

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Silver-Mounted Piha Kaetta Dagger

Southern India or Sri Lanka, Late 18th or early 19th century

Silver, wood, steel

32.5cm long

Stock no.: A5831

The *piha kaetta*, *pihiya*, or 'Kandyan knife' is a hand knife from Southern India and Sri Lanka. *Kaetta* means 'beak' or 'bill', referring to the distinctive shape of the blade, which is straight-backed with a drop-point and curved cutting edge.

The hilt is plated with silver, decorated with patterns in repoussé and chasing. The elongated bolster is decorated with *liya-pata*, a Sinhalese decorative motif which resembles swirling waves. Though it is of typical pistol-grip form, it is unusual for the hilt of a *piha kaetta* to be entirely silver-plated. They are generally made of organic materials such as wood, ivory, horn, and coral.

The wooden scabbard is fluted, with silver plating applied to the top half. Bands of silver filigree decorate the top and bottom of the silver plating. The scabbard curls over to form a wave. An 18th century *piha kaetta* in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (accession no. [IS.168&A-1897](#)), has a similar scabbard.