Sino-Siberian Dagger

Circa: 1st Millennium B.C.

Sino-Siberian

1st Millennium B.C.

Bronze

L: 30.3cm

The nomadic nature of the Eurasian steppe tribes allowed for much integration and exchange of styles and customs, as well as physical transportable objects; including personal ornamentation and weaponry. Particularly between the Scythian tribes of the Black sea region in the West, Central Asian tribes such as the Hephthalites, the Wushu, Yuezhi and Mongolians to the East and the Persians further South. The blade of this piece has strong ties to daggers of the late Chinese Shang Dynasty, with a more stylised animal terminal, similar to the art of the Scythians. The stout blade is thick and double sided, suggesting durability for practical utilitarian purposes, however the handle is highly ornate compared to contemporaneous designs, possibly lending itself to the likelihood that it was owned by an important member of the tribe, or that it was for ceremonial/ burial rather than everyday use. The handle terminates in a highly ornate stylised elk or deer's head, with hollow areas once presumably inlaid with stone. There is a small suspension loop under the chin of the animal, which shows this piece was work on a belt or strapping. Made from bronze, this piece would have been cast and then surface worked to create the finer details to the handle.

Literature:

Antiquities, Sotheby's, London, 21 April 1975, lot 239

David Aaron Ltd, 2021, No. 9.