



Lacquered Indian Shield (Dhal)

Bikaner, Rajasthan, 19th century

Shield (probably papier maché), lacquered and painted on both sides with gold bosses

46cm diameter, 7cm deep

Stock no.: A5851

A shield lacquered black all over and then painted with floral, vegetal, and cloud motifs. It has four unusually shaped gold bosses, decorated with floral motifs. Highly decorated hemispherical shields like this one were often used to give a dowry of money, weapons, and jewels to the groom.

The ornamentation, excluding the gold bosses, is nearly identical to that of a shield held in the National Museum, New Delhi (accession no. 75.615).¹ Another, with different bosses but very similar lacquer design, is in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (accession no. [IM.228-1922](#)). Others from the same group, all dated to 19th century Rajasthan (nos [229-1922](#), [230-1922](#), [3321\(IS\)](#)), are held in the same museum.

The decorative scheme appears to derive from a group of 17th-century Indian shields which were produced in Bengal and then sent to Japan to be lacquered, before being returned to India where they made valuable diplomatic gifts.² These shields were typically decorated with foliage and animals in gold lacquer on a black ground, frequently with European coats of arms at the centre. Examples of this group are held in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (accession no. [AN1685.B.13](#)) and the Wallace Collection, London (no. [A315](#)).

- [1] Pictured in G.N. Pant and K.K. Sharma. *Indian Armours in the National Museum Collection*. New Delhi: National Museum, 2001. p. 97.
- [2] Körber, Ulrike. 'A Study on 16th and 17th Century Luso-Oriental (Luso-Asian) Lacquerware', *16th Triennial Conference ICOM-CC*. Lisbon, 2011. pp. 1-3.