A MAMLUK BASIN WITH SILVER
INLAID DECORATION

EGYPT, MAMLUK PERIOD
15TH-16TH CENTURIES
12 (0) x 25 (0) cm

This basin is engraved with traces of inlaid silver. The sides of the basin carry a decorative band showing an epigraphic band in the Mamluk naskh style interrupted by nine lobed roundels filled with lotuses. The forcible removal of the silver inlay is indicative of desperate economic conditions. The inscription is benedictory:

Glory, prosperity, blessing, happiness, fertility and splendour.

A MAMLUK CANDLESTICK

EGYPT, MAMLUK PERIOD
LATE 14TH-EARLY 15TH CENTURIES
23 (0) x 22 (0) cm
ZAHARI AND KAIRU-ABBAS

Metalwork of the Mamluk period generally used inscriptions as its main decorative motif. This brass candlestick has extensive engraved decoration. The upper part of the body has a wide decorative band containing three oval-shaped medallions alternating with three round medallions. The round medallions contain delicate arabesque designs, while the area between the medallions is filled by V-lines. A Kutbi-Abbasid inscription can be found on the lower part of the neck. The oval medallions have Mamluk inscriptions in thuluth, reading:

Glory to our master al-Nasir [the victorious]
the sultan [king] Nasir al-Din [who gave victory to religion]
the wise Qalawun [owner's name]
A Mamluk Basin with Silver Inlaid Decoration

EIGHT, MAMLUK PERIOD 
14TH-15TH CENTURIES 
12 (D) x 25 (H) CM 
NEW

This basin is engraved with traces of inlaid silver. The sides of the basin carry a decorative register showing an epigraphic band in the Mamluk mosque style interrupted by nine lobed medallions filled with lotuses. The forcible removal of the silver inlay is indicative of desperate economic conditions. The inscription is benedictory:

glory, prosperity, blessing, happiness, fertility and splendour

Candlestick

BRUST PERIOD 
14TH CENTURIES 
22 (D) CM 
NEW

old generally used inscriptions as 
brass candlestick has extensive 
per part of the body has a wide 
three oval-shaped medallions 
edallions. The round medallions 
ignis, while the area between the 
Kufic-Abbasid inscription can be 
be neck. The oval medallions 
sign in shield, reading:

1. Nestor [the victorious] 
2. [who gave victory to religion] 
3. [owner’s name]

A Mamluk Revival Hexagonal Table

CAIRO, EGYPT 
late 18TH-FORTH 19TH CENTURIES 
86 (H) x 48 (W) CM 
NEW

This hexagonal table (called a baraj) is made of brass and features extensive engraved, opus sectile, silver and gold inlaid decoration. It is a copy of an original korsi which was made for the Maristan of Sultan Qal‘un by master Muhammad, son of Sunqar of Baghdad in AH 728/CE 1327. The original table is presently in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.
A TIMURID JUG

Iran, Timurid period
Late 15th century
14 (H) x 16 (W) cm
Beatty and Beatty 2627

This jug's shape is typical of the metalwork of the Timurid period and its handle features a dragon molding. The body carries a wide decorative band which has six elongated cartouches with cursive inscriptions and deme scrollwork. Below is a band of interlocking arches with lotus buds. The continuous epigraphic band on the neck reads:

Glory to our master the Sultan... the great [strong] sovereign and overlord.

A QAJAR STEEL CONTAINER

Iran, Qajar period
17th century
23 (H) x 16 (D) cm
Beatty 2626

Steel, an alloy of iron and carbon, was an expensive and highly sought-after metal before industrialized production made it cheap and readily available. Steel was especially favored for its use in weapons because of its hardness and strength. This container features elaborate engraved areas as well as gold damascening and is typical of containers of the Qajar period. The cartouches contain Persian poems written in the Persian script.
A Qajar Steel Container

Iran, Qajar period
17th century
23 (H) x 16 (D) cm

Steel, an alloy of iron and carbon, was an expensive and highly sought-after metal before industrialised production made it cheap and readily available. Steel was especially favoured for its use in weapons because of its hardness and strength. This container features elaborate engraved areas as well as gold damascening and is typical of containers of the Qajar period. The cartouches contain Persian poems written in the Persian script, naskhi.

A Tripod Incense Burner

China
16th century
8.4 (H) x 13 (D) cm

This tripod incense burner and the vase (right) were made in China for the domestic Muslim market. This bowl bears a Chinese seal on the base which is the reign mark of Emperor Xuande, Ming dynasty. There are three inscriptive panels on the body, which read:

The best musical innovation [is]
There is only one God, Allah
Muhammad is His Prophet

A Vase

China
16th century
6 (H) x 20.5 (D) cm

The globular body of this vase has a tall cylindrical neck with an opening rim to which two semicircular handles are attached; it rests on a splayed footing.

The body is decorated with two cartouches, each with an Arabic inscription, reading:

Thanks be to God
The wonder of God
The base of the dagger (complete with sheath) on the left shows calligraphy written in thuluth script in gold, which reads:

Mohammad the Prophet of Allah

The dagger without a sheath (below) was made by a man called Suli, who has signed his name at the base of the blade. The calligraphy on the blade states that this dagger is supposed to be an example of Suli's craftsmanship that will stand the test of time. Suli requests that he be rewarded for his skill with prayers for his soul after his death. There are three separate sections on the hilt which read: khulel, meaning 'obedient', ka'm, meaning 'existent', and khadi', meaning 'obedient'.
**Two Daggers**

*Left*  
Provenience from India  
19th century  
48.8 (L) x 5.5 (W) cm  
**A017269**

*Below*  
Provenience from India  
18th-19th centuries  
37 (L) x 5 (W) cm  
**A017270**

The base of the dagger (complete with sheath) on the left shows calligraphy written in chakli script in gold, which reads:

Muhammad the Prophet of Allah

The dagger without a sheath (below) was made by a man called Sufi, who has signed his name at the base of the blade. The calligraphy on the blade states that this dagger is supposed to be an example of Sufi’s craftsmanship that will stand the test of time. Sufi requests that he be rewarded for his skill with prayers for his soul after his death. There are three separate sections on the hilt which read: bi'ah, meaning 'submissive', kufi, meaning 'existent', and khaf', meaning 'obedient'.

---

**A Persian Shield**

Iron, Qajar period  
19th-20th centuries  
66 (Dia.) x 19 (Dia.) cm  
**A017267**

This shield features at its centre a face which personifies the sun and has a 16-pointed star radiating from it. There are four other abstract faces revolving around the sun. The writing around the rim is written in na'atiyy but is meaningless. It is odd to see such competent calligraphy devoid of meaning (in either Arabic or Persian), it seems that a very able metalsmith copied letters from a passage he could not understand.

It is interesting to note that the four pairs of cherub-like angels between the four abstract faces are derived from European models.

---

**A Persian Helmet**

Iron, Qajar period  
19th-20th centuries  
49 (H) x 19 (Dia.) cm  
**A017271**

This helmet seems to belong to the shield and both items were probably worn on ceremonial occasions. Again, the writing is meaningless. The construction of the helmet is interesting – similar helmets with a central spike and plume-holders are depicted in 18th-century Persian miniatures.

(Note the repetition of the abstract faces and cherubs.)
This very large curtain, from the Kaʿbah in Makkah, is embroidered with silver thread and is an extremely important example of Ottoman textile craftsmanship. There are three calligraphic panels, with various Quranic inscriptions, chosen for their particular effect, which deal with trust and purification.

The lowest of these calligraphic panels gives the pedigree of the Sultan Abdulhamid Khan II (r. 1876-1909) through his father, the Sultan al-Ghazi Abdulmecit Khan (d. 1839), his grandfather, Sultan Mahmud Khan II (d. 1817) and great-grandfather, Sultan Abdulhamid Khan I (d. 1774). The hexagonal curtain features intricate scrollwork, with pillars on either side and a border in the shape of hanging tassels below. The calligraphic work is masterly; the script used is Jali shirkh. A great deal of silver thread is used in the elaborate and ornate embroidery, resulting in a heavy curtain with a sumptuous appearance. The ornate silver embroidery and the superb standard of the calligraphy are beautifully set off by the background of dark blue velvet, creating an awe-inspiring effect.

The curtain reads as follows:

I

And We communed with Abraham and Isma'il, that they should sanctify my House.  
(from Surat al-Baqarah, II, verse 125)

II

(Take four birds; cause them to turn over the hill, and call them: they will come to thee flying with speed.)  
(from Surat al-Baqarah, II, verse 260)

III

Whoever enters it attains security; pilgrimage thereto is a duty which none can perform except those who can afford the journey.  
(from Surat al-Imran, III, verse 97)

IV

with whom God is pleased

'Ali

with whom God is pleased

Uthman

The Sultan Abdulhamid Khan son of the Sultan Abdulmecit Khan

son of the Sultan Mahmud Khan, son of

Sultan Abdulhamid Khan

The Sultan Abdulhamid Khan son of the Sultan Abdulmecit Khan

son of the Sultan Mahmud Khan, son of

Sultan Abdulhamid Khan
An Ottoman Curtain

Egypt, Ottoman Period
19th century
195.10 x 126.9 cm

This curtain, from the Ka'bah in Makkah, is embroidered with silver thread and is an extremely fine sample of Ottoman textile craftsmanship. There are three calligraphic panels, with various inscriptions, chosen for their particular effect, which deal with trust and purification. The finest of these calligraphic panels gives the pedigree of the Sultan Abdülhamid Khan II 909 through his father, the Sultan Al-Ghazi Abdülaziz Khan (d. 1830), his grandfather, bin Muhammed Khan II (d. 1807) and great-grandfather, Sultan Abdülhamid Khan I (d. 1714). The curtain features intricate scrollwork, with pillars on either side and a border in the shape of isaths below. The calligraphic work is masterly, the script used is jali chuah. A great deal of care is used in the elaborate and ornate embroidery, resulting in a heavy curtain with a three-dimensional appearance. The ornate silver embroidery and the superb standard of the calligraphy are truly set off by the background of dark blue velvet, creating an awe-inspiring effect.

The curtain reads as follows:

I
And We covenanted with Abraham and Isma'il, that they should sanctify My House
(from Surat al-Baqarah, II, verse 125)

II
birds; tame them to turn (v . . . ) . . . ; he, put a portion of them on every hill, and call them; they will come to thee (flying) with speed.
(from Surat al-Baqarah, II, verse 260)

III
never enters it save he is a pilgrim or a wayfarer. — those who can afford the journey.
(from Surat Ali 'Imran, III, verse 97)

IV
I am pleased with whom God is pleased
(Or from)

The Sultan Abdülhamid Khan son of
the Sultan Abdülaziz Khan
son of the Sultan Mehemet Khan, son of
Sultan Abdülhamid Khan
A PAIR OF BANNERS

IRAN
19TH CENTURY
195.00 x 58.5 (W) cm (one banner) - (one banner)

These banners, embroidered with gold and silver metallic threads, were made to be fitted on poles and carried during Ashurrah processions. These processions are held during the tenth of Muharram (the first month in the Islamic calendar) – the month of mourning for the Shiites. Right at the top of each banner is a silver monogram in the shape of a hand. The banners bear the name of Muhammad and, below that, the names 'Ali and Husayn are sewn in neat calligraphy.

Shi'ism is a sect within Islam and according to its tradition 'Ali and the descendants of the Prophet are the only legitimate successors to Prophet Muhammad. Ashurrah was the day 'Ali's son, Husayn, was killed.
A Pair of Banners

19th century
195 (H) x 33.5 (W) cm (see labels)

These banners, embroidered with gold and silver metallic threads, were made to be fitted on poles and carried during 'Ashurah processions. These processions are held during the tenth of Muharram (the first month in the Islamic calendar) - the month of mourning for the Shi'ites. Right at the top of each banner is a silver plate in the shape of a hand. The banners bear the name of Muhammad and, below that, the names 'Ali and Husayn are sewn in nasta'liq script.

Shi'ism is a sect within Islam and according to its tradition 'Ali and the descendants of the Prophet are the only legitimate successors to Prophet Muhammad. 'Ashurah was the day 'Ali's son, Husayn, was killed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Asia Civilisations Museum would like to thank the following people for their assistance in putting together this catalogue and exhibition:

Mr Taneg Rajah and Mrs Jehan Rajah
Leila Fonifie Rajah

The staff of the Taneg Rajah Museum, especially Muhammad Safdar

Dr. Nabil E. Safar
Prof. Gez Fehervari
Mohamed Zakaria
A.M. Keshavzadeh Talizii
(For help with the Persian material)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Asia Civilisations Museum would like to thank the following people for their assistance in putting together this catalogue and exhibition:

Mr Taneg Rajah and Mrs Jehan Rajah
Leila Fonifie Rajah

The staff of the Taneg Rajah Museum, especially Muhammad Safdar

Dr. Nabil E. Safar
Prof. Gez Fehervari
Mohamed Zakaria
A.M. Keshavzadeh Talizii
(For help with the Persian material)

GLOSSARY

Quran: The Qur’an is divided into 60 sections or ‘Juz’, according to length. The longer sections are found at the beginning of the Qur’an and the shorter ones at the end.

Juz: The name for a section of the Qur’an.

Surah: The text of the Qur’an is divided equally into 60 sections, each containing a portion of the text known as a ‘Surah’. Each Surah is usually read every night of Ramadhan.

Hadith: The sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Imam: The successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

Imam: The successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

Imam: The successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

Imam: The successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

Abbasids: An Arab tribal group that ruled from the 8th to the 14th centuries.

Turkish: A language spoken in Turkey.

Syrian: A language spoken in Syria.

Arabic: A language spoken in Arabic countries.

English: A language spoken in English-speaking countries.

Farsi: A language spoken in Iran.

Aramaic: A language spoken in Aramaic-speaking countries.

Persian: A language spoken in Persian-speaking countries.

Egyptian: A language spoken in Egypt.

Syrian: A language spoken in Syria.

Arabic: A language spoken in Arabic countries.

English: A language spoken in English-speaking countries.

Farsi: A language spoken in Iran.

Aramaic: A language spoken in Aramaic-speaking countries.

Persian: A language spoken in Persian-speaking countries.

Egyptian: A language spoken in Egypt.

Syrian: A language spoken in Syria.

Arabic: A language spoken in Arabic countries.

English: A language spoken in English-speaking countries.

Farsi: A language spoken in Iran.

Aramaic: A language spoken in Aramaic-speaking countries.

Persian: A language spoken in Persian-speaking countries.

Egyptian: A language spoken in Egypt.

Syrian: A language spoken in Syria.

Arabic: A language spoken in Arabic countries.

English: A language spoken in English-speaking countries.

Farsi: A language spoken in Iran.

Aramaic: A language spoken in Aramaic-speaking countries.

Persian: A language spoken in Persian-speaking countries.

Egyptian: A language spoken in Egypt.

Syrian: A language spoken in Syria.

Arabic: A language spoken in Arabic countries.

English: A language spoken in English-speaking countries.

Farsi: A language spoken in Iran.

Aramaic: A language spoken in Aramaic-speaking countries.

Persian: A language spoken in Persian-speaking countries.

Egyptian: A language spoken in Egypt.

Syrian: A language spoken in Syria.

Arabic: A language spoken in Arabic countries.

English: A language spoken in English-speaking countries.