

Object Summary



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Polychrome Wooden Panels with Arabic Poetry Inscriptions

Dated 1271 AH (1854 - 1855 CE)

Object Summary

Syria

Ottoman

Wood, polychrome pigments

Overall: 106 1/2 x 42 in. (270.5 x 106.7cm)

This small, shuttered wall closet, called a khazāna or dūlāb, would have been used for storage within the qa'a, or reception hall, of a private home in Ottoman Damascus. The wooden panels are decorated using a technique called 'ajami, a style of decoration that was used to embellish the walls of Damascene homes during the rule of the Ottoman empire. In this technique, gesso is applied to the woodwork in relief, painted with washes of brightly colored glazes, and illuminated with metal leaf. The panel above the closet contains an Arabic inscription in gilded thuluth script: You are in the unique (orphan) 1271 AH (1855 AD) The inscription is part of a poem by Abū 'Abdallāh Muhammad ibn Sa'īd al-Shanhājī al-Būṣīrī (1211–1294 CE). Al-Būṣīrī was a Moroccan-born Egyptian poet known for his poetry in praise of the Prophet Mohammed. The verse is continued on panels throughout the room.