The symposium that produced the essays published here was an important occasion in Islamic art history, for it was, as far as I know, the first devoted entirely to the Mamluk period. The work of so many specialized scholars assembled in one place now makes it possible to survey the "state of the art." The research presented ranges from preliminary reconnaissances to monographic additions to the literature. Certain areas, such as the study of the Mamluk military and political system, Mamluk monuments—mosques, colleges, Sufi convents, shrines, and other structures—are already relatively well known. Mamluk-period heraldry, glass, and metalwork have received a fair amount of attention, but ceramics, textiles, and illuminated manuscripts still lack basic research. Some of these studies therefore contribute to the identification and dating of ceramics, textiles, and other works of art that have hitherto been studied hardly at all. Other contributions deal with historical problems concerning internal and international influences upon the development of Egyptian arts.

Almost all the work presented in this volume raises important methodological questions about the relationship between basic research into specific topics and generalization about broader aesthetic and historical issues. Many of the contributors are not so straight and narrow, and rightly so. It is apparent that in some areas too little is known to venture any important generalizations about the quality or provenance of, or the influences on, a particular set of objects. Too little is known to speculate about their artistic or social meaning. Nonetheless, it is important to raise the kinds of general questions that do not depend upon the state of our knowledge but are guides to the development of further research. It is crucial to ask how a particular contribution fits into the whole. What do objects or groups of objects tell us about the larger class of works of art to which they belong? What does a particular contribution tell us about Mamluk-era society, its functions, its values, and the kind of people and human experiences it embodies? The issue is not whether we are ready to generalize our knowledge, but whether we locate our research in its artistic, cultural, or historical context so that we may pose significant rather than trivial questions for investigation. No research is meaningful without an implicit or explicit sense of the whole from which it is abstracted. All research, regardless of the state of knowledge, requires artistic and historical imagination to guide us toward the type of data that must be gathered and the questions that need to be addressed.

Though the articles in this volume do not always address the social and cultural context, to a social historian they suggest a number of considerations. One is the responsiveness of Mamluk-period art to international influences. Egyptian arts evolved along with the transformation of Egypt's position in the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean world from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The history of Mamluk arts reveals how much Mamluk Egypt was part of an international religious community, related to Muslim regimes in Iran and Anatolia, and tied to an international trading economy.

Egypt's position in the Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean worlds falls into three major phases. The first lasted from about 1250 to 1350, when Egypt became heir to the scholarly and artistic legacy of the Muslim Middle East. In an age when the Mongol invasions left Iran, Iraq, and Anatolia in political turmoil and economic collapse, when the Byzantine empire was crumbling before Turkish and Latin onslaughts and Europe
had yet to emerge from the fragmentation of its feudal era, the Mamluk regime emerged as one of the strongest and most stable of Muslim Middle Eastern and Mediterranean states. The Mamluks expelled the remaining Crusader principalities from Palestine and Syria, defended Syria and Egypt against Mongol invasions, and extended their power to the Cilician Gates and to the upper Euphrates valley in order to defend them against renewed invasions. By 1323 the Mamluks, by a treaty with Abū Saʿīd, ended hostilities with the Ilkhanid state of Anatolia and Iran on terms favorable to the security of Syria and Egypt.

The war against the Crusaders, the struggle against the Mongols, the suppression of Shiism, and anti-Christian and anti-Jewish riots generated intense religious fervor. As a leading Muslim power, the Egyptian regime became the protector of the caliphate and the suzerain of the holy places; Egypt organized the pilgrimage and provided the cover of the Kaaba. Egypt and Syria became refuges for scholars, artisans, and merchants from the embattled parts of the Muslim world. Muslim peoples, uprooted by non-Muslim conquests in Central Asia, Iran, and Spain and unsettled by the political turmoil in Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and North Africa, brought their scholarly abilities and artistic skills to Syria and Cairo. Egypt became a leading center of Muslim religious scholarship, especially in the study of hadith and law. Migrant workers in metal, textiles, ceramics, glass, and the building crafts revived Mamluk industry. Metalworkers from Mosul, for example, created a flourishing industry of inlaid brass, and architects from Tabriz worked in Damascus in the 1330s. Patterns for ceramics came from Sultanabad; silk designs from Iran; geometric motifs from Iran and Anatolia. The Baghdadi and Mesopotamian tradition of illuminated manuscripts was continued in early Mamluk copies of *Automata, Kalīla wa Dimna*, and *Maqāmāt*. The Mamluks also inherited the astronomical traditions of Rakka and Damascus as well as of Fatimid Cairo.

The second phase of Egypt's sensitive relation to world conditions came as a response to the Black Death of 1348 and succeeding epidemics that destroyed a substantial portion of the Egyptian population. The Mamluk elite, deprived of resources, turned to factional warfare and exploitation of the subject population. Regimes turned over rapidly, and Mamluk patronage for the arts and quality crafts declined. The history of metalworking, as reviewed by James W. Allan, gives a good illustration of this era: between 1360 and 1382 quantity but not quality suffered. The decline of patronage, however, showed itself in quality between 1382 and 1450, when very few distinguished pieces were produced. In the early fifteenth century the production of gold belts for Mamluks, horse trappings, spurs, and ornate inlaid saddles also declined. A similar decline took place in architecture, glassware, illuminated manuscripts, and other fine crafts and arts.

The third phase of Egyptian arts was a glorious outburst during the reigns of Qāṭḥāī (1468–96) and Qānšūh al-Ghawārī (1501–16). European fashion became an important influence on Egyptian glass, metalwork, pottery, and textiles in the late fifteenth century, when Italian and Spanish goods were both imported and imitated in the Mamluk empire. The predominant international influences, however, were Anatolian and Iranian. Ottoman expansion in eastern Anatolia opened the way for trade, overseas and overland through Aleppo, and provided the Mamluk empire with new sources of luxury goods and new markets for Mamluk products. The collapse of the Timurid regimes, and the rise and rapid demise of Turko-Mongol states, such as the Aqqoyunlu, once again sent Iranian artists westward. Marilyn Jenkins, analyzing Mamluk underglaze-painted pottery, points out that artisans from Tabriz in the second quarter of the fifteenth century were manufacturing tiles in Damascus and Fustat. An Egyptian rug industry began in the late fifteenth century as a result of the migration of craftsmen from northwestern Iran. Esin Atıl discusses the development of a new Mamluk style of illuminated manuscript under the influence of the Turko-Persian courts of northwestern Iran and the Ottoman empire. With the breakup of the Aqqoyunlu court in the midfifteenth century, an influx of Iranian artists led to the production of Turkish versions of the conquests of Alexander and of the *Shāhānšāh*, as court painters seeking new patronage began to compose epic histories for Mamluk sultans. Other Iranian painters came from Shiraz after the Safavid conquest. Baghdad influences were also felt in Mamluk Egypt.

Late Mamluk artistic activity was generated by some of the same forces that inspired the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century period of greatness in Egyptian art—the migration of craftsmen from disturbed regions of Iran to the stable court of the Mamluks and the international fashions and patterns of trade. The late fifteenth century, however, introduced new motives for the production of Mamluk masterpieces. For over a century and a half the Mamluk empire had been
the leading Middle Eastern Muslim regime. By the
fifteenth century, however, new large-scale empires
were being formed by the Ottomans in Anatolia
and the Balkans and by Tamerlane and his suc-
cessors in Iran. These new empires introduced a
period of intensified Middle Eastern rivalry for
political power and prestige. The Mamluks in this
case benefited not only from the migration of arti-
sans and from enhanced trade but from being
forced by political competition to reassert their
own imperial claims and to rededicate themselves
to the creation of Islamic architectural monuments
and the cultivation of imperial arts such as illumi-
nated histories of ancient kings. Mamluk patrons
and artists thus responded to the cultural achieve-
ments of their Iranian and Ottoman rivals.

The artistic and cultural style of Egypt was
also influenced by international trade. Despite the
establishment of the Mongol empire in Central
Asia and the opening of new routes to China, the
Mamluks managed to keep open the Red Sea–
Alexandria route to Europe. By the middle of the
fourteenth century, the closure of Central Asian
routes again favored Egyptian ports. By 1375 a
regular trade with Venice was reestablished in
Alexandria, and the international spice and luxury
trade flourished in Syria. Throughout most of the
fifteenth century, Syria and Egypt traded regularly
with Italian, French, Spanish, and Balkan ports.

International trade led to an internationaliza-
tion of fashion in textiles and ceramics. Mamluk
striped silks with bands of Arabic text became fashio-
nable in Spain and Italy and were commonly
reproduced in excellent quality and resold in
Egypt. Islamic metalworks and textiles sold in
China inspired Chinese weavers to copy Arabic
striped silks for sale in both Egyptian and Euro-
pean markets. Chinese blue-and-white ceramics
were also greatly admired and widely reproduced
in Egypt. By the fifteenth century, Egyptian domes-
tic production was virtually overwhelmed by
Chinese, European, and Anatolian products.

From the viewpoint of social history, another
important theme in this volume is the profound
commitment of the Mamluk regime to two kinds of
art, one cosmopolitan and imperial, the other
religious. These two major dimensions of Mamluk
art have their origin not only in the international
situation, but also in the peculiarities of the
Mamluk political and social system. This system is
well enough known. Egyptian society in the
Mamluk period was ruled by a regime of slave sol-
diers. In 1250, these slaves had revolted against
their masters, replaced the previous ruling family
with a slave general, and established a government
run by slaves and former slaves. In principle no
one could be a member of the military or political
elite unless he was of foreign (usually Turkish or
Circassian) origin, purchased and raised as a slave,
and trained to be a soldier and administrator in a
slave army barracks. No native of Egypt or Syria
could ever belong to this elite, nor in principle
could the son of the slave inherit the position of his
father. The slave system assured the ruler complete
control over the army and the administration, since
the slaves had no ties and no loyalties to the
subject society, but were isolated from the people
they ruled. These slaves were able to dominate
their subjects because they ruled a society that
could not itself organize for political purposes.

The subject society was peculiarly fragmented.
Though united by Islam, Egyptians and Syrians
were divided by family, tribe, quarters, youth
gangs, and other parochial associations and could
not generate a regional political leadership. The
ulema, who had the widest range of influence, were
themselves divided into several schools of law and
were attached to numerous local communities. The
combination of alien rule and a fragmented society
created intense problems of coordination, commu-
nication, and legitimation, as well as peculiar prob-
lems of expressing identity and world view. In the
Mamluk period these problems were handled on a
political and social level by an informal collabo-
ration between the Mamluk state elites and the
ulema religious elites. The state elites patronized
Islamic causes and took the ulama into the service
of the government; the ulama in turn legitimated
and supported the political regime. Mamluk pa-
tronage of popular quarters and youth gangs also
helped achieve a political equilibrium between the
regime and its subjects.

On a symbolic level the problem of integration
was handled through public ceremonies and the
creation of a religious and a royal art. The Mamluk
regime had to balance competing considerations.
To generate political cohesion within the military
elite and to express the supremacy of the regime
over its subjects, the Mamluks had to glorify their
nobility and win recognition of their sovereignty
and their right to rule. However, because the politi-
cal and military elites were foreigners, the
Mamluks also had to articulate their dedication to
Islam and their concern for the whole society.
Mamluk art, therefore, was channeled into both
royal and religious forms.

The royal forms of Mamluk art express class
identity and imperial claims. The Mamluk court
was organized to dramatize and celebrate the glory of royalty. Karl Stowasser points to regal Mamluk pageantry, such as the ceremonies for the accession of a new sultan, at which the caliph would invest the sultan with his office. There were special protocols for the reception and greeting of the caliph, the treatment of visiting ambassadors, the review and payment of troops, including the distribution of honorary garments, the review of military exercises, public audiences in the House of Justice, celebrations of the birthday of the Prophet, and banquets for the military elite, at which gifts were distributed to soldiers and officials. Royal processes reached out from the court to the general public. The annual mahmal, the weekly procession to Friday prayers, the processions to mark the passing of the agricultural year, the measuring of the high tide of the Nile, and the breaking of the dam to mark the summer cultivating season were all occasions for the public to witness the glory of the regime. Sultans also attended hunting excursions and polo games. On these occasions sultans and amirs were accompanied by tabihkhāna, or bands of drummers and cymbalists, whose presence signified the high rank of officials.

The glorification of the ruler and the elite was also expressed through the production and ownership of splendid apparel, weapons, furnishings, and utensils. The Mamluks wore different costumes for royal receptions, parades, hunting, polo, and tournaments. Their banners, cloaks, blankets, and saddlecloths were all woven with blazons—lions, swords, rosettes, epigraphy, and geometric designs—which signified the rank and court function of the amirs and their place in the Mamluk hierarchy. Early Mamluk ceramics and metalwork were also decorated to signify the glory of the regime. In the late thirteenth century, there were figurative representations of court life, as well as animal, bird, and floral arabesque decoration. Blazons were incorporated into Mamluk metalwork in the early fourteenth century. Inscriptions dedicate the objects to Mamluk amirs. Much metalwork art was also devoted to arms and armor, helmets, coats of mail, shields, swords, and drums.

Mamluk painting was the royal art, par excellence. The illuminated manuscripts of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries reflect the classical style of Baghdad and Mosul. Early Mamluk manuscripts are copies of Automata and of the tales of the Kalila wa Dimna and the Maqāmāt. These works were probably composed by artisans who fled from Iraq and Mesopotamia to Mamluk domains. From the late fourteenth century, however, new forms of art more characteristic of Mamluk interests became popular. Farāṭiya, literary works devoted to military concerns, were illustrated in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. After the middle of the fifteenth century, epic histories, including the history of Alexander the Great and the Shīhāmūma, were produced in Turkish translation. These works assert royal prerogative, the grandeur of monarchy, and the identification of Mamluk rulers with Turkish princes throughout the Middle East. By choosing themes such as the histories of Alexander and ancient Persian kings, told in Turkish, the Mamluks asserted their claim to Turko-Persian and Middle Eastern traditions of royalty. Like other Turkish and Iranian rulers, they became the patrons of works that celebrated imperial conquests and court life. In the last decade of Mamluk rule, Qānūn al-Ghawri established the first Mamluk court studio to produce manuscripts for the royal library. The royal artists were supplemented by Mamluk youngsters, who produced copies of manuscripts as part of their education.

Mamluk cultural consciousness had an ethnic and personal as well as a regal aspect. The Mamluk court listened to Sufi orations in Turkish. Circassian poetry was recited; Persian and Arabic manuscripts were translated into the language of the Mamluk elite. Even an element of personal vanity shows through. Laila ʿAli ibn Ibrahim points to the decoration of Mamluk halls with pictures of conquered citadels and portraits of important amirs. Heraldry and armaments, with their distinctive and original blazons, were a way to assert the personal vanity, pride, and power of the Mamluk warrior.

Alongside royal art, the Mamluks cultivated a commitment to religion. The sultan, as Karl Stowasser points out, had important religious functions. He upheld the suzerainty of the Abbasid caliphate. He maintained the four major schools of law. He was the guardian of the departure of the mahmal (pilgrimage caravan) and the protector of the holy places; he sat in the Hall of Justice supported by his qādis in order to hear the grievances of his subjects. He celebrated the Id feasts and other religious occasions, such as the birthday of the Prophet.

The most striking expression of the Mamluk commitment to Islam was the construction of great numbers of mosques, colleges, Sufi khanqahs, and other religious buildings. Mamluk sultans and amirs prepared monumental tombs for themselves, surmounted by large domes, each on the centerpiece of a complex of mosques, schools, and con-
vents endowed with agricultural incomes and urban rents. These were designed to win popular favor, to assure the memory of the good name of the benefactor, and perhaps to please God in the world to come. All the major cities of the Mamluk empire were provided with dozens and even hundreds of buildings dedicated to religious purposes. Vast sums were appropriated to provide permanent endowments for worship and teaching.

John Alden Williams and André Raymond illustrate how the growth of Cairo as a metropolis centered around religious constructions. Both study the way in which the building of new suburbs was determined by Mamluk investment in economic and religious facilities. Wherever a religious center—consisting of a tomb, a mosque, a college, or a khanqah, and often including soup kitchens and residences—supported by permanent endowments was created, a neighborhood could grow up. Whenever Mamluk amirs invested in canals, gardens, markets, caravanserais, and baths, a new center of urban life came into being. Religious and economic facilities were closely related. Markets, caravanserais, and baths were often built to provide an income for the support of mosques, colleges, and khanqahs, and reciprocally the construction of religious facilities stimulated settlement and the development of a neighborhood economy.

Jerusalem was a particularly favored place because it was a holy city to Muslims. Endowments for hadith schools, colleges, khanqahs, mausolea, orphanages, hospices for travelers, baths, and other public facilities were supported by commercial constructions, such as markets and hotels. The Haram was an important center of Ayyubid and Mamluk period buildings. Donald P. Little calls our attention to a hitherto unknown and precious collection of 875 documents, dating from the period 1393–97, which comes from the records of a Jerusalem judge and administrator of endowments and includes royal decrees, deeds of sale, endowment records, and inventories of waqf properties and private estates.

The patronage of religious institutions also inspired auxiliary arts. Building parts, including mihrabs, portals, windows, screens, shutters, and cupboards, display splendid achievements in metal, wood, and stonework. Religious furniture, including minbars and kursîs (Koran stands), inspired fine metal- and woodwork. Marble paneling was an important decorative feature for the mihrab and qibla walls of mosques, and was also used for pavements and fountains. Other furnishings included candlesticks, Koran boxes, doors, windows, and glass lamps.

Illuminated Korans were another Mamluk contribution to religious art. In the early fourteenth century, Korans were prepared in large-format, thirty-volume editions dedicated to mosques and khanqahs, to be read and recited by Sufi Koran readers. David James analyzes the first major Mamluk work of this type, possibly inspired by Ikhlanid conceptions. Similar works called forth the cooperation of calligraphers, illuminators, bookbinders, and auxiliary craftsmen who made lecterns, Koran boxes, and candlesticks. Mamluk patronage of illuminated Korans continued throughout the fifteenth century, though in the later period it shifted to smaller, multivolume sets and large, one-volume manuscripts.

Mamluk astronomy was also inspired by religious interests. While Fatimid and Timurid astronomy was carried out in special observatories under royal patronage, Mamluk astronomy, as David A. King shows, was concentrated in mosques. The major astronomical interest was the calculation of the times of daily prayer, and the major astronomical achievement was the construction of zij, or tables, defining the positions of the planets. Sundials helped keep the time of prayer.

In this volume, the studies of Mamluk arts are organized by object, building, or city. There are, however, other ways to proceed that would focus our attention on important questions about the relations of Mamluk art and architecture to Mamluk religious culture. First, we may note different types of religious motivation and symbolism. Mosques and colleges and other facilities served the intellectual and legal forms of Islamic study and worship. Sufi khanqahs, mausolea, and the participation of the ruler and his amirs in such festivals as the birthday of the Prophet or the pilgrimage appealed to the popular veneration of saints and to faith in the magical presence of God's power in the world. Ceremonies such as the measuring of the waters of the Nile and the breaking of the dam at the beginning of the agricultural season symbolized the importance of the ruler as a channel for the powers of nature. Alongside the Muslim Sunni and Sufi types of veneration were a pagan glorification of kingship and a belief in the ruler who controlled the powers of the universe; whose goodness could bring rain, abundant harvest, and prosperity; whose evil deeds could bring ruin.

Moreover, the tremendous proliferation of mosques, colleges, khanqahs, hospitals, and mausolea suggests social and religious concerns of a personal nature. As Oleg Grabar points out, whole
streets in the centers of old Cairo and Damascus were occupied by religious buildings. How can we explain the extraordinary proliferation of buildings, out of proportion to apparent social need? Why does the impulse to religious expression outdo even the desire for courtly embellishment and luxury?

The need for political legitimation and for the political and religious support of the ulema explains some of the construction, but there were also personal reasons for Mamluk patronage. Mamluks after all were people torn away from their homes at an early age, raised in a masculine, violent, militaristic society, exposed in a foreign land to death in battle or to death by plague. They did not easily establish families and reproduce themselves; the children of those who did were relegated to a second-class career of religious teaching or service in an auxiliary military corps. The religious endowments were about the only useful thing the Mamluks could do with their accumulated wealth, apart from forfeiting it to the state upon death. Endowments enabled them to develop local ties as property owners and donors, to transfer wealth and give employment to their children, and to win the favor of scholars, holy men, and the common people. One feels that Mamluk patronage was aimed at overcoming the isolation and despair inherent in a glorious but brutalizing life; it was a way of entering the fellowship of ordinary human beings.

Thus to understand Mamluk religious art we must not only review the history of objects, buildings, and cities but also consider these arts as expressions of Muslim belief and social relations, and in relation to the routines of Muslim worship, ritual, and religious mentality. Full understanding of religious art in the Mamluk period will require a combination of art-historical, textual, and religious studies, going far beyond the study of inscriptions found on buildings and objects, in order to bring alive our insight into the meaning and uses of any particular object or building.

Mamluk arts reveal a complex identity. They mix religious commitments with cosmopolitan imperial themes, ethnic identity with personal vanity. The creation of this varied art raises important questions. What kind of religious and monarchical vision does this production represent? What is the place of the Mamluks in the history of elite Muslim cultures? How does Mamluk elite culture compare with that of other Muslim regimes?

The juxtaposition of religious and royal iconography in Mamluk art is not, of course, unique. Almost every Muslim regime beginning with the early caliphate cultivated the arts in order to articulate religious commitments, imperial authority, and the superiority of the governing classes. A comparison of Mamluk with Fatimid and Ottoman arts—both of them being, at least in part, Egyptian arts—may bring out the distinctive qualities of Mamluk culture.

One of the striking features of both Fatimid and Ottoman cosmopolitan culture is the universality of religious and imperial claims. The Fatimid caliphs claimed to be successors to the Prophet Muhammad and the true caliphs of all Muslims, and they rivaled the Byzantine and Abbasid empires for world imperium. The Fatimids advanced their claims in the several vocabularies of Mediterranean civilization. They used Abbasid, Byzantine, and Isma‘ili symbols of political authority.

Emulating the great rival empires, the palace of the ruler was decorated with extraordinary splendor. Gold rafters supported the ceiling; rare birds and animals decorated the walls and furniture; fountains of cascading water cooled the air. The ruler himself sat on a gold throne protected by a screen in a fashion inspired by the Abbasids and resembling Byzantine enthronement. He was entitled to special clothing—a crown, a sword, a scepter, a parasol, weapons, and other implements—which were signs of his sovereignty. Court decorations, many of which were the gifts of foreign ambassadors, some of Byzantine manufacture and some Abbasid relics, depicted the glory of the ruler. A huge hanging silk map of all the lands and their rulers expressed the Fatimid claim to belong to the family of kings which governed the world. Fatimid paintings in both palace decoration and illuminated manuscripts show the influence of Samarra and, through Samarra, of Central Asia.

Equally important in the palace symbolism was Islam. The palace contained halls for the preaching and instruction of Isma‘ili Islamic beliefs. Religious functionaries, such as judges, missionaries, reciters of the Koran, and prayer leaders, were regularly present for court ceremonies. Formal religious processions symbolized in both religious and cosmopolitan terms the sublime importance of the monarchy. Palace receptions, such as audiences with the caliph, the review of soldiers, or the reception of ambassadors, and public processions, such as the Ramadān and New Year processions and formal openings of the Nile canal, brought the caliph and his entourage to the major mosques of the city, where he delivered the sermon, celebrated the festivals, and displayed the
magnificent and sacred objects of the Fatimid treasury. Thus the caliph brought home to the populace the importance of the ruler in both the secular universe of war and politics and the magical universe of religion and nature. In these processions were strong survivals of Byzantine, Iranian, and other Eastern influences.

The public architecture of the Fatimids was also an extension of the ceremonial aspect of the royal court. The new city, al-Qâhirah, constructed by the Fatimids with magnificent palaces, colossal halls, and grand mosques, was itself an architectural model of the universe of Fatimid rule. It was an imperial city designed for imperial pageants. The principal mosques, al-Azhar and al-Ḥākim, were constructed with minarets and cupolas that symbolized the preeminence of the imam and recalled the construction of the holy places of Mecca and Medina as a way of glorifying the ruler in the service of God and Islam.

The Fatimids further cultivated an aura of religious glory by sponsoring the cult of the family of ʿAli and by trying to inculcate a mass enthusiasm for shrines and relics. The caliphs constructed numerous mausolea in order to encourage pilgrimage. Koranic inscriptions encouraged obedience to the imam and called upon people to accept his authority as an expression of God’s will.

Ottoman culture had a somewhat different vision of the relationship between religious and monarchical claims. The Ottomans did not claim to be imams, but rather portrayed themselves as the defenders and enforcers of Muslim law. Thus they organized Muslim judicial administration and education and provided for the endowment of Sufi shrines and religious facilities, much in the fashion of the earlier Mamluk regime. Ottoman monarchical claims, however, matched and exceeded Fatimid ambitions. The Ottomans were the self-conscious heirs to the Turkish empires of Central Asia, to the Seljuq and Middle Eastern Islamic empires, and to the Byzantine empire. They engaged in wars of conquest reaching into Eastern and Central Europe, across the Mediterranean to North Africa, and into the Indian Ocean, defending and enlarging Muslim positions on a world scale. The vast imperial ambitions of the Ottomans led them to absorb Arabic and Persian religious, literary, and scientific culture and to accept elements of Byzantine and European styles in architecture and painting. They patronized historical scholarship concerning the origins of the dynasty and universal histories beginning with the creation of Adam. The Ottomans chronicled court life and were the first great Muslim rulers to appoint official historians. Their geographies reflected the expansion of Ottoman naval power throughout the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

Furthermore, the Ottomans imitated Ilkhanid and Timurid precedents by creating court studios to employ calligraphers, painters, illuminators, and binders to produce illuminated manuscripts and designs for Ottoman ceramics, tiles, wood- and metalwork, textiles, and carpets. Both Persian and Turkish literary classics were illuminated, but a new emphasis upon history and illustrations of court life defined a self-conscious Ottoman style. Histories of kings, books of victories, genealogies, biographies of sultans, and descriptions of festivals, accessions of sultans, receptions of ambassadors, royal processions, battles, sieges, banquet, and celebrations were all the subjects of manuscript illumination. Viziers, janissaries, cavalrymen, scholars, guildsmen, merchants, and sultans appear in profusion. Ottoman manuscript art reflects and celebrates the self-consciousness of the Ottoman elite as a world-historical force.

The universalist and imperial emphases in Fatimid and Ottoman art and the balances between religion and imperium seem very different from those of Mamluk art. Mamluk art retreats from the Fatimid pretensions to be a Muslim world caliphate, heir to the Abbasid and rival of the Byzantine empire. The more restricted Mamluk claims had a restraining effect on courtly and royal arts. In the Mamluk period, cosmopolitan culture was severely constrained in favor of Islamic symbolism. There are important continuities with the Fatimid period in the Mamluk emphasis upon court ceremonies and public processions, the state sponsorship of religious education and scholarship, the endowment of mosques, the preservation of funerary monuments and tombs—all of which become a permanent part of Egyptian-Islamic royal culture. No longer, however, do geographic symbols, as in Fatimid and Ottoman maps, express worldwide ambitions; no longer does interest in philosophy and astronomy symbolize universal rationality. Rather, in Mamluk art there is a frank acceptance of a local political destiny.

The Mamluk attitude toward Islam is also different. The Fatimids claimed to be imams—not only guardians, but objects of faith. The Mamluks were more humble servants of religion. Thus Fatimid patronage concentrated upon the religious glory of the dynasty and focused on the patronage of four great mosques, processions, tombs for the family of ʿAli, and the construction of a monumen-
tal capital. In contrast, the Mamluks devoted their energies to innumerable small buildings and endowments, which focus attention not so much on royal or official patrons as on the religious activity itself. They expressed care for social purposes rather than world glory. The intent of the monuments was more social and ideological than aesthetic and regal.

The restricted style in both cosmopolitan and religious arts is also related to limitations of resources. In the Mamluk era Egypt held a position of importance in the Muslim world on a very fragile economic base. It sustained its cultural and Middle Eastern–wide political responsibilities on the basis of a small territory and a relatively small capital city population. André Raymond has demonstrated that the population of greater Cairo before the Black Death of 1348 was on the order of from 200,000 to 250,000, and that in 1420 it was probably between 150,000 and 200,000. This compares with a population in Istanbul at the beginning of the sixteenth century of over 700,000. Moreover, the shallow demographic and economic base of Egyptian prosperity was shattered in the middle of the fourteenth century by repeated plagues and the progressive loss of economic opportunities to bigger trading and political competitors. By the end of the fifteenth century, Egypt would have to give up an excessive historic burden to the Ottoman empire. In the meantime the limitations of demography and economy restricted the capacity of Egypt to generate glorious architectural and artistic treasures.

This volume opens yet another important issue for social history—art and popular culture. These papers provide abundant information about the material culture of Egyptian society—clothing and textiles, ceramics, utensils, and decorations. Esin Atil has illustrated how real life can be viewed in manuscript illuminations. Laila 'Ali Ibrahim describes domestic architecture, showing how public halls and private rooms were designed. Such important features as screens, vestibules, outlook to the street, and the disposition of walls and courtyards not only made up a housing form but expressed a concept of the relation of the family to the outside world. David A. King discusses aspects of domestic architectural planning, including ventilation and the calculation of the orientation of streets, public buildings, and private residences. André Raymond and John Alden Williams have analyzed the distribution of baths, markets, and religious facilities. A study of the Haram documents, presented by Donald P. Little, contains inventories of the property of deceased people, a rare glimpse into private fortunes and individual tastes.

Even a few examples make clear that the art historian holds a key to understanding the culture of all classes that may surpass the sources available to historians who deal only with texts. This volume is replete with tantalizing suggestions about the taste, style, and sensibility of Mamluk Egyptian society. Egyptian metal- and glasswares, decorated in the late thirteenth century with figural motifs, came to be dominated in the fourteenth century by epigraphy and the blazons of amirs. Before 1300 Mamluk glassware was decorated with animal forms, pictures of musicians, and heraldic symbols such as lions and eagles. After 1300 epigraphy and the blazons of sultans and amirs decorate bottles, goblets, bowls, basins, and beakers. Mamluk textiles, which at first favored vegetal, animal, and epigraphic designs, were restyled with emphasis upon mathematically precise bands of decoration based on repetition of motifs and short inscriptions. Much of this change of style may be due to the introduction of new looms with mechanical patterning devices.

Ceramics give us important information about Mamluk taste. Bahri Mamluk ceramics, like Bahri glass- and metalware, stress animal and bird decorations and figural and narrative representations of court life. Some fourteenth-century potteries follow metalwork designs and are decorated with inscriptions and blazons. However, as George T. Scanlon points out, by the fifteenth century Mamluk taste had changed considerably, and Chinese influences had become extremely important. Mamluk pottery imitates Chinese blue-and-white wares and celadon, and underglaze pottery duplicates Ming porcelains. In the middle to late fifteenth century, with the decline of patronage for quality wares, cheaper forms of unglazed pottery abounded. Popular or mass tastes seem to have favored green, red, and brown clays, sometimes covered with brown or green color. Although the subject has hardly been explored, perhaps the most striking change in taste is the shift from decoration with animal and figural motifs to epigraphic, arabesque, and geometric decoration.

Before the Mamluk period, Egyptian art showed little interest in geometric designs; most Islamic geometric design was Iranian. However, the first hundred years of Mamluk rule brought a vast explosion of geometric decoration in Egypt. This decoration was at first based on patterns coming from Iran and Anatolia, but after 1350 Egypt
became the pioneer Muslim region in the development of new patterns and in the use of geometrical decoration for architectural surfaces, Koran manuscripts, and mosque furniture. Geometric decoration seems to be a prime Egyptian contribution to Islamic art.

The stylistic qualities of Egyptian art and the changes they underwent in the Mamluk period raise a number of important and still unanswered questions. Is there an Egyptian art distinct from that of other Muslim provinces? Are there stylistic distinctions between public and official forms of art and private and intimate modes of art? Is there a distinction between the Mamluk style of art pertaining to the political elite and the art favored by the mass of the native population? Does this art unfold as the autonomous expression of the specialized tradition of craftsmanship, or does it reflect the cast of mind of the populace as a whole? What does this art tell us about values, and to what does it correspond in other levels of Egyptian religious and popular culture?

These questions about the sociology of Egyptian art remain at the frontier of art-historical investigation, not only in Egyptian but in Islamic art history generally. Michael Baxandall’s *Painting and Experience in 15th-Century Italy* illustrates the fruitful potentialities of an approach to art history that seeks out the mentality and the culture of peoples from the study of their art. He shows, for example, how the gestures, postures, and positions of figures in Italian Renaissance painting are a revelation of Renaissance ideas about social relationships and the emotions that should be conveyed among people. He shows also how the fascination with perspective and proportions and the portrayal of complex geometric forms mirrored the involvement of the mercantile elites of Florence in gauging the sizes of irregular bales, boxes, sacks, and barrels. Renaissance art also reflects the calculating world of partnerships, profits, dowries, and inheritances. Renaissance art, then, can be understood in relation to other forms of culture, including other forms of art and literature, and the experiences of everyday life. In Mamluk art history the materials for similar investigations are abundant, but the questions have yet to be asked.

What kind of people and what kind of society have given us this treasure of artistic and documentary remains? In the artistic legacy of Mamluk Egypt we have clues to the political culture, the religious goals, and even the very mentality or sensibility of the civilization. If we are to understand this, our researches must be pursued on two levels. There must be an exhaustive examination of specific bodies of data, including texts and artifacts; but these investigations must be carried out with a sense of the relation of the arts to other forms of culture and to the historical context in which they were produced. To be meaningful, facts must be accumulated as contributions to illuminating the broader cultural themes and the total history of a particular civilization. The study of facts is not preliminary to, but integral with, questions of meaning.

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