

AMIR M O H T A S H E M I



Brass and Rosewood Pen Box

Circa: India, 19th century

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9cm high, 28.5cm wide

Stock no.: A5108

This rectangular pen-box with rounded edges is made of rosewood embellished with brass floral designs. The interior has several removable compartments: the two semi-circled inkwells are covered in brass to protect the rosewood from ink spillage. Meanwhile, the rectangular tray has space for two pens; beneath this rectangular tray is a hidden compartment which would have been used to store paper, private notes or other valuable items. The box also comes with a fitted lock and key.

The quality of this box, as well as its unusually large size, would have been a status symbol for the individual who owned it. There is an engraving with a monogram on the back with letters in the Latin script interlocked within a fish motif which suggests that this is an emblem. Thus, this pen box was most likely made in India specifically for export to the Western European market.

The brass decoration on the pen box is reminiscent of the motifs on a late 19th century jewellery storage casket made in Kerala, Southern India, illustrated in Untracht and Parpola (1993:28, fig.24).¹

Footnotes

1. Oppi Untracht and Marjatta Parpola. 1993. *Metal Marvels: South Asian Handworks*. Borgå: Borgå Museum. p. 28.