

Moral Equality—Aesthetic Supremacy: The East in the Cocharelli Manuscript

Kathrin Müller
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin,
Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte

ABSTRACT: The paper discusses the ambiguous attitudes toward Mongol and Muslim culture in the Cocharelli manuscript. It argues that the imagery was supposed to teach the Cocharelli children that vices knew no cultural boundaries. Rather than suggesting any moral superiority of Western culture, the miniatures raised awareness of human susceptibility to evil and its destructive consequences in general. While the manuscript's iconography thus aims at manifesting equality among cultures, its aesthetics reveals a reverence for the visual as well as material opulence of the East. The manuscript, then, seeks to offer all of the world's morals as well as its marvels to the Cocharelli children.

KEYWORDS: Western perceptions of Mongol and Mamluk culture – Iconography of the Vices – Trecento miniature painting

One of the many peculiarities of the moral treatise composed for 'Johanninus' Cocharelli and his siblings is its double focus on things near and far, local and global. On the one hand, the children's hometown Genoa—most impressively referred to in the minutely detailed depiction of the facade of San Lorenzo (Add. 27695, f. 7r; Pl. XIX)—serves as a familiar context for exposing vices and exemplifying virtues. In keeping with the late medieval penchant for discussing the political manifestations of moral behavior, both text and image are concerned with the effect of individual conduct on the communal welfare.¹ Most conspicuously, in at least six

¹ For the late medieval discourse on the virtues, cfr. Marini 1997, pp. 230-234; Bejczy 2011.

full-page miniatures, center stage is given to Genoese citizens acting out evil intentions (Add. 27695, f. 3v and f. 4r; Pl. VI and IX). Chiara Concina has pointed out this local dimension, arguing convincingly that the treatise «was intended not only to teach to ‘Johanninus’ general moral and religious precepts, but also to guide him along through his life as a citizen of the Genoese commune».²

On the other hand, the memories and moral teachings of their great-grandfather Pellegrino Cocharelli were to broaden the children’s horizon by describing recent historical events taking place in the Crusader states, Cyprus, Sicily, and the Tyrrhenian Sea. Even if they do not rely on first-hand experience, the tales of the Holy Land under Frankish rule and of Lusignan Cyprus were closely related to Pellegrino’s biography. A citizen of Acre, he had made a large fortune as a merchant and financial investor. Probably around 1280—that is, before the fall of Tripoli in 1289 and that of Acre in 1291, which ended the Crusader kingdom—he moved to Genoa, where Pellegrino and his offspring established themselves as a wealthy merchant family.³

Given Genoa’s far-reaching trade relations, it seems more than likely that the Cocharelli children were familiar with encountering the global world, for example in the form of slaves working in Italian households, of imported luxury goods such as silk fabrics, or of anecdotes told by or about Genoese merchants working in the Levant and in the Middle or Far East.⁴ Their great-grandfather’s tales, however, formed an integral part of the family’s past and identity. By putting them into writing, the children’s father not only preserved this oral heritage but also created a specific imaginary space in which people, objects, and news from foreign kingdoms, sultanates, and khanates could be integrated.

² Concina 2016, p. 241.

³ For the documentary evidence, cfr. Fabbri 1999, pp. 318-320, 2011, p. 289, and 2013, pp. 95-96; Concina 2019, pp. 108-109. Sicily and the Tyrrhenian Sea are the setting for the deeds of Corrado Doria, captain of the people and admiral of Genoa who in 1297 was appointed admiral of the fleet of Frederick III of Aragon, and his son Piero, related in the manuscript’s last verse section. For a discussion of this laudatory account, to which I will not refer in this paper, cfr. Concina 2016, pp. 235-239, and the edition of the text *infra* III, ll. 230-809.

⁴ The classical study of Genoa’s trade with the Levant is Balard 1978. For the slave trade, cfr. also Jehel 1995; Balard 2018; Williams 1995; Haverkamp 2005; for the silk trade Jacoby 1999, 2010, and 2016; for Genoese merchants traveling as far as Iran and China Petech 1964; Balard 1974 and 1993; López 1977; Paviot 1991 and 1997.

The highly detailed miniatures accompanying the text, for their part, served as a means of bringing the places *outremer* closer to home, delving into the historical events, and studying the facial traits, costumes, and behavior of people of other cultures. Most notably, this accounts for the full-page miniatures showing the fall of Tripoli (Add. 27695, f. 5r; Pl. XI), the fall of Acre (Bargello, inv. 2065 C, f. 1r; Pl. XIII) and the courtly scene centering on a Mongol Khan (Add. 27695, f. 13r; Pl. XXXV). As the Crusader states were sites of atrocities (committed by Christians and Muslims alike) and constantly threatened with downfall, the depictions of the respective potentates with their entourages and mounted warriors were presumably intended to exemplify abhorrent, sinful behavior. This seems especially obvious in the scene showing the Mamluk troops mercilessly killing the Christian population outside the city walls of Tripoli (Add. 27695, f. 5r; Pl. XI). Notwithstanding the small size of the folio (approx. 17 x 10 cm), the details emphasizing the brutality of the attack—lances being stabbed into the backs of defenseless victims, people being beheaded, blood spurt-ing from wounds, and naked corpses lying on the ground—must have caught the children’s attention and unsettled them at the same time.

The same is presumably true of the Mongol khan—who is shown in less frightening but (probably) equally dismissive manner, surrounded by musicians entertaining him and servants providing him with food (Add. 27695, f. 13r; Pl. XXXV)—not least in view of the fact that this miniature functions as the frontispiece to the chapter on gluttony (*gula*). However, there are also other interpretations of what this picture conveys about the attitude toward Mongol culture. On the one hand, for example, in his iconographical study of moral judgments about music in the Trecento, Howard Mayer Brown states that the artist «has dulled the picture’s reality but sharpened its meaning by offering so obviously a racist point of view».⁵ On the other hand, with regard to the model the artist might have used in order to create a convincingly Mongol setting, the picture has been described as a *copy* of a Persian miniature and related to a Mamluk example, namely the frontispiece to al-Hariri’s *Maqamat* in a manuscript produced in Cairo in 1334 and now in Vienna (Fig. 1).⁶

⁵ Brown 1985, p. 90. The author questions the miniature’s ‘realistic’ aspects because both the choice of instruments and the way they are played do not seem altogether plausible.

⁶ Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, A. F. 9, f. 1r. Cfr. Fabbri 2013, p. 97; Budde - Sievernich 1989, p. 626: «Frühste bekannte europäische Kopie einer persischen Miniatur». For the miniature in the Vienna manuscript, cfr. George 2011, pp. 11-14. Cfr. also Otto-Dorn 1982.

Taking this discrepancy seriously, in the following I will focus on the ambiguities in the depiction of Mongols and Mamluks. Representatives of both groups appear in two different kinds of pictures, namely in the aforementioned full-page miniatures as well as in small medallions in the outer frameworks of the folios (Bargello, inv. 2065 C, f. 1v, and Cleveland, n. 1953.152, f. 1v; Pl. XIV and XVI). I will argue that the imagery was supposed to teach the children that vices knew no cultural boundaries. Rather than suggesting any moral superiority of the Western culture, the miniatures raised awareness of human susceptibility to evil destructive consequence in general. While the iconography thus aims at manifesting equality among cultures, aesthetics reveals a reverence for the visual as well as material opulence of the East. The manuscript, then, seeks to offer all of the world's morals as well as its marvels to the Cocharelli children.

1. *Sin and Slaughter*

Owing to Pellegrino's moralizing accounts of historical events that had taken place in the Crusader states, his great-grandchildren will presumably have perceived the Mamluks and Mongols as foreign but nevertheless very 'real' forces. This aspect will have been further heightened by the miniatures showing the seizures of Tripoli (Add. 27695, f. 5r; Pl. XI) and Acre (Bargello, inv. 2065 C, f. 1r; Pl. XIII). The depictions of the two cities serve to emphasize the idea of separate cultural domains. Bounded by castellated city walls and densely crowded with buildings—among them several Christian churches—Tripoli and Acre represent the aspiration to turn the Holy Land into a stronghold of Christian rule. On the other hand, however, these confined urban spaces are surrounded by the enemy's troops, who have just entered the main gate of Tripoli and are swarming out into the narrow streets of Acre. Outside Tripoli, the Mamluk warriors are killing everyone who tries to flee at close range. As they poured over these miniatures, the children must have felt the terror of the life-threatening situation.

As Concina has pointed out, the text relating these events is concerned with exposing vices and illustrating their catastrophic consequences. It accordingly points out that the fall of both Tripoli and Acre was caused by envy. In the former case, Sibylla of Armenia had selfishly installed Bishop

Bartholomew of Tortosa as regent, and in the latter case the Templars and Hospitallers had quarreled unceasingly.⁷ Whereas in the Acre miniature there is no indication of the strife that caused the city's vulnerability, the Tripoli scene clearly alludes to the immoral behavior of Sibylla and Bartholomew. They are shown sitting next to each other in a grand loggia in the center of Tripoli. Holding hands and exchanging what seem to be intimate gazes, they appear unmoved by the fate of the civilian population.⁸ The miniaturist further accentuated the couple's complacency by symmetrically arranging groups of mounted Christian knights on both sides of the loggia. They are likewise evidently seized with passivity, despite the citizens' signs of anxiety as the Mamluk warriors approach the central square.

Most remarkably, the miniaturist devised pictorial means for the correlation of cause and effect and gave equal emphasis to both aspects. Tripoli, as a city moribund on account of its evil government, forms the fulcrum of the composition. In terms of both form and content, it serves as a reference point for everything that is happening outside. The curve of its walls seems to guide the Mamluk army into the scene. Moreover, the walls' regular brickwork and battlements (as well as the orderly arrangement of the Christian knights within) enhance the impression of an overwhelming and unmanageable crowd of hostile forces. Both the static compactness of the city and the symmetrical arrangement of Sibylla, Bartholomew and the knights likewise make the movement of the Mamluk equestrians seem even more agile and swift. Above all, the tenderness between Sibylla and the bishop serves as a foil for the atrocities being committed outside the walls and further emphasizes their hideousness.

If we compare the scene to the description of the events in the text, we find that the miniature obviously complements the text and vice versa. On the one hand, the narrator elaborates on the incidents leading up to the fall of Tripoli after the death of Sibylla's husband, Bohemond VI, the count of Tripoli and prince of Antioch, in 1275.⁹ The miniature, on the other hand, pays more attention to the violent acts committed by the Mamluk troops. Even though the text refers to them twice, it does not offer any de-

⁷ Cfr. Concina 2016, pp. 204-217, and 2019, pp. 96-107.

⁸ Cfr. Concina 2016, p. 207, and 2019, p. 99.

⁹ Cfr. Concina 2019, pp. 96-99.

tails but uses generic verbs such as «invade» («invadere»), «seize» («ceperere»), «kill» («interficere» and «occidere»), and «demolish» («destruere»). It summarizes how the hostile army took the city and only then mentions the massacre of those who had hoped to find shelter on the island close to the mainland. As for this final aggression, the text states that the Mamluks «marched with all their might upon the island from the mainland and violently seized it, killing all men and women, young and old alike, of this city and [in so doing] fully crossed the island» («[...] cum toto exforcio acceperunt super eam [insulam] per terram et ipsam violenter ceperunt. Et occiderunt omnes homines et feminas inductos senectute. Et ceteri inducti iuventute dicte civitatis – tam mares quam mulieres – plenarie evaserunt») (Add. 27695, f. 5v; ed. *infra*, I, III, 54-56).¹⁰

In order to establish a visual order of cause and effect, neglect and downfall, the miniature manipulates the facts postulated by the text, by showing the carnage along the shore while Tripoli is still intact. Probably for this reason as well, the painter devoted himself to illustrating all kinds of killing methods. Thus, on the one hand, the Mamluks' brutality seems to serve as a counterbalance to the vices of the Crusader elite. This suggests that the intention was to equate two types of condemnable behavior. On the other hand, however, the tremendous cruelty, great amount of blood, and considerable number of dismembered naked corpses will surely have made the Mamluks look far more appalling than the Christians who were 'merely' blinded by envy. Furthermore, as evil misconduct was commonly understood as a deviation from God's will brought about by succumbing to the temptations of the devil, the equestrians storming the scene could also be understood as unleashed demonic forces.¹¹ And whereas in the late Middle Ages it was generally conceded that acts of war inevitably involved violence, the killing of defenseless civilians was often criticized as excessive and cruel.¹² It is precisely this type of extreme violence that characterizes the Mamluk warriors in the miniature and identifies them all the more distinctly as evil opponents.

¹⁰ Cfr. Concina 2016, p. 210, and 2019, p. 97. For a discussion of the demolition of Tripoli *ibidem* and ed. *infra*, I, III, 52: «Que soldanus sciens et audiens, cum magno exercitu principatum invasit et cepit terram, interfecit gentes, destruxit habitacula et ab illo tempore citra nullus illam terram postea habitavit».

¹¹ Cfr. the warning of Ivo of Chartres against the crusaders' enemies, Newhauser 2001, p. 393.

¹² Cfr. Mauntel 2018 (with further literature).

2. *Splendid Supremacy*

With the Tripoli miniature in mind, the Cocharelli children might have imagined the fate that would have overtaken the inhabitants of Acre had they not already sought safety on board boats (Bargello, inv. 2065 C, f. 1r; Pl. XIII). Major attention is given to these refugee vessels heading towards galleys of which the majority belong to the Genoese fleet.¹³ Yet even though the sea fills almost the entire lower half of the page, the miniature has a tripartite structure made up of the sea, the deserted city being entered by the hostile troops, and the Mamluk camp outside the walls. This is similarly true of the Tripoli miniature with the bay and offshore island, the terrain in front of the city being overrun by the Mamluk equestrian army, and the illusively peaceful city.

Both pictures contrast states of quiescence with movement, if in opposing ways. In the Tripoli miniature, rampant movement characterizes the Mamluk warriors, while inactivity is assigned to the Christian forces. In the Acre scene, movement is implied by the galleys on the sea, but also explicitly shown in the militant action in the upper part of the picture. Now, however, the Mamluk warriors have gathered in systematic rows, their horses galloping side by side. The Christian knights are fighting back, but they are no more than marginal figures incapable of preventing the adversaries from storming the city.

The concerted action of the Mamluk equestrians might explain why Sultan al-Ashraf Khalil and his entourage look so relaxed in their pavilions. The tents and pavilions dominate the battlefield: they are higher than the houses of Acre, and their white cloth is conspicuously embellished with a red-framed medallion bearing the heraldic 'Baybars' panther.¹⁴ The pavilions' open fronts reveal the sumptuous textiles of their interiors. A mood of calm emanates from the turbaned men sitting cross-legged at the entrances, as well as from al-Ashraf Khalil on his throne. In

¹³ For a more detailed description of the miniature, cfr. Concina 2019, pp. 104-107. There is no mention of the flight across the sea in the text. Rather, it summarizes the sultan's attack and once again reconsiders the hopeless prospects of the Templars and Hospitallers: «Soldanus vero iratus convocavit suarum gentium numerum infinitum et predictam civitatem invasit, destruxit ipsam, neque aliquis Christianus et Sarraceni paucissimi ipsam postea habitavit, quod satis omnibus patet palam. Quod autem inter illos duos ordines qui predictae civitatis erant rectores esset invidia et discordia antedicta patuit in processu» (ed. *infra*, I, III, 75-76).

¹⁴ Cfr. Fabbri 2011, p. 306, note 25; Concina 2019, p. 99.

the Tripoli miniature, a similar pose has been assigned to Sibylla of Armenia and Bartholomew of Tolosa, who are also placed in the upper section of the picture. Hence, on the one hand, the two folios create an analogy between the Christian potentates and their Muslim adversaries. On the other hand, it seems implausible that this analogy serves to suggest a similar moral verdict for the Mamluk elite. After all, the sultan appears as a mighty and unperturbed opponent.

In fact, the miniature creates the impression of total supremacy. It tells the story of a foreign nation whose authorities are so powerful and assured of success that, even in the midst of a military attack, they can engage in conversation. While the sultan is receiving a group of ambassadors—who, to judge from their headdresses and vestments, are not European—the other men seem to be involved in scholarly debates. In other words, here the Mamluks are awe-inspiring in a less frightening manner.

The careful attention paid to the luxurious textiles of the pavilions supports this reading of the miniature. Blue and red fabrics with gold patterns clad the interior of even those tents that house animals. The sultan's pavilion, for its part, is made entirely of these precious fabrics. The frontispiece of the chapter on gluttony (Add. 27695, f. 13r; Pl. xxxv) seems to offer a closer look into the interior of such a pavilion. The Mongol khan is seated in an interior space decorated throughout with what appear to be figured silk fabrics in gold and color. To be sure, in the Cocharelli manuscript such lavish patterns also serve as a backdrop for Genoese citizens and spaces. In the same chapter, for example, an almost identical ornament can be seen on the wall of a tavern (Add. 27965, f. 14r; Pl. xxxvii).¹⁵ However, since the Mongol khan and the men to either side of him are sitting cross-legged, the former on a low pedestal and the latter directly on the ground, they bear an undeniable resemblance to the Mamluk officials in the camp outside Acre (Bargello, inv. 2065 C, f. 1r; Pl. xiii). The khan thus evidently likewise appears here in a setting specific to his own customs.

¹⁵ Cfr. Add. 27695, f. 8r (Pl. xxiii); for more patterns, Add. 27695, f. 3v, 4r, 9v, 11v, 12r, and 15r (Pl. vi, ix, xxvi, xxxii, xxxiii, and xxxix). The reference to woven silks is most obvious for the striped patterns. Cf. in particular Add. 27695, f. 2v (Pl. iv), and Cleveland, n. 1953.152, f. 1r (Pl. xv). A study of the types of patterns and their media-related aspects has yet to be carried out.

The splendor of such pavilions—that is, of the mobile camps of the Mamluks and Mongols alike—will have been well known in the Levant and quite familiar in Western Europe as well, particularly Italy. As early as 1255, William of Rubruck, one of the first European travelers to write an account of his journey to the Far East, recorded in his *Itinerarium* that the interior of the pavilion («domus») of Möngke Khan (r. 1251-1259) was «over and over covered with golden cloth» («tota tecta panno aureo intus»).¹⁶ Admiration for the material riches of the Mongols echoes throughout Marco Polo's *Devisement dou monde*, the travel narrative he wrote with the help of the romance writer Rustichello da Pisa when they were both prisoners (of war) in Genoa in 1298.¹⁷ The text was hugely successful. Already by the time of Polo's death in 1324—and also by the time the Cocharelli manuscript was produced—the original Franco-Italian version of the *Devisement* had been translated into French, Latin, and presumably also Venetian and Tuscan.¹⁸ The account offered a description of Polo's stay in the empire of Kublai Khan (r. 1260-1294) from about 1275 to 1292 and in Iran under Ilkhan Gaykhatu (r. 1291-1295). In 1295, the adventurer was back in Venice. In his narrative, he included numerous stereotyped references to the production of silks all over China. He also described the magnificent tents erected for the great khan and his enormous entourage during the annual hunt in March. Owing to the low temperatures in Northern China at that time of year, however, the khan's pavilion was not made of silk but of lionskin. Its interior was furnished with ermine and sable furs in such a skillful manner «that it was a wonder to see» («qe ce est une mervoille a voir»).¹⁹ An awestruck description of a

¹⁶ Guglielmo di Rubruk, *Viaggio in Mongolia (Itinerarium)* (ed. Chiesa), xxviii, 14, p. 154. William was traveling on behalf of Louis IX, King of France (r. 1226-1270). Starting from Acre in 1253, he reached Karakorum, at that time the capital of the Mongol empire. The *Itinerarium* is a letter for Louis IX which William dictated when he was back in Acre in 1255. Only six manuscripts dating from before 1500 have survived. However, William's descriptions must have circulated orally as well. For William and his account, cfr. Khanmohamadi 2014, pp 57-87. See also the descriptions in the slightly earlier *Historia Mongalorum* (between 1247 and 1252) of John of Plano Carpini, envoy of Pope Innocent IV. Giovanni da Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli* (ed. Menestò), ix, 29, 32 and 35, pp. 317, 319 and 322. For European notions of the Mongols based on travel narratives of the period 1221-1410, cfr. Jackson 2005.

¹⁷ For Polo's biography, cfr. Larner 1999, pp. 31-45; for his admiration of the material splendor of the East, Campbell 1988, pp. 106-111.

¹⁸ All translations taken together, the text is preserved in 144 manuscripts. Cfr. Dutschke 1993; Gadrat 2015; Simion - Burgio (ed.) 2024, pp. 435-444.

¹⁹ Marco Polo, *Devisement dou monde* (ed. Burgio - Eusebi), xciii, 28, i, p. 115.

sultan's hunting pavilion has also come down to us from the end of the fourteenth century. It can be found in the account of Simone Sigoli, a Tuscan pilgrim to the Holy Land in 1384-1385, who states that the pavilion of the Mamluk sultan Barquq (r. 1382-1389 and 1390-99) was one of the «the richest things in the world» («delle ricche cose del mondo»);²⁰

In all likelihood, the Cocharelli children also marveled at the beautiful tents and pavilions outside Acre. The miniature, then, evoked both fear and respect, animosity and admiration. It is this ambiguity that prevails in the Cocharelli manuscript whenever foreigners from the sultanates or khanates make their appearance. Hence it also applies to the Mongol khan enjoying a courtly feast (Add. 27695, f. 13r; Pl. xxxv).

3. *Bad Company*

The frontispiece of the chapter on gluttony is also the last page of the previous chapter on greed (*avaritia*). The two lines of text on a white ground in the upper part of the miniature conclude the moral lessons on greed: «what has been said thus makes clear why every wise man should avoid games» («aliis pateret in exemplum. Et sic per ea que dicta sunt patet quod ludus est fugiendus a quolibet sapiente»); ed. *infra*; I, v, 240-241). Since the previous folio—of which only a fragment has survived—shows a group of men playing dice (Add. 27695, f. 12r; Pl. xxxiii) and on its verso relates the story of «the man who lost his wife at gambling»,²¹ *ludus* surely refers to any kind of games with stakes. The miniature exemplifies the risks of gambling.²² Whether out of fear or sorrow, the man at the far right has covered his face with his hands. The gesture of the man furthest to the left—he is lifting his fur-lined coat—might indicate the risk of losing all one's belongings.

On the gluttony frontispiece, however, the warning against games also bears a connection to the courtly scene, or more precisely to the musicians sitting on and next to the text.²³ Given the focus on games and greed in

²⁰ Simone Sigoli, *Viaggio al monte Sinai* (ed. Fiacchi - Poggi), p. 112.

²¹ Concina 2016, p. 223.

²² For Tre- and Quattrocento attitudes toward games, cfr. Rizzi 1995 and 2001.

²³ Otherwise the arrangement of the three musicians does not seem plausible. Cfr. Brown 1985, p. 90: «The top register, with its heterogeneous group of trumpet, psaltery, and fiddle, may only serve as ornamental heading to the whole page [...]».

the previous folio, it seems unlikely that this arrangement serves to declare music a type of *ludus*. Rather, the negative tone of the text refers to musical performance per se. It ensures that music is understood as a danger to the Christian soul. Attitudes to music were ambivalent in Trecento Italy. On the one hand, music had always been a field of learning within the *quadrivium* and was appreciated as a cultivated form of pleasure. On the other hand, moralists feared its capacity to make women and men alike lose control over their thoughts and desires. Referring to the late thirteenth-century treatise on vices and virtues by the Florentine Bono Giamboni, Howard Mayer Brown convincingly argues that the denigration of music in the Cocharelli miniature serves to characterize the khan's banquet as a bad meal.²⁴ While gluttony was associated with uninhibited drinking and eating, in the miniature, the musicians—so carefully depicted in the very act of playing their instruments—make the danger of licentiousness even more palpable.²⁵

Compared to the attendants concerned with his well-being, however, the khan strikes a firm and stable pose. In fact, his immobility and the symmetrical arrangement of the miniature's upper half could also be a means of presenting him as an embodiment of the vice of gluttony. A comparison of the gluttony miniature with the frontispieces depicting Genoese citizens makes this more apparent. There, rather than being embedded in rigid formal compositions, the figures engage in communication. It is their social constellation that seems to determine the compositions. These miniatures offer *exempla* of evil behavior and not personifications of vices.²⁶

Now, assuming the gluttony frontispiece was likewise intended to teach the Cocharelli children how to detect and avoid bad *behavior*, what role do the khan's attendants play? The musicians are misusing their talents to encourage the immoral indulgence pursued most obviously by the two men sitting to the right and left of the khan. They are both staring at him. The one on the left is holding a long knife and about to cut a slice from a haunch, while his companion is nibbling at a (haunch) bone and

²⁴ Cfr. Brown 1985, pp. 92-95. Bono Giamboni, *Il libro de' vizî e delle virtudi* (ed. Segre), XXI.

²⁵ For the vice of gluttony, cfr. Newhauser 1993, p. 61; Hill 2007.

²⁶ A comparison of the miniatures of the Cocharelli manuscript to, for example, Giotto's frescoes of the vices in the Scrovegni Chapel, which date only slightly earlier (*ca* 1305), makes this even more obvious. Cfr. Krüger 2023.

thus seems to have already eaten up his (fairly large) portion of meat. The white color of the bone and the men's round caps associate them with the small white dogs eagerly awaiting tidbits.²⁷ This formal analogy serves both to denigrate the meat eaters and, in terms of the miniature's composition, to create a triangular form with the musician playing a psaltery at its apex. In his stiff pose, the khan thus appears to be framed by—or even trapped in—the triangle of his entourage. His role in this setting is anything but clear. It can only be assumed that he is about to drink from the large vessel he is holding in both hands. Does he intend to indulge in drinking? And if so, is it his own wish or is he being urged to do so by those surrounding him? Interestingly enough, except for the two musicians to the khan's right and left playing a double recorder and a fiddle, all the others come from Europe or Africa.²⁸ The white caps identify the two most condemnable figures as Europeans.²⁹ Again, as in the Tripoli and Acre miniatures, the Cocharelli children could observe that vices endangered people of all cultures.

It is all but obvious, then, that in this miniature the Mongol ruler was to be perceived as an embodiment of the vice of gluttony.³⁰ Rather, his role is worthy of further questioning. His sitting pose associates him with the Mamluks in the camp outside Acre. This pose presumably serves to signify people from both of these cultures. The two Europeans flanking the khan, then, would be recognizable as fellows who have adopted foreign customs. But have they done so in order to better seduce the khan? Or is this a sign of cultural estrangement—that is, of moral decline through assimilation to a foreign culture? What is needed, then, is a closer study of the picture's iconography.

²⁷ This kind of analogy can also be found in the moral treatise *Somme le roi* written 1279-1280 by the Dominican friar Laurent on behalf of Philip IV of France: «La tierce branche de cest vice [de gloutonie] est trop ardanment corre a la viande, come fait li chiens a la charoigne, et com plus est granz ceste ardeur, plus est granz li pechiez, car ausinc comme ce n'est pas pechiez d'avoir les richeces, mes de les trop amer, ausint n'est ce pas pechiez de mengier les bones viandes, mes de mengier trop ardenment ou trop desordeneement», Frère Laurent, *Somme le roi* (ed. Brayer - Leurquin-Labie), XXXVIII, 133-143.

²⁸ Cfr. Brown 1985, p. 90.

²⁹ Cfr. Scott 2007, p. 75.

³⁰ According to Manzari 2018, pp. 196-204, p. 204, however, «the personification of gluttony as a Mongol in this manuscript epitomizing one of the deadly sins can be interpreted as a proper icon of evil [...]».

4. *Iconographic Intruders*

For good reason, the gluttony miniature of the Cocharelli manuscript has been compared to the frontispiece to al-Hariri's *Maqamat* in Vienna (Fig. 1).³¹ Painted in Cairo in 1334 and thus contemporary with the Cocharelli work, the *Maqamat* shows a prince sitting cross-legged on a low throne and holding a small drinking cup. The prince, the winged creatures above him, the musicians, the dancer, and all the other attendants are lavishly dressed. In terms of both content and form, the miniature focuses on sensual pleasure. On the one hand, it depicts festive entertainment at court; on the other, it is a feast for the eyes of the beholder.

In his description of the frontispiece, Oleg Grabar pointed out that the enthronement scene draws on a generic iconographical scheme often employed in the Islamic world for decorative purposes, for example in metalwork or on lamps.³² Hence, in our deliberations on what model the Cocharelli miniaturist could have had at his disposal, we can also consider more functional objects such as ewers, trays, basins, and candlesticks made of brass and adorned with silver inlays.³³ Their iconography very often refers to the courtly world. Interestingly, some of the objects produced in the thirteenth century combine secular themes with Christian iconography. Even if they still raise many questions «about markets and systems of patronage, about manufacturing techniques and formal models, about the identities of makers and users, and about symbolic meanings and functions»³⁴ they clearly attest to a shared visual culture of the indigenous Muslims and Christians in the Near East and Egypt. Furthermore, since this group of objects suitable for clients from both religious cultures comprises pieces of high quality, designed for the courts, as well as less expensive, mass-produced items, the Cocharelli family might even have possessed such an object brought to Genoa by the children's great-grandfather Pellegrino.³⁵

³¹ Cfr. *supra*, note 6.

³² Cfr. Grabar 1984, p. 21.

³³ Cfr. also Dunlop 2016, pp. 233-235, who suggests that figured Asian textiles might have served as a model. For a broader consideration of global processes of transcultural exchange, cfr. Dunlop 2018, and 2020; Schulz 2020; for late medieval Genoese art, cfr. Fabbri *supra*, pp. 218-219.

³⁴ Khoury 1998, p. 66.

³⁵ For this group of objects, cfr. Baer 1989; Khoury 1998; Hoffman 2004; Snelders 2010, pp. 86-90. Cfr. also Folda 2005, pp. 470-471. For a concise introduction to Genoa's multicultural visual culture, cfr. Müller 2019.



Fig. 1. Al-Hariri's *Maqamat* in Vienna. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. A. F. 9, f. 1r.

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Fig. 2. The tray stand in the collection of the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MW.110.1999.

© The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (Photographer: Samar Kassab)



Fig. 3. On a slightly earlier strongbox from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art in London, two backgammon players are seated beneath the throne. Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London, MTW 850.

© Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London



Fig. 4. The strip soldered to the dome of the so-called Freer Canteen. Washington, DC, Freer Gallery of Art, Purchase - Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1941.10. © Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 5. The strip soldered to the dome of the so-called Freer Canteen (detail). Washington, DC, Freer Gallery of Art, Purchase - Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1941.10. © Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 6. Early fourteenth-century basin made in Mamluk Egypt or Syria for Hugues IV de Lusignan, King of Cyprus (r. 1324-1359), now in the Louvre. Paris, Musée du Louvre, MAO 101.

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Fig. 7. The so-called Diez albums in Berlin. Berlin, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Staatsbibliothek, Diez A Fol. 70, p. 22.

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A particularly sumptuous and thus surely courtly example is the tray stand in the collection of the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha (Fig. 2).³⁶ Probably made in Mosul in northern Iraq in the mid to late thirteenth century—that is, in a region that had previously belonged to the Great Seljuq Empire and now been taken over by the Mongols –, it was used to display and serve food at banquets. One of the scenes on the body of the tray shows an enthroned prince, a pair of angelic creatures, and a group of attendants presenting gifts to the ruler. The symmetrical arrangement of these figures as well as the prince's strict frontality indicate that a similar depiction could have inspired the painter of the Cocharelli manuscript. It might even have served him as a model for placing animals below the throne—even though the dogs very inappropriately substitute for the lions supporting the throne.

On a slightly earlier strongbox from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art in London, two backgammon players are seated beneath the throne (Fig. 3).³⁷ The prince is flanked by two figures presenting weapons, but there are no winged creatures above him. The enthroned prince is thus quite evidently the key element of this iconography, while the members of his symmetrically arranged entourage could vary.³⁸ Adopting this principle, the painter of the Cocharelli miniature used the scheme to invent a specific group of attendants. Both this working method and the fact that the painter refrained from disfiguring the Mongol ruler make it even more plausible that the picture's moral message was contained in the behavior of the courtly entertainers. It seems more than likely, then, that the Mongol ruler was not supposed to be perceived as an embodiment of the vice of gluttony. However, the didactic function of the two Europeans sitting cross-legged in close proximity to him remains unclear. Are they evil

³⁶ Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MW.110.1999. Cfr. Canby - Beyazit *et al.* 2016, cat. 69, p. 139 (Deniz Beyazit). Accordingly, one of the horsemen in a scene on the tray's body might represent a Crusader. This is indicated by the zigzag pattern of his dress, his weapons, and his hairstyle. Cfr. *ivi*, p. 139, fig. 63.

³⁷ London, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, MTW 850. Cfr. Canby - Beyazit *et al.* 2016, cat. 168c, pp. 265-267 (Deniz Beyazit). On the lower portions of the front and back it features standing Christian figures.

³⁸ Cfr. also the so-called *Baptistère de Saint Louis*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, LP 16 (Egypt or Syria, ca 1330-1340). On this object the facial traits of the enthroned prince, how is flanked by two attendants and holding a triangular drinking cup, are still visible. Those of the khan in the Cocharelli miniature strongly resemble them. Cfr. Macariou 2012, pp. 282-288 (Ead.) and, most recently, van den Bent 2020, pp. 237-260, here pp. 251-252.

intruders in a noble culture—mirrored in the manner in which they have been inserted into a scheme of courtly iconography—or have they fallen prey to the temptations of foreign customs? A closer look at the aesthetics of the Cocharelli manuscript makes the first option seem more likely.

5. *Eastern Aesthetics*

On both the tray stand in Doha and the strongbox in London, musicians accompany the enthronement scene. On the body of the tray, they are sitting close to each other in two friezes framing the main band. Not unlike their counterparts in the Cocharelli picture, they are actively engaged in playing various instruments. Even though in the manuscript there are several full-page miniatures subdivided into two halves, the decision to provide space for the musicians below the throne might also derive from this type of imagery.³⁹ The musicians in the upper register of the miniature, on the other hand, correspond to those sitting in two medallions in the upper corners on the side of the strongbox. In fact, if we assume that the painter imitated such a composition but decided to dispense with the medallions, the hovering position of his figures becomes less peculiar.

Medallions or, more specifically, rows of knotted roundels are a decorative device found on many objects from (Christian-)Muslim workshops. The tray stand in Doha, for example, features interlaced medallions with zodiacal figures on its foot and exterior rim. Similarly, the strip soldered to the dome of the so-called Freer Canteen (Fig. 4 and 5) is embellished with a row of roundels displaying seated musicians, drinking figures, and pairs of birds.⁴⁰ A third example, now with explicit references to the West, is the early fourteenth-century basin made in Mamluk Egypt or Syria for Hugues IV de Lusignan, King of Cyprus (r. 1324-1359), now in the Louvre

³⁹ Cfr. Add. 27695, ff. 8r, 11v, 14r (Pl. XXIII, XXXII, XXXVII).

⁴⁰ Washington, DC, National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art Collection, F1941.10. The strip may be an early replacement for a strip with an inscription naming the object's patron and the workshop where it was made. Since the canteen originally did not bear any secular but only ecclesiastical imagery, Heather Ecker and Teresa Fitzherbert have argued that it is a Jazīran object whose «hybridity is not intercultural [...] but rather communitarian: ecclesiastical and lay», Ecker - Fitzherbert 2012, p. 181. Cfr., most recently, Fleck 2023, pp. 176-241.

(Fig. 6).⁴¹ The ornamental center of its bottom is encircled by two strings of medallions with courtly motifs such as zodiacal signs and, again, seated musicians. As can be seen in all these examples, in this type of decoration the narrow interspaces are typically filled with ornament.

With these models in mind, it is easier to understand the artistic choices made by the miniaturist of the Cocharelli manuscript—namely, the lavish filling of the outer frames of the folios with golden knotted medallions and ornamentation.⁴² The resemblance of these medallions to the rows of roundels in metalwork from (Christian-)Muslim workshops becomes even more apparent when they accommodate seated figures. The beginning of the chapter on pride (*superbia*), for instance, is framed by a multicultural group of people (Add. 27695, f. 2r; Pl. III). The stains on the folio make it difficult to recognize all of them, but the turbans, facial traits, and black skin clearly indicate non-European origins.⁴³ Not surprisingly, everybody is sitting cross-legged despite the small size of the roundels. Also, these are conspicuously active figures playing instruments, performing archery or communicating by gesturing with their arms. However, as in many other folios, there doesn't seem to be any direct relation between the content of the text and the imagery—in this case, in other words, no denigration of the people in the framework. As musicians reap-

⁴¹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, MAO 101. The Arabic and French inscriptions of the basin both refer to Hugues. The Arabic one, however, gives him «belittling non-royal formula, [...] treating him as a vassal or emir of the sultan, and composing an inscription which reads superficially well but would have been in Mamluk eyes bogus, conceding nothing that could be politically compromising», Rogers 2012, p. 250. Cfr. Boehm - Holcomb 2016, cat. 19a and 19b, pp. 48-49 (Elizabeth Dospěl Williams).

⁴² According to the order of the leaves established by Concina 2016, pp. 217-224 (see also Concina - Faunce *infra*, pp. 383-385), this accounts for the manuscript's pp. 1-24 (the recto and verso being counted separately). In the following folios, the roundels disappear little by little, being substituted increasingly by figurative motifs and scenes without framing devices. Cfr. Eva R. Hoffman's reference to the frontispiece of the Crusader manuscript of the *Histoire Universelle* (London, British Library, Add. 15768, f. 1v) that «comprises a central motif of Christological scenes of the Creation painted in the distinct style of the Acre workshop surrounded by a distinctly local/Islamic motif of revelers, banqueters, and animals». She argues that this frame created «an authentic aura of the Holy Land», Hoffman 2004, p. 138.

⁴³ As in several other folios, the scenes in the large medallions in the lower border form an independent sub-cycle. Here, each of them shows a naked male figure with a shield, whose actions, however, remain enigmatic. He appears with an ape in the guise of a cleric and a dragon, seems to be fleeing from a naked woman, and is fighting two storks and a dragon.

pear, for example, in the gluttony frontispiece (Add 27695, f. 13r; Pl. XXXV), the activities do not seem specifically to illustrate pride.

In the first folio of the chapter on sloth (*accidia*) (Cleveland, n. 1953.1522, f. 1v; Pl. XVI), however, a similarly diverse group of persons exemplify evil behavior. Here, the seated Mongols, Mamluks, and Europeans—both ecclesiastic and lay—have been transformed into blatantly inactive individuals.⁴⁴ Some of them have clasped their hands, others are resting them on their knees. Their indefinite gazes make them look both pensive and bored; in any case, they are slothful. Evidently, the multicultural composition of the group was intended to make the Cocharelli children aware of the fact that vices affected people all over the world in like manner. Remarkably, then, the imagery did not serve to establish moral differences between the children's cultural peers on the one hand and Mongols and Mamluks on the other. Rather, the group of slothful individuals shows that the general concept of the Cocharelli manuscript was to demonstrate the universality of human fallibility.⁴⁵ The miniature with the fall of Tripoli and the gluttony frontispiece, then, differentiate between certain degrees of immoral behavior without labeling them as culturally specific. Obviously, the cross-legged sitting pose has two functions that are not necessarily interrelated: first of all, it illustrates foreign customs, but on the other hand it can also serve to visualize global immoral inertness.

Moreover, the illumination of the manuscript conveys high esteem for Mongol and Mamluk culture, especially its material and visual riches. The painter adopted the decorative device of knotted medallions and turned it into a prominent feature of his work. By consequence, the manuscript shares the aesthetics of ornament and opulence so characteristic of metalwork, figured silks, and other objects imported from the East. In the folio with the text relating the fall of Acre—and thus concerned with the vice of envy—, Eastern aesthetics and iconography converge (Bargello, inv. 2065 C, f. 1v; Pl. XIV). The three medallions in the bottom part of the frame show three princely Mongols. Their precious accoutrements, up-

⁴⁴ For the full-page miniature on the recto showing *accidia* and her court, cfr. Gertsman - Rosenwein 2018, cat. 20, pp. 80-83.

⁴⁵ Also cfr. the culturally diverse group of hybrid creatures in the framework of the initial page of the chapter on envy (*invidia*), Add. 27695, f. 4r (Pl. IX).

right poses and refined gestures turn the cross-legged pose into a majestic one. The textile patterns and adornments as well as the different head-dresses attest to the care the miniaturist took in painting these figures. He must have aimed at working as true to his model as possible. The head-wear of the figure on the right, for example, is a *boqtaq* characteristic of Mongol noblewomen. It can also be seen in a painting dated *ca* 1330 that was probably detached from a volume on the universal history of Rashī al-Dīn († 1318), vizier of the Ilkhan Ghazan (1271-1304), and then mounted in one of the so-called Diez albums in Berlin (Fig. 6).⁴⁶ Here, the Khatun, the wife of the Khan, and further female attendants kneeling next to the throne are all wearing red *boqtaqs* with long tops and veils at the back. The headdress in the Cocharelli manuscript is much smaller, but exhibits the same typical shape. Moreover, the Khatun in the Diez painting and the figure in the roundel both perform the same submissive gesture.

This open-minded, almost ethnographic attention to cultural diversity corresponds to a second ambition so prevalent in the manuscript's illumination, namely to depict animals in a manner as true to nature as possible. While this already accounts for the beasts and birds in the roundels of the first part of the manuscript—such as the birds accompanying the three stately Mongols (Bargello, inv. 2065 C, f. 1v; Pl. XIV)—, it is particularly true of the small animals in the last section.⁴⁷ It seems that, through its imagery, the manuscript amounted to a treasury of the world encompassing both the evil and the beauty rooted in culture and nature alike.

⁴⁶ Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Staatsbibliothek, Diez A Fol. 70, p. 22. Cfr. Ipsiroglu 1964, p. 22; Blair 1995 and 2006; Rührdanz 1997.

⁴⁷ Cfr. Bitsch *supra*.

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