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STANDARD (ALAM), IRON WITH OPENWORK DECORATION

IRAN; 16TH-17TH CENTURY

H: 110.5; W: 44.5 CM

“O, Ali, help” reads the uppermost part of the decoration on this standard. Ali plays a unique role in Shia-Muslim contexts since he (and not Abu Bakr, Umar, or Uthman) is considered the first legitimate leader of the Muslim community after the Prophet Muhammad. In the lowermost part of the decoration we find the names of God and Muhammad surrounded by those of twelve Shiite imams. Standards like this one have been used for centuries in religious processions such as the one at Ashura, when Shiites commemorate the martyrdom of Ali’s son Husayn in 680. A standard is mounted on a long pole that often bears one or more flags.

Published in:

Henry-René D'Allemagne: *Reminiscence d'Orient: Turquie – Perse et*

Syrie, Paris 1939, pl. XXV;
Spink & Son: *Persian and Islamic art*, London 1977, cat.no. 163;