



Inv. no.

SPIKE, IRON, WOOD, AND BONE

SYRIA; 14TH CENTURY OR LATER

The Rifai Sufis and kindred orders (as a group often called “howling dervishes”) held ceremonies in which participants in a trance walked on fire or let themselves be pierced with a variety of implements. The goal was to demonstrate the liberation of the spirit from bodily pain after intense concentration on God, but the orders’ rituals have been interpreted by critics as populist miracle making.

This iron spike was used to pierce the cheeks or abdomen just above the hips.

On loan from Mr. Oliver Hoare.