185. Inkwells in cast bronze incised and inlaid with copper and silver

Height 9.3cm, diameter 8.7cm

David Collection, Copenhagen,
no. 3271790
Period (9th century), 12th or early 13th century

An inscription on the three bird-headed plaques reads:

al-`izz ma`qal wa`l-qabil wa`l-madala

nisf al-salama wa`l-su`ada wa`l-`asba

`glory, prosperity, wealth, happiness, ease and long life to its owner.'

Inscriptions in roundels on lid

'amal al-Salih Malik

made by Shah Malik

This inscription on the upper body reads:

al-`izz wa`l-qabil wa`l-madala

nisf al-salama wa`l-su`ada wa`l-`asba

`glory, prosperity, wealth, happiness, ease and long life to its owner.'

Inscription on lower body:

... wa`l-su`ada wa`l-madala

nisf al-salama wa`l-su`ada wa`l-`asba

`... happiness and well-being and favour and health to its owner.'

Although small bronze inkwells were used by the Romans, glass ones seem to have been preferred in early Islamic times. Large bronze inkwells first appeared in the 11th century and one particular form, of which this is an example, became standard in Mesopotamia and Persia in the 12th century. Two types of ink were used in medieval Islam, one a soluble solid with a sour base known as midala, the other a liquid mixture of gallnuts and viitol called jawab. Inkwells such as these were intended for the latter ink, hence their name midala. They commonly held a big or piece of ink-soaked felt or wool and were also provided with an inner horizontal rim to prevent spilling, see Levy (1962). Three cords fastened to loop handles on the body and passing through loops on the lid allowed the objects to be safely carried about. Another inkwell made by Shah Malik is known, see Mayer (1959, pp. 87-93). Judging by its decoration, Shah Malik must have worked in Khurasan. Similar inkwells are known signed by craftsmen from such cities as Nishapur and Herat. The decoration of this inkwell employs revellers and animals.

Published: Pope and Ackerman (1936-9), pl. 431a-b; Mayer (1959, pp. 82-3, pl. XIII).

186. Mirror of cast bronze

Diameter 14.7cm

Iraq Museum, Baghdad, no. 14820
Persia, 12th-13th century

Inscription

baraka wa yamun surat raz al-din wa`l-salama wa`l-`asba

wa`l-qabil wa`l-su`ada wa`l-`asba

`Blessing, good fortune, joy, happiness, well-being, [God’s] sympathy, health, support, sustenance, victory ... perpetual ... to its owner.'

At least four other mirrors with this decorative design are known. One was found at Dusni in the USSR, one is in the British Museum, London (no. 66.12-29.975), another is in the Museum du Louvre, Paris, and a fourth is in the Institute of Arts, Detroit. See Krahkovskaya (1966, fig. 2); Miegrois (1922a, pl. 16) and Nabi-Oghlu (1931, fig. 1). This example is unique in having the pair of foam in the central area designed to take the boss-handle: the mirror was presumably held by a handle attached to the hole near the rim. The design appears to be a corruption of another mirror design with two pairs of animals in the inner field and this example may have been cast after another and better piece, compare Pope and Ackerman (1936-9), p. 130a-b. This would account for the general lack of definition and, in particular, the corruption of the inscription due to the mould having slipped at some point in the casting process. Mirrors with relief casting are not found in Persia much before 1100. They were almost certainly inspired by Chinese mirrors and their sudden appearance in the 12th century was due to the uniting of north China and Mongolia under the Tatars. This permitted people and objects to move more freely westwards from north China and brought mirrors to the province of Khurasan, the heart of the Persian metalworking industry.

Published: Unpublished.

187. Dish of bronze, incised and inlaid with copper and silver

Height 9.2cm, diameter 37cm

University of Michigan Museum of Art, no. 1957.1.41, purchased from the Her CLA SALU WUHU at 1959

Inspection on interior

al-`izz al-dalil wa`l-qabil wa`l-madala

nisf al-salama wa`l-su`ada wa`l-`asba

`glory, prosperity, wealth, excellence, cessation of suffering ... status, perfection, excellence, favour and long life.'

Inspection on exterior unbro.

Other examples of this type of dish are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. M.310-1954), in the Musee du Louvre, Paris (no. 33659) and two found in Semirechye in Central Asia. See Grobmann (1953), Melikian-Chirvani (1973, pp. 38-46), Bernaldt (1955, p. 176) and no. 187.

Published: Unpublished (1957), figs. 28-30.
186 Mace-head in cast bronze, originally gilded
Height 7.4cm, diameter 9.2cm
British Museum, London,
no. 8.1.8-8.1.9
Persia, 12th–13th century

It is difficult to find any parallels for the pair of lions with raised left paws which form the six blades of this mace-head and any attribution is bound to be conjectural. However, with its original giltting and set upon a sturdy metal handle, this mace-head must have been an impressive item of regalia, perhaps the proud possession of a provincial governor or petty ruler.

Unpublished

187 Dish of bronze incised and inlaid with silver
Diameter 33cm
Iran Bastan Museum, Teheran,
no. 1587
Transoxiana or Khurasan, late 12th–early 13th century

Inscription around centre has a repetition of na‘l-baraka, ‘and blessing.’ The main inscription:

This dish and no. 185, though never analyzed, are probably made of high tin bronze—a alloy of copper and about 20 per cent tin. This alloy was known in early Islamic times as asafir, literally ‘white copper’ or ‘white bronze’, and was used for bowls, ornamental dishes, ewers and candlesticks. Amongst the particular properties of high tin bronze is that it can be red-hot forged, like iron, and if quenched becomes reasonably malleable when cold. If permitted to cool slowly then hammered, it shatters. Three centres of high tin bronze manufacture are recorded in Islamic texts of the 10th–11th centuries: these are Tabaristan near Buakara, Hamadan in western Persia and Sistan province in eastern Persia. Of the Harpanid industry, nothing more is known, but the products of the 11th century Sistan indicate that this province depended upon Transoxiana for its inspiration. In the 12th and 13th centuries Khurasan became an important manufacturing centre and the silver bowls produced there are amongst the finest Islamic metal objects (example, the Vase Vescovai in the British Museum, London). Transoxiana continued to produce high tin bronze objects in this later period, but of less originality. They may be distinguished from the products of Khurasan by the almost three-dimensional effect of much of the decoration, by the unusual motifs and designs used, including interlace and knot patterns and floral designs, and by the uncommon vocabulary of the inscriptions. Some examples are characterized by unusual inscriptions.

Published: Mehitter-Chirvani (1974), pp. 45–5, figs. 1–5

188 Ewer of brass, incised and inlaid with silver
Height 40cm
British Museum, London,
no. 48.8–5.2
Persia (Khurasan), late 12th or early 13th century

Inscription on neck:

This ewer is one of a fairly large extant group (compare no. 191) some of which are simply cylindrical in shape, having flat or slightly concave faces, while others, like this example, are flared. The whole aim of the decoration is apparently to bring good luck to the owner of the object. The inscriptions state this quite clearly and the birds, birds (on the inner shoulder) and peacocks (on the lower body) probably symbolise this through the qualities associated with them in the folklore tradition. The medallions on the body give astrological expression with the same ideas by presenting the planets in their deities—the Sun in Leo, the Moon in Cancer, Mercury in Gemini, Venus in Taurus, Mars in Arietis, Jupiter (on the handle base) in Pisces, Saturn in Aquarius, Saturn in Capricorn, the planetary eclipse (see no. 194) in Sagittarius, Mars in Scorpio, Venus in Libra and Mars in Virgo.

Published: Landi (1975), II, pp. 63–6, pls. XXIX–XXX; Barrett (1984), pl. 6–7
Metalwork

199 Vase of beaten bronze, incised and inlaid with silver Height 16. 3cm, diameter 18. 8cm Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, no. 54. 453, formerly in the Pepys Collection, Paris Persia (Khorasan), 12th or early 13th century


[Mahmūd’s] intercession, perpetuity, sufficiency, honour, tranquility [for salāma], gratitude, mastery, victory, veneration, superiority, elevation, mercy, ease, health, favour, potency, power, [God’s] sympathy, safety, charity, long life and perpetual commendation to its owner. This inscription is in the format of the usual round medallions found on metal objects. The inscription is written in the Kufic script and is divided into four parts:


[Mahmūd’s] intercession, perpetuity, sufficiency, honour, tranquility [for salāma], gratitude, mastery, victory, veneration, superiority, elevation, mercy, ease, health, favour, potency, power, [God’s] sympathy, safety, charity, long life and perpetual commendation to its owner. ’

Made of this sheet metal, with an untouched and finished surface, the vase turned back, this object was probably designed to be a top for a small table. Low tables or taboos were made of pottery or common survivals from the 12th and 13th century. Syrian and Persia, and were often designed as stands for wine-brokers. In its inner centre, this metal top would have been suitable for sweet-meats, nuts or other choice foods, and would have served an important function in the typically fast-oriented social groupings of the medieval Islamic world.

Published: Edgington (1957, figs. 35, 37-4)

190 Table-top of brass, beaten, incised and inlaid with silver and copper Width 21. 8cm, length 25cm Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, no. 54. 599, acquired from the Kelkian Collection, Paris, in 1930 Persia (Khorasan), late 12th-early 13th century


[Mahmūd’s] intercession, perpetuity, sufficiency, honour, tranquility [for salāma], gratitude, mastery, victory, veneration, superiority, elevation, mercy, ease, health, favour, potency, power, [God’s] sympathy, safety, charity, long life and perpetual commendation to its owner. ’

‘Perpetual glory, secure life, secure existence, exceeding prosperity, rising good luck, favourable existence, authority and long life to its owner. ’

The inscription on this bowl indicates that its owner was an officer of Badr al-Din Lo‘‘n, ruler of Mosul 1248-59 (compare no. 197). Rice has suggested that this bowl was produced in Mosul but it seems more likely that it was manufactured in north-west Persia, perhaps Tabriz, as a special order for Naim al-Umar. ‘Umar. It is one of a series of bowls cast after north Persian ceramic forms which stylistically and technically is associated with a notable group of northwestern Persian cast bronze caddicestons. The workshops manufacturing these objects produced a great variety of caddicestons as well as superb stem-bowls and inlows. Indeed, the bronze casters of these 13th and early 14th century objects were undoubtedly the most original and creative in the history of early Islamic Persia, utilising and adapting shapes from a variety of sources to produce new styles of great strength and character.

Published: Lami (1485, II, pp. 124-5; pl. XIII-VIII)

191 Ewer of beaten brass incised and inlaid with silver and copper Height 44. 8cm, diameter 17cm Galleria Estense, Modena, no. 6221 Persia (Khorasan), 12th or early 13th century

Inscriptions are unclear. This ewer is of a type common in Khorasan prior to the Mongol invasions (compare no. 188). It is an outstanding example of this group because of its extraordinary repoussé figures – the harpies around the shoulder with their curious horns and the roused falconer on the neck with his animal-mask face. The lippe-like beast with its young and the lid on which they recline are probably not original, judging by the decoration around the lower part of the lid.

Published: Schonover (1966, pl. 24-6)

192 Bowl of bronze, cast, incised and inlaid with silver Height 12cm, diameter 20. 5cm Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna, no. 2748 North-west Persia, 1210-29


[Mahmûd’s] intercession, perpetuity, sufficiency, honour, tranquility [for salâma], gratitude, mastery, victory, veneration, superiority, elevation, mercy, ease, health, favour, potency, power, [God’s] sympathy, safety, charity, long life and perpetual commendation to its owner. ’

‘Perpetual glory, secure life, secure existence, exceeding prosperity, rising good luck, favourable existence, authority and long life to its owner. ’

The inscription around the sides is unclear. This pen-box is a composite piece. The cover for the small compartments is much later than the rest of the object and the body cover, with honesmen and swastika patterns, is probably 13th century Mesopotamian work. The body itself has a plated lobed inscription of a style unparallelled on other metal objects but similar to that of two inscriptions on 13th-century tomb towers at Maragheh in Azerbaijan and an inscription on a 12th-century mosque in Mosul. Hence the likelihood of this pen-box being a 12th-century north-west Persian product. The shape of the box is common in this period in Khorasan and was probably designed so that it could be placed in a belt. Pen-boxes continued to be carried in this way in Otonian lands until modern times. It is a box for the small compartments is much later than the rest of the object and the body cover, with honesmen and swastika patterns, is probably 13th century Mesopotamian work. The body itself has a plated lobed inscription of a style unparallelled on other metal objects but similar to that of two inscriptions on 13th-century tomb towers at Maragheh in Azerbaijan and an inscription on a 12th-century mosque in Mosul. Hence the likelihood of this pen-box being a 12th-century north-west Persian product. The shape of the box is common in this period in Khorasan and was probably designed so that it could be placed in a belt. Pen-boxes continued to be carried in this way in Otonian lands until modern times. 

Published: Pope and Ackerman (1958-9, pl. 133B)
194 Door-knocker in the form of two winged dragons with bird-heads as tails
Height 25cm, width 24.5cm
Danish Collection, Copenhagen, no. 30, 1973.
Northern Mesopotamia, Selaqqa period, late 13th or early 13th century.

This cast bronze door-knocker with incised decoration is one of a pair which was attached to the doors of the Ulu Cami in Cice, Turkey. The other is now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin-Dahlem. The knocker is notable not only for its beautiful design but also for its planetary symbolism. In the astronomical iconography of medieval Islam the dragon represents the planetary eclipse, and the knot here merely a loop—the node of the orbit of the moon. Although the dragon was never a planet it was accorded planetary status and came to have an astrological and talismanic significance. See Hartner (1926). The most celebrated example of its use in the latter context is on the Selaqqa Taliasan Gate at Baghdad. Thus the dragon door-knocker was both an adornment and a protection for the building on which it was hung. When that building was a mosque, astrology and religion were brought together much as occurred in medieval Christian Europe.

Published: Leth (1975, p. 69)

195 Ewer of brass incised and inlaid with silver
Height 38.1cm, diameter 20.6cm
Cleveland Museum of Art, no. 56.11, purchase from the John L. Severance Fund
Northern Mesopotamia, dated 1223.

Inscription on neck:
"sam'il Ahmad al-Dhahab al-naqqash al-Mansuri fi 'ismu na 'ituwa ma'n wa l-nu'ur bi-yahbaki
'made by Ahmad al-Dhahab, the decorator, of Mosul in the year 622 [1223 AD] and glory to my owner."

Inscription at handle base:
"sam'il Ahmad al-Dhahab al-Mansuri
'made by Ahmad al-Dhahab of Mosul."

Two graffiti of later owners on the neck read Ḥusayn ibn Qūsim and Umar al-Muhatab. The inscription on the shoulder is corrupt and evidently designed as ornament. Two other inlaid objects made by Ahmad al-Dhahab are known to have survived, a basin in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and another ewer in a private collection. This is the earliest of the three and one of the earliest objects signed by a Mosul artist. Although areas of the inlay are missing this ewer remains one of the finest surviving objects from 13th century Mesopotamian or Syria. It is also one of the most interesting, particularly in the scenes of everyday life which are contained within large medallions which adorn the body. Beginning at the left of the handle and proceeding clockwise: a man with a tree trunk on which a horseman shoots a bird, two men shoot birds in a tree, a camel rider presents a bouquet to another, a man ploughs with two oxen, a seated figure with mirror and two attendants, a flute-playing shepherd with goats and dog, a harpist and a flautist, a man graving a donkey near a peacock, a youth on a couch with attendants, a drinker and a man shooting a bird with a blow-pipe. The smaller medallions illustrate various hunters, riders and musicians while the neck and shoulder bear scenes showing an enthroned figure with attendants in an outdoor setting. These varied scenes give a delightful vision of the courtly life, open air sports, activities and labours of the time. The lid, upper neck ring, lower part of spout and its plaque, and base are all later additions.

Published: Rieche (1974a, pp. 37-301)

196 Ewer of beaten brass incised and inlaid with silver and copper
Height 30.5cm
British Museum, London, no. 66 12-49-4
Mesopotamia (Mosul), 1323

Inscription on the upper neck:
"naqsha Ḥusayn ibn Ma'na'a al-Mansuri fi 'ismu wājafūn wa ni'ta ma' nā bi'l-Mansuri
'decoration by Ḥusayn ibn Ma'na'a of Mosul, in the month of May of the year 679 [1323 AD] at Mosul."

Inscription on shoulder which is corrupt in places:
"al-īzz nu'll-baqi mu'all-ribta
mu'all-indahwa al-barahat mu'l-il'aqūna
al-qāhiba sayu'dum
mu'all-ribta al-barahat al-dawla
al'l-mu'allma mu'all-il'aqūna
dā'īman
'glory, long life, etc., [God's]
sympathy, blessing, health, felicity, wealth, well-being and health always."

Inscription on lower body:
"al-īzz nu'll-baqi mu'all-ribta
mu'all-nu'muqādar
al-tālita l-mu'allma
mu'all-il'aqūna al-nu'mūqā
al'qāhiba mu'all-nu'mū
'old al-īzz ikhtal il-aqū na'il-ayn ad [ilūm]
li-yahbaki
'glory, long life, ease, graviity, virtue, blessing, well-being, health, graviity, felicity, victory, ever eneimes, superiority and [God's] protection for ever for its owner.

The fame of this ewer rests in its inscription which gives not only the name of the decorator and the date, but also the name of the city, Mosul, where the ewer was made. It is the only known Mesopotamian object whose provenance is known for certain and therefore forms an important item of evidence for the history of the medieval Islamic metalworking industry. With the addition of a straight spout and substantial foot, the shape would be typical of northern Mesopotamian taste for this period, very similar to no. 195. The scenes in the medallions on the body are not as original as those on this other ewer and are largely of hunting, fighting and court scenes. However, the conception and workmanship have preserved here designs which are positive, bold and well-structured. There are also such subterfuges in the curvilinear structure of the background pattern of the shoulder which prevents monstony. The central band of horseman and animals contains another inscription though only an odd letter may be made out, the ingenuity of the artist having prevented it being deciphered. The spout of the ewer is missing and the base is a replacement.

Published: Reinaud (1868, II, pp. 423-30); Laro-Prez (1866, pp. 152-3); Pope and Ackerman (1908b, pp. 129-30).
Muslim lands, success of conquerors and holy warriors, father of orphans and the poor, pride of God's servants, remover of injustice and obscurity [in God], summit of dignities, patron of the state, giving victory to the rich skill of metalworkers in that city at this period. It probably dates from the second half of Ilkhanid reign since he only adopted the title al-Malik al-Rahim in 1233. Evidently commission for a princess, it is then found its way into the royal battery where doubtless was used to serve food to the prince and his courtiers. The four inner medallions contain a variety of figures including four planets: the sun with disc-like head, the moon with crescent, Mercury in a seated posture, and Venus with hate. Twenty-four outer medallions are decorated with scenes such as a falconer, men fighting lions, secomars or other mythical bird-cum-beasts, fighting foot-soldiers, bowmen, wrestlers, drinkers, musicians, dancers, a pair of rams, a pair of camels and a lion attacking a bull. The westlike character of both titles and depictions contrasts curiously with the fact that this object was made for a princess and that Ilkhanid himself was notable for his policy of placation rather than resistance in the face of Mongol invasion.

'Glory to our lord the sultan al-Malik al-Rahim, the learned, the just, the holy warrior, the defender, the fortified by God, the victor, master of kings and sultans, reveiver of justice in the words, sultan of Islam and the Muslims, fighting the oppressed against the oppressors, giving victory to the truth with proofs, slayer of infidels and polytheists, vanquisher of heretics and rebels, guardian of the borders of the Muslim lands, righther of the oppressed against the oppressors, father of orphans and the poor, bane of the caliphate, partner in the kingdom, pillar of the [Muslim] nation giving victory to the [Muslim] community, summit of dignities, pole-star of sultans, destroyer of atheists, masterer of holy warriors, dominator over the nations, sultan of the Arabs and Persians, hero of Syria, king of Iraq, unique of the age, fortified by God with victory, guardian of the borders by assailing the mamlukes, father of gifts, bestower of prizes, al-Malik al-Adil, Abu Bakr, son of our lord the sultan al-Malik al-Kamil Abu al-Mu'addil Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr ibn Ayub, may his victory be glorified.'

Inscription in curvatures on the outer 'amal Al-Jamal ibn Umar al-Mu'addil ibn al-Dhal al-Mu'addil 'week of Al-Mamluk al-Umar, known as al-Dhal, the decorator.' Inscriptions on bone ibn al-Dhal ibn Dinshah ibn al-Dhal ibn Dinshah ibn al-Dhal ibn Dinshah 'for the service of al-Malik al-Rahim ibn al-Dhal ibn Dinshah ibn al-Dhal ibn Dinshah ibn Dinshah ibn al-Dhal ibn Dinshah; son of the Commander of the Faithful, 1070-9 AH'. Inscriptions inside the base are corrupt, though occasional words of good wishes are recognizable. They were probably intended only for ornamental purposes. Copies and basins (Aqqa and Aqqa) were used in medieval Islam for the washing of hands before and after meals.

Published: Jacobson (1869, p. 334); Ricci (1974), pp. 301-11, pls. 6-9, 130-3, Paris (1971, no. 120).
199 Wallet of brass incised and inlaid with silver and gold
Height 15cm, length 31.6cm
Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Gambier Perry collection, no. 96
Northern Mesopotamia, mid-13th century

Inscription on lid:
al-izz wa'l-ajib wa'l-nasir wa'l-zaman wa'l-mal wa'l-dril wa'l-trzym [musl] [l-thal al-ashir wa'l-qaml wa'l-damsa madir] [mas] wa'l-n'arda ilma [t'l-dafil wa'l-yawm al-din] wa'l-Kamal wa'l-glory, prosperity, favour, excellence, fulfillment of wishes, righteousness, respect, safe return from pilgrimage, charity, benevolence, wealth (l), happiness, excellence, good fortune, perfection and...

200 Candlestick of beaten brass inlaid with silver
Height 34cm, diameter (base) 31cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 71521, formerly Harriet Collection
Syria or Egypt, Ayyubid period, mid-13th century

Inscription at base of neck:
'amalul al-bajal Isam'il al-mu'asra,
Muhammad b. Farisah al-Mansub
al-musta'im aqr al-Shuja'
al-Mansub
work of Haji Jami'-il, decoration
by Muizz ad-Din al-Mansur,
the inlaver, employee of
Shuja' of Mosul

Inscription around body:
al-'izz wa'l-ajib wa'l-jazar wa'l-zaffar
la'l-dik al-damsa al-damsa
wa'l-yawm al-din
"Glory, long life, triumph over enemies, continuity of health, superiority, high rank and rule."

The neck of the candlestick bears medallions of musicians, a drinking scene and a bearded man.

Published: Robinson (1907), p. 163, no. 1, pls. 8–9.

201 Mirror of cast bronze
Diameter 20.5cm
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, no. TL 175722, anonymous loan
Persia, Ilkhanid period, 13th century

The handle of the mirror is missing.
The picture on this mirror is of Bahram Gur and his lyre-playing Greek girl friend, Asilda. The story in the Shihabسر was summarized as follows. Bahram Gur took Asilda out hunting gazelle on his racing camel. She challenged him first to remove the horns of a male gazelle and give them to a female gazelle, and then to shoot a prickle into the ear of one of the two gazelles so that while it was running and scratching its ear with its paw he could pin together the paw, head and back of the animal with a single shaft of his arrow. Bahram Gur performed this extraordinary feat but Asilda then accused him of not being human but demonic. Upon this Bahram Gur threw her to the ground and triumphed over her with his camel!

Published: London (1933), no. 22903;
Pope and Ackerman (1938–9, pls. 130A and B)

202 Pen-box of brass incised and inlaid with silver and gold
Length 19.7cm
British Museum, London, no. 41 6–235
Probably Persia, 12th century

Inscription on front of body:
'amalul al-bajal Isam'il al-mu'asra,
sham'amul al nosa al 6a'mu
the work of Mahmud ibn Sunqur
in the year 860 (1261 AD)

This round-ended pen-box form, with its separate compartment at one end for writing materials additional to the pens, was probably based on a wooden model and first seems to have been made in metal in 12th century Persia. It continued to be popular after the Mongol conquests and was widespread, though in the Mamluk empire a rectangular form was also used (see no. 224). The maker of this pen-box may have been related to Muhammad ibn Sunqur al-Baghdadi who made the magnificent Koran box, no. 214. The decoration is rather "international" in style, and is difficult to pin down to any precise region. On the base is a fighting scene, in medallions which adorn the inside and outside of the body are musicians and dancers, and the outside of the lid is decorated with roundels containing the planets in their domiciles (compare no. 215). On the inner side, the planets alone are depicted: left to right, the Moon with crescent, Moon holding a scroll, Venus playing a lute, the Sun, Mars holding a sword and a dripping severed head, Jupiter and Saturn holding a pick in one hand.

Published: van Berchem (1904, p. 38);
Pope and Ackerman (1938–9, pls. 131A and B), Barrett (1943, pls. 30–3)

203
203 Casket of brass, incised and inlaid with silver
Length 12.5cm, width 10cm, height 12.5cm
British Museum, London, no. 1957 8–1
Western Persia, 14th century
A considerable number of caskets of this form have survived. This example has a characteristic band of pseudo-inscription on the edge of the lid but is rather unusual in the composition of its body decoration in which a large central area of geometric interlace is bordered by a frieze of animals and human figures. Base and fittings are not original.
Unpublished

204 Cup of bronze incised and inlaid with silver
Height 13.7cm, diameter 13.4cm
Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris, no. B. N. 528
Persia, Ilkhān period, 14th century

Inscription around rim
ay masbāh-e ‘addh-e kārāndī  
‘ay izm-e zulāb kāhrānān
kān kīhārān a dīhshāh u maḥbūr
ghīr bīh ḥuḥyā-ye gūlūstānī
lehanār āgar tārīb maḏāli
ay jām-e jahān namā-ye Maḥān
dar ḥārārī-ye ālī gūshāhāri
āndāhib-yi ālī-ye zindāgānī

Sweet drink of success, limpid fountain of happiness,
You are most pleasant and attractive and congenial,
I would say you were a blossoming flower,
If Alexander had not seen you,
World-showing cup of Maḥān,

205 Bowl of cast brass, incised and inlaid with silver and gold
Diameter 23.6cm
British Museum, London, no. 1961 6–3
Persia, Ilkhān period, 14th century

Inscription
‘īz batūn-šāhīn al-maṣṭūn al-alām
al-‘ādāl al-a‘lām mālīk rāqib
al-‘ānām muqadd-sālihīn al-‘arab
wa ‘ādī-‘alām wa al-‘adāliha al-dālīl al-muṣafar al-maṣṭūn al-‘alām
[al-muṣafar al-maṣṭūn al-‘alām]

‘Glory to our Lord, the possessing, the learned, the just, the fortified by God, the victors, the holy warrior, the defender, the protector of frontiers, the conqueror, the conqueror of the kings and sultans, refuge of the humble and poor. (Glory) to our Lord the possessing, the learned, the just, the fortified by God, the victors, the holy warrior, the defender, the protector of frontiers, the conqueror, the conqueror of the kings and sultans, refuge of the humble and poor.

Published: Bertiux (1915, p. 136); Paris (1973, no. 141) Melikian-Chirvani (1973, pp. 84–5)

206 Pen-box of beaten bronze, incised and inlaid with gold and silver
Length 19.8cm
Institut de France, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, no. 1.159
Persia, possibly Egypt or Syria, late 14th–early 15th century

Inscription
‘īz batūn-šāhīn al-maṣṭūn al-alām
al-‘ādāl al-a‘lām mālīk rāqib
al-‘ānām muqadd-sālihīn al-‘arab
wa ‘ādī-‘alām wa al-‘adāliha al-dālīl al-muṣafar al-maṣṭūn al-‘alām
[al-muṣafar al-maṣṭūn al-‘alām]

‘Glory to our Lord, the possessing, the learned, the just, the fortified by God, the victors, the holy warrior, the defender, the protector of frontiers, the conqueror, the conqueror of the kings and sultans, refuge of the humble and poor.

Lower external inscription
[‘īz batūn-šāhīn al-maṣṭūn al-alām
al-‘ādāl al-a‘lām mālīk rāqib
al-‘ānām muqadd-sālihīn al-‘arab
wa ‘ādī-‘alām wa al-‘adāliha al-dālīl al-muṣafar al-maṣṭūn al-‘alām]

[Glory to our Lord, the possessing, the learned, the just, the fortified by God, the victors, the holy warrior, the defender, the protector of frontiers, the conqueror.

Published: Bertiux (1915, p. 136); Paris (1973, no. 141) Melikian-Chirvani (1973, pp. 84–5)
208 Candlestick of bronze, cast and incised
Height: 31.8 cm
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, no. 12,064
Western Persia, Safavid period, late 16th century

The inscription is signed Shams al-din Khātūthī b. Ahmad b. Ahmad al-Kashmarī. It dates from the Safavid period and is inscribed in Persian. The inscription is written in nastaaliq script and is arranged in two lines. The inscription is bilingual, with the first line written in Arabic and the second in Persian.

Published: Hamid (1965, p. 149-50, pl. 7-8)

209 Jug of brass, inlaid with gold
Height: 15 cm
Private collection, England
Persia, Timurid period, 15th century

The inscription on the body of the jug is written in nastaaliq script and is inscribed in Persian. The inscription is arranged in two lines and is written in gold on a black background.

Published: Lane-Poole (1886, pp. 176-7, fig. 313; Bartlett [1990, pl. 32])
211 Candlestick of brass incised and inlaid with silver, copper and gold
Height 8.3cm, diameter 32.2cm
Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, no. 54.459
Syria, 1390–3

Inscription
mumau 'manda bi-rām ḡidekhāni al-maqār al-‘āli al-mansūri al-amīr al-kabīr al-qāhri
al-muqaddad al-‘āidi al-Zaynī Zayn
al-din Kūshbūghī al-Mansūri
al-‘ārabi
"This is one of the things made for the servery of the lofty authority, the lord, the great amir, the conqueror, the holy warrior, the just, al-Zayn, Zayn al-din Kūshbūghī al-Mansūri al-‘ārabi (of the households of the vassals Qalāwīn and Khalīl)."

The original candle-holder fitting for this candlestick is in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, and bears a similar inscription in the name of Kūshbūghī, the Mamluk Sultan from 1294–6. See Wet (1932, no. 4463, pl. XXIV). Kūshbūghī was deposed in 1296 but held important posts in the empire for most of his remaining life. He died in 1309. The use of al-‘ārabi in his title on the inscription on the candlestick indicates that this object was made during the reigns of his predecessor al-Malik al-Ashtar Khalīl who ruled 1290–1296. The cup in the circular shield was the insignia of the office of ‘cup-bearer’ to the sultan (ṣap), a post which Kūshbūghī is known to have held in his early days. He continued to use it when he became sultan and it also appears on some of his coins, but his successors dropped their animal blasons on coming to power and adopted instead a purely sultanic style, consisting of a round shield bearing royal titles alone. It is interesting to find here a polychrome blason though it has yet to be demonstrated whether such colours had heraldic significance.

Published: Mayer (1937, p. 61, pl. II)

212 Bowl of brass incised and inlaid with silver
Height 8.3cm, diameter 18cm
Galleria Estense, Modena, no. 2064
Egyypt or Syria, Mamluk period, first half 14th century

Inscription
al-maqrar al-‘arithmi al-‘āli
al-manṣūri al-amīr al-kabīr al-qāhri
al-‘āmil al-‘āidh al-qāhri
al-muqaddad al-maṣūri al-maṣūri
al-muṣawwir al-ṣuqūd al-muṣawwir
al-maktub al-qāhri
"The honourable, the lofty, the lordly, the great amir, the conqueror, the holy warrior, the just, al-Zayn, Zayn al-din Kūshbūghī al-Mansūri al-‘ārabi (of the households of the vassals Qalāwīn and Khalīl)."

The roundel show mythical animals, on the base are animals and birds of the hua, inside the base are fishes. These decorative motifs are probably intended to represent not only the pleasures of the present life but also the fortunes and happiness of the life beyond the sea.

Published: Verevis (1983, p. 84ff.)

213 Basin of brass incised and inlaid with silver
Height 10.3cm, diameter 36cm
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, no. M.73.1.123, The Nāṣir M. Hovānmān Collection, gift of Joan Palevsky
Egypt, Mamluk period, 13th–14th century

Inscription
on inside
al-maqrar al-‘āmil al-muṣawwir al-amīr
al-kabīr al-qāhri
al-muṣawwir al-ṣuqūd al-maṣūri
al-muṣawwir al-qāhri
"The honourable, the lofty, the lordly, the great amir, the conqueror, the holy warrior, the just, al-Zayn, Zayn al-din Kūshbūghī al-Mansūri al-‘ārabi (of the households of the vassals Qalāwīn and Khalīl)."

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Published: Verevis (1983, p. 84ff.)

214 Koran box of wood with wooden inlaid fittings, covered with bronze inlaid with silver and gold
Height 27cm, width 42.5cm
Staatsliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin-Dahlem, no. 1.888
Egypt, Mamluk period, first half 14th century

Inscription on the clasps
"ṣamāl Muḥammad ibn Sauqīr al-Baghdadī taṭīm al-Ḥājī Yūnūf ibn al-Qawālibī
made by Muḥammad ibn Sauqīr al-Baghdadī, inlaid by Ḥājī Yūnūf al-Qawālibī"

The other inscriptions on the box are Koranic and include Surah II, 135, Surah II, 197–9, Surah XXIV, 35, Surah XXVI, 195–9, Surah LVI, 76–80, 92–9 and Surah LXI, 22–3. In the great mosques and mausoleums of Mamluk Egypt, Korans were kept either in boxes (ṣamāl) or in tall free-standing metal cupboards (kūnūr). The maker of this ḥājī, Muḥammad ibn Sauqīr al-Baghdadī, may well have specialized in the making of bronze furniture, for he is also known to be the maker of a splendid inlaid in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, dated to 1347–8. See Cairo (1996, no. 61).

This Koran box must date from about the same time. It is interesting to note that among the Suras from the Koran inscribed on the box there is the one devoted to the Idea of God in light (Surah XXIV). This is a common text on 14th century enamelled glass mosque lamps (see no. 139). Such lamps, alongside the inlaid Koran boxes and cupboards, reflect the sumptuous taste of the Mamluk military autocracy and the extravagant liberality which characterized their pious foundations.

Published: Sauer and Maris (1942, no. 37, pl. 13); Wet (1932, no. 151); Belin-Dahlem (1978, no. 19, pl. 99)

215 Bowl of beaten brass, incised and inlaid with silver
Diameter 15cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris, no. 50572
Syria (?), Mamluk period, 14th century

The decoration of this bowl suggests that it is probably the earliest example of a type commonly produced by late Mamluk and Venetian-Saracenic craftsmen. Among the Mamluk pieces it is also the most lavishly decorated. The base bezel a central sun surrounded by six planets whose astrological significance is somewhat obscured by the fact that they are arranged in the wrong order. Thun: the Moon, Mars Jupiter (in Pisces, his domicile), Venus and Saturn. The sides bear alternate ω, τ or ω, δ inscriptions, a typical example of traditional Islamic iconography, and fighting animals, an age-old Middle Eastern motif.

Published: Magen (1963, no. 111, pl. XXII); Paris (1931, no. 165)
The inscriptions on the neck are shortened versions of the above with insignificant variations. In the roundels are the inscription 'the king of kings is our sultan,' al-Malik al-Afdal, the title taken by the Rasulid sultan of the Yemen, Dirghun al-Din 'Abbas, who ruled from 1363-77. The form of the script and the vegetal motif of the decoration of the censer demonstrate, however, that this is not a Yemeni but an Egyptian product. It is, in fact, one of a number of surviving metal and glass objects evidently made in Egypt for the Yemeni ruling house, the key piece being a censer in the Musée des Art Decoratifs, Paris, which, alongside the name and title of the Rasulid ruler al-Malik al-Jasim (1290-93), bears the names of the master and the words, 'al-Jasim [inside] in Cairo'. It has often been suggested that the Rasulid blazon was a rosette, a style of decoration that appears on this censer. However, as the rosette appears on objects dedicated to many different Yemini, both Rasulid and their officers, it was evidently not a blazon in the Mamluk Egyptian sense and may well have been a popular decorative motif. The only portion of the ornament of this censer that could have functioned as a blazon is the inscribed shield or roundel bearing the first three words of the full dedication.


The inscription on theurret rim of the basin is broken by six medallions containing a three-field blazon of cup between two bars, which are inlaid with copper bordered onto a hachured ground. The decoration is very severe, leaving the magnificent thuluth inscriptions to speak for themselves. For the name which has been previously read unsatisfactorily as 'al-Tabqa, it may equally be 'al-Taqwa which is interchangeable with 'al-'Asahf, an mmr frequently mentioned on the coins of this period.

Published: al-Qabas (1957, pp. 391-392; Cairo (1966, no. 65).
220 Ewer of beaten brass inlaid with gold and silver and copper with some niello ground

Height 40cm, diameter (rim) 15cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 24683, found in 1926 at Qasr, Egypt, Mamluk period, before 1342

Inscription on neck
al-maqar al-asraf al-dīli
Qaṭīf ‘aṣṣa ngrhu

‘The most noble authority, the lofty Qaṭīf, may his victory be glorified.’

Inscription on the centre
al-maqar al-asraf al-dīli
al-mansūdī al-allām al-makhlī
Qaṭīf al-Asraf

the most noble authority, the lofty Qaṭīf, may his victory be glorified.’

Published: al-Imāry (1967, pp. 128-9); Cairo (1969, no. 66)

221 Ewer of brass inlaid with gold and silver enhanced with niello

Height 30cm, diameter (rim) 10.5cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 13126, formerly Hariri Collection

Egypt, Mamluk period, before 1342

Inscription on neck
‘īsa li-mansūdī al-malik al-makhlī
al-dīn al-tābir al-mashīkh al-mashīkhī
al-Mu‘ayyad al-ma‘saq Shihād al-Din Muhammad ‘aṣṣa ngrhu

‘Glory to our lord the sultan, al-Malik al-Nāṣir, the learned, the diligent, the conqueror, the holy warrior, the defender, the protector of frontiers, the fortified by God, the victorious, Shihād al-Din, may his victory be glorified.’

Published: Cairo (1969, no. 68)

222 Basin of beaten brass inlaid with silver and copper

Height 19cm, diameter (rim) 44cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 13079, formerly Hariri Collection

Egypt, Mamluk period, about 1344

Inscription on exterior
al-qamār al-dīlī al-mansūdī
al-amār al-habīr al-malikī
al-dīnī al-tābir al-mashīkhī
al-Mu‘ayyad al-ma‘saq Shihād al-Din Ahmad ‘aṣṣa ngrhu

‘His Haγanah, the lordly, the king’s great amir, the learned, the diligent, the just, the conqueror, the holy warrior, the defender, the masterful, the sword-holder Qushtimir, mayor-domo of Qushtimir, President of the Council, may his victory be glorified.’

Inscription on belly
‘īsa li-mansūdī al-malik al-Malik
al-Nāṣir al-dīn al-mashīkh al-mashīkhī
al-Mu‘ayyad al-ma‘saq Shihād al-Din Ahmad

‘Glory to our lord the sultan, al-Malik al-Nāṣir, the learned, the diligent, the conqueror, the holy warrior, the defender, the protector of frontiers, the fortified by God, the victorious, Shihād al-Din, may his victory be glorified.’

Inscription on the rim is identical, except that al-mahdāmī replaces al-dīnī in the first line above and then is omitted in the fifth line. It is broken by three circular medallions containing a composite leaf, an oval scroll, and a single-headed eagle with wings outstretched in the centre and a cup, the sign of the cupbearer below. This is not the brass of Qushtimir who, evidently, preferred to use his master’s brass, which perhaps explains the ungrammatical inscriptions.

Published: Wiet (1935, no. 212); Cairo (1969, no. 49)

223 Vase of beaten brass with gold, silver and copper inlay

Height 35cm, diameter (rim) 15cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 13335, formerly Hariri Collection

Egypt, Mamluk period, before 1345

Inscription on neck
nimmu ‘amīla bi-‘aram al-maqarr
al-asraf al-dīlī al-maṣrif
Qushtimir al-dīlī al-Malik al-Nāṣir

‘One of the things made for the most noble authority, the lofty, the sword-holder, Qushtimir, the cup-bearer of al-Malik al-Nāṣir.’

Inscription on shoulders
nimmu ‘amīla bi-‘aram al-maqarr
al-asraf al-dīlī al-maṣrif
al-amār al-habīr al-malikī
Qushtimir al-dīlī al-Malik al-Nāṣir

‘Another of the things for the most noble authority, the lofty, the orderly (i.e., the officer of the sultan), the great amir, the sword-holder, Qushtimir, the cup-bearer of al-Malik al-Nāṣir.’

Published: Wiet (1935, no. 171); Cairo (1969, no. 76)

The metal inlay over the whole surface of the vessel, mostly in silver, is extremely fine and varied and consists of chimeric lions, papyrus and star-shaped flowers, panels of flying birds and small whirling rosettes. The inlay is delicately chased, even the underside of the base is decorated. At some later date the rim of the vase was crudely pierced with four holes, perhaps to hang it as a mosque lamp. The main inscription band is broken by three bazaars of a pointed roundel, consisting of a bar, a single-headed eagle with outstretched wings in the centre and cup below. Qushtimir, who died in 1345, was for a time cup-bearer (qau‘i) of al-Nāṣir Muγammad who died in 1341-2.