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## THE STRONGLY CURVED DAGGERS IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup>–19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY IRAN

The article is devoted to the dagger with an I-shaped hilt and a wide double-edged ribbed blade of different curvature that was widely used in Iran from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and during the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and called *khanjar*. The weapon seems to have appeared in the country under the influence of the Arabic military culture where the strongly curved *jambiyya* was a social marker and an essential part of the symbolic code of the nation. The local Iranian variants of the dagger, its shape, materials it was made of, its decoration scheme — the features showing its absorption of the Iranian culture — are described and analyzed by the author on the good number of pieces preserved in different collections.

*Keywords:* Dagger, *khanjar*, *jambiyya*, Iran, Arabia, weapon, blade, hilt, sheath.

On the edge of the 17 and 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Iranian culture there appeared a new type of a dagger which since then would have occupied a rather prominent position among the rest weapons in the country. The dagger has an I-shaped hilt and a short (23–24 cm), wide (about 5 cm) and highly curved double-edged blade with a prominent central rib along its entire length. One of the earliest examples of such a type dagger is the one from the Hermitage museum (№B.O.2345) which appeared in the Hermitage in 1927 directly from the Faberge collection [The Hermitage Inventory Vol. II, Folio 335] (pic. 1). The blade is dated to 1124 year of hegira that corresponds to 1712 (pic. 2) and marked with a name of its master Mehr(?) Rahim (pic. 3). On its both sides the blade is decorated with the Arabic script that includes the Qur'anic verse (61:13) and the appealing to Allah with his beautiful names that was made in the technique of gold overlaying.

According to the specialists a dagger with I-shaped hilt was first excavated in Osterrode in eastern Prussia and it is the oldest Persian dagger of Islamic period dating to the Timurid era [Stoklein 1935: 2576; Khorasani 2006: 219]. In those times the blades were only slightly curved assuming a more definite curve only in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century [Stoklein 1935: 2576] though the curved dagger with this type hilt is shown on the number of miniatures dating to this period while on the miniature with the Siavush death from the Baysonghur *Shahnama* made in Heart in 1430 it is held by an attendant in the left hand in reverse position. The same position of the dagger is also shown in the hand of a murderer on the miniature “*The Murder of Khosrow*” by Behzad from the *Khamsah* of Nizami in 1494 though its hilt is of a slightly different type with quillons turned downwards [Khorasani 2006: 219]. The dagger with a high curved blade but a quillon hilt is also shown on the miniature “*Bizhan beheads Human*” from the *Shahnama* 1482 [Canby 1998: 33].

The miniatures though don't usually show the details of the weapons except the rare cases when the weapon is depicted on the separate miniatures representing a single person and hence it is shown very precisely as it is on the pictures made about 1430 with soldiers probably of the Timur army [Martin Vol. 2 1912: Plate 55] but here the daggers are put in richly ornamented sheaths and once again it is impossible to see the blade features.

The Safavid era already at an early stage also knew daggers with an I-shaped white hilt and a blade with high degree of curvature as it is shown on miniatures [Sims, Marshak, Grube 2002: 124, cat. №41].

The real objects both dated and not from the time of the Safavids represent several types of daggers with an I-shaped hilt and a curved blade which were fashionable in those times. The first one is a dagger with quite narrow and very slightly curved almost straight double edged blade with a midrib like the dagger dated 1621 and marked with the name of master Lari and almost of the same type another dagger from the Hermitage museum [Ivanov, Lukonin, Smesova 1979: 28, № 53, 54]. The ivory hilts of these two daggers are much wider than the blades but should to be also Safavid as both daggers were brought to Russia not later than in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were preserved in the Kunstkammer of Peter the Great. Of another type is a dagger from the Hermitage museum that also seems to be of Iranian workmanship with a slightly curved but rather wide double edged blade without a midrib that was also in the Kunstkammer of Peter the Great already in 1727 and thus can be dated not later than the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century too [Ivanov, Lukonin, Smesova 1979: 28, № 55]. The third type is represented with above mentioned dagger №B.O.2345 (pic. 1–3) with wide and strongly curved double edged blade with a prominent midrib though according to M. Khorasani the majority of the daggers of the Timurid and Safavid time have a slighter curve and a less central midrib as compared to the later counterparts [Khorasani 2006: 219]. The dimensions of the first type daggers' hilts show that it is the dagger with a wide blade that became fashionable already in the late 17<sup>th</sup> — the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

This type of daggers with an I-shaped hilt and a rather wide double edged blade with a central rib preserved the prominent position among the short blade weapons and were the most widespread in Iran in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries though these daggers continued to be slightly different concerning in the degree of blade curve. The blade of the Hermitage museum dagger made by master Taqi's that is dated according to the quality of its enamel decoration approximately to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is not very strongly curved as are the blades of the daggers from the same museum that are precisely dated to 1801-2 and 1826–27 [Ivanov, Lukonin, Smesova 1979: 29, №№ 59, 62, 68] or the dagger №36.25.678a,b from the Metropolitan museum [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online-search/31848> — 21.12.2015]. The others like for instance another dagger from the Hermitage museum [Ivanov, Lukonin, Smesova 1979: 32, № 76] or the dagger №32.75.266 from the Metropolitan museum

[<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online-search/32261> — 19.12.2015] have stronger curved blades while there are pieces that represent even more strong curvature (for example the dagger №OA2170 from the Wallace Collection [[http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlus/service=direct1/ResultLightboxView/result.t1/collection\\_lightbox.\\$Tsp>TitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=Sfield/Valu](http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlus/service=direct1/ResultLightboxView/result.t1/collection_lightbox.$Tsp>TitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=Sfield/Valu) — 22.12.2015]). These various type blades were widespread in Iran all along the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the daggers themselves preserved extreme popularity among the Iranians.

These daggers with an I-shaped hilt and a wide double-edged ribbed blade of different curvature were called *khanjar* in Iran — the word that came to Persian language from Arabic (arabic خنجر — *khanjar*, «a dagger»). As M. Khorasani with reference to Dekhoda states the word appeared as early as in the *Shahnama* texts and it is the only correct one referring to such a weapon [Khorasani 2006: 219]. Some authors though like A. Jacobs [Jacobs 1985: 167] or A. Tirri [Tirri 2003: 208–210] use another Arabic word *jambiyya* (from جنب — *jamb*, “side”) speaking about these daggers. This word is also used towards these daggers on the web-site of the Metropolitan museum [<http://www.metmuseum.org/search-results?ft=jambiya> — 19.12.2015]. This last term is more commonly known when one speaks about Arabic daggers that also have an I-shaped hilt and a very wide, usually quite short, strongly curved blade with a prominent midrib going along the entire blade (pic. 4) though in different regions and in different tribes the shapes of Arabic daggers also differ in details. The words used in Arabia towards the daggers are both *khanjar* and *jambiyya*. They mean the same but are widespread in different regions of the Arabian peninsular: *khanjar* is commonly used in eastern Arabia, on the territory of modern Emirates, Oman, Muscat and some parts of Hadramaut as well as in Syria and Iraq while *jambiyya* is the word of the western parts of the peninsular especially Yemen. There are some regions (Salala for example) where both terms are common [Elgood 1994: 70].

The usage of the term *jambiyya* towards the curved daggers in Iran, India and Turkey by the scholars just signifies that their shape is very close to the shape of an Arabian dagger and may have appeared and become fashionable in these regions because of the influence of the Arabian culture though A. Jacob is hesitating on defining this influence: either the Arab on the Iranians or vice versa [Jacob 1985: 166]. All the three regions had got contacts with the Arab world.

In 1516–17 during a short sharp war the Turkish armies overthrew the Mamluk Sultanate which had dominated Egypt, Syria and western Arabia for two and a half centuries and brought these lands under their rule while they managed to occupy both shores of Red Sea, Iraq and two holy cities of Mecca and Medina [Lewis 1995: 114] and hence already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Ottomans possessed almost all Arabian territories as far south as Yemen and as far west as Algeria [McHugo 2013: 73].

In India where the strongly curved dagger became also widespread the members of the south Arabian tribes served as warriors. In Decan the infantry completed with the Arabs was estimated as the best one and the Arabian soldiers were paid more than the rest [Elgood 1994: 83].

In Iran the Arabs appeared once again in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1522–23 Shah Ismail Şafawī gave lands in Khorāsān and Fārs to refugees from the Ottoman empire, including a group of Ġazālī Arabs. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Ka‘b tribe settled down in Kūzestān. During the succeeding centuries many more Arab tribes moved from southern Iraq to Kūzestān and as a result, Kūzestān, which until recently was called Arabestān, became extensively arabized. The Shaikhs of the Ka‘b tribe and later those of the Moḥaysen were for two centuries the most powerful chieftains of southwestern Persia [EI — <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arab-iv> — 21.12.2015].

In the Arab culture the dagger was not just a weapon or an addition to the male dress. It was a social marker and an essential part of the symbolic code of the nation. Consequently the Arabs who readily adopted the high quality Indian and Persian blades for their swords and sabers [Elgood 1994: 14, 78, 83, 86] could have hardly done the same towards the daggers. To the contrary the Arabs came to these lands armed with their national dagger — A.H. Sharar mentioned *jambiyya* in India as a dagger which had a four-sectioned tip that could inflict a clover-shaped wound which was extremely hard to sew [Sharar 1994: 111] — that became popular among the locals and inspired the local smiths to produce the resembling pieces or put the blades of true Arabian workmanship in the hilts and sheaths made by Indian smiths in imitation of the Arabian style [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/31742> — 21.12.2015].

In Iran the fashion on the Arab daggers manifested itself in appearing of a local very special and recognizable type of the blade. It can be of different length and curvature but of approximately equal

width of about 5 cm with a slight elegant narrowing at the very end of the blade almost at the hilt as if it were a waist of the blade. This variant that existed alongside the other types of the blade had been thoroughly developed by the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as it is seen on the dagger from the Faberge collection in the Hermitage museum (pic. 1). It is definitely a Persian blade as it is ornamented with a chain of cartouches with floral design that was so famous for the Persian book decoration while as for this particular chain of a large semi-cartouche and a small cartouche it is almost the same as the one that decorates the bull-headed mace from the same collection that seems to have been made in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Iran [Iran v Ermitage 2004: 135, cat. № 155] and the dagger № 186&A-1896 from the Victoria and Albert museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/itemO67970dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 21.12.2015] and.

The *khanjar* blades were made in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran from different quality watered steel except only the blades which were specially intended for the *muharram* rituals. This statement is based on the analysis of the local Iranian daggers in the Hermitage museum and supported with the pieces from other collections such as the Metropolitan museum, the Wallace collection, The Victoria and Albert museum, The Notational military museum and Niavaran Palace museum in Iran and etc.

Sometimes the blades of these daggers were decorated with chiseled design or just outlines of cartouches made at the lowest part of the blade near the hilt that can be seen on the dagger blade № B.O.3184 (pic. 5) from the Hermitage museum or on the daggers' blades № OA2170 from the Wallace collection [[http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlusservice=direct1ResultLightboxViewresult.t1.collection\\_lightbox.\\$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldV-20.12.2015](http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlusservice=direct1ResultLightboxViewresult.t1.collection_lightbox.$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldV-20.12.2015)], № 5702-1901 from V&A museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/itemO71514dagger-unknown> — 19.12.2015] and № 36.25.781 a, b [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online-search/31761> — 19.12.2015].

Another variant of decoration is gold or brass used in the technique of overlay as it is on the blade № 1602&A-1888 from the Victoria and Albert museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O113962/dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 21.12.2015] or on the blade № OA1714 from the Wallace collection [[http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlusservice=direct1ResultLightboxViewresult.t1.collection\\_](http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlusservice=direct1ResultLightboxViewresult.t1.collection_)

lightbox.\$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=1&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldV — 20.12.2015]. The most gorgeous pieces combine the two like the blade of the dagger № B.O.2969 from the Hermitage museum (pic. 6) or the blade of the dagger from the Fogg / Harvard Art museum № 1958.131.A [<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object216044position=140> — 21.12.2015]. Another pair of very elegant decoration reminding the European design is the daggers № 718&A-1889 [<http://pcollections.vam.ac.uk/itemO71466dagger-and-sheathunknown> — 21.12.2015] and 732:1, 2&A-1889 from the Victoria and Albert museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/itemO71266dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 21.12.2015].

In Iran the blade of *khanjar* daggers existed in several variants though. The simplest and simultaneously the most elegant one was the double edged blade which was described above with the central rib going along the entire blade. Some of the examples like for instance the dagger № B.O.2893 from the Hermitage museum (pic. 7) or the dagger № OA2170 from the Wallace collection [[http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlus/service=direct1ResultLightboxViewresult.t1.collection\\_lightbox.\\$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValu](http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/MuseumPlus/service=direct1ResultLightboxViewresult.t1.collection_lightbox.$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValu) — 21.12.2015] were forged with thick cutting waxes.

The second variant is the blade with the central midrib and two rather wide fullers going from the tip but not till the very end of the blade thus leaving a small space at its low part near the hilt. This space was sometimes left plain (pic. 8) [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collectionthe-collection-online/search/31692> — 22.12.2015] but more often it was additionally decorated with the chiseled floral design [Tirri 2003: 209, fig. 146A] or with a script [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/itemO67800dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 21.12.2015] or with the figurative scenes the most usual among which is the one that is known both in the culture of sedentary Iranians of the Achaemenid times and the nomadic Scythian tribes — the combat between a beast/bird of prey and its victim that is usually a quadruped or a bird. The variants could be very different. The scene with a combat between a lion and an ibex was chiseled on the blades of two daggers № B.O.2349 (pic. 9) and № B.O.3167 (pic. 10) from the Hermitage collection, two daggers № 96.5.138 [Alexander 2015: 224] and № 36.25.1058 [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collectionthe-collection-online/search/31454> — 21.12.2015] from the Metropolitan museum and the dagger blade

№ 574&A-1876 from the V&A museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO71468dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 21.12.2015]. The thick cutting wages (at least in case with the Hermitage example) were left unsharpened. The combat compositions of the particular above mentioned blades are so akin to each other that the blades seem to have been made in the same workshop or even by the same master. These blades represent the third variant that is to some extent a derivation of the previous one when a blade was forged with its edges sharpened only in its first half while further they were left thick and unsharpened. It must be noted that on the same type blades there could be a “combat scene” of other types (for example, on the daggers from V&A museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO67796dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015] and [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO71240dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015] or the dagger № B.O.5476 from the Hermitage museum) that must mark other workshops while the diversity of the blade types seems to point to different centers of the blade production. Unfortunately even if the blades are marked with the name of a master or a year of forging they are not marked with the place which consequently seems to have been of no importance both for a master or a customer. Some information about the centers of weapon production in Iran can be traced from the European written sources. Thus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the best blades though of lower quality than they used to have been were made in Shiraz [Misl-Rustem 1897: 176] that definitely preserved its predominant place after the years of being the country’s capital city during the reign of the Zand dynasty.

The Iranian type of a *khanjar* dagger became popular not only in Iran but also in Turkey [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO67800dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015] and India where the Iranian blades were put in the hilts of local traditional shapes [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO71468dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015]. Finally under the influence of the Arabian dagger Indian and Turkish smiths also developed their own distinctive style of the blade. Never the less Iranian *khanjar* daggers were transported as far as Bali [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/32258> — 20.12.2015], but of the much more extensive use they were in the nearby lands of the Central Asia. It is evident because of the numerous gemstone additions that were put on the good number of the daggers’ hilts and sheaths that are mostly in the collection of the V&A museum

(for example [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O67796dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015]).

The hilts and sheaths of the *khanjar* blades were put in during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran were very different and made from various materials. The hilts could have been made of jade which was very rare — there are only two pieces from the collection of the National museum in Tehran [Khorasani 2006: 221]. A stone colored with green in case with the dagger from the Faberge collection in the Hermitage museum (pic. 1) could be an imitation of jade in less expensive material. The hilts were also made of metal and sometimes decorated with enamel [Ivanov, Lukonin, Smesova 1979: 29, № 59, 62, 68] that became very fashionable in Iran especially in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries or richly ornamented with jewelers as it is on the above mentioned dagger from the Hermitage museum [Ivanov, Lukonin, Smesova 1979: 32, № 76] or the Victoria and Albert museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O113962dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 21.12.2015]. These very richly ornamented daggers were popular among the Iranian aristocracy as the members of the Qajar dynasty like for example Fath ‘Alī Shāh or ‘Abbās Mirzā are shown armed with daggers of such a type [Adamova 2010: 333, 357, cat. №103, 117] while above mentioned dagger from the V&A collection is said to have been presented by Fath ‘Alī Shāh to an officer of the British East India Company Captain John Malcolm who concluded the Company’s first treaty with the shah in 1801 [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O113962dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 22.12.2015]. G. Drouville though points out that in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the daggers continued to serve as the social marker in Iran and says that the rich Iranians were armed with the strait knives (in Persian they are called *kārd* — کارد “a knife”) while curved *khanjar* daggers were typical to the middle class [Drouville 1826: 65–66], but as the real objects show the situation was more complex.

The most remarkable group of daggers consists of the pieces with ivory or walrus bone hilts. There are fourteen such items in the Hermitage collection. The hilts could have been left plain (pic. 5, 11) or decorated with carving. Ivory and walrus bone were very widespread not only for the *khanjar* dagger hilts but also for the knives from about the 17<sup>th</sup> century while the history of ivory usage for the arms decoration in Iranian culture is very long and goes back as early as the Acaemenid era (the famous scabbard from the Takht-e Sangin sword [Pichikjan

1991: 94]) and continued in the Sasanian times and later till the middle ages [Khorasani 2006: 223]. Another stage of white bone usage for the *khanjar* hilts seems to have corresponded with the general fashion for the ancient Iranian culture known at the court of Fath-‘Alī-Shāh. This fashion was reflected not only in the court life and its organization but also in the scenes that were carved on daggers’ hilts.

These scenes are also very different but there are some daggers where the images are defined with the script as it is with the dagger from the Oriental Arms (by courtesy of David Darom), with the image of a Sasanian shah Shapūr whose name is written lower [Khorasani 2006: 224, cat. № 218]. Another dagger of such a type with the defined image is in the collection of the V&A museum №717&A-1889. The front of the massive probably ivory hilt is ornamented with an image of a man dressed in Iranian court garments — a long coat with a sash and a tall hat, as well as loops of pearls and other jewels — wearing a dagger of this particular type tucked under the sash. He is also armed with a sword and a rifle. The decoration on the front of the hilt also includes two inscriptions in Persian, above and below the carved figure, which together read, ‘Portrait of Manouchehr, the brave king, the prince who wrestles panthers and grapples lions’ [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O67801dagger-and-sheath-al-husayni-ahmad> — 20.12.2015]. Manouchehr is a hero of the *Shahnama*. Unfortunately on the museum’s site there is no photo of the dagger’s reverse and any information about its decoration except that there are inscriptions which give an appropriate Qur’anic quotation: ‘In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. We have opened for thee an evident victory’, the name of the maker Ahmad al-Husayni, who has the sobriquet Kashtah, and what is very important the date of 1254 year of hegira which is 1838–1839 AD [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O67801dagger-and-sheath-al-husayni-ahmad> — 20.12.2015]. The date points that the dagger was made during the reign of Muhammad-Shāh. Another such dagger that was marked with a certain date of 1225 year of hegira corresponding to the 1810 AD — the Fath ‘Alī Shāh time — is in the H. Moser collection № M.W. 205. Its hilt decoration represents the group of characters that includes Rustam — the most famous personage from the *Shahnama* — who is mentioned in the verses put on the upper and lower parts of the hilt [Balsiger, Kläy 1992: 80–81]. The scene is shown under the arch which is flanked with two “angels” in the composition which is very similar to the one that

decorates the relief of Taq-i Bustan. There is another dagger №M.W.207 in the same collection with a scene made in a very close manner and organized in the same composition with an arch [Balsiger, Kläy 1992: 81]. These daggers that seem to have been made in the same workshop and in the same time marks the famous respect to the ancient Iranian culture and Sasanian in particular adopted at the court of Fath ‘Ali Shāh. It was at his court that the last attempt was made to revive the representational function of the illustrated *Book of Kings* [Artisans 2010: 34] while these two above described daggers mark the usage of *Shahnama* stories for the daggers’ hilts ornamentation.

The scene from the famous Iranian epic could be very easily recognized even if not marked with words as it is for example with the classical *Shahnama* scene of Rustam killing Sukhrab [Khorasani 2006: 226, cat. № 220] while sometimes there are scenes which origin is not evident as it is with the dagger from the Hermitage collection № B.O.2349 (pic. 9). Both sides of its hilt are ornamented with different scenes which include a landscape with the straggle of a mounted hero (he is dressed according to the Qajar fashion and armed with the curved *khanjar*) with a tiger (pic. 12), a bow hunting of another man dressed in a kind of beast skin (pic. 12, 13) and on the back side the same character with a kind of hammer in his hand is shown in a landscape surrounded with animals at a rock (pic. 14). These scenes evidently illustrate the story that was very well known for the Iranians in the Qajar times as were the other scenes carved on the daggers’ hilts.

Sometimes the scenes and iconography of the personages carved on a dagger hilt can be to some extent estimated as a basis for the dagger’s dating which is usually not easy as the above mentioned precisely dated pieces are the exception of the rule. For example the hilt of a dagger № B.O.3172 from the Hermitage museum is ornamented with the image of a warrior dressed in armour and a helmet marked with the royal aigrettes and armed with the same type dagger tucked under the sash (pic. 8, 15). The personage is shown seated on the chair that became popular in Iranian culture from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as it is shown on the paintings [Adamova 2010: 357, 377]. Under the chair there is a lying loin as if supporting the chair. The opposite side of the dagger is ornamented with a scene of hunting of a young man armed with a bow on the pair of animals depicted in the “scene of combat” (pic. 16). These images representing the archaic personages and occupations in combination with the stylistic features

could propose approximately the date of the middle 30–40s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that is the reign of Muhammad-Shāh while the dagger № B.O.3186 from the Hermitage museum with the image of a crowned man dressed in king garments seating on the chair (pic. 17) can be dated to the Fath-‘Alī-Shāh time. The dating is supported with the above mentioned precisely dated pieces made in a close style and iconography.

Simultaneously different variants of a crowned man image were used to decorate the daggers’ hilts. One of these variants is the image of a crowned man dressed in ordinary Persian garments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who is surrounded with youths and even naked children that was carved on the dagger № 186&A-1896 from the V&A museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O67970dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 22.12.2015]. Above and under the image in the two rectangular cartouches there is a line of a verse reading “Because of the eyebrows of the beloved there is more blood” which obviously don’t help with the recognition of the scene. The same scene but in combination with different verses is on both sides of the dagger’s hilt № 36.25.1056a,b from the Metropolitan museum [<http://www.metmuseum.org-collectionthe-collection-online-search31452> — 22.12.2015]. The scholars described the group as figures of kings, heroes or courtiers [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O67970dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 22.12.2015]. The same group differing only with the European styled hat of the central personage in combination with the same verses decorates a hilt of another dagger from the V&A museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O71462dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015]. Both hilts are executed in a very close manner that indicates that they were made in the same center but in different workshops or just by different artists while the scene seems to originate from a famous for the culture source.

The above mentioned line is just a part of the verse:

ز هوش فلطون دمش تیزتر      ز ابروی دلدار خون ریزتر

“Because of the passion towards Plato its edge is sharper  
Because of the eyebrows of the beloved there is more blood”.

There is another variant of this verse translation: “Its edge [literary tail] is sharper than the intelligence of Plato. It sheds more blood than the eyebrows of the beloved [sweetheart]” [Khorasani 2006: 590, cat. 223].

This verse is known for the decoration of different type blades till the 19<sup>th</sup> century [Skralivetskij 2013: 116; Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds 2008: № 272]. These lines (hardly legible though) being put in “pearl” cartouches decorate the walrus bone/ivory hilt of the dagger №B.O.1951 from the Hermitage museum (pic. 18). Its front side (pic. 19) is ornamented with a medallion and a half-medallion one under another and consequently two images of young men in. The men are dressed in simple garments and high hats reminding the darvish *kulah*. Different images put in medallions seem to have become fashionable for the arms decoration as early as on the edge of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century [Ivanov, Lukonin, Smesova 1979: 29, № 61]. The opposite side of the Hermitage dagger (pic. 20) is also ornamented with images of two young people. They are shown in full size embracing and dressed in European style garments — a man in a short dress and a lady in a long one with her hair accurately done. On both sides above the images there is a kind of pedestal reminding the style of Persepolis reliefs. The same image in combination with the same verses decorates the above mentioned dagger № 36.25.1058 from the Metropolitan museum [[http://www.metmuseum.org/collection-the-collection-online/search/31454](http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/31454) — 21.12.2015], but the hilts seem to have been made by different masters as the work differs considerably. The opposite side of the Metropolitan museum dagger is decorated with the “king” scene. The date of manufacturing for the dagger’s hilt with such images can be proposed by another Hermitage museum dagger № B.O.3184 (pic. 5). The images with two embracing young men dressed in the short European styled garments are not equal but close (pic. 21) to the above mentioned daggers. The opposite side of the hilt is ornamented with the same image but added with two angels (pic. 22). The line is the same “Because of the eyebrows of the beloved there is more blood” with the date ۱۳۰۸ در تاریخ — “at the date 1308” that is corresponded to 1890–1891 AD (pic. 21).

The dresses of the young men on this dagger obviously show the collars fashionable in Holland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This points to the famous fact that the masters of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century just copied the pieces of the previous days — the glorious times of the Safavid dynasty when the Dutch musters worked at the Iranian court [Adamova 2010: 28, 30, 92–94] while in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Iranian artists mostly copied Italian paintings both engravings and oil paintings brought to the East by the Roman Catholic divines. These paintings

have for two hundred years been ranked higher in Persia than the works by Bihzād and Mīrak [Martin 1912: 76]. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Europeanization of Iranian society started in great scale during the reign of Nāsir ad-Dīn–Shāh (in the beginning of the Qajar reign direct Iranian encounters with the Western world were extremely limited [Artisans 2010: 26]) was reflected in the decoration of the daggers.

The blades of the three above described daggers are different marking that daggers' hilts and blades were made in different regions and in different regions daggers were assembled though there seems to have been centers where the daggers were made in full as some pieces represent a very special and quite remarkable variant. At least other four daggers can support this conclusion. One of them is № B.O.3185 in the Hermitage museum (pic. 23), another one is in the Metropolitan museum [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/31450> — 22.12.2015], the third is in the H. Moser collection [Collection Henri Moser-Charlottenfels 1912: X, cat. № 233] and the fourth is in the Muse-ye honarha-ye taziini [Honar va mardom 1344 / 1965: 22]. All the four have got a distinctive type of an ivory/walrus bone(?) hilt which is not very much close to the I-shape while their blades have a rib forged not on the center of the blade but on its lower edge then changing with the wide fuller as if the blade were remade in accordance with the fashion from a blade of another weapon. On the lower part the blades are ornamented with a chiseled in relief floral design marked with gold/brass(?) overlay. The hilts of these daggers were also made in a close manner. The hilt of the Metropolitan museum piece is ornamented with cartouches and the images of warriors that definitely show the above mentioned fashion of the early Qajar rulers on the Acaemenid art as does the scene with a “king” and two attendants on the dagger's hilt from the Muse-ye honarha-ye taziini. The hilt of the dagger №B.O.3185 from the Hermitage museum is also adorned with the “king” scene. On the one side (pic. 24) the ruler is shown sitting on the oriental throne — *takht* — under a stylized arch and armed with a mace and a saber being put on his knees. Under him there are the two youths almost boys who are also armed with a dagger and a mace each. They are shown in the iconography typical to the image of Imam ‘Alī while the king's image represents the variant that is close to the throne images of Fath-‘Alī–Shāh. On the other side of the hilt (pic. 25) there is another ruling personage who is armed with a shield, a dagger, a saber and a mace and is also sitting on the

*takht* surrounded with his arm bearers holding his another mace and a saber. This scene represents the composition which is better known for the Safavid court. The hilt of the dagger from the H. Moser collection is also decorated with the “king” scene made in the same style [Collection Henri Moser-Charlottenfels 1912: X, cat. № 233]. These daggers evidently represent work of a common centre but the items again don't bear the information about the place of their manufacturing while the written sources are not completely informative regarding the details. The shape of these three daggers' hilts though is quite close to the shape of the above mentioned dagger №717&A-1889 from the Victoria and Albert museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O67801-dagger-and-sheath-al-husayni-ahmad> — 22.12.2015] made by master Ahmad Husayni in 1838 and henceforward the three above described dagger may have been made approximately in the middle 30–40s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which is also supported with the stylistic features.

As it was already shown verses were a widespread decoration of daggers' hilts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as they used to have been of the daggers blades' in the 15<sup>th</sup> — the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries [Ivanov 1979: 64–77]. There seems to be the only verse which was very popular on the arms as early as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century India [Alexander 2015: 225; Sotheby's 2009: № 145] that was preserved till the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

قبضه/دسته خنجرت جهانگیر است      گر چه یکمشت استخوان باشد  
نرسد کار عالمی بنظام      گر نه پای تو در میان باشد

“The hilt of your dagger will be the world conqueror

Only if the whole fist is bone.

The World will not reach the order

Without your feet in the middle”.

As M. Khorasani marks the last phrase is a Persian idiom meaning “without your presence or intervention” [Khorasani 2006: 224, cat. № 220]. These verses were put not only on the daggers' hilts made from ivory/walrus bone but also on the metal ones [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O71240-dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 22.12.2015].

The verses appeared on the dagger's hilts haven't got any evident connection with the scenes carved on their central part. It is the same verses that complete the decoration of above mentioned dagger № 36.25.1056 a, b from the Metropolitan museum with the “king” image [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online->

search31452 — 22.12.2015]. The decoration of the hilt of another dagger from the Metropolitan museum with these verses is a garden scene showing a lady in oriental garments playing with a naked child [<http://www.metmuseum.orgcollectionthe-collection-online-search25032> — 22.12.2015]. The scene with a lady, a man and a child all the three dressed in oriental garments in combination with a line from the verses is carved on the dagger hilt №B.O.3167 from the Hermitage museum collection (pic. 10, 26). The man is shown with a crown reminding a depiction of a Keyanid one at the Qajar court. On the opposite side of the hilt there is just a pair of a young man and a woman (pic. 27). The variants of this scene could be the one on the above mentioned dagger №574&A-1876 from the V&A museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO71468dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015] and the European styled images of a man and a lady with a naked child combined with the Quran quotation (61:13) on the dagger № 732:1, 2&A-1889 from the same collection [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO71266dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015] while the same Quran quotation can appear together with a separate figure of a man dressed in European garments [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO71285dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 20.12.2015] or “king” scene (pic. 28) and the medallions with the young men in *darvish kulahs* as are on the dagger № B.O.3180 from the Hermitage collection (pic. 29).

The hilts were also decorated with a floral compositions as it is on the above mentioned dagger from the Victoria and Albert museum [<http://collections.vam.ac.ukitemO67796dagger-and-sheath-unknown> — 22.12.2015] and the dagger № B.O.2969 from the collection of a Russian military officer K. Ksido in the Hermitage museum [Hermitage museum Archive: Corpus 4, Inventory 1, Act 548, folio 36] (pic. 6). The front sides of these daggers’ hilts are decorated with the flower bunch with the motive ‘*gol-o-bolbol*’ or “the flower and the nightingale” — the image that was so famous in Iranian poetry and hence the art till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the renewal of Persian poetry started in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century reached maturity [Artisans 2010: 30]. This motive can be seen on the lacquer objects (for example [Adamova 2010: 308, 309, 412, cat. № 74, 75, 171]) while the basis for the paintings on the pieces of applied art was provided by the miniature painting [Adamova 2010: 84]. The reverse of the dagger from the Hermitage museum (pic. 30) shows a medallion with the

representation of a miniature portrait of a European style lady made in combination with the above mentioned verses about Plato carved over a background with high quality floral design and the lines in Persian put in two small cartouches above and under the central medallion. The script in the lower cartouche is not yet legible while the phrase in the upper one seems to read: اهلی [أل] محمد ست — ‘*ahl-ī [āl] Muhammad ast*’ — “from the Muhammad family”. The line refers either to the dagger itself or to its owner. The quality of both hilt and blade work is very high that may point to the royal workmanship or at least to the special order for a Persian aristocrat. This dagger as many other examples shows that the images on the sides of a dagger’s hilt must not be necessarily semantically connected one with the other.

The brief examination of the images made on the *khanjar* daggers’ hilts shows that despite of the vast number of such type daggers preserved in different collections the number of subjects for their hilts ornamentation is quite limited. These were the scenes for owners’ pleasure like images of young men and ladies (sometimes naked [Khorsani 2006: 227]) or for showing the socio-culturally constituted differences between men and women revealed through erotic scenes [Khorsani 2006: 225]; or the images of the heroes from the legendary past who were also shown in paintings as the embodiments of national glory of Persia [Artisans 2010: 46]; or just the scenes that must have been easily recognizable (either with help of the verses or by their own) like the images of the characters from *Shahnama* or other texts. As it was shown these images could have been made both in European style that was so fashionable in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran or in accordance with the traditional Persian art. The European style was chosen by a celebrated painter in his days Abu-l Hasan Ġaffārī (1814–1866) for the execution of the most lavishly illustrated Persian manuscript of all times *The Arabian Nights* (1853–55). Its 3600 miniatures were made in accordance with European compositional principles and portraying characters wearing European-style dresses. The translation of the tales from Arabic into Persian ordered by the shah was in reaction of its European edition [Artisans 2010: 34, 35]. The appearance of the erotic scenes on the contemporary paintings and hence applied art may have been prompt by the revising of this text that had been faded into oblivion in Iran already in the Middle Ages [Artisans 2010: 35].

The connection of objects decoration with the literature was marked by I. Rapoport already in the 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the ceramic

produced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran while A.T. Adamova compares the development of Iranian lacquer painting with the situation in the manuscripts making [Adamova 2010: 87] which according to E. Bertels in the 19<sup>th</sup> century represented the low classes books like novels and short stories inspired with Persian written literature [Bertels 1988: 334–337, 341]. This thesis can be supported by the fact that the images appeared on the Iranian objects (both ceramic and lacquer ones) and daggers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to some extent correspond with each other [see: Iran v Ermitage 2004: 157–158] while the similarity between the daggers decoration and the Persian miniature have been already marked by the scholars [Jacob 1985: 168]. The Persian miniature images were somehow transported to the daggers' hilts like for example the images of the Indians that appeared on the Persian miniature art in the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and then were made on the daggers' hilts like the one №36.25.781a,b from the Metropolitan museum [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/31761> — 19.12.2015]. On the one side of the hilt there is an image of a Persian warrior with a saber while on the other side there is an image of an Indian warrior in the armour and Indian type helmet and shield. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the interest to Indian culture in Iran was not limited with the painting but included the literature that resulted in appearance of so called “Indian style” in Persian poetry [Adamova 2010: 35]. For the 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran the images of the Indians were also quite up to date as it was the time of active collaboration of the countries in printing industry [Artisans 2010: 47].

The quality of the miniatures and manuscripts' artistic expression in Iran in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was very different. The high quality manuscripts made in the traditions of Persian book art were still produced for the court [Artisans 2010: 30] though parallel with the rising popularity of the new forms of representational art, most notably easel paintings, prints and photographs the art of miniature painting was rapidly declining while as it was already mentioned painters of old school took their refuge in the imitation of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century style painting [Artisans 2010: 34] that was reflected on the daggers' hilts decoration that was also already mentioned. The miniatures made for book illumination were not always of very high quality even if showing signs of influence of famous 19<sup>th</sup> century Iranian painters like 'Alī Qolī Kūyī (active in 1845–1860) [Artisans 2010: 49, 47] and in terms of iconography [Artisans 2010: II, 49] corresponded with the

images on the daggers. Besides the lithograph illustrations provided the Iranians with the shapes and forms of mythical heroes as well as the main characters of Shi'ite religious legends as 'Alī, Hasan and Hoseyn. "After this point, lithographs came to provide the main inspiration in designing all the wall paintings, stucco ornaments, textiles, carpets and utensils of private homes" [Artisans 2010: 49]. The same is quite evident for the daggers' hilts decoration that consequently seems to have corresponded with the rest contemporary applied arts including book making and hence literature.

The daggers were sometimes worn not just tucked under the belt but additionally fixed with the cord which has preserved for example on the sheath of the above mentioned dagger № 36.25.781 a, b from the Metropolitan museum [<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/31761> — 19.12.2015] or on the dagger from the Oriental Arms and former collection of David Darom [Khorasani 2006: 585, № 218]. The cord was fixed either directly to the body of the sheath (mostly made of wood and covered with leather of different colors (pic. 31) or sometimes with cloth and completed with a metal or bone end) or to a small metal loop (pic. 32) which shape corresponds with the one known on the Caucasus daggers to fix the additional small knives. Some sheaths of the Iranian daggers like the dagger's one № B.O.2969 have the additional space for such a small knife (pic. 33). It appeared to be a kind of fashion that could have come with the artist of Caucasian decent who moved to Iran "in such a transient milieu" [Artisans 2010: 44]. Artist of Georgian, Aseri decent along with the Armenians of Isfahan played an increasing role in artistic innovation representing the middle road between tradition and innovation [Artisans 2010: 44] while the after Isfahan's loosing its status of the capital city the center of new artistic efforts shifted to Tabriz, the capital of South Azerbaijan which became the first hub of intelligentsia of European outlook [Artisans 2010: 44]. These ideas completely reflected on the daggers decoration and their sheath construction that even in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century preserved their position as an essential part of the male image.

The Caucasian culture of edged weapons was also to some extent influenced by the Iranian one as it is evident for example in regard with the dagger № B.O.2860 from the Hermitage museum (pic. 34). Its shape and especially bone hilt decoration (pic. 35) are arranged in accordance with the Persian scheme and include the personages and even the script

that is not at all legible but just an imitation of the Arabian letters. Sometimes the daggers seem to have been assembled somewhere in the Caucasus region as it is clear with the dagger № B.O.2899 also from the Hermitage museum (pic. 11) which blade is fixed in the hilt with small additional steel plates marked with a brass(?) disc.

This short article that can't claim the complete investigation of the topic show that the *khanjar* daggers which had been popular in Iran for about two centuries from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century being an important part of the culture were made in accordance with the Persian artistic traditions and hence reflected the changing tastes of Iranian society first the aristocracy and then the members of the middle class who became the main clients of the Persian art market from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and on.

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### Abbreviations:

EI — Encyclopedia Iranica

V&A — Victoria and Albert museum



Pic. 1 – A dagger. Detail. № B.O.2345. Iran. 1712.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 2 – A dagger. Detail.  
№ B.O.2345. Iran. 1712.  
The State Hermitage museum.  
Unpublished



Pic. 3 – A dagger. Detail. № B.O.2345.  
Iran. 1712. The State Hermitage museum.  
Unpublished



Pic. 4 – A dagger № 6878-2a. The Arabian peninsula. 20th century.  
The Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (Kunstammer)



Pic. 5 – A dagger. № B.O.3184. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 6 – A dagger. № B.O.2969. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 7 – A dagger. № B.O.2893. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 8 – A dagger. № B.O.3172. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 9– A dagger. № B.O.2349. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 10 – A dagger. № B.O.3167.  
Iran. 19th century. The State Hermitage  
museum. Unpublished



Pic. 11 – A dagger. № B.O.2899.  
Iran, Caucasus. 19th century. The State  
Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 12 – A dagger. № B.O.2349. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 13 – A dagger. № B.O.2349. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 14 – A dagger. № B.O.2349.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 15 – A dagger. № B.O.3172.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 16 – A dagger. № B.O.3172.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 17 – A dagger. № B.O.3186. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 18 – A dagger. № B.O.1951. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 19 – A dagger. № B.O.1951.  
Iran. 19th century. The State  
Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 20 – A dagger. № B.O.1951.  
Iran. 19th century. The State  
Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 21 – A dagger. № B.O.3184.  
Iran. 1890–1891.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 22 – A dagger. № B.O.3184.  
Iran. 1890–1891.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 23 – A dagger. № B.O.3185. Iran. 19th century. The State Hermitage museum.



Pic. 24 – A dagger. № B.O.3185.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 25 – A dagger. № B.O.3185.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 26 – A dagger. № B.O.3167.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 27 – A dagger. № B.O.3167.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 28 – A dagger. № B.O.3180.  
Iran. 19th century. The State Hermitage  
museum. Unpublished. Detail



Pic. 29 – A dagger. № B.O.3167. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 30 – A dagger. № B.O.2969.  
Iran. 19th century. The State  
Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 31 – A sheath. № B.O.5476.  
Iran. 19th century. The State  
Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 32 – A sheath. № B.O.3172.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 33 – A sheath. № B.O.2969.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail



Pic. 34 – A dagger. № B.O.2860. Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Unpublished



Pic. 35 – A dagger. № B.O.2860.  
Iran. 19th century.  
The State Hermitage museum. Detail