



Inv. no. 17/1970

LAMP, OPENWORK SHEET BRASS

IRAQ OR IRAN; 10TH CENTURY

H WITHOUT CHAIN: 26; DIAM: 40 CM

Along with a fragment in Chicago and a lamp in Kairouan, this metal mosque lamp is the oldest extant one in the Islamic world. Through historical sources we know of older lamps of silver and gold, but they were melted down long ago. A glass bowl held the wick and oil.

The lamp's decoration consists of an openwork, scale-like pattern surrounding a text from the Koran written in monumental *Kufi* calligraphy decorated with foliage. The chain is contemporary, but might not always have belonged to the lamp. It is difficult to localize it more exactly, since similar objects and fragments have been found from Iran in the east to Tunisia in the west.

Published in:

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