

RUNJEET SINGH

ARTS DES GUERRIERS D'ORIENT



ARTS OF THE ORIENTAL WARRIOR
11 - 16 SEPTEMBER 2019
PARIS



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Summer 2019

All prices on request

I

GOLD CHILLANUM

DECCAN, INDIA
17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 350MM

An elegant and graceful example of a Deccani double-edged dagger (or 'chillanum') comprising an iron hilt decorated in detail with gold and a watered wootz steel blade.

A lotus finial with carefully cut petals (a motif repeated in the grip's central moulding) sits atop the waisted hilt, leading into sweeping pommel arms and a curved knuckle guard which terminates in a drooping lotus bud shrouded by a leaf. The oval hand guard exhibits two bands of delicately pierced circles and lotus bud finials at each end. A sloped triangular section between the grip and the hand guard has been pierced to present a trefoil arrangement perhaps intended to further reflect the decoration of the hilt which is engraved throughout with flowers – the petals inlaid through true damascening with traces of silver and the centres with gold.

A motif of central flowers between foliage – cut into the steel on a sunken punched ground – forms the forte on each face of the blade which has been cut with four fullers. Two are lobed at their ends and begin from 'within' the forte, tapering to converge with the central rib of the blade and nearly meeting the two which run along the central third of the blade's length. These fullers and the medial ridge then disappear into the dagger's reinforced tip.

A similar example to this was published by Runjeet Singh in *Arms & Armour From the East 2016*, p.19, cat.no.5.

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of the late Richard R. Wagner Jr; (a noted collector of Asian arms)

Published

Oliver S. Pinochet, *Arms of the Paladins: The Richard R. Wagner Jr. Collection of Fine Eastern Weapons*, Mowbray Publishing, 2014, p.46, cat. no.3-86.





2

STEEL CHILLANUMDECCAN, INDIA
17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 350MM



This double-edged dagger (or 'chillanum') is made from a single piece of steel and has been delicately cut to produce a hilt of sculptural quality and blade of unusual construction.

The hilt is of waisted form, a bulbous top finial – repeated at the centre of the grip – moving through a conical structure into the winged pommel. The grip then bifurcates, terminating in lotus bud finials, and the main edges of the hand guard are neatly shaped into curved beaded lines.

The recurved blade commences with a forte which has been cut to present the form of a lotus in bloom. The top of the flower continues into a central ridge flanked by fullers and additional ridges at either side, all of which converge into a single line leading the blade to its reinforced point. Perhaps most interesting, however, are the blade's serrated edges – a distinctive feature in Indian edged weapons which Elgood well explains as follows: "In the early Indian texts the word used for a sword with a serrated edge is 'yavaka' or 'having an edge like barley'. The Rajput name for a sword with a curved blade with a serrated edge is 'asapala', named after the tree with serrated leaves. Weapons having blades with serrated edges are not very common and are found on a smaller number of seventeenth-century Deccani weapons."¹

Two chillanum similar to our own (inventory numbers MJM46.2870 and MJM46.2879) are preserved in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum and published by Elgood.² Another dagger preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc. No. 36.25.897),³ although it has two blades, similarly exhibits the unusual serrated edges shown on our example.

References

- ¹ Robert Elgood, *Arms & Armour at the Jaipur court: The Royal Collection*, Niyogi Books, 2015, p. 48
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 48; 50
- ³ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31679>



3

PUNJABI KATAR

PUNJAB, INDIA
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 310MM

This katar originating from Punjab, India, shows several distinguishing features which make it a piece of exceptional quality and craftsmanship.

The thick gilt side-bars are decorated with scrolling patterns of leaved vines in copper and silver, as well as stylised flowerheads with engraved lines and a variety of petal-shapes. The two handgrips are decorated further with small flowerheads and leaves in copper and silver highlights. The symmetrical v-shaped knuckle-bar is cleverly cut to resemble the forms of leaves such as those which appear on the side-bars and handgrips, the composition culminating at the centre in a sloping triangular arch, as if the composition were intended to resemble a convergence of vine tendrils.

A blossoming flower, carved out of the watered steel surface and flanked at either side by the numbers '7' and '0', springs from the crevice created by the knuckle-guard to form the forte of the blade.

This forte-flower forms the base of a sunken arched panel which extends over the first half of the blade, another flower carved in deep relief above and the details of its leaves and petals picked out with close engraving. The remainder of the blade and its gold-lined edges are pierced with a skilful openwork trellis pattern and decorated in *koftgari* with further floral motifs and careful lines.

Two katars with similarly arched knuckle-bars are published in Susan Stronge, ed., *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1999, p. 139, Nos. 156 & 157 (The Board of Trustees of the Armouries (XXVI D62 & 85 respectively)). Another example with this feature is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Accession Number 36.25.694).⁴

References

- ⁴ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31864>





4

GOLD KATARRAJASTHAN, INDIA
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 420MM

This katar is a classic example of these weapons as made during the 19th century in Rajasthan (north-western India). The two handgrips are decorated in gold with scrolling foliage and central poppy flowers, swelling slightly at the middle and gradually flaring out again where they attach to the side-bars. Small circles of gold in *koftgari* adorn the edges of each side-bar; gilt vine tendrils oscillating along the shallowly v-shaped knuckle-bar where the blade is inserted.

The tapering double-edged blade is made of Indian crystalline wootz Damascus and has been carved on each face to produce a deep medial ridge between planed fullers which run almost parallel to the edges of the blade. These fullers taper to meet the end of the medial ridge, forming a point which is accented by further fullers cut inwards over the central third of the blade. As one expects of these daggers, the blade finishes with a swollen, armour-piercing tip – its use perhaps made easier by the numerous fullers, which would have made the weapon lighter.

This katar comes with its original wooden scabbard, still retaining a red silk velvet covering and knotted orange-yellow cord for suspension. The chape of the scabbard is decorated *en suite* with the hilt, exhibiting a ten-petalled flowerhead at its centre in gold *koftgari*.

The arrangement of fullers visible on this blade is found on several other katar blades, such as an example in Robert Elgood, *Rajput Arms & Armour: the Rathores & their Armoury at Jodhpur Fort Volume 2*, Mehrangarh Museum Trust, 2017, p. 720.





5

LADIES KNIFE

DECCAN, INDIA
17TH - 18TH CENTURY

OPEN 200MM
CLOSED 160MM



A rare and unusual tool which is well explained by Brownrigg's book on the subject: "These cutters resemble the *katar* in the shape of the blade. When closed it is merely a two-bladed betel cutter. Opened up it becomes a serviceable weapon which is said to be used by women to protect themselves."⁵ The practice of betel-chewing is a historical cultural phenomenon which has been endemic throughout the Indian Subcontinent, South East Asia and large parts of the Western Pacific. 'Paan', in Hindi, is a chew or 'quid' parcel of a betel leaf containing areca nut, which is sliced using a betel-cutter, and a lime paste. It is chewed for its stimulant and psychoactive effects. The cutters are sometimes referred to as 'betel nut cutters' which is a misnomer since there is no such thing as a 'betel nut'.

The arms of this example are charmingly formed as parrots and secured with steel bolts which – along with the brass star-shaped washers – are intended to give the appearance of dazzling eyes, whilst the undulating back-edges are perhaps so formed in order to resemble the parrots' ruffled plumage. Clasps that keep the blade secure when the tool is closed are cut into the forms of horseheads, and the katar-style blade has ridged edges so that it fits easily into the equally ridged front-edges of the parrot-arms.

A similar example, the arms formed as the upper and lower sections of a stallion, was exhibited by Runjeet Singh (Ref. 080) in *Arms & Armour From the East 2016*, p.70, cat.no.29. Further comparanda are catalogued and photographed in the book cited above and below.⁶

References

⁵ Henry Brownrigg, *Betel Cutters: from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1991, p. 61.

⁶ *Ibid.*



6

JADE-HILTED TROUSSE

CHINA
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 310MM



This fine Chinese eating trousse comprises a knife, a pair of chopsticks, and a pickle spear.

The knife is mounted with a pale green jade handle and silver-gilt collar; the slender single-edged blade exhibiting a folded, layered construction on its surface. The production and carving of jade flourished during the Qing dynasty in China, starting especially with the reigns of the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors (1723-1796 A.D.),⁷ as both the demand and supply of jade grew. Jade pieces made to-order for the Imperial Court were subject to rigorous assessments, and each stage of production – including design, sawing, drilling, carving and polishing – had to be authorised by the emperor himself.

A gilt throat-piece (with attached belt loop for suspension) and chape adorn the wooden scabbard and have been chased to depict twining foliage, whilst the central section is decorated with silvered copper wire which has been finely twisted to present the viewer with an interlocking geometric pattern that resembles an openwork floral arrangement – each “flower” with a stud at its centre.

Accompanying the knife are a pair of chopsticks made from ivory; the tips encased in silver and the handles made from tortoiseshell. Inserted just in front of the chopsticks is an ivory pickle spear with a delicately carved handle to make its use easier for the owner.

A similar set to this example was exhibited by Runjeet Singh in *Arms & Armour From the East 2017* (Reference: 095). This comparand and the example shown here are also similar to another set preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. No. 36.25.989a–g.

References

⁷ Yang Boda, “The Glorious Age of Chinese Jades”, in Roger Keverne, editor, *Jade* (London 2010), pp. 126-188.





7

RED LACQUERED TROUSSE

CHINA
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 260MM

This well-preserved Chinese eating set comprises a knife and a pair of chopsticks placed within a bright red lacquered scabbard.

The knife is mounted with a white jade handle and bone collar; the slender single-edged blade exhibiting a folded and layered construction on its surface as well as further rings of metal at the forte which are likely designed to make the blade fit more readily into its scabbard. Included in the set are a pair of bone chopsticks which are inserted just in front of the knife.

The scabbard's collar and chape comprise inlays of cloisonné painted to depict stylised scrolls of green foliage and red flowers as well as a central blue lotus, all highlighted in gold on a turquoise ground, and both inlays enclosed by thin bands of gilt copper alloy. The central section of the wooden scabbard has been decorated with "the greatest triumph of Ch'ing [Qing] lacquer, [carved] lacquer in cinnabar red."⁸ Indian lotuses – popular in Chinese decoration for the good fortune they symbolically brought to the owner of the work⁹ – and rectangular spiral patterns are intricately carved in high relief and fine detail throughout, the central carving of spirals composed of a harmoniously "mirrored" or symmetrical construction. Works in cloisonné and lacquer appealed greatly to both the Chinese royal household and the wealthy classes of this period, and bright colours were often employed by craftsmen to create pleasing contrasts against the darker hues of woods and metals, as such a sense

of harmony well reflected the Qing emperors' revived interest in the universal balance that was espoused by Confucianism.

Provenance

Sotheby's Auction of Fine Asian, Australian & European Arts & Design, Australia 24th October 2017, Lot 45: <https://auctions.sothebysaustralia.com.au/lots/view/1-12M4X/a-red-lacquer-eating-set>.

A gallery project at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, titled *Arms and Armor: Imperial Patrons of the Military Arts in the Qing Dynasty* and including saddles, knives, and other militaria, showcases the masterful lacquerwork that applied to some Qing dynasty pieces.¹⁰

References

8. Maxwell K. Hearn, *Splendors of Imperial China: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (published jointly by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the National Palace Museum, Taipei), New York & Taipei, 1996, p. 123.
9. Tian Jiaqing, *Classic Chinese Furniture of the Qing Dynasty* (Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Company Ltd, Hong Kong & London), 1996, p. 38.
10. <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/asian-art/gallery-projects>



8

JADE KNIFECHINA
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 300MM

This straight knife is mounted with a pale green jade handle and short silver collar. The knife has a long slender blade of high quality steel, tapering towards the end to form a hatchet point (one edge of the blade's tip being straighter than the other).

The scabbard's throat-piece comprises a collar of bone painted green and black as if intended to resemble a dark spinach jade, as well as a gilt copper-alloy band engraved with a central flower flanked by outspreading leaves – a decorative motif which is repeated on the chape. A block applied to the reverse side of the scabbard is engraved at the top with a rectangular spiral pattern and pierced to hold a suspension ring. Below the central part of the block sits a small lobed plaque with an engraved flower at its centre. The scabbard itself has been cleverly carved into an unusual geometric design of connected circles that each enclose a kite-shaped carving – a pattern which is intended, perhaps, to give the appearance of interlocking flowers, or of carefully worked leather.

It is difficult to identify the precise symbolism or origin of this pattern, but it does appear in other Chinese works from the Qing dynasty, such as a cuirass preserved in the British Museum (As1921, 1029.1), where the same symbol sits at the centre of the breastplate between two lotuses painted in orange and yellow, perhaps confirming the likelihood that the scabbard's pattern is floral.





9

SHAGREEN TROUSSECHINA
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 310MM

This unusual and highly decorative eating set comprises a knife, a pair of chopsticks, and a toothpick.

The knife's handle is made from nanmu burl, a highly regarded timber, frequently mentioned as a material *par excellence* in Ming literati writings and often used in scholars' objects as well as for decorative cabinets' doors and tabletop panels.¹¹ It is further fitted with a rounded silver pommel and collar, and a slender single-edged blade exhibiting a folded, layered construction on its surface.

The throat-piece of the scabbard is composed of three silver-gilt bands chased and engraved to depict twining foliage and a central poppy flower. A band attached to the centre of the scabbard, as well as the chape, are decorated in a similar style.

The main section of the black-painted shagreen scabbard is decorated on both faces with four- and six-petal flowers in a pleasant variety of semi-precious stones: coral, lapis lazuli, and mother-of-pearl and green jades, each petal carefully enclosed within finely twisted silvered copper wire. The reverse face also features a mirrored pair of bone teardrops that reveal tongue scrapers when pulled out, above which sits a lobed plaque chased to depict foliage which extends along a vertical band that continues into a suspension block engraved with the two Chinese characters, 喜千 – this appears to read *wan* (meaning ten thousand) which is often used synonymously with the word *eternal*.

A pair of bone chopsticks (one missing a section at the tip) and a toothpick accompany this set.

Decoration of this kind – using inlays of precious stones – appears in many Qing dynasty pieces, such as a “Quiver and bow case of black velvet with jade and coral inlays” belonging to the Qing Court collection at the Beijing Palace Museum.¹²

References

- ¹¹ Evarts, Curtis, *C. L. Ma Collection: Traditional Furniture from the Greater Shanxi Region*, 1999
- ¹² Beijing Palace Museum (author), *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the [Beijing] Palace Museum: Armaments and Military Provisions*, The Beijing Palace Museum, 2008, p. 93





10

FAUX-AGATE KNIFE

KOREA
CHOSON DYNASTY
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 270MM

This is a well-made and unusual example of a Korean eating set known as a *eunjangdo* (literally meaning "silver knife"). *Eunjangdo* usually employ silver as their primary material and are worn by both men and women, sometimes with chopsticks – much like the eating knives from China which feature in this exhibition.

The simple, functional blade is typical for these knives, being straight with a single cutting edge. On one face, however, the blade has been engraved with a scrolling dragon, behind which are Chinese characters (now illegible) enclosed within a square. The hexagonal hilt is made from orange-brown stone which has been carved and polished to produce an attractive translucent glow, as well as a silver band and collar. The scabbard is decorated *en suite*, with the silver encasing formed into a gently undulating pattern that extends along the greater part of its length, one three-tiered hexagonal band interrupting the pattern and a further attached just before the scabbard's base which flares out slightly. An applied block with a loop for suspension and further faceted attachments feature on the reverse face of the scabbard.

A faceted silver pickle spear with black soapstone handles slides into the scabbard alongside the knife and is surmounted with an intricately engraved button in the form of a chrysanthemum flower.

It is difficult to find a similarly decorated example to our own. However, another knife (M.16SHEAT-1928), preserved at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and carved out of jade to depict an openwork floral arrangement, goes some way to demonstrating both the quality and diverse decoration of these sets.





11

SILVER KNIFE

KOREA
CHOSON DYNASTY
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 160MM

This is a fine example of a Korean eating set known as a *eunjangdo*. *Eunjangdo* usually employ silver as their primary material and are worn by both men and women, sometimes with chopsticks – much like the eating knives from China which feature in this exhibition.

The knives were carried for both protection and decoration, and this example serves both purposes well. The simple, functional blade is typical for these knives, being straight with a single cutting edge, while the silver hilt fulfils the more ornamental part of the knife's role, having been decorated using a Korean technique known as *kum-bu*, whereby pure gold foil is fused onto the surface of a finished silver object. In this case, the gold has been applied to an engraved crescent moon, a crane in flight, and a smiling deer atop tufts of grass.

The scabbard is decorated *en suite* with the hilt and divided into two sections: the first depicts another crane in flight (one of the Ten Symbols of Longevity in Korean art and folklore), whilst the lower section shows a stag in repose which mirrors the calmness of the doe above – a symbol of the happiness and fidelity in marriage that the *eunjangdo* itself also represented.¹³ The reverse side of the scabbard is engraved with scrolling floral patterns and a lotus in bloom at the centre. A loop for suspension is attached to the hexagonal throat-piece, above which a pair of chopsticks are inserted.

The chopsticks are made of silver, since "in addition to being elegant, silver was supposed to detect poison in food."¹⁴ When silver reacts with sulphur-based compounds, it tarnishes. Forms of arsenic commonly used at the time usually contained such sulphides. The belief held that if the owner picked up their food with the chopsticks and saw the metal turn black, they knew that the food was best left alone!

References

- ¹³ Debbi Kent & Joan Suwalsky, *100 Thimbles in a Box: The Spirit and Beauty of Korean Handicrafts*, published by Seoul Selection, Irvine USA, 2014.
- ¹⁴ Lois N. Magner, "The History and Culture of Food and Drink in Asia: Korea" in Kenneth F. Kiple & Kriemhild Coneè, eds., *The Cambridge World History of Food: Volume 2*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 1186 (article pp. 1183-1193).







12

MONGOLIAN KNIFEMONGOLIA
EARLY 17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 270MM

This well-preserved Mongolian knife is exceptionally large and splendidly decorated throughout with various motifs.

The wooden grip-scales are secured with an array of small brass rivets and carved with quatrefoil symbols similar to those found on the 'Jade Knife' also shown in this exhibition (see cataloguing for Ref. 08). The hilt's pommel depicts dragons in copper amidst clouds that curl inwards, the gilt-brass pommel-cap engraved with a central flower and leaves on a sunken punched ground. A long and slender blade is inserted into the hilt and cut with a fuller which extends along the greater part of its length, tapering towards a hatchet point.

The frontal face of the scabbard's wooden core is adorned with brass bands that each hold a bead of coral at their centre flanked by dragons engraved in deep relief and close detail. The chape repeats and expands this motif, a central lotus flower inset with a coral bead at its centre and enclosed from above and below by dragons amidst stylised clouds. 'Eternal knots' – one

of the Eight Auspicious Symbols in Buddhism – appear on the reverse face, as well as a larger inset coral. Above this, a dragon's head is fitted with a loop from which hangs a knotted orange cord for suspension.

The decoration of this piece shows strong Chinese influence. A related knife published in an exhibition catalogue of Mongolian works of art (now preserved in the National Museum of Mongolian History),¹⁵ is not much larger than our own example (20 5/8 inches) and was made by a Mongol craftsman for the giant Ondro Gongor, a bodyguard of the Bogdo Khan when a Mongolian government delegation visited Russia in 1918.

References

¹⁵ Various Authors, *Mongolia: The Legacy of Chinggis Khan*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1995, p. 106, No. 6.



13

BRONZE SWORD

SICHUAN, CHINA
 WARRING STATES PERIOD
 475-221 B.C.

OVERALL 420MM

This bronze Chinese short sword shows an elegantly preserved form and attractive patina.

The hilt is particularly unusual – although its circular pommel and collar of flattened-diamond section are to be expected, the hilt is conical where other examples would be thin and cylindrical with small disc-shaped mouldings. Yet more surprisingly, the hilt is also hollow. The reason for this is unclear, but it may perhaps have made the blade lighter and so easier to wield, or it may be that the hilts were simply cast this way – we cannot be sure.

The blade itself exhibits a graceful form of flattened octagonal section, tapering gently until the final third where the blade narrows and tapers again to the tip. The original bronze-yellow of the sword has been welcomely taken over by patches of reddish-brown and moss-green, imbuing this object with an archaic charm.

The hilt of the sword would have originally been bound "with rope so much so that a handle is formed."¹⁶ Our example is identical to one preserved in The Provincial Museum of Sichuan, China – particularly in terms of the unusual hilt-form.¹⁷

References

¹⁶ The Provincial Museum of Sichuan, *Ba Shu Bronze Ware*, published by the Provincial Museum of Sichuan, 1992, p. 241.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.



14

PAIWANESE SWORD

TAIWAN
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 680MM



A unique and vibrant sword of the Paiwan, the indigenous people of Taiwan.

Undoubtedly this piece owes its remarkable aspect to its decoration, such as in the mirrored arrangement of stylised ancestor faces carved at the top and bottom of the hilt, their unpainted eyes revealing this object's brown wooden core and so contrasting against the bold red paint that features throughout. A carved snake zig-zags between further faces along the scabbard – the unusual, almost forked end representing its head, and its menacing tail appearing just below another visage at the scabbard's centre. This snake – more specifically known as the 'hundred-step snake' (species name *D. acutus*) – is an object of veneration in Paiwanese culture and appears frequently in their carvings. Its particular appearance here beside an imposing human head represents the former passing its power to the latter: "The power and strength, associated with the snake, is transmitted to the human it touches or reaches toward."¹⁸ Such added strength would surely have been invaluable to this weapon's original owner.

The reverse of the scabbard is open-faced, with iron bars attached in order to keep the blade securely in place – two horizontal bands are fastened across the upper third whilst another extends along the greater part of the scabbard's length, curving towards the edge at each end. The blade is of typical form, single-edged and with an oblique tip.

Such swords are exceptionally rare, though a small group are published by the Vienna Museum für Völkerkunde, one of which similarly depicts the "Hundert-Schritt-Schlangen-Motiv" ('the hundred-step snake motif').¹⁹

References

- ¹⁸ Hueiyun Chen, "Form and Meaning in Paiwanese Art and Material Culture" (PhD thesis published August 2015), p. 97. (<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/156707973.pdf>).
- ¹⁹ Hsu (Ying-chou) & Shao-jen Hsu, *Paiwan: Kunst und Kultur der Ureinwohner Taiwans*, published by the Vienna Museum für Völkerkunde, 1991, p. 2.



15

A CHENANGKAS

MALAYSIAN PENINSULAR
17TH - 18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1030MM

A fine and historical sword comprising a gilt-brass hilt and unusual Persian trade blade.

The gilt-brass hilt is close in form to the tulwar-type, many believing that contact with Indian merchants via trade routes played a role in the hilt-forms of bladed Malaysian weapons. The grip, lobed langets, and floral trefoil quillons are engraved closely with a compact arrangement of flowerheads, a flower in bloom just at the base of the grip. The pommel is cleverly stylised as a blossoming lotus, the pommel-button forming its centre.

The original wootz pattern is still visible on the unusual Persian trade blade which is cut with two shallow fullers close to the back edge. These fullers run along the greater part of the sword's length (that which is closer to the back-edge tapering to its pointed end just before the other). A faded panel of Quranic calligraphy has been etched onto one face of the blade, a lion-shaped maker's mark engraved on the other. The blade is satisfyingly complete with its original wooden scabbard, still excellently preserved and attached with a bone tip.

From the beginning of the Muslim era there were extensive trade links between South East Asia and Jeddah where communities of Asian Muslim merchants settled and prospered, particularly in the spice and timber trade. The blade likely owes its fascinating union with this hilt to these same extensive trade links.

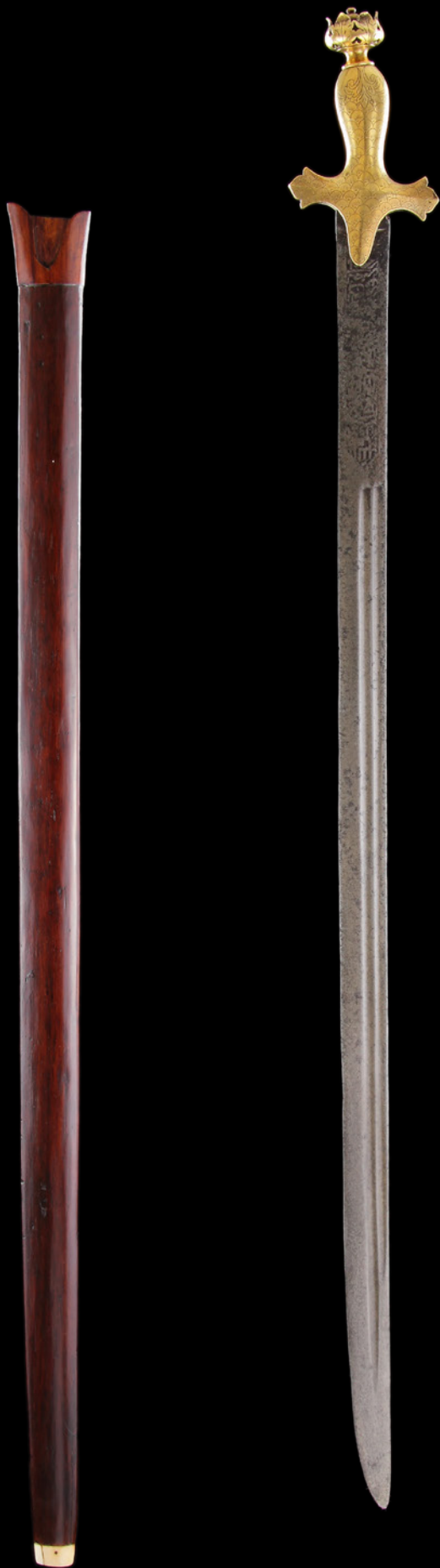
This rare sword closely resembles the Malaysian sword-type of the 'Pedong', but on account of its straight blade is in fact better categorised as a 'Chenangkas'. In his 1936 text on the topic of Malay weapons, Gardner noted that "It is often sold to the unwary as a crusader's sword because the hilt is in the form of a cross with a sort of little cup for the pommel, and the purchaser is told that the crusaders used to receive the Sacramental Wine in this cup before going to battle. (...) Unscrupulous dealers also try to cheat the amateur collector by selling as *chenangkas* a French sergeant's sword, period about 1830, of the type called *coupe-choux*."²⁰

My thanks to Michael Marlow for providing the reference from Gardner.

References

- ²⁰ G.B. Gardner, *Keris and Other Malay Weapons*, Progressive Publishing Company, Singapore, 1936, p. 69.





16

AYDA KATTICOORG, SOUTH-WESTERN INDIA
18TH OR 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 540MM



A fine example of this imposing weapon-type, an Ayda Katti, the traditional sword of the Kodavas in Coorg (the modern-day state of Karnataka).

At the base of the hilt is a wooden elliptical pommel-plate covered with red lacquer; the grip enclosed by strips of silver gilt which are each fastened in place with small bolts – a red tassel has also been attached to the pommel for suspension. The remainder of the red wooden hilt emerges through the other side of the grip and sits just below a stepped ferrule which has been closely engraved with a series of horizontal rows containing triangles in a mirrored arrangement.

In keeping with the original function of the Ayda Katti as a means for cutting through dense undergrowth (although it is unlikely our example served this purpose), the blade is essentially hatchet-shaped. A thin ricasso notched at each edge and engraved with a single beaded line continues out from the ferrule before the blade sharply widens at the base – the back edge extending horizontally before recurving inwards, whilst the front edge extends initially and then is cut back to form a short four-stepped protrusion. The greater part of the blade's length is then of typical form, the cutting edge distinctly convex where the back-edge is mostly straight before recurving and tapering towards the ricasso. Visible on one face of the blade is a stamp containing a stylised letter 'E', perhaps the mark of the family that was originally given this blade as part of a ceremonial gesture.

An Ayda Katti with similar decoration at the hilt is preserved in the Powys Castle and Garden in Wales as part of the National Trust Collections (Object No. NT1180585), having been accepted by HM Treasury on 21st March 1963 in lieu of tax and subsequently conveyed to National Trust ownership on 29th November 1963.

Provenance

The attached label reads:

*"Ex Lord Rolls coll.
Stratford/A
August 62
£3"*



From this we can surmise, with other information, that the sword was in the Rolls family (Lord Charles Rolls was co-founder of the Rolls Royce car manufacturing firm) who had their family home, The Hendre, in Monmouth, Wales.

The label implies the sword was sold in August 1962 for £3, in Stratford-upon-Avon (it is worth noting that Robin Wigington, a noted arms & armour dealer, had a shop and museum in the town).

The 1962 date on the label is relevant, as a year earlier, in 1961 Lady Eleanor Shelly-Rolls died.²¹ Eleanor was the sister of Lord Charles Rolls, who like his two other brothers, died leaving no children to inherit the estate, so it fell to Lady Eleanor. She also died leaving no children, and upon her death the estate passed back up the family line to the closest member of the family with surviving descendants. The Harding-Rolls branch of the family continued to live at The Hendre until 30 August 1984 when, following a failed time-share operation, it was sold.

One might say this sword is literally the Rolls Royce of Ayda Katti!

References

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleanor_Shelley-Rolls



17

TIGER PATAKERALA, SOUTHWESTERN INDIA
17TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1440MM

This pata is particularly eye-catching for its impressive wooden gauntlet which is carved into the appearance of a formidable tiger's head.

Black leaf-shaped stripes curved at either end are painted on an orange ground throughout the main section of the gauntlet, a central ridge continuing over the tiger's head where the face has been carved and painted to depict a thick curved brow and large oval eyes. When viewed from certain angles, the pierced loops fixed into the sides of the tiger – occupied by bud-shaped iron tokens – may seem to resemble the animal's ears. But they must serve some other purpose of appearance, since the ears appear just behind them, raised and painted under the ends of the brow. Still extant is the internal wooden bar that the wielder would have held to keep the weapon secure while in use, the bottom-most surface of the gauntlet flat and hollowed out though the rest of its section is curved. Much of the original fabric lining also survives. The long and slender blade – forged to mimic the shape of European swords – is of flattened diamond section, a shallow central ridge running to the spear-point tip.

Tipu Sultan's frequent use of the tiger in his personal iconography may have played a role in its manifestation here as the gauntlet of our pata. Parts of Kerala were captured by Hyder Ali and made part of the Kingdom of Mysore (until the Treaty of Seringapatam in 1792 when Malabar ceded to the control of the East India Company), and so the broader proliferation of the tiger as depicted in arts of this period may well have spread to the region and become popular with craftsmen. Tipu Sultan's own fascination with and reverence for the animal is well documented in objects such as a gold tiger's head from the Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 67212): "Although the tiger was an ancient symbol of kingship in India, Tipu made it his own; he declared that it was 'better to live a single day as a tiger than a thousand years as a sheep.'"

A similar wooden pata in the form of a tiger is published in the book by Ravinder Reddy: *Arms & Armour of India, Nepal & Sri Lanka: Types, Decoration and Symbolism*, 2018, p. 331.

References

²² <https://www.rct.uk/collection/67212/tigers-head>





18

ZOOMORPHIC TULWAR

SOUTHERN INDIA
17TH - 18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1000MM



This brass talwar hilt is interesting not only for the human and zoomorphic forms that comprise its decoration, but also for the Polish blade with which it has been paired.

The hilt's langets appear as long-faced *makara* (imposing sea creatures from Hindu mythology) with scales picked out in closely cut detail behind them, as well as on the grip where the mythical creature is depicted to have the body of a fish. The quillons have been stylised as grimacing tigers' heads, a motif that recurs as the finial of the recurved knuckle guard. The hilt's unusual decoration makes its origins difficult to place, but its similarities to other South Indian weapon-types, such as the famed Tipu Sultan swords, would suggest this example originates from the same region.²³

The blade is single-edged until the final third of its length and is cut with two fullers: the first fuller deeper and extending along the back edge, whilst another at the centre is broader and shallower. Etched decoration includes six-pointed stars and both a crescent moon and radiant sun with human visages. Above these, a striped snake curls its way along the greater part of the blade's length, its triangular tongue hissing outwards just near to the tip. The blade comes with an unusual black leather scabbard, carved with triangular geometric designs where the locket would be fixed, and fitted with a cross-hatched brown leather chape.

European blades were often imported to India and there fitted with hilts in order to equip newly raised forces or to serve as enviable trophies – such swords were generally known as 'firangi' (derived from the Arabic term 'al-faranji' used to describe Western Europeans). We can be sure of this blade's Polish origins due to its decoration and form, making this a rare union of hilt and blade, since imported swords usually came from manufacturing towns such as Solingen (Germany).²⁴

References

²³ See, for example, swords published in Robert Elgood, *Hindu Arms and Ritual: Arms and Armour from India 1400-1865*, Eburon Academic Publishers, Delft (Netherlands), pp. 109-126.

²⁴ Navina Hajat Haidar & Marika Sardar, eds., *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2011, p. 224.



19

INDIAN SPEAR-BUTT

DECCAN, INDIA
17TH - 18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 310MM

A steel butt for a south Indian lance or spear known as a *sang*, used to counterbalance the spearhead.

Many notable collections contain *sang* heads, but spear butts of this quality are unusual. This example is of conical form with two bands of applied vertically-fluted and bulbous mouldings each secured by flat, engraved iron washers (that at the opening for the haft being wider). These bulbous mouldings are further decorated with silver waves which – from a horizontal perspective – give the appearance of chevrons arranged into columns, each column neatly occupying a single flute (this decoration is interrupted in parts with further floral motifs). The main section of the conical form then is adorned profusely with an elegant array of intertwining leaved tendrils and flowerheads in gold and silver on a punched ground, culminating in the four-sided tip that was used to keep the spear securely in the ground when unneeded.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York owns a spear butt (Acc. No. 36.25.1928) of similar elegance, its bulbous mouldings having been spirally fluted, though it is not decorated with precious metals (this example is illustrated in Robert Elgood, *Hindu Arms and Ritual: Arms and Armour from India 1400-1865*, Eburon Academic Publishers, Delft (Netherlands), p. 193).



20

BRONZE SPEARHEAD

CHINA
ZHOU DYNASTY
1046 - 256 B.C.

OVERALL 270MM

The tubular socket of this spear-head tapers gradually to a circular moulding enclosed within raised edges. This leads into the spear-head itself which shows a pronounced medial ridge and two fullers that meet the medial ridge just below the reinforced tip. The spear-head exhibits a pleasing patina throughout, with colours ranging from dark to yellowish-green.

Bronze weapons dating to ancient times are commonly excavated in China, since they were so frequently included within burial tombs.²⁵ But this example (as well as Ref. 13 in this exhibition) is distinct from others for its well-preserved form – most other spear-heads of this type have been worn away, so that the lines do not stand out so boldly.

Instances of this spearhead-type – with a pronounced medial ridge and fullers – are rarer than others, but an example (Museum Number 1894.0727.31) in the British Museum displays this same feature, as does one preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Accession Number: 13.220.140a-h).

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of Arthur M. Sackler and acquired prior to 1978.

References

- ²⁵ Xialong Wu, *Material Culture, Power, and Identity in Ancient China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 26-76.





21

KHMER BELL HANDLE

CAMBODIA
11TH - 12TH CENTURY

OVERALL 150MM
(EXCLUDING BASE)

This remarkable bronze object is thought to have likely once functioned as the handle of a ritual bell.

The base of the handle comprises a series of several vertical mouldings incised with various motifs – a row of palmettes, for example, decorates the lowest and uppermost sections, this portion of the handle likely so crafted to make it fit readily into one's hand.

This series of mouldings then is surmounted on one face with a sloping triangular panel that depicts a seated Ganesha, whilst the other shows Shiva sat with his legs crossed. A stylised and imposing trident-head sits between these two panels – the two outer sections curving up and inwards and depicting on their inner surfaces the fear-inducing aspects of *makara*, formidable sea creatures within Hindu mythology. The central prong depicts *dvarapala* – temple gate guardians commonly found within Khmer temples and other architecture – over each face.

The trident-form of this piece is reminiscent of those same weapons that were often depicted in statues of *dvarapala*, or indeed of Shiva, within Khmer temples, with a long shaft and spade-like butt. It seems likely that these different iconographic traditions – the *dvarapala*, Shiva, the trident, and other aspects of Khmer religious practice – are here intended to be interconnected and interreferential in various ways, the shape of the handle mirroring the functions of its depicted deities and so bring further harmony and good fortune to the ceremonies in which it would be used. Shiva himself is often depicted with a trident, and "In Hinduism the bell is symbolic of existence and, as an attribute of Shiva, represents creation."²⁶

For a similar example to our own, see No. 155 in Emma Bunker and Douglas Latchford, *Adoration and Glory: The Golden Age of Khmer Art*, Chicago: Art Media Resources. Another is preserved at the National Museum (Phnom Penh), photographed and catalogued (Cat. No. 158) in Khun Samen, Preah Neang Tevi, *Collections of the National Museum Phnom Penh*, Phnom Penh: Department of Museums, 2005. Another comparandum is preserved in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession Number 91.22.2), showing many of the same features as our own example.

References

- ²⁶ Emma Bunker and Douglas Latchford, *Adoration and Glory: The Golden Age of Khmer Art*, Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2003, p. 428.
- ²⁷ <https://collections.artsmia.org/art/4226/hindu-ritual-altar-bell-khmer>



22

TIPU BATTLE REPORT (POLLILUR)

LONDON
31ST MARCH 1789

FRAMED 530x460MM

A rare and unusual report on the "PLAN of the Attacks made upon Lt. Cl. Baillie" published by Woodman & Mutlow on 31st March 1789. This series of attacks would later come to be collectively known as the Battle of Pollilur which took place on 10th September 1780 near Conjeevaram (the present-day city of Kanchipuram in south-eastern India).

The battle represented a catastrophic defeat for the East India Company, as Lt. Colonel William Baillie's army was crushed by the Kingdom of Mysore, led by Tipu Sultan. Baillie's forces were outmanoeuvred by Tipu, who successfully prevented British reinforcements from reaching Baillie, and the ensuing massacre saw approximately 3,000 Company troops killed and many more (including Baillie) captured. Archival records and correspondence attest to the East India Company's shock in the battle's aftermath, as half a year later in a draught circular to the Committee of Secrecy of the East India Company, both the chairman and deputy chairman noted with dismay that "the severe loss sustained by the defeat and destruction of Colonel Baillie's Detachment (...) and the future success of the Enemy, are events which have occasioned universal consternation and astonishment."²⁸

The map outlines the various phases of the battle with engravings and references in close detail (testament to Mutlow's specialism as an engraver of maps): buildings, forestry, roads and elevated positions – their contour lines marked through careful shading – are expertly drawn throughout. Perhaps the most interesting feature are the half-shaded rectangles (units of soldiers) and dense arrowed lines which further help the viewer to follow the action of the battle. The map shows minor fold lines but is otherwise well preserved within a gold-painted frame.

As per the signature that appears just under the bottom-right of the map, this detailed engraving was published by Woodman & Mutlow (trading in London ca. 1782-93), the map itself engraved by Henry Mutlow. Henry was later succeeded by his son, James Mutlow, at 3 York Street, and their company became engravers to the King ("H. Mutlow & Son, Engravers &c to His Majesty").²⁹ Under the bottom-left of the map is written "Innes Munro del.". Captain Innes Munro was a British officer "who seems to have fought in every engagement of the Second Mysore War and later published an account of it."³⁰ He has had a hand in the process of mapmaking here, "del." standing for "delineator" and so meaning that Captain Innes Munro himself would have provided the initial outline of the map (either by tracing or even possibly by verbal description) before it was engraved by Mutlow.

Examples of Mutlow's work can be found in various museum collections, such as an engraving of King Charles I (published ca. 1784) preserved in the Wellcome Collection.

References

- ²⁸ Archival Record of the British Library (Ref. IOR/H/153), *Proposed Draught of a Circular from the Committee of Secrecy of the East India Company, 31st May 1781 in the evening from the Chairman & Deputy Chairman.*
- ²⁹ https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?biold=9321
- ³⁰ John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1991, p. 413.

PLAN of the Attacks made upon LT. COL. BAILLIE
 by Hyder, Ally and Tippoo Sahib, on the 6th & 10th Sept. 1780 when upon his way to join the English Army at Congevoram.



REFERENCES.

A. English Camp on the 1st 6th & 9th September. B. Hyder Ally's Camp on the 9th Sept. C. Lt. Col. Baillie attacked by Tippoo, at Perembacum on the 6th September. DD. Tippoo's Camp 9th Sept. E. his position the 10th. E. Lt. Col. Fletcher's Rout with the Grenadiers. FF. Baillie's positions when halted, & attacked in the Night of 9th. G. Baillie's Order of Battle, when attacked by Hyder on the 10th. H. English Army upon its way to Succour Baillie. II. Rout of Hyder's Army in the Night of the 9th. I. G's position on the 10th. KK. → Hyder Ally's Retreat with the Prisoners to the Round Wells. L. Hyder Ally's station during the Attack.

Published as the Act directs March 20th 1789

23

HYDER ALI BATTLE REPORT (SHOLINGHUR)

LONDON
31ST MARCH 1789

FRAMED 590x420MM

A rare and unusual report on the 'Battle of Sholangur [Sholinghur]' published by Woodman & Mutlow on 31st March 1789. This battle took place on 27th September 1781 at Sholinghur, 80 kilometres west of Chennai (Madras, south-eastern India), and saw General Eyre Coote of the East India Company defeat Hyder Ali of the Kingdom of Mysore with heavy losses.

The Battle of Sholinghur followed shortly after the Battle of Pollilur (depicted in the previous catalogue entry) but was less impactful for the East India Company both in terms of immediate casualties and in its consequences for the Second Anglo-Mysore War. After the Battle of Pollilur, Coote had advanced to the Government at Madras to express his wish to resign from command. But the new Governor Lord Macartney insisted he continue in order to relieve the city of Vellore (imminently under threat by Hyder Ali). Coote obeyed his instructions and met Hyder at Sholinghur on the road to Vellore. Hyder opened the engagement with heavy cannon fire and cavalry charges, but the surprise-element of Coote's attack meant that the response was disorganised. Many of his cavalry troops were killed in crossfire, and ultimately Hyder was forced to retreat with heavy losses.³¹

The map outlines the various phases of the battle with engravings and references in close detail (testament to Mutlow's specialism as an engraver of maps): buildings, forestry, roads and elevated positions – their contour lines marked through careful shading – are expertly drawn throughout. Perhaps most exciting are the half-shaded rectangles (units of soldiers) and dense arrowed lines which further help the viewer to follow the action of the battle. The map shows minor fold lines and staining but is otherwise well preserved within a gold-painted frame.

As per the signature that appears just under the bottom-right of the map, this detailed engraving was published by Woodman & Mutlow (trading in London ca. 1782-93), the map itself engraved by Henry Mutlow. Henry was later succeeded by his son, James Mutlow, at 3 York Street, and their company became engravers to the King ("H. Mutlow & Son, Engravers &c to His Majesty").³² Under the bottom-left of the map is written 'Innes Munro del.'. This refers to Captain Innes Munro, a British officer "who seems to have fought in every engagement of the Second Mysore War and later published an account of it."³³ He has had a hand in the process of cartography here, 'del.' standing for "delineator" and so meaning that Captain Innes Munro himself would have provided the initial outline of the map (either by tracing or even possibly by description) before it was engraved by Mutlow.

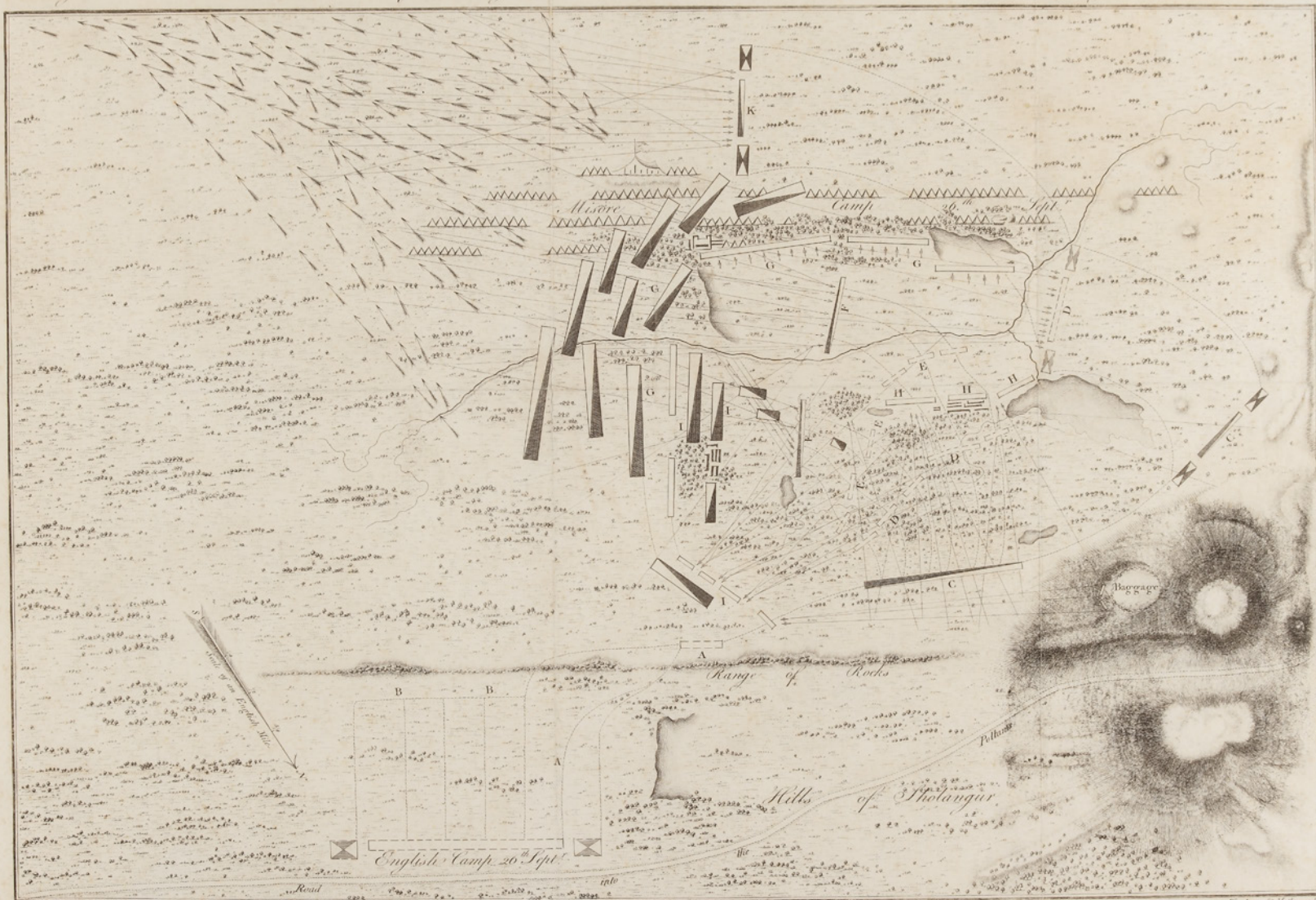
Examples of Mutlow's work can be found in various museum collections, such as an engraving of King Charles I (published ca. 1784) preserved in the Wellcome Collection.

References

- ³¹ G. Kalamurthy, *The Second Anglo-Mysore war (1780-84)*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1987, p. 35.
- ³² https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?biold=9321
- ³³ John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1991, p. 413.

BATTLE OF SHOLANGUR.

Gained by 11,000 British Troops under Lt. Genl Sir Eyre Coote over 143,000. Muscovians under the Nizam Hyder Ally Cann on 27th Sept. 1781.



REFERENCES.

AAA. Route & position taken by the 2^d Brigade in the Morning. BB. March of the Army advancing from the Ground of Encampment. CC. First position of the Army when formed for Action. DDD. Second position of the Line advancing irregularly & the 2nd Brigade gaining upon the Enemy's left Flank & obliging them to abandon all their strong posts. EEE. Third position of our Line advancing. FFF. Fourth & last position of the Line after the 13th Reg^t 17th & 21st Bat^{ns} of Spahys were charged by the Enemy's Cavalry. GGGG. The Enemy's Grand Line of Infantry & Cavalry as first formed behind Woods, Rocks, & Old House. HHHH. Advanced Corps of the Enemy with Guns who began the Attack. III. Tippoo's Corps Charging the Line & Cannonading our left Flank & Baggage. — Retreat of the Enemy at sun set Cannonaded by the 2^d Brigade. K.

Published as the Act directs March 30th 1782.

24

PAINTED TIGERBURMA
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 830x320MM

Likely originating from Burma, this fearsome tiger was perhaps intended as an attendant creature or as the mount of the nat (spirit) Maung Po Tu. In his human existence, he was a tea trader during the reign of King Minkhaung of Ava (Innwa) and was killed by a tiger during a journey to Shan state. For a figure of the Maung Po Tu nat riding a tiger see plate 74 in Sylvia Fraser-Lu, *Burmese Crafts Past and Present*, O.U.P., New York, 1994.

Our well-preserved example is painted mainly in orange, its stripes stylised in strips of black and pale red paint which each curve at either end. The tiger's details are carved out with considerable care: the eyes are painted with central white dots on an intimidating black ground and enclosed within a pale-red painted circle, slender eyelashes emanating out. Bristling whiskers flow from the top of the tiger's fierce grin which is filled with white-painted teeth,

its sharp canines carved so as to appear distinct from the others. The tiger's strong legs and musculature can also be seen in the carving, adding to the fearful aspect of this sculpture, as if it were ready to strike at prey.







25

MORO SADDLE & STIRRUPS

THE PHILIPPINES
(LIKELY THE ISLAND
OF MINDANAO)
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 530x350MM

A fascinating and rare leather saddle originating from the Southern Philippines (see below for a more expansive discussion of this piece's origin), decorated throughout with brass plaques and copper panelling.

The frontal crest of the saddle is fitted with copper plates of various shapes and sizes: two arched panels frame a central arrangement which comprises a cut foliate design placed under domed copper discs, each disc secured in place with brass rivets. Farther down the slopes of the frontal crest, thick copper alloy and steel cord runs through fixed iron loops which are pierced to hold brass rings for attaching further trappings. The cantle is fixed with copper plates, the outermost pierced with an arched row of heart-shapes and a flowerhead at the centre, whilst the cut-out foliate design attached to the frontal crest is repeated and enlarged over the greater part of the cantle's central leather surface. The middle of the saddle then is attached with lateral iron plates, to which large iron buckles are riveted for the suspension of leather straps holding the steel stirrups that accompany this set.

It is difficult to pinpoint the precise origin of this intriguing saddle, the name 'Moro' referring to the range of 13 Muslim ethnic groups who inhabit the southern islands of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan in the Philippines. But these stirrups, together with the unusual brass plaques which adorn the saddle's lower panel (just under the cantle) perhaps suggest that this piece may be the work of Maranao craftsmen, the Maranao being an ethnic group that mostly inhabit Mindanao (one of the Moro islands referenced above).

This is on account of the *panulung* – "the decorated beam-end of a Maranao house"³⁴ – which in traditional decoration would be structured as an s-shaped curve representing the *naga*, often carved with ridges along the front of the 's' (or 'crest') to represent the mythical sea creature's scales (this pattern appearing to feature on our own example). The heads of the stirrups may also be those of the *sarimanok* (a legendary bird of the Maranao people), though the precise iconographical differences between these two creatures can be difficult to identify in Maranao work.³⁵

The stirrups are further decorated at the foot-hold with pierced quatrefoils and small arches, as well as engraved four-petalled flowers. Similar examples of Moro decoration have been exhibited by Runjeet Singh, such as a Moro suit of armour (Ref. 156) in *Iconic 2017*. Another shirt preserved in the Islamic Arts Museum in Malaysia,³⁶ is fixed with a series of three silver panels, each engraved with a mirrored arrangement of curved tapering leaves and curling flowerheads which present much the same composition and decorative style as the large brass plaques fixed to the lower section of our example.

References

- ³⁴ Eric Casiño, *Ethnographic Art of the Philippines: An Anthropological Approach*, Manila (Philippines), 1973, p. 38.
- ³⁵ See David Baradas, "Some Implications of the Okir Motif in Lanao and Sulu Art", *Asian Studies* 6, 1968, p. 140; pp. 164-165, Figs. 20-22.
- ³⁶ Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, *Symbols of Power and Beauty: The Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia*, 2015, pp. 120-121, No. 53.



26

CHINESE FLINT STRIKER

CHINA
QING DYNASTY
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 85MM



This leather Chinese flint striker (or 'chuckmuck') is unusual for its brass fittings which are of better quality than most similar examples.

The brown leather purse of this set is fitted on its top-edge with a plate of brass engraved with floral motifs at either end as well as loops and an engraved bracket, so that the set could be hung from the owner's belt. On one face, a brass rectangular panel depicts a stylised *lù* symbol (representing prosperity) at the centre of a geometric design which includes Buddhist *swastikas* symbolising good fortune.

The reverse is then fixed with two Chinese characters within brass raindrop-shaped frames: the left character translating to 'luck/blessing' and the right 'fortune'. Clearly, the original owner of this flint striker was eager to have as much good luck as possible on the battlefield! When open, the purse reveals a sticker marked with Chinese characters – possibly a name – as well as brass plaques with hook and slot for closing the purse.

Attached to the purse by a series of rivets and a brass band of scrolling foliage is the plate of steel which would be used for creating a spark to light the owner's match, pieces of flint and a small amount of tinder usually kept within the purse.

Examples of these objects with this level of preservation and quality rarely come up for sale and are published infrequently. The British Museum, however, has one such fire-steel (Museum Number As1911,1007.1) which is decorated with a similar symbol (*lù*) at its centre to our own.





27

INDIAN MATCHLOCK

RAJASTHAN, INDIA
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1720MM

This large Indian matchlock 'toradar' or 'bandook' has a tapering, two-stage steel barrel retained by eight gilt wire barrel bands, generously decorated throughout with gold *koftgari*.

The stock of dark red wood has been polished to present a smooth surface and is attached with typical fittings: steel side-plates, a trigger pierced to present the form of a leaf and tendril (decorated with a motif in gold *koftgari* that matches its shape), brass flowerhead fittings used both for further decoration and to keep the steel plates secure to the stock, and a butt-cap of bone engraved with a row of concentric circles set between sections of darker wood.

Decoration in gold *koftgari* has been profusely applied throughout this matchlock, particularly to the breech, where a panel of blossoming flowerheads surrounded by leaves and bands of small gilt circles is depicted under a tiger amidst dense foliage. This scene is framed within a sloping arch surmounted by a central flower, and the matchlock's back-sight and pan with pivot-cover also retain much of their original gilt patterning in floral motifs. Farther along the barrel, two curved cartouches each contain a mirrored arrangement of flowers divided by central lines and rows of dots. The muzzle is decorated mostly *en suite* with the breech, though its sloping arched frame depicts a parrot, whose immersion on the canopy floor is cleverly implied by the fact that its wings are decorated in exactly the same style as the leaves upon which it treads.

Though the form of the gun is of typical Rajput style, the gold *koftgari* suggests Mughal influence. A musket at the Royal Armouries – Object Number XXVIF.126 – is also worth examining for comparison on account of the similar decoration that adorns its stock (notice the bone butt-cap and brass washers stylised as flowerheads). A further example showing the typical Rajput form of toradar was exhibited by Runjeet Singh in *Iconic 2017* (Ref. 152).



28

A LARGE BOWNORTH INDIA
17TH - 18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 930MM

This enormous bow measures just under a metre in overall length and 42mm at the widest point of the arms, suggesting this would have been a powerful warbow capable of delivering arrows with high speed and impact.

Made of buffalo horn, sinew, and wood (mango or rain tree) glued together, and then lacquered in a variety of vibrant colours: the central grip is painted with gold flowers on a red ground; a dark-green ground underlies the row of lotus flowers further along either side of the centre; and the ends are painted with red flowers on silver and gold. 'Kaman' bows – a Mughal type closely related to our own example – are often known as 'reflex bows' due to the bend that commonly afflicts their form when unstrung, but this example, perhaps owing to its sheer size, has fully resisted any such contortion. Both nocks, around which the bowstring would be wrapped, are also extant – a rarity in such weapons.

Hidayat-al-rami ('Guide for Archers') by Muhammad Buddah'i dated 1134 AH (1722) in the British Library (14143, ff.6v-7), reproduced in the book 'The Mughals, Life, Art and Culture' (p.54-55), shows detailed colour paintings of five methods for stringing a recurved Mughal bow.

Precise comparanda are difficult to come by in this case, though an example preserved at the Royal Armouries (Object Number XXVIB.8)³⁷ shows a similar form and shape to our own. According to Hewitts (1859), it was a gift from the East India Company to the Royal Armouries from Gwalior; Northern India.³⁸ Another bow exhibited by Runjeet Singh in *Arms & Armour from the East 2015* (Ref. No. 036) is also related to the present example in its form and origin.

References

³⁷ <https://collections.royalarmouries.org/object/rac-object-22218.html>.

³⁸ J. Hewitt, *Official Catalogue of the Tower Armouries*, London, 1859, No. xv2, p. 93.





29

NAGA QUIVERJAVA, INDONESIA
19TH CENTURYOVERALL WITH
ARROWS 690MM

This superb quiver comes from Java, Indonesia, and like the well-known shadow puppets of the same origin, it is made of cow or buffalo hide which has been dried, carved and painted.³⁹

The upper section of the quiver has been cut into a complex trellis pattern of curling vines or waves which are wonderfully framed by the sloping bodies of *naga*, mythical sea serpents which are thought to have entered the Javanese visual tradition from the 10th century A.D. in temple complexes and bathing places as stone water spouts.⁴⁰ Their crowns here indicate *naga*'s dominion over the underworld, and their scales, teeth and eyes are picked out in hues of yellow and red which have taken on pale beachy tones over time. The lower section is decorated with shell-motifs, lines painted on their surfaces to reflect the ridges of their real-life counterparts. A central medallion, which appears to read as the letters "SY", is surrounded by more of these shells, as the quiver then tapers to the point where the arrowheads rest.

The reverse is undecorated (though the silhouette created by the frontal carving is aesthetically impressive in itself) and pierced neatly with five holes – one for each arrow.

Also visible are the careful stitching and knotted thread which hold the quiver together, as well as the back of the leather lining which hems the lower section.

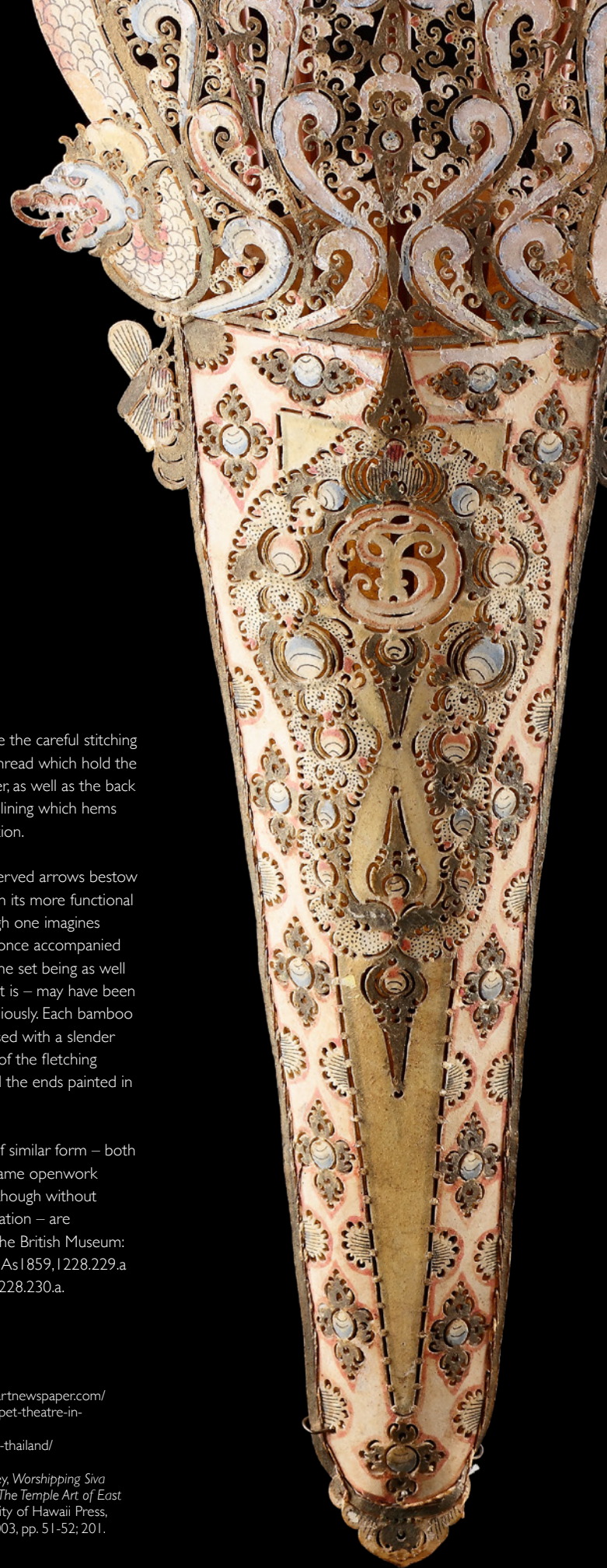
Five well-preserved arrows bestow the quiver with its more functional context, though one imagines the bow that once accompanied this quiver – the set being as well decorated as it is – may have been used ceremoniously. Each bamboo arrow is encased with a slender iron tip, most of the fletching preserved and the ends painted in red and gold.

Two quivers of similar form – both cut with the same openwork arrangement though without painted decoration – are preserved in the British Museum: Museum Nos. As I 859, I 228.229.a and As I 859, I 228.230.a.

References

³⁹ <https://asianartnewspaper.com/shadow-puppet-theatre-in-indonesia-malaysia-and-thailand/>

⁴⁰ Ann R. Kinney, *Worshipping Siva and Buddha: The Temple Art of East Java*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2003, pp. 51–52; 201.





30

YI QUIVERSOUTHWEST CHINA
19TH - 20TH CENTURY

OVERALL 500MM

A rare and well-preserved quiver of the Yi or Nuosuo people (historically known as Lolo), an ethnic minority group in China which is based across the Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces.

The underside of the base-cap is inlaid with a harmonious arrangement of mother-of-pearl pieces: the central shell is largest, whilst each concentric circle surrounding it is composed of shell-pieces that increase in size as the composition extends to the edge. The top-side then narrows into the main cylindrical section of the quiver which is composed of vertically carved bamboo. This central trunk also includes two raised sections which have been pierced for suspension, so that the quiver could be slung over the shoulder. The top of the quiver is inset with further circles of mother-of-pearl in three rows – a motif repeated on a triangular protrusion which sits just under the slender lobed gap where the arrows would be kept.

The quiver is covered throughout with a black lacquer which in small areas shows traces of a reddish-brown colour. In many Yi pieces such as this (as well as the armguard (Ref. 31) and cuirasses (Ref. 32 & Ref. 33) in this exhibition), the colour black dominates due to the various reasons which explain the importance of the colour in Yi culture. The black tiger is a deity worshipped in Yi religion (their group's historical name, "Lolo", is in fact related to the Yi word "lo", which means "tiger") and the colour black is also considered to represent high social status (as one might infer, lower-status individuals would normally wear white).⁴¹

A closely related example to our own (Inv. No. 71.1946.22.7.1-4) is preserved in the Quai Branly Museum, Paris. Another at the Bowers Museum in California (Object No. 2005.32.8) is painted although in slightly more worn condition than ours.

Published

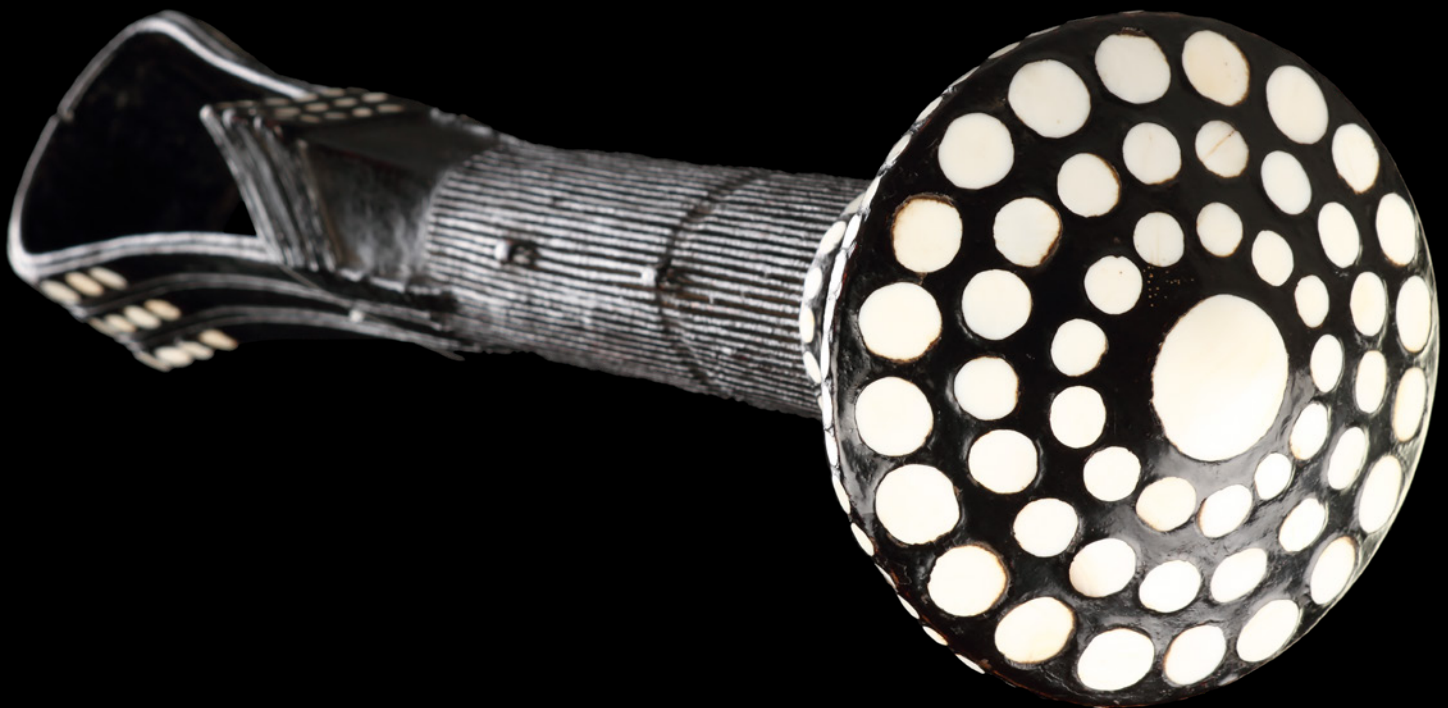
Henry Bussière, *Princes des Cimes*, Editions Adamas, 2003

Provenance

From the collection of Acher Eskanasy

References

⁴¹ Mei-yin Lee & Dr. Florian Knothe (eds.), *Embroidered Identities: Ormately Decorated Textiles and Accessories of Chinese Ethnic Minorities*, published by the University Museum and Art Gallery at The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2013, p. 103.





31

LEATHER ARMGUARDSOUTHWEST CHINA
19TH - 20TH CENTURY

OVERALL 300MM

A well-formed leather armguard of the Yi or Nuosuo people (historically known as Lolo), an ethnic minority group in China which is based across the Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces. The guard would generally be used to cover the wearer's left-hand, which also held a shield, whilst the right hand would be used to wield a weapon.

A strip of red paint sits just above the rimmed base of the guard and is further decorated with three rows bordered with lines of yellow paint, each row containing a continuous band of small circles. The central trunk of the guard is undecorated, bearing only the black lacquer which commonly covers Yi armour, and a leather belt is secured at the half-way point which could be fastened to adjust the tightness of the guard on the wearer's arm. Towards the top-end of the armguard, the main section flares out, as the leather has been neatly recurved to form a brim which is painted en suite with the guard's base. The interior – in no need of such adornments – shows the original leather surface which would have been extracted from Southern Yellow cattle (the breed indigenous to Southern China and Vietnam used to make Yi armour).

An example of similar form is preserved in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris (Inventory Number 71.1946.22.8) and another as part of a museum exhibition held in Hong Kong (Cat. No. 27), although both lack the painted decoration of our example.⁴²

(1) Mei-yin Lee & Dr. Florian Knothe (eds.), *Embroidered Identities: Ornatly Decorated Textiles and Accessories of Chinese Ethnic Minorities*, published by the University Museum and Art Gallery at The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2013, p. 114.

Published

Henry Bussière, *Princes des Cimes*, Editions Adamas, 2003

Provenance

From the collection of Acher Eskanasy

References

- ³⁷ Mei-yin Lee & Dr. Florian Knothe (eds.), *Embroidered Identities: Ornatly Decorated Textiles and Accessories of Chinese Ethnic Minorities*, published by the University Museum and Art Gallery at The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2013, p. 114.





32

CHINESE CUIRASSSOUTHWEST CHINA
19TH - 20TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 500MM

A well-formed cuirass of the Yi or Nuosuo people (historically known as Lolo), an ethnic minority group in China which is based across the Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces.

The armour is made from the hide of Southern Yellow cattle (the breed indigenous to Southern China and Vietnam used to make Yi armour), and the chest-panel's black-painted surface has been further decorated with borders of red paint lined with rows of arrows and circles in yellow – the interior panel filled with dotted flowerheads and painted designs (decoration repeated on the cuirass' back). The remaining four panels are decorated with painted borders of four-petalled flowerheads and further rows of circles, and those under the chest- and back-panels are fixed with small roundels of leather tied with a band, allowing the armour to be carried on the shoulder.⁴³

Leather straps secure the many sections together and reappear in density at the skirt which comprises six rows of closely interconnected lamellae lacquered with red and black paint and which each flare out slightly at their lower edge.

According to *Princes des Cimes*, Henry Bussière, 2003, the catalogue in which this armour was published, Nuossu society was divided into clans; central clans had armours decorated with red and yellow motifs on a black background, as we see here.

Two Yi cuirasses are preserved in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris (Inventory Numbers 71.1946.22.4 and 71.1946.22.10) and another example, on loan from the Natural History Museum, is recorded at the British Museum (Museum Number As1921,1029.1).

Published

Henry Bussière, *Princes des Cimes*, Editions Adamas, 2003

Provenance

From the collection of Acher Eskanasy

References

⁴³ (1) Mei-yin Lee & Dr. Florian Knothe (eds.), *Embroidered Identities: Ornatly Decorated Textiles and Accessories of Chinese Ethnic Minorities*, published by the University Museum and Art Gallery at The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2013, p. 114.





33

CHINESE CUIRASS

SOUTHWEST CHINA
19TH - 20TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 530MM

A large red-painted cuirass of the Yi or Nuosuo people (historically known as Lolo), an ethnic minority group in China which is based across the Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces.

The armour is made from the hide of Southern Yellow cattle (the breed indigenous to Southern China and Vietnam used to make Yi armour), the chest-panel here decorated with a dark red-painted surface which is further adorned with borders of yellow paint lined with rows of arrows and circles – the interior panel filled with large curling lines, and the back-plate decorated en suite.

According to Princes des Cimes, Henry Bussière, 2003, the catalogue in which this armour was published, Nuossu society was divided into

clans; southern clans had armours decorated with black and yellow motifs on a red background.

Leather straps secure the panels together, and an array of looped cords is fitted to the back of the cuirass so that it could be carried on one's back. These straps are most densely arranged at the skirt which comprises six rows of closely interconnected lamellae painted red and yellow, and which each flare out slightly at their lower edge.

Two Yi cuirasses are preserved in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris (Inventory Numbers 71.1946.22.4 and 71.1946.22.10). Another example, on loan from the Natural History Museum, is recorded at the British Museum (Museum Number As1921,1029.1).

Published

Henry Bussière, *Princes des Cimes*, Editions Adamas, 2003

Provenance

From the collection of Acher Eskanasy



34

A PAIR OF HORSE NECK DEFENCES (CRINETS)

TIBET
15TH - 17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 520x480MM
(EACH)

For the sides of a horse's neck, this piece is unique for the fact that it comprises a matching pair of neck defences or *crinets* (many extant examples being only for one side of the face). For comparison, a mounted pair can be seen in the Royal Armouries, Leeds (XXVIH.21 and XXVIH.22).

In this example, each neck defence is constructed from three overlapping layers of leather held together by leather thongs threaded through small, hollow iron bosses near the edges of each band (most on the outer layers now missing). The outer layers are painted with clouds in gold leaf on a dark ground, whilst the second layers depict curving gilt vines and blossoming lotuses on reddish shellac. The striking centre-piece of the right-sided neck-defence (the other with minor losses) is dominated by a scrolling dragon amidst curling

clouds and interlocking squares and circles which represent two of the seven primary possessions belonging to the *chakravartin* (the universal monarch in Hindu and Jain religious traditions) as symbolised by jewellery: the circular earrings of 'the precious queen' and the square earrings of 'the precious minister'.⁴⁴

The edges of the leather pieces are protected with green leather piping which is sewn together with thread woven in a precise chain stitch.

The leather back of each neck-defence is stamped with a wax seal which appears to contain a series of numbers (possibly '2061') enclosed within a circle of Tibetan script. The application of wax seals is a fairly common feature on Tibetan armour, and several examples can be found in LaRocca's 2006 book *Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet*.

Of note are items 1 and 32 which were collected by FM Bailey (1882–1967), an officer during the Younghusband expedition of 1903–4, LaRocca concluding that the Bailey items were likely collected during his employment as a trade agent in Gyantse, rather than during the expedition.

References

- ⁴⁴ Robert Beer, *Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols*, Serindia Publications, 2003, pp. 46-47.4.





35

RED AND GOLD HORSE NECK DEFENCE (CRINET)

TIBET

15TH - 17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 640x400MM

The importance Tibetans place on equestrian life is demonstrated by the elaborate and well-crafted equipment now preserved in museums and private collections.

This neck defence for a horse (crinet) is constructed from a single piece of stiff leather, and the illusion that it is constructed from four separate pieces is caused by the ornamental copper stitching, and rows of holes where hollow iron bosses would have sat, the bosses are now unfortunately missing, though this does not distract from the exquisite scenes depicted over the crinet's surface. The decoration is mindfully balanced: the fourth and second layers both depicting cloud formations in gold leaf on a reddish shellac ground, whilst the third and 'first' (central) sections depict tendrils, blossoming lotuses

and other flowerheads on a black ground, the centre depicting a victory banner at the left and a flying phoenix on the right.

In ancient Indian warfare, such banners frequently adorned the chariots of powerful warriors, and so its appearance here is certainly relevant. In Buddhism, the banner was adopted as an emblem of the Buddha's victorious enlightenment and the vanquishing of the armies of Mara.⁴⁵

The reverse of the crinet retains the majority of its vibrant red shellac. For the right side of a horse, this neck defence or crinet was intended to be secured to the animal as part of a pair. For comparison, a mounted pair can be seen in the Royal Armouries, Leeds (XXVIH.21 and XXVIH.22).

The ornamental chain stitching that adorns this crinet is of a type observed by Don LaRocca who comments that such a wire stitch is likely to have been reserved for the better pieces of Tibetan horse armour.⁴⁶

References

- ⁴⁵ Robert Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, Boston, 1999.
- ⁴⁶ Donald LaRocca, *Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2006, p. 105.





36

TRANSLUCENT DHAL

AHMEDABAD, INDIA
19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 540MM

An Indian shield, or 'dhal' from Ahmedabad, Gujarat, with stunning centrally painted decoration.

This piece is formed of Indian elk hide and has been subject to "a process where hide shields are boiled in oil till they become transparent." (the shield is not transparent, but rather translucent when held to the light). The centre depicts a medallion of floral patterns painted in pink, yellow and green which is further decorated with concentric circles of dots flecked in gold and bordered by a gilt sunburst. The shield's four gilt-copper bosses are chased to depict peonies and foliage, a small circle of green glass inset at the centre of each one. A textile base is also placed under each boss, so as not to wear against the shield's surface. The 'rays' of the central sunburst are repeated just in front of the shield's rim which depicts a continuous series of flowers enclosed by foliage at the sides and beaded lines above.

The reverse of the shield reveals another border containing a repeated floral pattern, the centre of the shield fixed with four iron loops for suspension as well as a red fabric cushion and still retaining some of the shield's original brown velvet straps.

A similar shield was presented to the Prince of Wales 1875-76 by the Nawab of Balasinor, Bombay Presidency, and is currently preserved in the Royal Collection (RCIN: 38128).





37

DAMASCUS STEEL SHIELD

PUNJAB, INDIA
19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 415MM

Composed of mechanical Damascus steel, this magnificent shield, or 'dhal', is excellently preserved, retaining nearly all of its original decoration.

Amidst whorls of watered steel (their specific visual effect known as the 'birds-eye' pattern for the larger circles that appear on the metal's surface), four star-shaped bosses are decorated in gold *koftgari*. Each is adorned with a quatrefoil arrangement of four-petalled flowerheads with another at the centre, the 'rays' of each boss further decorated with foliage and the gaps between them pierced at equidistant points along the circumference.

The border shines as brightly as the centre, for it is first carved into a jagged edge which has been decorated throughout with gilt scrolling vine tendrils and an inverted band of gold triangles which occupy the gap between each protrusion. Above this arrangement is another ring of stylised foliage dotted with carefully drawn flowerheads in bloom.

The reverse of the shield shows this object's age, but it retains its four iron loops for suspension and a red silk velvet cushion bordered with dark yellow thread.

This *koftgari* is comparable to work that came from Sialkot (now in northern Pakistan), such as can be seen in a cigar holder that was purchased at the 1867 Universal Exhibition held in Paris⁴⁸ and which now resides in the Victoria and Albert Museum. A further example of similar work being a katar exhibited by Runjeet Singh in *Arts des Guerriers d'Orient – Paris 2018* (Ref. 209). A shield preserved in the Royal Jaipur collection also exhibits similar decoration (see Robert Elgood, *Arms & Armour at the Jaipur Court: The Royal Collection*, Niyogi Books, 2015, p. 167, No. 118).

References

⁴⁸ <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O451846/cigar-stand>







38

KURDISH SHIELD (MERTAL)

TURKEY
MID - LATE 19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 240MM

This pointed buckler (or 'mertal') is exceptionally rare, originally worn by Kurdish infantrymen and taking its essential design and form from well-known Ottoman examples.

The core of the shield is composed of wicker which has been covered with woven thread in green, yellow and red. A dense array of radial iron bars secures the core which is further adorned with a great number of copper-alloy domed discs and pierced coins used as washers where the bars attach to the edge and centre of the shield. Four of these iron bars have also been recurved into open oval frames which are filled with dyed cloth. This same variety of red fabric covers the spiked central boss which is decorated with further iron bars, discs, plaques chased to depict eight-pointed stars on a dotted ground, and a fluted central finial. The reverse of the shield is covered with brown fabric and fixed with woven leather straps attached at two ends with iron loops for suspension.

Precise comparanda are scarce on account of this object's rarity, but its relation to other forms of Ottoman shields are clear.

A kalkan preserved in the John Woodman Higgins Collection at Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts (Inventory Number: 2014.86), for example, shows the same colour-pattern applied to its thread, and the iron bars which extend from its centre terminate in the same raindrop shape as ours.

Further examples of these shields are to be found in other media: a black and white photograph in *Illustrierte Völkerkunde, in zwei Bänden* (published 1922) shows a Kurdish infantryman equipped with his sabre ('kilig') and shield ('mertal'),⁴⁹ and a porcelain figure (circa 1907-1917) in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, Russia, shows another Kurdish man with a pistol tucked into his belt and – on his left wrist – a buckler of similar size and design to our example.

References

⁴⁹ Georg Buschan, *Illustrierte Völkerkunde, in zwei Bänden*, Strecker und Schröder, Stuttgart, 1922, p. 403.



Runjeet Singh Limited
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PO Box 6365
Coventry
CV3 9LU
United Kingdom

Published by Runjeet Singh
First Published August 2019

Photography by Philip Connor
Designed by Clapham Creative