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LANCE HEAD MADE OF STEEL INLAID WITH GOLD

IRAN; 16TH CENTURY

L: 36; MAXIMUM W: 2.3; MAXIMUM DIAM (SOCKET): 3.6 CM

This lance head presumably sat on a long, heavy cavalry lance of wood. The lance tip itself is three-sided and has three sharp edges, making it both solid, heavy and well suited for piercing armour. The conical socket in which the shaft was mounted is decorated with diagonal flutes and facets continuing up along the rounded transitional middle part. The three sides of the tip have recesses adorned with Persian verses inlaid in gold, concerned with war, love and the power of destiny over human life.¹

A small, circular mark (*tamgha*) has been added across the first verse, showing that the lance was at one point part of the Ottoman Hagia Eirene arsenal in Istanbul. Perhaps it is booty from the battle of Chaldiran in 1514 (27/1986) or a slightly earlier battle. Another unidentified mark of the same type has been added to the transitional section between tip and socket.

The importance of the lance as a weapon for warfare and hunting in the Islamic world is evident from miniature paintings. For example, a battle scene from the Turkmen, so-called *Big Head Shahnama* shows two riders carrying the same type of lance with a slender tip and an elongated socket (44/2006). In addition, there are many detailed descriptions of lance fighting in the so-called *furusiyya* manuals – Medieval, Arabic textbooks on the art of war (19/2001).

¹ Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer, Peter Wandel: *Fighting, Hunting, Impressing: Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500–1850*, Copenhagen 2021, Cat. 17 + Appendix, p. 274.

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Filiz Cakir Phillip: “Weaponry of Iran in the 15th and 16th centuries. A helmet and a spearhead in the David Collection” in *Journal of the David Collection*, 2021, 5, fig. 5, pp. 87-88;

Joachim Meyer, Rasmus Bech Olsen and Peter Wandel: *Beyond words: calligraphy from the World of Islam*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2024, cat. 73, p. 219;