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Rafiqa GULIYEVA,
orcid.org/0009-0000-0517-370X
Dissertation Candidate (PhD),
Head of the Exposition Department
Azerbaijan National Museum of Art
(Baku, Azerbaijan) rafigaguliyeva23@gmail.com

ARTISTIC FEATURES OF AZERBAIJANI METALWORK IN FOREIGN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

This article examines the artistic features of a selected corpus of medieval and early modern metal objects preserved in foreign museums and connected to the history of Azerbaijani visual culture through workshop provenance, the origin of an owner or commissioner, dynastic patronage, or the historiography of attribution. The chronological framework extends from 1190–91 to 1535–36. The corpus comprises the ewer made for ʿUthman ibn Sulayman al-Nakhjawani in the Louvre; the bowl naming Yusuf ibn Ahmad, a Tabrizi merchant, in the Victoria and Albert Museum; the monumental oil lamp commissioned by or for Uzun Hasan in the David Collection; the signed inkwell and pencase of Mirak Hussein Yazdi in the Benaki Museum; and the inscribed bowl of 1535–36 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Wade Cup in the Cleveland Museum of Art is used as a control case for the revision of a once influential Azerbaijani attribution. The study combines formal and stylistic analysis, typological comparison, epigraphic reading, material and technical examination based on published records, historical contextualization, and source criticism. It argues that «Azerbaijani metalwork in foreign collections» cannot be treated as a homogeneous category of workshop production. At least four distinct relations must be separated: a secure or probable production centre; the Nakhchivani or Tabrizi identity of an owner or commissioner; Aq Qoyunlu dynastic patronage; and a later historiographic attribution that may subsequently be revised. Across the corpus, epigraphy performs a structural as well as documentary function. Inscriptions identify owners, patrons, makers, dates, blessings, and religious formulas while simultaneously organizing surfaces into registers, cartouches, medallions, and repeating rhythms. Comparative analysis reveals a movement from the densely articulated inlaid programs of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries to fifteenth-century monumental dynastic representation, the more spacious and rhythmic ornament of early Safavid Tabriz, and the increasingly schematized, calligraphically emphatic decoration of the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The resulting evidence-based model permits these works to be studied within Azerbaijani art history without collapsing mobile artisanal networks and transregional patronage into the borders of a modern nation-state.

Key words: *Azerbaijani metalwork, foreign museum collections, Tabriz, Nakhchivan, epigraphy, attribution, material culture.*

Рафіга ГУЛІЄВА,
orcid.org/0009-0000-0517-370X
здобувачка ступеня доктора філософії (PhD),
завідувачка відділу експозиції
Азербайджанського національного музею мистецтв
(Баку, Азербайджан) rafigaguliyeva23@gmail.com

ХУДОЖНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ЗРАЗКІВ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОГО ХУДОЖНЬОГО МЕТАЛУ В ЗАРУБІЖНИХ МУЗЕЙНИХ КОЛЕКЦІЯХ

У статті досліджено художні особливості групи середньовічних і ранньомодерних металевих виробів, що зберігаються в зарубіжних музеях і пов'язані з історією азербайджанської художньої культури через місце виготовлення, походження власника або замовника, династичний патронат чи історіографічну атрибуцію. Хронологічні межі охоплюють період від 1190/1191 до 1535/1536 рр. До основного корпусу залучено глечик на ім'я Усмана ібн Сулеймана ан-Нахджавані з Лувру, чашу Юсуфа ібн Ахмада – тебризького купця – з Музею Вікторії й Альберта, монументальну лампу Узун Гасана з Колекції Давида, чорнильницю з пеналом майстра Мірака Хусейна Єзді з Музею Бенакі та підписану чашу 1535/1536 рр. з Метрополітен-музею. «Чаша Вейда» з Клівлендського музею мистецтв використана як контрольний приклад зміни музейної та наукової атрибуції. Методологія поєднує формально-стилістичний, типологічний, епіграфічний, матеріально-технічний, історико-порівняльний і джерелознавчий аналіз. Обґрунтовано, що поняття «азербайджанський художній метал у зарубіжних зібраннях» не може механічно ототожнюватися з єдиним місцем виробництва. Для коректного аналізу необхідно розрізняти щонайменше чотири типи зв'язку: достовірний або ймовірний виробничий центр; належність замовни-

ка чи власника до Нахічевані або Тебриза; патронат правителів Ак-Коюнлу; пізнішу історіографічну атрибуцію. Встановлено, що спільною художньою ознакою розглянутих предметів є структурна роль епіграфіки: напис не лише повідомляє ім'я, дату, благопобажання або релігійну формулу, а й організовує поверхню через пояси, картуші, медальйони та ритмічні повтори. Порівняння показує перехід від насичених інкрустованих програм кінця XII – початку XIII ст. до монументальної династичної репрезентації XV ст., просторовішого ранньосефевідського декору та більш схематизованої, каліграфічно акцентованої системи другої чверті XVI ст. Запропонована модель дозволяє включати ці твори до історії азербайджанського мистецтва без підміни мобільних ремісничих мереж модерною національною географією.

Ключові слова: *азербайджанський художній метал, зарубіжні музейні колекції, Тебриз, Нахічевань, епіграфіка, атрибуція, матеріальна культура.*

Statement of the problem. Foreign museum collections are among the principal sites through which medieval and early modern metalwork from the Iranian, Caucasian, Anatolian, and Mesopotamian worlds enters global art-historical narratives. Their online catalogues make inscriptions, technical data, dimensions, provenance statements, and earlier bibliographies accessible to a broad scholarly public. At the same time, museum classifications are not neutral containers. They condense changing scholarly positions into short labels such as "Iran," "Khurasan," "western Iran or eastern Turkey," "probably Tabriz," or, in older literature, "Azerbaijan." Because these labels can refer to different kinds of evidence, they must be read critically rather than repeated as equivalent statements of origin.

The expression "Azerbaijani metalwork" is especially complex when applied to objects created before the modern nation-state. In the present study it is used as a relational art-historical category, not as an automatic claim that every object was manufactured within the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The corpus includes works connected with Nakhchivan and Tabriz through personal nisbas, works associated with Aq Qoyunlu patronage, objects probably produced in early Safavid Tabriz, and one celebrated vessel whose former attribution to Azerbaijan was later rejected. This distinction is necessary because an inscription may identify the home city of an owner without identifying the workshop, while a dynastic inscription can establish patronage without fixing a precise production centre. Conversely, a stylistic attribution to Tabriz can be probable even when no explicit place-name is engraved on the object.

The chronological limits, 1190–91 to 1535–36, were selected because they bring together two decisive phases. The first is the mature medieval inlaid-metal tradition, in which epigraphic registers and contrasting materials transformed vessel surfaces into dense visual and semantic fields. The second is the Turkmen and early Safavid period, when political power in Tabriz and western Iran generated new relations among monumental patronage, Shiʿi inscriptions, linear inlay, engraving, and increasingly abstract ornamental systems. The central research problem is therefore twofold: which formal, stylistic, technical, and semantic features characterize this museum corpus, and how can its relationship to Azerbaijani art history be formulated without confusing production, ownership, patronage, and later attribution?

Research analysis. The historiography of Iranian and transregional Islamic metalwork provides the methodological basis for such a distinction. Linda Komaroff emphasizes that metal objects are unusually informative because their inscriptions often supply internal evidence concerning dates, makers, owners, religious formulas, and political patronage; this documentary capacity makes metalwork central to the reconstruction of artistic production and circulation (Komaroff, 2014). Her study of the transition from fourteenth-century spatial inlay to fifteenth-century linear inlay further demonstrates that changes in technique cannot be separated from changes in ornamental scale, figural content, chromatic contrast, and the integration of inscriptions into the overall decorative network (Komaroff, 1988: 89–102).

Azerbaijani-language scholarship has also treated the dispersion of national art across international collections as a distinct research problem. A relevant museum-oriented synthesis is the volume by Rasim Efendiyev and Toghrul Efendiyev (Efendiyev & Efendiyev, 2012), which surveys Azerbaijani works and heritage objects preserved outside the country. Its broad heritage perspective is useful for establishing the scale and diversity of dispersed material. The present article complements that approach by concentrating on a smaller verified corpus and by separating workshop provenance from the origin of a patron or owner.

James W. Allan's examination of metalwork under the Turkmen dynasties drew attention to a group of objects whose political and stylistic context extends across eastern Anatolia and Iran rather than conforming to a single modern national geography (Allan, 1991: 153–159). Anna Contadini, approaching luxury objects through the social history of patronage, showed that inscriptions naming merchants and scholars can document urban, non-royal participation

in the consumption of prestigious metalwork. Her analysis of the Victoria and Albert Museum bowl naming Yusuf ibn Ahmad, the Tabrizi merchant, is particularly important because the owner's urban identity is embedded in an object attributed to Khurasan (Contadini, 2017: 434–435).

The historiography also contains a cautionary example. Richard Ettinghausen's reassessment of the Wade Cup shifted the vessel from an attribution to late thirteenth-century Azerbaijan toward early thirteenth-century Khurasan, a view reflected in the Cleveland Museum of Art's present classification of the cup as Iranian (Ettinghausen, 1957: 327–366; Cleveland Museum of Art, n.d.). The case demonstrates that a visually persuasive regional attribution can be revised when epigraphy, iconography, ornament, and comparison are reconsidered together. Existing scholarship thus offers rich studies of individual objects, technical transitions, and patronage, but a comparative framework is still needed for separating the different meanings carried by the label "Azerbaijani" in foreign collections.

Purpose of the article. The purpose of the article is to identify the principal artistic features of selected Azerbaijan-connected metal objects in foreign museums and to develop an evidence-based classification of their relationship to Azerbaijani art history. The study addresses five questions: how the vessel or object form structures decoration; how material and technique generate visual contrast; how inscriptions operate simultaneously as text and ornament; which stylistic changes are visible between the late twelfth and mid-sixteenth centuries; and what type of evidence supports each Azerbaijani connection. Formal and stylistic analysis is combined with typological comparison, epigraphic and semantic interpretation, material-technical analysis based on museum documentation, historical contextualization, and source criticism. The corpus is deliberately selective and consists only of objects for which reliable museum records or established scholarly publications provide sufficient data.

Presentation of the main material.

Attribution as a layered evidentiary problem.

A metal object can be connected to a place or culture through several independent evidentiary layers. The first and strongest is an explicit or well-supported production centre, established by a dated inscription, maker's record, archaeological context, or a coherent comparison with a documented group. The second is the origin or urban affiliation of the maker, owner, or commissioner, often expressed through a nisba. The third is dynastic or institutional patronage. The fourth is stylistic attribution, which remains probabilistic even when based on a substantial comparative corpus. The fifth is historiographic attribution: the history of how an object has been classified, exhibited, and reassigned over time. These layers may coincide, but they frequently do not.

For the present material, four analytical categories are useful. Category I comprises objects securely or probably related to production in Tabriz, principally the early Safavid inkwell group and the Metropolitan Museum bowl. Category II comprises dynastic-patronage objects, represented by the lamp of Uzun Hasan. Category III includes objects made elsewhere but naming a person from Nakhchivan or Tabriz, namely the Louvre ewer and the Victoria and Albert Museum bowl. Category IV consists of disputed or superseded attributions, represented by the Wade Cup. This classification does not diminish the relevance of the objects to Azerbaijani art history. Rather, it specifies the historical mechanism of that relevance and prevents the owner's identity from being converted into a workshop provenance.

Owner, commissioner, and production centre: the Nakhchivani ewer and the Tabrizi merchant's bowl.

The ewer in the Louvre, inventory number OA 6314, is one of the most informative objects in the corpus because its inscription, maker, date, technique, and place of production are unusually well documented. The museum dates it to 586 AH/1190–91, identifies Herat as the place of origin, and names the bronzeworker as Raʿfa (?) ibn Saʿd. The object was made of leaded brass by casting, chasing, and champlevé work and was enriched with glass, black paste, silver, and copper inlays. It measures 22.2 cm in height, with a maximum diameter of 12.9 cm. The central inscription identifies ʿUthman ibn Sulayman, or possibly Salman, al-Nakhjawani as the owner or commissioner and records the date, while the upper and lower bands contain benedictory formulas in thuluth and Kufic scripts (Louvre Museum, n.d.).

The artistic organization of the ewer depends on the tension between its compact pear-shaped volume and a system of horizontal epigraphic registers. The swelling body provides a broad field on which three textual zones are arranged with distinct visual weights. The larger cursive forms of the upper and central inscriptions produce a flowing rhythm, while the angular lower Kufic register creates a firmer graphic base. Because the central dedication runs on both sides of the handle, the inscription is not applied to an abstract flat field; it is coordinated with the vessel's physical axis and with the user's manipulation of the object. The alternation of the yellow-toned brass ground with silver, copper, black paste, and glass

would originally have produced a polychromatic metallic surface in which semantic emphasis and visual contrast reinforced one another.

The ewer's Azerbaijani connection is precise but limited: al-Nakhjawani identifies the commissioner or owner as a person associated with Nakhchivan, whereas the same museum record assigns production to Herat. The object therefore documents the participation of a Nakhchivani elite consumer in the luxury-metal economy of eastern Iran. It does not, by itself, establish a Nakhchivan workshop. Its art-historical value lies in showing that urban identity, patronage, and object mobility were already intertwined at the end of the twelfth century. The inscription functions as a social biography embedded within the artistic structure of the vessel.

A related but socially distinctive case is the early thirteenth-century bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum, inventory number 634-1872, attributed to Khurasan. The vessel bears two inlaid inscriptions. The larger naskh band contains blessings, whereas a second, floriated angular inscription is divided into four sections by regularly spaced floral medallions and identifies Yusuf ibn Ahmad as a Tabrizi merchant. Contadini argues that the second inscription is integral to the decorative scheme and is better understood as part of the original commission than as a casual later addition (Contadini, 2017: 434–435).

Here the inscription achieves compositional integration through segmentation. The owner's name and professional identity do not interrupt the ornament; they are distributed around the circumference and synchronized with the medallions. The alternation between text and floral units transforms the bowl into a rotational composition that unfolds as the object is handled or viewed from changing positions. This differs from a single frontal dedication. The Tabrizi identity of the merchant becomes visible only through circumambulation, making social status part of the vessel's temporal mode of perception. As in the Louvre ewer, the place-name embedded in the nisba concerns the owner rather than the Khurasani workshop. Read together, the two objects reveal Nakhchivan and Tabriz not merely as production labels but as urban identities participating in long-distance systems of commission, trade, and possession.

Dynastic patronage and monumental form: the oil lamp of Uzun Hasan.

The oil lamp in the David Collection, inventory number 45/1999, belongs to a different scale and social register. Dated to the 1470s and localized cautiously to western Iran or eastern Turkey, it is made of brass inlaid with silver, measures 122 cm in height, and has a diameter of approximately 40 cm. Its two-part construction combines a traditional candlestick below with an upper shaft and a bowl intended for oil. A monumental thuluth inscription indicates that it was ordered by or for Uzun Hasan, ruler of the Aq Qoyunlu confederation (David Collection, n.d.). Allan includes the lamp among the key objects of Turkmen metalwork in eastern Anatolia and Iran (Allan, 1991: 153).

Its artistic effect is produced first by verticality. Unlike a hand-held ewer or bowl, the lamp occupies architectural space and organizes vision from the broad lower support upward through the shaft to the oil receptacle. The tapering and widening transitions between its parts establish a measured axial rhythm. Silver inlay activates the brass surface without dissolving the clarity of the silhouette. The calligraphic band is therefore read both as text and as a monumental contour that encircles the object, converting political patronage into a repeated visual presence. The scale also changes the relation between viewer and inscription: the text is not an intimate mark of ownership but an element of public or ceremonial display.

The lamp's connection with Azerbaijani art history rests principally on Aq Qoyunlu patronage and the political-cultural environment centred in Tabriz during Uzun Hasan's reign, not on a universally agreed workshop location. The museum's deliberately broad localization – western Iran or eastern Turkey – reflects the mobility of craftsmen and forms within the Turkmen realm. This ambiguity is historically meaningful. It shows that dynastic patronage could produce a coherent language across territories whose modern boundaries divide what was once an interconnected artistic sphere. Accordingly, the lamp should be classified as an object of dynastic and cultural affiliation rather than as proof of a narrowly bounded national workshop.

Early Safavid Tabriz: spacious inlay, devotional epigraphy, and ornamental transformation.

The inkwell and pencase in the Benaki Museum, inventory number 13172, introduces the early Safavid phase. The object is dated to the sixteenth century, assigned to Safavid Iran, made of brass inlaid with silver, and measures 30 cm. Its decoration combines arabesques with Persian and Arabic verses in nastaʿliq. The craftsman's signature, Mirak Hussein Yazdi, appears on the lower part, while Arabic verses invoking ʿAli place the object within a Shiʿi devotional environment associated with the reign of Shah Ismail I (Museum With No Frontiers, 2026).

The form unites two writing implements: a cylindrical inkwell with a domed cover and an elongated pencase. This functional duality generates

an asymmetrical but balanced silhouette. The dome acts as a compact volumetric accent, while the long case establishes a directional horizontal axis. Instead of concealing the difference between the components, ornament mediates their relationship through repeated arabesques, inscriptions, and medallion-like units. The calligraphic content is especially appropriate to an object designed for writing: text is simultaneously the product of the tool, the decoration of the tool, and a marker of the owner's religious and literary environment.

Komaroff associates three cylindrical, dome-covered inkwells signed by Mirak Hussein Yazdi with metalwork production at the first Safavid capital, Tabriz. She characterizes their medallions as containing radial arrangements of stylized cloud scrolls and notes that their overall organization is more spacious, rhythmic, and less rigid than the crowded precision of fifteenth-century wares (Komaroff, 2014). This group-level attribution is stronger than a general label of "Iran" but should still be expressed as a scholarly reconstruction rather than an inscriptional certainty for each individual object. Artistically, the Benaki work represents a rebalancing of surface density: motifs are allowed to breathe within distinct fields, and the silvery inlay creates measured accents rather than an uninterrupted glittering envelope.

The signed bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, inventory number 91.1.615, documents the next stage with unusual precision. Made by Al-Imami Sayyid Naqqash al-Husaini and dated 942 AH/1535–36, it is classified as Iranian and probably produced in Tabriz. The object is copper, tinned, engraved, and inlaid with black compound; it measures 16.7 cm in height and 34.9 cm in diameter. Its decoration includes cloud scrolls, cartouches, interlacing roundels, and a recurring Y-shaped motif. A Shiʿi prayer in naskh appears beneath the rim, while verses invoking abundance and happiness occupy the cartouches. The owner, Qasim ibn Husain Qannadi, the maker, and the date are recorded in a lower row of quatrefoils (Metropolitan Museum of Art, n.d.).

The bowl's broad rounded body supports a layered horizontal program, yet its visual language differs from the multicoloured inlay of the Louvre ewer and from the silver-inlaid Benaki object. Tinning establishes a pale metallic field, while engraved contours and black filling produce a graphic opposition closer to drawing than to polychrome incrustation. The ornament is distributed through overlapping and interlocking compartments. Rather than allowing every motif an independent visual presence, the design integrates cloud scrolls, cartouches, roundels, and inscriptions into a continuous network. The inscriptions remain legible, but calligraphy also operates as one of the principal abstract forms.

Komaroff describes the decoration of the second quarter of the sixteenth century as increasingly stiff and schematized, with traditional vegetal and abstract motifs maintained but more strongly abstracted and with calligraphy gaining prominence (Komaroff, 2014). The Metropolitan bowl confirms this transformation. Compared with the spacious radial medallions of the Mirak Hussein group, its surface is more tightly systematized and its repeated compartments more standardized. At the same time, the bowl preserves continuity with late fifteenth-century Turkmen metalwork and participates in a wider visual exchange with Ottoman and Mamluk arts, as the museum itself notes (Metropolitan Museum of Art, n.d.). Tabriz therefore appears not as an isolated local school but as a major node in a network of courtly, commercial, and artisanal interaction.



Fig. 1. Inscribed Bowl. Al-Imami Sayyid Naqqash al-Husaini, dated 942 AH/1535–36 CE. Copper; tinned, engraved, and inlaid with black compound. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. 91.1.615. Source: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/444614 (public domain; accessed 26.08.2026).

The Wade Cup and the historiography of displaced attribution.

The Wade Cup, inventory number 1944.485 in the Cleveland Museum of Art, is included not as an Azerbaijani work but as a methodological control. The museum currently dates it to 1200–1221 and classifies it as Iranian, made of brass inlaid with silver. It measures 11.5 cm in height and 16.1 cm in diameter. Around the rim, letters are formed from human figures, animals, and birds; the body is covered with

interlacing bands and compartments containing small figural and zodiacal imagery (Cleveland Museum of Art, n.d.).

The cup is formally compelling because the animated inscription converts the boundary between writing and representation into the principal visual event. The upper rim, normally a terminating contour, becomes a procession of figural letterforms. Beneath it, interlacing bands subdivide the surface into compact narrative or emblematic compartments. Silver inlay against brass sharpens this dual system: the eye alternates between reading, identifying figures, and following the geometric movement of the bands. Such richness made the object influential in discussions of regional style.



Fig. 2. The Wade Cup with Animated Script. 1200–1221. Brass inlaid with silver. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, inv. 1944.485. Source: https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1944.485 (Open Access; accessed 20.08.2026).

Ettinghausen's 1957 study challenged the earlier attribution of the cup to late thirteenth-century Azerbaijan and argued for an early thirteenth-century Khurasani origin; the present museum classification is consistent with that revision (Ettinghausen, 1957: 327–366; Cleveland Museum of Art, n.d.). The significance of the case extends beyond one object. Animated script, zodiacal imagery, and complex silver inlay circulated across regions and cannot independently prove a production centre. A national or regional attribution must therefore be supported by converging evidence rather than by visual resemblance alone. The Wade Cup shows why the historiography of classification must itself become part of object analysis.

Comparative artistic syntax of the corpus.

Across the selected objects, material is never merely a technical substrate. Leaded brass, brass with silver inlay, copper with tinning and black compound, glass, copper, and dark filling are deployed to articulate visual hierarchy. In the late twelfth-century ewer, multiple inlay materials create chromatic differentiation among epigraphic registers. In the fifteenth-century lamp, silver emphasizes monumental calligraphy against a stable brass body. In the early Safavid inkwell, silver provides controlled rhythmic highlights. In the Metropolitan bowl, the reduction of precious inlay and the use of a tinned surface with black filling shift the aesthetic toward graphic definition. This sequence does not represent a simple decline in material value; it reflects changing relations among cost, technique, legibility, and stylistic preference.

Composition is similarly governed by the tectonics of each object. Ewers and bowls favour circumferential bands because their curved bodies invite rotational viewing. The lamp translates the same principle into an architectural vertical structure, while the inkwell and pencase combine centralized and directional volumes. Cartouches, medallions, quatrefoils, interlacing roundels, and calligraphic bands serve as mediating devices between the geometry of the object and the continuity of ornament. Decoration is most successful when it clarifies rather than masks the object's physical organization: the handle axis of the Louvre ewer, the rotational sequence of the merchant's bowl, the upward movement of the lamp, and the horizontal extension of the pencase all determine how ornament is perceived.

Epigraphy is the most consistent unifying feature. Its functions include benediction, ownership, professional identity, dynastic patronage, maker's signature, date, poetry, and religious invocation. These meanings are not separable from form. Thuluth produces expansive, flowing contours appropriate to upper bands and monumental declarations; Kufic creates angular stability; naskh allows compact continuous prayer; nastaʿliq links the writing instrument to Persian literary culture. The inscription thus occupies three levels at once: documentary evidence, semantic program, and visual structure. This triple function explains why epigraphic analysis is indispensable to both attribution and formal interpretation.

Chronologically, the corpus suggests not a linear progression but a series of recalibrations. The late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century objects integrate dense inscriptions and costly inlays within strongly banded vessels. The Uzun Hasan lamp enlarges the epigraphic principle into a public and dynastic monument. Early Safavid Tabriz favours more spacious, rhythmic fields and radial cloud-scroll

designs in the Mirak Hussein group. By 1535–36, the ornamental vocabulary remains recognizable, but compartments become more schematized, engraving and black filling intensify the graphic effect, and calligraphy becomes increasingly dominant. These changes correspond to shifts in patronage, function, workshop practice, and transregional exchange rather than to an isolated evolution inside one territory.

The evidence-based typology also changes how foreign museum holdings can be incorporated into Azerbaijani art history. The Louvre ewer and the Victoria and Albert bowl belong to the history of urban actors associated with Nakhchivan and Tabriz in transregional consumption and commerce. The David Collection lamp belongs to the history of Aq Qoyunlu dynastic representation. The Benaki and Metropolitan objects belong, with different degrees of certainty, to the history of early Safavid Tabriz production. The Wade Cup belongs to the historiography of attribution and warns against converting an earlier scholarly label into a permanent national claim. Taken together, the works demonstrate participation, mobility, and cultural agency rather than a single territorially sealed "school."

The study is limited by its dependence on published museum records, catalogues, and available scholarly literature. No direct metallurgical analysis, conservation examination, or first-hand microscopic study was undertaken. Museum records also contain varying degrees of certainty, expressed through terms such as "probably" or through broad regional localizations. These qualifications are retained rather than resolved by conjecture. Further research should compare technical imaging, alloy analyses, tool marks, and epigraphic hands across a larger corpus, especially works in collections whose digital records remain incomplete.

Conclusions. The comparative examination of Azerbaijan-connected metalwork in foreign museums yields several conclusions. First, the corpus is historically coherent only when the nature of each connection is specified. Workshop provenance, the urban origin of an owner, dynastic patronage, and historiographic attribution are distinct forms of evidence and cannot be used interchangeably. The Nakhchivani ewer and the Tabrizi merchant's bowl are especially important because they document people associated with Nakhchivan and Tabriz within Khurasani and Herati systems of luxury production without proving local manufacture.

Second, epigraphy is the central organizing principle of the corpus. It records blessings, ownership, commerce, patronage, Shiʿi devotion, authorship, and date, but it also divides surfaces, directs movement, and establishes scale. The artistic significance of an inscription therefore lies not only in what it says but in how its script, placement, rhythm, and material contrast transform the object's form.

Third, the Turkmen and early Safavid works demonstrate a sequence of stylistic transformations. The monumental lamp of Uzun Hasan converts inlaid calligraphy into dynastic and architectural representation. The Mirak Hussein Yazdi inkwell group is associated with a more spacious and rhythmic Tabriz language, while the Metropolitan bowl of 1535–36 preserves traditional motifs in a more abstract, schematized, and calligraphically emphatic system. These objects also reveal Tabriz as a transregional centre whose metalwork interacted with eastern Iranian, Ottoman, and Mamluk traditions.

Fourth, the Wade Cup confirms that attribution is a historical argument rather than an immutable fact. Its reassignment from Azerbaijan to Khurasan demonstrates the necessity of combining epigraphic, formal, iconographic, technical, and comparative evidence. Visual similarity alone cannot establish a historical connection.

The article's principal contribution is therefore an analytical model for studying "Azerbaijani metalwork in foreign museums" as a relational corpus. Such a model preserves the legitimate place of these works in Azerbaijani art history while avoiding retrospective territorialization. It shifts attention from possession of objects to the historically demonstrable roles of Azerbaijani cities, patrons, merchants, and political centres within the mobile artistic networks of the medieval and early modern Islamic world.

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