



Lacquered Indian Shield (Dhal)

A shield lacquered black all over and then painted with floral, vegetal, and cloud motifs. The reverse is also lacquered, and decorated with unusually vibrant red and yellow abstract cloud motifs. Highly decorated hemispherical shields like this one were often used to give a dowry of money, weapons, and jewels to the groom. Shields from this group are found in the National Museum, New Delhi (accession no. 75.615)¹, and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (accession nos [IM.228-1922](#), [229-1922](#), [230-1922](#), and [3321\(IS\)](#)). These are all dated to the 19th century and attributed to Bikaner, Rajasthan.

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

[1] Pictured in G.N. Pant and K.K. Sharma. *Indian Armours in the National Museum Collection*. New Delhi: National Museum, 2001. p. 97.

[2] Körber, Ulrike. 'A Study on 16th and 17th Century Luso-Oriental (Luso-Asian) Lacquerware', *16th Triennial Conference ICOM-CC*. Lisbon, 2011. pp. 1-3.