Finch & Co



A VERY FINE 'KHANJARLI' DAGGER AND SHEATH

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WITH A LARGE IVORY HILT, DECORATED WITH ROSETTES OF RUBIES

THE RED VELVET COVERED SHEATH WITH PIERCED SILVER MOUNTS

INDIA

LATE 18TH TO EARLY 19TH CENTURY

ACCOMPANYING THE DAGGER IS A MINIATURE PORTRAIT ON IVORY OF THE MAHARAJAH OF VIZIANAGRAM

AN OLD LABEL TO THE REVERSE READING: 'PORTRAIT OF THE MAHARAJAH OF VIZIANAGRAM. PRESENTED WITH DAGGER TO GERERAL A. N. RICH ABOUT 1855 FOR SAVING HIS LIFE WHEN ATTACKED BY A WOUNDED CHEETAH'

GILT ORMOLO FRAME

DAGGER: IVORY ACT 2018: A CERTIFICATE FOR A PRE-1918 ITEM OF OUTSTANDINGLY HIGH ARTISTIC, CULTURAL OR HISTORICAL VALUE. CERTIFICATE NUMBER: WH73KH97/02 03/04/2025 (UPDATED: 23/05/2025)

MINIATURE: DEFRA PERMIT NUMBER: GJ3AB38X

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SIZE: 34CM LONG - 13¼ INS LONG / 35.5CM LONG - 14 INS LONG (WITH SHEATH)

MINIATURE: 11CM HIGH X 9.5CM WIDE (MAX) - 4⅓ INS HIGH X 3¾ INS WIDE

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LITERATURE

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GOING BACK TO THE ERA WHEN ARABIAN STATES WAGED WARS AND EXPANDED THEIR BORDERS, IT'S HARD NOT TO BE CAPTIVATED BY THE BEAUTY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE WEAPONS THEY CREATED. ONE SUCH WEAPON IS THE KHANJAR, ALSO KNOWN AS THE JAMBIYA IN YEMEN. ALTHOUGH ITS EXACT ORIGINS REMAIN A MYSTERY, IT'S WIDELY ACCEPTED THAT THE TOOL WAS USED FOR BOTH WARFARE, DOMESTIC PURPOSES, AND TRADE.

THE EARLIEST KNOWN DEPICTION OF THE KHANJAR IN YEMENI HISTORY IS FOUND ON THE STATUE OF THE SABEAN KING. DATING BACK TO THE YEAR 500 BC, THIS STATUE IS CURRENTLY HOUSED IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF YEMEN IN SANA'A.

THE WEAPON DEPICTED ON THE STATUE FEATURES AN I-SHAPED HILT, WHICH DIFFERS FROM THE MORE COMMON J-

SHAPED HILT WE SEE TODAY. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE I-SHAPED HILT REPRESENTS A PRECURSOR TO THE MODERN J-SHAPED HILT. THE J-SHAPE WE SEE TODAY IS BELIEVED TO HAVE EMERGED DUE TO TRADE WITH INDIA AND THE CONQUEST OF YEMEN BY THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BETWEEN THE 15TH AND 17TH CENTURIES.

DURING THE MUGHAL ERA, YEMEN AND INDIA HAD STRONG TRADE LINKS, AND A SIMILAR WEAPON WAS RECORDED IN THE TEXT 'AIN-I-AKBARI', WHICH PROVIDES DETAILS ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION OF AKBAR. THIS WEAPON, KNOWN AS THE JAMBHWA IN INDIA, BEARS A RESEMBLANCE TO THE JAMBIYA. GIVEN THE STRONG TRADE TIES BETWEEN YEMEN AND INDIA, AS WELL AS THE CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WORDS JAMBIYA AND JAMBHWA, IT'S HYPOTHESISED THAT THE WEAPON ORIGINATED FROM EITHER COUNTRY. IN 1763, THE FIRST RECORDED ACCOUNT OF A J-SHAPED JAMBIYA DAGGER APPEARED IN THE WRITINGS OF CARSTEN NIEBHUR, A GERMAN EXPLORER SERVING DENMARK. THE DAGGER WAS PRESENTED TO AL-MAHDI 'ABBAS, THE IMAM OF YEMEN, AS PART OF THE TRADITIONAL GARMENTS WORN BY THE YEMENI PEOPLE. THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST AND SUBSEQUENT SPREAD OF THE DAGGER LED TO ITS USE IN OTHER ISLAMIC LANDS. IT GAINED ANOTHER NAME, THE HANDSCHAR, AND WAS ADOPTED IN THE BALKANS. THE KHANJAR, A TRADITIONAL DAGGER, HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME. TODAY, IT'S TYPICALLY CRAFTED FROM WOOD, METAL, OR CAMEL BONES.

IN THE PAST, THE WEALTHY AND POWERFUL, ROYALTY, SAYYIDS, AND HASHEMITES, ADORNED KHANJARS WITH IVORY OR RHINOCEROS HORN HILTS. THESE HILTS SERVED AS A SYMBOL OF THEIR STATUS AND WEALTH.

BEYOND THEIR AESTHETIC APPEAL, KHANJARS WERE ALSO HIGHLY EFFECTIVE FOR DEFENCE. THE DAGGERS WERE WORN ON THE FRONT AND CENTRE OF THE WAIST, PROVIDING COMFORT DURING CAMEL AND DONKEY TRAVEL. THEIR CURVED SHAPE MADE THEM IDEAL FOR THRUSTING ATTACKS, ELIMINATING THE NEED TO BEND THE WRIST. ADDITIONALLY, THEIR AGILITY ENHANCED CUTTING AND TWISTING MOVEMENTS. THE WEIGHT OF THE BLADE CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR DESTRUCTIVE POWER.

AS FIREARMS BECAME MORE PREVALENT, THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF KHANJARS GREW. WHILE SOME DOMESTIC USES, SUCH AS SLAUGHTERING AND SKINNING ANIMALS, PERSISTED, THE DAGGER BECAME A SYMBOL OF PRIDE IN HERITAGE, PARTICULARLY IN YEMEN AND OMAN. IT WAS INTEGRATED INTO TRADITIONAL REGALIA, REFLECTING A COMMITMENT TO FAMILY HONOUR AND TRADITION.

THE KHANJAR HELD SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN MARKING LIFE'S MILESTONES. IT SYMBOLISED MASCULINITY AND WAS PRESENTED TO BOYS DURING THEIR TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD. SIMILARLY, IT WAS CONSIDERED PART OF THE GROOM'S ATTIRE DURING WEDDINGS, SIGNIFYING A WILLINGNESS TO PROTECT THE FAMILY. MOREOVER, THE KHANJAR REPRESENTED CONTINUITY, FAMILY HONOUR, AND THE PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONS AS IT WAS PASSED DOWN FROM FATHER TO SON. THE FACT THAT OUR EXAMPLE, PRESENTED HERE, WAS GIFTED TO GENERAL A. N. RICH, TESTIFIES TO THE DAGGERS HUGE 'IMPORTANCE' CONVEYING THE GRATITUDE FROM MAHARAJAH VIZIANAGRAM'S AFTER HIS LIFE WAS SAVED DURING THEIR HUNTING TRIP.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE ENGLISH COLLECTION