

© Copyrighted Material

The Renaissance and the Ottoman World

Edited by

ANNA CONTADINI
SOAS, University of London, UK

CLAIRE NORTON
St Mary's University College, UK

ASHGATE

© Copyrighted Material

© Anna Contadini and Claire Norton 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Anna Contadini and Claire Norton have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the editors of this work.

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-3818
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

The Renaissance and the Ottoman world / [edited] by Anna Contadini and Claire Norton.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4724-0991-1 (hardcover) 1. Renaissance--Turkey. 2. Turkey--Civilization--1288-1918. 3. Turkey--Relations--Europe. 4. Europe--Relations--Turkey. I. Contadini, Anna, author, editor of compilation. II. Norton, Claire, Dr., author, editor of compilation.

DR486.R46 2013

956'.015--dc23

2013006869

ISBN 9781472409911 (hbk)

Cover image: Ottoman silk (*kemkha*), second half of sixteenth century. Prato, Museo del Tessuto, inv. no. 75.01.316. Courtesy of Museo del Tessuto.



Printed in the United Kingdom by Henry Ling Limited,
at the Dorset Press, Dorchester, DT1 1HD

Chapter 2

Sharing a Taste? Material Culture and Intellectual Curiosity around the Mediterranean, from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century

Anna Contadini

Within the context of a research project that seeks to explore new concepts and, possibly, arrive at more productive paradigms, it is interesting to observe the degree to which the study of the transfer of artefacts between the Islamic Middle East and Europe has already evolved away from early art-historical modes of enquiry. It has become increasingly attuned to the need to take account not only of political and economic factors but also of ideological issues, and has begun to address what may be couched in contemporary terms as hybridity and transformations of meaning and identity. Above all, alongside the perennial concern with periodic conflict set against a background of wary coexistence, recent approaches have shown a greater awareness of transcultural impingement, so that however fundamentally a European phenomenon the Renaissance may be, it can be seen as one within which contacts with the Islamic world were embedded.

It is also worth stressing that the trade in artefacts and the artistic exchanges across the Mediterranean that took place during the Renaissance period were a continuation and development of already established patterns of contact and acquisition. Alongside what survived from Classical antiquity,¹ Eastern artefacts had long been appreciated and collected in Europe, as is demonstrated by the presence of medieval Middle Eastern rock crystals, ivory, glass, textiles and metalwork in many church treasuries and aristocratic collections, and although some were pillaged, others were gifts and yet others traded.² The Geniza documents, which record the activities of Jewish merchants in Fatimid Egypt, give evidence of healthy trans-Mediterranean trade connections as far back as

¹ See, for example, Knapp and Dommelen 2010; Carrié 1999.

Howard 2000, 59–62; see various articles in Schmidt Arcangeli and Wolf 2010. For a discussion of these objects between the church and princely treasuries and those of the ‘cabinet of curiosities’ see Raby 1985.

the eleventh century,³ and the account of the dispersal of the Fatimid treasury (in 1067) specifically talks about precious objects, including rock crystals, being sold in the markets.⁴

Given such information, it is hardly surprising that the old emphasis on empires, which even when used as seemingly neutral taxonomic tools still carried the implication that they were the major actors in the generation and transfer of artefacts, has gradually receded.⁵ The role of Byzantium, for example, had traditionally dominated the landscape of eastern Mediterranean scholarship, and more recently it has still been viewed as a bridge between East and West, especially in the transmission of ornament or technique (with reference, for example, to the use of pseudo-Kufic inscriptions, or to the origins of enamelling on glass in the Western world).⁶ But such generalised appeal to the mediation of Byzantium merely prolongs the traditional scheme. It is problematic not merely because the evidence for it may be inconclusive, but also, and especially, because it perpetuates the appeal to monolithic states and hence shores up a too schematic set of temporal and geographical demarcations. What is needed, rather, is a number of detailed case studies that might allow us to arrive at a better understanding of the complexities and nuances of developments within Byzantine territories, for given the permeability of borders and the frequent absence of centralised state patronage, it is rather the case that we need to heed the complexities of trading patterns and look at the Mediterranean less in terms of large-scale power blocs and more in terms of a patchwork of cultural centres participating in a set of loosely structured transactions. Accordingly, it might be more profitable to plot patterns of acquisition, and trace the responses to the different categories of artefacts as they variously maintain their original function, inspire emulation, are transformed, or are represented in other media.

Such retentions or adaptations point to conceptual flexibility, reflecting varied modalities of reception. Nor is the world of material culture the only forum of contact and reception, for in Renaissance Europe an interest in the Islamic world extended to certain areas of intellectual enquiry: to languages and to disciplines such as medicine and philosophy; and there was, further, an

³ Indeed, Goitein named the collection of volumes of his major publication on the documents (the first of which dates from 1967) 'A Mediterranean Society': Goitein 1967–93.

⁴ This is the eye-witness description by the *qāḍī* (judge) Ibn al-Zubayr of the dispersal of the palace treasures of the Caliph al-Mustansir (427–87/1036–94), as reported by the fourteenth-century historian al-Maqrizi (Al-Maqrīzī 1853); Contadini 1998, 20 and 27.

⁵ For views on the Mediterranean as a pool of exchanges and transactions see the fundamental work by Braudel 1949; and more recently, Abulafia 2003 and 2011; also Horden and Purcell 2000, esp. 342–400; Cameron 2012, esp. 101–2; and Hoffman 2007 for the arts.

⁶ Fontana 1999; Tait 1999.

openness to its technology, as witness the widespread adoption of the astrolabe, an appropriate example being the one dated 699/1299–1300 from Fez with Arabic and Latin inscriptions⁷ (Plate 1). As is well known, Middle Eastern scholarship, including classical scholarship mediated through Arabic, had provided an important part of Europe's intellectual landscape since the twelfth century, when Latin translations were made of important texts by such major figures as al-Farabi (Alpharabius), Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroës).⁸ In Italy the teaching of Arabic started as early as 1310, with the Dominicans in Piacenza, while a contemporary or slightly earlier Arabic-Latin dictionary was produced in Spain⁹ (Plate 2). This precious document, a witness to the Arabic spoken and written in Spain, was probably commissioned by the religious authorities in order to teach Arabic to friars seeking to convert Muslims. Within the general context of growing concern with the historical development of languages and the relationships between them,¹⁰ the study of Arabic was to develop further during the Renaissance, and in the late fourteenth century this manuscript was acquired by Niccolò de' Niccoli (ca. 1364–1437), a Florentine humanist scholar whose library contained Arabic and other oriental codices.¹¹ But the interests of such scholars were not restricted to the languages themselves: they had, rather, a broader humanistic concern with their related cultures. Accordingly, fresh manuscripts were sought, new editions and translations were produced, and the study of Arabic was recognised as a desideratum alongside that of Greek and Hebrew.¹² The major areas of concern remained medicine and philosophy,¹³ and the treatise on medicine (*Qānūn fi'l-ṭibb*) by Avicenna (the tenth to eleventh century Iranian polymath) was to remain on the syllabus of many European universities until well after 1600, with more than one translation being printed in Venice during the sixteenth century.¹⁴

⁷ Florence, Museo di Storia della Scienza, inv. no. 1109. See Marra 1993.

⁸ A brief summary of the transmission of medical knowledge from the Islamic world to the West can be found in Siraisi 1990, 12–16. Lists of publications relating to the influence of Ibn Sina on the West can be found in Janssens 1991, 237–58 and Janssens 1999, 137–61.

⁹ Now in Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, no. 217. The dating is based on codicological and script features of both Arabic and Latin.

¹⁰ 'la storia e la ragione delle lingue', as Michele Amari put it: Schiaparelli 1871, viii.

¹¹ Niccoli's library went to enrich the library of St Mark's in Florence, in 1441. For Niccoli's library see Ullman and Stadter 1972. Also, Schiaparelli 1871, xii and xx–xxi.

¹² Burnett 1979–80; Burnett and Dalen 2011.

¹³ Also history, and for a recent study of humanist historical thinking regarding the empires of Islam see Meserve 2008.

¹⁴ For one such example, published by Giovanni Costeo and Giovanni Mongio in Venice in 1564, see Hamilton 1994, 34–5. Incidentally, the First Book of the *Canon of Medicine* has been translated into English by O. Cameron Gruner and published in 1930, based on 'the Latin versions published in Venice in 1608 and 1595, supported by a study

The audience for works in the original would still have been tiny, so that unless commissioned by a wealthy patron they must have been uneconomical to print. Yet there is one recently rediscovered copy of a Qur'an printed in 1537–38 in Venice by Paganino and Alessandro Paganini that provides one of the earliest instances of movable type being created for Arabic script¹⁵ (Figure 2.1). This copy was in the possession of Teseo Ambrogio degli Albonesi (ca. 1469–1540), Lateran canon and renowned scholar of Near Eastern languages, who lived in Pavia, and we can see his annotations and also, in some places, his interlinear translation into Latin.

It was not until 1584 that printing in Arabic resumed, but it was then undertaken on a larger scale at the Stamperia Orientale Medicea (Medici Oriental Press) in Rome directed by Giovan Battista Raimondi.¹⁶ Two of the aims, to produce propaganda to attract Eastern Christians to Roman Catholicism and, given that printing was unknown in the Arab world, to make a profit by creating a new market, lie beyond our present concerns, but the third is directly relevant. This was to provide good editions of the Arabic originals of certain standard non-religious texts such as Avicenna's *Qānūn*; and, as is shown by an Arabic alphabet printed in 1592, to aid European students wishing to read a text¹⁷ (Plate 3). It thereby extended and deepened lines of enquiry and speculation central to Renaissance thinking, and provided on the intellectual level a parallel to the commercial strands that joined Renaissance Italy to the world of Islam.

But no evidence has come to light that might indicate that the aesthetic appreciation of Middle Eastern artefacts was conceptualised in ways connected with the world of ideas and scholarship, or that the Renaissance scholar perceived the desk rug and the astrolabe that adorned his studio as products of

of the Arabic edition printed at Rome in 1593 and the Bulaq edition' (quote taken from Gruner 1930, 18). Hamilton 1994 and 2011 are useful learned overviews on European interest of the Arab and Islamic world through the collection of the Arcadian Library.

¹⁵ Venice, Biblioteca dei Frati Minori di San Michele ad Isola, coll. A.V. 22. Nuovo 1987, and English translation Nuovo 1990; Fontana 1993b; Pelusi 2000; also see Dijk 2005, 140. The earliest known printed Arabic text is found in *Poliphili Hypnerotomachia*, published by Aldo Manuzio in 1499. According to Angelo Michele Piemontese, this is the first Arabic printed text in the world. However, here the Arabic texts are brief phrases, containing one bilingual Greek–Arabic epigraphy, and one quadrilingual Arabic–Hebrew–Greek–Latin: Piemontese 1999, 199–220 and 218, figs 1 and 2. The earliest Arabic complete book in movable type seems to be the *Book of Hours*, printed in 1514, see Hitti 1942; Krek 1979. A chronological list of Arabic books printed in movable type between 1514 to 1585 is given in Jones 1994, 104, footnote 13. A history of printing in Arabic can be found in Lunde 1981.

¹⁶ For a background on the Medici Oriental Press, see Jones 1994, 88–108. Also see Lunde 1981, 21–2, who places the Press within the context of the history of printing of Arabic texts. For Arabic printing in Venice see Vercellin 2000.

¹⁷ Giovan Battista Raimondi's *Alphabetum Arabicum*, Rome 1592, see Hamilton 1994, 60–61, cat. 15.

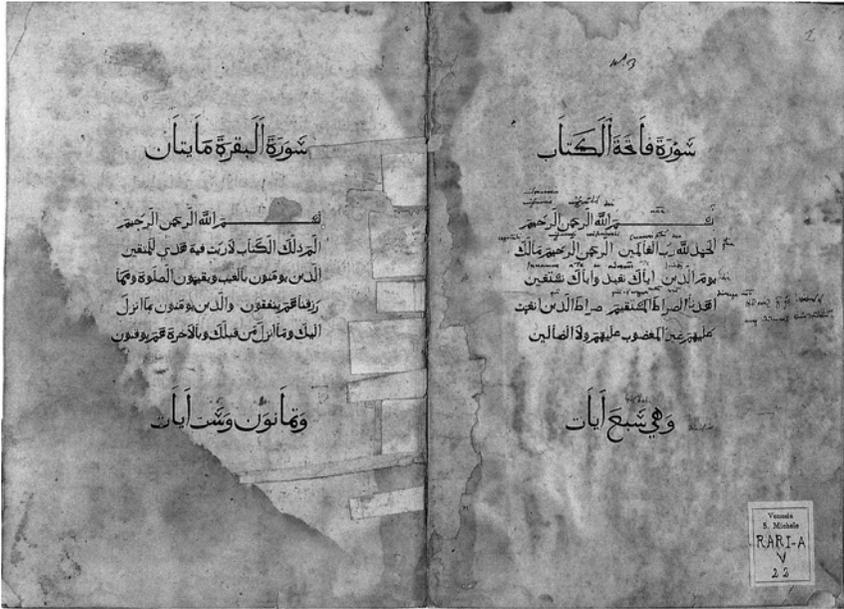


Figure 2.1 Qur'an printed by Paganino and Alessandro Paganini, 1537–38, Venice

Source: Venice, Biblioteca dei Frati Minori di San Michele ad Isola, coll. A.V. 22. After Curatola 1993, 481.

a culture the alterity of which demanded intellectual attention. Rather, as Sabba da Castiglione demonstrates,¹⁸ artefacts from the Levant could be inserted within a list of objects listed to adorn the home, amongst others from various parts of Europe, thereby underlining the fact that both the scholarly and the mercantile spheres of activity need to be seen as part of the same, complex cultural milieu. It is as such that they were treated in the 1999 Warburg publication on *Islam and the Italian Renaissance* which, with its emphasis on cultural history, covered both areas and, whether dealing with the visual and decorative arts or with aspects of language, philosophy and medicine, was expressly intended to promote a multidisciplinary approach.¹⁹

The following attempt to characterise the flow of material culture across the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance from this wider perspective, and to address its aesthetic impact as registered by differences in response, is deliberately selective. Rather than striving, unrealistically, for

¹⁸ Castiglione 1554, chapter CIX (109), on 'Cerca gli Ornamenti della Casa', 53.

¹⁹ Burnett and Contadini 1999. See also Kraemer 1992.

comprehensive coverage, preference has been given to consideration of a small number of representative case studies. The material is introduced in a broadly chronological sequence, and thus can be plotted against changes in the political, economic and social spheres, even if the emphasis is on the evolution of differing uses and related perceptions, thereby taking account of shifts in attitude towards the 'other'.

Discussing Pirenne's theory, Francesco Gabrieli judiciously commented that '... [he] considered the state of war (endemic and recrudescing at stated periods) in the society of the early Middle Ages as automatically paralysing international social and economic relations ...; [but] on the evidence of medieval texts such a comparison seems false'.²⁰ By interpreting the reaction of the West towards the Middle East as fundamentally antagonistic, traditional scholarship did not give due weight to the positive aspects of contact between the two cultures: without wishing to deny times of tension and the realities of military engagement, for present purposes we may remark upon the simple fact that trade continued even during periods of war.

The first examples relate especially to the earliest stage of contact with the Middle East, beginning in the medieval period, and are associated with the acquisition, use and display of a whole host of artefacts. That these were collected and admired for their beauty and their technical qualities is demonstrated by the fact that their value as luxury or display pieces was deliberately enhanced by the addition of often sumptuous mounts.

Some of the most striking objects are rock crystal vessels carved in relief, which were to be used in both secular and sacred contexts. Among the first extant, arriving in the tenth or early eleventh century, are the two found on the ambo presented to the palace chapel at Aachen between 1002 and 1014 by the Ottonian emperor Henry II²¹ (plates 4 and 5). They consist of a cup

²⁰ Gabrieli 1974, 68–9. Henri Pirenne's theory was that the end of Roman civilisation, and the beginning of the European Middle Ages, could be placed during the seventh century, as a result of Arab expansion into the Mediterranean that blocked Europe from trade with the East, see a summary in his posthumous book *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (Pirenne 1939, 284–5). This idea has been challenged on the basis of archaeological evidence: Hodges and Whitehouse 1983, 169–76. For a study of Western European views of Islam during the Middle Ages, see Southern 1962; Gabrieli 1974; Lewis 1993; Agius and Hitchcock 1994.

²¹ Which I had the privilege of studying recently in my trip to Aachen in November 2009. Thanks are due to the Chapel's authorities for allowing me to study the ambo closely and for photographic permission. I am also grateful to Jens Kröger with whom I discussed the two rock crystal pieces at length and who allowed me to study the calco of these two objects deposited in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin at an early stage of my research, prior to my direct examination of the objects in Aachen.

with one handle and a dish with raised foot, both carved in relief with vegetal motifs of palmettes, and they are often referred to as ‘cup and saucer’, a rather cosy interpretation that is interesting as well as amusing, as it may readily be understood as an example of the ‘domestication’ of a foreign object. It is, however, inappropriate, as they do not seem to constitute a related pair.²² They are differently decorated in carved relief and the typology of the cup points to it being probably earlier and from a different artistic sphere: its shape is related to Eastern Mesopotamian works of the ninth–early tenth century, while the dish could be assigned, on stylistic grounds and the type of cut, to the early Fatimid period, late tenth–early eleventh century.²³ Other objects have been assembled on the ambo, making it an extraordinary and unique object: we have sixth-century carved ivories at either side; a central, large, green glass Roman vessel cut in relief; and two agate vessels, around which are placed coloured stones and chalcedon and agate chess pieces of the typically non-figural Islamic type.²⁴

²² The ‘cup and saucer’ terms is used by Lamm 1929–30, vol. 1, 199, vol. 2, Tafel 68, 2 and 3, who put forward the hypothesis (on p. 199) that the cup could have been placed on the outer foot of the dish placed upside down; Wentzel 1972, 70, Abb. 72a following Lamm published the two vessels with the cup on top of the upside down dish, indeed as if they were cup-and-saucer. However, it is unlikely that this would have been their original function, it rather seems a modern, Western interpretation. Further, no other examples are known, though this in itself is not a reason for discounting the possibility, and the decoration in carved relief is different in the two pieces. For the objects and their interpretation of them see Lamm 1929–30, vol. 1, 199, vol. 2, Tafel 68, 2 and 3; Schnitzler 1957, 30, no. 36, Tafeln 110 and 111; Mathews 1999, 177–8, and figs 6 and 7 on 163. Works on the ambo in general include Doberer 1957, which still remains the most comprehensive study to date; Appuhn 1966; Mathews 1999, in footnote 1 lists a bibliography of works concerning the ambo written in the twentieth century. To this we may now add a forthcoming article by Gabriella Miyamoto, whom I thank for having sent me a copy of her lecture given in 2008 (see Miyamoto 2008). A colour picture of the ambo is found in Kramp 2000, 340. A recent study of the ivories on the ambo is Lepie and Münchow 2006, 26–57.

²³ Erdmann 1940, 144–5 and Erdmann 1951, 146 include them with a group of objects that belong to the high production of Fatimid rock crystal, late tenth – early eleventh century. However, the shape and decoration of the cup points to a Mesopotamian, western Iranian area, possibly ninth century. The typology of both cup and plate will be discussed in detail in my forthcoming publication on the two objects.

²⁴ For a discussion of the ‘style sets’ of abstract chess pieces in the Islamic world see Contadini 1995.

As the assemblage includes *spolia*²⁵ from ancient Rome and contemporary Byzantium it has been interpreted as symbolizing *translatio imperii*,²⁶ with the inclusion of Middle Eastern objects indicating parity with contemporary Islamic cultures. An allusion to the Islamic world, however, is by no means certain, and if, as has been suggested, the pieces came via Byzantium as part of the treasure that Theophanou,²⁷ wife of Otto II, brought with her,²⁸ they would most probably have been considered Byzantine pieces. However, it has not been possible to associate any particular object with Theophanou,²⁹ so that certainty eludes us.

Rather, it is worth noting that they retained their original form, with no attempt having been made to rework them in order to disguise or neutralise their original shape. Nor is it clear what symbolic value the chess pieces might have had. That they have been organised so as to represent armies on a field seems unlikely; rather, together with the other stones on the ambo, they should be considered primarily as part of an aesthetic programme, assembling pieces that were not manipulated but were included exactly as they were because of their colour and beauty. The use of coloured stones is significant, as it is also possible that it was associated with the characteristically medieval rhetorical concept of *varietas*, since there is evidence that this was extended to the sphere of material culture.³⁰ Accordingly, the ambo could be aligned aesthetically with the deliberately contrastive assemblages of differently coloured gems and rock crystal found on contemporary *Cruces Gemmatae*, such as the Lothar cross, also in Aachen, to be dated ca. 1000³¹ (Plate 6).

Abbasid or Fatimid glass and rock crystal objects are similarly found alongside late-classical pieces in several church treasuries. Many are now reliquaries, and those that arrived in Venice via Acre or Jerusalem might have

²⁵ I use the term *spolia* as in German and Italian scholarship and in Byzantine studies generally, i.e. for objects taken from one context and reused in another, no matter how they were acquired. For *spolia* see, for example, the seminal essay by Esch 1969. A distinction between 'reuse' and 'recycling' of objects has been made in more recent times, and the keynote address I gave at the Society of the Medieval Mediterranean in 2011 ('Cultures, Communities and Conflicts in the Medieval Mediterranean', University of Southampton, 4–6 July 2011) was entitled 'Sacred Recycling: the Appropriation of Middle Eastern Artefacts in Europe'. But we do not have evidence that all the objects considered here were ideologically/symbolically restaged, so that for many of them 'reuse' would be a more appropriate term. For such a discussion see, for example, Dale Kinney in Brilliant and Kinney 2011, 4 and chapter 5.

²⁶ For the concept of *translatio imperii* see Pocock 2005, especially chapter 7.

²⁷ For Theophanou, see among others Euw and Schreiner 1991; Euw and Schreiner 1993.

²⁸ Wentzel 1971, 1972 and 1973. But see articles in Davids 1995 that challenge Wentzel's suggestion that the treasury came with Theophanou from Byzantium.

²⁹ See Westermann-Angerhausen 1995, 245, 252.

³⁰ Carruthers 2009.

³¹ See Barasch 1997, 30–32.

already served in that function before 1204 and the sack of Constantinople, their probable source.³² It is certainly the case that some of the mounts pre-date 1200, and these are most probably Byzantine, as in the case of the *Grotta della Vergine* in St Mark's treasury³³ (Plate 7), a substantial fragment of a rock crystal vessel that has been turned upside down, and its neck mounted with a ninth–tenth century enamelled diadem of Leo VI. Placed in the centre is a later insertion, a silver-gilt statuette of the Madonna. This is Venetian and was evidently added after it arrived in Venice in the thirteenth century. In addition to its intrinsic significance as a composite object that has been refashioned in different times and places, this piece is also of interest because of the scholarship related to it. The crystal, already identified early in the twentieth century as Middle Eastern, possibly Egyptian or Iraqi, ninth to eleventh century, has been referred to as such in Islamic art scholarship ever since. In Byzantine scholarship, however, this is overlooked: usually there is no reference to the possibility of it being a Middle Eastern piece and it is referred to variously as a fourth to fifth-century late-antique object or a ninth to eleventh-century Byzantine one.³⁴

As a number of the vessels that are now reliquaries reached Venice well after 1204,³⁵ they may have formed part of that significant portion of the booty that was systematically divided up among the Crusader prelates and went with them to the Holy Land.³⁶ Whether or not they already contained a relic when brought to Europe,³⁷ the connection with the Holy Land raises the possibility of an association with holiness that singled them out as particularly suitable for this purpose, a judgement that might have been reinforced by the beauty and quality of the vessels, and even by a symbolic value inspired by the play of light on the rock crystal itself. Just as it has been suggested that the erection or refurbishment of shrines would help to revive the cult of that particular saint,³⁸

³² Riant 1875 and 1885.

³³ Inv. Tesoro 116; Hahnloser 1971, 81–2, cat. 92 (entry by André Grabar).

³⁴ A Fatimid attribution is given by Lamm 1929–30, vol. 1, 213–14, vol. 2, Tafel 76, 1; Christie 1942, 167–8; Shalem 1996, 223–4, no. 73 and 1996b, 58–60. A Byzantine attribution is given by Grabar 1971 (tenth–eleventh century) and Galuppo 2001 (ninth century). An attribution to Late Antiquity fourth–fifth century is given by Alcouffe and Frazer 1986 (Alcouffe on the rock crystal, Frazer on the votive crown) and Urbani 2008 where a possible Middle Eastern provenance for the piece is not even considered. Rogers 1998, 135 doubts a Fatimid attribution and speculates that it could be a European piece.

³⁵ As the earliest inventory of 1283 makes clear: Hahnloser 1971, xiii.

³⁶ What Patrick Geary 1986, 184 calls 'the greatest theft'. For an account of relics being used by Ottoman sultans (in particular Bayazid II, r. 1481–1512) for diplomatic relationships with the Papal state see Babinger 1951b.

³⁷ The reliquary of the Holy Blood in St Mark arrived in Venice already with the blood inside the rock crystal bottle. See Hahnloser 1971, 116–18, cat. 128 (entry by Erdmann on the rock crystal and by Hahnloser on the mount).

³⁸ Geary 1986, 179–80.

so a splendid rock crystal reliquary, especially when endowed with an elaborate mount, could have served a similar purpose. Without documentary evidence all this is decidedly speculative, but it is at least certain that such mounts were expressly designed to enhance the beauty of an already beautiful object and, in the case of a royal donation, to express gratitude and recognition by adding to its preciousness: such is clear both from the catalogue entry made by the abbot Suger (ca. 1081–1151) on the rock crystal vase of the queen of Aquitaine and from the extraordinary inscription on the wonderful metal mount that the monks added to it, which records a gift from an Arab king³⁹ (Figure 2.2).

The best-known rock crystals are the celebrated ewers, two of which, housed in the Treasury of St Mark, may ultimately have come from the Fatimid treasury and reached Venice in the mid or late thirteenth century.⁴⁰ Another striking example, now in the Treasury of the cathedral in Fermo⁴¹ (Plate 8), can also, according to style and cut, be dated to the Fatimid period, perhaps to the eleventh century, and what we know of its later history reveals something of the esteem in which such objects were held in Europe. It was given to the Cathedral by Giovan Battista Rinuccini, Archbishop of Fermo from 1625 to 1653, who received it as a present in 1649 from the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Vittoria della Rovere, daughter of Claudia de' Medici and wife of Ferdinando II de' Medici. That the ewer formed part of the Medici heritage is confirmed by the Medici coat of arms enamelled on the mount at the base. The mounts, in silver gilt and enamels, have recently been tentatively attributed to the early seventeenth century and to the workshop of Hans Karl, a goldsmith first in the service of Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau, Prince-Bishop of Salzburg, and later in the service of the emperor Rudolf II at Prague.⁴² (Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau was himself a lover of things exotic, and was responsible for commissioning gilded leather shields in Ottoman style from Venice in the late sixteenth century,⁴³ some of which will be discussed below.) Like other Fatimid or pre-Fatimid rock crystals, the Fermo ewer acquired value as a sacred object by being transformed into a reliquary: to it was consigned a bone of St Cesonio, the martyr. It is interesting to note that it was manipulated to fit this new function: apart from the beautiful

³⁹ Suger 1996, vol. 1, 151–3, ch. 19; Suger 1946; Gaborit-Chopin 1986, 289–91; Alcouffe and Gaborit-Chopin 1991, 168–72, no. 27 (Alcouffe on the rock crystal, Gaborit-Chopin on the mount); Beech 1992 and 1993, 75 and 3 respectively; Contadini 2010, 48–9.

⁴⁰ As documented in the 1283 inventory of St Mark. Hahnloser 1971, 112–15; also Contadini 1998, ch. 1.

⁴¹ The ewer has an Arabic inscription running along the shoulders, *baraka wa surūr bi'l-sayyid al-malik al-mansūr*, the interpretation of which is, however, unsure, for there has been some disagreement as to whether it is possible to identify here a specific al-Mansur. One may add that it could also be simply read as 'Blessing and joy to the victorious king'. For an up-to-date bibliography on the object see Barucca 2004 and Piazza 2006.

⁴² Barucca 2004, IX.9, 369.

⁴³ See Contadini 1989, 236–7 and notes 36–40.

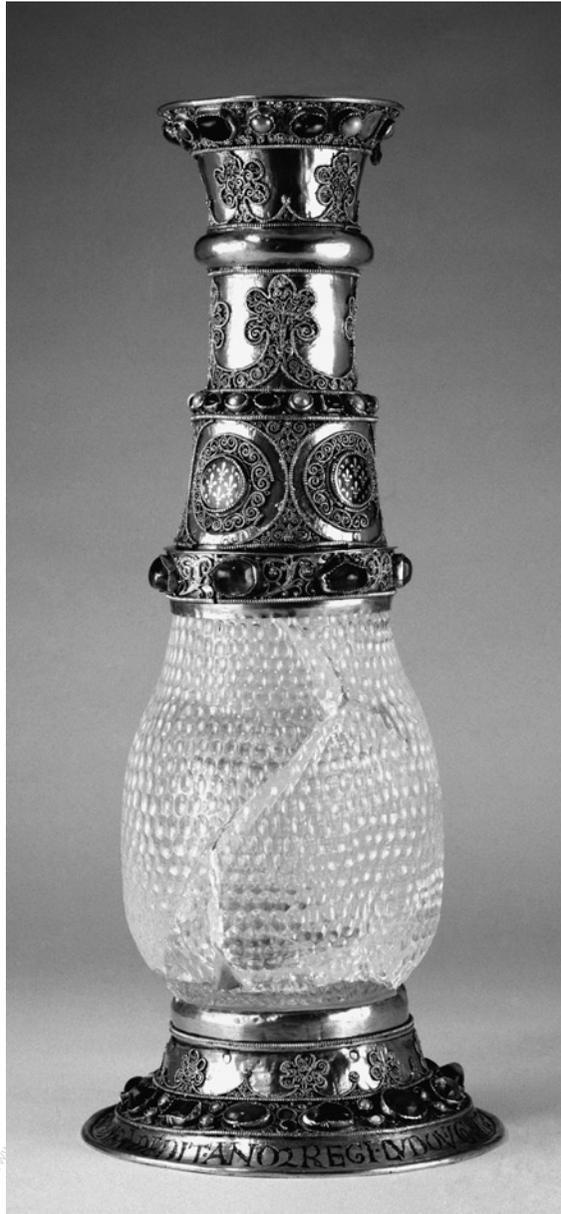


Figure 2.2 Vase of the Queen of Aquitaine. Sasanian or early Islamic rock crystal, Iran or Mesopotamia, fifth to ninth century. Silver gilt mount with precious stones, Paris, twelfth century.

Source: Paris, Musée du Louvre, MR 340. Courtesy of the Musée du Louvre.



Figure 2.3 Marble capital, carved in relief. Spain, Madinat al-Zahra, tenth century.

Source: Pisa, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, sala 1, no. 30. Copyright Opera Primaziale Pisana.

silver gilt and enamelled mount and lid attached to it, an attempt was made to enhance its beauty by adding an incised decoration of tendrils with bunches of grapes⁴⁴ on the plain area of the body under the missing handle. Together with the smoothing out of the points at which the missing handle had been broken off, this was probably done contemporaneously with the addition of the mount and lid, sometime in the early seventeenth century.

The rock crystals were not, however, the only pieces that could be invested with a particular symbolic importance. In Pisa this was demonstrated by setting two pieces of a quite different order on the roof of the cathedral: on the north transept, placed on a short column, it housed a marble capital from al-Andalus, more precisely from the Umayyad regnal capital, Madinat al-Zahra,⁴⁵ and above the apse, facing East, a bronze griffin (figures 2.3 and 2.4). The capital, which is

⁴⁴ Piazza 2006, 616. Guidi 1899 has drawings of the crystal, one of which shows the added incised decoration of the part under the handle, so this later decor was already there before 1899 when the article was published.

⁴⁵ According to Monneret de Villard 1946, 17, the capital was 'discovered' during the restoration works that took place in 1918.



Figure 2.4 Bronze griffin, Spain (?), eleventh to mid-twelfth century

Source: Pisa, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, sala 3. Copyright Opera Primaziale Pisana.

dateable to the second half of the tenth century and has an Arabic inscription mentioning Fath, the name of the maker,⁴⁶ was eventually taken down and

⁴⁶ This belongs to a well-known group of signed capitals from Madinat al-Zahra. See Contadini 1993, 122–3, cat. 39, Cressier 2004, and fig. 7, and Contadini 2010, all with relevant bibliography.

placed in the Baptistery where, in the centre of the baptismal font, it served as the pedestal for a bronze figure of St John the Baptist. The Pisa Griffin is an extraordinary bronze sculpture with an Arabic inscription of good wishes, eleventh to mid-twelfth century, a dating that recent carbon 14 analyses of organic material found inside one of the wings have confirmed.⁴⁷ It remained on top of a short column set on the roof from the Middle Ages until it was taken down in 1828 and put in the Camposanto before entering the Diocesan museum where it is now housed, together with the capital.⁴⁸ Monneret de Villard suggested that both were seized from Spain, most probably after either the battle of Almeria of 1089 or the conquest of the Balearic Islands in 1114,⁴⁹ although the latter seems more likely.⁵⁰ To enhance the visual impact of a cathedral for which the Pisans had already used the most precious materials, the Griffin was positioned where it would be visible to those coming from the city.⁵¹ Apart from its striking visual appearance and its material value as a large piece of bronze, the Griffin had the symbolic property of a terrifying guardian, for when the wind was blowing through its open belly it emitted eerie sounds that were amplified by an internal resonating vessel.⁵²

Although in some respects distinct from the rest of the material considered below, this first group of objects initiates the complex process of changing functions and perceptions that will develop further. If its most characteristic features are the acquisition and display of rare and valuable objects, it is also marked by significant transformations of function and symbolism. The European response to the arts of the Middle East was to be marked by further such shifts as it evolved and mutated thereafter – indeed continuing to do so down to the present day – and associated with this evolution was a shift in modes of acquisition. Although valuable objects might continue to appear as items of booty, trade now predominates, with extensive and increasingly dependable networks being developed, both responding to demand and further stimulating it.

⁴⁷ Contadini 1993, 129–30. The carbon 14 analyses were carried out in February 2013.

⁴⁸ Presently the Pisa Griffin, together with the Lion in the Mari-Cha collection and the Lucca Falcon are the subject of a project with Pisa Opera del Duomo, Pisa University, Pisa Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Lucca Soprintendenza, Oxford University, and the Istituto Superiore del Restauro e Conservazione in Rome. See <http://vcg.isti.cnr.it/griffin/>. For discussion of provenance, dating and function of the Griffin see Contadini 1993, no. 43, 126–30; Contadini, Camber and Northover 2002 where a comprehensive bibliography is also found; and also Contadini 2010. See also Carletti 2003. The piece presently on the roof is a copy.

⁴⁹ Monneret de Villard 1946.

⁵⁰ As the sources talk at greater length about the wonderfully rich booty from the Balearic conquest of 1114: see Contadini 1993, 131, note 10.

⁵¹ Baracchini 1986, 67, figs 71, 72.

⁵² Contadini in Contadini, Camber and Northover 2002, 68–70.

As far as Italy is concerned, the city states, and especially the maritime republics, were to become increasingly important, so that Middle Eastern artefacts were transmitted not only through Sicily and Southern Italy but also through the commercial activities of Genoa, Pisa, Lucca, Siena, Florence, Amalfi and, of course, Venice, particularly with regard to carpets and textiles. We know from documents in the Venetian archives that one of the biggest yearly expenses of the Republic, starting already in the early thirteenth century, was the import of precious textiles from various parts of the Middle East, and in particular from Fatimid and, later, Mamluk territories in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵³ But there were also sources further afield: after the fall of Acre in 1291 and until the early fifteenth century, textiles from Central Asia (Turkestan) and China, especially silk, were imported in great numbers by Florentine and Sieneese merchants via Persia and Iraq, which by then formed part of the Ilkhanid Empire.⁵⁴ In addition to these long-standing if fluctuating patterns of commercial exchange between East and West, significant developments were to take place during the Renaissance.⁵⁵ With the rise of the Ottomans as the new major power of the Islamic world, Turkish centres of production, already of some importance, came even more to the fore, and after 1453 the newly dominant position of Ottoman Constantinople attracted a strong Italian mercantile presence. The Genoese, long resident in considerable numbers in Constantinople, gradually lost ground in this new climate. This was to the advantage of Venice, which, after being granted trading capitulations in 1454, took over certain enterprises previously held by the Genoese and, within a few decades of the conquest, came to enjoy a commercial status that far exceeded its position under the Byzantines. It is interesting to note that the ascendancy of Venice occurred in spite of the considerable tensions – sometimes escalating into actual military conflict – that existed between the Sublime Porte and the Serenissima. Florence, too, came to be an important player in this new commercial arena, with the Ottoman sultan granting the city trading capitulations in 1460. Such trading opportunities encouraged the development of mercantile fleets and contributed to the economic growth of the Italian city-states. The number and activity of Italian merchants and overseas agents engaged in trade with the East increased considerably during the Renaissance, and this, of course, helped promote the importation of artefacts into Europe.

The import of rugs from the Middle East and North Africa to Florence and Venice is already documented from the early fourteenth century,⁵⁶ and fifteenth-century documents bear detailed witness to Florentine transactions involving

⁵³ Jacoby 2000, 271. Also Molà 1994, 23.

⁵⁴ Wardwell 1989.

⁵⁵ For a useful survey with much detailed information see Rogers 2002. Howard 2007 provides a great synthesis of the cultural and artistic transfer especially between Venice and the Ottoman empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

⁵⁶ Spallanzani 2007, 11–12.



Figure 2.5 Woollen table carpet, Cairo, mid-sixteenth century

Source: *San Gemignano, Museo Civico*. After Curatola 1993, 397.

merchants and their agents in complex trading networks. The presence of a Florentine colony in Constantinople soon after the city fell in 1453 reflected the increasingly favourable trading circumstances there, and in the fifteenth century Ottoman Turkish rugs, some from Bursa, became a significant element of Levantine trade. Once in Florence, they were distributed through yet another network, one catering for various categories of customer⁵⁷ (Plate 9).

For Venice, too, we know of the presence of merchants and agents overseas, buying or commissioning carpets both for other merchants and for patrician families who may have required the inclusion of the family coat of arms, as is testified by a document relating to a commission for Lorenzo il Magnifico,⁵⁸ and

⁵⁷ Spallanzani 2007, ch. I: 'Importation'.

⁵⁸ Spallanzani 1989, 88–9.



Figure 2.6 Girolamo da Carpi, *Portrait of a Gentleman with a Cat*, ca. 1526
Source: Rome, Galleria Nazionale D'Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini, inv. no. 0912 (F.N. 632).
Copyright of Soprintendenza SPSAE and Galleria Nazionale D'Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini.

as is shown by a table carpet in San Gemignano⁵⁹ (Figure 2.5). Instructions for carpets commissioned by Italian families were very precise, with regard not only to type but also to dimensions, as is demonstrated by a 1555 dispute between the

⁵⁹ See Boralevi 1993, 396–8, cat. 247; Spallanzani 2007, 56.

Venetian Francesco Priuli, an agent living in Alexandria, and the family of the trader Piero da Molin in Venice.⁶⁰

The use of these carpets varied, but usually they were not intended to be walked on, although they could be arranged around a bed (those that are depicted at the feet of the Madonna are a special case, as they demarcate a sacred space). They were used, rather, to cover furniture, in particular beds, benches, tables and chests,⁶¹ and the visual record testifies to the high regard in which they were held. A scholar saint, ancient philosopher, or Renaissance humanist is often represented in his study surrounded not only by books but also by various symbolic objects, including ones of Middle Eastern origin such as astrolabes, various types of metal bowls, pomanders, and, typically, a beautiful carpet that covers the table, as in the case of the fresco by Domenico Ghirlandaio of *St Jerome in His Study*, of 1480, where the splendid border of a colourful carpet with pseudo-Kufic motifs is visible,⁶² or the painting attributed to Girolamo da Carpi, *Portrait of a Gentleman with a Cat*, ca. 1526, where a small-pattern Holbein carpet is represented⁶³ (Figure 2.6).

Given such a variety of functional uses it hardly comes as a surprise to find that rugs were by no means the preserve of patrician families and the church: more modest individuals are also recorded as being able to afford a medium size rug.⁶⁴ For fabrics, on the other hand, such evidence is hard to find, and although silks and velvets were traded westwards in significant quantities the visual record points to them more as luxury commodities for the upper strata of society. Reflections of the commerce in fabrics that would contribute to Italy's economic ascendancy appear in art from the thirteenth century onwards: Middle Eastern textiles are reproduced in paintings of the main Italian masters where, in general, they symbolise individual or family wealth,⁶⁵ being, quite possibly, a direct representation of the possessions and hence status of the commissioner as well as a vehicle for the painter's expression of rare beauty.

Particularly prominent here are *tırāz*, a well-known type with epigraphic bands, the production of which is documented especially during the Umayyad, Abbasid and Fatimid periods,⁶⁶ while also well represented are brocaded textiles, including also a particular Spanish type, for Spanish-Islamic textiles begin to arrive in Italy with increasing frequency in the thirteenth and fourteenth

⁶⁰ Curatola 2004.

⁶¹ Curatola 2004, 130; Spallanzani 2007, 50 and numerous images that testify to the various uses of the carpets throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

⁶² Florence, Church of Ognissanti. Spallanzani 2007, fig. 46.

⁶³ Rome, Galleria Nazionale D'Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini, inv. 0912 (F.N. 632). Thornton 1997, fig. 87. The small-pattern Holbein is a type of Anatolian carpet of the early sixteenth century.

⁶⁴ Spallanzani 2007, 35, 44.

⁶⁵ Contadini 2006b, 29.

⁶⁶ See Contadini 1998, chapter 2 with relevant bibliography. Also Sokoly 1997.

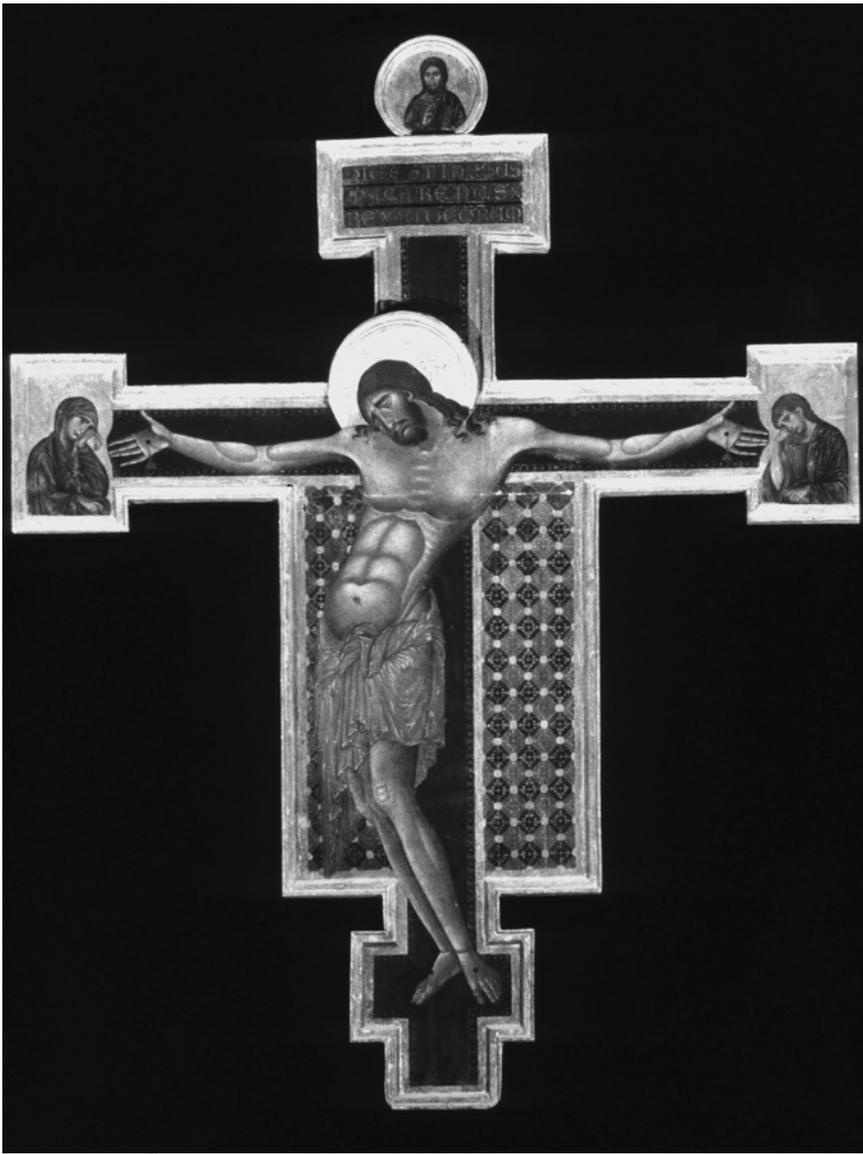


Figure 2.7 Cimabue, *Crucifix*, 1265–8, tempera on panel
Source: Arezzo, *Chiesa di San Domenico*. After Maetzke 2001, 58.

centuries as trade with Lucca and Pisa grew. The crucifix by Cimabue in San Domenico, Arezzo, 1265–8 (Figure 2.7), contains perhaps the earliest known examples of Middle Eastern textiles to be found in a Western painting. One, at

the back of Christ, is possibly Spanish, while the other, held by the Madonna,⁶⁷ is a *mandīl* (a fine handkerchief) with epigraphic *ṭirāz* bands in pseudo-Arabic, 'Kufic' script (Figure 2.8). In the fourteenth century such representation of luxury materials continues, as exemplified by Giotto frescoes in the Cappella degli Scrovegni (ca. 1305), which show several textiles with pseudo-Arabic inscriptions in both angular and cursive scripts, as well as scripts of other oriental languages, such as the Tibetan/Mongolian Phagspa.⁶⁸ In the early fifteenth century we find Hebrew in Andrea Mantegna,⁶⁹ while Gentile da Fabriano makes considerable use of Middle Eastern elements in his paintings. His *Adoration of the Magi*, for example, is full of 'oriental' references: turbaned men and Arabic or pseudo-Arabic inscriptions on the luxurious textiles⁷⁰ (Figure 2.9). The inscriptions are not, though, restricted to textiles (and other objects such as leather belts⁷¹): many are to be found on haloes, for example those of the Madonna and St Joseph. They were previously thought to approximate to the *shahāda* (the Muslim declaration of faith), but it has more recently been persuasively argued that Gentile's source was metalwork, on which inscriptions are, rather, expressions of good wishes.⁷² Both these and other haloes bearing pseudo-Arabic inscriptions, such as Gentile's *Madonna of Humility*⁷³ (Plate 10), resemble Ayyubid and Mamluk metalwork both with regard to the layout of inscription and decor, as a dish in the Aron collection shows⁷⁴ (Plate 11), and in the script, which is the typical *thuluth* used on metalwork of the period. As

⁶⁷ Contadini 1999, 4–5 and figs 3a, 3b (the textile held by the Madonna was first noticed by Bagnera 1988).

⁶⁸ Basile 1992, colour plates on 192, 268–9; Tanaka 1989 is on other alphabets represented in the Scrovegni paintings (such as the Phagspa script); and Tanaka 1994 for East Asian connections.

⁶⁹ See Busi 2007, pp. 99–105. For Hebrew inscriptions in general see Barasch 1989.

⁷⁰ Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. no. 8364. The bibliography on this painting is vast. For a work that deals with the pseudo-Arabic inscriptions see Auld 1989 and for a recent discussion of the textiles in this painting see Monnas 2008, 102–105. For an overview of pseudo-script in Italian art see Nagel 2011.

⁷¹ Another example of pseudo-Arabic inscription on the representation of a leather belt is found in Verrocchio's *David* (1473–75) in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence, for which see Fontana 1993, 457.

⁷² Leemhuis 2000. Also Auld 1986, 256–9; and Mack 2002, 65, fig. 57, who draws attention to the divisions of these inscriptions on the haloes into four sections divided by rosettes like those found in Mamluk metalwork (a type of division, however, that is also found on haloes with traditional Latin texts). Even in the case of Ayyubid metalwork with Christian imagery, the inscriptions are not religious but of the general, good wishes type (Baer 1989, 10–11). For the reading of the inscriptions as the *shahāda* see Sellheim 1968 and Forstner 1972.

⁷³ Pisa, Museo di San Matteo. See Contadini 1999, figs 22a and b where a detail of the halo is reproduced.

⁷⁴ Allan 1986, 92–3, cat. 12.



Figure 2.8 Drawing of the Madonna and the *mandil* from Cimabue's *Crucifix*
 Source: After Bagnera 1988.

far as can be ascertained, the content of the halo inscriptions is derivative of the typical Mamluk formula 'izz li-mawlāna al-sultān al-mālik al-'ādil, etc. It may therefore be concluded that, whether on clothing or halos, the inscriptions reference prized luxury artefacts, metalwork as well as textiles.⁷⁵

Textile designs with Islamic elements, including inscriptions with the same *thuluth* script, also appear in the sketchbooks of Jacopo Bellini (ca. 1424–ca. 1470), in particular that on parchment now in the Louvre.⁷⁶ Both the elements of the design and the inscriptions recall textiles from Lucca, as demonstrated by a late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century silk in the V&A, or perhaps from Venice,

⁷⁵ An Arabic inscription in *thuluth* is found on a fourteenth-century stained glass window in the Church of SS Annunziata in Florence (see Bernardini 1999), again most probably taken from a Mamluk metalwork.

⁷⁶ For instance on fol. 88v of the sketch book, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, inv. no. RF. 1556: see Degenhart and Schmitt 1984.



Figure 2.9 Detail from Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423, tempera on panel

Source: After Monnas 2008, fig. 105, detail.

as demonstrated by a fourteenth-century silk formerly in Berlin that might even have been a textile from the Lucchese colony in Venice.⁷⁷ The style of some of the drawings already suggests that Bellini was using an older sketchbook, and it is indeed clear that his own drawings are added on top. The earlier date of the designs is of interest because it points to the existence of 'pattern books' with orientalisising motifs, usually associated with a later period (see below), already in the fourteenth century.

The textiles themselves present us with problems regarding provenance, as they are often difficult to track. At the same time, this very difficulty is of theoretical interest, pointing as it does to a variety of economically driven adaptations that result in the production of similar materials in several locations, and in a circulation of style features that ought to result in homogeneity, but is counterbalanced by further local specialisation. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the most notable Muslim land in terms of international trade was the Ottoman Empire, and this certainly holds true as far as textiles are concerned. The great quantity of silk fabrics produced there are called in the documents by a bewildering number of terms whose meanings in many cases remain unclear, but the most important types were *kemkha* (brocaded silk, Plate 12) and *çatma* (velvets brocaded with silver or gold thread, Plate 13).⁷⁸ Production of these textiles was concentrated in the West Anatolian town of Bursa, which rose to prominence as a weaving centre from the later fourteenth century onwards. Bursa was, moreover, an entrepôt in the international trade in raw silk, which, until the development of local sericulture in the late-sixteenth century, was brought to it mainly from Iran.⁷⁹ Italian merchants settled and traded in Bursa throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but they concentrated on purchasing raw silk to be taken back to Italy,⁸⁰ either for the thriving and long-established local weaving industries, particularly in Venice, Florence and Genoa, or to be traded on, via Venice, to France or the Netherlands. Because of the existence of these domestic manufactories the demand in Italy for worked – as opposed to raw – silk from the East became with time rather

⁷⁷ V&A, inv. no. 8286–1863. See Auld 1986, 256–8 and fig. 9 for the Lucchese silk now in the V&A that has motifs and pseudo inscriptions in *thuluth* relatable to drawings in Bellini's sketch book. See also Monnas 2008, 49–51, fig. 40 which reproduces a page, fol. 88v, of Bellini's sketch book (mentioned in footnote 75) with orientalisising motifs and pseudo inscriptions; and fig. 41 which illustrates a reconstruction drawing of the Venetian silk formerly in the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin (lost in the war) relatable to Bellini's drawing; and notes 50–57 on page 345 for details of both sketchbooks and textile, and for the scholarly debate on both.

⁷⁸ Baker 1995, 92–3. For the terms and their meanings, see Denny 1982, 122; Rogers 1986, 15–17; Gürsu 1988, 27–30; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 16, 217–25.

⁷⁹ Denny 1982, 122; Rogers 1986, 15; Gürsu 1988, 19, 22, 39–40; Baker 1995, 86; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 155, 157–60.

⁸⁰ Gürsu 1988, 22; Molà 2000, 60.

low,⁸¹ so that while Ottoman fabrics were exported in large numbers to Eastern Europe and to Russia⁸² comparatively few ended up in Italy: earlier reliance on imported luxury textiles such as Fatimid *tirāz* and Spanish-Islamic brocade was thus replaced not so much by Ottoman as by local production.

It is thus hardly surprisingly to find that very few Italian Renaissance paintings depict Ottoman fabrics,⁸³ in contrast to their abundant portrayals of Ottoman carpets. In fact, far from being reliant on Ottoman textile manufacture, Italy was itself a major source of silk fabrics for the Ottoman court and upper strata.⁸⁴ Until the 1480s, all the velvets listed in Ottoman court documents were imported from Europe and, to a lesser extent, Iran.⁸⁵ During the reign of Mehmed II, much was spent by the court on purchasing Italian fabrics:⁸⁶ in 1505 alone the sum of 60,000 ducats – over 7 per cent of the Porte's total annual expenditure – was used for this purpose.⁸⁷ These textiles were bought to be tailored into imperial caftans and robes of honour.⁸⁸ Indeed, only a few of the surviving velvet caftans in the Topkapı Palace collection are made of Ottoman velvet; the majority are tailored from Italian material,⁸⁹ and it is notable that even robes of honour made for foreign visitors to the Ottoman court might be made of imported Italian fabric.⁹⁰ One imperial caftan, possibly for Osman II (r. 1618–1622) (Plate 14), the design of which closely resembles a velvet in the Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice (inv. no. 491/191) (Plate 15) seems to be of sixteenth-century Italian, probably Florentine, manufacture, and is, indeed, extraordinarily similar to the one worn by Eleonora de' Medici (married to Cosimo I de' Medici) in the

⁸¹ Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 182.

⁸² Rogers 1986, pp. 33–4; Baker, Tezcan and Wearden 1996, 28–9; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 176–81, 186.

⁸³ Andrews Reath 1927, 304; Denny 1982, 122. For those paintings that do depict fabrics that may be of Turkish manufacture, see V&A 1923, 13–14; V&A 1931, 10–11; V&A 1950, 6–7.

⁸⁴ Goldthwaite 1993, 20; Molà 2000, 93.

⁸⁵ One must keep in mind, however, that for Iran the documentation is inadequate. Wearden 1985, 26; Gürsu 1988, 28; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 182–90.

⁸⁶ 110,000 ducats: Baker 1995, 92, although many of these would have been woollens. For internal production of textiles and woollens in the Ottoman Empire, see Faroqhi 1980; Faroqhi 1982–83.

⁸⁷ Baker, Wearden and French 1990, 133. This will change in the mid-sixteenth century during the vizierate of Rüstem Pasha, when an embargo on the large-scale importation of luxury textiles from Italy was imposed: see Necipoğlu 1990, 155.

⁸⁸ For royal Ottoman caftans made of imported Italian fabric, see Rogers 1986, cat. nos and col. pls 14, 27–8, 31, 42–3, 46, 49; Baker, Wearden and French 1990, 133, 137 and figs 4, 15; Baker, Tezcan and Wearden 1996, 178–99; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, figs 36, 38, 40, 46, 54; Denny 2007, cat. 80.

⁸⁹ Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 182, 223.

⁹⁰ Wearden 1985.

portrait of her by Bronzino of ca. 1545⁹¹ (Plate 16). Both contain, further, design elements that could be read as either Spanish-Islamic or Italian.⁹² The suggestion, therefore, is of a constantly shifting pattern of exchanges, both at the level of trade, with enterprising manufacturers and merchants feeding and creating new markets, and at the level of design, with pattern elements from one part of the Mediterranean being incorporated in a fabric designed in another that might then be exported to an appreciative buyer in a third. But designs could also be created with a particular market in mind. Thus while the Ottomans did import fabrics with a distinctly Western appearance, Italian textiles produced in imitation of Ottoman models, especially silks, were sold there too, and it is generally agreed that they were produced for the export market.⁹³ A particularly fine example of a textile in Ottoman style but probably of Italian (and possibly Venetian) manufacture is a sixteenth-century velvet in the Bargello Museum⁹⁴ (Plate 17).

The market for such fabrics was by no means limited to the courtly sphere:⁹⁵ one Italian manufacturer of silk textiles whose dealings with the Ottomans are particularly well recorded is Andrea Banchi, a Florentine who owned a large and important workshop during the second and third quarters of the fifteenth century, and his account books, which survive in the Spedale degli Innocenti, Florence, document in some detail the substantial sales he made to various Ottoman buyers through agents resident in Pera.⁹⁶

While Italians copied Ottoman designs, the Ottomans returned the compliment. In Bursa about the middle of the fifteenth century (and in Istanbul a century later)⁹⁷ we find, in reaction to the market success of fashionable Italian designs, velvet-weaving looms producing fabrics virtually indistinguishable from them,⁹⁸ and although technical features can sometimes help clarify

⁹¹ The caftan is in Istanbul, TKS, inv. 13/360. See Rogers 1986, cat no. and col pl. 42. For the velvet in Venice see Degl'Innocenti 2006 (other pieces from the same velvet are kept in different collections). The Bronzino painting is in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, inv. no. 748. See also colour reproductions in Orsi Landini and Niccoli 2005, fig. 1 on 14; Monnas 2008, figs 199 and 216 on 180 and 195 respectively. For a discussion of the textile in this painting see Orsi Landini 2005, 25; Monnas 2008, 191–2.

⁹² See discussion in Thomas 1994.

⁹³ Denny 1982, 125; Baker, Wearden and French 1990, 137; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 182–3, 186–90.

⁹⁴ Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. Franchetti 639. Suriano and Carboni 1999, no. 25.

⁹⁵ Öz 1950, 73.

⁹⁶ Edler de Roover 1966, 270–75.

⁹⁷ On the establishment of these industries, see Gürsu 1988, 45–6; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 155, 171–2; V&A 2004, 125.

⁹⁸ V&A 1923, 7–9; V&A 1931, 12–14; V&A 1950, 7–9; Mackie 1973–74, 13; Gürsu 1988, 41, 72, 89, 165, 167, 182–3; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 187, 190; V&A 2004, 125.

provenance, the degree of mutual imitation in this period is such that certain pieces cannot be assigned with any certainty to either an Ottoman or an Italian place of manufacture.⁹⁹

Although never achieving the technical standard of their Italian equivalents, the Bursa and Istanbul silk fabrics were of fine quality and much admired both within and beyond the Ottoman Empire; moreover, they were only half as expensive on the Ottoman market as those from Italy.¹⁰⁰ The industry quickly developed its own characteristic style and excelled in the production of brocaded velvets, in particular *çatma*,¹⁰¹ that were also competitive in Italy. It is known that Ottoman traders were allowed to settle in Venice and sell fabrics amongst other wares,¹⁰² and that Italian merchants were engaged in importing Turkish silks into Italy.¹⁰³ Such fabrics were versatile, being put to different uses:¹⁰⁴ for upholstery, for the tailoring of costumes, and as floor coverings, and their popularity was such that at times the influx of Levantine brocades was substantial enough to cause the Venetian *Signoria* to place an embargo on their importation.¹⁰⁵

Evidence for the import of such fabrics, and for their use for clothing, survives in a repeated order mentioned in a letter, dated 1501, by Giovanni Maringhi, a Pera-based Florentine agent, informing his patron in Florence that he had sent to Bursa for four dress lengths of a type he had dispatched before.¹⁰⁶ Another insight is provided by a portrait of a Venetian noblewoman in the Palazzo Rosso in Genoa, which, although traditionally misattributed to Paris Bordone, was probably executed around 1565 by Parrasio Micheli (Figure 2.10). The lady is depicted lavishly attired in a gold-brocaded robe whose floral design is distinctly Ottoman in inspiration, and a brocade of Ottoman manufacture with

⁹⁹ Gürsu 1988, 43, 72, 167, 182; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 300, 333–5 and col. pls 67–8, 70–72. For discussions of the technical differences between Ottoman and Italian velvets, see Andrews Reath 1927; V&A 1923, 15; V&A 1931, 21–2; V&A 1950, 15–16; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 183, 187, 224.

¹⁰⁰ V&A 1923, 15; V&A 1931, 21–2; V&A 1950, 15; Wearden 1985, 27. For the prices of these velvets see Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 183.

¹⁰¹ For this type of velvet, see Rogers 1986, 16; Gürsu 1988, 28; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 222–4.

¹⁰² Gürsu 1988, 167; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 186; Pedani 2008, 9 for Ottomans, 7 for Persians.

¹⁰³ Mackie 1973–74, 14; Gürsu 1988, 165.

¹⁰⁴ For the uses to which Ottoman textiles were put, see Mackie 1973–74, 14; Denny 1982, 137; Gürsu 1988, 28. An inventory of the Topkapı Palace, Istanbul, dated 1504 lists various types of objects made from velvet, including cushion covers, cloths for mules, and night-caps. Öz 1950, 38.

¹⁰⁵ Rogers 1986, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Richards 1932, 137; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 186.



Figure 2.10 Parrasio Michiel or Micheli, *Portrait of a Lady*, ca. 1565
Source: Genoa, Palazzo Rosso. Copyright of the Palazzo Rosso.

a pomegranate pattern similar to that of the fabric in the painting may be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Figure 2.11).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ The brocade in the V&A (inv. no. 1356&A-1877) was first compared to the fabric shown in the portrait in V&A 1923, 13–14 and pl. IV.

Illustrated in Figure 2.12 is a *çatma* velvet, probably sixteenth century, that is typically of the output of Bursa:¹⁰⁸ the cut silk pile of the velvet is dyed a deep crimson (the favourite colour in Ottoman textiles) that is probably derived from lac,¹⁰⁹ and its design is rendered in gold thread. The pattern, one of the most frequently encountered in Ottoman textiles, consists of an ogival lattice that provides a framework for rows of staggered floral motifs, in this case carnations,¹¹⁰ and it presents us with another instance of the diffusion of a particular design feature along an irregular path. The origins of the lattice layout are ultimately to be found in East Asia, whence the design travelled westwards via the Mongol Ilkhanids who ruled Iran. From the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria it then passed to Renaissance Italy, and it is likely that Ottoman adaptation of it in the fifteenth century was indebted to Italian rather than Eastern models.¹¹¹ A similar complexity concerns the transfer of flower motifs, but there is here an additional fluidity that can render hazardous any attempt at hard-and-fast categorisation. The carnation – which, along with the tulip, hyacinth and rose, was central to the new floral repertoire created by court artist Kara Memi known as *quatre fleurs*¹¹² – may also have been of Western derivation. Although flowers had long featured in Islamic art, this new style, which is best known through the ceramics of Iznik, was distinguished by its relative naturalism: the flora rendered in this manner were recognisable species rather than unreal hybrid creations, and the impetus for this move to naturalism may well have come from illustrated European herbals and books of floriculture.¹¹³ However, such motifs acquired distinctive forms under the Ottomans, and the carnation in particular, or possibly the Sweet Sultan (*Centaurea Moschata*), took on a rather abstracted, fanlike shape that is instantly discernible as Ottoman and was especially favoured for use in the decoration of textiles.¹¹⁴ Crimson velvets brocaded

¹⁰⁸ London, V&A, inv. no. 100–1878. Although it is currently not possible to distinguish between the products of different centres (Rogers 1986, 15), the *çatma* weaving was particularly associated with Bursa, whereas the Istanbul ateliers appear to have specialised more in brocaded silks and cloths of gold and silver. Denny 1982, 124; Gürsu 1988, 19; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 156.

¹⁰⁹ Denny 1982, 124; Rogers 1986, 19; Gürsu 1988, 26.

¹¹⁰ For discussion of this layout, see Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 208, 229–30, 233.

¹¹¹ Mackie 1973–74, 14; Denny, 128; Gürsu 1988, 43, 67–8; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 208, 227.

¹¹² Atasoy and Raby 1989, 222. For an example of the *quatre fleurs*, see Atıl 1987, 59; for Kara Memi, see Rogers 1992.

¹¹³ See Rogers and Ward 1988, 60; Atasoy and Raby 1989, 222–3.

¹¹⁴ As on the example here illustrated, the carnations are usually arranged in staggered rows, often within an ogival lattice. See Denny 1982, 129; Gürsu 1988, 182; Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 317. For similar velvets, see Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 305 and figs 309, 310.

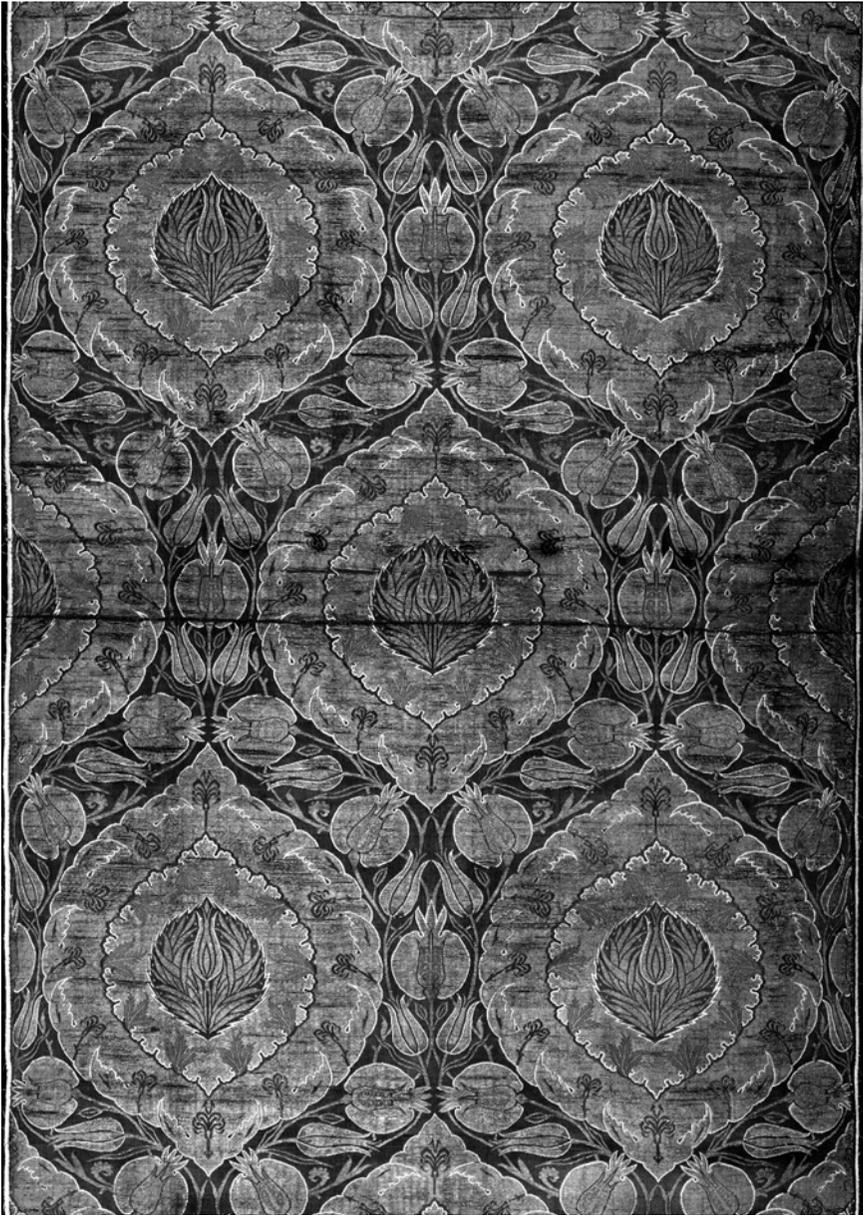


Figure 2.11 Woven silk brocade, Bursa, second half of sixteenth century
Source: London, V&A, inv. no. 1356&A-1877. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

www.ashgata.com



Figure 2.12 *Çatma* (brocaded velvet), Bursa, sixteenth century

Source: London, V&A, inv. no. 100-1878. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

with gold lattices and flowers were as commonly woven in Italy as they were in Anatolia,¹¹⁵ and so that they come to represent a type of textile that was of especially broad international appeal. At the same time, the distinctly Ottoman carnations (or Sweet Sultan), lends the fabric a recognisably Turkish flavour that would have served to differentiate it from similar Italian stuffs. By introducing an Eastern note into a rather Italianate format, velvets such as this would

¹¹⁵ Atasoy, Denny, Mackie and Tezcan 2001b, 182.

have held considerable appeal as variations on the kinds of textile commonly produced in Italy itself, and would thus have featured alongside locally produced weavings in the furnishing of Renaissance interiors or in the attire of the upper classes. There was thus a considerable measure of stylistic overlap and a mutual awareness of needs and tastes in Italy and the Ottoman Empire that encouraged the production of goods for export.

Another striking example of transcultural production is provided by a group of multifarious inlaid metalwork objects, many of which are found in European collections.¹¹⁶ As with velvets, assessment is complicated by the fact that they present us with sometimes intractable problems with regard to provenance, but it is likely that some were made for a local market and later acquired by Europeans, some may have been intended for a European market or even commissioned by Europeans, while others, finally, are European imitations, identified as such by stylistic and technical features. Those that cannot be so identified may be assigned broadly to two types.¹¹⁷ One consists of pieces where the decorative design can be identified as late Mamluk, typical examples being globular perfume burners, bowls and candlesticks. The other is stylistically akin to late fifteenth and sixteenth-century Iranian metalwork,¹¹⁸ but yet distinct, and is further distinguished from the first type by the use of silver wire inlay. Among the pieces of the first type some have a European morphology, which suggests that craftsmen were sometimes consciously creating shapes that would appeal to a European market, and a corresponding piece of the second type, now in the Courtauld, includes on one rim an Arabic formula identifying the maker, the 'Master Mahmud' (usually identified with Mahmud al-Kurdi, whose name appears on other pieces of metalwork¹¹⁹), while on the rim opposite there is a partial translation in Roman characters,¹²⁰ thus clearly indicating that it was intended for Europe (Plate 18). There are also pieces belonging to both types that contain the further and quite explicit feature of a European coat of arms, such as that of the prominent Venetian Contarini family, which appears on a pair of candlesticks now in the Museo Correr.¹²¹ However, in some instances, as with the

¹¹⁶ Previously dubbed 'Veneto-Saracenic'. For a review of the scholarship on them see Auld 2004, 7–8, 36–43.

¹¹⁷ Auld 2004, 8.

¹¹⁸ Ward 1993, 102–3.

¹¹⁹ Other names appear in other objects, such as that of Zayn al-Din.

¹²⁰ London, Courtauld Institute, O.1966.GP.204. See also Auld 1989, figs 1 and 2. The Roman transliteration is not, as often reported in the literature, a Persian version, being 'AMALEI MALEM MAMUD' (Robinson 1967, 170–73; Auld 2004 and 2007, cat. 103; and Mack 2002, 214, note 17, for example), but an abbreviated 'AMAL ELMALEM MAMUD', from the Arabic one on the other side of the rim: 'amal al-mu'allim maḥmūd yarjū al-maghfira min mawlāh (the work of the master Maḥmūd who hopes for forgiveness from his lord).

¹²¹ Venice, Museo Correr, inv. no. CIXII nn. 22, 23. See Contadini 2006, 311, col. fig. 21.3.



Figure 2.13 Molino ewer and detail of the coat of arms, brass, Germany, Netherlandish with Middle Eastern decoration, second half of fifteenth century

Source: London, V&A, inv. no. M.32-1946. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum; coat of arms photo by Rowan Bain.

famous Molino ewer¹²² (Figure 2.13), although the decoration is characteristically Middle Eastern in style, the object has a European shape¹²³ as well as a coat of arms, and here the presumption is that the vessel is of European manufacture, but with the surface worked by a Muslim craftsman.

This suggests either a back-and-forth trading process, or the presence of Middle Eastern craftsmen in Europe, and in fact it was long thought, as proposed in the middle of the nineteenth century by Vincenzo Lazari, that all the pieces discussed so far were produced in Venice by Muslim craftsmen settled there. This hypothesis remained unchallenged until 1970, when Huth argued that it was not supported by evidence and that the Venetian guild system would have not have permitted foreign craftsmen to work there.¹²⁴ Further, James Allan has provided comparisons (from Qur'anic illumination and architectural

¹²² Contadini 2006, 310–11, 356, cat. 62.

¹²³ See European ewers in the same shape in V&A 2004, 126–7 (entry by Tim Stanley).

¹²⁴ Lazari 1859; Huth 1970.

decoration) with the decoration on the Mahmud al-Kurdi group that point to a Mamluk (Cairo) provenance for this group and a dating to the third quarter of the fifteenth century;¹²⁵ Rachel Ward has proposed, on the basis of metallurgical analyses and details of design, for a Western Iranian provenance; and Sylvia Auld, subsequently, has argued, referring to inlay technique as well as design, for an Aq-qoyunlu provenance.¹²⁶ Yet evidence that such pieces were imported is hard to come by. There are Florentine documents of the fourteenth century that refer to metal cargoes coming from ports such as Beirut and *Tana* (Azov), with Famagusta (Cyprus) and Modon (Peloponnese) as intermediate stops. As Marco Spallanzani points out,¹²⁷ however, even though they cast light on prices and usage and, albeit rarely, refer to ornamental motifs, they make no mention of places of origin.

The presumption of Middle Eastern manufacture may, though, need to be revised in the light of the recent discovery of an extraordinary document in the National Archive in Florence that mentions a certain 'Antonio Surian' from Damascus who, in 1563, was said to be making inlaid metalwork in Venice better than any Italian.¹²⁸ It thereby reopens the debate about Middle Eastern craftsmen working in Venice, leading to a reappraisal of earlier scholars who had argued for their presence.¹²⁹ But whatever the place of production, we are dealing with objects, many found in European collections, that often bear European coats of arms, and in some cases have a morphology that is less mainstream Middle Eastern than European. Future progress in our understanding of them may need, as Auld (2004) has indicated, further engagement with the intricate problems of the design of the inlay decoration, and to this may be added the need for further technical analyses, to supplement what Ward and La Niece (1995, and La Niece 2007) have done for some of the material in the British Museum, and which would characterize items of European manufacture versus those of Middle Eastern provenance.

¹²⁵ Allan 1986, 55–7 and 1989, 168–70. More recently Behrens-Abouseif 2005 has taken up James Allan's attribution including a discussion of the inscriptions on some of these objects.

¹²⁶ Ward 1993, 102–3. Auld puts forward the hypothesis that masters like Mahmud al-Kurdi and Zayn al-Din might have been itinerant artists working for the Aq-qoyunlu Turkmen in and around north-west Iran or Anatolia: Auld 2004, 8–9, and ch. 7. There are two types of silver inlay – linear and spatial – and the method of attaching them varies: Allan 1979, 64–5.

¹²⁷ Spallanzani 2010, 7–10.

¹²⁸ This extraordinary document is mentioned in Spallanzani 2010, 11–12, and footnote 22. Similarly, the Egyptian 'Sabadino', working as a tapestry maker in Ferrara at the court of Ercole I, was judged to make 'panni figurati' better than anybody else: see Forti Grazzini 1982, 55. Thanks to Isabel Miller for the reference.

¹²⁹ See review of literature in Allan 1989, 167–8.

As a further complication, there are metalwork pieces of similar style which this time are European, mainly Italian, imitations of imported Middle Eastern artefacts, as in the case of two candlesticks in the V&A¹³⁰ (Figure 2.14). The stylistic similarity is sufficiently close for this group to have been identified only relatively recently on the basis of differences in design, the European imitations having a more clearly compartmentalised organisation of the decoration, and in material, as they contain no trace of the black organic compound that provides the background for the silver inlay of those produced with Middle Eastern techniques.¹³¹ They properly represent, then, the phenomenon of a fascination with Islamic art that led to the incorporation of its design in various media.

Numerous further instances of this phenomenon are supplied by leatherwork. There are several book-bindings, including varnished ones, made for doges and prominent Venetian families, such as the commission of the doge Michele Foscarini dated 1587 (Plate 19), where the binding is similar to a known Middle Eastern type, but with the addition of the Lion of St Mark on one side and the Foscarini coat of arms on the other.¹³² Similarly, shields and bucklers were produced in Venice, probably during the late sixteenth century, with decoration in Ottoman style, the shields with an oval and convex shape, the bucklers with a round and conical shape. Twenty-three such gilded and varnished leather shields and bucklers, and a number of quivers are preserved in the Armoury of the Doge's Palace (although unfortunately all the bucklers have the metal boss missing, so that the skin in the middle is laid bare), and similar pieces are scattered in various museums and private collections.¹³³ A particularly important collection is to be found in Salzburg, consisting of a group of twenty shields that Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau, the prince-bishop of Salzburg already mentioned above in relation to the possible maker of the enamelled mounts of the Fermo rock crystal ewer, ordered from Venice for his horsemen. Since von Raitenau was prince-bishop from 1587 to 1611 we actually know the period during which these shields were produced. This allows us to suggest a date for the other shields too, for the Salzburg ones are practically identical in decoration and technique not only to the items in Venice, but also to those in Florence, Rome, Milan, London, New York, Offenbach am Main and Munich.

The Venetian group is the one I was able to study and research in detail while the pieces were being restored.¹³⁴ The restoration process made it possible to

¹³⁰ Inv. no. 553–1865 and 554–1865, see Contadini 2006, 313–14, 360, cat. 135.

¹³¹ Ward, La Niece, Hook, and White, 1995, 235–58; La Niece 2007; also Auld 2007.

¹³² Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Cod. It. VII, 1724 (=8126), published in Zorzi 1988, tav. CXLIV. For varnished book-bindings in the Islamic style, see among others Zorzi 2003, 75–8.

¹³³ Contadini 1989, 236–7.

¹³⁴ Contadini 1989. This publication includes an analysis of their history within the 'cuoridoro' industry, drawn from archival documents, and of their decoration. 'Cuoridoro' is a dialectal version of 'cuoi d'oro', which literally means gilded leathers. The word 'cuoridoro'



Figure 2.14 One of a pair of candlesticks, brass, engraved and inlaid with silver, Italian, probably Venicè, mid-sixteenth century

Source: London, V&A, inv. no. 553-1865. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

establish the exact technique used, that of *cuoridoro*, and to conclude that the shields probably functioned primarily as display objects, paraded on special occasions and prominently exhibited on the wall of the entrance hall of Venetian patrician houses as a symbol of power, with spears behind it in a fan-like arrangement.¹³⁵ Alternatively, the weapons might be put in the study of the master of the house, where at times shields and other arms with the family coat of arms were displayed and proudly shown to important visitors and friends.¹³⁶

Examination of the bucklers and shields in the Doge's Palace revealed that they were produced by the technique used on gilded and varnished leather wall hangings, a kind of wall tapestry very much in fashion all over Europe during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. A wonderful Italian example is the one in the

was used indiscriminately for the art, the craftsmen, or the product. My finds have been used recently by Rizzo 2007 who adds further technical analyses recently conducted on various varnished and gilded objects. In this publication, instead of 'varnished' the objects are still unfortunately called 'lacquered', a misleading term as the process involved is totally different.

¹³⁵ Thornton 1991, 269; Brown 2004, 19–20, 73, 224; Brown 2006, 57. Such an arrangement can be seen in a print of 'Palazzo Cappello on the Grand Canal', from the 1843 book *Interiors and Exteriors in Venice* by Lake Price (published in Brown 2004, fig. 22).

¹³⁶ Thornton 1997, 80–83, especially the reference to Bartolo's study on 83.

Museo Civico at Bologna, which can be dated to the late sixteenth or the early seventeenth century, and is additionally of interest because it includes a form of decoration in the horizontal band that is quite clearly derived from a type of pattern found in Ottoman sixteenth-century silks¹³⁷ (Plate 20).

Plate 21 shows one of the shields with the Foscarini coat of arms, and bearing the initials A F, for Antonio Foscarini, an admiral of the second half of the sixteenth century. The overall style and appearance of the objects is so pronouncedly Ottoman that one could be forgiven for mistaking them at first glance as genuinely Turkish, although close inspection of their design patterns reveals striking similarities with some of the metalwork pieces discussed above, thus further illustrating the complexities of style transfer between media.

Beyond such processes of absorption we arrive, finally, at a stage where forms and concepts taken from the exotic are creatively recombined and/or recontextualised, often in a different medium. This process had already been exemplified in the way, say, that the halo of the Madonna in a painting might incorporate a pseudo-Kufic inscription, but we now enter the more dynamic realm of ornament, explicitly identified as a transferable element.¹³⁸ Admittedly, the transmission of ornamental features is common within a given culture (motifs pass happily from book illumination to architectural decoration or to metalwork design, for example, in Mamluk Egypt just as well as in Yuan China), but what is important to emphasise in the present context is the transcultural dimension, and what the international transfer of motifs may tell us about cultural fluidity.

In Europe, an interest in Middle Eastern ornament starts to be felt particularly keenly during the Renaissance, with Middle Eastern motifs of knots and stars being used, for example, by Leonardo and Dürer.¹³⁹ In the first half of the sixteenth century, pattern books such as those of Peter Flötner and Francesco Pellegrino include large sections of 'oriental' motifs (termed *moresque* by Flötner and *façon arabique* by Pellegrino)¹⁴⁰ (Figure 2.15). However, Pellegrino's patterns are closer to what is found on early sixteenth-century Venetian book-bindings and brassware than on Middle Eastern objects, and as in other European pattern books of the period such terms are used generically to encompass a variety of styles within the global vocabulary of ornament that could be used in different media: there is no attempt to identify specific origins.

¹³⁷ Contadini 1988.

¹³⁸ Rogers 1999; Rawson 1984, 145–98; Grabar 1992; Necipoğlu 1995, 91–126.

¹³⁹ Sannazzaro 1982, fig. on 151; Albrecht Dürer 1971, nos 110–111.

¹⁴⁰ Pellegrino 1908 (facsimile of the original edition, Paris 1530); Flötner 1882 (facsimile of the original edition, Zurich 1546). Examples from these can be found in Contadini 1999, figs 23–4 on pp. 47–8. Little is known about Francesco Pellegrino (d. 1552?), the artist whose sixty woodcuts of Islamic-style ornament were published as a pattern book in Paris in 1530. Only one copy of his pattern book survives (Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, Sciences et Arts no. 11952).

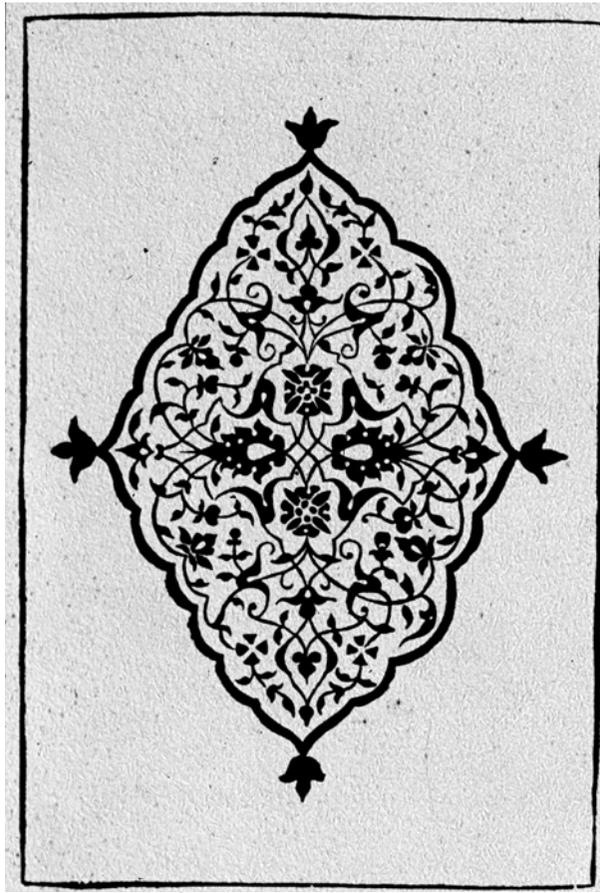


Figure 2.15 Pattern in Islamic style, from Francesco Pellegrino, *La Fleur de la science de pourtraicture: façon arabique et ytalique*, Paris, 1530
Source: After Pellegrino 1908.

Equally important, elements were creatively combined: as Rogers points out,¹⁴¹ it is the very eclecticism of Venetian Islamicising bookbinding designs that serves as a diagnostic tool to distinguish them from their Ottoman counterparts, which have an austere unity of design. Such recombination of motifs also appears in paintings, where textiles and carpets in some cases have complex designs that cannot be simple reproductions. Thus, in addition to some striking representations of real objects (as for example in the Holbein

¹⁴¹ Rogers 1999, 139.

and Lotto carpets),¹⁴² we also encounter displacement and creative reworking: Jan van Eyck, Quinten Massys and Hans Memling all juxtapose separate motifs to create pseudo-Islamic carpet and textile designs, which they would probably have claimed to be 'Ottoman'¹⁴³ (Plate 22).

The above discussion, which touches on acquisitions and exchanges, on transcultural cross-fertilization and competition, essays a move away from traditional art-historical scholarship towards, it is hoped, a more productive engagement with the contexts within which artefacts were produced and consumed, and also, however faint the traces, with the ways in which they were perceived. In doing so, it raises further questions and compels the recognition that the current state of our knowledge is not always sufficient for confident conclusions to be reached. With regard to early acquisitions, we may reasonably suppose that the use of rock crystal vessels, particularly as reliquaries with lavishly decorated mounts, indicates on the one hand an appreciation of their aesthetic grace and symbolic potential, and on the other ignorance of, or disregard for, any Islamic associations they may originally have had. Yet when we move to the much better documented Renaissance, we find, paradoxically, that the ascription of meaning becomes more elusive. The record suggests a high degree of commercial competitiveness, with a range of differently priced goods being made for both local consumption and export, some evidently luxury objects. But if the importation of these can obviously be understood as a recognition of value, their reception otherwise is obscure, and is certainly not verbalised in ways that might allow interpretation in the light of the re-emerging engagement with the world of Islam in intellectual circles.

Indeed, it may be argued that the very notion of a meaning associated with alterity is suspect, and that the pooling of design features meant that the fact of a Middle Eastern place of production for a given artefact might be incidental, even insignificant: the intensification of trading networks clearly demonstrates the increasing international appeal of certain types of artefact, leading to an eclectic sharing of features and the creation within them of significant local variations (resulting in an extraordinary complex scenario with related problems of identification and provenance).

With this process can be associated the enrichment of the language of ornament. Here we reach a stage where motifs are detached from their original contexts to be integrated creatively within others. At the same time, paradoxically, notions of origin are not wholly erased. Labels such as *arabesche* preserve an identification of certain style features that will eventually be brought into play as part of a growing characterisation of the Islamic Middle East, especially in its Ottoman manifestation, first as a threatening other and then later, especially as we move into the rococo domain of *turquerie*, as a world

¹⁴² Spallanzani 2007, 202–5, 210–13 for Holbein carpets, 233–7 for Lotto carpets.

¹⁴³ Ydema 1991, but more recently Monnas 2008, ch. 5: 'The transmission of textile designs in fifteenth and early sixteenth century Netherlandish Paintings'.



Plate 1 Astrolabe with Arabic and Latin inscriptions, Fez, dated 699/1299–1300. Florence, Museo di Storia della Scienza, inv. no. 1109. After Curatola 1993, 179.



Plate 2 Arabic-Latin dictionary, Spain, end of thirteenth – early fourteenth century. Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, no. 217, fol. 115r and fol. 226v. Copyright of the Biblioteca Riccardiana.



Plate 3 Title page. Giovan Battista Raimondi, *Alphabetum Arabicum*, Rome, 1592.
The Arcadian Library, www.arcadian-library.com.



Plate 4 Cup with one handle – from the ambo of Henry II, Iraq or western Iran, tenth century (?). Aachen, Palatine Chapel. Photo: Anna Contadini.



Plate 5 Dish, from the ambo of Henry II, Fatimid Egypt (?), late tenth – early eleventh century (?). Aachen, Palatine Chapel. Photo: Anna Contadini.



Plate 6 Lothar cross, c. 1000. Aachen, Chapel's Treasury. Copyright Marburg Archive.



Plate 7 *Grotta della Vergine* (The Virgin's Grotto), rock crystal, Fatimid Egypt (?), eleventh century (?); crown: silver-gilt, enamels and precious stones, Constantinople, ninth-tenth century; statuette of the Virgin: silver-gilt, Venice, thirteenth century. Venice, Treasury of St Mark, Tesoro, inv. no. 92. Courtesy of Tesoro di San Marco, Venice.



Plate 8 Rock crystal ewer, Fatimid Egypt, late tenth – early eleventh century;
European silver gilt and enamelled mount, early seventeenth century.
Fermo, Treasury of the Cathedral. Photo: Simone Piazza.



Plate 9 Small-pattern Holbein carpet, West Anatolia, third quarter of
the fifteenth century. Florence, Museo Bardini, inv. no. 7865.
After Boralevi 1999, 46, cat. 10.



Plate 10 Gentile da Fabriano, *Madonna of Humility*, c. 1420.
Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo. Photo: Anna Contadini.

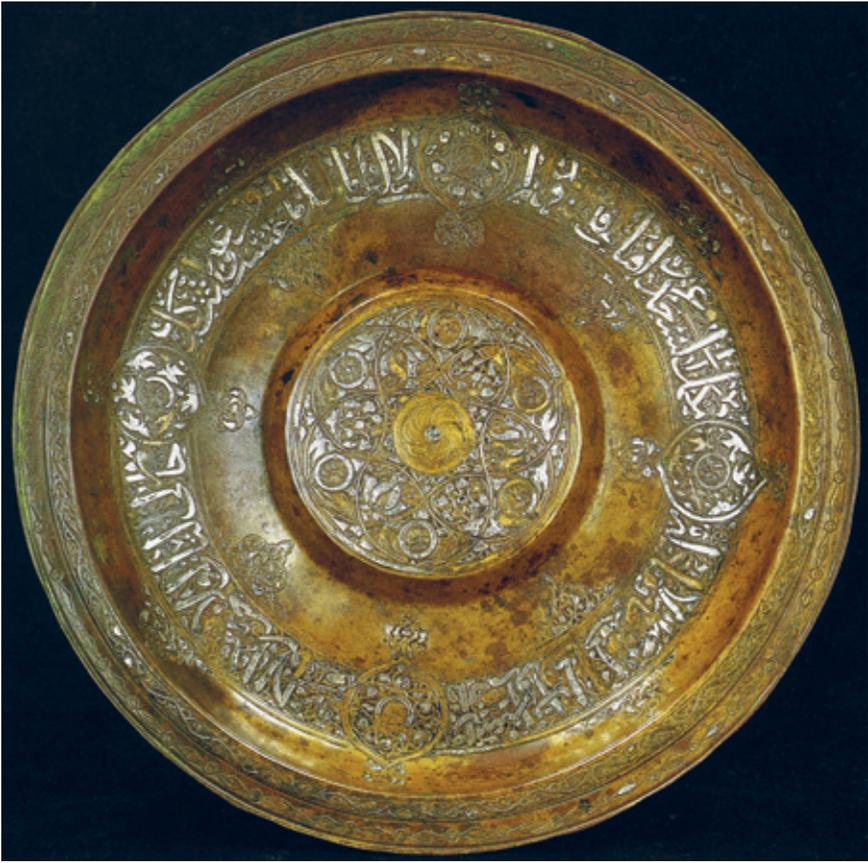


Plate 11 Dish, sheet brass incised and inlaid with silver and gold, Egypt or Syria, 1300–1350. Aron Collection. Photo: Valerio Ricciardi.



Plate 12 Ottoman silk (*kemkha*), second half of sixteenth century.
Prato, Museo del Tessuto, inv. no. 75.01.316. Courtesy of Museo del Tessuto.



Plate 13 *Çatma* (brocaded velvet), Ottoman, late sixteenth – early seventeenth century. Prato, Museo del Tessuto, inv. no. 75.01.33. Courtesy of Museo del Tessuto.



Plate 14 Short-sleeved kaftan, probably belonging to Osman II (1618–22),
European, probably Italian. Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı, inv. no. 13/360.
After Rogers 1986, cat. 42.

Contadini



Plate 15 Velvet, Florence, sixteenth century. Venice, Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo, inv. no. 491/191. Copyright of the Fondazione dei Musei Civici di Venezia.



Plate 16 Agnolo Bronzino, *Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni de' Medici*, c. 1545. Oil on panel. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. no. 748. Copyright of the Polo Museale della città di Firenze.



Plate 17 Velvet, probably Venice, sixteenth century. Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. Franchetti 639. Photo: Anna Contadini.

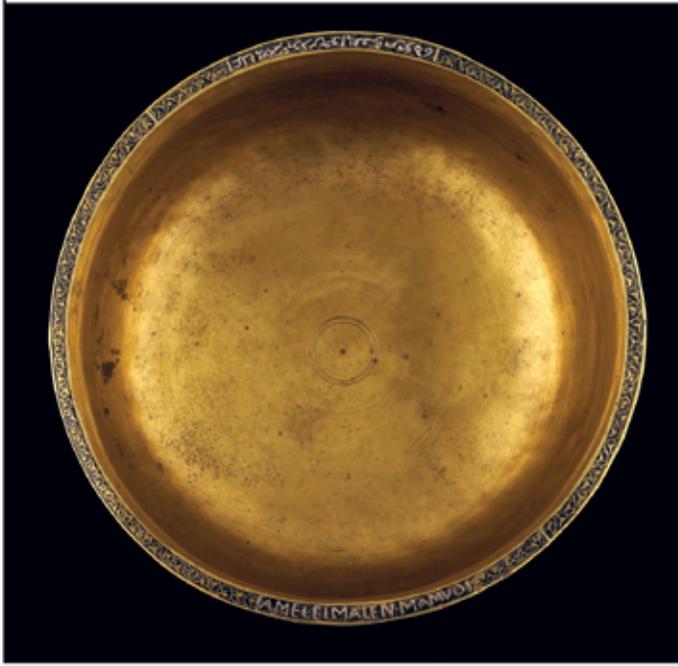


Plate 18 Mahmud al-Kurdi, bowl-shaped box with cover of engraved brass inlaid with silver, disputed provenance, fifteenth century. London, Courtauld Institute, O.1966.GP.204. Courtesy of the Courtauld Institute.

Contadini



Plate 19 Bookbinding, *dogal commission* to Michele Foscarini, 1587. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Cod. It. VII, 1724 (=8126). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice.



Plate 20 Gilded and varnished hanging leather with a horizontal band in Ottoman style, Venice (?), sixteenth century. Bologna, Museo Civico Medievale, inv. no. 2014. Copyright of the Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna, Italy.

Contadini



Plate 21 Gilded leather shield and detail of the arms of the Foscarini family, Venice, 1550–1600.
Venice, Armeria del Palazzo Ducale, No. Inv. 65/Sala E. Photos: Anna Contadini.



Plate 22 Hans Memling, *The Virgin and Child with Saints and Angels*,
Donne triptych, centre panel, 1478. Oil on panel. London,
National Gallery, inv. no. 6275.1. © The National Gallery, London.