



Inv. no. 42/1981

PULLEY, BRONZE INLAID WITH SILVER

IRAN; 12TH-13TH CENTURY

H: 8.6 CM

Mechanical devices played an important role for rulers in the medieval Islamic world. Large projects such as water mills and war material brought economic prosperity, and fine mechanics could be displayed proudly as proof of the technological capabilities of local princes.

A pulley inlaid with silver like this one could have been part of a fine instrument, perhaps a clock. Al-Jazari's *Kitab fi marifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya* (Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices) from 1205 has fantastic examples of mechanical constructions made for the court, including clocks, fountains, combination locks, and even robots!

Published in:

Sonja Brentjes (ed.): *Routledge handbook on science in the Islamic world: practices from the 2nd/8th to the 13th/19th centuries*, Abingdon 2022, fig. 1.9.4, p. 124;