# Pen-case and Candlestick: Two Sources for the Development of Persian Inlaid Metalwork

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FROM THE MID-TWELFTH CENTURY, when the technique of inlaying bronze or brass with precious metal first came into prominence in Iran, and for a period of several hundred years, Iranian metalworkers produced some of the finest examples of inlaid metalware known to Islamic art.[1] Sometime between the late fourteenth century and about 1456–57, however, the inlaying technique appears to have undergone a significant change, as is documented by a series of eleven dated inlaid wares that begins in the mid-fifteenth century (five of these are illustrated in Figures 8–16). Although there are no known dated examples of inlaid metalware from the first half of the fifteenth century to document the earlier stages of this transformation,[2] I intend to demonstrate that a pen-case in The Metropolitan Museum of Art and a related candlestick in a private collection are attributable to this transitional period and as such provide important evidence for the evolution of Iranian inlaid metalwork. I will also briefly consider the sequence of inlaid wares that postdate the mid-fifteenth century in order to establish fully the correspondence between the pen-case, the candlestick, and subsequent metalwork.

These fifteenth-century metalwares were produced during the Timurid dynasty (1370–1506), whose founder, Timur or Tamerlane, the great central Asian conqueror, and his immediate successors, transferred the focal point of Persian art and artistic patronage to the eastern Iranian world, first to Samarkand and later to Herat. The Timurid style of metalwork, like Timurid architecture and miniature painting, owes its origins to developments already underway in the fourteenth century in western Iran.[3] Yet, as has been demonstrated elsewhere, the phenomenon of the Timurid invasions of central and western Asia and simultaneous transportation of artists and craftsmen to eastern Iran led to the development of a distinctive style of metalwork, one that may be termed Timurid.[4]

The earliest examples of Timurid inlaid metalwork, produced between 1401–5, are a series of six oil lamps commissioned by Timur, perhaps for a religious structure such as the shrine complex of Khwajah Ahmad Yasawi in Turkestan City, which still preserves three lamps.[5]

These lamps provide an important clue for the subsequent evolution of Timurid inlaid metalwork. A detail from one of these lamps (Figure 1) demonstrates a development in the inlay technique that was already anticipated among certain later-fourteenth-century metalwares from northwestern Iran.[6] In this bronze lamp extremely fine pieces of silver and gold have been applied to a surface already defined by incised decoration, so that the precious metals merely repeat the surface design, as is visible in the vegetal ornament illustrated in Figure 1. This new manner of applying decoration in precious metal indicates a fundamental change in the ornamental function of inlaid metal, as it is here used purely for the effect of brilliance and perhaps opulence, whereas previously, as can be seen in a detail from a mid-fourteenth-century bowl (Figure 2), and as is graphically illustrated by the areas that have lost their inlay, such inlays also carried their own decoration, for example the facial features or textile patterns, so that they were an integral part of the overall program of design.

This change in the application and decorative function of inlaid ornament was to have a significant impact upon the further development of Iranian inlaid metalwork, in that it seems to herald the decline of large-scale inlaid decoration and the use of spatial inlays, which utilize small pieces of sheet metal. With few exceptions



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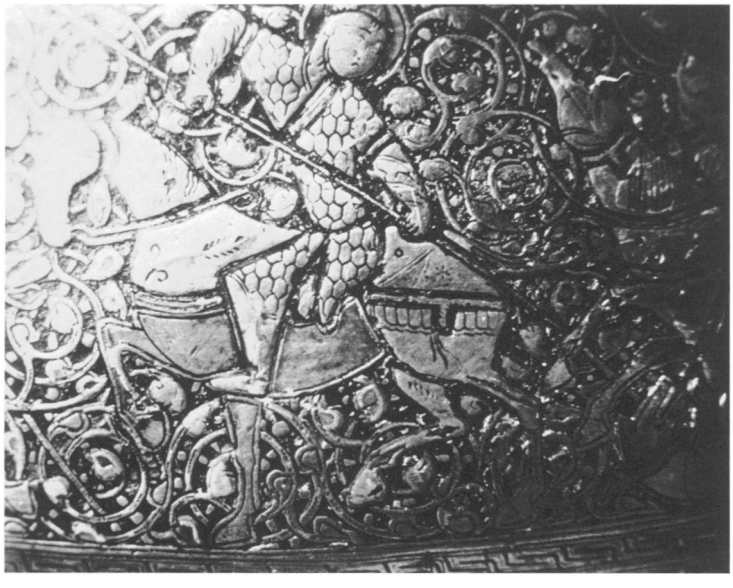
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1. Detail of the upper portion of an oil lamp, Timurid, 1401–5. Bronze inlaid with gold and silver. Leningrad, State Hermitage, inv. no. SA 15931 (photo: Komaroff)

2. Detail of a bowl, Iran, mid-14th century. Brass inlaid with gold and silver. Florence, Bargello, inv. no. 361 (photo: Walter Denny)



such spatial inlays are not found in subsequent fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century metalwork attributable to eastern Iran. Rather, these wares most often bear small-scale decoration that use linear inlays, which are composed of slender strips of sheet metal or wire.[7]

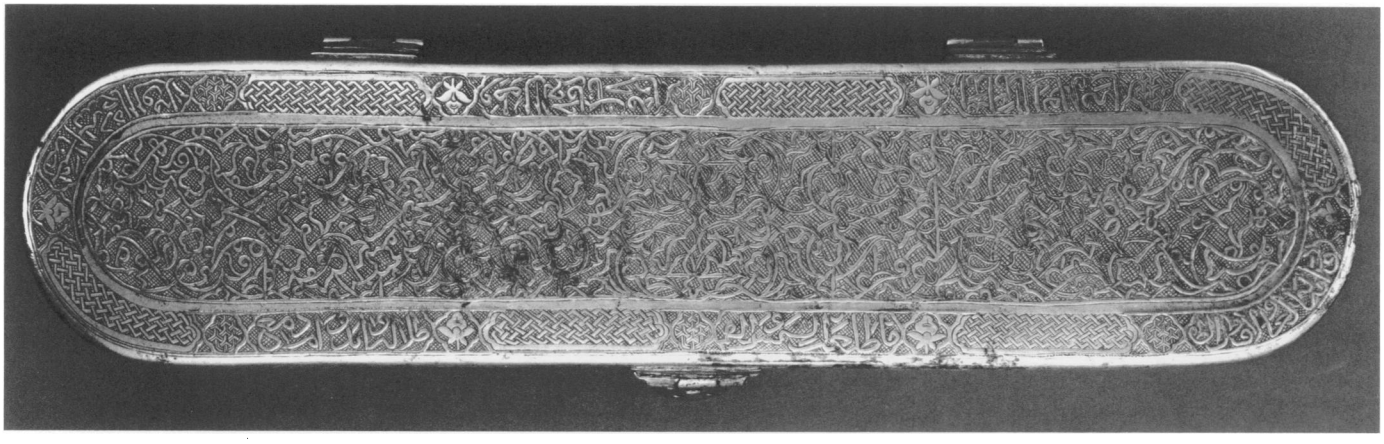
Whether it was a new taste for small-scale design that necessitated the use of linear inlays, or a preference for linear inlays that dictated the type and the scale of the decoration, is impossible to determine. There does, however, seem to have been a general trend toward the miniaturization of inlaid decoration in later-fourteenth-century metalwork from the western Iranian world, which is most apparent in the figural decoration. The gradual disappearance of nearly all figural imagery, which appears to have been initiated in the later fourteenth century, likewise allowed for an increased use of the smaller-scale, linear inlays, as these would not have been suitable for rendering most human or animal figures.[8]

For whatever reason, this use of small-scale, linear inlaid decoration was initiated (most likely within western Iran in the later fourteenth century), and by the mid-fifteenth century inlaid metalwork from eastern Iran is almost entirely restricted to linear inlays. This is demonstrated by the series of eleven dated inlaid objects from the years 1456–57 through 1505.[9] The same style of inlaid metalwork, which will presently be defined, continued beyond the period of Timurid rule, as is indicated by the dates and other inscriptions carried by several objects.[10] With the evidence provided by this dated sequence, which extends from the mid-fifteenth century through the first quarter of the sixteenth century, it is possible to postulate an earlier stylistic phase during the first half of the fifteenth century and furthermore to attribute certain objects to this period, namely the aforementioned pen-case (Figures 3–5) and candlestick (see Figure 7). On the basis of their shared technique as well as their common style, these two pieces, along with the dated, as well as several undated, examples form a cohesive class of inlaid metalwork.

The type of object in this group that survives in the greatest numbers is a pot-bellied jug with dragon handle (Figure 14); such vessels also include the greatest number of dated inscriptions, as well as signatures. Two types of pen-case, either rectangular with rounded corners (Figure 3) or wedge-shaped, are also in this group, as well as the candlestick.[11]

With one exception, all of these objects seem to utilize linear inlays exclusively; the inlays are invariably set against a cross-hatched background, which in most instances appears to have been filled with an unidentified black substance.[12] As I have already indicated, linear inlays became the sole means of inlaying in eastern Iran sometime after the middle of the fifteenth century. I have furthermore suggested that spatial inlays had already





3. Pen-case, Timurid, before mid-15th century (exterior decoration). Brass, exterior inlaid with silver, interior inlaid with gold and silver, 2⅜ × 11½ in. (6 × 26 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of E. C. Moore, 1891, 91.1.536

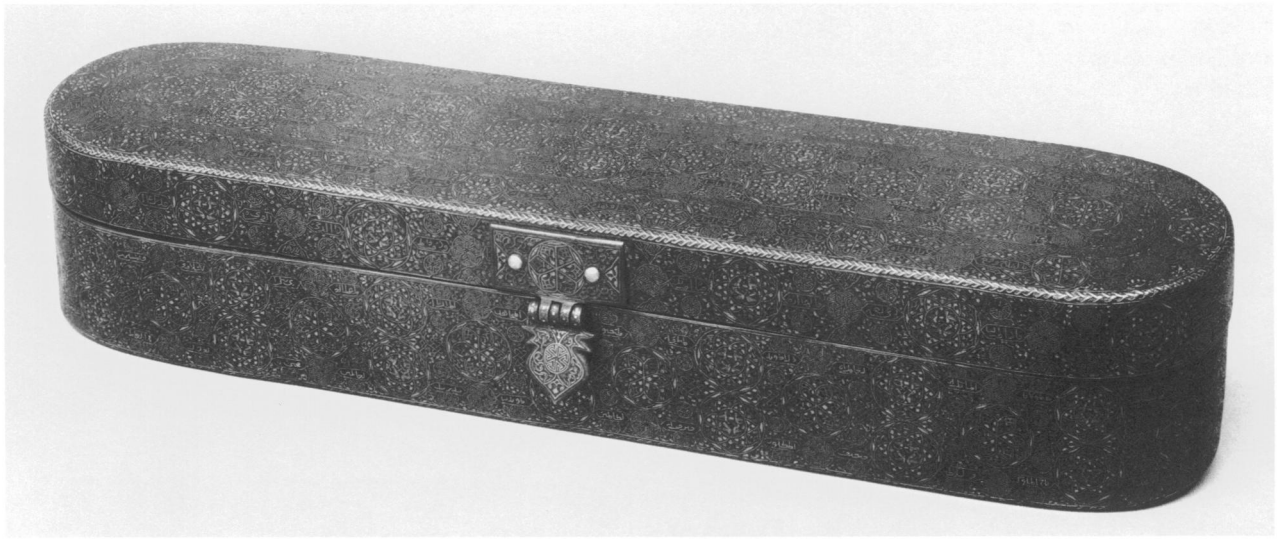
4. Pen-case, view of the top

undergone a significant transformation by the beginning of the fifteenth century, which may have contributed to the eventual disappearance of this technique and the new ascendancy of linear inlays. Finally, it can be noted that the linear inlays found in the Timurid wares are used in two distinct manners: in the first method the inlaid wires or strips of sheet metal are used to define a given motif, while in the second instance these linear inlays only indicate the outline of the motif.

The sequence of dated inlaid objects indicates that the latter method of inlay, in which the inlay serves only



5. View of the pen-case showing the interior, probably Iran, or Syria, late 14th century



6. Pen-case, Iran or Syria, late 14th century. Brass, inlaid with gold and silver, 2⅝ × 11⅛ in. (6.6 × 28 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift, J. P. Morgan, 1917, 17.190.822

to denote the outline of the motif, predominates in the third quarter of the fifteenth century but becomes rarer and is eventually totally absent from progressively later wares. Conversely, the method in which the inlays define the decoration increases in importance throughout the last quarter of the fifteenth century and is used exclusively by the beginning of the sixteenth century. Only one object from this group, the pen-case in the Metropolitan Museum, also utilizes some spatial inlays in addition to its linear inlays, which are of the outlining type. This object furthermore includes some areas of incised decoration as does the aforementioned candlestick.[13]

Both the specific decorative vocabulary and the scale of the design elements further serve to unite this group of inlaid wares. Their decoration is dominated by stylized floral and vegetal motifs that include arabesques of lancet or trilobed leaves, and simple rosettes and palmettes. Flowers and leaves are invariably interlaced, paired, or arranged in clusters that are generally circumscribed by a quatrefoil or a polyfoil. These larger units are most often linked and repeated, and are furthermore surrounded by arabesques, so that the end result is a complex pattern or network of design. This network of design evolved gradually during the second half of the fifteenth century, becoming progressively denser, and less varied in terms of the individual elements of design. Eventually the main emphasis of the pattern was provided by the contrasting coloration of the silver and/or gold inlays and the black-filled background.

The decorative use of inscriptions also shows a parallel development. Initially, from about the mid-fifteenth century, the inscriptions, which are always written in a cursive script (generally *naskh* or *thulth*), are maintained within their own clearly demarcated space, either through their larger scale or through their enclosure within cartouches that are set apart from the overall decorative pattern. By the close of the Timurid period, however, such inscriptions are reduced in scale and are set within bands or cartouches that are more fully integrated within the overall network of design.

For the specific reasons explained above, the pen-case in the Metropolitan Museum may be considered as the earliest surviving object belonging to this group of Timurid inlaid metalware. The exterior decoration of the pen-case is divided into three zones of inlaid and incised silver ornament: the top of the cover, the sides of the cover, and the sides of the lower portion of the case.

Around the outer edge of the top of the cover (Figure 4) is a narrow border outlined in inlay and composed of alternating cartouches and medallions. The cartouches bear either an incised guilloche band or a linear inlaid *naskh* inscription, while the medallions are decorated with an incised inverted Y pattern or an incised lotus blossom. In the center of the top of the cover is an extensive linear inlaid design. It is a symmetrically arranged, interlaced pattern composed of floral and leaf motifs that are only outlined by the inlays, while the interior space, as well as the interstitial areas show the cross-

hatched background, which preserves some type of black substance.[14] The original effect was perhaps that of a slender silver pattern set against a blackened background.

Along the sides of the cover, the decoration is composed of a series of interlocking medallions and cartouches (Figure 4). The latter bear either a linear inlaid *naskh* inscription or a scrolling floral and leaf motif that seems to utilize both spatial and linear inlays. In each of the medallions, which are not inlaid, is a concentric rosette motif or an inverted Y pattern.

The decoration on the sides of the lower portion of the pen-case is organized in a somewhat more complicated version of the traditional scheme found on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Islamic metalwork in which a central band is bordered above and below by narrower bands, all of which are intersected by medallions. Small-scale scrolling or interlaced floral motifs rendered by incising or indicated with spatial inlays, or else incised trilobed blossoms, provide the primary decoration of this area of the pen-case.

Before considering the inscriptions carried by this object, brief note should be made of the interior ornament. Although badly abraded, the interior decoration (Figure 5) of both the upper and the lower portions was originally composed of a small-scale pattern, inlaid in gold and silver, that included roundels filled with flying birds, as well as trefoil and latticework devices, interlocking roundels with star patterns, and a running swastika motif. The decoration is virtually identical to that of a second pen-case in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 6) and to another in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, which have been attributed to Syria or western Iran and are datable to the late fourteenth century.[15]

Microscopic examination of the two pen-cases in the Metropolitan Museum[16] has revealed that the second Syrian or Persian pen-case (Figure 6) utilized an inlay technique identical to that of the interior of the Timurid example (Figure 5) and, furthermore, that the exterior of the Timurid pen-case (Figures 3 and 4) was originally decorated in the same manner as its interior but was carefully burnished to remove all traces of the original decoration. The interior decoration is so badly corroded as to suggest prolonged burial, which might explain the apparent time gap between its original manufacture and decoration in the late fourteenth century and its present decoration, which clearly belongs to the fifteenth century. It is possible that the pen-case may have been brought to eastern Iran in the early fifteenth century as part of the booty from Timur's conquest of Syria or else western Iran.[17] The Metropolitan Museum's Timurid pen-case was then probably redecorated around the middle of the fifteenth century. Its silver-inlaid insert for the ink receptacle with ring-punched background appears to be a still later addition.

There are two sets of inscriptions on the exterior of the Metropolitan Museum's Timurid pen-case. The Arabic inscription on the top of the cover indicates a continuity with the epigraphy of earlier Iranian metalwork, while the Persian and mixed Persian and Arabic verses inscribed on the sides of the cover are especially typical of Timurid metalwork. In each instance the slender *naskh* inscriptions are written in such a manner that the letters appear to be stacked in two or three levels.

Inscriptions:

لصاحبه السعادة والسلامة / وطول العمر ما ناحت حمامة/
ابداً سرمداً الى يو[م] القيامة/ودام لك العز والاقبال والظفر/
ما طلعت الشمس والقمر/وظلا لنا بدوام دمع

To its owner, happiness and well-being and life as long as a pigeon coos, eternally, endlessly, until Judgment Day; and may glory, good fortune and triumph be yours always, so long as the sun and the moon rise, and may you remain a shadow for us as long as there are tears[18]

از خون دل نوشتم نزديك يار نامه/إني رأيت دهراً من هجرك القيامة//
سرز خطت بر ندارم چون قلم/گر سرم برداری از بر چون دوات//
عاقبت خير باد.

With my heart's blood I wrote a letter to the beloved
Verily, since your departure I have beheld endless time [as though] till Judgment Day
I shall not raise my head from this course just as [I raise] the pen
Though you lift my head from your breast just as [you lift the cover of] the inkwell
May the outcome be good (good luck!)
May the opening [of the pen-case] always bring a good outcome (good luck)[19]

The first inscription provides a variation on a poem that is commonly inscribed on fourteenth-century Iranian metalwork, but which is also occasionally found on

Timurid wares, including two slightly later jugs dating to the third quarter of the fifteenth century (see Figures 8–13).[20] Such Arabic well-wishing verses (which are somewhat comparable to the *du'a'*, or an invocation for God's favor) are among the most common types of inscription on Persian metalwork up to the fifteenth century. Beginning in the fifteenth century, however, both the frequency with which Persian poetry is inscribed on metalwork and the repertoire of the verses used show a



7. Base of a candlestick, Timurid, before mid-15th century. Brass inlaid with silver, 9¾ × 6¾ in. (24 × 17 cm.). Private collection (photo: Pope, ed., *A Survey of Persian Art* [London, 1939] pl. 1375)

dramatic increase.[21] For example, the inscriptions on the sides of the cover of the pen-case include a distich from a *mulamma'* (mixed Persian and Arabic *ghazal*) by Hafiz (d. 1389 or 1390), the most famous of the Persian *ghazal* lyricists,[22] from the *Diwan-i Hafiz*.[23] This represents, thus far, the earliest example of Iranian metalwork bearing inscribed verse by Hafiz, who was already renowned throughout the Persian-speaking world in his own lifetime.[24] Other *ghazals* abridged from his *Diwan* are inscribed on numerous examples of Timurid metalwork, including the contemporary candlestick, to be discussed below, while the earliest dated example of Timurid metalwork with inscribed verses by Hafiz is from the year 866/1461–62 (see Figures 10 and 11).[25]

The Persian verses on the pen-case, as well as the candlestick, represent the type of verse most frequently inscribed on subsequent Timurid wares in which some reference is made to the object itself and/or its function. Classical Persian poetry very often projects a multiplicity of images by juxtaposing words that have an ambiguous meaning. When verses of the type quoted above, which allude to the function of the object, or make literal reference to it, are inscribed on the actual object, they would presumably evoke a further image.

To summarize thus far, the use of spatial inlays on the Timurid pen-case in the Metropolitan Museum suggests that the object was decorated about or prior to the mid-fifteenth century, while the linear inlays, such as those in the center of the top of the cover that are of the outlining type only, indicate a date not after the third quarter of the century. The combined use of spatial inlays, which are more closely related to fourteenth-century metalwork, and linear inlays that outline the decoration only, a technique for which the earliest dated instance is from the year 1456–57 (Figure 8), connotes an intermediate stage in the evolution of inlaying with precious metal. Certain aspects of the decoration, such as the traditional manner in which the ornament on the sides of the pen-case is organized and is invariably centered within a carefully defined space, are most typical of pre-Timurid inlaid metalwork. The small-scale pattern or network of design on the top of the cover of the pen-case belongs to the decorative repertoire of Timurid inlaid metalwork that began about the middle of the fifteenth century. Finally, the manner in which the inscriptions are divided into two or three lines, so that the letters of the words appear to be stacked, is likewise characteristic of Timurid metalwork,[26] as is the inclusion in the inscription of verses by the poet Hafiz.

The juxtaposition of technical, decorative, and epigraphic features that are either more closely allied to fourteenth-century metalwork, or are unknown prior to the middle of the fifteenth century, allows for dating this object to the first half of the fifteenth century or, at the very latest, to the middle of the century. Furthermore, the use of linear inlays that outline the decoration, the inclusion of an inlaid pattern or network of design, and the style and content of the inscriptions, all serve to unite this object with other examples of Timurid inlaid metalwork, and make it the earliest such example known to me.

A candlestick (Figure 7) in a private collection is extremely close in terms of both style and technique to the Metropolitan Museum's Timurid pen-case, and it also belongs at the beginning of this group of Timurid inlaid wares. The decoration on the base of the candlestick combines incised and linear decoration; the socket, though decorated in a similar manner, appears to be a later replacement.[27]

Around the tapering mid-section of the base are alternating and interlocking medallions and cartouches. In each of the former is an inlaid interlaced floral-and-leaf pattern in which the motifs are outlined by the silver inlays. This pattern is extremely close to the more extensive design on the top of the cover of the pen-case (Figure 3). The inlaid "stacked" *naskh* inscriptions enclosed by the cartouches are again very similar to the inscriptions on the pen-case. Furthermore, the incised rosettes and peonies that surround the medallions and cartouches, as well as those that are interwoven with an inlaid leaf scroll at the bottom of the candlestick, or below its shoulder, are likewise comparable to the incised floral motifs on the pen-case. Finally, both objects bear small, incised scrolling leaves as a filler motif between certain of the inlaid lines.

Because of its numerous and close affinities to the pen-case, the candlestick can be similarly dated prior to, or about, the middle of the fifteenth century. Once again, the combination of linear inlays outlining the decoration, "stacked" cursive inscriptions, and inscriptions that present verses by Hafiz, which are also found on the candlestick,[28] all link this object with Timurid metalwork, and in particular the present group of inlaid wares. The Persian verses on the candlestick again allude to the function of the object:

در وفای عشق تو مشهور خوبانم چو شمع /
شب نشین کوی سر بازان ورندانم چو شمع /
روز وشب خوابم نمی آید بچشم غم پرست /
بس که در بیماری هجر تو گریانم چو شمع /

In constancy of love for you, I am the famous of the fair, like the candle,
I am the night-sitter in the street of the foolhardy and the vagrants, like the candle
Day and night sleep comes not to my grief-worshipping eye
Since in sickness of separation from you, I am weeping like the candle

If we now turn to the earliest examples from the sequence of dated inlaid wares, it will be further demonstrated that these objects are, first of all, stylistically and technically allied with the two preceding objects and, second, that the pen-case and candlestick base clearly represent a slightly earlier phase of development.

The two earliest dated objects are both jugs; one example, in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, is from the year 861/1456–57 (Figure 8), while the other is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and is dated 866/1461–62 (Figure 10). According to the signatures inscribed on the underside of each of these vessels (Figures 9 and 12), they are the work of the same individual—Habib Allah ibn ʿAli Baharjani. Both jugs are inlaid with silver, and the cross-hatched background is filled with a black substance which is especially well-preserved on the earlier example.

Epigraphy plays a dominant role in the decorative scheme of the two vessels. On both jugs a comparatively large-scale *thulth* inscription circumscribes the neck. The style and texts of these Arabic inscriptions are nearly identical: both include a version of the poem that was also inscribed on the top of the cover of the pen-case. Around the center of the body of the jug dated 861/1456–57 is a second, large-scale *thulth* inscription, again in Arabic, which supplies a royal protocol.[29] Above and below this central epigraphic band is a continuous pattern of interlaced palmettes, leaves, and small knotlike devices. The largest elements of the pattern—the palmettes—are outlined rather than defined by the inlays (Figures 8–9).

On Habib Allah's second, slightly later, vessel (Figure 10), the center of the body again bears inscriptions, but in this instance they are written in a small, "stacked" *naskh*, and are contained within four consecutive narrow bands of cartouches. These inscriptions are very similar in style to those of the candlestick; the Persian verses are again by the poet Hafiz.[30] Above and below the epigraphic bands of the London vessel is a broad register filled with a pattern composed of interlaced arches with palmettes and clusters of interlaced leaves and flowers. The palmettes are again outlined by the silver inlays (Figure 13). This pattern is closely related to that of the earlier jug in Berlin, while the floral-and-leaf patterns on both vessels are comparable to those of the previously described pen-case and candlestick; certain vegetal motifs shared by the two jugs are also comparable to the large, inlaid palmettelike leaves on the candlestick (Figure 7).



8. Jug, Timurid, dated 861/1456–57, by Habib Allah ibn ʿAli Baharjani. Brass, inlaid with silver, 5 × 5¼ in. (12.5 × 13 cm.). Berlin (West), Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, inv. no. I.3606 (photo: Museum für Islamische Kunst/J. Liepe)

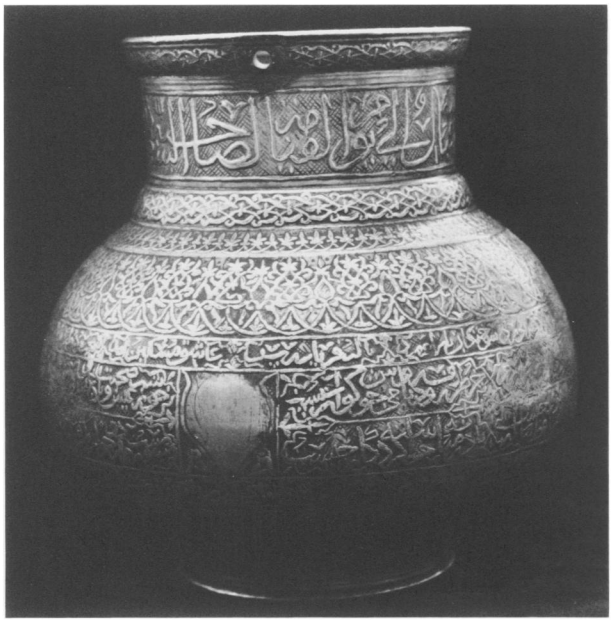
9. Detail of Figure 8 showing the signature and date on the bottom (photo: Museum für Islamische Kunst/J. Liepe)



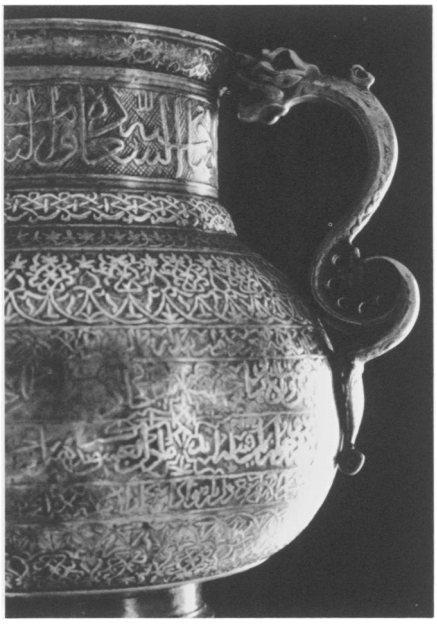
One further dated vessel makes extensive use of inlaid decoration of the outlining variety and that is a jug in the Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi, Istanbul, from the year 871/1466, which is signed by Husayn Shams [al-Din] Shihab [al-Din] al-Birjandi (Figure 14).[31] Here the floral and vegetal decoration on the body is characterized by inlays that outline the motifs. Such decoration is organized in a system of intersecting and overlapping cartouches and quatrefoils of a type that is also found in the designs of roughly contemporary bookbindings from Herat. As on the preceding objects, the Persian inscriptions, set within cartouches, are written in a multilevel, or "stacked," *naskh*. On the neck and cover of this vessel the alternating cartouches are filled with, or surrounded by, interlaces of trilobate leaves or lancet-leaf arabesques that are defined rather than outlined by the inlay. The decoration on the neck is, furthermore, somewhat compressed insofar as less of the background is exposed, while the inlaid pattern covers a greater area. The ornament on the upper portion of the jug dated 871/1466 already points toward a subsequent phase in the development of Timurid inlaid metalwork.[32] These three dated jugs, therefore, demonstrate the continuation and further development of the technical and decorative features of the pen-case and candlestick.

By comparison with the three vessels dating to the third quarter of the fifteenth century, or the somewhat earlier pen-case and candlestick, the decoration of five jugs dated or datable to the 1480s shows a denser, smaller-scale, more repetitive and therefore more unified type of patterning in which contrast is provided by the use of silver and gold inlays.[33] In each instance, as in a jug dated 893/1487–88 and signed by Qutb al-Din Najm al-Din Quhistani (Figure 15),[34] the elements of the design are defined rather than outlined by the inlays.[35]

The two latest dated objects from the Timurid period that belong to this group demonstrate the further progression of the decorative style here under consideration. These two jugs, produced during the final years of Timurid rule in eastern Iran, are dated 908/1503 and 910/1505 (Figure 16); they are signed by the same artist—ʿAla' al-Din (ibn) Shams al-Din al-Birjandi. The example dated 910/1505 is in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, while al-Birjandi's earlier work is only known to me from a Christie's sale catalogue.[36] Both are covered by a more compressed, denser network of design that is composed of delicate interlaced leaf arabesques in which, as on the Berlin vessel, the system of quatrefoils and epigraphic cartouches that encircles the



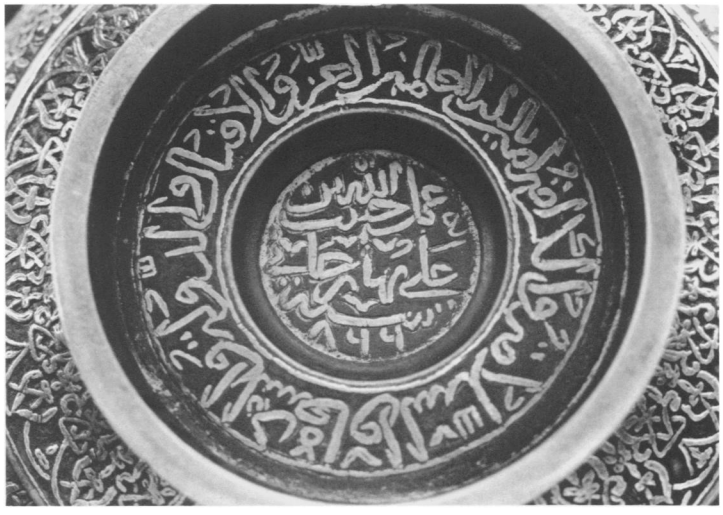
10. Jug, Timurid, dated 866/1461–62, by Habib Allah ibn ᶜAli Baharjani. Brass inlaid with silver, 5¼ × 5⅛ in. (13 × 12.8 cm.). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 943–1886 (photo: Komaroff)



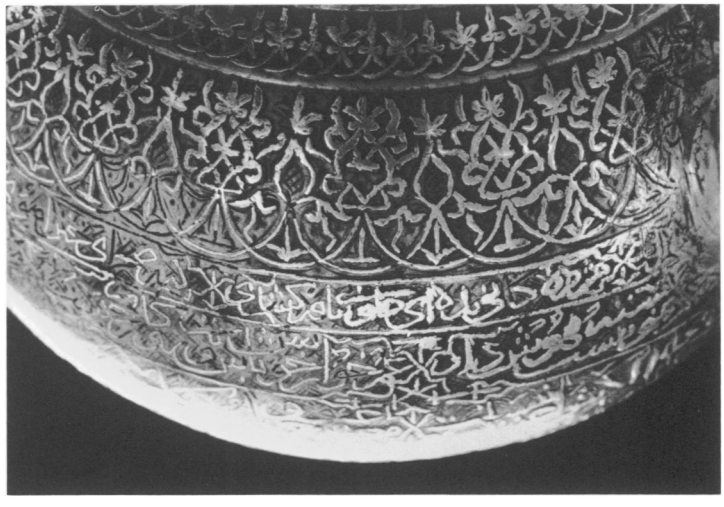
11. Detail of Figure 10 showing the handle in place (photo: Komaroff)

body and neck is barely distinguishable from the allover patterning. These two vessels are inlaid with silver alone.

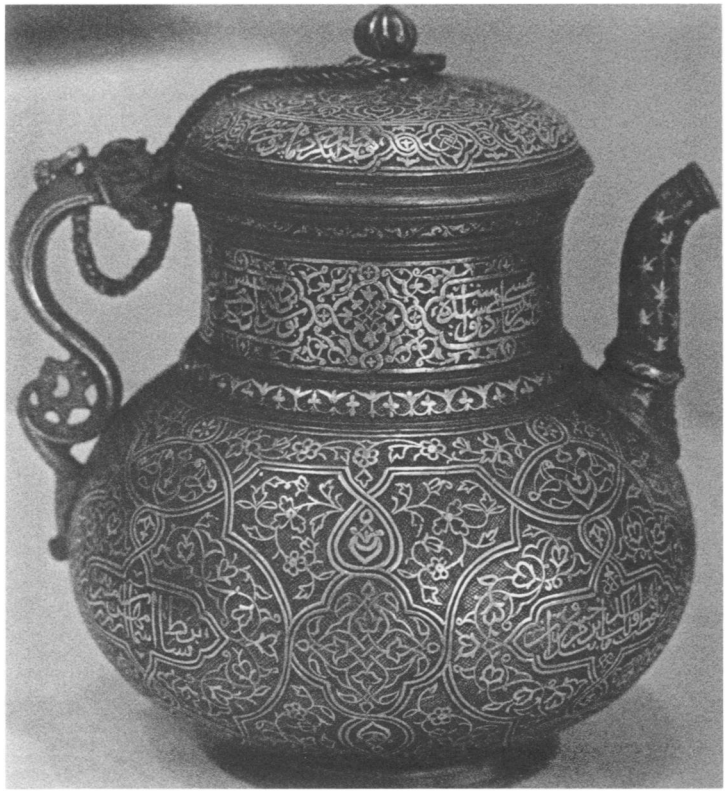
To summarize, the objects in our group of Timurid inlaid metalwork, beginning with the Metropolitan Museum's pen-case and concluding with the jug dated 910/1505, demonstrate an increasingly unified program of design in which the characteristic repetitive floral-and-leaf motifs and leaf arabesques gradually become finer, more closely packed, and less varied in terms of their individual nuances. Inscriptions exhibit a parallel development in that they eventually become fully integrated within the network of design. This clear stylistic progression, culminating in a dense surface patterning made up of small-scale decorative and epigraphic elements that are defined rather than outlined by linear inlays seems to have taken place in Khurasan, the last stronghold of Timurid power.



12. Detail of Figure 10 showing the signature and date on the bottom (photo: Komaroff)



13. Detail of Figure 10 (photo: Komaroff)



14. Jug, Timurid, dated 871/1466, by Husayn Shams al-Din Shihab al-Din al-Birjandi. Brass, inlaid with silver and gold. Istanbul, Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi, inv. no. 2961 (photo: David Alexander)

15. Jug, Timurid, dated 893/1487–88, by Qutb al-Din Najm al-Din al-Quhistani. Brass inlaid with gold and silver, H. 4¾ in. (12 cm.). Present location unknown (photo: Christie's sale cat. [London, 1972], lot 76)

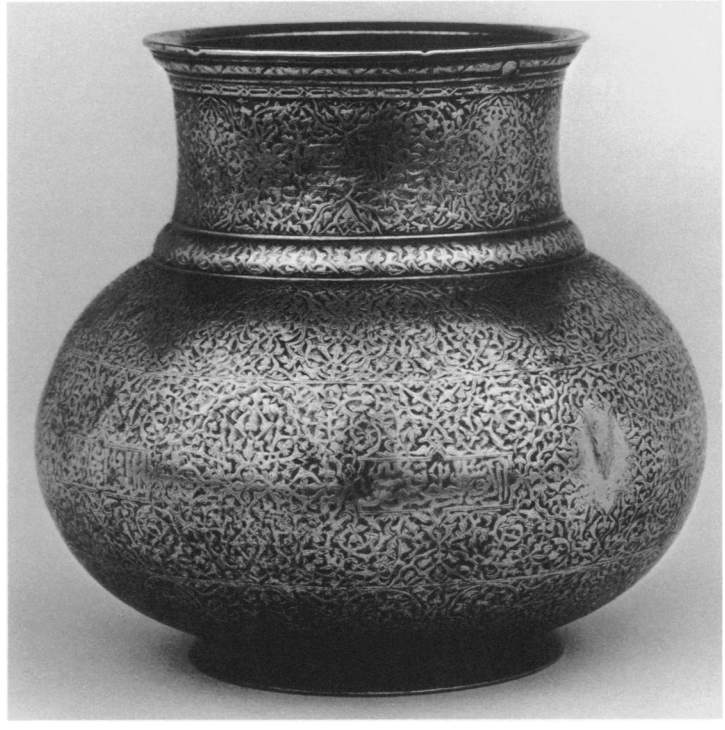
Of the thirteen signed examples of Timurid inlaid metalwork known to me,[37] eight of their signatures include the artist's *nisbah*,[38] which in every instance is formed after a place name in Khursan; they are:

1. Habib Allah ibn ʿAli Baharjani (Figures 8–13)
2. Husayn Shams al-Din Shihab al-Din al-Birjandi (Figure 14)
3. Shams al-Din Shihab al-Din al-Birjandi al-Quhistani[39]
4. Qutb al-Din Najm al-Din Quhistani (Figure 15)
5. Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din al-Ghuri[40]
6. ʿAla' al-Din (ibn) Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Birjandi (Figure 16)

The first *nisbah*, Baharjani, refers to Baharjan, which, according to the late-fifteenth-century text pertaining to the history of the city of Herat (*Rawdat al-Jannat fi Awsaf Madinat Harat*), was one of the nine districts of Quhistan.[41] Quhistan is a mountainous region of Khurasan, as is also noted in the above-mentioned historical work.[42] The next *nisbah*, al-Birjandi, is formed after the place name Birjand, which, according to the *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, written in 1340, was a provincial town in Quhistan.[43] That the Birjand referred to in this *nisbah* is in fact in Quhistan is indicated by the third *nisbah*, al-Birjandi al-Quhistani. It is possible that the owner of the *nisbah* al-Birjandi in this instance felt that his native

16. Jug, Timurid, dated 910/1505, by ʿAla' al-Din (ibn) Shams al-Din al-Birjandi. Brass, inlaid with silver, 5 × 5¼ in. (12.7 × 13.2 cm.). Berlin (West), Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, inv. no. I.6052 (photo: Museum für Islamische Kunst/J. Liepe)





town was so little known that he had to qualify his *nisbah* by adding the further *nisbah* al-Quhistani. In the fourth instance it is perhaps because the owner of this *nisbah* came from such an obscure town or village that Quhistani is used alone. The fifth *nisbah*, al-Ghuri, refers to Ghur, a mountainous area of Khurasan, as is noted for example in the tenth-century *Hudud al-ʿAlam* (in the *Nuzhat al-Qulub* called a district).[44] The sixth and last *nisbah*, al-Birjandi, has already been clarified.

The fact that each of these *nisbahs* is associated with Khurasan and furthermore occurs among the signatures on objects of which every one demonstrates a closely related decorative style and inlay technique would tend to support the supposition that the style and the technique may both be indigenous to Khurasan. This does not of course prove that the owners of these *nisbahs* necessarily worked in Khurasan, but the relative obscurity of the places after which the *nisbahs* are formed tends to militate against their having been understood or used outside of the Timurid East.[45] One of these objects, a jug signed by al-Ghuri, was made, according to its inscriptions, for the contemporary ruler of Khurasan—Sultan Husayn Bayqara (r. 1470–1506). This further ties the vessel by al-Ghuri and related examples to Khurasan, whose capital—Herat—was the preeminent artistic center of the Timurid East and, in fact, for all of Iran in the second half of the fifteenth century.[46] It is therefore most likely that a vessel made by someone from Khurasan (al-Ghuri) and for the ruler of Khurasan would have been made in the political and artistic capital of that region, namely Herat.

With the exception of al-Ghuri, all of the *nisbahs* just noted are associated with Quhistan, which, as Melikian-Chirvani was the first to point out on the basis of information supplied by the aforementioned "history of Herat," seems to have been economically tied to Herat, providing that city with a variety of goods and services.[47] It is highly likely that Quhistan also supplied Herat with skilled artists and craftsmen, or perhaps such individuals emigrated to, and were trained in, Herat. The same may perhaps be said of al-Ghuri—the man from Ghur, which is located just to the east of Herat.[48]

In the foregoing discussion I have attempted to demonstrate two correlative points. Namely, that the Metropolitan Museum pen-case and related candlestick represent the earliest extant products of the Timurid school of inlaid metalware thus far identified, whose later works help to tie this school to Khurasan. These two early inlaid wares are of further significance insofar as they document a formative phase in Timurid inlaid metalwork, one that presupposes a transference of established inlay techniques and decorative vocabulary from western to eastern Iran, where a final transformation into a uniquely Timurid style of inlaid metalwork was effected at Herat.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## NOTES

1. For further information on Iranian metalwork see Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8th–18th Centuries* (London, 1982). For general information on Islamic metalwork, including Iranian inlaid metalwork, see James W. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork: The Nuhad Es-Said Collection* (London, 1982); Esin Atil, W. T. Chase, and Paul Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, 1985); Eva Baer, *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art* (Albany, 1983); and Douglas Barrett, *Islamic Metalwork in the British Museum* (London, 1949).

2. Glenn Lowry, in "Iskandar Mirza and Early Timurid Metalwork," *Orientations* (Sept. 1986) pp. 12–20, has recently claimed that a pen-case in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, is dated 1412–13 (presumably 815 *hijra*). I have serious reservations, however, as to whether there is any date inscribed on this object, nor do I concur with the author on his stylistic assessment of this and a related pen-case in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (17.190.822, Figure 6), which has led him to conclude that these two objects were produced under Timurid patronage in the early 15th century in western Iran.

3. On the connections between a western Iranian, Shirazi, school of architecture and the subsequent development of a Timurid school of architecture whose practitioners were responsible for a number of officially sponsored buildings, see Lisa Golombek, *The Timurid Shrine at Gazur Gah*, Royal Ontario Museum of Art and Archaeology Occasional Paper 15 (Toronto, 1969) pp. 60–62; 71–73, n. 1, items D–G; K; M. On miniature painting, see, for instance, Ernst Grube and Eleanor Sims, "The School of Herat from 1400–1450," *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia*, ed. Basil Gray (London, 1979) pp. 147–178.

4. See Linda Komaroff, "Patronage or Pillage: The Evolution of Timurid Metalwork," a forthcoming study; also Komaroff's Ph.D. diss., "The Timurid Phase in Iranian Metalwork: Formu-

lation and Realization of a Style" (New York University, 1984), to be published shortly in revised form as *The Golden Disk of Heaven: Metalwork of Timurid Iran.*

5. Two lamps and the base of a third are in the Hermitage, Leningrad, while the upper portions of the third example are in the Musée du Louvre, Paris. One of the three lamps preserved at the shrine complex is incomplete and does not bear any inscribed reference to Timur. The first extensive study of these lamps was published by A. A. Ivanov, "O bronzovykh izdeliîakh konîsa XIV v. iz mavoleîa Khodzha Akhmeda Yasevi" [On bronze wares of the end of the 14th century from the Khoja Ahmad Yasavi mausoleum], *Srednaîa Aziîa i eë Sosedi* [Central Asia and its Society] (Moscow, 1981) pp. 68–84, and more recently by Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," pp. 207–233; 622–639.

6. For a detailed discussion see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," pp. 109–112; 228–230.

7. The differences between spatial and linear inlays are graphically illustrated in James W. Allan, *Persian Metal Technology 700–1300 AD* (Oxford, 1979) figs. 5a–d. Unless otherwise indicated, the observations and comments on the inlay technique included in the present study are based purely upon visual analysis.

8. On the decline and subsequent disappearance of figural imagery from Iranian metalwork, see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," pp. 78–95.

9. Five of these are illustrated in Figures 8–16; the remaining examples are: a pen-case, dated 865/1460–61, present location unknown; a jug, dated 889/1484, private collection; a jug dated 903/1498, in the British Museum; a jug, private collection, dated 901/1495; and a jug dated 908/1502, present location unknown; see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," nos. 6, 8, 14, 15 16A, respectively. Also an unpublished jug in the British Museum dated 889/1484. This is by no means a finite list; there are numerous published references to such dated pieces, while inlaid objects of this type, which occasionally bear a date, will most likely continue to appear on the art market.

10. On this topic, see Komaroff, "Timurid to Safavid Iran: Continuity and Change," *Marsyas* 20 (1979–80) pp. 11–16; as well as Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," pp. 577–589. Also, see below, n. 40.

11. As well as a type of bowl; see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," nos. 1–17, pp. 407–456; for the wedge-shaped pen-cases see nos. 6–7; and for the bowl, no. 17.

12. Such a black material seems to be a common feature of most medieval Iranian inlaid metalwork. In Nov. 1983 the black substance from the pen-case, 91.1.536, and a related late-fourteenth-century Syrian or western Iranian pen-case, 17.190.822, was analyzed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Objects Conservation. Apart from the fact that the black substance is a "solvent-resistant organic material," which may have been applied to the metalwork in liquid form, the results of the various tests did not lead to the identification of this substance. I would like to thank Richard Stone, of the Department of Objects Conservation, for his time, as well as for the insight of his comments. On the general question of this black substance and medieval inlaid metalwork, see Atil, Chase, and Jett, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 40.

13. As it is virtually impossible to distinguish between an engraved and a chased line on medieval Iranian metalwork with the naked eye alone, I have here, as elsewhere in this article, used the general term "incised" to designate any decoration that was produced by either an engraving or a chasing tool.

14. See above, n. 12.

15. The example in The Metropolitan Museum of Art was first published by Lowry, "Iskandar Mirza," fig. 3; for the pen-case in Paris, see Melikian-Chirvani, *Le Bronze Iranien* (Paris, 1973) pp. 84–85. Also see Allan, *Nuhad Es-Said*, pp. 90–92, where in contrast to Melikian-Chirvani, the author considers pen-cases of this type to be of Syrian, rather than Iranian, provenance. Also see above, n. 2, for reference to Lowry's recent attribution to western Iran, and to his dating of the New York and Paris pen-cases to the early Timurid period.

16. See above, n. 12.

17. On Timur's various conquests, see Jean Aubin, "Comment Tamerlan prenait les villes," *Studia Islamica* 19 (1963) pp. 83–122.

18. The reading of the last segment of the inscription is still tentative. Professor George Saliba, of Columbia University, has suggested in this regard that the last hemistich should probably be scanned by assuming a definite article, pronounced but not written, preceding the last word.

19. The reading of the last line is tentative, although, clearly, it conveys a message quite similar to that of the preceding cartouche. These inscriptions have also been read by Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, pp. 245–246.

20. I discuss this topic in detail in a forthcoming study, "An Epigraphic History of Iranian Metalwork, 11th–17th Century"; for specific reference to the Timurid wares on which this same inscription occurs, see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," nos. 3, 4, and 47, also see Appendix I, A; II, B; IV; V.

21. Some Persian verses occasionally express good wishes (as in the last two lines on the sides of the cover of the pen-case); such well-wishing verses most often include a distich by the 13th-century poet Saʿdi, from his *Bustan*, which is usually found in conjunction with a similar distich by the 10th-century poet Daqiqi and another distich from Firdawsi's *Shah-Namah*, completed in 1010. These specific verses were first identified by Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 252.

22. Hafiz was primarily active at the Muzaffarid court at Shiraz during the 14th century. On Hafiz, see Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* III (Cambridge, 1928) pp. 271ff.

23. *Diwan-i Khwajah Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafiz Shirazi*, eds. S. M. Rida Jalali Na'ini and Nazir Ahmad (Tehran, 1974) p. 569.

24. Considering Hafiz's fame—legend has it that Timur himself had an audience with the poet following his conquest of Shiraz in 1387 (see Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, pp. 188–189, 282)—it does not seem unlikely that copies of Hafiz's *Diwan* were already available and were well known in the Timurid East prior to the manufacture of this pen-case, around the middle of the 15th century. Two of the oldest extant manuscripts that include *ghazals* by Hafiz—each written in 1410–11, and one of which is the earliest most comprehensive collection of his poetry—were copied for the Timurid prince Iskandar, the contemporary ruler of Fars. See Robert M. Rehder, "The Text of Hafiz," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, 2 (1974) pp. 145–156, especially pp. 151–152.

25. From two separate *ghazals*, see Na'ini and Ahmad, *Diwan-i Hafiz*, p. 62 (and n. 4) and p. 249. These verses were first identi-

fied by Melikian-Chirvani, "Safavid Metalwork: A Study in Continuity," *Iranian Studies*, 7, 3–4 (1974) pp. 545 and 572 n. 55. In addition to Hafiz, Sa'di, Daqiqi, and Firdawsi (see n. 21, above) several other poets' verses have thus far been identified among the inscriptions on Timurid metalwork; these include Qasim al-Anwar, Salihi, and Jami, all 15th-century poets who were active in Khurasan. Their verses were first identified by A. A. Ivanov (see "Khudozhestvennaîa bronza blizhnego i Srednego Vostoka" [Artistic bronzes of the Near and Middle East] *Soobshcheniîa Gosudardstvennogo Ermitazha* [Communications of the State Hermitage] 30 (1969) pp. 31–36 for Qasim al-Anwar; for Salihi, see "Osvanie podsvechnika 800 g. kh. (1475–1476 gg.) so stikhami poeta Salikhi" [Base of a candlestick of the year 800 H. (1475–1476) with a verse by the poet Salihi] *Soobshcheniîa Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha* [Communications of the State Hermitage] 27 (1966) pp. 67–70; and for Jami, see "Tri predmeta so stikhami dzhami" [Three objects with verses by Jami] *Epigrafika Vostoka* 20 (1971) pp. 97–103.

26. On the epigraphic style of Timurid metalwork, see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," pp. 313–314.

27. I had the opportunity to examine this piece at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Oct. 1983. While the decoration from the socket includes very much the same floral motifs as those on the base of the object, the two differ considerably in technique and quality. The socket appears to be a later replacement intended to match the base. There is an interior seam at the juncture of the socket and base indicating that the two pieces were separately fabricated and then attached. The present location of this piece is unknown to me; it was first published in *A Survey of Persian Art*, ed. Arthur Upham Pope (London, 1939) pl. 1375.

28. Na'ini and Ahmad, *Diwan-i Hafiz*, pp. 390–391 and n. 12.

29. The inscriptions were first published in Klaus Brisch, ed., *Islamische Kunst: Loseblatt–Katalog unpublizierter Werke aus deutschen Museen. Bd. 2, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Metall, Stein, Stuck, Holz, Elfenbein, Stoffe* (Mainz, 1985) no. 338. I will here supply an English translation of the verses: Around the neck: "To its owner happiness and well-being and life as long as a pigeon coos. Lasting glory, with no humiliation in it, and good fortune until Judgment Day"; around the body: "The most mighty Sultan, the exalted Khaqan, the Master of the Kings of the Arabs and the non-Arabs, the shadow of God in the two lands, the Steward of the water and the soil who spreads the wings of peace and security [in the] year 861/1456–57"; and in a separate medallion: "Its owner is Iskandar ibn Muhammad Mirza"; on the underside of the base: "Made by Habib Allah ibn 'Ali Baharjani [in the] year 861/1456–57"; and surrounding this: "Glory, auspicious fate, good fortune, happiness, well-being, divine favor, O God of the two worlds." The royal protocol has not yet been associated with a particular Timurid prince, nor has the original owner of the vessel, whose name is given in the medallion, been identified.

30. See above, n. 25; also see Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, pp. 248–250, where a complete transcription and English translation of the inscriptions are provided.

31. My reading of the signature is slightly different than that of L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Metalworkers and Their Works* (Geneva, 1959) p. 47, who first recorded this inscription. I have not as yet been able to decipher fully the Persian verses on the body, neck, and cover, although these include the word *mashrabah*, or jug. This vessel, presently in the Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi, was (according to Mayer) formerly in the Topkapu Saray. I would like to thank Dr. David Alexander for his photograph of this piece.

32. It has not been possible to determine whether the spout on this vessel is original. It can be noted, however, that each of the jugs by Habib Allah bears a repair mark in precisely the same area as where the spout is attached on the example in Figure 14.

33. See Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," nos. 8–11A, pp. 429–439.

34. Known to me only from a Christie's sale cat. (London, Oct. 23, 1972) p. 28, lot 76, pl. 13. Also see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," no. 11.

35. For a detailed discussion that includes a number of examples that are dated or datable to the 1490s see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," pp. 342–345.

36. London, Oct. 23, 1972, p. 28, lot 77, pl. 10. The signature and date, on the underside of the vessel, reads: "made by the humblest of servants 'Ala' al-Din ibn Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Birjandi in the holy month of Ramadan 908/March 1503." Although the signature on the Berlin example is generally read as "'Ala' al-Din and Shams al-Din," the signature on the example of 908/1503 demonstrates that 'Ala' al-Din (ibn) Shams al-Din is in fact one person, as has also been noted by Melikian-Chirvani, "Safavid Metalwork," p. 545 n. 8. On the Berlin vessel dated 910/1505, see Brisch, *Loseblatt–Katalog*, no. 339.

37. Apart from the eight signed examples that include the artist's *nisbah*, there are five further signed objects, all jugs: two vessels signed by Husayn ibn Mubarak-Shah; another signed by Jawanbakht ibn Husayn; and a vessel by 'Abd al-Khalil Qutb al-Din; see Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," nos. 8, 9, 13, and 15, respectively. The fifth example is an unpublished jug in the British Museum by Jamal al-Din Shams al-Din. This list is by no means finite; further signed examples may very well continue to appear on the art market.

38. A *nisbah* is a type of surname, usually designating where its owner originated; a *nisbah* may also refer to an individual's clan or tribe, religious sect, and occasionally his trade or profession.

39. See Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," no. 7, pp. 338–339, and pp. 427–428. This piece, a pen-case datable ca. 865/1460–61, is in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran. I would like to thank Dr. Anatole Ivanov for bringing it to my attention.

40. See Komaroff, "The Timurid Phase," no. 14, pp. 343–344, and pp. 446–448. This object, a jug dated 903/1498, is in the British Museum. For a related jug that is also the work of a craftsman using the *nisbah* al-Ghuri (i.e., 'Ali b. Muhammad 'Ali Shahab al-Ghuri), and which was made in 918/1512, several years after the fall of the Timurid dynasty, see *Art from the Islamic World, Louisiana Revy* 27, 3 (Mar. 1987) p. 105.

41. Mu'in al-Din Muhammad Zamchi Isfizari, *Rawdat al-Jannat fi Awsaf Madinat Harat*, ed. S. M. Kazim Imam, pt. 1 (Tehran, 1959), pt. II (1960); pt. 1, p. 327. Similarly, Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 238.

42. Isfizari, *Rawdat al-Jannat*, pt. 1, pp. 327–328.

43. *Nuzhat al-Qulub (composed by Hamd-allah Mustawfi of Qazwin in 740/1340)*, trans. G. Le Strange, "E. J. W. Gibb Memorial" Series 23, 2 (London, 1919) p. 143.

44. And located east of Herat; *Hudud al-'Alam: "The Regions of*

*the World,"* trans. V. Minorsky, "E. J. W. Gibb Memorial" Series, n.s. 11 (London, 1937) p. 110. *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, p. 152. An alternate, and possibly more logical, interpretation of this *nisbah* is that it is formed after the town of Ghuriyan, a short distance west of Herat, which is mentioned by Qasim ibn Yusuf Abu Nasri Haravi, in 970/1515, in his *Tariq-i Qismat-i Ab-i Qulb*, ed. M. Haravi (Tehran, 1968) p. 89 n. 11, where this town is referred to in the context of Timur's conquest of Herat. I would like to thank Professor Robert McChesney of New York University for this suggestion and reference.

45. Similarly Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, pp. 238–239.

46. Ernst Grube, "Notes on the Decorative Arts of the Timurid Period," *Gururājañjarika, Studi in Onore di Giuseppe Tucci*, Istituto Orientale Universitario (Naples, 1974) p. 246, was the first to link these vessels with Herat, but solely on the basis of the inscriptions from the British Museum jug signed by al-Ghuri.

47. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 238. Isfizari, *Rawdat al-Jannat* pt. 1, pp. 327–328.

48. But see above, n. 44.