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Cross-cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts: The Islamic Appropriation of a Middle Byzantine Rosette Casket*

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Abstract

The reception of art and architecture in the Middle Ages is typically studied through the verbal accounts of medieval viewers. This paper explores possibilities for interpreting artistic reception in the absence of texts, through the material record of works of art themselves, specifically, a Byzantine ivory casket altered through the addition of Islamic gilded bronze fixtures. I propose that the transformation of the box expresses a viewer's cognitive appropriation of the original program, which reconfigured the iconography of the ivory container to accommodate a secular Islamic system of meaning. Rather than representing the changes as a misreading or a disfigurement of the Byzantine casket, the alterations embody a legitimate interpretation that articulates the viewer's receptivity to the original object and simultaneous appropriation of its visual framework to support an Islamic princely and astral program.

Much recent scholarship in a variety of disciplines has expanded appreciation for how cultures of the Middle Ages intersected deeply and constantly through diverse means, including trade, diplomacy, warfare, and pilgrimage.¹ In the artistic sphere, visual languages flowed across cultural divides, and works of art that participated in these interactions often developed hybrid stylistic and iconographic features.² In some instances, they draw together disparate elements in a conscious way, creating intentional and highly legible juxtapositions of distinct parts. Other hybrids were the product of unconscious fusions, in which artistic currents merged more subtly.³ In both situations, the mixing of different visual traditions can make the provenances of these works of art notoriously difficult to trace. Because of their propensity to defy localization, such objects are sometimes marginalized in art historical literature, which still grapples with how to interpret works of art that challenge or traverse boundaries of geography, nationality, language, and religion.⁴ This article contributes to a growing body of literature that recognizes the limitations of a provenance-focused approach to the study of hybrid works of art, foregrounding instead the movement of objects and the receptions they generated in the diverse contexts through which they traveled.⁵

A medieval casket in the treasury of the cathedral of Sta. Maria in Ivrea, Italy, provides the opportunity to expand on the possibilities of a methodology that privileges portability

over fixity and reception over provenance. The Ivrea casket is made from ivory and bone plaques affixed to a wooden core.⁶ The carvings depict acrobats, dancers, musicians, and combatant animals framed by finely carved floral motifs (Figs. 1–5). The borders affiliate the object with the so-called rosette caskets, a group of approximately forty-five middle Byzantine ivory- and bone-clad containers, which are typically dated from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. Unlike other objects in this corpus, the Ivrea casket is embellished with gilded-bronze attachments in the form of a seated man (Fig. 1), radiating disks (Figs. 2–4), and a figure riding an eagle (Fig. 5), which protrude strikingly from the casket's surfaces. The metal fixtures do not find parallels in any other Byzantine ivory caskets. Rather, they employ an iconographic repertoire of courtly and astronomical signs commonly attested in medieval Islamic secular art.⁷ The assemblage therefore represents at least two phases of production, each reflecting a different medieval artistic tradition. Yet no text records how the box arrived in its present location, when and where it was altered, or what motivated its transformation.⁸

Although we do not know the precise function that the Ivrea casket served in either its primary or secondary contexts, ivory and bone containers were used throughout the medieval world, in Byzantium, Islamic lands, and Western Christendom.⁹ Furthermore, the program of the Ivrea casket depicts secular iconographic themes that posed no obstacle to cross-cultural recognition and enjoyment. On these grounds, we can assume that containers like the Ivrea casket had the potential to move easily among distinct cultural groups and would have been appreciated for their functionality, material value, fine craftsmanship, and pleasurable programs depicting elite entertainments.

Scholars have said little about the relationship between the original ivory box and its metal attachments. Saverio Lomartire suggests that the fixtures were intended to update the Byzantine casket and satisfy the tastes of a later owner. While recognizing the Islamic character of the gilded-bronze fixtures, he interprets these additions as purely decorative.¹⁰ Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, in their seminal corpus of middle Byzantine ivory carvings, also note the Islamic character of the bronze mounts, stating that they “disfigure” the original ivory casket.¹¹ Indeed, to an eye seeking stylistic purity and aesthetic consistency, the metal attachments

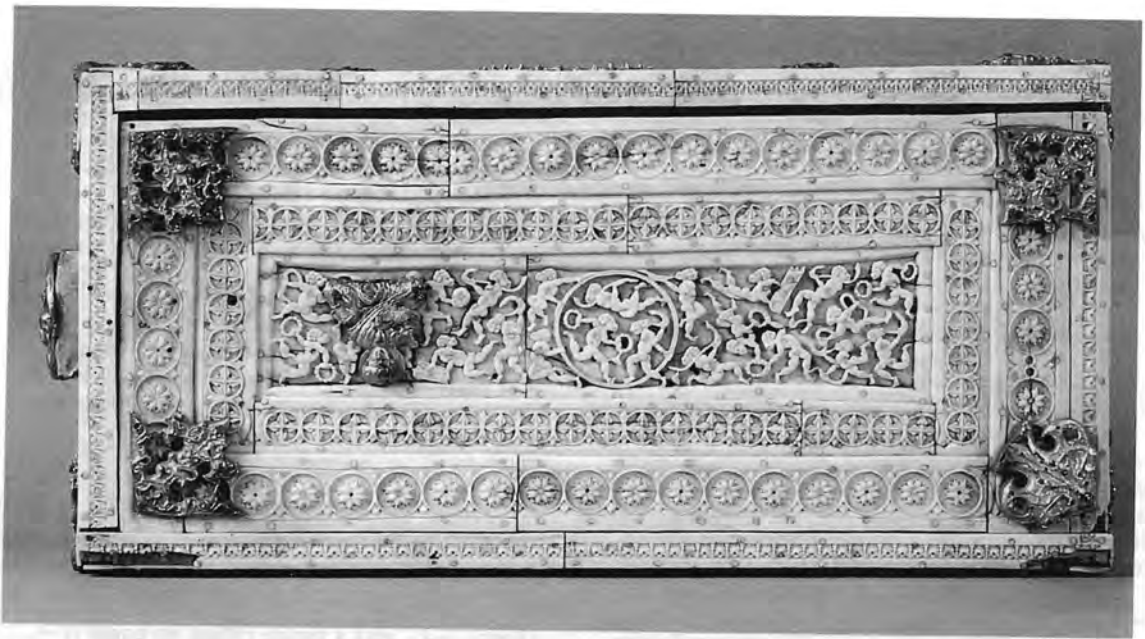


FIGURE 1. *Ivrea casket, ivory and bone panels on wood core, Byzantine, 11th–12th century; metal additions, gilded bronze, 12th–13th century(?), 51 x 25 x 15 cm, lid, Cathedral Treasury, Ivrea, Italy (photo: Saverio Lomartire).*



FIGURE 2. *Ivrea casket, long side (photo: Saverio Lomartire).*

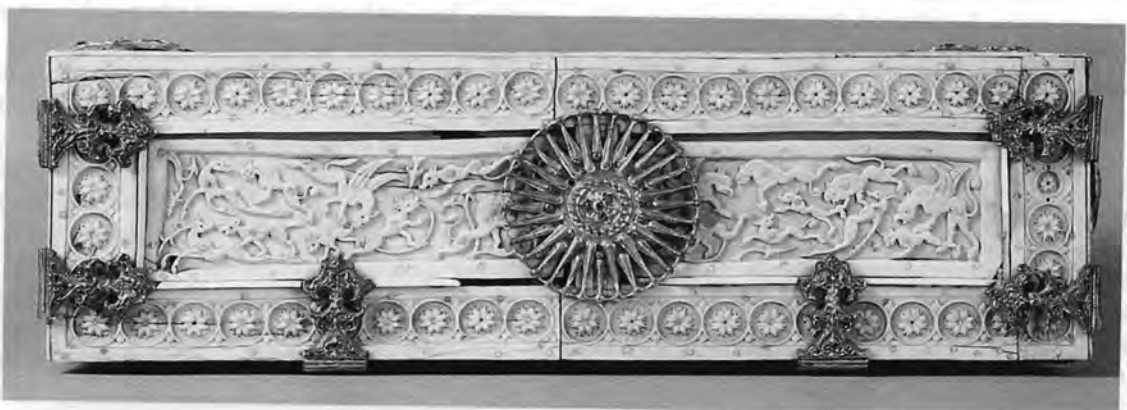


FIGURE 3. *Ivrea casket, long side (photo: Saverio Lomartire).*

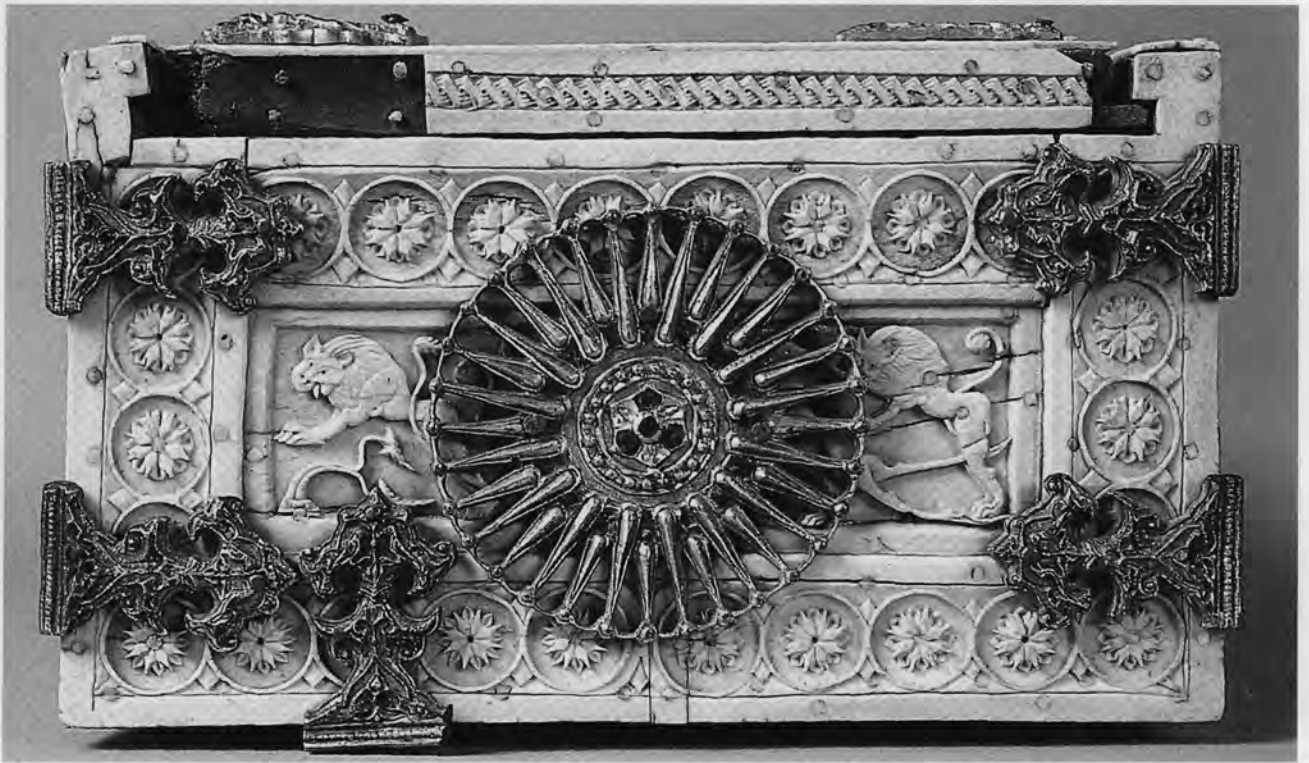


FIGURE 4. *Ivrea casket, short side with radiating disk (photo: Saverio Lomartire).*

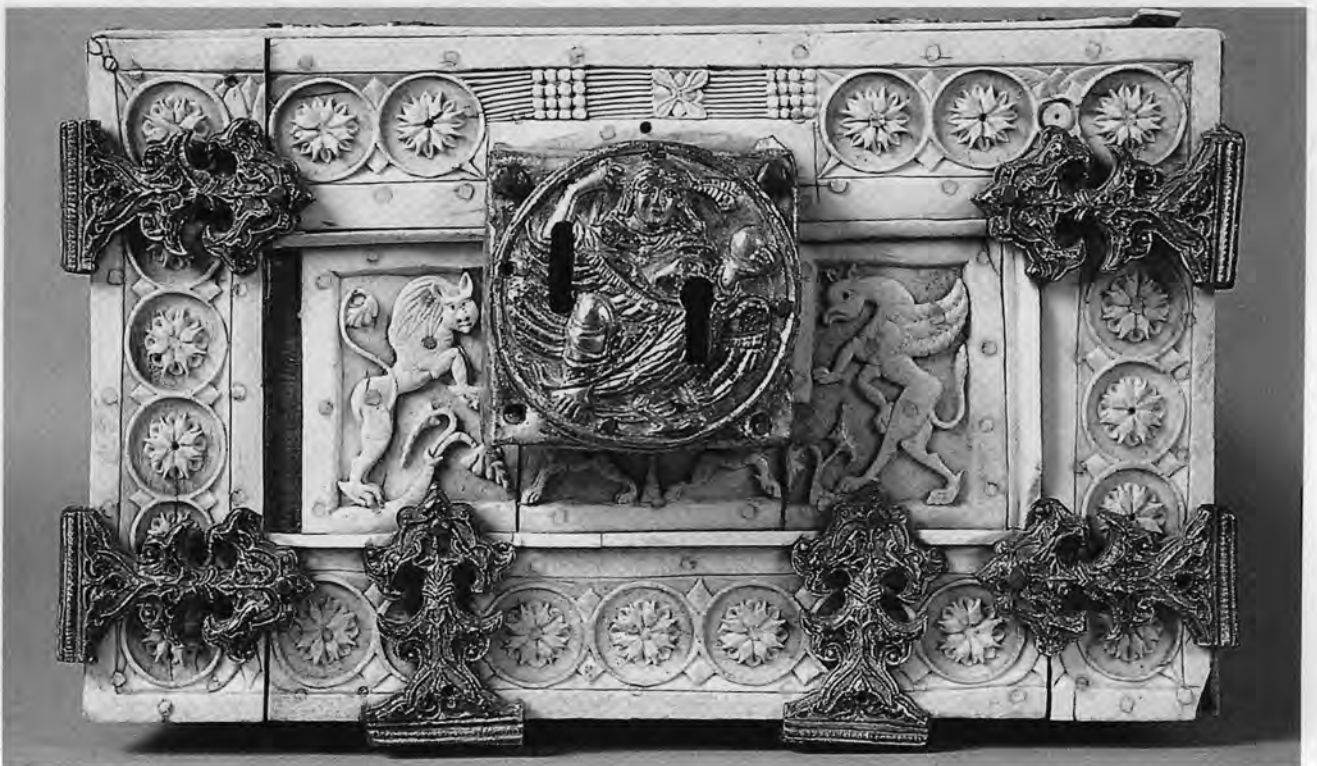


FIGURE 5. *Ivrea casket, short side with plaque (photo: Saverio Lomartire).*

mar the original object and obstruct the viewer's reading of the carved program. The conscious hybrid created by these additions extends boldly across the borders that conventionally separate Byzantine and Islamic art.¹²

By contrast, an approach that valorizes portability seeks exactly such examples of transformation and liminality as records of cross-cultural artistic interaction and reception. Rather than mere ornaments (or abhorrent disfigurements), the metal fixtures can be analyzed as productive interventions in the object's program.¹³ In fact, closer scrutiny reveals their subtle sensitivity to the casket's original design. The radiating disks are positioned at the middle of the three sides they adorn, echoing the composition of the carving on the lid in which a triad of acrobats leaps along the inner edge of a centrally placed circle (Figs. 1–4). The disk on the short end panel is placed between two rearing lions, creating a new composition in which the rampant felines frame the sunlike motif (Fig. 4). The gilded plaque respects the perimeter of the original lock frame so that the rearing lion and griffin in the surrounding ivory panel neatly flank the eagle-mounted figure (Fig. 5). In other words, the gilded-bronze attachments represent a creative, not a destructive, gesture. Their strategic placement with respect to the compositions of the ivory panels indicates a high degree of intentionality behind the choice and positioning of the additions and suggests that a more complex dynamic than mere decoration is at work in the alteration of the box.¹⁴

I propose that the motifs in ivory and metal functioned as iconographic referents for those viewers fluent in the visual language of the secular pleasures they depict. This vocabulary was intelligible across geographic and cultural borders, participating in what Oleg Grabar terms a "shared culture of objects" and artistic forms that operated throughout the medieval Mediterranean, particularly at elite levels of society.¹⁵ Yet the fact that this artistic vocabulary could be understood across cultures does not mean that it was completely devoid of differentiation. As Eva Hoffman emphasizes, stylistic and iconographic inflections of otherwise common themes and motifs allowed for distinct idioms to emerge within this shared visual language.¹⁶ In the case of the Ivrea casket, the gilded-bronze fixtures associate the motifs on the Byzantine ivory casket with a medieval Islamic system of secular iconography so that the relatively generic scenes of acrobatic performers and combatant animals accommodate a more specific program of elite pleasures and auspicious astronomical signs. This transformation is neither complete nor seamless; fissures between background ivory carving and foreground metal attachments are irrepressible due to differences in media and degree of relief. Nonetheless, aesthetic sensitivity and visual logic underlie the placement of the bronze fixtures, which appropriate the ivory plaques to serve as the ground for an iconographic program of courtly entertainments in an astral setting.¹⁷

Although unique in its particular combination of elements, the Ivrea casket has much in common with other works of

medieval art that were altered and reconfigured, often as a result of their movement through changing contexts of reception and use. The emphatic visual hybridity of the Ivrea casket—and the way in which it generates meaning through the strategic juxtaposition of disparate elements—recalls the broader phenomenon of medieval spolia: materials, either ancient or exotic, deployed in new physical and social contexts for reasons ranging from the practical, to the aesthetic, to the ideological.¹⁸ As Beat Brenk notes, the semantic dimension of spolia is rarely explained by its practitioners. Instead, the work of art itself articulates the significance of its aesthetic and semantic reconfiguration, producing what he terms "ideology without texts."¹⁹ Similarly, in the absence of written explanation documenting the intentions behind the transformation of the Ivrea casket, we must rely on careful consideration of its style, iconography, and composition in order to interpret the process of appropriation it records.²⁰

Hybridity is evident, however, not only in the intentional contrast between ivory plaques and gilded-bronze fixtures but in the subtle mixing apparent in the "Byzantine" box and the "Islamic" attachments, each of which displays stylistic features pointing to a broad range of potential models and the possible merging of different artistic traditions. The casket is closely related to a subgroup of ivory boxes that are dated to the eleventh or twelfth century and attributed to a Byzantine origin; however, the motifs and compositions of the ivory plaques also resonate with various examples of medieval Islamic art dating to the tenth century and later. Similarly, the metal attachments recall a range of Islamic secular objects but cannot be associated with a single center of production and represent a visual vocabulary that was, by the twelfth century, increasingly adopted and elaborated by non-Islamic groups. While overall iconographic and stylistic parallels support a Byzantine eleventh- or twelfth-century attribution for the ivory box and a twelfth- or thirteenth-century Islamic origin for the metal attachments, they simultaneously suggest connections with a variety of artistic traditions, attesting to a fluid exchange of styles, motifs, and objects that created both conscious hybrids and unconscious, organic fusions throughout the medieval Mediterranean and beyond.

This essay does not aim to resolve definitively the complex issues of provenance and chronology that the ivory casket and its gilded-bronze fixtures raise. Instead, it focuses attention on the meaning generated through the addition of the appliques and the process of reception that these additions reflect.²¹ The Ivrea casket offers an opportunity for exploring how works of art might themselves narrate cross-cultural exchange; how, in the absence of pertinent texts, these interactions can be traced and theorized through objects themselves.²² In order to understand the process of physical and cognitive alteration at work in this object, I first analyze the stylistic and iconographic features of the casket. In particular, I note the subtle ways in which the Byzantine carvings may have attracted a viewer predisposed to Islamic artistic forms and meanings, thereby



FIGURE 6. *Detail of Fig. 1.*



FIGURE 7. *Detail of Fig. 2.*

motivating the subsequent alteration of the ivory box. Next I contextualize the Islamic motifs within the iconographic systems from which they derive, a process pursued through comparison with relevant objects and texts. Then, I read the program created by the addition of the metal attachments and situate this act of transformation within broader patterns of artistic reception and appropriation in the medieval Mediterranean world. Although a single object, and one that has long lingered at the periphery of Byzantine art history, the Ivrea casket offers a fresh perspective on the question of medieval cross-cultural artistic dynamics, which is often dominated by text-based methods of interpretation and typically focuses on the mechanics of artistic exchange rather than questions of reception.²³

The Ivrea casket depicts a dynamic program of animal and human figures. The sliding lid displays a *mêlée* of twenty-four finely carved male nudes in high relief. These nimble acrobats dance and tumble across the central plaques, waving rings and scarves and playing musical instruments (Fig. 1).²⁴ Majestic lions, imposing griffins, and fierce dogs lunge at the heels of swift-footed deer on the front and back plaques (Figs. 2 and 3). Delicately carved rosettes in full bloom line the borders. Measuring 15 by 25 by 51 cm, this relatively large casket provides substantial fields for the unfolding of its complex, densely inhabited scenes. The dancers, musicians, and animals connote courtly recreations, perhaps recalling the pastimes of the elite owner who commissioned this costly and refined object.

In terms of style and iconography, the Ivrea casket is closely associated with six middle Byzantine ivory- and bone-clad containers located in New York, London, Ravenna, Prague, Detroit, and Pisa, to which I refer collectively as the Ivrea group.²⁵ Of these boxes, the Ivrea and Pisa caskets show the highest quality of execution.²⁶ The figures are carved on multiple planes, maximizing the appearance of depth within

the relatively shallow relief. The careful modulation of musculature endows them with a highly expressive effect (Figs. 6 and 7). Well balanced across the field, the dancers and musicians interweave in a fluid and graceful manner. The elegance of the carving is all the more apparent in contrast to the somewhat stilted and irregular disposition of figures on the New York, London, Ravenna, Prague, and Detroit boxes (Fig. 8).²⁷

The Ivrea group forms a subcategory of the so-called rosette caskets, a corpus of approximately forty-five middle Byzantine ivory- and bone-clad containers, distinguished by a decorative border of repeating flowers enclosed by circles.²⁸ The Veroli casket, a tenth- or eleventh-century ivory box depicting Greco-Roman myths, is the most renowned of the rosette caskets and exemplifies the classicizing themes and naturalistic style typically associated with the corpus (Fig. 9).²⁹ It has not previously been noted, however, that the Ivrea casket displays consistent attention to fine carving that is not only markedly higher in quality than most other boxes in its immediate subgroup but even approaches that of the Veroli casket. Despite the relative thinness of the ivory plaques, a remarkable effect of depth is achieved by rendering the figures on multiple planes (Figs. 6 and 7), a feature that also distinguishes the Veroli casket. Furthermore, in both boxes, the craftsmen beveled the edges of the central plaques and employed a distinctive technique of anchoring deeply carved or undercut elements into the frame.³⁰ The Ivrea casket demonstrates less undercutting and its figures are more stylized, but the similar execution of the floral motifs in the border as well as the overall complexity of the composition recommend it for comparison with the Veroli casket in terms of technical and aesthetic refinement. While these similarities do not support an attribution of the two caskets to the same workshop, they do emphasize the importance of the Ivrea casket within the corpus of rosette caskets and argue in favor of attributing it to Byzantine production.³¹



FIGURE 8. Casket, ivory and bone on a wooden core, Byzantine, 12th century, 28.3 x 14.3 x 11.1 cm, City of Detroit Purchase (photo: © 1989 The Detroit Institute of Arts).



FIGURE 9. Veroli casket, Byzantine, wood overlaid with carved ivory and bone plaques with traces of polychrome and gilding, ca. 1000, 40.5 x 15.5 x 11.5 cm, lid (photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

Nonetheless, the Ivrea casket lacks the classicizing qualities that characterize the Veroli box. In contrast to the realistically proportioned figures on the Veroli casket, the Ivrea dancers, acrobats, and musicians display elongated bodies, knotty muscles, and bulbous hair. Likewise, the animals on the side panels do not resemble the naturalistically rendered

beasts of the Veroli box. The Ivrea casket instead shows a tendency toward attenuated, stylized forms. The Veroli casket depicts specific Greco-Roman myths, for example, the Rape of Europa, in a stagelike arrangement. The Ivrea box does not relate a particular story or event, and some of the figures float weightlessly, defying standards of naturalistic representation



FIGURE 10. (top) *Canteen, brass inlaid with silver, Ayyubid, Syria or northern Iraq, mid-13th century, 45.2 x 36.7 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase, F1941.10.*



FIGURE 11. (left) *Detail of Fig. 1.*



FIGURE 12. (right) *Dish, inlaid brass, Iran, 12th or early 13th century, H. 3.2 cm, Diam. 18.3 cm, detail, Keir Collection, London.*



FIGURE 13. Basin, marble, Spain, 1038–73, 68 x 88 x 41 cm, Museo Nacional de Arte Hispano-Musulmán, Granada (243), front panel (photography by Bruce White, image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art).



FIGURE 14. Detail of back panel of basin shown in Fig. 13 (photography by Bruce White, image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art).



FIGURE 15. Detail of Fig. 1: cross-legged figurine.

which demand attachment to a groundline.³² The dislocation of figures from the groundline and the indeterminacy of their spatial relationships cause them to operate in a predominantly decorative, rather than narrative, mode; the viewer is attracted more to the aesthetically satisfying pattern and visual rhythm

of the overall design than the identity or activities of the individual figures depicted.

At the same time, the Ivrea casket's nonclassicizing characteristics suggest affinities with medieval Islamic works of art and may have predisposed the box to further alignment with this tradition. The way in which the figures are interwoven across the full fields of the plaques recalls compositions in medieval Islamic objects, for example, the three border medallions depicting birds on the so-called Freer Canteen, a mid-thirteenth-century brass vessel inlaid with silver, attributed to Ayyubid Syria (Fig. 10).³³ This compositional approach detracts from the integrity of specific figures, relegating them to secondary importance.³⁴ By contrast, the Veroli casket depicts figures on a realistic groundline and clearly distinguishes individual figures within the group. In the Freer Canteen border medallions are present. Next to the medallions inhabited by bird narrative scenes from the Life of Christ depict figures fully anchored to the spatial plane.³⁵ The Ayyubid work of art juxtaposes different modes of representation, narrative and decorative, suggesting an appreciation for the tension inherent in this contrast.

At the middle of the Ivrea casket lid, three acrobats run along the inner circumference of a circle (Fig. 11). This motif also recalls medieval Islamic parallels, such as a twelfth-thirteenth-century brass bowl from Iran depicting three rabbits similarly configured (Fig. 12).³⁶ In each work of art, the medallion is positioned at the center of the composition. In the vessel, each figure is identical, while on the casket the figures display unique postures, gestures, or props. Nonetheless, t



FIGURE 16. *Detail of Fig. 5: plaque over lock.*

Ivrea figures resemble one another in their body and facial types, and their overall visual impact is prioritized over their individuality.

Unlike the acrobats on the lid, the animals on the side panels are anchored to a groundline. Still, the figures themselves demonstrate stylistic parallels with animals in medieval Islamic art.³⁷ The enlarged shoulders and heads and tapering lower bodies of the lions on the Ivrea casket parallel the felines depicted on an eleventh-century marble basin from Islamic Spain (Fig. 13).³⁸ In both works of art, the heads of the lions are skewed to the front so that the entire face is visible. The elongated leg of one of the lions on the basin shows a marked similarity to the elongated hind legs of the deer on the Ivrea casket (Fig. 14). The less naturalistic mode of representation on the Ivrea casket may reflect an appreciation for the attenuated, stylized qualities of contemporary Islamic forms, thereby appealing to a viewer accustomed to this tradition.

The comparisons cited above are not proposed as direct models used in the design of the Ivrea casket. Instead, they point to overarching formal characteristics of medieval Islamic art that resonate with the ivory carvings, particularly those features that diverge from the classicizing qualities more commonly attributed to the rosette caskets. As such, the Ivrea plaques subtly merge elements of both Byzantine and Islamic models in an organic, unconscious hybrid.³⁹ This affinity with medieval Islamic objects may have predisposed the casket for subsequent alignment with a more distinctly Islamic artistic idiom; the patron and/or artist responsible for the alterations to the box would have recognized the object's iconographic and



FIGURE 17. *Detail of Ivrea casket: bracket.*



FIGURE 18. *Detail of Ivrea casket: bracket.*

aesthetic resonance with a shared visual culture of elite secular pleasures as well as its compatibility with a more specifically Islamic repertoire of courtly and astral iconography. The process described here recalls Linda Seidel's concept of artistic "receptivity."⁴⁰ This term characterizes the way in which an artist or patron is attracted to a foreign artistic element because it resonates with his own aesthetic or semantic values, eliciting "either pre-existent similarities or spontaneously-generated



FIGURE 19. *Plaque, ivory, Fatimid, Egypt, 11th–12th century, 30.3 x 5.8 cm, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany (photo: Georg Niedermeiser, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY).*

affinities.⁴¹ Receptivity does not require a consistency of meaning between primary and secondary contexts, but it does imply a motivation for the appropriation of a foreign object or element based on its correspondence to a secondary culture's aesthetic and ideological systems: "knowledge and appreciation are preconditions for assimilation."⁴² In the case of the Ivrea casket, the patron and/or artist responsible for the alterations to the box found value and familiarity in its visual themes, spurring the extension of the casket's iconographic program through the addition of the metal fixtures.⁴³

On the lid, a nimbed figure about 6 cm tall, dressed in a robe and turban, sits cross-legged. In one hand he raises a drinking cup, the other hand rests confidently on his knee (Figs. 1 and 15). Three medallions, each measuring about 9.5 cm in diameter, are affixed to the center of the long sides and one short end (Figs. 2–4). A gilded-metal plaque, about 6.5 by 6.5 cm, applied over the lock at the other short end depicts in low relief a cloaked figure holding an orb in one hand and grasping what may be a staff in the other. The figure straddles an eagle that spreads its wings in flight (Figs. 5 and 16). Eight leaf-shaped brackets, their tendrils inhabited by birds, wrap around the edges of the casket to secure the ivory plaques (Fig. 17). Four additional large clasps are affixed to the lid; they also depict vegetal forms inhabited by birds (Fig. 18). All of the metal attachments obscure portions of the figural scenes in the ivory panels, which run continuously beneath them. It is not uncommon for Byzantine ivory- and bone-clad boxes to be embellished along their edges with metal brackets.⁴⁴ Yet the figural and radiating forms incorporated into the main fields of the Ivrea casket are unique among the corpus of rosette boxes. They do not find parallels elsewhere in Byzantine art and were clearly not part of the casket's original design. Their closest comparisons derive from medieval Islamic and crusader models, especially twelfth- to thirteenth-century courtly and astronomical imagery popular among elite patrons throughout the medieval Mediterranean and Near East.

The cross-legged man on the lid of the Ivrea casket depicts a courtier or king, an iconographic type that derives from Sasanian-Islamic royal iconography.⁴⁵ Great care was taken in casting the figure, whose facial features are depicted with distinct individuality. The folds of his garment are similarly



FIGURE 20. *Dish, silver, Iran, 11th–12th century, H, 3.8 cm, Diam, 13 cm, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany (photo: Georg Niedermeiser, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY).*

refined, fully representing the contours of his bended knees and broad shoulders beneath the drapery. Even his bare foot, carefully folded beneath his body, is meticulously articulated. Intriguingly, the figure has been positioned on the lid at 180 degrees to the groundline of the ivory panel so that the dancers and musicians surrounding him are turned upside down, dislocating them from their original orientation.

Parallels for the cross-legged figure are ubiquitous in objects of diverse media dating to the tenth century and later from the Islamic Mediterranean and Near East. The cross-legged man on the Ivrea casket is particularly close to a figure in an eleventh- or twelfth-century ivory frame from Fatimid Egypt (Fig. 19). Like the figure on the Ivrea box, this cross-legged man wears a turban and holds a cup. The striations in-



PLATE 1. (Walker Figure 3) *Ivrea casket, long side* (photo: Saverio Lomartire).



PLATE 2. (Walker Figure 5) *Ivrea casket, short side with plaque* (photo: Saverio Lomartire).



PLATE 3. (Muir Figure 2) *Christ plays the fiddle for St. Agnes, Karlsruhe, Landesbibliothek, St. Georgen, perg. 5, fol. 16v (photo: Landesbibliothek).*



PLATE 4. (Muir Figure 3) *Christ and St. Agnes join hands, St. Georgen, perg. 5, fol. 17v (photo: Landesbibliothek).*



PLATE 5. (Muir Figure 4) *Christ presents St. Agnes with a ring, St. Georgen, perg. 5, fol. 18 (photo: Landesbibliothek).*



PLATE 6. (Muir Figure 5) *Christ beckons to St. Agnes from the heavens, St. Georgen, perg. 5, fol. 18v (photo: Landesbibliothek).*

dicating folds in the garments are also comparable, although the Ivrea figure is rendered with denser and more abundant drapery lines.⁴⁶ Most noteworthy is the fact that both figures display substantial corporeality, naturalistic gestures, and individualized facial features.⁴⁷ Three-dimensional metal appliqué is relatively uncommon in medieval Islamic art, but parallels do exist. For example, an eleventh- or twelfth-century silver plate attributed to Seljuq Iran shows a comparable cross-legged, seated figure (Fig. 20).⁴⁸ He plays a lute and turns his head to the side, in contrast to the Ivrea figure, who faces forward while holding a cup. Although the costumes of the figures differ, the theme of courtly entertainments is consistent, and the sculptural rendering and scale of the fixtures are comparable. An exact model for the cross-legged Ivrea figure has yet to be identified, but general comparanda exist in medieval Islamic art, substantiating attribution of the figure to that tradition.⁴⁹

The second type of appliqué, the radiating disk, is attached to one short end and the two long sides. These sunlike motifs were delicately cast; the individual spokes of the radial form taper elegantly as they reach the circumference of the circle. The disks also find formal and compositional parallels in medieval Islamic art. A pen box from western Iran, dated by inscription to 1281, shows on the interior of the lid a series of astrological symbols in medallions with a solar motif at the center, a composition that strikingly parallels the long sides of the Ivrea casket (compare Figs. 2–3 and Fig. 21).⁵⁰ The

radiating disk was a common emblem in medieval Islamic metalwork of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries and often appears at the center of compositions.⁵¹

The third category of appliqué—the eagle-mounted figure over the lock—displays carefully depicted corporeal and facial features. The figure's hands, feet, and face are finely rendered, as are the feathers of the winged mount. The drapery falls convincingly over the contours of the figure's body. This motif weaves yet another cultural thread into the fabric of the box. Its closest parallel is found in an early-thirteenth-century silver plate attributed to crusader-era Constantinople (Fig. 22).⁵² At the center of this vessel, a figure of Alexander the Great riding a griffin-drawn chariot rises into the heavens. Among the ten figures that surround him, several represent personifications of celestial bodies including, at the top right, a similar eagle-mounted figure, gripping a globe (Fig. 23). The motif has been tentatively identified as a personification of Jupiter.⁵³ Association with the astral realm is implied by its location in sequence after medallions depicting personifications of the sun and moon. An astronomical interpretation for the same figure on the Ivrea casket is supported by the solar disks affixed to the other three lateral surfaces of the box.

Scholars have identified the metal fixtures on the Ivrea casket as purely ornamental, implying that the Byzantine panels served as little more than decorative background for the Islamic additions. Yet, the strategic juxtaposition of the



FIGURE 21. Pen box, inlaid brass, western Iran, 1281, L. 19.7 cm, interior of lid (photo: © Trustees of the British Museum).



FIGURE 22. Plate, silver, Constantinople(?), Crusader(?), ca. 1208–16(?), H. 6 cm, Diam. 28 cm (photo: The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg).



FIGURE 23. Detail of Fig. 22: personification of Jupiter(?) (photo: The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg).

metal appliqué with motifs of acrobats, musicians, and combatant animals integrates foreground and background forms, suggesting that a more complex dynamic is at work in the alteration of the box. In medieval Islamic ruler imagery, the



FIGURE 24. Pen box, inlaid bronze, Ayyubid, northern Mesopotamia, 13th century, detail (photo: Bologna, Museo Civico Medievale).

royal figure typically sits surrounded by scenes of princely pleasures: hunting, music making, and dancing. For example, a thirteenth-century Ayyubid silver-inlaid bronze pen box produced in northern Mesopotamia shows on the interior of the lid a seated ruler, flanked by sword-bearing attendants (Fig. 24).⁵⁴ In front of the prince, musicians play a flute and tambourine while a dancer, at the lower center, struts and turns, flinging a scarf overhead. This scene recalls the composition created by merging the cross-legged figure with the acrobats and musicians on the Ivrea casket lid: when the gilded-bronze figure took command of the Byzantine ivory relief, the acrobats and musicians became courtly entertainers performing for their prince (Figs. 1 and 15).

Although frequently referred to as “the princely cycle,” this visual vocabulary of royal pleasures and pastimes was not a fixed or repeating thematic formula. Rather, it represented a repertoire of imagery from which particular motifs were selected to fit specific contexts of use and to conform to local visual and ideological traditions.⁵⁵ This iconography was not limited to royal commissions and was increasingly employed in works of art destined for a diffuse market of wealthy (but not necessarily royal or even aristocratic) patrons. An important development beginning in the mid-twelfth century was the merging of princely and astronomical iconography. For example, one of the aforementioned pen boxes (Fig. 24) depicts on the exterior of the lid a full complement of astrological personifications in medallions.⁵⁶ This combination of courtly and astral imagery offers one among many models for the association of princely and solar signs on the Ivrea casket.

The disks not only draw the princely figure into a celestial setting but also cast the animal motifs of the ivory panels



FIGURE 25. Exterior of lid of pen box in Fig. 21 (photo: © Trustees of the British Museum).

in astronomical terms. In twelfth- to thirteenth-century Islamic royal imagery, lions and griffins often function as symbols of the ruler's might and as protective beasts of the heavenly realm. Through juxtaposition with a solar motif, the lions and griffins on the Ivrea casket echo medieval Islamic works of art in which animals of astrological import are marked by celestial symbols. The exterior surface of one of the pen boxes discussed above (Fig. 21), for example, depicts the symbol of the constellation Leo: a lion, with the sun radiating from behind his back (Figs. 25 and 26).⁵⁷ The pairing of a lion with a solar motif is common in medieval Islamic representations of Leo because the sun was the planetary lord of this zodiacal sign.⁵⁸ This association may have motivated the addition of the radiating disks to the short end of the Ivrea casket, where the carved ivory lions flank the solar appliqué in a manner akin to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Islamic depictions (compare Figs. 4 and 26). Griffins, the other powerful beast featured on the Ivrea plaques, also hold astral connotations because they were thought capable of travel between celestial and earthly realms.⁵⁹ On the Ivrea casket, the ruler sits surrounded by entertainers, while the lower realms of his celestial sphere are protected by fierce griffins and lions.⁶⁰

Eva Baer interprets this dual royal-astronomical iconography as a secular symbolism that metaphorically celebrates the ruler as a solar king reigning in a celestial paradise.⁶¹ This visual topos parallels literary conventions of the era, both in texts and poetic inscriptions on objects.⁶² Further insight into the iconographic system informing the Ivrea casket is gained from an eleventh-century text, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, by the Islamic polymath al-Biruni (d. 1048), who in his later life resided at the Ghaznavid court at Khorasan. As James Allan notes, al-Biruni specifies the sun as "the symbol of kings, nobles, chiefs, and generals" because of its association with all things dignified, powerful, and valuable, including gold, lions, eagles, falcons, the royal palace, manhood, intelligence, knowledge, victory, and political power.⁶³ Al-Biruni's excursus encompasses several of the iconographic motifs depicted on the Ivrea casket—the sun,



FIGURE 26. Detail of Fig. 25 (photo: © Trustees of the British Museum).

the ruler, the eagle, the lion—elucidating the message that they conveyed to a viewer versed in these symbols.

By the late thirteenth century decorative programs in Islamic metalwork show a looser connection between princely cycle imagery and astrological motifs.⁶⁴ In some cases, astral signs are omitted almost completely, and only a solar symbol—

in the form of a radiating disk—remains to identify the theme as one of celestial kingship. This less direct affiliation of the ruler with celestial symbols may account for how the disparate astral and princely motifs on the Ivrea casket could still be read as a coherent program. The alignment of the solar disks on the long sides with the circular motif at the center of the lid links the entertainment scene with those of protective beasts. The addition of the seated prince reorients the dancers and musicians on the lid 180 degrees, disrupting the relation of the frolicking figures to the groundline so as to create a skylike setting that reinforces the celestial ambiance of the scene. The eagle-mounted figure traverses the heavens to join the ruler on the lid at his heavenly court.⁶⁵ The rampant griffin and lion flanking the eagle-mounted figure pay homage as they grant passage to the auspicious visitor. The repeating border motifs of blooming florettes bind together these diverse forms and themes.

Although constructed through the addition of the appliques, this new program originated in the mind of the artist and/or patron who was presumably well versed in the forms and meanings of medieval Islamic secular art. The reconfiguration of the Byzantine casket indexes this viewer's interpretation. By recognizing the visual and mental associations of the dancers, musicians, and animals in the Byzantine ivory panels with the celestial and princely symbols of the gilded-metal additions, subsequent viewers reiterate and thereby affirm the incorporation of Byzantine motifs into an Islamic system of meaning. Of course, not all viewers were "ideal" or even "informed readers," who perceived the full range of associations described above.⁶⁶ Still, the individual responsible for the alteration of the box seems to have been motivated by forms and meanings of Islamic princely and astronomical iconography when he added the gilded-metal fixtures. Subsequent viewers' interpretations of the program presumably fell somewhere along a spectrum of possibilities from mere ornament to highly saturated iconography.

To appreciate fully the process of recognition and appropriation recorded in the Ivrea casket's alterations, it is useful to consider other select examples of medieval cross-cultural artistic reception, which provide a foundation for further analysis of the dynamics at play in this object's reconfiguration. The German pilgrim Ludolph von Suchem, who visited Mamluk Jerusalem in 1350, reported that Baguta, a local Muslim woman living next door to the former "Church of St. Mary," offered a creative reading of the Christian paintings that still decorated the exterior of the building after its conversion into a mosque. He writes that these images tell "the story of Anne and Joachim and the Blessed Mary's birth," but that Baguta "declared that the picture of Joachim [St. Anne's husband] stood for Muhammad, and the painting of the trees for Paradise, where Muhammad kissed girls. And she referred the whole of the painting to Muhammad and set it forth with fervor and would tell many more wondrous stories of Muhammad with tears in her eyes."⁶⁷

For any reader—medieval or modern—the account is suspect, first and foremost because the prophet Muhammad is depicted only rarely in Islamic art and certainly did not feature in the aniconic decorative programs of medieval mosques.⁶⁸ Baguta presumably saw a series of scenes from the life of St. Anne, in which the mother of the Virgin Mary greets her husband, Joachim, in a garden and embraces him. When judged in relation to the Christian painting's intended narrative, Baguta's account represents an undeniable misinterpretation of the original work of art. When analyzed in terms of the audience's perspective, however, her response can be appreciated as a meaningful commentary on how viewers make sense of images from cultures other than their own. Seeing paintings on the exterior of a mosque, Baguta reconciled their visual content and physical context through relevant information from presumably popular Islamic traditions that recount heaven's gardenlike setting, the pleasures enjoyed there, and Muhammad's privileged rank in this paradisiacal realm.⁶⁹ As Barbara Zeitler has argued in reference to cross-cultural artistic reception among Byzantine and medieval Western viewers, these "misinterpretations" do not indicate shortcomings on the part of the audience. Rather, they reflect the viewer's resourcefulness and perseverance in making sense of the unfamiliar, often through quite sophisticated skills of visual and cultural analysis.⁷⁰ From this point of view, Baguta's commentary represents a constructive effort to read a work of art according to her own systems of meaning.⁷¹

In modern theoretical terms, Baguta's process of interpretation resonates with that outlined by Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, founders of the Konstanz school of reception theory.⁷² Both scholars are concerned with how literary works maintain significance for changing audiences over time and how readers derive constantly new meanings from the same text. Jauss draws attention to the historical contexts of reading and the constantly expanding potential for new interpretations within the shifting "horizon of expectations" of a given audience.⁷³ From this perspective, Baguta does not misinterpret the Christian paintings but analyzes them according to her own cultural context, ascribing to the images a significance that operates within these parameters.

Turning to how texts and readers interact to create these meanings, Iser emphasizes the indeterminacy surrounding a literary work. He argues that while an author's text provides a structure with which the reader engages, the audience derives and creates meaning by independently bridging blanks or gaps in the text. This process is directed, but cannot—indeed should not—be entirely controlled by the author. The reader completes the work through her response, which extends and transforms the original. Although guided by the text (or object), meaning is also extrinsic to it and ultimately generated in the mind of the reader (or viewer).⁷⁴ Having been radically dislocated from their initial loci of production and reception, objects that participate in cross-cultural interaction heighten awareness of the extrinsic nature of artistic meaning because



FIGURE 27. *Box, ivory and wood, Cuenca, Spain, 1026, 19 x 34 x 21 cm; mounts, Spanish, gilt copper enamel, ca. 1150–75, Museo de Burgos, Spain (106), (photography by Bruce White, image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art).*

their significance must be reconstituted in new contexts by new viewers. Baguta, for instance, constructed her interpretation by bridging the lacunae in the paintings with information she judged relevant, grafting her frame of reference onto the structure of the original work of art. A similar dynamic of reception is at play in the alteration of the Ivrea casket, in which the viewer recognized the entertainers and animals depicted on the ivory box as the foundation for a program of princely and astronomical import and manifested this interpretation by physically extending the original program through the addition of the metal fixtures.

Written accounts like that of von Suchem are extremely rare. Yet textual documentation is consistently at the core of many studies that address cross-cultural reception in the medieval world, a methodological tendency that may account in part for the relatively limited amount of scholarly work on the topic. In the absence of texts, some art historical studies have turned to medieval objects themselves as records of cross-cultural exchange. The most provocative of these interpretations ventures to consider how artistic reception might be accessed through analysis of the physical alteration that objects have experienced after they leave their original loci of production and use.⁷⁵



FIGURE 28. *Plaque on lid of casket in Fig. 27 (photo: Hirmer Verlag, Munich).*

Islamic portable objects deposited in European church treasuries during the Middle Ages offer a particularly intriguing example of how cross-cultural artistic reception can be documented in material—rather than textual—terms. Mounts,

brackets, and frames added to Islamic bowls, boxes, and vases equip them to serve as Christian reliquaries and liturgical implements. As for the medieval reception of these works of art in their new contexts, Avinoam Shalem argues that the specific messages they convey depend in part on the viewers' awareness of the objects' cultural origins. When Islamic derivation was recognized, objects could be appreciated as trophies of Christian triumph over the Muslim world.⁷⁶ Alternatively, exotic appearance might be taken to indicate antiquity, especially a biblical or early Christian pedigree. In the latter instance, objects were linked in place and time with holy people and even assumed reliclike status.⁷⁷ This range of interpretations is reflected in annotations in treasury inventories, but the premise for Shalem's interpretation comes from the objects' known loci of alteration and use in Latin Christian churches. From this context, even in the absence of texts, we can judge something of the perspective and intentions informing the Western medieval viewers who transformed and thereby reinterpreted these works of art.

The particular alterations to Islamic objects can provide a sense of the new meanings they accrued in Western contexts. An Islamic ivory box in the cathedral of Burgos, Spain, for example, is carved with figural motifs of animals and hunters, vegetal designs, and an inscription, which provides the name of the artist and the date of production, 1026.⁷⁸ After arriving in a Christian milieu, the box received *champlevé* enamel appliqué with scenes depicting St. Domingo flanked by angels on one side and the Lamb of God framed by fantastic birds on the lid (Figs. 27 and 28). Most of the imagery on these additions is drawn from a Christian symbolic system and equips the object to serve as a container for a saint's relics. Shalem argues that in their original Islamic context, the ivory carvings of animal and human figures surrounded by vegetal motifs may have connoted a paradisiacal setting in which brave hunters and fierce beasts emblemized ideal moral values, such as courage and victory.⁷⁹ The enamel plaques repositioned these themes to correlate with Christian meanings, casting the scenes of hunters and animals surrounded by vegetal forms as a heavenly environment for the saints and Lamb of God.⁸⁰ At the same time, the enamels associate the foreign work of art with Christian liturgical and sacred objects already in the treasury that were clad with lavish trimmings of similar style and media. The additions to the Burgos casket were not made haphazardly. Rather, the mountings emphasize the fine quality of the ivory carving while strategically aligning the alien work of art with familiar tastes and meanings.⁸¹

The fixtures on the Ivrea casket reflect similar care in their placement and comparable respect for the aesthetic value of the original work of art. Much as the enamel plaques on the Burgos casket integrate the Islamic box with Christian objects in the cathedral treasury, so the metal attachments on the Ivrea casket would link this box to Islamic objects displaying similar motifs and themes. Yet the Byzantine ivory carvings are still integral to the meaning of the foreground forms.

Without the dancers and musicians to act as attendants to the ruler, or the griffins and lions to receive the astral signs, there would be no semantic ground into which to root the metal attachments. The fixtures only partially obscure the panels, such that the alterity of the original object is maintained. The fissures between background and foreground elements consciously mark the liminal space that the casket occupies between Byzantine and Islamic forms and suggest an appreciation for the aesthetic variety that this composite object achieves.⁸²

While Baguta's interpretation of Christian wall paintings and the transformations of Islamic portable objects in Latin church treasuries provide useful corollaries for analyzing the physical and semantic transformations at work in the Ivrea casket's alteration, these examples are at the same time essentially different because in each instance meaning is generated across religious divisions and is characterized by a disjunction of references between the producing and receiving groups. In contrast, the ivory panels and metal attachments of the Ivrea casket depict secular motifs that do not pose immediate obstacles to cross-cultural recognition or use. Themes of elite amusements appear in medieval Islamic, Byzantine, crusader, and Western medieval works of art, attesting to a shared culture of luxury pastimes and of objects that record these pleasures.⁸³ In this regard, the act of transformation carried out on the Ivrea casket diverges fundamentally from the others cited above because it bespeaks a common, rather than conflicting, cultural identity and a subtle, rather than radical, realignment of an object's semantic value. Indeed, while medieval viewers may have easily recognized the striking visual juxtaposition produced by the addition of the metal appliqué as an intentional hybrid in aesthetic terms, they may have been less unsettled by the intercultural implications of this combination than many modern viewers, who perhaps possess stronger expectations for objects to observe distinctions of geographic and cultural identity than did the medieval people who made and used these works of art.⁸⁴

In part because of the Ivrea casket's cross-cultural character, the context for its transformation remains elusive. The twelfth- and thirteenth-century Mediterranean world witnessed flourishing intercultural traffic brought about by the crusades, but these networks grew from interactions among the Byzantine, Islamic, and Latin Christian spheres that had been ongoing for centuries. The logical candidate for reconfiguring the Byzantine box according to a medieval Islamic visual and semantic system would be, of course, an Islamic user, assumed to have acquired the object after its transfer from its original locus of production. By the twelfth century, however, Islamic princely cycle imagery had become increasingly adopted in non-Islamic realms, including Byzantium, Norman Sicily, and various crusader states.⁸⁵ For instance, the silver plate (Figs. 22 and 23) depicting an eagle-mounted figure similar to that on the Ivrea casket has been attributed to the thirteenth-century crusader court of Constantinople.⁸⁶ This raises the possibility that the alterations to the Ivrea casket could have been under-



FIGURE 29. Dish, copper gilt enamel, Mediterranean or Near East, mid-12th century, H. 5 cm, Diam. 26.5 cm (photo: Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck, Austria).

taken outside an expressly Islamic religious or political context, in which Islamic secular imagery was nonetheless understood, appreciated, and even imitated.⁸⁷

A useful parallel for the Ivrea casket in this respect is the so-called Innsbruck plate (Fig. 29), an elaborate enamel dish that depicts a variety of motifs from the intercultural visual vocabulary of medieval luxury arts. Around the periphery of the plate, women dance, male acrobats tumble, eagles attack quadrupeds, and riders charge their horses. At the center, Alexander the Great ascends to the heavens in his chariot. Like many of the objects discussed already, the Innsbruck plate integrates courtly entertainments and animal combats in a celestial setting. Along the interior rim an inscription in Arabic identifies the recipient, a twelfth-century Artukid emir, while around the exterior rim runs an illegible inscription, possibly imitating Persian.

Scholars have attributed production of the dish to a range of cultural and geographic contexts, including Islamic,

Georgian, and, most recently, Byzantine.⁸⁸ The significance of the object lies, however, not in its place of origin—a debate that may never be resolved—but, as Hoffman explains, in its witness to dynamic cross-cultural artistic exchange and shared systems of meaning that extended throughout the medieval world.⁸⁹ In a similar manner, the Ivrea casket draws from a visual and semantic culture of the Mediterranean and Near East that circulated among Islamic, Byzantine, Latin, and crusader realms, exemplifying the phenomenon of portability. As defined by Hoffman, portability characterizes objects that merge diverse iconographic, stylistic, and even technical traditions, thereby defying attribution to a specific locus of production or use. They derive meaning not—or not only—from their places of origin but also from their participation in a visual language common to multiple centers. The Ivrea casket's transformation was possible in part because of its participation in this medieval common culture of elite artistic forms and themes, which facilitated a subsequent viewer's receptivity

toward the Byzantine box, allowing him to see resonance between the motifs on the ivory plaques and Islamic princely and astral iconography. At the same time, this royal-celestial iconography was, by the thirteenth century, ubiquitous throughout the medieval Islamic world and increasingly popular even among non-Islamic groups, making it difficult, if not impossible, to specify the locus of the object's alteration. While it is useful to hypothesize contexts in which the ivory casket was produced and subsequently transformed, it remains impossible to know this for certain. Indeed, the portability of its stylistic and iconographic features remains, ultimately, its most characteristic attribute.

Previous interpretations of the metal attachments to the Ivrea casket as purely ornamental additions or insensitive disfigurements obscure the complex dynamics of appropriation at work in this object. According to the interpretation presented here, the motifs of the Byzantine ivory panels depicting elite pastimes of animal combats, dancing, and music making refer to a relatively generic thematic repertoire popular throughout the medieval world. Furthermore, the figures—both human and animal—resonate with both Byzantine and medieval Islamic models, perhaps predisposing this object for further alignment with Islamic types. As such, the ivory plaques represent organic, unconscious hybrids that serve as a foundation for the more conscious, intentional hybrid achieved through the addition of the gilded-bronze appliqué. These metal attachments shift the program of the box to accommodate an Islamic semantic system. The figures in the ivory plaques become symbols of the celestial sphere and princely pleasures. This realignment was realized in the imagination of the viewer, but no text documents the extension of the object's program. Rather, the metal fixtures alone articulate this new reception.

While the specific circumstances of the production and alteration of the Ivrea casket remain unknown, and perhaps unknowable, the object still records a rich cross-cultural interaction through which references to elite entertainments were appropriated and specified by the addition of courtly and astronomical symbols. As the fourteenth-century Muslim viewer Baguta demonstrates, meaning is largely extrinsic to a work of art, depending instead on the set of associations that a given viewer holds for the forms and motifs in question. The dislocation and relocation of meaning are heightened in processes of cross-cultural movement and reception. Texts and context provide important tools for discerning the messages of medieval objects, but in the absence of these sources, works of art need not remain mute. Objects are capable of narrating their own transformations and through dialogue with other objects can articulate at least some perspective on the cultural pathways they may have followed and the meanings they may have accrued—and shed—along the way. In the vigorously cross-cultural environment of the thirteenth-century medieval world, an artist or patron of Byzantine, crusader, or medieval Islamic origin could have executed the Ivrea casket's transformation, and the same range of subsequent viewers could have understood the new program that the metal appliqué construct. While it remains useful—even necessary—to insist on the distinct cultural affiliations of the original box versus its later attachments, the Ivrea casket ultimately attests to the permeability of the geographic and cultural divisions that underpin the study of medieval art. In this respect, it encourages us to recognize the reality of cultural distinctions in the medieval world, while at the same time remaining mindful of the broader perspective to be gained from movement across these same divisions.

NOTES

* This article developed from a chapter of my doctoral thesis, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics: 843–1204 CE" (Dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 2004). Aspects of this project were presented at the Frick Graduate Symposium, New York City, 2001, and the Byzantine Studies Conference, Toronto, 2007. I thank the audiences at these meetings for their thoughtful suggestions and comments. Numerous colleagues read earlier drafts of this article, and I am greatly indebted to them for their insights. I also thank the two anonymous readers commissioned by *Gesta* for their rigorous and perceptive critiques. Finally, I am grateful to Saverio Lomartire, who generously allowed me to publish his photographs of the Ivrea casket.

1. The interdisciplinary periodical *Medieval Encounters: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue*, first published in 1995, bespeaks this direction of inquiry, as do numerous essay collections, including B. Arbel, ed., *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean* (London, 1996); and R. F. Gyug, *Medieval Cultures in*

Contact (New York, 2003). The field of medieval art history has increasingly explored how objects and monuments actively engaged in material and ideological exchange between different religious, political, and geographic groups. For instance, see the special issue of this journal, "Encounters with Islam: The Medieval Mediterranean Experience: Art, Material Culture, and Cultural Interchange," ed. R. Ousterhout and D. Fairchild Ruggles, special issue, *Gesta*, 43/2 (2004). This trend is also reflected in recent essay collections and anthologies—intended in part as textbooks for medieval art history courses—that provide distinctly cross- and multicultural perspectives, for example: E. Sears and T. K. Thomas, eds., *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object* (Ann Arbor, 2002); and E. Hoffman, ed., *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Malden, MA, 2007).

2. The concept of hybridity has received extensive discussion in numerous disciplines, producing a surplus of connotations. My own use of the term draws from Mikhail Bakhtin's definition, as outlined in n. 3 below,

For a perceptive discussion of hybridity in relation to the visual arts, with an emphasis on the multiplicity of meanings under which the term operates, see C. Dean and D. Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review*, 12/1 (2003), 5–35. For a multidisciplinary perspective on the problematic nature of hybridity as a heuristic tool, see D. A. Kapchan and P. T. Strong, "Theorizing the Hybrid," *Journal of American Folklore*, 112/115 (1999), 239–53 and additional essays in that volume. For discussion of hybridity in relation to medieval—especially Byzantine and Islamic—art, see A. Cutler, "Visual Communities in Byzantium and Medieval Islam," in *Visions of Community in the Pre-Modern World*, ed. N. Howe (Notre Dame, IN, 2002), 37–73, esp. 48–52.

3. I refer here to Mikhail Bakhtin's distinction between conscious and unconscious linguistic hybrids: the former refers to moments of "intentional" borrowings that create sharp, even jarring juxtapositions of differing languages that disrupt and transform linguistic categories and orders, while the latter refers to "organic" mixing that is less immediately perceptible and does not directly challenge existing linguistic boundaries but still lays a foundation for future disruptions and fusions. The Ivrea casket, the subject of the present essay, evinces both conscious and unconscious hybridity. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and Holquist (Austin, TX, 1981), esp. 358–62. For a useful analysis of Bakhtinian hybridity in relation to postmodern theories of cultural difference, see P. Werbner, "Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity," in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. Werbner and T. Modood (London, 1997), 1–26, esp. 4–5.
4. Studies that attempt to identify the provenances of these works of art sometimes produce mutually exclusive, albeit equally persuasive, arguments. For example, the multiple interpretations of the so-called Innsbruck plate (see Fig. 29) suggest a diverse range of possible origins for the same object (see n. 88 below). Regarding the issue of cultural, temporal, and geographic taxonomies in the study of medieval, especially Byzantine, art, see R. Nelson, "Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art," *Gesta*, 35/1 (1996), 3–11. For recent discussion of the relation of place and space to the study of art history, see T. Da Costa Kaufman, *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago, 2004).
5. Essential to my discussion is Eva Hoffman's concept of "portability" and her perceptive articulation of the shortcomings inherent in provenance-focused approaches to the study of medieval metalwork, textiles, ivory carving, and enamel, among other media. She proposes instead a "pluritopic" interpretative model that emphasizes fluid exchange among cultures via complex networks of cultural interrelation. See Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," *AH*, 24/1 (2001), 17–50. Interest in the dynamic life of objects and the ability of "things" to be active agents in the production of social meaning is found across disciplines. See A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986); and C. Gosden and Y. Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archaeology*, 31/2 (1999), 169–78.
6. Almost all of the plaques are made of bone, with only a few pieces of the border possibly carved from ivory. The surfaces of the bone plaques are highly polished to imitate the smoothness and luster of ivory. Following current convention, I refer to the Ivrea casket and the corpus from which it derives as Byzantine "ivory" boxes, recognizing, however, that many of these objects are fabricated largely from bone. Regarding distinctions between these materials, see A. Cutler, *The Craft of Ivory: Sources, Techniques, and Uses in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 200–1400* (Washington, DC, 1985).
7. Scholars of "Islamic art" have long debated the question of whether this term should be understood to designate "the art of a culture or the art of a faith" (O. Grabar, "Islamic Art: Art of a Culture or Art of a Faith?" *Art and Archaeology Research Papers*, 13 [1978], 1–6). I use the term *Islamic art* with its broader cultural connotation rather than its exclusively religious sense, so as to encompass the secular traditions prevalent in medieval communities where Islam was the dominant (or at least the hegemonic) creed. Regarding the problematic nature of the term *Islamic art*, also see O. Grabar, "Islamic Art: Introduction; Definition," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. J. Turner, 34 vols. (London, 1996), 16:99–102.
8. Ivrea is located in the Piedmont region of northern Italy. Although Byzantium maintained diplomatic contact with secular and ecclesiastical powers in this area during the tenth and eleventh centuries, there is no indication that the casket traveled to the region as a diplomatic gift or that the object's current location was the context in which the metal fixtures were added. The box was first published in 1898, at which point it resided in the cathedral treasury. Documents in the cathedral archives offer no definitive evidence regarding when the object entered the treasury. The only possible reference to the casket is found in a treasury inventory of 1427, which mentions an ivory box with metal attachments that contained liturgical implements and holy oils. See S. Lomartire, "Il Confanetto Bizantino della Cattedrale di Ivrea," in *Florilegium: Scritti di Storia dell'Arte in Onore di Carlo Bettrelli* (Milan, 1995), 25–33, esp. 25, 32–33 nn. 5 and 8; citing *Esposizione di Arte Sacra Antica e Moderna* (Turin, 1898), 130, fig. 190. A closely related ivory box in the treasury of the cathedral at Pisa (see n. 26 below) is documented in a late-thirteenth-century inventory, suggesting a possible time frame (ca. 1275–1427) for the deposit of the casket in Ivrea.
9. Some medieval Islamic boxes in ivory and other media are compartmentalized on the interior. These divisions indicate that the containers were intended to hold, for example, pens or scales (S. Makariou, "A New Group of Spanish Ivory Pen Boxes?" *Journal of the David Collection*, 2/1 [2005], 185–95). In the case of middle Byzantine ivory boxes, however, no such divisions are apparent, and the specific function of these containers, if any, is unknown.
10. Lomartire, "Il Cofanetto Bizantino," 30.
11. A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1930), 1:47. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann propose an Arab-Sicilian locale for the addition of the metal appliqués, perhaps perceiving the multicultural artistic tradition of Norman Sicily as a logical venue for the conscious hybridity apparent in the Ivrea casket. They did not, however, provide specific comparanda for this identification, and medieval Sicilian objects offer no persuasive stylistic or technical parallels for the figural or solar motifs attached to the box. With regard to the brackets, a survey of C. P. Blythe's corpus of medieval Sicilian ivories (*Siculo-Arabic Ivories* [Princeton, 1939], cat. 64, pl. 29) reveals that, although medieval ivory caskets produced in Sicily were commonly decorated with metal brackets, these clasps were of a strikingly different style, consisting of flat, unornamented bands ending in spade-shaped finials. An eleventh-century Byzantine ivory box exhibiting this type of bracket and clasp provides a more likely candidate for Sicilian alteration (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Glory of Byzantium* [New York, 1996], ed. H. Evans, cat. 156, 233).
12. For the distinction between "conscious" and "unconscious" hybrids, see n. 3 above. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's characterization of the attachments as disfigurements (*Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 1:47) recalls the alternative conception of a hybrid as something that combines the incompatible, producing abhorrent, monstrous results, a definition not in keeping with my use of the term. Regarding the monstrous hybrid, see D. H. Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, 2003). For discussion of Byzantine attitudes toward composite creatures and hybridity more generally, see E. D. Maguire and H. Maguire, "Novelties and Invention in Byzantine

- Art," in *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture* (Princeton, 2007), 5–28.
13. I follow here a definition of *ornament* as that which provides visual pleasure over—or even to the exclusion of—semantic content. See O. Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Washington, DC, 1992), xxiv, 5, and 24–26; and J. Trilling, *The Language of Ornament* (New York, 2001), 13–14. Still, the question of whether ornament should be definitively disassociated from meaning has been long debated. Although A. Riegl, widely recognized as the progenitor of modern ornament studies, is concerned primarily with the morphology and diffusion of ornamental forms (and their reflection of a given culture's *Volksgeist*), he recognizes the potential for ornament to carry symbolic significance in discrete contexts. At the same time he remains skeptical of the arguments employed by some nineteenth-century scholars (foremost W. G. Goodyear, who promote highly diachronic and pan-cultural theories to explain the transmission of universal meanings (*Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* [Berlin, 1893], trans. E. Kain as *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament* [Princeton, 1992], 7–8 and 39). The potential for ornament to be meaningful remains a concern for recent theorists as well. See E. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Ithaca, NY, 1979), 217–25; and J. Trilling, *Ornament: A Modern Perspective* (Seattle, 2003), 71–111. Scholars working on the status of ornament in medieval art, particularly the reception of ornament and symbols in cross-cultural exchange, attempt to avoid the pitfalls of nineteenth-century ornament studies by employing synchronic, historically rooted analyses of meaning. See J. Trilling, *The Medallion Style: A Study in the Origins of Byzantine Taste* (New York, 1985); idem, "Medieval Interlace Ornament: The Making of a Cross-Cultural Idiom," *AM*, 2/9 (1995), 59–86; J.-C. Bonne, "De l'ornement dans l'art médiéval (VIIe–XIIe siècle): Le modèle insulaire," in *L'image, fonctions, et usages des images dans l'occident médiéval*, Cahiers de Léopard l'Or, 5 (1996), 207–49; J. Ottaway, ed., *Le rôle de l'ornement dans la peinture murale du moyen âge* (Poitiers, 1997); E. Baer, *Islamic Ornament* (New York, 1998), 89–124; Y. Tabbaa, *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival* (Seattle, 2001); and G. Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2004).
 14. Due to the relatively aniconic nature of Islamic art and its ubiquitous use of vegetal and geometric patterns, the definition and study of ornament have received particular attention in this subfield. For a useful overview of the issue, see G. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (Santa Monica, CA, 1995), esp. 61–87; and S. Blair and J. Bloom, "Ornament in Islamic Art," in Chestnut Hill, McMullen Museum of Art, *Cosmophilia: Islamic Art from the David Collection, Copenhagen* (Chestnut Hill, MA, 2006), ed. Blair and Bloom, 9–30. Scholarly treatment of Byzantine ornament is comparatively unadvanced. Riegl ("Tendril Ornament in Byzantine Art," in *Problems of Style*, 240–66) viewed Byzantine ornament as a mere holding pen for decorative forms between the more successful periods of Greco-Roman and Islamic art. Riegl's methodology for tracking the morphology of decorative motifs—and his generally negative attitude toward Byzantine ornament as neither faithful to antique precedent nor inventive—was implicit in subsequent studies, such as O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1911). For studies of Byzantine ornament that offer some corrective to Riegl, see Trilling, *The Medallion Style*; idem, "Medieval Interlace Ornament"; and Peers, *Sacred Shock*.
 15. O. Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC, 1997), 115–30. Also see Hoffman, "Pathways," esp. 25–26.
 16. Hoffman, "Pathways," 23.
 17. Transformation in meaning is integral to Robert Nelson's definition of appropriation as an act that entails "a distortion, not a negation of the prior semiotic assemblage. When successful, it maintains but shifts the former connotations to create the new sign and accomplishes all this covertly, making the process appear ordinary and natural" (R. Nelson "Appropriation," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Nelson and R. Shiff [Chicago, 1996], 116–29, at 119). Although Nelson emphasizes a desire for seamlessness in these processes, the Ivrea casket generates meaning in part through the friction between background and foreground forms; the hybrid appearance of this object makes palpable the act of appropriation at work.
 18. For an overview of scholarship on medieval spolia, see D. Kinney, "The Concept of Spolia," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. C. Rudolph (Malden, MA, 2006), 233–52, with a comprehensive bibliography. Studies that have particularly influenced my understanding of this issue include B. Brenk, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology," *DOP*, 41 (1987), 103–9; S. Redford, "The Seljuqs of Rum and the Antique," *Muqarnas*, 10 (1993), 148–56; J. A. Harris, "Muslim Ivory in Christian Hands: The Leire Casket in Context," *AH*, 18/2 (1995), 213–21; I. Forsyth, "Art with History: The Role of Spolia in the Cumulative Work of Art," in *Byzantine East, Latin West*, ed. D. Mouriki et al. (Princeton, 1995), 152–62; A. Shalem, "From Royal Caskets to Reliquary Containers: Two Ivory Caskets from Burgos and Madrid," *Muqarnas*, 11 (1995), 24–38; idem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996); A. Cutler, "Reuse or Use? Theoretical and Practical Attitudes toward Objects in the Early Middle Ages," in *Ideologie e Pratiche del Reimpiego nell'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1999), 2:1055–83; K. R. Mathews, "Expressing Political Legitimacy and Cultural Identity through the Use of Spolia on the Ambo of Henry II," *Medieval Encounters*, 5/2 (1999), 156–83; F. B. Flood, "The Medieval Trophy as an Art Historical Trope: Coptic and Byzantine 'Altars' in Islamic Contexts," *Muqarnas*, 18 (2001), 41–72; and A. Shalem, "Islamische Objekte in Kirchenschatzen der lateinischen Christenheit: Ästhetische Stufen des Umgangs mit dem Anderen und dem Hybriden," in *Das Bistum Bamberg in der Welt des Mittelalters*, ed. C. van Eickels and K. van Eickels, *Bamberger interdisziplinäre Mittelalterstudien, Vorträge und Vorlesungen*, 1 (Bamberg, 2007), 163–75.
 19. Brenk, "Spolia," 103. On the challenges and pitfalls of reading meaning in medieval spolia, see Flood, "Medieval Trophy," 41–42.
 20. Regarding the limited evidence for the provenance of the Ivrea casket or the circumstances surrounding its alteration, see n. 8 above.
 21. As such, I answer Eva Hoffman's call to reframe our approach to medieval portable objects ("Pathways," 21): "Instead of asking where objects came from, the question might be reformulated to ask what were the implications of portability and how were objects used and perceived interculturally?"
 22. In this regard, I respond to Robert Ousterhout and D. Fairchild Ruggles' call to "think outside the text" as we study the medieval Mediterranean world ("Encounters with Islam," 83).
 23. For a recent overview of reception studies in medieval art focusing on Western European cultures, see M. H. Caviness, "Reception of Imagery by Medieval Viewers," in Rudolph, *A Companion to Medieval Art*, 65–85, with additional bibliography. Exceptions to the focus on provenance and the mechanics of exchange in the study of medieval cross-cultural artistic interaction are found throughout the citations to this essay.
 24. The scenes of entertainers possess a late Antique pedigree, harkening back to depictions of hippodrome performers on Byzantine ivory consular diptychs (R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler* [Berlin, 1929], 10, 11–12, 18, and 20). The acrobats in the Ivrea casket carvings reflect this theme, although thoroughly decontextualized from their original setting, the hippodrome.
 25. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann (*Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 1: cats. 57–63, 44–47) first identified and grouped these caskets. It h

- been argued that variations in the formal qualities of the boxes indicate their stylistic development and chronological sequence. I hesitate, however, to attempt any relative dating for the caskets on these grounds because such discrepancies may, instead, represent different workshop practices—or even aesthetic preference on the part of artists and/or patrons—within the same period. The chronological and geographic attribution of middle Byzantine ivory production is notoriously problematic, and these questions await resolution. For the most recent consideration of the medium and its issues, see A. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (Ninth to Eleventh Centuries)* (Princeton, 1994). On the caskets specifically, see A. Papagiannaki, "The Production of Middle Byzantine Ivory, Bone and Wooden Caskets with Secular Decoration" (Dissertation, Oxford University, 2006).
26. The casket in Pisa exhibits a different format (a polygonal, hinged lid in contrast to the flat, sliding lid of the Ivrea casket), but in terms of subject matter, style, and rendering of border motifs, the two boxes show a clear affinity (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 1: cat. 63, 46–47; and Lomartire, "Il Cofanetto Bizantino," 31, fig. 10).
 27. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 1: cats. 57–62, 44–46. Also see O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era* (London, 1909), 16, cat. 16, pl. XI; C. Rizzardi, "Un Cofanetto di Età Mediobizantina con Bordo a Rosette nella Collezione di Avori del Museo Nazionale di Ravenna," in *33 Corso Cultura Arte Bizantina* (Ravenna, 1986), 399–414; and eadem, "Un Cofanetto Eburneo di Età Mediobizantina con Raffigurazioni Zoomorfe Conservato nel Museo Nazionale di Ravenna," in *Studi in Memoria di Giuseppe Bovini*, 2 vols. (Ravenna, 1989), 2:585–96. Scholars suggest a twelfth-century Italian origin for the caskets in New York and Detroit, raising the possibility that some boxes in the Ivrea group are "Byzantinizing," that is to say, part of a larger cultural orbit that emulated Byzantine artistic styles and traditions beyond the borders of Byzantium itself. Anthony Cutler tentatively posits that the New York box might be of northern Adriatic provenance ("Casket with Erotes and Animals," in New York, *Glory of Byzantium*, cat. 342, 504–5); Christine Verzár Bornstein suggests that the Detroit box might be from Byzantium or southern Italy ("Casket," in Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, *The Meeting of Two Worlds: The Crusades and the Mediterranean Context* [Ann Arbor, 1981], ed. Bornstein et al., cat. 41, 66). I maintain that, in the absence of definitive evidence for an alternative locus of production, the Ivrea casket's high level of craftsmanship and technical similarity to objects of secure Byzantine origin support a Byzantine attribution for the box and its group.
 28. This estimation is based on a survey of Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1, *Kasten*, and includes only those caskets that preserve their rosette borders. Within this group, approximately eight boxes depict biblical or Christian iconography; the remaining caskets depict secular themes. Also see K. Weitzmann, "Byzantine Ivory Caskets," in *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art* (Princeton, 1951; rpt. Princeton, 1984), 152–88; A. Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 42–43 (1984–85), 32–47; P. Speck, "Die Rosettenkästchen: Originalarbeiten oder Versuche einer Verwendung von vorhandenem Material?" *BZ*, 86–87 (1993–94), 79–85; and A. Cutler, "Mistaken Identity: Thoughts on Some Recent Commentary on the Rosette Caskets," in *Aetos: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango*, ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart, 1998), 46–54.
 29. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 1: cat. 23; J. Beckwith, *The Veroli Casket* (London, 1962); and A. Cutler, "The Veroli Casket," in New York, *Glory of Byzantium*, cat. 153, 230–31.
 30. Although the latter technique is applied more extensively in the Veroli casket.
 31. Regarding possible non-Byzantine attributions for some boxes in the Ivrea group, see n. 27 above. The parallels between the Veroli and Ivrea caskets previously led me to attribute a coterminous date for the two boxes, which I placed in the tenth century, at the earlier end of the Veroli casket's possible chronology (Walker, "Exotic Elements," 204). I am no longer convinced that these similarities require a common date for the boxes; instead, they indicate the high quality of production of both objects and, in the case of the Ivrea casket, support a Byzantine attribution. Anghosa Papagiannaki questions my association of the Ivrea and Veroli boxes, but her conclusions are based solely on photographic analysis of the Ivrea casket, which is insufficient for full appraisal of the quality and technique of the carving (Papagiannaki, "Production of Middle Byzantine Ivory Caskets," 210–12). She proposes an eleventh- to twelfth-century date for the Ivrea group, an attribution I support. I thank Anghosa Papagiannaki for allowing me to read her unpublished doctoral thesis and Anthony Cutler for productive and enjoyable discussions concerning the technical aspects of the Ivrea casket.
 32. The convention of a groundline is observed in the less finely executed boxes in New York, London, Prague, Ravenna, and Detroit (Fig. 8), indicating that the abstract style of the Ivrea casket carvings was a stylistic choice, not the result of poor skill. Furthermore, the dancer's prop of a rope circle, executed realistically in the relatively unrefined London plaque, is schematically rendered on the Ivrea casket lid, again indicating that the abstract style of the Ivrea casket is intentional. These observations are relevant to the stylistic affinity between the Ivrea casket and medieval Islamic art, a point discussed further below.
 33. E. Atil et al., *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC, 1985), cat. 17, 124–36. A similar effect is found in a late-thirteenth- to early-fourteenth-century inlaid brass basin from Egypt (*ibid.*, fig. 15, 27).
 34. For discussion of the tendency toward overall patterning in Islamic art (accompanied by an overly reductive psychological and social explanation for this characteristic), see R. Etinghausen, "The Taming of the Horror Vacui in Islamic Art," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 123/1 (1979), 15–19. For an alternative interpretation of this tendency as *amor infiniti* (love of the infinite), see Gombrich, *Sense of Order*, 80–82 and 125.
 35. Regarding the complex relation between Christian and Islamic art and culture at play in this object, see R. Katzenstein and G. D. Lowry, "Christian Themes in Thirteenth-Century Islamic Metalwork," *Muqarnas*, 1 (1983), 53–68; E. Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images* (Leiden, 1989); N. N. N. Khoury, "Narratives of the Holy Land: Memory, Identity, and Inverted Imagery in the Freer Basin and Canteen," *Orientalism*, 29/5 (1998), 63–69; and E. R. Hoffman, "Christian-Islamic Encounters in Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity, and Memory," *Gesta*, 43/2 (2004), 129–42, with additional bibliography.
 36. G. Fehérvári, *Islamic Metalwork of the Eighth to the Fifteenth Century in the Keir Collection* (London, 1976), cat. 74, 71, pl. 23a. D. S. Rice notes that centrifugal figural compositions of this type are common features of metalwork associated with Badr al-Din Lu'lu, the thirteenth-century Atabeg of Mosul ("The Brasses of Badr al-Din Lu'lu," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 13/3 [1950], 627–34, esp. 629, figs. 1–3 and pl. 13). Also see Baer, *Islamic Ornament*, 31–32.
 37. Lomartire ("Il Cofanetto Bizantino," 29) notes this stylistic affinity with Islamic art in general terms but does not cite specific examples. Regarding the "orientalizing" character of some rosette caskets, see L. Bréhier, "Le coffret byzantin de Reims et les coffrets d'ivoire à rosettes," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 5–6 (1931), 265–82, esp. 279–80.
 38. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500–1200* (New York, 1993), cat. 34, 88–90.
 39. Scholars have long recognized "Islamicizing" or "Eastern" features in middle Byzantine art, and the Ivrea casket can be understood to participate

- in this broader trend. Animals showing similar stylistic features are found in middle Byzantine monumental sculptural reliefs of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, particularly in Greece. See A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge* (Paris, 1976), 1: cats. 44, 81, and 92; 2: pls. XXId, LXIXa, and LXXXIVb. Striking parallels in design are also attested between Byzantine and Islamic metalwork and ceramic of the tenth to thirteenth centuries. See A. Ballian and A. Drandaki, "A Middle Byzantine Silver Treasure," *Museio Benake*, 3 (2003), 47–80, esp. 60–62. Also see the important early essay by A. Grabar, "Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 2 (1951), 265–90.
40. L. Seidel, "Images of the Crusades in Western Art: Models as Metaphors," in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. V. P. Goss (Kalamazoo, 1986), 377–91.
 41. *Ibid.*, 377.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. It is possible that the appliqués were added to the box in multiple stages, even in separate contexts. Alternatively, the fixtures may have been produced separately but later added to the casket at the same time. Indeed, the appliqués do not show definitive technical or stylistic similarity with one another, which argues in favor of multiple phases and/or locations of production. Still, no evidence exists regarding the specific context (or contexts) in which the Ivrea casket's transformation took place (see n. 8 above). Therefore, I discuss the metal attachments as a single phase of alteration and emphasize the common program to which they contribute.
 44. The brackets on the Ivrea casket parallel those in another Byzantine rosette casket dated from the tenth to early eleventh century (Lomartire, "Il Cofanetto Bizantino," 30 and 33 n. 26; and K. Weitzmann, *Ivories and Steatites*, Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, vol. 3 [Washington, DC, 1972], cat. 23, 49–55, pls. 25–31). Also see the comparable brackets on a twelfth-century ivory casket (P. d'Avennes, *L'art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaire depuis le VIIe siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe* [Paris, 1877], pl. CLVII; and Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, cat. 252, 290).
 45. Lomartire ("Il Cofanetto Bizantino," 30) offers a culturally inconsonant identification of the seated figure as "Buddha-like."
 46. E. Hoffman, "A Fatimid Book Cover: Framing and Re-framing Cultural Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean World," in *L'Egypte fatimide: Son art et son histoire*, ed. M. Barrucand (Paris, 1999), 403–20, fig. 2, pl. III.82. Also see an eleventh- or twelfth-century ivory plaque from Egypt that shows a comparable seated, cross-legged, turbaned figure holding a cup (E. Kühnel, *The Minor Arts of Islam* [Ithaca, NY, 1971], 229, fig. 194).
 47. Richard Ettinghausen notes these naturalistic features as a defining aspect of Fatimid figural art ("Early Realism in Islamic Art," *Studi Orientalistici in Onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, 2 vols. [Rome, 1956], 1:250–73).
 48. *Museum für islamische Kunst Berlin* (Berlin, 1980), cat. 17, 46–47. Also see a vase dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century from Kashan, Iran, which takes the form of a seated man wearing a turban and robe. He is positioned exactly like the figure on the Ivrea casket lid: holding a cup in front of his chest, he places his hand on his knee (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, *Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Victoria and Albert Museum* [London, 2004], ed. T. Stanley, 49, fig. 63).
 49. Additional parallels include the cross-legged, seated appliqué figures on an Iranian early-twelfth-century silver niello box (E. Baer, *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art* [Albany, NY, 1983], 73, fig. 53); an unattached twelfth- or thirteenth-century gilded-bronze cross-legged, seated figure, which displays a strikingly similar pose but significantly different stylization (A. U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, 6 vols. [London, 1938–39], 6:248, fig. 810a); and an unattached eleventh-century cross-legged, seated tambourine player discovered in Fustat (Cairo) (London, Hayward Gallery, *The Arts of Islam* [London, 1976], ed. D. Jones and G. Michell, cat. 170, 166). In addition, appliqué figures in low relief on a twelfth-century lock box, although different in style and pose, attest to the broader medieval Islamic practice of applying three-dimensional figurines to objects (Pope, *Survey of Persian Art*, 1303).
 50. R. Ward, *Islamic Metalwork* (New York, 1993), cat. 70, 90.
 51. J. W. Allan, "Solar and Celestial Symbolism in Medieval Islamic Art," in *Image and Meaning in Islamic Art*, ed. R. Hillenbrand (London, 2005), 34–41. Regarding solar symbols in Fatimid art and their proposed transmission to cultures of the medieval Near East, see idem, "'My Father is a Sun, and I am the Star': Fatimid Symbols in Ayyubid and Mamluk Metalwork," *Journal of the David Collection*, 1 (2003), 25–47.
 52. B. Marshak, "Plate with the Ascension of Alexander the Great," in New York, *Glory of Byzantium*, cat. 267, 399–401.
 53. This attribution is supported by the later emergence (attested in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian and Islamic astronomical texts) of Jupiter riding an eagle and holding a staff with drapery billowing overhead. These early modern images typically draw from medieval and antiquarian models. J. Sezec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (New York, 1953), 184–86, fig. 71; and D. Pingree, "Indian Planetary Images and the Tradition of Astral Magic," *JWCI*, 52 (1989), 1–13, 8, and pls. 1g and h. Vladislav Petrovich Darkevich identifies the figure on the Ivrea casket plate and another eagle-riding figure, depicted on a medieval Byzantine silver bowl, as Alexander the Great ascending to the heavens on his eagle mount (*Byzantine Secular Art in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* [in Russian] [Moscow, 1975], 74 and 154–55), but the latter figure holds a labarum, not an orb. Indeed, the Ivrea figure does not convincingly parallel any known medieval depictions of Alexander. Adolf Venturi proposes that the eagle-mounted figure represents a general of the biblical King Solomon (*Storia dell'Arte Italiana* [Milan, 1901], 608), while Goldschmidt and Weitzmann (*Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 1:47) suggest, with reservation, that it depicts a ruler-genius. Presumably they refer to the type known from Roman depictions of imperial apotheosis, as seen, for example, in a coin of Antoninus Pius, dated 141, showing the Augusta Faustina riding an eagle (H. Beck and P. Bol, eds., *Spätantike und frühes Christentum* [Frankfurt am Main, 1983], cat. 244, 669).
 54. F. Gabriele and U. Scerrato, *Gli Arabi in Italia: Cultura, Contatti e Tradizioni* (Milan, 1979), fig. 577.
 55. Regarding the genesis of the so-called princely cycle in late Antiquity and early medieval Islamic art, see O. Grabar, "The Painting of the Six Kings at Qusayr 'Amrah," *Ars Orientalis*, 1 (1954), 185–87; and idem, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, 1973; rev. New Haven, 1987), 162–64, 173, and 211. Concerning the theme of the royal banquet as a metaphor for the pleasures of paradise, see D. G. Shepherd, "Banquet and Hunt in Medieval Islamic Iconography," in *Gathering in Honor of Dorothy E. Miner*, ed. U. E. McCracken et al. (Baltimore, 1974), 79–92.
 56. Gabriele and Scerrato, *Gli Arabi in Italia*, 515, figs. 579–80.
 57. Ward, *Islamic Metalwork*, cat. 70, 90.
 58. S. Carboni, *Following the Stars: Images of the Zodiac in Islamic Art* (New York, 1997), 5. As Allan notes, the sun in Leo is often privileged over other planet-domicile pairs in medieval Islamic art, especially in metalwork. An early-thirteenth-century ewer likely from Herat includes a similar juxtaposition of a lion and a solar motif ("Solar and Celestial Symbolism," 34–45, esp. 36, pl. 5).

59. Griffins appear in Seljuq textiles, ceramics, and metalwork in conjunction with solar symbols and as protective beasts at the foot of royal thrones. K. Otto-Dorn, "The Griffin-Sphinx Ensemble," in *The Art of the Seljuqs in Iran and Anatolia*, ed. R. Hillenbrand (Costa Mesa, CA, 1994), 303–10.
60. An inscription on a metal vessel, dated 1181–82 and ascribed a provenance from Herat, speaks of the talismanic function celestial emblems could serve, protecting the craftsman who fashioned the ewer (J. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork in the Nuhad Es-Said Collection* [London, 1982], 49; and idem, "Solar and Celestial Symbolism," 35–36). The solar lions on the Ivrea casket may play a similarly apotropaic role, safeguarding the royal figure seated on the lid and, presumably, the contents (or perhaps even the owner) of the box.
61. E. Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting: A Note on Medieval Islamic Iconography," in *Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture: In Honor of Katharina Otto-Dorn*, ed. A. Daneshvari (Malibu, CA, 1981), 13–19.
62. As noted by D. S. Rice, a thirteenth-century metal pyxis, probably produced in Syria, celebrates the ruler as the sun, outshining his rivals. Its inscription reads: "Don't you see that God has given you eminence / Before which monarchs tremble and despair: / For you are the sun, the rulers stars; / When the sun rises no star is to be seen." The inscription derives from a late-sixth-century text of the pre-Islamic author al-Nabigha al-Dhubyani, who wrote the verses as part of a longer panegyric in honor of the king of Hira. Rice, "Brasses," 631–32, pl. 15; cited in Allan, "Solar and Celestial Symbolism," 38. Also see London, *Palace and Mosque*, 39, fig. 52.
63. Al-Biruni, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, ed. and trans. R. R. Wright (London, 1934), esp. 241–52; cited in Allan, "Solar and Celestial Symbolism," 37.
64. Baer, "Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 14–15; and Allan, "Solar and Celestial Symbolism," 34–38.
65. The eagle itself is an appropriate motif for this program due to its long-standing association with kingship in both the Roman-Byzantine and Sasanian-Islamic traditions. See D. Shepherd, "Saljuq Textiles—a Study in Iconography," in Hillenbrand, *Art of the Seljuqs*, 210–15.
66. The question of the reader's access to and control of information necessary to interpret works of literature (and art) is an essential concern within reception theory. For a brief overview, see R. C. Murfin, "What Is Reader-Response Criticism?" in *A Companion to James Joyce's Ulysses*, ed. M. Norris (Boston, 1998), 91–108. For a discussion of this issue in relation to medieval art, see K. R. Mathews, "Reading Romanesque Sculpture: The Iconography and Reception of the South Portal Sculpture at Santiago de Compostela," *Gesta*, 39/1 (2000), 3–12, esp. 6–9.
67. F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginning of Modern Times* (Princeton, 1985), 354; cited in Khoury, "Narratives," 69. In a reverse instance of cross-cultural reception, Raoul of Caen, in his mid-twelfth-century epic celebrating the deeds of the crusader hero Tancred of Caen, describes a massive silver statue on the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) in Jerusalem, which likely portrayed an ancient Roman deity. Intriguingly, Raoul says that Tancred considered various possibilities for the statue's subject—including Mars, Apollo, and even Christ—before ultimately identifying the figure as Muhammad and ordering it to be destroyed. This incident documents the potentially complex process of interpretation that medieval viewers experienced when confronted by alien works of art. For discussion of this passage, see M. Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), 143–44.
68. On the depiction of Muhammad in Islamic art, see C. Gruber, "The Prophet Muhammad's Ascension (*mi'raj*) in Islamic Art and Literature, ca. 1300–1600" (Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2005).
69. Regarding Islamic conceptions and depictions of paradise, see Hanover, NH, Hood Museum of Art, *Images of Paradise in Islamic Art* (Hanover, NH, 1991), ed. S. Blair and J. Bloom, esp. W. K. Reinhart, "The Here and the Hereafter in Islamic Religious Thought," 15–23; and W. Denny, "Reflections of Paradise in Islamic Art," 33–43.
70. B. Zeitler, "Cross-Cultural Interpretations of Imagery in the Middle Ages," *AB*, 76/4 (1994), 680–94, esp. 687.
71. On this point, see S. Mailloux, "Misreading as a Historical Act," in *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Contexts of Response*, ed. J. L. Machor (Baltimore, 1993), 3–31.
72. For useful summaries of the essential tenets of reception aesthetics, see W. Iser, "Reception Theory: Iser," in *How to Do Theory* (Malden, MA, 2006), 57–69; and Murfin, "What Is Reader-Response Criticism?"
73. H. R. Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. T. Bahti (Minneapolis, 1982), 3–45, esp. 18–20.
74. W. Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response," in *Aspects of Narrative*, ed. J. Hillis Miller (New York, 1971), 1–45, at 43; and idem, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, 1978).
75. Literature on medieval spolia provides many relevant examples of this approach; see n. 18 above.
76. A. Shalem, "Trophies, Booty and Spoils of Wars against 'Saracens,'" in *Islam Christianized*, 72–125. It must be emphasized, however, that a triumphalist mode is not the only means of understanding cross-cultural acts of spoliation, and in some instances such interpretations obscure more subtle dynamics of appropriation. The indiscriminate application of the "art object as trophy" paradigm has been productively critiqued by Flood, "Medieval Trophy," 41–72. For a reconsideration of the triumphalist interpretative model in relation to the use of sumptuous (typically Islamic) textiles in medieval Iberia and an argument in favor of seeing these objects as part of a common culture of luxury and prestige, see M. J. Feliciano, "Muslim Shrouds for Christian Kings? A Reassessment of Andalusi Textiles in Thirteenth-Century Castilian Life and Ritual," in *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile*, ed. C. Robinson (Leiden, 2004), 101–31.
77. A. Shalem, "Biblical Associations—Islamic Objects Integrated into Familiar Christian Iconography," in *Islam Christianized*, 134–37.
78. Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 132–33; and idem, "From Royal Caskets to Relic Containers," 27.
79. Shalem ("From Royal Caskets to Relic Containers," 31–34) further suggests that the "archaic" style of the ivories may have reminded the Muslim viewer of early medieval Iberian legends that foretold the fall of the Visigoths as a result of King Roderic's opening a sealed house in Toledo, which contained a chest depicting prophetic images of the Arab warriors who would conquer his realm. Objects like the Burgos casket might have recalled this story, thereby becoming symbols of Islamic military and moral victory.
80. When the Islamic origin of the casket was recognized, the Christianization of this alien object might have also expressed the spiritual triumph of Christianity over Islam. Alternatively, Shalem (*ibid.*, 24–25 and 35) proposes that the transformation of the box into a relic container may have been motivated in part by its perceived evocation of Roman or earlier Christian sarcophagi, suggesting a dynamic of receptivity comparable to that discussed above in relation to the Ivrea casket's alteration.
81. Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 132–37. A small ivory panel, dated to the mid-eleventh century and associated with a Spanish-Islamic context of

production, possibly in Toledo, provides an intriguing corollary to the strategies of appropriation at work in the Burgos and Ivrea caskets. The panel depicts birds and deer within vegetal scrolls. At a later date, perhaps in the thirteenth century, an angel was carved into the upper area of the plaque. Through this addition, the Islamic ornamental motif of an inhabited tendril was transformed into a Christian garden of paradise (J. Beckwith, *Caskets from Cordoba* [London, 1960], 30–33 and 71, pl. 33, in which the alteration is dated to the baroque period; and London, *Palace and Mosque*, 81, fig. 95, in which the alteration is dated to the thirteenth century).

82. For further discussion of the phenomenon of a “hybrid aesthetic” in eleventh- to twelfth-century medieval art, see esp. Shalem, “Islamische Objekte,” 163–75.
83. See n. 15 above.
84. Pnina Werbner’s assessment of the scholarly dilemma for contemporary social theorists might be applied to medievalists as well (“Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity,” 1): “The current fascination with cultural hybridity masks an elusive paradox. Hybridity is celebrated as powerfully interruptive and yet theorized as commonplace and pervasive.”
85. The Islamic princely cycle was appropriated in art produced in the Christian kingdom of Armenia as early as the ninth or tenth century (L. Jones, *Between Islam and Byzantium: Agh’amar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership* [Aldershot, 2007]). Later examples of princely cycle imagery in works of art and architecture produced outside the Islamic world include the Mouchroutas Hall, a twelfth-century structure at the Byzantine imperial palace in Constantinople, said to have been constructed by a “Persian” artist and apparently decorated with princely cycle imagery (C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972; rpt. Toronto, 1997], 228–29; and L.-A. Hunt, “Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration: Descriptions and Islamic Connections,” in *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, ed. M. Angold [Oxford, 1984], 138–57); the twelfth-century Norman Cappella Palatina in Palermo, which combines an Islamic princely cycle in the nave ceiling with Byzantine and Latin Western elements throughout the rest of the building to create a strikingly hybrid decorative program (W. Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo* [Princeton, 1997]); and a folio in a crusader manuscript of the *Histoire Universelle*, produced at Acre, ca. 1285 (British Library, MS Add. 15768, fol. 1v), which depicts princely cycle imagery in an illuminated frame surrounding scenes of Creation (Hoffman, “Fatimid Book Cover,” 415–17, fig. 15, and pl. III.86). It is also possible that princely cycle motifs may have spread to the Latin West. See J. Allan, “The Influence of Metalwork of the Arab Mediterranean on the Art of Medieval Europe,” in *The Arab Influence in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. P. Agius and R. Hitchcock (Reading, 1994), 44–62, esp. 51.
86. See n. 52 above.
87. For additional discussion of the production of Islamic artistic forms in non-Islamic cultural contexts, see A. Cutler, “The Parallel Universes of Arab and Byzantine Art (with Special Reference to the Fatimid Era),” in Barrucand, *L’Egypte fatimide*, 635–48; and idem, “A Christian Ewer with Islamic Imagery and the Question of Arab *Gastarbeiter* in Byzantium,” in *Iconographica: Mélanges offerts à Piotr Skubiszewski*, ed. R. Favreau and M. H. Debies (Poitiers, 1999), 63–69.
88. See S. Redford, “How Islamic Is It? The Innsbruck Plate and Its Setting,” *Muqarnas*, 8 (1990), 119–35, arguing for a Georgian attribution and citing earlier bibliography positing an Islamic attribution; and T. Stepan, “The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the Middle Byzantine Period and Its Relation to the Islamic East,” in *Perceptions of Byzantium and Its Neighbors (843–1261)*, ed. O. Z. Pevny (New York, 2000), 84–101, offering a Byzantine attribution.
89. Hoffman, “Pathways,” 39–42.