



Fig. 127. Plaque, ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 12.3; W: 6.3 cm. Almost all the right side is covered with gold with red bole underneath. There are also traces of gilding on the grooves and palmettes in other areas. – Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. no. 80c 5.

Fatimid Ivories Within a Mediterranean Culture

ANNA CONTADINI

Problems

The surviving corpus of material is strikingly diverse, and the problems associated with it are many and varied. We are indebted to Kühnel for having organized the carved material into two comprehensible groups, one consisting of the Berlin, Paris, and Florence plaques, the other of smaller pieces.¹ Stylistic affiliations enabled him to date the plaques securely to the beginning of the 11th century, at the latest, and he then argued, again on stylistic grounds, for the same provenance and dating for the smaller pieces.

But two major problems remain. First of all, Kühnel talks of a "Diaspora",² referring to pieces from Sicily and southern Italy, where he claims that production reached only a certain level and did not develop further. It is now generally agreed that the definition of centres and peripheries and the relationships between them are complex matters, particularly in a Mediterranean context, so that we may wish to downplay his implied diffusionist hierarchy and instead stress differences and local autonomy within a common style horizon. The second and more acute problem results from his selective approach, resulting in conclusions derived from just one type of material, so that no account is taken, for example, of the inlaid and encrusted pieces³ – still insufficiently studied – or the gaming pieces. Admittedly, he does include a number of chess pieces, but the dating needs revision (fig. 10).⁴ Further, the size of his corpus is governed by aesthetic principles: pieces he regards as of inferior quality are excluded.⁵ Whatever aesthetic judgments one might eventually want to make, it is clear not only that presumed quality is an arbitrary criterion of selection, but also that restricting in this way the number of pieces considered results in narrowing our vision and limiting our comprehension of the material.

This is not to belittle Kühnel's monumental study. But its clarity and sharpness of focus derive in part from its selectivity, and for a fuller understanding of Fatimid ivory the remaining material must also be taken into consideration. A comprehensive study would, however, exceed the bounds of the present article. Here the focus will be on a range of representative examples, and on the complex ways in which they relate both technically and stylistically to production elsewhere in the Mediterranean region.

Kühnel presented a total of 58 Fatimid pieces. A few are of debatable or erroneous attribution. The mirror backed with a carved ivory plaque in the Benaki Museum, for example, although included in the Fatimid section, was thought by Kühnel himself to be probably Iranian, 11th century,⁶ while scientific tests recently carried out at the Benaki Museum have confirmed Enderlein's assessment (in 1980) of it as a modern copy, dating it to the late 19th to early 20th century.⁷ But it is less important to make minor adjustments to Kühnel's corpus than it is to take into consideration the wealth of other pieces, including those that have subsequently come to light.

There are, for example, the various ivory carved objects found at Fustat, such as the tile found in an archaeological context with Fatimid material from the 10th century. It is superbly carved in two layers with a human figure in the middle, a bird on top, and a gazelle (?) beneath, all set against foliage in low relief. Another possibly Fatimid piece is a small ivory dish in the shape of a bird with a worm in its beak (fig. 4), perhaps a cosmetic dish (although it has been thought to belong to the Tulunid period).⁸

Ivory gaming pieces – specifically for chess and backgammon (*nard*) – are mentioned in the sources, along with ivory writing boxes, as part of the Fatimid treasury.⁹ Such pieces, and also draughts and dice, form part of the archaeological material from Fustat, dated by context from the 9th to the 11th

century,¹⁰ while the Ashmolean Museum also holds some from Fustat that do not have an archaeological context, but have been carbon dated to the pre-Fatimid and Fatimid periods.¹¹ In Egypt we can, in fact, point to a continuing tradition of manufacture from the pre-Islamic period on, even if we are unfortunately unable to trace a smooth, linear progression. Contrary to what had hitherto been believed, the chess pieces in fact demonstrate that the Egyptian tradition of ivory carving continued into the Ottoman period. All in all, there are pieces that date from the 8th-9th century to the 17th.¹²

This additional material thus demonstrates something of the variety of uses to which ivory could be put. The smaller and simpler gaming pieces, for example, presumably point to the inexpensive working of off-cuts, thereby indicating that ivory did not belong exclusively to the very top end of the luxury market.¹³

Further, “ivory” may not always be ivory. The majority of the figurine dolls, for example, are thought to be of bone,¹⁴ and further analysis is required to determine which is which. Walrus ivory could be used for the handles of daggers, and bone for small plaques, but so far no Islamic ivory piece has been identified as being made of hippopotamus tusks.¹⁵ However, for luxury goods and artefacts in the Islamic period we are certain that it was indeed elephant ivory that was used, most probably from East Africa,¹⁶ and we may turn now to a consideration of some of the major pieces made of this material.

The al-Mu‘izz Casket: a Persian or a Mediterranean Connection?

A particularly important example of early Fatimid ivory work is the al-Mu‘izz casket, discovered during the excavation of Carrión de los Condes (Palencia), and now kept at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid (fig. 44).¹⁷ There is also a very similar casket now in Mantua (fig. 128) with a carved decoration of painted red and green griffins on a gilded background. For this, various attributions have been



Fig. 128. Casket, ivory, with friezes of griffins carved in low relief and painted red and green on a gilded background. Fatimid North Africa (?), 10th century (?). H: 19; W: 41; D: 23 cm. – Museo Diocesano, Mantua.

suggested, from India in the 16th century to Spain in the 10th-11th.¹⁸ However, the similarities between the two are such that a common origin is likely, and the provenance of the al-Mu‘izz casket is confirmed by the inscription around the lid. In fact, this is the kind of inscription we always hope to find. It tells us that the casket was made for the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu‘izz li-Din Allah (r. 953-975) in Mansuriyya, the Fatimid capital before the conquest of Egypt, and it gives the name of the maker, a certain A[hma?]d (?) al-Khurasani.¹⁹ The Shiite formula contained in the inscription is one that is found on Fatimid textiles from Egypt,²⁰ but the inscription also includes a Koranic verse (61:13) that invokes God’s aid for early victory. As Jonathan Bloom has pointed out, this type of invocation does not seem to appear on textiles made after the conquest of Egypt, and it is therefore likely that the casket dates from before 969.²¹

Given such precise information, this piece allows – indeed solicits – a discussion of problems of stylistic affiliation and the diffusion of features across the Mediterranean basin. For example, its sides are decorated with a border of scrollwork painted in green and red that may recall the “Siculo-Arabic” ivories,

which are usually dated later (figs. 18 and 172). It indicates that the technique of painting on ivory was already known and practised in the Maghreb in the third quarter of the 10th century, and, as Ralph Pinder-Wilson has suggested, that the technique could have been taken from there to Sicily.²² However, the Maghreb is not the only possible source, for the idea of creating a colour contrast on the even surface of an ivory object was already present in Byzantine/Coptic material from Egypt. There is, for example, a Coptic box in the Victoria and Albert Museum whose decoration forms a sinuous pattern like that on the al-Mu'izz casket. It also demonstrates the technique of colour variation, either by painting the surface and then scratching it to reveal the lighter colour of the ivory, or by tinting parts of the surface (fig. 129).²³

The maker's *nisba*, al-Khurasani, takes us much further afield. According to Monneret de Villard,²⁴ it should not surprise us to find a workman from Khurasan cropping up in Mansuriyya, given the close artistic links between *Ifriqiya* and Mesopotamia. For these he cites the tiles surrounding the mihrab of the mosque at Kairouan that were almost certainly produced in the Baghdad/Samarra region,²⁵ and the epigraphic decoration of the *maqsura*, built under the Zirid al-Mu'izz ibn Badis (1016-1062), which, as Flury had argued, can be related to others in the Mesopotamian area and even to Ghazna.²⁶ The former thus relates to the movement of objects, the latter to the movement of craftsmen.

But does the *nisba* al-Khurasani really point to a Persian connection in the style and techniques of working ivory? The *Survey of Persian Art* contains a few ivory pieces belonging to the Islamic period and a few carved bone pieces. However, the ivory pieces have now all been attributed to other regions, and Pope himself doubted the Iranian origin of some of them, such as the elephant in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello.²⁷ On the other hand, Monneret reminds us that al-Qazwini, writing in the 13th century, says that the inhabitants of Tarq (a small town in the Isfahan district) were very skilful in making ebony and ivory objects, something that makes one envision a local industry of encrusted or inlaid



Fig. 129. Cylindrical box, ivory, stained, and the pattern scraped away. Egypt, Tulunid (?), 9th century (?). H: 5; Diam: 3 cm. – Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no. A. 164-1920.

objects.²⁸ But little has remained, surprising as that may seem, given that we have fragments of carved ivory from ancient Mesopotamia and from Ziwiye (Persian Kurdistan) dated to about the 8th century BC. There is also the presumed Ethiopian tribute of ivory tusks portrayed on the reliefs at Persepolis,²⁹ and mention may further be made of a box possibly from the late Sassanian period that was formerly part of the Stoclet Collection (fig. 6).³⁰

We do, however, have some items from the early Islamic period. For example, the excavation at Nishapur has yielded twelve ivory chess pieces and an ivory make-up palette,³¹ and early-9th-century ivory plaques recently excavated at Humayma (Jor-

dan) may have been produced in northeastern Iran (figs. 1 and 5).³²

Another interesting point, noted by Monneret de Villard and Pope, is a closeness in style between some of the mounted figures painted on "Siculo-Arabic" caskets and those in *minai* ware from the 12th and 13th centuries attributed to Rayy.³³ Such similarities do not, however, necessarily indicate direct influence, and patterns of transmission may have been quite complex, as suggested by the fact that some of these figures evince even stronger similarities to figures found on Fatimid drawings on paper and on lustre-painted pottery, especially in their clothing and facial features.³⁴

Gilding and Painting on Carved Ivory

Some carved ivory produced during the Islamic period was gilded and some could even have been painted. This is now clear from the close examination that I was able to carry out of several pieces, in particular the V&A's Spanish pyxis, which was taken for conservation in order to try to clean at least part of the varnish that had been applied to it over the centuries to "preserve" the ivory and prevent flaking (cat. no. 12). Sometimes it was of the sandarac type, a rather thick and heavy varnish that is now thought to be unsuitable as it may cause further damage and is responsible for the darkish/brownish look that some ivory pieces eventually acquire. The cleaning process revealed traces of pigments, red and blue, and of gilding underneath the varnish.

The presence of traces of gilding and painting has already been noted on a number of other carved ivory pieces of Spanish origin, not only from this period but also from the 14th century.³⁵ However, a degree of caution is in order in drawing conclusions from this, for it is impossible to say whether the pigments were part of the original decoration or added later, as indeed is the case with Byzantine ivories.³⁶ Traces of gilding have also been found on a number of Byzantine pieces, a striking example being the Veroli casket in the V&A, from the middle or second half of the 10th century, where the gilding is present

on architectural details and on the rosettes that form the framing decoration.³⁷ From the Abbasid period we have some recently discovered ivory fragments with signs of painting in red and a dark colour. They are flat plaques with roundels carved in relief and holes, and were found at an archaeological dig at Madinat al-Far, in northern Syria, together with bronze nails for the mounting.³⁸

My recent examination of the Florence ivory plaques in the Bargello (figs. 130-134, and especially fig. 127) revealed that many areas are gilded and that the gold was applied over what looks like a bole preparation of a red colour that has now become brownish in some places. I found the same reddish colour on the Berlin (figs. 135-140, especially 137) and Paris plaques (figs. 141-142), and although I could not actually see particles of gold, the presence of the red substance suggests either that they were painted or that here, too, it was a preparation for gilding. However, further technical analysis will be needed to establish the precise nature of these pigments on the Berlin and Paris plaques.

On all the plaques examined, the places that have preserved the gilding or the red colour were found to be the thick, high-relief areas. More precisely, gilding and painting are found within the carved lines that mark the leaves of a palmette, between the grapes, between the strings of a lute, on the folds of a turban, and – specifically on the Bargello plaques – also on the frame. Although it is impossible to extrapolate from this how extensively gilding and perhaps painting were used, one possible interpretation is that colour contrast served to outline and separate different fields, and possibly even to emphasize depth.

Where the plaques have been "cleaned", the gold has been erased. Their present appearance thus accords with the still prevalent Neoclassical idea that sculptural objects, whether marble or ivory, should be white. It is still difficult to imagine a polychrome Classical marble statue, and although it is now accepted that Greek temple friezes were painted, our eyes have been trained to see them in monochrome. It is equally difficult to imagine the wonderful Spanish-Umayyad carved ivory pyxides or the Fati-



Fig. 130. Plaque, ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 7.5; W: 17.2 cm; thickness of frame c. 0.5 cm. – Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. no. 80c 1.

mid carved plaques in polychrome. As has been suggested above, it is possible that rather than being part of the original concept, gold and especially pigment were added later. But if so, this would merely shift the timing of the problem, and given the clear evidence of the many non-carved pieces painted in polychrome and gilded, such as the “Siculo-Arabic” caskets and other objects such as combs,³⁹ there is a good case for accepting painting and gilding as an original feature of Fatimid carved ivories.

The Ivory Plaques Carved in Openwork

These are the four plaques in Berlin (figs. 135-140), the three fragments from longer plaques in Paris (figs. 141-142), and the six plaques in Florence (figs. 127, 130-134). All, we may assume, began life as gilded objects and were possibly also painted. Some have been “cleaned” or rubbed, so that the traces of gold are minimal, but all show patches of red pigment. On the Florence plaques this was almost certainly a preparation for gilding, and it may have been so on the others as well.

All share the distinction of being carved in open-

work, a rare technique, and they also employ undercutting. The quality of the undercutting is superb, creating spaces behind carved areas and also shadow, thereby emphasizing depth and adding to the three-dimensional effect. The relief is consequently high, but set within frames that are rather thin. As well as employing the same carving techniques, the plaques are also stylistically very similar; indeed, it is generally agreed that the Berlin and Paris plaques, which have the same measurements, belong to the same set, the only difference being that the Paris plaques are more fragmentary and slightly less well preserved than those in Berlin. Migeon has suggested that the Florence plaques should also be assigned to this set,⁴⁰ but they exhibit certain differences, in matters not only of detail but also and especially of scale.

The Florence Plaques

There are six of these, all carved in relief on openwork. Four are of the same size (figs. 130-133), the other two being smaller (figs. 127 and 134). Further, one of the four is oriented horizontally rather than vertically (fig. 130). Notwithstanding these differ-



Fig. 131. Plaque, ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 17; W: 7.6 cm. – Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. no. 80c 2.



Fig. 132. Plaque, ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 17.3; W: 7.7 cm; thickness c. 0.5 (outer frame), c. 0.2-0.3 cm (inner frame). Many gold traces on the turban of the lute player, on the strings of the lute, on palmettes, and on the frame. – Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. no. 80c 3.



Fig. 133. Plaque, ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 17.3; W: 7.5 cm; thickness of frame c. 0.6 cm. – Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. no. 80c 4.



Fig. 134. Plaque, ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 12.2; W: 6 cm. There are traces of red and gold on the lower and upper left side and along the right side. – Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. no. 80c 6.



Fig. 135. Four ivory plaques mounted as a frame. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 41; W: 36.5 cm; thickness of the frame surrounding the figures c. 0.3-0.4; thickness at the highest point of the relief c. 1.5 cm. – Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. no. I. 6375.



Fig. 136. Detail on the right of fig. 135.

ences, all six have many features in common, and the general style and technique of carving are sufficiently similar to make a strong case for them having belonged together, all forming part of a single set.⁴¹ As discussed above, in my recent examination I found evidence of extensive gilding done over a bole – probably an original feature.

In relating them to the Berlin and Paris plaques, Migeon suggested that they were all part of the decoration of the same piece of furniture (a chest, he thought). Kühnel, similarly, considered that the plaques would decorate furniture, but not necessarily that all would be found on the same piece.⁴²

Some of the plaques have grooves incised in at

least two sides of their frames, as if they were meant to be fitted into another plaque or into a frame, perhaps in a different medium, that would house a “mosaic” of decorative plaques. Two of them also have one side shaved down at the back to form an angle, as if to be inserted into something else.⁴³ However, this appears to be a later alteration, and is unrelated to the grooves. As these, instead, are of the same colour as the rest, and uneven, I have no reason to doubt that they are original. Clearly not original, on the other hand, are some of the nail holes, which look relatively recent. Others appear to be much older, but it is impossible, without further investigation, to know whether they are original. If so – and



Fig. 137. Detail of the upper left corner of fig. 135.

Fig. 139. Detail of the upper right corner of fig. 135.

Fig. 138. Detail of the lower left corner of fig. 135.

Fig. 140. Detail of the lower right corner of fig. 135.

this would also apply to the clearly old holes in the Berlin and Paris plaques – it would suggest that the plaques in question were once nailed onto another object. Again, a piece of furniture seems likely, while another possibility might be a door or wall panel or even a column, on which they might have formed part of a frieze decoration perhaps including other ivory and wooden plaques.

The themes represented on the Bargello plaques

are connected with princely life, and include hunting scenes, agricultural scenes, musicians and dancers, and the prince – holding a bottle and a drinking cup – being entertained by a musician. These themes are also found together, in sequence, on the Berlin and Paris plaques, on the carved wooden panels that were once part of the decoration of the Fatimid palace,⁴⁴ and, separately, on other Fatimid material.



The Berlin and Paris Plaques

We cannot establish the original dimensions of these plaques: the Berlin pieces have been crudely cut and the Paris plaques are fragments (figs. 135-140 and 141-142).⁴⁵ It is quite clear that the Berlin plaques were cut in order to be assembled into a frame, the form in which they now appear in the museum. According to the information available, they were assembled in this way in the 19th century and the museum, which acquired them in 1936, has no record of their previous state.⁴⁶ At the centre of the 19th-century arrangement was a 14th-century Venetian miniature, part of a double frontispiece of a *mariegola* – the medieval Italian byelaws of a guild – that is now in Cleveland.⁴⁷

Eva Hoffman has argued that the 19th-century arrangement of the plaques around a miniature actually echoes their original function.⁴⁸ According to this interpretation, they constituted the outer frame of a book cover or frontispiece. Her discussion of the themes represented on the plaques is convincing, but although there are parallels to them in illuminated manuscript frontispieces, they are also ubiquitous themes that occur in various media and contexts. Without positive evidence to support the conclusion, the case for the plaques originally having been part of a book is problematic. Even with the Berlin plaques as they are now, the book would have been rather large – height 40.6 and width 36.5 cm – and of an odd, almost square format. Although we know of large books produced in the Islamic world, none of this size survives from the Fatimid period, and those we know from later periods are mostly Korans, whereas the secular nature of the representations on the plaques obviously points elsewhere. Further, the few large secular manuscripts existing today (albeit from no earlier than the 12th century) are decidedly rectangular in format, being comparable in height, but not in width, which does not usually exceed 28 cm.⁴⁹

Fig. 141. Plaque (fragmentary), ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 5.8; W: 21.2 cm. – Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 6266.

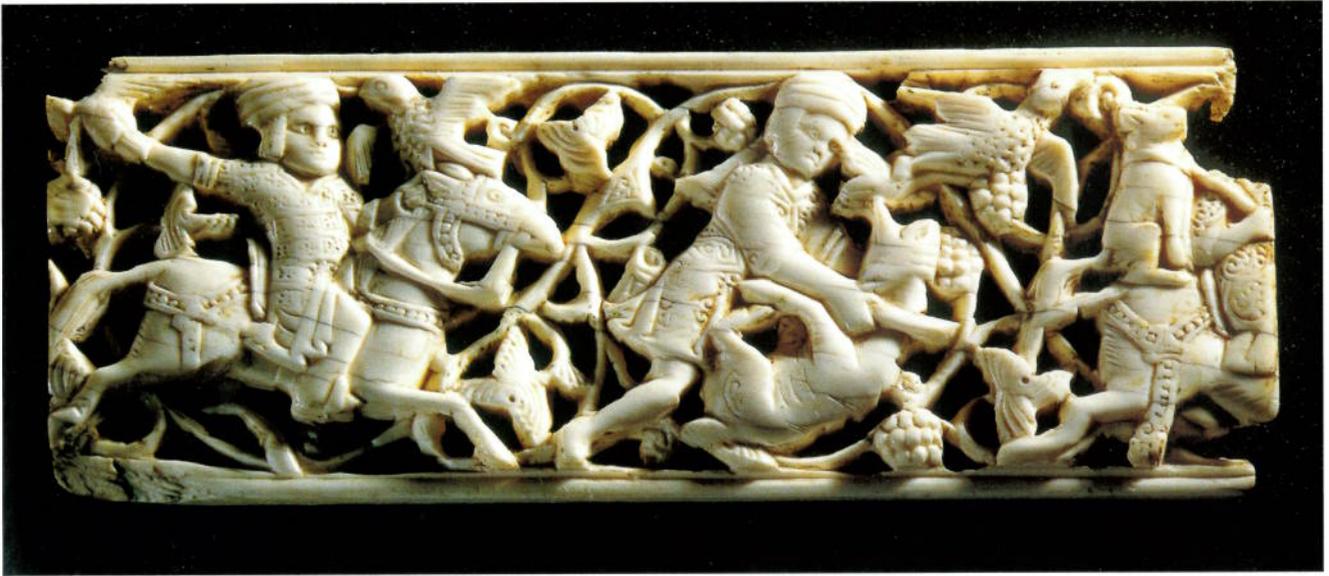


Fig. 142. Plaque (fragmentary), ivory. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 5.7-5.8; W: 15.5 cm. – Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 6265.

There is the added complication that the three related fragments in Paris would have to be viewed as part of a matching frame forming the other member of what would be a pair of front and back covers or double frontispiece. Nevertheless, we do have Byzantine evidence for ivory book covers, and Hoffman has hypothesized a double link: that of having precedents both for the idea of an ivory book cover and for what the iconographical scheme might have been, princely entertainment around the frame, with the figures on the plaques all looking inward to what could have been a representation of the prince himself in the centre.⁵⁰ However, the ivory book covers from the mid-Byzantine period are usually later arrangements, with the ivory being taken from objects such as diptychs, then cut and reassembled, retaining the holes and nails of the original assemblage.⁵¹ Similarly, the Berlin plaques have been cut to make them into a frame, something that runs counter to the idea that this was their original shape. In fact, it is quite clear that the horizontal ones have been cut in order to house the vertical ones, which have also had their upper frame (and probably also part of the carving) crudely cut away (fig. 139).

The fact that these plaques are carved in openwork may suggest that they were designed for light to come through. However, far from highlighting the

carvings, light coming from the back (fig. 143) would have reduced their impact. It is therefore more likely that they were set against a coloured background. On a book cover one may assume that this was coloured silk or leather, and on a frontispiece, presumably a painted strip. However, could the cover-like arrangement of the Berlin plaques – particularly if we recall their 19th-century manifestation as a frame around the *mariegola* miniature – in fact be keeping us from considering other contexts?

As with the Bargello plaques, they could have been part of a decorative frieze on a wall, column, or door panel, to be set together with other plaques, perhaps in wood. It is clear from the presumably original holes on most of them that nails were used to attach them to material beneath, and this would be consonant with such a hypothesis. But it would also accord with the traditional assumption in the literature that they were attached to a piece of furniture. This seems equally plausible, and it is possible to adduce suggestive analogies. Thus parallel to the chest/casket types proposed one may mention the so-called portable altar of San Millán de la Cogolla, which has long and short ivory plaques dated to the 10th century.⁵² Carved in relief with animals within roundels, they are inserted in the wooden base (originally the base of a piece of furniture), alternating



Fig. 143. Plaque, ivory, rear side of the piece shown on fig. 133.

with carved wooden plaques. Another type of furniture to be considered is a chair. The recent finds at Humayma from the Abbasid period (early 9th century) include carved ivory plaques related to the iconography of princely life, and the fact that two of these are curved (figs. 1 and 5) suggests that they may have been used to decorate a chair.⁵³ A possible ana-

logy is provided by the Cathedra of Maximian (6th century), a Byzantine chair or throne in Ravenna that has carved ivory plaques – admittedly not in openwork – stuck on both the outside and the inside,⁵⁴ including curved plaques at its back (fig. 48). But there is also the so-called Cathedra of St. Peter, from the 9th century,⁵⁵ which has long and straight (rather than curved) ivory plaques inserted in the wooden structure. These are carved in openwork and represent animals and humans within roundels, thus providing an even closer parallel to our plaques.

Whatever the nature of the object with which they were originally associated, the plaques remain a masterpiece of ivory carving. Their Fatimid identity and early-11th-century date are established through comparisons of subject, style, and technique with other works of confirmed Fatimid provenance, especially the carved wooden panels from the “Fatimid Western Palace” that were reused in the Maristan of Qalawun at the end of the 13th century. The repertoire of figures includes animals, hunters, musicians, riders, and drinkers, but it is important to note that the similarities go beyond this to include the particular ways in which they are arranged, these, too, being common to both ivory and wood.

Carving Technique

Further, there are important similarities in carving technique, and it seems to me that here, especially, a rather clear distinction can be made between Fatimid Egyptian manufacture and contemporary ivories from elsewhere around the Mediterranean basin. Whether in wood or ivory, Fatimid work – both plaques and other pieces – includes carving on two levels: a low relief of interlacing scrolls constituting the background, and a higher relief with the main motifs. The innovatory nature of this technique is shown by the way it contrasts with the earlier Coptic tradition,⁵⁶ where the carving is on one level and the designs are variations on the trefoil vine leaf with the stems sometimes framing animal figures, such as birds and lions, or other vegetal elements, as on a panel in the Los Angeles County Museum (fig. 144).

The Abbasid plaques excavated at Humayma have a bevelled cut that leaves broad flat areas (figs. 1 and 5), but also a sharp cut similar to the stucco decoration found at Raqqa (and up to a point also at Samarra and Nishapur).⁵⁷ None of them has a two-level cut relief, and the Humayma plaques also contrast with the Fatimid ones in that the surrounding frames are at the same level as the highest relief.⁵⁸

Two-level carving lived on into the early Mamluk period (late 13th and early 14th century), as shown by four ivory plaques in the British Museum from a building commissioned by al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun (r. 1293-1341);⁵⁹ by the carved wooden tiles from the minbar of the mosque of Ibn Tulun⁶⁰ from the time of Sultan al-Malik al-Mansur Husam al-Din Lajin (r. 1297-1298); and, in another medium, by the V&A marble basin dated 1277.⁶¹ This later material is no longer figural, but Rachel Ward regards a pair of slim, figural, carved ivory plaques in the British Museum that have received various attributions (from Coptic to late-medieval Coptic, 13th-century Sicilian, and 16th-century Persian) as 14th-century Mamluk, possibly from Syria.⁶² If so, we would have important evidence here for the continuation into the Mamluk period of figural ivory carving in a tradition similar to the Fatimid one. Differences in size nevertheless remain (the British Museum's pieces being much more slender and thinner than all the others) along with technical differences. These later plaques are not carved through, and the main figures are only slightly raised from their background of vegetal scrolls. If they are Mamluk – and I think that on stylistic grounds there is a strong possibility of this – they are early. As for their function, Ward suggests that they most probably constitute part of a frame, perhaps part of the frame of a book cover, just as Hoffman thinks is the case with the Berlin and Paris plaques.

But two-layer carving is by no means the only characteristic of the Fatimid plaques. Technically we find a considerable variety of cuts. As shown by other pieces as well as the plaques, we still encounter a round bevelled cut that leaves relatively large, flat areas in between as well as a sharp cut, a slanting cut, a two-level relief cut, and undercutting. Some of



Fig. 144. Coptic panel, ivory, carved in relief on one level. Egypt, 8th century. H: 10.79; W: 6.35 cm. – Los Angeles County Museum, The Madina Collection of Islamic Art, gift of Camilla Chandler Frost, inv. no. M.2002.1.521.

these carving techniques are found in wood, which also shows stylistic and iconographic features that are peculiarly Fatimid and very close to those of the plaques. Although the very broad and rounded effects produced by bevelling in Abbasid and Tulu- nid carving⁶³ are no longer found, bevelling is still used, for example on the panels from the Maristan.⁶⁴ Sometimes it is combined with a rather deep and sharp cut, and here a panel in the Louvre shows striking similarities to the ivory plaques (fig. 145).⁶⁵ A peculiarly Fatimid characteristic, again found on both ivory and wood, is a combination of deep in-

cision and bevelled edge followed by a wide, fairly flat area. On the plaques, for example, the relief is deep, at times with relatively flat, broader areas curving down at the edges (fig. 146; the thickness of the internal surrounding frame is c. 0.3–0.4 cm and that of the outer frame usually 0.5 cm, whereas the relief has a maximum thickness of 1.5 cm). This is also a feature that distinguishes these Fatimid pieces from the Spanish ivory containers.

Another technical device has a Byzantine connection. A feature common not only to the Berlin, Paris, and Florence plaques but also to most of the other Fatimid carved ivories not in openwork is the use of a technique that, according to Anthony Cutler, was developed by 10th-century ivory workers in Constantinople.⁶⁶ This sets the outer extremities of figures and objects at the same level as the contiguous bevelled inner edges of the frame, as with the feet of the hares and head of the bird on the V&A's ivory plaque,⁶⁷ or in the corner piece in Berlin (fig. 147). The reason for adopting it, as Cutler explains, is primarily that it was technically advantageous, avoiding weak points and consequent breakage.⁶⁸ However, it also has the aesthetic benefit of giving a more unified effect to the whole composition.

As expected, this feature is also found in Fatimid woodwork, as in the panels in the V&A, which are identical to those found in Cairo from the Fatimid period, inserted into doors, as discussed by Michael Meinecke,⁶⁹ or in the series of wooden friezes once decorating the Fatimid palace, as a fragment in Berlin demonstrates (fig. 148). As I have suggested elsewhere, the similarities in technique, style, and iconography that we encounter in Fatimid ivory and wooden objects point to them having been made in workshops in the same area, if not by the same craftsmen.⁷⁰

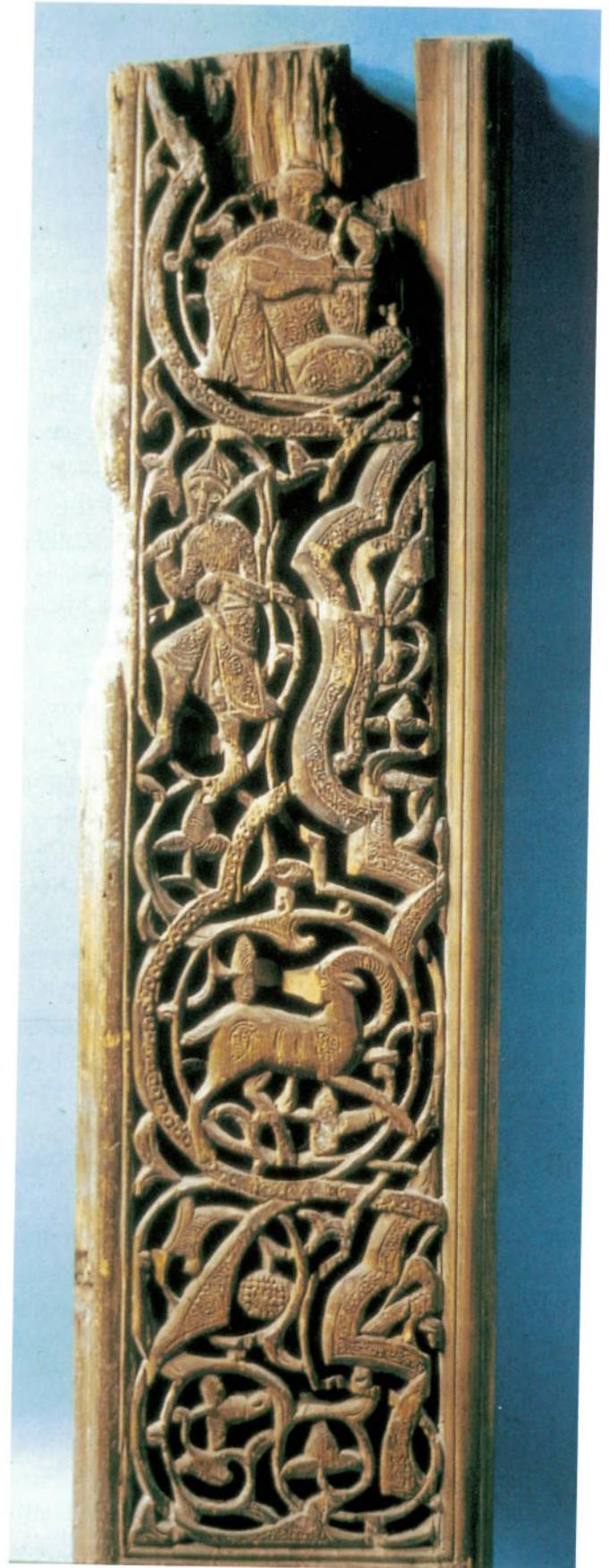


Fig. 145. Fragmentary plaque, wood, carved on two levels. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. – Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 4062.



Fig. 146. Berlin plaque, ivory, oblique view to show levels of relief. Detail of fig. 136.

The Oliphants

A discussion of Fatimid ivories cannot ignore the oliphants. On stylistic grounds, Kühnel assigns a group of oliphants and carved caskets to Muslim craftsmen working in southern Italy, while David Ebitz also generally considers them to be of southern



Fig. 147. Corner piece, ivory, carved on two levels. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century. H: 11; W: 5.5 cm. – Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. no. I. 5986.

Italian origin, although he argues that some could be Venetian.⁷¹ However, none of the oliphants they cite first turned up in Italy, which is what one would expect if they were made there. If anything, one would be forced to conclude that they were made for export, luxury objects that were traded rather than given as princely gifts. However, Richard Camber



Fig. 148. Fragment of a frieze, wood, carved on two levels. Fatimid Egypt, 11th century, probably once part of the decorative scheme of the Fatimid palace. H: 17; W: 29.5 cm. – Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. no. I 26/61.

has made a preliminary map of the earliest spots where the oliphants that have been thought to be of southern Italian origin were found and, interestingly, they seem to be linked to the river network of the Rhone and its tributaries, which suggests that they were being imported from the Mediterranean.⁷² If so, consideration of style and type of cut points to the possibility that some of them might in fact be Fatimid.

Avinoam Shalem has already suggested that at least some of the oliphants with bands of carving and faceted bodies, for example the one in Aachen,⁷³ could be Fatimid, from the 11th century. I would agree with this hypothesis on the grounds that the repertoire of figures and their style is consonant with such an attribution, and the type of cut already mentioned – with deep, round edges and broad surfaces, and in some cases on two levels – relates them closely to Fatimid material.

Fatimid and Spanish Ivories: What Connections?

Such characteristics stand in marked contrast to those of the masterpieces produced in caliphal Spain in the 10th and early 11th centuries. If we start with the earliest of the pyxides, the Zamora pyxis, now in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, dated

964 and ordered by the Caliph al-Hakam for his wife (cat. no. 4), we can see that although already a highly original piece, it has quite a strong Byzantine connection.⁷⁴ If we then move to the al-Mughira pyxis of 968 (cat. no. 11) and the Pamplona casket of 1004-1005 (cat. no. 20), we see how they suggest the development of a style that is more local and can consequently be distinguished from the Fatimid. The decorative vocabulary and the iconographic elements may be similar, but the style is decidedly not, especially when it comes to human figures. Further, the technique of cutting is different, producing a more sculptural quality on the pyxis, and a sharper, but flatter and more static style on other material like the Pamplona casket (e.g. cat. no. 20c). Such features point instead to connections between the Spanish ivories and Christian Spanish art and other Umayyad Spanish carved material, especially in marble and stucco (figs. 38, 39, and 105).⁷⁵

If we move later into the 11th century, with ivories produced in Cuenca during the period of the Taifas – such as the Palencia casket dated 1049-1050 (cat. no. 29) – we find stylistic elements that still relate them to Cordovan pieces, but the technique of carving is quite different. Indeed, according to Gómez-Moreno,⁷⁶ the Andalusian characteristics start to weaken until the few (and poorer-quality) pieces datable to the 12th century can be defined as Gothic in parallel with the French ivories. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish Spanish from French pieces.

There is not a great deal of documentation pointing to contacts between Fatimid Egypt and Spain with regard to ivory objects, especially in this early period.⁷⁷ The sources mention with a certain degree of detail various items of commerce – textiles, spices, etc. – but they very rarely mention ivory. The main instances occur in the Geniza documents, which talk about ivory inlay for trunks and stools, together with wood and mother-of-pearl, and of ivory kohl jars for the “rich bride”,⁷⁸ and al-Maqrizi reports that caskets of ivory, both rectangular and round, were mentioned by the *cadi* Ibn Zubayr as part of the dispersed Fatimid treasury.⁷⁹

But however interesting these scanty references

might be, they do not really tell us anything specific about trade between Egypt and Spain, and therefore shed no light on the possible transfer of styles and techniques. Furthermore, the stylistic differences between the ivory objects produced in Umayyad Spain and those in Fatimid Egypt certainly suggest independent traditions of workmanship.

Much later, however, in the 14th century, we find a certain amount of documentation relating to trade between Egypt and Spain and the Balearic Islands. For example, a document in the Archivio Datini in Prato, dated November 10, 1388, contains a list of the cargo loaded onto a ship in Alexandria bound for Barcelona that contains "7 pondi d'avorio" (c. 2.1 kg).⁸⁰ However, the ship arrived in Barcelona four months later (March 1, 1389), which obviously implies that it stopped at various points en route, so there is no way of knowing whether the ivory was destined for Barcelona.⁸¹

In his early-14th-century treatise *Pratica della Mercatura*, Balducci Pegolotti also reports that among the things sold in Majorca were "avorio d'ogni ragione, e denti di liofante" (ivory of all sorts, and elephant tusks), and that in Arsilia (Morocco) ivory was sold for half a "dobra d'oro".⁸² Pegolotti also states specifically that elephant tusks were sold in Acre, Alexandria, Cyprus (Famagosta), and Venice.⁸³

Fragmentary as it is, such evidence could conceivably reflect an increase of trade in ivory, and this would certainly make sense in relation to the revival of ivory workmanship around the Mediterranean in the 14th century. This included an ivory-working revival in Egypt, and the Mamluks were the main providers of African ivory for the European market.⁸⁴ The increase in supply, as I have pointed out elsewhere, may have stimulated the production of objects in ivory, especially in centres like Spain, where there had been a long and important tradition of ivory workmanship.⁸⁵

But the general evolution of Spanish manufacture is still one of increasing stylistic and technical differentiation when compared with Egyptian. Despite the high volume of trade across the Mediterranean, such international connections do not necessarily betoken the acquisition of techniques and styles from else-

where, and just as with Mamluk Egypt later, evidence for it is in fact conspicuously absent.⁸⁶

Iconography

The iconography we have seen on the Fatimid plaques is that of princely life, with court scenes, servants occupied in their activities, hunting, and the prince drinking and being entertained by musicians and dancers. This iconography is also found in the paintings of the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo⁸⁷ and the Cathedral of Cefalù,⁸⁸ and on the lustre-painted pottery of the Fatimid period.⁸⁹ The realistic elements in the portrayal of these scenes may be related to the survival of an uninterrupted Classical-Hellenistic tradition in Fatimid Egypt, of whose iconographic repertoire they sometimes make direct use.⁹⁰

An interesting example is found on two of the Florence plaques, those showing agricultural and hunting scenes (figs. 131 and 133), which have a strong thematic affiliation with the stone carvings of the labours of the months on the portal of St. Mark's in Venice. These carvings are dated to the mid-13th century, which led Rice to hypothesize a mid-13th-century date for the plaques as well.⁹¹ But it is now accepted that much of the iconography of the portal cycle on St. Mark's is based on Byzantine sources, which in turn are based on earlier imagery, although some scholars play down Byzantine mediation and favour a more direct connection with ancient cycles in a sort of "Classical revival".⁹² If this is correct, the iconography on our plaques could come from a source in Late Antiquity. However, these scenes, in particular the scene with a man carrying a heavy basket full of grapes (?) tied with a strap whose ends he is holding in his hands (fig. 131), is to be found in other Fatimid material, textiles, and lustre-painted ceramics in particular.⁹³ This suggests that, however mediated, such scenes had become quite widely diffused.

What, then, might a summary of Fatimid connections with other Mediterranean areas be? Above all, tentative. So much remains unclear, and in the

absence of compelling evidence different interpretations can often be argued with equal force. But if a less equivocal statement had to be ventured, it might be that what resemblances there are suggest stronger links with late Classical and Byzantine styles than with Spanish ones. Nevertheless, despite the evidence

for contacts and – whether we consider function, iconography, or carving technique – the inevitable occurrence of parallels with pieces produced elsewhere, the more complex Egyptian Fatimid ivories represent a stylistic synthesis that is quite distinctive.

1. Kühnel 1971. The Fatimid material is cat. nos. 88-130, pls. XCVII-CIII.
2. Kühnel 1971, p. 24.
3. However, there is some discussion of these in Kühnel 1925, pp. 196-198, figs. 164-166. A fuller treatment is found in Monneret de Villard 1938. The "Siculo-Arabic" ivories have received more attention: see Cott 1939; Ferrandis 1935-1940; Pinder-Wilson and Brooke 1973 and Pinder-Wilson 1977. I am grateful to Ralph Pinder-Wilson for discussing various aspects of the material included in this article.
4. Kühnel 1971, cat. nos. 9, 10, 10A, and 11. See, however, Pinder-Wilson and Brooke 1973, pp. 233-234 and pl. LXXXIVa, for the elephant in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Contadini 1995, Appendix I, no. 10 and fig. 47 for chess pieces in the British Museum, London. For other pieces of the same type now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Qatar, see Doha 2004, cat. nos. 3 and 4. Regarding the chess piece (Kühnel 1971, cat. no. 13), we know now that this belongs to a type that emerged later, in the 15th century. The conclusion of a later dating was made on the basis of stylistic analyses (part of what I have called style set B) and has been confirmed by carbon dating on a very similar piece in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. See Contadini 1995, p. 118 and fig. 9, as well as p. 139, cat. no. 7 and fig. 22. For other ivory chess and gaming pieces, dice, and draughts, see Contadini 1995, which is based primarily on the holdings in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait. See also Pinder-Wilson and Brooke 1973, pp. 233-234; Contadini in Venice 1993, cat. no. 6, pp. 71-72 for the Venafro chess pieces, 10th-11th century; Contadini 1994 for a figurative chess piece to be assigned to the 8th-9th century. For other Fatimid ivory pieces and the general question of the relationship of Fatimid carved ivory to carved wood, see Contadini 1998, pp. 109-113. For Fustat material, see below, notes 8, 10, and 14. One deeply carved, fragmentary piece in the British Museum – A.13-1934 with a hare among scrolls and foliage – is pre-Fatimid, but is extremely interesting as it is a possible example of the trend from which Fatimid carving evolved.
5. Kühnel 1971, p. 24.
6. Kühnel 1971, cat. no. 128.
7. Enderlein 1980, pp. 559-560. I am grateful to Jens Kröger for pointing out this review to me and to Mina Moraitou for the information about the Benaki analyses. These have shown that the date of the ivory has a 72% probability of being between 1810 and 1920, and a 24% probability of being between 1690 and 1730.
8. Scanlon 1981, p. 65 and fig. 21, for the carved ivory tile; Scanlon 1966, p. 104, fig. 14, for the ivory dish in the shape of a bird.
9. Kahle 1935, pp. 354 and 348, based on al-Maqrizi 1967-1973.
10. As e.g. a rectangular die and a draught, both excavated at Fustat, in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, acc. nos. EA 1974.64 and EA 1974-65, respectively; Contadini 1995, cat. nos. 13 and 15, figs. 34 and 36. For others, see Contadini 1995, Appendix II.
11. Specifically two rooks, one with two horns at the top, each inlaid with black "eyes", probably mastic, c. 11th century, acc. no. X3320, the other with two horns at the top with five deep ridges running vertically down between them and traces of a dark red colour, acc. no. X3316, 8th to 9th century; Contadini 1995, cat. no. 8, fig. 25, and cat. no. 9, fig. 26, respectively.
12. Contadini 1995, especially the catalogue at pp. 139-140.
13. A wonderful representation of the manufacture of dice and chess pieces is to be found in Alfonso X's *Libro del Ajedrez, tablas y dados*, dated 1283, San Lorenzo del Escorial, Biblioteca Real, MS T.I.6, fols. 3r and 65v, reproduced in Contadini 1995, figs. 8 and 39.
14. From Fustat, see e.g. a number of carved bone plaques, carved bone inlays, and bone dolls, all datable to about

- the 8th-9th century; Scanlon 1973, pp. 18-19 and figs. 19 a-e; Scanlon 1974, p. 83 and pl. XXX, figs. 2 a-b; Scanlon 1980, fig. 10 (fragment of a small carved bone lid with incised decoration). See also Scanlon 1968, p. 16, for the "Coptic dolls". Carved bone pieces are to be found in many collections. Some interesting and high-quality material is also in the Los Angeles County Museum's Madina Collection. I am grateful to Linda Komaroff and Jaclynne Kerner for showing this material to me and for the time spent in discussing it.
15. For the use of small bone pieces inserted as mosaic decoration together with wooden plaques, see e.g. the Kutubiyya minbar: Bloom et al. 1998, p. 21 and note 36, as well as Jonathan Bloom's contribution in this publication. For a hippopotamus tusk hoard found in Gao most probably for export to the Maghreb and possibly Spain, see Insoll 2003, p. 241 and fig. 5.12.
 16. Several Islamic ivory objects in the V&A were examined by Olga Krzyszkowska, Timothy Insoll, and myself. I selected both Islamic and medieval European pieces: a few late Mamluk plaques proved to be of bone, but all the other objects were of elephant ivory. For the provenance of the ivory, see also Avinoam Shalem's contribution in this publication.
 17. Amador de los Rios 1877, p. 533; Robinson 1881, cat. no. 43; Lisbon 1882, cat. no. 26; Williams 1907, pp. 95-96; Migeon 1927, vol. 1, p. 355, fig. 167; Ferrandis 1935-1940, no. 9; London 1976, p. 151, cat. no. 145; Bloom 1985, pl. 5; Bloom 1997, fig. 2; Blair 1998, no. 13.81; Contadini 1998, p. 10, fig. 5.
 18. It is said that the green is a later addition, but further study is needed to ascertain whether the red and the gilding are original. See Torelli 1924-1925, p. 305; Ozzola 1950, p. 61, no. 239, fig. 280, attributed to India, 16th century; Toesca 1974, attributed to a generic Islamic sphere; Pastore in Vienna 2004, pp. 209-211, no. 42, attributed to Spain, 10th-11th century.
 19. Sheila Blair reads the first name as Ahmad. See note 110 in her contribution in this publication.
 20. Contadini 1998, p. 10 and Chapter 2.
 21. Bloom 1997, pp. 20-21. For the inscription, see *RCEA*, V, 1934, p. 89, no. 1811; also Lévi-Provençal 1931a, no. 210.
 22. Pinder-Wilson 1960.
 23. The box is stained ivory, with the pattern scraped away. The decoration is divided into three panels divided by narrow upright bands each cut with three leaves; the panels have a stunted tree, an inverted S-shaped pattern, and a double anthemion. The bottom of the box, which was turned from a separate piece of ivory, has a geometrical pattern. The cover is missing. I am grateful to Mariam Rosser-Owen for help with this and other material from the V&A.
 24. Monneret de Villard 1938, p. 15.
 25. Marçais 1928.
 26. Flury 1920, especially pp. 35, 40, and 43.
 27. *Survey of Persian Art*, p. 2661, pl. 1435A. The elephant in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence (inv. no. 63c), is now generally considered 9th-10th-century Iraqi for stylistic reasons. See Kühnel 1971, cat. no. 14; Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979, fig. 549; Contadini 1995, p. 113, fig. 2.
 28. Monneret de Villard 1938, p. 15. For al-Qazwini's text, see Wüstenfeld 1848, p. 273.
 29. Albizzati and Becherucci 1958, for Mesopotamian and other ancient ivories; Wilkinson 1975 for the Ziwiyeh ivories. For the ivory tusks on the reliefs at Persepolis, see Dutz and Matheson 1998, pp. 49-50, with picture and drawings.
 30. The box was considered in an article by von Falke, who thought that it could be Sassanian; see Falke 1928. The box is also referred to by Shalem 2004b, p. 124, fig. 9.10 and note 15, where the bibliographical reference to Brussels 1971, cat. no. 56, is also given. I am grateful to Avinoam Shalem for having discussed this point with me and for sending me a copy of his then unpublished article.
 31. Wilkinson 1943 for the chess pieces and Wilkinson 1986, no. 4.14, for the make-up palette.
 32. Foote 1999, p. 428. I am grateful to Rebecca Foote for discussing the Humayma ivories with me.
 33. As found on the casket in the Treasury of the Cathedral in Veroli and that in the Museo Diocesano in Trento: see Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979, figs. 485-488 and figs. 608-610, respectively.
 34. For example the ones in Veroli, in *The Cloisters* in New York, and in the Cathedral Treasury of Halberstadt: see Pinder-Wilson and Brooke 1973, pp. 180 and 187 and pls. LXI and LXXI a and b, respectively. For Fatimid parallels of both facial features and style of clothing, see the fragment on paper with the representation of a human being in the Keir Collection, and the figure represented in a lustre-painted bowl in the Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11119. See Robinson (ed.) 1976, no. I.ii. and col. pl. 1, and Philon 1980, col. pl. XXIII, respectively.
 35. See e.g. the box datable to the 11th century in Kuwait (cat. no. 23), as well as the caliphal ivory panel in New York (cat. no. 24) and the Nasrid box in Zaragoza (fig. 124). The Tortosa encrusted casket has traces of gilding. See New York 1992, cat. no. 51; Contadini 2000b, p. 61.

36. For colour on ivory, see Connor 1998, but also Cutler 1998b, which is a review of Connor's book, pointing out how much of the colour on ivory might actually be a later addition.
37. V&A, inv. no. 216-1865, H: 11.2; W: 40.5; D: 16 cm. See Cutler in New York 1997, cat. no. 153.
38. Haase 2003, p. 103, fig. 6.
39. For example, the splendid gilded and painted comb in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz, inv. no. I. 6376, H: 12.6; W: 12.3 cm, Sicily (?), 12th-13th century.
40. Migeon 1927, vol. I, p. 341.
41. The plaque in fig. 130 is the only one oriented horizontally. The high parts of the relief are higher than the frame. The plaque in fig. 131 is "cleaner" than the others and only minimal traces of the reddish substance and of gold are found. The long left side of this plaque is cut back diagonally and the two shorter sides have grooves incised. The plaque in fig. 133 has also been "cleaned" so that traces of gold are minimal. The long left side of this plaque is cut back diagonally and the two shorter sides have grooves incised. For these plaques, see Supino 1898, p. 221, no. 80; Kühnel 1971, cat. no. 90; Curatola and Spallanzani 1989, pp. 353-354, no. 145; Contadini 2000a, p. 132 and pls. on pp. 134-135. For further references about reproductions of the plaques, see Venice 1993, cat. no. 63. I am indebted to Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi of the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, for permission to study the Fatimid plaques during a research visit in June 2004.
42. Kühnel 1971, cat. nos. 88-90.
43. These are figs. 131 and 133.
44. See the discussion in Contadini 1998, pp. 110-113.
45. For both the Berlin and the Paris plaques, see Kühnel 1971, cat. nos. 88 and 89, with previous bibliographical references, and pls. XCVII and XCVIII; also London 1976, p. 154, no. 151. For the Berlin plaques alone, see Alexander (ed.) 1996, vol. 2, no. 99, with full bibliographical references. For the Paris plaques alone, see Migeon 1927, fig. 148; also Paris 1977, p. 180, cat. no. 384, and Paris 1989, cat. no. 180. I should like to thank Claus-Peter Haase and Jens Kröger at the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin, who, in July 2003, allowed me to study the ivory plaques in much detail as well as other ivory and wood material in their care. I have since been corresponding with Jens Kröger and have benefited greatly from his knowledge and sound observations. I am grateful to Sophie Makariou at the Musée du Louvre for her help with the Paris plaques and other material.
46. On the acquisition by the Berlin Museum, see Jens Kröger's contribution in this volume.
47. For this particular *mariegola*, see Wixom 1961.
48. Hoffman 1998.
49. For a wide variety of examples, see Paris 2001, which also gives the measurements of the manuscripts discussed.
50. Hoffman 1998, p. 411.
51. See e.g. New York 1997, cat. nos. 303 and 304.
52. Gómez-Moreno 1951, p. 407, fig. 478. It is interesting to note that in this case, the ivory plaques that have a vertical orientation have actually been placed horizontally.
53. Foote 2003, p. 60.
54. For the Cathedra of Maximian (dated between 546 and 553), see e.g. Morath 1940; Campanati 1990, cat. no. 98. The same date is also accepted now for all the plaques, the differences being the result of different but contemporary hands. I am grateful to Anthony Cutler and John Lowden for discussing this point with me and for bibliographical references. Anthony Cutler has also been very generous in sharing his knowledge of Byzantine ivories as well as aspects of technique, and I have greatly benefited from our correspondence during the course of my research for this article. Migeon 1927, vol. I, p. 341, had already made the point that these plaques might have been used on a chair similar to the Cathedra of Maximian.
55. Volbach 1976, no. 260, pls. 114-116, with earlier bibliographical references. More recently see Nees 1991, colour pls. II and III.
56. See examples in Labib 1956.
57. Heusch and Meinecke 1989 for Raqqa; Herzfeld 1923 for Samarra; Wilkinson 1986 for Nishapur.
58. Foote 1999, p. 425.
59. Ward 2002, pl. 26.3.
60. These are now scattered in various collections around the world, including a big panel at the V&A (inv. no. 391-1884). See Lane-Poole 1886, figs. 36-40; also Paris 1977, cat. no. 77; Venice 1993, cat. no. 167; Folsach 2001, cat. no. 431.
61. V&A, inv. no. 335-1903. See Migeon 1927, fig. 84.
62. Ward 2002 and particularly p. 249 for her list of past attributions of the British Museum plaques.
63. As in examples from Samarra and Tulunid Egypt. See e.g. a panel in the British Museum, inv. no. 1944.5 13.3, London 1976, cat. no. 431, and one in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, Pauty 1931, pp. 26-27. See also Ettinghausen 1952 on the diffusion of the "bevelled style".
64. Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, inv. nos. 4061, 4062, 3554, 4128; Pauty 1931, p. 44 and pls. XXXVII and XXXIX.

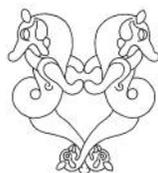
65. Anglade 1988, no. 32.
66. Cutler 1998a, p. 645.
67. Contadini 1998, col. pl. 50.
68. See Anthony Cutler's contribution in this publication, p. 42.
69. Meinecke 1991; Contadini 1998, pp. 111-113 and pls. 51 and 52A-E.
70. Contadini 1998, p. 113.
71. Kühnel 1971; Ebitz 1986, with references to earlier publications on oliphants by this author.
72. I am grateful to Richard Camber, who has shared his preliminary work with me.
73. Shalem 1996, pp. 103-106; Kühnel 1971, cat. no. 55, pls. XLVIII and XLIX.
74. In the words of Gómez-Moreno (Gómez-Moreno 1927, p. 234), the one scholar to discuss the sources of Spanish ivories, it demonstrates an "arte de espléndida riqueza ornamental, ... nada oriental puede equipararse, aunque de lejos la inspirasen otros marfiles bizantinos".
75. See the discussion and detailed photos and drawings of the reliefs from the Salón Rico at Madinat al-Zahra in Ewert 1995. The connection with Spanish Christian art has been clearly made by Beckwith 1960, who also points to an Eastern (Abbasid and Sassanian) connection.
76. Gómez-Moreno 1927, pp. 241-243.
77. Goitein 1967-1993; Constable 1994.
78. Goitein 1967-1993: 1983, vol. IV, pp. 130, 138, and 224.
79. al-Maqrizi 1895-1906, I, p. 414.
80. Spallanzani 1978, p. 146. I am grateful to Marco Spallanzani for having discussed matters of ivory trade in the Mediterranean with me.
81. Although according to Goitein in discussing the 11th and 12th centuries, "there must have been enough merchants in Egypt who had dealings with Spain and Morocco, to the exclusion of Tunisia and Sicily, to justify the establishment of direct shipping lines between Alexandria and the ports of Spain". Goitein 1967-1993: 1967, vol. I, p. 213.
82. Pegolotti 1936, pp. 123 and 277.
83. Pegolotti 1936, pp. 63, 69, 78, and 141.
84. Esin Atıl in Washington 1981, pp. 210-211.
85. Contadini in Venice 1993, cat. no. 32, pp. 115-116, with a discussion and bibliography on the group of cylindrical ivory boxes with a flat lid, pierced decoration, and inscriptions, and note 9 in particular for peculiarities of the script that may link it to Spain. For a discussion of a possible Egyptian provenance, see Esin Atıl in Washington 1981, p. 197. On this group of boxes, see also Stefano Carboni's contribution in this volume.
86. Contadini 1999, especially pp. 1-2; Irwin 2003, outlining the extremely complex ethnic composition of the Mamluks, who included numerous Europeans, though they were mostly renegades and employed in the army. Later, if any connections with European art can be made, they must be seen largely as an Ottoman Turkish phenomenon. I am grateful to Robert Irwin for granting me access to his then unpublished paper, Irwin 2004b.
87. Monneret de Villard 1950.
88. Gelfer-Jørgensen 1986.
89. Philon 1980.
90. Ettinghausen 1942 and Grabar 1972 for different aspects of "realism" in Fatimid art; Ettinghausen 1956 for the diffusion of the "bevelled" style; Grube 1962; Grube 1976 and Grube 1984 for both the tradition behind the Fatimid style and a convincing counter argument to "realism" in Fatimid art.
91. Rice 1954.
92. Demus et al. 1995, p. 134; for colour illustrations see Tigler 1995. See also Stern 1954 and Stern 1963.
93. Grube 1985.

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