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PAPER CUT WITH A CALLIGRAPHIC LION

TURKEY; 1280 H = 1863-1864

33 × 45,5 CM

A calligrapher's subtle play with script and image are the basis for this paper clip. Read from tail to head, the lion comprises a tribute to the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali: "May God bless his countenance and be satisfied with him, God's victorious lion, Ali ibn Abi Talib."

This motif in particular was popular among the *Bektashi* Sufi order, which became widespread in Turkey in the 13th century. The *Bektashis* considered Ali to be a divine manifestation on earth and personified him as a lion, in keeping with Shiite practice. The work is signed in the drop shape in the lower left corner: "Made by Sulayman, 1280 *hijra*" (1863-1864). The work was done with a sharp knife, not scissors.

Published in:

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. 121;

Alina Kokoschka: "Reading between the lines: Arabic script, Islamic calligraphy, and the question of legibility" in Bettina Gräf, Birgit

Krawietz, Schirin Amir-Moazami (eds.): *Ways of knowing Muslim cultures and societies: studies in honour of Gudrun Krämer*, Leiden [2019], p. 258, and p. 261, ill. 11,11;  
Marie Møller Kristensen: *Skrift – fra billeder til bits*, København 2020, fig. 26, pp. 64-65;  
Farouk Yahya: “Calligrams of the Lion of ‘Alî in Southeast Asia” in Liana Saif [et al.] (ed.): *Islamicate occult sciences in theory and practice*, Leiden 2020, fig. 11.1, p. 467;  
Asja Gimborg: *Velikolepnyj vek osmanskogo iskusstva: dvorcy, mececi, garemy i nocnoj Bosfor*, Moskva 2023, pp. 30-31;