



Bronze Incense Burner with Arabic Inscription

China, 18th to early 19th century

Bronze

8.1cm high, 12cm diameter

Provenance: Swedish private collector who travelled China extensively in the 1970s and '80s.

Stock no.: A5810

This solid-bronze censer on three cloud-shaped feet dates to the late 18th / early 19th century Qing dynasty. The base is cast with an apocryphal six-character mark which reads 'made in the Zhengde period'. The Zhengde Emperor (Zhu Houzhan) was the 11th emperor of the Ming dynasty, reigning from 1505-1521.¹ However, Zhengde reign marks (*nianhao*) continued to be used into the 17th and 18th century. The form of this censer is consistent with bronze censers of the early Qing dynasty such as the 18th-century example held in the British Museum (accession no. [1894.0108.11](#)).

Arabic inscriptions are held in three cartouches, in relief against a punched ground. They read:

al-hikma lillah / al-qudra lillah / al-shukr lillah

'Wisdom belongs to God. Power belongs to God. Thanks be to God'.

This box may once have been part of a set, comprising a brush pot, censer, and a box, designed to sit on a scholar's desk. Examples of these may be seen in the British Museum (accession nos [1894.0108.26](#) and [1894.0108.30](#)) and in the Amir Mohtashemi collection (stock no. [A5722](#)).

Incense was used both to perfume rooms and clothing, but also as a mindfulness practice in Buddhist worship and for Muslim scholars.²

n.b. accession nos are clickable links.

¹ 'Zhengde', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1 January 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Zhengde> on 7 February 2024.

² 'A Brief History of Incense in China', *The Feuerle Collection*. Retrieved from <https://www.thefeuerlecollection.org/de/history-of-incense/> on 7 February 2024.