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The Iconography of a Military Elite: Military Figures on an Early Thirteenth-Century Candlestick (Part III)

Features to Note, and Comparative Material

The arrows shown on the candlestick are of necessity illustrated in a somewhat crude manner (photographs 7–11; figures 5 and 6). Nevertheless, they do show an exaggerated reality—as confirmed by surviving arrow shafts, whole or fragmentary—especially where the swelling around their nocks is concerned (photograph 40; figures 27a–b). Arrows, of course, appear frequently in other iconographic sources but only occasionally in sufficient detail for such an aspect of design to be exaggerated to a similar degree (photographs 39a, 41, and 42).[1]

Two bows appear on the Costa candlestick (photographs 8 and 9; figures 5 and 6). Their recurved shape and the acute angle to which their strings are drawn show them to be of composite construction. As such, they represent the type of bow which had dominated Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and Inner Asian archery since ancient times. Until recently very few such bows existed in the archaeological record of the medieval Islamic world, though the archery equipment excavated from an eighth–ninth century grave at Moshevaya Balka on the northern slopes of the Caucasus was probably in the same military-technological tradition as seen south of the Caucasus, within both Islamic and Byzantine territory (photograph 45). Several were then found in the Euphrates valley of Syria (photograph 43) and in an unfinished form in a tower of the Citadel of Damascus (photograph 44). In both the latter cases the bows or bow fragments date from the late twelfth to early fourteenth centuries. Bows of varied shapes—smoothly curved, strongly recurved, and angled, but almost certainly all of composite construction—appear frequently in the pictorial sources (photographs 28, 39b, and 41; figures 82, 126oo, 139, 150a, e, and f, 151, 160, and 181c).

Only one quiver appears on the Costa candlestick, and then only partially (photograph 9; figure 6). It is nevertheless clearly of the open-ended form in which about a quarter of the rear parts of the arrows are exposed. As usual, the open top of this quiver faces to the horse-archer's rear. Several large fragments of leather were found among other pieces of late Mamluk, mostly broken, military equip-

[1]See "The Iconography of a Military Elite: Military Figures on an Early Thirteenth-Century Candlestick (Part I)," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 18 (2014–15): 57–90 (http://dx.doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977), for photographs 1–15c and figures 1–9. See "The Iconography of a Military Elite: Military Figures on an Early Thirteenth-Century Candlestick (Part II)," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 19 (2016): 193–299 (http://dx.doi.org/10.6082/M16971RQ), for photographs 16–58 and figures 10–185.

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ment in a building within the Citadel of Damascus. Some of these fragments have tentatively been identified as perhaps having formed parts of quivers or bow-cases.[2] As far as I am aware, however, the only other medieval quiver that comes at least from the frontiers of the early medieval Islamic world is that found at Moshevaya Balka, dating from the eighth or ninth centuries (photograph 45).

Quivers appear in Islamic and neighboring art sources throughout this period, though the type shown on the Costa candlestick tends to be associated with Turkish-influenced military cultures, most commonly from the twelfth century onward, and would seem to have been specifically designed for use on horseback (photograph 29; figures 126x [presumed from the presence of arrows just behind the horseman's seat], 138a, 139, 160, and 181a and c). Earlier quivers tended to have been of the "box" type in which much less of the arrows was visible. This box-type quiver often incorporated a flap which could fully enclose the arrows, and was usually shown hanging with the open top pointing forward (photograph 18; figure 106). It may also be significant that the box-type quiver returned to favor in several parts of the Middle East following the Mongol invasions (figure 178).

The absence of a bow-case with either of the two horse-archers on the Costa candlestick is worthy of note. It was, of course, quite common to show such troops with bows but lacking both quivers and bow-cases. During the early centuries bow-cases tended to be long and slender, designed to accommodate one or quite often two unstrung bows (photograph 20; figures 85 and 89). But this form was soon replaced by a shorter and broader case for a single bow in a strung state (figures 126x and oo, 150a and f, probably 167, and 172). Once again, the best surviving example is that from Moshevaya Balka (photograph 45).

Similarly, men armed with swords were not always shown with scabbards, so perhaps it should not be surprising that the one scabbard on the Costa candlestick is not being carried by the one man who fights with a sword (photograph 6; figure 3). This scabbard, which of course contains its sword because the cavalryman in question is wielding a lance, is hung at an angle on the man's hip. Because the lighter metal inlay is missing, details of how it was suspended cannot to seen with any certainty. Nevertheless, surviving scabbards from the Middle East and dating from roughly this period show that scabbards for both straight swords (as here) and curved sabers were hung from two straps to a sword-belt (photograph 46; figures 29, 32, and 36a–b). The front strap was shorter than the back, providing an angle that was convenient for drawing the weapon. The lower ends of these straps were attached to sometimes highly decorated mounts around the scabbard itself; the straps were usually in two parts buckled together to enable adjusting their length, and with their upper parts often divided in two. The latter feature

[2] D. Nicolle, *Late Mamlūk Military Equipment,* Travaux et études de la Mission archéologique syro-française, Citadelle de Damas, vol. 3 (Damascus, 2011), 185–92.

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spread the weight of the sword and scabbard to four points on the sword-belt, providing greater comfort and also stopping the scabbard from moving backward and forward too much. This system is also shown in varying degrees of detail in other pictorial sources (figures 82, 86, 89, 126a, e and x, 150f, and 185). Rarely the scabbard is shown with just one suspension point (photograph 29; figure 126c).

Of the two swords shown on the Costa candlestick, one is in use and one remains in its scabbard (photographs 6 and 7; figures 3 and 4). Note that in the photograph the curvature of the sword in use is largely, though not entirely, due to the curvature of the candlestick base. Nevertheless, even the drawing made from a pencil rubbing of this figure gives a hint of a curve to the blade, or at least to its lower edge. The blade also has a squared tip.

The most famous medieval Islamic text dealing with swords is, of course, that by al-Kindī who, writing in mid-ninth-century Iraq, provided the normal weights, lengths, widths, and places of origin of the types of swords commonly in use at his time.[3] How far al-Kindī's information remained valid for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is harder to judge. Relatively few swords can be stated with certainly to date from that period, though they probably include the blades of some weapons associated with later Abbasid caliphs which are now preserved in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul.

There is also no reason to doubt the authenticity of a sword reportedly found in Saladin's tomb in Damascus when it was opened for restoration at the end of the nineteenth century (figure 35). Known as "Saladin's Sword," it is preserved in the Askeri Muze in Istanbul. Its blade, however, bears the inscriptions *"made on the order of Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb,"* who was Saladin's father, and *"made by Sālim Ibn ʿAlī."*[4] Unfortunately, none of the surviving complete swords and sabers have the squared tip seen on the Costa candlestick (figures 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, and 35). The pictorial record is fortunately more varied where both straight swords and curved sabers are concerned (photographs 20, 23, 26, 29, and 39a–b; figures 86, 87a, 89, 92, 93, 103, 104, 112, 114, 117, 122a–b, 124, 126a, c, e, o, x–cc and nn, 128b, 137, 138a–b, 141a–b, 145b, 150f, 156b, 163a, 164c–e, 177a–b, 180, and 183–185).

A small but growing number of bronze objects which once formed parts of sword hilts have also come to light (figure 32), along with weapons that still have cast-bronze quillons and scabbard mounts (figures 29 and 32). There are also a few matrices or molds used in the casting of this kind of sword and scabbard elements. The dating of the latter had been a matter of controversy, but the early medieval

[3] Al-Kindī, *Medieval Islamic Swords and Swordmaking: Kindi's Treatise "On Swords and Their Kinds,"* trans. R. G. Hoyland and B. Gilmour (Oxford, 2006); idem, ed. A. R. Zakī, "Al-suyūf wa-ajnāsuhā," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters, Fuad I University* 14 (1952): 1–36; J. W. Allan, *Persian Metal Technology, 700–1300 AD* (Oxford, 1979), 83–87.

[4] D. Alexander, personal communication, March 2010.

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period originally proposed by David Alexander now appears to be strengthened by the discovery of additional objects.[5]

Two distinctly different types of spear or cavalry lance are shown on the Costa candlestick; a relatively short weapon with a single blade appears twice (photographs 10 and 11; figures 7 and 8). The differences in design, usage, and heritage between short and long spears have already been discussed, so here I will merely draw attention to some other representations of the single-bladed form in the iconographical record (photographs 15a–c, 18, 27, 28; figures 82, 98, 105, 106, 110, 126f, 135, 136, 138c, 155, 159b, 166, 175, 176, 181a, and 182a–b). Such spears are usually, though not always, shown as being relatively shorter than the double-ended form.

Double-ended spears are shown three times on the Costa candlestick (photographs 4, 6, and 12; figures 1, 3, and 9). These are clearly the sort of cavalry weapons that are elsewhere occasionally shown as being of almost exaggerated length. They are certainly not the same as the much shorter *zhūpin* spears or javelins that evolved as infantry weapons, though occasionally being shown in the hands of horsemen. While it would be foolish to definitively divide all representations of double-ended weapons into "long" cavalry *rumḥ* spears and "short" *zhūpin* javelins, they do tend to fall into two groups (long weapons: figures 80, 94, 134a–b, and 168; short weapons: figures 81, 88, 111, 140, and 142a–b). On very rare occasions two different blades have been found in an archaeological context that suggests a single weapon, though unfortunately the length of their presumed haft does not seem to have been recorded (figures 28a–b).

The Costa candlestick lacks sufficient surviving detail to tell whether its long cavalry spears had "knotted" bamboo hafts. Nevertheless, such weapons had a long pedigree and high prestige in the Islamic Middle East and beyond (see Appendix 3, published with Part II). They appeared in Coptic Egyptian art from at least the fourth or fifth century, though it is unclear whether the latter sources reflected an indigenous military tradition or that of neighboring nomadic Arab and other tribal peoples. Spears with bamboo or reed hafts were similarly shown in Gandharan art from northwestern India during the second and third centuries, often with two blades or at least a substantial pointed butt or foot.

It is therefore interesting to note that some of the earliest Arabic sources state that the best and most supple lances were made of Indian bamboo, though the finished weapons were reportedly manufactured in the Arabian coastal region then called Baḥrayn (the Persian Gulf coast from the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab to the Qatar peninsula). The resulting spears were described as normally being 10 cubits long,

[5] D. Alexander and H. Nickel, "Matrices for Sword Mounts," in *Notable Acquisitions 1979–80 [Metropolitan Museum of Art]*, ed. Philippe de Montebello (New York, 1980), 27.

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up to a maximum of 11 cubits.[6] Other sources maintain that long Arab spears were normally 11 cubits long during the seventh century, while short spears were around five cubits long.[7] Elsewhere long spears with bamboo hafts are shown in the art of the strongly Arab-influenced Byzantine province of Cappadocia in the tenth century, and on Islamic Andalusian ivory carvings dating from the early eleventh century. Illustrations of bamboo-hafted spears appear in Christian art from the mid-thirteenth-century Jazīrah (more particularly in the Mosul area) while somewhat later Iranian art still tended to associate the bamboo-hafted spear with Arab warriors. On the other hand, the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Turkish epic of *Dede Korkut* mentions a lance 60 hand-spans long,[8] while on another occasion putting such a weapon in the hands of specifically Turkish warriors.[9]

Shields appear twice on the Costa candlestick. One example is very convex, appears to be quite large, and is held by a heavily armored man wielding a double-ended spear (photograph 5; figure 2). Written sources, supported by the limited archaeological evidence, show that cavalry shields could be made from a variety of materials, ranging from wood and hardened leather to spiral cane bound with silk or cotton thread. There are even examples which are, at least partially, made of metal. Fully metallic shields were probably not known nor even necessary until the introduction of hand-held firearms in the late fifteenth or more likely sixteenth century. So the remarkable twelfth–thirteenth-century metallic shield elements found at Bishtam Qalʿah [Beshtam-Kala] in Transoxiana (figure 37) were probably a form of reinforcement or covering. Such a shield may have evolved from much more common, large metallic shield bosses (figures 38, 39a and c, and 40) and relatively frequent metallic shield rims (figure 39b). Large round shields rarely survive even in a fragmentary state (photograph 20), but were often shown in Islamic and neighboring art of this period. They could have a variety of decorations including tassels or fringes around their edges (photograph 21; figures 78b, 98, 104, 117, 126b–c, w, dd–ii, 179b, and 185).

There is no clear dividing line between shields that are here considered large and those considered small. It is an entirely arbitrary separation. Nevertheless, a shield carried by the only sword-wielding horseman on the Costa candlestick is clearly smaller than the first example (photograph 7; figure 4). Though small, it

[6] A. Von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte des Orients unter den Chalifen* (Vienna, 1875), 78–79.

[7] Ali Mohammed Ali el-Gindi, "Martial Poetry among the Arabs in the Jāhiliyah" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1952), 150.

[8] Anon., *The Book of Dede Korkut,* trans. G. Lewis (London, 1974), 44, 49, and 137.

[9] Ibid., 96, 135, and 143.

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is certainly larger than a buckler, though it is held in the man's left fist.[10] Shields or bucklers ranging from the relatively small to the very small appear quite frequently in the iconographic record (photograph 18; figures 78a and c, 82, 103, 122a, 123, and 170b).

One of the most striking features of the military figures on the Costa candlestick is the degree to which they, their weaponry, and their horse harness are decorated. This may, perhaps, be taken as further evidence that these horsemen are indulging in military display or some sort of *furūsīyah* exercises rather than real combat. Even their spears have three distinct styles of decoration and on four figures this consists of a pennon with two long streamers (photographs 4, 5, 10, 11, and 12; figures 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9). This surely brings to mind the question of those "Saracen" banners that some Crusader observers thought looked like "trousers." Discussions seeking to interpret what these "trouser-like" banners really were have suggested that they were a form of wind-sock, as was certainly used by some Turco-Mongol peoples of the steppes.[11] However, a simpler explanation may be found in the iconography of the Costa candlestick, namely that many of the pennons, flags, and banners used by medieval Middle Eastern Muslim armies during this period had two very long streamers attached. Nor were such flags uncommon in Islamic art from this period (photographs 15a–c and perhaps 23; figure 108) while earlier representations suggest specifically Turkish Central Asian origin (figure 106).

Three spears on the Costa candlestick have what might be described as large ribbons (photographs 4, 6, and 12; figures 1, 3, and 9). In two cases these are additional decorations on long, double-bladed spears that also have pennons with two streamers, but the ribbons are attached closer to the lower blade or large, pointed butt. Even on the third horseman (figure 3) these ribbons are closer to the small blade than to the main blade. Single or doubled ribbons on the hafts of spears or lances appear elsewhere in the pictorial record, sometimes in conjunction with another pennon or flag and sometimes as the only decoration on such weapons (photographs 15 and 23; figures 100, 126jj, 166, and 171a–b). Another of the spears on the Costa candlestick has what appears to be a sort of tassel added to its pennon (photograph 10; figure 7). Whether this was in any sense related to the spears topped with black ostrich feathers used by Abbasid light cavalry in the

[10] The question of the identification of small metallic buckler-shields, or the broadly flanged metallic bosses used in broader shields, has been discussed in some details by Dr. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World 8th–18th centuries, Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue* (London, 1982), 128–30.

[11] W. Leaf, "Not Trousers but Trumpets: A Further Look at Saracenic Heraldry," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 114 (1982): 47–51.

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ninth–tenth centuries is unknown,[12] but the same combined decoration is clearly shown on an unused spear carried by one of the mounted crossbowmen on the Freer Gallery Canteen (photograph 15a).

The clothing worn by men in a military role in medieval Islamic civilization had been differentiated from that of men in a civilian role from an early date. The differences very clearly reflected the needs of a military life, permitting greater ease of movement and, of course, the need for many such men to spend long periods on horseback. During the early Islamic centuries riding gaiters had been adopted along with use of the stirrup (photograph 21; figures 86 and 91–95). These also became fashionable within the Byzantine Empire. From the eleventh and certainly from the twelfth century onward, soft riding boots of Turkish Central Asian origin dominated military fashions in most of the Islamic world (photographs 15a–c, 16, 23, and 27; figures 107, 109, 114, 118, 126a–c, e, and x, 150f, 158, 160, and 172). Perhaps for reasons of rank and ceremonial, gaiters worn over such boots continued to be used by high-status military figures or pages in the Great Seljuq court and were also occasionally shown in Iraq (figure 155). They were then readopted by the Mamluk elite in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Egypt and Syria (photograph 29). Whether the *shurmūzah,* or overshoe, worn over other footwear in twelfth–thirteenth-century Yemen was originally such a gaiter is again unclear. The word is understood to have had a Persian origin.[13]

All the figures on the Costa candlestick probably wear these Turkish-style, soft leather riding boots, clearly without gaiters. Fortunately the interpretation of such footwear is made easier by the finding of an identical boot during excavations of a late medieval fortress in northern Nubia (figures 43a–b). It was described in detail in a subsequent archaeological report:

> The upper portion is sewn from three pieces of soft, pebble-grained leather or pigskin [surely unlikely if this boot had been worn by a member of a Mamluk garrison]…. The sole is made of heavier leather than is the upper, and the heel has been reinforced internally with a second piece. The upward projection at the front of the knee shows that this was a riding boot, and a small projecting thong at the back of the heel may have been designed for the attachment of a spur. The boot had originally been dyed a red or maroon colour.[14]

Though no spurs are shown on the Costa candlestick, it is worth noting that, according to written sources, *mihmāz* spurs were sometimes worn with *khuff*—

[12] Ameer Ali, *A Short History of the Saracens* (London, 1921), 430–43.

[13] Ibn Ḥātim, *The Ayyūbids and Early Rasūlids in the Yemen (567–694/1173–1295),* ed. and trans. G. R. Smith, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, new series, 26 vol. 2 (London, 1978), 124.

[14] W. Y. Adams, *Qaṣr Ibrîm: The Late Medieval Period* (London, 1996), 177.

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large, soft leather riding boots—during the twelfth century,[15] and appear in some fourteenth-century Mamluk *furūsīyah* military training manuals (figures 182a–b).

The bandana worn by three horsemen on the Costa candlestick (photographs 5, 6, and 9; figures 2, 4, and 6) was not a particularly military garment. In two cases it is worn with other headgear—a helmet and a presumed *sharbūsh* (see below). It was clearly not the same as a small turban (photographs 21, 28, 29; figures 100, 108, 120, 126v and ee, 132a, 139, 156a, 158, 161, 164e, 170b, 181b, and 182a–b), though the fashion for two trailing ends was often shared by both. Illustrated examples go right back to art from the Umayyad period and it was subsequently worn by both military personnel and civilians (figures 110, 118, and 126u [without the trailing ends]).

In contrast, the *ṭirāz,* an embroidered band around the upper arm of a garment, was associated with elites, both military and civilian. It might be worn by no less than six horsemen on the Costa candlestick (photographs 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12; figures 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9), though in some if not all cases this might be a misinterpretation of what was simply meant to indicate short sleeves. Having emerged as a distinctly Islamic item of costume, the *ṭirāz* was clearly widespread during the early thirteenth century but would gradually disappear in Iran and some neighboring regions following the Mongol conquest.[16] Elsewhere it would survive for several centuries. Not surprisingly the pictorial record abounds with examples of this *ṭirāz* (photographs 23, 26, 28, 29, perhaps 42, and 51; figures 100, 107, 108, 115, 118, 120, 124, 126a–e, g, i–k, s–w and ee, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, perhaps 141b, 143, 153, 155, 156b, 158, 159b, 160, 161, 162, perhaps 172, 177a–b, 176, perhaps 181a and c, and 182a–b).

Another garment associated with elite political and military status was the *sharbūsh* or *shurbūsh.* This fur or fur-lined hat with a sharply upturned brim and usually a decorative, perhaps gilded leather, plate above the brow was of Turkish or perhaps more particularly Seljuq origin and first appeared in the eleventh or twelfth century. Under Ayyubid influence it spread as far as Yemen, where there are two references to the *sharbūsh* being worn by amirs, presumably to indicate their rank.[17] Just one such *sharbūsh* may be shown on the Costa candlestick (photograph 7; figure 4), though this example lacks the brow-plate and might therefore be a small but unusually shaped turban. Similarly, one example of this headgear is shown on the closely related and better preserved Freer Gallery Canteen (photograph 15), where it does look more like a triangular turban. *Sharbūsh* fur

[15] L. A. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume* (Geneva, 1956), 18 n. 2, 35, 37, and 53.

[16] P. Ackermann, "Standards, Banners and Badges," in *A Survey of Persian Art,* ed. A. U. Pope and P. Ackermann, vol. 6 (London, 1939), 2773.

[17] Ibn Ḥātim, *Ayyūbids and Early Rasūlids,* 124.

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hats appear both clearly and in detail, or more dubiously, in many other pictorial sources (figures perhaps 114, 124, 128a–b, 155, 156b, 159, 162, 172, and perhaps 176).

There is a current orthodoxy in some parts of the Islamic world that maintains that it is, and always has been, religiously correct for a Muslim man to have the hair of his head cut short,[18] while his beard should be full. In fact there is very strong evidence that the early Muslim Arabs continued the pre-Islamic "Saracen" tradition of wearing their hair longer than that of most neighboring peoples. Over the following centuries iconographic evidence from practically every corner of the Islamic world shows that relatively long hair continued to be worn by members of the political and military elites, though perhaps not the religious elite. The rise to political and military dominance of the Turks from the later eleventh through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries led to some "military" hairstyles getting even longer, especially among the Turcomans who often continued their own tradition for braided locks.

Two of the horsemen on the Costa candlestick have full heads of hair, neatly cut to shoulder-length, falling into what might be called a "flip" (photographs 10 and 11; figures 7 and 8). With the possible exception of two other horsemen (figures 3 and 5) who seem to wear small close-fitting caps, and the man who might have a bandana (figure 6), these two men are the only ones on the candlestick whose hair is completely exposed and falling naturally. One of the small and very damaged figures shown on the top of the candlestick also has this hairstyle (photograph 14), though it does not appear on the Freer Gallery Canteen. As such, these men clearly do not have the very long, sometimes apparently braided, hair of those who might be regarded as "tribal" Turkish warriors or those wishing to be associated with the tribal Turcomans (figures 122a–b, 126a and g, 132a, 150e, 155, 156b, 159b, 162, and perhaps 172). This "flipped" haircut is also very different from that of traditional Bedouin Arabs.

Furthermore, such a style of full, sometimes shoulder-length hair had a long tradition among the military of Iran and the Middle East during the preceding Islamic centuries. It would also persist for many decades to come (photographs 16, 23, 26, 27, and 39a; figures 80, 81, 90–95, perhaps 98, 99, 100, 105, 107, 108, 115, 117, 118, 119a and c, 120, 124, 126v, 128a–b, 136, 137, 139, 145b, 146, 149a, 150f, 151, 161, 163a 174, and especially 177a–b). I would therefore venture to suggest that, in the context of early thirteenth-century Mosul where the Costa candlestick was prob-

[18]During the 1970s I worked on a highly illustrated book on Islamic history which was to be published by a Saudi educational charity. In addition to contributing to the text, I provided the pictorial information which an artist—the late lamented Angus McBride—would use in his historical reconstructions. Despite all archaeological and other evidence to the contrary, this Saudi charity insisted that all the orthodox Muslims in McBride's paintings must have close-cropped hair. Perhaps fortunately, this book never achieved publication.

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ably made, this hairstyle was used to identify the horsemen on the candlestick as members of the mamluk or *ghulām* elite of fully trained, professional soldiers.

The scarves seemingly thrown in a casual manner across the chests and shoulders of no less than six of the horsemen on the Costa candlestick (photographs 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11; figures 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8) may have been another form of military identification. Nevertheless it would seem to have been a geographically more limited and short-lived fashion which, introduced by the Seljuqs in the twelfth century, died out in the later thirteenth century. The habit is illustrated on a number of examples of Islamic art from a limited area of the Middle East during this period (photographs 15a–c; figures 117, 141a–b, 177a–b, and 181b). Scarves are similarly wound around polo-players on an inlaid basin dedicated to al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, now in the Museum of Islamic Art (inv. no. 15043) in Cairo, though I have not seen this object myself.[19]

The Costa candlestick may prove to be a significant source of information for the study of medieval Islamic horse harness, as it illustrates a variety of interesting features. Of the bridles shown, five appear in sufficient detail to warrant comment (photographs 4, 5, 7, 9, and 11; figures 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8). One of the most remarkable features of the development of the horse's bridle and bit in Iran and some neighboring regions during the very early medieval period was the adoption, for several centuries, of an almost muzzle-like bit that formed a sort of frame around the animal's mouth (figures 45, 79, 83, 94). The reasons for the development of such a device, and for its subsequent disappearance, remain a mystery.[20] Similarly, there seems to be almost nothing in the documentary evidence that can be certainly identified as referring to this "muzzle-bit" (see Part II, Appendix 4, for the terminology of more straightforward snaffle and curb bits).

Though this is clearly not the form of bridle shown on the Costa candlestick, some of the latter may nevertheless incorporate a high-standing and perhaps rigid metallic browband (figures 1 and 8), as shown elsewhere in the iconographic record (figures 96, perhaps 125a and c, 140, 148, 157, perhaps 163b, and perhaps 179) and preserved in the archaeological record (figures 44 and 46). Perhaps this was still known as the *jaflah ʿulīyah,* a metal or leather element above the bit. It was surely not the *ʿiṣāb,* which was a brow-band lying between the animal's eyes and ears.[21]

All the horses' bits on the Costa candlestick are of a straightforward curb type (photographs 5 to 12; figures 1 to 9). Their representation is essentially the same

[19] W. ʿIzzī, "An Ayyūbid Basin of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn," in *Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honour of Professor K. A. C. Creswell* (Cairo, 1965), 253–54.

[20] Recently it has been suggested that the "muzzle-bit" enabled a rider to control his horse by pushing down on its soft nose and thus inhibit its breathing.

[21] G. Douillet, "Furūsiyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 2:952–54.

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as that seen in other pictorial sources and confirmed by the archaeological record (photographs 21, 27, 28; figures 46, 47, 48, 49a–c, 50a–c, 77a–b, 86, perhaps 92, 95, 101, 103, 105, 109, 110, 114, 116, 118, 122a and c, 124, 125a–d, 126a–b, 127, 128b, 134a, 138a–c, 145a–b, 149b, 148, 153, 157, 159b, 162, 163b, 165, 172, 175, 179, 181a–c, 182a–b, and 183). Nevertheless it is important to note that curb-bits were not universally used. Snaffle bits are also shown in pictorial sources, though surviving examples come from the Eurasian steppes rather than the settled zones of the Islamic world. Among the nomadic Turkish and Mongol tribal peoples of the steppes, a preference for snaffle bits (usually with psalion side bars during the early period up to the twelfth century) rather than curb bits surely reflects their different lifestyle and different military heritage. Perhaps not surprisingly, the curb bit declined in popularity in those parts of the Islamic world that fell under Mongol domination during the later thirteenth century, largely being replaced by the snaffle if the artistic record is to be believed. On the other hand, the curb bit did later make a comeback. One relatively gentle curb bit (photograph 47) was actually found among the very late Mamluk or very early Ottoman military debris recently published in Damascus.[22]

The breast strap, which stops a saddle from sliding backward, especially during the impact of close combat or when climbing a steep slope, is visible only on two of the horses (photographs 5 and 11; figures 2 and 8). Known as a *labab* in Arabic since at east early Islamic times,[23] the breast strap was known as a *kemeldürük* by the Central Asian Turks according to the eleventh-century Turkish scholar and lexicographer Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī.[24]

On the other animals with caparisons, horse armors, or extensive or highly decorated saddle blankets, the presence of a breast strap may usually be assumed, though it seems not to be shown on two horses which lack those previously mentioned coverings (photographs 7 and 9; figures 4 and 6). It is usually, though not invariably, shown in medieval art from those territories that became the Islamic world (photographs 15a–b, 16, 20, 21, 27, 28, and 29; figures 85, 86, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 109, 118, 121, 122a, 124, 125a–c, 126a, e, ff, kk, ll, mm, and nn, 127, 128a–b, 132b, 134a–b, 135, 136, 137 138b–c, 139, 140, 146, 149b, 153, 154, 157, 159a–b, 160, 162, 163b, 165, 172, 174, 174, 176, 179, 181a–c, and 182a–b).

Unfortunately the broken medieval saddles found in a southern tower of the Citadel of Damascus (see below) have yet to be studied in sufficient detail to see

[22] D. Nicolle, *Late Mamlūk Military Equipment,* 245, 248, fig. 190.

[23] Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān,* ed. De Goeje (Leiden, 1866), 438; idem, *The Origins of the Islamic State,* trans. P. K. Hitti and F. C. Murgotten (London, 1916), 1:486; A. S. M. Lutful-Huq, "A Critical Edition of Nihayat al Su'l [Al-Aqsarā'ī]" (Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1956), [ed.] 330 and [tr.] 234.

[24] E. Esin, "The Horse in Turkic Art," *Central Asiatic Journal* 10 (1965): 199–200.

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whether they had attachment points for breast or crupper straps. According to al-Kāshgharī the crupper strap was called a *koşum* in medieval Turkish Central Asia.[25] This item of horse harness appears twice on the Costa candlestick (photographs 9 and 11; figures 6 and 8) and can be assumed to exist beneath caparisons, horse armors, and very large saddle blankets on the other horses. Like the breast strap, the crupper strap appears frequently in the pictorial record (photographs 15a–b, 21, 28, and 29; figures 85, 86, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 98, 100, 103, 104, 105, 106, 109, 110, 112, 114, 118, 121, 122a, 125d, 126a, d, e, kk, ll, mm, and nn, 128a–b, 134a–b, 135, 136, 138c, 140, 146, 149b, probably 152, 156c, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162, 165, 172, 174, 175, 176, 178, 179, 181a–c, and 182a–b) but is not always present. Furthermore, breast and crupper straps were not always used together.

Large tassels had been used as harness decoration in some parts of the Middle East since pre-Islamic times (photograph 18; figure 85). A very similar tassel is attached to the crupper strap of one horse on the Costa candlestick (photograph 9; figure 6) and appears in a number of other pictorial sources (photographs 15a, perhaps 28, and 29; figures 92, 93, 94, and perhaps 179). In general, however, this form of crupper decoration seems to have been replaced by others following the Seljuq conquest of Iran, the Fertile Crescent, and Anatolia.

Where a cloth only covers the horse's rump it can, with confidence, be identified as a large saddle blanket, especially where it goes beneath the crupper straps. One such appears on the Costa candlestick (photograph 11; figure 8). Known as the *namad zīn* in the late tenth-century Persian *Shāhnāmah,* it could apparently be of woolen cloth or of felt.[26] During the following century it was called an *içlik* in Turkish Central Asia, according to al-Kāshgharī.[27] Three of the animals on the Costa candlestick have what appears to be separate or additional cloths that cover their necks (photographs 5, 7, and 9; figures 2, 4, and 6), though it possible that they reflect a single piece of heavy textile or felt that had a more complicated shape and also ran beneath the saddles. Large horse cloths, sometimes with extensions to their basically rectangular shape, were certainly used in the Islamic world at a later date (photograph 48). Considerably larger horse cloths are shown on three of the horses on the Costa candlestick (photographs 5, 7, and 9; figure 2, 4, and 6) while similar coverings appear in other pictorial sources (photograph 15; figures 126nn, perhaps 156c, and 161).

The saddles of all the horses on the Costa candlestick are visible to greater or lesser degrees. They are of a kind which, having developed during the early medieval period, remained largely unchanged for a remarkably long period. This basic

[25] Ibid.

[26] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah,* ed. J. A. Vullers (Leiden, 1877–80), 1053; idem, *The Sháhnáma of Firdausi,* trans. A. G. and E. Warner (London, 1905), 3:276.

[27] Esin, "The Horse in Turkic Art," 199–200.

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wood-framed saddle was known as a *sarj* in Arabic and a *zīn* in Persian. Poplar was widely used for the basic wooden frame,[28] including a raised pommel at the front, an upswept cantle at the back, and horizontal side bars that linked these elements. Both the pommel and the cantle were normally made of two pieces of wood, left and right, as stated in some documentary sources and confirmed by the admittedly limited archaeological record.[29]

This form of saddle provided a more comfortable seat than the fully developed "knightly" cavalry saddle used in Western Europe from the eleventh century until the end of the medieval period. A clear distinction was, in fact, made between these saddles at that time. For example, a document drawn up in Cyprus on 3rd November 1303 and eventually forming part of the *Cartulaire Général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers* referred to *selles de croce* or *selles de cronce,* which were Turkish-style saddles—in other words examples of the *sarj*—and *celles d'armes,* which were deep "knightly" saddles.[30] The medieval Islamic *sarj* used in Central Asia, Iran, and the Middle East permitted greater movement and physical flexibility than the medieval European "knightly" saddle while remaining deep enough to provide a secure seat in combat. It was, in fact, the direct ancestor of the so-called "western saddle" used by the cattlemen of North America and was, to a considerable extent, also the ancestor of modern riding saddles.

A handful of such rigid wood-framed saddles, with their suspended, flexible leather seats, survive in the archaeological record (figures 51a–b, 52a–b, 53a–b, and 54a–e). They are, of course, much more abundant in the pictorial record, though the latter has to be used with caution because it shows the external appearance rather than the internal structure of such saddles (photographs 15a–c, 16, 18, 20, 21, 27, 28, and 29; figures 86, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 103, 104, 105, 106, 109, 121, 122a, 125d, 126a, b, d, e, kk, ll, mm, and nn, 128a–b, 138c, 139, 140, 143, 144, 145b, 146, 149b, 152, 156c, 157, 159a, 162, 165, 174, 175, 176, 179, 181a–c, 182a–b, and 183). Variations in external appearance largely reflected changes where the saddle flaps or shabrack were concerned. During the eighth to early eleventh centuries this was often very large indeed, hanging down as far as the rider's feet and being of either rectangular or rounded outline. These variations themselves seem to have reflected regional and perhaps ethnic identification as well as changing fashion.

[28] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah,* ed. Vullers, 722, 1053, and 1131; idem, *Sháhnáma,* trans. Warner, 2:374, 3:276 and 348.

[29] D. Nicolle, "Mamlūk Saddles, Surviving Fragments in their Historical Contexts," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras VIII: Proceedings of the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd International Colloquium Organized at Ghent University in May 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013,* ed. U. Vermeulen, K. D'Hulster, and J. Van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2016), 477–505.

[30] *Cartulaire Général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de St.-Jean de Jérusalem,* ed. Delaville Le Roulx (Paris, 1894–1906), 64.

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Stirrups are, not surprisingly, used by the horsemen on the Costa candlestick, though with two apparent exceptions (photograph 10; figures 7 and 9) where the apparent lack of stirrups reflects either the loss of the candlestick's inlaid silver or tin, or carelessness on the part of the artist. In both cases, however, the position of the rider's leg and above all the angle of his foot show that, in reality, a stirrup was being employed. Meanwhile, the history of stirrups remains one that still exercises historians of technology. Called *rikāb* in Arabic, they had been known at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad in the early seventh century, though perhaps being of non-metallic construction, but were supposedly rejected by Muslims as a foreign, Persian, device that would weaken a horseman.[31] Stirrups were nevertheless widely adopted within most of the Islamic world over the next century or so,[32] though even in the late tenth century the cavalry of al-Andalus still supposedly resisted their adoption.[33]

A large number of medieval stirrups have been excavated by archaeologists or have come to light through the international art market, though by far the greater number are from the graves of pre-Islamic, nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppes (figures 55 to 73). Stirrups had also appeared in Islamic art since the Umayyad period and were universal by the time the Costa candlestick was made in the early thirteenth century (photographs 15a–c, 16, 27, 28, 39, 49, 50, and 51; figures 86, 89, 92, 95, 98, 102a, 103, 105, 109, 111, 118, 121, 122a, 124, 125b–d, 126a, b, c, e, x, y, kk, ll, and nn, 128a–b, 132b, 136, 139, 144, 145b, 146, 147, 152, 153, 157, 158, 159a–b, 160, 161, 162, 165, 172, 175, 176, 178, 179, 181b–c, 182a–b, and 183).

Among the most important features of the Costa candlestick is its representation of horse armor (photographs 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12; figures 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9). Unlike the other styles of horse coverings on the candlestick, these are so extensive that their identification as protective armor rather than merely decorative caparisons seems justified, especially as all but one of them (photograph 4; figure 1) are also worn with a protective chamfron on the horse's head.

The subject of horse armor in the medieval Islamic world has only recently attracted detailed scholarly attention,[34] especially the differentiation between decorative coverings used to indicate status and those with a primarily protective

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[31] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn,* ed. H. al-Sundūbī (Cairo, 1947), 19.

[32] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ,* ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo-Baghdad, 1965), 20–21; C. T. Harley-Walker, "Jāhiz of Basra to Al-Fath ibn Khāqān on the Exploits of the Turks and the Army of the Khalifate in General," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (October 1915): 646; al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān,* 13–14 and 19–21.

[33] Ibn Ḥawqal, *Liber Imaginis Terrae, Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ,* ed. J. K. Kramers (Leiden, 1939) 1:113; idem, *Configuration de la Terre, Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ,* trans. J. K. Kramers and G. Wiet (Paris, 1964), 1:112.

[34] D. Nicolle, "Horse Armour in the Medieval Islamic Middle East," *Arabian Humanities* 8 (2017), http:y//cy.revues.org/3293.

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purpose. According to the eleventh-century Turkish lexicographer al-Kāshgharī, the simple fabric saddle cover was called an *al* in Turkish Central Asia. It was often used as a sign of rank,[35] as was the Arabic *ghashī* in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Yemen.[36] Of course this habit was also seen outside the Islamic world, probably in the Byzantine Empire and clearly in Rome since the eighth century.[37] The latter example was probably as a result of Byzantine influence or as a heritage from a more distant Roman imperial past, though it could also have betrayed some closer Islamic influence. A survival of this early medieval Roman habit may have been illustrated in a twelfth-century stone floor-mosaic which is known only through a much later drawing (figure 131).

These were not, however, horse armors. The latter was used by some elite Byzantine cavalry units in the tenth century, apparently being of the extensive style that covered virtually the entire animal, unlike the so-called Avar style of horse armor that covered only the front half of the horse.[38] Whether its adoption within Byzantium (figure 113 for a later Byzantine example) reflected direct influence from the peoples of the steppes, or, as I suspect, betrayed Iranian-Islamic influence at a time when both peoples were facing the threat of Turkish Central Asian horse archery remains unclear. It is nevertheless worth noting that, with the exception of a very obtuse and perhaps greatly exaggerated reference to Celtic Breton "horse armor" in the early ninth century,[39] proper horse armor was not used in Western Europe—outside Islamic al-Andalus—until the late twelfth century (figures 129, 133, 143, 169a–b, 170a, and 173a–b).[40] Nor would it become widespread among the knightly elite until the thirteenth century.[41]

Thus, the idea that the representation of horse armors on the Freer Canteen and the Costa candlestick reflect European or "Crusader" influence does not really stand up. The pictorial record is tantalizingly inadequate until the early thirteenth century, though it does support the documentary evidence's insistence that horse armor was used, albeit not widespread (photographs 15a–c and 18; figures

[35]Esin, "The Horse in Turkic Art," 199–200.

[36]Ibn Ḥātim, *The Ayyūbids and Early Rasūlids,* 126.

[37]P. Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* (London, 1972), 15.

[38]J. F. Haldon, "Some Aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1975): 38; J. D. Howard-Johnson, "Studies in the Organization of the Byzantine Army in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries" (Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1971), 292.

[39]Ermold le Noir, *Poème sur Louis le Pieux*, ed. and trans. E. Faral (Paris, 1932), book III, 124, lines 1628–31; B. S. Bachrach, "The Origins of Armorican Chivalry," *Technology and Culture* 10 (1969): 168, n. 9.

[40]E. Oakeshott, *The Archaeology of Weapons* (London, 1960), 279–80.

[41]V. Norman, *The Medieval Soldier* (London, 1971), 227.

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79, 89, 90, perhaps 112, 126b and oo, 132b, 143, 183, and 184). There may even be some fragments of Islamic horse armor in the archaeological record, though their identification as such remains far from certain (photographs 52 and 53; figure 75).

Things are slightly more straightforward where the chamfron to protect a horse's head in close combat is concerned. It is shown four times on the Costa candlestick (photographs 6, 8, 10, and 12; figures 3, 5, 7, and 9). Furthermore one such chamfron was actually found during archaeological excavations at the southern Nubian capital of Soba (figure 74).[42] This is unlikely to have been made in medieval Nubia. While it may have been an ancient relic preserved since Roman or early Byzantine times for ceremonial parade purposes, it would seem more likely that this piece of horse armor came from neighboring medieval Egypt. A number of medieval Islamic and Middle Eastern Christian illustrated sources probably show the chamfron (photographs 15c; figures 90, 183, and 184) though the early ones can be disputed. A little later, toward the end of the thirteenth century, the medieval Latin term *copita* referred to what are thought to be the first hardened leather chamfrons used in Western Europe.[43] This was, of course, several decades after chamfrons, sometimes perhaps also of hardened leather, were used in the Islamic Middle East (see Part II for use of the terms *testinia* and *tishtanīyah* in the context of horse armor).

Fashions clearly had an impact upon methods of decorating the saddles of military or political elites. They include various aspects of saddle design, such as the addition of decorative tassels or the elaboration of existing straps for decorative purposes. Two of the saddles on the Costa candlestick seem to illustrate such a development. Here the three straps so often shown beneath the sides of a saddle are longer than normal and have apparent tassels at the ends (photographs 5 and 9; figures 2 and 6). What is less clear is whether such groups of three saddle straps (*fitrāk* in Persian) originally had something to do with the attachment of crupper straps or securing other aspects of the saddle, or were mainly used to secure other objects ranging from lassos to enemy heads.[44] Perhaps hidden beneath the very large saddle flaps in early representations, other illustrations of such groups of straps range from the simple and seemingly functional to examples that are even more decorated than those on the Costa candlestick (photographs 15; figures perhaps 103, 126c, e, and x, 135, 137, 138a–c, 139, 149b, 160, 162, and 179). They seem

[42] L. Allason-Jones, "Catalogue of Weaponry from Soba Excavations, 8–14 cents." (unpublished typescript, 1992).

[43] Oakeshott, *Archaeology of Weapons,* 280.

[44] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah,* ed. Vullers, 362 and 1183; idem, *Sháhnáma,* trans. Warner, 2:66 and 4:50; Muḥammad Ibn Manṣūr Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārakshāh, *Ādāb al-ḥarb wa-al-shujāʿah,* ed. A. S. Khwānsārī (Tehran, 1969), 332–33.

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to have fallen out of fashion in the middle of the thirteenth century, at least in what became the Mamluk Sultanate.

Tassels were similarly attached to other items of horse-furniture, the most common being a throat tassel attached to a collar around the animal's neck, immediately behind its ears. This is shown four times on the Costa candlestick (photographs 5, 8, 9, and 11; figures 2, 5, 6, and 8). It was almost certainly of Turkish Central Asian origin, though also having been adopted by Sassanian cavalry (photographs 18 and 20; figures 83 and 85). Before battle Turkish warriors were reported as attaching such a tassel, called a *beçken;* this was mentioned in a poem quoted by al-Kāshgharī about the Uighurs. The Turks similarly attached other things to their horses' necks including beads, jewels, or even a lion's claw for presumably totemic purposes.[45] Another Turkish term for the tassel beneath a horse's throat was *qotuz,* which entered Arabic as *qutas.*[46] Such tassels apparently returned to fashion following the Turkish Seljuq conquest of Iran, the Fertile Crescent, and Anatolia (figures perhaps 116, 125a–d, 126d, 139, 144, 146, 158, 163b, 165, 172, 176, 181b, and 182a–b). In Mamluk Egypt and Syria such a neck tassel was known as a *zirr.*[47]

Two horses on the Costa candlestick appear to have tassels attached to their girths (photographs 11 and 12; figures 8 and 9), a feature which might appear elsewhere, though the illustrations are sometimes not clear enough to locate such tassels with precision (photographs 15a–c; figures perhaps 135, perhaps 138c, and 154). It was, however, never a widespread or prolonged fashion. In several such illustrations the presumed girth tassel could also be interpreted as tassels attached to the stirrups. The latter fashion certainly existed, being shown six times on the Costa candlestick (photographs 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11; figures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8), but again it was not particularly widespread (photograph 15a; figures perhaps 111, perhaps 135, 138c, 146, 147, and 154).

A variation on such horse harness decorations was a scarf around the animal's head, attached to more commonly used decorative horse collars. It is shown four times on the Costa candlestick (photographs 4, 6, 10, and 12; figures 1, 3, 7, and 9). Whereas the tassel could be seen as a typically Turkish horse decoration, horse collars seem to be more typically Iranian. Having appeared in late Sassanian art,[48] they were soon appearing in Islamic art.[49] By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries these collars were often known as *qilādah* or *mishaddah* in the Arab world,[50]

[45] Esin, "The Horse in Turkic Art," 197–98.

[46] E. Esin, in private conversation in London, 1976.

[47] Lutful-Huq, "A Critical Edition of Nihayat al Su'l," [ed.] 331 and [tr.] 36.

[48] D. Thompson, *Stucco from Chal Tarkhan-Eshqabad* (Warminster, 1976), 15.

[49] M. Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam* (Oxford, 1975), 168.

[50] Mayer, *Mamluk Costume,* 15; Douillet, "Furūsiyya," 952–54.

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while in thirteenth-century Islamic northern India the Persian term *bar band* was used.[51] In eleventh- and twelfth-century Fatimid Egypt the most elaborate and valuable such horse collars were of gold chains with amber decorations,[52] while those used in early fourteenth-century Marinid Morocco were clearly impressive but perhaps of less intrinsic value. Unlike the tassels, such collars were shown in the iconographic record over a wide area and a prolonged period (photographs 15a–c, 28, 29, and 51; figures 86, 92, 103, 105, 109, 116, 118, 121, 122a and c, 125a–d, 126b, 138a–b, 139, 140, 144, 146, 149b, 153, 157, 158, 161, 162, 163b, 165, 172, 179, 181a–c, and 182a–b).

The knotting of a horse's tail may be seen as another form of decoration or cultural identification. All save one of the horses on the Costa candlestick have their tails knotted in this manner (the exception being photograph 10; figure 7). Quite why the latter animal's tail is not knotted is unknown. Although docked horse's tails do not seem to appear in the pictorial record of Islamic art from the seventh to fourteenth centuries, al-Balādhurī, writing in the ninth century, refers to such a procedure being adopted by some Muslim cavalry toward the end of the great Arab conquests. He was describing a minor skirmish that took place during a Muslim raid near the frontier of Sind in 44/664–65. Here, in the country of al-Qiqan (in what is now southeastern Afghanistan), the raiders were attacked by twelve "Turkish" horsemen riding horses described as *mahdhūfah,* translated by Hitti and Murgotten as having docked tails. Though these "Turks" were eventually all slain, the Muslim leader al-Muhallab Ibn Abī Ṣuffrah said; "How much more expeditious in manoeuvering were these barbarians than we were! [So] He had the tails of his own horses docked, being the first Muslim to do such a thing."[53] The Arabic verb *hadhaf* can mean taken away, cut off (sometimes specifically referring to hair) or suppressed, so it remains possible that the reality behind the story, related by al-Balādhurī two centuries after the event, actually recalled the widespread Turkish and Central Asian habit of tying up a horse's tail prior to combat. It was probably also done during training, as recorded by al-Kāshgharī in a Turkish poem during the eleventh century.[54] Such knotted tails are, of course, widespread in medieval and later Islamic art (photographs 15a, 28, 29, probably 51, and 50; figures 86, 89, 92, 94, 105, perhaps 106, 114, 118, 121, 126a, b, and oo, 128b, 134a–b, 136, 137, 138b–c, 139, 140, 149b, 153, 156c, 159b, 162, 165, perhaps 172, 174, 181a–c, 182a–b, and 184), though they were by no means universal.

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[51] Mubārakshāh, *Ādāb al-ḥarb,* 332–33.

[52] M. Canard, "La procession du nouvel an chez les Fatimides," *Annales de l'Institut Orientale de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger* 10 (1952): 375.

[53] Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān,* 608; idem, *The Origins of the Islamic State,* 2:210–11.

[54] Esin, "The Horse in Turkic Art," 196–97.

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A final aspect of the figures on the Costa candlestick that requires comment is the actions of the horsemen themselves. The possibility that these figures reflect some aspects of *furūsīyah* training exercises has already been mentioned. Perhaps it is the very variety of their positions and actions that makes such an interpretation appealing. Nevertheless, some of these "combat positions" were a common part of the repertoire of artists and craftsmen in the pre-Islamic and medieval Islamic world. An archer shooting forward is a case in point (photograph 9; figure 6), this motif being widely used elsewhere (photographs 28 and 50; figures 160 and 181c). The archer shooting rearward (photograph 8; figure 5) was similarly popular (photograph 31; figure 139). Horsemen wielding swords in combat were, of course, a commonplace motif in many cultures, but the figure on the Costa candlestick adopts a slightly unusual attitude with his arm and sword fully extended (photographs 7 and 58; figure 4). Comparable positions are seen in a few other sources, though these tend to be from the same part of the Middle East and to be similarly dated (photograph 29; figures 126am, 128a, perhaps 145b, and 183). Most other illustrations of horsemen wielding swords place these weapons above the rider's head—in other words at the start rather than the completion of a blow. Hence it seems possible that the more unusual illustrations of an extended arm and completed blow might reflect cavalry fencing exercises in the *maydān* (photograph 58).

The abundance and variety of positions while using a spear or lance seem even more likely to reflect *furūsīyah* exercises in a *maydān*. On the Costa candlestick they include wielding with both arms and thrusting forward (photographs 10 and 11; figures 7 and 8). Of course it would be very difficult for a horseman to thrust rearward using this two-handed technique, or at least to do so effectively. Such a method of wielding a spear on horseback had been used since ancient times, but in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Middle East it seems already to have been considered old fashioned. Yet the tactic would persist throughout the medieval period in the Islamic world and beyond, though not, apparently, in Western Europe (photograph 3; figures 106, 110, 134a–b, 136, 159b, 172, perhaps 176, and 182a–b).

Wielding a spear with one hand, in what might have been regarded as a more modern manner, is shown four times on the Costa candlestick: twice to the front (photographs 4 and 5; figures 1 and 2 [of necessity because this horseman holds a large shield in his left hand]) and twice to the rear (photographs 6 and 12; figures 3 and 9). The spears in question are all of the long, double-ended type with a substantial blade or pointed foot at their rear ends. Comparable illustrations are found elsewhere in Islamic and neighboring art from this period (photographs 15a, 18, 27; figures 79, 94, 98, 105, 111, 126e, 135, 138c, 174, 175, and 181a).

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None of these horsemen use the Western European, Byzantine, and indeed Islamic, "couched" lance technique, which employed a relatively short but heavy weapon held behind its point of balance and with its weight supported by tucking the rear of the haft between the horseman's upper arm and thorax. The couched lance does, of course, appear elsewhere in medieval Islamic art of this and later centuries, including some particularly interesting examples on Turkish relief carvings from Afyon in Western Anatolia.[55] Though these are very difficult to date, some aspects of the figures suggest the early thirteenth century or a bit later.

[55] K. Otto-Dorn, "Türkische grabstein mit figurenreliefs aus Kleinasien," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 75–76.

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