



**A Rothschild Renaissance:
A New Look at the Waddesdon
Bequest in the British Museum**

Edited by Pippa Shirley
and Dora Thornton

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Front cover: Nautilus shell cup on a claw foot, unknown goldsmith, possibly Nuremberg, late 16th century, shell (*nautilus pompilius*) with silver-gilt mounts, h. 26.1cm. British Museum, WB.114

Pg. iv: The 'Cellini Bell', Nuremberg, mid-16th century, attributed to Wenzel Jamnitzer, silver, applied live-cast animals, insects and foliage, h. 13.3cm. British Museum, WB.95

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Chapter 11

Text and Image on Middle Eastern Objects: The Palmer Cup in Context

Anna Contadini

The Palmer Cup is one of the most extraordinary extant Middle Eastern glass vessels with poetic inscriptions (**Fig. 177**).¹ This chapter aims to add to our knowledge of the inscriptions and their relationship to the scheme of figural decoration, while also taking the opportunity to discuss other objects with hitherto unread poetic inscriptions, or ones the authors of which have not yet been identified, as part of a more extensive study of inscriptions on objects (poetic or not).²

Figure 177 The Palmer Cup, early 13th century (c. 1200–25), North Jazira, probably Raqqa or Aleppo, glass beaker with enamelled and gilded decoration, h. (without mount) 14.4cm, h. (with mount) 26.3cm, diam. (rim) 13.2cm, weight (glass) 186.24g, poetic inscriptions are verses from *Kushājim* and *Ibn al-Muḥtasib*. British Museum, WB.53



In Middle Eastern societies of the medieval period and beyond there was an extraordinarily widespread use of inscriptions not only on architecture, which lies beyond the scope of this chapter, but also on objects in all media. Here the study in progress is intended to shed light on objecthood, considering both the cultural valence of such texts and how the objects themselves were perceived.

Such inscriptions fall into several types:

1. benedictory or augural with best wishes (probably the majority). The benedictory ones express good wishes to the (anonymous) owner, going from a simple *baraka* ('benediction') to a lengthy series of expressions (for example, 'benediction, fortune, well-being . . . to the owner'). Examples on glass can be found later in this chapter, but they occur in all media including woodwork and rock crystals;³
2. laudatory inscriptions are also widespread and include celebratory epithets for an often anonymous ruler/sultan (although the fact that the word sultan is mentioned does not necessarily mean that the object was made for a sultan). These inscriptions become more frequent during the Ayyubid (examples discussed below) and Mamluk periods, one example in glass being the famous Cavour Vase;⁴
3. political and documentary, frequently found embroidered or woven on Fatimid *tirāz*, such as that made for al-Ḥākim al-Manṣūr (reigned AH 386–411/AD 996–1021), but also occurring, for example, on Andalusian ivories of the 10th century, such as the Pamplona Casket (dated AH 395/AD 1004–5), which gives the names of both the maker (and other craftsmen in the workshop) and the aristocrat for whom the object was made, and the date;⁵
4. proverbial (for example, 'Forbearance is at first bitter to the taste, but in the end is sweeter than honey. Good health'), as on a number of ceramics plates and bowls;⁶
5. religious (for example, '*fasayakfikahum*' ('[God] will suffice for you against them') from *sūrat al-baqara* (Qur. 2:137)). Religious and Qur'anic inscriptions may be common on religious architecture and tombstones,⁷ but are less common on objects, although there are examples on ceramic fragments found in Samarra and on *tirāz*;⁸
6. poetic, fairly common among luxury items, as discussed below.

The Palmer Cup, decidedly a luxury item, belongs to this last category. Its inscription consists of (sections of) two verses by different authors, and is an integral part of the decorative scheme. Indeed, the way in which all elements of the object interact makes the Cup not only an extraordinary aesthetic achievement, but also a sophisticated representation of the social milieu within which it functioned, a compressed and subtly punning metaphor combining both visual and textual aspects.

It takes its name from the Palmer-Morewood family of Ladbroke in Warwickshire.⁹ In 1893, a certain Mrs Palmer-Morewood, who had been using the Cup as a flower vase on her piano, took it to the British Museum for identification. Curator Augustus Wollaston Franks suggested putting it on sale at Christie's, where it fetched, for 1893, the extraordinary sum of £1,732. Dora Thornton has pointed



Figure 178 A display of objects including the Palmer Cup at Waddesdon Manor, photographed for *The Red Book* in 1897

out that the sale gives a 'fascinating insight into the workings of the art market in the 1890s', as the Cup was bought by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild for Waddesdon Manor (**Fig. 178**), and Thornton suggests that Franks might have encouraged the purchase in the hope that the Cup, with the rest of the Waddesdon collection, would eventually be bequeathed to the British Museum,¹⁰ a wish that came true.

On stylistic grounds, taking account of both decoration and inscription, it can be securely attributed to the Jazira area of northern Iraq and northern Syria, probably to Raqqa or Aleppo, both well-known centres of glass production, and likewise to a date in the early 13th century, most likely between AH 597/AD 1200 and AH 622/AD 1225



Figure 179 Map showing some of the main centres linked to the production of glass and metalwork production in the 13th and 14th centuries mentioned in this chapter, including the North Jazira (South-eastern Anatolia, North Iraq, North Syria) and Syria

Figure 180 Mount of the Palmer Cup, datable to the late 1250s or early 1260s, French, most probably Paris, silver-gilt chalice in filigree with a rock-crystal bead in the middle of the stem, h. 13.1cm, diam. (base) 12cm, weight 206.29g. British Museum, WB.53



(Fig. 179). The mount (Fig. 180) that supports it, a silver-gilt chalice in filigree with a rock-crystal bead in the middle of the stem, is French and, most probably, of Parisian manufacture, being datable to the late 1250s or early 1260s.¹¹ It is not possible to establish with certainty that the chalice was made specifically to hold this particular object, but if it was, as is likely, then the Cup must have come to Europe quite soon after its execution. The bottom of the glass has a peculiar form of base like a ‘doughnut ring’,¹² an expression coined by William Gudenrath and Hugh Tait to designate a double type of base, with a protruding ring being added to the base and trapping air inside. The reason for devising such a process was perhaps to provide improved stability for such highly flared beakers, where the diameter of the mouth is much greater than that of the base, by making it stronger, heavier and slightly wider. Pieces with this distinctive foot were thought to have been made for the luxury Middle Eastern market between the 1190s and 1200s.¹³ However, investigation by Tait has revealed that this special technique was used, although only sporadically, for a longer period and for glasses of a shape different from the Palmer Cup, testimony to a tradition that continued until about the mid-14th century in Syria.¹⁴

The bottom part of the beaker has a leafy scroll within red bands. Above, its main body has a decorative scheme consisting of six figures: a ruler enthroned, flanked on either side by an attendant with a spear followed, again on either side,



Figure 181a–d Four views of the Palmer Cup

by a dancer with castanets in her hands and, finally, opposite the ruler, a figure holding what may be identified as a mace. There are, consequently, visual references to kingship, music and warfare, all themes linked to the princely life and, embodied in the object itself, to the main theme of drinking (Fig. 181a–d). The letters of the inscription are in gold, applied in liquid form with a brush (Fig. 182). They are framed by red enamel and the spaces between are filled with blue enamel. Close examination from both the outside and the

inside of the glass allowed the reconstruction of the sequence of the various stages involved: first the gold inscription was written, then the letters were outlined in red enamel, and finally the gaps were filled with blue enamel (Fig. 183a–b).¹⁵

In places the blue enamel covers the inscription, adding to the difficulty in reading it. Scribal and literary practices determine its form, both in terms of script and content. The script is a type of *naskh*, a particular calligraphic style common in titles and captions of manuscripts of the early



Figure 182 Detail of Figure 177, showing part of the Arabic inscription on the Palmer Cup

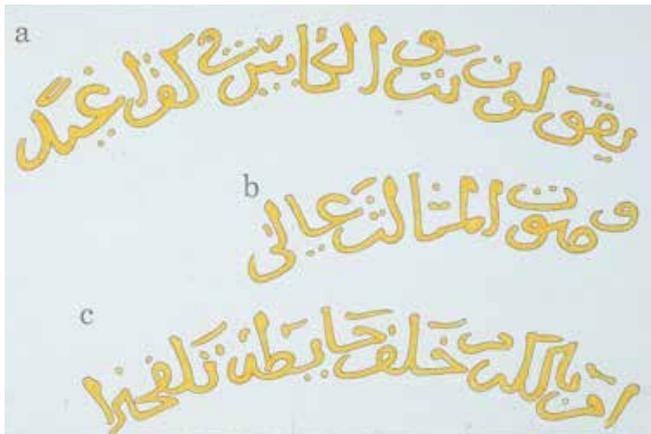
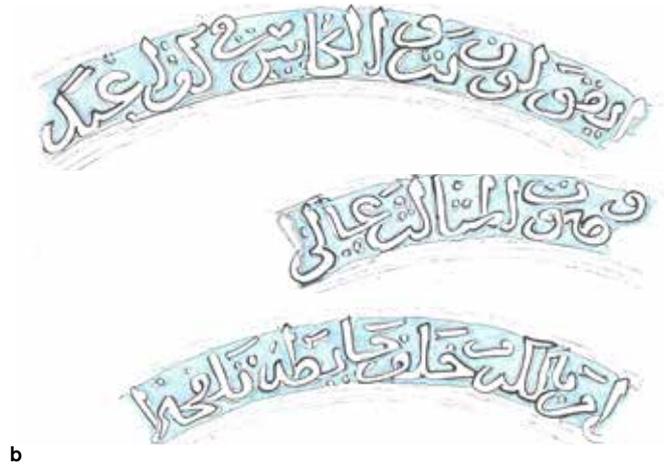


Figure 183a–b Drawings (by James Farrant) of the inscriptions on the Palmer Cup: a) the gold inscription; b) the inscription surrounded by blue enamel

Figure 184 Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, early 13th century (c. AH 622/AD 1225), probably Artuqid, South Eastern Anatolia. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Arabe 3929, fol. 131v



13th century. Gold letters framed in black or red, as here, are also found in manuscripts as, for example, in the titles of the various sections of the text and in the captions of the illustrations in a *Maqāmāt* manuscript, possibly Artuqid, again from North Jazira, and also datable to the early 13th century (Fig. 184).¹⁶

Arriving at a satisfactory reading was, however, a challenging task, for although part of it could be identified as an incomplete form of a line of verse by a known poet, the remaining shorter part was a truncated line difficult to complete, the authorship of which proved elusive.¹⁷ The inscription is thus made up of material from different poems, in different metres, that both belong, appropriately, to the genre of *khamriyya*, bacchic poetry, which became very popular in Arabic literature from the 8th and 9th century on. The verse I previously identified (in the metre *ṭawīl*) reads:

يقولون تب والكأس في يد أعيد وصوت المثلث عالي

They say “repent!” while the cup is in the hand of a beardless youth, and the sound of the third string is loud!

The string is one of the four strings of the lute, a standard accompaniment to courtly drinking parties. The verse is slightly shortened, as in its full form it reads ‘the sound of the second and third strings’:

يقولون تب والكأس في يد أعيد وصوت الثاني والمثلث عالي

Reference to both the second and third strings is a standard poetic convention, and implies all of them. The shortening is, I believe, a deliberate case of haplography,¹⁸ by



Figure 185 Detail of the ruler on the Palmer Cup

which the scribe has welded two words together, thereby retaining the sense but shortening the verse to fit the decorative scheme of the beaker, so that it is confined to the area above five of the six figures.

This verse, by the 10th-century poet Abū al-Faḥ Maḥmūd ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Shāhak, known as Kushājim (d. c. AH 350/AD 961), celebrated for his nature and wine poetry, remained well-enough known to be included in a literary anthology made by the 15th-century poet Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Nawājī (AH 788–860/AD 1386–1455), where it is set within a story featuring the 7th-century Umayyad Caliph Marwān (reigned AH 65–66/AD 684–685).¹⁹ The other verse, in the metre *munsariḥ*, is more severely truncated, consisting only of the first hemistich and the first word of the second, so that another six syllables are needed to complete the line. It reads:

أمر بالكرم خلف حائطه تلفحني ا

I pass by the vineyard. Behind its wall I am scorched (or struck) by . . .

There follows an isolated vertical (an *alif*) that might be interpreted as the beginning of the next word, the rest of which is then omitted (interrupted inscriptions are not uncommon).²⁰ However, if one looks at this verse from a visual point of view (Fig. 183a), instead of the beginning of a new word, the *alif* may be regarded as a sign of closure, marking the end of the incomplete verse, so that it mirrors the initial one, and the two function as a delimitation of space.

Although I had arrived at a reading of the verse, its author was still elusive. However, recently I was able to establish that it is by a certain Ibn al-Muḥtasib, who was



Figure 186 Kushājim's verse and the first five figures on the Palmer Cup (drawing by James Farrant)

born in Baghdad, was appointed as *waqf* supervisor of the famous Nizāmiyya library in Baghdad and is mentioned as the author of fine (*rā'iq*) poetry by the 14th-century historian 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr.²¹ He died in 1201, so that the composition of the line quoted may have taken place not long before the creation of the Palmer Cup.

The poem from which it is taken is of some thematic interest, for although it begins with the topic of wine and intoxication it ends by condemning it, because it was forbidden, and emphasises the theme of repentance. For those who knew the poem this would have resonated with the other verse on the Palmer Cup, which, inversely, begins with an explicit call for repentance that is then undermined by the delights of drinking to musical accompaniment stressed in the remainder of the verse – and, of course, by the very function of the cup itself.

Ibn al-Muḥtasib's verse runs, in full:

أمر بالكرم خلف حائطه تأخذني نشوة من الطرب

I pass by the vineyard. Behind its wall / I am seized by rapturous delight.

The next line proceeds with an interesting temporal conceit:

أسكر بالأمس إن عزمتم على الشرب غدا إن ذا من العجب

I become intoxicated yesterday if I intend to drink tomorrow: how amazing!

On the Cup is the same first hemistich, but the first word of the second is not that of the text as reported by Ibn Kathīr. This has *ta'khudhunī*, 'I am seized by', to which corresponds on the cup *talfahunī*, the obvious meaning of which would be 'I am scorched (or struck) by'. To find textual variants is perfectly normal, but the semantic disjunction here is such that one would expect the remainder of the hemistich to be different too. The verb *lafah* (contained within *talfahunī*) can also have the meaning 'to strike with a sword', which would suggest a possible connection with the mace-wielding figure painted below. A warlike continuation in a Bacchic verse may, though, be excluded. There is, however, a less common meaning of *lafah*, 'to touch lightly',²² after which it would be possible to proceed with the remainder of the line.

In terms of spatial disposition, five figures are all arranged beneath the first verse, and it is surely intentional that it should stretch exactly over the ruler (Fig. 185) and the four figures symmetrically placed around him (Fig.



Figure 187 Detail of the mace-holder on the Palmer Cup

186). Equally intentional is that the pivotal figure of the ruler, who is represented as a beardless youth, should be placed directly beneath the word *aghyad*, which means, precisely, ‘beardless youth’. For a ruler this form of representation is not uncommon, and therefore in no way implies a lack of regal authority; yet at the same time a playful pun is also intended, for the beardless youth of the verse is a wine-bearer, so that there is a visual-verbal polysemy appropriate to the conviviality of the situation in which the Cup would have been used. But the play of meaning is self-referential in a yet more complex way, for the ruler is shown in the posture for holding a cup, with his hand clenched, yet his hand is empty: one can therefore identify the Palmer Cup itself as the one that the cup-bearer referred to in the verse will bring, and that the ruler himself will then grasp. The mace-wielding figure is the only one beneath the second, abbreviated verse (**Fig. 187**).

More straightforward is the explicit relationship conveyed by the positioning of one of the dancers directly beneath the completion of the musical reference with the word *‘ālī* (‘loud’). As for the spear-bearers, one appears beneath the imperative *tub* (‘repent!’), and it is not inconceivable that the visual conjunction could have been read as a reference to the religious orthodoxy that the ruler should uphold but at the same time could ignore in the context of a drinking session with his court associates. The object wielded by the sixth figure has been referred to above as a mace, although it has been suggested that he could be a polo player, and there is, indeed, a representation on metalwork of polo players with a stick of a very similar shape.²³ They are, though, crucially, on horseback, as expected, whereas the figure on the Cup is not, and it would be strange indeed to have a polo player without his horse. Further, the shape is unusual, for polo sticks normally have a



Figure 188 *Mu'nis al-Ahrār*, in Persian, dated AH 741/AD 1341, Isfahan. Islamic Manuscripts, Garrett no. 94G, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library

hammer head, whereas among the various types of mace included in a beautiful representation in a manuscript of the *Mu'nis al-Ahrār* produced in Isfahan and dated AH 741/AD 1341 (**Fig. 188**), there is one, called *nāchakh*, that is identical in shape to that held by the figure on the Palmer Cup.²⁴

As a further complication, though, this type of object is also represented on a metal candlestick in the British Museum, from Syria or North Jazira, in the early 13th century, where it may have had another function (**Figs 189a–e**).²⁵ The iconography of its figures is very similar to that on the Palmer Cup, in the design of their robes, in the headgear (*sharbūsh*)²⁶ and in the way that walking figures are rendered, with one leg straight and the other slightly bent, with a slim foot slightly raised from the ground.²⁷ Although the candlestick does not have a date, it is securely datable to the early 13th century, as it clearly belongs to a group of metalwork that has now been established as of that period and coming from the Mosul or North Jaziran area.²⁸ These elements also confirm the early 13th-century date of the Palmer Cup and further support the region of provenance.

The lengthy inscriptions on the candlestick contain good wishes for an anonymous owner (see the Appendix to this chapter) and hence provide no clues as to the interpretation of the figural imagery, which consists of a series of human figures that may include persons of high rank, such as one that has been identified as a court secretary, the carrier of a pen box (the third personage from the left in **Fig. 189c**).²⁹ One figure holds a spear, a symbol of protection for the *amīr*/ruler, and two hold peacocks, princely animals, while a



a



b



c



d



e

Figure 189a–e Base of an inlaid brass candlestick, and details of the figural decoration on the central band, early 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, h. 18.1cm, augural inscriptions to an anonymous owner. British Museum, 1969,0922.1

further two hold drinking cups. Several are also holding a *mandīl*, or fine handkerchief. The majority of the figures, however, point to the theme of hunting, and the fact that they are surrounded by animals, including a cheetah, birds and hares, as well as vegetation motifs, reinforces this reading. Indeed, one of them has a lance in one hand while the other is holding upside down by its legs a hare he has just

captured (the fourth figure from the left in **Fig. 189c**). There are no fewer than five figures that hold an object similar to the one in the Palmer Cup. They have no horses, and they are not together, forming a team (and in any case a polo team is made up of four, not five). In fact, they are scattered among the other figures, and there is also no uniformity in the way they hold the curved stick, so that it is equally



Figure 190 Glass, footed bowl decorated with gold and enamels, 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, h. 18.3cm, diam. 63.6cm, poetic inscription by al-Sharīf al-'Aqīlī. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.1538

difficult to think of them as a squad of mace-bearing soldiers, especially given what they hold in the other hand. This is either a *mandīl* or, in one case, a hunting falcon, and the figure in question holds his stick behind his back, pointing down (**Fig. 189d**), and has at his feet a bird on one side and on the other a hare that touches the stick with its head. This suggests that these five figures might better be read as part of the hunting scene, possibly as beaters helping to flush out game.

On the Palmer Cup, likewise, a reference to hunting as a royal sport would hardly be surprising, but one would expect it to be conveyed by the figure of a falconer or by a hunting animal, and consequently the identification of its sixth figure as wielding a mace may be regarded as more likely. What, though, might be the function of a military figure in relation to the other five? Moving away from the ruler there are, on either side, a spear-carrying attendant who represents official duty, followed by a dancer representing pleasure and entertainment, so that whether going right or left away from the ruler there are two figures standing for major aspects of

the ruler's life: official responsibility and pleasurable relaxation. But here the transparency of the glass is a further crucial factor, allowing us to make connections and establish a relationship between these figures that is contrastive as well as complementary, for they are placed in such a way that, looking directly at, say, an attendant, the figure on the opposite side is a dancer. It may be argued, therefore, that a similar relationship of opposition and complementarity obtains between the ruler and the mace-holder, who is, by implication, virtually an equal, representing his significant alter ego, the military commander.

Given the complex web of references between text and image, one would expect that this figure, too, should somehow be related to the verse above or, rather, that the verse would allow a reading that would include him. Thus in the phrase 'behind its wall', there is, first, the literal reference to the wall of the vineyard, and, beyond that, an allusion to the 'wall' of the beaker, ready to receive the wine that the vineyard will produce, and to display the promise of the rapture it can induce; but in addition it may be suggested

Figure 191 Details of Figure 190, showing part of the inscription and following figural decoration





Figure 192 Fragment of a ceramic jug found in Jerusalem, the Old City, IDF House, dated by archaeological context to the Ottoman period, Persian verses from one of the *Rubā'īyyāt* of 'Umar Khayyām. Israel Museum, Jerusalem, A-5276/2007, L.306, 1108/7

that the word directly above the mace-holder, *ḥā'it* ('wall'), could be thought of, in a further, punning reference, to have the sense of 'one who guards, protects': all six figures, the ruler, the dancers, the spear-bearers and the mace-holder, would then have a coded identification in the words directly above them. Further, it might be suggested that the substitution of the verb *lafah* was made in order to include an allusion to the mace (as equivalent to a sword), while at the same time allowing a rarer meaning to provide compatibility in content with the (omitted) return to the effects of wine.

Although the majority of inscriptions are of good wishes, the Palmer Cup is not alone in having a poetic inscription. Staying with the medium of glass, there is a further 13th-century piece from Syria or North Jazira, this time a footed bowl, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 190).³⁰ Coloured enamels and gold are again used, and there is also a juxtaposition of text and human figures, although this time horizontally placed within the same band (Fig. 191). The inscription is in a similar style of script to that on the Palmer Cup. The line of verse quoted relates to love, although those familiar with the poem would know that wine appears thereafter, indeed already in the next line. I was able to identify the author as al-Sharīf al-'Aqīlī (c. AH 350–450/AD 960–1060),³¹ famous for his 'garden poetry' in which love and wine are celebrated, and the verse, in the metre *kāmil*, predictably draws on nature for its combination of standard attributes of the beloved:

يا طلعة القمر المنير الزاهر يا قامة الغصن الرطيب الناضر

Oh the appearance of the brilliant shining moon / oh the figure of a tender sprig blooming.

But as with the Palmer Cup, this is not exactly its original form, although in this case it has not been reduced in length but extended, with a word added to each hemistich, an addition that I believe was intentionally done to fit the appearance of the glass. The original runs as follows:³²



Figure 193 Nasser Ovissi, *Still Life*, 1980, oil on canvas, 91 x 71cm, painting with a jug and a bowl and part of a quatrain from the *Rubā'īyyāt* of 'Umar Khayyām as on the ceramic fragment in Figure 192. SOAS University of London, London, inv. no. SOASAW 2011.0233.01

يا طلعة القمر المنير يا قامة الغصن الناضر

Oh the appearance of the shining moon / oh the figure of a blooming sprig.

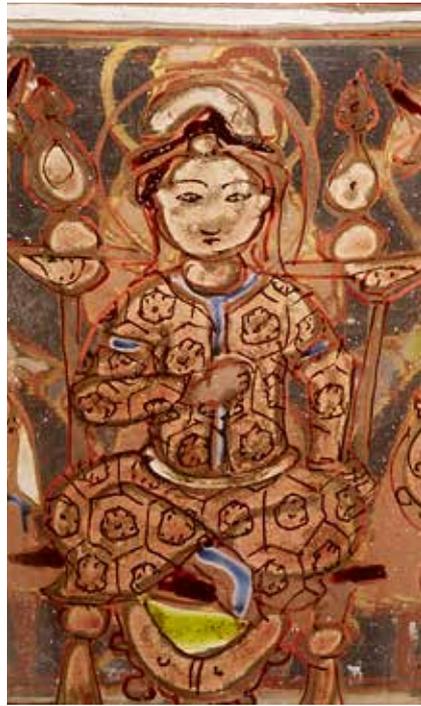
The two extra words, *al-zāhir*, 'brilliant', and *al-raṭīb*, 'tender', both refer to the appearance of the glass, as explained below.

There appear to be no specific correspondences between text and image of the type found on the Palmer Cup: there are no precise conjunctions of words and figures, some of which are musicians, others drinkers. There is, rather, the more general complexity of associations of wine, musical entertainment and love, the first two conveyed by the figures, the last by the verse. It may nevertheless be suggested that beyond its primary level of conventional poetic metaphors representing the appearance of the loved one, the verse could be taken to refer to the bowl itself, which may be thought to have the appearance of a 'brilliant shining moon' in terms of shape and the radiance of the glass and gold. Likewise, the stem supporting it could be thought to resemble a 'tender blooming sprig', referring to both its shape and the delicate nature of glass. In addition, the initial *yā* (oh!) of each hemistich³³ is a vocative particle drawing attention outwards, to the beloved, but set within the context of the bowl the descriptive phrases can also be interpreted as drawing attention back to the vessel itself.

It would, accordingly, belong to the class of auto-referential 'speaking objects'. Instances of objects 'speaking' through poetic inscriptions can be seen in all sorts of media,³⁴ as in a fragment from an Iranian ceramic jug found



a



b

Figure 194a–b: a) Glass fragment, gilded and enamelled, 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, h. 5.4cm, diam. 3.5cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 363/33–1900; b) detail of the ruler on the Palmer Cup

in Jerusalem, and dated by archaeological context to the Ottoman period,³⁵ which has the last part of the third and the fourth (and last) hemistich of one of the *Rubāʿiyyāt* of ʿUmar Khayyām (AH 439–526/AD 1048–1131) (**Fig. 192**). The full quatrain reads:

این کوزه چو من عاشق زاری بودست در بند سر زلف نگاری بودست
این دسته که بر گردن وی می بینی دستبست که در گردن یاری بودست

This jug like me was once a lover distraught/ Ensnared in the loops of a beauty's curls/ This handle that you see rested on its neck/ Is a hand that cradled the one he loved.³⁶

Interestingly, the first verse of the quatrain (less the last word) is also called upon by the contemporary Iranian artist Nasser Ovissi for a still life painting with a jug and bowl, now in the SOAS collections (**Fig. 193**).³⁷ As well as bearing incidental testimony to the continuing appeal of ʿUmar Khayyām's poetry, Ovissi's painting both separates and combines object and text. The heavy outlining and use of shade on the bottom part of the painting projects the three-dimensionality of the two vessels forwards, separating

them from the tangled text high above, but once deciphered this engages with them, projecting them now into emotional space: from speaking object we move to spoken *for* object, mute but invested by the painter's agency with human and cultural meaning.

Finbarr Barry Flood cites the 10th-century *Kūtāb al-muwashshā* ('Book of Ornament') by the Iraqi belletrist Muḥammad al-Washshā' (d. 936), who mentions inscribed objects bearing verses written in the first person so that the literate viewer gave voice to the object when he or she read out the text. For example, one *mandīl*, a fine handkerchief and personal item that can be passed between lovers as a token of affection, contains the following inscription: 'I am the handkerchief of a lover/ who wipes his tears on me/ Then offers me to his beloved/ who wipes on me some wine'.³⁸

Further contemporary (or near-contemporary) instances of figural representation are to be found on other glass objects, whether whole or fragmentary. I was able to locate one striking example while cataloguing the gilded and enamelled fragments at the Victoria and Albert Museum: it

Figure 195 Glass fragment (front and back), gilded and enamelled, 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, h. 3cm, diam. 4.5cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C41 P–1961





a **b** **c**
Figure 196a–c Three views of glass beaker with polo players, gilded and enamelled, mid-13th century, Syria, h. 15.5cm, diam. (rim) 10.9cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. OA 6131. The beaker was found under the altar of the church of Santa Margherita in Orvieto, Italy, and acquired by the Louvre in 1908

has the face of a beardless youth, finials on the throne and enamel in relief covered by a thin layer of gold, as on the Palmer Cup (**Fig. 194a–b**).³⁹ The technique of applying a thick layer of enamel, which makes the figures or decorative motives stand out in relief, is also found elsewhere, as on another fragment, also in the V&A, representing part of a bird (**Fig. 195**): this also has a thin coat of gold over the enamel, giving a shimmering look to the coloured areas, precisely as on the Palmer Cup.⁴⁰

Among the complete pieces with figural decorative schemes that are comparable to the Palmer Cup is a glass beaker in the Musée du Louvre,⁴¹ which has figures of riders who may be polo players, given the position of their arms, but unfortunately there is no representation of polo sticks, possibly as a result of the enamels having fallen away (**Fig. 196a–c**). It has the same type of foot, and its gilded and enamelled decoration is reminiscent of the enamelled ceramics of Iran of this period⁴² (**Fig. 197**) rather than of glass: for parallels in glass one would need to look at the North Jazira, Syria and later also Egypt. There are two bands of inscriptions on the Louvre beaker, both of laudatory nature ('glory to our lord the sultan, the royal, the diligent, the wise . . .') using a vocabulary often encountered on Ayyubid and Mamluk material from Syria and Egypt – but the presence of the word *sultan* does not necessarily mean that it was made for one. Of note here is that whereas the inscription is on the outside of the glass, the red band that provides the background is painted on the inside, thus again exploiting the transparency of the material, although differently from the Palmer Cup, in this instance to give depth.

Further parallels may be discerned between the Palmer Cup and a group of glasses that resemble it in shape, in their gilded and enamelled decoration and in particular the technical feature of the 'doughnut ring' base, which is also found on the beaker with polo players.⁴³ One is the *Coupe des*

huit prêtres, also attributed to North Jazira or Syria, early 13th century. Marguerite de Mallet, a relative of Guillaume de Dampierre, Count of Flanders, who went with Louis IX (1214–1270) to fight on the Seventh Crusade in 1250–1, bequeathed it to the Cathedral of Douai in 1329,⁴⁴ and it was later kept in the Musée de la Chartreuse de Douai. Unfortunately destroyed during the Second World War, there remains of it only a photograph and a 19th-century engraving (**Fig. 198**).⁴⁵ As represented, it had the same shape with a flared rim, the 'doughnut ring' base and a geometric, rather than figurative, design of rhomboids

Figure 197 Mina'i bowl, late 12th–13th century, Iran, ceramic, h. 9.6cm, diam. 21.1cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, MAO 2229





Figure 198 Engraving of the glass beaker *Coupe des huit prêtres*, early 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, formerly in the Musée de la Chartreuse de Douai, destroyed during the Second World War, after Gerspach 1885, fig. 48



Figure 199 The *Coupe de Charlemagne*, early 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, glass beaker, gilded and enamelled, h. (without mount) 15cm, diam. (rim) 12cm, h. (with mount) 24cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres, inv. no. 5144



Figure 200 Transcription on paper of the inscription on the *Coupe de Charlemagne*, with translation in Latin, late 16th to early 17th century, signed by Frédéric Morel. Musée des Beaux Arts, Chartres, inv. no. 4152. Gift from M. Bellier de la Chavignerie

connected by roundels, while enamel dots fill the background. It also had Arabic inscriptions around the rim and one around the foot which, unfortunately, cannot be read from the engraving. It was placed upon a silver-gilt mount in the shape of a chalice, very similar, if not identical, to that of another very close parallel, albeit again with a geometric decoration, the so-called *Coupe de Charlemagne*, now in Chartres (Fig. 199).⁴⁶

Measuring 15cm in height (without mount), it is now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Chartres. The myth goes that it was a gift to Charlemagne (that is, antedating its

manufacture by some four centuries) from Hārūn al-Rashīd (reigned AH 170–194/AD 786–809), the famous Abbasid caliph of Baghdad and protagonist of so many stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, and that Charlemagne gave it to the Abbey of the Madeleine de Châteaudun.

In addition to having the ‘doughnut ring’ base it is closely comparable to the Palmer Cup in terms of technique, shape, size, colour (light brownish) and quality of glass. It has a gold inscription outlined in red, and gilded and enamelled decoration on the body; its organisation of the space in three bands is similar, as is also the type of script: it too was



Figure 201 Watercolour on paper of the *Coupe de Charlemagne*, surmounted by a ribbon with the inscription in Arabic and its Latin translation, subtitled 'verre de Charlemagne conservé dans le trésor de chateaudun', 18th century, from *Recueil factice ancien contenant des dessins (et quelques gravures) du XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, relatifs à des abbayes et prieurés des chamoines réguliers de la Congrégation de France, under Magdeleine de Chateaudun*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Department of Prints and Drawings, Paris, Ve. 20, fol. 12bis

probably produced at the beginning of the 13th century in the North Jaziran region, possibly North Syria. However, it differs from the Palmer Cup with regard to both inscription and decoration.

The inscription is of the more common type expressing good wishes:

العز الدائم والعمر الطويل والسالم والجد الصاعد والدهر المساعد والدولة الكاملة
lasting glory and long and healthy life and rising fortune with
fate aiding, and perfect reign.

The inscription was first documented and translated (into Latin) in the 17th century, by Frédéric Morel (1558–1630), a royal interpreter (**Fig. 200**).⁴⁷ From the following century there is a list of objects from the Madeleine de Châteaudun including a watercolour of the chalice with the text and translation of the inscription in a ribbon above (**Fig. 201**). In the early 19th century the morphology of its letters suggested to Toussaint Reinaud (1795–1867)⁴⁸ (an Orientalist pupil of Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838)) that it should be dated to before the end of the 12th century, and consequently that it could have been acquired after the capture of Damietta in 1251, during the First Crusade of Louis IX.⁴⁹ In relation to the date suggested by Reinaud (and later by Carl Johan Lamm, 1902–1981) it is



Figure 202 Ceramic bowl with an augural, Arabic inscription in cobalt blue on a white slip, end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th century, Syria/Raqqa, diam. 24cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. MAO 250

interesting to note that the concatenation of augural phrases forming the inscription closely resembles that found on a ceramic bowl, now in the Louvre, from the end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th century (**Fig. 202**).⁵⁰

وله العز الدائم والإقبال الزايد والعمر السالم والجد الصاعد والدهر | الراعد
to him lasting glory, increasing prosperity, healthy life, rising
good fortune, and promising fate.

The decoration of the *Coupe de Charlemagne* is not figural but geometric, and is extraordinary in the execution and precision of the design and layout, having a belt-like design bordered in gold, parts of which intersect, producing the visual illusion of one gold border passing alternately over and under the other, and with each area of ground filled alternately with white or blue dots. These tiny enamel dots are arranged in rows asymmetrically, so that those of one row are placed above the empty spaces of the row below, thus creating diagonal as well as horizontal lines.

There is another beaker in the Louvre, also attributable to the early 13th century and from the Jazira/Syria area, which has the same type of decoration (**Fig. 203**).⁵¹ Although not as flared as the Palmer Cup or the *Coupe de Charlemagne*, it has the same 'doughnut ring' base, and inscriptions around the rim and at the bottom of a benedictory and laudatory nature, also in gold, outlined in red enamel and surrounded by blue enamel (as in the Palmer Cup), which are indeed in a hand very similar to that of the Palmer Cup. It also has narrower bands of inscriptions immediately below the bigger ones, in a different hand, very similar in content and style to those on the beaker with polo players, of a laudatory nature. The decoration of the wider, central band is similar to that on the *Coupe de Charlemagne*, with small dots of enamel of different colours forming rhomboid shapes.

Therefore, this Louvre beaker includes elements in common with the Palmer Cup, the *Coupe de Charlemagne* and



Figure 203 Glass beaker, early 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, gilded and enamelled, augural and laudatory inscriptions. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. OA 6121



Figure 204a–b Glass fragments, early 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, gilded and enamelled, h. 5.9cm, w. 2.5cm, and h. 7cm, w. 4.2cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (a: C.119T–1947 and b: C.822–1935)

the beaker with polo players. Although none of these objects is securely dated and provenanced, the features they have in common reinforce the likelihood that techniques and decorative elements were shared in glass workshops within a particular region of production during a certain period, and the evidence marshalled above points to them being made in the early to mid 13th century in the North Jazira/North Syria area.

Fragments with a similar geometric decoration of enamels and gold with the sophisticated application of small enamel dots are also found at the V&A (Fig. 204a–b).⁵² On close examination, where dots have fallen away one can

Figure 205 a–c a) The Palmer Cup (Fig. 177); b) the *Coupe de Charlemagne* (Fig. 199); c) the *Coupe des huit prêtres* (Fig. 198)





Figure 206a–b The Baltimore beakers, datable to the mid-13th century, attributed to Syria, laudatory inscriptions, h. 18.5cm, diam. 12.1cm, and h. 17cm, diam. 11.1cm. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, inv. nos 47.17 and 47.18

observe the circular depression on the thin glass where the hot enamel had been applied. The mounts provide a further connection: the *Coupe de Charlemagne* rests on a chalice-like silver-gilt mount, very similar to that of the *Coupe des huit prêtres*, and close in approach to that of the Palmer Cup, although different in details and execution. As all three are most probably French, and may be dated to the middle or the second half of the 13th century, Thornton has speculated that the three cups might have arrived in France with returning Crusaders (**Fig. 205a–c**).⁵³

Two further figural gilded and enamelled glasses are the famous Baltimore beakers, attributed to Syria, and datable to the mid-13th century (**Fig. 206a–b**).⁵⁴ Iconographical themes and the style of clothing of the figures clearly associate them with a Christian cultural environment. In particular, there are stylised but easily recognisable representations of the Holy Sepulchre, a figure riding a donkey, possibly a reference to Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, priests/monks and at the same time city landmarks such as the Dome of the Rock. Fragments with similar iconography have been excavated at Hama, confirming Syria as the likely production centre.⁵⁵ Because of the explicitly Christian nature of their iconography the beakers might have served as 'souvenirs', possibly for local Christian elites, or even, perhaps, for European pilgrims.⁵⁶

The laudatory inscriptions on the Baltimore beakers resemble that on the beaker with polo players in the Louvre, and there is, indeed, a strong family resemblance in the choice and combination of words. This is also the case for the augural inscriptions on the *Coupe de Charlemagne*, the Louvre ceramic bowl and the metal candlestick in the British Museum, all of which are datable to the early 13th century and assignable to the North Jazira/Syria area. Whether one can speak of a certain fashion of expression depending on period and locality still remains to be determined, since it could be argued that these inscriptions draw upon a common pool of words and phrases, so that similarity is to be expected. But it does not follow that the choice is random: to the contrary, these inscriptions are carefully organised. On the *Coupe de Charlemagne* the sequence of phrases is consciously structured according to the norms of rhymed prose (*saj'*), so that *dā'im* is followed by *sālim*, and *ṣā'id* by *musā'id*. The Louvre ceramic bowl resorts to both rhyme and the rhetorical device of parallelism: each phrase consists of noun plus adjective, and each adjective is morphologically identical, being of the shape CāCiC (where C=consonant); further, phrase one rhymes with phrase three, and phrase two with phrases four and five.

Of particular interest in this respect is the more extensive double inscription on the metal candlestick (top and bottom



a

Figure 207a–c Glass beaker of Sanjar Shāh, dated to between AH 576/ AD 1180 and AH 606/ AD 1209, North Jazira/North Syria, gilded and enamelled, h. 15.5cm, diam. (rim) 12.5cm. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, long-term loan from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, gift of John Gellatly, LTS1985.1.170.8 The gilded and enamelled decoration of fish has almost all fallen off. The trace of the fallen gilded inscriptions in Arabic, *bi-rasm al-sulṭān* and *sanjar shāh*, are visible

bands). This is unusual in length, but also in the amount of only slightly varied repetition between its upper and lower bands: both start with *العز الدائم والإقبال*, ‘lasting might and prosperity’, and end with *لصاحبه*, ‘to its owner’. Both contain the phrase *الجد الصاعد*, ‘rising fortune’, as well as the nouns *amal*, *baqā*, *khayr*, *naʿīm* and *naṣr*, and the various adjectives associated with them are all, as on the Louvre ceramic bowl, morphologically identical, being of the same CāCiC shape. The arrangement is thus clearly intentional, and the morphological parallelism, beyond its aesthetic effect when the text is read out, results in a clearly deliberate repetitive visual arrangement.

The tradition of flared, gilded and enamelled beakers with a ‘doughnut ring’ base perhaps starts as early as the Sanjar Shāh beaker,⁵⁷ dated to between AH 576/ AD 1180 and AH 606/ AD 1209, the period when this Atabeg ruled in the area of Mosul (**Fig. 207a–c**). This is the earliest known beaker with the particular technique of the ‘doughnut ring’ base, a morphology of highly flared rim, and a decoration of gold and enamels in the form of ‘floating’ fish.⁵⁸ Almost all the gold and enamel has fallen away, and can only be detected by microscope.⁵⁹ However, as seen on **Figure 207b**, at higher magnification one can

see the trace left by the gold, as well as that, slightly in relief, left by the enamel that outlined the fish. We can also see the details of the scales of the fish, which is evidence of the enormous care lavished on such a fragile object. The beaker is extraordinary also in that it has an inscription in Arabic indicating that it was ordered by a ruler. It is divided into two halves, on opposite sides of the glass, and was probably in gold: the trace of the lettering is very clear, and is reported here in full for the first time: *bi-rasm al-sulṭān* and *sanjar shāh* (on the order of the sultan Sanjar Shāh) (**Fig. 207b–c**). Traces of a bow and arrow and of a sword underneath the inscription *sanjar shāh* can also be detected as attributes of the sultan. The Sanjar Shāh beaker dates this tradition of gilding and enamelling on glass firmly to the late 12th and early 13th century, and indicates a very precise geographical area, that of North Jazira/Syria, probably Raqqa or Aleppo. As we have seen in the course of this chapter, both date and area are supported, with some flexible margins, by several others indications.

To have such an inscription is quite exceptional. That a beaker like this was precious enough to have the name of the ruler painted in gold points to the value of these fragile objects, and the continuing prestige of such beakers is



Figure 208 The Luck of Edenhall, second half of the 13th century, Syria or Egypt, h. 15.8cm, diam. 11.1cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.1 to B–1959

attested by a hitherto unnoticed mention of ‘gilded Aleppan glass’ in the account that Šafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī (c. AH 613–694/AD 1216–1294) related to the historian Ḥasan al-Irbilī of events in Baghdad after the Mongol conquest of the city in 1258.⁶⁰ Himself no aristocrat, but a court musician and a calligrapher, the master, indeed, of the celebrated Iraqi calligrapher Yāqūt al-Musta‘šimī, al-Urmawī represented his quarter in its desperate dealings with the particular Mongol general to whom it had been allotted. On the first day after the conquest al-Urmawī was himself host to the general, offering him a rich meal followed by musical entertainment, and he specifically mentions such glasses among the vessels in which wine was served.

An example that constitutes a late continuation – and probably the end – of this tradition is another impressive and intact beaker decorated with enamels and gold, albeit one without inscriptions. Made either in Syria or Egypt, it is known as the Luck of Edenhall (**Fig. 208**).⁶¹ It was in the possession of the Musgrave family of Edenhall in Cumberland before being acquired by the V&A, but its early history is unknown: again, as has been suggested for other beakers of this type, it may have been brought home by a Crusader or a pilgrim returning from the Holy Land. The glass remained intact in the possession of the Musgrave family until 1926, when it was loaned to the V&A and finally acquired by it in 1958.⁶²

Its remarkable non-figurative floral decoration, rather than being organised into bands, covers the whole surface,

although following a clearly organised and well thought-out plan. It, too, has a ‘doughnut ring’ base, and is perhaps one of the last objects made with this peculiar technique, as it is no longer found on Mamluk pieces of the late 14th and 15th century. Indeed, the general morphology of the vessel also disappears, for later beakers do not have the same elongated shape with a flared mouth.⁶³ For this reason – and also for stylistic reasons regarding the decoration – the Luck of Edenhall may not be as late as has sometimes been proposed, and probably belongs to the second half of the 13th century. It is likely that it was in Europe at least as early as the 15th century, as it has a leather case of that period that is believed to have been made especially for it, decorated with stamped and cut work and with a lid bearing the acronym IHS, *Jesus Hominum Salvator*. It has been suggested that this formula was meant to protect the beaker from damage.⁶⁴

The Palmer Cup, the *Coupe de Charlemagne* and the Luck of Edenhall are now all composite objects as they include a European mount or case, and the care lavished on them is testimony to the European admiration and appropriation of Middle Eastern objects of evidently outstanding craftsmanship. But in the case of the Palmer Cup, especially, there is a further aesthetic and semantic dimension to which its new European owner could not have had access: the layers of subtle cultural meanings that are created by the interplay of text and image, with its network of allusions that a knowledgeable audience would appreciate, making the object not just a functional if beautiful artefact but one that

artfully embodies and projects the sophisticated culture it was designed to serve.

Notes

- 1 The Palmer Cup, British Museum, WB.53, is of considerable size, measuring 14.4cm in height, with a diameter at the rim of 13.2cm. The metal mount measures 13.1cm in height with a base of 12cm in diameter. The mounted object measures 26.3cm in height. I would like to thank Dora Thornton, who has encouraged me to further my study of it. It was the late Hugh Tait who first introduced me to this extraordinary beaker, asking me to try and read the inscription, which could provide crucial evidence concerning its genuineness, about which there remained some doubt: indeed, it had so far been thought a pseudo/fake inscription. My initial findings were published in Contadini 1998b, beside those of Hugh Tait on the glass and its technique, explained in detail for the first time in Tait 1998.
- 2 There are several studies on inscriptions on objects and architectural features, for example Blair 1998. For an overview specifically on objects see Shalem 2010. Other studies in progress on inscriptions on objects and their cultural valence are in Contadini forthcoming 2017a and Contadini forthcoming 2017b.
- 3 Such as, for example, on a 9th-century Tulunid, wooden panel, Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, inv. no. 3498, and rock crystals, such as on a fragmentary 11th-century Fatimid rock-crystal bottle, V&A A.11-1942. On these objects see respectively Hayward Gallery 1976, 282, no. 435; and Contadini 1998a, 37, pl. 5.
- 4 The long inscription on the Cavour Vase has been published and translated in Carboni 2001, no. 129.
- 5 For the *ḥirāz* of al-Ḥākim al-Manṣūr, V&A 133-1896, see Contadini 1998a, 64-5, pl. 20. The Pamplona Casket is in the Museo de Navarra, Comunidad Foral de Navarra, Pamplona, see Holod 1992.
- 6 This proverb is found on a 10th-century Samanid ceramic plate: Musée du Louvre, Paris, AA 96. See Juvin 2012.
- 7 See Miles 1939 for Qur'anic phrases on tombstones, and the phrase *fasaykīkahum* (p. 156) on a *mihṛāb* now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (Rogers Fund, 1909, 09.87), for which see also Komaroff and Carboni (eds) 2002, 268, cat. 116.
- 8 As in the Samarra fragment painted in blue on a white glaze, now in Berlin: see Sarre 1925, 85, pl. 18/3 and fig. 179; and the *ḥirāz* of Harun al-Rashid also in Berlin written in the middle of a decorative band: see Kühnel 1925, 85, Abb. 2. Also, Blair 2007, 275.
- 9 Thornton 2015, 96. The Palmer Cup is one of a small group of non-Western objects that includes another Middle Eastern object, a gilded and enameled Mamluk mosque lamp (WB.54). This group includes exotic nuts and shells from the Indian Ocean, and ostrich eggs from Africa which were traded and treasured in Europe.
- 10 Thornton 2015, 103.
- 11 Tait 1998, 51; more recently Sara Guérin (email of 5 July 2016) has suggested the more accurate date of 1250s-early 1260s and the more precise place of manufacture as Paris.
- 12 For an exhaustive explanation of this particular technique and explanatory diagrams see Tait 1998, 52-3 and drawings a-j; also Tait 1999a, especially Appendix 1.
- 13 Lamm 1929-30, vol. I, 274-6, vol. II, pl. 96, 1-6.
- 14 Tait 1999a, especially Appendix 2.
- 15 Drawings by James Farrant. See Contadini 1998b, figs 14.4 and 14.5; Tait 1998, 50-1.
- 16 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Arabe 3929. For the manuscript see Grabar 1984, 8; also Contadini 2012, 100 and fig. 45.
- 17 Contadini 1998b, especially 56-7.
- 18 See explanation and drawings that give a visual rendering of the haplography in Contadini 1998b, 56-7.
- 19 Kushājīm 1895; see also Pellat 1960-; Brockelmann 1897-1902: suppl. I, 137. Kushājīm was born in Ramla and lived in Mosul and Aleppo: Meisami and Starkey (eds) 1998, vol. 2, 458. Al-Nawājī 1859, 39; see also Brockelmann 1897-1902, vol. 2, no. 11; and Meisami and Starkey (eds) 1998, vol. 2, 584. For an account of al-Nawājī's story see Contadini 1998b, 57.
- 20 Contadini 1998b, 58.
- 21 Ibn Kathīr 2003, 721, under the year 598 (Arabic text). For Ibn Kathīr (1300-1373), who operated in Syria, see Meisami and Starkey (eds) 1998, vol. 1, 341.
- 22 Ullmann (ed.) 1983, s.v. *lafāh*.
- 23 This is a fragmentary inlaid brass box with polo players, probably Mosul, early 13th century, now in the Louvre, Paris, inv. no. OA 3446: see Beyazit 2016. Read described the object held by the sixth figure on the Palmer Cup as a polo club: Read 1902a, cat. 53.
- 24 The bulk of the manuscript is now in the Dār al-Āthār al-Islāmiyya, Kuwait (LNS 9 MS) with dispersed folios. The folio under discussion is held in Princeton University Libraries, Robert Garrett Collection, 94 G. See Swietochowski and Carboni 1994, 36-7 and 61.
- 25 Inlaid brass candlestick, North Jazīra/North Syria, early 13th century, British Museum, inv. no. OA 1969.9-22.1. Baer 1983, fig. 124.
- 26 For types of headgear and the *sharbūsh* in particular, and their connections with different societies and the North Jazīra area, see Contadini 2012, 127-8. Human figures with facial features and a *sharbūsh* as found in the Palmer Cup are also found in a c. 1225 manuscript of Ibn al-Ṣūfī, *Risālat al-Ṣūfī fi al-kawākib* in the Reza Abbasi Museum in Tehran (for which see Contadini 2006), which is further confirmation of the date of the Palmer Cup.
- 27 Compare also the figure on the left in **Fig. 184**.
- 28 Raby 2012, 46.
- 29 Ward 1993, n. 86.
- 30 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, inv. no. 1891.91.1.1538, h. 18.3cm, diam. 63.6cm. See S. Carboni, 'Footed bowl (Tazza)', in Carboni and Whitehouse 2001, 241-2, no. 120.
- 31 Egyptian poet of the Fatimid period. Meisami and Starkey (eds) 1998, 705.
- 32 As in al-Sharīf al-'Aqīlī n.d.
- 33 First read by Stefano Carboni in Carboni and Whitehouse 2001, 241, where the initial *yā* is, however, omitted.
- 34 Some examples are found in Flood 2014, 482. He locates the earliest recorded instances of prosopopoeia in the milieu of the Abbasid court in Baghdad, often in contexts in which the 'speaking' artefact mediated between the bodies of lovers.
- 35 The fragment is now in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, a-5276/2007, l.306, 1108/7. See Avner *et al.* 2012. Thanks to Naama Brosh for alerting me to this publication, and to Ayala Lester for help in obtaining the photograph, and to Avinoam Shalem for initial help with this fragment.
- 36 Translation by Narguess Farzad, SOAS.
- 37 Nasser Ovisi, *Still Life*, 1980, oil on canvas, 91 x 71cm, SOAS University of London, London, SOASAW 2011.0233.01. The *Rubā'iyāt* hold a special place in Ovisi's heart, and in 1977 his etchings were included in a Spanish translation by the Nobel Prize winner Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984). Ovisi's works often include classical Iranian artefacts. This painting represents a ceramic bowl from Kashan, datable to the early 13th century (a real-life example is currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.61-1953). Beside it is a lustreware jug with a handle, also reminiscent of ceramics from this period.
- 38 The verse is discussed in Flood 2014, and see n. 103 for references to the manuscript of the *Kitāb al-muwashshā*.
- 39 Glass fragment, 13th century, North Jazīra/Syria, gilded and enamelled, h. 5.4cm, diam. 3.5cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 363/33-1900.
- 40 Glass fragment, 13th century, North Jazīra/Syria, gilded and enamelled, h. 3cm, diam. 4.5cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C41 P-1961.
- 41 Glass beaker with polo players, mid-13th century, Syria, gilded and enamelled, h. 15.5cm, diam. (rim) 10.9cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. OA 6131. See Sievernich and Budde (eds) 1989, 576-7, no. 4/54; Makariou (ed.) 2012, 140, fig. 89.
- 42 Mina'i bowl, late 12th-13th century, Iran, ceramic, h. 9.6cm, diam. 21.1cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. MAO 2229. See Makariou (ed.) 2012, fig. 80.
- 43 For a full explanation of this particular technique, and explanatory diagrams, see Tait 1999a.
- 44 Together, Hugh Tait adds, with an endowment for eight (chantry) priests: Tait 1998, 53.

- 45 Gerspach 1885, 105, fig. 48, where the engraving has the subtitle ‘vase arabe émaillé’. Also Contadini 1998b, fig. 14.6. For the photograph see Guérin 2015, fig. 12.
- 46 *Coupe de Charlemagne*, early 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, glass beaker, gilded and enamelled, h. (without mount) 15cm, diam. (rim) 12cm, h. (with mount) 24cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres, inv. no. 5144. Thanks are due to Claude Stefani who facilitated my study of the object and provided photographic material.
- 47 Contadini 1998b, 59 and figs 14.7–14.9.
- 48 Joseph Toussaint Reinaud was a member of the Académie des Inscriptions and professor of Arabic at the École des Langues Orientales.
- 49 In a note dated 9 June 1821 in *Notes Manuscrites sur le Verre de Charlemagne*, fol. 2, in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres.
- 50 Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. MAO250.
- 51 Glass beaker, early 13th century, North Jazira/Syria, gilded and enamelled, Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. OA 6121.
- 52 Glass fragments, early 13th century, North Syria, gilded and enamelled, h. 5.9cm, w. 2.5cm, and h. 7cm, w. 4.2cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.119T–1947 and C.822–1935.
- 53 Thornton 2015, 101.
- 54 Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, inv. nos 47.17 and 47.18, h. 18.5cm, diam. 12.1cm, and h. 17cm, diam. 11.1cm.
- 55 Riis in Riis and Poulsen (eds) 1957, nos 280–8.
- 56 Carswell 1998, 61–3.
- 57 Freer Gallery of Art, inv. no. LTS1985.1.170.8, 15.5 x 12.5 x 12.5cm. There are other glass beakers of this type, but the aim of this chapter is not to make a catalogue of all of them. Some have a similar base and morphology and gilded and enamelled decoration as in the Palmer Cup, and they vary from not having an inscription to having a non-figural decoration. For example, three such beakers of equal decoration but different sizes are in the Khalili Collection, inv. no. GLS 578. See Goldstein 2005, 278–9, cat. 305; Rogers 2010, 128, cat. 153.
- 58 A similar, but not identical, and better preserved glass beaker with gilded and enamelled decoration of what I call ‘floating’ fish is in the British Museum, 1879.0522.68. See Ward 2014, 116, cat. 11.
- 59 Carboni 1999, 173–4, and figs 3–4. Also Makariou (ed.) 2001, 189, cat. 198. Thanks are due to Julian Raby and Cory Grace for their help with the photographs of this object.
- 60 Al-‘Umarī 1988, p. 312.
- 61 Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.1–1959, h. 16cm. See Carboni and Whitehouse 2001, 203–4, fig. 99; Jones 2004, 108–9.
- 62 <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-luck-of-edenhall-history-and-myths/> (accessed 20 February 2017).
- 63 For later beakers, whose morphology and decoration is different but which retain the ‘doughnut ring’ base, see Tait 1999a.
- 64 <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O3311/the-luck-of-edenhall-beaker-and-case-unknown/> (accessed 20 February 2017).

Appendix

Texts and Translations

Readings and translations are all by Anna Contadini, unless otherwise specified. All texts are in Arabic, apart from the quatrain of ‘Umar Khayyām, which is in Persian.

1. Palmer Cup in the Waddesdon Bequest, British Museum, London (Fig. 177)

a. First verse, in the metre *tawīl*, by Kushājīm:

يقولون تب والكأس في يد أعيد وصوت الثالث عالي

They say “repent!” while the cup is in the hand of the beardless youth, and the sound of the third string is loud!

The full verse (as reported in al-Nawājī’s anthology) is:

يقولون تب والكأس في يد أعيد وصوت الثنائي والثالث عالي

The verse in the Palmer Cup is ‘abbreviated’ by intentional haplography, so as to make the text precisely match the figural scheme underneath. The scribe has welded two words together to make one. The omitted part is placed between square brackets:

yaqūlūna tub wa-l-ka’su fī kaffi aghyada

wa-ṣawtu ‘l-mathā[nī wa-l-mathā]lithi ‘ālī

b. Second, truncated verse in the metre *munsariḥ*, by Ibn al-Muḥtasib:

أمر بالكرم خلف حائطه تلفحني ا

I pass by the vineyard. Behind its wall I am scorched (or struck) by . . .

This is the verse that runs over the figure of the mace-holder, and the verb ‘I am scorched (or struck) by’ is the one that is exactly above the figure.

As reported by Ibn Kathīr, Ibn al-Muḥtasib’s verse runs, in full:

أمر بالكرم خلف حائطه تأخذني نشوة من الطرب

I pass by the vineyard. Behind its wall / I am seized by rapturous delight.

The next line proceeds with:

أسكر بالأمس إن عزمتم على الشرب غدا إن ذا من العجب

I become intoxicated yesterday if I intend to drink tomorrow: how amazing!

2. Glass footed bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Fig. 190)

Verse in the metre *kāmil*:

يا طلعة القمر المنير الزاهر يا قامة الغصن الرطيب الناضر

Oh the appearance of the brilliant shining moon / oh the figure of a tender sprig blooming.

This verse has had two extra words (one in the first hemistich, *al-zāhir*, ‘brilliant’, and one in the second, *al-raṭīb*, ‘tender’) added to the original, which is by al-Sharīf al-‘Aqīlī:

يا طلعة القمر المنير يا قامة الغصن النضير

Oh the appearance of the shining moon / oh the figure of a blooming sprig.

Variations on verses are not unusual, but it seems that these additions were made intentionally to fit the

appearance of the glass, with 'brilliant' fitting the luminous appearance of the gilded glass and 'tender' referring to the delicateness of the glass.

3. Ceramic fragment (Fig. 192) and Ovissi painting (Fig. 193) 'Umar Khayyām

The full quatrain in Persian reads:

این کوزه چو من عاشق زاری بودست در بند سر زلف نگاری بودست
این دسته که بر گردن وی می بینی دستیست که در گردن یاری بودست

This jug like me was once a lover distraught
Ensnared in the loops of a beauty's curls
This handle that you see rested on its neck Is a hand that cradled
the one he loved.

(Translation by Narguess Farzad)

4. Metalwork, candlestick base (Fig. 189a–e)

There are two bands of inscription. Using // to indicate the position of the roundels that divide them into four sections, they are:

Upper:

العز الدائم والإقبال والأمل والجد ا / / لصاعد والنعيم الخالد والنصر العاضد / /
والخير الوافد والسعد القاصد وا / / لخير الوافد والبقاء والنصر أبدا لصاحبه / /

Lower:

العز الدائم والإقبال والأمل والجد الصا ا / / عد والنعيم الخالد والنصر العاضد والخير الوا / /
فد والسعد القاصد والأمر النافذ والدولة / / الباقية والسلامة الغالبة والنصر والبقاء لصاحبه / /

Translation:

Upper:

Lasting might and prosperity, hope, rising good fortune,
perpetual felicity, help assisting, wellbeing arriving, happiness
approaching, wellbeing arriving, long life and victory forever to
its owner.

Lower:

Lasting might and prosperity, hope, rising good fortune,
perpetual felicity, help assisting, wellbeing arriving, happiness
approaching, effective command and enduring rule, safety
ascendant, victory and long life to its owner.

5. Coupe de Charlemagne (Fig. 199)

The inscription on this and on the Louvre bowl below are again of the more common benedictory or augural type, expressing best wishes:

العز الدائم والعمر الطويل السالم والجد الصاعد والدهر المساعد والدولة الكاملة
lasting glory and long and healthy life and rising fortune with
fate aiding, and perfect reign.

6. Louvre ceramic bowl (Fig. 202)

وله العز الدائم والإقبال الزايد والعمر السالم والجد الصاعد والدهر [الو]اعد والدولة الكاملة
to him lasting glory, increasing prosperity, healthy life, rising
good fortune, and promising fate.