

Islamic Glassmakers and their Works

L. A. MAYER

Hebrew University, Jerusalem

ELSEWHERE¹ I have tried to prove that the time is ripe for a new, more promising and more just approach to Muslim art. With the notable exception of miniaturists, a few Turkish architects and a handful of metal workers, Muslim art has been treated as if it had been created by an anonymous mass of craftsmen, with only the names of their patrons scintillating high above them. By disregarding individual artists, their backgrounds, and their relation to their works, we have turned our backs on the study of the creative power of the individual, the one thing which makes research in the field of art worth while, the one thing which makes it possible to understand the exact place and value of a given work of art, or, in other words, its worth for human civilization.

But if the method used till now can be changed with regard to most areas of Muslim art, it cannot be changed in all, and one of the fields in which it cannot be rectified is that of glass. Literary sources provide us with a few names of medieval glassblowers and decorators² who lived in Muslim countries, but not with a description of their works, so that—with one exception—we have no chance of identifying them. Inscriptions³ on the objects themselves reveal half a dozen names of their makers, none of whom happens to be mentioned in literature. Consequently, I present the following notes not as an attempt to

¹ At the Congress of Orientalists, Istanbul, 1951; cf. its Proceedings, I, 1953, p. 194, and in the introduction to my *Islamic Architects and their Works* (in the press).

² Ḥamdân al-Kharrâṭ: *Aghânî*, 2nd ed., 1929, pp. 152, I, 12 - 153, I, 10; Goldziher, *Mubam. Studien*, II, 1890, p. 360: Masters Mordecai. Hayyim and Samuel of Antioch: Benjamin of Tudela. *Itinerary*: ed. Adler, 1907, p. 18 (of the Hebrew text, p. 16 of the translation): Abû Ibrâhîm Ishâq b. Nuṣair. *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, 1871, p. 360; Lamm, *Mittelalterliche Gläser*, I, pp. 491, 496; al-Malik aṣ-Ṣâliḥ Ṣâliḥ b. Muḥammad b. Qalâûn, one of whose hobbies was glass making: Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, s.v., and several others.

³ Some of them are impossible to read and leave us in doubt whether عمل should be translated 'work of' and the word following it be considered as the name of the maker, or whether together with the first letter of the following word it should be translated 'made in' and the second line interpreted as the name of the place where the object was produced; e.g. Lamm, *Glass from Iran*, pl. 28, K. L. So far as I can see there is no signed glass object in which the 'work' is indicated by صنع or صنع

impart knowledge, but in the hope of obtaining additional information from colleagues who have more material at their disposal.

QĀSIM

Qâsim, a glassblower who flourished in southern Anatolia in the course of the 8th or 9th century, made a spoonlike object, discovered during the excavations of the Neilson Expedition to Mersin.

BIBL.: Florence Day apud Garstang, *Prehistoric Mersin*, 1953, p. 261.

AL-BAŞRĪ

Al-Başrî is the *nisba* of one or several glassblowers. Fragments of two vessels of lustred glass, signed by him—or by them—have survived. One, dated by Ettinghausen late 9th or early 10th century, is now in the Princeton Museum, another, several decades earlier, is now in the Museum of Muslim Art (formerly called Arab Museum), Cairo.

BIBL.: Ettinghausen, Early Islamic Glass-making Center, *Record of the Museum of Hist. Art, Princeton Univ.*, 1942, vol. 1, pp. 4-7.

‘UMAR B. IBRĀHĪM

‘Umar b. Ibrâhîm, a glassblower, flourished in Iraq about the middle of the 4th century of the Hegira (10th century A.D.). He is known by two glass flasks:

I. One, reported to have been found at Kufa, for some time in the Ginsberg collection, Berlin, now in the British Museum.

BIBL.: Lamm, *Glas von Samarra*, 1928, p. 41. id., *Gläser*, 1929-1930, I, p. 59, II, pl. 13, No. 6; *Répertoire d'épigr. arabe*, t. IV, 1933, p. 175 f., No. 1547. Herzfeld, *Geschichte der Stadt Samarra*, 1948, p. 279 f., No. 45, fig. 30; David-Weill, *Syria*, 1952, p. 163.

II. Another glass flask, found in Iraq, is now in the Louvre Museum.

BIBL.: David-Weill, Un flacon de verre, *Bulletin des Musées de France*, 1937, p. 103 f.; id., *Syria*, 1952, p. 163

ABBĀS B NUŞAIR

Abbâs b. Nuşair b. Abî Yûsuf Jarîr b. Sa'îd al-Balâwî, lived in Egypt at the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th cent. (early 11th cent.), where he made a glass vessel, a piece of which is now kept in the Museum of Muslim Art (formerly called Arab Museum), Cairo

BIBL.: Lamm, *Gläser*, 1929-1930, I, p. 117, II, pl. 39, No. 5, *Répertoire d'épigr. arabe*, t. VI, 1935, p. 76, No. 2141; Lamm, *Oriental Glass*, 1941, p. 47

SA'D

Sa'd, a Fatimid glass painter, to judge by his signature obviously identical with the famous potter of the same name, made a lustred bowl, a piece of which was found at Fustat and is now in the Benaki Museum, Athens.

BIBL.: Migeon, *Manuel*, 2nd ed., 1927, vol. 2, p. 118; Lamm, *Oriental Glass*, 1941, pp. 45 f., 51, pl. XVIII. 1.

'ALI B. MUḤAMMAD

'Alī b. Muḥammad ar-Ramakī (or az-Zamakī) is known by two lamps,⁴ each made for a Cairene mosque.

I. In 730 (1329/30) he made a lamp for the Mosque founded by Saif ad-dīn Ulmās, at that time chamberlain (*amīr ḥājib*) of Sultan Muḥammad b. Qalāūn. The lamp passed from the collection of Linant de Bellefonds into that of Rostovitz Bey, and finally into the Museum of Muslim Art, Cairo.

BIBL.: Wiet, *Lampes*, 1929, pp. 122-124, esp. p. 123, No. 3154, pl. VIII, with a very full literature, to which the following should be added: Lamm, *Gläser*, 1929-1930, I, p. 437 f., pl. 191.4; Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry*, 1933, p. 241; Taymur-Zaky Hasan, *At-taṣwīr 'inda-l-'Arab*, 1942, p. 109 and n. 377; Dimand, *Handbook*, 1944, p. 241; Zaky Hasan, *Dalīl Maṭḥaf al-Fann al-Islāmī*, Cairo, 1952, p. 135 f., No. 4.

II. At approximately the same time he made a lamp for the mosque founded by Saif ad-dīn Qauṣūn in Cairo (inaugurated 8 July 1330). It found its way from the Mannheim collection to that of Pierpont Morgan, who had it exhibited for many years in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (at least 1907-1914). It is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

BIBL.: Molinier, *Collection Charles Mannheim*, 1898, p. 39 and fig.; Schmoranz, *Old Oriental Glass Vessels*, 1899, pp. 66 f., 69, figs. 66-68, pl. XXXIV; Mádl, *Altorient. Gläser, Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*, I, p. 276, ill.; Artin, *Quatre lampes*, *Bull. Inst. Egypt.*, 1907, p. 81 f., pl. IV; van Berchem, *CIA. Jérusalem, Ville*, 1922, p. 289, n.; Wiet, *op. cit.*, p. 159, App. No. 26; Lamm, *Gläser*, 1929-30, p. 438, pls. 191.5, 200.1; Seitz-Lamm, *Glaset*, 1933, pl. 22; Mayer, *op. cit.*, p. 186 f.; Taymur-Zaky Hasan, *l. cit.*; Dimand, *Handbook*, 1944, p. 241.

According to Wiet's most plausible suggestion الرمكى and امكى cover the same name of which one element, viz. لر, was inadvertently omitted by the decorator on the lamp in the Arab Museum.

SERKHOSH IBRAHİM

Ibrâhım, known as the Drunkard (*serkhosh*), made the glass windows of the Mosque of Sultan Soliman the Magnificent in Istanbul, which was finished in 1557.

BIBL.: F. Adler, Die Moscheen zu Konstantinopel, *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 1874, p. 82; H. Barth, *Konstantinopel*, 1901, p. 131; Djelal Essad (= Arseven), *Constantinople*, 1909, p. 206; Babinger, Quellen, *Jahrbuch d. Asiat. Kunst*, 1924, p. 40; Mamboury, *Constantinople*, 2nd ed., 1929, p. 305; Arseven, *L'art turc*, 1939, p. 166, n. 2.