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DAGGER (KHANJAR) WITH HILT AND SCABBARD OF STEEL INLAID WITH BRASS AND SILVER

INDIA, DECCAN; SECOND HALF OF THE 17TH CENTURY

L (TOTAL): 38.5; L (DAGGER): 35.5 CM

With its hourglass-shaped hilt and its curved, double-edged blade, this Indian dagger belongs to a type known throughout the Islamic world and usually referred to as a *khanjar*. The type is thought to originate from the Arabian Peninsula, where it is also known as a *janbiya* ('side weapon').

In contrast to the shape itself, the decorations on the dagger's hilt and scabbard are closely linked to the Deccan in India. For example, the dark patina on the steel is strongly reminiscent of the matte black *bidri* metal made in the Deccan.

*Bidri* is a zinc-based metal alloy which is too soft and too brittle to be used for weapons, and so the weaponsmith has recreated the blue-black shades of *bidri* in steel instead. Furthermore, the delicate poppies inlaid in silver and brass are directly inspired by the type of

inlays characteristic to many *bidri* pieces of the period, such as bottles (1/1993), dishes (16/1987) and jugs (17/2011).

Several *khanjar* daggers with a steel scabbard and hilt from the Deccan are known, but the direct inspiration from *bidri* aesthetics on this dagger is quite unusual.

Published in:

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Oliver S. Pinchot: *Arms of the paladins: the Richard R. Wagner Jr. Collection of Fine Eastern Weapons*, Woonsocket, Rhode Island 2014, p. 42, cat.no. 3-71;

Bonhams, London, 29/4 2015, lot 145;

Christie's, London, 8/10 2015, lot 154;

Christie's, NY, 19/6, 2019, lot 378;

Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel: *Fighting, Hunting, Impressing: Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500–1850*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2021, cat.no. 38 + Appendix, p. 276;

Mentioned in Augustin, Bernd: "Die frühe Bidri-Ware: indische Zink und seine Tauschierung" in *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift*, Sonderheft, 2023, note 19, p. 31;