

Arabic Calligraphy | Civilisation of the Word

'Inscriptions are usually chosen to complement the function of the object.'

Inscriptions vary in subject and include a wide variety of calligraphic styles. They may refer to patrons and their accomplishments or recite verses from the Qur'an, protective prayers, blessings, poetic verses and proverbs. The latter inscriptions are usually chosen to complement the function of the object, such as the use of the Qur'anic verse 'God, Light of the World' (24: 35) on mosque lamps, or the use of poetic verses that praise the work of the pen, seen on pen cases or writing boxes. Protective prayers and invocations of blessings are expected to actively contribute to the function of a vessel. Words such as 'baraka' acknowledge and invoke God's generosity, and the owner's good luck. The same sentiments are evoked when using one of God's Ninety-Nine Names on an object, where its presence would protect the object and its contents from harm or loss.



Name:

Tomb cover

Dynasty:

Hegira 12th / AD 18th century Ottoman

Details:

Victoria and Albert Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

Justification:

Appropriately, the inscriptions on this tomb covering include the Shahada (profession of the Muslim faith), verses from the Qur'an and a pious invocation.



Name:

Two mosque lamps

Dynasty:

Hegira mid-7th century/ AD mid-14th century Mamluk

Details:

The British Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

Justification:

The necks of these two lamps are inscribed with a verse from the Qur'an: 'God, Light of the World'.



Name:

Door knocker

Dynasty:

Hegira 589 / AD 1193 Ayyubid

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

A knocker from the door of a religious school, upon which thuluth script acknowledges the patron of the school together with his mentor, the Ayyubid sovereign.



Name:
Glass tumbler

Dynasty:
Hegira 3rd century / AD 9th century Abbasid

Details:
National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
An inscription wishes that the user of this tumbler be filled with delight, and states that the glass was made in Damascus.



Name:
Cup with inscription

Dynasty:
Hegira second half of 5th or beginning of 6th century / AD second half 11th or beginning 12th century Taifa or Almoravid

Details:
Mértola Museum
Mértola, Beja, Portugal

Justification:
A kufic inscription wishes the user of this goblet full blessings and total happiness.
