



### **Bidri Talismanic Bowl**

Deccan, mid-18th century

Silver, zinc alloy

14 cm diameter, 5.5 cm high

Stock no.: A6082

A Deccani talismanic bowl with short, flared foot ring and everted rim. The bowl is decorated with bidri, an inlay technique originating in Bidar, Karnataka, which involves inlaying silver into a body made from a zinc-rich alloy. The exterior of the bowl is decorated in typical tehnishan technique with 'Hyderabad poppies', a motif seen frequently on eighteenth-century bidriware from the Deccan. The interior is decorated with the more unusual mahtabi technique, whereby the surface is plated with sheet silver and the desired pattern excised. This allows for much more intricate designs, like this Arabic inscription.

In typical Deccani thuluth script, an inscription in the central medallion reads Allah Muhammad Ali. The three calligraphic bands which decorate the interior walls contain the names of the twelve Shia Imams. Like most talismanic bowls of this type, this example was made for a Shia patron. It was believed that drinking water from a talismanic bowl would have healing effects.

A related bowl of similar dimensions with inscriptions in mahtabi work on its interior and flowers in tehnishan work on its exterior is in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art (no. 76.1239. ME.18).<sup>1</sup> It is dated to the mid-18th century. Another in the same collection (no. 76.1241. ME.20.), also dated to the mid-18th century, has the same inscription inside, although different exterior decoration. Another bidri talismanic bowl in the Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection, Geneva, is dated to the second half of the 18th century.<sup>2</sup>

[1] Mittal, Jagdish. Bidri Ware and Damascene Work in Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art. Hyderabad: JKMMIA, 2011, pp. 84-85, cat. 18.

[2] Picture in Zebrowski. Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India, London: 1997, p. 348, fig. 571.