

RUNJEET SINGH

ARMS, ARMOUR & WORKS OF ART



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All prices on request



I

TURQUOISE KHANJAR

MUGHAL DOMINIONS
OR DECCAN, INDIA
CIRCA 1800

OVERALL 360MM



This elegant dagger exhibits a pale green nephrite jade hilt of typical 'pistol-grip' form, which has been carved at the integral flaring quillons to depict a flower in bloom and at the pommel to depict further floral arrangements and foliate elements. Particularly interesting, however, are the inset beads of turquoise which decorate the hilt throughout – the making having cleverly used the turquoise to dot the centre of each carved flower and to form a pleasing row of rectangular slots along the medial brim of the pommel. These stones are attached to the hilt using *kundun*, a technique whereby "A gem is placed on lac, a natural resin secreted by the *Kerria lacca* (a mealy bug indigenous to India), and a jeweller layers leaves of 24-carat gold around the gem and over the lac, filling the area around the gem to hold it in place."¹

The 19th-century double-edged blade is forged from Indian *wootz* (watered) steel of elegant composition, with a high contrast pattern and brightly burnished edges. At the ricasso, on each face, the blade has been with a shallow lobed frame which has been finely decorated using gold *koftgari* to depict a balanced arrangement of scrolling foliage and flowers – this structure continues through a stylised lotushead into the central rib of the blade.

The blade is accompanied with its original wooden scabbard covered with purple-red fabric and fitted with a locket and chape of gilt silver over iron – the former shaped into the same pattern that appears on the blade's ricasso and including a small belt-loop for suspension.

The turquoise decoration on this dagger makes this piece an unusual example – similar works more often being adorned with rubies, emeralds or sections of rock crystal.

A similarly decorated hilt is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession Number 36.25.677a, b)² – its maker has also used turquoises inset through *kundun*. A dress sword within the National Trust Collections (NT 532361.1),³ taken at the relief of Lucknow in 1857, is also decorated profusely with turquoise.

References

- ¹ <https://collections.dma.org/essay/JraPbG4z>
- ² <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31847>
- ³ <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/532361.1>







2

JADE KHANJAR

MUGHAL DOMINIONS
OR DECCAN, INDIA
CIRCA 1800

OVERALL 380MM

Daggers such as this were status symbols for Mughal courtiers, and important figures within the court – princes, nobles or officials – would often be honoured with fine examples. The pale green jade handle of ours is of typical 'pistol-grip' form, the pommel carved with stylised irises amidst further flowerheads and leaved tendrils within a curving border of small sloped segments that line the pommel's brim. The lobed flaring quillons are decorated *en suite*, exhibiting a display of bifurcated branches of leaves which surround a central iris of similar design to that on the pommel, though now brandishing pollen-producing filaments and anthers, as if to suggest that the flower's life-giving functions have emerged 'since' the pommel.

The blade is attached at the ricasso with a gilt-silver plaque which has been cut with a symmetrical foliate outline. The long and slender blade exhibits a watered pattern, a central medial ridge running along the greater part of its length just before it merges with the adjacent tapering planes of the blade's section into the reinforced tip.

The blade is accompanied with a wooden scabbard which has been covered with a purple-red fabric and fitted with a locket and chape of gilt silver.

Two jade-hilted daggers in the al-Sabah collection show the same carved motif of unfurling irises in bloom on their hilts.⁴

References

- ⁴ Salam Kaoukji, *Precious Indian Weapons and other Princely Accoutrements: the al-Sabah Collection*, Thames & Hudson, 2017, pp. 162-3; 194-5, Cat Nos. 53 & 66 respectively.





3

SILVER-HILTED KHANJAR

DECCAN, INDIA
EARLY 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 400MM

This dagger owes its considerable weight to its solid silver hilt and fittings. The pristine hilt comprises a typical 'pistol-grip' and integral lobed quillons, and is further fitted with a push-button for releasing the blade from its scabbard.

The blade is forged from wootz steel, the dense patterning on its surface still well-preserved throughout. The forte has been chiselled with great skill to present a compelling arrangement: a central lotus in bloom is flanked by the tips of two further lotuses which are inverted to the first. These continue along the blade formed as raised ribs, gently tapering before they converge to form a medial ridge that leads into the blade's heavily reinforced, armour-piercing point.

Accompanying the blade is its original brown fabric-covered scabbard, the silver locket pierced with an openwork arrangement of raindrops and cut at the edges to present a lobed arch which culminates in another lotus-head, thereby mirroring the decoration of the blade. The reverse of the locket is attached with a small rectangular bracket for suspension, the chape decorated en suite and terminating in a fitted bulbous finial.

It is difficult to know whether the blade is 17th-century, or whether it is a 19th-century production based on earlier styles (though it is certainly a 17th-century design) – a dilemma which is in no small part indicative of the smith's competence. A twin-bladed chillanum (Accession Number 36.25.897) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York exhibits a similar design on its blades to our own.⁵

References

⁵ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31679>





4

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





5

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."⁶

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.⁷ Another dagger preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc. No. 36.25.897),⁸ although it has two blades, similarly exhibits the unusual serrated edges shown on our example.

References

⁶ Robert Elgood, *Arms & Armour at the Jaipur court: The Royal Collection*, Niyogi Books, 2015, p. 48

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 48; 50

⁸ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31679>

6

PUNJABI KATAR

PUNJAB, INDIA
18TH 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).⁹

References

⁹ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31864>









7

KANDYAN KNIFECEYLON (SRI LANKA)
18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 390MM

A Kandyan knife (or *piha-kaetta*) of outstanding quality, showing intricate silverwork and careful construction.

The horn grip scales of the hilt are carved throughout with a dense variety of patterns comprising *liya-pata* (the elongating scrolls which issue from the pommel and the edges of the scales) and further floral motifs. A silver plaque at the mid-point on each face is chased to depict a stylised flowerhead – the head of the rivet used to secure the scales to the tang of the blade charmingly disguised as the flower's 'centre'. The silver pommel-cap is chased with a fine array of scrolling foliage and fitted with a spirally fluted spherical tang finial, the wide silver edges of the hilt cut with a line of ridges which help to accommodate the protruding scrolls of the *liya-pata* carving.

The blade's bolster is chased with further *liya-pata* motifs enclosed within dotted borders and other foliate decoration in close detail. This bolster extends to encase the thick back-edge of the blade in silver and shows a *liya-vela* motif (a Singhalese decorative pattern which comprises a repeating arrangement of flowers and foliage), before the slender steel spine of the blade emerges and continues to form an acute and very gently recurved point.

The blade is complete with its silver-covered and fluted wooden scabbard, the slender sunken lines running across its surface before they taper into a chape of *liya-pata* style. The throat-piece has been designed separately and detaches from the rest of the scabbard, exhibiting a tight series of bead-bordered bands which are chased with various motifs: geometric designs and further instances of *liya-vela* as on the back-edge of the knife's bolster.

A similar example to our own is published in *Treasures from India (The Clive Collection at Powis Castle)*,¹⁰ exhibiting the same careful work applied to the throat-piece of the scabbard which, like ours, attaches separately.

Provenance

The dagger was sold by the respected Asian art dealer Gisèle Croës on the 17th August 1977, the original bill of sale accompanies the dagger.

References

¹⁰ Mildred Archer, Christopher Rowell & Robert Skelton, *Treasures from India (The Clive Collection at Powis Castle)*, Herbert Press / National Trust, 1987, p. 44, No. 25. See also: <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1180577.1>





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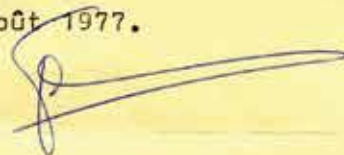
Certificat aux fins d'assurances.

Couteau à béthel d'origine Cingalaise
et du 18 ème siècle.

Manche en argent, travaillé de corne
très finement sculptée. Le travail de l'argent largement
incisé jusque sur la lame en grandes vagues ondulentes.

Origine: Ceylan
Epoque: 2ème moitié du 18ème siècle
Matériaux: corne et argent
Dimensions: long. 39cm

Fait en toute bonne foi à Bruxelles,
le 17 Août 1977.



8

GOLD MECCA JAMBIYA

MEDINA, ARABIA
LATE 19TH - EARLY
20TH CENTURY

OVERALL 345MM

This jambiya, likely made for a pilgrim journeying to Mecca, is generously covered with various forms of decoration. The 'I'-shaped hilt is typical for these weapons, stylised flowerheads formed of twisted silver wire with central spheres set within the flared ends of the hilt amidst silver roundels. The collar of the blade is adorned with beaded lines that enclose two wider bands of decorative patterns – the first comprising a tightly oscillating wave of silver; the second band filled with wire that has been tightly twisted as if to resemble knotted thread.

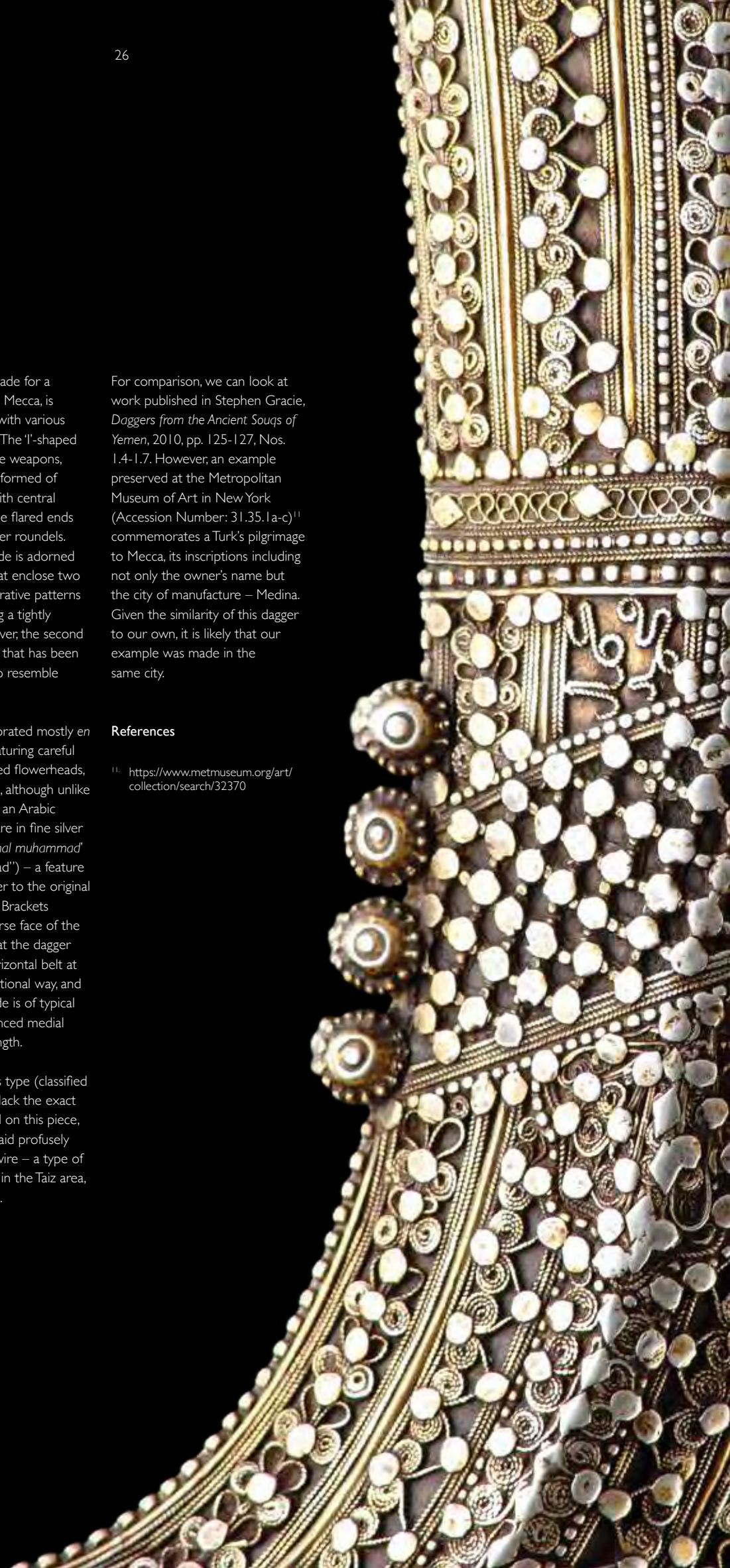
The scabbard is decorated mostly *en suite* with the hilt, featuring careful lines of filigree, stylised flowerheads, and further roundels, although unlike the hilt it also shows an Arabic inscription at its centre in fine silver wire which reads '*amal muhammad*' ("work of Muhammad") – a feature which must then refer to the original maker of the dagger. Brackets attached to the reverse face of the scabbard confirm that the dagger was worn with a horizontal belt at the waist in the traditional way, and the curved steel blade is of typical form, with a pronounced medial ridge along its full length.

Most jambiyas of this type (classified as 'Mecca jambiyas') lack the exact style of filigree found on this piece, with large roundels laid profusely upon twisted silver wire – a type of work typically found in the Taiz area, southwestern Yemen.

For comparison, we can look at work published in Stephen Gracie, *Daggers from the Ancient Souqs of Yemen*, 2010, pp. 125-127, Nos. 1.4-1.7. However, an example preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Accession Number: 31.35.1a-c)¹¹ commemorates a Turk's pilgrimage to Mecca, its inscriptions including not only the owner's name but the city of manufacture – Medina. Given the similarity of this dagger to our own, it is likely that our example was made in the same city.

References

- ¹¹ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/32370>









9

SILVER MECCA JAMBIYA

ARABIA
LATE 19TH - EARLY
20TH CENTURY

OVERALL 315MM



As in the previous piece of this catalogue, this dagger's form would suggest that it ought to be classified as a 'Mecca jambiya'.

The dagger's horn hilt is encased in silver fittings, two domed silver caps adorning each end of the two-pronged pommel.

Between these caps, at the centre of the pommel, is a stylised rosette with a stud at its centre – a form repeated at the other flared end of the hilt. The grip's centre is further attached with silver beaded lines and flowerheads which alternate with the same roundels that appear on the previous dagger in this catalogue, as well as on other examples of jambiya.

This style of decoration continues firstly over the throat of the scabbard with tightly packed rows of filigree work and foliate decoration in silver. A diagonal band bisects the frontal face of the scabbard approximately halfway along its length, engraved with a series of flowerheads and attached at each of its short edges with three flowerhead-eyelets for fitting the dagger to a belt. The main section of the scabbard (excluding the diagonal band) is further enhanced by borders at each edge of intricate geometric openwork. This, the scabbard's large striated pommel (or *thum*) and other features together indicate that this piece likely fits into the 'Mecca jambiya' type.

Two similar daggers – reflecting both the form and decorative style of our example – have formerly belonged to well-known European personalities, the first being that of Lawrence of Arabia, sold by Christie's in 2015,¹² and the second having belonged to Pierre Loti and subsequently published by Stéphane Pradines.¹³

References

¹² <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/silver-gilt-mounted-arab-jambiya-dagger-ornately-tooled-hilt-5915241-details.aspx>

¹³ Stéphane Pradines, *La Collection d'armes orientales de Pierre Loti, Les Indes savantes*, 2019, pp. 76-77.





10

OMANI JAMBIYA

OMAN
LATE 19TH - EARLY
20TH CENTURY

OVERALL 340MM

The hilt of the dagger is encased in sheet silver and features a typical two-pronged pommel, each of the two protrusions fitted with beaded dome caps and the pommel attached at its centre on one face with a stud framed by concentric beaded circles as well as a circular series of twice-lobed silver pieces perhaps intended to resemble flower petals (a pattern repeated over the grip of the hilt), this arrangement reappearing on the other face but furthermore set within a beaded raindrop frame.

Further lines of twisted silver wire wrap around the body of the scabbard, first used to create a panel of concentric squares, at the centre of which is a spirally fluted stud. The central section of the scabbard's surface, however, is covered with tightly woven lines of thread in gold, red, and orange.

Five silver rings positioned over the scabbard's threaded surface are then interconnected with woven silver wire which further links to larger rings for attachment to the scabbard's belt. Comprised of the same thread as that which covers the scabbard, the belt depicts a central band containing geometric designs typically found on other examples of Omani jambiya, bordered on each side by more densely woven rows of brown chevrons.

The scabbard's chape is decorated with further geometric silverwork comprising a central panel of silver studs set at the angles of a kite-shaped frame and concentric trapezoid panels with silver beaded edges. The hilt is fitted with a curved steel blade of typical form, with a pronounced medial ridge along its full length.

A similar example is published in Gracie's important work on the subject of Arabian daggers,¹⁴ and a striking image in Elgood's slightly broader book on the various weapon types and styles of Arabia features a striking and instructive image of Omani jambiyas.¹⁵

References

- ¹⁴ Stephen Gracie, *Daggers from the Ancient Souqs of Yemen*, 2010, pp. 164-165.
- ¹⁵ Robert Elgood, *Arms and Armour of Arabia in the 18th-19th and 20th Centuries*, Scolar Press, 1994, p. 81.



11

SILVER JAMBIYAMIDDLE EAST
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 330MM

This dagger is particularly interesting for its unusual amalgamation of features which seem to suggest mixed origins of manufacture and decorative style.

Beginning with the hilt, we can see that it shows the characteristic 'l-shaped' form of other Arab jambiya, and much of the decoration is clearly related to examples from the Middle East: beaded lines and vertical rows of silver circles feature prominently on the hilt's decoration, particularly at the grip, and are likely intended to imitate the roundels or studs that appear on other Arab jambiya. And yet other silverwork on the hilt is strongly suggestive of Indo-Persian influence: the sloping triangular panels on the pommel and just before the collar of the hilt, for example, are each filled with an arrangement of flowers amidst centrally whirling vine tendrils and leaves – the flowers' centres engraved with the type of cross-hatched lines that are reminiscent of this preparation in koftgari work.

The double-edged Persian blade is of high quality, exhibiting an undulating watered pattern on its surface and cut with a pronounced medial ridge, though the scabbard's mounts continue to make a single geographic attribution difficult. Silver filigree and borders formed of beaded lines suggest Middle Eastern origins, as well as the eyelets diagonally attached to the scabbard's sides, which indicate that the dagger was suspended with a horizontal belt, a method most frequently employed for Arab jambiya types.

But as on the hilt, there are those aspects of the decoration which are clearly Indo-Persian in style, particularly with regards to the panel of flowers that sits between the eyelets, as well as that which extends towards the scabbard's *thum* (another typical feature of Arab jambiya) which contains a sequence of lotuses that become smaller as the panel tapers. The engraved lotushead that sits atop the end of each panel is furthermore undeniably reminiscent of Indo-Persian decoration.

A dagger that shows a similar combination of influences to our own – particularly with reference to the panels of floral decoration on the hilt and scabbard – is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession Number 36.25.1052a, b)¹⁶ and also published in Ravinder Reddy, *Arms & Armour of India, Nepal & Sri Lanka: Types, Decoration and Symbolism*, London, 2018, p. 309.

References

¹⁶ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31448>









12

LARGE KHANJARTURKEY
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 520MM

The mounts of this large Ottoman dagger are decorated extensively with various patterns of floral decoration.

The hilt of this example is of typical form comprising a long slender grip and both pommel and handguard formed with two curved points (one side of the pommel showing minor damage). The hilt is encased entirely in gilt-silver which has been intricately chased and engraved throughout with a dense array of flowers and foliage on a finely punched ground. The scabbard is decorated mostly *en suite* with the hilt, though its central pattern of curving leaved branches and flowerheads is furthermore bordered by ornamental rows containing a pattern of smaller trefoil leaves. The scabbard is fitted at its end with a small chape decorated at its finial with a simple foliate motif.

The double-edged blade is forged of Turkish sham steel, exhibiting on its surface an effective pattern of gently waved lines and decorated along its forte in gold koftgari with curved and tapering panels of cascading leafy tendrils. The blade is further cut with a subtle medial ridge, curving and tapering gently along the final third of its length.

13

KHATAMKARI DAGGER

TURKEY
17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 280MM



This Ottoman dagger of great rarity is well preserved, retaining the majority of its intricate *khatamkari* decoration and a short blade of elegant form.

The rosewood hilt is of shallowly-waisted form and delicately inlaid with gold to depict a motif of curving tendrils that culminate in stylised blossoms made from *khatamkari* roundels, as well as micromosaics of stained ivory, resin, and ebony tesserae in bluish-white, dark green, peach and black designed to present the form of pointed stars. As the catalogue note from a Sotheby's entry well explains, *khatamkari* "is a technique that originated in Persia, most probably Shiraz and Isfahan, and travelled throughout the Middle East and India (...) Very fine ivory and bone 'baguettes' are sliced and placed and set into fine cavities, usually in a wooden object."¹⁷ The flat end-surface of the pommel is decorated with *khatamkari* florets in a symmetrical design that shows a central blossom enclosed within a square and further patterns including a circular arrangement of gilt rhombuses and curved lines of vine tendrils in green. The hilt's collar depicts similar motifs, with a later raised gilt panel at the centre.

The scabbard is decorated *en suite*, two branched arrangements of floral *khatamkari* patterns occupying an ogee-shaped panel at each end of the scabbard, the edges of each panel raised and demarcated through careful carving and enhanced with curving gold lines. The chape includes an integral spherical finial, and on the scabbard's reverse face, a small loop for suspension is fixed to the wooden surface above a gilt circular panel. The double-edged steel blade is characteristic of these rare daggers, being of short length and exhibiting a very slight curve which increases towards the blade's tip.

Such examples as this belong to a small group of Turkish daggers which rarely become available for sale. One comparable dagger was sold at Sotheby's in 2007 (Lot 152),¹⁸ exhibiting essentially the same form as our own. Even in museum collections, this weapon-type is rarely found, though a small group are preserved in the Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel in Germany (Inventory Nos. KP B II.617 & KP B XVII.22),¹⁹ subsequently published in a rare German catalogue on Ottoman weaponry.²⁰ Given the decorative quality of our own example, it is likely – as was the case for the *khatamkari* scribe's box cited above and in the footnote below – to have been made as a unique commission for a person of significant importance and taste.

References

¹⁷ <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/arts-islamic-world-116220/lot.161.html>. The object there described is comparable to our own for its specific use of *khatamkari* decoration.

¹⁸ <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2007/arts-of-the-islamic-world-107220/lot.152.html>

¹⁹ <https://datenbank.museum-kassel.de/200351/0/0/0/s17/0/100/objekt.html>; <https://datenbank.museum-kassel.de/191191/0/0/0/s19/0/100/objekt.html>.

²⁰ Löwe und Halbmond, Ein Prunkzelt und Waffen aus dem Osmanischen Reich in Schloss Friedrichstein, Petersberg, 2012, Catalogue Numbers 39 & 42, pp. 131-133.







14

PICHAQ KNIFEBUKHARA, UZBEKISTAN
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 260MM

This graceful knife originates from the city of Bukhara in Uzbekistan.

The hilt is secured with well-fitted mother-of-pearl grip scales, the heads of gilt-brass rivets dotted across the iridescent surface. Its grip straps are decorated with silver niello work, the blackened ground and inlaid highlights in this case used to depict a motif of scrolling leaves and flowerheads. The bolster is decorated *en suite* with the grip straps, preceded by a short silver-bordered band inlaid with turquoises.

The single-edged blade is cut with two slender fullers just below the spine, the surface of the steel exhibiting a pattern-folded construction. The blade is complete with its scabbard which is adorned with a mosaic of small scale-shaped turquoises framed by fine silver borders, the back-edge of the scabbard being flat to accommodate the thick section of the blade and decorated with a mirrored series of further rhomboid turquoises. The reverse of the scabbard is fitted with metal brackets for retaining a suspension cord, some of which is extant.

A similar example – although the central part of the scabbard is covered in fabric – is published in Robert Hales' volume on Islamic and Oriental Arms and Armour:²¹

References

²¹ Robert Hales, *Islamic and Oriental Arms and Armour: A Lifetime's Passion*, Robert Hales C.I. Ltd, 2013, No. 206, p. 90.







15

KARD DAGGERPERSIA
1842 AD

OVERALL 390MM

Grip-scales of walrus ivory form the handle of this Persian kard, secured in place through the tang with small brass rivets. The smooth steel backstrap of the hilt is carefully pierced to depict a delightfully constructed calligraphic verse from the Qur'an:

"Help from Allah and a speedy victory. So give the Glad Tidings to the Believers."

(Surah 61 (al-Saff), part of vs. 13.)²²

A stylised four-petalled flower is cut into the steel surface at either end of the backstrap's inscription. The bolster caps are decorated with a large, pierced panel of complex calligraphy (undeciphered) set within a jali: a decorative supporting framework for the Arabic letters. The heavy blade of wootz Damascus steel is chiselled at its forte on each face with a panel of intertwining foliage and arabesques in high-relief within a scrolling arched frame. The single-edged blade then tapers gradually to a pronounced armour-piercing tip.

The kard is complete with its wooden scabbard, which is covered with tooled leather, decorated with bands of foliate decoration, and marked with the year "1257" (1842 in the Gregorian calendar). It is further fitted with a silver chape and locket (the latter further attached with a loop for suspension), both of which are chased with a decorative motif of blossoming lotuses within stylised vine-bordered frames.

References

²² Qur'anic translation taken from Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation & Commentary* (3rd ed.), Lahore, 1938.



16

ENAMELLED SHAMSHIR

LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH
(NORTH-EASTERN INDIA)
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1040MM

Though the blade of this shamshir is itself of exceptional quality, the hilt – with its polychrome enamel still excellently preserved – is certainly the most eye-catching feature of this striking work. The silver hilt is closely engraved, and multi-coloured enamels have been generously applied throughout, the stylised langets decorated in red and green and the quillons carefully formed to depict the faces of snarling Makara with sharp silvered teeth and eyes, ears, nostrils and heads set with foil-backed crystals in a broad variety of colours. Makara are mythological sea-creatures which appear frequently in Hindu and Buddhist temple iconography as vehicles for the river goddess Ganga, Narmada, and the sea god Varuna. They are considered to be the protectors of thresholds and gateways, responsible for guarding throne rooms and temple entrances. The original owner of this sword would surely have been glad to have had them – quite literally – “by his side”.

The centre of the cross-guard depicts a stylised poppy flower with petals in blue surrounded by emerald-green foliage and exotic birds on one face. On the reverse, a bright-yellow leopard subdues an overturned gazelle – the scene enclosed from below by smiling fish in a yellow-green river, and above by a crane in repose. The main themes of flora and fauna continue over their respective sides of the grip: above the poppy, lotuses and further flowers intermingle with foliage in green and birds in blue; the reverse features a multi-tiered arrangement of fish, birds, and a resting gazelle (perhaps the same animal that will meet an unfortunate fate later along the hilt).

A magnificent pommel, mirroring both the form and colour scheme of the quillons, depicts a formidable Makara that uncurls its tongue as its snout recurves back towards the face, revealing the waves of silver that line the inside of its mouth.

The blade is forged of fine wootz steel, prized for both its aesthetic appeal and for the additional strength that its carefully folded construction provided to the blade. Three engraved fullers extend along the greater part of the blade's length close to the spine, stepped in an unusual arrangement at four equidistant points – a sure sign of the maker's skill. A broad and shallower fuller runs under the others, making the blade lighter and thus easier to wield. An etched gilt cartouche sits at the base of the fullers, comprising a trio of concentric circles with an inscription in Arabic at their centre which reads *'tawakalltu 'ala allah'* (“I put my trust in God.”). The blade is complete with a replaced custom-made black leather scabbard that includes two silver fittings with stylised loops for suspension and a chape.

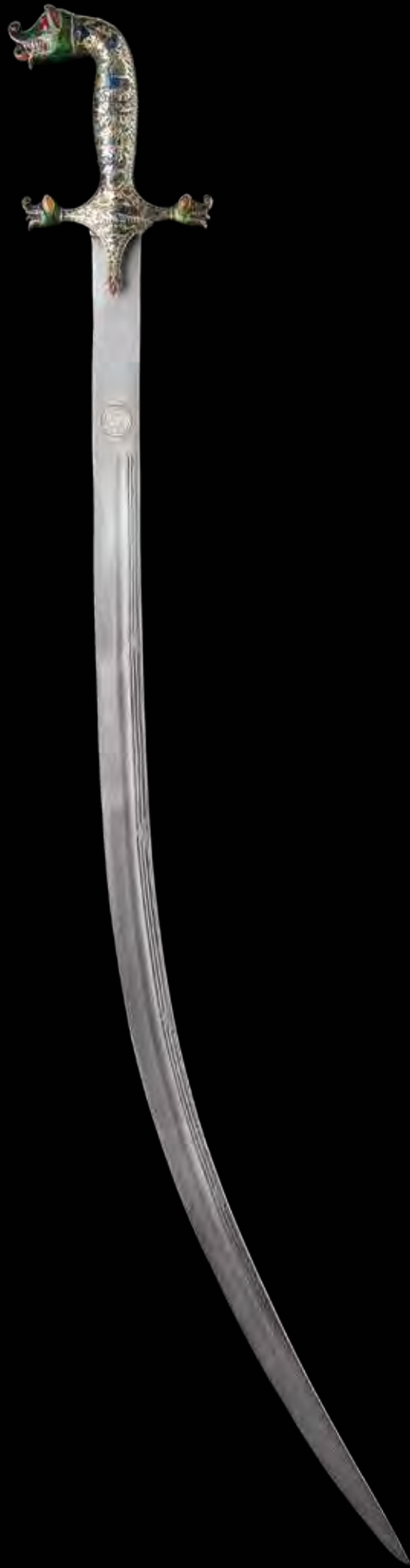
Enamelling was introduced to the Indian subcontinent in the late sixteenth century, as Mughal court craftsmen were taught by European enamellers based in Portuguese Goa. In this process, “coloured glass is fused to metal at very high temperatures, to create a decorative and hardwearing outer layer.”²³ Lucknow was a centre for the production of pieces such as this sword, the most remarkable feature of the work being the “brilliant blue and green *champlevé* and *basse-taille enamelling*” that adorned the silver.²⁴

The particular prevalence of these blues and greens on our example further cements its origin in Lucknow.

A near-identical sword is preserved in the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait (LNS I 124 M ab)²⁵ and we may also compare our example with a huqqa base (Acc. No. 2015.500.4.15)²⁶ at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on which is depicted a small yellow tiger similar to that visible on the hilt of our sword. Another huqqa base with similar decoration is now in the David Collection in Copenhagen (Inv. No. 20/2018)²⁷ and is described by Zebrowski as “The greatest piece [among a group of huqqa bases]”.²⁸

References

23. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/splendours-of-the-subcontinent-a-princes-tour-of-india-1875-6/the-0/enamelling>
24. Stephen Markel with Tushara Bindu Gude, *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courty Lucknow* (published by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art & DelMonico Books, Los Angeles, 2010), p. 205.
25. S. Kaoukji, *Precious Indian Weapons and other Princely Accoutrements*, Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2017, Cat. No. 114, p. 326.
26. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/39434>
27. <https://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/metal/art/20-2018>
28. Mark Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, Laurence King Publishers, 1997, No. 71, p. 86.











17

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 is a stamp representing the Coorg king, Dooda Veera Raja (1780-1809), under who's reign it was made.

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.²⁹ 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! My thanks to Mr. Anantharaj Gowda and Mr. Kochi Anindith Gowda for their help with the blade marking.

References

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleanor_Shelley-Rolls



PRESENTED TO E.A. CLISSOLD BY S. HOLDER, ESQ.^{ESQ.}

18

SILVER TEGHA

DECCAN, INDIA
FIRST HALF OF THE
17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 790MM

A fine and well-preserved example of the Indian sword-type known as a 'tegha', the massive blade thought by some to suggest that these swords were typically used for executions (though there is little evidence to support such a claim).

The crossguard of the heavy steel hilt is inlaid in silver *koftgari* with a spray of blossoming poppy flowers amidst foliage, their details picked out with fine delineation and the arrangement bordered by a continuous row of small circles. The stylised floral langets and trefoil foliate quillons reflect the decorative style which spreads throughout the rest of the hilt: the grip is decorated *en suite* with the crossguard and the gently recurved hand guard is decorated over its surface with further silver *koftgari* leaves, terminating in a *makara*-head finial. The tilted disc-shaped pommel is covered with further poppy flowers, the central domed boss on its underside carved around its edges to present the form of a three-dimensional flowerhead. The centre is further fitted with a pierced circular bracket for suspension.

The large but graceful curved blade is forged from wootz steel, exhibiting excellent preservation and a tight watered pattern.

The first section of its length shows a mark over its surface and is single-edged before the back-edge of the blade is cut inwards, the central section then double-edged and slender before the blade returns to its original single-edged section and tapers to a large tip. Finally, along a small section of the back-edge is a dedicatory inscription in silver that reads: "Presented to E.A. Clissold by S. Holder Esquire." The blade was likely given to Clissold as part of a military ceremonial gesture.

An enamelled katar in the Al-Sabah collection in Kuwait shows similar floral work to this sword, Kaoukji noting that such patterns can themselves be compared to those depicted in the page-borders of albums assembled during the reigns of Emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan.³⁰

References

- ³⁰ Salam Kaoukji, *Precious Indian Weapons and other Princely Accoutrements: the al-Sabah Collection*, Thames & Hudson, 2017, Nos. 8 & 9, pp. 48-51.







19

ARUNGZEB SWORD BLADE

MUGHAL INDIA
17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 950MM

The tang of this rare and unusual blade widens gently before broadening at sharp angles to continue into the blade itself which is formed of dark wootz steel of excellent quality, the characteristic metallic carbides imbuing this sword with a refined pattern of whorling bands. The width of the blade then remains mostly consistent until its final third, where it becomes double-edged and widens before tapering to a short tip. Two nasta'liq inscriptions, engraved into the steel surface and then inlaid with gold, help us to understand the exciting history of this blade, the inscription on the spine reading as follows:

shah e'alamgir

"the world-seizing king"

And on each face:

"there is no hero but Ali, no sword like Dhu'l-fiqar" (together with a Persian couplet)

Two specific comparanda here merit further discussion in order to better understand the likely context of our own example, the first being a talwar preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York named *bi-mehr* ('merciless') – Accession Number 36.25.1591a, b),³¹ which similarly includes Aurangzeb's title or epithet *alamgir* (as above: "world-seizing").³² The second (Museum Number IS.218&A-1964)³⁴ was given by the Right Hon. The Earl Kitchener of Khartoum to the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, coming directly from the armoury of Aurangzeb himself – *alamgir* appears once again among the blade's various inscriptions.

Our example is unlikely to have belonged to the Mughal emperor himself. As in the above-cited examples, his name would normally appear together with the word *Padshah* (a Persian word literally meaning "master king" [Old Persian *pad* meaning "master" and *shah* meaning "king"]). As is the case for the blade at the V&A, however, our example is almost certainly of courtly provenance and made with Aurangzeb's approval – perhaps as a gift to someone of political or personal importance to him, or as part of a ceremonial gesture.

In 2015, Christie's auction house sold a sword belonging to Aurangzeb, famously named 'Blood-thirsty'.³⁴ And another blade belonging to him, known as 'Diamond', was also sold recently at Christie's on 19th June 2019.³⁵

References

- ³¹ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/24328>
- ³² David Alexander, *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015, p. 184.
- ³³ <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O158364/sword-of-aurangzeb-sword-and-sheath-unknown/>
- ³⁴ Christie's, Lot 120 ("BLOOD-THIRSTY", A PERSONAL SWORD OF THE EMPEROR AURANGZEB"), *Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds* (Sake 10490), London, 23rd April 2015.
- ³⁵ Christies, Lot 382 ("DIAMOND", A PERSONAL SWORD OF THE EMPEROR AURANGZEB WITH GOLD-DAMASCENED TULWAR HILT"), *Maharajas & Mughal Magnificence* (Sale 17464), New York, 19th June 2019.



Handwritten text in Arabic script, likely a religious or historical inscription, located on a weathered, aged surface. The text is arranged in two lines and appears to be a form of calligraphy or a specific dialect.



20

SIKH SPEARINDIA
18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 2240MM

This well-preserved and historical weapon is known as a *karpa barsha* (translated as “Cobra Spear”). The base of the imposing steel spearhead is bifurcated into two flaring points, the main section of the blade formed with a pronounced medial ridge which runs along the greater part of the blade’s length as it tapers to a slender reinforced point. The blade is inserted into an unusual hemisphere of wood which is cut over its surface with various hollows. It is very rare for such weapons to be accompanied by their original wooden scabbards – our example’s is extant and fitted with brass encasings at its base and point which are cut and chased to depict outflowing acanthus leaves and intersecting lotus flowers atop a banded geometric pattern. The spear’s tubular brass socket is adorned with three bands, each containing a row of spherical protrusions.

The shaft is formed of bamboo which has been painted at its top and base with bands of leaves, chevrons and other symbols. The vast majority of its length, however, is painted with a floral motif comprising alternating vertical rows of white and red flowerheads within a scrolling framework of gold stylised vine tendrils on a dark-green ground.

A wooden spear with painted hunting scenes is preserved in the Royal Armouries, Leeds,³⁶ and a 2014 paper published by Thom Richardson and Natasha Bennett provides compelling attribution for the spear to Sardar Jowala Singh as part of a group of arms whose owners included Maharaja Sher Singh and Maharajah Ranjit Singh.³⁷

A *karpa barsha* of this type is also kept in the gurdwara (Sikh temple) in Sri Kesgarh Sahib, one of five seats of the Sikh religion in India, in the city of Anandpur Sahib, Punjab. It is thought to have belonged to Bhai Uday Singh, who used it to mount the head of Raja Kesri Chand whom he dispatched at the Battle of Lohgarh in 1710 A.D.

References

³⁶ <https://collections.royalarmouries.org/object/rac-object-37298.html>

³⁷ Natasha Bennett & Thom Richardson, “The East India Company gift to the Tower of London in 1853” in Thom Richardson (ed.), *East Meets West: Diplomatic Gifts of Arms and Armour between Europe and Asia*, 2014, p. 128.





21

RIDER ON ELEPHANT-MASKED HORSE

MEWAR, INDIA
LATE 18TH - EARLY
19TH CENTURY

DIMENSIONS 254 x 298MM



A gouache painting on paper highlighted with gold that presents a charming and colourful study depicting a white stallion with a lavish black, red and gold saddle-cloth and silver tassels as well as an elaborate elephant mask, the black cloth painted with feathery brushstrokes imitating the effect of the striped shine of ponyskin. The elegant moustachioed rider is clothed in a pleated white muslin *jama*, together with a yellow *pagri* and *patka* with fringed ends highlighted in gold. He holds a curious whip-goad terminating in a red tassel, curled in such a way as to mirror the curve of the elephant-mask trunk, creating a pleasant symmetry in the composition. The flanks of the horse are painted orange with darkened knees and the tail painted red. Both the horse and rider are silhouetted in profile against a bright crimson-red background that further adds to the dynamic colour contrasts of the composition.

This delightful image seems to follow the iconography of portraits of the favourite horses from the Royal Mewar stables of Maharana Ari Singh II (r. 1761-1773). As in this case, the horses were typically depicted with one leg raised, against a flat background, and the rider – usually a groom or noble looking to the right with the left hand raised – was anonymous. The focus was on the beauty of the stallions, whose names were typically recorded on the recto or verso of the painting.

This example is likely a later piece from this period, probably produced during the reign of Ari Singh's successor Maharana Bhim Singh (r. 1778-1828), and it presents a rare feature – the remarkable elephant face-mask, which signals the importance of the animal. An armour complete with chamfron and 'trunk-guard' are displayed in the Udaipur City Palace Museum, Rajasthan, purportedly having belonged to the horse 'Chetak' of Maharana Pratap Singh, the 13th King of Mewar (1540-1597). A painted depiction of elephant armour on a horse, of similar date, can be found in the British Museum (Museum No. 1941,0619,0.9).³⁸ In this case the equestrian portrait shows Maharana Jawan Singh of Udaipur (r. 1821-1838) richly dressed as a warrior. Interestingly, the groom in the present painting resembles Maharana Ari Singh, such as in a painting (Lot 70) sold by Christie's last year.³⁹ The whip held by the figure in our present example is a rare object which may be compared with a combination gun whip sold by Runjeet Singh in *Arms and Armour The Goddess: Arms and Armour of the Rajputs London 2018*, Cat No. 24, p. 67.

Provenance

From a distinguished New York collection, acquired 1968.

References

³⁸ https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=184157&partId=1&people=178982&people=178982-1-7&page=1

³⁹ <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Paintings/maharana-ari-singh-hunting-boar-ascribed-6142519-details.aspx?lid=1&from=relatedlot&intobjectid=6142519>



22

DEVI PAINTINGPAHARI, MANDI (INDIA)
CIRCA 1820 - 30

DIMENSIONS 298 x 210MM

This exquisite gouache painting, highlighted in gold, depicts the Hindu goddess (Devi) Parvati seated on an ornate dais and surrounded by vessels and offerings. The powerful enthroned mother goddess, wife of Shiva, is a deity linked to fertility, love, beauty and devotion, and can be presented with various aspects. Parvati, as shown in the image, is her gentle and benevolent character, recognised in the image thanks to the red sari which is here delicately adorned with gold motifs. In one of her four hands she holds an ankus (the hooked spear-tool used as an elephant-goad and a typical attribute of Parvati's son Ganesha), and in another she grasps her pasha.

The Devi, with one of her arms extended in varamudra, is lavishly attired, bejewelled, and surrounded by offerings – candleholders, vessels of food and drink, and incense-burners. Her lotus-petal golden dais, complete with a jewelled and enamelled parasol with green tassels and patterned silk cushions. The setting appears to be a garden covered in flowers, depicted as if they were a fabric pattern covering the ground, with an orange stylised flower border and a banister overlooking the blue sky. Adding further layers of decorative ornament, the scene is framed by a pair of red damask curtains, a white ogee-styled arch – as if the viewer were viewing the scene through a window – with a delicate green and pink floral pattern, and a black inner floral border.

A few further iconographic elements – the crescent moon on her forehead, the abundance of jewels, her crown and the lotus seat – point towards a specific manifestation of Parvati, that of Tripura-Sundari, unparalleled in beauty in Hindu mythology. In the visual tradition, aside from being enthroned and gracefully bejewelled, she often carries the attributes of the elephant goad and the noose (pasha) in two of her four arms, as in this instance.

At the top of the image, on the outer ornamental border, stippled in reddish-pink and orange, is the Parvati yantra,⁴⁰ a six-pointed star with a central dot (bindu) encased within an eight-petalled lotus and outer square with t-shaped gates in the four cardinal directions.

For comparable depictions of Devis, see Oliver Forge & Brendan Lynch, *Indian and Persian Painting 1590-1840*, London 2014, no. 27; and S. Stronge, (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, London, 1999, p. 113, pl. 124. The latter, belonging to the collection of the National Museum of India, is dated to circa 1835, and shows the famous leader of the Sikh empire, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), with his head bowed and his hands folded worshipping the Devi. The goddess shows remarkable iconographical similarities with the present miniature: four-armed, similarly enthroned on a rich lotus dais, carrying the noose, lavishly dressed, crowned and bejewelled, it is not surprising that the beautiful goddess was an object of devotion to the great figures of the period, such as the Maharaja.

ProvenanceRoyal Collection, Mandi
(stamp verso)**References**

⁴⁰ For further reading on yantras – the mystical and geometrical cosmograms used to worship deities as an aid in meditation – see Madhu Khanna, *Yantra – the Tantric Symbol of Cosmic Unity*, Inner Traditions International, 2003 and Bühnemann, Gudrun, *Mañḍalās and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*, Boston, 2003, p. 48.





**PAIR OF LARGE FANS
(PANKHA)**

MADRAS, INDIA
(MODERN-DAY CHENNAI)
19TH - 20TH CENTURY

TOP FAN 650 x 480MM
BOTTOM FAN 690 x 510MM

An historical and lavishly decorated pair of fans (or 'pankha' in Hindi) once owned by Arthur Lawley, 6th Baron Wenlock, GCSI, GCIE, KCMG (12th November 1860 – 14th June 1932).

The first fan is painted on one face to depict a dazzling array of blossoming poppies, peonies and other flowerheads in red and purple amidst scrolling green vines, all outlined with gold paint. At the base of the fan is its red-painted handle (this colour continuing around the brim), above which is painted a stylised golden dhu'l faqar sword with large and extravagant mouldings at the hilt and a broad blade bifurcated at the final third of its length, depicted on a green ground and enclosed by a lobed arch with bands of geometric decoration in gold and green. The sword reappears on the reverse of the fan, though on a crimson background, and the main surface is occupied not only with flowerheads and curling leaves in gold but also with two majestic peacocks, their symmetry highlighted by the vertical series of flowerheads that line the fan's centre.

The first face of the second fan corresponds with appropriate flare, as each of the indents created by the fan's blades are painted to depict an individual peacock feather – the shape of the fan satisfyingly

mirroring the shape of the bird's tail itself. The reverse reveals a symmetrical arrangement of brightly coloured flowerheads and foliage on a variety of grounds: pink, sky-blue, gold-flecked red and green, and white at the centre panel.

The gold-painted inscription at the red base gives these fans their context: "The Hon. Sir Arthur Lawley / K.C.M.G., G.C.I.E. / Governor". Lawley was made Governor of Madras on 28th December 1905 and kept the position until 3rd November 1911, his eldest brother Beilby Lawley, 3rd Baron Wenlock, having previously held the post from 1891 to 1896. Increasing nationalist agitation spread to Madras in around 1907,⁴¹ and saw Lawley introduce the Morley-Minto reforms to the region towards the end of 1908, providing the government of Madras with its first Indian representation (the Maharaja of Bobbili being the first Indian to be given membership of the Executive).

The fans were probably given to Lawley as part of a ceremonial gesture of gratitude, but pinpointing their precise place of manufacture is difficult. Shapes, sizes, colour schemes and styles vary greatly across India – surprising evidence for such a claim coming from the Indian Ministry of Communications, who on 30th December 2017

had sufficiently varied examples of this artistic tradition to issue a commemorative set of postage stamps all depicting different forms of the painted handfan from different parts of the country.⁴² We may, however, look to an example preserved at the British Museum (Museum Number As1960,10.91),⁴³ the scallop-shaped form of which mostly resembles that of the present example, and which also originates from Madras.

Provenance

Formerly in the Collection of Eustace Gibbs, 3rd Baron Wrexall, KCVO, CMG.

References

- ⁴¹ Charles Herman Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton University Press, 2015, p.262.
- ⁴² <http://postagestamps.gov.in/NewsPage.aspx?uid=198>
- ⁴³ https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=556594&partId=1&searchText=fan&page=9







The Hon. Sir Arthur Lawley
K.C.M.G., G.C.I.E.
7 March







24

OTTOMAN POWDER-FLASK

TURKEY
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 230MM

A well-preserved Ottoman powderflask inlaid throughout with a multitude of decorative bone pieces of various shapes and sizes.

The centre of each face is inlaid with bone and delicately carved to depict a series of concentric circles which form the core of an eight-pronged star, each of the eight pointed rays bordered with rows of rhomboid segments. Zygulski notes that the eight-pointed bone star represents the Seal of Solomon in Ottoman iconography: "A variation of the sign [the six-pointed star] was a star with eight arms, a derivation with higher magic power."⁴⁴ It would seem the original owner of this flask was eager to bring such power with him to the battlefield.

Further stylised stars then fill the space left between the rays, each set within a small frame formed of curving orange painted lines and further borders of rhomboid or diamond-shaped bone pieces, the latter of which appear again to fill the borders of a circle containing the central arrangement.

This decorative scheme of pleasing symmetry and harmony is repeated as the flask expands, and again over and across the flared top-section of the flask, the cap of which is fitted with a brass spring-operated mechanism for dispensing the gunpowder when needed.

A yellowish-green cord still fits through the iron loops for suspension at the flask's sides, the flat reverse of the flask attached with a large brass hook for hanging from a belt, and the whole surface remaining mostly undecorated besides a number "191" painted in black.

The Aga Khan Museum in Canada has in its collection a bone-inlaid panel (Accession Number: AKM703)⁴⁵ of similar form to our own, though it is dated to the second half of the 15th century.

References

⁴⁴ Zdzisław Żygulski Jr., *Ottoman Art in the Service of the Empire*, New York University Press, New York & London, p. 44.

⁴⁵ <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection/artifact/panel-akm703>





25

RIFLE BUTT

AFGHANISTAN
LATE 19TH - EARLY
20TH CENTURY

OVERALL 115MM

This rare and unusual object would have been set at the end of a rifle and pressed firmly into the marksman's firing shoulder to keep the gun steady and to allow safe absorption of the shot's recoil.

The ebony butt is of mostly cylindrical section, inlaid firstly with a band of ivory quatrefoils (the outlines painted in black) which are enclosed above and below by thin brass bands. The main section then is inlaid with alternating vertical stripes of the dark wood and ivory, each separated again by brass lines and secured with a rivet at each end.

The label attached to the rifle's butt gives us some clue as to its origins, reading in Persian first "Written in gold, the work of Ustad Nur Muhammad" together with a few other words which remain legible: "silver (...) ebony (...) flint" as

well as *siyaq/raqam* numerals which presumably indicate the amount of each material used by the gunmaker. It may be the case, then, that this piece was a workshop template or sample, shown to both prospective customers and craftsmen.

A near-identical piece to the present example, likely made by the same craftsman, can be seen on a rifle sold by Christie's in 2012 (Lot 342).⁴⁶ This rifle was gifted by Habibullah Khan Amir of Afghanistan to a Nur Muhammad, a local leader in the Nejrabi district, in a bid to secure his support for Habibullah Khan as Amir.

References

⁴⁶ <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/a-rifle-gifted-by-habibullah-khan-amir-5551137-details.aspx>



مشیت سیا | و بر سفت به درج

طیله نوشته عمر اسما نوری

بهر
نقره قدری
نور در قدره
شبهه اکون
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26

KARA (BRACELET)SIND, PAKISTAN
MID-19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 870MM

This luxurious gold bracelet (or 'kara') is adorned with sixteen raised collets, each set with a flat-cut foiled diamond set in the *kundan* style within a bed of granulated gold. Between each collet is a further leaf-shaped flat-cut diamond – the alternating composition extending densely over a bed of deep-green enamel. The bracelet's interior surface is decorated with enamel of pink, white and blue hues to depict the alternating flowerheads of lotuses and poppies on a ground of green enamel foliage.

Carvalho discusses a pair of 19th-century anklets in the collection of Nasser D. Khalili, noting that the vividness of the different shades of pink would suggest that they were the work of enamellers from Sind rather than Benares.⁴⁷ This is also true of two Sind guns within the same collection,⁴⁸ which show similar enamel work on their barrel bands and metal fittings as can be seen on our bangle. The palette shown in the present example is also similar to some Persian enamel work. Comparing the present object, for example, with No. 16 in this catalogue (the enamel *kindjal*), we can see how this style of decoration – with its prolific use of blues, pinks and whites – arrives in the Sind region.

Provenance

Purchased from Spink and Son Ltd
London early 1980s.

References

⁴⁷ Pedro Moura Carvalho, *Gems and Jewels of Mughal India (The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art)*, No. 55, p. 130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Nos. 56 & 57, pp. 132-135.





27

PANDAN

BIDAR, INDIA
LATE 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 130MM

This small box was used for containing betel or 'Paan'. 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, and during the Sultanate and Mughal periods in India, the word 'Pandani' was coined to name the betel container, constructed from the Hindi word 'Pan' and the Persian suffix '-dan'.

This example has been cut into the shape of a mango, including the leafy top which is raised from the rest of the cover. The main surface of the cover then is decorated in typical form with dense leaves and curling poppy flowers inlaid in silver, pleasingly framed by geometric borders set at either side of a further band of miniature leaves (this pattern is enlarged and repeated over the side of the box).

The decorative technique used here would categorise this piece as an example of bidriware (named after the common city of such objects' manufacture – Bidar),⁴⁹ where the

typical metalworking technique saw craftsmen blacken a cast alloy of zinc, copper, tin and lead which would then be carefully inlaid with silver or brass.

References

⁴⁹ For an overview of this type of work see Susan Stronge, *Bidri Ware: Inlaid Metalwork from India*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1985.





28

KULAH KHUD

PERSIA
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 2750MM
DIAMETER 195MM

This Persian helmet or 'kulah khud' has been carefully constructed and closely decorated with a variety of Quranic verses.

Atop the wootz steel dome of the helmet – the surface of which exhibits an array of dark watered whorls – sits a gently sloping conical spike which is secured in place with small rivets and decorated at its base with a sequence of golden trefoils, above which tapering panels divided by thin gold lines depict stylised cypress trees. Four arched calligraphic cartouches then rest just above the brim of the helmet's bowl, each containing a short chapter from the Qur'an, *suras* 109, 112, 113, and 114, which are known collectively as "The Four Quls" (this name taken from the beginning word of each invocation in these verses, "Qul", which translates to "Say!"). The slightly raised lower edge of the helmet then is further overlaid in gold with "The Throne Verse" (Qur'an 2, verse 255), which sits between rows of the same gilt trefoils that appear on the helmet's conical spike.

Three plume holders are also attached to the front of the helmet, each with a plaque at their base which has been first cleverly cut to resemble a type of stylised flowerhead in its shape, and then overlaid in gold on its surface with leaved flowers – brass rivets securing the plume-holders to the helmet bowl but also functioning decoratively as the centres of the flowerheads on each plaque. An adjustable nasal bar of rectangular section is attached below, formed at either end to present a floral outline which mirrors that of the plaques above and decorated *en suite* in gold.

Finally, the low edge of the helmet has been pierced with a precise row of small holes for suspending a 'four-tailed' camail of riveted iron links.

The decoration of the cone, composed of stylised cypress leaves, is repeated on a helmet believed to date to the Safavid period (circa 1501-1722 A.D.) and preserved in the Military Museum in Tehran, Museum Inv. No. 14.⁵⁰ The present example also shows some similarities to No. 45 in Runjeet Singh's *Arms and Armour of the East 2015*, p. 104, particularly with regards to the form of the conical top-spike attached to the helmet bowl.

References

⁵⁰ See Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani, *Arms and Armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period*, published by Legat Verlag (Germany), 2006, p. 717, Cat No. 408.









29

KURDISH SHIELD (MERTAL)

TURKEY
MID - LATE 19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 240MM

This pointed buckler (or 'mortal') 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 ('mortal'),⁵¹ 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

⁵¹ Georg Buschan, *Illustrierte Völkerkunde, in zwei Bänden*, Strecker und Schröder, Stuttgart, 1922, p. 403.



30

STEEL DHALPUNJAB, INDIA
19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 420MM

This 19th century Indian shield originates from Punjab, the centre of the Sikh community in India. The middle of its steel surface is adorned in gold koftgari with a four-sectioned arrangement of stylised lotuses that intersect at the centre. Gold leaved vines with flowerheads spread out over the rest of the circular central panel, as well as four domed bosses whose bases have been pierced and lobed in a pattern which replicates the sunburst pattern often found on Indian shields. The centre of each boss is further decorated with a silver lotus flower in bloom amidst gilt foliage, this middle arrangement bordered by a scrolling pattern that resembles carefully interwoven thread.

The overlapping head and tail-end of a gold-flecked snake form the circular frame of this central scene, the serpent's body flanked on either side by an openwork arrangement *en suite* with that which surrounds the four shield bosses and which lines the edge of the shield.

The outer band then depicts a captivating procession of antelopes, leopards, and other animals in various phases of hunt or flight, each figure having been cast and engraved individually before being riveted to the surface of the shield. Further leaved vines and flowerheads in gold weave between the animals and their endless chase. The reverse of the shield is covered with a 19th-century material known as 'mushru', a fabric of woven silk and cotton. It has been dyed and sewn to convey a pattern of larger red and grey stripes separated by thin bands of yellow and decorated throughout with an assortment of floral and geometric patterns. All four bosses are backed with iron rings, and the original cord handles also survive, although they are slightly frayed.

We can place this shield's origins in Punjab partly on account of a trio of similar examples – exhibiting animal hunts and similarly cut geometric borders – which are preserved at

Sandringham House as part of the Royal Collections (RCIN 37467; 37597; 37635),⁵² and which were presented to King Edward VII (then Prince of Wales) by Kharak Singh, Raja of Kapurthala, during his tour of India in 1875-76.⁵³

The koftgari on this shield is also comparable to work that came from Sialkot (now in northern Pakistan), such as can be seen in a katar exhibited by Runjeet Singh in *Arts des Guerriers d'Orient – Paris 2018*, Cat No. 1, p. 6.

References

⁵² <https://www.rct.uk/collection/37467/shield?language=ja;>

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/30/collection/37597/shield;>

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/32/collection/37635/shield>

⁵³ For the original catalogue notes and image of this example in situ, see: W. Grigg & Sons, *Arms and Armour at Sandringham: The Indian Collection presented by the Princes, Chiefs and Nobles of India in 1875-1876*, W. Grigg & Sons (London publishers), 1910.







31

18TH CENTURY SHIKARGAH SHIELD

MEWAR, INDIA
18TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 535MM

A remarkable shield of great rarity and splendid decoration, this piece owes its origins to Mewar in Rajasthan, northern India, and is a fine example of work from the region.

The circular panel at the centre of this shield depicts in gold the sun god Surya, the insignia of the Mewar royal court and a deity from whom many Rajput elders claim descent. Moustachioed and with his characteristic crown, he looks out at the viewer from the centre of a stylised sunburst and further concentric circles – the final border filled with six-petalled flowerheads and leaves detailed in red and green, providing a satisfying visual contrast against the predominant gold paint of the panel. Vying with the sun god for pride of place are four exquisite green bosses surmounted at the centre of gilt-brass sunburst bases – their emerald-tinted glow remaining dark and dormant until they are exposed to direct light and viewed at the proper angle.

Perhaps most striking, however, are the four dynamic portrayals of animals – (clockwise from the top of the shield) a rhinoceros, camel, buffalo and stag – all being subdued by lions and tigers in gold. The scenes are picked out in remarkably fine detail: the stripes of the tigers, the fierce manes of the lions, and even the rocky outcrops which function as the stages for these scenes of struggle, have all been painstakingly depicted with careful painted lines. A further decorative band *en suite* with that at the edge of the central panel separates these scenes from a final border which shows a dense circular array of further *shikargah* scenes: a crocodile opens its jaws at the assault of a buffalo, pairs of rams and stags lock horns, a giraffe gallops in flight from a tiger, a lion mauls a fallen buffalo, and an elephant tramples over the recoiling body of a tiger seemingly caught off-guard.

The reverse face exhibits the hide shield's natural texture covered with a reddish-brown lacquer and attached with a padded cushion of red velvet and four iron loops.

Depictions of the sun god Surya seem to have changed with time, perhaps on account of different painters' styles or specific schools, the intense gaze on our own example confirming the shield's 18th-century origins, though the rounded face is more usually a feature associated with the early 19th century.⁵⁴

A shield preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is also fitted with four green glass bosses (Accession Number 29.158.598),⁵⁵ but the more relative comparandum here is a shield (Accession Number 62.2879)⁵⁶ preserved in the National Museum of Delhi, whose similarity to our own example is so great as to suggest that it would have likely been made in the same workshop and/or by the same painter. The shield in Delhi furthermore bears the name of Maharana Sangram Singh II, as well as the names of three lords known in Rajasthan as 'thikanedars' (namely Salumbara, Kanodha and Badanora). Given the close association of this example to our own, it is not unreasonable to think that the present shield may have belonged to someone of suitably matching importance.

References

- ⁵⁴ See Runjeet Singh, *The Goddess: Arms and Armour of the Rajputs* – London 2018, No. 27, p. 77, as well as the reference there cited: G.N. Pant & K.K. Sharma, *Indian Armours in the National Museum Collection*, New Delhi National Museum, 2001, pp. 85–88, Nos. 76 & 77.
- ⁵⁵ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/34132>
- ⁵⁶ <http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/prodCollections.asp?pid=55&id=9&lk=dp9>







32

19TH CENTURY SHIKARGAH SHIELD

MEWAR, INDIA
19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 560MM

This shield originates from the same place in India as the previous example in this catalogue and exhibits many of the same features, though with some important differences in style and in the scenes depicted.

At the centre of the shield is a circular panel of similar arrangement to the previous shield – the golden face of Surya, the crowned sun god, sits at the middle, surrounded by a stylised sunburst and an outer band of red flowerheads alternating with leaves in green. Though the essential size and shape of Surya's face is unchanged from the last example, one can observe that here his features (as well as the rest of the central circular panel) are painted with somewhat thicker, bolder lines, suggesting that the shield is likely of 19th-century manufacture.⁵⁷ Four silver bosses with flourishing central flowerheads and concentric circular borders are placed around the Surya-panel.

The four main scenes of animals meeting cruel leonine fates – (clockwise from the top of the shield) a buffalo, jackal, pangolin and antelope – are placed at approximately equidistant points around the shield's circumference, and as in the previous example are picked out in excellent painted detail. Certain stylistic differences in comparison to the glass-bossed shield, however, are noticeable upon closer inspection: the lions here have more rounded bodies compared to their leaner counterparts in the previous example, and their faces are generally larger both in size and in their features, all gazing outwards at the viewer. More generally, we might also say that this shield presents a somewhat less morbid atmosphere. The pangolin almost appears to be stuck on the lion rather than mauled by it, and the antelope and jackal could even be said to show slight smiles – the struggle of the former animal further made confusing for the fact that its hooves have been replaced with paws, so that its torso seems all the more entangled with that of its pursuer.

As in the previous shield, a thin decorative band at the brim shows further *shikargah* scenes of animals in combat and flight: tigers hunt down oxen and other prey, elephants both clash and retreat, and in one small part of the scene a man appears to chase away a tiger. The red-painted reverse face is fitted with a moss-green velvet padded cushion and iron rings which are secured by the frontal bosses and further attached with pink fabric handstraps for holding the shield securely. Also painted on the back in a lighter shade of red is "A-" (the second character appears to be rubbed).

References

⁵⁷ See the previous example in this catalogue as well as Runjeet Singh, *The Goddess: Arms and Armour of the Rajputs – London 2018*, No. 27, p. 77, and the reference there cited: G.N. Pant & K.K. Sharma, *Indian Armours in the National Museum Collection*, New Delhi National Museum, 2001, pp. 85-88, Nos. 76 & 77.



33

PAINTED DHALGUJARAT, INDIA
19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER 430MM

A vibrantly painted 19th century Indian shield from Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The shield of convex form is made from treated elk hide and painted over the greater part of its frontal surface with an array of green leaved vine tendrils that curl into stylised flowerheads on a black ground.

The central panel comprises a series of symmetrical floral patterns in bright-red, crimson, black, white and gold, surrounded by a ringed border filled with continuous zig-zags and an outer sunburst whose stylised rays are each dotted at the centre with white paint. Four brass bosses are placed around

this central panel on textile bases so as not to damage the painted surface of the shield, and the decorative patterns that appear just before the rolled edge of the shield invert those at the centre: first a series of sunburst rays, and then a recurrence of the white-grounded floral motif.

The reverse is painted overall in bright-red, with geometric borders and scattered circular decoration in gold. Iron rings, a red silk-covered pad and navy-blue straps for holding the shield are secured at the centre, below which appear the maker's details in gold paint:

*Khooshal Dhunjee & Sons
Painter and Shield Makers
Dhalgarwada Street
City Ahmedabad
Bombay Presidency
India*

Our present example can be compared with one presented to the Prince of Wales 1875-76 by the Nawab of Balasinor, Bombay Presidency (The Royal Collection, RCIN: 38128).⁵⁸

References

⁵⁸ <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/38128/shield>





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