



Inv. no. 11/1965

SHIELD MADE OF STEEL AND IRON WITH DECORATIONS IN
OVERLAID GOLD

IRAN; FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

DIAM: 36.5 CM

This round, domed shield edged by a steel strip belongs to a type that emerged in India and Iran during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Up until this point, shields had mainly been made from light, flexible wicker, but the new, heavier type made of thick, moulded leather, iron, or steel, was more solid and provided better protection against firearms.

However, like many other nineteenth-century Iranian pieces of armour, this shield is unlikely to have been intended for use on the battlefield. It is more likely to have been a prop for use in parades or perhaps during the annual Shiite passion plays (*taziya*) commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

The surface of the shield is covered with decorations in overlaid gold (*kofrigari*). Three of the four original bosses have been preserved,

adorned with various types of birds in foliage. The domed part is decorated with arabesques while the outer strip is adorned with a band of cartouches depicting various scenes of fighting and hunting. Several of the people depicted wear the obliquely cut Astrakhan hat widespread in nineteenth-century Iran (183/2006). This detail further confirms the late dating of the shield.

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Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel: *Fighting, Hunting, Impressing: Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500–1850*, The David Collection, Copenhagen, cat.no. 69: