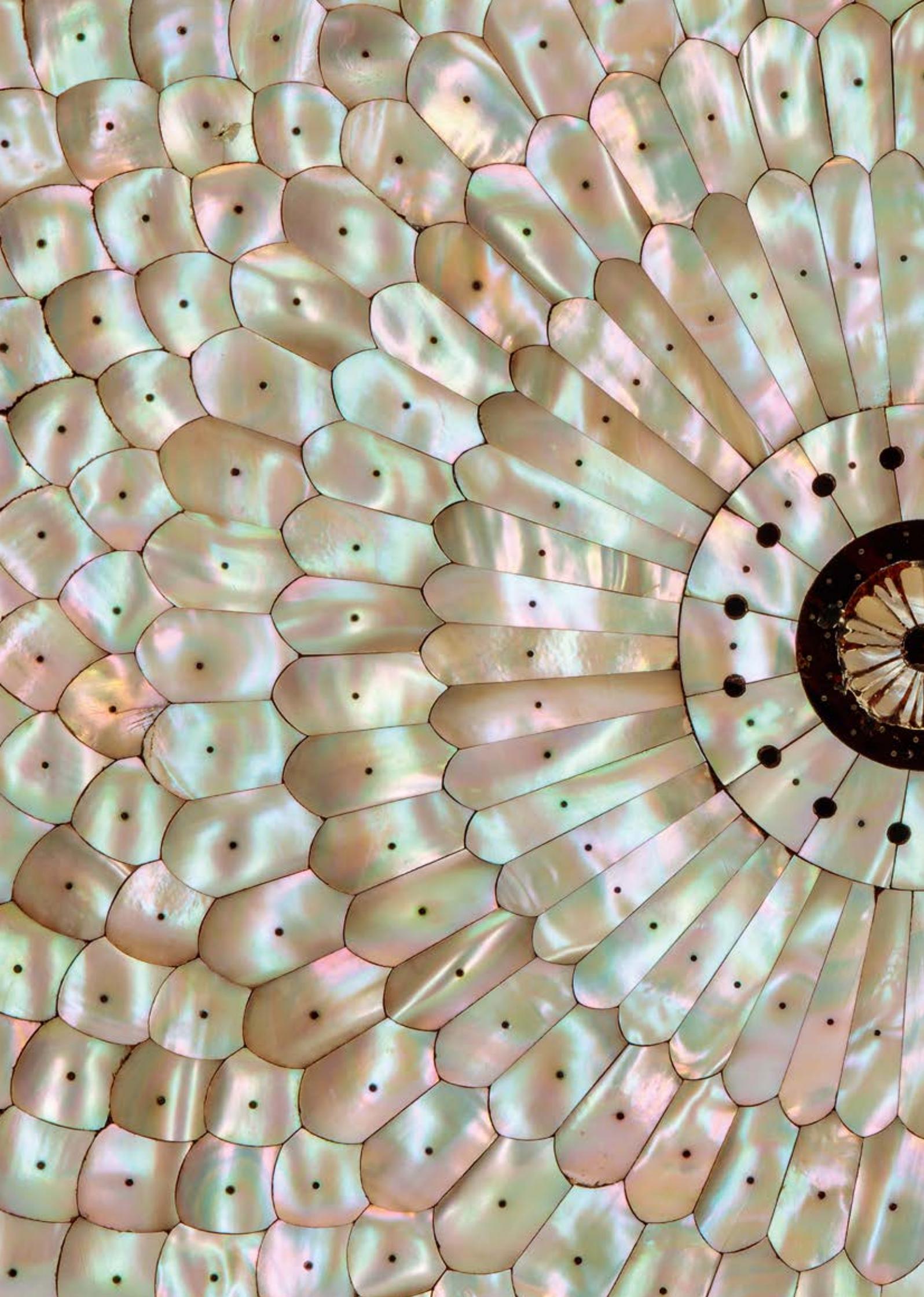


A M I R M O H T A S H E M I





# A M I R M O H T A S H E M I

INDIAN, ISLAMIC AND CROSS-CULTURAL WORKS OF ART

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## 1. Blue-and-White Safavid Bowl

Iran, 17th century

11cm high, 21.5cm diameter

Provenance: Private Australian Collection

This rare blue-and-white bowl is decorated on the outside with three Chinese guardian lions (*shi*), alternating with three circular motifs resembling the Buddhist *dharmachakra*, or wheel of dharma. Scrolling cloud-bands (*chi*) fill the remaining space. Inside, another lion surrounded by cloud-bands sits centrally within a circle. The sides are undecorated except for a thick border with diaper patterns and crosses around the inner top edge. The bowl is deep with rounded sides, and has a straight, high foot. On the base is a faux Chinese mark.

This bowl is a fine example of the high regard held for Chinese ceramics in the Islamic world. Chinese ceramics spread to the Islamic world as early as the 9th century, inspiring new decorative repertoires and advances in technology. By the 14th century Chinese blue-and-white porcelains were exported in great quantities, which resulted in the production of copies by Middle-Eastern potters. Persian potters, in par-

ticular, throughout the 16th to 19th centuries, produced imitation blue-and-white wares, some entirely Chinese in design, others combined with Islamic motifs.

Similar imagery depicted on the outside of this bowl can be found on a water pot (*kendi*) in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Accession Number 1000-1876, and illustrated in Crowe, no. 114, pp. 33 & 99. For a similar border with diaper patterns and crosses, see a domed jar in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Accession Number 940.90.1, and illustrated in Golombek, no. 14, pp. 314-15.

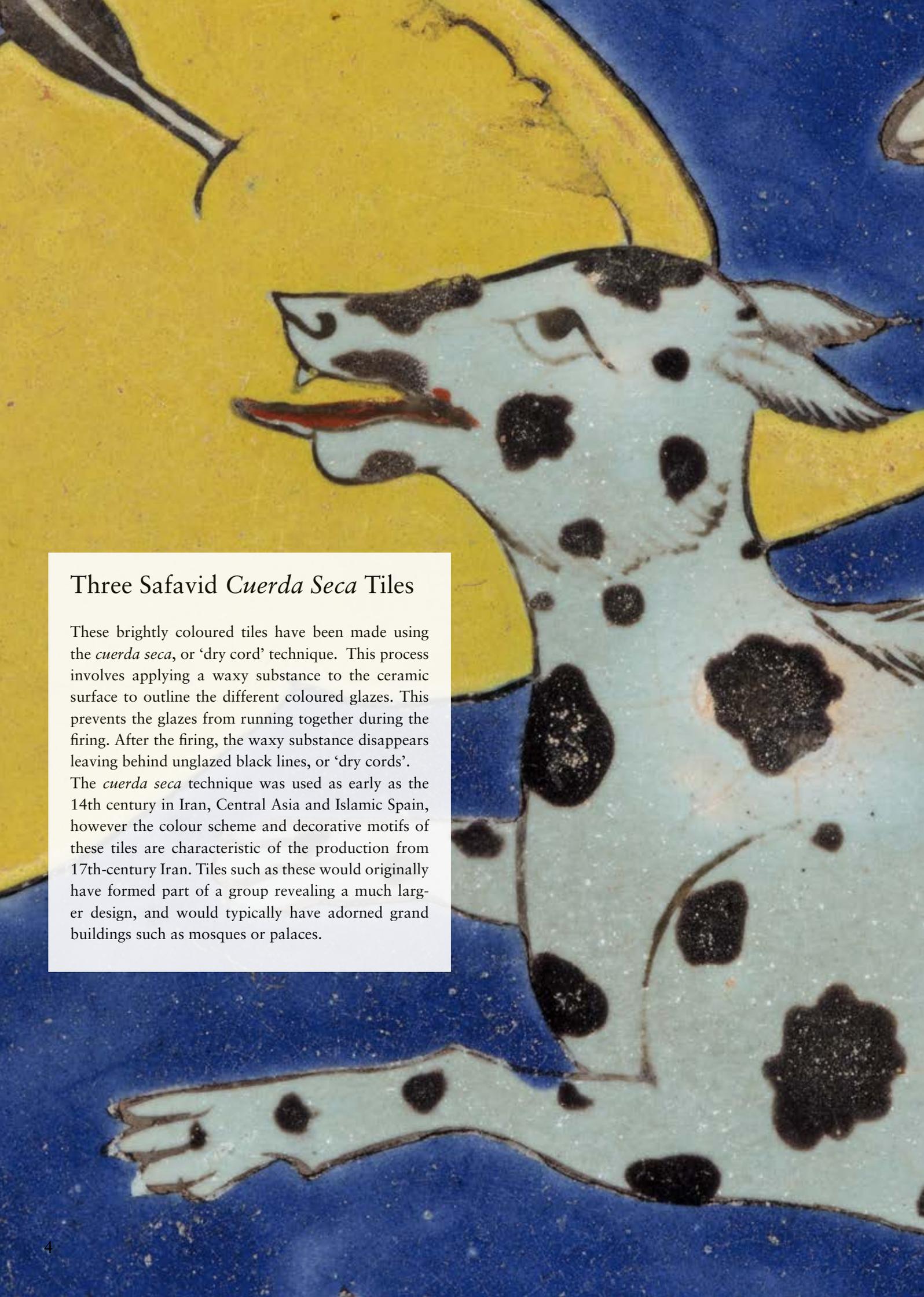
Literature:

Crowe, Y. *Persia and China: Safavid Blue and White Ceramics in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, 1501-1738, La Borie, London, 2002.

Golombek, L., et al. "Persian Pottery in the First Global Age: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", in *Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World*, Volume 1, Brill, Leiden, 2014.

Watson, O. 'Chinese-Iranian Relations xi. Mutual Influence of Chinese and Persian Ceramic', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2018, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/chinese-iranian-xi> (accessed on 9 Jan 2019).





### Three Safavid *Cuerda Seca* Tiles

These brightly coloured tiles have been made using the *cuerda seca*, or 'dry cord' technique. This process involves applying a waxy substance to the ceramic surface to outline the different coloured glazes. This prevents the glazes from running together during the firing. After the firing, the waxy substance disappears leaving behind unglazed black lines, or 'dry cords'.

The *cuerda seca* technique was used as early as the 14th century in Iran, Central Asia and Islamic Spain, however the colour scheme and decorative motifs of these tiles are characteristic of the production from 17th-century Iran. Tiles such as these would originally have formed part of a group revealing a much larger design, and would typically have adorned grand buildings such as mosques or palaces.



## 2. Safavid Tile with Animals

Iran, 17th century

24.5cm high, 25cm wide

Provenance: Private European Collection

This tile depicts part of a hunting scene where two animals are shown galloping mid-stride. The yellow-glazed animal is perhaps a gazelle, and has been struck by an arrow. Running alongside is a beast with black blotchy spots, looking rather fierce with fangs and a brightly painted red tongue. For a comparative example of animal scenes, see The Art Institute of Chicago, Accession Number 1917.797a-d.



### 3. Safavid Tile with Horse and Rider

Iran, 17th century

24cm square

Provenance: Private European Collection

The lower half of a horse and rider are shown on this tile, with clusters of flowers in the foreground. Just visible next to the horse are the outstretched arms of a figure, perhaps an accompanying groom. Similar scenes can be found on tiles in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto that would originally have formed part of a frieze.<sup>1</sup>

Note:

1. See the incomplete frieze panel entitled 'The Grooms' on The Royal Ontario Museum website blog 'Safavid Tile Project II: Rebuilding the Friezes' posted June 26 2018, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/safavid-tile-project-ii-rebuilding-the-friezes>







#### 4. Safavid Tile with Bird and Flowers

Iran, 17th century

24cm high, 22cm wide

Provenance: Private UK Collection,  
acquired at Spink in 1998

The upper left corner of this tile shows a bird swooping down to land on a branch. The body of the bird and the branches are glazed in a vibrant turquoise. The background of the tile is a deep blue, punctuated by white, yellow, green and black flowers and leaves. See the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Accession Number M.73.5.4, for a tile panel that includes similar iconography.



## 5. A Large 'Rimless' Iznik Dish Decorated with Grapes

Turkey, circa 1550-1565

35.8cm diameter

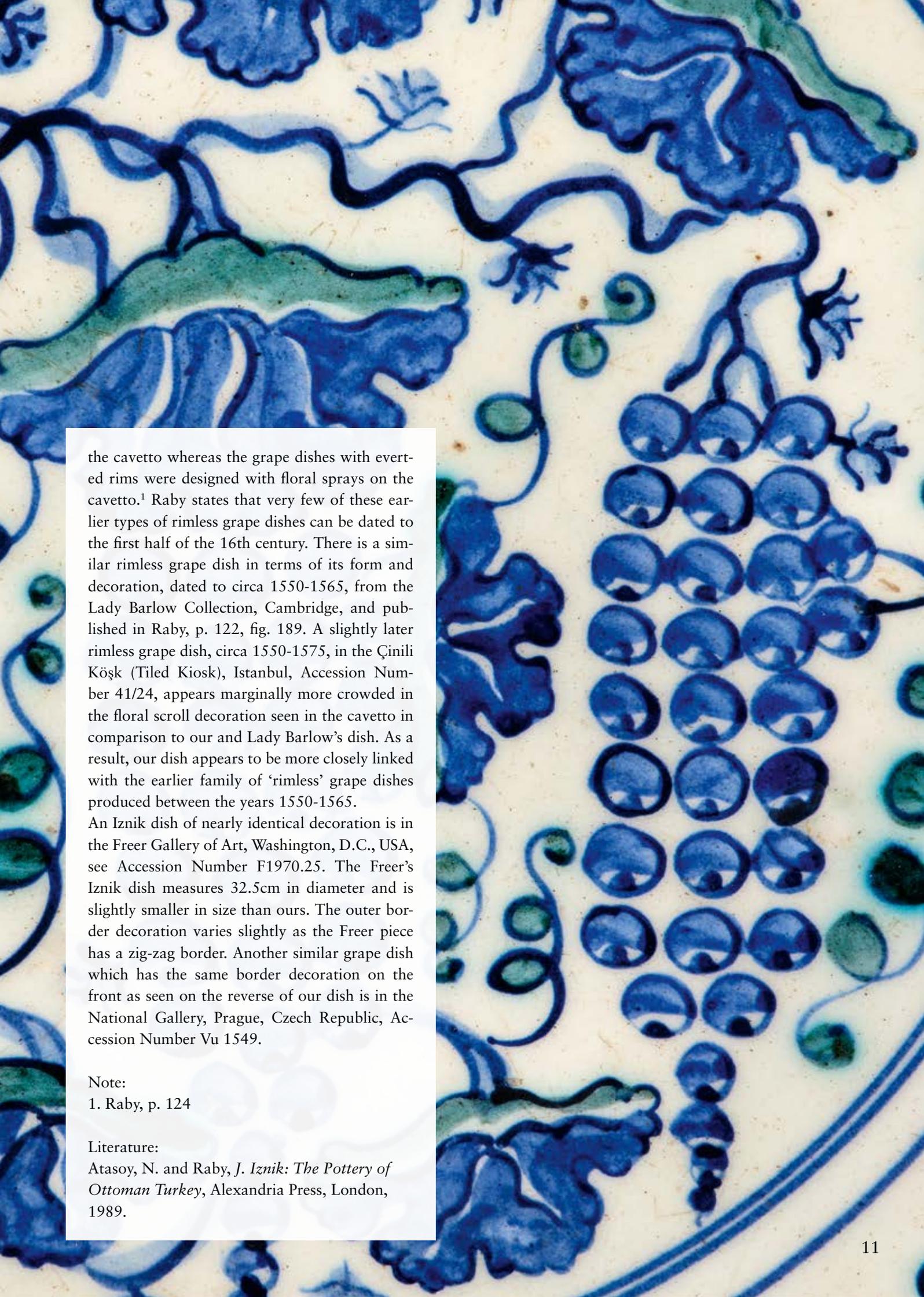
Provenance: Private European Collection since the 19th century

This large and striking circular pottery dish is decorated with a central configuration of three hanging clusters of grapes amongst curly vines and leaves painted in cobalt blue and green on a white ground. The cavetto of the dish is painted with a blue and green frieze of undulating floral scrolls with green flower heads. The narrow border is decorated with cobalt blue half-rosettes on a blue ground. The reverse of the dish is decorated in the same manner but

with a differing outer border with a geometric pattern painted in blue on a white ground. The base of the dish is simply painted with two thin blue concentric circles.

The distinctive clusters of grape decoration have been largely inspired by Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) Chinese blue-and-white porcelains which were highly-prized by the Ottoman court during the 16th century. The Ottomans added green enamels to the Chinese blue-and-white-palette as seen on our dish. During the second half of the 16th century, Iznik 'grape' dishes with everted rims of 'wave and rock' or 'breaking wave' patterns were substituted for the saucer-shaped 'rimless grape' dishes.

This 'rimless' style also emulates the Chinese 'grape' dishes from the 15th century. According to Raby, nearly all of the rimless grape dishes depicted continuous floral scrollwork in



the cavetto whereas the grape dishes with everted rims were designed with floral sprays on the cavetto.<sup>1</sup> Raby states that very few of these earlier types of rimless grape dishes can be dated to the first half of the 16th century. There is a similar rimless grape dish in terms of its form and decoration, dated to circa 1550-1565, from the Lady Barlow Collection, Cambridge, and published in Raby, p. 122, fig. 189. A slightly later rimless grape dish, circa 1550-1575, in the Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk), Istanbul, Accession Number 41/24, appears marginally more crowded in the floral scroll decoration seen in the cavetto in comparison to our and Lady Barlow's dish. As a result, our dish appears to be more closely linked with the earlier family of 'rimless' grape dishes produced between the years 1550-1565.

An Iznik dish of nearly identical decoration is in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA, see Accession Number F1970.25. The Freer's Iznik dish measures 32.5cm in diameter and is slightly smaller in size than ours. The outer border decoration varies slightly as the Freer piece has a zig-zag border. Another similar grape dish which has the same border decoration on the front as seen on the reverse of our dish is in the National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic, Accession Number Vu 1549.

Note:

1. Raby, p. 124

Literature:

Atasoy, N. and Raby, J. *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey*, Alexandria Press, London, 1989.





## 6. Iznik Dish Decorated with Tulips and Roses

Turkey, circa 1560-1575  
30cm diameter

This circular pottery dish is painted with an asymmetrical composition of flowering bole-red roses and cobalt-blue tulips, featuring raised bole-red dots, sprouting from a bunch of green and blue foliage. The everted rim is decorated with a stylised wave and rock border in cobalt blue and accentuated with green enamel. The reverse of the dish is decorated with alternating cobalt blue and green flower heads and paired cobalt-blue floral sprigs. There is an old collector's label on the base and '300' painted twice in black ink.

A similar Iznik dish with tulips and roses and nearly identical rim decoration, circa 1575, is published in Hitzel, p. 122, fig. 114, RMN Réunion, Paris, Accession Number E. Cl. 8111 (DS 2524).

### Literature:

Hitzel, F. & Jacotin, M. *Iznik : L'aventure d'une collection*, RMN, Paris, 2005.







## 7. Iznik Dish Decorated with Roses and Hyacinths

Turkey, circa 1560-1570

30cm diameter

Provenance: Private European Collection since the 1960s

This circular pottery dish is painted with an asymmetrical composition of bole-red roses, blue and red tulips and cobalt blue hyacinths with green stems and leaves on a white ground.

The everted rim is painted with an elaborate wave and rock border, with stylised leaves between. The back of the dish is painted with alternating cobalt blue and green flower heads and blue sprigs of flowers.

To see a comparable Iznik dish, dating to circa 1560-1570, but with a symmetrical composition of blue hyacinths and bole-red and blue roses depicted, see Bilgi, p. 128, fig. 22.

Literature:

Bilgi, H. *The Ömer Koç Iznik Collection*, Hülya Bilgi, Istanbul, 2015.

## 8. Blue-and-White Ewer Made for the Islamic Market

China

Late 17th - Early 18th century

Qing Dynasty

Kangxi Period (1662-1722)

28cm high

This ewer of flattened, pear-shaped form, is painted and decorated in a violet shade of cobalt blue on a greyish, off-white ground. Each side of the ewer is decorated with four floral sprays and a central tear-shaped floral spray medallion bordered by lappets and a lozenge pattern underneath. The neck with a bulbous drip guard is decorated in stripes and above and below the drip guard are upright and upside-down stiff leaves. The curved S-shaped spout is decorated with cloud motifs and culminates on the end of the spout with a flower-shaped tip. The curved square-shaped handle has hatched bands of painted decoration. The ewer has a metal lid, which is a later addition, probably European, with a fleur-de-lis and an eight-pointed star decoration.

This ewer was made during the Kangxi period (1662-1722) in China; however, both its form and decoration are based on Indian metal prototypes. A 17th-century Indian bronze ewer from North India, in the private collection of Dr Alvin O. Bellak, Philadelphia, USA, has similar decoration to our porcelain ewer specifically with regards to the upright and upside-down stiff leaf decoration on the neck and in the tear-shaped me-

dallion on the sides of the ewer (illustrated in Zebrowski, p. 163, fig. 229). Zebrowski states that the Bellak metal ewer is the 'finest bronze ewer of this type' and was initially discovered in Syria, as were many other important Mughal period vessels.<sup>1</sup> This further demonstrates the important trading connections between the Middle East and China, which continued throughout the Mughal period to meet the needs of the growing export market.

See a nearly identical pair of Kangxi blue and white ewers in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul; one of the ewers is published in Krahl, see p. 1007, fig. 2148, Accession Number TKS 15/4680. An iron-red Kangxi ewer in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Accession Number TKS 15/3995, shares similar decoration and form with ours; Zebrowski notes that this iron-red ewer was clearly produced for the Mughal market, p. 166. Another similar iron-red Kangxi ewer is in The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Accession Number 240B&C-1876.

Note:

1. Zebrowski, p. 166

Literature:

Kerr, R. and Mengoni, L. *Chinese Export Ceramics*, V&A Publishing, London, 2011.

Krahl, R. and Ayers, J. *Chinese Ceramics in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul: A Complete Catalogue, III, Qing Dynasty Porcelains*, Philip Wilson Publishers, London, 1986.

Zebrowski, M. *Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India*, Alexandria Press in association with Laurence King, London, 1997.





9. A Rare Famille Verte Porcelain  
Carpet Weight Made for the  
Indian Market

China, Qing Dynasty,  
Kangxi Period (1662-1722)

14.5cm high, 11cm diameter

Provenance: Christie's New York (1st June 1979),  
Private UK Collection



The porcelain carpet weight takes the form of a fluted bud resting on top of a six-sided segmented base. At the base of the domed finial, there are blue lobed leaves with gilt painted decoration that overlap pink famille-rose leaves painted in a lattice style. The top and base are painted with pink, blue and yellow lotus flowers with green foliage all outlined in black and separated by cobalt-blue borders with traces of gilt decoration.

The form of this very rare carpet weight derives from Indian metalwork. Often referred to as the 'slave of the carpet' (*mir-i farsh*), four metal carpet weights would be placed on the far corners of a rug or summer carpet in order to keep the carpet in place.<sup>1</sup> These Indian carpet weights were made from an assortment of metals, often in bidri, brass, bronze, and sometimes even in marble and crystal.<sup>2</sup> The form of this carpet weight originates from the indigenous architecture of the Deccan, India, seen on the Tomb Shrine of Sufi Saint Amin al Din Ala, dated to 1677, which has a domed roof similar to our carpet weight (illustrated in Zebrowski, p. 121, fig. 140).

Apart from our porcelain carpet weight, the only other recorded example is a nearly identical pair of Kangxi famille-verte carpet weights from the Eugene Fuller Collection, Seattle Art Museum, Washington, USA. One of the Fuller carpet weights is illustrated in Cox, p. 578, fig. 846. The Fuller pair of carpet weights was acquired in India and is thought to have been commissioned to order and imported there during Mughal rule. This rare porcelain carpet weight was offered for sale in Christie's New York in 1979 and is one of only three known examples made during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor.

Notes:

1. Zebrowski, p. 131
2. Ibid

Literature:

Cox, W. *The Book of Pottery and Porcelain*, Vol. II, Crown Publishers, New York, 1947.  
Zebrowski, M. *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, Alexandria Press in association with Laurence King, London, 1997.



## 10. Hispano-Moresque Jug

Manises, Spain

Second half of the 15th century

20cm high

This tin-glazed earthenware jug of baluster form is painted with four registers of alternating cobalt-blue and golden copper-lustre vine-shaped ivy leaves, fern and dotted patterns. The body of the jug is painted on the interior and exterior with a creamy off-white glazed ground. The applied strap handle and spout are painted in a golden copper-lustre with a small circular ring handle above the spout.

This highly-prized lustre jug was made in Manises during the second half of the 15th century. It exemplifies Valencian lustre wares which were favourable pieces collected predominantly by stately households in Europe during the 15th century.

A nearly identical jug but with brown copper-lustre is in Louhans, France, Accession Number HD 91-1-699. An albarello with similar painted ivy-leaf decoration is in the Hispanic Society of America, New York, see Barber, p. 115, fig. 42, and another comparable Valencian 'drug jar', circa 1450-1475, in The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Accession Number 10-1907.

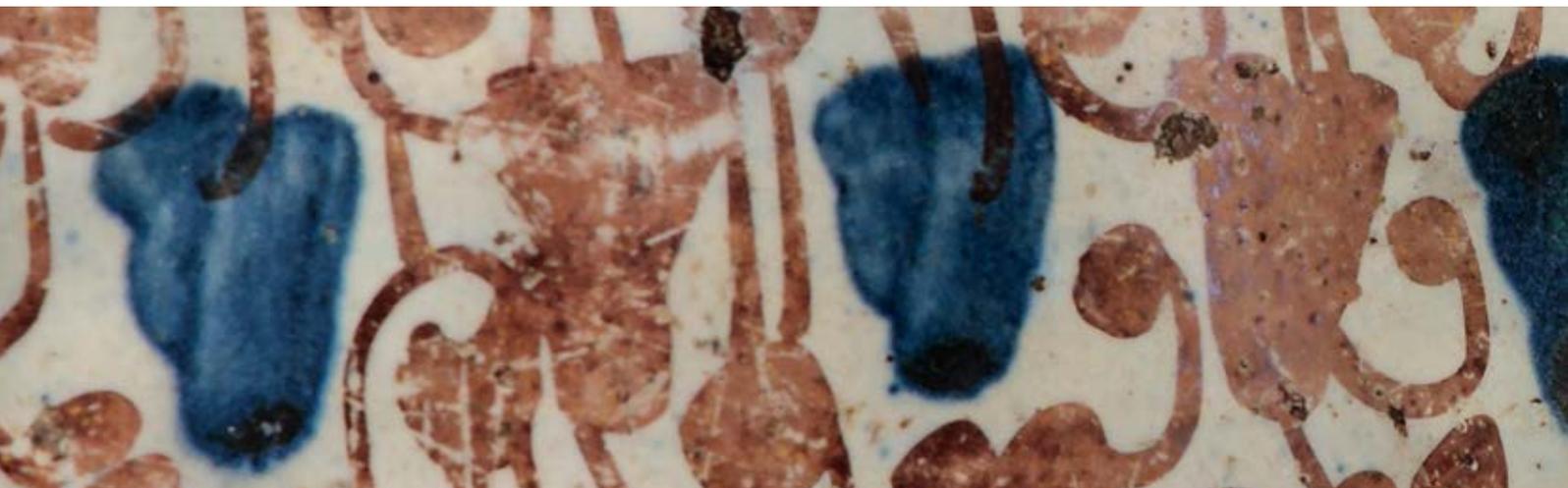
### Literature:

Amigues, F. and Bazzana, A. *Le Calife, le Prince et le Potier*, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, France, 2002.

Barber, E. A. *Hispano-Moresque Pottery in the Collection of the Hispanic Society of America*, Forgotten Books, London, 2015.

Dectot, X. *Céramiques Hispaniques: XIIIè-XVIIIè siècle*, RMN, Paris, 2007.

Ray, A. *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, V&A Publications, London, 2000.





## 11. Hispano-Moresque Dish

Manises, Spain, 16th century

43cm diameter

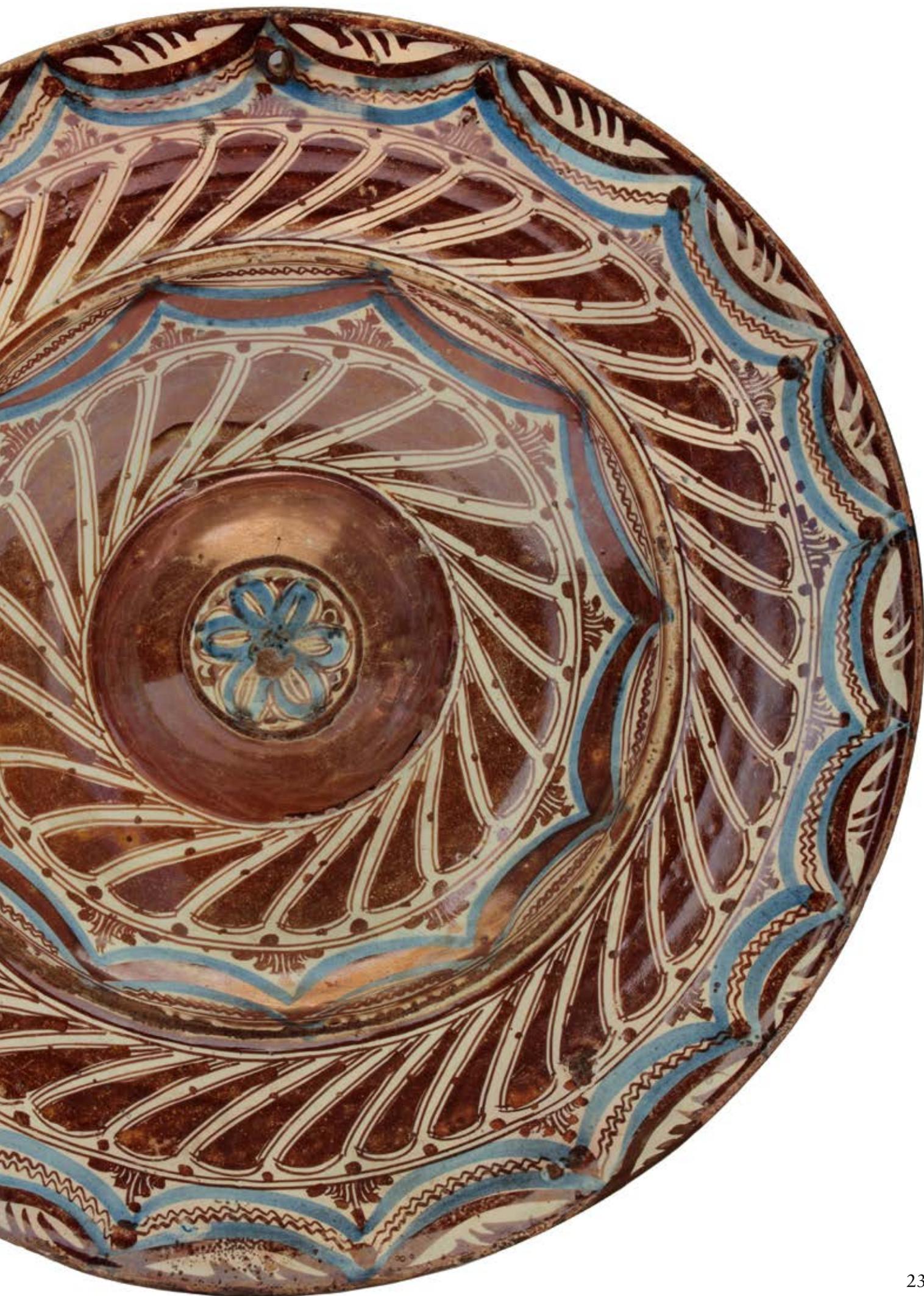
This circular dish is covered in a creamy off-white tin glaze and painted with brown copper-lustre and violet-blue decoration. The central boss has a blue and brown flower head, surrounded by a slanted gadrooned circle in brown lustre. The marly and the border decoration are continuations of slanted gadrooned panels in brown lustre alternating with zig-zag and frieze-like decoration in brown and blue lustre. The reverse of the dish has two old rivets, used to secure a hairline, and is decorated with brown copper-lustre fern leaves, concentric circles and a rosette on a creamy tin glaze ground.

A dish, circa 1525-1560, in The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Accession Number 330-1893, which shares the rare depiction which Ray refers to as 'spider's web' decoration in the well, shares a similar style of painting seen in the frieze-style decoration on ours. The reverse of the dish in The Victoria & Albert Museum also has similar decoration and painting to our charger.

Literature:

Ray, A. *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, V&A Publications, London, 2000.







## 12. Hispano-Moresque Dish

Manises, Spain, 15th century

22.8cm diameter

Provenance: Private European  
Collection

This tin-glazed earthenware dish is of shallow form with a moderate outward sloping rim; the ground is painted on a pinkish creamy-white tin glaze. The front and centre of the dish is charged with a fleur-de-lis enclosed in a blue shield. The front is decorated on the rim with brown copper-lustre *atauriques* forming curled plants, stems and leaves. The reverse of the dish is decorated with stylised leaf shoots inside concentric circles and surrounded by dots.

This dish, unusual for its smaller size in comparison to larger dishes, bears a coat of arms or heraldic shield that is commonly found on many other Manises chargers from this period. A larger dish (34.1cm diameter) in The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Accession Number 167-1893, dating to circa 1450-1475, has a leaping fish enclosed in a blue-outlined shield. According to Ray, the fish shield or coat of arms may be the badge of a noble family but it could also be purely ornamental.<sup>1</sup>

Note:

1. Ray, p. 81, fig. 171

Literature:

Ray, A. *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, V&A Publications, London, 2000.



### 13. Woman in Greek Dress After George de la Chappelle

Possibly France or Turkey

Late 17th – Early 18th century

20.5cm x 15.2cm

Provenance: Private European Collection

This painting depicts a woman standing in front of a splendid green curtain, edged with gold brocade and drawn to one side to reveal the cityscape of Istanbul in the distance. The artist has employed a vibrant palette of red, purple and bluish-white for the woman's clothing, set against the brilliant green curtain, blue waters and sky. The woman's gaze is directed towards the viewer as she stands elegantly dressed, holding a tulip in one hand.

*Quarassa Romeca, Dame Grecque*  
© The Trustees of the British Museum



*Afendias Athenia yapar, Souveraine d'Athenes*  
© The Trustees of the British Museum



This painting was rendered after an illustration in a book entitled *Recueil de divers portraits des principales dames de la Porte du grand Turc, tirée au naturel sur les lieux, et dédiée à Madame la comtesse de Fiesque*, by French artist George de la Chappelle. The book includes twelve engravings depicting women dressed in costumes associated with different nations and cultures related to the Ottoman Empire, often with views of Istanbul and the Bosphorus in the background. Chappelle travelled with the French ambassador Monsieur de la Haye to Istanbul in 1643 where he lived for several years, and sketched local women with whom he met through the embassy. He paid close attention to detail when portraying the various Ottoman Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Persian and Tartar costumes of the time, verifying their accuracy with the ambassador.





Chappelle's book was published in Paris in 1648, and the original copy was held in the collection of Phillippe of France, Duke of Orléans (1640-1701), younger son of Louis XIII.<sup>1</sup>

This painting follows closely, though not identically, Chappelle's ninth illustration entitled 'Afendias Athenia yapar', 'Souveraine d'Athenes'. In this illustration, a woman is portrayed wearing a traditional Greek costume that would have been worn for events such as assemblies, baptisms and marriages in the 17th century when Chappelle was in Istanbul.<sup>2</sup> In keeping with this illustration, our painting portrays the woman standing on hammam platform shoes (*nalins*), wearing a tunic held by a jewelled belt, and an outer fur-lined cloak. Minor differences can be noted in the patterns and folds of the garments, the position of the woman's left hand, and the addition of a tulip held in her right.

It is in the treatment of the woman's facial features, headdress and the background of the painting, however, where the painter has borrowed and combined elements from another of Chappelle's illustrations, the second one entitled 'Quarassa Romeca', 'Dame Grecque'. Here, the woman's smaller eyes, rounder cheeks and leftward-pointing gaze have been included in our painting. Furthermore, her large cap with hanging pearls and stones has been combined with that from the illustration of 'Souveraine d'Athenes'. Additionally, in our painting, the background of Istanbul and the Bosphorus from the 'Dame Grecque' has been combined with the grand curtain from the 'Souveraine d'Athenes'.

Costume albums in addition to topographical drawings and portraits of the ‘other’ became increasingly popular in Europe during the 17th century, as diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire evolved. As such, publications like Chappelle’s were often commissioned and reproduced. The Ptuj Regional Museum, Slovenia, for example, holds a collection of oil paintings dated to circa 1682 that follow very closely the illustrations of *Recueil de divers portraits des principales dames de la Porte du grand Turc*.<sup>3</sup> Further examples from a private collection, dated to circa 1660, and painted on copper like our painting, are illustrated in Boghossian, pp.74-75.

#### Notes

1. *Image of the Turks*, p. 210.
2. Chappelle, view 50/85.
3. *Image of the Turks*, esp. p.228 for ‘Souveraine d’Athenes’, and p. 218 for ‘Dame Grecque’.

#### Literature:

Boghossian, J., Ed. *Couleurs d’Orient: Arts et arts de vivre dans l’Empire ottoman*, Villa Empain, Fondation Boghossian, Brussels, 2010.

Chappelle, G. de la. *Recueil de divers portraits des principales dames de la Porte du grand Turc, tirée au naturel sur les lieux, et dédiée à Madame la comtesse de Fiesque*, Antoine Estiene, Paris, 1648, accessed online via Digital Libraries, Gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Clair, A. *The Image of the Turk in Europe*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1973.

*Image of the Turks in the 17th century Europe*, Sabancı University, Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul, 2005. Pages 228-29.





## 14. Portrait of Sultan Abdulmejid I on Ivory (Tasvir-i Hümayun)

Istanbul, Turkey, circa 1839-1851  
9.3cm high, 7.5cm wide

This oval miniature portrait depicts Sultan Abdulmejid I (r.1839-1861), the 31st sultan of the Ottoman Empire. He is wearing a red fez, and a dark, European-style uniform with gold embroidery in the front and a red, also embroidered, high collar. Attached to the front of his collar is an order. He sits on a chair upholstered in red material that has an elaborate frame bearing scrollwork and a centrally set stone. The background of the portrait is blue with decorative scrolling motifs.

Like his father Mahmud II, Abdulmejid I was a great believer in reforms and ushered in the era of the *Tanzimat* or 'reorganization' (1839-1876). This period witnessed social and political changes including movements towards secularism, and reshaping the Ottoman Empire following European models of governance. In

line with these changes, visual representations of Ottoman rulers began showing a more 'Western' tone, emphasising realistic and individualistic characteristics.

Miniature portraits such as this one were likely inspired by mid-18th to mid-19th-century European examples on ivory and enamel. These portraits first gained popularity in the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839), and served as diplomatic gifts. Four examples of this kind depicting Abdulmejid I are illustrated in Kürkman, pp. 585; 589-91. The first, signed and dated 1888, is by Armenian artist Josef Manas, while the last three are by Armenian artist Sebuhan Manas, signed and dated 1852, 1855 and 1856/57.

The order that Abdulmejid I wears hanging from his collar in this portrait is also depicted in other paintings of him. Two such examples include a miniature portrait by Jean Portet, painted in 1850 and housed in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul, Accession Number 17/215; and an oil painting by David Wilkie, painted in 1840 and housed in the Royal Collection Trust, London, Accession Number RCIN 407268. It was not until 1851 that Abdulmejid I issued his own order, the Order of the Medjidie. This order is star-shaped with seven points, and can be seen in later paintings of him such as those mentioned above by the two Armenian artists.

Literature:

Baskaya, F. E. and Özgüner, E. A. *Twisting Realism: The Representation of Power in the Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in the Early Photographic Era*, The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2015: Official Conference Proceedings, The IAFOR Research Archive, downloaded 01/2019.

Kürkman, G. *Armenian Painters in the Ottoman Empire: 1600-1923*, Vol. II, Matusalem Publications, Istanbul, 2004.

Vernoit, S. Occidentalism. *Islamic Art in the 19th Century*, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Vol. XXIII, The Nour Foundation, London, 1997, pp. 72-73; 77-79.







## 15. Ottoman *Kashkul* with Calligraphy

Turkey, Dated 1213 AH/1798-9 AD

8cm high, 16cm wide, 9cm deep

Provenance: Private European Collection since 1930

This wooden, oval-shaped *kashkul* features finely carved decoration and calligraphy. Both sides are decorated with rows of Persian script, and a band of arabesque motifs below them. On the base, the arabesque designs continue around and inside a circle with the apotropaic Seal of Solomon. The handles bear further calligraphy and arabesques, and the rim is decorated with a thin band of chevron motifs.

*Kashkuls*, also known as beggar's or dervish's bowls, were carried by wandering Sufi mystics to signify their religious poverty. They were used to collect alms to support the mystics who had renounced all worldly possessions. A long chain would have been fastened to either side of the bowl so that it could be carried or hung from one shoulder. A small protrusion with a hole on the side of this *kashkul* indicates that it could also have been attached to a belt.

The shape of this *kashkul* follows the traditional boat-shape of earlier 16th to 17th-century Iranian *kashkuls* made from metal. They were highly decorative and often included dragon-

head motifs on either end, while on our example these motifs have been rounded into handles. The Persian inscriptions on our *kashkul* include both the date and maker, and read as follows:

In the upper band, in praise of the 12 imams:

بحرمت سه محمد بحق چار علی  
بدو حسن بحسین و بموسی و جعفر

“In veneration of the three Muhammads, for the sake of the four ‘Alis, for the two Hasans, for Husayn, for Musa and Ja‘far.”

In the middle band (on one side only):

ما شاء الله  
عمل سپاهی زاده السيد خليل دده / سنه ۱۲۱۳ [۱]

“Whatever God wills. Work of Sipahi-zade al-Sayyid Khalil (Halil) Dede. Year [1]213 (1798-9).”

In the lower band:

يا رب بحق نادي [كذا] عليا سينجلي و بحق مصطفى  
محمد و بحق مرتضى علي  
لا فتى الا علي لا سيف الا ذو الفقار

“O Lord! For the sake of “Call on ‘Ali, [all grief and worry] will disappear”, and for the sake of Mustafa Muhammad and for the sake of Murtaza ‘Ali. There is no hero but ‘Ali, no sword but Dhu‘l-Fiqar.”

## 16. Throne Chair (*Sandali*)

South India, 18th century

94.3cm high, 76.6cm wide, 67.2cm deep

Provenance: Private European Collection



This exquisitely decorated throne chair (*sandali*) is a rare example of portable Mughal furniture from Southern India. The elevated back comprises a central floral spray of inlaid ivory, framed beneath a cusped arch. The flowers and leaves bear a naturalistic quality, with their details intricately embellished in red lac. A series of open work ivory cartouches, set within a geometric frame provides an architectural element. Four panels display ivory inlaid *hamsa* birds, encased in cartouches. Their enchanting lac decoration outlines intricate patterns on the breast and wings, and highlights details on the beak, plumage and tail feathers. The back culminates in an arch with three gilt finials, beneath which sinuous floral meanders echo the design and symmetry of the central motif. The seat comprises flower heads set within a diamond pattern, bordered by scrolling tendrils encircling blossoms. This pattern repeats on the frame, beneath a row of cartouches surrounding inlaid floral motifs, with exceptionally fine detailing. The legs are embellished with sinuous inflorescences, terminating in rounded brass feet.

One of the preeminent features of the throne chair are the brass hinges, enabling it to be easily folded and transported. The 17th-century merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier noted that the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707) possessed an ebony throne, which accompanied him while visiting his subjects. Jahangir (1569-1627) also utilised a *sandali* while addressing his court in the palace gardens, and the emperors were known to possess a number of thrones for different occasions. It is likely the present chair would have been used beneath a canopy of sumptuous fabrics and placed on an intricately decorated silk carpet, befitting of a ruler. During the festival of *Dussehra*, monarchs were known to pay reverence to their thrones, bestowing offerings and performing *aarti* (offering light in









the form of a flame) as priests chanted sacred verses. The festival was especially significant in the province of Mysore, having been observed since the 15th century by the Vijayanagara Empire kings. An early 18th century carved ivory back rest in the Mysore palace collection bears resemblance to the present chair, and may have originally been part of a *sandali*, (see Bhattacharyya, p. 74, fig. 15). Despite the inclusion of figurative elements, the decoration also consists of openwork ivory cartouches and features geometric registers. Another 18th century Mysore *sandali* echoes the shape of the present throne chair, with an openwork arched back, floral motifs and three finials (see Jaffer, 2001, p. 149). The use of red lac and the appearance of *hamsa* birds on the present chair also infer South Indian or Mysorean origins, both of which featured prevalently on crafts from the region during the Mughal period.

The very creation of such a portable throne chair unquestionably attests to its status as a revered item of courtly furniture. Moreover its exquisite decoration reveals the hand of a master craftsman, demonstrating fluency in the art of sophisticated embellishment.

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## 17. Basin

Gujarat, India

Second half of the 16th century

51cm diameter

Provenance: Collection of a British Noble Family

This rare mother-of-pearl hand washing basin features tesserae cut from the shell of the green turban sea snail (*Turbo marmoratus*), a marine gastropod. Basins, and their matching ewers, played an important role in the life of early modern European courts, where they were used for the ceremonial ablution of the hands. Large Indian basins such as the present one, made from wood - most probably teak (*Tectona grandis*) - and covered in mother-of-pearl tesserae, were seemingly modelled after ceramic prototypes, namely Chinese porcelain of the Yuan and Ming dynasties (1271-1644), copying in turn metal prototypes from Central Asia which, having been made in precious materials, have survived in far fewer numbers. This transfer process between artistic media is

called skeuomorphism, and has been studied in the context of the Gujarati mother-of-pearl production.<sup>1</sup>

The Indian origin of this mother-of-pearl work, namely from Khambhat and Surat (present-day state of Gujarat in Western India) has been fully demonstrated during the last three decades, not only by documentary and literary evidence but also through the survival of 16th-century wooden structures covered in mother-of-pearl tesserae. Geometric in character and somewhat Islamic in nature, this type of artistic work is characterised by the use of mother-of-pearl tesserae which are usually employed to form complex designs of fish scales or stylised lotus flowers. Objects such as basins, plates, dishes and saucers, drinking bowls, bowls, cups, bottles, water jugs and tankards were modelled after European prototypes in pewter and silver brought by the first Europeans to arrive on the west coast of India. The mother-of-pearl tesserae are either pinned or glued to each other with brass pins, or to a wooden base or core in the case of large basins, caskets and small chests.<sup>2</sup> While large dishes are usually made according to the first technique, large basins such as the

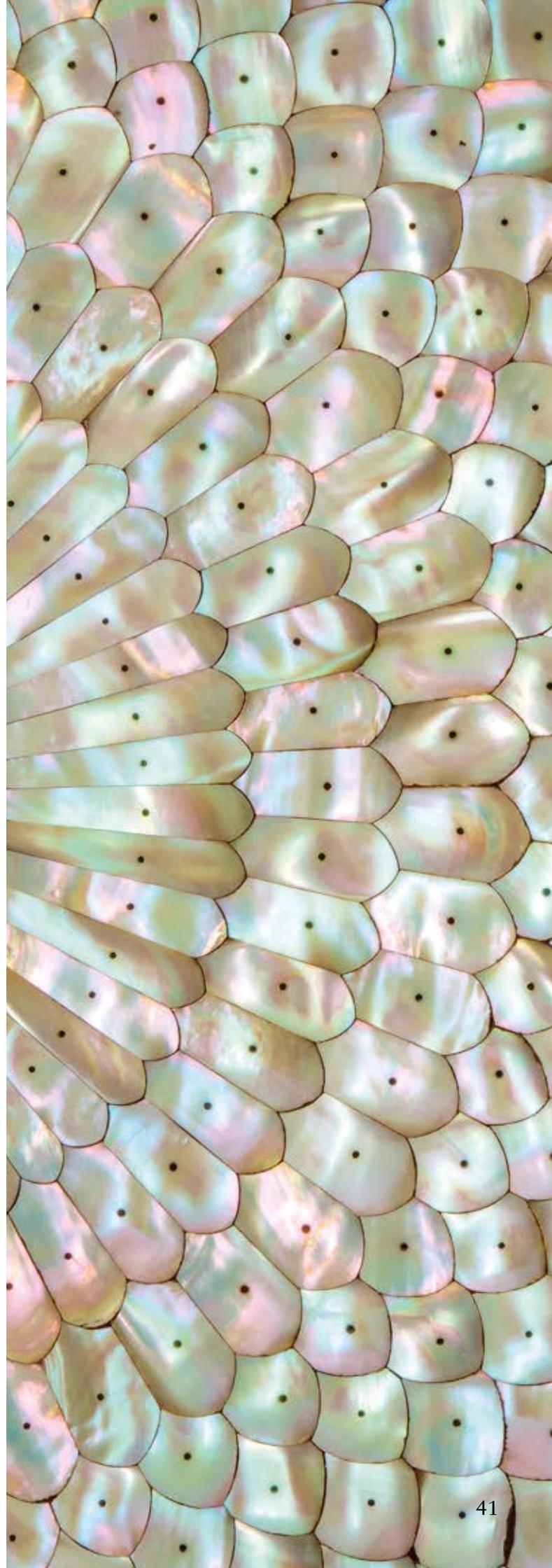
present one feature a wooden base or core onto which the mother-of-pearl tesseræ are pinned; in this case together with tortoiseshell for the central roundel. Although large dishes are uncommon, large basins such as the present example are even rarer. A similar shallow basin, with a wooden base and a continuous radiating flower pattern on the main field resembling that of our basin, survives in the Dresden *Kunstammer*, known as the *Grünes Gewölbe*, Accession Number IV 181. With its matching ewer, it is recorded in the inventories of the Electors of Saxony from 1586 onwards.<sup>3</sup> As with a few surviving examples of such basins with wooden bases, the one from the collection of the rulers of Bavaria in Munich, now housed in the Kunst- und Wunderkammer Burg Trausnitz, Landshut, Accession Number R 1265, still retains its original painted and gilded decoration.<sup>4</sup> The underside was originally painted in coloured shellac over a red varnished ground, not unlike the few surviving Indian basins of this origin, production and date, with typical Iranian-style decoration, such as Timurid cartouches, fine foliage sprays and animals. The once shallow, rounded sides that formed the cavetto, possibly damaged during the long trip between India and Europe, were removed and replaced by a twelve-sided arched wooden rim covered by tortoiseshell, an addition which may be dated from the mid-17th century and which betrays the taste for precious pieces of furniture veneered in tortoiseshell, namely in the Spanish Netherlands.<sup>5</sup>

Notes:

1. Crespo, 2018, p. 53 and pp. 132-141, cat. 3
2. Crespo, 2016, pp. 86-121, cats. 11-12
3. Syndram, Kappel, and Weinhold, p. 35
4. Sangl, p. 267
5. Fabri

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## 18. Writing Chest

Gujarat, India

Second half of the 16th century

11.4cm high, 24.5cm wide, 17.8cm deep

Provenance: Private European Collection

This extremely rare and highly important Gujarati writing chest has a flat projecting lid, and is raised on four bracket-shaped feet. Made from teak (*Tectona grandis*), this small chest features a front drawer that would have been used for storing documents and paper. Inside, on the left, is a small compartment or nook set with a hinged lid, used for storing writing implements. The wrought iron fittings include a square-shaped escutcheon with a T-shaped hinged latch flanked by columns. The rosettes on the lid securing the latch, in addition to the drawer puller, two L-shaped brackets securing the front and side, and the side handles, all follow the typical wrought iron fittings used on pieces of furniture produced in late 15th- and early 16th-century Europe.

Every exterior face, except for the back and

the underside which are painted with red shellac (on the underside only traces remain), is covered with mother-of-pearl tesserae and pinned with brass. The mother-of-pearl is most likely from pearl oyster shells, and, given the golden sheen seen on some of the tesserae, probably from *Pinctada maxima* oysters and the marine gastropod *Turbo marmoratus*. The mosaic decoration is both unusual and striking in its decoration and colour scheme: the whitish colour of the pearl-oyster mother-of-pearl contrasts with the dark tones of the tortoiseshell - probably from the hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) - and the vibrant orange-red inlays made from mastic mixed with pigment. The carpet-like decoration consists of simple rectangular frames of mother-of-pearl dotted with alternating red mastic and tortoiseshell lozenges, and a central fish scale pattern on the sides and the top. The lid features a round medallion with a Timurid-style rosette, which is a stylized lotus flower, over a tortoiseshell ground. The front is decorated with similar rectangular frames, while the field features two rectangular bands of stylised palmettes and rosettes over alternating dark



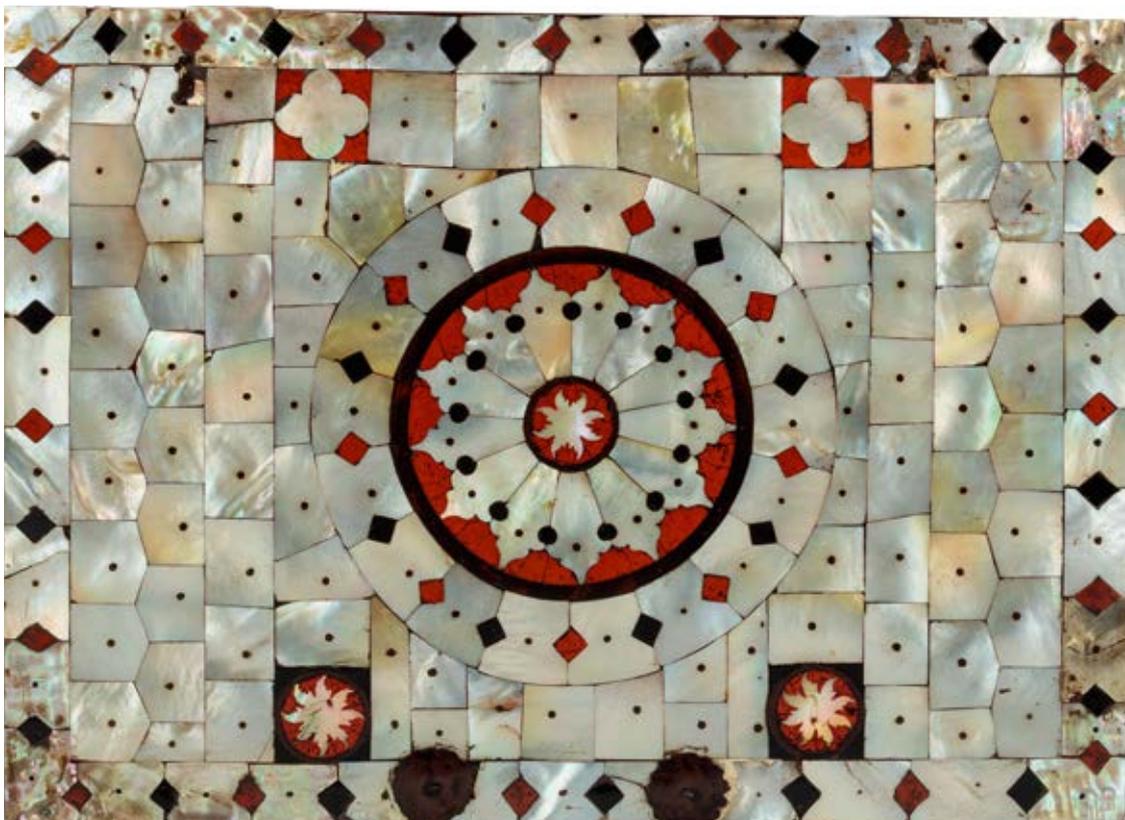
tortoiseshell and red-orange mastic inlays.

The Indian origin of this type of mother-of-pearl production, namely from Khambhat and Surat in the present-day state of Gujarat in western India, has been fully demonstrated during the last three decades, not only by documentary and literary evidence but also by the survival in situ of 16th-century wooden structures covered in mother-of-pearl tesserae.<sup>1</sup> A fine example is the canopy decorating the tomb of the Sufi saint Sheik Salim Chisti (1478-1572), in Fatehpur Sikri near Agra in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. This elaborate example is geometric in character and Islamic in nature, with the mother-of-pearl tesserae employed to form complex fish-scale designs and stylised lotus flowers.<sup>2</sup> Made to Portuguese order for export to Europe, the first items made using this type of mother-of-pearl technique to arrive in Lisbon were destined for the royal court and the princely collections of the time, as is recorded in surviving inventories. The first documented pieces can be found in the 1522 post-mortem inventory of the *guarda-roupa* of Manuel I of Portugal (r. 1495-1521).<sup>3</sup>

While caskets of many different shapes are known using the Gujarati mother-of-pearl technique, either featuring truncated pyramidal lids following local Islamic prototypes (their

remote origins in Far Eastern boxes containing Buddhist texts); or prismatic lids with three sides copying European prototypes; or even only slightly domed-shaped lids of European origin, no other writing chest of this type is known. Nevertheless, the late medieval prototype used as a model for the present writing chest is very well-known, as it was used in the production of the earliest pieces of Asian furniture made for export to Europe. These include mid-16th century lacquer-coated, small- and medium-sized writing chests, similarly fitted with drawers and inside nooks, made in the Kingdom of Pegu (present-day Myanmar) for the Portuguese market. Additionally, large storage chests or travelling trunks made in Portuguese-ruled Cochin (Kochi, in the state of Kerala) from the 16th century onwards.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to its rarity, the most important aspect of the present writing chest is in the rich, well-preserved painted decoration on the inside of the lid, the floor of the interior well, and the floor of the drawer. The inside of the lid is decorated with a prince or ruler on horseback with two attendants, the one in front wielding a fan and the second, behind his master, carrying an umbrella; both emblems denoting royalty and thus suggesting the royal or princely character of the horseman. All three figures are dressed





in the courtly attire of the Deccani sultanates: knee-length tunics fastened at the side and tight-fitting trousers and turbans. Adapted to the more intimate space of the well, the painting on its floor depicts a courtly love scene, with a man and a woman sitting on a carpet engaged in conversation, the man similarly attired, and the woman wearing a sari and a very tight-fitting bodice or *cholee*, emphasising her breasts, thereby highlighting the amorous, sensual nature of the depiction. The floor of the drawer is decorated with a princely hunting scene, with the prince on horseback with a bow and arrow aiming at a fleeing chital (*Axis axis*), surrounded by other deer and large hares. Heavily outlined, albeit gracefully, with all the figures in three-quarter profile and the background sprinkled with stylised flowers derived from Persian painting, the style of the depictions is reminiscent of Indian painting on paper, as practised in less-sophisticated courtly workshops in the Sultanate of Gujarat. Our decorative paintings share many similarities, for instance with the well-known Indo-Portuguese album *Codex Casanatense*, 1889,

a 'costume and customs' book on the different Asian peoples encountered by the Portuguese. This book has recently been attributed to an artist trained in a Sultanate studio in the early 16th century, possibly in Mandu (Malwa), or Gujarat, and dated to the 1540s.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the decoration on the few surviving mother-of-pearl basins using the same type of Gujarati production techniques as the present chest – namely on those featuring a wooden core, and those entering princely collections during the 16th century - matches in technique, materials and iconography with that on our unique writing chest. While one example features only Timurid-style medallions and arabesque decoration on its underside (Kunst- und Wunderkammer Burg Trausnitz, Landshut, Accession Number R 1265), the other known basin (Grünes Gewölbe, Dresden, Accession Number. IV 181), which had precious silver gilt mountings added to it ca. 1582-1589, features painted animals, namely hares and deer, that are strikingly similar to the ones depicted on our chest.<sup>6</sup>

Notes:

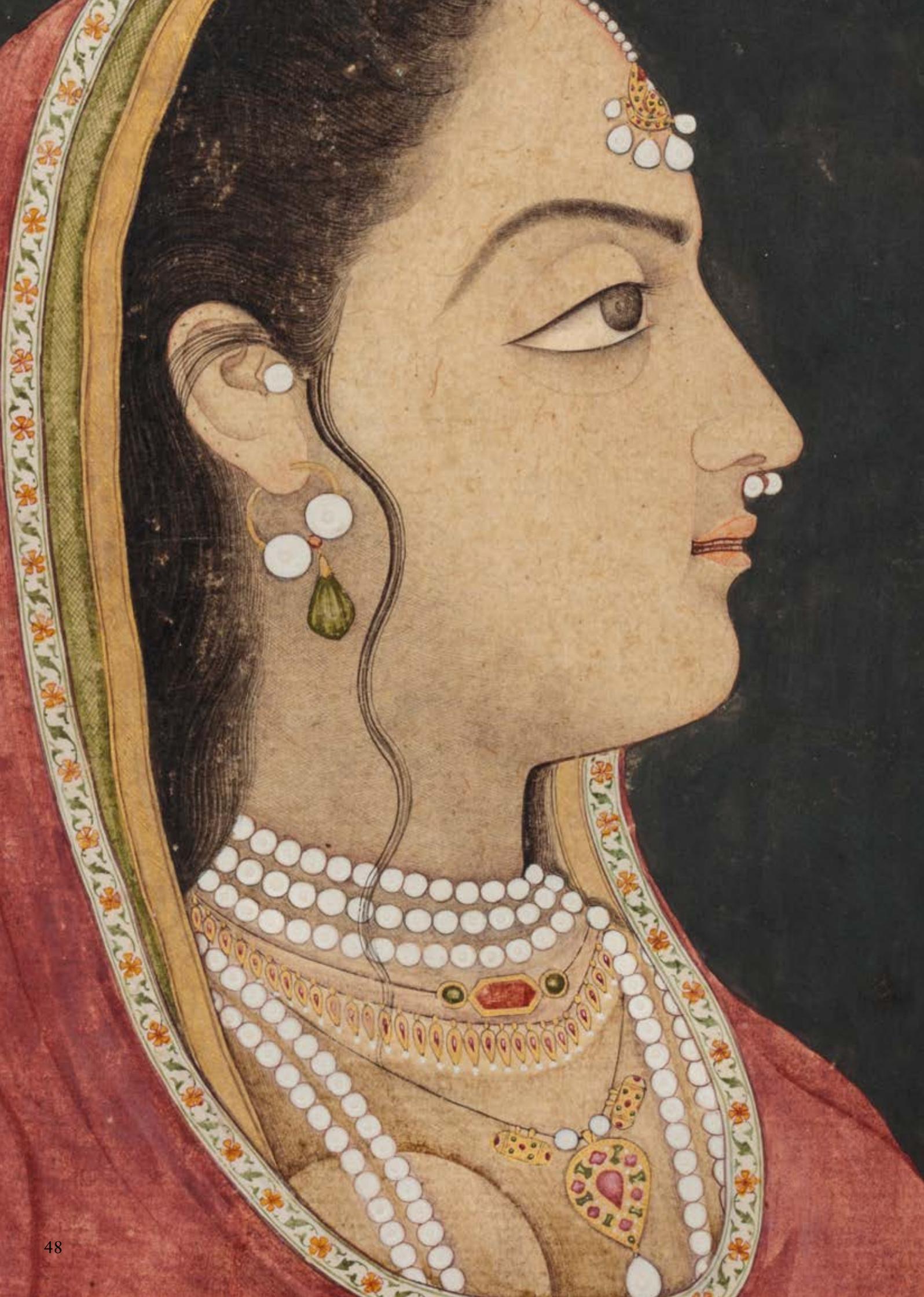
1. Ferrão, pp. 114-122; Felgueiras, 1996; Sangl, 2001; Sangl, 2005; Crespo, 2016, pp. 114-121, Cat. No. 12
2. Crespo, 2015, pp. 65-69; Wills, La Niece, McLeod, and Cartwright
3. Freire, p. 412
4. for the writing chests, see Crespo, 2016, pp. 238-261, cat. 22; for the storage trunks, see Felgueiras, 1994
5. see Losty; for a facsimile of the manuscript, see Matos
6. Sangl, 2001, p. 267; Syndram, Kappel and Weinhold, p. 35

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## 19. Bust-Length Portrait of a Lady

Attributed to Hasan Raza  
Bikaner, India, circa 1680  
20.5cm x 15.5cm  
Provenance: Private USA Collection  
since the 1960s

Bust-length views of beautiful women became a distinct painting type in Mughal painting in the mid-17th century, and were soon emulated in Deccani and Rajput courts. In this elegant work, the artist fills virtually the entire composition with the figure, who does not idly hold the customary flower or flask and wine cup, but is caught in reverie as she raises a hand to grip the frame of the painting itself. Together with that engaging gesture and velvety black background, the close-up view of the woman's lovely features, voluptuous body, *jhoomar tikka* (forehead ornament), and gleaming pearl jewellery creates a palpably alluring mood. The painter's mastery of his craft is evident in every detail: the subtle tonal gradation in the iris and pupil; the hint of shading around the discreet arching forms of the eyelids; the slightly parted lips; the soft, irregular hairline and layered, swept-back hair articulated with individual strands; the dusky modelling of the singer's jaw and neck; the long, sinuous sidelock; the thinly painted, diaphanous red madder garment; and the elegantly curled fingers of her open hand. On close examination, even the pearls of her earring and nose-ring have a slightly darker centre, which gives them a nuanced three-dimensionality.

If this painting draws upon the Mughal tradition in its formulation and precision, its flattening and abstract traits point unmistakably to the court of Bikaner in northwestern Rajasthan, which had close cultural ties with the Mughals throughout the 17th century. Its facial type differs from those of the better-known Ruknuddin

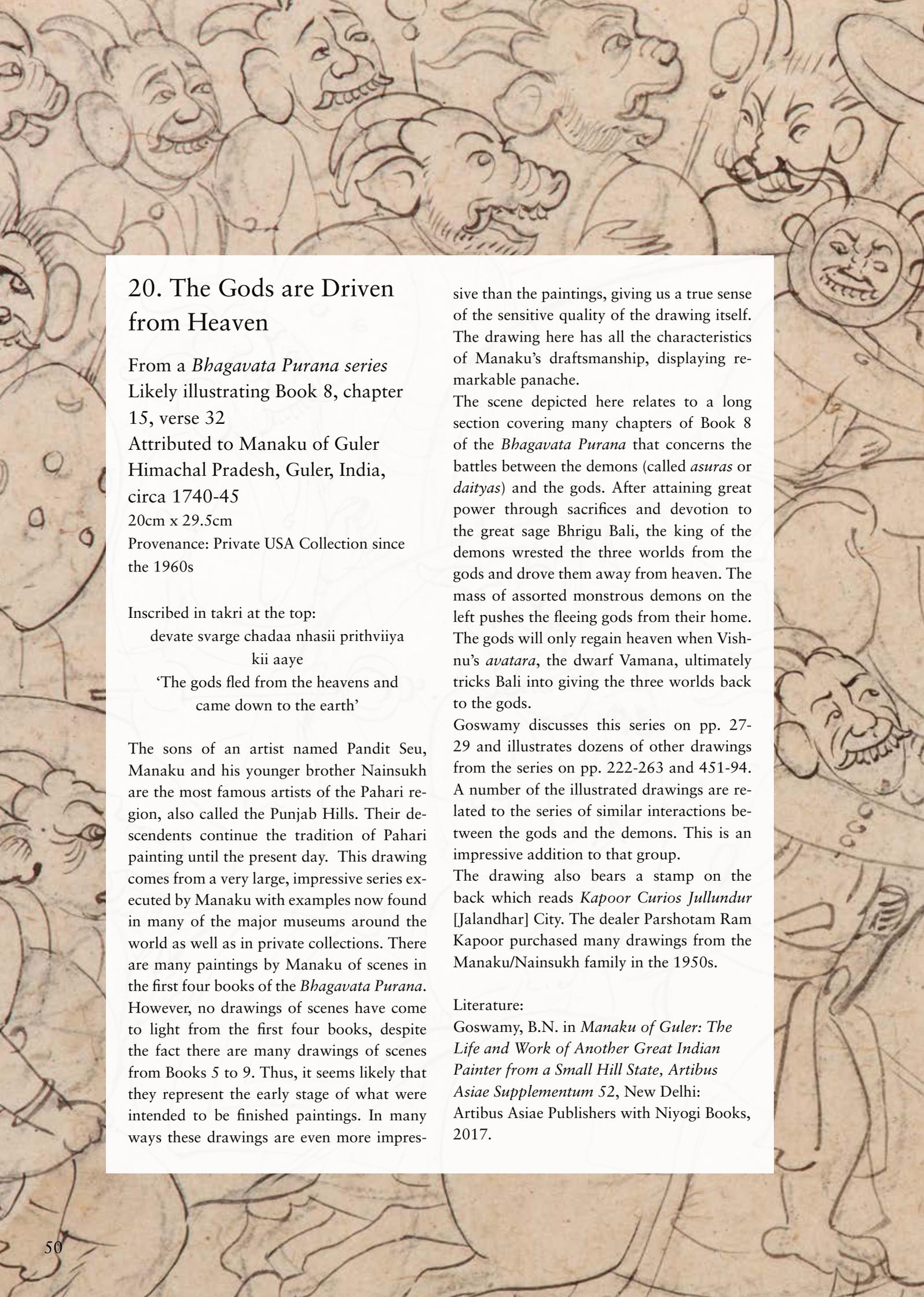


(active 1650-1700) and his descendants, and relates closely to a painting of Lakshmi-Narayana by the Mughal-trained painter Ustad Ali Raza of Delhi (active 1645-65), and especially to a work ascribed to Hasan Raza, one of his two sons. That equally superb painting presents a woman with practically identical features and jewellery in a frontal view. A bust-length drawing of a very similar woman in profile is in the Mittal Museum in Hyderabad.

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## 20. The Gods are Driven from Heaven

From a *Bhagavata Purana* series

Likely illustrating Book 8, chapter 15, verse 32

Attributed to Manaku of Guler Himachal Pradesh, Guler, India, circa 1740-45

20cm x 29.5cm

Provenance: Private USA Collection since the 1960s

Inscribed in takri at the top:

devate svarge chadaa nhasii prithviiya  
kii aaye

‘The gods fled from the heavens and  
came down to the earth’

The sons of an artist named Pandit Seu, Manaku and his younger brother Nainsukh are the most famous artists of the Pahari region, also called the Punjab Hills. Their descendants continue the tradition of Pahari painting until the present day. This drawing comes from a very large, impressive series executed by Manaku with examples now found in many of the major museums around the world as well as in private collections. There are many paintings by Manaku of scenes in the first four books of the *Bhagavata Purana*. However, no drawings of scenes have come to light from the first four books, despite the fact there are many drawings of scenes from Books 5 to 9. Thus, it seems likely that they represent the early stage of what were intended to be finished paintings. In many ways these drawings are even more impres-

sive than the paintings, giving us a true sense of the sensitive quality of the drawing itself. The drawing here has all the characteristics of Manaku’s draftsmanship, displaying remarkable panache.

The scene depicted here relates to a long section covering many chapters of Book 8 of the *Bhagavata Purana* that concerns the battles between the demons (called *asuras* or *daityas*) and the gods. After attaining great power through sacrifices and devotion to the great sage Bhrigu Bali, the king of the demons wrested the three worlds from the gods and drove them away from heaven. The mass of assorted monstrous demons on the left pushes the fleeing gods from their home. The gods will only regain heaven when Vishnu’s *avatara*, the dwarf Vamana, ultimately tricks Bali into giving the three worlds back to the gods.

Goswamy discusses this series on pp. 27-29 and illustrates dozens of other drawings from the series on pp. 222-263 and 451-94. A number of the illustrated drawings are related to the series of similar interactions between the gods and the demons. This is an impressive addition to that group.

The drawing also bears a stamp on the back which reads *Kapoor Curios Jullundur* [Jalandhar] City. The dealer Parshotam Ram Kapoor purchased many drawings from the Manaku/Nainsukh family in the 1950s.

Literature:

Goswamy, B.N. in *Manaku of Guler: The Life and Work of Another Great Indian Painter from a Small Hill State*, *Artibus Asiae Supplementum* 52, New Delhi: Artibus Asiae Publishers with Niyogi Books, 2017.



## 21. Portrait of Maharaja Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar III of Mysore

Attributed to George Landseer  
(c.1834-1878)

India, circa 1861

29.5cm x 14.5cm

Provenance: Private European Collection

Encouraging the next generation of artists to venture to India, the renowned painter William Hodges believed that they must possess a 'desire to present the truth', for 'everything has a particular character, and certainly it is the finding out the real and natural character which is required'.

Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III was a man who dedicated his life to the pursuit of truth. His own personal circumstances led to a relentless desire for justice and the salvation of his family honour. The great mastery of his portrait culminates in Landseer's evocation of the ruler's indomitable spirit, which so adeptly reveals his true character.

After the defeat of Tipu Sultan at the Siege of Seringapatam in 1799, the five-year-old Krishnaraja Wodeyar III was appointed Maharaja of Mysore by the British. The recently annexed state was in political and economic turmoil and the Maharaja faced a taciturn Prime Minister and mounting debts. The East India Company deployed troops to assist with the Naga rebellion in 1831, and subsequently took over the administration of the state. Krishnaraja Wodeyar III was retained as the titular sovereign, and guaranteed that he would regain his position once stability had been achieved.

Over the ensuing decades, the Maharaja dedicated his best efforts to regaining full administration of the state and sought personal relief through the arts. He was a polyglot, author

of several literary works and developed a new style of epic prose. His reign witnessed a flourishing of creativity in Mysore, as musicians, artists and playwrights were encouraged to visit the state. During this period it was fashionable for Maharajas to commission European artists to paint their likenesses.

George Landseer was an award winning portrait and landscape painter who had exhibited numerous works at the Royal Academy, London. In 1859 he left London for Calcutta at the request of Queen Victoria. Landseer was well acquainted with the artist Frederick Christian Lewis, who had established a successful career painting in India. Lewis himself had visited Mysore in 1845 and 1846, to paint a portrait of the British Commissioner and complete a large painting of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III's Durbar Celebrations. It is most likely Landseer was commissioned to paint the Maharaja's portrait following an introduction from Lewis. Furthermore, Landseer's endorsement from Queen Victoria made him a highly sought after artist amongst Indian patrons. In 1861 he joined Lord Canning's tour of the Himalayas and also painted portraits of the Maharajas of Indore and Gwalior. It would not be implausible thus to suggest Landseer painted Krishnaraja Wodeyar III during this fruitful period.

Hailed as one of the most capable yet underrated of Victorian painters, Landseer's portrait of the Maharaja stands as a testament to his achievements. The use of vibrant pigments to capture the beguiling jewels, the energetic brushstrokes of the turban and fleeting dashes of white to create aqueous eyes, all typify Landseer's hand. These liberal traits delineated him from the previous generation of portraitists and imbued his works with a tangible quality of the sitter's character.

Permitting oneself the time to be fully acquainted with such an intimate portrait, a visual autobiography unravels conveying the disposition of the Maharaja and sentiment of the artist. Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III's





finery is emblematic of the wealth and prowess of the Royal House of Mysore. His translucent blouse of the finest embroidered cotton provides a delicate contrast to the magnificence of his jewellery. Strands of pearls and Columbian emeralds sit below a necklace of glistening rubies, while his diamond earring catches the light, adding to the dazzling array of precious stones. A white shawl with gold brocade is draped over the Maharaja's shoulder, as the majestic display culminates in a sumptuous blue and gold Mysore-style turban, embellished with floral motifs. Reflecting European portrait compositions, the Maharaja sits in a chair with tall shoulders, his stoic demeanour pertaining to his venerable status. A red *tikka* marks the centre of his brow, indicating his devotion to the Hindu faith, while his softly rendered grey beard conveys a learned dignity. There are four other versions of the current painting, two of which include the Maharaja's hand clasping an ivory hilt and show him wearing a belt buckle, depicting a medallion of Queen Victoria. Whilst painted with enthusiasm and observation, the other portraits fail to achieve the nuanced detail of the Landseer work, and bear a somewhat naïve quality. Queen Victoria's diary mentions her fondness for some cattle Krishnaraja Wodeyar III had sent to her and in return she entrusted the Maharaja's physician with reciprocal gifts. These included 'a few specimens of the manufactures of Great Britain and other articles of which Her Majesty requests your acceptance as token of Her friendship and esteem'. Lewin Bentham Bowring, Commissioner of Mysore (1862-1870) also described the Maharaja wearing a 'much cherished sword with a medallion of the Queen upon the belt'. The illustrations of the medallion therefore reveal that the Maharaja sat for the portraits no earlier than 1861. This significant year marked the completion of the Maharaja's new residence, the Jaganmohan Palace and Art Gallery. Commissioning a renowned British artist to mark the occasion would seem fitting for a ruler who was a great advocate of painting. Inviting resident court artists to the sitting also enabled them to develop their techniques in portraiture and provided new works to decorate the palace and museum.

The Maharaja's final years were plagued by concern that the Wodeyar family might never regain their autonomy. In 1865 he adopted a son and despite *sanads* (certificates) guaranteeing princes their right to adopt heirs, the privilege was denied to the Maharaja. Dismayed but unrelenting, he took his case to the House of Commons. His physician led the campaign in England, forming the Mysore Caucus with previous Commissioners and Company officials. Rallying the press led to much public support as both nations were captivated by the seminal case. In April 1867, the Secretary of State finally informed the Maharaja that his adopted heir would succeed to the throne. The Maharaja died the following year, having finally accomplished his lifelong goal. To this day he is hailed as a 'freedom fighter' who, despite interminable adversity, led an unwavering campaign for justice.

In Landseer's painting of the Maharaja, the priority of artist and patron to unveil the truth evokes a dialogue of reciprocity within the work. The Maharaja presents himself in true authenticity and Landseer sensitively relays this to the canvas. In turn, the viewer is invited to journey into a seminal period of British and Indian history and venerate a man who committed his life to his principles.

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## 22. Royal Talpur Sword

Sindh, Pakistan

Late 18th – Early 19th century

84cm long

This sword has a tulwar hilt with a curved blade. The iron hilt is covered in gold with incised vegetal decoration. The grip is slightly bulbous, the quillons short with rounded ends, and the languet rectangular in shape with six punched squares. The knuckle bow extends from the quillon to the pommel disk, curling back on both sides to form two opposing decorative heads. The blade is curved, single-edged and damascened, and bears two sections of gold nasta'liq calligraphy. The first line, partly obscured by the hilt, reads:

سرکار میر صوبدار خان تالپر

'Sarkar Mir Subedar Khan Talpur'

Mir Subedar Khan Talpur (d.1846) was the son of the ruler Mir Fath 'ali Khan Talpur (d.1801), from the Talpur ruling house of Hyderabad. The Talpur Dynasty ruled Sindh (present-day southeast Pakistan) from the late 18th to the early 19th century. Mir Fath 'ali Khan Talpur became the first official ruler of Sindh, under Afghan sovereignty, following the battle of Halani in 1783.<sup>1</sup> Mir Subedar Khan is possibly the same person as the poet who composed a versified history of the Talpur dynasty called the Fathnama.<sup>2</sup>

The second section of calligraphy, in the cartouche next to the hilt, reads:

عمل اسد الله اصفهانی

'Work of Asadallah Isfahani'

Asadallah Isfahani is traditionally considered to be the most celebrated Persian sword maker. Despite his name appearing on many blades, very little is known about him. Dated examples bearing his name range from the 15th to the early 19th century, suggesting the continued use of his name was a sign of quality.<sup>3</sup>

For comparative examples of this type of sword, see the Royal Armouries Collection, Leeds, Accession Number XXVIS.135; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Accession Number 26.35.1a, b, and published in Alexander, pp. 182-83, No. 69, for a Persian example with the same signature of 'Asadallah Isfahani'.



Notes:

1. Askari, pp. 13-14
2. Storey, pp. 658
3. Alexander, p. 182

Literature:

Alexander, D. G. *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015.

Askari, N. *Treasures of the Talpurs: Collections from the Court of Sindh*, Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, 1999.

Storey, C.A. *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey, II, 3. M: History of India*, Luzac and Co., London, 1939.



## 23. Indian Sword with Champlévé Enamelled Hilt

India, 18th century

90cm long

Provenance: Private USA Collection

This sword features a striking blue hilt and matching chape, decorated with stylised floral motifs. The iron hilt is covered with blue champlévé enamel and gold, set with semi-precious stones in the *kundan* technique. The pommel disk is topped with a rosette-shaped boss embellished with clear and rose-coloured stones, and the underside bears six evenly spaced flowers. Symmetrical flowers rendered in gold and clear stones cover all sides of the grip and quillons, and this pattern continues on the chape. The rest of the scabbard is covered in red velvet. The blade is engraved on either side where it joins the hilt, with broad lines surrounding the languet terminating in a trefoil. Below, on one side, there are inscriptions reading:

يا فتاح

“O Opener!”

لا فتى الا علي لا سيف الا ذو الفقار

“There is no hero save ‘Ali,  
no sword save Dhu’l-Fiqar.”

Enamelling became a popular decorative technique in India following the arrival of European jewellers in the 16th and 17th centuries. The art

was developed especially in Mughal royal workshops but also became widespread throughout the Indian Subcontinent.<sup>1</sup> For further examples of swords with enamelling, see the Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, Accession Number LNS 2154 J ab, illustrated in Kaoukji, cat. no. 112, pp. 318-21, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Accession Number 36.25.1519a, b, illustrated in Alexander, no. 70, pp. 184-6.

Notes:

1. Keene, p. 62

Literature:

Alexander, D. G. *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015.

Kaoukji, S. *Precious Indian Weapons and Other Princely Accoutrements*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2017.

Keene, M. *Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals, The Al-Sabah Collection*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2001.





## 24. Mughal Dagger with a Jade Horse-Head Handle

India, 17th - Early 18th century

34.6cm long

Provenance: Nasli M. Heeramaneck collection

This Mughal dagger has a finely carved jade hilt in the shape of a horse head. The details of the horse's face are wonderfully captured with ears facing back, nostrils flared and mouth slightly open. The eyes are heightened with semi-precious stones, set in gold using the Indian *kundan* technique. A short forelock hangs centrally above the horse's eyes, while the mane falls gracefully down one side of the neck. Here the artisans have excelled in their use of carved jade, as dark inclusions in the stone appear along the horse's neck, emphasising the details of the mane and bringing a lively quality to the piece.

A delicately carved neckband hangs around the horse's neck, carrying a pendant in the shape of acanthus leaves. The pendant reaches the top ridge of one of three finger-rests along the side of the hilt. Below, the quillon block is carved with upward sweeping leaves that terminate in curls on either side, with an arrangement of acanthus leaves sprouting from the centre. The blade has a slight re-curve, and is ridged and double-edged. Comparable examples can be found in the Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, Accession Number LNS 173 HS (see Kaoukji, p. 199), and in Hales, p. 36, no. 83.

### Literature:

Hales, R. *Islamic and Oriental Arms and Armour: A Lifetime's Passion*, Robert Hales, England, 2013.

Kaoukji, S. *Precious Indian Weapons and Other Princely Accoutrements*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2017.





## 25. Gem-Set Mughal Dagger

India, 18th century

43.5cm long

This dagger features a jade hilt decorated with red and blue semi-precious stones. The stones are set in gold using the Indian *kundan* technique, joined by thin lines of gold inlay to create scrolling floral and vegetal motifs. The decorative repertoire complements the form of the hilt: the upper edge of the pommel is lined with a stemmed flower; the pommel butt is embellished with a thick branch of leaves; and the sides of the pommel have upward curling leaves and a petalled flower. Similar patterns line the cusped edges of the quillon block, with central foliage sprouting upwards and joining at the sides. The double-edged, ridged blade is made from *jawhar*, or watered steel, and curves gently ending in a reinforced tip.





## 26. Plaque (*The Triumph of Divine over Profane Love*)

Possibly Colombo, Sri Lanka,  
Early 17th century

19.5cm high, 13cm wide, 4cm deep

Provenance: Private European Collection for more than two generations, by descent

This extremely rare and highly important carved ivory plaque depicts *The Triumph of Divine over Profane Love*, an allegorical composition featuring Divine Love as a winged, crowned *putto*, armed with his bow and arrows. Divine Love tramples on Profane Love, a cupid tied up and blindfolded, who lies on the ground alongside his broken

quiver, arrows and some of his feathers. By the left margin is a representation of the crucified Christ, and in the background a host of Jesuit fathers are in prayer, receiving the Holy Ghost.

Masterfully carved in very high relief, the present plaque belongs to a very small group of only three-known similar plaques, which were modelled after a European devotional engraving by Hieronymus Wierix published around 1610. These plaques were certainly made under special, direct commission by the Jesuits in Portuguese Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), probably in Colombo, which, after the destruction of the imperial city of Kotte in the mid-16th century, had become a refuge for ivory carvers and other artists previously employed in the royal workshops. One example of this rare, small engraving, measuring 11.1 x 7.2 cm, and









probably part of a large series of engravings published by the Wierix brothers and commissioned by the Jesuits, is in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Accession Number RP-P-1898-A-19871, and illustrated below.

There are only two other similar pieces known to us. One, measuring 22.8 x 17.7 cm, is in the Museu Municipal, Viana do Castelo in Portugal, and is carved from a thinner ivory plaque and inscribed in Portuguese and Latin.<sup>1</sup> The other, measuring 19.5 x 13 x 4.3 cm, perfectly matches the present example in the depth of the plaque, the mastery of the carving and the absence of any inscriptions. It is set with a metal loop on top for suspension. It is housed in a private collection in Lisbon, and was published by Pedro Dias, who wrongly identified its place of production as Goa.<sup>2</sup> All three plaques faithfully copy the printed model, the carver following very closely all the details of the small original print, most certainly handed over by the patron and client. In addition, the plaque in Viana do Castelo also copies the Latin texts. These include the message which flows from the dove of the Holy Spirit (*Ignem veni mittere in terram*); the inscriptions on Divine Love's halo (*Divus Amor*) and on Profane Love's blindfold (*Cupido*); the scroll or banderolle coiled around Christ (*Amor meus crucifixus est*); and the copious three elegiac couplets on the bottom of the page (copied with several mistakes). These are all highlighted in red, leaving behind only the *imprimatur* and the engraver's name, while adding a Portuguese title which reads "Mostras de quem he" or "Proofs of who He is", alluding to the triumph of Christ over evil.

The long-lasting impression left by devotional ivory carvings made in Ceylon for the Portuguese was witnessed first-hand by Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563-1611), the author of the famous *Itinerario* published in 1596. When van Linschoten was in the service of the Portuguese archbishop Vicente Fonseca in Goa, the prelate was given an ivory sculpture of the Crucified Christ about forty-five centimetres in length. The author describes it as having been produced in such an excellent and industrious way that his hair, beard and face seemed as natural as if that of a living being, and so finely carved with limbs so well proportioned that one would fail to see similar pieces made in Europe. Stemming from an ivory carving tradition that was promptly exploited by the Portuguese, whether by missionaries keen on commissioning the images they so desperately required for the indoctrination of new converts, or even by courtly officials of the Portuguese state of India, the production of Catholic images in Ceylon achieved huge fame and prestige all over Asia. Once Ceylon was lost to the Dutch in 1658, however, the workshops probably moved to Goa.<sup>3</sup>



*Divus Amor*, © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

#### Notes:

1. Ferrão, pp. 141-142, cat. no. 188; Raposo, p. 132, cat. no. 355; Silva, pp. 110-111
2. Dias, pp. 78-79, cat. no. 33
3. Gschwend; Silva

#### Literature:

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- Dias, P. *A Arte do Marfim. O Mundo onde os Portugueses chegaram* (cat.), Pedro Bourbon de Aguiar Branco, V.O.C. Antiguidades, Porto, 2004.
- Ferrão, B. *Imaginária Luso-Oriental*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1982.
- Gschwend, A.J., and Beltz, J. (eds.). *Elfenbeine aus Ceylon: Luxusgüter für Katharina von Habsburg (1507-1578)* (cat.), Museum Rietberg, Zürich, 2010.
- Raposo, F.H. (ed.). *Portuguese Expansion Overseas and the Art of Ivory* (cat.), Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian – Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon, 1991.
- Vassallo e Silva, N. '«Engenho e Primor»: a Arte do Marfim no Ceilão. «Ingenuity and Excellence»: Ivory Art in Ceylon', in Silva, Nuno Vassallo e (ed.), *Marfins no Império Português. Ivories in the Portuguese Empire*, Scribe, Lisbon, 2013, pp. 87-141.

## 27. Casket

Probably Kholmogory, Russia,  
Early 18th century

16cm high, 20cm wide, 16cm deep

This casket, covered in pierced openwork bone, and carved with symmetrically displayed foliage over a wooden core, closely follows a 17th-century Sri Lankan (Ceylonese) prototype that originally would have been made for export to Europe.<sup>1</sup> Its decoration, albeit coarser in appearance when compared to the Sri Lankan models, minutely carved in elephant ivory, fully echoes its original

counterpart, standing as testimony to the far-reaching artistic consequences of global trade in the early modern period in the hands of the Dutch. Following in the footsteps of the Portuguese, who commissioned hybrid ivory-carved objects combining European shapes (and uses) with exotic local materials and high-quality craftsmanship, such caskets and other small luxury pieces of furniture were made for export and found their way onto Dutch ships bound for the White Sea on the northwest coast of Russia. Starting from the late 16th century the Dutch established important trading relationships with Russian merchants who supplied export goods from central Russia.<sup>2</sup>





The present casket was most likely made in Kholmogory (Холмогоры), which is in northern Russia at the mouth of the Northern Dvina River, and approximately fifty miles up the river from Arkhangelsk (Архангельск, known in English as Archangel). It was the chief seaport of medieval and early modern Russia, established near the exit of the river into the White Sea. Kholmogory had a thriving ivory and bone carving industry, which used the by-products of the hunting and whaling (seal bone and walrus ivory) trade from Arkhangelsk. A high level of craftsmanship was reached in the late 17th century in the workshops of the Kremlin Armoury, where, under the direct patronage of the Tsar, Yevdokim and Semyon Sheshenin, who had been brought from Kholmogory, produced bone carvings for the court and the Patriarchy. Similarly, the Kholmogory bone carvers Osip Dudin and Nikolai Vereshchagin, who worked for the imperial court in the 18th century, made objects that served as diplomatic gifts. Highly influenced by the designs and decorative repertoire of objects brought by Dutch, English and German merchants, the bone carvings made at Kholmogory, albeit unique, remain poorly known and studied.

#### Notes:

1. Chaiklin; Veenendaal; Crespo, pp. 212-218, cat. 19
2. Kotilaine, pp. 17-27

#### Literature:

- Bystrova, Ye. 'Холмогорская резьба по кости [Kholmogorskaya rez'ba po kosti]', *Народное творчество* [Narodnoye tvorchestvo], 3, 2007, pp. 60-65 [in Russian].
- Chaiklin, M. 'Ivory in early modern Ceylon: a case study in what documents don't reveal', *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 6.1, 2009, pp. 37-63.
- Crespo, H. M. *Choices*, Lisboa, AR-PAB, 2016.
- Kotilaine, J. T. *Russia's Foreign Trade and Economic Expansion in the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2005.
- Veenendaal, J. *Asian Art and Dutch Taste*, Zwolle, The Hague, Gemeentemuseum, 2014.
- Ukhanova, I. N. *Резьба по кости в России XVIII-XIX веков [Rez'ba po kosti v Rossii XVIII-XIX vekov]*, Leningrad, Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1981 [in Russian].

## 28. Mughal Bowl and Plate

Northern India, 18th century

Bowl 8.3cm high, 14.4cm diameter

Plate 2.5cm high, 20.5cm diameter

Provenance: Private European Collection  
since 1956

This delicately ornamented bowl and plate are exquisite examples of Mughal glass craftsmanship. The bowl of circular shape gently flares towards the rim. The body is gilded to luminous effect with poppy flowers in full bloom, enveloped by scrolling garlands with delicate leaves, interspersed with smaller flower heads. Fine details outlining the petals appear etched into the gilt, while two gold bands encompassing chevron motifs, one around the rim, the other corresponding to the diameter of the base, enhance the vertiginous aesthetic. The body narrows to a kicked-in base with the addition of a rounded foot. The base is embellished inside with a flower. The plate is decorated internally with two contrasting floral designs. The principal band echoes the motifs on the bowl, with poppy blooms set within foliated tendrils. The centre of the plate is decorated with six poppies, whose stems intersect to form a cartouche, encasing a floral motif upon which the bowl sits. Akin to the bowl, gold bands distinguish the two areas of decoration.

The earliest reference to glassmaking during the Mughal period appears in Abul al-Fazl's *A'in-i Akbarki* (1596-97), in which glass made in Bihar and near Agra is mentioned. Glass vessels from Iran and Europe also reached India during this time, which led to a flourish of glass production. Workshops created free-blown, (as with the present example)

and mold-blown glass as well as some wheel cut pieces. Decorative motifs echoed those appearing in paintings, objects, carpets and architecture of the period. Contemporaneous artworks depicting the Mughal courts reveal glass cups and saucers in use by the emperors and members of the aristocracy, as well as being prominently displayed, attesting to their status as highly valued objects.

The present bowl and plate would no doubt have been considered in this manner. As the sinuous blooms and tendrils inhabit the contours of the vessels they denote an organic lyricism and poetic sentiment, which could only have been achieved by a truly masterful artist. For examples of Mughal glass with similar decorative schemes, see Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Accession Number C.141-1936., and the Los Angeles County Museum, Accession Number M.84.124.2a-c.

### Literature:

Carboni, S. *Glass of the Sultans*.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2001.

Digby, S. 'A Corpus of 'Mughal' Glass', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1973, pp. 80-96.

Dikshit, M. G. *History of Indian Glass*, University of Bombay, 1969.

Liefkes, R. (ed). *Glass*. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1997.

Markel, S. 'Indian and "Indianate" Glass Vessels in the Los Angeles County Museum', *Journal of Glass Studies*, Vol. 33, 1991, pp. 82-92.

Stronge, S. *The Indian Heritage. Court Life and Arts Under Mughal Rule*. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1982.





## 29. Jade Bowl with Gold Appliqué

India, Late 18th century

6.9cm high, 18cm wide

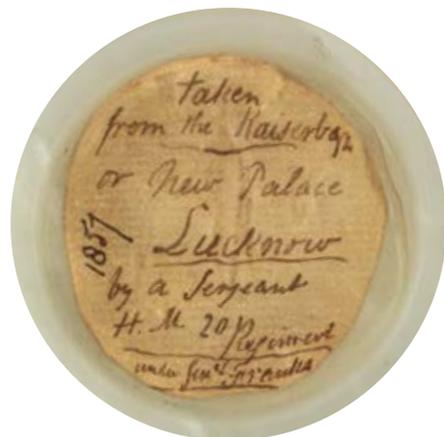
Provenance: Private UK Collection since 1957; taken from the Qaisar Bagh Palace in Lucknow in 1858 by a Sergeant of the H.M. 20 Regiment

This delicate jade bowl with two handles is carved from whitish-green jade and sits on a ring foot. The outer sides of the bowl are carved with rows of stems extending from above the foot to just below the rim. The stems begin and end with inward-facing stylised floral motifs. In line with the stems are four tall, evenly spaced leaf motifs rendered in gold appliqué, visible both outside and inside the bowl. The two handles are solid and curved, and decorated with acanthus leaves. A small hole, now filled, is visible on one side of the bowl. It is surrounded by a small area of jade that has not been polished, indicating the possible presence of a small plaque in the past.

A label under the foot indicates that this bowl was once housed in the Qaisar Bagh Palace in Lucknow, India, built in the mid-19th century by Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Awadh. A comparable example to this bowl can be found in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, illustrated in Teng Shu-p'ing, plate 150, pp. 124 & 260.

Literature:

Teng Shu-p'ing. *Exquisite Beauty – Islamic Jades*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2012.





### 30. Gold Container

Northern India,

Late 17th century

9cm high, 5.5cm diameter

Provenance: Private European

Collection

This rare and important egg-shaped gold container is set with a loop for suspension and decorated, together with the underside finial, with gold granules. Made from thick sheet gold, the present container features a complex chisel-cut, pierced openwork decoration, set in horizontal bands with different floral compositions. These are further decorated by chasing, separated by narrow pearled friezes also made by chasing, while the rim of the upper half, which closes by means of a crossbar, is decorated with a frieze of large granules made by punching a gold wire on a metal die. This precious gold container belongs to a rare group of similar objects, most probably made at the same North Indian production centre, and is only the third known example. One of the three was recently showcased at an exhibition in Lisbon and belongs to a private Portuguese collection in Porto, while the second one belongs to a private collection in Lisbon.<sup>1</sup> The one in Porto, perfectly spherical and also chisel-cut, features an hexagonal-based trellis, or lacework. This is similar to Indian *jalis* (pierced, openwork stone screens) which derive from the complex Islamic decorations found among the refined courtly arts of the Deccan Sultanates and the Mughal Empire.

These gold containers are related to a somewhat larger group of precious egg and sphere-shaped containers made from silver and, more rarely, from gold, where the halves close by pressing them together. Usually featuring a plain silver-gilt inner lining and an outer case made from pierced, openwork silver, decorated with horizontal bands of foliage made in repoussé, these have been identified as Gujarati or Goan in origin, and are dated from the late 17th to the early 18th century. Of these examples, some of which are large, a rare number feature their original contents: a Goa stone. Goa, or cordial, stones originated in the apothecary of the Colégio de São Paulo in Goa, and were an invention



of the Florentine lay brother Gaspar António in the mid-16th century. These were medicinal products and substitutes for the rare and very valuable bezoar stones - stomach secretions of an organic and mineral nature not digested by the bezoar goat - of Persian origin, which at the time had become difficult to acquire. According to most of the recipes that have survived, these stones, spherical in shape and covered with gold leaf, were made from musk, oriental bezoar stones, ambergris, seed pearls, ground antelope or deer horn, *terra sigillata*, red and white coral, emerald, topaz, ruby, jacinth and sapphire. Used in moderation, and scraped, ground, diluted into elixirs or merely immersed in liquid, these valuable stones would occasionally be stored and displayed in their own precious boxes and containers, made from gold or silver. One of the most spectacular examples is housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Accession Number 2004.244a-d. It is rendered entirely in gold, including gold granules, and features an elegant stand. It has been attributed to Goan workmanship as its complex decoration of animals and birds over a floral ground, with pierced and chased openwork, is similar to the trellis decoration of the reliquary casket of St Francis Xavier, which was undoubtedly made



in Goa.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the containers featuring silver-gilt linings have been recently attributed to Bombay - an important port city ruled by the British from 1665 onwards - regardless of the origin of the medicine housed in them, as such objects invariably come from old English collections, like the gold example now in New York.<sup>3</sup> The decoration on the present gold container in horizontal bands, in contrast to the similar gold container in Porto, is reminiscent of the silver and silver-gilt examples attributed to Bombay in the late 17th century. While the four-petalled flowers on our container are in fact similar to the example in Porto, the undulating frieze of flowers and leaves near the rim of the present example match a type of frieze used in contemporary 17th-century Gujarati furniture, and Mughal-style glazed earthenware tiles.<sup>4</sup> Our container would either have been made in Portuguese-ruled Goa, British-ruled Bombay (it was Portuguese before being gifted to Britain as part of the dowry of the Portuguese Catharine of Braganza, wife of Charles II), or in another North Indian coastal city deeply

engaged with European trade and the commissioning of luxury objects for export. The decorative patterns and motifs, alongside the metalwork techniques (and the reddish staining of the metal as seen from the inside) used in the manufacturing of our precious container is quintessentially Hindustani.

Notes:

1. Crespo, 2015, pp. 142-147, cat. 130
2. Crespo, 2015, pp. 139-143, cat. 124; Haidar and Sardar, p. 316, cat. 189
3. Crespo, 2015, p. 145
4. Crespo, 2016, p. 175, cat. 16

Literature:

- Crespo, H. M., *Jewels from the India Run* (cat.), Lisboa, Fundação Oriente, 2015.  
 Crespo, H. M., *Choices*, Lisboa, AR-PAB, 2016.  
 Haidar, N. and M. Sardar (eds.), *Sultans of Deccan India 1500-1700. Opulence and Fantasy* (cat.), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.



### 31. Two Playing Cards (*ganjifa*)

Northern India, 17th-18th century  
Both 3.1cm diameter

These two rare round playing cards, from the Indian game called *ganjifa*, are made from papier-mâché (compressed paper pieces or pulp bound with glue or starch) and are minutely painted in shellac mixed with pigments and highlighted with gold. The undersides of both cards are decorated with the same Timurid-style quatrefoil central medallion with arabesques in gold over a black ground. The face of one card is decorated with nine musicians wearing long belted tunics and turbans. Two of the musicians are on their knees playing a double-sided drum, probably the *mridangam*, the primary rhythmic accompaniment in a Carnatic music ensemble, and from which the Hindustani *pakhawaj* evolved. The drums are set horizontally, strapped to the men's necks and covered

in cloth (*gallapu*). The remaining seven musicians are dancing with hand-bells. The face of the other card depicts a European, probably an Englishman, in early 17th-century courtly attire. He wears a long-skirted sleeved jerkin, a doublet, a shirt with pleated linen cuffs, shoes, and a hat decorated with a plume. He is seated on a European-style chair holding a ball, his white dog close by, both depicted under a tree in gold against a black background.

The word *ganjifa* comes from the Persian *anjifeh* meaning 'playing card', a term which appeared in the 15th century and which may be related to the Persian word *ganj*, or 'treasury'. The first known reference to this game seems to date from the early 16th century, recorded in the biography of Babur (r.1526-1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty in the Indian subcontinent. Authors such as Ahli Shirazi, in





his *Rub'ayat-i Ganjifa* dated to c.1514-1515, and Abu al-Fazl, in his famous *'Ayn-i Akbari*, mention the game in some detail. The game first became popular at court in the form of lavish sets of ivory inlaid with gems or tortoiseshell, called *darbar kalam*. The Mughal *ganjifa* contains eight suits, each of twelve cards, for a complete set of ninety-seven cards.<sup>1</sup>

The depiction of European figures on playing cards, such as on our example, demonstrates the allure that *firangi* (the Franks, as Europeans were known in Hindustan) exerted in Mughal India.<sup>2</sup> On the use of shellac - a material not to be mistaken for real lacquer - in the painted decoration of these playing cards, Sir Thomas Roe, Ambassador of James I (r.1603-1625) to the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (r.1606-1627), wrote, in 1616: *'They paint staves, or bedsteads, chests of boxes, fruit dishes, or large chargers, extremely neat, which when they be not inlaid, as before, they cover the wood, first being handsomely turned, with a thick gum, then put their paint on, most artificially made of liquid silver, or gold, or other lively colours, which they use,*

*and after make it much more beautiful with a very clear varnish put upon it'*.<sup>3</sup> This is therefore the technique used on our two playing cards, as may be seen from the incredible details, masterfully painted with great skill, and similar to the painters working in the Mughal *karkhana*, or royal workshop. Their exotic, curious nature is heightened by their character as precious images to behold near the inquisitive eye.

Notes:

1. Leyden, pp. 256-259; Topsfield
2. Silva & Flores
3. Terry, p. 128

Literature:

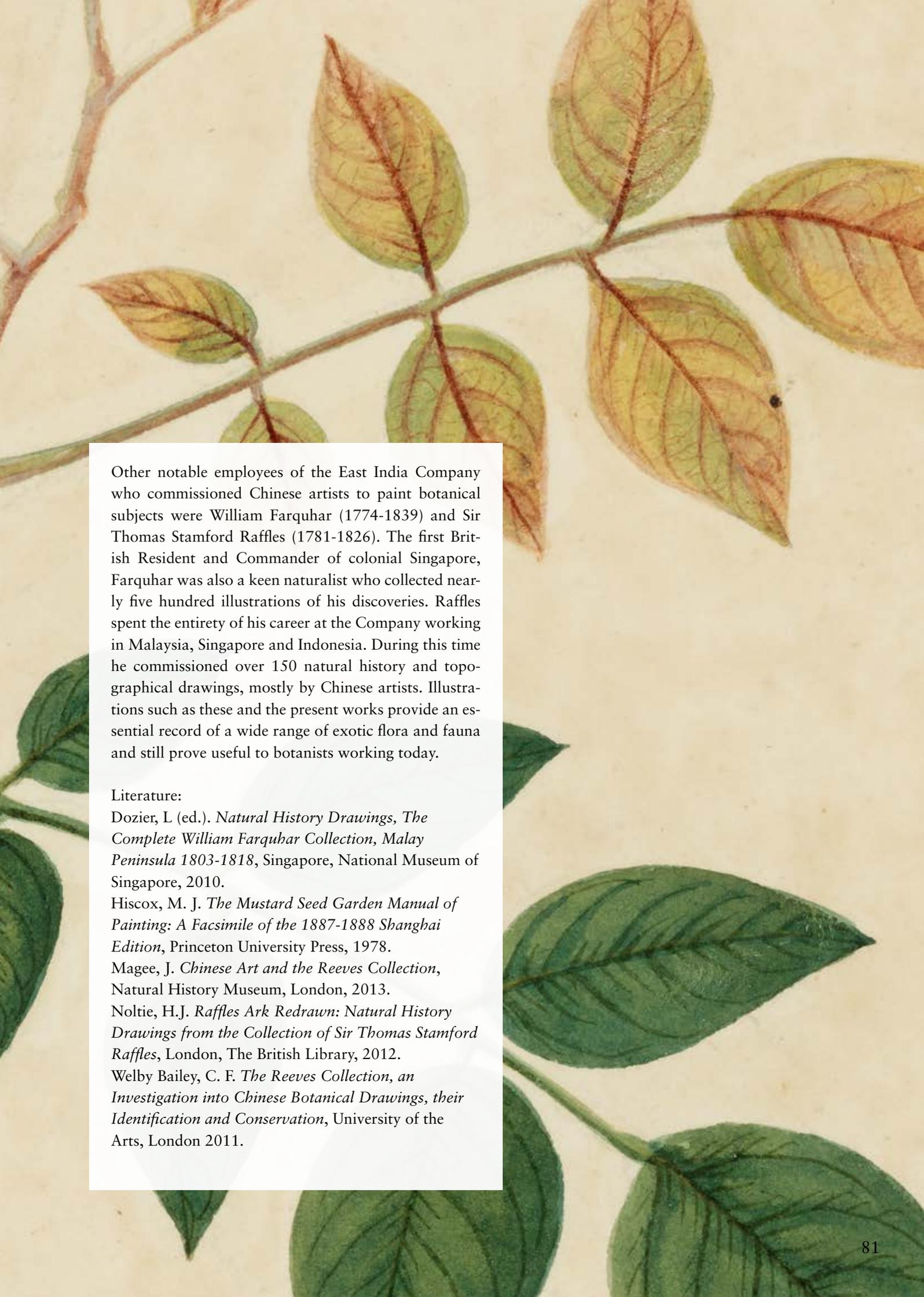
- van Leyden, R., *Ganjifa. The Playing Cards of India*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1982.
- Terry, A. *A Voyage to East-India* [...], London, Printed for J. Wilkie, 1777.
- Topsfield, A. (ed.), *The Art of Play. Board and Card Games of India*, Bombay, Marg Publications, 2006.



## Group of Four Botanical Paintings

*'To render the form of the plant and its true divine nature, one should carefully examine and study it. The transmitting of its very essence depends on the hand, and supreme brushwork. Really it is impossible to put this into words, for the secret originates in the heart and from there must rise.'*

This group of botanical watercolour paintings are likely to have been painted by Chinese artists from Macau or Canton, working for a European patron in the employment of the East India Company. Chinese artists excelled in producing botanical paintings for Europeans, successfully merging the spirit of the *gongbi* style (careful realism) with western artistic conventions. These works bear Chinese characteristics, such as the subtle use of blue paint to highlight the flowers and branches, depicting the underside of leaves by using a paler shade of green, and the inclusion of blemishes on the leaves. They also confirm to the doctrines outlined in texts such as *The Mustard Seed Manual of Painting* (quoted above), a familiar work amongst successful painters. Two of the works also bear Chinese inscriptions giving the names of the plants. These features are also present in the botanical drawings of the Reeves Collection. John Reeves (1774–1856) worked as a tea merchant for the East India Company in China. Residing in the port of Canton, he was able to obtain specimens from all over Asia. His interests in exotic flora led him to commission a great number of illustrations by Chinese artists, which he subsequently sent back to Britain for the advancement of botanical science.



Other notable employees of the East India Company who commissioned Chinese artists to paint botanical subjects were William Farquhar (1774-1839) and Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826). The first British Resident and Commander of colonial Singapore, Farquhar was also a keen naturalist who collected nearly five hundred illustrations of his discoveries. Raffles spent the entirety of his career at the Company working in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. During this time he commissioned over 150 natural history and topographical drawings, mostly by Chinese artists. Illustrations such as these and the present works provide an essential record of a wide range of exotic flora and fauna and still prove useful to botanists working today.

Literature:

Dozier, L (ed.). *Natural History Drawings, The Complete William Farquhar Collection, Malay Peninsula 1803-1818*, Singapore, National Museum of Singapore, 2010.

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Magee, J. *Chinese Art and the Reeves Collection*, Natural History Museum, London, 2013.

Noltie, H.J. *Raffles Ark Redrawn: Natural History Drawings from the Collection of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles*, London, The British Library, 2012.

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## 32. A Study of a Chinese Chestnut (*Sterculia monosperma*)

Probably Macau or Canton, China,  
18th-19th century

46.5cm x 35cm

This tree illustration depicts a bifurcating central branch whose adolescent leaves are pale green and deep red while those fully matured appear in vivid dark green flourishes. A thin stem droops, laden with delicate white flowers, above which another branch whose thick buds appear ready to bloom

in an instant. Striking orange-red dehiscent pods reveal dark brown seeds, one of which has been cut open to illustrate the edible nut inside.

An inscription in Chinese reads *pin po*, which closely resembles the characters for the Chinese chestnut, *ping po*. As with our illustration of the Star Fruit, *Averrhoa Carambola*, the inscription also bears comparison with those of the Reeves Collection of botanical drawings. A pencil inscription also appears on the back of the work, which may be a reference to the genus of the plant. The paper itself bears the watermark of J. Whatman, whose mill in Kent supplied the finest quality watercolour paper to the East India Company during the 18th century.



### 33. A Study of a Rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*)

Probably Macau or Canton, China,  
18th-19th century

46.5cm x 35cm

An Indian Hill Myna with distinctive pale yellow feathers around the eye, perches on the branch of a rambutan tree. The bird is elegantly framed by delicate stems of rich green pinnate leaves, with pale green undersides. Under the watchful gaze of the bird, the fruits of the rambutan appear covered with fleshy pliable spines, from which they derive the name 'hairy'. As with the other paintings in this collection, the artist has depicted the growth cycle of the fruits, which turn a vivid orange-red colour when ripe. A fruit that has had some

of its skin removed to illustrate the sweet pale flesh inside, also appears in the foreground. The artist has also depicted a small cluster of petite white flowers as they begin to open. Similarly to works in the Reeves Collection, the painting also depicts two withered yellow and brown leaves that appear to be diseased (see John Reeves Collection of Botanical Drawings, Natural History Museum, London, pl. 23). This may reflect the preference amongst Chinese artists of the period for demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of their subjects, rather than simply presenting them in an idealised fashion.

Rambutan trees are native to Indonesia and tropical Southeast Asia. As well as having a number of medicinal properties, the leaves and fruit were used to dye batiks red and the shoots could be prepared to dye silk fabrics green.





### 34. A Study of a Star Fruit (*Averrhoa carambola*)

Probably Macau or Canton, China,  
18th-19th century

47cm x 34.5cm

The thick branch with pinnate leaves of dark green, pale reds and light yellows occupies the space. The oval fruits have five prominent longitudinal ridges with smooth, waxy skin. The artist has depicted them in three different stages of development, with the flesh turning from pale green when unripe to yellowish-green when ripe. Amongst them, light purple flowers borne on a panicle display their elegant blossoms. A small dissection of the petals appears

to the left of the branch, while to the right a cross section of the fruit reveals the star shape from which it derives its common name. Beside this the Chinese inscription *yang tao* (star fruit) appears, which resembles inscriptions appearing in works in the Reeves Collection. The *Averrhoa carambola* tree has been cultivated in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia for hundreds of years and many parts of the plant are used in traditional medicine. Its name derives from the Marathi word *karambal* and *verrhoa*, named after Averrhoes (1126-1198), an Arabian philosopher and physician who translated the works of Aristotle. For a comparable illustration see 'Dollar Bird and Starfruit', William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, National Museum of Singapore, A.C. 1995-03233.





### 35. A Study of a Mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostana*)

Probably Macau or Canton, China,  
18th-19th century

47cm x 35cm

The serpentine branches of a mangosteen tree and its glossy leaves with lime green undersides occupy most of the page. A pair of pink flowers with rounded petals and deep red tips appear in full bloom, while two more flowers are in bud. A lichen green fruit is immature

while another of rich purple weights down the branch. A white succulent fruit has been painted beside its thick skin, illustrating the fragrant edible flesh that surrounds each seed. Of Southeast Asian origin, mangosteen trees are now widely cultivated in the tropics.

Frequently referred to as the 'queen of fruits' they are believed to be a cooling fruit that counterbalance the heating properties of the durian or the 'king of fruits.'

Mangosteen trees proved popular subjects for illustration amongst European botanists.

For a comparable illustration, see Magee, *Chinese Art and the Reeves Collection*, p. 49.





## 36. A Pair of Qajar Mirror Stands

Iran, 19th century

61.5cm high, 28.2cm diameter

Provenance: Private UK Collection since the 1970s

This pair of impressive mirror stands are made from steel, and decorated with engraved and openwork designs as well as gold damascening. The outer rims of the mirror frames are intricately ornamented with openwork medallions and adjoining pendants, set within a circular framework with cusped edges. The decoration throughout consists of symmetrically arranged arabesque designs. The patterns on the reverse are more restrained with radiating lines bearing delicate foliate pendants. These patterns continue to the bulbous, cusped feet of the stands, joined to the frames by thin legs with baluster-shaped curves. Similar decorative schemes with gold damascening on steel can be found on a

selection of objects including bowls, jugs and mirrors illustrated in Fellinger, pp. 376-79, Cat. Nos. 372-77.

Each stand has a hinged door that opens to reveal a mirror on one side and a lacquer painting on the other. The paintings are compositionally similar, each depicting a couple seated outdoors surrounded by attendants. Following a stylistic convention found in classical Persian miniature painting, emotion is not portrayed in the facial expressions of the figures but, rather, symbolically through action. In Qajar examples the action of exchanging objects such as flowers, cups and fruit is often depicted among men and women.<sup>1</sup> In each of these mirror paintings, fruits are displayed in the foreground while cups are offered among attendants. Additionally, the female of the couple in one painting is depicted holding a tall ewer and offering a cup to the male, while in the other painting the woman holds a mirror towards her male partner. In both paintings, trees in the background denote landscape.

Surrounding each of the paintings are cartouches filled with verses by various poets. The verses are the same on both and read:



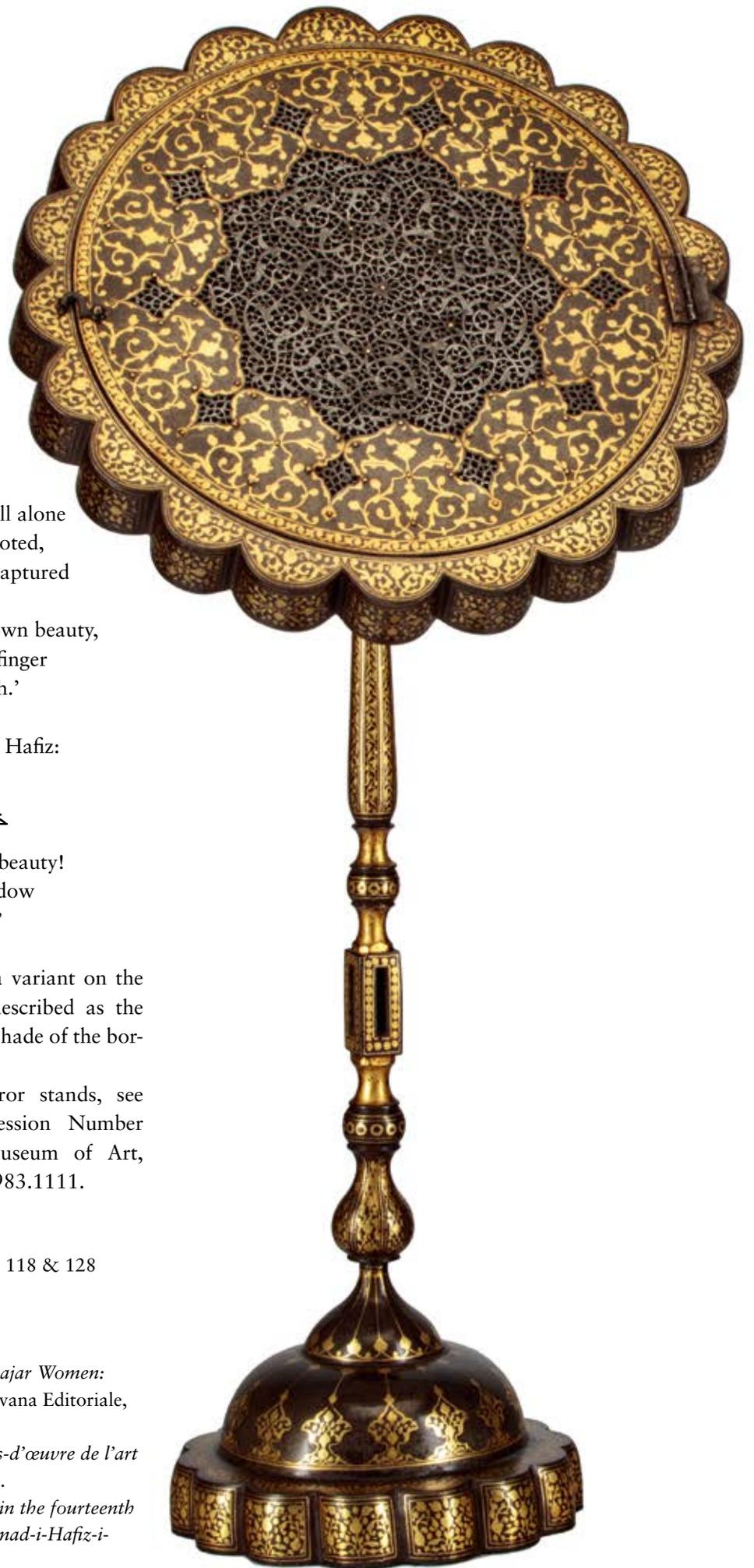
From a *ghazal* by Shater ‘Abbas Sabuhi (d. 1315/1897-8):

نظر در آینه کرد آن نگار رو با خود گفت  
خوشا بحال دل عاشقی که دلبرش است این

‘That idol looked into the mirror  
and said to herself,  
Blessed is the lover whose sweetheart  
is this one!’

From a *ghazal* of Sa‘di:

خوش میروی به تنها تنها فدای جان  
مدهوش میگذاری یاران مهربانت  
در آینه نظر کن تا حسن خود به بینی  
از حیرتت بماند انگشت بر دهانت



‘You walk along, beautifully, all alone  
to you alone is [our] life devoted,  
You leave bewildered those enraptured  
by your loveliness.

Look into the mirror to see your own beauty,  
Astonished at yourself your finger  
will remain in your mouth.’

Two lines from two separate *ghazals* of Hafiz:

ای آفتاب آینه دار جمال تو  
خورشید سایه افکن طرف کلاه تو

‘O sun, mirror holder to your beauty!  
The sun, that throws a shadow  
on the side of your hat.’

The second line would appear to be a variant on the standard version, where the sun is described as the *saya-parvar*, the ‘one cherished (in the shade of the border of your hat)’.<sup>2</sup>

For further examples of Qajar mirror stands, see the British Museum, London, Accession Number 1967,0718.1, and the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, Accession Number 1983.1111.

Notes:

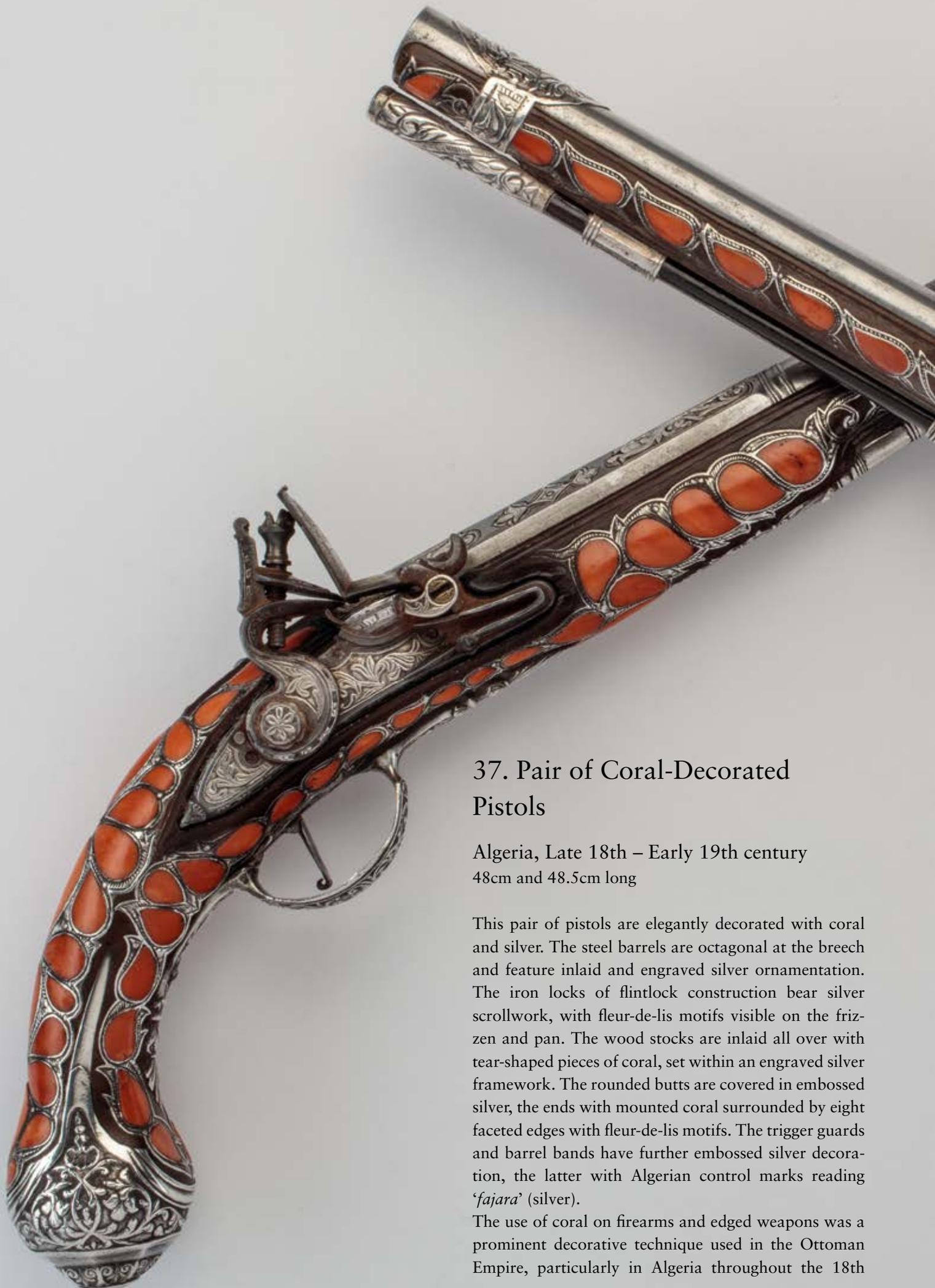
1. Chekhab-Abudaya and Sobers-Khan, pp. 118 & 128
2. Wilberforce Clarke, p. 777.

Literature:

Chekhab-Abudaya, M., Sobers-Khan, N. *Qajar Women: Images of Women in 19th-Century Iran*, Silvana Editoriale, Milan, 2016.

Fellinger, G., et al. *L'Empire des roses: chefs-d'œuvre de l'art person du XIXè siècle*, Snoeck, Gand, 2018.

Wilberforce Clarke, H. *The Divan, written in the fourteenth century, by Khwaja Shamsu-d-Din Muhammad-i-Hafiz-i-Shirazi*, London, 1891, vol. II, p. 777.



### 37. Pair of Coral-Decorated Pistols

Algeria, Late 18th – Early 19th century  
48cm and 48.5cm long

This pair of pistols are elegantly decorated with coral and silver. The steel barrels are octagonal at the breech and feature inlaid and engraved silver ornamentation. The iron locks of flintlock construction bear silver scrollwork, with fleur-de-lis motifs visible on the frizzen and pan. The wood stocks are inlaid all over with tear-shaped pieces of coral, set within an engraved silver framework. The rounded butts are covered in embossed silver, the ends with mounted coral surrounded by eight faceted edges with fleur-de-lis motifs. The trigger guards and barrel bands have further embossed silver decoration, the latter with Algerian control marks reading '*fajara*' (silver).

The use of coral on firearms and edged weapons was a prominent decorative technique used in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Algeria throughout the 18th



and 19th centuries. Many examples were presented as diplomatic gifts to European royalty, testifying to the value and high regard held for these objects. Four pairs of coral-decorated pistols similar to ours, for example, were included in the gifts offered by the Dey of Algiers to the Prince Regent, George IV, of Great Britain in 1811 and 1819. One pair is now housed in the Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle, Accession Numbers RCIN 62422 and 62424, while another near-identical pair is split between the Royal Collection Trust, Accession Number RCIN 62423, and the Royal Armouries, Leeds, Accession Number XXVIF.114 (see Andersen, pp. 104-7; 132-35). Three of the four pistols have the same Algerian control mark (*'fajara'*) as our pair.

Literature:

Alexander, D. G. *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015, pp. 267-69.

Andersen, N. A. *Gold and Coral: Presentation Arms from Algiers and Tunis*, Vaabenhistorisk Selskab, 2014.

Elgood, R. *Firearms of the Islamic World in the Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait*, I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London, 1995, pp. 74-76.



## 38. Ottoman Sword

Turkey, 19th century

92cm long

This sword is ornately decorated with scrolling floral motifs and calligraphic inscriptions. The wide, slightly flared hilt is made from two pieces of stone joined in the middle by a decorative band of silver-gilt. Inset on either side of the curved pommel is a green stone. The silver-gilt quillons extend in an S-form, terminating in finials bearing curling leaves and flower buds. The scabbard is finely decorated in full with chased silver, and areas of silver-gilt and niello. Motifs include scrolling leaves, flowers and trophies of arms such as wreaths, the Ottoman coat of arms, and the Ottoman crescent and star. The blade is curved and single-edged. It bears gold overlay including inscriptions along each side, and scrolling leaves with calligraphic cartouches at the forte.

For comparative examples see the Royal Armouries Collection, Leeds, Accession Number XXVIS.116, and Hales, p. 214, no. 525.

Literature:

Hales, R. *Islamic and Oriental Arms and Armour: A Lifetime's Passion*, Robert Hales, England, 2013.





### 39. Tortoiseshell and Mother-of-Pearl Box

Probably Lima, Peru, 18th century  
 11cm high, 36.5cm wide, 36.5cm deep  
 Provenance: Private UK Collection

This wooden box is of cushioned square form and decorated all over with inlaid mother-of-pearl with repeating patterns and rows of geometric flower-heads of stylised carnations and tulips, floral scrolls and birds on a tortoiseshell ground. The escutcheon rendered in mother-of-pearl is a mirror image of a bird surrounding the keyhole and flanked by two confronting birds. The top lid and sides of the box have additional depictions of birds in mother-of-pearl, some of which do not depict the bird's whole body but enchantingly, that of a double-headed bird. Inside the hinged lid of the box is an old list mainly of toiletries, written in a cursive hand in French, which lines the sides and base. The box sits on four short wooden bun feet.

The form of this box can be found in a similar workbox from a private collection in Arequipa, Peru, which according to Campos may have been used to store needlework and intended for a family's parlour room inside an important

Colonial house.<sup>1</sup> The box published in Campos is, however, dissimilar in its decoration to our box: it has darkened wood carvings on the edges while our box has the rare depiction of birds. There is an 18th-century Peruvian jewellery box in the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art Collection, Santa Fe, New Mexico, which shares striking parallels with our box, seen in the stylised tulips and flower heads, but does not include any representations of birds.

#### Notes:

1. Campos Carlés de Peña, p. 283

#### Literature:

- Campos Carlés de Peña, M. *A Surviving Legacy in Spanish America: Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Furniture from the Viceroyalty of Peru*, Ediciones El Viso, Spain, 2013.
- Carr, D. *Made in Americas: The New World Discovers Asia*, MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2015.
- Rishel J. J and S. Stratton-Pruitt. *The Arts in Latin America 1492- 1820*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 2006.
- Stratton-Pruitt, S. L. (ed.), *Journeys to New Worlds: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art in the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection*, 2013.





## 40. Tortoiseshell and Mother-of-Pearl Shaving Box

Probably Lima, Peru

18th century

21cm high, 10.3cm wide, 9.5cm deep

Provenance: Private UK Collection

This wooden box is of cubic form and entirely decorated with shimmering mother-of-pearl geometrically-shaped flower heads and pendants. The beautiful, naturally flowing mother-of-pearl decoration is inlaid on a tortoiseshell base. The lid is of slanted form. There is a silver loop handle attached to the top of the box. An elaborately ornamented silver lock plate to the front opens up to reveal a red-velvet interior. The reverse of the lid is connected by two silver hinges decorated with four incised flower heads and eleven old nails hammered onto a punched silver ground. The body rests on four short wooden bun feet.

This rare container was most probably used to store shaving tools. The mother-of-pearl decoration seen on this shaving box shares stylistic similarities with lacquered and mother-of-pearl boxes from Korea, Japan and Gujarat, Western India. In particular, the lacquered and inlaid mother-of-pearl boxes from the Korean Choson Dynasty (1392-1910) share the same family of high-quality *enconchado* (shell inlay) decoration as seen on our box. According to Rivas, this categorical style of *enconchado* work is in the 17th-century Korean Choson style.<sup>1</sup> Craftsmen in South America combined traditions of Spanish *Mudejar* inlaid and marquetry work with Asian-inspired motifs in order to create a new style of furniture to suit the demand for 'Chinoiserie' luxury goods.<sup>2</sup>

Notes:

1. See Rivas in Rishel and Stratton-Pruitt, p. 490
2. Carr, p. 62

Literature:

Carr, D. *Made in Americas: The New World Discovers Asia*, MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2015.

Rishel, J.J. and Stratton-Pruitt, S. *The Arts in Latin America 1492- 1820*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 2006.



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