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Figure 2.9 Pen box of bronze inlaid with silver and gold dated 704/1304-5.

Though the exterior of this pen box is abraded and missing its inlay, the interior is well preserved. The large oblong well was designed to hold red pens; the carved well at the right held the inkpot, and the circular holes held containers for sand, starch paste or red ink.

Like other elements associated with writing, the inkwell became a symbol for mystics. Sufis in the tradition of the great Andalusian mystic Ibn 'Arab, for example, interpret the letter nun in the opening words of Sura 68 'Nun wa'l-qalam,' as the shape of primordial inkwell that along with the primordial pen writes on the Well-preserved Tablet events to come. The inkwell was often attached to or incorporated in the pen case and the entire unit also designated dawar. The domed cylindrical type of inkwell can come with an attached upright cylinder for the pen. Large rectangular boxes measuring some 30 cm long had separate compartments for both pens and inkwell. Prominent statesmen or scholars often had such pen cases with their names and titles inscribed across the lid; they seem to have been official insignia of office. Majd al-Mulk al-Muzaffar, grand vizier of the Khwarazmshahs, for example, had his lengthy titles inscribed in naskh around the lid of an inlaid brass example made by Shadhi in 607/1210-11. The Mamlik statesman and scholar Abu'l-Fida (1273-1331) had his name inscribed in bold thuluth characters across the lid of his pen case.

Both of these rectangular pen cases are missing sections on the inside, but to judge from a large Mamlik example made in 704/1304-5 whose interior is intact (Figure 2.9), the ends of the boxes might have contained a semicircular depression for the inkpot as well as two small round holes for containers of sand, starch paste, or red ink. Made of brass inlaid with silver and gold, this example is inscribed with verses praising the reed pen and the pen box. It must have been for one of the learned ‘men of the pen’ at the Mamlik court.

In later times these rectangular pen boxes, like other implements for writing, came in a variety of fancy materials. The Chinese made them in blue-and-white porcelain for export to the Islamic lands. Jizak potters produced them too. The Ottoman court ordered others in bejeweled rock crystal. Many later examples from Iran are made of varnished pasteboard and decorated with portraits or depictions of birds and partridges. Ottoman calligraphers also used a type of rectangular pen case with a separate inkwell (hunqal) on the side. The Ottoman calligrapher Mehmed Usta, for example, had one made of gilt silver dated 1897/1773 and inscribed with the tugra of Sultan Mustafa III.

Cylindrical and rectangular cases had to be carried with two hands, but another type of wedge-shaped pen box with a hinged or separate tapersoidal plate was more easily portable and could be worn suspended from the belt. Like rectangular cases, the wedge-shaped box had an inner removable section for storing the ink. Such a portable pen case may have been made as a set with a rectangular one, for Shadhi, the Herat craftsman who made the large rectangular one for the Khwarazmshah vizier Majd al-Mulk, also made a wedge-shaped one.

To transport the ink, a small tuft of cotton, wool, or raw silk called lija was inserted into the inkwell, and the ink poured over it. The wad absorbed the ink like a sponge so that the reed pen would take up only the requisite amount of ink, thereby preventing blots when writing. The wad also ensured that the ink would not spill should the inkwell overturn.

Calligraphers in the Islamic lands thus used the finest materials and implements in their work. Let us now turn to what they wrote.

Notes

1. This chapter is intended as an overview; fuller explanations and more details can be found in the admirable study recently prepared by a team of French scholars and based mainly on the collections in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: François Déroche, Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe (Paris, 2000). For early manuscripts, see also the recent work by Ursula Dreibholz, Frühe Koranfragmente aus der Großen Moschee in Samaria/Early Quran Fragments from the Great Mosque in Samarah, Hefte zur Kulturgeschichte des Jemen, 2 (Sanaa, 2003).

2. For a readable survey of the subject, see Richard Parkinson and Stephen Quirke, Papyrus, Egyptian Bookshelf (Austin, TX, 1991). For its use as a writing support in the Islamic lands, see Jonathan M. Bloom, Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World (New Haven, 2003). On the materials used to make manuscripts in general but particularly in the medieval West, see Jonathan J. G.
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9. Ursula Dreibholz, a conservator, points out reasonably that the skin of wild animals like gazelles was unsuitable because they are prone to scars and scratches; Dreibholz, Quaran Fragments, 45.

10. The same is not true of Western medieval manuscripts, in which the two sides are virtually indistinguishable. It may be that the flesh sides of parchments prepared in the Islamic lands were not sufficiently scraped; Dreibholz, Quaran Fragments, 45.

11. See also the detailed photographs in Dreibholz, Quaran Fragments, fig. 37.

12. BL, Or. 4648/III, my thanks to Dr Colin Baker, Head of Near and Middle Eastern Collections there, for identifying the text. Adolf Grohmann [Arabischche Palographie I, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Phil-Hist. Klasse. Denkschriften. Rd. 94/1 [Vienna, 1967], 111], followed by Déroche, Manuel, 62–7, pointed out its large size. The Byzantines used skins of approximately the same length, but narrower in width, to make rolls. The well-known Joshua Roll, made in Byzantium c. 950, for example, is composed of fifteen sheets, each measuring some 50 cm high and anywhere from 42 to 90 cm long. See Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era AD 843-1267 [New York, 1997], no. 162. Byzantine books were made by folding the sheet in half, the largest, such as the Trebizond Gospels (Evans and Wixom, Glory of Byzantium, no. 340), measures 46 x 37 cm.

13. There are at least two leaves from a Koran manuscript on parchment tinted orange: MMA, ms. 40.161.100 and Khalili Collection, KFQ3; see François Déroche, The Abbasid Tradition: Qur’ans of the 8th to the 10th Centuries AD, ed. Julian Raby, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art [London, 1992], no. 11, where he also notes that there are also saffron-colored fragments.

14. Musulûn in ‘[Kuwait, 1985]. Other pages apparently taken from this same manuscript were sold at Sotheby’s on 22–23 October 1993, lot Déroche, Manuel, 49 and pl. 11.


17. For an exhaustive and synthetic history of paper in the Islamic lands, covering not only its practical but also its intellectual implications, see Bloom, Paper before Print, Helen Lovelace, Islamic Paper: A Study of the Ancient Craft (London, 2001), provides a short practical guide.


19. This suggestion was put forward by Dr Boris Marshak.


22. The remains are divided between the shrine at Ardabil in north-eastern Iran, Istanbul University Library, and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin [ms. 1434]. See further, Chapter 5 and note 35.

23. It has been the subject of a fine monograph by D. S. Rice, The Unique Ibn al-Bawwâb Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library [Dublin, 1935] and is often cited and illustrated, probably because of its full (perhaps too full!) colophon that provides the name of the scribe, the date, and the place of production.

24. One manuscript copied on parchment in Syria dates as late as 980/1573–74 [BN, ms. arab 2547], but as Déroche notes, Manuel, 38, its use there is anecdotal.


30. London, Khalili Collection, QUR89, Déroche, Abbasid Tradition, no. 84. Déroche’s close examination of the folios showed that the central bifolio of the three-folio quire was ruled open, whereas the other folios were ruled separately.


32. In the Islamic lands paper was typically colored by dipping the sheets in a dye bath in contrast to many European papers, which were made from colored fibers. According to the eleventh-century bibliophile
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Badis (Levy, 'Medieval Arabic Bookmaking,' 1960), saffron could also be added to the size; but this technique has not been observed in extant samples.


For a general overview of specialty papers in the Islamic lands, see Sheila S. Blair, 'Color and Gold: The Decorated Papers Used in Manuscripts in Later Islamic Times,' Muqarnas 17 (2000): 24-36, for Chinese papers, see Tien-Hsien Tien, Paper and Printing, ed. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilisation in China (Cambridge, 1985), 87-94. Colored paper was also exported to Japan, where purple or blue paper, with gold or silver ink, became popular from the mid-eighteenth century for transmitting sutras, see Miyoko Murase, The Written Image: Japanese Calligraphy and Painting from the Sylvan Barnet and William Burto Collection (New York, 2003), no. 4.


Most of the manuscript is in the Bibliothèque Nationale Française Décorée, Les Manuscrits du coran, du Magharib à l'Insoultâne, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits, Catalogue des manuscrits arabo-iranien [Paris, 1981], no. 10, but a few sections have been removed and are in the National Library of Russia [Add. 166,614], be as B. W. Robinson, 'A Turkman School to 1503,' in Arts of the Book in Central Asia, ed. Basildi Gray (Boulder, CO, 1977), 241 and fig. 130. The calligrapher signs himself 'the royal scribe' (al-khidr al-sultan) but it is not clear to which court he was.

LACMA 73.5.599; Lentz and Lowry, Timur, no. 149 Linda Komarnicki, Islamic Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, 1998), cover.

Bl. ms. Or. 3263, Stuart Cary Welch, Wonders of the Age: Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting, 1501-1576 (Cambridge, MA, 1979), 48-65. The manuscript, one of the finest ever produced, deserves a monograph. See further, Chapter 10.

See above, note 38.

See Chapter 10 and Figure 10.6 for the biography of Mir 'Ali and other work by this renowned master.

Virtually all the calligraphic specimens in the two albums prepared for the Maghal emperor Jahangir and the slightly later Kevorkian Album are signed by Mir 'Ali. On these two albums, see Chapter 10, note 60, and 13, note 44.

Richard J. Wolfe, Marbled Paper, its History, Techniques, and Patterns (Philadelphia, 1991), is a convenient introduction to the technic, but concentrates on Western examples, a slightly odd perspective since the technique was clearly introduced to the West from somewhere in the East. More information about the technique as practiced in the Islamic lands is found in Porter, Painters, Painting and Books, 43-51. See also Yves Porter, 'Kāğız-e abri. Notes sur la technique de la marbrure,' Studia Iranica 17 (1988): 47-55. For the most recent overview of the technique, see Nan B. Freeman, 'Historical Overview,' in Ebrā Art, Marble on Paper, the Work of Feridan Özkören, ed. Samal al Gallani (Bahrain, 2001), 8-16.
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51. These arguments often fall out along nationalist lines, with Turks (or scholars of Turkish art) advocating a Turkish origin, Iranians (or scholars of Persian art) opting for Iran, and Indians (or scholars of Mughal art) opting for India. Porter, Painters, Painting and Drinkers, 45-7, gives a good overview of the arguments regarding some of the sources and the problems in following them up.

52. BN, suppl. pers. 1790, Francois Richard, Splendeurs persanes; manu- scripts du XVIe au XVIIe siecle (Paris, 1977), no. 47. It can be dated by comparison with a comparable album dated Khab 853/July-August 1449 in the Chester Beatty Library (ms. 1377, Lentz and Lowry, Timur, no. 105). The beauty album has pages that are stenciled (Persian 'aks or 'eskil), perhaps spattered or pressed with a piece of vellum soaked in pale dye, a method that is described in the early nineteenth-century treatise on binding, Risala-ya 'ild-sa'i, for which see Porter, K'adż-e abā'ī, 50 and n. 13. The pages in the Paris album are definitely spattered. I owe thanks to the papermaker Jake Benson, who spattered me with questions about marbleing and provided details about the techniques used.

53. MMA 1997.71, first noticed by Freeman, 'Historical Overview', 10. For further information about the calligrapher and his period, see Chapter 10 and notes 54 and 61.

54. Several examples of quatrains penciled on blue marbled paper are illustrated in color in Samar al Galand (ed.), Ebrî Art, Marble on Paper, the Work of Feridan Qâgirî (Bahrain, 2001), 11-12.

55. Mark Zebrowski (George Michell and Mark Zebrowski, Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates, The New Cambridge History of India [Cambridge, 1999], 181), recently noted two superb pages of marbled paper in the Kronos Collection of New York that are decorated with matching chinoiserie patterns evoking weeping willow branches, outlined in gold. The inscription states that they were among the presents sent from Iran to Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Khali of Mandu and entered the royal library on 11 August 1456. I owe this reference to Jake Benson.

56. The close relationship between gold-speckling and marbleing is clear for illustrated pages in this manuscript have gold-speckled borders whereas test pages have marbled borders. The alternation is reminiscent of the practice of compiling albums with a double page of calligraphic exercises with figur al borders followed by a double page of paintings with abstract borders.

57. For festivals and other occasions, the Chinese made paper-cuts of animals, birds, and other figures, sometimes recurring entire festivals. The earliest examples, unrecorded in Xinjiang in 1959, date from the fifth century, and a group of paper flowers found at Dunhuang dates from the ninth or tenth century. See Turner, Dao, 'China Section', 5.

58. TIEM, ms. 2474. The manuscript has just been brought to scholars' attention by David J. Roxburgh, 'The Aesthetics of Aggregation: Persian Anthologies of the Fifteenth Century', in Islamic Art and Literature, ed. Oleg Grabar and Cynthia Robinson (Princeton, NJ, 2001), 123-5, but no illustrations are shown.

59. The main part of the manuscript is in TIEM, ms. A. 1926 a few other pages including this one (LACMA 73.3.539) have been detached from it; see Lentz and Lowry, Timur, no. 149, who also give a translation of the poem on this page. Sultan Husayn's poetry was not considered particularly inspiring. Babur, the Timurid prince and bibliophile who felt to India where he founded the Mughal line, commented [citation in Lentz and Lowry, Timur, 360] that, 'Many couples in his diwan are not bad, it is however, written in the same metre throughout.'

60. Linda Komaroff has confirmed for me that each folio consists of four sheets: two sheets of blue or green in the center that support the calligrapher like a window and two sheets for the margins or frame.

61. This work is unsigned, but contemporary sources mention the names of the scribes. One of the two scribes of the copy of the chronicle who worked at the court of Sultan Husayn is known as shikîrîn qalâm (sugary pen), who reputedly brought this art to perfection. Five signed specimens in his hand are preserved in the album compiled in 651/1254-5 for the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza (Hâlî 144, fol. 34 and 59; Châhr-yad Adî, 'Les artistes nommés Dust-Mohammad,' Studio Iranica 33, no. 3 [1993]: 335-6), and the copy of Sultan Husayn's poetry may be Shâykh 'Abdallâh's work as well. His son Dust Muhammad the elder (qâ'a', not to be confused with Dust Muhammad the calligrapher and compiler of the album, became an important decoupeur in the early sixteenth century, whose work is also preserved in the Bahram Mirza album (Hâlî 144). He might or might not have been the same person as the painter Dust Muhammad, known as Dust-i Divan (Dust the mad or eccentric). Dust Muhammad was, in turn, the teacher of Şâh-i Badkhânshah, as paper-cutting, like most calligraphic arts, was passed from master to pupil and often from father to son.
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al-Muqaddasi and al-Qalqashandani. The methods used by modern calligraphers (e.g., Mohamed Zakariya, *The Calligraphy of Islam: Reflections on the State of the Art* (Washington, DC, 1979), 7; Derman, *Letters in Gold*, 2nd ed., and Marie-Genèveve Guéa, *Dictionnaire du stylo Vernay-Nouri* (eds), *L’art du livre arabe: du manuscrit au livre d’artiste* [Paris, 2001], 53–60) can be useful, but it is methodologically dangerous to assume that these techniques were necessarily used in earlier times.


70. Rumi is reputedly the best-selling poet in America today, but his canonization began long ago: the fifteenth-century Sufi poet Jami already dubbed Rumi’s *Mathnawi* ‘the Qur’an in the Persian tongue.’ On the phenomenon of his popularity, see, among others, Carl W. Ernst, *The Shamshnama Guide to Sufism* [Boston and London, 1997], 169–73. Rumi’s *Mathnawi* is available in many editions; one of the most popular is that of R. A. Nicholson, which has been often reprinted (e.g., Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawi-yi Ma’navi*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson [Tehran, 1341]. Nicholson also wrote one of the first studies of Rumi in English, which includes a translation of these famous lines entitled ‘The Song of the Reed’: Reynold A. Nicholson, *Rumi: Poet and Mystic, 1207–1273* [New York, 1974], 31). See chapter 9 and Figure 9.1 for the earliest manuscript of Rumi’s famous work.


73. Letters in Gold, 9–10.

74. Their posture thus corresponds to that of ancient Egyptian calligraphers, as shown by the famous statue of seated scribe in the Louvre (E2035; Bloom, *Paper before Print*, 3). It contrasts to Chinese calligraphers who generally wrote on tables. The scholar’s table was the repository for the *wenfang si bao*, four treasures of the scholar’s studio: the inkstone, inkstick, brush, and paper. See Turner, *DoA: Scholar’s Table* with further references. The differences are due in part to the nature of the support: if only a small section of the papyrus roll was exposed, the papyrus was sufficiently stiff to allow the scribe to pen his text; Chinese calligraphers, by contrast, wrote on more malleable supports, typically silk or paper, that required a firm support.


77. Natanael Anasavin is one of few to work from extant examples as well as textual references. His study of the flow of ink, ‘Le recroquevem: déduction du ductus d’une écriture d’après l’intensité de l’encre,’ *La Gazette du Livre Médiéval* 37 (Autumn 2000): 34–42, also available on-line with color illustrations at http://mywebpage.ntscomp.com/anatanavld/ductus/index.html, shows what important results can be obtained from such a study.


80. V. A. Krachkovskaya, ‘Evolutsiya Kuficheskogo Pis’ma v Srednuyu Azii,’ *Izopigraphic Vestosoko* 3 (1949): fig. 4. The fragment is rare, if not unique, example of a Samanid ceramic with a historical inscription; most pieces have apocryphes; see Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions* [Edinburgh, 1998], 151–2.

81. See above, Chapter 1.


84. See above, Chapter 1.

85. Levy, *‘Medieval Arabic Bookmaking.’*

86. Many examples cited in Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*.

87. E.g., ms. arab 1300c and 1240c; Déröche, *Manuel*, 133 and n. 72.


90. Qādī Ahmad, *Gulistan*, 69; Qādī Ahmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, 112.


93. Good color illustrations in Dreibholz, *Quran Fragments*.

94. Bin, ms. arab 330c, for which see François Déröche, *Les Manuscrits du coran, aux origines de la calligraphie Nationale*, Département des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1983, no. 268. Most of the copy in gold is in the Nurosmiami Library in Istanbul (see 37), with detached leaves in the Khalili Collection (KQ 52) and elsewhere; Déröche, *Abbasid Tradition*, no. 41.


96. The colophon in the so-called Nurse’s Koran endowed to the Great Mosque of Kairouan in 1010/1020 (Figure 5.1) states that the same person was responsible for transcription, vocalization, illumination, and binding [B. Roy and P. Poinsoot, *Inscriptions arabes de Kairouan* [Paris, 1950–8], nos. 98 and c], although François Déröche has suggested that this statement may be an exaggeration. 


98. The testing carried out on the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque
Nationale suggested that the materials used for illumination might also be distinct from those used for illustration. A copy of al-Idrisi's Geography (ms. arab 2221) made in the Maghrib in the thirteenth century used materials and pigments not found in the other manuscripts tested. These included such colors as rose-violet, yellow ocher, and compound green, as well as white lead to brighten the colors. This manuscript was the only one of the group tested to have full-page paintings, so further work needs to be done to ascertain the distinction between illumination and illustration.

101. Elle, ‘Da’wât.’