

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Knife and Stylus in a Sheath with a Scribe's Tool Kit

Sri Lanka, 18th-19th century

Cut steel and horn

Entire set in a sheath : 27.5cm

Stock no.: A5243

This set comprises a long stylus and a knife in a sheath with a scribe's tool kit of three small utensils hanging from a double ring on the upper part of the sheath.

The stylus which has a sharp point is decorated with geometric patterns with a protruding part (shaft) in the middle in the form of amlaka. The handle of the short-bladed knife is also decorated with geometric patterns. The stylus and the knife are carried in a sheath made of horn which has a curving, ornamentally decorated tip in cut steel and similarly decorated upper part.

The stylus would have been used to incise palm leaves, which, after inscribing, were coated with ink. The knife was used for trimming and erasing. The attached small scribe's tool kit is seldom seen on comparable examples. The quality of decoration on the sheath implies an owner of high rank. For a similar example of an 18th-19th century knife and an almost identical stylus, see Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Accession Number 36. 25. 959a-c.

Bibliography

Jeremiah P. Losty. *The Art of the Book in India*. British Library, London, 1982.