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Blades of Faith and Beauty: Symbolism and Ornamentation on Daggers and Arms in the Islamic Heritage of the Pakistan Region

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ABSTRACT

This paper will explore the development of Islamic weapons in Pakistan, 16th -19th centuries, but with a different perspective; it does not consider the weapons as mere tools of war; it views them as vessels of "faith and beauty" which are well-developed. Though traditional scholarship has tended to group South Asian weapons by some broad terms like Islamic or Indian, in this study, the approach taken is to be localised to determine the specific martial identity of the Indus Valley. Through the application of Art and Design theoretical framework, the methodology incorporates a formal analysis, materiality and semiotics in decoding the structural and symbolic layers of daggers and swords. The major discoveries indicate that the decoration of these blades of faith was a two-fold purpose: as spiritual protection where Quranic writings (e.g. the Throne Verse) and mystical signs of the Seal of Solomon were inscribed and also serving as symbols of the imperial status in the Mughal Mansabdari system, jewelled daggers were granted as a symbol of royal patronage. In addition the paper also determines the regional peculiarities e.g., the Sindh matchlock and tracks the artisanal persistence of metallurgical skills in historical gateways, including Sialkot, Lahore and Gujrat. The study concludes that the historical shift of mediaeval lohar (armourer) skills into current worldwide industrial exhibits, e.g. the surgical instrument sector in Sialkot, is an important segment of the industrial history of Pakistan. As the artefacts are placed in a transregional nexus of Persian, Ottoman, and local influences, the study has added a subtle regional discourse into the wider area of the study of Islamic material culture and heritage.

Keywords: *Koftgari, Sindh Matchlock, Mansabdari System, Talismanic Inscriptions, Sialkot Industrial Heritage, Mughal Weaponry.*

INTRODUCTION

The martial artefacts in Pakistan are a deep manifestation of the Islamic legacy in the nation, which has transformed the daggers and swords into highly sophisticated items of spiritual and cultural representation. These swords of religion are defined by smooth fusion of killing functionality and divine beauty, which are frequently used as protective charms, royal attributes and social identifiers. (FURAT, 2011, p. 4; Leoni et al., 2016; Lo, 2022)They were also awarded as recompense of heroism or allegiance and this emphasises the versatility of their meaning against the wider socio-political context. These decorated weapons were

frequently ordered by Muslim rulers with elaborate designs and religious texts and given the added spiritual and symbolic significance. (Critchlow, 1976; Lo, 2022) This is not a simple matter of aesthetics but these weapons have become physical expressions of religious piety; the fact that a pattern of a ladder was common to the Damascus steel was often seen by Muslim warriors as a means to gain a transport vehicle into hell in case they are slain in battle. (Sümer, 2018, p. 269; Wadsworth, 2016, p. 3154; Суханов, 2022, p. 461) Wootz steel was amongst the finest in the world. (Chakravarty et al., 2026; Singh et al., 2021, p. 239) It is the metal that was used to fashion weapons such as the famous Damascus blades of the Middle Ages. However, Wootz steel dates back much further than the Medieval period. The technology originated in ancient India millennia before many other cultures ever found out about it. (Chakravarty et al., 2026; Qureshi et al., 2023, p. 333; Ranganathan & Srinivasan, 2006) (fig.1&2)

Figure 1, A sword maker of Damascus, Syria. Circa 1900. https://www.ancient-origins.net/artifacts-ancient-technology/wootz-steel-damascus-blades-0010148

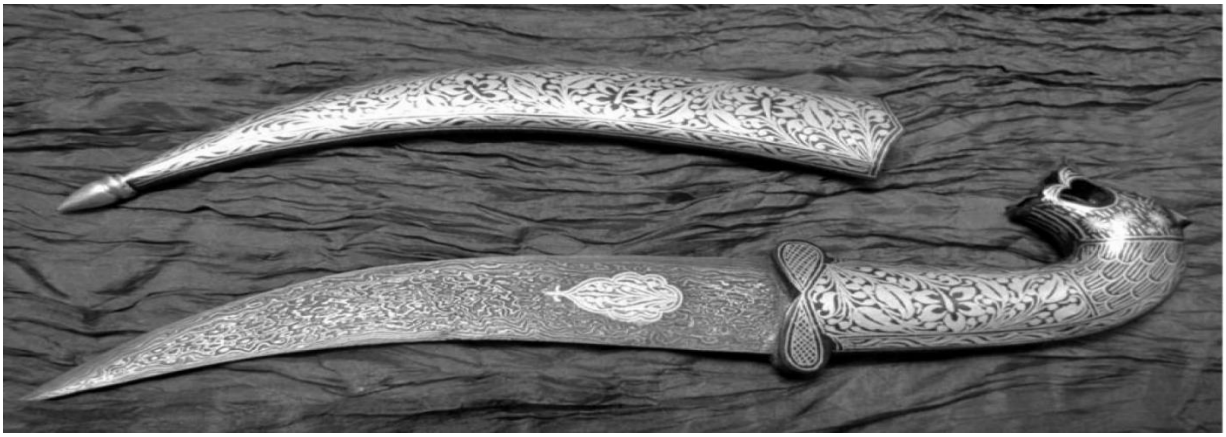

Figure 2, https://swordsinfo.com/general-information/damascus-steel-patterns-history/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The use of jade and gems were common. The masterpiece *khanjar* hilt with a horses-head shaped handle is made of one block of green nephrite jade. The part of the handle corresponding to the neck of the horse is adorned, in one of the frond themes, with a delicate work of etching in deep bas-relief filled with gold following the *kundan* technique, and with emeralds and rubies. Two black and white agates shape the eyes, and as a supplement to the precious appearance of the ensemble the bridle is overlaid with rubies entirely. The blade in compliance with the decorative character of the hilt consists of wootz or watered steel. Noble materials are used and the hilt has a zoomorphic form, proving that it belonged to a high dignitary. (Fig.3)

Figure 3, A Mughal jade-hilted gold-koftgari steel dagger (khanjar) North India, 18th Century the double-edged steel blade of curved form, the forte decorated in foliate gold overlay, the jade hilt of pistol-grip form with curved foliate quillons, carved with floral and foliate motifs, traces of gold paint Full Length: 34 cm, Blade Length: 22cm

Figure 4, Title: Dagger with Hilt in the Form of a Blue Bull (Nilgai) Date: ca. 1640 Geography: Made in India Medium: Hilt: Nephrite Blade: Watered steel Dimensions: H. 15 in. (38.1 cm)

Islamic weapons in South Asia have a long history of synthesis of alien methods and localised forms of art. (Alexander et al. 2015; Hunter 1875) Ghaznavid and Ghorid dynasties are said to have introduced fine Persian metalworking to the Indian subcontinent, and introduced damascened weapons and finely-

developed gold and silver inlay techniques of Afghanistan and Central Asia. (BOLAR 2011; Hunter 1875; FURAT 2011) This ancient time provided the technical base to what was to become the zenith of Indo-Persian martial art in the Mughal Empire, where weapons were ceased as simple instruments of warfare and became highly effective instruments of imperial graciousness. (Siebenhüner 2013; Meersbergen 2020; Alexander et al. 2015).

A system of honorific exchange freely provided by the administration of Mughal ruled India included the dispensing of weapons. The jewelled daggers *(khanjar)* and swords are often provided at courts as a symbol of the status and a token of the royal goodwill to princes, courtiers, and meritocratic officials. These were also commonly accompanied by ritual robes *(khil'at)* and were used to strengthen the pyramidal organisation of the state. (Meersbergen 2020) These weapons had a strong spiritual and protective meaning as well as a social role: shields and blades were often decorated with talismanic patterns such as magic squares called *wafk* or *buduh* and Quranic texts that were meant to bring Quranic protection to the owner. (Leoni, Grüber, and Lory 2016; Alexander et al. 2015; FURAT 2011)

Special centres of craftsmanship thrived in the Indus region as a result of the creation of these objects. One such technique, *koftgari*, damascening of gold or silver on steel, was a Persian process which is associated with Lahore and Sialkot, the latter having developed as a great centre of armourers and fine iron-workers. (BOLAR 2011; Hunter 1875) These centres in the region did well to connect the artistic tradition of contemporary Pakistan to the wider Persian and Ottoman decorative traditions. (FURAT 2011; Alexander et al. 2015)

One of the main peculiarities of this epoch was the culture of the greatest cultural syncretism, the fact that the Islamic martial aesthetics absorbed the local South Asian motifs. (Alexander et al. 2015)This is specifically seen in high-status objects such as jade hilts figured in the form of a blue bull *(nilgai)* that showed the Mughal interest in naturalism, also using material that was valued in terms of colour and feel such as nephrite. (Alexander et al. 2015; "A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-*Koftgari* Steel Dagger *(Khanjar)* North India, 18th Century," n.d.) (fig.4) The Hindu imagery being inserted into the Islamic artistic system can also be observed through scholarly interpretation of Mughal Persian works and objects. (Critchlow 1976; Alexander et al. 2015)This hinged saddle axe of exquisite decoration is connected with one in the Furusiyya Collection. The decoration on the head of flowers in the top and bottom confirm that it was Indian, not Persian. (Alexander et al. 2015) (fig. 2) The fusion of the Mughal preference towards naturalistic depiction with local symbolic vocabularies, became syncretic, at the same time as such subjects like the dragon were introduced into the local repertoire through Persian intermediaries who had acquired Chinese stylistic influences.

Figure 5, A gold-koftgari steel push dagger (katar) North India, 18th/ 19th Century the double-edged steel blade with armour piercing tip, recessed to each side and engraved with hunting and hawking scenes

overlaid with gold decoration, the hilt with sidebars and grips decorated in gold-overlay with foliate scrollwork, the grips with central openwork confronting elephants 53.7 cm. long

The evolution of the issuance of war weapons in the history of Pakistan became inseparable with the great impact of the Persian craftsmanship. (BOLAR 2011; Alexander et al. 2015)The artisans of Persia, known to have mastered iron and steel, brought with them the advanced methods of working out the curved blades to be used in the future as the martial mark of the area. (Hunter 1875; FURAT 2011) This influence is most apparent in the development of the shamshir, which tended to have the names of owners and makers (e.g. *Amil-i Abdi*) inscribed upon them, in beautiful cartouches of Persian calligraphy. (Alexander et al. 2015; FURAT 2011)

The artistic literature and styles moved to the court of Safavid helped in the amalgamation of designs that transformed the weaponry of South Asia. An example is the evolution of designs of dagger hilt, e.g. the evolution of the so-called pistol grip, or curled pommel, which is thought to have changed in Persian or Ottoman influence. (Alexander et al. 2015) These jewelled daggers *(khanjar)* often featured precious hilts with jade in the shape of petals where they could be used as a high-status diplomatic gift. (Meersbergen 2020; "A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-*Koftgari* Steel Dagger *(Khanjar)* North India, 18th Century," n.d.; Siebenhüner 2013). Moreover, decorations on such defence materials as shields (*sipar*) and breastplates reflected the Safavid traditions, which featured finely executed perforations and carvings made in gold and silver. (Lo 2022; Alexander et al. 2015)

The decoration of these arms in the South Asian Islamic art was enshrined in a divine philosophy that attempted to show the perfection of the universe with vegetal designs and geometric accuracy. (Alexander et al. 2015; Critchlow 1976)With this combination, the weapons became miniature cosmologies with every inlaid gem adding to the vision of spiritual order. (Leoni, Grüber, and Lory 2016) They could also be used as signifiers of communal memory, such as iron swords imitated after *Dhu'l-Fiqar* (the two-sword sword of Imam Ali), sometimes the preachers of the wider Islamic world use such weapons as ritual staffs during congregational prayers on Fridays, indicating the liturgical possibilities of the weapon. (Alexander et al. 2015; FURAT 2011)

The symbolism on these blades could contain a talismanic purpose that is meant to protect the blade bearer. (Alexander et al. 2015; Leoni, Grüber, and Lory 2016) One may come across inscriptions like the Seal of Solomon, a symbol put about to bring its owner wisdom and dominion over the supernatural or the Quranic Throne Verse, which commands divine mercy. (FURAT 2011; Leoni, Grüber, and Lory 2016; Alexander et al. 2015)Also, certain marks such as the "parasol" (*chhatri*) were applied to denote royal ownership, indicating that the weapon was owned by one of the kings, such as Emperor Aurangzeb, who was the alleged godsend and guarded by God. (Alexander et al. 2015) More than simply a religious motif, the art of the physical craftsmanship, including jade hilts and detailed gold *koftgari*, was also a manifestation of the status of the wearer and the representation of male masculinity in the courtial hierarchy. (Lo 2022; "A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-*Koftgari* Steel Dagger *(Khanjar)* North India, 18th Century," n.d.; Meersbergen 2020; Siebenhüner 2013)

Decorative devices such as floral motive of the so-called arabesque also add aesthetic value to the Islamic arms of Pakistan this technique reflects the decoration of that time in architecture. (fig.5) (Alexander et al. 2015; Critchlow 1976) Such designs like the eight-point star bear symbolic brunt that have been implicated in forming the modern-day visual identity in the area. (Critchlow 1976) These artifacts allow one to have an understanding of a tradition in which craft and art intertwine to commemoration of dual heritage of martial prowess and religious piety. (FURAT 2011; Alexander et al. 2015)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly discussion of the topic of Islamic arms and armor in South Asia is marked by the strong emphasis on typology, materiality and imperial administration, with regional specificities to the tradition of the Pakistan region being under-expressed. The works of G. N. Pant have become the definitive guide in terms of classifying and typology of weaponry in the subcontinent giving a chronological overview of the weaponry beginning in prehistory until the late medieval period. (Pant 1978). The work of Pant focuses on the evolution of arms design, construction, and ornamentation, which provides a means through which regional differences in the blade shape and hilt may be determined. (Pant and Cariappa 1970). Nevertheless, modern historians note that the general term of Islamic weapons and weaponry may be reductive and may lump different cultures (Mamluks and other Mongols) into one identity and mask the influence of individual cultures. (Blair and Bloom 2003; Ghafari and Hashemi 2023).

Socio-Religious Context and "Spiritual Armor"

Robert Elgood broadened the area by placing these artifacts in a greater social-religious context, especially on the ritual use and ceremonial meaning of weapons. (Elgood 2004). The study by Elgood points out arms were not simply a tool of war, but were entrenched in the cultural and spiritual life of the area and tended to be a piece of idolatry or a symbol of the-mighty-one-in-beauty-favored. (Elgood 2004). This religious aspect is also explained by the inscriptions on blades and hilts. These symbols culminating in Quranic *ayah* levels to Persian poetry served as a sort of spiritual armour that was meant to grant the wearer some divine protection, health and mercy. (FURAT 2011; SHIRAN, PARVIN, and MASTALIZADEH 2018). Calligraphic motifs kept in mind the presence of God and turned the weapon into a *dhikr* (remembrance) weapon and source of healing. (al. 2021; Starrett 1995; Hussain and Dein 2018).

Imperial Administration and Military Technology

The political aspect of the weaponry is explained by John F. Richards who places Mughal arms in the context of the imperial structures of the state. (Richards 1993). Mughal Empire could not have become successful without the institutional innovations of the military structure and strategic application of the latest technologies, including the use of firearms and standardized production of steel. (Richards 1993; Patar 2025; Zaky 1961). The virtues of the *Mansabdari* system, the dispensation of ceremonial arms was a tool of strengthening courtly relationships and guaranteeing a faithful military noblesse. (Charney 2022; Patar 2025). At this time high-status weaponry, including *zoomophic* jade-hilted daggers, were no longer rare luxury items and adopted a standardized role of designating high-ranking dignitaries and princes.

Materiality and Regional Craftsmanship

These artifacts have the necessary case studies that museum collections and catalogs furnish on their materiality. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Royal Armouries are some important examples of weaponry with *koftgari* inlay and watered steel (wootz) which are generally identified as the waters of paradise in Islamic poetic literature. (Lo 2022; Alexander et al. 2015; Hunter 1875). Certain symbolic identification marks like the "parasol mark" were used to strengthen the connection to the authority, symbolizing how the monarch is a ruler ordained by the gods. ("A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-*Koftgari* Steel Dagger *(Khanjar)* North India, 18th Century," n.d.; Alexander et al. 2015).

More importantly, it is observed that there is a gap in literature in terms of integrating these artifacts in a unified story about the Pakistan region. (Nejad 2021; Shah 2022). Although the functional typology is commonly promoted in current scholarship, the particular centers of craftsmanship during a particular historical period in the Indus region are seldom addressed. As an example, the existence of a famous center

of sword production in Daybul (nowadays in the vicinity of modern Banbhore) can be tracked back to as early as the 11th century. (Mantellini et al. 2022). Moreover, the aesthetic languages of local metalwork were highly affected by the local traditions including the kashi (tile-work) of Multan and Sindh which dictated the visual appearance of luxury crafts in these provinces. (Gill and Rehren 2017).

Research Gap

There is a major gap regarding the way martial traditions within the Indus region integrated Persian and Central Asian aesthetic languages as well as those of the locals. (Ahmed 2023; Iqbal, Akbar, and Cleempoel 2022). The prevailing literature seems to ignore the precise cross-cultural forces that shaped a certain visual identity in the area of Pakistan. (Ghafari and Hashemi 2023). This study is aimed at filling that gap by looking at the depth of symbols and decoration of such blades of faith as an area of localized spiritual and cultural tradition.

Significance of the Study

The research is important at several levels, as it stops the essential gaps in the record, interpretation, and preservation of the martial heritage in the Pakistan region.

Nuancing Regional Identity and "Indo-Persian" Discourse

To start with, it adds to the scholarly knowledge of the Islamic heritage weapons in the Pakistan region, a field that is usually dominated by the South Asian or Indian studies in general. This study uses a particular cultural orientation to determine distinctive features of the Indus region by avoiding a reductive use of the term Islamic that often takes different cultures (including Mamluks and Mongols) under one umbrella term. (Ghafari and Hashemi 2023). An example is the fact that the research indicates a certain degree of regional specialization such as the Sindh matchlock, in which the stocks are intensely down-bent, and the butts are triangular and flaring, which gives them a different outlook compared to the Central Mughal ones. (Alexander et al. 2015).

Documenting Artisanal Continuity and Industrial Heritage

Second, the paper highlights the craftsmanship cultures of Lahore, Sialkot, Gujrat and Wazirabad in the context of which artisanship has contributed to the formation of the cultural and economic identity. It unveils such an unusual technological direction in which the traditional skills of *lohars* (armorers) who used to be makers of shields and damascened swords transformed into contemporary globally prominent industrial belts. (Ilan 2015). In particular, the surgical instrument cluster of Sialkot and the cutlery business of Wazirabad, does represent a contemporary living legacy of these medieval metallurgy techniques, where the mandate to make swords of devotion to the faith gave way to the demands of high precision and professionalism. (Islam 2025; Ilan 2015).

Decoding the "Spiritual Armor" of the Indus Region

Third, the study discovers the convoluted symbolic and semiotic language of arms, as it is framed by them as the spiritual armor. They were also used as charms with magical forces as well as being functional weapons. The study makes our knowledge more meaningful on how these symbols of the Quran, such as the Throne Verse (2:255) and mystical Seal of Solomon (six point star) granted the owner divine mercy and safeguard against the evils of war. (Czermak 2016; Alexander et al. 2015). This spirituality changes the weapon to an object of violence into an object of dhikr (remembrance) and faith. (Leoni, Grüber, and Lory 2016; al. 2021).

Situating Pakistan within Transregional Artistic Networks

Lastly, the researcher illustrates how the Islamic traditions are intertwined, which is evident in the visualization of the arms of the Pakistan region as part of transregional nexus. The Persian calligraphy, Ottoman guards, and Mughal jade hilts on individual objects depict the permeable transfer and technology between the Indus Valley. (Khan 2025). More so, the inclusion of the native motifs, i.e. the *shikargah* (hunting) scenes or images of syncretism, reveal a distinctive cultural synthesis. (Petek 2018; Schofield 2015). Through these written records, the study will help in establishing an overdue system of industrial heritage inventory in Pakistan so that the diverse material culture in Pakistan can be preserved to be used by future generations. (Iqbal, Akbar, and Cleempoel 2022).

Aims & Objectives

The major purpose of the investigation is to examine the development of the Islamic weaponry within the Pakistan region with a special emphasis on how the creation of the aesthetic, functional, and spiritual planes between the 16th and the 19th centuries had created a unique regional identity. In order to do it, the following specific objectives are identified in the study:

- In order to build a local typology of arms and armor in the region of Pakistan, it is necessary to separate between regional peculiarities, including deep-curved Sindh matchlock and distinctive shapes of handles, and general, reductive Islamic or Indo-Islamic ones. (Ghafari and Hashemi 2023; Alexander et al. 2015).

- To record the metallurgical and decorative culture of historical artisanal groups in Sialkot, Gujrat, and Lahore, to study the technology of *koftgar* (gold inlaying) and damascening as well as the making of watered steel (wootz). (Islam 2025; Ilan 2015; Chakravarty, Mondal, and Mishra 2026).

- In order to break the semiotic and talismanic meaning of calligraphic inscriptions and symbolic patterns, including the Throne Verse and the Seal of Solomon, one must assess its role as a spiritual defense and a devotional object of the one who possesses them. (Alexander et al. 2015; Czermak 2016;).

- A study of the development of the weapons as an effective tool of war to a symbol of imperial prestige and diplomatic heights within *Mansabdari* structure and local courts of the prince. (Richards 1993; Patar 2025).

- This paper aims at following the historical roots and development of craftsmanship with special focus on the discussion of how the skills of *lohars* (armorers) of the Punjab region developed into modern and internationally recognized industrial belts, like surgery tool industry of Sialkot. (Islam 2025; Ilan 2015).

- In order to locate these artifacts in a transregional artistic web, it is urgently needed to define how the amalgamation of the Persian, Central Asia aesthetic languages, and the local language of Indus become useful to the formation of the specific cultural heritage discourse of Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the Art and Design Theory that brings a qualitative paradigm to the discussion of arms and armor as a complex artifact of visual culture. The methodology approach comprises three major analytical frameworks that aid in explaining the blades of faith in the Pakistani case:

Formal Analysis and Typology

The current study uses a formalist approach and examines the structural characteristics, i.e., line, shape, and proportion, of specific martial weapons, i.e., the *khanjar* (dagger), *talwar* (sword), and *sipar* (shield).(Zaky 1961; Pant 1978). The current research makes methodical record of this geometric balance of constructions of hilt and blade contour, which is intended to design a local typology of the regional variants, including the Sindh matchlock, to the wider Indo-Persian stylistic range. (Ghafari and Hashemi 2023; Alexander et al. 2015).

Materiality and Aesthetic Functionalism

The focus of the theoretical form of aesthetic functionalism in this study is the choice of materials, i.e. wootz steel, jade and ivory, to find how these materials serve both as a tool of tactical use and a tool of social signalling. The paper examines the technical skill that has been portrayed in local artisanal groups (Sialkot and Lahore), specifically exploring how *koftgari* or gold inlay, can be used as a marker of status and as a part of the history of industry. (Hunter 1875; Ilan 2015).

Semiotics and Iconographic Interpretation

A semiotic veil is used to explain ornament as commentary on visual information. (Bier 2008). The current research entails the de-coding of calligraphic texts, both Quranic verses and talismans texts, and also the geometric patterns like the Seal of Solomon, which are not simply regarded as the decorative features but the so-called signs, the manifestations of the spiritual protection and the divine power. (Alexander et al. 2015; Czermak 2016).

Comparative and Contextual Study

Lastly, the paper uses a comparative methodological approach to place these artifacts in a transregional nexus of a Persian, Ottoman, and Mughal influence. (Blair and Bloom 2003; Ghafari and Hashemi 2023). The analysis of the systematic study of the cross-cultural circulation of the motifs defines the processes under which the local artisans of Indus synthesized the aesthetic languages that were different, thus creating a strong specific regional identity. (Iqbal, Akbar, and Cleempoel 2022; Mantellini et al. 2022).

DISCUSSION

The research of the Islamic arm and armor on the territory of Pakistan evidences a strong image of military functionality and spiritual imagery that weaponry served as key objects in a common type of Perso-Islamic visual culture.

Typology and Interconnectedness of Arms

The typology of Mughal weapons can be described as an in-depth interdependence with the artistic traditions of Persia and the Ottoman Empire. These structural hybrids could often be found in common forms (e.g. the *shamshir* (curved sword) and *khanjar* (curved dagger)) and their grips (such as 18th-century jade grips of Mughal inscribed with *naskhi* script had Ottoman guard plates attached). (“A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-*Koftgari* Steel Dagger *(Khanjar)* North India, 18th Century,” n.d.). This interrelation went outside of the court to the battlefield where Indo-Arab matchlocks and even common design (e.g. *ghaddara*) like the *ghaddara*: an iron or steel staff or mace, reveal a common martial ancestry across Islamic world.(fig.5&6) (Elgood 2018; Halevi 2023). Additionally, the integration of the so-called “Ear Dagger" in the Mughal military equipment of the imperial era, an artefact that was highly affected by the aesthetic

norms of Andalusia and Europe, can also be seen as a sign of the fact that the region was able to absorb the motifs of other world regions into the local costume and military equipment. (THABET and Sayed 2023).

Figure 6, Antique 18th Century Silver Gilt Filigree Indian Royal Scepter Mace Mughal India Antique silver-gilt and filigree (Chandi Tarakasi) Indian Royal ceremonial scepter mace (chob), 18th century, Mughal India.
The mace is composed of many separate elements of silver, including a spherical gilt silver head (hollow inside) covered by intricate lattice filigree work decorated with garland and flowers enclosed at the bottom and the top by gilded silver rosettes and surmounted at the top with a gilt silver bulbous finial (hollow inside).

Figure 7, Antique 18th Century Indo-Persian Islamic Silver Inlaid Steel Mace, Antique 18th Century Indo-Persian, Islamic silver inlaid mace, a skilfully hand forged entirely of steel mace with large pear-shaped head surmounted by a raised bud finial, facet octagonal in cross section haft enclosed by a rounded cusp. All richly decorated throughout in silver koftgari damascening with palmettes and foliage motifs.

Types of Islamic Daggers

Khanjar

The *Khanjar* is a typical dagger in the martial and ceremonial cultures of the Muslim world. It was invented in the Arabian Peninsula, specifically in the nations of Oman and Yemen and the most recognizably unique aspect of it is sharply curved as well as being in many instances; a blade that is in most cases, in two pieces. Such features of the weapon are its role as a status and a masculinity symbol; its hilt is carved with complex ornamentation, usually made of ivory, horn or silver; and the decoration of its sheaths with filigree and embroidery. To that end, the *Khanjar* can still be considered a part of the modern conservative clothing in Oman.

Jambiya

The *Jambiya*, which is an extended variation of the *Khanjar* has its origin in Yemen and other Arab nations. It has a short-curved blade, but with a central ridge, and a characteristic J shape curved strength at the end. In the past, it was worn about the waist and the materials used in their manufacture including rhino horns were traditional pointers of social status.

Kard

The *Kard* was initially made in Persia (modern Iran) and later adapted in the Mughal India. It is defined with a straight single edged blade, a strengthened sharp end to penetrate armour and a relatively slight

curvature when compared to its Arabian counterparts. It is ornamented in its style in the usual style of using gold inlay done with the *koftgari* technique.

Pesh-kabz

The *Pesh-kabz* or an emerging Persian blade that was popular during Mughal India has a straight blade and is produced with a thick spine and thin point. It was specifically made to penetrate through chain armor, and included a T-shaped spine to improve the resistance. The hilt is often decorated with jade, ivory or other gems.

Khanjarli dagger

Khanjarli dagger is an Ottoman descendant that is unique in its terms with its characteristically curved elegant blade and lavish decoration that can be in gold, enamel, and gemstones. Usually attributed to Ottoman elites and courts, it bears inscriptions or calligraphic motifs, sometimes.

Bichwa

The *Bichwa* was crafted in the Deccan in India. Its curved edge reminds of a scorpion-strike. There is a looped handle which provides a safe grip and the weapon is usually hidden in situations involving the close combat. The *Bichwa* was therefore effective in secret meetings.

Qama

Using Islamic culture and originated in the Caucasus, the Qama features a straight blade, which is of the type, which is double-edged and of a wide-bodied, symmetrical design with little curvature. It was designed to be used in practical warfare.

Kindjal

Kindjal is similar to Qama which is a little bit longer. Made in Caucasus and Central Asia, it has a straight and two-edged profile, and it was carried by warriors and the men of tribes. It is made to mirror both the Islamic designing and also the local cultures.

Essential Designs in the Islamic daggers.

Damascus steel, jade, ivory and horn are some of the typical materials employed.

They are usually decorative with geometric and floral designs typical of Islamic art, using calligraphic texts - often verses of the Quran, or extracts of poetry.

Other typical methods are like gold inlay *(koftgari)* and filigree work.

The symbolism associated with these daggers refers to status, honor, and identity, and the symbolism could be regarded as representative of an even larger ceremony and cultural one that goes beyond the practical combat use.

Craftsmanship and Design Principles

The blades of faith were made based on the sophisticated methods of metallurgy and decorative arts aiming at the functional competence and stylish appeal that was also viewed as a stylish expression of decoration.

Koftgari and Damascening

To decorate the surfaces of steel, artisans mostly used the technique known as *koftgari* which is often referred to as false-damascening. (fig. 8,9,10 & 11) This involved hatching the metal so as to give it a deliberate rugged surface onto which gold or silver wire was then burnished. (Hunter 1875; Alexander et al. 2015). Conversely, true inlay procedure involved cutting of large grooves on the steel base to make it easier to insert precious metal wire which was the mode of making formal inscriptions. (Alexander et al. 2015).

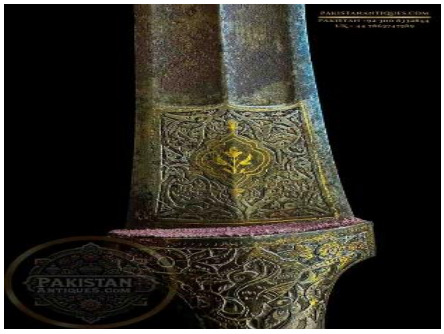

Figure 8, This rare 19th century Mughal dagger is a stunning example of the exquisite craftsmanship characteristic of the era. Featuring intricate gold Koftgari and silver work, along with beautifully chiseled details on the handle, this dagger is not only a weapon but also a work of art. Its excellent condition and unique features make it a valuable collectible for enthusiasts of Mughal history and weaponry. https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2089052084629142&set=a.736177179916646

Figure 9, Koftgari Dagger, Mughal circa 18th century CE, housed in Islamabad Museum, Pakistan

Figure 10, Antique Gold Damascened 18th - 19th Century Indo Persian Islamic Axe, Exquisite gold damascened antique, 18th-19th century, Indo - Persian Islamic axe, entirely made of well hand-forged steel, including a large crescent-shaped blade, decorated on each side with hand-chiseled cartouches with Arabic "nasta'liq"calligraphy among scrolled arabesques and highlighted by a gold koftgari inlay including the edges of the blade. Overall length: 74.5cm (29.33 inches) Height of the blade: 18.5 cm (7.28 inches)

Figure 11, shield showing arabesque pattern in Damascene work Lahore Museum

Jade and Ivory Carving

By seventeenth century, nephrite jade had become the material of the hilt of the high-status weaponry.(fig.12 & 13) The hilts were usually sculpted in a realistic style of representing animal heads, and especially those of horses, which were highly valued in Mughal culture, and secured to the hilt with rubies or emeralds in the *kundan* gold-setting style. (Alexander et al. 2015).

Figure 12, Title: Hilt of a Dagger,
Date: late 17th–early 18th century, Culture: Indian,
Mughal, Medium: Nephrite,
Dimensions: L. 4 7/8 in. (12.4 cm); W. 2 3/4 in. (7 cm);
Wt. 6 oz. (170.1 g).
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/33536?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Figure 13, Title: Dagger Date: 18th century
Culture: Indian, Mughal
Medium: Steel, nephrite, gold, ruby
Dimensions: L. 14 in. (35.6 cm); L. of blade 9 1/4 in. (23.5 cm); W. 2 1/8 in. (5.4 cm); D. 1 1/16 in. (2.7 cm); Wt. 9.4 oz. (266.5 g)
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31824?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Filigree and Enameling

Other ornamentation was applied to the scabbards and hilts by use of filigree-fine-wire work and champleve enameling. (Alexander et al. 2015; Lo 2022). The centers like Sindh developed their own enameling styles and it was found that was much more reflective of Iranian culture in comparison to the Mughal court at the center. (Alexander et al. 2015). The hilt of the dagger it is composed of is of thick pieces of gold welded around an iron core, and the fittings of the scabbard are of solid gold. There are the etched surfaces that are paved with jewel stones and coloured glass cut into miniature flowers. These ornamental patterns are almost the same as the floral designs observed in the artwork of Mughal in the beginning of the seventeenth century, showing that the dagger is probably dated to the leadership of Jahangir (1605-1627). His appreciation of nature, especially flowers, was so great that Jahangir referred more than once in his memoir, the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, to this subject. The blade itself consists of watered steel, which is an expensive material that has a characteristic patterned surface and power. The *chilanum* is a unique type of Indian dagger, which was officially differentiated by a long, flared pommel and guard often assuming a double-crescent form and a grip in the shape of a baluster. It is indicative of the fact that this design of hilt was in the Deccan; it is mentioned in a Deccani miniature, dating about 1555, in which Sultan Husain, Nizam Shah, I is shown with such dagger sheathed. The *chilanum* is also repeated in a corpus of Mughal paintings related to the rule of Emperor Akbar where the hilt is made out of gilt metal most of the time and the vocabulary used to decorate the hilt is relatively austere. A greater amount of nephrite was used in the making of these blades in the seventeenth century, and their decoration with coloured gemstones was also used.

The dagger under consideration has an arguably seventeenth-century origin and a rather modest decorative manner which can be compared with other specimens of more recent date. Although its present provenance cannot be explicitly attributed to any given workshop, its manufacturing characteristics and general shape depict some close resemblances to a dagger stored in Furusiyya Art Foundation collection, along with other similar items dated antecedent of 1730. Dr. Manuel Keene has provisionally dated the same nephrite hilts with settings of gemstones to the mid-17th century -late seventeenth century, and according to him, the given dagger spans the same time frame.

Islamic legacy of today lessen Pakistan is well rooted in the specific urban centres that had served previous roles as the centres of the production of the quality weaponry and armour. Lahore, Sialkot, Gujrat and Multan resulted in specialised traditions of craftsmanship providing a combination of lethal functionality with the fine aesthetic requirements of the Mughal court and, later, other local courts.

Figure 14, Title: Dagger with Scabbard, Date: 1605–27, Culture: Indian, Mughal, Medium: Steel, iron, gold, rubies, emeralds, glass, wood, textile, Dimensions: L. 14 5/8 in. (37.1 cm); L. without scabbard 13 15/16 in. (35.4 cm); L. of grip 4 13/16 in. (12.2 cm); L. of blade 9 1/8 in. (23.2 cm); W. of grip 1 3/4 in. (4.4 cm); L. of scabbard 10 1/2 in. (26.7 cm), https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/24907

Figure 15, Title: Dagger with Sheath, Date: late 17th century, Culture: Hilt, Indian, Mughal; blade, Turkish or Indian, Medium: Steel, nephrite, gold, rubies, emeralds, silver-gilt, leather, Dimensions: L. 17 in. (43.18 cm), https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/24298

Sialkot

Traditionally, Sialkot was one of the main centres of iron-workers called lohars who had been working as armourers, and Shoesmiths in military service. (Ilan 2015). These craftsmen were famous in the production of shields and a wide array of weapons. In the early twentieth century, the region had a support population, full of skilled ironworkers, whose competence in the accuracy of work with metals eventually developed into an industry with international representation, capable of producing dental and surgical instruments.

(Ilan 2015). Still living heritage of craftsmanship is one of the salient features that define the industrial and the cultural identity of the urban milieu.

Lahore

Being one of the large Mughal capital cities of the provinces, Lahore became a strategic center of the production of the refined weaponry and weapons. The Malaysian firearms that were possibly produced in Lahore during the last eighteenth or first half of the nineteenth centuries have high decorative traits such as pattern-welded steel barrels which are damascened in gold and interwoven in arabesques. *(Alexander et al. 2015).* The weapons were often fitted with wood stocks, carved and painted, and thus indicating a strong element of artistic amalgamation which was typical of the royal armories in the area. *(Alexander et al. 2015).*

Multan and Gujrat

These cities are of historical interest because of their rich contribution to the art of koftgari, an art that involves damascening of gold or silver, and other inlaid metals. (Hunter 1875). The decorative elements created in these centers, such as floral decorations carved and shaped or geometric scrollwork, always adhered to the decorative style of the famous glazed blue tiles and architectural handicrafts of the area. (Khan et al. 2023). The common language of the visual expressions promoted a unified aesthetics, and thus created an association between the process of producing martial objects and the larger Islamic art tradition in the Punjab region.

Sindh Region

Near the Punjab headquarters, guns made in the Sindh area had a unique morphology, especially in the case of the stocks, which twisted downward in a sharp manner and butt that was wide, flaring and triangular. (Alexander et al. 2015). High-status enameled and gem-set daggers were also common, including daggers dedicated to the rulers of the area, e.g. the "Lion of Sindh". (Alexander et al. 2015).

The fact that these regional production centers have existed, and continue to exist, highlights a tradition that has continued of having a tight linkage between technical mastery of steel and the traditions of spiritual and cultural values imparted by the Islamic legacy of Pakistan.

SYMBOLISM AND SEMIOTIC LANGUAGE

This decoration of these "blades of faith was a kind of semiotic language which projected revealing protection of the gods and imperiality.

Talismanic Inscriptions

Most prominently was the Throne Verse (2: 255) that was covered with gold and attached to serve as a talismanic charm against the evil surface of war. (Alexander et al. 2015; “A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-Koftgari Steel Dagger (Khanjar) North India, 18th Century,” n.d.). There were other commonly mentioned invocations such as O Self-Sufficient! and In a Tablet Preserved! (Qur'an 85:22), thus, highlighting the role of the weapon as a protective amulet. (Alexander et al. 2015). The sword contains talismanic texts that are meant to give spiritual protection. The blade is inscribed in four squares of Kufic script illustrating the Islamic professions of faith and the *Ayat al Kursi*, damascened in gold. These holy books have been interpreted to protect the warrior against dangers of war. The blade is also adorned with Seal of Solomon and cartouches that call the name of Allah, therefore, strengthening the talismanic and devotional meaning

of the blade. (fig.16 & 18) Talwar blade has the text refers to Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and the sixteenth year of his rule (1673). A parasol symbol, an ancient royal symbol in India and the Middle East is also found on the blade, indicating that the sword was linked with a ruler who was under the protection of gods.

Figure 16, Title: Saber, Date: blade, 18th–19th century; guard and decoration on blade, 19th century; grip, 18th century, Culture: blade, possibly Iranian; guard and decoration on blade, Turkish; grip, Indian, Medium: Steel, jade (nephrite), gold, Dimensions: L. 36 5/8 in. (93 cm); L. of blade 30 5/8 in. (77.7 cm); Wt. 2 lb. 1 oz. (935.5 g)

Figure 17, Title: Saber, Date: blade, 18th–19th century; guard and decoration on blade, 19th century; grip, 18th century, Culture: blade, possibly Iranian; guard and decoration on blade, Turkish; grip, Indian, Medium: Steel, jade (nephrite), gold, Dimensions: L. 36 5/8 in. (93 cm); L. of blade 30 5/8 in. (77.7 cm); Wt. 2 lb. 1 oz. (935.5 g)

Figure 18, Title: Saber (Talwar) with Scabbard, Date: blade, dated A.H. 835/1673 CE; hilt, 19th century, Culture: Indian, Medium: Steel, silver, diamonds enamel, leather, Dimensions: L. 36 5/8 in. (93 cm); L. of blade 31 1/2 in. (80.3 cm); Wt. 2 lb. 11 oz. (1220 g); Wt. of scabbard 12 oz. (348 g) https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/24319

Figure 19, Side view

Zoomorphic decoration

Ali I depicture of Ali Adil Shah (high 558-80) and Ali in zoomorphic dagger hilt in which Persian and Indian royal motives are fused. This superb specimen is inlaid with rubies, and exhibits in the hilt of the sword a dynamic composition, in which one of the dragons has attacked a lion; and the opposite has occurred, where a lion in a frenzied charge has chased a deer. Before the deer, there is a bird-like figure, possibly a parrot, holding a serpent in its mouth, which is a symbol of the deity, Garuda. A motif of scrolls emerging out of the piercing can be identified at the base of the hilt, where the head of a *yali*- a mythical leonine creature covers the decorations. The influence comes from Iran or Central Asia towards the end of the fifteenth century. The gold ornamentation is unusually good, indicating that it was produced at an imperial studio. This design has zoomorphic motives like hares and jackals carved into the blade and a human face coming out in the foliage. This visual is associated with the mythical *waqwaq* tree, and this theme is a combination of people, animals and plants. The hilt was later changed to have a silver ring engraved with fake gems of green color. This was not unusual since the hilts, blades and scabbards were frequently changed after being worn out or the tastes of the artistic world altered, which was a longstanding tradition of the dagger and indicates many different persons had possessed it. (fig.20).

Figure 20, Title: Dagger with Zoomorphic Hilt, Date: second half 16th century, Geography: Attributed to India, Deccan, Bijapur or Golconda, Medium: Hilt: copper; cast, chased, gilded, and inlaid with rubies. Blade: steel; forged, Dimensions: H. 15 5/8 in. (39.7 cm), https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/457730

Figure 21, close up

Figure 22, Title: Dagger with Scabbard, Creator: Unknown Artist / Maker, Unknown Artist / Maker, Date created: 1479/1499, 1580/1600, Location created: Iran or Central Asia, Iran, Central Asia, Physical Dimensions: 8.5 cm, 8.5 cm , https://artsandculture.google.com/story/jAWxQjF-Lj2iqw

Figure 23, close up view

Metaphors of Paradise

The floral arabesque was used as the metaphor of the garden of the paradise, and vegetal motifs were repeated because God and afterlife were unlimited. (Azcárate 2023; Zahra and Shahir 2022). This type of dagger was called a katar, which was supposed to be held in the cross bars with a clenched fist. This specimen has still retained its embossed leather scabbard. The decorative overgrowth, frequently observed in the *katars* worn by a waist sash in Indian paintings of the time, are metaphors of the Garden of Eden: the arabesque designs symbolize the heavenly garden, and the vegetal motives repetitively symbolize the endless fruit of God and the afterlife. (Fig.24)

Figure 24, ***Title:*** *Dagger (Katar) and Sheath,* ***Date:*** *17th century,* ***Culture:*** *Indian, Mughal,* ***Medium:*** *Steel, leather, gold,* ***Dimensions:*** *L. 19 in. (48.26 cm) https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/24306*

Royal Emblems

The royal insignia included the Seal of Solomon, a hexagram, given as a gift, while the parasol, or *chattra*, marked that the king was wise and possessed auspices that were sunshelve-driven as well as the king having been granted divinely is the dome of heaven. (Alexander et al. 2015; "A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-Koftgari Steel Dagger *(Khanjar)* North India, 18th Century," n.d.; Czermak 2016). The *saber* bears the royal insignia and royal power; it has Mughal jade grip and gold Ottoman guard inscribed with the words invoking the divine. The blade itself is inscribed with square Kufic text including the Quranic verse Throne (2:255), and thus giving the blade a charm of talisman. Other cartouches, the best known being the Seal of Solomon, a hexagram, and other symbolic emblems, express royal authority and godlike protection and the parasol *(chattra)* allows awareness of the refinement of the personage and the divine right of his rule under the aegis, as it were, of the heavenly sphere. (fig.25) The blade, which was made in Europe around 1600 and later inlaid with gold, contains Arabic and Persian texts in reference to Emperor Aurangzeb and the 16 th year of his reign (1673). The symbol on the blade, the parasol, which is an element that signifies the dome of heaven, is used to symbolize royal authority and divine protection, making the weapon considered as being owned by a sovereign ruler. (fig.26)

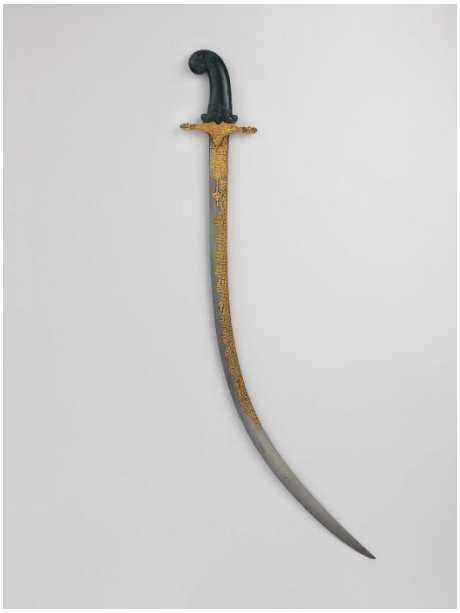

Figure 25, Title Saber Date blade, 18th–19th century; guard and decoration on blade, 19th century; grip, 18th century Culture blade, possibly Iranian; guard and decoration on blade, Turkish; grip, Indian Medium Steel, jade (nephrite), gold Dimensions L. 36 5/8 in. (93 cm); L. of blade 30 5/8 in. (77.7 cm); Wt. 2 lb. 1 oz. (935.5 g)

Figure 26, Title: Saber (Talwar) with Scabbard, Date: blade, dated A.H. 835/1673 CE; hilt, 19th century, Culture: Indian, Medium: Steel, silver, diamonds enamel, leather, Dimensions: L. 36 5/8 in. (93 cm); L. of blade 31 1/2 in. (80.3 cm); Wt. 2 lb. 11 oz. (1220 g); Wt. of scabbard 12 oz. (348 g)

Syncretic Imagery

The cultural synthesis is characteristic of this region, and one can observe it by the use of Hindu iconography, e.g., the images of Hanuman or Mahadev, in an Islamic artistic environment. (Schofield 2015). Moreover, *shikargah* (hunting) motifs on the blades were adjacent to the role of the monarch as a keeper of the cosmic order, and the process of hunting was used as a symbolic image of the struggle between the divine and the evil. The steel hilt, which confers on the Indo-Persian shamshir tradition, has a few hand-forged elements, and is carved in highly accurate low-relief on a subject illustrating a hunting scene in *shikargarh*, where a lion is chasing an antelope. (fig. 28) The pommel is inscribed with a symbolic portrayal of the Persian diverse mythical demon Div (dyw), a custom or style observed in India, Central Asia and other Islamic locations. In both pommel and cross guard finials movable brass clasps are attached with chains. This hilt is so far the only specimen to be found of a carved scene of the *shikargarh* within a half century of the investigation of the weapons and armour of the Islamic world.(Petek 2018; Parpia 2018). This is also seen in Katar, was a kind of ancient Indian dagger or *jamadhar* which was used in war or hunting as a lethal punching blow with the fist. The blade of this one is characterized with figures of elephants and horses of a hunting scene which are chiseled finely. (fig.29)

Figure 27, Antique 17th Century Islamic Mughal India Indo Persian Sword Indian Shamshir Dam. Overall length: 94 cm (37.1 inches) The overall length of the blade: 82 cm (32.28 inches) Width of the blade at the ricasso: 2.7 cm (1.06 inches) The thickness of the blade spine: 5 mm (3/16 Inch) Weight of the sword: 700 grams (1.543 lb.) https://www.rct.uk/collection/37642/sword-shamshirnbsp

Figure 28, Antique 17th Century Islamic Mughal India Indo Persian Sword Indian Shamshir Dam.

Figure 29, Title: Punch Dagger (Katar) with Sheath Date: late 17th–18th century, Geography: Rajasthan, Culture: Indian, Mughal, Medium: Steel, iron, silver, gold, rubies, Dimensions: L. 14 in. (35.6 cm); L. of blade 7 1/4 in. (18.4 cm); W. 3 3/16 in. (8.1 cm); Wt. 15.2 oz. (430.9 g)

GEMS

Jewelled daggers were expensive status symbols of the imperial court and ranking. Their presentation to the major courtiers and princes is regularly documented in the memoirs of Jahangir. He was named Shah Jahan and was given many gifts among them being a jewelled dagger when his son Khurram came back

triumphant in 1617 in Central India. This incident is thought to be depicted in a portrait by Nadir al-Zaman, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where Shah Jahan is seen in profile with a unique dagger at his waist. The dagger can be recognised by the decoration of the *hamsa* (goose-like bird) head and knuckle-guard attaching to the gable, which are also unusual characteristics shared with a dagger in the Wallace Collection. The presence of gold, emeralds, rubies and diamonds is a sign of royal ownership, and one lion carved on the hilt has rubies accurately cut and set to his eyes, nose and whiskers, not only as a luxury but as a semiotic value, a symbol of power and authority and good fortune as part of the Mughal visual language. (fig.30) The hilt of this great dagger of Mughal is made out of a solid piece of rock-crystal, inlaid with gold and embedded with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. There is a panel on which is lightly inscribed the name Claude Martin, a Frenchman, who had crossed to the British East India Company, after the capture of Pondicherry (176061) and had afterwards been made a major-general, commanding the Lucknow Arsenal. Martin was a great lover of Indian weapons and armour and this dagger was formerly in his collection. (fig.31)

Figure 30, Title: Jewelled Dagger Jewelled Dagger, Creator: Unknown Artist / Maker, Unknown Artist / Maker, Date created: 1614, 1615, Location created: North India, North India, Type: Arms, Medium: Gold, watered steel, table diamonds, rubies and emeralds, Gold, watered steel, table diamonds, rubies and emeralds

Figure 31, Title: Dagger with scabbard Dagger with scabbard, Creator: Unknown Artist / Maker, Unknown Artist / Maker, Date created: 1620/1630, 1620/1640, Location created: North India, North India, Physical Dimensions: 39 cm, 39 cm, Medium: Rock crystal, steel, cabachon emeralds and rubies, inlaid gold, wood, velvet and precious stones, Rock crystal, steel, cabachon emeralds and rubies, inlaid gold, wood, velvet and precious stones

Purpose and Function Beyond Warfare

In addition to the practical use of weapons and armor in war, weapons and armor were also important status symbols of status and political patronage among the Mughal imperial elite. The emperor regularly gave jewelled daggers to courtiers, princes and meritocratic officials as visible signs of favour *(khitab)* to accompany robes of honour *(khil'at)*. (Sood 2021; Critchlow 1976). Such distribution of artifacts was a significant part of the courtly diplomacy and was used to strengthen the alliances and to express the generosity of the ruler. (Baark 2018). Such weapons became an inseparable part of the daily life of the upper classes, which found its reflection in the form of illuminated manuscripts as the symbolic signs of social status and world popularity. (Baark 2018; THABET and Sayed 2023).

Imperial Favor

According to the memoirs of Emperor Jahangir, the exchange of jewelled daggers was one of the main means of receiving imperial favour at court by princes and other key courtiers after military successes.

Signs of Rank

Certain weapons including those adorned with the parasol mark were known to be a symbol of royal authority and senior courtly status. (Alexander et al. 2015).

Ritual Objects

The weapons became a part of the official attire of the elite and were even depicted in the royal portraits as the incarnation of the perfect man and the divine right to power.

Cross-Cultural Influences and Networks

The martial history of the Pakistan region is an indicator of a tremendous "cross cultural network" that connected the Indus region to the rest of the Islamic and European world, whereby there was a free movement of technologies, artistic styles and patronage.

Persian Craftsmanship and Motifs

Persian producers, especially those of the Safavid period, were famous in the skill of iron and steel working and developed some refined methods such as the making of so-called ink blades (watered steel or wootz) and complexes of gold and silver carving. (Nejad 2021). Persian artistic influence penetrated into the country via the immigrant master craftsmen, i.e., Shirmi Khorasani and Mir Ahmad Tabrizi, who taught the technique of metal engraving and damascening to the local artisans. (Ghafari and Hashemi 2023). These art forms had a visual vocabulary with other communication forms, where symmetrical pattern and floral foliage that was seen in Mughal-Lahore armorial bearings reflected similar patterns in subsequent Persian carpets and manuscript illustration. (Houghteling 2024). In Fig. 33 both the hilt and the blade are covered with gold with religious inscriptions, some of which contain the ninety-nine names of Allah.

Figure 32, Title: Dagger (Kard) with Sheath, Date: ca. 1800, Culture: Persian, Qajar, Medium: Steel, agate, gold, wood, velvet, copper, Dimensions: L. with sheath 18 7/8 in. (47.9 cm); L. without sheath 15 in. (38.1 cm); W. 1 1/4 in. (3.2 cm); Wt. 1 lb. 0.3 oz. (462.1 g); Wt. of sheath 4.4 oz. (124.7 g)

Figure 33, Title: Sword (Shamshir) Date: 19th century Culture: Persian, Medium: Steel, leather, Dimensions: H. 34 3/4 in. (88.3 cm); W. 4 3/4 in. (12.1 cm); Wt. 1 lb. 13.9 oz. (847.7 g)

Ottoman and Turkish Forms

A development of the shamshir, the curved saber, is one such piece of evidence of a common descent between Persian and Ottoman courts, with the characteristic features being a thin, downwardly-curved hilt

and a wrought blade usually decorated with Persian epigraphic text. (FURAT 2011). This inter-relationship promoted hybridity with the 18 th century Mughal weapons having jade grips and Ottoman style gold guards. ("A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-Koftgari Steel Dagger (Khanjar) North India, 18th Century," n.d.). In addition, the introduction of the so-called Ear Dagger in the Mughal time also testifies to the influence of Andalusian and European design culture which, having entered the world of the general Islamic design, was later reflected in the local martial clothing. (THABET and Sayed 2023). This excellent late 18th -early 19th -century Turkish Ottoman (or possibly Balkan) shamshir is a curved single-edged blade, made of fine wootz, with a fine pattern. The mountings, grip, crossguard, and scabbard with suspension mounts are of solid silver, repousse and low relief chased and scrolling foliage, shells and flowers all in the usual Ottoman Rococo design. This sword has a combination of European and Islamic ornamentation, which resembles the Ottoman metalwork, tombak, and decorative arts in the 18th century. Used as an arm and a status symbol, this high-end sword suggests that a person in an important position had it, so it is considered an excellent example of the Ottoman workmanship that stays in a museum. (fig. 34 & 35)

Figure 34, Antique 18th –19th century Silver Turkish Ottoman Islamic Sword Shamshir

Figure 35, Overall length with the scabbard: 89 cm (35.4 inches) Overall length without scabbard: 81.5 cm (32.09 inches)

Hindu Imagery Integrated into Mughal Arms

A constant element of Mughal weaponry was the element of cultural syncretism the Islamic martial aesthetics had to use local south Asian motives. Here Hindu deities such as Hanuman and Mahadev usually got inserted among inscriptions and themes into a largely Muslim artistic and theological context. (Sharma 2015; Schofield 2015). The above-mentioned syncretism was reflected in decorative material, especially *shikargah* (hunting scenes). These themes combined the Mughal preference of naturalistic treatment with native symbolic traditions, under which the hunt was a kind of allegory on the struggle of the divine with disorder. (Petek 2018; Parpia 2018).

European Patronage and Adaptation

The activity of the eighteenth century in South Asia by the Europeans had a significant impact on the production and sale of weapons. The local courts regularly used firangi blades produced in the factories like Solingen and then covered it with local hilt made in the native designs so as to fit into the traditional martial practices. (Halladay 2024). European nabobs such as Claude Martin in Lucknow took on leading roles in the artistic life of the area, as both patrons, commissioning Mughal-inspired items and accumulating huge armories which were a mix of Occidental and Oriental style. (Imbert 2021; Sil 2023). This time was also associated with the acclimatisation of the European smallsword and the arrival of influences of Baroque and Empire sources of decoration, both of which helped in the change of the classical nature of the designs of the hilt of the new instruments and floral patterns. (FURAT 2011).

Islamic Heritage in the Pakistan Region

The armory of the Pakistani sphere is used as an ultimate echo of the Islamic identity when the ability of the weapon to kill is harmoniously combined with the religious piety and the governmental authority.

Reflecting Islamic Identity within the Regional Context

The weapons were not weapons of fighting to any Muslim fighter, but it was rather meant to be a sword of faith that possessed magic power. The use of specific metallurgical styles (the so-called ladder *(qirq narduban)* on blades made of the wootz steel) was perceived as some sort of symbolic carriage which could help a warrior access paradise in case he died during the warfare. ("A Mughal Jade-Hilted Gold-*Koftgari* Steel Dagger (Khanjar) North India, 18th Century," n.d.). The identity was also strengthened by the use of names of weapons: The Blood Spiller (Khunrex) or The Splitter (Do-para), or the visible damascening of the gold inscriptions of the Throne Verse (Qur 2:255), which were meant to declare the use of protective things of heaven. (Alexander et al. 2015; Kinra 2019). Those pieces of equipment operated as a wider type of socio-religious environment, in which the offering of a sword or dagger by the emperor was a sounding symbol of merit and spiritual approval. (Critchlow 1976).

Continuity of Artistic Traditions Across Historical Centers

Metalworking particularly has preserved its Islamic tradition through a long-term technological development at its regional hubs such as in Lahore, Sialkot, Multan and Gujrat. (Venkatesh et al. 2025; Kinra 2019). Sialkot was especially a leading centre of the lohars (iron-workers), who were customary armorers of the imperial armies. (Ilan 2015). The tradition was made possible by the immigration of experts in craft, such as Kashmiri metalworkers, who moved to Punjabi cities in the 19th century, making this a form of continuity, and creating neighborhoods that were dedicated to koftgari and manual plating. (Lanzillo 2024). This succession is evident in the way Sialkot has shifted in the past decades regarding producing scimitars of Mughal style to producing the world-leading precision surgical instruments which is a new extension of the same metal-making skills. (Ilan 2015).

Contribution to Broader Islamic Art History

The weapons of this region are a distinctive "peculiar synthesis" in the greater history of Islamic art: a combination of Persian linear aesthetics and Indo-Sultanate and European pictorialities. (Petek 2018). These artifacts can no longer be considered as a monolithic group called Islamic, but rather within the framework of the so-called Indo-Iran nexus, where regional differences in the design of the hilt and decorative motifs can give exact details of the artistic traditions of the Indus region. (Khan 2025; Ghafari and Hashemi 2023). The floral arabesques and the star patterns of weaponry are a direct reflection of the so-called spiritual aesthetics of the Pakistani architectural masterpieces such as the Wazir Khan Mosque indicating a comprehensive visual culture that goes beyond media. (Ahmed 2023; Zahra and Shahir 2022; 2023). This localized explanation of the Islamic motifs makes sure that the martial heritage of the Pakistani people will be one of the most crucial chapters of the world history of Islamic material culture.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion summarizes the main results of the study, which proved one more time the importance of arms and armor as the means of fighting, but as the highly elaborated items of visual culture, religion, and political power in Pakistan region.

Synthesis of Findings

The analysis manages to prove that the "Islamic" arms of the Indus Valley are the synthesis of the Persian, Central Asian, and indigenous aesthetic languages and it does not rely on the simplistic historical categories anymore. (Blair and Bloom 2003; Ghafari and Hashemi 2023). In both marking local differences, like the distinctive look of Sindh matchlocks and history of the Daybul genius in the art of making swords, the study brings into the limelight a localized martial character that has been often lost in South Asian studies generally. (Mantellini et al. 2022; Alexander et al. 2015).

The Dual Role of Ornamentation: Power and Protection

One of the key conclusions of this study is the dual role of ornamentation as a symbol identifying the status of the imperial and a container of spiritual defense. The weapon turned into an organizational tool of the Mughal administration: the shift of high-status weaponry (the zoomorphic jade-headed daggers), to regularized forms of the *Mansabdari* system is stressed. (Richards 1993; Patar 2025). At the same time, these objects became talismanic, such as the Throne Verse (2:255) and the Seal of Solomon transformed into spiritual armor, and wearing them was to grant the enchantment with divine mercy and protection to their owner. (Alexander et al. 2015; Czermak 2016). These signs were a constant reminder of dhikr (remembrance), and so, a union between the world of martial and mystical. (al. 2021; Starrett 1995; Leoni, Grüber, and Lory 2016).

Artisanal Continuity and Industrial Heritage

The paper also highlights the strong tradition of Artisanal continuity in the Punjab state. Now the technical excellence of historical clusters in Lahore, Gujrat, and Sialkot, especially in the art of koftgari inlay and damascening, has not vanished, but has only changed over time. (Islam 2025; Ilan 2015). A shift in the medieval armor-working craft into modern and globally important industries, e.g. the surgical instrument industry around Sialkot, provides a unique insight into the continuation and innovation of metallurgical culture. (Zafar 2017; Ilan 2015).

Final Reflections

Overall, the so-called blades of faith that were created in the Pakistan territory are one of the important cultural artifacts representing the sophisticated quartet of religion, monarchy, and local craftsmanship. This study creates a necessary inventory of industrial heritage in Pakistan through the recording of these traditions in a multidisciplinary approach that involves art history and semiotics. (Iqbal, Akbar, and Cleempoel 2022). It eventually invents these objects as the permanent representations of a legacy that is not only profoundly localized in the Indus Valley, but also one that is indissoluble to the broader transregional ties of Islamic world. (Mantellini et al. 2022; Khan 2025).

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