88 Tray
Afghanistan, 13th century
Copper
Diameter: 74.5 cm
Inscriptions:

*Cursive*
"Glory, success, prosperity, grace, of God, splendor, excellence, generosity, forbearance, nobility, forbearance, modesty, mercy, generosity to God, virtuous..."

*Kufic*
Repetition of the word 'glory.'

There are twelve medallions around the rim, eight of which contain signs of the zodiac, and the other four with geometric and floral designs. Between the medallions are four panels of knotted Kufic calligraphy, four of tall cursive calligraphy, and four of floral arabesque patterns. The form and size of this tray make it most unusual, and it benefits from a wonderful green and red patina.

Very few pure copper vessels seem to have survived from the early Islamic period compared to those made of alloys such as bronze and brass. This indicates that copper was an expensive commodity, and was also difficult to cast. This tray and the following cauldron suggest that there was a workshop specializing in copper casting, probably in western Afghanistan (see J. W. Allan, *Persian Metal Technology, 700–1300 AD*, Oxford, 1979, p. 39).

89 Cauldron
Afghanistan, early 13th century
Copper
Height: 46 cm

This cauldron was probably made for cooking purposes in a religious or charitable institution which fed pilgrims and poor people on a regular basis. Its basic design is enhanced by tasteful engraved decoration. The shoulder of the vessel shows an inscription invoking a variety of good wishes. Below this a band of inverted cresting contains a winged animal in each panel against a background of flowering vines. The neck is decorated with a series of drop-shaped medallions, each containing a bird, and the handle is engraved with scrolling vines.
Ewer

Iraq, circa 1230
Beaten brass inlaid with silver
Height: 33.5 cm

Inscription: “Perpetual glory and long-life and noblemindedness and fortune and prosperity to the favorite of Kings and Sultans Bajawa (?)”

Around the upper body of the ewer are two medallions, each showing a mounted prince hunting with a falcon and four cartouches of calligraphy set against a background of geometric design. On the lower body are twelve arches, each enclosing a figure. At the front and back are the figures of seated princes who are accompanied in the other arches by musicians, cup bearers, arms bearers, a falconer and a poet holding a flower. A band of Kufic decorates the lower neck, with floral arabesques on the lobed shoulder and around the foot. The handle, spout and upper neck are restored. This ewer was quite possibly made in Mosul, Iraq, which became one of the main centers for inlaid metalwork in the first half of the 13th century. The technique of inlaying silver into brass seems to have been transferred from Herat to Mosul and from there spread further to Syria and to Egypt. Due to the diplomatic skills and political foresight of Badr al-Din Lulu, who ruled Mosul in 1218-59, the city escaped destruction by the Mongols and remained an active cultural and commercial center. We owe our knowledge of the metalwork of this period to the survival of various pieces, including five made for Badr al-Din himself, the so-called Blacas ewer in the British Museum signed by Shuja ibn Mana and dated 620 (1232); and the various pieces signed by Mosul artists, particularly Ahmad bin Omar al-Dhaki, Ibrahim bin Mawaliya and Isma'il bin Ward. (See D. S. Rice, “The Brasses of Badr al-Din Lulu,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, vol. 13, no. 3, 1950, pp. 32–87, and “Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili,” Ars Orientalis, vol. 1, 1957, pp. 243–269.)

Although almost no silver remains on the decoration of this ewer, it is nevertheless possible to see why the metal workers of Mosul attained such renown. The figures in the arches are particularly well defined, and the craftsman has managed to depict the figure of a poet reciting poetry so clearly that there is no doubt as to what he represents - not an easy task even conceptually. There are two related ewers in the Museum for Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul (one of which is dated 627 [1229], no. 217), and another was previously in the collection of Prince Sadraddin Aga Khan (see Anthony Welch, The Collection of Islamic Art of Prince Sadraddin Aga Khan, Geneva, 1972).
Candlestick

Iraq or Syria, circa 1300
Bronze or brass inlaid with silver
Height: 15.5 cm
Inscriptions: "Perpetual glory, healthy life, increasing prosperity, authoritative commands, all things good."

Candlesticks of this basic shape, frequently depicted in manuscript painting, vary considerably in the details of their profiles and ornamentation. This example shows a marked inward curve in the body and its inlaid silver motifs are both figural and epigraphic.

The small circular medallions around the body show two seated flute players and two seated princes. These medallions are linked by an inscription band with triangular decorative panels above and below. Around the shoulder, the stylized Kufic motif is inlaid with silver.

Candlestick

Iraq or western Iran, second half 14th century
Brass or bronze inlaid with silver
Height: 26.5 cm
Inscriptions: "Glory and victory and prosperity and splendour and grace and generosity and honor and goodwill to its owner, the just"

The proportions of this cast metal candlestick are particularly well-defined. This refinement is reflected in the elegant calligraphy around the body. The calligraphy is inlaid with silver and set against a background of spiralling vines. The inscription is interrupted by three circular medallions showing two mounted falconers and a polo player. The details of the figural subjects are finely engraved on the silver. Above and below this band is a border of inlaid vine pattern. The rim and the base of the candlestick pan are inlaid with a Kufic inscription framed by a vine pattern. Three figures of musicians within circular medallions decorate the upper part of the stem, with floral arabesques between them. A Kufic motif runs around the holder.

This type of candlestick was probably made either in Baghdad or Tabriz under the Jalairid dynasty, which succeeded to the territories of the Ilkhans in Iraq and Azerbaijan between 1336 and 1432.
93 Bowl
Syria or Egypt, mid 14th century
Brass inlaid with silver
Height: 8.3 cm
Diameter: 17.5 cm
Inscriptions: “Glory, permanent prosperity and long life to you, the lordly, the elevated, the splendid, the extended good luck, Khalid the Noble”

This bowl conforms in shape and design with many bowls made during the Mamluk era. A Thuluth inscription, incised and inlaid with silver, encircles the bowl on the exterior. It is set against a scrolling vine and interrupted by six medallions of flying birds. The underside is engraved with a lobed medallion of foliate forms, while the interior shows fish swimming around a disc. Such an illusionistic design suggests that the bowl may have been used to hold water or other transparent liquid.

94 Plate
Made for Amir Abrak al-Ashrafi
Syria, circa 1500-09
Tinned copper
Diameter: 36 cm
Inscriptions: Central medallion
“One of the objects made for the honorable authority, the lofty, the lordly, the . . . , the great, the masterly”

On the back
“One of the objects was made for the Amir Abrak al-Ashrafi, the Deputy of the Victorious Citadel of Aleppo, may God glorify its victories”

Inscriptions of subsequent owners:
“For al-Hajji Badr al-Din, son of al-Sibtiari. Its owner Mawdii Arud Salman Bek”

The Amir Abrak al-Ashrafi was appointed Governor of the strategically important city of Aleppo by the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghuri, who was killed at the decisive battle at Marj Dabiq near Aleppo in 1516, giving the Ottoman Sultan, Selim I, control of Syria and Egypt. The composite coat of arms in the center appears to have been used by several Mamluk amirs and is found on other examples of metalwork (see L. A. Mayer, Saracenic Heraldry, Oxford, 1933, pls.62 and 68). The engraved decoration, highlighted by black bituminous paste applied to the background, is typical of the late Mamluk period. At that time, economic depression and a shortage of silver caused artists to seek more economical materials. By applying a thin coating of tin over a densely-engraved copper vessel, they could approximate the opulence of 14th-century objects and create a distinctive piece of considerable aesthetic appeal.
Two Stem Bowls
Italy, late 15th–early 16th century
Bronze, gilded
a. Height: 12.2 cm
   Diameter: 16.2 cm
b. Height: 12.2 cm
   Diameter: 15 cm

The bowls are both of cylindrical form standing on a tall flared foot. Around the outside of each vessel, a geometric trellis is inlaid in silver, enclosing panels engraved with scrolling floral and arabesque patterns. The feet, possibly slightly later additions, are engraved with interlocking lobed cartouches of arabesque foliage.

A number of Muslim craftsmen found refuge in Venice from the ravages inflicted by Timur's invasion of Syria in the early 15th century. Their work was appreciated for its quality as well as its exotic nature, and their workshops seem to have flourished throughout the 15th and early 16th centuries. It is interesting to see how being implanted in foreign soil has affected the nature of their designs. On these bowls, the arabesques no longer link up into an organic whole, but are reserved into separate compartments. The vines have been trained to a European sense of surface pattern.

Two Openwork Plaques

Iran, circa 1576
Steel
Length: 38.8 cm
Width: 13.5 cm

According to Sir Charles Marling, these two plaques, and a third which he donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1919 (see *The Arts of Islam*, London, 1976, no.234), came from the shrine in Shiraz of Shah Tahmasp, second of the Safavid Shâhs of Iran, who died in 1576.

While the precise significance of the inscriptions awaits further research, the bold silhouette of calligraphic forms against the delicate floral vine is of undeniable beauty.

Steel, generally the material of arms and armor, reached a peak of decorative perfection under the Safavids in the 16th and 17th centuries. In addition to other plaques of this style, a magnificent Kashkul made by Hajji Abbas in 1606–07 may be noted (see J. W. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork: the Nuhad El-Said Collection*, London, 1982, no.26).

Provenance: Sir Charles Marling


Published: *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Persian Art*, 1931, p.197, case 317.
97 Basin
Saudi Arabia, circa 1600
Brass
Diameter: 30 cm
Inscriptions: On the rim
"Its owner Mullah Ahmad"
Under the rim
"For the possession of Husayn Agha Husayni, the envoy of Abdullah Khan the Uzbek, from . . . . the sacred enclosure (at Makkah?) the work of Piruz in Jeddah"

The inscription, which appears to be contemporary with the basin, indicates that it was made in the Hijaz, perhaps for a party of pilgrims. Its decoration suggests that the metalworker was trained in the Iranian tradition. This is corroborated by manuscript evidence, for there was apparently a group of artists that worked in the Safavid and Ottoman styles living in Makkah and Medina in the 16th and 17th centuries.

98 Basin
Iran or Afghanistan, late 16th century
Brass
Diameter: 36.8 cm

This basin is an elegant example of cast and turned brass. Great care has been taken with the proportions of the slightly inverting sides, the curved rim and the precise contours of the outer edge. The design at the center of the interior surface is comparable to the "star" medallions found at the beginning of contemporary manuscripts. The contrast of this minimal but exquisite decoration with the smooth contours of refined form are the source of the basin's beauty. An almost identical example is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. 738–1894).

99 Kashkul
Iran, circa 1600
Brass
Maximum length: 60 cm

This Kashkul, or beggar's bowl, is boat-shaped and terminates in dragon heads with movable tongues. Around the exterior rim, the Persian inscription is engraved in a series of cartouches. Below this, there are two registers of lobed medallions divided by palmette borders. The interior surface of the vessel is engraved with cartouches, medallions and fish. The chain is original.
Helmet

Turkey, second half 15th century
Steel with silver decoration
Height: 31 cm
Diameter: 24 cm
Inscriptions: “Glory is in worshipping God/Muhammad/wealth is in contentment/Muhammad/……/Muhammad”

This helmet is designed to be worn over a turban and retains the fittings for other battle accoutrements. Supplementary chain mail could be attached to the loops around the lower edge and a nose guard could be fastened to the bracket above the eye holes.

Around the upper part of the helmet, three lobed medallions enclosing calligraphy are linked by an interlaced frame of silver knotting. An inscription runs around the lower part, punctuated by three panels enclosing the name of Muhammad. The binding over the eye holes and around the lower edge has silver decoration. An arsenal mark is still visible, engraved on the ribbed middle portion just to the left of the hook. It shows that the helmet was kept in the main Ottoman arsenal in the Byzantine basilica of St. Irene, inside the entrance to the Topkapı Palace.

Two Flasks

a. Turkey, second half 16th century
   Copper, mercury gilded
   Height: 28 cm

b. Turkey, 17th century
   Leather embroidered with silver thread
   Height: 28 cm

The engraved decoration of tulips, carnations, cypress trees, arabesque medallions and cable-pattern borders is typical of Ottoman design of the period and particularly close in style to the decoration found on Iznik pottery. The shape of the flask is obviously derived from leather, as illustrated by flask b.

Another example, which has largely lost its gilding, is in the Louvre, Paris (K. 3442, Legs Koechlin, 1932) and was exhibited in November 1983, at the Palais de Tokyo.
102 Sword Pommel
Made for Amir Abu'l-Ghanaim Mansur bi-Allah
Iran, 12th century
Silver with niello and gilding
Height: 5 cm
Width: 4 cm
The wide band around the circumference of the pommel consists of a fine floriated Kufic inscription executed in niello on a minutely-stippled field. At the peak of the dome, a small raised boss is surrounded by curling vines in niello on a gilded background. The pierced stem of the pommel is designed to be fixed securely over the head of a sword.

103 Sword
Made by al-Hajji Sunqur
Turkey, 957 AH/1550 AD
Steel inlaid with gold; horn; brass
Length: 97 cm
The watered steel blade is enhanced with various inscriptions inlaid in gold. Three raised medallions contain invocations in Kufic, between which are the signature of the craftsman, the date and another invocation. Along the top of the blade, the word 'Buduh' appears three times.

104 Sword
Made by Maksud
India, 1087 AH/1676 AD
Steel inlaid with gold; iron overlaid with gold; walrus ivory
Length: 95 cm
The finely-watered steel blade is inlaid in gold at its base with four cartouches of Nastaliq calligraphy containing a poem dedicated to the Caliph Ali. Between the cartouches are invocations to God, written within a divided square.

105 Bow
Made by Muhiddin
Turkey, 999 AH/1582 AD
Horn, lacquered wood
Length of outer curve: 114 cm
This bow was made by Muhiddin, one of the most highly regarded bow-makers of the time. His talents are evident in the precise craftsmanship of every ridge and angle in this piece.
Bowl

Iraq, 9th century
Ceramic; white glaze overpainted in blue and green
Diameter: 25.2 cm

The shallow bowl has an everted rim and stands on a low foot. Inside, it is painted with a revolving design of calligraphic fronds around a central star in cobalt-blue and copper-green. The rim has rounded lappets, alternately blue and green.

This type of bowl typifies one of many manifestations of the long-standing Islamic admiration for Chinese art. Excavations in the area have revealed Far Eastern pottery juxtaposed with local Islamic wares, elucidating the similarities and differences. In this case, the potters added tin oxide to clear glaze in order to produce an opaque surface. Imitating in this way the quality of T'ang Dynasty porcelain, Muslim potters developed their own style of decoration in soft colors. While there are other examples of this type, this bowl is outstanding in its balanced beauty.

Islamic Pottery, 800–1400 AD, London, 1969, no II.

107 Bowl

Iraq, 9th century
Ceramic; white glaze overpainted in blue
Diameter: 22 cm

Inscriptions: “Whatever is made is made”

While much of Islamic art may be characterized by dense overall patterns, certain ceramic styles are strikingly economical in their designs. The surface of this shallow bowl is decorated with a single line of Kufic painted in cobalt blue. The positioning of the inscription and the deftness of its execution are most unusual and perhaps should be compared to Chinese models. The content of the inscription is not unlike similarly proverbial phrases found on other ceramic pieces.

108 Bowl

Iraq, 9th century
Ceramic; overpainted in luster
Diameter: 13.5 cm

This bowl is painted in honey-colored luster with a central star, between the points of which are alternately a word written in Kufic and a diamond-shaped panel. There are Kufic-like motifs on the exterior surfaces as well.

The origins of luster are controversial, but it seems likely that this technical innovation was developed in Iraq. The process involved painting a design in metallic oxides (e.g. sulphur, silver-oxide and copper-oxide) on a glazed and fired object. The piece was then subjected to a second firing, which fixed the design as a sheen on the surface of the vessel. Their seemingly costly appearance made such wares very popular, and examples are known from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Spain.
Jar

Egypt, 10th–11th century
Ceramic, overpainted in luster
Height: 29 cm

Inscriptions: In the cartouches around the body
    "Blessing and perfect and complete and complete and"
    Round the base
    "A perfect complete blessing perfect complete perfect complete"

This jar appears to be the only surviving example of this type that is intact, although other examples of the decorative style are known. Its decoration consists of two main components—knotting or braiding cables and Kufic calligraphy. Variations of the first are used as borders and as the trellis around the upper part of the body. A band of floriated Kufic calligraphy encircles the lower part, and epigraphic motifs appear in the medallions defined by the trellis above. The inscriptions are formulaic good wishes. The technique of decorating pottery in luster was probably introduced into Egypt from Iraq in the late 10th century. Glassmakers in Egypt had been using luster as early as the 8th century.