

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Vizagapatnam Table Bureau

India, 18th century

Sandalwood and ivory

Stock no.: A2461

This item contains less than 10% ivory and has been registered with Defra.

The top, front and sides of the rectangular bureau is veneered with ivory, while the back reveals the original sandalwood carcass. Black floral and foliated border design is etched on borders across all ivory surfaces. The sloping hinged flap reveals a fitted interior with three pigeon-holes in the centre on top of a long drawer, flanked by three drawers on each side. The drawers are mounted with brass round pulls. At top centre of the flap is a simple lozenge-shaped keyhole. Below the flap is a deep drawer fitted with further compartments. Four ball feet in sandalwood.

The port of Vizagapatnam in the Coromandel coast in east India was a centre of fine Anglo-Indian furniture and export from the latter half of the 17th century, where local craftsmen used their traditional woodworking skills to produce western-style furniture for Europeans. Example of popular blending of western forms with local craft techniques utilised the available ivory and exotic woods.

From the 1760s onwards, the technique of ivory veneered gradually replaced ivory inlay, for it permitted a greater degree of flexibility - engraving on ivory allows for freer and easier expression than inlaying ivory into a wooden ground. This piece, with its large-scale floral and foliated etching that covers almost all ivory surface, is such a work. Comparative materials can be found in the two bureaux in the Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 4695) and the cabinet and stand at the Victoria & Albert Museum (IS.289&A-1951).

Reference:

Amin, Jaffer. *Furniture from British India and Ceylon: A Catalogue of the Collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum*. 1st ed. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2001.