

## Μουσείο Μπενάκη

Τόμ. 9, Αρ. 9 (2009)



Τρία μεσαιωνικά ισλαμικά έργα από ορείχαλκο  
και η παράδοση της ένθετης μεταλλοτεχνίας από  
τη Μοσούλη

*Anna Ballian*

doi: [10.12681/benaki.20](https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.20)

### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

Ballian, A. (2013). Τρία μεσαιωνικά ισλαμικά έργα από ορείχαλκο και η παράδοση της ένθετης μεταλλοτεχνίας από τη Μοσούλη. *Μουσείο Μπενάκη*, 9(9), 113–141. <https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.20>

# ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟ ΜΠΕΝΑΚΗ

9, 2009

ANNA BALLIAN

Three medieval Islamic brasses and  
the Mosul tradition of inlaid metalwork

ΑΝΑΤΥΠΟ



ΑΘΗΝΑ 2010



## Three medieval Islamic brasses and the Mosul tradition of inlaid metalwork

AMONG THE ITEMS OF ISLAMIC metalwork with inlaid silver decoration in the Benaki Museum are two works signed by Mosul craftsmen. One is a tiny brass box dated to AH 617/1220, which bears the earliest known signature of a craftsman working in this medium, that of Isma'il ibn Ward al-Mawsili.<sup>1</sup> The other is a candlestick dated some hundred years later to AH 717/1317-1318 with the signature of 'Ali ibn 'Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Sankari al-Mawsili. These two works are the first and last entries on a list drawn up in 1957 by David Storm Rice of dated works by craftsmen using the *nisba* al-Mawsili, meaning 'from Mosul'.<sup>2</sup> Though it has since been added to, Rice's list continues to describe a period of exceptional evolution in the inlaid metalwork of the Near East.<sup>3</sup>

Mosul was first recognized as a centre of production for brass objects with inlaid silver decoration in the mid-nineteenth century when the famous Blacas ewer was published. The ewer, now in the British Museum, has an inscription explicitly mentioning that it was made in Mosul in 1232 by a craftsman named Shuja' ibn Man'a al-Mawsili. Ever since scholars and collectors have continued to show interest in Islamic inlaid metalwork and Mosul's reputation has continued to grow as more and more works were published, either bearing the signature of a craftsman with the *nisba* al-Mawsili, or unsigned but attributed to workshops in the city. Medieval Mosul was indeed a prosperous city with a reputation for local products such as its celebrated silks as well as the metalwork with inlaid silver. According to the Spanish geographer Ibn Said (ca. 1250), these were exported as gifts for foreign rulers. Moreover the area is known to possess rich metal deposits, which were exploited from at least the medieval period up to early modern times.<sup>4</sup> The metal

artefacts securely attributed to Mosul are relatively few in number and include the Blacas ewer and a group of five works bearing the name of Badr al-Din Lulu, ruler of Mosul (1210-1259).<sup>5</sup> David Storm Rice, who was an excellent Arabist and a pioneer in the study of Islamic metalwork, pointed out that the use of the *nisba* al-Mawsili may have given the craftsman prestige and the stamp of authority, but did not necessarily mean that the work was made in Mosul. On the contrary, it seems that craftsmen who had learnt their trade in or were natives of this city travelled to find work in other cities of the Jazira,<sup>6</sup> Syria, Egypt, Anatolia and Western Iran. Not to mention the fact that quite a few of these works are dated after the destruction of the city by the Mongols in 1261 or have inscriptions referring to Cairo or Damascus as their place of manufacture.<sup>7</sup>

In this article I shall present three works from the Benaki Museum collection which show the evolution of Near Eastern inlaid metalwork and which, in chronological terms, cover the period from the early thirteenth century up to the beginning of the fourteenth. A short introduction to inlaid metalwork will preface this presentation and I shall conclude with a brief note on David Storm Rice's visits to Athens.

Inlaid metalwork: the craft, the patrons, the makers and the historical environment

Islamic inlaid metalwork has attracted the attention of dealers, scholars and collectors right from the time when its production and fame were at their height. The best known work of Islamic inlaid metalwork in Western Europe is the

celebrated Baptistère de Saint-Louis which Louis IX is traditionally believed to have brought back from the Near East on his return from the Crusades. Nowadays in the Louvre, up to the mid-nineteenth century it was kept in the royal treasury in the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, where it was used as a font for baptizing the heirs to the French throne.<sup>8</sup> What is less well known is that inlaid metalwork was highly prized in the Byzantine capital. The Byzantine historian Pachymeres, referring to a visit to a church in Constantinople by the Emperor Michael Palaiologos, describes how he was offered some sort of sweetmeat on a copper tray inscribed in Arabic with glittering gold lettering. Indeed he explains that it is characteristically Egyptian to make such objects decorated with bold lettering. This means that in the Byzantine capital during the second half of the fourteenth century Islamic metalwork was circulating in aristocratic circles and Pachymeres at least could immediately recognize the typically Islamic decorative features.<sup>9</sup>

Brass artefacts with inlaid decoration in precious metals are one of the most characteristic and original forms of medieval Islamic art, a readily recognizable luxury commodity which could replace gold- and silverware in the tastes of the elite. As usually happens in the hierarchy of materials, precious metal objects were used as models both in terms of style and technique. The yellow gold of the brass is combined with the brilliance of the inlaid silver and is displayed against a ground frequently covered with a black, bituminous substance, which recalls the corresponding polychromy of parcel gilt and nielloed silver. The use of common techniques makes the comparison of brass with silverware all the more pertinent. The technique of hammering, which is employed in silverware in order to make the material go further, is adopted from the twelfth century onwards in the production of objects made of brass. In this case the technical differences also indicate a difference in clientele. Brass, bronze or other copper alloy objects were usually cast ware for everyday use (e.g. mortars, buckets, ewers, oil-lamps), whereas the artefacts made of sheet brass with inlaid silver were pieces intended for display and use in social or public settings: ewers and basins for ablutions, candlesticks, caskets, perfumed-water sprinklers, salvers, bowls etc.

The technique for inlaying brass objects, initially with copper and later with silver and gold, so characteristic of medieval Islamic work, developed in twelfth-century Eastern Iran, in the area of Khurasan, centred on the city of Herat. It seems that after the devastation of the area by the

Mongols in the 1220s local production ceased and at around the same time artefacts with inlaid silver and gold decoration appear in Mosul and more generally in the Jazira region, from where they spread to the rest of the Near East.

The inlay techniques using precious metals are not exclusive to the Islamic world and were known even before the twelfth century both in Central Asia and the Mediterranean region. In earlier research the connection with Iran and the importance of its influence not just as regards technique but also iconography was overemphasized and regarded as unequivocal. Nowadays there is more widespread acknowledgement of the role played by local traditions and by Fatimid art in creating an understanding of Islamic inlaid metalwork and of Islamic art of the period in general.<sup>10</sup> Though it seems quite likely that metalworkers displaced by the Mongol attacks of the 1220s fled to Mosul from Herat and Eastern Iran, there seems little doubt that the art of inlaying and the fashion for it already existed in the region. A famous ewer in the Louvre, a work by the master Isma'il ibn al-Mawliya from the 1210s or earlier<sup>11</sup> and the pen-case of 1218 in the Benaki Museum, which we shall look at in more detail below, show that precious objects inlaid with silver and gold were being produced in Mosul.

The development of inlaid metalwork in Eastern Iran has occasionally been associated with Buddhist and Indian influences,<sup>12</sup> but in the Jazira it should perhaps be related to the Late Antique tradition and contemporary Byzantine practices, a subject that so far has been little researched. A case in point are the small Byzantine bronze weights of the fourth to sixth centuries inlaid with copper and silver: minute imperial figures or architectural decoration, which are – at least from a stylistic point of view – close to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Islamic inlaid metalwork.<sup>13</sup> At the same time attention has recently been drawn to the production of inlaid metalwork in Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: the celebrated bronze doors of the South Italian churches, of which the earliest examples are the Amalfi doors of 1060, were manufactured in and imported from Constantinople.<sup>14</sup>

The subject is of particular interest because the appearance of inlaid metalwork in Constantinople has been attributed to influence from the Muslim East – with the traders of the Amalfitan colony acting as middlemen. In the second half of the eleventh century, however, Islamic inlaid metalwork had yet to emerge in the form we know from a century later in the Khurasan and the Jazira. Equally interesting is



Fig. 1. Artukid bowl, copper with cloisonné enamel, 1114-1144. Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum 1036 (after: D. Konstantios [ed.], *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire* [Athens 2002] 263 no. 141).

that the inscriptions on the doors attest to contacts between Italy, Byzantium and Islamic areas. Mauro Pantaleone, the donor of the set of doors commissioned for Monte Cassino (1066), had close connections with Egypt, the Holy Land and Syria and had built a hostel and warehouses in Jerusalem and Antioch. The bilingual Greek and Syriac inscription on the door of San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome (1070) names the caster as one Stavrakios, who was of Armeno-Syrian extraction. This almost certainly points to the Jazira region, which at the time had a large Christian population and a subsoil with rich metal deposits, that enabled the locals to acquire specialist metallurgical skills.<sup>15</sup>

In this period the Jazira region boasted a number of

monuments and objects displaying an extraordinary blend of traditions. Buildings with elements of Greco-Roman architecture and references to sixth-century Syrian churches have been described as evidence of a 'classical revival' and led to discussions about their eclecticism and hybrid or sub-antique character.<sup>16</sup> The most celebrated of the Jaziran objects are the coins with the Hellenistic busts and the portraits of Byzantine emperors<sup>17</sup> but perhaps the most controversial piece known for its Byzantino-Islamic style is the Innsbruck Artukid bowl (fig. 1).<sup>18</sup> This is the cultural climate in which inlaid metalwork developed in Mosul.

The larger historical context for the development of inlaid metalwork is the politically fragmented world of the post-



Fig. 2. Brass pen case with inlaid decoration bearing the name of al-'Adil Abu Bakr, AH 615/1218. H. 5 cm, L. 28.3 cm, W. 7.5 cm. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 13174 (photo: V. Tsonis).

Seljuk Islamic Near East. The small Turkoman states of the Jazira, the Seljuks in Konya and the various branches of the Ayyubids in Syria and Egypt, coexisted with the Crusader states, the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and Byzantium. The place of the large centralized empires had been taken over by local Muslim rulers, who offered patronage to artists and craftsmen and an appropriate platform for developing the arts. In the period from the late twelfth and throughout the thirteenth century an incredible explosion of the arts is seen which, though it has been called the 'Flowering of Seljuk Art',<sup>19</sup> belongs to the period after the break-up of the central Seljuk power and the emergence of many regional centres. Apart from the architecture, the focus was mostly on portable artefacts, such as ceramics, metalwork, glassware and textiles. Both quantitatively and qualitatively the level of production is astounding and these objects were no longer meant exclusively for court circles; they were also intended for the elite of the urbanized cities and for trade on the free market which, then as now, respected no dogmatic or ideological barriers.<sup>20</sup> For example there were merchants from Mosul, members of a Nestorian confraternity, who regularly visited the Crusader city of Acre to trade.<sup>21</sup> The Mawsili craftsmen's signatures act like brand names, loudly

proclaiming (nowadays we would say advertising) the fact that they were trained in or came from Mosul. It is no coincidence that the signatures emerge for the first time during the period when craftsmen and objects were on the move.<sup>22</sup> As is only to be expected in a traditional society, the names of the craftsmen indicate either the relationship between apprentice and master or a family relationship. The craft and its secret skills remained in the family and was handed down from father to son and grandson, as can be seen from a family of Mawsili craftsmen, in which the patriarch was working in Damascus and his descendants in Cairo.<sup>23</sup>

The inlaid metalwork objects were primarily aimed at the elite of the day; they were expensive and offered their owners social prestige. Typically they have lengthy inscriptions with prayers for long life and good fortune, which often refer to rulers and local leaders, officials and other powerful figures at court as well as sultans. We have seen that five works mention the name of the ruler of Mosul, the atabeg Badr al-Din Lulu (1210-1259). There are some fifteen other works of inlaid metalwork with inscriptions mentioning the name of an Ayyubid ruler, to which the Benaki pen case of al-'Adil must be added as the earliest in the group (1218) (fig. 2), the latest being the famous Barberini vase (1237-1260). A considerable

number of works bear the names of Mamluk and other rulers and officials, but most of the surviving artefacts are anonymous. There is not necessarily a link between quality and a named patron; some of the most exquisite and special works, such as those with Christian scenes, have no names.<sup>24</sup>

The other important aspect of these objects, which is especially attractive and perhaps unexpected to the modern viewer, is their complex decoration with a wealth of figural scenes. 'This craze for the figural', as it is called by Robert Hillenbrand,<sup>25</sup> includes hunting and battle scenes, sporting contests, astrological subjects, scenes of enthroned rulers and diversions at court – drinking, dancing, music – so-called genre scenes, and even scenes with Christian religious content. A comparable range of figurative scenes otherwise survives only in Islamic painted manuscripts, the earliest of which date from the same period and originate in the same region, the Jazira. With few exceptions the repertoire is not new or original, nor does it create a different artistic language. The subject matter and to some extent the style are familiar, having been used in the art of Abbasid Baghdad, Fatimid Cairo or Umayyad Cordoba, and derive from the wide-ranging repertoire of Late Antiquity. What is new at this point seems to be the associations and the choice of themes, especially the enthroned ruler, which is often combined with the astrological cycle and is invested with cosmic and supernatural qualities.

#### A pen case inscribed with the name of the Ayyubid sultan al-'Adil Abu Bakr

The brass pen case is of special interest because of an inscription which although badly damaged can be read as mentioning the date AH 615/1218 and the name of the Ayyubid sultan al-'Adil Abu Bakr (fig. 2).<sup>26</sup>

Kufic inscription on the internal walls:

مالك عادل ابوبكر خمس العشرستمانه ... الكرامة (?)

... owner 'Adil Abu Bakr six hundred and fifteen honour (?) ...

النعمة و الـ و ... (الدولة) ... و الدولة [و] [الكرامة

*Favour and... and (power) ... (power) and honour*

There is also a half erased cursive inscription on the upper surface of the lid:

عز و الاقبال ... النعمة (?) والدر ...

... *Glory and prosperity (?) ... favour and...*

and a damaged and illegible inscription that runs around the outer sides.

This makes the pen case the earliest dated inlaid work from the Near East and also the first in a series of inscribed objects with the name of Ayyubid rulers, in this case that of the brother of Salah al-Din himself. The next in the series would be the 1225 celestial globe of al-'Adil's son al-Kamil.<sup>27</sup>

In the medieval Islamic world pen cases and inkwells are associated with the men of the pen, with the learned and educated. Owners of inkwells and pens were scholars or wise men.<sup>28</sup> From the tenth century onwards inkwells were mentioned in Iranian poetry and historical works as symbols and prominent insignia of royal power and ministerial office, a notion perhaps dating back to Sasanian Persia and adopted by the Islamic caliphate. The so-called state inkwell was royal or ministerial, the latter being made on the occasion of the vizier's investiture.<sup>29</sup>

In the list of recorded pen cases two examples leave no doubt as to the high status of their original owners and can actually be characterized as state inkwells: the pen case dated AH 607/1210-1211 made for Majd al-Mulk al-Muzaffar, vizier of the last Khwarazm-Shah, now at the Freer Gallery of Arts in Washington; and the pen case of ca. 1320 belonging to Abu al-Fida, the famous governor of Hama.<sup>30</sup> Both seem to fit well with the picture of power, scholarship and statesmanship outlined above. The vizier Majd al-Mulk al-Muzaffar is known to have been the founder of a library in Merv while Abu al-Fida is renowned for his literary works, the most important of which are a history of the world and a geography. A third good example of what was presumably a state inkwell is mentioned in the chronicle of Sibṭ ibn al-Zawzī who describes the defeat of Badr al-Din Lulu, the ruler of Mosul, by the Khwarazmians in 1237: *Lulu escaped all alone riding a fast horse. The Khwarazmians looted his chattels, his treasures and all the possessions of his army. I have been informed that a silver inlaid pen case which was worth two hundred dirhems fetched five dirhems [...]*<sup>31</sup> But probably the best known example is illustrated on the Baptistère de Saint-Louis. In one of the medallions an enthroned Mamluk ruler is flanked by two *amirs*, one – the *silahdar* – holds a sword and the other – the *dawadar* or secretary of the state – carries a pen case or state inkwell with two hands.<sup>32</sup>

Al-'Adil's pen case is the only surviving royal state inkwell. In shape and design it is innovative as it introduces the rectangular shaped pen box and includes in the iconography the ruler in a cosmic setting which will become pre-eminent in Islamic metalwork for over a century. Although the silver inlay has mostly flaked off, the design is clearly discernible, as are



Fig. 3. Detail of the enthroned ruler on the pen case at fig. 1 (drawing: K. Mavragani).

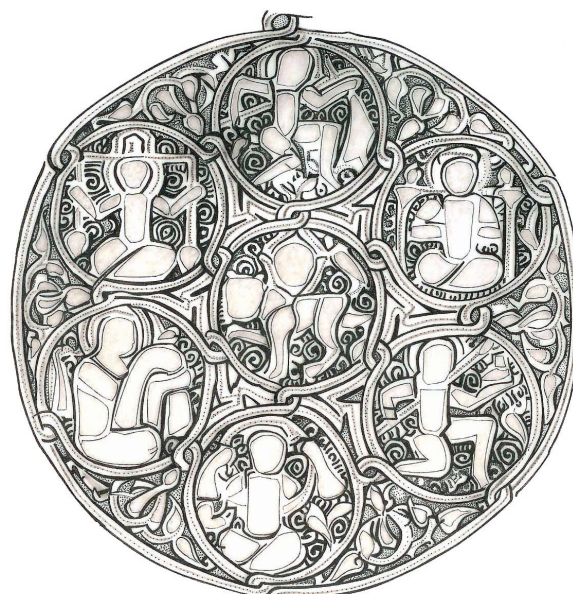


Fig. 4. Detail of the astrological medallion on the inside of the pen case at fig. 1 (drawing: K. Mavragani).

certain details of the craftsmanship. On the inside of the lid is a rectangle containing three medallions with court scenes surrounded by arabesques and four roundels with geometric, interlocked T motifs, all enclosed within a continuous pearl band. The lid is edged with a frieze of pacing or chasing animals and lanceolate leaves. Ten wheel motifs, of which two at the far left retain part of their original gold inlay, are inserted between the animals, which include such real and fantastic quadrupeds as a dog, a winged unicorn chasing an elephant, a winged hare, a griffin, a donkey and a bear.

The central medallion shows an enthroned ruler with a halo (fig. 3), perhaps the sultan al-'Adil himself, seated cross-legged on a throne-like low seat with a high back. He is wearing a turban but it is difficult to tell if he was holding anything, because the inlay at this point is almost completely lost. Two flying angels are carrying a billowing scarf that forms a canopy above his head. The throne is held by two winged lions shown back to back and licking their fore paws as they lift the exalted prince to heaven. In the art of late antiquity the scarf or canopy reveals divinity and by extension also royalty, while the winged lions or griffins are the solar creatures that carry the deified ruler to heaven. The enthroned potentate is thus solemnly depicted as a true Alexander ascending heavenwards.<sup>33</sup>



Fig. 5. Detail of a brass candlestick, AH 622/1225. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (after: D.S. Rice, The Oldest dated 'Mosul' candlestick A.D. 1225, *The Burlington Magazine* 91:56 [Dec. 1949] 337 fig. C VII).



Fig. 6. Frontispiece of the *Kitab al-Aghani* 17, ca. 1218-1219. Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi (after: R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* [New York 1977] 65).

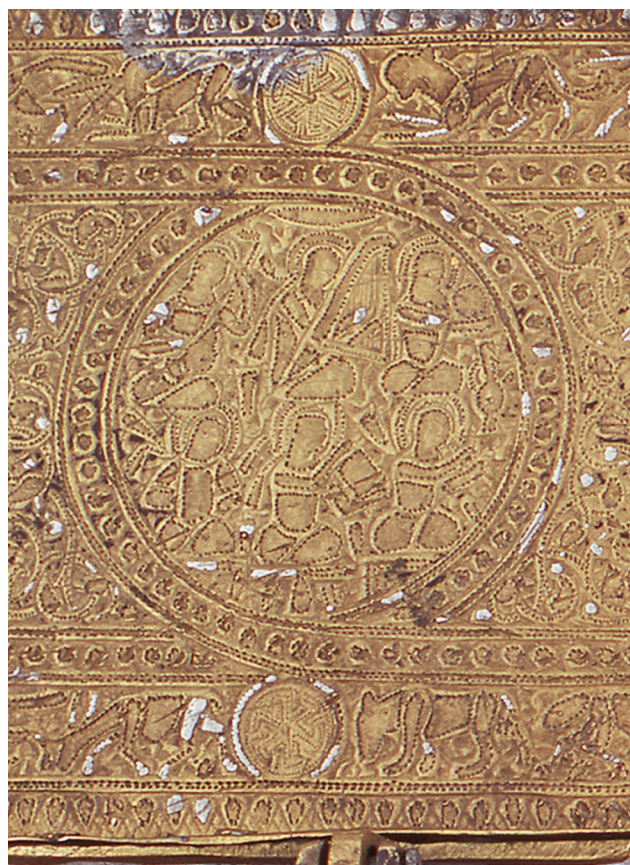


Fig. 7. Detail of the pen case at fig. 1 with dancers.

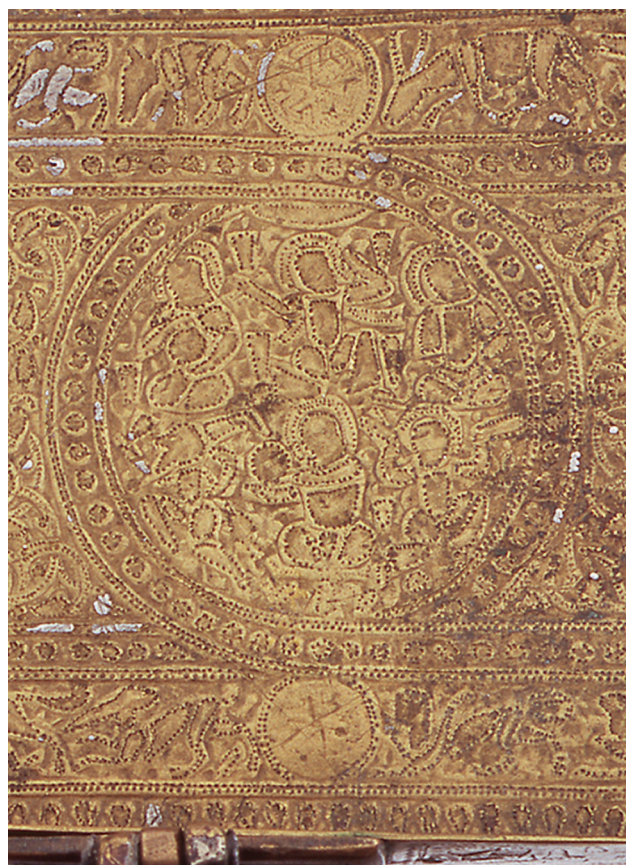


Fig. 8. Detail of the pen case at fig. 1 with musicians.

The strong symbolism of the enthroned ruler scene owes a lot to contemporary Christian and Byzantine iconography. This is an era and an area of classical revivals and survivals but also of living traditions.<sup>34</sup> The Christian population of the Jazira, whose close ties with Byzantium and the Crusader states are generally acknowledged, offered a wide range of material for the rulers of this new era to use and adapt. Perhaps the most impressive example from an iconographic point of view is found in the depictions of an enthroned ruler on a candlestick, made by a Mawsili craftsman seven years after the pen case in AH 622/1225, which is now in Boston (fig. 5). The ruler sits on a solar throne and is crowned or rather blessed by a bust-length figure with outstretched arms reminiscent of the Christ in Crusader and Byzantine icons, or more to the point in Byzantine miniatures depicting the emperor or the imperial couple blessed by Christ who delegates his divine power to the earthly rulers.<sup>35</sup>

The ruler is flanked by two attendants, members of his personal bodyguard, or royal slaves – *mamluks*. Though not yet as fully developed as it will be in the later thirteenth century in Egypt by the Mamluks, the institution of this elite body of young slaves in the service of the sultan is attested as early as the twelfth or first half of the thirteenth century in the Jazira and is also documented in pictorial sources such as the Vienna Kitab al-Diryaq and the Istanbul Kitab al-Aghani (fig. 6). It is from the frontispieces of these well known manuscripts that we can identify the attributes of the attendants.<sup>36</sup> The figure standing on the right, in an uncomfortable pose with one foot ceremonially raised and probably originally holding a sword (now lost), is the sultan's sword bearer or *silahdar*. The figure on the left is seated on a low platform and seems to lift his left hand towards the sultan. It is not clear what he is carrying here (the hand appears to end in a bifurcation), but in other cases he holds the neck

of a goose laid across his lap, as is appropriate to the master of the sultan's hunt. The scene is best seen on a tray stand from the Jazira, now in Qatar, where the silver is completely intact and the attendants carrying a goose and a sword can be clearly made out.<sup>37</sup>

The medallions flanking the enthroned ruler illustrate court entertainment: dancing and music (figs 7, 8). The semi-circle at the top of each roundel indicates the sky and an outdoor activity. It is rarely found on figural metalwork but it is seen on *minai* and Kashan pottery and is typical of Jaziran manuscripts such as the Paris and Vienna Kitab al-Diryaq;<sup>38</sup> it is thus a telling example of the debt owed by early Jaziran metalwork to manuscript illustration. In one medallion three figures dance to the music of two seated tambourine players and another musician with a square instrument, presumably a cithar, either the *qanun* or the *santur*.<sup>39</sup> In the other medallion the centre is occupied by a harpist with a long braid and among the identifiable instruments are a long-handled lute, a tambourine and a flute; a ewer floats at the far right.

The outside of the pen case is literally covered with astrological medallions which, as far as can be made out, are identical: three on the lid and five on the external sides. The sun is in the middle of each medallion with the six planets and the twelve signs of the zodiac revolving around it in two concentric rings.<sup>40</sup> A ninth astrological medallion with one ring of planetary figures around the sun is depicted on the bottom of the pen case (fig. 4) amidst a dense geometric interlace of eight-pointed stars with a rosette and a large silver dot at its centre. The visual resemblance to the night sky and the stars in the firmament is striking.

In medieval Islamic art and particularly in metalwork there are numerous depictions of the sun, the planets and the zodiac represented with symbols which on the whole derive from the Late Antique tradition. On the inside of the pen case the planetary figures are displayed as they appear in astronomical texts, beginning with the Moon as the closest to the earth and ending with Saturn, the farthest away (fig. 4). Arranged in a circle with the sun in the centre,<sup>41</sup> they are depicted either as solitary figures or in their respective zodiacal domiciles. For instance, the moon and the sun – the sixth and seventh planets respectively – each have only one zodiacal domicile, the Sun in Leo and the Moon in Cancer, while the rest of the planets have two. Contained within interconnected roundels and reading clockwise from the bottom they are: the Moon, a figure seated cross-legged holding a crescent, while a crab's pincers at the right symbolizes its

zodiacal domicile; Mercury, as a young man, a beardless scribe (*al-katib*), seated in profile, one knee raised to support the paper, and holding a scroll and a pen; Venus (represented by Libra as its planetary lord), a figure seated cross-legged under a balance; a figure of a man running, probably depicting Mars, because it is holding his attributes, a sword and a severed head (the latter feature being related to the astronomical image of the constellation of Perseus, who holds the head of the Medusa). The same running man is used for the personification of Saturn in the last medallion where he holds a sword instead of the usual axe. In between Mars and Saturn, Jupiter is depicted as a figure seated cross-legged on a high-backed throne, with no attributes but shown as a wise old man wearing a turban. In the middle medallion, the Sun is riding on a lion, Leo being its only zodiacal domicile.

There is little doubt that the pen case is the work of a Jaziran artist: the pearl border to the medallions is a vestigial feature from silverware that is found only on early Mosul pieces like the Benaki box of Isma'il ibn Ward (AH 617/1220) (fig. 9) and the Metropolitan ewer of ibn Jaldak (AH 623/1226). The geometric interlace on the inside is also a typical feature of the early phase of Mosul metalwork and can be compared with similar examples of interlace on the top of the Benaki box and also on two cylindrical boxes, one in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and the other in Berlin.<sup>42</sup>

Possibly starting with this pen case, astrological imagery combined with throne scenes was to become the most important subject depicted on the metalwork of the Jazira and Syria. The royal symbolism of this solar iconography was fully understood by contemporaries. There are, as might be expected, many visual antecedents of the cosmic ruler, from the earliest examples in Eastern Iran and the throne of Khusraw to the Western Islamic world and examples from Muslim Spain and Fatimid Egypt.<sup>43</sup> In Byzantium, the emperor was reported to have sat on a throne supported on winged lions or other winged creatures, such as griffins or eagles, and in his presence poems and hymns written by court poets were sung, equating him with the sun.<sup>44</sup> There are similar Arabic literary antecedents and parallels. On the Victoria & Albert box mentioned above there is a pre-Islamic poem comparing the ruler with the sun and his subordinates with the stars, a comparison made also by al-Mutanabbi in respect of Sayf al-Dawla, the well-known hero of the Arab-Byzantine frontier.<sup>45</sup> Arabic panegyrics on the prince comparing him to the rising sun draw on roots deep



Fig. 9. Brass box with inlaid decoration bearing the signature of Isma'il ibn Ward al-Mawsili, AH 617/1220. H. 3.3 cm. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 13171 (photo: V. Tsonis).

in Late Antiquity, as do similar poems and epigrams praising the neighbouring Byzantine emperor.<sup>46</sup>

In its original, glittering state, the pen case must have been an impressive gift worthy of a sultan. Al-'Adil was supreme sultan from 1200 but he had been conducting the affairs of the Ayyubid family and state from a much earlier date. A gift with such an explicit symbolic iconography was probably intended to commemorate a specific event and/or confirm an allegiance. One can only speculate on the kind of event which had provided the occasion for such a gift. With the arrival of the Fifth Crusade in AH 614/1217 the 72-year-old sultan al-'Adil found himself facing a fresh supply of crusading knights coming from overseas after a long and fruitful period of peace with the local crusaders and the Italian maritime states. Leaving the bulk of his forces with al-Kamil to protect Egypt, he moved into Syria to assist his other son al-Mu'azzam to guard the approaches to Jerusalem and Damascus. There he realized that he could not deal with the numbers and fanatical zeal of the crusaders and he decided to retreat, rejecting his son's proposals for a direct attack. A contemporary source relates a conversation which is supposed to have taken place between father and son in

which the sultan advised against combat while the Christians were still full of crusading zeal. He preferred to wait until they had grown weary when, he said, the land could be freed without peril. And so it transpired. Indeed, when the crusaders reached the Jordan and Lake Tiberias they exhausted their religious fervour in bathing in the sacred river and in making pilgrimages to local holy places. After the needless pillage of the town of Baisan on the Jordan, they spent their time collecting supposed relics and soon returned home.<sup>47</sup>

Sometime after the first day of the month of Muharram (the beginning of the Islamic New Year) which corresponds to 30 March 1218, the pen case was given to the sultan, probably in solemn recognition of his wise policy that had spared the Syrian lands of the Ayyubids. A few months later, at the camp of Marj as-Suffar outside Damascus, on hearing the news of the loss of the tower of Damietta to the Crusaders, al-'Adil died of shock; it was AH 7 Jumada 615/31 or August 1218.



Fig. 10. Brass basin with inlaid decoration made for a Rasulid sultan of Yemen, probably al-Muzaffar Yusuf, AH 647-694/1250-1295. D. of rim 51 cm. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 13075 (photo: V. Tsonis).

A basin decorated with the emblem of the Rasulids of Yemen

The second object to be examined is a large basin with cusped rim acquired by an antique dealer in 1931, probably in London (fig. 10).<sup>48</sup> The Museum archives mention that it belonged to the Rasulid Sultan of Yemen al-Muzaffar Yusuf (AH 647-694/1250-1295) but the long inscription on the rim is seriously damaged and has been impossible to decipher (fig. 11). Its attribution to a Rasulid environment is due to the five-petaled rosette – the dynastic emblem of the Rasulid dynasty – which is repeated some 48 times on the outside and inside of the vessel, not counting the base where the decoration has been completely obliterated. On the outside the gold inlay on the rosettes is still visible. Several stylistic features point to the period of al-Muzaffar Yusuf's reign and the wealth of royal imagery implies that he or some other person of very high standing at the sultan's court may have been the patron. Al-Muzaffar Yusuf is the first Rasulid ruler with a distinctly Mamluk taste in luxury goods, which he imported from Mamluk territory. He was on excellent terms with the Mamluk Sultan

Baybars (AH 669-676/1260-1277) and sent at least seven embassies to Cairo, while at least two Mamluk embassies are recorded during his reign. The catalogue of inlaid metalwork inscribed with his name comprises twelve pieces, one of which, a ewer made by a Mawsili craftsman, was made in Cairo in 1275-1276.<sup>49</sup>

The basin appears to have been owned in the seventeenth-eighteenth century by a certain Nasir bey, an Ottoman official who engraved his own name on the rim in a tuğra-shaped panel ending in a tulip (fig. 12). There is another owner's inscription under the base, probably earlier, which can be read – though only very tentatively – as beginning with the words: *bi-rasm* (in the possession of). Several inlaid metalwork pieces belonging to the Rasulids have been inscribed with the name of later owners – some of them identified as belonging to the Zaidi family of Shi'i imams from San'a. They were taken as booty in 1527 when the Zaidi imam invaded the Tahirid capital. Although we cannot identify this later owner, the basin can be added to the group of Rasulid pieces which changed hands and survived most probably in Yemen until the Ottoman period.<sup>50</sup>

Basins were used for ablutions and this accounts for their

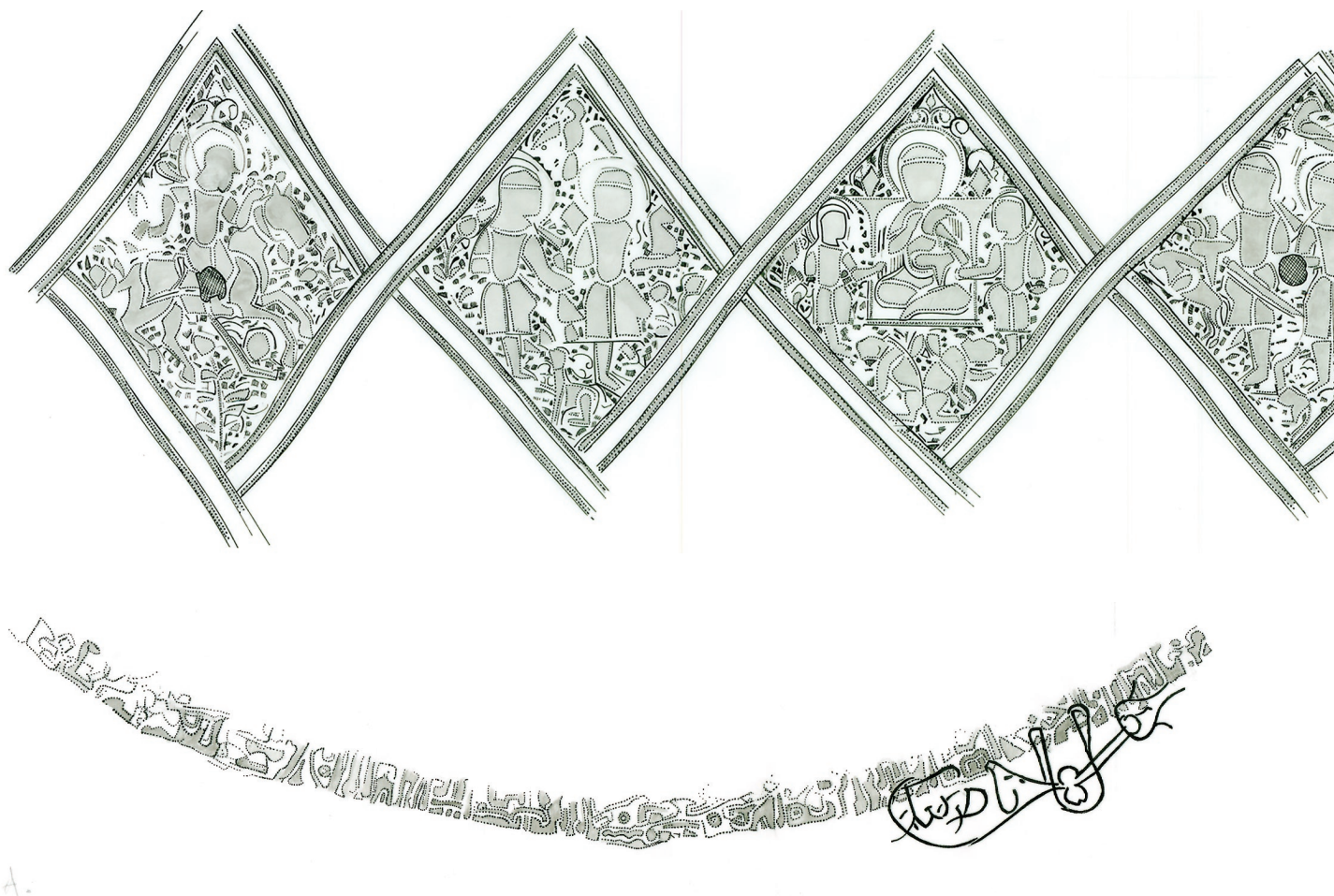


Fig. 11. Detail of the figural decoration of the basin at fig. 10 (drawing: K. Mavragani).

Fig. 12. Drawing of the inscribed rim of the basin at fig. 10 (drawing: K. Mavragani).

flat, lavishly decorated bases and in most cases the low sides left undecorated on the outside. In the Mamluk tradition basins normally have the shape of the Baptistère de Saint-Louis, with flaring sides and an everted rim. Basins with a cusped rim were widely used in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Khurasan, whence the shape most probably reached the Jazira.<sup>51</sup> An example in Berlin attributed to the Jazira is dated to the second quarter of the thirteenth century, another example in the Metropolitan Museum in New York is from Western Iran, and dates to the early fourteenth century.<sup>52</sup> The Benaki basin is the same size as the Berlin and Metropolitan pieces, 51-52 cm in diameter, but the rim is 12-lobed rather than 18-lobed and the walls are higher and decorated on the outside, a distinction probably due to the high-ranking official who commissioned it.

The exterior decoration of the basin gives the impression of being faceted. Divided by plain bands into four consecutive rows of twelve large compartments – lozenge or triangular shaped – each one has a roundel in the middle that bears the five-petalled Rasulid rosette. The top and bottom rows are decorated with a geometric double ‘Y’ pattern,<sup>53</sup> while the two middle rows contain scrollwork, one with a simple vegetal scroll and the other with an animated scroll whose ends take the form of animal heads.<sup>54</sup>

Inside, the two middle rows show figural decoration, one row depicting enthronement scenes and mounted hunters, the other with pairs of musicians and fowling. The drawing in fig. 13 shows two examples with musicians and fowling from the second row and the three compartments of the first row. The drawing in fig. 11 shows seven

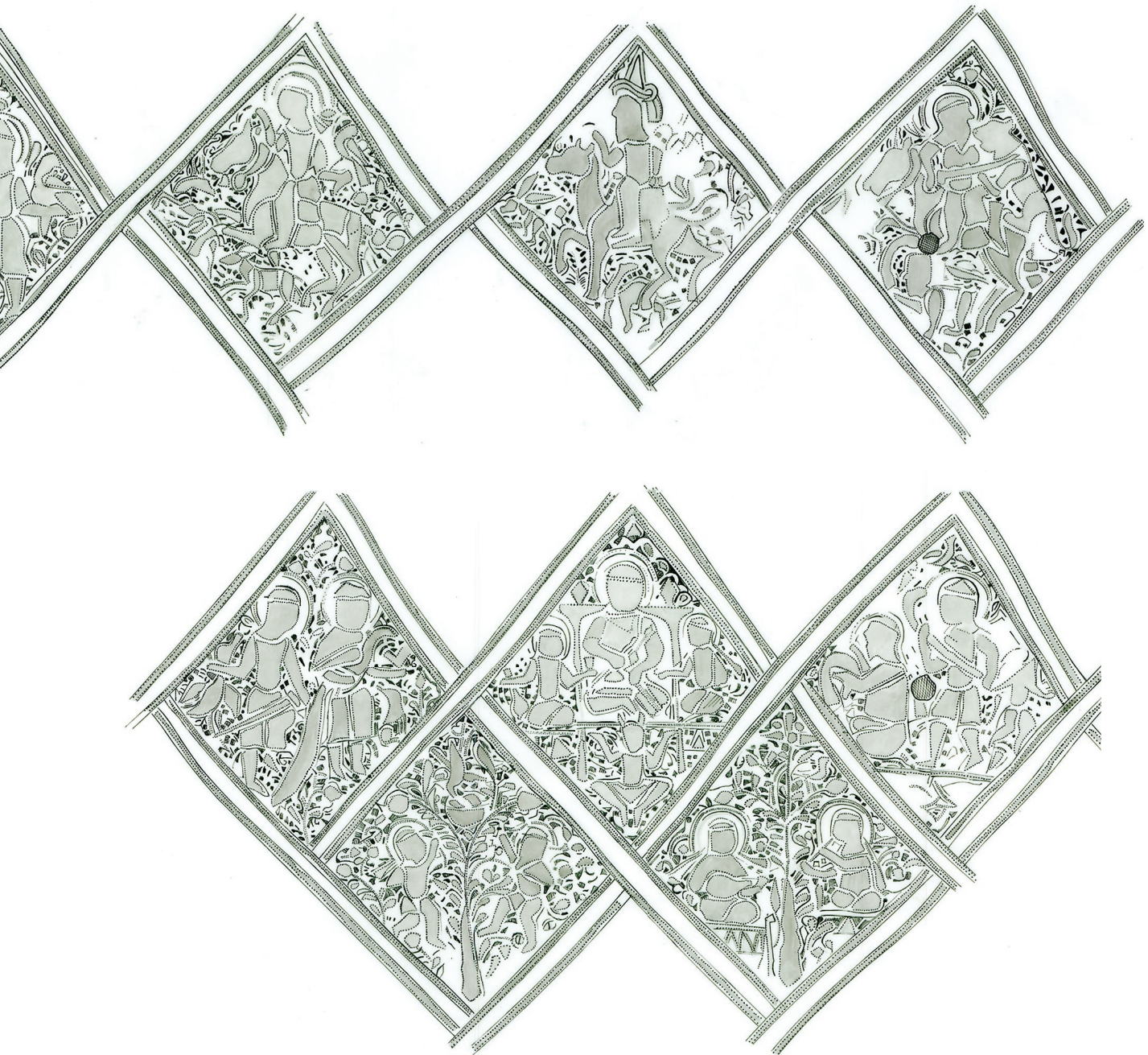


Fig. 13. Detail of the figural decoration of the basin at fig. 10 (drawing: K. Mavragani).

more compartements of the first row. The decoration of the lower part has been entirely erased.

In the first row the image of an enthroned ruler is depicted twice, the one image exactly opposite the other. In one lozenge he is shown seated cross-legged on a lion throne (fig. 11) flanked by two attendants who stand with hands extended in

a gesture of respect. On the opposite side the enthroned ruler is shown seated cross-legged on a kind of platform, between two attendants one of whom holds a bottle with a long neck and a cup (fig. 13). In many respects the two ruler scenes on the Benaki basin evoke frontispieces from manuscripts; one might even describe them as a double frontispiece. Few



Fig. 14. Frontispiece from the Assemblies (Maqamat) of al-Hariri with enthroned prince, ca. AH 734/1334. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek (after: R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* [New York 1977] 148).

double frontispieces from Arabic manuscripts have been preserved and they all hint at royal patronage, or at any rate images of authority which in several cases are accompanied by an author portrait.<sup>55</sup> Judging from the position of the hands of the ruler seated on the platform, he is probably holding a bow and arrow; the frontispiece of the *Kitab al-Aghani* (dated 1218/1219) (fig. 6) shows the ruler holding his weapons, the characteristic attributes introduced by the Seljuk military elite and used by the atabegs of the Jazira, in a similar way.<sup>56</sup> This frontispiece depicts Badr al-Din Lulu, who was not a Seljuk but an Armenian convert, adorned with the insignia of the ruling elite. Similarly on the Rasulid basin the ruler is depicted as a Seljuk potentate, an attempt at legitimizing the descent the Rasulids claimed from the Great Seljuks.

In the enthronement scene (fig. 13), a platform divides the central area with the ruler from the area underneath where what looks like a crouching human figure is depicted reaching out its long arms, as if holding up the platform. The creature's strange headdress seems to be fitted with two 'ears'. The position of its feet is reminiscent of that in a similar crouching figure on the 1223 Cleveland ewer, which D.S. Rice has suggested might be associated with the zodiac cycle.<sup>57</sup> On the Vaso Vescovali in the British Museum a similar figure (in this case an angel) is supporting a platform on which the radiating symbol of the zodiacal sign of the Sun appears.<sup>58</sup> Our crouching figure has no wings and may be an entertainer, a jester or an acrobat, like the one shown under the ruler's throne on the frontispiece of the *al-Hariri Maqamat* of 1334 in Vienna (fig. 14).<sup>59</sup> The composition seems to follow the hierarchical division of Byzantine consular diptychs, where the large central section is occupied by the authority figure and the lower part is left for servants, tribute bearers and entertainers. In the thirteenth century this compositional scheme was adopted by Islamic frontispieces.

As in frontispieces, the two images of the enthroned ruler on the basin are surrounded by officials and members of his bodyguard – all young men apart from one – arranged in pairs and proceeding towards him. Not all the attributes are clear but to the right of the ruler on the lion throne (fig. 11) is a guard holding a sword, followed by another with a bird – most probably a falcon – perched on his gloved hand. The official to the left of the ruler is also holding a bird on his outstretched arm – a goose or a duck.<sup>60</sup> The remaining lozenges depict four riders walking towards the ruler on the lion throne – to the right a mounted falconer, a man with



Fig. 15. Detail of the frontispiece of the *Epistles of the Sincere Brethren*, AH 686/1287. Istanbul, Library of the Süleymaniye Mosque (after: R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* [New York 1977] 101).

an impressive pointed headdress riding a camel, a horseman brandishing a sword at a lion which is attacking his mount's rump, and to the left another horseman playing polo.

The figure of the ruler seated on the platform (fig. 13) on the opposite side is accompanied by a pair of guards. The first holds a large bird, a peacock with a crest and a long feathery tail,<sup>61</sup> and behind him follows a second holding a goose by its neck in one hand and a sword in the other. To the right of the ruler and in front of an attendant holding a large polo stick stands the most interesting figure of the composition. A bearded secretary or scribe in profile, he sits cross-legged, writing on a long scroll. This is undoubtedly a figure taken straight from a manuscript frontispiece showing the portrait of an author – a court poet or historian – in the presence of his royal patron. Whether a standing figure (as on one of the frontispieces of the *Kitab al-Aghani*) or

seated (as on the 1290 double frontispiece of al Juwayni's History), an author presenting his work to his royal patron is not a conventional motif frequently reproduced in Islamic metalwork (fig. 15). It was popular in Arabic manuscripts of the thirteenth century and continued to be used by illustrators of Persian manuscripts of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.<sup>62</sup> It is therefore tempting to suggest that the scene represents an actual occasion, and to envisage a ceremony during which some scholar such as the state official and court historian Muhammad ibn Hatim, or the panegyrists ibn Hutaymil and Muhammad ibn Himyar, or a scientist (physicians were especially highly valued by al-Muzaffar Yusuf), presented their work to their patron. After all al-Muzaffar's court was famed for its scholarship and he himself was an assiduous student of medicine and science.<sup>63</sup>

The remaining two lozenges are damaged but it is clear that they depict riders: a mounted archer with a cheetah to the rear of his horse and a man on an elephant, seated in a *howdah* and assisted by two grooms. In most cases the hunt imagery is underlined by hares and dogs racing in front of or under the feet of the horses. It is possible that all the riders are, in fact, representations of the ruler himself performing heroic acts or entertaining himself in a royal manner. Five out of the six known frontispieces of the Kitab al-Aghani show the same ruler, Badr al-Din Lulu, in various royal activities: two enthronement scenes, an audience scene, a literary presentation and a hunting scene. In fourteenth-century Iranian manuscripts from Baghdad and Shiraz part of this royal imagery is squeezed into double frontispieces combining the enthroned ruler on one page and either an audience scene, a presentation or a hunting scene on the other. The Rasulid basin contains enough room for this imagery to fit comfortably into a row of twelve rhomboid compartments.

The second row of lozenges is even less well preserved than the first but it is clear that they show outdoor activities: musical entertainment and fowling (fig. 13). Paired figures are arranged on either side of trees with birds and birds' nests hidden among their branches, suggesting genre scenes or real outdoor activities. The figures are either musicians or hunters or mixed. Musicians playing lute, tambourine or flute are common enough in Islamic metalwork but bird catchers are less frequently depicted. Similarly fowling with a blowpipe or a bow, as described by D.S. Rice using examples from the 1223 Cleveland ewer, the Barberini vase,

the Homberg ewer and a few other Mosul pieces of the early or mid-thirteenth century, is only occasionally portrayed.<sup>64</sup> On the Benaki basin neither a blowpipe nor a bow seem to be depicted, but there is enough evidence of a more general fascination with birds and fowling. This row is all about the leisure pursuit of bird hunting to music. And in the first row three out of the four officials standing by the enthroned rulers are associated with offices related to birds, hunters or keepers of falcons, geese and peacocks.

It is not particularly easy to date the basin precisely. Al-Muzaffar Yusuf's reign extended throughout the second half of the thirteenth century, but the basin could not have been made before 1260 when the young sultan was still striving to establish his authority.<sup>65</sup> His good relations with the Mamluk sultan Baybars were undoubtedly strengthened during and after Baybars' pilgrimage to Mecca in 1269, then nominally under Rasulid control, but the peak of his power was in 1279 when he captured Zafar in Oman and thus succeeded in controlling the maritime trade of the Red Sea.<sup>66</sup> A date round about the middle of his reign or thereafter seems plausible by comparison with other pieces inscribed with the name and titles of al-Muzaffar. For instance the Benaki basin shares the 'Y' pattern of the background with the ewer made in 1275 in Cairo by a Mawsili craftsman, and also with a candlestick base now in Lyon.<sup>67</sup> Another feature of the Benaki basin is the wide, plain, ribbon-like bands framing the lozenges; these are outlined with double lines that were originally used to secure thin silver fillets. Similar plain ribbons are found on one of the trays made for al-Muzaffar which Esin Atil has dated to ca. 1290. This dating seems too late if we compare it with other pieces with the same type of ribbons dated to around the mid-thirteenth century or even earlier.<sup>68</sup> In the case of the Benaki basin it probably indicates the close dependence on Jaziran and Syrian models, which is to be expected from the first generation of Mawsili artists working in Cairo, Damascus or even elsewhere.

#### A Mawsili candlestick with a procession of Ilkhanid officials

The original patron of this candlestick is unknown but it is associated at a later date with Mirjan aka (agha), governor of Baghdad, founder of the Mirjaniya madrasa (AH 758/1357) and freedman of the Ilkhanid sultan Öljeytu (fig. 16). Mirjan agha dedicated the candlestick to the sanctuary of the



Fig. 16. Brass candlestick with inlaid decoration made by 'Ali al-Mawsili, AH 717/1317-1318. H. 53 cm, D. of base 41 cm. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 13038 (photo: V. Tsonis).



Fig. 17. The candlestick at fig. 16 from above showing the inscription on the rim with the signature of the craftsman and the zodiac medallions on the drip tray (photo: S. Delivorias).

prophet in Medina after scrupulously attempting to remove the human figures from the decoration. The earlier history of the candlestick is equally intriguing: dated AH 717/1317-1318 it was made by one of the few remaining craftsmen who signed their name with the Mawsili *nisba* and is probably one of the last dated pieces of Mosul metalwork.<sup>69</sup> The inscriptions were read by Étienne Combe in 1930 and subsequently published in exhibition catalogues.<sup>70</sup>

On the rim of the candle holder is the master craftsman's

inlaid inscription: *'The work of the ustadh Ali, son of 'Umar, son of Ibrahim, al-Sankari al-Mawsili, and [that was] in the year 717 of the Prophet's Hijra.* The word *ustadh*, meaning master, is of Iranian derivation and is not usually found on contemporary Mamluk metalwork (fig. 17).<sup>71</sup>

On the candle holder itself are Arabic verses in praise of the candlestick and the yellow fire and light it supports, all written in the first person as if the candlestick is speaking: *I preserve the fire and its constant glow. Dress me in yellow*

garments. *I am never present in an assembly without giving the night the appearance of day.*' This is a form of vernacular craftsman's poetry better known from later Mamluk metalwork.<sup>72</sup> The poetic inscription is interrupted by three roundels with swastika motifs, parts of which have been erased and later engraved with the name of the second owner, stating that the candlestick is a *wakf* for the sanctuary of the Prophet: *'This candlestick was given as an offering to the sanctuary of the Prophet by Mirjan Aka.'*

Inside the candlestick is cursory engraved a second inscription referring to Mirjan: *'This most luminous candlestick was presented by Mirjan of the Sultan, to the sanctuary of the Prophet and the curse of God be upon the one who changes it or attacks it or takes possession of it. [On pain of] flogging in the open and before all.'*

On the neck is a Quranic inscription [II, 256].

Around the edge of the shoulder are repeated the Arabic verses in praise of fire followed by some lines of Arabic poetry with blessings for the owner, as commonly found on Mamluk metalwork.<sup>73</sup> *'For its owner the glory and prosperity will last and long life for infinite days. Glory and victory and prosperity and grace and luck and splendour and excellence and generosity and forbearance and learning and the things for which you are exalted, so that the Arabs and Persians are embarrassed to describe you. What is created is little beside you, seeing that your qualities are for them the principles of existence while the people have disappeared.'* The verses encircle the drip tray on which are shown twelve medallions with the signs of the zodiac.

The body bears a large cursive inscription which contains a series of royal titles, but no specific name of a ruler is mentioned: *'Glory to our lord, the possessing king, the learned, the just, the God-aided (lit. the fortified [by God]), the triumphant, the victorious, the holy warrior, the defender of the frontiers, the pillar of Islam and the Muslims, may God make his victories glorious and multiply his power, through Muhammad and his family.'* The wording of the inscription praising an unnamed *malik* is consistent with the titles of the Turkoman rulers of the Jazira. For instance the epithets used in the first part of the inscription are almost identical with those used on a box in the British Museum made for Badr al-Din Lulu.<sup>74</sup> The titles, however, do not greatly differ from corresponding inscriptions on objects made for Ayyubid rulers of Syria and the Jazira and more importantly they are still used on late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century objects in an Ilkhanid style.<sup>75</sup> As early as the 1930s



Fig. 18. Brass candlestick with inlaid decoration kept in the Ardabil shrine, Iran (after: A.U. Pope, *A survey of Persian Art* 6 [Oxford 1939] pl. 1332).

Étienne Combe thought it possible that the anonymous owner of the candlestick was the Artukid ruler of Mardin, Shams al-Din Salih (AH 712-765/1312-1365). And I will come back to this later.

An analysis of the shape and decorative programme of the candlestick indicates the geographical area of the Jazira, Syria and also, following the establishment of the Ilkhanids, Western Iran. Made from sheet brass, candlesticks in this truncated conical form are known from the early thirteenth-century Jazira to the late Mamluk period. In 1297 a Maw-sili craftsman signed a piece made in Damascus and thus a series of Mamluk candlesticks of similar shape and style have been identified as being produced in that city.<sup>76</sup> A typical feature, also found on the Benaki candlestick, is the bold cursive inscription with the royal titles and the dedication between two narrow borders and projecting ridges.



Fig. 19. Detail of the candlestick at fig. 16 showing the Sun in Leo (photo: S. Delivorias).



Fig. 20. Detail of the candlestick at fig. 16 showing Saturn in Aquarius (photo: S. Delivorias).

In size the Benaki piece seems to be one of the largest: H. 53 cm, D. of base 41 cm. Exceptionally large works of this kind are often associated with the Ilkhanid period, the high status of the donor and/or the importance of the place to which the item is dedicated, normally a venerable shrine.<sup>77</sup> The inscriptions on the Benaki candlestick testify to the royal, though anonymous, status of the donor but there is no indication of the original place of dedication, if any. The closest parallel to this shape is a candlestick in the Ardabil shrine (fig. 18); there is a difference in height of 11 cm but the proportions, especially of the candleholder to the body, are similar.<sup>78</sup> The Ardabil candlestick is inscribed with the titles of an anonymous Turkoman ruler of the Jazira, which are similar to if longer than the titles on the Benaki candlestick. Together with a tray in the Aron collection with similar inscriptions the Ardabil candlestick is attributed by James Allan to a workshop in North Western Iran and it is thought that they were both made for the Artukid ruler of Mardin, al-Mansur Najm al-Din Ghazi II (1284-1312), Shams al-Din Salih's father. In their typically Ilkhanid decoration, however, both these pieces differ from the candlestick under discussion. They relate to a group of objects made for or during Öljeytu's reign and display the latest artistic trends.<sup>79</sup>

Despite similarities with Ilkhanid or Mamluk examples in terms of shape or the bold epigraphy, the decoration of the Benaki candlestick looks extremely conservative and more akin to earlier thirteenth-century examples. On the drip-tray are twelve medallions with the signs of the zodiac and on the body and neck five rows of officials in procession shown under an arcade with ogee arches (two rows on the body framing the large inscription, one on the sloping foot at the base of the neck and two on the neck itself). Both the ogee arches and the zodiac signs are extremely common on early pieces of metalwork from the Jazira and Syria, one could even say that they are the hallmark of the Jaziran style (cf. fig. 5).<sup>80</sup>

The zodiac signs on the drip-tray appear in most cases in combination with the corresponding planetary figures. Starting from the medallion with the Sun in Leo (fig. 19) and moving counter clockwise they are: the Moon in Cancer (fig. 22), al-Jawzahr (the Dragon), Venus in Taurus, Mars in Aries, Jupiter in Pisces, Saturn in Aquarius (fig. 20), Saturn in Capricorn, Sagittarius (fig. 21), Mars in Scorpio, Venus in Libra, Mercury in Virgo. Only al-Jawzahr, the invisible eighth planet (a dragon held responsible for the eclipses of the sun and the moon) is depicted as a solitary



Fig. 21. Detail of the candlestick at fig. 16 showing Sagittarius (photo: S. Delivorias).



Fig. 22. Detail of the candlestick at fig. 16 showing Moon in Cancer (photo: S. Delivorias).

figure, holding in each of his hands the twisting bodies of two dragons; it probably stands for Gemini, in the sign of which, according to the astrological system of the exaltations, the maximum influence of the al-Jawzahr/the Dragon is attained. The lesser influence of al-Jawzahr is Sagittarius who is represented here as a centaur shooting an arrow from his bow; normally the centaur's long tail ends in a dragon's head, which is omitted in this case.<sup>81</sup>

The position of the signs of the zodiac on the drip-tray around the neck that supports the light is in accordance with the well known sun symbolism associated with candlesticks. There is, in the words of James Allan: a *'thinly veiled equation of the sun with the local ruler, whoever that may have been'*.<sup>82</sup> And this is made absolutely clear by the Arabic verses praising and encircling the yellow source of light and power.

The closest parallels for the decorative scheme on the candlestick are found on a candlestick signed by Dawud ibn Salamah and dated 1248/1249, and to a lesser extent on a candlestick signed by al-Hajj Isma'il and Muhammad ibn Futtuh al-Mawsili in ca. 1230. Both depict the signs of the zodiac on the drip-tray and have horizontal friezes on the body. The former candlestick is one of the eighteen pieces of

inlaid metalwork currently known which are decorated with a mixture of Islamic and Christian scenes.<sup>83</sup> The decoration comprises four horizontal rows of arcades with standing courtiers or Christian saints, two of whom frame the central register, which is decorated with large medallions depicting Christian scenes. A similar layout on the latter candlestick comprises only Islamic scenes: medallions with enthronement scenes on the body framed by friezes of courtiers seated cross-legged.<sup>84</sup>

On the Benaki piece the Mawsili craftsman, Ali ibn 'Umar, chose to follow this traditional decorative programme with rows of some 116 officials on parade (fig. 23), but substituted the Christian or enthronement scenes, which normally accompany these processions, with the royal inscription, which was the latest fashion in Mamluk Damascus and Cairo. The officials themselves, however, do not look like Mamluk courtiers but rather like their Ilkhanid counterparts. They all walk to the right, wearing boots and long robes open at the front, with their hands held in front of their chests, all frozen in an identical pose. But the most telling detail is their hair arranged in two round curls, which is the most typical Ilkhanid hairstyle. This mixture of Mosul-style metalwork with details from the Ilkhanid fig-



Fig. 23. Detail of the candlestick at fig. 16 showing officials on parade (photo: V. Tsonis).

ural style is normally attributed to the late thirteenth century. By the end of the second decade of the fourteenth century the Ilkhanid style extends to Chinese-inspired decoration which includes lotus blossoms and dragon fights – conspicuous by their absence on our candlestick.<sup>85</sup>

It is difficult to attribute the candlestick to a specific geographic locality, whether a workshop in the Jazira or in Western Iran. An itinerant Mawsili craftsman looking for work and patronage at the court of the Ilkhans or the minor rulers of Western Iran and the Jazira or Anatolia is consistent with the picture of the diaspora of Mawsili craftsmen. However, the large size and weight of the candlestick point to a special commission that could only have been executed *in situ*. The conservative style, strangely stuck in the past, copies earlier models and may have been a deliberate choice on the part of a minor local ruler, although it does not explain his remaining anonymous.

It is worth exploring the Artukid connexion as Combe has suggested and keeping the intricate politics of the age in mind. The Artukids of Mardin held a special position in the Ilkhanid network of vassals. They were the Ilkhan's most loyal clients in the Jazira: al-Salih's father, al-Mansur, had given his daughter in marriage to Öljeitu, and was appointed by the Ilkhan Ghazan as governor of the Jazira. In AH 712/1312 he was succeeded by his son al-Salih, who apparently very quickly recognized the changing fortunes of the Ilkhanid dynasty and tried to assert himself vis-à-vis both the Ilkhanids and the Mamluks. In AH 717/1317-18, when the candlestick was made, the situation was still at an early stage, but al-Salih's position and power in the Jazira were unchallenged and sufficiently consolidated that he was able to put down the revolt in Amida.<sup>86</sup>

Young and ambitious, al-Salih, like his father before him, was in a position to maintain a circle of court poets such as

Sayf al-Din al-Hilli. Al-Hilli, who started out as court poet to al-Mansur, also composed poems for al-Salih, including a series of six poems called *'The Candle Cycle'* in which he describes and welcomes the candles as they are brought in and lit in the evening *majlis* at the court of al-Malik al-Salih.<sup>87</sup> Supposedly these candles were supported on fine inlaid candlesticks.

The circumstances in which the candlestick came into the hands of Mirjan Agha are unknown and will most probably remain in the realm of pure speculation. Mirjan was appointed governor of Baghdad by the Jalayrid ruler Shaykh Uways in 1356, and he remained in this post until 1364/1365 when he staged an abortive coup d'état. Despite this, in 1367-1368 he was reinstated by Uways and he remained governor until his death in 1374.<sup>88</sup> Assuming that the candlestick had remained in Artukid hands, the only case of close contact between the Jalayrids of Baghdad and the Artukids of Mardin occurred in AH 768/1366 when Shaykh Uways went to the Jazira and compelled the Artukid al-Mansur, al-Salih's son, to join forces with him.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps the candlestick was a present from the Artukid ruler of Mardin to Shaykh Uways himself, who then gave the candlestick to Mirjan after his submission and reinstatement in office in 1367-1368.

However he acquired it, Mirjan was not going to keep it for long. In the early 1370s, Uways ordered a large number of candlesticks to be sent to Mecca so that his name could be inserted in the *khutba*.<sup>90</sup> Following the example of his sultan, Mirjan may also have dedicated his candlestick to the shrine of the prophet in Medina at this time.

## APPENDIX

### D.S. Rice in Athens

Fifty to sixty years after they were first published, David Storm Rice's articles on Islamic inlaid metalwork remain examples of pioneer research. He would dedicate himself to an in-depth study of a chosen object or a small group of objects and analyse every possible aspect exhaustively: epigraphy, style and history. The long shadow cast by his reputation over the scholarly world of Islamic art is such that I deem it worth spending a few lines on his correspondence preserved in the Benaki Museum. And all the more so because this correspondence is addressed to Anthony Benaki and to the Byzantine art historian Manolis Chatzidakis, who was one

of the most important scholars in his discipline in the post-War period. Despite their formal character, the letters Rice exchanged with Anthony Benaki and Manolis Chatzidakis transport us into the atmosphere of a past era.

D.S. Rice (1913-1962) was one of the Jewish scholars who fled continental Europe in the 1930s and 1940s for Britain or the United States. Born in Austria, but having grown up in Haifa from the age of ten, he went to Paris to read Arabic Studies at the École Normale des Langues Orientales Vivantes. Until 1939 when he enlisted in the British army, he worked at the French Institute in Damascus, completed his book on the Aramaic dialects of Anti-Lebanon and travelled widely in the Near East and North Africa. He established a close relationship with Leo A. Mayer in Jerusalem, as well as with Ralph Harari and Gaston Wiet in Cairo, with whom he had shared interests in Islamic art and especially metalwork. It was perhaps from Harari and Wiet that he learned about Anthony Benaki's collection and in 1938, when his boat docked at Piraeus, he paid a hasty visit *entre deux bateaux*, to the then recently founded Benaki Museum.

After the end of the war he returned to his scholarly interests and in 1947 he was appointed to the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. His correspondence with the Benaki Museum began on 30.9.1948 and went on until 3.5.1953. Its aim was crystal clear from the start: *'I am particularly interested in objects of the Mosul school (or those attributed to it) and in Mamluk wares'*. He requested photographs of artefacts, firstly of the five published by Combe and then of another seven, which he probably learnt about from Wiet's book *Objets en cuivre*, the first being the writing case of Malik 'Adil Abu Bakr. Benaki himself answered him in the formal style used in correspondence at that time, but with evident satisfaction that a reputed scholar was interested in his collection. Later Rice asked for photographs of early Islamic drawings, but on this occasion he received a negative response from the Museum's curator, Manolis Chatzidakis, on the grounds that he himself wanted to publish them, something which the celebrated and multi-tasking Byzantinist, of course, never did. However, he was insistent in asking Rice to send him the relevant reference to the Museum's drawings, which Rice meticulously copied out and sent to him. It is worth noting that Chatzidakis had been sent to Paris before the War for studies in *'Muslim art'* by Benaki, who never stopped trying to further the study of his collection, which, by dint of being in Athens, was quite

cut off from international developments in scholarship.

In his letters from 1950 Rice announces that he is planning a trip of *'une année d'étude sur le continent et en Orient'* in which he wants to include Athens, where he hopes to stay for two to three weeks to study inlaid brasses. From Athens he would go to Cairo, where he would work on Ralph Harari's catalogue of metalwork, which had been started in 1938-1939, and from there he would continue his trip to Turkey. Wherever he went, Rice stayed at the British School. He had with him his heavy photographic equipment. He wrote to Benaki: *'J'ai développé au cours des 15 dernières années une méthode photographique particulièrement adaptée à la prise des cuivres et je fais moi-même les dessins nécessaires'* and *'Pourriez-vous me dire si le Musée Benaki possède une chambre noire où je pourrais développer mes plaques? Aussi la force du courant électrique en vol'*. Even today such a trip by an orientalist to the East sounds amazing and it would in any event have been quite impossible for the Greek scholars of the period. A researcher taking and developing his own photographs must have seemed the height of technological sophistication.

The journey went ahead and Rice sent warm letters of thanks to his two Greek correspondents from Turkey, at the same time expounding on the programme of publications he had drawn up with regard to the Museum's brasses, starting with the *'small box made by a Mawsili artist in 617 A.H.'* His stay in Turkey was: *'most profitable. I am returning with 10,500 photographs [...] the mere processing of this material will take at least a year'*. Benaki replied, giving permission to publish *'our little Mosul box'* and stressing: *'Please bear in mind that anything you publish, especially on Islamic art interests us a great deal and [we] would be grateful if you would send us anything you publish'*.

On the return journey Rice's ship stopped over in Athens

for a few hours on 21st July 1951 and he found a gift from the Benaki awaiting him, a copy of the catalogue of the famous exhibition organized by Benaki in Alexandria in 1925, the *Exposition d'art musulman à Alexandrie*. Rice thanked them warmly, promising to send copies of his publications. Indeed right up to his last letter, dated 3.5.1953, he continued to keep Benaki and Chatzidakis informed of the progress he was making in his research, to send his articles on the excavations at Harran and on manuscripts, as well as his essays in *Studies on Islamic Metalwork (SIMW)* vols I and II, which included brasses from the Museum. In two cases he refers to *'your unpublished Ayyubid box'*, announcing that he is planning to publish it in *SIMW*, first in vol. III and then in IV, something which in the end he did not manage to do.

As regards Chatzidakis, who went on to become a famous Byzantinist, it is clear that he did not have the same interests as Benaki. The latter tried in Athens to keep up the interests he had cultivated in Alexandria but without the necessary feedback. Long before Edward Said and the elaboration of the theory of colonial scholarship, Chatzidakis must have felt uncomfortable – and perhaps a justifiable touch of envy – about the possibilities afforded the British scholar: *'tout le monde n'a pas la veine de se ballader dans les pays orientaux comme dans son jardin'*. But he had recently received Rice's amazing book, *'la publication magistrale du Baptistère de St Louis'* and he did not hesitate to express his admiration. *'On reste perplexe parce que on ne sait quoi admirer le plus: le savant ou le photographe'*.

Anna Ballian  
Senior Curator  
Museum of Islamic Art  
ballian@benaki.gr

#### NOTES

1. D.S. Rice, *Studies in Islamic Metal Work II*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* [hereafter *BSOAS*] 15/1 (1953) 61-65.

2. The list was an appendix to the seminal article by D.S. Rice, *Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili*, *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957) 283-326. The Benaki Museum's candlestick shares the last place on the list with a Rasulid tray from

the Metropolitan Museum in New York dated to 1296/1297-1321. On the meaning of the word *nisba*, see *ibid.* 286.

3. For another four works with the signature 'al-Mawsili', see J.W. Allan, *Metalwork of the Islamic World. The Aron Collection* (London 1986) 49-50 figs 36-37; 66 no. 1; A. von Gladiss (ed.), *Die Dschazira, Kulturlandschaft zwischen Euphrat und Tigris* (Berlin 2006) 73-74 no. 28; Christie's, *Art of the Islamic and In-*

*dian Worlds*, 6 October 2009 (London 2009) lot 31.

4. J.W. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork The Nuhad es-Said Collection* (London 1982) 20. For the later period, see A. Ballian, Argana on the Tigris and Vank on the Euphrates: Pontic Mining Expansion and Church Silver from Argiroupolis/Gümüşhane, in: *Θυμίαμα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα* (Athens 1994) 1, 15-22; 2, pl. II figs 7-8.

5. D.S. Rice, The Brasses of Badr al-Din Lulu, *BSOAS* 13/3 (1950) 627-34. To these should be added a pen case in the David Collection in Copenhagen, dated 1255/1256, see Gladiss (n. 3). The Louvre ewer by the master Ismail ibn al-Mawliya and the box dated to 1220 in the Benaki Museum by his pupil, Isma'il ibn Ward al-Mawsili, are also securely attributed to Mosul. We know that the latter was still working in Mosul in 1249 as a copyist of manuscripts, Allan (n. 4) 56.

6. Jazira, meaning 'island' in Arabic, is the term used for the geographical region bounded by the two great rivers the Tigris and the Euphrates from near their sources to midway along their lengths. In terms of modern states it includes parts of Northern Iraq, North-Eastern Syria, and South-Eastern Turkey. On the importance of this region and its special character in the medieval period, see E.J. Whelan, *The Public Figure, Political Iconography in Medieval Mesopotamia* (London 2006) 1-6.

7. The most comprehensive introduction to Islamic metalwork is by R. Ward, *Islamic Metalwork* (London 1993).

8. D.S. Rice, *Le Baptistère de Saint-Louis* (Paris 1953).

9. R.S. Nelson, Paleologan Illuminated Ornament and the Arabesque, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 41 (1988) 20. We can visualize the tray as a typical Mamluk plate inscribed with a bold inscription, such as a tray in Allan (*op.cit.* 3) 93 no. 12.

10. J.W. Allan, Concave or convex? The sources of Jazīran and Syrian metalwork in the 13th century, in: J. Raby (ed.), *The Art of Syria and the Jazīra 1100-1250* (Oxford 1985) 127-39; Howayda al-Harithy, The ewer of Ibn-Jaldak (623/1226) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: The inquiry into the origins of the Mawsili school of metalwork revisited, *BSOAS* 64/3 (2001) 355-68.

11. In any case before 1220 when his pupil signed the Benaki Museum's box.

12. Allan (n. 4) 12-13; Ward (n. 7) 72-73.

13. C. Entwistle, Byzantine Weights, in: A. Laiou (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium: from the 7th through the 15th Century* (Washington, D.C. 2002) 611-14 figs 2-6, 5-8. Examples of weights with silver and copper inlaid decoration of the 4th-5th c., in: D. Fotopoulos – A. Delivorrias, *Greece at the Benaki Museum* (Athens 1997) 172 fig. 296; 175 fig. 298.

14. G. Matthiae, *Le porte bronzee bizantine in Italia* (Rome 1971); A. Iacobini, Le porte bronzee bizantine in Italia: arte e tecnologia nel Mediterraneo medievale, in: A. Iacobini (ed.), *Le porte del paradiso. Arte e tecnologia bizantina tra Italia e Mediterraneo* (Rome 2009) 15-54.

15. *Ibid.*, 18, 30 n. 24; 28 n. 21. In the 13th century and even after the Mongol invasion the number of Christians in the Jazira region was relatively high, see T. Fitzherbert, Religious diversity

under Ilkhanid Rule c. 1300 as reflected in the Freer Balami, in: L. Komaroff (ed.), *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden, Boston 2006) 390-406.

16. T. Allen, *A Classical Revival in Islamic Architecture* (Wiesbaden 1986); Y. Tabbaa, Survivals and Archaisms in the Architecture of Northern Syria, ca. 1080 - ca. 1150, *Muqarnas* 10 (1993) 29-41; J. Raby, Nur ad-Din, the Qastal al-Shu'abiyya and the 'Classical' Revival, *Muqarnas* 21 (2004) 289-310.

17. Whelan (n. 6); N. Lowick, The Religious, the Royal and the Popular in the Figural Coinage of the Jazīra, in: Raby (n. 10) 159-74.

18. The subject has been nicely summarized by M. Müller-Wiener, Im Kontext gesehen – Die Artukiden-Schale und das 'classical revival' in Nordsyrien und der Ġazīra, in: U. Koenen – M. Müller-Wiener (eds), *Grenzgänge im östlichen Mittelmeerraumen, Byzanz und die islamische Welt vom 9. bis 13. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden 2008) 147-67.

19. R. Ettinghausen, The Flowering of Seljuk Art, *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (1970) 111-31.

20. E.R. Hoffman, Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century, in: E.R. Hoffman (ed.), *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Malden USA, Oxford UK, Victoria Australia 2007) 317-49 (originally published in *Art History* 24/1 (2001) 17-50).

21. J. Richards, La confrérie des Mosserins d'Acre et les marchands de Mossul au XIIIe siècle, *L'Orient Syrien* 2 (1966) 451-60, mentioned by D. Jacoby, Society, Culture and the Arts in Crusader Acre, in: D.H. Weiss – L. Mahoney (eds), *France and the Holy Land, Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades* (Baltimore, London 2004) 99, 103.

22. A parallel case is that of the al-Kashani signature of the potters. Later, in the 15th century the same phenomenon is observed in a group of architects who sign their names using the *nisba* al-Shirazi, S.S. Blair, *Islamic inscriptions* (New York 1998) 51.

23. R. Ward, Tradition and Innovation, Candlesticks made in Cairo, in: J.W. Allan (ed.), *Islamic Art in the Ashmolean* (Oxford 1995) 154.

24. Such as the Freer canteen with its surprising Christian scenes, E. Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images* (Leiden 1989) 19-21; E.R. Hoffman, Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity and Memory, *Gesta* 43 (2004) 129-42.

25. R. Hillenbrand, The Art of the Ayyubids: An Overview, in: R. Hillenbrand – S. Auld (eds), *Ayyubid Jerusalem, The Holy City in Context 1187-1250* (London 2009) 28.

26. Read by Dr Muhammad Panahi. The date and name of the Ayyubid sultan were first read by Gaston Wiet in *Catalogue du Musée Arabe, Objets en cuivre* (Cairo 1932) 81 no. 4; 170 no. 37. In the correspondence of D.S. Rice with Anthony Benaki, the former mentions his intention to publish the Ayyubid pen case but it was eventually published by E. Baer, The ruler in cosmic setting: a note on medieval Islamic iconography, in: A. Daneshvari (ed.), *Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honor of Katharina Otto-Dorn* (Malibu 1981) 15 pls 6-9. Baer acknowl-

edges that the pictures were taken from D.S. Rice files, but she doesn't mention the inscription or the Wiet publication of it (re-published in: E. Baer, *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art* [New York 1983] 263-64 figs 214-15). I first dealt with this work in: An Early Jaziran Pen Case at the Benaki Museum, *Hadeeth ad-Dar, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah* 29 (2009) 2-7. The pen case was bought from an unknown dealer in Egypt in 1921. The dimensions are: H. 5 cm, L. 28.3 cm, W. 7.5 cm.

27. A. Collinet, Le métal ayyoubide, in: S. Makariou (ed.), *L'Orient de Saladin. L'art des Ayyoubides* (Paris 2001) 127-28 (hereafter *Saladin*).

28. In the Paris manuscript of the Kitāb al-Diryāq (Book of Antidotes) we find the portraits of nine ancient physicians (including Galen) who are shown with the essential attributes of learning: pen case, inkwell, bookstand, oil lamp etc. See O. Pancaroğlu, Socializing medicine: Illustrations of the Kitāb al-dirīyāq, *Muqarnas* 18 (2001) 157 fig. 2a-c.

29. A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, State Inkwells in Islamic Iran, *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 44 (1986) 70-94, esp. 70-71, 84.

30. E. Atil – W.T. Chase – P. Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, D.C. 1985) 102-10 no. 14; E. Atil, *Renaissance of Islam. Art of the Mamluks* (Washington, D.C. 1981) 84-85 no. 24.

31. Rice (n. 2) 284.

32. Rice (n. 8) pls 27A-B; the same scene by the same craftsman appears on the equally famous M. de Vasselot bowl in the Louvre, see Atil (n. 30) 74 no. 20.

33. The subject is not new to the Jazira, as it was depicted some 80 years earlier in the centre of the enamelled Innsbruck dish made for an Artukid ruler, see Müller-Wiener (n. 18), and in the same publication see the article by U. Koenen, Die Artukiden-Scale im Innsbrucker Ferdinandeum als Zeugnis der "Grenzgänge" im östlichen Mittelmeergebiet. Bemerkungen zur Methodik der byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte, 121-46.

34. See n. 16.

35. D.S. Rice, The oldest dated 'Mosul' candlestick A.D. 1225, *The Burlington Magazine* 91: 561 (Dec. 1949) 337 figs C(IV), C(VII); H.C. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2004) figs 9.2, 9.11 nos 203, 214, 225 fig. 16.4.

36. R. Ettinghausen, *La Peinture arabe* (Geneva 1977) 65, 91. On the royal slaves, see E. Whelan, Representation of the *Khāssaikiyah* and the origins of Mamluk emblems, in: P. Soucek (ed.), *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World* (New York 1988) 219-53.

37. J.W. Allan, *Metalwork Treasures from the Islamic Courts* (Doha, London 2002) 30-33 no. 5.

38. O. Watson, *Persian Kashan Pottery* (London 1985) pls 50-52 col. pl. B; Pancaroğlu 2001 (n. 28) figs 3, 12. This particular motif can be observed in later manuscripts from the Near East, see Ettinghausen 1977 (n. 36) 145, 150-51, 154.

39. Baer, *Metalwork* (n. 26) 223.

40. Although very damaged we can make out three similar astrological medallions on the lid of the pen case. A similar layout with different iconography is found on a later pen case in Bologna, see Baer, *The ruler* (n. 26) 13 pl. 1.

41. Baer, *Metalwork* (n. 26) 249. Astrological depictions in manuscript painting are less frequent in this period, see A. Caiozzo, Astrologie, cosmologie et mystique. Remarques sur les représentations astrologiques circulaires de l'Orient médiévale (XIVe-XVe siècles), *Annales islamologiques* 38/2 (2004) 311-56.

42. Rice (n. 5) 631, pl. 15; von Gladiss (n. 3) 75; Rice (n. 1) 61-65; Harithy (n. 10) 355-68; see also Baer, *Metalwork* (n. 26) 113 fig. 111.

43. E. Grube – J. Johns, *The Painted Ceilings of the Capella Palatina, Supplement I to Islamic Art* (New York 2005) 137 ills 26.6-26.7; 139 ills 27.7-27.9; P.O. Harper, Thrones and Enthronement Scenes in Sasanian Art, *Iran* 17 (1979) 49-64.

44. H.P. L'Orange, *Studies in the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship* (Oslo 1953) 65, 111-13.

45. Baer, *The ruler* (n. 26); also J.W. Allan, Solar and Celestial Symbolism in Medieval Islamic Art, in: R. Hillenbrand (ed.), *Image and Meaning in Islamic Art* (London 2005) 34-41.

46. T. Papamastorakis, Orb of the Earth: Images of Imperial Universality, in: E. Chrysos (ed.), *Byzantium as Oecumene* (Athens 2005) 79-105.

47. K.M. Setton – R.L. Wolff – H.W. Hazard (eds), *A History of the Crusades 2: The Later Crusades 1189-1311* (Madison, Wisconsin 1969) 390-91; D.S. Richards, Biographies of Ayyubid Sultans, in: Hillenbrand (n. 25) 445-49.

48. The dealer was E. Beghian, a well known carpet dealer in London and New York. In 1913 the Beghian antique shop was still located in the Istanbul bazaar and Morgenthau mentioned it in his diaries. Dimensions of the basin: H. 17 cm, D. of rim 51 cm, D. of base 37 cm.

49. V. Porter, The Art of the Rasulids, in: W. Daum (ed.), *Yemen 3000 Years of Art and Civilisation in Arabia Felix* (Innsbruck, Frankfurt 1987) 232-40, 249-53.

50. M. van Berchem, Notes d'archéologie arabe, *Journal Asiatique*, Xe série, 3/1 (1904) 84-90; Porter (*op. cit.* 49) 232. Also Atil (n. 30) 80 no. 22 n. 3.

51. A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8th-18th centuries* (exhibition catalogue, Victoria & Albert Museum, London 1982) 63 fig. 26; 79 n. 26; 190 no. 86; 202-06 no. 93.

52. A. Hauptman von Gladiss – J. Kröger, *Metall, Stein, Stuck, Holz, Elfenbein, Stoffe* (Mainz 1985) 70, 70 no. 278; a second piece in Berlin is much larger with 24 cusps and of a late 13th - early 14th-century date, see V. Enderlein, Das Bildprogramm des Berliner Mosul-Beckens, *Forschungen und Berichte* 15, *Kunsthistorische und volkskundliche Beiträge* (1973) 7-40; also in Melikian-Chirvani (n. 51) 205-06 n. 2. On the Metropolitan Museum piece, J.P. O'Neil (ed.), *The Islamic World* (New York 1987) 6 (also on line).

53. A characteristic geometric ground decoration in metalwork

attributed to Mawsili artists. More specifically the double-Y pattern is seen on the above-mentioned ewer of 1275/1276 and on a candlestick dated 1269, both made in Cairo by Mawsili artists, see Atil (n. 30) 57-58 no. 10. Other pieces: a basin in Teheran with similar background and a lavish figural decoration is dated 1274, G. Wiet, *Un nouvel artiste de Mossoul*, *Syria* 12 (1931) 160-62 pl. XXVIII; and a candlestick ca. 1270, Allan (n. 4) 80-83 no. 13; and also an earlier piece of ca. 1230, in: *Saladin* (n. 27) 148 no. 124.

54. For enclosed animated arabesque designs, see al-Harithy, (n. 10) 365. See also Baer, *Metalwork* (n. 26) 180-87.

55. R. Hillenbrand, Erudition exalted: the double frontispiece to the epistles of the sincere brethren, in: Komaroff (n. 15) 183-91; R. Hillenbrand, The Scheffer Hariri: a study in Islamic frontispiece design, in: A. Contadini (ed.), *Arab Painting Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts* (Leiden, Boston 2007) 119-20, 128-31; E.R. Hoffman, The author portrait in thirteenth-century Arabic manuscripts: a new Islamic context for a late-antique tradition, *Muqarnas* 10 (1993) 6-20.

56. R. Ettinghausen (n. 36) 65. Another such depiction of a ruler with a bow in metalwork is found on the Bologna pen case (n. 40), of which there are very good illustrations on line: [www.iperbole.bologna.it/cultura/percorsi](http://www.iperbole.bologna.it/cultura/percorsi)

57. Rice (n. 2) 289, 291-92. On the Rasulid tray made for Dawud, al-Muzaffar Yusuf's son, between 1300 and 1320, the squatting, winged creature is a fantastic animal, a sphinx, and part of an animated arabesque. See also Atil (n. 30) 80 no. 22.

58. W. Hartner, The Vaso Vescovale in the British Museum. A study on Islamic Astrological Iconography, *Kunst des Orients* 9 (1973/1974) 119; Ward (n. 7) 79 ill. 57.

59. Ettinghausen (n. 36) 148.

60. A goose or a duck in the hands of an attendant of the ruler is very common on metalwork, see n. 37 on a tray stand now in Doha.

61. A peacock is also depicted in the hands of a Mamluk official in procession on a candlestick in the British Museum, Ward (n. 7) 109 ill. 86.

62. Hoffman (n. 55); Komaroff (n. 15) pls 10-15. For the Kitab al-Aghani frontispiece with the presentation scene see D.S. Rice, The Aghani Miniatures and Religious Painting in Islam, *Burlington Magazine* 95/601 (Apr. 1953) 128-35.

63. E.G. Browne – R.A. Nicholson – A. Rogers (eds), *The Pearl-Strings; A History of the Resuliyy Dynasty of Yemen by Aliyubnūl-Hasan El-Khazrejiyy*, trans. J.W. Redhouse (Leiden, London 1906) I, 232-35; A. El-Shami – R.B. Serjeant, Regional Literature: the Yemen, in: J. Ashtiany – T.M. Johnstone – J.D. Latham – R.B. Serjeant (eds), *Abbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge 1990) 461-65.

64. Rice (n. 2) 298-300 figs 11, 16, 18, 20, 22-24; E. Baer, A brass vessel from the tomb of Sayyid Battal Ghazi, *Artibus Asiae* 39 (1977) 327-28 fig. 14. See also a later 13th-century basin in Berlin, where out of the six compartments dedicated to royal pastimes, only one shows bird hunting with bows, Enderlein (n.52) 26 fig. 7.

65. G. Rex Smith, The political history of Islamic Yemen down to the first Turkish invasion (1-945, 622-1538), in: Daum (n. 49) 137.

66. E. Valet, Les sultans rasulides du Yémen, *Annales islamologiques* 41 (1907) 159; M. abd al-Rahim Jazim – B. Marino, Nur al-Din et al-Muzaffar: la construction de l'État rasulide au Yémen, *Chroniques yéménites* 6 (1997), no. 6 (on line) 7.

67. Porter (n. 49) 219, 250-51 nos 6-7.

68. Atil (n. 30) 62-63 no. 14; *Saladin* (n. 27) 115 no. 98, also 114 no. 97; 117 no. 100; 149 no.126; Allan (n. 37) 30-33 no. 5.

69. See n. 2. The candlestick was bought from a dealer by the name of Hatoun in Cairo for EGP 615 in 1921.

70. E. Combe, Cinq cuivres musulmans datés des XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles, *BIFAO* 30 (1930) 51-54. The latest publication with an English translation of the inscriptions is in: M. Piotrovsky – J. Vrieze (eds), *Heavenly Art Earthly Beauty* (exhibition catalogue, De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam 1999) 71 no. 6 (M. Moraitou).

71. Ustadh, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (Leiden 1986-2004) 10, 925-26 (W. Floor). It is not used by other Mawsili craftsmen and is not a characteristic Mamluk craftsman's signature, see D. Behrens-Abouseif, Veneto-Saracenic Metalware, a Mamluk Art, *Mamluk Studies Review* 9/2 (2005) 150. On two Iranian cases, see Melikian-Chirvani (n. 51) 232, 280-81.

72. Cf. the inscription on a bowl depicted on the Baptistère de Saint-Louis which reads: 'I am a vessel to carry food'; Atil (n. 30) 76; Baer, *Metalwork* (n. 26) 214-15; on vernacular poetry in praise of the vessel it is inscribed on, see Behrens-Abouseif (*op.cit.*) 153, 155-56.

73. For instance on a late Mamluk spouted bowl in the Bargello Museum, Florence, see: *Islamic Metalwork from the Grand Ducal Collection* (Firenze 1981) 20-21 pl. 5a-b. I owe this information to Prof. Doris Abouseif, whom I thank for sharing her knowledge of Mamluk inscriptions.

74. Rice (n. 5) 628.

75. Allan (n. 3) 132-35 no. 35; *The Arts of Islam* (exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery, London 1976) nos 197-98.

76. Allan (n. 3) 48-51.

77. An even larger piece is the base of a candlestick, H 46 cm, a *wakf* of one of Öljeytu's viziers, L. Komaroff – S. Carboni (eds), *The Legacy of Genghis Khan, Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353* (exhibition catalogue, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Haven, London 2002) cat. no 160 fig. 154.

78. A.U. Pope (ed.), *A Survey of Persian Art* 6 (Oxford 1939) pl. 1332. The Ardabil candlestick was found in a hoard of inlaid brass vessels at Baznegerd near Hamadan.

79. Allan (n. 80).

80. To name but a few examples, ogee arches are found on: the 1225 Boston candlestick, the base of a candlestick in the Khalili collection, the candlestick signed by Dawud ibn Salamah dated to 1248/1249 and many more examples among the objects decorated with Christian subjects, *Saladin* (n. 27) 116 no. 99; 140-42

nos 114-15; 148 no. 124; E. Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images* (Leiden 1989). Planetary figures and zodiac signs are not commonly used on Ilkhanid metalwork.

81. Hartner (n. 58) 105-07, 121; S. Carboni, *Following the Stars: Images of the Zodiac in Islamic Art* (New York 1997) 23, 29, 41. Cf. the image of Jawzahr on a candlestick base dated to the first half of the 13th century, Baer, *Metalwork* (n. 26) 256 fig. 208.

82. Allan (n. 4) 65; *idem* (n. 45) 34-41.

83. Baer (n. 80) 17 pls 53-56. Also *Saladin* (n. 27) 116 no. 99.

84. *Saladin* (n. 27) 48 no. 124.

85. Komaroff-Carboni (n. 77) cat. nos 158-60; 166 figs 46, 1, 154, 228. At about the same time similar *chinoiserie* features ap-

pear on Mamluk metalwork, see Ward (n. 23).

86. Cl. Cahen, Contribution à l'histoire du Diyar Bakr au quatorzième siècle, *Journal Asiatique* 243 (1955) 71-74; A.F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge 2008) 151-52.

87. Safi al-Din al-Hilli, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (n. 71) 8, 801-05 (W.P. Heinrichs).

88. S.S. Blair, Artists and Patronage in Late Fourteenth-Century Iran in the Light of Two Catalogues of Islamic Metalwork, *BSOAS* 48/1 (1985) 53-59.

89. Cahen (n. 86) 80-81; Broadbridge (n. 86) 162-64.

90. *Ibid.*, 164; Blair (n. 88) 58.

## ANNA ΜΠΑΛΛΙΑΝ

Τρία μεσαιωνικά ισλαμικά έργα από ορείχαλκο και η παράδοση της ένθετης μεταλλοτεχνίας από τη Μοσούλη

Στο άρθρο αυτό παρουσιάζονται τρία έργα από τη συλλογή του Μουσείου Μπενάκη που μπορούν να σκιαγραφήσουν την πορεία της ένθετης μεταλλοτεχνίας στην Εγγύς Ανατολή και χρονολογικά καλύπτουν το διάστημα από τις αρχές του 13ου έως της αρχές του 14ου αιώνα. Χαρακτηριστικό τους είναι ότι συνδέονται με την παραγωγή της Μοσούλης και με τους τεχνίτες που υπογράφουν ως αλ-Μαουσιλί (από την Μοσούλη) επί τρεις, αν όχι και παραπάνω, διαδοχικά γενεές, μετακινούμενοι όμως από τη μία περιοχή στην άλλη, από τη βόρειο Μεσοποταμία στη Συρία, την Αίγυπτο και το δυτικό Ιράν, ακολουθώντας τις εναλλαγές της εξουσίας.

Το πρώτο έργο είναι μία καλαμοθήκη, διακοσμημένη με ένθετο ασήμι και χρυσό, ορατό πλέον μόνο σε λίγα σημεία στο εσωτερικό του σκεύους. Οι επιγραφές, αν και φθαρμένες, μας επιτρέπουν να αναγνωρίσουμε ως κάτοχο του σκεύους τον Αγιουβίδη σουλτάνο αλ-Αντίλ αμπού Μπακρ, αδελφό του περίφημου Σαλαδίνου, καθώς και το έτος Εγίρας 615/1218 που αντιστοιχεί στο έτος κατασκευής του αντικείμενου, και κατά περίεργη συγκυρία και στο έτος θανάτου του σουλτάνου. Η χρονολόγηση αυτή αναδεικνύει την καλαμοθήκη του Μουσείου Μπενάκη ως το παλαιότερο χρονολογημένο σκεύος με ένθετο διάκοσμο από την Εγγύς Ανατολή και πρώτο στη σειρά των αντικειμένων που φέρουν το όνομα Αγιουβιδών ηγεμόνων.

Οι καλαμοθήκες στον μεσαιωνικό ισλαμικό κόσμο συν-

δέονται με τους ανθρώπους των γραμμάτων. Έχουν σωθεί παραδείγματα που ανήκαν σε μεγάλους βεζύρηδες οι οποίοι συγχρόνως ήταν και φημισμένοι συγγραφείς. Από τον 10ο αιώνα και μετά θεωρούνται σύμβολα της κεντρικής διοίκησης και εξουσίας. Η καλαμοθήκη του Μουσείου Μπενάκη είναι προφανώς ένα βασιλικό δείγμα, σύμβολο της εξουσίας του Αγιουβίδη σουλτάνου. Ο ηγεμόνας, ίσως ο ίδιος ο αλ-Αντίλ αμπού Μπακρ, απεικονίζεται με φωτοστέφανο, όπως άλλωστε και οι υπόλοιπες μορφές, καθισμένος οκλαδόν σε θρόνο που υποβαστάζεται από φτερωτά λιοντάρια και στέφεται από φτερωτές μορφές, όπως στην παράσταση της Ανάληψης του Μεγάλου Αλεξάνδρου. Στα εκατέρωθεν μετάλλια παριστάνονται μουσικοί και χορευτές, θέματα που συνοδεύουν την αυλική εικονογραφία, ενώ στο εξωτερικό και στον πυθμένα της καλαμοθήκης έχουμε τα σύμβολα του ζωδιακού κύκλου και τους πλανήτες-κυβερνήτες τους γύρω από τον ήλιο, σε μια έμμεση εξίσωση του ηγεμόνα με το ηλιακό σύμβολο. Τόσο η εικονογραφία, όσο και οι άλλες διακοσμητικές λεπτομέρειες παραπέμπουν στην καλλιτεχνική παραγωγή της Μοσούλης των αρχών του 13ου αιώνα.

Δεύτερη στη σειρά παρουσίασης είναι μία ορειχάλκινη λεκάνη με ένθετο χρυσό διάκοσμο που ανήκε, σύμφωνα με τα αρχεία του Μουσείου, στον Ρασουλίδη Σουλτάνο της Υεμένης αλ-Μουτζάφαρ Γιουσούφ (έτος Εγίρας 647-694/1250-1295). Η παρουσία του πενταπέταλου

ρόδακα, εμβλήματος της δυναστείας των Ρασουλιδών, που εικονίζεται 48 φορές στο εσωτερικό και το εξωτερικό του σκεύους, ενισχύει την άποψη αυτή. Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα της λεκάνης του Μουσείου Μπενάκη περιέχει πλήθος σκηνών που εικονίζονται μέσα σε ρομβοειδή μετάλλια, παρατεταγμένα σε ζώνες στο εσωτερικό των τοιχωμάτων του σκεύους καθώς και στον πυθμένα, οι φθορές του οποίου καθιστούν αδύνατη την περιγραφή τους. Στο εσωτερικό των τοιχωμάτων τα μετάλλια παριστάνουν αυλικές σκηνές με τον ένθρονο ηγεμόνα να εμφανίζεται σε δύο μετάλλια, τοποθετημένα διαμετρικά το ένα απέναντι από το άλλο, περιστοιχισμένος από αξιωματούχους της αυλής που κρατούν τα σύμβολα του αξιώματός τους, μέλη της φρουράς του, έφιπποι παίκτες του πόλο, καθώς και τον επίσημο γραφιά-ποιητή της αυλής, παραπέμποντας σε σκηνές από τις διπλές προμετωπίδες των αραβικών χειρογράφων της εποχής. Η δεύτερη σειρά μεταλλίων απαρτίζεται από σκηνές κυνηγιού και μουσικής διασκέδασης των αυλικών.

Αν και η ακριβής χρονολόγηση του σκεύους δεν είναι ιδιαίτερα εύκολη, ωστόσο η ενίσχυση των σχέσεων του Ρασουλίδη ηγεμόνα με τον Μαμελούκο σουλτάνο Μπαϊμπάρς μετά το 1269, καθώς και η σχέση με άλλα έργα που φέρουν το όνομα του ίδιου σουλτάνου υποδεικνύουν ως πιθανή περίοδο κατασκευής της λεκάνης το τρίτο τέταρτο του 13ου αιώνα.

Τελευταίο παρουσιάζεται ένα εντυπωσιακό, ως προς το μέγεθος και τη διακόσμηση, ορειχάλκινο κηροπήγιο με ένθετο χρυσό και ασημένιο διάκοσμο, το οποίο είχε αφιερωθεί από τον διοικητή της Βαγδάτης Μιρτζάν Αγά στο τέμενος του Προφήτη στη Μεδίνα πιθανόν στις αρχές της δεκαετίας του 1370. Ωστόσο, όπως αναγράφεται στο χείλος του, το κηροπήγιο κατασκευάστηκε το έτος Εγίρας 717/1317-1318 από τον τεχνίτη Αλί ιμπν Ουμάρ

αλ-Μαουσιλί, υπογραμμίζοντας έτσι τη σχέση του με την παράδοση της φημισμένης για τη μεταλλοτεχνία της Μοσούλης, μολονότι είχαν περάσει 60 περίπου χρόνια από την καταστροφή της πόλης από τους Μογγόλους.

Τον λαιμό του σκεύους κοσμούν κορανικές επιγραφές, ενώ το σώμα του διακοσμείται με ρέουσα αραβική γραφή ευχετικού περιεχομένου για τον κάτοχο του σκεύους, οι τίτλοι του οποίου μας οδηγούν σε ηγεμόνα της περιοχής της βόρειας Μεσοποταμίας, πιθανόν τον Σαμς αλ-Ντιν Σαλίχ, τον Αρτουκίδη ηγεμόνα του Μαρντίν (1312-1365). Τα μετάλλια στο πάνω μέρος του κωδωνόσχημου σώματος περιέχουν τα ζώδια σε συνδυασμό με τα σύμβολα των πλανητών, όπως συμβαίνει σε πολλά έργα μεταλλοτεχνίας του 13ου αιώνα που συνδέονται με την παράδοση της Μοσούλης. Πέντε διακοσμητικές ζώνες στον λαιμό και το σώμα σχηματίζουν τοξοστοιχία με 116 τόξα, κάτω από τα οποία ισάριθμοι αξιωματούχοι με τη χαρακτηριστική κόμη των Ιλχανιδών πορεύονται σε πομπή στραμμένοι αριστερά. Αξιοσημείωτη είναι η απόπειρα να οβηστούν οι ανθρωπόμορφες μορφές του σκεύους, προφανώς πριν από τη δωρεά του στο τέμενος της Μεδίνας, για να αποτραπεί η προσβολή του κοινού αισθήματος των μουσουλμάνων το οποίο αποστρέφεται την παράσταση έμψυχων όντων στα θρησκευτικά τεμένη.

Οι τεχνοτροπικές λεπτομέρειες της πομπής των αξιωματούχων, οι τίτλοι που αναφέρονται στην επιγραφή και το σχήμα του κηροπήγιου που μπορεί να συγκριθεί με ένα ιλχανιδικό κηροπήγιο, το οποίο φυλάσσεται στο τέμενος του Αρνταμπίλ στο Ιράν, μας μεταφέρουν στο κλίμα των αρχών του 14ου αιώνα. Η περιοχή της βόρειας Μεσοποταμίας κηδεμονεύεται από τους Μογγόλους Ιλχανίδες ηγεμόνες του Ιράν και το κηροπήγιο, μολονότι εξαρτημένο από την παράδοση της Μοσούλης, φέρει τα χαρακτηριστικά της ιλχανδικής εποχής.

