



## Very Large Qalamdan, Mamelouk-style Writing Or Pen Box, Syria Or Egypt 19th Cty

1 400 EUR



Signature : Ateliers Syriens ou Egyptiens (Damas ou Le Caire)

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Brass

Length : 38,5 cm

Width : 11,5 cm

Height : 12 cm

### Description

ISLAMIC ART, DINANDERY Outstanding Mamluk revival penbox (Qalamdan) An old copper and silver-inlaid on brass writer's box in Mamluk style Very important QALAMDAN, writing desk or pen tray, Syrian or Egyptian metal work (Damascus or Cairo workshops) from 2nd part of 19th cty, in the style of richest MAMELOUK ones Exceptional brasswork, consisting of copper and silver inlays on a thick brass base. The Mamluk-style Arabic calligraphic script is extremely stylized (the style is highly ornamental and some letters are deliberately stretched or intertwined) to the point of making it difficult to read, but it is possible to decipher and translate inscriptions and formulas of blessing and prestige such as those that could be found on Syrian-Egyptian metal objects of the 13th - 15th

### Dealer

**Siegfried Fabien**

Céramique anciennes, Hte Epoque, Art islamique et indien,  
Curiosa

Tel : 06 82 45 46 13

Le-Petit-Pressigny 37350

centuries\* On the lid panel, whose calligraphy is particularly successful, we most probably read:???? ??????al-?izz al-da?imwhich means:"Eternal glory" or "Enduring power".This is an extremely typical formula for decorative Mamluk art.\* On the side panel, the reading is more fragmentary, but it appears to be a sequence of honorary vows of the type:???? ???????? ... or possibly ????? ???????? ...i.e.: "Glory and prosperity"/"Happiness and success".Large Mamluk basins, caskets, candlesticks and pedestal tables often bore series of repeated auspicious words:\* ??? (glory) ????? (prosperity/favor) ??? (good fortune) ????? (felicity) ????? (eternal)The casket's decoration - brass inlaid with copper and silver with Arabic inscriptions (monumental thuluth script), vegetal friezes, .. strongly evokes Syro-Egyptian "revival" productions from 2nd half of 19th century, often made in Damascus or Cairo for the Orientalist market, rather than a genuine medieval Mamluk object. But it faithfully reproduces the Mamluk aesthetic vocabulary.The exceptional quality of this writing case is also due to the fact that the interior is also inlaid with copper and silver in the same way as the exterior, including the large cylindrical compartment used to hold brushes and water during the writing-painting process: even the curves have been treated identically to the rest of the Qalamdan, obviously complicating its construction. The underside of the lid is still treated in the same way and with the same care, reflecting a certain fear of emptiness and extreme mannerism.Dimensions:38.5 x 11.5 x 12cmThe very large Qalamdan weighs no less than 3.7kg (!), testimony to the significant thickness of the brass plates used for the structure of the writing case and the quality brought to the fabrication of this piece.Good condition, Note a small, largely minor flaw, the 2 front corners of the lid edge being slightly spread at the corners. No missing inlays, and the box has suffered no dents or bumps. The compartment lid works perfectly, and the 2 original tubes to hold inks are

present."The pen box is an object of special status in Islamic art. Because of the high regard given to calligraphy in Islamic culture, its religious connection with the Koran and its central role in state bureaucracy - particularly in the chancellery, which links the state to the world - the pen (qalam) has been abundantly celebrated by poets as the embodiment of wit and intellect. The mamloukes pen boxes made for sultans and anonymous bureaucrats were richly decorated, but they stand out among other metal objects, primarily for the lofty, poetic texts sometimes inscribed on them."