FOLLOWING THE STARS

IMAGES OF THE ZODIAC IN ISLAMIC ART

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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ISLAMIC ART AND ASTROLOGY

Astrology in Arabic was called *ʿilm aḥkām al-nujūm*, which can be translated as "the science of the judgments of the stars." Its relationship to astronomy was a very close one, since astrology was considered to be a branch of astronomy—a dependency that is also evidenced by the names assigned to the two sciences (astronomy is *ʿilm al-nujūm*, or "the science of the stars"). An astrologer was supposed to study the movements of the stars and the planets to understand how they would affect daily activities and events and the character and personality of individuals. This is, in part, how astrology is perceived today, for, as defined in Webster's, it is "divination that treats of the supposed influences of the stars upon human affairs and of foretelling terrestrial events by their positions and aspects." According to the dictionary, the medieval definition of astrology as a "science" has given way to the modern-day concept of "divination," and the "influences of the stars" have become "supposed influences." This is not surprising, because recent scientific knowledge has made clear that the world and the universe are rather different from the way they were perceived in pre-Copernican times. Yet astrology, even if it has presently been stripped of its scientific aspect, never went out of fashion, and there are some who continue to believe that their personality and their actions are influenced by the positions of the stars as seen by an observer on Earth looking up at the night sky. A fixation for a few, followed casually by a large number of people, ignored by others, and scorned by many, astrology is still part of life today and is the subject of much literature.

In the medieval Islamic world, the science of astrology was based on a knowledge of astronomy passed on to the Arabs from Greek sources and consequently translated into Arabic. During the first centuries of Islam, it developed further, after the introduction of new observations and mathematical calculations, and the astonishing progress made in science, to which European culture would owe so much. The frescoes on the vaulted ceiling of the *calidarium* of the early-eighth-century baths at Quṣayr ʿAmra—presently in the Jordanian desert east of the capital, Amman—which include the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, are a testimony to the interest that the first Islamic rulers evinced in the subject.

As a science in its own right, astrology was a serious business that was taken up by celebrated scientists, mathematicians, and writers such as Abū Maʿshar al-Balkhī (9th century), al-Bīrūnī (973–1048), and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274). The large number of surviving manuscripts in public and private collections that deal with astrology speaks for the popularity of the subject throughout the Islamic world. From Spain and the Maghrib in the west to Central Asia in the east, horoscopes were cast by court astrologers, who often were the court astronomers, and also by specialists who made a living dealing with the more common folk. Evidence of the widespread interest in astrology in all strata of Islamic society survives, for example, in a royal horoscope included in a manuscript (now in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine Library, London; see Keshavarz, 1984), dedicated to Iskandar, Prince of Shiraz, in 1411, as well as in astrological sketches from the eleventh to the twelfth century drawn on scrap paper, which were found at the archaeological site of al-Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo) in Egypt.

The main purpose of this brief examination is to show the role of astrology in Islamic artistic production, or, in other words, to demonstrate how a scientific discipline became so popular that it even affected the appearance of works of art, serving as a decorative device while, at the same time, imbuing the object with a powerful cosmological and talismanic significance. However, before proceeding with the art-historical discussion of the twenty objects later on in the catalogue, a "scientific" explanation is needed to clarify the basic elements of Islamic astrology.

Islamic astrologers conceived of the universe as a series of concentric circles with the earth at the center. Charts found in medieval manuscripts, such as in early copies of al-Qazvīnī's cosmological work entitled *ʿAjā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt* (*"The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existing Things"*), written in the second half of the thirteenth century, elucidate this theory. The earth is surrounded by a number of Spheres (*aflāk*), each corresponding to the space in which a planet rotates. In ascending order of their distance from the earth, the first seven Spheres belong to the seven known planets: namely, the Moon (*al-qamar*), Mercury (*ʿuṭārid*), Venus (*al-zuhara*), the Sun (*al-shams*), Mars (*al-mirrīkh*), Jupiter (*al-mushtarī*), and Saturn (*zuḥal*). The eighth Sphere is that of the

so-called Fixed Stars (*al-kawākib al-thābita*), where all forty-eight constellations, including the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, rotate. The *Book of the Images of the Fixed Stars* by the celebrated astronomer ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī (see cat. no. 16) is devoted entirely to this subject. According to al-Qazvīnī, outside the eighth Sphere there is another one, called the Greatest Sphere (*al-falak al-aʿẓam*), which regulates the orbits of all the others and is the place where the angels and the Throne of God are situated.

An observer on Earth, therefore, would view the movement of the individual planets in the night sky (with the obvious exception of the "planet" Sun, which is visible only during the day) against the eighth Sphere, the Sphere of the forty-eight constellations. Greek astronomers in late antiquity had observed that if they drew imaginary lines between the stars in the sky, they would obtain shapes that would resemble human or mythological figures as well as animals. They drew and named forty-eight of these, which, for modern astronomers, too, represent the constellations of the Northern and the Southern Hemispheres. Arab astronomers learned from and translated Greek treatises on the stars, among which Ptolemy's *Almagest* was the most influential. Special attention was devoted to twelve constellations that constituted a kind of belt in the sky, inside of which the planets were constantly in motion. This group of constellations came to be known as the Zodiac or, in Arabic, as *minṭaqat al-burūj* ("The Belt of the Signs of the Zodiac"). Each of the twelve groups of stars in the Zodiac was given a name in Arabic based mainly on Greek sources, which had already identified the imaginary figures in the sky. Every planet could be observed "entering" the space belonging to one of the twelve constellations in the following order: Aries (*al-ḥamal*, "the Ram"), Taurus (*al-thawr*, "the Bull"), Gemini (*al-tawa'mān*, "the Twins"), Cancer (*al-saraṭān*, "the Crab"), Leo (*al-asad*, "the Lion"), Virgo (*al-ʿadhrā'*, "the Virgin"), Libra (*al-mīzān*, "the Scale"), Scorpio (*al-ʿaqrab*, "the Scorpion"), Sagittarius (*al-rāmī*, "the Archer"), Capricorn (*al-jadī*, "the Kid"), Aquarius (*sākib al-mā'*, "the Water Pourer"), and Pisces (*al-samakatān*, "the Two Fish").

The most important, original contribution of Islamic scientists to astronomy is the study of the rotation of the moon. This "planet" was the most conspicuous in the night sky and the one that traveled faster than any other from one constellation to another in the Zodiac. Before Islam, Bedouins and nomads had regarded the moon as the most important point of reference, and linked its movement and its phases to a simple system, called *anwā'*, based on the observation of the setting of the stars. This system helped in marking the passing of time and represented the basis for the lunar or synodic calendar that is still in use today in Muslim countries. The system of the Lunar Mansions (*manāzil al-qamar*), mentioned briefly in catalogue numbers 3 and 16, corresponds to the moon's twenty-eight "stops"—that is, to the number of phases from new moon to new moon within the Zodiac—and is more reliable than observing the other planets, since the moon stops near one or more specific stars, or clusters of stars, in every constellation in the Zodiac. Each Mansion is named after the star or cluster of stars in the vicinity where the moon stops—as, for example, *al-naʿā'im*, "the Ostriches," two groups of four stars each in the constellation of Sagittarius (see cat. no. 3), or the three Mansions in Scorpio (see cat. no. 16).

The Sun ideally moves from one constellation of the Zodiac to another in the space of a calendar year. If a complete rotation is 360 degrees, then the Sun stays in each constellation for about 30 degrees—that is, approximately the duration of one month or thirty days. While these calculations suffice for the present discussion, they are more complex, since in the lunar calendar year a month corresponds to about 29½ days.

As explained above, astrology studies the movements of the planets with the assumption that these affect the life of each individual on earth. At the time of one's birth, a horoscope is cast based on the current positions of the planets within the constellations. Since the Sun follows a regular course and stops for one month in each constellation, the newborn's sign of the Zodiac (*burj*, pl. *burūj*) will be the one in which the Sun is then located (for instance, according to today's charts, those with birthdays between March 21 and April 21 are under the sign of Aries, meaning that the Sun was in the constellation of Aries when they were born). The positions of the other planets, which would be determined by consulting astronomical tables and instruments, would define particular aspects of the newborn's personality. In astrology, Jupiter and Venus were considered beneficial, Saturn and Mars detrimental, and Mercury neutral, and they would exercise a weaker or a stronger positive or negative influence according to the sign of the Zodiac in which they were located at the time of an individual's birth. There exist additional complex astrological systems, such as the division into twelve Celestial Houses (*buyūt*), and rela-

tionships among planets (known today as conjunctions, trigons, quartiles, and so on), but they are not pertinent to the discussion here.

Apart from its position in the sky, each planet also was assigned one or two signs of the Zodiac to preside over. A planet would then become the Planetary Lord (*rabb*, pl. *arbāb*) of the sign—or signs—over which it would exert a great influence. These assignments traditionally are as follows: the Sun and the Moon presided over one sign each, Leo and Cancer, respectively, and the other five planets were the Planetary Lords of two signs of the Zodiac: Mercury controlled Gemini and Virgo; Venus ruled over Taurus and Libra; Mars, over Aries and Scorpio; Jupiter, over Sagittarius and Pisces; and Saturn, over Capricorn and Aquarius. Further divisions broke down the planets' influence into smaller periods of time, so that, for example, a planet could become the Decan (*wajh*, pl. *wujūh*) of a sign of the Zodiac and influence the first, second, or third decade (a ten-day period) of that particular sign. The so-called Terms (*ḥudūd*, sing. *ḥadd*) represent another division into irregular time periods, but because astrologers could not agree on these, there are many different tables of Terms. The Planetary Terms have an effect similar to that of the Decans, but the internal subdivisions within the thirty degrees of each sign are not regular or cyclical, since the degrees are divided into five unequal parts. Each sign, therefore, is influenced by one Planetary Lord, three Decans, and five Terms. As an example, see the illustration of catalogue number 20, which shows the zodiacal sign of Pisces, whose Planetary Lord is Jupiter (the figure holding the fish), whose Decan in the second decade once again is Jupiter (the figure sitting on the carpet), and whose five Terms are Venus (now missing), Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, and Saturn (the five vignettes at the bottom, from right to left).

As noted above, astrology was the subject of a vast literature. In order to provide some idea of an astrological text, I have included translations of selected passages that deal with the personality and destiny of those born under one of the three Decans of all twelve signs of the Zodiac, from the text of the *Kitāb al-mawālīd* (*"The Book of Nativities"*) by Abū Maʿshar al-Balkhī, a celebrated ninth-century astronomer, who wrote extensively about both astronomy and astrology. He was regarded as one of the fathers of these two disciplines by later Arab scientists, and he became one of the most influential authors to have his works translated into Latin in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, where he was known as Albumasar. These Latin translations contributed to a general interest in astrology, which, especially during the Renaissance, was incorporated into the imagery on works of art in Europe as well—as, for example, in the famous fresco cycle at the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara. The text of *The Book of Nativities* is divided into thirty-six sections: that is, one for each Decan of the twelve signs. In the few surviving illustrated manuscripts that contain this text, there are either twelve full-page miniatures, as in the late-fourteenth-century *Kitāb al-bulhān* in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (see Carboni, 1988), or thirty-six pictures, as in the astrological codex in the Keir Collection, the subject of catalogue number 20. The text from which the translations throughout this catalogue were taken is from another manuscript, presently in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (Arabe 2583); according to its colophon, it might have been copied in A.H. 700 / A.D. 1300, but its illustrations were added much later, very likely in the seventeenth century. In the translations, I have utilized generic plural subjects (for instance, "those who are born under this decade . . . ") in place of the masculine singular used by Abū Maʿshar, because it was not important to emphasize that this particular text is devoted exclusively to male subjects. In Abū Maʿshar's defense, I should add that he also wrote a more comprehensive treatise entitled *Kitāb mawālīd al-rijāl wa al-nisā'* (*"The Book of Nativities of Men and Women"*), whose text is preserved in a very small number of manuscripts and was not available to me. It is also clear from the translation that Abū Maʿshar relied heavily on Greek sources, since he quotes as authorities both Ptolemy, the celebrated astronomer of the second century A.D. from Alexandria, and Dorotheus of Sidon, the second century B.C. poet.

Images of the planets and of the signs of the Zodiac became highly popular in Islamic art, as is evident from the objects highlighted in the present catalogue. The illustrations of the twelve zodiacal signs, derived from the representations of the constellations initially developed by Greek astronomers, were available in those sources, and few subsequent variations were introduced. Among the most apparent transformations of the constellations were those of Virgo ("the Virgin," a female figure) into the zodiacal sign of *sunbula* ("the Ear of Corn"), as explained in catalogue number 14, and of Gemini, the depiction of which incorporates the twin brothers into a more complex iconography (see cat. no. 11). Minor alterations in the

iconography of the other signs in relation to the images of the constellations are noted in the entries below.

The personifications and illustrations of the planets, on the other hand, had few immediate points of reference in earlier sources. It is true that, in classical times, Aphrodite, Ares, Hermes, and Zeus for the Greeks (Venus, Mars, Mercury, and Jupiter for the Romans) often were the subjects of sculpture and were represented as gods but not as planets. It was only later on, closer in time to the Islamic era, that in representations of the planets themselves they were given a human appearance. In Islamic astrology, as explained earlier, the role of the planets was fundamental, and, therefore, a system of personifications was as necessary, if not more so, as those of the signs of the Zodiac. Based, once again, on Greek sources, each planet also was soon associated with a particular color, day of the week, and geographical area, as well as with one or more occupations, and its personality evolved from these various characteristics. Many influences came into play from the classical Western world, ancient Mesopotamia, and, especially, it seems, from the Indian subcontinent. Eventually, Mercury became "the Scribe" and was depicted as a young man writing on a scroll of paper (see cat. no. 3); Venus was a female musician, who played various instruments (see cat. no. 4); Mars took on the appearance of a warrior, with a sword and a severed head in his hands (cat. no. 5); Jupiter was a sage, a judge, and a man of law, wearing a turban (cat. no. 6); Saturn became a dark-skinned, half-naked old man holding a pickax (cat. no. 7); and, finally, the Sun and the Moon, which occupied special positions in the circle of the planets, were identified as human figures holding a sun disk and a crescent, respectively (see cat. nos. 1 and 2). In addition to the seven traditional planets, an eighth, invisible planet, called *al-tinnīn* ("the Dragon") or *Jawzahr* in Arabic, acquired importance, and was commonly represented both in isolation or incorporated into the image of a zodiacal sign, as explained in catalogue number 8.

The integration of images of the planets and of the signs of the Zodiac into the decoration on art objects postdates the Early Islamic period—notwithstanding the appearance of the constellations of the Zodiac in the ornamental imagery on the early-eighth-century baths at Quṣayr ʿAmra mentioned above. As a matter of fact, the scenes that decorated the baths were an extension of the Late Hellenistic astronomical tradition that continued to be perpetuated in manuscripts with strictly astronomical contents, such as the copies of the *Book of the Images of the Fixed Stars*, the earliest example of which, dated A.D. 1009 (see cat. no. 16), is preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

It was only in the twelfth century that individual astrological images such as those of the Moon or of the pseudo-planet Jawzahr, or astrological cycles that might include either the seven planets, the twelve signs of the Zodiac, or both groups in a concentric arrangement, began to appear on stone reliefs and on metalwork in a geographical area that extended eastward from the Jazira (a region including modern northern Iraq, northeastern Syria, and southeastern Turkey) to eastern Khurasan (corresponding to present-day eastern Iran and Afghanistan). The earliest dated specimen to survive is a bronze mirror bearing images of the seven planets; it was made in A.H. 548 / A.D. 1153, either in Anatolia or in Iran, and is now preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (see Storm Rice, 1961). In addition to noting the date of manufacture, the inscription on the mirror clarifies its function: ". . . This blessed mirror . . . will serve for curing the paralysis of the mouth, alleviate the pains of childbirth and also other pains and sufferings. . . . It was made . . . as the Sun passed the sign of Aries." Therefore, the incorporation of a reference to the planets in the imagery on a work of art, from its inception, endowed the object with the apotropaic and talismanic function of preventing sickness and bad luck. Furthermore, the fact that the inscription on this mirror records that it was made at a particularly favorable moment (when the Sun was in Aries) demonstrates how horoscopes and astrological connotations were integral parts of such works. This interpretation is also confirmed by a long poem, copied on a late-twelfth-century ewer, which includes images of the complete zodiacal cycle (see cat. no. 9); one passage of the poem has been translated as: ". . . Seven heavenly bodies [the planets], however proud they may be, are protection for the one who works so. Let kindness come down on the one who makes such a ewer, who wastes gold and silver and so decorates it . . . " (see Ward, 1993, pp. 76–78). In this case, protection was somewhat selfishly invoked on the maker of the ewer, who, presumably, also was the author of the poem and intended to keep his work of art for himself.

Other well-known metalwork objects that include astrological images are—to mention but a few—the so-called Bobrinski bucket, dated 1163, in The State

Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (see Ward, 1993, pl. 54); the "Vaso Vescovali," datable to about 1200, in the British Museum, London (see Hartner, 1973; Ward, 1993, pl. 57); another mirror, made for an Artuqid ruler in southern Anatolia in 1262, on which the representations of the planets show a very strong Byzantine influence (it was recently acquired by the David Collection, Copenhagen; see Ettinghausen and Grabar, 1987, fig. 385); and the pen box executed by Maḥmūd ibn Sunqur in 1281, now in the British Museum (see Baer, 1983, pl. 205; Ward, 1993, plates 69–70). The images of the planets and the Zodiac, which developed in the Anatolian and the Iranian world, became familiar on Mamluk inlaid metalwork—that is, on objects produced either in Egypt or in Syria between the middle of the thirteenth and the fifteenth century (see, for example, cat. nos. 1, 3–4, and 17).

Images of talismanic and astrological significance were also carved in stone. The most outstanding example is the planetary cycle depicted on the bridge at Jazirat ibn ʿUmar, in present-day Syrian territory, not far from the borders with Turkey and Iraq, which was erected in A.D. 1164 (see Preusser, 1911, pl. 40). The reliefs on the bridge include a representation of the eighth planet, Jawzahr, which, in comparison to the other planets, was charged with a special talismanic importance. Its image in stone, transformed into that of a man flanked by two dragons, or into a pair of intertwined dragons with open mouths (see cat. no. 8), became popular in the Jaziran area and further south, reaching Baghdad in the late twelfth and the early thirteenth century (see Carboni, 1992, pp. 476–79). Another planet that gained popularity in the same area as a talismanic image on metal objects and in works on paper was the Moon (see cat. no. 2). A celebrated manuscript dated A.D. 1199, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, lists antidotes against poisonous snakes and contains a frontispiece illustration of intertwined dragons and the personification of the Moon (see Farès, 1953, colorpl. 1); the talismanic, magical, and therapeutic function of this frontispiece seems obvious.

In summary, astrological imagery, originally derived from studies on astronomy, became popular in Islamic culture and art, and those objects on which it appeared gained a propitious horoscopic significance that sometimes was clarified by an inscription or by the choice of specific images (see, for example, the pilgrim flask in cat. no. 15). Additionally, such objects possessed a cosmic power to protect and preserve the owner from sickness, bad luck, defeat, and the loss of influence. It is not surprising that such imagery came to be incorporated into the ornamentation on the most accomplished works of art: those made for rulers, princes, and affluent private citizens.

The initial introduction of this imagery in the eastern Islamic world seems to date to the first half of the twelfth century. It flourished for about two centuries in Syria and Egypt as well, but subsequently it probably lost some of its significance, only to be copied years later mainly for its decorative quality. The explanation for the appearance of this type of imagery in eastern lands is complex and requires more thorough investigation. The most celebrated astronomers and astrologers, such as Abū Maʿshar, al-Ṣūfī, and al-Bīrūnī, mentioned above, were all of Iranian origin although they wrote in Arabic, the *lingua franca* in the Early Islamic period. Their texts, which were also illustrated, were circulated principally in eastern Islamic regions, forming the basis for the diffusion of an astrological iconographic system. In addition, an important part must have been played by those dynasties responsible for the shift of power from the all-Arab house of the ʿAbbasids to central Asian, eastern Iranian peoples. The Ghaznavids, the Seljuqs, and, in more concentrated areas, the Khwarazmshahs and the Artuqids originated a new artistic language generated by new influences and with new meanings, which provided a fertile ground for the incorporation of astrological images on art objects. Talismanic mirrors probably were the first such objects to be produced, followed shortly by other works in metal. Later on, the Mamluks, another dynasty of central Asian, Turkic origins, found these images suitable and adopted them for their own works of art.

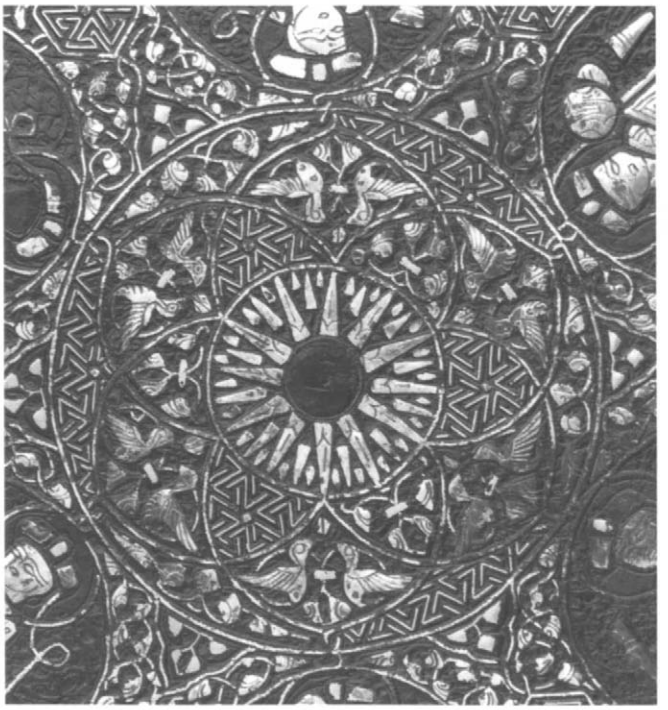
The twenty items discussed below—all but one from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum—illustrate this geographical and chronological diffusion of style and image. With the exception of the Mughal coins (cat. no. 10), the works range in date from the late twelfth to the fourteenth century. Only four were made in Mamluk Egypt or Syria; the remainder were produced in the Iranian world. They represent a specific but highly symbolic phase of the production of Islamic art in a limited time period. Perhaps their talismanic power to exert a positive and beneficent influence is still effective, and, just as they protected their owners over the past centuries, they continue to safeguard those who take good care of them today at the Metropolitan Museum.

Plate
Egypt or Syria, Mamluk period, 14th century
Brass, inlaid with gold and silver
Height, 1 in. (2.5 cm); diameter, 9⅞ in. (25 cm)
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1717)

1. In the Metropolitan Museum's archival files, this medium-sized plate is listed as belonging with a tripodal cylindrical incense burner with a domed lid and a long, straight handle (Inv. no. 17.190.1716). These two objects have a few decorative patterns in common, such as the interlaced Z-shaped motifs in the background and inside the medallions, the crown surrounded by rays at the center of the plate, and the geometrical border. In addition, they are both inlaid with gold and silver. Nonetheless, the two objects do not seem to be part of a set because their overall decoration is rather different, yet their association is probably correct functionally, since this plate might, indeed, have served as a base on which an incense burner could be placed.

Narrow concentric bands, including geometric or scroll patterns, fill the space around the cavetto and the border of the plate and frame the central design that completely covers its bottom surface. The image of the Sun appears at the very center of the decoration as a circle (once inlaid with gold) surrounded by twelve long, pointed rays; this central motif then opens up to form a multipetaled flower, the background of which includes geometric and vegetal patterns and confronted birds. The medallion that encloses the multipetaled flower, in turn, is surrounded by six other roundels, each linked to the central one by a continuous interlacing band. All the medallions contain a haloed figure of a musician, who is seated with his legs crossed: five of them have an instrument (two play the tambourine, two others the *nāyy* [a type of flute], and one the lute) and the sixth is probably a singer. A beaker is visible against the background of each medallion, thus underscoring the convivial aspect of the scene.

The solar symbolism of the entire central design is further emphasized by the band of rays that frames it, echoing the emblem of the sun disk at the plate's immediate center. As mentioned on the opposite page in discussing the compositions of catalogue numbers 4, 7, and 17, six planets usually surround the Sun—one would expect to see images of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn around it—but, in the case of this plate, whose composition is identical, they have been replaced by the six musicians and by more conventional scenes of courtly pastimes. This represents one of the few instances in Islamic art—which is generally conservative in its repetition of established designs—where a conventional composition has been deliberately manipulated to modify the general symbolism of an art object. Unfortunately, the absence of an inscription, which could have provided additional information, precludes a better understanding of this adaptive process.



As discussed in the Introduction, for Arab astronomers the **Sun** (*al-shams*) was merely another planet that rotated around the earth. For this reason, it was enumerated as the fourth planet in ascending order of its distance from the earth and, consequently, it appeared in illustrations along with the other planets. In illuminated astrological manuscripts (such as the treatise discussed in cat. no. 20), the personification of the Sun is shown as a male figure, usually wearing a tunic and sitting cross-legged in a position similar to that of the planet Jupiter (see cat. no. 6), who is framed by the rays of the sun disk—with a human face at its center—that he holds in his raised hands. In other words, the sun disk has been substituted for the head of the male figure.

Muslim artists, however, did not regard the Sun as just one of the seven planets, since its symbolic association with light, energy, power, and command made it an especially forceful image. The Sun is also the Planetary Lord of the zodiacal sign of Leo (the Lion; see cat. no. 13)—another emblem of secular dominion and physical strength. With its multiple cosmological and nonreligious connotations, the Sun became a central and meaningful image on art objects made for rulers, governors, affluent patrons, and other clients. This process of the conscious transferral of the Sun from the fourth, secondary position in the list of planets to a central one is evident on a number of objects that can be seen throughout this catalogue (for example, the two large trays in cat. nos. 4 and 17, and the *mīnāī* bowl in cat. no. 7). On them, the Sun—which is also the only planet that has dispensed with its human guise—is represented simply as a sun disk encircled by its rays at the immediate center of the image, surrounded by the other six planets and, on the two trays, by the twelve signs of the Zodiac as well. These compositions reflect the concentric structure of the universe as conceived by Arab astronomers, in which the Spheres (*aflāk*) of the individual planets were ringed by that of the Zodiac. Within this structure, the earth should be at the center of the universe, but it has been replaced with the image of the Sun. Although it can be argued that this transformation was dictated by aesthetic and compositional needs, artists certainly were aware of the Sun's complex symbolism, and, therefore, the creation of a different iconography was deliberate.

Candlestick
Northern Iraq (al-Jazira) or western Iran,
late 13th–first half of the 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver and gold
Height, 12½ in. (31.8 cm); diameter (at base), 10⅜ in. (26.4 cm)
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.523)

2. Candlesticks with truncated conical bases, cylindrical necks, and bulging sockets were familiar objects throughout the Islamic world in the medieval period. They revealed various degrees of sophistication in their decorative patterns, which were usually obtained by means of the inlay technique.

The decoration on the present object is among the most elaborate of its kind. The surface is entirely filled with a background pattern of interlocked T-shaped elements; with round or lobed medallions that include figural images; with calligraphic bands in *naskh* script; and with narrow bands enclosing either geometric or vegetal motifs. The four large medallions on the body of the candlestick display the same composition of an enthroned ruler, seated frontally in a cross-legged position and holding a glass of wine, who is flanked by two soldiers carrying swords. Two lions support his throne. Above the ruler's head, two human-headed birds, probably harpies, complete this traditional royal scene, which is symbolic of power, authority, and opulence. The smaller medallions above and below the inscriptional bands on the main body of the candlestick, as well as around the transitional area between the body and the neck (not visible in the photograph), contain the single figure of a woman, sitting cross-legged and facing front, who holds a circle inside of which is a crescent that frames her head. This image, as explained on the opposite page, signifies the "planet" Moon. Other human figures are present inside the lobed medallions around the neck of the object: They represent additional courtly attendants to the enthroned ruler. Six-petaled rosettes and small paired ducks also occur inside tiny round medallions.

Inscriptions in Arabic are enclosed by bands extending around the socket, the base of the neck, the shoulder, and the main body of the candlestick. These are blessings for the anonymous sultan to whom this work was dedicated and include words such as "glory," "triumph," "prosperity," "fortune," and "long life." In addition, a brief section of an invocation (*duʿā*) in verse on the shoulder, now partly erased, was commonly found on contemporary metalwork in the Iranian area. Yet another, later inscription states that the candlestick belonged to a certain "Zaynab, the daughter of the Commander of the Faithful, al-Mahdī li-dīn allāh."

It would seem that the candlestick originated in the geographical areas of the Jazira or of western Iran in the late thirteenth or first half of the fourteenth century. While it has been shown that the inscriptions link the object to southwestern Iran, its figural imagery—especially the representation of the Moon—points more decidedly to the Jaziran region.

Published: Baer, 1973–74, fig. 12; Melikian-Chirvani, 1982, fig. 50 A (detail); *Arte islámico*, 1994, colorpl. p. 209.

Like the Sun, the **Moon** (*al-qamar*) is personified as a human figure sitting cross-legged and holding a circle, within which is a crescent shape. However, unlike the Sun, the Moon is feminine in nature and, therefore, is represented as a female image, with a woman's face and, often, long braids. Usually, a tunic covers her body, which does not display visible womanly attributes. As an exact parallel to one of the images of the Sun (cat. no. 1), where the sun disk's rays encircle the male figure's head, the head of this female figure is surrounded by a crescent. Another feature that the Moon has in common with the Sun is that it presides over only one sign of the Zodiac: namely, Cancer (see cat. no. 12).

The concept of the feminine nature of the Moon probably developed in Arabic folklore as a counterpart to the personification of the Sun. The Moon was the "planet" nearest to the earth and the one that most influenced everyday activities. The passing of time itself, based on the lunar, or synodic, calendar, was regulated by the phases of the Moon. In poetry, the face of a beautiful woman was often compared to the full moon (*badr*) and frequent similes evoked the crescent moon (*hilāl*). Grammarians came to distinguish the consonants of the Arabic alphabet as "solar" (*shamsiyya*) and "lunar" (*qamariyya*) letters.

The Moon was linked to the dark, cool, and humid part of the day and, especially in countries where daytime heat prevented a number of activities, a particular interest in the Moon's cycle developed. This interest was primarily in the astronomical behavior of the planet, since it was so important to everyday life, but the Moon soon gained an astrological symbolism as well and was grouped with the other planets; as the closest planet to the earth, it was listed first in ascending order. The Moon's personification as a female was never questioned and the image became familiar in representations of the seven planets. In addition to its affiliation with the group of planets, the Moon received further attention, and soon acquired a talismanic relevance. Its iconography remained unchanged but it was often represented in isolation, without the other planets, on works of art. Sometimes, additional talismanic images, such as intertwined dragons, would make clear that the figure of the Moon was far more powerful than its mere astrological aspect.

The candlestick discussed in the present entry is a good example of such forceful symbolism: The talismanic image of the Moon, almost devoid of any astrological significance, is repeated several times across its surface, thus protecting the anonymous ruler to whom the object was dedicated.

Basin

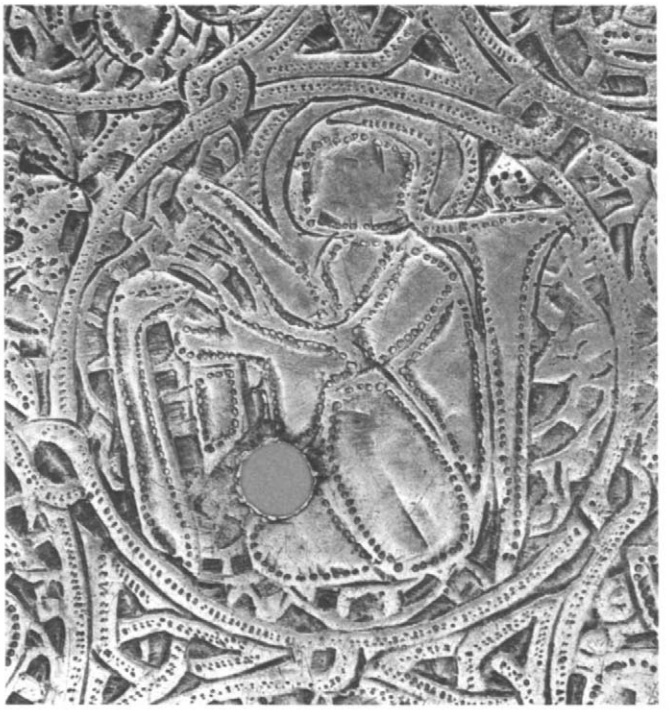
Egypt or Syria, Mamluk period, late 13th–early 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver and bitumen
Height, 4¼ in. (10.8 cm); maximum diameter (at rim), 12⅝ in. (32.1 cm)
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.553)

3. This elegantly shaped basin, which can be described as an upside-down top hat, was used for ablutions together with a large, matching ewer. Such sets were already popular in the first half of the thirteenth century under the Ayyubids, and their use continued throughout the fifteenth century in the same area then dominated by the Mamluks.

The interior surface of the basin is entirely decorated, while much of the exterior space is left without decoration. On the outside walls is an inscriptional band in kufic that lists a sequence of blessings; it is interrupted by four oval medallions, with pendants, which depict figures of either a musician, a dancer, or a wine drinker. Six-petaled flowers inside small roundels were inlaid at intervals between the pendants.

The interior includes a wide band covering most of the vessel's walls and containing a eulogic inscription in elegant cursive *thuluth* dedicated to an anonymous high-ranking Mamluk. Three large, round medallions intercept the inscription, each depicting the same figure of a ruler sitting on a portable throne and flanked by two attendants; the three scenes are virtually identical except for the positions of the arms of the ruler, which are different, although the meaning of this is not clear. Below this band, another, narrow one includes a series of figures, sitting next to each other, drinking and playing musical instruments. The scenes are made lively and appealing by the fact that the figures, rather than being isolated (as are those, for example, in cat. no. 7), are shown in groups of two or three and clearly relate to one another while enjoying their courtly pastimes.

Inside, the bottom of the basin is completely covered with roundels that illustrate the seven planets and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. As on the plate in catalogue number 1, the Sun's rays frame both the central circle that represents the planet Sun as well as the whole composition. The nineteen medallions are arranged, as is usually the case, in a circular composition, with the Sun in the center, the remaining six planets immediately around it, and the twelve zodiacal signs in the outer ring. The planets, easily identifiable by their attributes, appear clockwise in their descending order, although Saturn and Jupiter are switched. The majority of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, also shown clockwise, are depicted without their Planetary Lords, except for Cancer and Leo, which invariably are paired with the Moon and the Sun, respectively, and Virgo and Aquarius, where the human figures are a vital part of each composition, which would not be properly understood without them (see cat. nos. 14 and 19). Libra, which usually includes Venus, surprisingly contains a long-legged bird instead between the pans of the scale. Rather than being an odd variation, this might be the most meaningful of all nineteen images, since the bird could be related to the twentieth Lunar Mansion, called *al-naʿāʾim* ("the Ostriches"). (This system is briefly explained in the Introduction.)



Mercury, called *ʿUṭārid* in Arabic, is also known as *al-kātib* ("the Scribe"). For this reason, in Islamic iconography this planet is represented as a young, beardless scribe in the act of writing on a scroll. He is usually seated in profile, one knee raised to support the paper so that he can perform his activity. He holds a reed pen, and sometimes there is an inkwell at his side. Mercury appears in this form in manuscript paintings and on metalwork and ceramic objects decorated with astrological subjects. He is the second planet in ascending order of distance from the earth, and the Planetary Lord of two signs of the Zodiac, Gemini and Virgo.

When Mercury is represented within the group of the seven planets, as on the inlaid basin discussed in this entry, the usual iconography is always retained. In astrology, however, this planet was considered *munāfiq* ("hypocritical"), since Mercury did not have specific positive or negative influences (in conjunction with a lucky planet, he brought good fortune, and with an unlucky one ill fortune). His neutral, and ultimately weak, nature was reflected in his image as conveyed by illustrations of the zodiacal cycle. It is possible to infer from the representations of the two Zodiac signs he presides over, Gemini and Virgo (cat. nos. 11 and 14), that Mercury not only did not maintain his attributes of the pen and the scroll but also was superseded by the more powerful image of the Head and Tail of the Dragon (the eighth, pseudo-planet Jawzahr; see cat. no. 8) in depictions of Gemini (cat. no. 11). In Virgo, he can be identified as the beardless, male figure holding the scythe (cat. no. 14), but it is only his youth that makes him recognizable, since he is engaged in an entirely unrelated activity, which was dictated by the iconography of the zodiacal sign itself.

Apart from their astrological imagery, the five planets (in addition to the Sun and the Moon) also had a talismanic significance, as explained in a number of treatises beginning with those compiled by the great astronomer and scientist al-Bīrūnī (A.D. 973–1048). However, this talismanic aspect of the planets did not find its way into the mainstream of artistic production, as happened with that of the Moon (see cat. no. 2). Al-Bīrūnī describes Mercury's talismanic incarnation as "a youth seated on a peacock, with a serpent in his right hand and in the left a tablet, which he is in the process of reading." This iconography for Mercury occurs in some illustrated manuscripts dealing with the subject of planets in their talismanic aspects and, surprisingly, in a copy of a cosmographical work from the beginning of the fourteenth century, which proves that, quite possibly, these talismanic images of the planets were more widespread than is commonly believed.

Tray
Egypt (Cairo), Mamluk period, early 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver and bitumen
Diameter, 28 in. (71.1 cm)
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.605)

4. Shortly after the Mamluks gained power in Egypt in 1250, Yemen was ruled by the Rasulid dynasty (1288–1454). Although fully independent, the Rasulids acknowledged that the Mamluks were their potential overlords, and they regularly dispatched ambassadors to Cairo bearing gifts. The Mamluks sent envoys with presents in return. It was under these favorable circumstances that Mamluk metalworkers and glassmakers received commissions for works intended for the Rasulid sultans. These artists did not adhere to a specific decorative program to distinguish objects made for local demand and those produced for export to Yemen. The sole features that differentiate the two categories of production are the Rasulid titles in the inscriptions and the presence of the emblem of the Yemenite dynasty, the five-petaled rosette.

This large tray, used to carry food, is one of a group of about forty extant works of art made by Mamluk craftsmen specifically for the Rasulid sultans of Yemen. According to its prominent *thuluth* inscription, the tray was executed for the Rasulid sultan al-Mu'ayyad Hizabr al-Dīn Dāwud ibn Yūsuf (r. 1296–1321), a contemporary of the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwun (r. 1294–1341, with two interruptions). The division of the decoration of the tray into concentric bands results in one of the most elaborate compositions found on objects of this type. The central roundel contains representations of the seven planets and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The Sun is in the center, and Saturn, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, the Moon, and Mercury are illustrated clockwise, although they are not in their classical order. The twelve signs, on the other hand, are in their traditional sequence, clockwise. Three large roundels interrupt the main inscription. Two of them show what appears to be a horseman extracting an arrow from his quiver and then shooting it at a gazelle; in the third, a horseman attacks a lion with his spear. The small running quadrupeds seen in profile around the rim of the tray provide a comprehensive Mamluk bestiary: There are a rhinoceros, lion, antelope, cheetah, saluki, wolf, hare, unicorn, bear, elephant, horse, onager, gazelle, deer, and sphinx. The border of this rim is completed by a band of tiny, stylized quails. The two smaller bands immediately next to the main band include eulogies in an elaborate, barely readable "knotted-kufic" script. Five-petaled rosettes are present within the circles that intercept the inscriptions inside these smaller bands.

The silver inlay was very shallow, and, as the tray evidently was frequently used and polished, the inlay has almost totally disappeared, so that only the black bitumen is still partially visible.

Published: *Africa*, 1996, p. 184, no. 99 (entry by S. Carboni).

Venus (*al-zuhara*) is the Planetary Lord of Taurus and Libra (cat. nos. 10 and 15) and is usually represented as a female playing a musical instrument. The planet's name comes from the Arabic verb "to shine; to illuminate," the designation given on account of the extraordinary brilliance of this planet against the dark sky. The feminine and positive nature of Venus has a well-known history that long predates Islamic astrology.

Venus is depicted most often as a lute player, seated with her legs crossed, but she is also shown with a number of different instruments, such as the tambourine, harp, flute, and castanets. When she is included with her signs of the Zodiac, Venus always maintains her traditional appearance and attributes, as in the case of Taurus (cat. no. 10), where she appears astride the bull in the act of playing music. In Libra, on the other hand, her image was weaker (as explained in cat. no. 15), and sometimes it was even misunderstood, so that the female musician was replaced by a male figure or was ignored altogether.

The planet Venus occasionally is alluded to in reference to the story of Hārūt and Mārūt. These two fallen angels, mentioned in the Qur'an (II: 96), were challenged by God to do better than would men, who are sinners, if faced with the same conditions. Hārūt and Mārūt failed because, as soon as they arrived on Earth, they were captivated by a beautiful woman and killed a man who had witnessed their misconduct. All the other angels observed them from Heaven, and Hārūt and Mārūt decided to atone for their sin on Earth: They were imprisoned and have hung by their feet in a well in Babylon ever since. According to some texts, the woman whom Hārūt and Mārūt had lusted for learned the name of God from them, after which they soon forgot it. The mythological birth of the planet Venus, *al-zuhara*, apparently originated from this legend, for the woman was changed into a star called Zuhara by God.

Fragmentary ewer
Probably Iran, first half of the 13th century
Brass, inlaid with silver and copper
Height, 8⅞ in. (22.5 cm); diameter (at shoulder), 6⅞ in. (17.5 cm)
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.530)

5. Since the neck of this inlaid metal vessel is missing, its original shape must be reconstructed from its details and from comparative material. This object, very likely, was a ewer similar to that seen in catalogue number 9, with a narrow neck, large spout, and curving handle. This interpretation is supported by the presence of an undecorated area enclosed within one of the twelve medallions containing depictions of the signs of the Zodiac, which would correspond to the place of attachment of the handle, and by the large number of similar multisided ewers that might have provided the model for the present vessel. Additional details, such as the slightly flaring profile, the shape of the foot, and the dimensions, correspond to those of other such ewers.

The surface of this fragmentary ewer is richly ornamented with silver and copper inlays, but some areas were left undecorated—a feature that sets this example apart from the typical Khurasanian ewer discussed in catalogue number 9. Three inscriptional bands, one on the transitional section between the shoulder and the neck (not visible in the photograph) and the other two above and below the medallions on the body, carry traditional blessings to the owner. Their sequence, especially the opening wording *bi-l-yumn wa al-baraka* ("with bliss and divine grace"), was a standard formula for inscriptions on twelfth-century ewers made in Khurasan. The calligraphic style is different in each band: animated *naskh*, kufic, and plain *naskh*. The backgrounds of all three bands are filled with vegetal scrolls. The band between the shoulder and neck, in animated *naskh* script, is made more spirited by the presence of birds and quadrupeds amid the vegetation. The twelve medallions with pendants, one on each facet of the vessel, include the full zodiacal cycle according to the traditional iconography. The only anomaly, as mentioned above, occurs in the medallion depicting Pisces, in which a large lobe-shaped area was left empty and the images of two fish were adapted to the unusual remaining space, while the representation of the sign's Planetary Lord, Jupiter, was omitted. A narrow band with twelve running quadrupeds in profile, one creature on each of the facets, is present around the shoulder. Additional lobed medallions alternate with vases of flowers near the base, and a narrow rope pattern decorates the foot of the vessel.

While this object bears a relationship to twelfth-century eastern Iranian ewers, it clearly either corresponds to the last period of their production or, perhaps, was derived from such a model and thus would be even later in date. A ewer in the collection of The State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg displays a parallel combination of decorated and undecorated areas and is similar to the present vessel in profile and in ornamentation. Therefore, the Metropolitan's fragmentary ewer, with its neatly drawn signs of the Zodiac and quadrupeds seen in profile, seems to belong to the thirteenth rather than the twelfth century.

Mars (*al-mirrīkh*) is the fifth in ascending order and a familiar image among the group of planets; as in Greek and Roman tradition, it is known as the "red" planet (*al-aḥmar*), the lord of war and of ominous events and misfortune. Its negative influence is surpassed only by that of another planet, Saturn (see cat. no. 7), and for this reason it was called *al-naḥs al-aṣghar* ("the minor misfortune").

Mars was depicted as a male warrior, wearing boots, a coat of mail, and often a helmet. His attributes were a long sword held in his right hand and a severed head that he grasped by its hair with his left hand and which, in manuscript paintings, was always shown graphically dripping blood. The bold iconography of the severed head underscores the warlike character of the planet but it probably is also related to the astronomical image of the constellation of Perseus, called in Arabic *ḥāmil ra's al-ghūl* ("the Bearer of the Demon's Head"), which represents a transformation of the Greek iconography of the severed head of Medusa.

Mars is the Planetary Lord of the two zodiacal signs of Aries and Scorpio and, having a strong personality, he dominates the images when included in their houses. He rides the ram in Aries (see the present image and cat. no. 9), while still maintaining his appearance and displaying his attributes in his outstretched arms. As explained in the discussion of Scorpio (cat. no. 16), in most cases the figure of Mars is seen holding a scorpion in each hand rather than the sword and the severed head. However, his powerful image is still easy to identify from the helmet and coat of mail that he wears.

Pen box

Western Iran or northern Iraq (al-Jazira), 13th century
Brass, inlaid with gold and silver
1⅝ x 8¾ x 1⅝ in. (4.1 x 22.2 x 4.1 cm)
Gift of Mrs. Lucy W. Drexel, 1889 (89.2.194)

6. Metal pen boxes were produced in large numbers by Muslim craftsmen and often were lavishly decorated with silver and sometimes with gold inlays. A typical shape for these objects in the medieval period in western Iran would have been oblong, with rounded ends, like the present example. The lid would have been hinged to the lower part of the box on a long side, and a clasp would have secured it on the opposite side when the box was not in use. On this particular pen box, the hinges and hook are later additions. The interior would have included a receptacle on one side (now missing) to hold the inkwell, while the remaining space would have been filled with a variety of reed pens with different-sized tips. A small, sharp knife to cut the tips would also have been provided. A pen box, thus, contained basic writing equipment.

For obvious reasons, the inlays in the interior are better preserved than those on the exterior. Inside, on the bottom, five medallions set against a background of vegetal designs include individual musicians and single figures of drinkers. The underside of the lid, visible only when the box is open, contains a knotted-kufic benedictory inscription interrupted by three medallions decorated with geometric patterns inlaid in gold. A second inscription of blessings to the owner of the object, in *naskh* script now too worn to be fully legible, is enclosed inside a narrow band on the top of the lid. The main field is occupied by three large medallions with personifications of three Planetary Lords: The Moon is in the center, traditionally represented as a female holding a crescent, with Jupiter, in Pisces, to her right, and Venus, a lute player, in Libra, to her left. Pisces and Libra are meant to symbolize the zodiacal signs associated with the owner's birth. The Moon, which is not depicted with her sign, Cancer, here takes on a talismanic relevance, since its image is also duplicated at the two ends of the box, thus symbolically protecting the entire object. Additional musicians and drinking figures are visible within lobed medallions around the sides of the pen case.

Notwithstanding the loss of inlay, it is still possible to appreciate the sophisticated decorative program of this box, which made it a prized possession with special meaning for its anonymous owner.

Published: Schimmel, 1992, fig. 23 a.

Jupiter (*al-mushtarī*) is the sixth planet in ascending order and the one that has the most beneficial effect. It was called *al-saʿd al-akbar* ("the Larger Star of Fortune") by Arab astrologers because its good influence surpassed that of the other benevolent planet, Venus (see cat. no. 4). Jupiter was assigned to two houses in the zodiacal cycle, Sagittarius and Pisces, and presided over them.

Jupiter is the only planet without specific attributes, which—if included—would help to make it recognizable. It is the planet of wisdom, law, and order, and for this reason is depicted as a middle-aged male figure with a beard and a turban, who is supposed to represent a judge (*qāḍī*). He is a man of responsibility and power, whose judgment is wise and trustworthy. The turban identifies him as an Arab and a Muslim and speaks for his familiarity with legal, religious, and scientific matters. His black beard shows that he is a mature man in his most productive years. He is usually dressed in a long tunic and sits cross-legged facing front; as mentioned earlier, this is a common position for the planets but in this case it helps to give Jupiter a balanced and focused attitude.

Although Jupiter is a very influential planet in Islamic astrology, the lack of attributes made him weaker when he was portrayed in one of his planetary houses. Sagittarius (cat. no. 17) is a powerful image in itself, which also incorporates the Head of the Dragon (see the pseudo-planet Jawzahr in cat. no. 8), so when Jupiter actually is meant to be present, his role is limited to a representation as the upper part of a centaur, and, in addition, he is often stripped of his turban and tunic. In Pisces, on the contrary—as is evident here—Jupiter is shown in full. The absence of attributes influenced the iconography of the zodiacal sign itself: Artists endowed him with a fish in each hand, thus underscoring the imagery of the sign, as explained in catalogue number 20.

Bowl

Central or northern Iran, late 12th–early 13th century
Composite body, painted with overglaze and gilded
Height, 3¾ in. (9.5 cm); maximum diameter, 7⅜ in. (18.7 cm)
Purchase, Rogers Fund, and Gift of The Schiff Foundation, 1957 (57.36.4)

7. *Mīnāī* (literally, "enameled") ware was produced in the pottery centers of northern and central Iran between the second half of the twelfth and the early thirteenth century. Figures were drawn in a style very similar to that employed on the contemporary lusterware attributed to Kashan (see, for example, the objects in cat. nos. 13 and 18), although the general approach was quite different. The numerous bright, opaque pigments used on *mīnāī* ware lend a distinctive, miniature-like quality to the painted scenes and to the figures. However, the coloring of the bowl is not as bright as that of the majority of similar objects, but is based mainly on tonalities of bluish grays and browns in addition to gold; although it is peculiar to few other bowls, it is, nonetheless, very appealing.

This object has a curved profile with a small protruding rib halfway up the side and a straight rim. There is a kufic inscription inside, just below this rim, and a second one, in large, hurried *naskh* script, on the outside, both of which were partially restored. The original sections in kufic are eulogistic, while those in *naskh* might have included the name of a dedicatee.

The major focus of the composition is on the central medallion with the human-faced Sun encircled by its rays and by the planets. The planets are depicted clockwise, from the most distant to the closest to the earth, in almost correct order (the only exception being the exchange of Mercury and Venus), and they are illustrated according to their classical iconography. The rest of the composition is arranged in circular bands radiating from the center of the bowl. Its dedication to a ruler is evident since the decoration includes a scene with a throne, musicians and courtiers, parading horsemen, and the cosmic images of the Sun and of the other six planets. Two enthroned rulers sit diametrically opposite each other, under the kufic inscriptional band, and are surrounded by a total of twenty-six figures, all seated side by side in different positions, most of them attendants and courtiers in addition to harp and tambourine players. Ten riders and their mounts are shown in profile on the cavetto of the bowl. Some of the horsemen holding a thin stick might be depictions of polo players, while the others seem to ride at leisure, as if before the ruler. Small birds are also illustrated between the riders, perhaps to designate the images as hunting scenes or representations of various courtly activities performed on horseback.

The *mīnāī* bowl was broken and repaired and shows (under ultraviolet light) some areas of restoration and inpainting, especially near the rim. However, its composition and the great majority of the decoration are original, contributing to the bowl's reputation as one of the most accomplished in the so-called group of "small figure" *mīnāī* ware and the most like a miniature in its delicacy.

Published: *Survey of Persian Art*, 1939, pl. 656 A; *Islamic Art, MMA Bulletin*, 1975, p. 18.

Saturn (*zuḥal*), the opposite of Jupiter (see cat. no. 6) in terms of its effect on people and events, is the seventh and most distant planet from the earth and the most negative of them all. It was called *al-naḥs al-akbar* ("the Larger Star of Misfortune") and was more powerful than Mars (see cat. no. 5) in exerting its bad influence. The negative aspects of Saturn also became well known to European astrologers later on, since a vast literature developed on the subject. Moody and melancholic characters came to be described in nineteenth-century literature as "saturnine," a designation taken directly from the evil that the planet Saturn was believed to exercise over specific individuals.

The image of Saturn in Islamic iconography apparently was derived from Indian sources, but it underwent complex transformations. Although the various passages through these transformations are not clear, Saturn eventually assumed the appearance of a dark-skinned man of advanced age, with a long white beard, dressed in a pair of trousers or a skirt and nothing else. Because of his negative nature, astrologers linked him to the color black and made him preside over the most remote geographical areas of the earth, which might explain his dark skin. Yet it is also true that, in manuscript painting, when an artist intended to depict an Indian he would automatically paint the figure with dark brown or black skin. The association with India is further underscored when Saturn is represented in his talismanic aspect as a person with multiple arms, similar to Hindu divinities, and with a different object in each hand. Saturn's talismanic iconography was sometimes maintained in ordinary renditions of the cycle of the seven planets, although, usually, he was shown as a human figure with just two arms, holding a pickax (here, he has one in each hand), which became the most commonly depicted of Saturn's attributes in Islamic art. Why this tool was included is not clear, but it was probably associated with Saturn's relationship to lowly labors, such as mining in dark places.

Saturn is the Planetary Lord of the signs of Capricorn and of Aquarius, and his image is strong and powerful. He is depicted astride the kid in Capricorn (cat. no. 18) and, in the complex scene that identifies Aquarius (cat. no. 19), as a human figure pulling a rope. In the latter case, Saturn cannot hold any of his other attributes at the same time, but he is immediately recognizable, nonetheless, due to his physical appearance.

Mortar

Iran, late 12th–early 13th century
Bronze, inlaid with silver
Height, 4¼ in. (10.8 cm); maximum diameter, 5¾ in. (14.6 cm)
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.527a)

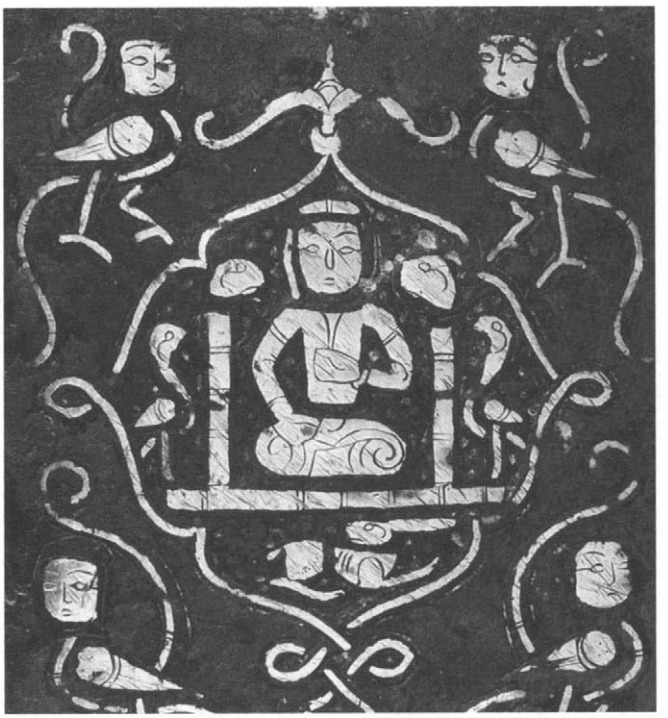
8. Heavy bronze mortars often were elevated to artistic rank by fine inlaying with silver. Originally, this octagonal mortar would have had a curved handle attached at each side. Two large squares with a central hole, protruding from the body of the mortar, once functioned as the sockets for such a handle.

The object is noticeably worn, since it was functional, and much of its silver inlays have now disappeared. However, enough is left to provide a sufficient indication of its decorative program. Inscriptions in *naskh* script above the rim and around the base, and in kufic around the top, include a sequence of traditional blessings dedicated to the owner. The kufic inscription, beginning with *bi-l-yumn wa al-baraka . . .* ("with bliss and divine grace . . ."), commonly occurred on objects produced in the Iranian area in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (see also the discussion in cat. no. 5). The owner is not anonymous, for an additional inscription—apparently original, as an undecorated space was left around one of the two protruding squares that once accommodated the handle—informs us that the dedicatee was a certain Abū Bakr ibn ʿAlī ibn Malik Dād al-Tabrīzī. Although it does not necessarily mean that this mortar was made in Tabriz, the ancestral home of the owner's family, a northwestern Iranian place of production is likely.

The main decoration on each of the six remaining facets of this octagonal object (with the exclusion of the two sides reserved for the handle) consists of a lobed medallion surrounded by four harpies seen in profile, one at each corner. The central image within the individual medallions varies: The depiction of the pseudo-planet Jawzahr (see the opposite page), drawn inside two medallions, is flanked by figures on horseback, including a falconer, an archer on a winged horse, and two swordsmen each holding a severed head in his hands. These two men carrying a sword and a head also might have an astrological significance as representations of the warrior-planet Mars (see cat. no. 5), and the archer is reminiscent of Sagittarius (cat. no. 17), although the falconer is not a known astrological figure. The side opposite the one with the owner's name, containing the second square protrusion, was also decorated with four harpies.

In general, the decorative program of this mortar as well as its single elements are frequently encountered in Seljuq art, on a number of contemporary inlaid metal objects and on works in different mediums. The personification of Jawzahr, depicted twice, sets this mortar apart from the others, and makes it more meaningful.

The present object entered the Metropolitan Museum's collection with an undecorated pestle (Inv. no. 91.1.527b) that probably is modern and thus is unrelated.

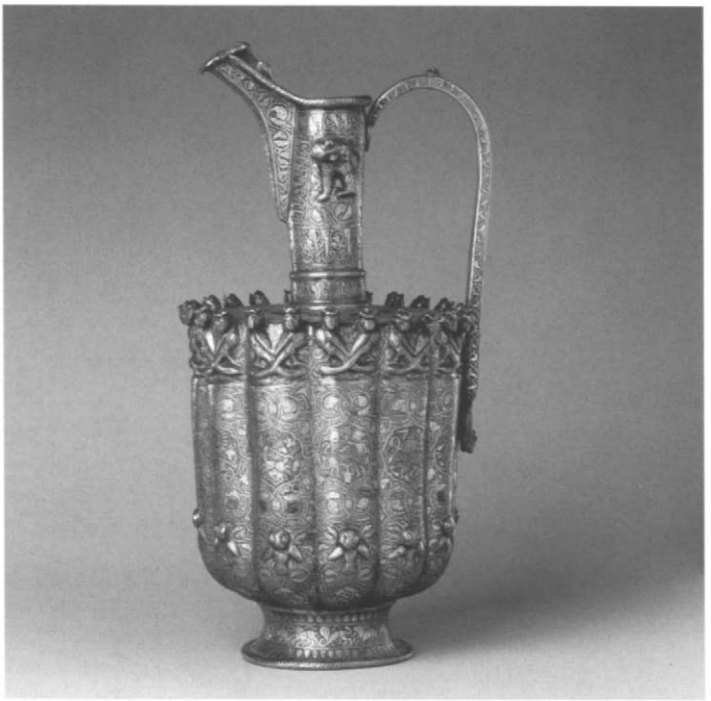


In addition to the seven planets discussed in catalogue numbers 1 through 7, Arab astrologers assumed that an invisible, eighth planet was present in the sky and was responsible for the eclipses of the Sun and of the Moon. They probably took the idea from Indian sources, whose origins are to be found in Hindu mythology, in the story of the demon Rahu: "It was Rahu who, previous to the churning of the milk ocean, commanded the demons, then allied with the celestial gods in the struggle against the world serpent, Ananta. After the victorious event, he succeeded in an unguarded moment in sipping the amrita drink; but the sun and the moon, who had watched his crime, denounced him to the gods, and instantly Vishnu, approaching in haste, severed his head from his body. Nevertheless, the amrita had already produced its effect and rendered him immortal like the celestials. Consequently, Rahu's head as well as his body, Ketu, intransigent enemies of the two great luminaries, ever since tries to devour the sun and the moon whenever the occasion serves, and thus causes solar and lunar eclipses" (Hartner, 1938, p. 131).

Islamic astronomers termed this pseudo-planet, which sometimes devoured either the Sun or the Moon and provoked an eclipse, *al-tinnīn* ("the Dragon") or *al-jawzahr*. This planet was at some stage split into two parts, which represent the Lunar Nodes recognized by modern astronomers: the Head (*ra's*) and the Tail (*dhanab*) of the Dragon. During the twelfth century in Seljuq Anatolia and in northern Mesopotamia, this eighth planet found its place in Islamic iconography together with the other seven traditional planets, and it was represented as a dragon with a knot in the middle of its body. The carvings on the bridge at Jazirat ibn ʿUmar (present-day Syria), dated to 1164, offer the best examples of the astronomical meaning of the knotted dragon in Islamic iconography.

Jawzahr was not the Planetary Lord of any of the zodiacal signs. However, the Head and the Tail of Jawzahr were incorporated into the iconography of the cycle of the Zodiac, as mentioned in the discussions of Gemini and of Sagittarius (cat. nos. 11 and 17), since this pseudo-planet's exaltation and descension (its strongest and weakest influences) occurred in these two opposite signs. The symbol of the knot is also present in the representation of the sign of Cancer, as discussed in catalogue number 12.

The scene on the inlaid mortar in the present entry depicts Jawzahr in isolation and thus has a talismanic meaning. Here, the pseudo-planet is a human figure seen frontally, sitting cross-legged on a low stool. The upper bodies of two snakes, each ending in a dragon's head, rise at either side of the human figure. This image, which rarely occurs in Islamic art, is the true personification of the eighth, pseudo-planet Jawzahr, although its talismanic rather than its astrological significance excluded it from the iconographic cycle of the other seven planets.



Ewer

Eastern Iran (Khurasan, probably Herat), about 1180–1210
Brass, inlaid with silver and bitumen
Height, 15¾ in. (40 cm); maximum diameter (at shoulder), 7½ in. (19.1 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1944 (44.15)

9. This ewer and a small number of others of identical shape and size are among the most spectacular ever achieved by eastern Iranian metalworkers. The construction of this object was an accomplishment in itself: The body was made from a single sheet of brass, which was hammered to obtain thirteen large flutes; the confronted harpies, as well as the other birds—possibly owls—were worked in repoussé, in high relief; the heads of the harpies, which protrude from the shoulder, are three dimensional and must have been formed from inside. All the other parts of this splendid vessel were made from additional individual sheets of brass soldered to the body.

The ewer is lavishly decorated, with no empty spaces anywhere on its surface. Inscriptions inlaid in silver in the so-called "human-headed" *naskh* script include blessings to the owner. Besides the harpies, birds, and lions in high relief, described earlier, the surface is inlaid with quadrupeds, eagles attacking ducks, and fish. In addition, vegetal scrolls ending in all types of animals' heads (the so-called *wāqwāq*-tree motif) are found in each of the remaining empty spaces on the ewer's body and neck. The rays of the sun are also depicted in two inlaid bands around the foot. This imagery provides the ewer with a complex symbology that includes the power of the lion; the light and strength of the sun; the source of life of water, which is symbolized by the fish and by the function of the ewer itself; the good fortune denoted by the harpies and the owls, and by the content of the inscriptions; and the talismanic meaning inherent in the *wāqwāq*-tree motif.

The zodiacal cycle was planned before the vessel's construction, when the metalworker hammered the thirteen flutes for each of the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the one on which to nail the handle to the body without concealing any of the signs. Therefore, the main symbolism is astrological and cosmological and encompasses all the others mentioned above. The twelve signs are shown in detail, from right to left—beginning with Aries at the immediate left of the handle—against an elaborate background of vegetal scrollwork. The iconography of the signs is traditional, but the inlayer made an apparently unusual mistake when he depicted the bearded and half-naked Saturn (in place of Mercury) as the Lord of Virgo. Since such inaccuracies are very rare, especially in the medieval period, when this symbolism held so much power and meaning, it is also possible that Saturn's presence in Virgo might have been intentional and perhaps was related to the horoscope of the ewer's anonymous dedicatee.

Among the most important examples of ewers with depictions of the planets and the Zodiac is one, in Tblisi—mentioned earlier, in the Introduction—which contains poetic verses. It was made in Herat (in present-day western Afghanistan) and is dated 1181/82, thus providing vital information for the dating of a whole group of related objects.

Published: Dimand, 1945, fig. p. 89; *MMA Islamic World*, 1987, fig. 29 (color); Schimmel, 1992, fig. 65 (color).

Aries (*al-ḥamal*, literally, "the lamb"), the ram, is the first sign in the zodiacal cycle. In illustrations, it is always shown in profile, almost invariably looking, and leisurely walking, toward the left. The large, curving horns identify this otherwise nondescript, hoofed quadruped, with a short tail, as a ram. Its posture is neither heraldic nor aggressive, and it stands in repose with its head raised. The Planetary Lord of Aries is Mars, which, when depicted with this sign, is seen riding the ram. The inclusion of the "belligerent" planet makes representations of Aries more lively, since Mars is shown as a male figure with outstretched arms holding a sword in his right hand and a severed head in his left (see cat. no. 5).

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Said the Wise [Abū Maᶜshar]: "Those born under this decade have a white complexion and are good-natured. If they come under the influence of Venus, their complexion is oily, their beautiful eyes are blue black, and their arms are well proportioned. They have a mark on their hand, thigh, and hips. They are fearful of being abandoned. The cause of their death will be related to the abdomen. An illness will affect them when they are young, but their life will be quite long. They will have other problems when they are sixty but, again, their life will still be long. Allah the Highest knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise [Ptolemy]: "Tuesday and Thursday night are good days of the week for them. The colors of their clothing should be red and purple, and the stone of their signet ring should be a carnelian. Their month is Muharram. When they appear in front of the ruler, they stand at his right to discuss their needs. From one to eight o' clock in the morning on Tuesdays, they sleep with their head turned to the north to chase away nightmares and grief."

[Said the Wise Dorotheus]: "Their favorite drinks are pomegranate and apple juices. They suffer greatly from the heat. Allah knows more."

Aries—Third decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maᶜshar)

Nine coins from the reign of Jahāngīr
India (Agra and Ahmadabad), Mughal period,
A.H. 1027–34 / A.D. 1618–25
Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2382, .2391, .2394, .2397, .6552, .7401, .7402, .7403, .7405)

10. (99.35.2382) Silver: Diameter, ¾ in. (1.9 cm); weight, 11.2 g.
Obverse: Aries; reverse: mint of Ahmadabad, dated 1027 / 1618
(99.35.7402) Gold: Diameter, ⅞ in. (2.22 cm); weight, 10.8 g.
Obverse: Taurus; reverse: mint of Agra, dated 1028 / 1618 (14th year of Jahāngīr's reign)
(99.35.2394) Silver: Diameter, ¾ in. (1.9 cm); weight, 11.2 g.
Obverse: Gemini; reverse: mint of Ahmadabad, dated 1027 / 1618
(99.35.2397) Silver: Diameter, ⅞ in. (2.22 cm); weight, 11.3 g.
Obverse: Cancer; reverse: mint of Ahmadabad, undated
(99.35.7403) Gold: Diameter, ¾ in. (1.9 cm); weight 10.8 g.
Obverse: Leo; reverse: mint of Agra, dated 1033 / 1624 (19th year of Jahāngīr's reign)
(99.35.6552) Gold: Diameter, ⅞ in. (2.22 cm); weight, 10.9 g.
Obverse: Libra; reverse: mint of Agra, dated 1034 / 1625 (19th year of Jahāngīr's reign)
(99.35.7405) Silver: Diameter, ⅞ in. (2.22 cm); weight, 10.9 g.
Obverse: Scorpio; reverse: mint of Agra, dated 1030 / 1621 (15th year of Jahāngīr's reign)
(99.35.7401) Gold: Diameter, ⅞ in. (2.22 cm); weight, 10.9 g.
Obverse: Capricorn; reverse: mint of Agra, dated 1031 / 1622 (16th year of Jahāngīr's reign)
(99.35.2391) Gold: Diameter, ⅞ in. (2.22 cm); weight, 10.9 g.
Obverse: Pisces; reverse: mint of Agra, dated 1028 / 1619 (13th year of Jahāngīr's reign)

The Mughal ruler Jahāngīr (r. A.D. 1605–27) had, among his many artistic interests, a particular concern for the appearance of the coins struck during his reign. He explained in his autobiography that since dated coins, minted at the time, bore the month in addition to the year, he had devised a plan to replace the months with images of the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Following this idea, a spectacular series of coins was produced in both gold and silver, with images of a sign of the Zodiac and of the sun (the latter was a royal symbol) on the obverse and an inscription that included Jahāngīr's name, the date, and the mint on the reverse.

The Metropolitan Museum owns ten of these rare coins, five gold *muhurs* and five silver rupees, nine of which depict different signs of the Zodiac (Leo appears on both silver and gold coins, while those with Virgo, Sagittarius, and Aquarius are missing). It is fascinating to learn from Jahāngīr himself that each sign is meant to correspond to the month of coinage, with Aries presumably the first month, and so on. According to this system, these nine coins would have been minted, in chronological order, in January 1618, January or February 1618, March 1618, November or December 1619, June or July 1621, September 1622, February or March 1624, and April or May 1625. However, a brief study of these coins reveals some inconsistencies in this respect, since in two cases the A.H. year, the year of Jahāngīr's reign (also stamped on the reverse), and the month/sign of the Zodiac do not correspond. For example, the coin on which Leo is shown, supposedly struck in February or March 1624, and the coin with Libra (to the right of Leo), minted fourteen months later, in April or May 1625, bear the same year of Jahāngīr's reign, the nineteenth, stamped on the reverse. This would suggest that the equation,

sign = month, in strict accordance with Jahāngīr's will, was not always followed.

★

Taurus (*al-thawr*), the bull, is a universally familiar image in the zodiacal cycle. The bull is always shown in profile as a horned quadruped with a conspicuous hump on its back, both in representations of the signs of the Zodiac as well as in miniature paintings. On Jahāngīr's coin, illustrated here, the Sun and its rays may be seen in the background, but this is an exception to the rule since the Sun is not Taurus's Planetary Lord. In fact, all coins minted for the Mughal emperor with the signs of the Zodiac also depict the Sun in the background, evidently as a substitute for the image of the ruler himself rather than as an astrological presence. The figure most often associated with Taurus is its true Planetary Lord, Venus, typically portrayed as a woman riding a bull and usually playing the lute, as in catalogue number 4.

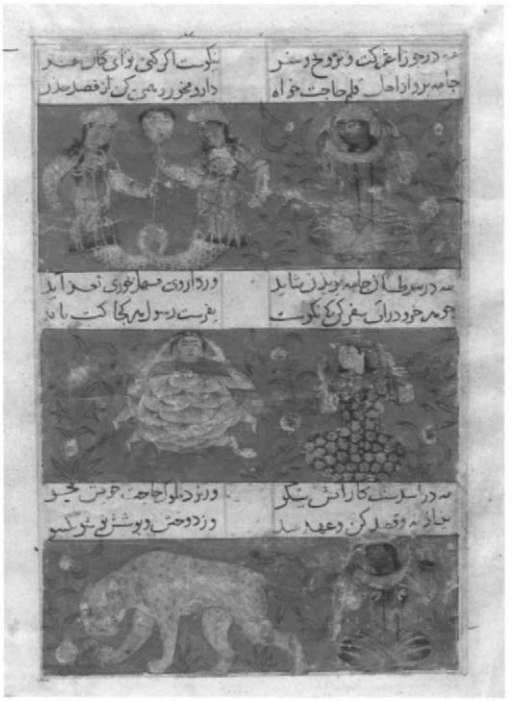
★

Said the Wise [Abū Maᶜshar]: "Those born under this decade have a dark complexion with a tendency to redness. They have a small build, a large head, and a loud voice. Easily bored, they are interested in noble matters. They have a mark on their head and many smaller marks on their shoulders, feet, and legs. When they sit down, it becomes difficult for them to get up again. [For this reason], they do not sit down at night. Allah the Highest knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "The persons born under Taurus and Venus in the decade of Saturn are happy and loved by everyone. They are courageous, artful, direct, and bold. Food and drink agree with them. Among their [favorite] colors are black [kohl] and wine red, and the stone of their signet ring is blue. When they enter the governor['s office] to meet him, they stop at his left side and wait to be invited [to speak]. When they sleep, they keep their head facing in the direction of Mecca in order to have a quiet rest and be free of preoccupations."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will have some deprivations when they are infants. They will be fearful of a persistent illness at the age of fifteen. When they are thirty, they will become strongly infatuated and will fall ill for this reason. At forty-five, they will be summoned in front of the governor. At sixty-five, they will be seriously ill. If they get married they will live ninety years. Allah knows more. The best days of the week for them are Friday and Monday, the worst Tuesday and Wednesday. The [best] month is Safar, or the Christian [Byzantine] *month of Tishrīn al-thānī* [November], *and they will suffer most of their illnesses during Muharram. They will suffer from many ailments during their life. Allah knows more."*

Taurus—Third decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maᶜshar)



Leaf from the *Mu'nis al-aḥrār* manuscript
Iran (Isfahan), 1341
Ink, gold, and colors on paper
7½ x 5 in. (19.1 x 12.7 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1919 (19.68.1)

11. This page is the verso of a leaf from a Persian manuscript entitled *Mu'nis al-aḥrār fī daqā'iq al-ashʿār* (*"The Free Men's Companion to the Subtleties of Poems"*). The text, a large anthology of Persian poetry, was completed in the town of Isfahan, in central Iran, by the poet and scribe Muḥammad ibn Badr al-Dīn Jājarmī in A.H. 741 / A.D. 1341. The work is divided into thirty chapters, the twenty-ninth of which, "Illustrated Poetry and the Lunar Elections," contains verses by the twelfth-century poet Muḥammad al-Rāvandī.

The present leaf, an illustration of the second short poem, on the Lunar Elections, includes twenty-four verses—that is, two full verses (forming a single *rubāʿī* or quatrain) for each sign of the Zodiac. The poem, in which the personification of the Moon enters the houses of all twelve signs, is addressed to the Beloved and describes the latter's appearance and character. However, since the poem is mainly astrological in nature, the verses also include predictions and commonsense wisdom. For example, the quatrain at the beginning of this page can be translated as: "With the Moon in Gemini, partnerships, making marriages and journeys / Are good, if you do them, O you mine of jewels. / Have clothing cut, make your requests from men of the pen. / Do not take medicine and be sure to shun bleeding."

In the illustrations of this poem the Moon is represented as a woman with two long braids, who wears a crown and holds a crescent that frames her head. She is pictured here in conjunction with Gemini, Cancer, and Leo. The simple composition of each painting shows the Moon, set against a red background filled with tall plants rising from tufts of grass, sitting cross-legged on the right side of the page and looking at the sign of the Zodiac illustrated on the left.

Gemini, the Twins, is depicted at the top of the page. The iconography of the image, which is complex, is discussed on the opposite leaf. Cancer, the Crab, represented in the center, is a round, scaly, pale-violet creature that holds the circular head of its "planet," the Moon, in its claws. Leo, the Lion, at the bottom, a pale-beige animal with long legs and a peculiar bearded chin, turns its back to the Moon.

Published: Swietochowski and Carboni, 1994, colorpl. p. 41.

Gemini (*al-jawzā'*, or *al-tawa'mān* in astronomical terms), the Twins, appears as two youths whose reptile-like tails are joined; they hold a stick, on top of which is a head. They wear identical gold crowns, green tunics decorated with gold flowers on the chest, and knotted gold belts. The familiar iconography of the twins is preserved, but the image is made more complex by Gemini's astronomical association with the pseudo-planet Jawzahr (the Dragon), or the Lunar Nodes, discussed previously (see cat. no. 8). Jawzahr's exaltation (the position of the planet in the Zodiac in which it was considered to exert its greatest influence) is in Gemini; therefore, the Head (*ra's*) of the Dragon (here transposed into a human face) is shown atop the stick that both twins tightly hold. The two youths are transformed into Siamese twins by their tails, which coil in the middle, and, since these represent the Tail (*dhanab*) of the Dragon, the association with Jawzahr is evident again. Consequently, the present iconography of Gemini also incorporates the pseudo-planet Jawzahr, thus representing its most common image in the Islamic world.

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Said the Wise [Abū Maᶜshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a dark complexion and a small build. They have a tendency to become cyanotic and anemic. Their sight is excellent. They have a great fear of the unknown. They have an amiable way of speaking. They are usually assisted by men of science and law. They have a mark on their head. They are respected persons. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those who are born under Gemini and Mercury in the decade of the Sun have a noble heart. They are high minded and inclined to spirituality. Their most favorable days of the week are Wednesdays and Sunday nights; least favorable are Fridays. Food and drink agree with them. Coldness is well balanced in their body. Yellow is a good color for their clothing. When they appear in front of a governor, they stop at his left side to discuss their needs. When they sleep, they turn their head to the west in order to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will have a breakdown at the age of sixty because of a serious illness related to moisture in their body. The same will happen when they are twenty, this time for an illness related to dryness. At thirty and forty-five, they will be scared by thieves and will be injured. At sixty-six, they will be affected by important matters but, if they protect themselves from harm, they will live a long life. The most favorable month of the Christian calendar is Ḥazīrān [June]. *The Muslim month of Rajab is safe for traveling without the need for [horoscopic] advice, and there will be no serious illnesses. Allah the Highest knows more."*

Gemini—Third decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maᶜshar)

Inkwell with lid
Probably Iran, early 13th century
Bronze, inlaid with silver
Height (with lid), 5⅞ in. (14.9 cm), (without lid), 3¾ in. (9.5 cm); diameter (at base), 4½ in. (11.4 cm)
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1959 (59.69.2a,b)

12. Inkwells received special attention in the Islamic world since writing was the principal means of circulating the word of God and the most prominent form of artistic expression. Inkwells of glass, wood, or ceramic were recommended rather than those made of precious metals, and ornamentation consisting of human or animal forms was condemned. Nonetheless, writing eventually went on to become a secular art as well, and, as in Islamic art in all mediums, inkwells soon were regarded as precious objects on account of their complex and sophisticated decoration.

The present large inkwell is one of the best examples of its type. Its excellent state of preservation speaks for the quality of its inlay technique and also for the fine care that it received in the past. With its suspension rings intact, the object is virtually complete, the only exceptions being the missing small glass vessel—the actual receptacle for the ink, which would have fitted into an opening in the bronze—and the loss of only a negligible amount of inlay. The form of this inkwell developed in eastern Iran in the Seljuq period, in the eleventh century, and prevailed through the thirteenth century. As pointed out by Baer (1972, pp. 208–9), however, the shape of the lid—which sits directly on the horizontal rim of the vessel—its hemispherical dome topped by a pear-shaped finial terminating in a round knob, finds parallels in objects produced in thirteenth-century Mesopotamia and Syria, thus widening the possibilities of its exact place of manufacture.

The entire surface of the object, including the bottom of the base, is lavishly decorated. The body is divided horizontally into three bands, with those on the top and bottom containing files of quadrupeds. The rest of the body as well as the lid are lavishly inlaid with silver. Two inscriptions in "human-faced" *naskh* script, containing blessings, appear on the inner ring at the top of the body and on the lid (not visible in the illustration). The central register is wider and includes depictions of the twelve signs of the Zodiac set into eight-pointed star-shaped medallions, which are joined by a continuous band that outlines the stars and runs along the borders. The signs are represented in their traditional sequence, from right to left. The iconography is traditional as well, although a preoccupation with details resulted in some minor variations, such as the human-headed pans of the scale in Libra, and the lion with a lion-headed tail in Leo (both are visible in the illustration). The presence on three of the twelve medallions of three-lobed plaques with hinged suspension rings required that the three water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces) be depicted on the plaques themselves, whose odd surfaces did not allow the inlay artist to achieve the same excellence as in the other nine medallions. These three signs are hidden under the suspension rings but are visible when the inkwell is in use—that is, when it is suspended from a cord that passes through the rings fastened to its body and lid.

Published: Scerrato, 1966, fig. 15 (color); Ettinghausen, 1969, pl. 12; Baer, 1972, figs. 6–10a, 13–14.

Cancer (*al-saraṭān*) is the crab and the Planetary Lord associated with it is the Moon. Unlike the other planets, which influence two signs of the Zodiac apiece, the Sun and the Moon, the two most conspicuous "planets" from the point of view of a terrestrial observer, each preside over one sign, Leo and Cancer, respectively. This strong association is almost invariably emphasized in the image of Cancer, whose claws hold a disk with the crescent Moon. This basic iconography is sometimes made more complex by the addition of a heart-shaped knot placed between the images of the crab and the Moon: As explained in catalogue number 19, it is meant to indicate the Lunar Node (see also the discussion of the pseudo-planet Jawzahr in cat. no. 8). The crab is always depicted as seen from above, with a roundish body often subdivided into fanciful horizontal sections, four small legs at either side, and long claws to hold the circle of the Moon. Sometimes, both the Moon and the crab are shown with human faces.

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Said the Wise [Abū Maᶜshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a white complexion with a tendency to redness. They are tall and plump and have a small neck. They are quick and playful. They suffer from vertigo when they stand in high places. They like men of science and study constantly. They often change jobs. They have marks on their head and chest. They have good manners and are intelligent. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those who are born under Cancer and the Moon in the decade of Venus have a graceful build, a few good qualities, and changing moods. They are playful with people. Good days for them are Mondays, bad ones are Wednesdays. Food and drink agree with them. Yellow and blue are suitable colors for their clothing. Their signet rings are made of steel with a carnelian stone. Pisces and Scorpio are the ideal signs for their associates and spouses. The best months for them are Rabiᶜ II, or Tammūz [July] *in the Christian calendar, while the worst one is Rabiᶜ I. They will die on a Saturday. Allah knows more. . . ."*

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will have difficulties at the ages of twenty, thirty-one, and forty. At sixty, a merciless illness will strike; they will not recover from it completely until they are seventy-seven years old. Allah knows more."

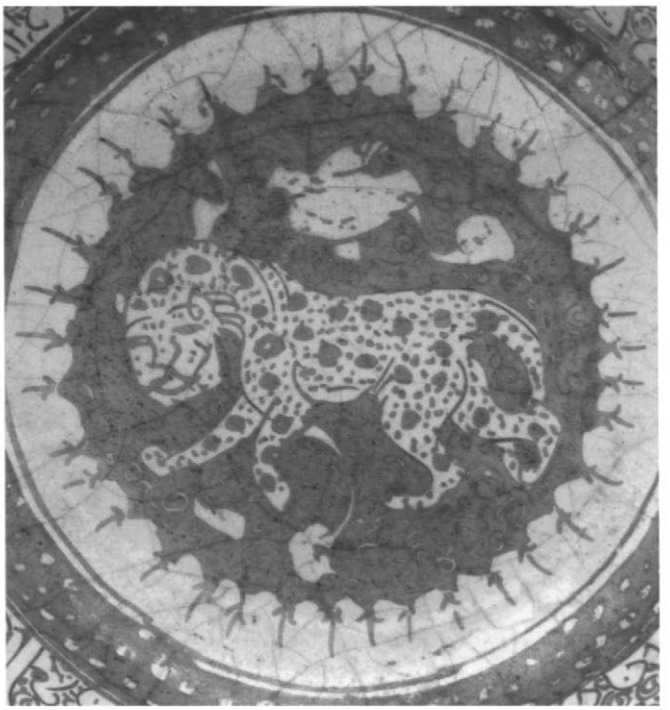
Cancer—First decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maᶜshar)

Bowl
Iran (Kashan), early 13th century
Composite body with a brown luster overglaze paint
Height, 4 in. (10.4 cm); maximum diameter, 8¾ in. (22.2 cm)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Lewis Balamuth, 1968 (68.215.10)

13. The profile of this fine bowl, with its straight, low, hollow foot; a transitional section between the foot and the body that splays outward; and straight, flaring sides, makes it typical of the ceramic objects decorated with luster paint by Kashan workshops in the early thirteenth century. The bowl is in very good condition, its brown luster decoration still crisp and shiny. Its exterior was painted with a simple pattern of medallions between bands; its interior, following a common decorative device dictated by the shape of the bowl, was divided into concentric circles. Some of the patterns were drawn in reserve and others were painted directly in luster, creating a dichromatic contrast that contributes to the overall appeal of the object.

The interior of the bowl contains a medallion in the shape of a sun disk with thirty-seven rays; in the center, drawn in reserve, is a feline walking to the left, its body dotted with spots of luster paint. The sun medallion also includes a plump bird flying above the lion and three half-palmette motifs in reserve. Although this image might be interpreted simply as a symbol of power and wealth, the presence of a lion inside the circle of the Sun suggests that it also must be regarded as the astrological emblem of Leo with its Planetary Lord, the Sun. Therefore, this bowl seems to combine a cosmological and talismanic symbolism along with a basic representation of power. This interpretation is supported by the talisman-like looped dragons, with their confronted heads and wide-open mouths, that form the band that encircles the central medallion. Images of this type, which also have astronomical and astrological associations with the Head and the Tail of the Dragon, as in the representation of the pseudo-planet Jawzahr (see cat. no. 8), were especially common in Iraq and southeastern Anatolia, as confirmed by the decoration on the so-called Bāb al-Tilism (Gate of the Talisman) in Baghdad, unfortunately destroyed at the beginning of the century but known from old photographs.

The dragon-filled band includes pseudo-kufic writing, while the two bands closer to the rim contain inscriptions in a hurried cursive *naskh* script, one copied in reserve by scratching the luster away, the other written upside down in luster against the white slip. The garbled calligraphy seems to repeat several short sentences in both Arabic and Persian, which, if decipherable, perhaps would shed light on a better understanding of the symbolism of the bowl.



Leo (*al-asad*), the lion, is the solar symbol of power and strength among the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The Sun, its planet, often represented in Iranian art as a human face surrounded by rays, rises from the back of the lion, which, invariably, is depicted in profile, looking either right or left, in a walking posture or with one foreleg raised in a heraldic stance. Its image tends to be that of a powerful, strong-bodied feline, with a large head, slightly open, menacing mouth, and a very long tail that curves around the hind legs. Sometimes—as, for example, in catalogue numbers 12 and 19—the tail terminates in a lion's head or in the full figure of a lion: This superfluous addition probably was derived from the image of the centaur in Sagittarius, whose tail, which ends in a dragon's head, has an astronomical meaning (see cat. no. 17), and perhaps also from the talismanic significance of animal-headed tails in the medieval Islamic world.

★

Said the Wise [Abū Maᶜshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a bright complexion with a tendency to redness. They have a harmonious build, broad shoulders, and are corpulent. Their voice is loud and they are talkative. They quarrel and know how to trick their listeners. They fear what they cannot see. They have marks on their head, knee, and feet. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those who are born under Leo and the Sun in the decade of Jupiter are courageous. They have a fair complexion, a broad chest, and can endure everything without fear. Good days for them are Wednesdays. Food and drink agree with them. Red, wood tones, and purple are good colors for their clothing. Their signet rings are made of gilded steel with a wine-colored [garnet] stone. When they appear in front of a governor, they stop at his right side to discuss their needs. When they sleep, they turn their head to the east in order to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will suffer at the ages of twenty and thirty from a great infatuation and they will become seriously ill for this reason. At forty-five, their veins will give them trouble. At sixty, a dangerous illness will strike. If they get married they will live until they are ninety. Allah knows more."

Leo—Second decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maᶜshar)

Inkwell without lid
Iran, late 12th–early 13th century
Brass, inlaid with silver and copper
Height, 2⅜ in. (6 cm); diameter (at base), 3¼ in. (8.3 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1944 (44.131)

14. The typology of this inkwell, whose lid is missing, is well known, and the short discussion in catalogue number 12 provides a good description of this kind of object.

The twelve signs of the Zodiac are arranged around the surface of the vessel in three groups of four. Each group comprises five medallions, four of which include a zodiacal sign, while the central medallion depicts a horseman (or in one case a falconer). The five medallions are linked to one another by interlacing patterns. The empty spaces in the background are filled with vegetal scrolls terminating in zoomorphic heads. The signs of the Zodiac are represented in their traditional order: For example, the second group of four (visible in the photograph) includes Leo (upper right corner), Virgo (lower right), Libra (upper left), and Scorpio (lower left). All of them follow the established iconography. The three groups are separated by additional lobed medallions that are undecorated except for the tiny heads of three copper nails that were hammered through the wall of the inkwell. These nails, once functional, originally held together the small plaques provided with holes through which a cord for suspension would have been passed (this is evident in cat. no. 12). Two other inkwells are known (see *Survey of Persian Art*, 1939, pl. 1311 C–D, for these examples at the time in private collections) that show the very same decorative repertoire of medallions with three groups of four signs of the Zodiac, the small interspersed plaques still nailed in place between them.

The underside of the inkwell is also ornamented—although some areas are left plain—with a pattern that is found, as well, on another inkwell (see Baer, 1973–74, fig. 212, for this example, also in a private collection) on the bottom of which is a large central medallion including a six-pointed star partially camouflaged by interlacing patterns. Around the border, bands interrupted by the empty areas are filled with the vegetal scrolls ending in zoomorphic heads that characterize the body of the present inkwell.

In general, both the silver and the copper inlays—the latter, used sparingly—largely remain in place, which serves to make this object still fresh and appealing.

Published: Migeon, 1927, II, fig. 247 (Collection of Paul Garnier); Dimand, 1945, fig. p. 90.

Virgo (*al-sunbula*) is the only sign of the Zodiac whose iconography is very different from that of Western cycles. This is due to the fact that, for some reason, the name of the constellation, *al-ʿadhrā'* (literally, "the virgin"), was not passed on to the corresponding sign of the Zodiac. Instead, the sign was named after the brightest star of the constellation, *sunbula*, which means "ear [of corn]." Consequently, when the astrological iconography was codified, the image of the virgin, a female figure, gave way to the representation of a male, evidently the Planetary Lord Mercury, who was shown as a farmer slashing ears of corn with a crescent-shaped scythe. This image became standard and was included in all zodiacal cycles, while the female figure of the constellation of Virgo remained unchanged in astronomical treatises, such as the text described in catalogue number 16. The few exceptions to the rule that occurred later were probably influenced by European traditions. For example, the coins minted for the Mughal emperor Jahāngīr (see cat. no. 10) show a winged female figure holding an ear of corn, thus combining the two interpretations.

★

Said the Wise [Abū Maʿshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a bright complexion. They have a pleasant build and small, symmetrical shoulders. They have a good voice and they like to be entertained and to play. They love good manners and are eloquent in their speech. They are considered intelligent by men of culture. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those who are born under Virgo and Mercury in the decade of Venus are fearful that good fortune will turn its back on them, even if they are usually lucky and are happy people. Good days for them are Wednesdays, while Sundays are bad. Hot and moist foods and drinks agree with them. Red and green are good colors for their clothing. When they appear in front of a governor, they stop at his left side to discuss their needs. When they sleep, they turn their head in the direction of Mecca in order to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will suffer at the ages of twelve and nineteen over a great controversy, which will cause them harm. At thirty, an enemy will prevail over them. At sixty, they will fall ill but they will recover and live until they are eighty-four. The best month of the year for them is Jumada I, or the Christian month of Aylūl [September]. *They will die on a Saturday in the month of Jumada II. Allah knows more."*

Virgo—Second decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maʿshar)

Pilgrim flask
Iran (Kashan), Ilkhanid period, first half of the 14th century
Composite molded body, painted with overglaze and gilded
Height, 12 in. (30.5 cm); width, 4¾ in. (12.1 cm); diameter, 10¼ in. (26 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1957 (57.164)

15. This large pilgrim flask belongs to a group of wares known as *lājvardīna*, from the Persian word for lapis lazuli (*lājvard*). This name was assigned to these vessels because they are coated with a deep, rich blue glaze, over which other colors—usually red, brown, white, and gold leaf—were added. This technique, developed in the Ilkhanid period, can be considered both as a replacement and continuation of the *mīnāī* ware, which was decorated according to a similar process (see cat. no. 7).

A pilgrim flask, whose shape is of Chinese origin, is a flat, circular bottle provided with rings to accommodate a cord for suspension. A functional pilgrim flask would be small or medium in size and made of animal skin or metal. The present ceramic flask, large and heavy, never was intended to be functional, but it had a symbolic meaning, which is suggested by its decorative program. It includes, on each face, one medallion in the center surrounded by six others linked by a continuous looping pattern. Each medallion that encircles the central one depicts a sign of the Zodiac, thus providing the complete cycle of twelve signs on the two faces of the flask. The central medallions include Gemini on one side and Sagittarius on the other. The fact that the two latter signs, which are also directly opposite on the zodiacal circle, are repeated and prominently displayed in the center of each face points to the specific astrological significance of the imagery, which, perhaps, may be associated with the horoscope of a newborn child.

The sequence of the twelve medallions is unusual: The side with Sagittarius in the center incorporates the first and the last three signs (counterclockwise from the lower right corner: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces); the face with Gemini (reproduced in the photograph) shows the central six signs in a random order (clockwise from the lower right corner: Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Libra). Gemini and Sagittarius are once again prominent, since they are represented inside the medallion placed at the top of each side, just below the neck. In addition, if one applies the *abjad* (the numerical value of the letters of the alphabet) to this unusual sequence, and a number from one to twelve is assigned to each sign according to the traditional sequence (Aries = 1 to Pisces = 12), one notices that the sum of the six medallions on each face equals thirty-nine. Could it be possible that this number corresponds to the year A.H. [7]39 / A.D. 1338–39 when the child might have been born? Obviously, without the support of an inscription this is only a hypothesis, but, as nothing was accidental in the casting of a horoscope, this interpretation might be close to the truth. The symbolism inherent in the object itself also would be appropriate for a newborn child to begin his travels through life, for the pilgrim flask is a container for water, the most vital staple for a safe journey.

Published: Hôtel Drouot, 1950, lot 64.

Libra (*al-mīzān*), the scale, here is a straightforward image of a balance with its two pans suspended from chains secured at the sides of a central shaft. Traditionally, the pans are always shown empty, and the only iconographic variation—pointed out above in the cycle on the lidded inkwell (cat. no. 12) and visible as well on the footed bowl (cat. no. 19)—is the depiction of the features of a human face, scratched into the inlaid silver that fills the surfaces of the two pans. This variation has no apparent astrological meaning and is almost certainly decorative. Venus, the female instrument player (see cat. no. 3), seen earlier astride a bull (Taurus; see cat. no. 10), is the Planetary Lord of Libra. Since Venus is engaged in playing an instrument, she cannot hold the scale and be shown in proper conjunction with her sign at the same time. For this reason, the Islamic illustrators often included the female musician in the empty space between the two pans. However, this image was not effective; since the two components were represented in isolation, the significance of the scene was sometimes misunderstood. Thus, a male or a female figure without a musical instrument (as in the present detail), or simply a hand holding the scale, was introduced in a few cases. The very unusual substitution of a long-legged bird on the basin in catalogue number 3 probably has to be regarded as a deliberate choice.

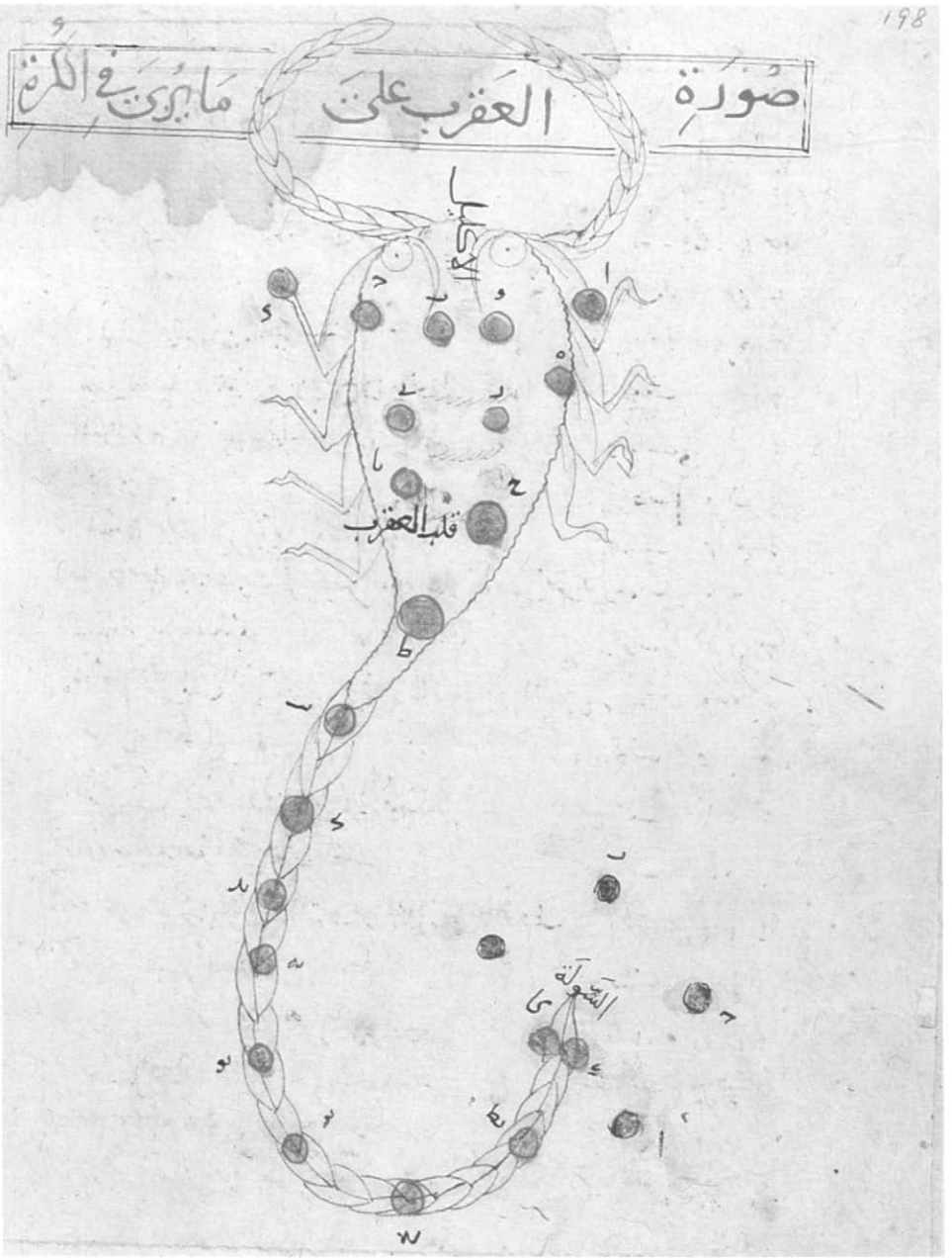
★

Said the Wise [Abū Maʿshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a fair complexion with a tendency to redness. They are tall, and have a long neck, a small head, broad shoulders, and short forearms. They have a sharp mind, but they are stubborn. They have a strong heart and they like other people. They have a mark on their face, nose, and head, and a scar on their hips and feet. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those born under Libra and Venus in the decade of Jupiter are reasonable and knowledgeable. They have a strong heart and are good-natured, amusing, and playful. The best day of the week for them is Friday and the worst is Wednesday. Cold and moist food and drinks agree with them. Red and purple are the most appropriate colors for their clothing. Their signet ring should be made of silver with a red or a green stone. When they appear in front of the governor, they stand in front of him to discuss their needs. When they sleep, they turn their head to the south and the west to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will have a problem at the age of nine and a difficult time when they are twenty-one. They will suffer from pain at forty but, if they recover, they will live to reach the age of eighty. Their month is Rajab, or the Christian month of Nīsān [April]. *They should be concerned if they fall ill on a Saturday or a Tuesday in the month of Jumada II. Allah the Highest knows more."*

Libra—Third decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maʿshar)



16. The Constellation of Scorpio, from a manuscript of al-Ṣūfī's Book of the Images of the Fixed Stars (page 198)

Iran, probably 15th century

Black and red ink, and gold, on paper, with a leather binding

10 x 7¼ in. (25.4 x 18.4 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.160.10)

The tenth-century astronomer ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī (A.D. 903–986) is credited with the authorship of several important Arabic texts on the stars; he can be considered as the greatest scholar in this field from the Islamic lands. His works, based on a knowledge of the stars as transmitted by the Greek astronomers, improved on Ptolemy's *Almagest*. His most important text, represented here, is the *Kitāb ṣuwar al-kawākib al-thābita* (*"The Book of the Images of the Fixed Stars"*), an illustrated compendium of the forty-eight constellations observed both from the earth and, theoretically, from outside the celestial globe. The outlines of each constellation and the stars belonging to it are therefore drawn twice, their image mirrored in the second drawing.

The earliest manuscript of this text, now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, is also the earliest surviving illustrated codex in Arabic and is dated A.D. 1009, less than a quarter of a century after its author died. The present manuscript of one hundred and fifty folios, one of the few extant copies predating the sixteenth century, is slightly damaged at the beginning and the end, so that only forty-three out of the original forty-eight constellations survive. As a rule, the drawings that illustrate this text are extremely traditional and do not change considerably through the centuries. Often, only details of the garments worn by some of the figures provide clues as to the date and place of production of a manuscript when the colophon is missing. The present example is no exception; probably copied from a fourteenth-century codex, it seems, nonetheless, to be a product of fifteenth-century Iran for a number of reasons.

The constellation reproduced here, one of the twelve that make up the Zodiac, is "the image of Scorpio as it is observed from the earth," as explained in the title that appears between the nippers of the scorpion. The scorpion is imaginatively drawn in black ink and the stars forming the constellation are indicated with large dots outlined in red and filled in with gold. Letters identify the single stars, while three groups of stars, which correspond to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth stations of the astronomical system of the twenty-eight Lunar Mansions (see the brief explanation in the Introduction), are named in full as *al-iklīl* ("the Crown"), *qalb al-ʿaqrab* ("the Heart of the Scorpion"), and *al-shawla* ("the Sting").

In al-Ṣūfī's treatise, the images of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, placed between the Northern and the Southern Hemispheres, are strictly scientific, and are devoid of astrological significance; therefore, they are never depicted in association with their Planetary Lords. However, with the exception of Virgo and of Gemini, their iconography corresponds to that of the signs of the Zodiac, as demonstrated by the depiction of Scorpio shown here.

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Scorpio (*al-ʿaqrab*) is the scorpion, whose Planetary Lord is Mars (see cat. no. 5; and cat. no. 9, where Mars is discussed as the rider on the ram). The scorpion generally is depicted as fancifully as the crab (Cancer; see cat. no. 12): Its long tail, ending in a sting, tends to be rather exaggerated, while its pincers are somewhat underplayed. The scorpion's body is usually oval shaped and is sometimes provided with scales; it has four short legs on either side, and, as in the case of the crab, it often has a nearly human face. The scorpion is shown in duplicate when it is represented with its planet: Mars holds one by the tail in each hand, usually in a mirrored composition in which one arm is raised and the scorpion is upside down while the other arm is kept at his side and the scorpion's body is turned upward. Since the planet Mars most often is depicted holding a sword and a severed head, the same problem that confronted the artist in the case of Venus, who is playing a musical instrument and thus cannot hold the scale at the same time—as described in the previous entry (cat. no. 15)—could have arisen here as well. However, Mars the warrior wears a helmet and a coat of mail and therefore is still recognizable without the complementary attributes. Yet, rather than showing Mars and the two scorpions, many illustrators resorted to maintaining the images of both animals without the planet—so often that the most common image of Scorpio in isolation has become that of two scorpions with curved bodies arranged in a circle.

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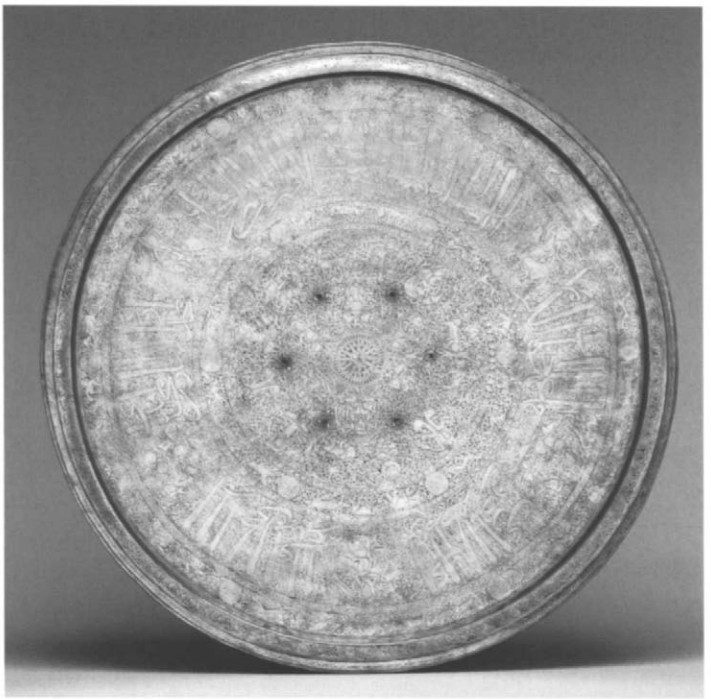
Said the Wise [Abū Maʿshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a fair complexion with a tendency to redness. They are handsome, and have a loud and beautiful voice. They are virtuous and inclined to religious matters. They have a mark on their face, hips, and under one foot. They have black eyes. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those born under Scorpio and Mars in the decade of Venus have a nice personality and are liked by others. The best day of the week for them is Tuesday, and the worst is Friday. Cold and moist food and drinks agree with them. Red is the most agreeable color for their clothing. Their signet ring should be made of gilded steel with a carnelian stone. When they appear in front of the governor, they stand at his left. When they sleep, they turn their head to the north to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will fear for their health at the age of eighteen because they will fall from an elevated place and hurt their extremities. They will have a serious problem at thirty-three. At forty-five, they will have to face an enemy and an injust person. A serious illness will strike when they are sixty, but if they recover they will live to be ninety. Allah knows more. Their best month is Shaʿban, the worst is Rajab, or, among the Christian months, Ayyār [May]. *If they get sick on a Wednesday in the month of Tammūz* [July] *they should be concerned."*

Scorpio—Third decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maʿshar)



Tray
Egypt (Cairo), Mamluk period, early 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver and bitumen
Diameter, 30¼ in. (76.8 cm)
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.604)

17. Trays such as this one and that discussed in catalogue number 4 were used to carry food from the kitchen to the dining area and were placed either on the floor or on a low biconical stand. These stands—many of which still survive—would have functioned as portable tables that could be easily stored when not in use.

The tray discussed in catalogue number 4 was made for export to Yemen and bears the emblem, name, and titles of a Rasulid sultan. The present tray, on the other hand, is dedicated to an anonymous high-ranking Mamluk emir, but it is clear that the two were produced in a very similar, if not the same, workshop, since the sole features that clearly differentiate one from the other are the inscriptions and the emblem of the five-petaled rosette on catalogue number 4. This workshop can be located in Cairo on the basis of yet another, similar tray in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (Inv. no. 91.1.602), with an inscription that states that it was made in that city by an artist whose family originally was from Mosul in northern Iraq.

The designs on this tray, in concentric bands, are very elaborate, and, despite the loss of nearly all of the silver inlays, are still easily appreciated. The central roundel contains representations of the seven planets and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The Sun is in the center, and the Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, and Venus are shown clockwise, but, once again, they are illustrated in random order. The twelve signs are in their proper sequence, clockwise, and the majority of them are represented with their Planetary Lords but, rather atypically, the three mounts—namely, Aries (the ram), Taurus (the bull), and Capricorn (the kid)—are shown in isolation, without their planetary riders (Mars, Venus, and Saturn, respectively).

The main inscriptional band is framed by two narrow bands that include the familiar Mamluk group of quadrupeds seen in profile in a walking posture and proceeding counterclockwise. The tall and elegant *thuluth* calligraphy is interrupted by six large round medallions in which images of horsemen alternate with figures of musicians. The inscription informs us that this tray was made for "the lord, the great prince." However, as it does not mention this Mamluk's name, it might well be that it was produced for a very high-quality market, rather than to fill a specific commission. The three horsemen depicted inside the medallions—two polo players and a falconer—are engaged in courtly pastimes; the other three images represent pairs of musicians sitting on three-legged benches, each twosome consisting of a musician accompanying a singer. The two narrow outer borders of the tray contain a pattern of stylized birds that seem to be changing into leaves and a geometric motif of lozenges alternating with small circles.

Published: *Arts of Islam*, 1981, no. 57.

★

Sagittarius (*al-qaws* or *al-rāmī*) is a centaur in the act of shooting an arrow from his bow. The former name ("the Bow") is commonly used to identify the sign of the Zodiac, while the latter ("the Archer") usually refers to the constellation. The image of the centaur derives from the representation of the corresponding constellation, although here the upper body of the mythical beast can be interpreted, instead, as an image of Jupiter—that is, Sagittarius's Planetary Lord. The centaur, whose head and arms are turned backward, is always seen in left profile, sometimes fully dressed and sometimes with a naked torso. The bow and the act of shooting are, indeed, the focus of the composition, since they give the zodiacal sign its name. However, the attention of the viewer is also drawn toward the legendary creature's long tail, which curves upward and ends in a dragon's head with an open mouth and an aggressive posture, as it prepares to meet head on the arrow that is about to be cast.

As pointed out in the discussion of Gemini (cat. no. 11), which is diametrically opposite Sagittarius in the circle of the Zodiac, the pseudo-planet Jawzahr (see cat. no. 8) comes into play here once again. This time it is Jawzahr's descension (*hubūṭ*: the position of the planet in the Zodiac in which it was considered to exert its weakest influence) that is depicted in Sagittarius. The Head (*ra's*) of the Dragon is about to be vanquished by the centaur, thus stressing the weakness of the planet in this sign. This complex image, which has both astronomic and talismanic associations, became standard in illustrations of the zodiacal cycle and was rarely misinterpreted (see cat. no. 18).

Said the Wise [Abū Maʿshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a dark complexion with a tendency to redness. They are good-looking, but their physique is somewhat stocky, although in proportion. They have a strong and noble soul. People love them and like to listen to them. They have a mark on their right knee and on their belly, and a scar on their hips. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those who are born under Sagittarius and Jupiter in the decade of the Moon are liked by men and women. They are handsome and speak in an amiable manner. The best day of the week for them is Thursday and the worst is Tuesday. Cold and moist food and drinks agree with them. Yellow is the most suitable color for their clothing and their signet ring should be made of gold. When they meet the governor, they stand at his left to discuss their needs. When they sleep, they turn their head to the east to chase away nightmares and grief. The best months for them are Ramadan and Shaʿban, or the Christian month of Tammūz [July]."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will suffer from various illnesses when they are four years old, and then at eleven and twenty. When they are forty, they will face a very serious problem but after they recover they will live until they are ninety. They should be concerned if they fall ill on a Wednesday in the month of Shaʿban. Allah knows more."

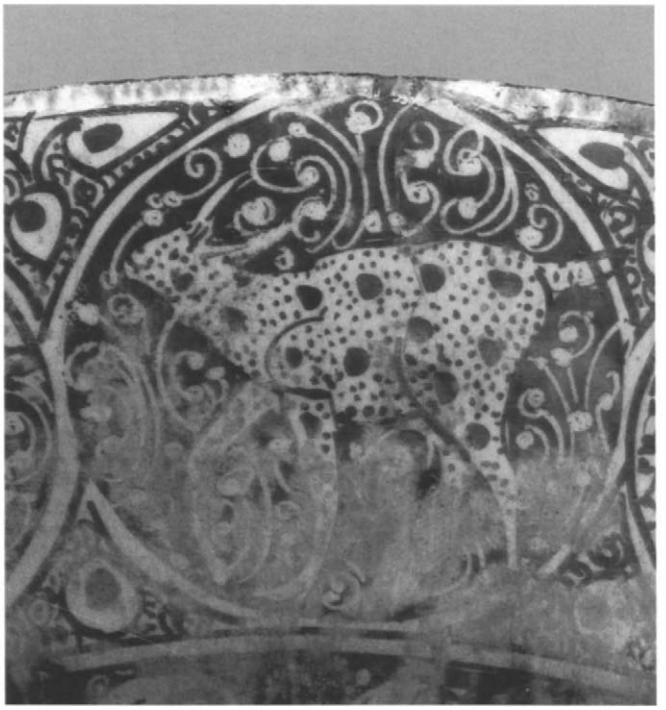
Sagittarius—Second decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maʿshar)

Bowl
Iran (Kashan), 13th century
Composite body, with a luster overglaze and blue paint
Height, 3½ in. (8.9 cm); maximum diameter, 8⅛ in. (20.6 cm)
Gift of Edward C. Moore, Jr., 1927 (27.13.9)

18. This bowl has the same shape as the example in catalogue number 13, although its dimensions are slightly smaller. The luster paint has faded in some areas but the overall decoration is still visible. The interior surface of the bowl, divided into concentric circles, contains human figures drawn in reserve and animals. The areas representing the robes of the figures are decorated with spiral patterns, while those corresponding to the coats of the animals are filled with tiny dots and larger spots. The background decoration, also in reserve, consists of vegetal patterns, scrolls, and half-palmettes. In the inner circle on the bottom of the bowl are two haloed figures without specific attributes, probably engaged in conversation. On the narrow band surrounding this inner circle are verses of poetry in Arabic in a hurried *naskh* script. A larger band occupies almost half of the height of the wall of the bowl and includes simple vertical patterns consisting of half-palmettes and vegetal designs; pseudo-kufic writing, with repeated vertical *hastae* in superimposed blue pigment, makes the luster design underneath more difficult to read. The last decorative band, on the wall of the bowl, extending up to the rim, is occupied by twelve medallions that depict the signs of the Zodiac, clockwise. Additional bands of pseudo-cursive script and geometric decorations were painted on the exterior wall of the bowl in luster and touches of blue pigment.

The iconography is fairly traditional, but the Planetary Lords were left out and all the signs are represented in isolation. This seems to be typical of illustrations of the Zodiac on luster pottery, where "scientific" elements became less important and the figures were not drawn as carefully and meaningfully as on inlaid metalwork objects. The zodiacal cycles pictured on a small number of luster-painted ceramic vessels (for example, on two large plates, one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the other in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; see *Survey of Persian Art*, 1939, plates 712–713) show similar inaccurate iconographical details. Thus, Aries, Taurus, and Capricorn are portrayed as quadrupeds without their riders (Mars, Venus, and Saturn, respectively); Virgo, Libra, and Aquarius are barely recognizable, respectively, as Mercury slashing ears of corn, Venus between the two pans of a scale, and Saturn drawing water from a well; and Sagittarius, the centaur, has lost both his bow and his dragon-headed tail.

The representation of the signs of the Zodiac on luster-painted pottery seems, generally, to be rather conventional and devoid of specific astrological and horoscopic meanings. Therefore, the main reason for its adoption must have been its decorative appeal within the Islamic figurative tradition, which was so admired by luster painters in the twelfth and the thirteenth century.



Capricorn (*al-jady*), the kid, is always represented as a small goat in left profile, identifiable by its horns, which curve slightly backward. The iconography never changes and only details may vary, such as the length of its tail, the presence of a goatee, or the color of its skin in illustrated manuscripts. In most cases, Capricorn is shown with Saturn, its Planetary Lord, who sits astride it in the same manner as the riders in the other signs atop their zodiacal mounts (Aries and Taurus) noted earlier. The planet Saturn is easily recognizable: a bearded man with a naked torso, who wears only trousers and holds one or more of his attributes, the most recurrent of which is a pickax (see cat. no. 7).

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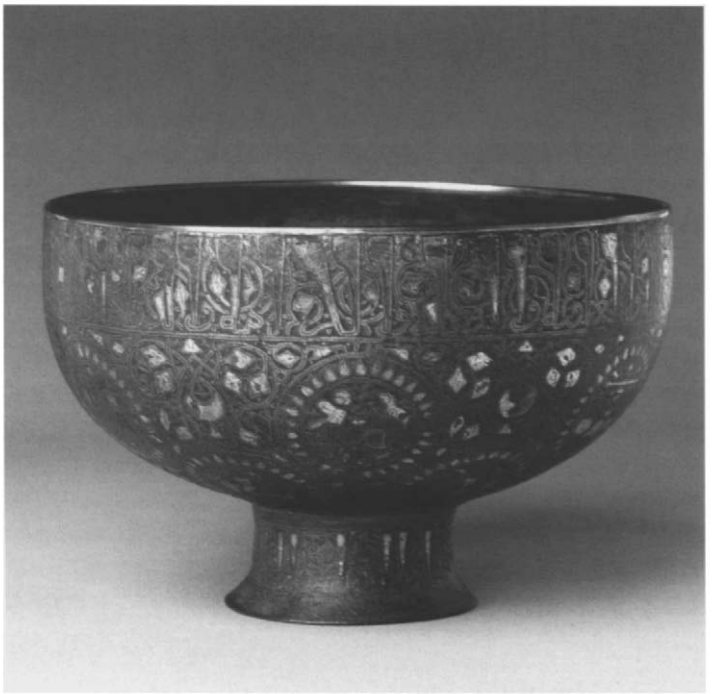
Said the Wise [Abū Maᶜshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a shiny complexion with a tendency to become either tanned or very white. They are tall, speak in an amiable manner, have a good character and a thin skin, and make a nice appearance. They are good mediators. They love to mix with other people and are easygoing. They are fearful in their youth. They are well versed in scientific matters. They have a mark on their right knee, belly, and hips, and a scar on their feet. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those born under this decade have a noble soul, and are shy in a nice way, intelligent, and well liked. The best day of the week for them is Saturday and the worst is Thursday. Hot and dry food and drinks agree with them. Their signet ring should be made of silver with emeralds or sapphires. Their clothes should be variegated. When they appear in front of the governor, they stand at his left to discuss their needs. When they sleep, they turn their head to the south to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will have problems at the ages of eleven, nineteen, and thirty-one. A serious illness will afflict them when they are forty-five and again at sixty-two, but when they recover they will live until they are eighty. The best months for them are Ramadan and the Christian month of Ḥazīrān [June]. *They should be concerned if they fall ill on a Saturday or a Friday in the month of Shaᶜban. Allah knows more."*

Capricorn—First decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maᶜshar)



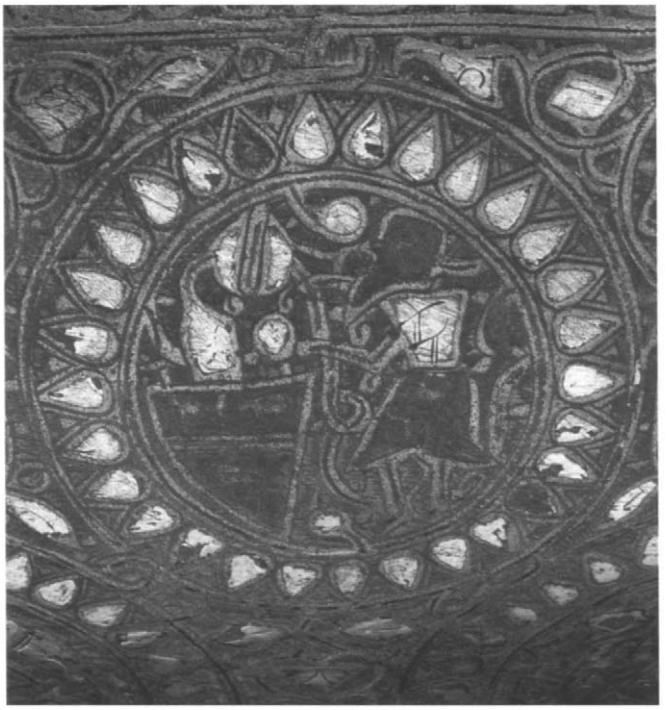
Footed bowl
Eastern Iran, early 13th century
Bronze, inlaid with silver
Height, 4½ in (11.4 cm); maximum diameter, 7 in. (17.8 cm)
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.543)

19. Footed bowls, called *jāms* in Persian, have a long history among the art objects produced in Iran. This particular type of bowl, with a rounded profile, sides that curve inward, and a low, slender foot, was widely used in eastern Iran in the twelfth and the thirteenth century.

Most of the original silver inlays are now lost, but enough remain to provide a clear impression of the overall decorative program of the bowl. There are two epigraphic bands, under the rim and around the foot, each consisting of a sequence of blessings for the bowl's anonymous owner copied in cursive *thuluth* script. The *hastae* of the letters broaden as they rise toward the top, where they are cut off horizontally; in the upper band, large engraved areas of the *hastae* take the form of human faces—hence, the common designation of "human-headed" cursive calligraphy. The benedictory formulas used for the inscriptions as well as specific details in the calligraphic style point firmly to an eastern Iranian origin for this footed bowl.

The main field, under the larger epigraphic band, is ornamented with a series of round medallions in two rows, each medallion representing a sign of the Zodiac and framed by a ring of flamelike, pointed rays that underscore the solar symbolism of the decoration. The empty spaces between the medallions are filled with four vegetal scrolls that stem from a footed vase whose shape is reminiscent of that of the object they adorn. The zodiacal cycle can be read in proper order from right to left, alternating from the upper to the lower row, its iconography both extremely traditional and, with the presence of the Planetary Lords, comprehensive. As in the case of the lidded inkwell (cat. no. 12), numerous nonessential details enrich the artistic quality of the designs. Thus, Leo's tail ends in a dragon's head, while that of Sagittarius terminates in a full-bodied quadruped instead of just the usual dragon's head (see the illustration); the pans of the scale (Libra) are human headed; and the background is inhabited by scrolls ending in animals' heads. Furthermore, Cancer includes a meaningful addition that is commonly incorporated in more western, Jaziran (southern Anatolian and northern Mesopotamian) objects: the presence of a heart-shaped knot between the crab's body and the Moon clutched in its claws, which symbolizes the Lunar Node—a variation on the iconography of the pseudo-planet Jawzahr discussed in catalogue number 8. However, this isolated symbolism is not sufficient to suggest a more western provenance for the bowl, since all of the other elements point to eastern Iran.

Published: Dimand, 1944, fig. 84; Ettinghausen, 1970, fig. 3.



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Aquarius in Arabic is called *al-dalw* ("the water bucket") or *sākib al-mā'* ("the water pourer"). The former name is the most common for this sign of the Zodiac and the latter, for the corresponding constellation. Illustrations of the constellation, following the original Greek name and the most frequently encountered iconography—also familiar in Europe—show a male figure pouring a stream of water from a vessel that he holds in either hand. When the image of the "water bucket" was initially integrated into scenes of the cycle of the Zodiac, it was up to the first illustrators to find a way to convey its meaning. Thus, the bucket was pictured in an appropriate context—that is, inside a well—and the male figure of the pourer became Saturn, a half-naked, dark-skinned, bearded man (see cat. no. 7). The relationship between the sign and the Planetary Lord was emphasized by depicting Saturn as a figure in the act of pulling on the rope that would either raise the bucket or lower it in the well.

This scene is complex yet effective, although, oddly enough, the integration of the water bucket helped to reverse the original meaning of the sign's name: In other words, "the water pourer" was transformed into "he who extracts water" or "the water carrier." The typical representation of Aquarius shows Saturn drawing water from a well whose exterior structure is made of brick and which operates by means of a rope-and-pulley system. Often, a grassy landscape is included to underscore the outdoor setting of the scene.

Said the Wise [Abū Maʿshar]: "Those who are born in this decade have a bright complexion. They are of medium build and have a thin skin. They are easily affected by the sun since they are pallid. They walk fast. They get bored easily and often become angry and anxious. They cannot wait patiently or keep a secret for more than an hour. They have a scar on their head. Allah knows more. . . ."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those born under Aquarius and Saturn in the decade of the Moon have round features, a broad chest, and a lot of hair. They are straightforward and courageous. They are usually in a good mood during the first months of the year. The best day of the week for them is Saturday and the worst are Mondays and Wednesdays. Cold and moist food and drinks agree with them. Red and yellow are the most appropriate colors for their clothes. Their signet ring should be made of gold with a black stone. When they appear in front of the governor, they stand at his left to discuss their needs. When they sleep, they turn their head to the north to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will face problems at the age of four. At twenty-five, they will fall from an elevated and a very recessed place. A serious illness will strike them when they are forty, but if they recover they will live to be seventy, or as old as eighty-five. Their Christian month is Shubāṭ [February], *but they should fear the month of Āb* [August]. *Allah knows more."*

Aquarius—Third decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maʿshar)

20. Leaf from a miscellaneous astrological manuscript

Western Iran or Iraq (Tabriz or Baghdad), Jalayirid period, late 14th century
Ink, gold, and colors on paper
8⅞ x 6¾ in. (22.5 x 17.1 cm)
Keir Collection, Ham, Richmond, England

The manuscript to which this page belongs is a dispersed copy of an illustrated, miscellaneous text that deals principally with astrological matters. The surviving sections, bound in haphazard order, formerly were preserved in the Keir Collection and in the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo. In 1987, I was able to reconstruct and publish two of the treatises that were once part of the manuscript. Sadly, since 1987, the vicissitudes of civil war have brought tremendous suffering to the city of Sarajevo and the rest of former Yugoslavia. If it is true that the loss of human lives and the destruction of a country are the only things that really matter, it must be reported, nonetheless, that a great tragedy occurred when a phosphorus bomb hit the building housing the Oriental Institute. Thus, to the best of my knowledge the Sarajevo section of this astrological manuscript was burned.

The present page is the last, and perhaps the most accomplished from an artistic point of view, of the surviving illustrations among the Keir Collection's holdings. According to its title, it depicts "the discourse on him who is born under the sign of Pisces and Jupiter, in the second Decan under the influence of Jupiter." The composition is evidently more complex than that of any other illustrations of the Zodiac discussed throughout this catalogue. This is because, here, the astrological, talismanic, and cosmological symbolism underlying all of the images seen thus far gives way to the scientific aspect of the study of astrology, as it was conceived by astronomers and men of science. The composition merely illustrates and complements the text and should not be interpreted otherwise. Pisces is represented by the larger fish swimming in the pond or river in the foreground. On the bank at the right, Jupiter, its Planetary Lord, holds the fish he has just caught in his left hand and the fishline in his right. Jupiter, the Planetary Lord, faces in the direction of Jupiter, the Decan (in this particular case, the two planets happen to be the same), who, from his seated position on a carpet, watches over and protects those born in the second decade of Pisces. The vignettes below the main illustration and to its right are less easily deciphered (see the brief discussion in the Introduction): the five planets (now four, since the lower right corner of the page is missing)—namely, Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, and Saturn, from right to left—are the Planetary Terms (*ḥudūd*) that exert an influence similar to that of the Planetary Decans. The roundels arranged vertically on the right side of the sheet are part of a chart that explains the differences between the gradations of light and dark, a distinction that astrologers made use of in forecasting the propitiousness of daily activities. During this decade (or ten days), the first two days and the last three are auspicious (the roundels are light, or gilded in the actual manuscript), and the center five days are unfavorable, since the corresponding roundels are dark.

Published: Carboni, 1987, pl. IXD (color).

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The sign of **Pisces** is called *al-ḥūt* ("the big fish") in Arabic. Therefore, in the illustration of the Zodiac, there is supposed to be only one fish, which is sometimes the case. The sign is usually represented as a large, nondescript fish, whose body curves slightly upward in order to better fit into the round medallion within which it is depicted. When Jupiter, its Planetary Lord, is illustrated, too, this male figure (see cat. no. 6) sits cross-legged, floating above the curved back of the fish. However, the constellation of Pisces (*al-samakatān*, or "the two fish") also influenced the iconography of the corresponding sign of the Zodiac, which often took the form of the more familiar image of two confronted fish arranged in a circle. This is why, as on the pen box discussed in catalogue number 6, Jupiter, when included in the illustration, is shown with a fish on each side, similar to the figure of Mars with the two scorpions (cat. no. 16). Although the image of Jupiter with the two fish does not reflect the literal interpretation of the sign of Pisces, because it is more effective and closer to the meaning of the constellation, it became more popular than the representation of a single fish.

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Said the Wise [Abū Maᶜshar]: "Those born under this decade have a bright complexion and a tendency to become tanned. Their body is cold and moist, as they belong to a watery and nocturnal sign of the Zodiac. Their physique is well proportioned, but they tend to gain weight easily. They change moods often. They tend to work little, since they do not like to exert effort. They get annoyed easily. When they become attached to a place they like, they do not want to leave it. They love women. They have great strength and are cunning. Allah knows more."

Said the Wise Ptolemy: "Those born under Pisces and Jupiter in the decade of Saturn are thoughtful and strong. They are good-natured and they speak in an amiable manner. They have many good qualities, and balance amusing and serious moments well. Thursday is a good day for them, while Saturday is bad. Cold and moist food and drinks agree with them. Red and green are suitable colors for their clothes. Their signet ring should have a blue stone. When they appear in front of the governor, they stand at his left. When they sleep, they turn their head to the north to chase away nightmares and grief."

Said the Wise Dorotheus: "They will have a problem at the age of five. They will fall from an elevated place when they are eleven. Other problems will present themselves when they are eighteen and thirty-five, but they will recover and live a long life. Allah knows more. Their months are Dhu-l-Hijja and the Christian month of Adhār [March]. *They should be careful every Saturday in the month of Aylūl* [September]. *Allah knows more."*

Pisces—First decade (from *The Book of Nativities* by Abū Maᶜshar)

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