

The inscription on the beaker is made up of two separate verses, both belonging to the *khamriyya*

امر بالكرم خلف حايطه تلفحنى ا



(I pass by the vineyard. Behind its wall I am burnt by [. . .].)

In addition to the evidently incomplete nature of the sentence, the metre also indicates that material is missing, for what we have is a line in the metre *munsariḥ* in which the last two feet are omitted.

'a mur ru bil kar mi khal fa ḥā 'i ṭi ḥī

. - . - / - . - . / - . . - /

tal fa ḥu nī' [.....]

- . . - / - . . - / - . . - /

The next word might readily be conjectured to be, for example, *al-shams* (the sun), which fits both metre and sense, but a further six syllables would still need to be supplied, and, as it has not proved possible to identify the source, the line as a whole cannot be reconstituted.

The first line, on the other hand, can be identified: it is by the tenth-century poet Kushājīm.<sup>4</sup> Maḥmūd ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Sindī ibn Shahak Abū'l-Faṭḥ, known as Kushājīm, died around 961. He was born at Ramla and lived in Mosul at the court of Abū'l-Hayjā 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥamdān, and then in Aleppo, in the entourage of Ṣayf al-Dawla. As a poet he is noted for his nature poetry, in particular his descriptions of gardens, flowers and trees. But he was also a scribe, an astrologer and master cook to Ṣayf al-Dawla: indeed, he excelled in so many branches of knowledge and activity that the name Kushājīm is said to be an acrostic formed out of the initial letters of the subjects in which he excelled.

The line in question became quite well known, and is cited in a number of literary anthologies. One of these is the *Ḥalbat al-kumayt* (an anthology of wine poetry) by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Nawājī (d. 1455),<sup>5</sup> who sets it in the context of an amusing story, which runs as follows.

During his caliphate Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam (the Umayyad Caliph Marwān I, who reigned 684–5) prohibited wine and ordered the police to patrol the streets. One night the policemen found a very handsome but very drunk man who was reciting a couplet of love poetry. When he had finished they said: 'Have you not heard the Caliph's call to abandon drunkenness?' To which he answered: 'I am a stranger, and I was not aware of this.' They cautioned him, let him go and went away. But on the second night there was the same young man even more drunk than before, reciting the following verses: 'They say: repent! while the cup is in the

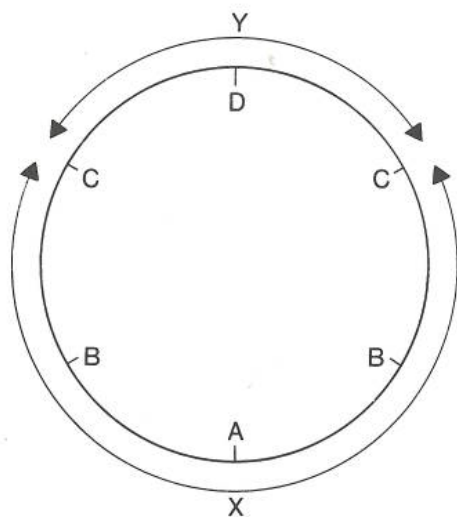
hand of a beardless youth, and the sound of the second and third [strings of the lute] is loud! [This is the verse that appears on the Palmer Cup.] But I said to them: even if I were to feel repentance and I saw this in a dream, it would still seem proper to me.'

They again surrounded him and said: 'Was not what happened to you yesterday enough to stop you doing it again?' But he answered: 'I repented while drunk and so I was inclined to forget it. If you punish me it is just, but if you forgive me you will be virtuous.' They cautioned him not to do it again and left. But on the third night there he was drunker than ever, reciting a verse on the pangs of the separated lover. The police seized him and brought him before Marwān, who inflicted upon him what the law prescribes. When he had been flogged his eighty strokes he said: 'God save the Caliph! I am a slave but you have inflicted upon me the flogging of a free man. [A slave should receive only half the punishment of a free man.] Give me due compensation for the wrong you have done to me.' Marwān agreed that he should be given compensation, so the man said: 'God save the Caliph! If you consider it right to give me compensation for the wrong you have inflicted upon me in the form of drinking wine whenever I like, please do so.' The Caliph considered him a witty fellow, forgave him and made him one of his Companions.

The six figures depicted on the body of the beaker are: a ruler seated on a throne, cross-legged, in the attitude of holding a beaker (although the beaker is not depicted) (fig. 13.2); two flanking attendants each holding a spear (figs 13.1 and 13.3); two musicians playing castanets (figs 13.1 and 13.3); and finally a figure holding a sort of mace (fig. 13.4).<sup>6</sup> This is a typical depiction of aspects of the life of the ruler, where he is surrounded by the antithetical but complementary themes of warfare and entertainment.

There is a difference in the way Kushājīm's verse relates to the figures as opposed to the truncated verse (see diagram overleaf). Kushājīm's verse (*X*) occupies a space which includes the ruler (*A*) and the two attendants (*B*) and goes as far as the castanet players (*C*), leaving only the space on the other side of the castanet players stretching over the mace-holder (*D*) for the truncated verse (*Y*). Kushājīm's verse (shortened by the haplography) thus extends exactly as far as the five figures made up of the ruler and the other four symmetrically placed around him. In addition to this symmetry may be noted the fact that the word *aghyad* (beardless youth) is placed immediately above the





ruler, who is represented precisely as a beardless youth (fig. 13.2). Rulers are often portrayed as beardless, and this is not perceived as undermining their authority. But the beardless youth referred to in the verse is a wine-bearer and obviously cannot be thought of as a ruler. Nevertheless, the placing of the word *aghyad* over the ruler can hardly be ignored or dismissed as coincidental, and in a society where wit and verbal dexterity were much appreciated among courtiers it may well have been intended as a visual-verbal pun appropriate to the conviviality of the situation in which the cup would have been used. The fact that the ruler's hand is empty may also be interpreted as a pun, indeed a double one, identifying the Palmer Cup itself both as the one referred to in the verse and as the one which the ruler will in reality grasp.

The sixth figure, the mace-holder (fig. 13.4), is external to the symmetry of the other five figures, and is exactly opposite the ruler. The quality of glass *par excellence*, transparency, here comes to stimulate our imagination.<sup>7</sup> If we look through the glass (see diagram above) we find that there is a correspondence of opposites: the two spear attendants (B), representing military, official figures, correspond, on the other side, to the castanet players (C), representing leisure and pleasure; and the ruler (A) corresponds to the mace-holder (D).

This last correspondence is much less obvious than the other two and more difficult to explain, even if, by analogy, we may assume them to form another pair of complementary opposites the nature of which might in some way be illustrated by the interrupted verse. If we relate the mace-holder to the inscription that runs over his space, 'behind the wall' of the beaker as seen from the ruler's side,

and note that the verse goes on to say 'I am burnt by [? the sun]', we may be tempted to think of the association of the sun with royalty (long-established in Near Eastern art), and wonder whether we are not faced here with another pun, one in which the verse does not need to be completed as the figural metaphor completes the words. The mace-holder, according to this reading, becomes the armed *alter ego*/warrior/enemy/subordinate who would be always subject to or defeated ('burnt') by the ruler/sun.

But however this verse might be interpreted in relation to the figure beneath, the fact that it is truncated should occasion no surprise. Truncated inscriptions are not uncommon on Islamic objects. Although it is impossible at present to give comparative examples on glass objects, since inscriptions on glass have as yet been little recorded, it is possible to give examples from other media such as metalwork and pottery. Examples of truncated poetic inscriptions are found on some lustre bowls of the early thirteenth century in the Nasser D. Khalili collection, London.<sup>8</sup> Other examples are provided by non-poetic, benedictory or titular inscriptions. One such example is the famous Iranian brass ewer with copper and silver inlay, in Modena, from Khurasan, datable to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, on which a number of interrupted inscriptions are found around the neck and on the body.<sup>9</sup> The interruptions on similar examples may have been for lack of space, or, rather, for what Lisa Volov has defined as a lack of good preliminary organisation of the space.<sup>10</sup> The example she cites is of a Samanid pottery plate in the St Louis Art Museum (37-283:51) which, following the practice of having proverbs or moratory sentences, has the inscription 'Planning before work protects you from regret. K'. The K, she suggests, has probably been added to illustrate what happens when you do not plan 'before work' – you find yourself with insufficient space to finish the inscription. Other instances may sometimes be for decorative purposes or abbreviations or, as Melikian Chirvani has hypothesised, talking about the Iranian material in the Victoria and Albert Museum, might sometimes have had esoteric meanings which are now lost to us.<sup>11</sup>

Iconographical parallels for the representation of the ruler are to be found in media other than glass. A ruler seated cross-legged, holding a cup, and surrounded by attendants is found in the 1199 *Kitāb al-diryāq*, of Mosul or North Jazira provenance, where, like the ruler in the beaker, he also wears a particular type of headgear, the *sharbūsh*,



associated with that area during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> This type is also found on early thirteenth-century metalwork, also from the Jazira area.<sup>13</sup> Further comparisons in glass are provided by fragments in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum which show close affinities not only in style but also in the technique used (figs 14.1 and 14.2). A strikingly close parallel in terms of both style and technique may be found on a fragment (fig. 14.2) with the face of a beardless youth in relief enamel covered by gold, very similar to that in the Palmer Cup (as also are the finials of the throne).

The Palmer Cup is part of a group of enamelled beakers with elongated bodies, flaring mouths and a distinctive foot, the chronology of which is yet to be established with precision. Lamm included it within a group that he called the 'Raqqā group' assigned to the late twelfth to early thirteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The closest parallel to the Palmer Cup from this group in terms of shape and type of foot and in the way the inscription is laid out is the so-called Coupe de Charlemagne (fig. 14.9 on col. pl. K), now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres.<sup>15</sup> The inscription on this beaker is also laid out in gold, outlined by red enamel, and the kind of *naskh* used is practically identical to that in the Palmer Cup. But the inscription on the beaker is not poetic, just benedictory, and can be translated as 'Lasting glory, long and healthy life, rising fortune and perfect reign'.

This inscription had been first studied in the seventeenth century by one Frédéric Morel, royal

interpreter, who drew it and translated it into Latin (fig. 14.8). Subsequently, at the end of the eighteenth century, the chalice was rendered in a rather romantic watercolour with a ribbon floating over it containing the inscription, as part of a list of conspicuous objects from the Magdeleine du Châteaudun (fig. 14.7). In the early nineteenth century Joseph Toussaint Reinaud anticipated Lamm in suggesting a date before the end of the twelfth century, on the basis of the shape of the letters of the inscription.<sup>16</sup> He also ventured that it probably came from Egypt as a souvenir, as did others of the kind found in many French towns, and suggested that it could have come with a Crusader from Egypt, after the capture of Damietta in 1251, during the First Crusade of St Louis.<sup>17</sup> In relation to the date suggested by Reinaud and Lamm, it is interesting to note that the inscription is identical (save for two extra words) to one found on a ceramic bowl, painted in blue under transparent glaze, from the Jazira area, end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century, now in the Louvre.<sup>18</sup>

But quite apart from the current scholarly controversy surrounding the dating of this group of enamelled beakers – a topic that cannot be explored in depth in this paper – it should be stressed that, although belonging to it typologically, the Palmer Cup presents fascinating elements that in the present state of our knowledge are unique: figural motifs and, especially, the poetic nature of the inscription.

## NOTES

1. It is included, in the form of a drawing, in Lamm, 1929–30: 2: pl. 96:6. The beaker, now in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities of the British Museum, is part of the Waddesdon Bequest, and will be included in the forthcoming volume on the collection by Hugh Tait, who first drew my attention to the glass and asked me to study it. His profound knowledge and experience have provided valuable insights and have rendered my research most enjoyable. Professor Owen Wright has been most helpful in assisting in the research on the inscription and in commenting on various points covered in this article. Claude Stefani (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres) made my study on the Coupe de Charlemagne possible. He also generously made available to me documentary and photographic material. Marthe Bernus-Taylor and Sophie Makariou (Louvre) helped with comparative material that has been very important towards my research on the Palmer Cup.

2. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Arabe 3929.

3. The formula *al-mathānī wa al-mathālith*, indicating music and specifically the sound of the lute, sometimes appears in titles but with the order reversed to facilitate rhyming. An example is the *Kitāb al-mathālith wa al-mathānī fī al-maʿālī wa al-maʿānī* by Šafī al-Dīn al-Hillī (1278–1349).

4. See Pellat, 1960–; Brockelmann, 1897–1902, suppl. 1: 137; Kushājim, 1895 (no pagination).

5. Al-Nawāʾī, 1859: 39. See Brockelmann, 1897–1902, 2: no. 11.

11. Al-Nawāʾī narrates the story in which this verse comes without ascribing it to any particular poet.

6. This weapon is represented in the Iranian copy of the *Muʿnis al-aḥrār*, dated 1341, where it is called *nāchakh*, a sort of mace or spear: Swietochowski and Carboni, 1994: 36–7 and 61. This sort of weapon is also represented on a metal candlestick in the British Museum (OA 1969.9–22.1), probably from Syria, thirteenth century: Baer, 1983: fig. 124.

7. This point emerged in discussion after a seminar on the Palmer Cup that I gave at the Oriental Institute in Oxford, April 1995.

8. Grube, 1994: cat. nos 277 and 283.

9. Curatola, 1993: no. 125.

10. Volov, 1966: 106–33.

11. Melikian-Chirvani, 1982: no. 45.

12. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Arabe 2964, fol. 27 recto. See colour reproduction in Farès, 1953.

13. See for example the Blacas Ewer, Mosul, 629/1232–3: Scerrato, 1966: col. pl. 39.

14. Lamm, 1929-30, 2: pl. 96: 6.

15. Another beaker related to the Coupe de Charlemagne is in the Louvre 6121.

16. Joseph Toussaint Re naud (1795-1867): an Orientalist, pupil of Silvestre de Sacy, Re naud was a member of the Académie

des Inscriptions and Professor of Arabic at the École des Langues Orientales.

17. In a note dated 9 June 1821 in *Notes Manuscrites sur le Verre de Charlemagne*, fol. 2, in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres.

18. MAO 250.

# CAPTIONS

FIG. 14.1 Fragment of gilded and enamelled glass with enthroned figure. London, Victoria and Albert Museum C119R-1947.

FIG. 14.2 Fragment of glass with part of enthroned figure in thick enamels and gilded. London, Victoria and Albert Museum 363/33-1900.

FIG. 14.3 Drawing of the decoration on the Palmer Cup by James Farrant.

FIG. 14.4 Drawing of the inscription on the Palmer Cup (viewed from the exterior) by James Farrant.

FIG. 14.5 Drawing of the inscription on the Palmer Cup (viewed from the interior) by James Farrant.

FIG. 14.6 Engraving of the Coupe des huit prêtres, subtitled 'vase arabe émaillé'; after Gerspach, 1885: fig. 48. The beaker was formerly in the Musée de Douai but was destroyed in the Second World War. Attributed to Syria, early thirteenth century.

FIG. 14.7 Eighteenth-century watercolour of the Coupe de Charlemagne subtitled 'Verre de charlemagne conservé dans le tresor de chateaudun'. H. 35.7 cm; W. 25.7 cm. From *Recueil factice ancien contenant des dessins (et quelques gravures) du XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, relatifs à des abbayes et prieurés des chanoines réguliers de la Congrégation de France*, under Magdeleine de Chasteaudun. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Department of Prints and Drawings, Ve. 20, fol. 12bis.

FIG. 14.8 Drawing and Latin translation of the inscription on the Coupe de Charlemagne preserved in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Chartres. The translator was probably Frédéric Morel (1558-1630), royal interpreter, who is recorded as knowing Hebrew.

FIG. 14.9 [on col. pl. K] 'Coupe de Charlemagne', glass beaker with enamelled and gilded decoration, and with European mounts. Attributed to Syria, early thirteenth century. H. 24 cm. Chartres, Musée des Beaux-Arts 5144.











13.1



13.2

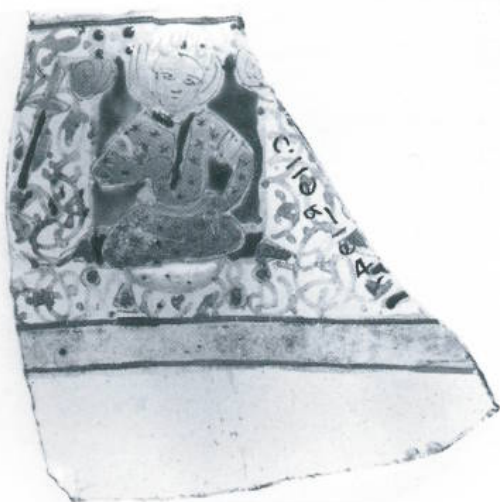


13.3



13.4





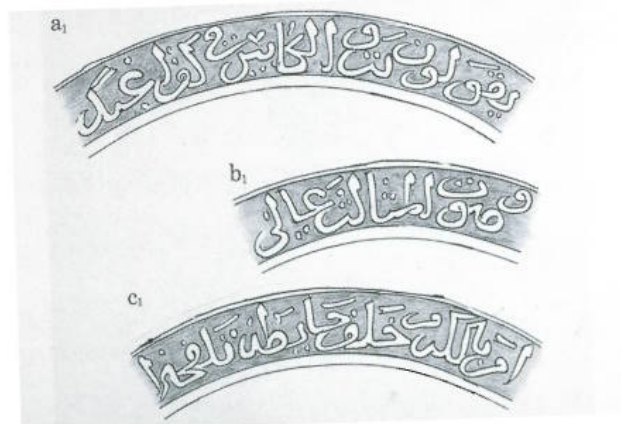
I4.1



I4.2



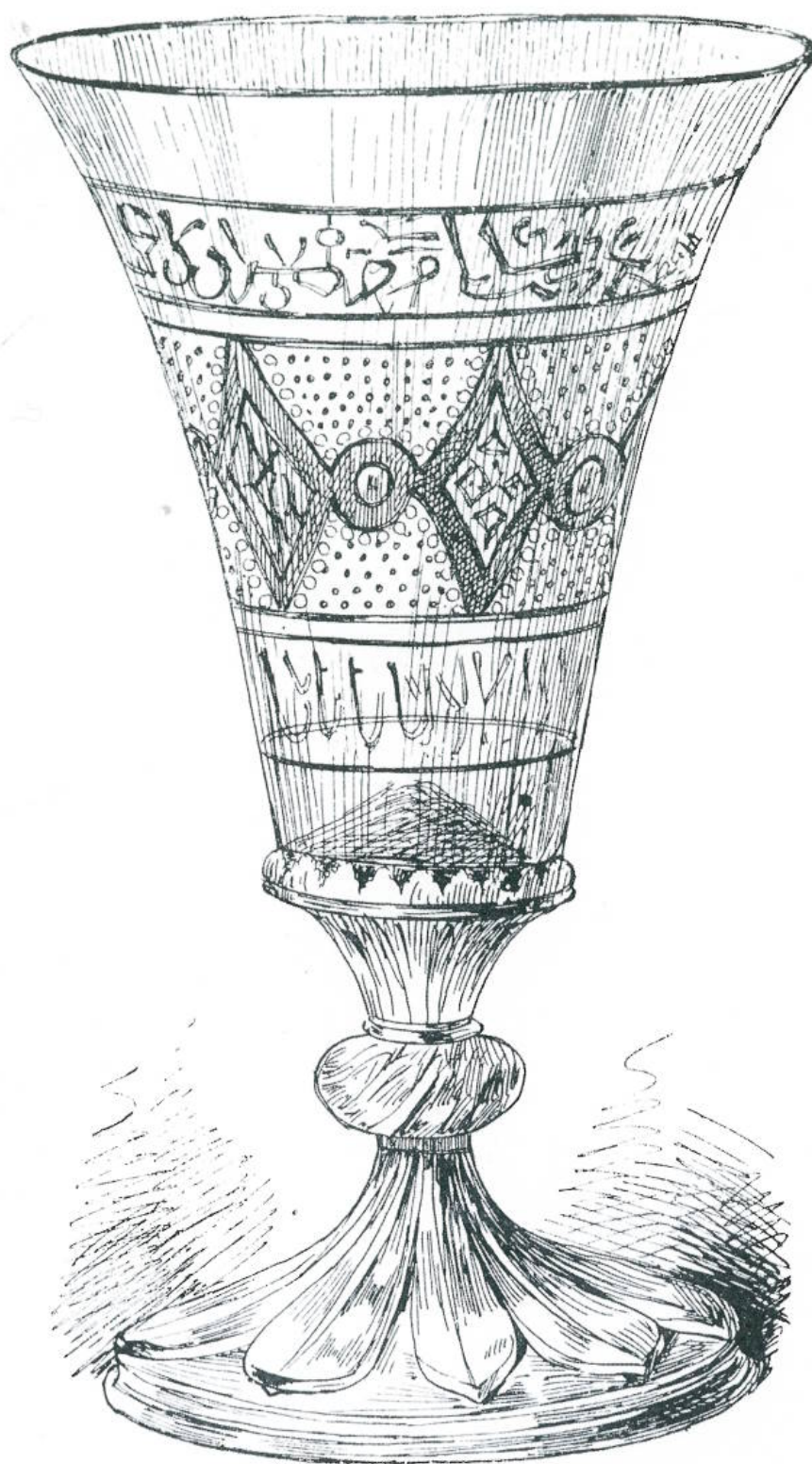
I4.3



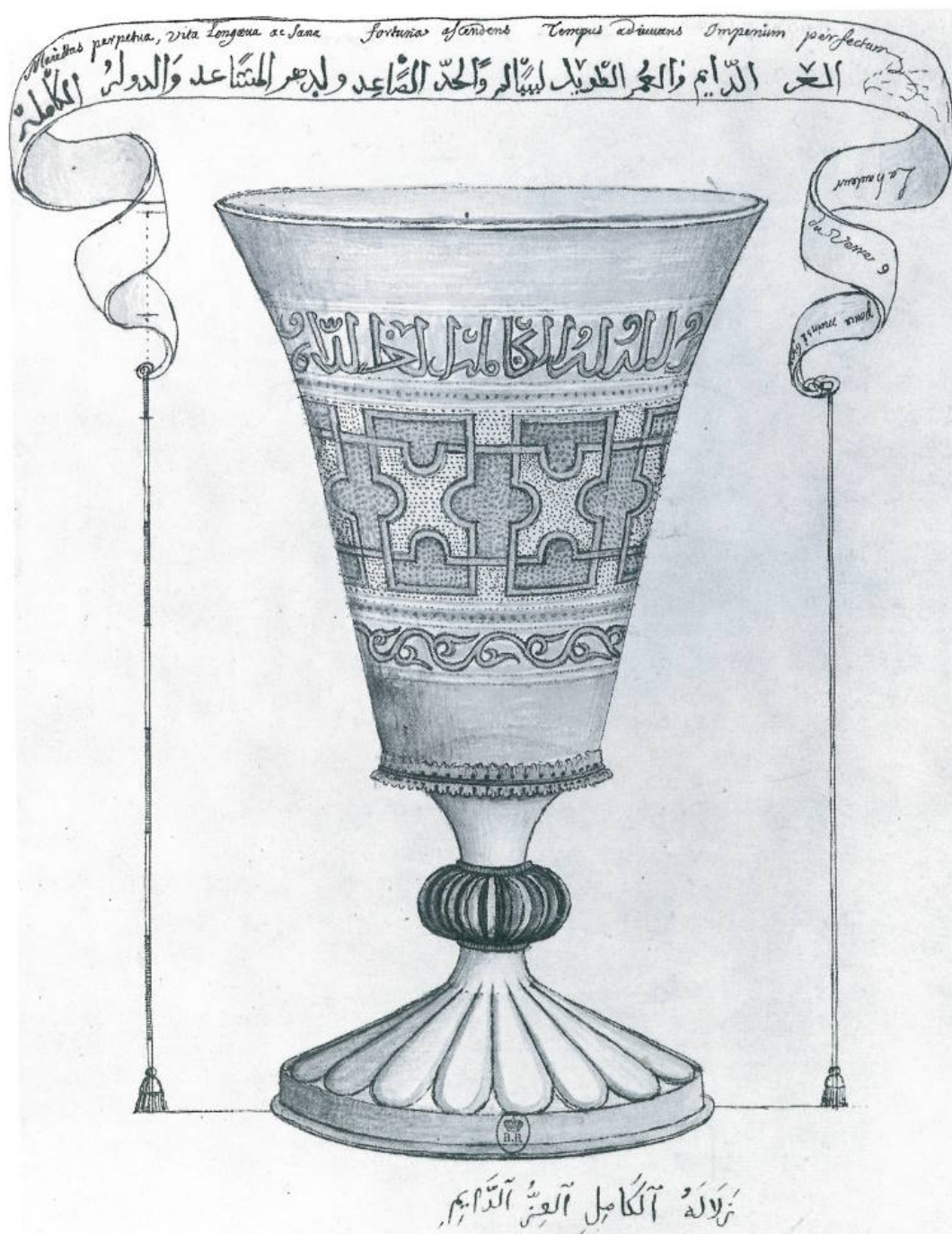
I4.4



I4.5

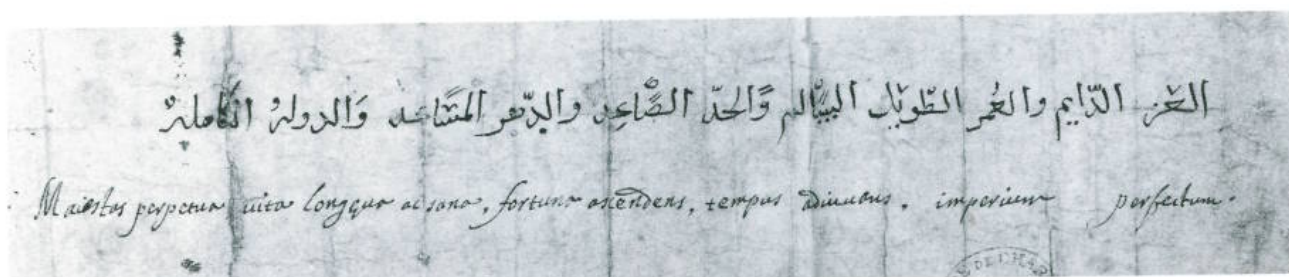






14.7

Verre de charlemagne conservé dans le tector de chateaudun



14.8

*Aime Costello*

*Gilded and  
Enamelled Glass  
from the  
Middle East*

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*Edited by Rachel Ward*

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COVER ILLUSTRATION:

Glass mosque lamp with gilded and enamelled decoration  
made for the Mamluk amir Sayf al-Dīn Tuquzdamur.  
Egypt, 1330–45. H. 33 cm. London, British Museum OA 1869.6–24.1.

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