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Cartridge Case (Palaska)

Ottoman Balkans, probably northwestern Greece, ca. 1800

Silver gilt, leather strap

12.5 cm high, 15.5 cm long, 2.5 cm deep

Stock no.: A6101

An Ottoman Balkan cartridge case or Palaska of silver gilt. The front is decorated with dense pierced and engraved foliate, as if imitating filigree. It is adorned with four small red beads. The reverse is plainer, decorated with a chased Seal of Solomon and acanthus leaves. It has a leather strap to allow it to be worn around the waist as a belt. The ornate decoration means that cases of this type have sometimes been used to hold precious objects, like Qur'ans.

The decoration is comparable to metalwork from northwestern Greece and its islands. The technique of perforating a design into one sheet and overlaying onto the surface is, according to Robert Elgood, typical of the Ionian or Heptanese Islands. An example of a blunderbuss attributed to this region shows similar decoration, including a Seal of Solomon.¹ The foliage shows some features of silverwork from Ioannina, such as the large flowers, dotted decoration, and scaled panels. An example of this work is also illustrated in Elgood, cat. 298, pp. 234, 235.

A very similar palaska with foliate decoration on one side and Seal of Solomon on the other is in the Royal Ontario Museum (no. [940X147.2](#)), dated by Lisa Golombek to the 18th century. Another example of rectangular form is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (accession no. [192-1883](#)), attributed to Albania, Ottoman Balkans, 19th century. Two palaskas pictured in Elgood, cats 127 and 128, have

similar foliate design and are attributed to Bosnia Herzegovina. The arsenal of the Tsarkoye Selo, St. Petersburg, has a similar example from Turkey, dated to the 18th century.²

[1] Elgood, Robert. *The Arms of Greece and Her Balkan Neighbours in the Ottoman Period*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2009, p. 174, cat. 212.

[2] Tumanovskiy, V. *Arsenal of Tsarskoye Selo*. St. Petersburg: Baltica, 2000, p. 49.