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OCTAGONAL CONTAINER (INKWELL), ENGRAVED AND GILDED
COPPER

SPAIN OR NORTH AFRICA; LATE 14TH-16TH CENTURY

H: 9.5; Maximum W: 9.8 cm.

This octagonal container, which now is missing its lid, probably served as an inkwell. Three more complete examples have been published: one cylindrical and two octagonal, all with their lids.¹ The four riveted mounts with rings made it possible to hang the inkwell, for example from the owner's belt, when it did not stand on a firm base. The lid might have had corresponding rings. A construction like this was also found on earlier inkwells from other parts of the Islamic world (see e.g. 32/1970).

The decoration on the sides is divided into three horizontal bands. The top inscription: "Honor to God" or "Royal Power is God's." Below are eight curved niches with palmettes in the wedges and with related inscriptions in every second niche. At the bottom is a band with palmettes. The decorative elements appear shiny against a hatched background.

The style of the inscriptions brings to mind the ones found in other Spanish decorative art (see e.g. 2/1989), and it has been suggested that the artist might have been inspired by textile designs and that the container could have been made in North Africa after the Nasrids were expelled from Granada in 1492.² A different kind of inscription, perhaps an artist's signature that cannot be deciphered, was engraved vertically in one of the niches.

¹ *Art from the world of Islam. 8th – 18th century, Humlebæk, 1987, cat. no. 174 (Homaizi Collection) (Louisiana Revy, 27, no. 3); Arte y Cultura de al-Andaluz, Alhambra, Granada, 2013, cat. no. 197 (Instituto Valencia de Don Juan), and Sotheby's London, Oct. 8, 2014, lot 92.*

² *Sotheby's London, Oct. 19, 2016, lot 235.*

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Sotheby's, London, 19/10-2016, lot 235;