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Chinese Impact on Mamluk Minor Arts

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Although the Near East had been always inspired by Chinese themes and artistic motifs, its products in the Mamluk period (1250-1517 A.D.) reveal much more Chinese impact, particularly in the domain of minor arts.

Thanks to efforts of early Mamluk rulers, the Mamluk dynasty had been firmly established, and the Mamluk empire enjoyed a great deal of security, peace and prosperity. Much attention was paid to trade relations with the Far East, and consequently arose the importance of Silk Roads, which were the main means of trade transport between East and West.

In 1323 Sultān al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalawun concluded a peace treaty with the Il-khanids, and thus secured the trade carried along Silk Roads between the East and the Mamluk empire, passing through Iran and other Il-khanid territories. Through diplomatic relations, peace alliances, and exchange of friendly embassies and gifts with several other Eastern and Western countries, such as Yemen, Abyssinia, Delhi, Aragon, France, Byzantium and the city-states of Italy, the Mamluks secured other land and sea routes, and were able to monopolize the trade passing through their empire¹⁾ along these roads.

Moreover, Egyptian merchants traveled to other countries to exchange goods. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa met some of them during his journey²⁾. He was even accommodated in China, at the Dar (house) of the sons of 'Othmān Ibn Affān al-miṣrī (the Egyptian), one of the richest merchants settling in China³⁾. Besides, foreign merchants were well-treated by Mamluk authorities, a fact that was confirmed by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa⁴⁾.

The Chinese, on their part, took much interest in trading with the outside world, especially in the Yuan Period (1280-1368 A.D.). Venetian Marco Polo referred to good relations between China and the Near East⁵⁾. Chinese emperors exchanged messengers and sumptuous gifts with other rulers. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa described some of the gifts exchanged between the Chinese emperor and the sultān of Delhi, and even Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was sent as a messenger by the sultān of Delhi to the emperor of China⁶⁾. Chinese ships traveled as far as India and the Red Sea⁷⁾. Moreover, Chinese authority extended right across Asia into Europe and merchants were able to travel safely both in China and along Silk Roads. Marco Polo and many others mentioned the skill, industry and greatness of the Chinese people⁸⁾.

Chinese-manufactured goods exported along Silk Roads, poured into the Mamluk empire and were greatly admired both in the Near East and Europe.

Owing to favorable circumstances, Mamluk art at that time revealed

revolutionary progress. Prosperity enabled rulers and their courtiers as well as other wealthy inhabitants to live in luxurious surroundings, and Mamluk artists became in great demand to embellish these surroundings with spectacular objects for both secular and religious use. Artists, on their part, did their best to excel and achieve the most possible perfection in minor arts, such as textiles, ceramics, metalwork, glass, woodwork and manuscript illumination, in addition to architecture and architectural decoration⁹).

Mamluk artists were not satisfied with Islamic artistic traditions inherited from the Fatimids, Seljuks and Ayyubids. As it became fashionable to adopt foreign techniques, forms, themes and decorative motifs, Mamluk artists, trying to keep up with fashion, assimilated some Chinese artistic characteristics with the indigenous traditions, particularly in objects of minor arts. Chinese impact was reflected in various aspects.

One of these aspects is revealed in attempts to imitate Chinese materials and manufacture. These attempts were especially evident in imitation Chinese celadon and porcelain, which were popular in the Mamluk empire. Chinese celadon had been imitated before in Iran, at least since Il-khanid rule. Therefore, it was easy to produce Egyptian celadon with assistance of artisans who immigrated into Egypt where they made ceramic ware bearing their signatures, which refer to their original native lands such as al-Tawrīzī (from Tabriz) and al-Hormuzī (from Hormuz). Celadon shards, both Chinese and Mamluk, were found in abundance in excavations all over Egypt and Syria. It is rightly suggested that Chinese celadons of Yuan dynasty served as models in glazes that range from bright green to gray green¹⁰).

At the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, there are several examples of celadon ware of Chinese, Iranian and Mamluk origins. Examples of celadon ware of Chinese origin are:

1. Fourteenth century crackled vase with broken neck, decorated with relief vine scrolls and leaves; round fluted base. (No. 26275; height 45 cm; diameter 15 cm)
2. Vase in bright green, with long neck, wide rim and fluted base, decorated with relief vine scrolls, leaves and flowers. (No. 1042; height 60 cm; diameter 25 cm)
3. Vase in similar color, but with incised decoration. (No. 1039; height 46 cm; diameter 20 cm)
4. Vase with wide rim, fluted body and narrow base, in green and without any decoration. (No. 23971; height 12.7 cm; diameter 13 cm) (Plate 1)
5. Plate in gray green glaze, with everted flat rim, floral incised decoration in center, and flutes resembling a rose on rear. (No. 23970; height 3.8 cm; diameter 19 cm)

Example of Mamluk-imitated celadon at the same museum is a vase in green glaze with wide rim, fluted body and narrow base. (No. 6115/4) (Plate 2)

An example of Iranian-imitating celadon at the museum is a bowl in green

glaze, with pattern of pair of fish in center, and molded flutes on the sides (No. 16242; diameter 22.7 cm). This bowl's form, with low foot, flaring sides, everted rim, decoration and technique imitating Yuan celadons, which were simulated in Iran as well as in Egypt, and many examples reproduced the popular theme of swimming fish in the center of the bowl. This bowl could be compared with the fourteenth century plate from Sultaniyah in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in imitation of Chinese celadon with relief underglaze decoration of four fish¹¹).

Regarding Chinese porcelain, Mamluk artists endeavored to simulate only its translucency, since it was impossible to manufacture the material itself because of lack of kaolin clay in the Mamluk empire. The translucency was mainly achieved by two methods:

First was underglaze-painted ware, which became common in the fourteenth century. They had a coarse off-white body covered with a thin coating of fine clay, then a tin glaze that gave it a close resemblance to porcelain. Closer imitation was partly accomplished by piercing walls of the ware, along the outlines of engraved ornament, and filling with glaze, thus simulating transparency of porcelain. This process had been practiced before in Iran in the twelfth century, during Seljuk reign, probably to imitate Sung dynasty porcelain, and was revived in the fourteenth century. A fourteenth century Mamluk specimen is a pierced goblet, painted blue, turquoise and black underglaze, that is with the Madina Collection in New York. (c 18)¹² (Plate 3) Holes were covered by transparent glaze. This example shows that the technique, which had been employed in white Seljuk ware, was later applied to polychrome ware. Its employment in the Mamluk empire is worth noticing. However, revival of this technique in the Mamluk period was mainly ascribed to the impact of Chinese porcelain passing along Silk Roads, and pouring into Egypt and Syria, as mentioned by many contemporary writers¹³).

The second method followed by Mamluk artists to imitate Chinese porcelain occurred in connection with blue-and-white porcelain that played an important role in the Ming period and was exported in abundance along Silk Roads. It is said that China partly owed the Islamic world this widespread technique. Cobalt pigments had been imported into the Yuan empire from Persia in the Timurid period, and Chinese made use of them in the manufacture of blue-and-white porcelain. However, decoration of Ming dynasty ware exerted great influence on themes depicted on underglaze-painted Mamluk ceramics. Many Egyptian imitations of blue-and-white porcelain have been excavated in Egypt and Syria—mostly wasters and shards. Some of them bear names of the artists¹⁴).

At the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, there are examples of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain as well as examples of Iranian and Mamluk imitations. An example of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain is a flask with recently-affixed brass neck. Both sides of the body are decorated with concentric rings containing floral ornaments. Between the two concentric rings are conventionalized bands of clouds and other patterns. (No. 4113; height 33 cm; diameter 24 cm) (Plate 4)

Examples of Iranian imitations at the same museum are:

1. Bottle, used for smoking (hookah bottle), exterior of which is decorated with floral ornament in blue and red colors, on white background. (No. 3453; Height: 29 cm)
2. Cosmetic bottle on both sides of which are zones containing Persian inscriptions in Nasta'liq style, in white color on blue background. Spaces between zones are decorated with rather naturalistic floral patterns around a bird and butterfly in blue on white background. Apex of the bottle is shaped in the form of a shell. (No. 16255; height 10.5 cm)
3. Pot with cover. Body contains four compartments in each of which is a floral ornament in black on white background. Between compartments are floral patterns. On the sloping sides of the cover are five concentric rings, between which are scale ornaments. (No. 16258; height 9.5 cm)
4. Flask, exterior of which is rendered with dragon and phoenix together with floral motifs. (No. 16265)

As regards Mamluk imitations of blue-and-white porcelain, two types can be distinguished:

First type, and probably earlier, continued to use rather local patterns. The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo owns a shard of that type bearing the signature of a potter called "al-Ustādh al-Miṣrī," who apparently was active during the fourteenth century. It is a piece of the bottom of a bowl, center of which is decorated with concentric circles with floral motifs in blue on white background. One can conceive that decoration on the body of the bowl was divided into vertical zones containing geometrical and floral ornament. (No. 5404/16) (Plates 5a,b)

Second type of Mamluk imitation of blue-and-white porcelain is represented by a potter called Ghaybī Ibn al-Tawrizi. He adopted Chinese motifs in decorating his ceramics, which were mainly of blue-and-white underglaze painting, although he sometimes used additional colors such as black, pale green, dark yellow and red. His style continued into the fifteenth century¹⁵⁾.

The museum owns large quantities of shards and wasters bearing several names of potters of his school.

One of these is Abū-Al'izz, who integrated Chinese motifs with native elements. An example of his work, owned by the museum, is a vase glazed in blue and white. On both sides of its neck are two attached handles, each decorated with two scrolls. Two spaces between the scrolls bear arabesques. Decoration on the body is divided into 11 vertical zones, in which floral scrolls are rendered according to native tradition. Between body and neck is a white band decorated with blue zigzag. Lower portion of the body is divided by pairs of lines into zones in each of which is a blue glazed ring. Around the interior of the rim is the signature of the potter. Some decorative motifs on this vase resemble Chinese wave-and-foam patterns. (No. 4577; height 29.5 cm; diameter 14 cm) (Plates 6a,b)

Another example of the same style in the museum is a two-handled vase in blue-and-white underglaze painting, with broken rim. Exterior decoration is

divided into horizontal zones. The zone surrounding the neck is decorated with minute geometric motifs resembling fish scales. The largest zone around the upper portion of the body of the vase is decorated with floral branches executed according to local tradition, while the zone surrounding lower portion is decorated with overlapping circles. (No. 4071; height 22.5 cm; diameter of rim 11 cm) (Plate 7)

Signature of one of these potters, "The work of Al-Baqīlī," appears on the bottom of a bowl in the museum (No. 5899). Center of the base is decorated with a rather naturalistic branch rendered according to Chinese tradition. The branch is surrounded by two concentric rings, outer of which is encircled by several sprays apparently covering the whole body, which is missing. Just above the bottom on the exterior are small zones of lancet leaves. The whole body seems to have been decorated with floral patterns. (Plates 8a,b)

At any rate, decoration of the Ming dynasty ware exerted great influence on themes rendered on underglaze-painted Mamluk ware, especially fifteenth century tiles, on which Chinese motifs were often adapted to native patterns. Some tiles bearing the name of Sulṭān Qayitbay (1468-96 A.D.) and ascribed to Ghaybī show these characteristics. (Nos. 3001, 3265) (Plate 9)

The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo owns a panel consisting of several hexagonal tiles with blue-and-white underglaze painting. (No. 15664) A tile in this panel depicts two branches rendered somewhat symmetrically, and bearing large and small rounded fruits or blossoms. The drawing combines naturalistic and stylized representation, typical of blue-and-white style of tile decoration in the fifteenth century. (Plate 10)

Chinese silk manufacture was also imitated in the Mamluk empire. It is well known that Chinese silks spread in the Near East since the earliest periods. However they increased in the thirteenth century when new technical processes were developed. Ibn Iyās (died 1524 A.D.) wrote that China exported textiles in several colors to all countries¹⁶. Chinese brocade, particularly, fascinated Near Eastern artists who therefore did their best to apply Chinese manufacture. A parallel movement appeared in Western factories, especially at Lucca, Venice and Granada¹⁷.

The Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg owns a Chinese gold brocade with medallions of dragons and tendrils of climbing plant, an example of the Chinese brocades that, according to estimates, were in Europe from the thirteenth century onward¹⁸.

Brocade manufacture had been, most probably, known in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Turkistan, where it was praised as "Tatar textile". Examples of this textile are kept nowadays in Western collections in the form of chasubles and copes¹⁹.

Moreover, imitation of Chinese silk was evident in the manufacture of a kind of silk called "Kamkha", produced in Egypt and exported to Europe. Their decorations, constituting undulating vines, lotus scrolls and braided elements, reveal Chinese influence²⁰.

At the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo are several silks of Chinese manufacture and of Mamluk imitations. Design of Mamluk imitations was based on Yuan silks, examples of which were excavated in Egypt.

Examples of Chinese silks at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo are:

1. Fragment in yellow and blue colors. Its decoration consists of five circles, each of which is surrounded by stylized leaves and contains Chinese longevity (shou) character²¹⁾. The units are attached to each other by means of vine scrolls encircling either flames or conventionalized cloud-bands. (No. 2225; length 45 cm; width 33 cm) (Plate 11)
2. Similar blue weave bearing undulating vine scrolls with large units each of which consists of stylized leaves surrounding concentric rings with the Chinese longevity (shou) character. (No. 2227; length 31 cm; width 39 cm)

Examples of Mamluk silk at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo are:

1. Silk waistcoat lined with linen, with four buttons. Its decoration consists of compartments of various shapes, containing geometrical patterns symmetrically arranged. Some zones contain Arabic inscriptions in Naskhī style, which may be deciphered as "al-Sultan". This fragment was excavated at Drunka in Upper Egypt. (No. 2228; length 41 cm; width 25 cm) (Plate 12)
2. Yellow silk brocade decorated with zones containing Arabic title "al-Sultān", as well as crescents bearing Arabic title "al-Kāml", together with representation of fish. (No. 3740; length 75 cm; width 57 cm)
3. Greenish blue fabric decorated with ogival pattern, composed of squares connected by means of circles between the angles. While the rings contain crescents, squares contain either lotus scrolls or the Arabic titles "al-Sultān". (No. 12661/2) (Plate 13)
4. Weave decorated with horizontal black zigzag bands containing braided ornament and Arabic writing in Thuluth style, read: "al-Sultān al-Malik, al-Ṣalīh, al-'Ālim" (The learned, virtuous, king and sultan). (No. 8225) (Plate 14)
5. Yellow silk with silver embroidery patterns consisting of vine scrolls and leaves. (No. 4701; length 29 cm; width 13 cm)

Another aspect of Chinese impact on Mamluk minor arts was reflected in the imitation of some forms of Chinese utensils, especially in ceramic and metal.

Regarding ceramics, Chinese celadons of Yuan dynasty served as models in shape for Mamluk celadons. For example, Mamluk potters manufactured monochrome glazed jars with fluted bodies imitating Chinese forms. Several of these jars were glazed in green. (Plate 2) Shapes of some fifteenth century underglaze-painted ware, having off-white and reddish clay, reflect influence of Ming dynasty porcelain, and some of them are even exact copies of Ming ware.

As regards metal work, the form of pierced globular bronze objects serving as either hand warmers or incense burners, mostly from thirteenth century onward, were known in China as early as the Tang period. Chinese prototypes are either of

silver or bronze, slightly smaller, and they were used as incense burners. Otto Münsterberg published two of these Chinese incense burners: one in bronze and the other in silver, both decorated with floral ornaments²²).

A famous example of Mamluk globular metal objects is the bronze incense burner owned by the British Museum in London²³. It bears the name of Badr al-Din Baysarī, an official in the early Mamluk period. It is of an unusually large size; the loop at its apex suggests that it was suspended from chains. It is probable that it was executed during the reign of al-Sulṭān al-Manṣūr Qalawun (1279–93 A.D.) because the last of the titles inscribed on it, “al-Manṣouri,” indicates that Baysari was an official for this sultan when this incense burner was manufactured.

Pierced globular hand warmers were also produced in the West. Earliest European examples date from the thirteenth or fourteenth century. There are other examples of this utensil belonging to Islamic and European countries in several collections and museums, such as the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo²⁴) (Plates 15) and the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington²⁵). Vice versa, influences of Islamic bronzes on China have been noticeable. Certain bronze objects with silver inlay work were popular among the Mongols and were also taken into China where, in a few cases, they were imitated in porcelain and earthenware. These small vessels were probably used in rituals of the new year or “White Feast” described by Marco Polo²⁶).

Perhaps the obvious aspect with regard to Chinese impact on Mamluk minor arts is revealed in their using Far Eastern decorative elements: floral, animal and geometrical. At first these motifs were exactly imitated; in due time, though, they were assimilated according to indigenous traditions, and blended with native elements. Naturalistic plants of Chinese origin were borrowed to decorate Mamluk articles. These plants were willows, water weeds, banana, plantain, fruit bearing branches, floral scrolls and leaves. (Plates 6, 8–10, 18, 19)

The Chinese lotus, in particular, was widely used to decorate Mamluk products. Its introduction into Islamic ornamentation brought refreshment to the arabesques. Examples of lotus scroll as decorative motif in Mamluk minor arts are countless in metalwork, woodwork, ivory work, ceramic, glass, textile (Plates 13, 14), bookbinding and manuscript illumination.

At the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo there are two printed linen fabrics. The upper portions contain stylized lotus scroll of Chinese origin. In the center is a large rosette and below it are two floral scrolls arranged symmetrically. The whole decoration is surrounded by a band of vine scrolls with stylized leaves. (Nos. 8696, 12619/8) (Plates 16, 17)

The next Chinese flower executed on Mamluk objects is the peony. Peony scrolls derived from Chinese ware were sometimes rendered on Mamluk underglaze-painted tiles of the fifteenth century as well as textiles, metalwork, glass and manuscript illumination. An example of the representation of lotus and peony in Mamluk minor arts is revealed in an illuminated frontispiece of a Muṣḥaf (Koran Book), dated 1349, at the National Library in Cairo (No. 54 1370; height 70.5 cm;

width 49 cm) Lotus blossoms and peonies are depicted alternately on the blue band encircling the central square²⁷).

Regarding animal motifs of Chinese origin used by Mamluk artists in their decoration, imaginary creatures may be the most interesting, such as dragon and phoenix. Although these fantastic animals had symbolic meaning in the Far East, they were rendered by Mamluk artists as decorative motifs only, void of any other content. At the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo is a hexagonal tile (No. 15664) containing two dragons rendered symmetrically around a large leaf and flying phoenix. There are also sprays, leaves and flowers surrounding the dragons. It is evident that the Chinese motifs were incorporated in the indigenous style. (Plate 18)

On the other hand, the Chinese phoenix is also represented on a Mamluk shard at the same museum, in blue-and-white underglaze painting, bearing the signature of the potter al-‘Ajamī. (No. 5404/33) (Plate 19) At the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington is a Mamluk bowl in gilded and enameled glass²⁸). In medallions on its cover, as well as on larger medallions on its body, are represented fabulous figures of phoenix against turquoise fields. Another example of Mamluk rendering of the phoenix is found on an Egyptian fourteenth century vase in gilded and blue enameled greenish glass (that was known to be at the Museum of Arabic Antiquities in Kuwait). Around its sloping body is a monumental Thuluth Arabic inscription reading: “‘Izzun limawlānā al-Sultān al-Malik al-‘Ālim.” (Glory to our master, the learned king and sultan.) A phoenix is rendered on the horizontal band around the neck of the vase²⁹).

In addition to floral and animal motifs, Mamluk artists decorated their product with geometrical patterns, some of which presumably imitate natural elements such as mountains, clouds, waves and foam^{30,31}). (Plates 6, 7, 13)

Another example of Far Eastern impact on Mamluk minor arts is revealed in representation of men with Central Asian features and headdresses. For example, at the Louvre in Paris is a Mamluk brass bowl inlaid with silver and gold, made by Ibn al-Zayn between 1290 and 1310 A.D. (MAO 331). The body is decorated with horizontal zone containing figures, some of which have faces of Central Asian type while others wear soft furry Central Asian hats³²).

Square Kufic calligraphy, widely used in the Mamluk period to decorate masterpieces of minor arts, is thought to have been influenced by Chinese seals. At the Museum of Islamic Art is a tile bearing the signature work “‘Amal of Ghaybī Ibn al-Tawrīzī” in square Kufic. (No. 2077) (Plate 20)

Finally, there are some Chinese masterpieces that still raise discussion concerning their purpose in China, as they bear mixed elements of Chinese and Islamic origin such as Chinese longevity (shou) character, Chinese seals, Arabic signatures and Arabic inscriptions containing benedictions, maxims and chapters of the Holy Koran, as well as ornamental motifs of both Chinese and Islamic origin. The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo owns several examples of these, mainly textiles, metalwork and porcelain.

An example of such textiles is a Chinese silk damask in greenish blue,

containing zones geometrically arranged and surrounded by vine scrolls. In the center of each zone is a rosette surrounded by an Arabic benediction in Mamluk Thuluth style in honor of the above-mentioned King al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalawun. The inscription reads: "‘Izzun Limawlānā al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Nāṣir-Nāṣir al-Dunya Wal-Dīn Muḥammad (Ibn missing) Qalawun." (Glory to our master the sultan, the king, al-Nāṣir Nāṣir al-Dunyā Wal-Dīn (supporter of secular and religious matters) Muḥammad ((son of)) Qalawun). Chinese influence in the design is evident. The fragment was found in a burial ground south of Asyūt in Upper Egypt. (No. 2226; length 51 cm; width 35 cm) (Plate 21) A similar fragment is exhibited at Victoria and Albert Museum³³). It is suggested by A. F. Kendrick that such Chinese silks belonging to Yuan dynasty (1280-1368 A.D.) were probably woven as presents for King al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qualawun, although it is doubtful that the weavers were Chinese³⁴. They may have been Turkistani or Mongol, yet the possibility of Egyptian weavers is not excluded³⁵.

Another example in metal of that type of Chinese manufactured goods is a round bronze cosmetic box at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo with relief Chinese floral decoration and Thuluth Arabic inscriptions. (No. 3863; diameter 14.5 cm; height 6 cm) (Plate 22) Center of the cover on the exterior is a rosette surrounded by inscription, while a band of undulating stem, intersected by lotus scrolls and other flowers, borders it. Around the sides of the cover and the box are two lines of inscriptions.

The inscriptions read as follows:

On the cover: "Qāla raḥmat' Ullahi 'alayhi: Awṣā Luqmānu l'ibnihi, qāla Yā Bunayya al-qāidah." Around the sides of the cover: "‘Amma ‘āfiyat'ul-‘Ākhirah thalāthun: ghufrān' udhdhunūbi wa Qabūl' uṭ-ṭā'ati wa dukhūl' ul-jannah. Fa shukru 'āfiyat' il-'Uqbā thalāthun: 'imāratu bayt' Illāhi wan-naṣīhatu likhalq' Illāhi." Around the sides of the box: "Wat-tilāwatu likitāb' Illāh. Allāhumma innī asaluka al-jannat wamā qarraba ilayhā min qawlin wa 'amalin wa a'ūdhu bika min' an-anāri wamā qarraba ilayhā min qawlin wa 'amalin ya 'nī li 'ibād' Illāh."

The translation:

On the cover: "He, may God have mercy upon him, said, Lokman advised his son. He said, 'O, my son. The rule'." Around the sides of the cover: "Regarding the goodness of the other life, it is three things: remission of sins, acceptance of submission and entering Paradise, and thanking the goodness of the result is three things: prayer in the mosque, advice to people and reading the Holy Koran. O, God! I ask thee Paradise and that what brings me nearer to it of both speech and deed, and I seek protection by thee from Hell and that what brings me nearer to it of both speech and deed. He means: for the worshippers of God."

It is suggested that such objects were made by Muslim Chinese artists for Muslim inhabitants in China as there were millions of them in the Yuan empire. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, there was an Islamic quarter in every Chinese city he visited³⁶. However, such objects may have been made in China for export to the Islamic world and they may be remarkable examples of Chinese craftsmanship³⁷, as

well as evidence of Chinese care for export³⁸⁾, and also a proof of exchanging influences along Silk Roads.

Same purposes could be suggested concerning the manufacture of porcelains of similar sort, several examples of which are owned by the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.

These examples are:

1. Cup decorated with gilded geometrical patterns on blue background, with three white zones containing the last three chapters of the Holy Koran, written in Arabic Naskhi script. Around the exterior of the rim is written the first chapter of the Holy Koran in the same script. In the center of the cup is a traditional Chinese rosette and around the interior of the rim a band of floral pattern in blue and red colors. (No. 12734) (Plate 23)
2. Three small cups with some pieces missing. Each contains on the exterior three zones with Arabic inscriptions reading: "al-Mawt Ḥaqq-al-Sirāt Ḥaqq-al-Baath Ḥaqq." (Death is right—Path is right—Resurrection is right.) Between the zones there are minute floral motifs in blue color. (No. 6929 / 1, 2, 3; diameter 7 cm) (Plate 24)
3. Three-legged ware with three compartments in white glaze round its exterior. These compartments contain Arabic inscriptions in relief that read: "Lā Ilāha Illā Allāh—Muḥammad Rasūl' Ullāh" (There is no God but Allāh—Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah.) The compartments are surrounded by floral patterns in yellow and green on blue background. On the bottom is a Chinese mark in white on red background in the shape of square seal. (No. 3456; height 7 cm; diameter 15.5 cm) (Plate 25)
4. Three-legged ware with gilded relief Arabic inscription inside three compartments supposed to read as follows: "Lā Ilāha Illā Allāh—Muhammad Rasūl' Ullāh" (There is no God but Allāh—Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.) Around the inside of the rim are gilded patterns while a gilded line decorates its exterior. The rest of the object is void of pattern. (No. 3458; height 15 cm; diameter 10 cm) (Plate 26)
5. Two-handled and three-legged ware in white color with cover, apex of which is lion-shaped. Part of one of the handles is missing. An Arabic inscription in green around the body reads: "Afdal Dhikr—Lā Ilāha Illā-Allāh" The best translation is: "There is no God but Allāh." On the cover are pierced ornaments. (No. 3459; height 12 cm; diameter 10 cm) (Plate 27)
6. Round box with cover containing concentric rings. Central ring bears Arabic relief inscription in blue on reddish background. It reads: "Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh" (Praise be to God). Outer circular band together with exterior of the vessel is decorated with floral motifs in green on blue background. (No. 3457; height 4.5 cm; diameter 11 cm) (Plate 28)
7. Vase bearing two compartments containing relief Arabic inscription in blue on reddish background, reading as follows: "Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh" (Praise be to God.) Between compartments, on the rest of the exterior of the vase, are

floral motifs in yellowish green on blue background. Around upper portion of the neck is an ornament of arches alternating with zones in blue on yellowish green background. (No. 3455; diameter 5 cm; height 14 cm) (Plate 29)

8. Blue-and-white three-legged vase, exterior of which is wholly decorated with floral scrolls around two compartments containing Arabic inscription in Naskhi style, which reads: "Idha rayta āthiman-Kun sātiran wa ḥalīman." (If you see a sinner, be patient and shelter him.) On the bottom of the vase is a CHENG TE character mark (1506-1521) from Ming dynasty³⁹. (No 3454; diameter 5 cm; height 15.5 cm) (Plate 30)

NOTES

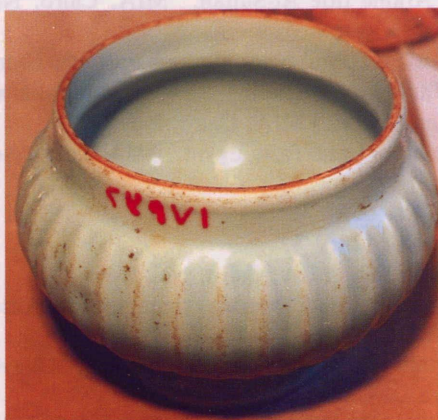
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6. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, op. cit., vol. II, p. 93.
7. *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 113; Kendrick, op. cit., p. 41.
8. Kendrick, op. cit., p. 41.
9. Atıl, op. cit., p. 15.
10. *Ibid*, pp. 146-151; Grube, Ernst I., *The World of Islam*, p. 104.
11. Du Ry, Carel I., *Art of Islam*. Harry N. Abrams, New York, p. 211.
12. Atıl, op. cit., Plate 78, p. 169; Grube, op. cit., p. 74.
13. Maqrīzī, Khīṭaṭ, vol. II, p. 48; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, op. cit., p. 159.
14. Du Ry, op. cit., p. 211; Rice, David Talbot, *Islam Art*. Thames and Hudson, 1984, p. 132.
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17. Atıl, op. cit., p. 223.
18. Speiser, Werner, *The Art of China. Spirit and Society*. Crown Publishers, New York, 1960, p. 192.
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22. Münsterberg, Otto, *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte*. Esslingen A.N., Paul Neff Verlag (Max Schreiber) 1912, band II, S. 186.
23. Atıl, op. cit., Plate 11, pp. 58, 59.
24. For example, an incense burner was found at Qūs in Upper Egypt.
25. Atıl, *Art of the Arab World*. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1975; Plate 80, p. 145; *The Unity of Islamic Art*. Plate 57.

26. Du Ry, op. cit., p. 210.
27. Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam. Art of the Mamluks*. p. 29.
28. Atıl, No. 58.16. *Art of the Arab World*. Smithsonian Institution. Plate 72.
29. No. LNS69G. Ghāda Ḥajjāwī Qaddūmī, al-Tanawwu ' 'Fi al-Wiḥda (Diversity in Unity), 1987, p. 116.
30. Speiser, op. cit., p. 92.
31. Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, No. 4577.
32. Atıl, op. cit., Plate 20, pp. 74, 75.
33. No. 769. 1898. Mackie, Louise W., *Toward an Understanding of Mamluk Silks: National and International Considerations. Muqarnas. An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*. vol. 2. The Art of the Mamluks. Yale University Press. New Haven and London, 1984, Plate 21, p. 140.
34. Kendrick, op. cit., p. 41.
35. Dimand, M. S., *A Handbook of Muhammadan Art*. Second Edition, Hartsdale House, New York, 1947, p. 261.
36. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, op. cit., vol. II, p. 160.
37. Ibid, vol. II, p. 161; Ibn al-Wardī, *Kitāb Jarīdot al- 'Ajāib wa Farīdat al-Gharaib* (The Book of the List of Miracles and the Precious Gem of Strange Things). Print of Muṣṭafā al-Babī al-Ḥalabī, Egypt, 1939, pp. 52, 53; Abū al-Fidā, *Tārīkh Abū al-Fidā* (History of Abu al-Fidā), vol. 1, p. 102. Zakī Muḥammad Ḥassan, *Al-Šin wa Funūn al-Islām* (China and the Arts of Islam), Cairo 1941. pp. 20-32.
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PLATES

1. Chinese celadon vase in green. Height 12.7 cm; diameter 13 cm. Museum of Islamic Art (henceforth referred to as MIA), Cairo, Egypt, No. 23971.
2. Mamluk-imitated celadon vase in green glaze. MIA, Cairo, No. 6115/4.
3. Fourteenth century Mamluk pierced goblet painted in blue, turquoise and black underglaze. Madina Collection, New York. (After Esin Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam Art of the Mamluks*, Plate 78.)
4. Chinese blue-and-white porcelain flask with recently repaired brass neck. Height 33 cm; diameter 24 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 4113.
5. Mamluk shard bearing the signature of potter al-'Ustadh al-Miṣrī. MIA, Cairo, No. 5404/16.
6. Mamluk vase glazed in blue-and-white, bearing signature of potter Abū Al 'izz on interior of rim. Height 29.5 cm; diameter 14 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 4577.
7. Mamluk vase in blue-and-white underglaze painting with broken rim. Height 22.5 cm; diameter of rim 11 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 4071.
8. Mamluk shard bearing signature of potter Al-Baqīlī. MIA, Cairo, No. 5899.
9. Fifteenth century Mamluk tiles in blue-and-white underglaze painting bearing names and titles of Sulṭān Qayitbay (1458-96 A.D.) and Sulṭān Jānbalāṭ (1500 A.D.) and ascribed to potter Ghaybī. MIA, Cairo, Nos. 3001, 3265.
10. Mamluk tile in blue-and-white underglaze painting. MIA, Cairo, No. 15664.
11. Chinese silk fragment in yellow and blue colors. Length 45 cm; width 33 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 2225.

12. Mamluk silk waistcoat in yellow and brown colors, lined with linen weave, with four buttons, and bearing Arabic inscriptions in Naskhi style which could be deciphered as al-Sulṭān, excavated at Drunka in Upper Egypt. Length 41 cm; width: 28 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 2228.
13. Mamluk greenish blue silk fabric bearing Arabic title Al-Sulṭān. MIA, Cairo, No. 12661/2.
14. Mamluk silk weave in yellow, decorated with horizontal black zigzag bands containing braided ornament and Arabic writing in Thulth style, reading Al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Ṣālih al-‘Ālim (The learned, virtuous king and sultan.) MIA, Cairo, No. 8228.
15. Mamluk globular bronze incense burner or hand warmer from Egypt. MIA, Cairo, No. 15108.
16. Mamluk printed linen fabric. MIA, Cairo, No. 8696.
17. Mamluk printed linen fabric. MIA, Cairo, No. 12619/8.
18. Mamluk tile in blue-and-white underglaze painting. MIA, Cairo, No. 15664.
19. Mamluk shard in blue-and-white underglaze painting bearing signature of potter ‘Ajami. MIA, Cairo, No. 5404/33.
20. Mamluk tile in blue-and-white underglaze painting bearing signature of potter Ghaybī Ibn al-Tawrīzī in Square Kufic. MIA, Cairo, No. 2077.
21. Chinese silk damask in greenish blue bearing Arabic benedictions in Mamluk Thuluth style in honor of Sulṭān al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (Ibn) Qalāwun. Found in a burying ground south of Asyūṭ in Upper Egypt. Length 51 cm; width 35 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 2226.
22. Chinese bronze box bearing Thulth Arabic inscriptions. Diameter 14.5 cm; height 6 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 3863.
23. Chinese porcelain cup decorated with gilded geometrical patterns on blue background, with three white zones containing last three chapters of the Holy Koran, written in Arabic Naskhi script. MIA, Cairo, No. 12734.
24. Three small Chinese porcelain cups bearing Arabic inscriptions. Diameter 7 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 6929/1,2,3.
25. Chinese three-legged porcelain ware bearing Arabic inscription in relief. Height 7 cm; diameter 15.5 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 3456.
26. Chinese three-legged porcelain ware with gilded relief Arabic inscription. Height 15 cm; diameter 10 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 3458.
27. Chinese three-legged porcelain ware, with Arabic inscription in green around body. Apex of cover lion-shaped and part of one of two handles is missing. Height 12 cm; diameter 10 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 3459.
28. Chinese round porcelain box with cover bearing Arabic relief inscription in blue on reddish background. Exterior is decorated with floral motifs in green on blue background. Height 4.5 cm; diameter 11 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 3457.
29. Chinese porcelain vase bearing two compartments containing relief Arabic inscriptions in blue on reddish background. Rest of exterior decorated with motifs in yellowish green on blue background. Diameter 5 cm; height 14 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 3455.
30. Chinese blue-and-white three-legged vase, wholly decorated with floral scrolls around two compartments containing Arabic inscription in Naskhi style. On the bottom of vase is Zheng-de character mark (1506–21 A.D.) from the Ming dynasty. Diameter 5 cm; height 15.5 cm. MIA, Cairo, No. 3454.



pl. 1. Chinese celadon vase in green.



pl. 18. Mamluk tile in blue-and-white underglaze painting.



pl. 25. Chinese three-legged porcelain ware bearing Arabic inscription.



pl. 28. Chinese round porcelain box with Arabic inscription on cover.



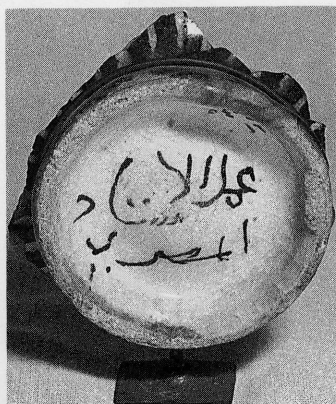
pl. 2. Mamluk-imitated celadon vase in green glaze.



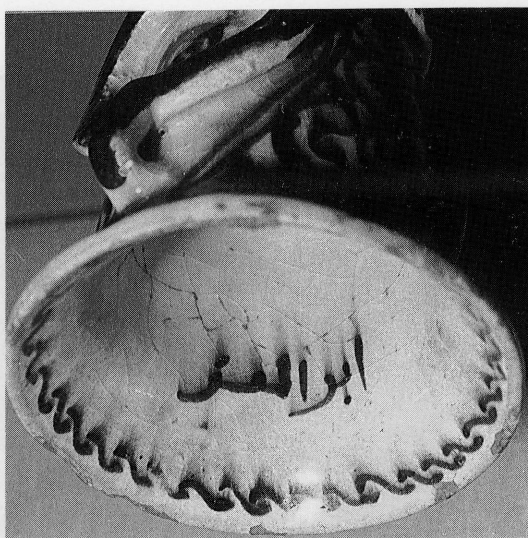
pl. 4. Chinese blue-and-white porcelain flask.



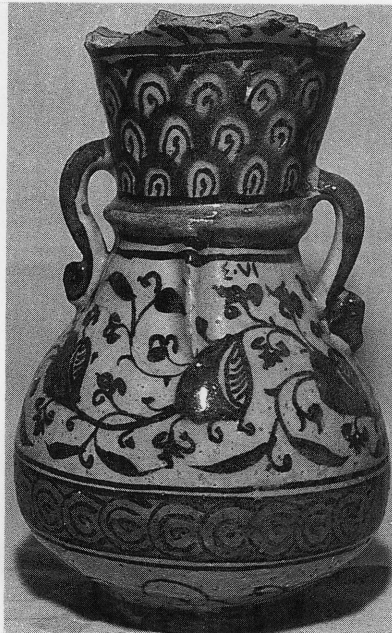
pl. 3. Fourteenth century Mamluk pierced goblet painted in blue, turquoise and black underglaze.



pl. 5a & b. Mamluk shard bearing the signature of potter al-'Ustadh al-Misri.



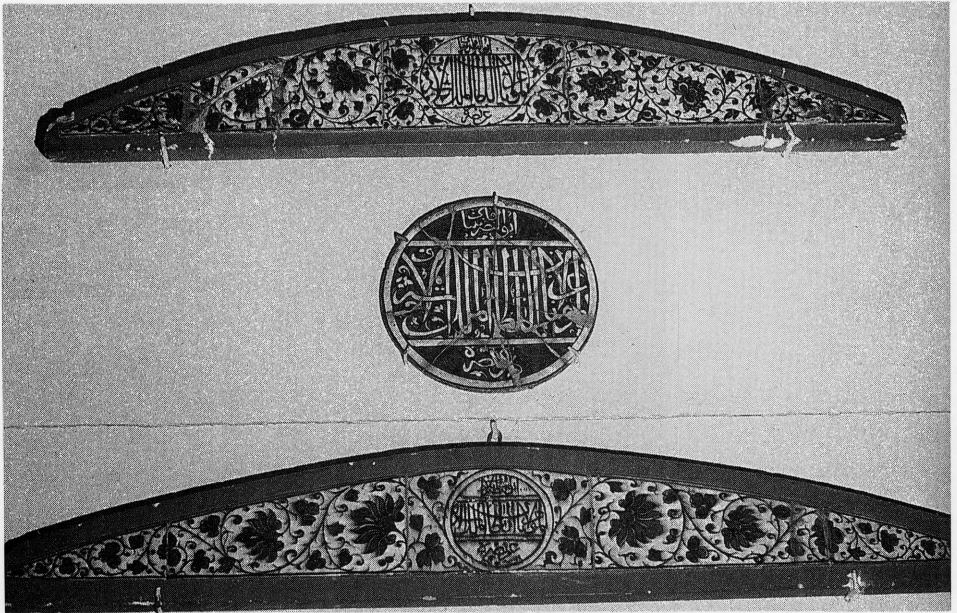
pl. 6a & b. Mamluk vase glazed in blue-and-white, bearing signature of potter Abu Al'izz on interior of rim.



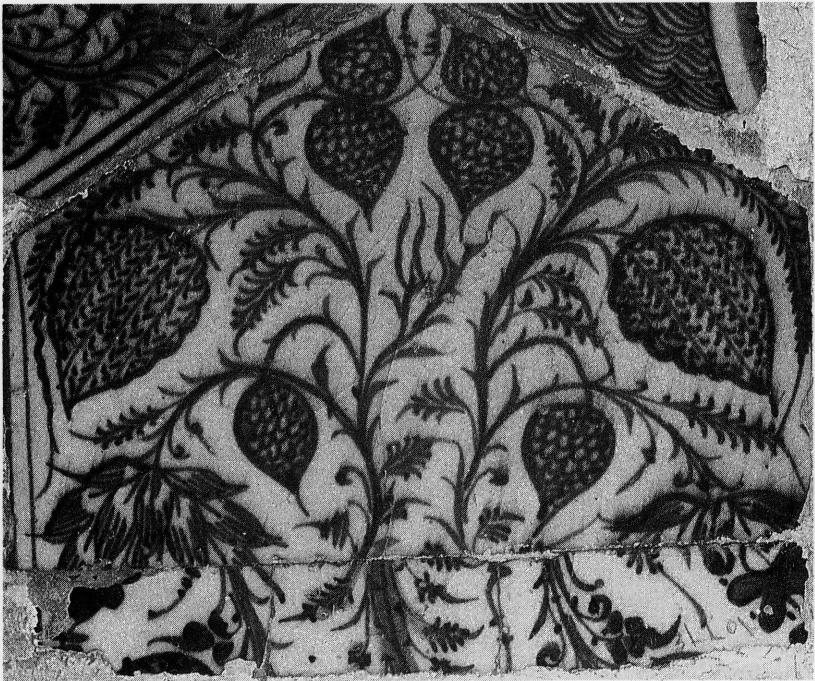
pl. 7. Mamluk vase in blue-and-white underglaze painting; rim broken.



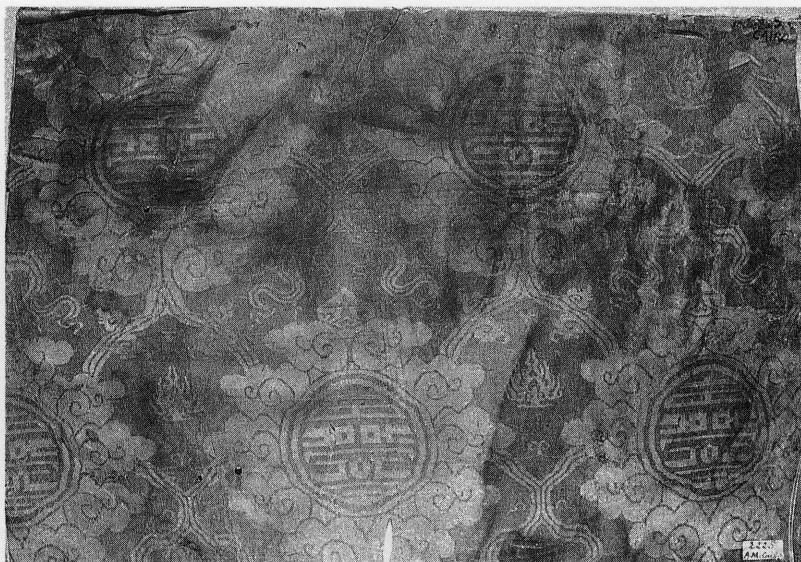
pl. 8a & b. Mamluk shard bearing signature of potter Al-Baqili.



pl. 9. Fifteenth century Mamluk tiles in blue-and-white underglaze painting.



pl. 10. Mamluk tile in blue-and-white underglaze painting.



pl. 11. Chinese silk fragment in yellow and blue colors.



pl. 12. Mamluk silk waistcoat in yellow and brown colors, lined with linen weave.



pl. 13. Mamluk greenish blue silk fabric bearing title al-Sultan.



pl. 15. Mamluk globular bronze incense burner or hand warmer from Egypt.



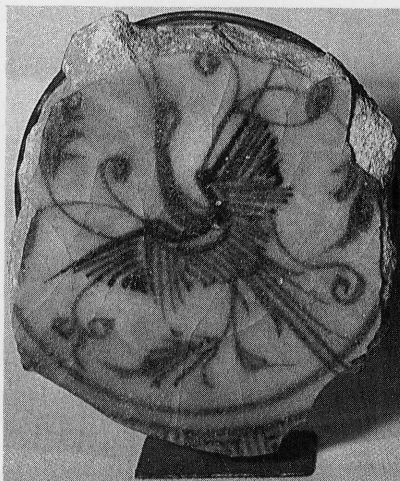
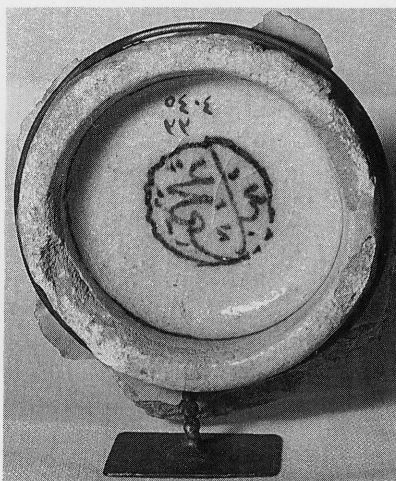
pl. 14. Mamluk silk weave in yellow, decorated with horizontal black zigzag bands containing braided ornament and Arabic writing in Thulth style.



pl. 16. Mamluk printed linen fabric.



pl. 17. Mamluk printed linen fabric.



pl. 19a & b. Mamluk shard in blue-and-white underglaze painting bearing signature of potter 'Ajami.



pl. 20. Mamluk tile in blue-and-white underglaze painting.



pl. 22. Chinese bronze box bearing Thuluth Arabic inscriptions.



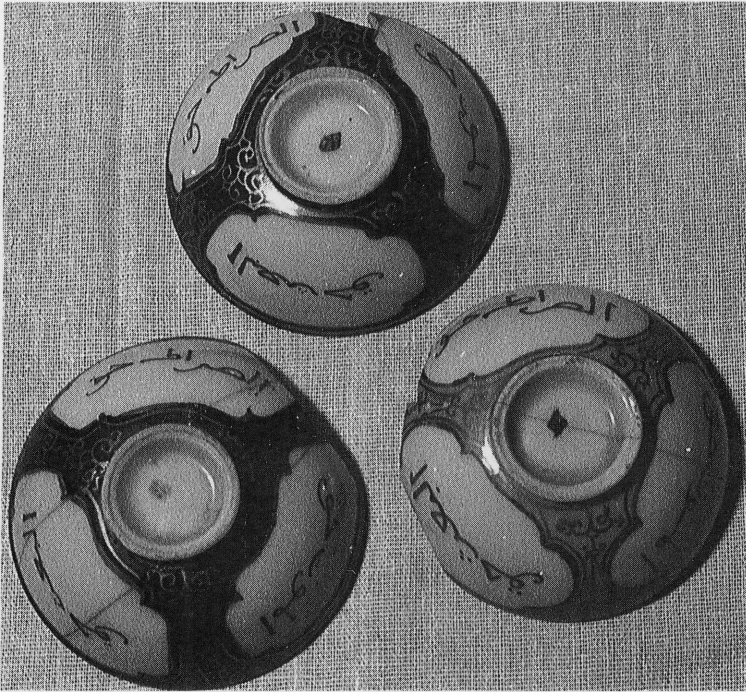
pl. 21. Chinese silk damask in greenish blue bearing benedictions in Mamluk Thuluth style in honor of Suiṭān al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (ibn) Qalawun.



pl. 23. Chinese porcelain cup decorated with gilded geometrical patterns.



pl. 26. Chinese three-legged porcelain ware with gilded inscription.



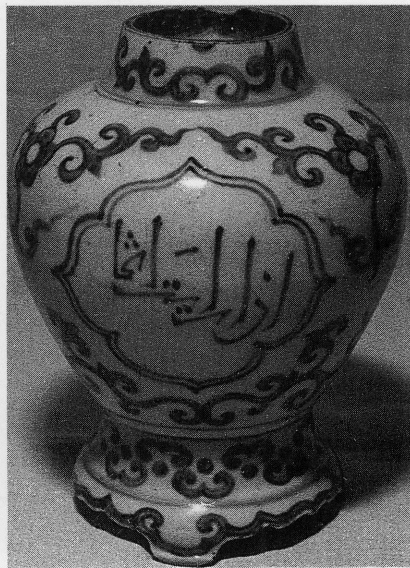
pl. 24. Three small Chinese porcelain cups bearing Arabic inscriptions.



pl. 27. Chinese three-legged porcelain ware, with Arabic inscription in green around body.



pl. 29. Chinese porcelain vase of two compartments.



pl. 30. Chinese blue-and-white three-legged vase.