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STEEL STANDARD (*ALAM*), WITH OPENWORK DECORATION

IRAN; LATE 17TH-EARLY 18TH CENTURY

TOTAL H: 378.5 CM

In the Islamic world, the *alam* was used as an insignia of princely rank, as a military standard, and as a religious standard.

No matter what its purpose, the *alam* generally featured religious inscriptions that mention the name of the Prophet Muhammad and the four first caliphs. Most standards come from Shiite Iran, which is why the names of Ali, Fatima, and their sons Hasan and Husayn often play a prominent role.

This *alam* is unusually large and complex. It was undoubtedly owned by a guild or brotherhood that carried it in a procession during Muharram, the month of mourning. Since it is an object that was used, and not just displayed, several parts of the standard have been restored over the years.

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