

RUNJEET SINGH  
DISCOVERIES





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## INTRODUCTION

It has been over two years since my last physically published catalogue, so I write this with excitement and optimism for the future. It is very difficult to write this introduction without mentioning Covid-19, the last two years have not been without challenges for all of us, but I am very pleased to be able to present this striking collection of objects from all over Asia. In particular some *discoveries* that I hope will excite collectors, researchers, and art lovers as much as they did me when I first discovered them. I also welcomed a new member of staff to the gallery, Ms Maël Baussand (PhD), who joins me as my gallery manager, and brings with her experience from the contemporary art world. Maël's excitement and enthusiasm for Asian art is manifested in her assistance in creating this catalogue.

I would now like to draw your attention to some of the discoveries. The first is number 7 and could be considered the holy grail for students of Indian arms and armour: the missing *bagh nakh* (leopard claw) to its matching hand which has been long known about, and currently in the Feldman family museum, Kyiv - I hope it and its custodians remain safe. The Asian department of the V&A museum, particularly Susan Strong, were very helpful in my research.

Number 32, an Indian rocket sword, is of a type that has never before been found on the open market, and one of a very small group known (all of which are in museums).

It ignited much talk within the circles of academics and curators that helped me research it, and it is already in the collection of a British institution who wish to remain anonymous until they have the pleasure of launching the news of the acquisition themselves. Simon Metcalfe (Royal Collection Trust) and Nidhin Olikara (Shimoga, India) were instrumental in researching this item and two newly discovered rockets in the Royal Collection Trust.

Perhaps the item that gave me the biggest smile is number 41: an Indian *dhal* (shield). It is of a rare type that shows a painted Royal procession around the circumference. In this example, the first that I am aware of, it shows female warriors, instead of male, leading the procession. A deserving victory for the growing number of female collectors and specialists in the arms and armour field.

There are several other rare and unusual items included within these pages, but I will leave the reader to make their own discoveries. All are important pieces of a broader 'jigsaw' puzzle, and with time we begin to see the bigger picture. I cannot take all the credit for this, as I am privileged to have the support of family, friends, colleagues, and clients who all help me contribute to this fascinating area of collecting that gives us a glimpse into the pride, artistry, and connoisseurship of our ancestors.

-

Runjeet Singh  
June 2022





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June 2022

**All prices on request**



# रा.कि.पो

I

## DIMPLED KATAR

KISHANGARH, RAJASTHAN, INDIA  
CIRCA 18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 450MM  
BLADE 245MM

This *katar* (push dagger unique to the Indian continent) originates from Rajasthan and shows distinguishing features that make it a piece of exceptional quality and craftsmanship from the Kishangarh armoury.

The highly polished steel hilt with double-grip is ornamented throughout. Its thick sidebars and handgrips are decorated with a texturized, hammered pattern of shallow dimples (typical of the Kishangarh armoury), which still have traces of gold. The symmetrical V-shaped knuckle-bar is cleverly cut to mirror the form of the blade, the composition culminating at its centre in a sloping triangular arch and the short fuller split by a raised medial ridge with a stylized flower in bloom. Its simple but careful lines are carved in deep relief directly out of the short blade's surface. The high-quality steel blade shows small traces of patination and is formed with a central fuller and swollen tip. The distinctive etched armoury mark, visible on the forte, is typical of the Kishangarh armoury<sup>1</sup>. The Devanagari letters translate as 'ra ki po' and it is not currently known what the marking means. The scabbard comprises a wooden core and bi-coloured (gold and blood-red) velvet sheath, sewn with a delicate string of saffron-coloured thread.

### Provenance

Art Market USA  
Kishangarh armoury, Rajasthan

### References

<sup>1</sup> See Jens Nordlunde, *A Passion for Indian Arms: A Private Collection*, 2016, p.139-140.





2

## SHIKARGAH (HUNTING) KATAR

RAJASTHAN, INDIA  
CIRCA 1850

OVERALL 440MM

The present dagger or *katar* is a rare variant of the type thought to have been made in the town of Bundi in Rajasthan.

The hilt is engraved throughout with blossoming lotus flowers and leaved vine tendrils on a punched ground, the gap between the centrally swollen grip-bars then filled with the aforementioned fretwork which conveys a symmetrical array of four-petalled flowerheads set between stylised lotuses in miniature (it is this unique style of fretwork which suggests the dagger originates from Bundi).

A watered steel blade is inserted into the foliate v-shaped knuckle-bar and has been chiselled over the greater part of its sunken surface on one face with an elephant's head and the goddess Durga sat astride a tiger with Shiva shown running in front with her head turned back. Chiselled over the other face, the ends are similar; though in place of the divine scene a striped tiger is depicted hunting an antelope. The main section of the heavy blade tapers to a heavily reinforced, armour-piercing point.

These religious and *shikargah* (hunting) scenes set the dagger apart from most others. An essential comparandum, however, is to be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where a *katar* (Accession Number 35.24.912) confirmed to originate from Bundi shows precisely the same decorative arrangement in its fretwork as the present piece.<sup>2</sup>

### Provenance

European art market

### References

- <sup>2</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31504>







3

## JADE DAGGER

MUGHAL DOMINIONS, INDIA  
18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 360MM  
BLADE 230MM

Formed with a translucent jade hilt of 'pistol-grip' form, this dagger (or *khanjar*) represents a persuasive example of a weapon-type commonly sought after by collectors.

A slightly unfurled lotus – the texture of its petals and stigma picked out with close carving – sits serenely at the centre of the lobed quillon block. This motif is repeated at the pommel, though here the fuller structure of the flower is conveyed, as its long, ridged leaves splay out from the centre and over the medial brim of the hilt.

A fine 'wootz' steel blade of slender section completes the dagger, exhibiting a rich pattern over its surface and recurving gradually over the course of its length before the blade then tapers to a point.

We may compare the present example with another Mughal dagger exhibited by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *Treasures from Asian Armouries - TEFAF 2020* (Cat. No. 4), particularly on account of its similar floral carving.<sup>3</sup>

### Provenance

European art market

### References

<sup>3</sup> Runjeet Singh, TEFAF: Treasures from Asian Armouries, 2020, pp.16-17, No.4.

URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/355/armourpiercing\\_jade\\_dagger](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/355/armourpiercing_jade_dagger)











4

HANÇAR (DAGGER)

OTTOMAN TURKEY  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 408MM  
BLADE 295MM

This opulent *khanjar* (from Ottoman Turkish راجنخ 'hancer', راجنخ 'hançar') represents a fine example of this weapon type, very well preserved. Closer inspection of the decoration, in particular, reveals precise and thoughtful craftsmanship.

The viewer's eye is drawn immediately to the translucent, blue stone inset just beneath the scabbard's locket, which could be a Ceylon sapphire (the 'cabochon' form would typically exclude topaz or aquamarine, while the absence of iridescence rules out opal). The scabbard is made of wood with lush silver covering that shows traces of gold. The mounts are richly decorated with sparkling roses of green, blue and pink gemstones closely intertwined in dense foliage - a mesmerising display of rubies, emeralds, spinels and beryls on the locket complementing the chiselled floral vines arranged lengthwise in diamond patterns and blooming up to the chape fitted with a bud-shaped point.

The hilt of the dagger is carved from a single block of pale nephrite jade with an ethereal, luminescent glow. Eye-shaped garnets and emeralds are inset over the grip in a symmetrical arrangement evoking tiny blossoms, with a vibrant, fully open matching floral design at the top.

The double-edged watered steel blade is slightly curved in an elegant line and of a superior quality. They are resistant to shattering, and can be honed to a sharp, resilient edge<sup>4</sup>. The robust, engraved fuller, reinforced by double grooves, rises boldly from a central flower in gold on both sides of the blade, which in turn blossoms from an applied steel forte of symmetrical drooping leaves, a finely worked element which is usually seen only on the finest daggers of this type.

A further example of this type of ceremonial weapon can be seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art from the Stone bequest (36.25.994<sup>5</sup>).

Provenance  
  
Private European collection

References

<sup>4</sup> Leo S. Figiel, *On Damascus Steel*, Atlantis Arts Press, 1991, pp. 10–11.

<sup>5</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31584>

See also Alexander, David, Stuart W. Pyhrr, and Will Kwiatkowski, *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015, pp. 203–205, no. 79, ill.





5

## STEEL CHILLANUM

DECCAN, INDIA  
17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 375MM  
BLADE 256MM

This is an elegant and graceful example of a Deccani double-edged dagger called a *chillanum*. Sometimes these daggers are referred to as *khapwah*, a name taken from the *A'in-i-Akbari*, a 16th-century document recording Mughal administration under Emperor Akbar (1542-1605). It comprises an iron hilt of sculptural quality and a watered 'wootz' steel blade.

The scabbard, with fittings of silver, is covered with verdigris coloured leather and adorned with an ornamented locket. The hilt is of waisted form with a bulbous, lotus top-finial exhibiting carefully cut petals – a floral motif also repeated at the centre of the grip's moulding. From here the hilt curves into a winged pommel with sweeping arms and a curved knuckle-guard, which terminates in a drooping bud. The oval hand guard features lotus-bud quillons, the outline cleverly cut into a skilful trellis pattern of scrolling flowers and leaved vines.

A sloped triangular section between the grip and hand guard has been pierced to convey a trefoil arrangement, perhaps intended to further enhance the foliate decoration. The recurved blade commences with a forte that has been cut into the steel to present the form of a lotus in bloom, as well as stylised flower heads with engraved lines and a range of petal-shapes. The top of the flower continues into a central ridge flanked by two fullers at either side, tapering to converge with the central rib into a single line that leads the blade to its reinforced tip.

Similar examples are published in Runjeet Singh Ltd catalogues *Arms & Armour from the East* (2016)<sup>6</sup>, and *Arts of the Oriental Warrior* (2019)<sup>7</sup>.

### Provenance

European art market

### References

<sup>6</sup> URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/62/gold\\_chillanum](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/62/gold_chillanum)

<sup>7</sup> URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/284/gold\\_chillanum](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/284/gold_chillanum)

URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/285/steel\\_chillanum](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/285/steel_chillanum)









6

## KHAPWAH

DECAN OR MUGHAL DOMINIONS  
& NEPAL

16TH CENTURY (DAGGER)  
19TH CENTURY (SCABBARD)

OVERALL: 340MM  
BLADE: 230MM

An all-steel dagger referred to as a *khapwah* in the *A'in-i-Akbari*, a 16th-century document recording Mughal administration under Emperor Akbar (1542-1605). This type of dagger is most commonly referred to by western students of Indian arms and armour as a *chillanum* and is likely to have been made in the Deccan, or a Mughal workshop. They are commonly seen in Mughal miniature paintings suspended from the waistbands of courtly men.

The hilt is formed with a substantial diamond-shaped cross-section which splits into an elegant, winged pommel with slightly upturned tips. A bulbous top-finial sits between the arms of the pommel. The lower section of the hilt then gracefully bifurcates just before the curved blade, which exhibits a central ridge and heavy swollen tip.

The dagger's scabbard comes from the Himalayan regions – probably Tibet or Nepal. The silverwork has likely been done by a Nepali craftsman, with two fine panels depicting a snow leopard in silver repoussé over either side. The frame of the scabbard is chased with typical Buddhist iconography, such as the flaming jewels that appear near the throat.

The knife and hilt both are heavily patinated and show patches of gold, or a gold-coloured metal. It is highly likely that the hilt and scabbard were completely gilded, but the blade may have only had patches of braise.

Interestingly Lord Egerton of Tatton who wrote the pioneering work, *A description of Indian and Oriental Armour* (1880), depicts a similar dagger and attributes its origins to Nepal<sup>8</sup>. That is now widely thought not to be the case, but with the discovery of this dagger, there now exists further evidence that such daggers were at least found in Nepal, even if they were not made there.

### Provenance

European art market

### References

<sup>8</sup> Lord Egerton of Tatton, 1880, plate IX, no.339.

7

## ARTICULATED BAGH NAKH

SATTARA, INDIA  
18TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 185MM  
WIDTH 85MM

This fascinating object is known as a *bagh nakh* – literally “leopard claw”. Where the vast majority of extant examples are comprised only of a single crossbar<sup>9</sup>, ours represents one of just two known to have survived with this striking construction. It is exceptionally rare.

With respect to its functionality, too, this piece is exceptional. The shallow wrist-plate is attached with a looped bracket to secure the wearer’s hand firmly in place and thus provide the needed support to resist against impact. The main surface is comprised of seven hinged rectangular plates to ensure a close alignment with the contours of the wearer’s palm. A short, upturned spike is fitted to the underside of the weapon, so that damage is inflicted upon the wearer’s opponent whether they strike in an upward or downward motion.

Fitted at the end are four fingerplates which narrow before thickening into sharp curved claws, those at either end formed with a loop for the owner’s fingers and the entire group secured below with a thick rectangular crossbar which distributes the force of any strikes and so reduces the likelihood of fractures. The thumb is attached with a short, separate hinge at the side of the palm and fitted with a thicker securing loop than those at the main section.

Such weapons were usually worn concealed under a glove so as to bestow the owner with the element of surprise in an attack. The *bagh nakh* was famously used by Marathan leader Shivaji Bhonsale I (1630-1680) to kill the Mughal general Afzal Khan, who had come to meet with him under the pretence of a parley during a siege of the Maratha fort. Angered that the Mughals had desecrated a family temple, and suspicious that Khan may try to kill or arrest him, Shivaji wore armour under his clothes and armed himself with a *bagh nakh* and *bichawa* which he used to kill Khan<sup>10</sup>.

The present example, made for the right hand, may possibly be the match for a left-handed claw preserved at the Feldman Family Museum (Museum No. 3288)<sup>11</sup> and published by Hales.<sup>12</sup> The only other potential match is the final remaining example of a *bagh nakh* of this construction published in the pioneering work by Lord Egerton.<sup>13</sup> The very claw used by Shivaji in the encounter described above was reputed to exist within the collections of the V&A (see Accession Number IS.33-1971), though the likelihood of this provenance is uncertain.<sup>14</sup> It *could* be the example presented here, however records held by the V&A and the fact that Lord Egerton’s was only a line drawing, is insufficient evidence to say that they are one and the same. The museum wrote off the Egerton example from their collections in year 1950<sup>15</sup>.

My thanks to Natalia Yakushev for hand modelling the *bagh nakh*.

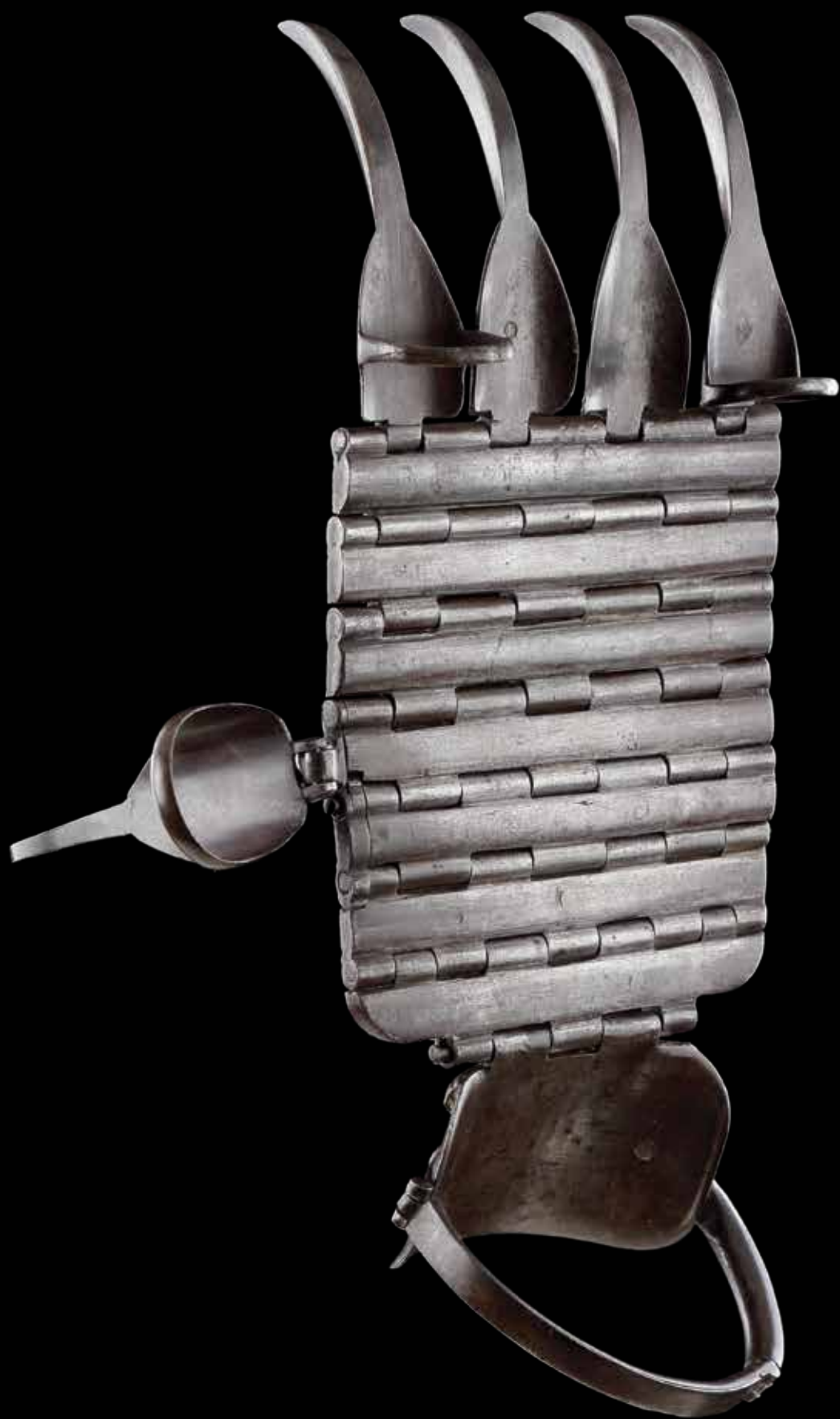
### Provenance

French art market  
French private collection  
Swiss private collection  
UK art market

### References

- <sup>9</sup> URL: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O452463/tiger-claws-unknown/>
- <sup>10</sup> Haig, Wolseley; Burn, Richard (1960) [first published 1937], *The Cambridge History of India, Volume IV: The Mughal Period*, Cambridge University Press
- <sup>11</sup> URL: <https://feldmanmuseum.org/collection/exhibit/sharnimyy-bagnakh-dlya-levoy-ruki>
- <sup>12</sup> See Robert Hales, *Islamic and Oriental Arms and Armour: A Lifetime’s Passion*. London, 2013, p.75, No. 161.
- <sup>13</sup> See W.A. Egerton, *Description of Indian and Oriental Armour: Illustrated from the Collection Formerly in the India Office Now Exhibited at South Kensington and the Author’s Private Collection*, London, 1896, p.115, pl.10, No. 477.
- <sup>14</sup> URL: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O134202/tiger-claws-unknown/>
- <sup>15</sup> Asian Department archives; personal communication with Susan Stronge - senior curator V&A museum.



















8

## BICHAWA BAGH NAKH

INDIA  
19TH CENTURY

BLADE 130MM

This bichawa *bagh nakh* combines a recurved *bichawa* blade – which translates as “scorpion sting” – and a *bagh-nakh*, which translates as “leopard claw” (not “tiger claw”, as is commonly stated).

The *bagh nakh* was famously used by Marathan leader Shivaji Bhonsale I (1630-1680) to kill the Mughal general Afzal Khan, who had come to parley with him during a siege of the Maratha fort. Angered that the Mughals had desecrated a family temple, and suspicious that Khan may try to kill or arrest him, Shivaji wore armour under his clothes and armed himself with a *bagh nakh* and *bichawa*, which he used to kill Khan<sup>16</sup>.

This example is made to fit the right hand, its outer ring large enough for a thumb, whilst the ring at the base of the blade is intended for the little finger. The claws then protrude from the gaps between the wearer’s knuckles, the recurved blade extending out the bottom of the hand.

Of polished steel, the piece demonstrates careful manufacture, particularly in the way that the claws are set into the crossbar and precisely braised into place. The base of the blade, too, has been carefully shaped. An example very similar to our own can be found in the Science Museum, London<sup>17</sup>.

### Provenance

London art market

### References

- <sup>16</sup> Haig, Wolseley; Burn, Richard (1960) [first published 1937], *The Cambridge History of India, Volume IV: The Mughal Period*, Cambridge University Press
- <sup>17</sup> URL: <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co124048/tiger-claw-bagh-nakh-bagh-nakh>

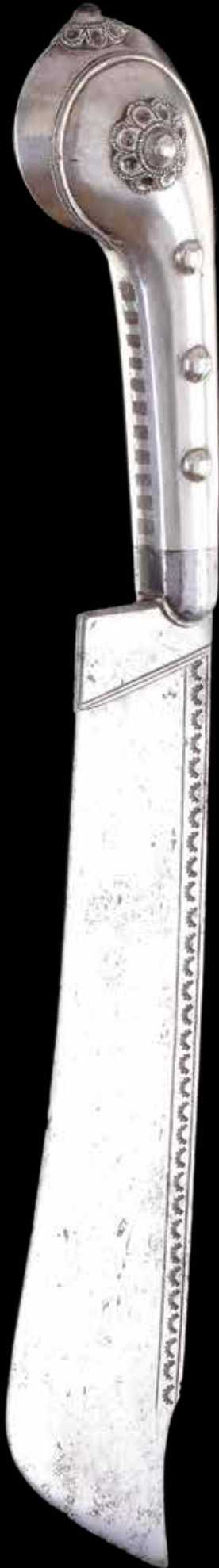


9

## PINCHANGATTI

COORG, SOUTH-WEST INDIA  
MID-19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 300MM  
BLADE 184MM



Normally referred to as *pinchangatti*, such elegant silver-mounted daggers as this were typically used by the Coorg people of Karnataka in south-west India. And since they often serve as a strong symbol of familial honour within Coorg culture, it is rare that these objects enter the Western art market.

Four small studs dot the silver surface of the hilt: three are placed at equidistant points over the grip; whilst the fourth is set at the centre of the pommel and formed with a beaded frame so as to depict a stylised flowerhead. Further flowers of different forms as well as fine geometric patterning appear over the backstrap and bolster of the hilt.

The blade is broad, single-edged, and clipped towards the point, whilst the scabbard comprises a wooden core covered with silver-sheet mounts including a locket and chape in exceptional condition, the latter formed with a neatly incised bud-shaped finial. An elegant steel suspension chain of two sections is attached to the reverse face of the scabbard and terminates in a beaded plaque with a range of miniature hygienic tools (among them tweezers, knives, and an ear spoon).

A similar dagger was published by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *Iconic: New York 2018* (Cat. No. 6),<sup>18</sup> whilst another (Accession Number 2800(15)), preserved in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, exhibits a hilt near-identical to that of the present piece.<sup>19</sup>

### Provenance

European art market

### References

<sup>18</sup> Runjeet Singh Ltd, *Iconic: New York 2018*, pp.22-23, Cat. No. 6 [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/178/coorg\\_pinchanagatti](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/178/coorg_pinchanagatti)

<sup>19</sup> URL: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O450045/dagger-and-sheath-unknown/>





10

## QAJAR KHANJAR

PERSIA (MODERN-DAY IRAN)  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 413MM  
BLADE 270MM



This *khanjar* dagger from Persia shows a similar form to other examples made in Persia during the Qajar period, but includes an extremely rare and unusual grip.

The hilt is carved from walrus ivory to convey a variety of human heads. The pommel shows two bearded and moustachioed men who are each crowned with a row of red rubies which line the edges of the pommel. The grip then depicts two female faces mirrored either side of a central bulbous moulding which is studded with small turquoise roundels. Both faces are carved with the facial features typically seen on female figures in Qajar works of art, such as pronounced eyebrows. The face nearest to the pommel even has a beauty mark on her cheek in the form of a small stone. The base of the hilt is further mounted with reddish coloured stones (later replacements) and turquoise.

The blade is forged from high-quality dark wootz steel with a strong central rib and two sunken panels which are decorated in gold with Islamic calligraphy. The accompanying wooden scabbard is covered with an Iranian brocade and finished with a walrus-ivory tip.

The depiction of two-dimensional figures on ivory hilts from Persia is widespread, but this type of three-dimensional carving and the prolific use of stones are both extremely rare. Most collections of arms and armour have examples, but two pieces preserved in the Wallace Collection (Inv. Nos. OA1713 and OA1714)<sup>20</sup> and another at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession Number 36.25.1058) are useful comparanda.<sup>21</sup>

## Provenance

UK art market

## References

<sup>20</sup> URL: <https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org:443/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=62243&viewType=detailView>

URL: <https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org:443/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=62244&viewType=detailView>

<sup>21</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31454>













## II

## STEEL KARD

QAJAR EMPIRE  
(MODERN-DAY IRAN)  
18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 405MM

Forged entirely from steel, this *kard* dagger originates from the Qajar Empire (modern-day Iran).

A trio of calligraphic panels are etched over the hilt, the bolster and backstrap then overlaid with a series of miniature panels which alternate between foliate emblems and further calligraphic inscriptions in gold. Further panels at the base of the blade are chiselled with an enchanting array of unfurling flowerheads and intermingled vines which frame an arabesque calligraphic panel in gold.

The superb artistry of the dagger's decorative elements is matched by a 'wootz' steel blade in pristine condition which on close inspections shows a rich patterning, the blade tapering elegantly to a slender point. The dagger retains its black-painted shagreen scabbard with maroon-coloured cord for suspension.

The dagger's inscriptions are translated below:

*On the hilt, Side A:*

دل دل رس نه ا ج ا ذا / می حرلا نم حرلا دلل م سب  
نی د ی ف نول خدی / س انلا ت ی ر و حت فل و  
چا وفا دلل

"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. When the help of God and the victory arrive, And thou seest men entering the religion of God by troops."

*On the hilt, Side B:*

ك ه ن ا / ه ر غ غ ت سا و ك ب ر دم حب حب سف  
عل نی ز ما ا ای / (؟) ق ت ه ان و ه اب و ث نا  
نی د ب ا  
"Then utter the praise of thy Lord, implore His pardon; for He loveth to turn in mercy." (Qur'an 110) Ha. And He is a faithful companion(?). O Imam Zayn al-'Abidin!"

*Panel at the base of the blade (both sides translated together):*

ك دن ا م زاب ا م ا ذك / ز ا ك ت س ی شق ن ض  
ی ا ق ب م نی ب ی م ن ا ر ی ت س ه ه  
ن ه س ۱۱۹۷

"The intention of the design is that something of us should endure, For I see no permanence in existence. Year 1197 (1782-3)" (from Gulistan, a famous Persian poem by Sa'di)

*Spine of the blade and backstrap:*

ن ای د ای / ن ان م ای / ن ان ح ای / دلل ای  
"O God! O Affectionate! O Beneficent! O Requirer!"

*Underside of the tang:*

ی ل ع ای / دم ح م ای / دلل ای  
"O God! O Muhammad! O 'Ali!"

*Bolster:*

ر ك الو / لال ج الو  
"O Possessor of Majesty and Generosity!"

Daggers made in this style - with chiselled decoration in arabesque panels and foliate motifs - were exhibited by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *Iconic: New York 2018* (see Cat. Nos. 4 & 5).<sup>22</sup> Further comparanda can be found in important museum collections. See a dagger (Accession No. 36.25.1043a, b) preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York thought to have been made in the workshop of Muhammad Nami,<sup>23</sup> and another (Accession No. 824-1893) at the Victoria & Albert Museum with similar chiselled decoration to our own.<sup>24</sup>

## Provenance

European art market

## References

<sup>22</sup> See Runjeet Singh, *Iconic: New York 2018*, pp.18-21, Cat. Nos. 4 (URL: [http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/176/kard\\_dagger](http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/176/kard_dagger)) & 5 (URL: [http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/177/pierced\\_kard](http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/177/pierced_kard)).

<sup>23</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/24308>

<sup>24</sup> URL: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O71512/knife-unknown/>



12

## HUNTING KNIFE

TIFLIS, GEORGIA  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 400MM

In place of twin grip-scales, this exceptionally rare and important hunting knife, originating from the old city of Tiflis (or Tbilisi) in Georgia, has a walrus-ivory handle formed from a single piece, the steel bolster decorated in gold on a cross-hatched surface with vine tendrils and three-leafed splays. The lobed panel at the base of the blade is decorated mostly *en suite* with the bolster, though its gilt foliage slopes downwards and rises again to display the head of a long-beaked bird in profile. The blade itself is forged from coveted *bulat* (or 'wootz') steel that exhibits an elegant patterning over its surface and maintains its broad section for the greater part of its length before the spine and section thin and taper to a slender point.

The *kard* is complete with its original wooden scabbard covered in black velvet and fitted with a chape and locket of pattern-welded Damascus steel which have been generously overlaid in gold with arabesque panels and other foliate designs. Remarkably, even the leather strap and bracket used to secure the dagger to the wearer's left side are extant.

In this case, the most important dagger with which we can compare the present example is one preserved in the Hermitage Collection in Saint Petersburg, Russia, especially with reference to its blade (Inv. No. B.O.-2287).<sup>25</sup>

## Provenance

UK art market

## References

<sup>25</sup> See Vsevolod Obratsov (2021), *Oriental Arms and Armour in the Hermitage Collection*, State Hermitage Museum, pp. 148-149.









13

## MINIATURE KNIVES

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:  
NORTH INDIA, GUJARAT (INDIA),  
SYRIA, NORTH INDIA.  
17TH - 18TH CENTURY

LEFT	235MM
CENTRE	215MM
RIGHT	205MM

This group of fine miniature knives constitutes a pleasing example of the varied and intricate artistry that can be observed in arms and armour.

The leftmost knife shown in the images dates to the 18th-19th century and comprises walrus ivory grips, a blade of wootz steel with elegant surface patterns, and a dark-green velvet-covered scabbard.

The second knife comes from the state of Gujarat in India and dates to the 17th or 18th century. Its grip-scales are made from mother-of-pearl which has been carved into an interesting shape, possibly intended to convey the outline of a bird's head and crest in profile. The watered blade is overlaid with winding vine tendrils in gold and exhibits the much sought-after 'Mohammed's Ladder' patterning over its surface whereby pillars of whirling wootz steel surge into the body of the blade from its sharp edge. It is complete with a leather-covered scabbard which has been painted black.

The third knife is 19th century and originates from Syria, its slender hilt covered throughout with long splays of palm leaves in gold *koftgari*. The blade is overlaid at the forte with a network of gold quatrefoils and along the back-edge with an inscription. The maker's style extends to the metal scabbard which is decorated in gold *en suite* with the hilt and fitted with a gently sloping suspension bracket.

### Provenance

London art market





14

## EATING SET

MONGOLIA  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 327MM

This set consists of a fine eating trousse and a *chuckmuck* or flint striker (derived from the Anglo-Indian word *chakmak* which in turn comes from the Turkish word *çakmaktaşı*, meaning 'flint').

The eating trousse is a well-made example that consists of two straight single-edged knives and a pair of chopsticks. The scabbard has a wooden core that has been covered with red-scaled shagreen, its natural lustre giving it a lacquered appearance. The knives' hilts are layered with grip-scales of polished bone and wood and the chopsticks are made from bone with silver pommels. The *chuckmuck* is a typical example of the fire-lightning kits found across North Asia from China to Japan since the 17th century<sup>26</sup>.

The unusual green stone suspended by the chain (possibly aventurine) serves a functional purpose as well as an aesthetic one: in providing counter-balance to the flint striker when worn, it stops the pouch from coming out of the wearer's belt while walking – much like a Japanese *netsuke*. The eating set and flint pouch are both hung by means of silver chains, with pendants decorated with graceful floral patterns on a gold coloured ground.

Similar sets were presented in our Hong Kong catalogue in 2017<sup>27</sup>, and a particularly striking example can be found in Patricia Ann Berger and Terese Tse Bartholomew's book *Mongolia: The Legacy of Chinggis Khan*<sup>28</sup>.

## Provenance

UK art market

## References

<sup>26</sup> Such daily utensils for 'striking a light' were essential implements until the gradual introduction of the match in the mid-19th century: the user would produce a spark by striking a flint against the steel base ridge.

<sup>27</sup> Runjeet Singh, *Hong Kong Catalogue*, 2017, pp.8-23.

URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/catalogues/6/hong\\_kong\\_2017](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/catalogues/6/hong_kong_2017)

<sup>28</sup> Patricia Ann Berger and Terese Tse Bartholomew, *Mongolia: The Legacy of Chinggis Khan*, Thames and Hudson, 1995, p.106, item 6.







15

**KINDJAL DAGGER**

TURKEY (OTTOMAN EMPIRE)  
1850 AD

OVERALL 415MM  
BLADE 285MM

This magnificent *kindjal* was made in the Ottoman Empire in 1850 during the reign of Abdulmejid I (Ottoman Turkish: *درویش محمد بابا*, romanized: *Abdülmeccid-i evvel*, Turkish: I. Abdülmeccid; 25 April 1823 – 25 June 1861), who was the 31st Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and reigned from 2 July 1839 – 25 June 1861 and succeeded his father Mahmud II on 2 July 1839. As we know, many Caucasian Muhajirs (settlers) lived in Ottoman Empire and served in the army of the Ottoman Sultan – some of them to become famous commanders and generals. Many of the Caucasian craftsmen worked in Ottoman workshops, including in the court of the Ottoman Sultan<sup>29</sup>.

The piece is highly decorated using fine gold decorations to depict intricate stylized foliage; the dagger is likely ceremonial and probably belonged to a high-ranking officer. Contrary to the single, offset groove on each face of the blade that appears on most examples, our piece displays a double-groove. The scabbard is decorated *en suite* with the hilt in gold-inlaid mounts, the elongated chape cut at its end into a faceted flower-bud finial.

The *kindjal* dagger has a long and rich socio-cultural history in the Caucasus. It dates back as far as the 3rd century B.C. – its shape and weight drew are based on the Roman *gladius* sword-type – and continued to be refined over three millennia, from a blade made of copper or bronze to one made

of steel, allowing the dagger to become stronger and narrower over time with improved efficiency in combat. This wonderful dagger likely belonged to a high ranking officer or Pasha in the Ottoman Imperial Army.

The present example matches well with the *shashka* included in this catalogue<sup>30</sup>. Similar pieces can also be seen in the State Hermitage Museum<sup>31</sup>.

**Provenance**

Private European collection

**References**

<sup>29</sup> Caucasian craftsmen worked not only in Russia and Central Asia (Bukhara and Samarkand), but also in the Middle East (Ottoman Empire). This is also noted by researcher R. Alikhanov in *Art of Kubachi* (A., 1976. p. 53) and evidenced by the descendants of the Kubachi, Lak masters - including Daud Efendiev, a silversmith and a descendant of old masters, resident of the village of Duki, Lak district of Dagestan. According to him, at different times the Laks and Kubachins worked in Istanbul, including in the court workshop of the Turkish Sultan. See also: *Searching For Lost Relics*, I. & Kh. Askhabov, 2016. p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> See item number 16.

<sup>31</sup> See Yuriy A. Miller; Caucasian Arms from the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. *The Art of Weaponry in Caucasus and Transcaucasia in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Devantier, Næstved [Denmark], 2000.



## SHASHKA SWORD

TURKEY (OTTOMAN EMPIRE)  
1850 AD

OVERALL 970MM  
BLADE 815MM

An incredible example of the kind of single-edged sabre wielded by the people of the Caucasus typically known as a *shashka* or *shasqua*.<sup>32</sup> Like the matching kindjal dagger (see item number 15), this magnificent saber was made in the Ottoman Empire in 1850 during the reign of Abdulmejid I (Ottoman Turkish: دب ع دب ع دب ع, romanized: Abdülmecîd-i evvel, Turkish: I. Abdülmecid; 25 April 1823 – 25 June 1861), who was the 31st Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and reigned from 2 July 1839 – 25 June 1861 and succeeded his father Mahmud II on 2 July 1839. As we know, many Caucasian Muhajirs (settlers) lived in Ottoman Empire and served in the army of the Ottoman Sultan – some of them to become famous commanders and generals. Many of the Caucasian craftsmen worked in Ottoman workshops, including in the court of the Ottoman Sultan<sup>33</sup>.

It should be noted that not only Caucasian sabers, but also Turkish-type sabers, made and decorated by Caucasian craftsmen, are very rare. They are of great historical and cultural value.

Such swords were used in much the same way as a Western European sabre, with highly similar cuts, thrusts, guards and parries.<sup>34</sup> The lavish gold decoration of this sword – applied generously throughout both the scabbard's mounts and the blade itself – are exceptionally well

preserved. Glistening vine leaves and floral patterns scroll intricately along the length of the blade, beautifully highlighting its slender shape and golden inscription reading:

### Side A

*Qur'an 48:1 (in part) - "Verily We have granted thee a manifest victory."*

### Side B

*Qur'an 61:13 (in part) - "Help from God and a speedy victory. So give the glad tidings to the believers."*

The Caucasian form of the *shashka* has a scabbard which encloses most of the hilt, with little more than the pommel protruding. Plainer in other examples, the pommel is pierced to receive a sword-knot, but the present piece may have served a more ceremonial purpose. Officers' models were indeed much more heavily ornamented, and it is to be noted that officers had considerable freedom in their choice of embellishment – even down to non-regulation blades, typically sharpened for the last third nearest the tip<sup>35</sup>.

This wonderful sword likely belonged to a high ranking officer or Pasha in the Ottoman Imperial Army.

### Provenance

Private European collection

### References

- <sup>32</sup> A Russian word originally coming from the Adyghe word Сашхьэ, *sashko*, meaning 'long knife'.
- <sup>33</sup> Caucasian craftsmen worked not only in Russia and Central Asia (Bukhara and Samarkand), but also in the Middle East (Ottoman Empire). This is also noted by researcher R. Alikhanov in *Art of Kubachi* (A., 1976, p. 53) and evidenced by the descendants of the Kubachi, Lak masters – including Daud Efendiev, a silversmith and a descendant of old masters, resident of the village of Duki, Lak district of Dagestan. According to him, at different times the Laks and Kubachins worked in Istanbul, including in the court workshop of the Turkish Sultan. See also: *Searching For Lost Relics*, I. & Kh. Askhabov, 2016, p. 129.
- <sup>34</sup> See Ruslan Urazbakhtin, 'Shashka in Late XIX–XX C: Outline of Russian Combat Techniques', in: *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* (vol. 6, issue 2), Matyas Miskolczi (ed.), 2018, pp. 146–168.
- <sup>35</sup> See Yuriy A. Miller, *Caucasian Arms from the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. The Art of Weaponry in Caucasus and Transcaucasia in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Devantier, Næstved [Denmark], 2000.





17

**CHEVRON TULWAR**

DECCAN, INDIA  
17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 940MM  
BLADE 815MM

A monumental and well-preserved example of an Indian sword known as a *tulwar*. The hilt of this sword is decorated with gold inlay, referred to as *tah-i-nishan*, which is a more costly technique than simply applying the gold to the surface in the more common technique known as *kofrigari*.

Graceful chevron-leaves fill the blackened surface of this striking hilt in gold, their feathery edges picked out in fine detail. The hilt further comprises lotus-head langets, domed quillons, a centrally swollen grip, and a pommel disk that is especially pleasing for its incorporation of the same leafy schema into a sunburst structure. A domed cap sits on the pommel disk with a pierced border of lotus flowers, an openwork pommel-tag completing the hilt.

The large, curved blade is forged from pattern-welded steel and clearly exhibits an excellent state of preservation with a cloudy pattern that reveals the structure of the metal. The first section of its length shows handwritten markings, the number '98' etched within a box together with the number '1928' above an undetermined word, yet to be deciphered. There are also Indian numbers on the spine (likely contemporary to its manufacture unlike the other markings). Written in gold they appear to read '929'. The sword is complete with its red velvet-covered scabbard, which is fitted with a chape forged from wootz steel and decorated with gold along its border.

**Provenance**

Private collection USA.















18

**GILT TULWAR**NORTHERN INDIA  
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 950MM

The gold hilt of this sublime *tulwar* is elaborately decorated over its surface with a pleasing range of motifs and patterns: a large lotus flower blossoms at the middle of the crossguard and is encircled by a winding vine tendril which continues curling its way up the centrally swollen grip, flanked at either side throughout with further flowerheads on a finely stippled ground. The sides of the domed quillons are lined with chevrons, and a round pommel disc decorated with further flowerheads and vines completes the hilt.

A thick Syrian trade blade of wootz steel extends to a considerable length from the hilt and is etched over the surface on one face with a trio of cartouches which comprise two calligraphic panels and a central lion in shallow relief.

The sword is complete with a scabbard covered in green velvet which is made resplendent by its gilt locket and chape, which have each been decorated *en suite* with the hilt and cut and pierced at their edges.

**Provenance**

Private collection USA







19

## CHAKRAVARTI SHORT-SWORD

DECCAN, SOUTHERN INDIA  
15TH-17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 572MM  
BLADE 465MM



This alluring weapon is known as a *chakravarti* sword. Its unusual form is deeply imbued with both regal and religious symbolism, and as a work of art wonderfully embodies that sought-after merging of elegant form with a persuasive sense of history.

The archaic iron hilt retains large amounts of its original silvering and comprises sloping langets, spherical quillons, a centrally swollen grip, and the tri-spherical pommel which partly characterises such swords. A large cut panel of silvered steel fills the gap between the hilt and blade to reinforce the sword's structure, secured in place by two bolts at the quillons and another two over the langets. This latter pair have been cut to convey stylised flowerheads whose dotted petals pleasingly match the sphere-and-disc motifs that are central to the sword's symbolism.

The steel blade has been forged with a disc-shaped forte including a small semi-circular notch cut near to the hilt (possibly a later modification). Over the remaining course of its length, the blade tapers to a fine point, exhibiting a pronounced medial ridge and leaning gently to one side.

As alluded to above, the unusual forms and features of this exceedingly rare sword represent a complex network of symbols, for which Elgood (2004) provides the most thorough background and explanation. Firstly, the large, disc-shaped forte (or *chakra* forte) is connected closely with the ruling Rayas of the Vijayanagara Empire (circa 1336-1646 A.D.) in southern India, in that this disc shape may symbolise the sun or wheel of time (*kalachakra*), which as Elgood observes, "(...) would tie it to Vishnu, from whom the Rayas claimed descent, by association with his weapon the *chakra* known as *Sudarsana*."<sup>36</sup> For the kings of the Vijayanagara Empire, this *chakra* was, in turn, a powerful symbol of the right to rule. This would symbolically bestow the ruling Raya and owner of such a sword with the position of *chakravarti*, the title given to the ancient Indian concept of the Universal Ruler. The Sanskrit words *chakra* and *vartin* translate to "wheel" and "one who turns" respectively, meaning that he who became *chakravarti* would eternally spin the wheel of heaven (*kalachakra*, as above). Functioning in tandem with the powerful iconography of the *chakra* forte is the spherical tri-part pommel, which likely represents the Trimurti (trinity) of the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, who embody the roles of creator, preserver and destroyer respectively.

Elgood concludes his detailed analysis as follows: "Are these swords symbols of kingly power? It seems probable."<sup>37</sup>

Linking such weapons as the present example to contemporary temple sculptures at Kanchipuram and Kumbakonam, as well as appearances of this weapon-type in the Laur-Chand manuscript, Elgood states that such swords must have been produced prior to 1610. A similar pair of swords are published in the Robert Hales collection,<sup>38</sup> and another in *The Hindu Warrior* by Roy Elvis,<sup>39</sup> though very few other examples are known. However, Elgood's discussion of the subject provides illuminating comparanda from various periods of the Vijayanagara Empire.<sup>40</sup>

### Published

Robert Elgood (2004), *Hindu Arms & Ritual: Arms and Armour from India 1400-1865*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, p.123, Fig. 11.24.

Robert Hales (2013), *Islamic and Oriental Arms and Armour: A Lifetime's Passion*, London, p.71, No. 155.

### Provenance

Private collection USA  
Private collection of Robert Hales

### References

<sup>36</sup> Robert Elgood (2004), *Hindu Arms & Ritual: Arms and Armour from India 1400-1865*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, p.111.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, p.112.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Hales (2013), *Islamic and Oriental Arms and Armour: A Lifetime's Passion*, London, p.71, No. 154.

<sup>39</sup> Roy Elvis (2020), *The Hindu Warrior*, London, Olympia Auctions, p.92, Cat. No. C109.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, pp.109-126. Thus see figs. 11.1-24.





20

## PAIR OF HUGE DHA SWORDS

NORTHERN THAILAND  
(RATTANAKOSIN KINGDOM)  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1180MM  
BLADE 622MM

Two large ceremonial swords from Northern Thailand which date to the 19th century. The hilts comprise wooden cores covered with silver sheet which has been divided into nine panels of fine and detailed repoussé decoration, with chased floral and geometric designs indicative of Thai style. The panels are separated by silver bands with a large bulbous pommel of segmented decoration. The swords' curving blades each convey the identical profile of a flickering flame.

A similar, shorter sword is preserved in the National Museum, Bangkok. Illustrated and described by Panchaphan as a "Lanna-style" sword,<sup>41</sup> it is presumed that Panchaphan is referring to the Kingdom of Lan Na, an Indianised state centered in present-day Northern Thailand during the 13th to 18th centuries.

### Provenance

Private collection USA  
Runjeet Singh 2015  
London art market

### Literature

Singh, 2015, *Arms & Armour of the East*, p.60-61.

### References

<sup>41</sup> Naengoi Panchaphan, *Silverware in Thailand*, p.134.











21

## SIKIN PANYANG

NORTHERN SUMATRA, INDONESIA  
(ACEH PROVINCE)  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 692MM  
BLADE 520MM

The present sword or *sikin panyang* is an interesting variant of the type of straight, single edge cutlass or *klewang* sword originating from the Indonesian Archipelago (Nusantara).

As a typical example of the most popular fighting weapon of the Acehnese people, this particular piece is thought to have been made in the province of Aceh, Northern Sumatra, likely during the early years of the Aceh War against the colonial Dutch, prior to 1879, where many *sikin* were produced<sup>42</sup>.

The wooden scabbard, or *sarung*, is reinforced with two metal bands. Worn at the waist, it is of uniform width from end to end and has been polished and darkened by the years. It displays an intricate design

of carvings with floral and leaved vine tendrils engraved on both sides of its length, inspired by the Aceh vegetation. The throat is well-preserved and shows exceptional low-relief chasing. The forked *hulu* or handle, made of horn (probably buffalo), leads to a ferrule with gilt overlay decoration that merges into the first two inches of the sword's spine. These forked hilts are also named *toempang beunteuëng* due to their transverse protrusions<sup>43</sup>.

The most remarkable aspect of the laminated blade or *wilah* is its inlaid honorific inscription. Starting from the ricasso, it mentions the Sultan of Aceh Iskandar Muda (early 16thC, d. 17thC) and is encoded with apotropaic properties: as he was known as Aceh's most powerful historic ruler, Sultan Iskandar Muda would have been an appropriate figure to invoke during war times. Additionally, it features both Quranic writings and esoteric blessings (*basmalah/bismalah*).

## Provenance

Private collection UK

## References

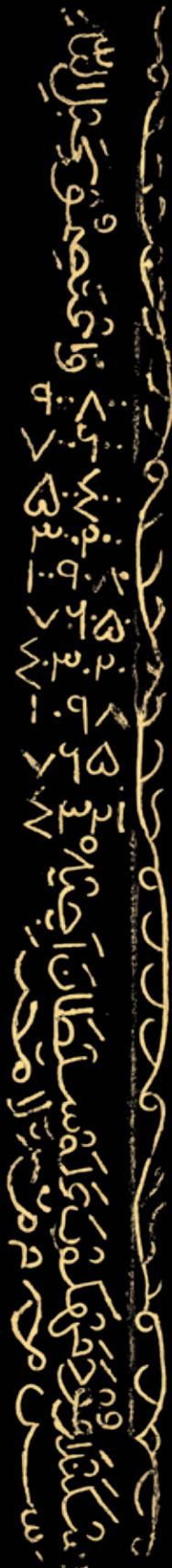
<sup>42</sup> Personal communication with Dr Mulaika Hijjas (SOAS University of London) – with thanks for her help contextualizing and transliterating the sword's inscription.

<sup>43</sup> See Farouk Yahya, *Magic and Divination in Malay Illustrated Manuscripts*, Brill, 2015.

See also Steel and Magic : Edged Weapons of the Malay Archipelago, Deutsches Klingmuseum Solingen, Sixt Wetzler, 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Abdel Haleem trans. *The Qur'an*. Oxford: OUP, 2008. p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> Abdel Haleem trans., *ibid.*, p. 42.



Transliteration reads as follows :

#### Side A

Bismillah al-rahman al-rahim

(Reading upwards from line 4)

yā ayyuhā  
alladhīna  
āmanū  
ittaqū  
l-lāha ḥaqqa  
tuqāṭihi  
wa-lā  
tamūtunna ilā  
wa antummu  
muslimū-  
na

[Qur'an 3:102 : "You who believe, be mindful of God, as is His due, and make sure you devote yourselves to Him, to your dying moment."<sup>44</sup>].

budūḥ

[This is a talismanic word formed from the abjad equivalents of the four corner cells of a 3 × 3 magic square: 2, 6, 4, 8 (2 = ba, 6 = waw, 4 = dal, 8 = ḥa)]

Muhammad  
Abu Bakr  
Umar  
Uthman  
Ali

#### Side B

(Reading from the hilt)

Iskandar Muda Mahkota Alam  
Sultan Aceh

S m-h m l-a m-ḥ?-r

[Without further clues, these isolated letters are impossible to interpret: they may have talismanic significance, or perhaps are intended to indicate ownership.]

(Rotated 90 degrees, reading from the tip of the sword down)

900 800  
700 600  
500 400  
300 200  
100 90 10  
80 70 50  
40 30 20  
10 9 8  
7 6 5  
4 3 2 1

(Rotated back to previous orientation, reading along the length of the blade, Qur'an 3:103, continuing from the other side)

wa-i' ṭaṣimū bi-ḥabli l-lāhi  
["Hold fast to God's rope."<sup>45</sup>]







22

### THREE SPEARHEADS

LEFT AND CENTRE:  
DECCAN, INDIA  
18TH CENTURY

RIGHT:  
RAJASTHAN  
19TH CENTURY

LEFT	425MM
CENTRE	310MM
RIGHT	430MM

These spearheads are lavishly decorated throughout with fantastic motifs in gold.

All three of the spearheads are formed with a faceted socket, that of the first spearhead exhibits decorative bands of three-petalled flowerheads set amidst leaved vine stems over the entirety of its socket in gold *koftgari*. A separate, central band comprising a sequence of small dots in gold, when examined closely, leads charmingly into a miniaturised spearhead-shape. The long and slender blade is formed with a pair of shallow fullers which taper into the blade's reinforced, armour-piercing point at approximately halfway along its length.

The second with finely painted bands of curving leaves and minute flecks of gold adorn the cross-hatched surface of the final example's darkened steel socket. This leads into a bifurcated base which has been fitted with a bud-shaped finial and adorned with panels of vines that swirl and stretch over the greater part of the twin arms' lengths. The two blades then

are each formed with a forte of leafy branches thickly painted in gold that each lead into a stylised lotus and spear-shaped panel.

The third being decorated with fine lines of gold that delineate each of the sides. A bulbous moulding with foliate decoration sits just below the base, which has been cleverly formed as a pair of large, open-mouthed *makara* (two further *makara* in miniature appear at either side). The blade is then chiselled at the forte in deep relief with a uniquely detailed lotus flower, its curved leaves and petals neatly incised and so imbuing the artful panel with texture and realism. Sunken twin fullers appear over the greater part of the blade's remaining length at either side of a small, stylised lotus and an engraved medial ridge.

The third example shown at the left within the images may be compared with a spearhead (Cat. No. 15) published by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *Arts des Guerriers d'Orient* (2018), especially with reference to the chiselled unfurling flower visible at

the base of the blade.<sup>46</sup> Another, preserved in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Accession Number 20.151.5), similarly shows this theme at its forte.<sup>47</sup> In its decoration and form, the second and central spearhead of our set is also similar to a piece exhibited by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *The Goddess: Arms and Armour of the Rajputs - London 2018* (Cat. No. 21).<sup>48</sup>

#### Provenance

European art market

#### References

<sup>46</sup> URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/224/spearhead\\_and\\_butt](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/224/spearhead_and_butt)

<sup>47</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/22747>

<sup>48</sup> URL: <https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/255/trident>





23

**SANG (SPEARHEAD)**

SOUTHERN INDIA  
16TH - 17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 505MM  
BLADE 290MM

This *sang* (spearhead) shows refined craftsmanship and a good state of preservation.

A large iron ring, pierced with two concentric circles of small holes, forms the base of the spear's tubular socket which has been adorned with detailed floral motifs. The socket is strengthened by three thick band-shaped mouldings which alternate with chased bands, all chiselled throughout with rows of recurrent beading. The double-edged blade curves gently and is intricately decorated at the forte on each face with a symmetrical composition of opposing *yali* (dragon-like mythological creatures) that exhibit large, curved fangs and scales which have been cleverly cut to mimic the ridged texture of reptilian skin. A central lotus design separates the creatures and repeats in miniature at the base of the blade's deep-cut arrowhead fullers. The style of this decoration is linked with the Nayaka kingdom (1529-1736): during the rule of the Nayakas, art and architecture flourished in the region of what is now modern-day Tamil Nadu.<sup>49</sup> As explained in Dr Ravinder Reddy's recent study, 'Southern [Indian] spearheads tended to be weighty, straight or curved, adorned with chiselled mythological beasts and generally with no gold but sometimes with silver plate.'<sup>50</sup>

Another spear, remarkably similar to the present example, has been illustrated in *The Hindu Warrior* (2019), a work by Roy Elvis,<sup>51</sup> and Robert Elgood's discussion of these spearhead-types, points to further comparanda that are preserved in important museums and collections, such as the Royal Collection Trust.<sup>52</sup>

Examples of such *sang* spears were presented to King Edward VII during his tour of India in 1875-76 when Prince of Wales, by Muktamabai Chhatrapati, Princess of Tanjore. These were recorded in the exhibition *Arms and Armour at Sandringham: The Indian Collection* (1910)<sup>53</sup>, probably as diplomatic gifts from the Zamindar of Seithur. A similar spear was also published by Runjeet Singh Ltd<sup>54</sup>.

**Provenance**

European art market

**References**

49. The Nayaks – renowned for their intricate artworks and spectacular architecture – formed a dynasty in Southern India after the collapse of the Vijayanagar Empire, and ruled from the 16th to 18th centuries.
  50. Ravinder Reddy, *Arms & Armour of India, Nepal & Sri Lanka: Types, Decoration and Symbolism*, Hali Publications Ltd, 2019, p. 110.
  51. Roy Elvis, *The Hindu Warrior*, Thomas Del Mar Ltd, 2018, p. 381.
  52. Robert Elgood, *Hindu Arms and Ritual: Arms and Armour from India 1400-1865*, Eburon Academic Publishers, Delft (Netherlands), 2005, p. 194.
- See also URL: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/38430/spear-sang> and URL: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/37988/spear-bsp-sang>
53. URL: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1113357/arms-and-armour-at-sandringham-the-indian-collection-presented-by-the-princes>
  54. URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/361/sang\\_spearhead](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/361/sang_spearhead)





24

LANCE

KUTCH (GUJARAT), INDIA  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 970MM  
BLADE 815MM

A long spear or lance from Kutch, a district of the state of Gujarat in Western India. Carved from bamboo and lacquered black, the spear is fitted with copper mounts which are chased with floral patterns typical of the metalwork produced in Kutch – a well-known producer of works in silver.

The lance unscrews at its half-way point for easy transport; its steel blade contained within an original velvet-covered scabbard which is also mounted with copper fittings.

A similar example is preserved in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>55</sup>

Provenance

London art market

References

<sup>55</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/30757>





25

**CHAHAR-KHAM BOW**

SINDH, NORTHERN INDIA  
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1000MM

This rare and lavishly lacquered piece shows an elegant, double S-shaped curve, its reflex limbs formed from horn, wood and layers laid in glue (with horn belly, wooden core and sinew on the back), its surfaces wrapped in richly painted bark and brightly decorated with stylised floral motifs. The edges of the contours are lacquered in golden yellow and saffron-red, accentuated by V-shaped patterned bands or panels running width wise along the arms up to the wooden ears and nocks (where the bow's hues darken slightly), both sides enhanced with black lines. The back of either arm, towards the ears, is decorated to match the oval grip: the double medial ridges widen into short double ears, and the strongly recessed grip, as well as the lower section of the ears, shows a dense, lustrous décor of delicate, leafy *boteh* / *buta*. Each wooden ear is signed (probably the maker's signature) with undecipherable Arabic lettering.

Recurved *chahar-kham* or 'four curves' bows form a type described in *Kitab Hidayat al-rami* ('The Archer's Guide') by Muḥammad Budah'ī, written around 1500 AD.<sup>56</sup> Their shape is severe, comprising a deeply setback handle with one to three rows of sinew on the back of the bow. They represent an older kind of composite bow, reminiscent of the ancient Scythian form. It is thought that *chahar-kham* bows were probably once in widespread use among much of the Indian subcontinent, but production continued the longest in Sindh, from where this example is thought to originate<sup>57</sup>.

**Provenance**

European art market

**References**

<sup>56</sup> The manuscript *Kitab Hidayat al-rami* was purchased by the British Library in 1983 where it remains today. The work was dedicated to Husayn Shāh, ruler of Bengal from 1493-1519 A.D.

<sup>57</sup> See Edward McEwen; *The chahar-kham or "four curved" bow of India*, Elgood (editor), Islamic Arms and Armour, London Scholar Press, 1979









26

**PAINTED BOW**

KASHMIR (NORTHERN INDIA)  
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1470MM

This rare and lavishly painted bow likely comes from Kashmir. The central grip is bound with a bluish threading over a thin sleeve of red cotton and further reinforced with a faceted wooden support-strut. The bow's long slender arms are then lacquered over their entire surface with a mix of motifs both floral and geometric: diagonal bands of rippling yellow lines criss-cross on a bright-red ground; panels painted in darker hues are illuminated by thickly painted four-petalled flowerheads. No space – however small – is left unfilled by decorative patterning.

In this case there are two main pieces to which we can compare the present example. The first is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession Number 36.25.2515a–h),<sup>58</sup> while the second is preserved in the collection of the University of Missouri.

**Provenance**

European art market

**References**

<sup>58</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/30293>



27

**STEEL BOW**SIALKOT, PUNJAB  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1050MM

This elegant reflex bow is decorated with lavish *kofgari* in the Sialkot style.

Slender cartouches flourish throughout the bow's surface, filled with spiralling foliage which alternate between gold *kofgari* and plain steel. These spirals continue onto the grip section. Here, the cartouches house multi-petalled flowerheads encircled by scrolling gilt foliage. Such fine craftsmanship and embellishment suggest this bow was likely an expensive and high-status possession, not only for the owner but also for its maker. The present piece is far superior to most that are known to us<sup>59</sup>, though a similar bow can be found in the Royal Collection of Jaipur<sup>60</sup>.

Although already known in India, this type of bow was reintroduced by Muslim invaders, and the Indians, quickly deeming it to be a superior weapon, gladly adopted it. With wood and horn being susceptible to the climate, metal bows such as this one were sometimes used as appropriate substitutes<sup>61</sup>.

**Provenance**

Collection of Stephen Selby,  
Hong Kong.

**References**

- <sup>59</sup> See another example here URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/256/steel\\_bow](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/256/steel_bow)
- <sup>60</sup> Robert Elgood, *Arms & Armour at the Jaipur Court: The Royal Collection*, Niyogi Books, 2015.
- <sup>61</sup> See Dr Parvinder Khanuja, *Splendors of Punjab Heritage: Art from the Khanuja Family Collection*, Roli Books, 2022, p.232, item 36.



## QING 'PRECIOUS' BOW

BEIJING, CHINA  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1114MM

The present object provides a unique opportunity for a connoisseur to acquire an extremely rare and fine Chinese bow of the highest order. The vibrant colours of this bow belie the quality of its design and function as a supreme hunting weapon. Such bows are often referred to as *baogong* (寶弓 or 'precious bow')<sup>62</sup>.

The main surface is carved from the horn of water buffalo – a variety typically used for more expensive bows – which has likely been glued to a wooden core.<sup>63</sup> Short collars of green rayskin frame the central grip-section, below and above which appear longevity-symbols painted in red and white over Manchurian black peach bark. A stunning mosaic panel of red- and crème-coloured squares extends over the greater part of both arms. At the lower arm, a red-and-white infinity knot within a gourd-shaped frame sits just above an ogee panel of multi-coloured chevrons intricately applied to the surface of the bow (this pattern is commonly referred to by Chinese bowmakers as "pheasant's neck" decoration, a name likely chosen on account of the palette used). Lastly, in keeping with the theme of longevity, a stylised *swastika* is painted in white at the end of either arm.<sup>64</sup>

As is indicated above, the bow is replete with symbols that allude to themes of longevity and prosperity. The gourd is associated in Chinese visual arts with familial continuity and the birth of future generations, whilst the Chinese verbalisation of the *svastika* – *wan* (萬) – puns on the number ten thousand, the highest number that can be expressed in a single character. In combination, these symbols express a wish for familial continuity equivalent to ten thousand future generations.

This bow forms a very small group of mosaic-patterned bows which take their distinctive design from Emperor Qianlong himself, he is seen with such bows in paintings by Giuseppe Castiglione<sup>65</sup>.

Later they were also produced for certain ranks of guards and princes.<sup>66</sup> As the dynasty progressed, they became available for any who could afford them. An important distinction with the bow offered here and most other known mosaic bows, is that the ears are short, a deviation from Manchu archery traditions<sup>67</sup>, which points at the fact this example was probably a special commission for somebody important, likely a Tibetan.

## Provenance

London art market

## References

<sup>62</sup> URL: <http://www.manchuarchery.org/content/qing-dynasty-precious-bow>

<sup>63</sup> Tan Danjong's "Investigative Report on Bow and Arrow Manufacture in Chengdu" published in Academia Sinica Language and History Review, Taipei, 1951.

<sup>64</sup> On the theme of longevity in Chinese art, see for example URL: [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/long/hd\\_long.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/long/hd_long.htm).

<sup>65</sup> URL: <http://www.manchuarchery.org/content/qing-dynasty-precious-bow>

<sup>66</sup> *Baogong* attributed to the Qianlong emperor are published in: *Illustrated History of the Qing*, part 6; the Qianlong era, Xinhua University Press, Beijing 2002, p. 21. Another is published in: *De Verboden Stad*, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam 1990, p. 238. A portrait of Qianlong holding such a bow is in the Palace Museum Collection, Beijing. It was published in Jean-Paul Desroches, Isabelle Leroy-Jay Lemaistre, et Guillaume Fonkenell: *La Cité interdite au Louvre*, Coédition musée du Louvre / Somogy éditions d'Art, 2011.

What appear to be woodblocks of early mosaic patterned bows can be found in Pu Jiang et al., eds., *Huangchao Liqi Tushu* (皇朝禮器圖式), or "Illustrated Regulations on the Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Dynasty", Palace Edition of 1766 (British Library, 15300.e.1). This version is based on a manuscript of 1759.

<sup>67</sup> Personal communication with Peter Dekker















29

## IMPERIAL LEATHER QUIVER

BEIJING, CHINA

19TH CENTURY (QING DYNASTY)

OVERALL 300MM

This imperial leather quiver is exceptionally well preserved and likely originated from Beijing. It is a wonderful example of the Chinese cross-strapped quivers associated with the Manchu of the 'Eight Banners' forces (*jakūn gūsa*).<sup>68</sup>

Typically, two types of Qing quivers are found with uniforms of various ranks in the imperial guard: leather and metal quivers such as the present example, and silk- or velvet-covered pieces. Such quivers followed strict colour codes and regulations, the Qing rulers stipulating that certain colours ought to be worn for different occasions<sup>69</sup>.

They are frequently paired with a bow case of matching colours and materials, the outline often styled in the shape of the mythical dragon carp – a fish which, according to legend, transformed into a dragon<sup>70</sup>.

This particular, wedge-shaped example, a typical Manchu design with strong Tibetan influence, is made of thick tooled leather which has been clad with a pattern of crossing lines and displays intricately ornamented copper alloy fittings. The central fitting is decorated with a stylized *shou* character for longevity (寿) at the front. Five bats – a Chinese symbol for good fortune – are arranged in a circle which stands for the five traditional blessings of life (health, wealth, success, family, and a peaceful death). The large round fittings depict *kui* dragons coiled amidst dense vegetation, while the flower vase with emerging halberds fitted to the top left corner offers a visual a pun for 'rising three ranks in the examination' – the highest promotion attainable within the Qing court<sup>71</sup>.

The interior lining of the quiver's pockets – wherein arrows of various forms would have been stored – survives. Owing to the open distribution of these pockets, such quivers were often referred to as *sādài* (撒袋) or 'dispersing bag' in Chinese.<sup>72</sup>

### Provenance

Art market USA

### References

<sup>68</sup> A banner system functioning as administrative and military divisions into which all Manchu households were placed, and forming the basic organisational framework of all of Manchu society. During wartime, the 'Eight Banners' were effectively armies, complete with cavalry, artillery and infantry.

<sup>69</sup> See *Illustrated Regulations for Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Qing dynasty* 皇朝禮器圖式, Beijing, Wuyingdian, 1796.

<sup>70</sup> See Natasha Bennett, *Chinese Arms and Armours*, Trustees of the Royal Armouries, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> See also Runjeet Singh, *Hong Kong Catalogue*, 2017. URL : [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/131/qing\\_imperial\\_quiver](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/131/qing_imperial_quiver) and [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/279/leather\\_quiver](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/279/leather_quiver)

<sup>72</sup> A beautiful painting by Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766) depicts Qinglong Emperor in ceremonial armour on horseback, giving us context for this type of quiver and the Manchu tradition of its use: the Emperor wears the quiver on his right hip, presumably secured by a belt, with the arrows facing backwards.





30

## IMPERIAL VELVET QUIVER

BEIJING, CHINA

19TH CENTURY (QING DYNASTY)

OVERALL 266MM

This rare Qing Dynasty Imperial Guard's quiver is covered in red velvet with applied copper-alloy mounts with traces of gilding. In addition to the main pocket, the quiver has no less than three rear, hinged pockets (an unusual feature compared to the usual two); and another pocket wrapped around the three hinged pockets for quicker draws. These hold extra or special arrows. Three large, stylised Chinese shòu 寿 (longevity) symbols sit prominently on the front in the position where on earlier quivers three slots would be present for the placement of the additional arrows<sup>73</sup>.

An important quiver of matching adornment and similar form is in the Brooklyn Museum (acc. no.34.1386a-f) as part of a full costume<sup>74</sup>. The only significant difference between these two quivers is that the textile covering on the Brooklyn Museum's example is what is known as *suozijia*— a silk brocade with a pattern of interlocking Ys (in imitation of archaic armour) which is usually reserved for Qing princely ranks only.

We also presented a very similar but maroon velvet quiver, complete with arrows to lend the piece context, in our Hong Kong catalogue back in 2017<sup>75</sup>.

A beautiful painting of Qinglong Emperor in ceremonial armour and on horseback, dated to 1739 or 1758 and painted by Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), gives us context for this type of quiver and the Manchu tradition of its use<sup>76</sup>. The Emperor wears the quiver on his right hip, presumably secured by a belt, with the arrows facing backwards. We can see the quiver, like ours, is wedge shaped, has a main pocket and three small, rear pockets that contain two distinctive arrows with black-and-white fletchings—signifying them to be whistling arrows. The main compartment contains seven arrows with feathers of the spotted argus: a large pheasant native to the jungles of Malaysia. These feathers are described in imperial regulations as phoenix feathers<sup>77</sup>.

### Provenance

Private European collection

### References

<sup>73</sup> See also: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/279/leather\\_quiver](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/279/leather_quiver)

<sup>74</sup> See URL: <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/38760>

<sup>75</sup> See URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/131/qing\\_imperial\\_quiver?keywords=quiver](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/131/qing_imperial_quiver?keywords=quiver)

<sup>76</sup> See Rawski and Rawson, China: *The Three Emperors*, 2005, p.166, fig.65.

<sup>77</sup> See URL : <https://debtelin.nl/archery/the-qianlong-emperor-in-ceremonial-armor-on-horseback>





31

### HAND-FIRING MUSKET

DECCAN OR MUGHAL  
DOMINIONS & CHINA  
17TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1335MM

A beautiful and intriguing musket of cross-cultural significance. The late 17th or early 18th century barrel is of high quality and is either of Mughal or Deccani manufacture. It is of octagonal section and tapers from a wide breach to a ½-inch bore (approx. 13mm). The barrel is decorated over its entire length with densely packed foliage and blossoming flowers in gold inlay. The breach and fore-end are decorated mostly *en suite* with the barrel, whilst the muzzle is inlaid entirely with a chevron-pattern of stylised leaves.

The curved stock and forestock are Chinese, 19th century or earlier. It is clear that the maker had a skilled hand, and has thoughtfully mounted the barrel slightly higher than would be expected, presumably to ensure that all of the gold work at the breech is exposed. Two silver barrel bands, so often seen in Chinese antique firearms of the period, thoughtfully hug the contours of the musket, with small, flattened oval belt loops. The bands are also prudently placed where the gold decoration on the barrel changes. The butt has been finely carved over each face to convey a four-clawed dragon, which chases a flaming pearl sitting just behind the barrel-breach. The butt is fitted with a silver cap.

The lack of firing mechanism means that this gun would have had to be fired manually, by holding a match in the primed flash pan. This suggests it was not a gun for practical use, but perhaps was made for ceremonies, or as a votive offering to a temple.

Indo-Chinese weapons are not unheard of. The Palace Museum in Beijing has many examples of Indian edged weapons mounted in China, with Chinese blades or scabbards. See *Armaments and Military Provisions – The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum* (2008). There is also a Chinese made Tibetan-style musket (with bi-pod) in the Wallace Collection, London, with a 17th century Indian barrel with gold decoration (accession number OA2003).

#### Provenance

European art market







## MARATHA ROCKET

MARATHA CONFEDERACY  
(INDIA)  
18TH CENTURY

OVERALL 1195MM  
ROCKET 233MM  
DIAMETER 44MM  
WEIGHT 2440G

Now in the collection  
of a UK institution

This exceptionally rare and unusual object is an early kind of rocket that was deployed by a range of Indian armies as early as the 17th century. This example comprises firstly a long blade of Indian manufacture (though it is made in the style of a European rapier – note especially the forte and medial fuller). This is bound at the hilt-end with leather cords to a cylindrical steel case covered with red fabric. A crescent-shaped spike extends from the top-end of the case, whilst at the bottom-end is a short hole or nozzle used to hold the fuse. Gunpowder is kept within the cylindrical casing, so that upon firing, the entire piece would have been launched at great speed into enemy lines, wreaking havoc especially on crowded clusters of infantrymen.<sup>78</sup>

These rockets are found only rarely – perhaps unsurprising given their original function. And others preserved in both the Royal Artillery Museum in Woolwich, London, as well as the Bangalore Museum in India, show similar though ultimately varied forms to the present example.<sup>79</sup>

But how can these discrepancies in form – between the present example and those preserved within museum collections – be explained, particularly with respect to this rocket's place of manufacture?

Though the invention and production of such weapons has consistently been attributed to the Kingdom of Mysore and the forces of Tipu Sultan (1751-1799), both the contemporary literary evidence and the museum comparanda mentioned above strongly suggest that the present piece must possess a different history.

A written source, in this case, is able to provide vital insights as to the origins of our example. During his travels throughout southern and western India, James Forbes, an English bookkeeper, noted of a Maratha military camp as follows: *"The war rocket used by the Mahrattas which very often annoyed us is composed of an iron tube eight or ten inches long and near two inches in diameter. This destructive weapon is sometimes fixed to a rod iron, sometimes to a straight two-edged sword, but most commonly to a strong bamboo cane four or five feet long with an iron spike projecting beyond the tube to this rod or staff, the tube filled with combustible materials (...)"*<sup>80</sup>

This description precisely matches the structure of the present piece, and in tandem with a range of other sources, confirms the theory proposed by Nidhin G. Olikara – for whose instructive article we are grateful and give thanks – that rockets of this particular form were in fact made and used by the Maratha Confederacy.<sup>81</sup>

I offer thanks to Nidhin Olikara for his help in preparing this catalogue entry, and for his informative paper based upon this rocket which is published in 'The Journal of the Arms & Armour Society, Vol XXXIV, No.1, March 2022'.

### Provenance:

Sir William Farington - Worden Hall, Lancashire, England

### References:

<sup>78</sup> For further discussion of their use, for example, in the Anglo-Mysore Wars, see: H M Iftikhar Jaim & Jasmine Jaim (2011), 'The Decisive Nature of the Indian War Rocket in the Anglo-Mysore Wars of the Eighteenth Century', *Arms & Armour*, 8:2, 131-138.

<sup>79</sup> The second of the two illustrations that comprise the following item in this catalogue (Cat. No. 10) also depicts a rocket of similar form (the caption reads *bahmna*, which is very close to *bahn*, the traditional word for a rocket or 'fire arrow').

<sup>80</sup> James Forbes & Eliza R. Montalembert (1834), *Oriental Memoirs: a narrative of seventeen years' residence in India*, London, pp.359-360.

<sup>81</sup> Nidhin G. Olikara, *An 18th Century Sword-Bladed Metal Cased Maratha War Rocket And The Evolution Of The Use Of The War Rocket in India*, in *The Journal of the Arms & Armour Society*, Vol XXIV, No.1, March 2022.

















33

## PAINTED BLUNDERBUSS

KASHMIR  
19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 534MM  
BARRELL 305MM  
MUZZLE DIAMETER 38MM

The decoration of this unusual 19th-century blunderbuss is spectacular. Polychrome scenes of amber-coloured figures and animals both in repose and in flight are painted over the wooden stock amidst bursting pink leaves and flowerheads whose gold outlines and contours contrast brilliantly against a dark ground of forest-green. A European (possibly French) flintlock mechanism is attached to the stock and adorned with fine lines and foliate patterns in gold *koftgari*, the remaining fixtures – side-plate, butt-cap and trigger-guard – all decorated *en suite*.

A Damascus-steel barrel is then secured to the stock by large domed screws visible on the side-plate, and chiselled at its breech with a symmetrical trellis of splaying leaves and circling vine stems in gold – a decorative scheme repeated at the flared muzzle which is the key characteristic of such firearms.

Another blunderbuss of this type is preserved in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (Inventory Number 3.O.-5871),<sup>82</sup> showing the same schema and a similar colour palette in its painted decoration, as well as a near-identical barrel and flintlock mechanism. Another, preserved at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (Accession Number 2604(1S)), may shed further light on the present example's origins.<sup>83</sup> Presented by H H Maharaja Gulab Singh of Kashmir, it can be confidently dated to the

early 19th century, and exhibits a highly similar short Damascus-steel barrel which has been adorned with cartouches of stylised foliate decoration in gold *koftgari*.<sup>84</sup>

Amin Jaffer's cataloguing of an armchair painted in this style of Kashmiri papier-mâché work provides further context, including a quote from Emily Eden, the famous poet and novelist, who during her travels in the Punjab during the late 1830s lamented, "I had a great miss this morning of some trays and cups japanned in Cashmere."<sup>85</sup> Similarly decorated items of furniture were used at the courts of the Sikhs, who ruled Kashmir from 1780 to 1846.<sup>86</sup>

### Provenance

European art market

### References

<sup>82</sup> URL: <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/15.+weapons%2C+armor/669292>

<sup>83</sup> URL: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O84493/flintlock-firearm-unknown/>

<sup>84</sup> See also: Lord Egerton of Tatton, *Indian and Oriental Armour*, London, 1896, p.144, Cat. No. 762.

<sup>85</sup> Amin Jaffer (2002), *Luxury Goods from India: The Art of the Indian Cabinet-Maker*, V&A Publications, London, p.48.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*



34

## CHINESE STIRRUPS

CHINA  
18TH - 19TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 178MM  
WIDTH 165MM  
WEIGHT 1929G

This heavy pair of large Chinese stirrups exhibit unusual decorative features that make them unique from other examples (though antique Chinese stirrups are rare in any case).

Formed entirely from bronze, the present pair begin with a stepped top-section which in its design is reminiscent of Chinese temple architecture, each stirrup then including the typical rectangular apertures which would have originally held the stirrup leathers. The shoulders are cast to convey the faces of dragons that show sharp fangs and billowing manes. A sunken section extending from their mouths comprises the main surface of the stirrups' posts or 'arms', and in deep relief conveys a mantra inscription in the Lanca script (a Tibetanised form of Sanskrit), possibly the well-known mantra: *Om mani padme hum*.

Intersecting the posts and treads are further faces of those same dragons seen at the shoulders, though here they are depicted as if seen from above. Domed discs of turquoise are then inset within a centrally sunken border over the edge of the treads; each of the four sides holds twenty-two of these discs (eleven are missing in total). The main interior surface has been incised with a large central medallion containing a large Chinese character set within a border of delicately engraved foliage.

Two stirrups of similar weight and size were exhibited by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *Treasures from Asian Armouries - TEFAF Maastricht 2020* (see Cat. No. 17),<sup>87</sup> also showing dragon-shoulders and the same essential structure that is typical of such pieces, as well as a mantric inscription. A bronze censer (Object Number 24:2005a,b), preserved in

the Saint Louis Art Museum and made by a famous bronzesmith of the late Ming dynasty, similarly shows striking dragon faces.<sup>88</sup>

## Provenance

Private European collection

## References

<sup>87</sup> URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/368/dragon\\_stirrups](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/368/dragon_stirrups)

<sup>88</sup> URL: <https://www.slam.org/collection/objects/43377/>











35

## TIBETAN STIRRUPS

TIBET  
16TH - 18TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 152MM  
WIDTH 117MM

Tibetan stirrups of this quality and age seldom appear on the art market. Indeed, they are sufficiently rare that much of what is known about Tibetan stirrups with respect to their form and categorisation originates from a single, obscure treatise published by Tashi Namgyal, a writer of the 16th century.<sup>89</sup>

Here thick plaques of damascened gold cover the stirrups' shoulders and convey stylised dragons' heads in profile at either side of the rectangular apertures originally used to secure the stirrup leathers. The posts (*rkang* in Tibetan) are formed of faceted iron damascened in silver, and curve gently down towards the lozenge-shaped treads (*mthil*). An elegant four-footed base completes each stirrup, chiselled and

engraved over its surface in deep relief to convey a foliate sequence in gold mostly *en suite* with that at the shoulders. The stylised leaves and tendrils rise and fall with a great sense of vitality – a bright and well-preserved schema which in turn provides a pleasing contrast to the archaic patina covering the iron underside of the treads.

Though it is difficult to pinpoint precisely similar examples, it is useful to compare the present stirrups with a pair (Accession Number 2002.136.1, .2)<sup>90</sup> preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, particularly on account of their deeper lozenge-shaped treads – a rare and unusual feature in such pieces – as well as the similarity of their chiselled decoration in gold.<sup>91</sup>

### Provenance

Private European collection

### References

<sup>89</sup> On this and Tibetan stirrups, saddles and bridles, see Donald LaRocca, *Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2006, pp. 214-266.

<sup>90</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/25100>

<sup>91</sup> See Donald LaRocca, *ibid*, pp. 245-246, Item Number 131.





36

## GOLD STIRRUPS

TBILISI, GEORGIA  
19TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 135MM  
WIDTH 123MM

These refined stirrups originate from the city of Tiflis (or Tbilisi, the modern capital of Georgia). Miniature birds in gold – their striking features and plumage picked out in close detail – sit at either side of the sloping apertures through which the original stirrup leathers would have been placed. Further damascene-work appears over the arms, conveying a lush menagerie of gold flowerheads and curving vines. As the arms widen, these flowerheads grow, before at the base one bird defeats another within an ogee-arched panel.

The stirrups' treads are hollow but formed with ridged upper edges so as to provide a firmer grip against the rider's footwear. The decorative band of stylised flowerheads and vines over the exterior face, and a plain band of gold at the interior, reveal most clearly the cross-hatching used to hold the gold inlay. An inscription at the underside of the treads gives the maker's name: "Khachatur (/Hatjatur) of Tbilisi".

This name likely refers to Khechatur Beburov, a weaponsmith born in 1766 who worked in the city of Tbilisi, Georgia.<sup>92</sup> He produced arms and armour for Russian royalty, and was held in sufficiently high esteem that on the 2nd August, 1792, he was given the status of a noble by the Georgian Tsar Heraclius II.<sup>93</sup> Though the year of his death remains uncertain, we know that Khechatur was still alive and working in 1827, since this is the year in which he produced and presented a fine sword to Russian emperor Nicholas I (r.1825-1855), which is now preserved in the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg (Inventory Number B.O.-38).<sup>94</sup>

We thank Gotscha Lagidse for his assistance in identifying the maker of these stirrups.

### Provenance

Private European collection

### References

- <sup>92</sup> A detailed article on Khachatur's biography can be found here: URL: <https://www.gotscha.nl/khachatur-ru.pdf> (text in Russian).
- <sup>93</sup> *ibid*, see Fig./Doc. 7 taken from the Central Historical Archives of Georgia.
- <sup>94</sup> See Yuriy A. Miller (2004), *Caucasian Arms from the State Hermitage Museum*, St Petersburg, p.61 and URL: <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/15.+weapons%2c+armor/507566>.

Хачатур Тбилиси







37

# BRONZE SCULPTURE: CAUCASIAN WARRIOR

THEODORE-JOSEPH  
NAPOLEON JACQUES

RUSSIA  
1851

OVERALL 520MM



This stunning bronze sculpture by the French artist Napoleon Jacques depicts a Caucasian mountaineer standing fully armed. It was modelled in 1851 and cast the same year – presumably in St Petersburg, where the artist lived until the end of 1858. Napoleon Jacques created multiple versions of this soldier: a similar sculpture cast sometime between 1850-1870 at the Felix Chopin foundry in St Petersburg is titled *Caucasian Warrior* and likewise depicts a standing soldier; this time with his left hand leaning on the hilt of his sword. Another bronze with a slightly different patina, probably a copy of the Chopin work, is preserved in the State Hermitage Museum of St Petersburg under an Unknown Artist label<sup>95</sup>.

The present iteration of the Caucasian mountaineer is richly detailed, with incredible attention given to the texture of his clothes and mail-coat. The soldier is well armed, too. He carries a holstered pistol, a *kindjal* dagger (an example of which is presented in this catalogue<sup>96</sup>), and a *shashka* sabre<sup>97</sup>.

Napoleon Jacques is the author of the monument to Peter The Great that was erected in Kronstadt in 1842. He is known as the very first sculptor to have switched from the classic form to a daily realism, depicting ordinary people and genre scenes in small bronze statuary. As a foreigner living and working in Russia, he influenced the likes of Nikolay Lieberich, Evgeny Lanceray and Vasiliy Grachev in the early 1870s – artists who took, developed and realised the style pioneered by Jacques and made it contemporary and popular. Images of Russian scenery (such as hunting scenes) were their main focus, along with portraits of people from the Caucasus.

## Provenance

European art market

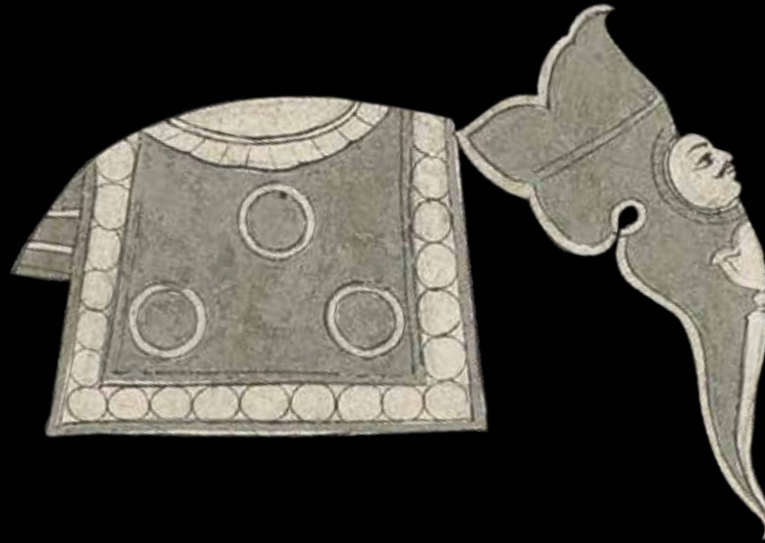
## References

<sup>95</sup> Yuriy A. Miller, *Caucasian Arms from the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. The Art of Weaponry in Caucasus and Transcaucasia in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Devantier, Næstved [Denmark], 2000.

<sup>96</sup> See item number 15.

<sup>97</sup> See a similar example in this catalogue, item number 16.





38

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF ARMS AND ARMOUR

AWADH (OUDH),  
NORTHERN INDIA  
18TH CENTURY

HEIGHT: 318MM  
WIDTH: 210MM

This fine pair of illustrations depicts a broad and fascinating range of Indian arms and armour in bright colours and charming detail within red-painted borders.

Among the curiosities depicted, on the left panel of the first illustration, is a depiction of a brown *peti kamari kasava ki* – a kind of cuirass or cummerbund “of tightness”. Further down is a *ghoda pasar* (“horse armour”) with recurved shaffron and decorative trappings, together with a brilliant *hasri pasar* (“elephant armour”) which shows much of the same detailing, though its shaffron furthermore depicts the mysterious face of a moustachioed man in profile. Next to a blue *dhal* (“shield”), at the bottom of this panel, is an unusual object which so far remains unidentified and is labelled a *bichuva*, or “scorpion”. The greater part of the opposite panel then depicts a range of bladed weapons as well as bows and quivers, including a *gilol*: a bow with two “teeth” which would fire small pebbles or clay pellets here painted grey.

Within the left-hand panel of the second illustration, amidst a group of red-painted edged weapons, is a simply painted *chakra* (“quoit”), an iron ring both worn over a turban to defend the wearer from enemy attacks and used also as a deadly throwing weapon.

There follows a column of different hafted weapons, including a *lohamgi*, a club attached with a series of pointed metal ridges (the word roughly translates to “stick with an iron end”). At the base of the panel is a *bahmna*, a wooden pole attached with a metal casing at its end – likely a *bahn*, or “rocket”.

Amongst the fine pieces of the right-hand panel is a striking gauntlet-weapon here given the name *panjo ji rako*, which translates approximately to “gripping claw”. A trio of armour-pieces are then depicted further down, including a *bakathar*, the Persian word for an armoured coat made of mail and plate. Lastly, a *sar par* with seven steel blades and red base is shown at the bottom: *sar* (or *sir*) translates to “head”, whilst *par* means “to rip”, thus bestowing this formidable object the equally formidable meaning “head ripper”.

This pair of paintings is exceptionally rare and few precise comparanda are known. However, a page of the Gentil Album preserved in the Victoria & Albert Museum (Accession Number IS.25:34-1980) is particularly useful here.<sup>98</sup> The album comprises fifty-eight paintings depicting a variety of themes from 18th-century India, and is so-called after the French infantry colonel Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Gentil (1726-1799) who commissioned the collection.

This example from the Gentil Album and our own illustrations depict many of the same objects, including a claw-type weapon, the “head ripper”, and armours for a man, horse, and elephant, as well as the scarce ‘bahn’-rocket (this providing further evidence to the theory that the region of Awadh was an important centre for the manufacture of such weapons).<sup>99</sup> Another important painted work for comparison is shown within the *Nujum Al-Ulum* manuscript (Bijapur; c.1570) preserved in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, and partly published in Robert Elgood, *Hindu Arms and Ritual* (2004).

We thank Kamala Lucas for her translation of the captions within these illustrations.

### Provenance

Art market USA

### References

<sup>98</sup> URL: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O402774/rites-and-festivals-of-muslims-album-page-unknown/>

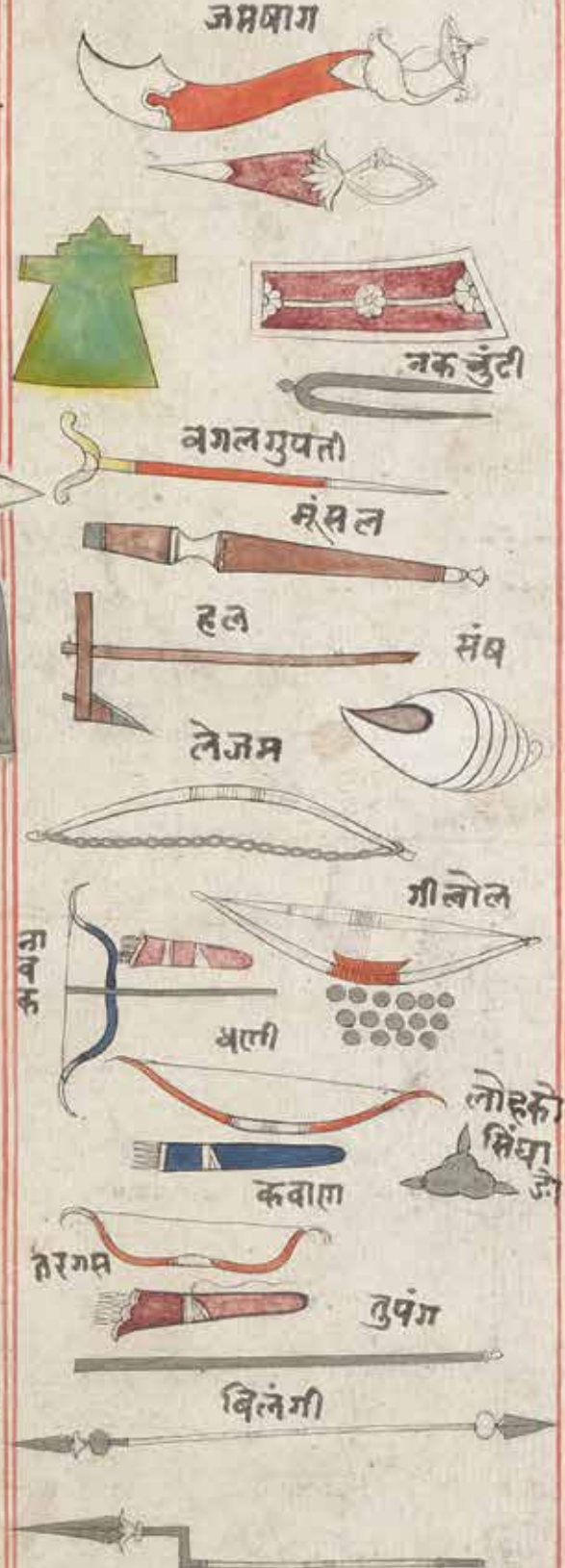
<sup>99</sup> As in the description of Cat. No. 5, see Nidhin G. Olikara (?), “Changing Timelines: On the discovery of a fine 18th-century Maratha Rocket and its implication on the evolution and use of Rockets”, (forthcoming)



पेटीकसरीकसदाकी



जमश्याग



नक चुंटी

वगल गुपती

मंसल

## हल

संक्ष

लेजम

गी लो ल

धरणी

लोहको

सिंघा

此

कदाण

हरगम

तुपंग

बिलिंगी



peṭi kamari hasavā kī - a cuirass (peṭi) "of tightness"



bughī - "ignite"



cilainbaḥ

ghoḍā pāsar -  
horse' armour



hasrī pāsar -  
elephant armour

bichuvā -  
Scorpion

dhāl - shield



jamaṣāg



nakacu'mṭi - "prickly"



baḡal gupatī - "Side knife"



maṃṣal - "fleshy"



baḷ - plough

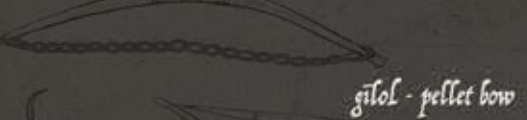
ṣaṃṣa - conch



lejam - training bow



gīlōl - pellet bow



nāyak -  
"Sailor"



alhanī - "lora",  
"wealthy"

loba ko Ṣinghā nō  
- "beat the iron"



kavāṇ (also "kaman") - bow



taragas

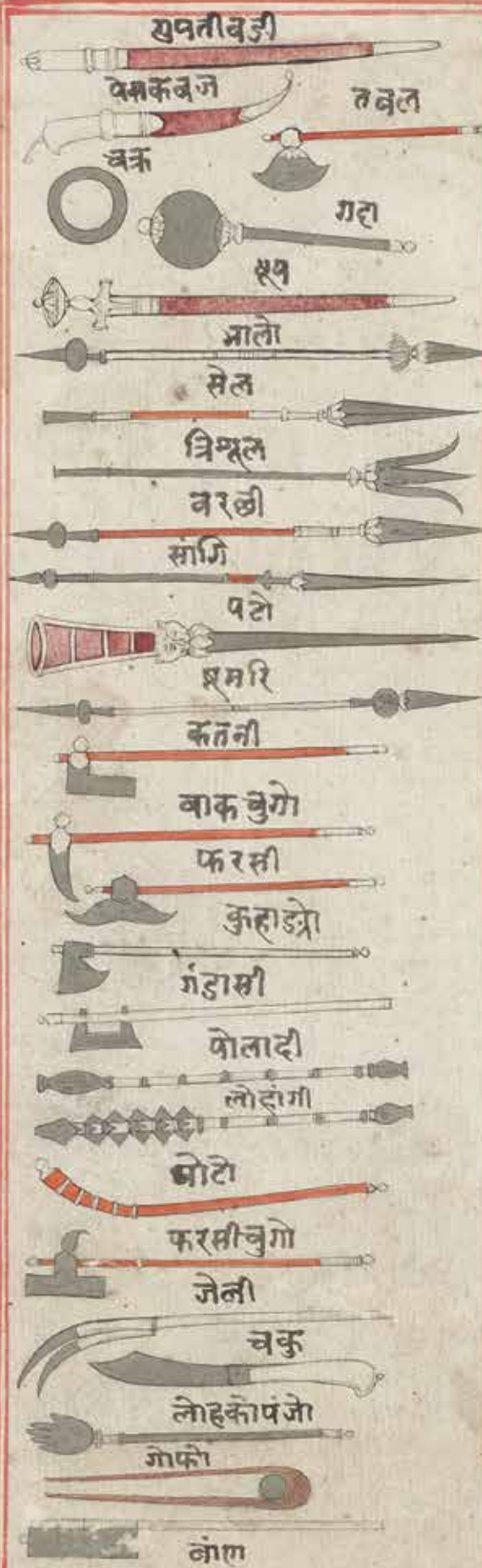
tupamg



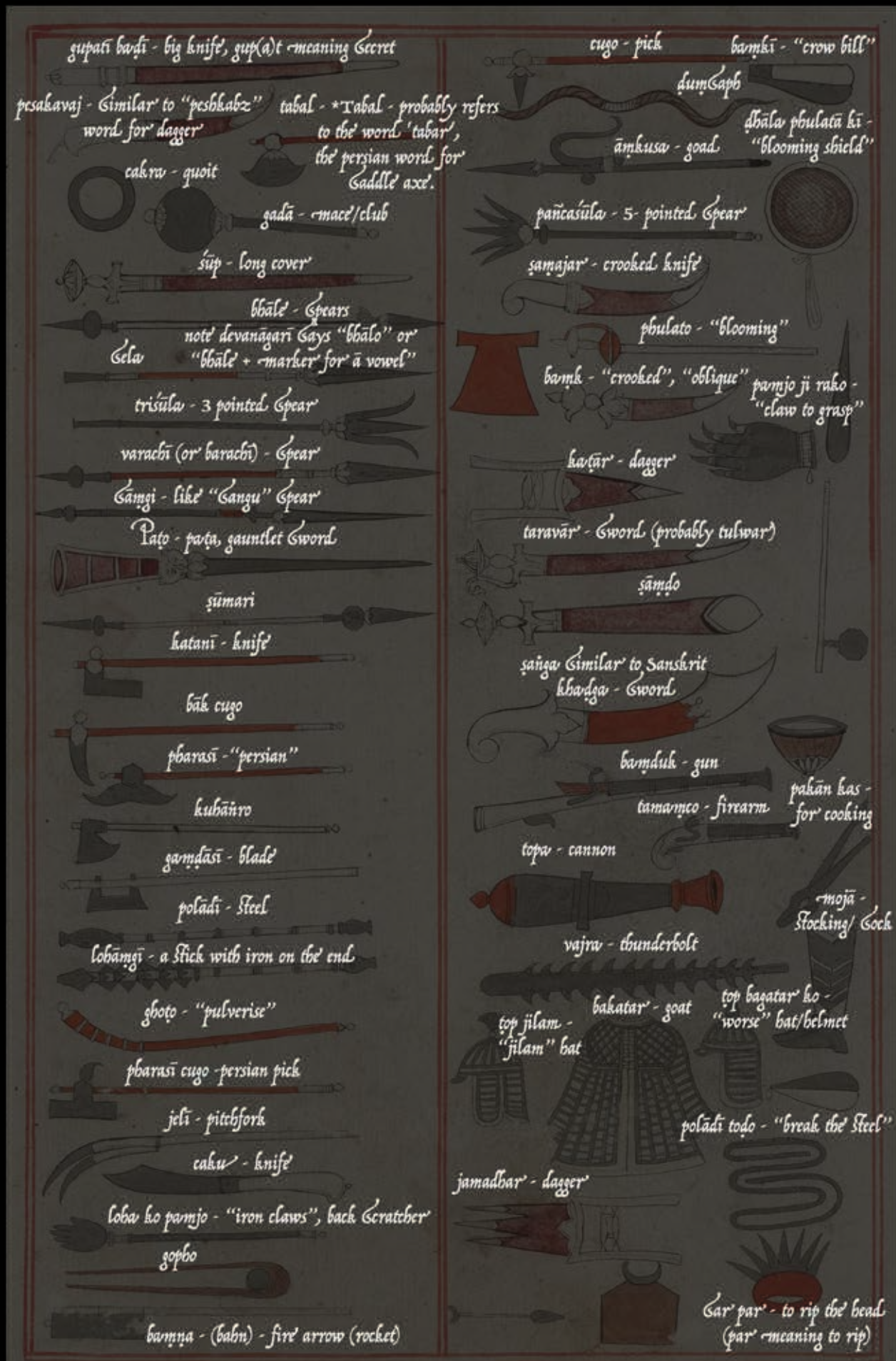
bilamgī















39

## COLLECTION OF FLINT-STRIKERS

PERSIA  
15TH - 19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 75MM - 140MM

This superior collection of six flint-strikers originates from Persia. Two of the pieces are of a significant importance and the finest examples of an already remarkable lot - a Timurid example in the form of a dragon, and another in the form of a snake. They all are made of steel, which has been skilfully engraved on each face and drilled and filed to optimise their intended function: the elongated surface would have been used to create a spark by scraping a flint across the edge.

An Arabic inscription on the middle right striker reads as follows: 'Sultan Nadir Shah 1154' (1741 to 1742 A.D.).

Over the centuries, such strikers became more and more decorative and elaborate, showing a real aesthetic concern that not only made them important daily tools for providing heat and light, but also turned them into personal showpieces. A diverse range of flora, fauna, and letters appear as decorative motifs and outlines in other known examples, as well as additional hoops, fittings, and curls which became variously popular in the centuries that they were used. The Timurid flint-striker, dating to the 15th century, is almost identical to an example currently held in the Tanavoli Collection,<sup>100</sup> but such pieces can also be found in many important museum collections across the world.

### Provenance

London art market

### References

<sup>100</sup> See James Allan & Brian Gilmour, *Persian Steel : The Tanavoli Collection*, Oxford, 2000, p. 439, no. 73.





40

## KALACHAKRA MASK

TIBET  
18TH CENTURY

HEIGHT 230MM  
WIDTH 245MM

The fiery visage of this mask is mesmerising, with the brow, moustache and all edges of the face worked intricately in gilt-copper repoussé to depict spiralling flames that look as if they might leap out at the viewer. The mask's rubbed nose reveals the copper core of the frame, whilst the oval third eye and broad apertures for the wearer's cheeks and mouth provide generous space for the wearer's features.

Masks such as these were used by monks during a ritual Offering Dance (*Ghar* in Tibetan) of the Kalachakra Initiations. The ceremony sees monks dance in the guise of offering goddesses, so as to lend concentration to the *Kalachakra* Mandala, a manifestation of Kalachakra as the sacred realm of Buddha (Kalachakra literally translates to "Wheel of Time").<sup>101</sup>

As in many other examples, the nose here is rubbed and lays bare a copper surface, though the reason for this is unclear. An important comparandum (Museum Code ABR 041),<sup>102</sup> preserved in the Tibet Museum (Gruyères, Switzerland), similarly shows the copper interior of both its nose and third eye. Further important examples for comparison are published and discussed by Béguin (1977),<sup>103</sup> as well as Thurman & Weldon (1999).<sup>104</sup>

The mask possesses a rich and impressive provenance, having been first sold and published by Spink & Son Ltd in *The Mirror of Mind: Art of Vajrayana Buddhism* (London, 1995),<sup>105</sup> and subsequently by Christie's in 2004 (New York).<sup>106</sup> During the intermediary period, the mask was furthermore featured in an exhibition and subsequently published in *Monasterios y lamas del Tibet* (2000).<sup>107</sup>

## Published

Exhibition Catalogue, *The Mirror of Mind: Art of Vajrayana Buddhism*, London, Spink & Son Ltd, 1995, pp.72-73, Cat. No. 44.  
Exhibition Catalogue, *Monasterios y lamas del Tibet*, Madrid, Fundación "La Caixa", 2000, p. 119, Cat. No. 60.

## References

- <sup>101</sup> See also Cat. No. 9 above (i.e. the chakravartin sword).  
<sup>102</sup> URL: <https://tibetmuseum.app/index.php?w=coll&cat=all&id=149#slide-0>  
<sup>103</sup> G. Béguin, *Dieux et démons de l'Himalaya*, 1977, cat. no. 329, ill. p. 265  
<sup>104</sup> R. Thurman and D. Weldon, *Sacred Symbols, The Ritual Art of Tibet*, 1999, cat. nos. 40 and 41.  
<sup>105</sup> Exhibition Catalogue, *The Mirror of Mind: Art of Vajrayana Buddhism*, London, Spink & Son Ltd, 1995, pp.72-73, Cat. No. 44.  
<sup>106</sup> Exhibition Catalogue, *Indian and Southeast Asian Art Including 20th Century Indian*, New York, Christie's, 2004, Lot 87.  
<sup>107</sup> Exhibition Catalogue, *Monasterios y lamas del Tibet*, Madrid, Fundación "La Caixa", 2000, p. 119, Cat. No. 60.

41

## MAHARANI DHAL (SHIELD)

MEWAR, INDIA  
18TH CENTURY

DIAMETER: 612MM

A monumental and possibly unique Rajput leather *dhal* (shield). The shield's impressive size is matched well by its striking depiction in black-and-gold paint of a complex and eye-catching procession which trails busily around the shield's decorative center. The piece is more striking still for the fact that a large proportion of the procession is made up of Royal and courtly women.

A set of stairs, painted three-dimensionally so as to convey a sense of depth, lead up to a palace entrance and provide a starting point for the procession, which in turn travels anti-clockwise along the shield's main surface. Beneath the stylized architectural features that follow, attendants holding parasols and standard-bearers help to identify the turbaned lady on horseback just ahead of them as royalty. Dozens of accompanying females, all wearing turbans and some carrying weapons and shields, travel both on foot and on horseback towards an ascetic who sits under a tree. From there, the procession becomes male; and it appears that the artist has not bestowed the male figures with the same prominence that he has given to their female counterparts. They are less individualized and packed more closely together. It is also not clear who the leading male is: a Maharana or Maharajah is missing from the male half of the procession.

Surya the sun god insignia of the Mewar royal court occupies the center of the shield, radiating rays of sunshine within an outer circular border of small flowerheads. Around this central panel are four domed, gilt-copper bosses, the surface of each chased with floral patterns.

Fantastic animal scenes sit between the bosses: three each depict tigers bringing down a camel, boar and buffalo; and the fourth conveys an elephant that jostles with a ram. The style of these depictions is more realistic than that seen on similar shields: the artist has added shading to the animals' frames with fine black lines and in so doing rendered them vivid and lifelike.<sup>108</sup> A velvet cushion-pad, the pile now gone, is fitted to the back of the shield with replacement brocade handgrips. A direct comparandum is not currently known to us, but a shield in the National Museum of Delhi depicted by Pant is similar in theme and construction.<sup>109</sup> Another was sold by Christies, New York in 2008.<sup>110</sup>

### Provenance

Private collection USA

### References

<sup>108</sup> URL: [https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/437/19thc\\_mewari\\_shield](https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/437/19thc_mewari_shield)

<sup>109</sup> G.N. Pant, K.K. Sharma, Indian Armours in the National Museum Collection, New Delhi National Museum, 2001, p.88, no.77.

<sup>110</sup> URL: <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/indian-and-southeast-asian-works-of-art-n08418/lot.328.html>















42

## MAHARANA DHAL (SHIELD)

MEWAR, INDIA  
18TH CENTURY

DIAMETER: 530MM

Andrew Topsfield, honorary curator of the Ashmolean museum (after retiring as keeper of Eastern Art in 2016) coined the term '*tamasha* painting', or 'pictures of public spectacle', when talking about a group of known Rajput paintings that display the king's ritual acts. Several are known; and now this leather shield can be added to that group. The shield has been painted with painstaking detail in gold on a black ground, and the subject matter is near identical to one in the National Museum of Delhi, which depicts Maharana Sangram Singh II on a royal hunt.<sup>111</sup>

Many of the paintings referred to by Topsfield share elements with the shield presented here. One example – a painting of Maharana Sangram Singh II in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (Felton bequest 1980 AS92-1980)<sup>112</sup> – depicts a kind of cage from within which hunters could safely shoot at their prey. In the painting, the hunters' cage has been vacated, and the bait, a buffalo, left free to roam. In this shield, we also see buffalo used as bait, and a cage within which the Maharana and four hunters remain, the Maharana extending his musket through the cage and shooting at a tiger. In the same painting referenced above, a tiger which has been shot by the royal party is placed on an elephant's back. On our shield, the seated Maharana watches as a tiger is similarly lifted onto the back of an elephant. He is identified as king by his *kalgi* (turban ornament), solar emblem and parasol, which are both held up behind him.

Another painting which includes a hunting cage is preserved in the San Diego Museum of Art,<sup>113</sup> and depicts Maharana Jagat Singh II shooting a tiger from within the cage whilst his attendants (and royal insignia) wait by the banks of the river.

A third painting illustrated by Pratapaditya Pal again shows Sangram Singh II,<sup>114</sup> and the use of a hunting cage, but also has other parallels with the shield in discussion due to its multiple depictions of the Maharana. The shield similarly uses a palace as a starting point to tell the story of the hunting party, and soon after the Maharana has left the palace, he is first seen on his horse witnessing a tiger killing a deer. Next, he is shown sat upon a raised platform shooting at deer. As we continue anti-clockwise around the circumference of the shield, we see the Maharana mounted on his horse again, looking backwards at a partially undressed lady who bathes a lake. The Maharana is then shown shooting at a tiger through the hunting cage mentioned previously. Now that the tiger has been killed, we see the maharajah switch from horseback to elephant, presumably tired from the day's hunting, as he appears to supervise the dead tiger being mounted onto the back of another elephant. Lastly, he forms part of a grand procession which leads back to the pictured palace where attendants and ladies await the successful royal party.

Surya, the insignia of the Mewar royal court, looks out from the shield's centre surrounded by a band of bright sunrays. Around this central panel are four gilt-copper domed bosses, the surface of each chased with floral patterns, and the edge pierced and cut into a decorative border. A later silk brocade cushion-pad with straps, through which the wearer would place their hand, is fitted to the back of the shield.

As well as the close comparandum in the National Museum of Delhi cited earlier, the David Collection in its recent publication, *Fighting, Hunting, Impressing – Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500-1850*, depicts a similar shield from their collection, although the subject matter appears to be Mughal rather than Rajput<sup>115</sup>. Another was sold by Christies, New York in 2008.<sup>116</sup>

### Provenance

Art market USA

### References

- <sup>111</sup> G.N. Pant, K.K. Sharma, *Indian Armours in the National Museum Collection*, New Delhi National Museum, 2001, p.88, no.77.
- <sup>112</sup> Joanna Williams, *Kingdom of the Sun – Indian Court and Village Art from the Princely State of Mewar*, 2007, p.130, no.14.
- <sup>113</sup> Andrew Topsfield, *Court Painting at Udaipur*, 2001, p.193, no.172.
- <sup>114</sup> Pratapaditya Pal, *The Classical Tradition in Rajput Painting*, 1978, p.120-121, no.37.
- <sup>115</sup> See pp.198-199, cat.no.89
- <sup>116</sup> URL: <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/indian-and-southeast-asian-works-of-art-n08418/lot.328.html>



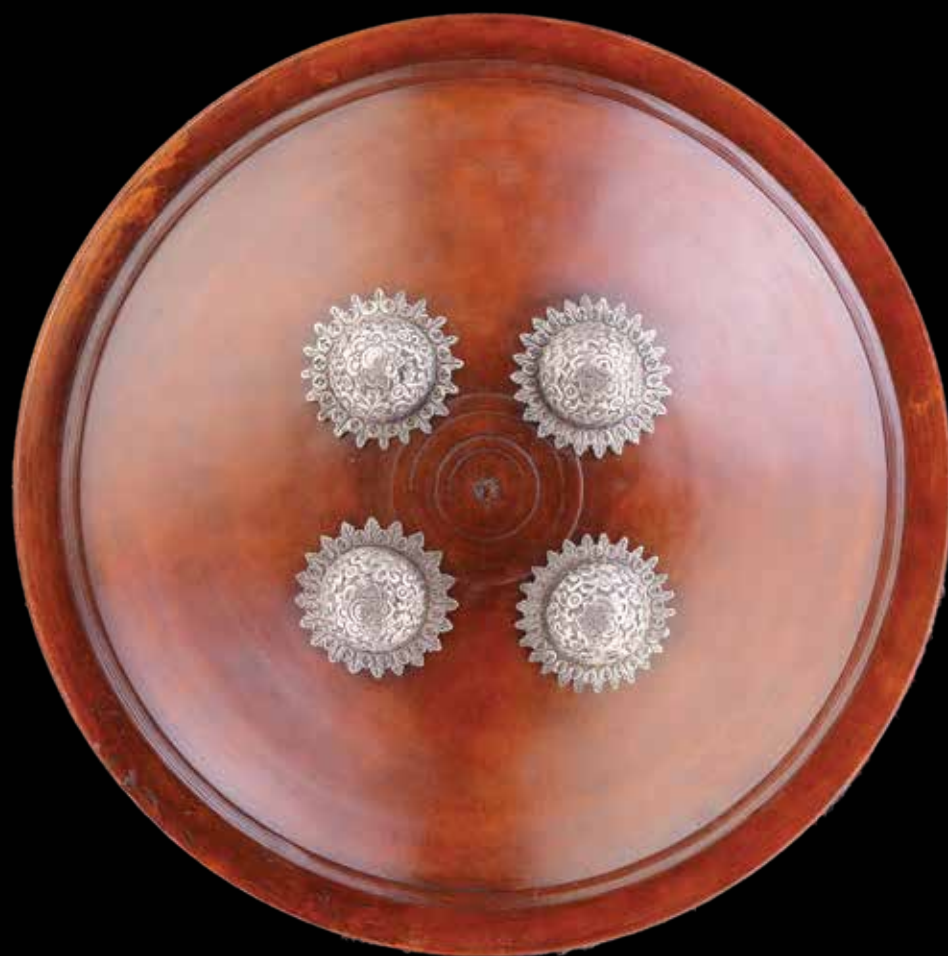












43

### PAIR OF LEATHER DHAL (SHIELD)

KUTCH, GUJARAT, INDIA  
19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER: 425MM

A pair of beautiful honey-coloured semi-translucent *dhal* (shields). The domed silver bosses show all the signs to suggest they were made in Kutch, with flowing foliate patterns created by repoussé and chasing techniques.

The shields are formed of thick Indian *sambar* (elk) hide and have been subject to "a process where hide shields are boiled in oil till they become transparent."<sup>117</sup> (the shield is not transparent, but rather translucent when held to the light). The rear of each shield retains some traces of paint, as well as an original velvet knuckle-pad and handles.

Animal hide was commonly used to make shields in India as it is light in weight, but also durable enough to withstand blows from both bladed weapons and, reputedly, bullets.

A similar shield was Presented to King Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, during his tour of India in 1875-76 by Vibhaji II Ranmalji, Jam Sahib of Nawanagar.<sup>117</sup>

#### Provenance

Art market UK

#### References

<sup>117</sup> Robert Elgood (introduction), "*Indian Art in Marlborough House*" in *Arms and Armour at Sandringham: The Indian Collection presented by the Princes, Chiefs and Nobles of India to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit to India 1875-1876*, London, 1910 (two volumes republished in facsimile editions, Ken Trotman Books, 2008).

<sup>118</sup> URL: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/14/collection/11458/shield>









44

## RITUAL DANCE SHIELD

MADURA, INDONESIA  
CIRCA 1900

DIAMETER: 630MM

A fine example of a painted wooden shield from the island of Madura, Indonesia. With its well-preserved, sturdy surface and solid hand-grip, this ceremonial shield still retains various traces of its original red pigment and gold leaf throughout, subtly highlighting the shield's noble provenance – for there is little doubt that it originates from the court of the Bangkalan principality.

The centre roundel of the shield, together with the four cartouches in its outer rim, feature intricate inscriptions in Jawi.<sup>119</sup> Arabic calligraphy was often prominently displayed on weapons and armoury in Indonesia, both to symbolically reaffirm the bearer's Muslim identity, and to serve a protective purpose in times of conflict. The talismanic quality of this shield ought to be remarked: the carving at the centre, encircled by floral designs and proclaiming 'God is great' (*'Allah Akbar'*), is encircled within the penultimate band by the four cartouches which refer to Prince Cakraningrat, the Regent of Bangkalan, Madura (*'Pangeran Cakraningrat'*, *'Adipati Bangkalan Madura'*).

Some details of the shield, however, hint at earlier religious allegiance and symbolism, signifying the deeper legitimacy of the island's ruler. Indeed, at various periods in the Madurese history, the royal court embraced in turn either Buddhism or Hinduism, or both, and there exists a legend proclaiming that the island of Madura is in fact the very realm of the Hindu deity Baladewa. As noted by curator Robyn Maxwell in her own description of the shield: 'The formal title taken by successive rulers of Bangkalan – *'Cakraningrat'* – is derived from the *cakra*, the discus weapon of the great Hindu god Vishnu, and the Wheel of Law, symbolising the Universal Monarch. The multi-spoked *cakra* – four large flames – or trident-tipped prongs and four smaller ones within one or more broad circular bands – served as a symbol of Bangkalan royalty, a prominent feature on the court's coat of arms and ceremonial banners, appearing on royal letters, manuscripts, seals, and coins. It was also emblazoned on weaponry, including cannons, and is the central design feature of this ceremonial shield.'<sup>120</sup>

While it is not known for certain which sovereign the inscription alludes to, it can be inferred from the title of *'Pangeran Cakraningrat'* that it may have been Pangeran Hasyim, who ruled from 1882-1905 as the first Madurese Regent under the Dutch colonial administration – an attribution further supported by the shield's age<sup>121</sup>.

### Provenance

Bill Evans  
Perry Kesner  
Roberto Gamba

### Literature

Bill Evans, *War, Art and Ritual – Shields from the Pacific*, 2019

### References

<sup>119</sup> Jawi is the script for the Malay language transliterated in Arabic, derived from the name of the island of Java (Jawa in Indonesian / Malay). Because Madura is located just off the north-eastern coast of Java, the Madurese people are culturally and linguistically very closely related to the Javanese.

<sup>120</sup> See Robyn Maxwell, *Life, Death and Magic: 2000 Years of Southeast Asian Ancestral Art*, National Gallery of Australia, 2010

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*





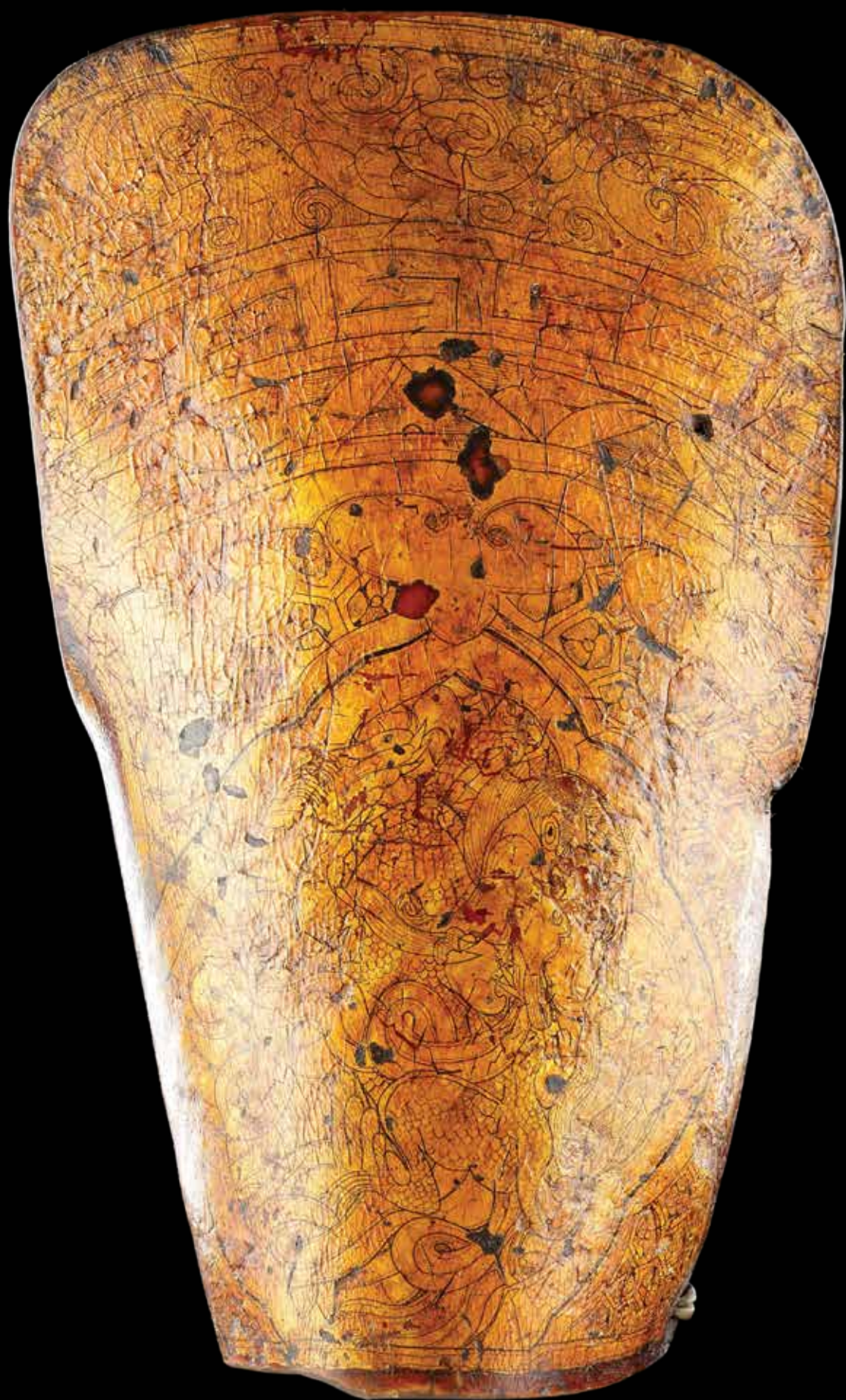


وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَكَ كُفْرًا

لَكَ كُفْرًا

الله





45

## FOREARM GUARD

TIBET

POSSIBLY 15TH - 16TH CENTURY

OVERALL 268MM



This rare item is part of a small, privileged group of closely related arm defences from Tibet, all examples of which appear to have been made for the left arm exclusively – suggesting that these were never made in pairs. Two basic types of forearm guards are known: one with applied iron struts (reminiscent of Tibetan shields and furniture, often with ornamental piercings); and the other, such as the present example, with no fittings, but with the lacquered leather surface entirely covered with varnished or gilded decoration<sup>122</sup>.

Like other arm guards of this type, the outer surface of this piece retains much of its original decoration, consisting of glazed orange and red shellac (tree resin) and fine lines painted in a black pigment. It is very similar to the decorations seen on Tibetan bow cases, quivers, and horse armour;<sup>123</sup> though the level of detail in this piece is especially arresting.

The whole surface is thoroughly decorated, the design arranged in three separate sections (from top to bottom). The upper, lobed section depicts scrolling patterns of heavy clouds, rolling ominously in the sky. This is followed by twin lines of squared spirals, evoking a roof, or perhaps a gate to the heavens. The last section, which constitutes the main artistic display of the piece, is a skilfully intricate drawing of what appears to be a *druk* (in Standard Tibetan 'འརྒྱལ', *dzongkha*) – the mighty Thunder-Dragon of Tibetan and Bhutanese mythology. It symbolises profound enlightenment and is typically connected to storms and the divine moving and shaking of the landscape (thunder being the 'cloud-voice', or formidable roar of the creature). Upon closer inspection, one can see a glimpse of the mythological beast's scales, coiling

within and without the golden surface of the armguard: as in the legends that birthed it, the *druk*'s full form eludes us still, but has certainly lost none of its evocative power.

Similar pieces to this one can be seen in the Metropolitan Museum, New York<sup>124</sup>.

## Provenance

Art market USA

## References

<sup>122</sup> See Donald LaRocca, *Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. See also Laurence Austine Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, 1895.

<sup>123</sup> An example of the latter can be seen in our catalogue, *Iconic: New York*, 2018, with a stunning Tibetan flanchard or 'sga'i am cog' (meaning 'ears of the saddle')

URL: <https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/202/flanchard>

<sup>124</sup> URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/25371>

URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/26594>

URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/27953>







46

## MORO ARMOUR

MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES  
19TH CENTURY

HEIGHT OF SHIRT: 610MM  
DIAMETER OF HELMET: 220MM

The main body of this well-preserved armour comprises brass plates burnished bright and connected by the small links of a mail shirt. The two larger frontal plates then are studded with a symmetrical display of three silver panels depicting the outlines of stylised sea monsters, the two pairs of central latches each secured by a silver plaque cut and engraved in the form of an unfurling flowerhead with large, coiling leaves.

A burgonet helmet with upturned peak, pierced plume-holder, and ridged central comb completes the armour; the comb cut over the greater part of each face with a charming trellis of interweaving vines and flowerheads - a motif repeated in the curved plaques placed at either end of the comb and just above the hinged cheek-pieces, which are later additions.

In similar armours, there are often disappointments: latches or plates may be missing; or there may be gaps in the mail shirt. The present set, however, is especially complete, making it a particularly attractive example. The helmet of another set (Cat. No. 28)<sup>125</sup> published by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *Iconic: London 2017* is similar in its decoration,<sup>126</sup> and a full armour (Number 2014.12.1)<sup>127</sup> preserved in the Peabody Museum at Harvard University - though in worse condition than our own - has silver foliate plaques with the same outlines used to hold the frontal plates together.

### Provenance

London art market

### References

<sup>125</sup> URL: [http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/168/moro\\_suit\\_of\\_armour\\_with\\_helmet](http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/168/moro_suit_of_armour_with_helmet)

<sup>126</sup> Runjeet Singh, *Iconic: London 2017*, pp.86-89, Cat. No. 28.

<sup>127</sup> URL: <https://bit.ly/3kOcEky>









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## SHIRT OF MAIL AND PLATE

BIJAPUR, INDIA  
16TH - 17TH CENTURY

OVERALL 850MM

This impressive mail coat is in an excellent state of preservation and comprises one of the few heavier pieces that have survived from the late 16th to early 17th centuries. Such armours formed part of the famous armoury of Bikaner, Rajasthan,<sup>128</sup> and mail coats of this type were produced at Bijapur, the capital of the Adil Shahi dynasty.

The thigh-length shirt with long sleeves is composed of heavy graduating riveted links, heavier at the top for the more vital areas, and lighter towards the bottom. Rectangular iron plates, contoured to sit against the body, protect the abdomen and sides have four pairs of large buckles with decorative eye shaped studs. The plates at the rear are smaller, laminated and arranged into columns in order to afford the wearer some degree of movement.

A similar armour can be found in the David Collection and published in the catalogue for the 2021 exhibition with the same title 'Fighting, Hunting, Impressing – Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500-1850', Folsach, Meyer, and Wandel, p160-161, cat.no.55.

### Provenance

Private collection UK

### References

<sup>128</sup> The Bikaner armoury was situated in Chintamani fort, known from the early 20th century onwards as 'Junagarh' or 'Old Fort'. It is perhaps best known for the arms and armour associated with the military exploits of ruler Anup Singh, who served extensively in the Deccan as commander, general and administrator. Arms and armour of the Bikaner armoury can be identified by their characteristic punch-dot markings – the majority of weapons we encounter with such markings being entirely made of steel and of simple form, though well-crafted.

See Hermann Goetz, *The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State*, Bruno Cassirer, Oxford, 1950, p.17-18.

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CHEVRON  
TULWAR

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