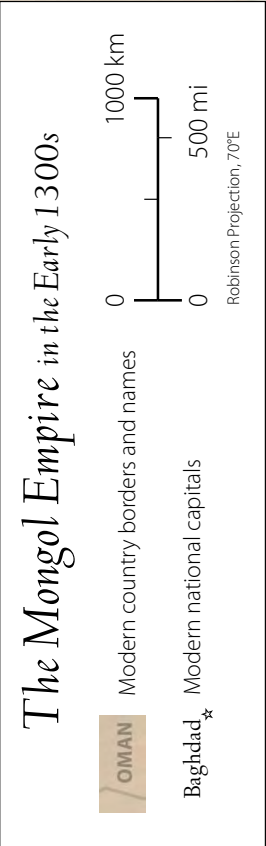


UNIT 7

Trade and Artistic Exchange

The role of trade, diplomacy, and cultural interconnections is crucial to understanding works of art produced in the Islamic world. The fluid movement of artists and luxury objects among eastern and western Asia and Europe led to the cross-fertilization of motifs, designs, materials, and production techniques. The existence of a network of trading posts and routes throughout this vast geographic region facilitated long-distance communication, the transmission of ideas, and the emergence of a global culture. The chapters in this unit highlight artistic relationships between China and the Near East and those between Venice and the Islamic world.



UNIT 7: CHAPTER 1

Ceramics in China and the Near East

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- ♦ identify how trade and cultural ties led to artistic exchange between China and the Near East from the tenth to the seventeenth century; and
- ♦ recognize visual evidence of these exchanges in ceramic works of art.

Introduction

This chapter explores how trade connections between China and the Near East informed Near Eastern ceramic production, beginning in the eighth century. In China, certain ceramic technologies were far more advanced than in the Near East. Potters living in the region of present-day Iraq and Iran experimented with new materials and decorative techniques in an attempt to imitate prized Chinese wares. The ceramic works featured in this chapter reflect the ways in which Chinese materials, technical innovations, forms, and motifs inspired specific styles of pottery in the Near East.

Trade and Travel

Contact between China and the Near East predates the advent of Islam in the seventh century; sea and land routes connected the two regions as early as the third century B.C. The main route was the Silk Road, named after the most important commodity that was traded along it—Chinese silk (see map, page 32). The ease of travel across Asia and the Middle East was facilitated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by the Pax Mongolica (literally, Mongol peace)—the unification under the Mongol conquerors, who swept through Asia establishing control over territories stretching from East Asia to eastern Europe (see map opposite).

In addition to traveling by land routes, merchants also traded via sea routes, carrying luxury commodities such as ceramics, carpets, rice wine, musk, perfumes, paper, dyestuffs, pearls, ink, and ivory in great quantities.

During the reign of the Abbasids (750–1258) there was remarkable expansion in international trade. Sea routes stretched all the way from Iraq to Indonesia, and ships traveling back and forth would stop at many ports along the way to buy and sell goods. Abbasid merchants returned home with finished goods (such as ceramics, paper, silk, and ink from China) as well as raw materials (like spices from India and teakwood from Southeast Asia). This boom in trade transformed Iraq into an international marketplace in which prized Chinese and Southeast Asian imports such as silk, paper, tea, and ceramics were sold.

Artistic Interconnections

On their journeys, traveling merchants were exposed to different peoples, places, and cultures. In addition to the commodities they traded in bulk, they often acquired luxury items, such as textiles, rugs, and metalwork—goods that were admired and subsequently copied in areas far from their source. Islamic motifs, such as arabesques, were disseminated in this way and began to appear on Chinese-made textiles, marble carvings, and ceramic vessels. Likewise, Chinese styles and materials influenced objects made in the Islamic world. Among these are ceramic vessels that were inspired by Chinese porcelain. The study of these ceramics, excavated in large numbers in the Near East and in China, traces the history of artistic exchange and helps us understand how trade facilitated artistic interconnections between two distant regions.

The Importance of Ceramics

In the pre-Islamic period, most luxury vessels were made of precious metals, including gold and silver, while ceramic wares were largely used for utilitarian purposes such as storing water and food, transporting goods, and cooking. However, in the Islamic world, luxury ceramics became popular and were appreciated for their aesthetic appeal and affordability. This phenomenon may be due in part to Muslim prohibitions on men using gold vessels. However, it is also likely that the creation of more ornate ceramics was a response to the demands of new buyers, who desired reasonably priced luxury goods. Chinese imitations account for only a segment of the luxury ceramics made in the Near East, however; many techniques and styles, such

as *mina'i* and lusterware, were developed independently, responding to local tastes and influences.

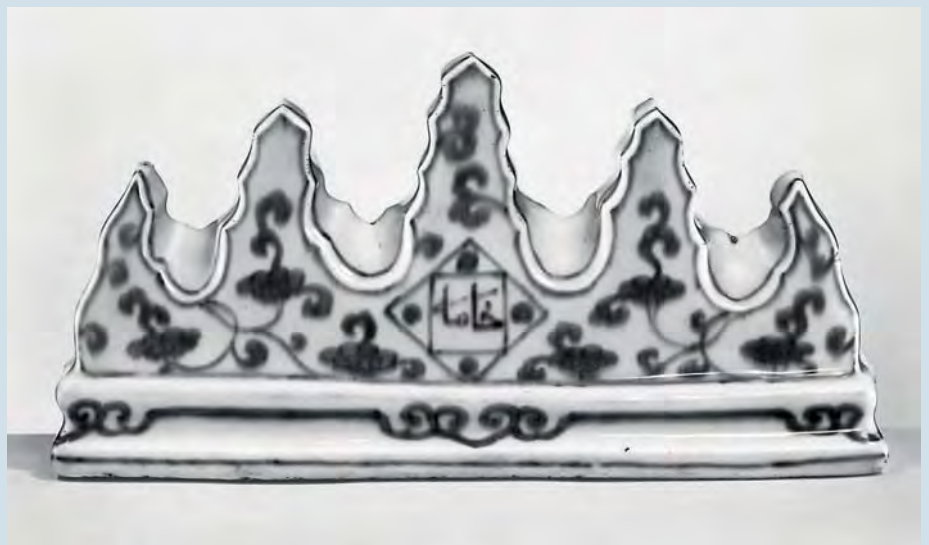
Local potters in the Near East were impressed by the elegance and durability of Chinese stoneware and porcelain ceramics and attempted to re-create their prized qualities. Porcelain required white kaolin clay fired at an extremely high temperature; neither the clay material nor the amount of wood required for sustained firing at high temperatures were available in the Near East. Iraqi potters invented ways to imitate the smooth white surface of Chinese ceramics. Using locally available clay, they covered the earthenware body of vessels with an opaque white coating called *slip* and decorated it with designs in cobalt blue and other colors in emulation of Chinese porcelain.

Chinese ceramics had an indelible influence on the pottery of the Islamic world, a trend that continued in Iran in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and culminated during the Safavid period (1501–1722), when ceramics were increasingly regarded as desirable luxury goods to present as gifts. For instance, in 1609 the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas gave a gift of 835 Chinese porcelain vessels to the shrine of his dynasty's spiritual founder, Shaikh Safi in Ardabil, Iran. This act reflects the status of Chinese porcelain as prized luxury objects in the Safavid court and demonstrates its role in official gift giving.

During the early seventeenth century, Chinese potters emulated Ottoman and Safavid ceramic designs. The likely patrons of these works were Muslims in powerful positions in the Ming court, as well as Muslim merchants in other parts of China. These patrons favored Islamic designs and Arabic inscriptions on their luxury ceramic wares (fig. 48).

FIG. 48. Brush rest with Arabic inscription, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), early 16th century; China; porcelain painted with cobalt blue under transparent glaze (Jingdezhen ware); L. 8¾ in. (22.2 cm); Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.56.14)

A Muslim patron living in China commissioned this brush rest. The mountain form of the brush rest is distinctly Chinese, while the inscription is in Arabic, reading “pen rest” (“pen” on one side, and “rest” on the other). The surface decoration in the form of scrolling arabesques may also be inspired by Islamic art.



Bowl with cobalt-blue inscriptions

9th century

Iraq, probably Basra

Earthenware; painted in blue on opaque white glaze;

Diam. 8 in. (20.3 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1963 (63.159.4)

LINK TO THE THEME OF THIS CHAPTER

This bowl, made in Iraq, is an example of the earliest Chinese-inspired vessels produced in the Near East.

FUNCTION

In addition to being a functional object, a work like this also conveyed the social and cultural status of its owner. The person who bought or commissioned this bowl could afford luxury ceramics and appreciated them for their aesthetic qualities.

DESCRIPTION/VISUAL ANALYSIS

The white ground of this shallow bowl creates a stark contrast with the dark blue designs along the rim and in the center. The central calligraphic design consists of a single word, *ghibta* (happiness), repeated twice in kufic script.

CONTEXT

When white wares from China arrived in the Abbasid domains (present-day Iraq and Syria) in the eighth century, potters were impressed by their translucent white surfaces. Although kaolin clay—the material used to create porcelain—was not available locally, Iraqi potters attempted to reproduce its visual effect and durability by covering the earthenware body of vessels with a layer of opaque white glaze. The white ground provided an ideal surface for decoration in any color, but the combination of blue and white was particularly popular.

KEY WORDS AND IDEAS

Silk Road, cultural exchange and trade, China and Iraq, calligraphy (kufic script), Abbasid caliphate, ceramics



41. Bowl with cobalt-blue inscriptions

White bowl (*tazza*)

12th century

Iran

Stonepaste; incised under transparent glaze; H. 3¹/₁₆ in.

(9.4 cm), Diam. 7³/₄ in. (19.7 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1963 (63.159.2)

LINK TO THE THEME OF THIS CHAPTER

This vessel reflects efforts by Near Eastern potters to emulate Chinese porcelain and motifs.

FUNCTION

In addition to being a functional bowl, a work like this reflected the sophistication and refinement of its owner.

DESCRIPTION/VISUAL ANALYSIS

At first glance, this footed bowl is almost indistinguishable from Chinese examples (fig. 49). The entire body is incised with delicate motifs and covered in a transparent white glaze with a slightly greenish tint. In the center of the interior, a rosette motif radiates upward to the vessel's walls and a vine scroll wraps around the exterior. The incised lines are decorative, but are also used to make the clay appear even thinner, in order to more closely approximate the look of translucent porcelain. The light shining through the incised lines creates a subtle play of translucency and opacity.

CONTEXT

This *tazza*, or shallow bowl resting on a foot, reflects the result of the artistic interconnections between Greater Iran and China during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is made of stonepaste, a material adapted by twelfth-century Persian (Iranian) potters in Kashan in the twelfth century as a more translucent, durable, and sophisticated alternative to earthenware. Stonepaste (also known as frit) is made of ground quartz mixed with clay and glaze, and turns white when fired. Visually, these wares were near

perfect imitations of Chinese porcelain. Thus, while the appearance of this bowl is Chinese, the materials and techniques are purely Persian. The introduction of stonepaste was a significant development in the history of Islamic ceramics and remained the primary medium until the materials and techniques required to produce true porcelain were developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



FIG. 49. Small bowl, late Northern Song (960–1127)–Jin (1115–1234) dynasty, about 12th century; China; porcelain incised with decoration under ivory-white glaze (Ding ware); Diam. 3¹/₂ in. (8.9 cm); Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Roger G. Gerry, 1980 (1980.532)

This twelfth-century bowl is an example of Chinese porcelain, the material Iranian potters tried to imitate. The inside of the bowl displays an incised flower motif. The body is covered with an ivory-white glaze.

KEY WORDS AND IDEAS

Silk Road, cultural exchange and trade, China and Iran, Abbasid caliphate, ceramics, porcelain, stonepaste



42. White bowl (*tazza*)

Tile with image of a phoenix

Late 13th century

Iran, probably Takht-i Sulaiman

Stonepaste; underglaze-painted in blue and turquoise,

luster-painted on opaque white ground, molded;

14¾ x 14¾ in. (37.5 x 36.2 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.49.4)

LINK TO THE THEME OF THIS CHAPTER

The phoenix (featured here) and dragon (found on many other tiles found at the same site) are important symbols in Chinese art and culture, in which they are regarded as benevolent and auspicious beasts (fig. 50). Both subjects made their way from China into Iran. The phoenix was transformed into a mythical Persian bird, the *simurgh*. In its Persian context, the *simurgh* retained its benevolent and magical associations. It is legendary for saving the life of prince Zal in the *Shahnama*. (See “The Making of a Persian Royal Manuscript: The *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp.”) This is just one of many Chinese motifs—such as scroll-like clouds and vegetal spirals of flowers, leaves, and vines—that began to appear in Persian art during the thirteenth century.

FUNCTION

Archaeological evidence indicates that this tile was once one of hundreds that decorated the interior walls of the Ilkhanid imperial palace Takht-i Sulaiman (near Tabriz, in present-day northwestern Iran). Together with other decoration such as carved stucco, the tiles created a richly colored and textured surface in the interior of the palace.

DESCRIPTION/VISUAL ANALYSIS

A phoenix, or *simurgh*, adorns the center of this tile, the body pointing upward toward the sky and the blue and turquoise plumage spreading out behind it. The entire surface is molded in relief and painted in blue, turquoise, white, and luster—a gold-colored metallic sheen achieved by firing at a specific temperature. One can imagine the stunning visual effect created by hundreds of such intricate and colorful tiles adorning the inside of a palatial room.

KEY WORDS AND IDEAS

Cultural exchange, Genghis Khan, Ilkhanid Mongols, Chinese Yuan, phoenix, *simurgh*, relief, stonepaste

CONTEXT

This tile indicates the close economic, political, and artistic relationship between the Ilkhanid Mongols and their Chinese Yuan cousins within the vast area controlled by descendants of the Mongol conqueror, Genghis Khan. As east-west trade flourished throughout the Mongol domains, so did the transmission of artistic techniques, aesthetic tastes, and decorative motifs. The Ilkhanids, whose name means “subordinates to the Great Khan [of China],” ruled Iran and its surrounding territories. Nomads and traders transported luxury items, such as textiles and works of art on paper and silk, throughout the vast empire, introducing dragons, lotus flowers, phoenixes, and other creatures from Chinese mythology into the Ilkhanid decorative repertoire, where they took on new meanings and forms.



FIG. 50. Canopy with phoenixes and flowers, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), China; silk and metallic thread embroidery on silk gauze; overall: 56¾ x 53 in. (143.2 x 134.6 cm); Purchase, Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat Gift, Louis V. Bell and Rogers Funds, and Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, in honor of Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg, 1988 (1988.82)



43. Tile with image of a phoenix

Elephant-shaped drinking vessel (*kendi*)

Second quarter of the 17th century

Iran, probably Kirman

Stonepaste; painted in shades of blue under transparent glaze;

H. 9½ in. (23.2 cm), W. 7⅞ in. (18.1 cm), Diam. 4⅝ in. (11.7 cm)

The Friends of the Department of Islamic Art Fund, 1968

(68.180)

LINK TO THE THEME OF THIS CHAPTER

This object illustrates a late phase in the artistic interconnections between China and Iran, when domestically produced wares in Iran were strikingly similar to Chinese models.

FUNCTION

This jar most likely served as a drinking vessel or a base for a water pipe, but was above all appreciated for its decorative qualities. Persian potters adopted the form from similar Chinese wares (fig. 51).

DESCRIPTION/VISUAL ANALYSIS

This vessel takes the form of a seated elephant with a cylinder on its back. The decoration, in underglaze-blue paint, extends along the entire body. The cylinder, into which the liquid would be poured, sits upon a flowerlike collar embellished with painted birds and flowers. Garlands and hanging tassels adorn the neck and rear of the elephant. A blanket, thrown across the elephant's back, is divided into four decorative quadrants on each side and features a stylized lotus flower (another Chinese import).

CONTEXT

An important difference between Persian and Chinese examples is the smooth white porcelain body that was unique to China. Craftsmen in Persia were unfamiliar with the main raw ingredient, white kaolin clay. They also had no knowledge of the complex firing technique, which involved specially constructed, high-temperature kilns. Works made of stonepaste, such as this example, reflect an attempt to re-create the smooth white surface of

Chinese porcelain and were often painted in cobalt-blue pigment, which was mined in Iran and was both used locally and exported to China. The blue-and-white wares produced in China were avidly collected in Iran and later in Europe. The demand for blue-and-white wares stimulated the production of domestic imitations in many regions. Eventually, Persian potters achieved a level of mastery that enabled them to sell blue-and-white stonepaste pieces to the Dutch, who appreciated them as replicas of Chinese porcelain.



FIG. 51. Elephant-shaped drinking vessel (*kendi*), Ming dynasty (1368–1644), late 16th century; China; porcelain painted in underglaze blue; H. to top of spout 7 in. (17.8 cm), L. 6½ in. (16.5 cm); Purchase, Seymour Fund, funds from various funds and Stanley Herzman Gift, 2003 (2003.232)

This *kendi* is a Chinese original—the white translucent surface readily distinguishes the material as porcelain. The strength and malleability of this material enabled the artist to shape the trunk and contour of the head with greater precision than in the Persian example.

KEY WORDS AND IDEAS

Cultural exchange and trade, China and Iran, Ming dynasty, Safavid empire, elephant, lotus, geometric ornament, stonepaste



44. Elephant-shaped drinking vessel (*kendi*)

Lesson Plan: Unit 7, Chapter 1 Ceramics in China and the Near East

FEATURED WORK OF ART

Tile with image of a phoenix (image 43)

Late 13th century

Iran, probably Takht-i Sulaiman

Stonepaste; underglaze-painted in shades of blue and turquoise, luster-painted on opaque white ground, molded; 14¾ x 14¼ in. (37.5 x 36.2 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.49.4)

SUBJECT AREAS: Visual Arts and World History

GRADES: Middle School and High School

TOPIC/THEME: Art as a Primary Resource

GOALS

Students will be able to:

- ◆ identify ways works of art reflect exchange between Chinese and Near Eastern civilizations;
- ◆ recognize ways animals act as symbols in various cultures; and
- ◆ create a tile that highlights the qualities and traits commonly associated with an animal.

NATIONAL LEARNING STANDARDS

Visual Arts

- ◆ NA-VA.K-12.3 Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- ◆ NA-VA.K-12.4 Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures
- ◆ NA-VA.K-12.6 Making Connections Between Visual Arts and Other Disciplines

World History

- ◆ NSS-WH.5-12.5 Era 5: Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000–1500 C.E.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

- ◆ W.CCR.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content
- ◆ W.CCR.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation

ACTIVITY SETTING: Classroom or Museum

MATERIALS: Pencil, paper, “The Mongol Empire, about 1300” map (see page 206), and computer with Internet access (or relevant printouts from the Museum’s website). For the alternative activity, you will also need clay and paint or glaze.

QUESTIONS FOR VIEWING

- ◆ Look closely at the tile. What type of lines, shapes, and colors do you notice?
- ◆ Describe the features of the animal. What do they remind you of? Why?
- ◆ The phoenix (featured here) and dragon (found on many other tiles from the same site) are important symbols in Chinese art and culture, in which they are seen as benevolent and auspicious beasts. When the phoenix motif was imported into Iran, it was transformed into a mythical Persian bird, the *simurgh*. What words might you use to describe the *simurgh* featured on this tile from Iran? Why?
- ◆ Where do you see tilework in your community? How, if at all, do the types of tiles used at each site differ?
- ◆ Where might a tile like this be found? What do you see that makes you say that? Tiles bearing this motif and possibly produced from the same molds were excavated at Takht-i Sulaiman, the royal summer palace of the Ilkhanid Mongol ruler Abaqa (reigned 1265–82) in northwestern Iran.

ACTIVITY

SUBJECT AREAS: Visual Arts and World History

DURATION: Approximately 45 minutes

The Ilkhanid Mongols of Iran (1206–1353) and their Chinese Yuan (1271–1368) cousins both lived within the vast area controlled by descendants of Genghis Khan (see map, page 206). Compare and contrast the art of the Ilkhanid Mongols and the Yuan dynasty (see **RESOURCES**). Note similarities and differences between the materials, motifs, and techniques employed, and identify details that suggest ties between these two cultures (see fig. 52). (For young children, focus each student or small group on one comparison image.)

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY

SUBJECT AREA: Visual Arts

DURATION: Approximately 90 minutes

Cultures throughout history have frequently associated animals with specific qualities or traits; for example, many have revered lions for their bravery and strength, and owls for their wisdom. Select one animal and research the various qualities and traits that communities around the world have associated with it. Create a tile design featuring this animal using line, shape, and color to emphasize key details and reinforce those qualities or traits. Present the tile along with your research findings, a statement about your use of elements (such as line, shape, and color) in the work, and a photograph or description of where you would place the tile and why.



FIG. 52. Canopy with phoenixes and flowers, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368); China; silk and metallic thread embroidery on silk gauze; overall: 56 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 53 in. (143.2 x 134.6 cm); Purchase, Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat Gift, Louis V. Bell and Rogers Funds, and Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, in honor of Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg, 1988 (1988.82)

RESOURCES

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OBJECTS IN THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION RELATED TO THIS LESSON

Fig. 52. Canopy with phoenixes and flowers, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368); China; silk and metallic thread embroidery on silk gauze; overall: 56 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 53 in. (143.2 x 134.6 cm); Purchase, Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat Gift, Louis V. Bell and Rogers Funds, and Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, in honor of Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg, 1988 (1988.82)

Plate, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), mid-14th century; China; porcelain painted with cobalt blue under transparent glaze; Diam. 18 in. (45.7 cm); Purchase, Mrs. Richard E. Linburn Gift, 1987 (1987.10)

Dish with two intertwined dragons, about 1640; Iran, Kirman; stonepaste; painted in blue under transparent glaze; H. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (7 cm), Diam. 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (43.8 cm); Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1965 (65.109.2)

Author: Adapted from lessons by classroom teachers Jesse Johnson and Katherine Huala
Date: 2012

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UNIT 7: CHAPTER 2

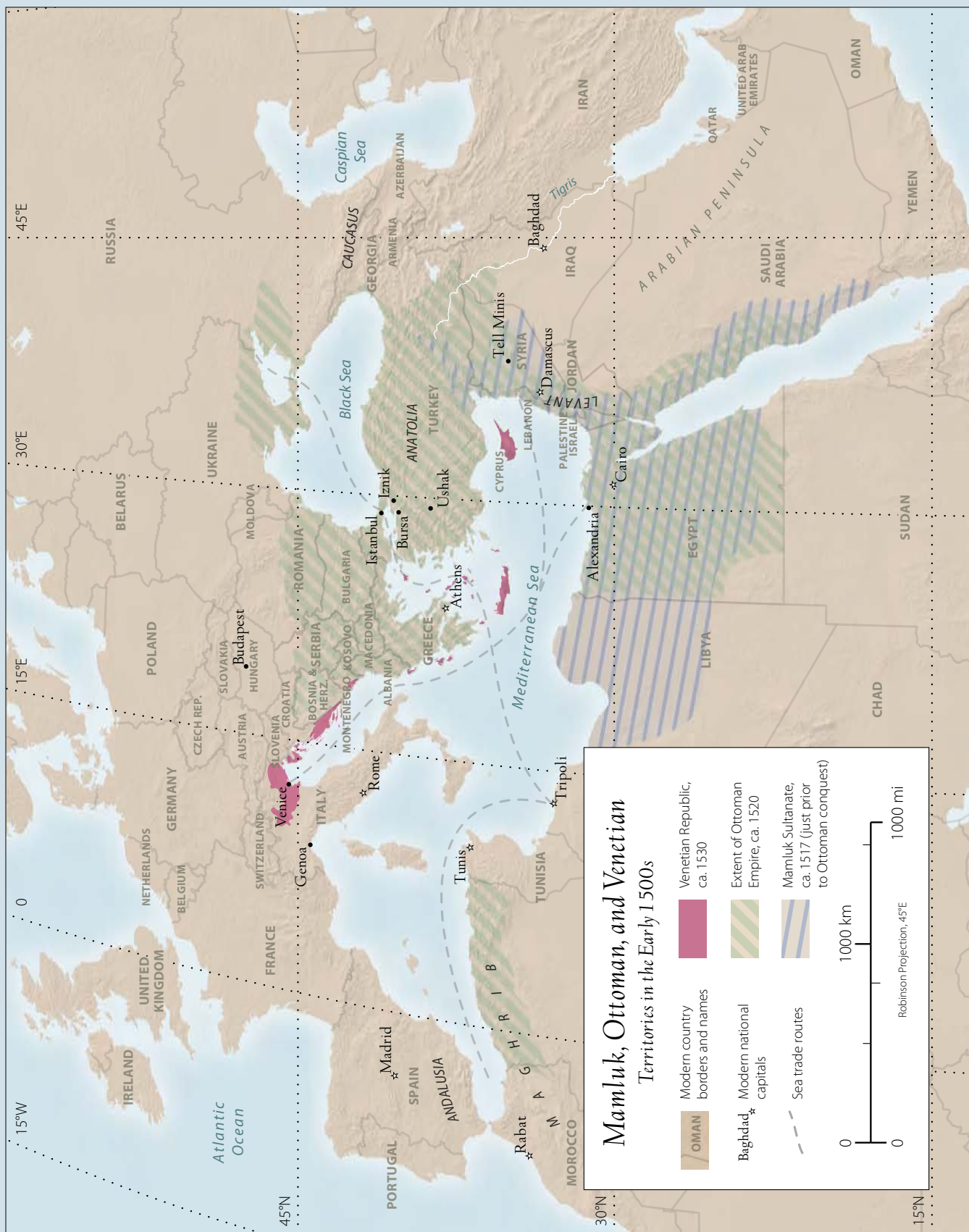
Venice and the Islamic World

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- ♦ identify how factors such as trade and diplomacy led to artistic exchange between Venice and the Islamic world during the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries; and
- ♦ recognize visual evidence of exchanges in works of art.

Introduction

The city of Venice, in northeastern Italy, was founded in the seventh century. The city is comprised of 117 small islands situated in a lagoon with easy access to both the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas. The Venetians took full advantage of their city's strategic location to conduct both local and long-distance trade, and eventually became one of the world's most powerful maritime empires. Venice's economy focused on trade and merchants held important positions of power in Venetian culture. Venice began trading with the Islamic world as early as the eighth century. For centuries, Venice was the link between Europe and the Muslim powers in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean; most luxury goods making their way over sea routes from Islamic lands to Europe passed through Venetian ports (see map, page 222). Because of the importance of trade with Arab lands and Ottoman Turkey, many Venetians learned Arabic and spent considerable time in these regions, buying goods such as spices and raw silk that could be sold for a profit upon their return. This trade had an enormous economic as well as cultural advantage for both parties. Artistic techniques, ideas, and motifs flowed from East to West, and vice versa, through the movement of both merchants and goods. Venice's main trading partners were the Mamluks, whose capital was in Egypt, and the Ottomans, whose capital was in Turkey. Despite the mutual benefit of trade, Venice's relationship with both of these empires was complex, encompassing intermittent periods of peace interrupted by trade embargos and territorial wars.



Venice and the Mamluks

The Mamluk empire (1250–1517) was a military-controlled sultanate that ruled lands in present-day Egypt and Syria. Trade between the Venetians and Mamluks began as early as the thirteenth century and profited both empires, strengthening their diplomatic ties. Trade led to the exchange of materials and goods as well as artistic styles and techniques. Artists in Syria and Egypt produced works of exquisite craftsmanship in glass, metal, silk, and wood to be traded with Europe, most often through the Venetians. The Venetians particularly valued the opulence and sophistication of Mamluk enameled glassware and began producing local imitations. Some of the buildings erected in Venice during the height of this trade relationship also reflected Mamluk style, which the Venetians saw as luxurious and exotic (see figs. 53, 54). The Mamluks and Venetians remained advantageous trading partners until Ottoman forces conquered the Mamluks in 1516–17. Trade between the former Mamluk lands and Venice continued, but under the auspices of Ottoman rule.



FIG. 53. Facade of the Doge's Palace, Venice, Italy, 1340–1510



FIG. 54. Mosque of Altinbugha al-Maridani, Cairo, Egypt, 1339–40

Note similarities in the style of the arcades and crenellations to those in the Doge's Palace above.

Venice and the Ottomans

The Ottoman empire (1299–1923) was, at its peak, one of the most important economic and cultural powers in the world and ruled a vast area stretching from the Middle East and North Africa all the way to Budapest (in present-day Hungary) in the north. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Venetian and Ottoman empires were trading partners—a mutually beneficial relationship providing each with access to key ports and valuable goods (fig. 55). Though territorial wars intermittently interrupted their relationship, both empires relied on trade for their economic well-being. As a Venetian ambassador expressed, “being merchants, we cannot live without them.” The Ottomans sold wheat, spices, raw silk, cotton, and ash (for glass making) to the Venetians, while Venice provided the Ottomans with finished goods such as soap, paper, and textiles. The same ships that transported these everyday goods and raw materials also carried luxury objects such as carpets, inlaid metalwork, illustrated manuscripts, and glass. Wealthy Ottomans and Venetians alike collected the exotic goods of their trading partner and the art of their empires came to influence one another. (For more about the Ottoman empire, see “Art and Empire: The Ottoman Court,” page 123, and “Domestic Life in Eighteenth-Century Damascus,” page 183.)



FIG. 55. Venice as rendered by Ottoman admiral and cartographer Piri Reis in the early 16th century. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz

The Islamic Impact on Venice

The latest Islamic tastes were often reflected in the homes of the richest Venetians, for whom luxury objects from the East became desired collectibles. Islamic art and architecture also influenced Venetian painting. Artists who traveled to Islamic lands were fascinated by the people, garments, and architecture they saw there and sketched them in meticulous detail. Many brought their drawings back to Europe, where they circulated widely in artistic circles. Such sketches influenced a whole generation of painters and led to the popularity of Eastern scenes and costumes in Venice (fig. 56). Venetian paintings, particularly of biblical subjects, incorporated settings inspired by Mamluk Egypt and Ottoman Turkey. In addition to artistic influence, the Islamic world also contributed to the scientific growth of Venetian culture. Many of the classical astronomical and mathematical treatises known in Venice were originally introduced through Arabic translations. (See “Science and the Art of the Islamic World,” page 91.) These various connections left a very tangible legacy in Venice; by the nineteenth century, some of the most important and largest collections of Islamic art were in Venetian hands.



FIG. 56. *Reception of the Venetian Ambassadors in Damascus*, 1511; Venice; oil on canvas, 46½ x 80 in. (118 x 203 cm); Musée du Louvre, Paris

Lamp for the Mausoleum of Amir Aidakin al-‘Ala’i al-Bunduqdar

Shortly after 1285

Egypt, probably Cairo

Glass, brownish; blown, folded foot, applied handles;
enameled and gilded; 10³/₈ x 8¹/₄ in. (26.4 x 21 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.985)

LINK TO THE THEME OF THIS CHAPTER

Venetians prized enameled glass objects produced in Egypt and Syria. They collected and emulated Mamluk glass, inspiring the local production of enamel-painted glass vessels in Venice.

FUNCTION

This enameled glass lamp was made for the mausoleum of a high-ranking Mamluk officer. It would have been suspended from an arch, lintel, vault, or dome by chains attached to the glass loops on the body, and filled with oil and a floating wick, which when lit would illuminate the lamp from within. In the days before electricity, these lamps were essential in providing light to the interiors of mosques and other buildings. One can imagine the visual effect of hundreds of such lamps hanging from chains, illuminating the interior of a mosque or tomb. (The Museum has re-created this effect in gallery 454 with modern hanging lamps commissioned specifically for this space.)

DESCRIPTION/VISUAL ANALYSIS

This lamp features a semi-spherical body with a low foot and a wide opening. The enameled and gilded surface is decorated with three bands of calligraphy—one on the flare, one on the body, and a third on the underside of the vessel. The inscription on the body, which has been left unpainted, would have glowed when the lamp was lit. In addition to the calligraphic text, a pair of confronted bows set against a red circular ground appears nine times.

CONTEXT

This lamp provides insight into the court life of thirteenth-century Egypt. An inscription indicates the lamp was commissioned for the tomb of a high-ranking Mamluk officer who held the title “Keeper of the [Sultan’s] Bow”; the blazon, or coat of arms, on this lamp features a crossbow, the symbol of his office.

KEY WORDS AND IDEAS

Trade, Venice and Egypt, Mamluks, calligraphy (thuluth script), lamp, blown glass

The Venetians admired and imitated floral decorative elements popular in Egypt during the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries (fig. 57). Luxury items from the Islamic world were readily available as models, having come into Venetian collections through trade and as diplomatic gifts.



FIG. 57. Pilgrim flask, about 1500–1525; Italy, Venice; glass, colorless, nonlead; blown, enameled, gilt; H. 12³/₈ in. (31.4 cm); Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1167)

This flat-sided bottle, called a pilgrim flask, is an example of a vessel produced in Venice after Islamic models, and reflects the transmission of artistic forms and techniques through trade. The scrolling floral elements, which form a medallion surrounded by a double pearl border, are evocative of motifs seen on gilded and painted glass from Syria and Egypt. The technique of enameled glass was highly prized by Venetian collectors. Responding to local demand, Venetian craftsmen imitated the forms and motifs of the foreign works of art.



45. Lamp for the Mausoleum of Amir Aidakin al-'Ala'i al-Bunduqdar

Velvet fragment

Second half of the 16th century

Turkey, Bursa

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; cut and voided velvet, brocaded;

66 x 52 in. (167.6 x 132.1 cm), Wt. 89 lbs. (40.4 kg)

Rogers Fund, 1917 (17.29.10)

LINK TO THE THEME OF THIS CHAPTER

This velvet fragment contains motifs typical of Ottoman textiles, which were transmitted to Venice via trade and inspired a new direction in Italian weaving. Motifs traveled back and forth between Ottoman and Venetian workshops and many of the textiles of both centers feature strikingly similar characteristics (fig. 58).

FUNCTION

While the exact function of this textile is unknown, Ottoman textiles woven from fine silk were often used to make expensive garments or furnishings such as cushions, wall hangings, upholstery, and curtains. Textiles like this were also frequently sewn into ecclesiastical or other ceremonial garments in the West.

DESCRIPTION/VISUAL ANALYSIS

This panel consists of two almost identical, loom-width pieces of silk velvet. In the first row of each piece, the featured motif is intact; in the second row, it is split in half along the outer edges. When the two panels are placed side by side, the motif in the second row is completed.

FIG. 58. Length of velvet, late 15th century; Italy, Venice; silk, metal thread; 23 x 12 ft. 4 in. (58.4 x 375.9 cm); Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.49.8)

This velvet fragment woven in Italy features an artichoke motif that closely resembles those found in contemporary Ottoman examples. Such velvets were in high demand throughout Europe and the Ottoman empire, where they were used to make luxurious clothing and home furnishings. Similar textiles appear frequently in paintings of the Madonna and Child and other religious scenes, where their preciousness pays tribute to the exalted status of the subjects. (See, for example, Crivelli's *Madonna and Child Enthroned* [1982.60.5].)

The motif, a symmetrical design of repeating artichoke-shaped forms surrounded by a palmette with saz leaves, is enhanced by the floral forms that appear within the leaves, as well as by the meandering scrolls of carnations, tulips, and hyacinths. The silver metallic thread, now slightly tarnished, would once have shimmered against the rich red background.

CONTEXT

Italian weavers, admiring Ottoman designs, readily incorporated and adapted them into their own textiles. Likewise, Turkish weavers often wove carpets inspired by designs in Venetian velvets. Preferring the expensive and exotic Venetian velvets to those locally produced in Bursa, the Ottoman court ordered a large number of *kaftans* made of Venetian silk. Despite vibrant textile industries of their own, the Ottomans and Venetians remained important clients of one another's textile production. Works like this reflect the cultural and economic ties between the two powers.



KEY WORDS AND IDEAS

Trade and diplomacy, Venice and Turkey, Ottoman empire, cultural exchange, textile, silk



46. Velvet fragment

Lesson Plan: Unit 7, Chapter 2 Venice and the Islamic World

FEATURED WORK OF ART

Velvet fragment (image 46)

Second half of the 16th century

Turkey, Bursa

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; cut and voided velvet, brocaded; 66 x 52 in. (167.6 x 132.1 cm); weight, 89 lbs. (40.4 kg)

Rogers Fund, 1917 (17.29.10)

SUBJECT AREA: English Language Arts, Visual Arts, and World History

GRADE: Middle School

ACTIVITY SETTING: Classroom or Museum

TOPIC/THEME: Artistic Exchange

GOALS

Students will be able to:

- ◆ recognize evidence of artistic exchange and mutual influence between Venice and the Islamic world in works of art; and
- ◆ use informational texts as a resource to substantiate inferences.

NATIONAL LEARNING STANDARDS

English Language Arts

- ◆ NL-ENG.K-12.8 Developing Research Skills

Visual Arts

- ◆ NA-VA.K-12.3 Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- ◆ NA-VA.K-12.4 Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures
- ◆ NA-VA.K-12.6 Making Connections Between Visual Arts and Other Disciplines

World History

- ◆ NSS-WH.5-12.6 Era 6: The Emergence of the First Global Age, 1450–1770

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts

- ◆ SL.CCR.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally
- ◆ SL.CCR.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

MATERIALS: Pencils, 8½ x 11-inch paper for sketching, large paper (8½ x 11 inches or larger, if possible), tracing paper

QUESTIONS FOR VIEWING (designed to *follow* the suggested activity)

- ◆ Describe the shapes you see. Of what do they remind you? Why?
- ◆ What do you notice about the way the shapes are organized?
- ◆ What steps might be involved in creating this work? What do you see that makes you say that?
- ◆ How might fabric like this be used in your community? In the Ottoman empire works such as this were used in furnishings (i.e. cushions, curtains, and wall hangings) or clothing; Europeans frequently imported textiles in this style for ceremonial costumes like this robe (fig. 59).



FIG. 59. Vestment (chasuble), late 16th century; Italy; silk, metal, linen; L. 50 in. (127 cm); Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the Rembrandt Club, 1911 (2009.300.2953)

- ◆ Ottoman weavers and other artists frequently used the artichoke-and-leaf motif in the sixteenth century. During this period the artichoke motif was also employed by Venetian artists. A comparison between the featured work of art and a length of velvet reveals subtle variations in the forms (fig. 60).

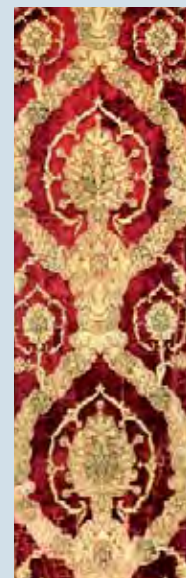


FIG. 60. Length of velvet, late 15th century; Italy, Venice; silk, metal thread; 12 ft. 4 in. x 23 in. (375.9 x 58.4 cm); Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.49.8)

How might motifs travel from one region to the next? Read one or more of the suggested essays (see **RESOURCES**) to learn more about ties between Venice and the Ottoman empire; compare your findings with the inferences you developed based on close observation of the two works.

- ◆ If someone asked you to create a work of art incorporating the motifs in this design, would you feel stifled or inspired? Why?

ACTIVITY

SUBJECT AREA: Visual Arts

DURATION: Approximately 60 minutes

Trade and exchange between Venice and the Islamic world prompted artists in both regions to use and adapt designs from one another; a comparison of the featured work of art and the length of velvet (fig. 60) reflects this trend. Create a motif inspired by a work from Venice or the Islamic world:

1. Fold an 8½ x 11-inch sheet of paper into quarters.
2. Select a work of art and sketch one small detail in each rectangle on your page.
3. Trade sketches with a partner.
4. Look closely at the sketches you received and select one to develop further. Place tracing paper over the drawing you selected. Copy the parts of the design you like best and modify the remaining areas to suit your taste; repeat this process several times using the same base drawing.
5. After exploring several possibilities, identify the motif you feel is the strongest and share your work with your peers. Use one or more of the motifs developed by you and your classmates to create a pattern on a large sheet of paper; you can reproduce the shapes by placing each drawing face down on the fresh sheet of paper and rubbing the back with the tip of your pencil.
6. Share your finished work and two or more process sketches with a classmate. Discuss the development of the design and your thoughts on where you might best apply it (for example, on a shirt, wallpaper, or rug) and why.

RESOURCES

Carboni, Stefano, Trinita Kennedy, and Elizabeth Marwell. "Commercial Exchange, Diplomacy, and Religious Difference between Venice and the Islamic World." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cedr/hd_cedr.htm (March 2007).

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OBJECTS IN THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION RELATED TO THIS LESSON

Fig. 59. Vestment (chasuble), late 16th century; Italy; silk, metal, linen; L. 50 in. (127 cm); Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the Rembrandt Club, 1911 (2009.300.2953)

Fig. 60. Length of velvet, late 15th century; Italy, Venice; silk, metal thread; 12 ft. 4 in. x 23 in. (375.9 x 58.4 cm); Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.49.8)

Carlo Crivelli (Italian, active by 1457–died 1493), *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, 1472; tempera on wood, gold ground; 38¾ x 17¼ in. (98.4 x 43.8 cm); The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection, 1982 (1982.60.5)

Author: Adapted from a lesson by classroom teacher Katherine Huala
Date: 2012

Unit 7: Chapter 2 Related Readings and Resources

Carboni, Stefano, ed. *Venice and the Islamic World, 828–1797*. Exhibition catalogue. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007.

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HIGH SCHOOL

Church and Mosque: Religious Architecture in Venice and Istanbul. DVD. 30 min. New York: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1996.

Discusses how the political and economic relationship between these two cities influenced architectural design in the sixteenth century.

Covington, Richard. “East Meets West in Venice.” *Saudi Aramco World* (March–April 2008), pp. 2–13. <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/200802/east.meets.west.in.venice.htm>.

MIDDLE SCHOOL; HIGH SCHOOL

Sardar, Marika. “Europe and the Islamic World, 1600–1800.” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/erpr/hd_erpr.htm (October 2004).

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UNIT 7: CHAPTER 2 SOURCES

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Covington, Richard. “East Meets West in Venice.” *Saudi Aramco World* (March–April 2008), pp. 2–13.

Ekhtiar, Maryam D., Priscilla P. Soucek, Sheila R. Canby, and Navina Najat Haidar, eds. *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011 (cat. no. 109).

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