



Inv. no. 23/2018

WICKER SHIELD WRAPPED WITH COLORED SILK AND METAL
THREADS AND WITH AN UMBO AND METAL FITTINGS OF STEEL
AND BRASS

TURKEY; 17TH CENTURY

DIAM: 67.5 CM

Ever since antiquity, thin, flexible branches have been used for shields because of the materials' qualities. Wicker is easily available, shields made from it are light, and above all, it is fairly resistant to arrows and side arms. By wrapping the wicker with threads in various colors, the shields could be decorated. Timurid/Turkmen painting from the 15th century features circular shields with bright, simple colors, their ring structure clearly showing that they were made of wicker (42/2006).

A few Safavid wicker shields that have been preserved from around 1600 show how they could also be decorated with more artistic and detailed figurative motifs.¹ The 2nd half of the 17th century, however, is the period from which a large number of wicker shields have been preserved from the Islamic world. They belonged to Ottoman warriors, but were kept as trophies in Western collections when the

expansion of the Ottoman Empire in Central Europe was successfully blocked.

This shield has a simple, undecorated steel umbo. Around the umbo is the word *allah* (God) repeated between ornaments that resemble double-headed eagles. A wider band is decorated with opposing heart-shaped forms containing a flower flanked by two leaves. The flower-shaped brass fittings on the front served as brackets on the back for the straps that were used to hold the shield on the arm or on the back.

The Ottoman wicker shields (*kalkan*) were fairly rarely decorated with calligraphy, but this shield's decoration and color scheme have a parallel in one in Krakow's National Museum.²

Damage along the edge shows that our shield was used in battle.

¹ *Persisk konst i Sverige, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm 1973, p. 26, cat. no. 201*

² *Inv. MNK V-51, see Michal Dziewulski: 100 Rarities From the Military Collection at the National Museum in Krakow, Krakow, 2015, cat. no. 16a*

Published in:

Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel: *Fighting, Hunting, Impressing. Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500-1850*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2021, cat.no. 68 and Appendix, p. 277;