



## The Ethiopian Processional Cross: Shard Of Faith, Guardian Of Sacred Mysteries



3 500 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Quelques manques

Material : Brass

Length : 34,35

Height : 43,50

### Description

**Artistic and Historical Description** This rare Ethiopian processional cross embodies a long tradition of Christian religious art in Ethiopia, a country where the Orthodox Tewahedo Church has played a central role for centuries. Made of a metal alloy, likely brass or silver, this cross features intricately carved sculptural elements, reflecting the skills of Ethiopian artisans who have passed down through generations.

Processional crosses like this one are carried at the head of religious processions during festivals and liturgical ceremonies, symbolizing faith and divine blessing. They are often richly decorated and adorned with elaborate designs that tell biblical stories, holy stories, and prayers etched into the metal. **Iconographic Analysis** The cross you shared features a rich and complex

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iconography. Here is an overview of the main figures and their roles in the Ethiopian religious context:

**Christ Pantocrator:** Usually placed in the center or on the upper part of the cross, Christ Pantocrator (King of the Universe) is depicted blessing with his right hand raised and holding the Gospel in his left hand. This image is central to Orthodox Christian iconography and symbolizes the sovereignty and mercy of Jesus Christ over the world.

**The Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus:** At the center of the cross, there is often a depiction of the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus. This motif, called "Theotokos" (Mother of God), symbolizes divine motherhood and the incarnation of Christ. Mary is venerated as the protector of the Church and is often surrounded by angels, indicating her holiness and special place in Orthodox Christianity.

**Angels:** Depictions of angels on the arms of the cross, sometimes with outstretched wings, symbolize divine messengers and heavenly protectors. They are often depicted holding instruments of Christ's passion, such as the lance or the sponge, emphasizing their role in the events of the Crucifixion and their mission to praise and serve God.

**Prophets and Saints:** On the lower or side panels, it is common to find images of Old Testament prophets, local saints, or apostolic figures. Each figure is accompanied by specific iconographic details (books, instruments of martyrdom, etc.) that help identify their role and importance in the Christian tradition.

**Symbolism and Spiritual Significance** Each detail of this processional cross tells a sacred story and reminds the faithful of the foundations of their faith. The geometric and floral motifs that adorn the cross symbolize eternal life, Christ's victory over death, and the promise of salvation for all believers. The circle, often seen around the figures, is a symbol of eternity and infinity, indicating the timeless and universal nature of God.

**Liturgical Role and Use** Processional crosses play a central role in the rituals of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. They are carried by

priests or deacons during processions, accompanied by liturgical chants, incense, and prayers. The processions themselves are public manifestations of faith, serving to bless the participants, the communities, and the surrounding lands. In conclusion, this Ethiopian processional cross is not only an object of religious art, but a powerful symbol of faith and Christian history in Ethiopia. Each carved element and each figure depicted tells a part of this story, rooted in centuries of devotion, prayer, and religious practice. It is a living testimony to Ethiopia's spiritual and cultural heritage.