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WATER FLASK, CAST BRONZE, WITH ENGRAVED DECORATION

NORTHERN INDIA; 16TH-17TH CENTURY

H: 21 W: 23.6 CM

The shape of this characteristic type of water flask is based on flasks made of leather without a base. The handle for filling water and spout for pouring it were made of wood or metal and attached to the leather with the aid of a collar.

Although fairly few Indian bronze flasks of this type have been preserved, they are familiar features on Indian miniatures, where they appear from around 1525. Chinese porcelain flasks with this shape are slightly older, however, and it is probable that both Indian and Chinese flasks hark back to a leather prototype used by Central Asian nomad peoples. The engraved decoration that embellishes the flask is unusual.

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