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## Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art

Five years ago, in a long article summarizing several days of meetings with colleagues from all branches of Islamic study, I sought to define the achievements, limitations, needs, and possibilities of the study of Islamic art and archaeology.<sup>1</sup> One of those needs was a journal. I described a publication that would be inexpensive, so that it could be made readily available all over the Muslim world and wherever else Islamic art is studied or collected; that would provide bibliographical and other practical information about research and thinking in the field; and that would serve as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas about Islamic art.<sup>2</sup>

With some modifications *Muqarnas* is meant to be the fulfillment of that need. A yearly chronicle of the field's activities will require a network of correspondents that will take time to build. Cheapness is an almost impossible goal in inflationary times. Exchange of information and ideas is, in one way, the easiest function to fulfill. It merely requires that scholars or critics or research teams write down whatever data they have gathered, whatever hypotheses they have developed, and whatever explanations and conclusions they have reached. It is, in another way, one of the most difficult and challenging. To be successful, a forum for the exchange of ideas must fulfill two conditions: it must be aware of the expectations that people both inside and outside academic circles have for the ideas and information it provides, and it must be sensitive to the intrinsic nature of data about Islamic art. The first condition guarantees that scholarly activities will be meaningful to contemporary discourse, and the second prevents scholars from asking questions for which there are no possible answers.

These requirements seem obvious enough, but their implications for the study of Islamic art are both complex and unique. While we genuinely

hope for an intellectual exchange that is free of acrimony, it is unreasonable to expect agreement on every issue and even wrong to assume we can escape from personal or ideological prejudices. It is possible, however, to hope that disagreements and different points of view can be creatively expressed.<sup>3</sup> The shape of future issues may well depend on how easily and successfully debates and discussions do emerge. In the meantime, my purposes in this essay are to reflect on the two requirements of expectation and of data, to comment on some recent experience with scholarship and with contemporary practices in architecture, and to propose some approaches to the further investigation of the history of the arts in Muslim countries.

Twenty-five years of activity in the field, the supervision of doctoral dissertations, and countless hours of teaching and lecturing have provided me with feelings and opinions about the direction scholarship is taking and about the nature of the questions asked of Islamic art. Nearly three years on the steering committee of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture have brought me into contact with the contemporary world and its questions, at least as they pertain to architecture: to a medievalist accustomed to the academic comforts of dealing with a past long gone, this has been an exhilarating but daunting experience. Finally, several years of administering a department of art history have made me realize that scholarship is not simply a matter of collecting information and compiling footnotes, but of determining the relationship between this information and dozens (perhaps hundreds) of men and women who study, write, listen, look, and search for a great variety of different ways of understanding themselves and others. Hence what follows has its personal side. For this I do not apologize, for beyond the traditional scholarship of information, one of the objectives of this annual is precisely to investigate and to reflect

upon the attitudes that shape our understanding of Islamic art.

Thirty years ago, the study of Islamic art was easy enough to define. Most people came to it along one of three simple paths. One was archaeology: the study of Umayyad palaces in the Levant and cities like Nishāpūr in Iran, the continuing "archaeological" survey of India, and dozens of excavations with no Islamic ambitions, such as Tarsus, Corinth, Antioch, Susa, and Rayy, which encountered so embarrassingly often, without wishing to do so, the remains of the Muslim world. Another was collecting: rugs, ceramics, and miniatures acquired a market value, a public developed that had taste and discrimination, and both private and public collections grew. Finally, there was the old and now much-maligned Orientalism, which instilled, through dry and inhospitable grammars and furtively read travel accounts, romantic notions of faraway lands and exotic cultures. Whatever the mix of these three preoccupations in any one scholar or essayist, the result was nearly always the same: the formation of a small group of practitioners with largely overlapping knowledge, asking many of the same questions, and using commonly accepted modes for exchanging information. The preferred Islamic language learned by those who did learn a language was Arabic, and the broader queries on which we were weaned were the old and traditional issues of the Semitist, the classicist, and the medievalist: the extent of "Oriental" influence in the Christian world, the disappearance of a classical ideal with no creation of a Western type of medieval structure to replace it, the nature of ornament, alleged iconoclasm, miniature cycles, the dome, and so on. The way to deal with these problems was equally clear: apply the methods of scholarship that had developed by 1900. A complex methodology that involved a complete bibliography, a survey of sources, and tripartite conclusions was required. The end product was *the book*, or at least an article with copious footnotes.

It is easy to deride this scholarly tradition as pedantic and elitist, but its accomplishments are, and will always remain, the inevitable foundation on which all subsequent knowledge and interpretations are built. In accuracy of information and completeness of control over subject matter, the traditional technique exemplified by the French *grande thèse* is unmatched.<sup>4</sup>

There are, however, grounds for questioning the ultimate value of this technique of research, or at least its exclusivity, as the standardbearer for scholarship and thought. First of all, this highly

refined instrument is profoundly Western. The Muslim world did not participate in its development, and this immediately raises the fundamental question (to which I shall return more than once) whether any culture can be meaningfully understood through the applications of techniques developed outside it. Second, the truly universal scholarship that was suitable for the intellectual elites of the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>5</sup> has been made obsolete, if not destroyed, by the national, social, technical, and linguistic changes that have come since then.

As we refine our ability to store bibliographical information on computers instead of on old-fashioned index cards or in human memories, the usefulness of a certain kind of academic discipline diminishes because specialized bibliographers can make available scholarly activities in twenty languages, while the university-trained individual can be expected to read perhaps two or three. Instantaneous satellite communication of an idea or an image poses no practical problems, while acquiring a photograph from a museum or borrowing a book from another country may require months of fruitless negotiation. Even if we all knew twenty languages and had available the most sophisticated means of sharing images and ideas, no one of us would be likely to retain sufficient information about some fifty Muslim countries, the collections of some two hundred and fifty museums spread all over the world, and the projects of some fifty centers of fairly active scholarship.<sup>6</sup> As national or regional boundaries become linguistic barriers, the old ideal of universal scholarship breaks down even further. Take the two most obvious examples: Russian and Turkish. Hundreds of publications pertinent to Islamic art appear every year in those two languages, neither of which is normally read by the majority of specialists elsewhere. As a result, most of these publications are happily ignored, even when they are available in libraries.<sup>7</sup>

We are clearly dealing with a form of human "input overload." All the information provided cannot be assimilated, and so, as in standard psychological experiments, it is selected or rejected on the basis of a variety of practical or ideological criteria. Traditional scholarship need not necessarily despair. It can, on the contrary, be a healthy sign that the field of Islamic art should be broken up into subdivisions, for the specialist in Indonesian architecture cannot be expected to know the monuments of Morocco, the scholar versed in the ninth century cannot claim competence in the fourteenth, and a complete knowledge of ceramics is incompatible with a similar awareness of textiles. Unfortunately this diversification of compe-

tence and learning so taken for granted in biology or physics disappoints the expectations of those who, for whatever reason, seek knowledge in Islamic art.

A particularly interesting and in many ways novel expectation comes from contemporary builders, patrons, planners, architects, engineers, bankers, and development experts of many types who comprise a world that has been entrusted with (or has assumed for itself) several contradictory roles. Collectively they are supposed to meet the challenge of rapid population growth, to adapt alien forms of industrialization to new areas, to invest the tremendous new wealth of the oil-producing nations in a meaningful physical setting, to create the plant (universities, teaching hospitals, museums) in which new local elites can learn to use the techniques of today and prepare those of tomorrow, to maintain an ecological balance within the environment, to preserve a traditional system of social and personal relationships, and to develop an aesthetic link with the past. Existing, universally applicable techniques can serve all but the last two roles. The preservation of a traditional way of life is far too complicated an issue for international technology to deal with, and the dislocation of elites from their own past over the last century makes it difficult to navigate between the shoals of fundamentalist rigidity, socialist innovation, intellectual and emotional discoveries of one's past through alien works, and any of a variety of intermediary attitudes. This is not an issue which can be dealt with by non-Muslims, at least not in any normative way, for ultimately it requires choices and decisions that derive from one's own search for identity. At best non-Muslims can provide information and perhaps some comparable experience, but they cannot supply the precepts that derive from membership in a Muslim culture.

In some way this is also true of aesthetic links with the past. After numerous seminars, discussions, consulting jobs, and perusals of built or planned projects, I am no longer certain that the historian can help design the future. He can sharpen the understanding of past monuments, he can advise on how to preserve them, but whether he can determine how the past should merge with the future is much less clear. He ought, however, to observe and record what is happening now, because the concern of contemporary patrons for forging a link with the past involves a fundamental question of architectural and artistic patronage at any time: How are the aesthetic and the taste of a moment created and controlled?

In practice, patrons and planners expect the historians to identify and define what is "Islamic"

about a form, a motif, or a structure. The question is not frequently posed to painters, ceramicists, weavers, or decorators, in general, mostly because those arts do not require the huge financial investment that architecture does, and they hardly have the same visibility. There is an intriguing contradiction, however, in the dichotomy between a sense of opportunity and urgency in architecture and an easier acceptance of universal values (or the absence thereof) in other arts. It is as though one order of artistic endeavor requires cultural identification, while the others do not. I cannot determine the sociological explanation for this contradiction, but its presence poses an interesting problem for the historian. Is it peculiar to our times alone? Was it always there? Should we always seek ways to distinguish among forms or levels of taste according to the medium used? In a wider sense, the expectation on the part of contemporary architects and patrons for some ill-defined essence from the past leads the historian to see the past in a new and different way. He begins to view it as a series of distinct units of time and space whose complexity is revealed to him precisely because he has been made aware of the present. He ends up, therefore, less and less able to provide answers to the questions put to him.

In the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, when Western colonial rule dominated much of the Muslim world, North Africa, Egypt, Iran, and India witnessed a much more strongly articulated concern for the preservation, continuation, and readaptation of traditional styles of architecture and folk art than was called for during the forties, fifties, and sixties of this century. The economic and psychological developments of the past decades have, it seems to me, subsumed national definitions of the arts under social definitions — the visual structure of a village or of a spontaneous urban development conforms to the need to look "modern," for example — rather than ethnic or political ones. This trend is particularly startling when one compares it with the efforts of only a few decades ago to identify the Spanishness, Englishness, Frenchness, or whatever, of Western art in Gothic or Baroque times,<sup>8</sup> with the concern of some older Turkish scholars to find consistent Turkish motifs and ideas from Egypt to Central Asia,<sup>9</sup> with some rather extravagant projects of imperial Iran,<sup>10</sup> and especially with the consistent attempts to define the arts according to vertical, ethnically or nationally based units that are carried out, not surprisingly, in the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> Granted that there are exceptions and that the phenomenon may be temporary, the expectation of real or alleged national



forms is far less tangible than has been (and perhaps still is) the case in the Western world or than appears in politics or education. People are convinced that there are "Islamic" forms above and beyond regional, climatic, or national variables. Does this characteristic of Muslim culture have its roots in the great expansion of Islam in the early Middle Ages, when social, intellectual, and religious ties between diverse groups in very different areas overshadowed temporary empires? Or is it a peculiarity of today's Muslim world, with its inequalities of wealth and funds? Is it a phenomenon of the third world, where the requirements of a life of dignity within the constrictions of a common social contract outweigh a possibly imported national identification? It is probably not for the historian of art to answer these questions. But the comparative absence of an emphasis on the national identification of visual forms does raise some fundamental questions for the study of the arts. What label — cultural, national, regional, temporal, qualitative — is appropriate for artistic creation? Is the application of contemporary ethnic divisions and intellectual attitudes to older works of art valid? How intense is a culture's relationship to its own creativity?

A third set of expectations does not come from the Muslim world, nor is it a direct result of traditional Western Orientalist scholarship, although it does bear some relationship to it. It might be called an epistemological expectation. As a field of study, the history of Islamic art is in its infancy. Whole regions — Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Africa — have hardly been explored. Barely half a dozen illustrated manuscripts have been published, and what we know of the processes of creation and beautification in the Muslim world since its inception is minimal. Ideologically, old notions of iconoclasm and ornament predominate and still percolate into the manuals and surveys that form the taste of the educated public.<sup>12</sup> An argument can therefore be made for a massive effort to catch up with other subfields of the history of art. Monuments should be studied and published, stylistic and iconographic analyses pursued, written sources culled for information, theories and hypotheses tested and discussed. On the other hand, it may just be that Islamic art offers a unique opportunity to try something else, to use the more speculative and more theoretical approaches developed in other disciplines, or to develop an entirely new methodology that could eventually be translated to other fields.

Three examples illustrate what I mean. From the hundreds of excavations organized to seek either museum objects or holy or historically im-

portant places, archaeology has developed a complex, and at times abstruse and overly abstract, system for raising and solving problems.<sup>13</sup> It should be possible to devise a strategy for archaeological investigation in the Muslim world that would begin by identifying significant questions for which archaeology can best provide answers; for instance, How did housing develop? How did ceramic techniques spread? or How did construction devices develop? Energies and funds could then be concentrated on their resolution. This would be a far more rational way of proceeding than our present haphazard and accidental system of excavating whatever site happens to be convenient. Instead of adapting traditional methodologies to Islamic art, we could test new systems of analysis through sign systems;<sup>14</sup> we might thereby accelerate awareness and understanding of Islamic monuments by using forms more accessible to the contemporary world than those that require an endless study of languages and catalogs. Even the uninitiated have found it exciting to see that much of the recent historical work on modern western Europe has been based on innovative uses of written sources, and that a range of historical experience, which not only deepens our understanding of the past but leaves room for a whole range of ideological interpretations, has been made available.<sup>15</sup> It would, of course, be absurd to expect to extract the same information from a culture with different archival habits, but information that exists in the Muslim world does allow for greater depths of meaning than have been reached so far. Obvious examples can be found among the tomb inscriptions in Egypt; they could provide the basis for a social and ideological history of Muslim Egypt and a better understanding of its monuments.<sup>16</sup>

Many recent studies on a variety of traditional historical and cultural topics have relied almost exclusively on original sources and have largely ignored the bibliographical apparatus and the several decades of scholarship that have often been based on the very same sources.<sup>17</sup> This is not, I believe, because earlier scholars were either foolish or unreliable but because the questions that are now being asked did not occur to them. These are the questions raised by the very character of Muslim sources and of Muslim phenomena in general,<sup>18</sup> not by issues developed in the West.

The study of Islamic art requires, first of all, a better understanding of what Islamic culture thought of itself and how it operated in any particular place at any particular time. Some of the phenomena that will be investigated — such as the transformations in visual forms that derive directly



from the faith or the changes in available images and techniques created by the Muslim empire — will be unique to the Muslim world. Others — such as the ways in which forms develop to suit taste, the meanings of symbols, or the processes for making decisions in the arts — are universal. In order to decide which questions are culturally bound and which are not and, therefore, which approaches should be chosen for a particular study, however, we must first understand what the culture was and what it wished to become.

A dialogue and a dialectic between past and present are as unavoidable today as they always have been. The danger is that, because an artificial re-creation of the past always betrays the yearnings and requirements of the moment, the past can be misunderstood if viewed exclusively in terms of the ideologies of the present. The historian must walk on the thin edge that separates self-gratifying but intellectually free antiquarianism from vibrant but ideologically charged contemporary quests.

In short, traditional, contemporary, national, Islamic, technical, and intellectually innovative requirements are, at the same time, exhilarating opportunities and potential pitfalls. They are exhilarating because they introduce into every phase and aspect of the study of Islamic art the excitement of new ideas and new information in the midst of the unprecedented growth that characterizes the Muslim world of today. They can also easily become paradigmatic of the study of the arts and of history in general. Unfortunately, they also form pressures that lead only too frequently to premature and inappropriate judgments, as medievalists claim equal authority in explaining contemporary matters and the seventh century, and as architects or patrons evaluate the monuments of the past with no awareness of the conditions that surrounded their creation. Few of us are without guilt in this respect; we ought to become as aware of our limitations as we are of the intellectual challenges facing us.

From broad theoretical considerations, let me now turn to the practical tools available for dealing with Islamic art,<sup>19</sup> and particularly to a group of recent books that purport to be either introductions to or comprehensive surveys of the field.<sup>20</sup> My aim is not to criticize them — a task to which all such books lend themselves all too easily — nor to question their accuracy — although that, too, is far easier for Islamic than for Western art. What I shall rather try to do is to imagine what impact these books might have on the uninitiated reader.

The most scholarly and accurate of them is volume four of the eighteen-volume survey of the

history of art in the new version of the celebrated *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*.<sup>21</sup> A historical and an art-historical introduction precede 474 plates and 296 pages in two columns of small print with sometimes short, sometimes elaborate, commentaries on each plate; bibliographies; and indexes. Two-thirds of the photographs and all but three of the ninety drawings are of architecture, in contrast to H. W. Janson's comparable work on Western art, in which those proportions are reversed. The implication — and an altogether correct one — is that architecture is *the* particularly characteristic genre of Islamic art.

Another statistic is even more significant. Nearly three-fifths of the illustrations deal with works of art created before A.D. 1300. Only about a dozen works from later than 1700 are shown. In contrast, perhaps ninety percent of the buildings in the Muslim world date from after 1700 and the vast majority of its extant architectural monuments and most of its paintings date from between 1300 and 1700. Finally, about four-fifths of the *Kunstgeschichte's* illustrations show objects from an area where only a fifth of the Muslims live. All this will seem to the reader to imply two things. One is that Islamic art stopped being creative two hundred and fifty years ago, a suggestion that is at the very least unjustifiable, for it is hardly likely that any culture ever stops creating for its pleasure or building a setting for its life. The other is that only the distant past can properly be called Islamic.

All but one of the contributors to the *Propyläen* volume are Westerners. This suggests that Islamic creativity may have meaning for Westerners only if it dates from before 1700; it is perhaps also not an accident that studies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Islamic art have come more frequently from Muslims than from Westerners.<sup>22</sup> Scholars also know more about early monuments than about later ones, but the important word here is *scholars*. Their interest in antiquarianism, their point of departure in medieval studies, and their fascination with origins have given prominence to the most distant past of Islam rather than to modern or premodern developments. None of this would by itself be wrong, had it been made explicit. A careful reading of the art-historical introduction by Janine Sourdel-Thomine in fact suggests that she is aware of the issue, that the book is essentially about medieval art and its post-medieval imperial successors. Nonetheless it still claims to be a comprehensive survey and to represent a living culture's continuous artistic growth.

Alexandre Papadopoulos's *L'Islam et l'art*

*musulman*<sup>23</sup> shares a great deal of the Propyläen volume's attitude. Many of the monuments and the categories are the same; the overwhelming preponderance of monuments date from before 1600, though the visual balance is not as loaded toward the first centuries of Islam. Because of the author's interest much more is said about painting, and, despite a magnificent photographic survey, architecture is dismissed as non-art. The key difference between the two volumes is that the *Kunstgeschichte's* assumptions are subsumed under a factually correct apparatus, whereas Papadopoulos proclaims his from the very beginning as the statement of a doctrine, as an explanation rather than a surgical depiction of the monuments. Whether the doctrine is valid or not is unimportant; what is pertinent here is that the author feels he can provide a single explanation, with some internal modulations, for the whole phenomenon of Islamic creativity.

A second difference is that the *Kunstgeschichte* is clearly a history. It traces single monuments or a series of monuments through presumably identifiable, although not always clearly delineated, periods.<sup>24</sup> Papadopoulos, on the other hand, favors nonhistorical topics, either techniques or categories like "geometry," "national aspects," "aesthetic values," or — although only in architecture — "national forms." Papadopoulos's nonhistorical, in fact deliberately ahistorical, approach carries over into the magnificent plates, where superb photographs provide sequences of function or technique which are never directly explained in the text and which serve, or so it seems, as formal exemplars of an abstraction that calls itself Islam.

Papadopoulos's book responds much better than does the Propyläen volume to contemporary demands for a definition of Islamic forms independent of time and space. It does not burden the reader with any undue concern for the intrinsic or time-bound meaning of any particular monument; instead the reader can come away feeling able to recognize the art of a particular culture, and not like a mere witness to the interlocking of styles in a web of temporal and spatial relationships. To question a date or criticize an interpretation is useless if the synchronic significance of a work of art is secondary to its diachronic meaning according to the author's version of the culture's system.

Michael Rogers's book, *The Spread of Islam*,<sup>25</sup> and Titus Burckhardt's *Art of Islam, Language and Meaning*<sup>26</sup> both have titles that have little to do with their contents. Both are briefer than Papadopoulos's work and the volume in the Propyläen *Kunstgeschichte*, and however differ-

ent their approaches may be, both emphasize architecture or, more precisely, the built environment. Although they do not avoid traditional images that have monumental effects, their choice of pictures frequently emphasizes the monument's setting and even the people in it. But, just like the authors of the first two books, they tend to choose early Islamic monuments, and although Rogers emphasizes the period between 1300 and 1500, the four centuries since then are only occasionally represented in either book. The illustrations, good though they are, are not the main purpose. Neither book claims any kind of systematic coverage, as the Propyläen *Kunstgeschichte*, for instance, clearly does and as Papadopoulos does by implication in his title. They both have a point of view, but to find it one has to read and reread the text.

Burckhardt's point of view is the clearer. Put in simple form, it is that a "common language of Islamic art" did develop, that this language appears in such expressions of Muslim life as religious or pious behavior (what is called in the book "liturgy") or as the coexistence of nomadic and sedentary ideals, and, finally, that the major monuments exemplify in a variety of stylistic and regional ways different "syntheses" of a Muslim language. The book does not claim to be exhaustive, but it does suggest the elements by which a transcendently ordained way of life and its visible expressions can be made to agree with each other. The book also subtly implies that there is a prescriptive aspect to Muslim artistic creativity. The nature of these prescriptions is not spelled out, but the argument — to take one example — that Persian painting, whatever its aesthetic merits, ultimately failed because it did not quite fit with the prescribed idiom is a value judgment derived from the precepts of the faith and not from the works of art.

A volume such as this one has great appeal, and, in many ways, its approach has influenced a host of contemporary books and essays.<sup>27</sup> One reason for its appeal is that it sets Islamic art as an ideologically unique phenomenon by maintaining that the Muslim revelation affects all aspects of the life of man. In a way, therefore, it cannot be criticized from the outside. From within, it is possible to ask whether the importance given to the Arabic language and Arab monuments is justified when the majority of the Muslim world is not Arab. It is also appropriate to wonder whether mysticism and the search for cosmic unity are the operative forces behind artistic creativity, as several other recent studies have suggested.<sup>28</sup> While, in short, it may be legitimate to question how

universal the Muslim implications of the approach are, the approach itself is in some ways beyond question. It becomes a dogma rather than a methodology, and to a historian concerned with a particular moment its usefulness is limited. It is only one of many options open to us for understanding the past. For the contemporary artist, on the other hand, it is immensely attractive because it claims to penetrate the whole ethos of a culture and, positively or intuitively (a favorite term in the book), to define its parameters.

Neither these difficulties nor these opportunities are provided in Rogers's book. Its scholarship is impeccable — at times even precious, as obscure references outnumber accessible ones. It is also a profoundly historical work, abounding in dates, in dynasties, and in the complicated unfolding of events. Its emphasis on a few mostly cultural issues, like the development of the faith or the contrast between urban and rural orders, is paralleled by precise and usually very lucid discussions of less than a dozen key monuments from Arab, Iranian, and Central Asian history and brief references to perhaps fifty others.

As a work of historical scholarship, it lends itself to the esoteric criticism of the cognoscenti: Why choose one monument rather than another? Is the interpretation or date provided correct? Are there not better or other sources for the period? These arguments do not concern the vast majority of the public interested in learning about the Muslim world. Even the fascinating first chapter about the "lure of Islam" deals exclusively with its appeal to Westerners, not with the reasons for the conversion to Islam of North African Berbers or Indonesian peasants. It is a book without a doctrine, without definitions of what may or may not be correctly construed as Islamic. It nonetheless contains the strong ideological message that the task of the historian should not be one of judging and evaluating but of establishing whatever "seeming truth" may be derived from the remaining sources. To the questions asked by the contemporary Islamic world, it does not provide much in the way of answers.

A very different picture emerges when one turns to comparable books produced in the Soviet Union: a universal history of architecture in twelve volumes, of which one volume is entitled *The Architecture of the Countries of the Mediterranean, Africa, and Asia*;<sup>29</sup> a beautifully illustrated *History of the Peoples of the Soviet Union* in nine volumes;<sup>30</sup> and, by B. V. Veimarn, *The Art of the Arab Countries and of Iran*,<sup>31</sup> part of a series dealing with the arts of the world. These books treat the same monuments as the previous ones,

but this time the word *Islam* does not even appear in the titles of most chapters; regional or national units are their points of reference. The editors of all three formally acknowledge that they are searching for diachronic cultural continuity, as is clearly visible in the series of histories on the arts of the Central Asian republics and of Azerbaijan.<sup>32</sup> They all consistently bring their investigations up to the present. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so notable for their absence in Western surveys, are here treated almost as fully as the earlier centuries. Whether arranged by date or by period (the "medieval" period curiously lasts throughout the nineteenth century in Iran, according to one of the books<sup>33</sup>) the chronological framework is always clearly formulated. Cross-regional or cross-cultural relations and influences are minimized, except when confusion surrounds the term "Central Asian." Finally, aside from vague terms like "most successful" or "characteristic," there is little in the way of critical evaluation; for every period or area the examples are typical of academic surveys.

The first observation that might be made from all this is that more attention is given to architecture and to architectural construction and decoration than to the other arts. It is as though, at the level of what may be called universal prestige, architecture and its related techniques outrank painting, sculpture, and objects. The question is whether or not this corresponds to some profound truth about the Muslim world. Does the Muslim concern for the whole community lead to a community development of setting and leave other artistic endeavors to the less controllable choices of individuals? Or have the historical circumstances of Islam in fact preserved something that is true of all cultures: that the built environment is consistently the most meaningful form of human creativity? Is the tendency to emphasize the artistic history of painting, sculpture, and objects an aberration of Western elites since the Renaissance and of Chinese literati?

The concentration of scholarly effort on the early centuries of Islam, with its concomitant emphasis on the Arab world, reflects in part the earlier concern of scholarship with unraveling and explaining the beginnings of Islamic culture and in part the influence of archaeology, a technique far more at ease with early monuments than with recent ones. It is unlikely that books written ten years from now will exhibit the same bias, for the present concentration of research on later times will provide better representation for the fourteenth century onward. An awareness of regional differences is also bound to develop further, if for



no other reason than that the share of sources for the later periods is more evenly distributed among Arabic, Turkish (in several forms), Persian, Urdu, and Malay than it was for the first six centuries, when Arabic prevailed.

In the meantime, however, we have a vision of Islamic art in which the earliest monuments create the norms by which the whole artistic span is defined. This emphasis gives undue importance to the pre-Islamic origins of Islamic forms at the expense of their Islamic operation, and it implies that the contemporary world does not descend from an earlier time, but in some way still partakes of its culture. It is somehow assumed that a Cairene of today belongs to the culture that created the mosque of Ibn ʿUmar or the madrasa of Sultan Hasan, though this is comparable to assuming that an inhabitant of modern Chartres is still living through the passage from Romanesque to Gothic so superbly shown in the sculpture of his cathedral. The burden of proving cultural continuity of this magnitude lies with those who maintain its existence; its historical logic is clearly unlikely.

All these books, except the Soviet ones, deal with the "Islamic" nature and character of the art created by and for Muslims. Although "Islam" might only appear in a title or be used as an arbitrary, conventional delineation of a set of monuments to be discussed according to classical art-historical or archaeological methods, the question, What is Islamic about these monuments?, lurks throughout, and answers hardly exist. Historians discuss what happened, and they attribute whatever they find that is new or different to the existence of Islamic culture; once it happened, they simply argue for the kinds of changes in taste, technique, and habit that identify any culture. Nonhistorians operate in a less clearly defined fashion. Sometimes they find in buildings or designs (large spaces, for instance, or intricate geometry) principles or tendencies (equality of parts within the space, absence of exteriorization, or the endless growth of an ornamental design) that reflect characteristics (the unity of a community of equals, for example, or the assertion of one creator for the diversity of the universe) of Islamic culture. At other times, a more complicated procedure is used. Whatever characteristics of the Muslim faith and religious behavior are described or imagined are automatically made the cause of whatever forms appear. A typical example of this process is the courtyard house, frequently regarded as the typical Islamic house because it allows for the creation of private, semiprivate, and

public areas. In reality that particular plan is not even usable in most of the tropical Muslim world or in the cold northern climes where Islam also penetrated. In other words the climatic and thus regional significance of the courtyard house far outweighs its potential adaptability to the social prescriptions of the faith.

To use Islam as an explanation for Islamic art rather than simply for individual Muslim monuments is to avoid coming to grips with three issues. One is the extent to which, and the ways in which, Islamic variants have affected the arts. The hypothesis has been put forward, for instance, that the growth of representation in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iran is related to the growth of a genuinely Iranian Sufism.<sup>34</sup> If a religious variant can effect such a change, however, did it happen with Iranian Sufism alone? Should not one assume that other variations, from one *madhhab* to the other, from one *ṭariqa* to the other, or from Shi'ism to Sunnism, also had their visual equivalents? The alternative is surely that the impact of Islam is limited to features so broad as to become almost meaningless to the student of forms.

Another issue is the relationship of Islam to regional, ethnic, and eventually national entities, and to characteristics that grew out of climatic conditions but which have become tied to ethnic or national identity. The issue would probably have amused a man of the fifteenth century or the ninth, who did not think that way. But we do, and we continue to search for Turkish motifs, Iranian principles, and Bengali contributions in the arts, just as we search for Italian influences in Germany or French ones in England. Has Islam transcended these local or parochial positions as it did when it declared its disapproval of human representation?

The last of the issues can best be stated in the form of two questions.<sup>35</sup> At what stage in the development of a form is it legitimate to give it a cultural — in our case Islamic — meaning? Are those meanings inherent in the forms, or are they only in the minds of the beholders? These questions might be answered in terms of Islamic culture alone, although in my own view they belong to a much broader art-historical problem, which has been sidestepped in the study of Western art as well through the categorizing of art according to personal or period styles, local formal developments, and so forth. This may well be another one of the many areas where the study of Islamic art, encumbered as it is by unanswered questions, can help in understanding all the arts.

The fourth conclusion drawn from my sample of popular books on Islamic art may in fact be at

the root of the first three, particularly the third. Only one of these books was written by a Muslim, and even the testimony he adduces from the Muslim world about its own art is scanty: an occasional quotation from Ibn Khaldūn, a few qur'anic verses, and here and there a reference from Persian poetry or from a historian or geographer. The absence of written sources is not in itself odd if one thinks of all these books as histories of art, but most of them emphasize precisely the Islamic character of the art they are dealing with without conveying any sense of what Islam really was or now is.

More significant is the paucity of contemporary Muslim writing on Islamic art in general. Turkish scholars do write about Islamic art in Anatolia or the Ottoman Empire; Iran, Egypt, and the Indian subcontinent have produced their share of local histories and descriptions of monuments. But with the exception of a little book by A. Bahnassi on Arab aesthetics<sup>36</sup> and the broad generalizations on painting developed over the years by M. S. Ipsiroglu,<sup>37</sup> there has been, to my knowledge, no continuation of the work begun nearly half a century ago by B. Farès, M. Zaky Hassan, M. Mostafa, and A. Fikri. The disquieting possibility then arises that the very need to define an Islamic art is a Western one, and one not shared by the contemporary Muslim world. Political and cultural associations may in fact be inspired by motives different from those that create works of art. If this is so today, was it perhaps not also so in the past? Once again a peculiarity of the contemporary scene leads to a question for the past, and a concern for the relationship between past and present in Islamic art leads to fundamental questions about the nature of art itself.

Consideration of what our sample books have to offer beyond their beautiful pictures and of what definition of Islamic art can be derived from them leads to my last conclusion. All these books are premature in that neither factually nor conceptually do we possess an acceptable and accepted framework for information and explanations. Anchored in the works of a remote past, the authors claim that their findings are valid for today, although for the most part they ignore the last three centuries entirely and introduce temporal and spatial categories as well as religious or philosophical interpretations that are either copied from Western models or unproved. We first need a series of factually sound and intellectually challenging works of what might be called "intermediate" scholarship; that is, regional, technical, chronological, and thematic surveys that would bridge the

gap between monographs and broader works of ideas. Pitifully few such surveys exist,<sup>38</sup> and the vast majority that do have been written in the past fifteen years.

Manuals and coffee-table books are almost invariably ten or fifteen years behind the actual state of scholarship and knowledge in any field. The particular problem with Islamic art, especially architecture, is that the demand for knowledge about its past has increased suddenly and far faster than the ability of scholarship to deal with it.

Scholars are easily caught in dilemmas between esoteric knowledge and public needs, between traditional scholarship that requires a total command of sources and popular demands for general information accessible to all, between contemporary social, ideological, and intellectual expectations and the assumption of an objectively available past, between the immensity of the Muslim world and an awareness of any one individual's limitations, between the universal requirements of a Western-created scholarship and the immediate and personal feelings of Muslims, especially of their restless and ambitious youth. Some of these dilemmas are an unavoidable part of the very essence of a scholarship practiced by an international body of scholars over the past of a living culture. Some have arisen because so many of the expectations developed for Islamic art cannot be met with the information that is available. Expanding the traditional methods of gathering information and compiling such tools as accurate and complete catalogs or anthologies of appropriate texts will not solve the problem, because we will also be called upon to identify and explain those characteristics peculiar to the Muslim world and those internal rhythms of the culture that have affected its art.

It was suggested earlier that written sources have not been sufficiently used in dealing with Islamic art. At first glance, this is simply not true. Both the archaeological and the Orientalist traditions have always profited from written evidence, as is amply demonstrated by the works of, say, Max van Berchem, Jean Sauvaget, and Richard Ettinghausen. Yet, in most cases, the monument, the work of art, the inscription, or the object led to the text. The only exceptions, to my knowledge, are the study of Ibn Bibi, the chronicler of Seljuq Anatolia, by Kurt Erdmann, an art historian who otherwise had no particular interest in texts;<sup>39</sup> a few essays relating Persian poetry to Persian painting;<sup>40</sup> and a lamentably few studies on technical manuals.<sup>41</sup>

The perusal of almost any text, however, brings out questions or information pertinent to the history of the arts. For example, in the *Murūj al-dhahab*, Mas'ūdī writes that Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847–61) introduced new kinds of textiles and clothing (in particular the official use of *mulham*, silk woven onto cotton) at the 'Abbasid court and a new way of building ("building unknown to people [until then]") called "from Ḥirah,"<sup>42</sup> which included a rather curious use of the portico (if it is correct to translate *riwāq* as portico for that time) for ceremonial purposes. In other words, in this one passage of a reputable and original historian, changes in both architectural and vestimentary style are documented. We may not be able to substantiate this change with visual evidence right away, but at least we know that something was recognized and recorded by the culture itself as having changed. It is now the task of the art historian to try to discover what that something was.

A second example comes from the *Kitāb al-muwashshā*, a description of elegant society in Baghdad in the early fourth century A.H. (late ninth and early tenth centuries A.D.). It mentions that a secretary was seated on a platform (*duk-kān*) of teakwood profusely decorated with verses inlaid in lapis lazuli.<sup>43</sup> Aside from the pertinence of this information to our knowledge of the technique of inlaid woodwork, it also indicates that the practice of decorating objects with literary texts had developed as early as the tenth century, although it did not become common until a century or two later.<sup>44</sup>

The first example pinpoints a moment of change in taste and technique; the second serves to extend across time the existence of an otherwise known manner of decorating objects and monuments of architecture. It is obvious that hundreds of similar examples can be culled from nearly all forms of Islamic literary creativity and that in the aggregate they are bound to provide a history of forms complementary to, or perhaps entirely different from, the one developed by the art historian.

Another approach to literary sources involves the analysis of major writers in order to understand their aesthetic sensitivity. An obvious candidate is Ibn Khaldūn. It would probably require several seminars and dissertations to extract from that great philosopher-historian and unsuccessful judge all the information useful to art historians, but two particularly celebrated chapters dealing with cities and crafts might be mentioned.

In his discussion of cities, Ibn Khaldūn emphasizes dynasties (*duwal*) as the creators of "civi-

lized" cities, that is, of centers of tranquility (*da'a*) and luxury (*taraf*). He also distinguishes between buildings (*binā'*) and monuments, and, for the latter, he uses the term *haykal*, which does not seem to me to have had that generalized a meaning in earlier Arabic texts, where it usually refers to any pre-Islamic structure.<sup>45</sup> What is interesting to the art historian, though, is that he identifies dynasties with cultural units and architectural monuments with the style of a particular time. Both of these observations are appropriate for a man of the fourteenth century. Dynastic distinctions and the exteriorization of buildings were in fact characteristic of the time, even if the way had been paved earlier. The art historian is, therefore, justified in modifying — or at least introducing nuances into — his interpretation of that century, making it more legitimate, perhaps, to talk of true works of art when discussing the madrasa of Sultan Ḥasan or the paintings of Rashīd al-Dīn than in explaining the Kharraqān tombs or the illustrations of the *Maqāmāt*. On purely visual grounds it is possible to separate works of art from run-of-the-mill objects or buildings, but we can only be assured that the judgments we arrive at are valid if we can extract some notion of contemporary standards from the sources.

In a second passage Ibn Khaldūn deals with the craft of architecture (*ṣanā'a al-binā'*).<sup>46</sup> Architecture, along with agriculture, tailoring, carpentry, and weaving, is one of the "necessary" crafts, he says, as distinguished from the "noble" crafts of writing, book production, singing, and medicine. Aspects of this passage may belong to a literary genre whose history is yet to be investigated,<sup>47</sup> but it is still very instructive. It sets up the architect as the main creator of buildings. While recognizing that some architects are superior to others, Ibn Khaldūn always places them above engineers, surveyors, and the host of craftsmen involved in construction: bricklayers, earthworkers, plasterers, roofers, decorators, and others. The architect comes from the city and is employed by the ruler, and this makes him the mediator between dynastic rule and the urban order. No such claim is made for carpenters, weavers, or tailors in the sections which immediately follow the passage on architects. Here again Ibn Khaldūn shows himself to be a man of the fourteenth century, perhaps even specifically of fourteenth-century Egypt. He reflects the anomaly of a Cairo where alien rulers created some of the most intensely Muslim and local monumental architecture to be found in Islam, and he gives the architect a major role not otherwise fully recognized in inscriptions or chronicles until the following century.



The validity of these observations on Ibn Khaldūn can only be established by comparing passages such as these with the writings of his contemporaries and of earlier and later writers of similar importance. My only point here is that texts, whether compendia like those of Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi and al-Ghuzūlī, written nearly eight centuries apart,<sup>48</sup> geographical descriptions like those of Muqaddasī or Ewliyā Čelebi,<sup>49</sup> literary exercises like those of al-Tanūkhī or like the *Thousand and One Nights*,<sup>50</sup> or even legal texts like Ibn Abdūn's *hisba* manual or Rashīd al-Dīn's *Waqfnāma*,<sup>51</sup> contain both synchronic and diachronic information. The first tells us about the taste and needs of a specific time and place; the second about the constant needs and aspirations of Islamic culture. It is not possible to separate them from each other without first thoroughly studying hundreds of texts, and it is hardly fair to expect art historians to accomplish that task, which requires a philological and literary acuity that is not ordinarily part of their equipment. They do have an obligation, nonetheless, to be aware that definitions of taste and sensibility of a time can be extracted from the extant texts. Is it entirely accidental that Ibn Khaldūn talks so much about architecture and so little about other arts and crafts? Does it not distinguish him from a Dust Muḥammad of sixteenth-century Iran who talks about painters, or from Byzantine and Western Christian writers of Ibn Khaldūn's own time who discuss iconography?

Still another obligation of art-historical research is to set up problems and pose questions for cultural and literary historians. One of the most intriguing of them is how to explain the appearance and rapid growth during Islamic art's formative centuries of ceramic art in Iraq, northeastern Iran, and Egypt. Most research so far has concentrated on technical definitions and on the place and time of the invention or development of various types of ceramic manufacture, and a vague scholarly consensus has formed that the development of pottery-making resulted from the impact of Chinese ceramics through a revitalized trade with the Far East combined with the development of an urban taste that could not afford, or did not wish to own, expensive gold and silver objects. Whatever balance should be established between these and perhaps other explanations for early Islamic ceramics, their decoration, their style, and their qualitative evaluation have hardly been part of the discussion. Yet, is it not precisely the forms and ornamental qualities of a bowl or jug, rather than the reasons behind the formation of ceramic art, that led to its acquisition as well as to the maintenance

or disappearance of some topics or techniques of decoration? Scholarship has dealt with some of these issues, but has concentrated either on formal analysis<sup>52</sup> or on those motifs, like writing, representations, or idiosyncratic signs (a cross, for instance), that have readily identifiable external referents.<sup>53</sup>

Because ceramic is a technique that lends itself to use at nearly all social levels, very few early sources mention it. Thus it is only by looking at the objects themselves that we will find an explanation of their meaning within Islamic culture, as opposed to the purely utilitarian functions that have been determined by archaeologists for the purpose of scientific dating.

The recent publication of the pottery excavated at Nishāpūr, the articles by Charles Wilkinson on that pottery, the numerous objects alleged to have come from Nishāpūr that are found in nearly all museums, and several studies on Afrāsiyāb pottery and on the inscriptions found on one group of ceramics have made hundreds of objects and thousands of fragments available for study.<sup>54</sup> How can one deduce the taste and occupations of the inhabitants of Nishāpūr or Afrāsiyāb from the observations and classifications made about these pots and shards by the art historian? Studies of motifs or single objects, excellent though they may be, are difficult to extend to other objects within the same class because they lack a broader conceptual framework that could provide at least tentative interpretations of alterations and modifications.<sup>55</sup>

The Nishāpūr finds make possible a proposal for such a framework for the northeastern Iranian ceramics of the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>56</sup> The plates and bowls are particularly useful because they all deal with the same compositional problems — the organization of a circular surface — and outnumber other shapes by a wide margin.

Regardless of techniques, motifs, or compositional pattern, all ceramic designs from our group could be evaluated in terms of a series of linear scales whose opposite ends might be defined in something like the following terms.

1. Total clarity *versus* total incoherence. Whether a calligraphic or a floral design is used, a motif can range from the clearly legible to the almost totally unreadable.
2. One subject *versus* uncertainty of subject. A plate can be decorated with a single bird or with a series of motifs so complicated that none can be identified as the main topic of the decoration.
3. Simplicity of composition *versus* complexity of composition. A simple inscription around

the rim or the division of the circle (through whatever subject) into four quadrants are examples of simple basic compositions; the decoration on the Freer and Foroughi plates<sup>57</sup> are examples of complex ones.

4. Traditional *versus* invented motifs. Although the problem needs further investigation, it seems likely that some floral designs have parallels in earlier times and other places, even (although surprisingly rarely) in pre-Islamic monuments; designs like birds, on the other hand, appear to be innovations.

5. Precise *versus* imprecise outline of motifs. Some letters or geometric partitions are clearly defined; others are loosely designed with overlapping and carelessly and freely drawn borders.

6. High *versus* low quality of design. It is usually not very difficult for a group to agree that some objects — like the celebrated plates at the Louvre, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Freer Gallery — are superior, even unique, works of art and that others are repetitious or poorly executed.

Other categories can no doubt be established and one or another of these six modified, sharpened, or eliminated. The main point here is simply that any group of objects can be measured against a scale that can provide a range of visual judgments independent of their motif. Analyzing ceramic subjects according to a system of linear ranges becomes even more tantalizing when it is related to the social structure of Nishāpūr as reconstructed by Richard Bulliet.<sup>58</sup> According to Bulliet the city was divided into two factions, each of which acquired its legal and primary dimension in its relationship to a madhhab, its intellectual dimension within a *mu'tazilite-ash'arī* opposition, and its ideological dimension within Sufism. Each probably also found a local dimension in the use or nonuse of Persian, and a moral dimension in private behavior. This scheme is what Bulliet calls an "ordering of society," in large part an arbitrary but necessary one, exactly as the decoration of objects of daily use was an arbitrary, although less necessary, ordering of shapes. Any one individual did not automatically have to follow the same social order once his madhhab was identified; one person could be Ḥanafī in law but Shāfi'ī in morals and social relations.

Eventually many more social and behavioral divisions and subdivisions evolved, and, of course, many of them still need to be fitted into the social structure outlined so far. But perhaps the opposite extremes of the visual analysis I propose correspond in some way to the binary opposites of the social scale, adding to them the dimensions of taste

and of visual memories and symbols. It would be absurd to try to match visual and social scales for the tenth century, though it may perhaps be possible for the twelfth and thirteenth; but the intriguing possibility remains that a close relationship did exist between social and religious allegiances and visual choices. The further possibility then arises that visual analyses, if carried out for sufficiently large groups of objects,<sup>59</sup> can provide us with a human dimension which can then be related to the great social and intellectual struggles and debates of the early centuries of Islam. Conversely, a relationship between the appearance of a new Muslim social order and the emergence of new artistic forms suggests that the latter may have represented a conscious attempt to create a visual language adapted to the internal complexities of the society.

The example of northeastern Iranian ceramics is not meant necessarily to demonstrate the validity of the analysis, but simply to suggest a procedure for dealing with those objects of daily use that can transform them into sources for the cultural history that created them. Perhaps this kind of approach can also demonstrate that some understanding of any art can be gained, even while some of its motifs and purposes remain undeciphered.

These remarks are not meant to comprise either a systematic doctrine or a method of dealing with Islamic art, but rather to suggest that the artistic experience of the Muslim world in over 1,400 years is too rich, too varied, and too complex to lend itself to a single message, a single voice, or a single explanation. No one person can master its intricacies with the accuracy and commitment it deserves, and it would be a betrayal of its history to limit it to one formal system or to one set of explanations. The implications of this conclusion are, however, no longer the preserve of the historian, and especially of the non-Muslim historian. The contemporary Islamic world will make its own choices in terms of its own heritage and according to its own feelings and interpretations. Critics, from wherever they come, can comment on these choices and evaluate them according to whatever norms they choose, but the historian can only record and document.

The past decades have sharpened and increased our understanding of much of Islamic art, but new concerns and questions, many of them raised outside the academic world, require that we pursue something beyond traditional and restricted scholarship. We must also deal with the protean complexities of the past as they merge into the present in ways that are attuned to contem-

porary quests. What these ways might be is less clear, but I hope that *Muqarnas* can serve the two functions of scholarly accomplishment and imaginative, even speculative, discourse on the meaning of yesterday for today.

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## NOTES

1. Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art and Archaeology," in Leonard Binder, ed., *The Study of the Middle East* (New York, 1976), pp. 229-63.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

3. Most of the examples that come to mind belong to highly specialized scholarship, for instance the Meyer Shapiro-Carl Nordenfalk debate on the Florence *Diatesaron* in the pages of *Art Bulletin* 60 (1973); or Ernst Herzfeld's and Friedrich Saxl's views on the throne of Khusrav in, respectively, the *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 40 (1920), and the *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 2 (1923). A superficially more frivolous but actually very successful vehicle for presenting different views is Charles Jencks and George Baird, *Meaning in Architecture* (New York, 1969).

4. A recent example in a particularly distinguished history is André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Damascus, 1973).

5. See Herzfeld's highly perceptive obituary of Max van Berchem in *Der Islam* 12 (1922): 206-13.

6. As a simple and almost randomly selected recent example of the problem, see K. Abdullaev, "Dva liustrovoi keramiki iz Bukhary," *Istoriia Materialnoi Kul'tury Uzbekistana* 15 (1979). It deals with two small fragments of what appear from the drawings to be Kashan or Gurgan plates found in a trench near the Mir-i Arab madrasa. What is the point of knowing this? Should the article be included in standard bibliographies, or would its addition represent mere pedantry?

7. In fact, matters are much more complicated, as Soviet and Turkish scholars work in very different circumstances and often have different concerns. The more important point is that so much of their scholarship is ignored because Russian and Turkish are not so well known as French or English, but who among us has not heard the complaint that scholarship in one country ignores what is done on the other side of an easily crossed frontier? The usefulness of translations with commentaries like the ones provided by Michael Rogers in *Iran*, vols. 17-18 (1978-80), is evident, but these are merely drops in the bucket.

8. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (London, 1955). While the great wars of the twentieth century have been particularly productive of what later seems to have been intellectual aberration, much of the artistic historiography of Europe during the past two hundred years has been strongly committed to the development of national pride. On the positive side, these motives have contributed to the preservation of a lot of monuments.

9. Oktay Aslanapa, *Turkish Art and Architecture* (London, 1971), reflects similar concerns.

10. Specific examples need not be mentioned at this time of political uncertainty, but the whole period will be fascinating to study at some later date.

11. See pp. 7-8.

12. H. W. Janson, *History of Art*, 2d ed. (New York, 1977), pp. 226-45; Frederick Hartt, *Art* (New York, 1976), pp. 280-92; Helen Gardner, *Art through the Ages*, 7th ed. (New York, 1980), pp. 254-67.

13. Two recent examples among many are David Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology* (London, 1968), and Jean-Claude Gardin, *Une archéologie théorique* (Paris, 1979).

14. See, for example, Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, 1979), among many possible ones.

15. Emmanuel LeRoy-Ladurie, *Montaillou* (Paris, 1975), is the most popular example of an approach particularly in vogue in France.

16. Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), and the dissertation of Jonathan Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture" (Harvard University, 1980).

17. A few examples only: Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton, 1980); Klaus Lech, *Geschichte des islamischen Kultus* (Wiesbaden, 1979); Tilman Nagel, *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem in Islam* (Bonn, 1973).

18. In a curious way Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1967), and the several colloquia of the late sixties devoted to the Islamic city are uneasily straddling old and new questions.

19. Of the many bibliographical tools in our possession, K. A. C. Creswell's *Bibliography of the Architecture, Arts, and Crafts of Islam* (London, 1961), is the only one specifically dedicated to Islamic art. It is essential that it be continued.

20. I am concentrating on recent ones, as older ones are either out of print (Ernst Grube, *The World of Islam* [New York, 1966]), antiquated (Ernst Kühnel, *Islamic Art and Architecture* [Ithaca, 1966]), or weak in their scholarship. Katarina Otto-Dorn's *Art de l'Islam* (Paris, 1964; see also the German edition and the forthcoming English one) would otherwise have been included in the survey, and many of the points made about the Propyläen volume or Rogers's book apply as well to this excellent introduction to early Islamic art.

21. Janine Sourdel-Thomine, Bertold Spuler, with thirteen additional collaborators, *Die Kunst des Islam* (Berlin, 1973).

22. For instance Günsel Renda, *Türk Resim Sanati, 1700-1850* (Ankara, 1977), among many Turkish contributions. There are, of course, exceptions like Dorothea Duda, *Innenarchitektur syrischer Stadthäuser* (Beirut, 1971), or the various restoration accounts by B. Revault.

23. Alexandre Papadopoulos, *L'Islam et l'art musulman* (Paris, 1976; English ed., New York, 1979).

24. In the book each new dynasty is usually heralded by a page full of coins.



25. Michael Rogers, *The Spread of Islam* (Oxford, 1976).
26. Titus Burckhardt, *Art of Islam, Language and Meaning* (London, 1976).
27. The most obvious and most popular is Nader Ardalan and Leila Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity* (Chicago, 1972).
28. It permeates in particular much of the recent literature on ornament, such as Keith Critchlow, *Islamic Patterns* (London, 1976), and Issam El-Said and Azye Parman, *Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art* (London, 1976).
29. The whole series is edited by N. V. Baranov; the volume under consideration is edited by I. S. Iarova, *Arkhitektura Stran Srednizemnomoriia, Afriki i Azii* (Moscow, 1969).
30. The general editor is B. V. Veimarn; it is divided into periods, and at least four volumes, going through to the eighteenth century (Moscow, 1971-76), have appeared.
31. B. V. Veimarn, *Iskusstvo, Arabskikh Stran i Irana VII-XVII vekov* (Moscow, 1974).
32. I am thinking of the numerous histories of art in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan written by G. A. Pugachenkova and L. T. Bretanitskii.
33. V. L. Voronina, I. S. Iarova, ed., *Arkhitektura*.
34. Oleg Grabar, "The Visual Arts," *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5 (Cambridge, England, 1968).
35. I have also dealt with some aspects of it elsewhere, e.g., "An Art of the Object," *Artforum*, March 1976; "Islamic Art: Art of a Culture or of a Faith?" *AARP* 13 (1978); "Das Ornament in der islamischen Kunst," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, supp. 3 (1977), pp. xli-liv.
36. Afif Bahnassi, *Jimaliyah al-fann al-'Arabi* (Kuwait, 1979).
37. M. S. Ipsiroglu, *Das Bild im Islam* (Vienna, 1971).
38. The only consistent attempt to develop this intermediate scholarship on a fairly systematic basis, with important but mixed results, has been by Dietrich Brandenburg, whose latest volume (with Kurt Brusehoff) is *Die Seldchuken* (Graz, 1980). That most of these books are not at all satisfactory, and some even downright wrong, is evidence of the chasm between information and interpretation that has split our field. My own essay, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, 1973), also has problems to which I shall soon return.
39. Kurt Erdmann, *Ibn Bibi als kunsthistorische Quelle* (Istanbul, 1962).
40. Priscilla Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting," in Richard Ettinghausen, ed., *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum* (New York, 1972), and Henry Corbin, *L'imagination créative dans le soufisme d'Ibn Arabi* (Paris, 1958), are different examples of the uses of literature with art.
41. For a recent example, see James Allen, "Abu'l Qasim's Treatise on Ceramics," *Iran* 11 (1973).
42. Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab*, ed. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille (Paris, 1861-77), vol. 7, pp. 192-99.
43. Abu'l-Tabib Muhammad al-Washsha', *Kutab al-muwashshā* (Beirut, 1965), p. 268; M. M. Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids* (London, 1970), p. 176.
44. I am thinking of the poetry found on Mediterranean ivories of the eleventh century, a Ghaznavid palace, and Khurasan unglazed pottery of the eleventh and twelfth(?) centuries. The whole subject needs a thorough study.
45. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal (New York, 1958), vol. 2, pp. 273 ff.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 357-66.
47. Oleg Grabar and Renata Holod, "A Tenth-Century Source for Architecture," *Eucharisterion: Essays Presented to Omeljan Pritsak*, Harvard Ukrainian Studies, 3-4 (1979-80), pt. 1, pp. 310-19.
48. Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *al-'Iqd al-farid* (many editions); al-Ghuzūlī, *Maqāli' al-Budūr* (Cairo[?], 1299/1882).
49. On all geographers, see André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1967-75).
50. D. S. Margoliouth, *The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge* (London, 1921).
51. E. Lévi-Provençal, *Trois traités hispaniques* (Cairo, 1947); French ed., *Séville au début du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1947). I. Afshar, *Waqfnameh* (Tehran, 1976).
52. Oleg Grabar, "Notes on Decorative Composition," in Richard Ettinghausen, ed., *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum* (New York, 1972), pp. 91-98.
53. Lisa Volov [Golombek], "Plaited Kufic on Samanid Epigraphic Pottery," *Ars Orientalis* 5 (1966); Charles Wilkinson, "Christian Remains from Nishapur," *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens in Memoriam Kurt Erdmann* (Istanbul, 1969).
54. Charles Wilkinson, *Nishapur: Pottery of the Early Islamic Period* (New York, 1973); S. Tashkhodzhaev, *Khudozhistvennaia Polivnaia Keramika Samarkanda* (Tashkent, 1967).
55. Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (Princeton, 1947), offers a framework for miniatures that can be used to work out any one manuscript or even to come to entirely opposite conclusions. The same theoretical setting exists for archaeological reasoning.
56. There are still many problems in devising more precise dates for these ceramics and in developing any sort of internal chronology. For the time being, it makes methodological sense to consider the whole corpus as a unit until scholarship has developed a true "history" of the various groups.
57. Esin Atil, *Ceramics from the World of Islam* (Washington, D.C., 1973), no. 12; for Foroughi's plate, see Papadopoulos, *L'Islam*, pl. 85.
58. Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), and "The Political-Religious History of Nishapur in the Eleventh Century," in D. S. Richards, ed., *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150* (London, 1973).
59. A fascinating attempt to do so on more strictly art-historical grounds was made with a group of bronze plates. See V. I. Marshak, "Ranneislamskie bronzovye bliuda," *Trudy Otdela Vostoka Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha* 19 (1978).