VOLUME 2
Chapter 6

Ewer Type MW 1: Cast Bronze Ewers with Cylindrical Body on Three Feet and Bipartite Neck

1. General Description

The cast bronze ewers assembled in this category range from 26 cm - 38 cm in height and are characterized by a squat and angular cylindrical body, which rests on three feet. These are either fairly high and waisted with a somewhat zoomorphic aspect (cat. nos. 1-3; fig. 1, pl. 1, fig. 2) or low and angular (cat. no. 4; fig. 3). Most characteristically the centre of the body is enhanced by horizontal fluting, which stops short of a narrow band below the shoulder edge above and a corresponding one near the base below.

Only in the case of no. 4 (fig. 3) has this treatment been replaced by relief decoration, which however still retains the demarcated band below the shoulder edge. The shoulder is either flat or rises very gently from the outer edge (cat. nos. 3, 4; figs 2, 3) - in the case of no. 3 (fig. 2) emphasised by a succession of horizontally placed, ovoid cavities - towards the more or less rounded neck collar.

From the neck collar rises a facetted bipartite neck, which consists of a strongly waisted, cylindrical lower part terminating in a protruding upper ridge and, rising from this, a squat or slightly elongated cylindrical section (cat. no. 3; fig. 2), which may appear very slightly waisted and flares faintly towards the round mouth. In the case of no. 4 (fig. 3) the neck treatment is different and much more fluent in profile. Here, the composite structure has been replaced by a tall and strongly waisted cylindrical neck, which is interrupted only by a small rounded moulding enclosing its centre.
The lip is flat and, in the case of ewers 1-3 (fig. 1, pl. 1, fig. 2), projects to the same extent as the ridge which terminates the lower part of their bipartite neck. In the case of nos. 1 (fig. 1) and 3 (fig. 2) it is further enhanced laterally by horizontally projecting extensions, which resemble vegetal motifs or animal heads.

The more or less strongly S-shaped handle is treated in various ways. Thus, in the case of nos. 2 and 3 (pl. 1, fig. 2) it is twisted, while on ewer 1 (fig. 1) it is beaded and on ewer 4 (fig. 3) perfectly flat. It joins the back of the lip either by two lateral extensions enclosing the latter (cat. nos. 2, 4; pl. 1, fig. 3) or by a small decorative plaque (cat. nos. 1, 3; figs. 1, 2).

Below, the handle most typically does not join the shoulder directly, but is linked to the latter by a small angular bridge joined to its lower part. Its lower termination bends outwards and culminates in a small rounded (cat. no. 1; fig. 1) or pyramidal knob (cat. no. 2; pl. 1) or a five-lobed half-palmette (cat. no. 3; fig. 2). Only the handle of ewer 4 (fig. 3) joins the shoulder directly, i.e. just below the shoulder edge.

As for the existence of thumbpieces, only ewers 1 and 3 (figs. 1, 2) retain their original thumbrests which are rendered as a backwards bending fleshy leaf with a central groove, which terminates in a large rounded knob above. In the case of nos. 2 and 4 (pl. 1, fig. 3) only a low rounded base appears, which, however, most probably orginally supported a finial, as well.

Ewer V.1/1 (fig. 4) has been included in this category mainly on the basis of certain general similarities it shares with the preceding pieces, in particular the neck design. Its vertically faceted, cylindrical body is very slender and elongated and rests on a low footring. It tapers towards a much reduced and minute flat shoulder.

The moulding in the centre of the shoulder introduces a faceted bipartite neck, which is closely related typologically to those encountered on the other pieces in this group. However, the neck’s upper section is much squatter in this case and flares more strongly towards the mouth. As on ewers 2 and 4 (pl. 1, fig. 3) the slightly S-shaped, beaded handle is attached to the lip by means of two, apparently
floral, clasps, which enclose its back and sides. Below, it joins the upper body directly by means of an attachment resembling a crested bird’s head.

The thumbpiece, a large pomegranate, is unique in this category, but is of course frequently met with on other contemporary vessels.

2. Decoration

The decorative techniques applied on the ewers in this category include relief decoration, incising and punch-dotting, all of which are often combined and in some cases superimposed on the same object.

On the horizontally fluted vessels (cat. nos. 1-3; fig. 1, pl. 1, fig. 2) the reserved bands above and below the central area receive incised or punched ornamentation. Thus, on ewer 2 (pl. 1) these areas display successions of rosettes and merlons above (now hardly perceivable) and apparently some kind of geometrical pattern below.\(^1\) On ewer 3 (fig. 2) the horizontally disposed ovoid cavities, which demarcate the shoulder edge and at the same time infringe the plain band above the facets, have their lower curvature emphasised by single incised lines with tiny quatrefoils in between. The remaining space of the band is punch-dotted and the whole decorative area is terminated below by a punch-dotted border. The lower band, bordered by punched lines above and below, displays scrollwork with central leafs or flowers, a design created purely by punch-dotting without the help of any incised outlines.

Ewer 1 (fig. 1) apparently displays three oddly positioned vertical bands of engraved benedictory phrases in Kufic, which completely counteract the effect created by the horizontal fluting which encloses the central body. In my opinion these epigraphic elements may have been added to the ewer well after its creation and therefore probably do not form part of the ewer’s original decoration.

\(^1\) Berlin 1979, p. 43 no. 117.
On ewer 4 (fig. 3), finally, the body is completely covered by relief decoration, incorporating a system of arcading with abstract tree motifs filling the space beneath each arch. Below the shoulder, this decorative zone is terminated by a narrow band, which contains a succession of merlons, likewise executed in relief.

The shoulder also receives decorative enhancement. Thus, in the case of ewer 2 (pl. 1) a continuous ivy- or vine-like scroll, worked in relief and enhanced by incised details, occupies this area, creating an interesting visual contrast to the subtly engraved decoration on the upper and lower body. A punched line encircles the outer shoulder edge of ewer 3 (fig. 2), apparently enclosing remains of a punched floral design, which, however, cannot be specified further from the available photograph.

Ewer 4 (fig. 3), finally, displays an abstract scrolling motif in relief, thus complementing the relief decoration applied to its body.

The decorative treatment of the bipartite neck encountered on ewers 1-3 (fig. 1, pl. 1, fig. 2) and V.1/1 (fig. 4) is similar in all cases and involves the outlining of the upper and lower facet terminations on both sections by single or double curved lines with lozenge- or bud-shaped motifs set in between, a decorative convention encountered also on many other early Islamic ewer types with facetted cylindrical necks.

In the case of ewer 3 (fig. 2) the treatment is slightly different in that the facets are shortened, leaving narrow decorative bands above and below, a treatment again paralleled on other contemporary ewer types, such as particularly the vessels associated with the famous "Baqra" ewer and another group of ewers with round bodies and tall cylindrical necks. On ewer 3 (fig. 2) these bands are filled with various motifs, including a succession of diamonds with central punch-dotted

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2 Melikian-Chirvani has already highlighted the contrasting visual effects created by the combined use of various decorative techniques; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 186, 197, 201.
3 No comment can be made with regard to the shoulder decoration of ewer 1 (fig. 1), as the available photograph does not afford a clear enough view of that area.
4 Cf. ewer types EMW 4, MW 3, MW 4.
5 Cf. ewer types MW 3 & 4.
quatrefoils in the band around the base of the lower neck and apparently a likewise punched zig-zag pattern below the mouth.6

The neck of ewer 4 (fig. 3) remains undecorated apart from central collar already mentioned.

3. Origin, Provenance and Date

At present, no pre-Islamic prototypes, neither from the Hellenistic world nor from Sasanian Iran or Central Asia, can be suggested as direct predecessors for the unusual profile of the ewer type discussed here. Certainly, this fact may be due to a lack of surviving objects from that time and the fortuitous nature of discoveries and excavations. However, on the other hand, it would not be impossible that the vessels assembled here represent in fact an innovation in ewer design, as Melikian-Chirvani has suggested.7

If one is to follow his hypothesis, the question arises as to where and when this exercise in structural composition may have taken place within the framework of early Islamic metalwork production. Fortunately, all the characteristic structural features of this type can be linked to other vessels which have been dated and provenanced, if in some cases only tentatively, and can therefore help to establish an at least circumstantial chronological and geographical setting for the group as a whole.

To start with, the concept of a cylindrical body placed on three feet can be paralleled on several pieces of another early Islamic bronze ewer type, whose structural components have been linked to pre-Islamic vessels current in Coptic Egypt, the Byzantine world and the ancient Near East (cf. ewer type EMW 3).

6 The decoration in the bands enclosing the upper part of the waisted lower section and the base of the cylindrical part above cannot be made out from the available photograph.
7 Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 91.
An even closer parallel for the ewers’ profile, however, can be found among the early Islamic pottery objects excavated at Sūsa, a town situated on the south-western fringes of Iran (fig. 5). An unfortunately fragmented piece features a very similar body profile and virtually identical feet, with the only difference that it incorporates a short body spout, which in the case of the metal ewers has not been adopted.  

Finally, and most remarkably, the body shape can be paralleled to an astonishing degree on certain traditional wooden ewers coming from the Caucasus, now preserved in the Tiflis Museum (fig. 6).  

Admittedly, these objects must be much later in date than the ewers discussed here, but keeping in mind the far-reaching artistic conservatism in the Caucasian lands, where many art forms remained unchanged throughout the centuries, and also the fact that at least one of the ewers (cat. no. 2; pl. 1) was actually purchased in Tiflis in 1897, it seems at least worth hinting at this startling generic similarity.

As for the exceptional elongated and vertically faceted body of ewer V.1/1 (fig. 4), it can be compared quite closely to certain early Islamic bronze ewers with horizontal beak-spouts, which have been tentatively linked with early Islamic Mesopotamia as well as the western and north-western regions of Iran.

The next characteristic element of the ewer design to be analyzed here is the peculiar bipartite neck with a strongly waisted and faceted lower part and a squat, likewise faceted cylindrical superstructure. Baer, in dealing with this group, pointed out that the lower neck section resembles the necks found on vessels associated with the famous "Basra" ewer. This ewer type most probably originated

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8 Koechlin 1928, p. 67 pl. XIII no. 94.
9 Mourier 1907, p. 183 lower figure.
10 In addition to similarities in the allover profile of the bronze ewers and the Caucasian wooden vessels, the enhancement of the shoulder edge as encountered on ewer 3 seems to be related to the lobed decoration of that area on several of these wooden vessels. Incidentally, an even closer parallel to the horizontally orientated oval cavities marking the shoulder edge of ewer 3 (fig. 2) can be found on the so-called "Pelegrina" ewer, excavated on the Esquiline hill in Rome as part of an extensive late Roman silver treasure; cf. Skelton 1981, no. 17.
11 Cf. ewer type MW 2.
in 'Abbasid Mesopotamia and then spread eastwards to Iran and Central Asia, where it was still current as late as the 12th century.\footnote{Baer 1983, pp. 87-90, 321 notes 199-202; for a comprehensive discussion of the "Baṣra" ewer type cf. chapter 8; Melikian-Chirvani in his thesis specifically compares the neck of ewer 2 in this category (pl. 1) with those of two ewers in the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, belonging to the "Baṣra" ewer type; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch.III, p. 90.}

Such a comparison, however, remains incomplete and in fact avoids getting down to the origin of this intriguing neck design as a whole, which after all is not confined to this ewer type alone, but appears on several other early Islamic ewers, too. Thus, a virtually identical neck treatment can be observed on a number of probably 8th - 11th-century, ovoid-bodied and body-spouted bronze ewers on three feet, which have been shown to have generic links with pre-Islamic objects from the eastern Mediterranean lands and Egypt.\footnote{Cf. ewer type EMW 4.} The neck design appears again on a pear-shaped ewer with copper-inlaid relief decoration (ewer type MW 3/V.4). This piece, now in the Hermitage, was acquired in Dagestan, but has most recently been attributed to 8th/9th-century Iraq (fig. 7).\footnote{Orbeli and Trever 1935, p. 46, pl. 73; Kuwait 1990, p. 25 no. 5 (Arabic/Russian text and plate), p. 11 no. 5 (English text); cf. chapter 8.} Finally, a related yet slightly modified neck design, where the lower section consists of three superposed mouldings of decreasing size rather than a waisted cylinder, occurs on some pear-shaped bronze ewers, which are typologically linked to vessels associated with the "Baṣra" ewer on the basis of their body profile and certain secondary details such as the style of the handle and its attachments as well the choice of thumbpiece (ewer type MW 3/V.5, V.6., V.1).\footnote{Cf. chapter 8.} These pieces were tentatively attributed to 8th-century Mesopotamia or Persia.\footnote{The second ewer, which came up at auction in 1984, needs further investigation, as it seems to carry extensive re-engraving; cf. Christie's 23.11.84, lot 554.}

The fact that an array of different early Islamic ewer types was provided with a bipartite neck design speaks for its popularity at the time and the question arises from where the inspiration for its creation may have been drawn. Certainly, its profile may have been an innovation devised by early Islamic metalworkers.
However, it is also possible - as was already pointed out elsewhere\(^\text{17}\) - that it derived from a type of pre-Islamic neck concept which was characterized by a very pronounced neck collar effectively dividing the neck into a more or less waisted lower section and a mainly squat upper part. Such a neck treatment does occur for example on eastern Mediterranean pottery from the 10th - 8th century B.C. and on Roman pottery and glass vessels (figs. 8a & b). Finally, a somewhat related tripartite neck was fitted to an oddly shaped Byzantine water heater excavated at Ballana in Nubia (fig. 9).\(^\text{18}\)

The last noteworthy structural element of the ewer's profile is the handle. In the case of ewers 1-3 (fig. 1, pl. 1, fig. 2) it is, to recall its characteristic features, of strongly S-shaped appearance with beaded or twisted centre. Above, it is attached to the lip by means of two decorative clasps or a small decorative plaque, while joining the shoulder below by means of a small bridge, before curving outwards and terminating in a rounded or pyramidal knob or half-palmette motif.

Very similar handle designs with more or less identical attachment systems - the upper one of which perpetuates Romano-Byzantine traditions\(^\text{19}\) - can be observed on at least four other early Islamic bronze ewers of varying appearance. These include the ewer in the Detroit Institute of Arts, attributed to 8th-century Mesopotamia or Persia (ewer type MW 3/V.1), and the ewer in the Hermitage, probably originating from 8th-century Iraq (ewer type MW 3/V.4), as well as a globular-bodied vessel with tall cylindrical neck (ewer type MW 4/V.5) and a bulbous globular-bodied jug attributed to 9th/10th-century Iran (ewer type MW 3/V.2, fig. 10).\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{17}\) Cf. chapter 4, section 3.
\(^{18}\) Kempinski and Avi-Yonah 1979, p. 208 pl. 42; Gose 1984, pl. 11 nos. 170 & 172; Emery 1938, p. 357 no. 790, pl. 93D; Waldbaum 1983, pl. 34, pp. 92-3.
\(^{19}\) Cf. chapter 8, section 3.1.
\(^{20}\) Melikian-Chirvani compared the handle of the Hermitage ewer to that of the Berlin piece (cat. no. 2; pl. 1) and considered this typological link between the two pieces as sufficient evidence to attribute both pieces to the same workshop. This suggestion seems too daring to me, as to my mind other structural features as well as the decoration of the vessels also have to be taken into consideration, and in fact the all-over profiles of both vessels and their decorative layout are too distinct to make an attribution to the same workshop that easy; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 90, 93.
The origin of this particular handle design remains elusive at present, but as for the beaded version, similar handles with central beading can be traced back to late Sasanian vessels.\(^{21}\) As for the twisted variant, Melikian-Chirvani has pointed out that such handles can already be observed on spouted vases from Tepe Giyān in Luristan and Pashkand in north-western Iran before the Achaemenid period.\(^{22}\) Strong, on the other hand, mentioned that handles in the form of a twisted rope occurred on certain early Hellenistic jugs executed in precious metal.\(^{23}\)

In addition to the ewers’ structural features some of their decorative elements may also help to establish a general provenance and dating for these pieces. Thus, the subtly engraved rosettes, which alternate with merlon motifs on the upper body of ewer 2 (fig. 11), correspond perfectly in size and execution to those dispersed among the engraved designs on the famous bird aquamanile made by Sulaymān in 796/7 A.D., while the merlons themselves are a familiar feature in early Islamic architecture as well as on wood carving and metal work.\(^{24}\)

The relief vine scroll on the vessel’s shoulder, on the other hand (fig. 12), seems to come closest in style to the floral designs displayed on an early Islamic, probably 8th-century silver bowl attributed to Iran (fig. 13).\(^{25}\) Melikian-Chirvani, on the other hand, has likened the style of the design to floral ornamentation, likewise executed in relief, encountered on the pear-shaped 8th/9th-century ewer in the Hermitage and on a more or less contemporary ewer of similar appearance (cf. ewer type MW 3/7) in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore.\(^{26}\)

In view of such comparative material, an 8th/9th-century dating may also offer itself for the Berlin piece. However, it seems to me that the deeply-cut and precisely defined vine scroll on the latter may be slightly earlier than the vegetal

\(^{21}\) Cf. Michigan 1967, no. 18 for an example.
\(^{22}\) Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 207.
\(^{23}\) Strong 1966, p. 105.
\(^{24}\) Cf. Hassan 1956, p. 20 fig. 69, p. 88 fig. 272 as examples.
\(^{25}\) Stuttgart 1972, no. 117.
ornaments on the other pieces, which, although undoubtedly related stylistically, are characterized by a more rounded and more generalized execution.  

On ewer 4 (fig. 3) relief decoration has been utilized to cover the entire body as well as the shoulder plate. The scroll on the shoulder may be rated as a somewhat deteriorated version of that on the Berlin piece, and the merlons around the upper body, though here executed in relief, can also be paralleled on that vessel. The decorative scheme chosen to enclose the body, on the other hand, is unique in its layout, as far as the other ewers in this category are concerned.

It can, however, be found in similar form on several other early Islamic bronze ewers and other objects. The setting consists of an architectural frieze made up of tall semicircular arches, which are joined by individual petalled flowers in their upper parts. Such friezes had long been popular in the arts of the late classical and Hellenistic world of the Mediterranean as well as the Sasanian lands and subsequently, it is no surprise that they were soon incorporated into the evolving artistic repertoire of the newly established Islamic empire.

The peculiar detail of the rosettes joining the arches points to Sasanian influence for this particular arcade, as floral "capitals", such as are undoubtedly intended here, appear quite often in the depictions of architectural friezes on late Sasanian metalwork. Melikian-Chirvani likens the typological features of the ewer's arcade to arches found in Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, which was probably executed between

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27 A similar observation was already made by Marshak; cf. Marshak 1972, p. 81.
28 Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 93, 95-6.
29 On ewers a similar architectural design - with arches enclosing large rosettes among other motifs - can be found on certain ewers associated with the famous "Marwān" ewer, which was found in Abūsir al-Malik in Egypt. On these pieces, however, the decoration is always incised, not, strictly speaking, worked in relief (on some of the pieces the upper termination of the arcade appears to be in relief); cf. ewer type EMW 5, chapter 5, section 2, section 3.2. Similar arceding designs also occur on an early Islamic bronze bowl in the Islamic Museum in Berlin; cf. Erdmann 1969, pl. 85. On the importance of such architectural designs in pre-Islamic and early Islamic art cf. King 1982.
30 King 1982, pp. 24-28. As examples of architectural friezes in early Islamic art King quotes the bronze panels in the Dome of the Rock, dated 691, the mosaics in the Damascus mosque, executed in 705 and the frescoes adorning the walls in Qusayr 'Amra (711); cf. op. cit., p. 25.
724 and 727 A.D., and proceeds - on the basis of that comparison - to suggest a dating in the second half of the 8th century for the vessel. 32

The tree-like plant structure displayed underneath each of the arches recalls the vegetal designs on the probably 8th/9th-century ewer in the Walters Art Gallery (ewer type MW 3/7). However, the execution of the buds and other details on ewer 4 (fig. 3) appears much more conventionalized, with less precision devoted to a naturalistic rendering of the design, so it may be possible that this piece has to be dated slightly later than the WAG ewer and, accordingly, ewer 2 (pl. 1) in the Berlin Museum. 33

The only other ewer in this category that reveals any discernible ornamentation is ewer 3 (fig. 2). However, its nearly exclusively punched designs on body, shoulder and neck (fig. 14) are too badly worn or too general in style to yield information useful for provenance or dating. Only the scrolling frieze applied to the lower body seems to permit comparison with a stylistically somewhat similar panel on the neck of a probably late 9th/10th-century ewer of uncertain provenance (ewer type MW 4/5, fig. 15).

To sum up, the considerations presented above suggest that the ewer type discussed here reveals typological links with other early Islamic bronze vessels. These were probably current in eastern Mediterranean lands as well as certain regions of Mesopotamia. The fringes of western and north-western Iran have also been implicated as possible areas with regard to their origin. Finally, the curious similarity in profile between the ewers and certain wooden vessels from the Caucasus should also be noted.

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33 Cf. op. cit., Ch. III, p. 96; the assumption that ewer 4 (fig. 3) was produced slightly later than ewer 3 (fig. 2) may be borne out by its much simplified structural features, such as the lower knob-like feet, the waisted cylindrical neck with central collar instead of the more complex bipartite neck and the degenerated, flat and nearly perfectly straight handle, whose upper attachment plaque has become stylized without any attention paid to the decorative enhancement of this area, any longer.
As for the dating, the 8th or 9th century may come closest to the truth, if one is to judge by the similarity between the decorative details on ewers 2, 3 and 4 (pl. 1, figs. 2, 3) and those found on other artefacts dated to that period.\footnote{Baer, in dealing with this group, was already confronted with the problem of its provenance and points out that despite some attempts to link the pieces with Iranian lands, the Persian derivation could not be confirmed. She suggests that a Near Eastern or possibly Egyptian origin should be given equal consideration; cf. Baer 1983, p. 90; Allan in a short note regarding the group suggests that the pieces may originate from *Abbāsid* Mesopotamia; cf. Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 219. Melikian-Chirvani, on the other hand, attributes the whole group to Khurāsān, apparently on the basis of a comparison between the Berlin ewer’s cylindrical, horizontally fluted body on three feet and the profile of a large ceramic bowl from Nīshāpūr as well as certain eastern Iranian ceramics in general. However, he did not, as far as I could see, give any reference for those pieces and therefore I am unable to comment on his argumentation; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch.III, pp. 182, 203.}

4. Function

At present, there are no indications whatsoever as to the original function of the ewers assembled in this category and neither their shape nor their decoration provide any clue.

5. Summary

Early Islamic bronze ewers with squat cylindrical bodies on three feet and bipartite neck may have been developed in Mesopotamia or immediately adjacent regions such as the eastern Mediterranean lands or north-western Iran at some time in the 8th century, to judge from their typological links with pre-Islamic vessels from those areas as well as other early Islamic ewer types attributed to those regions and time. Their reliance on pre-Islamic prototypes cannot be proven, at present. Nothing is known about the vessels’ function.

Information regarding this ewer type is very meagre, indeed, at present, and the preceding analysis must therefore remain extremely circumstantial with many questions left unanswered.
Catalogue

1. Christie's 5.7.85, lot 761; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 26 cm.
Squat cylindrical body with horizontal fluting stopping short of two plain bands below the shoulder edge and above the base, resting on three low, strongly waisted feet with splayed bases; in centre of very slightly raised shoulder rounded moulding; tall bipartite neck with waisted and faceted cylindrical lower part terminated by flattened ridge, above broad, faceted cylindrical section with round mouth and flat projecting lip with decorative lateral extensions; thick S-shaped handle of circular cross-section joins back of lip by means of small decorative plaque and shoulder edge by means of small rectangular bridge, before bending outwards and terminating in pyramidal knob; six beads in full-round occupy lower and central handle; thumbpiece simple leaf shape with central groove, bending backwards and ending in rounded knob. Punched decoration on lip; simple arcading with intermediate leaf motifs enhance terminations of neck facets; on front of body three vertical (?) bands with unread beneficary (?) phrases (not original?) (fig. 1).
Lit.: Christie's 5.7.85, lot 761.

2. Berlin Islamic Museum I 3556; bought in Tiflis; cast bronze, relief and engraved decoration; h. 38.2 cm, diam. 18.8 cm.
Shape as 1, but twisted handle attached to lip by two now fragmented extensions enclosing the latter's rear section; thumbpiece missing, only low circular base remains. On shoulder, deeply cut leafy scroll with engraved detail; around upper and lower body, bands with remains of alternating rosettes and merlons; on neck, facet terminations enhanced by curved double lines with intermediate lancet leaves (pl. 1).
Lit.: Sarre 1906, p. 5 no. 4, pl. II; Sarre and Martin 1912, Vol. II, no. 2973, pl. 126; Sarre 1922, p. 54, fig. 134; London 1931, pl. 229T (The depicted piece does not match the caption: the photo actually shows ewer 3 in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts); London 1932, p. 47 no. 91c; Pope 1938, pl. 244A; Schlunk 1939, p. 53 no. 151, pl. 49; Berlin 1954, p. 9 no. 30; Berlin 1967, p. 11 no. 20; Erdmann 1969, p. 110, pl. 83; Berlin 1971, pp. 43-4 no. 117; Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, no. III/9, pp. 52, 90-93; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 219; Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 25, 38 notes 28 & 29, 430; Baer 1983, p. 321 note 200.

3. Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Frederic Brown Fund 38.2; n. p.; cast bronze, punched and incised; h. 31 cm, diam. 14 cm, diam. base 12.5 cm.
Shape as 1, but shallow ovoid cavities disposed horizontally around shoulder edge; shoulder slightly more raised; upper neck section more elongated; more pronounced, palmette-shaped lateral lip extensions and floral handle attachment at the back; twisted handle with polylobed half-palmette as lower termination. Around lower body, band with punched design of scrollwork with central flower; shoulder cavities outlined below by engraved lines with intermediate quatrefoils on punch-dotted background; around outer shoulder, punched line and perhaps remnants of other decorative motifs; around base of lower neck, punched design of crosses set into lozenges; upper band below ridge with decoration (?) and bands on upper neck section with punched zig-zag design; on lip, punched rosettes; on lateral extensions, engraved details; on decorative attachment plaque, incised two-leafed bud or palmette; incised details on lower handle termination (fig. 2).
4. Hermitage; acquired in Dagestan; cast bronze, relief decoration; h. 25.7 cm.

Shape as 1, but very short feet; slightly sloping shoulder; instead of bipartite neck, tall, strongly waisted cylindrical neck with central rounded collar; flat, faintly S-shaped handle attached above to lip by clasps enclosing the mouth and below to upper body; thumbpiece missing, only rounded base remains. On body arcading, each arch enclosing an abstract tree-like structure; above merlon frieze; on shoulder, leafy scroll (fig. 3).


V. 1/1 Kuwait Nat. Mus. LNS 85 M; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 34.5 cm, diam. ca. 13 cm.

Extremely elongated cylindrical body with dense vertical facetting, tapering towards narrow shoulder with central rounded moulding; low footring; bipartite faceted neck similar to that on 1-3, but upper part squatter and flaring towards mouth; flat, projecting lip; rounded, slightly S-shaped handle with flat inside and three half-beads in centre joins lip by means of two half-palmette-shaped extensions enclosing its back and side sections; below, handle attached to upper body, lower termination resembles crested bird’s head; thumbpiece pomegranate. Neck facets outlined by incised lines with rounded motifs between the curved terminations (fig. 4).

Plate 1
MW 1/2. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 38.2 cm
(West Berlin, Islamic Museum, inv. no. 3556).
FIG. 1
MW 1/1. Bronze Ewer, h. 26 cm
(Christie's 5.7.85, lot 761).

FIG. 2
MW 1/3. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 31 cm
(Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 38.2).
FIG. 3  
MW 1/4.  Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 25.7 cm (Leningrad, Hermitage).

FIG. 4  
MW 1/4.  Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 34.5 cm (Kuwait, National Museum, inv. no. LNS 85 M).
FIG. 5
Fragmented Early Islamic Pottery Ewer from Susa, South-Western Iran.

FIG. 6
Wooden Ewers from the Caucasus (after Mourier 1907, p. 183 lower figure).
FIG. 7
8th/7th-Century Bronze Ewer (MW 3/V-4).

FIG. 8a
Phoenician Pottery Ewers with Bipartite Necks. 10th-8th Century B.C.
FIG. 8b
Roman Pottery Ewers of "Terra Sigillata" Ware found in Cologne.
1st Century A.D. (after Gose 1984, pl. 11 nos. 170 & 172).

FIG. 9
Byzantine Water heater excavated in the Royal Tombs of Ballana in Nubia.
FIG. 10
Cast Bronze Ewer attributed to 9th/10th-Century Iran (MW 3/V.2).
Rosette and Merlon Motifs on the Upper Body of Ewer MW 1/2 (after Sarre 1906, p. 5 fig. 1).

Floral Designs displayed on an Early Islamic Silver Bowl from Iran.

Relief Vine Scroll on the Shoulder of Ewer MW 1/2 (after Sarre 1906, p. VIII).
FIG. 14
Punched Designs on Ewer MW 1/3.

FIG. 15
Decorative Panels on the Neck of Ewer MW 4/5.
Chapter 7

Ewer Type MW 2: Cast Bronze Ewers with Pear-shaped Body, Waisted Neck and Horizontal Spout issuing from the Mouth

A very large and heterogeneous group of cast bronze ewers, which has been variously attributed to late Sasanian and early Islamic Iran, comprises various varieties of ovoid or pear-shaped vessels with horizontal spouts. Three main sub-groups can be distinguished and will be dealt with in turn.

1. General Description

1.1. Sub-group 1 (Cat. nos. 1-7; figs. 1-3, pl. 1, figs. 4-6)

Ewers belonging to the first sub-group have bulbous ovoid or pear-shaped bodies resting on tall and sometimes quite broad feet with annular ridges. Their bases can be plain (cat. no. 1, fig. 1), dented (cat. no. 5, fig. 4) or carry a pearl border in relief (cat. no. 6, fig. 5). One ewer has a low circular base instead of the typical pedestal foot (cat. no. 2, fig. 2). The neck, which can be plain (cat. nos. 1 and 3, figs. 1, 3) or faceted (cat. nos. 2, 4-7, figs. 2, pl. 1, figs. 4-6), is of varying length and either waisted or conical (cat. no. 5, fig. 4), but always separated from the body by a rounded collar.

The long horizontal spout above is tubular, very narrow and of either rectangular or triangular (cat. no. 5, fig. 4) section. The small almond-shaped

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1 It is at the moment still notoriously difficult to distinguish precisely between objects produced under Sasanian rule and those made after the Islamic conquest, as there seems to have been a nearly uninterrupted and unchanged production of traditional objects in Iran for a considerable period following the establishment of Islamic rule in the country.

2 In three cases (cat. nos. 3, 4, 7) the original feet are missing and no comment can therefore be made on their appearance.
mouth area is either covered by a hinged lid or left open (cat. nos. 2, 3, 7, figs. 2, 3, 6). In all cases a projecting lip, either flat or rounded, runs around the mouth. The lateral extensions surrounding the outer mouth are mostly lobed so as to indicate abstract floral motifs.

The handle is more or less S-shaped, of either angular or rounded appearance and plain. In one case, however, the handle is twisted (cat. no. 7, fig. 6), and on another ewer it is made up from superposed heart-shaped sections (cat. no. 5, fig. 4). Invariably, the handle is attached to the back of the neck and the central or lower body by means of zoomorphic attachments, which are stylized to varying degrees. The thumbpieces, if extant, are rendered as rectangular or square knobs with cut edges resting on a low, rounded base.

1.2. Sub-group 2 (Cat. nos. V. 1/1-2; fig. 7)

The second variety of bronze ewers with horizontal spouts (cat. nos. V.1/1 and V.1/2, fig. 7) features a very tall and slender pear-shaped body resting on a low foot-ring. Above, the body tapers strongly to receive a small broad collar, which introduces a long and narrow neck. This tapers very slightly towards a broad, angular spout comprising an oval mouth section which continues into a pinched narrow pouring section closed at the tip. The handle, which is angular and slightly S-shaped, can be either plain or has central beading. It joins the back of the spout and, by means of an abstract zoomorphic attachment, the central body. The thumbpiece is rendered as a simple pomegranate.
1.3. Sub-group 3 (Cat. nos. V.2/1-10; V.2/1/1; figs. 8-15, pl. 2, figs. 16, 17)

The ewers assembled in group 3 show a general resemblance in their body profile to those of sub-group 1. They have more or less bulbous, pear-shaped or ovoid bodies resting either on tall pedestal feet (cat. nos. V.2/1-3, figs. 8-10) or on low slanting bases of varying height. The body tapers to receive a rounded and projecting collar, which is for the most part fairly thin and undecorated. Broad collars, however, also occur (cat. nos. V.2/5 & V.2/7, figs. 12 & 14), and decoration of this area can be found as well (cat. no. V.2/2, fig. 9). The neck rising above is tall and waisted. At the top it extends into a long narrow spout, which projects horizontally from an almond-shaped mouth section. Its tip is closed towards the front, while the mouth and the upper side of the spout are left open. Around the outer edges of spout and mouth runs a flat, sometimes rounded ridge, which in one case (cat. no. V.2/7, fig. 14) is enhanced by two laterally protruding dented motifs of probably floral origin.

The handle is slightly S-shaped and attached to the upper neck and central body by means of more or less stylized zoomorphic attachments. Only in one case (cat. no. V.2/1, fig. 8) has this system been replaced by a stylized feline making up the handle, with its paws resting on the back of the mouth and the back of the central body. The body of the handle can be angular or rounded. It is mainly left plain, but in two cases obliquely set grooving (cat. no. V.2/9, pl. 2) and half-beading (cat. no. V.2/10, fig. 16) occur along the back. If a thumbpiece exists, it is rendered as a rectangular or rounded knob with cut edges set on a low base.

Ewer V.2/1/1 (fig. 17), although typologically related to the ewers of sub-group 3, differs from the other pieces in several aspects. Firstly, its body is made of high-tin bronze rather than ordinary bronze. With an over-all height of 15.8 cm it is considerably smaller than the other objects, which range from 29 cm for ewers with low bases to 43 cm for vessels with a pedestal foot.
Its body, resting on a broad, low foot-ring with concave base, is still pear-shaped, but squat and so bulbous that it appears nearly globular. Its surface is facetted. Eleven pentagonal facets appear around the bottom and top of the body. Two rows of imbricated lozenges are inserted between their triangular ends in the central area.\(^3\) The angular collar at the base of the neck is likewise facetted, and so is the squat, cylindrical neck, which is only slightly waisted.

The pouring section rises from the neck at a sharp angle and is clearly separated from it, a treatment which differs from the fluent entity of neck and spout on the other ewers. The spout is also shorter and more angular towards the tip. The likewise facetted handle is made of ordinary bronze and fashioned in similar style to those applied to the other objects of this group. However, the zoomorphic elements have here deteriorated into unidentifiable and shapeless attachments.

2. Decoration

2.1. Sub-group 1 (Cat. nos. 1-7; figs. 1-3, pl. 1, figs. 4-6)

Apart from ewers 1 - 3 (figs. 1-3) which remain undecorated, the ewers of the first sub-group are characterized by extensive ornament executed in relief which is further enhanced by secondary incised motifs and on occasion (cat. no. 4; pl. 1) sparse copper inlay. Thus, the body of ewer 4 (pl. 1) features a design of two large peacocks picking the branches of a fantastic palm-tree (fig. 19), while the spout has an incised scroll and an animal figure along its sides.

On ewer 5 (fig. 4) the relief decoration has been applied to the body and the neck. The former shows on each side a female piper accompanying a supernatural quadruped. On the façade of the body these two identical scenes are separated by a small flower. The neck has two addorsed griffins or similar fantastic monsters with

\(^3\) Melikian-Chirvani 1974, pp. 129-31.
a scroll design below. Here again, the spout receives an incised ornament, in this case a succession of horizontally disposed palmette leaves. On ewers 6 and 7 (figs. 5, 6) the relief decoration is non-figural. In the case of ewer 6 (fig. 5) three large medallions with central abstract tree designs occupy the body, while on ewer 7 (fig. 6) a system of detached almond-shaped bosses has been chosen for this area.

2.2. Sub-Group 2 (Cat. nos. V.1/1-2; fig. 7)

As for the ornamentation, in this case incised, which was applied to the ewers of sub-group 2, detailed comments can only be made about the bronze vessel from Kuwait (cat. no. V.1/1; fig. 7), as a photograph of no. V.1/2 was not obtainable for closer examination. Nevertheless, it can be said with regard to ewer V.1/2 that the lower body displays rectangular panels with central x-like motifs, while the spout shows a vine motif. Ewer V.1/1 (fig. 7), on the other hand, carries a deeply-engraved system of large-scale scrollwork which covers the body completely. Similar scrolls, but more delicately executed and only slightly incised, cover the neck and the sides of the spout.

2.3. Sub-Group 3 (Cat. nos. V.2/1-10; V.2/1/1; figs. 8-15, pl. 2, figs. 16, 17)

All the ewers of sub-group 3 which rest on a pedestal foot (cat. nos. V.2/1-3, figs. 8-10) are undecorated. Many of the ewers on a low base are also plain (cat. nos. V.2/4-6, V.2/1/1, figs. 11-13, 17). Those vessels which are decorated carry

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4 This could perhaps be interpreted as an indication that they were of somewhat inferior importance and status in comparison with the more precious silver vessels still current at the time.
ornamental themes which range from small individual elements set against a plain background to decorative schemes involving the entire surface.

Thus, the only decoration on ewer V.2/7 (fig. 14) comprises a short silver-inlaid Kufic inscription naming one Bakr ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. On ewers V.2/8-10 (fig. 15, pl. 2, fig. 16), on the other hand, the body and sometimes additionally the neck or indeed other parts of the ewer are covered by decorative motifs and compositions to a varying degree. Thus, ewer V.2/8 (fig. 15) displays lateral vase motifs and a central cartouche containing a sphinx.

The body of ewer V.2/9 (pl. 2) is covered comprehensively by two large medallions with a pair of revellers in intimate embrace. The medallions are separated in the front and at the back by addorsed griffin-like creatures. On this ewer the neck also receives extensive ornamentation, including a Kufic inscription, scrollwork and quadrupeds.

On ewer V.2/10 (fig. 16), finally, the central body, flanked by ornamental arcading above and below, is enclosed by a succession of floral medallions alternately linked with others containing confronted birds. Above and below the main decorative scheme the ewer carries bands of quadrupeds alternately running clock- or anticlockwise against a scrolling ground. Just below the shoulder collar runs a large panel of Kufic on a scrolling ground, while the neck is ornamented above and below by decorative arcading. Further arcading, though much more simplified, can be found on the lower body, just above the foot of the vessel.

3. Origin of Ewer Type

3.1. Sub-group 1 (Cat. nos. 1-7; figs. 1-3, pl. 1, figs. 4-6)

The origin of ewers of this particular sub-group has often been related to late Sasanian prototypes made of silver. However, strictly speaking, none of the objects
presented as comparative material shows any convincingly close resemblance to the pieces under discussion, particularly as far as the peculiar shape of the spout is concerned.

Undeniably, the Sasanian silver ewers do display a very similar profile - comprising an ovoid or pear-shaped body, a pedestal foot and a long, waisted neck. However, the horizontal spout, which is also such a characteristic feature of these objects, is rendered in a very different way. Here, the neck extends into a flat almond-shaped spout with a protruding, angular edge terminating in a pointed tip. The tip of the spout is closed, and thus any liquid would be forced over its upper edge (fig. 19).

In the case of the Islamic bronze ewers under discussion the spout consists of a rounded mouth section, protruding from the neck, with a small almond-shaped and often lidded aperture above. Towards the front, this section narrows down abruptly and extends into a very narrow and very long tube, which is mostly closed from above. With a spout system like this the liquid flows through the tube rather than over the outer edge.

From these observations it becomes clear that although the Islamic ewers and their immediate predecessors share a similar profile and the same concept of a horizontal spout, the technical execution of this concept is very different in both cases, and it can therefore not be readily argued that the spout profile of the Islamic pieces is directly derived from that of the Sasanian vessels.

There is, however, one late Sasanian silver ewer which in its appearance seems to provide a half-way stage between the "classical" Sasanian ewer shape and the Islamic bronze ewers (fig. 20). This piece, preserved in the Cincinnati Art Museum, shares its overall appearance with the other Sasanian pieces. Yet at the same time, several details in the ewer's execution seem to anticipate the profile of the later pieces: the more bulbous appearance of the body and the clear demarcation

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5 For examples cf. Michigan 1967, no. 19; Porada 1980, fig. 115; Sarre 1922, fig. 128. Some Sasanian vessels seem to have featured a similar spout, where however the tip was not pointed, but of angular section; cf. Harper 1978, p. 60 no. 18.
of the central body by the neck collar above and the emphatic ridge below, which at the same time serves clearly to set the lower body apart.\(^6\)

Lastly and most interestingly, the rendering of the spout seems to anticipate to some extent the later narrow tubular spouts applied to the early Islamic bronze ewers discussed here. The characteristic almond-shaped profile of the more typical Sasanian spouts, terminating in a closed pointed tip, has been abandoned here and replaced by an open tubular tip of square section, not unlike the tubular (though closed and more pronounced) spouts of the early Islamic vessels. However, even in the case of the Cincinnati ewer the similarities with the pieces under discussion are not far-reaching enough to argue that they may have derived directly from such vessels of probably Sasanian origin.

In fact there are indications that their origin may have some connections with pre-Islamic metal objects from countries to the west of the Sasanian empire, particularly the Roman world. It has often been suggested in the past that the general body profile of early Islamic bronze ewers with horizontal spouts can be traced back ultimately to a late Roman ewer shape current in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. (fig. 21).\(^7\)

This type was characterized by a bulbous, inverted pear-shaped body, which rested on a high pedestal foot with an annular knob in the centre. Above the body rose a conical neck interrupted by a collar in its upper section. From the upper neck projected a horizontal spout, which was rendered as an open tube of semicircular section springing from a horseshoe-shaped mouth (fig. 22).\(^8\)

This Roman shape gradually penetrated Sasanian metalworking traditions and was subsequently modified to suit contemporary Iranian taste.\(^9\) In the process the body became pear-shaped with a taller pedestal foot. The collar below the spout

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\(^8\) Zahn 1917, cols. 263-304; Strong 1966, pl. 56A; Peirce and Tyler 1932-4, pls. 58/9. The silver ewer of this type in Berlin is hammered from sheet silver. The foot and the upper neck with the spout are worked separately and soldered on, as is the handle. The height of the vessel is 32 cm, 37 cm with handle. It weighs 1863.2 grams.
on the late antique pieces was removed and another one added around the lower neck. The spout also underwent changes in that the distinct open tube springing from a horseshoe-shaped mouth was replaced by an almond-shaped spout with a closed pointed tip, in which mouth and pouring section present a continuous entity surrounded by an angular outer ridge.

This Sasanian modification of the late antique vessel shape subsequently became the most popular standard ewer type in Iran for centuries to come, and because of this popularity it even survived the collapse of the Sasanian empire for quite some time. Muslim artists working in this area during the first years of Islamic rule still drew their inspiration from Sasanian artefacts to a large extent, and there can be little doubt that at least one major feature of the early Islamic bronze ewers under discussion, i.e. the general body shape, was based on Sasanian silver ewers, which in their turn served as intermediate transmitters of an older late Roman concept.

The peculiar spout of the Islamic vessels, on the other hand, cannot be directly related to such predecessors, as we have already indicated above. It does, however, show a striking resemblance to the horizontal spout of a late Roman silver ewer, which was found as part of the famous Esquiline treasure on the outskirts of Rome and is datable to the late 4th century (fig. 23).  

Following the contemporary fashion in the Roman world for bold, angular geometric shapes and complex polygonal forms, this remarkable vessel consists of a body comprising seventeen facets which break at angles to form the foot and define the shoulder and neck mouldings of the vessel. The neck receives the horizontal spout, which consists of a rounded, faceted mouth section with small aperture and a long and closed pouring tube of triangular section. The mouth opening was originally lidded, as can be concluded from the remaining hinge at the junction of handle and rim. In considering the design of the spout found on the late Roman

silver ewer, the strong similarity with the early Islamic pieces becomes obvious and is the more remarkable as several centuries separate the dates of their manufacture.

It appears that the design of the early Islamic bronze ewers with tubular horizontal spouts comprised in sub-group 1 presents a synthesis of two main elements which seemingly derive from two different pre-Islamic metalworking traditions. The body profile recalls Sasanian prototypes, while the rendering of the spout hints at direct late Roman inspiration.

3.2. Sub-group 2 (Cat. nos. V.1/1-2; fig. 7)

Early Islamic ewers of this shape are extremely rare, and until now only two pieces have come to my attention. Their profile at first sight faintly recalls well-known Sasanian silver vessels with their angular almond-shaped spouts, long necks and pear-shaped bodies. However, such a resemblance is in fact too superficial readily to suggest a direct evolution of the former from the latter.

A virtually unknown and very peculiar type of late or post-Sasanian bronze ewer, however (figs. 24 & 25), seems immediately to anticipate the ewers under discussion. One piece of this group was dated by Sarre to the 5th century A.D. (fig. 24). It has a very long-drawn, bottle-like body on a low foot-ring. The tall neck with horizontal ribbing is surmounted by a very long, slightly sloping and angular spout with a closed tip. The handle is attached directly to the back of the spout, and to the central body by means of an abstract zoomorphic motif, i. e. exactly the same handle attachment as on the Islamic examples discussed above. The back of the handle displays half-beading, which is echoed in the central beading on the Islamic ewer (no. V.1/2) from the Feisal Research Centre.

The decoration on the "Sasanian" piece, too, shows an indirect relation to that particular ewer. The upper part of the vessel's tall body is decorated with an

12 Sarre 1922, p. 66, pl. 127 left; Sarre and Martin 1912, no. 2981, pl. 127.
ornamental panel of horizontal layout. A band of probably abstract rosettes is surmounted by two arched bands set obliquely and enclosing palmette-like motifs below and cross-like motifs above. The remaining part of the body is enhanced by fine vertical facetting. This system of horizontal ornamentation on the upper body and vertical enhancement of the major part of the lower body appears to be retained exactly on the ewer from the Feisal Research Centre with its horizontal ribbing on the shoulder and the long rectangular panels with x-like motifs on the main body.¹³

A late or post-Sasanian bronze ewer preserved in a monastery in Swanetia (Caucasus area) comes closest to the Islamic ewers under discussion here (fig. 25).¹⁴ Its extremely elongated, pear-shaped body, the projecting neck collar and (in comparison to the former "Sasanian" piece) the shorter and slightly pinched spout immediately relate it to the pieces under discussion. The principle of over-all decoration adhered to on this vessel, which displays a net of ornamental lozenges containing single floral stalks and thus copies a design based on late Sasanian textiles, and the engraved enhancement of the spout, are repeated on the ewer from Kuwait (no. V.1/1, fig. 7).¹⁵

It appears that the ewers of sub-group 2 owe their profile to a little-known group of Sasanian or post-Sasanian bronze ewers. However, the contribution of certain Roman shapes cannot be ruled out either. A preliminary pointer in this direction may be a very interesting spout fragment belonging to the Water Newton treasure and dated to about the 4th century A.D. (fig. 26). Its appearance is strikingly similar to that of the spouts found on the early Islamic ewers in this sub-group.¹⁶

¹³ It has to be said here, however, that a detailed photograph of this ewer was not available, and the observations made above are therefore based on the catalogue description of the piece.
¹⁴ Erdmann 1938/39, p. 256, pl. 44 fig. 2.
¹⁶ I owe my knowledge of this piece to the Department of Classical Antiquities in the British Museum.
3.3. Sub-group 3 (Cat. nos. V.2/1-10; V.2/1/1; figs. 8-15, pl. 2, figs. 16, 17)

James Allan in his thesis suggested that, although the ultimate origin of this group of ewers was undoubtedly the same as that of sub-group 1, the intermediate style, far from being Sasanian, was almost certainly Sogdian. He saw a direct link between the profile of the Islamic pieces and that of ewers attributed to Sogdian metalwork of the 7th and 8th centuries which, though based on the classical prototype, were characterized by a lower base, simpler handle and a rimmed mouth. According to him, this profile contrasted markedly with the Sasanian form mentioned above. This argumentation, though certainly valid in general terms, requires some modification, as the evolution of the typological sub-group under discussion seems to have relied on more than just one stylistic impetus.

In fact, the direct reliance of the early Islamic bronze ewers of group 3 on Sogdian objects, as implied in Allan’s study, is less pronounced than he assumed. A short discussion of three typical Sogdian ewers will clarify this point.

A tall gold ewer dated to the 7th century A.D. (fig. 27), a 7th/8th-century silver jug from Semirechie (fig. 28) and another silver vessel from the shores of the Vjatka river (north of Kazan) and attributed to the first half of the 8th century (fig. 29) all share the same features. They have very bulbous, ovoid or pear-shaped bodies which significantly are not spherical but slightly flattened. They rest on broad bases, which can be high like that of the earlier gold ewer (fig. 27), an incorporated part of the body as is the case with the Semirechie ewer (fig. 28), or a low broad foot-ring set apart from the body, as featured on the early 8th-century ewer from the Vjatka river (fig. 29).

Above, the body tapers to continue uninterruptedly into a waisted neck, which expands into a fairly short horizontal spout drawn to a point and typically surrounded along the outer edge by a thin, prominent lip.\(^{19}\) The sturdy handle is invariably attached directly to the back of the mouth and to the central body below.

From this description it becomes clear that the differences outweigh the similarities between Islamic and Sogdian pieces. This is particularly the case with the flattened body profile and the manner in which the handle is attached. Features that do correspond are secondary details affecting the shape, such as the low foot-ring, which occurs nearly identically on the early 8th-century ewer from the Vjatka river and the majority of the Islamic pieces. The bulbous quality of the body profile is also echoed to some extent and, most significantly, the closed spout with the prominent lip has been adopted. However, despite these similarities, the fact remains that the over-all body profile characterizing the Islamic ewers of group 3, and especially those with a high pedestal foot, has little in common with Sogdian vessels. Instead, it suggests direct derivation from well-known Sasanian prototypes executed in silver.

The fusion of both Sogdian and Sasanian influences culminating in the production of the Islamic ewers under discussion may already have taken place in late Sasanian times, when a group of silver ewers absorbed Sogdian influence and adopted the characteristic almond-shaped spout with closed rounded tip and projecting lip.

At least two objects documenting such a modification survive. One silver-gilt ewer with oval medallions enclosing female dancers (fig. 30) was tentatively attributed on stylistic grounds to the eastern Iranian world, where a major artistic centre was active after the 6th century.\(^{20}\) A second piece in the Idemitsu Art Gallery in Tokyo is of slightly more unusual appearance with its horizontally ribbed neck and clearly demarcated lower body. This ewer, which is again ornamented

\(^{19}\) Apparently, as far as is visible on the photograph at my disposal, the Semirechie ewer does not seem to have such a lip.
\(^{20}\) Michigan 1967, pp. 60-1, 80, p. 104-5 no. 18.
with dancers, here enclosed by vine scrolls and accompanied above and below by musicians and animals, has not been dated, but is said to have come from Gilân, a region which was not a major Sasanian center, but served as a refuge for many Sasanian aristocrats after the fall of their empire (fig. 31). Thus the ewer could well have been transported there, rather than having been manufactured in that area.

Certainly, the provenance and dating of "Sasanian" pieces such as these are notoriously difficult and contentious, particularly as objects of "Sasanian" type continued to be made in the early Islamic period. However, even if these two examples are already early Islamic, they still display so many elements of traditional Sasanian art that in that case they must be closely related to slightly earlier Sasanian prototypes.

To sum up, it appears that the ewers of group 3 derive from a group of late Sasanian silver vessels which had been developed under the influence of Sogdian elements, comprising in particular the characteristic rendering of the spout.

4. Provenance and Date

4.1. Sub-Group 1 (Cat. nos. 1-7; figs. 1-3, pl. 1, figs. 4-6)

To start with the undecorated pieces in this sub-group, it is at present virtually impossible to say when and where exactly they originate. Nevertheless, to judge by the combination of Sasanian as well as late Roman features in their design, it seems possible that they were produced in an area of the Iranian world, where western and eastern artistic traditions could merge easily, i.e. Mesopotamia or those regions immediately adjacent to it, which were all close to Byzantine and indeed eastern

\[22\] Fukai 1968, p. 80.
Mediterranean lands.\textsuperscript{23} The precise time of their manufacture is also difficult to determine at present, but it must be sought in an era when both artistic currents were still strong in these areas, probably in the very first centuries of Islamic rule.

As for the decorated pieces in this sub-group, an examination of their diverse decorative schemes may assist in provenancing and dating the ewers more precisely.

The main decoration displayed on ewer 4 (pl. 1) shows two large peacocks which flank a fantastic palm-tree (fig. 18) and actually touch its lateral branches with their beaks. This design has led several scholars in the past to attribute the vessel to 8th/9th-century Iraq, mainly on the basis of rather generalized comparisons with \(^{24}\)Abbasid art forms, especially textiles, and the apparent co-existence of strong Sasanian and Byzantine elements.\textsuperscript{24} Unfortunately, none of those dealing with this object based their suggestions on a concrete and detailed analysis of the design and its meaning. This task will therefore be undertaken here in an attempt to assess the validity of the attribution generally made.

The composition applied to this ewer, i.e. two peacocks flanking a palm-tree, is unusual for an early Islamic artefact, and in fact it seems to be unique to this particular piece.\textsuperscript{25} It does not, to my knowledge, feature in Sasanian art either, where moreover both the peacock and the palm-tree as individual motifs seem never to have played a prominent iconographical role.\textsuperscript{26} In the lands of the eastern Roman empire on the other hand, both the use of individual peacocks and palm-trees, as well as their heraldic combination had featured strongly for centuries.

Already in Roman times the peacock had become an attribute of the gods and was held in great veneration as a symbol of apotheosis and eternal life.\textsuperscript{27} In the

\textsuperscript{23} It is interesting in this context to note the depiction of a ewer of apparently very similar shape on a sculptured stone altar screen from Tsebelda in Georgia, which has been dated to the 6th century A.D.; cf. Talbot-Rice 1965, fig. 229.

\textsuperscript{24} Orbeli 1964, pp. 766-7; Dimand 1959, p. 347; Kuwait 1990, p. 10 no. 2 (English text).

\textsuperscript{25} Ralph Pinder-Wilson has already pointed out that this motif does not seem to appear anywhere in the Islamic world apart from Sicily; cf. Pinder-Wilson 1973, pp. 292-3.

\textsuperscript{26} Schmidt 1980, p. 45; Schmidt's statement is also quoted in Daneshvari 1986, p. 48 note 105.

\textsuperscript{27} Kirschbaum 1971, p. 410; Lother 1929, pp. 23, 28, 44.
days of early Christianity the peacock's symbolism was perpetuated and incorporated into the new religious beliefs of the time. Its flesh was believed to be incorruptible. Because of this and its traditional qualities it became unseparably associated with the concept of paradise.

This role of the peacock as a paradisal bird led to its combination in art with palm-trees, which were believed to flank the holy waters of paradise, according to the description of St. Paul in the New Testament.\(^{28}\)

To the Christian believer the date palm also symbolized the tree of life which grew near the Gates of Eden.\(^{29}\) It stood for resurrection and eternal life and therefore featured strongly in artistic contexts of a religious nature, especially funerary art, either on its own or flanked by mythical humans or animals, including the peacock.\(^{30}\) The latter combination appears for example on the tombstone of Theodulphus from Tunisia, which dates to the late 4th century A.D.\(^{31}\) Very often this motif can also be found on early Christian artefacts from Italy and particularly from the area around Naples.\(^{32}\)

The theme remained popular in the Mediterranean lands for centuries and still appears as late as the 12th century, for example in the architectural ornament and on artefacts executed in Muslim and Norman Italy. Thus, paired peacocks confronting a palm-tree appear frequently on Sicilian ivory caskets and among the mosaics adorning Norman palaces such as the 12th-century Palazzo Reale in Palermo and the royal palace known as "The Zīţa", which was built on the outskirts of Palermo around 1170.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{28}\) Kirschbaum 1971, p. 365.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Op. cit. p. 366; for examples on textiles cf. Flemming s. a., pls. 18 and 19.

\(^{31}\) Kirschbaum 1971, p. 410.

\(^{32}\) Loher 1929, p. 72.

\(^{33}\) Pinder-Wilson 1973, pp. 261-305; Talbot-Rice 1964, p. 216, fig. 193; Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979, figs. 6, 7, 27. It seems worth mentioning that the mosaic in the Zīţa shows a striking resemblance to the image on the ewer in that the flanking birds likewise touch the lateral branches of the date palm with their beaks.
With these observations in mind the subject of two peacocks flanking a palm-tree on the bronze ewer under discussion seems to suggest a strong reliance on Byzantine and eastern Mediterranean traditions rather than Sasanian ones.

The peacock is rendered twice in identical fashion on both sides of the date palm. At first sight the style of its execution seems to recall Sasanian precedents, especially with regard to its general shape, the compact profile of the tail feathers as well as the broad neck band ending in a short flowing extension. Yet a closer examination of all these individual features in the bird’s design reveals that any Sasanian details utilized here have been greatly modified and in places enhanced by details stemming from another, more western artistic background.

The bird’s body profile is characterized by a striking degree of static stiffness, affecting even the fluency of the neck band. This has little in common with the dignified vitality and fluency of comparable birds appearing on Sasanian artefacts which, though created closely before or immediately after the fall of the Sasanian dynasty, still retain the traditional treatment to a large degree.\(^{34}\) Thus, even on an 8th-century silver bowl from Mazandarān (fig. 32) the long-tailed and crested bird depicted in the central medallion of the exterior still shows the mobility and fluency of earlier birds.\(^ {35}\)

The stiffness of the peacock’s shape is emphasised by its rigid tail feathers. In Sasanian times the tail feathers of most birds depicted in art were usually composed of long and detached, strongly curving elements, sometimes only two,

\(^{34}\) As already mentioned, the species of the peacock seems to appear only very rarely among the birds normally depicted in Sasanian art, and it seems that often birds which do not display the typical features of a peacock, i.e. the characteristic antennae, the pointed straight beak and the long tail feathers, have been mistaken for that bird, or objects with identifiable peacocks have been wrongly attributed to the sphere of Sasanian art. Thus Orbeli (1964, fig. 256c) depicts a peacock on a silver cup, which most recently has been attributed by Marshak to the Khazar Khaganate of the 8th/9th century and therefore cannot be counted as a Sasanian artefact; cf. Marshak 1986, pls. 91/2, p. 432 nos. 91, 92. Compare also Harper 1978, p. 64 fig. 21, p. 65 no. 21, p. 134 no. 58, p. 137 no. 61; Michigan 1967, no. 27, no. 32, no. 35, no. 39.

\(^{35}\) Harper 1978, pp. 77-8, no. 26; Michigan 1967, no. 17.
sometimes four or five.36 In comparison the peacock on the bronze ewer shows three broad feathers of nearly equal length adjoining each other and bending only slightly towards the bird’s head. This static and compact treatment to some extent recalls the rigidly defined curvilinear outline, often filled with small patterns, representing the tail of Sasanian senmurvs, such as can be found for example on the garments of kings depicted on the walls of the iwān at Taq-i Bustān.37

In addition to these Sasanian traces in the bird’s execution other details reveal more western influences. Thus, the bird’s facial features, particularly the copper-inlaid, round pupil surrounded by two concentric bands and the emphatic "eye-brow", show interesting similarities to an early Byzantine eagle figure datable to the 6th/7th century A.D. (fig. 33).38

The rendering of the small feathers covering the body and the wing ultimately also suggests Byzantine influence. The lancet-shaped elements with broad central veins and oblique lateral strokes often appear on early Byzantine bronze birds, and can also be found on Byzantine ivory carvings.39 The peacock’s tail feathers, despite their general similarity to Sasanian ones as far as their compact profile is concerned, are quite different in detail. While the Sasanian treatment uses a rigidly defined curvilinear outline filled with various abstract and ornamental patterns, the artist of this object rendered three large, adjoining feathers with naturalistic "eyes", which can easily be identified as those of a peacock.

Virtually identically treated tail feathers appear on a 5th- or 6th-century stone relief from Venice, where two peacocks flank a central pedestal basin, thus again confirming late Roman and early Byzantine contributions in the execution of

36 Harper 1978, p. 77 no. 26. One identifiable peacock with similarly compact tail feathers can be found however among the relief decoration of Taq-i Bustān; cf. Fukai 1984, Vol. IV, fig. 60 no. 57; cf. also ibid., pp. 86-7, fig. 36.
37 Harper 1978, p. 96, figs. 34a/b, p. 123 fig. M left., p. 121 fig. K; Schmidt has argued that the senmurv’s tail was actually adapted from Sasanian peacock images, but as these seem so exceedingly rare and as many bird representations with such tails cannot definitively be identified as peacocks, this theory might require further investigation; cf. Schmidt 1980, pp. 28-9.
38 Münster 1983, p. 41 no. 17.
the ewer’s decorative scheme (fig. 34).\textsuperscript{40} Finally, one minor motif added to the bird’s plumage actually presents an artistic innovation, which begins to occur frequently only on objects made after the Arab conquest. This is the peculiar pearl band which divides the wing vertically.\textsuperscript{41}

To sum up, the analysis of the peacock’s artistic execution reveals a synthesis of three artistic traditions. Byzantine elements are mixed with distinct Sasanian details, while at the same time the first early Islamic motifs start to assert themselves.

The peacocks flank a fantastic tree which, despite its composite and abstract treatment, has been identified as a date palm on the basis of the characteristic palm branches and two large fruit clusters hanging on either side of the stem (fig. 18). The image of the date palm, as has been mentioned before, does not feature prominently in Sasanian art, but does occur frequently on the artefacts of the Roman and early Christian world.

However, its depiction on objects from this area is always purely naturalistic and does not include any fantastic additions as is the case with the palm tree discussed here. Consequently, the iconographical heritage responsible for the tree’s heterogeneous appearance in this instance must be sought elsewhere.

Throughout history the date palm was of the greatest importance to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, as it guaranteed economic wealth and prosperity for the whole region because of its many properties. Consequently, it is not surprising that this tree should also feature prominently in local art forms, and from as early as Assyrian times it occurs frequently in naturalistic or stylized form on stone reliefs, architectural elements, pottery, ivory carvings and seals.

Most interestingly, many of these early artefacts seem to anticipate in their treatment of the date palm several of the elements occurring on the tree under discussion. One of these features is the palm’s crown or foliage. On the ewer this

\textsuperscript{40} Glück 1923, pl. 17.
\textsuperscript{41} Harper 1978, p. 137.
crown is formed by a large central, lozenge-shaped blossom, which is flanked by two leaves on long stalks springing from its upper sides, and two large superposed leaves below, the upper one of which is oblong and the lower one pointed. All the palm branches spring from a narrow oblong base, with two half palmettes protruding horizontally on either side. Apart from the latter, all elements are outlined by fairly broad borders.

This treatment of the foliage finds various interesting parallels in ancient Mesopotamian art, not only among numerous palm images, but also among the various abstract palmette designs ultimately derived from them.\(^4^2\) Thus, a very simple rendering of a palm-tree found on a cylinder from Khorsabad near Nineveh, which is datable to the first half of the first millennium B.C., seems to anticipate the arrangement of the leaves - a central vertical branch not unlike the lozenge-shaped one on the ewer's palm tree - and is flanked by three, in this case detached, sprays (fig. 35). All branches spring from an unnaturalistic, three-tiered base, a feature recurring in modified form on the tree discussed here.\(^4^3\) The peculiar vertical lancet leaf in the centre of the palm's crown occurs frequently in ancient Mesopotamian plant and palmette designs, and more often than not the whole ensemble is based on a geometric or indeed oblong base (fig. 36).\(^4^4\) Objects carrying this particular rendering of the palm crown seem to originate mainly from northern Mesopotamia, the ancient Assyria, and appear as early as the early first millennium B.C.\(^4^5\)

The next significant features of the ewer's palm tree are its fantastic lateral branches with bunches of fruit attached to their upper part, curling towards the tree's base. These peculiar attachments also find certain analogies in ancient

\(^4^2\) For a very comprehensive study about date palm representations in antiquity and their stylization or abstraction cf. Danthine 1937.


\(^4^4\) Compare images in: Op. cit., Vol. 2, fig. 44: stone vase, first half of the first mill. B.C.; fig. 165: cylinder from the same period; fig. 358: textile design from Nimrud, reign of Assurnazirpal (883-859); fig. 363: relief from Nimrud, first half of the first mill. B.C.; figs. 369 and 384: pottery from Assur from the same period; fig. 589: stone vessel, early third millennium B.C.

\(^4^5\) See footnote 44.
Mesopotamian date palm depictions. Some of these images show the extended hanging branches with the fruit clusters at the end, a very naturalistic treatment, while others are rendered in a more fantastic manner.

It is the latter treatment that seems to relate directly to the flowing extensions of the ewer’s palm tree. One such stylized depiction appears for example on a stone vessel datable to the early third millennium B.C. (fig. 37). Another palm tree with long and curved lateral branches appears on an Assyrian cylinder from the late 2nd millennium B.C. (fig. 38) and on a pierced bronze plaque from Nimrud, dated to the early 1st millennium B.C. (fig. 39).

It can certainly be argued that all these examples are from a period which is too far removed from the image under discussion to suggest a direct transmission of images from the former to the latter. However, the continuity of ancient Mesopotamian art forms, which bridges centuries if not millennia, has been observed before, as for example in connection with certain types of early Islamic pottery from Mesopotamia, which display iconographical features that link them directly to imagery used on ancient Mesopotamian artefacts of religious and mythical importance.

As for the curling lateral branches of the ancient palm tree images, they also seem to remain an integral part of such depictions for a very long time. Indeed, they also appear, in slightly modified form, in conjunction with date palms and more stylized trees among the early Islamic imagery in the Dome of the Rock and, more significantly in this context, are found on early Islamic pottery from Mesopotamia. Thus, a cobalt-painted white ware dish dated to the 9th-10th century (fig. 40) displays a simple palm-tree, flanked by two long and leafy branches which this time, however, rise from its base.

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50 This fact is puzzling, and one wonders, whether an old artistic detail had been misunderstood, or whether its position was modified to achieve a design which would be more visually pleasing and harmonious on a round plate; cf. Pope 1938, pl. 574D.
On another dish of Mesopotamian lustre ware datable to the 9th century (fig. 41) two long branches rendered in a very similar way rise upwards from the upper stem of a fantastic tree - perhaps a stylized palm-tree. Sometimes, these peculiar palmette branches also appear detached from a floral context and become enigmatically fused with various animals, as is the case for example on a 10th-century lustre plate allegedly from Rayy (fig. 42). On this piece, which technically and iconographically still relies strongly on slightly earlier Mesopotamian lustre plates, two branches of identical appearance spring from a mythical beast’s feet and again rise so as to enclose the animal.

In this instance, the detailed rendering of these palmette branches is interesting. The leaves are alternately filled with hatching or with deep lustre colour. This scheme recalls very strongly the one applied on the branches of the ewer’s tree. Here, each alternate leaf is engraved or filled with a large plaque of copper inlay.

The last feature of the ewer’s palm tree which remains to be discussed combines the stem and base: a column with central scrollwork resting on four steps. The peculiar treatment of the stem is not unusual in early Islamic times. Already in 691/2 A.D., some of the date palms depicted in the Dome of the Rock display ornamented trunks. In this case, however, they are shown bedecked with precious stones and mother of pearl.

One tree, found on the inner face of the octagonal arcade, comes closest to the ewer’s palm tree in its treatment of the stem (fig. 43). The superposed circles with enclosed six-petalled rosettes there seem to anticipate the superposed round scrolls enclosing polylobed leaves on the ewer’s palm trunk. On a small jug from
Susa dated to the 7th/8th century A.D. (fig. 44), such a decorated trunk may also have been intended, here serving as base for a stylized palm-like plant, not unlike the ewer’s palm tree in its general outlines. The central, superposed globular elements, although totally abstract, seem strangely related to the simple scrolls on the palm tree under discussion.

The stepped base on which the palm’s columnar trunk is resting finds immediate predecessors in the Byzantine crosses represented on Byzantine and early Islamic coins, as Allan has pointed out already.

However, yet again, ancient Mesopotamian predecessors may ultimately also have contributed to the inclusion of this minor detail into the composition of the ewer’s palm tree. Several ancient Mesopotamian tree representations include pyramidal bases. One example found at Susa and datable to around 3000 B.C. is made up of four steps and supports a seemingly abstract tree structure (fig. 45). On an ancient cylinder from the early first millennium B.C. a base of three steps features (fig. 46).

From the observations made above, the heterogeneous character of the ewer’s iconography becomes obvious. Strong Byzantine elements include the subject matter as such and details in the bird’s execution. Alongside the former appear Sasanian features, apparent in the general bird shape, the profile of its tail feathers and the degenerated neck band. The third influence comes from ancient and early Islamic Mesopotamian art forms, mingling with the first traces of "official" Islamic art, such as the associations with early Islamic coinage and the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock.

A synthesis of all these influences could most easily have been achieved within the artistic climate of early Islamic Mesopotamia. Because of its geographical
vicinity to both Byzantium and Iran, this area was constantly exposed to artistic influences from both sides. However, at the same time it always retained its own local traditions to a large degree. Therefore this area may be suggested for the ewer’s origin. As far as dating the object is concerned, a 9th-century date seems most acceptable, based as it is on the artistic comparisons with contemporary artefacts made above.

Turning to ewer 5 (fig. 4), it displays an even richer quantity of decorative elements than the piece discussed before, involving not only the main body, but also other parts of the vessel. Thus, the spout is filled with horizontally orientated and interconnected palmettes enclosed in heart-shaped frames. The neck displays two griffin-like creatures with long S-shaped necks, wings and horns, leaping towards the centre over an undulating scroll underneath.

The main body carries two elongated winged quadrupeds with palmette motifs on their flanks and the tips of their long tails. The beasts are accompanied by two pipers, distinguished by a cap with long lateral strands and a curious, shawl-like band enclosing them from above. The two groups flank a small central flower displaying five petals, which rises from a tall stem with four large leaves symmetrically flowing on either side.

In the most recent study of the object it has been suggested that the subject matter depicted here shows a double image of Bellepheron and Pegasus. However, a detailed examination of the iconographical elements employed here seems to exclude the possibility of such an interpretation. At the same time it seems to confirm another one made long ago by Orbeli in the Survey of Persian Art.

Already at first sight the exaggeratedly slim and winged body of the animals, their proportionally squat front legs on paw-like supports (not hoofs!) and the extended hind quarters lightly poised so as to imply an impending leap forward, immediately exclude any association of the these figures with an equestrian motif.

60 Cf. Orbeli 1964, p. 735.
The fantastic tail, seemingly extending forward between the animals’ hind legs, 
likewise does not correspond to a horse’s bushy tail, and even the head, though 
admittedly giving a faint impression of a horse’s features, in fact carries two long 
and slightly curved horns, and thus contributes even further to the suggestion that 
the identification of the quadrupeds as horses has to be rejected. Interestingly 
enough, most of the features characterizing the beasts on the ewer appear in 
virtually identical fashion in the representation of the leaping beasts on the ewer’s 
neck. These, however, immediately invite an identification as griffins, which in 
Sasanian Iran were beneficent creatures associated with royalty.61

A formidable bronze animal support preserved in the British Museum and 
dated to the 7th or 8th century A.D. (fig. 47), offers a striking parallel to the 
images on the ewer.62 It displays a very similar body structure, with the extended 
hind quarters ready to jump, the rather angular snout and the curved horns. 
However, the most aggressive and fierce aspect of this remarkable sculpture is 
somewhat less apparent in the representation of the beasts on the ewer’s neck and 
even replaced in the main scene by a rather static and subdued stiffness and loss of 
energetic alertness. This modification of the beasts’ character encountered on the 
ewer may suggest a certain loss of inner meaning and thus a slightly later date for 
the object’s manufacture than that of the bronze griffin discussed above. Another 
detail supporting this assumption is the use of vegetal motifs and foliation to 
add to the creatures’ body. The taste for this type of decoration seems to have 
evolved only towards the end of the Sasanian era and probably even later, and it is 
only on definitively Islamic objects that it can be most commonly found.63

Another griffin support contemporary to the one in the British Museum and 
probably from western Iran (fig. 48)64 is covered with convoluted leaf patterns and 
floral designs. These highly stylized plants turning back on themselves in S-shaped

62 Orbeli 1964, pp.720-1, fig. 250.
curves to form new leaves seem immediately to anticipate the floral motifs separating the griffins on the ewer. Thus, the central flower flanked by superposed wavy leaves is closely related to the plant on the griffin support’s paw, and the vegetal details on the back of the ewer to those on the griffin’s head.65

Both griffin figures on the ewer are accompanied by rather plump walking figures. These wear peculiar head-dresses of Sasanian derivation, with long double strands falling over their shoulders, and a narrow shawl-like band springing from underneath their arms and flowing behind their heads. Both play a horizontally extended flute-like instrument with their left hand, while holding a long staff in their right.

The theme of a flute player associated with a fantastic beast occurs very similarly on a silver plate preserved in the Hermitage Museum, which has most recently been attributed to northern Iran and dated on the basis of an inscription to the early 8th century (fig. 49).66 Although in this case the flautist is mounted on the back of the creature, the essential relationship between the imagery on the ewer and that on the plate is immediately obvious. However, the lively fluency and the delicate accentuation of the latter has been grossly reduced on the ewer. Here, the theme has been rendered in a comparatively crude manner, to the extent that certain iconographical details, like the majestic fierceness of the beast, the mounted position of the flautist and even her female sex, have been lost.

On the other hand, certain features not found on the plate have been enigmatically added to the scene on the bronze vessel. The staff in the flautist’s right hand, for example, might have been added to the iconographic repertoire of this scene from other models, such as a splendid silver plate in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 50), which most likely displays the same subject matter as the plate from the Hermitage, with the difference that the mounted female here holds a

66 Orbeli 1964, pp. 735-6, note 4; Marshak 1986, fig. 184, p. 436 no. 184.
long floral stalk in her right hand and a lotus blossom in her left hand instead of the long flute featured in the other scene.67

Likewise, the swaying shawls enclosing the flautists’ heads on the ewer may ultimately hark back to images such as that on the plate from the Metropolitan Museum.68 However, in the latter case the flowing lateral extensions belong to a cape falling down the figure’s back, while the halo enclosing the divinity’s head is completely separate. Perhaps the shawls on the ewer could be interpreted as a synthesis of these two, originally unrelated, elements at a time when the subject matter as a whole may no longer have been well understood.

Yet another origin for the shawls could be sought in objects directly indebted to Graeco-Roman art, such as a silver plate from the Cleveland Museum of Art.69 This piece shows a woman (perhaps Anahita), her head enclosed by a scarf, which after curling along her arms disintegrates into vine scrolls on either side, a treatment reminiscent to that found on the ewer.

As far as the interpretation of the ewer’s subject matter is concerned, the close resemblance to the plate in the Hermitage is of greatest importance. Orbeli identified the scene on the latter piece as Drvaspa, the spirit of the animal creation, riding Tishtrya, the star Sirius, incarnated as a fantastic beast along the river Ram, the stream of good pasturage which also represents the region of the sky.70 It seems reasonable to assume a similar interpretation for the images on the ewer, given their close iconographical reliance on the scene depicted on the plate.

The fact that the scene is represented twice in heraldic fashion with a central floral motif between the two mirror images may again hint at a certain ignorance of the original iconographical significance of the theme. It is certainly another indication that the ewer was made well after the Islamic conquest, as the duplication of artistic themes for purely decorative purposes, as apparently encountered here,
was not customary in Sasanian art, but did become popular in Islamic times, especially on textiles.\textsuperscript{71}

The simplified and probably misunderstood iconography applied on the ewer suggests a date somewhat later than that of the probably late Sasanian or early Islamic plate from the Metropolitan Museum and even that of the 8th-century plate from the Hermitage. Perhaps therefore, a 9th-century date may be suggested.

The area where the ewer originated has often been identified as Daghṣtān, and certainly the close iconographical and stylistic ties with the Hermitage plate, and with the bronze griffin mentioned above, which both are believed to come from northern and north-western Iran, would support such an attribution.

Ewer 6 (fig. 5) carries a purely vegetal design, rendered in a very abstract manner. Three interconnected oval medallions defined by thin borders occupy the sides and the façade of the ewer. From the lower centre of each medallion, it will be recalled, rises a tall, very stylized tree with three superposed single scrolls, each with a five-petalled stylized leaf, curving inwards on either side. Above, each tree terminates in a simple trefoil finial.

The tree motif is not new. It was a frequently used element in Sasanian art. Thus, a similar, though more naturalistic tree-like composition can be found for example among the rock reliefs of Tāq-i Bustān and in other media such as metalwork.\textsuperscript{72}

In all cases, most characteristically, the tree-like plant rises from a tall narrow stem, and the lateral, inward-curling buds spring from a horizontally disposed element, either a floral motif or a simple rectangular bar as is the case with the tree images on the ewer. However, the manneristic naturalism which characterizes Sasanian artefacts to varying degrees has totally disappeared on the bronze ewer and has been replaced by geometric abstraction.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71} Harper 1978, pp. 44, 138.
\textsuperscript{72} Pope 1938, pls. 167, 168C, 216B.
\textsuperscript{73} Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 28.
Alongside such Sasanian models, even closer parallels can be found to the trees depicted on the ewer, which in fact may have been among the various elements of the Hellenistic heritage that served as artistic models for the Sasanian treatment of the subject matter. A tree-of-life motif on a 5th-century textile from Antioch (fig. 51) and another one found on a 6th-century Coptic garment trimming woven by Zacharias in Akhmim (fig. 52) seem immediately to anticipate the style of the trees under discussion.\(^4\)

The layout of the design, i.e. the way it is repeated three times in identical fashion, and the complete lack of figural motifs, as well as any remaining naturalism in the plants, hint at a date well beyond the Sasanian and into the Islamic era. The style of the decoration seems a direct product of official Islamic conventions.

The buds within the scrolls find their closest stylistic parallels in 8th - 9th-century green and yellow glazed Mesopotamian pottery (fig. 53) and among the foliage on some of the marble panels which adorn the 9th-century mihrâb in the Great Mosque of Qairawân (fig. 54).\(^5\) On these grounds a 9th-century date may be tentatively suggested. Its place of origin may be sought to the west of Iran, perhaps Mesopotamia or Syria, if one may judge from the close links with Hellenistic textiles from Syria and Egypt and Islamic artefacts from Mesopotamia and Tunisia.\(^6\)

On ewer 7 (fig. 6) the new Islamic principle of abstract ornamentation finds its most concrete expression. Moulded motifs, which are often referred to as tear drops, but may in fact be identifiable as stylized lotus buds, are employed all around the body of the ewer. These bosses, which are enhanced around their bases by mouldings, point upwards and are laid out in horizontal units set obliquely.\(^7\)

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\(^4\) Lechler 1937, p. 399 fig. 48, p. 410 fig. 48; Falke 1921, fig. 35.
\(^5\) Hassan 1956, pl. 6; Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler 1973, pl. 137.
\(^6\) A similar dating and attribution of this piece was already suggested by James Allan in his thesis, based, however, on slightly less detailed observations; cf. Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 214.
\(^7\) Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 28; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 214. Allan alludes to further, probably incised decoration, which according to him was invisible in the published
Such ornamentation seems to have enjoyed great popularity in what has been referred to by Melikian-Chirvani as Sāmānīd art, and buds with or without mouldings around their bases appear on a large number of other 9th-10th-century metalwork objects from eastern Iran such as bowls, bottles, flasks and mortars. According to Melikian-Chirvani they also featured strongly among the moulded stucco ornaments applied to contemporary Nīshāpūrī architecture and on Bukhāra earthenware.

To sum up, it appears that this ewer was produced in eastern Iran during the 9th or 10th century A.D., as its ornamentation can be paralleled on other contemporary artefacts from that region. The decoration may represent an Islamic innovation based on the religious preference for geometric and abstract rather than naturalistic and figural designs.

photographs. This is not mentioned by Melikian-Chirvani. See also Marshak 1972, p. 77, pl. 13.
78 Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 28.
79 Cf. op. cit., p. 32 fig. 7, p. 41 no. 2 as examples.
80 Op. cit., pp. 28-9. It has been suggested by this scholar that this remarkably popular deployment of moulded lotus buds was a "modern Islamic decoration" (op. cit., p. 28), and at first sight it appears very innovative indeed in the level of its geometric abstraction. However, this ornamentation also finds strangely close parallels in eastern Mediterranean glassware dating to the late first or early second century A.D. Thus, a tall cup from 1st-century Pompeii and a ewer datable to the 1st or 2nd century A.D. both carry a virtually identical, though denser, system of two-tier buds laid out in horizontal units set obliquely. The only difference between the bosses on the 9th-/10th-century Islamic artefacts and those on these Roman glass wares lies in their direction, the former pointing upwards, the latter ones downwards; cf. Harden 1988, pp. 162-3 no. 84; Deiss 1966, p. 76. An interpretation of the peculiar "tear-drop" ornamentation has been offered in connection with the Roman glass vessels. The motif of the lotus buds was explained as ultimately deriving from representations of the knot holes on Heracles' wooden club which, through its association with the hero, had in in itself become understood as a symbol of fortitude and virtue; cf. Harden 1988, p. 163, Hall 1979, pp. 14, 72. At the moment it cannot be proven that any knowledge of this ancient association still existed in 9th-/10th-century eastern Iran, and most probably by that time such buds were employed for merely decorative purposes. However, the great popularity of this motif at that time seems intriguing and it remains to be explained what led to its repeated application on so many contemporary artefacts that they are now seen as one of the typical features of that age.
81 Cf. footnote 80.
4.2. Sub-Group 2 (Cat. nos. V.1/1-2; fig. 7)

Regarding the provenance and date of ewers V.1/1 (fig. 7) and V.1/2 in the second sub-group, it is interesting to note that their curious profile can be paralleled in early Islamic pottery. Thus, a very similar, though more robust and heavier, earthenware ewer with goddesses and dragon figures executed in barbotine technique (fig. 55) is said to have come from a Christian cemetery in Tikrit. Another jug of similar appearance with blue glaze was allegedly excavated at Rayy, but has close links with early Islamic pottery from Susa (fig. 56). This piece was tentatively dated to sometime between the 7th to 9th centuries. Finally, fragments of yet another vessel of this type were found in Susa.

With regard to the decorative features on the bronze ewers, detailed discussion is possible only with regard to ewer V.1/1 (fig. 7), as no detailed photograph of ewer V.1/2 was available.

It will be recalled that the decoration on ewer V.1/1 (fig. 7) was characterized by an over-all composition of undulating scrollwork. The over-all decoration of metal vessels with scrollwork was already popular in late Sasanian times. It appears for example on a 6th/7th-century silver-gilt roundel preserved in the A. M. Sackler collections. A plant design with stylized vine leaves and fruit covers the obverse surface, interspersed with rather naturalistic animals and birds. A contemporary silver-gilt vase from the National Collection in Tehran is completely covered by scrolling branches of two inhabited vine trees growing from a ground plain. In between, vintagers and other human figures appear. A 6th/7th-century vase in the British Museum carries a virtually identical decorative scheme (fig.

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82 Reitlinger 1951, pp. 15, 22, fig. 24.
83 Ettinghausen 1964, p. 677, pl. 191A
A more stylized version of the theme again occurs on a probably contemporary silver plate. 88

Comparisons between such "Sasanian" objects and the ewer under discussion do suggest a certain generic reliance of the later on the earlier pieces. However, the artistic principle of over-all scrollwork has been treated very differently. Thus, the technical execution of the ewer's ornamentation has left behind the traditional Sasanian technique, which achieved the typical relief effect on metalwork objects by carving away the background. 89 Here, the main design on the body still stands up clearly against the background, but this effect is obtained by emphatically outlining the motifs with deeply grooved engraving.

The iconographical rendering of the scrollwork is also far removed from that on the "Sasanian" pieces. The vine has been replaced by a profusion of fantastic buds and floral motifs, some revealing Sasanian influence. The human and animal figures so typical in the Sasanian scrolls have disappeared completely, perhaps not least under the influence of new Islamic fashions, which officially discouraged figural depictions.

As for the scrolling branches themselves, they appear somewhat more naturalistic and animated than their Sasanian predecessors. Buds and small leaves spring from their sides, and help to fill any remaining spaces within the individual tendrils which are not already occupied by various large blossoms. On the "Sasanian" pieces the branches are for the most part devoid of lateral additions. They branch off only rarely to carry vine leaves and grapes.

The spirit of the vegetal theme found on the ewer does indeed seem to suggest some more western influence. Thus, similar scrollwork in the degree of naturalistic sprouting and in style appear on a wooden panel originating from 8th-century Egypt or Syria (fig. 58). 90

87 Op. cit., p. 73, fig. 24a.
88 Michigan 1967, no. 51.
From the evidence considered above, it appears that the ewers of group 2 come from Islamic lands to the west and north-west of Iran and perhaps from Mesopotamia. They can perhaps be dated tentatively to the 8th century on the basis of similarities with contemporary pottery and, in the case of V.1/1 (fig. 7), early Islamic woodwork. The fact that the decoration on ewer V.1/1 (fig. 7) is slightly further evolved in comparison with the "Sasanian" examples may consolidate this dating.

4.3. Sub-Group 3 (Cat. nos. V.2/1-10; V.2/1/1; figs. 8-15, pl. 2, figs. 16, 17)

As for the undecorated ewers in this sub-group (cat. nos. V.2/1-6; figs. 8-13), the division into Sasanian and early Islamic pieces is at present completely impossible. Nevertheless, it seems that the ewers on high pedestal feet are very close to the "Sasanian" pieces discussed above. They may therefore slightly predate those on low bases, which seem to take up the more sturdy and stable aspect of the 8th-century Sogdian ewers, while still retaining the general profile of the Sasanian vessels. As for the provenance of these pieces, it is virtually impossible as yet to suggest a particular area of Iran. However, the apparent typological links with ewers from Sogdia may indicate that they were perhaps manufactured in the eastern fringe areas of Iran. With regard to ewer V.2/1/1 (fig. 17) Melikian-Chirvani compares its spout to certain Central Asian and Chinese vessels and appears to favour a dating around the 8th or 9th century A.D.91

As for the remaining pieces in this sub-group, clues with regard to their date as well as their provenance can again be deduced from their decoration. To start with ewer V.2/7 (fig. 14), which is preserved in the Herat Museum and is said to have been found in the Herat area, it is undecorated apart from a short Kufic

inscription inlaid with silver. The latter is positioned on the central body underneath the pouring lip, thus clearly emphasising the façade of the object.92

The inscription is executed in simple and unadorned Kufic. It reads "Bakr ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz", perhaps giving the name of the owner rather than that of the artist, whose name would probably have been preceded by the standard 'amala.93 On the basis of the epigraphy, particularly the descending, rounded ligature between two letters found on two occasions, the rounded curving of several lower letters, and the singular 'ain rendered by two obliquely set strokes converging on the writing line leaving the top of the letter open, Ettinghausen dated the inlay to a period between the last two decades of the 3rd and the first half of the 4th century A.H., i. e. between the end of the 9th and the middle of the 10th century A.D. He pointed out, however, that the ewer itself may predate the inlay, as its still marked reliance on Sasanian shapes suggested to him a date of manufacture prior to ca. 900 A.D.94

The artist’s decision to place the inscription underneath the spout on the front of the ewer reflects a fashion current in 9th-/10th-century eastern Iran, when the emphasis of an object’s façade by decorative devices, according to Melikian-Chirvani, became a typical feature of contemporary art.95 This observation broadly confirms the dating attempted by Ettinghausen on a purely epigraphic basis.

Ewer V.2/8 (fig. 15) carries three individual motifs set against a completely plain background. The sides are enhanced by small identical vase motifs, while the front carries an ogival cartouche with a sphinx set against a spiral scrolling background.96 Both vase motifs and sphinxes, the latter sometimes, as in this case, displayed in cartouches, belong to the standard repertoire of 12th/13th-century metalwork from Khurāsān and can be found on many objects of that period.97

92 Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 27-8, fig. 2; Ettinghausen 1957, pp. 332-3, fig. D.
95 Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 28.
However, the fact that the motifs here are displayed in a very isolated manner against a plain surface seems to suggest a dating rather near the beginning of that period, i.e. the 12th century, and Baer’s observation that sphinxes seem to occur on metalwork from about the middle of the 12th century certainly seems to confirm such a dating.\textsuperscript{98} The origin of the ewer may be sought somewhere in eastern Iran, which according to Baer was one of the earlier and most important regions in which objects with sphinx motifs seem to have been produced.\textsuperscript{99}

The bronze ewer preserved in the Louvre (cat. no. V.2/9, pl. 2) carries the richest and most comprehensive decoration in sub-group 3. The main features covering the vessel’s sides are two large polygonal medallions enclosing pairs of intimately embracing revellers. The medallions are separated in the centre by two addorsed griffins, which appear again in similar form on the ewer’s neck.

Sauvaget in a brief consideration of this remarkable piece attributed it to 12th/13th-century Persia, as he considered the main figures to be typical representatives of what he calls the Seljuq type, with its clearly Mongoloid features.\textsuperscript{100} Marshak on the other hand argued, probably more correctly, for an earlier date, as he interpreted the full and hardly Asiatic features of the personages as pre-Seljuq, while considering them somewhat later than typically Būyid figures. On that basis he suggested an 11th/12th-century date, which has been accepted more recently by Allan. The latter also pointed out quite rightly that the vegetal ornaments certainly predated those found on 12/13th-century metalwork from Khūrāsān.\textsuperscript{101}

It is equally difficult to determine the exact area from which this vessel originated. The closest stylistic parallels to the scenes depicted can be found on a 12th-century stucco panel from Rayy (fig. 59).\textsuperscript{102} However, certain details in the treatment of the figures on the ewer suggest a more eastern origin. Thus, the

\textsuperscript{98} Baer 1965, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{100} Sauvaget 1951, pp. 131-2, fig. 3; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 215.
\textsuperscript{102} Pope 1938, pl. 516.
intimacy of the scene expressed in the embrace is unusual in official Islamic art, but seems strangely to recall the sensuality of Asian and particularly Indian art.

Moreover, the peculiar seated position of the revellers, with the soles of the feet touching each other, seems to relate to the animated figure of a reveller depicted on a silver bowl probably from Kābulistān (fig. 60)\textsuperscript{103}, rather than to the stiffer posture of Islamic figures with their legs crossed or tucked underneath their garments. Such considerations suggest that the ewer’s origin may perhaps be sought on the eastern fringes of Iran or in modern Afghanistan.

The ewer auctioned by Christie’s (cat. no. V.2/10, fig. 16) represents another example of the elaborate ornamentation applied to medieval Iranian metalwork. This piece has been dated to 11th-century Khurāsān by the auctioneers with the suggestion that some of the decoration was added later. On the basis of the photograph at my disposal I could not identify the additions made, but the decoration as it appears today is certainly of a heterogeneous and incoherent character and will need further investigation in order to establish the original appearance of this vessel.\textsuperscript{104}

5. Function

How the ewers with horizontal spouts of sub-groups 1-3 were used is not known, but certain speculations can be attempted on the basis of secondary evidence provided by a) pre-Islamic prototypes and their depiction on contemporary artefacts, b) the occurrence of the Islamic ewer type on contemporary artefacts and c) the decoration on the ewers themselves.

a): While the late antique ancestor of the Islamic type was apparently used as part of an ablution set in conjunction with a basin\textsuperscript{105}, the Sasanian variant seems to

\textsuperscript{103} Marshak 1986, p. 436 no 180, fig. 180.
\textsuperscript{104} Christie’s 28. 11. 1983, lot 380.
\textsuperscript{105} Zahn 1917, p. 285.
have been in use predominantly as a drinking vessel. As such it is depicted on several Sasanian and Sogdian artefacts. On a 7th-century silver-gilt bowl probably manufactured in Iran (fig. 61), such ewers appear among the utensils attended to by a servant during a courtly festivity, perhaps celebrating a marriage contract or an investiture. A contemporary silver dish attributed to northern Tokhāristān (fig. 62) depicts the exploits of Heracles' life from Euripideus' "Syleus", including a banquet scene with a seated Sogdian prince and his lady, somewhat enigmatically placed in the middle of the Greek tragedy. The attendant who serves the lady from the left holds two ewers of familiar type by their handles in his right hand.

They appear again, this time housed in a special container, amongst the objects surrounding yet another feasting couple on a probably late Sasanian silver plate (fig. 63). Finally, a vessel with slightly different body profile but closely related spout is placed in front of a revelling princely personage and his lady reclining on a couch on a large painted pottery amphora uncovered in Merv (fig. 64).

Such depictions of ewers on pre-Islamic artefacts make their general function clear. They were designed for use at private functions and festivities, held by the Sasanian and Sogdian nobility in the circle of friends and family. They were to pour the wine that might give relaxation and entertainment during such banquets.

However, apart from this obviously utilitarian and secular function, the significance of such ewers actually lay much deeper and was of great ritual importance.

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106 On some Sasanian artefacts they are however also depicted in a clearly ritual context as pouring vessels, probably for water; cf. Ettinghausen 1984a, p. 313, figs. 4 & 21, where a female figure, probably Anahita, pours from such a vessel. Similar scenes also occur among the reliefs of Ţaq-i Bustān and on silver ewers; cf. Ettinghausen 1984a, fig. 11; Harper 1978, pp. 60-1. In this context the vessels have been interpreted as symbols of the celestial waters fertilizing the earth; cf. Christensen 1936, p. 454.

109 Talbot-Rice 1965, fig. 119; Marshak 1986, figs. 15 & 16.
110 Carter 1974, p. 180, pl. VI.
112 Orbeli 1964, p. 723.
repeatedly, have been associated with the celebration of Nawrūz, the Iranian New Year, which was not only celebrated in the Sasanian heartlands, but also in adjoining areas under Iranian influence, such as Sogdia. 114

During the six-day duration of the festivities marking the spring equinox, many official ceremonies took place at the Sasanian court, during which the king granted audiences to dignitaries, friends and family. Presents were exchanged and provincial rulers appointed or dismissed. 115 On the sixth day the ruler would then celebrate alone with his intimates, entertained by musicians and poets. 116 For him personally the New Year celebrations were of the upmost importance, as they marked the annual renewal of his reign. 117 This reinstatement was of a ritual nature, based on the belief that the king embodied the renewed universe and represented the legendary deified monarch Yim, who overcame the demon of aridity and death, thus making a new annual cycle possible. 118

In this context the courtly banquets at Nawrūz were not merely to be understood as a feast for pleasure, but represented the fulfillment of certain cultic requirements. During these festivities the most significant feature was the liberal serving of wine, again in memory of Yim, who was considered the legendary inventor of wine. Reclining on his throne, the king would drink to the point of intoxication. 119 This peculiar custom probably represented a symbolic communion with the gods, during which he partook of a divinely bestowed Water of Life in the form of wine, served to him in what could be called the chalice of investiture. 120

The enormous ritual significance of these banquets was certainly reflected in and transmitted to the utensils used during the rites involved. Obviously ewers and cups must have constituted the most important emblematic implements during their

115 Christensen 1936, pp. 166-7, 402-3.
120 Op. cit., p. 188.
performance. Indeed, many of the surviving silver ewers of Sasanian type display motifs that may well have some thematic connection with the royal Nawrūz.\textsuperscript{121}

They consist of a series of semi-nude female dancers holding an attribute, ewers among others, in either hand, and often displayed in some kind of arced setting.\textsuperscript{122} Their significance has often been discussed\textsuperscript{123}, but judging from the repertory of attributes associated with them, they seem to be related to seasons and months, and probably personify popular seasonal festivals celebrated in Sasanian Iran, of which Nawrūz was undoubtedly the most important one.\textsuperscript{124}

In view of the observations made above, it seems likely that the Sasanian variant of the ewer type under discussion had ritual rather than purely secular importance and was typically used for serving wine during royal occasions of ritual importance.

The custom of royal intoxication was continued in Islamic times, and the Umayyad caliphs frequently drank wine on particularly auspicious occasions, and also in places of ceremonial importance, in an attempt to assert the royal legitimacy of their rule by adhering closely to Sasanian court practices.\textsuperscript{125} The near-deification of the ruler and his symbolic feasting laden with divine significance was certainly a strong element of such events, as it had been under the Sasanians, too.

For the Muslim rulers these princely banquets were moreover reflections of the eternal revelling in paradise which was promised in the Qur'ān to every true believer. The pleasures of this life were understood as a vision of those promised in the next and they were, before all others, the privilege of the religious and political leaders of all Muslims, the caliphs.\textsuperscript{126}

The caliphs' conscious reliance on the customs of their predecessors most probably involved an adaptation of the appropriate ritual utensils as well. Indeed, on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{122} Carter 1974, pp. 194-201.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Carter 1974, pp. 200-1; Harper 1978, p. 61.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Carter 1974, p. 187; Grabar 1954, pp. 71-2, 83, 85.
\item \textsuperscript{126} The paradisical aspect of Islamic banquet scenes has been discussed by Shepherd 1974, pp. 79-92.
\end{itemize}
an early 8th-century silver plate from the region of Tokharistan, which depicts a feasting ruler at Nawrūz in a very similar setting to that on the late Sasanian plate in the British Museum (fig. 65), vessels of Sasanian type recur, including most significantly a tall ewer of familiar type with incised arcading.\textsuperscript{127} On a floor painting from Qaṣr al-Ḥāyr al-Gharbī (fig. 66) a similar, but much taller ewer is shown between two musicians, which most probably are to be understood as parts of a princely feast.\textsuperscript{128}

Throughout Islamic times drinking remained an essentially royal practice and was never adopted on any significant scale by the Islamic population as a whole.\textsuperscript{129} It retained its ceremonial and symbolic significance and was continually practised during official occasions to emphasise the exclusive greatness and divine glory of the ruler, not only by the early caliphs, but apparently also by later dynasties like the Buyids.

On a gold coin attributed to their rule (fig. 67) a ruler is seated crosslegged in a frontal position and holds a cup in his raised hand. He is served by two attendants, one of whom is about to pour from a ewer. In shape it still recalls Sasanian vessels, but it is now much more closely related to some of the Islamic bronze ewers under discussion.\textsuperscript{130} A very similar ewer is also depicted on an early 11th-century silver dish (fig. 68), showing a virtually identical scene to the one on the Büyid medal. This object has been attributed to the lands under Ghaznavid rule.\textsuperscript{131} Their courtly way of life reflected Iranian aristocratic and monarchic traditions very strongly, and judging from this unique plate, which was perhaps commissioned to commemorate an auspicious occasion like the inauguration of Mahmūd of Ghazna as the "King of the East" in 1000 A.D., Sasanian-inspired vessels, including the ewers under discussion, were still at least to some extent an

\textsuperscript{127} Carter 1974, p. 180, pl. V; Marshak 1986, pl. 193, p. 437, no. 193; Grabar 1954, pp. 61, 81, 87.
\textsuperscript{128} Schlumberger 1946, pp. 86-102, pl. B.
\textsuperscript{129} Grabar 1954, pp. 83, 89, 90.
\textsuperscript{130} Cf. op.cit., p. 88.
\textsuperscript{131} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 61; Kuwait 1990, p. 14 no. 19 (English text); Marshak 1971, pl. 29.
integral part of ritual and ceremonial in Iranian court life during the 11th century.\textsuperscript{132}

However, there are indications that the ewer type under discussion might not only have been in royal and princely use in Iranian lands alone. An 11th-century silver bowl (fig. 69)\textsuperscript{133}, which most recently has been attributed to Fātimid Egypt\textsuperscript{134}, depicts an enthroned lute-player flanked by various objects, including a ewer closely resembling the Islamic bronze vessels with horizontal spouts.

Perhaps this type reached Fātimid territory through the exchange of diplomatic gifts from the 'Abbāsid court or from Iran. Perhaps, however, such vessels were also consciously used in an official courtly context in order to copy the customs underlying the royal legitimacy of the caliphate in Baghdād, which after all was the main target of Fātimid religious and political aspirations throughout their rule in Egypt.

It is most likely that the ewers used at early Islamic courts were not made of cast bronze, but were hammered from gold or silver sheet. The religious condemnation of such precious metal vessels was apparently never considered as binding in royal circles, and several contemporary chroniclers repeatedly mention the large quantities of gold and silver utensils in the possession of kings and noblemen.

Some of these were obtained as tax from regions rich in precious metal, such as Ṭabāristān, which was obliged to deliver 300 silver cups annually during the late 8th century A.D.\textsuperscript{135} Others were gifts exchanged habitually between monarchs or sent by petty rulers and governors to a higher ranking royal figure on official occasions and the feast of Nawrūz.\textsuperscript{136}

Thus, in 743 the governor of Khurāsān sent among other gifts gold and silver ewers to the caliph, and in 805 Hārūn al-Rashīd received gold and silver

\textsuperscript{133} Kühnel 1971, p. 128 fig. 148.
\textsuperscript{134} This hypothesis was put forward in an as yet unpublished paper given by Julian Raby.
\textsuperscript{135} Spuler 1952, p. 475.
vessels from one of his regional representatives.\textsuperscript{137} As late as 1033 the Khurasani governor of the Ghaznavid Mas'ūd sent various presents including gold and silver vessels valued at four million dirhems to the court in Ghazna.\textsuperscript{138}

Additional riches were added to the royal treasures at times of conquest, as in 1029, when after the capture of Rayy by Ghaznavid forces thirty thousand dinars' worth of gold and silver utensils were carried off.\textsuperscript{139}

Perhaps the bronze ewers of the type discussed may have been used by lesser rulers unable to afford the splendours of the larger courts, but eager to copy royal practices at times when ceremony and ritual were required. Certainly bronze did also have a certain value, and a bronze worker was only affordable for a few, while iron objects served for the daily needs of ordinary people.\textsuperscript{140} It is feasible that the bronze ewers in such circumstances may have served a similar purpose to that of their silver and gold counterparts, and indeed, some of the decorative schemes encountered on them indirectly support such an assumption.

The ewer with the two peacocks flanking a date palm for example (cat. no. 4, pl. 1) has, as has been discussed, strong paradisiac connotations. As early Islamic royal feasts apparently had a divine aspect and were intended to represent an apotheosis of the ruler in a setting reminiscent of paradise, such an iconography would be most appropriate on a vessel used on such occasions.

As far as the interpretation of subject matter on ewer 5 (fig. 4) is concerned, Orbeli identified the scene on the latter piece as Drvaspa, the spirit of the animal creation, riding Tishtrya, the star Sirius, incarnated as a fantastic beast, along the river Ram, the stream of good pasturage which also represents the region of the sky.\textsuperscript{141} Although in this case the concrete ambience in which this ewer was used can only be guessed at, the context was most probably a ritual one.

\textsuperscript{138} Bosworth 1963, pp. 87-8.
\textsuperscript{139} Op. cit., p. 78.
\textsuperscript{140} Orbeli 1964, p. 763.
\textsuperscript{141} Op. cit., p. 735.
The tree-of-life motif on ewer 6 (fig. 5) could again remind the user of the afterlife in the Garden of Eden, as could the vase motifs and the sphinx on the Hermitage ewer (cat. no. V.2/8, fig. 16). The latter motif in particular, with its strong solar and cosmic associations, connoted a higher world.

Most revealing, however, is the decoration on the ewer preserved in the Louvre (cat. no. V.2/9, pl. 2). Here, the allusion to royal banqueting is a very obvious one with the two main medallions depicting two revelling couples. However, the spaces in between the medallions contain griffins, which at first sight seem strangely unrelated to the main subject. Inhabitants and guardians of paradise, these beasts give the banqueting scenes a strong transcendental undertone, and it could again be argued that the artist was trying to depict a royal feast in a paradisiac, supernatural setting.142

Such observations seem to hint at a continuing use of at least some of the bronze ewers under discussion in a banqueting context still laden with ritual significance until at least the 11th century A.D, but obviously further research will be needed to substantiate these initial suggestions. It is certainly not impossible that this ewer type was also used by a broader section of contemporary Muslim society, and in a largely non-ritual context. Thus, ewer V.2/7 (fig. 14) is most probably not a royal object, and the iconography encountered on ewer V.2/8 (fig. 15), which can undoubtedly be interpreted as laden with paradisiac significance, may at the same time have a more general apotropaic meaning. For the ordinary Muslim believer these motifs could also have served as a reminder of eternal light and life after death.143

143 Baer 1965, pp. 62, 64-5.
6. Summary

Cast bronze ewers with a pear-shaped body, a waisted neck and a horizontal spout issuing from the mouth occur in three major varieties. Two of these may have been developed in the areas of Mesopotamia and north-western Iran under the influence of Sasanian and Hellenistic vessel forms during the very first years of Islamic rule or even before. The third variety, on the other hand, though probably developed at the same time as the other varieties, may have more eastern associations, as it shows Sogdian as well as Sasanian influences.

As for the provenance and date of the ewers in this category, it appears that vessels belonging to the first two varieties remained popular mainly in the areas of their first appearance. They may date to the 9th century or thereabouts. Only one vessel, ewer 7 (fig. 6) of the first sub-group, has links with 9th - 10th-century eastern Iran.

The undecorated ewers belonging to the third sub-group may date to the very early Islamic period, while those with decoration have been dated between the late 9th and the 12th century. As for their provenance the eastern fringe areas of Iran have been suggested. The function of ewers in this category is not known, but it has been suggested that they may have been used at least partly during ritual royal banquets.
Catalogue

Sub-group 1

1. Cairo, Islamic Museum; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 40 cm.
Slender, ovoid body on pedestal foot with thick, round base and small relief band around its upper part; body tapers towards a narrow rounded moulding; tall, cylindrical neck with concave sides; long and very narrow tubular spout of angular profile; around mouth area, protruding lip surmounted by hinged lid with cast trilobed motif on top; broad, S-shaped handle joins back of neck and central body by means of abstracted animal head attachments; handle surmounted by tall, rectangular knob with cut edges resting on narrow rounded base. Undecorated (fig. 1).

2. Christie’s London, 21.11.86, lot 271; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 30 cm.
Form as 1, but slightly more bulbous and resting on low foot-ring; spout clearly demarcated from neck; polylobed lip around mouth; facetted neck; nearly square thumbpiece with cut edges on low, rounded base. Terminations of neck facets enhanced by incised lobing; simple engraving on neck; otherwise undecorated (fig. 2).

3. Tehran, Archaeological Museum no. 4800; Gurgān; cast bronze; h. 27 cm, diameter of mouth 4 cm.
Form as 1, but foot and base missing; neck shorter; hinged lid of spout missing; protruding stylized lip running slightly below level of mouth edge; body fluted vertically; on top of handle, square thumbpiece with cut edges on low rounded base (fig. 3).

4. Hermitage, inv. no. KZ 5753; Daghestān; cast bronze, relief decoration, incised, copper inlay; h. 40 cm (39.2 cm).
Form as 1, but foot replacement; neck faceted; lid missing; handle plain with thumbpiece missing; zoomorphic attachments abstracted. Around back of spout, simple incised scroll with central, seven-petalled leaf; on sides of spout, fox-like quadrupeds walking towards the tip; on main body, in relief two peacocks flanking central fantastic palm-tree on stepped base, actually picking on upper leaves with their beaks; details of design incised and inlaid; on lower body, petal border in relief (pl. 1).

5. Hermitage; Daghestān; cast bronze, relief decoration, incised; h. 43 cm.
Shape similar to 1, but much heavier and more compact; bulbous, pear-shaped body, the base of which continues into high pedestal foot with broad, stepped central band; lower part faceted and outer edge toothed; above, body tapers towards broad, slightly protruding, rounded collar at base of tall, conical neck;
around mouth section, broad, strongly protruding edge displaying stylized floral motifs; above, hinged lid (?); broad, angular handle only very slightly S-shaped, with 14 heart-shaped units on its length and zoomorphic finials with naturalistic details; the latter separated from main handle by two small superposed pearl bands; thumbpiece rectangular with cut edges on low, rounded base. On sides of finial, rosettes with recessed petals and centres; on sides of spout, incised succession of horizontally disposed, six-petalled palmette leaves in long, adjoining heart-shaped enclosures with interspersed single leaf motifs; on neck, in relief two symmetrically disposed monster-like quadrupeds with long S-shaped necks, wings and horns leaping towards the centre over a simple scroll undulating underneath; on both sides of body facing frontal axis fantastic, long drawn winged and horned quadrupeds with tails ending in split palmettes between their hindlegs; they are accompanied by female (?) pipers with head dresses and two long plaits, surrounded above by gauze-like bands terminating under the figures’ arms; in between figural units on lower front of body, five-petalled flower on high stem rising from base with four superposed leaves symmetrically flowing on either side of stem; on lower body, above annular ridge, upward pointing lotus leaves in relief (fig. 4). 


6. Hermitage; Daghestan; cast bronze; relief decoration, incised; h. 37.7 cm. Form as 1, but body more pear-shaped; pedestal foot broader, faceted in lower part with pearled outer edge; neck faceted; vertical rim surrounding mouth area, no hinge provision for lid; angular handle, only slightly S-shaped with very broad lower attachment of stylized zoomorphic appearance; thumbpiece, square knob with cut edges on low, rounded base. On body, relief decoration: three oval medallions adjoining laterally with two small rectangular motifs determining the points above and below, where the medallions separate to form their upper and lower curves; from centre of each lower curve rises a large and stylized tree-like plant with three superposed, single inward turning scrolls containing an abstract, six-petalled bud symmetrically displayed on each side of the stem; top of tree rendered as trefoil finial; in between spandrels of medallions, leaf motif and above them stylized, undulating scrollwork (fig. 5).


7. Kiev, Museum of Western and Eastern Art; n. p.; cast bronze; relief decoration, incised; dimensions unknown.

Shape generally as 1, but foot missing; faceted neck collar and neck, the latter broader and less waisted than on 1; lip around mouth area lobed (floral motifs?); rope-shaped handle. On body, cast two-tier almond bosses pointing upwards and set obliquely; on spout and thumbpiece, unidentifiable incised designs (fig. 6).


V.1/1. Kuwait, National Museum LNS 84 M; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 25.5 cm.

Very slender, elongated pear-shaped body on low foot ring; small rounded collar at base of tall, cylindrical neck; short, horizontal spout with pinched tip; angular, slightly S-shaped handle joins back of mouth and lower body, the latter by means of stylized zoomorphic attachment; thumbpiece, stylized pomegranate without base. On spout, petalled flowers in scrolls; on neck, leafy scrollwork; on body, large scale, all-over scrollwork with great variety of leaves, buds and palmettes; on foot, palmette scrolls; on back of handle, simple dotted motifs (fig. 7).

Lit.: Jenkins 1983, no. 37; Mallalieu 1983, pp. 12-3, fig. 4.
V.1/2. No Location; n. p.; cast bronze or brass, incised; h. 32 cm.
Form as V.1/1, but beading on central handle and ribbing on upper body. On lower body, rectangular panels, each with X-motif. On spout, vine pattern (no photograph available).
Lit.: Riyadh 1985, no. 80.

V.2/1. Rome, private collection; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 30.4 cm (33.5 cm with handle), max. diam. 10.5 cm.
Slender, pear-shaped body on high pedestal foot; tall, waisted neck, introduced by rounded collar and widening into a horizontal, slightly pinched, pointed spout with rounded lower edge; thick projecting lip all round; handle rendered as slender, naturalistic feline resting its front paws onto back of mouth; lower handle attachment engraved with parallel lines perhaps indicating tail end(?). Undecorated (fig. 8).
Lit.: Scerrato 1971, pp. 61-75.

V.2/2. Christie’s London, 9.12.68, lot 123; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 40 cm.
Form as V.2/1, but slightly more bulbous; foot with central rope-strand band; rope-strand collar around neck base; angular S-shaped handle with abstracted zoomorphic attachments joined to upper neck and central body. Undecorated (fig. 9).
Lit.: Christie’s 9.12.1968, lot 123.

V.2/3. Washington, Freer Gallery of Art no. 45.13; n. p.; cast brass; h. 43.7 cm, diam. of body 16.5 cm, weight 2255 grams.
Form as V.2/2, but foot-ring and collar plain; on handle, square thumbpiece with cut edges on low, rounded base. Undecorated (fig. 10).
Lit.: Ettinghausen 1984, p. 893, fig. 3; Atil 1985, pp. 62-4, no. 3.

V.2/4. Berlin (West), Islamic Museum I 3555; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 31 cm, diam. 13.5 cm.
Form as 2, but more pear-shaped and on low, slightly slanting foot; handle thinner with central groove on back; thumbpiece with hardly accentuated, cut edges, resting on large, rounded base. Undecorated (fig. 11).

V.2/5. Metropolitan Museum of Art no. 1978.549.1; n. p.; cast bronze; dimensions unknown.
Form as V.2/4, but body ovoid and bulbous, on higher, less slanting foot ring; broader neck and handle; rectangular thumbpiece. Undecorated (fig. 12).

V.2/6. C.L. David Collection 28/1987; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 29 cm.
Form as V.2/5, but slightly longer and more slender neck. Undecorated (fig. 13).
Lit.: Unpublished.

V.2/7. Herat Museum; n. p. (Herat?); cast bronze, silver inlay; dimensions unknown.
Form as V.2/5 and V.2/6, but body more bulbous on high slanting foot ring; broader neck collar; lip very thin with polylobed protrusions on sides of mouth; handle thinner and more rounded; handle joins neck higher up (upper attachment apparently broken off), immediately below lip; thumbpiece very squat square knob, with cut edges on broad, angular base. On front of body, short silver-inlaid Kufic inscription, naming one Bakr ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz (fig. 14).

V.2/8. Hermitage KZ 5774; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 36 cm.
Form as V.2/4, but more bulbous body; angular S-shaped handle with rectangular, indented knob on small, rounded base. On sides of body, vase motifs; on front, an arched cartouche with sphinx on scrolling ground (fig. 15).

V.2/9. Louvre 7951; n. p.; bronze cast in two pieces (body and handle), incised; h. 34 cm, diam. 16 cm.
Form as V.2/6, but body more ovoid; slender neck more waisted and collar further down; handle rounded with superposed pairs of oblique incisions recalling twisted handles; zoomorphic handle attachments clearly identifiable by incised eyes, muzzles and mouths; broad square knob as thumbpiece, set on low, angular base. On sides of body, two large polygonal medallions outlined by broad plain borders, each containing a revelling couple in embrace; medallions placed within large square frames with concave sides; remaining spaces between squares and medallions filled with fleshy floral scrolls; in between the two squares on front and back of ewer confronted griffins on floral scrolling ground; above and below main decorative scheme, panels with quadrupeds walking clockwise, the lower one terminated by pointed panelling; on lower neck, benedictory Kufic inscription; above, inverted heart palmettes; underneath spout, quadruped walking towards tip; around lip, simple zig-zag pattern (pl. 2).

V.2/10. Christie’s London, 28.11.83, lot 380; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 32 cm.
Form as V.2/9, but half-beading on flattened centre of handle. Beneath lip, intertwined scrolls; on upper and lower neck, ornamental arching; above neck collar, long-drawn quadrupeds walking anticlock-wise on scrolling background; on body, broad band of Kufic on scrolling ground; below, narrower panel with quadrupeds running clockwise on scrolling ground; around central body, broad panel flanked by flat-cusped arches terminating in heart-shaped extensions, the lower ones inverted; in between, scalloped and indented medallions interconnected by knot-like joints, and filled alternately with confronted birds and four individual palmette motifs; on lower body, another panel with walking quadrupeds moving anticlockwise; below, simple arcading (fig. 16).
Lit.: Christie’s 28.11.1983, lot 380.

V.2/1/1. Metropolitan Museum of Art L.61.74.4; n. p.; cast high tin bronze, handle cast bronze; h. with knob 15.8 cm, diam. of body 10.5 cm.
Very bulbous, nearly globular body on broad, low foot-ring with concave base; body tapers very slightly to receive broad, angular and facetted collar; above, squat cylindrical neck with vertical facetting, sides very slightly waisted; clearly demarcated, almond-shaped spout section with angular tip and angular ridge all round; handle crozier-shaped and facetted, with thick undefined attachments and globular thumbpiece on low base; body surface faceted with 17 pentagonal units around its upper and lower part and lozenge-shaped units in between. Undecorated (fig. 17).
Plate 1
Plate 2
MW 2/V.2/9. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 34 cm
(Paris, Louvre, inv. no. 7951).
FIG. 1
MW 2/1. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 40 cm
(Cairo, Islamic Museum).

FIG. 2
MW 2/2. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 30 cm
(Christie's 21.11.86, lot 271).
FIG. 3

FIG. 4
MW 2/5. Cast Bronze Ewer allegedly from Daghestan (Leningrad, Hermitage).
FIG. 5
MW 2/6. Cast Bronze Ewer allegedly from Daghestan (Leningrad, Hermitage).

FIG. 6
FIG. 7
MW 2/V.1/1. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 25.5 cm
(Kuwait, National Museum, inv. no. LNS 84 M).
FIG. 8
MW 2/V.2/1. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 33.5 cm
(Rome. Private Collection).

FIG. 9
MW 2/V.2/2. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 40 cm
(Christie's 9.12.68, lot 123).
FIG. 10

MW 2/V.2/3. Cast Brass Ewer, h. 43.7 cm
(Washington, Freer Gallery of Art, inv. no. 45.13).
**FIG. 11**
MW 2/V.2/4. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 31 cm
(West Berlin, Islamic Museum, inv. no. 13555).

**FIG. 12**
MW 2/V.2/5. Cast Bronze Ewer. Dimensions unknown
(New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 1978.549.1).
FIG. 13
MW 2/V.2/6. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 29 cm
(Copenhagen, C.L. David Collection, inv. no. 28/1987).
FIG. 14
MW 2/V.2/7. Cast Bronze Ewer with Silver Inlay.
Dimensions unknown (Herat Museum).

FIG. 15
MW 2/V.2/8. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 36 cm
(Leningrad, Hermitage, inv. no. KZ 5774).
FIG. 16
MW 2/V.2/10. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 32 cm
(Christie's 28.11.83, lot 380).
FIG. 17
Cast High Tin Bronze Ewer, h. 15.8 cm (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. L.61.74.4).

FIG. 18
Detail of Ewer MW 2/4: The Central Palm Tree.
FIG. 19
Late Sasanian Silver Ewer.
FIG. 20
Late Sasanian Silver Ewer (Cincinnati, Art Museum).
Two Late Roman Silver Ewers. 4th/5th Century A.D.
FIG. 22
Mouth Section of a Late Roman Silver Ewer in Berlin.

FIG. 23
Late Roman Silver Ewer from the Esquiline Treasure.
Rome (?), late 4th Century A.D.
FIG. 24
Late Sasanian Bronze Ewer. 5th Century A.D. (?).

FIG. 25
Late or Post-Sasanian Bronze Ewer from Swanetia (Caucasus).
FIG. 26
Silver Spout Fragment from the Water Newton Treasure. Ca. 4th Century A.D.

FIG. 27
7th-Century Gold Ewer.
FIG. 28
7th/8th-Century Silver Jug from Semirech'ye

FIG. 29
Silver Vessel from the Shores of the Vjatka River. First Half of the 8th Century A.D.
FIG. 30
Late Sasanian, Silver-Gilt Ewer
with Female Dancers. Eastern Iran.
FIG. 31
Late Sasanian Silver Ewer allegedly from Gilan.
FIG. 34
5th/6th-Century Stone Relief from Venice showing Two Peacocks flanking a Central Pedestal Basin.

PIG. 34
Early Byzantine Eagle Figure. Cast Bronze, 6th/7th-Century A.D.
FIG. 35
Palm-Tree on a Cylinder from Khorsabad near Niniveh.
First Half of the First Millennium B.C.

FIG. 36
Ancient Mesopotamian Palm-Tree Crowns.
(After Danthine 1937, figs. 358, 369, 384, 589).

FIG. 37
Date Palm on a Mesopotamian Stone Vessel.
Early 3rd mill. B.C. (after Danthine 1937, fig. 35).
FIG. 38
Palm-Tree on an Assyrian Cylinder. Late 2nd mill. B.C.
(After Danthine 1937, fig. 230).

FIG. 39
Palm-Tree on a Pierced Bronze Plaque from Nimrud.

FIG. 40
Cobalt-Painted White Ware Dish.
Mesopotamia, 9th/10th Century A.D.
FIG. 41
Early Islamic Lustre Dish.
Mesopotamia, 9th Century A.D.
FIG. 44
Early Islamic Pottery Jug from Susa.
7th/8th Century A.D.

FIG. 45
Ancient Tree Representation with Pyramidal Base on an Object Found at Susa. Ca. 3000 B.C.
(After Danthine 1937, Vol. 2, fig. 683).

FIG. 46
Tree Representation with Pyramidal base on an Ancient Mesopotamian Cylinder.
Early 1st mill. B.C. (after Danthine 1937, fig. 858).
FIG. 47
7th/8th-Century Bronze Animal Support.

FIG. 48
7th/8th-Century Bronze Griffin Support from Western Iran.
FIG. 49
Late Sasanian Silver Plate from Northern Iran.
8th Century A.D. (?).
FIG. 50
Late Sasanian (?) Silver Plate, perhaps depicting Dravaspa riding Tshtrya.

FIG. 51
Tree-of-Life Motif on a 5th-Century Textile from Antioch.

FIG. 52
**FIG. 53**
Early Islamic Green- and Yellow-Glazed Pottery Dish.
Mesopotamia, 8th/9th Century A.D.

**FIG. 54**
Foliage on a Marble Panel from the 9th-Century Mihrāb in the Great Mosque of Qairawān.
FIG. 56
Early Islamic Pottery Jug with Blue Glaze
allegedly excavated at Rayy. 7th-9th Century A.D.

FIG. 55
Early Islamic Earthenware Ewer allegedly from
a Christian Cemetry in Tikrit, Iraq.
FIG. 58
Late Sasanian Silver Vase, 6th/7th Century A.D.

FIG. 57
Wooden Panel with Strollwork, Egypt or Syria, 8th Century A.D.
FIG. 59
Detail of a 12th-Century Stucco Panel from Rayy.
FIG. 60
Central Medallion of a Silver Bowl found in the Punjāb.

FIG. 61
Silver-Gilt Bowl with Royal Banquet Scene.
Iran (?), 7th Century A.D.

FIG. 62
Detail of a Banquet Scene on a Silver Dish depicting
the Exploits of Heracles. Northern Tokhāristān, 7th Century A.D.
FIG. 63

Ewers belonging to a Banquet Scene on a probably late Sasanian Silver Plate.
FIG. 64
5th/6th-Century Pottery Amphora with Royal Banquet Scene. Discovered in Merv.

FIG. 65
Silver Plate depicting a Royal Banquet Scene. Tokharistan, 8th Century A.D.
FIG. 66
Detail from a Floor Painting at Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, 8th Century A.D.

FIG. 67
Royal Drinking Scene on a Buyid Gold Coin.
FIG. 68
Royal Drinking Scene on a Ghaznavid
Silver Dish. 11th Century A.D.

FIG. 69
Silver Bowl depicting a Princely Lute Player.
Fāṭimid, 11th Century A.D.
Chapter 8

Ewer Type MW 3: Cast Bronze Ewers with Pear-shaped Body on Splayed Foot, Waisted Cylindrical Neck, Round Mouth and Curved Handle - The "Basra Ewer" Group

The ewers in this category can be subdivided into two distinct sub-groups, each one of which in turn includes several remarkably individualistic variants.

1. Description

1.1. Sub-group 1 (cat. nos. 1-14, V.1-V.6: figs. 1-7, pl. 1, figs. 8-19)1

Ewers 1 - 14 in the first sub-group vary from 24.4 cm to 44 cm in height and are distinguished by a more or less bulbous, pear-shaped body, which rests on a low slanting foot-ring.2 The neck, which in all but one case (cat. no. 1) rises from a rounded, sometimes obliquely hatched (cat. nos. 3, 10) collar, is cylindrical, waisted and can vary in width. Its surface may be enhanced by faceting (cat. nos. 3-5, 7, 14) or, more commonly, remain plain (cat. nos. 1-2, 6, 8-13).3 The mouth is round and surrounded by a flat protruding lip, which in the case of ewer 3 is very broad.

In all cases the handle is flattened to a varying degree and more or less S-shaped. Occasionally, its centre is enhanced by half-beading, the beads varying

1 In order to avoid extending the already long brackets with the relevant catalogue numbers within the text even further by adding the corresponding figure numbers, the latter have been omitted in the descriptive parts of this chapter. They can, however, be found easily by referring to the catalogue.
2 The body treatment of ewer 11 is unique in that it shows a horizontal groove around its widest part and a fluted lower section.
3 In the case of ewer 11 a rounded collar runs around the central neck.
from five to seven in number. Above, the handle is attached to the mouth by an often decorative plaque extending into two lateral clasps which enclose the lip up to the middle. Their terminations are enhanced by stylized animal heads in most cases. Bird-heads dominate, but in at least one case (cat. no. 3) sharply moulded hares' heads have been applied instead, while the extensions encountered on the mouth of ewer 6 rather resemble gazelle heads. On some ewers the clasps seem to have been merged with the lip proper, and in these cases the handle joins the back of this area without visible interruption (cat. nos. 8, 10). On ewer 13 two small protrusions flank the area where the handle joins the back of the lip. The lower handle attachment is apparently derived from a gazelle head, a feature still clearly recognizable in the case of ewer 3, where two twisted horns help to identify the animal intended.

Most handles are surmounted by a palmette leaf thumbpiece of varying size, which bends backwards and ends in a rounded knob (cat. nos. 1-3, 5-7, 12). In the case of ewer 10 a similar design was probably originally intended, but today the motif appears very distorted, perhaps a fault which already occurred during the original casting process. Finally, a vegetal motif may also have been intended by the almond-shaped plaque with globular finial, which surmounts the handle of ewer 13, while the thumbpiece of ewer 14 is rendered as a large openwork design not unlike those encountered on certain ewers of the second sub-group to be discussed below. On ewers 4 and 9 the thumbpiece is broken off and only its base survives today. The shape of this base, however, suggests that it, too, may, in both cases, have supported a palmette leaf similar to those encountered on the handles of the majority of ewers in this sub-group. Only two ewers (cat. nos. 8, 11(?)) seem never to have been furnished with a thumbpiece.

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4 Louisiana 1987, p. 64 no. 7.
5 Pinder-Wilson 1960, p. 89.
The various vessels which have been added to this sub-group as **typological variants** (cat. nos. V.1-V.6) share a related body profile with the vessels just mentioned, i.e. - generally speaking - a rounded body on a low foot-ring, a tall, narrow and sometimes waisted neck and a round mouth, as well as a more or less related handle design. However, at the same time each piece is clearly distinct not only from the vessels in the main section of this sub-group but also from the other typological variants included in this sub-section.

Thus, **ewer V.1**, in contrast to the main type discussed earlier, reveals a more slender body on a very flat rounded base, a narrower neck with thick rounded lip and a much deteriorated handle attachment system, when compared to the much more sophisticated versions with animal-head clasps mentioned before. The handle itself also stands out from the other vessels in that it is virtually straight and joins the upper body directly, i.e. without decorative attachment plaque. The thumbpiece is rendered as an elongated polygonal knob, a feature unparalleled in this category but not unusual on other early Islamic ewers.6

**Ewer V.2** seems somewhat related to ewer V.1 but its profile is again distinct in that it features a squat globular body and a broad, waisted and facettiéd neck with broad rounded lip. Its most remarkable detail, however, is the twisted S-shaped handle design, surmounted by a small bent palmette leaf, with the lower part attached to the body below by a rectangular element before terminating in an outward-bending curve.7

**Ewer V.3** stands out because of its inverted pear-shaped body, which clearly emphasises the upper rather than the lower part of the vessel, as was the case with ewers of the main type discussed above.8 This emphasis of the upper part is repeated on its neck, with the area below the mouth widening slightly beyond the

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6 Cf. ewer type MW 2, chapter 7.
7 This particular handle design can be found on several other early Islamic ewers; cf. ewer type MW 1, chapter 6; ewer MW 4/V.5, chapter 9.
8 Interestingly, the very same body profile can be observed on another group of early Islamic ewers; cf. ewer type EMW 5, chapter 5; cf. also the second sub-group of ewer type MW 4, chapter 9.
width of the neck’s base below. The fact that the central neck is facetted relates this ewer closely to certain vessels in the second sub-group as well as to certain other early Islamic ewers of different type. The same is true for the rounded rendering of the lip and particularly the winged protrusions which emphasise the upper attachment area of the now missing handle. Below, the handle again joins the body without any decorative intermediary.

The body profile of ewer V.4 is virtually identical to that of vessels belonging to the main type, with two significant exceptions. Firstly, the neck is bipartite. While its lower part repeats the waisted neck design already encountered on ewers 1 - 14, its upper section is rendered as a squat cylinder, which widens towards the mouth. The second unique feature of this vessel is the strongly S-shaped angular handle and its attachment system. The upper part of the handle splits into the two usual, elongated animal-head clasps which are to enclose the lip, long before the onset of the latter, and thus an open space is created which separates the handle proper from the mouth. Below, the handle curves outwards and ends in a pyramidal knob. It is attached to the body by means of a small rectangular bridge. Both the neck and the handle design relate this vessel to several other bronze ewers of early Islamic date, including of course ewer V.2 as regards the treatment of the handle.10

Ewer V.5 also features a bipartite neck, but here the lower section is rendered as a succession of four bulbous rings which decrease in size towards a small dented ridge. The latter introduces a squat cylindrical section above. The handle is quite unique in this category as it is rendered in the shape of an elongated stylized feline which rests its paws on the back of the lobed mouth. Oddly enough, the latter, despite its lobed appearance, seems to display lateral clasps similar to those encountered on the lip of ewers belonging to the main type. This feature is

9 Cf. ewer type MW 4, chapter 9.
10 Cf. ewer types EMW 4, chapter 4; MW 1, chapter 6; cf. also footnote 6.
entirely out of place here from a functional point of view, as in this case the extensions are not utilized as part of the handle attachment system.

**Ewer V.6**, finally, may represent a typological derivative of ewer V.5. Body and foot are nearly identical to those on the aforementioned vessel, and the concept of a bipartite neck recurs here as well. However, the latter is rendered in a slightly different way. The lower section appears much reduced in size and expanse: it features only two rounded mouldings which alternate with angular ridges and terminate in a flaring terminal above, this being furnished with a dented ridge. Above, a tall cylindrical section widens towards the mouth.

The rounded S-shaped and beaded handle is again attached to the back of the mouth by means of lateral decorative clasps. Below, an ornamental plaque with three lobed protrusions links it to the body. The neck design of ewer V.6 is undoubtedly linked to that of Ewer V.4 and other early Islamic ewers mentioned in connection with that particular piece. Its handle design, on the other hand, while certainly related to those encountered on ewers 1 - 14, can be paralleled even more closely on ewers of the second sub-group to be discussed next.

1.2. **Sub-Group 2** (Cat. no. I - XI, V. I-II; figs. 20-22, pl. 2, figs. 23-28, pls. 3-4, fig. 29)

Ewers in the second sub-group vary from 25 cm to 49.5 cm in height. They are distinguished from pieces in the first sub-group by several significant details. Firstly, they feature a wider, more bulbous **body**, which can be faceted in cases (cat. nos. IV, V, VI, VII?, IX, X?). In all but one case (cat. no. V.II) the **foot** is considerably higher and of mainly conical shape. However, on occasion other foot designs can be observed as well. Thus, a pedestal foot with central moulding occurs on ewer I and a tall waisted and faceted foot with small angular extensions around the outer edge appears on ewer II.
The **neck** treatment can also vary from that encountered on ewers of the first sub-group as well as from one ewer to another within the second sub-group itself. Most pieces feature a more or less waisted neck which can vary in width. It rises from a rounded collar and can be plain (cat. nos. I, III, X, XI) or, more usually, displays either central or full-length faceting (cat. nos. IV, V, VI, VII?, VIII, IX, V.II). In one case the full-length facets terminate in rounded projections below, which in fact replace the more usual, rounded collar (cat. no. II). Ewer V.1 features a neck design which is identical to that on ewer V.6 of the first sub-group but is here executed with more precision and care for every detail.

The flattened **lip** is again enhanced by lateral clasps ending in large bird heads with fantastic crests (cat. nos. I, IV, VII, VIII, V.I) or floral motifs, often abstracted (cat. nos. III, V). In at least one case these clasps have deteriorated to the extent that the lateral lobed extensions, now completely abstracted, actually form an integral part of the lip and are no longer part of the handle attachment system (cat. no. IX). Ewer II, finally, shows a completely different mouth design. It consists of a broad, slightly waisted section which protrudes from the upper neck and is studded along the upper and lower edge with small square knobs like those around the outer edge of the foot.

The **handle** is generally S-shaped, but again can vary greatly in appearance. Thus, the handles of ewers I and II are rendered as stylized and extremely elongated felines which rest their hindlegs on the central body and their front paws on the mouth, while their fangs bite the back of the lip. Most of the remaining ewers feature either rounded or flattened handles with central beads which are either executed fully in the round or reduced to half (cat. nos. III, IV, V, VI, VIII, X, XI, V.II). In some cases the half-beading is reduced to mere grooving or indentations (cat. nos. VII, VIV). On ewer V.I, finally, the handle is characterized by a twisted centre, and terminates below in a split volute design, the lower part of which joins

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11 Unfortunately, I am unable to comment on the lip extensions of the remaining ewers as I had no photograph of this area at my disposal (cat. nos. VI, X, XI, V.II).
the body. This handle design can again be paralleled on several other early Islamic ewer types already referred to above, including ewer V.2 of the first sub-group and, to some extent, ewer V.4 as well.12

Generally, the handles of ewers III-XI and V.II in the second sub-group join the body by means of broad attachment elements which in most cases seem to evoke zoomorphic or vegetal associations. An exception is the somewhat more complex attachment system employed on the lower handle of ewer IV. Here, the handle terminates in a lobed floral shape below and features in addition an abstract curved protrusion facing away from the body. The latter is positioned slightly higher up from the handle’s actual termination. The lower handle body is attached to the ewer proper by means of two superposed rectangular bridges.

If the handles are surmounted by thumbpieces, these are rendered either as palmette leaves ending in a rounded knob (cat. nos. III, IV, X) or as a large openwork design with a central palmette leaf enclosed by more or less abstracted, split palmettes with small extensions. The latter are joined at the top in a rounded knob rising from a likewise rounded moulding (cat. nos. V-VII, V.I). In the case of ewer VIII only the base of the thumbpiece remains today.

2. Decoration

2.1. Sub-Group 1 (cat. nos. 1-14, V.1-V.6; figs. 1-7, pl. 1, figs. 8-19)

Quite a large number of ewers in this sub-group remain virtually plain (cat. nos. 1-6, 8, V.1, V.2) apart from some inconspicuous incised detailing or hardly discernible remains of original decoration. In these cases incising is used most frequently to define the lateral bird heads extending from the lip13 and/or to

12 Cf. footnote 6.
13 In the case of ewer 5 this area is additionally inlaid with copper.
enhance or evoke facetting encountered on the neck. In the latter case the rounded terminations of the facets most typically alternate with small bud or lozenge motifs, a decorative neck treatment extremely popular in early Islamic metalwork and thus recurring frequently on numerous other early Islamic ewers.\(^1\) In addition to the modest decorative incisions on lip and neck, other inconspicuous ornamentation can affect the body proper, the upper handle attachment area and the base plate.

Thus, on ewer 2 remains of a crude Kufic inscription can be made out on either side of the lower handle attachment. Fragments of Kufic are also discernible around the middle of ewer 8, a piece which is additionally noteworthy for the peculiar pearled stripe displayed vertically on its sides. On ewer 6 the upper body reveals traces of punching which was apparently used to create arcading that has now all but disappeared.

The decorative treatment of the upper handle attachment area is likewise very restricted and often crude. Thus, on ewer 5 a stylized floral motif occupies the plaque beneath the thumbpiece, and behind the latter the name "Muḥammad" has been placed, while on ewer 6 a number of unidentifiable motifs, both punched and incised, occupy the upper attachment plaque. The base plate, if decorated, receives a large rosette (cat. nos. 5, V.2).

Among the vessels in this sub-group which receive more extensive incised decoration, ewer V.3 is the most modest one, as its body remains undecorated. Its neck, however, displays two conspicuous decorative panels with leafy scrolls set against a punch-dotted ground. These flank a central area of facetting. In addition, the ewer has a criss-cross pattern filled with punch dots around the foot, and a floral panel with punched background enhancing the base plate. Abstract incised detailing on the lip and the upper handle attachment area complete its decoration. Interestingly, a very similar approach to ewer decoration with a clear emphasis on the neck can be observed on certain other early Islamic ewers as well.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Cf. in particular ewer type MW 4, chapter 9; cf. also ewer types EMW 4 & MW 1. On ewer 10 deeply engraved panelling replaces this treatment.

\(^1\) Cf. ewer type MW 4, chapter 9.
On the remaining ewers with incised decoration (cat. nos. 9-14, V.6) it is undoubtedly the body which is meant to be the primary focus of attention. On ewers 9 and 10 the designs of the body have been so deeply incised that they give the impression of relief or repoussé decoration. Both ewers carry large lateral roundels, filled with floral motifs in the case of no. 9 and senmurvs in the case of no. 10. The remaining space on the front of the ewers receives a large fleshy scroll in the case of ewer 10, while on ewer 9 two superposed horizontal bands, enhanced by wing-like motifs above, seem to link the lateral medallions across the front. As for the back, ewer 10 repeats the motif applied to its front. On ewer 9 the area around the handle remains undecorated apart from two crude volutes which spring up on either side of the handle attachment. Below the handle a large trefoil appears, which appears to surmount a large roundel with a central floral motif.

Ewers 11-13 are closely related in their decorative layout. They all display a benedictory Kufic - or in one case (cat. no. 12) naskhi - inscription around the upper body and a cartouche with a sphinx or bird on their façade. The latter design is flanked either by vase motifs (cat. nos. 11, 12) or by roundels (cat. no. 13). On ewers 12 and 13 these are separated from the central cartouche as well as from each other by vertical guilloche bands. The lower body of these ewers bears either a geometric guilloche (cat. no. 11) or a band of Kufic set off by arcading (cat. no. 12). In addition to the decoration on the body, both ewers also show some enhancement to their necks: a Kufic panel in the case of ewer 12 and two plain bands above and below in the case of ewer 13.

The engraved decoration on ewer V.6, in addition to a Kufic inscription on the neck and a band of heart scrolls on the foot, also displays a central design on the

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16 In the case of ewer 9, the major design of the body is framed above and below by slightly raised bands with vertical grooving.
17 The decoration on this ewer is very worn, and accordingly, only a tentative analysis of its decoration is possible.
18 In addition to the geometric guilloche, ewer 12 also displays two dragon heads near the handle. This motif also occurs in very similar form on ewer ICAW 3/15 (chapter 13). The decoration applied to the lower body of ewer 13 could not be determined from the available photograph.
façade, bands around the upper and lower body and vertical dividers on the sides, here filled with scrolls. However, several sections of this ornamentation have been re-engraved or indeed newly added. Consequently, the original appearance of the ornamentation cannot be determined beyond doubt.

The decoration on the body of ewer 14 is similar to that on the three preceding pieces, but diverges somewhat in detail. A very broad Kufic panel runs around the upper body, stopping short of the handle. Below, an elongated cusped cartouche filled with scrolls occupies the façade, while the sides display a vase motif and a large floral roundel. All these elements are joined with each other by a continuous guilloche band issuing from the area of the lower handle attachment, the latter in its turn enhanced by an abstract vegetal design. Below, a broad scrolling band and three horizontal grooves set off this design. In addition to the ornamentation on the body, ewer 14 also displays the remains of a rosette-like design on the base plate, thus recalling similar motifs on ewers 5 and V.2.

Finally, three ewers in this sub-group (cat. nos. 7, V.4, V.5) carry relief decoration with secondary incising and, on occasion, copper or perhaps even silver inlay. Interestingly enough, the decorative layout employed on these ewers is very similar in all cases, but the individual elements employed are largely different in each case. Thus, on ewer 7 two large pomegranate trees occupy its sides. These are separated at the front and back by smaller, composite plant designs. The whole composition is bordered by toothed borders above and below. On ewer V.4 both sides are occupied by a large geometric interlace design with floral detail in the centre, while the front and back bear respectively a composite wing motif and a palmette tree. On ewer V.5, finally, the sides display two large roundels with tiny half-palmette extensions and a central palm-tree flanked by vines, while the front shows a tall palmette structure.19

19 The corresponding motif at the back is not visible on the published photograph.
2.2. Sub-group 2 (Cat. no. I - XI, V. I-II; figs. 20-22, pl. 2, figs. 23-28, pls. 3-4, fig. 29)

Among the ewers of the second sub-group two pieces (I, II) again carry relief decoration. Thus, ewer I displays an all-over pattern created by four obliquely set rows of six symmetrically disposed leaves which, decreasing in size, flank a central bud on a tall stem. Below, this decorative scheme is set off by large lotus leaves which alternate with additional bud motifs on stems, and these leaves are echoed by two overlapping rows of similar, outward-pointing leaves on the base of the pedestal foot. Ewer II, on the other hand, displays three obliquely set rows of upward-pointing almond designs, a decorative scheme repeatedly encountered on early Islamic bronze ewers and other objects as well.20

The remaining vessels in this sub-category, apart from ewer III which appears to be undecorated, are incised to a varying degree. Thus, ewers VIII and V.I are virtually plain apart from some minor incised detailing. On ewer VIII the only decorative enhancement appears on the foot, which is enclosed by large and very simple drop- or lancet-shaped motifs, and on the neck, which apparently displays crude leaf or bud motifs. Ewer V.I, on the other hand, merely displays now scarcely visible, superposed horizontal grooving on the upper and lower part of the cylindrical neck, and punched dots on the lip. Furthermore, the bird heads of the handle attachment clasps are enhanced by incised detailing, as are the area below the openwork thumbpiece and the elements of the thumbpiece itself.

On ewers IX and X the decoration is restricted to two decorative bands on the upper and lower neck as well as minor detailing on the lip and handle attachment plaque. In the case of ewer IX the neck panels are filled with epigraphy, and the lip receives a triangular panel with simple volutes at the back. It is also enhanced at the front and on its sides by roundels with central cross motifs. On

20 Cf. ewer MW 2/7; for other metal objects with tear-drop or bud motifs see for example Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 32 fig. 7, p. 41 no. 2.
ewer X, on the other hand, the neck bands display scrollwork below and a succession of trefoils confined within a zig-zag panel above. The ewer's lip is also filled with dense scrollwork which is interrupted at the front and on the sides by small crosses set against a plain background, a decorative scheme which undoubtedly echoes that encountered on the lip of ewer IX.

On ewers XI and V.II, finally, the body decoration seems to consist of a large epigraphic panel which runs across the central body and is flanked by floral roundels; a smaller inscription with lateral floral medallions is positioned in the centre above. The necks of these two vessels apparently bear incised pseudo-facetting terminated by deeply grooved borders above and below. Further decorative detail includes a small floral motif on the lower handle attachment and, in the case of ewer XI, incised panelling on the foot.

On ewers IV-VI, which, as we have seen, are closely related typologically, the neck, body, foot and base also receive various forms of much more extensive ornamentation in addition to the incised detailing on lip and thumbpiece. Thus, on ewers IV and VI the central facets of the neck are flanked above and below by various vegetal designs, while on ewer V a scroll runs around the lower neck. The facetted bodies of ewers IV and V show vertical panels of scrollwork which in the latter case alternates with plain facets.

On ewer VI the body displays two superposed horizontal friezes somewhat oddly incised onto the vertically facetted body. They contain a narrow animal band above and a wider hunting scene alternating with large floral designs below. As for the tall conical feet of these three ewers, they are covered by various types of vegetal ornament or scrollwork enclosed by punch-dotted borders. In the case of ewers IV and VI, the decorative elements of the foot recur in virtually identical fashion in the aforementioned ornamental panels on the upper and lower neck. In the case of ewer V the base plate as well as the foot is decorated and carries a large
composite palmette design enclosed by a border of small circles each with central dot.  

On ewer VII, finally, the main decoration seems to be restricted to the sides of the body, to judge by the only published drawings, and both bear a large roundel filled with geometric scrollwork, surmounted by a trilobed finial and set onto a triangular base.

3. Origin of Ewer Type

It has been suggested in the past that ultimately all the ewers assembled in this category are derived from a type of oinochoe current in Italy during the Roman imperial era and still popular in the eastern lands of the Byzantine empire as late as the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.  

In fact this assumption may be somewhat simplistic, as there are indications that more than one late antique vessel type may have served as an inspiration for the ewers discussed here.

3.1. Sub-Group 1 (cat. nos. 1-14, V.1-V.6; figs. 1-7, pl. 1, figs. 8-19)

To start with the ewers of the first sub-group, they undoubtedly derive their body shape from a late antique ewer type exemplified by objects like the famous 4th-century silver ewer from Chaourse (fig. 30), a contemporary vessel executed in Antioch (fig. 31) and several Roman bronze ewers excavated in Hungary (fig. 32). Its features include a slender ovoid body on a low splayed base or foot-ring, a narrow, slightly waisted neck, often decorated with a rounded central moulding,

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21 It should be noted that the entire decoration of ewer V is set against a punch-dotted background.
23 Strong 1966, pp. 165-6; Walters 1921, pp. 39-40 no. 147, p. XXIV; Ross 1962, no. 1, pl. 1; Radnoti 1938, pl. XLIV nos. 1, 2, 6; Sokoly 1990, p. 9.
and a round mouth with a flat lip. The handle is usually straight, flattened and attached to the rim by a horizontal plaque with two clasps, generally ornithomorphic, issuing from the latter. These enclose the sides of the lip. This handle attachment system is usually surmounted by a small curled palmette thumbpiece, which recurs repeatedly on the Islamic ewers discussed here.

Interestingly, this particular handle attachment system was extremely popular in late Roman metalwork in general. As early as 1894 Schreiber reported that several Hellenistic stone moulds for such handles were found in the surroundings of Alexandria and also in other locations in Egypt - obviously executed locally for the casting of objects produced in local workshops. According to the scholar the ornaments and shapes preserved in these moulds represent the most popular features used in local metalwork during the Hellenistic period. Among these stone moulds several recesses for the casting of small handles or handle attachment systems can be found, executed in several different sizes and with varying ornamentation, but always of a common basic type (fig. 33).

The most noteworthy feature of this basic type is the distinctively unorganic junction between the generally vegetal ornamentation of the handle and the zoomorphic treatment of the actual attachment clasps. Although the handle seems to demand a similarly vegetal extension to enclose the vessel’s mouth, the fluency of the design is repeatedly interrupted by the introduction of bird or occasionally animal heads developing out of the handle and applied along the rim of the vessel.24 This quite individualistic theme apparently remained popular all over the Hellenistic world for a long time: it continued to be employed well into the 6th century A.D., not only on ewers like the ones mentioned here but also on jugs, pans, mirrors, bowls, buckets and amphorae.25

25 Schreiber 1894, passim; Melikian-Chirvani claimed that the bird heads on the Islamic ewers were of steppe origin, without, however, putting forward any concrete evidence for this suggestion. In the light of the evidence presented here, it seems that his hypothesis can be all but discarded; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 61.
Although the early Islamic ewers in the first sub-group are clearly dependent typologically on the late Roman ewer type just described, there are at the same time certain notable differences between the two. These suggest that the evolution of the Islamic type may have received additional momentum either from other Hellenistic vessel types or from non-Hellenistic sources. Most significantly in this context, the body of the Islamic pieces in the first sub-group appears to have been modified. The elongated ovoid body of the late antique type, with its widest expansion in the centre, seems to have been replaced either by a bulbous pear-shaped body on a slightly taller conical foot, or (more rarely) a nearly globular body. In both cases the widest expansion of the body occurs near the base. The neck moulding, rather than being applied to the centre of the neck as was the case on late Roman vessels, has now been applied to the upper body in the form of a much reduced collar.

Other modifications are reflected in the more rounded and often beaded handle of the Islamic pieces, and in particular in the treatment of the latter’s lower attachment area. This now features a projecting stylized element of perhaps zoomorphic derivation not encountered on the pre-Islamic prototypes.

Exactly when and where these typological modifications started to affect the ewers under discussion is difficult to determine, but certain preliminary clues may be extracted from the altered pear-shaped body profile. Among Hellenistic and Roman bronze and precious metal vessels a pear-shaped silhouette is comparatively rare. Generally, they either feature an elongated ovoid body with the widest expansion more or less in the centre, or they are characterized by an inverted pear-shaped body with its widest expansion located around the shoulder area.

Ewers with more or less bulbous, pear-shaped bodies, on the other hand, made up - as far as we know today - the standard ewer type used in Sasanian lands at the time. Other objects such as vases and bottles, which were executed in Iran

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26 For an example of an early 5th-century, pear-shaped silver ewer see Kent and Painter 1977, p. 54 no. 105.
27 For examples of vessels with these profiles cf. Odobesco 1889-90, Vol. II, pp. 5-14; Curle 1923, Pl. V.
probably in the years immediately predating the advent of Islam, follow the same structural trend virtually throughout.\textsuperscript{28}

It seems probable, then, that late Roman ewers of the \textit{oinochoe} type came into contact with vessels of the Sasanian empire at some point, most probably in fringe areas such as the eastern Mediterranean lands, Syria or indeed Mesopotamia. Perhaps they reached these areas as trade commodities in exchange for spices, silks and other precious textiles, or indeed as loot. The last is perhaps the most realistic possibility in view of the continuing border skirmishes between the Byzantine and Sasanian empires right up to the ultimate take-over of the entire region by the victorious armies of Islam. Perhaps the late antique vessels were then gradually modified according to local fashion and thus received their characteristic body profile as well as the rounded collar at the lower neck and indeed the zoomorphic enhancement of the lower handle termination, which can in fact already be observed on several late Sasanian silver ewers (fig. 34).\textsuperscript{29}

3.2. Sub-Group 2 (Cat. no. 1 - XI, V. I-II; figs. 20-22, pl. 2, figs. 23-28, pls. 3-4, fig. 29)

Ewers of the second sub-group have also been considered as having evolved directly from late Sasanian silver ewers, with which they share the general body profile and the concept of a high foot.\textsuperscript{30} However, the Sasanian vessels feature an entirely different spout concept; and, in addition to this very obvious typological discrepancy between the two groups, there are other indications which imply that the early Islamic vessels may in fact again embody a synthesis between late Roman vessels and those executed in Sasanian lands.

\textsuperscript{28} For Sasanian ewers and other vessel shapes cf. Michigan 1967, nos. 18, 19, 21, 22, 32; Kent and Painter 1977, p. 153 fig. 321; Sarre 1922, no. 128; Orbeli and Trever 1935, p. 43 no. 48, p. 45 no. 61.
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Michigan 1967, no. 18; Orbeli and Trever 1935, p. 45 pl. 61.
\textsuperscript{30} Baer 1983, p. 83; Scerrato 1966, p. 10.
An important clue in this respect is the existence of two nearly identical glass vessels which most probably imitate contemporary objects executed in metal (fig. 35). Both pieces are said to have been executed in the western provinces of Asia Minor and can be dated to the 4th century A.D.\textsuperscript{31} Their elongated pear-shaped bodies are set on a pedestal foot and separated from the slightly waisted, cylindrical neck by a rounded collar around the latter’s base. The handle, surmounted by an abstracted leaf thumbpiece, is attached to the central body below and joins the round mouth by means of two short clasps. The structural aspects of these ewers seem to link them directly to the early Islamic bronze ewers in the second sub-group. Indeed, the only intermediary Sasanian contribution appears to be the beaded handle and the zoomorphic nature of its lower attachment.

Two other aspects set the early Islamic ewers apart from the closely linked late antique glass vessels. One is the tendency towards a slightly heavier and often facetted body, and the other the substitution of a conical base with sloping sides for the traditional pedestal foot, probably for more stable support.\textsuperscript{32} Baer considered these as innovative features developed in early Islamic times, a hypothesis which appears perfectly acceptable. However, at least one Roman bronze ewer is known which displays both the very bulbous pear-shaped body and a strikingly similar, conical base of a height proportionally comparable to that encountered on the early Islamic pieces (fig. 36).\textsuperscript{33} Consequently, the possibility that these features, too, were due to influences from the west should not be entirely discounted.

Late Roman artistic influences may also have been responsible for the dense vertical \textit{facetting} applied to the bodies and necks of several of the ewers in the second sub-group. Facetting had already become fashionable in the late Roman period,\textsuperscript{34} and several vessels from that period can be cited which seem to anticipate the type of facetting applied to the Islamic pieces.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Karlsruhe 1966, p. 46.
  \item Baer 1983, p. 83.
  \item Radnoti 1938, pl. XLVI no. 4.
  \item Strong 1966, p. 190.
  \item Cf. La Baume 1964, p. 43 no. 44, pl. 35, p. 44 fig. 36.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
One hammered silver ewer from the 6th century A.D. is particularly interesting in this context (fig. 37). It was found in 1912 in the grave of a probably Khazar prince at Malaya Perestshepina, north of the Black Sea, together with a silver bowl for washing. The latter carries a Greek inscription on the handle giving the total weight of both objects and, more importantly, the time of their manufacture in Constantinople under emperor Mauricius Tiberius (582-602). It also refers to their function as a wash set, known as *cherniboxeston*, for ecclesiastical use. The ewer of this set is characterized by a bulbous, virtually pear-shaped profile, with its body subdivided into eight wide and slightly concave facets. Below, it tapers towards a low, star-shaped base with eight points. Above, a broad cylindrical and likewise faceted neck terminates in a round mouth with flat lip. The cast handle is flattened and S-shaped. It is conceived as a vegetal stalk with engraved detailing, growing out of a human mask below. In its upper part, a palmette or acanthus leaf with globular finial rises to reveal the protome of a griffin or panther with the paws pointing towards the flat attachment plaque which surrounds the back of the mouth and terminates in large bird heads on either side. In the centre of the former a trefoil ornament executed in relief further enhances its surface.

In comparing this particular piece with the several facetted, early Islamic ewers in the second sub-group, certain similarities are notable. These include not only the bulbous pear-shaped body with concave facetting, but also the acanthus thumbpiece with globular finial and again the attachment plaque with ornithomorphic lateral clasps. Incidentally, the decorative concept of adorning the

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36 Matzulevitch 1929, p. 6 no. 9, pp. 83-5; Bank 1960, pls. 56/7, p. 125 nos. 56-9; Dodd 1961, p. 120 no. 31; Berlin 1978, pp. 56-7, 111, 113. This ewer is now preserved in the Oriental Department of the Hermitage (no. W 826); height 27 cm, diam. of body 7.8-10 cm, diam. of neck 7.5 cm, diam. of foot 9.6 cm, weight 1364 grams.

37 The ewer's body was apparently assembled from eight separately wrought segments soldered together at the edges. The base and neck may then have been joined on to it subsequently; cf. Matzulevitch 1929, p. 83.

38 Berlin 1978, pp. 57, 111. The zoomorphic protome is interesting, as it seems somewhat related in principle to those feline handles encountered on ewers V.5, I and II in this category.

39 Matzulevitch 1929, p. 83.
attachment plaque of the handle with a small floral ornament, which can be observed on the Byzantine silver ewer, also recurs in very similar form on several of the Islamic pieces, though here generally in incised rather than raised form.

Yet another structural detail observable on at least some of the early Islamic ewers discussed here most probably owes its existence to artistic influences exerted by the Hellenistic world. This is the feline handle, applied to ewers I and II of the second sub-group and also found on ewer V.5 of the first sub-group. Allan has already pointed out that probably both the feline handle and indeed the abstract curving handle ultimately derive from Roman and Hellenistic handle types. Thus, he paralleled the curving handle style to that on Hellenistic pieces such as the silver jug from Arcisate, datable to the 1st century B.C.

As for the feline variety, he considered it as typologically related to a certain group of Hellenistic curved handles which arch above the level of the mouth and join the back of the lip. Indeed, several of these do so by means of a feline protome. However, the feline handles on the Islamic pieces come even closer to a second late Roman handle type which terminates in a feline head biting, as it were, the back of the ewer’s mouth. Notwithstanding these observations, Allan at the same time emphasised that the idea of an animal serving as a vessel’s handle may have been inspired by Partho-Sasanian traditions and may at least in some cases have had Dionysiac connotations, though these, too, would of course be ultimately classical in origin.

The role of late antique artistic influence in the development of the early Islamic ewers discussed here may not have been restricted to structural aspects. Certain decorative aspects may also have been derived from late antique art. Thus,

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40 Feline handles can also be observed on several other early Islamic ewers of varying type; cf. ewers MW 2/V.2/1, ICAW 3/4, 14, 18 as examples.
42 Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 209; Tarbell 1912, pl. LXXXVI, pl. LXXXVI figs. 165 and 166.
43 Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 209. For a detailed study of Dionysiac iconography with regard to the feline handles of Islamic ewers see Ettinghausen 1972, pp. 3 - 10.
the concept of decorating the vertical facets within the confines of their surface area, as can be observed for example on the "Basra" ewer (cat. no. IV; pl. 2) and the closely related vessel in the Keir collection (cat. no. V; fig. 23), may also have been inspired by late antique artistic trends.

Indications which justify this suggestion can be found for example on a now fragmentary, faceted silver flagon unearthed at Trapain Law in Scotland and datable to the 4th century A.D. (fig. 38). The neck of this piece shows delicately engraved, ornamental panels filled with laurel and scrolling designs alternately, and executed in strict submission to the limits set by the faceted surface. In this instance both the decorative layout and the choice of motifs seem to anticipate the ornamentation used on the faceted bodies of the "Basra" and Keir ewers.

To sum up the evidence assembled above, it seems that the early Islamic ewers in this category ultimately evolved from certain metal and glass vessels of varying type executed in the Hellenistic world. In addition there is also a tangible Iranian legacy as far as their typological development is concerned, though perhaps this is not as pronounced as has been assumed in the past.

4. Provenance and Date

It is very difficult to assess exactly where and when the ewers of this category were being produced in early Islamic times. However, the diversity of their general appearance and the great variety of decorative schemes employed suggest that their production was neither confined to one particular area of the Islamic world nor indeed to one specific period of its early history. In order to establish the general chronological and geographical ambience of these pieces as a whole, the best

44 Curle 1923, pl. VIII.
approach is firstly to assess the clues provided by each individual ewer and then to piece them all together so as to allow a comprehensive picture to emerge.

4.1. Sub-Group 1 (cat. nos. 1-14, V.1-V.6; figs. 1-7, pl. 1, figs. 8-19)

To start with the ewers of the first sub-group, the virtually undecorated examples (cat. nos. 1-6, 8, V.1, V.2; figs. 1-6, pl. 1, figs. 14-5) have to be assessed mostly on the basis of their profile alone. Ewers 1 and 3 (figs. 1, 3) have been assigned by Allan to Iraq, an attribution which is certainly feasible given the pieces' close similarity with late antique vessels of the oinochoe type found all over the Hellenistic world, and the occurrence of certain secondary details like the zoomorphic lower handle attachment common to late Sasanian vessels.45 Such a synthesis of Hellenistic and Iranian elements was certainly one of the most characteristic features of early Islamic art, and one of the regions at the forefront of this artistic merger was Mesopotamia. The latter region enclosed the political centre of the Sasanian empire and was also in close touch with the lands of the eastern Mediterranean, which for centuries had been permeated with Hellenistic culture and artistic traditions. As for the chronological setting of ewers 1 and 3 (figs. 1, 3), the 9th/10th-century dating put forward by Allan seems somewhat late, and considering the pieces' rather conservative profile I would suggest a late 8th or 9th-century dating. However, it has to be stressed that at present there is no clue that would conclusively support one or the other dating. Thus, both suggestions must for the moment remain hypothetical.

Ewer 2 (fig. 2), from the Khalili collection, may be attributed to the same general region and time, to judge merely by its close typological similarity to the preceding pieces. In addition the fragments of crude Kufic discernible on the back

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45 Sokoly already noted the close similarity of these two ewers to some Roman bronze vessels found in Hungary; cf. Sokoly 1990, p. 9; Radnoti 1938, pl. XLIV nos. 1, 2, 6, pl. XLII no. 1, pl. XLI no. 2.
of this ewer certainly seem to support an early dating with their broad elongated and unadorned letters. While ewer 4 (fig. 4) has also been attributed tentatively to 8th- or 9th-century Mesopotamia, ewer 5 (fig. 5) was considered by Melikian-Chirvani as originating from 8th-century Khurāsān. He believed the ewer to belong to one of the standard vessel types which made up the earliest repertoire of shapes from Islamic Iran and which ultimately derived from Sasanian inspiration. In view of the evidence assembled above with regard to the ewer type's typological origin, nothing seems to support an Iranian provenance for this vessel. On the contrary, the fact that its profile is very closely related to that of the preceding pieces seems in itself to suggest a western provenance and a dating similar to that put forward for them.

Ewer 6 (fig. 6) quite possibly belongs to this early "Mesopotamian" group as well. Ewer 8 (pl. 1), on the other hand, may be of more eastern origin and of a slightly later date. As for the date, this assumption is based mainly on the fact that the attachment clasps have been merged with the lip. This feature is not, to my knowledge, encountered on the preceding pieces, where the lip and the lateral clasps always seem to form two independent structural entities, still clearly separated visually by a deep groove even when they are physically joined together. In addition to this modified detail the characteristic, backward-curving palmette thumbpiece has been omitted. The still unread, incised Kufic inscription which runs around the vessel's middle, on the other hand, has been considered by Sokoly as being of an early date. At present a more precise comment on the epigraphy is unfortunately not possible. In any case the attribution to the 9th or 10th century originally put forward by the auctioneers dealing with this piece may come close to the truth. The provenance of this piece, on the other hand, remains unknown, and although Iran has been suggested, there is in fact no real evidence for that.

46 For a similar type of Kufic cf. Safadi 1978, p. 11 top figure.
47 Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 40 no 1; Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 77-9 no. III/5, 202.
48 Sokoly 1990, p. 10.
49 Christie's 11.10.88, lot 363.
Ewer V.1 (fig. 14) is a unique piece which follows the body shape of the main type but at the same time departs from the latter in various significant details.50 Allan, in dealing with this vessel, suggested that it might originate from Ghazna. This attribution seems somewhat too daring for comfort, considering the extremely meagre evidence about the metalwork of Ghazna in early Islamic times. In this context the more general attribution to eastern Iran already put forward by Scerrato and Melikian-Chirvani seems safer, although even this will need further study.

As for the ewer’s dating, Melikian-Chirvani suggested sometime between the late 7th and early 9th century, while Scerrato put forward the 9th or 10th century A.D.51 Neither claim can at present be substantiated beyond doubt, particularly as there are at present no immediately comparable objects which could provide further clues in either direction. Undoubtedly, further research into this particular ewer will be necessary in order to establish its precise chronology and provenance.

Ewer V.2 (fig. 15), finally, has also been attributed to 9th/10th-century Iran, this time by Allan.52 The rosette on the base, found in similar form on the base of the ewer in the Victoria and Albert Museum (cat. no. 5; fig. 5) and on the bases of ewers 14 and V.3 (figs. 13, 16), has been linked to Sasanian traditions.53 In fact, however, this decorative detail appears at present inconclusive in establishing an object’s provenance, as it cannot be proved that its use was exclusively confined to Sasanian lands.

A perhaps more relevant detail encountered on ewer V.2 (fig. 15), on the other hand, may be the peculiar handle design with a twisted centre and outward-curving lower termination. Identical handle types can also be observed on several other early Islamic ewers of varying type,54 none of which can be linked conclusively with the Iranian heartlands. On the contrary, they rather seem to show

51 Cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 84-5 no. III/7; Scerrato 1966, pl. 4, p. 17.
52 Allan 1986, p. 118 no. 27.
54 Cf. footnote 6.
links with early Islamic objects produced in lands to the west and north-west of Iran proper, including the Caucasus region. Accordingly, these areas may also deserve consideration when examining the geographical origin of ewer V.2 (fig. 15) in more detail in the future.

Ewer V.3 (fig. 16) is the first vessel in this sub-group to provide several decorative as well as structural clues as to its provenance and dating. To start with the structural aspects, it will be recalled that its body is not pear-shaped but rather ovoid, with a slightly flattened shoulder area, and it tapers towards a low splayed base. This profile seems to recall the predilection for inverted pear-shaped and flat-shouldered jug and ewer shapes noticeable in Hellenistic metalwork. At the same time the body shape, together with the rounded shoulder moulding, the waisted, centrally facetted neck with its decorative friezes above and below, and the laterally protruding lip extensions, all relate this piece to another typological group of early Islamic ewers. This seems to have evolved from Hellenistic metal and glass shapes and apparently emerged in early Islamic Mesopotamia. From there it spread eastward across Iran and into Central Asia, where it was still popular several centuries later.55

One particular ewer belonging to this type (ewer type MW 4/5), tentatively dated to the late 9th/10th-century A.D., is of additional interest in this context (fig. 39). It not only reveals a decorative scheme identical to that on ewer V.3 (fig. 16) around the foot - a succession of x-shapes filled with rows of punched dots - but also stylistically closely comparable friezes on the upper and lower neck, with leafy scrollwork against a punch-dotted background. A second ewer of this particular type (ewer type MW 4/6, fig. 40), dated to around the 10th century A.D. by Allan and Dimand, also reveals closely related ornamentation on the neck.56 Such comparative material suggests that ewer V.3 (fig. 16) may indeed have originated in Syria or adjacent areas of the eastern Mediterranean, as has already been suggested.

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55 Cf. ewer type MW 4, chapter 9.
by Sotheby's,\textsuperscript{57} and that it may be dated to some time around the late 9th or early 10th century.\textsuperscript{58}

The remaining ewers of sub-group 1 are more lavishly decorated, either (as is the case on ewers 7, V.4, V.5; figs. 7, 17-8) by relief ornamentation with sporadic copper inlay in places, or by engraving. Ewer 7 (fig. 7) carries a composition of two pairs of two denaturalized plant motifs disposed symmetrically. On either side of the vessel a stylized pomegranate tree extends its branches and buds to cover the entire surface. An enormous composite floral design occupies the body façade and is echoed by a similar, yet smaller and more acanthus-like motif at the back.

There can be no doubt that the floral compositions which occupy the front and back of ewer 7 (fig. 7) are ultimately derived from the Sasanian artistic repertoire. Thus, they can easily be paralleled for example on various carved fragments from Taq-i Bustān.\textsuperscript{59} Similar designs were also absorbed into the art of the Umayyads and can be found in very similar fashion among the mosaics adorning the Dome of the Rock (691 A.D.) and the Great Mosque of Damascus,\textsuperscript{60} as well as in contemporary minor arts including metalwork. Among the latter, stylistically related motifs can be observed, for example, beneath the lower handle attachments of vessels typologically associated with the famous "Marwān" ewer (ewer type EMW 5/1, fig. 41).\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{57} Sotheby's 15.10.86, lot 155.
\textsuperscript{58} The 7th/8th-century dating put forward by Sotheby's appears too early to judge by the style of decoration encountered on this piece. If one compares it with other, supposedly contemporary decoration set against a punched background - like that applied to the famous "Baṣra" ewer (cat. no. IV) and to the closely related ewer in the Keir collection (cat. no. V) in the second sub-group, both of which are currently dated to between the late 7th and the 9th centuries - the stylistic discrepancy becomes immediately obvious. While the ornament on the latter pieces is characterized by a considerable degree of vibrant originality and vitality, the design on ewer V.3 has become much more static and stereotyped in its visual expression and seems rather to represent a degenerate version of the decorative schemes encountered on the "Baṣra" and Keir vessels.
\textsuperscript{59} Ettinghausen 1942, p. 117, fig. 16; Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 79-84 no. III/6.
\textsuperscript{60} Finster 1970/71, figs. 41, 44-45.
\textsuperscript{61} Sokoly 1990, p. 10; Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 80. It should be noted in this context that Melikian-Chirvani interpreted the design on the façade of ewer 7 as a stylized depiction of two rams directing their heads towards a central copper-inlaid lotus flower. In view of the closely related and undoubtedly floral designs from Sasanian and early Islamic
As for the pomegranate trees on the ewer’s sides, Melikian-Chirvani likened their fluency to certain designs found on Sogdian and Bactrian cups without, however, giving any specific examples for his claim.\(^{62}\) Be that as it may, similarly flowing tree designs can be cited on another early Islamic ewer of composite shape (ewer type EMW 4/V.1/2, fig. 42) which has been attributed tentatively to 9th/10th-century Iran.\(^{63}\) On this piece the trees have the same flowing quality and show a similar, though more delicate and elaborate, execution of the stems, buds and leaves. Interestingly, the layout of the decoration, two more or less identical designs for the sides of the ewer and for the front and back, is likewise closely comparable on both ewers, even if the treatment of each individual element is more complex and detailed in the case of ewer EMW 4/V.1/2 (fig. 42). Such observations suggest that ewer 7 (fig. 7) perhaps originated from the same cultural sphere as the piece in the Hermitage (ewer type EMW 4/V.1/2; fig. 42). As for its date the 8th or 9th century have been suggested by several scholars previously dealing with the piece,\(^{64}\) but keeping in mind the 9th/10th-century dating put forward for the stylistically related vessel in the Hermitage, a slightly later dating should not be dismissed.

A similar attribution most probably applies to ewer V.4 (fig. 17) as well, considering that the piece is related to ewer 7 (fig. 7) not only with regard to the relief technique and inlay of large copper fillets, but also, and more specifically, the type of decorative layout employed. Again, the vessel’s sides are occupied by identical motifs, while stylistically related elements occupy the front and back of the ewer. In this case the lateral designs are rendered as two large geometrical rosettes containing a central cross with trefoil-ended arms, while a large wing motif, flanked by plants, occupies the front. An acanthus tree with symmetrically disposed branches appears at the back below the handle.

\(^{62}\) Op. cit., p. 82.


Melikian-Chirvani, in dealing with this vessel, took these conceptual similarities in the ewers' decoration as a clear indication that both vessels were manufactured in the same workshop, a hypothesis which seems too daring at present.\textsuperscript{65} If one examines the decorative features of ewer V.4 (fig. 17), the central wing motif and indeed the plant design at the back are both again undoubtedly of Sasanian derivation, if in this case (as Ivanov has already pointed out) treated in a stylized manner typical of Islamic art.\textsuperscript{66} Allan, on the other hand, likened the decorative element on the ewer's façade to a similar element encountered on a probably 10th-century dish preserved in Berlin (fig. 43).\textsuperscript{67}

As for the geometric designs on the ewer's sides, they appear to be quite unique in early Islamic metalwork. Interestingly, however, a virtually identical motif, executed as a pen drawing, can be found on a 9th/10th-century, probably Egyptian, papyrus in the Archduke Rainer collection in Vienna (fig. 44).\textsuperscript{68} The peculiar cross-shape which occupies the centre of the geometric interlace was compared by Allan to a virtually identical motif applied to the neck of an early Islamic bronze ewer (ewer type MW 4/1, fig. 45) found in Baghdād and probably datable not before the late 8th century A.D. at the earliest.\textsuperscript{69}

All in all it appears that ewer V.4 (fig. 17) may be dated perhaps around the 9th century A.D.\textsuperscript{70} Its provenance, on the other hand, is still quite unclear, though here too western Iran or Iraq, Syria and perhaps even Egypt are possibilities, if one takes into account the considerations outlined above. Ivanov, who has dealt with this piece most recently, has suggested Iraq as one possible place of origin, a hypothesis probably based mainly on his observation that both the shape and the

\textsuperscript{65} Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 86-8.
\textsuperscript{66} Kuwait 1990, p. 11 no. 5 (English text).
\textsuperscript{67} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{68} Arnold and Grohmann 1929, pl. 5, p. 14. A similar, though more complex geometric design can also be observed on a probably 8th/9th-century moulded pottery dish; cf. Hassan 1956, p. 1 fig. 2.
\textsuperscript{69} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 206. Melikian-Chirvani, on the other hand, likened the cross design to a stucco motif found in Varakhshā, and subsequently argues for an eastern Iranian provenance for ewer V.4; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{70} Ivanov suggested the 8th/9th-century A.D.; cf. Kuwait 1990, p. 11 no. 5 (English text).
decorative features of this vessel reflect an early Islamic synthesis of Byzantine and Islamic styles. Such a synthesis would be most readily expected in lands strongly exposed to both cultural currents, i.e. Mesopotamia in particular. On the other hand, other adjacent regions, such as Syria in particular, should not be excluded from the investigation either, as here, too, a similar merger of artistic trends from east and west can be observed in early Islamic times, not only in minor arts but in particular in architecture.

The last ewer with relief decoration in this sub-group, ewer V.5 (fig. 18), is remarkable in several respects. The visual impact of its shape is dominated by the peculiar bipartite neck which combines a succession of round bulbous mouldings below with a squat conical section above.

This neck design is clearly linked generically to that encountered on ewer V.6 (fig. 19) and ewer V.1 (fig. 20) in the second sub-group. It can also be compared, in more general terms, to the neck design of ewer V.4 (fig. 17) and other typologically related, early Islamic ewers which feature a waisted and tapering, cylindrical lower section surmounted by a squat cylindrical one. Considering that all but one of these ewers with comparable neck treatments have been tentatively linked with late 8th-10th-century Mesopotamia or north-western Iran, it may be suggested that ewer V.5 (fig. 18) also originated in that chronological and geographical setting.

The evidence which can be extracted from the piece’s decoration is somewhat heterogeneous. On the one hand, the decorative layout, two large figural roundels separated by narrow, tree-like plant designs, recalls certain artistic conventions popular in pre-Islamic metalwork from Central Asia. On the other hand, however, the motif of the date palm which occupies the roundels on either

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71 Ibid.
72 Cf. ewer types EMW 4 & MW 1.
73 Ewer V.6 has been attributed to 12th-century Iran. If this attribution proves to be correct, the ewer may represent a later evolutionary stage of this particular typological variant of ewer form; cf. Christie’s 23.11.84, lot 554.
74 Cf. Darkevitch 1976, pls. 7 & 10 as examples.
side of the body is an ancient Tree-of-Life symbol particularly popular in Mesopotamia since prehistoric times. Indeed, it appears in very similar fashion on another early Islamic ewer tentatively attributed to 8th/9th-century Iraq.  

Undoubtedly, the origin and dating of ewer V.5 (fig. 18) will need closer investigation, but perhaps a preliminary attribution to the western fringes of Iran or Mesopotamia and an 8th - 10th-century dating may serve as the basis for such further research.

The remaining ewers of the first sub-group carry exclusively incised decoration, although in the case of ewers 9 (fig. 8) and 10 (fig. 9) the designs have been outlined with such deep lines that a pseudo-relief effect has been achieved.  

Both the latter vessels reveal large lateral roundels, in the case of ewer 9 (fig. 8) apparently filled with large floral motifs, in the case of ewer 10 (fig. 9) with two *senmurvs* facing the object's façade. The remaining spaces in between disclose a very worn design with superposed horizontal bands surmounted by a wing-like motif and an acanthus scroll.

Again (as on ewer V.5; fig. 18) the decorative layout reveals the influence of artistic conventions found on pre-Islamic metalwork from Central Asia. As for the style of individual motifs within this decorative setting, ewer 9 (fig. 8) is too badly worn to yield any decisive clues.

Ewer 10 (fig. 9) is a different matter. The *senmurvs* depicted on it had long been regarded as the most famous legendary animals in Iranian mythology and were accordingly frequently depicted on Sasanian artefacts such as textiles, stucco and indeed, metalwork.  

The *senmurv* remained a popular motif in Umayyad times

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76 It is interesting in this context to speculate whether these two pieces may represent an intermediate stage in the artistic development of early Islamic bronze and brass ewers, namely the move away from relief decoration towards purely incised and perfectly flat designs. These demanded far less skill from the caster of the vessel and ever-increasing abilities from the decorator.
and therefore, as Allan has pointed out already, an accurate attribution of ewer 10 (fig. 9) on the basis of this motif alone proves difficult.\textsuperscript{78}

However, one minute detail in the depiction of the \textit{senmurv} on this vessel, already noted by Pinder-Wilson in 1960, may be relevant to its attribution, i.e. the curved horns, which are unusual and not generally part of conventional \textit{senmurv} depictions.\textsuperscript{79} Interestingly, very similar horns can be observed on another fabulous being of legendary Iranian origin. This appears on a 6th- or 7th-century silver dish which Marshak has recently attributed to northern Iran (fig. 46).\textsuperscript{80} As for the other decorative details on ewer 10 (fig. 9), the acanthus scrolls set in between the main roundels have been linked by Pinder-Wilson to similar vegetal ornaments found on the aforementioned high-tin bronze dish attributed to early 10th-century Iran (fig. 43).\textsuperscript{81}

Considering the admittedly meagre evidence provided by the decoration of ewer 10 (fig. 9) and also its general appearance in comparison with other objects of the type discussed here, it appears that the vessel may be somewhat later than the preceding pieces, and a dating to the late 9th or early 10th century, already advocated by Scerrato and Allan, may be suggested.\textsuperscript{82} As for the object’s provenance, Iraq has been suggested,\textsuperscript{83} but I personally believe that in this case an Iranian provenance deserves equal consideration, considering in particular the plants’ stylistic similarities with the aforementioned, probably 10th-century high-tin Iranian plate (fig. 43) and the similarities between the \textit{senmurvs’} horns and those on the probably northern Iranian dish discussed earlier, which may date from the 6th or 7th century (fig. 46).

Among the remaining objects in the first sub-group, ewers 11 - 14 (figs. 10-13) all feature decorative layouts and individual motifs which identify them as

\textsuperscript{78} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 206; Scerrato 1966, p. 12 no. 3.
\textsuperscript{79} Pinder-Wilson 1960, p. 89; for a more conventional depiction of the \textit{senmurv} cf. Marshak 1986, fig. 199.
\textsuperscript{80} Marshak 1986, fig. 184, p. 436 no. 184.
\textsuperscript{81} Pinder-Wilson 1960, pp. 91-2; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{82} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 206; Scerrato 1966, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{83} Sokoly 1990, p. 10.
belonging to the large corpus of metalwork executed in eastern Iran during the 12th and early 13th centuries.

Typically, a central cartouche, generally filled with a sphinx, bird or floral motif, is flanked by vase motifs or roundels on the ewers’ sides and enclosed above and below by bands containing Kufic and/or naskhi inscriptions as well as guilloche bands in cases. It is also not unusual, as is the case on ewers 12 - 14 (figs. 11-13), that the central motifs are either separated by vertical decorative panels or interconnected by a narrow ornamental band.

The decoration of ewer V.6 (fig. 19), finally, diverges somewhat from the more conventional decorative schemes, and although the large crescent motif on the front is not unparalleled per se, its detailing and indeed the execution of most of the other decorative panels (except perhaps the epigraphic band around the upper neck) seem odd and have apparently been re-engraved at some later date, thus irrevocably distorting the original decoration. A 12th-century Iranian attribution has been suggested for this piece, but a more detailed study of its individual features will be necessary to corroborate this as yet hypothetical suggestion.

4.2. Sub-Group 2 (Cat. no. I - XI, V. I-II; figs. 20-22, pl. 2, figs. 23-28, pls. 3-4, fig. 29)

In the second sub-group only ewer I and II (figs. 20-1) display cast relief decoration, while the remaining pieces either remain undecorated or carry incised and sometimes additionally inlaid ornamentation.

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84 Allan has already suggested this attribution for the Harari and Keir ewers (cat. nos. 11 & 12); cf. Allan 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 206-7. Fehérvári, on the other hand, has suggested an 11th/12th-century dating for the Keir ewer; cf. Fehérvári 1976, p. 56.
85 Similar decorative layouts can be observed on several other early Islamic ewers of similar date; cf. several pieces belonging to ewer types ICAW 3 and 6 as examples.
86 Christie’s 23.11.84, lot 554.
The decoration of ewer I (fig. 20) is unique in this category and of great beauty. It consists (as was mentioned before) of four staggered rows of foliate imbrications, each with two pentafoil acanthus escutcheons enclosing a small bud, perhaps originally inlaid with copper, set on a long stem. The origin of this complex decorative scheme can be sought, according to Ackerman and Pope, in the lotus petal and seed theme apparently connected with ancient solar worship in ancient Iran and already encountered on Achaemenid wine bowls. The fact, however, that the artist of this ewer created a continuous horizontal succession of an originally isolated motif and repeated this four times in order to cover the vessel body comprehensively, indicates that he was working towards the end of the Sasanian period or indeed already during the first years of Muslim patronage, when such patterns apparently first became fashionable. Accordingly, a dating to the late 7th or even 8th century may be suggested. Interestingly in this context, a likewise late Sasanian or early Islamic silver cup reveals a succession of identical vegetal designs around its outer side (fig. 47). In this case the object, though also cast, seems to have been decorated in repoussé, and it may therefore provide evidence that bronze vessels with cast relief decoration such as ewer I may have taken their inspiration ultimately from precious metal objects adorned with repoussé decoration.

87 Ackerman and Pope 1946, p. 57; Ettinghausen 1940, p. 115; Jenkins 1985, p. 55.
89 Jenkins 1985, p. 55. Allan suggests a 9th-century dating for this ewer. He bases his attribution on certain similarities that, in his view, link this ewer to another early Islamic bronze ewer with a horizontal beak spout which depicts a shepherd and two griffins in relief and is considered to be of 9th-century date (ewer type MW 2/5). He particularly views as similar the way in which the cast ridges of metal were used to define the decorative units, and the comparable level of stylization observable in the treatment of the plant motifs on both vessels. I personally believe, as I have indicated elsewhere in this thesis (cf. the discussion of ewer MW 2/V.1/1 in chapter 7), that the artistic principle of decorating a vessel allover, without differentiating between the sides of a ewer and its front and back, may antedate the four-sided layout so typically found on certain 8th- or 9th-century ewers with relief decoration (cf. ewers 7, V.4-5 in this category, for example). Moreover, I feel that Allan's points are too general to allow a dating of ewer I on such grounds alone; cf. Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 207.
90 Michigan 1967, no. 38, fig. 38.
Yet another pre-Islamic precious metal object with similar design can be cited. It is a small stem cup made of gold which was discovered at Perestshepina together with other precious metal objects and was executed, according to Marshak, by western Turkic peoples (perhaps Avars) in the first half of the 7th century A.D. (fig. 48).\(^91\)

As for the ewer’s geographical provenance, both Mesopotamia and western Iran have been suggested.\(^92\) However, it may well be possible that the object in fact came from an area further to the north, since it was discovered as part of a treasure in Stepanzmaninda in the Kazbek region of the Caucasus.\(^93\) Although this find-spot cannot be considered conclusive in itself, it is interesting that a design closely related to that on the ewer can be found on a capital from the colonnade in the eastern apse of a ruined building in Ishkhani, a location situated to the south-east of the Black Sea and today part of Turkey, though in early medieval times it was still in Georgia.\(^94\) Unfortunately, very little is known about the metalwork production in the lands of between the Black and Caspian Seas during the centuries we are concerned with here. However, considering that the area was traditionally rich in metals and boasted a productive metalworking industry in antiquity, it seems possible that local centres still produced metal vessels in early Islamic times and decorated them with motifs influenced by artistic centres in neighbouring areas such as Georgia, Mesopotamia and Iran.

On ewer II (fig. 21), the three staggered rows of moulded bud or drop shapes help to associate this piece with a large number of other early Islamic metal objects, including bowls, bottles, flasks, mortars and indeed ewers enhanced with more or less identical elements. Most of these have been associated with 9th/10th-century eastern Iran, where, according to Melikian-Chirvani, similar bud motifs can

\(^91\) Marshak 1986, p. 72, fig. 90, p. 432 no. 90.
\(^93\) Mourier 1907, p. 115. The author notes that there is an inscription, perhaps in Arabic, on one of the ewer’s sides.
\(^94\) Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze 1979, p. 98.
also be observed among the contemporary stucco ornamentation of Nishapûri architecture and Bukhâra earthenware.95

Ewer III in the Koç Collection (fig. 22), which remains undecorated, is virtually identical to several of the vessels assembled in the first sub-group (cf. cat. nos. 2, 4, 5; figs. 2, 4, 5), except of course for its higher foot. The latter pieces have been attributed tentatively to 8th/9th-century Mesopotamia and there are at present no indications that would prevent us from attributing ewer III (fig. 22) accordingly.

The "Basra" Ewer (Plate 2)

The next piece in this sub-group, known as the "Baṣra" ewer (cat. no. IV; pl. 2), and now preserved in Tiflis, is at once the most famous and perhaps the most controversial object not only in this typological category but within the context of early Islamic metalwork as a whole. Yet despite the enigmas surrounding this piece, it has often been considered the central object of this ewer type around which all the other typologically related vessels should be grouped and dated. The ewer's most important feature is a Kufic inscription which encloses the mouth. The generally accepted reading is: "Blessing, from the works of Abū (or Ibn) Yazīd in Baṣra in the year 69(or 67) A.H." At first sight this epigraphic band seems clearly to place the piece in 7th-century Baṣra, a fact that once led it to be acknowledged as the oldest precisely datable Islamic artefact.97

95 Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 28-9; cf. ewer type MW 2/7, chapter 7). It should be noted in this context that the vessel was bought in Turkey; it allegedly came from the neighbourhood of Lake Van. If there is any truth in this piece of information, the question immediately arises whether the tear-drop motif may not actually have originated in the west before becoming popular in Iran. Indeed, very similar decorative elements can already be observed on 1st/2nd-century Roman glass-ware; cf. Harden 1988, pp. 162-3, no. 84; Deiss 1966, p. 76; see also the discussion of this motif in connection with ewer MW 2/7 in chapter 7. If this hypothesis were to prove correct, the ewer under discussion here may antedate the eastern Iranian pieces with similar decoration.
96 Diakonov 1947, p. 8; Fehérvári 1976, p. 25; Sokoly 1990, p. 4.
97 Pinder-Wilson 1960, p. 90.
Unfortunately, however, the accuracy of the statement incised on the ewer’s rim has been questioned by several scholars, the first of which, B. I. Marshak, discussed the ewer comprehensively in 1972. He argued that, looking at the layout of the inscription, it appears that the engraver miscalculated the space available for the latter and was therefore forced to undertake corrections in the word sana, squeeze certain characters of the word sittin and eventually omit the last element of the dating words which should have included the Arabic word for either "hundred" or even "two hundred".

These speculations then induced him to conclude that the true date of this ewer should be read as either 167/9 A.H. or 267/9 A.H., i.e. 786/7 (788/9) or 886/7 (888/9) A.D. He believes this dating to be additionally borne out by the style of the epigraphy and what he sees as the Central Asian-inspired ornament on the ewer’s neck, foot and handle. This, he says, could hardly have appeared on an early Islamic artefact from Basra before the conquest of Central Asia by the Umayyads in the 8th century.

In 1976 Allan supported Marshak’s views and put forward additional evidence of a numismatic nature to corroborate these views. Firstly, he pointed out that the first completely Arabic coin as opposed to Arabo-Pahlavi coin was not struck in Iraqi towns before 79 A.H.(ca. 696 A.D.), i.e. ten years after the earliest dating of the ewer. Before then, Pahlavi script was apparently used on coins for all epigraphic details apart from the bismillah. Moreover, the style of epigraphy encountered on the ewer can still be found largely unchanged on Basran coins of the 3rd century A.H. and thus does not in itself indicate an early date. Indeed, he believes that the writing on the ewer was deliberately archaized. Finally, Allan shows that a post-reform coin from Baṣra, dated to 40 A.H.(661 A.D.), may also

100 Allan 1976a, p. 302.
101 Ibid.
bear an incomplete date, thus providing a kind of precedent for the "error" assumed to have occurred on the "Basra" ewer.\(^{102}\)

A third scholar, who dealt with ewer IV (pl. 2) in 1976, had different views. Géza Fehérvári dismissed Marshak’s theory as improbable, since according to him the custom of omitting the hundred or thousand unit of a year was a rather late practice and quite unknown in the first centuries of Islamic art.\(^{103}\) Furthermore, he points out that certain epigraphic peculiarities in the inscription, such as the open form of the 'ain and the circular rendering of the nūm and ha, are all closely comparable to late 7th- or 8th-century epigraphy as found for example on a dam near Tā’if which bears the name of the caliph Mu’āwiyya and the date 677-8. Similar features can also be observed on a column from al-Muwaqqar datable to 722-3 and finally, on the intermediate octagon of the Dome of the Rock executed in 691-2.\(^{104}\)

As for Baṣra as an early Islamic metalworking centre, Fehérvári believes it to be quite feasible that the town was indeed capable of producing objects like the "Baṣra" ewer as early as the 7th century, particularly as it was apparently also responsible for glass and pottery production of some quality around the same time.\(^{105}\)

The most recent discussion of the "Baṣra" ewer, finally, was undertaken by Melikian-Chirvani in 1982, based largely on a discussion of the vessel’s inscription already contained in his 1972 thesis. He accepts the date as expressed on the ewer and dismisses Marshak’s theory.\(^{106}\) According to him, Marshak was not aware of the fact that a bilobed half-palmette, which he mistook for the letters bā-nūn or bā-yā of iḥb or aḥb (Yaẓīd), separates the beginning of the inscription from its end. Melikian-Chirvani then suggests a reading completely different from that generally accepted by other scholars. He doubts the reading of the word "Baṣra" and suggests

\(^{102}\) Ibid.; Sokoly 1990, p. 5.
\(^{103}\) Fehérvári 1976, pp. 25-6.
\(^{105}\) Ibid.
instead bi’l-nudra (Arabic for: "in one"), a formula which would correspond to the semantic equivalent in Persian, yek-bare rikhteh shodan, used on Iranian metalwork.\(^{107}\) As for the remainder of the inscription Melikian-Chirvani suggested that the date is followed by the formula baraka min sun’ihi ("divine grace through its making") and a concluding alif, an ending (according to him) quite common in a great many Iranian inscriptions on metal.\(^{108}\) The inscription as a whole should then in Melikian-Chirvani’s opinion be read like this: "Blessing may come from that which is made in one piece in the year 69. Blessed be he who made it. Alif."\(^{109}\)

Based on this analysis of the ewer’s epigraphy Melikian-Chirvani accepts the late 7th-century dating, but puts forward an eastern Iranian provenance for this piece, and consequently, for the entire typological category under discussion.\(^{110}\)

The controversy surrounding the "Baṣra" ewer’s inscription continues to this day and no new decisive arguments have so far emerged. If one were to evaluate the various viewpoints summarized here, it has to be said that, judging by the epigraphy alone, neither a 7th-century nor a later 8th/9th-century dating (as put forward by Marshak and Allan) can be completely rejected.

In my opinion the script on the lip, though somewhat primitively executed, seems fluent enough and even has a certain self-confidence in its layout. Consequently, I believe that any omission of the hundreds was intentional and not merely a result of bad design on the part of the craftsman.

\(^{107}\) Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 65; Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 25, p. 37 note 23. This phrase, according to him, is for example engraved on an Iranian bronze object made in 1203.

\(^{108}\) Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 37 n. 22.

\(^{109}\) Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 66. As mentioned before, the reading of the artist’s name (Ibn or Abī Yazīd), has also been omitted, as the relevant letters were identified by Melikian-Chirvani as bilobed fleurons incised horizontally and intended - together with another corresponding design placed diametrically opposite - to mark the beginning and end of the inscription. The alif which terminates the inscription is, he thinks, probably an abbreviation of the divine name. In order to further justify his omission of the artist’s name Melikian-Chirvani argues that there is no evidence of an artist’s name, in Islamic art in general or Islamic Iranian art in particular, which starts with ibn, and he claims that such a prefix occurs only among literary and historic writers; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 62-6.

\(^{110}\) Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 25.
As for its style, it finds close parallels not only on those Umayyad artefacts cited by Fehérvári but also, and even more closely, in an inscription found at Mount Sala’ near Međīna, where Abū Bakr and 'Umar are said to have prayed in 625 A.D. The tall Kufic letters that can be made out next to the graffito commemorating the event show a striking resemblance to those executed on the lip of the ewer. In addition to this piece of evidence, Sokoly further cited stylistically related epigraphy on a milestone of 'Abd al-Malik (685-705) from Bab al-Wādī as well as the slightly later inscription on the famous bronze bird executed by Suleyman in 723 A.D.

Despite such epigraphic parallels from the 7th and early 8th century, there is at present no conclusive evidence that would reject the later dating suggested by Allan and Marshak. The only definite chronological clue to be drawn from the inscription is the fact that the Kufic employed is plain and therefore has to antedate the 10th century, when foliations and floriations of the individual letters became increasingly popular.

To sum up, from a purely epigraphic point of view the period spanning the late 7th to the late 9th century has to be considered when examining the time of the ewer’s production.

Regarding its place of origin, Başra seems to be acceptable to most scholars. If Başra can indeed be accepted as the place where the ewer was manufactured, then we are again faced with the problem as to when its production

111 Safadi 1978, p. 15 top figure.
112 Sokoly 1990, p. 5.
113 Op. cit., p. 6. In one aspect, however, both Marshak’s and Allan’s theories remain contestable. They both failed to provide a large enough number of early Islamic inscriptions which reveal a comparable omission of the hundreds. Only quantitative evidence of that kind could give credence to their assumption that the habit of applying incomplete dates to early Islamic objects can already be widely observed in early Islamic times.
114 Melikian-Chirvani’s epigraphic analysis which substitutes b’il-nudra (in one) for the name of Baṣra, does not appear convincing to me, as both the latter formula and the enigmatic alif at the end of the inscription seem to be characteristics of later 12th/early 13th-century epigraphy. They are not encountered on very early Islamic metalwork from Iran. In any case Melikian-Chirvani fails to prove that such formulae existed at the time of the ewer’s production, which he after all accepts as the late 7th century A.D. Be that as it may, his arguments do not at present suffice to refute the reading of the relevant letters as “Baṣra” and to substantiate an eastern Iranian provenance for this piece.
could have taken place there. Archaeological evidence from the city itself and the surrounding area of southern Iraq, as well as evidence drawn from literary sources, suggests that, although Basra was indeed founded in 638 as a military camp and grew fast, the town only reached its zenith under ʿAbbāsīd rule in the 8th and 9th centuries. Only during this period did it develop into a very large city by medieval standards. By that time it had also become an important commercial centre and a focus of intense religious as well as intellectual activity. However, on the other hand, we have reports that already after the arrival of Jiyad ibn Abi Sufyan as new governor in 665 the town assumed an urban appearance and enjoyed considerable prosperity. Indeed, one source even claims that the population of Basra had already reached a total of 300,000 inhabitants as early as 670.

From the comments made above it becomes evident that the information contained in the ewer’s inscription remains ambiguous and inconclusive at present, as neither the date nor indeed the provenance can apparently be accepted at face value. Consequently, the only alternative in an attempt to fix the vessel’s chronological and geographical setting is to consider the various decorative features which characterize the foot, body, neck, mouth and handle of the piece.

To start with, the free-flowing scroll which covers the foot and incidentally the extension of the lip is composed of slender, sinuous stems. From these spring an array of curly leaves which end in a peculiar, single punched dot. The visual impact of this decorative scheme is one of profusion, and indeed confusion, which leaves the beholder puzzled as to the original layout underlying the incised ornamentation. The leafy sprays seem to be displayed at random and without organic cohesion, although in some places individual designs seem to recall the profile of a lily or related flower.

115 Ettinghausen 1942a, pp. 4-7; Sokoly 1990, p. 7.
116 Pellat 1960, pp. 1085-86.
118 Hitti 1964, p. 241.
119 Marshak 1971, fig. 27. Note the design immediately to the right of the foot’s central axis.
Marshak, discussing this enigmatic style of decoration, stated that it had no analogy in either Byzantine or Sasanian ornament, both of which one would expect on a Mesopotamian artefact of the late 7th century. At the same time, however, he considered the design as stylistically related to that encountered on a mid 8th-century silver cup discovered in Tomiz, and according to him, probably manufactured in Sogdia or Chach (fig. 50). Unfortunately, Marshak’s comparison does not seem convincing if one examines the motifs concerned closely.

On the Tomiz cup the main elements of the design, a neatly laid-out intertwined horizontal succession of split palmette designs, are clearly in contrast to the apparently indecipherable profusion of vegetal designs on the foot of the "Baṣra" ewer. The visual clarity of the ornament on the Tomiz cup is further enhanced by the punch-dotted background which makes each element of the design stand out emphatically. The latter feature does not occur on the "Baṣra" ewer at all.

Allan, taking up a preliminary remark of Marshak, argued that the ewer’s decoration in fact represented a stylistic development of the Sogdian style found on the Tomiz cup and likens it to the Sāmarrāʾ I and II stucco styles of the 9th century A.D. Indeed, many of the Sāmarrāʾ designs, which were of course executed not only in stucco but also in wood, come quite close stylistically to the scrollwork on the ewer’s foot. This is especially true as regards the degree of abstraction achieved and also the manner in which a seemingly endless design is composed of enigmatically combined and fused individual motifs. These hide the underlying compositional structure.

In addition to the similarities to 9th-century Sāmarrāʾ ornament, the scrollwork on the ewer’s foot can in fact be paralleled even more closely by 9th/10th-century book painting. On a Qurʾān leaf probably executed in Iraq or Persia, the golden suṣra heading in the centre contains an elaborate Kufic script

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120 Marshak 1972, p. 65; Marshak 1986, fig. 81, p. 431 no. 81. Melikian-Chirvani considered the scrollwork on the ewer’s foot as a stylization of ram heads similar to that attested in Central Asian art, without, however, putting forward any concrete evidence for his claim; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 60.
outlined in red and set against a background of floral scrollwork (fig. 51).\textsuperscript{122} The latter is executed in a style which is strikingly similar to that encountered on the ewer. One motif in particular, discernible between the \textit{tā marbūta} of the initial word \textit{sūra} and the \textit{alif} of the subsequent word, is nearly identical to the lily-like design referred to earlier.

As for the scrolls on the ewer’s body, each facet contains a vertically rising, fairly thick stem which forms a rounded section at regular intervals. This is introduced by two downward-curving trefoils or stylized grapes. Each rounded section in its turn contains a large simple trefoil.

This type of scroll is well known as far back as Hellenistic times and was still popular in all branches of early Islamic art. Hence, Fehérvári compared it to the similar yet rather more naturalistic vines found on the octagonal arcade of the Dome of the Rock as well as on panels from the bath porch and the forecourt balustrade at Khirbat al-Mafjar.\textsuperscript{123} Sokoly likened the ewer’s scrolls to two stalks found among the vegetal decoration which adorns the depiction of a mosque on a perhaps Umayyad Qur’an frontispiece which has recently been discovered in the Friday mosque of San’ā’.\textsuperscript{124} However, a closer look at both scrolling designs again reveals that the ones in the miniature are much more naturalistic and free-flowing than the rather static and conventionalized stalks on the ewer - though they are of course executed in a much more labile medium.

The preceding comments suggest that the ornamentation on the ewer’s foot and lip comes closest to designs found on 9th-century artefacts. The scrollwork on the body facets, though apparently without any immediate parallels at present, seems to represent a later stage than the more naturalistic and free-flowing Umayyad scroll patterns, with its new rigidity and increased level of stylization.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{122} Fehérvári and Safadi 1981, p. 28, no. 1, p. 29 top figure.
\textsuperscript{123} Fehérvári 1976, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{124} Sokoly 1990, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{125} The question arises in this context whether the increased stylization of the vines may not be due to incompetence on the part of the engraver. However, it appears to me that the overall quality of the decoration on this piece does not allow for such an interpretation.
Accordingly, it too may indicate the same kind of 9th-century date suggested by the other decorative features.\textsuperscript{126}

Quite apart from the evidence provided by the ewer’s epigraphy and ornamentation, its position within this particular typological category - i.e. its \textit{profile} in comparison with those of other pieces belonging to this ewer type - may also point to a date rather later than the 7th century. Thus, the neck design with a faceted central area flanked above and below by broad decorative panels links the ewer to a group of early Islamic bronze ewers which probably first appeared in Mesopotamia during the late 8th or early 9th century.\textsuperscript{127}

Moreover, the clasps of the upper handle attachment, although still showing the outlines of a crested bird head (a clear Hellenistic legacy), reveal incised ornamentation which no longer includes naturalistic - i.e. ornithomorphic - detailing as on typologically slightly earlier pieces of this group. Instead, it has vegetal scrollwork on the crest and a succession of punch-dotted circles along the bird’s head.

It is obvious that the “Basra” ewer will definitively need further detailed investigation in order to resolve the numerous enigmas and discrepancies surrounding its geographical and chronological setting. The period between the late 7th and the late 9th century will have to be taken into account as a whole in any future attempt to establish the object’s time of manufacture, although certain observations undertaken here seem to tip the balance towards a dating around the 9th century. As for its place of origin, Mesopotamia, i.e. Basra, seems feasible enough.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{126} Marshak dated the scrollwork on the ewer’s body to the 8th century, without however presenting any concrete evidence for his suggestion; cf. Marshak 1972, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{127} Cf. ewer type MW 4, chapter 9.
\textsuperscript{128} Melikian-Chirvani is to my knowledge the only scholar who regards this piece as a product of eastern Iran. His argument is based on the inscription and his claim that both the vessel’s shape and its decoration reveal strong Central Asian influence; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 57-66. It is interesting in this context to note a story by the 10th-century writer al-Tanukhi. He narrates how, after a party in the house of the police prefect of Baṣra, he walked to his barge on the river through the place where jugs are
There are three other ewers in the second sub-group which are directly related to the "Basra" ewer from a typological point of view: ewer V in the Keir collection (fig. 23), ewer VI formerly in the Lewisohn collection (fig. 24), and ewer VII (fig. 25), excavated in the old town of Samarkand and published by Marshak in 1972. All three share the bulbous and faceted body on high conical base, the waisted cylindrical neck and the S-shaped beaded handle. The large openwork thumbpiece alone sets them structurally apart from the "Basra" ewer, which displays a solid palmette leaf instead. From a decorative point of view, on the other hand, each piece differs from the rest, and each one offers very contrasting clues regarding its dating and geographical provenance.

Fehérvári has pointed out à propos ewer V in the Keir collection (fig. 23) that both the scrolling panels on its faceted body and the openwork thumbpiece are elements derived from Hellenistic traditions. While this statement needs no further comment with regard to the vine scrolls on the body, the origin of the openwork plaque is in fact less obviously to be connected with Hellenistic art. Unfortunately Fehérvári himself gives no concrete Hellenistic parallel to substantiate his claim.

Dating the ewer on the basis of these decorative features proves difficult. It is certainly correct, as Fehérvári argued, that the style of scrollwork on the facets finds ample parallels in Umayyad art. However, the motif remains popular well into early 'Abbásid times. Thus it can be found for example on a late 8th-century wooden minbar panel from the Iraqi city of Tikrit (fig. 52) and among the manufactured. Here, he felt it necessary to retire into the house of a jug manufacturer. If the jugs in question were metal objects, which seems feasible, this story strengthens the argument for the existence of metalwork production in early Islamic Baṣra; cf. Margoliouth 1922, p. 42.

130 It is interesting to note in this context that Melikian-Chirvani in his 1972 thesis has linked the openwork thumbpieces of these ewers with Coptic Egypt; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 206.
131 Fehérvári 1976, p. 26. Sokoly additionally pointed out that similar scrollwork can also be observed on a probably Umayyad ivory casket; cf. Sokoly 1990, p. 8.
decorative panels of the minbar in the Great Mosque of Kairouan. In view of such observations the scrollwork on the ewer cannot serve as a conclusive indicator for the date of the vessel.

On the other hand, both the decoration on the ewer's lip and that on its foot reveal significant clues in this respect. The incised and punched decoration around the mouth and on the lateral clasps (whose function of joining the handle to the mouth has incidentally become obsolete, thus leaving them as purely decorative features) is completely abstract, with few additional motifs of vegetal origin. The outlines of the clasps are no longer ornithomorphic as was the case on earlier pieces in this group, and their abstract ornament further obscures their original identity. The beginnings of a development away from naturalism towards abstraction as a decorative principle were already noticeable on the "Başra" ewer. But the process is even further developed here - a point that might help to indicate a slightly later date for the Keir ewer in relation to the "Başra" piece.

The most revealing aspect of the ewer's ornamentation, however, can be observed on its foot. This bears a large-scale scrolling design with each curve enclosing a trefoil leaf and a peculiar gourd-like plant. The whole decoration is set against a punch-dotted background, a treatment which incidentally occurs in all the other decorated areas of the ewer as well. Here, there can be little doubt that the ornament was indeed influenced by Central Asian silverware, both in applying the artistic convention of highlighting the main decorative elements by a punch-dotted background and in the actual choice of vegetal motifs employed. Thus, a very similar type of scroll, especially with regard to the gourd-like plant motifs, can be observed for example on a silver bowl discovered in Tomiz and probably executed in 9th-century Central Asia (fig. 53).

These considerations make it possible to date the Keir ewer tentatively to the 9th century and perhaps to a time slightly later than that assumed for the "Basra"  

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132 Dimand 1937, pp. 295-6, 298, figs. 1-2, 8; Sokoly 1990, pp. 8-9.
133 Marshak 1986, fig. 93, p. 432 no. 93; Darkevitch 1976, pl. 22 figs. 3-4 (no. 64); Allan 1976a, p. 302.
ewer, bearing in mind the advanced abstraction of the lip clasps and the clearly discernible Central Asian influence encountered on the Keir ewer. As for its provenance, Mesopotamia has been suggested by Fehérvári, mainly on the basis of its close typological links with the "Basra" ewer. However, until the uncertainties regarding the provenance of the "Basra" ewer are resolved, the attribution of the Keir ewer must be viewed with caution, too, and the matter must effectively be left open for the present.

The Lewisohn ewer (cat. no. VI; fig. 24) was discussed in some detail by Marshak in 1972. Diagnostic details can again be sought in the scrolling decoration of the foot and neck, as well as in the wide horizontal frieze containing four hunting scenes and intermediate floral motifs with tendrils that recall those on the foot and the neck. The scrolls applied around the ewer's foot are stylistically related to those on the base of the "Basra" ewer, and they also show interesting technical similarities to the latter, such as the convention of terminating each vegetal element with a small punched dot, and the dotted border lines.

134 This dating has already been suggested by Allan in 1976; cf. Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 208. Melikian-Chirvani arrives at a similar dating and argues that the crude inscription on the handle back cannot be dated before the 9th century on stylistic grounds; cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, pp. 70-74.
135 Fehérvári 1976, p. 32 no 1. The occurrence of punch-dotting on this vessel has been considered by Melikian-Chirvani as a clear indication that the piece must be of eastern Iranian origin. However, although this background treatment was undoubtedly one of the main characteristics of Central Asian and in particular Sogdian metalwork executed between the 7th and 9th centuries, there are indications that this technique was also used in the west as early as Roman times; cf. Radnoti 1938, pl. XLV.2a and also the discussion regarding the punch-dotted background on ewer EMW 5/3 in chapter 5. Moreover, by the 8th and 9th centuries there was a constant flow of Sogdian artefacts, probably mainly across the steppes, to the west - including the caliphate, the Khazar empire situated in the north-western steppes, and Byzantium. In all these areas such pieces were subsequently imitated in technique and style (cf. an 8th/9th-century silver cup with peacocks attributed by Marshak to the Khaqanate of the Khazars); cf. Marshak 1986, figs. 44, 46, 48, 51-2, 55-6, 82-5 (as examples for Sogdian metalwork), pp. 309, 311, 316, 318, 325, 328; also see figs. 91/2 and p. 432 nos. 91/2 for the Khazar silver cup. On the other hand there is one object which might reveal evidence for a more eastern provenance with regard to ewer V. On a painted and glazed earthenware bowl from 10th-century Nishapur, the central palmette design shows a striking similarity to the openwork thumbpiece on the ewer; cf. Grabar 1972, p. 95 fig. 4.
137 An additional animal frieze occupies the upper body of the ewer, but this feature is hardly discernible on the available photographs and therefore cannot be evaluated stylistically at present.
However, in this case the design is co-ordinated in a much clearer manner, with buds, leaves and stems immediately distinguishable among the overall ornamentation. Interestingly, just as with the design encountered on the foot of the "Baṣra" ewer, the type of scrollwork employed here also evokes certain background motifs utilized in Qur’anic book illumination. Thus, a very similar design occurs for example on a Qur’ān page illuminated by one 'Ali either in Iraq or Persia in 1092.139

As for the large bud which occupies each curve of the foot scrolls, it is of unusual shape, but (perhaps significantly) its lower part, which consists of a trilobed base surmounted by three nearly globular petals, corresponds exactly to certain bud or flower shapes known from Central Asian art.140 The stylistically related scrolls on the neck are of slightly different appearance. Their buds seem to be related to certain other flower motifs utilized in Central Asia, such as some found for example on a late 8th/9th-century silver bucket manufactured in Sogdia or Uṣrūshana (fig. 54).141

As for the main decoration on the ewer’s body, the figural frieze has been analysed by Marshak, who compared the treatment of the horse and the peculiar manner in which its tail is bound to a 10th/11th-century marble relief from Ghazna, while relating the floral motif to the designs on the Tomiz cup (fig. 50).142 Marshak also attempted to identify the type of sword worn by the horseman as a 10th-century feature. This theory, however, has been firmly rejected by Allan and Melikian-Chirvani. The latter points out that swords of this type can be seen on earlier frescoes from Turkestan.143

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139 Lings 1976, p. 18 nos. 14-16, pl. 16.
140 Cf. Darkevitch 1976, pl. 5 no. 7; Marshak 1986, fig. 34, p. 429 no. 34 as examples.
141 Marshak 1986, fig. 65, p. 431 no. 65. Sokoly likened the neck scrolls to similar designs on a silver plate in Berlin, attributed by Sauvaget to the 9th or 10th century; cf. Sokoly 1990, p. 8; Sauvaget 1940/1, pp. 19-33.
142 Marshak 1972, p. 65. Fehervári, on the other hand, relates the floral motifs to pre- and early Islamic Syrian scrolls; cf. Fehervári 1976, p. 27.
The evidence assembled above makes it feasible to date the Lewisohn ewer to the 10th or even 11th century, if one is to judge by the stylistically similar motifs on the Qur'an page executed in 1092. Its provenance is far less clear, but Marshak seems to suggest yet again links with Mesopotamia, mainly on the basis of its close typological similarities to the "Basra" and Keir ewers. On the other hand, if the incised frieze, which Marshak compares to images from Ghazna, is anything to go by, and if one were to accept his assumption that the vessel and its decoration are contemporary, then a provenance from eastern Iran must also be considered.

Ewer VII (fig. 25) was unearthed in the shahristān of Samarkand and features a large lateral medallion with geometrical scrollwork, a motif which recurs repeatedly on 12th/13th-century metalwork attributed to the eastern provinces of Iran and to Central Asia. Accordingly, a similar attribution may be put forward for this piece at present. Ewer VIII (fig. 26) has been identified as "Ghaznavid" - a term which is still very nebulous and has not been properly justified by those who published the piece.

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144 This dating had already been suggested by Marshak and Allan; cf. Marshak 1972, p. 69; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 208. It has been noted that the vessel is actually more archaic than the incised decoration applied to it, a comment subsequently rejected by both Marshak and Melikian-Chirvani; cf. Marshak 1972, p. 65; Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, p. 69. I personally find it at least noteworthy that a horizontally orientated frieze should have been incised onto a vertically faceted body, which after all could just as well have been decorated according to the requirements of its body structure - as were both the "Basra" and Keir ewers for example. Moreover, from a purely technical point of view it must have been quite awkward to overcome the physical obstacle presented by the narrow facets and to achieve coherent outlines. In my opinion the frieze may well have been an afterthought which may have been applied to the ewer not long after its original manufacture.

145 Marshak 1972, p. 72.

146 There is at least one object that seems to support an eastern attribution for the Lewisohn ewer; cf. footnote 137. It may also be interesting in this context to mention that a large group of variously faceted, cylindrical-bodied ewers with obliquely rising beak spouts - generally dated to the late 12th- and 13th-century and attributed to eastern Iran - reveal a strikingly similar decorative concept to that on the Lewisohn ewer. They, too, generally receive a horizontally orientated ornamentation which completely contradicts the vertical facets of the body structure and in such cases actually aims at concealing the physical features of the vessel completely; cf. ewer type ICAW 6.


148 Mortimer-Rice and Rowland 1971, p. 90 no. 176.
The incised decoration on this vessel is of such a sketchy and generalized nature that no dating or indeed provenance can be deduced from it.\textsuperscript{149} The only preliminary indicator regarding its chronological and geographical place within this typological group is its profile, which is very closely related to that of the preceding piece which we dated tentatively to 12th/13th-century eastern Iran. However, much more research will be necessary to corroborate this very circumstantial statement.

Ewer IX (fig. 27) differs slightly from the preceding pieces on account of its chamfered, faceted body and its neck design, which features two broad bands, flanked by narrow mouldings around its upper and lower part, enclosing the central facets. This particular neck treatment is, according to Marshak, a comparatively late feature,\textsuperscript{150} and Melikian-Chirvani was able to point out more concretely that the thin raised fillets with indentations which frame each moulding appear around the 10th or 11th century A.D. at the earliest.\textsuperscript{151} The degenerated treatment of the lateral lip extensions further underlines the fact that this vessel is a chronologically later variant of a model which had already been popular centuries earlier.\textsuperscript{152}

Apart from these rather general observations, there is one feature of the ewer’s appearance, i.e. the compact floriated Kufic applied to the neck, which can provide more concrete evidence as far as its date and provenance are concerned, and Melikian-Chirvani, who has dealt with the vessel extensively, has taken its style as an indicator pointing to late 10th or early 11th-century eastern Iran.\textsuperscript{153}

Ewer X (fig. 28) was purchased in Samarkand and can be compared closely with the preceding vessel from a typological point of view. However, in this case the decorative bands flanking the central neck facets contain a zig-zag design with inscribed trefoils and a scrolling band. Stylized scrollwork is also used to enhance most areas of the lip, while its lateral flanges, in the case of ewer IX (fig. 27), have

\textsuperscript{149} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{150} Marshak 1972, pp. 75-77.
\textsuperscript{151} Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{153} Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 46; Sokoly 1990, p. 11. A similar dating had also been put forward by Allan in 1976; cf. Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 207.
central crosses set against a plain background. Marshak has dealt with this vessel extensively and pointed out that its ornamentation shows analogies to decorative motifs encountered on eastern Iranian and Central Asian bronze objects executed in the 12th and early 13th centuries.\textsuperscript{154} Perhaps, however, a slightly earlier dating should not be discounted either, bearing in mind the similarities with the preceding piece.

Ewer XI (pl. 3) - allegedly purchased in Bukhāra - seems to represent a somewhat degenerate version of the body profile found on ewers IX and X (figs. 27-8), particularly as far as the much-flattened neck moulding and panelling on the upper and lower part of the neck are concerned. However, the decorative motifs and remnants of inscription on the body seem to place this vessel within the same geographical area and to point again to the 12th or early 13th centuries.\textsuperscript{155}

Ewer V.I (pl. 4) appears to be a high-footed version of ewer V.6 (fig. 19) in the first sub-group. Otherwise, it is particularly related to ewers IV, V, VI and VII (pl. 2, figs. 23-5) in this sub-group on the basis of its body profile, the bird clasps of the upper handle attachment and the large openwork thumbpiece. But the bipartite neck and the twisted handle relate this piece to several other types of early Islamic bronze ewers, most of which have been tentatively attributed either to the western fringes of Iran, to Mesopotamia or to the eastern Mediterranean lands, and dated to a period between the 8th and the 10th centuries.\textsuperscript{156} Accordingly, a similar attribution may be appropriate for this ewer, but concrete suggestions must await a more detailed investigation of the piece.

Ewer V.II (fig. 29) appears to be a reduced version of ewer XI (pl. 3), and its close similarity to the latter not only with regard to profile, but also decorative layout and choice of individual motifs, seems to justify a similar attribution to 12th- or early 13th-century eastern Iran.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{154} Marshak 1972, passim; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{155} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 207; Marshak 1972, p. 71 pl. 7.3, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{156} Cf. footnotes 6 and 9.
\textsuperscript{157} The auctioneers dealing with this piece dated it to the 11th or 12th century; cf. Sotheby's 19.10.83, no. 36.
To sum up, the comprehensive analysis of typological and decorative features encountered on the ewers of the first and second sub-groups has helped to put each individual piece, if often hypothetically, into its chronological and geographical context. At the same time, moreover, certain general conclusions regarding the development of the ewer type as a whole can also be deduced from the evidence provided by each individual object within the category.

From the evidence presently to hand it appears that vessels belonging to the first sub-group, i.e. pear-shaped ewers on low slanting feet with waisted cylindrical necks and round mouths enclosed by bird- or animal-head clasps which issue from the upper handle, form the first typological stage in this category. Most probably this type originated somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean world, Syria or Mesopotamia, regions where Hellenistic influence was still strong in the first centuries of Islamic rule, i.e. up to the 9th century. At the same time it was in those areas that artistic details derived from neighbouring Sasanian Persia could most easily merge with the original vessel design.

Ewers of the second sub-group were evidently derived from this type. Their variant profile may have appeared first in southern Mesopotamia around the 9th century, to judge by the admittedly still controversial evidence provided by the "Baṣra" ewer (cat. no. IV; pl. 2) and immediately related pieces.\textsuperscript{158} Both typological varieties continued to be made thereafter. In fact they span the entire early Islamic period from around the 8th century right up to the late 12th or early 13th century A.D. During that time, however, the two types travelled eastward, i.e. production centres seem to have shifted from Mesopotamia further and further into Iran and towards Central Asia.\textsuperscript{159}

Interestingly enough, despite this transfer in time and space, the profile of the vessels belonging to this category remains on the whole remarkably unaltered.

\textsuperscript{158} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 208-9; Marshak 1972, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{159} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 208-9; Marshak 1972, pp. 77, 84.
In the course of time only the style of decoration can clarify the provenance and date of a particular piece belonging to this type.\(^{160}\)

Marshak already observed this phenomenon in 1972, not only with regard to the ewer type discussed here but also with regard to two other major early Islamic ewer types.\(^{161}\) According to him the consistency of the ewers' profile throughout the centuries resulted from a certain indifference towards form at the time. This attitude ran parallel with an increasing interest in the development and refinement of various decorative techniques and layouts. Marshak argued that, as a result of such developments within the early Islamic metalworking industry, mass production of utilitarian bronze objects of traditional shape increased. The latter were then enhanced by specialized engravers and indeed inlayers with decorative schemes appropriate for their particular time and place.\(^{162}\)

Marshak's theory may come close to the truth. It certainly sounds logical that, once a universally usable vessel shape like the one discussed here had been developed, there seemed no need continuously to invent new vessel forms for the same purpose. Thus, the type was simply adopted as it was in the areas to which it was being introduced. At best it was modified structurally, and in some cases decoratively, according to local taste.\(^{163}\)

\(^{160}\) Marshak 1972, p. 72.
\(^{163}\) In accepting Marshak’s theory, there remains one notable inconsistency which cannot yet be clarified. If the practicability of this vessel shape caused it to survive over several centuries and wide geographical areas, then one would expect its production to continue first and foremost in the areas of its first appearance, i.e. Mesopotamia and its adjacent regions. However, there seem to be no pieces among the extant varieties of this type which could readily be attributed to these areas during the 11th - early 13th centuries. The explanation of this enigma will need further investigation, but some preliminary ideas may be aired. One hypothesis might be that some of the attributions put forward in this chapter, generally based on as yet largely unchallenged conventions of dating and attributing Islamic metalwork, are in fact erroneous. Perhaps some of the pieces thus far accepted as "Iranian" were actually produced in the west. A second theory might argue that the vessel type for one reason or another declined in popularity in the western areas of its origin, while thriving further east. This might have been due to the various political and economic upheavals at the time which could well have disrupted metalwork production and perhaps even slowed it in favour of cheaper wares made of pottery or other materials. This problem needs clarification.
5. Function

Regrettably there is at present no evidence at all as to the particular use of this ewer type. However, considering the fact that it was so widely distributed over large areas of the early Islamic empire and that it survived over several centuries, it was obviously adaptable and popular. Accordingly, it may have served one or probably even several tasks essential to the daily life of early Islamic citizens irrespective of their geographical and chronological ambience. These tasks might have included service as ablution vessels for prayer time and/or personal hygiene or as containers for drinking water or even wine. Did they indeed form part of a washing set in conjunction with a matching basin?

This suggestion seems particularly valid if one recalls the 6th-century Byzantine silver ewer from Perestshepina, which was quoted as one of the possible prototypes for at least some of the vessels in this category. This piece, it will be remembered, also formed part of a ritual washing service for ablutions, in this case used in a Christian ecclesiastical context. As for the ewers’ potential use as drinking vessels, the iconographical features on several of the pieces are noteworthy, as they seem to surround the container of the liquid with various forms of apotropaic symbolism.164

Thus, among the ewers decorated in relief the pomegranate trees on ewer 7 (fig. 7) and the date palms, flanked by vines, on ewer V.5 (fig. 18) are well-known motifs signifying the Tree of Life and light. They are also intimately related to concepts of paradise and eternal life.165 The lotus petal and seed motif on ewer I (fig. 20) may well have been interpreted in a similar way. It had apparently been connected with solar worship at least in ancient Iran.166 The large senmurvs on

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164 The latter would incidentally not be misplaced on an ablution vessel either, as the ritual cleansing was meant to rinse away sin and protect the believer from evil.

165 For a detailed discussion regarding the symbolism of the pomegranate throughout history cf. Muthmann 1982; cf. chapter 7 for a detailed discussion of the symbolism of the date palm in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times.

166 Pope and Ackerman 1946, pp. 58-9.
ewer 10 (fig. 9), finally, are animals traditionally considered in Iran as heavenly guardians of paradise and solar creatures with life-giving powers. On the incised vessels motifs like the vine scrolls on ewers IV and V (pl. 2, fig. 23) as well as the centrally disposed sphinx and peacock on ewers 11 (fig. 10) and 12 (fig. 11) respectively, are all likewise symbolically connected with traditional concepts of eternal life, paradise and the life-giving properties of the sun.

A closer analysis of the iconographical significance of these ewers would lead one astray in the context of this thesis. However, it is hoped that the summary suggestions made above may provide a few preliminary lines of inquiry for further research.

6. Summary

Cast bronze ewers with pear-shaped bodies, low or high splayed bases, waisted cylindrical necks and curved handles attached to the mouth by lateral clasps and surmounted by palmette or openwork thumbpieces, appear to have originated in eastern Mediterranean and/or Mesopotamian lands under mainly Hellenistic and, to a lesser extent, Sasanian influence some time around the 8th or 9th century. From there they spread eastwards across Iran into its eastern fringe areas and Central Asia, where they were still popular towards the beginning of the 13th century.

From a decorative point of view, the techniques and layouts employed on the earlier vessels in this group seem to have been more diversified than on later pieces. The techniques included cast relief work, sparse inlay of copper fillets, low incised

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167 For a detailed discussion of the legendary symbolism and significance of the senmurv see Schmidt 1980, passim. The feline handles of ewers V.5, I and II are noteworthy in this context, too. According to Ettinghausen they are part of a Dionysiac iconography of Hellenistic origin and are thus again linked with rituals concerned with paradisical fertility and eternal life; cf. Ettinghausen 1972, pp. 3-10.

168 For a discussion of the sphinx and peacock as solar and paradisical animals see chapter 7 (ewer type MW 2) and Baer 1965, passim.
relief and engraving. On later pieces, which generally display more conventionalized decorative schemes, incising and occasional inlay prevail.

The ewers’ original function is not known, but their use as daily domestic utensils in contemporary Muslim households, i.e. ablution and/or drinking vessels seems likely, given their widespread and long-lasting popularity.
**Catalogue**

**Sub-Group 1**

1. Kuwait, Private Collection I/511; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 34 cm; diam. 14.5 cm. Slender pear-shaped body on low splayed foot-ring, tapering towards waisted cylindrical neck; round mouth with flat projecting lip; slightly S-shaped, flat handle attached to lip by triangular plaque extending into lateral decorative clasps, below to central body by means of abstracted zoomorphic element; thumbpiece, backward curving palmette leaf terminating in rounded knob. Undecorated (fig. 1). Lit.: Louisiana 1987, pp. 64-5 no. 8; Sokoly 1990, p. 9.

2. Khalili Collection MTW 1425; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 35.8 cm. Form as 1 but on higher foot; shallow moulding around base of neck; handle of stronger S-shape; very worn lateral lip projections. On neck, engraved pseudo-facet terminations with large lozenges in between; on both sides of lower handle attachment, remains of crude Kufic inscription; otherwise undecorated (fig. 2). Lit.: Unpublished.

3. Kuwait, Private Collection I/68; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 30.3 cm, diam. 14 cm. Form as 2, but slightly lower foot separated from body by thin ridge; ropework design on pronounced neck collar; strongly faceted neck; broad lip; strongly defined hares' head clasps join the handle to the lip; lower handle attachment, abstracted gazelle head with ropework horns; small and strongly curved palmette thumbpiece with knob terminal. Undecorated (fig. 3). Lit.: Louisiana 1987, p. 64 no. 7; Sokoly 1990, p. 9.

4. Detroit Institute of Arts 30.441; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 31.7 cm. Form as 2 but lower, stronger splayed foot; slimmer and more rounded neck collar; faceted neck; lateral bird or griffin (?) head clasps around lip; slightly S-shaped, angular handle with six half-beads in centre, stylized zoomorphic animal head as lower termination and obliquely rising thumbpiece base; thumbpiece broken off. Undecorated apart from six half-coils on handle attachment plaque (fig. 4). Lit.: Aga-Oglu 1931, p. 90, fig. 1; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 205-209, Vol. 2, p. 618 no. A/1/a/7; Sokoly 1990, p. 9.

5. Victoria & Albert Museum 434-1906; n. p.; cast brass, copper inlay, incised; h. 44 cm (ca. 36 cm without thumbpiece), diam. body 18.4 cm, diam. base 11.7-11.9 cm. Form as 4 but slightly more bulbous; large, thirteen-leafed palmette thumbpiece; five half-beads on handle. On base, eight-lobed rosette with tiny trefoils in between; on neck, double-arched lines enhance upper and lower facet terminations with small lancet-shaped motifs in between; floral designs (?) on mouth, bird head clasps enhanced with incised detailing and copper-inlaid eyes; on handle plaque, central almond-shaped motif rising from lyre-shaped chalice pointing towards back of thumbpiece; behind thumbpiece inscription: Muhammad (fig. 5). Lit.: Pinder-Wilson 1960, p. 90; Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, no. III/5, pp. 77-9; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 205-9, Vol. 2, p. 618 no. A/1/a/4; Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 25, 28, 40-41 no. 1; Baer 1983, pp. 83-4, fig. 63; Sokoly 1990, p. 10.

6. Khalili Collection MTW 454; n. p.; cast bronze, punched and incised; h. 33 cm. Form similar to 5 but body more bulbous, on higher, only slightly splayed foot; thin ridge between foot and body; broad rounded neck collar; neck plain; very large animal head clasps; flat, very slightly S-shaped handle with six half-beads in centre; small, strongly curved palmette thumbpiece with knob finial. Abstracted punched
and incised motifs on upper handle attachment; detailing on clasps; on body, remains of punched arceding (fig. 6).

Lit.: Unpublished.

7. WAG Baltimore 54.457; n. p.; cast bronze (brass?), relief decoration, copper (and silver?) inlay, incised; h. 37 cm, diam. 17.3 cm.
Form as 5 but more bulbous; slightly lower foot; broader and flatter neck collar; thumbpiece similar to that on 6.
Relief decoration on body: (between toothed borders above and below) on sides, large plant design with inlaid buds and leaves (pomegranate tree?); on façade, large fleshy acanthus plant; similar motif beneath handle; on neck, incised facet enhancement with trefoils set between rounded terminations (fig. 7).


8. Bumiller Collection BC 1235; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 30 cm.
Form as 5 but plain neck and broader neck collar; six half-beads on central handle; floral (?) clasps around lip; no thumbpiece. Vertical stripe with tiny pearlimg on left side of body; remains of early Kufic inscription on the right and on the left of the body, perhaps originally reading haraka lj-sahrabi (?)(pl. 1).

Lit.: Christie's 11.10.88, lot 363; Sokoly 1990, pp. 9-10.

9. Khalili Collection MTW 453; n. p.; cast bronze, traced and incised; h. 31 cm.
Form as 5 but body more bulbous with slightly less splayed foot and broader neck collar; neck plain; very large bird head clasps on sides of mouth; handle only slightly S-shaped with seven central half-beads; thumbpiece broken off, only obliquely rising base remains. On body, very worn decoration: two large lateral roundels, apparently filled with large floral motifs, are linked across the front by two superposed horizontal bands; above upper band, symmetrically disposed, wing-like motifs; below neck collar and around lower body, slightly projecting bands with vertical grooving; on neck, engraved inverted arceding with intermediate rounded motifs (probably remains of original pseudo-facetting); on upper handle attachment, abstract vegetal motifs; on clasps, detailing; on handle below heading, three superposed skittle-shaped motifs; on both sides of lower handle attachment, volute motif; below, large trefoil perhaps surmounting large roundel with central flower (fig. 8).

Lit.: Unpublished.

10. British Museum 1959,10-23,1; said to have been excavated in Persia; brass(?), cast in one piece except for soldered base plate; subsequently planished; five original plugs in body; traced and punched decoration; h. 29.6 cm, diam. 13.1 cm.
Slender pear-shaped body on fairly high splayed foot, tapering towards neck, which is demarcated by two superposed, very slightly rounded bands; neck cylindrical and waisted, tapering towards the upper third and then flaring towards the round mouth; flat protruding lip with two lateral animal heads extends towards the back to receive the very flat, strongly S-shaped handle with stylized lower animal head attachment and deformed, seven-leaved palmette thumbpiece with knob finial. On body, large lateral roundels with semmury in profile, between these on front and back acanthis scroll; on upper neck collar, oblique hatching; around lower neck, deeply outlined oval panelling; on handle plaque, incised floral stems flanking elongated drop-shaped motif (fig. 9).

A/1/a/1, fig. 27; Pinder-Wilson 1981, pp. 3061-3; Baer 1983, pp. 84, 136 fig. 114; Fehérvári 1987, p. 441, fig. 44; Sokoly 1990, pp. 9-10.

11. ex. Harari Collection Cairo; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 30.1 cm.
Slender ovoid body with horizontal groove around widest part; faceted lower part; low, slightly splayed foot; broad, slightly rounded neck collar; waisted cylindrical neck with central moulding; round mouth with lateral bird head profiles; flat, very slightly S-shaped handle with central half-beading; no thumbpiece. On lower neck and body, incised panelling; below neck collar, benedictory Kufic frieze; on façade of central body, cusped medallion with harpy, flanked by large vase motifs; below body groove, guilloche band (fig. 10).
Lit.: London 1931, pl. 16 no. 74C; Pope 1938, pl. 1295A, p. 2483 fig. 813; Pinder-Wilson 1960, p. 91; Marshak 1972, fig. 7(2); Allan 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 205-9, Vol. 2, p. 618 no. A/1/a/5; Sokoly 1990, p. 9.

12. Keir Collection; n. p.; cast bronze, traced(?) and incised; h. 29 cm (34.5 cm with thumbpiece), diam. base 9 cm, diam. mouth 8.5 cm, diam. body 15 cm.
Bulbous pear-shaped body on low, very slightly splayed foot; projecting rounded neck collar; very slightly waisted, cylindrical neck; flat, S-shaped handle joins round mouth by means of two clasps enclosing the back; lower handle attachment, abstract animal head with modelled ears or horns; 13-lobed palmette thumbpiece. On body, horizontal central zone bordered by narrow inscription panels above and below: the lower one Kufic, repeating the word al-yumm - "happiness", the upper one pseudo-naskhi; the central zone is divided into three sections of varying width by two vertical guilloche bands; on the body façade, cusped cartouche with peacock; on sides, vase motif and small arabesque medallion; on either side of lower handle attachment, dragon heads springing from broad band which intertwines below; on lower body, simple lancet valance; on neck, narrow Kufic frieze (fig. 11).

13. Sotheby's 25.4.90, lot 83; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 27.5 cm.
Form as 12 but higher, more splayed foot-ring; broader and flatter neck collar; decorative extensions protruding on either side of handle attachment at back of mouth; simple, slightly curved handle of angular section with four central beads; handle attached to body without decorated terminations; abstract leaf-shaped thumbpiece with globular finial. On neck, two plain bands and a rib; on body, Kufic inscription and six vertical guilloche bands alternating with central lobed medallion and four roundels (fig. 12).
Lit.: Sotheby's 25.4.90, p. 26 lot 83.

14. Khalili Collection MTW 1238; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 40 cm.
Form like 5 but more slender body with indicated facetting and broader neck collar with oblique hatching; neck faceted; flat, S-shaped handle with large openwork thumbpiece. On upper body, large benedictory Kufic frieze on floral spiral ground, ending short of handle; below, large cusped arabesque medallion linked to lateral vase motifs and arabesque roundels by narrow guilloche band which terminates on either side of the lower handle attachment; around lower body, scrolling frieze and below, three horizontal grooves; abstract vegetal design around handle base; on base plate, remains of guilloche bands and central star or rosette (fig. 13).
Lit.: Unpublished.

V.1 Rome, Museo Nazionale di Arte Orientale; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; dimensions unknown.
Slender ovoid body on narrow rounded base; thick rounded neck collar; narrow cylindrical neck with waisted sides; round mouth with rounded protruding lip; straight rounded handle with three central half-beads; thumbpiece rendered as
elongated polygonal knob on splayed base. On neck base, inverted arcing with intermediate lancet motifs (fig. 14).


V.2 Aron Collection; n. p.; cast quaternary alloy, incised; h. 24.4 cm, diam. rim 6.8 cm.
Bulbous globular body on narrow rounded foot rim; slightly projecting and sloping collar introduces broad cylindrical and faceted neck with slightly waisted sides; round mouth with rounded lip; S-shaped, twisted handle attached to back of mouth by flat plaque above, and to upper body by means of rectangular bridge below; lower handle termination bends outwards; small, slightly curved palmette leaf thumbpiece with rounded finial. On neck, incised outlining of facets with trefoils in between the rounded terminations; on concave base plate, large rosette motif (fig. 15).

Lit.: Christie's 16.10.78, lot 51, pl. 12; Allan 1986, p. 118 no. 27; Sokoly 1990, p. 12.

V.3 Bumiller Collection BC 662; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 24.6 cm.
Bulbous, inverted pear-shaped body on low, slightly rounded foot-ring; in centre of flattened shoulder, projecting rounded collar introduces cylindrical neck with waisted sides and central faceting; round mouth with rounded lip, the latter with two wing-like extensions at the back; handle missing, only attachments remain. On base plate, medallion containing panel with floral motifs against ring-matted background; on foot, incised x-motifs filled with punched dots; on upper and lower neck, frieze with leafy scrollwork on punch-dotted background; facets outlined by double border with small intermediate lancet motifs and bordered by two narrow, punch-dotted zones; on lip, chevron and dot border; on lip extensions, vegetal details (fig. 16).

Lit.: Sotheby's 15.10.86, lot 155; Sokoly 1990, p. 12.

V.4 Hermitage KZ-5750; acquired in Daghestan; bronze (or brass?), relief decoration, copper inlay, incised; h. 34.5 cm.
Bulbous, pear-shaped body on fairly high, splayed foot; rounded neck collar; bipartite neck: the lower part cylindrical and waisted, the upper one squat, cylindrical and flaring towards the round mouth; flat, strongly projecting lip enclosed by large lateral animal head extensions issuing from the upper handle; handle of angular section and S-shaped, with pyramidal finial on outward curving, lower termination; handle attached to body by trapezoidal joint; thumbpiece missing. On upper body, band of linked, downward pointing trefoils, framed by slightly rounded neck collar above and similar plain band below; beneath handle, palmette design; winged design flanked by flower sprays on front; on sides of body, large geometric interface enclosing central cross with trefoil-ended arms (fig. 17).


V.5 ex. Bobrinsky Collection; n. p.; cast (?) bronze, flat relief decoration, incised; dimensions unknown.
Slender pear-shaped body on splayed foot with flat outer edge; tiered neck with four rounded sections separated by thin ridges, surmounted by flaring cylindrical element and lobed mouth with lateral bird head extensions; feline handle. On body façade, palmette plant; on sides, palm-trees flanked by curved plants with small leaf extensions, enclosed within dentil medallions (fig. 18).

V.6 Museum für Kunsthänderwerk, Frankfurt am Main 14741; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 33 cm.
Bulbous pear-shaped body on splayed foot; tiered bipartite neck: the lower part with five alternately narrow and wide, rounded sections, surmounted by a flaring cylindrical element which terminates in a toothed ridge, the upper part tall and cylindrical, flaring slightly towards the round mouth; upper handle attachment with two lateral animal heads encloses back of lip; rounded S-shaped handle with six central beads and large lobed, lower attachment, perhaps evoking a seated animal (?); thumbpiece, flattened knob with two pointed extensions (animal head intended ?). On foot, upward pointing heart-palmettes; around lower body, scrolling frieze with plain borders, the latter with regular tiny knot extensions; on body façade, large crescent motif with scrollwork and central fleur-de-lys motif; on sides, vertical scrolling panel joins the other decorative friezes which run above and below; around lower handle attachment, floral motifs; around upper neck, Kufic inscription; on lower handle extension, crudely executed, seated animal (fig. 19).
Lit.: Christie’s 23.11.84, lot 554.

Sub-Group 2

I. Metropolitan Museum of Art 47.100.90; n. p.; cast bronze, relief decoration, incised and once inlaid; h. 48.9 cm.
Body shape like I, but pedestal foot and cylindrical waisted neck with rounded, projecting collar around base; elongated bird heads around mouth; feline handle with animal-head biting the back of the lip. On body, four rows of pointed buds on thin stems, the latter enclosed on either side by three inward-curving and rounded leaves which increase in size towards the outside; around lower body, large leaves alternating with small buds on thin stems; on foot, overlapping, outward-pointing leaves; deeply incised detailing on bird heads which enclose lip (fig. 20).

II. Victoria and Albert Museum M27-1945; said to have come from the neighbourhood of Lake Van; bought in Turkey; cast bronze, relief decoration; h. 29.3 cm, diam. 12.5 cm.
Squat and bulbous, ovoid body on high flaring foot with broad, toothed outer edge; broad cylindrical and faceted neck with waisted sides; facets terminate in rounded knobs below; broad round mouth section with flat lip and rectangular bosses around upper and lower edge; feline handle similar to that on I, but with more naturalistic detailing; feet of feline rest on broad heart-shaped attachment plate. On body, three rows of upward-pointing drop shapes (fig. 21).

III. Koç Collection; n. p.; brass or bronze; h. 36.8 cm.
Pear-shaped body on fairly high, splayed foot; rounded projecting neck collar; cylindrical neck with strongly waisted sides; round mouth with lateral, leaf-shaped extensions; flattened, slightly S-shaped handle with six central half-heads, obliquely rising palmette thumbpiece and lower attachment rendered as stylized gazelle head. Undecorated (fig. 22).
Lit.: Welch 1972, p. 185 Metal 3; Riyadh 1985, no. 79; Sotheby’s 16.4.86, lot 80; Sokoly 1990, p. 9.
IV. The "Basra" Ewer. Tiflis, Arts Museum; made in Basra by Ibn (Abu?) Yazid in the year 69 A.H.; cast bronze, traced and punched; dimensions unavailable.
Form similar to III, but much more bulbous, facetted body on higher foot; broader, more pronounced neck collar; central facetting on broader neck; round mouth enclosed by elongated, abstracted bird-head clasps issuing from the triangular plaque which serves as the upper handle attachment; flattened handle with six central beads and curving projections at base; handle attached to lower body by means of two superposed rectangular joints; large, slightly bent palmette thumbpiece with rounded finial. On body facets, simple scrollwork; on foot, free-flowing, linear tendrils within dotted borders; on upper and lower neck, vertically orientated, floral motifs; on upper handle attachment, decoration stylistically similar to that on foot; on lateral clasps, dot-circle motifs and detailing on bird crests; on inner lip, Kufic inscription within dotted borders: "Blessing. From the work of Abu (Ibn?) Yazid, from among that which was made in Basra in the year 69" (pl. 2).

V. Keir Collection; n. p.; cast bronze (brass?); punched and incised; h. 30 cm (40 cm with thumbpiece), h. foot 4.5 cm, h. neck 9.5 cm; diam. base 9 cm, diam. mouth 7 cm, allover diam. 15 cm.
Form as IV, but slightly less bulbous; slimmer and taller neck; lateral half-palmette extensions on mouth; slightly S-shaped and beaded handle with three abstract, superposed volutes as lower termination and openwork thumbpiece made up of two inward-curling, knobbled split palmette leaves, which are terminated above by a flattened knob and enclose a cross motif in the centre. On each alternate body facet, vine scroll; on foot, framed by punched borders, scroll with large trefoils and leaves; on base, large palmette motif enclosed first by circle dot border and then punched line; abstract scroll on neck; on lip, dot-circle motifs; on lateral extensions triangle, volute and leaf motifs; towards back of lip, long-drawn heart-motifs flanking a triangular design; all decorative elements set against a ring-matted background; on upper handle, crude Kufic inscription: sana'a 'Afw (fig. 23).

VI. ex Lewisohn Collection; n. p.; bronze, punched and incised; h. 49.5 cm.
Form as IV; flat S-shaped handle with openwork thumbpiece similar to that on V. Around body, four hunting scenes and arabesque medallions (?) on upper body, running animals; on upper and lower neck and on foot, scrolling stems and tendrils (fig. 24).
Lit.: Pope 1930, fig. 80, p. 177; Pope 1938, pl. 1295B; Pinder-Wilson 1960, p. 91; Marshak 1972, figs. 5-6, pp. 65-9; Melikian-Chirvani 1972, Ch. III, no. III/2, pp. 66-70; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 205-9, Vol. 2, p. 620 no. A/1/c/3.

VII. Samarkand Museum; Shakhristan; bronze, incised (damaged); dimensions unavailable.
Form as IV, but less bulbous; plain neck(?); large crested bird-head extensions on mouth; broad, slightly S-shaped handle with central grooving and three protrusions on lower part; abstract zoomorphic (?) lower handle attachment and openwork thumbpiece similar to that on V and VI. On right side of body (seen from handle), large roundel with dense spiral scrolls and floral details (fig. 25).
VIII. Kabul Museum 58.2.22; Ghazna (?); bronze, traced; h. 29.5 cm.
Form as VII, but lower foot; central neck facetted; S-shaped handle of angular section, with five central half-beads and lower termination similar to that on VII; thumbpiece missing; lateral animal or bird-head extensions on mouth. Traced facet outlines on neck; vegetal motifs on upper (?) and lower neck and on foot (fig. 26).

IX. Victoria and Albert Museum 1434-1902; n. p.; cast bronze, incised, copper inlay; h. 31.5 cm, diam. body 16.2 cm, diam. foot 10.45 cm.
Form as IV, but with body subdivided into eleven wide pentagonal facets which join up with eleven short facets rising from the base; ridge between body and foot as well as around the outer edge of the foot; base plate missing; neck collar with tiny beaded borders; neck faceted; lip with abstract lateral elements enclosing it; flat, slightly S-shaped handle of angular section with sixteen indentations along its back; wide lower handle attachment plaque with three lobed extensions below; no thumbpiece. On upper and lower neck, benedictory Kufic frieze, flanked by plain bands; on upper handle plaque, triangular panel with volutes; in centre of lateral extensions, rounded with engraved cross (fig. 27).

X. Hermitage SA 12745; purchased in Samarkand; bronze, probably cast in one piece except the now wanting base plate (plugs in upper neck), incised; h. 38.8 cm.
Form like IX, but much wider lower body and higher foot; rounded ridge between foot and body; protruding rounded neck collar enclosed by thin ridges; waisted cylindrical neck with two horizontally grooved bands around upper and lower parts; flat lip around round mouth, with lobed lateral extensions; S-shaped handle of angular section, with trapezoidal upper attachment plate, six central half-beads, stylized animal-head as lower attachment and 13-leaf thumbpiece with its finial now broken off. On lower neck, scrollwork; on upper neck, system of triangles with central palmette leaves; on lip, scrollwork, leaving the lobed lateral areas and the front plain apart from small central crosses (fig. 28).

XI. ex Martin Collection; purchased in Bukhara; bronze, incised; dimensions unavailable.
Form as X, but with lower foot; broader and flatter neck collar; thin, slightly raised bands around upper and lower neck; lobed lateral lip extensions; S-shaped handle of angular section with twelve central half-beads and broad lower attachment plate, the latter with crescent-shaped extension at back; no thumbpiece. Incised panelling around central foot; around lower body, benedictory cursive inscription panels alternating with floral medallions; on front of upper body, inscription panel (?) flanked by floral roundels; floral motif on lower handle attachment (pl. 3).

V.I Detroit Institute of Arts 76.96; n. p.; bronze (body hammered?), neck and handle cast; punched and chased decoration, traces of gilding (?); h. (including thumbpiece) 47 cm, widest diam. 16.5 cm.
Shape virtually identical to V.6, but high splayed foot; projecting lobed collar around base of neck, the tiered part of which consists of three rounded rings separated by narrow angular ridges; handle attached to mouth by long-beaked bird-head clasps; handle S-shaped and twisted in centre; lower handle termination split, the outer part curving outwards, the inner one joining the body; openwork thumbpiece with two split palmettes enclosing a pointed five-petalled flower and terminating in flattened and grooved knob. On lip, individual punch-dots; on upper handle attachment plaque, engraved abstract motifs; incised detailing on bird-heads, thumbpiece and lower attachment; chased bands of floral scrolls encircling neck, rim and foot(?) (pl. 4).
Lit.: Unpublished.

V.II Sotheby’s New York 19.10.83, lot 36; n. p.; bronze, copper inlay, incised; h. 25 cm.
Form virtually identical to XI, but foot much lower and only slightly splayed; 14 half-beads on handle. Decoration similar to that on XI; on neck, remains of incised facettting (fig. 29).
Lit.: Sotheby's, Parke, Bernet and Co. 19.10.83, p. 18 no. 36.
Plate 1
MW 3/8. Bronze Ewer, h. 30 cm
(Bumiller Collection, inv. no. BC 1235).
Plate 2
MW 3/IV. Cast Bronze Ewer. Made in Başra by Ibn (Abū?) Yazīd in 69 A.H.
Dimensions unavailable (Tiflis, Arts Museum).
Plate 3
MW 3/XI. Bronze Ewer purchased in Bukhara.
Dimensions unknown (ex Martin Collection).
Plate 4
MW 3/V.1. Bronze Ewer, h. 47 cm
(Detroit, Institute of Arts, inv. no. 76.96).
FIG. 1
MW 3/1. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 34 cm
(Kuwait, Private Collection, inv. no. 1/511).

FIG. 2
MW 3/2. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 35.8 cm
(London, Khalili Collection, inv. no. MTW 1425).

FIG. 3
MW 3/3. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 30.3 cm
(Kuwait, Private Collection, inv. no. 1/68).
FIG. 4
MW 3/4. Bronze Ewer, h. 31.7 cm
(Detroit, Institute of Arts, inv. no. 30.441).
FIG. 5
MW 3/5. Cast Brass Ewer, h. 44 cm
FIG. 6
MW 3/6, Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 33 cm
(London, Khalili Collection, inv. no. MTW 456).

FIG. 7
MW 3/7, Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 37 cm
(Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, inv. no. 54.457).
**FIG. 8**
MW 3/9. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 31 cm
(London, Khalili Collection, inv. no. MTW 453).

**FIG. 9**
H. 29.6 cm (London, British Museum, inv. no. 1959,10-23,1)
FIG. 10

MW 3/11. Bronze Ewer, h. 30.1 cm
(Cairo, ex Harari Collection).
FIG. 11
Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 34.5 cm (London, Keir Collection).

FIG. 12
MW 3/13. Bronze Ewer, h. 27.5 cm
(Sotheby’s 25.4.90, lot 83).

FIG. 11/12
MW 3/12. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 34.5 cm
(London, Keir Collection).
FIG. 13
MW 3/14. Bronze Ewer, h. 40 cm
(London, Khalili Collection, inv. no. MTW 1238).

FIG. 14
(Rome, Museo Nazionale di Arte Orientale).
FIG. 15
MW 3/V.2. Ewer of Quaternary Alloy.
H. 24.4 cm (Aron Collection).
FIG. 16
MW 3/V.3. Bronze Ewer, h. 24.6 cm
(Bumiller Collection, inv. no. BC 662).
FIG. 17
Bronze Ewer acquired in Daghestan.
H. 34.5 cm (Leningrad, Hermitage KZ-5750).
Fig. 20. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 48.9 cm (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 47.100.90).

FIG. 22
MW 3/III. Bronze Ewer, h. 36.8 cm
(Koç Collection).
FIG. 23
MW 3/V. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 40 cm
(London, Keir Collection).

Detail of foot design

scroll on body
FIG. 24
MW 3/VI. Bronze Ewer, h. 49.5 cm
(Lewisohn Collection).
FIG. 25
MW 3/VII. Bronze Ewer from Shakhristan. Dimensions unknown
(Samarkand Museum; after Negmatov and Khmelnitsky 1966, pl. XXI).
FIG. 26
MW 3/VIII. Bronze Ewer allegedly from Ghazna. 
H. 29.5 cm (Kabul Museum, inv. no. 58.2.22).
FIG. 27
MW 3/IX. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 31.5 cm

FIG. 28
MW 3/X. Cast Bronze Ewer purchased in Samarkand.
H. 38.8 cm (Leningrad, Hermitage, inv. no. SA 12745).
FIG. 29
MW 3/V. II. Bronze Ewer, h. 25 cm
(Sotheby's New York 19.10.83, lot 36).
Fig. 30: 4th-Century Silver Ewer from Chaourse.

Fig. 31: 4th-Century Silver Ewer excavated in Antioch.
FIG. 32
Roman Bronze Ewers excavated in Hungary.
FIG. 33
Hellenistic Stone Mould casting Handle Attachment Systems. From Egypt.
FIG. 34
Late Sasanian Silver Ewer.
FIG. 35
4th-Century Glass Ewer allegedly from the Western Provinces of Asia Minor.

FIG. 36
Roman Bronze Ewer from Hungary.
FIG. 37
Hammered Silver Ewer found in the Grave of a Khazar (?) Prince at Malaya Perestshepina. Early Byzantine, 6th Century A.D.

FIG. 38
Fragment of a Facetted Silver Flagon unearthed at Trapain Law in Scotland, 4th Century A.D.
FIG. 39
Hammered Bronze Ewer (MW 4/5).
Late 9th/10th Century A.D.

FIG. 40
Detail of Early Islamic Bronze Ewer (MW 4/6).
Ca. 10th Century A.D.
FIG. 41
Palmette Designs beneath the Lower Handle Attachments of Ewers EMW 5/5 & 5/6.

FIG. 42
Cast Bronze Ewer (EMW 4/V.1/2).
Iran, 9th/10th Century A.D.
FIG. 43
Detail of a High Tin Dish from Iran. Probably 10th Century A.D.

FIG. 44
Geometric Design on a 9th/10th-Century Papyrus from Egypt.
FIG. 45
Early Islamic Bronze Ewer (MW 4/1) found in Baghdad.
Mesopotamia, late 8th/9th Century A.D.

FIG. 46
Late Sasanian Silver Dish.
Northern Iran, 6th/7th Century A.D.
Late Sasanian or Early Islamic Silver Cup.

Early 7th-Century Gold Stem Cup from Malatya

Probably made by Avar Craftsmen.
FIG. 49
Detail of a Capital from the Colonnade in the Eastern Apse of a Ruined Church in Ishkhani, Eastern Turkey.

FIG. 50
Silver Cup discovered in Tomiz. Sogdia or Chach, Mid 8th Century A.D.
FIG. 51
Detail of a 9th/10th-Century Qur'ān Leaf
probably executed in Iraq or Persia.

FIG. 52
Wooden Minbar Panel from Tikrit, Iraq.
Late 8th Century A.D.
Silver Bowl discovered in Tomiz. Central Asia. 9th Century A.D.

Late 8th/9th-Century Silver Bucket from Sogdia or Usbhana.

FIG. 54

FIG. 53
Chapter 9

Ewer Type MW 4: Cast Bronze Ewers with Rounded Body, Tall Cylindrical Neck and S-Shaped Handle with Central Beading and Pomegranate Thumbpiece

The next ewer type - with over forty pieces one of the most extensive categories among the various groups of pouring vessels discussed in this thesis - is cast or hammered. It is characterized by a rounded body on a low foot-ring and surmounted by a tall, cylindrical and slightly flaring neck, which rises from a projecting shoulder collar and terminates at the mouth in a flat or sometimes rounded lip. Usually the handle is very faintly S-shaped, with central beading, and is surmounted by a pomegranate thumbpiece. Two main variants of this basic profile can be observed, with each category in its turn incorporating several related, yet distinctive derivations.

1. General Description

1.1 Sub-Group 1 (cat. nos. 1-17, V.1-V.8; pl. 1, figs. 1-17)

Ewers belonging to the first sub-group range from 13.2 cm to 37 cm in height. They have a rounded body, which in most cases is virtually globular and bulbous (cat. nos. 1, 2, 5-10, 12, V.1-7). In one case (cat. no. V.8) this globular body has

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1 From the literature it is not clear which manufacturing technique was used. According to Allan, all the objects he dealt with are cast, and he (together with Marshak) refers to several other pieces, mainly belonging to the second category in this chapter, as hammered; cf. Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 209; Marshak 1972, p. 73.
3 In order to avoid extending the already long brackets with the relevant catalogue numbers within the text even further by adding the corresponding figure numbers, the latter have been omitted in the descriptive parts of this chapter. They can, however, be easily found by referring to the catalogue for chapter 9.
been divided into very wide concave facets. Other vessels in this category have a more ovoid body shape, which is elongated to a varying degree (cat. nos. 3, 4, 11, 13, 15, V.5).

The body typically rests on a low, sometimes slightly rounded and splayed base (cat. nos. 1-7, 8(?), 9-11, 12(?), 13, 14, V.1, V.3, V.5), but several vessels also feature higher and more splayed foot-rings (cat. nos. V.2, V.4, V.6, V.7), which in one case (cat. no. V.8) is also facetted. In the centre of the upper body a distinct projecting collar encloses the base of the neck. It is normally rounded (cat. nos. 1-7, 9-11, 14, 15(?), V.1, V.3, V.5), but angular varieties also occur (cat. nos. V.2, V.4, V.6-8). These range from fairly broad (cat. no. V.2), flat (cat. nos. V.6-7) to very flat (cat. no. V.4) or facetted (cat. no. V.8).

The cylindrical neck is also rendered in several different ways. It can be very tall and slender, flaring very slightly towards the mouth (cat. nos. 3, 4, 9, 13, V.3, V.5-7). A second treatment renders the neck virtually straight, though slightly shorter and broader (cat. nos. 1, 2, 5-7, V.1-2). Finally, some ewers have a comparatively shorter neck, which flares quite strongly towards the mouth (cat. nos. 10, 14, V.4).

In most cases the neck has been enhanced by facetting, a method again applied in several variations. Thus, ewer V.8 has its neck completely subdivided into facets, which reflect the profile of its body. On other pieces less pronounced, slender facets sometimes cover the whole length of the neck (cat. no. V.3) or leave only very narrow bands above and below (cat. nos. 4, V.2, V.5). Most typical, however, is another treatment where the central neck carries only a facetted register, with panels of varying breadth flanking it above and below (cat. nos. 1-3, 5-7, 9-11, 14), and sometimes clearly demarcated by broad bands with grooved borderlines (cat. nos. 9, 10). In three cases the neck has been left plain, i.e. without any facetted areas (cat. nos. V.4, V.6, V.7).

A projecting lip encloses the neck’s mouth on most ewers of this group. It is either more or less rounded (cat. nos. 1-5, 7, 9, 11, V.5) or completely flat (cat.
nos. 6, 10, 14, V.1-4, V.8). In some cases the lip is not perfectly circular, but slightly pointed at the front with a kerb emphasising the tip (cat. nos. 10, V.3, V.4). Ewers V.6 and V.7 do not have a clearly demarcated lip as such. A narrow plain band around the neck's upper edge is separated from the all-over decoration below by an engraved line, thus merely simulating a lip. Towards the back of the lip, curved or wing-like lateral extensions of varying size and appearance often mark the area where the handle is attached (cat. nos. 1-7, 9-11, 14, V.1-5, V.8). In the cases of cat. nos. V.6 and V.7 only, no such extensions have been employed and the handles have been affixed to the upper neck.

The handle can be rounded or angular in section and is often S-shaped to a varying degree (cat. nos. 1-4, 7, 9-11, 14, V.2, V.5, V.7-8). Sometimes, however, it is bent outwards (cat. nos. 5, 6, 15) or perfectly straight (cat. nos. 13, V.3-4, V.6). Most typically, the handle carries central beading fully in the round, with beads ranging in number from three (cat. no. 5) to five (cat. nos. 3, 10, 11, V.6), six beads (cat. nos. 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 14, V.8), seven (cat. no. V.5) or eight (cat. no. 7).

Below, the handle is attached to the upper body by means of a simple leaf- or palmette-shaped extension. Sometimes, this area can be further enhanced by a horizontal bird-shaped extension (cat. no. V.6) or by beading (cat. no. V.2). In one case (cat. no. V.5) the handle curves outwards and ends in a pyramidal knob, while being joined to the upper body by means of a rectangular bridge.

1.2. Sub-group 2 (cat. nos. I-XVII, V.I-V.IV; figs. 18-24, pl. 2, figs. 25-6, pls. 3-4, figs. 27-9)

Ewers of the second category - ranging from 20.3 cm to 36.3 cm in height - can be distinguished quite clearly from the first one by the inverted pear-shaped profile of their bodies, which are mainly bulbous and squat or slightly elongated. In the case
of ewer V.IV the **body** has been drawn out to the extent that it can be more adequately described as being of bell-shaped appearance.

Apart from the latter vessel all the ewers of this group rest on either slanting or straight, sometimes faintly rounded, **feet**. These are somewhat larger and more prominent than those most typically found on ewers of the first category (cf. 1-7, 9 for example). In this context one may note the extraordinary height of the foot supporting ewer V.II, which in its appearance seems to relate to the bases belonging to another ewer type - that associated with the famous "Basra" ewer, preserved in Tiflis (cf. ewer type MW 3, chapter 8). In some cases the area where the foot meets the body is emphasised by a thin ridge (cat. nos. III(?), V, VI, VIII, IV, X, XI, V.I), a feature that is found only rarely on ewers of the first group (cf. 9, 10, V.3).

Above, the body is flattened and receives a projecting **neck collar** of varying width, most typically with slightly rounded slanting sides quite distinct from the more annular collars commonly found on ewers of the first group. The stepped double collar applied on ewer V.I is very unusual, while other ewers display a very flat, angular moulding (cat. nos. IV, XI, V.III, V.IV). The latter can be observed only once (cat. no. V.4) among the vessels of the first category.

The cylindrical **neck** varies in length and flares towards the mouth to a varying degree, giving it a slightly funnel-like appearance in most cases (cf. cat. nos. 14, V.4). In a similar manner to sub-category 1 the neck’s surface can be structured in various different ways. The central section of the neck is usually structured by small facets, leaving panels of varying width above and below, either plain or covered with decoration (cat. nos. I-III, V-VIII, X, XI), a treatment already encountered on several pieces of the first group (cf. cat. nos. 1-7, 9-11, 14).

On some pieces this partition of the neck into three sections is emphasised by two plain bands with grooved borders, separating the central section from the upper and lower neck (cat. nos. V, VI-VIII; cf. cat. nos. 9 & 10 in the first group). On two pieces (cat. nos. X, XI) the central area is demarcated by two projecting ridges
rather than by broad bands. These, however, only run across the front of the neck and terminate on its sides. Finally, the necks of ewers V.I, V.II and V.IV are left plain, apart from a decorative panel below the lip of V.IV.

The projecting lip enclosing the **mouth** is flat throughout, with a decorative handle attachment plate towards the back, similar to those encountered in the first group (cat. nos. I-VIII, X, XI, V.I, V.II). The lip of ewer V.IV, which is slightly pointed at the front (cf. cat. nos. V.3 and V.4 in the first group), also shows two lateral extensions at the back. However, in this case they seem to have lost their original purpose, as the handle here has been attached to the back of the upper neck rather than to the lip, as is customary on the other vessels. Ewer V.II does not feature a clearly demarcated lip and here the handle joins the area just below the mouth rim.

The **handle** has been treated in various different ways. It is of rounded or angular section and either S-shaped or straight (cat. nos. II, XI, V.III). The thick C-shaped handle attached to ewer V.I is quite exceptional and is emphasised in the centre by three ovoid beads. Some of the other pieces feature six beads fully in the round along the central handle (cat. nos. I, II, X), recalling the handles most typically encountered in the first category. More frequent, however, are handles with a flat inside and five or six central half-beads (cat. nos. III, IV, VII) or perfectly flat examples with deeply carved superposed indentations imitating the original beading (cat. nos. IV, VIII, XI, V.III). The handles of ewers V.II and V.IV are left completely plain.

The lower handle attachment is leaf-shaped in most cases, just like those mostly encountered on ewers in the first sub-group, but in some cases the handle may also have been joined directly without any decorative extension (cat. nos. IV(?), V.III(?), V.IV(?)). The attachment system adopted on ewer V.I is remarkable. Here, the lower handle splits into two arms, with the lower one joining the body and the upper one the shoulder with its upward-turning termination enhanced by a tall, bud-like knob with facetted sides.
The thumbpieces - if extant - again portray a pomegranate, the body profile of which sometimes seems to refer directly to that of the ewer below (cat. nos. I, II, VIII, X, V.I). Only in the cases of ewers V.II and V.IV are the thumbpieces of completely different appearance, the first one being skittle-shaped and the second one reduced to a tiny ovoid plaque without decorative significance.

The preceding general consideration of the ewers’ profiles and execution reveals already how varied they are with regard to height, body profile, neck and handle treatment as well as several secondary details. But they still display an overall similarity that justifies their categorization within one distinct typological group. Such diversity automatically evokes the question whether the various pieces may have been produced in several workshops rather than one, perhaps situated in several different regions with probably more or less regular contacts. They may also have been manufactured over a considerable length of time, in which case the stylistic differences affecting the ewers’ appearance may be explained by evolutionary as well as geographical factors. Both aspects will have to be dealt with in conjunction with an investigation into the ewers’ provenance and date.

2. Decoration

2.1. General Observations

Most ewers assembled in this category are characterized by a notable decorative simplicity and modesty, in which any enhancing ornamental features do not impair or overshadow the visual impact of the ewers’ beautifully proportioned profile. Only in three cases (cat. nos. 7, V.6, V.7) has this balance been reversed, and here the vessels appear to be mere carriers for more or less comprehensive all-over decoration, which immediately draws the onlooker’s prime attention away from the
profile of the vessel. As for the remaining pieces, any ornamental enhancement characteristically involves the lip and upper handle attachment plate, the upper and lower neck, sometimes small areas of the body, the foot, the base and in many cases the lower handle attachment plate.

2.2. Decoration of Sub-Group 1 (cat. nos. 1-17, V.1-8; pl. 1, figs. 1-17)

The decorative elements to be found on the objects in Group 1 are quite heterogeneous and include geometric, floral and epigraphic elements.

The lip - if decorated at all - can display traces of hatching (cat. no. 1) or linear incising (cat. no. 10), a series of punched dots (cat. no. 2), zig-zag patterns with central dots (cat. no. 5) or a narrow cable pattern (cat. nos. 9, V.3). The winged backward-curving extensions at the back of the lip sometimes recall bird heads (cat. nos. 10, V.3), but mostly they seem to carry more or less abstract floral elements, which evoke a stylized split palmette, a feature which can be linked with Romano-Byzantine traditions.4

On the neck the central facetted panel is nearly always flanked by decorative panels above and below. Only ewer 14 does not seem to show any decorative enhancement in this area. The panels can display various patterns.

Ewer 1 carries an interlace of cusped quatrefoil medallions joined by small circles; these are filled with rosette crosses and palmette motifs in the interstices in both areas. Ewer 2 displays a simply-drawn diamond pattern with central leaves and flowers. A system of obliquely-set triangular spaces filled with dots and enclosing

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4 This point has been more comprehensively discussed elsewhere; cf. chapter 8, ewer type MW 3. Allan generally interprets the extensions as bird heads, which, in this context, however, they are mostly not. A close look at the attachment plates found on classical pieces reveals that they actually consist of two elements: two large bird heads enclosing the sides of the lip and, joining these at the back, two lateral volutes. It seems to me that it was probably the latter that inspired the extensions on the Islamic pieces, after the all-enclosing bird heads had been abandoned; cf. Schreiber 1894, figs. 52-4, 84, 86, 112, pl. 1 nos. 2 & 4, pl. 2 no. 4, pl. 3 no. 6; Allan 1982, p. 43.
large diamonds with central crosses can be found on ewer 3. Two very narrow bands of guilloche on a punch-dotted background decorated the upper and lower neck of ewer 4. Ewers 5 and 6 both display simply-drawn scrollwork on a punch-dotted background. On ewer 9 the upper panel displays a naskhi inscription on a floral scrolling background, while the lower panel includes a long-eared hare looking backwards while running in front of a floral scrolling background.

The neck of ewer 10 likewise features a naskhi inscription on a floral scrolling ground above, but displays a broad plaited band below. A very simple criss-cross band runs around the lower neck of ewer V.4, and two narrow and plain or panelled bands enclose the upper and lower part of the neck on ewer V. 8.

In most cases the upper and lower terminations of the central facets also display some kind of ornamental treatment (cat. nos. 1, 5, 6, V.3, V.5), and in the case of ewer V.3 each alternate facet on the front of the neck has a simple cursive inscription with benedictory contents.

The body is left plain in the overwhelming majority of the cases (cat. nos. 1-6, 9, 11(?), 12(?), 13(?), 14, V.1, V.8). The body of ewer V.5 is virtually undecorated apart from a perhaps cusped (?) punched line on the upper body just below the neck collar. The bodies of ewers 8 and V.3 are enhanced by two epigraphic friezes on their upper sides, flanking a central rosette in the first case and an interlace roundel in the second.

A very simple Kufic inscription forms the only decoration on the body of ewer V.2, running across the upper front. Ewer V.4 displays a central bird with an elaborate floral scroll in its beak looking towards the left, flanked by two bands of linear M-patterns above and below. Finally, two large crescents with scroll filling are disposed on both sides of ewer 10, flanked towards the inside by small almond-shaped motifs below. In its centre a cusped medallion displays a comparatively crude male figure on floral ground.5

5 The layout of the decoration on this ewer and the style of the medallion suggest some re-engraving, a matter which needs further investigation.
The feet of the ewers under discussion can be ornamented by criss-cross systems with central dots (cat. nos. 1, 2, 4), herring-bone (cat. no. 3), X-motifs filled with punching above and below (cat. no. 5) or simple scrollwork (cat. no. 9). In addition, even the base plates of some of the ewers receive decorative attention. The motifs can be geometrical (cat. no. 2) or floral (cat. nos. 3, 4). In the case of ewer 7 a standing bird, probably set against a scrolling background, was chosen to highlight the base plate.

In many instances the lower handle attachment plate itself and the area around it have also been decorated. Among the chosen motifs here are a simple garland design ending in long intricate extensions (cat. no. 1), a punched double band outlining the leaf-shaped attachment and ending in circles at regular intervals (cat. no. 2), pouncing and split palmettes (cat. no. 3), punched outlining ending in abstracted floral extensions (cat. no. 4), basic incised outlining (cat. no. 9) and a chain of incised dotted circles (cat. no. V.6). In the case of ewer V.3 two confronted bird heads enclosed in an incised leaf-shaped motif flank the handle base.

As already indicated above, three objects clearly stand apart from the remaining pieces as far as the decorative layout is concerned. On ewers 7, V.6 and V.7 an all-over ornamentation of neck and body replaces the much more modest decoration of the other pieces, which allows the main visual impact of the object to reside in its general profile. Each of the three pieces is individualistic, indeed unique, in the choice of its decorative features. However, all of them display a basic system of superposed horizontal bands of varying width, in which the various ornamental elements have been confined.

On the body of ewer 7 these panels include a naskhi inscription and a hunting scene on a spiral scrolling ground as well as a succession of almond-shaped palmette scrolls, all separated by narrow interlace bands. The neck has a Kufic inscription above and a band of interlace below, with additional guilloche bands on alternate facets.
The decoration of ewer V.6 likewise combines geometrical, epigraphic, floral and zoomorphic elements. The broadest area around the central body is here taken up by a central cusped medallion with scrollwork, linked to two lateral bird roundels by a band of scrollwork with lancet-like extensions above and below. The entire surface of V.7 has been given over to a profusion of large-scale floral motifs and wing-shaped elements, only interrupted by two plain bands of varying width on the upper and lower body.

2.3. Decoration of Sub-Group 2 (cat. nos. I-XVII, V.I-IV; figs. 18-24, pl. 2, figs. 25-6, pls. 3-4, figs. 27-9)

Among the pieces of the second sub-group only two pieces (cat. nos. II, IV, V) are left entirely plain. On the other vessels the decoration - as with the first group - is mainly concentrated on the neck and in several cases on the body, with secondary motifs like single pounced lines (cat. nos. I, II), guilloche patterns (cat. nos. V(?), VII-VIII) or scrollwork (cat. no. VI) also affecting the foot in several cases.  

A greater standardization of decorative motifs seems to characterize the ewers of this category. As for the neck, the panels flanking the central facets above and below now carry either abstract floral motifs (cat. nos. I, II) and scrolls (cat. no. XI) or Kufic and naskhi inscriptions on a floral scrolling background (cat. nos. V[?], VI, VIII, X). These epigraphic friezes may be applied identically above and below, or confined to the upper band only, with narrow guilloche patterns below (cat. nos. X, XI). In the case of ewer V.III a plain Kufic panel was chosen for the upper section with a band of dotted circles around the lower neck, while the panelling on the upper neck of ewer V.IV may have been intended to evoke a pseudo-epigraphic effect.

6 Here, as on ewer 10, some re-engraving and more recently applied decoration seems possible.
In many cases the vertical facets now also receive decorative attention, and each alternate facet usually receives a more or less intricate scrolling design (cat. nos. V[?]I-VIII, XI; cf. ewers nos. 7 and V.3 in the first group for a similar enhancement of the facets).

The body is still left plain in several cases (cat. nos. I-IV, VI, V.II). If decoration does occur, two major varieties can be distinguished. The first one displays a round or cusped medallion filled with floral and knotted designs on the front (cat. nos. VIII-X), which is sometimes flanked by smaller lateral roundels filled with vegetal designs (cat. no. VIII) or birds on a floral ground (cat. no. X). Ewer V.I also adheres to the concept of enhancing the front and sides of the body by individual motifs, but the elements chosen deviate from those mentioned above, in that the central cusped medallion is filled with a walking sphinx, while the sides are occupied by large crescent motifs with floral scroll filling.\(^7\)

The second decorative treatment involves large epigraphic panels of Kufic and naskhi laid out on the sides of the upper body and yet again flanking a central cusped or rounded, mainly floral medallion (cat. nos. V, VII[?], XI, V.III; cf. no. V.3 in the first group). In the case of ewer V.IV, this system has been somewhat abstracted in that here an interlace rosette is flanked by two intertwined cable bands.

The observations contained in the above structural and decorative analysis show that ewers belonging to the first sub-group are characterized by a considerable heterogeneity with regard both to shape and to the choice of decorative motifs and their layout. Pieces of the second sub-group, however, appear generally to be more standardized, with few diversions in shape and less decorative variety.

The increased importance given to the ornamentation of the ewers' bodies in the second category is also noteworthy. It stands in clear contrast to the mainly plain body surfaces encountered in the first group.

\(^7\) On the basis of the photographs available to me I was unable to comment on any decoration that may have been applied to the lip and upper handle attachment, aspects that will therefore need to be left for future study.
Knowledge of these differences between the two groups will prove helpful in the attempt to establish a provenance and date for the objects under discussion and - if possible - to put them in relation to each other as far as their chronological and geographical settings are concerned.

3. Origin of Ewer Type

At present no immediately related predecessors for this early Islamic ewer form can be found in the metalwork of Sasanian Iran or the Hellenistic world. Somewhat similar shapes do, however, exist in Roman glass, such as for example a type with globular body, high neck and a handle that may either be attached near the rim or be halfway down the neck. This form appears around the first century A.D. (fig. 30). Another related jug style current in the first and second centuries A.D., though not very frequently encountered, features a bulbous globular body with a shoulder ridge, resting on a wide base (fig. 31).

According to Allan glass bottles with globular bodies and cylindrical necks also survive in late Roman Syria and remain common in early Islamic times. The closest parallel in glass that has come to my notice so far is a glass ewer from the royal tombs of Qustul in Nubia, a largely Coptic site revealing close connections with the arts of pre-Islamic Egypt (fig. 32).

Additionally, there may also be evidence, even if it is still meagre, that globular ewers with tall necks also existed among Roman vessels executed in other media. Thus, a Roman vessel style termed lagoena displays a profile which in general terms seems to accord with the appearance of the Islamic pieces under

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8 Zick-Nissen claims that the shape follows Sasanian models, but gives no evidence or references; cf. Berlin 1979, p. 68; Fehérvári 1976, p. 29.
10 Isings 1957, p. 71 form 53.
12 Emery 1938, p. 377 no. Q 24-50, pl. 106B.
discussion. However, further research is needed, and prototypes more directly related to the ewers under discussion should emerge in the process.

4. Provenance and Date

4.1. Sub-Group 1 (cat. nos. 1-17, V.1-8; pl. 1, figs. 1-17)

Ewers of the first sub-group as a whole can be attributed to the first centuries of Islamic rule on the basis of certain structural features alone. Thus, the characteristic winged extensions to either side of the upper handle attachments are a clear remnant of Romano-Byzantine fashions, which favoured the application of long-beaked bird heads developing out of two volutes and enclosing the rims of ewers, jugs and other vessels requiring a handle (fig. 33). While the actual lateral bird-headed clasps have been abandoned on these early Islamic pieces, the backward-curving extensions - based on the original volutes from which the bird heads develop - are still retained and rendered in a similar fashion to those encountered on pre-Islamic objects.

Another archaic feature is the ornamentation of the handle with superposed beads fully in the round, as encountered on the majority of pieces in the first group. This treatment can also be found on other early Islamic ewers, particularly those commonly associated with the "Baṣra" ewer, which is currently dated between the 7th and 9th century A.D. (cf. ewer type MW 3, chapter 8). Finally, the form of the vessels as as whole has also been interpreted as a modification of Romano-Byzantine types by Marshak, a fact that therefore supports even more an early Islamic dating for this group.

14 See note 4.
15 Allan 1982, p. 43.
16 Marshak 1972, p. 77.
The chronologically earliest ewer in this category is most probably the piece excavated in Ruṣāfa, a suburb of Baghdad (cat. no. 1; pl. 1). According to Allan this particular find-spot alone suggests a dating not earlier than the late 8th century, while the winged handle attachment may well be a 9th-century feature. The decorative motifs applied on this ewer seem to confirm such a dating. Thus, Hamid compared the palmette designs on the neck and the way in which they are displayed to 8th- or early 9th-century Islamic designs and placed them before the end of the 9th century. More precisely, the design - trefoil crosses set into quatrefoil medallions linked by intertwining circles, with intermediate palmette designs above and below - seems to recall closely certain decorative schemes encountered in Sasanian stucco, as on a panel from a villa in Umm Za’atir near Ctesiphon (fig. 34), or a reconstructed frieze probably from Nizāmabād in north-western Iran (fig. 35).

The fact that the crosses are set into a system of cusped medallions connected by interlacing circles ultimately indicates classical influence, which according to Ackerman had reached new popularity in early Islamic times, when this decorative framework not only provided the setting for ornament executed in stucco, but was also applied to other media, as for example a wooden panel attributed to 8th- or 9th-century Egypt (fig. 36). The decoration applied around the lower handle attachment on the ewer under discussion - a double band of outward-pointing arches with simple trefoils on the peaks - further encourages a late 8th/9th-century dating, and in addition may hint at a probably Iraqi origin, as it can be related directly to a virtually identical design found on a 9th-century ’Abbāsid pottery bowl, executed in blue on an opaque white glaze (fig. 37).

17 Ibid., p. 73; Hamid 1967, pp. 146-7; Allan 1982, p. 42.
20 Erdmann 1969, pp. 76-89, pls. 50, 55.
22 Hassan 1956, p. 95, pl. 299.
The registers on the neck of the ewer in the Keir collection (cat. no. 2; fig. 1) are subdivided into diamonds by oblique lines. These motifs are either filled with an individual bud or a four-petalled flower. Fehérvári, in dealing with this piece, again associated this decorative scheme with Sasanian stucco, in particular certain floral patterns from the palace at Kish in Iraq, and dated the piece to the 9th or 10th century, while attributing it - surprisingly - to Khurásan.\(^4\) Allan, on the other hand, sees the decoration as a much corrupted version of the ornamentation on the Baghdād piece and prefers a 10th/11th-century dating and an Iraqi provenance.\(^5\)

In fact, whether the decorative scheme of the Keir ewer relies on that of the Baghdād piece must be left open to question, as it is possible that both motifs - the system of interlacing medallions with intermediate designs, and that forming diaper patterns with small central motifs - have a separate identity and derive from two distinct decorative patterns that were both already current in the western lands of the classical world and in western Iran before the advent of Islam (figs. 38 & 39).\(^6\)

A closer parallel to the ornamentation on the Keir ewer can be found on one of the floor frescoes discovered at Qaṣr al-Ḥair al-Gharbī in Syria and dated to ca. 730 A.D. (fig. 40). Here the two superposed central panels, depicting two court musicians above and a mounted hunter below, are framed by a system of large squares filled with rosettes standing on their tips and joined by small circles. The spaces in between are filled by semi-rosettes identical in style to those in the central squares. Basically, this intricate design is again achieved by first outlining a network of obliquely-set lines, a method virtually identical to the one adopted on the Keir ewer.\(^7\)

The only difference between the floor painting and the ewer lies in the degree of visual impact exerted by the floral motifs filling the spaces. While on the floor painting at Qaṣr al-Ḥair the geometrical network recedes completely in the

\(^6\) Erdmann 1969, pl. 14; Pope and Ackerman 1981, p. 2707; Richter 1956, p. 62, pl. XXIV.
\(^7\) Ettinghausen 1979, p. 37.
face of the large rosette motifs, it visually dominates the panels on the ewer and makes the floral elements appear as small, secondary space-fillers that by no means command prime attention as is the case at Qaṣr al-Ḥair. This simplification of a more complex design like the one on the fresco may well be due to a later date of execution, when certain traditional designs had begun to deteriorate, but it may also simply express a continuation of simpler designs already known before Islam. It may also be due merely to the smaller scale of the object, which might not have allowed a more elaborate execution.

An even closer parallel, a diaper pattern - this time on a small scale - can be observed on a fragment of a vessel from Sāmarra, which has been dated to the 9th century (fig. 41). Accordingly, the 9th- or 10th-century dating suggested by Fehérvári may come closest to the truth. As far as the geographical origin of this piece is concerned a Near Eastern provenance, perhaps from Iraq or Syria, seems most likely, on the basis of the decorative traditions reflected on this piece.

On ewer 3 (fig. 2) another, more intricate network created by obliquely-set lines can be observed. Here, small triangular spaces with three central pounced dots were achieved by adding horizontal lines. These motifs make way at regular intervals for large diamonds, into which a central square has been placed. The latter contains in each case a simple silver-inlaid rosette. A somewhat related design can be observed on a dark blue glass vessel, preserved in the Islamic Museum in Berlin and assigned to Iran during the 9th - 11th centuries (fig. 42), and perhaps the bronze vessel may belong to the same spacial and temporal context.

The decoration of ewer 4 (fig. 3) is too general to allow any concrete interpretation, but the fact that its shape is virtually identical to that of no. 3 (fig.

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28 Hassan 1956, p. 276 fig. 817.
29 Berlin 1986, p. 55 no. 32. Unfortunately, I was unable to comment on any decoration that might affect the handle base and the base of the body, as no photographic material of these details was available. If there is ornamentation in these places, its style may help to clarify further the date and the origin of this piece.
3), in addition to displaying all the archaic features mentioned above, may bear out the 9th/10th-century dating suggested for it.30

On ewer 5 (fig. 4) the simple scrolling design against a punch-dotted background is most interesting. It finds a closely related parallel on another type of early Islamic ewer with ovoid body and waisted cylindrical neck sold at Sotheby’s and now in the Bumiller Collection (fig. 43; ewer type MW 3/V.3).31 Even the enhancement of the facets’ termination and the foot are virtually identical.

Such conformities necessarily evoke the question whether both ewers may not actually have been decorated, if not executed as a whole, in the same area and at the same time, and it does in fact seem feasible on the basis of the similarities between the two pieces that the dating and attribution of the Kuwait ewer may be closely linked with that of the other vessel. The ewer in the Bumiller Collection has been tentatively dated to 7th/8th-century Syria, apparently mainly on the basis of its shape.32 While the geographical attribution may deserve further consideration, the dating, judging by the style of the decoration, seems too early, especially if one compares it to other contemporary scrolling designs on a punched background, such as can be found for example on a ewer preserved in the Keir collection and currently dated between the late 7th and the 9th centuries (ewer type MW 3/V).33

The vegetal designs on this piece are characterized by a notable and vibrant originality and vitality. On the Bumiller ewer, however, such characteristics seem much reduced and the motifs have become more static and stereotyped. Accordingly, a late 9th/10th-century dating seems more appropriate for this piece, and in fact such a dating seems to be further borne out by the observations of Allan and Dimand regarding yet another piece, with neck ornamentation closely related

30 Here, as on the preceding piece, the decoration on the lower handle attachment and the base will need further attention. The attachment decoration seems to resemble that of the Baghdađ piece, a fact that would further encourage a fairly early date for this ewer.
31 Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 155; Bumiller Collection BC 662.
32 The profile of this ewer seems to relate directly to eastern Mediterranean bronze ewers and other vessels in use before the advent of Islam; cf. the discussion of inverted pear-shaped ewers in chapter 10 (ewer type MW 5).
33 Allan 1976a, pl. 2.
stytically to that applied on the two preceding pieces, i.e. ewer 6 (fig. 5). Allan interpreted the vegetal designs on ewer 6 (fig. 5) as belonging to an era prior to the 11th century but later than the art of Samarra, and therefore agrees with the dating originally suggested by Dimand, i.e. the 10th century A.D.\textsuperscript{34}

Ewer 7 (fig. 6) was unearthed in the upper part of the middle level of Tepe Madraseh at Nishapūr.\textsuperscript{35} Its decoration, which has been thoroughly studied by Marshak, displays, according to him, many elements current on 12th/13th-century Khurāsān metalwork, such as the epigraphic panels executed in Kufic and naskhi style, the hunting animals set against a characteristic floral scrolling background, and the various interlace patterns.\textsuperscript{36} However, as he, and more recently Allan, have pointed out, certain stylistic details affecting the decorative layout as well as certain individual decorative features indicate a slightly earlier date, i.e. the 11th or 12th century.\textsuperscript{37}

Thus, the very animated treatment of the central hunting frieze and its unusually large scale hint at a time of manufacture prior to that of typical 12th/13th-century metal objects from Khurāsān. The still fairly naturalistic and curvilinear background scrolls anticipate the very geometrical, tightly-wound background ornamentation typical of that later period, and so do the palmette band around the lower body and the style of the epigraphic friezes, which according to Allan are clearly distinct from those occurring on bronze objects later than ca. 1200 A.D.\textsuperscript{38}

Finally, the lower handle attachment plate also emphasises the ewer’s reliance on earlier traditions. It is rendered in the shape of a tripartite palmette, which closely recalls that applied on a double-spouted ewer of peculiar shape from Daghstān (fig. 44; ewer type EMW 4/V.1/1), which Marshak attributed to a time before the 11th century.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{34} Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 210; Dimand 1947, p. 137; Dimand 1941, p. 206; Marshak 1972, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{35} Allan 1982, pp. 19, 42, 83 no. 100.
\textsuperscript{36} Marshak 1972, p. 88 note 38; Allan 1982, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{38} Allan 1982, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{39} Marshak 1972, pp. 76-7; Orbeli and Trever 1935, pl. 78.
As for ewer 8, the brief catalogue entry does not allow any conclusive statements, but considering the few details given, the 12th-century dating may be fairly accurate.\(^40\) Ewer 9 (fig. 7) may be dated to a slightly later period than the preceding pieces, firstly on the basis of certain structural changes affecting the neck, which do not seem to occur earlier, and secondly on the basis of the decorative friezes.

Marshak, in his careful study of early Islamic ewers, which involved among others the ewer type under discussion and the ewers cognate with the "Basra" ewer (ewer type MW 3, chapter 8), established that the application of two plain bands with grooved borderlines as demarcation between the central facetted register and the panels above and below is a comparatively late occurrence, and can be found on such pieces as a vessel from Samarkand datable to the 12th century.\(^41\)

The style of the decoration not only confirms such a dating, but also helps to reveal the origin of the piece. In the upper neck panel it displays a fairly typical example of 12th-century naskhi, set against a floral scrolling ground, in the lower one apparently a type of animal frieze against the same style of ground. These features seem to have been particularly popular in Khurāsān during the later years of the 12th century.

A similar dating and attribution may be tentatively suggested for ewer 10 (fig. 8), to judge from its neck ornament, which is most probably original. Any analysis of the remaining elements on the body must be left until it can be established with certainty which of them formed part of the original design and which were added at a later date. Unfortunately, no comments can be made with regard to ewer 11 (fig. 9), for lack of detailed photographs; but the apparent existence of plain bands above and below the facets may place this piece, too, sometime around the 12th century.

\(^{40}\) Sotheby’s 17.10.84, lot 153.
\(^{41}\) Marshak 1972, p. 76.
Ewers 12, 13 and 14 (fig. 10) appear to be undecorated and thus do not furnish any evidence with regard to their provenance and date, although an attribution to 9th/10th-century Iran has been attempted for nos. 12 and 14 (fig. 10). Ewer 13 was excavated at Raqqa together with identical vessels executed in clay and glass. This may be an indication that local craftsmen were familiar with this particular ewer type at the time, and thus, this object was most probably not simply a chance find in the area, but may also have been of local manufacture.

The examination of ewer 15 has to be left for future research, as no image was available for a detailed analysis. Neither can comments be made with regard to ewers 16, 17 and V.1, all of which are apparently undecorated. However, it may be worth mentioning that ewer V.1 was allegedly found in Nishapur.

Ewer V.2 (fig. 11) is characterized by a simple Kufic inscription across its upper front alone, a feature that occurs in very similar fashion on a pear-shaped ewer with horizontal beak spout preserved in the Herat Museum (fig. 45; ewer type MW 2/V.2/7). This piece has been dated to the late 9th/10th century on the basis of its epigraphic style, and perhaps, accordingly, a similar date may be suggested for the piece under discussion. As for its provenance, an eastern Iranian origin is feasible, as the emphasis of an object’s façade by decorative devices of various kinds seems to have been a popular feature in local arts during the 9th to 11th centuries, according to Melikian-Chirvani.

Ewer V.3 (fig. 12) displays two large naskhi bands flanking a central interlace roundel, a decorative scheme often encountered on 12th-century metalware from Iran. On ewer V. 4 (fig. 13) - excavated at Ribāt-i Sharaf in Khurasan - the façade of the object has again been given prime attention by the decorator; this time it displays a bird between two zig-zag lines. Clearly, eastern Iranian artistic

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42 Sotheby’s 18.4.84, lot 115. The dating for ewer 14 was kindly provided by the Kestner Museum in Hannover.
43 Damascus 1969, no. 25.
45 Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 28.
traditions of the 9th - 11th centuries are reflected here, and accordingly, the 12th/13th-century dating suggested by Fehérvári seems rather too late.\(^46\) Perhaps an 11th/12th-century may instead be tentatively suggested, taking into account the find-spot, the rather archaic decoration and, on the other hand, the simplified and somewhat deteriorated profile of the vessel.

Ewer V.5 (fig. 14), allegedly from Ghazna, has too little in the way of decorative features to allow any dating, but certain general features may help towards a tentative attribution.\(^47\) Marshak observed that the characteristic lozenges emphasising the curved terminations of the facets, and the peculiar S-shaped handle terminating in a pyramidal knob, can be associated closely with a probably 8th/9th-century cylindrical ewer on three legs with bipartite neck (fig. 46; ewer type MW 1/2), which was bought in Tiflis and may indeed have Caucasian connections.\(^48\) Such similarities may indicate a similar dating for the "Ghazna" ewer, but further research is necessary. The geographical attribution will also need further investigation, as the ewer's commonly assumed Iranian provenance is not proven; the close similarity of its handle with that of the other piece may open new perspectives in this respect.

Ewer V.6 (fig. 15) has been analysed most thoroughly by Melikian-Chirvani in 1982.\(^49\) He observed that the object, despite its close links with the traditional type, presents certain deviations, particularly the circular rim without the characteristic lateral extensions, the latter probably due to a manufacturing date in a somewhat later period.\(^50\) The decoration also combines early and later features in an unusual fashion. Thus the layout of the design - with a large motif emphasising the object's front, and a decorative band on the lower neck terminating in roundels

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\(^{46}\) Fehérvári and Kiani 1982, fig. 10, no. 11.
\(^{48}\) Marshak 1972, p. 72. For a discussion of this ewer type see chapter 6.
\(^{49}\) Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 85-6 no. 19.
\(^{50}\) Op. cit., p. 85.
on the sides - clearly recalls what he calls "Sāmānid" compositions.\(^5\) Most of the decorative details, however, come closest to eastern Iranian designs of the 12th century, and so, according to Melikian-Chirvani, does the style and wording of the epigraphic frieze - originally copper-inlaid - around the upper body.\(^5\)

On the ewer from the Kuwait National Museum (cat. no. V.7; fig. 16) the all-over ornamentation is most unusual. It is interrupted only by two plain bands, which demarcate the shoulder area and the lower body. The large Sasanian-inspired wing motifs, which are the most conspicuous elements of the design, find their closest parallels on a probably 8th/9th-century bronze bowl attributed to Iran (fig. 47)\(^5\), while other details such as the curled and ribbed leafage seem to anticipate the ornamentation of certain 11th-century rock crystal and glass vessels (fig. 48).\(^5\)

Extensive all-over decoration such as is found on this ewer is very rare, though not unique, on early Islamic pouring vessels. It also appears for example in similar fashion on a slender pear-shaped ewer with short horizontal beak-spout, tentatively dated to 8th-century Iraq or north-western Iran (fig. 49).\(^5\) Here, the decorative elements are left to flow freely over the entire surface without any restriction. In the case of the Kuwait ewer, however, the decoration, though at first glance apparently covering the entire body in a seamless way, has actually become confined to broad friezes bordered by plain bands, i.e. compartmentalized.

This layout technique turned up in endless variations and was to become

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\(^5\) Op. cit., pp. 85-6. It should be noted that a connection between early Islamic metalwork from eastern Iran and the Sāmānid dynasty cannot be established with certainty at present and therefore Melikian-Chirvani's terminology may be misleading.

\(^5\) Op. cit., p. 86. Melikian-Chirvani mentions certain unusual early motifs such as a chain of incised dotted circles around the handle base and a small pointed escutcheon engraved below, which led him to speculate whether they may be remnants of an earlier decoration. The ewer also features certain unique and innovatory elements, including the bird head protruding from the lower handle, arches resting on fleur-de-lis designs and the zig-zag line around the neck. Melikian-Chirvani explains the latter as a symbol of the sun's rays and establishes that this must be the first association of a ewer with a solar motif, much favoured later in medieval Iranian poetry. I cannot follow this interpretation, as to my mind a crudely executed zig-zag line alone without any other obvious solar symbolism in sight cannot suffice to evoke any symbolic associations.

\(^5\) Berlin 1979, p. 44 no. 119.


\(^5\) See chapter 7, fig. 7 (ewer type MW 2/V.1/1).
characteristic of early Islamic metalwork up to the 13th century and later. On such pieces the decorative elements were neatly separated by and confined to bands, panels, friezes and medallions as well a roundels or arcading. Thus, it could be argued that the beak-spouted ewer with its distinctively unrestricted ornamentation seems to anticipate the Kuwait ewer in the manner the decoration has been applied, the free-flowing all-over decoration gradually making way for a more structured approach which forces the observer optically to perceive the setting of the decorative elements before appreciating the visual impact exerted by each one of them. The considerations outlined above suggest a 9th-century dating and a general attribution to Iran for ewer V.7 (fig. 16) from Kuwait.

The decoration of ewer V.8 (fig. 17) again offers no hints as to its origin, and only its facetted appearance, unique to the group under discussion, may evoke some speculation. Concave facetted vessels do survive from both early Islamic Iran (cf. ewer type ICAW 6, chapter 16, sub-group 4) and Egypt, where they can be found among 9th-12th-century glass objects. However, from a purely visual point of view, the ewer does seem to relate more closely to the Egyptian pieces with regard to the considerable width of the facets. Nevertheless, a geographical attribution is impossible at present. An 8th - 10th-century dating has been suggested by the auctioneers, but the very deteriorated extensions of the upper handle attachment and the pronounced bands around the upper and lower neck may suggest a somewhat later date.57

56 Berlin 1986, p. 73 no. 86, p. 64 no. 59.
57 Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 126.
4.2. Sub-Group 2 (cat. nos. I-XVII, V.I-IV; figs. 18-24, pl. 2, figs. 25-6, pls. 3-4, figs. 27-9)

Ewers I and II of the second sub-group (figs. 18-19) carry stylistically closely related designs - crudely drawn, fleshy leaves, flowing from either side of a central crescent shape in the case of no. I (fig. 18). Their general appearance seems to recall, in a very deteriorated manner, the vegetal designs found on the shoulder of the Kuwait ewer (cat. no. V.7; fig. 16), which has been tentatively dated to the 9th century. The background of ewer II (fig. 19) appears to be hatched, a feature found on certain other early Islamic metal objects from eastern Iran.58 Keeping this admittedly meagre evidence in mind, a 10th-century dating and an eastern Iranian attribution may be suggested for the pieces under discussion, pending a more detailed analysis.

For lack of detailed photographic material no comments can be made with regard to ewer III (fig. 20), and ewer IV (fig. 21) appears to be undecorated. Ewer V (fig. 22) was found in Toi-Tyube in Central Asia, and the main decoration - two large epigraphic panels flanking a central medallion as well as the pronounced neck bands - suggest a dating somewhere around the late 11th/12th century. This dating is also feasible for the style of scrollwork and epigraphy found on ewer VI (fig. 23), which in its turn may also have Central Asian connections, as Sarre suggested.59

Ewer VII (fig. 24) was acquired in Central Asia and its apparent stylistic similarity to ewer VI (fig. 23) may justify a dating similar to that of the preceding pieces. Ewer VIII (pl. 2) was acquired at Kokand, and the decoration on the front of its body - a cusped medallion with central knot motif enclosed by floral spiral scrolls - is virtually identical to that displayed on ewer VIV (fig. 25), which has

58 See for example a 10th/11th-century incense burner from Khurāsān in Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 33 fig. 8.
59 Sarre 1906, p. 8.
been dated to the 12th century by Allan and given a provenance from north-eastern Iran.60

Ewers X and XI (fig. 26, pl. 3) are closely related typologically, as both display two characteristic ridges that enclose three-quarters of the upper and lower neck. Chronologically, however, ewer X (fig. 26) seems to predate ewer XI (pl. 3). The former’s modest ornamentation - a large central medallion filled with scrolls and two lateral bird roundels on the body - is typical for 10th/11th-century decoration from eastern Iran and can be found for example on a contemporary bull-headed ewer from Khurāsān (fig. 50; ewer type ICAW 2/7, chapter 12).61 The application of an inscription set on scrolling ground and running around the upper neck, however, seems to suggest a slightly later date, and all in all an 11th-century dating may be more appropriate. The decorative scheme utilized on ewer XI (pl. 3), on the other hand, recalls that on ewer V in the Hermitage (fig. 22) and therefore a late 11th/12th-century dating may again be closest to the truth.

Ewer V.I (pl. 4) is the most enigmatic of all with regard to shape and also to some extent with regard to the decoration applied. The latter certainly has connections to decorative layouts such as can be found on ewers V (fig. 22) and XI (pl. 3), but the execution appears much more elaborate, especially because of the major use of silver inlay. It may therefore be assumed that the ewer was executed at a somewhat later date, perhaps around the end of the 12th century or even the early 13th century. Its exceptional shape, moreover, may hint at an origin from a production centre which is not situated in eastern Iran; but as comparable pieces are wanting as yet, this assumption remains to be proven.

While ewer V.II (fig. 27) is completely plain, the decoration on ewer V.III (fig. 28) yet again corresponds to that found on ewers V (fig. 22) and XI (pl. 3), with a peculiarly dense style of Kufic employed in the large lateral friezes. Accordingly, a 12th-century eastern Iranian provenance may again be suggested.

61 Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 52-3 no. 16.
Finally, the very generalized decoration on ewer V.IV (fig. 29) does not allow many stylistic speculations, but the central rosette can be found in virtually identical fashion on a late 12th-century tripod stand from eastern Iran, preserved in the Mūzīm-i Bākhtar at Mazār-Sharīf.62

The examination of the decorative and typological features characterizing the ewers of the type under discussion makes it obvious that this particular vessel style, with all its variations, must have had a continuous history from the days of its first appearance in the late 8th or early 9th century to the late 12th century or even later, a fact already observed by Marshak in his elaborate study.63 He pointed out that the form apparently first flourished in early 'Abbāsid Iraq and was then gradually introduced eastwards into Iran and its north-eastern regions, i.e. Khūrāsān, Sīstān and Transoxiana, where it survived long after its use had apparently declined in its land of origin.64

The fact that for centuries the ewer type retained its archaic features in many cases (they still appear on the 11th/12th-century ewer from Nīshāpūr [cat. no. 7; fig. 6]) has also been explained by Marshak. He points out that the Iranian bronze working tradition between the 9th and the 11th centuries was apparently characterized by a certain stagnation as far as form was concerned, while at the same time it pursued a continuous development in decoration.65 In Marshak’s opinion this discrepancy was possibly the result of a division of labour, which led the caster to become a mere copyist of mass-produced objects, while leaving the engraver to apply the motifs.66

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62 Op. cit., p. 62 fig. 25. It should be noted here that the body shape of this ewer, though certainly related to the other pieces of this group, seems curiously related to the profiles of 13th-century Mesopotamian ewers and traditional water vessels still in use in Iraq today; cf. ewer type MW 5, chapter 10.
63 Marshak 1972, pp. 72-7.
64 Ibid.; Allan 1982, pp. 19, 42; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 210. Baer’s suggestion that these ewers can safely be dated to 10th - 12th-century Khūrāsān and that they spread from there has to be rejected in the face of Marshak’s theory, which is borne out by the evidence provided by the pieces themselves; cf. Baer 1983, p. 90.
65 Marshak 1972, p. 85.
Turning to the pieces of the second sub-group, which appear to be generally later than the pieces in the first category, the consistency of profile and decoration encountered among them is noteworthy. As a majority of the pieces were either excavated or acquired in the Transoxanian regions of Central Asia, and in addition feature 11th-12th-century eastern Iranian designs, it seems feasible to suggest, as did Marshak and more recently Allan, that these objects are local copies, perhaps mainly from Transoxiana, or rather derivations of the prototype produced earlier and concurrently in other areas of the Islamic empire.

5. Function

Unfortunately, nothing is known about the particular use of this ewer type. However, the mere fact that it was so widely distributed throughout large areas of the Islamic empire, and that it survived over several centuries, must indicate that it was very popular and perhaps indispensable in many households of medieval Islamic society. Accordingly, one might suggest that ewers of this profile were among the domestic utensils which formed an integral part of Muslim life, such as for example ritual ablution equipment in mosques and washing sets used in daily life for intimate hygiene as well as for ablutions before and after meals or at prayer times.

Perhaps, however, such ewers were also used for more specific purposes. In one of the miniatures featured in a manuscript of the Kitāb al-Diryāq, datable to 1199 A.D., a ewer of the type under discussion is suspended by a peg from the right wall of a doctor’s or medical expert’s room. This man, with several assistants,

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67 The suggestion that pieces of the second sub-group are beaten rather than cast like the ewers of the first category, as put forward by Marshak and Allan, needs further investigation, as both techniques are quoted in the literature dealing with these pieces.
is in the process of preparing an antidote for one of the poisons current at the time (fig. 51). 69

6. Summary

Bronze ewers with globular or inverted pear-shaped bodies and tall cylindrical necks seem to appear for the first time in 8th/9th-century Iraq and are perhaps derived from pre-Islamic Mediterranean vessels executed in various materials. From there they moved eastwards across Iran as far as Transoxiana, where they are still current in slightly modified form in the late 12th century. The pieces of this group are only modestly decorated and their ornamentation reflects the wide distribution and chronological diversity of this particular type.

The function of this ewer type is not known, but its apparent popularity suggests that it might have been used for religious ablutions or personal hygiene within the Muslim household or in the mosque.

69 Farès 1953, pl. XI.
Catalogue

Sub-Group 1

1. Baghdad, Iraq Museum; Rusafa, Baghdad; cast bronze, incised; h. 30 cm. Globular body, slightly tapering towards a low, slightly rounded footring; from faintly flattened shoulder area, surrounded at base by a prominent rounded moulding, rises a tall cylindrical neck, very slightly flaring towards the mouth; central neck slightly faceted; mouth surrounded by flat protruding lip ending at back in two horizontal lateral projections curving backwards; the rounded, softly S-shaped handle joins the lip in between the curved projections above and the upper body below by means of a narrow pointed attachment; central and lower handle enhanced by six beads; thumbpiece large bulbous pomegranate. On foot, criss-cross pattern with central dots; body undecorated apart from ten small trefoils set on everted arched stems and enclosing the handle base; on neck above and below; apparently neck Form as 4. Sotheby's Lit.: Hamid 1967, pp. 145-50, figs. 1-4; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 210, Vol. 2, p. 622 no. A/1/d/1.

2. Keir Collection; n. p.; cast bronze, incised and punched; plugs in body and neck; h. 26 cm, with thumbpiece 30.5 cm, diam. mouth 6.5 cm, diam. base 7.5 cm, diam. body 13.5 cm. Form as 1, but slightly more rounded lip and more pronounced and longer facetting on central neck. On foot, criss-cross pattern similar to that on 1; base plate with four parallel vertical lines augmented by serpent-shaped motifs encircled by small dots; body undecorated apart from five-lobed leaf-shaped handle base with engraved details and punched outline expanding into circles at regular intervals; registers on upper and lower neck, diamond patterns with either four-petalled flower or bud in centre, spaces in between diamonds filled with simple leaves; on lip, series of punched dots; upper handle attachment rendered as split palmette with engraved veins (fig. 1). Lit.: Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 210, Vol. 2, p. 623 no. A/1/d/7; Fehérvári 1976, pp. 29-30, 34-5 no. 5, pl. 2c; Allan 1982, p. 42; Baer 1983, p. 321 note 210.

3. Sotheby's 26.4.82, lot 13; n. p.; cast (?) bronze, incised, silver inlay; h. 31 cm. Form as 1, but slightly more ovoid body; neck taller and slimmer; thicker neck collar; only five beads on central handle; thumbpiece missing apart from base. On base of foot, scrolling foliage on pounced ground; on foot, widely set herring bone pattern with punched borders; body undecorated apart from handle base, surrounded by pouncing and split palmettes; on upper and lower neck, system of triangles with central punched pyramid motifs, enclosing large diamond-shaped areas with central squares with stylized inlaid flower heads in the middle (fig. 2). Lit.: Sotheby's 26.4.82, lot 13.

4. Sotheby's 15.10.85, lot 42; n. p.; cast (?) bronze, incised; h. 30 cm. Form as 3, but six beads on central handle; thumbpiece large pomegranate; whole neck apparently very slightly faceted apart from a narrow decorative register above and below; on foot, undiscernible linear and punched designs; base with foliate motifs; body undecorated apart from handle base, which is leaf-shaped, incised with floral details and surrounded by punching and incised motifs; on upper and lower neck, narrow guilloche panels on punched ground with dotted borderlines; abstract vegetal details on upper handle attachment; lozenge band on lip (fig. 3). Lit.: Sotheby's 15.10.85, lot 42.
5. Kuwait, National Museum LNS 195 M; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 19 cm. Form generally as 1, but smaller with shorter neck; only three beads on handle; no thumbpiece apart from low round base. On foot, small crosses filled above and below with ring-matted lines; on upper and lower neck, registers with thin scrollwork and large central pomegranate-like buds with punched extensions on ring-matted ground; facets bordered above and below by arched double lines with small semi-circles with central dot in the interstices, adjoining narrow areas of ring-matting separated from the decorative panels by thin plain bands; on upper handle attachment, punch-dotted enhancement of the stylized split palmette plaque; on lip, apparently zig-zag pattern with central dots (fig. 4). 
Lit.: Keene 1984, no. 26.

6. MMA Rogers Fund 32.66; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 33 cm, diam. 14.7 cm. Form as 1 and 2, but handle flatter and bent outwards rather than S-shaped. Decoration apparently restricted to neck: band of diamond pattern below lip; bands of simple leafy scrolls apparently on ring-matted ground above and below faceted central neck, somewhat similar in style to the scrollwork on 5 (fig. 5). 

7. MMA 38.40.240; Nishāpur, Tepe Madraseh, middle level; cast bronze, incised; h. 33.5 cm, diam. 16 cm. Form as 1 and 2, but slightly more elongated body and more rounded footring; neck shorter; eight beads on handle, lobed and pointed handle base; rounded lip. On base, rounded with standing bird on probably scrolling ground; body covered by decorative bands of varying width, separated by plain borders: on shoulder, broad panel with cursive inscription on floral scrolling ground, which terminates on either side of the handle in a narrow guilloche band running downwards; below, a narrow interlace band, likewise turning downwards on either side of the handle; around central body, large register with hunting scene on spiral scrolling ground with floral details; below, interconnecting almond-shaped scrolls with central palmette leaves, and finally another narrow interlace band; on upper neck, broad panel with Kufic inscription on abstracted floral ground; every second facet enhanced by vertical guilloche band; on lower neck, double line with guilloche patterns in between; inscription on neck and shoulder benedictory (fig. 6). 

8. Sotheby’s 17.10.84, lot 153; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 21.6 cm. Globular body with narrow horizontal shoulder; tall, slightly flaring neck; slightly curving handle; low foot. Body decorated with two epigraphic friezes flanking central rosette; neck with narrow strapwork band (no photograph available). 
Lit.: Sotheby’s 17.10.84, lot 153.

9. L.A. Mayer Memorial M. 19-72; n. p.; cast (?) bronze, incised; no dimensions available. Form as 1, but more squat and very pronounced facetting on central neck; facetting separated from decorative panels above and below by two broad plain bands. On foot, stylized scrollwork; on lower neck, hare and probably other animals on floral scrolling ground; on upper neck, naskhi inscription on floral scrolling ground; on lip, narrow cable pattern; on upper handle attachment, central leaf motif and vegetal details; around handle base, incised outlined panel (fig. 7). 
10. Khalili Collection MTW 460; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 37 cm.
Form as 9, but slightly more ovoid body, broader neck collar, shorter neck; only five beads on handle. On body, central cusped medallion with frontally positioned, male figure wearing pointed hat, set against floral scrolling ground; on sides, large crescent motifs filled with scrolls, adjoined immediately at an awkward angle towards their inside by oval motif filled with three individual scrolls and ending in lancet leaf below (disposition of motifs suggests some re-engraving); on upper neck, benedictory naskhi on floral scrolling ground; on lower neck, large plaited band; birds' heads on back of lip, on its sides two parallel lines, at tip kerb with flanking zig-zag grooves (fig. 8).
Lit.: Unpublished.

11. Hermitage; n. p.; bronze, incised; dimensions unknown.
Form as 3, but pomegranate finial remains; apparently undecorated (?) (fig. 9).

12. Sotheby's 18.4.84, lot 115; n. p.; bronze; h. 27.4 cm.
Spherical body; tall, slightly flaring neck; beaded curved handle; thumbrest pomegranate (no photograph available).
Lit.: Sotheby's 18.4.84, lot 115.

13. Damascus, National Museum; Raqqa; bronze; dimensions unknown.
Elongated ovoid body on rounded footring; tall, slightly flaring neck. No further details available (no photograph available).
Lit.: Damascus 1969, no. 25.

14. Hannover, Kestner Museum 1971.42; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 32 cm, overall width 15 cm.
Ovoid body on low, slightly splayed foot; from rounded collar tall, flaring neck with central faceting; protruding lip with lateral extensions; angular handle with six central beads; thumbpiece pomegranate. Incised vegetal detail on upper handle attachment plate (fig. 10).
Lit.: To be published by the museum in the near future.

15. Cairo, Islamic Museum 15239; n. p.; bronze; dimensions unknown.
Ovoid body tapering towards base; tall, slightly flaring neck; beaded handle; knob-like thumbpiece; no further details available (no photograph available).
Lit.: Unpublished (?)

16. Hermitage SA 12728; acquired in Samarkand; cast bronze; dimensions unknown.
Form evidently similar to 1, but handle flat on inside and high foot (no photograph available).

17. F.R. Martin Collection (?); n. p.; bronze; dimensions and further details unknown (no photograph available).
Lit.: Stockholm 1897, Schrank 7; Marshak 1972, p. 73.

Globular body tapering slightly towards low footring; base missing; tall and sturdy neck with flat lip; on one side of mouth remains of lateral projection; handle missing (no photograph available).
Lit.: Unpublished.
V.2. Sotheby’s 12.4.89, lot 50; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 18 cm.
Squat globular body on fairly high flaring foot-ring; on flattened shoulder angular collar introduces tall, fairly broad cylindrical and faceted neck, slightly flaring towards the mouth; flat protruding lip; slightly S-shaped, rounded handle with three half-heads near the base and knob-shaped thumbpiece; wing-shaped upper attachment plate; across the upper front of the body, simple Kufic inscription (fig. 11).
Lit.: Sotheby’s 12.4.89, p. 16 lot 50.

V.3 Khalili Collection MTW 143; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 21.5 cm.
Form very similar to V.2, but low foot, squatter body, rounded neck collar and more flattened handle with pomegranate-like thumbpiece; facets merely engraved; on handle seven rounded lateral protrusions. On body, large central roundels with intricate interlace star made up of scrolling branches, terminating in large leaves, above small trefoil; roundel flanked on sides by large panels with benedictory naskhi on floral ground; on neck, engraved facets with heart-shaped terminations above, alternatively left plain or with benedictory cursive inscription; area near and behind handle left only with plain facets; lip slightly pointed with remains of angular guilloche; towards back, lateral bird-head extensions; on upper handle attachment, fleshy leaf design; thumbpiece faceted with engraved rosette on top; handle attachment below flanked by bird heads (fig. 12).
Lit.: Unpublished.

V.4 Tehran (?); Ribat-i Sharaf; bronze, incised; h. 18.3 cm, diam. 5.7 cm.
Squat and bulbous globular body on low, splayed footing; flat, slightly protruding collar introduces tall, flaring cylindrical neck with flat, slightly pointed lip; handle flat and nearly straight with stylized pomegranate thumbpiece. Below neck collar and above foot, two bands of M-patterns; in between, on frontal body, bird standing on two volutes incorporated into the linear band below, with flowing palmette design in beak and tiny "comb" on its head; immediately above, a symmetrical volute design; around lower part of neck, band of obliquely set crosses (fig. 13).

V.5 Kabul Museum 58.2.21; Ghazna; cast bronze, traced and punched; h. 29.2 cm.
Shape related to 3 and 4, but more ovoid body on wider footing; indicated facetting on tall cylindrical neck, which flares towards rounded lip; thick, rounded and strongly S-shaped handle joins lip by means of decorative plaque; below, lower handle curves outwards, terminating in pyramidal knob; attachment to the body is achieved by a rectangular link joining the lower curve of the handle to the upper body; on central handle seven large beads; thumbpiece very large globular knob on low conical support. Punched circles on foot and punched lines at top of body; semi-circular terminations of neck facets outlined by engraving with lozenges between the arches (fig. 14).

V.6 V&A 758-1889; n. p.; cast bronze, incised and partly inlaid with copper; bottom disc missing, lower foot later addition; h. with thumbrest 36.7 cm, diam. body 16.7 cm, diam. mouth 6.6 cm.
Body shape as 1, but slightly squatter and higher, splayed foot rim; neck collar angular (similar to V.2), with tall, slender cylindrical neck flaring towards mouth; no protruding lip, only slightly rounded mouth edge; rounded and straight handle directly attached to area below mouth edge without decorative attachment; below, slightly raised, leaf-shaped attachment with engraved extension and chain of incised, dotted circles all round; above handle base, bird head curving outwards; five beads
on upper handle; thumbpiece large pomegranate on squat rounded base. Decoration on body: immediately below neck collar, band of zig-zag on ring-matted ground, then narrow register with chain pattern; below, broader area with simple, originally inlaid cursive script (traces of copper remain); below, chain pattern; frieze stops within a few millimeters of the handle base; below, a band of scrollwork with lancet-like additions above and below joins two lateral roundels with birds on floral ground with central waisted medallion containing formal scrollwork; below, chain pattern and interlocking arches resting on lancet-like, stylized fleur-de-lys designs; decoration on neck: chain patterns framing grooved band, followed by simple cursive epigraphic frieze, originally inlaid; below, another chain pattern; in lower neck section on sides, roundels with central, three-lobed half-palmettes and lancet-like extensions outside, connected by double-banded guilloche; in centre of guilloche, large lancet pointing downwards, seemingly piercing an upside down crescent; around base of neck, pinpoint holes indicate the former existence of punched chains of dotted circles; benedictory inscription on body (fig. 15). 


V.7 Kuwait National Museum LNS 132 M; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 29.2 cm, diam. 16 cm. Form as V.6, but body slightly more globular; apparently flat handle without beading. Entire neck covered with large, fleshy palmettes, trefoils and grape-like motifs; on body, three decorative panels of varying width, separated by plain bands; on shoulder trefoils, large tear-shaped leaves and other floral details; on main body, large symmetrical inward-curving wing motifs on split palmette base, in between scrolling leaves, trefoils and grapes; similar motifs around lower body; on foot, dotted line introduces scrollwork (?) (fig. 16). 

Lit.: Jenkins 1983, p. 38; Atil 1990, p. 82 no. 18.

V.8 Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 126; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 23.5 cm. Bulbous and squat globular body subdivided into eight very wide, concave facets, resting on a fairly high, octagonal footring; octagonal collar introduces tall, sturdy neck, again eight-sided, and flaring slightly towards the mouth; flat protruding lip; angular, S-shaped handle joined to lip by flat, very small decorative plaque; on central handle six angular beads; palmette-shaped terminal at base and palmette-shaped finial; on upper and lower (?) neck, two-panelled narrow bands flanking register of vertical panelling; incised line around handle base (fig. 17). 

Lit.: Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 126.

Sub-Group 2

I. C.L. David Collection 21/1967; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 31 cm. Squat, inverted pear-shaped body tapering towards a fairly high, splayed footring; on flattened shoulder, broad rounded collar introduces tall and broad cylindrical neck with short central facetting, flaring slightly towards the mouth; flat, protruding lip; rounded, slightly S-shaped handle joins back of lip by decorative plaque with two lateral wings; below, pointed attachment on shoulder; on central and lower handle, six beads; thumbpiece, large pomegranate, its body copying the ewer’s shape. On upper and lower neck - flanking the central facets - decorative panels with crudely incised fleshy leaves and wing motifs, the former enclosing a heart motif; facets outlined above and below by arched lines; dotted borders around base of neck and foot (fig. 18). 

Lit.: Unpublished.
II. Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 120; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 29.3 cm.
Shape virtually identical to I, but neck more slender and beads further up on handle.
Identical style of decoration to that on I with crudely drawn, curving leaves and wings on upper and lower neck; dotted line on lower neck; remains of dotted border on foot (fig. 19).
Lit.: Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 120.

III. Hermitage; n. p.; bronze, incised(?); dimensions unknown.
Form as I, but taller, slimmer neck; longer facets; five half-beads on central handle; inside of handle flat; thumbpiece, stylized pomegranate without reference to ewer’s body shape; no decoration discernible from the available photograph (fig. 20).
Lit.: Marshak 1972, pp. 72, 73 fig. 8; Fehérvíri 1976, p. 29.

IV. Christie’s 20.4.1979, lot 13; n. p.; bronze; h. 30 cm.
Form as III, but higher, nearly straight foot; very flat, slightly projecting collar; no facetting visible on available photograph; flat handle with central indentations; slender pomegranate thumbpiece; upper decorative handle attachment very degenerated; no decoration visible (fig. 21).
Lit.: Christie’s 20.4.1979, lot 13.

V. Hermitage SA 12752; found in Toi-Tyube, Central Asia; bronze, incised; no dimensions available.
Form as I, but flatter neck collar; longer facets on central neck, clearly separated from decorative panels above and below by broad plain bands, bordered by thin lines; handle missing, only base and upper decorative plaque remain. On upper body, two broad epigraphic panels flanking central medallion (?); incised decoration on upper and lower neck, details indiscernible on available photograph (fig. 22).
Lit.: Marshak 1972, p. 75 pl. 10 left, pp. 73, 75 (text).

VI. Berlin, Islamic Museum I 3563; n. p.; hammered bronze, incised; h. 30 (36) cm.
Form identical to V, but slightly S-shaped handle, flat on the inside, with five half-beads in the centre; thumbpiece fragmented, only rounded knob remains; foot nearly straight, base plate missing. On foot, simple floral ornament; on upper and lower neck, benedictory Kufic (?) on floral scrolling ground; on two of the facets scrollwork, on a third repetition of the word baraka - "blessing"; incised motifs below the handle base and on lip; benedictory inscriptions on upper and lower neck (fig. 23).
Lit.: Sarre 1906, pp. 7-8 no. 12, pl. IV; Allan 1976, Vol. 1, p. 211; Berlin 1979, p. 68 no. 226; Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 86 note 1, p. 430.

VII. Hermitage SA 12748; acquired in Central Asia; bronze, incised; no dimensions available.
Shape identical to V and VI, but taller neck; six half-beads on central handle, handle fragmented in its upper half. On lower foot, guilloche band; incised decoration on upper body (?); decorative registers on upper and lower neck and some of the facets, details indiscernible (fig. 24).
Lit.: Marshak 1972, p. 75 fig. 10 right.

VIII. F.R. Martin Collection (?); Kokand; bronze, incised; dimensions not available.
Shape identical to V and VI, but handle flatter, with central indentations; thumbpiece pomegranate, roughly corresponding to body shape. On lower foot, guilloche band; on frontal body, elongated cusped medallion with central geometric knot extending into floral scrolls, flanked by two roundels containing split palmettes; on upper (?) and lower neck, Kufic inscription on floral scrolling ground; on alternate facets, simple scrollwork (pl. 2).
Lit.: Martin 1902, pl. 28; Sarre 1906, p. 8; Marshak 1972, p. 71 pl. 7.3, pp. 73, 75; Fehérvári 1976, p. 30; Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 77, 430.

VIV. Louvre AA 59/AA176; Ghazna or Sistan (?); hammered (cast?) quaternary alloy, incised (body and neck separately mounted, combined with other objects); h. body 13 cm, diam. base 8 cm. Body shape as VIII, but more bulbous. On lower foot, guilloche pattern; on central body, large cusped medallion with central geometric knot extending into floral scrolling motif identical to that on VIII; below handle terminal, band of scrolling stems; neck apparently with bird-head profile at rear of mouth plate; on neck, facettion and band of Kufic (fig. 25).

X. Sotheby’s 10.10.78, lot 293; n. p.; bronze, traced and incised; h. 23 cm. Form as II, but shorter neck; two protruding ridges on upper and lower neck around the front; flat, hardly projecting neck collar; flat, straight handle with central indentations; abstracted broad pomegranate thumbpiece. On sides of upper body, large Kufic panels on spiral scrolling background flanking central circular medallion with floral arabesque; around front of upper and lower neck, guilloche bands; between ridges, vertical bands of scrollwork (fig. 26).
Lit.: Sotheby’s 10.10.78, lot. 293.

XI. Sotheby’s 16.4.85, lot 11; n. p.; cast bronze, incised; h. 35.5 cm. Form as X, but squatter body on lower footring; central shoulder sunk in; broader neck collar; flat, angular handle with six full beads in the centre; detailed pomegranate thumbpiece. On central body, large roundel with three palmette scrolls; on the sides, small roundels with birds on scrolling ground; on lower neck, narrow guilloche band; above lower ridge, slim plain band; on upper neck, broad Kufic inscription on a floral scrolling background (pl. 3).
Lit.: Sotheby’s 16.4.85, lot 11.

XII. Cairo, Islamic Museum 15238; n. p.; bronze, dimensions unknown. Very pronounced, inverted pear-shaped body on low footring; tall, cylindrical neck flaring towards mouth; no other details available.
Lit.: Unpublished (?)

XIII. Hermitage 12753; found in Toi-Tyube, Central Asia; bronze; no dimensions or details available.
Lit.: Marshak 1972, p. 75.

XIV. Hermitage; n. p.; bronze; no dimensions or details available.
Lit.: Marshak 1972, p. 75.

XV. F.R. Martin Collection (?) ; n. p.; bronze; no dimensions or details available.
Lit.: Marshak 1972, p. 75; Stockholm 1897, Schrank 7.

XVI. F.R. Martin Collection (?) ; n. p.; bronze; no dimensions or details available.
Lit.: Marshak 1972, p. 75.

XVII. No location; from Uratyube, Central Asia; bronze; no dimensions or details available.
Lit.: Marshak 1972, p. 75.
V.I Khalili Collection MTW 452; n. p.; cast bronze; incised, silver inlay; ca 30 cm.
Very accentuated, inverted pear-shaped body on low, very slightly rounded footring; in centre of flattened shoulder a stepped and rounded double moulding introduces cylindrical neck, which flares towards the mouth; thick, C-shaped handle with three rings in the centre, attached to the mouth by means of two outward-curving bird heads and to the shoulder and upper body by a split lower termination; the shoulder joint is emphasised by a tall, faceted knob of slender bud shape; thumbpiece pomegranate. On foot, scrollwork; on body, very large, cusped medallion with silver-inlaid outlines ending in a pointed trefoil, filled with sphinx walking sidewise to left with frontal face, on floral scrolling ground; medallion flanked above by continuous large naskhi inscription panel, cusped above the top of the central design, inlaid with broad silver stripes and set against a floral scrolling ground; on body sides, large crescent motifs on pedestal base with silver outlines and floral spiral scroll filling; underneath handle attachment on body, two long-necked animal heads facing outwards and ending in trilobe below; spaces in between filled with floral spiral scrolling; on lower handle knob, panels with dogs and other quadrupeds running downwards against structured background; neck undecorated; incised eyes and outlines on lateral bird extensions of lip; benedictory inscription on body (pi. 4).
Lit.: Unpublished.

V.II British Museum 1980,7-1,1; n. p.; cast bronze; h. 36.3 cm, diam. rim 8.2 cm, diam. base 9.5 cm.
Form as I, but more pointed body on very high, splayed footring; no facetting on neck; no pronounced lip; plain handle attached directly to area just below lip; above lower attachment, triangular protrusion on stepped base; thumbpiece skittle-shaped. Undecorated (fig. 27).
Lit.: Unpublished.

V.III Sotheby’s 19.10.83, lot 35; n. p.; bronze, incised; h. 25 cm.
Inverted pear-shaped body with flat shoulder, tapering towards a fairly wide and low, splayed footring; flat angular collar introduces very tall and broad cylindrical neck (facetted?) flaring slightly towards the mouth; flat protruding lip; very thin and straight angular handle joins back of lip by means of small, degenerated plaque; indication of indented central handle, imitating beads; thumbpiece, tall cylindrical knob with pomegranate crown. On upper body, two broad epigraphic friezes with Kufic flanking a central rosette containing split palmettes enclosed by scrolling vines; on upper neck, Kufic panel; on lower neck, narrow panel with dotted circles (guilloche?) (fig. 28).
Lit.: Sotheby Parke Bernet and Co. 19.10.83, no. 35.

V.IV Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 118; n. p.; bronze, incised and traced; h. 20.3 cm.
Tall, bell-shaped body tapering and then splaying again slightly near the base; base plate missing; very narrow, angular collar introduces tall and slender cylindrical neck, tapering towards the mouth; flat and protruding lip, slightly pointed at the front, with two wing-like horizontal protrusions at the back; flat, plain and S-shaped handle, joined to back of upper neck (replacement); small knob thumbpiece. On upper neck, broad register with vertical panels separated by tiny guilloche bands; around upper body, plaited cable band ending in frontal round medallion, filled with interlaced rosette design (fig. 29).
Lit.: Sotheby’s 15.10.86, no. 118.
Ewers that cannot be attributed to either group for lack of information

A. Private Collection, Tübingen; n. p.; bronze; no dimensions or details available.

B. Ankara, Ethnographic Museum no. 7347; n. p.; bronze; no dimensions or details available.
Plate 1
MW 4/1. Cast Bronze Ewer found in Ruṣāfa, Baghdād. H. 30 cm (Baghdād, Iraq Museum).
Plate 2
MW 4/VIII. Bronze Ewer from Kokand.
Dimensions not available (F.R. Martin Collection?).
Plate 3
MW 4/XI. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 35.5 cm
(Sotheby's 16.4.85, lot 11).
Plate 4
MW 4/V.I. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. ca. 30 cm
(London, Khalili Collection, inv. no. MTW 452).
FIG. 2
MW 4/3. Cast (?) Bronze Ewer, h. 31cm
(Sotheby's 26.4.82, lot 13)

FIG. 1
MW 4/2. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 30.5 cm
(London, R. Collection)
BIG. 3 MW 4/4.
Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 30 cm
(Sotheby's 15.10.85, lot 42).

BIG. 4 MW 4/5.
Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 19 cm
(Kuwait, National Museum, inv no. LNS 195 MA).

FIG. 3
MW 4/4. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 30 cm
(Sotheby's 15.10.85, lot 42).

FIG. 4
MW 4/5. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 19 cm
(Kuwait, National Museum, inv no. LNS 195 MA).
FIG. 5
MW 4/6. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 33 cm
(New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 1932.32.66).
FIG. 6
MW 4/7. Cast Bronze Ewer from Tepe Madrasah, Nishapur.
H. 33.5 cm (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv.
no. 38.40.240; after Allan 1982, pp. 82-5).
FIG. 7

FIG. 8
MW 4/10. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 37 cm
(London, Khalili Collection, inv. no. MTW 460).
FIG. 9
(Leningrad, Hermitage).

FIG. 10
MW 4/14. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 32 cm
(Hannover, Kestner Museum, inv. no. 1971.43).
FIG. 11
MW 4/V.2. Bronze Ewer, h. 18 cm
(Sotheby's, 12.4.89, lot 50).

FIG. 12
MW 4/V.3. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 21.5 cm
(London, Khalili Collection, inv. no. MTW 143).
FIG. 13
H. 18.3 cm (Tehran; after Pchervari and Kiani 1982, p. 340, no. 11, FIG. 10).

FIG. 14
MW IV/V.5. Cast Bronze Ewer allegedly from Ghurza.
H. 29.2 cm (Kabul Museum, inv. no. 59.2.21).
FIG. 15
MW 4/V.6. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 36.7 cm
FIG. 16
MW 4/V.7. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 29.2 cm
(Kuwait, National Museum, inv. no. LNS 132 M).
FIG. 17
MW 4/V.8. Bronze Ewer, h. 23.5 cm (Sotheby’s 15.10.86, lot 136).

FIG. 18
MW 4/1. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 31 cm (Copenhagen, C.I. David Collection; inv. no. 21/1967).
FIG. 12
MW 4/II. Cast Bronze Ewer, h. 29.3 cm (Sotheby's 15.10.86, lot 120).

FIG. 20
FIG. 21
MW 4/IV. Bronze Ewer, h. 30 cm
(Christie's 20.4.79, lot 13).

FIG. 22
MW 4/V. Bronze Ewer from Toi-Tyube, Central Asia.
Dimensions unknown (Leningrad, Hermitage, inv. no. SA 12752).
FIG. 23
MW 4/VI. Hammered Bronze Ewer, h. 30 cm (West Berlin, Islamic Museum, inv. no. 12748).

FIG. 24
FIG. 25

FIG. 26
MW 4/X. Bronze Ewer, h. 23 cm (Sotheby's 10.10.78, lot 293).
Fig. 28
MW 4/VIII. Bronze ewer, h. 36.3 cm (London, British Museum, inv. no. 1980, 7-1, 1).

Fig. 27
MW 4/VII. Cast Bronze ewer, h. 36.3 cm (Sotheby's 19.10.83, lot 35).
FIG. 29
MW 4/V.IV. Bronze Ewer, h. 20.3 cm
(Sotheby's 15.10.86, lot 118).

FIG. 30
1st-Century Roman Glass Vessel Type
(after Ising 1957, p. 69 form 52).

FIG. 31
1st/2nd-Century Roman Glass Vessel Type
(after Ising 1957, p. 71 form 53).
FIG. 32
Upper Handle Attachment of a Bronze Ewer from Pompeii, 1st Century A.D.

FIG. 33
Late Antique Glass Ewer from the Royal Tombs of Qustul in Nubia.
FIG. 34
Sasanian Stucco Panel from a Villa
in Umm Za’tir near Ctesiphon.

FIG. 35
Reconstructed Sasanian Stucco Frieze
allegedly from Nizamabād, North-Western Iran.
FIG. 36
Carved Wooden Panel attributed to 8th/9th-Century Egypt.

FIG. 37
9th-Century Abbasid Pottery Bowl with Blue Design on an Opaque White Glaze.
FIG. 38
Sasanian Capital from Bisutun, Western Iran.

FIG. 39
5th-Century Floor Mosaic from Antioch on the Orontes, Northern Syria.

FIG. 40
Detail of a Floor Fresco discovered at Qasr al Havana al-Gharrin Syria. Ca. 730 A.D.
FIG. 41
9th-Century Pottery Fragment from Samarra, Iraq.

FIG. 42
Dark-Blue Glass Vessel with Incised Decoration. 9th-11th Century A.D.
FIG. 43
Early Islamic Bronze Ewer (MW 3/V.3).

FIG. 44
Early Islamic Bronze Ewer with Double Spout. Allegedly from Dagestan (EMW 4/V.1/1).
FIG. 45
Early Islamic Bronze Ewer (MW 2/V.2/7).

FIG. 46
Early Islamic Bronze Ewer (MW 1/2).
**FIG. 47**
Detail of an 8th/9th-Century Bronze Bowl allegedly from Iran.

**FIG. 48**
Lamp of Rock Crystal. Egypt, Fatimid Period.
Late 10th - Early 11th Century A.D.
FIG. 49
Early Islamic Bronze Ewer (MW 2/V.1/1).
FIG. 50
Early Islamic Bronze Ewer with Bull-Head Spout (ICAW 2/7).

FIG. 51
Miniature from the *Kitāb al-Dirāsah*, depicting the Preparation of an Antidote. Northern Mesopotamia, 1199 A.D.
Chapter 10

MW 5: Beaten Brass Ewers with Inverted Pear-shaped Body on Waisted Foot, Cylindrical Neck, Obliquely Rising, Tubular Body Spout and Arched Handle

1. General Description

The large beaten brass ewers assembled in this category range from 28.5 cm to 50.8 cm in height. They feature a bulbous and either squat or elongated, inverted pear-shaped body, which tapers towards the foot to a varying degree. In some cases the widest part of the body is rounded and tapers gently towards the base. On other pieces the upper section is rather elliptical, and the body profile gives the impression of having been perceived as two conical sections, the upper one squat and flattened, the lower one tall and elongated (cat. nos. 1, 6, 8, 9, 11, V.1/2, V.1/6; pls. 1, 6, 8-9, 11, 14, fig. 1). In three cases (cat. nos. V.2/1-3; pls. 17-19) the body, though of the same bell-shaped profile, is decagonal with slightly convex facets.

Generally, the ewer body rests on a waisted and often splayed foot, which is decagonal in the case of ewers V.2/1-3 (pls. 17-19). It is introduced by a rounded or angular ridge projecting from the lower body. On most objects in this group the foot is fairly low. However, high supports can also be observed occasionally (cat. nos. 8, V.1/4, V.1/7, V.1/8; fig. 1, pls. 13, 15-16). In virtually all cases a rounded and either angular or flattened band projects from the outer edge of the foot. Several ewers are now either without their original foot (V.2/1; pl. 17) or have had their entire base section replaced (cat. nos. 1, 2, V.2/2; pls. 1, 2, 18), a measure which on at least one occasion apparently led to a slight shortening of the body (cat. no. 1; pl. 1). On ewer V.1/6 (pl. 14) only the base plate has been lost and replaced at a later date.
In the centre of the body’s flattened **shoulder** a raised scalloped, polygonal (cat. no. 3; pl. 3) or decagonal (cat. nos. V.2/1-3; pls. 17-19) collar introduces the base of the neck, which is generally short and either cylindrical or again decagonal in the case of ewers V.2/1-3 (pls. 17-19).

Above, a ring projection introduces the main section of the **neck**. In the case of ewers 2-11 (pls. 2-9, figs. 1-2) and V.2/1-3 (pls. 17-19), where it is ten-sided, this moulding is fairly narrow and either rounded or of triangular section (cat. no. 8; fig. 1). In the case of ewers V.1/1-6 (pls. 10-14, fig. 3) on the other hand, a large and strongly projecting, bulbous knob occupies this area. In the case of ewers V.1/7 (pl. 15) and V.1/8 (pl. 16) this element has been lost, resulting in a shortening of the neck on ewer V.1/7 (pl. 15) and a substitution of a plain cylindrical section, flanked by flat projecting ridges, in the case of ewer V.1/8 (pl. 16).

Above the ring projection ewers 2-8 (pls. 2-7, fig. 1) and V.2/1-3 (pls. 17-19) feature a cylindrical or decagonal neck, which widens slightly towards the narrow waisted mouth section. The latter, apparently echoing the design of the foot, is introduced by a narrow rounded or angular ridge and topped by a flat lip, which can project to a varying degree. In several cases the mouth is lidded, either by a flat plaque with two hinges (cat. nos. 4-6; pls. 4-6) or a domical lid which, however, may in fact be later than the ewers themselves (cat. nos. 2, 3; pls. 2-3).

On several pieces in this group the neck or parts of it have undergone more or less extensive restoration. Thus, on ewers 8 (fig. 1) and V.2/1 (pl. 17) the lid has been lost, while on ewers 2 (pl. 2) and V.2/2 (pl. 18) the upper most ring of the neck is a later replacement. In the case of ewer 7 (pl. 7) the neck was apparently shortened and the mouth rim replaced in modern times. On ewers 9 (pl. 8) and 11 (pl. 9) more or less the entire neck section has been replaced by later reproductions.

In the case of ewer 10 (fig. 2) the now wanting neck section above the neck base

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1. On ewer 1 (pl. 1) the projecting ridge around the central neck is actually formed by the flaring terminations of the upper neck and the neck base.
2. In the case of ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) this knob is a replacement.
has not been replaced but a squat flaring mouth has been substituted for it. This element was apparently not purpose-made but adapted from some other, perhaps more or less contemporary object, to judge by the fact that the naskhi inscription adorning it is placed upside down.

On ewers V.1/1-8 (pls. 10-16, fig. 3) the neck design above the bulbous ring collar is slightly different from that encountered on the preceding pieces. Here, a more or less squat and slightly flaring cylindrical section surmounts the knob. It in its turn introduces a large mouth section, which consists of two rounded projections flanking a narrow waisted section in the centre. Each element of the mouth section is separated from the other one by a tiny unobtrusive ridge. Above, a flat and slightly projecting lip surrounds the circular mouth. Again, the aperture often still retains its original lid, which is generally domed (cat. nos. V.1/3-4, V.1/6; pls. 12-14), or reveals traces of an original cover (cat. no. V.1/1; pl. 10). In the case of ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) the domical lid, though typologically blended in with the appearance of the ewer as a whole, is a later replacement.

The handles encountered on the ewers in this group, insofar as they are still original, are of two main types. The most popular one is of angular section, can sometimes be faceted and consists of two parts. The upper one is arched and attached to the neck immediately below the waisted mouth section by means of a broad, heart-shaped plaque stepped back from the handle proper and terminated by a hinge-like finial. Below, this section of the handle terminates in a rounded ring projection flanked by tiny angular ridges. Further down, the lower section of the handle is straight and joins the shoulder of the ewer by means of an attachment plate. The latter corresponds in appearance to that attached to the upper handle, with the only exception that, in this case, it is introduced by an angular ridge and not stepped back from the main body of the handle. This handle type is usually surmounted by a globular or polygonal thumbpiece with semicircular finial. It rises from a cylindrical stem, which is set on a triangular base projecting from the handle below (cat. nos. 2, 4-6, 8, V.2/2-3; pls. 2, 4-6, 18-19, fig. 1).
The second handle type, encountered on ewers 3, V.1/3, V.1/5 and V.1/6 (pls. 3, 12, 14, fig. 3), is rather broader in appearance and of either rounded or angular section. Its upper part, which is attached directly to the upper moulding of the mouth section, is curved. Its lower part is straight and widens slightly towards a bulbous ring projection intended to enhance the area where the lower handle joins the body by means of a flat almond-shaped plaque.

In many cases the handle again fell victim to damage or loss and had to be repaired (cat. no. 3; pl. 3) or replaced altogether at a later date (cat. nos. 1, 7, 11, V.1/1, V.1/4; pls. 1, 7, 9-10, 13). Other ewers have remained without handles since the loss occurred (cat. nos. 9, 10, V.1/2; pls. 8, 11, fig. 2).^5

Diametrically opposite the handle rises a tubular and sometimes facetted (cat. no. V.2/3; pl. 19) spout, which rises obliquely from the shoulder and tapers slightly towards the tip. In most cases the tip and often also the lower part of the spout receive a profiled ring projection (cat. nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, V.1/6; pls. 2, 5-6, 14, fig. 1).

On many ewers (cat. nos. 1, 4, 9, 11, V.1/1, V.1/3, V.1/5, V.1/8, V.2/2; pls. 1, 4, 8-10, 12, 16, 18, fig. 3) the present spout is not original and was added at a later date. On ewer 2 (pl. 2) the spout base was replaced at some time, and on ewer 7 (pl. 7) the spout has apparently been remounted.^6 Finally, on ewers 10 (fig. 2) and V.1/1 (pl. 10) the lost spout was not replaced, and on the former piece only its base remains today.

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^5 Interestingly enough, on ewer V.1/7 (pl. 15) a second spout occupies the area where one would normally expect the handle, a highly unusual feature, which seems to be contemporary, however, to judge by the decoration found on it.

1.1. Technique of Manufacture

All the ewers in this category consist of several parts which were worked separately and then soldered together: the body, the foot section, the base plate, the neck, in the case of ewers V.1/1-8 (pls. 10-16, fig. 3) the various cylindrical and globular or rounded sections of the neck, the spout and spout base, the handle and where applicable, its base. Examples of the first handle type discussed above are not always hollow as one might expect, but are cast in at least three cases (cat. nos. 2, 4, V.2/2; pls. 2, 4, 18).

A technical analysis of ewer 4 (pl. 4) in 1985 gave a clearer picture of how the various sections of a ewer belonging to this type were formed, and it may be of use to repeat the results arrived at in this context. The body of this vessel was apparently shaped mainly by spinning and the scalloped collar was then raised afterwards.

The manufacturing technique of the neck could not be determined with certainty, but it does not appear to have simply been hammered and soldered, as no seam could be discerned along the vertical length of the neck. The handle, as was mentioned before, is cast, and so perhaps are the hinges of the lid. However, the latter may also have been shaped from sheet metal, just as the lid appears to be. Metal pins were used to attach the hinges to the lid.

All the structural sections which extend from the main body of the ewer have been soldered into place. The neck fits onto the main body with the barely discernible joint occurring just below the lower neck collar. The neck narrows into a sleeve which extends down into the opening of the body. Soft solder was used to attach the base of the spout and the handle, and a thick ring of solder also joins the bottom to the body.7

It would be highly interesting if similar analyses could be undertaken on other pieces in this group in order to establish the exact technique of their  

7 This technical analysis was first published in Atil 1985, pp. 122-3.
manufacture. It would also be helpful to test the metallic composition of these ewers in search of clues as to their provenance and date.

2. Decoration

The decorative schemes employed on ewers in this category are extraordinarily sumptuous, indeed stunning, not only with regard to their highly skilled and intricate technical execution and the extensive use of precious metal inlay, but also, and most importantly, with regard to the iconographic individuality of each piece and the remarkable array of decorative motifs employed.

2.1. Body

In planning the decoration of the body, the artists of ewers 1 - 11 (pls. 1-9, figs. 1-2) and V.1/1-8 (pls. 10-16, fig. 3) chose layouts which were to complement the individual sections of the body’s surface and highlight them to their best advantage. The most popular approach in this respect was apparently to divide the surface into a varying number of either detached (cat. nos. 3, 9, V.1/5, V.1/8; pls. 3, 8, 16; fig. 3) or adjoining horizontal zones, demarcated by guilloche (cat. no. 1; pl. 1), zig-zag (cat. no. 6; pl. 6), punch-dotted (cat. no. 7; pl. 7), pearled (cat. nos. 2, 8, 10; pl. 2, figs. 1-2), meander (cat. nos. V.1/2, V.1/7; pls. 11, 15) or plain borders (cat. nos. 5, 11, V.1/1-4, V.1/6; pls. 5, 9-14). The zones are of varying width. The reasons for this arrangement are probably twofold. Firstly it covers the various body sections like the shoulder, the widest circumference, and the central and lower body, to their best advantage; and secondly, visual monotony is avoided. Most commonly, the decorative zones vary from four to six in number, and are, as seen from the shoulder downwards, either alternately wide and narrow or vice versa.
2.1.1. Decorative Schemes: Alternating Narrow and Wide Friezes

On ewers which employ a scheme of alternately narrow and wide bands to cover the body (cat. nos. 1, 5, V.1/1, V.1/2, V.1/5, V.1/8; pls. 1, 5, 10-11, 16, fig. 3), the first frieze below the scalloped collar is generally filled with either Kufic or naskhi epigraphy (cat. nos. 1, 5, V.1/1, V.1/5; pls. 1, 5, 10, fig. 3). Only in the case of ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) was a band of arabesque scrolls used instead. Below, the remaining surface above the body's widest circumference, covered by a wide decorative zone, is treated slightly differently on every single piece. Thus, ewers 1 (pl. 1) and V.1/1 (pl. 10) display two variants of a continuous courtly pageant, in the latter case disposed in two superposed registers, with an enthroned ruler at the centre. On ewer 5 (pl. 5) this area is occupied by a succession of interconnected polylobed medallions, which contain various courtly scenes and are set against a geometric background.

On ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) the wide shoulder frieze is largely epigraphic with tall cursive letters set against a background of arabesque scrolls. In the centre, and only there, a large polylobed medallion with musicians interrupts the band on both sides of the ewer's shoulder. On ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3), a similar decorative scheme was chosen to fill the wide zone on the upper body. However, in this case the epigraphy chosen comprises a naskhi script with human-headed hastae and the two medallions in the centre are roundels, each one filled with an enthroned figure holding two animal-headed staffs. The decoration of the wide shoulder frieze on ewer V.1/8 (pl. 16), finally, is indiscernible from the only published photograph, and sadly no comments can therefore be made on this area.

Turning to the next narrow decorative band on ewers 1, 5, V.1/1, V.1/2, V.1/5 and V.1/8 (pls. 1, 5, 10-11, 16, fig. 3) this is made to correspond more or less exactly to the widest circumference of the body. It can display epigraphy such as naskhi in the case of ewers 1 (pl. 1) and V.1/8 (pl. 16) or knotted Kufic interrupted by arabesque roundels in the case of ewer 5 (pl. 5). On ewer V.1/1 (pl.
10) this zone is occupied by riders or warriors, while in the case of ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) a continuous arabesque scroll interrupted by geometric roundels was applied. Interestingly enough, the latter decorative scheme not only repeats the theme of the first frieze below the scalloped collar of ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) above, but is, more importantly, perceived as an integral part of the decorative layout which occupies the wide panel below.

This fact is further emphasised visually by the application of an arabesque scroll, identical to that in the narrow frieze above, as backdrop for the main decorative elements of the wide zone. On ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3), finally, the narrow zone has been dissected into small detached cartouches with indented sides, each one filled with a running quadruped.

The next wide band, which encloses the larger part of the tapering lower body, is generally occupied by a succession of either interconnected arches ( cat. nos. 1, V.1/8; pls. 1, 16), lobed medallions (cat. nos. 5, V.1/1, V.1/2; pls. 5, 10-11) or roundels with triangular extensions above and below (cat. no. V.1/5; fig. 3). The motifs which fill the variously compartmentalized layout of this zone vary from piece to piece and are highly individualistic. Thus, on ewer 1 (pl. 1) airy genre scenes are contained beneath each arch, while the arcade on ewer V.1/8 (pl. 16) appears to enclose intricate interlace designs. The polylobed medallions on ewers 5 (pl. 5) and V.1/2 (pl. 11) contain various courtly themes including mounted hunters, musicians and enthronement scenes. In both cases the medallions are joined by small geometric roundels and are set against a virtually identical background of arabesque scrolls.

On ewer V.1/1 (pl. 10) this decorative scheme has been reversed with arabesque designs filling the medallions and figural scenes occupying the remaining spaces in between. The same decorative concept of confining the non-figural decoration to the compartments provided and filling the remaining space with figural motifs can be observed on ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3). However, in this case it is handled in a very different way. The central roundels contain alternately one of two
different interlace designs, while the triangular extensions above and below display intertwined scroll motifs. The remaining spaces in between the roundels receive human configurations above and paired ducks below.

The narrow frieze which completes the decoration of the body on ewers 1, 5, V.1/1, V.1/2, V.1/5 and V.1/8 (pls. 1, 5, 10-11, 16, fig. 3) is again treated in a more uniform manner. It often displays an epigraphic (mainly Kufic) frieze (cat. nos. 5, V.1/1, V.1/5, V.1/8; pls. 5, 10, 16, fig. 3). In the case of ewer 5 (pl. 5) the Kufic is knotted, and in the case of ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) a succession of detached and stepped Kufic cartouches appears in this area. On ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) a valance border has been applied instead. In the case of ewer 1 (pl. 1), finally, a narrow frieze of polo-players is terminated by a border of inverted triangles with circular terminals. The latter may not be original, as the vessel has been shortened and altered from this area downwards.

Before turning to ewers with other decorative schemes enhancing the body, attention has to be drawn to the decorative treatment chosen for the bodies of ewers V.2/1 (pl. 17) and V.2/3 (pl. 19). The most striking aspect of their ornamentation is the fact that the artists chose to ignore completely the requirements of the body structure and apply a decorative scheme which contradicts, even negates, that structure.

Thus, the wide vertical facetting of the body surface has on both occasions been covered again by a superposition of either adjoining or detached (cat. no. V.2/3; pl. 19) friezes with plain or pearled borders. On both ewers the friezes are six in number and alternately narrow and wide. The lowest one is again narrow and designed to set off the main decoration above from the foot below. Thus, in this case the seemingly more logical and certainly more conventional artistic concept of decorating a vessel in accordance to its structural requirements was ignored in favour of a decorative layout which contradicts the latter and was in fact directly adopted from the plain-bodied ewers in this category. The visual effect is striking, as the beholder is forced to ignore the verticality of the body features in order to
perceive the decoration in its entirety. In fact the body is concealed or veiled, as it were, by its ornamentation.  

As for the individual motifs which fill the system of superposed bands, both pieces again display a highly individualistic combination. Thus on ewer V.2/1 (pl. 17) the first narrow band below the polygonal shoulder plate and indeed all the subsequent narrow friezes on this piece are occupied by various forms of epigraphy, which on all occasions are interrupted by geometric medallions. On ewer V.2/3 (pl. 19), on the other hand, all the narrow bands display animal friezes. As for the two wide panels in between, ewer V.2/1 (pl. 17) shows them to have a virtually identical layout with polylobed medallions, containing royal scenes, interconnected by small arabesque or solar roundels and set against a geometric background. On ewer V.2/3 (pl. 19) the first wide panel contains a tall cursive inscription set against a floral ground, while the second one shows a succession of detached polylobed arabesque medallions, one to each facet, with small knotted scroll motifs in the intermediate spaces. Each of the latter is placed across the edge of a facet above and below. The frieze which on both vessels terminates the body decoration below contains a valance design.

2.1.2. Decorative Schemes: Alternating Wide and Narrow Zones

Ewers 2, 6-8, 11, V.1/3, V.1/6 and V.1/7 (pls. 2, 6-7, 9, 12, 14-15, fig. 1) display a succession of alternately wide and narrow zones if seen from the shoulder downwards. Here, the zones vary from four to five in number. As on the ewers which display the first decorative scheme of alternately narrow and wide zones on

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8 It is relevant in this context to point out that several of the faceted cylindrical-bodied ewers with obliquely rising beak spouts current in late 12th/early 13th-century Iran display exactly the same visual contrast between the verticality of the body structure and the horizontality of its decoration; cf. ewer type ICAW 6.

9 A very similar decorative treatment of the central body can be observed on certain ewers, also with concave facetting, of "Herati" type; cf. ewer type ICAW 6.
their bodies, here again, the variety of motifs employed to fill the friezes is astonishing, and again, their composition differs from piece to piece.

Thus the wide panel which introduces the decoration of the body, just below the raised shoulder plate, is treated in a different manner on virtually every piece. On ewers 2 (pl. 2) and V.1/6 (pl. 14) it shows a continuous figural frieze. In the case of ewer 2 (pl. 2) the latter depicts royal outdoor entertainment, while on ewer V.1/6 (pl. 14) a succession of saintly personages can be observed.

On ewers 6 (pl. 6) and 8 (fig. 1), on the other hand, the artists confined their figural scenes to large medallions interconnected by cartouches filled with arabesque designs. The latter are further emphasised visually by small vegetal or figural roundels which flank the cartouches above and below. The background treatment is different in both cases: on ewer 8 (fig. 1) it consists of a geometric design, while on ewer 6 (pl. 6) it is made up of animated arabesque scrolls with intermediate geometric hexagons.

On ewers 7 (pl. 7) and V.1/3 (pl. 12) a large cursive inscription on an arabesque ground fills the shoulder panel, and on ewer 11 (pl. 9) large epigraphic cartouches, alternating with figural medallions, are placed against a geometric background. On ewer V.1/7 (pl. 15) a continuous hunting frieze is interrupted in the centre by a large roundel containing a horseman and set against an arabesque ground.

The next narrow zone again corresponds more or less precisely to the body’s widest circumference. In some cases it contains epigraphy, such as the anthropomorphic and knotted Kufic on ewer 2 (pl. 2) and the naskhi with intermediate geometric medallions on ewer V.1/7 (pl. 15). On ewers 6-8 (pls. 6-7, fig. 1) it displays an animal frieze, which on occasion (cat. nos. 6, 7; pls. 6-7) can be interrupted by small geometric medallions. In the case of ewer 11 (pl. 9), an unusual system of obliquely set squares, again interrupted by geometric medallions,
is filled with abstract vegetal motifs. On ewer V.1/6 (pl. 14), finally, arabesque scrollwork fills the narrow plane.\textsuperscript{10}

The next wide panel occupies the greater part of the central body. Again, it is devoted to an array of figural scenes, which can be displayed in very different ways. Thus, on ewer 2 (pl. 2) the zone is in itself conceived as consisting of three superposed bands, as it were. The central row contains a succession of alternately large and small polylobed figural medallions. These are interconnected by small knots and flanked above and below by a succession of small and detached polylobed medallions. These occupy spaces which correspond to those in between the cartouches of the central row.

The fact that the background of the wide zone on ewer 2 (pl. 2) is covered entirely by dense intertwined scrollwork obscures the underlying decorative layout, and makes the beholder perceive the frieze as one integral entity, which seems to envelop the central body again rather like a piece of textile. This treatment of the central body is unparalleled on other pieces in this group. On these, generally speaking, the main decorative elements clearly dominate the background and are visually superior to it.

On ewer 7 (pl. 7) a band with interconnected roundels of equal size is filled with the signs of the zodiac, an unusual decorative theme in this group, and set against a scrolling background. On ewers 6 (pl. 6) and 8 (fig. 1) the decorative layout of the central body repeats that of the wide shoulder panel, either exactly (cat. no. 8; fig. 1) or in slightly modified form (cat. no. 6; pl. 6). On ewer 8 (fig. 1) the repeated composition, obviously in order to avoid visual monotony, has been moved, as it were, by one position. Thus, the position of the figural medallions below correspond to that of the intermediate arabesque cartouches above, and vice versa. On ewer 6 (pl. 6) the figural medallions, in this case alternately small and large and filled with astrological rather than royal motifs, are now interconnected by

\textsuperscript{10} The decoration of this zone on ewer V.1/3 (pl. 12) is not clearly visible on the only published photograph, but it appears to be either vegetal or floral.
geometric roundels rather than the arabesque cartouches applied in the shoulder panel. The roundels above and below the linking elements are smaller here and filled with rosettes rather than figural motifs. The animated arabesque scroll ground, however, is identical in both zones.

A very similar layout to that observed on ewer 8 (fig. 1) can again be found on ewer V.1/6 (pl. 14). However, in this case the large figural medallions are polylobed and interconnected by epigraphic rather than floral cartouches. The small medallions which flank the latter above and below contain individual figures rather than the bird pairs and arabesques found on ewer 8 (fig. 1). The geometric background treatment, on the other hand, is identical to that on the former vessel.

On ewers V.1/3 (pl. 12) and V.1/7 (pl. 15) the decorative layout is highly individualistic in both cases. On ewer V.1/3 (pl. 12) large polylobed medallions with various figural scenes and tiny rosette roundels are spaced out against a background of arabesque scrolls. On ewer V.1/7 (pl. 15), large roundels with hunting figures alternate with rather large-scale royal scenes, which fill the intermediate spaces comprehensively. Finally, the artist of ewer 11 (pl. 9) chose arcading similar to that on ewers 1 (pl. 1) and V.1/8 (pl. 16) to display a succession of royal and courtly figures. Here the ground on which the figures appear is made up of abstract scrollwork, while the remaining space around the arcade is filled with a system of geometric fretwork.

The narrow band which, strictly speaking, completes the scheme of alternately wide and narrow decorative zones on ewers 2, 6-8, 11, V.1/3, V.1/6 and V.1/7 (pls. 2, 6-7, 9, 12, 14-15, fig. 1) is characterized by a greater uniformity with regard to its ornamentation. Usually, it contains an animal frieze (cat. nos. 6-8; pls. 6-7, fig. 1), which on occasion can be interrupted by small geometric medallions (cat. nos. 6, 7; pls. 6-7), a valance design (cat. nos. 11, V.1/3, V.1/6; pls. 9, 12, 14) or an epigraphic band with intermediate geometric roundels (cat. no. V.1/7; pl. 15).
If five rather than four decorative zones have been applied, as is the case on ewers 7, 8 and V.1/3 (pls. 7, 12, fig. 1), the fifth frieze tends to be a narrow valance design, apparently intended to set off the main decorative scheme above from the foot ridge below.

2.1.3. Decorative Schemes: Other Decorative Layouts

Several ewers in this category (cat. nos. 3, 4, 9, 10, V.1/4, V.2/2; pls. 3-4, 8, 13, 18, fig. 2) display decorative layouts which are quite different from the two main schemes discussed above, and each one of these in its turn is treated in a highly individualistic manner. Thus, on ewer 3 (pl. 3) a wide band with tall cursive epigraphy highlights the shoulder area, while a second frieze, containing a valance design, emphasises the widest circumference of the body. The remaining areas of the body remain undecorated. Ewer 9 (pl. 8) - in principle - shows a very similar decorative treatment, which again concentrates mainly on the shoulder of the body and its widest circumference. As in the case of ewer 3 (pl. 3), here, also, two superposed and in this case detached bands were chosen to enhance the aforementioned areas. Again, the upper one is epigraphic (here interrupted by central figural medallions) and the lower one contains a valance design. In addition, however, the artist of this vessel chose to emphasise the centre of the tapering and slightly waisted lower body as well: a narrow Kufic band, interrupted by geometric interlace roundels, encloses this area.

On ewer V.1/4 (pl. 13) a tall cursive inscription frieze again occupies the shoulder. However, in this case the remaining body surface below has been completely and very effectively covered by spacious arcading, filled with arabesque designs. The arcade exploits and complements the verticality of the tapering body perfectly. In order to set the main decoration off against the foot ridge below, a tiny naskhi frieze has been inserted just above the latter.
The decoration on ewer 4 (pl. 4) is unique in this group. It consists of a textile-like network of lime-shaped meshes, each one filled with an intricate arabesque design. Tiny pearled borders demarcate this all-enclosing ornamentation just below the raised shoulder collar and above the onset of the foot section.

On ewer 10 (fig. 2) the underlying framework of the decoration is somewhat more complex than that on other pieces in this group, and its composition cannot easily be discerned at first sight. Only a closer analysis reveals the formal structure of the design employed here. Continuous pearl borders divide the body surface into two superposed friezes of roughly equal width. In the upper panel, which occupies the shoulder, the pearl borders branch off to form ogival arches. These contain haloed figures which, to judge by their various attributes, may be saints. In the lower zone the pearl borders intertwine to form five large roundels, each one filled with a hunting or combat scene or, on one occasion, by a human-headed eagle. The spaces in between the roundels are in their turn filled by three superposed friezes with plain borders. These contain epigraphy in the centre and arabesque scrolls, interrupted by a central roundel depicting a bird combat, above and below.

Ewer V.2/2 (pl. 18), like ewers V.2/1 (pl. 17) and V.2/3 (pl. 19), again displays a visual discrepancy between the verticality of its body structure and the horizontality of its decoration. Here, five superposed panels of varying width have been applied. The wide panel below the raised shoulder collar, which contains a continuous royal pageant similar to those on ewers 1, 2 and V.1/1 (pls. 1-2, 10), is followed by a narrow frieze with knotted Kufic. Then comes another wide one with a succession of hunting scenes, each one of which is set within the confines of a body facet. The lower body, finally, is enclosed by a very broad and elongated plane set off below by an additional tiny band. The former contains an elongated arcade. Each one of its arches, which again corresponds to the expanse of a body facet, contains a haloed, probably saintly figure. Below, a tiny animal frieze completes the decoration on the body of ewer V.2/2 (pl. 18).
Interestingly enough, the decorative layout on this piece creates a very tangible visual tension between the horizontal friezes on the upper and central body on the one hand and the verticality of the arcade and the haloed, probably saintly, figures on the other. The beholder of this ewer can sense a clear visual hierarchy between both sections, as the eye is drawn first and foremost to the arcade, perhaps the most significant element of the decorative composition as a whole. It is only subsequently that one perceives the individual elements of the horizontal friezes above.

2.2. The Foot Section

For the ornamentation of the several still original support systems attached to the ewers' lower bodies, certain motifs seem to have been favoured. To start with the foot ridge, it could receive either a braided band (cat. nos. 2, V.1/1, V.1/2; pls. 2, 10-11), a succession of ray-like fillets or herring-bone designs (cat. nos. 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, V.1/7; pls. 5-6, 9, 15, fig. 1), a pearled guilloche (cat. nos. 7, V.1/6(?); pls. 7, 14) or a twisted rope design (cat. no. V.2/3; pl. 19).

The central foot, if decorated, often displays an epigraphic frieze of either Kufic or naskhi. Mainly, the script is set against a floral or scrolling background and interrupted by decorative roundels or medallions (cat. nos. 4-6, V.1/2(?), V.1/3(?); pls. 4-6, 11-12). In one case the epigraphy is confined to a succession of detached individual cartouches (cat. no. V.2/3; pl. 19). Other designs applied to the foot include braided or knotted bands (cat. nos. 7, 9, 10; pls. 7-8, fig. 2) or floral scrollwork and arabesque motifs. The latter are either confined within a network of triangles (cat. nos. 8, V.1/7; fig. 1, pl. 15) or occur as a continuous frieze in free-flowing fashion (cat. nos. 11, V.1/1, V.1/4, V.1/6; pls. 9-10, 13-14). On one occasion, the scrollwork is interrupted by floral roundels (cat. no. 11; pl. 9). Sometimes, the decorative frieze around the central foot is further enhanced by
pearled (cat. nos. 4, 6; pls. 4, 6) or braided (cat. no. V.1/1; pl. 10) borders. On ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3), finally, the foot as such remains undecorated, but a central rosette executed in repoussé occupies its base plate.  

### 2.3. Shoulder Collar

Turning to the shoulder collar, we find again an array of individualistic motifs. Most commonly, floral or vegetal motifs like scrollwork or arabesques, sometimes with intermediate geometric designs (cat. no. 5; pl. 5) or pairs of birds (cat. no. 6; pl. 6), occupy both the scalloped and polygonal shoulder plates (cat. nos. 1, 5, 7[?], 8[?], 10, 11, V.1/4, V.2/3; pls. 1, 5, 7, 9, 13, 19, figs. 1-2). On ewer V.2/2 (pl. 18) both floral and zoomorphic detailing occurs.

On other pieces the petals of the collar display the signs of the zodiac (cat. no. V.1/1; pl. 10) or personifications of the planets (cat. no. V.2/1; pl. 17). In the latter case the figures are set within a continuous network of interconnected quatrefoils formed by pearled borders and set against a geometric background. On ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) small seated figures alternate with complex knot designs, while on ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) revellers and musicians occupy this area. The raised collar of ewer V.1/6 (pl. 14), finally, displays small haloed figures. Only on one occasion is the decoration of the shoulder collar epigraphic (cat. no. 4; pl. 4). It contains the signature of the artist and the date of the ewer’s manufacture in naskhi characters.

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11 This detail can also be observed on several ewers of the "Herati" type; cf. ewer type ICAW 6.
2.4. Neck Base

The neck base often receives the signature of the artist and occasionally additional information such as the name of the patron, the date of the vessel and the place of its execution (cat. nos. 2, 4, 5, V.1/1, V.1/2, V.2/1-3; pls. 2-5, 10-11, 17-19). In other cases it is occupied by benedictory or purely ornamental epigraphy (cat. nos. 7, 10, 11, V.1/6; pls. 7, 9, 14, fig. 2), which can, on occasion, be interrupted by geometric roundels (cat. no. V.1/7; pl. 15).

On ewer 6 (pl. 6) an arcade occupies the neck base. Each arch is filled with either a pair of birds and an arabesque design or a haloed, perhaps saintly figure. The remaining spaces in between the arches are enhanced by floral detailing. On ewer 8 (fig. 1), finally, a system of triangles filled with arabesque designs occurs, recalling the virtually identical frieze around the central foot of this piece.

In addition to the main designs on the neck base, additional enhancement is sometimes achieved by pearled (cat. nos. 4, 5, 8, 10, V.1/7; pls. 4-5, 15, figs. 1-2), meander (cat. no. V.1/2; pl. 11) or zig-zag borders (cat. no. 6; pl. 6), and on one occasion by ray-like fillets in the upper part (cat. no. 4; pl. 4).

2.5. Neck Collar

On ewers where the original neck collar still exists, the latter can display a pearled band (cat. nos. 4, V.2/2; pls. 4, 18), a herring-bone design (cat. nos. 5, 6, V.2/1; pls. 5-6, 17), a geometric interlace (cat. nos. 2 [?], V.2/3; pls. 2, 19) or two superposed rows of silver-inlaid triangles (cat. no. 8; fig. 1).

Ewer V.1/6 (pl. 14) displays a succession of lobed medallions, filled with seated revellers and set against a geometric background, in this area. Finally, the decorative treatment of the neck collar belonging to ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) is unique in
that it displays a design of interlacing stars, containing animal combat scenes, executed in repoussé. 12

2.6. Neck

2.6.1. Sub-group 1

The heterogeneous decorative elements which enhance the ewers’ necks reflect the individuality of the body decoration. As far as the underlying layout is concerned, however, certain conventions seem to prevail. Thus, the necks of ewers belonging to the first typological sub-group generally seem to reflect an artistic predilection for subdividing the surface of the central neck into three superposed zones, with two narrow ones flanking a wide central one (cat. nos. 2, 5-7; pls. 2, 5-7). 13

Again, the motifs chosen to fill this framework vary from piece to piece. Thus, on ewer 2 (pl. 2) a continuous royal enthronement scene is flanked by epigraphic bands. On ewer 5 (pl. 5) two naskhi bands enclose a wide frieze. The latter contains a succession of polylobed figural medallions and small geometric designs, which alternate. The background is filled with arabesque scrollwork, which incidentally corresponds exactly to that found on the wide zone around the central body below.

On the neck of ewer 6 (pl. 6) the central area, which is enclosed by very narrow zig-zag borders, again reflects the decorative layout on the body, and so does that on ewer 8 (fig. 1). Here, however, the borders are made up of narrow pearl strings. On ewer 7 (pl. 7) a tall cursive inscription is flanked by scrolling friezes above and below. The central neck of ewer 3 (pl. 3) displays the signature of

12 The decoration on the neck collars of ewers 3, 7, V.I/1, V.I/3 and V.I/4 (pls. 3, 7, 10, 12-13) could not be discerned from the photographs available to me.
13 Interestingly enough this neck treatment can also be observed on several other ewer types of early Islamic date which most probably originated in Mesopotamia; cf. ewer types MW 3 & MW 4.
the artist and the date of the vessel’s execution, and in addition traces of other erased epigraphy can be observed. On ewer 4 (pl. 4), finally, the entire neck is covered by the same design that envelops the body below.14

On those ewers of the first sub-group where the original mouth section still survives, it is embellished either by a succession of vertically disposed silver fillets (cat. no. 1; pl. 1) or scrollwork (cat. nos. 4, 5; pls. 4-5) - on one occasion (cat. no. 5; pl. 5) interrupted by rosettes and set between pearled borders. On ewer 7 (pl. 7) the area shows a geometric interlace. Finally, the mouth sections on ewers 6 (pl. 6) and 8 (fig. 1) are introduced by an angular ridge enhanced with herring-bone. The central waisted area is enclosed by a narrow pearl band, while a cable-like design runs around its upper part.

2.6.2. Sub-group 2

The neck structure of ewers in the second sub-group of necessity requires a decorative treatment different from those encountered in the first sub-group. The small cylindrical section above the large neck collar seems always to receive epigraphy. As for the bulbous mouldings of the mouth section above, they display either a geometric interlace (cat. nos. V.1/1, V.1/4; pls. 10, 13) or, more commonly, various types of scrollwork, which can on occasion be interlaced (cat. nos. V.1/2, V.1/6, V.1/7, V.1/8(?); pls. 11, 14-16).

In the case of V.1/5 (fig. 3) the scrolls have been executed in repoussé. The waisted area between the mouldings shows either an interlace design (cat. nos. V.1/1(?), V.1/7; pls. 10, 15), a succession of vertically disposed silver fillets (cat. nos. V.1/2, V.1/6; pls. 11, 14), an inscription (cat. no. V.1/4; pl. 13), an animal frieze (cat. no. V.1/5; fig. 3) or scrollwork (cat. no. V.1/8; pl. 16).

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14 In the case of ewer 1 (pl. 1) the neck has been shortened and the section which remains today shows a central naskhi inscription and a scroll, executed in repoussé, above.
2.6.3. Sub-group 3

As for the necks of the three ewers in the third sub-group, they reflect the artistic concept of contrasting the verticality of the body structure with the horizontality of the ornamentation, which we could already observe on the body. Here, as on the necks of ewers belonging to the first sub-group, three superposed zones have been applied.

In the case of ewers V.2/1 (pl. 17) and V.2/3 (pl. 19) the central zone is only slightly wider than the flanking ones, while on ewer V.2/2 (pl. 18) the central area is considerably wider than the friezes above and below. On ewer V.2/1 (pl. 17) the upper and lower zones contain epigraphy interrupted by geometric roundels, while the central one, separated from the latter by pearled borders, shows a succession of interconnected figural quatrefoils set against a geometric background. On ewer V.2/3 (pl. 19) the three friezes, which are detached, display scrollwork and, in the centre, knotted Kufic. The neck of ewer V.2/2 (pl. 18), finally, is occupied by a succession of tall haloed figures (perhaps saints?) in the centre. Each is confined to a facet. Narrow Kufic friezes flank the central composition.

The facets of the mouth section on these pieces receive either geometric roundels (cat. no. V.2/1; pl. 17), cartouches of Kufic (cat. no. V.2/3; pl. 19) or central rosettes and abstract floral motifs set across the joints of the facets (cat. no. V.2/2; pl. 18).

2.7. Handle

On those handles which are still original, all the secondary decorative motifs which occur on the body and neck of the ewers can again be observed. They include geometric interlaces, meander borders, scrolls, zig-zag patterns, pearl bands and herring-bone designs (cat. nos. 4-6, 8, V.1/5-7, V.2/1-3; pls. 4-6, 14-15, 17-19,
On other occasions, handles could apparently remain undecorated (cat. nos. 3, V.1/8[?]; pl. 3, pl. 16).

2.8. Spout

The spout is treated again in a quite heterogeneous fashion. Sometimes it is apparently meant to reflect the decorative style of the body (cat. nos 2[?], 5, 6; pls. 2, 5-6). On other occasions it can receive epigraphy (cat. no. 3; pl. 3), a geometric design (cat. no. 4; pl. 4), pearled bands (cat. no. V.1/6; pl. 14), arabesque or vegetal scrolls (cat. nos. 7, V.1/5; pl. 7, fig. 3), abstracted scroll designs and pearl motifs (cat. no. 8; fig. 1) or indeed a combination of such motifs (cat. nos. V.2/1, V.2/3; pls. 17, 19).

2.9. Summary

It becomes clear from the decorative analysis undertaken above how heterogeneous both the decorative layout and the choice of individual motifs on the individual pieces are. Each ewer displays an astonishing degree of individuality, and it is highly likely that most of the pieces in this group were made according to the specifications of a particular patron. They certainly do not appear to have been mass-produced, like so many of the other ewer types in this thesis, for an anonymous every-day market.

Despite the pieces' individuality with regard to their ornamentation, it does appear that the artists responsible for their enhancement worked with a pool of decorative elements generally popular at the time. Perhaps they even had pattern
books at their disposal, from which they chose a selection of motifs and combined them according to the wishes of the future owner.\(^\text{15}\)

Among the most typical decorative elements applied to ewers of this category are figural medallions or continuous friezes with scenes of courtly life (sometimes out of doors) or genre scenes, planetary (more rarely zodiacal) motifs or Christian imagery. The background is occasionally left plain, but is more typically geometric or made up from arabesque scroll designs. The latter are sometimes interspersed with zoomorphic detailing. Additional motifs employed as borders or on narrow structural sections of the ewer’s body include pearl, guilloche, meander and geometric interlace bands as well as hatching, scrollwork and herring-bone patterns.

3. Origin of Ewer Type

There has been some degree of discussion in the past about the ultimate typological origin of this particular ewer type. The two major poles of opinion, both of which are still found today, are best represented by the statements made some time ago by Ralph Harari and Ernst Kühnel respectively. Harari, in discussing the Blacas ewer (cat. no. V.2/1; pl. 17), pointed out that neither the shape of this object nor the curve of its handle could be paralleled on Persian metal objects.\(^\text{16}\) Kühnel, on the other hand, argued in 1939 that the shape of this ewer type represented the ultimate culmination point of a typological development which originated in Khurāsān with the bronze and brass ewers with precious metal inlay manufactured in and around Herat from the 12th century onwards.\(^\text{17}\) In his opinion the densely faceted variants

\(^{17}\) Cf. ewer type ICAW 6.
of that group preceded the twelve-sided and even the perfectly plain forms encountered on Mesopotamian pieces in the early 13th century.\textsuperscript{18}

Unfortunately, in both cases the opposed viewpoints of the two scholars, which are representative of the views of others who dealt with this subject, were not arrived at as a result of an extensive study of the relevant material evidence. Rather were they purely hypothetical and speculative. This situation prevailed until very recently, when Dr. A. Hagedorn for the first time seriously attempted to assess afresh the validity of either position on the basis of concrete evidence.\textsuperscript{19} As her study is the most comprehensive and accurate to date, I propose to follow her line of inquiry and add, where appropriate, further information and comments which I have been able to collect in addition to the material assembled in her thesis.

To start with an assessment of the alleged Iranian legacy, as put forward by Kühnel and indeed still alluded to much more recently by Melikian-Chirvani,\textsuperscript{20} it has to be conceded that the eastern Iranian ewer type, which the former took to be the typological predecessor of the ewers discussed here, was not only known in the west but has on at least two occasions been shown to have actually been executed there.\textsuperscript{21} However, to judge by the very small number of extant pieces such as these, it appears that they were rather exceptional cases and not, as far as we can assess today, the exponents of a large-scale production in the west aimed at copying and rivalling in brilliance the famous ewers which were exported mainly from the area around Herat during the late 12th and early 13th centuries. In any case there are at present insufficient indices to presume that the aforementioned eastern ewer type was among the standard vessel forms produced in the Jazira and Syria at the

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 169-173, no. 75 for a probably Mesopotamian ewer he attributes to western Iran; cf. also his discussion of ewer 1 (pl. 1) in Paris 1971, p. 102 no. 149.
\textsuperscript{21} Cf. ewers ICAW 6/V.3/14-15; Pope 1938, pls. 1324, 1327; Allan 1985, p. 127.
Consequently, Kühnel's assumption that the Mesopotamian vessels evolved from locally produced ewers of "Herati" profile seems highly unlikely.23

However, even if one is to accept the profile of the ewer type under discussion (with its inverted pear-shaped body, cylindrical neck and obliquely rising, tubular body spout) as indigenous and as having evolved in its own right, it could still be argued that its typological origins lie in Iran. However, there is no evidence at all to uphold such a theory at present. Indeed, there are several indications that make an Iranian origin appear rather unlikely.

Thus, as Allan has pointed out already, there is within the corpus of early Islamic metalwork attributable to Iran no ewer or indeed any other object before the 14th century that can be shown to feature an obliquely rising, tubular body spout.24 Indeed, all the Islamic Iranian metal ewers that have come to my attention so far feature either a round mouth, an abstract horizontal or obliquely rising beak spout issuing from the upper neck, a zoomorphic pouring section or one in the shape of a contemporary oil lamp.25

The situation is slightly different as far as early Islamic pottery production is concerned. In the ceramic medium, body-spouted vessels of varying shape do already occur among the finds from early Islamic Nishāpur, and later, body-spouted ewers feature quite prominently in early 13th-century Kāshān pottery.26 However,

23 Apart from the observations made above, the question arises why a craftsman should have wanted completely to alter the appearance of a widely popular and practical ewer shape such as the one imported from eastern Iran. Indeed, the considerable difference in profile between the two ewer types seems to me to be too profound to suggest any far-reaching typological link between the two. Not only do the body shapes differ - cylindrical and barrel-shaped in one case, inverted pear-shaped in the other - but the neck design is quite individual in both cases. Most importantly, however, both types feature completely different spout concepts, and it is extremely difficult for me to accept the suggestion of a direct evolutionary development from an obliquely rising beak-spout issuing from the upper neck to a narrow tubular body spout rising from the upper body.
24 Allan 1985, p. 133. Of course it may be dangerous to venture such general statements considering the undoubtedly incomplete nature of the material that survives. However, it is certainly notable that body spouts appear to be almost absent from Iranian metal objects datable before the 14th century.
25 Cf. ewer types MW 2, 3 & 4, ICAW 1-6.
the latter objects differ from the metal ewers discussed here in various significant aspects to do with their profile. The vessels from Kāshān are characterized by a globular or elongated body. They feature a different base, a flat handle and a body spout which is bent near the tip rather than straight. In addition, the pottery ewers tend to be considerably smaller in size than the metal ewers in this category.\(^{27}\)

In view of such structural discrepancies between the pottery ewers and the metal vessels it seems certain that the former did not intend to copy the latter, but that they were based on another typological source.\(^{28}\) This observation is highly relevant, because, had the metal ewer type in question here been current and universally popular in Iran at the time, it seems logical that potters would have imitated its characteristic profile too.

Indeed, a precedent for such a direct dependency of pottery ewers on metal prototypes can be pointed out with regard to the most popular type of pouring vessel current in Iran in the 12th/13th centuries, which is characterized by a plain or variously facetted body, a cylindrical neck and an obliquely rising beak-spout.\(^{29}\) Ewers of this type were frequently copied in ceramics and enhanced by all the current decorative techniques at the disposal of the potter at the time.\(^{30}\) To sum up, there is no evidence at present that the ewer type discussed here originated in early Islamic Iran.

Neither can its profile be traced in the admittedly meagre corpus of pre-Islamic vessel forms from that area. Thus, the apparently dominant metal ewer type in late Sasanian times features a pear-shaped body on a high pedestal foot, a waisted neck and a horizontal beak-spout issuing from the mouth. Apart from this type only one example of another, apparently pre-Islamic, Iranian ewer form has come to my notice. This piece is characterized by a horizontally fluted, ovoid body on a high

\(^{27}\) Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 27.
\(^{28}\) Most probably it was Chinese wares that inspired the profile of the Kāshān ewers; cf. ibid.
\(^{29}\) Cf. ewer type ICAW 6.
\(^{30}\) Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 27.
foot, a likewise faceted, waisted neck and a round mouth (fig. 4). Both types show no resemblance to the ewer form discussed here. In particular, they feature yet again completely different spout concepts. Indeed, as far as I have been able to assess, obliquely rising, tubular body spouts do not seem to appear at all among pre-Islamic Iranian pouring vessels in metal or indeed pottery.

If one examines the hypothesis which assumes a western origin for the ewer type in this category, on the other hand, there are many interesting indices that seem to point to that source.

To start again with the spout concept, there are several areas in the Near East where obliquely rising, tubular body spouts can be observed from pre-Islamic times onwards. Thus in Egypt ancient ritual vessels as well as certain Coptic ewers datable to the 5th/6th centuries A.D. feature a body spout, though this is proportionally shorter. Further to the north-west, ancient Palestine also produced various vessel types with an obliquely rising tubular spout, and at least one globular-bodied bronze ewer with body-spout is also known from ancient Cyprus (fig. 5).

The most outstanding region with a long history of body-spouted ewers, however, is Iraq. Here, such vessels can be traced in considerable quantities and in a great variety of body shapes (but most typically with elongated, inverted pear-shaped bodies) since Sumerian times. Most interesting in this context are the silver libation vessels unearthed in the royal tombs of Ur, datable to the 3rd millennium B.C. (fig. 6). These pieces are characterized by narrow and very long,
tubular body spouts which rise at an extremely steep angle. In their appearance they seem immediately to anticipate the spouts encountered on the metal ewers we are concerned with in this category.

In early Islamic times body-spouted vessels are still much in evidence in eastern Mediterranean lands as well as in Mesopotamia, and there are several bronze ewer types with this spout concept which have been tentatively linked with these areas, partly on typological and partly on stylistic grounds. In addition to these pieces an as yet unparalleled metal ewer of rather enigmatic shape has come to light at the late 8th/early 9th-century site of Umm al-Walid, situated to the southeast of Amman.

This piece, datable to the 8th century A.D., is characterized by a globular body resting on three tall legs, a broad and faceted cylindrical neck, and angular looped handle, and, most significantly, yet again by an obliquely rising, tubular body spout, which in this case terminates in a small animal head (fig. 7). Several body-spouted metal ewers may also be attributed, if tentatively, to Fatimid Egypt.

In addition to the evidence provided by metal objects, tubular body spouts can also be observed in the early Islamic pottery of the region. Thus, excavations at Qasr al-Ḥair al-Sharqī brought to light several body-spouted ewers alongside other earthenware vessels, and work at the 8th-century Umayyad residence of Khirbat al-

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36 Cf. ewer types EMW 3-5 and ewers EMW 1/V.1/1 & V.1/2.
37 Geneva 1992/93, p. 13, p. 17 fig. 11.4, p. 18 fig. 14, p. 23. I am most grateful to Dr. James Allan for providing me with this highly interesting piece of information.
38 It is interesting to note in this context that Hagedorn did not find any depictions of body-spouted ewers among the artefacts with figural decoration usually attributed to the Fāṭimid period. This is striking if one assumes such vessels to have been popular in the area at the time. However, many objects executed in precious metal, glass and rock crystal as well as illuminated manuscripts were destroyed or dispersed after the dissolution of the Fāṭimid treasury between 1061 and 1069, and therefore the observation made by Hagedorn may not be as inexplicable as it seems. In any case the aforementioned, probably Fāṭimid, bronze vessels, which might well owe their survival to the fact that they were not of the highest quality, attest to a continuation of body-spouted ewers during that time.
Mafjar also yielded body-spouted pottery objects, though these were sadly fragmented for the most part (fig. 8).  

In addition to the obliquely rising, tubular body spout the ewers in this group are further distinguished by their inverted pear-shaped profile. This in its turn is also indicative of the vessels’ ultimate typological origin. Again, this particular body shape is atypical for early Islamic or pre-Islamic vessel forms from Iran. These tend to display a far-reaching predilection for more or less bulbous, pear-shaped bodies with a clear emphasis on the lower part of the vessel. They do not, as a rule, emphasise the shoulder area, as is the case with the inverted pear-shaped body shape we are concerned with here.

On the other hand, if one turns yet again to the Hellenistic world and the early Islamic Near East, the aforementioned profile occurs quite frequently among the ewer and vase forms current at the time. Most interesting in this context is a 4th-century silver ewer from the famous Water Newton treasure (fig. 9). This piece displays the same body profile as the 13th-century Islamic ewers, apart from the tubular, obliquely rising body spout which is absent here. It also, interestingly enough, has a closely comparable, projecting and profiled mouth section.

Similar observations can be made with regard to a 6th-century silver ewer which was discovered near the Syrian town of Hama and is now preserved in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (fig. 10). This particular piece again displays a closely comparable body profile, and its appearance as a whole (if one is again to ignore the absent body spout) is very similar, too.

As for the early Islamic metalwork associated with the eastern Mediterranean lands, there is at least one early Islamic ewer type connected with that region and

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39 Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 29; Grabar 1978, Vol. 2, p. 159 pl. B no. 16 (B/XI/L9-6/319), p. 131 pl. A1 nos. 15 & 16 (B/1/2-1/23; B/X/W/14); Baramki 1940, p. 101 fig. 15.1, fig. 15.4(?).
40 Kent and Painter 1977, pp. 29-30 no. 26, p. 54 no. 104; cf. also Iliffe 1933, p. 90 fig. 27.
42 WAG no. 57-645; h. 24 cm; cf. Dodd 1973, pp. 7, 9; Diehl 1926, pp. 107-8, pl. XXVIII; Baltimore 1947, p. 88, pl. LII no. 398.
undoubtedly based on Hellenistic prototypes, which features an inverted pear-shaped body profile too.43

In view of the considerations put forward above it seems justifiable to regard both the spout and the body profile of ewers in this category as derived from certain vessel forms current in the eastern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia and other areas of the Hellenistic world long before the advent of Islam. In addition, yet another feature, which can be observed on at least some of the pieces discussed here, most probably stems from those very same sources.

The detail in question is the wide concave facetting applied to ewers V.2/1-3 (pls. 17-19).44 The facetting of a metal object's surface had become a well established and widely-practised fashion in the Hellenistic world by the 5th century A.D. It continued right up to the advent of Islam, and today, pieces like the famous 4th/5th-century "Pelegrina" ewer (fig. 11) or the eight-sided, 6th/7th-century silver ewer from Malaja Perestshepina (fig. 12) attest to the great inventiveness with which this technique was applied.45

Most interesting in this context, however, is one particular, late antique bronze oinochoe, found in Predotto Cividale near Trieste in northern Italy (fig. 13).46 This piece, which incidentally belongs to a vessel type that was perpetuated in early Islamic metalwork,47 is characterized by an inverted pear-shaped body with wide, slightly concave facets - a body treatment remarkably similar to that of the ewers discussed here.

43 Cf. ewer type EMW 1.
44 Kühnel apparently considered the concave-facetted variants of this type as derivatives of a group of likewise facetted, cylindrical-bodied ewers with beak-spouts, which were popular in eastern Iran at the time. Although, strictly speaking, this possibility cannot be discounted altogether, it seems unlikely. After all, if the Mesopotamian metalworkers did copy the eastern ewers or aspects of their appearance such as the facetting, one would expect to see the other types of facetting (convex ribbing; alternately triangular and convex facets), which occur on other exponents of the eastern ewer type, on the western pieces as well; cf. Kühnel 1939, pp. 15-6.
45 Cf. Skelton 1981, pp. 42-3, p. 83 no. 17, pl. 31; Matzulevitch 1929, p. 6 no. 9, pp. 83-5. Incidentally, the visual impact of the facetting on the latter piece is closely comparable to that encountered on ewers V.2/1-3 (pls. 17-19) in this category.
46 Richards 1980, pl. 59.
47 Cf. ewer type EMW 1.
All the aforementioned comparative objects are related to the metal ewers under discussion either because of the identical spout concept, the body profile, the style of facetting or indeed a combination of one or the other of these features. However, there exists in addition at least one pottery ewer which seems immediately to anticipate the profile of the Islamic pieces as a whole.

This object was apparently found in the Armenian Garden in Jerusalem and has been dated to the period between the late 8th and the 10th century (fig. 14).48 Finally, other vessels of virtually identical shape, characterized by a bulbous and inverted pear-shaped body, a cylindrical neck and a tubular body-spout, come from 11th/12th-century Azerbaidjān (fig. 15).49

Apart from the material evidence collected here with regard to the origin of the ewer type in this category, there are certain secondary clues which suggest that the latter was indeed current in the Near East before the 13th century. Thus, according to Hagedorn, a Coptic gospel executed in Damietta in 1180 contains the depiction of a ewer which closely resembles the ewer type investigated here owing to its inverted pear-shaped body profile (though this is slightly more elongated), its handle design with thumbpiece and its straight tubular spout (fig. 16).50

The existence of this particular piece of evidence is of great importance, as it provides dated proof that body-spouted ewers were undoubtedly used in the Near East slightly before the years to which we usually ascribe the first extant metal examples.51 Slightly later, similar ewer profiles can again be observed in mainly 13th-century Arab miniature painting. Here they appear alongside vase shapes inspired by classical forms, spoutless ewers and those of "Kāshāni" type with curved spout (fig. 17).52

48 Friedman 1975, p. 45 fig. 61.
49 Yessen 1959, p. 135 no. 73.
51 Ibid.
52 Op. cit., p. 29; for such depictions cf. Paris, Bibl. Nat. arabe 3929, fol. 84 (late 12th/early 13th century; Paris, Bibl. Nat. arabe 6094 fol. 55v (Syria (?), first quarter of the 13th century); London, Brit. Lib. Or. Add. 22114 fols. 49, 96, 119 (Syria, ca. 14th century); Paris, Bibl. Nat. arabe 5847, fol. 86r (executed by al-Wāṣīṭī probably in Baghdad, 1237); London, Brit. Lib. Or. 1200, fol. 87r (dated 1256). All these examples can be viewed on the
In view of the considerations put forward above, it appears that the profile of this ewer type owes nothing to Iranian influence. Rather was it an indigenous form which was probably developed in the lands of the eastern Mediterranean and/or Mesopotamia, to judge by its typological links with vessel forms current in those regions before the advent of Islam. Although we do not know exactly when the ewer type was first manufactured, we can assume that it occurred sometime during the early Islamic period, but certainly well before the late 12th/early 13th century.53

4. Provenance and Date

In this typological category, unlike all the other ewer groups assembled in this thesis, the dating and attribution of the individual objects is often facilitated or indeed provided in full by epigraphic evidence found among the rich ornamentation of the vessels in question. In the comparatively few cases where such immediate clues are not present, a stylistic comparison of the vessels' decoration with other contemporary artefacts from all media can generally provide firm guidelines in this respect.

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53 Allan, in dealing with one of the ewers in this group (cat. no. V.1/5; fig. 3), assumed that its profile was developed during Fatimid times, as - according to him - body-spouted metal ewers are not found in Iran or Iraq in early Islamic times. However, in view of the evidence presented above, this hypothesis may need reviewing. In this context it is also worth recalling that there are at least two early Islamic bronze ewers with facetted, inverted pear-shaped body and obliquely rising body spout, which seem to predate the Fāṭimid period and which may have been executed in Mesopotamia or the regions immediately adjacent to it; cf. ewer type EMW 1, cat. nos. V.1/1 and V.1/2; cf. Allan 1982a, p. 57; Allan 1985, p. 133.
4.1. Sub-group 1

Ewer 1 (pl. 1) was executed, according to the Kufic inscription on the ewer’s shoulder, by Ibrahīm ibn Mawāliyā, perhaps a craftsman of Aramaic origin to judge by his patronym. Its provenance and dating are unknown. Both aspects have been examined by D. S. Rice, who was the first and in fact the only scholar dealing with this object in painstaking detail. According to him, several features of the ewer justify a dating around the late 12th or early 13th century.

Starting on a technical note, Rice regarded the presence of copper inlay as an archaic feature which went out of fashion around the mid 13th century. As for the succession of vertically disposed copper and silver fillets on the mouth section, they can be paralleled in similar fashion on the foot of a probably 12th-century bucket from Iran.

Turning to the main decorative elements on the ewer, Rice pointed out that the guilloche borders represented again a comparatively early feature which tended to disappear by the 13th century A.D. As for the main figural friezes on the upper and lower body, the processional theme on the shoulder and the succession of polo players just above the foot are among the oldest examples of their kind in

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54 Rice 1953 (II), p. 73.
55 Op. cit., pp. 78-9; Rice 1958, p. 250. This dating is still accepted in Paris 1971, p. 102 no. 149.
56 Rice 1953 (II), p. 78.
57 Op. cit., p. 79. As for the repoussé technique employed for the scroll below the mouth section of the ewer, it reminded Rice of a group of 12th/13th-century ewers and candlesticks from eastern Iran, an area where repoussé ornamentation was one of the most striking decorative features. However, this comparison is really without true value as far as establishing the ewer's date is concerned. The repoussé technique was by no means exclusive to Iranian metalwork at that time. Indeed, it had been widely used in the Hellenistic and Sasanian world long before the advent of Islam and continued to be popular on later Byzantine and Islamic silverware, both of which pre-date the 12th/13th-century Iranian pieces referred to by him. Consequently, the inspiration for the repoussé scroll on the ewer's upper neck could have come from different contemporary or earlier sources. In addition, the type of repoussé scroll as such cannot, to my knowledge, be paralleled on Iranian pieces either; cf. Rice 1953 (II), p. 78.
Islamic metalwork as a whole.\textsuperscript{59} Both subjects can be compared to probably 12th-century stucco decoration and also appear in similar fashion in 13th-century Arab miniature painting.

Thus, to start with the royal pageant, a very similar scene can be found on a stucco revetment from Rayy, inscribed with the name of Tughril Bey II, who died in 1195.\textsuperscript{60} In miniature painting, the early 13th-century images of the \textit{Kitab al-Aghani} provide stylistically comparable ruler imagery, while certain contemporary Arabic treatises on veterinary and medical sciences reveal similar depictions of horses, mules and their equipment.\textsuperscript{61}

The rather peculiar style of scrollwork which underlies the entire royal audience scene also calls for some comment. Interestingly enough, scrolls with the same linear quality, as far as the tendrils are concerned, and a similar degree of density can be observed on a late 12th/early 13th-century ewer of eastern Iranian origin.\textsuperscript{62} The theme of polo, which appears on the lower body, apparently entered the decorative repertoire of Islamic metalwork and other media some time in the second half of the 12th century.\textsuperscript{63} Thus, it appears for example on a group of 13th-century monochrome glazed jars and on late 12th/early 13th-century overglaze painted polychrome pottery.\textsuperscript{64}

One further figural zone can be observed above the polo scene. It consists of ogival cartouches which contain various garden and genre scenes. The cartouches, which can be observed in similar fashion on other contemporary metal objects\textsuperscript{65}, recall architectural decoration. Thus, after the 11th century, this motif appears, in several variations, for example in Iran. Here, it is either executed in stucco or

\textsuperscript{60} Pope 1938, pl. 517.
\textsuperscript{61} Rice 1953 (II), pp. 75-6.
\textsuperscript{62} Cf. ewer ICAW 6/V.2/12.
\textsuperscript{63} Baer 1983, p. 238.
\textsuperscript{65} In contemporary metalwork similar cartouches, though here with plain rather than guilloche borders, can be found for example on a probably early 13th-century bronze bucket from Iran; cf. Pal 1973, p. 299 no. 300.
brick, or it can be carved in stone.\textsuperscript{66} In northern Mesopotamia the design occurs only once, on the stucco lintel of a door in the Christian-Chaldaen church of Mar Shemūn in Mosul.\textsuperscript{67}

The scenes contained within the arched compartments on the ewer’s body most probably draw their inspiration again from contemporary miniature painting. While it is difficult to match the figural scenes with directly comparable images in early 13th-century book painting, certain secondary iconographical details that surround the main figures can indeed be found there.

Thus, one of the trees which form the backdrop for the action in the foreground of one of the niches (fig. 18)\textsuperscript{68}, with large globular fruits at the end of its branches and its spiky leaves, is identical in execution to a slightly more shrub-like plant found in the 35th miniature illustrating the romance of Warqa and Gulshah, and executed in the late 12th or early 13th century. The bush is placed to the left of the two protagonists, who say farewell as Warqa prepares to leave for Yemen (fig. 19).\textsuperscript{69}

Yet another plant of similar appearance can be found in a miniature which depicts three medical plants. It belongs to Ghāzi’s \textit{Mufid al-Khass} and was executed around 1200 A.D.\textsuperscript{70} Interestingly enough, the more naturalistic tree and the thin linear plants with round protrusions which appear in some of the other figural cartouches on the ewer’s body seem to be anticipated stylistically by the sketch of a tree found on a late 9th- or early 10th-century paper fragment found in the Fayyūm in Egypt (fig. 21).\textsuperscript{71}

In view of the stylistic parallels put forward in considering the decoration of ewer 1 (pl. 1), it becomes obvious that none of them suffice to date the vessel with accuracy. They only confirm the general chronological setting already suggested by

\textsuperscript{66} Cf. Pope 1938, pl. 523 for similar decorative arcading in the \textit{Masjid-i Jamī} in Qazvīn, executed in 1116.
\textsuperscript{67} Aga-Oglu 1945, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{68} Rice 1953 (II), pl. XXb.
\textsuperscript{69} Daneshvari 1986a, p. 59 fig. 36.
\textsuperscript{70} Pope 1938, pl. 814A.
\textsuperscript{71} Rice 1959, pl. 1c.
Rice, i. e. the late 12th or early 13th century. However, quite apart from the stylistic evidence provided by the ewer’s decoration, there are certain historical circumstances surrounding the maker of this piece which help to narrow down the ewer’s date. They also help one to speculate about the location of Ibrahīm ibn Mawāliya’s workshop.

In 1220 a small brass box, now preserved in the Benaki Museum, was signed by its engraver Iṣma‘īl ibn Ward. In addition to his name the artist further identified himself as "the pupil of Ibrahīm ibn Mawāliya al-Mawṣili". 72 Twelve years later, in 1232 A.D., another artist named Qāsim ibn ‘Alī signed a brass ewer, again referring to himself as a ghulām, i.e. an apprentice, of Ibrahīm ibn Mawāliya. In view of these two inscriptions Rice argued that Ibrahīm ibn Mawāliya had probably been an established master craftsman for some time and was a man of middle age, when Iṣma‘īl, perhaps under his supervision, worked the small brass box in 1220. Moreover, Ibrahīm was probably still alive when Qāsim completed his ewer in 1232.

In following Rice’s train of thought it seems likely, then, that Ibrahīm established his workshop towards the late 12th century and was probably not only alive but still active in 1232. 73 His ewer was undoubtedly produced in that period and probably around the beginning rather than towards the end of that time-span.

As for the location of Ibrahīm’s workshop Rice took the artist’s probably Aramaic patronym as an indication that he was probably a member of one of the non-Muslim communities in Mosul, which had always formed a notable proportion of the local population there. 74 There may be some circumstantial evidence to consolidate Rice’s assumption.

We know that one of Ibrahīm’s apprentices, Iṣma‘īl ibn Ward, could still be found in Mosul in 1249, when he presented a handwritten copy of the Masābih al-

suma by al-Baghawi, a collection of religious traditions, to a local assembly of theologians for examination.\textsuperscript{75}

Ewer 2 (pl. 2) is next in line chronologically, and in this case both the artist and the date are known: the vessel was decorated by Ah\madas\dhak\i
t-
Mawsili\i in 1223 A.D.\textsuperscript{76} Unfortunately, however, the place of the ewer’s manufacture is not mentioned. Consequently, its provenance is again open to some degree of speculation. Rice, who published a detailed study of the vessel’s decorative techniques, style and iconography, suggested an attribution to northern Mesopotamia. He particularly favoured Diy\ârbak\i\r or one of the other major towns within the confines of the Artuqid realm at the time as the most likely locations of Ah\madas’s workshop.\textsuperscript{77}

His assumption was based mainly on the discovery of a graffito incised on the inside of a candlestick executed by Ah\madas’s pupil Ibn Jaldak in 1225. This crude inscription names al-Malik al-Mas\u\uidd as its owner, a man whom Rice identified as almost certainly the last Artuqid ruler of Diy\ârbak\i\r and Hisn Kaif\u.\textsuperscript{78} In fact Rice’s argument is somewhat shaky, as the inscription, which forms his only piece of evidence, is not part of the original decoration on the candlestick. It may therefore have been added at any time after its completion, when it had reached the ruler’s store rooms either through trade or even through looting.

In view of such criticism it is probably safest to attribute ewer 2 (pl. 2) to northern Mesopotamia in general and leave its precise attribution to one of the major metalworking centres in the area, like Mosul or indeed Diy\ârbak\i\r, to future research.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{75} James 1980, pp. 318-321. Melikian-Chirvani is more cautious regarding the provenance of ewer 1 (pl. 1). He attributes the vessel to northern Iraq with a question mark and proceeds to emphasise its Khur\uas\uani\i links with regard to its decorative style. He considers the ewer as a link between the metalwork production of Khur\uas\uani and that of the Arab Near East; cf. Paris 1971, p. 102 no. 149; Paris 1977, p. 99 no. 153.
\textsuperscript{76} London 1976, pp. 178-9 no. 195.
\textsuperscript{77} Rice 1957, p. 320; Rice 1949, pp. 339-40.
\textsuperscript{78} Rice 1957, p. 319.
\textsuperscript{79} There is indeed evidence that Diy\ârbak\i\r was an active and probably significant metalworking centre at the time. Thus al-Jaz\uari, who was in the service of the Artuqids during the last years of the 12th and the first two decades of the 13th century, informs us
Ewer 3 (pl. 3) was produced by Iyās the ghulām of 'Abd al-Karīm ibn al-Turābī al-Mawṣili in 1229. This vessel is of far lesser quality than the majority of other pieces in this category, especially as far as its decoration is concerned. Human and animal figures are absent, and the decorative layout is confined to two superposed horizontal zones on the upper body, filled with epigraphy and a valance design respectively.

It is likely, as Rice has suggested already, that this vessel is a comparatively rare example of the more mundane versions of its type, designed to meet the demands of ordinary customers frequenting the bazaars of Mesopotamia and Syria at the time. Again, nothing is known about the location of Iyās’s or rather 'Abd al-Karīm’s workshop, and the decorative style found on the ewer is on the whole too general to reveal any conclusive evidence in that respect.

However, it may be significant that the type of arabesque valance encountered in the second decorative zone seems to be strikingly similar to the interlaced scroll frame which encloses a frontispiece to one of the volumes of the Kitāb al-Aghāni by Abū'l-Faraj al-Īsfahānī. This miniature, which shows a mounted royal falconer, was executed in Mosul in 1219 (fig. 22). However, further research will be necessary to confirm an attribution to Mosul, and until then northern Mesopotamia in general has to be considered as the area of the ewer’s origin.

Ewer 4 (pl. 4) was executed in 1232 by Qāsim ibn 'Ali, the aforementioned apprentice of Ibrahīm ibn Mawāliyā who, it will be recalled, signed himself as that he executed a cast brass door with elaborate ornamentation for the royal palace in Diyarbakr. As the production of such a large-scale object undoubtedly required a body of participating craftsmen, it can be assumed that a metalworking infrastructure of some sort must have existed in the city at the time; cf. Wiedemann and Hauser 1921, pp. 213-232. It is interesting to note in this context that the nīsha “al-Turābī”, according to the 12th-century writer Samānī, was used by certain inhabitants of Merv in Central Asia, most of them involved in commerce. In this case the nīsha “al-Mawṣili” probably belongs to 'Abd al-Karīm, and that of “al-Turābī” to his father, who may thus have been a descendant of one of the merchant families from Merv. If that is so, we may have here one instance in which a person of eastern Iranian descent was involved in the metalworking industry of 13th-century Mesopotamia; cf. Rice 1953 (III), p. 230.

81 Rice 1953 (III), pp. 229-232.
82 Louisiana 1987, p. 88 no. 99, pl. on p. 22.
responsible for the embellishment of ewer 1 (pl. 1) around the turn of the 13th century. Interestingly enough, ewer 4 (pl. 4) was made to order. It was worked, according to an inscription on the neck, for a court official named Shihāb al-Dīn, who was in the service of a ruler with the titles of al-Malik al-'Aẓīz.83

Rice, who again dealt with this piece in some detail, suggested that the amīr in question may be identified as Shihāb al-Dīn Tughril al-'Aẓīzī. This official, who was of Turkish descent, served as the regent of the Ayyūbid sultan al-Malik al-'Aẓīz Ghiyāth al-Dīn. The latter officially ruled Aleppo between 1216 and 1237.84 However, as he was still a child during the first years of his rule, Shihāb al-Dīn was chosen as his representative and ruled in his name until the sultan’s coming of age in 1232.

Thus, ewer 4 (pl. 4) was executed in the year of the Ayyūbid ruler’s assumption of de facto rule and in fact only one year before Shihāb al-Dīn’s death in 1233.85 These historical facts are not only interesting in that they provide a concrete backdrop for this particular piece. They may also help one to speculate about its provenance. Unlike some of his other colleagues, whom we have mentioned above, Qāsim may well have pursued his trade in Syria, perhaps even in Aleppo itself, where after all his patron is known to have resided.86

The next ewer in this sub-group (cat. no. 5; pl. 5) was made by Yūnus ibn Yūsuf al-Mawsīlī in 1246. Again, this object is difficult to place exactly from a geographical point of view, and a detailed iconographic analysis will probably be the most fruitful way eventually to tip the balance in favour of a Mesopotamian, Syrian or perhaps even Egyptian provenance.87

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83 Atil 1985, p. 120.
84 Rice 1953 (II), p. 68.
85 Atil 1985, p. 120.
86 Ibid.; Rice 1953 (II), p. 68. If the ewer’s attribution to Syria proves to be correct, this vessel would be the earliest dated inlaid brass object from that area; cf. Rice 1957, p. 324. On the other hand it has to mentioned here that Rice compared the medallions on the ewer’s body to similar ones on a tray executed in Mosul for Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’, the ruling atabeg of that town; cf. Rice 1950, p. 633; Rice 1953 (II), p. 66 note 5.
87 During a rather preliminary discussion of this ewer Ettinghausen assumed an origin from Mesopotamia; cf. Ettinghausen 1966, p. 467.
A preliminary glance at the ewer's decorative characteristics seems to suggest a Syrian provenance. Thus, the artistic convention of creating a network of horizontal bands by means of thin plain borders and placing polylobed figural medallions, which develop from the latter, within those zones, can be observed in similar fashion on a basin executed for the sultan al-Malik al-Sālih Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb in Syria around the year 1240.88

As far as the style of the decoration as a whole is concerned, the general appearance of the central zone can be compared quite closely to a similar frieze on the 13th-century bowl part (the stem is later) of the famous "Fano" cup, attributed to Egypt or Syria and today housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.89 Here, the decorative scheme of figural polygonal medallions interconnected by geometric roundels and set against an arabesque scroll background encountered on ewer 5 (pl. 5) recurs in closely comparable fashion.

The remaining ewers of sub-group 1 are undated and unprovenanced. Ewer 6 (pl. 6), the only vessel in this category to survive with its matching basin, was executed by 'Alī ibn 'Abdallāh al-'Alawī al-Mawsīf. It has been attributed by its curators to Mesopotamia or Mosul and dated to ca. 1235 A.D.90 Unfortunately, however, this attribution was not based on an analytical study and therefore has to be treated with caution. Rice, in dealing with this ewer, suggested that it revealed many characteristics of Syro-Egyptian metalwork datable to the latter half of the 13th century.91

In 1989 Eva Baer dealt with the Berlin ewer in conjunction with her study on Ayyūbid metalwork with Christian images.92 She considered details like the

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88 Atil 1975, pp. 64-8 no. 27.
90 Celle 1947, no. 98, pl. VIII. Kühl put forward a dating around 1255 A.D. for this piece; cf. Kühl 1939, p. 13.
91 Rice 1953 (III), p. 232; Baer also accepts a dating to the second half of the 13th century: Baer 1989, p. 15. Fehérvári, in dealing with an incense burner executed for the Ayyūbid sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil al-ʿAdil II (1238-40), pointed out that the animal friezes on this object, which he considers as Syrian in style, can be paralleled stylistically on the Berlin ewer discussed here and its basin; cf. Fehérvári 1968, pp. 49-50.
borders of narrow triangles, the animal friezes, the duck scrolls, the imaginary creatures and of course the arcing with saintly figures on the ewer’s neck base as indices for a Syrian provenance, and she proceeds to attribute the vessel to a Syrian workshop active in the second half of the 13th century, if not towards its end.93

Ewer 7 (pl. 7) is unsigned and thus does not provide any direct clues as to its master, dating or provenance. If one is to judge merely by its body profile and the style of its decoration, a 13th-century dating and an attribution to either Mesopotamia or Syria seems feasible. However, only a detailed iconographic study of this piece can ultimately justify this preliminary suggestion.94

As for ewer 8 (fig. 1), its decorative layout shows certain similarities to that encountered on ewer 6 (pl. 6), if one is to exclude the geometric rather than floral background. Moreover, large medallions with frontally enthroned ruler figures appear again in very similar fashion on the basin associated with ewer 6 (fig. 6).95

Apart from the latter pieces, which have been dated tentatively to late 13th-century Syria, other stylistically comparable pieces include a probably 13th-century candlestick from northern Mesopotamia or northern Syria, now in the Keir collection, and a brass pencase attributed to late 13th-century Syria or the Jazīra.96

The decoration on the body of ewer 9 (pl. 8) in principle recalls that on ewer 3 (pl. 3) with its epigraphic panel, here interrupted by large figural roundels above and its valance design below. Here, however, an additional, narrow Kufic band interrupted by geometric interlace roundels occupies the lower body. The decorative restraint exercised on this ewer is in stark contrast to the all in all more elaborate

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93 Op. cit., p. 22. It is interesting to note in this context that a parallel for the heraldically arranged waq-waq design, i. e. a composition of animal scrolls arranged around a central rosette, found on the Berlin ewer occurs on a candlestick executed in 1269/70 by Muḥammad ibn Ḥassan al-Mawsī; cf. Baer 1989, p. 23 note 67; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, p. 4, fig. 19.
94 Geneva 1985, no. 281; Welch 1972, p. 204, Metal 17. The medallions with zodiacal signs, which occur on the central body, are unusual in 13th-century metalwork from Mesopotamia and Syria. However, a similar zodiacal cycle, again set against an arabesque background, occurs on a 13th-century penbox attributed to Mosul and now housed in the British Museum in London; cf. Ward 1993, p. 83, fig. 62.
96 Fehérvári 1976, pl. 41b; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, p. 12, fig. 83; Louisiana 1987, p. 91 no. 124, photo on p. 27.
vessels in this group. However, there are other objects which reveal the same artistic trend, such as for example a mid-13th-century brass candlestick from Syria.97

Interestingly enough, the latter piece also reveals a stylized plaited band around the base and a virtually identical geometric interlace roundel, again interrupting a decorative band, on the projecting section surmounting the shaft. In addition, a very similar epigraphic frieze, also interspersed with figural roundels, and a virtually identical type of valance can be found on a Syrian brass basin, probably executed between 1240 and 1260 (fig. 23).98 In view of the two comparable objects discussed before, it seems feasible to suggest that this ewer, too, may originate in mid-13th-century Syria.99

The rich and unusually complex decoration on ewer 10 (fig. 2) can be compared stylistically to that on ewer V.1/1 (pl. 10). The latter vessel discloses the same decorative concept of creating the framework, which underlies the decoration, by means of continuous beaded borders. At the same time, ewer V.1/1 (pl. 10) also displays a stylistically closely related background treatment of arabesque scrolls.100 Another comparison can be drawn between ewer 10 (fig. 2) and a brass vase executed for the Ayyūbid sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣaḥāb al-Dīn Yūṣuf, who ruled Aleppo between 1237 and 1260.101 This piece also shows narrow dotted borders, a similar scrolling ground in the epigraphic bands and comparable roundels with combatant birds.102

Ewer 11 (pl. 9), finally, has been attributed to Iraq and dated to around 1230 A.D. However, a closer examination of the decorative style found on this piece immediately negates that attribution. In fact, the arcading with polylobed arches and

97 Louisiana 1987, p. 90 no. 114.
98 Allan 1982a, p. 76 no. 12. Incidentally, the decorative layout on this basin also leaves a considerable amount of surface undecorated.
99 This attribution has in fact already been suggested by the museum curators responsible for this piece; cf. Berlin 1986, p. 95 no. 144.
100 Sotheby’s 12.4.89, pp. 9-10 lot 62.
102 Sotheby’s 12.4.89, p. 9.
elongated figures wearing flat caps and haloes, the abstract style of scrollwork that surrounds the figures, the intermediate geometric roundels and the interlaced arabesque scrolls on the foot can all be paralleled in virtually identical fashion on a raised brass ewer fragment attributed to 14th-century Fars (fig. 24). In addition, the succession of large epigraphic cartouches and figural medallions and the style of geometric background encountered on ewer 11 (pl. 9) occur again on certain 14th-century Iranian basins, which might, at least in part, also originate from Fars.

4.2. Sub-group 2

Ewer V.1/1 (pl. 10) was executed in 1226 by Abū Bakr ’Umar ibn Hajji Jaldak, the apprentice of Ahmad al-Dhakī al-Mawsīlī, who in his turn signed himself as responsible for the adornment of ewer 2 (pl. 2). As for the provenance of ewer V.1/1 (pl. 10) Rice suggested an origin from one of the major cities within the Artuqid realm. Other scholars dealing with this piece, on the other hand, seem to consider Syria as another possible region from which the vessel might have come. Again, only a detailed iconographic study of this piece can ultimately determine the ewer’s provenance.

Ewer V.1/2 (pl. 11) is signed by ’Alī ibn Ḥamūd al-Mawsīlī, who worked the vessel for a Mamluk amīr named Atmīsh al-Sa’dī in 1274 A.D. Considering the identity of the ewer’s patron, it seems most likely that the artist was working either in Syria or Egypt at the time, a suggestion certainly supported by the

104 Cf. Atil 1985, p. 159, figs. 56-7, 87; Qaddumi 1987, p. 146 no. LNS 116 M.
107 Atil 1985, p. 121 fig. 48; Dimand 1928/9, p. 103. Interestingly enough in this context, the decorative style on ewer V.1/1 (pl. 10) has been compared by Fehérvári to a cylindrical casket executed for the Ayyūbid al-‘Adīl II, who reigned Syria and Egypt from 1238 to 1240; cf. Fehérvári 1968, p. 51.
108 Aga-Oglo 1945, p. 35; Rice 1953 (III), pp. 231-2, no. 9.
vessel’s decorative style with its large-scale epigraphy, its polylobed figural medallions and the lively arabesque scroll background.

Ewer V.1/3 (pl. 12) was completed only one year after the preceding piece, i.e. in 1275. Its maker, ’Alī ibn Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Mawṣilī, signs himself as responsible for the vessel’s decoration on the neck. He further declares in this inscription that the ewer was executed in Cairo for his patron al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf I, the Rasūlid ruler of Yemen from 1250 to 1295. All these details are highly relevant. Firstly, they provide clear evidence for the ewer’s geographical and chronological setting. At the same time they also bear witness to the fact that ewers of this type inlaid with precious metal were not only executed for a local clientele of high rank, but were also deemed highly desirable by rich and powerful customers from far afield.

Ewer V.1/4 (pl. 13) does not reveal the identity of its maker. However, yet again its patron is referred to by an array of honorific titles. The latter identify him as al-Malik al-Kāmil Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad, the Ayyūbid sultan who ruled Egypt from 1218 to 1238. He also exerted control over Syria for some time in 1238, and during this brief period he resided in Damascus. In view of this information it seems likely that the ewer was executed somewhere in the lands under the sultan’s rule, with Egypt probably being the most likely location.

Ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) has been discussed extensively by Allan in 1982. An inscription on the rim of the neck names one ‘Abd al-Rahmān, without, however, specifying whether he was involved in the execution of the ewer in any way or what other role he might have had with regard to the vessel. The owner of the ewer, on the other hand, is named on the shoulder. He is al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Mu’izz al-Dīn Mahmūd ibn Sanjar Shāh, the atabeg who ruled in parts of the Jazira between 1208

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111 Aga-Oglu 1930, p. 27.
112 Unfortunately, the quality of the only published photograph of ewer V.1/4 (pl. 13) is too bad to allow any comments regarding its decorative features or comparisons with other contemporary artefacts from Syria and Egypt. It is to be hoped that clearer images of the piece are made available in the future to enable a more detailed study to take place.
and ca. 1250 and probably, according to Allan, had his capital in the city of Jazira ibn 'Umar north-west of Mosul, today known as Çizre.\textsuperscript{113}

Allan, in speculating about the ewer’s provenance, argued that, although the latter might theoretically come from Mu’izz al-Din’s capital, certain stylistic peculiarities in the vessel’s decoration seemed to support an attribution to Mosul, the major metalworking centre in the Jazira at the time.\textsuperscript{114} Thus, Allan referred to certain stylistic parallels (which he found striking) between the decoration of ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) and that on the ewer executed by Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya perhaps in Mosul towards the end of the 12th century (cat. no. 1; pl. 1).

Firstly, he saw a link between both pieces because of the repoussé bands around their necks which cannot be found on any other early 13th-century ewers of the group. Furthermore he argued that both ewers combine decorative areas set against a plain background with others which are set against a densely ornamented ground, a decorative scheme not commonly found on contemporary Mesopotamian metalwork. Finally, Allan saw a stylistic parallel between the diamond-shaped areas springing from the central medallions on ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) and the triangular areas between the top of the arches on Ibrahim’s ewer. On the basis of such observations Allan suggested that ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) was not only executed in early 13th-century Mosul, but was in fact also a product of Ibrahim’s workshop.\textsuperscript{115}

The epigraphy on ewer V.1/6 (pl. 14) is of exclusively benedictory nature, and consequently other aspects of the vessel’s decoration must be considered in an attempt to establish its provenance and date. Unfortunately, the ornamentation is quite worn and can thus offer only limited stylistic and iconographic information.

\textsuperscript{113} Allan 1982a, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} Allan 1982a, pp. 56-7. In my opinion Allan’s hypothesis is rather bold, particularly as there is, strictly speaking, only circumstantial evidence for the attribution of Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya’s workshop to Mosul in the first place. Consequently, it is dangerous to base the attribution of ewer V.1/5 (fig. 3) only on the evidence provided by ewer 1 (pl. 1). Moreover, it seems to me that the stylistic similarities pointed out by Allan are not in fact striking enough to suggest a direct link between the pieces. At best, they may suffice to suggest a common provenance from Mesopotamia, but a more concrete attribution would, I believe, have to be based on a still more detailed analysis of the ewer in question.
However, the combination of a rather striking type of geometric background with polylobed figural medallions and knotted Kufic can be paralleled for example on a pencase attributed to mid-13th-century Syria. The most revealing aspects of the ewer’s decoration, however, are the large frieze with Christian figures on the shoulder and the individual Christian personages confined to the raised petals of the shoulder collar.

The costumes of these figures, according to Melikian-Chirvani, are characteristic of Syria and northern Iraq. Baer, who dealt with this ewer in conjunction with other 13th-century metal objects characterized by Christian imagery, attributed the ewer, probably rightly, to a Syrian workshop active during the second half of the 13th century.

Ewer V.1/7 (pl. 15) has been attributed to late 13th-century Syria or Egypt by Scerrato. His attribution is probably correct to judge by its stylistic similarities to the greatest piece executed in those regions at the time: the famous "Baptistère de St. Louis", worked by Muḥammad ibn al-Zayn in Egypt or Syria around the beginning of the 14th century. Stylistic comparisons can also be drawn between ewer V.1/7 (pl. 15) and yet another contemporary basin which is again signed by Muhammad ibn al-Zayn.

As for ewer V.1/8 (pl. 16), the only published photograph of this piece is not detailed enough to allow any concrete comments with regard to its date and provenance. Consequently, the suggested attribution to mid-13th-century Iraq has to be accepted at face value for the time being.

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117 Paris 1971, pp. 107-8 no. 158.
118 Baer 1989, pp. 15-16, 22.
119 Scerrato 1966, pp. 120-121 nos. 53-4, figs. 53-4; Paris 1977, p. 141 no. 274.
120 Paris 1977, p. 138 no. 263.
121 Stockholm 1985, p. 130 no. 22.
4.3. Sub-group 3

Turning to the third sub-group in this category, ewer V.2/1 (pl. 17) - the Blacas Ewer - is undoubtedly the most important piece in the entire group and one of the key objects in Islamic metalwork as a whole. Its significance lies again in the historical evidence provided by its epigraphy. Thus, the relevant inscription on the ewer's neck not only names its maker, Shujā' ibn Maḥmūd, but also gives the year of its manufacture - 1232 - and, most importantly, the location of the artist's workshop, Mosul.

Accordingly, this ewer is the only Islamic metal vessel which can, strictly speaking, be attributed with certainty to 13th-century Mosul, the residence of the atabeg Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'. As such, the ewer is a very rare piece of evidence in the study of the medieval Islamic metalworking industry in the Near East.

Ewer V.2/2 (pl. 18) was executed in 1242 by the same master craftsman who in 1226 had embellished ewer 2 (pl. 2) of the first sub-group, namely Aḥmad al-Dhakīrī al-Mawsī. Another inlaid object of this artist survives today. It is a basin made for the Ayyūbid sultan al-Ẓāhir al-Manṣūr. The existence of this basin led Rice to argue that Ahmad who, as we have seen, probably worked in the Artuqid territories of northern Mesopotamia in the first two decades of the 13th century, may have moved his workshop to Syria or Egypt sometime after 1232, when his old patrons, the Artuqids, were overthrown by the Ayyūbids.

The ornamentation of the ewer, which includes Christian figures on the neck and central body, certainly suggests an origin in Syria, where Christian themes were among the most important artistic trends in metalwork around the mid-13th century.

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122 Rice 1950, p. 627.
123 An extensive study of this piece has recently been undertaken by Hagedorn; cf. Hagedorn 1989.
124 Rice 1957, p. 320.
Ewer V.2/3 (pl. 19), finally, was completed in Damascus in 1258/9 by Husayn ibn Muḥammad al-Mawsilī, the father of ʿAlī ibn Husayn, who in 1275 made ewer V.1/3 (pl. 12) for the then Rasūlīd sultan of Yemen.\footnote{126}

4.4. Summary

To sum up, it appears that all three variants of the inlaid brass ewers in this category were first produced in northern Mesopotamian workshops, and their production apparently started towards the end of the 12th century. The major metalworking centre in the area, until its conquest by the Mongols in 1259, was undoubtedly Mosul, although it is not altogether impossible that other centres were located elsewhere in the region, as for example at Diyarbakr.\footnote{127}

Within Mosul itself, several high-quality workshops apparently existed, headed by master craftsmen like possibly Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya and Shuja’ ibn Manā'a. Each of these had at least one apprentice or helper working under their supervision: Isma‘īl ibn Ward and Qāsim ibn ʿAlī are known to have worked for Ibrahim, and one Muhammad ibn Futuh was associated with Shuja’ ibn Manā’a.\footnote{128}

It appears that shortly before the middle of the 13th century the political upheavals which had begun to affect northern Mesopotamia forced many metalworkers to move southwards to Syria and Egypt in search of a safer existence, and also of new powerful patrons such as the Ayyūbids and, slightly later, the Mamluks.\footnote{129}

\footnote{126} Paris 1971, p. 104 no. 152.
\footnote{127} Literary evidence regarding the position of Mosul as a metalworking centre is rare. Ibn Sa‘īd, who travelled in Mesopotamia around 1250, states that “high-quality metalwork and especially inlaid brass vessels fit for kings were being exported from that city”; cf. Rice 1957, pp. 283-4; James 1980, p. 318. Regarding the possibility that Diyarbakr was a metalworking centre at the time see notes77, 79.
\footnote{128} For a discussion of the organisation of workshops in Mosul see Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 32-34.
\footnote{129} Ewers of this type continue to be popular well into Mamluk times and several pieces datable to the 14th century survive today; cf. Rice 1953 (IV), pl. VI; Islamic Museum in Cairo inv. no. 24084, published in London 1976, p. 192 no. 220; Benaki Museum Athens,
Inscriptions on several of the inlaid ewers and related objects executed at the time explicitly give either Damascus or Cairo as their place of origin, but other, as yet unidentified, contemporary workshops might well have been established elsewhere, as for example around Fars in Iran.130

5. Function

Dr. Hagedorn most recently investigated the function of this ewer type in the context of her thesis on the Blacas ewer.131 She established that in 13th-century Arab miniature painting ewers with a profile closely comparable to that of the type discussed here occur in various contexts.

Mostly, they are depicted in a drinking context or as part of a washing or ablution set, i.e. in conjunction with a basin.132 At least one such service, dated to the late 13th century, survives today, with both the ewer and the basin preserved in the Islamic Museum in West Berlin (cf. cat. no. 6; pl. 6).133

Interestingly enough, the iconography of this particular set, according to Zick-Nissen, seems to further specify its use. In her opinion the decorative elements on both objects assign the service to the domain of jurisdiction. Consequently, she argued that it was probably executed for a high-ranking Muslim law official, perhaps a judge or an executioner, either of whom would have had to undertake

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130 Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 15; the author cites Rice who distinguished production centres in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Spain, Yemen and Asia Minor. Kühnel, on the other hand, assumed metalworking centres in Baghdad, Damascus, Aleppo and Cairo as well as in cities in Anatolia and Iran; cf. Kühnel 1939, p. 9. It is interesting in this context to recall Ibn Bīṭrīṣ’s story of a 13th-century merchant based in Erzerum who had worked vessels with precious metal inlay in order to present them to the Mongol Khān in Turkestān; cf. Duda 1959, p. 193.
133 Hagedorn cites another set in the Islamic Museum in Cairo, which, however, lies outside the chronological scope of this thesis; cf. Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 30.
ritual ablutions before the announcement of the verdict or its execution. 134 Ablutions in a legal context were apparently not performed by Muslims alone. Thus, Hagedorn discovered similar washing sets among the images that adorn two Coptic gospels (dated to 1180 and 1250 respectively), and on both occasions they again occur in a legal scene: the Roman tribunal during which Pilate washes his hands of Jesus. 135

Apart from such a specific use, ewers of the type discussed here and their matching basins were probably utilized for religious ablutions and personal hygiene at mealtimes in the houses of the upper classes and royal households of the late 12th and 13th centuries. 136 Certain medieval sources seem indirectly to confirm this assumption.

Thus, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī reports in a chronicle compiled in 1237 that when the possessions of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu were looted and partly sold off after the Khwārazmians' conquest of his realm in the same year, a basin and ewer, worth around 800 dirham, were among the objects which changed hands for only a

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134 Berlin 1980, pp. 63-4, nos. 25 & 26; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 31. The practice of ritual hand-washing before the beginning of legal proceedings is attested for example in the chronicle of Seljuq rule in Anatolia which was compiled by Ibn Bīrīn in the 13th century. He reports that sultan 'Alī al-Dīn Kaiqubādī I (616-34/1219-1236) never executed a government decree without performing his ritual ablutions first; cf. Duda 1959, p. 100; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 31.


136 Kühnel 1939, p. 1. Undoubtedly, washing sets of a similar type but of much more modest execution must have been used by a broader section of contemporary society. We find indications for this assumption for example among the Maqāmāt of al-Ḥārīrī (1054-1122). Thus, the author relates in his 19th maqama, which is entitled 'The encounter at Niṣībīn', how Abū Zayd instructed his son to serve his companions a meal and 'afterwards let them hear the Two Rumourers, the ewer and basin for washing the hands, that spread the rumour that the meal is at an end'; cf. Shah 1980, p. 80. Unfortunately, however, we have no extant examples of such everyday utensils. This fact is puzzling and worth emphasising in this context, particularly with regard to the ewers we are concerned with here. If the type was indeed one of the popular vessel forms in the Near East during the late 12th and 13th centuries, one would expect a hierarchy among the ewers of the group with regard to the quality of their execution and decoration. And this is exactly what can, for example, be observed among the group of ewers with plain or facetted cylindrical bodies and beak spouts so popular in eastern Iran during the same period. Here, within the same typological group, we possess pieces of comparatively poor workmanship with very little or no decoration, pieces with modest decorative schemes and limited use of precious metal inlay and finally, extremely precious vessels of the highest technical and artistic quality, sumptuously inlaid mainly with silver and sometimes even gold. The enigmatic point regarding the lack of a qualitative hierarchy within the ewer type discussed here will need further investigation in the future.
fraction of their original price.\textsuperscript{137} Al-Maqrizi, a 14th/15th-century source, informs us that during that time there was hardly a house in Cairo, or indeed in Egypt in general, which did not possess several inlaid brasses, and a contemporary trousseau for a bride belonging to the upper classes would contain, among other valuable objects, at least one inlaid brass basin and matching ewer.\textsuperscript{138}

Admittedly, al-Maqrizi lived some time after the period we are concerned with here. However, it seems likely that his account reflects the continued predilection for inlaid brass objects which had apparently begun on a large scale some time in the 13th century.\textsuperscript{139}

To sum up, it appears that the main function of ewers in this typological group was to serve as part of a washing set, which would be used for ritual and religious ablutions of an official as well as private nature. They would also serve for personal hygiene at meal times.

6. Summary

Beaten brass ewers with inverted pear-shaped bodies, cylindrical necks, arched handles and obliquely rising, tubular body spouts appear to have been developed as a type from Hellenistic and ancient Near Eastern vessel forms. Their evolution took place in near-eastern lands and perhaps Mesopotamia some time before the 12th century.

In the late 12th century, northern Mesopotamia was the main area for the manufacture of brass vessels with precious metal inlay belonging to this type, with

\textsuperscript{139} Inlaid metal objects remained fashionable in Egypt until at least the early 16th century. Thus, Ibn Iyas, in describing a royal procession through Cairo in 1516, specifically mentions a convoy of several loads of vessels with precious metal inlay from the royal store-rooms, including bowls or basins, ewers and candlesticks; cf. Schimmel 1985, p. 191.
Mosul and perhaps Diyārbakr as centres with major workshops. By the mid-13th century further workshops executed similar ewers in Syria, Egypt and perhaps Iran. Ewers of this type remained popular until well into the 14th century, but by that time their proportions had become exaggerated and less aesthetically pleasing.

As for their function, ewers of this type were used most probably as part of a washing set utilized at meal-times as well as for ritual ablutions of a private or official nature.

140 It is quite possible that there were metalworking centres in Mesopotamia producing high-quality ewers of this type and matching basins well before the late 12th century. One indication for this may be a story by the late 10th-century writer al-Hamadānī. He reports in his 22nd maqāma how a Basran merchant showed off a washing set to his visitor, al-Iskandari. The merchant’s servant is asked to put down the basin and bring the ewer (ibriq). The merchant picked the ewer up and said: “Look at this brass (or copper?). It seems like a burning brand or a piece of gold. Its brass is Syrian and it is of Iraqi workmanship. It is not a worn-out curio. It has known and made the round of the palaces of kings. I bought it in the famine year and I preserved it for this hour. The spout is of one piece with it. This ewer is fit only for this basin, and this basin is only suitable for this company”; cf. Prendergast 1973, pp. 88-94; Al-Hamadānī 1924, pp. 118-9.
Catalogue

Sub-Group 1

1. Louvre AO K 3435; n. p.; signed by Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya; beaten bronze (brass?), incised, copper and silver inlay, repoussé work; handle, spout and base later; neck and body (?) shortened; foot replacement; h. 30.8 cm, diam. 22.8 cm (23.5 cm).

Bulbous bell-shaped body with sloping shoulder, tapering towards low stepped base; above, cylindrical neck base, introduced by repoussé petals and terminated by flaring ridge; the neck base receives the likewise cylindrical, upper neck section; the latter rises from a projecting ridge and widens slightly towards the waisted mouth section which is introduced by a repoussé band of scrollwork. On mouth section, succession of alternately silver and copper fillets; on upper neck, naskhi on scrolling ground; on lower neck and raised shoulder petals, short intertwining scrolls ending in vertically rising lancet leaves above; on body, from the shoulder downwards, six alternately narrow (A) and wide (B) horizontal zones bordered by guilloche bands: 1.(A) Kufic on a ground of spiral scrolls; 2.(B) courtly pageant on ground of sparsely laid-out scrollwork; 3.(A) naskhi on spiral scrolling ground; 4.(B) 10 ogival medallions, formed by a continuation of the guilloche borders above and below this zone; each cartouche contains a pair of human figures hunting birds or conversing in a stylized garden setting; in between arches, pairs of addorsed harpies above and small almond-shaped motifs below; 5.(A) frieze of polo-players on ground of spiral scrolls; 6.(A) band of inverted triangles ending in small circles (not original?). Artist's signature on shoulder. (pl. 1).


2. Cleveland Museum of Art 56.11; n. p.; signed by Ahmad al-Dhakītal-Mawsili fin 620 A.H./1223 A.D.; beaten brass (handle cast), incised, silver inlay; lid, uppermost ring of neck, lower part of spout later; h. 36.5 cm (38.1 cm), diam. 20.6 cm.

Elongated and rounded bell-shaped body tapering towards a flat projecting ridge which introduces a low, slightly splayed foot; lower neck as on 1, terminated by projecting rounded collar; upper neck section tall and cylindrical, flaring towards waisted mouth section with projecting edges; above, domed lid with skittle-shaped finial; arched handle of angular section, attached to upper neck and body by means of thick almond-shaped plaques with small hinge-like terminations; the lower attachment plaque surmounted by small ring projection; around central handle, large globular knob flanked by tiny angular rings; thumbpiece, bulbous globular knob with rounded finial, set on profiled stem which rises from projecting triangular base; diametrically opposite handle, tall tubular spout narrowing down towards tip; lower spout and tip enhanced by rounded moulding. On lid, guilloche; on mouth section, inscription interrupted by rosette and whirling roundels; on central neck, continuous royal enthronement scene; above and below, very worn inscription bands; (two later graffiti on neck read Husayn ibn Qāsim and Usta(dh) al-Muhtasib); on neck collar, remains of interlacing (?); on neck base, signature of artist in naskhi: "Work of Ahmad al-Dhakī, the engraver of Mosul in 620 A.H.(1223 A.D.) and glory to my owner"; on scalloped shoulder collar, figural
scenes; on body four superposed, alternately wide (a) and narrow (b) zones with pearl borders: (a) royal outdoor entertainment, (b) knotted anthropomorphic Kufic, (a) three obliquely set rows of ten polylobed medallions on arabesque scroll background, the central ones larger than those above and below, and connected by small knots. The five large medallions and five medium-sized ones, which alternate in the centre, contain (as seen from the left of the handle clockwise): 1. horseman shooting at bird in tree and gardener digging at root of tree; 2. Two kneeling archers shooting at birds in central tree; 3. Two confronted camel riders with birds and peacocks; 4. ploughman and central tree with birds; 5. enthroned figure holding a mirror with two attendants approaching, lion below, peacock pair above; 6. Flute-playing shepherd with goats and sheep in front of tree with bird; 7. harpist and flute player with birds and quadrupeds; 8. man and grazing donkey, with peacock and birds; 9. youth reclining on couch with two attendants, tree and birds; 10. central tree flanked by seated reveller and standing man with blowing tube. The ten small medallions above contain: 1. crouching winged creature; 2. man spearing lion; 3. rider with falcon; 4. man riding lion; 5. man shooting bow at leopard; 6. man riding lion and facing backwards; 7. rider killing dragon; 8. man fighting lion with stick; 9. rider with (7); 10. rider attacked by lion. The ten small medallions below contain: 1. flute and tambourine players; 2. cymbal and lute players; 3. violin player and musician with unidentifiable instrument; 4. dancers; 5. lute and tambourine players; 6. lute player and musician with unidentifiable instrument; 7. flute and darabukka players; 8. two revellers; 9. lute and flute players; 10. flute and harp players. On lower body, animal frieze; decoration on handle and spout not discernible on the available photographs, but the latter may reflect the decorative style of the body; on handle base, signature of artist: "Made by Ahmad al-Dhakī al-Mawsili" (pl. 2).

Lit.: Hautecoeur and Wiet 1932, p. 90; Wiet 1932, pp. 19, 23, 170, App. no. 39; Wiet 1932a, p. 78; Kühnel 1939, p. 10; R.C.E.A. Vol. X (1939), p. 206 no. 970; Ettinghausen 1943a, p. 13 no. 45; Dimand 1945, p. 92; Hassan 1948, p. 544; Rice 1949, pp. 334-340, figs. 5-6; Rice 1953 (II), p. 66; Rice 1953 (III), p. 231; Rice 1957, pp. 278-301; 325-6, figs. 1-6, 10-20, 25, pls. 1f, 4f, 16f, g; Mayer 1959, pp. 30-1; Shepherd 1959, pp. 4-10; Serrato 1966, p. 94 no. 40, p. 95 fig. 40; Fehérvári 1968, p. 51; Al-'Ubaidi 1970, pl. 3; London 1976, pp. 178-9 10.195; Atil 1985, p. 121, fig. 47; Nassar 1985, fig. 2b; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, p. 24 no. 2, fig. 3.

3. İstanbul, Türk ve İslam Müzesi 217; n. p.; made by Iyāṣ, the slave or hireling of ʿAbd al-Kaṭīf ibn al-Tuṭāfī al-Mawsili in 627 A.H./ 1229 A.D.; beaten brass, remains of copper and silver inlay; lid later, upper part of handle repaired; h. 37 cm (without lid), allover height 45.7 cm, widest diam. 20 cm. Form as 2, but more slender and elongated body on wider base; higher neck collar rising from polygonal shoulder plate; tubular handle with rounded moulding around lower part; tubular, obliquely rising body spout with stepped protrusion around tip. On central neck, nashki with artist’s name and date; above, traces of another, apparently erased inscription; neck collar and shoulder plate plain; on upper body, broad frieze of benedictory Ayyūbid nashki (15.2 cm wide), set against a background of arabesques with large loops from which issue palmettes and split palmettes; below, separated from the former by a plain border, valance of arabesques; remaining body plain; foot plain; on upper and lower spout, two narrow (1.5 cm wide) bands with benedictory cursive inscriptions; on handle, herringbone design made up of small leaves (pl. 3).

Lit.: Ağa-Oğlu 1930, pp. 27-8, pl. A; Kühnel 1939, p. 10; Rice 1953 (III); pp. 229-232, figs. 1f, pls. I-II; Rice 1957, pp. 325-6, Mayer 1959, p. 52; Al-'Ubaidi 1970, pl. 7; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, p. 3, 24, fig. 6.

4. Freer Gallery of Art 55.22; Syria; made by Qāsim ibn 'Afī, the apprentice of Ibrahim ibn Mawāliyā al-Mawsili, for Amīr Shihāb al-Dīn Tughrul in Ramadhān of 629 A.H./June-July 1232 A.D.; hammered and spun brass: several parts (body,
foot, neck, lid, spout, handle) made separately and soldered together; handle cast; spout replacement; chased, inlaid with silver, copper (only on spout) and black organic material; h. 36.7 cm; diam. 21.3 cm, weight 2.670 kg.

Form as 2, but with less splayed, waisted foot terminated by rounded moulding above and angular edge below; petalled neck collar flatter; upper neck slightly shorter; round mouth with flat projecting lip, covered by flat circular lid with two larges hinges and tiny knob towards the front to facilitate opening; handle as on 2, but with flatter attachment plates; globular thumbpiece without rounded finial; body spout tapers towards tip; tip surrounded by stepped projection; lower spout bears rounded moulding. On lid, scrollwork; on lip, interface band; around mouth section, scrollwork; below, on moulding, guilloche; on central neck, arabesques contained within network of lime-shaped meshes, the latter created by thin continuous split palmette scrolls and linked by crescent-shaped loops; on lower neck moulding, pearled guilloche; on lower neck, framed by pearl borders - and above, additionally by succession of ray-like silver fillets - dedicatory Ayyübid naskhi naming the vessel's owner; below, on raised petals, artist's signature and date in naskhi; body covered entirely by pattern identical to that on central neck, demarcated above and below by pearled borders; on upper foot moulding, interface; on central foot, benedictory naskhi between pearled borders, interrupted by large crescent-shapes; on base plate, 14 recessed scallops radiating from a central boss; on handle sides and central knob, interface; on back of handle, floral scrollwork; underside plain; on thumbpiece, ray and petal motifs, on its base knot design; on upper and lower spout, very worn benedictory (?) Kufic, on wide central section, geometric interlace (pl. 4).

Lit.: Hautecoeur and Wiet 1932, p. 90; Wiet 1932, p. 19 no. 15, p. 23 no. 20, p. 171 no. 42, App. no. 42; Wiet 1932a, p. 79; Kühnel 1939, pp. 10-13, fig. 9; R.C.E.A. Vol. X (1939), pp. 252-3 no. 3977; Ettinghausen 1940, p. 116; Ettinghausen 1943a, p. 13 no. 46, pl. VIII; Aga-Ögölu 1945, p. 42 n. 120; Hassan 1948, p. 544; Barlett 1949, p. XIV; Rice 1949, p. 339; Rice 1950, p. 633; Rice 1953 (II), pp. 66-69, pls. X-XI; Rice 1953 (III), pp. 231-2; Rice 1957, pp. 286, 324-6, App. no. 7; Mayer 1959, pp. 78-9; Scerrato 1966, p. 98; Al-‘Ubaidi 1970, pls. 8-9; Schneider 1973, pl. 7; Atıl 1975, no. 26; Erginsöy 1978, fig. 139; Baer 1983, p. 99 fig. 76, pp. 102, 140-1, note 233; Atıl 1985, pp. 117-123 no. 16; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 3, 24, fig. 7.

5. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 54-456; n. p.; made by Yūnus ibn Yusuf in 644 A.H./1246 A.D.; beaten brass, incised, silver and gold inlay; h. 44.5 cm, diam. 23.9 cm.

Form as 4, but with more splayed foot; handle with hinge-like finials on attachment plates. Decoration on lid not visible on published photograph; around mouth section, scrolling band with pearled borders; on central neck, three polylobed medallions with scenes of courtly entertainments, interconnected by small geometric interface roundels and set against an arabesque background; above and below, benedictory naskhi friezes on floral ground, interrupted by geometric interlace roundels; on neck moulding, herring-bone pattern; on lower neck, naskhi with pearled border below; on shoulder petals, arabesque motifs and, on the joints between the latter, geometric interlace roundels; on the body, five superposed, alternately narrow (A) and wide (B) friezes: 1. (A) naskhi; 2. (B) eight interconnected polylobed medallions - four on either side - displaying two variations of four scenes, one on each side: 1. figure pays homage to either enthroned bearded ruler or youthful prince, who in each case is attended by sword-bearing page; 2. two standing courtiers with varying attributes facing audience scene; 3. dais with two female musicians; 4. youthful or bearded groom standing behind horse. 3. (A) knotted Kufic interrupted by arabesque roundels and set against leafy scrolling ground; 4. (B) six large polylobed medallions on arabesque ground, interconnected by geometric interlace roundels: 1. audience scene, 2. mounted rider attacking winged quadruped; 3. two musicians seated on dais in front of tree. 4. mounted rider attacking feline. 5. frontally enthroned ruler with attendants, 6. saddled horse
with two attendant grooms; 5. (B) knotted Kufic on arabesque ground; on upper foot ridge, succession of ray-like silver fillets; on central foot, Kufic interrupted by roundels with individual revellers and set against arabesque ground; below, geometric interlace band; on outer edge of foot, herring-bone pattern; on handle back and central knob, arabesque scrolls; on its underside, meander band; on thumbpiece, Kufic on leafy scroll ground; on its base, arabesque motif; on upper and lower spout, naskhi; on its wide central section knotted Kufic and arabesque patterns with intermediate geometric interlace roundels above and below; on spout tip and lower spout moulding, herring-bone pattern (pl. 5).


6. West Berlin, Islamic Museum I. 6580; n. p.; signed by 'Ali ibn 'Abdallah al-`Alawi al-naqqash al-Mawsili; beaten brass, incised, silver and gold inlay; h. 43 cm, diam. 20.6 cm, weight 2024 grams.

Form as 5, but more elliptical upper body and generally squatter profile; broader moulding around lower spout.

On inner lid, signature of artist; on mouth: arabesques rosettes, lions, sirens and bird pairs; around mouth section above, scrollwork; in the centre, pearled band; on ridge below, herring-bone pattern; on central neck, bordered by zig-zag bands; large roundels with inscribed polylobed medallions, each one containing a frontally enthroned ruler flanked by musicians; background of figures geometric; medallions interconnected by benedictory epigraphic cartouches flanked above and below by small roundels with seated man holding crescent, and set against arabesque scroll background; on neck collar, herring-bone design; on neck base, arcade with alternately single saintly figures and bird and arabesque designs, the interstices with floral detailing; on scalloped shoulder collar, zig-zag band above, introducing pair of birds and arabesque designs on the petals; on body, four superposed bands, alternately (a) wide and (b) narrow and bordered by zig-zag bands: (a) on shoulder, layout repeats that on central neck, medallions filled with enthroned ruler, musicians, mounted hunters; (b) animal frieze interrupted by geometric hexagons; (a) four large and four small medallions alternating, all interconnected by geometric roundels, the latter flanked by small rosette roundels above and below, and set against animated arabesque scroll ground; the small medallions contain frontally seated personifications of the planets, the large ones the same, but here in conjunction with symbols of their zodiacal domiciles; (b) animal frieze as above; on foot ridge, herring-bone; on foot, naskhi with intermediate bird pair and arabesque medallions, set between pearled borders; on base, graffito: "property of 'Ali Khan son of Husayn"; on handle: vertical panels of scrollwork, zig-zag, braided bands, birds and geometric rosettes; on lower handle attachment: bird and scroll design, T-fret and rosettes; on handle mouldings, guilloche; on base of thumbpiece, bird pair in cartouche; network of lozenge-shaped meshes on thumbpiece and handle knob below; on spout base, arabesque scroll; on lower spout, benedictory Kufic on floral ground; on central spout, three alternately wide and narrow, superposed fields bordered by zig-zag bands; the wide zones contain leafy scrollwork and rosette roundels, the narrow ones Kufic on floral ground; on tip, plaited band (pl. 6).

7. Ex-Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection; n. p.; beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; handle and mouth rim modern, spout rim remounted, neck shortened; h. 29 cm. Shape as 5, but slightly less bulbous body and less splayed foot; no projection on spout tip. On central neck, tall benedictory naskhi on floral ground, flanked above and below by narrow scrolling friezes; on neck base, ornamental Kufic on scrolling ground; on scalloped collar, arabesques (†); on body, five superposed zones, alternately (a) wide and (b) narrow: (a) on shoulder, tall benedictory naskhi on floral ground, (b) animal frieze interrupted by geometric roundels, (a) twelve roundels with personifications of the planets and the symbols of their zodiacal domiciles, set against arabesque scroll ground, (b) animal frieze as above, (a) valance; on foot ridge, pearled border; on foot, interlace; on spout, arabesque scrolls (†) (pl. 7).


8. Hermitage N-WP 1481; n. p.; beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; lid missing; dimensions unavailable.

Shape as 6, but taller body with more elliptical upper part and tapering more strongly towards foot; flatter foot ridge, higher and more splayed foot; flatter shoulder petals; neck collar of triangular section. On lower ridge of mouth section, herring-bone design; on central neck, large frontal roundel with enthroned ruler, linked to back of neck by epigraphic panels; the latter flanked by roundels with bird pair and arabesque designs above and below; the entire central frieze with geometric background and pearl borders; on neck collar, zig-zag bands; on neck base, within pearl borders, system of triangles pointing upwards and downwards alternately and containing arabesque designs; on shoulder petals, arabesques (?); on body, five superposed zones with pearl borders, the first four alternately (a) wide and (b) narrow: (a) on shoulder, design repeats that of neck, but with two figural roundels containing enthroned personage; (b) animal frieze; (a) as on shoulder, but here four figural roundels with enthroned figures and mounted hunters; (b) animal frieze; on lower body, valance of ray-like silver fillets; on foot ridge, herring-bone; on foot, decorative band similar to that on neck base (fig. 1).

Kühnel 1924/5, pp. 100-1, pl. 55; Kühnel 1939, p. 18 fig. 14, pp. 19-20; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 22, 27, fig. 189.

9. West Berlin, Islamic Museum I.3576; n. p.; beaten brass, incised, inlay of silver and black compound; neck and spout later, handle missing; h. 37 cm.

Body shape as 4, but flatter foot mouldings. On body, three detached superposed friezes: 1. very tall and cursive, benedictory inscription interrupted by roundels with seated flautist and tambourine (lute?) player, all on floral spiral scroll ground; 2. valance of elongated lancet leaves; 3. ornamental pseudo-Kufic band interrupted by large roundels with interlace stars; in the centre of each epigraphic section, trefoils protrude above and below; on foot, plaited band (pl. 8).


10. Sotheby’s 12.4.89, lot 62; n. p.; beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; neck, spout and handle missing, only their bases remain; on neck base, replacement mouth; h. 28.5 cm.

Shape as 2, but slightly shorter body; the foot, with splayed base, clearly demarcated by strongly projecting ridges. On neck base, benedictory Kufic with pearl border below; on shoulder petals, arabesque designs; on body, two large superposed zones, terminated by a stylized lancet-leaf valance below: in upper section, six trilobed and arched medallions with pearl borders, each containing a saintly figure with attribute; in between arches: single birds above, sphinxes below; in lower section, five large roundels with pearl borders, interconnected by benedictory Kufic friezes on scrolling ground, with accompanying bird combat scenes above and below; roundels filled with either a human-headed eagle, a bird
of prey attacking a deer, a lion attacking a horse man, a falconer on a camel or a man fighting a lion; the remaining background of this zone with arabesque scroll background; on foot ridge, herring-bone design; on foot, braided band (fig. 2).
Lit.: Sotheby’s 12.4.89, lot 62.

11. No location; n. p.; beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; handle, spout and upper neck restored; h. 33.5 cm.
Shape as 8, but shorter foot with pronounced outer edge; higher shoulder petals. On neck base, benedictory (?) Kufic on scrolling ground; on shoulder petals, arabesques interrupted by small decorative roundels; on body, four superposed zones, alternately (a) wide and (b) narrow: (a) on shoulder, two roundels with mounted falconer alternate with elongated epigraphic cartouches; background of frieze geometric; (b) band of squares placed on their tip and filled with abstracted vegetal motifs; frieze interrupted by geometric roundels; remaining intermediate spaces with similar vegetal designs; (a) twelve lobed arches against geometric background, each filled with haloed figure, either enthroned prince, cup bearers, arms bearers, falconer or poet holding a flower; (b) interlaced valance of lancet leaves; on foot ridge, herring-bone design; on foot, arabesque frieze interrupted by geometric roundels and larger medallions with pair of birds and arabesque designs (pl. 9).
Lit.: Riyadh 1985, p. 113 no. 90, pl. on p. 112.

Sub-Group 2

V.1/1 MMA 91.1.586; n. p.; executed by 'Umar ibn al-Hājjī Jaldak, the ghulām of Ahmad al-Dhakī; the engraver, al-Mawsīlī in 623 A.H.(1226/7 A.D.); beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; spout and handle (?) later; h. 37 cm.
Body shape as 10; neck composite: above neck base, large bulbous knob surmounted by squat, very slightly flaring, cylindrical section; above, mouth section consisting of two rounded mouldings which flank a central waisted section; broad handle of angular section, widening towards base; around lower handle, rounded knob flanked by narrow projecting bands; thumbpiece damaged (remaining base part of original lid attachment?). On mouldings of mouth section, interlace; on central area, geometric band; on upper neck, knotted Kufic; on neck collar, interlacing scrolls (?); on neck base, cursive inscription with pearled border below, containing the signature of the artist and the date; on raised petals, seated figures representing the signs of the zodiac; on body, five superposed zones with pearled borders, alternately (a) narrow and (b) large: (a) on shoulder, cursive inscription, (b) continuous courtyard scene on plain background, with cup bearers, musicians and attendants disposed in two superposed registers flanking the central ruler figure; (a) frieze with horsemen on arabesque ground, (b) succession of interconnected quatrefoil medallions formed by continuous interlacing pearl strings issuing from the borders; each medallion contains arabesque designs with zoomorphic and anthropomorphic detailing; in the interstices, alternately pairs of riders and mounted hunters; (a) Kufic on scrolling ground; on foot ridge, braided band; on foot, interlaced scrollwork between braided borders; on handle, geometric design and, on lower moulding, plaited interlace; (later graffito "the lady in 'Affī's care") (pl. 10).
V.1/2 Tehran, Gulistan Palace; n. p.; made by ‘Alī ibn Ḥamūd al-Mawsili in 1274 A.D. for Amīr Atmish al-Ṣa‘di; beaten brass, silver inlay, repoussé, incised; handle missing; h. 38 cm.

Shape as V.1/1, but more splayed foot with slightly flatter base plate; large neck knob worked in repoussé; upper neck section taller; rounded mouldings of mouth section of more elliptical profile; strongly projecting, flat lip; spout tubular, tapers towards profiled projection at tip. On mouldings of mouth section, interlaced leafy scrollwork; in between, row of vertically disposed silver fillets; on upper neck, naskhi on floral ground; on neck collar, interconnected eight-sided star medallions with animal combat scenes; in between stars, floral detailing; on neck base between meander borders, naskhi on floral ground, giving name of artist; on scalloped shoulder collar, revellers and musicians; on body, six superposed zones with meander borders, alternately (a) narrow and (b) wide: (a) on shoulder, arabesque scrolls with intermediate geometric roundels; (b) tall beneficent thulūth (?) on floral ground, interrupted in the centre by polylobed medallions with musicians; (a) as on shoulder; (b) succession of alternately small and large, polylobed medallions, formed by plain borders which issue from those flanking the zone above and below; the medallions are interconnected by geometric roundels and set against an arabesque scroll ground; the small medallions contain seated musicians and revellers, the large ones mounted hunters; (a) as on shoulder; (b) interlaced valance on foot ridge, braiding; on foot, pseudo (?)-Kufic inscription; on outer edge of foot, cable pattern; on spout, three alternately wide and narrow zones with meander borders (decoration on lower spout erased or worn away?); in wide zones, interlaced ogival medallions with seated revellers, set against an arabesque scroll ground; in central zone, naskhi on floral ground; on spout tip, braiding (pl. 11).


V.1/3 Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs 4412; executed in Cairo by ‘Alī ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili in 674 A.H./1275-6 A.D. for the Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Ḍīn Yūsuf I (Rasūlīd ruler of Yemen, 1250-95 A.D.); beaten brass, incised, silver inlay; spout replacement; h. 50 cm.

Shape as V.1/2, but slightly less bulbous; narrower knob above neck base; upper neck section taller and flaring stronger towards mouth; arched handle of angular section widening towards lower attachment area, which is marked by a large projecting knob; tiny thumbpiece on upper handle serves as attachment for domical lid with bud-like finial (cf. a similar detail on V.1/1). On mouth section: interlace (?) and, in between, Kufic inscription; decoration on upper neck indiscernible on available photograph; on neck collar, inscription and intermediate floral roundels; on neck base and shoulder collar indiscernible; decoration on body, five alternately (a) narrow and (b) wide zones with broad plain borders; (a) on shoulder, plain band(?); (b) beneficent thulūth on scrolling ground; (a) animal frieze (?); (b) succession of detached polylobed medallions and tiny rosette roundels on arabesque ground; medallions contain courtly scenes; (a) animal frieze (?); on foot ridge, decorative border; on foot, knotted Kufic (pl. 12).

Lit.: Giraud 1881, pl. XL.2; Goupil 1888, p. 22, no. 74; Lavoix 1885, p. 300; Schmoranz 1899, p. 8, n. 1; Migeon 1900, p. 128; van Berchem 1904, pp. 17-20, 38-40, ill.; Demaison 1905, no. 48, p. 38 ill.; Fago 1909, p. 128; Sarre and Martin 1912, Vol. 1, p. 12; Migeon 1922, pp. 24-5; Hourticq 1925, Vol. 1, p. 170; Kühnel 1925, p. 180; Migeon 1927, Vol. 2, pp. 58, 84-6, fig. 261; Salles and Ballot 1928, p. 34; Dimand 1931, p. 230; Hautecoeur and Wiet 1932, p. 90; Wiet

V.1/4 Istanbul, Museum of Islamic and Turkish Arts; n. p.; made for Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ayyūb Khafīl (al-Malik al-Kāmil Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad); beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; handle replacement; h. 50.8 cm. Shape as V.1/3, but body tapers less strongly towards foot; faceted neck base; projecting neck collar flatter; tall tubular spout tapering towards profiled ring projection on tip; domical lid with raised petals. On lid: silver-inlaid detailing; geometric knots in between petals; on mouth section, geometric interlaces and, in between, cursive inscription; on upper neck, knotted pseudo-Kufic (?); on neck collar, remains of silver-inlaid detailing; on neck base and raised shoulder collar, abstracted floral designs; on upper body, four superposed zones: on shoulder, narrow frieze of abstract scrolls (?); wide panel with tall cursive inscription between plain borders; on central body, arcade with pointed arches enclosing arabesque designs, in the interstices geometric designs; on lower body, narrow frieze with naskhi, naming the owner; on foot, valance design (pl. 13). Lit.: Aga-Oğlu 1930, pp. 27-8, pl. B; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 7, 25, fig. 42.

V.1/5 Nuhad al-Said Collection; n. p.; made for Abūʾl Qāsim Mahmūd ibn Sanjar Shāh; beaten brass, silver inlay, repoussé, incised; spout, neck collar and lid later; h. 44 cm. Shape as V.1/1, but with arched handle of angular section and slightly projecting, angular ring around its lower part. On rim of neck, inscription "'Abd al-Rahman"; on mouth section, repoussé arabesque bands and, in between, animal frieze on scrolling ground; on upper neck, beneficent anthropomorphic naskhi on scrolling ground; on neck base, vertically disposed, paired leaves; on scalloped collar, small seated figures alternating with knot motifs; on body, five detached, superposed zones, alternately (a) narrow and (b) wide: (a) on shoulder, naskhi on floral ground, naming owner; (b) anthropomorphic naskhi punctuated on either side by roundels with frontally enthroned figure; (a) succession of detached cartouches with running animals on scrolling ground; (b) succession of roundels filled with two different interlace designs which alternate; each roundel extended above and below by triangular fields with arabesque and scrolling designs respectively; from the joints of the former small trefoils extend into the decorative zones above and below; in the spaces between the central roundels, human figures (man holding two ducks, pair of drinkers, musician) above, and paired ducks below; background of this zone plain; (a) beneficent Kufic on floral ground, disposed in succession of adjoining stepped cartouches; on handle, arabesque scrolls on sides and vertically paired leaves on back; on lower handle ring, braiding with guilloche borders; base with twelve-sided repoussé rosette; on upper body, later inscription "Malik Ahmad ibn Qasim ibn Qayd(?)" (fig. 3). Lit.: Christie’s 7.5.1973, lot 96; Allan 1982a, pp. 54-7, no. 6; Allan unpubl., pp. 4, 5, 7-9, Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 8, 26, fig. 49.

V.1/6 Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs 4413; n. p.; beaten brass, silver and red copper inlay, incised; base plate replacement; h. 46 cm. Shape as V.1/5, but upper body slightly more elliptical; original tubular spout with rounded moulding, flanked by tiny angular rings, around lower part and tip; original handle arched and of polygonal section, with rounded moulding flanked by tiny angular rings below. On lid, small lobed medallions with seated figures, set against geometric ground; on mouth section, scrollwork and, in between, vertically disposed silver and copper fillets; on upper neck, beneficient naskhi; on neck
raised, ten-sided shoulder collar; ten-sided neck foot; section and polylobed medallions on its lower body; Bulbous ten-sided cm. 629 ibn Man?a al-Mawsilfin V.2/1 The Blacas Stockholm Lit.:

(b) wide: (a) curved tubular spout; on sides of handle: guilloche, on back vertically paired leaves; on lower handle, moulding interlace; on spout moulding, interlace; on central spout, three detached friezes with two bands of braiding flanking central benedictory naskhi (pl. 14).


V.1/7 Bologna, Museo Civico Medievale 2093; n. p.; beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; neck shortened (large collar missing), space of handle occupied by second tubular spout with curved upper part (original?); dimensions not available. Shape as V.1/5, but taller foot; steeply rising, tubular spout which tapers towards tip; around lower spout, polygonal knob; second spout of identical appearance but with curved upper part. On mouth section, intricate geometric interlace bands; on upper neck, naskhi interrupted by geometric roundels and flanked by pearl borders; on neck base, similar decoration; decoration on shoulder collar not visible on available photograph; on body, superposed zones with meander borders, alternately (a) wide and (b) narrow: (a) on shoulder, figural frieze (?) interrupted by central roundels with horsemen; (b) naskhi on floral ground, interrupted by geometric roundels; (a) courtly scenes on dense floral ground, interrupted by roundels with mounted hunters; (b) naskhi frieze as above; on foot ridge, herring-bone design; on foot, system of alternately upright and inverted, scalloped triangles with arabesque designs, framed by pearled borders; on spout bases, inscriptions; on polygonal knobs, interlace designs; on main spouts, intricate interlace designs (pl. 15). Lit.: Scerrato 1966, p. 120 nos. 53-4, figs. 53-4; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 22, 27, fig. 186.

V.1/8 Hermitage NP 1480; n. p.; beaten brass, silver inlay, incised; spout later; large knob on neck wanting; h. 38.2 cm. Shape as V.1/5. On mouth section, scrollwork(?); on upper neck, cursive inscription; on shoulder petals, individual rosette and heart-shaped motifs alternating (?); on body: five detached, superposed zones, alternately (a) narrow and (b) wide: (a) on shoulder, cursive inscription; (b) figural frieze(?); (a) cursive inscription; (b) arcing with interlace designs beneath and arabesque scrolls in the interstices; (a) Kufic; on lower body, interlaced valance (pl. 16). Lit.: Stockholm 1985, p. 130 no. 22; Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 22, 27, fig. 187.

Sub-Group 3

V.2/1 The Blacas Ewer: British Museum 66.12-69.61; Mosul; decorated by Shuja' ibn Marz?a al-Mawsilfi in the month blessed by God, the month of Rajab in the year 629 A.H./1232 A.D. in Mosul; beaten brass, copper and silver inlay, incised; spout and foot section missing; base replacement, lid missing; handle hollow; h. 30. 4 cm. Bulbous ten-sided body tapering towards the base (originally the upper ridge of the foot); raised, ten-sided shoulder collar introduces ten-sided neck with collar around its lower part; upper neck flares slightly towards waisted mouth section with
projecting edges; broad arched handle of angular section widening slightly towards lower, heart-shaped attachment; around lower handle, narrow ring projection; remains of lid attachment on upper handle. On each facet of mouth section, geometric roundel with lancet leaf extensions, flanked by vertically disposed, paired leaves; on central neck, three superposed zones with pearled borders, the central one slightly wider than the others; the upper and lower zones contain naskhi and Kufic respectively, interrupted by geometric roundels; in central zone, ten interconnected quatrefoil medallions formed by a continuation of the borderlines above and below and set against geometric background; the quatrefoils contain: 1. seated lute player; 2. dancing monkey; 3. seated figure with dance scarf; 4. seated female tambourine player; 5. dancer in motion; 6. seated flautist; 7. as (4); 8. seated reveller; 9. seated reveller facing (8); 10. seated flautist; on neck collar, obliquely set fillets; on neck base, naskhi with artist’s signature; on scalloped shoulder collar, interconnected quatrefoil medallions on geometric background, flanked by pearled borders; each medallion contains a frontally seated personification of the planets, three of which appear twice; on body, five superposed zones with thin plain borders, alternately (a) narrow and (b) wide: (a) on shoulder, corrupted benedictory naskhi interrupted by geometric roundels; (b) succession of eight polylobed medallions interconnected by small floral roundels and set against geometric background; medallions (starting to left of handle) contain: 1. two turbaned men in sword fight; 2. mounted hunter fights bear; 3. enthroned ruler with cup approached by servant with (?) polo-stick; 4. mounted hunter spears lion; 5. mounted hunter attacked by lion or leopard; 6. enthroned revelling ruler with standing servant holding standard or polostick and seated harpist; 7. mounted falconer; 8. kneeling man hunting three birds; (a) anthropomorphic script, the letters transformed into mounted or standing fighters in combat with fabulous creatures; frieze interrupted by geometric octagons; (b) ten polylobed medallions set against geometric background and interconnected by small solar roundels; the medallions (starting from the handle clockwise) contain: 1. two seated female musicians; 2. mounted hunter with cheetah, bird, dog and gazelle; 3. seated female with mirror, attended by standing female servant; 4. mounted archer attacking quadruped; 5. bent bearded man kisses hand of enthroned ruler with spear-holding servant in attendance; 6. camel with attendant and howdah occupied by two figures; 7. Bahram Gur and Azadeh on camel during hunt; 8. two seated musicians with harp and flute; 9. mounted sword fighter fighting man on foot; 10. seated ruler with bow, presented with flower vase by male servant; (a) frieze as that beneath shoulder plate; on lower body, interlaced valance design; on handle attachment, arabesque design; above, naskhi with pearled borders; on facets of handle, alternately pearl borders, scrollwork and geometric design (pl. 17).

Lit.: For a comprehensive bibliography on this ewer cf. Hagedorn 1989, Vol. 1, p. 23; for a detailed discussion cf. op. cit., vol. 1 and 2; also: Ward 1993, pp. 80-1, figs. 59-60.

V.2/2 Keir Collection; n. p.; signed by Ahmad al-DhakTal-Mawsili and dated 640 A.H./1242 A.D.; beaten brass (handle cast), silver inlay, incised; upper ring of neck later, base added from another piece; spout replacement; total loss of original inlay, re-inlaid; h. 34 cm, diam. base 14 cm, diam. neck at rim 9 cm.

Shape as V.2/1, but more elongated body; waisted ten-sided foot with projecting angular ridges above and below; mouth lidded; arched handle of angular section with heart-shaped attachment plaques terminating in open, hinge-like loops (the upper one still with pendant); on central handle, large knob flanked by narrow angular ridges; similar ridge above lower attachment plaque; thumbpiece, tall polygonal knob with rounded finial, waisted foot and angular base projecting from handle. On mouth section, rosettes and intermediate floral designs; on mouth ridge, pearled border; on central neck, ten upright saintly (?) figures with indiscernible gestures and attributes; central zone flanked by narrow benedictory Kufic panels above and below; on neck collar, pearl border; on neck base, naskhi with artist’s
signature; on raised collar, floral and zoomorphic detailing; on body, five superposed zones of varying width, with pearled borders above and plain ones below; on shoulder, continuous frieze with enthronement scene, the ruler being approached by attendants on either side; below, narrow panel with knotted benedictory Kufic; around central body, ten panels with pairs of hunters, separated by vertical succession of paired leaves; below, ten upright panels rendered as niches with vertically paired leaves as columns and pearled arches; each section contains a standing haloed figure with Christian attributes, set against a floral background; in the interstices, floral detailing; around lower body, tiny animal frieze; on foot, geometric medallions; on handle: panels with interlace, beaded guilloche, rope designs; on lower handle attachment, arabesque design with pearled border; on sides of thumbpiece, rosette; decorative detailing on base (pl. 18).


V.2/3 Louvre 7428; Damascus; made by Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili for al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yusuf in 657 A.H./1258 A.D.; beaten brass, silver inlay (partly lost, partly restored), incised; h. 33.8 cm, diam. 17.5 cm. Shape as V.2/1, foot section as on V.2/2 but shorter and with wider base; faceted tubular spout issues from projecting base with ring moulding and tapers towards tip with profiled ring projection; handle as on V.2/2, but with flatter central knob and without pendant attached to upper handle attachment. On mouth section, ten cartouches with Kufic inscription on ground of tiny, densely set spirals; on central neck, two panels with interlaced scrollwork flank a central frieze of knotted Kufic; all panels detached from each other and set against spiral ground; on neck collar, geometric braiding; on neck base: date, artist’s signature and place of production; on shoulder collar, scrollwork; on body: five superposed zones, alternately (a) narrow and (b) wide: (a) on shoulder, animal frieze on spiral ground; (b) tall naskhi on spiral ground naming and praising the owner; (a) animal frieze as above; (b) ten polylobed medallions formed by continuation of upper and lower borderlines, each one filled with arabesque designs on background of tiny spirals; in between the medallions above and below, heart-shaped intertwined scroll set across the facet joint; (a) animal frieze as above; on lower body, intertwined valance design; on foot ridge, twisted band; on foot, ten cartouches with benedictory Kufic on ground of tiny spirals; on spout, five decorative zones with plain borders, containing alternately naskhi (Kufic in the centre) and ten individual motifs (geometric guilloche and abstract vegetal design); on spout base, naskhi on spiral ground; on handle facets, braided bands alternate with pearl strings; on central knob, braided band; on sides and base of thumbpiece, individual floral motifs (pl. 19).

Plate 1
Plate 2
MW 5/2. Beaten Brass Ewer made by Aḥmad al-Dhakī al-Mawṣili in 620 A.H./1223 A.D. H. 36.5 cm
(Cleveland, Museum of Art, inv. no. 56.11).
Plate 3
MW 5/3. Beaten Brass Ewer signed by Iyās, the hireling of 'Abd al-Karīm ibn al-Turābi al-Mawsilīn 627 A.H./1229 A.D
H. 45.7 cm (Istanbul, Türk ve İslam Müzesi 217).
Plate 4

MW 5/4. Hammered Brass Ewer signed by Qāsim ibn 'Alī, the apprentice of Ibrāhīm ibn Mawāliyā al-Mawṣīlī, for Amīr Shīhāb al-Dīn Tughrul in 629 A.H./1232 A.D.
H. 36.7 cm (Washington, Freer Gallery of Art, inv. no. 55.22).
Plate 5
MW 5/5. Beaten Brass Ewer made by Yūnus ibn Yūṣuf in 644 A.H./1246 A.D. H. 44.5 cm
(Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, inv. no. 54-456).
Plate 6
H. 43 cm (West Berlin, Islamic Museum, inv. no. I. 6580).
Plate 7
MW 5/7. Beaten Brass Ewer, h. 29 cm (ex Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection).
Plate 8
MW 5/9. Beaten Brass Ewer, h. 37 cm
(West Berlin, Islamic Museum, inv. no. I. 3576).
Plate 9
MW 5/11. Beaten Brass Ewer, h. 33.5 cm (no location).
Plate 10
Plate 11
MW 5/V.1/2. Beaten Brass Ewer made by 'Ali ibn Ḥamūd al-Mawsili for Amīr Atmish al-Sa’dīn in 1274 A.D.
H. 38 cm (Tehran, Gulistan Palace).
Plate 12
Plate 13
H. 50.8 cm (Istanbul, Museum of Islamic and Turkish Arts).
Plate 14
MW 5/V.1/6. Beaten Brass Ewer, h. 46 cm (Paris, Musée des Arts Decoratifs, inv. no. 4413).
Plate 15
Plate 16
MW 5/V.1/8. Beaten Brass Ewer, h. 38.2 cm
(Leningrad, Hermitage, inv. no. NP 1480).
Plate 17
Plate 18
MW 5/V.2/2. Beaten Brass Ewer made by Ahmad al-Dhakī al-Mawsilī in 640 A.H./1242 A.D.
H. 34 cm (London, Keir Collection).
Plate 19
FIG. 1
(Leningrad, Hermitage, inv. no. N-WP 1481).

FIG. 2
MW 5/10. Beaten Brass Ewer Body, h. 28.5 cm
(Sotheby's 12.4.89, Lot 62).
FIG. 3
MW 5/V.1/5. Beaten Brass Ewer made for Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjar Shih.
H. 44 cm (Nuhad al-Said Collection).

FIG. 4
Late Sasanian (?) Silver Ewer with Horizontally Fluted Body.
FIG. 5
Archaic Greek Bronze ewer from Cyprus.

FIG. 6
Silver Libation Vessels from Ur.
3rd Millennium B.C.

FIG. 7
8th-Century Bronze Ewer with Zoomorphic Body
Spout excavated at Umm al-Wafid in Jordan.
FIG. 8
Early Islamic Pottery Vessels with Body Spout from Qasr al-Hair al-Sharif and Khirbat al-Mafjar.

FIG. 9
4th-Century Silver Ewer from the Water Newton Treasure.
FIG. 10
6th-Century Silver Ewer discovered in Hama, Syria.
FIG. 11
4th/5th-Century Silver Ewer from the Esquiline Treasure discovered in Rome.
FIG. 12
6th/7th-Century Silver Ewer found in Malaja Perestshepina.
FIG. 13
Late Antique Bronze Ewer from Predotto Cividale, Northern Italy.

FIG. 14
Late 8th - 10th-Century Pottery Ewer discovered in the Armenian Garden in Jerusalem.
FIG. 15
Pottery Ewers from 11th/12th-Century Azerbaidjan.

FIG. 16
Ewers depicted in 12th-Century Coptic Gospels.
FIG. 17
Ewers depicted in 13th-Century Arab Miniature Painting.

FIG. 18
Medallion "b" on Ewer MW 5/1.
FIG. 19
Shrub-like Plant in the 35th Miniature of Warqa and Gulshah. Late 12th/early 13th Century A.D.

FIG. 20
Plant from Ghazî's Muqaddimât. Ca. 1200 A.D.
FIG. 21
Sketch of a Tree found on a late 9th or early 10th-Century Paper Fragment from the Fayyum, Egypt.

FIG. 22
Detail of the Interlaced Scroll Frame enclosing a Frontispiece of the Kitab al-Aghta Mosul, 1219 A.D.
FIG. 23
Syrian Brass Basin probably executed between 1240-1260 A.D.
FIG. 24
Raised Brass Ewer Fragment attributed to 14th Century Fars, Iran.