

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Silver Gilt Ottoman Dagger

Ottoman Turkey, 18th century

Silver gilt, gemstone, steel, wood

50cm long; 34cm long (the blade), 47.5cm long (unsheathed)

Stock no.: A5811

Provenance: Collection of Henry-René d'Allemagne

This unusual Ottoman hançer (or khanjar) dates from the late 18th or early 19th century. Its simplicity is striking. But for a thin band of engraved floral decoration at the locket of the scabbard and a foliate suspension loop just below this, the silver gilt runs uninterrupted from the gemstone at the top of the pommel to the bud-shaped finial of the scabbard. The unadorned surface allows for the refined craftsmanship and high-quality materials to be admired. The contemporaneous watered steel blade is also simple, with just three ridges as decoration.

Daggers from this period, particularly straight hilt-less daggers called kards, often have panels of plain silver gilt applied to both ends of the scabbard. An example in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (accession no. [36.25.730a,b](#)) is dated to the late 18th or early 19th century. It is more unusual, however, to have a hançer which is entirely covered in silver gilt, including the hilt. A few examples are held in Russian collections. A jambiya in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (accession no. [B.O.-483](#)), is entirely covered with silver gilt. Another dagger in the same collection (no. [B.O.-3275](#)) comprises an Indian jade hilt with an 18th-century unadorned silver gilt sheath. Several daggers in the State Historical Museum, Moscow, have similar features. A dagger (accession no. [1785/1 op](#)) and its corresponding sheath (accession no. [1785/2 op](#)) are entirely covered in silver gilt, and smooth but for a thin band of floral engraving at the top of the sheath and a foliate suspension loop. Another, (no. [1186/1 op](#) for the dagger and [1186/2 op](#) for the sheath) is also dated to the 19th century. It has a more pronounced band of floral decoration on the scabbard, but otherwise is entirely unadorned.¹

Another example, dated to the 18th century, is in the Furusiyya Art Foundation, Vaduz (Inv. R-981) and paired with an earlier hilt.²

This dagger comes from the collection of Henry-René d'Allemagne (1863-1950), a French historian, author, and collector of Islamic art. He travelled extensively throughout the Middle East, building his collection. Most of his collection is now divided between the British Museum, London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

n.b. accession nos are clickable links

[1] Also illustrated in Astvatsaturian, E.G. *Turkish Weapons in the Collection of the State Historical Museum / Turetskoe oruzhie v sobranii Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeya*. St. Petersburg: Atlant, 2002. p. 173.

[2] Di Lallo, Emanuela (ed.) *The Arts of the Muslim Knight: The Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection*. Milan: Skira, 2008. p. 175, cat. 163.