

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Mughal Jade Hilted Khanjar

The Deccan (probably Hyderabad), India, 17th Century

Watered steel, jade, silver

36cm long (overall), 23cm long (the blade)

Stock no.: A5848

Provenance: Australian private collection since at least 1990.

The *khanjar* is a double-edged dagger with a slightly recurved blade and a pistol grip hilt. The distinctive pistol-grip can be traced to the southern Deccan, where it developed from hilts in the shape of parrot heads.¹ No weapons with a pistol grip hilt appear in the Windsor *Padshah-nama*, considered the best source for weaponry of Shah Jahan's reign, suggesting that they were popularised during the reign of Shah Jahan's successor, Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707).²

This *khanjar* has a hilt of carved dark green nephrite jade, inlaid with carnation and cypress leaves in silver, recalling the technique of bidri. The double fullered watered steel blade is decorated at forte with a small etched flower panel. A dagger of such quality would only have been used ceremonially or worn at court, and never in combat.

A *khanjar* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (accession no. [36.25.667](#)), attributed to 17th-18th century Deccan has a similar pistol grip hilt. Though the scalloped blade is quite different, the silver

inlay on the hilt is a similar pattern. The hilt of a khanjar with near identical silver inlay, though paler green jade, is held in the British Museum, London (accession no. [1878.1230.883](#)), and is dated to 17th-century India. A dark green jade pot in the National Palace Museum, Taipei has the same pattern.³ It was published alongside a number of other daggers in this group by Stephen Markel, who theorised that they were made in Hyderabad.⁴

This dagger was exhibited in Paris in the 'Splendeur des armes orientales' exhibition in 1988.⁵

n.b. accession nos are clickable links

[1] Welch, Stuart Cary (ed.) *India: Art and Culture 1300-1900*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985, p. 178.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Teng, Shu-p'ing. *Exquisite Beauty-Islamic Jades*. Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2021, p. 101 cat. 110.

[4] Markel, Stephen 'Non-Imperial Mughal Sources for Jades and Jade Simulants in South Asia', *Jewellery Studies* 10 (2004). pp. 68-75; p. 70, in Alexander, David G, Stuart W. Pyhrr, Will Kwiatkowski, and Cynthia Clark. *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015, p. 216.

[5] Missillier, Philippe and Howard Ricketts. *Splendeur des armes orientales*. Paris: Acte-Expo, 1988. p. 112, cat. 189.