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Patterns of Flight: Middle Byzantine Appropriation of the Chinese Feng-Huang Bird

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ARS ORIENTALIS VOLUME 38

**THEORIZING CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION
AMONG THE ANCIENT AND EARLY MEDIEVAL
MEDITERRANEAN, NEAR EAST AND ASIA
EDITED BY MATTHEW P. CANEPA**

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PATTERNS OF FLIGHT

Middle Byzantine Adoptions of the Chinese Feng Huang Bird

1 (OPPOSITE)

Ewer, Tang dynasty, 700–750.
 Earthenware with molded decoration
 and three-color (*sancai*) lead glazes,
 height 32.2 cm, diameter 13 cm. The
 Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of
 Pauline Palmer Wood, 1970.1076.
 Photography © The Art Institute of
 Chicago

Abstract

Theories of artistic diffusion played a prominent role in art historical scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but more recently diffusionism has fallen from favor, in part because of its association with the reductive applications of an earlier era. Yet important advances in diffusion, network, and adoption analysis forged in the social sciences since the mid-twentieth century—which have not yet actively impacted art historical inquiry—offer new possibilities for theorizing artistic diffusion. This article evaluates diffusionism in its newer forms and explores the usefulness of these theories for the analysis of medieval cross-cultural artistic transmission, specifically the middle Byzantine adoption of the medieval Chinese *feng huang* bird. A shift in emphasis from the rate and extent of adoption to questions of how and why individual instances of adoption were carried out features prominently in current diffusion analysis techniques and is useful for the study of medieval luxury objects, which are typically characterized by small sample sets of limited dissemination that nonetheless suggest varied and complex processes of adoption. In keeping with the aims of this volume, attention is paid to articulating methods and terminology that hold potential for application to other subfields of premodern art history.

WHETHER SELF-CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT, art historians tend to operate according to an assumption of diffusion, that is to say, we presume that artistic styles, motifs, and meanings spread from one area to another and that this process can be plotted and its significance interpreted. Theories of artistic diffusion enjoyed popularity in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship.¹ Diffusion continues to play a prominent role in recent studies of innovation transmission in the fields of public health, media studies, sociology, and political science, among others.² But within premodern art history and its sibling disciplines of anthropology and archaeology, diffusionism has fallen from favor, in part because of its association with overly reductive, universalist applications, particularly those of the early twentieth century.³ While techniques for the analysis of diffusion phenomena have continued to evolve in the social sciences, these methodological developments have not been brought to bear on art historical studies.

Rudolf Wittkower's famous study of 1939, "Eagle and Serpent: A Study in the Migration of Symbols," which traces a motif of animal attack across a dramatically broad geographic, chronological, and cultural span, has come to epitomize the shortcomings of the diffusionist approach in art history.⁴ Wittkower demonstrates an impressive command of iconography from a diversity of world cultures, arguing that images of an eagle attacking a snake are fundamentally connected across time

and space. He proposes that in all these contexts the motif maintained a consistent, essential significance, communicating the victory of good over evil. Yet his emphasis on symbolic commonality causes him to neglect or minimize important differences among the various instances of the motif that may have inflected its meaning, including their lack of stylistic unity and disparities among the contexts in which they appeared. In addition, some of his arguments for communications between discrete cultural and historical contexts are tenuous. Criticism of Wittkower's and similarly bold applications of diffusionism is certainly well-founded. Yet the rejection of some diffusionist methodologies does not change the fact that the phenomenon of diffusion continues to be relevant to studies of cross-cultural artistic exchange and, more recently, concepts of artistic "globalism," "trans-culturation," and cultural "encounter."⁵

This essay revisits the concept of diffusion as it relates to a case study of medieval cross-cultural artistic transmission, suggesting that revisions to traditional techniques of analysis offer a productive means of restructuring consideration of medieval artistic exchange. These new models — which fall under the general rubrics of network and adoption analysis — attend to individual instances of the adoption of new ideas and forms, judging micro-processes and -contexts as essential to understanding the success and failure of diffusion.⁶ They offer useful models for analyzing the small sample sets of limited dissemination that typify medieval luxury arts.

My case study is a group of six middle Byzantine (ca. 843–1204) works of art, each of which depicts the medieval Chinese *feng huang* bird (as seen in Figs. 1 and 3–7).⁷ They include two silver cups (Figs. 9–10), a lead seal (Fig. 12), a manuscript headpiece (Fig. 13), an ivory triptych (Fig. 14), and a purple-dyed ivory box (Fig. 15). All these objects are small-scale works that fall within the traditional art historical category of "minor" or "decorative" arts. I prefer the term "portable arts," which avoids the value judgment inherent in "minor" and "decorative," emphasizing instead the distinctive property of mobility that is common to these works of art.⁸ The objects date from the early tenth to early eleventh century, and their valuable media, refined craftsmanship, and/or association with the Byzantine social elite qualify them as luxury items.

In art historical literature, the *feng huang* is often referred to as a phoenix, but its form and meaning are distinct from those of the Roman–Byzantine phoenix bird. The latter has a compact body, long legs, and a small head; it is usually depicted standing and haloed (see Fig. 2). The phoenix's ability to regenerate from its own ashes led to its association with imperial succession and renewal in the pagan tradition and the resurrection of Christ in the Christian tradition.⁹ Earlier art historical studies conflate the phoenix and *feng huang*, but this elision inappropriately domesticates the motif, suppressing its exotic character and minimizing the phe-



2

2

Floor mosaic from the Villa of Daphnis near Antioch, Roman–Byzantine, late fifth century, from Harbiye, Turkey. Mosaic, 600 x 425 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, MA 3442. Photograph C. Jean / J. Schormans. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY

nomenon of diffusion it evinces. In order to retain recognition of the bird’s foreign origin, I employ exclusively the Chinese term for the animal.¹⁰

The *feng huang* appears very rarely in non-Chinese works of art prior to the Mongol conquest in the mid-thirteenth century.¹¹ Indeed, to my knowledge, the six Byzantine objects that form the focus of this study are the only works of art produced outside China before circa 1250 that employ the motif. The fact that adoption of the *feng huang* was restricted to the upper echelons of Byzantine society and did not spread extensively throughout Byzantine artistic production renders it ill-suited for a traditional diffusionist study, which would assess a large-scale phenomenon and the rate and extent of its successful adoption. In contrast, network analysis — with its emphasis on the micro-process of adoption in individual instances — can be productively applied to situations of small-scale cross-cultural artistic transmission. In adapting these revised social science models to the study of medieval artistic dissemination, this essay contributes new perspective on the larger topic of cross-cultural artistic exchange in the premodern world, in particular by drawing attention to the tendency of medieval art history to under-theorize instances of inter-cultural artistic adoption that are attested in only limited or unique examples. Such situations should not be excluded from the broader discussion as aberrations or exceptions. Rather they attest to a category of cross-cultural exchange for which small data sets are the norm.

Instead of focusing on the logistics of transmission of the *feng huang* or the physical maps of diffusion that these transferences created, my investigation foregrounds questions of reception and “cognitive geography,” that is to say, Byzantine



3A

3A
Armrest covered with a brocade textile, Tang dynasty, eighth century. Silk, length 78.2 cm. Shosoin Treasury, National Museum, Nara, Japan. Photograph © Shosoin Treasury, National Museum, Nara, Japan



3B
Detail of 3A.

attitudes toward foreign places and peoples and the artistic forms that served as their surrogates.¹² This emphasis is dictated in part by the limited evidence documenting the process of the *feng huang*'s movement to the west, which makes it impossible to arrive at any definitive explanations of the mechanics of its transference. But the approach is also motivated by an abiding interest in what adoption of the *feng huang* might reflect about Byzantine attitudes toward exotic eastern cultures. This essay operates from the premise that Byzantine viewers' understanding of foreign works of art was embedded in (and can be deduced from) the ways that Byzantine patrons and designers chose to redeploy these models in their own artistic production.

In response to the call of this volume to theorize the method and vocabulary for the investigation of cross-cultural interactions, the present study posits a set of analytical terms that develop from the work of several scholars of premodern art history. Furthermore, the investigation is informed by revisions to diffusionism that take interest in the "failure" of innovations to disseminate throughout society and in the motivations and strategies behind their successful and unsuccessful adoptions.¹³ First the historical context within which the *feng huang* migrated from its Chinese origin to its Byzantine destination is briefly outlined, along with the limited but important evidence for direct and indirect diplomatic and commercial connections between these cultures during the late antique and medieval eras. The discussion then turns to diffusionism and network analysis, highlighting methods and terms that are productive — as well as those that are limiting — for the study of Byzantine objects depicting the *feng huang*. At the fore of this study are the concepts of adoption, appropriation, and expropriation, which I define as follows: Adoption is a neutral term, which refers to the act of employing an exogenous — and therefore innovative — form. Appropriation refers to instances of adoption in which the original form is reconfigured in order to serve better the intentions or needs of the adopters while still retaining an affiliation with its source. Expropriation entails a more radical reworking of the initial form, which results in a greater degree of dislocation from its original context and more extensive incorporation into the adopting culture's stylistic or semantic traditions.¹⁴

The subsequent analysis of the six instances in which the *feng huang* appears on Byzantine objects demonstrates how terms generated from earlier models for cross-cultural artistic exchange can be applied to the case study of this motif. Special attention is paid to distinguishing the different dynamics at play in each



4

4
Mirror, Tang dynasty, 618–907.
Bronze, width 26.4 cm. Freer Gallery
of Art, Purchase, F1929.17



5

5
Ornaments in the shape of the *feng huang*, Tang dynasty, late seventh to early eighth century. Gold sheet, height 5.1 cm. Collection of Myron S. Falk, Jr., New York. Photograph © Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY

instance of adoption, illuminating the way in which the six objects bespeak distinct types and degrees of appropriation and expropriation. In this respect, I emphasize the agency of Byzantine artists and patrons in selecting and negotiating this foreign motif and the significance of these individual instances of adoption to our broader understanding of Byzantine cross-cultural artistic interaction.¹⁵

From East to West: The Migration of the *Feng Huang*

The distinguishing features of the *feng huang* as it appears on Byzantine objects include the full, fluidly rendered wings, thin legs, pronounced head comb, and standing (as opposed to flying) pose.¹⁶ The bird is typically surrounded by dense foliage, a feature in keeping with Chinese literary tradition, which notes that the *feng huang* would alight only on branches of the paulownia tree.¹⁷ Although the majority of the most compelling comparanda for the *feng huang* in Byzantine art dates to the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) (Figs. 1 and 3–5), viable models are also found in art produced under the Liao (907–1125 CE) (Figs. 6 and 7) and Song (960–1279 CE) dynasties, which inherited and imitated Tang models. The long period of Tang rule was marked by relative unity and peace. In striking contrast, the tenth to eleventh centuries (when the *feng huang* appears in Byzantine art) witnessed political insecurity and dissolution. During this era China was ruled by several dynasties, some of whom reigned coterminously in different regions of the former Tang empire. The Liao (an ethnically non-Chinese dynasty of Turco-Mongol origin) controlled the north and northwest of China while the south was successively ruled by the Five Dynasties (907–960) and the Song.



6

6
Crown from the tomb of Princess Chen, Liao period, 1018 or earlier. Gilded silver, height 30 cm, diameter 19.5 cm. Research Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology of Inner Mongolia. From Shen, *Gilded Splendor*, 102–103

In late antique and medieval Chinese culture, the *feng huang* was associated with the South and appears with other animals symbolizing the cardinal directions.¹⁸ Along with the dragon and the deer, the *feng huang* emerged in the Han era (206 BCE–220 CE) as a protective animal. For this reason, it was depicted extensively on funerary monuments, a practice that continued into the Tang period.¹⁹ During the Tang dynasty, however, important changes in artistic style took place. These transformations were stimulated in part by new models from western sources that moved eastward along the Silk Road during the seventh and the first half of the eighth century, when China endeavored to strengthen control over its Central Asian periphery in order to reinforce its northern borders against invasion.²⁰ At this time, the indigenous Chinese motif of the *feng huang* was gradually transferred from monumental—especially funerary—decoration to small-scale objects, some of which combined the Chinese bird motif with features adopted from western, especially Sasanian art.²¹

Spurred in part by the influx of foreign works of art from western regions such as Persia, early Tang artists increasingly incorporated animal motifs into the decoration of portable objects, including ceramic vessels (Fig. 1), textiles (Fig. 3), mirrors (Fig. 4), jewelry (Fig. 5), and metal vessels.²² Yet it is important to note that although the *feng huang* is often associated with the larger phenomenon of western cultural influx during the Tang era, no evidence suggests that the bird itself was



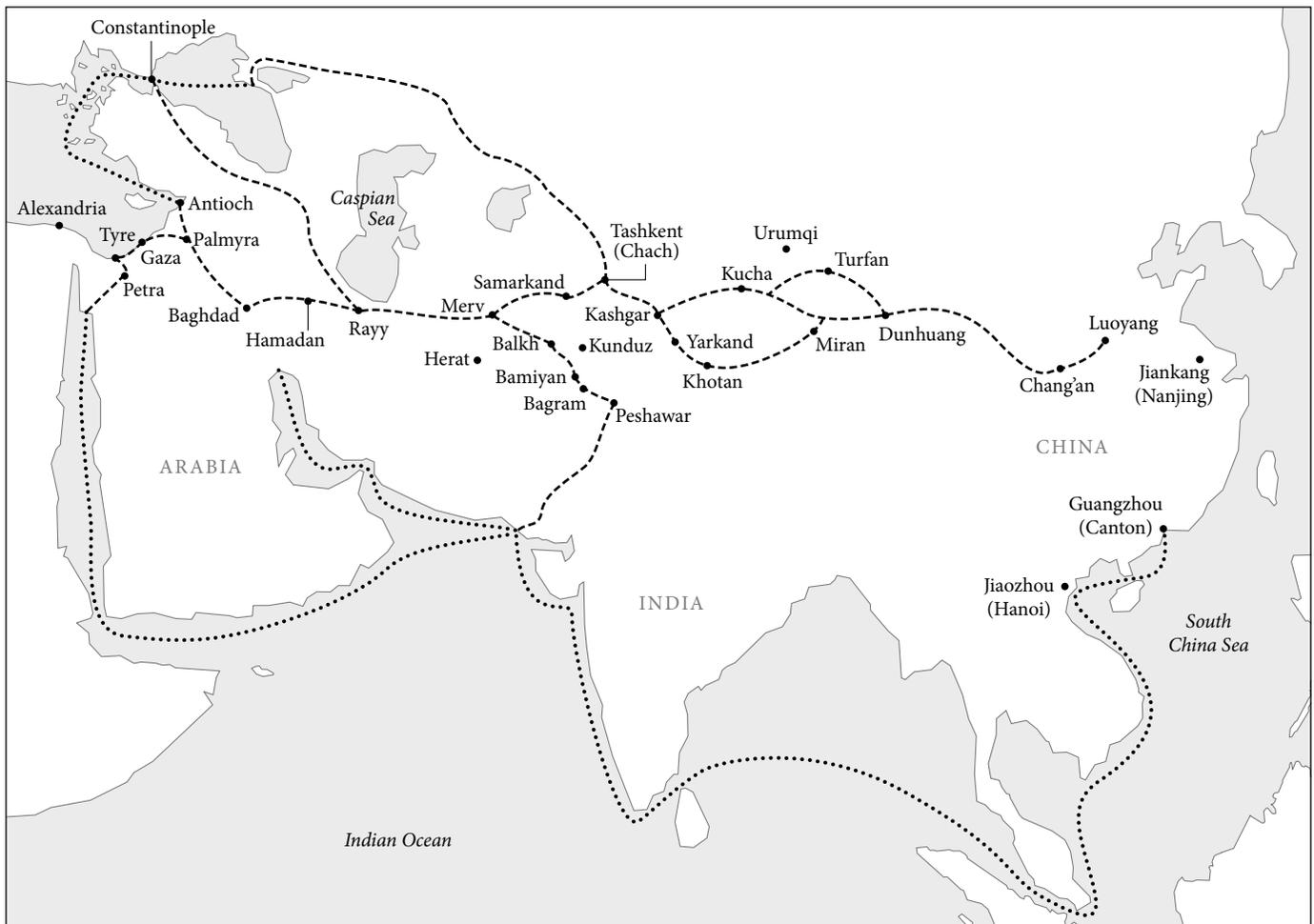
7

7
Pillow, Liao period, tenth century.
Gold and wood, height 10.1 cm,
width 37.8 cm, depth 23.2 cm. Musée
Cernuschi, Paris, MC 2003-6.
Photograph © Philippe Joffre / Musée
Cernuschi / Roger Viollet

understood as a foreign motif. Han-era depictions of the standing *feng huang* show strong similarities to the type that appears in Tang, some Liao, and all Byzantine works of art, indicating that this motif possesses a distinctly Chinese, rather than foreign, origin.

Post-Tang dynasties were greatly influenced by Tang models, and, as noted above, the *feng huang* was one of many motifs imitated in works of art produced under the Liao (Figs. 6 and 7) and Song dynasties.²³ Throughout medieval Chinese history, the *feng huang* appeared on luxury objects in the most prestigious materials, such as silk, gold, and silver. The meaning of the *feng huang* shifted over time, but it was consistently understood as an auspicious and distinguished sign associated with rulers — especially the empress — and the divine recognition of virtuous leadership.²⁴ For instance, the *feng huang* decorates a Liao-era crown found in the tomb of Princess Chen, which dates to circa 1018 (Fig. 6).²⁵

There survives no evidence for the specific pathway of transmission that the *feng huang* followed to Byzantium. Still, given the formal affinity between the Chinese models and Byzantine imitations, it is reasonable to assume that the motif reached Byzantium via a work of medieval Chinese art that found its way to the capital, Constantinople.²⁶ This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the standing *feng huang* does not feature prominently, if at all, in works of Islamic or Central Asian art produced prior to the mid-thirteenth century. Indeed evidence in monumental art for the westward movement of the *feng huang* appears to stop abruptly at the Caves of Dunhuang, an oasis city located in northwest China on the eastern edge of the Taklamakan Desert and the point of convergence for the major western branches of the Silk Road (see Fig. 8). These caves preserve important Tang wall paintings in which the standing *feng huang* is repeatedly depicted, particularly on the clothing of high-status women.²⁷ Given its location at a key juncture along the Silk Road, Dunhuang operated as a point of transition into and out of Chinese culture, which further supports the notion that the *feng huang* was an expressly Chinese motif of limited westward diffusion prior to the thirteenth century.



8

8
Map showing the land and sea commercial pathways connecting Constantinople and Chang'an. Adapted from Françoise Demange, *Glass, Gilding, and Grand Design: Art of Sasanian Iran (224–642)* (New York: Asia Society, 2007)

Chinese historical records allude to diplomatic missions conducted between China and Byzantium, providing one possible means of direct cross-cultural artistic exchange, especially of luxury portable goods. These delegations would have been limited in number, however, with the majority dating to the seventh and eighth centuries, significantly prior to the period during which the Byzantine objects depicting the *feng huang* are thought to have been produced, in the tenth to eleventh centuries.²⁸ Still, Chinese sources record at least one later embassy from Byzantium, dated to 1081 during the Song dynasty, which maintains the possibility of the exchange of works of art as diplomatic gifts in the middle Byzantine era. Additional embassies may have taken place in 1091, with the Song sending a delegation and gifts to the West, although the Chinese sources are unclear as to whether the destination, the land of “Fu-lin,” should be understood as Byzantium or some other medieval polity.²⁹

Another potential means of transference is trade. A brief consideration of the east–west commercial routes in operation during the late antique and medieval eras illustrates the expansive distance separating the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, from the Tang capital, Chang’an (see Fig. 8), but these vast spaces were bridged by vibrant networks connecting far-flung regions. Numerous intermediary cultural and commercial centers punctuated the long journey from Chang’an to Constantinople, providing dynamic markets where people met and goods were exchanged. Of

particular note, mercantile cities such as Samarkand in Sogdiana and Dunhuang (see Fig. 8) offered points of transference.³⁰ In many instances merchants would travel only a segment of the Silk Road, selling their goods at interim depots. Furthermore, the ceremonial, political, and commercial capital of the Islamic Abbasid empire at Baghdad (750–1258) (see Fig. 8) offered a potential way station for imported goods between the far eastern and far western ends of the Silk Road.³¹ In Byzantium, luxury wares, especially textiles, were synonymous with eastern origin such that the early tenth-century Byzantine code for regulating commercial practices in Constantinople, *The Book of the Eparch*, cites a special term for objects, especially silks, coming from the Abbasid empire: “Bagdadikia.”³² In addition, long-distance shipping routes between China, India, and the Mediterranean passed via the Red Sea to the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt beginning in at least the tenth century.³³ Evidence of the impact of these commercial networks is found in Abbasid and Fatimid works of art, especially ceramics that copy Chinese models. Imitations of Tang *sancai* (three-color “splash” ware) and Liao two-color vessels offer important examples of the impact that Chinese ceramics exercised on medieval Islamic production.³⁴ Chinese ceramic vessels were also prized as diplomatic gifts, passing from Chinese to Islamic courts, between Islamic rulers, and from Islamic courts to Byzantium.³⁵

As a result of these active and varied commercial and diplomatic connections among diverse medieval groups, it is entirely possible that individual objects lost their specific cultural associations as they moved from one region to another. This would be especially probable in instances of sporadic and/or mediated cross-cultural communications, such as those that characterize the limited relations between Byzantium and China.³⁶ It is important to note, therefore, that although we today are able to identify the *feng huang* as a medieval Chinese motif, Byzantine viewers were not necessarily cognizant of its specific geographic or cultural origin. They may have identified the *feng huang* with an intermediary group, most likely one of the major commercial cities of the medieval Islamic world, or perhaps some other exotic realm, like India.³⁷ Indeed contacts between Chinese and Islamic courts and markets were more active than those between Byzantium and China.³⁸ For the Byzantines, therefore, the *feng huang* may have been an emphatically foreign motif, but one of generic or ambiguous origin.

It is often assumed that the *feng huang* would have reached Byzantium via textiles, which were lightweight and not prone to breakage, making them well-suited for long-distance travel. Yet no examples of medieval Chinese textiles with Byzantine provenance are attested. In fact, the best-known example of the *feng huang* motif in a Tang-era textile is preserved in a monastery treasury at Shosoin, Japan, and survived only because it was kept in storage and therefore relatively undisturbed from the medieval era to the present (Fig. 3).³⁹ Byzantine importation of

Chinese silks declined after the sixth century, when an independent silk industry in Byzantium began to expand significantly in quantity and quality of production.⁴⁰ By the tenth century, Byzantine silk production was on a par with that of any medieval culture, and the importation of foreign textiles was selective, focusing primarily on Islamic products.

While textiles remain a possible vehicle for the transference of the *feng huang* motif to Byzantium, additional media should be considered. For instance, archaeological evidence dates the impact of Chinese ceramics on Abbasid and Fatimid production to the tenth and eleventh centuries, coinciding with the date range of *feng huang* motifs in Byzantine works of art.⁴¹ Tang-era ceramic ewers showing the *feng huang* on one side (Fig. 1) and a mounted hunter on the other are among the most numerous preserved depictions of the motif, raising the possibility that the *feng huang* might have been circulated via this medium. Other potential vehicles include metalwork, such as mirrors, boxes, and jewelry. Some of the closest medieval Chinese parallels for the *feng huang* on Byzantine portable objects are found in Tang and Liao gold and silver. Many medieval metal vessels are surprisingly light, and metalwork is known to have been transported over great distances in the Middle Ages, arguing in favor of maintaining the possibility of transference via these media.⁴²

A New Approach to Artistic Diffusion

Having surveyed the possible means of transmission, a traditional diffusion study would amass a significant data sample for the appearance of the *feng huang* in Byzantine art and plot the rate and extent of its diffusion over time, seeking to establish at what point the innovation can be said to have saturated the intended audience or market. According to the well-known model devised by Everett Rogers, five levels of progressive degrees of diffusion, each representing a different category of adopters, would be charted: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.⁴³ But several characteristic features of medieval luxury objects make it difficult, if not impossible, to apply this approach.

First, luxury objects are, by definition, exclusive and therefore not necessarily well-positioned to be adopted throughout society. Instead, they are meant to be produced and used at the restricted levels of “innovators” and perhaps to a limited degree among “early adopters.”⁴⁴ Certainly in many cases luxury goods are imitated by the broader population and thereby diffuse throughout society, but as a result, their defining feature of exclusivity is lost. Therefore, it might be argued that the non-material value of luxury objects is measured in part by their lack of saturation: their failure to diffuse is a mark of their success. For this reason, the *feng huang* motif and other instances of cross-cultural, elite-level artistic diffusion require a modified method that accommodates small samples of limited dissemination.

Second, early diffusion models tend to neglect the qualitative distinctions among different instances of adoption. They are primarily concerned with the rates and extent of diffusion, not with the individual decisions that people exercise in determining whether to adopt an innovation. In the analysis of the *feng huang* motif, little if any attention would be paid to the particular contexts of its appearance in the six different Byzantine works of art. As noted above, the more nuanced techniques of network and adoption analysis consider the factors contributing to successful adoptions as well as the reasons behind adoption failure or discontinuation of adoption.⁴⁵ These analytical models are distinguished by their focus on micro-processes of diffusion. They consider qualitative factors, such as different motivations for and types of adoption.⁴⁶

The six middle Byzantine objects that depict the *feng huang* have been the focus of discrete studies that address to varying degrees issues of provenance, stylistic sources, and iconographic programs. In addition, most members of the group are discussed by Etele Kiss in an article of 1999.⁴⁷ Kiss focuses on questions of chronology and stylistic morphology rather than the motivations for the inclusion of the Chinese motif or the qualitative distinctions between different instances of its adoption.

One of the reasons that scholars avoid questions of intention and reception in instances of premodern cross-cultural artistic interaction is the relative dearth of textual evidence explaining why an artist or patron decided to adopt a given motif, or how audiences responded to artistic innovations.⁴⁸ It is no doubt for this reason that diffusionism played an important early role and remains relevant in the study of ornament.⁴⁹ For instance, James Trilling advocates the validity of diffusionism for understanding the spread of decorative motifs throughout various traditions and media of medieval art.⁵⁰ He offers a useful model for navigating the slippery borders between ornament and iconography, between aesthetics and meaning, an approach especially applicable to motifs like the *feng huang*, which did not necessarily preserve their semantic content in tandem with their formal features as they moved across cultural borders. Trilling accommodates a lack of textual evidence about adopters — about the people who decide to use a new motif or form — by analyzing works of art as records of adoption. Similarly, Byzantine objects depicting the *feng huang* can serve as “primary sources” for the intentions behind appropriations of the motif, which can be accessed through visual scrutiny of formal features and careful analysis of a motif’s relation to the artistic programs in which it appears. This approach draws in part on theories of material culture studies that emphasize the “social life of things,” the idea that objects are not passive tools of cultural expression, but instead operate as active agents of social meaning and communication. The receptions and uses they experience as they move among dif-

ferent contexts are equally if not more significant than questions of production and provenance.⁵¹

In revisiting diffusionism, I propose a shift in focus from the mechanics of diffusion over space and time and the effort to link disparate examples of a broadly disseminated motif in semantic terms. Instead I draw attention to micro-processes of adoption in individual instances and argue that while the *feng huang* may convey specific meaning in some of its Byzantine iterations, there is no reason to presume (*pace* Wittkower) that the motif maintained its original significance—or any other single meaning—as it was transmitted.⁵² The multiple and distinct iterations of the *feng huang* together attest to the range of modes within which Byzantine makers and users might operate when deploying foreign motifs. The varied uses of the *feng huang* demonstrate the flexibility and sophistication of Byzantine designers and craftsmen, who negotiated and reworked foreign artistic sources. In line with this interpretation, I emphasize the agency of the adopting culture in the process of artistic exchange, thereby affirming the consensus of art historical discourse that insists on the conscious and active nature of artistic appropriation and expropriation, particularly in instances of cross-cultural interaction.⁵³

The close readings of individual objects employed in this study help to avoid a major pitfall of earlier diffusionist studies, which superficially assess a large data sample and disassociate individual motifs or elements from the objects and programs that constitute their original contexts of depiction. By focusing instead on a limited number of examples, this investigation privileges the changing contexts in which the same motif was situated in order to assess the distinct choices and intentions to which these differences allude.⁵⁴ I characterize the individual iterations of the motif according to both style of execution and, when relevant, potential iconographic content, insisting that while form and meaning can be distinguished from one another, they are not mutually exclusive.⁵⁵

Terms of Analysis

Within this qualitative, small-scale method of analysis, the characterization of different kinds of adoption becomes the primary task. For this endeavor, there exist several useful models. In particular, Richard Ettinghausen provides a taxonomic approach to consideration of the impact of Roman models on Sasanian art, and Marian Feldman offers classifications for the analysis of cross-cultural artistic adoption in diplomatic gifts exchanged in ancient Mesopotamia.⁵⁶ Like the current investigation, their corpora are limited in number, but by focusing on the qualitative aspects of individual instances of artistic diffusion, they maximize the potential significance of the extant evidence. Their terminology, outlined here, offers a



9A

9A
Cup, Byzantine, discovered in Dune on the Island of Gotland, Sweden, tenth or eleventh century. Silver, height 6 cm, diameter at lip 10.6 cm. Historiska Museet, Stockholm, 6849:5. From Andersson, *Mediaeval Drinking Bowls*, pl. 15A



9B
Detail of 9A. From Andersson, *Mediaeval Drinking Bowls*, pl. 15B

standard vocabulary for the following analysis of the adoption of the *feng huang* motif in Byzantine works of art.

Ettinghausen identifies three primary modes to characterize the way that Greco-Roman artistic models were employed in Sasanian art.⁵⁷ The first mode, “transfer,” is an act of unmediated copying. It involves “taking over of shapes or concepts as they stand, without change or further development.”⁵⁸ The second mode, “adoption,” refers to “artistic forms [that are] transferred from one region to another and remodeled according to novel principles,” which “differ so much from their original configurations that their true identities become obscured.”⁵⁹ As noted above, I define “adoption” in more neutral terms as any act of cross-cultural transmission. Still, I endorse Ettinghausen’s concept, characterizing it as “adaptation” in order to emphasize the active reworking that I understand to be at the core of his definition. He qualifies the third and final mode as “integration,” “a form of interchange, [in which] it is difficult to say which is the giver and which the receiver.”⁶⁰ Feldman identifies a similar dynamic at work in her material, characterizing the phenomenon as a process of hybridization that produced a “supra-regional,” international visual language, in which “specific channels of foreign inspiration cannot be clearly traced.”⁶¹ This category is not applicable within Byzantine uses of the *feng huang*, but does resonate well with other situations of cross-cultural artistic interaction in the premodern world.

For my remaining terms, I shift to Feldman’s identification of an indigenous tradition in which local features are combined with conspicuously foreign elements in a single object with the result that both sources remain distinctly recognizable.⁶² Within this phenomenon, I emphasize the “strategic juxtaposition” of disparate elements, which draws the viewer’s attention to the contrast between indigenous and foreign features. Like Feldman, I note that these contrasts generate meanings that depended on the producer’s ability to control and distinguish between local and foreign forms.⁶³ Such objects resist “integration” of exotic elements in order to maximize the semantic potential of stylistic and cultural alterity.



10A



10B

10A, 10B

Drawing and unrolled view of a cup, Byzantine, discovered in the Kama region of Plehanovo, Russia, tenth or eleventh century. Silver. Current location unknown. From Vladislav Petrovich Darkevich, *Khudozhestvennyi metall Vostoka VIII–XIII* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), pls. 57.1 and 2

Adoption Analysis of the *Feng Huang* in Middle Byzantine Works of Art

Returning to the Byzantine examples of the *feng huang* motif, these different types of adoption can now be exemplified. The first mode is relatively straightforward, and is effectively described by Ettinghausen’s term “transfer.” A transfer retains the character of its source and shows only the most limited adaptation to the adopting culture’s formal and semantic traditions. Three of the six *feng huang* examples adhere exclusively to this description, and two of these objects are silver cups.⁶⁴ One cup was discovered in a fourteenth-century hoard buried in Dune on the island of Gotland, Sweden (Figs. 9A and B).⁶⁵ The specific circumstances surrounding the object’s movement from Byzantium to Scandinavia are unknown, but by the ninth century, Scandinavia was connected with Silk Road and Mediterranean commercial routes via the Baltic sea and land and river passages to Constantinople. Trade between Byzantium and Scandinavia was particularly active in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The so-called Varangian guards, Scandinavian mercenaries who served as elite soldiers for the emperor in Constantinople, may also have transferred Byzantine works of art and coins to the North.⁶⁶ The other cup was uncovered in the Kama region of Plehanovo, Russia, but is now lost (Figs. 10A and B).⁶⁷ It may have also traveled from Byzantium along northern trade routes.

Each vessel depicts the *feng huang* in the company of lions, a combination that appears in Tang objects (see Fig. 4). These parallels further strengthen the argument for a direct transfer from a Tang (or Tang-inspired Liao or Song) model. The animals in both Tang and middle Byzantine examples are depicted in comparable environments of floral and vegetal patterns. The cups recall vessels that were produced in the Central Asian region of Sogdiana (and imported to Tang China) as well as those manufactured in China by Sogdian craftsmen who had settled there (Fig. 11).⁶⁸ No evidence suggests, however, that a Byzantine viewer would have been equipped to make such distinctions between Sogdian versus Chinese features and origins. There is no basis on which to read a semantic dimension in these transfers. They instead reflect a desire to imitate a foreign model in a direct fashion so as to capture its aesthetic and perhaps prestige value.

A third example of the *feng huang* has not, to my knowledge, been previously identified. It is found on a lead seal that likely dates to the early tenth century (Fig. 12). Although the material of this object is humble, the seal served to authenticate the documents of a mid-ranking Byzantine courtier, whose name, title, and office are recorded on the reverse: John, imperial *spatharokandidatos* and *dioiketes*.⁶⁹ The motif of the *feng huang* served as a personal emblem of this relatively elite individual and therefore is affiliated with the upper levels of Byzantine artistic production represented by the other five instances of adoption. The *feng huang* is shown in a



11

11
Cup, Tang dynasty, early eighth century. Silver, height 6.4 cm, width 7.8 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Purchase, 1930.⁵¹



12

12
Seal of John, imperial *spatharokandidatos* and *dioiketes*, Byzantine, tenth century. Lead, diameter 24 mm, thickness 3 mm. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., 58.106.5350. Photograph © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, D.C.

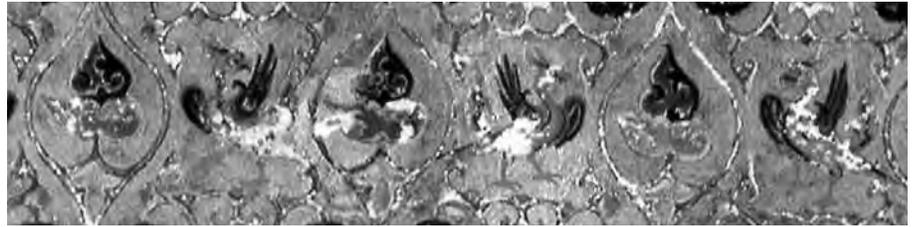
blank field, with no additional iconography to contextualize it. It is best understood as an instance of transfer, although the emblematic nature of the representation suggests that particular value was placed on the motif as a mark of status or possibly propitiousness.

A fourth *feng huang* motif is found in a mid-tenth-century copy of a Byzantine secular manuscript on horse care, the *Hippiatrica* (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Phillips 1538, fol. 41r).⁷⁰ In one headpiece are depicted *feng huang* birds standing on palmette leaves (Figs. 13A and B). At either side, additional birds, possibly pheasants, are interspersed in the tendrils. Headpieces in other folios of the manuscript depict fantastic animals, such as griffins, encircled by abstract vegetal rinceaux (fol. 29r). The text was compiled in the imperial scriptorium during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (r. 945–59) from earlier works by Roman and Byzantine authors.⁷¹ The manuscript is an extremely luxurious object. Measuring 26.5 by 29.6 centimeters and consisting of 394 folia, its size and extent are unusually substantial. It boasts high-quality parchment, elegant calligraphy, sumptuous headpieces, and intricate border ornaments. Many of the decorations are elaborated with gold leaf.

The use of the *feng huang* in the headpiece might at first be interpreted as a simple transfer, yet several important features point to a different dynamic. It illustrates an instance of adaptation, albeit at a low level. The individual motifs, including the *feng huang*, but also the vegetal and floral elements, are recognizably Chinese in origin. It is possible that the artist was working from a textile model (for example, Fig. 3), which would have approximated the carpet design in the manuscript. Both textile and manuscript possess a two-dimensional format and an all-over distribution of repeating motifs. At the same time, and unlike the silver cups, the manuscript page adapts the *feng huang* to a new medium and composition even though stylistically it remains close to a Chinese model.



13A



13B

13A
Headpiece, Byzantine, tenth century. Pigment and gold foil on parchment, folio 26.5 x 29.6 cm. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, Cod. Phillips 1538, fol. 41r. Photograph courtesy of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

13B
Detail of 13A. Photograph courtesy of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

The context of its depiction, a decorative border in a book on horse care, raises the question of the motivation for the selection of a foreign motif to adorn this particular object. The *feng huang* might have been considered appropriate for this handbook because of its association with the animal world, or perhaps its exotic character was thought to resonate with the secular information found in the manuscript.⁷² Indeed, sections of the *Hippiatrica* address the use of pharmaceuticals in horse care, and these medicines often employed spices, such as cinnamon, ginger, and pepper, that came from exotic regions of the East.⁷³ It is, of course, also possible that the motifs were generic decorative forms intended to convey luxury and status in a broad sense.

While the interpretation of any specific meaning for the *feng huang*'s inclusion in the manuscript headpiece remains hypothetical, the object was certainly associated with the highest level of patronage, that of the imperial circle.⁷⁴ Like other encyclopedic handbooks produced under the auspices of Constantine VII, the *Hippiatrica* was most likely intended for minimal circulation within a limited audience.⁷⁵ These conditions would have undermined the potential diffusion of the motif throughout Byzantine society.

Examples of transfer and low-level adaptation can be easily mistaken as the sole modes of cross-cultural interaction, particularly with regards to motifs that appear merely ornamental and situations in which little textual or historical evidence is available to explain the intentions behind a given adoption. But examples such as these supply important evidence for the broader phenomena of artistic contacts and help to highlight distinguishing features of more nuanced and semantically informed modes of appropriation and expropriation.

A fifth example of the *feng huang*, found on the reverse of a tenth- or eleventh-century Byzantine ivory triptych (Figs. 14A and B), represents a much more thorough instance of adaptation that operates on multiple levels and might even be



14A

14A
Back side and outer wings of a triptych, Byzantine (Constantinople), tenth or eleventh century. Ivory, height 25.2 cm, width 33 cm (open). Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican City, 2441. Photograph © Collection of the Museo Sacro of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana



14B
Detail of 14A. Photograph © Collection of the Museo Sacro of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

said to gesture toward integration. Several birds in the medallions follow a Chinese model, including the one located in the second row from the top on the right (Fig. 14B). As in the *Hippiatrica* headpiece, the birds on the ivory panel are disassociated from their original source, but here the reworking of floral, foliate, and bird motifs is more extensive.⁷⁶ The tendril frames resemble late antique and Byzantine models, indicating assimilation of the *feng huang* within a Byzantine stylistic and compositional idiom.⁷⁷ Although the alterity of the bird is still evident, it has shed some of its original formal distinctions, showing progression toward stylistic integration. This transformation is not, however, limited to formal aspects. The bird is more than an ornamental motif; it participates in a decidedly symbolic program, dictated by the large, jeweled cross at the center.⁷⁸ While the silver cups, lead seal, and manuscript headpiece belong to the domain of secular art, the triptych is a Christian devotional object. The cross represents a sign of spiritual redemption in an otherworldly setting. The panoply of well-ordered exotic birds and floral motifs evokes the garden of paradise. Although the *feng huang* has lost some of the stylistic distinctions of the Chinese model, its exotic character is still discernible and desirable. Allusion to the animal's distant origin may have been intended to express the wondrous diversity of the heavenly realm and its miraculous encompassing of the earth's natural bounty, which includes animals from the farthest reaches of the earth.⁷⁹ Here the foreign motif serves a distinctly Christian program. As such, it has been appropriated and adapted formally, but expropriated semantically from its Chinese model.

The sixth and final example of adoption is the most complex of all. A late tenth- or eleventh-century middle Byzantine purple-dyed ivory casket depicts two *feng*



15A

15A
Casket, Byzantine (Constantinople),
tenth or eleventh century. Dyed ivory,
height 13.4 cm, width 26.4 cm, depth
13 cm. Cathedral Treasury, Troyes,
France. © Trésor de la cathédrale de
Troyes – Photograph Didier Vogel

huang birds, each positioned on one short end of the box (Figs. 15A and B).⁸⁰ The birds closely resemble medieval Chinese models, observing the distinctive characteristics of the standing *feng huang* type. But while the precisely rendered birds are best characterized as stylistic transfers, the context of their depiction on the box suggests that a different semantic dynamic is at work. The front and back panels of the casket depict the royal hunt and the lid displays a scene of imperial *advntus*, or triumphal return to the capital city. These emphatically militaristic and victorious themes have prompted the suggestion that the Chinese bird operates here like a late antique Roman–Byzantine phoenix, which, as noted above, was understood as a mythical animal of eastern origin that symbolized imperial renewal and political succession.⁸¹ Yet the Chinese *feng huang* does not resemble the Roman–Byzantine phoenix in appearance, casting doubt on the notion that a Byzantine viewer would have equated the two birds (compare Figs. 2 and 15B). If the designer of the Troyes Casket intended to emphasize continuity with the late antique iconographic motif and its meaning, presumably he would have used the familiar Roman–Byzantine form. An argument for semantic domestication of the *feng huang* does not sufficiently account for the stylistic alterity that the motif maintains in the Troyes Casket. The decision to employ the decidedly exotic *feng huang* implies a different set of intentions and meanings.

Its expressly foreign character contrasts with other motifs on the ivory box, further preventing a viewer from reading the bird as a Byzantine phoenix. The formal contrast between the bird and the vignettes of hunt and triumph emphasizes cultural and geographic distance, perhaps in order to demonstrate that the dominion exercised by the imperial figures in the long panels extends to the farthest corners of the earth, encompassing the most exotic creatures of the natural world and the distant cultures they represent. The Chinese bird participates in a Byzantine semantic system, but not as a result of stylistic integration or semantic expropriation. Instead its meaning relies on the marshaling of stylistic alterity as a signifier in and of itself. The aesthetic friction generated by the strategic juxtaposition of styles in the long and short panels was essential to the object's message of cultural difference and military conquest.



15B

15B

End panel of figure 15a. © Trésor de la cathédrale de Troyes – Photograph Didier Vogel

Like the *Hippiatrica* headpiece, the Troyes Casket was a luxury object produced for imperial, or at least courtly, consumption. It would have likely circulated in a limited fashion, at the highest social levels. Similarly, the silver cups and ivory triptych would have been restricted in their production and subsequent social circulation because of the valuable materials from which they were fabricated.⁸² Yet, like the lead seal, the non-imperial nature of the cups and triptych as well as their practical functions might have predisposed them to be more easily disseminated than the manuscript or casket.

In addition to the economic and social proscriptions that the patronage and media of these objects imply, the foreign character of the *feng huang* motif might also have proved an obstacle to its broader cultural diffusion. These examples suggest that the more deeply the motif was absorbed into the program of a given work of art, the more extensively it was assimilated to Byzantine stylistic norms. The triptych and manuscript headpiece both show signs of this process, indicating the initial stages of the erasure of alterity.⁸³ In the end, the emphatic cultural otherness, and the meanings that Byzantine viewers drew from this difference, might have prevented the *feng huang* from more extensive dissemination.⁸⁴

Conclusions

These six works of art represent qualitatively different types of Byzantine adoption of a Chinese model. My interpretation emphasizes the agency of the Byzantine makers and users of these objects, who chose to appropriate foreign types to serve Byzantine interests and needs. The simplest of these modes was that of transfer, whereby medieval Chinese sources were imitated directly and little stylistic or semantic transformation of the models took place. But we should not see this dynamic as necessarily earlier or less sophisticated than the others, nor should we take stylistic transfer as indicative of a less complex cognitive or semantic appropriation of a given model. Indeed the ivory casket shows an equally if not more direct transfer of a medieval Chinese stylistic type, but is the most subtle of the six examples in terms of the message the *feng huang* is marshaled to convey through strategic juxtaposition. These objects do not necessarily demonstrate a process of

evolution from one dynamic of adoption to the next. Behind each choice lie the aesthetic and ideological needs of the artist and patron as well as their abilities, both artistic and cognitive. Any one of these modes — transfer, adaptation, integration, or strategic juxtaposition — could be deployed at a given time. Indeed, as demonstrated by the Troyes Casket, more than one of these dynamics could be at work in a single object.

This case study of the Byzantine adoption of the *feng huang* motif demonstrates the usefulness of returning to diffusion — via network analysis — in order to explore more deeply and systematically the transmission of artistic forms and meanings in the premodern era and in the cross-cultural context. A focus on the rate and extent of the adoption of the *feng huang* in Byzantium is unlikely to yield particularly informative conclusions because of the exclusive nature and limited production of the medieval luxury objects on which the motif appeared. But aspects of network analysis that assist in discerning qualitative distinctions among instances of adoption do offer useful perspective on this material. Careful scrutiny of the differences between the individual iterations of the *feng huang* reveals the flexibility of Byzantine makers and users in their deployment of this foreign model. A method that insists on qualitative distinctions among instances of adoption and is generated from the close reading of individual objects brings to light the sophisticated nature of Byzantine cross-cultural appropriation and expropriation. In this way it offers perspective that can be applied productively to similar instances of small-scale but complex adoption in other situations of premodern cross-cultural artistic transmission.

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NOTES

This article develops an excerpt from my doctoral dissertation, “Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics, 843–1204 CE” (Harvard University, 2004). A version of this essay was presented at the College Art Association 2008 session “Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among the Ancient and Early Medieval Mediterranean, Near East, and Asia,” organized by Matthew P. Canepa. I thank the chair, participants, and audience of that session for their helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to Eva Hoffman, Emine Fetvacı, Amy Gansell, Diliانا Angelova, Meredith Malone, and especially Heather Grossman for their comments and encouragement. Special thanks are due to the two anonymous readers commissioned by *Ars Orientalis*, who provided careful and valuable contributions for the improvement of this essay. I am grateful to Hao Sheng, Karen Hwang, and Li Ling for assistance with the translation of Chinese texts. Illustration expenses were generously subsidized by a Junior Faculty Research Grant from the College of Arts and Sciences, Washington University in St. Louis.

1 The primary alternative theory for parallelisms in cultural developments was that of “independent” or “spontaneous” convergence of artistic styles, motifs, and meanings. For a brief discussion of these two approaches and their debate in the early twentieth century, see Rudolf Wittkower, “East and West: The Problem of Cultural Exchange” (1966); repr. in *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977), 10–14. For a general introduction to the origins and later developments of diffusionism, see Peter J. Hugill, “Diffusionism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, ed. David Levinson and Melvin Ember, 4 vols. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1996), 1:343–45; and idem, “Introduction,” in *The Transfer and*

Transformation of Ideas and Material Culture, ed. Peter J. Hugill and D. Bruce Dickson (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1988), ix–xxii.

- 2 For useful introductions to current models for diffusion analysis, see Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1962; 5th ed., New York: The Free Press, 2003), esp. 1–37; and Thomas W. Valente, *Network Models of the Diffusion of Innovations* (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1995), esp. 2–5.
- 3 Exceptions can be found in archaeological and anthropological studies of large-scale distribution phenomena. For example, see Dave D. Davis, “Investigating the Diffusion of Stylistic Innovations,” in *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 6, ed. Michael B. Schiffer (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 53–89. Also see the essays collected in Hugill and Dickson, *The Transfer and Transformation of Ideas*.
- 4 Rudolf Wittkower, “The Eagle and Serpent: A Study in the Migration of Symbols,” *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2, no. 4 (1939): 293–35; repr. in *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, 15–44. Another prominent example of the diffusionist approach in art history is Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Berlin, 1893), translated by Evelyn Kain as *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- 5 In the field of premodern and non-Western art history, see especially John Boardman, *The Diffusion of Classical Art in Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Robert Ousterhout and D. Fairchild Ruggles, eds., *Encounters with Islam*, special issue of *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004); Alka Patel, ed., *Communities and Commodities: Western India and the Indian Ocean (11th–15th Centuries)*, special issue of *Ars Orientalis* 34 (2004); Prudence O.

- Harper, *In Search of a Cultural Identity: Monuments and Artifacts of the Sasanian Near East 3rd to 7th Century A.D.* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2006), esp. ch. 3, “Diffusion,” 115–62; Philippe Forêt and Andreas Kaplony, eds., *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); and Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).
- 6 See Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 1–37; and Valente, *Network Models*, 2–5; and esp. Barbara Wejnert, “Integrating Models of Diffusion of Innovations: A Conceptual Framework,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 292–326.
- 7 The study of exotica in middle Byzantine culture and art has received relatively limited attention. For the seminal study on this topic, see André Grabar, “Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens,” *München Jahrbuch der bildenden kunst* 2 (1951): 265–90. Also see Walker, “Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art,” with a comprehensive bibliography; and eadem, “Meaningful Mingling: Classicizing Imagery and Islamicizing Script in a Byzantine Bowl,” *Art Bulletin* (2008) 90, no. 1: 32–53.
- 8 In this respect, I take as a departure point Eva Hoffman’s call to move discussion of medieval cross-cultural artistic interaction away from questions of origin and provenance and toward consideration of objects’ post-production transference through different cultural contexts, their dialogue with multiple artistic traditions, and the implications portability holds for the meaning of works of art. See Eva Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century,” *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001): 17–50; and Alicia Walker, “Cross-Cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts: The Islamic Appropriation of a Middle Byzantine Rosette Casket,” *Gesta* 47, no. 2 (2008): 99–122.
- 9 For extensive discussion of the form and meaning of phoenix iconography in Roman–Byzantine art, see R. van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix according to Classical and Early Christian Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).
- 10 In Chinese visual and literary tradition, two other mythical birds, the *zhu niao* (or Vermilion [Red] Bird) and the *luan* (typically referred to as a “senmurv”), were depicted following the same conventions as the *feng huang*. Indeed the birds may have been graphically interchangeable. For a brief introduction to these animals, see Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon* (London: British Museum Publications, 1984), 99–105. Regarding the *zhu niao* and its significance in medieval Chinese culture, see Edward H. Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird: T’ang Images of the South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). For the *luan* and its relationship to the *feng huang*, see James Hargett, “Playing Second Fiddle: The *Luan*-Bird in Early and Medieval Chinese Literature,” *T’oung Pao* 75, nos. 4–5 (1989): 235–62.
- 11 Concerning the more extensive dissemination of Chinese cultural forms—including the *feng huang*—to the west after the mid-thirteenth century and the role of the Mongol empire in facilitating these transmissions, see Ladan Akbarnia, “*Khita’i*: Cultural Memory and the Creation of a Mongol Visual Idiom in Iran and Central Asia” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2007); and Dickran Kouymjian, “The Intrusion of East Asian Imagery in Thirteenth-Century Armenia: Political and Cultural Exchange along the Silk Road,” in *The Journey of Maps*, 97–117, both with additional bibliography.
- 12 For discussion of “cognitive geography” and its role in the formation of ancient and late antique Roman attitudes toward India and luxury commodities from the East, see Grant Parker, “*Ex Oriente Luxuria*: Indian Commodities and Roman Experience,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45, no. 1 (2002): 40–95, esp. 41, 44, and 55–61.
- 13 My discussion is particularly informed by Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*; idem with F. Flory Shoemaker, *Communication of Innovations: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (1962; 2nd ed., New York: The Free Press, 1971); and Valente, *Network Models*.
- 14 Regarding the application of the term “expropriation” to analysis of medieval cross-cultural artistic interaction and the distinction of “expropriation” from “appropriation,” see Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability,” 30.
- 15 The terms appropriation and expropriation—with their emphasis on the potentially transformative nature of adoption—resonate with the concept of “re-invention” found in revisions to traditional diffusion theory. Re-invention accounts for the way in “which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of its adoption and implementation. . . . an innovation is not necessarily invariant during the process of its diffusion. And adopting an innovation is not necessarily a passive role of just implementing a standard template of the new idea.” Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 16–17.
- 16 After the mid-eleventh century in both Chinese and foreign works of art, the *feng huang* is typically rendered flying, rather than standing. See James C.Y. Watt and Anne E. Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 149, cat. no. 39; 151–53, cat. nos. 40–42; 163, cat. no. 47; and 197, cat. no. 60. For the flying *feng huang* in Chinese works of art prior to the thirteenth century, see *ibid.*,

- 55, fig. 12; 87–90, cat no. 23 and fig. 32; and 118–121, cat. nos. 31–32.
- 17 Hargett, “Playing Second Fiddle,” 236.
- 18 Regarding the meaning of the *feng huang* in pre-Tang art and culture and its preeminence in Chinese bird lore, see Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), passim; and Hargett, “Playing Second Fiddle,” passim.
- 19 For depictions of the *feng huang* in Tang funerary decorations, see Fanfeng Meng and Zhaoying Liu, eds., *Xin Zhongguo chu tu mu zhi* [Excavated epitaphs from New China: Hebei], vol. 1 (Beijing: Wenwu Press, 2004), passim. Also see Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 73, fig. 53; and Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, eds., *Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China, Gansu and Ningxia, 4th–7th Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams and Asia Society, 2001), 44, fig. B; 77–78, no. 16a (identified as the *zhu niao*); 246–49, no. 80a and fig. B (identified as the *zhu niao*).
- 20 On the receptiveness of medieval Chinese, especially Tang, society to cross-cultural interaction, see Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of Tang Exotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); and Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, “Cosmopolitanism and the Tang,” in Juliano and Lerner, *Monks and Merchants*, 292–303.
- 21 Tang-era metalwork vessels showing the *feng huang* against an open field follow western compositional models, possibly from Sasanian Persia: Jessica Rawson, “The Lotus and the Dragon: Sources of Chinese Ornament,” *Orientalism* 15, no. 11 (1984): 22–36, esp. 27. In contrast, the traditional Chinese representation of the *feng huang* typically shows the animal surrounded by foliage.
- 22 Rawson, “The Lotus and the Dragon,” 25–27; and eadem, *The Ornament on Chinese Silver of the Tang Dynasty* (AD 618–906), British Museum Occasional Papers 40 (London: British Museum, 1982), esp. 6–7.
- 23 For Liao depictions of the *feng huang*, see Tianshu Zhu, *Liao dai jin yin qi* [Liao dynasty gold and silver objects] (Beijing: Wenwu Press, 1998), passim.; and Hélène Chollet, “Treasures from the Liao Period at the Musée Cernuschi,” *Orientalism* 36, no. 5 (2005): 40–46. In Liao objects, the *feng huang* is more commonly rendered in flight, but parallels for the standing *feng huang* (the type that appears in Byzantine art) are also attested. For the *feng huang* in flight, see Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold*, 87–90, cat no. 23 and fig. 32; for the standing *feng huang*, see *ibid.*, 176–77, cat. no. 51; Hsueh-man Shen, *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China’s Liao Empire (907–1125)* (New York: Asia Society, 2006), cat. nos. 3 and 16; and Monique Crick and Helen Loveday, *L’Or des steppes: Arts somptuaires de la dynastie Liao (907–1125)* (Geneva: Collections Baur, 2007), cat. nos. 4, 14, 16, 37, 39, and 51. A limited number of objects depicting the *feng huang* may be dated to the twelfth century, during the Song era. But these iterations typically show the bird in flight and do not provide as striking a parallel to the standing *feng huang* that appears in Byzantine works of art. See Michael Rogers, “China and Islam — The Archaeological Evidence of the Mashriq,” in *Islam and the Trade of Asia*, ed. D. S. Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1970), 67–80, esp. 71–73; and Ryoichi Hayashi, *The Silk Road and the Shoso-in* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill and Heibonsha, 1975), 151, fig. 174.
- 24 Hargett, “Playing Second Fiddle,” 236.
- 25 Shen, *Gilded Splendor*, 102–103.
- 26 The depiction of the *feng huang* in Chinese objects of valuable materials and high-quality craftsmanship would have made evident its prestige even if no explanatory information traveled with the object to Byzantium. A hypothesis that Byzantine artists and patrons may have adopted the *feng huang* because of its associations with social status and material wealth, even if they were not aware of its specific origins and meaning, finds support in diffusion and network studies which establish that innovations spread most effectively “via structural equivalence [which] is the imitation of the behavior of others who are in a similar position in the social space, but not necessarily others with whom the potential adopter communicates” directly: Valente, *Network Models*, 14–15.
- 27 The prevalence of *feng huang* motifs in the textile patterns depicted in medieval Chinese frescoes from Dunhuang, particularly those worn by empresses and female members of the imperial court, signals the elite status of the motif and its frequent association with women: Shana Chang, *Tun-huang li tai fu shih t’u an* [Costume patterns from Dunhuang frescoes (A.D. 366–1368)] (Hsiankang: Wan li shu-tien, 1986), figs. 17–18, 75, 78, 177–78, and 278. It should be noted, however, that some of the women depicted in the Dunhuang murals originated from territories further west. For example, in a late tenth-century mural, the daughter of the king of Khotan, a Silk Road city west of Dunhuang, along the southwestern edge of the Taklamakan Desert (see Fig. 8), is depicted wearing an elaborate *feng huang* headdress adorned with jade, a material for which Khotan was famous. It is unclear whether the *feng huang* was part of the Khotan visual vocabulary, or whether the headdress represents a syncretic object combining Chinese and Central Asian modes. See Roderick Whitfield, Susan Whitfield, and Neville Agnew, *Cave Temples of Mogao:*

- Art and History on the Silk Road* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000), 28. For further discussion of the topography and early medieval history of this segment of the Silk Road, see Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, "Introduction: Monks, Merchants, and Nomads in Northwest China," in Juliano and Lerner, *Monks and Merchants*, 15–36.
- 28 For useful discussion of the mechanics of trade along the Silk Road in the early Byzantine period, see Jonathan Karam Skaff, "The Sogdian Trade Diaspora in East Turkestan during the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46, no. 4 (2003): 475–524. The presence of Roman motifs in works of art dating to the Han dynasty evinces artistic transmission between these groups. But while, hypothetically speaking, the products of these contacts could have been passed down to the Byzantine court, no objects or historical references attesting to such intracultural dissemination exist. It is more likely that middle Byzantine use of the *feng huang* is the result of contemporaneous interactions, roughly from the ninth to the eleventh century. On Roman–Han cultural and artistic connections, see Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, "Pour une archéologie des échanges: Apports étrangers en Chine — transmission, réception, assimilation," *Arts Asiatique* 49 (1994): 21–33; Donald Leslie and Kenneth Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources* (Rome: Bardi, 1996), with an important review by Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "The Roman Empire as Known to Han China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119, no. 1 (1999): 71–79; and Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, "Roman Themes in a Group of Eastern Han Lacquer Vessels," *Orientalism* 32, no. 5 (2001): 52–58.
- 29 Friedrich Hirth, "The Mystery of Fu-lin," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 30, no. 1 (1909): 1–31, esp. 24–31; and idem, "The Mystery of Fu-lin (cont.)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 33 (1913): 193–208 (which argues that Fu-lin is the Byzantine empire); and Robert Hartwell, *Tribute Missions to China, 960–1126* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1983), 72 (which proposes that Fu-lin should be identified as the Seljuk empire). Regarding Chinese–Byzantine relations, also see D. W. Johnson and Alexander Kazhdan, "China," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1:422; Michael Kordosis, *China and the Greek World: An Introduction to Greek–Chinese Studies with Special Reference to the Chinese Sources*, vol. 1, *Hellenistic—Roman—Early Byzantine Period (2nd c. BC–6th c. AD)* (Thessalonike: n.p., 1992); Baoquan Han, "Chang'an: China's Ancient Capital and Gateway to the Silk Road," in *Gateway to the Silk Road: Relics from the Han to the Tang Dynasties from Xi'an, China*, ed. Herbert Coultts (Edinburgh: City of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries, 1996), 15–23, esp. 17; and Ying Lin, *Tang dai Fulin cong shuo (Fulin the Ruler of Treasure Country: Byzantium in the Tang Society AD 618–907)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 2006).
- 30 Regarding the Sogdians, their art, and their important role in early medieval commerce along the Silk Road, see Guitty Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting: The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); and Judith A. Lerner, "The Merchant Empire of the Sogdians"; Boris I. Marshak, "The Sogdians in Their Homeland"; and Luo Feng, "Sogdians in Northwest China," in Juliano and Lerner, *Monks and Merchants*, 220–69.
- 31 For a summary of archeological evidence for trade connections between the Abbasid empire and Tang China, see A. D. H. Bivar, "Trade between China and the Near East in the Sasanian and Early Muslim Periods," in *Pottery and Metalwork in T'ang China: Their Chronology and External Relations*, Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia, no. 1, ed. William Watson (London: University of London, 1976), 1–11. Another possible means for the transference of works of art and artistic traditions was via Chinese artists active at the eighth-century Abbasid court: see Paul Pelliot, "Des Artisans Chinois à la Capitale Abbasside en 751–762," *T'oung Pao* 26 (1969): 110–12. Regarding Chinese artists at the tenth-century Samanid court, see Julian Raby, "Between Sogdia and the Mamluks: A Note on the Earliest Illustrations to Kalila wa Dimna," *Oriental Art*, n.s., 33, no. 34 (1987/88): 381–98, esp. 386 and 397 n. 27.
- 32 It is interesting to note that members of the Byzantine court were allowed privileged access to these imported goods and could purchase quantities for their personal use directly from the commercial distributors: *To Eparxikon Vivlion. The Book of the Eparch. Le livre du préfet*, intro. Ivan Dujčev (London: Variorum Reprints, 1970), 29–30 and 239–40.
- 33 Abraham L. Udovitch, "Fatimid Cairo: Crossroads of World Trade — From Spain to India," in *L'Égypte Fatimide: son art et son histoire*, ed. Marianne Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999), 681–91.
- 34 See Basil Gray, "The Export of Chinese Porcelain to the Islamic World: Some Reflections on Its Significance for Islamic Art, before 1400," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 41 (1975–76/1976–77): 231–61, esp. 231–33; and Yolande Crow, "Early Islamic Pottery and China," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 41 (1975–76/1976–77): 263–78, esp. 270–71. For trade between

- China and Egypt in the ninth to eleventh centuries during the Tulunid and Fatimid dynasties — providing evidence of Tang, Liao, and Northern Song wares in medieval Fustat — see George T. Scanlon, “Egypt and China: Trade and Imitation,” in *Islam and the Trade of Asia*, ed. D. S. Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1970), 81–95, esp. 81–88.
- 35 Crowe, “Early Islamic Pottery and China,” 263–64. The eleventh-century Fatimid courtier, Ibn al-Zubayr, reported that “Chinese porcelain dishes,” were among the gifts sent from the Seljuk ruler Tughrilbek to the Byzantine emperor in 1057: Ahmad ibn al-Rashid Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, trans. Ghada-al-Hijawi al-Qaddumi (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 112. Regarding the exchange of diplomatic gifts between Byzantine and medieval Islamic potentates, see Anthony Cutler, “Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 247–78, with additional bibliography.
- 36 In contrast, Armenian objects employing the *feng huang* were produced during a period when Armenia maintained direct and regular contact with the Mongol court, which supports an argument for retention of Chinese meanings for the motif in the Armenian context: Kouymjian, “The Intrusion of East Asian Imagery in Thirteenth-Century Armenia,” 121–29.
- 37 Similarly, Roman and late antique conceptions of India and China were often imprecise. Consumers of exotic trade goods and even geographers were sometimes misinformed regarding the specific origins of commodities and objects. On this point, see Philip Mayerson, “A Confusion of Indias: Asian India and African India in the Byzantine Sources,” *Journal of the Oriental Society* 113, no. 2 (1993): 169–74; and Parker, “*Ex Oriente Luxuria*,” passim. Incorrect identifications of the sources for commercial goods could also be intentional. Thirteenth-century Islamic merchants misrepresented the origins of trade items in dealings with Chinese buyers, perhaps to prevent their clients from accessing these exotic wares and commodities directly: G. R. Hudson, “The Medieval Trade of China,” in *Islam and the Trade of Asia*, ed. D. S. Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1970), 159–67, esp. 160–61; and *Chau Ju-Kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. and trans. Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1966).
- 38 According to Chinese sources, thirty-six Islamic missions went to the Tang capital Chang’an between 651 and 798, an average of four per year: Han, “Chang’an: China’s Ancient Capital and Gateway to the Silk Road,” 17–18.
- 39 Hayashi, *The Silk Road and the Shoso-in*, 108–109, fig. 118. An additional example of a medieval Chinese textile depicting the *feng huang* was excavated at Reshui, Dulan, Qinghai Province and dates to the eighth or ninth century: James C. Y. Watt, et al., *China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200–150 AD* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 75, fig. 74.
- 40 The old tale, recounted by early Byzantine historians, that the growth in the Byzantine silk industry was spurred by the smuggling of silkworms from China to Byzantium is suspect, but continues to be cited broadly. For a more rigorous investigation of the growth of Byzantium’s silk industry and its cross-cultural dimensions, see David Jacoby, “Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 197–240, esp. 198–99.
- 41 Gray, “The Export of Chinese Porcelain to the Islamic World,” 233.
- 42 Regarding the trade in metalwork between Egypt and India in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, especially in copper and bronze vessels, see Udovitch, “Fatimid Cairo: Crossroads of World Trade,” 689–91.
- 43 Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 247–51.
- 44 Rogers characterizes “innovators” (the most relevant category for the Byzantine adoption of the *feng huang*) as “cosmopolites” whose “control of substantial financial resources to absorb the possible loss owing to an unprofitable innovation” allows them to take risks. They possess the ability to “cope with the high degree of uncertainty about an innovation at the time that the innovator adopts” and they are capable of “launching the new idea in the social system by importing the innovation from outside of the system’s boundary.” In contrast, “early adopters” are more integral to society and serve as role models for mass-scale adoption of an innovation: “The early adopter is respected by his or her peers, and is the embodiment of successful and discrete use of new ideas. . . . the role of the early adopter is to decrease uncertainty about a new idea by adopting it, and then conveying a subjective evaluation of the innovation to near-peers by means of interpersonal networks.” Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 248–49.
- 45 Valente, *Network Models*, 12–13. Also see Wejnert, “Integrating Models of Diffusion of Innovations,” 297–326, which argues for the need to adapt diffusion analysis so as to account for the complex and interactive variables that influence decisions to adopt innovations.
- 46 Rogers identifies the main “characteristics of innovations” that potential adopters consider as: relative advantage (“the degree to which an innovation is

- perceived as better than the idea it supersedes"); compatibility ("the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters"); complexity ("the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use"); trialability ("the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis"); and observability ("the degree to which the results of an innovation are observable to others"). Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 15–16.
- 47 Etele Kiss, "Byzantine Silversmiths' Work around 1000 between China and the Ottonians: The Beszterec Holy Water Vessel," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 49 (1999): 301–14.
- 48 For further discussion of this issue, see Walker, "In the Absence of Texts."
- 49 As seen, for example, in Riegl's seminal study of the diffusion of ornament, *Stilfragen*.
- 50 James Trilling, "Medieval Interlace Ornament: The Making of a Cross-Cultural Idiom," *Arte Medievale* 9, no. 1 (1995): 51–86; and idem, *The Language of Ornament* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001).
- 51 See Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archaeology* 31, no.2 (1999): 169–78; and Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, eds., *Art's Agency and Art History* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).
- 52 Wittkower observes that the question of meaning is key to discussions of what he called "fine" or "high" arts, because they are more likely to be invested with cultural significance and, I would add, with more individual and even unique meanings (Wittkower, "East and West: The Problem of Cultural Exchange," 13). I disagree, however, regarding the basis of his distinction. He categorizes objects according to materials: "artisan media" such as "ceramics, metalwork, and textiles" are to him fundamentally different from "high art" such as "painting and sculpture." For the medieval era, when many of the most aesthetically sophisticated and conceptually complex objects were produced in so-called craft materials — ivory, metal, textile — his distinctions do not hold.
- 53 On this point, see Irene Winter, "Perspective on the 'Local Style' of Hasanlu IVB: A Study in Receptivity," in *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia*, ed. Louis D. Levine and T. Cuyler Young, Jr. (Malibu: Udena Publications, 1977), 371–86; Linda 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. Vladimir P. Goss (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), 377–91; Robert Nelson, "Appropriation," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert Nelson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 116–28, with additional bibliography; and John Hay, "Toward a Theory of the Intercultural," *Res* 35 (1999): 5–9.
- 54 Hoffman similarly emphasizes the potential for motifs of consistent form and style to express different meanings within separate objects and distinct artistic traditions: Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," 17–50.
- 55 Or, to put it another way, style can function iconographically. On this point, see Irene Winter, "The Affective Properties of Styles: An Inquiry into Analytical Process and the Inscription of Meaning in Art History," in *Picturing Science Producing Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison (New York: Routledge, 1998), 55–77. For a useful study of the deployment of style in the expression of political identity and social difference, see Esther Pasztory, "Identity and Difference: The Uses and Meanings of Ethnic Styles," *Studies in the History of Art* 27 (1989): 15–38.
- 56 Richard Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran and the Islamic World: Three Modes of Artistic Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Marian Feldman, "Luxurious Forms: Redefining a Mediterranean 'International Style,' 1400–1200 BCE," *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 1 (March 2002): 6–29; and eadem, *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an "International Style" in the Ancient Near East, 1400–1200 BCE* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Also see Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, "Pour une archéologie des échanges," esp. 23–26; Esther Jacobson, "Beyond the Frontier. A Reconsideration of Cultural Interchange between China and the Early Nomads," *Early China* 13 (1988): 201–40; and Anthony Cutler, "Byzantine Art and the North: Meditations on the Notion of Influence," (1996); repr. in *Byzantium, Italy and the North: Papers on Cultural Relations* (London: Pindar Press, 2000), 455–73.
- 57 Ettinghausen describes his study as concerned with "reception" or "transformation." I subsume both these terms in "appropriation," which I believe entails the concepts of receptivity and agency that Ettinghausen intends: Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran*, 1–2.
- 58 Ettinghausen identifies these types of adoption as rare and short-lived, presumably because they imply that form and meaning were not rooted in the receiving culture's traditions and were therefore less likely to be preserved: Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran*, 1.

- 59 Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran*, 2.
- 60 He notes that integration often takes place in an “off-beat, marginal region” and might result in “secondary or unusual features that suddenly took on a new significance in their new historical setting.” Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran*, 2.
- 61 She proposes the term “hybridized international tradition” to characterize objects that defy a single cultural affiliation. The origins of particular motifs and styles become obscure because multiple cultures deploy a common artistic vocabulary or “visual koine” (Feldman, “Luxurious Forms,” 8–9, 17–18, 22, and 25). Regarding comparable phenomena in medieval art, see Oleg Grabar, “The Shared Culture of Objects,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 115–30; and Robin Cormack, “But is it art?” in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. Jonathan Shepherd and Simon Franklin (Aldershot, U.K.: Variorum, 1992), 219–36, esp. 229–36.
- 62 Feldman, “Luxurious Forms,” 6–9 and 12.
- 63 Ibid., 14–17.
- 64 The Byzantine origin of these cups is accepted in most scholarship (although see exceptions in note 65 below). Yet in light of recent research on related objects of Sogdian and Tang origins, these vessels and their purported Byzantine provenance might benefit from new consideration.
- 65 Scholars question the Byzantine origin of the cup from Gotland, but none has definitively reattributed the vessel. For a suggested Kievan provenance, see Anthony Cutler, “The Sculpture and Sources of ‘Byzantios’” (1972), repr. in *Byzantium, Italy, and the North*, 431–54. For a proposed Bulgarian provenance, see Veronica Sekules, *Medieval Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 187–88. For studies endorsing a Byzantine origin, see André Grabar, “Quelques observations sur le trésor de Nagy-Szent-Miklos,” *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1968): 250–61, esp. 255–56 and 259–60, fig. 6a–b; Kiss, “Byzantine Silversmiths’ Work around AD 1000,” 310 and 312; and Aron Andersson, “A Cup from Byzantium and Late Romanesque and Early Gothic Drinking-bowls in the Dune Treasure from Gotland,” in *Mediaeval Drinking Bowls of Silver Found in Sweden* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1983), 17–34, esp. 18–19. The Gotland cup finds a close comparandum in a silver vessel found at Preslav, Bulgaria in a grave dated to the ninth or tenth century. The Preslav cup is decorated with floral and foliate designs similar to those on the Gotland cup, but it lacks animal motifs (Andersson, “A Cup from Byzantium,” 19, fig. 6).
- 66 Cécile Morriison, “Le rôle des Varanges dans la transmission de la monnaie byzantine en Scandinavie,” in *Les pays du nord et Byzance (Scandinavie et Byzance)*, ed. Rudolf Zeitler (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1981), 131–40; and Elisabeth Piltz, “Varangian Companies for Long Distance Trade: Aspects of Interchange between Scandinavia, Rus’ and Byzantium in the 11th–12th Centuries,” in *Byzantium and Islam in Scandinavia*, ed. Elisabeth Piltz (Jonsered: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1998), 85–106. Regarding broader Byzantine artistic and economic impact on medieval Scandinavia, also see Anthony Cutler, “Garda, Källunge, and the Byzantine Tradition on Gotland,” *Art Bulletin* 51, no. 3 (1969): 257–66; idem, “The Sculpture and Sources of ‘Byzantios’,” 431–54; and idem, “Byzantine Art and the North,” 455–73.
- 67 Kiss, “Byzantine Silversmiths’ Work around AD 1000,” 309–10, fig. 7.
- 68 For Tang cups of comparable profile with similar ring handles, see Li Jian, ed., *The Glory of the Silk Road: Art from Ancient China* (Dayton, Ohio: Dayton Art Institute, 2003), 197, cat. no. 106. For discussion of the impact of western (esp. late Roman, Sasanian, and Sogdian) traditions on Tang-era metalwork (including drinking cups), see Dongfang Qi, *Tang dai jin yin qi yan jiu* [Research on Tang gold and silver] (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 1999), esp. 345–62; Jessica Rawson, “Central Asian Silver and Its Influence on Chinese Ceramics,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s. 5 (1991): 139–51; and Clarence W. Kelley, *Chinese Gold and Silver in American Collections: Tang Dynasty, A.D. 618–907* (Dayton, Ohio: Dayton Art Institute, 1984). Regarding Sogdian imports to Tang China and the production of Sogdian works of art in the Tang capital, Chang’an, see Valerie Hansen, “The Hejia Village Hoard: A Snapshot of China’s Silk Road Trade,” *Orientalism* 34, no. 2 (2003): 14–19; and Qi Dongfang, “The Burial Location and Dating of the Hejia Village Treasures,” *Orientalism* 34, no. 2 (2003): 20–24.
- 69 Imperial *spatharokandidatos* was a mid-ranking court title. A *dioiketes* was a fiscal office with responsibilities that may have included the collection of taxes. The date for this unpublished object is supported by the fact that among other seals recording this office, the latest is attributed to the late ninth to early tenth century: George Zacos and A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. 1, pt. 3 (Basel: n.p., 1972), 1766, no. 3161.
- 70 Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, *Reliefs* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934), 16–17, fig. 5; Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des IX und X Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1935; repr. 2 vols., Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 1: esp. 16–18, plate

- XXI, fig. 115, and 2:28 and 78; Kiss, “Byzantine Silversmiths’ Work around AD 1000,” 310, fig. 10; and Anne McCabe, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine: The Sources, Compilations, and Transmission of the Hippiatrica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 23–27.
- 71 On the tradition of horse care in Byzantium, see A.-M. Doyen-Higuet, “The Hippiatrica and Byzantine Veterinary Medicine,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 111–20; and McCabe, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine*.
- 72 The presence of two illuminations depicting birds at the beginning of Phillips 1538 has led to the suggestion that the manuscript might have originally included a treatise on the care of birds, specifically falcons (McCabe, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine*, 24). The pages on which the *feng huang* appears, however, are integral to the *Hippiatrica* text.
- 73 McCabe, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine*, 15.
- 74 An imperial patron undoubtedly qualifies for Roger’s adopter category of “innovators.” See note 44 above.
- 75 McCabe, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine*, 24–25 and 300.
- 76 Kiss, “Byzantine Silversmiths’ Work around ad 1000,” 311; Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 2:34, no. 32, plates XI and XII; and Helen Evans, ed., *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, ad 843–1261* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 131–32, cat. no. 79 (back panel not illustrated).
- 77 See, for example, Henry Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), figs. 69, 71, 76, 77, 81, 83, 87, and 88.
- 78 Another middle Byzantine devotional ivory, the so-called Harbaville Triptych, also depicts a cross within a paradisiacal garden on its reverse (Evans, *The Glory of Byzantium*, 133–34, cat. no. 80). Although displaying a more naturalistic representation than the motifs on the back of the Vatican triptych, the Harbaville Triptych nonetheless attests to the currency of the theme of the redeeming cross of paradise in other works of art from this era.
- 79 Indeed late antique authors, including Josephus (first century CE) identify India as the location of the Garden of Eden, and animals of paradise, including birds, symbolize the other-worldly realm in texts and images: C. R. Whittaker, “‘To Reach out to India and Pursue the Dawn’: The Roman View of India,” in *Rome and Its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2004), 144–62, esp. 148.
- 80 The box is thought to have been produced in Constantinople and transported to Troyes by Jean Langlois, chaplain to Cramier de Traisnel, bishop of Troyes, following the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204: Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1, *Kästen* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1930), 63, cat. no. 122, plate LXIX and LXX; Géza De Francovich, “Il concetto della regalità nell’arte sasanide e l’interpretazione di due opere d’arte bizantine del periodo della dinastia macedone: la cassetta eburnea di Troyes e la corona di Costantino IX Monomaco di Budapest,” *Arte lombarda* 9 (1964): 1–48; Kiss, “Byzantine Silversmiths’ Work around AD 1000,” 311–13; and Walker, “Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art,” 226–316.
- 81 Henry Maguire explores the connection of the phoenix to Roman and early Byzantine imperial ideology, particularly to the concept of imperial renewal, but remains uncommitted as to whether or not the *feng huang* on the Troyes Casket was recognizable as a phoenix by the Byzantine viewer or contributed to the object’s triumphal message: Maguire, “Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal,” in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, Fourth–Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino (Aldershot, U.K.: Variorum, 1994), 181–98, esp. 197; and idem, “Casket with Emperors and Hunters,” in Evans, *The Glory of Byzantium*, 204–206, cat. no. 141, esp. 206. For discussion of the phoenix as a symbol of imperial renewal, also see idem, *Earth and Ocean*, 63–64; and Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix*, passim.
- 82 In Rogers’ terms, these objects would have been commissioned and/or produced by individuals belonging to the adopter categories of “innovators” and “early adopters.” See note 44 above.
- 83 Concerning the conditions under which adoption takes place, see note 46 above. It is worth noting that while the *feng huang* itself was not adopted broadly in Byzantium, the floral and foliate motifs that often surround it — and that also appear independently of the *feng huang* in other works of art — became extremely popular throughout a broad range of media. Perhaps the more successful diffusion of the vegetal designs was the result of their lower semantic valence and exclusively ornamental nature: M. Alison Frantz, “Byzantine Illuminated Ornament: A Study in Chronology,” *Art Bulletin* 16 (1934): 43–76, esp. 55, 57–58, plates VII–XII and XVI–XVIII; Weitzmann, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei*, passim.; and Kiss, “Byzantine Silversmiths’ Work around 1000,” esp. 309–14.
- 84 Within the terminology of diffusion and network analysis, the *feng huang* might be said to have a “higher risk” associated with the motif, causing the threshold for adoption to increase: Valente, *Network Models*, 63–78.