



Review

Museum Artifacts as Linguistic Archives: Exploring Linguistic Insights from Timurid Artifacts

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A B S T R A C T

This paper explores museum artifacts from the Timurid period as invaluable linguistic archives, moving beyond traditional historical and artistic interpretations to unveil hidden narratives about past societies. It argues that the linguistic data embedded in inscriptions, manuscripts, coins, and architectural texts offer profound insights into language use, communication practices, and cultural nuances of the Timurid Empire. This paper demonstrates, based on detailed linguistic analysis of a selection of artifacts, that they served as an active repository that both conveyed political power, religious beliefs, kinship systems, and social life. For instance, Persian inscriptions on jugs and ewers underscore artistic expression and imperial authority, while Arabic inscriptions on finger-ring seals and coins highlight religious piety and political legitimacy, blending Mongol traditions with Islamic values. Manuscripts and paintings further illustrate Persian as the dominant literary language and the mechanisms of intellectual and cultural exchange. The article also highlights some issues that can be challenging for linguists when collecting data from museum artefacts, such as text fragmentation and language opacity, particularly in a multilingual environment. To overcome these challenges, this review also proposes methodological approaches, including comparative linguistics, digital epigraphy, and contextual study, to address these challenges. With the robust technology and multidimensional approach, some challenges can be overcome and valuable resources can be provided for further linguistic analysis. This cross-disciplinary initiative transforms objects as vibrant forms of knowing through which one can access a fuller account of the workings of language as an intellectual technology in building and shaping lived experience, values, and power relations in Timurid society, providing productive insights into the ways in which language acts upon culture to advance or undermine social cohesion.

I. INTRODUCTION

Museums are widely regarded as precious institutions that collect and showcase artifacts of cultural heritage, providing visitors with an opportunity to experience and engage with the past. Such artifacts, regularly considered from historical or artistic perspectives, represent milestones in human civilization (Attwood, 2024; Gahtan, 2022; Meyer, 2016). However, their value is not limited to their physical forms. Museum

objects, whether some are inscriptions on ancient stones, written manuscripts, and everyday items or products decorated with symbols, can be a treasure trove of linguistic data in order to find information about language use, communication, and cultural practices globally (Bagnall, 2016; Douglas, 2017; Napitupulu et al., 2023). In what follows, we investigate the still underutilized and unexamined potential of these objects as resources for language analysis, demonstrating how this

material constitutes linguistic archives and how texts inscribed on or woven into them can be read to reveal narratives about the societies that produced them.

Museum studies have their origins largely in anthropology, history, and art history, as these disciplines have become increasingly sympathetic to interdisciplinary approaches. As we continue to explore the intersections between disparate disciplines, the role of linguistic analysis in shaping our perception of museum collections becomes increasingly evident (Czachur et al., 2023; Guillot, 2014; Napitupulu et al., 2023). Linguistics can offer an in-depth and nuanced understanding of how language has shaped human communities (Douglas 2017). Using linguistic approaches on Timurid compendia enables us to seek insights beyond the texts' own form and content to the social and cultural worlds in which they were made and read.

The history of the Timurid period was characterized by a dynamic interplay between different cultural and linguistic influences, including Persian, Turkic, and Mongolian traditions, resulting in a diverse linguistic environment. The inscriptions on architecture, manuscripts, and coins dating from this period indicate the hybrid nature of the language used during the contact (Khan & Ameen, 2024; Komaroff, 1992; Roxburgh, 2013). Epigraphy, the analysis of inscriptions, has long been a crucial approach to deciphering the languages and writing systems used in ancient cultures. Inscriptions in monuments, tombs, and everyday objects provide invaluable information on the changes that have occurred in language structures over time and space, as well as on linguistic variation and social stratification (Bashir et al., 2024; Cooley, 2012; Murugan & Visalakshi, 2024). In the case of Timurid objects, linguistic analysis can contribute to an understanding of the language's role in legitimizing the ruler's authority, articulating religious devotion, and fostering the exchange of ideas. Royal decrees, for example, were issued in Persian, which was the language of power and culture under the Timurids, while religious texts were penned in Arabic to convey divine authority.

In addition, objects in museums also served to represent the multilingual and multicultural context of a given society (Allegranzi, 2024; Komaroff, 1992). The Timurid empire in Central Asia and

Iran had diverse linguistic and cultural pockets (Bakirov et al., 2024; Siddiq, 2012). The empire's position at the crossroads of Turkic, Persian, and Arab expansion has presented a unique opportunity to study the mechanisms of language contact and the processes of multilingualism in pre-modern times. The artifacts from this era often exhibit traces of language mixing and the coexistence of two different scripts. Such objects of material culture enable scholars to follow the history of hybrid language forms and observe how language intersects with politics, religion, and culture in the Timurid period.

This review paper examines the potential significance of museum objects, particularly those from the Timurid period, for linguistic research. Museum specimens are commonly examined for their historical, artistic, and cultural significance, but it is the less well-documented linguistic evidence hidden within these objects that is the focus of this paper. The paper aims to provide a theoretical framework for examining museum artifacts as linguistic archives, from which insights into language use, communication, and cultural practices in a pre-literate society can be gleaned.

II. LINGUISTICS AND MUSEUM

Linguistic analysis is the investigation of how language works, encompassing a broad range of aspects, from the differences between phonetics and syntax to semantics and discourse. Through the lens of language, this form of analysis uncovers what languages were spoken in past societies and richly illustrates how language structured communication, identity, and cultural practices (Bostoen, 2020; Bowerman & Evans, 2014; Enfield et al., 2014); applied to museum artefacts, it provides access to stories that text approaches adamantly fail.

There are several ways of analyzing language. Epigraphy, the analysis of writing carved into stone, metal, and other such durable surfaces such as monuments or, indeed, coins (Cooley, 2012; Millar, 1983; Seales & Chapman, 2023) is one such method. Museum environments also employ epigraphy to reconstruct ancient texts and chart the evolution of writing systems, as well as changes in language and dialect (Cooley 2012; Millar 1983). For instance, inscriptions on Timurid architecture and monuments in Central Asia are frequently inscribed in Persian, Arabic, and Turkic languages,

a potential source for linguistic studies.

Historical linguistics is yet another key approach, for it studies how language changes over time. When applied to museum collections, historical linguistics can demonstrate how these languages evolved in terms of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary (Bynon 1977; Gonzales 2018). It can additionally monitor relations and interactions between various language communities, for instance, in relation to one another within ‘multilingual entities’ such as the Timurid empire, where Persian, Arabic, and Turkic were used to live alongside each other and borrow from each other.

Sociolinguistics is also crucial which helps to grasp how society and its structures, power arrangements, and norms are mirrored in language. Museum artifacts, for example, can be subjected to sociolinguistic analysis, which demonstrates how such items provide evidence of the ways that language was employed to exercise key components of power, identity, and authority (Lindström 2005; Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). For example, the elevated style found in the inscriptions of the royal history of Assyria reduces to one common feature of social stratification, while religious writing in Arabic tends to emphasize the Holy Islamic king’s legitimacy and the Empire’s dependence on its existence.

The relationship between museum studies and linguistics offers insight into the role of language in heritage artifacts. Museum studies often concentrate on the care and interpretation of objects as the primary purpose of a museum, though causal, representational, and non-causal implications also come into play. Yet for the linguist who wishes to treat artifacts as ‘texts,’ things more than mere material objects, there are linguistic archives that offer important information about communication systems, organization of societies, and belief systems.

Such linguistic analysis of artefacts can reveal further layers of interpretation that might not necessarily be immediately apparent from visual or historical analysis alone (Burkette & Skeates, 2022; Napitupulu et al., 2023). For instance, by analyzing the inscriptions on Timurid monuments, it can be understood how the language was practiced at that time, as well as grasp the sociopolitical and religious background in which these texts were

created. The textual contents of these inscriptions can provide clues to the application of Persian as an elite administrative language, Arabic as a religious code, and Turkic as it was spoken by non-religious humans. The linguistic content of such artifacts is, therefore, central to the understanding of the societies that create them. When we read the words inscribed on these artifacts, we are not just reading history; we’re engaged in a direct encounter with the lives, beliefs, and power dynamics of long-dead civilizations.

This interdisciplinary approach, which combines museum studies and linguistic analysis, provides a more comprehensive understanding of museum collections. Museum objects have traditionally been interpreted by academics from various fields, including art history, archaeology, and anthropology. Yet, the linguistic analysis that can be added to these traditional approaches offers a more comprehensive picture of artifacts. Linguists can provide new insights into the linguistic features in artifacts and how language relates to social relationships of power and identity. The study of language use in Timurid objects, for example, not only describes the shift from one script to another but also offers an introspective discussion on how languages fashioned authorities and vice versa. Inscriptions on royal monuments, religious texts in mosques, and manuscripts from the Timurid court are all aspects of a cultural and intellectual exchange that has spanned Central Asia and beyond. Furthermore, combining linguistics with museum studies is not just about preserving heritage for coming generations, but also about revealing the richness and potential of these tools as sources of knowledge about language, culture, and history. Such interdisciplinary work can provide richer readings of the past, stimulating the recovery and understanding of linguistic and cultural dimensions of museum collections.

III. MUSEUM ARTIFACTS AS LINGUISTIC ARCHIVES: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF TIMURID ARTIFACTS

Museum artifacts contain much useful linguistic information, which provides insights into the language, culture, and social structures of the societies from which they derive. These objects are presented in several iterations, offering different perspectives on the connection between language and culture. The most valuable museum artifacts

containing linguistic data include inscriptions, manuscripts, coins, and architectural texts. These written documents, whether etched in stone, printed on paper, or carved into artifacts, provide a distinctive window into the past, illuminating how language was deployed for power, religion, and identity, as well as social organization.

Inscriptions

Inscriptions represent the most common form of museum object with linguistic information. These are the kind of texts that have been inscribed, carved, or written into robust materials like stone, metals, or ceramics. Inscriptions are generally considered as indicators of public dialogue, upon which significant events or announcements have been memorialized (Bos, 2021; Millar, 1983; Murugan & Visalakshi 2024; Seales & Chapman, 2023). It was long established, for instance, to record royal orders, honours, and commemorations on coins, monuments, and buildings in the Timurid era. These inscriptions were created to convey messages of strength, authority, and divine approval, often written in formal languages such as Persian and Arabic. Analysis of these inscriptions provides scholars with insight into the political and religious orientation of the Timurid Empire.



Fig. 1 Jug from Timurid dynasty

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1878-1230-732-a

Inscription language: Persian

Inscription script: Thuluth

Inscription translation: In a narrow band around the centre of the body, in 'thuluth' script: *"A covenant with the Beloved is mine, which I have forever I hold the well-wisher of his street in the same manner as my life By the cypress of Chigil I behold the purity of the 'khilwat' of my heart From the moon of Khotan, I have the splendour of my eye and the lustre of my heart O learned 'pir'! Don't forbid me the wine-house*

For in abandoning the wine bowl I have a promise-breaking heart There is a cypress in my house under whose shade I do not long for the garden's cypress and the meadow's box tree It is fit that I should boast like Solomon about [your] ruby [lip's] signet When the great name [of God] may be, what fear have I of Satan But after long abstinence such as this, Hafiz became a notorious profligate What worry have I, while in this world I have [Amin al-Din] Hasan".

Inscription note: Poetry quoted from Hafiz, 'Diwan', Khanlari, pp. 644-45.

Inscription type: maker's mark

Inscription language: Persian

Inscription translation: *"In the time of the month of Muharram of the year nine hundred and nineteen [March 1513]"*

Figure 1 describe a jug from Timurid dynasty which provided with beautiful Thuluth script inscribed in Persian reflects the artistic excellence and intellectual ambition of the Timurid court. Dominant in the period, Persian was the primary literary and cultural language of the empire, as well as one of its most important political languages and languages of diplomacy. Although culturally heterogeneous, the empire was linked by Persian literary and intellectual culture. Thuluth, with its elegant and meandering script, further suggests the object's artistic and symbolic value. This script, historically employed for significant writing such as royal decrees and religious manuscripts, raises the jug from a functional tool to a cultural masterpiece.

The inscription comprises a rhyming verse from the celebrated Persian poet Hafiz, whose works were much admired in Timurid times. A poet renowned for writing about love, mysticism, and the tensions between speculative piety and carnal pleasure, Hafiz's verse is a significant part of the era's intellectual landscape. The survival of his poetry is evidence that during the Timurid court, Persian poems were a favored aspect of aristocratic culture and philosophical exploration. Dated in the year 919 AH (AD 1513), the inscription falls towards the end of the Timurid reign, a period marked by political unrest; however, it remains a significant center for cultural production. The jug exemplifies the intellectual climate of the period, reflecting the influence of Persian poetry, Sufism, and mysticism on social and artistic life.

The maker's mark, combined with the verse, offers a clue in that it indicates that the jug was produced by a talented craftsman, probably amongst the wider intellectual and artistic world of the Timurid court. It suggests it may have been commissioned for a royal or elite

individual, who would have appreciated this play of poetry, calligraphy, and Sufism. The mix of mysticism and personal devotion in the inscription could also contain political overtones. Like other Timurid rulers, the author argues, Bāysunghur was interested in employing art to uphold his right to rule: the incorporation of Hafiz’s poetry could be read as an attempt to associate the rise of the court with intellectual and cultural prestige (a property which Hafiz long stood for), thus emphasizing his own dynasty’s relationship to Sufism and Persian



Fig. 2 Ewer from Timurid dynasty

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1962-0718-1_1?selectedImageId=1613287817

Inscription language: Persian

Inscription script: Thuluth

Inscription translation: (1) Around the neck, in ‘thulth’ script: *“The most mighty sultan, the glorified Khaqan, the master of the kings of the Arabs and the non-Arabs, he that is supported by the beneficent king, the sultan, son of the sultan, he that glorifies the sultanate, the world and the faith, Abu’l-Ghazi Sultan Husayn Bahadur, may God perpetuate his kingdom [illegible] the state [?]”*. (2) Around the wide central register of the body, within cartouches, in ‘thulth’ script: [Persian verse, no longer legible]. (3) On the underside of the base, in ‘thulth’ script: *“Made by the poor miserable slave, Muhammad ibn Shamsi [Shams al-Din] al-Ghuri, in the middle of the month of Sha’ban the glorified, [in the] year of the ‘hijrah’ nine hundred and three”*.

Inscription type: signature

Inscription translation: Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din al-Ghuri

Inscription note: name of the maker

The Persian inscription on the ewer (Figure 2), written in Thuluth script, is a magnificent expression of the political, religious, and cultural undercurrents of the time of Timur. The upper portion, which surrounds the neck of the jug, is a royal eulogy praising Sultan Husayn Bahadur,

one of the renowned Timurid rulers. The adoption of titles such as “The most mighty sultan” and “master of the kings of the Arabs and non-Arabs” is an expression of political and military strength, emphasizing his ultimate sovereign jurisdiction not only in relation to Timurid territories but throughout all Islamic regions. The title of Khaqan, associated with Turkic monarchs, suggests the Central Asian origin of the Timurid dynasty and emphasizes the ruler’s dominion over both nomadic and sedentary subjects. The formulation “he that exalts the sultanate, the world and the faith” reveals this double-sided nature of legitimacy for a ruler; those who somehow simultaneously hold worldly power and spiritual belief were key tropes in Timurid political discourse. This prayer, “may God establish his kingdom,” gains divine favour by framing the king as a political and spiritual safeguard.

The second section, located around the central register of the jug, features a Persian verse in Thuluth script, though much of it is now illegible. The remaining legible portion likely serves as a poetic eulogy, celebrating the ruler or the patron who commissioned the jug. Persian poetry, particularly during the Timurid era, was a vehicle for expressing themes of beauty, faith, and royalty, often used to glorify the ruler’s virtues. The use of Thuluth script for the poetic inscription not only adds aesthetic value but also highlights the prestige of the object as both an artistic and political statement. The inclusion of poetry on such an item demonstrates the integration of art, religion, and politics in Timurid material culture.

On the bottom side of the base, an inscription bears the name of the maker, Muhammad ibn Shamsi al-Ghuri, attributing it to this artisan. This identifies the jug as being a product of a talented hand, for the artisan modestly calls himself “the poor, miserable slave.” This humility stands in stark contrast to the grandeur of royal eulogy and religious content, revealing the social hierarchy of the Timurid court, where artisans, despite their low status, were essential to the production of courtly luxury goods. It is also inscribed with the date of its manufacture – a particularly rare feature, usually reserved for offerings made on behalf of living individuals rather than deceased relatives 1498 (919AH), placing the jug in terms both of its Timurid historical setting and within an approximate lifetime for contemporary production

during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bahadur.

This is more than a pile of skills; to it was attached political strength, religious influence, and cultural polish. The glorification of Sultan Husayn Bahadur exemplifies how rulers utilized material culture to showcase their authority. On the one hand, the poetic and religious verses of the inscription disclose how politics and religion were interwoven in the cultural production of the Timurid elite; on the other, an inscription signed by a humble maker brings back to mind how artisans, despite their important role in shaping art heritage for the emperor, remain members of the lowest social class.



Fig. 3 Finger-ring seal from Timurid dynasty

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_AF-2256?selectedImageId=1613109266

Inscription type: inscription

Inscription position: bezel

Inscription language: Arabic

Inscription script: Arabic

Inscription translation: Muhammed and Ali are the best of mankind.

The writing on this finger ring seal offers a brief yet insightful glimpse into the religious, cultural, and political mindset of its time (Figure 3). Located on the bezel of the ring, it played a private as well as public role. Using the Arabic script, it demonstrates both religious commitment and political aspiration by revering Muhammad and Ali, two of the most significant figures in Islamic history. The language and culture, as well as the possible religious and political context of this inscription, are also discussed.

One of the finest expressions of devotion and praise about Muhammad is inscribed: “Muhammad and Ali, the best of mankind.” Together with Muhammad, the last prophet, and Ali (as the first Imam), they are two of the most prominent figures in contemporary Islamic theology. This inscription

would be particularly relevant to Shia Muslims who believe Ali was Muhammad’s legitimate successor as opposed to Sunni Islam, which upholds the authority of the first four caliphs. The claim to pre-eminence is thus a manifestation of both religious beliefs and political thoughts, associating faith with the legitimacy of sovereigns and political leaders.

The Shiite connection suggests that the ring might have been owned by a Shiite individual or was made to cater to the Shiite community. This has significant political implications for the balance of power, which was previously based on religious polarization during the Timurid era. The inscription may have been to confirm that the person represented was a supporter of the Shiite cause and more valuable in places where the Sunni-Shiite divide had become a factor in social and political life.

The ring was also both a personal and an official instrument. Usage in the Islamic world. Seals were used in the Muslim world primarily for protection and authority. The legend, accordingly, indicates that the ring could have belonged to a religious or political figure who wanted to underline his affiliation with Muhammad and Ali to strengthen both power (authority) and piety.

That the bezel is situated as the most outwardly visible feat of the ring does, in fact, emphasize just how essential the inscription was to communicate something more than just for anyone and everyone to read, but also mark when such a reading took place. A ring with such an inscription would identify the wearer and signify not only his faith but also his political and social commitments. In the Timurid era, when religious affiliation was integral to political authority, the ring would have served as a symbol of status and fidelity, signifying the wearer’s affiliation with the Muslim community and drawing attention to their participation in the spiritual leadership of Muhammad and Ali.

The ring is inscribed and offers a great example of how religion, politics, and self-identity were intersecting forces in the Islamic world during the Timurid period, which tied religious association to political influence. The writing is a naked profession of faith, loyalty to the ruling faction, and even affiliation with its hip-hop subculture, reiterating the sacred provenance of Muhammad and Ali in both religious and political spheres.

Coins

Coins, originally designed to serve as currency, often bear scales of information that are a valuable historical source for linguistic features related to the political and economic order (Allouch et al., 2022; Bacharach, 2011; Napitupulu et al., 2023). For example, on the names of sultans and religious slogans, occasionally even verses of poetry appear on Timurid coins. On these coins, language was carefully chosen to convey magnificence & the rule of authority. Coins occasionally displayed multilingual inscriptions, reflecting the linguistic plurality of the Timurid Empire. From the analysis of these inscriptions, it is possible to elucidate how language was used to convey power and legitimacy; representations of economy, communication, and culture can be unveiled from a linguistic perspective.

Arabic inscription, two double knots, all within two squares with circular legend, all within a plain circle. (obverse)



Fig. 4 Coins from Sultan Mahmud Khan

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1887-1201-11

Inscription language: Arabic

Inscription script: Arabic

Inscription content: لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله ابابكر عمر عثمان على

Inscription translation: “There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God Abu bakr; ‘Omar; ‘Uthman; ‘Ali

Inscription script: Arabic

Inscription content: هرات السلطان الاعظم محمود خان امير معظم
تيمور كوركان

Inscription translation: Herat The Supreme Sultan, Mahmud Khan, the Mighty Amir, Timur Gurkan

Inscriptions on this coin by Sultan Mahmud (Figure 4), Khan of the Chagatai Khanate, say much about the religious, political, and cultural forces at work. The double inscriptions upon the obverse and reverse call attention to Sultan Mahmud’s strength, piety, and unity with the Islamic Commonwealth. Penned in Arabic, it’s more than just words; it claims religious and political legitimacy.

The obverse inscription reads:

“لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله ابابكر عمر عثمان على”

Translation: “There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God, Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, Ali.”

The inscribed text is the Shahada, the basic statement of Islamic faith in which Muhammad is identified as the last prophet, and mentions are made of the first four caliphs, figures respected within Sunni Islam. In Sunni Islam, these caliphs are considered legitimate successors to the Prophet and would have imbued the coin and reign of Sultan Mahmud with religious authority. The Shahada situates the ruler within the fundamental ideology of Islam, thereby legitimizing him as a divinely chosen leader. By including the caliphs, Sultan Mahmud’s name is situated in the rightful Islamic tradition of leadership that began with Muhammad.

The double knots and circular legends that surround the inscription are evidently symbolic, their meaning expressive of that unity and eternity that transformed the coin from an instrument of barter to a religious and political symbol. The simple circle surrounding the central device may denote divine Unity or God’s eternal reign.

The reverse inscription reads: “هرات السلطان الاعظم محمود خان امير معظم تيمور كوركان” Translation: “Herat The Supreme Sultan, Mahmud Khan, the Mighty Amir, Timur Gurkan.” This inscription also demonstrates Sultan Mahmud’s political legitimacy through the mention of Herat, one of the principal cities in the Chagatai Khanate and a major cultural and political center. The terms “Supreme Sultan” and “Mighty Amir,” which emphasize the military and political power of the ruler, project a hierarchical structure of the Timurid and Chagatai empires. The Timur Gurkan invocation links Sultan Mahmud with a history of martial supremacy and political consolidation, which legitimates him as the successor to Timur’s empire, thereby boosting his power.

A second combination of features is the five circles on the reverse, which could symbolize the five pillars of Islam but may instead be a symbol of unity, religious or political. Circles in Islamic art represent the divine, the eternal, and the endless cycle of power. These circles of power, in turn, serve to reinforce the notion of a divinely ordained ruler, whose authority is perpetuated through time and who maintains dominion over both spiritual and worldly realms.

The piece's artistic form and political and religious messaging are woven together in the coin's design, featuring double knots, circular legends, and five circles. The round shape can symbolize unity, eternity, and divinity in Islamic culture, as well as an archetypal ruler whose power continually grows stronger. Coins like this weren't simply currency: They were propaganda, intended to emanate the ruler's power, bolster his religious piety, and project his authority over both subjects and rivals.

The employment of the Arabic script for religious meanings and messages underscores the dominant role played by Islam in the Chagatai Khanate's political organization. The ruler's legitimacy, and Arabic as the language of the Qur'an, legal documents, and official orders, then made reliance on it an obvious course. Sultan Mahmud's employment of Arabic emphasizes his connection with the wider Islamic world, projecting him as an Islamic ruler whose values were derived from Islam and serving to link him with Prophet Muhammad and his rightly guided caliphs.



Fig. 5 Coins from Timurid dynasty

<https://en.numista.com/227893>

Inscription language: Arabic

Inscription script: Arabic

Inscription content:

“سلطان محمود خان یرلغی”
 “خلد الله ملكه”
 “امیر تیمور گورکان”

Translation:

“Sultan Mahmud Khan by yarligh (decree)”

“May God perpetuate his reign”

The inscription on the obverse of the coin reads:

“Emir Timur Gurkan”

Reverse side:

“لا اله الا الله”
 “محمد رسول الله”
 “ابو بكر عمر عثمان علي”

Translation:

“There is no god but God”

“Muhammad is the Messenger of God”

“Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali”

This coin, featuring the inscription of Sultan Mahmud Khan of the Chaghataid Khans, offers a rare insight into the political, religious, and cultural attitudes prevailing at that time (Figure 5). Obverse and reverse inscriptions not only emphasize the Ruler's power but also express his religious faith and his place in the Islamic world of which Ghazanfar was a part: more specifically, that of the Timurid polity. Through the study of the inscriptions and their historical context, a glimpse into how the coin functioned both as a political instrument and as part of formal religion can be explored.

This inscription has several important purposes. Firstly, Sultan Mahmud Khan is established as a ruler with regal authority and possession under the title of Sultan. This is a key term across the Islamic world, denoting as it does an authority whose role is conceived as military-spiritual, responsible for defending and propagating the Islamic state.

The phrase “by *yarligh* (on the authority that)” refers to the script of medieval Mongol administration, under which a Khan's right to order was based on laws known as imperial decrees or yarlighs. This is important because it places the Sultan in broader Mongol and Chagatai Khanate cultural contexts, where the Khan was not just a political leader, but one whose words were believed to be divinely inspired or granted by heaven. The sentence “God make his reign perpetual” is a religious invocation for divine favor and the continuance of Sultan Mahmud's rule. The fact that this blessing is mentioned emphasizes the inseparability of religious and political power in the region. The inscription declares that Sultan Mahmud “in the name of God,” thereby delineating his rule as not only a matter of military conquest or political plotting, but also as divinely justified. Lastly, “Emir Timur Gurkan” (or Tamerlane) alludes to the Timurid legacy. The title refers to Timur, one of the key figures in Central Asian history, whose name is used to bolster Sultan Mahmud's claim as a legitimate successor to the Timurid heritage. Sultan Mahmud thus reaffirms his own power and legitimacy by referring to the authority of the Timurid empire, in which he includes himself as a successor, highlighting that his reign is part of a pattern, not an aberration. This reference also serves to reinforce the political notion of the ruler's legitimacy in relation to memories and ideas of Timur, thereby placing Mahmud as a member of a

more prestigious lineage.

This is a statement of political might and religious legitimacy, as well as a “union between Mongol tradition, Islamic piety and the Timurid legacy”. It posits Sultan Mahmud not merely as a political ruler, but as an authority deeply rooted in divine sanction and historical primacy.

The reverse inscription of the coin presents the Shahadah in Kufic. This Shahadah, the principle of Islamic belief, witness that to say ‘there is no God but Allah’, Islam’s monotheistic character can be recognized, and the prophethood of Muhammad. The ornamentation with the Shahadah on the coin is very important, as it demonstrates the ruler’s support for Islam. It places the coin not only as a currency but also as a religious artifact bearing a message of faith. By inscribing this on the reverse, not only is the coin a token for circulating wealth, but it is also used as a vehicle by which the ruler publicly expresses his belief and submission to the Islamic faith. The inclusion of the first four caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, represents a specific acceptance by the Shiite tradition of that part of Sunni theology that lists these four as the rightful successors to Mohammad. These caliphs are held up as paradigmatic Muslim rulers and leaders within Sunni Islam, suggesting the Sunni identity of Sultan Mahmud’s rule through their presence on coins. These names are also indicative of an attempt to associate Sultan Mahmud with the early Islamic leadership, underlining the religious, as well as political, legitimacy of his rule.

The inscriptions in the coin are a clear reflection of Islam’s central role in the political and cultural life of the Chagatai Khanate. The coin serves as a reminder to those who used it that Sultan Mahmud’s authority was not only derived from his military power or political savvy, but also from his adherence to the core principles of Islam. The connection between political authority and religious identity is thus reinforced, presenting Sultan Mahmud as a ruler who governs with divine approval.

Manuscript and Paintings

Manuscripts are also an important source of linguistic data included in museum holdings. These are manuscript writings which can range from literature, scientific and legal records to religious works (Alam & Subrahmanyam, 2011; Fardhosseini & Morshedi, 2024; Handoko, 2024; Khadjimetov et

al., 2025; Welch, 1987). The Timurid manuscripts, some of which have survived in museums, are important sources for the intellectual and cultural atmosphere during that period of time. The literary language of the court was Persian, and much of the art produced was poetry (as well as historiography and philosophical works). These texts provide numerous linguistic attributes for analysis, such as stylistic features, poetic structures, and vocabulary. And the language of these manuscripts mirrors contemporary intellectual fashions: in the Timurid Empire, scholars engaged with philosophy, theology, and what we today call “the sciences”, frequently translating and interpreting works from a range of languages, including Arabic or Persian.

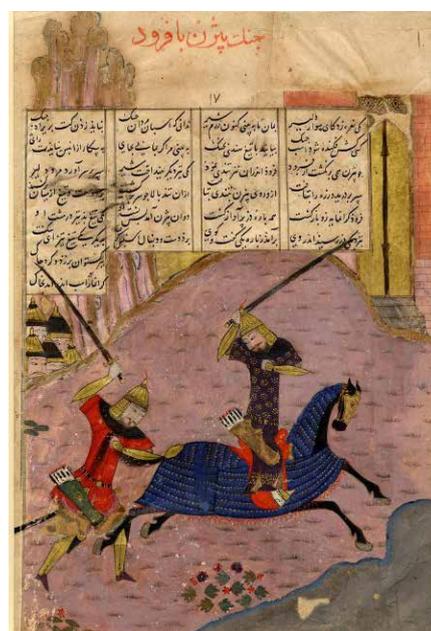


Fig. 6 Bijan and Farud from Shanama manuscript
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1948-1009-0-50

The Figure 6 depicting the sword fight between Bijan and Farud from Firdawsi’s *Shahnama* is a forceful treatment of the visual narrative in Persian. Made with ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper, this detached folio depicts a powerful scene from one of the most tragic episodes in Persian epic literature. The creation of texts and paintings, and how these elements combine, informs us of the essential character of the story, its cultural significance, and aesthetic expression in a way that provides insight into greater thematic structures within the *Shahnama*, as well as traditions of Persian miniature.

The picture depicts the combat between Bijan and his antagonist, Farud, two of the personages

from Firdawsi's magnificent epic of Persian history, the *Shahnama*. This episode marks the climax of great machismo in Homer, where the two warriors engage in a fierce battle. The figures are arranged for dynamic contrast: Bijan is riding a blue-cloaked horse and appears in front of the standing Farud, who wears red. The colours are symbolic, with red representing valour, while blue has traditionally been associated with nobility, wisdom, and the heavens. The two shades could be interpreted as the conflicting essences or desires of the two fighters, reflecting the tension between them.

Khan, was significant to the overall history of the Mongol Empire in the Middle East. During the rule of Ghazan Khan and his successor Uljaytu, the Ilkhanid rulers undertook various attempts to recruit Chinese technical experts to Iran. Il-Khanid court culture was characterized by an attachment to Persian and Arabic, as well as to Chinese literature and philosophy. Both Ghazan and Uljaytu were followers of Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam, so that the influences of all three religions can be attributed to these Mongol rulers in varying degrees of intensity, contributing to the cosmopolitan and eclectically opportunistic outlook at the court.

This painting illustrates the extent to which intellectual and diplomatic exchanges typified Mihr Ali's immediate Il-Khanid milieu. The image of Chinese sages presenting books to Uljaytu, the Il-Khanid ruler, highlights the strong cultural links between Persia and China during Mongol times. Offering history books, it is the force behind this project and says much about how the rulers supported education, intellectual, and cultural exchange between Persians and Indians, with these paintings actually a testimony to that.

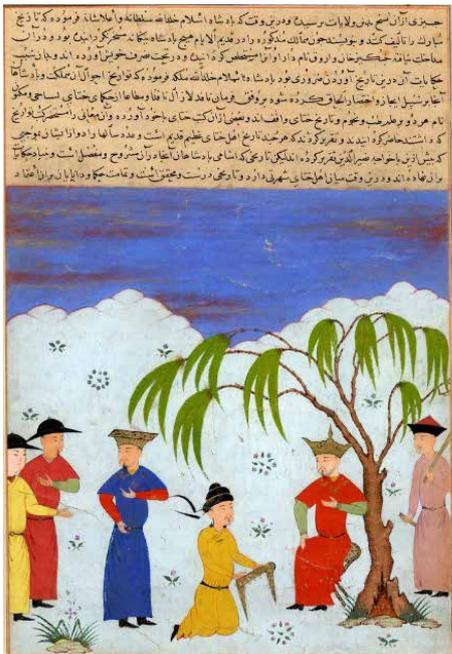


Fig. 7 Literature from the Majma' al-Tavarikh of Hafiz-i Abru manuscript
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1966-1010-0-13

Another detached painting manuscript page from the *Majma' al-Tavarikh* of Hafiz-i Abru presents a momentous scene (Figure 7), also as he writes: this illustration depicts two Chinese sages, Li-ta-chih and Maksun, with books on history before Uljaytu, who was the Il-Khanid ruler of Iran (1304-1316 or possibly Ghazan Khan). A historical document in both form and substance, the work also represents a singular cross-cultural exchange between the Il-Khanid court and East Asia, emblematic of the interests and allegiances of its time. The manuscript page juxtaposes aspects of Islamic historiography, artistic traditions, and political iconography to reveal the tensions that prevailed within Persian Mongol relations in the Il-Khanid era.

The Il-Khanid dynasty, led by Hulagu



Fig. 7 Manuscript from Baburnama
<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-arts-of-the-mughal-empire>

Another picture with a legend from *Baburnama* affords us an insight into the political and diplomatic situation that prevailed. It is the scene of Babur receiving Uzbek and Rajput envoys who have come to felicitate him on his accession. This picture is an incredible portrayal of the political and cultural scene that existed during Babur's rule,

when he established the Mughal Empire.

This illuminated manuscript page of the Baburnama gives a pictorial representation of the political and diplomatic relations that were instrumental in Babur's early reign. The image of Babur receiving the Uzbek and Rajput envoys thus represents more than simply the acceptance of his authority; it also appears to represent the emergence of a new Mughal Empire in India. The scene is rich in artistic detail and symbolic content, effectively capturing the crucial significance of intercultural diplomacy as a tool for building an empire, forging alliances with diverse peoples, and laying the foundation for Babur's multicultural empire.

An even more vivid judgment from Baburnama on the same theme, but showing two types of medieval India, Hindu ascetics at a smadh and acclaiming royal standards. These images depict scenes from the life and rule of the Mughal Emperor Babur, characterized by a synthesis of Islamic, Hindu, and Mongol traditions.

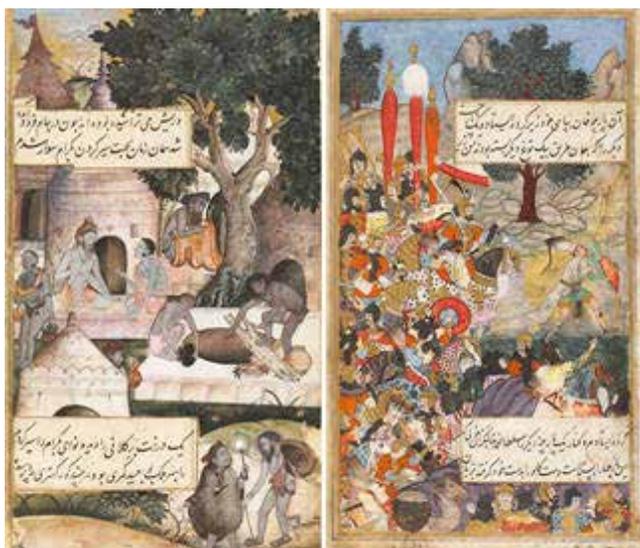


Fig. 8 Left to right: Hindu ascetics at a shrine; the ceremony of acclaiming the royal standards, detached folios from a copy of the Baburnama.

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-arts-of-the-mughal-empire>

Both paintings, depicting Hindu ascetics dedicating a shrine and the ceremonials used on the acclamation of royal standards, are very important in the context of Babur's administration in India. On the other hand, the ascetics reflect the religious traditions of India's cultures and their emphasis on Babur encountering different religious practices. By contrast, the ceremony highlights Babur as a political and military leader, focusing on his

establishment of control over territory and the formalisation of his status as an emperor.

By juxtaposing both episodes in the manuscript, the artist highlights Babur's status as a monarch over a rich and varied empire, one that involved not just martial and political accomplishments but an intense involvement in India's cultural and religious environment. Babur's traditionalist-hybrid position, which bridged the ancestral traditions of Hindu and Islamic cultures, was essential for stability in his multicultural empire. Additionally, these folios can be interpreted as Babur's attempts to frame his rule as one of peaceful coexistence with an overlapping realm between the religious and political. The illustration of the Hindu religious traditions sets up the Mughal royal rituals in juxtaposition, indicating Babur's sense of a pluralistic society under his rule, where various other religious and cultural practices existed in parallel, if not always peacefully, well within the framework of Mughal administration.

The arrival of the first Jesuit mission in Fatehpur in 1580 marked a significant moment in the cultural exchange between Mughal India and the European world. The Jesuits, dispatched by the Portuguese and having established a mission in the Mughal Empire, made a substantial impression through their unique contributions of Christian-themed art. The missionaries installed a chapel in the house that Emperor Akbar had assigned to them, and they displayed Christian paintings that featured biblical subjects and religious iconography.



Fig. 9 Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-arts-of-the-mughal-empire>

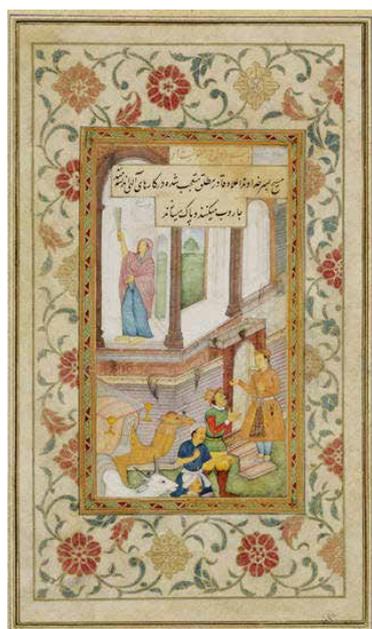


Fig. 10 Preparations for the birth of Christ
<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-arts-of-the-mughal-empire>

These paintings, unfamiliar to the Mughal court, caused a sensation among the Mughal elite. Emperor Akbar, known for his fascination with new ideas and cultural exchanges, immediately perceived the potential importance of these *patras*. He invited his top courtiers over to the chapel in order that they should see this pair of new representational arts of Christian themes, for it was novelty itself he apparently wanted them to witness, so zealous was he about matters foreign and exotic. The latter exposure was to have a significant impact on Akbar and his artists.

Akbar then directed that his own court artists be brought in and made to copy the European paintings, so that the European influence in Mughal art became a significant one. While the Mughal painters did not adopt the scientific perspective-based principles of European painting, the encounter with these images initiated a subtle yet transformative shift in Mughal artistic practice. Some of the *Akbarnama* paintings and other Mughal manuscripts, for the first time, showed a rising sun, an inspiration possibly drawn from European representations of three-dimensional space and light. This was a departure from the previous pseudo-perspective flat style that dominated Mughal painting.

The study of these various types of artifacts offers a comprehensive view of how language functioned in the Timurid Empire. Through linguistic analysis, it can be explored how language

served as a tool of authority, religion, and culture. Inscriptions, manuscripts, coins, and architectural texts were all used to convey messages of political power, religious devotion, and cultural identity. Language was not only a means of communication but also a medium through which authority was asserted and social hierarchies were reinforced. Hence, museum artifacts from the Timurid period serve as important linguistic archives, providing valuable insights into the empire's political, religious, and cultural fabric. Through linguistic analysis, we can gain a deeper understanding of how language served as a tool for authority, religious expression, and cultural identity, thereby revealing the complex social structures and power relations that shaped the Timurid world.

IV. UNVEILING HIDDEN NARRATIVES: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Linguistic study of museum artefacts provides an exciting opportunity to investigate unknown historical narratives concerning past cultures. Though the materiality of these artifacts (inscriptions, manuscripts, coin notes, or architectural texts) often yields rich historical and artistic insights, it is in the language entwined with such objects that we may gain access to the social priorities, power relations and cultural practices embodied within a distinct society (Burkette & Skeates, 2022; Leatherbury 2018; Napitupulu et al., 2023; Simpson, 2024; Spear & Nguyen 2023). This linguistically informed approach to the Timurid domain further reveals the social, political, and intellectual currents that coursed through its body (Abdykadyrova et al., 2021; Binbaş, 2016; Turner, 2017). Through artifacts, we can reveal how language was employed in shaping identities, addressing power relations, and invoking intellectual /cultural exchange.

Inscriptions and written texts accompany much of the evidence in our museums, and language, as a tool for influencing social values or transmitting norms and power hierarchies, carries significant weight. Like many other empires, the Timurids employed language not only as a medium for everyday use but also to communicate authority, strength, social arrangements, and promote ideal cultures (Altun, 2023; Betrò et al., 2024; Subtelny, 1997). Inscriptions on monumental buildings, coins, and manuscripts can convey more than mere words; they convey ideologies

about leadership, religion, and identity. Through an examination of language in these artifacts, academics can uncover the overt and covert stories about power as it was wielded and established, as well as how the culture has been shaped by and passed down through language.

For instance, the choice of Persian in royal inscriptions and coins showcases a desire by Timurid rulers to project cultural and intellectual leadership. Persian became the language of legitimacy and romance. In the royal orders and religious edicts written down in Persian, the Timurid rulers aligned themselves with a larger intellectual tradition and traditional culture. In these circumstances, Language became a vehicle for political and cultural identity: the rulers identified themselves with a tradition of Persian kingship and governance that could be deployed to legitimate their imperial power over multilingual, multicultural subject peoples. Whereas Arabic, the liturgical language of Islam, conveyed divine authority and signified the emperor's responsibility as a political leader, as well as protector and promoter of the Islamic religion (Mauder, 2024; Salvaggio, 2024; Zoghbor & Alqahtani, 2022). The Timurid sovereigns intertwined their political and religious power in a discourse of justification through language, associating their sovereignty with the protection of Islam and its values.

The linguistic analysis of these objects also provides a window into the cultural habits at the time. For instance, the abundant Arabic invocation of religious verses from the Qur'an in public areas like mosques, mausolea and monuments is witness to the place held by religion in Timurid society. It was not just decorative: Intentional expressions of piety and allegiance to Islam, these inscriptions combined Persian and Arabic, the languages of what would become Islam's two great empires. Through the intersection of the two languages, these objects expressed a multifaceted story of Islamic faith and statecraft that both supported religious qualities in addition to rulers who voiced legal rights over power (Bacharach, 2010; Bakirov et al., 2024; Mauder, 2024; O'Kane et al., 2023). In these environments, language acted as a system of conservation and cultural transmission, spreading shared beliefs and values down the line.

Linguistic analysis can reveal power relations that lie beneath the surface of society. In the many

languages found on Timurid objects, some of the deliberately contrastive registers by which members of disparate ethnic and linguistic communities at the court distinguished themselves can be heard. For example, the presence of Turkic on some Timurid coins or in certain inscriptions attests to the importance of Turkic-speaking military elites and the nexus between the ruling elite (often speakers of a Turkic dialect) and the Persian-speaking bureaucracy and intelligentsia. Arabic in religious settings. Again, this reflects the influence of Islamic religious ideology, which unites faith-based authority with political power (Manz 2020; Siddiq 2012). Such linguistic turns point to the ways in which language was strategically manipulated by opposing groups to reproduce or transform social stratification and authority.

V. CHALLENGES, LIMITATION, AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study of ancient writing and inscriptions from museum artifacts promises to reveal new perspectives on languages, cultures, and societies. Yet, this approach is compromised by many issues, including the fact that even consistent texts are fragmental or ambiguous in interpreting their unclear variables (Assael et al., 2025; Handoko, 2024; Houston, 2004; Julian & Devipriya, 2024; Sommerschild et al., 2023). These are the same challenges that make language analysis of historical documents (particularly multilingual and multi-layered ones like Timurid manuscripts) a difficult task. Notwithstanding these difficulties, researchers have sought to devise methodological routes out of this impasse, including processes of comparative linguistics and the application of digital technologies to epigraphy. Through the recognition of these challenges and the methodological approaches used to accommodate them, research can more systematically and accurately perform linguistic analysis on museum artifacts.

The Challenges of Analyzing Ancient Texts and Inscriptions

Fragments One of the most important difficulties when working upon ancient texts and inscriptions is that quite often they are fragmentary. Inscriptions, in particular those that have been preserved on monuments, coins, and other objects, are frequently mutilated or fragmentary. Erosion, weathering, and vandalism may eventually make portions of the types indistinguishable or entirely

unreadable. This fragmentation complicates the reconstruction of the complete statement and, in some cases, attributes to it its “historical” context (Assael et al., 2019, 2022; Devi, 2006; Seales & Chapman, 2023). Inscriptions on monuments, for instance, may be mutilated by later rulers or natural disasters, resulting in a loss of crucial pieces that would help discern the complete message. But such incompleteness can make it difficult to understand the text properly or situate it within a wider historical, political, or religious context.

Another challenge in analyzing ancient texts is the unclear or inconsistent use of language in the inscriptions. Often, artifacts of multilingualism, such as the Timurid Empire, contain languages that were in contact with one another, and in such contexts, there is borrowing of loanwords, phrases, or even grammatical structures. For example, Timurid inscriptions that use Persian blend with a variety of other written culture media, like in the case of the climb from Persian to Arabic and Turkic, which can be a challenge for historians since languages have different word order due to syntactic structure, because they do not possess the same scripts or tradition. The simultaneous use of languages in the same text may complicate identification and interpretation, particularly when an interaction between other or all of the several languages is expressed (Allegranzi 2024; Bakirov et al. 2024; Kirmizialtin and Wrisley 2020; Komaroff 1992). Additionally, language forms from antiquated or regional dialects of an earlier stage of a language may appear in inscriptions, introducing another level of ambiguity.

Ancient inscriptions are also frequently in symbolic or metaphorical language, which is still employed for religious, official, and ideological reasons. Meaning of symbols or words Finding the meaning of certain word or phrase is usually difficult particularly if it does not have a full context in which an inscription was written (Arjunan et al., 2025; Balogh, 2019; Murugaiyan, 2012; Napitupulu et al., 2023) Other means Symbolism and inscriptions uses different other means to convey message other than color and form. For instance, those in royal buildings generally use an elaborate language composed of political and religious semantics, not always intelligible to contemporary readers. Without the proper context of culture and history, these symbols are often misinterpreted.

The Limitations of Using Museum Artifacts for Linguistic Analysis

Museum artifacts, though they hold a veritable wealth of resources for linguistic study, also pose various limitations to the extent and quality of study that can be conducted. As earlier stated, a significant caveat is that many objects are fragmentary. Partial inscriptions, absent characters, or partially eroded text could not only affect the decipherability of the language but also hinder the disambiguation and reconstruction of the entire script (Assael et al., 2022; Diao et al., 2025; Locaputo et al., 2024). This limited view may lead to a misunderstanding of the historical and cultural context behind the object.

Another drawback is the ambiguity of certain artifacts in their context. Most museum objects, particularly those from excavations or private collectors, often have limited knowledge about their context (Beaudoin, 2012; González & Fontijn, 2023). For example, inscriptions on coins or monumental plaques can be devoid of references to their situs originis, addressee, or historic occasion. Without the context, it becomes difficult to translate language and relate the text to a larger history or culture. For instance, an inscription on the facade of a Timurid mosque, such as the one in Isfahan, may convey vital political or ideological matters, but one can hardly understand what the message would be without refreshing one’s memory in reference to contemporary politics.

Language change also poses a significant challenge in the analysis of ancient texts. Languages change, and the language on inscriptions may not be the same as today. Changes to the language of a document in terms of grammar, syntax, or vocabulary can introduce ambiguity with respect to what the original said in a passage (Arjunan et al., 2025; Assael et al., 2025; Kruschwitz, 2015). For example, with Timurid Persian, the inscriptions and manuscripts have obvious differences to modern Persian, and one must be prepared for historical linguistic shifts when seeking to understand its construction.

Finally, the multilingual nature of some Timurid artefacts adds another layer of complexity in addressing these problems. Multilingual engravings are harder to parse because three languages, Persian, Arabic, and Turkic, have different syntactic orders (Allegranzi 2024;

Chumbow 2018; Kumar 2024; Özateş et al. There is potential for meanings to be lost in translation or muddled by linguistic operations in these language interactions. Furthermore, multilingualism can also be employed for political or cultural reasons, such as affirming power or religious leadership. An accurate interpretation requires knowledge of the intentions that are behind the multilingual use and the specific functions of each language in the inscription.

Methodological Approaches for Overcoming These Challenges

Despite these difficulties, historians have developed various methodological strategies to address the problem of interpreting ancient texts and inscriptions. These methods involve a combination of established linguistic approaches and techniques, as well as those provided by computational technology, in an effort to enrich the reliability and depth of what has been revealed about the linguistic structure.

Among the best possible ways for analysing multilingual inscriptions is comparative linguistics. Such work entails considering languages within the same linguistic family or across different families, and comparing the similarities and differences in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax (Campbell, 2015). Various structural and historical linguistic components of the language(s) used in Timurid inscriptions can be found in late written sources or reconstructed from other known sources in Persian, Arabic, and Turkic, which share similar linguistic settings. Comparative linguistics will help identify borrowings, regional dialectal variations, and changes in language use over time, enabling the study of linguistic and cultural exchanges within the empire (Adams, 2007; Dahlgren, 2022; Meyer, 2023).

Another important methodological approach is epigraphy, which is the study of inscriptions on durable materials such as stone, metal, and ceramics. The traditional method has been meticulous physical study of inscriptions, viewing them directly and in strong sunlight (or photographing and sometimes rubbing them) to bring out the text. In recent years, epigraphy has undergone a digital revolution, allowing researchers to analyze inscriptions with greater agility. For example, digital imaging modalities (e.g., 3D scanning, multispectral imaging, high-resolution photography) permit

scholars to disentangle details that may be imperceptible to the human eye (Barmpoutis et al., 2007; Francolini et al., 2018; Rabinowitz et al., 2018; Seales & Chapman, 2023; Valente et al., 2019; Waters, 2022). These effects can be useful for making worn or damaged text legible, restoring broken portions of the inscription, and comparing different versions of the same text. Researchers can also utilize digital tools to develop databases of inscriptions, allowing them to examine massive sets of texts and consider how things change over time or across different regions.

Another tool that may be applied is corpus linguistics, particularly to large bodies of text. Through the development of a digital corpus of Timurid inscriptions, researchers can utilize computational techniques to examine linguistic characteristics, including word usage, syntactic formation, and lexical diversity, in these texts. In this regard, corpus linguistics provides the capability of uncovering linguistic patterns that are hidden by traditional analysis (Biber et al., 1998; Carradini & Swartz, 2023; Handoko, 2024). This approach is particularly useful in the case of multilingual inscriptions, as it may be possible to detect patterns of code-mixing that reveal how languages were used in interaction with one another within the empire. Finally, contextual research plays a crucial role in overcoming the limitations of fragmented or unclear inscriptions. By examining the historical, cultural, and political context in which the artifact was created, scholars can better interpret the language and understand the intentions behind the inscription. This research often involves cross-referencing inscriptions with other historical documents, royal decrees, and religious texts to reconstruct the broader social and political environment in which the artifact was produced.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the importance of material relics within a museum context as unpromising archives of language, especially when it comes to the Timurid era and its texts, regarding these objects as an intersection for such manuscripts to be uncovered. In addition to their historical and artistic importance, the information recorded on these objects contains valuable evidence about language change, communication strategies, and cultural perceptions in the Timurid

Empire. The inquiry revealed that these objects serve as dynamic repositories of linguistic data. Verses on jugs and ewers unveiled a high level of gamesmanship in political eulogies and private piety, as well as the Persian register of caliphal authority, which employed painterly material as much as administrative language in sophisticated scripts like Thuluth. Finger-ring seals that lent religious authority, with their inscriptions in Arabic identifying religious figures, revealed the intimate intertwining of faith, politics, and identity within the Islamic world. Coins also proved highly effective in projecting rulers' legitimacy, piety, and historical pedigree through their selective use of Arabic inscriptions, which merged Mongol custom with Islamic society. Manuscripts and paintings continued to enrich this multilingual tapestry, demonstrating the enduring power of Persian as the preeminent literary language, as well as the ability of texts, whether verbal or visual, to convey intricate cultural and intellectual transactions. This interdisciplinary approach serves not only to save these artifacts for future generations, but more importantly, to breathe life into the study of them as illuminating texts that can be used as a framework to reconstruct what life was like in the days when these cultures thrived, how they lived and breathed, their values, and power structures. These intertwined narratives of language, culture, and power, concealed within the linguistic archives, have lessons that continue to resonate with us today concerning communication and identity. This review can be basis for further linguistics analysis based on the museum artifact which can provide alternative perspectives on linguistic studies and related studies.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Informed consent was granted from all respondents, and their identities had been on the private and confidential files. This study fully complies with the ethical standards and publication guidelines of Jurnal Arbitrer

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Dilafruz Kurbanova: Conceptualization and design of the review, supervised the research process, and final manuscript preparation.

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Gulkhayo Abdullaeva: Writing introduction and literature review sections, revise manuscript and ensured the clarity of the final document.

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The authors declare no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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