

The ewer of Ibn Jaldak (623/1226) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: the inquiry into the origin of the Mawṣilī School of metalwork revisited

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Experts on Islamic metalwork have long been puzzled by a group of medieval inlaid brasses produced by Mawṣilī artists, since many of the issues they raised remain unresolved. All of them were originally grouped into the category of ‘Mosul bronzes’, with Max van Berchem arguing that the availability of raw material in the Mosul region (provided by the copper mines in the upper basins of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) and the references to a metal industry in Mosul by Ibn Saʿīd in his *Geography* pointed to that city as a source of these objects. Therefore, only those signed by artists with the *nisba* al-Mawṣilī were considered eligible for inclusion in the group.¹ The list of known Mawṣilī metalwork was expanded by the work of Kühnel and Wiet² who added approximately thirty pieces dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries A.D. Following in their footsteps, D. S. Rice conducted extensive research on many of the Mawṣilī pieces to determine the validity of the term ‘Mawṣilī School’ for these metal works.³ Rice makes a clear distinction between works produced at Mosul and works signed by artists using the *nisba* al-Mawṣilī, and produces a list for the latter including twenty-eight objects dating from between 1220 and 1321.⁴

The disputes in past studies deal primarily with questions about the existence of the Mawṣilī metalwork industry, where it was located, and the development of its style. The little energy that went into the investigation of the origin of the Mawṣilī School evaded the question by stressing the north-eastern Iranian connection. Melikian-Chirvani, for example, writing on the ewer made by Shujāʾ ibn Manʿah in 629/1232, states:

The Blacas ewer in the British Museum, the only one that can be *proved* to have been made at Mosul, again points to a Khurasānian connection.⁵

Harari, commenting on the same ewer, writes:

Since, however, we know of no earlier or indeed no other metalwork claiming to have been made in Mossul, it may be that Mossul craftsmen

¹ Max van Berchem, *Monuments et inscriptions de l'Atabek Lu'lu' de Mossoul*, *Orientalistische Studiens* 1 (Giessen, 1906), 197–210.

² See Gaston Wiet, ‘L'exposition d'art Persan à Londres’, *Syria* 13 (1932), 78–9 and Ernst Kühnel, ‘Zwei Mosulbronzes und ihr Meister’, *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 60 (1939), 9–11.

³ Articles by David S. Rice include: ‘The oldest dated Mosul candlestick, A.D. 1225’, *Burlington Magazine* 91, Dec. 1949, 334–40; ‘The brasses of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'’, *BSOAS* xiii/3, 1950, 627–34; and ‘Inlaid brasses from the workshop of Aḥmed al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī’, *Ars Orientalis*, 2, 1957, 283–326.

⁴ The list was published as an appendix to Rice ‘Inlaid brasses from the workshop of Aḥmed al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī’.

⁵ Assadullah Suren Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic metalwork from the Iranian world 8th–18th centuries* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1982), 138.

were themselves descended from a branch of the North Iranian school of inlayers, or at least regarded them as a disciple would his master.⁶

Rice also states: 'It seems very likely that Islamic inlaid brasses were first made in Persia, and that the fashion spread from there westwards' and that the Mongol invasions 'were the prime cause for the migration of craftsmen to the flourishing cities of Syria and Egypt'.⁷

While stressing the Persian influence on the bronzes of Mosul, almost all past studies ignore the rich local artistic tradition of the area to which, in my opinion, the Mawṣilī School owes its origin. James Allan, in his publication of the Nuhad Es-Said collection, successfully attempts to find a 'happier balance between Khurasānian influence and the indigenous metalworking tradition of Syria and Jazira'.⁸

In his studies of Mawṣilī metal works, Rice focuses on a group of five objects produced by a single workshop, that of Aḥmad al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī, between 620/1223 and 640/1242.⁹ Among them were the Cleveland ewer (620/1223) and the Louvre basin made for the Ayyūbid Sulṭān al-'Adil II (636–8/1238–40). One object, the ewer of Ibn Jaldak, only briefly described by Rice, was not studied in detail since Rice had no access to it at that time, is the subject of this article. The aim of this paper is to explore the question of origin through a close examination of this single object; the Mawṣilī ewer now in the Metropolitan Museum (no. 91.1.586) made by Ibn Jaldak in 623/1226.¹⁰ Though the ewer may not be considered significant for the quality of its craftsmanship or the state of its preservation, it is important in as much as it represents a turning point in the development of Mawṣilī metalwork and is a key piece in the puzzle. By tracing its origin we can shed light on the larger question of the origin of the Mawṣilī School and its metalworkers.

The Ibn Jaldak ewer

The ewer at the Metropolitan Museum has a tall moulded neck, a curved handle, a pear-shaped body, and a concave foot. It is 14.5 inches (37 cm.) high, with a maximum diameter of 8.25 inches (20.5 cm.). It is made of hammered brass inlaid with silver. The silver inlay designs cover the whole surface of the vessel and are structured as a series of concentric bands of varying widths. Unfortunately, a considerable portion of the silver inlay has disappeared, but the ewer retains its original design, aside from the spout which is a later restoration. The original must have had a straight, erect spout (fig. 1).

The neck is tubular in shape, tapers towards the shoulder, and has a scalloped collar. It is divided into six horizontal rings. Three mouldings alternate with a band of geometric design and two bands of inscriptions. The plaited pattern on the upper mouldings is repeated on the moulding at the base of the handle. The third moulding is larger than the other two and is made of a separate sheet of brass. It is decorated with a floriated arabesque design, intercepted by small octagonal medallions in a key pattern. The band of

⁶ Ralph Harari, 'Metalwork of the early Islamic period', in Arthur U. Pope (ed.), *A survey of Persian art* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, reprint 1964–65), 7: 2496.

⁷ Rice, 'Inlaid brasses from the workshop of Aḥmed al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī', 284–5.

⁸ James W. Allan, 'Concave or convex? The sources of Jaziran and Syrian metalwork in the 13th Century', in Julian Raby (ed.), *The art of Syria and the Jazira 1100–1250* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 127.

⁹ Four of the objects are studied fully in D. S. Rice 'The oldest dated Mosul candlestick', 334–40 and Rice, 'Inlaid brasses from the workshop of Aḥmed al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī', 284–85.

¹⁰ I am indebted to the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum in New York for allowing me to take a close look at the ewer and to photograph it for the purpose of this study.



FIG. 1. The ewer of Ibn Jaldak at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (dated 623/1226). (Courtesy of the MMA.)

inscription above this moulding is in an interlaced kufic style typical of northern Mesopotamia, the reading of which is made difficult by the loss of the silver inlay. The inscription below the moulding and at the base of the neck is most important; it contains the signature of the artist, the name of his master, and the date of production (figs 2a and 2b). The placement of the signature at the base of the neck is identical to that of the Cleveland ewer (no. 56.11) made by Aḥmad al-Dhakī. Written in naskhī script, Ibn Jaldak's signature reads (fig. 3):

Work of 'Umar ibn Jaldak, ghulām of Aḥmad al-Dhakī al-Naqqāsh al-Mawṣilī in the year six hundred and twenty-three [1226].¹¹

The scalloped collar of the neck contains representations of the signs of the zodiac (figs 4a and 4b). Beginning with Aries at the handle, the ten

¹¹ Though the inscription was recorded as reading: 'Umar ibn al-Ḥājī Jaldak' at the Metropolitan Museum, a closer examination reveals that it reads 'Umar ibn Jaldak'. The full name of the craftsman appears in his earlier piece, the candlestick at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and reads, as recorded by Rice: 'Abū Bakr ibn al-Ḥājī Jaldak'. See D. S. Rice 'The oldest dated Mosul candlestick', 339.



FIG. 2a. The signature of Ibn Jaldak on the neck of the ewer. (Photograph by H. Al-Harithy.)



FIG. 2b. The signature of Ibn Jaldak on the neck of the ewer. (Courtesy of the MMA.)

semi-circles end with the sign of Capricorn. Their iconography is as follows (see fig. 5):

Aries: Represented by a Mars mounted on a ram; he holds an object in his hand.

Taurus: Venus mounted on a bull; she is represented by a lute-playing figure.

Gemini: Mercury, the planet's figure, is not represented. The twins are seated cross-legged, one behind the other, each holding a round object.

Cancer: Represented by a crab with a winged figure riding on its back.

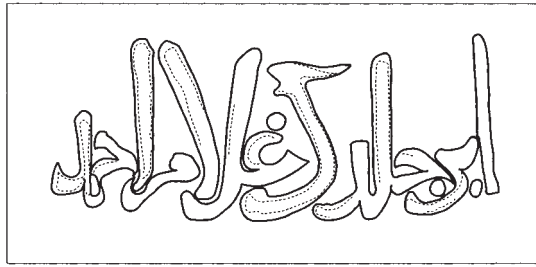


FIG. 3. The signature of Ibn Jaldak on the neck of the ewer.

Leo: A lion carrying a disc on its back, enclosing a sun with a human face and eight triangular rays.

Virgo: The two figures are kneeling, facing opposite directions, each with one leg bent in a very awkward position. They seem to be cutting a curving stalk ending in leaves.

Libra: The loss of inlay leaves only a trace of a figure under the scales.

Scorpio: Mars is represented by a cross-legged, seated, figure holding a scorpion in each hand.

Sagittarius: Both the sign and the planet figure Jupiter are symbolized by a centaur releasing an arrow at the dragon head crowning its tail.

Capricorn: Saturn riding on a Capricorn and holding in his left hand an indefinable animal.

The shoulder of the vessel is decorated with two continuous bands. The first, below the scalloped neck, is an epigraphic band written in naskhī script containing a series of blessings and good wishes. It begins at the handle and reads:

Glory, victory, dominion, dignity, good health, security, virtue, blessing, good health, sufficiency, restfulness, continuance, virtue, pride, happiness, victory over the enemies, and forgiveness to the end of life.¹²

The second band contains representations of courtly scenes, enthroned figures in the company of their courtiers, servants and entertainers. The composition is divided into four parts by the handle, the spout and two octagonal medallions of key-pattern design such as that on the moulding of the neck (figs 6a–d). The two enthroned personages depicted in the composition suggest that it should be viewed as two courtly scenes, not one. Each composition has two rows of figures, the lower consisting of seated musicians and the upper of standing courtiers. This is the same arrangement as that depicted in the courtly scene on the neck of the Cleveland ewer. The background is plain. One peculiar feature of both scenes is the placement of the enthroned figures. In the front composition, left of the handle, the figure on the throne does not occupy the centre of the scene, but the end near the spout. The personage is resting his right hand on his hip, with a bird perched on his left hand. In the scene on the back, the throne is forced off-centre by the medallion. The off-centred placement of the two enthroned figures seems to echo that of the scenes on the shoulder of the Cleveland ewer.¹³ Both the off-centring and the absence of

¹² The complete texts of the inscriptions on the ewer were obtained from the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum. They had been recorded and translated by Yāssir al-Ṭabbā' in 1978.

¹³ See D. S. Rice, 'Inlaid brasses from the workshop of Aḥmed al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī', 290, fig. 5a and b.



FIG. 4a. The zodiac signs on the scalloped collar of Ibn Jaldak's ewer.



FIG. 4b. The zodiac signs on the scalloped collar. (Courtesy of MMA.)

the framing guards or winged angles of the enthroned figure may have been intended to reduce the emphasis on the enthronement scene since the object was not made for or commissioned by a royal patron.

The body consists of three decorative friezes. The top one is a continuous band of mounted horsemen moving from right to left. The second frieze is the widest. Eight large quatrelobed medallions filled with a floriated arabesque design alternate with arabesques ending with human and animal heads. The medallions have pearl borders and are flanked on all four sides by small roundels, each enclosing a six-spoked wheel motif (fig. 7). Inserted in the triangular areas between the medallions are two rows of outdoor scenes. The

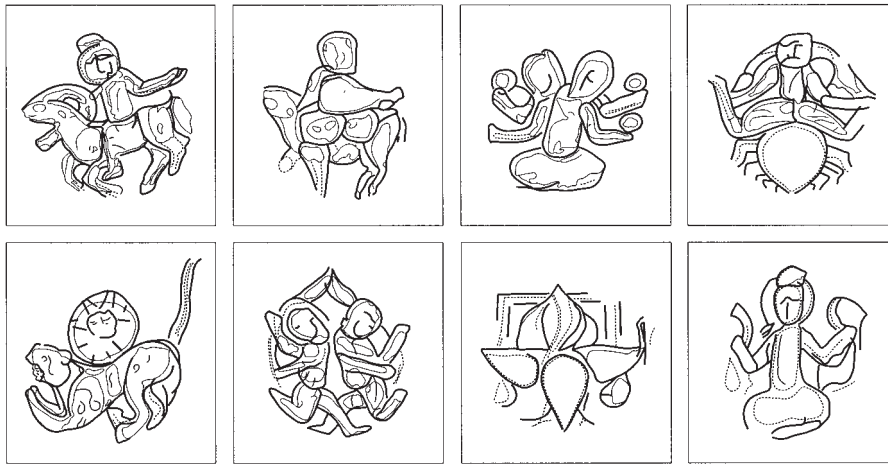


FIG. 5. The zodiac signs on the scalloped collar of Ibn Jaldak's ewer.

upper row contains pairs of riders; the lower one contains a series of scenes of a horseman hunting (fig. 8). The third frieze is epigraphic. Written in floriated Kufic, it reads:

Continuous glory, everlasting prosperity, peaceful life, perfect health,
lasting dominion, luxuriant life, ascending good luck, effectual authority,
purposeful good omen, and perfection ... to its owner.

Unlike the upper part of the vessel, the body decoration is set on a ground of arabesques. The foot contains a band of floral arabesques between plaited borders. At the bottom of the vessel is a graffito that reads 'Afīf al-Muẓaffarī'. This is the same name as that incised on the base of the candlestick made by Ibn Jaldak a year earlier (622/1225). The name may refer, as Rice suggested, to a eunuch in the service of one of the two Ayyūbid princes with the title al-Muẓaffar, Shihāb al-Dīn Ghāzī of Mayyāfarīqīn (617–642/1220–44) or Taqī al-Dīn Maḥmūd of Hama (626–642/1228–44).¹⁴

Two Persian motifs

When viewed in chronological order and in the context of Mawṣilī work, the ewer raises no doubts as to its legitimate descent. It shares with its forebears shape, technique, decorative layout and iconographical content. However, when viewed geographically and in the context of contemporary Iranian metalwork, the vessel seems to contain two Iranian decorative motifs. The first is the representation of the zodiac signs on the scalloped neck, which has no parallel in any Mawṣilī work that predates Ibn Jaldak's ewer, such as the Louvre ewer made by Ibrāhīm ibn Mawāliya, and the Cleveland ewer by Aḥmad al-Dhakī (620/1223). Representations of the zodiac signs, however, are very common in Persia, and are encountered in the metalwork of Khurāsān as early as the twelfth century. James Allan attributes this emphasis on astrology in Persia to elements in Khurāsānī society or religion:

Although astrology had been an integral part of Muslim thought since the days of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, it was particularly emphasized by the Ismā'īlī sect: the Carmathians, the Fatimids, and later the Assassins.

¹⁴ See D. S. Rice 'The oldest dated Mosul candlestick', 340.

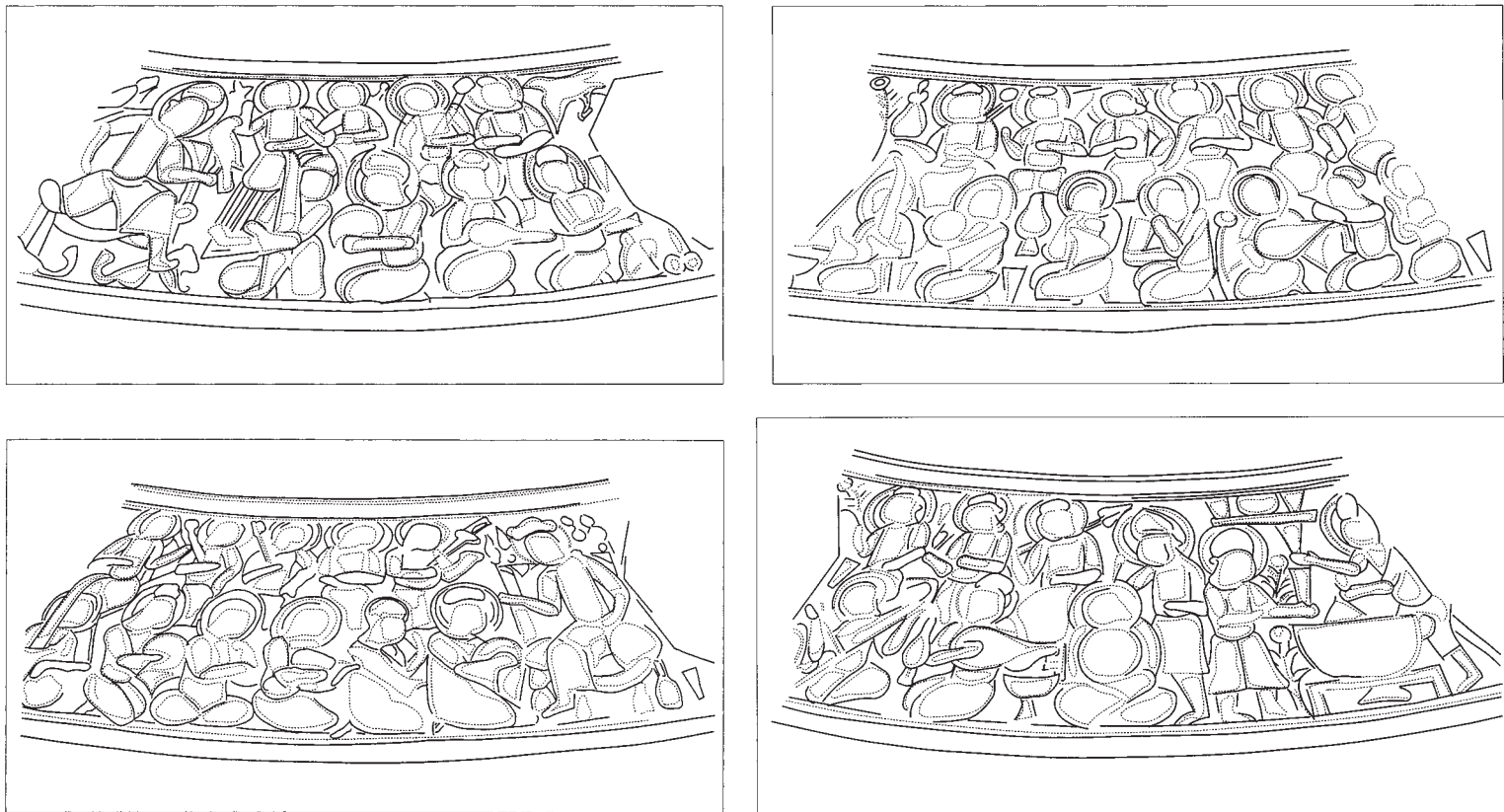


FIG. 6. The courtly scenes on the shoulder of Ibn Jaldak's ewer.

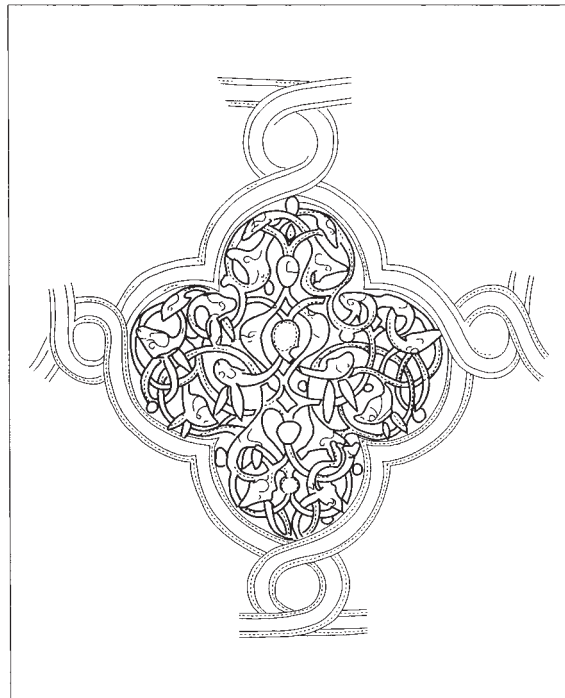


FIG. 7. The animated arabesque medallion, the ewer of Ibn Jaldak.

Whereas individual Muslims might consult an astrologer for advice at important moments in life, the Ismā'īlis made a much more energetic attempt to predict future events and so to synchronize human and cosmic history.¹⁵

One of the earliest known examples of the zodiac motif on Persian metalwork is a bronze ewer dating from the late twelfth century at the Museum of the Gulistan Palace in Tehran.¹⁶ The representations of the signs of the zodiac on the ribs, with variations in detail, are very similar to those on the ewer under study. Another example is the pen case at the British Museum (no. 91.6-23.5) made by Maḥmūd ibn Sunqur and dated 680/1281.¹⁷ The exterior of the lid is decorated with the signs of the zodiac, arranged in three groups of four and enclosed in circles. In both examples, each of the twelve signs is represented in combination with its astrological lord, as in the ewer of Ibn Jaldak. The ewer in the Georgian Museum in Tiflis, made by Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Harawī in 577/1181, places the signs on the shoulder of the vessel, thus presenting an even closer parallel.¹⁸

This is not to suggest that the zodiac signs were not known in Iraq and the Jazīra. Literary and artistic evidence testifies to the contrary, and scientific

¹⁵ James W. Allan, *Islamic metalwork. The Nuḥad Es-Said collection* (London: Sotheby Publications, 1982), 16.

¹⁶ Willy Hartner, 'The pseudoplanetary nodes of the moon's orbit in Hindu and Islamic iconographies', *Ars Islamica*, 5, 1938, fig. 1.

¹⁷ See Esin Atil (ed.) *Islamic metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), 105, fig. 39 and Eva Baer, *Metalwork in medieval Islamic Art* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1983), 253, fig. 205.

¹⁸ See Leon Tigranovich Giuzalian, 'Bronzovi Kuvshin 1182g', *Pamyatniki Epokhi Rustaveli* (Leningrad, 1938), pl. 18.



FIG. 8. Hunting scenes on the body of Ibn Jaldak's ewer.

literature of the period deals extensively with astrology. The signs, however, are represented differently. For example, al-Jazarī, in his *Automata* of 1209, represents them without the planet lords. Another example of the representation of the zodiac signs is on the bridge of Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar. The reliefs on the bridge, dated by Herzfeld to the second half of the twelfth century, represent eight signs with their planet lords. They are described by Herzfeld as follows:

The relief of this bridge show, starting from the right: 1–Saturn and Libra, 2–Jupiter and Cancer, 3–Mars and Capricorn, 4–the Sun and Leo, 5–Venus and Pisces, 6–Mercury and Virgo, 7–the Moon and Taurus, 8–Sagittarius and ?.¹⁹

The zodiac signs on the bridge, though depicted with their planet lords, follow

¹⁹ Ernst Herzfeld, 'Der Thron des Khosro', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsamm.*, 41, 1920, 103.

the astrological system of Exaltations, which is different from the astrological system of the Domicilia followed in the representations of the zodiac signs on Khurāsānian metalwork.²⁰ The principle according to which the signs and the planets are arranged on the ewer of Ibn Jaldak is also that of the Domicilia. It is therefore evident that the zodiac motif of Ibn Jaldak finds its closest parallel in the zodiac signs employed in the decoration of Khurāsānian metalwork.

The second Persian motif is an animated arabesque design. Animated arabesques enclosed in the quatrelobed medallions are not entirely Persian; they are most certainly a modified version of Persian animated scrolls, which appear constantly in Khurāsānian metalwork. The animated scroll work does not, however, appear as an isolated self-contained motif of symmetrical composition. Rather, it appears amid inscriptions, establishing ground, or filling in spaces between motifs. An example is found on the Shazi Khurāsānian pen box, dating from the early thirteenth century.²¹

Since self-contained arabesque designs exist on examples of early Mawṣilī metalwork, Ibn Jaldak seems to have blended two motifs that were known to him—the floral arabesque motif typical of Mawṣilī work and the scroll ending with animal heads typical of Khurāsānian work. This artistic innovation explains the peculiar treatment of the decorative scheme on the body of the ewer. It reverses the relationship between scenes usually placed in the most prominent positions and the background of the field in which they are placed, usually filled with geometric or floral motifs. In this case, the background arabesques are brought forward to occupy the large medallions, while the riding and hunting scenes are shifted to the field in the background of the medallions.

All available evidence indicates that the two motifs, zodiac signs and animated arabesques, are similar to motifs of the same type employed in the decoration of Khurāsānian metalwork. Second, they do not seem to have appeared on any of the metalwork produced by Mawṣilī artists before 1226, the production date of Ibn Jaldak's ewer, nor did they appear in the work executed by his master Aḥmad al-Dhakī. Third, the two motifs were introduced for the first time into the Mawṣilī tradition of metalwork by the ewer of Ibn Jaldak²² and can be seen both on later examples of Mawṣilī work, such as the zodiac signs represented on the candlestick made by Dā'ūd ibn Salāma in 646/1248,²³ and on later descendants of the Mawṣilī School such as the animated arabesque medallion on the basin made for Sultān al-Malik al-Sāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb in 1240 at the Freer Gallery (no. 55.10).²⁴ Fourth, the self-contained arabesque or animated compositions that appear on the thirteenth-century metalwork of western Iran suggest a Mawṣilī influence.

Determining the extent of the Persian influence on early Mawṣilī metalwork is important for our investigation into the origins of the Mawṣilī School. The fact that Persian motifs were *injected* as decorative elements into Mawṣilī work testifies to the existence of an established industry, not a branch or an industry

²⁰ For a full explanation of the two astrological systems, see Willy Hartner, 'The pseudoplanetary nodes of the moon's orbit in Hindu and Islamic iconographies', 115–9.

²¹ See Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic metalwork*, 70–1, fig. 40.

²² Eva Baer has identified the candlestick in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (no. 15.121), which is the work of two Mawṣilī artists: Ḥājj Ismā'il and Muḥammad ibn Futtūh in the 1230s or 40s, which contains the earliest example of animal scrolls in a central design composition. Ibn Jaldak's ewer provides an even earlier precedent than does this example. See Baer, *Metalwork in medieval Islamic art*, 180–5.

²³ Now at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

²⁴ See Atil, *Islamic metalwork in the Freer Gallery*, 137–47.

copying imported objects. A more detailed examination of other aspects of the Mawṣilī ewer of Ibn Jaldak may reveal further evidence as to its origin.

Local roots

The characteristics this particular ewer shares with other Mawṣilī productions and the typical features of Mawṣilī metalwork point to a local artistic tradition. The pear-shaped ewer with spout on the body is characteristic of Mawṣilī work and has always distinguished this group from contemporary Iranian production, the fluted Persian ewers with cylindrical bodies and spouts high on the neck.²⁵ It has been proposed that Mawṣilī ewers were influenced in their shape by the waisted, body-spouted ewers dating from about 900—an example being the bronze ewer at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (no. 24261).²⁶ In addition, the shape of Ibn Jaldak's ewer also finds its analogues in Syrian and Jaziran pottery.²⁷

Not only the shape, but also the decorative motifs of the vessel confirm the hypothesis forwarded by scholars that emphasizes the rooted local tradition. The scenes on the shoulder of Ibn Jaldak's ewer borrowed from court life are comparable to the courtly scenes depicted on both the neck of the Cleveland ewer and the shoulder of the ewer by Ibn Mawāliya. They are all variations on the same theme: enthroned figures attended by two or more courtiers, entertainers and servants, and are also seen in contemporary manuscripts. They seem to be a rooted tradition. According to Rice: 'both the theme of the ruler flanked by attendants and that of the ceremonial pageant have venerable antecedents in the arts of the Ancient Near East.'²⁸ In making a clear stylistic distinction between the Mawṣilī metalwork and that of Saljuk Iran, Fehérvári points to the close parallel between the enthroned figure depicted in a large medallion on the Mawṣilī Keir candlestick (no. 126) and the front piece illustration of the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* manuscript.²⁹ In arguing for a Jaziran origin, Allan also points out that the genre depicted on the body of the ewer of Aḥmad al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī of 620/1223 find their parallel in the illustrations of *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*.³⁰ It becomes clear that both the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* manuscript of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, which was made between 1217 and 1219 for the library of the atābek of Mosul Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', and the illustrations to the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī dating to 1237, are examples of manuscripts that must have acted as a source for many of the scenes depicted by Mawṣilī artists on metalwork.³¹

Mawṣilī artists used trees, rather than floral abstractions, as a major device. The manner in which they employ the tree as a design element in their decorative schemes is unique. The only parallel can be found in Iraqī manuscripts, where the tree also plays an essential part in a composition. Whether

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of the formal classification of ewers, see Baer, *Metalwork in medieval Islamic art*, 83–103.

²⁶ The connection was suggested by Allan in his discussion of the ewer of Ibn Sanjar Shāh, dating to the thirteenth century. See Allan, *Islamic metalwork*, 57.

²⁷ See examples in Ernst Kühnel, *The minor arts of Islam* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), 89, fig. 52 and Esin Atil, *Art of the Arab World* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1975), 81.

²⁸ D. S. Rice, 'Studies in Islamic metalwork II', *BSOAS*, xv, 1953, 75.

²⁹ Géza Fehérvári, *Islamic metalwork of the eighth to the fifteenth century in the Keir Collection* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), 95–6. See also Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab painting* (Skira, 1962), 65.

³⁰ Allan, *Islamic metalwork*, 21.

³¹ See Oleg Grabar, *The illustrations of the Maqāmāt* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and Samuel Miklos Stern, 'A new volume of the illustrated Aghānī manuscripts', *Ars Orientalis*, 2, 1957, 501.

placed in the centre to define the axis, at the edges to contain the composition, or in the foreground to provide a uniform spatial context, the tree was always employed as an active design element. The compositions in the niche-shaped medallions decorating the body of Ibn Mawālīya's ewer are examples: the scene of two men standing under a palm tree and the scene of two men seated under a fruit tree are drawn in a manner similar to that of the illustrations of the famous twelfth-century manuscript of Dioscorides's *Materia Medica*, copied in Iraq by 'Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl in 621/1224.³²

The garden scenes on Ibn Jaldak's candlestick, dated 622/1225, and reproduced and discussed by Rice,³³ contain compositions of a tree at the centre with men picking fruit, climbing the tree, and hunting animals. Similar trees divide the scene under the scalloped neck of the Cleveland ewer and simultaneously create an overall background for the scene. Parallels for such compositions, Rice pointed out, are also to be found in ceramics produced in the same period.³⁴

Rice has also acknowledged that the niche-shaped medallions in which these compositions are contained have their exact parallels in the architecture of Iraq and Jazīra, including the architecture of Abbasid Sāmarrā.³⁵ The arcade of the basin of Maṣūr echoes the trilobed shape of the niche-shaped medallions.³⁶ The architectural ornament in this example also employs a tree trunk to define the vertical axis of the floral composition.

Conclusion

The ewer made by Ibn Jaldak provides evidence that proves valuable for an investigation into the origins of the Mawṣilī School. At one level, it directs our attention to the transition in the metalwork industry that took place early in the third decade of the thirteenth century, marking a clear distinction between early and late Mawṣilī work. It is therefore not surprising that past scholarship placed an emphasis on the Persian impact on Mawṣilī production and ignored the local artistic heritage, since it dealt primarily with later Mawṣilī work. It is probably accurate to attribute the Persian artistic influence on Mawṣilī metalwork to the Mongol invasions of Iran and the migration of artists westwards; it is, however, misleading to attribute the birth of the Mawṣilī metalwork industry to these same factors. If there had been no established industry in Mesopotamia, artists would not have migrated there to seek employment.

The evidence also suggests that Ibn Jaldak himself was an artist who migrated from Persia after the Mongol invasions. A number of facts support this possibility. First, Ibn Jaldak worked for Aḥmad al-Dhākī al-Mawṣilī and did not himself have the *nisba* al-Mawṣilī. Second, the two known pieces that are signed by Ibn Jaldak date to the period after the Mongol invasions of north-eastern Iran in 1220. Third, the name Jaldak is not of Arabic origin; it is most likely to be Farsi.

The evidence examined here indicates that it is the locally rooted artistic

³² See Hugo Buchta, 'Early Islamic miniatures from Baghdad', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, V, 1942, 19–39 and D. S. Rice, 'The brasses of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', 627–34.

³³ D. S. Rice, 'The oldest dated candlestick', 334–40.

³⁴ The reference is given by Rice in 'The oldest dated candlestick', 338 as Rudolph Meyer Riefstahl, *The Parish Watson collection of Mohammadan potteries* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1922), figs. 72 and 86.

³⁵ D. S. Rice, 'The oldest dated candlestick', 337.

³⁶ For discussion of parallel examples see Aga-Oglu 'About a type of Islamic incense burner', *Art Bulletin*, 27, 1945, 33.

tradition, and not an imported one, to which Mawṣilī metalwork owes its origin. This is to be expected of an area with a history like that of Iraq and the Jazīra. The practice of royal and princely patronage of the arts, the rich mix of cultures and religions, and the artistic heritage dating back to ancient times all provide fertile grounds not only for the birth of a metalwork industry, but also for its nourishment.