AMIR MOHTASHEMI

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INDIAN, ISLAMIC AND CROSS-CULTURAL WORKS OF ART

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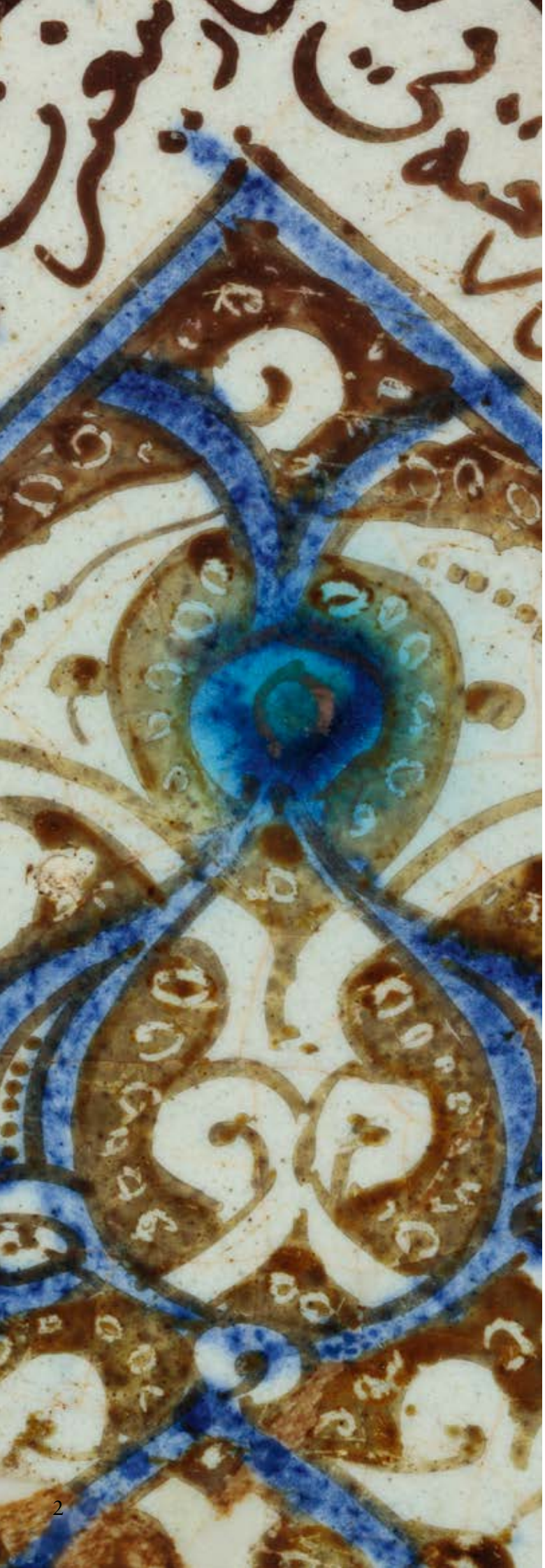


1. Kashan Star Tile

Iran, late 13th century

23.5 cm high, 23.5 cm wide

Provenance: Mentioned in the inventory of a private European collector, pre-1960, and documented under the sales list of 1960.

This eight-pointed star tile was originally part of an alternating star-and-cross-shaped dado panel.[1] It is decorated with an overglaze painting technique known as lustre painting to produce a lustrous metallic colour derived from silver and copper oxides.

There are four small diamonds forming a large central medallion which connects a floral device ornamented with leaves and dots in cobalt blue, which were painted into the glaze before firing. The golden-brown lustre was then added over the glaze and, thus, the tile required a second firing which made it both complicated and costly to produce.

The border is adorned with fine *naskh* inscriptions on a white background framed with blue lines reflecting the star shape of the tile. The inscriptions recite verses from Firdawsi's *Shahnama* ("The Book of Kings") as follows:

> Follow the sayings of your Prophet,
> Wash the darkness from your heart in their waters.
> What did he say, the Lord of inspired revelation,
> the Lord of enjoying and forbidding?
> "I am the city of knowledge, 'Ali is its gate",
> these words are correct, they are the speech of the Prophet.
> I bear witness that this is his secret,
> you would say his voice fills my ears.
> The philosopher regards this world as an ocean
> on which the waves are driven by a hurricane.
> As if eighty ships arrayed on it,
> each with its sail unfurled….

Since the beginning of the thirteenth century Kashan had become the main centre for ceramic production in Iran and lustreware became its best-known and most numerous product.[2] This

production slowed down due to the Mongol invasions. However, large scale production resumed in the 1260s,[3] the period which this tile probably belongs to. Indeed, the floral style is reminiscent of the dado around the tomb of Imamzada Yahya in Veramin, which dates to 1261-63.[4] In addition, there is an eight-pointed star tile with inscriptions from the *Shahnama* in the British Museum in London (Accession Number: G.232.1-2) which dates to 1260-70.

Footnotes:
1. See, Oliver Watson. 1985. *Persian Lustre Ware*. London: Faber & Faber. p.122.
2. Ibid. p.123.
3. Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni. 2002. "Catalogue: 107, Star and Cross Tiles". In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*, edited by Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. p.266.

O.H.

2. Takht-e Soleymān Tile

Ilkhanid Iran, 1270-75

28.5 cm high, 28.5 cm wide
Provenance: Private collection.

This striking square tile is decorated with an overglaze bronze-brown lustred ground with cobalt blue and turquoise underglaze paintings. It would have originally formed part of a horizontal frieze along the top of a dado, most likely in the imperial complexes of the Ilkhanid rulers in Takht-e Soleymān, south of Tabriz.

The moulded upper border projects slightly from the main surface and is decorated with band leaves. Across the centre of the tile, the two tri-lobed arches painted in turquoise form a border with a hemistich in naskh script written in cobalt blue. The script comes from the Persian national epic Shahnameh ("Book of Kings") by Firdausi, which reads:

برهنه چو زاید ز مادر کسی

("Man being born in mother-nakedness ...")[1]

This verse occurs in the section relating to the reign of Iskandar (Alexander the Great) and is part of the answer given by the Brahmins of India to Iskandar's question regarding the Brahmins' choice to lead a life of asceticism. On either side of the lobed arches there are animal heads growing out of trees, some of which are picked out in turquoise.

Tiles similar to this piece were found during excavations at Takht-e Soleymān in a palatine complex identified as the summer palace of the Ilkhanid ruler Abaqa Khan (r.1265-1282). There are numerous frieze tiles from Takht-e Soleymān with texts from the *Shahnameh* in lobed inscription bands or scenes of hunting and fighting, some of which bear dates to the AH 670s/AD 1270s.[2] These tiles are particularly important because Abaqa Khan's palace is the sole surviving secular building of the period with lustre decoration.[3]

There are similar examples held in the Bargello Museum in Florence (Accession Number: bg. C1969 GF SSPMF neg. n. 537546),[4] the Harvard Art Museums in Massachusetts (Accession Number: 1958.47), the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (Accession Numbers: B60P2145 and P60P2146),[5] the British Museum in London (Accession Numbers: 1878,1230.573.1 and 1878,1230.573.2), and the Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design in Honolulu (Accession Numbers: 48.346.1 and 48.346.2).

Footnotes:

1. For translation see, Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner. 1912. *The Shâhnáma of Firdausí. Done into English*, Vol. VI. London: Kegan Paul. p.144.
2. Oliver Watson. 1985. *Persian Lustre Ware*. London: Faber and Faber. pp.134-36.
3. Venetia Porter. 1995. *Islamic Tiles*. London: British Museum Press. p.37.
4. See, Watson, 1985:135, fig.112.
5. See, Tomoko Masuya. 2002. "Ilkhanid Courtly Life". In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*, edited by Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, 74-103. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

O.H.

3. Safavid Blue-and-White Bottle

Iran, 17th century
36.5 cm high, 21 cm wide

This Safavid bottle is painted in several tones of underglaze cobalt blue with decorations in the chinoiserie style. On one side of the object a man is depicted approaching two seated figures dressed in Chinese-style clothing, one of which is portrayed with her legs bare; there are also trees, dwellings and hillocks surrounding this main scene. The two seated figures are repeated on the opposite side of the bottle but are positioned to the left with a moon shape above them; in addition, there are more trees, hills and dwellings which dominate the tiered and elongated landscape.

Since the seventeenth century Safavid potters had aimed to imitate Chinese porcelain, especially once the Ming dynasty fell in 1644 and the imperial patronage of the Jingdezhen potteries diminished, severely disrupting the flow of the export trade. Hence, the production of chinoiserie blue-and-white objects in Iran filled the void in domestic markets and, to some extent, abroad, enabling patrons who could not obtain Chinese porcelain or access the Chinese porcelain market to own prestigious imitations.[1]

In the Victoria and Albert Museum in London there is a Safavid bottle with an almost identical depiction of the two seated figures, but only on one side of the object (Accession Number: 1245-1876);[2] in addition, the motif of two seated figures also appear on a seventeenth century Safavid dish (Accession Number: 2721-1876).[3]

Footnotes:
1. Lisa Golombek and Eileen Reilly. 2013. "Safavid Society and the Ceramic Industry". In *Persian Pottery in the First Global Age: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, edited by Lisa Golombek, 13-56. Leiden: Brill. p.22.
2. See also, Yolande Crowe. 2002. *Persia and China: Safavid Blue and White Ceramics in the Victoria and Albert Museum 1501-1738*. Geneva: La Borie. p.151, no. 236.
3. Ibid. p.115.

O.H.

4. Safavid Footed Bowl

Iran, mid-17th to early 18th century

6 cm high, 11 cm diameter

This hemispherical bowl with a tall foot is an exceptional example of Safavid era "Gombroon ware", which was one of the finest wares produced in Iran since the second half of the seventeenth century.[1] Its glassy appearance was decorated by directly piercing through the walls of the white porcelain-like body to form patterns that were then filled by a transparent glaze to create translucent windows. Thus, the light shining through these incised lines creates a subtle play of translucency and opacity whilst also serving to emphasise the thinness of the walls – a characteristic of Chinese porcelain which Persian potters aimed to emulate. This simple design was enhanced with underglaze painting inside the bowl with four floral sprays in cobalt blue and dark green outlined in black. The rim is also edged with black dashes in groups of three.

Gombroon wares revived the technique of incised white-body ceramic vessels that first became popular in Iran during the twelfth century. Similar to Persian ceramic production from the ninth century onwards, both Gombroon wares and their twelfth century influences sought to imitate the unique qualities of Chinese ceramics, since kaolin (i.e. the white clay used to create Chinese porcelain) was unavailable in the Middle East.[2] The increasing popularity of producing white ceramics in Iran during the seventeenth century was a response to the discontinuation of porcelain exports from China between 1643-83.[3]

Although this object is named after the port city of Gombroon, the actual place of manufacture is unknown. Originally, the term "Gombroon wares" referred to the then Western European name for Bandar-e 'Abbas, on the Strait of Hormuz, which served the British and Dutch East India Companies as an entrepôt for ceramics and other luxury goods to Western Europe. Hence, Gombroon was a point of export rather than a place of production. Possible centres for the production of Gombroon wares are Shiraz, Yezd, Kirman or Isfahan, however, there is no archaeological evidence to support these claims.[4]

There are similar examples of footed Gombroon bowls in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Accession Numbers: 1389-1876; 1399-1876; 1962-1910; 424-1872; and 1401-1876).

Footnotes:

1. Géza Fehérvári. 2000. *Ceramics of the Islamic World in the Tareq Rajab Museum*. New York: I.B. Tauris. p.292.
2. Maryam D. Ekhtiar and Kendra Weisbin. 2011. "160. Bottle". In *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, edited by Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Priscilla P. Soucek, Sheila R. Canby, and Navina Najat Haidar, 232-34. New Haven: Yale University Press. p.232.
3. Ibid. p.233.
4. Fehérvári, 2000:292.

O.H.

5. Safavid Bottle

Kirman, Iran, late 17th century

26 cm high, 14 cm wide
Provenance: UK private collection.

This elegant Safavid bottle incorporates in its decoration a combination of polychrome and cobalt blue underglaze on a white background. Several shades of blue enhance the vase-style head which has pointed triangular leaves and diamond motifs followed by a narrow border. On either side of the pear-shaped body there is a protruding teardrop panel with three sprays of flowers surrounded by olive-green spikey leaves. Around this, there are flowers and Chinese-inspired clouds in three shades of cobalt blue which are then followed by a border of orange-red flowers and olive-green leaves which begin at the slender neck and continue to the bottom. The bottle is supported by a short oval foot and there is a blue pseudo-Chinese mark on the base.

Since the early seventeenth century, ceramics of this type were produced in Kirman and consisted primarily of imitations of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain which were decorated with cobalt blue in an underglaze technique. However, by the 1640s a new style emerged with elements loosely based on Chinese floral motifs combined with locally developed devices, such as polychrome vegetal forms and medallions.

There is a dish in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York with similar floral and foliage designs (Accession Number: 91.1.92); these same motifs are on a larger bottle held in the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology in Oxford (Accession Number: EA1978.1709). Meanwhile, the form of the bottle, particularly its vase-style head, is comparable to a blue-and-white example in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Accession Number: 1072-1876).

O.H.

6. Qajar Charger

Iran, Late 19th century

7 cm high, 38 cm diameter

This elaborately designed charger of deep form resting on a short-rounded foot depicts at its centre a skilfully composed design of a young couple dressed in richly patterned clothes and elegant headwear reflecting the luxury life of the Qajar court. The male offers his lover a glass of wine, a favoured metaphor for both earthly and divine love in Persian literature. Pomegranates and sherbets fill the central foreground while curtain drapes above the couple indicate a private setting. Surrounding the central scene are intertwined floral motifs painted in blue, yellow, white, green and brown, all outlined in black, whilst the rim of the charger is outlined in brown.

There is an inscription on the back of the dish with the maker's mark which reads *amal-e Husayn* ("made by Husayn"). Although very little is known about this skilled painter,[1] his distinctive signature is easily recognisable on Qajar ceramics; for example, there are several pieces painted by Husayn in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, including several chargers (Accession Numbers: IAMM 2016.13.21 and IAMM 2016.13.15) and a *qalyan* / waterpipe (Accession Number: IAMM 2016.13.49). The Victoria and Albert Museum in London also has several pieces from the late Qajar period signed by Husayn, including a vase (Accession Number: 579-1888), a flask (Accession Number: 516-1888) and a bottle (Accession Number: 574-1888).

Footnotes:

1. See, Heba Nayel Barakat and Zahra Khademi. 2019. *Qajar Ceramics: Bridging Tradition and Modernity*, edited by Lucien de Guise. Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. p.213.

O.H.

7. İznik Tile

Ottoman Turkey, ca. 1575-85

25 cm high, 25 cm wide

Provenance: Last sold at Dutch auction, 2010.
European private collection.

Of square form, this polychrome İznik tile painted in underglaze technique would have originally been part of a frieze. The central trefoil motif is flanked by half trefoils on either side, all of which are outlined in thick bole-red with cobalt-blue and green decorations within forming smaller palmettes on the white background. The larger trefoil designs are linked together by a red lobed border from the bottom followed by blue and turquoise borders which are outlined in thin black outlines.

Most likely, this striking design was developed in the imperial workshops in the Ottoman capital city of İstanbul and then executed in the town of İznik, located in north-western Anatolia. The technique used to create the tile was complex and required multiple firings to ensure the highest level of clarity for both the colours and the design. Thus, İznik tiles similar to this piece were highly valued luxury objects which still continue to represent Ottoman visual culture at its height.

There is a range of İznik tiles in the *Çinili Köşk* ("Tiled Kiosk") in the Topkapı Palace in İstanbul, with trefoil bordures.[1] There are also two tiles in a similar style in the British Museum in London (Accession Numbers: 1895,0603.146 and 1895,0603.147).

Footnotes:

1. See, Gönül Öney. 1975. *Turkish Ceramic Tile Art*. Tokyo: Heibonsha. Figs. 99-103 & p.179.

O.H.

8. İznik Tile Panel

Ottoman Turkey, ca.1575-80

25 cm high, 50 cm wide

Provenance: Last sold at French auction, 2007.
European private collection.

This İznik panel exemplifies the most splendid period of Ottoman ceramic production, for it is identical to the tiles found on the walls of the *Has Oda* ("privy chamber") in the harem section of the Topkapı Palace. The design is dominated by lotus palmettes and serrated *saz* leaves painted in blue and red against a solid white background. There are also Chinese-inspired curving cloud bands painted in thick red pigment with green leaves.

The Ottoman Sultan Murad III had commissioned İznik tiles for the refurbishment of the *Has Oda* after a fire broke out there in 1574.[1] According to an imperial order dating to 1575, the Sultan ordered the tiles to be made by the tile-master Mehmed in İznik.[2] By 1578-79 the Sultan's private room was rebuilt by the renowned Ottoman architect *Mimar* Sinan and redecorated with the tiles. Spare tiles left over from this project were later used to decorate other imperial buildings.

Except for the tiles in the Sultan's suite of rooms and a few reassembled panels housed in the Chamber of the Holy Relics, the majority of the decorations in the Topkapı Palace are dated to the seventeenth century because many of its best revetments had perished in fires or were relocated to the nearby Sultan Ahmed Mosque.[3]

The Metropolitan Museum in New York has a similar İznik tile in its collection (Accession Number: 02.5.91). The Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon also has a panel composed of 40 tiles which appears to come from this same collection (Accession Number: 1679).[4]

Footnotes:

1. See photograph in, Walter B. Denny. 2004. *Iznik: The Artistry of Ottoman Ceramics*. London: Thames and Hudson. p.109.
2. Belgin Demirsar Arlı and Ara Altun. 2008. *Tiles: Treasures of Anatolian Soil: Volume 2, Ottoman Period*. İstanbul: Kale Group Cultural Publications. p.105.
3. Denny, 2004: 114.
4. See, Maria d'Orey Capucho Queiroz Ribeiro. 2009. *Iznik Pottery and Tiles in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum*. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. pp.122-23.

O.H.

9. İznik Tile

Ottoman Turkey, ca.1575

31 cm high, 31 cm wide

Provenance: Last sold at UK auction, 1999.
European private collection.

This underglaze painted square İznik tile is decorated with stylised peony blossoms/lotus medallions, facing in two directions, up and down, with small flowers in their centre and feather-like *saz* leaves interlaced at their base. The bold design is painted using a vibrant bole-red as well as several shades of blue and green with thin black outlines. The centralised design is surrounded by further half palmettes on all four sides of the tile, indicating that this piece was once part of a larger panel.

Throughout the sixteenth century İznik tiles represented one of the main decorative elements in imperial Ottoman architecture, expressing the wealth and power of Ottoman patrons. By 1557, the Süleymaniye Mosque was the first building to be covered with glazed tiles decorated with the "red bole" pigment which is also strongly apparent on this tile.

In particular, this tile is strikingly similar to the fine İznik tiles found on the walls and niches of the *Has Oda* ("privy chamber") of the Sultan Murad III in the Imperial Harem of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul.[1] This splendid room was rebuilt due to a fire by the renowned architect *Mimar* Sinan in 1578.[2] According to an imperial decree dating to 1575, the Sultan ordered İznik tiles from the tile-master Mehmed.[3]

Outside the Topkapı Palace, there are similar examples of this tile in the collections of several prestigious institutions; there are two examples in the Khalili Collection in London (Accession Number: POTI1688),[4] a further nine examples in the Tareq Rajab Museum in Kuwait,[5] one example in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha (Accession Number: PO.468.2007), and a fragment in the Sadberk Hanım Museum in Istanbul.[6] In addition, the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon has a panel of 63 tiles which appears to come from the same collection (Accession Number: 1663).[7]

Footnotes:

1. J.M. Rogers. 1988. *The Topkapı Saray Museum: Architecture, The Harem and Other Buildings*. London: Thames and Hudson. no.67.
2. Gérard Degeorge and Yves Porter. 2002. *The Art of the Islamic Tile*. Paris: Flammarion. pp.210-11.
3. Belgin Demirsar Arlı and Ara Altun. 2008. *Tiles: Treasures of Anatolian Soil: Volume 2, Ottoman Period*. İstanbul: Kale Group Cultural Publications. p. 105.
4. See, R.M. Rogers. 1995. *Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Collection of Nasser D. Khalili*. London: The Nour Foundation. p.184, cat no.122.
5. See, Géza Fehérvári. 2000. *Ceramics of the Islamic World in the Tareq Rajab Museum*. New York: I.B. Tauris. p.314, no.377.
6. Ara Altun 1991. *Sadberk Hanım Museum: Turkish Tiles and Ceramics*. İstanbul: Sadberk Hanım Museum p.66.
7. See, Maria d'Orey Capucho Queiroz Ribeiro. 2009. *Iznik Pottery and Tiles in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum*. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. p.118.

O.H.

10. Dome of the Rock Tile

Ottoman Jerusalem, 16th century

25 cm high, 25 cm wide

Provenance: French private collection prior to the 1970s.

Of square form, this underglaze ceramic tile is part of a rare series of "Jerusalem tiles" made during the Ottoman era for the Dome of the Rock. The decorations are of extremely fine quality and include white lettering on a cobalt blue background with turquoise curved leafy stems surmounted by black outlines.

During the mid-sixteenth century a high demand for tiles was fuelled by the grand projects of the Ottoman dynasty. Most notably, Sultan Süleyman I ordered the restoration of the Dome of the Rock and asked the master potter Abdallah from Tabriz to oversee the work.[1] It is known that some of these tiles date between 1545 and 1552.[2]

These "Jerusalem tiles" were most likely made locally because kilns were discovered in the Najara vaults in 1917.[3]

The distinguishing characteristics of this "Jerusalem tile" are the drilled holes on the edges for metal fixing pegs to be inserted, as mortar and grout were not adequate for the building. In addition, on the unglazed back of the tile, the number ۴۳ ("43") is deeply scored on the surface, presumably to aid the craftsmen to set out the tiles in the correct order.

There is a similar tile with white lettering on a cobalt blue background held in the Louvre in Paris (Accession Number: AFI2317).

Footnotes:

1. Venetia Porter. 1995. *Islamic Tiles*. London: British Museum Press. p. 102-3.
2. Gérard Degeorge & Yves Porter. 2002. *The Art of the Islamic Tile*. Paris: Flammarion. p.212.
3. Arthur Millner. 2015. *Damascus Tiles*. Munich: Prestel. p.119.

O.H.


AN PAYAS HAN

11. Portrait of Sultan Bayezid II

European School

Late 17th or early 18th century

16 cm high, 9.5 cm wide

Oil on vellum.

Provenance: Private European collection prior to 1963.

This intimate portrait of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512) both reveals the complexity of artistic exchange between Istanbul and the rest of Europe, which stemmed from the Renaissance, and it also sensitively evokes the personal nature of the Sultan himself.

Kneeling on an elaborate carpet, Sultan Bayezid appears resplendent in a sixteenth century sultanic dress. Bearing no royal aigrette, his *taj* ("scholar's turban") befits the ruler's pious nature. An exquisite green kaftan adorned with stylized *tughra* motifs in gold thread is worn under a sumptuous forest green *kurdi* ("robe"), with a broad ermine collar and trim. The Sultan rests against a rich amber cushion embroidered with gold floriated motifs, reflecting the aesthetic of his belt. His greying beard suggests Bayezid's advancing maturity, and his complexion belies that of an elderly man. The painter's delicate natural shading creates a sense of depth and subtlety on his face, while carefully delineated arching brows, high cheekbones and chestnut eyes characterise his features.

Though partially worn, the inscription appears to read 'V Sultan Payasit Han'. The initial V was most likely followed by 'III' indicating that he was the eighth Ottoman Sultan. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, images of the Sultans were much sought after to adorn the walls of European castles and palaces. Portraits and manuscripts depicting the sultans were given to ambassadors visiting the Ottoman court.

In 1553 the earliest known printed collection of sultan portraits, with individually identifiable features, was produced by Guillaume Rouillé in Lyons. Printed in several languages, *Promptuarium Iconum* became a principal source of sultanic iconography in sixteenth century Europe. In 1579 a series of oil portraits of the Sultans, attributed to the workshop of Paolo Veronese, was sent from Italy to Istanbul at the request of Sultan Murad III (r. 1574-1595). The paintings appear to be predominantly influenced by Rouillé's illustrations. Both series depict Bayezid II as an elderly man with a tapering beard and wearing European costume. As the oil paintings arrived in Istanbul, court historiographer Seyyid Lokman and artist Nakkaş Osman were tasked by Murad III to record the appearances of the earlier Ottoman Sultans in a manuscript. Within the completed 1579 *Sema'ilname*, Lokman's biographies appeared beneath Nakkaş Osman's portraits. Representing the personality of the sultans marked an innovation in Ottoman manuscripts and Nakkaş Osman's images shaped the canon for sultan portraits until the end of the eighteenth century. Bayezid II's portrait is a clear prototype for the present work. The Sultan kneels on a carpet against a red cushion and wears a scholar's turban and green robes, embellished with gold and folds that reveal the red lining of his tunic. Notable differences are the brown trim of his kaftan, blue belt and his depiction as a young man.

Throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, manuscripts reflected the influence of Nakkaş Osman's portrayal of Bayezid II and depictions of him as an older ruler emerged. Levni Abdülcelil Çelebi was the court painter under Sultan Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703) and Ahmet III (r. 1703-1730). An accomplished and renowned artist, he was influenced by European painters who visited the court, particularly the Flemish-French artist Jean Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737). Levni's illustration of Bayezid II for a 1703 *Silsilename* ("Book of Genealogy") manuscript presents him leaning against a red cushion on a patterned carpet. He wears a green kaftan with ermine trim and his grey beard is more akin to the present painting. Levni's works sought to present the true characters of the sultans and his style had a great impact on their depictions amongst Ottoman and European artists. He provided a series of sultan portraits for Demetrius Cantemir which were subsequently engraved by Claude du Bosc for Cantemir's book, *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire*, published in London in 1734. Despite the fact that almost two hundred years had elapsed, Du Bosc's illustration of Bayezid II still referenced Nakkaş Osman's portrayal of him, combined with that of Levni. The Sultan is once more presented in three-quarter profile, kneeling against a cushion. His kaftan bears an ermine collar and he is wearing a *taj*. Although variations occur in his eyes, ermine belt and in his fuller figure, his high cheekbones, gently arching nose and grey beard are all similar to the present portrait.

The artist of the current painting must have been familiar with elements of this multifarious amalgamation of Bayezid II imagery. The work may well have been part of a portrait series and would certainly have belonged to a notable individual.

If paintings evoke the spirit of their subjects, this one truly succeeds in conveying the essence of a pious, intelligent ruler, known by his people as "Bayezid the Just". Possessing all the attributes of an adept leader, he inherited a bankrupt state and faced civil unrest, yet by the end of his reign the empire had expanded, the state treasury was full and citizens experienced greater wealth.

Further Literature:

Nurhan Atasoy and Lale Uluç. 2012. *Impressions of Ottoman Culture in Europe: 1453 –1699*. İstanbul: Turkish Cultural Foundation.

Robert Born, Michal Dziewulski, and Guido Messling, (eds.). 2015. *The Sultan's World: The Ottoman Orient in Renaissance Art*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz.

Stefano Carboni. 2006. *Venise et L'Orient : 828-1797*. Paris: Gallimard.

Aikaterini Dimitriadou. 2000. *The Hest Bihist of Idris Bidlisi: the Reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512)* Ph.D, The University of Edinburgh.

Selim Kangal (ed.). 2000. *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*. İstanbul: İşbank.

J.M. Rogers. 1995. *Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman art from the collection of Nasser D. Khalili*. Geneva: Musée Rath.

Haydn Williams. 2014. *Turquerie: An Eighteenth Century European Fantasy*. London: Thames and Hudson.

C.H.

12. Ottoman Leather *Matara* ("Flask")

Ottoman Turkey, 16th or 17th century
24 cm high, 25 cm wide
Provenance: From the estate of Sir Walter Scott, Abbotsford House.
Private UK collection.

This elegant Ottoman *matara* ("flask") was made to carry beverages during pilgrimages and battles. It is made of three pieces of hard leather stitched together and consists of a central opening with a short cylindrical neck for filling and a curved pouring spout on the side. The leather appliqués are decorated with three-sided palmettes around the neck which are repeated on a larger scale on the front and back of the object with additional arabesque motifs, scrolls and interlacing foliage that have been punched, stippled and engraved. There are traces of an orange-brown colour on the palmettes, which may have originally been red, as well as traces of green around the pouring spout. The metal rings attached on both shoulders of the object would have enabled its owner to carry the flask using straps.

Mataras were luxury items held in high esteem within the Ottoman court. Similar gourd-shaped flasks were even sent as diplomatic gifts to European rulers; for example, Sultan Murad III sent a *matara* to the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II in ca.1580, which is now held in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Accession Number: HJRK_C_28). Today most surviving *mataras* are held in Germany and Austria since they were taken as booty after the siege of Vienna in 1683.[1] These objects are typically made of leather because this was far more durable and practical than using materials such as glass, precious metals or faience, which would have easily been broken.[2] Such objects would have been made where the leather industries flourished in the Ottoman territories, such as in Edirne or Diyarbakır.[3]

Footnotes:
1. Sophie Makariou and Charlotte Maury. 2008. *Three Empires of Islam: Istanbul, Isfahan, Delhi: Master Pieces of the Louvre Collection*. Musée du Louvre. p.196.
2. Suraiya Faroqhi. 2016. *A Cultural History of the Ottomans: The Imperial Elite and its Artefacts*. London: I.B. Tauris. p.132.
3. See, David J. Roxburgh. 2005. *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600-1600*. London: Royal Academy of Arts. p.466; and Barbara Karl. 2018. "Objects of Prestige and Spoils of War: Ottoman Objects in the Habsburg Networks of Gift-Giving in the Sixteenth Century". In *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, edited by Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen, and Giorgio Riello, pp.119-149. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.130.

O.H.

13. Ottoman *Kubur* ("Pen Case")

Ottoman Turkey, 18th century
32 cm long, 4.5 cm diameter

This cylindrical *kubur* ("pen case") is made of three component parts and veneered with mother-of-pearl scales. The detachable lid is crowned with a green emerald finial which rests on an amber wood knop surmounted by a silver rim around its edges. When opened, the inside of the case reveals a tubular papier-mâché body covered in red leather. In addition, beneath the case there is also a detachable base concealing a silver inkwell with a cover decorated in the form of a foliage motif.

There is a similar Ottoman pen case with mother-of-pearl scale decorations in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection (Accession Number: MXD116).[1] Furthermore, there is another comparable pen case, bearing the *tughra* of the Ottoman Sultan Osman III (r.1754-57), held at the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in İstanbul (Accession Number: 4040).[2]

Footnotes:
1. J.M. Rogers. 1996. *Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Collection of Nasser D.Khalili*. London: The Nour Foundation. p.170.
2. For an image of the pen case see, Garo Kürkman. 1996. *Ottoman Silver Marks*. Istanbul: Mathusalem Publications. p.163.

O.H.

14. Ottoman *Rahle* ("Quran Table")

Ottoman Turkey, dated 1244 (1828 AD)
64.4 cm high, 93.2 cm wide, 38 cm deep
Provenance: UK private collection.

Once owned by the Turkish-born Princess Esra Birgen Jah, the former wife of the Nizam of Hyderabad Mukarram Jah, this splendid walnut Quran stand is decorated in the imperial *Tarz-ı İstanbul* ("İstanbul-style"). It has a striking central sunburst motif consisting of a 19-sided mother-of-pearl star enclosed by rows of diamonds and triangles inlaid with tortoiseshell and mother-of-pearl. This sun-burst motif is repeated as half medallions on either side of the surface and separated by tulips and six-sided rosettes intertwined with scrolls, diamonds, triangles, and circles in mother-of-pearl. There is also a border of rosettes followed by an outer border of downward facing triangles in mother-of-pearl and upward facing tortoiseshell triangles to harmonise the tessellating scheme.

Similar to the surface decorations, the central sun-burst motif has been repeated on either side of

the table and surmounted by rosettes with scrolls, diamonds and circles in mother-of-pearl; below this, the table legs are in the *mihraplı* ("mihrab") style with a protruding three-sided floral-shaped medallion decorated with diamond motifs, of which the central motif is formed of a six-sided mother-of-pearl star within a tortoiseshell circle. The four legs are also decorated with the rosettes adjoined by scrolling vines and circles in mother-of-pearl followed by a border of triangles. Carved on the underside of the table is the year 1244 (1828 AD).

Under the table there is a shipping label which reads: "ADER PICARD TAJAN – PARIS – PRINCESS ESRA JAH LONDON".

There is a similar Quran table containing this sun-burst motif in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum in İstanbul (Accession Number: 108).[1] The Haghia Sophia Library also has a folding Quran table with similar motifs.[2]

Footnotes:
1. See, Cevdet Çulpan. 1968. *Rahleler*. İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi. p.32-33. & ill.29-30.
2. Ibid.

O.H

15. Ottoman Commemorative Textile

Ottoman Empire, mid-19th century
197 cm high, 183 cm wide
Provenance: US private collection.

This impressive textile honouring the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, Osman *Gazi* (r. 1299-1326), is made of felt with gold thread and sequins. There are floral, figural and animal motifs, as well as crescent moons, stars and *tughras* in gold, red, green and brown colours dominating the large black background. In the centralised medallion, there is a portrait of Osman *Gazi* wearing a grand turban and kaftan whilst holding a sword with his two hands. Interestingly, he is portrayed standing next to an imperial Ottoman mosque which could not have been constructed during his reign, thereby symbolically immortalising the ruler. The portrait is bordered by short descriptions of his rule and the Ottoman administration. In the cartouche beneath him it reads:

سلطان عثمان خان اول غازی
Sultan Osman Han-ı Evvel Gazi
"Sultan Osman Khan the First, the Ghazi."

The portrait is very similar to a hand-coloured mezzotint by the British printmaker John Young which was commissioned by Selim III in 1806. The Topkapı Palace had supplied Young with gouache portraits by an Ottoman Greek painter, Konstantin Kapıdağlı, to complete the mezzotint.[1] Thereafter, upon seeing the finished piece, Selim III approved a larger project which would include the portraits of all the succeeding Ottoman sultans in one album. Although Young relied on Kapıdağlı's portraits, there had been a long-standing court tradition of Ottoman imperial portrait albums. Indeed, the physiognomy and clothing of Osman Gazi would have relied heavily on miniature precedents found in Seyyid Lokman Çelebi's *Kıyafetü'l-İnsaniyye Fi Şema'ili'l-Osmaniyye* (1579) and Abdulcelil Levni's *Kebir Musavver Silsilenâme* (1703-30). Nonetheless, Kapıdağlı introduced the European pose of a standing ruler, rather than painting him seated; he also included texts around the central medallion – these two features are also present in Young's work as well as in this textile.

By 1815, Young published his portraits of the Ottoman sultans commercially in Britain to recover his costs, for Selim III was deposed by the janissaries in 1807.[2] These portraits began to reach a wider audience once they were reproduced as cartes de visite by the Ottoman Armenian photographers, the Abdullah Frères, in the 1860s.[3] Indeed, the popularity of Young's album at this time helps to date this textile to the mid-nineteenth century.

Around the textile's portrait of Osman *Gazi*, there are cartouches with descriptions of the

ruler's life; in between these important dates, there are also numbered cartouches which describe important positions within the Ottoman administration. The numbered cartouches correspond to the numbered portraits in the ring of images around Osman *Gazi*'s portrait. From clockwise, starting at two o'clock, the Ottoman Turkish text reads:

١. صدر اعظم حضرتلرى اشكالى
1. Sadr-ı Azam Hazretleri eşkalı
"1. Image of His Excellence the Grand Vizier."

تاريخ وفاتلرى ٧٢٦
Tarih-i vefatları, 726
"The date of his death, 726 (1326)."

٤. بايراقدار آغا(لرك؟)اشكالى
4. Bayrakdar Ağa(ların?) eşkalı
4. "Image of the Bayrakdar Agha
(Chief Standard Bearer)."

ولادت همايونلرى ٦٥٧
Veladet-i Hümayunları, 657
"His imperial birth, 657 (1258)."

٢. قپوجى آغالرك اشكالى
2. Kapucı Ağaların eşkalı
"2. Image of the Kapuci Agha
(Chief Doorkeeper)."

جلوس همايونلرى ٦٩٩
Cülus-ı Hümayunları, 699
"His imperial accession, 699 (1299-1300)."

٣. تبردار آغانك اشكالى
3. Teberdar Ağanın eşkalı
"3. Image of the Teberdar Agha
(Chief Axeman)."

مدت سلطنتلرى ٢٧
Müddet-i saltanat, 27
"Length of his sultanate, 27 (years)."

In addition to commemorating Osman I's reign, this textile is extremely symbolic for its use of felt, because felt-making is one of the oldest Turkish handicrafts which was brought to Anatolia in the eleventh century by the migrating Turks from Central Asia. Initially used by nomads to make tent coverings and clothes, the Ottoman Turks upheld this handicraft and introduced it throughout their expanding borders. Hence, from the late fourteenth century, when crafts and commerce expanded rapidly into the large towns of the Ottoman Balkans, textile and felt-making were new industries which thrived in the Muslim districts.[4] Felt continued to be used throughout Ottoman society for centuries, from Ottoman officials wearing the *fes* headdress to shepherds wearing *kepenek* cloaks.

John Young. 1815. "Sultan Othman Khan I: Head of the Ottoman Imperial House (Sultan Othman – Khan Ier. Chef de la Maison Imp. Othomane)".
From *A Series of Portraits of the Emperors of Turkey… With a Biographical Account of Each of the Emperors.* London: W. Bulmer. Hand-coloured mezzotint, 37.5 cm x 25.3 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Reference Number 2011.1083.

Footnotes:
1. Mary Roberts. 2015. *Istanbul Exchanges: Ottomans, Orientalists, and Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture*. California: University of California Press. p.23.
2. Ibid. pp.30-31.
3. Ibid. p.33.
4. André Clot. 2012. *Suleiman the Magnificent*. London: Saqi.

O.H.

16.Hispano-Moresque Lustre Charger

Manises, Spain, 16th century

39 cm diameter

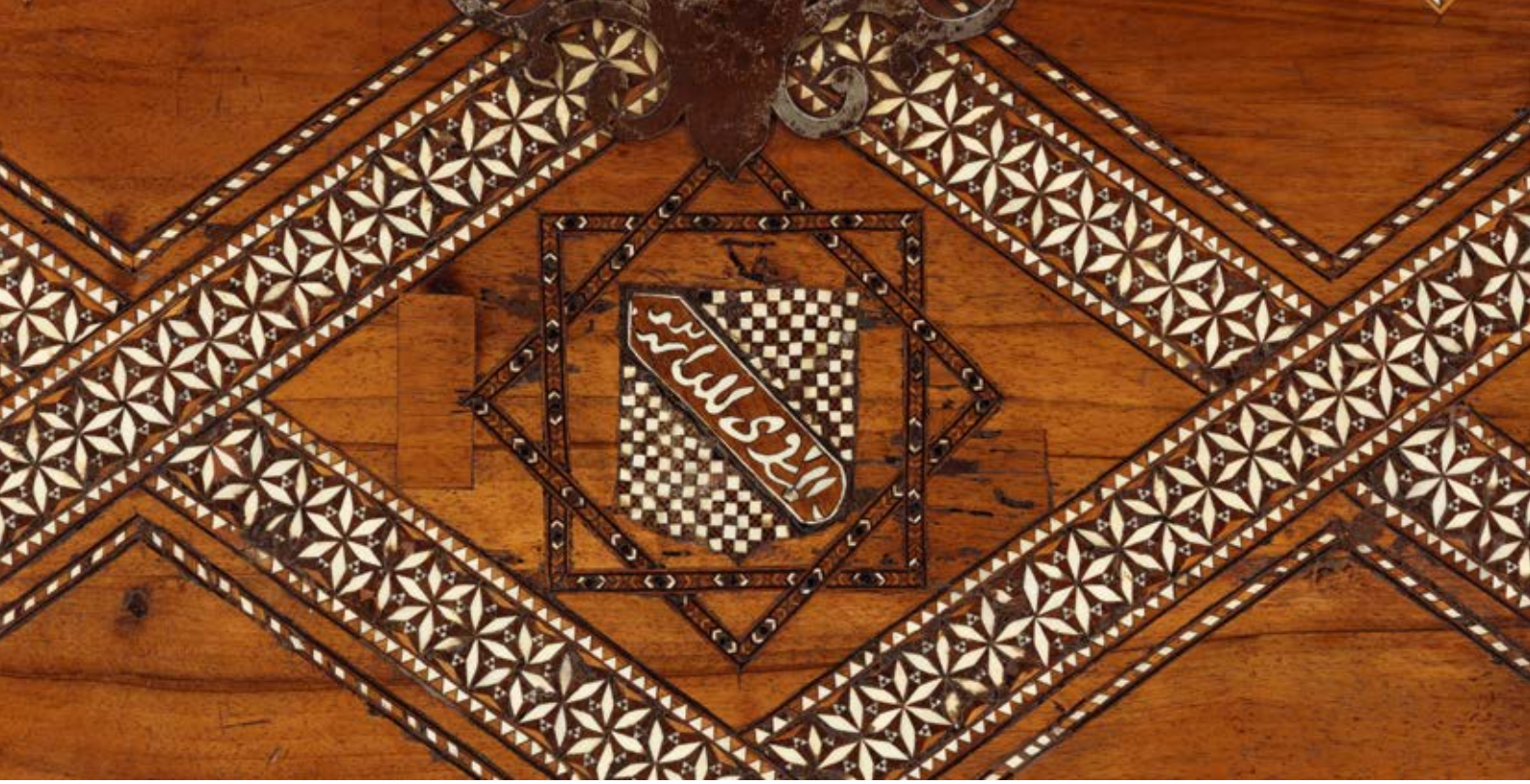
Provenance: Private European Collection

This shimmering circular charger is covered in a creamy-white tin glaze and painted in blue and brown copper-lustre. The raised central boss is striking due to its solid lustre border which encloses a four-sided foliate design. The surrounding cavetto bears elegantly decorated blue and relief-painted leaves split into four sections. Interestingly, the sloping and everted rim has two rare features: the three cartouches with fleshy leaf-form design strongly recall the Islamic motifs found on early Islamic pottery from Al-Andalus; furthermore, the three sets of six-petalled flowers are uncommon motifs in Hispano-Moresque lustre chargers of the sixteenth century. On the reverse of the charger there is a central rosette surrounded by concentric circles, fern leaves and whorls which are all in brown copper-lustre. The charger was made specifically for hanging, for it has an original hole on the rim which is glazed around the edges indicating the intended position for display.

Further Literature:

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

O.H.



17. Spanish *Escritorio* ("Writing Desk")

Spain, 16th-17th century
64.4 cm high, 111 cm wide, 38 cm deep

Characteristic of sixteenth century Mudéjar furniture, this rectangular writing cabinet, popularly known as a *vargueño*, is made of walnut and richly decorated with numerous devices of geometrical ornament with inlaid coloured wood and bone which together form stunning floral motifs and with borders composed of stars, diamonds, triangles and squares. In addition, the edges of the cabinet are decorated with ebony and white-coloured wood. Intended to be used as furniture for travellers, there is an iron lock plate with its original key to keep precious items secure. Its elaborate iron hasp is decorated with a shell motif, and on the lower section of the door there are two groups of three inverted shell-shaped motifs, also made of iron, covering the hinges. The door opens downwards to serve as a writing desk and reveals nineteen fitted drawers of varying sizes which are also profusely decorated with geometric designs in floral motifs highlighted in bone and coloured wood.

Perhaps amongst the most distinctive pieces of Spanish furniture, cabinets in this form were originally known as *escritorio* ("writing desk") in the sixteenth century, rather than by the more common name, *vargueño*, which was introduced in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This change of name came about supposedly because such cabinets were made in the town of Vargas in the province of Toledo during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such practical pieces later rested on trestle stands of the same width but were not connected to the cabinet itself. Moreover, they were usually Mudéjar ornaments, as is evident by the combination of Western European and Islamic motifs. Indeed, on this cabinet there is an emblem shape centralised on the door with Arabic inscriptions running diagonally through which includes the word *li-lah* ("to God").

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has a smaller cabinet with similar star and diamond designs which form floral motifs (Accession Number: W.104:1-1921).

Further Literature:

María Paz Aguiló Alonso. 1993. *El mueble en España, Siglos XVI-XVII*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Colum Hourihane. 2012. "Spain, V: Furniture". In *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture, Volume 2*, edited by Colum Hourihane, pp.612-37. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

O.H.


وخت بن فالسا
شاہ بلبل
In the Collection of Lady Impey at Calcutta
Printed by زین الدین Nilkur of Patna 1781

18. An Indian Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) by Shaikh Zayn Al-Din

Calcutta, India, 1782

52cm high and 72.5cm wide

Pencil, pen and ink and watercolour with gum Arabic heightened with bodycolour on English paper watermarked 'J. Whatman'.

Inscribed in the lower left corner: "In the Collection of Lady Impey/Painted by (Zayn al-Din)/Native of Patna 1782".

Verso stamped with the seal of Sir Elijah Impey.

Provenance: Private European collection prior to 1970.

Perching momentarily on a phalsa tree branch, this exquisitely flammeous paradise-flycatcher displays the mastery of Shaikh Zayn Al-Din's painterly technique and encapsulates his sensitivity towards the natural world.

Through Zayn Al-Din's close observations of nature, his compositions evoke a visual poetry between flora and fauna. As the phalsa tree's turquoise-green leaves radiate outward, a gentle dip in its branch echoes the curve of the bird's chest, and the inky blue berries reflect the feathers encircling a watchful eye. The bird's plumage has been artfully rendered in exceptional detail, with individual feathers outlined by minute strokes. Exquisitely rich pigments enliven the rufous wings and greenish black tones iridesce across the head and crest. As the bird's attentive gaze casts directly outwards, its body is braced with a latent energy. In capturing a bird seconds away from flight with such representational verité, Zayn Al-Din demonstrates his innate connection to the natural world.

A native species to Asia, the paradise flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) hunts insects in the understorey of the dense forest canopy. The subadult males have vivid flame-coloured wings, long tail feathers and a ring of blue around their eyes. The phalsa tree is highly regarded in ayurvedic medicine, the root may be used to treat rheumatism, the leaves form poultices and the berries possess astringent and stomachic properties.

A pioneering natural historian, Lady Impey created a menagerie of animals at her home in Calcutta. She commissioned several local artists to record native bird, plant and animal species between 1777 and 1782. The finest of these works featured in the acclaimed Impey Album, comprising 197 studies of birds, 76 of fish, 28 of reptiles, 17 beasts and 8 of flowers. The Persian inscription on the current work '*Darakht ban falsa, Shah Bulbul*' has been translated into English on the reverse as 'Falsa Tree with King's Nightingale'. Inaccuracies in transliteration occur, as 'falsa' in Persian would be written as 'phalsa' and the English appears as a literal translation of the Persian. However, the titles refer to the local Bengali names, which would have been more commonly employed at the time.

Shaikh Zayn Al-Din was the most accomplished of the Impey Album artists. Having worked at the atelier of the Murshidabad court of the Nawab of Bengal, his paintings displayed the sensitive calligraphic strokes and adept refinement of a classically trained Mughal artist. Under the patronage of Lady Impey, Shaikh Zayn was required to produce more realistic, larger format paintings with greater emphasis on perspective and shading. It is likely he was shown examples of this in illustrated natural history publications from the Impey's library. Combining typical European 'bird on a branch' imagery with Mughal elements such as increasing layers of paint to achieve lustrous colour, Zayn Al-Din reveals his true mastery of both genres.

Not only were the Impey Album paintings aesthetically beautiful, they were amongst the earliest images of many of the species depicted, causing great excitement amongst ornithologists upon the family's return to London in 1783. The works also provide a valuable record of medicinal plants whose properties may still be of benefit.

The recent discovery of Sir Elijah Impey's stamp on the back of this work is worthy of particular mention. The Impey Album was sold at Phillips, London, 21 May 1810 and subsequently dispersed. Examples from the album are currently held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Binney Collection in San Diego, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Radcliffe Science Library in Oxford. The exciting discovery of the present work enables its reassertion into one of the most revered and important collections of Company School painting.

Today this work stands as testament to shared passions: to those of a woman whose dedication to collecting has informed our present understanding of Indian flora and fauna, and to those of an artist whose paintings capture the true majesty of the natural world with exquisite sentiment.

Further Literature:

Hermione De Almeida and George H Gilpin. 2006. *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India*. London: Routledge.

Mildred Archer. 1992. *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum.

Stuart Cary Welch. 1978. *Room for Wonder: Indian Painting During the British Period 1760-1880*. New York: American Federation of Arts.

C.H.

19. Study of a Malaysian Pied Fantail (*Rhipidura javanica*)

Malacca, Malaysia, late 18th century to early 19th century

40.5cm high, 26.5cm wide
Pencil, pen and ink and watercolour with gum Arabic heightened with bodycolour on English paper, watermarked 'I Taylor 1795'.
Provenance: North American private collection.

The meandering stems of a banana bush (*Tabernaemontana pandacaqui*) affords an elegant perch for a Malaysian pied fantail (*Rhipidura javanica*). This beady-eyed species is known for its restless nature, frequently swishing its tail from side to side whilst engaged in dextrous aerial feats. Residing in tropical lowland forests it is common throughout a number of Southeast Asian countries. Depicted with an open beak, the fantail appears to be in mid-song as though calling to a mate.

Exceptionally fine brushstrokes have been employed to demarcate the black feathers, while discreet hints of deep greens create a shimmering quality to the plumage. Exquisite details also appear in the depiction of the flora; the intricate venation on the underside of leaves, stamens emerging from delicate flowers and delightfully vivid pairs of orange fruits. Such a graceful work has undoubtedly been executed by an extremely accomplished hand.

The composition of this painting is almost identical to an illustration in the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, in the National Museum of Singapore (ac. 1995-03228). Farquhar arrived in Malacca as an Engineer in 1795 and later became Resident and Commandant of Malacca from 1803-1818 and Singapore from 1819-1824. A keen naturalist with a particular fondness for Malaysian birds, he kept a number of species at his home. Farquhar commissioned at least two Chinese artists to paint all manner of flora and fauna. These were completed on English paper, some of which included the 'I Taylor' watermark. The present work is watermarked 'I Taylor 1795' indicating the paper is no older than this date and was concurrent with Farquhar's time in Malacca. The work also bears a pencil inscription, which appears to read 'Jancunehl Gia.' This may have been a Romanised mistranslation of the Jawi inscription on the Farguhar collection work; Jangkuci Gila. Romanised Malay names appear in pencil on most of the Farquhar paintings, even in the absence of a Jawi inscription. The current work also bears a pencil outline, visible around the bird's tail. Farquhar's artists were required to sketch outlines before painting and evidence of pouncing and silverpoint outlines appear on many of the works. Such parallels hint at the possibility that the current work may have been commissioned by Farquhar, who is known to have sent copies of some paintings to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta.

What remains unquestionable is the consummate skill demonstrated in both works. Rendered with an impressive display of painterly technique, they truly encapsulate the diverse riches afforded by Malaysian natural history.

Further Literature:

Karina H. Corrigan. 2004. "Chinese Botanical Paintings for the Export Market", *The Magazine Antiques*, Vol. 165; part 6, pp.92-101.

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

G.G. Khim. 1999. *The William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings*. Singapore: Goh Geok Khim.

C.H.

20. A Study of an Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*)

Probably Canton or Macau, China, 19th century

26.5 cm high, 30 cm wide

Pen and ink and watercolour with gum Arabic heightened with bodycolour.

Provenance: North American private collection.

An Indian cuckoo perches on the branch of a rose bush amongst a profusion of delicate pink flowers. Gracefully poised in profile, the bird's feathers appear to their most resplendent capacity. Dynamic strokes of dark brown over greyish hues add texture and three-dimensionality to the plumage, while milky-whites crown the outer wings. Fine black chevrons punctuated with white dots ornament the tail feathers in a strikingly elegant camouflage.

The luscious display of emeralds and pinks surrounding the cuckoo reveals the artist's delight in capturing the floral element of the composition. The serrated leaves burst forth as new growth is indicated by lighter green tones. Meandering stems terminate in languorous undulations of petals, whose deep pink edges gently fade to whitish hues. This intoxicating depiction encapsulating the vitality of the rose indicates an artist possessing an advanced understanding of the botanical arts.

First published in 1697, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* influenced generations of Chinese artists. It noted that "Flowers should carry themselves lightly…They should be drawn with liveliness, accurate colour, in appropriate circumstances, placed properly, and with buds added." Due to its extensive flowering season, the rose was celebrated in China as 'the eternal spring flower' (*changchunha*) and was frequently painted.

In 1700s the East India Company established its first factory in Canton. Visiting botanists collected specimens from the *Fa Tee* ('Flowery Land') nurseries and commissioned experienced Chinese artists to paint them. In 1797 Lord Macartney returned from China with the 'Macartney Rose,' inspiring such adulation for the species that the Dog-rose became celebrated as England's national flower.

Further Literature:

G.G. Khim. 1999. *The William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings*. Singapore Goh: Geok Khim.

Judith Magee. 2013. *Chinese Art and the Reeves Collection*. London: Natural History Museum.

Kai Wang. 1992. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

C.H.

21. Raja and Courtesan

Attributed to Hasan Raza, son of 'Ali Raza Bikaner, Rajasthan, India, c. 1680-85

33 cm high, 26.5 cm wide

Ink, opaque watercolour on paper.

Provenance: private European collection since the 1940s

This double-portrait of a ruler and his inamorata locked in a tight embrace has no exact counterpart in seventeenth century Rajasthani painting. The two bust-length figures are powerfully unmediated, filling the composition and being thrust forward by a black background relieved by only an unobtrusive balustrade. Exceptionally, each of the entwined figures holds a wine bottle and cup in his or her hands, and the woman is shown actively pouring more of the intoxicant. The elegant form of the swan-neck bottles, known as *ashkdan* ('container for tears'), introduces a measure of ornamental exoticism, for their narrow, curvilinear necks and leaf-shaped mouths are inspired by Murano glassware that was produced in Venice in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and imitated in Safavid Iran shortly thereafter. This type of strikingly large-scale, lascivious drinking scene almost certainly has its origins in northern Europe, where sixteenth century artists, for example, Hendrik Goltzius evoked such suggestive solicitations in taverns with an implied cash enticement or a procuress. Indeed, a c. 1730 Mewari version of a couple posed in a similar cheek-to-cheek manner retains the European-style garb and upturned moustache for the male figure as well as the presence of a procuress.[1]

The meticulously rendered jewellery displayed here is remarkably varied: the emeralds on the raja's turban band and pair of royal *sarpeches*, the ruby *bugadi* at the top of his ear, the familiar two-pearl earring, and the double-strand pearl and gem necklaces about his neck and chest. The female is bejewelled almost as opulently, with a string of pearls running along the part in her hair *(sir maga)* and terminating in a circular ornament (*tikka*), a graceful nose-ring (*nath*), a large circular earring (*karnphool* or 'ear-flower'), a double-strand pearl necklace with a large emerald pendant, and the ostentatious *hathphool* ('flower for the hand') on the back of each hand. The brilliant bits of white, green and gold in the jewellery establish a staccato surface rhythm that is extended subtly in the tiny circles that form diamond patterns and beaded borders on her tie-dyed diaphanous *odhani* (veil). All these forms stand out from the thinly painted turban, the raja's tight-fitting upper garment and the woman's sheer *choli*.

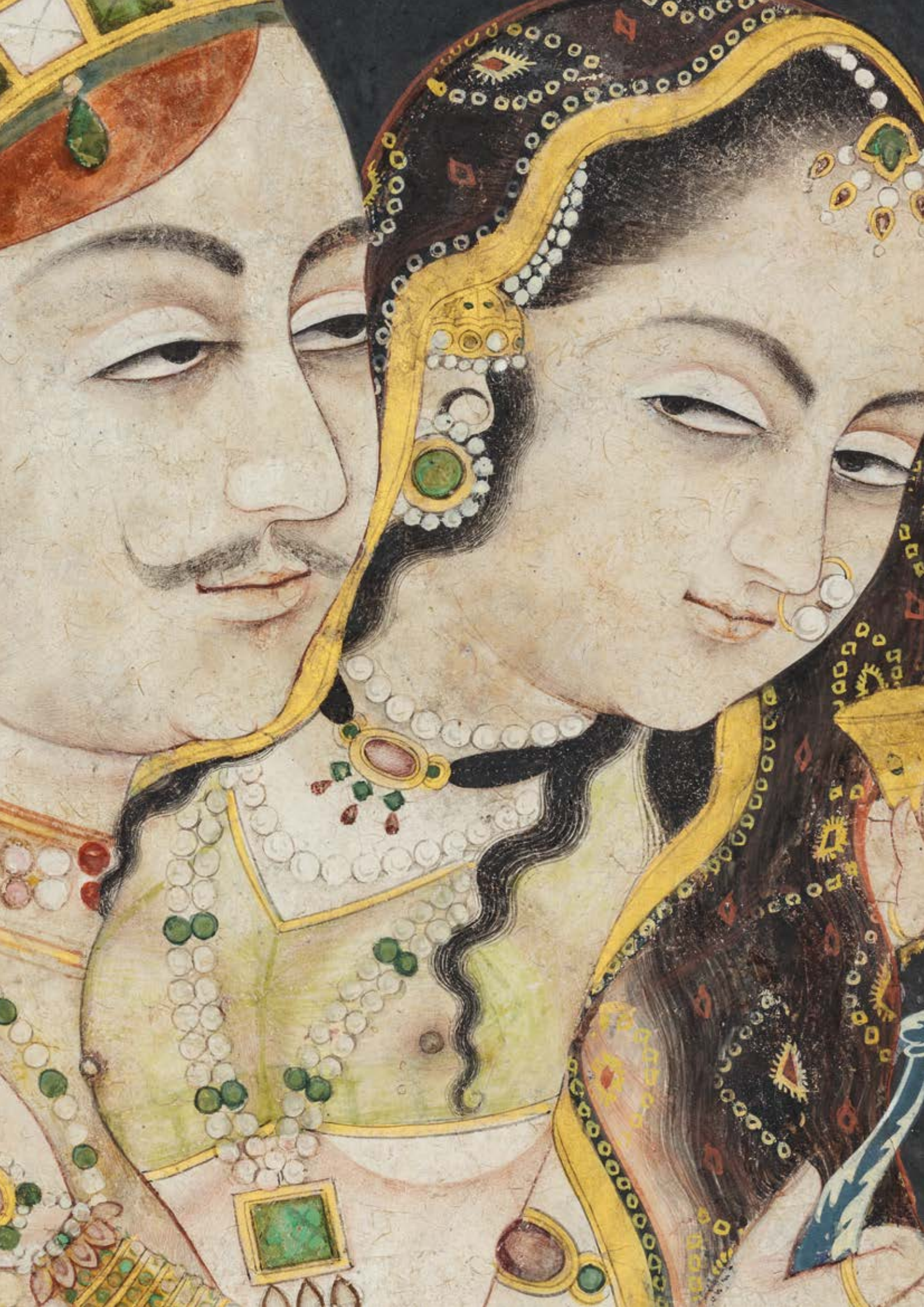
The figures are presented as both tipsy and coy, qualities conveyed by wide, half-shuttered eyes, the woman's sidelong glance and the slight incline of her head away from her paramour. The figures' faces, arms and hands are drawn with crisp precision and are modelled selectively, most skilfully around the eyes, mouth and jaw, but most distinctively in the arching yellowish brushstrokes spanning the raja's upper arm and forearm. The male's features and facial hair are adapted from those of Maharaja Anup Singh of Bikaner (b. 1638, r. 1669-98), a conceit that appears frequently in Rajasthani painting.[2]

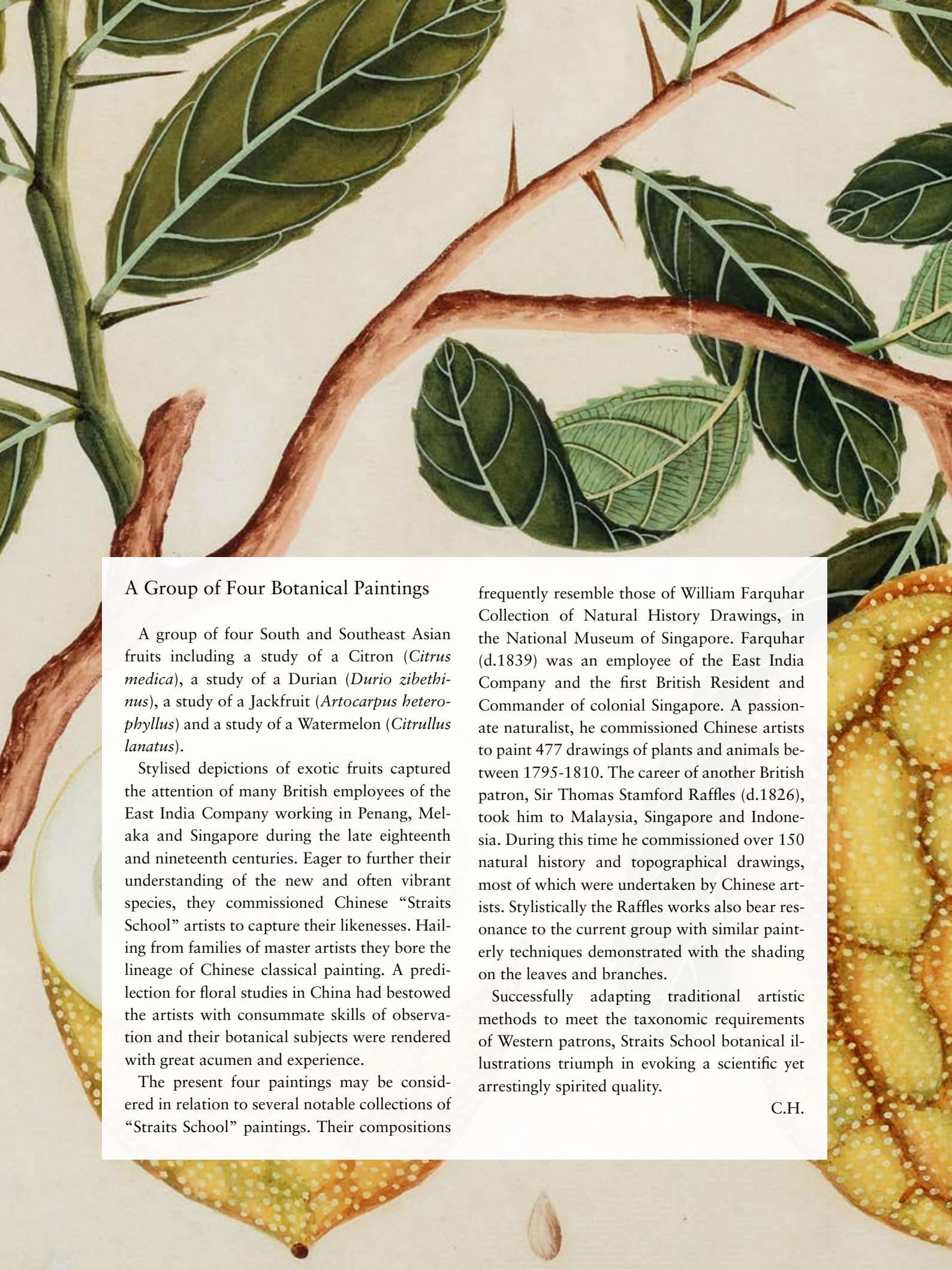
This marvellous painting relates most closely to a painting ascribed to Hasan Raza, one of the two sons of 'Ali Raza, a highly accomplished early Bikaner artist.[3] That work, now in the National Museum of India, New Delhi, presents an equally large-scale frontal portrait of a beauty with a very similar treatment of her eyes, mouth, nose and hair. A bust-length portrait of a lady in profile view attributed to this same artist was offered in our 2019 catalogue.

Footnotes:

1. Published in Gerd Kreisel. 1995. *Rajasthan: Land der Könige*. Stuttgart: Linden Museum Stuttgart. Abb.111.
2. See *Maharaja Anup Singh on Horseback*, Bikaner, c.1690, published in the frontispiece in Hermann Goetz. 1950. *The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer.
3. Published in Karl Khandalavala, Moti Chandra, and Pramod Chandra. 1960. *Miniature Paintings from the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection*. New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi. no.90, fig.71.

J.S.





A Group of Four Botanical Paintings

A group of four South and Southeast Asian fruits including a study of a Citron (*Citrus medica*), a study of a Durian (*Durio zibethinus*), a study of a Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) and a study of a Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*).

Stylised depictions of exotic fruits captured the attention of many British employees of the East India Company working in Penang, Melaka and Singapore during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Eager to further their understanding of the new and often vibrant species, they commissioned Chinese "Straits School" artists to capture their likenesses. Hailing from families of master artists they bore the lineage of Chinese classical painting. A predilection for floral studies in China had bestowed the artists with consummate skills of observation and their botanical subjects were rendered with great acumen and experience.

The present four paintings may be considered in relation to several notable collections of "Straits School" paintings. Their compositions frequently resemble those of William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, in the National Museum of Singapore. Farquhar (d.1839) was an employee of the East India Company and the first British Resident and Commander of colonial Singapore. A passionate naturalist, he commissioned Chinese artists to paint 477 drawings of plants and animals between 1795-1810. The career of another British patron, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (d.1826), took him to Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. During this time he commissioned over 150 natural history and topographical drawings, most of which were undertaken by Chinese artists. Stylistically the Raffles works also bear resonance to the current group with similar painterly techniques demonstrated with the shading on the leaves and branches.

Successfully adapting traditional artistic methods to meet the taxonomic requirements of Western patrons, Straits School botanical illustrations triumph in evoking a scientific yet arrestingly spirited quality.

C.H.

22. Study of a Durian (*Durio zibethinus*)

Probably Penang, Malaysia, 19th century
38 cm high, 49 cm wide
Watercolour with gum Arabic heightened with bodycolour on English paper watermarked 'Ruse & Turners'.
Provenance: UK private collection purchased in the US in the 1970s.

This botanical illustration depicts both unripe and mature fruits and the interior of another durian with a seed embedded in the flesh. The flowers appear from round buds to fully blossoming.

The durian is a popular fruit in Southeast Asia known in some areas as 'the king of fruits' and reputed to be an aphrodisiac. The trees grow 25-50 metres in height and bear large fruits with thorn-covered rinds. The fruits emit a distinct aroma favoured by some and loathed by others (they are forbidden on Singaporean trains for this reason). Fruits can be up to 30cm long and weigh between one and three kilograms. The large flowers can be creamy-white to yellow and emit a heavy sour-milk aroma. They are particularly favoured by pollen and nectar eating fruit bats (*Eonycteris spelaea*) which are their main pollinators in Malaysia. The flowers may be eaten and the flesh is consumed at various stages of ripeness and features in a great number of sweet and savoury Southeast Asian recipes.

In 1856, the British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace exclaimed, "to eat Durians is a new sensation worth a voyage to the East to experience.... as producing a food of the most exquisite flavour it is unsurpassed." In contrast, during his tenure as Governor General of Java, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles ordered that they be removed from his vicinity due to their foul odour.

Botanical illustrations of durians were produced for William Farquhar and Sir Stamford Raffles (see William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, in the National Museum of Singapore (ac. 1995-2985) and The British Library, an Album of 40 Drawings of Plants Made by Chinese Artists at Bencoolen, Sumatra, for Sir Stamford Raffles, (ac. 016485) As with the present work, they all depict the fruit and flowers appearing on the trees simultaneously. This implausible phenomenon would not have occurred naturally, although it does serve the taxonomic interests of the patrons.

Further Literature:

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

G.G. Khim. 1999. *The William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings*. Singapore: Goh Geok Khim.

A. R. Wallace. 1869. *The Malay Archipelago: The land of the orang-utang and the bird of paradise.* London: Macmillan and Co.

C.H.

The jack tree (also known as jackfruit) grows in a number of countries providing tropical lowland habitats, including southern India, Malaysia and Indonesia. The evergreen species has a relatively stout trunk although it grows quickly and can attain heights of 20 metres. Weighing up to 55 kilograms and measuring up to 90cm long, it bears the heaviest and largest fruits of any tree species. Dense spines protect the flesh within and turn golden yellow when fully ripe. Young jackfruits have a milder taste and fleshy texture while mature specimens tend to be sweeter, lending them well to desserts. The trees are monoecious, bearing male and female flowers. These appear as yellow or peach coloured blossoms although the male flowers tend to be pale green. Stingless bees such as *Tetragonula iridipennis* play a crucial role in their pollination.

Jackfruits are regularly used in South and Southeast Asian cuisine and the seeds may also be eaten. Their nutritional benefits include a valuable source of fibre and vitamin B6. The wood is a sought-after building material due to its resistance to termites.

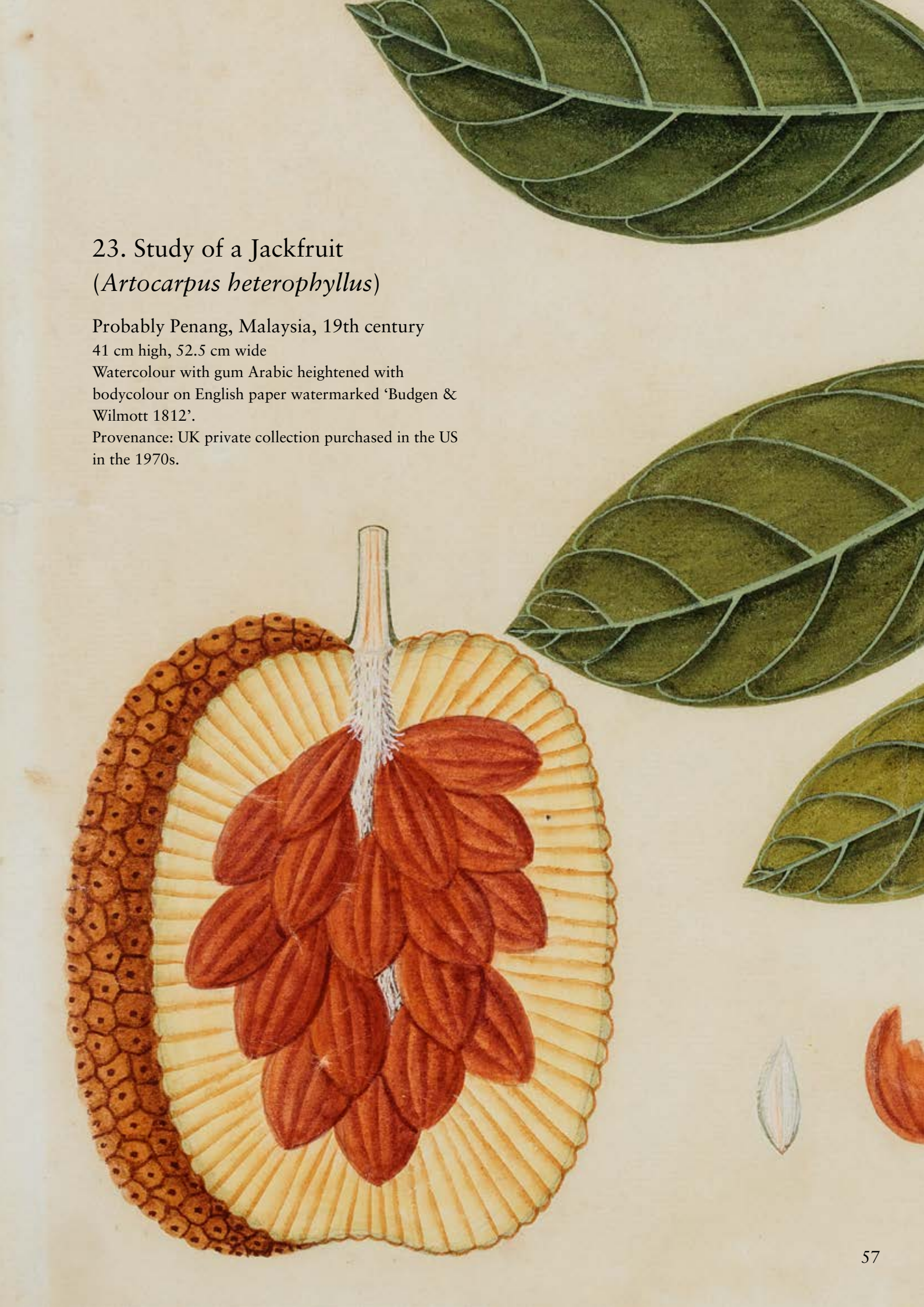
The present work depicts a laden branch supporting a young specimen and two larger jackfruits, beneath which the inside of a ripe fruit reveals the edible bulbs. It has been erroneously labelled as a breadfruit, which bears similar fruits although they are smaller and have a rough rather than spiny surface.

Further Literature:

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

Jules Janick and Robert E. Paull (eds.). 2007. *The Encyclopedia of Fruit and Nuts*. Oxfordshire: Cabi Publishing.

C.H.



23. Study of a Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*)

Probably Penang, Malaysia, 19th century
41 cm high, 52.5 cm wide
Watercolour with gum Arabic heightened with bodycolour on English paper watermarked 'Budgen & Wilmott 1812'.
Provenance: UK private collection purchased in the US in the 1970s.

24. Study of a Citron (*Citrus medica*)

Probably Penang, Malaysia,
19th century
42 cm high, 54 cm wide
Watercolour with gum Arabic heightened with bodycolour on English paper watermarked 'Budgen & Wilmott 1812'.
Provenance: UK private collection purchased in the US in the 1970s.

Originating from India and elsewhere in Asia, the citron family consists of ten species and many cultivars. *Citrus medica* is a small tree or shrub with irregular branches growing up to a height of five metres. One of the oldest citrus species, its cultivation can be traced back to 2000 BCE. Despite its resemblance to the lemon it is a distinct species. Long spines protrude from the branches along the leaf axils and it bears large aromatic fruits with a thick bulbous rind. The fruits are popular in Asian cooking and the oils have been used in perfumes. *Citrus medica* is also valued for its medicinal properties in the treatment of intestinal disorders and pulmonary ailments.

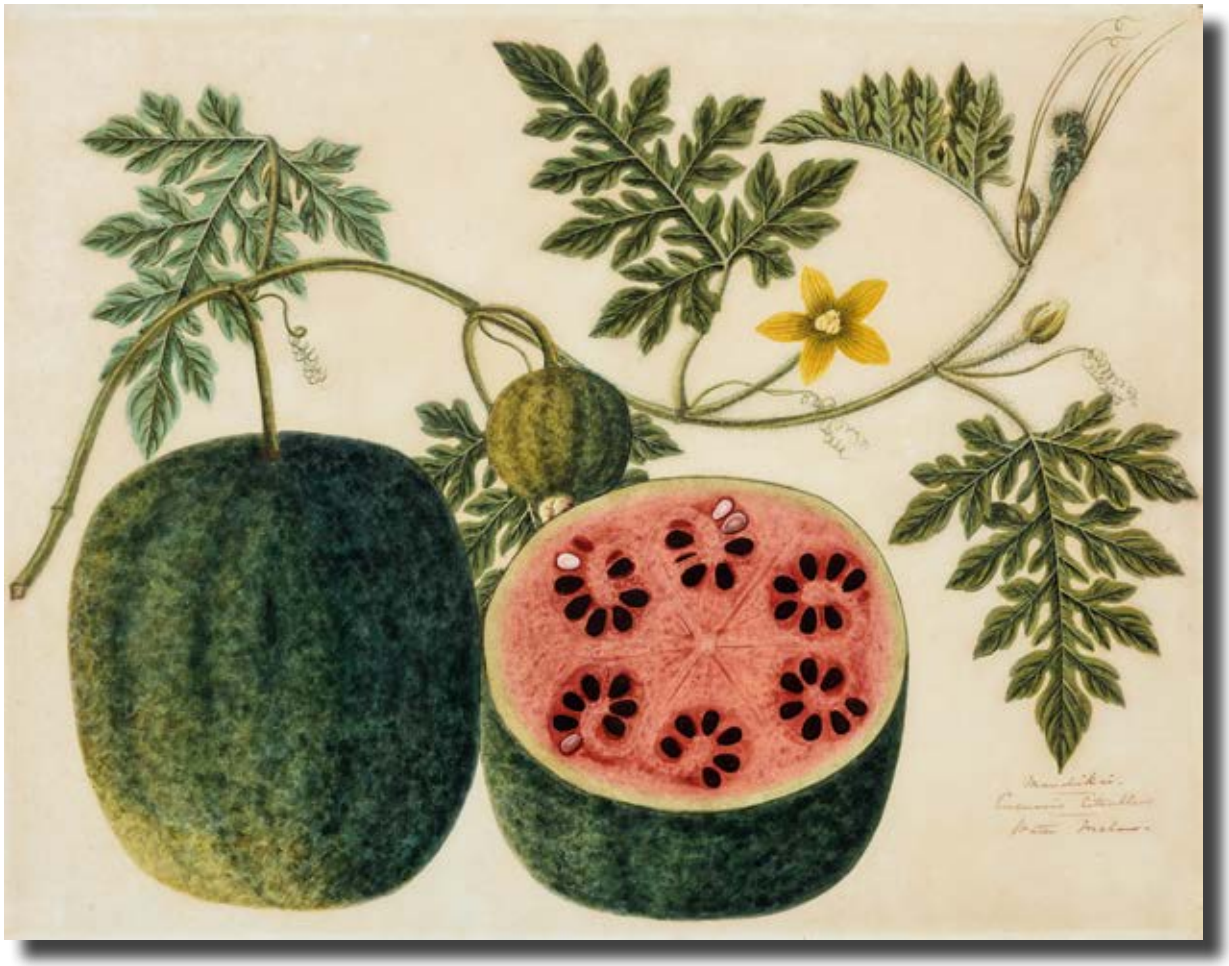
The painting may be compared to a similar study of *Citrus medica* in the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, in the National Museum of Singapore (ac. 1995-3036). Both images depict a ripe fruit and less mature green fruit growing from a central branch. Beside this appears half a citron with a single pip to its right. Both artists have employed dapples to capture the texture of the rind and clusters of white blossoms. The leaves are quite distinct, however, with the present artist favouring a much paler green to outline the veins. This gives a greater sense of volume and liveliness to the work.

Further Literature:

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

G.G. Khim. 1999. *The William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings*. Singapore: Goh Geok Khim.

C.H.



25. Study of a Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*)

Probably Penang, Malaysia,
19th century

38 cm high, 48 cm wide

Watercolour with gum Arabic heightened with body colour on English paper watermarked 'Ruse & Turners 1825'.

Provenance: UK private collection purchased in the US in the 1970s.

Originating from West Africa, watermelons are an annual plant with long climbing or trailing stems. As members of the *cucurbitaceae* family they are related to pumpkins, bitter gourds and cucumbers. The flowers may be white or yellow with male and female blooms appearing on the same plant. They bear generous rounded fruits with typically deep pink succulent flesh and large seeds. Known as saga *semangka* in Malay, the roasted seeds are a popular snack and may also be ground into flour.

Ancient cultivars of watermelon species have been discovered in the Nile Valley dating back to the second millennium BCE and watermelon seeds were found in the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun.

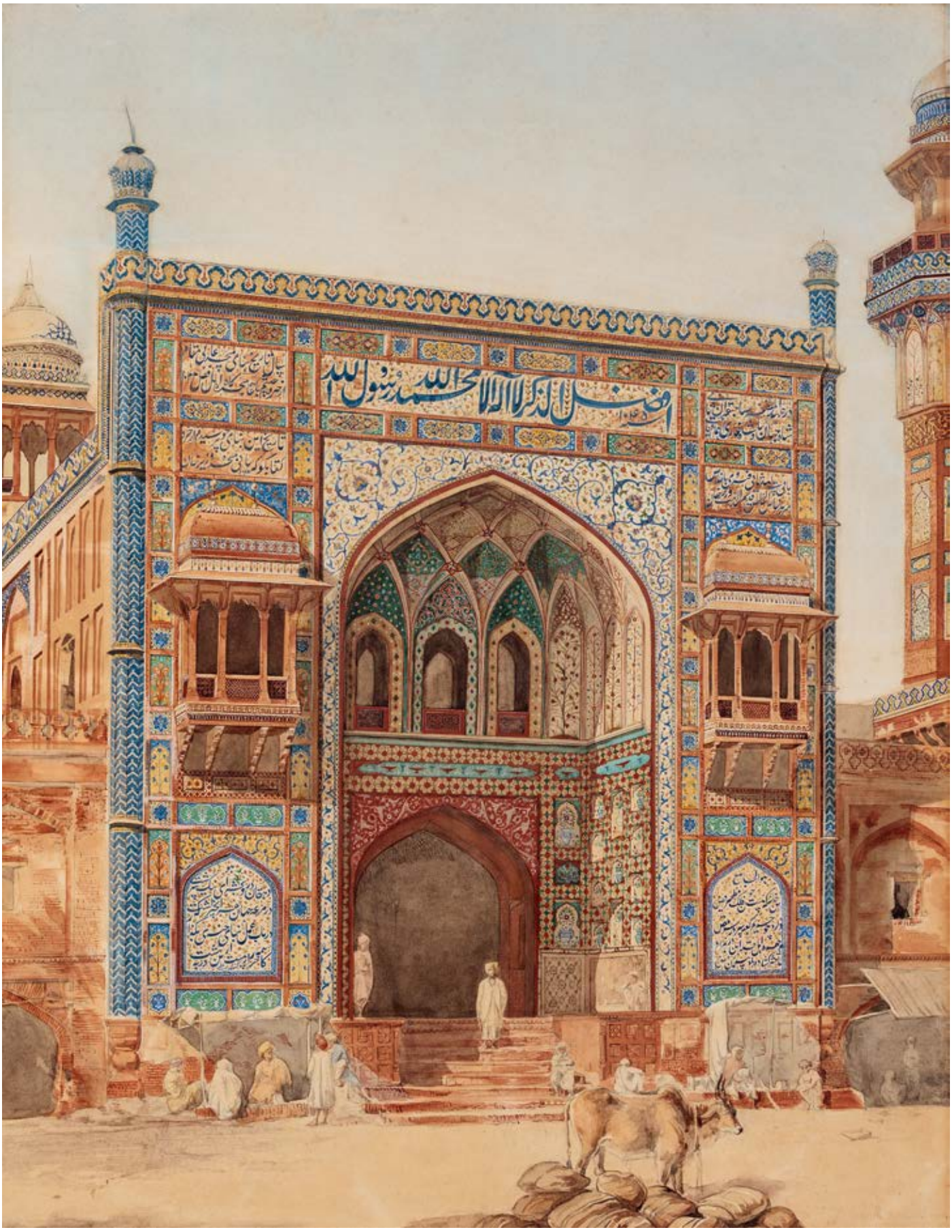
The present work bears likeness to a study of a watermelon in the Farquhar Collection, (William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, in the National Museum of Singapore (ac. 1995-3129). Both illustrations depict a large green fruit with half a watermelon beside it, illustrating the vivid flesh and clusters of seeds. A young fruit appears above this as leaves and flowers are borne along the meandering vine.

Further Literature:

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

G.G. Khim. 1999. *The William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings*. Singapore: Goh Geok Khim.

C.H.


افضل الذکر لا الٰہ الا اللہ محمد رسول اللہ

26. Watercolour of the Wazir Khan Mosque Entrance

By Amir Baksh
India, 19th century
56 cm high, 43 cm wide

Painted by the draughtsman Amir Baksh in the Punjab style, this architectural watercolour of the Wazir Khan Mosque in Lahore encapsulates the grandeur of the Timurid-style *iwan* (i.e. the recessed arched entrance) flanked by two projecting balconies with details of the vibrant tilework mosaics of abstract, floral and calligraphic designs. In addition, there are worshippers depicted outside the main entrance; one of the men stands alone, centrally placed on the main stairs looking towards the direction of a bull strolling the street.

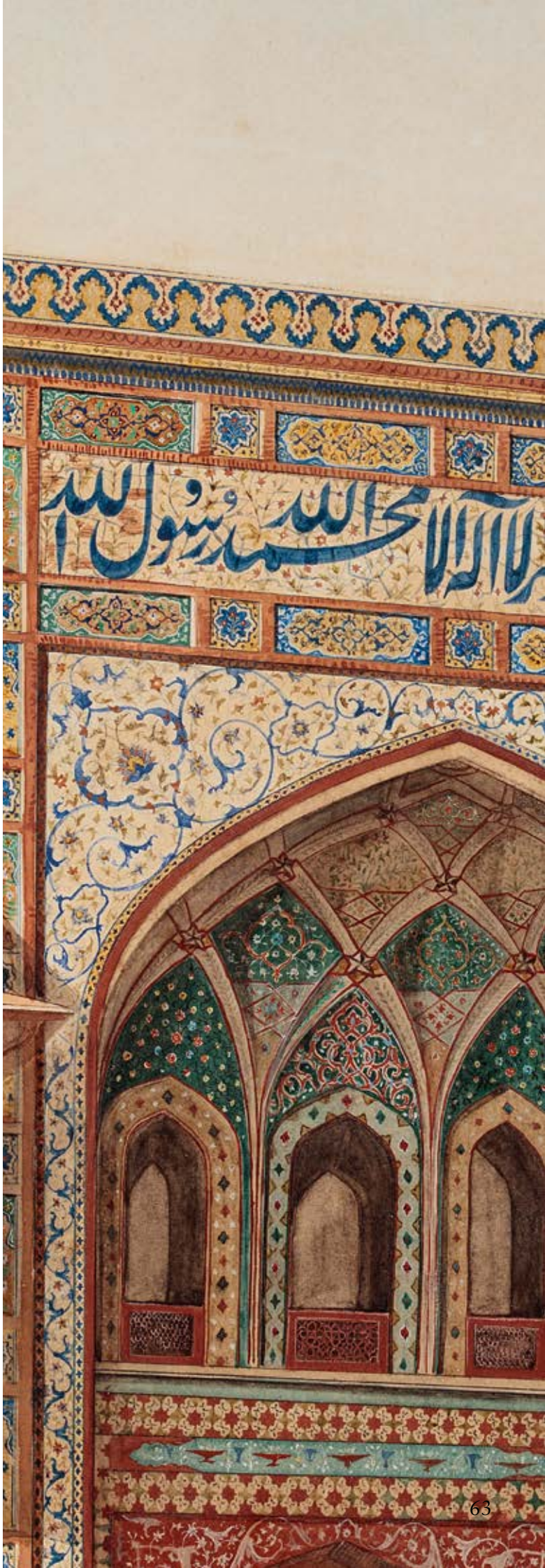
Born in Lahore, Amir Baksh belonged to one of the most prominent artist families, the Chughtai family, who had dominated the *musawir* ("painter") and *naqqash* ("decorator" and "illuminator") scene in the Punjab since the eighteenth century.[1] In general, the paintings and frescoes made by the Chughtai family were not signed, therefore, much of their work remains anonymous.[2] Fortunately, this finished painting has the artist's signature on the bottom right hand corner.

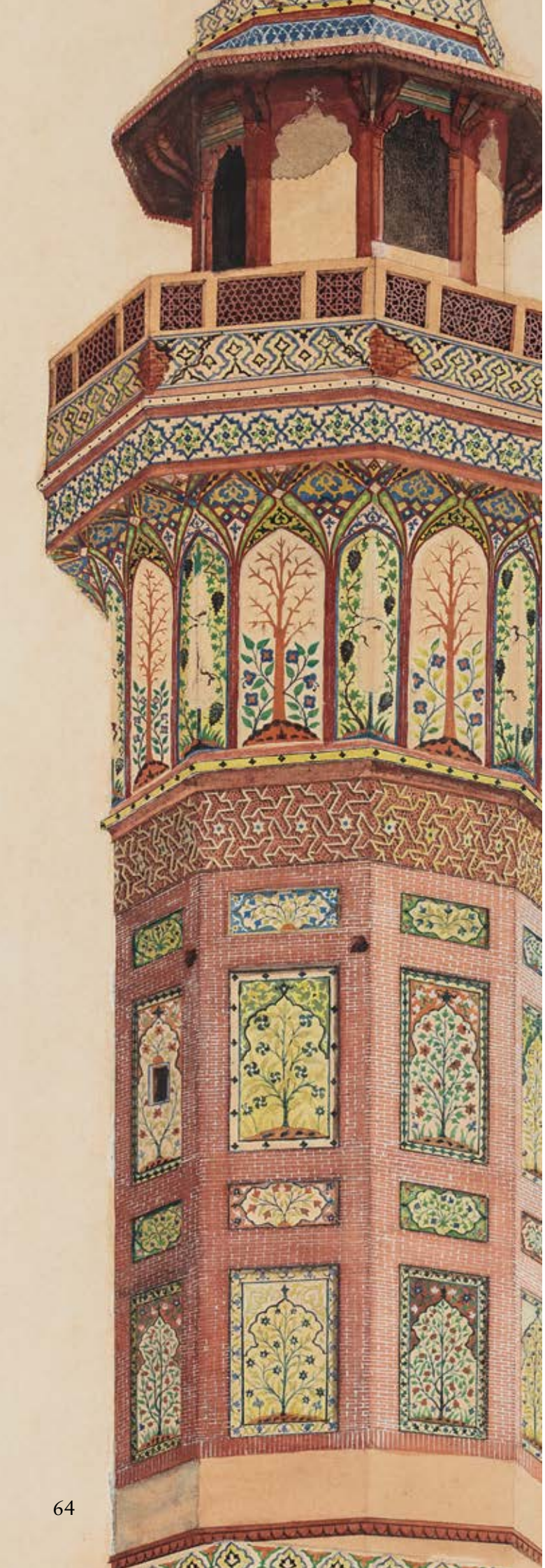
Having studied at the Mayo School of Art in Lahore, Baksh was a student of John Lockwood Kipling. During the Simla Fine Art Exhibition of 1882, Kipling showed twelve of his own sketches while only two works by his students are known to have been displayed, including Baksh's watercolour of the front of Wazir Khan Mosque (most probably this painting), which was awarded the Patiala Prize.[3] Baksh was later responsible for training a large number of Drawing Masters of the Punjab,[4] and became the Head Teacher of Drawing in the Municipal Artisan's Training School at Amritsar.[5]

Baksh is also notable for his unfinished work titled *The Chauburji Gateway* which is held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Accession Number: IS.2491-1883).

Footnotes:
1. R.P. Srivastava. 1983. *Punjab Painting*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publishers. p.46.
2. Ibid.
3. Julius Bryant. 2017. "Kipling as a Designer". In John Lockwood Kipling: *Arts & Crafts in the Punjab and London*, edited by Julius Bryant and Susan Weber, 123-150. New York: Bard Graduate Centre Gallery. p.130.
4. Muhammad Abdullah Chughtai. 1961. *A Century of Painting in the Panjab, 1849-1947*. Lahore: Kitab Khana-i-Nauras. p.44.
5. Tahir Kamran. 2016. "Lockwood Kipling's Role and the Establishment of the Mayo School of Art (1875-1898)", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 26 (3) p.456.

O.H.





27. Watercolour of Two Minarets from the Wazir Khan Mosque

By Amir Baksh
India, 19th century
60 cm high, 42 cm wide

Painted by the draughtsman Amir Baksh in the Punjab style, this architectural watercolour shows two of the four minarets from the seventeenth century Wazir Khan Mosque. Baksh chose to paint the minarets from an angle which enables one to appreciate both the octagonal and the square style minarets with their distinctive balconies and domes. The façades are painted with precision, showing the intricate details and vibrant colours of the *kashi-kari* mosaics made of glazed pottery and tiles.

Born in Lahore, Baksh was from the prominent Chughtai family who had dominated the *musawir* ("painter") and *naqqash* ("decorator" and "illuminator") scene in the Punjab since the eighteenth century.[1] In 1882, during the Simla Fine Art Exhibition, Baksh won the Patiala Prize for "the best picture, in native style, original or copy, by a native artist of the Punjab".[2] He was later responsible for training a large number of Drawing Masters of the Punjab,[3] and became the Head Teacher of Drawing in the Municipal Artisan's Training School at Amritsar.[4]

Footnotes:
1. R.P. Srivastava. 1983. *Punjab Painting*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publishers. p. 46.
2. Quoted in Susan Weber. 2017. "Kipling and the Exhibitions Movement". In John Lockwood Kipling: *Arts & Crafts in the Punjab and London*, edited by Julius Bryant and Susan Weber, 205-280. New York: Bard Graduate Centre Gallery. p.209.
3. Muhammad Abdullah Chughtai. 1961. *A Century of Painting in the Panjab, 1849-1947*. Lahore: Kitab Khana-i-Nauras. p. 44.
4. Tahir Kamran. 2016. "Lockwood Kipling's Role and the Establishment of the Mayo School of Art (1875-1898)", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 26 (3) p. 456.

O.H.

28. Bronze Pilgrim Flask

Deccan, India, 16th – 17th century

30 cm high, 26 cm wide

Provenance: Private US Collection.

This bronze pilgrim flask, which rests on a splayed rhomboid foot, is of crescent shape with voluted terminals and is decorated with a lightly modelled lappet of trefoil arrangement which extends to form the long neck of the vessel. There are attachment rings beneath the hinged domed lid as well as hinges on both sides of the shoulders of the main body and one beneath the tubular spout.

Containers in this form can be found depicted in Deccani court painting; in particular, paintings from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries show such flasks associated with people of political or spiritual authority. Therefore, it is quite possible that this vessel type was emblematic of the owner's high rank.[1]

In addition to relating to a group of similarly shaped vessels made of animal hide in India, the rigorous symmetry and form of this flask is also observable in earlier prototypes from Ottoman Turkey. Indeed, this form emulates Ottoman leather prototypes, a few of which have survived,[2] as have engraved gilt brass versions.

There are several pilgrim flasks of identical form held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (without a lid, Accession Number: 1992.50), the David Collection in Copenhagen (Accession Number: 32/2008) and the Khalili Collection in London (Accession Number: MTW 1530).

Footnotes:

1. Mark Zebrowski. 1997. *Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India*. London: Alexandria Press. p.200.
2. The best known of these Ottoman leather flasks was presented by Sultan Murad III to the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II ca.1580, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Accession Number: HJRK_C_28).

O.H.

29. Folding Quran Stand

India, 17th – 18th century

42.2 cm high, 22.2 cm wide (closed)

Of folding form, this elegant Quran stand is made of two rectangular panels connected by hinges in the centre. On the top half of the exterior panels there is a rectangular medallion with geometric lattice decorations in ivory surrounded by a stained, green-coloured, ivory border. In addition, there is a continuous arrangement of ivory and tortoiseshell borders, of which the widest is decorated with small rectangular ivory and ebony pieces placed in a zig-zag format. This zig-zag border continues on the lower half of the panels which has also been carved and adorned with a large palmette with spandrels made of tortoiseshell to form the four legs of the stand. Throughout the edges of the object there is ivory and tortoiseshell inlaid in a checkerboard-style. The interior of the stand is also decorated with a stained-ivory border on each side, which is surrounded by three rows of eight-sided stars carved into the wood.

Indeed, Quran stands such as this were beautifully manufactured items intended for use in mosques, mausoleums, or homes. Quran stands have traditionally been essential in a religious setting because they provide the necessary respect required by keeping the Quran high above the ground.

O.H.

30. Silver-Mounted Coco De Mer *Kamandalu* ("Pouring Vessel")

Kutch, India, late 19th century
26.5 cm high, 37 cm wide

This rare and exquisite pouring vessel is made of a large polished shell from a fruit called a *lodoicea* (also known as a "sea coconut" or "coco de mer"), which is endemic to the islands of Praslin and Curieuse in the Seychelles. The craftsmen have cleverly cut the fruit in half to form the container's body and then decorated the shell with silver mounts. The silver hinged handle, above the new lid, is in the shape of a curved cobra with intricate carving on its back, neck and front. Beneath the snake, there is a bull's head with a pierced mouth functioning as a spout which is covered by a chained stopper. The silver-footed base is of oval form and is ornamented with foliage on a punched background.

The design of this container is based on leather prototypes called *gomukhi* ("cow face bags") used in India by Hindu *mendicants* ("beggars") or *sadhus* ("holy men") for carrying sacred water from the Ganges. Thus, the leafy fronds on this pouring vessel symbolise the new life that springs from the waters, while the *lodoicea*, a source of milk, oil and food, has further meaning, for it would have been regarded as an auspicious fruit fit to be offered to deities.

There is a similar pouring vessel held in a private collection which was published by Christiane Terlinden in 1987.[1] A similar silver-mounted *coco de mer* vessel was offered in our 2017 catalogue.

Footnotes:
1. Christiane Terlinden. 1987. *Mughal Silver Magnificence*. Brussels: Antalga. p.170, fig.261.

O.H.

31. Three Indian Glass Bottles

Probably Gujarat, India, 18th century

Each approx. 14-15 cm high, 6.5 cm wide

This set of three finely gilded mould-blown square bottles with silver stoppers are decorated in a striking tessellating scheme of diamonds on all four sides of the body, whilst the sloping shoulders are decorated with floral motifs between two zig-zag borders around the edges in gold. There are also pointed designs in gold around the narrow neck.

The shape of these bottles derives from Dutch and German moulded vessels, produced primarily in the second half of the seventeenth century, which were stored in compartments inside large cases. Hence, these shorter Indian bottles have become known as “case bottles” or “gin bottles”.[1]

Similar Indian bottles were influenced particularly by the Dutch style when the Dutch East India Company established a factory in Gujarat in 1618.[2] By the mid-eighteenth century, a glass factory was opened in Bhuj by Ram Singh Malam, a Gujarati craftsman, who, after spending some time in the Netherlands, found a patron in Maharao Lakha, the ruler of the small Kingdom of Kutch.

Footnotes:
1. Stefano Carboni. 2001. *Glass from Islamic Lands*. London: Thames & Hudson. p.389.
2. Stefano Carboni. 2001. "Glass in the Age of the Empires". In *Glass of the Sultans*, edited by Stefano Carboni and David Whitehouse, 275-298. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. p.287.

O.H.

32. Ceylonese Ceremonial Ladle

Kandy, Sri Lanka, 17th-18th century

47 cm wide; handle 32 cm long,
silver bowl 15 cm diameter
Provenance: UK private collection since the 1940s.

This extremely rare, ornate ladle (*kinissa*) replicates traditional ladles used in Sri Lanka for serving water for both drinking and ritual purposes when holy water was poured over a Buddha figure. Simpler ladles were usually manufactured in coconut and wood, of which there are several examples (see British Museum, London, Accession Number: As1898,0703.80.).

In contrast, this present ladle has a finely chased silver bowl with rich relief and an elaborate ivory handle carved with a lion's head (*simha*), spouting decorative floral ornamentation (*liya pata*). At the base of the handle, attached to the silver bowl, is a kneeling male figure in prayer which represents either a Buddhist priest or a devotee.

Stylistically, this ladle is comparable in date and manufacture to the refined, finely carved ivory caskets, portable cabinets, containers and fan handles executed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Kandy, the last capital of the ancient kings of Ceylon. These sophisticated Sinhalese ivories made for export linked Asia with Europe, as they were destined for European consumers and were widely circulated in the trading networks of the Portuguese and later those of the Dutch. High-quality Sinhalese metalwork and weapons, especially the handles of daggers and knives (*pihiya kättha*), such as a gold knife kept in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (Accession Number: NG-NM-7114), correspond to the unique shape and decoration of this handle.

An eighteenth century ladle comparable to this one, in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Accession Number: IS. 19-1886), is encrusted with gold and gemstones; the lion (*simha*) sporting ruby eyes. A second ladle in the British Museum in London (Accession Number: FBInd.43), dated to the seventeenth century, has a bowl made of chased copper and an ivory handle studded with silver rivets. This present ladle lacks the additional decoration of jewels, gold inlays or silver studs. All three ladles probably originated from Kandy, the ivory carved in one of the royal workshops there, whilst the bowls were manufactured in another.

Sri Lanka was, and still is, predominantly Buddhist, and over the centuries it has produced a range of exquisite carvings with Buddhist subject matter. In 1904, F. H. Andrews proposed the Victoria and Albert Museum ladle was used for sacrificial purposes, which A. K. Coomaraswamy refuted, suggesting such rare ivory ladles were either devotional objects dedicated to a temple or reserved for elite use in a royal palace.

Literature:

Fred H. Andrews. 1904. 'The Elephant in Industry and Art', *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, vol.10, pp.81-88.

Alan Chong. 2013. 'Sri Lankan Ivories for the Dutch and Portuguese', *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, 5 (2).

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy. 1908. *Medieval Sinhalese Art: Being a Monograph on Mediaeval Sinhalese Arts & Crafts, Mainly as Surviving in the Eighteenth Century, with an Account of the Structure of Society, and the Status of Craftsmen*. Broad Campden: Essex House Press. p.334, Pls. XIII and LXI.

P.E.P. Deraniyagala. 1942. 'Sinhala weapons and armour', *The Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, XXXV, no.95, pp.106-112.

Annemarie Jordan Gschwend and Johannes Beltz. (eds). 2010. *Elfenbeine aus Ceylon. Luxusgüter für Luxusgüter für Katharina von Habsburg (1507-1578)*. Zurich: Museum Rietberg.

Lodewijk Wagenaar. 2016. *Cinnamon and Elephants: Sri Lanka and the Netherlands from 1600*, Nijmegen: Vantilt Publishers. p.122, fig.4.14.

A.J.G

33. Indian Dagger with Jade Hilt

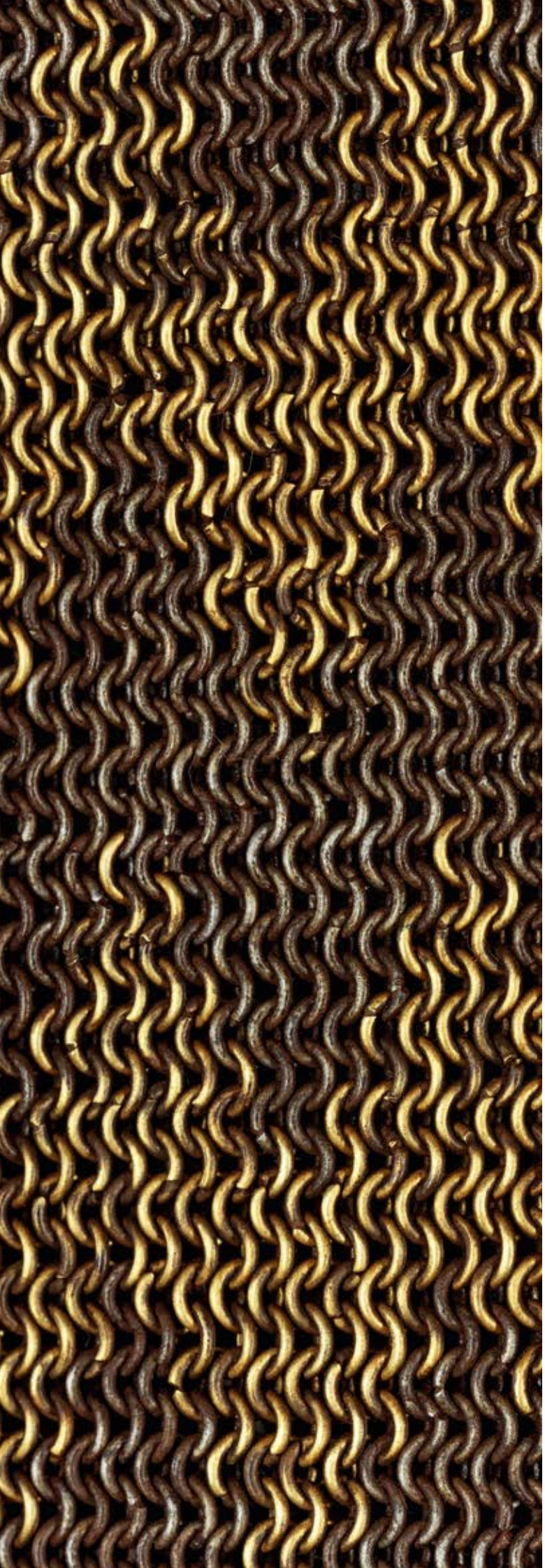
Bandanwara, Rajasthan, India
19th century
66.5 cm long
Provenance: Private collection.

This dagger features a watered steel blade with a curved point decorated with a trefoil motif on the fuller towards the forte. The dark green nephrite jade hilt attached to the blade is also curved but bends towards the opposite direction from the blade's tip, which elegantly enhances the appearance of the weapon. In addition, the weight of the jade hilt provides a functional purpose, for it helps to counterbalance the steel blade and provides a comfortable grip when in use. The scabbard covering the weapon is made from wood covered with olive-green velvet which is also overlaid with a gold chape and locket in floral and foliage motifs. There is an inscription above the locket which reads: "Rao Ranjit Singh ji bandhanvar, samvat 1842". Attached to the back of the scabbard, there is also a label with the number "9" which refers to the Bandanwara arsenal in which it was made.

O.H.

34. Indian Chainmail Armour

India, late 18th century
178 cm high, 65 cm wide



Probably worn by high-ranking military personnel, this remarkably well-preserved suit of armour is made of iron and brass. The helmet has a low hemispherical skull surmounted by a central plume holder and two feather holders on either side of the frontal area decorated with a pattern of foliage in gold *koftgari*. In addition, there is a broad band of floral ornament in *koftgari* encircling the edges of the helmet. On the front side of the helmet, there is also a sliding nasal guard with a boteh designed hook to hold it in its raised position. In addition, there is an aventail of fine butted iron worked with a pattern of horizontal zig-zag lines in brass rings to protect the wearer's ears and neck. Similarly, the long-sleeved coat and trousers are formed of butted iron rings linked together with zig-zag decorations in brass.

There are two comparable eighteenth-century full pieces of armour in the Royal Armouries collection in London (see Accession Number: XXVIA.6 and XXVIA.8) as well as a comparable helmet in the same collection (XXVIA.152). In addition, there is a chainmail coat in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London which also has butted links in a zig-zag pattern (Accession Number: 3183 (IS)).

Further Literature:

Ravinder Reddy. 2018. *Arms & Armour of India, Nepal & Sri Lanka: Types, Decoration and Symbolism*. London: Hali Publications Ltd.

Howard Ricketts and Philippe Missillier. 1988. *Splendeur des Armes Orientales / Splendour of Oriental Arms*. Paris: Act-Expo.

O.H.

35. A Royal Thai Gold Lobed and Footed Tray

Thailand, 20th Century

20.5 cm diameter, 8 cm high, weight 517 g

Provenance: Presented to Admiral Andreas du Plessis de Richlieu (Thai noble title: Phraya (Phya) Cholayuth Yothin) by King Rama V of Siam in 1902, and then by descent.

The tray is made of pure gold—thus ranking as a gift of the highest order—and would have been produced by a skilled goldsmith employed at the Department of the Ten Crafts (*Krom Chang Sip Mu*) responsible for producing the finest art-works for the royal court of Siam.1 It is decorated profusely to the interior, around the lobed rim and the foot with a pattern of daisies, which were one of King Chulalongkorn's favourite flowers and a symbol of the heart. It is noteworthy that in 1887, the king ordered a large quantity of tea sets with the same daisy pattern from the Sèvres Porcelain Factory in France as commemorative gifts for guests at the Royal Cremation Ceremony of his recently deceased beloved son, Prince Sirirat.[2]

Although this type of footed tray would typically have been used to make offerings at a Thai temple during important religious ceremonies, this particular very fine example was created in gold as a parting gift from King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1853-1910) of Siam to his long-time Danish friend and confidant, Admiral Andreas du Plessis de Richlieu (1852-1932).

An inscription in English reads: "To his excellence Phya Cholayutyothin. In dear remembrance as a token of high esteem of old acquaintance and sincere friendship", whereas an inscription in Thai offers a stronger indication of the high regard and fondness in which King Chulalongkorn held Richlieu, and may literally be translated: "Given to his excellence Phya Cholayutyothin with love from me as my love to my kin, siblings, best friends, by my love and reverence due to us having to part ways. Please keep this as a reminder of our friendship."

After working as a merchant seaman on Danish East Asiatic Company ships sailing to Asia and Australia, Richlieu arrived in Bangkok in April 1875 with a letter of introduction from King Christian IX of Denmark to King Chulalongkorn.[3] Although it took considerable persistence and a few weeks before Richlieu managed to obtain a royal audience, he and King Chulalongkorn seem to have developed an immediate rapport, landing him a position with the Siamese Navy. The king tasked him with a number of assignments of increasing importance, resulting in his being named Commander in 1883, and eventually becoming the first and only foreign Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the Siamese Navy in 1900.[4] Richlieu oversaw the successful expansion and modernisation of the navy while his stature and influence at the court grew over the years as he received numerous royal titles and decorations. He also accompanied King Chulalongkorn and Crown Prince Maha Vajiravudh on domestic inspection tours and overseas visits.[5]

Richlieu retired from the navy and returned to Denmark in 1902, missing his wife and young family, who had returned home the year before, and in poor health after suffering a bout of malaria.[6] King Chulalongkorn personally saw him off to Singapore aboard the Royal Yacht, showering him with a considerable number of important and valuable gifts. These included several medals and niello, silver and gold utensils, including this splendid footed tray.

Footnotes:

1. Mary Laugesen, Poul Westphall, and Robin Dannhorn. 1980. *Scandinavians in Siam*. Bangkok: Scandinavian Society of Thailand. p.25.
2. M.R. Usnisa Sukhsvasti. 2012. *Journey of the Robe*. Bangkok: Anders Normann. p.5.
3. Ibid, p.6.
4. Fleming Winther Nielsen. 2010. "Andreas du Plessis de Richelieu: The Admiral Who Went Ashore", *ScandAsia*, 22 March 2010. https://scandasia.com/6074-andreas-du-plessis-de-richelieu-the-admiral-who-went-ashore/ (accessed on 14 December 2019).
5. Paul Bromberg. 2019. *THAI SILVER and Nielloware*. Bangkok: River Books. pp.151-152.
6. Jeffery Sng and Phimpraphai Bisalputra. 2011. *Bencharong & Chinaware in the Court of Siam: The Surat Osathanugrah Collection*. Bangkok: Chawpipope Osathanugrah. p.263.

P.B.

36. Chinese Bronze Vase

Chin, Ming dynasty, 16th century

14 cm high, 7 cm wide

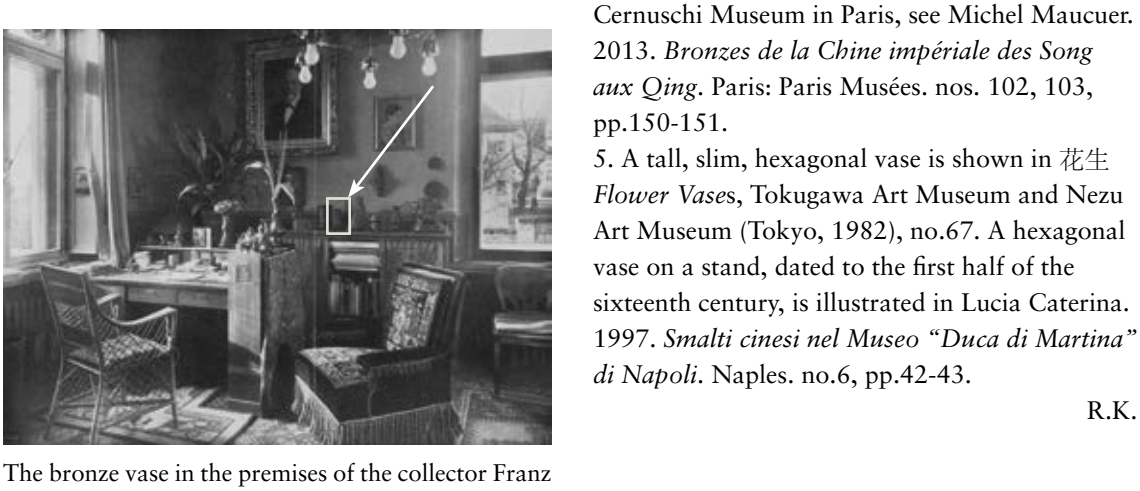
Provenance: European private collection since 1914.

It is an intriguing fact that Chinese bronzes with Islamic inscriptions do not seem to have been made for export, but rather for domestic consumption. For this reason, they exist in vessel forms suitable for the Chinese market. A number were made during the late fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, when the Hongzhi (1488-1505) and Zhengde (1506-21) emperors both expressed an active interest in Islam. The Zhengde Emperor in particular is known to have studied Arabic, and many of his eunuchs came from the Muslim communities of western China.

This unusual piece is an incense tool vase, made to contain the spatulas and spoons used in the preparation of fragrance. Scent was used in Buddhism and in ancestor worship, but the preparation and use of incense also became a scholarly accomplishment that required refined vessels and implements. The vase is hexagonal, made of a sturdy yellow bronze with a high zinc content. It has an even, greenish patina across the whole surface that was probably induced. The artificial patination of bronzes was seen as integral to their appeal, and had been practised by craftsmen since the Song dynasty (960-1279).[1] The cast decoration in the main field is of a lotus blossom with radiating petals enclosing an Arabic inscription that is repetitions of a phrase or part of a phrase, possibly ولا اله الا الله "And there is no god but God". The invocations are well-written in Sini script, the style of Arabic writing used in China.

Emperor Zhengde was drawn to Tibetan Buddhism while retaining an interest in Islam, and the decoration exemplifies both religions. On either side of the central field are two bands containing a scrolling leaf pattern, whose design corresponds to that cited by the great ceramic scholar Geng Baochang as being typical of the Zhengde period[2]:

Bronze incense vessels with Islamic inscriptions, including a tool vase with spatula, are known.[3] There are a few Islamic inscription bronzes with Zhengde reign marks, while many porcelain censers, brush rests and other scholar's desk vessels, with Zhengde and Wanli (1573-1620) reign marks, exist. Bronzes with square facets are were common in the Ming dynasty, for example the vessel called touhu or pitch pot.[4] Tall, hexagonal, slender vases are known in cloisonné.[5] However, even taking all these examples into account, this vase still appears to be unique.



The bronze vase in the premises of the collector Franz Xaver Bachem (1857-1936).

Illustration from Geng Baochang, *Appraisal of Ming and Qing Porcelain.*

Footnotes:

1. Two vases with similar green patination are in Rose Kerr. 1990. *Later Chinese Bronzes (Victoria and Albert Far Eastern Series)*. London: Bamboo Publishing and the Victoria and Albert Museum. pl.14, p.25. Artificial patination is discussed on pp.70-72.

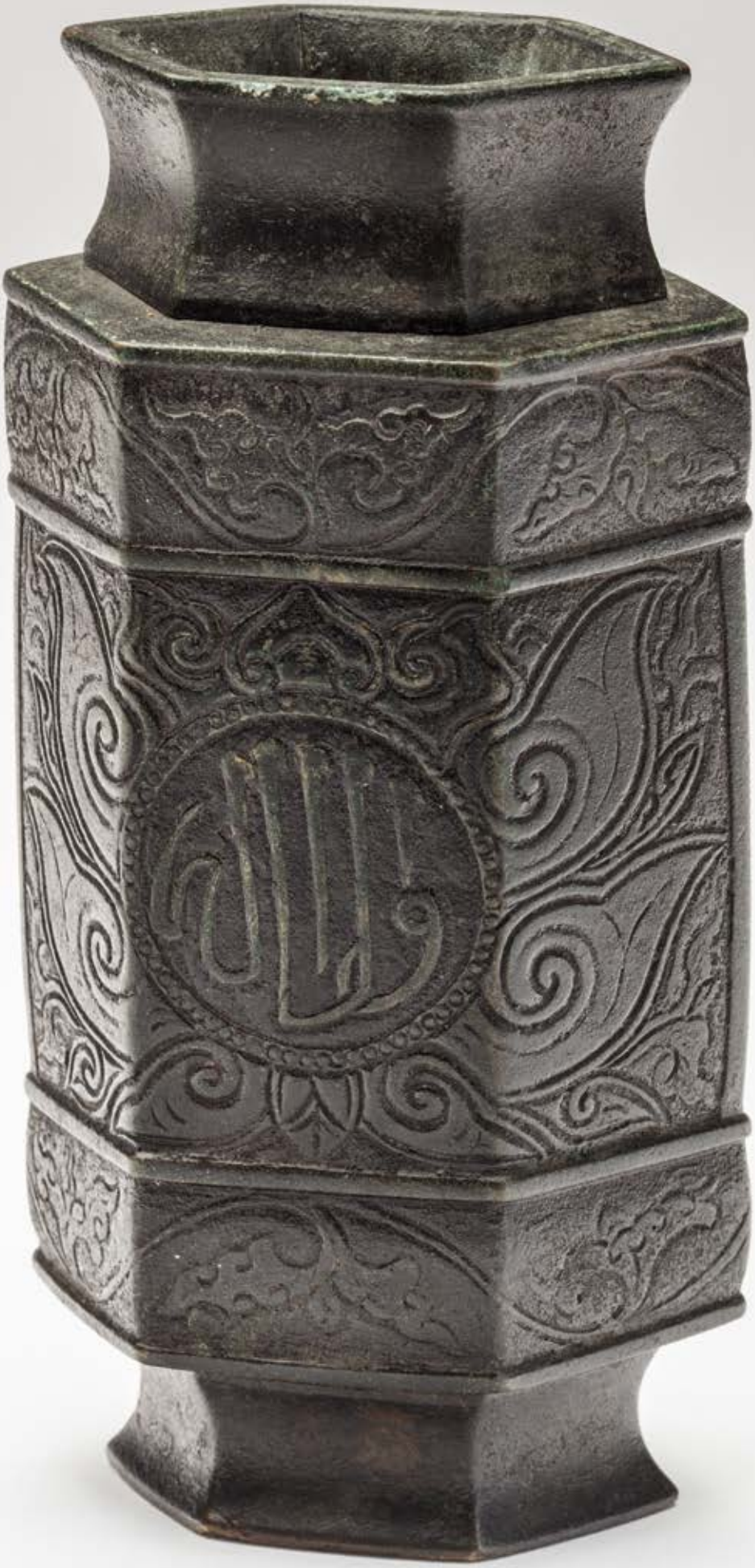
2. Geng Boachang 耿寶昌. 1984. *Appraisal of Ming and Qing Porcelain* 明請瓷器堅定 . Beijing. p.99.

3. See, Paul Moss. 1984. *Emperor, Scholar, Artisan, Monk: The Creative Personality in Chinese Works of Art*. London: Sydney L. Moss Ltd. no.119; and Paul Moss and Gerard Hawthorn. 1991. *The Second Bronze Age. Later Chinese Metalwork*. London: Sydney L. Moss Ltd. nos.69-70.

4. For example, two items displayed by the Cernuschi Museum in Paris, see Michel Maucuer. 2013. *Bronzes de la Chine impériale des Song aux Qing*. Paris: Paris Musées. nos. 102, 103, pp.150-151.

5. A tall, slim, hexagonal vase is shown in 花生 *Flower Vase*s, Tokugawa Art Museum and Nezu Art Museum (Tokyo, 1982), no.67. A hexagonal vase on a stand, dated to the first half of the sixteenth century, is illustrated in Lucia Caterina. 1997. *Smalti cinesi nel Museo "Duca di Martina" di Napoli*. Naples. no.6, pp.42-43.

R.K.



37. Porcelain Ewer Made for the Islamic Market

Jingdezhen, China; Wanli reign period, 1572-1620

30.5 cm high, 14 cm diameter

The tall, elegant ewer was made at the Chinese "porcelain capital" of Jingdezhen, which was the city where the bulk of ceramics both for domestic and export use was manufactured, over a period of one thousand years. The vessel was modelled after an Islamic metal prototype, for the tall foot and neck, the rounded body and even the slender spout are all faceted in hexagonal form. To create such a shape in porcelain is much more difficult than in metal, for it needs to be moulded rather than thrown. Moulds were not commonly employed at Jingdezhen because they were more expensive than the human labour utilised for throwing clay on a wheel.

The ewer is decorated in underglaze cobalt blue, a pigment that had originally been introduced to China from Iran in the eighth century CE. On the body is a design of dragons chasing the flaming pearls of wisdom and the flaming pearls also adorn the spout. A panel of *baoxiang* "treasure flowers" flows round the lower neck with a band of plantain leaves above it. Round the high base are bands of looping swags, some of them in the shape of the magic fungus of immortality. The delicate spout is joined to the body by a strut, while a loop on the top of the handle was to attach a chain to a lid, which is now lost.

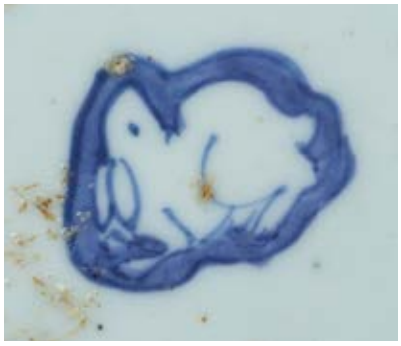
On the base of the ewer is a crouching hare, painted inside a patch of blue. In Chinese mythology, the hare is the fourth creature in the zodiac that leads the sun through the twelve terrestrial branches of the zodiac and resides in the moon. The dark shadows that one can see on the surface of the moon are said to resemble the outline of the hare, pounding cinnamon twigs for immortality in a mortar and pestle. Lunar festivities are held in China on the day of the eighth lunar month, when the depiction of a hare expresses the wish that the children will rise in the social scale and enjoy a peaceful life.[1] The design of a hare on a blue ground was sometimes painted on the base of export porcelain during the Wanli period.[2] Some experts believe that it denotes the trademark of an individual workshop within the vast porcelain manufacturing city of Jingdezhen.

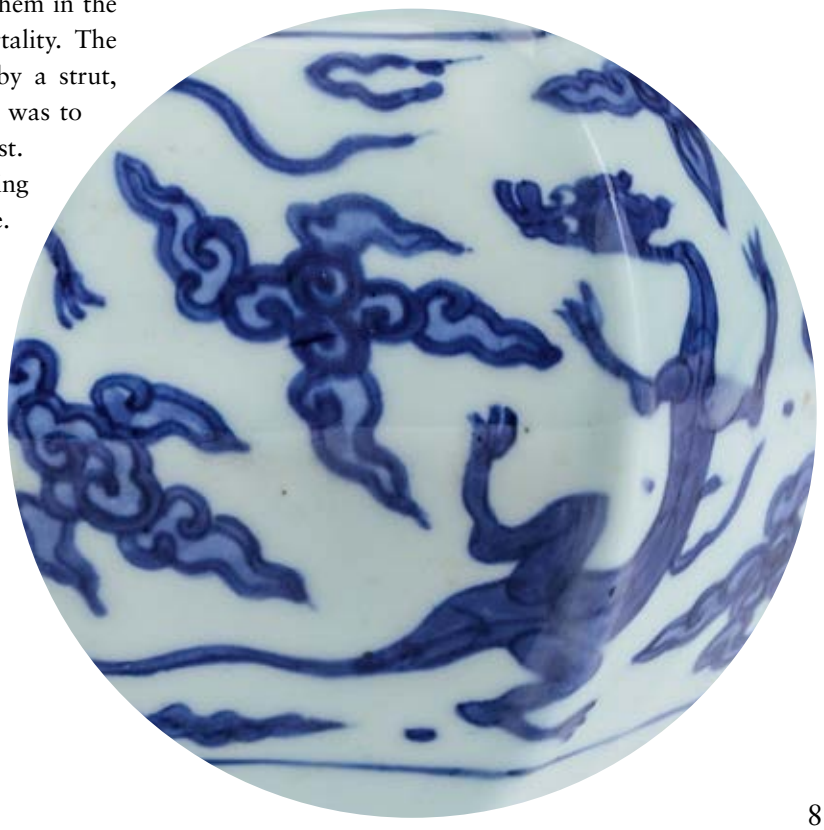
A Wanli period ewer of similar hexagonal shape and of near-identical size is in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Accession Number: 174-1879). It bears a German gilt metal mount, indicating that Chinese porcelain ewers for the Islamic market also travelled further westwards to Europe.

Footnotes:

1. Wolfram Ederhard. 2015. *Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*. Routledge: London. p.140.
2. See for example Jorge Welsh. 2008. *Kraak Porcelain. The Rise of Global Trade in the Late 16th and Early 17th Centuries*. London and Lisbon, Gorge Welsh Research and Publishing. p.110.

R.K.





38. Serving Tray in Leaf Form

China, mid-19th century
Porcelain Jingdezhen; enamels
Guangzhou
3 cm high, 14.5 cm wide,
18.5 cm long
Provenance: US private collection.

The tray was made in kilns at the great Chinese porcelain centre of Jingdezhen. Fashioned in porcelain, it was moulded to take the form of a leaf. The porcelain blank (plain, white, glazed but undecorated vessel) was sent down to Canton, where it was decorated over the glaze in enamels, and then gilded. Thus the first firing took place in the high-temperature kilns of Jingdezhen, and its decoration was carried out at enamellers' workshops in Canton. A multitude of small, private firms operated throughout Canton, purchasing fired porcelain blanks of all qualities, decorating and re-firing them in small muffle kilns. The muffle kilns used for this second firing were simple, round brick structures, about one metre high and three-quarters of a metre across, fitted inside with an iron wheel-like shelf that could be lifted in and out of the kiln using an iron hook. The shelf was densely packed with artefacts, carefully placed so that the objects did not touch one another during firing or they would be spoiled. Large items were put at the base, covered with clay lids made of the refractory material used to line kilns and make saggers, and smaller items were put on top of the lids. The process could be repeated to form several tiers, but obviously great care needed to be taken when unloading the kilns of this rather precarious load. The muffle kiln was lit around the sides using charcoal, and items on the iron wheel were turned using the iron hook, so that firing was uniform.[1] Kiln operators protected themselves from the fierce heat with hand-held circular shields. Such a simple operation could be carried out in a very limited space, and required relatively little capital outlay, and thus could be run by small family concerns.

The decoration on this tray catered to Middle Eastern taste, for dense bands of flower scrolls are interspersed with bands of deep blue, and with cartouches containing inscriptions in both Hebrew and Arabic. The design was then embellished with lavish gilding. In the centre is an inscription in Persian/Arabic: "He! Year 1268 (1851-52). 116 6 *waw*. Wholesomely and with pleasure!" The significance of the numbers 116, 6 and the letter *waw* in the middle have not been established. Beneath the rim are two inscriptions in Hebrew, saying "Drink thy wine with a merry heart!" (Ecclesiastes 9:7) and "Healing and life."

It is interesting to consider whether the tray was made for a Jewish, Arab or Persian client. Both Arab and Jewish merchants were involved in the trade with China, while porcelain was also valued in Iran.[2] A clue to possible customers comes from a cup and saucer in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts that have the same inscription in Hebrew (Accession Numbers: 2013.1011.1 and 2013.1011.3a-b). They originally came from the Jewish Sassoon family, who had links with India, China and England.[3]

Notes
1. Firing was generally achieved at relatively low temperatures of about 700-800°C.
2. Chinese porcelain for the Middle Eastern market, especially Iran, was made in some quantity in the mid-19th century. A typical example is a Chinese famille rose plate inscribed with the date AH 1269 (AD 1853) in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Accession Number: 552-1878) that was acquired in Iran in the mid-19th century.
3. For more information on the Sassoon family see Rose Kerr, Phillip Allen & Shih Ching-Fei. 2016. *Chinese Ivory Carvings: The Sir Victor Sassoon Collection*. London: Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers.

R.K.

39. Ewer Made for the Indian Market

Guangzhou, China, 18th century

35 cm high, 28 cm wide

Provenance: UK private collection since the 1970s.

The ewer is elegant in shape, with a pear-shaped body, long slender spout, arching handle and lid with knop. Its form is not Chinese, but derives from India, and it was for clients in this region that the vessel was made.

Its surface is painted with a wide variety of coloured enamels. The technique of painting with enamels on a metal base first developed in northern Europe during the Renaissance. European missionaries, foremost among them the Jesuits, started to bring European enamelled metal objects to China as official gifts in the late seventeenth century. These included things that were unknown to the Chinese, such as watches, clocks and religious scenes. Both the technique and the artefacts were seen as rare and precious, and several enamelled watches and clocks are still preserved in the collections of the imperial family in the Forbidden City in Beijing.[1] An imperial workshop to replicate such treasures was set up.[2] Chinese craftsmen had already attained a high level of skill in enamelling porcelain, so adoption of this new technique on copper was rapid. However, the imperial workshop could only manufacture a limited number of pieces, and as the taste for painted enamels on a metal base spread, larger premises appeared in the southern port city of Guangzhou (Canton). The city catered to Chinese clients but also to a wide variety of contacts abroad, whose ships arrived daily from Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Decorating enamelled copper vessels such as this ewer followed the same process as porcelain. After the initial firing, designs would be laid down in dark outline and the piece would be passed through the hands of several artisans, each specialised in the drawing of different designs. Some were expert in flower decoration, others in figurative or geometric patterns. The decoration was then coloured with different enamels, each based on a different powdered metal oxide mixed with water or oil, to give a paste that could easily be laid down on the surface.[3]

The decoration on the piece is subtle and elaborate. Tear-shaped repoussé panels on each side contain delicately painted peonies, peaches, chrysanthemums and day lilies. These plants convey wishes for wealth, nobility, long life and maternal devotion. Round the neck and foot are further floral bands, while the body is decorated as if draped with swathes of precious textiles that are looped and tied. This manner of non-figural decoration would have been suitable for Muslim clients, and would have been attractive to them, even if the Chinese symbolic meanings of the designs were not apparent.

Footnotes:

1. Wan-go Weng. 1982. *The Palace Museum: Peking, Treasures of the Forbidden City.* New York: Harry N. Abrams.

2. Hugh Moss. 1976. *By Imperial Command: An Introduction to Ch'ing Imperial Enamels.* Hong Kong: Hibiya.

3. Jorge Welsh (ed.). 2015. *China of All Colours. Painted Enamels on Copper.* London and Lisbon: Jorge Welsh Research and Publishing. pp.26-28.

R.K.

40. Ewer Made for the Indian Market

Guangzhou, China, 18th century

34 cm high, 28 cm wide

Provenance: UK private collection since the 1970s.

The vessel is formed from beaten copper to give a complex shape, namely an ewer destined for the Middle Eastern or Indian markets. To create such vessels, copper sheets were cut to an appropriate size and then pressed or hammered into the required shape. Moulds may have been used for the more common forms. The extremities – finials, handles, spouts, feet – were slotted into the body and the edges folded in on themselves. As far as possible soldering was avoided because soldered joints could become detached or loose during the enamelling process, thereby damaging the enamel surface. Once the vessel was assembled, it was smoothed and cleaned on every facet, in preparation for painting. A base layer of enamel was applied, usually white in colour, and this counter layer also helped bind jointed sections together, helping prevent cracks and the flaking off of subsequent coats of enamel. The piece was then fired for the first time in a muffle kiln. Muffle kilns were small ovens that generated a heat of around 700-800 degrees C.

The most important and complex stages in the production of painted copper were the refining, painting and firing of the enamels themselves. It is likely that craftsmen employed the same readily-available enamels that were used to decorate porcelain. In many cases, such as this ewer, the palette of enamel colours used was the same as that used on porcelain. That palette included ruby red and pink derived from colloidal gold, giving rise to the European term "famille rose". Famille rose colours also encompassed opaque lead-stannate yellow, and lead-arsenic white. White enamel, when mixed with other colours, enabled a wider range of pastel shades than ever before.[1] This extensive palette was fully used in the complex floral and geometric patterns on this colourful ewer. The patterns comprise scrolls of *baoxiang* or treasure flowers on the two sides of the body, arranged in upright, symmetrical strands that recall Islamic decoration. Geometric designs fill the rest of the body, the handle and the spout, while the foot and base of the spout are painted with a vivid green decoration of blossoms on a cracked ice ground. Cracked ice and prunus blossom symbolise the New Year, promise and hope. This is because prunus blossom appears on bare branches before the frozen ice has thawed, in late January or early February at the season of the lunar New Year.

Such dense floral and geometric designs in a rich array of colours were well suited for Muslim customers. Although the Quran, the Islamic holy book, does not explicitly prohibit the depiction of human figures, Chinese decorators would have been aware of possible problems with figural decoration. It was easier, and less risky, to incorporate the wide array of non-representational patterns available in their pattern books.

Footnotes:

1. Rose Kerr (ed.) and Nigel Wood. 2004. *Ceramic Technology. Science and Civilisation in China Volume 5*, part 12. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.638-645.

R.K.

41. Ewer Made for the Indian Market

Guangzhou, China, 18th century

31cm high, 23cm wide

The vessel is formed from beaten copper to give a shape that is clearly non-Chinese and was designed for a client in the Middle East or India, with a flattened pear-shaped body and long slender spout and handle. Its surface is painted with a rainbow of painted enamels. The crafting of ewers was an industry that flourished in Iran and spread from there to Iraq and Egypt. The shape is also seen in Mughal Indian miniatures of the mid-seventeenth century.[1] Different forms of ewers and the roles they played were manifold. They were employed to pour water for bathing, for hand-washing, or for *wudu* (obligatory ablutions before prayer). Ornamental ewers were also used to decorate the palaces and houses of *amirs* and sultans.[2] A highly ornamental vessel of this style with non-figural decoration would be suited to either domestic or ritual use.

This ewer was produced in Guangzhou, where, from the second half of the eighteenth century, artisans in small workshops manufactured enamel goods of the highest quality, some destined for court and some for export.[3] The artisans were used to producing foreign shapes and decorations. In this case, the form of the ewer clearly derives from Indian metalwork. Its decoration, on the other hand, is entirely Chinese. Shaped, repoussé panels on each side contain peony flowers and ripe peaches, symbolising beauty, nobility and long life. Peony scrolls wind round the foot and beneath the mouth, while the main ground is covered with a dense, brocade-like pattern and repeating scrolls in red and black. The decoration recalls that seen on painted enamels made for the Qing dynasty court. However, this vessel was clearly made for export. The skilled enamel decorators in Guangzhou had a common repertory for goods, reproducing patterns and styles they were familiar with, even on shapes that were not.

Footnotes:

1. Susan Stronge. 1985. *Bidri Ware. Inlaid Metalwork from Indi*a. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. p.40.

2. Al-Sayyed Muhammad Khalifa Hammad. 2020. "Ewer" in *Discover Islamic Art, Museum With No Frontiers*. http://islamicart.museumwnf.org/database_item.php?id=object;ISL;eg;Mus01;20;en

3. Shih Ching-fei and Wang Chongqi 施靜菲, 王崇齊. 2013. "Qianlongchao yuehaiguan chengzuo zhi <Guang falang> 乾隆朝粵海關成做之<光琺瑯>" ('Canton enamels' Manufactured at the Guangdong Maritime Customs in the Qianlong Period)", in Guoli Taiwan daxue meishu shi yanjiu jikan 國立台灣大學美術史研究集刊.35 (National Taiwan University Art History Research Papers vol.35). Taipei: National Taiwan University. pp.87-163+165-184+257. Shih Ching-fei 施靜菲. 2014. "Qianlong yuehaiguan chengzuo. Guangfalang fukeban zuopin乾隆粵海關成做。光琺瑯復刻版作品 (Imperial "Guang falang" of the Qianlong Period Manufactured by the Guangdong Maritime Customs. Painted enamels duplicate works from Guangzhou)", in Gugong wenwu jikan故宫文物季刊 (*Palace Museum Quarterly*) no.373. Taipei: National Palace Museum. pp.50-63.

R.K.

42. Pandan and Tray Made for the Indian Market

Guangzhou, China, 18th-19th century

Box 8.5 cm high, 14 cm deep;
Tray 23 cm wide, 28 cm long

The box and tray were fashioned from copper and painted with enamels. A series of ogival panels, reminiscent of Middle Eastern design, are set within an overall ground of black scrollwork interspersed with blue chrysanthemum heads. Within the ogival panels are twining lotus and peony, symbolising purity, nobility and beauty. While some vessels enamelled on a copper base were manufactured at the imperial workshops in Beijing, these items are of a style that indicates manufacture in Guangzhou (Canton).[1] Enamelling in that city reached high levels of competency on goods that were destined for Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The copper enamelling industry had flourished from the early eighteenth century. It is described in a letter of 13th August 1728, from the British Ambassador in the Hague. Holland was the principal destination for goods from China, so he was well placed to note novel luxuries:

> I have bought some China here (which was brought by the last East India ships that came in) of a very particular sort; its merit is being entirely new; which in my mind may be almost as well as undoubtedly old; and I have got all there was of it, which amounts to no more than a service for tea and chocolate, with a basin and ewer. They are of metal, enamelled inside and out with china of all colours.[2]

From the eighteenth century onwards Guangzhou seized the export trade in enamelled copper. It was relatively easy to manufacture in small workshops, as it required no specialised or expensive equipment and utilised the talents of many skilled artisans who had congregated in the city. Moreover, Guangzhou was a flourishing sea port that traded with countries across the world. Two regions that were supplied with painted enamels on a copper base were Mughal India and Southeast Asia, which is where this paan set was destined.

Paan refers to both betel nut and betel leaf. The offering of paan, a digestive of crushed betel nut, spices, and lime paste rolled into the leaf of a betel plant, is an Indian social ritual that conveys hospitality and refinement. The paan stored in these boxes would have traditionally been chewed after meals in India, while the plant was also enjoyed in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. Paan sets were designed and manufactured in a variety of materials, their one essential component being an attractive, decorative finish. The ceremony of offering and consuming paan was one in which a host would seek to impress his or her guests, by employing refined and pleasing utensils. This enamelled paan set admirably fulfils those requirements.

Footnotes:
1. Margaret Jourdain and R. Soame Jenyns. 1950. *Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century*. London & New York: Country Life Limited.
2. Quoted in Jorge Welsh (ed.). 2015. *China of All Colours. Painted Enamels on Copper.* London: Jorge Welsh Research and Publishing. p.17.

R.K.

43. Huqqa Base Made for the Indian Market

Guangzhou, China, 18th century
20 cm high, 10 cm wide

Huqqas are waterpipes that are used to smoke aromatic tobacco mixtures that come in a wide variety of flavours. They usually work by passing charcoal-heated air through the tobacco mixture and ultimately through a water-filled chamber. A user then inhales the smoke through a tube and a mouthpiece.[1] This attractive vessel was the container for water in a huqqa apparatus. Its body swells to a bulbous base in order to provide stability, while its upright neck was appropriate for the fitting of smoking tubes.

Some say that the use of the huqqa spread from India to Persia. After the introduction of tobacco to India by the Jesuits, the huqqa was said to have been invented by a Persian physician to Mughal Emperor Akbar (r.1556 – 1605), who had raised health concerns about smoking tobacco. The pursuit had become popular among Indian noblemen, and the physician envisaged a system that allowed smoke to be passed through water in order to be "purified". Others maintain that the huqqa originated in the Safavid dynasty of Persia and was transmitted east to India. Whatever its origin, the waterpipe became popular among noblemen throughout the Middle East and India, where it was a status symbol for the aristocracy.

The vessel is enamelled in a style that was particular to Guangzhou. A deep blue ground is painted with twining *baoxiang* flowers, with acanthus panels at the neck and a rim of lotus petals round the base. *Baoxiang* or treasure flowers are a type of fictional, hybrid floral design. Each bloom represents a fusion of plant and leaf motifs that originated from different cultures, including India, Central Asia, Persia, Byzantium, Greece and the Chinese domestic arts. *Baoxiang* flowers were exotic and auspicious, and were used to decorate court and religious objects. Their choice for this export item denotes its high quality, which is reinforced by the palette of enamels used and the detailed manner of decoration. Flowers and leaves are depicted in a range of colours that shade into one another, to make it seem that the design is three-dimensional. The blue ground is rich and glowing. This style of decoration and the colours employed are also seen on vessels manufactured in Guangzhou (Canton) as tribute goods for the Chinese imperial court during the eighteenth century,[2] demonstrating the high quality of the piece.

Footnotes:

1. Hugh Chisholm (ed.). 1911. "Hookah", in *Encyclopædia Britannica.13* (11th edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 670.
2. Yang Boda 楊伯達 et al. 1987. 清代廣東貢品 *Tributes from Guangdong to the Qing Court*, Jointly presented by the Palace Museum, Beijing & the Art Gallery. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong. pp.80-87.

R.K.

44. Chinese Iron Container

China; late Ming dynasty,
16th-17th century
22 cm high, 10cm wide, 11 cm deep

This unusual item is modelled as a tall rectangular container with a hole on each side, attached to a deep rectangular well. It is probable that this is a desk stand, employed to contain brushes and water for use on the scholar's desk. Porcelain desk stands complete with integral screens were made in rectangular form,[1] which chiefly date to the second half of the sixteenth century.

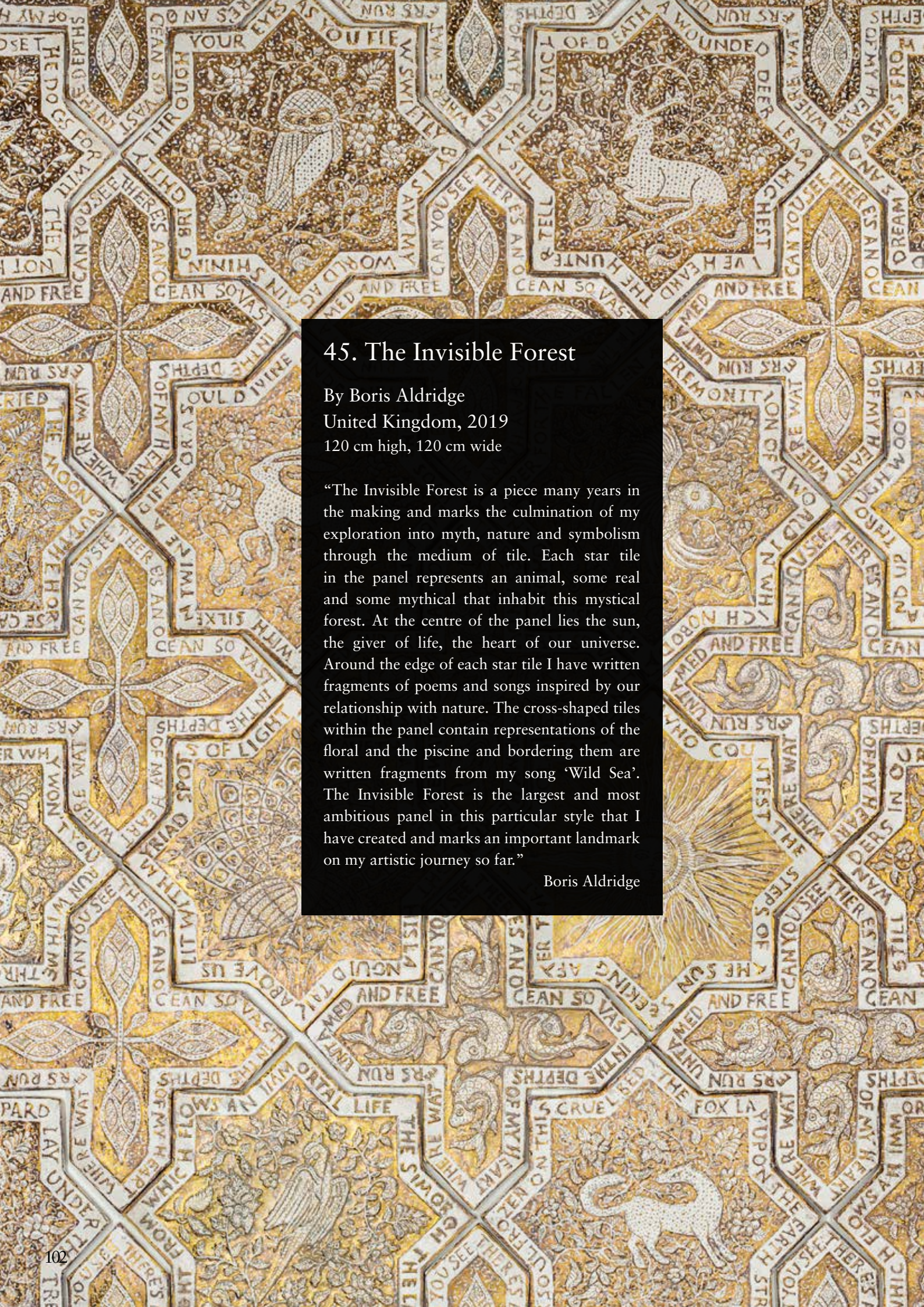
The later sixteenth century was also a time when iron vessels with inlaid silver wire were created, like this stand.[2] Manufacturing vessels in iron rather than bronze was work that had features in common with the production of iron tools and weapons. However, embellishment with inlaid silver wire raised such pieces to the status of decorative works of art. The silver inlay on this piece is quite worn but is well preserved on one side and reveals the design to consist of cranes among swirling clouds, with a diaper pattern on front. Cranes symbolise long life and superhuman wisdom in China, because their white feathers link them to the islands of the Immortals, and it is believed that they carry the souls of the dead to Paradise. Clouds are said to be formed by the union of yin and yang and thus represent the celestial realm, happiness and good fortune.[3]

These typically Chinese motifs surround quotations in Sini script, the type of Arabic script written in China, that are quite well written. On the back and on one of the sides is the prayer الحمد لله "Praise be to God". The inscription on the front is undeciphered. The fourth side consists of an Arabic saying "There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the prophet of God". This phrase is found on several other Chinese pieces, including a porcelain incense burner in the Percival David Collection in London[4] and a bronze box in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, assigned by them to the Zhengde period (1505-21).[5] It begins with the word المؤمن (*al-mu'min* – "the believer"), but has not been fully deciphered.

The combination of Chinese vessel shapes and auspicious patterns, with Arabic inscriptions, typifies an art style that first developed in China at the end of the fifteenth century. Thus the desk stand exemplifies the union of Islamic and Chinese influences, both in its shape and its decoration.

Footnotes:
1. A porcelain example dated to c.1540-1600 is in the British Museum, illustrated in Jessica Harrison-Hall, *Ming Ceramics in the British Museum* (British Museum Press, 2001), no.9:109, p.263. A Wanli period (1573-1620) blue-and-white square stand is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, https://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/41059.html?mulR=1589805329|23.
2. An iron jar and lid with inlaid silver wire and a Wanli period reign mark (1573-1620) is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, see Rose Kerr, *Later Chinese Bronzes* (Victoria and Albert Far Eastern Series, 1990), pl.44, p.55.
3. Fang Jing Pei, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art. Figures, Bugs, Beasts and Flowers* (Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, California, 2004), pp.45, 52.
4. PDF A.469, a porcelain incense burner dating to the 17th-18th century and made at the Dehua kilns in Fujian province. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3180497&partId=1&people=40033&peoA=40033-3-18&page=1
5. http://www.iamm.org.my/galleries/china/

R.K.



45. The Invisible Forest

By Boris Aldridge
United Kingdom, 2019
120 cm high, 120 cm wide

"The Invisible Forest is a piece many years in the making and marks the culmination of my exploration into myth, nature and symbolism through the medium of tile. Each star tile in the panel represents an animal, some real and some mythical that inhabit this mystical forest. At the centre of the panel lies the sun, the giver of life, the heart of our universe. Around the edge of each star tile I have written fragments of poems and songs inspired by our relationship with nature. The cross-shaped tiles within the panel contain representations of the floral and the piscine and bordering them are written fragments from my song 'Wild Sea'. The Invisible Forest is the largest and most ambitious panel in this particular style that I have created and marks an important landmark on my artistic journey so far."

Boris Aldridge

Text by Ozan Huseyin (O.H.)

With contributions by Dr Rose Kerr (R.K.), Christina Hales (C.H.), Prof. John Seyller (J.S.), Dr Annemarie Jordan Gschwend (A.J.G.) and Paul Bromberg (P.B.)

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