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AMULET SCROLL (*TARSH*) WITH POLYCHROME BLOCK PRINT

EGYPT, PERHAPS IRAN; 10TH-11TH CENTURY

H: 86,6; W: 4,5 CM

Amulet scrolls like this one, with brief printed quotations from the Koran and God's 99 names, were probably not intended to be read, only enclosed in a good-luck charm. The text at the top – “God's support and a speedy victory” – is known from Islamic armor, indicating that the scroll was intended for a warrior.

The printing technique employed for the *tarsh* was presumably adopted from China. The use of block printing for amulets stopped between the 15th and 18th century, possibly as a result of a popular *Sufi* tradition that *baraka* (luck and fortune) was best transmitted through the written and not the printed word.

Published in:

Ramsey Fendall: *Islamic calligraphy*, Sam Fogg Rare Books and Manuscripts, London 2003, cat. 22;
Sarah Kiyanrad: *Gesundheit und Glück für seinen Besitzer: schrifttragende Amulette im islamzeitlichen Iran (bis 1258)*, Würzburg 2017, Abb. 2, p. 364;
Joachim Meyer: "Ornament or symbol. Around an early group of silver amulet cases in the David Collection" in *Journal of the David Collection*, 2021, 5, fig. 4, pp. 11-12;
Owen Davies: *Art of the grimoire: an illustrated history of magic books and spells*, London 2023, p. 99;
Joachim Meyer, Rasmus Bech Olsen and Peter Wandel: *Beyond words: calligraphy from the World of Islam*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2024, cat. 120, pp. 292-293;