



Inv. no. 18/2010

SUFI EMBLEM, WOOD

TURKEY; 18TH-19TH CENTURY

H INCL. FOOT: 89.5; W: 45.5 CM

This sculpturally conceived calligraphic composition features the words “ya Shafi” (O Healer!), repeated and reversed. Al-Shafi is one of Allah’s many names. It is often used among the Sufis as a decorative metaphor of God and as one of several words and phrases that bring the Sufi further on his path when they are remembered and repeated (*dhikr*).

We do not know why the base bears a marked resemblance to the shape of classical Islamic candlesticks from the 13th-14th century, but the emblem could be interpreted as a flame. In Sufi poetry, the moth’s longing for the candle’s burning flame is interpreted as the lover’s longing for the beloved – a metaphor of the Sufi and God.

Published in:

Sotheby's, London, 6/10-2010, lot 345;

Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel: *Sufisme: islams mystiske vej*,
Davids Samling, København 2011, pp. 60-61;

Institute of Ismaili Studies: *Encounters in Muslim History, Student
reader 1*, London 2017, p. 221;

Stig T. Rasmussen: *Klassisk arabisk litteratur i oversættelse til dansk:
en litteraturhistorisk vejvisende antologi*, København 2018, pp. 110-
111;

Calouste Gulbenkian Museum: *The rise of Islamic art, 1869-1939*,
Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon 2019, cat.no. 10, pp. 82-84;