413 Bowl painted in blue, turquoise, sage-green, purple and black under a transparent glaze
Height 28cm, diameter 42cm
Godman Collection, England
Turkey (Iznik 'Damascus' type), Ottoman period, about 1550

The features which most distinguish the 'Damascus' style from the preceding 'Abraham of Kutsabya' style are the free designs, tending towards naturalism, and the use of rich polychromy. The style starts somewhere in the 1520s when turquoise and sage-green are found, and naturalistic flower designs appear. By the mid-16th century, black and manganese purple are added to achieve the richest palette ever used by Iznik potters. Characteristic of this period are the tulips and daffodils flowers which appear in this bowl in a natural setting, and the small panels of black arabesques under a turquoise wash. It may be that designs for these wares were supplied by court artists as similar forms are also found on textiles and carpets of the period.

Published: Godman (1971, pl. LII-LII, no. 123), Lane (1976, pl. 32 and 1977b, p. 276, fig. 44)

414 Dish painted in blue, green, black and red under a transparent glaze
Diameter 28cm
Staatliche Muscheck Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin-Dahlem, no. 1, 5370
Turkey (Iznik, 'Rhodian' type), Ottoman period, second half 16th century

The 'Rhodian' style of Iznik developed out of the 'Damascus' style in about 1560. The change is seen in the colours: the subtle sage-green and manganese purple of the former group are replaced by grass-green and the famous Armenian bole red, a brightly coloured clay slip that is applied in perceptible relief. This gives the best pieces a brilliance never before achieved in ceramic decoration. The mixture of naturalistic flowers with stylized floral motifs, cloud scrolls and other abstract designs is a common feature of these wares.

Published: Kühnel (1970, fig. 121), Berlin-Dahlem (1976, no. 119)

415 Vase painted in red, blue, green and black under a transparent glaze
Height 18.5cm
Godman Collection, England, formerly in the Griffiths St. Lawrence Collection
Turkey (Iznik 'Rhodian' type), Ottoman period, second half 16th century

The work here consists of the neck and shoulders, perhaps to act as a flower vase or container for pot-pourri. The base is marked with a long-stemmed 'T' intersecting with a 'S', resembling a mark found on Italian maiolica. It is possible that this piece was made for export to Italy for such trade is indicated by copies in maiolica of Iznik wares.

Published: Lane (1976, pp. 59-60, pl. 416)

418 Bottle painted in black, blue, green and red under a transparent glaze
Height 32.5cm
British Museum, London, no. 38

The motif of double cloud bands is found on textiles and carpets of the period, as well as on pottery vessels and tiles. This bottle illustrates the high standards of technical excellence that were often maintained even when the decoration itself was of a modest nature. The metal mounts are a later addition.

Unpublished

417 Jug painted in blue and turquoise under a transparent glaze
Height 13.2cm, width 14.5cm
State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, no. VII-206
Turkey (Iznik), Ottoman period, late 16th-early 17th century

Originally with a neck and handle similar to no. 410. While polychrome painting is indicative of later Iznik periods the restricted blue and white palette does not necessarily place a piece in the earlier 'Abraham of Kutsabya' class. The smoother and more typically ceramic shape and the repeating cloud pattern of this piece indicate a relatively late date. The repeat pattern is derived from textiles.

Published: Miller (1975, illustration p. 143)

416 Dish painted in red, blue, green and black under a transparent glaze
Diameter 30.5cm
Godman Collection, England
Turkey (Iznik 'Rhodian' type), Ottoman period, second half 16th century

An example of a group characterised by an all over fish-scale pattern. The cruciform design formed by the cypress sprays and green scales may be read as four fish against a background of blue water.

Published: Godman (1951, no. 119, pl. LVIII)
219 Tankard painted in blue with red touches under a transparent glaze
Height 15cm
Godman Collection, England
Turkey (?zinc ‘Rhinou’ type)
Ottoman period, late 16th or 17th century
The inscription reads
Dâr-e dûnd bîr musâfirîn bîn [la] dîr Gîçî [âqîbî]/gîçî meyn[î] dîns dîns [sic] dir
"The house of the world is an inn. Who does not see [that he must move] on is mad."
This piece shows the standard form of the Iznik tankard (or possibly vase) of
the second half of the 16th century or later. Its curious angular flat
handle betrays a wooden or possibly leather prototype. It is most unusual for
vessels of the ‘Damascus’ or ‘Rhinou’ Iznik type to bear inscriptions, hence the particular
interest of this piece.
Published: London (1958, p. 55, no. 444);
Godman (1961, no. 81, pl. LXX)

240 Tile panel painted in blue, turquoise, green and red under a transparent glaze
Height 75cm, width 360cm
Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian,
Lisbon, no. 1528
Turkey (Iznik ‘Rhinou’ type)
Ottoman period, second half 16th century
This panel was possibly removed from the mosque of Ïlyas Pasha in
Istanbul which was built in 1574.
Very similar panels reported to have come from this mosque are preserved
in other European collections. See, for example, Mignon (1971, pl. 42) for a panel
in the Louvre. From the mid-16th century onwards a great proportion of
the Iznik potteries’ output consisted of tile work which was used exten-
sively for the decorative decoration of buildings. Panels of this shape
would be set over doors or windows. Columns, walls and minarets
would be covered in similar tiling. Records are preserved which show that the
potters worked to the special order of the rulers to produce tiles for state
buildings. These tiles employed patterns supplied by court artists
which were executed on paper in Istanbul and then transferred onto
ceramic tiles in Iznik. This panel is closely allied in style to similar panels
made for Sinan’s mosque of Selim II in Edirne and the tomb of that
sovereign in Istanbul. The carefully planned design of curved leaves,
palmettes and ribbons. The cloud bands is typical of the high period of
Iznik production. Even when such tiles were mass-produced, their
quality was often extremely high.
Published: Lisbon (1963, no. 52)

241 Panel of underglazed painted tiles
Height 240cm, width (overall) 155cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, no. 39999-1,
from the tomb of Selim II, completed 1575
Turkey (Iznik ‘Rhinou’ type)
Ottoman period, 17th century
The lavish ceramic decoration of the tomb of Selim II is among the finest
productions of artists from the Ottoman court in Istanbul and the cer-
amic artists of Iznik. This large panel, composed of sixty tiles, was
formerly found on the exterior wall of the tomb, under a pediment and to
the left of the entrance, with a companion panel on the right. It con-
tains a tradition of such white-ground decorative panels first established
in the tomb of Suleyman I in 1566, with designs ultimately tracing back to
manuscript illustrations and bookbinding. The large composition of
leaves and palmettes under an arch and surrounded by a blue-ground
border, was painted across the large field of tiles. The various elements
of the design include the sinuous curved leaves, the convoluted Chinese
cloud-bands, complex composite floral forms and the flowering tree on
two exceptionally long saw-edged leaves.
Published: Mignon (1971, pl. 47); Özi (1980,
danu, p. 31)

242 Jar, covered with a white slip and painted under a transparent glaze
Diameter 20cm
Archaeological Museum, Province of
Granada, no. 627, found at Medina Elvira, near Granada
Spain, Unnamed Caliphate, 9th-10th century
It was under the domination of the Arabs that pottery was raised from
the lowly position it had occupied under the Visigothic rulers. An
interest in pottery is shown not only by the development of local fine
pottery, of which this bowl was a typical example, but also by the
discovery of fragments of lustre wares imported from the Middle
East; see Frothingham (1951, pp. 4-5). The Spanish products,
however, show little dependence on Eastern wares either in shapes or
designs, and the technique—underglaze painting on a white
ground—is not known in the East at this period. Even the drawing of
the hare bears little resemblance to those found commonly on Mesopotamian
wes.
Published: Grenet-Monroe (1951, p. 314, fig. 370); Torres-Balbis (1969, p. 278, fig. 658)

243 Bowl covered in an opaque white glaze and decorated with lustre
Diameter 28cm
Museo Provincial, Province of
Granada, no. 628, found at Medina Elvira, near Granada
Spain, Unnamed Caliphate, 9th-10th century
The base is a bowl in Arabic resembling malaga ‘Malaga’. The
origins of lustre painting in Spain are obscure. The technique was
certainly brought by craftsmen from the East, but at what period is not
certain. Whether by craftsmen from Egypt leaving after the fall of the
Fatimids in 1171, or from Persia or half of the 13th century, no lustre
ware of certain Spanish origin is recognisable until the early 14th
century. From the mid-13th century onwards this technical
turnal references to ‘golden ware’ from Malaga abound, and the
inscription on the base of this bowl and on other fragments confirm this
attribution. The designs are painted in a Spanish idiom, which show a
feint but interesting resemblance to designs on 13th and 14th century
Syrian wares (see especially no. 311). The lustre body used for all fine
wears in the Middle-East from mid-12th century onwards was unknown in
Spain. Malaga ware was an important item of export and many
fragments have been found in Fustat in Egypt as well as in most
countries of Europe.
Published: Duscheck (1973, p. 336, fig. 6-7); Berlin-Dahlem (1971, no. 542)
425. Tile covered with an opaque white glaze and decorated in lustre

Christian products, as a similar vessel has been discovered in excavations in Malaga, see Llibre (1973, p. 99, fig. 144).

Unpublished

427. Tombstone of earthenware covered with an opaque white glaze and decorated with lustre

The date recorded is that of the death of the student, and one might assume that the tombstone was made a short time afterwards. The design on the reverse of the tile is similar to those found on other lustre pieces from Malaga.

Published: Freethingham (1951, pp. 70-2, fig. 49; Llibre (1973, fig. 144)

428. Panel of tiles, mosaic tiling in green, black, blue and white

This piece is a most important document for the study of Nasrid ware as it is one of a very few pieces that gives a precise date for its manufacture. The form is typical for tombstones of the period and appears in stone as well as earthenware.

The inscription reads:

al-jahali l'allah wa bathtabu taswirya
al-adhab al-adhab al-marjam Abi
Abi Ashzib Muhammad ibn
al-shaykh al-faqih al-qadim Abu
Abi Allah ibn Sadiq Abu
al-Jabali rahimahullah Allah
nas barrada shahidu 'ind al-zamam min
yuna al-tahmam al-adhab' washa
'Shih al-qadim 'inda al-laili
al-yamn wa'l-yamn
'So God be glorified and be praised
'Very good to God alone; the young student, the late Abi' Abdallah Muhammad son of the shaykh the
noblemest Abi' Abdallah
son of 'Abd al-Jabali, God have mercy on him and
make cool his resting place,
died in the evening of Monday the
14th of Dhu al-qadah of the year
eight hundred and eleven
[31st March 1409 AD] good
fortune and prosperity, good
fortune and prosperity.'

Unpublished

468. Bowl, painted in lustre on an opaque white glaze

This bowl provides a pair to the famous ship bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, see Freethingham (1951, figs. 66-7).

This has for long been attributed to Manises in Valencia, whereas it is thought that potters from Moorish Malaga travelled after the decline of lustre pottery production in the Arab state. However it has recently been argued that these wares were made in Malaga and are Moorsish not

Wood

Despite the perishable nature of wood, a relatively abundant quantity of woodwork, showing a high level of artistic and technical accomplishment, has survived from the major areas of the Islamic world. While much of this woodwork shares a stylistic vocabulary in common with other decorative arts associated with Islam there are, nonetheless, distinct regional variations. The type of inlay work, known as bālūtān–hālīs, was well developed in Persia, whereas the use of turned wood to make openwork lattices was a feature of Egyptian woodwork. Islamic woodwork shows a chronological range from the 7th century down to the present day, although the representation is uneven for different areas. The most complete historical sequence can be traced in Egypt which not only has the most surviving pieces but also the earliest, since some carved panel fragments have been dated to the 7th century, see Pauty (1931, PI. II). These are followed by a wealth of examples including a series of dated pieces of the 10th to 11th centuries, see Lamm (1936, pp. 90-1). Much of this Egyptian woodwork is preserved in situ in mosques, Coptic churches and secular buildings. In contrast the woodwork tradition of Persia cannot be studied so consistently, as the earliest examples are datable to the 10th–11th centuries and pieces have only survived in reasonable numbers from the 14th century onwards.

The development of a flourishing woodwork tradition is naturally linked to the availability of the basic material. In areas where wood was abundant such as north Persia, Turkey and the Balkans, it was used extensively as a building material. Where wood was rare as in Egypt and Arabia it was an expensive import and was consequently ornamented with the lavish care reserved for a luxury material. It is not always easy to assess the sources and types of wood because of insufficient documentation and research; in this context all too often the wood of surviving pieces has either not been determined or has been incorrectly identified. A certain amount of information is available, however, which serves as a general guide to the types of wood used. Although Egypt is thought to have been more abundantly wooded in Fertile times (mid-10th to mid-11th centuries) than at present the bulk of its wood supplies were always imported, see Mayer (1958, p. 13). Resinous woods such as pine and cedar were imported from Turkey and Syria white plane wood (platanus) came also from Turkey. The Sudan and India were sources of the teak and ebony used
for more valuable objects. Sycomore (ficus), olive and cypress woods were more rarely used. Both Turkey and Persia could draw on their natural resources; parts of the north-west and Caspian regions of Persia were and still are intensely forested. Many species of trees were available for timber supplies such as oak from the Zagros forests, walnut, plane, cypress, elm, maple (acer), box, cherry, beech, lime, willow and poplar. Evenly-grained timbers like walnut, pomegranate, maple and pear were specially favoured for carving. In the arid Arabian peninsula the range of woods was narrow; palm and tamarisk and imported teak and sandalwood from India.

The function of wood in the Islamic world was primarily architectural. The brilliance and versatility of its ornament was essentially a means of making the utilitarian pleasing—a tendency which runs through all media of Islamic art. Wood was also a practical material allowing of little waste: in the hands of a skilled joiner even small fragments could be made into an attractive and functional object.

Both external and internal units of religious and secular architecture were fashioned from wood and in areas where it was plentiful supply either entire buildings or major parts of them were constructed of timber. Turkey furnishes several splendid examples with wooden mosques of 14th and 15th century date. Similarly in domestic architecture lavish use of wood is shown by the timber-frame houses with overhanging upper storeys found throughout Ottoman Turkey and the Balkans. In the Caspian region of Persia, buildings, such as the houses raised on platforms of Gilan province, were constructed entirely of wood. Where the main structure was of stone or brick substantial wooden fittings were added, houses and country Mosques in north Persia today have deep porches with wooden pillars which are directly related to the ornate colonnaded porches or tulars of the Chehel Sutun and Ali Qapu palaces of 17th century Isfahan. Wooden fretwork windows filled with stained glass which served as sliding partitions separating rooms from each other or from the garden court were an important feature of Persian domestic architecture. In Egyptian houses were given a distinctive character by the use of wooden doors and projecting balconies with windows made of turned lattice work.

Inside mosques, structural features like ceilings, domes, doors, screens isolating the sanctuary, mihrabs such as the one in the mausoleum of Sayyida Rukhayya in Cairo built between 1144 and 1160, carvings on tombs, and furniture such as pulpits or minbars, lecterns and Koran boxes were made of wood. Domestic interiors made extensive use of wood. An essential feature of the lack of specialised furniture in the Western sense. Rooms were flexible in function as they were carpeted and could be turned to different uses at will; for example, a dining-room was created by serving food on a cloth spread out on the floor. Furniture consisted of wooden chests for storing bedding and occasionally small tables and stools. Most of the woodwork therefore was structural. Ottoman houses of Turkey and the Balkans demonstrate the use of wood for elaborately decorated ceilings and panelled walls set with the cupboards and niches essential for storage purposes in the absence of wardrobes, bureaus, etc. Similar cupboards and niches were set into the walls of Cairene houses observed during the last century with the addition of a wooden shelf running along the sides of some rooms, see Lane (1908, pp. 14-18).

Several woodworking techniques were widely practised. Common to them all is the use of small panels joined together to make items of the required size: the reasoning behind this is sensible—there was no waste of wood and the distortion caused by warping and shrinking in hot climates was minimised by being evenly distributed over smaller units. Perhaps the most widespread and earliest technique of woodworking was carving in relief which reached a high level of achievement in Egypt, Persia and Turkey. Here methods were used such as undercutting and slant-bevelling to exploit the decorative potential of wood. Another widely used technique was the synthesising of a design by applying wood strips to a foundation of beams. This was particularly favoured for ceilings of which excellent examples can be seen in Cairene and Ottoman houses. Wood worked in the carved and strip-apply techniques could be further embellished by painting. Some 15th century pieces from Persia show traces of paint while elaborately painted ceilings are a distinctive feature of the Safavid palaces of Chehel Sutun and Ali Qapu, and of Ottoman and Cairene houses. As the use of painting developed, carving inevitably became less ornate as the painted elements supplied the decoration.

Wood was also decorated by the technique of inlay in different coloured woods, ivory and bone. Two 12th century pulpits from North Africa have inlay in other woods and bone, and the 15th century pulpits from Qhriyha’s mosque in Cairo has ivory inlay. The use of mother-of-pearl inlay became widespread in Ottoman woodwork from the 17th century onwards while in contemporary Persia there developed a specialised inlay work known as khâsim-kâri in which fine strips of wood, etc., are glued together to form meticulous geometrical patterns. These are then sliced horizontally into layers which are then stuck to a wooden foundation. Finally the technique of shaping wood by turning it on a lathe was practised: this is seen at its best in the lattice windows (maskubiyad) of Cairene houses.

Islamic woodworkers were respected for their expertise and many were known by name since they signed their works, see Mayer (1958). They had the heritage of a venerable pre-Islamic tradition. Carpenters in Persia had played an essential role in building in Achaemenid times since they constructed wooden roof beams at Persepolis and Susa, and the bas-reliefs at Persepolis showing Darius and Xerxes seated on an elaborate throne are a witness to the woodworker’s mastery of his craft. This skill was to continue into Islamic times. Egypt’s experience included both the tradition of woodwork from Pharaonic times and the comparatively recent work of the Copts which provided much inspiration in technique and design. In Turkey carpenters had a special position closely related to that of architects; it is in fact known that several architects started their careers as carpenters. Apart from such specialised branches of the woodworker’s craft such as that of the turner and inlay-worker carpenters, joiners and cabinet makers were not specifically differentiated: the term majlir generally covered all
these trades in Arabic, Persian and Turkish.

Islamic wood illustrates the emergence of the characteristic idiom of Islamic ornament based on interlaced geometrical patterns, the complex foliate motif known as the arabesque which was often enriched with a trellis floral life, and the exploitation of the decorative possibilities of the many styles of Arabic calligraphy. A further significant contribution was made by figural representation.

The earliest Islamic wood consists of a group of panel fragments from 7th century Egypt deeply carved on one level of relief. The designs influenced by Coptic models, are variations on the trefoil-leaved vine whose stems frame figural motifs such as birds and lions. In another group of fragments of 8th century date the carving is still on one level of relief but is more shallow, while the vine scrolls are more elongated with leaves showing a tendency towards the stylisation of Sassanian half-palmettes. Carved wood panels from Takrit dated to the 8th century (no. 658) show further stylistic evolution. Their decoration consists principally of vine scrolls disciplined into deep spiralling bands and circles in which heart-shaped palmettes with schematically rendered veins replace leaves and pine cones grow out of the tendrils. Contemporary Egyptian woodwork illustrates a more abstract style in which overlapping arches and circular motifs often enclosing palmettes are reserved against bands of deeply-cut continuous lozenges confined within dog-tooth borders. One example is a key piece as it shows the synthesis of Sassanian and Byzantine elements (no. 24). It is a frieze carved with panels containing pairs of curved Sassanian wings enveloping three globes flanking a scalloped panel containing a vine foliage tree. All these motifs are set against a background of vine trefoil worked in the Byzantine manner. The frieze is additionally decorated with bands of Arabic inscription in a squint kufic script with elongated horizontal, a form which was current in the 9th century.

Abbasid woodwork of the late 8th and 9th centuries (see no. 471) witnessed the appearance of a new style in wood carving which has close parallels in the contemporary stone and stucco work from Samarra. The technique used is slant-bevelled relief carving to give an almost padded or quilted effect. The motifs are realised on a large scale and generally consist of generous spirals, comma-like volutes, and pear-shaped drops all combining to form a smooth and symmetrical pattern; another variant employs the same vocabulary of ornament but picks out the shapes in raised outline only. This style is closely paralleled in Tulunid Egypt (mid-9th to early 10th centuries) where it may have been introduced from Mesopotamia. Hints of the bevelled technique are already seen in early 9th century panel fragments where large circular motifs with concentric circles appear. The style developed fully to blend the Abbasid repertoire with animal motifs such as pairs of streamlined doves carved on a frieze in which traces of paint have also been found (no. 436). Deeper undercutting of the motifs modified the style in the early 10th century. It is interesting to note that the Tulunid bevelled technique continued in Egypt along with the innovations of the Fatimid period. The doors of the Al-Jalil mosque in Cairo are a good example of this survival since although they are carved with bevelled arabesques the foliate kufic inscriptions bear the date 1010.

Fatimid Egypt (mid-10th to mid-11th centuries) saw a great flowering of the woodcarver's art while material for comparison has survived from Persia, Turkey and North Africa. Excellent examples of both Islamic and Coptic wood have survived characterised by a great vitality which pervades a much enriched decorative vocabulary. A logical development can be traced from the Tulunid style as the softly textured bevelled motifs take on a new energy by a combination of deep undercutting and outlines picked out in bands of beading. The use of figure motifs was greatly developed either formally as in the adored horses' heads which appear to metamorphose out of lobes of the symmetrical arabesque foliage which entwines around them (no. 443) or in an almost naturalistic way as in the friezes of 11th century date (no. 442) from the Fatimid palace site of Dar al-Qubayya in Cairo. Here are a profusion of figure scenes – hunters, dancers, musicians, and merchants with camels all set within interlaced compartments on a background of spiralling trefoil scroll. Certain motifs have parallels in other Islamic art forms; the winged harpies, for example, are found on Fatimid lustre-painted pottery and in the designs of the Seljuq pottery of contemporary Persia. Comparable treatment of arabesque motifs is found in Syrian woodwork (no. 448). Fatimid woodwork of the 12th century shows increasing elaboration of detail. Two miniatures from the mosques of Sayyida Nafisa (1138–45) and of Sayyida Rukhayya (1154–60) are carved with continuous patterns in which geometrical interlacing is combined with small units such as hexagons and stars each enfolding a separate foliate motif. This style of ornament increasingly tended to replace the lively figural decoration.

While wood from other regions of the contemporary Islamic world is less well-documented than in Egypt some general features can be deduced from the surviving pieces. In Persia few examples at present can be attributed with confidence to a 10th century date. The earliest pieces of carved wood of 10th to 11th century date include the doors from the tomb of Manṣūr of Ghazni (995–1030), whose kingdom fell within the sphere of Persian cultural influence, and show some resemblance to the carving of early Fatimid work in their use of carved arabesque scrolls, beaded bands, and inscriptions in kufic. Some 12th-
century pieces, such as a mimbar dated 1151 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, demonstrate a continuous decoration of geometrical motifs and palmettes. Where foliage scrolls occur the forms of the leaves show their origin in the Sasanian half-palmette.

A relatively large amount of wood has survived from Turkey attributed to the 12th to 13th centuries including doors, pulpits, and Koran stands carved with geometrical and arabesque devices and representational motifs of lions, griffins, peacocks, and human figures which can be paralleled in Turkish Seljuk ceramics, tilework and stone. Although there is little contemporary woodwork extant in North Africa, there are a few important pieces of late 11th to 12th century date such as the mimbar of the Great Mosque of Algiers dated 1082 and two Moroccan mimbars from the Koutoubiya and Ksar mosques constructed between 1150 and 1160, all in carved wood using a repertoire of designs of geometrical patterns, palmettes and arabesque scrolls.

During the long period following the Fatimids, Egypt was ruled successively by the Ayyubids and the Mamluks (mid-12th to early 16th centuries). At first the Fatimid woodwork tradition continued but with increasing elaboration in the combinations of tendrils and leaves of arabesque motifs and new palmette forms. Gradually figurative representation gave way to a composite style in which small interlocking polygonal panels were filled with interlaced arabesque foliage in carved relief. Inlay in different coloured woods, bone and ivory was increasingly used. One of the most distinctive features, however, of Mamluk woodwork and indeed of Mamluk decorative arts is the replacement of kufic script by a bold variant of the cursive naskhi script known as thuluth. Here the script is the main element of the design which is formally divided into sections. A ceiling fragment of carved wood from the restorations to the Al Azhar mosque of Cairo made by the Mamluk Qaytubay in 1404-5 shows how the treatment of calligraphy in wood resembles that of contemporary metalwork and ceramics. Here a large rounded with scalloped edge contains a thuluth inscription quoting Qaytubay’s name which is arranged as a diametrical chord. The roundel itself is framed in geometrically-shaped panels carved with arabesques reserved in relief on a plain background.

The Mamluk period also witnessed the development of the masrabiyya or turned wood lattice, which continued through to the 15th century. It was used for screens, partitions and windows and is best seen in Cairene private houses. The basic principle is straightforward—a lattice was constructed of turned oval shapes joined together by short turned and ribbed links. An early example of masrabiyya work is seen in diagonal lattice squares set into a carved wooden panel from the Madrasa of Qaytbay at al-Jamillyya founded in 1460-1. An almost inexhaustible range of patterns could be worked in masrabiyya in varying degrees of lace-like fineness. A technique was also practised which resulted in another pattern at a subsidiary level to the main lattice. If the connecting links were extended in length extra turned shapes could be fitted into the lattice to form designs such as mimbars (no. 455) interlacing cypress trees and kufic inscriptions.

In Persian pieces of a higher standard exist from the 14th century onwards. The carved doors from the sanctuary of the mosque of Bayezid Bābāi of 1307-9 illustrate a profusion of arabesques with inscriptions in kufic. A particularly elegant and graceful style is seen in late 14th century pieces like the carved wood Koran stand in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, dated 1360, in which the arabesque motifs are enriched by flowers and palmettes of Chinese inspiration such as the lotus and peony, and inscriptions are written in a bold naskhi. 15th century woodwork continued this tradition with an increasing use of exuberant floral ornament which foreshadows the style of the Safavid period (16th to early 18th centuries). Application of painted detail also became more prevalent replacing meticulous carving.

From the 16th century onwards, the dominant influences in Islamic woodwork were those of the Ottoman Turkish empire which controlled formerly independent territories such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, North Africa and Syria, and of the Safavids and Qajars of Persia. Both were characterised by increasing use of colour and flamboyance of motif which are especially seen in the painted floral designs and narrative scenes embellishing the walls of Ottoman houses and in the intricate khatam-kari inlays and painted and lacquered doors and ceilings of Persia.
430 Fragment of a wooden cornice carved, painted and gilt
Length 93cm, height 9.5cm.
Syria, Umayyad period, 8th century
Probably part of a lintel or cornice.
An identical design is found on the corner of the Mosque of 'Amm, Pusiat, dated to 827. See Creswell (1932, I, pl. 49b). The scroll motif with various fillings, common to Hellenistic and Mediterranean Christian art, survives unmodified, as here, or transformed into a palmette.
Unpublished

430 Panel, probably sycomore
Height 40.5cm, width 21cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 11468
Egypt or Syria, Umayyad period, 8th century
This panel is carved in high relief with two circular scrolls issuing from a basket-like vase. The upper scroll contains a bunch of grapes and the lower a palmette vine leaf. At either side of the vase is a pendant cluster of grapes and a squashed leaf. The scrolls have acanthus-like fronds. The panel bears circular ewer holes and was evidently part of a wooden revetment. The theme, not the style, recalls the wooden revetment panels from the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem dated to about 715. See Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler (1973, p. 186, no. 66-9).
Unpublished

431 Carved panel
Height 9cm, width 24cm
National Museum, Damascus, no. 24.45.58.978
Syria, Abbasid period, 9th–10th century
This panel comes from Qal‘at al-Jabar, a site on the upper Euphrates, and consists of a pattern of circular grooves developing out of each other around an axis. The pattern is already recognisable as an arabesque even though its elements are not yet abstract. In the centre, the piled vases of Hellenistic origin have been simplified under the influence of the third Samarian style. The leaves growing out of the vases are bevelled and form complementary semi-circular shapes. The grooved Sassanian palmettes are unmodified. The scoring of these leaves and the beadwork on the vases are typical of the post-Sasanian, especially Fatimid, woodwork (compare nos. 442, 447).
Published: Damascus (1996, fig. 115)

433 Wooden panel, originally attached to beam
Length 72cm, height 18.7cm
British Museum, London, no. 1944.5-13.2
Mesopotamia, Abbasid period, 9th century
The bevelled wavy lines edging the main pattern on this panel are an adaptation of the scroll motifs and surround a deeply cut pattern of bevelled lances.
Unpublished

433 Carved panel
Height 9cm, width 24cm
National Museum, Damascus, no. 24.45.58.978
Syria, Abbasid period, 9th–10th century
This panel comes from Qal‘at al-Jabar, a site on the upper Euphrates, and consists of a pattern of circular grooves developing out of each other around an axis. The pattern is already recognisable as an arabesque even though its elements are not yet abstract. In the centre, the piled vases of Hellenistic origin have been simplified under the influence of the third Samarian style. The leaves growing out of the vases are bevelled and form complementary semi-circular shapes. The grooved Sassanian palmettes are unmodified. The scoring of these leaves and the beadwork on the vases are typical of the post-Sasanian, especially Fatimid, woodwork (compare nos. 442, 447).
Published: Damascus (1996, fig. 115)

435 Wooden panel, originally attached to beam
Length 71cm, height 9.5cm
British Museum, London, no. 1944.5-13.2
Mesopotamia, Abbasid period, 9th century
Lozenges here enclose identical cushion-like motifs. Compare no. 435.
Unpublished

438 Section of a frieze, probably in teak
Length 93cm, height 226cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 24.45.58.978, from the Great Cemetery tomb of Caire
Egypt, 8th century
Inscriptions in the upper and lower margins are from the Koran, Suras II, 255 and IX, 13. Sur II, 235, the Ayat al-Kursi, is a particularly common funeral inscription. The script is a squarish without dots and is flat carved. The frieze is divided into panels, palmettes and rams' horns carved in high relief alternating with panels of incised trefoil scrolls which two have a foliate lance in a lobed arch, conceivably intended as a mishab. The palmette compositions are derived from the elements of Sassanian crowns – the circular diadem, the scouring wings and the horns of Alexander. However, this particular combination does not appear on the coins of any of the Sassanian kings or on pieces of Sassanian silver and is evidently a free composition.
Published: David-Wellin (1931, p. 43); Pusiat (1951, p. 12); Münz (1955, pp. 196-73)
456 Section of a frieze, probably of sycomore
Length 179cm, height 20.5cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 5417.1
Egypt, Tulumin period, 9th century

The bevelled frieze shows confronted collared doves with a papyrus between and a background of swirling wing-like palmettes. The border above, the left hand end and the carved decoration were thickly painted in red and yellow ochre with highlights in black and white, probably on a deep blue ground. The doves' wings have been flattened and show pairs of dowel-holes to fix embossed plaques which have now disappeared. There are also dowel-holes to fix the panel to the wall.
Published: Pinney (1933, pp. 26-7), Gresham (1971).

457 Arch panel probably of teak
Height 58cm, width 45cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 5417.2
Egypt, Tulumin period, late 9th century

This bevelled arch panel in a blank surround has palmettes transformed into confronted birds with their heads drooping on their breasts. The elements in highest relief have been shaved flat. This is a perfect example of the ambiguity of the Samarras bevelled cut design in which the design and ground merge perfectly so that no single line can trace the pattern. There are no indications of painting, but a comparable painted panel was discovered at Samarra. See Herrfeld (1923, pl. XLI).
Unpublished.

458 Fragment of a carved panel with flourished kufic inscription
Length 46.8cm, width 13.2cm
National Museum, Damascus, no. 20552
Syria (Raqaq), 11th century

This panel was discovered during the excavation of the Abbasid palace complex at Raqaq to which, however, it did not belong. The inscription reads (al-mirala-m advisers, 'Commander of the Faithful.' The lettering and scrolls form distinct planes against the background and together with their unobstructed elegance suggest links with the developments in the lettering on the monuments of 11th century Diyarbakir in southern Turkey.
Published: Damascus (1969, p. 174, fig. 73).
439 Painted corbel in the shape of an eagle's head
Length 70cm, height 15cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia (Kairouan), Zirid period, 11th century

The head of the eagle is stylised and combined with an abstract scroll design in red, white, yellow and black. Corbels of this type appear early in north Africa and Spanish Islamic architecture and do not seem related to an eastern prototype. They have not yet been studied in depth.

440 Beam painted with geometric and plant designs on a red ground
Length 135cm, width 22.5cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia (Kairouan), 11th century

The painted designs on north African beams and corbels appear to be unique in Islamic art. Their dating remains uncertain and their origins unexplored. Compare no. 441.

Published: Marcet (1935)

441a-b Two beams with painted inscriptions from beams of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
a. length 297cm
b. length 159cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia (Kairouan), 11th century

The tree-trunks which form the beams of the transverse aisle of the Great Mosque were part of the 10th century Agilid foundation. They were boxed in with planks of cypress wood of which all but six bear later 11th century decoration.

Published: Marcet (1935); Roy and Poussard (1998, II, figs. 1, p. 436, 6)

442 Section of a frieze with remains of plaster coating
Length 43.5cm, height 90cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 3456, found during excavations at the hospice of Sultan Qalawun in Cairo, Egypt, Fatimid period, 11th century

The hospital of Sultan Qalawun was built on the site of a Fatimid palace the Dir el-Qubur (before 1063), and this wooden frieze is believed to have come from this palace. The richly variegated decoration which includes hunting scenes, musicians, dancers, turkeys and hares is entirely characteristic of Fatimid court art and was also taken up by the painters who produced the lime pottery for which Fatimid Egypt is celebrated (compare no. 237). There are also parallels of theme, though not of style, with the paintings on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in

443 Door panel of teak
Height 31cm, width 31.5cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 2281
Egypt, Fatimid period, 11th century

This panel is deeply incised with a striking slanting cut, clearly reminiscent of the Samarra bevelled style but without any of its ambiguity of line. The central motif, a pair of beheaded horses' heads in a beaded medallion with a palmate between, is almost flat cut. This panel may be compared to another with a pair of horses' heads in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See Dimand (1932, no. 122).

Published: Pany (1931, p. 67); Cairo (1936, no. 219)
445 Section of a frieze with an embossed inscription
Length 18 cm, height 23 cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 1746. Gift of Dr. Kamal Huqayn
Egypt, Fatimid period, 11th–12th century

The inscription:

I am n/a a huluna tsa sa'da
[=i] ... and perfect favour and
happiness [and] ...

Though there are traces of plaster covering this beam there is no paint. The final word of the inscription is illegible and the disappearance of part of the inscription may be due to the fact that it was embossed with a thin wooden veneer fixed with dowels. The inscription may be compared to those on the beams of the mosque of al-Sa'di in Cairo dated to 1160. See David-Weill (1931, p. 48).

Unpublished

446 Section of a frieze
Length 132 cm, height 25 cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 13148. Purchased in 1935
Egypt, Fatimid period, 11th–12th century

The frieze is inscribed with a Koranic text from Sura II, 155, with pointed letters and continuous undulating scroll ground. The inscription was too long for the space available and is completed at the end above the line.

Unpublished

447 Carved panel
Height 36 cm, width 19.1 cm

Seattle Art Museum, no. 65.61.1,122

Russet Fuller Memorial Collection
Egypt (Fustat), Fatimid period, 12th century

Despite the foliation, the lines of the design of this panel are abstract. The type of arabesque created was to provide a model for much of Islamic decoration that was to follow.

Published: Boeke (1970, no. 154)

448 Panel of pomegranate wood carved on both sides with kufic inscriptions
Height 29.6 cm, width 23.9 cm

National Museum, Damascus, no. 947
from the mosque of Maqallat al-Idayn, Damascus
Syria, Fatimid period, 11th century

The outer face is carved with the bismillah in plated kufic and with a dedicated inscription in unornamented kufic:

Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-Mustasim ibn as-Saffah al-Safiya 497
'Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali, favoured by the Commander of the Faithful, God accepted his offering of this screen in the course of the year 497 [1103 AD].'

The centre panel of the inner face is carved in plated kufic based on circular instead of rectangular figures, with the words Allahu al-salih, 'peace'. The surrounding frieze is taken from the Koran, Sura III, 18. The depth of the scrollwork brings out the relative importance of the inscription which is pierced in the central panel, in the background of the Koranic quotation but in the same plane as the dedication which surrounds this panel. The frieze of three-lobed leaves around the centre panel on both sides derives from the first Samarani style. The small vase from which springs symmetrical foliated arabesques is a vestige of the Hellenistic artistic tradition.

Published: Damasci (1969, fig. 154)

449 Carved panel with inscription
Length 310 cm, height 16 cm

British Museum, London, no. 19.618
Egypt, Fatimid or Ayyubid period, 12th century

The inscription is from the Koran, Sura II, 264, in a stiff plain kufic script on a regular background of slender foliated scrolls. The words are grouped logically in cartouches, some letters being elongated to fill the space available. Two factors make the simple pattern lively, the axis of the inscription is off-centre and the solid eight-pointed star which forms the smaller cartouches is doubled and expanded at the centre.

Unpublished
453 Cenotaph of mulberry wood
inscribed on the sides
Length 26.2cm, width 13.5cm
height 9.5cm
Iraq Museum, Baghdad, no. A. 62.4, from the mosque of Salūm al-Farsīs, near Baghdad. Mamluk period (Baghdad), 1227
This cenotaph was ordered by the Abbasid alām al-Mustansir for the tomb of the seventh imam of the Twelver-Shiā, Mūsā al-Kāшим (died 799). The presentation of a cenotaph to the tomb of a saint or local hero was a way of ministering his popularity, and the tomb of Mūsā was endowed by successive conquerors of Baghdad who relegated al-Mustansir’s offering to the tomb of Salūm al-Farsīs. The inscription on the lid is taken from the Koran, XXXIII.33. As well, the patron and date are given.

454 Cenotaph of sandalwood
with inscriptions and traces of paint and gilding
Length (including frame) 21.7cm, width 11.6cm, height 13.8cm
National Museum, Damascus, from the mausoleum of Khalid b. al-Walād, Home Syria (Homs), Mamluk period, 13th century
Commemorative plaques found in this mausoleum date the cenotaph and show it to have been ordered by the Mamluk sultan al-Zahir Baybars (died 1277) on his passage through Homs to celebrate his victories in Armenia. See al-Tabq, (1963, pp. 35, 115). The cenotaph is incomplete as there is no lid or base. The date, names of artist and patron are missing on three sides representing mihrabs in which hung long lamps (an allusion to Koran, Sura XXIV.35); the fourth side is incised in thuluth with Koran, Sura, II, 255. The top frieze is inscribed in thuluth. Only two sections survive taken from the Koran, III, 166 and XXXXI.23. Below it runs a frieze in plaited kufic on a background of scrolls. The body of lettering is cramped against the lower border and the scrolls emphasise the monogeneity of the upright strokes. The inscription quotes verses from the Koran, Sura IX, 22, XXXIX, 37; and CLXI, 31. The body of the cenotaph is divided into panels on three sides representing mihrabs in which hang lamps. On the fourth side it is an inscription from the Koran, Sura II, 255.

455 Window screen (mashrabiyya) of squares with beaded diagonals
Height 142cm, length 152cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 536, from the mosque madrasa of Sultan Hasan, Egypt, possibly Mamluk period, mid-14th century
The interior of this panel is a rectangle of finer work showing in silhouette a minaret and mosque lamp. The provenance is not certain since the mosque of Sultan Hasan was formerly in a depot for woodwork collected from ancient monuments which were in danger of ruin or destruction. Mashrabiyya work is a typical Egyptian craft which was much stimulated by the shortage of fine wood for panelling and which, from the mid-13th century, developed rapidly. While there is no precisely dated material from the 14th century, such an early date for this section is by no means impossible.
Published: Wiet (1936, no. 37); Cairo (1969, no. 151)

456 Pair of window-shutters with identical kufic inscriptions
Height (each) 68.2cm, width 49cm
From Hasan Museum, Tebriz, no. 3283
Persia (Fars), Bayzid period, 14th century
The inscriptions in Arabic, unread, are set with mihrab-shaped scrollwork borders.
Unpublished

457a-b Two carved triangular capitals
a. Height 24.5cm, width 7.5cm
b. Height 36cm, width 7.5cm
From Hasan Museum, Tebriz, nos. 3165-6
Persia (Azerbaijan), early 14th century
The advantages of building in wood are elasticity in earthquake zones and cheapness. In the early centuries of Islam, wood was used in public architecture to an extent which present remains scarcely indicate and on a grander scale than contemporary illustrations usually suggest. The carved decoration derives from Abbasid and Fatimid models. The inscribed capital b has the words al-‘[?] bdshh, illāh al-rabūl; ‘victory belongs to God, the One...’ inscribed in naskhi on two registers. The capitals have outer bands of a rolling wave motif which run up the sides. On the back capital is a six-pointed star set in an arabesque decoration.
Unpublished