

This is an extract from:

*The Crusades from the Perspective
of Byzantium and the Muslim World*

edited by Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh

published by

*Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection
Washington, D.C.*

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Trustees for Harvard University

Washington, D.C.

Printed in the United States of America

www.doaks.org/etexts.html

The Crusades and the Development of Islamic Art

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Among the numerous catchy but arrogant as well as intellectually dubious aphorisms attributed to great men is Napoleon's statement "l'intendance suivra." The idea is, I guess, that, once a brave and well-led army has moved forward conquering territories and defeating enemies, the paraphernalia of practical institutions and needs required to make an army function and to lead it to other successes or, alternately, to keep conquered territories under control, this practical and necessary context of a significant event follows automatically.

Historians of art and of anything else have followed this Napoleonic adage in assuming that major events affect culture and the arts. It is, so the assumption goes, legitimate to argue that the French or Russian revolutions, Alexander the Great's conquests in western Asia, the Mongol invasions, the appearance of Islam, the spread of Buddhism, and other such momentous episodes in the history of mankind had an impact on the arts or modified existing ways of doing or seeing things in some significant manner. Such impacts or modifications can be the culmination or expression of internal, culture-bound, seeds which would be shaken into revolutionary novelty because of an event, as with constructivism in twentieth century Russia, the evolution of David and the formation of Ingres in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France, or the merging of Hellenistic with Roman sculpture. Or else these novelties can be attributed to the sudden appearance of the new and foreign element, like the art of sculpture in India, apparently revolutionized by Hellenistic models, floral ornament introduced into Chinese art by the spread of Buddhism, or French painting and architecture transformed by the invasion of Italy in the last years of the fifteenth century.

The mode of operation of these changes varies. There are destructions of the old and its replacement with something new through the will and decision of whoever wields power, as often happened with changes in religious spaces when temples became churches and churches or fire-temples became mosques. At other times, artists and artisans as well as techniques of all sorts are brought in and become the instruments of the transformation, as when Persian painters went to India in the sixteenth century, or when the Umayyads in the seventh and eighth centuries, like the Normans of the twelfth,

This paper is more or less the one delivered as a lecture at the occasion of the Dumbarton Oaks symposium on the Crusades. Only the most elementary bibliographical references have been added and a few rhetorical changes made.

acquired the financial means to hire whomever they wanted for their ambitious programs of construction and decoration.

The assumption is that the revolutionary or unusual event, whether or not it involves an invasion, leads either to some triggering within the affected culture which brings out new and perhaps unexpected features hidden in the existing cauldron of memories and competencies or else compels new patterns of cultural life through the importation of foreign technicians, models, taste, or behavior.

A priori, the phenomenon of the Crusades can legitimately be considered as such an epic or at least momentous event. New men and women with a Western European and Latin culture established themselves in a land that had existed for more than three hundred years in an Islamic culture blissfully ignorant, for the most part, of the Latin Christianity about to appear on its territory. That new and unexpected event was kept alive and active for nearly two hundred years, until the late thirteenth century, and survived far longer in cultural memory. There were large-scale, if temporary, movements of people, including artisans and construction workers brought from afar to replicate as many aspects as possible of the homelands of the Crusaders. We have an enormous program of construction, as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, the coastal cities of Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon and several interior areas (I am thinking of the Crac des Chevaliers to the north, now in Syria, and Kerak or Shaubak to the south in Jordan) are all covered with monuments of a new imported architecture. Manuscripts are illustrated in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and, although I am not aware of many remaining objects made specifically for the Latin inhabitants of Palestine, the emblems of their presence, are still visible in their coins and seals, and a number of reliquaries were probably done in Palestine as well.¹ All of this was happening at the height of the Romanesque artistic explosion and of the sophisticated Byzantine pictorial wealth under the Komnenian dynasty.

It is equally important to recall that the twelfth century, and especially its second half, witnessed an extraordinary set of quantitative and qualitative changes in Islamic art. Hundreds of new buildings, for the most part *madrasahs* and other social functions of pious architecture but also caravanserais and bazaars, were sponsored in every city from Central Asia to the Mediterranean coast in order to meet a set of newly developed ideological and economic purposes. It is in the twelfth century that the *muqarnas*, that ubiquitous and unique form of Islamic architecture about which I will have more to say shortly, spread all the way to Morocco from its origins in Iraq and Central Asia, with all sorts of intermediary stops like the Cappella Palatina in Palermo. Thanks to a patronage expanded from the courts to the mercantile elites of the cities, new techniques in the decorative arts made possible representations of people, animals, and at times whole narratives, on relatively common and inexpensive media like ceramics. Metalwork was modified by the expansion and refinement of the technique of silver inlaying, which allowed for clear and very detailed representations and ornament. At the end of the century the first known dated manuscript with illustrations inaugurates the short-lived but brilliant school of Arab painting in the thirteenth century. These novelties also

¹ The bibliography is enormous on the art of the Crusades. The most recent thorough survey is J. Folda, *The Art of the Crusades in the Holy Land, 1098–1187* (Cambridge, 1995).

affected Christian art within or at the periphery of the Muslim world, as is clear by the changes that occurred within Armenian, Syriac, and Egyptian Coptic traditions.²

Conventional academic wisdom attributes these changes in Islamic and Islamicate art to an expanded patronage made more sophisticated through international trade, through the industrialization of the manufacture of paper with all sorts of important ramifications for all the arts, and through new techniques, especially in ceramics and metalwork, developed first in northeastern Iran and in the area of Baghdad.³

The main question is, then, a relatively simple one: Is there a connection between the Latin (and perhaps more generally Christian) forceful reappearance in Syria and Palestine and the major, often revolutionary, modifications brought into Islamic art at about the same time? And there are subsidiary questions: Was there an impact of Islamic forms on the arts made for the newly arrived Christians and their co-religionists back home? Or are there examples of the opposite, Western features in Islamic objects? Did the Crusaders affect the long-range development of Islamic art in the Levant?

The only one of these questions that had been the subject of discussion and of published studies is that of a possible or actual impact of Islamic art on Western art, and I shall not deal with it at all except for one small observation later on. I shall be brief on the matter of direct or indirect traces of Crusader art in contemporary or later Islamic art, because there is, to my knowledge, no systematic survey of existing evidence; I cannot, therefore, propose even a reasonable scheme for the organization of the material. What follows are a few random examples.

In Cairo the complex of Muhammad al-Nasir (ca. 1303) (Fig. 1) has a Gothic portal brought by boat from Acre and used as a trophy; it is also possible to argue that certain features of the slightly earlier complex of Qala'un, for instance the articulation of the exterior facade and of the windows, owes something to Western architecture, although it may simply be that it uses forms associated with the holy city of Jerusalem and not with the art of another culture.⁴

In Anatolia the mosque and hospital at Divrigi dated around 1229 contain unusual features on their facades which are difficult to connect to local Anatolian, Christian or Muslim, traditions; this is especially true of their elaborate gates with most unusual splayings (Fig. 2) and with a prominent stone sculpture in high relief with vegetal rather than figurative motifs (although some figuration is actually hidden in the vegetation) belonging to an interesting subgroup of late Romanesque art found from southwestern France

² The easiest access to this material is in R. Ettinghausen and O. Grabar, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 650–1250* (London, 1987), in particular chaps. 7 and 8; a new and considerably revised version of the book should appear in late 2000. For Christian material from the Near East, see J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures* (Paris, 1964); J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés* (Paris, 1974); H. C. Evans, "Cilician Manuscript Illumination," in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York, 1994), 66–83.

³ Some of the interpretations were formulated a long time ago by O. Grabar, "Les arts mineurs de l'Orient musulman," *CahCM* 11 (1968): 181–90. Additional and alternate views appear in J. Allan, "Silver: The Key to Bronze in Early Islamic Iran," *Kunst des Orients* 11 (1976–77): 5–21, and in Jonathan Bloom's forthcoming work.

⁴ For these buildings, the basic publication is by K. A. C. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1959), 190 ff. Summary in S. Blair and J. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800* (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 72–77.

to east of Moscow. Whether in Anatolia or in Russia, the motifs of this art and, even more so, the very fact of its existence seem to reflect Western and most particularly Latin models. The assumption of such models may actually explain other innovative features of thirteenth-century Anatolian architecture, although none are as original as those of Divrigi. One should add the alternate possibility of an impact coming from Armenia and the Caucasus.⁵

Examples of Crusader parts reintegrated in Muslim monuments of the Mamluk and even later periods abound in Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem, Beirut, and Tripoli. Although I am not well acquainted with military architecture, I take it as a valid proposition that large Crusaders' fortifications had an impact on the citadels of the Muslim world in Syria, Jordan, and Anatolia and merged with an older and somewhat different tradition of the urban citadel which had already begun in eastern Iran in the tenth century, but for entirely different reasons.⁶

It is more difficult to detect a visual or formal impact of the Crusades on arts other than architecture. What did, however, happen is the use of forms to communicate the political and ideological ambitions issued from the Crusades. Such is the case of Nur al-Din's inscriptions, which charge *madrassahs* and mosques from Mosul in northern Mesopotamia to Damascus in Syria with a new militancy, as has been so well demonstrated by Yasser Tabbaa.⁷ And, in a particularly spectacular way, such was the meaning given to the minbar, now destroyed, made in Aleppo for a Jerusalem that had not yet been reconquered. In all these instances, forms and functions owe little, if anything, to the Crusades, but the meaning to be given to these forms is very much tied to the existence of the Latin kingdom.

These examples from the Levant lead to the conclusion that the art of the Crusaders did leave traces in the Muslim world, but these traces are, relatively speaking, minimal (except perhaps in military architecture) and almost any one of them is a unique case which can be explained through special circumstances. Only in Palestine is it possible to argue for a sort of symbiosis of imported Western and local forms and techniques. This symbiosis, as it appears for instance in the eastern wall of the Aqsa mosque or in the fountain at the *bab al-silsilah* also in Jerusalem, was a natural meshing together of building traditions, and, if it strikes us today as awkward, it probably was not so at the time. The handsome screen of wrought iron built by the Crusaders around the rock in the Dome of the Rock remained there until the fifties of this century. One can understand the historical (actually more antiquarian than historical) and national reasons for its removal, but the interesting point is that it made visual sense inside the building—it enclosed and protected its holy spot—even if it was not the building's original message to highlight the rock in this fashion. A possibly more curious impact of that screen occurs in Cairo. There the mausoleum of Qala'un was based on the Dome of the Rock and provided

⁵ Among other places, R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture* (Edinburgh, 1994), 96–97.

⁶ H. Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge, 1994). D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁷ Y. Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. V. P. Goss and C. Bornstein (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1986), 223–40, and for the specific case of Aleppo, idem, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (University Park, Pa., 1997).



1 Cairo, mosque *madrasah* of Sultan al-Nasir, portal from Ascalon, ca. 1303
(courtesy of Nasser Rabbat)



2 Divrigi, mosque, northwest portal, thirteenth century
(courtesy of Ülkü Bates)



3 Louvre, ewer or aquamanile in the shape of a peacock, inv. no. MR 1519 (drawing after Adrien de Longpérier)

4 Urtuqid plate, first half of the twelfth century, Innsbruck





5 Mantle of Roger II, dated 1133–34, Vienna

with a fancy wooden screen around the tomb of the sultan, because it was there in the model as the early Mamluks knew it, not as it had been at the beginning.

Some scholars have even argued for a Palestinian quality to the Romanesque sculpture in the Holy Sepulcher and elsewhere in the Christian sanctuaries of the Holy Land.⁸ These arguments have not been accepted by all scholars, but, even if they are valid in part or as a whole, they would still be mere examples of what I would call the micro effect of the Crusades on the arts: an intrusion within the archaeological texture of Palestine and of the Syro-Lebanese coast and occasionally monuments elsewhere in which, for known or obscure reasons, something Western pops up. This micro effect recalls the French women of one of Zoe Oldenbourg's novels dealing with the Crusades who were remembering the lush landscape of Picardy while working as indentured servants in the harsh and dry fields of central Syria. They were touching minor episodes within a grand history.

This could be the end of the paper with the simple conclusion that the Crusades hardly mattered in the artistic life of the Muslim world. Matters are far more complicated when one turns to the reflection of Islamic forms in Western art. They are complicated because the range of these reflections is much wider and the specificity of the Crusades in their existence more difficult to determine. There is the simple exoticism of imported forms and techniques, as with so many textiles, bronzes, or ivories reused for relics or for the ornamentation of churches and of ecclesiastical vestments, with the construction of a very Syrian Islamic mausoleum for the Norman prince Bohemond, or with the random imitation of the Arabic script found all over medieval art and especially in textiles. There may well have been subtler impacts, as the memory of the Holy Land may well have affected the architecture of late Romanesque cloisters. Altogether, at this mini level, the presence of Islamic forms was greater in the West than of Western forms in the Islamic world, that presence is only partly to be related to the Crusades, and it was but a minor bit player in the very active changes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁹

On the levels of exchanges of forms or of affecting artistic creativity directly and immediately, there is not, I believe, much more to say except to continue listing examples. But there still looms the broader issue that too many changes occurred in the twelfth century, and especially all around the Mediterranean, not to feel that the most unusual event of that century should not somehow be connected with these changes. In other words, there may well have been a macro impact of the Crusades. Perhaps some other term than "impact" is the appropriate one for a very different type of relationship than that of immediate connection. Let me investigate the matter around two series of documents. One, the thirteenth-century Islamic metalwork with Christian scenes, is a tight

⁸ N. Kanaan, "Local Christian Art in Twelfth Century Jerusalem," *IEJ* 23 (1973): 167–75, 221–29.

⁹ There is no overall survey of Islamic themes in Western art. See P. Soucek, "Artistic Exchange," in C. Bornstein and P. Soucek, *The Meeting of Two Worlds: The Crusades and the Mediterranean Context* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1981), 15–16; A. Shalem, *Islam Christianized* (Frankfurt, 1996); G. Sievernich and H. Budde, eds., *Europa und der Orient, 800–1900* (Berlin, 1989); and the very thoughtful observations of R. Ettinghausen, "The Impact of Muslim Decorative Arts and Painting on the Arts of Europe," in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (Oxford, 1974), 292–320, repr. in his *Collected Papers* (Berlin, 1984), 1074 ff. All these studies are provided with good bibliographies.

and small group of objects from a very limited and specific area, northern Mesopotamia and Syria. The other one roams all over the place and consists of works of art, of motifs, and even of problems that do not fit into any common category of understanding but illustrate something quite important about the twelfth century.

There are eighteen remaining inlaid bronzes with Christian scenes.¹⁰ Some have often been illustrated, others are hardly known, very few have received the detailed attention they merit, in part because each one contains details in its alleged or demonstrated Christian features that are unusual or do not make sense.

Three broader characteristics of these objects are more important for our purposes than a search for an explanation of individual details. One is that they are for the most part in a technique—bronze or brass inlaid with silver, occasionally with copper—and for purposes—lighting, serving, writing, washing, pouring water or other liquids—that are common in metalwork made for feudal lords and for the notables of Muslim cities since the middle of the twelfth century. This new metalwork appeared first in northeastern Iran and culminated in the great thirteenth-century series of works associated with the city of Mosul in northern Mesopotamia, but found all over Egypt, Yemen, and the Levant. All objects with Christian scenes are in the same technique, and the shapes and functions are also quite common, except for an extraordinary canteen in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington whose actual purpose and function are still very much of a mystery.¹¹ One can still wonder whether there is any connection between the possible uses of these objects and the Christian motifs of their decoration, but, so far, none has been discovered, and it is more reasonable to conclude that these objects belonged to a common body of things and designs for the upper classes of society in Muslim lands during the first half of the thirteenth century regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation. It is curious that one of them, a tray now in St. Petersburg, was found near Kashgar, today Kashi, at the frontier of the Islamic world and of China. In short, Christian themes simply became one of the possible options in the standard imagery available within the Muslim world.

The second characteristic of these objects is that, even though several among them are provided with inscriptions, none of the inscriptions implies that the object was made for a unique purpose or a specific individual, least of all that it was made for a Christian. Most of the inscriptions are standard series of good wishes without, insofar as I have been able to figure out, anything separating them from other metal objects of the same class. There are three references to the Ayyubid amir al-Malik al-Salih, who ruled, at various times, in northern Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Damascus between 1232 and 1249 and who was involved in complicated alliances with or against the Crusaders. But even these references are of a general nature, not personalized, and the more frequent lists of

¹⁰ The standard book on the subject is E. Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images* (Leiden, 1989); see also R. Katzenstein and G. D. Lowry, "Christian Themes in Thirteenth-Century Islamic Metalwork," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 53–68.

¹¹ An interesting and original explanation of this canteen has been proposed by Nuha Khoury, "Narratives of the Holy Land," *Orientalism* 29.5 (1998): 63–69.

good wishes have an anonymous quality suggesting objects made on speculation, for sale at some court or to a wealthy buyer possibly from the nonmilitary class. These objects reflect the needs or opportunities of a market, and it is the thoughtful but cautious requirements of a market that may explain the absence of scenes like the Crucifixion or the Ascension, which are uniquely peculiar to Christianity and which could be seen as offensive or at least inappropriate by Muslims, as well as the prominence in nearly all these objects of rows of standing personages, these priestly and monastic figures that were admired by Muslims since the time of the Prophet. These objects breathe a quiet pietism that is not so much ecumenical as areligious. It may well, as has been suggested, correspond to the spirit of the area, at least at the upper feudal level, after the 1229 treaty between Frederick II and Malik al-Kamil, a time when conflicts were feudal and territorial rather than religious and national. The sources of the Christian images are probably for the most part local Syriac ones, possibly Byzantine, very little Western, although one Western iconographic detail has apparently been identified.

And the third important character of this group of motifs is that they disappear after the middle of the thirteenth century, whereas the technique of inlaying remains, as do the functions of most of these objects. It is, of course, true that representations of other kinds also diminish in the latter part of that century, and Christian images could have been the victim of a general revival of aniconism all over the Levant, in spite of major exceptions like the Baptistère de St. Louis in the Louvre.¹² But, even if this is so, it is remarkable that Christian themes entered, for a short while, within the mainstream of Muslim private art. Iconographically, this phenomenon cannot easily be connected with the Crusades since, at least within the boundaries of research known to me, no representation on the bronzes has been connected with the art of the Crusades. Nor are there any stylistic parallels between the images on objects from Muslim workshops and the little we know of comparable Latin or Byzantine art. But it may be possible to argue that the very special political mood established by the negotiations that followed the recapture of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187 permitted, at least for a while and within a certain class of Muslims or of dignitaries within the Muslim world, an acceptance of identifiably Christian but nonthreatening motifs as a sort of worldliness acceptable on secular objects. This possible fact of contemporary taste, rather than the motifs themselves, would have been the result of the presence of the Crusaders in the Levant. What remains to be worked out is the probably considerable role played in this development by the Christians of the Near East, who, as is well known, ended up as the main victims of the whole adventure but served as important agents of change in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

However they are to be interpreted, the Islamic bronzes with Christian topics form a neat and coherent set. Incoherence is what characterizes my second group of examples. It consists of several peculiar objects, of an architectural invention, and of a chronological

¹² This fascinating object has received much recent attention long after its initial publication by D. S. Rice, *The Baptistère de St. Louis* (Paris, 1953). See D. Behrens-Abouseif, "The Baptistère de Saint Louis: A Reinterpretation," *Islamic Art* 3 (1989): 3–13.

problem. Individually these items have nothing to do with the Crusades, but as a group they may perhaps best be explained as willed or accidental effects triggered by the Crusades.

The first of these items is a container in the shape of a peacock now in the Louvre (Fig. 3).¹³ Art historians have tended to date the object and the whole group of zoomorphic containers with which it forms a set to the twelfth century and to attribute it to Spain or to Sicily, with one, to my mind unsuccessful, attempt to give this peacock an Iranian origin. The curiosity of the object lies in part in the manner in which it was meant to function, but this will not concern me in these remarks. The other reason for its notoriety is that it has two inscriptions certainly engraved at the same time in a space provided for them. One is in Arabic reads: *'amal Abd al-Malik al-Nasrani*, "made by Abd al-Malik the Christian." There has been some controversy about the correctness of the translation, but the alternate ("made by the servant of the Christian king") poses both grammatical and historical difficulties. The other inscription is in Latin and has been read as *opus Solomonis erat*, a curious sentence, which should be translated as "it was the work of Solomon," suggesting either a maker by that name or, in a metaphoric way, a "beautiful work," so to speak worthy of Solomon. A Spanish attribution for the bird seems reasonable because it is only in Spain that this particular Latin formula occurs on a couple of other objects. The peacock was thus seen as belonging to some sort of exchange between Muslims and Christians for which the following scenario can be proposed: someone, a merchant perhaps, orders from a Christian metalworker by the name of Abd al-Malik a fancy container of a known type (we have at least two other examples) and decides to broadcast the value of the object by calling it Solomonic in beauty or perhaps to imply, by the use of *erat* instead of the more normal *est* or the more accurate *fuit*, that this object imitates or actually is something belonging to Solomon and brought from the Holy Land, at the very least copying something that would have belonged to Solomon. The market for the object would have been Latin. But value is provided by the artisan's name written in Arabic, yet identified as a Christian. It could have been an example of the sort of mercantile and vanity-driven artistic contact made possible by the Crusades.

The trouble with this traditional interpretation is that it may have been based on a misreading of the Latin text. In an article that came out almost twenty years ago but which did not attract much attention among historians of art, the palaeographer Robert-Henri Bautier argued that, after *opus Solomonis*, we should read *era T* and then a small x.¹⁴ T, as it turns out, was in central Spain and until the twelfth century, the symbol for the Latin M to mean 1000, and the era involved in this system began in 38 B.C. Thus we have an object dated to 962 or 972, depending on how one interprets the doodad after T. And historians of art throw their arms up in despair, for something they would have sworn to be twelfth century turns out to be two centuries earlier and dated to boot. The

¹³ The object has often appeared in catalogues, e.g., *L'Islam dans les collections nationales* (Paris, 1977). The first publication was by A. de Longpérier, "Vase arabo-sicilien," *RA*, n.s., 6 (1865): 356-67. A paper of mine entitled "About a Bronze Bird" is to appear in a volume in honor of Ilene Forsyth.

¹⁴ R.-H. Bautier, "Provenance du paon aquamanile," *BullSocAntFr* (May 1978): 92-101.

whole neat and elaborate scenario I proposed a few minutes ago falls apart in its most interesting part; certainly the Crusades could not have had anything to do with this object, unless it is legitimate to talk of a pre-Crusade Crusade culture in Christian Spain. But is Bautier's reading right? I do not have a solution at this stage, and I certainly have difficulties putting this bird in the tenth century. Should one imagine for the late tenth century in Spain some prefiguring of a type of mercantile and symbolic activity more common later on? Should it belong on the Spanish frontier or something comparable to Akhtamar on the Anatolian one and from which the Crusades were absent indeed, but which exhibit multicultural features to be found later more frequently?

The second object I will deal with is the celebrated Innsbruck plate (Fig. 4).¹⁵ It was made for a minor Urtuqid ruler of eastern Anatolia between 1114 and 1142, during the most successful decades of the crusading enterprise. The plate is unique for being enameled on both sides with themes that find parallels in Byzantine art from Constantinople, in Georgian art, and even in Limoges. I can easily imagine a successful prince in the upper Euphrates valley being persuaded by a Georgian goldsmith, traveling, as many artisans did at that time, from one court to the other, that, given the proper financial reward, he could have on one copper bowl all the themes that appear in Byzantine imperial art, that he could thereby impress Frankish knights with the inventiveness of his patronage and his subjects with Arabic *and* Persian statements, the latter being quite ungrammatical and for practical purposes illegible. There is something slightly vulgar and nouveau riche in this display of colorful wealth, but it may well illustrate the taste of many other feudal lords and barons than a relatively minor Urtuqid prince.

The third example of an odd object is even better known. It is the mantle of Roger II (Fig. 5) now in Vienna, to which I shall also return in a slightly different way in my conclusion. All that matters at this stage is to point out two obvious and well-known contrasts in it. One is that it contains an inscription that gives its date (1133–34) and place of manufacture (Palermo) as well as many good wishes but no indication of owner, maker, or use. This inscription is in Arabic, but the shape and probable function are Latin. The carefully woven decoration of the mantle is without direct parallel anywhere but probably reflects a very concrete astrological or astronomical configuration on one side and the royal court on the other.¹⁶ The Crusades may not have been directly involved in the manufacture of this mantle, but they are so much part of the wealth and ambitions of Roger II that it is perhaps not unreasonable to see them as part of the climate that made the robe possible.

My last two examples are of a different type. One is the peculiar adventure of the *muqarnas*, that quintessentially Islamic form developed probably in Iraq in the tenth century and appearing in northeastern Iran and Egypt in the tenth and eleventh centuries. What is interesting about it for our purposes is its spread westward: new mosques in

¹⁵ Innsbruck, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, *Die Artuquiden-Schale* (Innsbruck, 1995), with all appropriate references.

¹⁶ A large study of the mantle will be found in the contribution I made to the fifteenth Levi della Vida Award symposium "The Experience of Islamic Art," hopefully to be published at UCLA. The object itself is often illustrated.

Tinmal and Fez, both in Morocco, among many other places, use *muqarnas* ceilings in the thirties of the twelfth century, and the largest and most brilliant example of the technique is the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina completed by 1142.¹⁷ The form itself has been given various symbolic and possibly religious meanings within the Muslim tradition, and a cosmic meaning is implied by Philagatas in a celebrated sermon pronounced in Palermo, although there is some doubt whether such meanings should be attributed to all uses of the form or to its inception. What really matters is that it is after the formation of the Latin kingdom in Palestine and after the Mediterranean had become the lifeline of the kingdom's existence that the new form spread to become the common ceiling ornament of religious as well as secular buildings in Muslim as well as Christian lands.

And, finally, there is a peculiar and difficult problem connected with the chronological rhythm of figural representations in Islamic art. As is by now well known, such representations were never entirely given up, but they diminished in number and in variety during Abbasid cultural preeminence in the ninth and tenth centuries. This was especially true for objects that had some public visibility. Thus Spanish courtly and private ivories could have masses of images in the tenth century, although fewer in the eleventh, and the representational vocabulary on ceramics was on the whole quite limited; there were on them more rabbits and birds than people. All this changed in the middle of the twelfth century, most strikingly in the ceramics and metalwork from Iran. Yet the earliest signs of change occurred in the eleventh century and in the primarily luster ware of Fatimid Egypt, where representations of considerable thematic and stylistic variety make their appearance. We do not know very well how to date these ceramics and how to establish stylistic and chronological sequences within them. But it is on the ceilings of the Cappella Palatina that many of these Fatimid themes appear before the middle of the twelfth century and before the true explosion of images elsewhere in the Muslim world. Is it entirely an accident that a major change in Islamic art, which had begun to take place in the Mediterranean area, spread elsewhere just as the Crusader state and culture were establishing themselves in the Levant?

These examples—and there are others—do not demonstrate nor even suggest an impact of the Crusades, neither on concrete levels of forms and techniques nor even in ideological or sociopolitical programs. What they do show is the existence of a concentration of creative energy in the twelfth century, wherever one looks. The Crusades are part of that energy, and they established an enabling focus of power in an artistically underdeveloped area, for such was the case with Syria and Palestine in the eleventh century. That power led to major changes in that area and, even more remarkably, in adjacent and surrounding areas: a revitalized Syrian interior, an Anatolia bursting with building activities for all sorts of religious and secular purposes, a northern Mesopotamia

¹⁷ Much has been written on the *muqarnas* over the years, but there is as yet no definitive and coherent explanation. See Y. Tabbaa, "The Muqarnas Dome," *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 61–74, and "Muqarnas," *Dictionary of Art*, ed. J. Turner, vol. 22 (London, 1997), 321–25; also his *Constructions of Power and Piety*, esp. 144. For Palermo, arguments and interpretations are found in W. Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom* (Princeton, 1997).

with new cities and centers growing along reestablished trade routes, and even a transformation of the coast and hinterland of North Africa. That focus of power led to the expansion and development of motifs and ideas like the *muqarnas* and like representations of almost anything to satisfy the needs of a newly and intensely recharged Muslim society and ethos. The results were sometimes bizarre, as with the Innsbruck plate or the Louvre bird, but the point is that of a wealth of accomplishments often based on seeds planted earlier in a more haphazard fashion in the East or in Egypt and in Andalus, perhaps, as had been suggested by some, in the pan-Mediterranean culture of the eleventh century.¹⁸ The seeds might have taken much longer to spread all over the Muslim world and to grow in quality and quantity, had it not been for the new impulse created by the Crusades, an impulse of energy, not of forms.

In a sense and quite paradoxically, one could argue that the most spectacular Islamic art of the time of the Crusades is the Norman art of Sicily primarily under Roger II, but also under William II, when, in a spirit of unwitting ecumenism, *muqarnas*, figures, inscriptions, and astronomy all combine to create a stellar series of highly original works of art. They do not form an eclectic combination of forms from different sources but a genuine entity, illustrating not a clash of civilizations, to use an abominable, recently coined, expression, but a truly operating manipulation and enjoyment of commonly accepted forms. Of course, like the Crusades themselves, this Norman creativity left no posterity, but, because it is a work of great art and artifice charged with obscure memories, a robe with a camel subdued by a lion, framed by an Arabic inscription praising sensual pleasures, became the formal coronation robe of the holy Roman emperors north of the Alps, and no one ever worried about the original meaning of the motifs on it.

The century of the Crusades was thus far more interesting and far more creative than the Crusades themselves. In the Norman art of Sicily it almost succeeded in managing something that was hardly imagined by either the Crusaders or their opponents: a formal setting accessible visually and intellectually to all the actors of the century in the Mediterranean. On a much more limited scale, something comparable may have been present with the bronzes with Christian scenes in Syria and northern Mesopotamia and possibly in the architecture of thirteenth-century Anatolia. On the whole, however, after 1250 or thereabouts, the creation of man became Muslim or Christian, Saracenic or Infidel, ours or alien. The latter became the others who could be hated and despised or, at best, exotic. The modern age had begun.

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¹⁸ P. Soucek in *The Meeting of Two Worlds* and several articles by Hans Belting.

