Driven by congruent needs and tastes that fostered the production of goods for export, the relationship between Renaissance Italy and the Ottoman Empire was marked by a mutually beneficial adoption and adaptation of an array of designs and their constituent motifs. But only rarely, it seems, did this process provoke reflection, so that although the Renaissance is better documented than earlier periods, we find that the ascription of meaning remains elusive. Reception, beyond the evident valuation of objects shown by the barometer of price, was certainly not verbalized in ways that might suggest recognition of an emerging cultural nexus with an articulated aesthetic in some degree connected to the reengagement with the world of Islam occurring in intellectual circles. As a result, the artifacts themselves provide the primary and sometimes the only investigative resource. Yet however thorny the problems they may present, we can at least disentangle some of the complex strands of borrowing and mutation that mark the changes in Middle Eastern and Italian ornament during the Renaissance, tracking the ways in which the responses of each to the arts of the other would change.

Previously, Middle Eastern artifacts acquired by the West did not serve as models to be imitated. Rather, they were assigned novel functions: rock crystal vessels, for example, might be used as reliquaries, often embellished with luxurious mounts, to "stage" them and acknowledge them as, usually, royal gifts. But if the process of adaptation in such cases is transparent, it is far less so with the ambon of Henry II in Aachen Cathedral, an early example of the integration of a variety of artifacts, including two Middle Eastern rock crystal vessels, within a quintessentially medieval, western European ambon in trefoil shape against a background decoration of vermi gris. Here various interpretative problems arise, including that of perception: were the Middle Eastern objects of particular symbolic significance, in the context of translatio imperii, as representative of the cultural glitter of the Islamic world, or were they thought to be of Byzantine origin? Or, did they, rather, as I have argued elsewhere, primarily form part of an aesthetic program determined by the concept of varietas?

During the Renaissance, new functions might still be found for exotic items (a perfume container might be used as a hand-warmer), but this aspect becomes less significant, and there is a major shift in emphasis toward what I have termed the "freeing of the motif." Italian textiles, for example, begin to incorporate Ottoman designs, and Ottoman production in turn adopts Italianate elements, thereby presenting scholars, in addition to problems of provenance, with questions concerning the transmission of design as the industry evolved—and it also needs to be borne in mind that "Ottoman" design may be shorthand for a common vocabulary of ornament shared with the Persianate world. As with the rock crystals on the ambon, a motif may not always have a clear geographical provenance or "national" identity. We are, rather, confronted with the incorporation of imported features of ornament that are then creatively reinterpreted or reassembled to provide new variations to attract appreciative customers: Italian fabrics based on Ottoman models are thus not simple imitations either in terms of ornament or of technique, even if they might be aimed at the Ottoman market. Such fabrics illustrate well the seamless integration of motifs from various sources...
within a common design world, and if associated problems of attribution can now often be resolved, we are still left with the more intriguing and important task of reading them as cultural texts, of following the local inflections of a common vocabulary, and, where possible, teasing out their implications.

There is, in addition, the phenomenon of transmateriality to consider. It is found both in the morphology of objects (such as metal vessels in the shape of leather ones) and, in particular, in the vocabulary of ornament. Within the Islamic world, for example, thirteenth-century Abbasid manuscript illustration inspires Mosuli metalwork; decorative motifs in fourteenth-century Mamluk Qur’anic illumination recur on the relief design of the domes of Mamluk mosques; and sixteenth-century Ottoman and Safavid ornament is adapted to all media, from textiles to carpets to book illumination to ceramics. In Europe, we find similar phenomena of both morphological adaptation and transmateriality (as between metal and glass, for example), and as far as perceptions are concerned, we may detect a parallel move toward nonspecificity in the trajectory of the Renaissance vocabulary of design.

The material discussed below suggests, indeed, that by the sixteenth century, if not before, Middle Eastern ornament had become an integral part of an artistic vocabulary that was increasingly international, thereby calling into question, for this period, the validity of traditional art-historical tropes such as “exoticism” and “imitation.” The term “influence,” too, needs questioning: while unavoidable, it must be understood here to operate in the context of a complex set of circulating elements, and not to denote a simple relationship between donor and recipient, that is, from a Eurocentric perspective, as unidirectional and insensitive to reciprocity. In tracing this change we may point to trade itself as a vehicle of exchange and familiarization, but also to creativity in technology and design for purposes of emulation and competition. Transmateriality provides further evidence of adaptation, and the way in which it plays not just with vessel shapes but also with decorative motifs serves as an index of reduced cultural localism and of an eclectic widening of aesthetic horizons.

Antecedents

The European acquisition of Middle Eastern artifacts, whether by pillage, diplomatic gift, or trade, began long before the Renaissance. The rock crystal vessels converted into reliquaries and those on the ambon of Henry II, mentioned above, provide early examples, and there are others in different media, for instance, Middle Eastern textiles with ornamental bands (tīrāz), sometimes decorative but usually consisting of text. They provide evidence for the existence at this period of trade in luxury goods, and that they were appreciated as precious objects is demonstrated by the fact that they might be used as wrapping or shrouds for Christian relics. An extraordinary example is the “tunic of Saint Ambrogio” (d. 397), used as a wrapping for the remains of the saint, made of indigo-dyed silk with an inscription in Arabic woven in yellow silk. The blue silk has a lozenge pattern, and the inscription is in a double horizontal band, repeated in mirror image. Unfortunately, thanks to the activities of Franz Bock, known as “Scissor Bock” for having systematically cut textiles to sell to museums and private collectors, it is now dispersed in different reposi-
Fig. 23.1. Reliquary of the Nails of Saint Clare, Egypt, tenth century; Fatimid rock crystal; copper gilt chalice with precious stones, Italy, fourteenth century (?). Protomonastero di Santa Chiara, Assisi, Italy.

Reliquary of the Nails of Saint Clare, a rather beautiful tenth-century Fatimid vessel that was mounted in Italy, upside down, on a high, copper-gilt stem with a base embellished with semiprecious stones, probably in the fourteenth century. The carving in relief is sharp, and it exhibits mastery in the curved floral decoration, with one element seamlessly linked to the next, that is typical of the highest quality of rock crystal production from Fatimid Egypt. Drilled into the very clear crystal is a cylindrical hole, which suggests that the vessel originally must have served as a receptacle for perfume or cosmetics, but it now contains nail clippings of Saint Clare, the devoted disciple of Francis of Assisi, who died in 1253—a striking example of the radical transformations to which such early acquisitions were often subjected (fig. 23.1).

Renaissance Acquisitions

The above are just three examples from a wide range of artifacts that survive in European collections and church treasuries and demonstrate that Europeans started acquiring artifacts from the Islamic Middle East already during the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, such acquisitions multiplied and became more varied, as trade assumed greater importance, facilitated by the growth of extensive and increasingly dependable mercantile networks. Artifacts were imported from various parts of the Middle East: from Fatimid (909–1171) and, later, Mamluk (1250–1517) territories, that is, principally, from Egypt and Syria; from the Ilkhanid Empire (1256–1353), which controlled Iraq and Iran and also gave access to Central Asia (Turkestan) and China, especially with regard to silk; and, with the rise of the Ottomans as a new major power in the fifteenth century, increasingly from Turkish centers of production. Indeed, Ottoman rugs and textiles were to become a significant import. In Italy, Islamic artifacts were transmitted not only through Sicily and southern Italy under Norman rule and, as one of the so-called Siculo-Arabic caskets, bears witness to the extraordinary syncretic culture of Sicily in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Particularly prominent among these early European acquisitions are rock crystal vessels, ranging from the spectacular and finely carved ewers now displayed in, for example, the treasury of San Marco in Venice and the V&A, to a variety of smaller pieces. One such is the
capitulations in 1460: a ready supply of imported material of various prices and qualities was assured alongside an equivalent range of locally produced material. Likewise, Ottoman customers had access to European goods, and became increasingly keen to acquire them, fabrics especially, for the quality of Italian production made them particularly attractive. There are two resulting trends: a variety of economic factors encouraged the manufacture of similar materials in several locations, while on the other hand, homogeneity was countered by local specialization.

Trade

The dissemination of ornament through trade may be illustrated first by textiles. Ottoman exports were principally in the form of *catma* (voided and brocaded) velvets, with Bursa as the main production center from the later fourteenth century onward. But Bursa also became an international center for trade in raw silk, and it was this that increasingly attracted Italian merchants supplying Italian centers of production. The consequent growth in the output of the Italian weaving industry resulted in a reduction in local demand for Ottoman worked silk, especially as Italian weavers had begun to explore Ottoman patterns. Indeed, Italian fabrics with design features of Ottoman or other Middle Eastern derivation would be imported in increasing volume by the Ottomans, as demonstrated by Ottoman court documents: of the velvet caftans in the Topkapı Palace, only a few are of local production.¹²

Not surprisingly, the ornamental repertoire of these fabrics shows a degree of interchange that can create problems of identification. For example, on grounds of design, the Santa Maria dei Frari cope of ca. 1500 (fig. 23.2a) was long thought to be Venetian, but technical analyses confirm that it is in fact Ottoman, testimony to the adaptability of Ottoman weavers in responding to imported fabrics.¹³ On the other hand, a sixteenth-century velvet in the Bargello Museum was once thought to be Ottoman, but it is now accepted that it is of Italian (and probably Venetian) manufacture (fig. 23.2b).¹⁴ Although it incorporates well-known Ottoman motifs, their overall organization is rather atypical, as is the combination of colors, which can, however, be matched in textiles known to be Italian: the light red/pinkish color of the spreading tendrils, for instance, is found in Italian textiles from the end of the fifteenth century onward, as in an example in the V&A (fig. 23.2c),¹⁵ and further evidence for an Italian origin is provided by the fact that the fabric is pure silk (not normal for Ottoman velvets) and by differences in the way the pile is treated.¹⁶ Italian fabrics based on Ottoman models would have been mainly aimed at the Ottoman market, but that
Ottoman-derived motifs were also included in designs for the Italian home market is suggested by the presence of clothes with Ottoman patterns in paintings, such as the Portrait of a Lady by Parrasio Micheli (ca. 1565) and Titian’s The Burial of Christ (ca. 1572) with the cintâmanî motif. It is instructive, however, to note that fabrics with Ottoman motifs in paintings cannot readily be identified as Ottoman, in contrast to the frequent presence in paintings of Ottoman rugs, thus reflecting the disparity between the high level of demand for Ottoman rugs as against the low level of demand for Ottoman fabrics, given the abundance of local manufactories.9

The trajectory of a particular design motif is often complex, as shown, for example, by the diffusion of the ogival lattice, the origins of which are ultimately to be found in eastern Asia. It traveled westward with the Mongol Ilkhanids (1256–1353), reaching Mamluk Syria and Egypt and thence Renaissance Italy, and it is likely that the Ottomans’ adaptation of it was indebted to Italian rather than Eastern models.20 In a sixteenth-century çatma velvet in the V&A (Fig. 23.3a), the ogival lattice encloses yet another motif with a complex history, for it serves as a framework for rows of carnations, or possibly sweet sultan (Centaurea moschata), a floral element that may have been derived from European herbals and books of floriculture, but took on a rather abstract and instantly identifiable fanlike shape in its Ottoman manifestation.21

And then we have capers. A document dated June 14, 1555, in the National Archive in Florence, sent from Frankfurt by the merchant Francesco Carletti to the Saliti Company in Florence, contains a drawing for a textile design with an ogival lattice through which are threaded branches with capers, accompanied by a request for pieces like it to be manufactured for a “Frankfurt fair.”22 Although the organization of the ogival lattice in this drawing is typically Italian, and the representation of the capers likewise, as may be seen in textiles such as a stola da procuratore (a procurator’s stole) in Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice, both were also to be found on Ottoman velvets, such as one in the Bargello (Fig. 23.3b), and Carletti was presumably familiar with such fabrics. But no Middle Eastern source is implied by his specifying that the order should be made of domashco tanà, for by the sixteenth century, domascha had long lost any connection with Damascus: it refers to a
locally produced fine, thin silk (while tanè specifies a maroon/orange color). This document thus illustrates well a design world marked by the seamless integration of elements from various sources, and quite possibly ignorance of, their ultimate origins.

At the same time, his letter provides an interesting insight into entrepreneurial activity and commissioning well beyond Italy. This international market also included the Middle East, for commissions involving the dispatch of drawings with textile designs were not just internal European affairs: documents recently published by Gülru Necipoğlu contain orders of this kind from Ottoman pashas, one for Venetian fabrics to be sent to Cairo, the other, to go to Istanbul, involving various cushion designs.26

Similar complexities arise with metalwork that can be identified as European imitations of Middle Eastern models, mainly Italian objects demonstrating the desirability of such designs in Renaissance Italy. Examples are the two candlesticks in the V&A with the Foscarini coat of arms that strive toward a Middle Eastern typology in their decoration (fig. 23.4a).27 Indeed, the stylistic similarity of such pieces with ones of Middle Eastern origin is sufficiently close for this group to have been identified as European only relatively recently, on the basis of the more clearly compartmentalized organization of the decoration, a conclusion confirmed by the absence of the black organic compound used on Middle Eastern pieces to provide the background for the silver inlay.28 Another candlestick in the V&A demonstrates the reciprocal nature of such transfers, although in this case with regard to morphology rather than decoration (fig. 23.4b).29 Of its two component pieces (the third is missing), the upper part is a later replacement and does not concern us.30 The morphology of the lower part, made in western Iran in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century, is derived from an Italian and most probably Venetian prototype, one demonstrated by the Foscarini candlesticks. The incised design, however, most of the inlay of which is now unfortunately lost, conforms faithfully to Safavid ornament of the period of Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) as demonstrated, for example, by a flask of ca. 998 (1590) in the British Museum (fig. 23.4c).31 In both the V&A and BM pieces, we find an almost identical treatment of the cusped arches and split palmettes. For the interpretation of these phenomena, however, especially in order to make sound deductions about style preferences, much still remains to be done, in particular by taking into consideration a much larger corpus of artifacts than has hitherto been

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Fig. 23.4. (a) One of a pair of candlesticks, Italy (probably Venice), mid-sixteenth century, brass engraved and inlaid with silver. Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. no. 553-1865), London. (b) Candlestick (lower part), western Iran, late-sixteenth or seventeenth century, engraved bronze. Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. no. 4307-1857), London. (c) Flask, Iran, ca. 998 (1590), brass. British Museum, Henderson Bequest (inv. no. 78.12-30.795), London.

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attempted and by identifying textual references more fully. In the interim, it may be suggested as plausible that, beyond curiosity, an aesthetic openness allowed a conceptual “naturalization” of Middle Eastern ornament that allowed for the frictionless integration of certain novel elements.

Transmateriality

A further feature of the circulation of ornament is transmateriality, as a common pool of design elements appears in different media. This is a phenomenon that appears within both European and Middle Eastern production as well as between them. European metalwork, for example, may imitate ornament on glass, which in its turn derives from textiles, as in the case of a late-seventeenth-century silver gilt beaker in Hamburg that displays the same peacock-feather pattern as an early-seventeenth-century glass beaker in Vienna on which the red dots, rendered in the metal beaker by punches, seem to have their origin in a textile pattern. For Renaissance Italy, to take just one instance, we may cite the decorative designs on the foil disks of a group of medallion-shaped, silver-gilt and enamel costume ornaments that exhibit similarities with manuscript illumination from Milan around 1380 to 1400.

The incorporation of designs found in manuscript illumination also occurs in Mamluk metalwork, while similarities between the figural images on Mosul metalwork and Arab and Syriac manuscript illustrations have been noted on a number of occasions. In terms of ornament, one may observe parallels with manuscript and luster tile painting in the background decorations of Mosuli metalwork, which range from plain backgrounds to thick winding scrolls, hatching, spirals, and independent ornamental scrolls. Likewise, it has been noted that the designs on metalwork produced by Mahmud al-Kurdi (see below) have elements in common with those found in Mamluk and Iranian architecture and manuscript illumination, while earlier metalwork may also exhibit the phenomenon of imitating the decorative effects used on a different material: the Courtauld metal bag (ca. 1300), for example, has an overall decoration that recalls Chinese-like textiles. A particularly striking example of transmateriality is shown, during the reign of the Mamluk sultan Qaytbay (1468–96), by certain motifs such as the three-petaled leaf, which appear on artifacts in various media, including on the dome of his mausoleum and on a brass bowl inlaid with gold and silver in the V&A.

The process by which a decorative motif migrates across different media may readily be illustrated by the grotesque, which consists of fantastical human and animal forms interwoven with foliage designs. It derives from ancient Roman wall paintings that were discovered in Rome during the fifteenth century, and thereafter began to be popularly used in the decorative arts not only in Italy but also across Europe. From its beginnings as wall decoration, it thus spread to a variety of media such as engravings, woodcarving, textiles, ceramics, and metalwork, where it appears on objects as diverse as German silver tankards and Italian armor. Such transferability of motifs can be partly explained by the fact that artists both produced designs for, and worked on, a variety of luxury objects, including tapestries, frescoes, stucco, and metalwork and were often commissioned to decorate entire residences, as in the case of Giulio Romano (ca. 1499–1546) and Perino Del Vaga (1501–47), both of whom had trained with Raphael. The wide dissemination of artists’ designs was a significant factor in the circulation of ornament in Renaissance Europe, for while these drawings were initially private affairs between artist and patron, they later became a collection of stock samples, and sketchbooks were lent to friends and colleagues. The development of printing further increased their availability, and ornamental prints and pattern books were published to cater to craftsmen in various fields who were trying to keep up with the demand for luxury goods from the emerging bourgeoisie but did not have the necessary expertise to create their own designs. In Germany, for example, pattern books by artists such as Hans Brosamer (1495–1554) provided goldsmiths with ideas.

Evidence for the existence of such pattern books in the Islamic world is scanty, but there are certainly parallels between Europe and the Middle East with regard not just to one person working in more than one medium but also, and more significantly, to the ways in which transferability was encouraged by the close relationships that sometimes existed between craftsmen working in different media. How extensive the former practice was is still a matter of investigation, but it is very likely, for instance, that the building superintendent of the Sultan Hasan mosque-madrassa complex in Mamluk Cairo, Muhammad b. Biylik, was also the scribe of a Qur’an in the Keir Collection (and connec-
tions have been made between the decoration of that building and manuscript illumination). There is clearer Mamluk evidence for the latter process, as we find familial ties between goldsmiths and manuscript scribes and illuminators: the scribe of a Mamluk Qur’an dated 801 (1397), for instance, was a goldsmith’s son, while an earlier Mamluk Qur’an, dated 701 (1302), was produced in the mosque of the goldsmiths’ market (Suq al-Sagha). In the Ottoman world, likewise, a direct connection between manuscripts and metalwork is provided by the binding of the Divan of Sultan Murad III in the Topkapı Sarayi, which was done by the court goldsmith Mehmed. For a European parallel, I cite the particularly strong connection, reinforced on occasion by social and familial ties, that existed between German armorers and the engravers and etchers who ornamented their suits of armor.

Given the resulting transferability of design elements, we find that, just as with fabrics, metalwork sometimes presents us with seemingly intractable problems with regard to provenance. Those pieces for which a Middle Eastern origin can be identified include both objects made for a local market, some of which were acquired by Europeans, and objects made for a European market, sometimes in response to commissions. Dubbed “Veneto-Saracenic,” they are typically brass objects distinguished by the use of silver inlay and may be assigned broadly to two types: One consists of pieces in which the decorative design can be identified as late Mamluk, typical examples being globular perfume burners. The other type, associated with Mahmud al-Kurdi, is of uncertain provenance. It is stylistically akin to late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Iranian metalwork, but yet distinct, while being differentiated technically from the first type by the finely engraved arabesques of the background. In both types, the background is covered with a black organic compound, a feature that points to Middle Eastern origins, as do the metallurgical analyses showing that the Mahmud al-Kurdi pieces contain much lower levels of nickel than do European ones. One example of this second, Mahmud al-Kurdi—type, actually includes on one rim an Arabic formula identifying the maker and on the opposite side a corresponding transliteration in Roman characters, clearly indicating that it was intended for Europe. Among the late Mamluk pieces, some have a European morphology, which suggests either that Middle Eastern craftsmen were consciously creating shapes to appeal to a European market while adhering to their own decorative idiom, or that they were commissioned to decorate pieces of European manufacture, which implies either a back-and-forth trading process or the presence of craftsmen from the Middle East in Venice. The latter possibility has generally been discounted, the assumption being that these metalwork pieces were probably produced in Egypt or Iran with European buyers in mind. However, recently discovered documents confirm the presence in Venice in 1563 of a certain Armenian named Antonio Surian, thirty-five years of age, from Damascus, employed to recover ordnance from sunken vessels (artiglierie dalle navi affondate) but who is also noted as doing inlay work (all'agensino) better than any Italian, implying that he was producing inlaid metalwork of high quality, and the possibility cannot be excluded that he taught craft skills to Venetian assistants, as Marco Spallanzani speculates. But whatever his role, recent documentary evidence confirms the existence of a back-and-forth trade in metalwork: pieces produced in Venice or arriving from elsewhere in Europe were dispatched to Damascus to be decorated, even on occasion incorporating a specific design feature commissioned by an aristocratic European buyer, such as a family coat of arms, and then brought back to Venice. The well-known Molino ewer, for example, has a European shape and coat of arms, but its decoration is characteristically Middle Eastern in style, and the presumption is of a vessel of European manufacture with the surface worked in the Middle East or by a Middle Eastern craftsman: the decoration is in fact very similar to that of a tray made in Cairo in the second half of the fourteenth century now in the V&A.

Further evidence for transmateriality is provided by leatherwork, as exhibited by bookbindings and shields. Venetian gilded leather shields, for example, which are primarily decorative symbols of power, paraded on special occasions, exhibit Ottoman design features found on bookbindings and other material such as textiles and metalwork. On one of the shields, we find a twelve-point medallion in the center with an interlace of flowers and half-palmettes (fig. 23.5a), while the field is decorated with the cloud-collar motif, reminiscent of the cloud-collar border of Ushak carpets, such as the one in the V&A, so that the whole is a quite typical assemblage of Ottoman motifs (fig. 23.5b). Indeed, without knowledge of the differences in shape and materials it would require detailed analysis in some cases to deter-
mine their Venetian provenance. On a buckler from the same group, in contrast, the organization of the various elements, together with the coloristic effect, is a creative Venetian reinterpretation of an Ottoman design (see below), its transformational strategies reminiscent of what we have seen happening on the Venetian velvet in the Bargello and the Frari cope. Similar processes are apparent on another shield, where the medallions on the field, with their polylobed contour and the quadri-lobed split palmette with a central flower (fig. 23.6a), are very similar in shape and ornament to those on sixteenth-century Ottoman silks, and also have a similar coloristic effect (figs. 23.6b, 23.6c). However, another motif, the cloud-band, is used in a "stylized" form quite foreign to its Ottoman realizations, with the curves squeezed tighter. The lack of any pretense at precisely reproducing an Ottoman object is confirmed by the insertion of the Lion of St. Mark in the central medallion and, below it, the initials "A C" (probably for a member of the Contarini family). The shields thus exhibit a variety of responses, including the reassembly of selected motifs in novel combinations.

In the only painted buckler (fig. 23.7a) that does not have a relief ornament, we find links with yet other media. In the interlace of half-palmette, including the coloristic effect of blue and red, the decoration is close to Ottoman Iznik ceramics, as illustrated by a tile datable to around 1578 (fig. 23.7c), while the shape of the split-palmette medallions recalls elements found in metalwork, as seen in a late-fifteenth- to early-sixteenth-century perfume burner, in Bologna, probably made in Egypt or Syria (fig. 23.7b). A glimpse of the importance attached to painted shields (and other arms such as lances and quivers) is given by documents that Luca Molà has recently found relating to a Hungarian, Nicolò Ongaro, who was invited to work in the Venetian arsenal, as he had a reputation of being a good shield and lance maker. He eventually complained of being underpaid, and was granted a yearly stipend of sixty ducats on condition that he would supply thirty shields and thirty lances annually. Although the shields mentioned in these documents may not be the same as the ones discussed so far, as they were not destined to the Venetian aristocracy, the documents clearly describe
them as painted, and the money and time that Nicolò Ongaro was granted suggest that items like these were of importance nevertheless.

Technique

Analogous combinations of ornamental features found on a wide range of media occur in another leather product, bookbinding, the study of which highlights again the importance of investigating the techniques used in order to understand modalities of transfer. The splendid Venetian stamped, painted, and gilt binding in the Newberry Library containing the document of appointment, by Doge Alvise Mocenigo, of Girolamo Mula as procuratore (procuratore) of St. Mark in 1572 is made up of varnished upper covers and doublures, and within the clearly Islamic-derived design format of a central lobed medallion, corner pieces, and arabesques we find not only the Lion of St. Mark and the coat of arms on the reverse but also elements of Renaissance ornament in the "populated" border that contains not just birds and insects but also grotesque figures.63

Another instance of the incorporation of features characteristic of fifteenth-century Mamluk bindings is provided by a copy of Cicero’s Epistolae ad familiares, printed on parchment in Venice in 1475, and bound for Peter Ugelheimer (d. 1489), the owner of the Deutsches Haus Inn in Venice.

Edged with knotwork motifs, it has at the center a typically Middle Eastern almond-shaped medallion. But this contains Ugelheimer’s coat of arms surrounded by the Y-shaped stamps that are usually found on Islamic metalwork, not on bindings, thus indicating that transferability of ornament might also be mediated technically. Similarly, the tools used on the Italian binding of a manuscript from Padua, copied in 1400, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, may have been modeled on metalwork tools, “a natural borrowing since tool cutting was generally the work of goldsmiths.”65

Venetian bindings in Mamluk or Ottoman styles are never precise imitations, contrary to common assumptions. The outer cover of Leonardo Bruni’s Commentarius rerum in Italia suo tempore gestarum (1464–65) shows segmented borders with gilded tool work,
Fig. 23.7. (a) Buckler, Venice, late sixteenth century. Armeria del Palazzo Ducale (inv. 66/Sala E), Venice. (b) Perfume burner, Egypt or Syria, late fifteenth–early sixteenth century. Museo Civico Medievale (inv. no. 2110), Bologna. (c) Tile, Iznik, Turkey, ca. 1578. Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. no. 1645-1892), London.
Fig. 23.8. (a) Doublure, L. Bruni, *Commentarius rerum in Italia suo tempore gestarum* (Bologna [?], 1464–65). Biblioteca Marciana (Lat. X, 117 [=3844]), Venice. (b) Upper cover, Petrarch, *Canzoniere and Trionfi* (Florence, 1460–70), Bodleian Library (Ms. Canon. Ital. 78), Oxford.

while the doublures have elaborate filigree (fig. 23.8a). Although the overall organization is derived from Mamluk bindings, the leather cutout constituting the design of the filigree is covered with little pearls, once thought to be made of glass, but actually, as recent analysis shows, of resin—a form of ornamentation not used by Middle Eastern binders. The tooling inside the segmented borders of the outer cover is rather messy by comparison with the binding in the Bodleian Library of 1460–70 (fig. 23.8b), a type that could have provided a possible inspiration. This binding, which covers Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, was for a long time thought to be Italian, but recent analyses of the sewing show that it must be Mamluk, a conclusion reinforced both by stylistic considerations, as the design is elegant and rigorous in its organization, and by technical features, for the tooling is identical to that on other bindings known to be Mamluk. Similarly, a volume in the Biblioteca Marciana containing two manuscripts (one of which, *De vita et moribus philosophorum*, is dated 1453) that was later owned by the Venetian historian Marin Sanudo the Younger (1466–1536) has a Mamluk or North African–style binding (with a flap) that Anthony Hobson believes was bound in Egypt. In addition, Hobson has noted two other European books—a copy of the Aldine Press edition of Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius (1502) and the *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis*, printed in Paris in 1505—that have Ottoman bindings and sewing, which suggests to him that they were sent to Istanbul to be bound. At the same time, the collections of kings and scholars such as King René of Anjou (1409–80), the Italian philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), and the Spanish ambassador to Venice Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (ca. 1503–75) attest to the presence of Arabic and Turkish manuscripts from the Islamic world (and their bindings) in Europe, and these could have provided models for local bookbinders, thereby facilitating the transfer of Mamluk and Ottoman ornaments into the European repertoire. Yet if we compare the tooling of the borders in the Bruni binding, we can see how the design of the Mamluk model has, seemingly, been misunderstood. Or has it? Another possibility, in the absence of tools capable of such fine detail, would be
approximation born of necessity, which might also explain why the problem of steering the design around the corners is solved or, rather, evaded by the substitution of little squares.

Differences in both equipment and technique, whether enabling or inhibiting, may well be a factor contributing to stylistic shifts as a design feature travels. For example, on the varnished binding in the Newberry Library that was mentioned earlier, the binder resorts to painting, thereby allowing certain designs to be copied more easily; and where painting was combined with relief, this was made not with small metal tools, but by pressure molding. With advances in technology, by the end of the fifteenth century, large stamps could be produced by European binders (fig. 23.9c), facilitating the transfer of ornament by drawing an imitation design, whether inspired by an object or a pattern book, from which the stamp would be cut. The pattern of the central medallion of the Venetian binding in Chatsworth Library, the 1520–30 Fra Giocondo, Sylloge (fig. 23.9a), for example, is very similar to the field of an earlier Ottoman binding made by the influential Turkmen binder Ghiyath al-Din in 1477 (fig. 23.9b), but even without access to an Ottoman model incorporating this design in a medallion, the Venetian binder could have drawn it out himself, based on an original or copied pattern, in order to create a stamp for pressure molding. The printed drawing of an almond medallion by Francesco di Pellegrino in his *La fleur de la science de pourtraicture: Patrons de broderie, façon arabe et ytalique* (1530) demonstrates well this possibility (fig. 23.9d). Such pattern books, together with single-page ornament prints, were particularly in vogue in the sixteenth century; intended for craftsmen of various fields, including bookbinding, they would have facilitated the transmission of ornament across media and encouraged eclecticism.

Renaissance Eclectic Taste

The extraordinary *Libro dei ricami* (Book of embroidery) (fig. 23.10) by the Venetian Gaspare Novello, dedicated to Loredana Mocenigo (wife of the Doge Alvise Mocenigo, whose varnished binding was discussed earlier), is a precious document testifying to the circulation of embroidery models intended for women, whether printed, as in the case of Pellegrino's work, or drawn by hand in ink and various watercolors, as here. Some of the drawings show clear affinities with Ottoman ornament, especially in the intertwined vegetal motifs that often contain a reinterpretation of the lotus flower, palmettes, tulips, and carnations. The outlines have been prickcd for transfer of the design by pouncing. Like the two embroidery books in the V&A by the Venetians Lunardo Ferro and Amadio Novello, both dated 1559, the *Libro dei ricami*, dated 1570, contains material similar to Pellegrino's aforementioned drawings, published in 1530, pointing to the longevity of such designs.

But Pellegrino was already producing designs rather closer to the abstract "arabesques" found on early-sixteenth-century Venetian bookbindings, metalwork, and textiles than to those on Middle Eastern objects featuring seminaturalistic identifiable flowers. There is no attempt to identify the origin of specific designs, and as with other sixteenth-century European pattern books, Pellegrino's designs are in fact strongly eclectic in character, including also Renaissance grotesque ornament. Frequently a single term—usually "arabesque" or "moresque"—is applied generically to a variety of styles: for Pellegrino, his patterns are in the façon arabe et ytalique (Arabic and Italianate manner). With regard to both metalwork and textiles, the early *da or di Damasco* (from Damascus) is gradually replaced, in the sixteenth century, by *alla damaschina* (in the Damascene manner), a term now also applicable to pieces made in Italy. Although, as seen above, it could be a technical designation of a particular quality of silk, in other contexts it referred to a spectrum of design features, so that while no longer necessarily signifying geographical provenance, it could be argued that it demonstrated at the level of style an enduring awareness of a Middle Eastern association allied to the prolongation of a taste for "orientalizing" motifs up to the second half of the sixteenth century. It is true that the Carpelli drawing mentioned above contains no such motifs, but the term was certainly applied to the Middle Eastern objects and designs and their Italian emulations for which there was a taste and even a fashion in cities like Venice and Florence from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Such artifacts, carpets especially, spread to various levels of society, not just the aristocratic and upper classes. Indeed, as Marco Spallanzani has shown, the type of carpet that we now label as Holbein (a *ruote*) became so fashionable that one customer, in 1472, wanting variety, had to insist on having something different.

By the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Middle Eastern-derived ornament had become an
Fig. 23.9. (a) Upper cover, Fra Giocondo, Sylogue (Venice, ca. 1520–30). Chatsworth Library, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, England. (b) Binding, Fakhr al-Din al-‘Iraqi, Al-Lam‘at (Istanbul, 881 [1477]). Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (MS. 2035, formerly MS. 1501), Istanbul. (c) Stamp for pressure molding from a modern bookbinder, sixteenth century. Private collection, Istanbul. (d) Pattern in Islamic style, from Francesco Pellegrino, La Fleur de la science de peintre-architecte et peintre de broderie, façon arabique et orientale (Paris, 1530).
integral part of the Italianate stylistic repertoire, a productively hybrid domain within the larger European and Mediterranean style world where concepts such as “influence” no longer have traction. This is underlined by the emic perceptions that we can detect, however faintly: the generalizing vocabulary of Renaissance ornament seems to indicate a gradual diminution in the signaling, not of Middle Eastern connections, but of non-European otherness. There is, indeed, a surprising lack of commentary on the “foreign” nature of both Middle Eastern objects and the so-called arabesque. For example, Sabba da Castiglione, in his Ricordi (written in 1549), simply lists a wide range of objects to adorn the home that includes tapestries from Flanders, Turkish and Syrian carpets, leathers from Spain, and new and wonderful things from the Levant and Germany.82

Such eclectic acceptance and integration seems to be characteristic of the primarily nonrepresentational arts. Although there could, by definition, be no comparable dilution of otherness in figural painting, parallels might be anticipated in the acceptance and circulation of novel styles and techniques, yet these can be detected only sporadically. The early paintings in the Cappella Palatina, Sicily (1143), demonstrate that Islamic-style figural representations might be integrated within a Christian setting, and a later self-conscious adaptation of techniques typical of painting in an Islamic tradition can be seen in the Seated Scribe (1479–81), attributed to either Gentile Bellini or Costanzo di Moysis (or da Ferrara). This in turn was to be copied by Persian artists,83 and a Persian painting of The Virgin and Child, datable to the late fifteenth century, was also based on an Italian model, closely resembling one of Bellini’s works.84 Yet such examples are rare, and later European depictions of people from the Islamic world remain firmly within Western artistic traditions of representation.85 Having seen Western paintings, Mughal artists were prepared to copy aspects of the techniques that they employed.86 But apart from the painter of the Seated Scribe, it may be assumed that Western artists did not generally have access to representative examples of Islamic painting, and even if this had been the case, one can only speculate as to what their reactions might have been. Accordingly, comparison between figural representation and the circulation of ornament can only be taken so far: the former gives the occasional glimpse of a potential cultural openness and reciprocity with implications for an awareness of novel aesthetic norms, while the latter demonstrates an achieved integration. The apparent ease with which this came about may be partially explained by a significant cultural

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Fig. 23.10. Gaspare Novello, Libro del ricami (Book of embroidery) (Venice, 1570). Museo del Tessuto (inv. no. 97.01 M, fol. 147 and detail), Prato, Italy.
shift during the Renaissance, the "rediscovery" of antiquity. Allied to the growing humanist concern with the languages, literatures, histories, and sciences of the past, this also embraced an enhanced visual awareness of Greco-Roman art, and with it of the elements of arabesque and their organizational possibilities that both classical and Byzantine ornament contained. Once familiar with such forms, the Western eye would hardly find their Middle Eastern manifestations unusual and would, indeed, be predisposed to react positively toward them. They could thus be both readily incorporated as design elements and naturalized to the extent that awareness of their origin might be erased. Even as late as the nineteenth century Middle Eastern objects such as the famous Fatimid rock crystal ewers were considered Byzantine: the vegetal interlace surrounding animals is a form that had long existed around the Mediterranean, while the Kufic inscriptions that merge beautifully with the rest of the decoration were often not understood to be Arabic at all.

Conceptually naturalized, Middle Eastern ornament was thus fused within an increasingly undifferentiated Renaissance design compendium, a unified world that allowed Sabba da Castiglione to arrive at a cultural vision with an ethical dimension, for he concludes that all these ornaments (and he actually uses the word ornamenti) are to be commended and praised because they sharpen the intellect and induce politeness, civility, and courtliness (e tutti questi ornamenti ancora commendo e laudo, perché arguiscono ingegno, poltezza, civiltà e cortegiania).

It would be nice to think that our enhanced awareness of the international movement of ornament and the creative local energies it helped to inspire might, in turn, itself foster such qualities.
Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy
1300–1600 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 13–40. An
indication of the turn toward an apprecia-
tion of surfaces and artisanship is evident in Alberti’s definition of the origins of
pleasure, which arises not only from
intellected form but also from “the work of
the hand” and treatment of material
qualities (VI, 4). Alberti, On Building, 139.
50. Yuriko Saito, Everyday Aesthetics
51. Fernand Braudel, La Mediterra
een e le monde méditerranéen à l’Épique de Philippe

Chapter 23
1. Anna Contadini, “Sharing a Taste?
Material Culture and Intellectual Curiosity
around the Mediterranean, from the
Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century,” in The
Renais sance and the Ottoman World, ed.
Anna Contadini and Claire Norton
(Rarnham: Ashgate, 2013), 30.
2. Anna Contadini, “Artistic Contacts:
Current Scholarship and Future Tasks,” in
Islam and the Italian Renaissance, ed.
Charles Burnett and Anna Contadini
(London: Warburg Institute, 1999), 9–11.
3. Whether this is to be seen as a
centralization of the vocabulary of
ornament during the Safavid period that
would reflect a political agenda is a matter
of debate, and it is beyond the remit of
this chapter.
4. For πτίτζα, see Anna Contadini, Fattimid
Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum
(London: V&A Publications, 1998), chap. 3,
with relevant bibliography. Also Jochen
Scholy, “Towards a Model of Early Islamic
Textile Institutions in Egypt,” in Islamische
Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Altneue
Probleme, Riggisberger Berichte, no. 5
(Riggisberg: Aebi-Gugg-Stiftung, 1997).
5. For Franz Beck, seeiligott Borkopp-
Rostler, Der Aachen Kanonikus Franz Beck
und seine Textilsammlungen: Ein Beitrag zur
Geschichte der Kunstgewerke im 19. Jahrhun-
dert (Riggisberg: Aebi-Gugg-Stiftung, 2008).
(V&A), inv. no. 8560–1863. See Contadini,
Fattimad Art, 62, pl. 16.
7. R. H. Pinder-Wilson and C.N.L.
Brooke, “The Reliquary of St. Petroc and
the Ivories of Norman Sicily,” in
Pinder-Wilson, Studies in Islamic Art
(London: Pindar Press, 1985; first published in
Archaeologia 104 [1973]: 261–303); Antony
Eastmond, “The St. Petroc Casket, a
Certain Mutilated Man, and the Trade in
Ivories,” in Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Islamic
Painting 1100–1300, ed. David Knipp
(Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2011).
9. Emma Zucca, Catálogo delle cose d’arte
di antichità di Assisti (Rome: Libreria dello
Stato, 1936), 203, fig. at 205; Kurt Erdmann,
“Islamische Bergkristallarbeiten,” Jahrbuch
der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen
(1946): 128–30 and fig. 3; Francesco Gabrieli
and Umberto Serrato, Gli Arabi in Italia
(Milan: Garzanti-Schiavill, 1979), no.
520; Anna Contadini, “Translocation and
Transformation: Some Middle Eastern
Objects in Europe,” in The Power of Things
and the Flow of Cultural Transformations,
ed.
Lieselotte E. Saurna-Jeltsch and Anja
Eisenbeiss (Munich: Deutscher Kunstver-
lag, 2010), 43–46, pl. 11 and fig. 11.
10. As the Geniza documents testify, see
S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society: The
Jewish Communities of the Arab World as
Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo
Geniza, 6 vols.: vol. 1, Economic Foundations
(1969); vol. 2, The Community (1971); vol. 3,
The Family (1978); vol. 4, Daily Life (1983); vol.
5, The Individual (1988); vol. 6,
Cumulative Indices (1993) (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1987–93;
reprint [paperback], Berkeley: University of
11. Deborah Howard, Venice and the
East: The Impact of the Islamic World on
Venetian Architecture, 1100–1500 (New
Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000),
59–62; Caterina Schmidt Arcangeli and
Gerhard Wolf, Islamic Artefacts in the
Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange
and Artistic Transfer (Venice: Marsilio, 2010);
see also Jihan Rabi, “Exotica from
Islam,” in The Origins of Museums: The
Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and
Seventeenth-Century Europe, ed.
Oliver Impey and Arthur Macgregor
12. For a discussion on the importation
of Italian textiles in the Ottoman courts, see
Nurhan Atasoy et al., İpek: The Crescent and
the Rose; Ottoman Imperial Silks and Velvets
(London: Ashmound Editions, 2002), 182–90,
where some of these documents are
discussed in 185–86; see also Newbert Gürso,
The Art of Turkish Weaving: Designs through
the Ages, ed. William A. Edmonds
(Istanbul: Redhouse Press, 1988), 283; Carlo Maria
Suzano and Stefano Carboni, La seta
islamica/Islamic-Silk (Florence: Museo del
 Bargello/9th International Conference on
 Carpets, 1999), no. 25. Examples of
Ottoman-made caftans in the Topkapı
Palace include one that dates to the late
and another from the first half of the seventeenth century (inv. no. 13/6) and from


16. As Suriano and Carboni, La seta islamica, 85, note... "... by the end of the 15th century Ottoman velvets were already being made using silk for warp and (often) pile and cotton or linen for the weft."

17. Genoa, Palazzo Rosso; see Contadini, "Sharing a Taste?", 45-46, fig. 2.10.


21. V&A, inv. no. 100-1878. Although it is currently not possible to distinguish between the products of different centers (J. M. Rogers, ed. and trans., The Topkapı Palace Museum: Costumes, Embroideries, and Other Textiles, from the original Turkish by Hâlya Tescan and Selma Delibaj [London: Thames and Hudson, 1986], 15), cintamani weaving was particularly associated with Bursa, whereas the Istanbul ateliers appear to have specialized more in brocaded silks and cloths of gold and silver. Denny, "Textiles," 124; Gürsu, The Art of Turkish Weaving, 19; Atasoy et al., İpek, 156.


24. Venice, Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo, inv. no. 491/19A. See Degl'Inocenti, Intrecci Mediterranei, 80-81, cat. 14; Contadini, "Sharing a Taste?", pl. 15.


28. See note 35, below, for references.


30. The bronze (gun metal) candlestick was called Melikian-Chirvani's "composite." Indeed, it is not only made of two pieces, but the upper piece, in the form of a glass, is different in style of decoration, and also, it seems, in metal composition, probably brass.


32. Two silver beakers of this type are known, both made by the metalworker Johann Adolf Lambrecht ca. 1675, one in the Kremlin in Moscow, the other in a private collection in Hamburg; see Bernhard Heitmann, Migration and Metamorphosis: The Transformation of Shapes, Ornaments, and Materials, Metropolitan Museum Journal 37 (2002): 112 and fig. 5.

33. The beaker is from northern Bohemia (or northern Czechoslovakia), an area with a long tradition of glassmaking. Strasser Collection, Vienna; see Heitmann, "Migration," 112 and fig. 10.

34. Heitmann, "Migration," 112, who suggests the connection (although does not give a comparative example).


from GrotiSqu: 16th- and 17th-Century Grotesques
Stanley Orients Spezial,$ Sue, ornamental features
in Kosourovil, werf
in Sylvia Curatola
Their North Jazlran and 'Abbasid
in Wamuiano
Ward however, cautions against
Arabe candlestick
Hillenbrand and Neighbours,” Tradition
Illustrated Arabic Book of Animals (the Kitab
Na’t al-Hayawan) in the Ibn Bakhthiša’
37. D. S. Rice, “Inlaid Brasses from the
Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhakir al-Mawlili,” Arts Orientalis 2 (1937): 333, no. 6; also see
Transmission from books to metalwork
does not only involve decoration but also illustrations, as seen on the Mosuli
candlestick in the Khalili Collection that
represent, among other things, a scene of a
teacher with pupils writing on tablets,
a tableau that can be identified only through
knowledge of the illustrations of the manuscripts of the early and mid-
thirteenth century Maqamat, such as in one
probably copied in Syria, dated 699 (1222).
now in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms.
Arabe 6094, fol. 1671; see Anna Contadini,
“Ayyubid Illustrated Manuscripts and
Their North Jazirin and ‘Abbasid Neighbours,” in Ayyubid Jerusalem: The
Holy City in Context 1187–1350, ed. Robert
Hillenbrand and Sylvia Auld (London: Altajir Trust, 2005), pl. 9.4.
Metalwork: The Problems of Provenance,” in Arte veneziana e arte islamica: Atti del
primo simposio internazionale sull’arte
veneziana e l’arte islamica, ed. Ernst J.
Grube, Stefano Carboni, and Giovanni
39. James W. Allan, “Chinese Silks and
Mosul Metalwork,” in Court and Craft: A
Masterpiece from Northern Iraq, ed. Rachel
Ward (London: Courtauld Gallery in
association with Paul Holberton Publishing,
2014).
40. Oleg Grabar, “Reflections on
Mamluk Art,” in “The Art of the Mamluks,”
special issue, Maqārīn 2 (1984): 7. Grabar,
however, cautions against attributing
ornamental features that were common
during Qaytbay’s reign as a style, as they
were not exclusive to this period.
See A. S. Melikian-Chavhan, “Cuivres
indés du domaine de Q’ai ibh,” Kunst des
Orients 6, no. 2 (1969): fig. 2:8; also Tim
Stanley et al., Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art
from the Middle East (London: V&A
Publications, 2004), fig. 112.
42. M. B. Piotrovski, and T. N.
Kosovurova, The Magic World of the
Grottesque: 16th- and 17th-Century Grotteques in the
Applied Art of Western Europe from the
Hermitage Collection; Catalogue (Saint
Petersburg: Slavia, 2000).
43. For brief discussions on their
ornamental drawings, see Stuart W. Pyrhr
and José-A. Godoy, Heroic Armor of the
Italian Renaissance: Filippo Negri and His
Contemporaries (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 109–10; and
Marjorie Connell, “Pietro del Vaga,” in
Designs of Desire: Architectural and
Ornamental Prints and Drawings 1500–1580,
exh. cat., ed. Timothy Clifford (Edinburgh:
National Galleries of Scotland, 1999).
44. For an overview of ornament
drawings and prints during the
Renaissance, see Janet S. Byrne, Renaissance
Ornament Prints and Drawings (New York:
For example, a print by Bresamer, first
published 1540, now in the V&A, E. 235–1914
(this copy printed ca. 1570), shows designs
for two cups with the ornamental motif of
the acanthus leaf and molded decoration.
45. J. M. Rogers, “Ornament Prints,
Patterns and Designs, East and West,” in Islam and the Italian Renaissance, ed.
Barnett and Contadini.
46. David James, “More Qur’āns of the
Mamluks,” Manuscripta Orientalis 13, no. 2
47. Cairo, Dar al-Kutub, no. 11. Martin
Lings and Yasim Hamid Safadi, The Qur’ān
(London: World of Islam Publishing for the
48. Sofia, SS Cyril and Methodius
National Library, OP 1707, Z. Ivanova and
A. Stolova, The Holy Qur’ān through the Centuries: A Catalogue of the Exhibition of
Manuscripts and Printed Editions Preserved in the SSRN, ed. Rachel Ward (London: Courtauld Gallery in
association with Paul Holberton Publishing,
2014).
49. Topkapi Saray Museum, 2/2107;
Zeren Tanandi, “Bibliophile Aghas
(Eumuchs) at Topkapi Saray,” in “Essays in
Honor of J. M. Rogers,” special issue,
50. Marina Belozerskaya, Luxury Arts of
the Renaissance (London: Thames and
Hudson, 2005), 180.
51. However, now that the scholarly
consensus is that they were not made in
Venice, this term is best avoided. For a
review of the scholarship on them, see
Sylvia Auld, Renaissance Venice, Islam and
Mahmud the Kurd: A Metalworking Enigma
(London: Altajir World of Islam Trust,
2004), 7–8, 36–43; Doris Behrens-Abouseif,
“Veneto-Saracenic Metalware, a Mamluk
Art,” Mamluk Studies Review 9, no. 2 (2005)
(who has argued that all the pieces come
from Mamluk Egypt); and Contadini,
“Middle-Eastern Objects,” 509–15, where
the term “Veneto-Saracenic” is avoided.
52. For examples of these, see Auld,
53. The Iranian provenance was already
suggested by Rachel Ward, Islamic
Auld puts forward the hypothesis that
these masters might have been
itinerant Aqqoyunlu Turkmen working in
and around northwest Iran or Anatolia, on
the grounds of stylistic comparison with early
Ottoman and Aqqoyunlu material:
Auld, Renaissance Venice, 8–9, and chap. 7;
see also Auld, “Master Mahmud,” 218–19.
54. Auld, Renaissance Venice, 60.
55. Although other Islamic metalwork
of this type contains high levels of nickel.
For the scientific analysis of these objects,
see Rachel Ward et al., “Veneto-Saracenic
Metalwork: An Analysis of the Bowls and
Incense Burners in the British Museum,” in
Trade and Discovery: The Scientific Study
of Artefacts from Post-Medieval Europe and
Beyond, BM Occasional Paper 109, ed. D. R.
Hook and D.R.M. Gaimster (London:
British Museum Press, 1995); and Susan La
Niece, “Master Mahmud and Inlaid
Metalwork: A Scientific Perspective,” in
Venice and the Islamic World, ed. Carboni;
see also Auld, Renaissance Venice, 60–61.
56. The Roman transliteration is not, as
often reported in the literature, a Persian
version, “AMALEI MALEM MAMUD” (for
example, B. W. Robinson, “Oriental
Metalwork in the Gamber-Pary
Collection,” Burlington Magazine 109, no.
768 [March 1967]: 170–73; Auld, Renaissance
Venice, and Auld, “Master Mahmud,” cat. no. 103; and Rosamond M. Mack, Bazaar
to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art,
1300–1600 [Berkeley: University of
California Press, 2003], 214ff), but rather
“AMAL ELAMELEM MAMUD,” from the
Arabic inscription on the other side of the
rim: "the work of the master Mahmud who
hopes for forgiveness from his lord" (aml
al-mu allim mahmud yarju al-maghfira min
muḥammad).
57. Marco Spallanzani, Metalli islamic al
Firenze nel Rinascimento (Florence: Storici per Edizioni Scelte, 2010), 11–12, and n. 22.
58. Marco Spallanzani points out (ibid.,
7–10) that the Florentine documents of the
fifteenth century that refer to metal
cargoes from a port of the Near East fail
to give any further specification. They cast
light on other aspects such as prices and usage, and even sometimes refer to ornamental motifs, but not to places of origin. However, there is mention of a back-and-forth movement of objects to be decorated in the Middle East.


60. See Contadini, “Sharing a Taste?”, fig. 2.13 for the detail.

61. In the entry by A.R.E North in Sievernich and Budde, eds., Europa und der Orient, 601, no. 4/07, it is stated that the ewer was crafted in Europe (Netherlands?) and decorated in an Islamic workshop, either by a Middle Eastern craftsman in Venice or, more probably, in Cairo. In the V&A catalogue of 1951 (Fifty Masterpieces of Metalwork), it is stated that the ewer would have reached Venice from the “Low Countries or Germany” in the fifteenth century and been decorated there by a group of Venetian craftsmen, while its 2004 publication (Stanley et al., Palace and Mosque, 127–28, fig. 12a), says that it was a Late Gothic ewer from the Netherlands or Germany, which was sent to the Middle East, probably by a member of the Molino family, for the inlaid ornament to be added before it was re-exported back to Italy.


63. For these shields, see Anna Contadini, “Cuordoro: Tecnica e decorazione di cuori dorati veneziani e italiani con influenze islamiche,” in Arte veneziana, ed. Grube, Carboni, and Curatola, 231–35. In Contadini, “Middle-Eastern Objects,” 320–21, some of these shields are published in color.

64. He was invited by a certain Nicolò Draschevich of the Signoria. For “targhe all’usanza di Croazia, perché quelle che si facevano in questa città, et a Modena, non solamente non aggiungevano di gran lunga alla perfezione di queste, ma buona parte di quelle son state conosciute inutile da fantome. Veduto poi con l’occhio proprio le targhe, che da sopradetto son state fatte in questa casa per mandar in Cipro, le quali, oltre che son laude da periti, non costano più delle medesime, lo riputiamo perfetto et perfetto maestro non solamente di far et dipinger targhe, ma etiam di far una bella sorte di lance da cavallo buse innervate più lunghe, più leggere, et più forti delle altre, che sono massicce, le quali reputiamo habbino ad esser molto a proposito nelle fatturature per l’avantage della lunghezza. Però essendo V.S. già di parere di far una

quantità di questa sorte di targhe et lance da dispensar dove farà bisogno, massime alle cavallerie de straditi che si trovano sopra le se sue isle et forteza da mare, si come sopra l’isola di Cipro è stato novamente introdotto.” Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Senato Mar, filae 24: incaricamento November 29, 1560, and May 24, 1561. I thank Luca Mollà who has given me the opportunity to mention this document here.

65. Chicago, Newberry Library, Wing MS ZW 1.757. See Grube, Carboni, and Curatola, Arte veneziana, cover; Mack, Bazaar, fig. 143; and Ernst J. Grube, “Venetian Lacquer and Bookbindings of the Sixteenth Century,” in Venice and the Islamic World, ed. Carboni, fig. 1.


67. MS M. 859. Hobson, Humanists and Bookbinders, 16, and fig. 9.

68. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Lat.X, 117(=3844). Hobson, Humanists and Bookbinders, 43, figs. 37, 38, pl. 2; Mack, Bazaar, 129, fig. 153; Ohta, “Binding Relationships,” pl. 42.


72. This indicates to Alison Ohta that the manuscript was bound in the Mamlik region (rather than Istanbul as suggested by Hobson). Ohta, “Binding Relationships,” 223–24; Hobson, Humanists and Bookbinders, 23–24.


74. Hobson, Humanists and Bookbinders, 148. The Aldine Catullus is in the Vatican Library, Aldine III.49, and the Horae is in a private collection; both are published in Hobson, Humanists and Bookbinders, figs. 117 and 118, respectively.

75. Hobson, Humanists and Bookbinders, 22, 149–54; also Ohta, “Binding Relationships,” 223.

76. Giocondo: Chatsworth Library, Derbyshire. Hobson, Humanists and Bookbinders, 151, fig. 119, pl. 3; Ohta, “Binding Relationships,” fig. 11.3.


77. Contadini, “Sharing a Taste?”, fig. 2.15.


80. For a discussion of the term alla damascina, see Valentina Catalucci, “Gli oggetti ‘islamici’ a Firenze nell’età della controriforma,” in Controversie: Dispute letterarie, storiche, religiose dall’antichità al Rinascimento, ed. Gloria Larini (Padova: libreriauniversitaria.it edizioni, 2013). Note that as Marco Spallanzani observes, the term alla damascina applies not only to objects in the Islamic style being made in Europe but also to those imported from the Middle East; see Spallanzani, Oriental Rugs in Renaissance Florence, Bruscuschini Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art, Textile Studies, no. 1 (Florence: Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 2007), 60, 67–68.

81. “Non gli voglio a ruote?; Spallanzani, Oriental Rugs, 63.

82. Saba da Castiglione, Ricordi (Venice: Paolo Gherardo, 1554).


86. Ibid., 10–11.

87. Castiglione, Ricordi, chap. 109, on
Chapter 24
1. Edmund L. Sterling, History of Henderson County, Kentucky (Henderson, KY, 1887), 150.
4. Ibid., 3.
5. On these serials, see William H. Dillistin, Bank Note Reporters and Counterfeit Detector. 1826–1866, with a Discourse on Wildcat Banks and Wildcat Bank Notes (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1949).
10. Laban Heath, Heath's Infallible Counterfeit Detector at Sight (Boston: L. Heath, 1864), 9–11.
15. Period discussions dwelled frequently on the engraver’s impotence in the face of the superhuman perfection of the geometrical lathe: "The engraver cannot imitate the labour of the geometrical lathe" ("Bank-Note Engraving in America," 310). One might argue that rather than attempt to make manual copies of banknote ornament, counterfeiters would need only to get a hold of a lathe. But the lathes and their associated presses and transfer-presses were extremely expensive, bulky, and noisy, making them difficult to acquire and nearly impossible to conceal from authorities.
17. Ibid., 1–2.
18. Ibid., 15–16.
21. Ibid., 8.
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