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DERVISH'S STAFF, STEEL

IRAN; 18TH-19TH CENTURY

L: 68.5 CM

A dervish's staff like this one was commonly used by members of Sufi brotherhoods. In certain Sufi orders, members practiced "the remembrance of God" and asceticism on long retreats, keeping a vigil as they prayed. During these vigils, the dervish used the staff to rest his head or arm as he warded off sleep.

At one end, the staff forms a calligraphic ornament that elegantly spells out the name Ali, referring to Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Shiites' most important religious figure after the Prophet Muhammad.

Published in:

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Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom (eds.): *Cosmophilia. Islamic Art from the David Collection, Copenhagen*, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, Boston 2006, cat.no. 31;

Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel: *Sufisme: islams mystiske vej*, Davids Samling, København 2011, s. 38;

Stig T. Rasmussen (ed.): *Verdens skrifter*, København 2011, fig. 4, pp. 154-155;

Alina Kokoschka: "Reading between the lines: Arabic script, Islamic calligraphy, and the question of legibility" in Bettina Gräf [et al.] (ed.):

*Ways of knowing Muslim cultures and societies: studies in honour of Gudrun Krämer*, Leiden [2019], pp. 257-258, ill. 11,8;