



Mughal Silver Pandan

Circa: 18th century

India, 18th century

9.5cm long, 7.5cm wide, 3.3cm high

368 grams

Provenance: Private Collection

Stock no.: A4787

This octagonal box is decorated in pierced and chased silver. The central oval panel and the inner border on the flat lid are decorated with lotus flowers and birds. The outer border of the lid is embellished with lotus flowers amongst leafy scrolls. The base of the box has another hinged lid which opens up to reveal a hidden mirror inset in the silver. The lid on this side is decorated with an oval and inner border of roses and an outer border of birds amongst leafy scrolls.

By the 18th century, silver boxes such as this one were made in a variety of shapes, often with floral and bird decoration. These boxes were used to store pan, edible leaves wrapped with lime paste, areca nuts and spices. Pan was used for its medicinal, digestive and aphrodisiac properties and was most likely introduced to the Mughal ruling classes by courtiers (see Terlinden, p. 144). The pierced silver work on this box also ingeniously aided to preserve the contents as air could travel through the box (Terlinden, p. 143).

A similar example of a silver pandan which also has a mirror concealed in its hinged base is illustrated in Terlinden, p. 144, fig. 208. An 18th-century pandan from Rajasthan or Gujarat in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (accession no. [S1987.969](#)) shares similar pierced decoration.

Literature:

Terlinden, C. *Mughal Silver Magnificence*. London: Antalga, 1987.