and, furthermore, they had to face the invasion of that odd group of Christian irregulars, the Mardaites, while the Cyprus situation was still unsettled.[126] However, the interesting point is not in the actual events, but in the psychological climate of Christian–Muslim relations in the latter part of the seventh century. The important fact here is that there was a constant ambiguity in these relations, for they were, on the one hand, relations between two faiths and, on the other, between two empires. By the end of the seventh century it appears fairly certain that an important fraction of the Christian population within the Muslim empire – and especially the hierarchy of the church – was in reality a sort of "fifth column" for the Byzantine state,[127] which was all the easier, since communications were not interrupted between the two empires, as has recently been shown again.[127a]

ʿAbd al-Malik directed himself against the Christian danger no less effectively than against the danger of disaffection in the very ranks of Islam. The Mardaites were taken care of by an expedition[128] and by a treaty with Byzantium.[129] A few years later, ʿAbd al-Malik changed the coinage[130] and transformed it into an instrument of opposition to the Byzantine empire. Already the earlier experimental issues had contained symbols of the new state,[131] but the new coinage included in a nutshell all the themes of the inscription of the Dome of the Rock: the unitarian affirmation (There is no God but God, One, without associate), the emphasis on Muḥammad (Muḥammad the Apostle of God), and the mission verse from the Koran quoted above. The argument that coinage was an element of ideological warfare is all the more convincing since, around the same time, and probably before the Muslim change of coinage, Justinian II introduced a new Byzantine coinage with a definite Christological emphasis (*servus Christi* in the inscription and an image of Christ with the inscription *rex regnantium*) which had hitherto been absent.[132] It may be pointed out in passing that it is on problems of Christology that all later discussions between Muslims and Christians will center.[133] As to the third Christian element, the Christians of the Muslim empire, ʿAbd al-Malik's attitude toward them was a mixture of sternness and persuasion. It is exemplified in the erection of the Dome of the Rock, whose meaning was that the Islamic state was here to stay and that the new faith was simply the final statement of what was true in Christianity.

One may introduce here yet another document which may have a bearing on the problem. Most Arab chroniclers, when relating the major events of the Prophet's life, relate that Muḥammad had sent a series of embassies to the rulers of the world, and, among them, of course, to Heraclius.[134] The historical value of many of these stories has been questioned[135] and there is no doubt that much in their later forms was certainly made up, although the mere fact of Muḥammad's sending messengers is not implausible, especially after his first successes over Jews and pagans, when he began to emphasize the universality of the new faith. One of the stories transmitted by Ṭabarī may have some significance in our investigation. It goes back to al-Zuhrī, who claims to have heard it from a Christian bishop *at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik*, and, like many other accounts, it says that Heraclius himself was quite convinced of the truth of the Prophet's mission, but that the upper ranks of the church refused to follow him and that he had to submit to them.[136] Regardless of whether Muḥammad sent messengers, it is extremely improbable, to say the least, that Heraclius would have even considered becoming a Muslim. But it could be suggested that the Umayyads, in order to arouse the Christians against the hierarchy of the church, which was closely tied to the Byzantine empire, and in order to further the aims of conversion which certainly existed among their followers, might have created the fiction that the hero who brought the True Cross back to Jerusalem was ready to become a Muslim. And it is under ʿAbd al-Malik and at the time of the construction of the Dome of the Rock that such a story might have been put into circulation.

By itself this account has little significance, but, together with the coins, the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock, and the Christian activities in the Muslim empire, it contributes to the suggestion of an interesting group of propagandistic activities taking place during the ideological "cold war" between the Christian and Muslim empires at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik. All together they created a climate of opinion which certainly influenced the spirit of crusade and the consciousness of a struggle between the two faiths and the two states, which characterized the great Muslim expedition against Constantinople in the years 97–9/715–17.[137]

These facts would, I believe, show that the interpretation here proposed of the Dome of the Rock does agree with the known historical development of Islam and Byzantium in Umayyad times. But this significance could only last so long as the circumstances permitted. Its faint echo is still apparent in Maqdisī, but it may be noted that the Muslim geographer claimed that in the tenth century AD Christians and Jews still maintained the upper hand in the affairs of the city;[138] the building, therefore, still served its original purpose, albeit on a very restricted level.

In the meantime, however, the whole Ḥaram area underwent considerable change, both in its physical aspect and in its significance. The identification of the *masjid al-aqṣā* with Jerusalem was more generally accepted than before and all the small memorial structures connected with the Ascension of Muḥammad were built. The question is whether one can date the moment when this change

took place. The inscriptions are not very helpful. The earliest one to mention the *isrā* of the Prophet and to quote Koran 17 : 1 is the one which was seen by Harawi and which is dated in 426/1035.[139] It was in the large congregational mosque at the southern end of the Ḥaram, which is generally called the Aqṣā mosque. Basing himself on that inscription, Max van Berchem suggested that it is there and not on the Rock that the Muslim tradition had first localized the event of the Prophet's life.[140] This is quite possible, inasmuch as Ibn al-Faqīh, one of our earlier sources, mentions that in this mosque there was a black plaque with the inscription *khilqah Muḥammad*,[141] and behind the *qiblah* there was another inscription connected with the Prophet. At the same time, the existence of a *qubbah* of the Ascension on the central platform of the Ḥaram would lead one to believe that it is in a more central part of the esplanade that the miraculous event was thought to have taken place. Were both places accepted at the same time? Or was there a difference in meaning between them? Could one have been more definitely commemorative than the other? The question of localization is still not clear.

As far as dating is concerned, it may be suggested that it was under al-Walīd, 'Abd al-Malik's successor, that the identification of the *isrā*' and *mi'raj* with the Ḥaram area was accepted and translated into architecture. Al-Walīd was known as a great builder. He built the new mosque at Madīnah, the royal mosque at Damascus, and he restored a great deal in Mekkah.[142] In the case of Madīnah, Sauvaget has shown that the plan of the new mosque depended in many ways on the preceding structure which was like the shrine of the house of the Prophet.[143] And the Egyptian papyri show that under al-Walīd a major mosque was built in Jerusalem. There is little doubt that it is the present Aqṣā mosque which was centered on the previously built sanctuary of the Rock, perhaps in *architectural* imitation of the complex of the Holy Sepulchre, as has been suggested, although the *idea* of adapting a congregational mosque to a formerly built sanctuary is also that of Madīnah.[144] If, then, the Ascension of Muḥammad was supposed to have taken place on the site of the mosque, there is some justification in attributing to al-Walīd the monumental recognition of the fact. If, on the other hand, the localization was on the central platform, we can still argue that al-Walīd was responsible for it. And this for the following reason.

It will be recalled that two writers, al-Muhallabī, quoted by Abū al-Fidā,[145] and Eutychius[146] attribute the building of the Dome of the Rock to al-Walīd. Al-Muhallabī adds that al-Walīd was also responsible for the small *qubbahs* around the Dome of the Rock, while Eutychius claims that the dome of the main sanctuary was taken from a Christian church in Baalbek and brought to the Holy City. The errors of these two writers could be explained if we suppose that al-Walīd was indeed responsible for the building of the small mausoleums and consequently for the architectural translation of the Ascension of the Prophet. It may even be that al-Walīd did have a small cupola moved from some remote Christian church, while it would of course be unthinkable to imagine the transportation of the dome set over the Rock. Knowing al-Walīd to have been the

builder of the large congregational mosque and of the small mausoleums, al-Muhallabī and Eutychius would have simply concluded that the building up of the Ḥaram in general was his doing. It may finally be added that all the religious foundations of al-Walīd are characterized by their concern with a lavish expression of the power of the Umayyad state and with their emphasis on the places sanctified by Muḥammad. It would have been natural for the builder of the mosque of Madīnah to have used the Ascension of the Prophet as a reason to build a large mosque in Jerusalem.

Be this as it may, we can see that the evidence which can be gathered from the mosaics, the inscriptions, and the location of the Dome of the Rock shows that the first major Muslim attempt at monumental architecture can only be understood in all its complexity and uniqueness when seen in its Umayyad context. Political and religious, directed to the Muslim as well as to the Jew and especially the Christian, symbol of a state and of a mission, the Dome of the Rock reflected the centuries of traditions and beliefs which had accumulated on Mount Moriah, just as it was intimately tied to the specific historical situation of the time.[147] As a political and immanent structure, the Dome of the Rock soon lost its meaning. But as a religious building it continued the great tradition of the Temple and its significance went far beyond that of a mere *martyrium* to a moment of the Prophet's life. It must be seen as the first of a long series of Muslim sanctuaries connected with the lives of Prophets, although it is still to be investigated whether, and, if so, to what extent, both architecturally and conceptually the Dome of the Rock influenced the development of later *qubbahs* and *welis*. Moreover, with the development of mysticism the concept of the Ascension of Muḥammad became one of the richest and most profound themes of Islamic thought and reached even beyond the frontiers of Islam, influencing the spiritual progress of the western world.[148] Thus the Ḥaram area in Jerusalem acquired a sacredness far greater than and much different from the temporal significance that was given to it at the time of its revival by the Umayyads through the building of the Dome of the Rock.

Notes

1   Among the Muslim holy places Jerusalem occupies in general a slightly less important place than the two Arabian sanctuaries. The Palestinian city was more important in Umayyad, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk times than under the 'Abbāsids or the Fāṭimids, although both of the latter dynasties took great care in repairing damaged monuments on the Ḥaram. At times, also, it seems to have had a local importance rather than an ecumenical one; see Nāṣir-i Khusrow, tr. G. LeStrange in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society* (hereafter PPTS), vol. 4, London, 1896, p. 23. Or else its importance was only emphasized by specific religious, and especially mystical, groups; see the remarks at the end of S. D. Goitein, *The historical background of the erection of the Dome of the Rock*, Journal of the American Oriental Society (hereafter JAOS), vol. 70 (1950), pp. 104–8.

2   A. S. Marmarji, *Buldāniyah Filasṭīn al-ʿarabiyah*, Beirut, 1948, pp. 30–42, 234–301.

3   G. LeStrange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, London, 1890, pp. 83–233.

4   J. Gildmeister, *Die arabischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Harambauten*, Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins (hereafter ZDPV), vol. 13 (1890), pp. 1–24.

5   N. A. Miednikov, *Palestina ot zavoevaniya arabami do kristovykh pohodov*, Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik, vols. 16 and 17 (1897).

6   A. S. Marmarji, *Textes géographiques sur la Palestine*, Paris, 1951.

7   Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum II Syrie du Sud*, 3 vols., Cairo, 1922–3, 1927.

8   G. LeStrange quotes an unpublished fragment of Ṣibt al-Jawzi to that effect, *Description of the Noble Sanctuary*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (hereafter JRAS), n.s., vol. 19 (1887), p. 280.

9   K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim architecture*, vol. 1, Oxford, 1932, pp. 42–94 and 151–228.

10   M. van Berchem, vol. 2, pp. 23–31, 37 ff.

11   See, for instance, G. LeStrange, in JRAS, vol. 19 (1887), pp. 260–1.

12   Two of these late *faḍāʾil* have been recently translated by C. D. Matthews, *Palestine-Mohammedan Holy Land* in *Yale Oriental Series*, vol. 24, New Haven, 1949, with important notes.

12a Al-Harawi, *Guide des Lieux de Pèlerinage*, tr. J. Sourdel-Thomine, Damascus, 1957, p. 62 ff.

13   al-Yaʿqūbī, *Historiae*, ed. T. Houtsma, Leyden, 1883, vol. 2, p. 311.

14   Eutychius ibn al-Baṭrīq, *Annales*, ed. L. Cheikho et al., in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, ser. 3, vol. 7, Paris, 1909, p. 39 ff.

15   Quoted by Abū al-Fiḍā, *Geography*, tr. M. Reinaud and S. Guyard, Paris, 1848–83, vol. 2, p. 4; cf. also Gildmeister in ZDPV, vol. 13, p. 8.

16   Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, ed. M. S. al-ʿAriyān, Cairo, 1940, vol. 7, pp. 299–300; this text is one of the earliest ones to include the more or less complete hagiography of Jerusalem as it will appear in later traditions.

17   Creswell, p. 43, n. 1; I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, Halle, 1889–90, vol. 2, pp. 35–7.

18   S. D. Goitein, *op. cit.* See also J. W. Hirschberg, *The sources of Moslem traditions concerning Jerusalem*, Rocznik Orientalistyczny, vol. 18 (1953), p. 318 ff.

19   J. Horovitz, *The earliest biographies of the Prophet and their authors*, Islamic Culture, vol. 2 (1928), p. 38 ff.; cf. also *al-Zuhri* in *Encyclopedia of Islam*. For doubts about al-Zuhrī's relationship with ʿAbd al-Malik, see now A. A. Duri, *Al-Zuhri, a study on the beginnings of history writing in Islam*, Bull. School of Oriental and African Studies, vol. 19 (1956), pp. 10–11.

20   Balādhurī, *Anṣāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 5, ed. S. D. Goitein, Jerusalem, 1936, p. 355 ff., esp. pp. 358, 360, 362, 373.

21   Ṭabarī, *Annales*, ed. M. de Goeje et al., Leyden, 1879–1901, vol. 2, pp. 781–3.

22   Cf. below for a possible interpretation of Eutychius' error.

23   Goitein has suggested that the pilgrims from Syria mentioned by Nāṣir-i Khusrow did not in fact accomplish the regular *ḥajj*, but only the *wuqūf*, a practice which was observed in many provincial cities.

24 On all these problems cf. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Le pèlerinage à la Mekke*, Paris, 1923, p. 49, and *Encyclopedia of Islam* articles on Kaʿbah, Mekkah, etc.

25 Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, *Kitāb rusūl allāh*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1859, p. 263 ff., tr. by A. Guillaume, London, 1955, p. 181 ff.

26 al-Yaʿqūbī, *loc. cit.*

27 B. Schrieke, art. *Isrāʾ* in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, and *Die Himmelsreise Muhammeds*, Der Islam, vol. 7 (1916), attempted to show that the Ascension of the Prophet was a sort of *Initiationshimmelfahrt* for prophethood. On the more general problem of the Ascension, see the recent contributions of G. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*, Uppsala, 1950, and *Muhammad, the Apostle of God and his Ascension*, Uppsala, 1951, whose interesting conclusions go far beyond the specific problem of Muḥammad.

28 A. A. Bevan, *Muhammed's Ascension to Heaven*, Studien . . . Julius Wellhausen gewidmet, Giessen, 1914. The case of Ṭabarī is particularly significant to Bevan, since the medieval writer included the Jerusalem identification in his *Tafsīr*, but dropped it from his later chronicle. See also Ibn Ḥawqal in *Bibl. Geogr. Arab.*, vol. 2, 2d ed. by J. H. Kramers, Leyden, 1938–9, p. 172, where the *masjid al-aqṣā* seems to be very generally located in Palestine, but not in any specific place.

29 Even in later times traditions were maintained which denied that the Rock was the place whence Muḥammad ascended into heaven; cf. Matthews, pp. 20–1.

30 J. Horovitz, *Muhammeds Himmelfahrt*, Der Islam, vol. 9 (1919).

31 A. Guillaume, *Where was al-masjid al-Aqṣā?*, al-Andalus, vol. 18 (1953).

32 Nāṣir-i Khusrow in PPTS, vol. 4, p. 49. Cf. above, pp. 167–8.

33 H. Schmidt, *Der heilige Fels in Jerusalem*, Tübingen, 1933, p. 47. See also G. Dalman, *Neue Petra-Forschungen*, Leipzig, 1912, p. 111 ff., and esp. p. 137 ff.

34 J. Simons, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament*, Leyden, 1952, p. 344 ff., and esp. p. 381 ff., with full bibliography; A. Parrot, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, Neuchâtel-Paris, 1954, p. 7 ff.

35 *Mishnah Middoth* in *The Babylonian Talmud*, Eng. tr. by I. Epstein, London, 1948, chap. III; Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 31 ff.; Simons, *op. cit.*, p. 39 ff., where no specific information is given about the Rock.

36 W. H. Roscher, *Der Omphalosgedanke bei verschiedenen Völkern*, Berichte über die Verhandl. d. Sächs. Gesell. d. Wiss. zu Leipzig, phil.-hist. Kl., vol. 70 (1918), p. 34 ff. with further bibliography. Further references in J. W. Hirschberg, *Sources of Muslim traditions*, p. 321 ff., with, curiously, no mention of Abraham.

37 G. Dalman, *Jerusalem und seine Gelände*, Gütersloh, 1930, p. 125; L. Ginzberg, *The legends of the Jews*, Philadelphia, 1913–38, vol. 1, p. 285, and vol. 5, n. 253 on p. 253. See also the various commentaries on the book of Genesis.

38 Josephus, *Jewish antiquities*, vol. 1, p. 225 ff., and vol. 7, p. 327 ff. H. Danby, *The Mishnah*, London, 1933, p. 196; *The Babylonian Talmud*, tr. under direction of Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, London, 1933 (and subsequent years), pt. 1, vol. 1 (Zebaḥim), p. 305; part 2, vol. 7 (Taʿanith), pp. 74 and 77 ff., etc.; see index.

39 Text and tr. in PPTS, vol. 1, London, 1896, pp. 21–2.

40 H. Vincent and F. M. Abel, *Jerusalem II Jerusalem Nouvelle*, Paris, 1926, vol. 1, pp. 16–18. As far as the Roman period is concerned, this is not entirely certain, and there is some evidence that there were Roman monuments on the Ḥaram area.

41 Simons, p. 383, n. 2; Ginzberg, vol. 5, p. 253.

42 The relevant texts are all in the collection of the PPTS, vol. 1, p. 24: "Here (Golgotha) Adam was formed out of the clay; here Abraham offered us Isaac his son as a sacrifice, in the very place where our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified." See also vol. 2, pp. 14–16. On the *omphalos* at Golgotha, see A. Piganiol, *L'Hemispharion et l'Omphalos des Lieux Saints*, Cahiers Archéologiques, vol. 1, 1945; A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, Paris, 1946, vol. 1, p. 253. That the Christian tradition was rather confused, at least in the beginning, is shown by the *Terra Sancta* of Theodosius, where both Golgotha and Mount Moriah are seen as the place where Abraham sacrificed Isaac (in PPTS, vol. 1, pp. 25–6, and vol. 2, p. 10). This association between Abraham and the Holy Sepulchre was maintained after the conquest by the Muslims, since it appears in Arculfus (*ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 10–11) and later in the account of the Russian abbot Daniel (*ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 15–16). It is interesting to note that the abbot considers the Rock to have been the site of Jacob's struggle with the angel (p. 20). The identification with Jacob occurs also in Eutychius and must have been a fairly common Christian tradition after the earlier Jewish associations had been moved to the Holy Sepulchre.

43 L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. 3, Milan, 1910, p. 920 ff., with all the texts known to that time.

44 LeStrange, *Palestine*, pp. 139–42.

45 Ṭabarī, vol. 1, pp. 2408–9; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Bonn, 1839, pp. 519–20.

46 Theophanes, p. 524. The Bonn text is not very explicit, since it simply talks about a *naos.* The de Boor edition (vol. 1, p. 342) has an addition which specifies that we are dealing with a mosque on the site of the Jewish Temple. It is the more likely interpretation of the text, and LeStrange's translation, *Palestine*, p. 91, is incorrect.

47 Eutychius, vol. 2, pp. 17–18.

48 Cf. R. Hartmann, *Die Geschichte des Akṣa-Moschee in Jerusalem*, ZDPV, vol. 32 (1909), p. 194, n. 1.

49 Agapius of Manbij, *K. al-ʿUnvan*, ed. A. A. Vasiliev, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 8, Paris, 1912, p. 475.

50 See, for instance, ʿUmar's several conversations with Kaʿb and other Jews in Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 240 ff. On Kaʿb and the other major transmitters of Jewish lore into Islam, see M. Lidzbarski, *De Propheticis, quae dicuntur, legendis Arabicis*, Leipzig, 1893. All this makes rather suspect the statement in Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 2405, that the treaty between ʿUmar and Sophronius contained a prohibition for Jews to live in Jerusalem. See also Michel le Syrien, *Chronique*, tr. J.-B. Chabot, vol. 2, Paris, 1901, p. 425. De Goeje, *Mémoire sur la conquête de la Syrie*, Leyden, 1900, p. 155, explains it as a "concession faite aux Chrétiens, dont la disposition envers les Juifs était tout autre que bienveillante." But there is no evidence that ʿUmar would agree to discriminate against the Jews. It was not so in Alexandria, where the Jews were specifically permitted to remain in the city (R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John of Nikiou*, London, 1916, p. 194). And in many instances, the Jews actually helped the invading Muslims (Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 2579; Balādhurī, *Futūh*, ed. M. de Goeje, Leyden, 1866, p. 167). De Goeje had admitted that parts of this treaty should be considered as later interpolations, although there is no reason to doubt the whole

text; it may be advanced that the statement on the Jews is one such interpolation. For a more negative attitude, see Caetani, *Annali*, vol. 4, p. 299 ff.

51 It may be wondered whether the Muslims would have actually taken over the Ḥaram area simply because it had been the first *qiblah*, since it is in opposition to the Jews that Muḥammad changed the direction of prayer (Ṭabarī, vol. 1, pp. 1680–1). The need for a large area and ʿUmar's desire not to take churches away from the Christians were probably more important arguments.

52 It is, of course, often difficult to distinguish between political and religious acts in the Middle Ages. And yet, in the prophecies related by Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 2409, to the effect that the conquest of Jerusalem was a victory over the *Rūm* and that it was a revenge of the *banū Isrāʾīl* who had been oppressed by the *Rūm*, one can see more than a mere statement of the new consecration of a holy spot, rather a sense of victory over an alien power. It is interesting also to compare the images of Sophronius as given by Eutychius and Theophanes. To Eutychius, a Christian who was living under the rule of Islam, the speaker for a minority under alien domination, Sophronius appears as a shrewd politician who had succeeded in baiting the mighty conqueror away from the Christian sanctuaries. To Theophanes, living in the security of the capital of the Christian empire, the patriarch of Jerusalem was a broken man, who had to submit to the tragedy which befell him and his city, but who remained aloof and contemptuous of the heretical barbarian; cf. below, n. 127. These two attitudes could easily find parallels in recent times, when conquests and foreign occupations have led men of the same nations, but in different places, to varying interpretations of the same events.

53 On all these problems see art. *Ibrāhīm* in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, also art. *Kaʿbah*, both by A. J. Wensinck, who reflected Snouck Hurgronje's ideas on the development of the Abraham concept in the Koran. Recently these ideas have been challenged in part by G. H. Bousquet, *La légende Coranique d'Abraham*, Revue Africaine (1951), pp. 273–88 (cf. *Abstracta Islamica*, Revue des Etudes Islamiques, 1952, p. 156). And Professor A. Guillaume has informed me that he will bring out a series of documents which will shed a new light on the origins of Muḥammad's view of Abraham. R. Blachère, in his translation of the Koran, gives a complete index and full bibliographical references on all passages concerned with Abraham. For later interpretations, see the major chroniclers and traditionists. For Abraham as related in one way or another to the whole of mankind, see the interesting text in Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqat*, ed. F. Sachau and others, vol. 1, Leyden, 1905, p. 22. Balādhurī, *Anṣāb al-Ashrāf*, ed. W. Ahlwardt, *Anonyme Arabische Chronik*, Greisswald, 1883, pp. 254–5, relates an interesting story going back to al-Madaʾīnī, in which the descendence from Abraham through Ismāʾīl and the cousinage with Isḥāq are understood as meaning that to the Arabs belong both *mulk* (kingship) and *nubuwwah* (prophethood).

54 Cf. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, p. 238 ff., and passim.

55 John of Damascus, *De Haeresibus*, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (hereafter PG), vol. 94 (Paris, 1864), cols. 767–8. Cf. C. H. Becker, *Christliche Polemik und Islamische Dogmenbildung*, Zeitschrift für Assyriologie, vol. 26 (1912), p. 179 ff., who seems to have been the first one to point to the importance of John of Damascus for early Islam. The relationship between Abraham and the Kaʿbah is

also known to an anonymous Syriac chronicler (ca. AD 680), but he does not refer to the sacrifice of Isaac, ed. and tr. I. Guidi, in *Corp. Script. Christ. Orient.*, ser. 3, vol. 4, Paris, 1903, pp. 31–2; Th. Nödike, *Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik*, Wien. Akad. d. Wiss. Sitzungb. d. phil.-hist. Kl., vol. 127 (1893), p. 46. See also A. Jeffery, *Ghevond's text of the correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III*, Harvard Theological Review, vol. 37 (1944), p. 310. The possibility of a Christian tradition setting Abraham in Mekkah is mentioned with further references in M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, Paris, 1957, p. 387.

56 See Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 290 ff., for an enumeration of the different traditions on the subject. Similar enumerations are also to be found in the other major chroniclers and in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, Cairo, 1321 AH, vol. 23, p. 44 ff. (commentary on Koran 37: 101 ff.). It may be added that in a later tradition the sacrifice was even moved to Damascus, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Al-taʾrikh al-kabīr*, Damascus, 1329, I, pp. 232–3. The tradition is uncommon but points to the importance of the Abrahamic legend in Islam.

57 al-Kisāʾi, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, ed. I. Eisenberg, Leyden, 1923, p. 150 ff.

58 Ibn Qutaybah, *K. al-Maʿārif*, ed. R. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1850, pp. 18–19.

59 I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung*, Leyden, 1952, p. 79 ff.

60 Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 273; that Abraham had lived in Palestine and had built a *masjid* there is not doubted; *ibid.*, pp. 271 and 347–8. This is accepted by other writers.

61 Yaʿqūbī, vol. 1, pp. 25–6.

62 al-Kisāʿī, p. 150.

63 For instance Maqdisī in *Bibl. Geogr. Arab.*, vol. 3, Leyden, 1906, p. 170, a gate of Abraham.

64 In PPTS, vol. 4, p. 47.

65 Cf., for instance, all the examples given by C. C. Torrey, *The Jewish foundations of Islam*, New York, 1933, esp. p. 82 ff., on Abraham. See also D. Sidersky, *Les origines des légendes musulmanes*, Paris, 1933, pp. 31–54, esp. pp. 48–9, where, however, the author claims that Ismāʿil alone was sacrificed; and J. Finkel, *Old Israelitish traditions in the Koran*, Proc. Amer. Acad. for Jewish Res., 1930–1.

66 A physical relationship could be established between the *maqām Ibrāhīm* in Mekkah, the stone on which Abraham stood while building the Kaʿbah and which bore his footprints, and the Rock in Jerusalem which also has footprints.

67 Torrey, p. 102. See also the interesting comments of G. Widengren, *Muhammad*, p. 133 ff., who may, however, have been too strongly influenced by the possible impact of Gnostic doctrines.

68 John of Damascus, *De Haeresibus*, col. 763. See also the Homily to the Virgin in PG, vol. 96, cols. 657–8; for the term "sons of Agar" see also Michel le Syrien, vol. 2, p. 450, and other Greek or Syriac sources.

69 See the reference in A. A. Vasiliev, *Arabs and the Byzantine empire*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, vols. 9–10 (1956), pp. 308–9. For the origin of the word, see B. Moritz' article *Saraka* in Pauly-Wissowa, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*.

70 Professor Ihor Sevcenko, of Columbia University, has pointed out to me another Greek source, probably to be dated in the seventies of the seventh century, which introduces the concept of the Ishmaelites as forerunners of the Anti-Christ and as

enemies of the true faith. The source is the body of prophecies attributed to Methodius of Patara, E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen*, Halle, 1848, pp. 1–96. On p. 68 the invaders against whom Gideon fought are called "sons of Umee" originally from Ethrib. The editor points out, p. 25, that we are probably dealing with a veiled reference to the Umayyads. Through Methodius of Patara the concept of the Ishmaelites was carried over to other "barbarian" invaders, even though the term was misunderstood; see, for instance, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, Cambridge, 1953, p. 184; and the references in Sackur. See also S. H. Cross, *The earliest allusion to the Revelations of Pseudo-Methodius*, Speculum, vol. 4 (1929), p. 329 ff. For other texts pertaining to this problem and a different interpretation, see M. B. Ogle, *Petrus Comestor*, Speculum, vol. 21 (1946), p. 312 ff. But for Methodius and eschatological themes connected with historical events, see now A. Abel, *Changements politiques et littérature eschatologique*, Studia Islamica, II (1954), p. 26 ff. and p. 37. An added argument for a specific meaning of the word "Saracen" can be derived from a passage in Mas'ūdī, *K. al-Tanbīh*, ed. M. de Goeje, in *Bibl. Geogr. Arab.*, vol. 8 (Leyden, 1894), p. 168, whereby, in the early part of the ninth century the emperor Nicephorus was supposed to have forbidden the use of the word "Saracen," since it was thought to be injurious.

71 Al-Azraqī, K. *Akhbar Makkah*, in F. Wüstenfeld, *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka*, vol. 1, Leipzig, 1858, pp. 114–15 and passim, pp. 115–48, where the story is repeated several times; Ṭabarī, vol. 2, p. 592 ff.; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, p. 29 ff.

72 Al-Azraqī, pp. 39–40, where the statement about Jerusalem is attributed to the Jews; *ibid.*, p. 41, where it is related that the earth of Ṭā'if had been brought from Syria. The statement about the prophets should be related to Ibn Ḥawqal, p. 161, where Jerusalem is mentioned as the city of the prophets, and Iṣṭakhrī, in *Bibl. Geogr. Arab.*, vol. 1, pp. 56–7, where Jerusalem is described as having a *miḥrāb* for every prophet. For Mekkan claims see Azraqī, p. 39, where it is said that 70 prophets were buried in Mekkah. A curious point about the text of Ibn Ḥawqal is that the Rock of Jerusalem is referred to as the Rock of Moses, probably because the tradition has it that it was Moses who made the Rock into a *qiblah*, Nāṣir-i Khusrow, p. 27, unless we meet with a confusion with another Rock of Moses which has been set any place from Antioch to Persia (Maqdisī, pp. 19, 46, 151; Iṣṭakhrī, p. 62).

73 See H. A. R. Gibb, art. *'Abd allāh ibn az-Zubayr* in the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

74 Goldziher, Wellhausen, and Nöldeke gave a great deal of importance to the statement in a later Syriac source that Mu'āwiyah was made king in Jerusalem and then prayed in various Christian sanctuaries; Th. Nöldeke, *Zur Geschichte der Araber . . . aus syrischen Quellen*, Zeitschr. Deutsch. Morgen. Gesell., vol. 29 (1875), p. 95, or *Corp. Script. Christ. Orient.*, ser. 3, vol. 4, Paris, 1903–5, p. 55; J. Wellhausen, *Das arabische Reich*, Berlin, 1902, p. 136 ff. The story seems little reliable as such, especially in its implication of a kind of pilgrimage to Christian sanctuaries, but, if one recalls the dislike of the Umayyads for Madīnah, the first capital of the Muslim state, this Syriac source may indeed reflect some specific relation between the Umayyads and Jerusalem. See, for instance, al-Isfahānī, *K.*

al-Aghānī, Būlāq, 1868, vol. 19, p. 90, where Khālid al-Qaṣrī is said to have been ready to move the Kaʿbah to Jerusalem, if the caliph so ordered. In itself that type of statement is not very trustworthy, since it appears to be a literary image, but it may reflect the very same tradition which is more completely expressed in Yaʿqūbī.

75   In theory the person of Adam could also have been used as a connection between Mekkah and Jerusalem, since his life is described in both places. However, to my knowledge, there is no evidence to that effect.

76   The expression was first used by R. Hartmann, *Der Felsendom in Jerusalem*, Strasbourg, 1909, p. 21 ff., and has been accepted by Max van Berchem, p. 234. See also Ch. Clermont-Ganneau, *L'Hémisphère, abside ou ciborium*, Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale, vol. 3 (Paris, 1899), pp. 88–90.

77   Creswell, vol. 1, p. 70 ff. It must be added, however, that the excavations carried out by Crowfoot and Detweiler at Buṣra have compelled a reconstruction of the cathedral which makes it architecturally less immediately related to the Dome of the Rock; cf. J. W. Crowfoot, *Churches at Bosra and Samaria-Sebaste*, British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, Supplementary Papers No. 4 (London, 1937), p. 7 ff. Recently P. Verzone, *Le Chiese di Herapolis*, Cahiers Archéologiques, vol. 8 (1956), p. 45 ff., has brought to light another very close model of the Dome of the Rock. For the formation of the type see A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, vol. 1, pp. 141 ff., and 345 ff. and passim. For domical constructions see E. B. Smith, *The Dome*, Princeton, 1950, p. 10 ff., whose conclusions, however, on Islamic domes, pp. 41–3, should be revised.

78   In Creswell, vol. 1, p. 196 ff. That the vegetal elements in the Dome of the Rock (just as probably the landscapes of Damascus) should be interpreted as Muslim parallels to Christian iconographies of paradise (whether interpreted as such by the Muslims or simply taken over) has been shown by A. Grabar, *L'Iconoclasme byzantin*, Paris, 1957, p. 62 ff.

79   Some of the crowns have been quite recently analyzed briefly by J. Deer, *Mittelalterliche Frauenkrone in Ost und West*, in P. E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik* (*Schriften der Monumenta Germanica Historica*, vol. 13, 1 and 2, Stuttgart, 1954–5), II, p. 423 ff. J. Deer announces there that he is planning on pursuing the subject of the type of "jewels" found in the Dome of the Rock in a forthcoming work.

80   The wing motifs found on the drum do not really belong to the category of actual jewels, as can be seen by comparing them to the decoration on the inner face of the octagon and which is a crown. It is certain, however, that the decoration of the drum has been redone and it may be that the later artists misunderstood the crown motif, which was there originally, and transformed it into a purely decorative one of wings. The existence of crowns on the drum of the building would agree with the proposed explanation of the decorative theme in the Dome of the Rock.

81   Marguerite van Berchem, pp. 196–7.

82   It is in fact in images dealing with religious matters – of which we have a larger number – that we can find most of our parallels with the jewels of the Dome of the Rock. The monuments of Ravenna and of Rome provide us with the best repertory of jewels and crowns. See Marguerite van Berchem and E. Clouzot, *Mosa-*

ïques Chrétiennes du IVme au Xme siècle, Geneva, 1924, figs. 275 (Orans in Florence), 50 (Annunciation Mary in Santa Maria Maggiora), 144 and following (San Apollinario Nuovo), 197 and following (San Vitale); W. de Gruneisen, *Sainte Marie Antique*, Rome, 1911, figs. 77, 105. For royal examples see R. Delbrück, *Die Consulardiptychen*, Berlin, 1926, pls. 16, 22, 32, 38; W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine coins in the British Museum*, London, 1908, vol. 1, pls. XXIII ff.; A. Pasini, *Il tesoro di San Marco*, Venice, 1885, pl. L, 1. All these examples which occur on coins, seals, consular diptychs, silver plates, mosaics, and paintings are no later than the eighth century. For other examples see the studies devoted to the subject of crowns by J. Deer, which are enumerated in Schramm, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 379–80.

83 Schramm et al., *Herrschaftszeichen*, passim. See also J. Deer, *Der Ursprung der Kaiserkrone*, Schweizer Beiträge zur Allgemeine Geschichte, vol. 8 (1950), pp. 51–87. For Sasanian crowns, see K. Erdmann, *Die Entwicklung der sassanidische Krone*, Ars Islamica, vol. 15–16 (1951). It is interesting to compare the representations of crowns on the Dome of the Rock with the later ones at Quṣayr ʿAmrah, A. Musil, *Ḳuṣeyr ʿAmra*, Vienna, 1907, vol. 2, pl. XXVI. In the Umayyad bath, the Sasanian crown is, on the whole, quite similar to that of the sanctuary, comprising a row of pearls, a diadem, wings, a stand, and a crescent. The Byzantine crown, however, is different and, to the extent to which it is visible, it belongs to a variety of the "helmet" type (cf. Deer in Schweizer Beiträge) rather than to the "open" crown type which is characteristic of the Dome of the Rock. The Umayyads obviously used two different traditions as models. In Quṣayr ʿAmrah we meet with a strictly imperial tradition, whose characteristic was, as was shown by Deer, the "helmet" type with additions and variations. In Jerusalem the tradition was different. Deer, in Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen*, suggested that most of the Dome of the Rock crowns were actually crowns of women, which were usually open. Although the problem goes beyond the scope of our study, it may be wondered whether the Byzantine emperor wore "helmet" crowns in all his functions. Furthermore, votive crowns were generally open and it may be wondered whether they should be considered as women's crowns; cf. Schramm, vol. 2, p. 377 ff., and below. It is important to remember also that votive crowns and jewels, just as the crowns and other jewels worn by Christ, the Virgin, and saints (cf. the preceding note), belong to the same typological and, in many ways, ideological repertory as the insignia worn by princes. The open crown was common in the west, A. Boinet, *La miniature Carolingienne*, Paris, 1913, pl. 131, for instance.

84 C. Nordenfalk, *Die Spätantike Kanontafel*, Göteborg, 1938, pls. 24, 33, 39, fig. 2 in the text, p. 104. Armenian examples are also illustrated in S. Der Nersessian, *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire*, Cambridge, 1945, pl. 21, 1; and K. Weitzmann, *Die armenische Buchmalerei des 10. und beginnenden 11. Jahrhunderts*, Bamberg, 1933, pl. 9, No. 37. Also K. Weitzmann, *Byzantinische Buchmalerei des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1935, pl. 17, No. 92, for the Greek example from the Marciana Library. Other Greek examples occur on an unpublished Gospelbook in the Greek patriarchate in Jerusalem.

85 Nordenfalk, pp. 103–8, where, however, the author describes as a lamp what, on the Marciana Gospelbook, appears rather to be a crown with a hanging in the shape of a cross.

86 It has been illustrated many times. Cf. B. M. Apolloni Ghetti et al., *Esplorazione sotto la Confessione di San Pietro*, Rome, 1951, figs. 118, 121, pl. H.

87 Marguerite van Berchem-Etienne Clouzot, *op. cit.*, figs. 203–6.

88 Delbrück, *Consulardiptychen*, pl. 22. The usage of such crowns in the imperial tradition goes back to the ancient practice of giving a crown of laurels, but jeweled crowns are in evidence in Ravenna's representation of the palace of Theodoric and on certain Carolingian miniatures. It must also be added that the Byzantines were not the only ones to have hanging crowns in royal palaces. It was a common Sasanian practice, as can be seen through the well-known example of the crown of Ctesiphon (A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Copenhague, 1944, p. 397) and through numerous incidents in the *Shāh-nāmeh*. All references to crowns in the latter work have been conveniently gathered by K. H. Hansen, *Die Krone in Shāhnāme*, Der Islam, vol. 31 (1953).

89 H. Schlunk, *Arte Visigodi* in *Ars Hispaniae*, vol. 2, Madrid, 1947, pl. 328 and following p. 311 ff. These crowns are often discussed in passing in Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen*; see especially vol. 1, p. 134, vol. 2, pp. 377–9. For other examples of insignia and jewels, many of which were probably used in the same fashion, see, for instance, *Walters Art Gallery early Christian and Byzantine art*, Baltimore, 1947, pl. 57 and following; and *Berlin, Staatliche Museum, Kunst der Spätantike im Mittelmeerraum*, Berlin, 1939, pl. 14 and following.

90 Both in type and in their probable usage these have been related to Byzantine examples, Schlunk, p. 313.

91 U. Monneret de Villard, *Les Couvents près de Sohag*, Milan, 1925, vol. 1, p. 23.

92 See the references in E. H. Swift, *Hagia Sophia*, New York, 1940, p. 198.

92a See reference in K. Erdmann, *Das Iranische Feuerheiligtum*, Leipzig, 1941, p. 38.

93 That imperial crowns, both male and female, were found in the Holy Sepulchre is ascertained by Antoninus Placentinus, *Itinerarium*, ed. Geyer, Vienna, 1898, p. 171.

94 In a recently published posthumous article M. Aga-Oglu has gathered much of this information, although in a totally different connection; M. Aga-Oglu, *Remarks on the character of Islamic art*, The Art Bulletin, vol. 36 (1954), p. 182.

95 Al-Azraqī, *K. Akhbar Makkah*, in F. Wüstenfeld, *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka*, vol. 1, Leipzig, 1858, p. 155 ff.

96 Cf. above.

97 Al-Birūnī, *K. al-Jamāhir*, ed. F. Krenkow, Heyderabad, 1936, p. 67. This text was unavailable to me and I owe the reference to the article by Aga-Oglu.

98 The inscription is supposedly dated in 101/719–20; E. Combe, J. Sauvaget, and G. Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*, Cairo, 1931 (and subsequent years), No. 101. The date is, of course, impossible. Either the name of the caliph or the date were misread by the chronicler.

99 Thus (altägyptisch) does C. J. Lamm, *Mittelalterliche Glaser*, Berlin, 1930, p. 490, translate the word *farāʿūniyah*.

100 This succession has been described by F. Gabrieli, *La successione di Hārūn al-Rashīd*, Rivista degli Studi Orientali, vol. 11, 1928. The Ṭabarī texts on the subject have been translated by the same scholar, *Documenti relativi al califfato di al-Amīn*, Rend. della R. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, ser. 6, vol. 3 (1927), p.

191 ff. Although well known in its modalities this partial division of the empire has not been fully analyzed from the point of view of religious-political ceremonies (see, for instance, Azraqī, p. 160 ff.) or of feudal institutions (a comparison with the almost contemporary Carolingian divisions of an empire may be quite fruitful). For a discussion of the formulas used in the inscriptions made on that occasion see A. I. Mihailova, *Koformleniiu gosudar-stvennyh aktov vremeni Abbasidov*, Epigrafika Vostoka, vol. 7 (1953).

101 Ibn al-Dāyah, *Sīrah Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn* in *Fragmente aus dem Mughrib*, ed. K. Vollers, Berlin, 1894, p. 19.

102 *Répertoire*, No. 119.

103 See B. Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, Wiesbaden, 1952, p. 55, and the bibl. references in n. 4. A. I. Mihailova, *Novye epigraficheskie dannye dlia istorii Srednei Azii IX v.*, Epigrafika Vostoka, vol. 5, 1951, who discusses this whole group of inscriptions, doubts (p. 18) the veracity of the story on the grounds that, aside from al-Azraqī, we only have the testimony of al-Yaʿqūbī (vol. 2, p. 550) about the conversion of a Tibetan king. But both authorities are quite early and, while certain features may very well have been invented, the fairly precise statement of al-Azraqī certainly refers to an event which did take place.

104 See also al-Yaʿqūbī, vol. 2, p. 550, where several thrones are implied. The gold and silver of the throne or thrones were used to strike coins.

105 *Répertoire*, No. 100.

106 *Répertoire*, No. 116.

107 The difference in mood between the two inscriptions is apparent in the following quotations: 1, From the 199 inscription dealing mostly with the victory over al-Amin: ". . . he [the *imām*] was obeyed, because he himself held on forcefully to his obedience to God; he was sustained in his work for the Book of God and the revival (*ihyāʾ*) of the way (*sunnah*) of the messenger of God, and he was delivered of his oath to the one who was cast off (*al-makhlūʿ*), because of [the latter's] betrayal, perjury, and alteration [of the pact]." 2, From the 200 inscription: "May whoever reads these lines contribute to the glorification of Islam and the abasement of polytheism, through word and through act, for the strengthening of the faith is imposed on men, as is prescribed by the *imams*, and [also] whoever desires asceticism, the holy war, the gates of piety, and a contribution to all that is earned by Islam in this glory and these splendors."

108 Max van Berchem, *Matériaux*, pp. 223–371.

109 *Ibid.*, pp. 228–255; *Répertoire*, Nos. 9–11.

110 Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un CIA: I, Egypte*, Paris, 1903, p. 19 ff.

111 *ibid.*, pp. 50–1.

112 E. Herzfeld, *Damascus, studies in architecture I*, Ars Islamica, vol. 9 (1942), p. 5.

113 M. van Berchem, *Matériaux, Syrie du Sud*, p. 235 ff.

114 This last sentence is still fairly obscure, as can be seen from the varying translations by Pickthall, Palmer, and Blachère, but the reference to Christ is unmistakable.

115 This expression might be compared to the expressions found on early coins: *Muḥammad rusūl Allāh wa ʿabduhu* or *Muḥammad ʿabd Allāh wa rusūluhu*. See J. Walker, *Arab-Byzantine coins*, London, 1956, p. LXVII.

116 The last few words are missing on the inscription, probably because the artist miscalculated the space he had at his disposal.

117   This point had already been made by M. de Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, Paris, 1864, p. 89. Max van Berchem, p. 251, n. 4, has denied that most of the quotations deal with Jesus. While it is, of course, true that the inscriptions on the doors are not overly explicit, the main inscription inside the building is quite unique for its emphasis on the relations between Islam and Christianity.

118   Goitein has also pointed this out, in JAOS, vol. 70 (1950), p. 106. At a slightly later date, John of Damascus, *Homily on the Holy Sabat*, in PG, vol. 96, cols. 641–2, reflects Muslim missionary work: "Whoever does not confess that Christ is the Son of God and God is an Antichrist. If somebody says that Christ is a servant (*doûlos*), let us close our ears in the knowledge that he is a liar and that he does not possess the truth." The reference to the Muslim view of Christ is unmistakable.

119   Al-Maqdisī, p. 159; LeStrange, *Palestine*, pp. 117–18.

120   For a later example see *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, tr. S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 110–11. See also the Arabic traditions mentioned below.

121   See, for instance, al-Dīnawari, *K. al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. V. Guirgass, Leyden, 1888, pp. 21–2; al-Isfahānī, *K. al-Aghāni*, Būlāq, 1868, vol. 14, pp. 5–8; ibn al-Fakīh, *K. al-Buldān*, in *Bibl. Geogr. Arab.*, vol. 5, p. 141 ff. There is a whole body of such stories which should be sorted out. Often these stories are connected with the stories dealing with Muḥammad's missions (cf. below), but some have already acquired a literary flavor suggesting that we are in fact dealing with a theme which was not merely historical. For legends and history, see R. Goossens, *Autour de Digínis Akritas*, Byzantion, vol. 7 (1932), pp. 303–16; M. Canard, *Delhemma*, *ibid.*, vol. 10 (1935), pp. 283–300; H. Grégoire and R. Goossens, *Byzantinische Epos und arabischer Ritterroman*, Zeitschr. Deutsch. Morgen. Gesell., n.f., vol. 13 (1934), pp. 213–32; and especially M. Canard, *Les aventures d'un prisonnier arabe*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, vol. 10 (1955–6).

122   Cf. references to Max van Berchem, above, n. 113. This point poses again the question of the formation of Muslim iconoclasm. The earliest definite evidence from a literary source derives from the complicated body of documents known as the "edict of Yazīd," which has been recently analyzed by A. A. Vasiliev, *The iconoclastic edict of the caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, vols. 9–10 (1956). But the archeological evidence of the Dome of the Rock and of the mosque of Damascus shows that, even before the time of Yazīd, it was fully accepted that a Muslim religious building did not admit of representations of living beings. There was thus a definite distinction in Umayyad times between an imperial art which permitted images and a religious art which did not. It is unlikely, however, that Muslim theology in the second half of the first century of the Hegira had already made all the conclusions which will be drawn later from the concept of God as the only Creator. It may be that the simple incident of the destruction of idols by Muḥammad in Mekkah created a precedent which was followed without being fully rationalized. The conscious destruction of religious representations in Central Asia by the Arab conquerors, which is evidenced both in literary sources and by archeological documents, seems to have been the result of an opposition to idols rather than to representations. It may also be suggested that the Muslim opposition to religious images was connected with the tremendous importance of

images in Christianity and that we are in fact dealing with a reaction against means of conversion and teaching with which the Muslims could not compete. The whole question of the origins of Muslim opposition to religious images is far from being solved, but a solution should not mean, as it has at times, the attribution to early Islam of the systems of thought and conclusions characteristic of a later period, but rather an understanding of the problem within its historical context. On the question of the work of art as a symbol of sovereignty, it may be interesting to relate the following story told by Eutychius, ed. L. Cheikho, vol. 2, pp. 19–20. At the time of the conquest, we are told, the Arab forces under Abū ʿUbaydah signed an armistice for one year with the Christians of Qinnasrīn whereby a frontier would be established between Christian and Muslim possessions, in order to allow those Christians who so desired to leave Syria and follow Heraclius into Anatolia. The frontier was defined by a pillar or column (*ʿamūd*), beyond which the Muslims were not to go. On this column the Christians painted a portrait of Heraclius seated in majesty (*jālis fī mulkihi*), with the agreement of Abū ʿUbaydah. But one day, while practicing horsemanship, a certain Arab accidentally planted the point of his spear in the eye of the image and put its eye out. The chief of the Christians (*al-baṭrīq, patricius*) immediately came accusing the Muslims of betraying the truce. When asked by Abū ʿUbaydah what he would like in return, he said: "We will not be satisfied until the eyes of your king are put out." Abū ʿUbaydah suggested having his own image mutilated, but to no avail, since the Christians insisted on having a likeness of the Muslim's great king (*malikukum al-akbar*). Finally Abū ʿUbaydah agreed. The Christians made an image of ʿUmar, whose eye was then put out by one of his men. Then the *baṭrīq* said: "You have treated us equitably." Here again the important point is not whether or not the event actually took place, although, even if arranged, it is not inconceivable during the "free for all" period of the conquest. The story may have been simply invented in order to satisfy, in one small instance, the vanity of the Christians defeated by the great caliph. But the essential point of this account is in showing once again the significance of a work of art as a magic symbol of state and sovereignty through the actual identification of emperor and image.

123 Max van Berchem, p. 238. It may be added here that, of all later Muslim caliphs, al-Maʾmūn was probably one of the most likely to understand the symbols involved in the Dome of the Rock, since, it will be recalled, he was responsible for the inscriptions on the treasure of Kābūl-shāh, above.

124 See, for instance, the monument of La Turbie in southern France, J. Formigé, *Le Trophée des Alpes*, Paris, 1949.

125 See the content of the inscriptions in H. Stern, *Les représentations des conciles dans l'église de la Nativité: les inscripions*, Byzantion, vol. 13 (1938), p. 420 ff., esp. pp. 437–40 abd 449 ff.

126 On the relations with the Byzantines see J. Wellhausen, *Die Kämpfe der Araber mit den Romäern in der Zeit der Umaijaden*, Nachrichten von d. K. Gesell. D. Wiss. zu Göttingen, 1901, p. 428 ff.; on the Mardaites see art. by H. Lammens in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, with further bibl.; for wars in Asia Minor see E. W. Brooks, *The Arabs in Asia Minor (641–750)*, Journal of Hellenic Studies, vol. 18 (1898), p. 182 ff.; for the Byzantine side see G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford, 1956, p. 116; and for the Cyprus problem, R. J. H.

Jenkins, *Cyprus between Byzantium and Islam*, Studies presented to D. M. Robinson, Saint-Louis, 1953, vol. 2, p. 1006 ff. Just recently the psychological aspect of Umayyad relations with the Byzantines has been admirably sketched by H. A. R. Gibb, *Arab-Byzantine relations under the Umayyad caliphate*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, vol. 12 (1958), pp. 231–3.

127 It is in fact in Christian sources that this phenomenon becomes evident, since from a Christian point of view this was a very desirable activity. See the epistle of Sophronius to Sergius in Migne, PG, vol. 87, pt. 3 (Paris, 1865), cols. 3197–200; cf. also the texts gathered by M. de Goeje, *La conquête de la Syrie*, pp. 174–6. The Sophronius letter was read anew at the sixth ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 680, J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum. . . collectio*, Florence, 1765, vol. 11, cols. 459 and following. The pretext offered by Theodore, the representative of the see of Jerusalem (col. 455), was his desire to know whether the thoughts expressed in it were orthodox. This is a strange pretext at best, since the theological position of Sophronius was always recognized as one of the strongest expressions of orthodoxy in the face of Monotheletism. It is much more likely that Theodore wanted to draw the attention of the Council to the situation of the see of Jerusalem and, in a disguised form, to invite intervention. It had, of course, to be done in a disguised form, since there were, at the Council, representatives of other "occupied" areas, who were favorable to Macarius and the heretics on trial (see cols. 618–19) and who might have informed the Umayyads of orthodox activities. The stories dealing with John of Damascus' betrayal of the caliph to the emperor are probably legendary (PG, vol. 94, cols. 453–6); see the article (*Saint*) *Jean Damascène* in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Paris, 1924. Yet what is unlikely is not the story itself but the fact that John of Damascus would have been plotting with Leo. Theophanes (Bonn ed., p. 559) relates that 'Abd al-Malik wanted to use the columns of the Gethsemane church for the rebuilding of the Mekkan Temple; various Christian notables requested him not to do so, but suggested instead that they would ask Justinian II's permission to substitute columns from another church. So it was done. The point here is not whether the story is true or not but that both the Christians and, curiously enough, 'Abd al-Malik seemed to accept Justinian's sovereignty over Christian buildings in Jerusalem. Theophanes, pp. 641–43, also relates that, under al-Walīd II, the archbishop of Damascus had to be exiled for making anti-Muslim speeches; see also p. 632. Other sources, Denys of Tell-Mahre, *Chronicle*, tr. J. B. Chabot, Paris, 1895, p. 475, attribute to 'Abd al-Malik a persecution of the Christians. And the inscriptions of Bethlehem, perhaps slightly later than the Dome of the Rock, while, according to Stern, they did not follow a purely Byzantine tradition, but a local Syrian one, imply a condemnation of heretics which may have been directed against the Maronites, but also against the Muslims, who were considered as heretics (probably Arians, C. Güterbock, *Der Islam im Lichte der byzantinischen Polemik*, Berlin, 1912, p. 6). The unusual lack of representations of living beings does suggest that the mosaics were made with a definite consciousness of the existence of Islam and not exclusively within a Christian world of its own. On this problem and other related ones, see now the texts, images, and commentaries in the second chapter of A. Grabar, *L'Iconoclasme byzantin*, Paris, 1957.

127a H. A. R. Gibb, in Dumbarton Oaks Papers, vol. 12, p. 221 ff.

128 Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 5, p. 335.

129 Theophanes, pp. 558–9.

130 Ṭabarī, vol. 2, pl. 939, and the other chroniclers. On all questions of coinage, see now J. Walker, *Arab-Byzantine coins*, London, 1956, esp. pp. XXV, XXIX, LVII ff., for expressions showing political concern.

131 See, for instance, G. C. Miles, *Miḥrāb and ʿAnazah: a study in early Islamic iconography*, Archaeologica Orientalia, in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld, New York, 1952, pp. 156–71. Grabar, *Iconoclasme*, p. 67 ff.

132 Wroth, Catalogue, vol. 2, p. 330 ff.; cf. A. Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Strasbourg, 1936, p. 19, n. 4, where the symbolic elements of Justinian's coinage are emphasized. See also E. Kitzinger, *The cult of images before iconoclasm*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, vol. 8 (1954), p. 126, where the change is explained in purely Byzantine terms. This was no doubt so, but it may be suggested that, in the case of Justinian II, just as in the case of ʿAbd al-Malik, important changes or decisions had both an internal and an external significance. See the extensive discussion in A. Grabar, *Iconoclasme*, p. 67 ff.

133 Güterbock, *op. cit.*, passim; C. H. Becker, in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, vol. 26, 1912; Jeffery, in *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 37, 1944.

134 There are many versions of the story and some are confused with other similar themes (cf. above, n. 121); see Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 1585 ff.; *Aghāni*, vol. 6, p. 64 ff.; Ibn Saʿad, *Ṭabaqāt*, ed. E. Sachau, vol. 1, 2, p. 15 ff., etc.; see also M. Hamidullah, *Corpus des Traités et Lettres Diplomatiques*, Paris, 1935, pp. 14–15. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, p. 178 ff.

135 C. L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. 1, Milan, 1905, p.725 ff.

136 Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 1565; see also pp. 1561–2 for another tradition transmitted by al-Zuhrī to the effect that Heraclius dreamed that "circumcised people" will rule over Jerusalem.

137 M. Canard, *Les expéditions Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et la légende*, Journal Asiatique, vol. 208 (1926), p. 80 ff.

138 al-Maqdisī, *op. cit.*, p. 165 ff.

139 Max van Berchem, p. 382 ff.; Guide des Lieux de Pèlerinage, p. 64. It is only after the arrival of the Ottomans that we meet with inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock itself with the theme of the Night Journey.

140 *Ibid.*, p. 383.

141 It is not clear whether we should understand the word to mean "form (of the name) of Muḥammad" (LeStrange, *Palestine*, p. 100) or "figure de Muḥammad" (Marmarji, *Textes*, p. 211), the former being more likely, unless we are dealing with some imprint on a stone which was associated with the Prophet.

142 On all these activities see J. Sauvaget, *La Mosquée Omeyyade de Médine*, Paris, 1947, passim and esp. p. 93 ff.; also Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

143 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

144 R. W. Hamilton, *The structural history of the Aqsa Mosque*, London, 1949, p. 74; Sauvaget, pp. 100–1; Creswell. vol. 2, p. 119 ff.; E. Lambert, *Les origines de la mosquée*, Studia Islamica, vol. 6 (1956), pp. 14–18.

145 Text in Gildmeister, ZDPV, vol. 13, p. 18.

146 Eutychius, ed. Cheikho, vol. 2, p. 42.

147 Max van Berchem, p. 252, n. 1, pointed out that the 'Abbāsīd chroniclers were curiously reticent about 'Abd al-Malik's work in Jerusalem, while quite voluble about al-Walīd's programs, and suggested that the reason was 'Abd al-Malik's reputed impiety. It might be more likely to consider that the later chroniclers were not fully conscious of the significance of the building in the historical situation of the time.

148 See lately H. Adolf, *Christendom and Islam in the Middle Ages*, Speculum, 32 (1957), pp. 103–15, with an extensive bibliography on the question of the impact of the Muḥammad stories on the West. See also, Americo Castro, *The structure of Spanish history*, Princeton, 1954, p. 130 ff., for an interesting explanation of the formation of the sanctuary of Saint James in Santiago. The apostle is seen as a "counter-Muhammad, and his sanctuary [as a] counter-Ka'bah" (p. 151). Here also the development of a religious center is explained through its relation to a specific historical situation.

11

The Image of the Word: Notes on the Religious Iconography of Islam

Erica Cruikshank Dodd

The art of Islam has been of increasing interest to art historians in recent years and new attempts are being made to interpret its character, to evaluate it within terms of modern art history and on its own merits. The popular misconception, that Islamic art is purely abstract and contains no figural representation has been finally eradicated and so has the general characterization of this art by the expression "horror vacui". The result of this enlightened approach has been greater appreciation for the aesthetic values of Islamic art and deeper sympathy with its objectives.

The first problem to confront the student of Islamic art is the religious prohibition against figural representation which was always effective, in spite of the continued existence of a figural tradition in secular art. A great deal has been written about the prohibition of images in Islam,[1] and the conclusions reached have left to Islamic art an exotic, esoteric quality, quite apart from the mainstream of art historical development – have, indeed, given it a romantic "mystique" more indicative of the Western concept of the Orient, than of the real character of this art. The Western eye is so accustomed to seeing spiritual ideas and beliefs conveyed by anthropomorphic symbols that the absence of such symbols in the religious art of Islam is difficult for the non-Moslem to appreciate. The modern Moslem himself, in reflection of Western artistic tradition, is likely to apologize for the inhibitions against representation in his art and to depreciate what he considers to be a primitive custom surviving in his own culture. He may speak of it as if it were a thing of the past, best forgotten, or as if it were no longer applicable.[2] The absence of figural representation in religious art has led to the belief that no religious symbols exist at all in Islamic art, that it is "exclusively decorative," "without religious function."[3] Historians write of the lack of

form,[4] the dissolution of matter and the infinite pattern,[5] the unfortunate lack of religious iconography.[6] Although they frequently contribute a sensitive understanding to this art, these descriptions are deficient unless they are firmly anchored in the primary tenets of the faith that it was designed to express.

From another point of view, part of the difficulty presented to modern writers with regard to figural representation in Islam, is connected with Western misconceptions about classical art. Many art historians look upon the West as the inheritor of a glorious classical past, whereas the East is represented as survivor of a less civilized, even barbaric tradition. To the Western mind, with its rich tradition of classical revivals, "classical" means "representational." "Classical art" implies figurative art not only as naturalistic as possible but also an art that centers around the human figure. Thus an art that is removed from nature and hostile to the human figure must *per se* be "anti-classical."

In the first place, however, the convention which regards classical art as realistic overlooks another side, that is the abstract purity of form which raised the art of Greece and Rome to heights never again achieved by classical revivals. Actually, what distinguished classical art at its best is the harmony between abstraction and the realistic representation of nature. This very delicate harmony was always in the balance and at times the classical scales tipped one way toward greater realism, or another toward greater abstraction. It is too easily forgotten that long before the rise of Islam, classical art was firmly bent on the path toward greater abstraction and lesser realism. If Islamic art preferred abstraction to realism in its vision of the world, it followed a tradition of the Hellenistic Mediterranean that was already well established.

In the second place, the classical art which centered around the depiction of man in his universe, ran into trouble over the representation of God. As long as man was conceived as potent, self-reliant and real, and as long as God was conceived as having human frailty, this artistic vision made sense. A classical art that portrayed gods in the shape of man, also portrayed men in the shape of gods. The Romans, however, who saw the world with harsher realism, pictured individuals as they appeared in life, without idealism and also conceived of a single Being, rational but of pure form, beyond the comprehension of man. How was this kind of God to be represented as differentiated from man and yet meaningful to him? That the problem became a real one to the artist is clear. By the time of the Roman Empire, two artistic traditions had come into being: the representation of gods, or the Emperor-God, in the shape of man but increasingly formalized, abstracted and removed from nature; and the representation of lesser citizens or genre-type figures, realistic and nameless. There was also a classical trend of thought which forbade altogether the representation or actualization of God.[7] Islamic art when it removed the likeness of man from the portrayal of God, was logically completing an artistic process begun long before the advent of Muhammad. Eventually for Islam the genre-type, realistic figures of Hellenistic and Roman art also partook of religious abstraction, but these figures never became as scarce in Islam as they did in the medieval West.

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It is the argument of this paper that the art of Islam should be placed squarely within the context of the general history of medieval art: Western Christian, Eastern Christian and Islamic. If the great characteristic of medieval Christian art is its religious expression, this is equally true of Islam, and for reasons which are historically the same. As in the case of West and East Christian art, so also for Islamic art, the spiritual relationship between man and God had to be expressed through a symbolic system removed from realistic representation of the natural and temporary world, and yet comprehensible to the believer. As in the case of West and East Christian art, the essential problem for the art historian is to understand the symbolic system. If properly understood, the religious symbolism of Islam expresses its message in complete harmony and consistency, in all its parts, from the most lowly domestic objects to the finest religious representation, from the basic supports of architecture, to the smallest detail of its decoration. What is more, for both Christians and Moslems the further away the artist was from the center of religious worship and from religious sanctions, the easier it was to relax this system. Neither medieval Islamic art nor medieval Christian art was ever entirely divorced from nature, or from the representation of natural human beings. In times and in places where religious sanctions were light, more natural representation occurred than at other times, or in other places. Finally, this art did not eventually meander into the Arabian sands to get lost in the infinite arabesque, but was repeatedly fed back into the younger tribal culture of medieval Europe, either directly, or through Spain, Sicily and Byzantium, so as to contribute to the newer Western growth a discipline born of ancient tradition. This larger conception of the role Islamic art played in wider medieval history is seldom appreciated.[8]

The following notes represent three different but inter-dependent approaches to the study of Islamic art through its central religious symbolism. The first explores the theoretical connection of Islamic iconography with the ancient classical tradition of the Logos. The second section examines the roots of the earliest religious iconography in Islam in Christian or classical-Christian traditions. The third describes an example of this iconography in its maturity, transformed so as to mirror a religious vision of the universe. In the mature development of this art the origins of the religious iconography were for all practical purposes lost in the mists of tradition. All three studies independently point to the same conclusion: that there was a continuous development of religious symbolism from Hellenistic art through Early Christian representation directly inherited and developed or elaborated by Islam to express a medieval world vision.

The Prohibition of Images

At the heart of the Islamic style is the representation of God, or of a particular relationship between man and God, which leads us directly to the question of

the prohibition against images. Western scholars explain the absence of the religious image (generally considered to be a source of poverty in Islamic style) as due to one or more of the following three factors: (1) that early Islamic art was influenced by a preference for non-representational art long practised in the Orient; (2) that primitive Islam associated the image with magical qualities, and therefore the image was taboo; (3) that early Islamic art was influenced by Jews who had been converted to Islam. Each of these three explanations appears to be insufficient as they are presently presented, and each casts Islamic art in a false light. It seems important, therefore, that they should be corrected. Surely the emphasis in Islamic art should not be placed on the absence of a divine image but rather on the substitution of another symbolic image for the traditional human figure. If the Islamic style is considered in this light, it takes its rightful historical place in the wider development of medieval culture, as an integral part of this development and not as a peculiar manifestation of the desert.

The first point above is the most questionable. This is the attitude expressed by Creswell as "inherent temperamental dislike of Semitic races for human representations in sculpture and painting."[9] What is meant by "semitic" in this instance is difficult to determine but the truth is precisely the opposite, that non-representational art was not generally favoured in the East, except, perhaps, by a small number of Jews, prior to Islam. It is true that in ancient Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt, artistic styles were long disposed to be two-dimensional and patterned, mystical or linear, rather than three-dimensional, solid and naturalistic. But this two-dimensional, patterned style of the East was always representational, filled with a rich and precise repertoire of human and animal form. Gods were represented either in human form, with human and animal attributes, or with astronomical symbols. This tradition could not in itself have led to the abolition of images. If, on the other hand, by "semitic" is meant the artistic traditions of the Saudi-Arabian peninsula, there is evidence to show that what art was there was deeply influenced by classical styles and it followed both the traditions of late Mesopotamian and of Roman art fairly consistently.[10] In this area, at least, non-figurative art was not apparent.

The second point, that Islam associated the image with magical qualities, is more controversial. The idea that Arabs attached primitive magical properties to the image which seems to have originated with A.J. Wensinck in 1925, was supported by Sir Thomas Arnold,[11] and is still accepted today.[12] Its supporters cite as evidence the fact that many Arabs from primitive areas today dislike having their picture taken for fear of encouraging the Evil Eye, or because such a process is regarded as taking away a part of their own person. But many primitive societies hold this belief, and all but Islam have gone on to develop a rich representational repertoire. The patrons of early Islamic art, moreover, were far from being primitive. Such a theory cannot be supported by twentieth century examples taken from the remote countryside. Actually, a naive superstition of this kind may be the result, not the cause, of the tradition. Recognizing the weakness of this argument, Oleg Grabar cited as contemporary proof of such practice at the

time of the conquest, a story told by Eutychius. Since it is the only contemporary evidence cited in support of such a theory it is worth considering in detail:

> At the time of the Conquest, we are told, the Arab forces under Abū ʿUbaydah signed an armistice for one year with the Christians of Qinnasrīn, whereby a frontier would be established between Christian and Muslim possessions, in order to allow those Christians who so desired to leave Syria and follow Heraclius into Anatolia. The frontier was defined by a pillar or column (*ʿāmūd*) beyond which the Muslims were not to go. On this column the Christians painted a portrait of Heraclius seated in majesty (*jālis fī mulkihi*) with the agreement of Abū ʿUbaydah. But one day, while practicing horsemanship, a certain Arab accidentally planted the point of his spear in the eye of the image and put its eye out. The chief of the Christians (*al-batrīq, patricius*) immediately came accusing the Muslims of betraying the truce. When asked by Abū ʿUbaydah what he should like in return, he said "We will not be satisfied until the eyes of your king are put out." Abū ʿUbaydah suggested having his own image mutilated, but to no avail, since the Christians insisted on having a likeness of the Muslim's great king (*malikukum al-akbar*). Finally Abū ʿUbaydah agreed. The Christians made an image of ʿUmar, whose eye was then put out by one of his men. Then the *batrīq* said "You have treated us equitably".[13]

As Oleg Grabar points out, the important point here is not whether or not the event took place; as he says, the story may have been invented to satisfy the vanity of the Christians defeated by the great Caliph. The point of this account is "in showing once again the significance of a work of art as a magic symbol of state and sovereignty through the actual identification of emperor and image."[14] What is even more significant in this story, however, was pointed out by Grabar subsequently:[15] it must be noted that it was the primitive Christians, not Abū ʿUbaydah, who demanded primitive retribution in the form of an eye for an eye. In other words, it was the Christians, not the Arabs, who associated magical powers with the portrait of the Emperor.[16] In agreeing to the mutilation of the portrait of the Caliph – indeed, in offering to have his own portrait damaged – Abū ʿUbaydah showed remarkable indifference to ancient Christian superstition. This same story will be mentioned below in support of a further argument; for the time being, it must be granted that the story of Eutychius does not support the contention that it was the Arabs who attributed magical properties to the image. On the contrary, there is ample evidence to suggest that the Arabs who conquered the great Hellenistic centers of Alexandria, Damascus, Antioch, Aleppo and Jerusalem, admired the works of art there and had them copied in their own mosques and palaces. Far from attributing to them magical powers inherent in their own culture, the Arabs did what every young and fresh conquering civilization had done before them in this area for four thousand years or more. They took over and developed existing artistic and cultural patterns (without necessarily understanding their original meaning) and gradually transformed these patterns to express their own particular creed.

The third reason generally given to explain the abolition of the image in Islam is the influence of the Jewish tradition regarding the image.[17] This theory is complicated and needs to be approached carefully. There is surely some truth in it, but if so, it must lie within the general historical context whereby all three, Christians, Moslems, and Jews, were themselves influenced by older classical tradition. The Law of Moses firmly commands the Jews: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything which is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exodus, I: 4–5). This commandment became the cornerstone of theological dispute in the early centuries of Christianity. If this commandment were in itself responsible for the Islamic prohibition of images it might be expected to appear in the Koran, but it does not, any more than it does in the New Testament. Actually, in the first centuries after Christ, there is evidence to show that the concept of images within the synagogue was deeply influenced by classical traditions and the interpretation of this commandment considerably relaxed.[18] Sometime in the middle of the fifth century, and during the sixth, the religious prohibition against images in the synagogue was restored with a vigour that was previously unknown. Apparently, at this time, the Jews suffered a violent reaction to increasing icon-worship among Christians and only then did they adopt a rigorous iconoclasm.[19] Whether the Jewish prohibition was subsequently an influence on both Christian and Moslem iconoclasm, as has been maintained, is not clear but it seems reasonable to infer that in the sixth century, educated Christians, Jews and devout pagans were alike offended by increasing icon-worship in the Christian church. Such practices might easily be confused with a return to idolatry.

In order to understand the development of icon-worship and its reaction in the Christian church it is necessary to explore more deeply the older pagan traditions in which the Christian attitude originated. We have already mentioned that the problem of the representation of God was evident in classical times. It was a problem that had plagued classical thinkers as early as the seventh century BC, when the Greek philosopher Xenophanes maintained that it was not reasonable to portray gods in the physical shape of man, because, in his own words, ". . . if oxen, horses, and lions had hands, or could paint with their hands and fashion works as men do, horses would paint horselike images of gods and oxen oxlike ones and each would fashion bodies like their own . . . The Ethiopians consider the gods flat-nosed and black; the Thracians blue-eyed and red-haired."[20] Later on, classical philosophers, among whom was Plato, pursued this line of thought to the conception of a single God who became equated with the Mind, rather than with the physical shape of man, or with the classical *Logos*, meaning Reason. Thus it was only the intellectual capacity of man, his reason – *the Logos* – that resembled the divine, not the body. It is common knowledge that the association of the Logos with the Divine was eventually carried into both Christian and Jewish theology also, here the *Logos* being translated as the Word: "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

(John I:1). Then the identification of God with Reason, or the Word, called into question how to represent artistically and symbolically the presence of God, or the *Logos*, without drawing Him in human shape.[21]

For classical pagans there were other problems: for example, men came to adore the statues of their gods as much as they adored the idea the statue represented. They came to associate the statue with the god, and this multiplied the plurality of gods, creating great confusion as to which was the right one. Of what should these gods be made, or what material? Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century BC, tells the story of a God that had been made out of a vessel that had previously been used for washing feet. There is a great deal of classical literature on this problem and it is interesting that Strabo, a Roman geographer writing about the time of Christ, sees in Moses a "true Stoic philosopher" because of his absolute condemnation of idolatry.[22] We are still, however, six or seven hundred years before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad.

By the first century AD, many pagans had come to terms with traditional forms of popular devotion and the gods – the gods in human shape, the whole quarreling family on Mount Olympus – lived on in a fashion. By then there had developed a profound classical literature in defense of the old habit of the image. The main argument employed by classical writers to defend the anthropomorphic image was that, in the words of Dion Chrysostom: "Since we know – and do not merely guess – that it is to a Being in Whom reason dwells that we have recourse, we give to God the human form as being the vessel of thought and reason. In the complete absence of the original model, we seek to show forth the incomparable and the invisible by means of the visible and the comparable. We employ the power of the symbol."[23] Or, as Julian the Apostate writes: "Our fathers established images and altars . . . as symbols of the presence of the gods, not that we may regard such things as gods, but that we may worship the gods through them."[24] The worship of images becomes acceptable, therefore, just so long as the worshipper realizes that he is communicating with God through a symbol and not directly with the God himself. Unfortunately this intellectual distinction between the symbol and the Idea was not always maintained by pagan worshippers any more than it was to be maintained by future Christian worshippers of the icon.

Thus the pagan tradition bequeathed to the Christian an unsolved problem: the representation of God. For a long time – eight centuries, to be precise – early Christians wrestled with this problem. The fact that so many early figural representations of God and Christ have survived in early Christian art indicates that the pagan tradition was not easily discarded, but many early Church fathers wrote unequivocably and forcefully against images. Among these were Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria (2nd century), Origen (d. 254), Eusebius (d. 371), Basil of Caesarea (d. 379), Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395), Asterius of Amaseia (c. 400), Epiphanius (d. 402), and St. John Chrysostom (d. 407). It was St. John Chrysostom who suggested the alternative symbolism for God that was

eventually adopted by the Iconoclasts in place of the human figure. He wrote: "We enjoy the presence of the saints in their writings, in which we have images, not of their bodies, but of their souls, since their words are images of their souls"; or Gregory of Nyssa: "One should not worship the form of the Servant, but God the Logos, existing in the glory of the Father and in the form of God."[25] The matter came to a head when the Emperor Leo III, in 730,[26] passed an Edict that commanded the unconditional prohibition of images. The controversy that arose over this edict raged for more than a century, during which time all human images were actually destroyed in most of the Eastern churches. The Western Empire refused to comply with the Emperor's order. The resulting conflict over this issue became so serious that it led eventually to a split between East and West, a split which was never entirely resolved. In 843, the Empress Theodora finally succeeded in restoring the Image to the Eastern Church. Even so, the disagreement between East and West left permanent scars which resulted eventually in their separation. Thus, in the Christian Church, the problem of the image had implications that were violent enough to crack its very foundations.

In the ninth century, icons were restored in the Eastern church largely on the basis of two arguments. The first one is sophistry. It was argued that the New Testament replaced the Old Testament and that Christians needed no longer to be afraid, as the Jews had been, of resembling their pagan neighbours in the worship of the human image. Curiously enough, by the sixth century the worship of icons in the Christian church had reached such proportions that the distinction between pagans and Christians in this respect must not have been obvious. Secondly, and more important, Christians discovered that they could draw on a doctrinal argument in support of the image that made good sense: after all, it was argued, all Christians believe that God sent His Only Begotten Son down to earth in the form of a man for the Salvation of Mankind. This was the essence of Christianity. Therefore it was neither unreasonable nor blasphemous to portray Father and Son in human form. Leo, Bishop of Neapolis, used an argument for the restoration of images that recalls older pagan thought: "The representations of the Saints are not our Gods, but books which lie open and are venerated in churches in order to remind us of God and to lead us to worship Him."[27] Following the doctrine of Salvation, images were again sanctioned in Christian art, which then went on to develop a magnificent repertoire of Church iconography. Meanwhile, however, the moment of crisis in the Christian church occurred precisely at the same time as it occurred for Islam, but with different results.

It is significant that the first recorded incident of iconoclasm was one that concerned both Moslems and Christians. In 723, the Caliph Yezid II ordered the removal of icons from all Christian churches within his realm.[28] This incident suggests that the fervent adoration of icons among Christians living in Islam at this time was already offensive to Moslems. In this respect, indeed, this incident backs up the story told by Eutychius about the Emperor Heraclius' image. It was the association of the image with magical properties on the part of the Early Christians, not on the part of primitive Moslems, that insulted the Orthodox

Moslem attitude. However one must remember that Yezid's successor, Hisham, revoked this order, which proves that the universal abolition of images was by no means acceptable to all Moslems at this time. Before Islam had made up its mind on the matter, the Iconoclast Controversy was in full force.

Like the New Testament but unlike the Old, the Koran contains no prohibitions against figural representation. As in the case of Early Christian art, a good deal of figural representation has survived from the earliest centuries of Islam and this indicates that the question was not at first precisely defined. After his triumphal entry into Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad entered the Ka'bah, put his hand over a picture of Mary with Jesus seated on her lap that was painted on a pillar, and said: "Rub out all the pictures except these under my hands . . ."[29] The first specific injunctions against the making of images are contained in the Hadith, and these Hadith were written down only in the ninth century. Other outside but contemporary sources suggest that Moslem opinion hardened in this direction only toward the end of the eighth century, that is, precisely during the period of Christian iconoclasm.[30]

It is a revealing coincidence that the question of the image was crucial for both Christianity and Islam in the eighth century, and that the controversy centered in Damascus, under Omayyad rule. The Church Father who was instrumental in restoring images to the Christian Church was a Syrian (and presumably a Semite) John of Damascus, a member of an old Damascus family called Mansur which played an important part in the state administration under Abd-el-Malik. He was born about the close of the seventh century and died c. 749.[31] It was he who linked the question of icons with the doctrine of Salvation and thereby provided rational grounds for the restoration of images. Now Islam did not have this kind of doctrine. Instead, the Islamic solution to the problem of the image was related to a doctrine as fundamental to Islam as the Trinity was to Christianity: the most important element of Islamic teaching involves – not, as in Christianity, the telling of the story of Christ and imitation of the life of Christ, but, rather the precise learning of the Word of God, the Holy Koran. For the Moslem, the Prophet is only the conveyor of a message. The Koran is actually the faithful reproduction of the original scripture in heaven, the actual words of the Book of Heaven which were communicated at different times to the Prophet Muhammad. The written or the recited Koran is thus identical in being and in reality with the uncreated and eternal word of God. Thus, the most fundamental of Islamic beliefs offered a reasonable alternative to the ancient problem of images, an alternative that was as meaningful to the Moslem as the Doctrine of Salvation was to the Christian: If God did not reveal Himself nor His Image to the Prophet, He had nevertheless revealed the faithful "picture" of His Word. The representation of this Word, the Holy Koran, offered a reasonable substitute for the traditional human figure that represented Divinity in both pagan and Christian religions. It would necessarily have a divine association for all true believers.

In other words, the theory of images of John of Damascus could not have meaning for a Moslem. Although Christianity was considered close to Islam,

and Christians along with Jews admitted to the Brotherhood of the Peoples of the Book, in one respect the Koran is unequivocal: When the Christians called Jesus the Son of God, they had erred from the true path of their religion by admitting the plurality of God, and hence were idolaters. For Islam, there is no God but God. God did not send his Image down in the form of a Man, but rather in the form of a Book. In this light, Christian imitation of Christ represented by the icon would look something like pagan idolatry to the Moslem, whereas reverence for the Book implied imitation of the Logos, the Word of God. This is a significant difference.

Now Islam is frequently regarded as an influential factor in the Iconoclast Controversy, but there is no real evidence to support this assumption.[32] George Ostrogorsky suggests that Leo III had Semitic ancestry and that this might have caused him to abolish images in the Christian church. We should remember, however that John of Damascus was an Arab, and that he restored them. André Grabar points out[33] that Iconoclasm was rooted in the Eastern provinces of Byzantium and therefore Islamic influence is suggested. One might also say that the popularity of iconoclasm in the Eastern provinces would favour the adoption of Iconoclast attitudes by Islam. What evidence we have, and it has been summarized here, suggests that there were rational objections to the image in the Mediterranean world long before the rise of Islam; that Islam inherited the problem of the image in its entirety, along with other beliefs belong to the Peoples of the Book, and along with many classical traditions; and that both Christianity and Islam made up their minds about the matter at approximately the same time, and on rational grounds, based on their respective doctrines. In one case, God is symbolized by the human form, because that was Christian doctrine. In the other, the presence of God is symbolized by the image of the Word, because this was Islamic doctrine. Both these solutions, in turn, reflect opposing but long-standing traditions in Classical thought: God as symbolized by man, or the Logos, symbolized by the Book.

If this is true, then the Islamic prohibition of the image should not be considered a remnant of Semitic tradition, nor a primitive bedouin superstition, nor just the reflection of Jewish influences, but rather the reflection of profound pagan, Christian and Jewish cumulative scholarship.[34] To the learned mind in Damascus, in the eighth century AD, the substitution of the Word for the human figure as a symbol for God might carry with it all the intellectual, philosophical and religious implications of the Classical and Christian Logos. In any event, it was the only kind of symbolism open to Islam.

The Beginnings of Symbolism in Islam

So far, the argument for the substitution of one image for another in the art of Islam has been theoretical. It receives tangible proof, however, in the birth of

this art in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. That the symbolism suggested in the foregoing section was conscious at the beginning of Islam, with all the deeper connotations implied, is very unlikely. The earliest evidence we have of a symbolic use of Koranic inscriptions is in the interior of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, which was decorated with mosaics dated by inscriptions in 691 AD.[35] On the whole, the style and iconography of this decoration reflects late Hellenistic, Byzantine and Sassanian origins for which ready parallels are found in the contemporary Christian monuments of Syria and Palestine.[36] The important fact is that no human or animal figures occur in the decoration of the Dome of the Rock, indicating that the prohibition of figural representation in a religious monument was already a reality in seventh-century Islam. Since figurative decoration occurs in the Omayyad period both in secular art and on the official coinage, it is equally clear that this prohibition did not, at that time, extend to all forms of decoration.

It has frequently been pointed out that not only the architecture, but also the decoration of the Dome of the Rock, the vegetal motifs with vases, fruit and cornucopiae, follows a contemporary Christian tradition of religious art with deep symbolic meaning.[37] From the very beginning, apparently, the Arabs did not hesitate to adopt the Christian symbolic vocabulary that was applicable to their own faith. In addition, Oleg Grabar has described the symbolism of the jewels and crowns also in the decoration of the Dome of the Rock as part of the symbolic vocabulary of seventh-century Christian art.[38] Part of this decoration and contemporary with it is a long Koranic inscription proclaiming the new faith. Oleg Grabar explained both the symbolic and the literal meaning of this inscription as "a statement of Muslim unitarianism and a proclamation to Christians and Jews, especially to the former, of the final truth of Islam."[39] The relationship of this symbolic inscription to the tradition of Christian iconoclast art has not been pointed out, however, and in this relationship can be traced the origin of Islamic religious iconography. In other words, the early religious symbolism of Omayyad art, taken over from Christian iconoclasm, presented a solution to the ancient problem of images most suitable to the Islamic faith. In the Dome of the Rock were established patterns for the unbroken development of this religious vocabulary in all forms of later Islamic art.

The relevant Christian monument contemporary with the Dome of the Rock is the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, decorated with mosaics between 680 and 787 AD, that is just before or during the Iconoclast Controversy.[40] The only remaining decoration dating from the period of its construction are the mosaics in the nave of the Church of the Nativity, representing a series of Provincial and Ecumenical Church Councils. Each of these councils is titled and a passage from the council written out in full, framed in an architectural setting and separated one from another by means of stylized vegetal and floral motifs (since the mosaics are in very bad shape, a drawing is reproduced where these elements may be clearly seen, Figs. 11.1, 11.2). Set in the series of provincial councils is a large cross between two trees. Below each inscription is an altar, on

Figure 11.1 Drawing of mosaics in the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 1736.b.6, pl. II
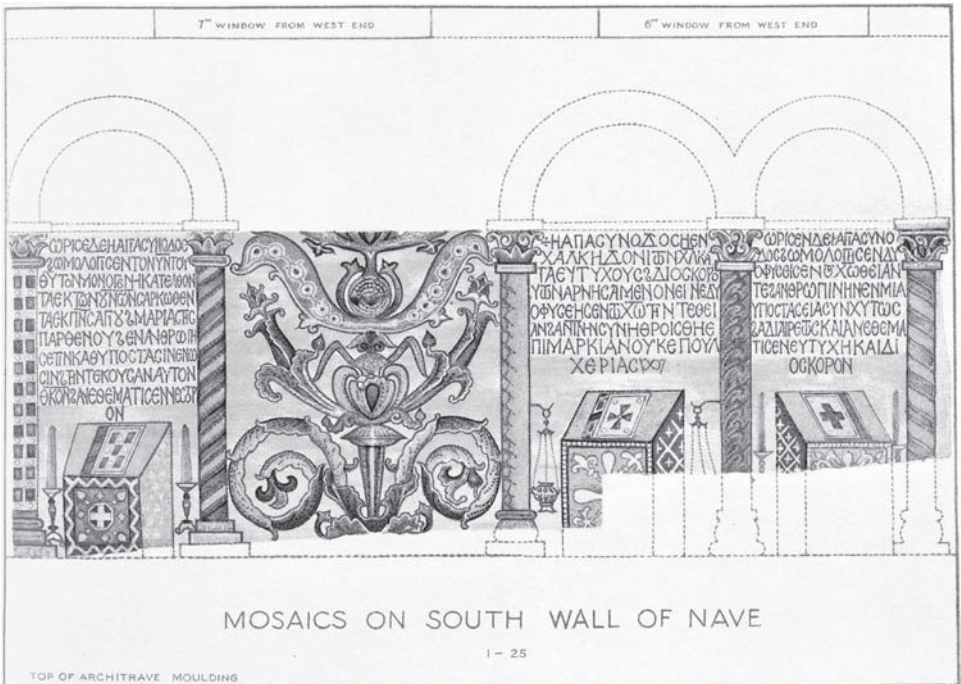
Figure 11.2 Drawing of mosaics in the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 1736.b.6, pl. II

which is placed a closed book. Above the inscription is a cross in a nimbus. The decorative scheme thus consists of four principal elements: (1) the floral and vegetal motifs; (2) the architectural settings; (3) the pictorial religious symbols, altars, books, crosses; (4) the inscription. Each of these four elements can be traced in earlier church decoration in Syria and Palestine or in established Byzantine iconography.[41]

(1)   The floral and vegetal motifs closely resemble motifs also discovered in the decoration of the Dome of the Rock. In particular, the vine scrolls tumbling in an orderly way out of beautiful vase forms are repeated in various ways in the Dome of the Rock. This vine scroll motif belongs to the classical repertoire carried over into early Christian art throughout the Mediterranean World as seen, for example, in the Church of St. George in Salonika.[42] It is common in Christian art of Egypt, Syria and Palestine in the fifth and sixth centuries, for example in the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul at Jerash.[43] It is found again, some-what stylized, in other examples of Omayyad art, as in the great mosque at Damascus, built by Al-Walīd in AD 715.[44]

(2)   The architectural settings in the mosaics of Bethlehem are also common enough in the classical tradition transformed in Byzantine art. They are found in the mosaic mentioned above, in Jerash, and are used with primary icono-graphical symbolism in the Mosque at Damascus. In the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, these architectural settings frame the principal iconographic motifs, as indeed, they also do in the earlier Church of St. George at Salonika.

(3)   The iconographical element at Bethlehem, the pictorial religious sym-bolism of altars, Gospel books and crosses below and above the inscriptions are part of established Christian Iconoclast decoration. These symbols do not appear in contemporary Omayyad monuments, even though Moslems did not hesitate to use Christian Symbols which could be given an Islamic interpretation. However, since the altar, the book and the cross refer specifically to the Trinity their absence in Moslem iconography is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, since they give an especial meaning to the fourth iconographical element in the mosaics at Bethlehem, the inscriptions, these symbols must be examined in greater detail.

The symbolic representation of an altar, representing the throne of God the Father, and the Book of the Gospels, representing the Divine Logos, were for-mally understood by the Church Fathers as an answer to the problem of the human image. Thus the combination of thrones and altars occurs in the dome of the Orthodox Baptistry in Ravenna, of the sixth century. The altars support an open book and the thrones cushion a cross within a nimbus. According to Cyril of Jerusalem, the thrones and the altars represented the seat of Christ and the Gospels represented the material presence of the God-Logos. It is important for us to note here that the same idea was repeated in an apocryphal text of the Patriarch Germanos of Constantinople, during the Iconoclast Controversy, con-temporary with the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. And, what is more, the Council of Ephesus in the fifth century, one of the councils represented on the walls of the Church at Bethlehem, made Christ "president" of the gathering

of Holy Bishops by placing the Holy Writ upon the throne (altar) before the congregation, thus implying that the council was effectively "His Word."[45] An altar with a closed book upon it is represented behind the figures of the saints in Salonika and we should keep in mind that Leo, Bishop of Neapolis, compared the representations of the Saints to books (above p. 192).[46] These saints and books are framed in elaborate architectural settings not unlike those in Bethlehem (Figs. 11.1, 11.2). In Bethlehem, moreover, the eight-armed cross above the altar (Fig. 11.1) represents a further development of this initial iconoclast symbolic representation. In a bronze from St. Sophia in Constantinople (sixth century) is represented the Holy Book upon a throne (or altar) and above these is the figure of a dove. The three persons of the Trinity are clearly intended: the throne to represent the Father, the Book as Christ or the Logos, and the dove as the Holy Ghost. Thus the more scattered elements in the dome of the Orthodox Baptistry have been integrated and given precise meaning. In the Church at Nicaea, contemporary with the Church at Bethlehem, these three symbols are depicted in the dome, and the dove is represented inside an eight-armed cross, and with a nimbus.[47] This combination again occurs in the later (eleventh-century) church of Hosios Lukos.[48] In this light, the eight-armed cross in a nimbus above the altar in Bethlehem is understood as an iconoclast symbol for the Holy Ghost. Thus the altars, Gospel books and crosses in the mosaics at Bethlehem represent not only an iconoclast solution to the problem of the Divine Image, but actually represent the Trinity and reflect the concern in the eighth century over the definition of the Trinity, the quarrels of the Trisagion.[49]

(4)   Finally, our understanding of the symbols at Bethlehem is completed by the fourth iconographic element on the walls, the inscriptions. The content of these inscriptions and their placement between the book and the Cross have an especial meaning. As described above, they represent passages from the Church Councils and the passages chosen in every case reflect decisions taken by the Councils over the definition of the Trinity. For example, the representation of the Council of Ephesus reads:

> The Holy Synod of Ephesos, composed at first of 200 Holy Fathers, against Nestorius, who divided Christ in two substances and did not confess the mother of the Lord to be Mother of God, assembled in the time of Theodosius the Younger. And the Holy Synod decreed and confessed that the Only Begotten Son of God came down from Heaven, was incarnate through the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary and became man in the unity of substance and that she who bore Him was Mother of God.[50]

The central placement of the inscriptions in the composition of the whole mosaic gave them especial symbolic importance. Moreover they actually replaced figural representations previously used to describe the Councils in Christian Church iconography.[51] This is not, however, the first time inscriptions were used in this

way. In the sixth-century Church of the Propylaea at Jerash, there occurs a mosaic roundel decorated with an abstract, geometric ornament around the name and titles of a saint, where normally his portrait would be seen.[52] Around the outside of the roundel are written verses from the Psalms. Although this combination of abstract decoration, religious inscription and iconographic symbolism in the form of an inscription instead of a figural representation occurs frequently in later Islamic decoration (see, for example, the roundel over the doorway of A1-Aqmar) it is never found before the eighth century. The use of an inscription in the Church at Bethlehem to replace figural representation was previously understood only in earlier iconoclast Christian art and its use in Bethlehem to define the Trinity according to Orthodox Church doctrine, represented together with the established symbols of the Trinity, is coherent only in Christian terms. There are no known precedents in Islam.

Since all the iconographical elements in the Church of the Nativity mosaics at Bethlehem may be understood in the light of contemporary Christian art, it is difficult to understand why scholarly opinion insists on a Moslem influence for the mosaics. Their strict observance of an Iconoclast tradition suggests that the mosaics may belong to the period of the Iconoclast Controversy itself, that is to a time after 730, a date that is supported by two internal associations pointed out by Henri Stern: that the wording of the inscriptions is related to the writing of John of Damascus, which belongs to the second quarter of the eighth century, and that the importance of the Church Councils was emphasized by the Patriarch Germanos (c. 726) who not only (as mentioned above) reinforced the symbolism for the Trinity described at Bethlehem, but also described the Councils as "an indissoluble and inseparable chain" and a supreme weapon against heresies.[53]

To return to the problem of Islamic decoration, it has been noted that the principal motifs in the decoration of the Dome of the Rock are understandable in terms of Christian art. Since the date of the Dome of the Rock coincides with the known dates of the Church at Bethlehem, it is difficult to say precisely which system of decoration may have influenced the other but the weight of the evidence points to the adoption by Islam of a contemporary Christian vocabulary. This is more readily understandable than the contrary proposal: that the Church at Bethlehem should have been influenced by Islamic practices which, if they existed at all at this time, had certainly not yet become established. No other comparable churches with figural decoration from this area contemporary with the Dome of the Rock have survived to indicate that absence of figural representation was confined to Moslem institutions.

The inscription in the Dome of the Rock supports these conclusions. This inscription represents verses from the Koran the theme of which has an unmistakable resemblance to the theme of the Bethlehem inscriptions, although, of course, with appropriate content: they emphasize not the Trinity, but the Unity of God:[54]

> . . . Who has not
> taken to Him a son
> and Who has not any associate in the Kingdom (XVII:111)
>
> The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary,
> was only the Messenger of God, and His Word
> that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from
> Him. So believe in God and His Messengers,
> and say not, 'Three'. Refrain; better is it for you.
> God is only One God. Glory be
> to Him – that He should have a son! (IV:170–2)

More important, unlike the inscriptions at Bethlehem, the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock run along high above the main decorative area, under the cornice, where they are barely visible to the observer. They are one among many decorative elements used with symbolic meaning and by no means the most prominent. They do not dominate a central iconographic scheme as do the inscriptions at Bethlehem. Thus, although each of the iconographic elements used to decorate the Dome of the Rock could be understood as Christian motifs translated into Moslem terms, they do not form a coherent whole like the iconographic system in Bethlehem. A few years later, the mosaics in the Great Mosque in Damascus portrayed a single decorative scheme with deep symbolic meaning, the Islamic Vision of Paradise (see note 36). The theme in Damascus also reflected contemporary Christian symbolism but the integration of the design shows deeper understanding and a more specifically Moslem content. Nevertheless, the symbols used in Damascus were still representational. The use of an inscription as the principal element of religious decoration, of an inscription to replace an image as occurred at Bethlehem is not found in Islam until many years later. Thus it was a practice first established in Early Christian decoration. This relationship between Islamic and Christian art is reinforced by the knowledge that the Omayyads imported Byzantine artists to decorate their buildings,[55] artists who could not fail to be familiar with the ordinary Christian religious vocabulary. A specifically Islamic vocabulary was not yet known.

The above comparison between the mosaics of Jerusalem and Bethlehem indicate that the conscious use of inscriptions to replace figural representation of the Divine was established in Christian art long before inscriptions became the predominant system of decoration in Islam, and that the origin of symbolic inscription in the decoration of a mosque lay in earlier Christian church art, specifically in Christian iconoclast decoration. If iconoclast art used an inscription to replace figural symbolism, and specifically as a symbol for the Logos, so later Moslem iconography may be said to have taken over the same symbolic association. At any rate, a direct association between the symbolic meaning of the earliest inscriptions in Islamic art and the Christian symbol for the Logos can be traced even though the development of this symbolism in later Islamic

art may have been independent of its Christian-Classical origins. In the Dome of the Rock were laid patterns for future religious decoration in Islam. This development is now examined.

Religious Symbolism in the Mosque

Just when the use of writing in Islam replaced pictorial religious composition is not established. It was likely a slow process. What is clear is that figural representation was discouraged in Abbasid mosques as religious inscriptions increased correspondingly in decorative and symbolic value. It is interesting to note, for example, that the original Omayyad inscriptions on the Nilometer in Cairo (96–7 H = 714–16 AD) were purely utilitarian, confined to measurements of the height of the water. In the succeeding period, however (199H = 814–15 AD), Koranic inscriptions of highly symbolic character were added.[56] For example, one of the verses chosen for the West side of the Nilometer:

> Hast thou not seen how that God has sent down out of heaven water, and in the morning the earth becomes green? (XXII: 62)

These verses used in a stylized, decorative kufic in place of all other decoration suggest that the substitution of Koranic script for other symbolic religious decoration was established in the time of the Abbasids.[57] At the same time, as if in response to custom that was already in practice, the permanent injunctions to makers of images and the whole mystique associated with the image appears in Islamic traditions.

A full account of the development of religious symbolism of purely Islamic nature lies outside the exploratory purpose of this paper. In order to understand the direction of this development, however, it is pertinent to examine its presentation in a religious monument from a later period. The tomb and *madrasah* of Sultan Hassan (757–64 H = 1356–62 AD) was built at a time when the Islamic style may be said to have fully matured, and the Islamic symbolic vocabulary developed, without having lost touch entirely with the thread of its origins.[58] At the great entrance to Sultan Hassan, beneath the radiance of the *mukarnas*, is inscribed a verse from the Koran:[59]

> The likeness of His Light is as the lamp in a niche,
> in temples God has allowed to be raised up,
> and His Name to be commemorated therein;
> therein glorifying Him, in the mornings and the evenings,
> are men whom neither commerce nor trafficking
> diverts from the remembrance of God
> and to perform the prayer, and to pay the alms . . . (XXIV: 36–7)

The tradition lying behind the use of this verse in the doorway of a mosque is not yet clear, but it is a fact that this verse also occurs earlier in the *miḥrābs* of Cairo[60] and elsewhere.[61] The description of a lamp in a niche renders the association intelligible. The glass lamp hanging in the *miḥrāb*, as it hung in the *miḥrāb* of a mosque and as it is frequently portrayed in pictured niches was believed to symbolize the vessel of the heart burning in the chest of the believer with the Holy Message, the Word, the "light" of the Koran.[62] The above verse occurring in a *miḥrāb* is therefore not surprising. It is more significant that at some time before the building of Sultan Hassan, it was transferred to the doorway of a mosque. In this way the inscription gives symbolic meaning to the mosque as a whole. Such an association would be only theoretical, were it not reinforced by the fact that an earlier Cairene mosque, Al-Aqmar (1125 AD)[63] presents a literal representation of the *miḥrāb* on the facade.[64] In Sultan Hassan, the inscription by itself replaces the pictorial image.

On the other hand, the *miḥrāb* in Sultan Hassan contains this verse:

> We have seen thee turning thy face about
> in the heaven; now We will surely turn thee
> to a direction that shall satisfy thee.
> Turn thy face towards the Holy Mosque; and
> wherever you are, turn your faces towards it.
> Those who have been given the Book know it is
> the truth from their Lord; God is not heedless of
> the things they do. (II: 139)

Thus the inscription at the entrance to the mosque gives symbolic meaning to the entrance by associating it with the "light" of the *miḥrāb*, whereas the inscription in the *miḥrāb* refers to the light of the heavens, associating the Holy Mosque with this light. As the *miḥrāb* is the focal point of worship for all believers, so it represents the heart of the mosque. So, we are to understand, the mosque is the focal point of worship for the world, the *miḥrāb* of the world. One is reminded of the same kind of imagery in a Christian parallel: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). This verse is written in the open gospel held by the Christ Pantocrator in the great apse of Cefalu.[65] Both examples effectively illustrate the symbolic nature of the Word, although by now their specific vocabulary has changed not only in the spelling, but also in the alphabet.

In each of the four *liwans* of Sultan Hassan, marching around the massive walls in a continuous even band, is an ornate kufic stucco inscription:

> In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
>
> Surely We have given thee
> a manifest victory,

that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins,
and complete His blessing upon thee, and guide thee
on a straight path,
that God may help thee
with mighty help.

It is He who sent down the Shechina
into the hearts of the believers, that
they might add faith to their faith –
to God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth;
God is All-Knowing, All-Wise –
and that He may admit the believers,
men and women alike, into gardens
underneath which rivers flow, therein
to dwell forever, and acquit them of
their evil deeds; that is in God's sight
a mighty triumph;
and that He may chastise the hypocrites,
men and women alike, and those who think
evil thoughts of God; against them
shall be the evil turn of fortune. God
is wroth with them, and has cursed them,
and has prepared for them Gehenna –
an evil homecoming!" (XLVIII: 1–6)

These verses, from the Surah known as Victory, present the image of the mosque as a symbol of Paradise to the Believer, and the vision of God triumphant over the Universe. The first of these images "of gardens underneath which rivers flow" recalls the same symbolism pictorially presented in the great courtyard of the Omayyad mosque in Damascus. In Damascus, the vision of paradise leans on earlier Christian symbolism. In Sultan Hassan the vision of paradise is presented in words, rather than pictorially. The image of God, triumphant over the Universe, brings to mind the image of the great Christ Pantocrator in the dome of a Byzantine church. What is more, the inscription itself, in larger letters than any others, more elaborately decorated in an elegant floriated kufic, conveys by its style its symbolic importance. The historical or banal inscriptions in Sultan Hassan, as elsewhere in Islamic art of this period, were written in ordinary nashki inscription, the difference in style serving to underline the especial religious significance of these Koranic verse.[66]

In case the association of the main inscription in Sultan Hassan with the pictorial vision of paradise is not sufficiently convincing, the same imagery is conveyed by inscriptions over the six doorways into the court of Sultan Hassan. The following verses are inscribed:

Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him
and good pleasure: for them await gardens wherein

> is lasting bliss,
> therein to dwell forever and ever; surely with God
> is a mighty wage. (IX: 21–2)
>
> . . . The godfearing shall be amidst gardens
> and fountains:
> Enter you them in peace and security. (XV: 45–6)

Finally, in the adjoining tomb of the Sultan, another large kufic inscription marches around the four walls, larger and more impressive than any other element in the decoration and drawing all other elements into a coherent and unified decorative whole. The verse chosen for the walls of the tomb, under the dome, is that which is also found in the drum of the dome in a mosque,[67] or in the courtyard,[68] sometimes even at the entrance to a mosque.[69] The verse amounts to a basic statement of Islamic faith, but is especially suitable to the neo-platonic theme of Death, Sleep, and the Entrance to Eternal Life:

> God
> there is no god but He, the
> Living, the Everlasting.
> Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep;
> to Him belongs
> all that is in the heavens and the earth.
> Who is there that shall intercede with Him
> save by His leave?
> He knows what lies before them
> and what is after them,
> and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge
> save such as He wills.
> His Throne comprises the heavens and earth;
> the preserving of them oppresses Him not;
> He is the All-high, the All-glorious. (II: 256)

This image of a supreme and omnipotent God invokes a royal symbolic image not unlike that of the Christ Pantocrator, but, more especially, it evokes the image of crowns and jewels, the symbols of victorious royalty. These symbols were represented pictorially on the inside of the tomb area of the Dome of the Rock.[70] Once again the original symbolic image of royalty seems to have been retained in the later mosque tradition whereas the vocabulary changed from a pictorial to a literal one.

Stylistically, the principal inscriptions in Sultan Hassan give direction to the entire decorative scheme. The main element of the decoration, the great inscription in the *madrasah* or in the tomb, is inscribed around the architectural forms, uniting the different parts, building a single architectural statement in praise of God. Around this band the individual elements in the mosque, the *miḥrāb*, the

minbar, the windows, doors and, above all the dome, are themselves intricately decorated with abstract designs or with other symbolic verses, subservient to the main theme. Each of these elements is related functionally to the architecture as a whole. The contrasting colours of the marble in the *miḥrāb*, for example, emphasize (they do not negate) the form of the niche, the vital springing of the arch. According to their function, on the other hand, the doorways invite the spectator into a maze of geometric cobwebbing that belies their solidity. In contrast, the heavy marble slabs on the walls give solidity and weight to the letters of the great inscription that they underline. The regular, balanced repetition of architectural forms gives balance and unity to the structure, and yet each individual element of the design is different from its neighbour, thus lending infinite variety and interest, in place of monotony or repetition. Notice, for example, how the patterned bands above and below the inscription are harmoniously balanced, and yet are not identical. In the best Moslem architecture, it is impossible to insist that the decoration hides the structure. Each functional part is like a musical instrument, outlined, emphasized and made plastic with individual tones of decoration and then woven into the structure of the orchestral whole so as to create an architectural symphony alive to the individual thrust and vitality of every one of its parts. Every part is strictly controlled, according to its function, the resulting harmony and balance giving an ordered unity of space that is unique and fundamental to the Islamic style.

The harmonious relationship between decoration and structure, the symbolism given to the mosque by means of the scripture, is very different from the literal and more primitive symbolism of the Christian Logos presented on the walls of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. At Bethlehem, the inscriptions replace a pictorial decoration on the wall that has little or nothing to do with the architectural structure of the building as a whole. At a later period in Byzantine art, contemporary with Sultan Hassan, the great church interiors covered with glittering mosaic represented pictorially and symbolically the structure of the Church of God. In the West, a similar powerful symbolism was lent to the architecture, especially to the exteriors, by means of statuary. Islam recognized no comparable hierarchy of saints, monks and martyrs, of special religious ceremonies connected with special Feast Days, of sacraments – nothing, at least, as complicated as those depicted on the walls and in the body of the Christian Church. Nevertheless, the structure and decoration of the mosque is as intimately related to the Islamic creed as the Christian church was to Christian dogma. The Moslem recognized only the direct relationship between himself and God through His Word, and the equality of all men before God. Unlike the early medieval Christian vision of the universe, the tangible world was not an instrument of evil but rather the miraculous creation of His hands and the supreme illustration of divine order and harmony. The mosque represented the rational, ordered universe, a single, centralized unit of peace and harmony, with little differentiation between interior and exterior, no emphasis of one part over another, only mysterious designs weaving their wonderful pattern into the divine

structure, each part underlined and made intelligible to man through His Word. In its essence, this vision of the world was "classical", even neo-platonic in its symbolism. This is not to presume that those responsible for the decoration of a mosque consciously replaced the figural representation of God with the representation of the Word; nor that many of the worshippers knew what was being represented. What is certain, is that every worshipper knew large sections of the Koran by heart; they were part of his daily vocabulary. A Moslem recognized the letters in a mosque, if not the sense of the inscription, with the same excitement and religious fervour as that inspired by figural representation in the contemporary Christian church.[71] If the sense of the inscription was obscure, so was much of the religious symbolism in Christian churches lost upon the congregation. In pure artistic terms, Islam presented a solution to the problem that had plagued classical artists since the time of Plato: In every detail of the mosque was visually represented the supremely classical God-Logos.

Notes

1   The bibliography for this subject is presented at length by K. A. C. Creswell, "The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam," 159. The most complete treatment of the subject is that by Sir Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 1–40. For more recent additions, see Bishr Farès, "Essai sur l'esprit de la décoration islamique", *Conférences de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* (Cairo, 1952), 27; *idem*, "Philosophie et jurisprudence illustrées par les Arabes; la querelle des images en Islam", *Mélanges Louis Massignon* (Institut français de Damas, 1957), 100–9; K. A. C. Creswell, *A Bibliography of the Architecture, Arts and Crafts of Islam* (Cairo, 1961), 981–2.

2   Aly Bey Bahgat and Felix Massoul, *La céramique musulmane de l'Egypte* (Cairo, 1930), 38; Bishr Farès, "Essai sur l'esprit de la décoration islamique", *Conférences de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* (Cairo, 1952), 27; Zaky M. Hassan, "The Attitude of Islam Towards Figurative Painting", *The Islamic Review*, XLIV: 7 (July, 1956), 29.

3   Ernst Kühnel, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (Cornell, 1966), 24; Sir Thomas Arnold, *The Old and New Testaments in Muslim Religious Art* (London, 1932), 1.

4   A. U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, II (Oxford, London, N.Y., 1939), 909.

5   Ralph Pinder Wilson, *Islamic Art* (London, 1957), 7; Ernst J. Grube, *The World of Islam* (London, 1966), 11.

6   E. Kühnel, *La miniature en Orient* (Paris, n.d.), 1.

7   Cabrol and Leclerq, "Images", *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, VII: 1 (Paris, 1926), col. 209.

8   See E. Cruikshank Dodd, "On the Origins of Medieval Dinanderie: The Equestrian Statue in Islam", *Art Bulletin*, LI (1969), 220–32.

9   K. A. C. Creswell, "The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam", 165; *idem, A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, 98; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 54, 111, 140 note 4. R. Ettinghausen ("The Character of Islamic Art", *The Arab Heritage*, ed. Nabih Faris [Princeton, 1944], 256–66), describes the ancient use of odd-shaped stones as "images" by the Arabs (see also note 10, below). This custom

is perhaps the practice of a primitive civilization without an art, in imitation of images, rather than the deliberate choice of non-representation on religious grounds. Islam is not a primitive religion, nor should its art be traced to primitive habits. On the contrary, there is evidence to show (below, note 10) that when a civilized art was available to pre-Islamic Saudi-Arabia, its forms and vocabulary were adopted without apparent hesitation.

10 Albert Jamme, "Inscriptions on the Sabean Bronze Horse of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VIII (1954), 317–30; Zaky M. Hassan, "The Attitude of Islam Towards Figurative Painting", *The Islamic Review*, XLIV: 7 (July 1956), 28 f.; Frank P. Albright, "Catalogue of Objects Found in Marib Excavations", in Richard le Baron Bowen Jr., and Frank P. Albright, *Archaeological Discoveries in South Arabia* (Baltimore, 1958), 269–73; Berta Segall, "The Lion-Riders from Timna", *ibid.*, 155–82; Ray L. Cleveland, *An Ancient South Arabian Necropolis* (Baltimore, 1965), *passim*; Jacqueline Pirenne, "Notes d'archéologie Sud-Arabe", *Syria*, XXXVII (1960), 326–47; XXXVIII (1961), 284–310; XXXIX (1962), 257–62; XLII (1965), 109–36, 311–41; Diana Kirkbride, "Ancient Arabian Ancestor Idols", *Archaeology*, XXII (1969), 116–21, 188–95.

11 A. J. Wensinck, "The Second Commandment", *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afd. Letterkunde, Deel LIX (1925), Ser. A, no. 6 (unseen); *idem*, "Sūra", *Encyclopédie de l'Islam* (Paris, 1934), IV, col. 590; Sir Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 11.

12 K. A. C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, 99; A. Grabar, "L'interdiction des images et l'art du palais à Byzance et dans l'Islam ancien", *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1957), 395; R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, 13.

13 Ed. L. Cheiko, vol. 2, 19–20; O. Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", 56, note 122; *idem*, "Islamic Art and Byzantium", 69.

14 O. Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", note 122.

15 "Islamic Art and Byzantium", 72.

16 See E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VIII (1954), 83–150, esp. 95.

17 H. Lammens, "L'attitude de l'Islam primitif en face des arts figurés", *Journal Asiatique*, IIe série, VI (1915), 274–9; A. J. Wensinck, "Sūra", *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, IV (1934), col. 590; Sir Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 10; Creswell, "The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam", 165; *idem, A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, 98.

18 Especially through the great neo-platonic Jewish scholar, Philo (first century AD). See G. B. Ladner, "The Concept of the Image . . .", 5, 7, 11.

19 E. L. Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece* (London, 1934), 61–7, and *passim*; J. B. Frey, "La question des images chez les Juifs à la lumière des récentes découvertes", *Biblica*, XV (Rome, 1934), 265–300; A. A. Vasiliev, "The Iconoclast Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, AD 721", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, IX–X (1956), 25; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 100, notes 3 and 4 (full bibliography).

20 Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 5th ed., 15, 16; as in Walter Kaufmann, *Philosophic Classics, Thales to St. Thomas* (Englewood Cliffs, 1961), 16.

21 The development of pagan thought about the image, its reflection in early Christian theology and its role in the development of Byzantine iconoclasm has been the subject of many detailed studies. The most recent comprehensive treatment of this subject with bibliography is that of A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*. The important classical development is studied by H. Leclerq, "Images (Culte et Querelle des)" in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, VII: i (1926), cols. 180–302. The following authors write about particular aspects of this problem: G. B. Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy"; Sirarpie der Nersessian, "Une apologie des images du septième siècle", *Byzantion*, XVII (1944–5), 58–87; Paul J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and its Definition (Horos)", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VII (1953), 37–66; G. B. Ladner, "The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy", *ibid*., 3–34; Milton V. Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VIII (1954), 153–60; E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm", *ibid*., 83–150; Norman H. Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church", 116–43.

   These articles are concerned with the development of Byzantine iconoclasm. I summarize here only some of those points relevant to development of iconoclasm in Islam.

22 Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church", 118, note 2. See also Leclerq, "Images", *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, VII: 1, cols. 207–14.

23 Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church", 131.

24 293 A., as quoted by Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church", 131.

25 Text and translation given by Anastos, 'The Ethical Theory of Images . . .", 154, and 157, no. 24.

26 Milton V. Anastos (*The Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, part I [Cambridge, 1966], 68, n. 2) holds that there were two edicts, one in 726, and one in 730.

27 Baynes, "Idolatry in the Early Church", 136.

28 There is a long tradition behind this story, given in detail by A. A. Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, IX–X (1956), 25–47; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 105 ff. Yazid is supposed to have been influenced by a Jew. The tradition holds, therefore, that the Jews were responsible for the development of iconoclasm in Islam, and that the Moslems then influenced Leo III.

29 Azraqi (d. 858), *K. Akhbar Makkah*, in F. Wüstenfeld ed., *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka* (Leipzig, 1858), 111–13.

30 This development is described by Sir Thomas Arnold and Creswell, see note 2 above. Their conclusions are supported by the development of an iconoclastic type of coinage by the Caliph Abd-al-Malik in the last five years of the seventh century: George Miles, "Mihrāb and 'Anazāh: a Study in Early Islamic Iconography", *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld* (N.Y., 1952), 156–71; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 67 ff.; John Walker, *A Catalogue of Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umaiyad Coins* (London, 1956), liii f.

31 The relationship of John of Damascus to the classical tradition of images and especially to the neo-platonic doctrine of images just described is studied by G.B. Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy", 143 ff.; *idem*, "The Concept of the Image . . .", 16 ff.

32 George Ostrogorsky, "Les débuts de la Querelle des Images", *Mélanges Charles Diehl* (Paris, 1930), 235–55; *idem, History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford, 1956), 143; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 111–12; *idem, Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, Part II (1967), 327; M. V. Anastos, *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, Part I (1966), 65 ff.

33 *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 111.

34 Ladner, "The Concept of the Image . . .", 7, points out that a most influential scholar on the doctrine of images for the Early Christian Church was the Jewish Bible scholar and platonist, Philo of Alexandria (1st cent. AD). It is he who linked the "Divine Image" with the "Word of God".

35 Max van Berchem. C.I.A., IIe partie, *Syrie du Sud*, II, 223–55; K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, I, 42–96, extensive bibliography to 1930, 90–4; since then, see O. Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", *passim*.

36 Marguerite van Berchem, "The Mosaics of the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem and of the Great Mosque at Damascus", in K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, I, 147–252; Henri Stern, "L'Aniconisme dans l'Islam primitif", *Actes du XXIe Congrès International des Orientalistes* . . . (Paris, 1948) 335–6; R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, 26–8. See also G. B. Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy", 138 f.

37 Marguerite van Berchem, in Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, I, 227–8; H. Stern, "Les représentations des conciles . . ." (1936), 122 ff; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 62 f.

38 "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", 46–52.

39 *Ibid.*, 56.

40 W. Harvey, W. R. Lethaby, O. M. Dalton, *The Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem* (London, 1910); H. Stern, "Les représentations des conciles . . ." (1936), 101–52 (1938), 415–59; R. W. Hamilton, *The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem* (Jerusalem, 1947); A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 50–61.

41 The origins of the principal decorative motifs have been analyzed by Henri Stern and his conclusions are briefly summarized here. See also A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 50 ff.

42 Charles Diehl, M. Le Tourneau, H. Saladin, *Les monuments chrétiens de Salonique* (Paris, 1918), 19–31; Hjamar Torp, "Quelques remarques sur les mosaïques de l'église Saint-Georges à Thessalonique", *Pepragmena tou th' Diethnous Byzantinologikou Sunedrion* (1955), 489–98 (unseen); Angelo Procopiou, *The Macedonian Question in Byzantine Painting* (Athens, 1962), 28 f.

43 Carl H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, The City of the Decapolis* (New Haven, 1938), pl. LXXV; J. W. Crowfoot, *Early Churches in Palestine* (London, 1941), pl. XVIII b.

44 See note 36.

45 H. Stern, "Les représentations des conciles . . ." (1936), 143.

46 Carl-Otto Nordström, *Ravennastudien* (Stockholm, 1953), 46 ff.; pl. 12d.

47 *Ibid.*, pl. 12e.

48 Angelo Procopiou, *The Macedonian Question in Byzantine Painting* (Athens, 1962), pl. 28; H. Stern, "Les représentations des conciles . . ." (1938), 457.

49 See Anastos, *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, part 1 (1966), 67.

50 Translation of R. W. Hamilton, *The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem*, 61; for orginal text and full discussion of the councils see H. Stern, "Les représentations des conciles . . ." (1938), *passim*.

51 Stern, "Les représentations des conciles . . ." (1936), 144, note 3; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 55.

52 C. Kraeling, *Gerasa, The City of the Decapolis*, pl. LXIIb; J. W. Crowfoot, *Early Churches in Palestine*, pl. XXII.

53 H. Stern. "Les représentations des conciles . . ." (1938), 458.

54 Two contemporary slogans offer striking parallels to these inscriptions. It is well known that Moslems went into battle crying the *Shahāda*, "There is no God but God." It is less widely known that they fought against Christians fortified with the cry of the *Trisagion*, "Hosios, Hosios, Hosios" (W. Ensslin, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, part II [1967], 43 f.)

55 H. A. R. Gibb, "Arab-Byzantine Relations under the Umayyad Caliphate", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XII (1958), 224 ff.

56 Max van Berchem, C.I.A., *Ière partie, Egypte*, I (1903), 19–20; O. Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", 53.

57 The most valuable indication of this change may be observed in the change from pictorial representation to calligraphy in coins in the Abbasid period (see note 30).

58 Max van Berchem, C.I.A., *Egypte*, I, 251–73, esp. p. 273.

59 The Koranic translations used in this paper are taken directly from A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London and New York, 1955). Arberry's translation preserves most faithfully the spirit of the original, but in order to do so, he has had to sacrifice precision in the order and indication of verses. He uses the numeration of the Fluegel edition (Leipzig, 1841), as do other European scholars. This differs from the Cairene edition, 1923, which I have been using where possible to check the translation. I have given the Fluegel numbering as used by Arberry and van Berchem, but have checked the translations with the Cairo edition. Where the Arabic inscription is not available, however, but only the numbers of the verses, I have consulted R. Blachère, *Le Coran*, which gives both the Cairene and Fluegel numbering, as a guide to the Arabic text probably represented. A case in point are the two verses in question from this, the "Light" sura. Van Berchem in his indication of this inscription does not transcribe the Arabic text but gives only the verses (Fluegel). It is therefore difficult, without consulting the inscription itself, to judge exactly how the verses were inscribed and, in this case, there could be considerable difference in meaning. I have chosen the version "couramment admise" according to Blachère, and omitted a few lines of the Arberry text, but, admittedly this may not be a precise rendering of the verses over the doorway of Sultan Hassan. Nevertheless, given all possible variations in translation, the essential content of the inscription is for our present purpose the same.

60 *Ibid*., p. 55 (1085); no. 474 (1352). Max van Berchem was interested mainly in the historical inscriptions in the mosques in Cairo and frequently does not give the Koranic verses, so that it is not possible to collect exact evidence on the use of Koranic inscriptions in all the mosques in Cairo or elsewhere without visiting each monument personally. The present conclusions are based on what evidence has already been collected in the hope that future writers will not neglect to consider Koranic texts in their description of any monument. There are times when these are not essential to the understanding of the decoration, but there are times when not to read the Koranic inscriptions is comparable to describing a Western Medieval cathedral without its statuary, or a Byzantine church without its mosaics.

61 Ernst Herzfeld, C.I.A., *II, Syrie du Nord, Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, I (1955), 218, no. 102 (1245).

62 R. Blachère, *Le Coran* (Paris, 1975), 380, note 35b. The full history of the symbol of light in the Koran and its origins in Platonic thought is described by Tj de Boer, "Nūr", *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, III (1936), col. 1020f (with relevant bibliography). For the symbolism of the *miḥrāb*, see George C. Miles, "Mihrāb and 'Anāzah: A study in Early Islamic Iconography", *Archeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld* (New York 1952),156–71.

63 Max van Berchem, C.I.A., *I, Egypte*, 67–71.

64 Caroline Williams has pointed out to me that the scheme of the original façade of this mosque repeats the contemporary scheme found on the East or *qibla* wall of a prayer hall, in which the main *miḥrāb* in the center is flanked by two similar, smaller ones on either side. Each *miḥrāb* is covered by a fluted semi-dome, or hood (i.e. Um Kulthum, 1122 AD, or Sayyida Ruqayya, 1133 AD). Above the left-hand entrance of Al-Aqmar is a small sculptured niche identified as a *miḥrāb* by means of the hanging light in the center. This representation has aroused considerable curiosity but the reason for the sculptured niche on the façade suggests deliberate symbolism. The almost contemporary mausoleum of Sayyida Ruqayya (Van Berchem, *ibid.*, 71–2) also presents this duplication in the scheme of the façade and East wall. In addition to this fact, the Koranic verse XXXIII: 33, which appears on the façade of al-Aqmar, in the rosette, is found in the *miḥrāb* of Sayyida Ruqayya. Such an interchange again suggests a symbolic association of the two parts of the building: the *qibla* wall, giving the direction for prayer, and the entrance wall of a mosque, which exercised the same function for the man in the street, especially when – as frequently happens today – the interior was too crowded and prayers were conducted outside.

65 A. Grabar, *Byzantine Painting* (Skira, 1953), 127.

66 Max van Berchem, C.I.A., *I, Egypte*, 53 f; V. A. Kratchdovskaya, "Ornamental Nashkī Inscriptions", in A. U. Pope, *Survey of Persian Art*, II (New York and London, 1939), 1770; L. A. Mayer, "A Note on Some Epigraphical Problems", *ibid.,* 1807.

67 Max van Berchem, C.I.A., *I, Egypte*, Al-Azhar, AD 970–2, p. 49; Sayyidah Ruqayyah, c. AD 1135.

68 *Madrasah* of Emir Tankis, Jerusalem, AD 1328 (Max van Berchem, C.I.A., *II, Syrie du Sud*, I, 261); *Madrasah* of Sultan Malik Zāhir Barqūq, A.D. 1386 (*idem*, C.I.A., *I, Egypte*, no. 194); Convent and Mausoleum of Sultan Malik Nāṣir Faradj, AD 1411 (*ibid.*, no. 210); *Madrasah* and Mausoleum of Sultan Malik Ashraf Qāyt-Bāy, AD 1473 (*ibid.*, no. 297).

69 The mosque of Ibn Tūlūn, AD 879 (*ibid.*, 28); the mosque of the Emir Altunbugā El-Māridāni, AD 1340 (*ibid.*, 192).

70 The original mosaic inside the dome of the Dome of the Rock has not been preserved so that it is impossible to carry further this association with pictorial art. The present inscription in the summit of the dome, dated 1874, may, however, replace an earlier one which would have confirmed this association: the present inscription is from the Koran, II: 256.

71 See Franz Rosenthal, "Significant Uses of Arabic Writing", *Ars Orientalis,* IV (1961), 15–23; O. Grabar and Derek Hill, *Islamic Architecture and its Decoration, A.D. 800–1500* (London, 1967), 85ff.

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Henri Stern, "Les représentations des conciles dans l'église de la Nativité à Bethléem", *Byzantion,* XI (1937), 101–52; XIII (1938), 415–59.

12

Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine

G. R. D. King

The attitude of the early Islamic state towards figurative representations is often cited as a source contributing to the establishment of officially-supported iconoclasm within the Byzantine Empire in AD 726.[1] Islam has generally adopted a position opposed to the representational in secular art, and the exclusion of all figurative motifs from Islamic religious art is clear from the first, yet this attitude is not necessarily to be regarded as intrinsically iconoclastic in the true sense of the word; indeed, outside Arabia itself, the only evidence of iconoclasm until the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate in 132/750 is confined to the well-known attack on images and statues carried out on the orders of Yazīd II. b. ʿAbd al-Malik (101–5/720–4). This much discussed outbreak of iconoclasm is well documented by Islamic and Christian sources,[2] but the very fact that it is so specifically associated with Yazīd's Caliphate suggests that it was considered unusual at the time. Although Christian sources carefully record the difficulties of their communities under the Umayyads, the absence of references to image-breaking under Caliphs before Yazīd implies that his action was a rarity worthy of comment: under normal circumstances, it would seem the Muslims left the Christians to use icons and representations or not, as they wished.

The connexion between Islam and Byzantine iconoclasm, and specifically between Yazīd and Leo III, the instigator of imperial iconoclasm, was alleged very early on in the Byzantine sources. During the Second Council of Nicaea in AD 787, assembled to condemn iconoclasm and to support the newly re-established iconodule rule in the Empire, it was stated that Leo III had introduced iconoclast doctrine into Byzantine territory in imitation of Yazīd II's actions inside the Caliphate.[3] The charge was repeated by Theophanes in the

early ninth century[4] and by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nicephorus (d. AD 828).[5] Vasiliev even suggests[6] that the individual who persuaded Yazīd to adopt iconoclasm was the same person who appeared shortly afterwards in the Empire advising Leo to move in the same direction. It is possible that the Iconoclast party within Byzantine territory was encouraged to imitate Yazīd's activities, but in terms of doctrine and iconography, iconoclasm had deeper roots within Christianity itself. It did not need Islam to invent Christian opposition to images; the extensive use of icons in the Christian world was sufficient to stimulate a profound objection to them among those Christians who felt that alien, pagan-like practices had intruded into their religion. As to charges made within the Christian world that iconoclasm was the creation of the Muslims or that Leo III and his supporters were 'Saracen-minded', these were more in the nature of insults than precise references to a theological position. Epithets cast at one another by disputing Christians do not necessarily signify a deep understanding of Islamic attitudes in a period when Byzantine knowledge of Islam was limited.

The Muslims themselves gave only occasional indications of serious concern with the principle of Christian worship through icons in the Umayyad period; apart from Yazīd's curious and short-lived attack, the Muslims seem simply not to have cared greatly about the matter. They took an interest in the content of Christian representations from time to time, when the subject-matter offended or contradicted Islamic beliefs. But it was the issue of doctrine, its statement and counter-statement, that was of far greater interest to the Islamic world, whether in disputing Christian practices or expounding the beliefs of the Muslims. The matter of representations of God had already been settled in Islam in the lifetime of the Prophet: the inconceivable was beyond encompassing by any artistic repertoire; and meanwhile idolatry was suppressed and the pre-Islamic religious images were overthrown inside Arabia itself. The pagan idols of Mekka were destroyed by the Muslims in 8/630, and although the Prophet may have spared a picture of Mary and Jesus in the Ka'ba, he nevertheless destroyed the rest of the numerous images which it had housed before his entry to Mekka. The great number of idols in the houses of the Quraysh were likewise removed, while missions were sent to destroy other pagan idols elsewhere in Arabia. Some sites associated with the *Jāhilīyya* seem to have been avoided ever after.[7] However, with paganism and idolatry suppressed, the Muslims do not appear to have extended their destruction of images thereafter to the Christian communities they encountered; they may well have disapproved of the widespread use of icons in worship by many in the Near East, but they seem to have left these Christians to pursue their own customs. The silence of the Christian and Islamic sources suggests that no long-sustained and total repression of Christian images ever took place in the early Islamic period to match in effectiveness the suppression of pagan idols in Arabia carried out by the Prophet. Where objections were expressed to Christian practices regarding images, they related to matters of doctrine raised by specific pictures, most frequently concerning the role of Jesus in Christianity.

For the early Muslims, the underlying religious meaning attached to what was represented was of greater importance than the fact of representation as such. The *Jāhiliyya* idols in Arabia had been destroyed first and foremost because they were idols and thereafter, beyond Arabia, objections to Christian pictures were made because of what they portrayed, not because of the fact of portrayal in itself. It seems that while it did not matter especially to the Muslims in the early Islamic period if the Christians chose to portray Jesus, they cared very greatly about the way Christians regarded Jesus. The Muslim attitude towards the cross as the sign of the Death, Ascension and Resurrection of Jesus is interesting in this respect: the cross had become at once the universal sign of Christianity in the Near East and also the sign of the Byzantine Empire. In its religious and political guises, the crucifix was more objectionable to the Muslims than any picture, and its suppression is encountered in the Umayyad period more often than the destruction of pictures. The theological controversy underlying this suppression, articulated on the Islamic side by a steady and consistent succession of doctrinal statements on issues contesting Christian theology, is far more characteristic of the early Islamic period than iconoclasm; by its very nature this dispute could not transfer its scene of operations to the Byzantine Empire, however 'Saracen-minded' Leo III may have become.

Montgomery Watt[8] has suggested that those *sūras* of the Qur'ān which declare God's Oneness and deny that He would have offspring had initially been directed against the followers in Arabia of the 'daughters of God'. What was only an aspect of Islam's concern with its opponents in Arabia took on a greater importance as an issue of contention in the conquered Byzantine Near East, where the Muslims were confronted with an indigenous Christian population at the centre of whose theology was the Trinity. With the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus, ruling an extensive and well-organized series of Christian communities and confessions, and opposed by the Byzantine Empire in the north, the Muslims seem to have consciously asserted those elements of Islam that most distinguished it and over which they were most in dispute with their non-Muslim subjects. This assertion of Islam's doctrines was pursued with single-mindedness in a number of highly public directions. Thus, insofar as opposition to Christian practices occurred, the Muslim authorities concentrated on those ideological points that conflicted with Islam, that is, the doctrines of Jesus as the Son of God, and the Trinity. However, at the same time, Christian buildings in the Near East were extensively decorated by paintings and mosaics among which figured pictures of Christ alone or with the Virgin, while representations of the cross were ubiquitous, not only carved on buildings and in paint and mosaic, but also on portable objects. More intrusive still in the urban centres of the Near East was the display of crosses in church services and in public processions above all. It can be of little surprise, therefore, that when the Muslims began to state their doctrines by means of public monuments and assertive policies during the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, there should also have been a spate of objections raised to the cross as well as to the subject-matter of

representations of Christ. Yet these objections cannot be taken as Islamic icono-clasm, nor did the Christians themselves seem to have regarded them as such. Textual evidence suggests that prevention of the public display of crosses under the Umayyads was more common than recorded incidents involving objections to Christian representational art. Other cases of destruction of the fabric of Christian buildings that took place in the Caliphate outside Yazīd's reign seem to have stemmed simply from a desire to loot the rich source of wood, marble, columns and other valuables that the churches and monasteries held.

An Egyptian source, Severus b. al-Muqaffaʾ, compiling from authors contemporary with the events described, provides a view of conditions as Christians in Egypt perceived them under the Umayyads, compensating for the scarcity of contemporary literary material elsewhere in the Caliphate. Severus and his sources record meticulously the impediments endured by the Monophysite church in Egypt under the Umayyads, and yet even here it is only in the Caliphate of Yazīd II that any reference is made to the suppression of Christian pictures. In view of the silence of Severus on iconoclasm under other Caliphs, one must assume that it simply did not exist or was so rare that incidents went unrecorded. Instead, Severus mentions attacks on Christian symbols and pictures of a quite different significance. In 67–70/686–9, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān, the governor of Egypt and brother of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, ordered Christian crosses in gold and silver to be destroyed in Egypt.[9] This was a somewhat ambiguous act for it could just as well have been intended to deprive the Christians of their valuable crosses for the sake of the metal, since Severus mentions no destruction of crosses in materials other than gold and silver. Yet on the other hand, the attack was directed solely against crosses, and the ideological significance of the event is reinforced by the accompanying action taken by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz: he ordered Qurʾān-based declarations to be fixed to the churches in Miṣr and the Delta, reading: 'Muḥammad is the great Apostle of God, and Jesus also is the Apostle of God. But verily God is not begotten and does not beget.'[10] The statement of so central a point of dispute between Islam and Christianity, summed up on the Christian side in the cross as the sign of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, could not have been more explicit or succinct.

A series of similar doctrinally-based attacks on Christianity are recorded in Egypt and also in Bilād al-Shām during the remainder of the Umayyad period. In 76/695 the Byzantine Emperor, Justinian II, was deposed in favour of Leontius. On that day ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān ordered the suspension of the Christian liturgies in Egypt. The Muslims objected to the Christian doctrine which they took to hold that God could take a wife and produce a son, and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz himself also objected to the divisions of the Christian sects on matters of doctrine.[11] Towards 86/705 al-Aṣbagh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz complained specifically of a picture representing the Virgin and Jesus carried in a procession at a monastery in Ḥulwān; he expressed his objection to the Christian regard for Jesus by asking who Christ was that he should be worshipped as God.[12] Yet although al-Aṣbagh resented the subject-matter of the picture he did not have it destroyed:

the whole thrust of his attack was on christological doctrine, and the existence of the representation as such was incidental to the issue. Indeed, the very fact that al-Aṣbagh objected to this one picture in the procession rather than any other indicates that his complaints were not directed at pictures in themselves. Another incident involving a picture, recorded by Severus, took place between 127/744 and 151/768; here again it was Christian doctrine which was attacked by a Muslim rather than the representation itself.[13] As in the case of al-Aṣbagh, the incident was provoked not by the existence of a representation but by the subject-matter and its implications: Christ crucified.

Such attacks on pictures on doctrinal grounds linked to the role of Jesus need to be seen in the context of opposition to crosses or their public display in the early Islamic period, an instance of which has been mentioned above. At some time after the Muslim conquest of Damascus and before 86/705, a governor of the city, ʿAmr b. Saʿd, issued an order that no crosses should appear in public there.[14] This led to civil disturbances when Jews of Damascus took the governor's words as licence to destroy all crosses, including those fixed to buildings, one of which was on the Church of St. John the Baptist; the site was already shared with the Muslims who used the eastern part as a mosque. The governor responded to these excesses by punishing the Jews, saying that he had intended only to prevent the prominent display of crosses by the Christian community, rather than the destruction of those fixed to buildings.

This desire to remove crosses from public display led the Caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (99–101/717–20) to forbid the Christians to show their crosses, according to al-Yaʿqūbī.[15] That he objected to crosses seems confirmed by a letter to ʿUmar from the Emperor Leo III:[16] this was apparently written in reply to an earlier communication from ʿUmar to Leo, and the nature of Leo's reply indicates that the Caliph had asked about Christian regard for the cross and pictures, since Leo's letter explains the honour shown to the cross and the lesser respect shown to pictures. ʿUmar's preoccupation with the cross and with representations combines the concerns already shown in these directions in Egypt by his father and his brother, al-Aṣbagh. ʿUmar's concern over the Byzantine Christians' reverence for pictures also presaged Yazīd's own far more extreme picture-breaking activities. However, Yazīd went further than his predecessor and cousin, ʿUmar, ordering attacks on images, as well as breaking crosses rather than simply forbidding their display. Yet while his attack on images was unusual by comparison with the actions of earlier Caliphs, Yazīd's actions were nevertheless motivated by the same ideological hostility to Christian practices as his predecessors' had been.[17]

The Muslim campaign against crosses is more comprehensible when it is recalled how ubiquitous the motif was in the Near East, where it was shared by both those Christians who accepted images and those who seem to have dispensed with them. In certain cases, the cross seems to have replaced the image of Christ in the apses of churches, although the loss of the wall decorations of so many churches in the Near East makes it impossible to decide how widespread

this was. The cross was a motif that persisted even in the most aniconic decorations in the Near East, the work in some cases of Christian groups apparently averse to representational art, to judge by their surviving decorations. The cross as the principal motif of official Byzantine Iconoclastic art within the territory of the Empire had its antecedents in the Near East in the pre-iconoclastic and, indeed, in the pre-Islamic period. Given the geographical distribution of these cross-based decorations, it is difficult to be sure whether they should be associated with Christians of Monophysite persuasion, Nestorians, or with some less precise affinity. Had the Muslims been much concerned with the principle of the use of images by Christians, they might have been expected to feel rather more in sympathy with those Christians whose decorative motifs imply an aversion to icons and representational art in a religious context. However, the scattered surviving evidence of monuments for Syria, Jordan and elsewhere in the area suggests that it was these same anti-image Christian groups who made particular use of the cross, the symbol so offensive to the Muslims, in their church ornaments.

Although most of the paintings and mosaic decorations of the churches of the Near East have now fallen from the walls, the stone-built churches of Jordan and Syria of the fourth–seventh centuries AD abound in crosses in low relief and incised, carved on lintels over doorways and elsewhere; many of the villages and towns, in Jordan at least, were still inhabited in the Umayyad period. Furthermore, sufficient fragmentary decorations survive on walls or as floor mosaics to indicate the existence of a non-figurative decorative tradition that included the cross and was the alternative convention to the representational Christian decorative tradition recorded in the great cities of the Near East. One of the most thoroughgoing non-figurative decorations appears in a small underground chapel on the outskirts of Ḥimṣ in Syria near the site of Bāb al-Ṣibāʿ,[18] dated to between AD 471 and 514. The motifs consist of various types of bejewelled cross, simple foliage and inscriptions. A similarly cross-based decoration occupies the apse of a chapel in a basilica at Ruṣāfa-Sergiopolis:[19] the magnificent painted cross is almost destroyed but it raises the question of what decorated the apses of other churches in the area whose mosaics and paintings are now lost. A completely non-figurative decoration in mosaic appears in the church of Mār Gabriel in the Ṭūr ʿAbdīn area in south-eastern Turkey, in which a cross filling the apse of the church is the main feature: other motifs include architecture, foliage and inscriptions on a gold mosaic ground. The church has been associated with Monophysite patronage from Antioch and dated to AD 512.[20] At Karabel in Lycia a monastery church apse is decorated only with a cross and a *tabula ansata* in relief, formerly mosaic-covered, and dating from the pre-Islamic period.[21] In Armenia, crosses seem to have been set up in many parts of the country,[22] while in areas which were familiar to the Arabs of the *Jāhiliyya* and to the early Muslims, crosses were also widespread: the churches excavated at Ḥīra[23] and on Kharg island in the Arabian Gulf,[24] attributed to the pre-Islamic period, were decorated with simple crosses, while in Yemen, a certain Azqir[25] set up crosses

which were subsequently destroyed in the pre-Islamic period in an anti-Christian attack. In a description of the sixth-century AD church of Abraha in Ṣanʿā, crosses and stars in mosaic are mentioned, but no reference is made to figurative motifs.[26]

For the Christians, the cross was the sign of Christ and it was accepted as an object of reverence or respect even by those Christians who rejected images. It was protection from evil, the worker of miracles, and the emblem of the Christian world and the Byzantine Empire. After the rediscovery of the True Cross by Saint Helena, the mother of Constantine I, and the appearance of the cross in the sky over Jerusalem in AD 351, the cross motif spread widely in the Christian world, often in luxurious and exotic forms, as the symbol of the religion of the Christian Empire. In the final war of the Empire and the Sassanians, wood of the True Cross was carried off to Iran after the sack of Jerusalem in AD 614. This trophy was brought back once again in triumph by Heraclius, and paraded through the Near East in celebration of the Christian victory. In the meantime, the ideological prominence of the cross as the sign of the Christian Empire had been further emphasized by Heraclius who included it on his coinage. In view of the cross's role as the principal emblem of the Empire, its significance for the Christians and its ubiquity, it is little surprise that, like the Sassanians before them, the Muslims should subsequently have concentrated their attacks on this sign within the Caliphate. The cross had already had a long history as the concrete manifestation of doctrinal conflict between the Christians and other groups: not only had the Sassanians attacked Christianity through the cross but so too had pagans and Jews at various times, while the Paulicians were to attack and break crosses within the Empire itself. It was the prominence of the symbol as the summation of Christianity that led to its being so treated by such diverse opponents, while for the Muslims, the issue of the Christian view of Jesus and the cross was also particularly offensive doctrinally inasmuch as it emphasized the role ascribed by the Christians to a prophet shared by the two religions.

As well as forbidding the display of crosses on occasion, and sometimes physically attacking them, the Umayyads also showed some concern to adapt into innocuous forms the cross that figured on early Islamic coin issues in the former Byzantine provinces. However, this matter was only really resolved with the Umayyad coinage reform of 77/696 which finally established a purely Islamic coinage tradition. Because of the very nature of coinage, the Caliphate's coin issue had a public effectiveness and significance with respect to iconography that other administrative decisions lacked. Thus, while it is of interest, the removal of crosses from official brands in Egypt under the governor Usāma b. Zayd al-Tanūkhī was less far-reaching in impact. Usāma had every monk branded on the left hand with the name of his monastery in about 96/714 and although Severus[27] comments on the absence of the cross from the brand, it is hardly surprising that the Islamic administration should have erased from its administrative system a symbol so antipathetic to its own ideological position. Nevertheless, this eradication of Christian symbolism from Islamic contexts does not

appear to have been pursued consistently: for instance, Qaṣr Burquʿ in eastern Jordan is a pre-Islamic site rebuilt by al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik in 81/700 in which a cross survives undefaced,[28] although it is of course possible that it was once obscured by plaster. However, a similar example exists further south in the desert at Kilwa, where the sixth-century AD Byzantine settlement has a cross incised on a lintel, with Kufic inscriptions nearby indicating the subsequent use of the site by the Muslims.[29] Yet despite these isolated exceptions, the over-riding Umayyad objective in the main urban centres was to assert Islamic prin-ciples, and in contesting Christian ideology, no vigorous campaign could ignore the cross.

An Umayyad counter-offensive to the doctrine of the Trinity, the role of Jesus in Christianity, and the cross, was a corollary of Muslim objections to the display of the cross and representations of Jesus and other figures. As we saw, in Egypt ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān fixed Qurʾān-based inscriptions on churches to contest aspects of Christian doctrine which the Muslims disputed, while in the same period, the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik addressed the issue in a far more grandiose way with the construction of the Dome of the Rock in 72/691 in Jerusalem. Oleg Grabar has suggested that the building of the Dome of the Rock combined the symbols of victory with an assertion of the position of Islam as the successor and supplanter of the other two monotheistic religions of the Near East.[30] The selec-tion of *sūras* in the mosaic inscription inside the building stresses precisely those points on which Islam and Christianity were in dispute, and which ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz had already raised in his public notices in Egypt: these *sūras* variously refer to God's blessings on His angels and on the Prophet Muḥammad, and to the unity of God who takes none unto Himself and has no son. The People of the Book are warned not to stray from the tenets of their religion and it is stated that the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was a Messenger of God; the Oneness of God is asserted and the Trinity is specifically denied.

The same Islamic ideological declarations, which so precisely contradicted Christian doctrine, were reasserted shortly afterwards with the coinage reform of ʿAbd al-Malik, mentioned above. Again, the *sūras* selected and summarized the main points of conflict with the Christians; the Unity of God, and by implication the role of Christ.[31] J. D. Breckenridge has suggested very reasonably that ʿAbd al-Malik's reformed coinage was a response to the coinage issued by Justinian II between AD 692 and 695 which carried the image of Christ on the obverse with the cross behind the head, the emperor carrying a cross on the reverse, and the inscriptions *Servus Christi* and *Rex Regnantium*.[32] No combination of Christian images and words could have so precisely offended against all the points of Islamic doctrine which were currently being expounded by the Muslims. It was the issue of ideological offence rather than any inherent Islamic opposition to representa-tions on coins that led to the Muslim rejection of Justinian's coins and caused ʿAbd al-Malik to respond with a thoroughly Islamic coinage.

Given Muslim objections to the cross and the doctrine of the Trinity, the mosaics decorating the interior of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem are

remarkable for their selection of motifs if they are rightly dated to the Umayyad period[33] – although recently an attribution to the eleventh century AD has been proposed.[34] The iconography includes architectural backgrounds framing inscriptions declaring the doctrines of the Church, with the emphasis on the Trinity; these motifs are accompanied by crosses. In view of the campaign being waged by Muslims against christological doctrines, the decoration of the Church of the Nativity would seem to have been unyieldingly provocative. Even if it was erected under the tolerant Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (105–25/724–43), there can be little doubt that the decoration was intended as a gesture in answer to the Muslim campaign to assert explicitly Islamic doctrines. In the circumstances, the absence of figures from the mosaics can hardly be regarded as an attempt to assuage the sentiments of Muslims. Instead the non-figural nature of this Christian doctrinal statement would seem to put it into the category of those non-figurative works produced by Christians in the Near East for internal Christian reasons, rather than because of any Islamic proscription on representations.

Apart from cross-based Christian decorations in which figures are avoided, some of which have already been mentioned, there are a number of floor mosaics from Syria, Palestine, Jordan and elsewhere which precede Islam and also exclude figures. A late fourth-century AD basilica at Dibsī Faraj in north Syria has a floor mosaic with architectural and geometric motifs, but apparently no figures;[35] other floor mosaics without figures occur in the fifth century AD at Shepherd's Field in Palestine,[36] at Kfayr Abū Sarbūt near Madaba,[37] at the *Dayr* church at Maʿīn,[38] both sixth century AD, and in an exposed mosaic at Riḥāb. The last three are all in Jordan. Even where figures are included in floor mosaics, they are sometimes reduced in scale and prominence; thus, in the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian at Jerash, of AD 535, the donors are confined to positions off to the sides of the principal panel before the altar, a great inscription in a *tabula ansata*. Cumulatively, this evidence suggests that long before Islam there was a strong tendency among certain groups of Christians in the Near East to adopt non-figurative motifs in their churches, and, if the Jerash example is relevant in this context, to reduce the prominence of figures in favour of the inscription panel. Indeed, in general, in the non-figurative repertoire, art in the Near East reserved major roles for inscriptions of a religious nature, for symbolic devices and, as we have seen, for crosses, with the rest of the subsidiary areas filled by geometric and foliage motifs. Islam, then, can hardly be viewed as the progenitor of this development in Christian art, which was already well under way before the time of the Prophet. However, the process among Christians in the pre-Islamic Near East may well have been related to the revulsion which Jews too began to show in the sixth century AD for the representations which had previously been accepted in synagogues, and which arose from the increasing acceptance of representational religious art throughout the Near East.

It would seem that Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik's brief iconoclastic campaign within the Caliphate had some effect, although of a specific and a limited character.

Thus Severus bemoans the putting away of pictures under Yazīd, and al-Kindī and al-Maqrīzī corroborate him.[39] It is natural that damage to certain Christian mosaics in Bilād al-Shām should be ascribed to this period of Umayyad icono-clasm,[40] and it is by no means unlikely that Yazīd's decree should have led to damage to mosaics at Madaba, Kfayr Abū Sarbūt, Jerash and Maʿīn (although the last has been attributed to his predecessor, ʿUmar II b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz). Oleg Grabar has commented[41] on the concentration of this iconoclastic damage in Jordan. The damage may seem concentrated in part because the mosaics of this area are more familiar, but it may also reflect some internal and local Christian controversy, rather than any Islamic intervention. Nevertheless, it is a striking coincidence that Yazīd II built a large cistern at al-Muwaqqar, where he resided, in AD 104/722–3, which is only a short distance east of Madaba, Kfayr Abū Sarbūt and Maʿīn: his other residence was to the north, at Bayt al-Rās near Irbid. In view of the brief duration of Yazīd's Caliphate, it has been suggested that Yazīd's edict had limited effect within the vast territories of the Caliphate; yet it is likely that his measures would have had some effect in the immediate vicinity of his residence at al-Muwaqqar, and in northern Jordan generally, because of his residence at Bayt al-Rās. This situation raises an interesting issue: if Yazīd did indeed ensure that figurative representations in the neighbourhood of al-Muwaqqar were excised, it is difficult to see how the paintings of Quṣayr ʿAmra were not destroyed at the same time, situated as they are some 50 km to the east in an area that was frequented in the Umayyad period. After all, a cousin of Yazīd in Egypt had a statue in his bath house destroyed as a result of Yazīd's edict and the prominence of the owner of Quṣayr ʿAmra would have been no guarantee of the paintings' protection from the iconoclasm of the Caliph. Did Quṣayr ʿAmra escape because it had not yet been built in Yazīd's reign?

Despite this localized evidence in Jordan for Yazīd's activities, the effects of his suppression of representations, and certainly the iconoclastic tendencies of the early Muslims in general, have been exaggerated. While the early Muslims con-structed religious buildings devoid of figures, they built palaces in which figura-tive art abounded: even under the ʿAbbāsids a sculpture of a horseman surmounted the palace in the Round City of Baghdād.[42] Within Palestine itself, there appears to be no significant break in production of icons between the sixth century AD and the ninth, confirming the view that such image-breaking as occurred was confined to Yazīd's reign.[43] While the Muslims generally left the Christians to produce and use figurative representations as they saw fit, for their own part, they drew on the available repertoire of art to promote Islamic doctrine in a region where much of the iconography was already shared by Christians, Jews and pagans. The Muslims drew on those features of the artistic repertoire which it was permissible to use in mosques; with the Qurʾān at the heart of their religion, with the ancient Arabian tradition of public inscriptions (and, it seems, literacy in pre-Islamic Arabia), and with the fact that the inscription was already widely used in the Near East by Christians, Jews and pagans (at Edessa), it seems inevitable that the Muslims should have written the statements with which they enunciated their

own tenets and countered their opponents. This element in Islamic art arose from entirely internal reasons within Islam and the Arabian tradition, and proceeded to develop upon the artistic repertoire of the Near East.

On the Christian side, concern over the graven image was an ancient problem,[44] with opinions sharply divided on the issue long before Yazīd II. Furthermore, the essentials of what was to constitute official Byzantine iconoclastic art within the Empire existed in Bilād al-Shām well before the doctrine took hold of the state. For whatever reason, certain Christians in the Near East had employed a non-figurative repertoire for several centuries before Islam. The loss of so many mosaics and paintings in the Near East from the Byzantine period makes this tradition seem shadowy. Yet ironically, the existing evidence suggests that the iconography represented by this tradition was, if anything, more disturbing to Muslims than the icons and pictures which decorated so many churches in the region, with the cross and inscriptions promulgating Christian doctrine in terms as explicit and direct as those in which the Muslims themselves were stating their own doctrines under the Umayyads.

Notes

1   In an extensive bibliography on Iconoclasm the following touch particularly on the Islamic attitude to images: H. Lammens, 'L'attitude de l'Islam primitif en face des arts figurés', *Journal Asiatique*, IIme série, VI, 1915, 239–79. T. W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (New York, 1965), 1–40. G. Ostrogorsky, 'Les débuts de la querelle des images', *Mélanges Charles Diehl* (Paris, 1930), I, 235–55. G. Marçais, 'La question des images dans l'art musulman', *Byzantion*, VII, 1932, 161–83. K. A. C. Creswell, 'The lawfulness of painting in early Islam', *Ars Islamica*, XI–XII, 1946, 159–66. *Idem, Early Muslim architecture*, (2nd ed. Oxford, 1969), I/1, 409–14. Bishr Farès, 'Philosophie et jurisprudence illustrées par les Arabes. La querelle des images en Islam', *Mélanges Louis Massignon* (Damascus, 1957), II, 77–109. A. A. Vasiliev, 'The Iconoclastic edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (hereafter *DOP*), 9, 10, 1956, 25–47. A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin* (Paris, 1957). R. Paret, 'Textbelege zum islamischen Bilderverbot', *Das Werk des Künstlers. Studien zur Ikonographie und Formgeschichte Hubert Schrade zum 60. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 1960, 34–48. G. E. von Grunebaum, 'Byzantine iconoclasm and the influence of the Islamic environment', *History of religions* [Chicago] II, 1, 1962, 1–10 (reprinted for private circulation, University of Chicago). O. Grabar, 'Islamic art and Byzantium', *DOP*, 18, 1964, 69–88. *Idem, The formation of Islamic art*, New Haven and London, 1973), 75–103. *Idem*, 'Islam and Iconoclasm', *Iconoclasm: Papers given at the ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, University of Birmingham, March 1975, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), 45–52 (hereafter *Iconoclasm*). S. Gero, 'Notes on Byzantine Iconoclasm in the eighth century', *Byzantion*, XLIV, 1974, 23–42. L. W. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental background of the Iconoclastic controversy* (Leiden, 1974), 10–33. P. Crone, 'Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 1980, II, 59–95.

2 Vasiliev, loc. cit. A. Grabar, op. cit., 93–112.

3 J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova, et Amplissima Collectio* (Florence, 1757), XIII, cols. 197, 200 [Greek]; 198–9 [Latin].

4 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), I, 401–2.

5 Nicephorus, 'Antirrheticus tertius Adv. Constantinum Copr.', *Patrologiae Graecae*, C, cols. 528, 529, 532, 533 [Greek]; cols. 527, 530, 531, 534 [Latin].

6 Vasiliev, loc. cit., p. 28, n. 12; p. 30.

7 F. V. Winnett and W. L. Reed, *Ancient records from North Arabia* (Toronto, 1970), 34. For studies of pre-Islamic idolatry and the religious environment at the time of the Prophet, see H. Lammens, 'Les sanctuaires préislamites dans l'Arabie occidentale', *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph* (1926), XI, fasc. 2, 39–173; *idem, L'Arabie occidentale avant l'Hégire* (Beirut, 1928); Toufic Fahd, *Le Panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire* (Paris 1968). Fahd (249 ff.) suggests that Arabian pre-Islamic religion had been heavily influenced by the Hellenistic tradition of representing deities of various types in painting and sculpture, a tendency which had greatly increased prior to Islam. The various statuettes and wall-paintings excavated at al-Faw in south-west Saudi Arabia substantiate this point, at least as far as stressing the degree of Hellenistic influence on pre-Islamic Arabian art (see A. R. al-Ansary, *Qaryat al-Fau* (Riyad, 1981)).

8 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956), 318.

9 Severus b. al-Muqaffaʾ, 'History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria III, Agathon to Michael I (766)', edited, translated from the Arabic into English, and annotated B. Evetts, *Patrologia Orientalis*, V, 1910, 25.

10 ibid., p. 25. There appears to have been the beginnings of such a move against crosses in Muʿāwiya's time: cf. J.-B. Chabot, I. Guidi, H. Hyvernat and B. Carra de Vaux, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri, Chronica Minora*, Series Tertia, IV (Paris, 1903), trans. into Latin from the Syriac, 55–6.

11 ibid., p. 35.

12 ibid., p. 52.

دخل الى دير حلوان نظر الى الصور مزيّنة كما يحب وكانت صورة السّيدة الطاهرة مرتمريم والسّيد المسيح فى حضنها.

13 ibid., pp. 149–50. In this case a young Muslim speared a picture, but merely to parody the action represented, the spearing of the crucified Christ on Calvary by a soldier. Yet no complaint was made by the Muslim regarding the fact of representation.

14 *Chronicon Anonymum ad A.D. 819, I, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri*, Series Tertia, XV, Syriac text; XIV, trans. Latin from the Syriac, I.-B. Chabot (Louvain, 1937), 205. In fact E. de Zambaur (*Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de l'Islam* (Hanover, 1927), p. 28, n. 3) states that as the Umayyads resided at Damascus there were no governors appointed to the city; he lists no governor by the name of ʿAmr b. Saʿd. See also A. S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their non-Muslim subjects* (London, 1930, repr. 1970), 105–6.

15 al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitâb el-Kharâdj*, annotated, trans. from the Arabic into French, E. Fagnan, as *Le livre de l'impôt foncier* (Paris, 1921), 196.

16 A. Jeffery, 'Ghevond's text of the correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III', *The Harvard Theological Review*, XXXVII, 1944, 269–332.

17 Severus, 72–3.

18 J. Sauvaget, 'La chapelle byzantine de Bab Sbā' à Ḥoms', *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph*, XIV, fasc. 1, 1929, 3–20. The Necropolis Choziba of the Monastery SS. John and George in Palestine has painted crosses on the walls like those of the Bāb al-Ṣibā' chapel (O. Meinardus, 'Notes on the Laurae and monasteries of the Wilderness of Judaea, I', *Studium Biblici Franciscani Liber Annuus*, XV, 1965, 241–3). Does this reflect an aversion to representational art, or is it that in the chapel at Ḥimṣ and the Palestinian Necropolis, the cross was felt to be appropriate in a funerary context?

19 J. Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie* (Paris, 1947), 299–300, fig. 109. M. Mundell, 'Monophysite Church Decoration', *Iconoclasm*, 67–9.

20 E. J. W. Hawkins and M. C. Mundell, 'The mosaics of the Monastery of Mār Samuel, Mār Simeon and Mār Gabriel near Kartamin', *DOP*, 27, 1973, 279–96.

21 R. M. Harrison, 'Churches and chapels of central Lydia', *Anatolian Studies*, XIII, 1963, 131–2.

22 S. der Nersessian, 'Une apologie des images du septième siècle', *Byzantion* XVII, 1944–5, 58–87. P. J. Alexander, 'An ascetic sect of iconoclasts in seventh century Armenia', *Late classical and mediaeval studies in honour of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.* (New Jersey, 1955), 151–60. N. G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy* (The Hague, 1967), 164 ff.

23 D. Talbot Rice, 'The Oxford excavations at Hira, 1931', *Antiquity* VI, 1932, 280–3. *Idem*, 'The Oxford excavations at Ḥīra', *Ars Islamica*, I, 1934, 51–73.

24 R. Ghirshman, *The Island of Kharg* (Tehran, 1960), 10–14.

25 J. W. Hirschberg, 'Nestorian sources of North-Arabian traditions on the establishment and persecution of Christianity in Yemen', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, XV, 1949, 324–5.

26 Al-Azraqī, *Ta'rīkh*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 1858, I, 88–90. G. R. D. King, 'Some Christian wall-mosaics in pre-Islamic Arabia', *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, X, 1980, 37–43.

27 Severus, 68. Usāma also added the date according to the *hijrī* calendar; this is hardly surprising and was in the spirit of the times.

28 H. Field, *North Arabian Desert archaeological survey, 1925–50* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 57–8, 150–8. H. Gaube, 'An examination of the ruins of Qasr Burqu'', *Annual of the Department of Antiquities* [of Jordan], 1974, XIX, 93–100.

29 N. Glueck, 'Christian Kilwa', *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, XVI, 1936, 9–16; *idem, The other side of the Jordan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 51–4.

30 O. Grabar, 'The Umayyad Dome of the Rock', *Ars Orientalis*, III, 1959, 33–62. C. Kessler, ''Abd al-Malik's inscription in the Dome of the Rock: a reconsideration', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1970, 2–14. An interesting attempt to create a new Islamic iconography of symbol and text appears in a floor mosaic in Palestine described by M. Rosen-Ayalon, 'The first mosaic discovered in Ramla', *Israel Exploration Journal*, XXVI, 2/3, 1976, 104–19.

31 J. Walker, *A catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and post-Reform Umaiyad coins* (London, 1956), II, liii ff. and 84 ff.

32 J. D. Breckenridge, *The numismatic iconography of Justinian II (685–695, 705–711 A.D.)* (New York, 1959), 76.

33 H. Stern, 'Les représentations des Conciles dans l'église de la Nativité à Bethléem', *Byzantion*, XIII, 1938, 456, gives a seventh-century AD date. J. Beckwith, *Early*

Christian and Byzantine art (London, 1970), 76–7; Beckwith gives a date after AD 694. E. C. Dodd, 'The image of the Word', *Berytus*, XVIII, 1969, 52; Dodd gives a date of AD 730.

34 Mundell, *Iconoclasm*, p. 67, n. 89.

35 R. P. Harper, 'Excavations at Dibsi Faraj, Northern Syria, 1972', *Les Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes*, XXIV, 1974, 25–9.

36 V. Tzaferis, 'Shepherds' Field (Beit Sahur)', *Israel Exploration Journal*, XXIII, 2, 1973, 118–19.

37 M. M. Ibrahim, 'Archaeological excavations in Jordan, 1972', *Annual of the Department of Antiquities* [of Jordan], XVII, 1972, 95.

38 M. Piccirillo and M. Russan, 'A Byzantine church at ed-Deir (Maʿīn)', *Annual of the Department of Antiquities* [of Jordan], XXI, 1976, 68–70.

39 *The governors and judges of Egypt or Kitāb el-Umara' (el-Wulāh) wa Kitāb el-Qudāh of el-Kindī* (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, XIX, Leiden and London, 1912, ed. R. Guest), 71–2. al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭāṭ*, ed. Būlāq (1270/1852), II, 493.

40 R. de Vaux, 'Une mosaïque byzantine à Ma'in (transjordanie)', *Revue Biblique*, XLVII, 1938, 255–8. Pointing out that the iconoclastic damage at Ma'īn was repaired in AD 719–20, de Vaux attributes the damage to 'Umar II, rather than to his cousin Yazīd II. Yet it might be considered that internal Christian disputes akin to those that led to Jewish destruction of pictures in synagogues were the cause of this vandalism, if it predates Yazīd's reign.

41 O. Grabar, *Iconoclasm*, 45 has suggested that this damage could have been the result of Monophysite or other internal Christian changes.

42 It might be added that even at Sāmarrā in the third/ninth century, evidence of aversion to representations among the élite is unclear, or at least, ambiguous. Paintings decorated the private chambers of the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim, and although a number of painted containers with representations on them were found broken, this may have been because of what they had contained – wine – rather than because of the representations. The fact that not all of these containers had been broken seems to confirm a lack of concern for the images on them (cf. D. S. Rice, 'Deacon or drink: some paintings from Samarra re-examined', *Arabica*, V, 1958, 15–33).

43 K. Weitzmann, '*Loca Sancta* and the representational arts of Palestine', *DOP*, 28, 1974, 31–55.

44 N. H. Baynes, 'The icons before Iconoclasm', *The Harvard Theological Review*, XLIV, 2, 1951, 93–106. E. Kitzinger, 'The cult of images in the age before Iconoclasm', *DOP*, 8, 1954, 84–150. Dodd, loc. cit.

Part IV
Local Syncretistic Traditions: Jews, Muslims, and Christians

13

Hebrew Book Illumination in the Fatimid Era

Rachel Milstein

The subject of this article is a group of fairly homogeneous Bibles, consisting of a few complete codices and many fragments. Some extant colophons date these manuscripts from the late ninth to the eleventh century, and attribute them to Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa. Several pages of an unusual size or style may have come from Iraq or Iran, but scholarly opinions vary in this respect, and therefore these controversial exceptions will be excluded from our discussion.

Regardless of its origins, most of the material, if not all of it, was found in Egypt, and at least three complete illustrated manuscripts are still in the possession of the Karaite synagogue in old Cairo.[1] The main bulk of the extant material is now in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, and smaller lots are in London, Cambridge, and Tbilisi.[2]

The modern history of the illustrated Bibles started in 1860, when Abraham Firkovitch, a Russian Karaite, purchased his first collection in Cairo, and perhaps in other Near Eastern towns. This first collection, then a second one, was sold to the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg, while sections of texts which originally had been bound together with those chosen by Firkovitch, were later dispersed around the world together with material from the famous Cairo Genizah. The Firkovitch collections contain almost ten thousand Hebrew manuscripts and fragments, Bibles and other texts, and more than one thousand Arabic manuscripts written in Hebrew letters. Of all these, only a few dozen Bibles are illuminated, and among them only one complete codex and some twenty fragments were copied in the tenth and the eleventh centuries.[3] They are all closely related to each other and to the illustrated manuscripts from the Karaite synagogue in Cairo, by codicological details, style, and names of scribes and patrons.

The Karaites are a Jewish sect that denies the Talmudic rabbinical tradition, and recognizes the Scriptures as the sole and direct source of religious law. This movement was founded in the eighth century by Anan ben David, who devised a doctrine based upon ancient sources, and upon orthodox and sectorial Islam. Most of Anan's followers lived in Egypt, but important communities existed in Ashdod, Ramla and Jerusalem in Palestine, and in Syria, Iraq and Iran. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, with the exception of a short period during the reign of the Fatimid Imām al-Ḥākim bi-Amri Allāh, Jewish communities under Fatimid rule enjoyed a peaceful period, rich in economic and cultural activities. The Karaites, persecuted rivals of the Rabbanite Jews, found protection in the Islamic authorities and developed close contacts with them. Towards the twelfth century the Karaite communities of the Islamic world disintegrated, and their members emigrated to Byzantium and other Christian lands.[4]

Years of good contacts with the Muslims, and the special importance attributed by the Karaites to the Scriptures, led them to adopt the formal evolutions that occurred in Quranic manuscripts. For one thing, they preferred the codex – *muṣḥaf* – over the scroll, and some of their earliest *muṣḥafs* are written in Arabic letters.[5] They developed vocalization and punctuation signs, numbered verses, and used decorative devices as separating marks, titles, or space fillers. The indebtedness of the *muṣḥaf* to the scroll is seen in the arrangement of the biblical text in vertical columns, as in a scroll. Because of the arrangement in columns, which leaves many spaces unused, ornamental devices in the role of space filler may appear within the written surface, in the upper and lower zones.[6] Only poetry is often written in a different lay-out, as in the first Song of Moses (Exod. 15) from 929, in the earliest dated Pentateuch extant.[7]

In the Qurʾāns, on the other hand, empty spaces occur only at the end of a *sūra*, and are filled with decorative bands containing the title of the following *sūra*.[8] As in the Qurʾān, all the formal innovations in Bible codices were intended to safeguard the Holy Scripture from any errors or changes, and make the reading accessible to every one. The bitter polemics between Rabbinic Jewry and the Karaites over the reading and interpretation of the Bible remind us of the contemporary debate over the Qurʾān between Sunnites and Shiʿites, which brought about the evolution of the *naskhī* script by Ibn Muqlaʿ and Ibn al-Bawwāb.[9]

Under Islamic influence, the Karaites developed the science of Hebrew grammar, with the aim of ensuring correct reading and copying of the Bible. Solutions for difficult points in the text were deduced by comparison between all the variations of given grammatical or syntactical forms. Therefore, as part of the laws and regulations concerning the presentation of the holy text – the *masōrah* (tradition) – sets of comparisons and variations were inscribed as footnotes on the borders of the folios by the *naqdan*, the vocaliser.[10] In some Bibles, mainly the illuminated ones, the masoretic notes in micrography became ornamental or served as lines and contours for decorative compositions.[11] As it must have been the *naqdan*, the grammarian, who designed the micrographic

decoration,[12] we may search for some logic in the choice of ornamental motifs or in the overall composition.

Almost all the single motifs and many of the overall patterns in the extant manuscripts are drawn and painted in ink, gold, and colors on parchment, and they reflect the usual variety of contemporary Qurʾāns. Faithful to evolutions in Islamic art, the earlier illuminations depict simple ivy scrolls, grids of round or lozenge-shaped cells with one leaf inside, or large interlacings of Late Antique origins. The later examples consist of more elaborate, varied and even eccentric motifs, typical of the floriated Islamic styles. The early examples are almost monochromatic, in shades of gold, ochre and sepia, and reflect the Abbasid taste as, for example, in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, the Mosque of Three Doors in Kairouan, or the Mosque of Ibn Ṭulūn. In some cases, small touches of red, blue and green follow the style of illuminated ninth- and early tenth-century Qurʾāns, while the full page compositions in both Qurʾāns and Bibles recall the designs of Coptic bindings. These are considered by scholars as a source of influence for the art of the book in North Africa, Spain and even North England.[13]

In the later Bibles of our group, the chromatic effect is richer, the sinuous palmettes shine on a dark blue ground, vegetal scrolls sprout from cornucopias,[14] as in a painted Fatimid wooden beam in Al-Aqṣā mosque,[15] or in the illuminated Qurʾān of Ibn al-Bawwāb. Hellenistic reminiscences of naturalistic movement in plants are intensified in this example by some light brown shading, which creates a three-dimensional feeling. This style reflects the evolution of Hellenistically inclined Fatimid art toward a multi-dimensional relief, a flowing movement, and a certain naturalism.

What constitutes a real difference between the Bibles and the Qurʾāns of this period is the inclusion of architectural motives. One reason for this is the equation made by the exegetes between the Sanctuary and the Books of the Law, hence a conceptual and philological visualization of the book as a building. The *Tōrah* – the teaching of the Lord – is often described as a monument, whose roof is supported by columns and pillars (*ṭūr* or *ʿamūd*), or by bases/roots (*uṣūl*), its chapters are gates (*shaʿar*), and its index – a key (*mafteaḥ*). A grammatical essay in poetic form that appears at the end of a few Bibles[16] suggests a comparison of the three parts of the Holy Scriptures with the tripartite division of the Temple: the courtyard, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies. In another metaphoric description (by Abraham Ibn Ezra):

> . . . the guardians of the walls of the Sanctuary, founded by the hands of our God, which no stranger was ever able to destroy. By 'Sanctuary' the Holy Scripture is meant. They [the masoretes] counted the people [i.e. the words] of the Sanctuary, consisting of from two to eleven [letters] in order to prevent a stranger from approaching the gates of righteousness.[17]

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jews regarded the teaching of the Lord as a way to salvation, when a new, apocalyptic Temple would be built in freed Zion. This would be the end of the Diaspora, an era of national

and spiritual liberation. These Messianic expectations, and the identification of the Book with the Temple are expressed in these drawings of the Temple and its implements. Similar representations already existed in wall paintings and the floor mosaics of Late Antique and Byzantine synagogues, but an unexplained gap of five centuries separates them from the tenth-century Bibles. It is possible that illustrations of the Temple in some early Christian Bibles testify to a missing link with now lost Hebrew manuscripts.[18]

In the Late Antique examples, the Temple is schematically arranged on a vertical axis, from the outer gate at the foot, to the Holy of Holies with the Tables of the Law in the upper part, and the *menōrah*, the symbolic light, in the middle. In the same composition, a gabled roof creates the impression of a frontal view, as if a façade or an elevation of the building is depicted. A double view also characterizes a composition in a Bible from 929, where the Temple is shown as a gabled façade.[19] In another codex, stylistically slightly later, the enclosure of the messianic Temple is drawn as a ground plan of a court within a court, a concentric layout with the Tables of the Law in the center.[20] The contours as well as the geometrical decoration of the gate are made of miniature letters, a choice of verses from the book of Psalms, almost all of which glorify the *Tōrah*, its value, the obligation to keep and follow it, and the benefits in doing so. The choice made by the artist-grammarian, which shows that for him the Temple and the Book are one and the same thing, explains the depiction of architecture in the *Tōrah*.

The only verses in this composition that do not refer to the *Tōrah* are in the triangle on top of the building, and in the upper corners, beside the spandrels. These verses, at the outer and upper points of the compositional space, speak of God Himself. The triangle at the top reads: "God in Zion is Great, He is above all the nations. Blessed is God, the God of Israel." Thus the placement of the texts creates a hierarchic order, both architectural and compositional, which reappears in many of the illuminations.

A page from a sumptuous codex in the Karaite synagogue of Old Cairo shows that not only full page illuminations can depict architecture.[21] Every page can become a monument, when the masorah in micrography depicts roofs above the columns of the text. An examination of the complete manuscript reveals a surprising variety of motifs, many of which are architectural. On the borders of a few pages groups of small domed buildings in a typical Fatimid style are drawn around the main text. Since the text on these pages is about traveling, the architectural images in micrography are conceived as a road map with habitations, shrines and domed mausolea. One example, in Genesis 35, tells of Jacob's arrival at Beth-El, where he erected an altar to God (Beth-El in Hebrew means "the House of the Lord"). The small domed buildings in the border are composed of sentences describing the journey and the shrine. On the following page, the micrography of similar monuments speaks of the burial of Isaac and the encampment of Jacob, which may have inspired the inclusion of mausolea into the architectural repertory. Such an association is further demonstrated in the full

page illumination at the end of Genesis, where a large lamp is seen hanging above an altar or a cenotaph within a domed pavilion. The last verse of Genesis tells about Joseph's embalmment and burial in a coffin in Egypt.

An iconographic attitude can be seen already in the earliest dated Bible, where the first Song of Moses is partly framed by abstract human figures. Although depicted without faces or other realistic features, these figures resemble the well-known Fatimid dancer reliefs and luster-ware drawings. That such figurative art could be tolerated within a Jewish religious context, we see also in a carved wooden door of obvious Fatimid origin, from a Cairo synagogue.[22] A typical dancer remains in the center of one of the carved compartments, although defaced. The human figures in the Bible, then, can be interpreted either as the women dancing after the safe passage of the Children of Israel through the Red Sea, or as people running in an effort to cross the sea.

The tendency to iconographic illustration suggested here is reinforced by other manuscripts, such as the one in Tbilisi.[23] Small drawings that contain a number of verses and do not overrun the width of a column terminate every book in the codex, and others serve as titles. The composition at the end of Leviticus, showing a circle over a triangle, follows immediately after the words: "These are the commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai." It seems, then, that the circle represents the Light of the Lord, the triangle the mountain, as in Christian depictions of the lamb of God on a mountain. On the same page, the fourth book, Numbers, starts with the words "And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the taber-nacle of the congregation . . ." This is preceded by a schematic drawing of a gate or a section of the tent, with what seems to be a lamp hanging from the ceiling.

Although illumination based on architecture is not known in Qur'āns con-temporary with these Bibles, it however appears in some earlier ones. Noteworthy in particular is the famous Qur'ān from Sanʿa, with a double composition of mosques.[24] In a few later manuscripts, all of them from Egypt, a decorative arcade appears over certain title bands.[25] This style of illumination disappeared during the ninth century, perhaps as a result of the heated debate about the nature of the eternal Word of God and the archetypal Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*). But a "tree of life" within an arch in a few Qur'āns shows a great resemblance to at least one of the later Bibles, thus demonstrating a possible source of influence.[26]

The debate about the nature of the Qur'ān was only a part of the growing schism between the Sunnite and Shiʿite theological and cosmological systems, which resulted, among others, in an evolution of greater abstraction in the arts of the Islamic Mashriq.[27] Baghdad, under growing Sunni opposition to the Shiʿa, developed a non-iconographic art, while in Egypt and the Islamic Maghreb, where local styles emerged under the Umayyads of Spain and the Fatimids, Hellenistic and Neo-Platonic elements took hold of the arts, the cosmological systems, and the philosophical reasoning.[28] In spite of this, the tenth- and eleventh-century Qur'āns from Egypt do not contain any architectural motifs,

perhaps because the copyists were alienated from the now extinct tradition. Besides, since the individual Qurʾāns were said to represent the archetypal book in heaven, architectural connotations do not suit their nature.

The illuminated Hebrew Bibles, although making iconographical use of architectural motifs, also reveal a tendency towards abstraction. A comparison between two compositions, one from the codex in Old Cairo, the other from St. Petersburg, shows the two styles. The St. Petersburg Bible is dated to 1008 CE, the Cairo codex is assigned to the tenth century, and a few of the full page compositions are almost identical.[29] But while the architectural depictions in the Cairo manuscript are quite recognizable as such, their compatibles in St. Petersburg are totally abstract. In fact, without the aid of the Cairo compositions, we would have no clue to their meanings. This observation is very important to our analysis, because depictions of architecture necessarily contain concepts of space and a sense of directions. In a building there are always the concepts of up, down, right and left, in and out, and these are divided into hierarchic orders of upper and lower, inner and outer. These concepts are doubled and strengthened in pictorial depictions of architecture due to the viewer's natural tendency to attribute directions to the picture itself. Therefore, an abstract composition which originates from a depiction of architecture contains the concepts of space and the sense of directions even after the architectural identification has been effaced. The abstract composition thus becomes a pure cosmic representation, a sort of *mandala*.

The structure depicted here represents the *Tōrah* between two lamps inside a temple, which has a lower zone – perhaps a gate, an internal space and a roof topped by lozenges. The intervals in the roof cresting, as in the crenellations of Islamic architecture, create an interplay and a reciprocal movement between themselves and the sky, suggesting a sense of elevation from the solid line of the earth to the endless space of heaven. As in the illustrations of the other Bibles, the arrow-like shapes of all the architectural components reinforce the sense of opposition between below and above. In an outstanding example of this opposition,[30] a realistically depicted façade rests on unrealistic, arrow-like bases, that point down so as to enhance the sense of direction. Moreover, the step-like micrographic decoration under the arch, which seems to be inspired by brick architecture, contains a masoretic variation of the verb "to descend". In the center, the scribe inserted references to God's descent upon His people, or upon Mount Sinai, where up and down, heaven and earth, came to a meeting point.

Having interpreted these Bible compositions as cosmic structures, some resemblance to contemporary Christian painting from Spain becomes apparent. In the illumination from the St. Petersburg codex, the cross in the center recalls the tenth-century variations of the theme of the Cross of Victory.[31] The alpha and omega that hang on either side of the cross, recall the structure of the *Tōrah*-Temple from the Cairo codex, with the lamps hanging at its sides. The motif in the center of the Temple is of course not the Christian cross, but a combination of four arrows directed to a focal point. The four arrows represent the four directions, in the same way that a six-point star represents the rose of the winds.

In another composition from the St. Petersburg Bible a six-pointed star replaces the four arrows in the center.[32] This composition is the purely abstract equivalent of the large figurative rose of the winds in a Christian *Biblia Sacra*, copied in León in 920 CE,[33] in combination with a typical Spanish Alpha.[34] Based on this comparison, the frequently depicted six-point stars in the Hebrew Bibles seem to be more than a decorative device. Moreover, the six-point star appears constantly within and around the inscriptions engraved on Islamic tombstones in Egypt already in the ninth century.[35] In mosque context it appears only in the twelfth century, in the *miḥrāb* of Sayidda Ruqāyya in Cairo, where each of the six sides of the star is made of the name Muḥammad. In this form it is repeated later in Anatolian and Iranian mosques, in the center of the large dome, where Christ is depicted in Byzantine churches.[36]

Now, one of the characteristics of an interlace in a form of a star, which fits it to represent the movements of the spheres and assume a cosmic role, is the impression it gives of unending movement. In other illuminated pages from the St. Petersburg codex, this impression is reinforced by the fact that the star is drawn with a slight off-axis inclination.[37] Moreover, the inscription inside may be inclined in the other direction, and the protruding form at the top is drawn off center. These irregularities do not betray the uncertainty of an untrained artist, for they reappear consistently in all the compositions of this category.[38] This example, in fact, reminds us of typical, though later, Kabbalistic representations of the systems of emanations. A similar interpretation may be possible here, but we can not at present prove that such cosmological concepts and symbols may be connected with any tenth-century Jewish community. Instead, another important aspect of these drawings, is their role as amulets that represent and transmit eternal bliss.

Many representations of gates close the books of the Pentateuch, the gates of the Law which separate or give access to a higher space (Fig. 13.1)[39] We have already seen that the words inscribed in the upper zone generally refer to God and His promise to His people in Zion. The arch is usually made up of verses speaking of the *Tōrah*, and the lower parts and outer extensions are often composed of blessings and promises of bliss. Many of these structures are pierced by a vertical line or object which connects the lowest and uppermost points of the composition. This column, an abstraction of the form and the concept of the "tree of life," can be seen as representing a message transmitted from heaven to this world, an intervention, a blessing, a *barakah*.

This idea is corroborated by the fact that more than one such composition, mostly in the colophon, contains a masoretic combination of the verb berech – to bless. In one case, a dedication to a patron named *Mevorach*, which means "the blessed one", could be the reason for choosing this particular verb as a common denominator for the composition.[40] But, as the same verb appears in many other manuscripts, not necessarily connected with the same patron, we may conclude that the blessing and not the individual patron is the subject of the composition. The declinations of the verb, as in this case, may follow a descending line, in which

Figure 13.1 Illuminated page in a bible copied in Cairo in 1008 CE. St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B, 19a, fol. 476v. Photograph by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research, with the collaboration of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center. Courtesy Russian National Library (Saltykov-Shchedrin)

the inscription in the upper lozenge reads "I bless them", in the middle lozenge "My blessing", and in the lower one "he will be blessed from Your blessing." The order of the declinations is alphabetical; their repeating arrangement on a descending line suggests a hierarchical conception of the illuminated space.

A rather remote analogy to these compositions may be found in the magical nature of the two last *sūras* of the Qur'ān. In a non-Qur'ānic context, the protecting hand – *khamsa* – drawn within an arch on a Fatimid ceramic, shows that formal parallels to the Bible illuminations were known in Fatimid Egypt.[41] Furthermore, compositions of a "tree of life," a source of light, or a written message

of a similar content, all within arches, are quite common in religious architecture, for example in the *miḥrāb*, and even more so on gravestones and prayer rugs.

It is not possible, however, to explore such contacts in this short paper. It is also not possible to describe other formal elements and meanings in this group of manuscripts, let alone the important questions of the historical and the cultural context. We have pointed out some formal and conceptual contacts between the art of the Hebrew manuscripts and those of the Muslims and the Christian churches under Muslim rule. Similarities between art forms of Egypt and the Levant and those of Spain are not surprising if one thinks of the circulation of people and artefacts, and the existence of wealthy communities in several North African towns. The lavish Cairo Pentateuch, so different in style from the other Bibles and yet connected with them, may reveal a North African source of inspiration. A full-page illumination at the beginning of Leviticus depicts a section of a monument, with three horseshoe arches (Fig. 13.2).[42] Series of such arches

Figure 13.2   Illumination at the beginning of Leviticus in a complete Pentateuch in the Karaite synagogue of Old Cairo. Picture from Rachel Milstein, "Hebrew Book Illumination in the Fatimid Era," in Marianne Barrucand (ed.), *L'Égypte fatimide: son art et son histoire* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999), p. 440, fig. 15. © Jewish National Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

are known in the Muslim architecture of Spain and North Africa, as the archeological findings in the tenth-century town of Sedrata, south of Algiers can testify.[43] The closest parallel, however, is the Great Mosque of Kairouan, especially the stone and ceramic tiles with their floral motifs that look almost identical to the surface decoration of all the architectural drawings in the Cairo codex.[44] In fact, every structural and decorative element of the Great Mosque can be found in one or more of the Bibles, and this in addition to the affinity between some Bibles and the Qurʾān bindings found in the Mosque, and the repertory of motifs that decorate the façade of the Mosque of Three Doors, in the same town.

I may conclude by saying that during the tenth and eleventh centuries a certain visual language was known and used for iconographical purposes by believers of the three monotheistic religions between Palestine and Spain. The motifs, compositional schemes, and the degree of abstraction differ from one group to another, according to their particular theological and cosmological systems. A comparative study of their art may not only make us better understand the works, but reveal new dimensions of their written texts, and shed light on the passage of cultural trends between East and West.

Notes

1   The Bibles in the Karaite Synagogue of Old Cairo were described by Richard Gottheil, "Some Hebrew Manuscripts in Cairo," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 17 (1905): 609–55. One of the illuminated manuscripts, dated by a colophon to 894/5, is the subject of an unpublished Ph.D. thesis by Leila R. Avrin, "The Illuminations in the Moshe Ben-Asher Codex of 895 C.E.," University of Michigan, 1974. Recent research dates this Bible to the eleventh century. See Malachi Beit-Arié, C. Sirat, and M. Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis Litteris Extrati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes, Tome I: jusqu'à 1020* (Paris, CNRS, Institut de Recherches et d'Histoire des Textes; Jérusalem, Académie Nationale des Sciences et des Lettres d'Israël, 1997), pp. 25–39, pls. 1–5.

2   Extensive bibliographies on the earliest Bibles in the various collections can be found in L. Avrin's dissertation and in Beit-Arié, Sirat and Glatzer *Codices Hebraicis*. Some of the St. Petersburg Bibles are briefly discussed in Bezalel Narkiss' Introduction and "New Descriptions" to the reprint of Baron David Günzburg and Vladimir Stassof, *Illuminations from Hebrew Bibles of Leningrad* (Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1990). More specific publications are noted below, with reference to individual manuscripts.

3   See Narkiss' Introduction to *Illuminations from Hebrew Bibles of Leningrad*, pp. 18–31.

4   On this sect, s.v. "Karaites", *Encyclopedia Judaica*. On the possible Karaite origins of the early illuminated Bibles, and the identification of their scribes, see Avrin, "The Illuminations in the Moshe Ben-Asher Codex of 895 C.E.," p. 3–18, 76–80, 201–13.

5 An example of an illuminated Bible in Arabic letters is in London, BL. Or. 2540. Repr. In Narkiss' Introduction to *Illuminations from Hebrew Bibles of Leningrad*, fig. 21.

6 An example of this arrangement is a page in St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 1575.

7 St. Petersburg, NLR. Firk. Hebr. II. B. 17, fol. 5v. For a description of this manuscript, see Narkiss' Introduction to *Illuminations from Hebrew Bibles of Leningrad*, pp. 47–9; Beit-Arié, Sirat, and Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis*, pp. 53–64.

8 On the development of Qurʾān illuminations, see Martin Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination* (London, World of Islam Festival Trust, 1976); François Déroche, *Catalogue des manuscrits musulmans, Tome I, l: Les manuscrits du Coran aux origines de la calligraphie coranique* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1983); Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Illuminated. A Handlist of the Korans in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin, 1967); B. Moritz (ed.), *Arabic Palaeography: A Collection of Arabic Texts from the 1st Century of the Hidjra till the Year 1000* (Cairo, Khedival Library, 1905); David James, *Qur'ans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library* (London, World of Islam Festival Trust, 1980); Marilyn Jenkins, "A Vocabulary of Umayyad Ornament," in *Maṣāḥif Ṣanʿā: A Catalogue of an Exhibition* (Kuwait, Dār al-Athār al-Islāmiyya, n.d.), pp. 17–23; François Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition. Qur'ans of the 8th to 10th Centuries AD.* (London. Nour Foundation. Nasser, D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, vol. 1, 1992).

9 On this development in the Islamic art of the book, see Yasser Tabbaa, "The Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part I, Qurʾānic Calligraphy," *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1991): 119–43; Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Scroll – Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture. Topkapi Palace Museum Library MS H. 1956* (Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995), pp. 92–108. On the illuminations in the Qurʾān of Ibn al-Bawwāb, see David S. Rice, *The Unique Ibn al-Bawwāb* Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, 1955).

10 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Masorah"; Avrin, *The Illuminations in the Moshe Ben-Asher Codex*, pp. 65–75; Joseph Gutmann, "Masorah Figurata: the Origins and Development of a Jewish Art Form," in *Estudios Masoreticos (V Congreso de la IOMS) dedicados a Harry M. Orlinsky*, ed. Emilia Fernández Tejero (Madrid, Instituto "Arias Montano", 1983), pp. 49–62.

11 St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 262, fol. 3v.

12 In the colophon of the complete Bible in St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B.19a, the scribe points out that he "engraved" or "inscribed" the codex, and this probably means that he added the vocalization and the masorah to the main text. See Avrin, *The Illuminations in the Moshe Ben-Asher Codex*, p. 171. For more about this codex, see Beit-Arié, Sirat, and Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis*, pp. 114–31, pls. 42–53.

13 Several compositions that recall Coptic bindings illuminate the Ben-Asher codex in the Karaite synagogue of Old Cairo (Gottheil 34), the subject of L. Avrin's dissertation. See pls. 1, 2, 3, and 7 in her study, with a discussion of the origins, and comparisons with contemporary Qurʾāns, on pp. 104–12. The influence of Coptic bindings on Islamic art is demonstrated in Theodore C. Petersen, "Early Islamic Bookbindings and Their Coptic Relations," *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954): 42–64; and the same influence on Spanish manuscripts is studied in Mireille Mentré, *La*

Peinture mozarabe (Paris, 1995), 104–7. The most important group of related Islamic bookbindings is described in Georges Marçais and Louis Poinssot, *Objets kairouanais, IXᵉ au XIIIᵉ siècles* (Tunis, 1948); and a tenth-century Qurʾān with a motif that appears in all the above-mentioned groups is reproduced in D. James, *Qurʾans and Bindings*, no. 8, Ms. 1406.

14   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 49, fol. 2v.

15   Repr. in R. W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque* (Jerusalem, 1949), p. 82, tie-beam E 4.

16   For example, in St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 19a. See Avrin, "The Illuminations in the Moshe Ben-Asher Codex of 895 C.E.," pp. 37, 184.

17   Naftali Wieder, "Sanctuary as a Metaphor for Scripture," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 8 (1957): 165–75.

18   For a thorough discussion of the Temple, the meanings of its various parts, and their artistic representations, see Elisabeth Revel-Neher, *L'Arche d'alliance dans l'art juif et chrétien du second au dixième siècles* (Paris, 1984), especially pp. 24–31, 120. On the continuation and development of the Jewish iconography of the Temple in Christian art, see Stanley Ferber, "The Temple of Solomon in Early Christian and Byzantine Art," in *The Temple of Solomon: Archaeological Fact and Medieval Tradition in Christian and Jewish Art*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Missoula, Mont. 1976), pp. 21–43; Bianca Kühnel, "Jewish Symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle and Christian Symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the Heavenly Tabernacle," *Jewish Art* 12/13 (1986–87): 147–68.

19   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 17, See note 7.

20   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 49, fol. 2v. For a discussion of the symbolic meaning of this layout, see Yaffa Levy, "Ezekiel's Plan in an Early Karaite Bible," *Jewish Art* 19–20 (1993/4): 68–83. The author identifies the two tables in the center as the doors of the Holy of Holies, but their form, like the traditional *tabula ansata*, recalls the table of the Law in the depiction of the Temple. On this motif in the Bible illuminations and its sources, see Avrin, "The Illuminations in the Moshe Ben-Asher Codex of 895 C.E.," pp. 12–21.

21   In the Karaite synagogue of Old Cairo, Gottheil no. 18.

22   Jerusalem, The Israel Museum.

23   Tbilisi, Academy of Sciences, Institute of Manuscripts, Hebr. 3. A description of this manuscript, by G. V. Tsereteli, is in *Philologia Orientalis* 1 (1969): 21–39.

24   Repr. in Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer, "Architekturbilder im Koran. Eine Prachthandschrift der Umayyadenzeit aus dem Yemen," *Pantheon* 45 (1987): 4–20.

25   After Moritz, *Arabic Palaeography*, pl. 5.

26   A codex from ca. 1000 in the Karaite synagogue of Old Cairo, Gottheil no. 17.

27   Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Scroll*. pp. 42–109.

28   Recent publications on Fatimid thinking are Paul E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiʾism. The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge, 1993); Daniel De Smet, *La quiétude de l'intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l'œuvre de Hamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī* (Louvain, 1995); Heinz Halm, *The Fatimids and Their Tradition of Learning* (London, Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997).

29   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 19a, fol. 475v; Ms. Gottheil 18 in the Karaite synagogue of Old Cairo. About these two Bibles, see notes 11 and 20.

30   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 1548, p. 4. An apparently false colophon dates these fragments to 922, but even if this date is inauthentic, the codex can safely be attributed to the tenth, or at latest the beginning of the eleventh century. See Beit-Arié, Sirat, and Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis*, p. 13.

31   Examples of such variations are reproduced in Mentré, *La Peinture mozarabe*, pp. 56–7.

32   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 19a, fol. 476v.

33   *Biblia Sacra* from the Kingdom of León (Abellar), now in the possession of the Cathedral of León, no. 6, fol. 3r. Repr. in Mentré, *La Peinture mozarabe*, p. 72, ill. 30.

34   For example, a large *Alpha* in an Antiphonaire from León, León Cathedral, no. 8, fol. 4v, repr. in Mentré, *La Peinture mozarabe*, p. 103, ill. 62.

35   The earliest known tombstone with this motif, from the year 801, is reproduced in Hassan Hawary and Rached Hussein, *Catalogue Général du Musée Arabe du Caire. Stèles Funéraires*, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1932), no. 1506/687, pl. IV.

36   More about the evolution of this symbol, in Rachel Milstein, *King Solomon's Seal* (Jerusalem, Tower of David Museum, 1995), pp. 36–46.

37   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 19a, fol. 419r.

38   Similar off-centered stars appear in the same Bible, fol. 490r, and in St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. I. C. 5.

39   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 19a, fol. 477r.

40   St. Petersburg, NLR, Firk. Hebr. II. B. 262, fol. 2r.

41   After a reproduction from Richard Ettinghausen, "Notes on the Lusterware of Spain," *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954): 133–56, fig. 33.

42   In the Karaite synagogue of Old Cairo, Gottheil 18.

43   Marguerite van Berchem, "Sedrata. Un chapitre nouveau de l'histoire de l'art musulman. Campagnes de 1951 et 1952." *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954): 157–74. Fig. 12 shows a series of arches filled with floral motives, quite similar to those of the Cairo Bible.

44   Good line drawings of the decorations in the Great Mosque illustrate the article by Louise W. Boothe, 'The Great Mosque of Qairawan," *Oriental Art* 16 (1970): 321–36. See in particular figs. 7 and 16. Old reproductions of the tiles, in Georges Marçais, *Les faïences à reflets métalliques de la Grande Mosquée de Kairouan* (Paris, 1928).

14

An Icon at Mt. Sinai and Christian Painting in Muslim Egypt during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

Robert S. Nelson

Since World War II, one of the most significant developments in the study of medieval art has been the identification of schools of Crusader painting in the Holy Land. The initial impetus for research came from H. Buchthal's pioneering study, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1957), in which he attributed a number of manuscripts to Jerusalem and Acre in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Developing and extending Buchthal's work, others in recent years have broadened our knowledge of Crusader art. J. Folda[1] has identified a group of French Gothic manuscripts, painted at Acre in the later thirteenth century, and in Constantinople C. L. Striker and Y. D. Kuban have discovered a fragmentary cycle of the life of Saint Francis in the style of the famous Arsenal Bible, a product of an Acre workshop, according to Buchthal.[2] Furthermore, in a series of fundamental papers, K. Weitzmann has revealed the existence of fascinating Crusader icons painted in mixtures of French, Italian, and Byzantine styles, and doubtless he will present more important panels in his final publication of the icons on Mt. Sinai.[3] This series of astute discoveries has led to the establishment of a new field of medieval art that will continue to help solve many problems in the history of painting in the Levant.

If much attention lately has been directed toward understanding the nature of Crusader art, less concern has been given to exploring the painting of native communities that were in the Near East before and after the Crusades. Here the

problems are numerous. Often a symbiotic relationship existed between the art of local Christian minorities and that of the Muslim majority, and Byzantium continued to exert a strong artistic influence in spite of the deterioration of its political fortunes. One example of such art-historical intricacies is a Sinai icon of the enthroned Christ, heretofore attributed to a Crusader artist (Figure 14.1). The present article will first propose a rather different attribution and then discuss the style of the panel within the larger context of Christian painting in

Figure 14.1   Icon of Christ enthroned, Mt. Sinai (164 mm × 286 mm). University of Michigan, Sinai Archive. Reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan–Princeton–Alexandria Expedition to Mt. Sinai

Syria and Egypt during the high Middle Ages. Measuring only $164 \times 286\,\text{mm}$,[4] this small, narrow icon depicts Christ seated on a bench and holding an open, uninscribed codex in his left hand, while he blesses with his right hand. His bare feet rest on a footstool painted in an awkward perspective, and a large halo encircles his head. To either side are written the abbreviated Greek words for Jesus Christ, and the Greek letters sigma and omicron can still be read on the arms of his cross nimbus. The third letter at the left is now effaced, and the meaning of the inscription thereby obscured.[5]

In 1966 Weitzmann first published the panel, in his seminal study, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," and termed it the earliest icon in a Western style at Mt. Sinai. He compared Christ's soft, curvilinear drapery to that of an Evangelist in a Northern French book of 1146 from the Abbey of Liessies and Christ's face to that of Jesus in the Shaftesbury Psalter, an English manuscript from about the same period, and concluded that the painter of the icon came from one or the other side of the Channel. Moreover, he thought that the calm dignity of Christ here was owed to the influence of Byzantine art, noting that even a small detail like the panel of rinceaux on the front of the throne behind the legs of Jesus resembles the ornament of Byzantine manuscripts, and so he judged that the artist must have worked in the Holy Land under Byzantine influence and most probably in Jerusalem.[6] In his survey of Crusader painting and sculpture in the Holy Land, J. Folda accepted Weitzmann's arguments, although for Folda the face of Christ had a pronounced Levantine character.[7] W. Grape in his dissertation of 1973 also saw connections between the icon and Near Eastern painting and used this evidence to argue for the influence in the region of Romanesque art transmitted through Crusader painting.[8] Recently A. Weyl Carr considered the icon briefly in a lecture delivered at a stimulating symposium on the Crusades, which took place in Michigan in the spring of 1981. She specifically compared the head of Christ to types found in the famous Schefer Maqāmāt of al-Harīrī of 1237 in Paris (Bibl. Nat. arabe 5847) and suggested that the icon might date later than Weitzmann had supposed.

According to these four interpretations, the icon is a work of Crusader art, even though each author found certain traits that failed to fit the expected pattern. For instance, Weitzmann correctly perceived the icon to be an unicum, in describing it as an example of a Crusader style of which no other examples are preserved. In contrast, he has been able to assemble groups of several related Sinai icons in other styles. Folda recognized the affinity of the facial type to that in the Shaftesbury manuscript, but he also saw a Near Eastern quality in the face of Christ. Grape thought that the mid-twelfth-century icon was so similar to examples in a Coptic-Arabic manuscript of 1250 that it was surprising that the two were separated by an interval of a hundred years. The proposal of Weyl Carr would date the icon well into the thirteenth century and thus long after French and English artists had abandoned the version of Romanesque drapery that Weitzmann cited in order to attribute the icon to a Western artist in the first place.

In fact, the contradictions and complexities of attribution do not stop here. The Shaftesbury Psalter has analogous facial types but lacks the Romanesque "damp-fold" drapery seen in the cited French comparison, or in other English manuscripts of the period. According to Kaufmann, the frontal facial type with oblong shape and long drooping moustache is difficult to parallel in English art of the period.[9] The motif, then, is rare, and definitely not a commonplace element that might have been easily exported to the East. The French Gospel Book, written for the Abbey of Liessies in 1146 and destroyed during World War II except for two miniatures, contained an image of Christ with related features, except that the moustache is not as long and prominent.[10] This figure of the enthroned Christ, placed in the shaft of the initial I at the beginning of the Gospel of John, relates typologically to the Sinai icon, for Jesus holds a book with his left hand and blesses with his right hand. Stylistically, though, the figure has little in common with the panel painting. In the miniature, dynamic folds of drapery sweep across the body and animate an otherwise sedate pose. Like the Evangelist John from the Gospel Book, Christ has a large tear-shaped area on one knee. This form is characteristic of English Romanesque manuscripts, such as the Lambeth Bible, and has nothing in common with the quiet, geometrically pure shape on the right knee of the Christ on the Sinai panel.[11]

In other English or French illumination of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there is no throne comparable to Christ's on the icon. Although the backless throne is a ubiquitous element throughout medieval Christian art, thrones represented in English and French miniatures lack the panel of rinceaux in the front. In this area Western artists usually preferred to depict various assemblages of arches and niches, instead of this two-dimensional arabesque.[12] No similar throne appears in Crusader art,[13] and one might contrast the object in question with the jewel-bedecked throne of Christ in a thirteenth-century icon of the Deesis and saints at Mt. Sinai.[14] Moreover, a throne with a panel of arabesque is also foreign to Byzantium, where, for the most part, painters represent richly adorned thrones with square or turned legs, in imitation of Early Christian designs and ultimately of Roman furniture.[15] Occasionally in East and West one encounters another type with various figures or scenes shown on panels of the front or side of a throne,[16] but still such decoration differs from the large rectangle of scrollwork on the Sinai icon.

Moreover, neither the drapery style nor the facial type closely resembles either Byzantine or Crusader art of the twelfth or thirteenth century. Small details, like the position of Christ's hand, are also troubling. On the icon the hand is bent back slightly to the left, an awkward pose that is not used on other Crusader or Byzantine icons of Christ blessing.[17] A case in point is the aforementioned icon of the Deesis and saints. Here the enthroned Christ blesses and tilts his right hand to our right. This is often the case in Western images of the blessing Christ, but some Italian Romanesque panels do show Jesus holding his right hand bent back to our left. There, however, the position of the fingers is different, and otherwise these Italian panels bear no stylistic relation to the Sinai painting.[18]

Many of these singular elements of the Sinai panel may be explained if the icon is compared to a richly illustrated Coptic-Arabic Gospel Book in the library of the Institut Catholique in Paris (Figure 14.2). It and its companion volume of the Epistles in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, Ms. 94, were written in 1249/50 by the monk and priest Gabriel. J. Leroy has described the manuscript in detail in his fundamental study of Coptic illumination and has assigned the volumes to Cairo.[19] On the illuminated pages of this New Testament Christ has a short, thin beard, a small drooping moustache, and a tuft of dark hair beneath his lower lip, the same features found on the icon. That these are stylistic rather than iconographical traits is shown by the full-page miniature of the Evangelist

Figure 14.2 Page from Coptic-Arabic Gospel Book with the Evangelist John, 1249/50. © Institut catholique de Paris, Bibliothèque de Fels, MS Copte-arabe 1, fol. 174v

Luke with the same style of beard and moustache. The feet of Jesus on the Sinai icon are bare and symmetrically splayed in front of the footstool, as if hanging freely in the air. The Evangelists (Figure 14.2) and Christ in the bilingual manuscript also do not wear sandals, and in several cases their bare feet seem suspended in space. On the icon Christ's right knee is thrust out to the side, and his feet are brought closer together. The pose is one favored by the illuminator of the manuscript, and he uses it twice for images of Christ.

Moreover, the icon and manuscript agree in the manner in which garments are rendered. In the figures of Christ of the icon and the miniature of the Ascension, a large oval fold dominates the right leg, and the two painters have tended to color the lower edges of folds, a common feature of the manuscript (Figure 14.2). In the icon, light or dark streaks of color radiate from the ends of an oval, as on the right leg, or in several areas of the chest. This, too, is a mannerism typifying the Coptic illuminator, who uses it on the arms and legs of Luke, the left foreleg of John (Figure 14.2), and, most comparable to the icon, on the seated figure of Jesus at the house of Simon, the scene at the upper left of fol. 110r. In the latter instance, the right thigh of Jesus is shown as a large oval with light and dark ends like the right foreleg of Christ on the icon.

Finally, the distinctive blessing gesture on the icon occurs as well in the illustrated New Testament. The group portrait of James, Peter, John, and Jude in the Cairo volume provides several examples of the act of blessing, and the young, beardless John holds his right hand before his chest in precisely the same cramped position, i.e., bent back to the left, as Christ assumes on the icon.[20] In the miniature of the Ascension, the hand of Jesus is only slightly less mannered. There Christ holds a blank book in the same way as he does on the Sinai icon. Thus the pose, drapery, and general facial type of the two figures closely correspond, and their only significant difference is the proportions of the upper body and the length of the hair. On the icon Jesus' torso is broader and his hair is thicker. The result is to make the figure portrayed on the panel more imposing and hieratic or simply iconic, a not inappropriate impression for an icon to create.

The peculiar type of throne depicted on the Sinai painting finds parallels in the Paris-Cairo codex and other Coptic manuscripts and can be considered to be Near Eastern. The panel of vine scrolls behind Christ's legs is virtually identical to the arabesque decorating the low bench of Mark in the Paris Gospels. Here the ornament is more obvious, because the throne extends farther to the left of the Evangelist. Such furniture appears as well in several other miniatures, such as the scene of Herod and the Magi at the upper left of fol. 4v,[21] and is thus a telling indication of the close affinities between the manuscript and icon. However, the type of furniture shown here also belongs to the larger context of Coptic art. In the earlier and even more richly illustrated Gospel Book in Paris, Bibl. Nat. copte 13, Mary and the infant child sit on a backless throne that also has a panel of arabesques on the front. At the beginning of copte 13, Christ sits in a large chair adorned with several panels on the sides and front.[22]

To a certain degree, such decoration probably reflects contemporary tastes and craft practices in medieval Egypt, a country famed for its intricately carved panels of wood designed to be set into many different objects. Wooden plaques like the circular pattern on the upper part of the throne of fol. 2v of copte 13,[23] or the S-shaped motifs on the other thrones,[24] actually survive. Coptic artists in particular were accustomed to working with wood, and they decorated the iconostasis, pulpit, and other parts of their churches with carved wood in the varying styles of the dominant artistic culture of Egypt, Islamic art.[25] Imitations of several kinds of Coptic-Islamic woodwork can be seen, as well, in other Coptic manuscripts and frescoes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[26] In the case of the thrones depicted in the manuscript of 1249/50 and the Sinai icon, the arabesque panel probably represents an imitation of actual Egyptian furniture decorated with panels of intricately carved wood, such as is seen in a twelfth-century plaque in Cairo.[27] A second possible model for the painter would have been ivory inlay, and Coptic examples of the latter technique survive in the tenth-century doors of the church of the Virgin at Dēr es Suriān.[28]

Because of the several points of comparison between the Coptic-Arabic New Testament of 1249/50 and the icon now at Mt. Sinai, it may be proposed that the panel should be attributed to an artist closely related to, or even identical with, the illuminator of the volumes in Paris and Cairo. The task of painting a small panel, measuring 286×164 mm, would scarcely have involved much adjustment for the painter of a manuscript with pages of a similar size, 245×175 mm.[29] The icon, then, should be dated to the mid-thirteenth, not the mid-twelfth century, and is Coptic, not Crusader. As such it is a rare example of an extant Coptic icon from the high Middle Ages. Although several icons are known from the sixth and seventh centuries, it is not until the fifteenth century and later that one finds other Coptic panels.[30]

Because so few contemporary icons are known, many details of the Sinai painting remain to be explained. For example, it is not known how the panel fits into the larger history of icon painting in the Levant in the thirteenth century, a particularly active period for Crusader icon production. If the style of the enthroned Christ better resembles the illustrations in a Coptic-Arabic Gospel Book from Egypt than those of a Latin Gospels from Northern France, this does not necessarily mean that there may not still be some sign of the impact of the Latins on the art of the region. Many issues must await the final publication of the corpus of icons from Mt. Sinai, at which time it will probably be possible to sort out the mixtures of artistic nationalities and to probe small details, such as the partly destroyed interlace decoration on the border of the icon. Although such angular interlace would be out of place in traditional Byzantine art, it does appear in thirteenth-century Crusader miniatures, as well as in contemporary Syriac illuminations; and interlace in general, if not this particular type, had long been used in Coptic manuscripts.[31] Thus the ultimate source for the icon's frame is moot.

Finally, because the Crusader attribution for the icon is not without merit, one must ask, why could there be any difficulty at all in distinguishing between the stylistic properties of the art of a small, declining religious group in Islamic Egypt and the burgeoning Romanesque art of Northern Europe? Perhaps one answer can be sought in their common denominator – Byzantium. In 1941, W. Koehler showed how Byzantine painting influenced the drapery style of Romanesque art and led to what he called the "damp fold," a term to describe the way fabric clings to the body in one area and piles up in deep folds in other places, while revealing the human form beneath.[32] Both the icon of Mt. Sinai and the French Gospel Book cited in comparison by Weitzmann display these "damp folds." Since Koehler's lecture, the history of the impact of this aspect of Byzantine art on Western Europe has been analyzed by others,[33] but the study of the influence of Byzantium on the East has received less attention. However, shortly before Koehler's paper appeared, H. Buchthal published an article on two Arabic manuscripts in Paris, Bibl. Nat. arabe 6094 and 3465, and pointed to their "Hellenistic" or Byzantine aspects, one of which was the soft drapery that flowed across the figure.[34]

Certain aspects of the figure style of MS 6094, a copy of the Māqāmat of al-Harīrī from 619H., 1222/23 AD,[35] could be described in the same terms as Romanesque illumination. For example, Abū Zaid, the old man half-standing and half-kneeling on the left side of the scene on fol. 124 (Figure 14.3) has the damp-fold design on his thigh and foreleg. A series of parallel catenary folds hang down from his arms in a manner that is analogous to the more crisply arranged "nested V-fold" of Romanesque art.[36] Different from Western art, however, is the lack of movement in this figure, one of the more active in the manuscript. Normally, the large ovoid folds blanket the body and arrest action, rather than enhancing it, so that there is no equivalent to the robust dynamism of the Evangelist John in the Gospel Book from Liessies.

Both the icon at Mt. Sinai and the Coptic-Arabic New Testament in Paris and Cairo have features in common with the two Arabic manuscripts published by Buchthal. The oval folds outlined by white lines and dark shading in the illustrations of the Paris Māqāmat (Figure 14.3) appear on the right leg of Christ on the icon. The illuminator of the bilingual codex occasionally uses the ovoid fold, as on the leg of Christ in the upper left corner of fol. 110r, but more often resorts to a series of parallel elliptical curves with dark shading at the bottom of the loop, as if some black liquid had collected there. The mannerism is clearly evident in the garments of Mark or Peter, and the catenary folds on the latter Apostle resemble those of the elderly man in the Māqāmat scene (Figure 14.3). In another miniature, the Muslim artist has embellished the tunic of the seated figure of the governor of Merv with smaller versions of the same decorative motif, but here the result is to reduce an originally illusionistic formula to a flat pattern, because the designs on the lower part of the garments have no basis in reality. The illuminator of the Coptic-Arabic codex also enlivened the legs of seated people, in the case of the Apostles at the Pentecost; but folds there echo the

Figure 14.3   Māqāmat illustration of al-Hariri showing Abū Zaid. Bibliothèque Natio-nale Arabe, Paris, MS arabe 6094, fol. 124r

contour of the leg and do not cut across it, as they do in the Māqāmat illustra-tion. Neither artist, however, liked to leave a large area of garment free from embellishment. Thus when the miniaturist of the New Testament came to depict the enthroned figure of Herod in the top left panel on fol. 4v, he subdivided the lower part of the garment into sections defined by darker folds. The result is illogical, if the original purpose of the damp fold is remembered. What formerly was a means of revealing the anatomical structure of a draped figure now serves to obscure that anatomy.

The painter of the other Paris manuscript, arabe 3465, an undated copy of the Fables of Bidpai, works in the same style, but his figures lack the exaggerated mannerisms and hardened or crystallized drapery designs of the miniatures of the Māqāmat. For this reason Buchthal dated arabe 3465 earlier than arabe 6094 of 1222, but attributed it to Syria also. As he noted, both share a common style of drapery, one based ultimately upon Byzantine sources.[37] The Paris-Cairo New Testament also deserves to be studied in this context, as certain aspects of its

illustrations compare even more closely to the Bidpai manuscript. For example, the artists of both rely on soft, flowing drapery rather than the frozen patterns of arabe 6094. The gentle curves of the extended leg of the seated king on the right side of fol. 23v resemble the large set of catenary lines running down the legs of Saint Peter. A closer comparison still is the depiction of the seated Bazūya at the left of another miniature in arabe 3465 and some of the Apostles at the Pentecost. Not only do these men sit in a similar Oriental manner, but their garments are decorated with parallel elliptical folds, especially on the legs.

These three books also share a common vocabulary of gesture, which has its ultimate origins in Byzantium, as Buchthal noted.[38] By 1250, the date of the Paris-Cairo codex, these formerly Byzantine elements have been absorbed and fused with contemporary references to form a syncretistic style that renders labels like Muslim or Christian useless in this context. The content of this bilingual text is Christian, but its style is non-denominational or Levantine. Thus Herod greets the Magi on their horses with gestures similar to those which the governor of Merv uses to converse with Abū Zaid, and both men sit in the same Eastern way and are attended by servants, who stand behind and hold a fan or banner. Abū Zaid walks with a cane that he appears to hold with his left hand and uses his right hand to point to the governor. In the Institut Catholique volume, the same pose is better understood in the scene of two blind men appearing before Jesus. The painter of the arabe 3465 also employs the gesturing hands to indicate dialogue, a centuries-old convention, but elsewhere he portrays people in non-classical poses, such as the semi-reclining position of an ascetic in one miniature (Figure 14.4). Apparently, the artist has adapted a Near Eastern custom, shown as well in a Baghdad manuscript of 1224,[39] and hence the attitude of the Evangelist John in the New Testament (Figure 14.2) probably has a similar origin.

One of the most common features of the two Arabic manuscripts in Paris is the use of architectural backgrounds, usually composed of arches and lintels. As Buchthal noted,[40] these serve to order compositions in the manner of Byzantine illumination. Although such architecture is less common in the narrative scenes of the New Testament, analogous forms are encountered. For example in the vignette of Christ and the man with dropsy, the right center panel on fol. 110r, curtains are tied to the sides of the frame, as they are in a miniature of the Bidpai text (Figure 14.4). Arcades and curtains are a standard element of the author portraits in the Christian manuscript, and the illuminator has taken pains to present ornate textiles and polylobed arches whose spandrels are adorned with rich arabesques (Fig. 14.2) in the style of contemporary architectural ornament in Cairo.[41] A related type of vine-scroll fills the spandrels of the cusped arch of fol. 20v in arabe 3465, and moreover two griffons confront each other across the arch here, as they do in the spandrels of the portrait of Luke in Paris.

Finally, a third Arabic manuscript now in Bologna may be associated with the style of the three preceding books. Presently in the Biblioteca Universitaria, cod. arab. 2954, the text consists of the Arabic translation of the *De Materia Medica* of Dioscorides and dates from 642 H./1244 AD.[42] The book contains a full-page

Figure 14.4 Kalila wa Dimnie manuscript illumination showing a reclining ascetic. Bibliothèque Nationale Arabe, Paris, MS arabe 3465, fol. 115v

miniature of three figures grouped together beneath an arch from which two curtains are suspended. A later hand has added the identifying labels of Dioscorides, Lukmān, and Aristotle. The ornate curtains tied to the flanking columns resemble those in the Paris Evangelist portraits. The shaded curves on the garments of the central figure recall the depictions of drapery in the Pentecost, but are closer to those in a Bidpai miniature. The Bologna Dioscorides may thus be linked with the two Arabic and one Coptic-Arabic codices in Paris, and it provides another confirmation that the style in question is a product of the first half of the thirteenth century. Paris arabe 6094 is dated 1222/3; Buchthal assigned arabe 3465 to a somewhat earlier period, or ca. 1200–20; the Bologna codex was written in 1244; and the Paris-Cairo new Testament in 1249/50.

In the first half of the thirteenth century, four centers of Arab illumination have so far been identified: Central-Southern Iraq or Baghdad, Northern Iraq or Mosul, Syria, and Morocco or Spain.[43] Of the four, Syria is the region that is least well defined; in contrast, the attributions to Mosul and the Magreb are

based upon documented manuscripts. Buchthal, who isolated the characteristics of the Baghdad school,[44] also initiated the Syrian attributions with his study of Paris arabe 6094 and 3465. Recognizing the impossibility of deciding their provenance definitely, he nevertheless proposed Syria, because, first, three architectural details in the miniatures could be compared to buildings of this region; second, the observed impact of Christian art on these illuminations suggested a region close to Byzantium and open to its influence; and, finally MS 3465 had certain affinities with the Coptic Gospel Book in Paris, Bibl. Nat. copte 13 of 1178/80. The latter, he thought, was inspired by Syriac illumination.[45] Others have generally followed his lead and have considered Syria to be the center of Byzantine influence on Arab painting.[46] Sometimes the Greek element there is indeed strong, as in the case of a manuscript of the sayings of ancient Greek sages or an Arabic copy of Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* of 1229.[47] The latter is reasonably well linked with Syria or Northern Mesopotamia, and its miniatures, fascinating copies of a Greek manuscript of perhaps the latter half of the tenth century, demonstrate the impact of Greek models in the area.

The style of its author portraits differs, however, from the figural miniatures of the two Arabic manuscripts in Paris, arabe 6094 or 3465, the Bologna Dioscorides, the Paris-Cairo New Testament or the Sinai icon, and thus the problem of the precise localization of these five objects remains at issue. Until conclusive evidence on these matters is forthcoming, it may be proposed that the attribution of this particular style should be broadened. Because the icon and the New Testament are most likely Egyptian products and because the earliest manuscript, Paris arabe 3465, does bear some relationship stylistically to Paris copte 13, written and illuminated at Damietta in the Nile Delta, the geographical parameters of the style should include Egypt as well as Syria.

In this regard, one last series of paintings in what might be called the Oriental "damp-fold" style needs to be considered – the frescoes in the church of the Virgin at Dēr es Suriān or the monastery of the Syrians in the Wādi Natrūn. Founded in the sixth century and sacked in 817, the monastery was restored by Syrians in the ninth century, and its church of the Virgin was richly decorated in the first third of the tenth century by the abbot Moses of Nisibis, about whom J. Leroy has written.[48] Syriac inscriptions on the elaborately inlaid haikal doors record that Moses made them and built the altar in 913/14, and the Syriac on the choir doors indicates that he completed them in 926/7. Because the richly carved stucco decoration of the sanctuary resembles Muslim styles of the ninth or tenth century, it has been suggested that this work too is to be credited to the Abbot. Likewise Evelyn-White suggested that the frescoes in the north and south semi-domes of the choir and in another semi-dome at the west of the nave belonged to the same period,[49] even though there is little evidence to connect the paintings with either the ivory inlay of the doors or the stucco of the sanctuary. In fact, Strzygowski observed that there is an earlier layer of frescoes beneath the scene of the Ascension in the west,[50] and recently J. Leroy has proposed that this, not the present outer layer, might be the decoration sponsored by Moses.[51]

From a study of the Syriac of the inscriptions on the frescoes, Leroy convincingly argues that the painters were Copts, not Syrians, and, concerning the date of the frescoes, he tentatively suggests the twelfth or thirteenth century.[52]

These paintings will require a detailed study before their date and style are fully understood, but in the context of the present discussion they provide useful evidence of the damp-fold drapery in Egypt. For example, the drapery on the lap of Mary, who stands below Christ at the Ascension, consists of two large elliptical shapes surrounded by tubular folds, a possible precedent for the treatment of Christ's right foreleg on the Sinai icon (Figure 14.1). Although the garments of Jesus in this fresco are not comparable, one sees further instances of the damp-fold style on the drapery of Mary at the Dormition, and below her the covers of her bier are arranged in rows of catenary folds, shaded on the lower edges, details that may be comparable to the drapery of Peter in the Institut Catholique codex. Thus the frescoes at Dēr es Suriān should also be considered in connection with this Byzantinizing stylistic current observed in the Arabic and Coptic manuscripts, and perhaps because the drapery patterns in the fresco are still plain and uncomplicated, a date in the twelfth or early thirteenth century might be reasonable.

In any event, the Sinai icon, the New Testament manuscript, and the monastic frescoes all mark Egypt as a center of painting in the pre-Mamlūk era, and although these works are Christian in content, their style is as much Islamic as Christian. Thus it is somewhat misleading to characterize Egypt as a moribund center of Islamic painting in the thirteenth century, and to credit it with significant activity only in the following century.[53] The origins of Mamlūk painting have heretofore been ascribed to the migration of artists from Baghdad and Mosul, as they fled in front of the encroaching Mongols. Signatures of Mamlūk artists working in several media seemingly indicate a place of origin in Mosul, but the matter is complex.[54] Undoubtedly, there are stylistic relationships between Mosul and Mamlūk illumination, as seen perhaps most clearly in the penchant in the latter for what Holter called the "Schnörkelfalten,"[55] or scroll-folds, after the labyrinth of serpentine folds frozen in place on the surface of the figure. Yet drapery composed of ovoid shapes still is occasionally seen in the Mamlūk period. For example, the garments of al-Hārith, standing at the right side of a miniature of the Vienna Māqāmat codex of 734 H/1334 AD, consist of two series of repeating elliptical folds shaded on the lower edges.[56] All has become pattern here, one that scarcely suggests fabric any more, at least of a non-polyester sort.

The origins of this style can be sought perhaps in the catenary folds of a figure like Peter before Mark in the Institut Catholique manuscript of 1249/50, or those of the coverings of the bier on which Mary lies in the fresco at Dēr es Suriān. Thus antecedents exist within Egypt for this particular style. Moreover, Buchthal has shown the influence of Paris arabe 6094, or a related manuscript, on another Mamlūk Māqāmat copy in London, Brit. Lib. Add. 22114,[57] and it is thought that Paris arabe 3465, the earliest Arabic version of the Fables of Bidpai, had an influence on the later illustrated manuscripts of the Mamlūk

period, a matter that deserves further study.[58] In general, however, too little survives to permit a detailed understanding of the development of Arab painting from the early thirteenth into the fourteenth centuries in Syria and Egypt, perhaps owing to the usual losses of fragile material over the centuries, but possibly also because of the Mamlūks' apparent lack of interest in illustrated Arabic secular (or literary) texts. These rulers of Turkish origin preferred instead to commission lavish Qur'āns for their new religious foundations.[59]

In the realm of Christian painting in Egypt, discontinuity is also the rule. The styles of the Paris-Cairo New Testament of 1249/50 and the related Sinai icon do not have successors.[60] Instead, the history of Christian book illumination in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries involves a number of different solutions to the fundamental problem of how a religious minority expresses itself artistically within the context of a dominant Muslim culture, and to what extent it borrows from foreign, usually Byzantine sources. In the case of an Evangelist portrait in a Coptic manuscript of 1256/7(?) in Cairo, Coptic Museum MS 93,[61] the illuminator has presented an awkward, inelegant version of the Byzantine damp-fold drapery without any of the ornamental finesse of the Evangelist portraits in the Institut Catholique volume. Examples of Islamic geometric and arabesque ornament appear in manuscripts of 1272 and 1291,[62] but the Evangelists in the latter, Cairo, Coptic Patriarchate Bibl. 196, now bear the imprint of another Byzantine style, that of the Palaeologan era, in which figures are larger, more volumetric, and draperies are painted in a softer, more modulated manner.[63] New Byzantine influence, then, has reached the region, and one sees evidence of it also in a medallion portrait on a leaf from an Arabic lectionary at Mt. Sinai. The ornament around the medallion links the page to a school of illumination identified by K. Weitzmann as active at St. Catherine's monastery in the later thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries.[64]

By the fourteenth century, richly illustrated manuscripts written in Coptic decline both in quality and quantity; but the Christians of the Mamlūk empire still commissioned luxuriously decorated books. Only now the preferred language increasingly was Arabic, and the ornament was often indistinguishable from contemporary Islamic art. Although much remains to be learned about the decoration of these Christian Arabic manuscripts, and even the extent of the subject has yet to be surveyed fully,[65] a few books deserve to be considered in the present context, because they help to illumine the nature of this hybrid art. Too long ignored by students of Islamic and Christian art, such manuscript decoration allows the history of Christian painting in the region to be traced into the fourteenth century. Several manuscripts have elaborate frontispieces with geometric and floral patterns in the style of Mamlūk Qur'āns. A case in point is an Arabic version of the four Gospels in Cairo, Coptic Museum, MS 90, written by a Coptic priest in Damascus in 1340/1 (Figure 14.5).[66] Like the frontispiece in a fourteenth-century Mamlūk Qur'ān in London, Brit. Lib. Or. 848 (Figure 14.6),[67] an outer border of arabesque frames a field divided into three parts. The smaller rectangles above and below contain inscriptions, a layout common to
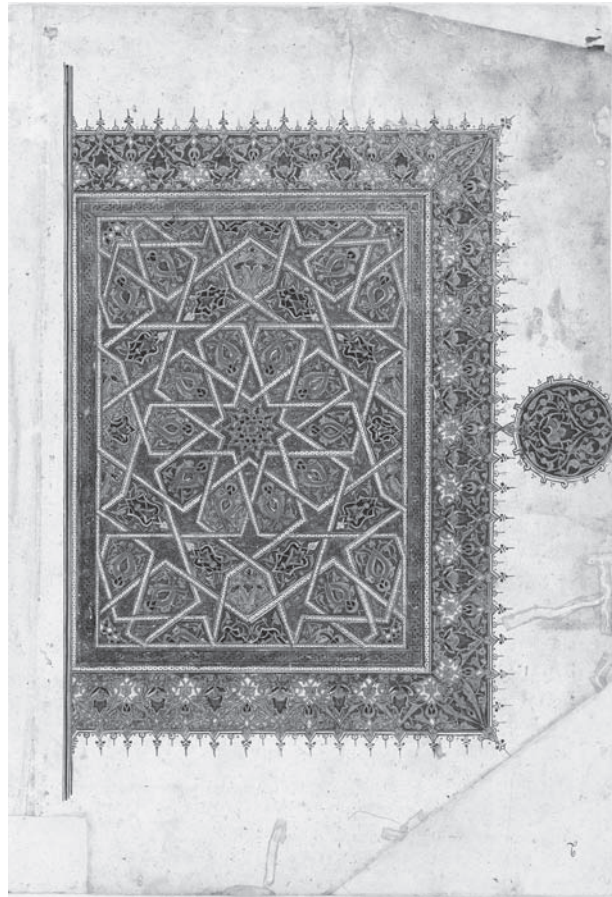
Figure 14.5 Frontispiece to the Gospel of Matthew, 1340/1. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Arabe 12, fol. 2r

Qur'āns as well,[68] and the central panel encloses a geometric design formed by white bands, just as similar beaded strips describe the intricate star in the center of the Qur'ān frontispiece (Figure 14.6). In each case a narrow inner border of interlace is knotted in the same pattern. The only aspects of the Gospel page that might be interpreted as Christian are the designs placed in the four corner polygons of the center square. These may have been intended to be read as crosses.

A second Arabic Gospels, now in the Topkapi Sarayi in Istanbul, can be related to the Cairo manuscript. J. Leroy published the Istanbul Gospel Book some years ago, describing its text and decoration in detail without suggesting a place of origin for the book.[69] Like the Cairo page (Figure 14.5), the field of the initial
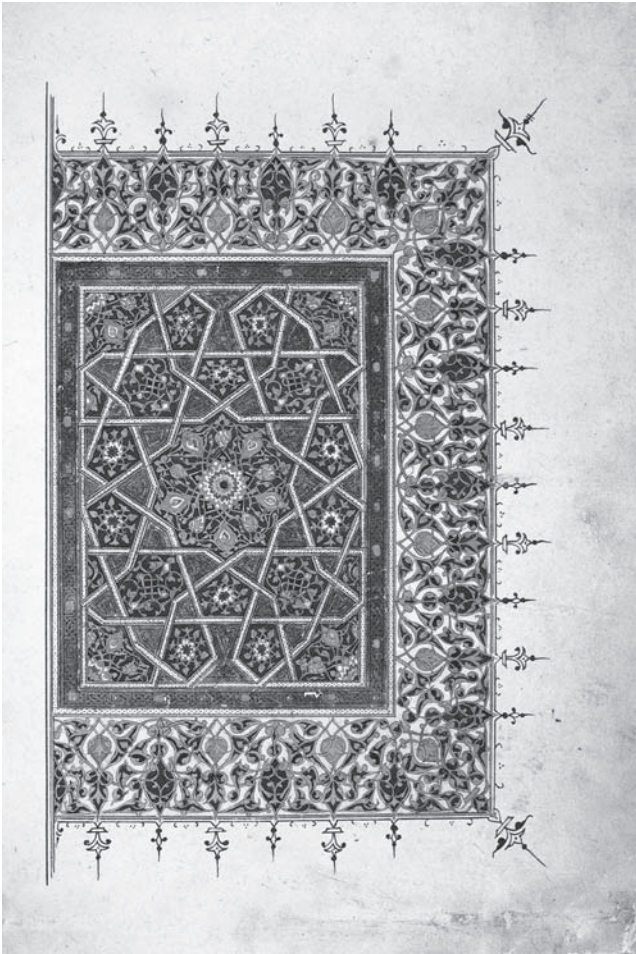
Figure 14.6 Frontispiece to a fourteenth-century Mamlūk Qurʾān. London, British Library, Or. 848, fol. 1v. By permission of the British Library

Istanbul frontispiece has four polygons, created by criss-crossing bands of small, white beads, as well as inscriptional panels above and below the central square. Each of the polygons is filled with a delicate golden star-burst, colored green in its outer lobes, dark blue in the intermediate zone, and white and light blue in the center. The same color scheme appears in the analogous star at the center of the frontispiece in the London Qurʾān (Figure 14.6).[70]

The overall pattern used for the field of the Istanbul page is the common Islamic design of the star and cross, a favorite of Seljuk potters, especially of Kashan,[71] and in the latter cases the cross obviously bears no Christian symbolism. In the more general use of the design, then, the specific motifs carry no meaning, but within the realm of Near Eastern Christian art, the situation was

different. When artists of whatever religion worked for Christian patrons, they endeavored to arrange the cross and star in such a way as to emphasize the former. For example, a pair of wooden doors of 1371 in the church of St. James in Jerusalem[72] are carved with the star and cross pattern, but only the crosses are shown in the center of each wing. The stars are bisected, so that one row appears complete only when the doors are closed. As a result the cross is the dominant element, surely not a coincidence on doors leading to a chapel, just as it is likely that a Christian meaning was intended for the cross placed at the center of the initial frontispiece in the Istanbul Gospels.

The other ornamental pages in the manuscript have similar Islamic origins. The Gospel of Mark is introduced by a double frontispiece containing the end of the table of contents for Mark and the beginning of the Gospel. Each page is decorated with an intricate quatrefoil pattern formed by overlapping circular bands. Such designs of intertwined circles, or segments of circles, had long been used in Qurʾāns from the early Kufic ones and the Baghdad manuscript of Ibn al-Bawwāb of 1000/1 AD[73] to the more pertinent example, a Mamlūk Qurʾān in Dublin, part of the same multi-volume set as the aforementioned manuscript in London.[74] On other pages of the Gospel Book, the illuminator has marked inscriptions with a small decorated circle in the margin, another traditional element of a decorated Qurʾān,[75] and the large blossoms on a finispiece at the end of the list of chapters for Matthew's Gospel also derive from the same source.[76] These flowers, the lotus of Chinese derivation, are a favored motif of Mamlūk Qurʾāns.[77] Because of the affinities to the latter and to the Cairo Gospel Book of 1340/1, the manuscript in the Topkapi Sarayi should be attributed to Egypt or Syria and dated to the middle or second half of the fourteenth century.

Other Christian Arabic manuscripts from the same period confirm that this adoption of Muslim conventions for ornament and book design is wholesale and not confined to a few isolated cases. A third Arabic Gospels of 1337, published and illustrated by J. O. Westwood in 1843–5, but seldom noticed since, also contains similar ornamental frontispieces in the Mamlūk style before the individual Gospels.[78] An Arabic version of the Pentateuch in Paris, Bibl. Nat. arabe 12 of 1353, is of Egyptian origin and opens on fols. 1v-2r with two carpet pages, which are fully illuminated in the manner of contemporary Qurʾāns.[79] The ten-pointed star at the center of the page corresponds to that of the aforementioned Qurʾān in London, and once more the same color scheme and framing interlace pattern appear in both. Like the Qurʾān, double ornamental frontispieces introduce the volume, and on the next pages, fols. 2v-3r, the beginning of Genesis is written within an elaborate frame that corresponds to that for the beginning of a surāh in the London codex.[80]

Although the history of figural miniatures in fourteenth-century Christian Arabic manuscripts remains to be written, the Istanbul Gospels is sure to figure prominently in any such discussion, for it undoubtedly is one of the finest illustrated volumes of this type, if not in fact the finest. Unlike the flat, conventional

standing Evangelists in an Arabic Prophet Book in Berlin from 1327,[81] the Istan-
bul Evangelists are superb examples of the contemporary volumetric style of
Byzantine painting of the Palaeologan period, a style whose presence was detected
earlier in some Coptic and Arabic miniatures of the late thirteenth century. Pres-
ently the Istanbul book has illustrations of three Evangelists before their respec-
tive Gospels, the portrait of Luke having disappeared, and an introductory image
of the Deesis, or Mary and John the Baptist turning and praying to the central
figure of Jesus. These illustrations, thoroughly Byzantine in character, indicate
that the artist was conversant with Greek style and iconography. The pose of the
Evangelist Mark, reading from a scroll that he holds in his hands, appears in
Byzantine illumination in the thirteenth century, probably as a result of Latin
influences.[82] The subject of the Deesis, not found in extant Coptic illumination,
is a popular theme for frontispieces in Byzantium.[83] Likewise the scene of John
dictating his Gospel to his disciple Prochoros in the mountainous landscape,
does not occur in Coptic manuscripts, nor can it be explained by a prefatory text
on the preceding page of the Istanbul codex. Rather, the miniature follows a
Byzantine pictorial tradition that also was not prompted by prefaces in Greek
Gospel Books.[84] The particular iconography of John seated, gesturing to
Prochoros and turning back to the rays of revelation, and of the disciple also
seated on a low stool nearby, becomes popular in Byzantium in the late thirteenth
and fourteenth centuries.[85] The sharp, metallic highlighting on John's inflated
garments invites comparison with Byzantine miniatures of the second or third
quarter of the fourteenth century[86] and corroborates the approximate date indi-
cated by the above analogies with Mamlūk Qurʾāns and with the Cairo Gospels
of 1340/1.

The inscriptions in the Istanbul miniatures are in Greek, not Coptic or Arabic,
suggesting that the painter might even have come from somewhere in the Byz-
antine Empire. He did, however, make one concession to the requirements of
his Arabic book. His Evangelists turn to the left, not the right as in Greek
books,[87] in order to face the text that follows in a language read from left to
right. Yet such a minor rearrangement is only a slight adaptation to a radically
different environment, and one is rather struck instead by the pronounced
dichotomy of the miniatures and the frontispieces in the manuscript. One part
is Byzantine; the other Mamlūk.

Like the Evangelists in the above Coptic manuscripts of 1256/7 and 1291,
the Istanbul portraits betray absolutely no trace of contemporary Mamlūk figural
style, as seen in either the ovoid or scroll folds on the garments of the turbaned
man in a scene from the Vienna Māqāmat of 1334. Instead, the miniatures in
MS 196 in the Coptic Patriarchate from 1291 or those in the Topkapi Sarayi
volume from the mid-fourteenth century depend upon styles of Palaeologan
painting, newly imported from Byzantium, and bear no similarity with the
abstract, orientalizing type of damp-fold drapery of the Paris-Cairo New Testa-
ment, the Sinai icon of Christ enthroned, the Dēr es Suriān frescoes, and the
Arabic manuscripts in Paris and Bologna. Thus the history of Christian book

decoration in Egypt during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries cannot be seen as a continuous evolutionary development, but rather is characterized by a series of discrete accommodations to the artistically more powerful cultures of Byzantium and Islam. The first half of the thirteenth century witnessed a fusion of Christian and Muslim styles and a mutually beneficial symbiosis that was not destined to continue in the Mamlūk period. Later Islamic manuscript illumination takes its own course, and Christian artists turn back to Byzantine art for fresh inspiration for religious subjects, while adopting in entirety the format and ornament of Muslim frontispieces.[88]

In the case of these carpet pages (Fig. 14.5), a certain ambiguity inevitably arises in the interpretation of pictorial forms, because the patterns are part of the wider context of the art of the dominant culture, Islam. It is as if Christian art has reverted to the position it had held in the pre-Constantinian period vis-à-vis the art of the Roman Empire. Then Christian art was only a subspecies of a far larger visual order, a dialect of a more general or universal pictorial language.[89] As in the case of the non-specific or generalized motifs of the orant figure or the Good Shepherd on Early Christian sarcophagi, it would be impossible to identify as Christian many of the ornamental frontispieces of these fourteenth-century Christian Arabic manuscripts, if some other detail such as an inscription, or the contents of the book, did not provide a clue as to the context of the miniature. In several respects such decoration no longer deserves to be called Christian, only Near Eastern, or better still, Mamlūk or Islamic, in the sense that Hebrew manuscripts illuminated in Paris in the thirteenth century are stylistically Gothic.[90]

Notes

1 Folda, 1976.
2 "Work at Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul: Second Preliminary Report," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXII, 1968, 191, figs. 19–29; "Work at Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul: Third and Fourth Preliminary Reports," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXV, 1971, 257–8.
3 Weitzmann, 1966, 49–84; 1963, 179–203; "Four Icons on Mount Sinai: New Aspects in Crusader Art," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, XXI, 1972, 279–94; "Three Painted Crosses at Sinai," *Kunsthistorische Forschungen. Otto Pächt zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, Salzburg, 1972, 23–25; "Die Malerie des Halberstädter Schrankes und ihre Beziehung zum Osten." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, XLI, 1978, 258–81.
4 Weitzmann, 1966, 52, n.4.
5 Later icons often have different letters in these places. See K. Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, K. Miatev, S. Radojčić, *Icons from South Eastern Europe and Sinai*, London, 1966, pls. 111, 113, 115, 129, 131, 189. Here the reference is to ὁ ὤν, as in Revelation 1:8, 4:8, 11:17. For an important discussion of the inscription, see J. T. Matthews, "The Byzantine Use of the Title Pantocrator," *Orientalia Christi-*

ana Periodica, XLIV, 1978, 448. The Sinai icon does not follow this Byzantine tradition. In the West, letters also are added to the crossed nimbus, and in Italy, one encounters the word REX or the abbreviation RGD for Rex Gloriae Dominus. See Garrison, 1953–4, 165, fig. 211; 1957–8, 210, n.3, fig. 246; 1960–2, 4, fig. 1.

6   Weitzmann, 1966, 52–3.

7   Folda, 1977, 254, pl. XLVa.

8   W. Grape, *Grenzeprobleme der byzantinischen Malerei*, Vienna, 1973, 71, 117–18.

9   C. M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066–1190*, London, 1975, 83, figs. 131–4.

10 The historiated initial of Christ enthroned is illustrated in A. Boinet, "L'atelier de miniaturistes de Liessies au XIIᵉ siècle," *La Bibliofilia*, L, 1948, fig. 2. Also on the manuscript, see J. Leclercq, "Les manuscrits de l'abbaye de Liessies," *Scriptorium*, VI, 1952, 53–4, 57–8; C. R. Dodwell, *Painting in Europe 800–1200*, Baltimore, 1971, 179; J. Porcher, *Medieval French Miniatures*, New York, n.d., 37–8.

11 Dodwell in *The Great Lambeth Bible*, London, 1959, 16–19, discusses the relationship of that manuscript with the Liessies Gospel Book.

12 For English illumination, cf. Kauffmann (as in n. 9), figs. 5, 8, 50, 80, 92, 101, 102, 114, 135, 139, 147, 188, 218, 222, 241, 255, 273, 285, 291. For French illumination, cf. Porcher (as in n. 10), fig. 8; pls. X, XIII, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXIII, XXXVII, XLVI.

13 Cf. Buchthal, 1957, pls. 12b, 17b, 51b, 87; Weitzmann, 1966, fig. 16; Folda, 1977, pl. XXXVIb.

14 On the icon, see Weitzmann, 1963, 194–5, fig. 18.

15 For a few examples of Byzantine thrones, cf. W. F. Volbach and J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Byzanz und der Christliche Osten*, Berlin, 1968, pls. 10b, 12, 13, IX, XVII, 99; Lazarev, 1967, figs. 80, 94, 109, 157, 161, 170, 211, 329, 352, 356, 362, 368, 384, 385, 395–400, 411, 413, 415. On the Roman thrones, see G. M. A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans*, London, 1966, 98–101. Here one sees thrones with turned and rectangular legs, and some with small rectangular panels on the front or the sides (cf. figs. 476–83). Sometimes these panels are decorated with figures as in fig. 481, and at other times they are unadorned as in fig. 483.

16 André Grabar has devoted a series of articles to various types of decorated ecclesiastical thrones, and these have been collected in his *L'art de la fin de l'antiquité et du Moyen Age*, 3 vols., Paris, 1968: "Le trône des martyrs," I, 341–50; "La 'Sedia di San Marco' à Venise," I, 351–64; "Trônes épiscopaux du XIᵉ et XIIᵉ siècle en Italie Méridionale," I, 365–92; "Trônes d'évêques en Espagne du Moyen Age," I, 393–402; and "Sur les sources des peintres byzantins des XIIIᵉ et XIVᵉ siècles," II, 861–5. In the last paper, Grabar studies the small figures of prophets shown on the front of the throne of the Virgin in the apse of the church of Staro Nagoričino from 1314, and he astutely relates these figures to some found in late antique and Early Christian art, concluding that the painters of the 14th century have borrowed from art of the Justinianic period. In this connection, it may be noted that a miniature in a Crusader copy of the *Histoire universelle* in London, Add. 15268, shows King Ninus seated on a throne decorated with busts of four figures. Buchthal dated the manuscript to the 1280's and noted the strong Palaeologan influence on its style, citing, in particular, the shape of this throne. See Buchthal, 1957, 80, 84, 86,

pl. 87. The miniature may, therefore, be a reflection of a Palaeologan figural throne of the type that was to be painted later at Staro Nagoričino. In the early Middle Ages one of the most important historiated thrones is the Cathedra of St. Peter with a number of ivory plaques of the Labors of Heracles on the front. See K. Weitzmann, "The Heracles Plaques of St. Peter's Cathedra," *Art Bulletin*, LV, 1973, 1–37; and "An Addendum to 'The Heracles Plaques of St. Peter's Cathedra'," *Art Bulletin*, LVI, 1974, 248–52. Most of the thrones discussed in the preceding papers have a back and thus do not correspond typologically to the bench type portrayed in the Sinai icon.

17   Crusader icons: Weitzmann, 1963, fig. 18; Folda, 1977, pls. XLVb, XLVIIb, XXXVI (a Crusader fresco). Byzantine icons: G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones du Mont Sinai*, I, Athens, 1956, figs. 48, 68, 80, 83, 96, 111, 115, 176, 196, 198, 219, 221, 228, 229. The central figure of Christ on a templon beam at Mt. Sinai (*ibid.*, fig. 118) is the closest that one can come to the hand gesture in question, for here Jesus holds his right hand vertically, a position that nevertheless is to be distinguished from that of Christ on the Sinai panel. The beam is probably a Crusader work of the 13th century. See K. Weitzmann. "Die byzantinischen Elfenbeine eines Bamberger Graduale und ihre ursprüngliche Verwendung," *Studien zur Buchmalerei und Goldschmiedekunst des Mittelalters, Festschrift für Karl Hermann Usener*, ed. F. Dettweiler, *et al.*, Marburg an der Lahn, 1967, 16.

18   Cf. Garrison, 1955–6, figs. 3, 6, 11, 14, 17.

19   Leroy, 1974b, 157–77. As mentioned above, Grape (as in n. 8), 117–18, also saw the relation of the icon to the Paris manuscript but drew different conclusions as to the significance of this affinity. I understand from Professor Folda that Lucy-Anne Hunt has written a dissertation on the Institut Catholique manuscript for the Courtauld Institute of Art. Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult it there, nor did I hear her paper delivered to the International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Vienna, for which see her abstract in *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinisten-kongress, Résumés der Kurzbeiträge*, Vienna, 1981.

20   Leroy, 1974b, pl. 94. Also on this gesture see below n. 39.

21   Also cf. *ibid.*, pls. 89, 93.

22   For other examples of panels of ornament on the front of thrones in copte 13: *ibid.*, pls. 45a, 54b, 57a, 60b, 72a. An interesting case of such decoration is the bed carried by the Paralytic (*ibid.*, pl. 48c). The bed is a low rectangular box with panels of ornament on the sides. Depictions of furniture in Syriac manuscripts probably also imitate contemporary objects. There the panel of arabesque is less common, although it does appear in one miniature in a manuscript of ca. 1220 in London, Brit. Lib. Add. 7170. See Leroy, 1964, pl. 89, 4.

23   Cf. Pauty, pls. VI, No. 1311; B, Nos. 9492, 9524; X. The round knobs atop the corners of the throne probably also are derived from actual practices. Compare, for example, the wooden base of a lectern in the Coptic Museum: Simaika, 1937, pl. XLVIII. Although much later and dated 1492 AD, the base is square in form, and each side has rectangular panels of darker wood separated by strips of lighter wood and by corner posts with small knobs at the top, features that correspond to the throne depicted in copte 13.

24   As shown in Leroy 1974b, pls. 48c, 54b, 60b. Such ornament probably refers to that style of wide currency in Egypt, the successors of the imported style C, or the

beveled style, of Samarra. For Egyptian examples in wood, see Pauty, pls. III, XII–XVIII, XX–XXVIII. On the style in general, see R. Ettinghausen, "The 'Beveled Style' in the Post-Samarra Period," *Archaeologica orientalia in memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*, ed. G. C. Miles, Locust Valley, NY, 1952, 72–83. On the general subject of Islamic wood-carving, see E. Kühnel, *The Minor Arts of Islam*, Ithaca, NY, 1971, 234–9; J. Scarce, J. Bray, and W. Ezzy, "Wood," *The Arts of Islam*, London, 1976, 273–94.

25   Fine examples are to be found in the churches of the Wādi Natrūn published in Evelyn-White, *passim*. Also see E. Pauty, *Bois sculptés d'églises coptes (époque fatimide)*, Cairo, 1930. On Coptic woodwork more recently, there is M. Jenkins, "An Eleventh-Century Woodcarving from a Coptic Nunnery," *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. R. Ettinghausen, New York, 1972, 227–40.

26   Cf. J. Leroy, *Les peintures de couvents du desert d'Esna*, Cairo, 1975, pl. VIA (the throne of Christ has panels on the front and two knobs on the back in analogy to fol. 2v of copte 13, fig. 10), VII, XIB, XIC, 27, 31. The Evangelists' chairs in Oxford, Bodl. Lib. Hunt. 17 (Leroy, 1974b, pls. 39–40) have rectangular pieces with pointed ends and square panels. The former shapes occur on doors of Coptic churches in the Wādi Natrūn: Evelyn-White, pls. XLIII, LXXVII.

27   200 × 75 mm. Pauty, 74, pl. XCIV.

28   Evelyn-White, pls. LVIII–LX. On these doors more recently, see K. Weitzmann, "The Ivories of the So-Called Grado Chair," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXVI, 1972, 87–8, and J. Leroy, 1974a, 154–61. For a later example of a Coptic ivory panel with arabesque ornament and a cross, see Atil, 1981b, 207, No. 103. The arabesque here compares well with 14th-century panels published by Evelyn-White, pls. XLV, LXXVII; and as in the latter a thin inlaid fillet of ivory runs around the field.

29   Leroy, 1974b, 157.

30   See *ibid.*, 39, n. 1 for a most useful survey of preserved Coptic icons.

31   On Crusader illumination: Buchthal, 1957, pls. 82b, 84c, 91c, 99b, 101c; and Folda, 1976, figs. 33, 42, 44, 58, etc. On Syriac illumination: Leroy, 1964, pls. 105, 107, 109. On Coptic illumination: Leroy, 1974b, pls. 2–4, 6, 10–12, 15, 100–4. The angular interlace does not appear in pure Byzantine miniatures, but a related variety is found in the borders of the 13th-century miniatures in Athens, Nat. Lib. cod. 127, probably as the result of Crusader influence. See R. S. Nelson, "A Thirteenth-Century Byzantine Miniature in the Vatican Library," *Gesta*, XX, 1981, 218–19. Finally, among the Crusader icons so far published, one has a border of interlace, albeit of a sort different from the icon of Christ enthroned. See Folda, 1977, pl. XLVIIb.

32   W. Koehler, "Byzantine Art in the West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, I, 1941, 70.

33   O. Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West*, New York, 1970; E. Kitzinger, "The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XX, 1966, 25–48.

34   Buchthal, 1940a, 125–133.

35   On the manuscript more recently, see D. S. Rice, "The Oldest Illustrated Arabic Manuscript," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXII, 1959, 216, who doubts the date traditionally assigned to the manuscript. He has not been followed by later authors: Ettinghausen, 79–80, 83; D. James, "Arab Painting, 358 A.H./969 A.D.-1112 A.H./1700 A.D.," *Marg*, XXIX, 3, 1976, 15. The illustrated

manuscripts of the Māqāmat will be discussed in the forthcoming monograph of Oleg Grabar.

36 This term and another, "nested U fold," are used by Garrison, 1955–6, 178; 1957–8, 200–6.

37 Buchthal, 1940a, 126–31; *idem*, "Indian Fables in Islamic Art," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1941, 317–24. Subsequent studies of arabe 3465 include Ettinghausen, 61, 80; S. Walzer, "The Mamlūk Illuminated Manuscripts of Kalīla wa-Dimna," *Aus der Welt der islamischen Kunst*, ed. R. Ettinghausen, Berlin, 1959, 195; P. J. Müller, *Arabische Miniaturen*, Geneva, 1979, pls. 31–4, 36–41, 43–5, 49–50; Atil, 1981a, 61.

38 Buchthal, 1940a, 126–31.

39 Cf. E. Atil, *Art of the Arab World*, Washington, 1975, 58, No. 23, a miniature from the Dioscorides of 1224 from the Baghdad school. The iconography is repeated in a Mamlūk copy of the Kalīla wa-Dimna: Atil, 1981a, fig. 55. Arabe 3465 had one further link with the Paris-Cairo New Testament. On fol. 34r of the former (unpublished) there is a seated, frontal figure who gestures with his right hand in the same manner as Christ in the Ascension scene of the Cairo volume (Fig. 8). It will be recalled that this particular position of the hand was distinctive and shared with the Sinai icon (Fig. 14.1).

40 Buchthal, 1940a, 127.

41 Cf. K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, II, Oxford, 1959, pl. 29, the minaret of Sayyidnā al-Husayn of 1237 AD.

42 E. J. Grube, "Materialien zum Dioskurides Arabicus," *Aus der Welt der islamischen Kunst*, ed. R. Ettinghausen, Berlin, 1959, 179, with further literature.

43 Ettinghausen, 161.

44 H. Buchthal, "Early Islamic Miniatures from Baghdad," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, V, 1942, 19–40. More recently on the Baghdad school, there is the stimulating paper of D. James, "Space-forms in the Work of the Baghdād Māqāmat Illustrators, 1225–58," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXXVII, 1974, 305–20.

45 Buchthal, 1940a, 131–3.

46 Rice (as in n. 35), 218; Ettinghausen, 80, 161.

47 Ettinghausen, 67–78; *idem*, "Interaction and Integration in Islamic Art," *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum, Chicago, 1955, 119–20.

48 Evelyn-White, 170–1. On Moses see Leroy, 1974a, 152–3, with further references.

49 Evelyn-White, 183–207.

50 J. Strzygowski, "Der Schmuck der ältern el-Hadrakirche im syrischen Kloster der sketischen Wüste," *Oriens Christianus*, I, 1901, 362–3.

51 Leroy, 1974a, 167.

52 *Ibid.*, 165–6. It should also be noted that the frescoes have recently been mentioned by Weitzmann (as in n. 28), 76, 83–4, who follows the older view that Syrian artists painted the frescoes. Strzygowski (as in n. 50, 371) and Leroy earlier (1964, 87–8) had considered the paintings to be Syrian work, a notion that Evelyn-White (p. 184) doubted. Weitzmann's study raises a complex problem, because he finds that the frescoes resemble some of the ivories of the Grado group, panels that seem to have

connections with Syria or Egypt (pp. 82–5). If true, the ivories would serve to document the earlier appearance of the damp-fold drapery in the Levant.

53 Buchthal, 1940b, 151–2; Ettinghausen, 161.

54 Buchthal, 1940b, 147–51; K. Holter, "Die frühmamlukische Miniaturenmalerei," *Die graphischen Künste*, II, 1937, 12–14; Haldane, 6. On metalwork, see Atil, 1981b, 51; and D. S. Rice, "Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Aḥmad al-Dhakī al-Mawsilī," *Ars Orientalis*, II, 1957, 283–6, 319–25.

55 Holter (as in n. 54), 8.

56 On the manuscript in general, see Ettinghausen, 147–53; K. Holter, "Die Galen-Handschrift und die Makamen des Harīrī der Wiener Nationalbibliothek," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, N.F., XI, 1937, 15–34, 45–8; Atil, 1981b, 258–9; Haldane, 100–3. See also the forthcoming study of Grabar on the illustrations of the Māqāmat.

57 Buchthal, 1940b, 148, Ettinghausen, 145.

58 On these manuscripts, see S. Walzer (as in n. 37), 195–206; *idem*, "An Illustrated Leaf from a lost Mamlūk Kalīlah wa-Dimnah Manuscript," *Ars Orientalis*, II 1957, 503–5; Ettinghausen, 140–1, 153–6; Haldane, 8–9. Most recently there is Atil, 1981a, *passim*, and esp. 65.

59 In general, see Atil, 1981b, 24–8.

60 Concerning the manuscript, it is interesting to note that Leroy (1974b, 222) calls it a "unicum." Ironically, Weitzmann (1966, 52) used the same word to describe the Sinai icon. Although the style of New Testament manuscript does not seem to have been influential, the book was nevertheless known to later Coptic scribes, and it has been proposed that London, Brit. Lib. Or. 424–5 of 1308 AD is a direct copy of this manuscript. See Leroy, 1974b, 173, 177, for the older literature. It is interesting to note that the miniatures are not repeated in the later volume in London. Instead, blank spaces colored yellow serve as substitutes for the illustrations in the earlier manuscript.

61 Leroy, 1974b, 177–8, pl. 109, 1.

62 *Ibid.*, pls. 9; 5, 1. Note that the identification of pl. 9 is corrected in the addenda, p. 234.

63 *Ibid.*, pls. 96; 97, 1. Cf. Mark (pl. 96, 1) with Luke in London, Brit. Lib. Burney 20 of 1285 (Lazarev, fig. 395). The semifrontal pose of Luke (pl. 96, 2) may be compared with Mark in Mt. Athos, Lavra A 111 of the late 13th or early 14th century (Pelekanides, III fig. 55).

64 K. Weitzmann, *Illustrated Manuscripts at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai*, Collegeville, Minn., 1973, 26–7, fig. 40.

65 A listing of twenty manuscripts appears in Buchthal and Kurz, 24–7. Several of the manuscripts discussed on the following pages were not known to the authors, when they wrote, and probably more examples remain to be found.

66 Simaika, 1939, 11, pls. XVIII-XX; G. Graf, *Catalogue de manuscrits arabes chrétiens conservés au Caire, Studi e Testi,* LXIII, Vatican City, 1934, 77–80; Leroy, 1974b, 65; M. Cramer, *Koptische Buchmalerie*, Recklinghausen, 1964, 40, figs. 26–7. It must be noted that there has been some confusion concerning the identification of the Cairo manuscript. The page illustrated (fig. 14.5) serves as a frontispiece for the Gospel of Matthew and has the first half of the following inscription: "The Pure Gospel, the Shining Lamp, which is the Source of Life and the Ship of Salvation

according to the Holy Apostles." This page is illustrated in Simaika, 1939, pl. XVIII, as MS 90. In Simaika, 1937, 8, the same page is illustrated on pl. XIV and is identified as MS 91 from the 14th century. Cramer has repeated the later identification and has also illustrated this page. Leroy (1974b, 65) also mentions the manuscript as No. 91. In Buchthal and Kurz, 24, a MS 91 is listed with reference to the illustrations in Simaika, 1937, pls. XIV, XV, but the date assigned to this manuscript is that for MS 91 in Simaika, 1939, 4, that is, 1203 AD. Thus descriptions of two manuscripts have been conflated. I follow the description in Simaika, 1939, 11, the authoritative source according to Mrs Samiha abd el-Shaheed, the First Curator of Manuscripts at the Coptic Museum, so that the correct number of the manuscript is 90. Perhaps a misprint in Simaika's *Guide sommaire* of 1937 started the confusion.

67 Lings and Safadi, 54–5, pl. IX.

68 Cf. *ibid.*, 54.

69 Leroy, 1967, 119–30. The manuscript is described rather inaccurately in F. E. Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu,* III, Istanbul, 1966, 337. I thank my colleague Robert Dankoff for translating this reference for me. In addition it has just recently come to my attention that another Turkish scholar, Y. Demiriz, has also discussed the manuscript. See "Topkapı Sarayı III. Ahmed Kütüphaneside bir Arapça Incil," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, II, 1966–1968, 87–101. I thank Dr Heath Lowry for translating the article for me. Apparently working simultaneously with and independent of Leroy, Professor Demiriz described the decoration and assigned the manuscript to mid-14th-century Syria on the basis of comparisons to unpublished Arabic manuscripts in the Topkapi Sarayi collection. In general, her conclusion is correct, but the matter can also benefit from the broader context of Christian manuscript illumination in the Mamluk Empire of both Syria and Egypt. Both regions shared a common artistic culture that makes it difficult to specify more precise localizations to one area or another without further studies of Mamluk painting.

70 Lings and Safadi, pl. IX, for color illustration.

71 A. Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, London, 1947, 39–40, pl. 67B. For a more extensive discussion with further references see E. J. Grube, *Islamic Pottery of the Eighth to the Fifteenth Century in the Keir Collection*, London, 1976, 245–54. For the cross and star pattern in general, see I. El-Said and A. Parman, *Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art*, London, 1976, 12–13.

72 B. Narkiss, ed., *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem*, New York, 1979, 122, 156, fig. 164. I thank John Carswell for drawing my attention to this example.

73 Cf. A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Illuminated*, Dublin, 1967, pls. 13, 14, 18, 26; D. S. Rice, *The Unique Ibn Al-Bawwāb Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library*, Dublin, 1955, 31–33, pls. III–IV.

74 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS 1465. See Atil, 1981b, 32–33, No. 2; Lings and Safadi, 55.

75 Leroy, 1967, pls. X, 2; XI, 1; XII, 1. Cf. Lings and Safadi, No. 75, ill. on p. 54 of London Brit. Lib. Or. 848.

76 Leroy, 1967, pl XI, 1.

77 Cf. Lings and Safadi, pls. XII–XIII; Atil, 1981b, 38–39, 48.

78 *Palaeographia sacra pictoria*, London, 1843–45, No. 8: London Brit. Lib. Add. 11856. Also see Buchthal and Kurz, 26, with further references; London, British

Library, *The Christian Orient*, London, 1978, 31. Like a Mamlūk Qurʾān, the manuscript opens with double frontispieces (fols. 1v-2r) before Matthew, followed by the portrait of the Evangelist (fol. 2v). The other three Gospels are preceded by a single frontispiece and an Evangelist portrait. A detail of the illustration of Luke is reproduced in T. W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, Oxford, 1928, pl. 64b. With respect to quality, the Evangelist portraits are rather inferior to the ornamental pages. A second Arabic Gospel Book in London, Brit. Lib. Or. 1327, also has fine ornamental frontispieces, but no miniatures. It was written at about the same time, 1334 AD, probably in Egypt. See C. Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London, 1894, 8–9.

79 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, *Trésors d'Orient*, Paris, 1973, 55; G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, Paris, 1972, 17–18.

80 Lings and Safadi, ill. on p. 54.

81 K. Weitzmann, "An Early Copto-Arabic Miniature in Leningrad," *Ars Islamica*, 1943, 132–33, figs. 20–1; Buchthal and Kurz, 24, with further literature.

82 H. Buchthal, *The 'Musterbuch' of Wolfenbüttel and its Position in the Art of the Thirteenth Century*, Vienna, 1979, 39–40, cf. figs. 37, 39, 40, 45, 51, 52.

83 On the absence of the Deesis in Coptic miniatures, see Leroy, 1974b, 199. As he notes, the medallions of Mary and Jesus in the upper half of a cross page in Cairo, Coptic Museum MS 94 (pl. 93), may be derived from the Deesis composition, but nevertheless the basic point holds that the full group does not appear in extant Coptic manuscripts. In contrast, the Deesis is common in Byzantine art. See C. Walter, "Two Notes on the Deesis," *Revue des études byzantines*, XXVI, 1968, 311–36; *idem*, "Further Notes on the Deësis," *Revue des études byzantines*, XXVIII, 1970, 161–87. The articles are collected in his *Studies in Byzantine Iconography*, London, 1977, where in the preface he cites some more recent papers on the subject.

84 For the preface in the Istanbul manuscript, see Leroy, 1967, 122–3. On the matter of the textual basis for the scene in Byzantium, see R. S. Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface and Miniature in the Byzantine Gospel Book*, New York, 1980, 86–7, with further references.

85 Cf. Mt. Athos, Protaton church: H. Buchthal and H. Belting, *Patronage in Thirteenth-Century Constantinople, An Atelier of Late Byzantine Book Illumination and Calligraphy*, Washington, DC, 1978, pl. 81c; Mt. Athos, Dionysiou 80: Pelekanides, I, fig. 147. In the latter manuscript, one sees many specific details of comparison in the treatment of the drapery of John and Prochoros, indicating fidelity to this particular iconographic type. According to Pelekanides, I, 424, Dionysiou 80 is dated 1321, but in A. Turyn, *Dated Greek Manuscripts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in the Libraries of Italy*, I, Chicago, 1972, 131, the book's colophon is transcribed differently to yield the date 1316/17, a year, which, unlike 1321, agrees with the indiction number specified by the scribe.

86 Cf. H. Buchthal, "Toward a History of Palaeologan Illumination," *The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art*, Princeton, 1975, figs. 5–8, 13, 18, 33.

87 On this tradition, see Nelson (as in n. 31), 220.

88 In this context one further Egyptian work may be mentioned, but unfortunately not illustrated. In the church of al-Muʿallakah in Old Cairo, there is a little noticed icon of Saint Mark on the southern wall. Although badly in need of cleaning, the painting is sufficiently visible to indicate that it is a Byzantine work of the Palaeologan period, perhaps from the 14th century. The panel is built into an elaborately

carved wooden and ivory frame, consisting of numerous panels of arabesque and geometrical ornament in the Mamluk style and two figural panels of the Annunciation to Mary and Christ standing on two beasts. The ensemble here, combining as it does Byzantine painting with Mamluk decorative carvings, corresponds to manuscripts like the Gospels in Istanbul.

89 See A. Grabar's conceptualization of the problem in *Christian Iconography*, *A Study of Its Origins*, Princeton, 1968, xliii-xlvii.

90 On the broader use and the implications of the term "Islamic" in reference to Near Eastern art, see O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven, 1973, 1–3. The Hebrew manuscripts are discussed in J. Gutmann, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting*, New York, 1978; see esp. 78–81.

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Part V
Luxury Arts and the Representation of the Court

15

The Cup of San Marco and the "Classical" in Byzantium

Ioli Kalavrezou

The most precious and delicate glass object of the middle Byzantine period is a small cup in Venice, the famous vase in the treasury of San Marco which presumably was part of the booty from Constantinople (Fig. 15.1). Decorated with seven medallions containing figures that recall the art of classical antiquity, it is the only piece of painted Byzantine glass to survive intact. Its high quality hints at an established glass manufacture that otherwise only survives in fragments.[1] Its decoration places the cup in the middle of perennial problems which have determined the overall model with which we probe Byzantine art: the role of the classical, the survival or revival of the Greek heritage. For the flesh-colored antique figures on a dark background are not merely reminiscent of but self-consciously quote the decoration of red-figured classical pottery. Since the decorative system of rosettes between the medallions and the pseudo-Kufic inscriptions clearly mark the piece as Byzantine, and since the material is glass rather than clay, no one would mistake this bowl for ancient. One could argue that it is a Byzantine effort to render, in a material they controlled, a luxurious response to an art form of their Greek forebears.

It is curious, then, that the cup has not until recently played a greater role in the discussions of the Macedonian renaissance of the tenth century. The notion that the art of the Macedonian period retrospectively encountered the art of classical antiquity, brought up by Kondakov in the late nineteenth century, has been most forcefully presented by Kurt Weitzmann in a number of studies.[2] The current generation of art historians is somewhat uneasy with the notion of a

Figure 15.1 Glass cup with mythological scenes (one side). Venice, Treasury of the Cathedral of San Marco. Reproduced by kind permission of the Procuratoria di San Marco, Venice

renaissance, but to date has expressed this primarily by writing the term in quotations and referring to it as a 'so-called' event. Presumably the bowl was left out of discussions of the renaissance because it had been considered of the eleventh century. Anthony Cutler in 1974 brought the cup into the context of the tenth-century Macedonian emperors. He argues that nothing in the decoration, even the pseudo-Kufic inscription, forbids a tenth-century date, and that this date is more consistent with the "mythological scenes", presumably because these are thought to be a renaissance phenomenon. Further, he believes that the solitary figures derive from ancient gems, and that the cup may be a "whimsical commission" by Constantine Porphyrogenitus "inspired and made possible by the possession of a large number of gems".[3] The tenth-century date has been implicitly taken over by Hans Belting in an argument that lays the groundwork for questioning the existence of the Macedonian renaissance.[4] For Belting, classical motifs on mid-Byzantine objects are not to be explained by a revival of "ancient art" but by the object type or category of secular luxury ware which calls up the topos of an ancient craft and brings it into fashion.[5] He sees the ancient themes which decorate objects like the San Marco cup and the Veroli casket as just a phenomenon of fashion found on secular luxury goods. The notion of fashion skirts close to positing that the period quoted the antique in a manner not dissimilar to the Macedonian renaissance, albeit without the same intent. The notion of object type, on the other hand, if pushed further, might eliminate the need to speak of fashion. Still, Belting's observation about object types and their different styles offers alternative ways to explain the visual evidence that has previously been explained by the idea of a renaissance. The overall purpose of his article is to free the period from the dominance of a unified notion of art by showing that divergent styles exist on divergent types of objects and that classical themes are found on the category of secular luxury goods. This

approach of organizing and looking at the material helps distinguish new formal and functional patterns from established ones.

For the notion of the Macedonian renaissance both ancient subject matter and motifs, that is, an iconography with classical roots, and a classicizing style have played a role. On the majority of art works the two are not found together. In this paper I want to investigate whether the objects with images from an antique repertoire provide evidence for a renaissance of classical art and culture, using the San Marco cup as the focal point.

When we turn to the material evidence, we can observe from the early period onward that objects of secular function, whether luxurious or not, always were liable to display classical subjects. The appearance, for example, in the fourth and fifth centuries of mythological themes does not need to be explained by a 'renaissance'. The Venus on the Proiecta casket does not express a 'pagan' point of view but is simply a subject appropriate to a box with toiletries for a woman. Kathleen Shelton has argued persuasively that this and other pagan images, like the Muses, are in the fourth century best understood at a general level, as a common language of topics appropriate to the object or the person who possessed it, and that they simultaneously served as decoration.[6] The same can be said of secular objects of the following centuries through the Herakleian period. The Byzantines of these earlier centuries did not have to dip back into some almost forgotten reservoir of classical motifs in order to find subjects to decorate an object all' antica. For example, excavations of the recent years in Ephesos have brought to light in one of the houses on the hillslope a room which had one large wall fresco from the first century AD with a scene from the Achilles story and on an adjacent wall a different subject painted during a fourth-century restoration.[7] we know that this and other houses were still inhabited in the seventh century. This means that first-century wall paintings could be seen 600 years after they were made, in a house which was lived in.

Mythological motifs were still part of the culture, in however a diluted form. They conflict with the Christianity of the culture no more than the Islamicizing palace built by the emperor Theophilos in the ninth century. As the myths and ancient gods remained available to the literary world, so they existed in the artistic or visual world too. Their place was obviously the profane sphere, the secular objects with some artistic pretention. Whatever cultic functions figures and mythological stories may have had at one time, by the late antique period their use on private objects was for the most part generalized and without specialized meaning. They were citations of a great past still remembered.

The compositions and especially the gestures of the images quoted, however, had by the late sixth century already become medievalized. This can be seen on some of the silver objects of this period. For example, on the plate in the Hermitage with the scene of the judgment of the arms of Achilles the composition is in conception no longer classical but rather Byzantine. As Kurt Weitzmann has shown, the artist worked with stock figures borrowed from other narrative scenes and reassembled in a medieval way.[8]

Is the situation still the same when we turn to the ninth- and tenth-century material and look at objects of profane use for evidence of classical subject matter either still surviving or newly revived? There are, first of all, very few profane objects of any sort still extant. Those with apparently mythological subjects can be readily listed: a number of ivory caskets, the San Marco cup, and a silver inkpot in the cathedral treasury in Padua. To these a number of manuscripts might be added. These objects, few as they are, hint of a lingering survival and gradual extinction of classical subject matter rather than to its revival. Why have such images relinquished the place they had maintained for many centuries within the Christian culture? There was no need to give them up unless they began to lose their importance and meaning. Classical subject matter under iconoclasm did not suffer the same suppression which destroyed religious images in the eighth century.

The glass cup in San Marco is the place to start because its figural representations come the closest to reproducing an ancient art. The cup is well known for its fine decorative ornament but especially for its mythological scenes. Within the seven medallions around the body of the bowl athletes and warriors, nude or in classical garb, are represented that recall for most observers figures from a classical Greek vase. Many of their poses are familiar from classical art. The flesh-colored figures are set off against the very dark glass of the bowl, re-creating the same color contrast found in classical red-figured painting. Even the presentation of single figures within medallions can often be seen in the center of kylixes of the late fifth and fourth centuries BC where individual figures from the repertoire of Dionysiac characters are represented as well as athletes and warriors. The craftsmen stay within the ancient tradition of keeping the garments, columns and other elements the same color as the figures. On red-figured vases the figures wear fillets held by head bands as well as thin decorative bands around the neck and arms.[9] On the pottery these are painted in white which makes them stand out; on the San Marco cup they are painted in gold. Common to both is the technique of composing the figures and demarcating parts of the body with thin lines, drawn on the cup in red. Like the ancient vases, the medieval compositions are kept in a unified color. Gold is used to highlight the armor of the warriors.

From these observations, we can conclude that Byzantine craftsmen knew what ancient Greek vase painting looked like. Pottery fragments, if not whole vessels, were plentiful in the Greek countryside in the ancient ruins and sanctuaries. This was more the case in the Middle Ages, where much was still standing or lying around and archaeology had not yet removed most artifacts. What more appropriate for a cup than to take up art motifs established on objects with a similar function. This does not mean that this cup copied a classical vase directly. Presumably this was not the first and only cup of this type made. We also know that once an image or formula was worked out Byzantine craftsmen tended to repeat it; it joined their stock of images for a repertoire of topics appropriate to a category of objects. We cannot assign a date to the creation of the images on

the cup since we have very little information on painted Byzantine glass ware. These observations, in any case, provide sufficient evidence to reject Cutler's theory that the models of these figures were ancient gems. The painting technique applied cannot have derived from relief carving.

But are these connections with ancient vase painting enough to argue for a revival of an ancient art in the Posticonoclastic period? Cutler has attempted to identify the figures in the medallions, but without much success: there may be a Dionysos and a Herakles, but apart from these there is little that is identifiable. One problem is that the attributes which in classical art are the major means of identifying a figure are no longer recognizable as such. Of course, even the attempt to identify the figures would be pointless, if the craftsmen did not try to render specific characters or had no narrative intent. Perhaps this was no longer of importance, and meaning was given to other aspects of this decorative system. And if one looks at the cup there are indeed some formal and visual principles of organization that may have supplanted any narrative intent.

For example, five of the medallions are connected visually by clear directional gestures and a variety of stances and poses. One figure is shown completely in profile, the draped figure in the medallion now covered by one of the handles.[10] In contrast to the other medallions, the figure here is flanked by stylized acanthus tendrils which are also painted in red and light green with highlights often found in manuscript illumination. He clearly points with his index finger towards the medallion on the right, and his stance reinforces this direction. It consequently appears as if with his gesture he were directing our gaze around the vase.

The posture and gesture of the figure in the next medallion bind him both to the previous and to the following ones. He steps forward on his toes, almost dancing, at the same time as he turns his head back over his right shoulder (Figure 15.1). The figure is nude with a mantle draped lightly over his shoulders. He wears a helmet and holds two not easily identifiable staffs. His stepping forward leads the eye to the figure in the next medallion, a male nude in three-quarter rear view who is resting his left arm on a pedestal. Here the stable posture and the rear view of the figure brings the movement to a halt. Still, this nude turns his head to the right and looks towards the next character, towards whom his outstretched right hand holds a tendril as if presenting it. What seems to be a wreath of leaves about the head may indicate that the male nude derives from a Dionysos. The next figure, in contrast, is seated and bearded and only his upper body is nude. He, too, holds an object. In his left arm rests a disk with the depiction of a head, probably the Gorgon's because of the mass of hair painted in gold. His head is turned toward it, while with a counter movement he points his index finger at the tendril offered by the preceding standing male nude. His glance and the turning of his upper body are directed towards the figure in the next medallion who runs in his direction. This last figure is a nude, shown in three-quarter rear view with a mantle flying over his shoulder behind him. He carries a staff similar to that of the second figure described above, whose visual opposite he is. He stops the sequence of visual action, which can be followed in both directions.

The representations of the two remaining medallions are self-contained. On the right a Herakles-type figure stands at ease between two identical columns joined by a stylobate. He rests his weight on what looks like a colonnette but may be his club set on the column on his right. A reddish quiver hangs from the opposite colonnette.

The medallion I have left till last stands out from the others in two ways: the figure represented is a warrior and he is accompanied by a second figure. The warrior is seated, wears a helmet, carries a spear and a quiver or scabbard, and his shield rests on the ground next to him. His right arm is held bent with the hand before his mouth, a gesture either of speech or thought. A small winged child on a pedestal opposite is addressing the warrior. This is the only medallion with anything resembling a scene and perhaps this is why it was chosen by the craftsman who applied the metal handles as the central medallion of this side. That this bowl was planned with sides can also be argued by the way the ornamental Kufic inscription has been placed at the outer base on the cup. It is located at exactly the space between the handles on the side opposite the scene. If one faces the scene with the warrior, the Kufic 'inscription' can be seen, through a slight tilt of the cup, by those sitting opposite, that is from the outer side (Figure 15.3).

What can be concluded from these observations? The seven medallion figures display a wide variety of poses, including even complementary ones. The cup presents something like a gallery of antique figure types: figures are shown from the front, the back, walking in or out, sitting and standing. Five medallions are compositionally bound together by gestures of extreme directional pointing that are not at all antique but medieval. Such gestures are found elsewhere in the tenth century as guides for the eye. This compositional schema is visual rather than thematic, and it encompasses only part of the decoration. The two medallions not connected to this set have slightly more complex subjects; their location is not inelegant but it does not suggest that the entire set of medallions was thought out to present a single visual or narrative theme.

The difficulty identifying the figures coupled with the fact that individual medallions are a principle of organization that hardly strives after the narrative implies that retelling ancient stories was hardly the aim of the cup; if it were, we should not have such difficulty identifying them. The figure as figure is more important than its identity or place in any narrative. The cup, then, has been improperly described as having 'mythological' scenes; it seeks rather to present an air of the antique through a gallery of males, an excerpted set of stock figures. The cup does not revive classical art, but holds onto the last remnants of a source of subject matter whose validity was now less in the subject matter than in the conveyance of a certain form or appearance. A conscious revival would not be so uncertain of its subject matter; if only certain figure types were being revived, it would not be a renaissance in any sense of the word. The meaning has to be sought in precisely the lack of narrative and the presentation of these quotations, which can be labeled as visual symbols.

Curiously, the ivory caskets, the San Marco vase and the silver inkpot in Padua, the only objects from the middle Byzantine period that can be unambiguously recognized as secular objects with figures deriving from antiquity, are all containers. All are also of some material value and thus display an upper class taste, although much of the ivory work is of rather low quality. All are decorated by placing around the exterior sides individual figures separated by ornamental motifs or frames. This decorative scheme is appropriate for the exterior of small containers, like the vase or the inkpot, since their shape makes it impossible for anyone to perceive much of the decoration at a single glance. This system of dividing the surface into smaller units makes certain that a complete unit is perceived as a whole from whatever angle one looks at the object.

The decorative system of the inkpot, dated to the 9th–10th centuries on palaeographical grounds,[11] is conceptually the same as that of the glass cup. The individual figures on the outer surface are separated by twisted snakes which serve as ornamental dividers. Represented are a putto next to a column with a lyre, a seated figure, Ares (?) and Eros. An inscription runs along the top border identifying the owner as the calligrapher Leon, and the object as a container of color or ink. The object was probably the personal inkpot of the scribe Leon who had chosen to have his container decorated with figures from the antique repertoire. These figures do not seem to make up a specific theme but only give the container an antique appearance. On the lid is a beautiful head of the Gorgon. In contrast to the more generalized characters around the body of the pot, the memory of the Medusa head, as an apotropaic symbol, seems to have been retained.[12] On the lid it serves as a guardian and protector of the ink inside.

The same system of single figures is the norm for the ivory caskets in general as well as for those commonly said to be decorated with figures from antique mythology. The plaques with the individual figures are framed by ornamental bands of rosettes. Only a few pieces of higher quality such as the Veroli casket attempt anything like a strip or group of figures which makes up a scene.[13] The story telling scene on profane objects that lasted through the silver dishes of the seventh century has fallen almost completely out of use. Thus the cup is of a piece with the decorative approach of most other mid-Byzantine examples.

Enough ivory caskets survive – unlike the unique glass cup and inkpot – to give us an idea of how the decoration was assembled. The repertoire of figures or figure types is extremely limited. Predominantly individual characters were carved on single plaques and applied on the caskets. Almost all of the single figure types on these ivory caskets can be found on those few which contain scenes. The craftsmen were apparently working with a limited stock of figures which they repeated in a variety of combinations. The 'themes' of these caskets were consequently confined to the general impression conveyed by the figure types themselves. The close interconnections among the caskets still extant make the hypothesis that there was much more antique subject matter available to the craftsmen quite doubtful.

Just as the decorative system varied little among the caskets, so also their thematic 'programs'. It is important to note that especially the caskets with single figures are thematically just as imprecise as the cup. This puts the cup's 'lack' of a thematic program in a different light. To take one example among the ivories, a casket in New York has seventeen rectangular plaques with individual figures.[14] The theme of the warrior outweighs all others and gives the casket a general overall subject. Although a large number of individual warriors is shown, there are no exact repetitions: one walks toward the right, another is frontal, another is seen from the rear walking towards the left, etc. (Figure 15.2). The poses as well as dress and age are varied. This recalls the kind of variety observed on the cup. A few figures have even been taken over from different thematic repertoires. A youth draped with a himation who holds a bunch of grapes and a globe and an old man who is possibly a Silenus may be leftovers of Dionysiac revelers. Among the warriors two are dressed in trousers and turban-like helmets that betray Islamic influence which was making itself felt in the Macedonian period.

Classical or antique subject matter, in summary, survives on these objects in only a few formulas rather than as a subject matter that is being revivified. A decorative system has been found that does not require mastery of narrative content at the same time as the scenes themselves are disappearing. This process is taking place in a very similar manner on all – though admittedly a small body of material – secular objects that historically displayed antique subject matter.

This limitation of a repertoire extends even to the small details. For example, on the San Marco cup the columns consist of a three or four step base, a drum and a capital consisting of the same stepped slabs as the base. The same design formula has been used on representations of columns or altars in the ivories. This

Figure 15.2 Ivory casket, detail. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.237). Photograph, all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

is not the way ancient art depicted columns, even in abbreviated versions. This is a medieval craftsman's short-hand for a column and a part of the medieval repertoire of antique forms. Similarly the motif of the lyre, placed on a barely recognizable column on the inkpot, can be found on the caskets.[15] Other iconographic connections between these objects can be pointed out. For example, the profile heads in medallions between the bands of rosettes found often on the ivory boxes are part of the Byzantine decorative system on the cup. These heads show how connected and limited the repertoire was. They probably have a more specific meaning from what we can establish now, which remains to be explored. On the ivories they are first incised with a sort of compass which leaves a hole for the future head between cheek and hair at the level of the ear. In the painted versions of these heads on the cup the hole has been interpreted and painted as an earring.

From these observations there is no doubt that not only the forms but also the content of antique art have drastically diminished. A renaissance of antique art and culture in the tenth century would have manifested itself in stronger terms. What we see here are the last visual remains of an art form which from the eleventh century on was no longer preferred. The category of secular art, in so far as it has survived, adopts another repertoire of forms and themes. Vessels such as the Troyes ivory casket and the silver gilt bowls in Leningrad[16] now display images of the hunt, dancers and musicians, and phantastic animals. This repertoire is partially drawn from the Islamic world, which makes its presence felt by the eleventh century.

Belting in his article brought up a second category of luxury ware as a contrast to the 'classicizing' object type. It is the 'orientalizing' type represented for him by the famous tenth-century Byzantine silk production.[17] The Byzantine silks of this period represent without doubt a digested and reworked Islamic repertoire of forms. But this vocabulary is not limited to silks. Here the cup serves again as an excellent test case, reminding us, as some of the ivory caskets, that the two spheres were treated as sources but not combatants. For together with the ancient figural motifs pseudo-Kufic inscriptions decorate the cup. A wide band of imitation Arabic lettering has a prominent place along the inner lip of the cup and at the base (Figure 15.3).[18] The two categories of visual forms coexist on one object but are kept visually separate. The Kufic decoration might almost be thought of as a surprise for the viewer, who, having seen the exterior, discovers further visual pleasure by looking into the cup, or sees the lower Kufic band as the cup is lifted for a drink. For the modern viewer, the cup displays an aesthetic sense that conforms to our sense of the best of several worlds: the figural from the antique, the decorative from the Islamic, both set within an overall Byzantine system of presentation.

As the Islamicizing production of silk textiles in the middle of the tenth century shows, this art was finding a great echo within Byzantine culture. For the category of secular art, it can to a large extent be seen as a replacement for

Figure 15.3 Glass cup with mythological scenes and pseudo-kufic incription. Venice, Treasury of the Cathedral of San Marco. Reproduced by kind permission of the Procuratoria di San Marco, Venice

the drying up of antique sources. A fragmentary glass vase, for example, with the same decorative approach as the San Marco cup, has in its two surviving large medallions a seated musician playing a stringed instrument and a lion, both images from the oriental repertoire.[19]

Thus it is not too surprising to find an emperor expressing admiration and appreciation for the newest imports in luxury goods, since these always reach aristocratic circles first. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos – whom modern scholars often cite as a fomenter of a classical renaissance – in the only surviving text in which he himself praises a work of art, happens to be admiring an "Arabic" product, and a cup at that. This comment is found in a letter written ca. 940 before Constantine became sole ruler to Theodore, Metropolitan of Kyzikos, a close friend of Constantine's residing on the Bithynian Olympos, who had sent him some greens from the countryside and a cup, and Constantine was responding with a letter of thanks:

". . . When I received the mountain vegetables and found these more tasty than honey in honeycomb, I was thankful to the sender. I marveled at the Arabic cup, its variegated <beauty>, its smoothness, its delicate work – both while eating and while going to bed; and, having thought of pouring myself some wine into it, I also feel a great pleasure, greater than if the famous nectar were abundantly poured over my lips . . .".[20]

Concerning the category of secular luxury goods, the evidence excludes a renaissance of antique art. It is a separate task to investigate the source of the classicizing style of ninth- and tenth-century religious and secular art, and to explain what may be more complex relations to classical traditions in certain works of distinctly imperial function, such as the Paris Psalter.

Notes

1   J. Philippe, *Le monde byzantin dans l'histoire de la verrerie*, Bologna 1970. A Grabar, La verrerie d'art byzantine au Moyen Age, in: *Fondation Eugène Piot, Monument et Mémoires publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 57 (1971), p. 89–127.

2   N. Kondakov, *Histoire d'Art byzantin*, Paris 1891. K. Weitzmann, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, Chicago 1971, Studies nos. 6, 7, 8, and passim; also *The Joshua Roll: A work of the Macedonian Renaissance, Studies in Manuscript Illumination 3*, Princeton 1948.

3   A. Cutler, The Mythological Bowl in the Treasury of San Marco at Venice, in: *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History, Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, Beirut 1974, p. 235–54. The bibliography on the cup can be found in: *Der Schatz von San Marco in Venedig*, Exhibition Catalogue, Milan 1984.

4   H. Belting, Kunst oder Objekt-Still?, in: *Byzanz und der Westen. Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 432 (Vienna 1984), p. 65–83.

5   Belting, op. cit., 75. In this essay Belting shows that Basilios, a patron of the 10th c., commissioned a variety of objects which do not show an uniform style. Although I agree with this notion, I do not see how the Naumachika (Ambrosiana, cod. B. 119), a collection of texts from different periods on naval tacticts, his Homilies of John Chrysostomos (Dionysiou, cod. 70) and his Lectionary (Leningrad, cod. 55) are witnesses for antiquarian interests, especially since the ornament of the Dionysiou manuscript exhibits close similarities with the ornament on the Limbourg staurotheque, also one of his commissions. The Naumachika is the only work which in part contains ancient texts. But this fact and the fact that it is a luxury edition do not bring this manuscript closer to antiquity. Unfortunately we do not know how Basilios would have had decorated an object of secular function.

6   K. Shelton, *The Esquiline Treasure*, London 1981, p. 27.

7   H. Vetters, Ephesos, in: *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts*, Grabungen, 1969, p. 7–22.

8   K. Weitzmann, The Survival of Mythological Representations in Early Christian and Byzantine Art and Their Impact on Christian Iconography, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14 (1960), p. 45–68. A. Bank, *Frühbyzantinische Silbergefässe aus der Eremitage*. Ausstellung, Berlin 1978, nos. 9, 12.

9   A.D. Tendall and A. Cambitoglou, *The Red-figured Vases of Apulia* 1, Oxford 1978, passim.

10 Cutler, op. cit., fig. 14.

11 A. Guillou, *La Civilization Byzantine*, Paris 1974, pl. VI. C. Mango, Storia dell'arte, in: *La Civiltà Bizantina dal IX all' XI Secolo*, ed. A. Guillou, Bari 1978, p. 282, fig. 57.

12 Another ancient apotropaic symbol, the Heraklian knot had also retained its power through the Middle Ages, see I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, The Byzantine Knotted Column (to appear in the *Festschrift for Milton Anastos*).

13 A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbein-skulpturen* I, Berlin 1930, nos. 21, 40, 41 etc.

14 Goldschmidt-Weitzmann, I, no. 12.

15 Goldschmidt-Weitzmann, I, no. 24. Here a putto is seated on the column. This combination of column and putto can be found on other examples e.g. nos. 17, 25, On no. 17 the putto is standing and thus reminiscent of the medallion in the San Marco cup.

16 Goldschmidt-Weitzmann, I, no. 122. A. Bank, *Byzantine Art*, Leningrad-Moscow 1966, Nos. 208, 213.

17 Belting, op. cit. 75–6.

18 Grabar, op. cit. 91–94. Cutler, op. cit. 238–9.

19 W.F. Volbach, A. Grabar, et al., *Il Tesoro di San Marco, II: Il Tesoro e il Museo,* Florence 1971, no. 83, pl. LXVIV.

20 J. Darrouzès, Epistoliers byzantins du xᵉ siècle, in: *Archives de l'orient chrétien* 6 (1960) 329. For the reference I would like to thank Ihor Sevčenko.

16

Images of the Court

Henry Maguire

"What could be more delightful than to find oneself in the emperor's entourage, to participate in the imperial lifestyle, to wear magnificent costumes, to share an intimate association with the emperor?" So wrote an anonymous Byzantine courtier of the tenth century in a letter of consolation to a high official who had lost his post.[1] Yet in another letter the same courtier dwelt on the darker elements of court life: "What suspicion, jealousy, fear, flattery, servility, ignorance, deceit, softness, languor, insolence, senselessness, peevishness, slander, and other impurities and filth! All these vices have insolently invaded the imperial palace!"[2] Since the Middle Ages the Byzantine court, at the center of the empire, has provoked opposing reactions, whether in art or in literature. There was no single view of the palace and its functionaries, but rather many views, official and unofficial, internal and external, institutional and private, sophisticated and naive, flattering and hostile, which together make up a mosaic of the whole. Like all mosaics, the composite image of the court comes into a unified focus when seen at a distance, but when seen close-up the individual viewpoints contrast and conflict with one another. This essay attempts to create out of the opposing facets a general picture of courtly life in Byzantium, which will serve as a background to the material culture of the emperor and his entourage.[3]

Palace and Ceremonial

From the founding of Constantinople in the fourth century until the end of the eleventh century, the primary physical locus of court life was the Great Palace,

which occupied the eastern tip of the city, extending southward from the Church of Hagia Sophia. There are few remains of the Great Palace, but it was an extensive complex of buildings, each with different functions, including an impressive vestibule, throne rooms and audience halls, a large state dining room, imperial bedchambers, and several chapels – all of which were arranged around courtyards – and gardens and even a polo ground.[4] The edifices were magnificent and drafty and owed much to Late Roman and Islamic palace architecture. In the twelfth century the Komnenian emperors, whose foreign policy was strongly engaged with Western Europe, moved the court to the more castlelike environment of the Blachernai Palace, located against the city walls in the northwest corner of Constantinople.[5] The Blachernai became the principal imperial residence, although the Great Palace continued to be used for official purposes throughout the twelfth century.[6]

The official life of the court was centered on a succession of ceremonials, a political liturgy involving speech, costume, and action, which marked all types of state occasions, including imperial coronations, marriages, births and birthdays, the promotion of officials, the reception of ambassadors, and the celebration of triumphs. There was also a regular calendar of processions to churches on feast days. Many of these ceremonies took place within the confines of the palace and were witnessed only by members of the court and by privileged guests, such as ambassadors; others took place outside the palace in the city's streets and churches. The ceremonies not only codified the internal structure of the court and ensured its cohesion but also presented to the public an idealized image of the Byzantine state. The overriding message – the unchanging order and majesty of the Byzantine Empire – did not, however, preclude the expression of more transient concerns.[7]

An important site of public ceremonial was the Hippodrome, the large racetrack adjacent to the Great Palace, which was used for chariot races and other state functions, such as the proclamations of emperors and the staging of triumphs. The emperor received ritualized acclamations in his own box in the Kathisma, a two-story building that communicated directly with the Great Palace.[8] Because the people of Constantinople saw the emperor at the Hippodrome, the place itself became a symbol of political power. Scenes from the Hippodrome were depicted in capital cities beyond the borders of Byzantium. The frescoes adorning the eleventh-century Cathedral of Sviata Sofiia (Saint Sophia) in Kiev show the Byzantine emperor seated in the elevated box of the Kathisma with his attendants standing beside him, as well as views of the arena itself, including the starting gates for the four chariot teams, musicians, acrobats, and mimes, and spectators in the galleries.[9]

Taxis and *Ataxia*

Ceremonial presented an image of *taxis*, the harmonious order that was thought essential for the proper functioning not only of the court but also of the whole

empire. *Taxis* was opposed to *ataxia*, the disorder abhorred by the Byzantines and considered characteristic of barbarians and heretics. The court's framework was an elaborate hierarchy of offices and titles, reaching from the emperor downward. The titles and their sequence in rank have been preserved in official lists drawn up primarily to aid in the organization of state banquets.[10] The order of seating at dinner parties was a matter of great importance: in the tenth century the Western ambassador Liutprand of Cremona complained bitterly when he was placed in the fifteenth position from the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, below the retinue of imperial officials.[11] Liutprand also wrote a vivid description of a ceremonial that took place during the week before Palm Sunday, when the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos distributed largesse to his courtiers in strict order of precedence. A herald summoned each recipient to come before the emperor and receive his payment, which was in the form of bags of gold coins and, for higher officials, silk cloaks.[12] The garment that a dignitary received was integral to his rank. Official instructions for ceremonials, such as the *Book of Ceremonies*, a tenth-century compilation, gave precise descriptions of the costumes to be worn by particular rank holders at different events. Fine clothes were an important component of the Byzantine self-image. When the foreigner Liutprand was returning from Constantinople to Italy, he took some purple silk cloaks with him. But he was stopped by four palace officials who confiscated the garments, stating that only Byzantines had the right to wear such clothing. "As we surpass all other nations in wealth and wisdom," they reportedly said, "so it is right that we should surpass them in dress. Those who are unique in the grace of their virtue should also be unique in the beauty of their raiment."[13]

The *taxis* of the imperial court is represented in a well-known portrait of a Byzantine emperor and his retinue contained in a manuscript of homilies by the Church Father John Chrysostom, now in Paris (cat. no. 143).[14] This miniature was painted for presentation to the emperor Michael VII Doukas, perhaps between 1071 and 1073, shortly after his marriage to Maria of Alania. It was later retouched for presentation to Michael's successor, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, perhaps in 1078 or 1079, after Nikephoros had married Michael's former wife, Maria.[15] The use of the same painting to portray two different emperors demonstrates that imperial imagery was largely permanent and unchanging; for the second presentation it was necessary only to modify the ruler's face slightly and to attach new inscriptions. The miniature shows the emperor, magnificently attired in silks, sitting on a high throne. Over his blue and gold tunic he wears a darker blue cloak, fastened by a gold-and-ruby brooch and decorated with a large trapezoidal *tablion*, woven of gold thread. At the throne's top are personifications of Truth and Justice, two imperial Virtues, while below, four courtiers flank the emperor. The ranks of the officials are clearly marked by their silk costumes and their titles, which are written above their heads. The men at the right wear red-tasseled headdresses and red and gold cloaks over blue tunics. The man to the far right is labeled *proedros* and *megas primikerios*; the other courtier is identified as *proedros* and *dekanos*. The two courtiers on the left hold higher

administrative posts; they are at the ruler's right hand, the more favored position, and wear white hats. Nearest the throne stands a beardless eunuch who wears the most splendid costume, a white silk robe decorated with large medallions containing lions woven in red and gold. He is designated *protoproedros* and *protovestiarios*. Originally the *protovestiarios* was the keeper of the emperor's wardrobe, but by the eleventh century he occupied a high administrative post. The beardless official beside the *protovestiarios*, wearing a red and gold cloak over a blue tunic, is called *proedros* and *epi tou kanikleiou*. The latter title indicates that he was the keeper of the imperial inkstand, that is, the emperor's private secretary.

A sense of order is conveyed not only through the titles and the costumes but also through the posing and arrangement of the figures. The emperor, larger and placed higher than his courtiers, sits in a strict frontality, his face turned toward the viewer. The officials stand in equally frozen poses, their faces turned toward the ruler in submission and respect. Only the abstractions, the Virtues, show signs of movement and life. The *taxis* seen here can be contrasted with the *ataxia* depicted in a ninth-century psalter now in Moscow.[16] This work represents the heretical Council of 815, convened by the emperor Leo V to renew Iconoclasm within the Byzantine Empire. At the bottom right two Iconoclasts destroy an image of Christ, while to the left an enthroned figure dressed in purple presumably represents Leo V or his son Symbatios-Constantine, who actually presided over the council. Every element of the composition expresses *ataxia*. The ruler looks not to the front but turns his eyes shiftily to the side. He is flanked not by orderly and deferential courtiers but by a confused crowd of cronies. He does not wear the heavily jeweled imperial crown with its pearly pendants; instead, his wild and unkempt hair bunches out in an exaggerated fashion. The whole disorderly court literally flows with blood, which gushes out at the right and washes around the conspirators' feet.[17]

Images of the Emperor

As the miniature of Nikephoros III Botaneiates demonstrates, the emperor was at the center of the court, and its order or disorder was reflected in his person. Byzantine artists and orators developed strongly idealized images of the emperor's physique, deportment, and costume, to which a good emperor was supposed to conform. They also employed a stylized set of models and metaphors to evoke the ruler's unseen qualities, his wisdom and his virtue. All of these images had negative counterparts, which were applied to bad rulers.

Since the end of the Roman period Byzantine orators had praised the physique of the emperor by following a simple formula. The speaker began his description of the imperial body with the head and worked his way down to the feet. A typical example of this procedure is found in an anonymous panegyrical descrip-

tion of the twelfth-century emperor Manuel I Komnenos presiding over a jousting tournament. According to this encomium, the emperor had a tall body, resembling a palm tree. His hair was long and waving in the wind, while the imperial eyebrows were symmetrical and graceful. The eyes of the sun king were like violets and gave flashing glances. His shoulders were broad and heroic but symmetrical; his chest was strong and manly; and his stomach was lean and beautifully proportioned like a cuirass.[18] Such an imperial body, strong and gracefully symmetrical, is seen in a frontispiece miniature in an early eleventh-century Psalter of Basil II, now in Venice. The emperor stands in full physical glory over his groveling enemies.[19]

The reverse of *enkomion* (praise) is *psogos* (invective), an example of which is Liutprand of Cremona's well-known description of Nikephoros II Phokas. Although he was Italian, Liutprand knew Greek well. He had spent enough time in Byzantium to be familiar with the conventions of its rhetoric, and here he turns each element of a Byzantine panegyric into its opposite.[20] Thus Liutprand also begins his description of the imperial person with the head and proceeds down the body, but he does not start by exclaiming that the emperor is tall like a palm tree; rather, he compares him to a pygmy. The emperor does not have long and waving hair but a thick growth of bristles like those of a pig; his eyes are tiny like those of a mole; his belly is not lean but large. And so the parody goes on; every shining imperial virtue is turned by the malicious Westerner into a vice.[21]

The emperor also had to conform to idealized standards of deportment. He had to be seen as fixed, stable, and unmovable, a ruler whose character and judgment were unswayed by emotional excess. Such a demeanor was described by the eleventh-century courtier and orator Michael Psellos in a speech addressed to Isaac I Komnenos: "You are straight, true, stiff . . . steadfast, firmly fixed, lofty . . . an impartial judge, unwavering in judgment . . . a secure counselor, noble, unshaken in [stormy] waves." Psellos stressed the ruler's lack of emotions: "Where is there any anger in you, where are there streams of laughter, where are there traces of rage, and where is there babbling of speech? Where is there boasting, or violence, and a wily mind? Where [is there] a knitting of the brows or an angry expression? For there are no unseemly qualities in you, neither easily excited emotion . . . nor delight, nor any graces, nor much laughter."[22]

A portrait of Nikephoros III Botaneiates and Maria of Alania that appears on another frontispiece page of the Homilies of John Chrysostom in Paris shows the rulers as straight, tall, impassive, and without the superfluous graces dismissed by Psellos (Figure 16.1).[23] These rigid and severe depictions, against a gold background with no graceful ornament, express the ideal imperial demeanor praised by Psellos and other Byzantine orators.

But when emperors were the object of censure, they were described in terms of softness, licentious movement, and instability. Often such rulers were compared to animals or to the pagan god Dionysos and his followers, whose revels were sometimes seen on the subversive ivory and bone plaques that decorated

tenth-century Byzantine boxes. Thus an invective against the emperor Michael III, which was composed on the initiative of his usurper's grandson, accuses him of staging drunken parodies of the liturgy in the palace. Michael is said to imitate Dionysos, "the giver of graces," in his pursuit of "what was soft, loose, voluptuous, and without rigor or moral fiber." His followers are derided as "unbridled satyrs, ready for all shameless conduct, the devotees of Dionysos."[24] The association of Dionysos and his entourage with playfulness, frivolity, and lack of dignity is evident in the Veroli Casket (cat. no. 153); there the god reclines in a chariot drawn by two panthers, while above him a naked boy disappears headfirst into a basket.

Just as the emperor's body and behavior were held to ideals of beauty and decorum, his costume and regalia were the visible expression of his majesty and virtues. "Your might is made known . . . by the throne, and by the tiara, and by the pearl-spangled robe," said Euthymios Malakes to Manuel I Komnenos in 1161.[25] For the rhetorician each jewel of the emperor's regalia symbolized an aspect of his virtue. The anonymous description of Manuel I presiding over the jousts says that the gold of his crown "flashed like lightning, the pearls appeared white, and the precious red stone glistened, these being a mirror of the treasury of wisdom that resides in the emperor's head."[26] A hostile writer would denigrate the emperor's garb. To Liutprand of Cremona, the imperial robe worn by Nikephoros II Phokas was dirty, foul smelling, and faded with age, and his regalia were ancient and ill fitting.[27]

A less sophisticated interpretation of the imperial regalia is given in the *Oneirokritikon* (dream book) of Achmet Ben Sirin, a Byzantine primer on the interpretation of dreams that was probably composed in the tenth century. According to Achmet, "If someone dreams that he had the distinction of wearing an imperial crown that had been studded with pearls and gems, he will have dominion and glory analogous to the crown; and if he dreams that the gems and pearls were hanging down from it like earrings, his dominion will be in accordance with their length and beauty. If the emperor dreams that the pendants of his crown were cut off, his reign will be disorderly and short-lived."[28] Here the jewels and pearls that hang from the emperor's crown represent the emperor's prowess in a concrete way: the longer the pendants, the better the prognosis. Perhaps it was for this reason that some imperial portraits, such as that of the twelfth-century emperor John II Komnenos in Hagia Sophia, depicted pearly pendants that descended almost to the shoulders.

Byzantine orators and artists expected the emperor to conform to a number of revered models, with whom he was constantly compared. If he fell short, he might be compared to models of vice and wickedness. The most important of the virtuous prototypes was Christ himself, whom the emperor imitated on earth. The twelfth-century writer and intellectual Michael Italikos wrote to Manuel I Komnenos, "You go about here below as a living and moving statue of the king above who governs you, and I don't know of anyone else on earth more like him."[29] At the end of the eleventh century the archbishop Theophy-

laktos of Ohrid observed: "Every emperor is an image of God . . . just as the archetype is higher than all [creation], so the likeness will be above all [others]."[30] This analogy between the divine and the earthly ruler was expressed in Byzantine works of art such as the enamels now adorning the Holy Crown of Hungary. These plaques, whatever the object that they originally adorned, form two distinct groups, centered respectively on Christ and on the emperor Michael VII Doukas, who alone occupy arched frames. Christ is flanked by the archangels Michael and Gabriel and by four saints, all of whom pay deference by turning their heads or eyes toward him. The emperor is flanked by his son Constantine on his right and by the lower-ranked Géza I, the king of Hungary, on his left; like the saints accompanying Christ, the Hungarian king indicates his submission to his overlord by turning his eyes toward the emperor.[31]

Old Testament models, especially David and Solomon, were also significant. At the end of the twelfth century the writer Michael Choniates compared the living emperor Isaac II Angelos with painted icons representing the biblical king David: "The emperor resembles David in almost all characteristics that adorn not only the soul but also the body. It is not possible to set them side by side at the present time, except insofar as one can be pleased by an icon of David, and by means of the icon briefly demonstrate the identity of the original characteristics. . . . If, then, the emperor may be shown to resemble the icon of David, it is plain that the emperor must be much like David himself in all respects."[32] These resemblances were dramatized through the rhetorical device of syncrisis, or comparison. For example, in the Psalter of Basil II the portrait of the emperor standing in triumph over his enemies was associated with a second frontispiece showing six scenes from the life of David.[33] Each of these Davidic scenes can be read as a reference to the emperor. The killing of the bear and the lion exemplifies the destruction of the ruler's enemies, who were often compared to wild beasts in imperial rhetoric. David kneeling before the prophet Nathan in remorse for his adultery with Bathsheba alludes to the emperor's humility and contrition, virtues necessary for imperial success.[34]

Comparisons with biblical figures also gave force to invective. Bad emperors might be associated with Pharaoh, with Saul, or with Herod. Saul was especially important in the Byzantine rhetoric of blame, for his character and history allowed a usurper (the new David) to vilify his deposed predecessor (the old Saul) and thus to justify the coup. This theme was also illustrated in Byzantine art.[35]

More rarely, the emperor might be compared with models from pagan mythology. If he was being condemned, he might be associated with the many-headed Hydra[36] or, as we have seen, with the unbridled Dionysos. However, if he was being praised, he might be set beside Herakles for his strength[37] or Orpheus for his powers of taming and persuasion.[38] There is a hint of the Orphic comparison in the opening miniature of the Paris Psalter, a tenth-century manuscript directly or indirectly associated with the imperial court, where David is depicted as a musician. He is surrounded by an admiring audience of animals, together with

personifications evoking different facets of nature (a nymph represents a fountain at the upper right; a bronzed youth portrays Mount Bethlehem at the lower right).[39] The image reflects ancient portrayals of Orpheus, in which he is shown as a lyre player in a mountainous landscape with animals clustered around him.[40]

Another aspect of imperial panegyric was the use of conventional metaphors to describe the qualities of the emperor, of which the most common was the identification of the emperor with the sun. The emperor is the sun in a blooming springtime, the new, rising sun that replaces the setting sun of his predecessor, the sun that dispels the clouds of invaders, and the Sun of Justice; he is even greater and higher than the sun itself.[41] In art this solar symbolism was conveyed by the emperor's halo and by the brilliant gold of the background. Solar symbolism may also have been embodied in a marble roundel containing an image of John II Komnenos (cat. no. 137), which once probably had a gilded background, so that the imperial portrait was silhouetted against a circle of gold.[42] But here, too, the lofty solar symbolism could be brought down to earth by the barbs of invective. Liutprand of Cremona sneered that the emperor Nikephoros was a "burnt-out coal," not the "morning star" or rising sun.[43]

The Courtier

The courtiers, the supporting cast of the imperial theater, were regarded officially as the creators and upholders of good order, or *taxis*, but their own perspective was that of ambitious and often fearful individuals. The official view held that the court functioned as a well-regimented liturgy, with a prescribed place and costume for each participant on every occasion, thus creating a harmonious pattern that reflected heaven above and formed a model for the imperial dominions below. In contrast, the anonymous tenth-century correspondent quoted at the opening of this essay observed that while court life had its pleasures ("the friends, the celebrity, the splendor, the glamour of living in the city"), the palace was full of jealousy, flattery, deceit, and fear. He consoled his banished friend by urging him to look to higher things: "Everything [in mundane affairs] is a game and a stage, offering only a faint trace of the truth."[44]

In another letter of consolation, addressed to an official named John who had lost his position as chamberlain, the same writer complains of the liars at court, who were goaded by malice and envy into making false accusations, so that even though he was known for intelligence and integrity, John had been excluded from the palace.[45] He was lucky in that he had lost only his post; intrigues at court could cost a trusted official his sight or even his life. According to the historian Niketas Choniates, the emperor Manuel I Komnenos gave Theodore Styppeiotes, who held the post of keeper of the inkstand, a gold inkwell set with precious stones. This special favor aroused the envy of another courtier, who

framed his rival for treason. As a result, the emperor had Styppeiotes blinded.[46] We can visualize what type of gift it was that started this drama with the help of an inkpot belonging to an earlier epoch, the late ninth or early tenth century. This vessel is made of gilded silver and decorated with figures from pagan mythology executed in relief, such as a nude Ares seated with his weapons. The metrical inscription on the base identifies the owner as "Leon, the delightful marvel among the calligraphers."[47] A fine Gorgon's head is framed by writhing serpents on the lid. The monster safeguarded the contents of the inkpot, and possibly its owner, from misfortunes such as those that befell Styppeiotes.

An intimate glimpse of the mentality of an individual courtier is given by an illuminated manuscript of the Psalter and New Testament now in Washington, DC. We know from the contents of the book that it was made in Constantinople in 1083 or 1084, and its small size indicates that it was intended for private use.[48] What kind of use this was is revealed by the opening pages, which contain a series of prognostications, somewhat resembling a modern horoscope. The predictions themselves strongly suggest that the owner had a career at court. They are preceded by instructions telling the user to open the book at random to find a psalm number, to count a further six numbers, and then to find that number on the list of predictions. Several forecasts are suggestive of the conflicts, intrigues, hopes, and fears of court life: "Number 20: Many enemies, but they will not injure you . . . number 55: An office [*axia*] is in store for you after a little while . . . number 67: This matter bears a grudge . . . number 77: Bend in submission and you are raised up . . . number 84: Fear not, you will be elevated after some days . . . number 89: A hidden matter is revealed . . . number 109: You are successful, and favor lies in store for you."[49]

The Court of the Women

An important part of imperial life was the women's court. Presided over by the empress, it consisted of the wives and widows of high court officers, each of whose title and position in the hierarchy was analogous to her husband's rank. In the tenth century there were parallel ceremonials for men and for women, and even simultaneous state banquets for the two genders.[50] For example, the *Book of Ceremonies* describes the reception for the wives and widows of court officials after the birth of a male child to an empress: "Know well that on the eighth day after the birth the bedchamber of the *augusta* [empress] is beautified with veils interwoven with gold and with chandeliers. . . . The child . . . is placed in the crib and he and the *augusta* are covered with spreads woven with gold. . . . Then are led in the *zostai* and *magistrissai* and the *anthypatai* and *patrikiai* and the official *protospathariai* and the other senatorial wives, and then likewise the high-ranking widows corresponding to the aforesaid offices, one after another, from the New Palace dining room. And they pray in thanksgiving

Figure 16.1 Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates and courtiers. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Coislin 79 (*Homilies of St John Chrysostom*), fol 2r

for the *augusta*, and acclaim her, and they give fitting respect, each one bringing in a gift of her own choice."[51]

These careful instructions reveal that ceremonials for women were as elaborate as those for men. The female ceremonials were not confined to the palace but occasionally took place in the public arena. Women played a prominent role in the *adventus*, or arrival, of an imperial fiancée at Constantinople. The wives of court officials processed beyond the city walls to greet their future mistress and to dress her in imperial garments and red shoes. On some occasions the foreign princess would arrive with a magnificent retinue, including gifts such as leopards riding behind their trainers on horseback.[52] An *adventus* is depicted in a manuscript containing an epithalamium that may have been written for the daughter of Louis VII of France, Agnes, who arrived at Constantinople in 1179 to marry Alexios II, the heir of Manuel I Komnenos (Figure 16.2). The poem describes how more than seventy high-ranking ladies went out to welcome the new arrival,

Figure 16.2 A foreign princess arrives at Constantinople for her wedding. Manuscript illustration, Byzantine, 1179. Vatican City, © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms Vat. gr. 1851, fol. 3v

and how one of them went on ahead to dress the princess in a costume befitting an empress. The miniature shows the princess in Western dress and then in resplendent imperial costume, including a silk robe decorated with eagles. Below, she sits on a central throne receiving the homage of the women in the palace.[53]

Like the emperor, the empress was presented in rhetoric and art by a complex of ideal images. Many panegyrics of empresses employed the same conventions as those of their husbands: the women were lauded for their noble birth, their imperial virtues, and their physical beauty and perfection. The same similes were employed: they shone like the sun, and they caused those around them to burgeon as if in the spring-time.[54] There were, however, some differences. When the empress was praised together with the emperor, she was often compared to the moon, with her husband being the sun.[55] There was also a greater emphasis on physical beauty in the encomiums of empresses; comparisons might even be made with Aphrodite and Cleopatra, always, of course, in the empress's favor.[56]

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The power of the empress's beauty is revealed by an incident from the reign of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5). This usurper had murdered Maria of Antioch, the beautiful mother of his predecessor. When he wished to attack her memory, he had the faces of her images repainted to look old and wrinkled, so that her loveliness would not arouse the viewer's sympathy.[57]

Conclusion

In summary, not only was the Byzantine court highly regulated, with its hierarchy of offices, its costumes, and its ceremonials, but the perceptions of the court were also regulated. Whether positive or negative, these perceptions responded to a fixed set of ideal images that were repeatedly conveyed in speech, in writing, and in art. Both the panegyrics of court life and the invectives were highly stylized, although there were significant variations within that stylization. In this respect Byzantine imperial art appears to resemble church art in following established patterns of iconography and expression. However, the Byzantines were not totally chained to the artistic conventions imposed by Church and state. There was still room for an art that played around the edges of the dominant ideology, providing some relief from its discipline. Here is found the life, movement, and freedom of expression that the official images denied – in the undignified putti of the ivory and bone boxes or in the portrayals of pagan gods and monsters in silver. These marginal images, engaging, subversive, and sometimes disturbing, both denied and confirmed the fixity and good order of the center.

Notes

1   Darrouzès and Westerink 1978, p. 217.
2   Ibid., pp. 229–31.
3   The classic discussion of the art of the imperial court is Grabar 1936. For more recent treatments, see H. Maguire 1997.
4   Mango 1959; Guilland 1969, vol. 1, pp. 3–367.
5   Papadopoulos 1928, pp. 127–76; Runciman 1975.
6   Magdalino 1993, pp. 115–19.
7   McCormick 1985, 1986; Cameron 1987.
8   Guilland 1969, vol. 1, pp. 369–595.
9   Lazarev 1966, pp. 56–7, 236–40, pls. 40–1, fig. 28; Logvin 1971, pp. 38–40, pls. 251–6.
10 Oikonomides 1972.
11 Liutprand of Cremona 1915, p. 181; 1930, p. 241.
12 Liutprand of Cremona 1915, pp. 157–8; 1930, pp. 211–12.
13 Liutprand of Cremona 1915, p. 204; 1930, p. 268.
14 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. Coislin gr. 79, fol. 2.

15 Spatharakis 1976, pp. 107–18; Dumitrescu 1987. See also, however, Durand 1992, pp. 360–1.

16 Moscow, State Historical Museum, Ms. 129 (Khludov Psalter), fol. 23v.

17 Corrigan 1992, pp. 32–3.

18 Lampros 1908, p. 16.

19 Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. gr. 17, fol. 3r; Cutler 1984, pp. 115–19.

20 Koder and Weber 1980, p. 60.

21 Liutprand of Cremona 1915, p. 177; 1930, p. 236.

22 Kurtz 1936–41, vol. 1, pp. 46–7.

23 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Coislin gr. 79, fol. 2 bis v.

24 Migne 1857–66, vol. 109, cols. 216, 268; see also Cutler 1984–5, p. 45.

25 Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1913, p. 163; Magdalino 1993, p. 463.

26 Lampros 1908, p. 17.

27 Liutprand of Cremona 1915, pp. 177, 181; 1930, pp. 237, 240.

28 Drexl 1925, p. 202; Oberhelman 1991, p. 219.

29 Gautier 1972, p. 294; Magdalino 1993, p. 437.

30 Gautier 1986, p. 157.

31 Deér 1966; Wessel 1967, pp. 111–15; Kovács and Lovag 1980.

32 Lampros 1879–80, vol. 1, p. 215.

33 Venice, Biblioteca Marciana Ms. gr. 17, fol. 4v.

34 Maguire 1988, pp. 93–4.

35 Ibid., pp. 89–93.

36 Lampros 1879–80, vol. 1, p. 229.

37 Ibid.; Vogt and Hausherr 1932, p. 58.

38 Magdalino 1988, pp. 104–7; Maguire 1989, p. 219.

39 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. gr. 139, fol. Iv; Cutler 1984, pp. 70–1.

40 Maguire 1989, pp. 217–20.

41 Ibid., p. 228; Maguire 1994b, p. 190; Magdalino 1993, pp. 417–18, 436, 467.

42 Vikan 1995, pp. 104–8.

43 Liutprand of Cremona 1915, p. 181; 1930, p. 241.

44 Darrouzès and Westerink 1978, pp. 227–31.

45 Ibid., pp. 215–25.

46 van Dieten 1975, vol. 1, pp. 59, 111–13; Choniates 1984, pp. 34, 63–4.

47 Hörandner, Koder, and Kresten 1989, pp. 150–1; Maguire 1994a, pp. 112–14.

48 Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks Collection Ms. 3; Der Nersessian 1965, pp. 156, 164; Nelson 1989, pp. 145–6.

49 The predictions are on fols. 2r–3r. I am grateful to Ihor Ševčenko for bringing these texts to my attention and to Alice-Mary Talbot for help in deciphering them.

50 Herrin 1995, pp. 72–6; Kazhdan and McCormick 1997.

51 Migne 1857–66, vol. 112, cols. 1149–52.

52 Verpeaux 1966, pp. 286–7.

53 Spatharakis 1976, pp. 210–30, pls. 158–73.

54 Gautier 1972, p. 147 (Michael Italikos on Irene Doukaina).

55 Leib 1937, vol. 1, pp. 111 (Anna Komnene on her mother, Irene Doukaina).

56 Regel 1892, vol. 1, p. 84 (Eustathios of Thessalonike on Agnes of France); Gautier 1972, p. 149 (Michael Italikos on Irene Doukaina).

57   van Dieten 1975, vol. 1, pp. 116, 332–3; Choniates 1984, pp. 66, 183; Eastmond 1994, pp. 508–9.

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17

But Is It Art?

Robin Cormack

My aim here is to investigate the visual aspects of diplomacy in accordance with the editors' brief. This was to address 'the modes of operation of diplomacy rather than Byzantine foreign policy as such'; 'the actual things exchanged between Byzantine and foreign rulers'; and also 'to discuss the ceremonial reception chambers in the Great Palace as far as we know or can know about them'. Space inevitably dictates selectivity in the choice of material, and the solution taken is to focus on evidence from the reigns of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–59) and Constantine IX Monomachus (1042–55).

In looking at Byzantine works of art from the point of view of their function as the 'gift' in diplomacy, we need to treat the objects less as 'art' to be analysed or appreciated on their own terms and more as items chosen or designed to impress and to be valued by the receiver as part of cross-cultural negotiation. We have to be aware therefore of the conceptual debates on the gift – the good gift, that is, not the bad gift or obvious bribe – and on ritualized friendship.[1] One question in dealing with the diplomatic gift and how it works, is whether we might even be observing a process in which there is a continuity between the middle ages and the present day. Can we for once be in a position to avoid serious anachronism? This possibility makes it worthwhile to mention a modern example which at first sight seems to offer some parallelism with the middle ages.

In an act of Christian diplomacy in September 1989 Dr Robert Runcie, the archbishop of Canterbury, went on a visit to Rome to discuss church unity with the pope. An essential part of the diplomacy was the exchange of gifts. Dr Runcie gave the pope a watercolour picture of *The arrival of Augustine in England in*

597, specially commissioned for the occasion from an established British artist, Sonia Lawson ARA.[2] This was painted for the occasion in five months and was about a metre square when framed. No doubt the idea was to commission a 'good' artist; but those responsible for organizing the gift emphasize that the subject and the evocations of the theme were paramount in their minds, not the quality of the execution. The intention of the chosen subject was no doubt to flatter the pope by reminding him of the historical closeness of the two churches, though it did essentially imply the superiority of the church of Rome, from whom the archbishop was trying to court favour: the Anglican church appeared in the diplomacy as the weaker partner. Of course the pope gave a gift in return. He gave a two-volume colour facsimile of an illuminated manuscript, *Vatican lat. 1202, the Codex Benedictinus*, the mid-eleventh-century Lectionary for the festivals of Saints Benedict, Maurus and Scholastica painted at Monte Cassino. The facsimile was published in 1981–2, and so this gift was something that the pope had to hand; it required no special effort on the Vatican side except to get a copy off the shelves of their bookshop. One effect of this gift was to remind the British of the richness and antiquity of the Vatican legacy.

The exchange of gifts was an essential part of the negotiations, and the process fits well into the classic analysis as provided by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss in his work on Polynesian islanders.[3] Each side is obliged to accept the generously offered gift of the other, and the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception. The transaction is based on obligation and self-interest: the giver is in a position of superiority until the donation is reciprocated and then only if the return gift is superior. In this episode the English gift was given first, and was instantly repaid with another; but the theory is still that the recipient should return more than he received – the return should be bigger and more costly – and can of course be the granting of the favour which was the purpose of the diplomacy.

On this occasion the English delegation failed to make any visible progress. The presentation facsimile was incorporated into the Lambeth Palace library, and the English watercolour has no doubt gone to the Vatican store where other such modern 'tasteful' gifts are said to be stacked up. Perhaps the relative unimpressiveness of the gifts in this case suggests both sides knew all along that the diplomacy was doomed to failure.

In view of my suggestion of possible insights to be gained from the 'continuities' of the practices of art in diplomacy, it is alarming to read the assessment of Arnold Toynbee on the diplomatic practices of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. It is a sad (though not unfamiliar) case of a historian unable to handle visual evidence. Toynbee failed to understand through the literary texts the changed atmosphere which a carefully constructed visual environment can evoke, and saw the Byzantine practicalities of diplomacy as merely naive and childish: 'Could even the most simple-minded barbarians have taken seriously the mechanical toys in the imperial throne-room that were set working for the edification of foreign ambassadors to whom the emperor was giving audience?'[4] I suggest that on the

contrary there was nothing more naive and childish in the Byzantine experience than there is in modern practices. This is not, however, to assume uncomplicated continuities between modern and medieval practices; no doubt beneath the similarities lie the usual gaps and discrepancies between modern and medieval mental assumptions.

The Environment of Diplomacy

It is most revealing to re-create the environment of diplomacy before turning to the individual effects of the gifts involved in Byzantine operations. One obvious factor in Byzantine diplomacy is the aim of impressing foreigners in the run-up to any face-to-face meetings: the cityscape of Constantinople itself played an important and effective part in this. Foreigners found the city as a whole so impressive that individual buildings and their architecture were not closely observed. They saw 'fortress Constantinople'; they were instantly overwhelmed by the constructed notion of a world capital.[5]

Once the foreigner was inside the city, the Byzantine aim was, as in any effective ritual, to create the right atmosphere before doing business. The Byzantine emperor in the Great Palace in Constantinople had an environment which had developed as the ideal arena for the purposes of receiving ambassadors in audience, and for the stage-managing of spectacles and banquets for their edification and manipulation. In interpreting the use of this environment, one needs to remember that in Constantinople the emperor was receiving diplomatic missions, not sending requests elsewhere.[6] He was in a position of superiority which he had to maintain as part of the diplomatic process. The whole ritual of diplomacy in the palace was to impress the foreigner with Byzantine superiority: to make-believe that to enter St Sophia was to enter heaven, or that the Byzantine emperor in the Great Palace was the king of kings, the most powerful monarch on earth.

Texts from the time of Constantine Porphyrogenitus help to uncover some of the practical mechanisms used in the palace to impress embassies.[7] Constantine was well aware of the power of imperial ceremonial, and the preface of the *De cerimoniis* parades the Byzantine insights: 'If imperial power is displayed with order and dignity and so reproduces the harmonious movement given by God to the universe, then it will induce the admiration of foreigners, and will seem to our own subjects more pleasant and more impressive.'[8] The English royalty, from the Tudors onwards, have perhaps been one of the closest emulators of Byzantium. To understand the architecture of the English palace, one needs to study the prescriptions of court protocol which determined the arrangements rather than to study the history of architectural form: Henry VIII only needed a small bedsitter in his palaces to carry out his negotiations. The same method must be true of the study of the Great Palace. This developed over the period

not in response to the history of architectural form, but to serve the needs of ceremonial and impressing visitors. It is clear that the Great Palace *worked*. Liudprand of Cremona is one of our most eloquent witnesses of this in his account of his reception in the throne room of the Magnaura in September 948 or 949, when he describes the gilded singing birds which Toynbee so denigrates.[9]

The *De cerimoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus is a prime text for an exploration of Byzantine perceptions of diplomatic visits.[10] Its reader soon surmises that by the tenth century the key location of impressive ceremonial was no longer, as it had been in the sixth century, the Bronze Gate (by then more used as a prison than as the ceremonial facade of a palace) and the public arena of the Hippodrome (though this was still in use for example in 946); it had shifted to the privacy and luxury of the palace. Of the new apartments built in the ninth century by Basil I, which included the sleeping quarters of the emperor, the *Vita Basilii* writes: 'To see these most beautiful works for oneself would be the most accurate way of learning about them. However, they are not open to inspection by everyone, so that they have to be brought to the ears of serious enquirers in a written account. The object of writing is to win for the patron of these works the admiration that is his due, and to save those who are excluded from the right of entry into the palace from being totally ignorant of its wonders'.[11] It was the exclusiveness revealed in this text that gave the emperor total control of the ritual with no danger of disturbance by the people.

The shift of the focus of ceremonial deep into the palace is strikingly documented in the history of the Chrysotriclinus, the Golden Pavilion of the palace, which was built by Justin II (565–78) and completed by his successor Tiberius II (578–82); it was embellished after iconoclasm under Michael III (842–67) and developed by Basil I (866–86).[12] This pavilion – 'the finest room in the palace' according to Liutprand, and often called by Constantine simply 'the palace' – was in the tenth century the key place for ceremonial. It was a setting from which the ordinary public was entirely excluded; only the court and most highly rated foreigners could reach this far into the palace.

The Chrysotriclinus is frequently mentioned in Byzantine texts, but there is never a full description of the building. The Walker Trust began digging in 1935 on the presumed site of the Chrysotriclinus, but few have accepted that this is the part of the palace which was found, even if Miranda managed to produce a reconstructed ground plan of the Chrysotriclinus which accommodated the impressive mosaic floor that was excavated.[13] Study of the various literary sources yields a composite image of the building and its parts, including the following key elements. It is visualized as a centrally-planned building roofed by a dome which was pierced by sixteen windows and supported by eight *kamarai* (arches or niches) which formed chambers. The eastern or imperial chamber (the *bēma*) contained the imperial throne behind bronze rails. The north-east chamber, the oratory of St Theodore, contained the emperor's crown and the rod of Moses and other famous relics: the emperor could put on his robes in here. The south chamber led to the emperor's bedroom through silver doors put up by

Constantine Porphyrogenitus. One chamber was called the Pantheon; another was the Treasury (*phylax*).

As part of his edition and translation of the *De cerimoniis*, Vogt produced a reconstruction of the whole of the Great Palace, including the Chrysotriclinus as well as the area of St Sophia, Hippodrome, Bronze Gate and the Magnaura.[14] But it might be thought that of all the attempts at reconstruction of the lost palace the most elegant architectural visualization is that proposed by Ebersolt in 1910.[15] There is, however, a major problem to confront in reading all the reconstructions, which is perhaps particularly clear in this scheme of Ebersolt. This problem is that all such plans and elevations, however much they may seem based on the evidence of the texts, are nevertheless culturally determined by the attitudes and experience of the modern viewer. Ebersolt's Great Palace is so reminiscent of French Beaux-Arts architectural planning of the beginning of the twentieth century that we must accept that it may be far from the actual Byzantine medieval development.[16]

Ebersolt believed that the Chrysotriclinus was octagonal in form (and related to innovating sixth-century architecture like Saints Sergius and Bacchus at Constantinople or San Vitale at Ravenna). Krautheimer in his turn proposed that it was circular in plan with a pumpkin-shaped dome, and that it had a gallery; but his visualization is all part of a mistaken argument that the Chrysotriclinus was a fully-fledged palace chapel.[17] As for the decoration of the building, we have an epigram celebrating its post-iconoclastic decoration between 856 and 867 which seems to have represented a cycle of monumental mosaic icons: Christ enthroned was represented in the eastern chamber; the Virgin was on the opposite vault over the entrance door, and located near to Michael III and the patriarch Photius; elsewhere in the building was the heavenly court of angels, apostles, martyrs and priests.[18] The viewer at a tenth-century audience would have entered to see the (real) enthroned emperor below the (imaged) enthroned Christ (perhaps both figures seated on lyre-backed thrones). The interior was further enhanced by Constantine Porphyrogenitus with floral ornament (perhaps in tiles).

The Chrysotriclinus in the tenth century functioned as a throne room and was surrounded by the main living quarters of the emperor. This is to be contrasted with the sixth century when Justinian's main living place was the Daphne Palace, the place for salutations and conferring honours was the Great Consistorium, the main throne room was the Magnaura (where the throne of Solomon was kept, the famous automata with growling lions and singing birds, and the effective elevating throne) and the main banqueting hall was the Chamber of the Nineteen Couches. The new Chrysotriclinus took over all these functions, though not exclusively, as these other buildings remained in use. But its purpose was to supply a more grandiose setting for very special occasions. So the Chrysotriclinus was the nucleus around which the imperial family lived; it had religious functions as the assembly place in the early morning for every major church festival, and the emperor would pray here; it had civil functions – promotions to

highest offices were made here; and the logothete came here every morning for a consultation on state affairs; and it was the chief venue for special banquets at Easter and other times. It was where the most important diplomacy was carried out. The Chrysotriclinus satisfied Byzantine perceptions in the tenth century of the 'right place' for an emperor to make his most important appearances.

The key question for the present article is to ask how this structure was manipulated to maximum advantage; and this is best documented with a glance at the reception for the Arab ambassadors from the emir of Tarsus on 31 May 946, which as recorded surpassed the great reception given to the Byzantine ambassadors at Baghdad in 917/18.[19] There is a fundamental issue here about the use of text. The account of the reception comes from the text of the *De cerimoniis*.[20] So at one level this is text only and what it says may not be what exactly happened on the day. But such an issue of text here, while it must be recognized, does not lessen its analytic importance: for it remains clear that emperors understood the power of visual extravaganza.

The Moslem ambassadors were summoned from their lodgings beside the mosque (built under Leo III), and taken through St Sophia (normally barred to members of their religion) to the Magnaura for a first reception with the enthroned emperor. The second reception was a banquet in the specially decorated Chrysotriclinus.[21] In its porch, the emperor's two silver and two golden organs were placed, reminding us of the enormous importance of music in creating atmosphere. During the meal the choirs of St Sophia and Holy Apostles sang from behind curtains; as each course was brought on, the choirs were silent and the organs sounded. No doubt during this banquet (as in the Christmas feast recorded by the ninth-century prisoner of war Harun-ibn-Yahya in the Chamber of the Nineteen Couches), an imperial herald made the announcement for the Moslems that 'I swear by the head of the emperor that in these dishes there is definitely no pork'.[22]

The emperor sat at the Golden Table placed in the centre of the domed room and below a chandelier; protocol only allowed up to five other privileged persons to sit with him. The silver table of Theophilus was laid out for the guests, and the famous Pentapyrgion (a vast cupboard crowned by five towers, also made for Theophilus) was set up.[23] The eight chambers were decorated with imperial mantles, crowns, ornaments and enamels from the Pharos and other churches in the palace. In the south chamber were hung the imperial golden vestments and a crown with enamels on it. The eastern chamber (the throne area) was embellished with hanging crowns – the green crown from the Holy Apostles, the blue crown from the Pharos and a blue crown from St Demetrius. The other chambers were glittering with light from candelabra brought from the Pharos church and decorated with embroideries and other treasures. We learn from Constantine's accounts that the emperor could appropriate all the treasures of Constantinople when he wanted to put on a display like this. He requisitioned objects from church treasuries and also borrowed silver from silversmiths, guest houses, hospitals, monasteries and churches outside the city. This great exhibition of imperial

art was therefore in part a sham, save that it showed the power of the emperor who could claim everything in the city – or rather the text constructs the image of an emperor who could.

In addition to this exhibition of precious objects, we should not forget the effect of special dress, as well as of the silk hangings and Persian carpets, in enhancing the magnificence and superiority of the Byzantine court. Constantine even gave special instructions to dress up these Moslem ambassadors in special clothes supplied by the palace; these *spekia* were ones with special pearled collars, normally limited in Byzantium for use by eunuchs; no doubt the Byzantine court could appreciate this irony, even if the visitors were blissfully unaware of the joke at their expense. When the emperor rose from the banquet, each of the ambassadors (according to their rank) received a sum of money on a gold tray before retiring. Outside the Chrysotriclinus, they washed their hands in perfumed water.

Even from this abbreviated account of one reception, it should be clear how much Toynbee failed to see: the quite staggering effect of playing on all the senses at once of the visiting ambassadors – who in addition to everything else had come on a mission whose success was a foregone conclusion. You do not need to be a child to be overawed by an effective monarchy in control of diplomatic rituals.[24]

The Visual Language of Diplomacy

One ceremonial moment in the reception of these Moslem ambassadors was a gift of coins. The political issues of giving and receiving gifts now need more attention. I want to suggest that the importance of the *artistic* gift is that it can be willingly perceived as representing the 'good' gift, rather than the bribe. A gift of this character is also easier to proffer, as it circumvents (at least in part) the question of value. Whereas bribes can be adversely criticized by the recipient as too paltry, the value of art can always be felt to excel its intrinsic bullion value. Art offers this further dimension in the game of impressing the foreigner. The tiniest bit of enamel art can be seen as worth more than heavy bags of coins.

This aspect of the work of art as a special commodity enhanced by its role in diplomacy faces one simple descriptive problem: how do we now know when a specific work of art operated as a diplomatic gift? The problem is not even one of whether a work of art was made for a specific diplomatic occasion, for there are several examples in Byzantium of objects made for one purpose being recycled as diplomatic gifts – as of course happened in the case of the Vatican's gift to the archbishop of Canterbury mentioned above. One answer to the question of diplomatic intent may be to look at individual works which survive and make a decision about their patronage and history. Obvious candidates for such recognition as integral parts of diplomatic transactions are works of art either known to

have passed from Byzantium to western Europe in the middle ages in documented diplomatic exchanges or which are for definable reasons likely to have done so. There are some such candidates. One is the sixth-century cross of the Emperor Justin II, now in the Vatican. Research, however, soon shows that, although this grand object was very likely an imperial gift to Rome, the precise circumstances of its arrival in the west are unknown.[25] Another candidate is the enamelled reliquary case for a piece of the True Cross in Poitiers, the relic itself being a well-documented present from the Byzantine Emperor Justin II and his wife Sophia to the abbess of the Holy Cross at Poitiers. But though the gift is documented in the sixth century, what we now know is, surprisingly, an eleventh-century work of art.[26] Byzantine textiles, of which many pieces found their way to the medieval west, offer a variation of the problem. Some certainly were diplomatic gifts; but clearly not all, as Liudprand for one informs us when he failed to smuggle his collection out of Constantinople. The question we face is how to distinguish those which came to the west as gifts and those which came as part of legitimate – or illegitimate – commerce. The design of embroideries is often international in character – so much so that there are endless debates over whether particular pieces are Byzantine, Islamic or western. I shall suggest below that this international ambivalence fits well into the visual language of diplomatic objects. But the main problem with all these objects whose history and provenance is unclear is that, if we assume them to be diplomatic gifts, any deductions will be speculative and unfounded. It might be tempting to claim, for example, that the eleventh-century Psalter of Basil II was intended as a diplomatic gift and that it communicated to its (inferior) recipient the power of the Byzantine emperor. But the temptation rests on nothing more than a reading of the visual language.[27] It might of course be possible, despite the general lack of documentation, to define a category of diplomatic art; but in this short paper is seems better to choose and analyze just a few more direct examples of works of art involved in the diplomatic process.

Another possible approach should however be mentioned, which undoubtedly supplements the deductive empirical approach to surviving works of art themselves. This involves going again to text, and it is facilitated by the recent work of Michael Hendy, an apparently unintentional compiler of what he deprecates as 'dotty and antiquarian' information.[28] A number of sources refer to the basic materials needed by emperors as part of their arsenal of diplomatic negotiations. Hendy usefully itemizes, for example, the objects carried on the imperial baggage train; and also lists the presents sent in 935 to the king of Italy, Hugh of Provence, as an inducement for him to give in return his military help.[29] Hugh received cash, ten court dresses, one onyx chalice, seventeen pieces of glassware, thirty sacks of incense, and oil. His seven counts and six bishops and the neighbouring count all received similar gifts. We also have the list of gifts given personally by Liudprand to Constantine Porphyrogenitus: nine breastplates, seven gilded shields, two silver gilt cauldrons, swords and spears, and four young eunuchs. Records of this kind, whether or not they record the literal truth of

events, do indicate the character of art involved in diplomacy, and perhaps most clearly of all document the common medieval acceptance of the universal value of gold and silver. One must therefore expect precious metals to be the particular currency of serious diplomatic exchange; and this at least is one value which has continued to the twentieth century. But there is the further element that, between top people, there is mutual acceptance of the merit of works of art. Since the setting of diplomacy in which the exchange of gifts takes place is one with a facade of friendship and common values, art can act in it to claim that top people between cultures speak a common symbolic language.

It is this communicative power of the artistic dimension in diplomacy which will be explored in the rest of this paper. Two evocative works are selected as objects which can with some confidence be accepted in the category of diplomatic gifts, even though this conclusion is ultimately a deduction based on internal evidence. The works in question are two eleventh-century enamel crowns, both now in Hungary; the so-called royal crown of Hungary and the diadem given by Constantine Monomachus to the king of Hungary. The less grand diadem is perhaps paradoxically the more revealing about the visual language of diplomacy, once its codes of reference are recognized. Both crowns represent gifts to Hungary of a kind that Constantine Porphyrogenitus had in his time specifically recommended against giving as diplomatic gifts in this part of the world, despite any repeated demands for them. He even set out the easy diplomatic answer to any such request: the best formula was to inform the petitioner that all crowns belonged to St Sophia and only the Byzantine emperor could ever wear them.[30]

The 'royal crown of Hungary' or St Stephen's crown has a tripartite arrangement of enamel plaques showing at the front a blessing Christ enthroned with his 'courtiers' Michael and Gabriel below. The composition at the back can be read as a contrived symmetrical pendant to this. In the plaque at the top is represented Michael VII Ducas (1071–8) labelled: 'Michael Ducas, faithful in Christ, emperor of the Romans'. Below the Byzantine emperor, on the left, also with a nimbus, is the figure of his son and co-emperor labelled: 'Constantine, emperor of the Romans, born in the purple'. The third figure on the right lacks a nimbus; his gaze is directed towards the Byzantine emperors and he is identified as the Hungarian King Geza I (1074–7) with the inscription: GEOVITZAS PISTOS KRALES TOURKIAS ('Geza, faithful king of Hungary'). This is a diplomatic gift which symbolizes the inclusion of the king of Hungary in the 'family of kings'. It also defines his position in that family; for although the recipient king is represented in the enamels, he is seen to be subordinate to the donor. By accepting the precious crown, Geza both affirmed his common values with the donor but remained the inferior 'partner'. The images say what the act of giving and receiving symbolizes.

The crown of Constantine Monomachus (also in Budapest) is much more complex to read as well as stylistically more striking. The piece has to be reconstructed from the seven enamel plaques found in Slovakia in the 1860s, and there

has of course been some debate on how it is to be reconstructed and whether, as I am assuming, King Andrew of Hungary was the recipient of the crown (dating it between 1046 and 1050).[31] If we do accept this as a diplomatic gift from Constantine to the Hungarian court, what can we see?

The images on the crown represent various orders of 'reality'. Three pieces were of Constantine Monomachus, his wife and empress Zoe, and the co-empress Theodora (Fig. 17.1). Accompanying the Byzantine imperial family were two personifications ALETHIA (Truth) and TAPINOSIS (Humility) and two so-called 'Dancing Girls'; and there were two apostles, Peter and Andrew (Fig. 17.2).[32] These figured plaques may not be the original complete set. The iconographic oddity which has exercised art historical scholarship has been the two unlabelled dancing girls; and the normally accepted identification is that they evoke the daughters of Israel dancing in front of David (as in the tenth-century Paris Psalter). This identification bestows on them an acceptable imperial iconography. But such a 'puritanical' identification of the iconography is not likely to be the end of the story. I want to suggest that in a work of art intended for diplomacy, a more ambivalent international language is involved. They may be the daughters of Israel, but I suggest they do indeed invoke dance as well. No doubt diplomacy in the middle ages, as it does now, involved all kinds of sexist and sexual signals. This crown talks the language of the international diplomat;

Figure 17.1 Enamel plaques from a crown, 1042–50. Left to right: (a) Zoe (10.5 cm × 5 cm), identified with misspellings as "Zoe the most pious Augusta"; (b) Constantine IX Monomachus (11.5 cm × 5 cm); (c) Theodora (10.7 cm × 4.8 cm), identified with misspellings as "Theodora the most pious Augusta." Budapest, Hungarian National Museum

(a)　　　　　　　　(b)　　　　　　　　(c)

Figure 17.2 Further enamel plaques from a crown, 1042–50 (1860). (a) "Dancing girl" (10 cm × 4.5 cm); (b) Truth (*Alētheia*) (8.7 cm × 4.2 cm); (c) St Peter (diam. 3 cm). Budapest, Hungarian National Museum

it conceals beneath the public facade of coronation and power the private cameraderie of the rich. In this case it works as much through its style as its content. Just as Michael Psellus implies that Constantine Monomachus was far too familiar in his language to the caliph of Egypt,[33] so in this case the crown evokes between rulers the delights of the Islamic court and the harem through the use of Islamic style in the representation of women. A parallel use of Islamic imagery to invoke the international 'fellowship' of kings occurs in the ceiling of the court chapel in Palermo – the Capella Palatina.[34]

This crown fits well into the category of art made for diplomacy: it is not one of those second-hand objects hastily taken out of some imperial collection and pressed into the service of gift-giving. And it serves its purpose very well. As a

crown it gives and confirms power. It is a rich work of precious and valued metal, in the universally admired medium of enamel in which Byzantium at the time was pre-eminent. Symbolically it shows the prestige of the giver. It shows the common values and attitudes of both parties. It conveys who is the superior in the transaction, but in a manner acceptable to the (invisible) recipient, whose desire for recognition is being granted. This work of art suggests visually that the outsider king is really an insider. The political facts were different; but the conceit of friendship is conveyed.

It is clear that Byzantine diplomacy was deeply dependent on art as translatable means of communication. Art was pivotal in the diplomatic process, and far from being the childish and naive device which was all that Toynbee could see. The visual language of diplomacy spoke on many levels. Most important, art could offer a special, coded, common language between courts. In art, rulers could find the evocation of the high life and ambitions which they mutually respected. Art provided links between rulers which were denied to the people at large, who were more likely to perceive only their differences from the foreigner. The favour of a gift of art, like diplomatic ritual, aimed to flatter enemies into respect.[35]

Notes

1 See for example G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge, 1987).

2 For information about the gift to the Pope, I would like to thank the Revd Canon Stephen Platten and Anne Tyler at Lambeth Palace (Dept. of Ecumenical Affairs); and the artist, Sonia Lawson ARA, for further details of the commission: she was asked to paint the watercolour in May 1989, to be completed by mid-September 1989. The size of the picture (40″ × 36″) was chosen to enable it to travel as hand luggage on the flight to Rome.

3 M. Mauss, *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London, 1966).

4 A. J. Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World* (London, 1973), 498f.

5 For insights into the mechanisms of urban architectural development for political advertisement, see P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Michigan, 1988), and the review by A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome's cultural revolution', *JRS 79* (1989), 157–64. This imaging of power is easier to see in the cases of Fascist Rome or Mitterrand's Paris than in London.

6 For this model see F. G. B. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London, 1977).

7 I am not in this paper including the public ceremonial and state processions, many of which were linked to the church liturgical year and which were targeted at Christian believers and at the control of the home market. See on this domain, M. McCormick, 'Analyzing imperial ceremonies', *JÖB* 35 (1985), 1–20 and Averil Cameron, 'The construction of court ritual: the Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies*', in D. Cannadine and S. Price, eds., *Rituals of Royalty* (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36.

Also more broadly, S. G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), and M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory. Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986).

8 *DC*, preface, 5; Vogt, I, 2.

9 Liudprand, *Ant.*, VI.5–10, pp. 154–8; Wright, 207–12. See also G. Brett, 'The automata in the Byzantine "Throne of Solomon"', *Speculum* 29 (1954), 477–87.

10 See *DC* II.15, pp. 570–98 (and see above n. 4 for Toynbee's perception). I am here treating these accounts as paradeigmatic of such occasions, not as representing the diplomatic strategies of one emperor alone. However, Cameron and McCormick (cited in n. 7) effectively explore the diachronic possibilities of the text; our approaches need not be taken to be exclusive of each other. The text describes the arrangements for: 1) the emissaries of the emir of Tarsus (acting for the Abbasid caliph to negotiate peace and an exchange of prisoners) on 31 May 946; these negotiations took place in the Triclinus of the Magnaura; 2) three other Middle Eastern Arab envoys on 30 August 946, also received in the Magnaura; 3) the reception of the Andalusian ambassadors who overlapped with Liudprand in 948 or 949; 4) the visit of Olga (Helga), *archontissa* of *Rhōsia*, on 9 September 946 or 957, in the Triclinus of Justinian II.

11 Theoph. Cont., V.87, p. 329.

12 For the earlier stage of ceremonial, but with hints of the later development, see the evidence in Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris. Libri IV*, ed. Averil Cameron (London, 1976) and her discussion, especially 12–14; also her more recent treatment of text, as cited in n. 7.

13 *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors* (Oxford, 1947); *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors. Second Report*, D. Talbot Rice, ed. (Edinburgh, 1958); S. Miranda, *Les palais des empereurs byzantins* (Mexico, 1966). A recent treatment of the mosaics is J. Trilling, 'The soul of the empire: style and meaning in the mosaic pavement of the Byzantine imperial palace in Constantinople', *DOP* 43 (1989), 27–72.

14 A. Vogt, *Le livre des cérémonies*, I, *commentaire* (Paris, 1935); see also C. Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen, 1959), fig. 5.

15 J. Ebersolt, *Le grand palais de Constantinople et le livre des cérémonies* (Paris, 1910), esp. 77–92.

16 I owe the correlation between Ebersolt's conception and French historical architectural attitudes to Dr Hans Buchwald's contribution in discussion.

17 The literature on the interpretation of central plans and functional iconography is substantial, and sometimes refers to the Chrysotriclinus; see especially R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1979[3]); I. Lavin, 'The House of the Lord. Aspects of the role of palace Triklinia in the architecture of late antiquity and the early middle ages', *Art Bulletin* 44 (1962), 1–27; and as representative of a polemical debate between Krautheimer, Mathews and Mango, see C. Mango, 'The church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus once again', *BZ* 68 (1975), 385–92.

18 *The Greek Anthology*, ed. W. R. Paton I (Loeb, 1916), 106.

19 There is perhaps something anomalous about both these receptions. Who is meant to be most impressed by the display? There seems to us no high political importance

in either of these well recorded occasions. The answer may well lie in a careful consideration of the ways this text worked in Byzantium.

20 See A. G. Paspates, *The Great Palace of Constantinople*, tr. W. Metcalf (London, 1893), esp. 326f.

21 The Chrysotriclinus was regularly decorated at Easter.

22 A. A. Vasiliev, 'Harun-ibn-Yahya and his description of Constantinople', *SK* 5 (1932), 157.

23 The twelfth-century 'Reliquary of the Holy Blood in the shape of a church' in the treasury of San Marco at Venice may give a clue as to the appearance of this object.

24 Cf. B. A. Henisch, *Fast and Feast. Food in Medieval Society* (Pennsylvania State University, 1976), 206: 'A medieval feast worthy of the name proceeded at a leisurely pace, with plenty of time between courses to be filled by an enterprising host with incidental delights and surprises. To feed the guests was only a part of the program. The aim was to excite and satisfy every sense: taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing'.

25 See Averil Cameron, as in n. 12. The cross has not always been attributed to Justin II.

26 See D. Buckton, 'Byzantine enamel and the West', in *Byz. and West*, 235–44; R. Cormack, 'Reflections on early Byzantine cloisonné enamels: endangered or extinct?', to appear in the *Memorial for Laskarina Bouras.*

27 For a bibliography on Venice, Marciana gr. 17, see A. Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium* (Paris, 1984), 115–19, who dates it around 1004. One could speculate that it was a gift made for Otto III to whom the young Princess Zoe (daughter of Constantine VIII) was betrothed; she set out for the wedding in January 1002, but learnt on her arrival at Bari that he was dead. She returned to Constantinople.

28 M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 619.

29 Hendy, *Studies*, 268.

30 *DAI* chap. 13/24–72, pp. 66–9.

31 K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels from the 5th to the 13th Century* (Shannon, 1969), no. 32, 96–104 (Monomachus); no. 37, 111–15 (Holy Crown of Hungary).

32 The inclusion of these two apostles might perhaps be interpreted in terms of church politics, as a reference to the apostolic tradition of Rome and Constantinople.

33 Psellus, *Chron.*, chap. 90, II, p. 64; tr. E. R. A. Sewter, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers* (Harmondsworth, 1966), 253. Psellus boasts of his ability to write ambivalent and subversive diplomatic messages on behalf of Constantine to the caliph of Egypt which Byzantines and Egyptians understood in different ways; the emperor was not amused and took over the task of this writing in person.

34 This particular parallel is twelfth century in date.

35 For an analysis of the gift of relics in the medieval west as a device for the development of patronage networks and the creation of 'fraternal love' between *amici*, see P. Geary, 'Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics' in A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Social Perspective*, (Cambridge, 1986), 169–91.

Part VI

Expanding Boundaries: Spain, Sicily, Venice, and Beyond

18

Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century

Eva R. Hoffman

. . . the artwork, at home everywhere because rooted nowhere, has become an image of the mobility and internationalism of modern life.
— Wendy Steiner[1]

In this article I will consider the role of portable monuments in cross-cultural interchange between the Islamic and Christian medieval realms in the Mediter-ranean and beyond from the tenth to the twelfth century. The focus will be defined not by the style and subjects represented on these works, but rather by the circumstances of portability, shifting the emphasis from 'production' to 'circulation'. Portable arts are innately characterized by their potential for move-ment and indeterminacy. Many objects have travelled great distances or have been displaced from their original contexts, under a variety of circumstances. While portability destabilized and dislocated works from their original sites of production, it also re-mapped geographical and cultural boundaries, opening up vistas of intra- and cross-cultural encounters and interactions. It is my contention that through movement these objects participated in and defined the contours of visual culture and experience. Portability and circulation highlight the active 'lives' of objects; their openness and permeability; how objects referred to and

merged with their makers and users, the people and cultures that exchanged them, and the relationships that they defined.[2]

Classification

My point of departure will be the museum setting where many of these objects currently reside and are now defined and recontextualized as 'works of art'. Within this framework, the scholarship on these itinerant works from Islamic and Christian Mediterranean realms from the tenth to the twelfth century has traditionally focused on tracing sources and localization, using familiar tools of analysis developed for Western European art – authorship, style, date and periodization.[3] The limitations of such studies for this material may be illustrated by the abundant number of works in various media with uncertain attributions. The localization of a large group of animal metalwork sculptures of varying size and function has routinely been shifted back and forth between such centres as North Africa, Egypt, Sicily and Spain.[4]

One of the most celebrated of these is a bronze work, known as the Pisa Griffin (Figure 18.1), which has most recently been attributed to Spain.[5] The Pisa Griffin stands impressively at a height of 108 cm (42½-in) and was mounted on the Cathedral of Pisa sometime in the early twelfth century, where it remained until 1828. It was probably moved there from another Mediterranean location. While it contains an Arabic inscription with familiar wishes of blessings and happiness to the anonymous owner, it is silent regarding patronage, site of production and date. Similarly, a group of luxury textiles has been the subject of uncertain or conflicting attributions within sites in the Mediterranean. It is often impossible to tell the difference, for example, between textiles made in Byzantine and those made in Islamic centres.[6] There are also comparable geographic ambiguities in the attributions of a large number of ivories made between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The carving of ivory was concentrated in Spain, Egypt, Sicily, Southern Italy and Venice, but unless the carving is identified by an inscription, it is difficult to determine, with absolute certainty, the specific site of its production. A variety of conflicting attributions for these ivories can be found in the standard handbooks on Islamic art.[7]

In many of these cases, where specific documentation does not survive, or never existed, it is futile to attempt to identify the 'original' works and localize these objects to singular sites of production. The efforts to contain these works within individual national boundaries represent later constructions that mirror modern ideologies shaped by nationalism rather than the more fluid medieval conception.[8] Similarly, the taxonomic approach, designed for the classification of European 'works of art' within the art museum, has not always provided the best tools for the analysis of Islamic art. On the contrary, this approach, often resulting in uncertain attributions or in identifying and emphasizing an absence,

Figure 18.1 Bronze griffin, Spain?, eleventh century. Pisa, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. akg-images/Erich Lessing

has contributed further to the marginalization of these works already diminished by their categorization as 'minor' or 'decorative arts'. Even in cases where it has been possible to classify some Islamic works according to these criteria, the most celebrated of these works are still labelled by the names of their modern owners or collectors, such as the 'Bobrinski Kettle'.[9] Such labelling makes it clear not only that the objects are categorized according to the criteria designed for the twentieth-century museum setting, but that their very identities are linked to those who have collected and classified them. The methodology also recalls early studies by such scholars as Panofsky and Seznec, who had studied Islamic and Medieval art, not for their own sake, but as stepping stones in the 'development' towards the pinnacle of Renaissance art.

These interpretations of Islamic works from the self-reflexive Western perspective, coupled with the resistance of these works to classification within the museum system, demonstrate the necessity to consider these works on their own terms, echoing the observations of scholars who have noted the dangers of

defining the art of one culture in the terms of another, particularly with regard to the obvious disjunction between western and non-western visual arts. The territory and criteria for classification must derive fundamentally from within cultural categories and practices. A number of recent studies provide models for this kind of contextualization.[10] Textual accounts further provide a window into categories constructed within the culture. For example, the eleventh-century treatise *Book of Gifts and Rarities* (*Kitab al-Hadaya wa'l-Tuhaf*), despite our still imprecise understanding of all of its terminology, is a mine of information on the status and hierarchies of court treasures.[11] Here, slaves, animals and prized objects are all grouped together into a single classification, and value is assigned according to such criteria as size, quantity, luxury, exotic origin and cost.[12] Such accounts provide an insight into how works were perceived and used within their culture, an approach I will pursue here by exploring the implications of portability.

Implications of Portability and Visual Identity in the Mediterranean

I will argue that the parameters of localization for these objects were defined along a network of portability extending well beyond fixed geographical sites of production to include the geographical and cultural arenas in which the works were circulated and viewed. Instead of attributing works to singular sites of production, we might ask why so many of these objects from Mediterranean centres dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries appear indistinguishable from one another and why it is possible to attribute the same works to any number of sites? The association of these works with multiple sites is an affirmation of portability and suggests that identity and meaning were informed through circulation and networks of connection rather than through singular sources of origin or singular identification. Multiple localization also replaces classification by the familiar centre/periphery paradigm. Instead of a single dominant culture radiating out from the capital to the provinces, what is suggested here is a 'pluritopic' model which allows for the existence of multiple sites and greater fluidity between various centres and peripheries.[13] This helps to explain the similarities of these Mediterranean objects to one another and their uncertain specific attributions and it points to their belonging within a wider, shared visual culture. The Griffin, for example, is a work that could have been made and circulated in any number of these sites. The fantastic beast, carrying connotations of victory and power, would have been clearly understood throughout the Mediterranean sphere, regardless of where it was made. Localization along multiple axes acknowledges the continual interchange and interactivity of portable works within the representational practices of these cultures. Instead of asking where objects came from, the question might be reformulated to ask what were the implications of portability and how were objects used and perceived interculturally? I will argue

that the identities of these objects – the way they were defined and are redefined – are tied to their portability.

What I would like to suggest here is not a cross-cultural exchange in the traditional sense of the transmission of individual objects and ideas among disparate cultures. I am proposing, instead, the existence of a broader cultural mechanism through which objects extended beyond themselves, both geographically and semantically; a discourse of portability that mapped a common visual language across cultural and religious boundaries, whether those objects moved, as in the case of the Griffin, or remained fixed, as in the case of the so-called Mantle of Roger II (see Figure 18.2), a second work from the Mediterranean, at the opposite end of the attribution spectrum.[14] The Mantle's border inscription in Arabic provides a precise date of 1133–4 and localization to the royal workshop in Palermo, and hence the likely patronage of Roger II (1111–54), the Norman ruler of Sicily and southern Italy. Yet despite such a definitive attribution, identity for the work cannot be confined within these finite limits. The content of the inscription may locate the Mantle within its Norman context, but the choice of Arabic text and script also forges a link beyond the Western Norman domain to the Islamic sphere. The same can be said for the theme represented on the Mantle, a lion subduing a camel disposed on either side of a palm tree. The theme of dominance and submission was a favourite royal theme on Norman monuments, explored through a number of different pairs of stronger animals dominating weaker animals.[15] However, it was also a traditional and enduring theme originating in the ancient Near East and Persia, surviving into medieval times, and widely used in the visual cultures throughout the Mediterranean

Figure 18.2 Mantle of Roger II, 1133/4. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum. akg-images/Erich Lessing

world as a recognizable display and claim of power and dominion.[16] The choice
of this theme for the Mantle, as in the case of the Griffin, represents a selection
from a recognizable repertoire of emblematic images of animals, animal combats
and court motifs, that, despite specific contexts and meanings, depended on and
extended to an identity within the broader medieval Mediterranean sphere and
the network of court art beyond the Mediterranean, as will be discussed in detail
below. The expansion of borders through the discourse of portability resonates
in the fluid exchanges in literary, intellectual and economic practices as well.

Much has been written about the lively multicultural interchange that took
place in the Mediterranean between the tenth and twelfth centuries, most imme-
diately between Islamic and Christian powers located in the Mediterranean arena
at the crossroads of Europe, North Africa and Asia, including, among others,
Norman Sicily, Fatimid Egypt and North Africa, al-Andalus and Byzantium.[17]
Interchange in the Mediterranean was neither new nor momentary. Geographi-
cally, the Mediterranean Sea had always been the natural connector between the
people and cultures around its shores. Well-travelled routes were established in
antiquity and the strong ties between Mediterranean centres during ancient
times laid the ground for a common tradition that was retained and recognizable
in varying degrees, in spite of great cultural changes after the heyday of ancient
activity. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, when interactions between
Mediterranean centres became intense once again, these routes formed in anti-
quity and late antiquity were reactivated. During this time, the Fatimids, Byz-
antines, Normans and Umayyads in Spain flourished and competed in close
proximity around the Mediterranean. Each sponsored its own impressive literary,
scientific, artistic and commercial centres, and no single power dominated the
others. The energetic competition between these powers sometimes took the
form of military conflict but for the most part the rivalry was played out through
commerce and diplomacy. The constant traffic of people and goods, at court
level through gifts and at merchant-class level through trade, proved an effective
recipe for sustaining a fragile co-existence and a delicate balance of power.[18]
Each of these centres was inhabited by a mix of populations representing
the ethnic and religious peoples of all the other Mediterranean centres, and
members of these groups maintained networks of trading partners among co-
religionists throughout the region.[19] When travelling anywhere within the Medi-
terranean, S. D. Goitein noted that 'one was, so to speak, within one's own
precincts.'[20] I would argue that, visually, it was the portable works in circulation
that defined such familiar surroundings and imparted the 'Mediterranean' feeling
and look.

Yet, a few qualifications are in order here. I do not wish to suggest a mono-
lithic Mediterranean culture with an undifferentiated collective visual identity
for all objects. This would simply substitute one fixed classification for another.
As recent studies have pointed out, the availability and sharing of visual vocabu-
lary did not necessarily imply the existence of a pluralistic culture.[21] Interchange

did not imply uniformity. It operated at different levels of intensity and within varying political, social and cultural networks and boundaries.[22] A shared collective signification, furthermore, did not rule out the existence of individual identity. While the shared emblematic themes of animals and court activities was ubiquitous throughout the Mediterranean, this common vocabulary was used to frame particular messages and representations of specific identity, as, for example, the Mantle below.[23] Of importance, therefore, was not only the appearance of these themes but how these themes were used and perceived. The visual vocabulary itself could be used in different ways by different cultures. For example, palmette motifs on tenth-century luxury works found in both Byzantine and Umayyad Spanish courts form close visual analogues, but the syntactical organization of this vocabulary in each remains distinct.[24] The palmettes in the Byzantine works are generally used as a framing border pattern, whereas the palmettes in the Umayyad pieces constitute the image field itself. Even in instances where works appear to us visually indistinguishable, the eleventh- and twelfth-century viewers probably could have made distinctions, and even during the eleventh and twelfth centuries similar themes were not all perceived in the same way by all audiences. The discourse of portability also allowed for multiple identities.

In the case of the Pisa Griffin, for example, the pan-Mediterranean theme of a fantastic griffin acquired a specific identity tied to its installation and meaning in the Pisan setting, where it became a trophy of Pisan victory, with the transfer of the Griffin's apotropaic powers to its new site atop the cathedral.[25] Later, when the Griffin was placed in the Museum of the Campo Santo, it was defined as a 'work of art' and labelled the 'Pisa Griffin', the identity still claimed for the work today. The specific identity and value of the Pisa Griffin, therefore, may be tied primarily to how it was used. While the shared appearance and visual vocabulary signified collective belonging and a culture of interchange, the distinctions in the way the vocabulary was used defined nuances of individual identity. The full range of meanings, therefore, is produced through the balance between the local and the international spheres, a delicate balance at best. In the case of the Griffin, for example, our knowledge of the particular is admittedly partial as we cannot be certain where or how the Griffin was used before its transference and installation on the Cathedral of Pisa. Visually, the broader pan-Mediterranean identity dominates. This is the case for the many objects with conflicting attributions from the shared Mediterranean visual culture of the tenth to twelfth centuries. The price for regional participation and belonging was often the suppression or loss of local, particular identity. For these objects there is always the inherent conflict between retaining local meaning and culture on the one hand, and functioning in the broader global sphere, on the other. It is a dichotomy familiar in our own times, as we embark on the multi-ethnic, multinational globalization, fraught with fantasies about Utopian internationalism and, at the same time, with fears of losing local identities in the process.[26]

Beyond the Mediterranean – An International Court Culture

Another qualification about Mediterranean culture is that, for the most part, the works belong to the realm of the court that extended beyond the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean formed a closely knit subsystem with its own core and regional coherence, but it was just one of several regions within a larger interconnected international system of trade and exchange that linked the large land areas of Europe to Asia by sea and overland routes.[27] On the west and north, the Mediterranean linked up with the Italian port cities and the European circuit. On the east, the Mediterranean sea route linked up to an overland route from the Levant to Baghdad which, in turn, connected and overlapped on the northeast to the overland route from Constantinople to China via Central Asia, and southward to the Indian Ocean. Each of the key Mediterranean powers maintained political and religious links well beyond the Mediterranean. Fatimid Egypt maintained contact with Islamic centres outside its boundaries, notably with Abbasid Baghdad and the Jaziran cities, while Byzantium maintained ties with Orthodox satellite states and independent affiliate states as far away as Kiev and Georgia.[28] In some cases, notably in areas that were within both the Islamic and Byzantine orbits, the cross-cultural connections were as thoroughly interwoven and as difficult to unravel as those within the Mediterranean.

Within this broader purview, in particular, was the closely knit international court culture that superseded geographic regional affiliations. The pathways of cultural exchange followed the more widely dispersed small independent states during the twelfth century, extending over Spain, Sicily, Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Byzantium and the Caucasus.[29] The affiliation with a 'fellowship or family of kings', exemplified by the Fatimid, Abbasid and Byzantine rulers, was taken with particular seriousness by the smaller states as a validation for identity and legitimacy.

This court culture was defined by a shared taste and classification of luxury and visual display.[30] While literary sources delight over descriptions of rare and unique objects acquired through imperial gifts and plunder, the quest for the prized singular object became a shared trope among the courts and the courts vied with one another within the same definitions and criteria for luxury and the exotic.[31] Foreign objects enjoyed a higher status than local ones, and those from exotic 'Eastern' empires were held in highest esteem as paradigms of imperial luxury and grandeur. (Of course, the definition of 'eastern' depended on where one was located.) Authentic Eastern objects may, in fact, have existed and luxury materials such as silks, ivory and precious stones and jewels were, indeed, imported from exotic, sometimes Eastern, locations. For the most part, the evidence suggests that imported materials were used locally to produce works that were perceived as exotic and eastern. Such exoticism applied to luxury textiles, which were often labelled as 'Eastern' but which were made locally.[32] Not sur-

prisingly, the shared perception of exoticism among the courts often resulted in a production of works which were indistinguishable from one court to another.

There was an underlying logic for the shared vocabulary of luxury. A common vocabulary provided a visual link between the courts and facilitated comprehensible and transferable communication. It has been rightly observed that most surviving luxury works today were either given as gifts or appropriated as booty.[33] Gifts given from one ruler to another were inscribed with a shared vocabulary of power and prestige, and those appropriated as booty displayed and solidified the transfer of that power and prestige.[34] Possession of the object implied participation in that power, as well as delineations of allegiance, alliance and hierarchy. Whether acquired as gifts or as booty, the objects represented much more than their literal selves. The objects may have referred to a ruler or, in some instances, acted as nothing less than substitutes for the actual presence of the ruler at the other end of the exchange.[35] Above all, objects established and stood for relationships between giver and recipient, engaging them in a continuous flow of reciprocity, thereby cementing the bonds between courts.

Textiles were the prime luxury medium for the circulation and exchange of the shared vocabulary of the international court culture. The portability and high status of textiles within the dominant Byzantine and Islamic cultures assured their significant mediating role in the exchange between all the affiliated cultures. It is the medium in which Byzantine participation occurred most fully in establishing this international visual vocabulary, and in which Byzantine–Islamic visual exchange flourished. The ubiquitous animal, hunt and court themes, symmetrically organized in pairs and enclosed in compartments, can be comfortably situated within Mediterranean textiles. The interrelatedness and difficulty in distinguishing between surviving textiles from different centres within these cultures, the documentation of tremendous quantities of textiles and their privileged use and display by the courts, and the frequent use of textile motifs in other media, all speak to their high value and to the depth of interchange.[36] The central place of textiles in international court culture will be highlighted in the following discussion of two works from Norman Sicily.

Norman Sicily

The twelfth-century royal court of Norman Sicily offers an excellent vantage point from which to study the boundaries and dynamics of this shared Mediterranean visual culture. The Normans wrested Sicily and southern Italy from an Arab dynasty in 1060.

During the twelfth century, under the reigns of Roger II, his son William I, and grandson William II, Norman Sicilian culture reached its height and played a crucial role in the political and cultural history of the Mediterranean at the

time.[37] As westerners, the Normans kept close ties with their cousins in England and Syria, and at the same time sponsored a culture in Sicily and southern Italy that included Byzantine and Islamic components. With Palermo as its capital, Sicily under the Normans became a meeting point in the Mediterranean geographical triangle comprising Islamic Spain, North Africa and Egypt, and served as a bridge among the medieval West, Byzantium and the Islamic world. Norman works of visual art participated in activating this interchange and have been duly noted as dynamic sites of interchange.[38]

The Mantle of Roger II

One of the most celebrated of these sites of visual interchange is the Mantle of Roger II (1133–4, Figure 18.2), a work discussed above for its ties to pan-Mediterranean culture despite its dynastic self-referentiality.[39]

Mantles had traditionally functioned as attributes of political and religious prerogative. In the biblical account, after the prophet Elijah is carried off to heaven in a fiery chariot and disappears,

> [Elisha] picked up Elijah's mantle, which had dropped from him; and he went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Taking the mantle which had dropped from Elijah, he struck the water and said, 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' As he too struck the water, it parted to the right and the left, and Elisha crossed over. When the disciples of the prophets at Jericho saw him from a distance, they exclaimed, 'The spirit of Elijah has settled on Elisha!' And they went to meet him and bowed low before him to the ground (Kings II, 2.13–15).[40]

Such is the description of the literal and figurative passing of the mantle of leadership from the prophet Elijah to his successor Elisha. Since biblical and ancient times, mantles had been used as instruments for the designation and transmission of holiness and power and were worn by rulers and clergy as signifiers of authority. Also embedded in the mantle's conferral and authentication of power was its protective function. Through the power conferred by the mantle and under the mantle of authority, the rulers and their realms received protection. Since, for the most part, the claim of authority was divine, the protection was considered divine as well.

Whatever other meanings and associations would accrue, the Mantle of Roger II was anchored by this dual function of power and protection. Significantly, well after its specific Norman use, from the sixteenth century onwards, the Mantle was designated as the official coronation robe of the Holy Roman emperors.

In court culture, royal dress was an essential component of identity and self-representation of the ruler, and was taken with particular seriousness by rulers

of smaller states who represented themselves in robes based on the Byzantine and Islamic models.[41] Portability was a key factor in the wide dissemination of these garments throughout the courts and, ironically, contributed to some degree to their present-day survival.[42] It is often possible to match representations of robes in royal portraits with surviving luxury textiles that belonged to the shared visual court culture of the twelfth century. In some cases, the textiles or robes may have been gifts given directly from the Byzantine and Islamic sovereigns to rulers of smaller states, granting or acknowledging the authority of these rulers, and in all cases the choices of self-representation in these garments carried political messages of allegiance and identity.

Norman robes did in fact imitate Islamic and Byzantine models, as represented in the celebrated portraits of King Roger II. The portrait of Roger II in the Church of St Mary's of the Admiral (1146–7) clearly represents Roger in the guise of a Byzantine emperor, while his costume in the ceiling paintings of the Cappella Palatina (begun in 1143) presents him in the image of the Islamic Caliph. It has been suggested that the choice of garment may distinguish the various roles of the king, the guise of the Byzantine emperor signifying the holy sphere, and that of the Caliph signifying the royal sphere.[43] The garments here are transferred to the Norman self-image, and at the same time, they perhaps challenge the Byzantine and Islamic originators of these images. However, as Kitzinger has shown for the Byzantine garment, and as Johns and Tronzo have shown for the Islamic garment, these representations are no more than generalized and abstract images.[44] The Mantle, by contrast, is a singular Norman design that was probably worn by Roger and referred specifically to Norman rule and its ruler.

The Mantle's theme of dominance and submission, represented metaphorically through the representation of the stronger animal dominating the weaker animal, was not a motif used exclusively by the Normans but rather was widely disseminated, as noted above. The specificity of 'Norman' meaning, however, was determined by the choice of the lion and camel, and how that theme was used. Ultimately, the meaning of the theme on the mantle depended on and was completed by its wearer. While wearing the mantle, Roger animated the animal combat, enacting the full theme as it is spelled out in the medallions of the Byzantine royal hunting silks, representing victorious hunters/rulers flanking a central tree with emblematic, metaphorical animal combats echoing the theme below.[45] The real king, Roger, embodied and substituted the image of the ruler/hunter, while the animal combat on the Mantle duplicated the emblematic image represented below the ruler/hunter. The semi-circular form of the mantle may be understood as the lower portion of the medallion on the hunting silk with the person of the king completing the theme of the upper portion.

The lion, which appeared as the royal symbol in a number of Norman royal monuments, clearly signified Norman victory and was personalized by Roger, who identified with the image of the victorious lion.[46] By wearing the image of a victorious lion over his shoulders, the lion was transferred and fused to his

person, transforming Roger into the embodiment of victory. Therefore, by performing its traditional role of granting power and protection, the Mantle conferred and validated Roger's power and authority. The unusual choice of a camel as the opposing, defeated, larger but weaker animal, seems to have been as deliberate as the choice of the lion, and, through the eyes of the Normans, could only have signified Islam.[47] Yet the triumph is defined not only through the clarity of present identities in the contemporary Norman–Islamic context, but also through a reversal of the motif's past associations. Thus, while the lion may once have represented Islamic victory, it now represents Norman triumph, turning the tables on the Muslims and proclaiming a shift in the balance of power between the Muslims and the Christians. The reversal in the use of the motif, in fact, goes beyond appropriation and demonstrates an act of expropriation.[48] Such expropriation finds parallels in other royal Norman works and fits into the overall pattern of Roger's patronage, where Islamic and Byzantine visual motifs were used to glorify the Norman dynasty and the imperial self-image, while at the same time disempowering Islamic and Byzantine hegemony.[49]

The actual shape and type of the Mantle follow the form of medieval European mantles, linking the Mantle to yet another sphere, and connecting Roger II to the Western rulers and clerics who wore these as signs of political and religious authority.[50] Logistically, this connection was made possible by the implications of portability. Several of the Western mantles were tied to the Mediterranean visual realm. One of the most celebrated and one of the few surviving of these, the mantle of the Ottonian ruler Henry II, who was crowned in 1014, may have been made in southern Italy or Sicily and presented as a gift to Henry II by Melus (Ishmael) of Apulia during his visit to Germany between 1017 and 1019. This would suggest strong southern Italian and Norman associations.[51] Furthermore, two celebrated mantles for European clerics, the Fermo Chasuble of St Thomas of Becket and the Suaire of St Lazare, were made from twelfth-century Islamic Andalusian textiles with the familiar shared Mediterranean vocabulary of peacocks, lions, griffins and eagles.[52]

These Western mantles share cosmic themes which include representations of animals, and animals triumphant over prey.[53] Such themes fit the traditional function of mantles in granting power and protection. Wrapped in the mantle, the wearer would receive the benefit of cosmic protection, while at the same time he would himself become part of the cosmological programme, occupying the honoured central position, the focal point of the theme.[54] In the case of the Mantle of Roger II, cosmological implications may have been incorporated into the overriding theme of kingship. It is possible, for example, that the dots on the animals still retained some residual signification of their original ancient association with stars and constellations.[55] Roger's interest in astronomy and astrology supports such a reading, as does the association with other related works created under Roger's patronage that carry probable cosmological connotations, such as the celebrated nave ceiling of his Cappella Palatina.[56]

A key marker of identity and one of the most significant connections for the Mantle is the visually striking Arabic inscription, which clearly spells out the date and localization of the piece, while serving as its elegant border design. The inscription reads:

> This is what was made in the royal treasury (*khizanah*). Full happiness, honour, good fortune, perfection, long life, profit, welcome, prosperity, generosity, splendour, glory, perfection, realization of aspirations and hopes, of delights of days and nights, without end or modification, with might, care, sponsorship, protection, happiness, well-being (success), triumph and sufficiency. In Palermo (*Madinah Siquliyah*) in the year 528 [1133–4].

Why was this specific information inscribed in Arabic? The choice of Arabic for the inscription was as carefully considered as the representation of the camel. For those who could read Arabic, most obviously the Muslims within the Mediterranean sphere, including those present in Roger's domain, it would clarify, once and for all, the reversal of power and the expropriation of the perquisites of victory. Arabic was by no means restricted to Muslims; it was a language used at Roger's court. Roger himself was fluent in Arabic, as well as in Latin and Greek. The use of Arabic was a sign of Roger's cosmopolitanism. It was also a sign of the international flavour of the Norman court, where the highest artistic and intellectual achievements of Islam could be found and where artists employed by Roger were capable of executing their work in flawless Arabic and authentic Islamic design.[57] As a display of Roger's conceit, the inclusion of Arabic marked the fullness of the expropriation of the Islamic theme. Here Roger's control and mastery extends to the language and culture of his adversaries.

Beyond the legibility and authenticity of the text, the Arabic script was recognized in the first place as the visual sign of Islamic culture. In fact, when the mantle was draped over Roger's shoulders, the inscription could not be fully visible, and at best, only words or fragments of phrases could be deciphered.[58] What was at stake here was Roger's royal image. The inclusion of the Arabic inscription lent an air of an authentic Islamic – probably Fatimid – royal work.[59] Robes inscribed with the name of the caliph were the royal Islamic prerogative and would be presented by the ruler to officials and visitors as gifts.[60]

Finally, from the vantage point of medieval Western use and perception, an Arabic inscription would have signified an apotropaic function and religious aura, meanings which support the cosmological/victory themes and the practical and metaphorical protective functions of the Mantle discussed earlier.[61]

The message of the Mantle, therefore, would have been clear to a number of different audiences, depending on the access of each to any single one of these connections. Following the pattern of Norman specificity, an inscription supplied details of factual information. Yet, the full localization of the work required a weaving together of an entire network of connections, including traditional functions of royal prerogative, themes from the collective Mediterranean repertoire, links to the specifically Islamic royal sphere and actual mantle types used

in medieval Western Europe. In other words, the full implications and nuances of meaning of the Mantle could only be understood through access to the multiple coordinates – Western, Norman, Mediterranean and Islamic. Identity and meaning occurred and spread beyond the barriers of specific localization through the intricacies and networks of connections.

Norman Reception Room

The implications of portability and networks of connections extended beyond peripatetic pieces. Through circulation, the court vocabulary inscribed on movable objects was transferred to large-scale static architectural programmes fixed in space and time. Such a transfer may be proposed for a room in the Joharia section of the Norman Palace in Palermo, the so-called Norman Stanza (Figure 18.3), which probably served as a reception room, dating to the reigns of either William I or his son William II. Despite restorations, the room preserves remarkably well the original twelfth-century mosaic programme, covering the vault and the upper portions of the walls.[62] In the vault a geometric framework of lattice bands connects the four roundels enclosing lions at the four corners and the four eight-lobed medallions enclosing griffins, placed symmetrically in the intervening spaces between the lions. The geometric strapwork meets at the centre of the vault in a star-shaped compartment enclosing an eagle triumphant over a hare. On the walls the imagery comprises pairs of real and imaginary animals, sometimes with hunters, disposed symmetrically on either side of central palm trees.

All these motifs are familiar from the international court imagery of royal power and glorification.[63] The animals served as royal signs and guardians, and wielded power in the cosmic realm as well. The motif of paired animals flanking a tree descends from the ancient 'Tree of Life/Tree of Paradise' motif, and in medieval times, it was associated with a royal or paradisal setting.[64] These motifs, individually and in combination, may be found within the Norman court context, in particular, in works associated with the Islamic sphere. The animals on the vault of the reception room are represented in the earlier paintings on the nave ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, located in the same Norman palace as the reception room.[65] The triumphant eagle, in the centre of the room's vault, which can also be found in the Cappella Palatina, is a variant of the victory theme encountered on the Mantle. Like the victorious lion on the Mantle, the crowned eagle here metaphorically represents the Norman king. The eagle/king also refers to the theme of royal apotheosis represented in the Cappella Palatina ceiling, where the eagle holds its prey in its talons as it lifts up the king on its breast.[66] The motif of paired animals flanking trees on the lunettes of the reception room is familiar from the Mantle of Roger II, where triumphant lions symmetrically flank a palm tree. Furthermore, on the lining of the

Figure 18.3 Reception room, 1150–1200, Norman Royal Palace, Palermo. Alinari Archives, Florence

Mantle the theme of the tree flanked by human figures and animals appears in a repeat pattern.[67]

It is hardly possible to overestimate the mediating role of textiles in this design. The enclosure of animals in compartments, the static representations, the inclusion of eagle and griffins, and the consistency of paired hunting and animal motifs symmetrically flanking central trees, all clearly point to textile design and the shared textile vocabulary of the international courts between the tenth and twelfth centuries, from Islamic, Byzantine and Norman centres.[68] As in the case of the Mantle, the themes on the lunettes of the reception room find

close comparisons in Byzantine hunting silks. The wide dissemination of textiles among these centres may also account for parallel translations of these motifs on a range of other works in more monumental scales as well.[69]

The connection of the reception room design to textiles is especially fitting, considering both the visual canopied tent-like effect of the vaulting in the reception room and the way textiles were used at court. The vault's lattice bands suggest the poles that support the canopy, while the vault's mosaic decoration extending down to the tops of the walls reminds one of a cloth whose edges overhang its frame. The plausibility of interchange between mosaic sheathing and textile wall-hanging is confirmed when we consider that textiles made up an important part of palace furnishings. Textiles with representations of traditional royal themes of animals and vegetation were used both as wall-hangings, and as complete substitutions for and simulations of built architecture.[70] Within the Norman court William Tronzo has noted that tapestries hung over the mosaic decoration on the walls of the Cappella Palatina.[71]

The relationship of canopies to vaults and their heavenly associations had long ago been noted in the classic study by Karl Lehmann[72] and is supported here by the astral associations of the animals represented in the reception room vault. In the Norman realm, canopies surmounted royal and episcopal thrones which incorporated lions, eagles and griffins on the thrones and throne supports as guardian and astral beasts. In Sicily and southern Italy, lions appear on the Palatina and Monreale thrones (both of which date, at latest, to William II); griffins appear on the Monreale throne, and eagles are present on the episcopal throne at Canosa, *c*.1080.[73] Astral associations of thrones were known from Byzantine, Islamic and earlier Sasanian contexts.

In addition to textile designs, the reception room offers striking comparisons to a number of celebrated royal ivory boxes from Islamic Spain (Figure 18.4).[74] The specific motifs on the reception room's lunette of symmetrically paired animals and archers on either side of a palm tree are duplicated on an ivory casket dated 1049–50 made at Cuenca (Figure 18.4), for Husām al-Dawla, son of the Taifa king al-Ma'mūn.[75] The lions and griffins on the vault of the reception room ceiling design are echoed in the corner compartments on this ivory box. The eagle triumphant over a hare, in the centre of the room's vault, can also be found on other royal ivories from Islamic Spain, as on the lid of the box for 'Abd al-Malik, son of al-Manṣūr, dated 1004–5.[76] The room and the boxes even share a similar shape and structure, confirming the jewel-box effect of the Norman reception room. To be sure, the Andalusian ivories probably carried specific messages of royal propaganda relating to specific local and regional events and politics, utilizing the universal royal imagery of hunt, animals and vegetation, as visual metaphors for privilege and power.[77] Yet the comparisons between the structures and programmes of the reception room and the ivories are so specific that they appear to be direct translations from one medium into the other. It is possible that this inter-media exchange was effected through textiles. As in the reception room, the symmetry and paired motif patterns on the ivories are clearly

Figure 18.4   Ivory, leather, and gold casket, Spain, 1049/50. Photo Archive, National Archeology Museum, Madrid

related to the textile format.[78] Later on, these ivories were paired with textiles when the ivory containers served as reliquaries and were often lined with nearly matching textiles.[79] Yet, while the initial impetus for these patterns on the ivories may ultimately have come from textile design and their use may have referred to the prestige of the textile medium, once these designs were absorbed on works in other media, such as ivories and other portable arts, these works themselves became conduits of interchange. The designs were so thoroughly integrated and disseminated in the full range of media throughout the Mediterranean that it is difficult to trace the exact conduits of exchange. The extension of the inter-media exchange to include also the broader visual arena of non-portable works expanded the implications of portability even further. For while architectural monuments are obviously not mobile, through their participation in this network, they too served as conduits of interchange and they too may be located along the pathway of portability.

While the same visual vocabulary is used as the focus and signifier of a royal space of privilege and power in both the portable works and the Norman reception room, the viewing experiences and functions speak to differences inherent in the nature of each medium. Even the privacy of a small reception room cannot

compare with the intimacy of contemplating a portable object held in one's hand. For the reception room, which must be experienced from within, the dimension of space and the potential for public display are critical factors in creating meaning and for the understanding of function. As a site for royal reception, the room served as a place where luxury works were displayed and where diplomatic gifts were exchanged. But more than just a setting for exchange, the room itself played an active part in the inter-media interchange, which included portable objects, furnishings and wall mosaics, as well as the users and viewers of the room. The visitors in the room would be completely surrounded by the visual discourse of royal privilege and power, echoed throughout in various scales, precious materials and textures. The room certainly served to magnify further the Norman pretensions of grandeur and royal status, though it represented much more than an enlargement of a luxury court object.[80] Under the glittering canopy, presumably seated on an actual throne, surrounded by his courtiers and valuable objects, the king could project himself into this visual programme of magnificence. The astral association of the animals represented on the vault, may even support a heavenly association, suggesting not only actual glorification of the king but also a metaphorical ascent to paradise.[81]

The insertion of this visual programme into a stationary architectural monument may also be read as a declaration of Norman dynastic claims and aspirations of durability. The fixed nature of architectural space stands in obvious contrast to the indeterminacy of the object and the vicissitudes of portability. Architectural monuments suggest permanence and invariability while portable ones appear ephemeral and vulnerable. Ironically, these roles are sometimes reversed. It is, in fact, rare to find architectural monuments, like the relatively well-preserved reception room, that still survive today and that can also be linked to their portable counterparts. The large-scale works, intended as monuments to posterity, have often fallen into disrepair or have been targeted for destruction in acts of political aggression and violence, whereas small-scale works, seemingly more vulnerable, have often survived precisely because of their size and portability. They are simply easier to rescue and hide. Alternatively, small-scale works have survived through looting, an act of aggression which often accompanies the destruction of large-scale monuments, serving as a counterpart to the violence directed at the buildings. In such cases, the object then becomes a valued souvenir, signifying victory.

The Innsbruck Dish

Portability opens up the possibility of otherwise unlikely connections between distant geographical and cultural realms. Such is the case for the celebrated copper gilt dish with cloisonné and champlevé enamel housed in the Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck (Figure 18.5).

Figure 18.5   Dish with the ascension of Alexander, copper gilt with enamel, Anatolian(?), mid-twelfth century. Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum

The Innsbruck Dish, as it is popularly known, represents the very essence of portability. Considered as a singular work, it has thus far defied any definitive and undisputed classification and attribution.[82] The circumstances of the making and reception of the enamelled dish are unclear and scholars have puzzled over how to reconcile ambiguous and even – at times – contradictory evidence that has caused this work to slip between the constructed definitions of Islamic and Byzantine art.[83]

The inscriptions in Arabic and Persian on the Innsbruck Dish supply Islamic links and an association with a ruler from the mid-twelfth-century Artuqid dynasty from either eastern Anatolia or northern Mesopotamia. However, the inscription is so poorly rendered that the precise identity of an historical figure cannot be ascribed with absolute certainty.[84] On the other hand, the enamel technique suggests a Byzantine connection. Even so, its rough workmanship has cast doubt on its Byzantine court production and has raised speculation that it was made in some unidentified provincial centre, with access and receptivity to this medium. In most studies of the work, the goal has been to isolate and identify the single site of production for the dish.

Recognizing the complexity of cultural identification for the enamelled dish, Scott Redford proposes Georgia as the most likely site of production. This attribution is reasonable since, as Redford notes, 'medieval Georgia possessed a hybrid culture, oriented toward Byzantium by virtue of its orthodoxy, but partaking of many features of medieval Muslim culture due to its geography'.[85]

Indeed, as Redford points out, well before the twelfth century this area was marked by an intermingling of peoples and cultures.

While Redford's hypothesis is persuasive, I will focus on the work's connective relationships rather than pursuing the identification of its specific site of origin. Redford has noted parallels with Norman works and other Mediterranean centres.[86] I would like to add the visual connection between the dish and the programme of the Norman reception room, and ask: how we can explain such striking and unexpected connections and what can we learn from them?

The comparison of the dish to the reception room is striking. The roundels on the dish contain eagles and winged beasts triumphant over weaker animals, recalling the themes on the vault of the reception room, while themes in the interstices between the roundels on the dish contain paired animals flanking palm trees, including leopards in one case, corresponding to the lunette design in the reception room. The emblematic treatment of the motifs in the reception room is expanded on the dish to contain more narrative details, as well as details that unmistakably link the iconography to the Ascension–Paradise theme. In the roundels the animals are clearly linked to the astral realm: the two eagles have projecting arms holding moon crescents and each winged astral beast is shown triumphant over a weaker animal. Between the roundels, the paradisal background is further expanded. Alternating with the palm-tree motifs are figural scenes of a lutist, a dancer and a group of entertainers (acrobats?). Hovering over these figures are paired birds, perhaps connoting the paradisal context. A similar programme of themes is combined on the exterior of the dish.

In the centre of the dish, enclosed in a medallion, there is a crowned ruler, shown seated on a winged griffin-supported wheeled chariot-throne, about to alight. The scene has been identified as the Ascension of Alexander the Great, surely representing the aspirations to glory on behalf of the dish's patron in the merging of his identity with that of Alexander. The closest analogies for the motif may be found on Byzantine 'charioteer silks' (*c*. ninth century).[87] While it is spelled out fully on the dish, the central Ascension–Paradise theme is essentially the same as that in the vault of the Norman reception room, where it is suggested emblematically, through the crowned eagle.

In short, in addition to expected ties to textile motifs, the dish is covered with similar themes found on both the vault and the lunette of the Norman reception room. Once this programmatic link is made, the transference and interchangeability in media between mosaic and enamel techniques become apparent. Regarding the reception room, this connection confirms and enlarges its place in intermedia exchange. As for the dish, however, these compelling visual ties seem to complicate further the coordinates of identification. Unlike the reception room and the related Andalusian ivories, the Innsbruck Dish was probably not made in the Mediterranean sphere. The close connection need not necessarily be explained through direct contact.

Instead, this connection and the range of connections inscribed on the enamelled dish articulate the pluritopic model of multiple sites and suggest the truly

far-reaching implications of portability. Identity for the dish extends well beyond any single geographic region or nationality. Even if the dish originated in Georgia, it was made for a foreign Artuqid prince, and it contains links to Byzantine, Islamic and Norman Sicilian works. Unlike the fixed medium chosen by the Normans, here is a work that is completely shaped and defined by portability. It is an object that fully suited and represented the complexities and transitory nature of princely authority in a twelfth-century minor court of the Artuqids. Mobility in this context represented not only the form taken for the portable work, but also a metaphor for the instability and impermanence of such courts, which relied on transferable Islamic and Byzantine visual tropes for royal identity. To ascribe the Innsbruck Dish to a single location would run the risk of excluding or overlooking other branches within this rich network and context. The dish is far more interesting for what it tells us about the interchange and connections between these realms than for any one of these affiliations separately. It is an object that stands at the meeting point of interchange, which defined an international court culture during the twelfth century and united such disparate frontier kingdoms as the Artuqids of Turkman descent and the Normans of European descent. For the dish and the related works in this visual network of culture, identity is mapped, not by physical boundaries of the object nor by the geographical boundaries of a particular place but, rather, through the pathways of portability. Through their circulation, the portable arts were true connectors for court cultures between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

What is proposed here is a reconceptualization of cultural space, predicated on the notion that movement is inherent in the nature of the object and that through movement the coordinates for identity may be defined. This approach offers a more complex and expansive view of the object; highlighting its dynamic potential and defining it, not simply as a static product of culture contained within physical and geographical boundaries, but rather as an active agent engaged in self-definition and in shaping the contours of culture. The object may literally traverse cultural and geographical distances. The object itself also serves as a point of departure for a journey leading in many directions, following continuous and changing relationships and connections over space and time. The implications of portability, therefore, allow the object to extend beyond its literal self to an expandable field of identifications and meanings. Identity is relational. Through its exchanges, the object both defines and is defined by its relation to other objects, people and representational practices along its pathway of portability.

Notes

1 Wendy Steiner, *The Scandal of Pleasure. Art in an Age of Fundamentalism*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 80.
2 On the life of an object, see Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural*

Perspective, ed. A. Appadurai, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 64–94; Patrick Geary, 'Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics', *Social Life of Things*, pp. 169–91; Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra. Theft of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1978.

3   From the considerable literature on the recontextualization of non-western and medieval objects in the Western European museum setting and their transformation into 'art', see Susan Vogel, 'Always True to the Object, in our Fashion', in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, Washington DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, pp. 191–204; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 209, 235 and chaps. 9 and 10; Howard Morphy, 'Aesthetics in a Cross-Cultural Perspective: Some Reflections on Native American Basketry', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1992), pp. 1–16. Robert S. Nelson, 'The Discourse of Icons, Then and Now', *Art History*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1989), pp. 144–57, and Joan Branham, 'Sacrality and Aura in the Museum: Mute Objects and Articulate Space', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, vols 52/53 (1994/5), pp. 33–47. On periodization, see, for example, Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1989, p. 20; for the classic statement of authorship as a way to privilege certain works and erase others see Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, London and New York: Penguin Books, 1984, pp. 101–21.

4   For the lion in Cairo, see *Trésors fatimides du Caire*, exhib. cat., l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, 1998, no. 52; for the lion in Paris, see *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, ed. Jerrilynn D. Dodds, exhib. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1992, no. 54.

5   For a full treatment of the Griffin and its attribution to Spain, see *Al-Andalus*, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 216ff. with full bibliography of conflicting attributions and an acknowledgement of its broader regional connection. See, in particular, *The Art of Medieval Spain A.D. 500–1200*, exhib. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1993, pp. 80–1 (a different attribution in a catalogue produced by the same museum). For examples of conflicting attributions of other works in metal compare the following: A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8th–18th Centuries*, exhib. cat., Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1982, pp. 68–9; Umberto Scerrato, *Metalli islamici*, Milan, 1966, p. 70ff.; Géza Fehérvári, *Islamic Metalwork of the Eighth to the Fifteenth Century in the Keir Collection*, London, 1976, pls. 9–10; Gaston Migeon, *Manuel d'art musulman: arts plastiques et industrielles*, vol. 1, Paris: Picard, 1927, p. 376ff.

6   See Anna Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving AD 400 to AD 1200*, Vienna: Verlag Fassbaender, 1997, and the collected studies by Anna Muthesius, *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving*, London: Pindar Press, 1995; this issue is also discussed in Priscilla Soucek, 'Byzantium and the Islamic East', in *Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843–1261*, ed. Helen Evans and William Wixom, exhib. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997, pp. 405–7 and entries in the catalogue by Anna Gonosová, nos. 269–71 and 344, noting the resemblance of high-quality Sicilian textiles to Byzantine works.

7   For example, compare the attributions of the ivory oliphants to southern Italy by Ernst Kühnel, in his *Die Islamischen Elfenbein-skulpturen VIII–XIII Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1971, nos 54ff. and the attribution by David MacKinnon Ebitz to Venice with contacts to Fatimid Egypt and Southern Italy, in his 'Fatimid Style and Byzantine Model in a Venetian Ivory Carving Workshop', *The Meeting of the Two Worlds. Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, eds Vladimir P. Goss and Christine Verzár Bornstein, Studies in Medieval Culture, vol. XXI, Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986, pp. 309–29. See also the same carved ivory plaques, attributed to Egypt by Kühnel, nos 88–9) and to southern Italy by Richard Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar, in *The Art and Architecture of Islam 650–1250*, Harmondsworth and New York, 1987, pp. 203–5, fig. 196. Another group of ivory plaques in the Bargello, Florence, are, similarly, of uncertain attribution (Kühnel, no. 90).

8   For a parallel in the Mediterranean literary sphere, see Maria Rosa Menocal, *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origin of the Lyric*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1994, and review of this work by Gregory R. Stone, 'The Age of Others', *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1996), pp. 155–63.

9   Richard Ettinghausen, 'The Bobrinski "Kettle": Patron and Style of an Islamic Bronze', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. 24, 1943, p. 193, n. 1. On the value and pedigree of works determined by the chain of Western ownership, see Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 100ff.

10   Notable studies in Islamic art are Lisa Golombek, 'The Draped Universe of Islam', *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World. Papers from a Colloquium in Memory of Richard Ettinghausen*, ed. P. Soucek, University Park, PA and London, 1988, pp. 25–39 (Chapter 7, this volume); and Cynthia Robinson, 'Palace Architecture and Ornament in the "Courtly" Discourse of the Muluk al-Tawa'if: Metaphor and Utopia', PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1995. Among studies in other areas and disciplines, see Nelson, 'Discourse of Icons', op. cit. (note 3), p. 144ff.; David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989; Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972; Clifford Geertz, 'Art as a Cultural System', *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 94–120.

11   The work survives only partially preserved through a later copy. See now, *Book of Gifts and Rarities: Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf*, trans. and annotated Ghada Hijjawi Qaddumi, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996, with references to earlier editions and translations.

12   Note, for example, Qaddumi, op. cit. (note 11), paras. 192, 139 and 402 for evaluations of carpets based on size and rock crystal containers based on capacity. An excellent discussion of this point regarding luxury works in the eleventh-century Taifa court culture in Spain, may be found in Cynthia Robinson, 'Palace Architecture and Ornament', op. cit. (note 10), p. 419ff.

13   Discussion of the pluritopic model and the reassessment of the centre/periphery model may be found in the literature of post-colonial theory. See, for example, Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, p. 8ff. and n. 13.

14 Hermann Fillitz, *Die Schatzkammer in Wien*, Vienna, 1964, fig. 6; idem., *Die Insignien und Kleinodien des Heiligen Römischen Reiches*, Vienna and Munich, 1954, p. 24, 57ff. figs. 23–6; Percy Ernst Schramm and Florentine Mütherich, *Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser: Ein Beitrag zur Herrschergeschichte von Karl dem Grossen bis Fredrich II 768–1250*, Munich, 1962, no. 179. Josef Deér, *The Dynastic Porphyry Tombs of the Norman Period in Sicily*, Cambridge, Mass., 1959, p. 40ff.; Ugo Monneret de Villard, 'La tessitura palermitana sotto i normanni e i suoi rapporti con l'arte bizantina', *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, vol. 3, *Letteratura e storia bizantina*, Vatican City, 1946, p. 464ff. Recently discussed in William Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 142–3; and O. Grabar, 'Experience of Islamic Art', Levi della Vida lecture, UCLA, March, 1996 (kindly made available to me in typescript).

15 For the theme in the Norman realm see below pp. 33–4 (Norman reception room) and n. 65 (the ceiling of Cappella Palatina). Also discussed with respect to a group of eleventh–twelfth-century ivory oliphants either from southern Italy or Venice, in David MacKinnon Ebitz, 'The Medieval Oliphant: Its Function and Meaning in Romanesque Secular Art', *Explorations: A Journal of Research at the University of Maine at Orono*, vol. 1 (1984), pp. 11–20. The meaning of the palm tree is discussed in Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 142–3, n. 31 and in terms of its royal and religious connotations in W. Tronzo, 'The Mantle and the Garden: Some Possibilities for Thinking About the Role of Gifts in Twelfth-Century Sicily', delivered at the conference of the College Art Association, Toronto, February, 1998, in the session, 'The Discourse of the Gift'.

16 The history of this theme from ancient times is explored in R. Ettinghausen and Willy Hartner, 'The Conquering Lion, The Life Cycle of a Symbol', *Oriens*, vol. 17 (1964), pp. 161–71. For the appearance of this motif in the wider realm of Islamic court art, see the eleventh-century Andalusian ivories, above, p. 333 and the twelfth-century lion-bull motifs on the entrance gateway of the Great Mosque in Diyarbakir, in Max van Berchem and Josef Strzygowski, *Amida: Matériaux pour l'épigraphie et l'histoire musulman du Diyarbekr*, Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1910, p. 67. A new interpretation of the lion and gazelle motif from Khirbat al-Mafjar has been proposed in Doris Behrens-Abouseif, 'The Lion-Gazelle Mosaic at Khirbat al-Mafjar', *Muqarnas*, vol. 14 (1997), pp. 11–18; for Byzantine examples, see the hunting textiles, n. 45, below.

17 See the classic study, S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5 vols, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1967–1988, esp. vol. 1, pp. 1–74 for an historical overview. For the Normans, see David Abulafia, 'The End of Muslim Sicily', *Muslims under Latin Rule 1100–1300*, ed. J. M. Powell, Princeton, NJ, 1990, and idem., *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean 1100–1500*, Aldershot: Variorum Press, 1993. Connections to Spain are discussed in Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900–1500*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994. For discussion of visual interchange in the Mediterranean, see Dalu Jones, 'Romanesque East and West?', *Connoisseur*, vol. 191 (April 1976), pp. 280–5; Oleg Grabar, 'The Shared Culture of Objects', in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997, pp. 115–30.

18 This point is made for a later period in Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

19 Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, op. cit. (note 18), p. 354; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, op. cit. (note 17), vol. 1, p. 48, points out, for example, the practice of arranged marriages to facilitate and forge these international bonds.

20 *Mediterranean Society*, op. cit. (note 17), vol. 1, p. 42.

21 Among these studies: Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 134–5; B. Zeitler, ' "Urbs Felix Dotata Populo Trilingui": Some Thoughts About a Twelfth-century Funerary Memorial from Palermo', *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1996), pp. 114–39; Robinson, 'Palace Architecture and Ornament', op. cit. (note 10).

22 For the relationship and distinction between the art of the court and that of the middle class, see Oleg Grabar, 'Imperial and Urban Art in Islam: The Subject Matter of Fatimid Art', *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire, mars-avril 1969*, Cairo, 1972, pp. 173–89; also Oleg Grabar, 'Trade with the East and the Influence of Islamic Art on the "Luxury Arts" in the West', *Il medio oriente e l'occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo* (Atti del XXIV congresso internazionale di storia dell'arte), Bologna, 1979, vol. 2, pp. 27–34, for distinctions between art and commerce, and between trade during the eleventh–twelfth centuries with that during the thirteenth century.

23 For the use of emblematic themes in this way, see E. Hoffman, 'A Fatimid Book Cover: Framing and Re-framing Cultural Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean World', in *L'Egypte Fatimide: son art et son histoire*, ed. Marianne Barrucand, Paris, 1999, pp. 404–19, and Francisco Prado-Vilar, 'Circular Visions of Fertility and Punishment: Caliphal Ivory Caskets from al-Andalus', *Muqarnas*, 14, 1997, pp. 19–41.

24 This comparison was made in Priscilla Soucek, 'Byzantium and the Islamic East', *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 409–10, also cat. no. 38, and discussed by Soucek in a lecture at Harvard University, Spring, 1997.

25 Such a transfer follows a (Roman) tradition of defeating the enemy and taking possession of holy sites and spoils. See the discussion in Linda Seidel, 'Images of Crusades in Western Art: Models as Metaphors', in *Meeting of the Two Worlds*, op. cit. (note 7), p. 384ff. Seidel also points out the specific analogy that was made between the Pisans in their North African raid on the Muslims in 1087 and the Roman victories. Further discussion on the magical absorption of the church of the powers of the ancient charms, the 'pagan powers submitting to new glory' and on the appropriation of the visual vocabulary of one's foes 'to mitigate some of their power by possessing their forms' appears in Linda Seidel, *Songs of Glory, The Romanesque Facades of Aquitaine*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 61, 78 and 81. For an interesting application of ideas of appropriation, see Jerrilynn D. Dodds, 'Islam, Christianity, and the Problem of Religious Art', in *Art of Medieval Spain*, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 27–40; and Julie A. Harris, 'Muslim Ivories in Christian Hands: the Leire Casket in Context', *Art History*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1995), pp. 213–21.

26 See, for example, the anthology of essays by Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

27   For the mapping and extension of connections beyond the Mediterranean, I follow
      Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, op. cit. (note 18), pp. 12ff. and 32ff.
      Many of her conclusions for the period between 1250 and 1350 are in fact valid for
      the earlier period as well, between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Goitein, op. cit.
      (note 17), vol. 1, p. 47, points out, for example, that during the eleventh and twelfth
      centuries Egypt and Syria were way stations for trade between the Mediterranean
      and the Indian Ocean. For the fluid perception of geographic boundaries, see Ralph
      W. Brauer, 'Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography', *Transactions
      of the American Philosophical Society*, 85, part 6 (1995), pp. 1–69.

28   See *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 273ff.

29   Grabar, 'Shared Culture of Objects', op. cit. (note 17), p. 127.

30   Robin Cormack, 'But is it Art?', *Byzantine Diplomacy* (Papers from the twenty-
      fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990) ed. Jona-
      than Shepard and Simon Franklin, Aldershot: Variorum, 1992, pp. 231–6 (Chapter
      17, this volume); Jones, 'Romanesque, East and West?', op. cit. (note 17), pp.
      282–3. See the foundation studies by André Grabar on shared court tastes and the
      adaptation of Islamic court art, 'Le Succès des arts orientaux à la cour Byzantine
      sous les Macédoniens', *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, ser. 3, 2, 1951, pp.
      32–60; and Oleg and André Grabar, 'L'Essor des arts inspirés par les cours prin-
      cières à la fin du premier millénaire', *L'Occidente e l'Islam nel'alto medioevo*
      (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2–8 aprile
      1964), vol. 2, Spoleto, 1965, pp. 845–92, reprinted in Oleg Grabar, *Studies in
      Medieval Islamic Art*, London, 1976, no. VIII.

31   For the definition and hierarchy of luxury, see Robinson, 'Palace Architecture and
      Ornament', op. cit. (note 10), pp. 419ff. and 431. The elevated status of spoils taken
      during the Islamic conquests is noted in the *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, op. cit. (note
      11), pp. 167–75 (paras 176–202), 177 ('Table of Solomon', para. 209), 179 (para.
      215), 187 (paras 238–9), 194–6 (paras 254–62), 225–8 ('Chapter on Booty in
      Conquests and Shares in Raids', paras 359–69) and 229–41 ('Fatimid Treasury',
      paras 372–414). For the looting of the Fatimid Treasury during the eleventh
      century, see Grabar, 'Imperial and Urban Art'. For the looting of Constantinople
      in 1204, see D. E. Queller, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople,
      1202–1204*, Philadelphia, 1977. The prestige attached to looted works and their
      superiority to gifts is discussed in Geary, *Furta Sacra*, op. cit. (note 2), p. xii. Also,
      Beat Brenk, 'Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics Versus Ideology',
      Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 41 (1987), pp. 103–9.

32   See Cristina Partearroyo, 'Almoravid and Almohad Textiles', in *Al-Andalus*, op. cit.
      (note 4), pp. 105ff.

33   Ioli Kalavrezou, 'Luxury Objects', *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 218–23;
      Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized, Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval
      Church Treasuries of the Latin West*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996; and
      Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, op. cit. (note 6).

34   See the classic study by Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange
      in Archaic Societies*, trans. I. Cunnison, New York and London: W. W. Norton and
      Company, 1967 [1925]; Cormack, 'But is it art?' op. cit. (note 30); and Anthony
      Cutler, 'Les échanges de dons entre Byzance et l'Islam (IXieme-XIieme siècles)',
      Journal des Savants (Jan–June 1996), pp. 51–7. I am grateful to Professor Cutler

for sending me his article. Now, see the important anthology *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift, New York and London: Routledge, 1997.

35 This relationship between the representation and the actual person of the ruler will be explored with respect to the Mantle of Roger II, above, pp. 326–31. On this topic, see Freedberg, *Power of Images*, op. cit. (note 10); and Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. For relics and reliquaries as substitutes for the saints and as the sources of power and holiness, see Geary, 'Sacred Commodities', op. cit. (note 2), p. 176; idem., *Furta Sacra*, op. cit. (note 2), p. xii. See also Amy Remensnyder, 'Legendary Treasure at Conques: Reliquaries and Imaginative Memory', *Speculum*, vol. 71 (1996), p. 887ff.

36 See note 6 above. The status and cultural role of textiles in the Islamic world has been explored in J. Sadan, *Le Mobilier au proche orient mediévale*, Leiden, 1976, and Lisa Golombek, 'Draped Universe of Islam', op. cit. (note 10), pp. 25–39, where she interprets the complexity and variety of textile terminology as indicators of its status in the culture and concludes, p. 36, that 'the preeminence of textiles also helps to explain why it was possible, and perfectly acceptable, in Islamic art for different media to share the same decorative treatment. . . .' The privileged status and richness of textiles and its far-reaching geographic distribution is fully supported in the sources in the *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, op. cit. (note 11), paras 30, 51, 52, 63, 75, 79, 162 and 302. Textiles as sites of interchange have been studied in depth by Anna Gonosová in 'The Role of Ornament in Late Antique Interiors with special reference to intermedia borrowing of patterns', PhD diss., Harvard University, 1981. Also, Anna Muthesius, 'Silken Diplomacy', in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, op. cit. (note 30), pp. 237–48; Cutler, 'Les échanges de dons', op. cit. (note 34); and Cormack, 'But is it art?', op. cit. (note 30).

37 *I normanni. Popolo d'Europa 1030–1200*, ed. M. D'Onofrio, Venice, 1994; *L'eta normanna e sveva in Sicilia: Mostra storico documentaria e bibliografica*, Palazzo dei Normanni, Palermo, 1994. For history see Robert S. Lopez, 'The Norman Conquest of Sicily', in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K. M. Setton, vol. 1, Philadelphia, 1955, p. 54ff; and Helene Wieruszowski, 'The Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Crusades', in *History of Crusades*, vol. 2, pp. 3–49. For Roger II, see Helene Wieruszowski, 'Roger II of Sicily, Rex-Tyrannus, in Twelfth-Century Political Thought', *Speculum*, vol. 38 (1963), p. 46ff.

38 See, for example, the profusely illustrated catalogue by Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato, *Gli arabi in Italia: cultura, contatti e traditioni*, Milan, 1979, especially the chapter, 'Arte islamici in Italia', pp. 275–571.

39 A pervasive self-referentiality in the Norman appropriation of Western, Byzantine and Islamic visual vocabulary has been noted in studies of Norman art. See, for example, Ernst Kitzinger, 'Mosaic Decoration in Sicily under Roger II and the Classical Byzantine System of Church Decoration', *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Functions, Forms and Regional Traditions*, ed. William Tronzo, Bologna, 1989, pp. 147–65; Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of St. Mary's of the Admiral in Palermo*, Washington DC, 1990, pp. 191–6; Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), p. 134ff.; Zeitler, 'Urbs Felix Dotata Populo

Trilingui' op. cit. (note 21); J. Johns, 'The Norman Kings of Sicily and the Fatimid Caliphate', *Anglo Norman Studies*, vol. 15, (1992), pp. 133–59.

40 Kings II, 2.13–15 following the translation in *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985.

41 For royal dress, see Golombek, 'Draped Universe', op. cit. (note 10). Also see examples in the *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, op. cit. (note 11), paras 106 (the offering to the conqueror of Aleppo, al-Dazbari, of the cloak of the Byzantine emperor Romanos which was taken during the Byzantine siege of the city), 112 and 397 (jewelled garments); 163 (gifts of precious garments to Byzantine envoys) and 263 (description of and fascination with a massive costume worn by Byzantine emperor). For Byzantine court dress, see Elizabeth Piltz, Middle Byzantine Court Costume', in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire, Cambridge, Mass., 1997, pp. 39–52. Among the smaller states that adapted Byzantine and Islamic costumes were Georgia, Armenia and the Crusader state in Jerusalem. The Georgian royal family is represented wearing Byzantine imperial dress in the hall church at the palace complex at Vardzia (1184–6) in *The Georgian Chronicle: The Period of Giorgi Lasha*, trans. K. Viviian, Amsterdam, 1991, p. 166. Also see the Armenian portraits of Gagik and Leo II, each wearing robes with the ubiquitous pattern of roundels enclosing animals, in *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 352 and 354; and 'Der Nercessian', *L'Art arménien*, Paris, 1978, pp. 108–9, fig. 75 for a painting showing King Gagik-Abas of Kars wearing a robe with roundels enclosing elephants and ibex, motifs found in Islamic and Byzantine court textiles. For the Crusader context, see the Western king in Byzantine regalia represented on the Melisenda Book cover, in *Glory of Byzantium*, cat. no. 259, with references and illustration on p. 388. For western robes, see n. 50 below.

42 Textiles also survived as the result of their recontextualization as wrappings for holy relics and transfer into Western European treasuries. See Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, op. cit. (note 6), especially chap. 14, and catalogue with listings of provenance; and Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, op. cit. (note 33).

43 Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), p. 143. A parallel opposition of Byzantine and Islamic visual modes has been noted in the Armenian palace church at Aght' amar. Byzantine themes of royal power are used abundantly inside the church to justify King Gagik's rule. On the facade, however, King Gagik is represented in the image of an Islamic ruler. Helen Evans has suggested that the Islamic robe may have been a gift from the caliph of Baghdad and that the choice of the Islamic mode may signify a claim of independence from Byzantium. See *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 352.

44 Kitzinger, *Mosaics of St. Mary's of the Admiral*, op. cit. (note 39), pp. 191–6; Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 140–3; Johns, 'Norman Kings of Sicily', op. cit. (note 39), p. 135.

45 Full references for the hunting silks may be found in Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, op. cit. (note 6), M 31 on p. 174 and comparisons on p. 213; also in *Byzance, L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, exhib. cat., Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1992, 195, no. 130.

46 For lions in context of the throne platform in the Cappella Palatina, see Tronzo, op. cit. (note 14), p. 68ff. For other royal Norman contexts see, Deér, *Porphyry*

Tombs, op. cit. (note 14), p. 66ff.; and Josef Deér, 'Die basler Löwenkamee und der süditalienische Gemmenschnitt des 12. Und 13. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 14 (1953), p. 129ff.

47 While the camel was not widely used in Islamic contexts, Grabar, 'Experience of Islamic Art' op. cit. (note 14), it may be found in the non-Muslim Norman and related Crusader contexts, where it signified the Muslim 'other'. For representations in the Norman context, see, for example, U. Monneret de Villard, op. cit. (note 14), figs. 25–6; and Kühnel, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, op. cit. (note 7), no. 82, pls. 82–4. Additional support for the interpretation of the triumph over the camel as the Christian triumph over the Muslim may be found in Ebitz, 'Medieval Oliphant', op. cit. (note 15), pp. 13–17, with a discussion of the metaphoric use of the motif on oliphants and its literary counterpart in the medieval epic of the *Chanson de Roland*, written in Anglo-Norman by the mid-twelfth century. It is worth noting that in addition to literary similes in the *Chanson de Roland*, ('Just as the deer run before dogs/ So the pagans flee before Roland'), oliphants appear in the poem in the context of battle and victory against the Saracens.

48 This distinction between appropriation and expropriation is discussed in C. Owens, 'The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Post-Modernism', *Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, New York: HarperCollins, 1992, pp. 487–502.

49 Evident in Norman coinage, robes, adaptation of Arabic inscriptions and titles. See Johns, 'The Norman Kings of Sicily', op. cit. (note 39), pp. 133–59.

50 Western mantles are discussed in Elizabeth Carroll O'Connor, 'The Star Mantle of Henry II', PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1980; and Schramm and Mütterich, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 46–8, 163ff. The mantles designated the wearer as God's representative on earth, as explored in Anabelle Simon-Cahn, 'The Fermo Chasuble of St Thomas Becket and Hispano-Mauresque Cosmological Silks: Some Speculations of the Adaptive Re-use of Textiles', *Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar, Muqarnas*, vol. 10 (1993), p. 4.

51 O'Connor, 'The Star Mantle of Henry II', op. cit. (note 50), pp. 6ff. and 147ff., for literary sources describing another mantle with a related cosmic theme, donated by a pilgrim to Monte Cassino during a military campaign in southern Italy led by Henry II. See also the so-called Mantle of Charlemagne in the catalogue *Europa und Der Orient 800–1900* (Berliner Festspiele), ed. Gereon Sievernich and Hendrik Budde, Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1989, p. 542, no. 634.

52 Simon-Cahn, 'The Fermo Chasuble', and Eva Baer, 'The Suaire de St Lazare: An Early Datable Hispano-Islamic Embroidery', *Oriental Art*, vol. 13 (1967), pp. 36–49.

53 O'Connor, op. cit. (note 50), p. 147ff.; Simon-Cahn, op. cit. (note 50), pp. 1–5.

54 See the representation of the ruler in the centre of Islamic astrological programmes, see Eva Baer, *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art*, Albany: State University Press, 1983, pp. 258–74.

55 For support of a cosmological association, see Grabar, 'Experience of Islamic Art' op. cit. (note 14). These dots, however, also appear in textile design, notably in the related Byzantine hunting textiles. See Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, op. cit. (note 6), pl. 24b.

56 While it is generally agreed that some level of cosmological interpretations for the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina is justified, the precise nature of cosmological association is less certain. See Dalu Jones, 'The Cappella Palatina, Problems of Attribution', *Art and Archeology Research Papers*, vol. 2 (1972), p. 41ff.; Annabelle Simon-Cahn, 'Some Cosmological Imagery in the Decoration of the Ceiling of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo', PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1978; and Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 59–62, suggesting that the cosmological scheme was integrated within the realities of Roger's kingdom. The star-shaped frames enclosing the motifs on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina may be adaptations from textile design. These compartments appear on the lining of the Mantle of Roger II and the Mantle of Henry II. On the latter the frames enclose astronomical imagery as well as Christian themes.

57 For the important distinctions in the use of types of Arabic titles and inscriptions by Norman rulers, see Jeremy Johns, 'The Norman Kings of Sicily', op. cit. (note 39), p. 135.

58 I owe this observation to Susan Spinale, a student in a seminar I taught on the Islamic Portable Arts, Fall 1995, Harvard University.

59 Johns, 'Norman Kings', op. cit. (note 39), p. 149ff.; Tronzo, op. cit. (note 14), p. 137, points to inscriptions as the essential difference between the Byzantine and the Norman appropriations of Islamic vocabulary.

60 Golombek, 'Draped Universe', op. cit. (note 10), p. 29; Robert B. Serjeant notes, 'It is an emblem of dignity reserved for the sovereign, for those whom he wishes to honor by authorizing them to make use of it and for those whom he invests with one of the responsible posts of government', in *Islamic Textiles: Materials for a History up to the Mongol Conquest*, Beirut, 1972, p. 7. Quoted by Golombek, 29 and by Partearroyo in *Al-Andalus*, op. cit. (note 4), p. 105.

61 The possibility of an apotropaic function for inscriptions is discussed in Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 83ff.; for the relationship between inscriptions and other accompanying visual forms see Scott Redford, 'How Islamic Is It? The Innsbruck Plate and Its Setting', *Muqarnas*, vol. 7 (1990), pp. 119–32; Richard Ettinghausen, 'Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation', in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. D. Kouymijian, Beirut, 1974, pp. 297–317.

62 Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, New York, 1950, pp. 180ff. Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Mosaic Fragment in the Torre Pisana of the Royal Palace in Palermo: A Preliminary Study', *Mosaique: Recueil d'hommages à Henri Stern*, Paris, 1983, p. 243. Tronzo, *Cultures of his Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 129–30, suggests the possibility of an expansion of the role of this room for court receptions under the successors of Roger II. Regarding the restoration of the mosaic program, Demus noted (p. 185, n. 23–4) that the vault was 'much restored; design probably genuine', and that the lunette mosaics have been 'restored in places but comparatively well preserved as a whole. The design is authentic.' Furthermore, he dismissed earlier claims that the central eagle in the vault was a later addition, noting, however, that 'the crown may have been added at any time' (p. 186, n. 33).

63 Comparable large-scale Byzantine court decoration is described in John Kinnamos's Epitome, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents*, trans.

Cyril Mango, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972, p. 225. Hunt scenes in this genre were also represented in the twelfth-century frescoes for St Sophia in Kiev, in Viktor N. Lazarev, *Old Russian Murals and Mosaics from the Xth to the XIV Century*, trans. B. Roniger, London, 1996, p. 53ff., and in André Grabar, 'Les Fresques des escaliers à Sainte-Sophie de Kiev et l'iconographie impériale byzantine', *Seminarium Kondakovium*, vol. 7, (1935), p. 103ff.

64 The ancient motif and its transformations are discussed in Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Mosaics of Nikopolis', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 6. (1951), fig. 36; Ettinghausen and Hartner, 'Conquering Lion', op. cit. (note 16), pp. 161–71.

65 Ugo Monneret de Villard, *Le Pitture musulmane al soffitto della Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, Rome, 1950, p. 34ff.; for representations of lions, see fig. 149, 150, 152, 173; for lions on the throne, see Demus, *Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, op. cit. (note 62), fig. 9; and Andrea Terzi, *La Cappella di S. Pietro nella Reggia di Palermo*, 1889 (reprinted Palermo 1987), pl. Xi-A. For griffins, see Monneret de Villard, ibid., figs. 147–8; and Deér, *The Dynastic Porphyry Tombs*, op. cit. (note 14), p. 91ff. For eagles, see Monneret de Villard; for single heraldic eagles, see figs. 10, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 36, 44; for eagles triumphant over weaker animals, see figs. 115, 29, 33, 44 and 45; for eagles supporting capitals, see figs. 24, and 51.

66 Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, Lausanne, 1962, p. 44ff.; See also, H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, Mass. and Oslo, 1953, p. 69ff.

67 Part of the lining has now been attributed to a later period in Anne Wardell, 'Panni Tatarici', *Islamic Art*, vol. 3 (1988–9), p. 110.

68 See note 36 above. For examples of this shared vocabulary, see *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 224–5, no. 149 (Byzantine silk with image of imperial eagle); and p. 412f., nos. 269–70; p. 505, no. 344 (for related Islamic, Sicilian and Mediterranean silks). Also, note 52 above, and examples in *Al-Andalus*, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 104–10, nos. 23–4, 87–8; and *Art of Medieval Spain*, op. cit. (note 5), nos. 57 and 60.

69 See, for example, the translation of textiles into marble and stucco in Southern Italy, in Gabrieli and Scerrato, *Gli arabi in Italia*, op. cit. (note 38), figs. 303–4; 306–7; 326; 393; 398–401. Also, Simon-Cahn, 'Fermo Chasuble', op. cit. (note 5), p. 3, compares motifs found in textiles to those in the paintings of the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo.

70 These themes are recorded on brocade curtains, among the reported 38,000 curtains that were hung in the palace in Baghdad to impress the Byzantine envoys in the year 917. See J. Lassner, *The topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages*, Detroit, 1970, pp. 88–99. Textiles with similar themes were sent as gifts to Baghdad by the Byzantine Emperor Romanos, in the year 983, in *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, op. cit. (note 11), para. 73, p. 99ff. Golombek, 'Draped Universe', op. cit. (note 10), pp. 30–1, also notes reference to variations of these themes in the Fatimid tent of the vizier, al-Yazuri (al-Maqrizi, *al-Mawa'iz wa-al-I'tibar fi Dhikar al-Khitat wa-al-Athar*, Bulaq, 1854, I, 419) and in the Hamdanid tent made for Sayf al-Dawlah.

71 Tronzo, *Cultures of His Kingdom*, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 67–8.

72 Karl Lehmann, 'The Dome of Heaven', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 27 (1945), pp. 1–27; see also H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, Mass. and Oslo, 1953, p. 134ff.

73 For the Cappella Palatina and Monreale thrones, see Josef Deér, *Dynastic Porphyry Tombs*, op. cit. (note 14), p. 35ff. Deér attributed the canopies to Roman sources. For the Bari throne, see Francesco Gabrielli and Umberto Scerrato, *Gli Arabi in Italia*, op. cit. (note 38), figs. 333–4; also see figs. 353, 451; and Emile Bertaux, *L'art dans L'Italie Meridionale*, vol. 1, Paris and Rome, reprint, pp. 444–6. For the episcopal thrones see André Grabar, 'Trônes Épiscopaux du XI et XII siècles en Italie Meridionale', *Art de l'antiquité et du môyen age*, Paris, 1968, pp. 365–93; and Deér, op. cit., pp. 113–14, note 38. Grabar claimed a Roman origin for the thrones while Deér noted Islamic associations. See also Christine Verzár Bornstein, 'Romanesque Sculpture in Southern Italy and Islam: A Revaluation', in *Meeting of Two Worlds*, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 285–93. The canopied royal porphyry tombs commissioned by Roger II, linked to both the episcopal throne canopies and the Norman church 'canopies', may also be related to the intertwined tracery of the vault of the reception room. Deér noted an Islamic association for these panels, in his *Porphyry Tombs*, p. 87ff., fig. 125.

74 Renata Holod, 'Luxury Arts of the Caliphal Period', and Cynthia Robinson, 'Arts of the Taifa Kingdoms', both in *Al-Andalus*, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 41–62 and catalogue entries with bibliography, nos. 1–7, pp. 190–206. Also see Julie Harris, 'Muslim Ivories in Christian Hands', op. cit. (note 25), pp. 213–21; Robinson, 'Palace Architecture', op. cit. (note 10), pp. 490–1; Avinoam Shalem, 'From Royal Caskets to Relic Containers: Two Ivory Caskets from Burgos and Madrid', *Muqarnas*, vol. 12 (1995), pp. 24–38; Prado-Vilar, 'Circular Visions', op. cit. (note 23), pp. 14–19.

75 *Al-Andalus*, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 204–6, no. 7; Robinson, op. cit. (note 10), pp. 486–95, 668–9. This visual comparison has also been made in Shalem, 'From Royal Caskets to Relic Containers', op. cit. (note 74), p. 29, where similarity of victory and paradise themes are noted.

76 *Al-Andalus*, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 198–201, no. 4. In addition to the eagle triumphant over the hare, the triumph theme is explored through a number of different paired animals on this work. For other examples of the theme, see the al-Mughira ivory, in *Al-Andalus*, no. 3. Also note Gabrielli and Scerrato, *Gli Arabi in Italia*, op. cit. (note 38), p. 505, no. 552, an ivory plaque attributed to Spain (?) or Sicily (?), twelfth–thirteenth centuries with a geometric strapwork enclosing figural images that closely echoes the design of the Norman vault. On the ivory, a lion triumphant over a human figure substitutes for the central image in the Norman vault of the eagle triumphant over the hare, and rabbits are enclosed in corner compartments.

77 Robinson, 'Palace Architecture and Ornament'. op. cit. (note 10), pp. 490–4.

78 Also, see ibid, pp. 668–9, for specific references to textile fragments related to the Cuenca ivory and Caliphal ivories. For the link between motifs on Umayyad Spanish ivories and Byzantine textiles, see Soucek, 'Byzantium and the Islamic East', op. cit. (note 24), p. 409.

79 For example, the textile for the lining of the Reliquary of San Millán, in *Al-Andalus*, op. cit. (note 4), no. 23; and no. 21, the so-called veil of Hisham II, which was wrapped around a reliquary. Also, see Soucek, 'Byzantium and the Islamic East', op. cit. (note 24), p. 409.

80 For the fashioning of objects in the shape of buildings, see *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), no. 176, an incense burner in shape of domed building, with connec-

tions to objects from southern Italy and no. 300, a reliquary in form of miniature tomb/church.

81   For Near Eastern legends of soaring palaces and halls, see L'Orange, *Cosmic Kingship*, op. cit. (note 72), pp. 59–60. For the tenth-century Islamic fascination with the Sasanian Throne of Khosrau and astral halls see Ernst Herzfeld, 'Thron des Khosro: Quellenkritische und Ikonographische Studien über Grenzgebiete der Kunstgeschichte des Morgen- und Abendlandes', *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, vol. 41 (1920), pp. 103–47.

82   *Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 422–3, no. 281, with full bibliography.

83   The problem is fully discussed in Scott Redford, 'How Islamic Is It?', *Muqarnas*, vol. 7 (1989), pp. 120–32. It should also be noted that cloisonné enamel was used widely for precious objects of royal prerogative in many circumstances. See, for example, the Alfred Jewel, a gold and cloisonné work with a portrait (Christ?) made for King Alfred the Great (871–899) in David A. Hinton, *A Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, 700–1000 in the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford, 1974, pp. 29–48.

84   Redford, op. cit. (note 83), p. 124.

85   ibid., p. 128.

86   ibid., p. 124, and n. 24, where he compares motifs to paintings on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina and to the painted beams in the cathedral of Cefalù, as well as to Sicilian inlaid bone and painted ivory boxes.

87   Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 173, cat. M 29–30 and comparisons on p. 212.

19

Islam, Christianity, and the Problem of Religious Art

Jerrilynn D. Dodds

In the Middle Ages Latin Christian writers dedicated substantial literary energy to constructing bipolar oppositions between themselves and the Muslims with whom they shared the peninsula and on whom they projected an image of cosmic alienation generated by reference to Christian dogma. The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile stated: "On our side, Christ, God and Man. On the Moors', the faithless and damned apostate, Muhammad. What more is there to say?"[1] Such a sentiment was not uncommon; most medieval Spanish Latin chronicles treating the intercourse of Muslims and Christians structured relationships between these two religious groups in a similar way. The kaleidoscopic political, religious, and ethnic relations between Arabs, Berbers, Muwallads, Mozarabs, Basques, and Latin Christians (from Asturias, Castile, Navarre, Aragon, Galicia, León, Portugal, and Catalonia) were transmuted into a comfortingly reductive myth that linked Christian morality with the politics of the northern kingdoms' conquest of the peninsula. Thus Muhammad is not just an infidel, but a damned apostate, subject to Christian judgment, an assessment that not only polarizes Muslims but also draws them into the net of Christian control.

Contemporary scholarship concerning the Spanish Middle Ages is still marked by this opposition. Scholars of the medieval Iberian Peninsula study, write, and teach as representatives of a culture defined by the religion of the group that produced it. Thus scholars are defined as experts in Islamic art of the Iberian Peninsula or as experts in Christian medieval art. There is considerable interest in the "interchange" between artistic traditions that are viewed as discrete; such study, however, demands "interchange" between scholars whose fields of study

are often as self-contained in the scholarly, social, and economic worlds of universities and museums as are medieval representations of "Christians" and "Moors." But, although religious difference was often galvanized by political difference in the Middle Ages, religious ideology did not control all aspects of cultural interaction, attitude, and production in Spain. In accepting a tidy, polarized representation of Spanish Christians, we miss the complex interrelations and tensions that make the arts of this period rich and original. The purpose of this article is to mine visual representations of the early medieval era on the Iberian Peninsula, not only for expressions of the polarized model but also for evidence of different ways of viewing the complex interrelations between the peninsula's diverse inhabitants.

It is often said that the early medieval period in Spain was marked by little artistic interchange between Christians and Muslims as artists and patrons. Typically the period is contrasted with the late twelfth century and after, which witnessed the flourishing of the Mudejar culture, a tradition that exhibited a high degree of interdependence between arts conventionally associated with Spanish Islamic or Christian patronage and production. The early Middle Ages are seen instead as a time when political might eclipsed the possibility of strong artistic interchange. It is assumed that the superior political and cultural power of the Umayyads in al-Andalus precluded an interest in appropriating any product of the politically and economically weaker Spanish Christians. Christians in turn are thought to have submitted passively to invasive attacks of "influence" from Umayyad and then French artistic sources, a cultural permeability which is presumably the result of their less powerful political and economic position.

The word "influence" is perhaps too often used to characterize the relationships between artistic traditions in medieval Spain. Because it suggests exertion or action by a donor or originator, "influence" implies that a group which is creating a new art, and searching for models outside its own tradition, receives artistic stimulus passively. Of course, the opposite is true. Looking outside one's own tradition, one's artistic circle, is a highly creative and courageous act. And the movements of artistic forms across the frontier between various Spanish-Islamic and Spanish-Christian traditions – penetrating the social and cultural barriers of different religions, ideologies, and political goals – are more complex and more interesting than the reductive notion of "influence" would suggest.

In early medieval Spain religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups sought to create fictional pictures, visual identities that helped simplify the complex, protean fabric of multicultural life. So, when the Visigoths began their rule of a large Hispano-Roman population on the Iberian Peninsula, these new, minority patrons reached far afield for grandiose symbols of sovereignty and religion and were responsible for objects such as the crown of Receswinth (cat. 12a; all cat. refs. are to *The Art of Medieval Spain*). In less official arts, however, creative tensions resulted from the confrontation, on a more prosaic level, of Germanic and late Roman decorative traditions. Thus at San Pedro de la Nave classical rinceau forms intertwine with the schematized figures and geometric ornament

more typical of Visigothic metalwork. When speaking about cultural interaction, there is always a coexistence of an official cultural attitude and the kind of contact that grows from more habitual social interaction.

For the Umayyads, the Muslims who ruled in the multicultural capital of Córdoba from the eighth to the eleventh century, the construction of a mosque in 785 was linked to the formation of an identity.[2] It meant the creation of a building that would set their faith apart from that of the important Christian and Jewish populations whom they ruled. The Umayyads used the hypostyle plan and a brightly colored, intricate, and abstract ornamentation that made careful reference to Islamic models, while consciously avoiding confusion with Christian or Roman religious buildings. But this exclusion of Christian reference did not keep Umayyad patrons and their craftsmen from using native traditions and indigenous architectural morphemes: thus the horseshoe arch, construction techniques, and basic ornamental vocabulary are the same late antique forms from which the architecture of the Visigothic period developed. Their reuse carried no other meanings than necessity and the Muslims' desire to be integrated into the life and culture of the rich frontier peninsula they had appropriated.

The issue of official culture and shared culture is especially crucial in discussing the Mozarabs, or Christians who lived in lands controlled by Spanish Muslims. Scholarship for some time reflected the assumption that because Mozarabs were politically and economically subject to Muslims, their art must also represent a kind of passive accretion of Islamic style. But we now know that the Mozarabs' reactions to Umayyad art, and their uses of art to express their political and social dilemma, were much more complex and sophisticated.

The first buildings constructed by Mozarabs who immigrated north from Córdoba to the Christian kingdom of León are deeply conservative and reveal little that might be associated with the Islamic architecture of the Umayyads of Córdoba. Churches like San Miguel de Escalada recall the Visigothic period, when Christians ruled the entire peninsula.[3] The horseshoe-arched arcade and the partitioning of space at Escalada reflect entrenched traditions in Spanish building, which existed long before the Umayyads took control of al-Andalus.

For these immigrant Mozarabic churchmen, building in the north was an opportunity to create an image for a culture which they felt was threatened by the fashion for and sophistication of the Umayyad culture of al-Andalus. Consider the often-quoted complaint of the Mozarab Alvarus (d. about 861) of Córdoba, who lamented the assimilation of Cordoban Christians:

> The Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the Arab theologians and philosophers, not to refute them but to form a correct and elegant Arabic. Where is the layman who now reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, or who studies the Gospels, prophets or apostles? Alas! all talented young Christians read and study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the Christian literature as

unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their own language. For every one who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write better poems in that language than the Arabs themselves.[4]

This complaint may perhaps help us to understand why contemporaries of Alvar became voluntary martyrs, dramatizing the plight of the Mozarabs and providing them with a powerful rhetorical platform for a religious culture they feared was becoming obsolete. Under such unpropitious conditions the act of making a Latin Christian culture can be seen as a political one.[5] Even building became politicized for the Mozarabs, all the more because construction of Christian churches was highly restricted under Islamic rule.[6] Indeed the tenacious, conservative style of the Mozarabic patrons of Escalada can be seen as more than a yearning glance backward; it can be regarded as a resistance to a rich and attractive Umayyad culture – one they feared would overwhelm and consume their own.

A much-studied page of the Morgan Beatus manuscript helps us see how northern Christians received and understood the idea of a Spanish Islamic art and characterized it as different from their own. There are a number of lively conventions for representing architecture in the Beatus manuscripts, but most are part of traditions in which illuminators repeat and embroider conventions that characterize buildings conceptually and iconographically. But in at least two pages of the Morgan Beatus, the artist Maius uses architecture to convey very specific meanings. In the page depicting the Feast of Belshazzar from the Old Testament Book of Daniel, Belshazzar and his court recline around a table, while Daniel points to a disembodied hand, indicating the "writing on the wall" that warns of the fall of Belshazzar's impious kingdom. The wall is represented by a distinctive horseshoe arch with alternating red and white voussoirs; this has been shown to be a direct reference to the Great Mosque of Córdoba, the building that most represented Umayyad hegemony on the Iberian Peninsula. Maius thus transformed a well-known biblical story into a contemporary morality play, in which the Muslims of al-Andalus are likened to the ungodly Belshazzar, and their demise is predicted.[7]

It is fascinating that Maius was able to make this political point through a representation of architecture: he and his audience understood that polychrome masonry distinguished this horseshoe arch – from all the others in the manuscript – as Islamic. Thus he was able to use widely understood assumptions to dissociate an "Islamic architecture" clearly from that with which he identified as a Christian. Architecture became a carrier of ideological meaning, a way of expressing difference from another group.

Painting and architecture could also express the tension between an official rejection of Islam and the shared cultural values that grew from the proximity of Muslim and Christian. Another page from the Morgan Beatus depicts the destruction of Babylon. The doomed city is represented by a single elegant house

consumed by translucent flames but still encrusted with objects and ornament: floral patterns, geometric motifs, and precious vases and boxes identify Babylon with a Spanish Islamic palace. Though this image of Babylon looks nothing like any particular house, the artist's energetic and original scattering of an unorthodox variety of nonrepresentational motifs on the facade distinguishes this city from others depicted in the manuscript. It conflates the Christian idea of the complex ornamentation of much of the aniconic decoration of Spanish Umayyad architecture and the costly objects found in Umayyad palaces. Here the Umayyad setting is associated with the doomed civilization of Babylon; once again, the Spanish Umayyads become "other" to Christians, one of the powers that will be destroyed in the final reckoning. But there is also in this image an acknowledgement of the opulence and attractiveness of Spanish Islamic art, an appreciation evident in later church building in the north. At San Miguel de Celanova northern churchmen built a chapel that reflects not only admiration for the power and complexity of the doorways of the Great Mosque of Córdoba but also shared formal values. Because the patrons of San Miguel were monks who did not feel their cultural identity was in peril in the northern Christian kingdoms, their attentiveness to Umayyad form – even their capacity to identify with it – could find full play in this tiny oratory.[8] And this phenomenon was not limited to monastic buildings. There is evidence that a church exhibiting similar formal values was constructed by King Ramiro II of León adjacent to his palace in the heart of the capital.[9]

It is useful to remember that while Christians were voicing antagonism toward Muslims as representatives of an opposing political power, they could still admire and feel comfortable with the material and literary culture of al-Andalus. This stance can be discerned in the precious objects featured so prominently on the facade in the Babylon miniature. Indeed those works had a prestige and value for Christians that often transcended whatever religious and ideological associations their manufacture might have inspired. They can be seen as expressing shared artistic values that form a subconscious part of the artistic dialogue between Christians and Muslims in early medieval Spain.

It is not surprising that small costly objects became the focus, both of one kind of representation of Islam, and of a value scale shared by those who lived under both Islamic and Christian rule. The Umayyads of al-Andalus used precious boxes of ivory and silver to create an image of themselves as a refined and prosperous elite on the western frontier of Islam. The very act of commissioning an object in so rare and costly a material as ivory was in itself a powerful gesture. The Umayyad period is distinguished in particular by the production of a number of solid ivory objects, most of which were gifts exchanged within the royal family.[10] Boxes carved in royal workshops, such as the al-Mughira casket and the box made for the Umayyad official Ziyad (cat. 39 [all references are to *The Art of Medieval Spain*]), are laden with figural imagery that unmistakably spells out the owner's power and sophistication. The depiction of rulers and aristocrats seated on thrones or elephants in garden settings – fragile arabesques

of minutely drilled vine scrolls – intertwines the notions of might and cultivation in a way unique to Spain in western Europe. And this message was not lost on the Christian north.

While princely patrons set the artistic standard in al-Andalus, ecclesiastical, monastic, and secular patrons in northern Spain dedicated their resources to the embellishment of the church. Paradoxically the best evidence of the northern Christians' deep admiration for Spanish Islamic material culture can be found in church treasuries, which are replete with objects manufactured in al-Andalus, including ivory, silver, and bronze boxes, and silk textiles. Indeed a great deal of what survives of the courtly arts of al-Andalus was preserved in northern church treasuries. So while church chronicles posited a deep alienation between Christian and Muslim populations, church treasuries reveal admiration for and understanding of Islamic artistic culture.

A pyxis in the Braga cathedral treasury (Figure 19.1) dates from the end of the Umayyad caliphate, where precious ivories were traditional courtly gifts. Its decoration is structured around a horseshoe-arched arcade that creates a kind of palace setting intertwined with arabesques and animals tucked into vine scrolls. The fecund garden, harvesting servants, animals, and architectural arcade all allude both to a pleasurable and refined courtly context and to the power that such an environment conceals.

But what was this object's meaning for the Christian churchmen who received it in the early eleventh century? An inventory of the cathedral of Braga suggests it served as a reliquary, a use that was not unusual for fine boxes of Islamic manufacture once they made their way to the northern Christian kingdoms. Alternatively this box may have held a tiny chalice and paten which are housed in the same treasury (see Figure 19.1); these pieces of northern manufacture can nestle together inside the Islamic pyxis. The chalice and paten were the gift of Don Mendo Gonçalves and his wife, Dona Toda, important members of an old and distinguished Portuguese family. They recall, in gilded silver relief, many of the decorative themes and formal preoccupations of the Braga pyxis: in all three objects birds and animals folded into vine scrolls and wandering tendrils create a complex surface pattern. And one might even wonder if the keyhole arches punched into the chalice stem echo the horseshoe arches that wreathe the body of the pyxis. It is not at all certain, however, that the artist of the chalice and paten appropriated from the Braga pyxis: the silver pieces would have to have been made very soon after the pyxis to have reflected its designs directly.[11] But the formal concerns common to these objects – one from Islamic Spain and the other two from Christian Spain – point to a wide base of shared artistic values and complex interrelations which are worth exploring. On one hand, such intricate and elegant elaboration of vine scrolls had a long history in pre-Islamic Spain, in both luxury arts and monumental contexts. In fact, the luxury arts of Muslim and Christian patrons shared a common foundation in the arts of the late Roman Mediterranean, in particular in those vegetal themes whose repeated motifs create complex surfaces with subtle variations, which express a tension

Figure 19.1 Casket of Sayf al-Dawla and chalice and paten of San Geraldo. Chalice and paten: silver gilt, Mozarabic, before 1008; chalice H. 11 cm, diam. 7.5 cm; paten diam. 9 cm. Casket: H 20 cm, diam. 10.4 cm, Andalusia, 1004–8, ivory and silver gilt. Treasury of Braga Cathedral/Photograph © 1993 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

between abstraction and naturalism. On the other hand, admiration for the way Islamic tradition had drawn those forms into an elegant style with potent implications led northerners to regard Umayyad luxury arts as worthy models for an opulent and authoritative art. Such an unvoiced tension between parallel development and interchange between traditions can even be found in reliefs from Escalada (cat. 77), which are deeply Visigothic in character but also reflect Umayyad developments of late Roman decorative themes.[12]

How did this duality resonate in a society that characterized Islamic religion and culture as the eternal other – the earthly military enemy and the spiritual foe of the kingdom of Christ? On what level were these complex interrelations understood by the patron of the chalice and paten, Don Mendo Gonçalves, whose father had died in battle defending Santiago de Compostela from the forces of al-Mansur – the Cordoban dictator who, in turn, was the father of ʿAbd al-Malik, the man who commissioned the Braga pyxis?

Wills and gifts of deed from the eleventh century document this passage of objects from Umayyad court to northern church treasury and the subsequent transformation of their meanings. In León an entire collection of Islamic boxes can be found in the treasury of San Isidoro (cats. 46, 47), and among the items enumerated in the extraordinary charter of 1063 were a number of textiles designated specifically as Islamic in manufacture.[13] That the Islamic origin of the textiles is mentioned is significant: indeed most of the boxes carry Arabic inscriptions,

and in many of the most prized textiles Koranic inscriptions are displayed quite boldly.[14] The new Christian owners of these luxury goods did not shrink from recognizing their obvious derivation, a fact that signals their association of transcendent craft with al-Andalus. It appears that, for many northern Christians, the sumptuous quality of the material culture of al-Andalus supersedes any undermining political and religious associations with Islam. Thus Islamic objects came to galvanize the religious and hegemonic aspirations of callow Christian rulers and churchmen in a way no object of local manufacture could. This reading was further complicated by the status of many of these works as spoils of war.

The Braga pyxis probably came to the cathedral treasury as a gift from a northern noble who received it as tribute or booty. It was no doubt consigned to the cathedral in thanks for God's help in military endeavors which were increasingly sanctified by the church. But remunerative battles were not always pious in intent. The extraordinary silver casket of Hisham II (cat. 38a), for instance, probably came to the cathedral treasury of Girona in 1010, when Catalan mercenaries fought in Córdoba for Wadih, the Muslim governor of La Marca Superior. The contract for military services declared that all booty would belong to the mercenaries, and so it was probably their donation that brought the casket to the Girona Cathedral.[15] Now these spoils were captured by noble Christians – Count Ramón Borrel III of Barcelona and his brother Count Armengol of Urgel – but their battle against Muslims in Córdoba can hardly be seen as a holy war. Their contract with a Muslim governor reminds us that the political reality of alliances reveals an interdependence between Christians and Muslims far more complex and interwoven than polemicists would have us believe. The rather compromised nature of the exploit did not, however, taint the object's identity as a work of enormous monetary value or as a symbol of conquest. Once it had taken its place in the Girona cathedral treasury, Hisham II's casket surely became a symbol of Christian victory over Islam. Its ostentation and the elegance of its craft were mustered to serve the force that had appropriated it, overcome it. Its power and sophistication accrued to the church, which domesticated it within the sanctified enclosure of the treasury. The casket of Hisham II thus passed from a world in which Christians and Muslims were politically and culturally interdependent into a church treasury where it was transformed into a visual expression of the myth of bipolar opposition between Christians and Muslims. It thus served an ideological position most sympathetic to church authority in this protean land.

The victory of the faith and its appropriation of what is most precious of al-Andalus is particularly poignant in the case of two reliquaries. The first is a beautiful casket of ʿAbd al-Malik converted into a reliquary at the monastery of Leyre. The second is a tiny heart-shaped silver niello box manufactured by *taifa* craftsmen, used as a reliquary in the treasury of San Isidoro in León (cat. 46). These recognizably Islamic objects held the relics of Nunila and Alodia at Leyre and Pelagius at León – Mozarabic martyrs killed by Umayyad rulers in Córdoba for blaspheming the name of the prophet. The glorification of these martyrs in

boxes that exemplify Islamic craft is possible only within a matrix of meanings that defines the appropriation of a caliphal or *taifa* object as a victory over the religious and hegemonic force of Islam.

But this stance also masked admiration for as well as openness to Umayyad and *taifa* material culture. It has been suggested that the heart-shaped box that held the relic of Saint Pelagius was crafted for a Christian market.[16] The taste for *taifa* boxes was probably widespread, and they may have been integrated into the secular domestic setting of privileged classes in the kingdom of León.

Thus we find a reverence for Spanish Islamic material culture that supersedes the language of display, the posturing of appropriation. And though the stance of the church and Christians toward the numerous Islamic realms seems to harden in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, traces of the acceptance of the arts associated with them can still be discerned. Under Ferdinand I in the second half of the eleventh century, appropriated objects of Islamic manufacture were joined in the San Isidoro treasury by sumptuous liturgical arts that had become increasingly Germanic in character. The ivory-and-gold reliquary of Saint Pelagius (cat. 109) and the gilt-silver reliquary shrine of Saint Isidore (cat. 110) were both executed in styles and techniques that show a steady gaze toward the north and that were intended, as Williams has demonstrated, to reinforce the treasury's imperial character.[17] And yet within the recesses of these same reliquaries the walls were lined with fine Islamic textiles. These silks do not seem to function as spolia, which depend to some extent on display for their message of victory and domination. Rather, their seclusion within these opulent caskets, which have a vigorous exterior imagery, suggests that a tension exists between the language of the textiles and that of the new luxury arts. These textiles were the finest material in which holy Christian relics could be wrapped, but they were also examples of an art whose discourse of power and opulence had to be circumscribed, controlled.

This ideological distancing of Islamic material culture was contemporary with a growing cultural policy that began in the Christian kingdoms in the late eleventh century.[18] Under Ferdinand's son Alfonso VI, the traditional Hispanic rite was suppressed in favor of the standard Roman liturgy. Four of Alfonso's wives were of French blood, and both father and son were passionate patrons of the Burgundian monastery of Cluny and used that relationship to help them restructure the Spanish church and papal relations. There was, in these two generations, a conscious policy of associating the aspirations of Christian Spain with those of northern Europe; this included suppressing the aspects of the Spanish Christian identity, like the indigenous liturgy, which marked the cultural individuality and insularity of the Spanish Christians and which set them apart from those Christian lands whose experience was unmediated by intercultural tensions.

The artistic arm of this policy supported the introduction of the Romanesque style in Spain. It appears first in architecture – as early as the reign of Ferdinand's father, Sancho the Great of Navarre, the man who forged the first links with the Christian north – and then in manuscripts, luxury arts, and boldly figural wall

painting and sculpture, which were introduced by Ferdinand, Alfonso, and their families in León.[19]

Like the change in liturgies, the adoption of a new artistic style was marked by a turning away from traditional practice. Horseshoe-arched architecture – whether associated with Visigothic or Spanish Islamic prototypes – never again appeared in any significant way in the northern kingdoms. There were also buildings of Asturian type in the north, but now a Romanesque architectural idiom – with ashlar construction, semicircular arches, and barrel vaults – and vigorous figural arts almost subsumed the northern architectural and ornamental modes that had flourished in parallel to Islamic crafts. A more insular indigenous culture was suppressed in favor of a liturgical and artistic expression associated with unchallenged Christian hegemony in northern Europe.

It is characteristic of Spanish Romanesque sculpture that original and complex iconographies at times make direct reference to the Christian kingdoms' struggle with al-Andalus to the south. Predictably these do not refer to their actual specific rivals – there were a number of different political and ethnic groups among the Muslims with whom northern Christian monarchs fought in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, groups with widely divergent ideological positions toward the Christians and the peninsula. Rather they characterize all Muslims as a single mythic and reductive "other." The best example is the Portal of the Lamb at San Isidoro in León, which was shown by Williams to place Muslims in an iconography of "reconquest" generated by the Leonese church's political cosmology.[20] Williams also demonstrated that on the same portal Isidore himself was drawn into this militarized discourse. He is shown in conjunction with a warrior, a reference to the aid he lent – according to a then quite current account – to Alfonso VII in his successful campaign against Andalusia.[21]

The adoption of Romanesque arts in the northern Spanish kingdoms had many programmatic meanings which have been widely explored by scholars; but on one level it must also have constituted not only a resistance to Spanish cultural insularity but also an exteriorization of those aspects of Spanish Christian culture which were intertwined with the arts of Islam through common sources, shared experience, or admiration. Thus in the Romanesque period appreciation of the arts of Islamic Spain was controlled. When it could not be encased in a context that exteriorized Islam through the themes of victory and domination, it was often found in the margins: in the lining of reliquaries or in the column capitals – but not the monumental reliefs – of Santo Domingo de Silos.

Perhaps the largest and most important of the reliquaries of San Isidoro was the Arca Santa, which held a group of important relics, including several thought to be from apostolic times (Figure 19.2). The gilded silver front presents a Christ in Majesty in a mandorla held by angels, whose bodies strain, forearms bulging, from their effort. They are flanked by two registers of apostles who gesticulate with dignified vigor from beneath arcades. The figures are quite plastic and give the vision a monumental immediacy. So it seems all the more anomalous that the entire ensemble is enclosed within a wide, pseudo-Kufic inscription. This

Figure 19.2 Arca Santa of Oviedo, black oak and gilded silver (73 cm × 119 cm × 93 cm), late eleventh or early twelfth century. Cámara Santa, Oviedo Cathedral. Photograph © 1993 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

inscription was copied at least in part from an Islamic object by an artist who did not understand Arabic[22] but who wanted to link the object and the notion of Islamic manufacture. A number of individual letters or groups of letters are legible but the inscription also contains sequences of forms unrecognizable even within the most abstracted and ornamented of Kufic calligraphic traditions. Because it has the marginal, enframing position it would have on a Spanish Islamic box, it gives the impression of an enormous silver box of Umayyad manufacture, from whose core emerges a vision of Christian revelation.

The tension between the wide band of calligraphy in bas relief and the vibrant Christ it encloses is arresting. On one hand, there is high regard for Islamic manufacture, and the inscription gives the Arca the status and meaning of spolia: booty implying dominance and victory over the authors of the subjugated style. The formal contrast between the band and the front panel serves to counterpose them – to remind us of their divergence, of the opposition that results in such victories. The presence of Islam – not as a long-standing or integrated part of

peninsular life but as an unholy other – gives new meaning to Christian observance in the north and a new force and immediacy to apocalyptic images.

The notion that the sacredness and power of the Arca and its owners might be augmented by an allusion to Islam is suggested by legends surrounding its arrival in Oviedo. By the beginning of the twelfth century, it was recorded that the Arca Santa had been built by disciples of the apostles themselves in the Holy Land, then brought to Spain, and subsequently to Oviedo to escape the Muslims' conquest of the peninsula.[23] The Arca origin is fit into a reading of history that rehearses the basic facts of Muslim and Christian military opposition: a recounting that smothers all memory of shared culture with the sterile image of righteous opposition. The constant presence of such an other – in legend and in art – justifies the militant posture of the church and sanctifies the militant actions of its members. The inscription reminds us of the exalted mission of the Christian kingdom, while the powerful image of Christ calls up the extraordinary authority behind this sanctified endeavor.

Both the church and the kingdom are given a sharper, more forceful identity by virtue of the existence of their enemy, all the more so because that enemy is not Christian. This heightening of self-awareness may be one reason why Spanish Islamic forms occur in contexts closely associated with pilgrimage and Crusade. The Templars' church at Torres del Río, on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, is one of many centrally planned churches throughout Europe which act as small replicas of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. They are reminders of the raison d'être of the military orders and of the holy sites to be freed from Islamic domination through the Crusades. It is fascinating then that the dome of Torres del Río is an austere ashlar copy of a tenth-century Umayyad dome in the Great Mosque of Córdoba (see Figures 19.3 and 19.4). This one gesture links the Muslims with whom Spaniards had interacted for centuries with the great enemy of the church in the Holy Land. It is a gesture that must surely relate to the act of Pope Eugene III, who granted Crusader indulgences to those participating in the conquest of Tortosa. His declaration that the struggle against Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula might be seen as a Crusade was recognized more than once, as knights from northern Europe aided in the Spanish Christians' appropriation of the peninsula. Some of those stayed and added another thread to the fabric of artistic form and intercultural ideology. The intervention of the French has been suggested in particular on the pilgrimage roads. The pilgrimage to Santiago do Compostela grew enormously in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, promoted by the church and rulers of the northern kingdoms and the papacy and by the Cluniacs, who had substantial hegemonic and economic interests in northern Iberia. It should not be surprise that Islam made an appearance on the road as well.

A tiny silver niello box once in the treasury of the church of Saint-Jean in Liège (cat. 43) might well have been brought there as a reliquary, acquired by pilgrims returning from Santiago.[24] The idea that relics encased in an Islamic object would witness a pilgrimage or represent a Spanish experience is an
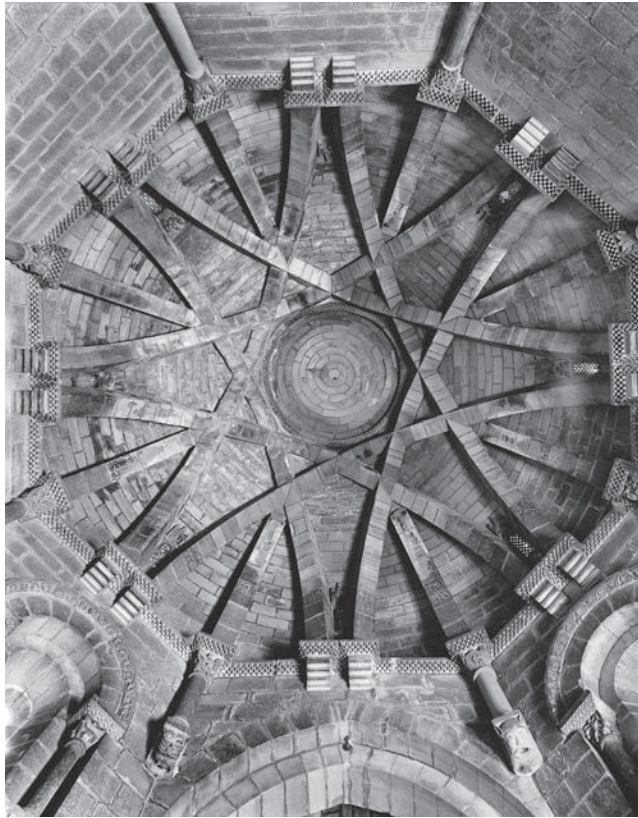
Figure 19.3 Dome, Santo Sepulcro, Torres del Rio, Navarra, Spain. Hirmer Verlag, Munich

interesting one. Consider, on the other hand, the portal of San Pedro de la Rua in Estella, the principal church in the French quarter of a city squarely on the road to Santiago. Estella has no tympanum nor the hierarchical figural imagery for which the tympanum is usually the vehicle in France and Spain. Instead the portal relies for interest on polylobed arches and on the multiplication of plastic moldings, dozens one after another, each carved with a different vegetal or geometric design. The overall effect seems clearly and consciously to make reference to Islam, not through particular motifs but through the creation of an abstract, aniconic design generated by surface patterning. The Estella facade does not look like Umayyad or *taifa* architecture, however; here Islamic arts might be refracted through the Crusader experience, modified by the interests of the French populations which were a strong presence in that city.[25] The facade shows similar concerns to portals in Aquitaine where Crusaders built churches that also made
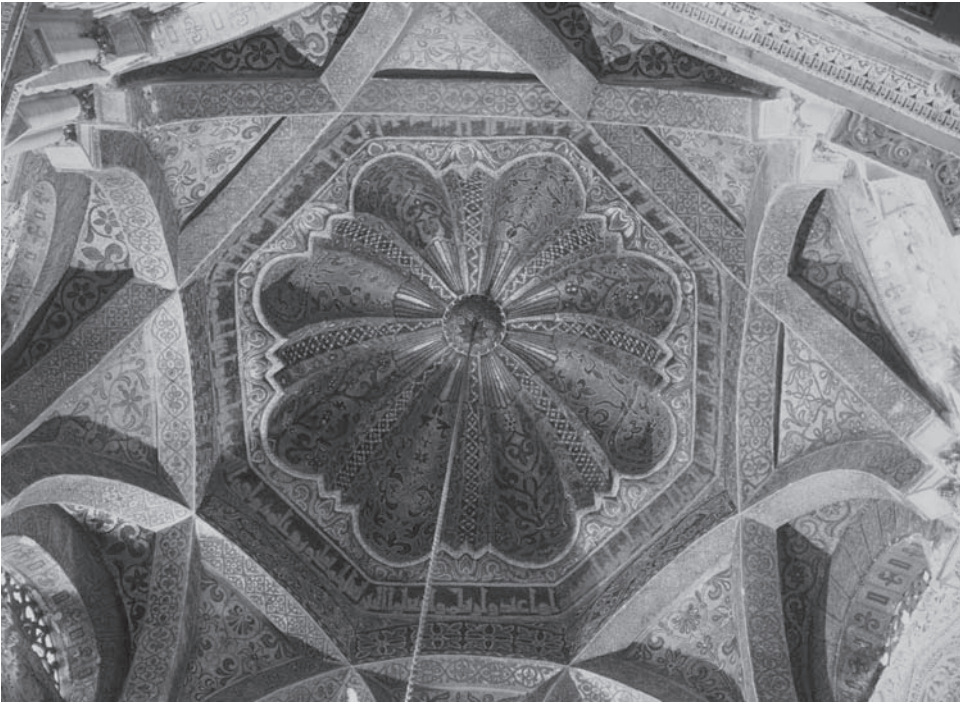
Figure 19.4   Mihrab Dome, Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain. Akg-images/Jean-Louis Nou

reference to their victories over Islamic forces in the Holy Land. Thus Seidel has spoken of the relationship between the delicate carving of repeated moldings on such portals and metalwork brought to France as booty by the Crusaders.[26]

Does a similar if more generalized meaning function at Estella, or is this portal with its recognizably Islamic formal properties simply a reminder for pilgrims that the road to Santiago was on a frontier – that the apostolic mission was still alive, that the faith was still to be defended? In either case, patrons on the pilgrimage roads can be shown to have perpetuated the linkage of the Crusades with hegemonic struggles in Spain and to have aided the Spanish Christian monarchs in their task of cultural tidying – of folding all the Muslims of their experience into one reductive image.

Certainly among the Spanish there were official attempts to link the pilgrimage and struggle with Islamic hegemonies. Though the pilgrimage, and the body of Saint James, had existed on the peninsula for some time, the veneration of the apostle took a peculiar turn in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It was then that the legend of Santiago Matamoros took its place in monumental arts: Saint James the Apostle as he appeared to Spanish Christian monarchs, a soldier "on a white horse, with a white standard, and a great shining sword" to lead the

Christians in battle against the Muslims.[27] And so, at the church of Santiago itself, we see not only the apostle who knew and followed Christ but also a contemporary, militant Saint James, with the mangled bodies of Muslim soldiers beneath his horse's hooves. Saint James has been recruited here as a soldier in the battle for the banishment not just of Islam but of those aspects of Islamic culture that informed the identity of Spanish Christians. At the end of the early medieval period northern Spanish art was firmly trapped within a structure that fused identity and hegemony with religion.

Today, in the twentieth century, Islam hovers at the margins of the veneration of Saint James and of Spanish identity. On the eve of the saint's feast, a temporary facade is built in front of the cathedral of Santiago and emblazoned "To the Patron of Spain." This facade represents a palace with arcades and horseshoe arches covered with a skin of red and white polychromy; it gives us, as it would have given Christians a thousand years ago, an easily recognizable, reductive vision of "Islam." On the stroke of midnight this vision of all that is Islam for Christian Spain erupts in a fabulously gaudy display of fireworks and then disappears. A visual image of Islam in Spanish culture is controlled, trivialized, and erased: that is perhaps what Spanish Christians of the early Middle Ages wished to do with that part of their identity shared with Spanish Muslims.

Notes

1   Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile, in Barrau-Dihigo 1913, p. 43, quoted in O'Callaghan 1975, p. 331.
2   Dodds 1992, pp. 11–25.
3   Dodds 1990, pp. 47–81.
4   Paul Albar, *Indicus Luminosus*, in Migne 1844–64, vol. 121, p. 35, trans. Southern 1962, p. 21.
5   Dodds 1990, pp. 58–70.
6   Ibid., pp. 58–64.
7   Williams 1980, pp. 212–13, 217–19, with discussion 221–7.
8   Dodds 1990, pp. 84–94.
9   Gómez-Moreno 1919, pp. 253–9; Dodds 1990, p. 77. I am indebted to Fernando Miguel Hernández for information concerning his excavations at San Salvador.
10 Holod in Dodds 1992, pp. 41–7.
11 The most recent dates offered for the Braga pyxis suggest completion between 1004 and 1008, while the chalice and paten are believed to have been fashioned before the death of Gonçalves in 1008 (*Portugal* 1992, p. 94).
12 Schlunk 1972, pp. 128–32, 137; 1965, pp. 921–5.
13 Williams 1993b; Blanco Lozano 1987, pp. 166–72.
14 Though there is evidence to suggest that there were, in the Leonese court, individuals who could read Arabic, this interpretation does not depend on an understanding of the Arabic texts. Rather, it rests on the notion that Arabic script held a direct association with al-Andalus and the culture created by Spanish Muslims there.

15 Manuel Casamar Pérez in Dodds 1992, pp. 208–9.
16 Carboni 1993.
17 Williams 1993a.
18 Meyer Schapiro (1939) introduced the idea that Romanesque art constituted the cultural arm of a political policy aimed at controlling indigenous groups within the church through the suppression of "Mozarabic" arts.
19 Williams 1993b.
20 Williams 1997.
21 Ibid., p. 11.
22 I am indebted to John Williams for sharing his unpublished research concerning this aspect of the casket with me.
23 Harris 1993.
24 George 1988, pp. 5–21.
25 Durliat (1962, p. 69) related it to Provençal cloisters.
26 Seidel 1981.
27 Crónica General, in Flórez 1747–1918, vol. 19, p. 331.

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20

The Medieval Object-Enigma, and the Problem of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo

William Tronzo

The subject of this article is the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, the royal chapel of the Norman kings of Sicily that was built by Roger II beginning probably in the 1130s (Figure 20.1).[1] The question that it addresses, however, is one of the relationship between visual and verbal forms of representation: between the material forms of the edifice – the art and architecture of the Cappella Palatina – and the words and actions that occurred within it – the events, rituals, and liturgies of the twelfth century. It was not fruitful to explore this relationship in terms of a one-to-one structure, of the sort that has been depicted in studies of the function of medieval buildings elsewhere.[2] It is necessary to conceive of it in more dynamic, indeed reciprocal, terms – in which human actions were given meaning by structured space, and material forms were made rational by the measured beat of movements and words. We no longer live this way, and our art and architecture function completely differently. However, to my mind this relationship is the very essence of the medieval experience, and coming to terms with it, a historical problem of importance.

Figure 20.1   Palermo, Cappella Palatina, interior looking west. Alinari Archives, Florence

I

In reflecting on recent developments in the field of medieval art history, I keep returning to the following dichotomy. On the one hand, I see a rich array of questions and approaches, methods and techniques – an array that has been substantially reconfigured in our own lifetime. Barely a decade ago one had to specialize in either style or iconography in order to fulfill the role of medievalist; today, the key issues are ideology, patronage, audience, gender, and so on.[3] In any case, on the other hand, what I also see is a cast of characters that has not changed all that much. These characters are the objects themselves. They can be very strange to someone who is not inured to them through academic study:

books painted all over with monstrous figures, metal body parts encrusted with jewels, elaborate robes. We arrange these objects in different groups – recensional patterns that move through time and regional traditions, through space – but the fact is that we often do not understand them very well as objects. Perhaps it could be put this way (and this is a way that has been explored by Henk van Os and Hans Belting, among others, in the case of icons): much of what we now know as medieval art was originally designed for liturgical rites, ceremonies, and other functions.[4] Thus individual objects were almost always created – not as autonomous works – but as parts of larger ensembles, with specific uses in mind. In a sense medieval art was more like African art, for instance, than any other Western art either before or after: ritual objects that were meant to be brought together and used together in ritual spaces. But it is precisely these ensembles – how the objects went together – and these rituals – how they were intended to be used – that are so unclear. More often than not what we have been left with is simply flotsam and jetsam both physically and conceptually – decontextualized fragments of once complex and interrelated environments, keyed to certain patterns of movement and action. However, accepting these fragments at face value (which it may seem that we have to do), or assimilating them to more familiar art forms or traditions (which is something that we often do) is a miscalculation: it deprives our learned analyses of a dimension that is critically important, and that makes them, in turn, often seem abstract and superimposed. I might also add that the ensemblistic and functional aspect explains to me why medieval art often fails as museum art. Objects that were meant to be brought to life momentarily and in carefully orchestrated settings wither away on walls that have been rationally appointed to display other object-traditions, and other arts.[5]

Briefly put the medieval object-problem is not so much one of the sources in the form of texts or the lack of them, but of the way in which this evidence is discussed, and in order to pursue it I would like to shift gears a bit. I think that the object world of the Middle Ages is probably more enigmatic to us than a great deal of what either went before or came after in the West, and so too are medieval ritual spaces. It was precisely this issue that Thomas Mathews addressed in his monograph on the Early Christian churches of Constantinople.[6] The central problem Mathews set out to treat was that of the relationship between church design and liturgy, and I single out his work not because he was the first to do so – he was not.[7] However, he presented the problem in such a way that a development and the meaning of the development became clear. In this sense his work constituted a challenge to the way things had been traditionally understood.

But it was a challenge that has not been taken up. Recent scholarship in medieval architectural history follows certain time-honored paths, as well as some new ones – but very little on function.[8] The reasons for this may be various, but there is one thing in particular that stands out. Mathews makes the point explicitly in his book: in order to understand the function of a medieval structure,

it is necessary to have a prescriptive text that essentially sets it out, and this text must be from the same time and place as the building in question.[9] The principle is a rigorous one, and, to a certain extent, also a reaction, I believe, to the kind of explanation current earlier on in which, for instance, a Syrian liturgy was used to explain a mosaic cycle in Ravenna.[10] It is also so exclusive that it leaves out of the question a great deal of the medieval situation. Most medieval buildings do not have texts attached to them, so nothing concrete can then be said about their function.

While Mathews is explicit about this, many other scholars in the field accept the point implicitly. What I would like to propose is something different. Rather than try and define it now in the abstract let me turn directly to the single example that I would like to discuss, the Cappella Palatina in Palermo. The palace chapel of the Norman kings, the Cappella Palatina is a good case study in the present context for two reasons. It is such an unusual concatenation of strange, unprecedented, even unseemly juxtapositions, superimpositions, and apparent mistakes that it begs to be defined in some way – what precisely is the object in question here?[11] It is also such a well-preserved ensemble from the twelfth century – though not all from the same period as we shall see – and without any texts directly associated with it that are of explicit help in understanding how it worked, that it also begs to be explained. Why was this room chosen to be the heart of the royal palace? What function did it fulfill?

However, before we turn to these issues, a brief, general overview is in order as a point of orientation. The Cappella Palatina was begun, but not entirely finished to the state in which we see it today, under the first of the Norman kings to rule the island of Sicily, Roger II. Construction probably started in the 1130s.[12] The chapel formed the centerpiece of the Norman Palace in Palermo, of which very little otherwise has survived (Figure 20.2).[13] The palace itself has its own interest, however, as does the exterior of the chapel; but I shall confine myself essentially to the interior: a basilica with a nave flanked by two aisles, a domed choir, two transepts, and three apses (with an altar in each). The chapel was accessible through doors in both aisles and to the west, and it was richly decorated with colored marbles, mosaics, paintings, and sculptures. It also contains a pulpit and paschal candelabrum in the south aisle and an elaborate throne platform against the west wall of the nave.

The peculiarities of this structure are many, but let me single out only two. One is the fact that the chapel is decorated with a number of art forms in different styles – with different cultural roots and affiliations – and no attempt seems to have been made to bring at least the most prominent of these together into any kind of harmony. The domed sanctuary is decorated much like a middle byzantine church – itself a domed, centrally planned structure – with its hierarchy of holy figures and scenes from the life of Christ descending from an image of the Allruler in a heavenly frame.[14] As such the sanctuary has a kind of self-enclosed completeness that is rather odd within the context of this larger whole. The decoration turns in on itself. The nave, on the other hand, is covered with
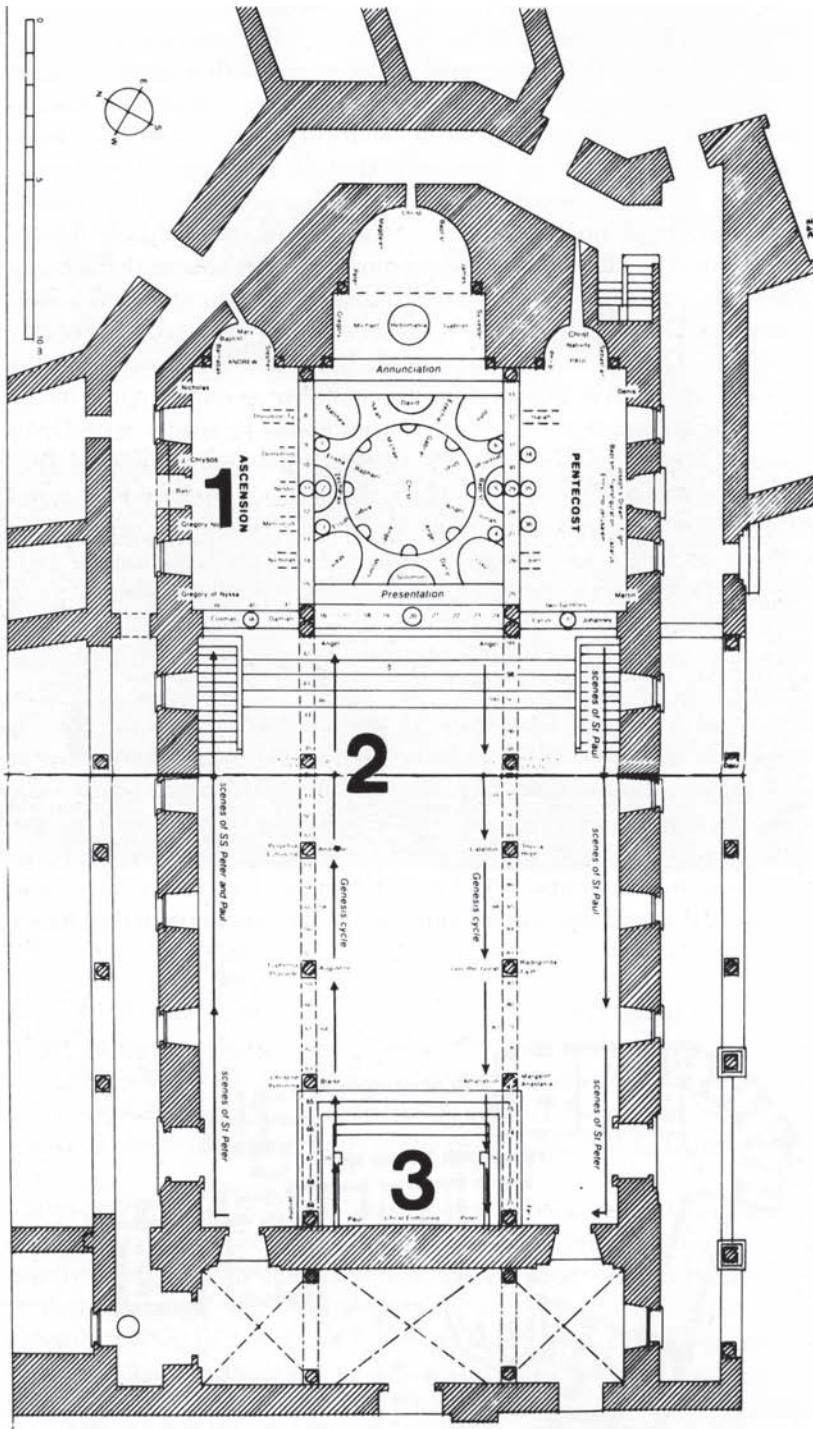
Figure 20.2 Palermo, Cappella Palatina, plan showing placement of balconies on north wall of north transept (1), north wall of nave (2), and throne platform at west end of nave (3). © William Tronzo

a spectacular vault of cedar wood, executed in the muqarnas technique that had become fashionable relatively recently in the Islamic world.[15] The fact that such an Islamic-looking form is gilded and painted with drinkers, dancers, and musicians dressed like oriental courtiers makes it doubly bizarre in a church: it surmounts – directly – a cycle of Old Testament subjects from the Creation through the story of Jacob on the two walls of the nave – in what seems to be a totally unprecedented reversal of roles, in placing the worldly (and in what was for the Christian twelfth century its most pagan form) over the spiritual realm.

The second peculiarity has to do with the functional axes of the chapel. To look at the plan, one might assume that the Cappella Palatina was a normal church, organized along a single major axis that ran east–west, with the significant liturgical activities occurring in the area of the sanctuary and choir, and an audience standing in the nave. But the situation was not so simple. As Ernst Kitzinger has shown in a now classic study, the predominant organization of the sanctuary of the chapel by itself was not east–west, but north–south, and for the enjoyment, above all, of the king.[16] One indication of this is on the north wall of the north transept where there are the traces of a balcony (an arched recess) that communicated, via a passageway, with the part of the palace that is believed to have contained the royal apartments, and such a route is conceivable only for the king. Any further doubt should be put to rest by another look at the decoration: not only was it based on byzantine precedent, but it was also imbued with royal images and messages, which distorted it in a way that was decidedly un-byzantine.[17] Many of the narrative scenes from Christ's life that would have been distributed rather evenly around a middle byzantine church, for instance, were grouped together on the south wall of the south transept to make a statement about triumph and power that could be viewed in its entirety only from the balcony to the north. In other words, the byzantine model, which purported to depict the universe that embraced all viewers and privileged none, was here grounded in one fixed and specific point – and that point was the king. This fundamental distortion also further supports the autonomy of the sanctuary.

The nave too is interesting from a functional point of view, but here the situation is different. At the far west is a gigantic throne platform, upon which stood or was seated the king (Figure 20.3).[18] This is indicated by at least one of the materials with which the platform was rendered – porphyry, which was a royal and imperial prerogative, not to mention the great size of the fastigium, which was an honorific symbol, and the fact that whoever occupied this place would have positioned himself directly beneath the figure of Christ. In the royal chapel this level of aggrandizement would have been appropriate only for the king. However, here is the conundrum. In order to face the altar one would have had to have turned one's back to the king; to face the king, on the other hand, one would have had to have turned one's back to the altar – either way an uncomfortable arrangement if not a breach of decorum in a church. There is also the question of why there were two royal places in the chapel.

Figure 20.3   Palermo, Cappella Palatina, throne platform against west wall of nave. ©
William Tronzo

I am by no means the first person to have pointed out some of these problems
and anomalies, and I am not the first to attempt to offer an explanation for them.
Generally speaking, previous accounts of the Cappella Palatina have followed one
of two lines. On the one hand, certain scholars – such as Slobodan Ćurčić – have
attempted to assimilate the chapel to certain architectural traditions or certain
perceived traditions – either ecclesiastical or palatine – as embodied, for instance,
at Aachen or in the Great Palace of Constantionople.[19] But the fact is that there
is nothing else quite like the chapel in all of its significant features in any of these
traditions. Others, such as Eve Borsook and Beat Brenk, have spoken of the
ideology of the mosaics without much regard for their placement or chronology,
or of the mix of styles and art forms in the chapel in much the same terms as

with other works of Norman art, namely, as the reflection of the Sicilian society that the Norman kings ruled.[20] But these explanations too are insufficient. Although it is true that twelfth-century Sicily was a mixed land – Greek and Arabic, French and Latin – social structure in itself does not explain why one form was chosen for one part of the chapel – or any other work of Norman art, for that matter – as opposed to another. There is the nagging question of principle: was the chapel simply or even overwhelmingly the result of outside circumstances, or did it have some internal logic and rationale? I think that it did, and that it was also new, or rather that the chapel used art in a new way. In a sense it was a new kind of object; this brings us back to the enigma problem and the issue of function, which is how I believe that it can be solved.

Let me sketch out my understanding of the situation. I began my study of the Cappella Palatina by taking a very close look at the monument itself. It was not possible to do any actual digging in the chapel in the sense of removing bits here and there to see how things were put together, but it was possible to scrutinize the standing building. This seemed important for the following reason. It is well known that the chapel was built by Roger II with later contributions, mostly on the inside in the form of decorations and furnishings, by his son and grandson, William I and William II. It has also and often been assumed that the entire endeavor was guided and controlled by a unitary and coherent master plan that was worked out at the very beginning.[21] The sequence of the various features of the chapel has never seemed so overwhelmingly important as to be clearly differentiated (besides the fact that the Cappella Palatina has often been apportioned among different fields, with architectural historians concerned primarily with the building itself, Islamicists with the nave ceiling, and Byzantinists with the mosaics). What interested me, however, was precisely how the whole worked, and thus the various parts and particularly their relationship to one another, chronological and otherwise, became very important. This is what I found: a chronology of development for the chapel and its appurtenances, worked out with more or less precision, that provides a different basis for understanding how the monument came into being in the twelfth century in phases, and with these phases, a different picture of how it must have functioned and what it must have meant. Let me now survey my investigation of the physical fabric of the Cappella Palatina, which involved partly stripping away later accretions, and partly reconstructing missing pieces, in order to recreate at least in the mind's eye a building that no longer exists. At this point I shall concentrate on two examples, beginning with the great throne platform in the nave.

II

Viewed head-on and from a vantage point in the nave to the east, the throne platform looks like a perfectly plausible and unified ensemble (despite certain

rather bizarre modern restorations).[22] Close examination reveals a different situation. For one thing, the sides of the platform do not fit the spaces in which they are situated, and, in fact, a document from the chapel archive explains why. These great slabs of marble and porphyry in elaborately carved frames were put on the platform in the seventeenth century, after they had been removed from the chancel barrier of the chapel.[23] Similarly, the backdrop of the platform, what may be called the throne superstructure – that is, the fastigium, the zone of mosaic with the lion roundels and the scene of Christ flanked by Peter and Paul – is also such a misfit that it too could hardly be original, although here one must speak about a twelfth-century not a seventeenth-century date. I do not mean to say that these three zones themselves do not go together. On the contrary, I think that there is a great deal of internal evidence embedded in this otherwise very heavily restored wall to show that the entire surface forms a unity. But it is a unity that does not fit its own setting. Its overall composition of horizontals and verticals, for instance, does not agree with either the pavement below or the portions of the west wall to either side, whose mural organization is essentially that of the rest of the chapel. This decoration, too, is also just a surface that sits astride a window, visible from the other side of the wall, that has been walled up. Finally, the decoration is fraught with chronological indicators, like the figures of the lions, certain details of the ornament – particularly the rinceaux with their characteristically loopy and tri-lobed leaves – and above all the hairstyle of Christ, that point insistently to the period of *c*. 1160–80, which postdates by a considerable stretch the decoration of the chapel in the 1140s.[24]

The only thing here that is original, in fact, is the platform or the dais itself, which is raised up above the floor of the nave on five steps, and this may be said for two main reasons. First, the materials, technique, and patterns of the dais pavement are perfectly congruent with those of the rest of the floor of the chapel, concerning whose integrity, after some study, I have no doubt. Second, the very architecture of the chapel seems comprehensible only with the dais or something that must have been very much like it from the beginning. Its shape and position, for instance, account for the fact that the first intercolumniation of the nave colonnade is considerably wider than any of the other nave intercolumniations – which is an unusual variation for medieval architecture.[25] This intercolumniation is entirely filled by the dais. It also explains why the chapel lacks a central door to the west (which is unique for a building of this sort), not to mention, finally, the fact that two of the nave columns rest directly on the dais – at least insofar as I can tell – and although they could have been removed and set back in place, it seems an unlikely operation. If the dais had been added later, in all likelihood, it would have been built around the columns, and not underneath them as it now appears to have been.

What I reconstruct for the throne platform, therefore, is essentially two phases: in the first one, there was the dais as we see it today, a low platform decorated with marble revetment on five steps. Above it in the west wall of the chapel was a window, and because this window would have taken up a substantial

portion of the wall in its sheer size, nothing like the figural decoration that we now see. I doubt that there would have been any figures here at all, although how the wall otherwise would have been finished I cannot say. Later on, under William II, the west window of the chapel was walled up and the throne super-structure was put in place.[26]

One final point about the platform. Although the change just described is important and gets at the heart of what happened in the chapel in the twelfth century, its meaning for us lies also in the fact that it must be connected to two other developments that took place at the west end of the chapel in the 1180s, namely the addition of a narthex – a feature that had never been part of the original plan of the chapel – and the reworking of the two western door frames to take new bronze doors.[27] The bronze doors themselves are most significant. Such objects were by no means common in the Middle Ages, and what they imply, besides lofty status, is an entrance pattern for the chapel through the narthex and along both sides of the throne platform, which seems to fit very well the highly stressed symmetry of the new image of Christ flanked by Peter and Paul at the west end of the nave.

The second element to discuss involves a stretch of wall in the nave on the upper left or north side near the sanctuary, which is unusual for one reason: restoration. Now restoration in itself is by no means an extraordinary event in the chapel. Many of the mosaics have been repaired or added to in one way or another; the chapel, after all, has remained in almost continuous use from the twelfth century until today, and throughout this entire time it had to be main-tained. These other restorations are partial, however, in the sense that they involve figures or parts of figures, never entire compositions, and are often signed with inscriptions or coats of arms. Here, a whole stretch of wall is new, with three entirely new scenes (Lamech and his Wives, the Assumption of Enoch, and the Family of Noah) and these scenes are unsigned.[28] It is possible that the modern mosaicist was guided by some fragments or other indications from the twelfth century, and that he reproduced what was essentially a medieval scheme. But the possibility is unlikely. For one thing, these scenes do not appear in the one other church program that we have good grounds to believe actually copied the Cappella Palatina nave in the twelfth century – the program at the Cathedral of Monreale of the 1180s – and this omission is doubly odd since Monreale is a much bigger church with a considerably larger area of wall to cover.[29] Another reason has to do with the subjects themselves. They are strange episodes, very minor events in the Old Testament story, and in one case, namely the Family of Noah, not even a narrative subject at all, but a portrait. To my knowledge they are also very rare, if not unprecedented, in medieval cycles. However, they have the distinct advantage of falling between the scene of God's reproval of Cain for the murder of Abel and of the building of the Ark, which are represented in the Cappella Palatina on either side of the eighteenth-century scenes. To a later artist seeking to fill in a gap in the wall in between these two subjects, and to maintain the narrative unity of the whole, they would have made a lot of sense. The only

question is why would there have been a gap – if there were no mosaics in the twelfth century, what then was on the wall?

An answer comes from an early nineteenth-century description of the chapel by the Sicilian historian, Cesare Pasca: 'Nel luogo ove sono i menzionati musaici, eravi anticamente un palchetto per i vicere'.[30] According to Pasca, therefore, there was a balcony – 'un palchetto' – in this precise spot (the 'menzionati musaici' were the eighteenth-century scenes) – at least by the time of the viceroys, or the Spanish rulers of Sicily beginning in the sixteenth century. To prove that a nave balcony then went back to Norman times is difficult, but there is one piece of evidence that supports it. At the apex of the arches of the nave colonnade, in an area that was unaffected by any of these changes, there is a series of medallions with portraits of saints, one over each arch.[31] The medallions fill the space in between the upper edge of the arch and the lower border of the decorative band above them in every case but one – here, where the eighteenth-century scenes are now located – suggesting that some other factor must have played a role in the original conception of the design. Could it have been the projection of some form from the wall, like a balcony, which partly blocked the area and made it necessary to adjust the size of the medallion accordingly?

If so, then one further unusual aspect of the chapel might also find some explanation. It is the fact that the west wall of the north transept, that is, the wall that is perpendicular to the area in question, the north wall of the nave, contains, not only a window, like the corresponding piece of wall opposite, but two narrow slits, that are inconceivable simply as openings to admit light. They make sense only as viewing apertures: in other words, openings that would have allowed someone to see below but not to be seen, which is interesting in light of the fact that the area above the north aisle of the chapel, directly behind these slits and the presumed balcony in the nave, contains a room that may well have gone back to the twelfth century.[32] As a matter of fact, these two walls, the wall with the slits and the wall with the balcony, may well have come together in this very room, which, in turn, would have given access in one space to both positions. Now the viewing hypothesis is interesting particularly in light of the fact that none of the other functional rationales that I can imagine, based on the evidence that I have collected about such elevated positions from other contexts – such as churches, palaces, and mosques, where they served as places for musicians, for instance, or guards – would fit the situation here very well.[33] The location of these structures, the presumed balcony and the slits, was simply too eccentric. However, the viewing purpose would have made sense, because it would have been from this point precisely that one would have had an optimal view of the king in both of his places: in the balcony in the north transept, which was overlooked by the slits, and on the platform at the west end of the chapel, where he would have been viewed in conjunction with the original main entrance (of which more presently).

Let me mention now in summary form three further points.

1. It has long been argued that mosaics in the nave and aisles of the chapel – the Old Testament scenes, and a cycle of scenes from the lives of Peter and Paul – were rather late in date, coming some time after Roger's death in 1154.[34] What is also the case, however, is that these mosaics are enormously ill-suited for their architectural context which, together with other evidence – both stylistic and iconographic – strongly suggests, indeed to my mind proves, that they were never originally intended for the chapel.[35]

2. The pulpit and paschal candelabrum at the east end of the south aisle were also not part of the original plan for the Cappella Palatina, as witness their late date, their very specific sources in other monuments, and their lack of fit.[36]

3. Finally, there is the main apse of the chapel – one of the two most prominent elements of the sanctuary that engages the viewer standing in the nave. According to my researches and those of others, this apse composition represents a late development, replacing an earlier image of the Virgin flanked by saints, including St Peter, which would have been much more a part of the internal order of the sanctuary than the present apse, and much less an appeal to a viewer standing in the nave.[37] In other words, there was originally no emphasis on an axial viewer, but, strangely enough, on one in the south aisle. There stands the most prominent narrative element of the sanctuary *vis-à-vis* the nave, the scene of the Nativity over the right or south apse, to which I shall also return.[38]

III

We may now return to the question of the Cappella Palatina as an object: what makes it seem so surpassingly miscellaneous or circumstantial, unsynthesized or disjointed that it has been called a hybrid? At least part of the answer, in a word, must now be 'overlay': the Cappella Palatina as we now see it is an overlay of plans. There were two of them, different both conceptually and functionally, that were put one on top of the other in the twelfth century. Suffice to say that all the changes that I have described hang together chronologically – mid- to late-twelfth century – and all embody a pattern that had a two-fold impact on the first plan. First, they involved the implantation of an entire Christian framework, embracing both images (the Old Testament cycle and the sequence of scenes from the lives of Peter and Paul) and furnishings (the new throne back, the pulpit, and paschal candelabrum – which in themselves say much about the new audience of this space) into a space – the nave – that before had no overt Christian content whatsoever. It simply looked like a secular hall, with a balcony and platform, and a most dramatic cover in the form of a muqarnas vault.[39] The nave also had more of a north–south orientation originally, like the sanctuary, with its balcony and platform – an orientation that was obliterated by the

changes. The new Christian elements of the later twelfth century imposed a new order on the nave space, essentially symmetrical, balancing both aisles and nave, and relating them more clearly and directly to the sanctuary than they had ever been before, which is the second point to make. In other words, when the Cappella Palatina was first built it only masqueraded as an east–west structure; it actually functioned north–south (which explains its role as a linch-pin in the palace) – and it is on this building (the building, in effect, that no longer exists – the building that the great nave vault was meant to cover) that I would like to concentrate in the remainder of this article, particularly with regard to the issue of asymmetry.

To return to the question of entrance; as I suggested earlier, the change in the throne platform involved a change in the entrance pattern of the chapel, with an emphasis now on the west and on symmetry – on what one must assume were parallel movements through the two doors of the narthex into the aisles alongside the throne. There is good reason to believe, however, that the original main entrance into the chapel was at the far west end of the south aisle. Not only is this even today the largest doorway into the chapel, it was probably the only door that would have been reached via a monumental public staircase, as the archeological investigation of the architect Valenti has shown.[40] Presumably one entered the palace itself from the south, which is where the public portion of the edifice is believed to have been, proceeded into a large court and then via the monumental stair, into the chapel, to encounter first the platform, minus of course the throne back, from the side. This is an odd juxtaposition, and the question arises as to why it occurred. Part of the answer I believe lay at one's feet, in the *opus sectile* pavement of the chapel, which is an original feature of the ensemble and one of the most beautiful floors from the twelfth century.[41]

This pavement is laid out essentially as a symmetrical design, in a series of square and rectangular compartments, with only one serious departure from the norm. This occurs in the south aisle at precisely the point where the original main entrance of the chapel is believed to have been. Here, instead of the usual curvilinear or rectilinear patterns in simple frames, we find compartments divided between large central elements and narrower flanking bands. These patterns are analogous to the types of designs that are often found at thresholds in ancient and medieval floors, and it is as threshold pavements that they should be understood.[42] What they indicate is that the first bay of the south aisle to the west was a threshold – in fact, it was the main threshold of the chapel; but they also tell us that the second bay too was a threshold, and the only space for which it could have been a threshold was the nave. Taken together, then, these patterns inscribe a path of movement through the chapel, from a point of entry at the south-west, down the south aisle one bay and into the nave – in other words, from the entrance into a direct, head-on and close-up encounter with the occupant of the platform, the king.

This movement certainly seems very much like a ceremony of greeting, the byzantine custom of ritual bowing or proskynesis (which had been inferred from

other sources that the Sicilian nobles performed for the king), and in it we have, finally, what was probably the subject to be viewed by the occupants of the presumed balcony on the north wall of the nave.[43] But we also have a critical second pole from which our picture of the chapel function might be hung. It almost goes without saying that the sanctuary of the chapel served for the performance of the liturgy, and that this performance, from all that we can tell, especially from the presence of the sanctuary balcony and from the degree of separation of sanctuary from nave, was reserved for all intents and purposes for the king. There may have been an audience in the nave for these services but they would have seen little. What now seems to have taken place in the nave, however, was the greeting ceremony, or something along these lines, which obviously could not have occurred simultaneously with the liturgy, because it too involved the king. Two separate ceremonies, in two separate and yet linked spaces, and two roles above all for the king.

IV

There are no Sicilian texts that tell us how the Cappella Palatina was used, nor is there anything at all in the immediate area of Italy, France, Germany, or any other region of the West, that would account for this type of disposition, especially for the fact that it seems to have been a repeated event, since it was encoded in the very structure of the chapel itself.[44] In fact, this functional disposition seems to have been the first structure of the chapel. However, in Byzantium the liturgical situation is more interesting and potentially more useful. To speak of the liturgy in Byzantium, however, raises questions about chronology, sources, and development that cannot be explored here. Suffice to say that by the twelfth century the Byzantines had developed an elaborate set of liturgical practices that involved the emperor directly, that one of the main points of this liturgy, the imperial liturgy, was to make tangible a link between the emperor and Christ, the terrestrial and celestial rulers, through the vehicle of the major feasts of the liturgical year, and that this linkage was framed in an increasingly stressed and explicit way as time went on, as witness, for instance the changes between the tenth-century Book of Ceremonies of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, and the fourteenth-century treatise of Pseudo-Kodinos.[45] Within the context of the Cappella Palatina, three aspects of this liturgy are of special interest: first, that it placed emphasis on Christmas, 25 December, the birth of God-made-man; second, that it very often involved a two-part ceremony that embraced first, the emperor's participation in the liturgy in one of the palace chapels or churches, and then a reception in which the emperor was greeted by and then received the members of his court; and third, that it was repeated incessantly, as one moved through the eternally renewing cycle of the major feasts of the liturgical year.[46] In other words, homage to the ruler was paid repeatedly on

two levels, first to Christ by the emperor and then to the emperor by his court, which ratified and confirmed the chain of command that was the very basis of the byzantine state.

That the first Norman king would have taken over this liturgy for use in his own kingdom is not at all implausible given the historical circumstances. The Normans were upstarts, who under Roger had created a kingdom where none had existed before, which was tantamount to an act of treachery against the then-world order.[47] They looked to Byzantium for an image for themselves and for a vocabulary that would enable them to proclaim their own sovereignty.[48]

There is another, more specific factor that gives this hypothesis greater weight: the sermons that were written by King Roger's own court homilist, Philagathos.[49] These sermons, which are only now in the process of receiving their first serious and sustained scholarly edition, have often been mined by art historians precisely because they make the kind of links between the king and Christ that are so evocative and relevant to specific images in the Cappella Palatina.[50] What no one to my knowledge has remarked on is the fact that these are sermons, plural that is, that they form a collection that was clearly intended to be recited repeatedly as one moved once again through the cycle of the liturgical year. In other words, the linkage between Christ and Roger was restated repeatedly, indeed it became one of the themes of the yearly cycle of liturgical feasts in mid-twelfth-century Palermo. I know of no other royal commission quite like this anywhere in the period before Philagathos.[51] But I can think of no better formulation or rather institutionalization of the byzantine imperial-liturgical idea than the series of sermons that Philagathos wrote.

Returning to the Cappella Palatina, we can now perhaps make some more delicate distinctions by integrating imagery, and very simply at that, into our functional picture of the first phase of the chapel. In my opinion, one of the main ways in which the chapel was originally designed to work was as follows.[52] The king heard the liturgy recited from his balcony in the sanctuary – literally closer to God than any other mortal man in a universe that was imbued with his own royal themes and preoccupations. But it was God's realm – the realm of the king in heaven. He then descended to the realm of the king on earth, Roger's own realm – the terrestrial realm – the nave of the chapel, where he stood, only slightly elevated above his court to receive and greet them, surrounded by images of the perfect earthly kingdom. The visitors entered from the southwest where they saw the king first in profile. They then turned to walk down the south aisle, where the grandest narrative image in the entire chapel, the Nativity, confronted them on the east wall of the sanctuary above the south apse – the eternal moment of beginning of this temporally unfolding link between Christ and king, and the point of departure for the feast cycle that then wrapped around the entire sanctuary. The visitor then turned to enter the nave and to confront the king full face in all of his glory. I would imagine that these ceremonies were watched from above, perhaps by the women of the court, who probably were not given a place in the chapel. Thus the building came to life in

an insistent repetition of the linkage between the two realms, following the liturgical year like the cycle of scenes in the sanctuary or Philagathos's sermons, in what was ultimately a byzantine-derived function. But the edifice itself was not derivative in the sense of being unoriginal, which is the final point that I would like to make.

There are two ways in which the original version of the Cappella Palatina was unusual, I would dare say bold and unique. The first was in its style. There is a certain amount of evidence from throughout the Middle Ages of the preference of one culture for the art, even architecture of another – of Byzantium for Islamic arts, for instance – but nowhere else known to me gave rise to a structure that combined the arts in such a clear and purposeful way: byzantine art was used for the sanctuary of the chapel because it alone had a format capable of depicting the universal order of the Allruler, who was the being above the king; Islamic art, on the other hand, was used to depict the true terrestrial realm for the Normans, the native vocabulary of Norman Sicily, and arab land, and especially Palermo, the arab capital of 1000 mosques which became the Norman capital, in which a Christian king spoke Arabic and in which arabic architecture defined the place of the king.[53] The second point has to do with function. If it is true that Byzantium invented the functional format that provided a model for the kind of ceremonies that took place in the Cappella Palatina, they never – at least to my knowledge – had an architectural form that served the function in precisely the same way, and for one reason. What the first phase of the chapel as I have reconstructed it implies is not only a *paragone* between the heavenly and earthly kingdoms, but also the link between them, as a matter of fact, the sole link between them – the king. It was the king alone who had the privilege of occupying a position in both realms, who moved between them as the hinge that held them together, and in his physical place – on a balcony, on the ground – and in his physical movement, he gave the world its very structure. In Byzantium, on the other hand, although the emperor was the head, he was not the sole hinge between the here and the beyond; the possibility of access, unmediated and direct, to the higher power was something that was always open to all.[54]

That the Cappella Palatina of today was an overlay of two separate plans was one of the points of this paper. I have concentrated on the first – the building, which now no longer exists, not on the change itself. I shall not speculate on the reasons why it occurred, except to make one point: what happened in the chapel, with the addition of the new forms that reoriented the nave, made it symmetrical and marked it as unmistakably Christian, was tantamount to a normalization of the building as a Christian church in a specifically western mode. This coincided with the normalization of the Sicilian monarchy that occurred in the second half of the twelfth century, when the grandiose and byzantine ambitions of the first Norman monarch were relinquished in exchange for the recognition of Sicily as a kingdom in the West.[55]

The other point has to do with structure and sources. It was an analysis of the structure of the chapel that gave us some clue as to what the individual

objects meant, and I am certain that this is as true for the chapel as it would be for any medieval robe or disembodied arm. The object world of the Middle Ages had a structure that cannot be ignored – in this case, many lengthy arguments about the Cappella Palatina may now have to be emended because they have posited 'meaningful connections' that probably never existed. As for sources, I think that physical movements and activities are very hard to come to terms with, but almost impossible if we demand that the evidence be one-to-one. What we need is to examine the sources in terms of larger patterns of uses, behaviors, and attitudes – to mine them to determine how things happened or were supposed to happen. This is nothing less than a history of functions – not in the impressionistic mode, but the nuts and bolts functional history, which we do not have, of institutions, of activities, and of places (like the history of the use of the church building in the Middle Ages), or whatever else is relevant to medieval art.

Notes

1 For the Foundation Charter of the chapel of 28 April 1140, see A. Garofalo, *Tabularium Regiae ac Imperialis Capellae Collegiate Divi Petri in Regio Panormitano Palatio* (Palermo, 1835), p. 7. Among the many modern studies of the Cappella Palatina an essential overview is still provided by Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (New York, 1950), pp. 25ff.

2 See subsequent text (pp. 4–7). On the relationship between artistic forms and human activities, see most recently, *Art in Ritual Context*, A Special Issue of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*, eds Kathleen Ashley and Irene J. Winter (Pittsburgh, 1992).

3 There is still no adequate critical survey of modern scholarship on medieval art, although there have been some attempts to review the literature in certain individual sub-fields; see Sible de Blaauw, 'Architecture and Liturgy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Traditions and trends in modern scholarship', *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft*, 33 (1991), pp. 1ff., and the essays of Ilene H. Forsyth and Willibald Sauerländer, *The Cloisters. Studies in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary*, ed. Elizabeth C. Parker with the assistance of Mary B. Shepard (New York, 1992), pp. 3ff., 26ff.

4 Henk van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces*, 2 vols (Groningen, 1984–8). Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult, Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich, 1990).

5 For a recent and stimulating contribution to the discussion of the modern museum exhibition, see *Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC, 1990), especially the essays of Alpers, Baxandall, and Greenblatt.

6 Thomas Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1971).

7 The study of the liturgical function of ecclesiastical architecture has had a long tradition; see, for instance, Paul Frankl, *Die Entwicklungsphasen der neueren Baukunst* (Stuttgart, 1914), republished in translation by James F. O'Gorman as *Principles of Architectural History, The Four Phases of Architectural Style, 1420–1900*

(Cambridge, MA, 1968), pp. 162ff.; see also de Blaauw, 'Architecture and liturgy', pp. 3ff.

8   See Marvin Trachtenberg, 'Some observations on recent architectural history', *Art Bulletin*, 70 (1980), pp. 208ff.

9   Mathews, *The Early Churches*, pp. 3ff., esp. p. 5. The point is reiterated by Arnold William Klukas, 'The architectural implications of the *Decreta Lanfranci*', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 6 (1983), pp. 136ff.

10 F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, Vol. II, *Kommentar*, pt. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1974), p. 155.

11 See also David Abulafia, *Frederick II. A Medieval Emperor* (London, 1988), p. 53.

12 Garofalo, *Tabularium*, p. 7.

13 Francesco Valenti, 'Il Palazzo Reale di Palermo', *Bollettino d'Arte*, 11 (1925), pp. 512ff. See also the study by Ernst Kitzinger on the Torre Pisana, 'The mosaic fragments in the Torre Pisana of the Royal Palace in Palermo: A preliminary study', *Mosaïque. Recueil d'hommages à Henri Stern* (Paris, 1983), pp. 239ff.

14 The byzantine affiliations of the sanctuary mosaics have been analyzed by Ernst Kitzinger, 'The mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo. An essay on the choice and arrangement of subjects', *The Art Bulletin*, 31 (1949) pp. 269ff., esp. 271ff.

15 The vault is beautifully illustrated in Ugo Monneret de Villard, *Le Pitture musul-mane al soffitto della Cappella Palatina in Palermo* (Rome, 1950). See also Dalu Jones, 'The Cappella Palatina in Palermo: Problems of attribution', *Art and Archae-ology Research Papers*, 2 (1972), pp. 41ff., but with caution. In certain respects the nave vault of the chapel is close to the double-bay vault of the nave of the al-Qarawiyin mosque in Fez; see Henri Terrasse, *La mosque al-Qaraouiyin à Fes* (Paris, 1968), pls. 28ff.

16 Kitzinger, 'Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina', pp. 279ff.

17 Loc. cit.

18 Two recent studies have focused on the throne platform: Slobodan Ćurčić, 'Some Palatine aspects of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 41 (1987), pp. 125ff.; and Beat Brenk, 'La Parete occidentale della Cappella Palatina a Palermo', *Arte medievale*, II Ser., IV/2 (1990), pp. 135ff.

19 Ćurčić, 'Some Palatine aspects', esp. pp. 140ff.

20 Eve Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic. The Royal Programmes of Norman Sicily 1130–1187* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 17ff. Brenk, 'La Parete', pp. 135ff.

21 This is the assumption, for instance, of both Ćurčić and Brenk in the studies cited above, note 18. It is also the assumption made by Eve Borsook in her monograph, *Messages in Mosaic*.

22 The panels of ornament and the porphyry strips that enframe them beneath the pediment of the fastigium do not represent the original medieval arrangement of the throne back; see Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, p. 46, pl. 39.

23 Benedetto Rocco, 'La Cappella Palatina di Palermo: lettura teologica', *B.C.A* (*Beni Culturali Ambientali Sicilia, Bollettino d'informazione*, 4 (1983), p. 27. pl. V.

24 The pediment zone of the throne platform may be compared to the vault mosaic of the so-called Norman Stanza, with regard to the figures of the lions and the ornament; see Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, p. 180, figs. 114, 117. The Stanza is dated by Demus to a period bridging the reigns of William I and

William II, *c.* 1160–70. See also Brenk, 'La Parete', p. 139, without drawing, however, the necessary chronological conclusion. Christ's hairstyle in Sicily seems to have changed markedly in the course of the twelfth century. The earlier preference was for a flatter style; later on, especially in the mosaics of Monreale, the style was much loftier and fuller; see Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, figs. 2, 10B, 13, 16B, 39, and 61.

25 The westernmost intercolumniation is wider than all of the others in the nave, except for the easternmost, by over a foot.

26 The superstructure of the throne platform must also be discussed in connection with the royal throne at Monreale; see Wolfgang Krönig, *The Cathedral of Monreale and Norman Architecture in Sicily* (Palermo, 1966), figs. 45 and 53ff.

27 Ursula Mende, *Die Bronzetüren des Mittelalters 800–1200* (Munich, 1983), pp. 53ff., pp. 145f., figs. 35 and 36; Antonio Cadei, 'La prima committenza normanna', *Le Porte di Bronzo dall'Antichità al Secolo XIII*, ed. Salvatorino Salom (Rome, 1990), pp. 367ff., figs. 21ff. On the narthex, see Francesco Valenti, 'L'arte nell'era normanna', *Il Regno Normanno* (Milan, 1932), pp. 220ff., pls. LIII, LIV, figs. 105–7.

28 The work may be attributed to the late eighteenth-century mosaicist, Santi Cardini; see Demus, *The Mosaics of Sicily*, p. 44.

29 The most cogent discussion of the iconographic relationship between the Cappella Palatina and the Cathedral of Monreale is Ernst Kitzinger's in his monograph, *The Mosaics of Monreale* (Palermo, 1960), pp. 25ff.

30 Cesare Pasca, *Descrizione della Imperiale e Regale Cappella Palatina di Palermo* (Palermo, 1841), p. 98. I would like to thank Ernst Kitzinger for drawing my attention to this passage.

31 A displacement similar to the one described here may also have occurred in the north transept, on the two walls (east and west) facing the presumed balcony of the king; see Kitzinger, 'Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina', p. 285.

32 The difference in the height of the slits may perhaps be explained in terms of some missing structure, such as a staircase, which is at least implied by the presence of an opening near the top of the wall in the south-east corner of the room in question – was this opening a door to the roof of the chapel in the area of the dome? A stair would have made the opening accessible from below.

33 The following discuss cases from the relevant literature: M. Canard, 'Le cérémonial fatimite et le cérémonial byzantin. Essai de comparison', *Byzantion*, 21 (1951), pp. 355ff., esp. p. 409; D. Sourdel, 'Questions de cérémonial Abbaside', *Revue des Études Islamiques*, 28 (1960), pp. 121ff., esp. p. 124ff., George Majeska, *Russian Travellers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, Dumbarton Oaks Studies*, 19 (Washington, DC, 1984), p. 104, pp. 420f.

34 Demus, *The Mosaics of Sicily*, pp. 43ff., and 404ff.

35 One manifestation of this lack of fit is the awkward way in which the figures in the mosaics are cut off by the arches of the nave colonnade; see Demus, *The Mosaics of Sicily*, figs. 31ff. This is not the case in any other nave decoration that I know.

36 Lorenza Cochetti Pratesi, 'Il candelabro della Cappella Palatina', *Scritti di Storia dell'Arte in Onore di Mario Salmi* (Rome 1961), pp. 291ff.; idem, 'In margine ad alcuni recenti studi sulla scultura medievale nell'Italia meridionale. Sui rapporti tra la scultura campana e quella siciliana', *Commentari*, 21 (1970), pp. 255ff.; Michael

Schneider-Flagmeyer, *Die mittelalterliche Osterleuchter in Süditalien. Ein Beitrag zur Bildgeschichte des Auferstehungsglaubens* (Frankfurt a.M., 1986), pp. 221ff.

37   Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, pp. 37f., pp. 53f.

38   Borsook interprets the Nativity, incorrectly in my opinion, as a reference to Roger's coronation on 25 December; see Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, pp. 33ff.

39   The first covering of the nave and aisle walls is something of a mystery. The walls could hardly have been left unadorned until the mosaics were put up under William I, but there is not the slightest trace of an earlier decoration anywhere in the chapel that I have been able to find. However, in a sermon that was delivered in the late 1140s or early 1150s by Roger's court homilist, Philagathos, there is perhaps a clue. Philagathos refers to brilliantly colored hangings or draperies in the chapel, and although he does not describe their precise location, it may well be that they lined the walls of the nave and aisles of the chapel, as was the custom in royal halls elsewhere; see Filagato de Cerami, *Omelie per i vangeli domenicali e le feste di tutto l'anno*, ed. Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi (Palermo, 1969), p. 175. The date of the sermon is discussed by Ernst Kitzinger, 'The date of Philagathos' homily for the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul', *Byzantino-Sicula II, Miscellanea di Scritti in Memoria di Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi* (Palermo, 1975), pp. 301ff. If this were the case, the muqarnas vault probably would have had an even greater impact on the viewer than it does today.

40   Valenti, 'L'arte nell'era normanna', p. 220, pl. LI, figs. 101–2; G. Giacomazzi, *Il palazzo che fu dei re. Divagazione storico-artistica sul palazzo dei normanni* (Palermo, 1959), fig. 21.

41   Concerning the floor, see the remarks of Demus, *The Mosaics of Sicily*, p. 28; also Hiltrud Kier, *Der mittelalterliche Schmuckfussboden* (Dusseldorf, 1970), p. 29, fig. 337; and Dorothy Glass, *Studies on Cosmatesque Pavements, British Archaeological Reports, International Series*, 82 (Oxford, 1980), p. 4.

42   See, for instance, Kier, *Schmuckfussboden*, fig. 270; Ernst Kitzinger, 'The threshold of the Holy Shrine: Observations on floor mosaics at Antioch and Bethlehem', *Kyriakon, Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. P. Grandfield (Munster i. W., 1970), pp. 639ff.

43   Josef Deer, *Der Kaiserornat Friedrichs II* (Bern, 1952), pp. 13ff.

44   In a more detailed treatment of the problem, I shall discuss two other issues – the 'Westwerk' tradition of Northern Europe, and the ceremonial commemoration of coronation, or *Festkrönung* – both of which have only a negative bearing on the situation in the Rogerian phase of the Cappella Palatina; with regards to the former, see Percy Ernst Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1954), pp. 354ff.; Friedrich Möbius, *Westwerkstudien* (Jena, 1968); as for the latter, see H. W. Klewitz, 'Die Festkrönung der deutschen Könige', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germ. Abt.*, 59 (1939), pp. 48ff.; Carl Richard Bruhl, 'Frankischer Krönungsbruch und das Problem der Festkrönung', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 194 (1962), pp. 205ff.

45   For the Ceremony Book of Constantine VII, see *Le Livre des cérémonies*, ed. Albert Vogt, 2 vols, text and commentary (Paris, 1935–40). For the text of Pseudo-Kodinos, see *Pseudo Kodinos, Traité des Offices*, ed. Jean Verpeaux (Paris, 1966). In addition: Otto Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im hofischen Zeremoniell*, 2nd ed. (unrevised, Darmstadt, 1956): André

Grabar, 'Pseudo Codinos et les cérémonies de la cour byzantine au XIVe siècle', *Art et Société à Byzance sous les Paléologues. Actes du colloque organisé par l'Association Internationale des Études Byzantines à Venise en Septembre, 1968* (Venice, 1971), pp. 195ff.; Averil Cameron, 'The construction of court ritual: The Byzantine book of ceremonies'. *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. D. Cannadine and S. Price (Cambridge, 1987). pp. 106ff.; Henry Maguire, 'The mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial reading'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 46 (1992), pp. 205ff.

46 It should be noted that the liturgical year in Byzantium began with the Feast of the Annunciation (25 March). Both the Book of Ceremonies of Constantine VII and the text of Pseudo-Kodinos, however, open with a description of the Christmas liturgy. On the imperial significance of Christmas, see Maguire, 'Nea Moni'; also Anselm Strittmatter, 'Christmas and Epiphany: Origins and antecedents', *Thought*, 17 (1942), pp. 600ff.; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, 'Oriens Augusti – Lever du Roi', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 17 (1963), pp. 119ff.

47 Erick Caspar, *Roger II. (1101–1154) und die Grundung der normannisch-sicilischen Monarchie* (Innsbruck, 1904), pp. 61ff.; Ferdinand Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile* (Paris, 1907), vol. II, pp. 1ff.; Helen Wieruszowski, 'Roger II of Sicily, *Rex-Tyrannus*, in Twelfth-Century Political Thought', *Speculum*, 38 (1963), pp. 46ff.

48 Ernst Kitzinger, 'On the portrait of Roger II in the Martorana in Palermo', *Proporzioni*, 3 (1950), pp. 30ff., and more recently, idem, *I mosaici di Santa Maria dell' Ammiraglio a Palermo* (Palermo, 1990), pp. 191ff. Reinhard Elze, 'Zum Königtum Rogers II. von Sizilien', *Festschrift Percy Ernst Schramm* (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 102ff., reprinted idem, *Papste-Kaiser-Könige und die mittelalterliche Herrschaftssymbolik* (London, 1982), no. IX, particularly with regard to the phrase, 'Rex est imperator in regno suo'. But contrast the view of L. R. Ménager, 'L'institution monarchique dans les états normands d'Italie', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 2 (1959), pp. 303ff.

49 Rossi Taibbi's edition of Philagathos's sermons (see note 39) was left incomplete with his untimely death. The sermons have also been published in the *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Greca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1864), vol. 132.

50 Kitzinger, 'Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina', pp. 279ff.

51 Philagathos's sermons, however, were widely diffused in Byzantium; on this subject see the study of Bruno Lavagnini in the *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Vera von Falkenhausen and Ernst Kitzinger for discussing this problem.

52 The sequence of events suggested here, of course, is only one of many possible solutions – to explore the others would take us far beyond the scope of this essay. It should be stressed, however, that the other possibilities are also conceivable within the framework of a basic functional division between sanctuary and nave.

53 See, for instance, the royal garden pavilions immediately outside the city of Palermo (the Zisa, the Cuba, and the Cubala): Adolf Goldschmidt, 'Die normannischen Königspalaste in Palermo', *Zeitschrift für Bauwesen*, 48 (1898), pp. 541ff.; Giuseppe Caronia, *La Zisa di Palermo, Storia e restauro* (Rome, 1982); Ursula Staacke, *Un palazzo normanno a Palermo. La Zisa* (Palermo, 1991). On the muslim culture of

Norman Sicily, see Michele Amari, *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*, vol. 3, pts. 1–3 (Catania, 1937–9); Umberto Rizzitano, *Storia e cultura nella Sicilia saracena* (Palermo, 1975), esp. pp. 267ff.

54 A case in point is the icon, which functioned as a conduit of holy power regardless of the status of the devotee; see Belting, *Bild und Kult*, passim.

55 Caspar, *Roger II*, pp. 328ff.; Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination*, vol. II, pp. 98ff.

21

Venice and Islam in the Middle Ages: Some Observations on the Question of Architectural Influence

Deborah Howard

Once described by the great Venetian art historian Giuseppe Fiocco as a colossal *suq*,[1] the city of Venice has always conveyed a distinctly oriental atmosphere to the western european visitor. Mystified by its labyrinth of dark, narrow, often dead-end streets, twisting at right-angles through densely built-up, separately demarcated parishes, glimpsing fragrant gardens hidden behind high, crenellated walls, sniffing the pungent odours of exotic oriental spices in the bustling, crowded markets, the traveller might well have imagined himself transported, as if on a magic carpet, to one of the great mercantile centres of the Middle East – to Baghdad, Cairo or Damascus – to the world of Marco Polo's travels or the Arabian Nights.

Yet recent studies of the Islamic city have argued that the unifying force that shaped the Moslem urban environment was Islam itself – the shared cultural and religious codes that moulded the daily routine and world view of every believer.[2] The history of the Venetian Republic ran parallel, chronologically, to that of Islamic civilization: the first Doge was elected in AD 697, just sixty-five years after the death of the Prophet, and throughout her history the Serenissima competed militarily and economically with the world of Islam.[3] Religion was often the cause for confrontation between the cultures of east and west, and although traditionally suspicious of Papal authority, Venice was also proud of her role as defender of the Christian faith. If ostensibly in opposition to the essential

unity of Moslem culture, that is, the Islamic faith itself, how then did medieval Venice – unlike her chief competitors, the maritime Republics of Genoa and Pisa – come to acquire so many Moorish architectural and urban characteristics?[4]

It could, of course, be argued that any thriving medieval city was compact, crowded and cosmopolitan, that rich oriental textiles and luxury objects were prized throughout Europe, and that picturesque skylines and intricate ornament were not exclusive to Venice. It could also be pointed out, with some justification, that those European cities that were actually under Moslem domination, such as Seville, Granada and Palermo, came to appear Moorish in a far more obvious and recognizable way.[5] One could protest, too, that Venetian civilization was strongly imbued with Byzantine influence, and that many of the characteristics of Islamic architecture were also shared by, and indeed grew out of, the Byzantine artistic heritage. Tracing the threads still further back, we cannot ignore the fact that the Hellenic-Roman legacy across the whole of the eastern Mediterranean world endowed all the region's visual cultures with a common repertoire of decorative motifs and building types.

It is precisely because of these complications that the subject of Islamic influence on Venetian medieval architecture is an absorbing and challenging one.[6] This study will try to isolate and identify those characteristics in the Venetian built environment that are recognizably and specifically Islamic in origin, rather than shared elements inherited from Rome or Byzantium. This process of visual matching is a relatively straightforward one, but its implications are far more complex. How and when was the influence transmitted? How conscious was the emulation of Moorish architecture? Why were Islamic forms adopted, and if they were easily identified as such, what were they intended to convey?[7] (The corollary is equally fascinating: what aspects of the Moslem city were never imitated, and why?)

The Identification of Islamic Traits in Venetian Architecture

The first post-medieval critic to recognize Venice's debt to Islam seems to have been John Ruskin in his *Stones of Venice*, published in 1851–3. Although Ruskin is now generally acknowledged as the writer who re-opened European eyes to the beauties of Venetian Gothic, his interest in what he referred to as the 'Arab' contribution has received relatively little attention:

> All European architecture, bad and good, old and new, is derived from Greece, through Rome, and *coloured and perfected from the East* . . . (my italics)

> The Venetians deserve especial note as the only European people who appear to have sympathised to the full with the great instinct of the eastern races . . . While the burghers of the North were building their dark streets and grisly castles of oak and sandstone, the merchants of Venice were covering their palaces with porphyry and gold.[8]

What Ruskin himself knew of 'Arab' architecture is not entirely clear. He would have been familiar with the fanciful orientalism of John Nash's Brighton Pavilion and, more topically, with the Indian displays at the Great Exhibition of 1851. He would probably have known sketches by travellers in Ottoman Turkey and, most important of all, he must have admired Owen Jones' beautiful coloured folios of Islamic designs.[9]

Ruskin himself pinpointed the 'Arab' influence on Venetian architecture to around 1180, when, he claims, the Byzantine-Roman style was succeeded by 'a transitional one of a character much more distinctively Arabian; the shafts become more slender, the arches more consistently pointed'.[10] Interestingly, Ruskin's dogmatic, moralizing, Christian standpoint did not blind him to the positive qualities of eastern architecture. On the contrary, he admired the spiritual sincerity of the Islamic tradition:

> Observe how, in the Oriental mind a peculiar seriousness is associated with the attribute of the love of colour; a seriousness rising out of repose, and out of the depth and breadth of the imagination, as contrasted with the activity, and consequent capability of surprise, and of laughter, characteristic of the western mind.[11]

Venice's Oriental Connections

Before turning to the visual connections, we should briefly explain the nature of Venice's eastern connections. Venice was already trading extensively with the Islamic world by the early ninth century.[12] The fact that two Venetian merchants, Bruno di Malamocco and Rustico di Torcello, were able to smuggle the remains of St Mark out of Alexandria in 828 or 829, suggests that their presence in the Egyptian port was a fairly routine event. Wool, wood, metals and arms from northern Europe were shipped east by Venetian merchants in exchange for spices, silks, cottons and Russian furs.

The Crusades were obviously a crucial period in east–west relations.[13] Although Venice was a major point of embarkation, the Republic's participation was reluctant and was only gained in return for exceptional trading privileges in the new Kingdom of Jerusalem.[14] After the Fourth Crusade, diverted by Venice to capture Byzantium, the Venetians occupied three-eighths of Constantinople.[15] For more than half a century the Byzantine Empire effectively became a Venetian colony and an important base for oriental trade.[16] During this period the Venetians signed five trading treaties with the Egyptian Mamluks, maintaining flourishing trading posts in both Cairo and Alexandria.[17]

It was also in the thirteenth century that the uniting of the Mongol empire opened up the silk route to western merchants. Although Marco Polo has remained the most famous Venetian traveller to reach China, an Italian merchant's handbook in 1340 reported the road to Cathay to be 'perfectly safe by

day or night'.[18] Not only merchants and explorers but also Franciscan missionaries ventured eastward;[19] and the recently discovered tomb of a certain Caterina Vilioni, who died in Yangchow in 1342, suggests, remarkably, that it was even possible for western women to travel to China at this time.[20] Realizing the economic advantages of her oriental links with the Islamic world, Venice vigorously asserted the Republic's right to trade with the 'Infidel', resisting strong Papal pressure for what we would now call sanctions.[21]

San Marco

The great church of San Marco, a gigantic reliquary for the precious body of St Mark and the private chapel of the Doge, is probably the most conspicuously oriental building in Venice, with its glittering mosaics, shimmering marbles and exotic skyline. But it is also an insistently Byzantine building, consciously modelled on the archetypal Apostle's church, the Apostoleion in Constantinople. Its Byzantine characteristics have been extensively studied, especially by Otto Demus, who also drew attention to its specifically Moorish qualities.[22] As Demus pointed out, the Alexandrian connections of St Mark himself would have justified the attempt to emulate Islamic models in a Christian church.[23]

San Marco was several times enlarged and remodelled in the four centuries following its foundation in the ninth century. The most conspicuous Moorish elements are to be found towards the end of this period. For instance, Demus pointed out the similarities between the stone window grilles, particularly those over the Porta Sant' Alippio (the doorway on the extreme left of the façade), and similar windows in the great Umayyad mosque in Damascus.[24] Traceries of this type may also be seen in the tomb of the Dogaressa Felicitas Michiel (d. 1111) inside the narthex; indeed the Islamic tree of life motif is incorporated into its decorative stonework.[25] Demus also pointed out the resemblance between relief panels in San Marco, such as the peacock relief on the west façade, and the stylized symmetry of Egyptian wood carvings of the Fatimid period.[26] More difficult to substantiate is Demus's assertion that the attenuated broken ogee arches of the Porta dei Fiori and the Tesoro entrance are reflections of Saracenic influence, since arches of this shape are rarely found in the Islamic tradition.[27] We shall return to this problem when we look at Venetian palace decoration.

If this last example of orientalizing was apparently based more on fantasy than on direct influence, the same cannot be said of the prominent outer domes of San Marco which have dominated the Piazza since they were added in the thirteenth century, leaving a legacy still evident in the domes of Santa Maria della Salute four centuries later. Although the idea of the double dome seems to have had Persian origins, great bulbous domes were certainly a conspicuous element in the Egyptian townscape by the thirteenth century. As Lane-Poole's illustration of the domes of the Ibn Tulun mosque under restoration shows clearly, the raised

domes of San Marco resemble their Egyptian prototypes in construction as well as form.[28] And they also served a comparable function, for the swelling Fatimid and Mamluk domes always stood over important tombs. Since St Mark himself had been martyred in Alexandria, it would have appeared entirely appropriate to give the shrine of Venice's patron saint the attributes of an Egyptian mausoleum. Such a trans-cultural transference from one religious context to another presupposes a Venetian understanding of the meaning of domes to the Islamic society of Cairo, and an acceptance of their deeper significance which transcended religious boundaries.[29]

Before leaving San Marco we should pause to admire the delicate metalwork lanterns which, although probably made in Venice, clearly show the impact of Islamic metalwork.[30] We may also observe the practice of outlining ogee-arched reliefs in rectangular panels, a formula reminiscent of the Islamic mihrab niche. Perhaps most surprising is the presence of no less than twenty-one Islamic objects in the treasury at San Marco, many of them in later Venetian mountings.[31] Were these treasures recognized as non-Christian objects, or does their presence suggest a blurring of the boundary between western and eastern cultures?

The Church of Santa Fosca, Torcello

An intriguing example of Islamic influence on Venetian religious architecture is to be found in the little church of Santa Fosca on the island of Torcello (Figure 21.1). Like San Marco, the church was built to house the relics of a saint brought from the Eastern Mediterranean. The body of Santa Fosca, together with that of her nurse, Santa Maura, was brought from Sabratha near Tripoli in the tenth century. By 1011 a church had been built to house her remains on the island of Torcello, next to the cathedral, and the church was consecrated in 1247.[32]

It is generally assumed that the octagonal arcade – or rather, the five sides of an octagon – wrapped round the façade and sides of the church, is later than the core of the building. It is assumed, too, that the church was originally intended to carry a vaulted dome, instead of the present conical roof. The inner church takes the form of a Byzantine-style Greek cross with a polygonal apse, also five-sided, at the east end. For a saint martyred in Ravenna, this Byzantine imagery was entirely consistent. More surprising is the presence of apparently Islamic reminiscences on the exterior of the apse. The bold terracotta decoration, with its emphatic triangular dog-tooth ornament and dentilled mouldings in shades of beige and dark red, bears a notable resemblance to the ornamentation of Seljuk tomb towers, such as the late twelfth-century mausoleum at Erzurum in Turkey.[33] Although one could propose a common Roman origin (similarly bold, dog-tooth patterning is known in Roman remains in Alexandria[34] and in the Byzantine tradition), the frequent travels of Venetians

Figure 21.1 Church of Santa Fosca (right) and Cathedral (left), Torcello, Venetian lagoon © Sarah Quill/Venice Picture Library/The Bridgeman Art Library

to Seljuk domains at this period does not preclude a direct influence. Again, as in the case of San Marco, this implies a Venetian understanding of the funerary associations of these towers and their potential relevance and appropriateness to Santa Fosca's mausoleum.

Let us now consider the external ambulatory, supposedly a later addition. It probably dates from the twelfth century, to judge by its tall, stilted arches, which recall Veneto-Byzantine palaces of this date. It has not so far been noticed that the octagonal ambulatory with stilted arches surrounding a domed inner chamber would have been immediately recognizable as a reference to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. This celebrated Umayyad monument was in the charge of the Knights Templars from their foundation in 1118 until Jerusalem's recapture by Salah-al-Din in 1187.[35] Their period of occupation coincides with the time when the ambulatory was supposedly added to Santa Fosca. The Templars placed a cross on the Dome of the Rock to symbolize its new, Christian dedication. Should we not therefore consider the significance of the Crusader crosses inlaid in white on the three gables of Santa Fosca? The Templars played an important role in east–west trade as bankers and custodians of valuables, and were favourably regarded in Venice.[36] Indeed, when the order was abolished in 1311–12, the state-run Venetian inquisition refused to support their demise.[37] The Templars are known to have built a series of centrally planned churches across Europe, often consciously modelled on the Holy Sepulchre.[38] However, the Dome of the Rock was also a highly meaningful prototype because it was believed (wrongly, of course) to be the Temple of Solomon.[39] We shall return to the particular Venetian relevance of this Solomonic connection below.

The Doge's Palace

It is fitting to recall at this point Ruskin's famous evaluation of the Doge's Palace:

> The Ducal Palace of Venice contains the three elements in exactly equal proportions: the Roman, Lombard, and Arab. It is the central building of the world.[40]

Today the seaward elevation of the Doge's Palace (Figure 21.2) is as celebrated as the Taj Mahal or the Eiffel Tower, but its very familiarity makes it hard to assess the original impact of the design. Erected between 1340 and 1361 the building is infused with oriental references that were surely intended to be recognizable to the much-travelled public, both Venetians and foreigners.

Its most obvious Islamic qualities are the insistent two-dimensionality and openness of the façades, the lozenge pattern on the upper wall, the roofline crenellations, and the delicate traceries of the *piano nobile*. The most interesting Islamic connection, however, is the striking affinity to the depiction of the al-Aqsa Mosque in the map of Jerusalem in Marin Sanudo the Elder's *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*. The manuscript was compiled in about 1320, just two decades before the start of the present Doge's Palace.[41] The al-Aqsa Mosque, like the Dome of the Rock beside it, was an Umayyad building, occupied by the Templars in the twelfth century and believed by the Crusaders to be the Palace of Solomon.[42] Indeed, in the Sanudo map it is labelled 'Domus Salomonis'. Although the building has been much altered, it seems that the Sanudo view was not accurate, even in the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, the representation of a prominent eastern building with such convincing Christian credentials seems

Figure 21.2   Doge's Palace, Venice, south façade, begun c.1340. © Sarah Quill/Venice Picture Library/The Bridgeman Art Library

to have made a real impact on the design of the Doge's Palace. The Palace of Solomon, described in the first Book of Kings (6: 7–12) as having a portico of columns in front, three storeys in dressed stone, an inner courtyard and a wood-panelled Hall of Judgement, would have provided a highly appropriate model for the Venetian Palace of Justice. The link with the Sanudo illustration reinforces the suggestions of Lionello Puppi and David Rosand that the Doge's Palace was consciously associated with this biblical prototype.[43]

As far as the architectural detail is concerned, it is not easy to identify exact sources for the apparently Islamic features. The crenellations look as if they were copied from an Egyptian mosque, but their exact form is not found in any surviving North African building. In this context it would be intriguing to know whether Venetians were aware of the royal associations of Umayyad desert palaces, with their ornate roofline crenellations.[44] Similarly, the inlaid marble diaper pattern on the upper wall is reminiscent of lozenge patterns in monochrome brickwork in Seljuk architecture. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the whole Iranian world these Seljuk designs were transformed into coloured patterns in glazed tilework.[45] And the elegant ogee arches of the *piano nobile* have few obvious Islamic sources, although they are generally considered to be closer to oriental models than to western Gothic. The characteristically Venetian ogee arch seems to have Islamic origins: although it is rare in built architecture, it more commonly occurs in portable objects such as the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century glazed terracotta panel of a mihrab niche now in Paris. The double-curved pointed arch, anticipated tentatively in the Doge's Palace and later a major motif in Venetian palace design, appears conspicuously at the top of the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo, though in a plumper form. It is as if the designers drew on hearsay, or perhaps rough sketches, provided by travellers returning from the east, to provide an oriental architectural language, rather as the eighteenth century created *chinoiserie*.[46]

This invented orientalism certainly achieved what Ruskin called 'the exquisite refinement' of Islamic architecture,[47] but did it hold any deeper significance? Of course, oriental resonances would have helped to authenticate the biblical connection with the Palace of Solomon. We should remember, however, that this was also the period which saw the fastest growth in Venetian trade with the east. Since the establishment of the state convoy system in 1303, officially escorted voyages were departing with increasing regularity.[48] As if to explain the importance of Venice's maritime trade, one of the capitals on the Piazzetta side of the Doge's Palace represents figures from all the main nations that traded with the Serenissima.[49] Venetian merchants were now penetrating from the Black Sea ports into Persia and Anatolia (hence the Seljuk imagery in the Palace) and even China. Meanwhile the Syrian commercial link was greatly strengthened (hence the Aleppan reminiscence). Trade with Mamluk Egypt was also flourishing (hence the Egyptian-style crenellations), despite a long-drawn out dispute with the Pope who wanted to prevent Venice from trading with the 'Infidel'. Throughout the Middle Ages Venice repeatedly asserted her right to trade with Islamic

countries in the face of Papal opposition, but the mid-fourteenth century saw the bitterest and longest of these struggles.[50] The conspicuous display of Islamic-style characteristics – if not direct quotations – in their seat of government must have acted as a bold statement of her independence as a great trading nation. Finally, it is not irrelevant that since the closing of the Great Council in 1297 the Venetian nobility had been a closed oligarchy. In the Doge's Palace we see the creation of a distinguishing architectural identity to assert and to reinforce the new, exclusive status of the patrician class.

The Venetian Palace

The architectural expression of the identity of the Venetian patriciate extended, of course, to the domestic sphere. The family palace served not only as the home but also as the headquarters of the merchant's trading activities. The origins of the Venetian palace have been the subject of much speculation. made all the more difficult by the fact that no domestic architecture before the twelfth century appears to survive. The first known documentary record of a Venetian house, belonging to one Theophilus de Torcello, occurs in the will of Doge Giustiniano Parteciaco (827–9).[51] Although this house is described as covered with 'lapidibus' (mosaics?), many other early houses were probably timber constructions, most of which seem to have been destroyed in the great fire of 1105. The rebuilding after the fire coincided with the dramatic expansion of Venetian oriental trade during the period of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Venetian colonies in the Levant. It also ran parallel to the remarkable growth in the use of Venetian dialect, infused with Arab words, instead of Latin or Greek in commercial documents. A Florentine writer in 1211 complained that Venetian merchants' letters were either in the vulgate, or, at best, in 'corruptum latinum'![52] That the Venetian palace evolved with distinctly exotic, quasi-eastern characteristics, as we shall see, was another aspect of this assertion of national identity.

The resemblance between the early Venetian palace and the Arabic trading post, or *funduk*, has become a commonplace in the literature on Venetian architecture.[53] The related word *fondaco* was used by Venetians to describe foreign merchants' trading posts in Venice as well as their own bases in the Middle East. The *funduk* itself was also known in Arab cities by terms such as *khan*, *wakala* or *qaysariyya*, while the *caravanserai* often took a similar form.[54] Both in Venice and in the east the type is characterized by a two-storey, screen-like façade, perforated with arcades, often with corner towers (Figure 21.3), containing storage and (except in Venice) stabling below, and lodgings above. A central courtyard contained a well or fountain, fed by a cistern beneath. The openness of the structure was emphasized by the frequent use, in medieval documents, of the Venetian dialect word *loza* (loggia) to describe Venetian *fondachi* in the East.[55] Although the architectural genealogy is complicated by the existence of similar

Figure 21.3 Fondaco dei Turchi on the Grand Canal, Venice (now the Museum of Natural History), façade, late twelfth century, restored nineteenth century/ © Sarah Quill/Venice Picture Library/The Bridgeman Art Library

courtyard plans in early Byzantine palaces[56] (and, indeed, in Roman precedents), the connection between the *funduk – khan – wakala – qaysariyya* type and the Venetian *fondaco* seems unambiguous.

More difficult to assess is the relationship between the true *fondaco* or trading post in Venice and her colonies, and the Venetian Gothic patrician merchant's palace, with its deep, narrow plan and courtyard placed at the rear. Whether this type grew out of the same prototypes or developed from different roots is impossible to ascertain.[57] It is, however, interesting – and perhaps significant – to notice that the excavations of Fatimid palaces in Fustat (Cairo) have revealed several examples of deep, narrow plans with long halls lined with benches, not unlike their Venetian equivalents.[58]

As the plan form was transformed, so, too, the architectural language was modified towards the end of the twelfth century, as Ruskin first observed. The tall, slender, stilted arches of the so-called Veneto-Byzantine palaces already owed as much to Islamic models as to Byzantine ones. The delicacy and insubstantiality of the traceries of Venetian Gothic palaces, from the Doge's Palace onwards, gave an even more oriental effect. The ogee arch and double-ogee arch motifs became dominant themes in the palace decoration of the patrician class, now closed to outsiders and seeking a distinguishing identity. The outlining of pointed arched windows in rectangles, so distinctive a characteristic of Venetian Gothic palace window design, must surely derive from the Islamic practice, already noted in the discussion of San Marco above, of enclosing pointed arched niches in frames. That the Venetian double pointed arch may have evoked a characteristic domestic element in the Islamic townscape, that has now largely disappeared, is suggested by Martin Briggs's drawing of a similarly arched

doorway in Alexandria, published in 1924.[59] Dressed in lavish oriental textiles, speaking their own distinctive dialect, the Venetian nobility built palaces that expressed an easily recognized, if imprecise, orientalism.

How consciously Islamic this architectural language was contrived to be is difficult to ascertain. Was it deliberately created by the designers of the Doge's Palace as a statement of the Solomonic theme of Justice, or of Venetian independence from Byzantine domination and of resistance to papal opposition to their trade with the 'Infidel', then to be imitated by ambitious nobles simply for reasons of pretension and class distinction? Or was the taste of the Venetian patrician so deeply imbued, through years spent abroad on trading ventures,[60] with an instinctive feeling for two-dimensional ornament, perforated traceries and shimmering polychromy that they hardly recognized the Islamic imprint on their own homes? (A delightful instance of the blurring of the boundaries between east and west occurs in a fifteenth-century Venetian manuscript illumination of Ptolemy in Alexandria, in which the geographer is shown, regally dressed, standing outside a Venetian-style Gothic palace!)[61] Did the Venetian merchant's architectural identity evolve as unselfconsciously as his spoken dialect, or did it convey a deliberate celebration of the strength and importance of Venetian maritime trade? Certainly there can have been no intention to *copy* Islamic prototypes, for the architectural imagery was as varied in its roots as the dialect. Finally, it should be remembered that this article has deliberately not discussed the equally significant input of architectural ideas from Byzantium, mainland Italy and northern European Gothic.

Conclusion

These are preliminary observations in the huge and highly complex field of east–west relations in the Middle Ages. Much more needs to be learned about Venetian attitudes to Islam, about the ways in which Islamic characteristics became woven into the city's urban fabric, about early reactions to this 'eastern' townscape, and about the experiences of Venetian travellers in the Levant and further afield. We must remember that the situation was not constant through time but varied continually in the face of changing political and economic relationships between Venice and the Arab world. We also need to understand better what Islamic forms were intended to convey on Venetian soil – whether it be Holy Land settings, crusader zeal, respect for the wealth and civilization of Islam, glorification of Venice's eastern trade, a deeper understanding of the spiritual values of Islamic society, or simply a continuum of 'oriental' architectural language from the Adriatic across the whole Eastern Mediterranean. All these questions will be considered in my forthcoming investigation into the subject.

However premeditated the Venetian assimilation of Islamic characteristics into the city's architecture, there can be no doubt of the potency of the imagery

during the centuries of Venetian dominance in Levantine trade. We should not forget the high degree of culture, scientific expertise, material prosperity and spiritual unity in Arab civilizations at this time,[62] and Venetians who spent time in the Eastern Mediterranean would have naturally wished to emulate these qualities. As Fiocco wrote: 'Thus Venice found her national "vocation", her own voice, infusing her heritage with reminiscences of the Islamic world . . . , themes that made her ever more responsive to the quality of colour and light . . .'.[63] And so the townscape of Venice became a powerful element in the creation of the so-called 'myth of Venice', later codified and celebrated by Venetian sixteenth-century writers such as Gasparo Contarini who proudly called the city 'the emporium of the whole world'.[64]

Notes

This article is a preliminary study for a more substantial work entitled *Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100–1500* (Yale University Press, 2000).

1 G. Fiocco, 'L'arte a Torcello e a Venezia', in *Venezia nel Mille* (Florence, 1965), p. 218.
2 See, for example, Ira Marvin Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); A. Hourani and S. M. Stern (eds), *The Islamic City: a Colloquium* (Oxford, 1970); Titus Burckhardt, *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning* (London, 1976), esp. pp. 181 ff.; and R. B. Searjeant (ed.), *The Islamic City* (UNESCO, Paris, 1980).
3 See Archibald R. Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean* (Princeton, 1951); Roberto Cessi, 'Venice to the eve of the Fourth Crusade', in *The Cambridge Medieval History, IV: The Byzantine Empire*, I (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 250–74.
4 On attitudes to Islam in the medieval west, see Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1960); W. Montgomery Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh, 1972); and R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).
5 See Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato, *Gli Arabi in Italia* (Milan, 1979); and G. R. Crespi, *The Arabs in Europe* (New York, 1979).
6 Although there is an enormous literature on cultural contacts between Islam and the West, there are few studies of the Islamic influence on Venetian architecture. These are Ernst J. Grube, 'Elementi islamici nell'architettura veneziana del medioevo', *Bollettino del Centro di Studi di Architettura 'Andrea Palladio'*, VIII (ii) (1966), pp. 231–56; Michelangelo Muraro, 'Questioni islamiche nell'arte veneziana', *Actas del XXIII Congreso Internaçional de Historia del Arte* (Granada, 1977), pp. 156–67; and Giovanni Lorenzoni, 'Sui problemici rapporti tra l'architettura veneziana e quella islamica', in Ernst J. Grube (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente Vicino: Atti del primo simposio internazionale sull'arte veneziana e l'arte islamica* (Venice, 1989), pp. 101–10.
7 See the discussion of these issues by Oleg Grabar in 'Islamic Architecture and the West: Influences and Parallels', in S. Ferber (ed.), *Islam and the Medieval West*

(Binghamton, NY, 1975), pp. 60–6; idem, 'Trade with the east and the influence of Islamic art on the "luxury arts" in the west', in *Il Medio Oriente e l'occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo*, 24th International Congress of the History of Art (Bologna, 1982), pp. 27–34.

8   J. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols (London, 1851–53), vol. I, pp. 13, 78 and 79.

9   The most important of these, Owen Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament* (London, 1856), post-dates Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*, but his researches were presumably already well-known through his involvement in the decoration of the Crystal Palace. Ruskin himself refers to Jones' work on the Alhambra (*Stones of Venice*, vol. I, p. 430).

10 Ibid., vol. I, p. 21

11 Ibid., vol. II, p. 148.

12 On Venice's oriental trade, see W. Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce du Levant au Moyen Age*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1885–86); R. Morozzo della Rocca and A. Lombardo, *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI–XIII*, 2 vols (Turin, 1940); Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade . . .*; Roberto S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond (trans. and ed.), *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents* (New York, 1955); Roberto S. Lopez, 'Venezia e le grandi linee dell'espansione commerciale nel secolo XIII', in *La civiltà di Marco Polo* (Florence, 1955), pp. 39–82; Maria Nallino, 'Il mondo arabo e Venezia fino alle crociate', in Francesco Calasso (ed.), *Venezia del Mille* (Florence, 1965), pp. 161–81; Frederick C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore and London, 1973), pp. 124–31; Marie Nystazupoulou Pélékidis, 'Venise et la Mer Noire du XIe au XVe siècle', in Agostino Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, vol. I pt II (Florence, 1973), pp. 541–82; Angeliki E. Liaou, 'Venice as a centre of trade and artistic production in the 13th century', in Hans Belting (ed.), *Il Medioevo e l'occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo: Atti del XXIV Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte* (1979), Vol. II, pp. 11–26; Alvise Zorzi (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente: Arte, commercio, civiltà al tempo di Marco Polo* (Milan, 1988) especially the contributions of Zorzi, Roberto Lopez and Ugo Tucci.

13 Vladimir P. Goss and Christine Verzar Bornstein, *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades* (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1986).

14 Steven Runciman, 'L'intervento di Venezia dall prima alla terza Crociata', in *Venezia dalla prima Crociata alla conquista di Constantinopoli del 1204* (Florence, 1965), pp. 3–22. See also Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce . . .*, vol. I, pp. 148 ff.

15 It has even been suggested that it was the Moslems who persuaded Venice to divert the Fourth Crusade (Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce . . .*, vol. I, pp. 401–4).

16 A. Zorzi (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente . . .*, 'Marco Polo e la Venezia del suo tempo', pp. 13–40 and ibid., Ugo Tucci, 'Il commercio veneziano e l'oriente al tempo di Marco Polo', pp. 41 ff.

17 Venice's artistic links with Mamluk Egypt have been perceptively investigated by Sylvia Auld, and were the subject of her lecture on 'Venice and the Mamluks' given at Edinburgh University's symposium on *Medieval Venice* in May 1990.

18 Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, 'Notices of the Land Route to Cathay and of Arab Trade', in Col. Sir Henry Yule and Henri Cordier (eds), *Cathay and the Way thither*, vol. III (London, 1914), p. 152.

19 Yule and Cordier, vols II–III.

20 Francis A. Rouleau S. J., 'The Yangchow Latin Tombstone as a Landmark of Medieval Christianity in China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XVII (1954), pp. 346–65. Although Rouleau believes the name Vilioni to be of Genoese origin, it seems not unlikely that Caterina came from the same Venetian family as Pietro Vilion who made his will in Tabriz in 1265 (contents of will published in Laiou, 'Venice as a centre of trade . . .', p. 19).

21 Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce . . .*, vol. II, pp. 41–57.

22 Otto Demus, *The Church of San Marco in Venice: History, Architecture and Sculpture* (Washington, 1960), pp. 104 ff.

23 Ibid., pp. III, 195.

24 Ibid., p. 104. Such windows are also found in Umayyad desert palaces such as Qasr al-Hayr al-Garbi.

25 I am indebted for this observation to a seminar given by Barry Flood, research student in the Department of Fine Arts, Edinburgh University.

26 Demus, *The Church of San Marco . . .*, pp. 147–8.

27 For the most up-to-date published bibliography of sources on early Islamic architecture see Richard Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 650–1250*, Pelican History of Art (Harmondsworth, 1987).

28 Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt* (London, 1886).

29 For pertinent observations on the transference of artistic ideas from one context to another see T. Allen, *Five Essays on Islamic Art* (California, 1988), p. 13.

30 For recent discussions of the nineteenth-century myth that Islamic metalworkers had workshops in Venice see the contributions of J. W. Allan and Sylvia Auld in Ernst J. Grube (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente Vicina: Atti del primo simposio internationale sull'arte veneziana e l'arte islamica* (Venice, 1989), pp. 167–84 and 185–202.

31 G. Perocco *et al.*, *The Treasury of San Marco*, exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum (New York, 1984).

32 Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello* (Padua, 1758), p. 572.

33 See Sonia P. Seherr-Thoss, *Design and Colour in Islamic Architecture: Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey* (Washington, 1968), pp. 222–5; and Behçet Insal, *Turkish Islamic Architecture in Seljuk and Ottoman Times* (London, 1959), pp. 42–6.

34 Patrizia Pensabene, 'Lastre di chiusura di loculi con naskoi egizi e stele funerarie con ritratto nel Museo di Alessandria', in *Alessandria e il Mondo Ellenistico-Romano: Studi in onore di Achille Adriani* (Rome, 1983), Pls X–XI.

35 T. S. R. Boase in Harry W. Hazard (ed.), *The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States*, vol. IV of K. M. Setton, *A History of the Crusades* (Wisconsin, 1977), pp. 86–8, 138 and 272–3.

36 See Marion Melville, *La vie des Templiers* (Paris, 1951, 2nd edn, 1974); M. Dumontier *et al.*, *Sur les pas des Templiers en Bretagne, Normandie, Pays de Loire* (Paris, 1980); Alain Demurger, *Vie et mort de l'Ordre du Temple 1118–1314* (Paris, 1985); and P. W. Edbury, 'The Templars as Bankers and Monetary Transfers between West and East in the Twelfth Century', in P. W. Edbury and D. M. Metcalf (eds), *Coinage in the Latin East: The Fourth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 1–17.

37 R. Enzo Caravita, *Rinaldo da Concorrezzo, Arcivescovo di Ravenna (1303–1321) al tempo di Dante* (Florence, 1964), p. 163.

38 See R. Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Medieval Architecture"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, V (1942), pp. 1–33; and Élie Lambert, *L'Architecture des Templiers* (Paris, 1955).

39 Carole Herselle Krinsky, 'Representations of the Temple of Jerusalem before 1500', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXIII (1970), pp. 1–19; Helen Rosenau, *Vision of the Temple: The Image of the Temple of Jerusalem in Judaism and Christianity* (London, 1979).

40 Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. I, p. 17.

41 Giuseppe Caraci, 'Viaggi fra Venezia ed il Levante fino al XIV secole e relativa produzione cartografica', in Agostino Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e il Levante fino secole XV*, vol. I (Florence, 1973), pp. 162, 176; B. Degenhart and A. Schmitt, 'Marino Sanudo und Paolino Vento: Zwei literaten des 14. Jahrhunderts in ihrer Wirkung auf Buchillustrierung und Kartographie in Venedig, Avignon und Neapel', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, XIV (1973), pp. 139–246; and Gereon Sievenich and Heinrik Budde, *Europa und der Orient 800–1900* (Berlin, 1989), p. 678 (where the manuscript is dated 1330, although it was presented to the Pope in Avignon in 1321).

42 Boase, in Hazard, *The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States . . .* , pp. 87–8;

43 See especially L. Puppi, 'Verso Gerusalemme', *Arte Veneta*, XXXII (1978), pp. 73–8; and David Rosand, *Painting in Cinquecento Venice: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto* (New Haven and London, 1982), pp. 127–9.

44 See K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Moslem Architecture*, 2nd end, vol. I pt 2 (Oxford, 1969); and Robert Hillenbrand, '*La Dolce Vita* in early Islamic Syria: the evidence of later Umayyad palaces', *Art History*, V (1982), pp. 1–35.

45 For examples see Seherr-Thoss, *Design and Colour . . .* , pp. 30–9, 92–109, 122–3.

46 See, for example, Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London, 1961); and Patrick Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London, 1979).

47 Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. I, p. 18.

48 Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, pp. 124–31.

49 Observation of G. Diehl, 'La peinture orientaliste en Italie au temps de la Renaissance', *La Revue de l'Art ancien et moderne*, I (1906), p. 12.

50 Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce . . .* , vol. II, pp. 41–57.

51 Sergio Bettini, *Venezia: nascita di una città* (Milan, 1988 edn), p. 94.

52 Gianfranco Folena, 'Introduzione al veneziano "de là da Mar"', in Agostino Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, vol. I pt I, p. 299, quoting the Florentine Buoncompagno da Signa.

53 The pioneering study of this subject was Giorgia Scattolin, *La casa-fondaco sul Canal Grande* (Venice, 1961).

54 See Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Urban Life in Syria under the Early Mamluks* (Beirut, 1953), pp. 88–9; Gaston Wiet, *Cairo: City of Art and Commerce*, trans. S. Feiler (Oklahoma, 1964), pp. 123–5; Insal, *Turkish Islamic Architecture . . .* , pp. 48–62; Kurt Erdmann, *Das Anatolische Caravansaray des 13 Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols (Berlin, 1961, 1976); Eleanor Sims, 'Markets and Caravanserais', in Ernst Grube (ed.), *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning* (New York, 1978),

pp. 80–111; A Raymond and G. Wiet, *Les Marchés de Caire: Traduction annotée du texte de Maqrizi* (Cairo, 1979), pp. 1–24; and R. Parker and R. Sabin, *Islamic Monuments of Cairo: a Practical Guide* (Cairo, 1985 edn).

55 Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce . . .* , vol. I, p. 531, and vol. II, p. 101.

56 Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Pelican History of Art (Harmondsworth, 1986 edn), pp. 347–52; and Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1976), pp. 146–51, 194.

57 Sergio Bettini, 'Elementi favorevoli e contrari all'espansione dell'arte veneziana nel Levante', in Agostino Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e il Levante al secolo XV* (Florence, 1974), vol. II, pp. 17–39; and C. Caruggia, 'La casa e la Città dei primi secoli', in P. Maretto, *La casa veneziana* (Venice, 1986), pp. 3–52, have recently explored the possible evolution of the Venetian palace from the Roman *domus*, a long, narrow building at the corner of a rectangular plot, later expanded to fill more and more of the plot area. See also Richard J. Goy, *Venetian Vernacular Architecture: Traditional housing in the Venetian Lagoon* (New York and London, 1989).

58 See K. A. C. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford, 1952); and S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. IV (Daily Life, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1983), pp. 47 ff. The most salient difference is the lack of direct access to the interior of the Fatimid palaces, which had tortuous entrances to ensure privacy.

59 Martin S. Briggs, *Muhammedan Architecture in Egypt and Palestine* (New York, 1924), p. 141.

60 See Yves Renouard, 'Mercati e mercanti veneziani alla fine del Duecento', in *La civiltà di Venezia del secolo di Marco Polo* (Venice, 1955), pp. 85–108; and Ugo Tucci, 'Il commercio veneziano e l'oriente al tempo di Marco Polo', in Alvise Zorzi (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente: Arte e commercio al tempo di Marco Polo* (Milan, 1988 edn), pp. 41 ff.

61 Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, Cod. Marc. Gr. Z. 388 (=333), illustrated in A. Roccati, 'I viaggiatori veneti', in A. Siliotti (ed.), *Viaggiatori veneti alla scoperta dell'Egitto* (Venice, 1985), pl. 1.

62 See, for example, A. R. Lewis (ed.), *The Islamic World and the West AD 622–1492* (New York, 1970).

63 Fiocco, 'L'arte a Torcello . . .', p. 220 (my translation).

64 Michel Mollat, Philippe Braunstein, Jean-Claude Hocquet, 'Réflexions sur l'expansion vénitienne en Méditerranée', in Agostino Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, vol. I pt I (Florence, 1973), p. 519, note I.

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