

A M I R M O H T A S H E M I



Ottoman Silver Yatagan

Probably Foça (then Ottoman Bosnia, now Turkey), dated 1224 H (1809 CE)

Silver, steel, silver gilt

77cm long

Stock no.: A5868

This fine yatagan (also yataghan, yatağan, ataghan), is of typical form with recurved blade and eared hilt. The silver scabbard is decorated with rococo floral motifs held within geometric cartouches, against a background of stylised palmettes. It terminates with a scaly fish head finial. The top of the scabbard is decorated with bands of silver gilt filigree, arranged in scrolling vegetal patterns. A silver gilt bolster with curling edges extends 8cm down the blade. Swords with identical bolsters generally indicate that the same craftsman made the blades, rather than the hilt and scabbard.¹ The hilt is decorated with rosettes along the grip and the eared pommel, and the two halves are affixed to a thick false tang decorated with filigree buttons.

The single-edged blade is decorated on both sides with cartouches and roundels bearing gold damascene inscriptions in both Arabic and Turkish. One of these identifies, in Turkish, the date, maker, and owner of the sword: 'The year 1224 (1809-10 CE). The work of Ahmed. The owner is Yusuf Pasha (?)'. The letter 'ب' (b) at the end of the word 'صاحب' (*sāhib*, owner) is transformed into a cartouche, holding the name of the owner.²

Side A reads:

1) In a roundel (Arabic):

توكلی علی خالقى

My trust is in my Creator.

2) In a cartouche ending in a tughra design (Turkish):

[سنه ۱۲۲۴ عمل احمد صاحب يوسف باشى [باشا؟]

The year 1224 (1809-10). The work of Ahmed. The owner is Yusuf Pasha(?).

3) In an octagon in a square cartouche (Arabic):

توكلی علی خالقى

My trust is in my Creator.

4) In an oblong cartouche, a Turkish couplet:

سینه اعدایه یا رب بو بجاغی قیل نشان

[صاحبنى دایم [كذا] مظفر ایله الوسون عالیشان

O Lord aim this knife at the breast of the enemy,

Render its owner always victorious, [may he be distinguished!]

5) In an oblong cartouche, the same couplet as no. 4:

سینه اعدایه یا رب بو بجاغی قیل نشان

صاحبنى دایم مظفر ایله الوسون عالیشان

O Lord aim this knife at the breast of the enemy,

Render its owner always victorious, may he be distinguished!

Side B reads:

1) In an oblong cartouche (Turkish):

[یا محمد قیل شفاعت اومتکدر [كذا] اوسف ا [یوسف؟]

Intercede O Muhammad! Yusuf(?) is from among your community.³

2) In a roundel (Arabic):

... توكلی علی خالقى عبده

My trust is in my creator. His (i.e. God's) servant ...

3) In an oblong cartouche (Arabic):

... لا فتا الا علی [لا] سيف الا ذا الفقار [ر] یا

There is no hero but 'Ali, [no] sword but Dhu'l-Faqar. O ...

The most prized yataghans with silver and silver gilt hilts, sometimes called *srebrnjaci* in Serbo-Croat, were made in Foča. They are usually dated between 1775 and 1825.⁴

A very similar yatagan is held in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (accession no. [51.428](#)), signed Hasan Agha and dated to the 19th century. Another, with ivory handle but similar false tang decoration, is signed Ahmed and dated 1220 AH or 1805/1806. It is also attributed to Ottoman Bosnia and held in the Veste Coburg Museum.⁵

[1] Astvatsaturian, E. G. *Turkish Weapons / Turetskoe oruzhie*. Saint Petersburg: Atlant, 2002. p. 139.

[2] Astvatsaturian. *Op. Cit.* pp. 148-151.

[3] This was a standard formula for calling for blessings upon the owner (see e.g. Marcus Pilz et al., *Gold and Damascus Steel* [exhibition catalogue], Coburg: 2024, p. 281.

[4] Elgood, Robert. *The Arms of Greece and Her Balkan Neighbours in the Ottoman Period*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2009. p. 142.

[5] Pilz et al. *Op. Cit.* p. 284, cat. 85.