Amir Mohtashemi

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Indian, Islamic and
Cross-Cultural Works of Art

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1

Chinese Carpet Weights Made for the Indian market

Kangxi period (1662-1722)
China

Famille Verte porcelain
18.2cm high

Provenance: Collection of Anne and Gordon Getty
Aquired from Spink and Son, London in 1998

Two porcelain carpet weights each in the form of a lotus bud set on a circular base with a fluted pattern. Each individual rib is painted with a delicate floral design. At the tip of the domed finial are concentric circles of green and gilt.

Carpet weights are also referred to as *mir-e farsh*, which has often been misunderstood to mean "slave of the carpet" as, according to H. Thabet, "Mir" in fact means governor and "farsh", carpet. Thus, it means "the element in charge of the carpet" or "is the controller/ governor of carpets."[1] Typically, the weights would be placed on the corners of a light summer carpet to keep it in place outdoors. Indian carpet weights were made from an assortment of materials, typically brass, bronze, *bidri*, marble and crystal. The possible inspiration from architecture is visible in the similarities to the domed finials [*gul dasta*] seen on the top of slim columns of Mughal and Deccani buildings.

Chinese porcelain carpet weights, such as these are very rare. Only a few recorded examples are found, though slightly different in appearance from our example. One pair is in the Eugene Fuller Collection, Seattle Art Museum, Washington, USA; illustrated in Cox, vol. II, p. 578, fig. 846. The Fuller pair of carpet weights was acquired in India and is thought to have been commissioned to order and imported there during Mughal rule. Another example is to be found in the David Collection, Copenhagen (Inv. no. 5/2019).

A.S.

Bibliography:

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

Notes:

1 Thabet, H. "Carpet Weights 'Mir Farsh' from Mughal India: An Archaeological, Artistic and Comparative Study", *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies 7*, no. 1 (June 2017), pp. 53-54.

2

Watercolour of the Taj Mahal at Agra

William Havell

c. 1817-1825
Agra, India
Watercolour on paper
25cm high, 37cm wide

Provenance: UK private collection since 1978
Exhibited in the Reading Museum and Art Gallery in the William Havell, Bicentenary Exhibition 9 January – 20 February 1982, and published in the William Havell 1782-1857, catalogue no. 86.

A serene watercolour view of the Taj Mahal at dawn from the banks of the river Yamuna, as fisherfolk carry on with their daily tasks. The wash of blue in the sky and the rising sun emitting a glow from the left corner informs us of the time of day. The painter, William Havell, provides an alternative view of the Taj, which is unlike its usual depiction from the front. This is typical of Havell's work throughout his career, avoiding the more obvious and "popular" views. From the bank, one can see the whole Taj complex from an angle, including the beautiful Taj Mahal, the two red sandstone and white domed mirror-structures, and the surrounding walls. The two mirror structures are the mosque by the western wall and the Mehman Khana which serves as the *jawab* or answer to the mosque for symmetry, by the eastern wall. These two face the sides of the Taj Mahal. All three buildings are set on a sandstone plinth. Great attention is paid to the structures, namely domes, the arches and the minarets as well as to the textural surfaces – both of the buildings and the muddy earth of the riverbank. Fishing boats can be seen on the river in the background.

William Havell, son of Luke Havell, came from a famous artistic family. He sent his first painting to the Royal Academy in 1804 and was one of the founders of the Society of Painters in Watercolours. In 1816 he was appointed one of the draughtsmen to Earl Amherst of Arracan's embassy to Peking. However, on account of a conflict aboard the ship, he was forced to leave the ambassador's service. He travelled to Manila and Penang, and from there overland to Calcutta where he found work painting portraits of British officers and landscapes. After a bout of cholera, he left Bombay for Liverpool. After a short time in England, he moved to Italy, on account of further ill health. In 1855 he returned to England, moving to High Row, now Kensington Church Street where he died on 16th December 1857.

A.S.

A Group of Eight Company School Paintings

George Annesley, 2nd Earl of Mountnorris and Viscount Valentia (1769-1844), was a passionate amateur naturalist with a particular interest in ornithology. Following a career in the army, he travelled to India in 1802 where, inspired by his encounters with professional botanists and zoologists, he commissioned a number of natural history paintings.

During his four-month residency with Saadat Ali Khan, Nawab of Oudh (r. 1798-1814), the Viscount was much enthused by the ruler's additions to his ornithological collection; "he sent people into his woods to bring me rare birds and plants; he laid a dawk two hundred miles to bring them down to me in a state of perfection." (Viscount Valentia, 1809, p. 172.)

In 1803 he stayed with Lord Wellesley (the elder brother of the first Duke of Wellington) and visited his menagerie in Barrackpore, Calcutta. Viscount Valentia gifted Wellesley two bird studies from his collection, now in the British Library, London (see M. Archer, *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library*, London, 1962, p. 96). The works bear his personal Indian seal, "The Right Honourable Lord Bahadur Viscount Valentia."

Returning to England in 1806, the Viscount became a member of parliament and wrote a three- volume series chronicling his travels, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon and the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt in 1802-06*. Published in 1809, the books were illustrated by his draughtsman and secretary Henry Salt. Continuing his interest in the natural world, Annesley became a member of the Royal Society and subsequently his collection has become the subject of an important series of natural history studies, celebrating India's rich ecological biodiversity.

Of the current series of paintings, four bear the Viscount's personal Indian seal, "The Right Honourable Lord Bahadur Viscount Valentia 1217 (1802-3)" on the back, while three others have an undeciphered small seal mark in exactly the same ink as the works with a personal seal. Considering this and that the paintings display such a great likeness to one another, it is highly probable that they were commissioned by the Viscount and undertaken by the same artists. Drawing upon Mughal traditions of exceptionally intricate detail, rich colouration and masterful observation, Viscount Valentia's artists successfully united this with European scientific taxonomy; achieving a sense of harmony between the romantic and the rational. Charming, informative and highly decorative, these works are a valuable example of the finest early nineteenth century Indian ornithological painting.

Literature:

George, Viscount Valentia, 1809. *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon and the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt in 1802-06*. Volume 1, William Miller, London.

Mildred Archer, 1962. *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library*, London.

"India is a country of splendour, of extravagance."

Viscount Valentia, 1809

George Annesley, 2nd Earl of Mountnorris when Viscount Valentia
by Samuel Freeman, after John James Halls
Stipple engraving, early 19th century
NPG D5312








3

A Study of an Ashy Drongo, *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on Fleur de lys watermark paper
47cm high, 27cm wide

Provenance: Collector's seal on verso in Persian: 'The Right Honourable Lord Bahadur Viscount Valentia, 1217 (1802-3)'.

With jet-black lustrous plumage, an elegant and deeply forked tail and piercing garnet-red eyes, the Ashy Drongo emanates a monarchical resplendence.

A member of the Dicruridae family, populations occur across South and Southeast Asia.

Preferring open forest in mountainous regions such as the Himalayas, they conduct aerial sallies, capturing insects in mid-flight. The birds are also known to eat blossoms such as those of the eucalyptus tree and also, occasionally, smaller birds and lizards. They have also been observed riding on the backs of sheep and buffalo, whilst feeding upon insects. Whistler (p. 158) describes the Ashy Drongo as "a magnificent flier, turning and twisting with extreme speed and skill, and it has the pugnacity of the family, hunting larger birds from the vicinity of its nest with great courage." Both sexes collaborate in nest building, with the males producing materials and the females overseeing the construction. A clutch of four to six eggs is laid in a loose cup nest made of roots, lichens and spiders webs. The birds emit a pleasant, chattery and sometimes nasal call and have been known to mimic other birds.

Ashy drongos can exhibit plumage in varying shades of grey with the presence of white patches around the eye of some birds. However, with very dark feathers, Longicaudatus, a subspecies in India bears more likeness to the Black Drongo, although it has a longer tail and brighter red eye.

The present bird has predominately black feathers with a wisp of grey supercilium above the eye. The chest feathers are also a paler greyish-black, with hints of brown tones on the primaries. Despite its charcoal black appearance, the plumage also reveals a subtle iridescence, and, on close observation the feathers appear to shimmer with exquisite deep blue-green tones.

The work itself may be regarded as a celebration of fine detail, as seen in the delicate whiskers around the bird's beak and glimmer of light reflecting upon the iris. Dense clusters of feathers on the forehead are also rendered with extremely refined brushstrokes. Overall there is a symbiosis between the confidence of this majestic bird and that of the hand of the artist, who has succeeded in their animated presentation of this elegant species.

Bhujjangah written in pencil on recto and below this 'Fork tailed shrike'.

For additional ornithological studies made for Lord Valentia, see Sotheby's Sven Ghalin Collection, Lot 36 a drawing of a bustard, and Lot 37 a watercolour of a crow-pheasant, both made for Lord Valentia; Sotheby's, London, 31 May 2011, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Part Two, lot 115; see also Welch 1976, no.26; Welch 1978-I, nos.18a-c.and Leach 1995, no.7.96, pp.760-2. For two bird studies donated by Viscount Valentia to Lord Wellesley, see British Library in London (Wellesley Collection, NHD 29, vol. iv, f.21,27)

C.H.

Literature:

Hugh Whistler, 1949. *Popular Handbook of Indian Birds. Edition 4.* Gurney and Jackson, London, pp. 158-59.

Craig, Robson, 2005. *Birds of Southeast Asia.* Princeton University Press. Ashy Drongo, p. 176.

4

A Study of a Small Buttonquail, *Turnix sylvaticus*

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on J Whatman paper
40cm high, 26cm wide

Provenance: Collector's seal on verso in Persian: 'The Right Honourable Lord Bahadur Viscount Valentia, 1217 (1802-3)'.

True to its name, the small buttonquail is a diminutive bird, measuring up to a mere 15cm. Reluctant flyers, they tend to skulk through dry grasslands, making them extremely difficult to find. Despite their quail-like appearance, they lack the crop and hind toe of true quails and are in fact more closely related to shorebirds. The buttonquail's geographical range is extensive, stretching from India, tropical Asia and Indonesia to Africa. Regrettably, the last buttonquails in Europe were declared extinct in 2018. Intensive agriculture and coastal development in southern Spain led to their demise. Unfortunately, the current population in Morocco is also facing similar challenges.

An unusual trait of the small buttonquail is that the females are polyandrous. Having laid four to five eggs, they will seek another mate, leaving the male to incubate the eggs and raise the chicks. Females also possess unique vocal organs, enabling them to produce long, deep calls, often made at dawn and dusk.

The present study depicts an alert small bird with stunningly intricate patterned feathers. The cryptic plumes of the upperparts consist of blacks and greys, with vivid flashes of cinnamon. The rufus chest feathers are interspersed with elegant black diamond patterns and the flanks and belly are greyish-white. Similar to the wings, the tail feathers are finely barred with quivering lines of black and chestnut, enhancing the bird's ability to conceal itself amongst foliage. With its diminutive body and large feet, one can easily imagine this charming small bird scuttling amongst the dried grasses as it beadily hunts for seeds and insects. Through this lively and vibrant depiction of the buttonquail, the artist succeeds in reproducing the bird's quaint and colourful character.

For additional ornithological studies made for Lord Valentia, see Sotheby's Sven Ghalin Collection Lot 36 a drawing of a bustard, and Lot 37 a watercolour of a crow-pheasant, both made for Lord Valentia; Sotheby's, London, 31 May 2011, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Part Two, lot 115; see also Welch 1976, no.26; Welch 1978-I, nos.18a-c.and Leach 1995, no.7.96, pp.760-2. For two bird studies donated by Viscount Valentia to Lord Wellesley, see British Library in London (Wellesley Collection, NHD 29, vol. iv, f.21,27)

C.H.

Literature:

Bikram Grewal et al. 2016. *Birds of India - A Pictorial Field Guide*. Om Books International.

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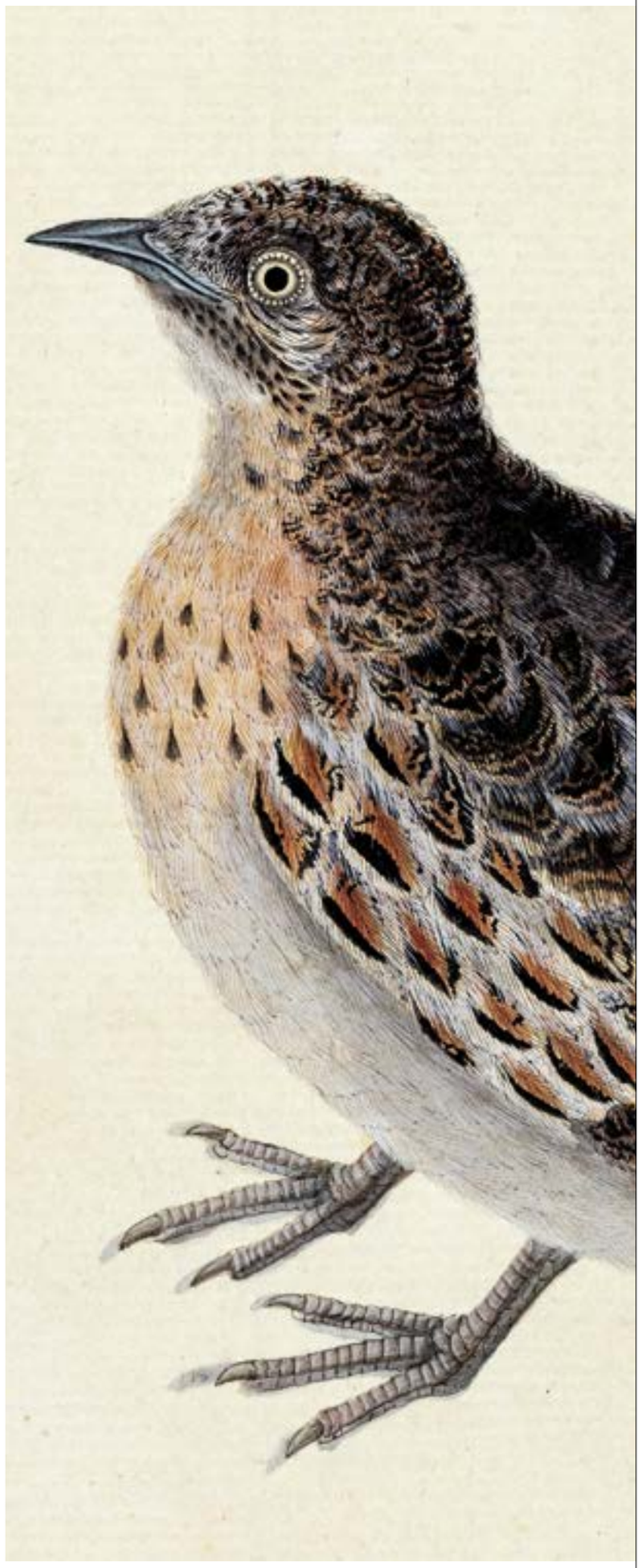

5

A Study of a Female Crimson-Browed Finch, *Carpodacus subhimachalus*

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on J Whatman paper
42cm high, 26.5cm wide

Provenance: Collector's seal on verso in Persian: 'The Right Honourable Lord Bahadur Viscount Valentia, 1217 (1802-3)'.

Displaying her alert diligence, a female crimson-browed finch perches on a branch. Her large and powerful grey bill is perfectly suited to cracking open seeds, upon which she feeds tentatively amongst pines and junipers. Her head is a soft ashy-brown with paler tinges around the cheek. The wing feathers descend from silvery browns to hazel and deeper browns as they reach the tail. The throat is a faint primrose yellow, fading to pale grey across the belly to the undertail-coverts.

Located in India, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar, crimson-browed finches appear in pairs or small groups in temperate forests and shrublands. Deriving from the Latin sub (beneath) and Hindi *himachal* (snow), the binomial name *Corythus subhimachalus* was described in 1836 by British naturalist Brian Houghton Hodgson.

Despite this not being the most audaciously coloured of the Fringillidae family, the artist of the present work demonstrates a tremendous enthusiasm for capturing the bird in an accurate and detailed manner. The feathers have been painstakingly delineated with minute brushstrokes and appear to shimmer across the bird's back. The eye is sharp and conveys a sense of the bird's intelligent yet wary nature. The proportions of the body also appear accurately, revealing the crimson-browed to be one of the larger finches. Given this characterful and accurate study, it would appear that the artist was not simply working from another illustration, but rather they had a true understanding of and familiarity with this particular species of bird.

Written in pencil below the bird: 'Female? Of the Crimson Headed Finch'.

For additional ornithological studies made for Lord Valentia, see Sotheby's Sven Ghalin Collection Lot 36 a drawing of a bustard, and Lot 37 a watercolour of a crow-pheasant, both made for Lord Valentia; Sotheby's, London, 31 May 2011, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Part Two, lot 115; see also Welch 1976, no.26; Welch 1978-I, nos.18a-c.and Leach 1995, no.7.96, pp.760-2. For two bird studies donated by Viscount Valentia to Lord Wellesley, see British Library in London (Wellesley Collection, NHD 29, vol. iv, f.21,27).

C.H.

Literature:

Bikram Grewal et al. 2016. *Birds of India - A Pictorial Field Guide.* Om Books International.

6

A Study of a Pair of Sunbirds

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on unidentified English paper
38.5cm high, 24cm wide

Provenance: It is highly likely that the work was commissioned by George Annesley, 2nd Earl of Mountnorris and Viscount Valentia (1769-1844), during his visit to Calcutta in 1803. Appearing on the current work, *An Emerald Dove* (see p. 20) and *A Caspian Tern* (see p. 18), the ink used on a small stamp on the recto left-hand side exactly matches that used for Viscount Valentia's personal seal on four other works in the present collection; see *An Ashy Drongo* (p. 8), *A Bronzed Drongo* (p. 16), *A Crimson-Browed Finch* (p. 12) and *A Small Buttonquail* (p. 10).

This artfully rendered composition depicts two sunbirds perched on a branch. The darker bird appears to be a male Purple Sunbird, *Cinnyris asiaticus*, displaying his breeding plumage. At less than 10cm long, *Cinnyris asiaticus* is one of the smaller members of the sunbird family. The male has deep charcoal eyes and a curved grey-black beak. The neck is greyish black leading to a deeper blue-black, with hints of lapis overtones. The head, back and wings are an exquisite deep inky blue, which creates a dazzling metallic shimmer as the bird catches the light. During the non-breeding season, males revert to their eclipse plumage which is more akin to the females, although clusters of vivid blue feathers remain. The females tend to be olive-brown with yellow underparts.

The bird at the top of the branch may be a female purple sunbird, or another member of the *nectariniidae* (sunbird) family. The head and back are a combination of moss and olive tones, with paler greens around the edges of the feathers. A darker strip reaches from the crown along the upper back and the throat is a pale yellow. The wings, lower back and tail feathers are an exquisitely rich forest green. There is a softness to the feathers, creating a sumptuous, velvety quality to the wings.

There are fifteen species of sunbirds in India which inhabit deciduous and dry forests, scrubland and gardens. These vocal birds congregate in garrulous groups, where they are known to fend off much larger birds. Despite eating some insects and berries, sunbirds primarily feed on nectar. Their curved beaks enable them to extract nectar with expert precision and they are invaluable pollinators for certain plant species.

In the present study it is the bird's plumage that so captivates the viewer. The employment of precision shading is exceptional, with paler tones used to demarcate the edges of the feathers and deep hues providing body. Both studies exhibit a wonderfully harmonious relationship between rich colours, depth and texture. Not only are the sunbirds exquisitely beautiful, but their glistening plumage also has a highly tactile quality, truly bringing these spirited little birds to life.

For additional ornithological studies made for Lord Valentia, see Sotheby's Sven Ghalin Collection Lot 36 a drawing of a bustard, and Lot 37 a watercolour of a crow-pheasant, both made for Lord Valentia; Sotheby's, London, 31 May 2011, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Part Two, lot 115; see also Welch 1976, no.26; Welch 1978-I, nos.18a-c.and Leach 1995, no.7.96, pp.760-2. For two bird studies donated by Viscount Valentia to Lord Wellesley, see British Library in London (Wellesley Collection, NHD 29, vol. iv, f.21,27)

C.H.

Literature:

Bikram Grewal et al. 2016. *Birds of India - A Pictorial Field Guide*. Om Books International.

Douglas Dewar. 1911. "Indian Sunbirds", *Journal of the Foreign Bird Club*, pp.129-134.

7

A Study of a Bronzed Drongo, *Dicrurus aeneus*

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on J Whatman paper
46.5cm high, 28cm wide

Provenance: Collector's seal on verso in Persian: 'The Right Honourable Lord Bahadur Viscount Valentia, 1217 (1802-3)'.

Perching upon a branch with an alert, intelligent expression, a member of the Drongo family takes a moment to rest. The bird is predominately black with faint dapples of inky blues upon the head, cheek and neck. An arrestingly fiery amber shade, the bird's eye is extremely striking against the darker plumage. The bill curves downwards toward a sharp tip, ideally suited to grasping insects during rapid flight. The wing feathers are black fading to a magnificent coppery shimmer across the primaries. These tones continue down the long tail feathers, which gather together and form a straight tip. The Ashy Drongo often appears with a metallic gloss to their feathers and forked tail. Some, however, are more bronzed with a less forked tail, that may appear square-ended. The females bear a less iridescent plumage than the males and the juveniles are duller than the adults, with less forked tails. Given their characteristics and the variety within the species, it is most likely the present bird is indeed *Dicrurus aeneus*.

As a family, Drongos are renowned for their aptitude and cunning. Utilising their accomplished skills in mimicry, they reproduce the alarm calls of other species, which are capable of frightening them off and thus causing them to abandon their food. Several drongo species have been witnessed using a variety of different alarm calls in this manner.

Of the 27 species of Drongo in the world, nine are found in India. They frequent the lower Himalayas and the Western and Eastern Ghat mountain ranges. Occupying broadleaf evergreen and deciduous forest, they may be found individually or in small groups. Predominantly insectivorous, they conduct aerial sallies under the forest canopy, searching for insects before returning to a favoured perch. Drongos have also been known to join other species to create larger foraging flocks.

Breeding from February to July, bronzed drongos lay up to four pinkish-brown eggs. Nests are constructed from a variety of materials including bamboo leaves, bark and grasses. After a period of thirteen days the chicks are born and fed by both parents. At 24 centimetres, they are one of the smaller members of the Dicruridae family, but despite this they will aggressively defend their broods by attacking much larger birds.

During his travels in the early nineteenth century, Viscount Valentia would have encountered some of the most accomplished artists in India at the time. With extremely fine detailing, rich and diverse pigments and a great likeness to the subject, the present work bears testament to this. Such accurate morphological characteristics imply the artist was working directly from nature. One can only imagine the wonder experienced by Lord Valentia as he laid his eyes upon these birds for the first time, and his sheer excitement upon returning home with an exceptionally accomplished and diverse collection of ornithological paintings.

For additional ornithological studies made for Lord Valentia, see Sotheby's Sven Ghalin Collection, Lot 36 a drawing of a bustard, and Lot 37 a watercolour of a crow-pheasant, both made for Lord Valentia; Sotheby's, London, 31 May 2011, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Part Two, lot 115; see also Welch 1976, no.26; Welch 1978-I, nos.18a-c.and Leach 1995, no.7.96, pp.760-2. For two bird studies donated by Viscount Valentia to Lord Wellesley, see British Library in London (Wellesley Collection, NHD 29, vol.iv, f.21,27)

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Literature:

Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 1991. *Indian Painting for British Patrons*, 1770-1860.

Stuart Carey Welch, 1976. *Indian Drawings and Painted Sketches.*

Linda Leach, 1995. *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, London, vol. ii.

8

A Study of a Caspian Tern, *Hydroprogne caspia*

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on W Elgar paper
28.5cm high, 34cm wide

Provenance: It is highly likely that the work was commissioned by George Annesley, 2nd Earl of Mountnorris and Viscount Valentia (1769-1844), during his visit to Calcutta in 1803. Appearing on the current work, *A Study of a Pair of Sunbirds* (see p. 14) and *An Emerald Dove* (see p. 20), the ink used on a small stamp on the recto left-hand side exactly matches that used for Viscount Valentia's personal seal on four other works in the present collection; see *An Ashy Drongo* (p. 8), *A Bronzed Drongo* (p. 16), *A Crimson-Browed Finch* (p. 12) and *A Small Buttonquail* (p. 10).

With a wingspan of up to 60cm, this magnificent specimen is the largest tern in the world. The bird has a black cap, pale grey neck and darker grey wings. The bill is a vivid orange with a dash of black towards the tip. The solid black cap indicates that the present bird was painted in the summer, as during the winter months the cap is reduced to black streaks. The delightful genus name "water swallow" derives from the Ancient Greek *hudros* and Latin *progne*.

Caspian terns hunt fish in salt and freshwater. Hovering well above their prey, they dip their heads before commencing a lightning-fast dive into the water. Despite their names, Caspian terns breed in Asia, North America, Europe and Australia. A vocal species, the birds emit loud croaking sounds and their young are known to call for food, despite being well capable of independence.

The artist of the present work celebrates the bird's generous stature as its beak and tail feathers terminate just short of the page margins. As the tail extends and gently fans out, a variety of wide, elongated and patterned plumes emerges. A darker shadow is cast as one feather blocks the light shining through the feather above it. This detailing not only provides volume and three-dimensionality, but also indicates the hand of a painter who has taken great care to observe the subtle details of their subject. Rather than just forming one of a series of ornithological paintings, this work truly conveys the artist's sincere interest in and keen admiration for this elegant bird.

Written in pencil below the bird: 'Sterna Caspia' and beneath this, 'Caspian tern.'

For additional ornithological studies made for Lord Valentia, see Sotheby's Sven Ghalin Collection Lot 36 a drawing of a bustard, and Lot 37 a watercolour of a crow-pheasant, both made for Lord Valentia; Sotheby's, London, 31 May 2011, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Part Two, lot 115; see also Welch 1976, no.26; Welch 1978-I, nos.18a-c.and Leach 1995, no.7.96, pp.760-2. For two bird studies donated by Viscount Valentia to Lord Wellesley, see British Library in London (Wellesley Collection, NHD 29, vol. iv, f.21,27)

C.H.

Literature:

Bikram Grewal et al. 2016. *Birds of India - A Pictorial Field Guide*. Om Books International.

9

A Study of a Male Asian Emerald Dove, *Chalcophaps indica*

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on W Elgar paper
45cm high, 34cm wide

Provenance: It is highly likely that the work was commissioned by George Annesley, 2nd Earl of Mountnorris and Viscount Valentia (1769-1844), during his visit to Calcutta in 1803. Appearing on the current work, *A Study of a Pair of Sunbirds* (see p. 14 and *A Caspian Tern* (see p. 18), the ink used on a small stamp on the recto left-hand side exactly matches that used for Viscount Valentia's personal seal on four other works in the present collection; see *An Ashy Drongo* (p. 8), *A Bronzed Drongo* (p. 16), *A Crimson-Browed Finch* (p. 12) and *A Small Buttonquail* (p. 10).

"I think it the most beautiful of all the *dove*-kind I have hitherto seen"
George Edwards, 1743.

With an air of intelligence and grace, a male Asian Emerald Dove perches on a branch. This exceptionally attractive bird inhabits the forests of Southeast Asia and the Indian Subcontinent.

The bird's beak is a vivid coral and the keen eyes a rich chestnut. The feathers on the crown are white, interspersed with blue flecks. The breast is a rich mauve, suffused with oranges, browns and purple tones. The wings and back plumage form a sublime tapestry of emerald greens with hints of citrine, evoking the myriad shades of the bird's forest habitat. A small cluster of white feathers appears on the ridge of the wing, while the secondary wing feathers are olive and bronze. The elegant tail feathers are greyish white, tipped black, and the legs and feet are a dusky mauve.

The eighteenth-century English naturalist George Edwards was particularly taken by this species, which he referred to as the "Green Wing'd Dove" in *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds*, 1743. He remarked that as the bird's wings caught the light, he witnessed a "splendid Copper Colour, or a Colour more inclining to Gold." Edwards had sketched an emerald dove at the house of John Warner, a merchant in Rotherhithe. He was also fortunate to have seen another live bird, kept by the naturalist Sir Hans Sloane, 1st Baronet PRS (1660-1753). Sloane's extraordinary collection of 71,000 items was donated to the Natural History Museum, British Museum and British Library in London, forming the foundations of these important archives.

Displaying such an exquisite array of sublime colours, it is likely Lord Valentia would have delighted in including this bird in his ornithological collection.

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C.H.

Literature:

Bikram Grewal et al. 2016. *Birds of India - A Pictorial Field Guide.* Om Books International.

George Edwards. 1743. *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds.* The College of Physicians, London.

10

A Study of a Eurasian Coot, *Fulica atra*

c. 1800
Calcutta, India

Watercolour on unidentified English paper
47.5cm high, 28.5cm wide

Provenance: It is highly likely that this work was commissioned by George Annesley, 2nd Earl of Mountnorris and Viscount Valentia (1769-1844) during his visit to Calcutta in 1803.

By far the most striking feature of the Eurasian coot are the bird's extraordinary feet. The palmate skin on the toes distributes their bodyweight, enabling them to walk on aquatic plants. On land, the lobes fold back as the birds raise their feet, allowing them to walk on mud and grass. Their generously proportioned feet also assist them in travelling across the water's surface, as they vigorously flap their wings before taking flight. Despite their placid looking appearance, coots are known to engage in vicious territorial disputes. Again, their feet are deployed as males charge one another, then turn to strike out with their powerful feet. Coots are also intelligent birds: thwarting the practice of brood parasitism, parents are able to distinguish when another coot has laid an egg in their nest.

The Eurasian Coot is found in Europe, Asia, New Zealand and Australia. They are the most aquatic member of the rail family, which includes moorhens, crakes and gallinules. During migration coots are able to fly remarkable distances, although these long journeys often occur at night where there is less risk from predators.

The present study is an extremely well observed and accurate representation of this intriguing bird. The feathers are predominantly black with grey tinges on the underside of the belly and chest. The bill is white with a murmur of pink and the distinctive frontal shield is typically white. The feet are pale green with a touch of yellow and have been painted with a great deal of care and attention, as the incredible reptile like textures of the skin demonstrate.

Beside the bird appears a detailed study of the beak and shield. The open bill reveals a long narrow tongue and a series of small, sharp teeth. This unusual and insightful feature reminds us that as well as being wonderful artworks, these paintings were also of great scientific interest. At the time these studies were commissioned, there was a great fervour to discover the mysteries of the natural world; to observe, to record and to preserve.

Written in pencil below the bird: 'Fulica Atra and below this 'Common Coot.'

For additional ornithological studies made for Lord Valentia, see Sotheby's Sven Ghalin Collection Lot 36 a drawing of a bustard, and Lot 37 a watercolour of a crow-pheasant, both made for Lord Valentia; Sotheby's, London, 31 May 2011, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Part Two, lot 115; see also Welch 1976, no.26; Welch 1978-I, nos.18a-c.and Leach 1995, no.7.96, pp.760-2. For two bird studies donated by Viscount Valentia to Lord Wellesley, see British Library in London (Wellesley Collection, NHD 29, vol.iv, f.21,27)

C.H.

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11

Shah Hamadan's Mosque in Srinagar

Frederick William John Shore
1891
Kashmir, India

Oil on canvas
74.6cm high, 89.5cm wide

Provenance: The Collection of the late Lord and Lady Swaythling

A beautiful and rare depiction of the Khanqah-e Maula, also known as Shah-e-Hamadan Masjid and Khanqah, in the old city of Srinagar in present-day Jammu and Kashmir on the banks of the river Jhelum. This oil painting shows the stunning wooden Masjid with its tapering, pyramidical roof, columned balconies and sharp pointed spire. There is a sense of serenity and calm in this depiction of a bright day with a few clouds scattered across a blue sky and a gentle riverbank. It appears to be a summer's day where the trees, possibly Chinars (*Platanus orientalis*), are verdant green. On the *ghat* or steps on the banks of the river Jhelum we see a number of people dressed in white, alighting from small *shikaras* or cedar boats with tapering canopies, to visit the shrine. Some of the boats are carrying people also in white. The pagoda-style architecture of the building, the boats and the trees are all typical symbols of Kashmir.

Frederick William John Shore was a British artist who was born in 1844. He succeeded his brother as 4th Baron Teignmouth in 1915. His grandfather was Sir John Shore, the Governor General of Bengal from 1793 to 1798. Whilst serving as a Major with the Royal Horse Artillery, Shore was based at Sialkot (now Pakistan). He remained at Sialkot until January 1894 and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel before returning to England later that year. He died in 1916. He is known for his beautiful landscape paintings of the rivers and landscape of the Kashmir Valley. The Khanqah-e-Molla or Shah-e-Hamdan is one of the oldest Muslim shrines located on the banks of the river Jhelum in Srinagar. An important religious destination in Srinagar, this shrine was originally built in 1395 and reconstructed in 1732. Believed to contain "the secret of Allah" - the Khanqah-e-Molla is an excellent example of wooden architecture drawing inspiration from Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic styles. The Khanqah-e-Molla was originally constructed by Sultan Sikander (1389-1413 AD) in memory of the Sufi saint Mir Syed Ali Hamdan, who lived in Kashmir and was instrumental in the spread of Islam in Kashmir.

In 1480, the building was ravaged by fire and reconstructed by Sultan Hassan Shah in 1493. Following that, in 1731, the shrine was damaged once again, with Abul Barkat Khan rebuilding it in 1731. Most mosques and shrines (*ziyarat*) in Kashmir are based on an architectural plan of a low, cubic space forming the prayer hall or burial chamber, which is then covered by a pyramidal roof and often supported by a series of pillars. Large mosques will have a third element known as the *mazina* which consists of a square, open pavilion from which the muezzin would give the call to prayer (*azan*) and a sharp spire which represents the minaret.

The Shah Hamadan masjid neatly fits this local typology of mosque architecture. It has a square plan measuring approximately 190 cm on each side and sits on an irregular walled base composed of materials taken from ancient temples. It is a two-storeyed, tiered structure with gently sloping pyramidal roofs differentiating each tier. The roofs are further emphasised by heavy woodwork on the cornices under the eaves. The first tier has double-arcaded verandahs running continuously around the building, the only break being for the canopied main entrance. The second tier is more of an arcaded balcony that protrudes on all four sides of the main structure. The verandahs with arcades and balconies and their delicate wooden grilles (*pinjras*) together with slender columns not only lend structural support to the roof but also create the impression that the 16m-tall mosque is soaring into the sky. The pyramidal roof of the second tier is capped off by an open pavilion for the *muezzin*, which in turn is crowned by a sharp pyramidal spire. The base of the spire has a protruding triangular decorative window on each face and has a golden end finial (*alem*) at the apex. Parts of the roof have, over time, been covered with seasonally flowering vegetation, creating a charming image of intricate woodwork and terraced flowerbeds.

According to James Fergusson, the *masjid* of Shah Hamadan, which is smaller than the Jama Masjid, "is interesting, in the first place, because its roof is probably very similar to that which once covered the temple at Marttand, and the crowning ornament is evidently a reminiscence of a Buddhist Tee, very much altered, it must be confessed, but still not so very unlike some found in Nepal, as at Swayambunath, for instance and elsewhere" (pp. 608-9). The building envelope is made of square logs arranged in alternate courses, which generates an attractive pattern on both the exterior and interior of the building. He adds that the method in which the logs are placed and ornamented resembled the ornamentation of temples found in Orissa. The cross-cultural inspiration for Kashmiri architecture makes this a striking architectural structure.

Additions were made over time; for example, a small subsidiary temple and two rows of cloisters were created in the interior. The rows consist of 14 arches, which flank the north and south side of the large 69' x 46' (21 x 14m) prayer hall. The shrine of the saint is in a cloister in the northwest corner. The date 1384 AD (786 Hijra), marking the saint's death, is carved above the doorway. This tomb chamber is decorated with glass and glazed work. An annual congregation forms at this shrine to celebrate the saint's death on the 6th of 'Zilhaj', the last month of the Muslim calendar.

The walls of the prayer hall are made of woodwork panels with stone skirting. Some display the names of God carved in gold. The centre of the prayer hall has four solid wooden pillars 7 metres in height, placed in a square configuration, which support the ceiling. They are decorated with painted wooden chips arranged in a herringbone pattern on the shafts, carved lotus motifs at the base and leaf patterns on the 16-sided capitals.

A.S.

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A Pair of Yellow-Footed Pigeons

Male
Female

Provenance: Major General Claude Martin (1735-1800)
Niall Hobhouse Collection Sale, Christie's London May 22nd, 2008.

Two striking paintings of the Yellow-footed green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicoptera*) from the collection of the French general, architect, surveyor, gunsmith, banker and botanist, Claude Martin. Martin was initially based in Fort William in Calcutta before moving to Lucknow where he lived from 1776 until his death and where he had a close relationship with the Nawab of Awadh, Mirza Asaf-ud-Daula. Through indigo cultivation, money-lending and serving the Nawab, he became extremely wealthy. He used his wealth to patronise painters, build schools and explore his scientific interests. Martin's keen interest in paintings is reflected in the fact that by the time of his death, his collection included over 650 Company School paintings of birds, all painted by Mughal-trained painters.

According to Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, "a small number of birds were kept at the Majafgarh [sic] estate, probably housed in elegant bamboo cages. These included pigeons, parrots, cuckoos, a nightingale (bulbul), partridges and the Indian robin. Martin mentions a caged songbird that was sent from Lucknow to Najafgarh, but which died on the journey. He ordered the carrier to refund the ten rupees cost of the bird. Water birds could be found along the banks of the Ganges at Najafgarh or the Gomti in Lucknow. But the birds of prey, on their perches, are harder to identify. Unlike the Nawab and his courtiers, Martin was not a keen huntsman."[1] It was, in fact, the Nawab who had the largest collection of birds in Awadh. It is possible that Claude Martin had access to some of them or commissioned the paintings of these birds from the Nawab's collection, though no written proof of this has yet been found.

The numbering of these paintings and those found in The Lucknow Menagerie Hobhouse catalogue indicates that there were at least 658 drawings of birds, 600 of plants, 606 of reptiles and some animals, that have now been dispersed across many private collections. Martin kept a store of European paper, and the paper used for these paintings would have been made c. 1760-1780. These paintings would have been executed between Martin's arrival in Lucknow and 1785. This would place them 20 years ahead of the Marquis of Wellesley's collection in Calcutta but around the time of those made in Patna under Sir Elijah and Lady Impey's commission between 1774 and 1782. Impey visited Martin in 1781-2 and it is possible his visit inspired this project.

12

A Male Yellow-Footed Green Pigeon, *Treron phoenicoptera*

18th century (c. 1775-1785)
Lucknow, India

Pen and ink with watercolour, heightened in gum arabic
47cm high, 28cm wide

The Yellow-footed Green Pigeon is primarily olive-green in colour with "ashy grey above, uniformly bright yellow below, with a lilac patch on wing-shoulder and a conspicuous band across the blackish wings."[2] The yellow tufted feathers on the legs make it stand out from other green pigeons and give it its name.

They are found in the scrublands, forests, and cultivated area near towns and villages of southern Asia from Pakistan and India through to some sightings in Sri Lanka. They perch on banyan and peepul trees, feeding mainly on fruits and berries, especially peepul figs. Their colouration helps with camouflage amongst the trees. They are locally known as *Hariyal* in Hindi and Marathi, as well as *Haroli* in the latter. *Hariyal* means green, referring to the olive-green colour of the bird's feathers. The painter's intention to paint a scientific painting with accuracy and not simply as a decorative piece is visible through the attention to detail. Extraordinary attention is paid to the feathers and the changing colours across the bird's body. The male is shown with brighter colouration, seen particularly in the purple shoulder and the yellow feathers on the legs. The glistening eye is highlighted by the white ring around it.

Below the painting is an inscription in Persianised-Urdu saying "Haral" and the number 476 on the lower right. An inscription in ink in English reads "Purple shouldered Pigeon Lath. Sup. Strabo. B.C. male".

A.S.

13

A Female Yellow-Footed Green Pigeon, *Treron phoenicoptera*

18th century (c. 1775-1785)
Lucknow, India

Pen and ink with watercolour, heightened in gum arabic
47cm high, 28cm wide

As visible in this painting, the sexes are nearly identical, with the females being slightly duller and exhibiting a lighter purple patch. Here, the head of the male is slightly more rounded than that of the female. The juveniles look similar and lack the purple shoulder patch.[3]

These birds are almost exclusively arboreal, descending to the ground only to drink water. They typically congregate in flocks of a few birds or very large groups of not just their own kind, but also other green pigeons, hornbills and other fruit-eating birds, to enjoy feasts of banyan and peepul figs. Similar to parakeets, they climb onto branches, and often hang upside-down with great agility to eat the fruits.[4]

Below the painting is an inscription in Persianised-Urdu saying "Haral" and the number 475 on the lower right. An inscription in ink in English reads "Purple shouldered Pigeon. fe. B.C".

For further information on Claude Martin and the Lucknow Menagerie, see the exhibition catalogue Niall Hobhouse, *The Lucknow Menagerie: Natural History Drawings from the Collection of Claude Martin (1735-1800)*, May 2001.

A.S.

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2 Ali, Salim, and Ripley S. Dillon. *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, Together with Those of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Ceylon.* Vol. 3. 10 vols. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 1083

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

14

A Coromandel Cabinet on a Stand

c.1650-1680
Sri Lanka or Coromandel Coast

Solid ebony with small sections of Indian rosewood
Cabinet: 82cm high, 109cm wide, 56cm deep
Stand: 69cm high, 114cm wide, 56cm deep

Provenance: Thierry-Nicolas Tchakaloff Collection

A stunning carved ebony cabinet belonging to a very small group of ebony furniture that was made for local Dutch VOC officials in South India, the Coromandel Coast, Batavia and Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) in the second half of the seventeenth century (Terwen-de Loos 1985; Veenendaal 1985; Jaffer 2001; and Veenendaal 2014). This group of furniture is characterised by low relief carving with vegetal motifs, the blending of Christian and local imagery, the use of solid ebony for the turned, carved, or openwork elements, and plaques, combined with twist-turned components which were common in contemporary European furniture.

This two-door cabinet, finely carved in low-relief and profusely decorated throughout, has eleven drawers and sits on a separate stand that is fitted with two large drawers. All elements of the cabinet and stand are made from joined and pinned solid ebony (Ceylon ebony, *Diospyrus ebenum*), apart from two internal shelves in the cabinet which are probably Indian rosewood edged in ebony, and a top board of European pine in the stand, added later. The identical pouncing within the carving and their shared distinctive drawer construction confirms that the cabinet and stand are of a piece. The lavish use of ebony or *kaḷuvara* in Sinhala, an exotic hardwood highly prized in Europe since antiquity, illustrates the natural wealth of the Sri Lankan and south Indian forests. Both rare and expensive, ebony is also an extremely hard wood and difficult to work with, thus requiring a high level of skill in the production of a luxury piece such as this.

When open, the interior of the cabinet reveals its architectural form, with banks of drawers surrounding a central cupboard door which opens to the right. The door has two carved columns and a capital, further emphasising the architectural form of the cabinet. The top drawer is flanked on each side with three arched niches. While the interior sides of the cabinet doors are plain, the exterior of the cabinet and the fronts of the drawers are defined by the same delicate low-relief carving. The decoration of the exterior sides consists of a central field with two concentric scalloped medallions featuring vegetal scrolls in two-fold symmetry. These forms are known in Sinhala as *liya væla* and form the basis for much of the decorative repertoire used in Ceylonese and South Indian carving (Coomaraswamy 1956, pp. 98– 99).

Made by highly skilled, local craftsmen, and influenced by contemporary European elements, this early example is rare. The Ceylonese imagery across the carving suggests that it was most likely made in Sri Lanka or South India. It is likely that artisans would have travelled between the two regions (Veenendaal 1985, p. 24). Ebony cabinets on stands from this early period are very seldom found, as opposed to the more numerous contemporary chairs and settees, or smaller two-door table cabinets and caskets (Veenendaal 2014, p. 41).

A Sri Lankan mythological bird-like creature known in Sinhala as *serapeṇḍiyā* (also as *guruḷu pakṣiyā*), meaning 'ruler of serpents', and a double-headed eagle, known locally as *bhēruṇḍa pakṣiyā* (Coomaraswamy 1956, p. 85) are deployed throughout to ward off evil and protect the precious contents stored in this type of furniture from unscrupulous people. The *serapeṇḍiyā* has the head of a lion or *makarā*, albeit with the snout curled inwards, the body of a bird, and an S-shaped tail (Coomaraswamy 1956, p. 83). It appears as a pair of masterfully carved entangled birds with their tails transformed into vegetal scrolls over the fronts of the eight smaller drawers on the inside (flanking the cupboard door), and the larger two on the lower register, as well as on the stand on the fronts of its two large drawers and over its sides. The double-headed *bhēruṇḍa pakṣiyā* decorates the drawer in the first register of the cabinet. Highlighting the architectural design of the cabinet, the decoration of the central cupboard door consists of a niche covered by entablature enclosing what seems to be a European-derived heraldic shield with a combination of lozenges (the field divided into lozenge-shaped compartments) with *semy-de-lis* (the field strewn with *fleurs-de-lis*). On top of the 'shield' rises an oversized eagle with outstretched wings. Crowning the entablature, flanked by two Classical-shaped urns, there is a crowned cherub, also with open wings. The crowned cherub possibly points to the Christian identity of its owner.

The cabinet belongs to one of the least understood groups of so-called Indo-European furniture (Jaffer 2001, p. 130), partly on account of the misunderstanding by Horace Walpole (1717-97), the British writer and influential collector and connoisseur who

amassed a large collection of such ebony carved furniture in his palatial residence, Strawberry Hill, London, who believed that they were made in England. The presence of these types of ebony carved pieces of furniture in many aristocratic British houses was mistakenly associated with the Tudor period, and the use of twist-turning was believed to be typical of Elizabethan furniture. This may have led Walpole to infer that such pieces were of early English manufacture, an error that persisted throughout the nineteenth century.

A.S

Comparative material:

Recorded in British collections from at least the mid-eighteenth century, pieces such as openwork ebony chairs and tables, and more rarely large cabinets with stands like the present example, were brought to Britain in large quantities by officials of the East India Company and merchants. We know less about the subsequent fate of those pieces owned by Dutch VOC officials, apart from what is recorded in Dutch museums. The Coromandel Coast was certainly one of the most important centres for the production of such carved ebony furniture; an ebony table from the Coromandel Coast in the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS 73-1981), dated 1660-80, has the same low relief vegetal carving, and also features Christian-inspired motifs and carved *serapendiya* as well as parrots (Jaffer 2001, no. 2 p. 138-9). One somewhat similar cabinet on a stand made in Sri Lanka for the Dutch market (133.0 × 78.0 × 47.5 cm), set with Chinese-style silver fittings, belongs to the collection of the Kunstmuseum Den Haag (formerly the Gemeentemuseum), inv. 0540200, purchased from Beeling & Zn., Leeuwarden, who reportedly bought the piece in England (private conversation with Hartkamp-Jonxis). A more lavish cabinet on a stand, deploying similarly quintessential Ceylonese motifs (*liiya væla*), acquired many decades ago in England, belongs to the collection of the noted Dutch art historian Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, curator emeritus at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Later, from 1680-1740, we see the iconography of these cabinets (and caskets) shift towards more deeply carved large floral motifs, mixing European with local decorative repertoires, a development also seen on contemporary chintz textiles made in the Coromandel Coast for export.

With thanks to Mary Galloway, Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, Hugo Miguel Crespo, Thierry-Nicolas Tchakaloff and Peter Holmes.

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15

Sword Fight Between a Christian Horseman and an Indian Soldier

c. 1600
Mughal, India

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
12.4cm high, 14.8cm wide

Provenance: Collection of Lavinia, Marchioness of Cholmondeley (1921-2015), thence by descent

The scene depicted in this rare, unusual Mughal painting evokes contemporary depictions of *Saint James the Moor-slayer*. It may illustrate the story of the miraculous apparition of the Apostle Saint James the Great (d. 44 CE), also known in Spanish as *Santiago Matamoros* (Moor-slayer). According to Spanish legend, the saint appeared in 844 at the Battle of Clavijo (La Rioja) leading the Christian forces to victory over the Muslim invaders. In this painting the saint is portrayed riding triumphantly on a rearing white horse in combat with a Muslim foot soldier. Saint James's attire corresponds with items of clothing used by the Portuguese in India in the late sixteenth century, namely a long-skirted jerkin (*roupeta*) with a cuirass featuring a fleur-de-lys-type cross on the breastplate, loose-fitting trousers, boots and a burgonet decorated with plumes. Conversely, the barefoot "Moor" is depicted as a contemporary local Indian soldier wearing a long double-breasted, multi-laced coat (*jāma*), over short tight-fitting trousers (*shalwār*), a decorated waist sash (*paṭkā*) and a small turban (kulahdār).[1] While Saint James brandishes a European long sword with a lion-shaped pommel, the Indian soldier wields a *khāṇḍa*, a typical Hindu fighting sword fitted with a double-edged straight blade and basket hilt.[2] The "Moor" also sports a round convex black shield, a Hindu *dhāl* probably of leather decorated with dome-shaped gilt nails on the rim and a yak tail hair hanging from the centre.[3]

Albeit a specific Iberian iconography, the theme of *Saint James the Moor-slayer* circulated in print form from the late fifteenth century, while the Battle of Clavijo was depicted by Peeter Baltens and engraved by Antonio Tempesta around 1600.[4] After his victory in Tunis in 1535, the Emperor Charles V (r. 1519-1556) was himself portrayed as Saint James the Moor-Slayer by an unidentified Antwerp painter, now in the Worcester Art Museum, England (inv. 1934.64).[5] This was an allegorical painting charged with powerful political connotations, somewhat similar to those expressed in this Mughal painting. There are, however, some typical iconographic details that are absent from the present painting. Usually, the saint is depicted with the red Cross of Saint James, the symbol of the Order of Santiago, on his chest. In contrast, the golden fleur-de-lys-type cross depicted is that of the Order of Calatrava (Spanish, red) or the Order of Avis (Portuguese, green). The saint is also generally depicted trampling on his defeated, dismembered Muslim enemies, and not engaging with them in this somewhat more balanced manner. The intention of the painter may have been merely to illustrate the archetypical conflict between Christians and Muslims, and not an actual battle between Portuguese and local Indian soldiers, nor the story of *Santiago Matamoros*. Whatever the case, this depiction seems to be a peculiar choice of subject matter considering that it was most probably made at the painting workshop of a Muslim ruler, likely at the Mughal imperial workshops during the later years of the Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) or the early years of Jahangir's rule (r. 1605-1627).

The first meaningful contacts between Europeans and Mughals began in 1573 after Akbar's conquest of Gujarat.[6] The Emperor encountered the first Portuguese in Surat, and as a result, decided to send a mission to Goa in 1575 led by Haji Habibullah.[7] For two years the many artists and craftsmen who accompanied him learned new crafts which they ultimately introduced to the imperial workshops. The mission was soon followed by that of Tahir Muhammad in 1580-1581 with the same orders to bring back specific articles in addition to expert artisans and musicians, satisfying the Emperor's desire for "objects of wonder and rarity" and qualified craftsmen to produce them. This, in turn, fuelled by the Emperor's religious curiosity, led to the first of several Jesuit missions from Goa to the Mughal court, starting in 1582.[8] By bringing prints and paintings that were shown to royal artists who would copy them at the Emperor's request, the Jesuit priests with their novel imagery helped to infuse new artistic ideas with lasting consequences for the development of a Mughal artistic idiom. While some of the works produced at this time faithfully copy the European models provided by the prints and paintings, the present composition seems to have been only loosely inspired by these examples, mostly in the depiction of the European soldier and his horse.

Given the Jesuit connection, it is not surprising that the closest parallel that could be found, seemingly used as a model by the Mughal artist (likely of local Indian origin) is the religious print made by Adriaen Collaert (c. 1560-1618) after a design by Jan van der Straet, better known as Johannes Stradanus (1523-1605), and published c. 1580-1600 by Philips Galle, that depicts *Saint George Killing the Dragon*. Although the more vigorous pose of the horse is not followed by the Indian painter, nor the position of the right hand holding the long sword, both the overall attire of the painted

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European horseman, the cross on his chest, the position of the left hand holding the reins firmly against his chest, the hanging dagger and the plumes adorning both his helmet and the horse's head, all match closely those on the print. In addition, Stradanus' famous series on the breeds of horses belonging to John of Austria, the illegitimate son of the Emperor Charles V, entitled *Equile Ioannis Austriaci* published around 1578, may have provided the model (possibly *Gallicus*) on which the Mughal artist based the design of the horse in this painting. Although it seems the Indian soldier was not modelled after any known print, as it is unlikely that depiction of this specific type of clothing would be known to European artists, it should be emphasised that the realistic treatment and careful shading of his billowing *jāma* are similar to that of the European horseman's clothes.[9] The naturalistic rendering, style and vibrant colouring of the present painting are reminiscent of well-known compositions more closely based on European printed models. These include, for example, Kesu Das' *Joseph Telling his Dream to his Father*, painted around 1590 and based on a 1544 engraving by Georg Pencz; and a painting depicting *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* by the artist Nini based on an engraving by Hieronymus Wierix from c. 1599-1605.[10]

Probably once set on an album page, this painting, with its careful execution, detailed depiction of items of clothing, arms and armour, and unexpected iconography, stands as a distinctive and historically significant testimony to the religious and artistic interactions between Europe and Mughal India in the so-called Age of Discovery.

H.C.

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Mika Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism. Artistic Encounters between Europe and Asia at the Courts of India, 1580-1630*, Leiden, Brill, 2018.

Som Prakash Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978.

Notes:

1 On these items of clothing, see Som Prakash Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978, pp. 47-53.

2 On the *khāṇḍa* sword, see Robert Elgood, *Hindu Arms and Ritual. Arms and Armour from India, 1400-1865*, Delft, Eburon Academic Publishers, 2004, pp. 79-100. On the use of mostly Indian-origin arms at the Mughal court, see Robert Elgood, "Mughal Arms and the Indian Court Tradition", *Jewellery Studies*, 10 (2004), pp. 76-98.

3 Round shields embellished with the fluff of yaks' tails were used by the Mughal guards. See Prakash Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978, pp. 85-86.

4 A copy of this engraving belongs to the collection of the British Museum, London, inv. X,3.83.

5 See Jan van Herwaarden, "The Emperor Charles V as Santiago Matamoros", *Peregrinations. Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 3.3 (2012), pp. 83-106.

6 See Jorge Flores, *The Mughal Padshah. A Jesuit Treatise on emperor Jahangir's Court and Household*, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2016, passim, pp. 10-21; Jorge Flores, *Unwanted Neighbours. The Mughals, the Portuguese, and Their Frontier Zones*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2018.

7 See Mika Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism. Artistic Encounters between Europe and Asia at the Courts of India, 1580-1630*, Leiden, Brill, 2018, pp. 37-38; and Hugo Miguel Crespo, "Indian diamonds and the Portuguese during the rise of the Mughal empire", in Usha R. Balakrishnan (ed.), *Diamonds Across Time. Facets of Mankind, London*, The World Diamond Museum, 2020, pp. 201-203.

8 For the artistic aspects of this interaction, see Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul. Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of India, 1580-1630*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1998; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, "Between Religions: Christianity in a Muslim Empire", in Nuno Vassallo e Silva, Jorge Flores (eds.), *Goa and the Great Mughal* (cat.), Lisbon - London, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Scala Publishers, 2004, pp. 148-61; Asok Kumar Das, "Prince Salim and Christian Art", in Nuno Vassallo e Silva, Jorge Flores (eds.), *Goa and the Great Mughal* (cat.), Lisbon - London, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Scala Publishers, 2004, pp. 162-69; and Milo C. Beach, "Visions of the West in Mughal Art", in Nuno Vassallo e Silva, Jorge Flores (eds.), *Goa and the Great Mughal* (cat.), Lisbon - London, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Scala Publishers, 2004, pp. 169-89.

9 On such subtle differences, see Kavita Singh, *Real Birds in Imagined Gardens. Mughal Painting between Persia and Europe*, Los Angeles, The Getty Research Institute, 2017.

10 The first in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (inv. IN.41.2), and the second in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. IM.139A-1921). Nonetheless, both compositions follow very closely their European model. See Asok Kumar Das, "Prince Salim and Christian Art", in Nuno Vassallo e Silva, Jorge Flores (eds.), *Goa and the Great Mughal* (cat.), Lisbon - London, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Scala Publishers, 2004, pp. 166-68.

16

Company School Painting of Two Ducks

19th century
India

Watercolour on paper
29cm high, 18cm wide

Provenance: UK private collection since the early 1990s

This wonderfully detailed study truly encapsulates the inquisitive nature and unique character of the Muscovy duck. At the top of the folio, the male has a white neck and wing feathers while his head, nape and back shimmer with iridescent black plumage. His freckled grey beak fades to pink, with a dash of black at the tip. Distinctive red wattles surround the bill and eye; these markings typify the breed and are more pronounced amongst the males. Below, the female is primarily white, with elegant dashes of black on her crown, back and tail feathers. Demonstrating a closely observed familiarity with the breed, the artist has presented the male resting on his haunches while the female appears with her head raised as her sharp eyes keep watch over the pair. Originating from South America, Muscovy ducks were brought to Europe in the 16th century on Columbus's ship, the *Santa Maria*. In 1612, the Mughal Emperor Jahangir was presented with a bird he'd never seen before. Muqurrab Khan, a high-ranking court official gifted him a turkey, which he had acquired from Portuguese merchants in Goa. It is possible that Muscovy ducks were brought to India around this time, as animals and birds from North and South America arrived on Spanish and Portuguese vessels and made fine, and sometimes extraordinary, diplomatic gifts. The present work would have appeared within an album of 'Company School' paintings, as Europeans working in India employed the most experienced local artists to record the likenesses of flora and fauna. These paintings were then bound into albums that formed treasured private collections, or were donated to museums and scholarly organisations.

C.H.

17

Company School Painting of Two Ducks (with Persian Inscription)

19th century
India

Watercolour on paper
29cm high, 18cm wide

Provenance: UK private collection
since the early 1990s

Exceptionally finely painted, these studies provide a wonderful celebration of the natural world's capacity for exquisite pattern and delicate colouration.

The Eurasian Widgeon appears with a chestnut head, creamy crown and deep hazel eyes. Buff feathers delineated with soft tawny bands run from chest to flank. The back and marginal coverts are exquisitely decorated with wavy black lines, while the rest of the wings comprise of brown, black and white hues. These large dabbling ducks may be found across Eurasia, favouring northern climes for breeding and the warmth of Southeast Asia and Central Africa during the winter months. Occupying wetland habitats, such as marshes, they dabble for aquatic plants or graze vegetation on land.

Immediately below is a charming and intriguing study of a black-headed duck, with dashes of 'forget me not' blue from the top of the beak to the crown. The deep hazel eyes stand out against an outline of white feathers. A thicker band of white forms a semi-circle around the eyes, creating a distinctive and extremely elegant pattern. This is further accentuated by a vivid wash of electrifying teal on the bird's cheeks. Grey feathers along the nape of the neck appear to cascade down into creamy and deep brown lobes, which run along the underside of the bird. The wings are auburn with the speculum demarcated by a further wash of exquisite teal. Rendered with such fine brushstrokes, the soft texture of the feathers is almost palpable. As this species is currently unknown, it may signify that the bird has become extinct since the painting was undertaken. Sadly, habitat decline and hunting have eradicated certain breeds of Indian ducks, a recent notable example being the pink-headed duck (*Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*), which has not been sighted since the 1950s. The Persian inscription beside the wigeon reads "چیرن (*chīran*)" or "چیری (*chīrī*)" and is numbered "94". The bird below is numbered "95". At the top of the folio appears the page number "132".

C.H.

18

Equestrian Portrait of Rao Ram Singh I of Kota

c. 1700
Kota, India

Ink, heightened with white and with some wash on paper
33.5cm high, 34cm wide

Provenance: King Gustav Adolf VI of Sweden, inventory no. 542

This is possibly a portrait of Rao Ram Singh I of Kota who reigned from 1696 to 1707.There is another drawing that is identified as Ram Singh in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum in Hyderabad that sports similar features (see reference below). The other drawing is not as delicately detailed as this charming sketch which is very carefully drawn with an array of exquisite details. The horse is a real *tour de force* as is the carefully rendered costume of the ruler. The delicate hairs of the horse's mane fanning out and the scarf wrapped around Ram Singh's shoulder swinging behind him give a sense of swift movement to the drawing. Ram Singh's hand holding the reins is treated with great delicacy and the elephant head on the pommel of the saddle is simply exquisite. The artist has added some white pigment to the face of the rider, giving it a naturalistic look. White pigment also highlights part of his garment while his turban is wholly white. Ochre is used to enhance the silhouette of the face and a pinkish wash has been added to the saddle blanket giving more naturalism to the whole, thus enlivening the drawing. Although facing to the left, a painting contemporary to ours in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (B86D13), depicting Maharaja Anup Singh of Bikaner and dating from the last quarter of the seventeenth century, has a similar feel and pose with the ruler on horseback holding a lance. In our drawing the end of the lance has been torn away. A similar horse is also seen in a Deccani painting "A Mounted Prince holding a Falcon" in the David Collection, Copenhagen (13/2015) which also dates from the same period.

See also Andrew Topsfield and Jagdish Mittal, *Rajasthani Drawings in the Jagdish and Kamla Museum of Indian Art*, Hyderabad: Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, 2015, no. 42, pp. 96-97 (76.635).

The drawing bears the stamp reading: "Udaipur Wala Mewar" in the centre with "Nur MD Ibrahim Silver Merchant" around the border.

R.J.D.B.

19

Red Sandstone Jali

17th/18th century
North India

Red sandstone
125cm high, 69cm wide

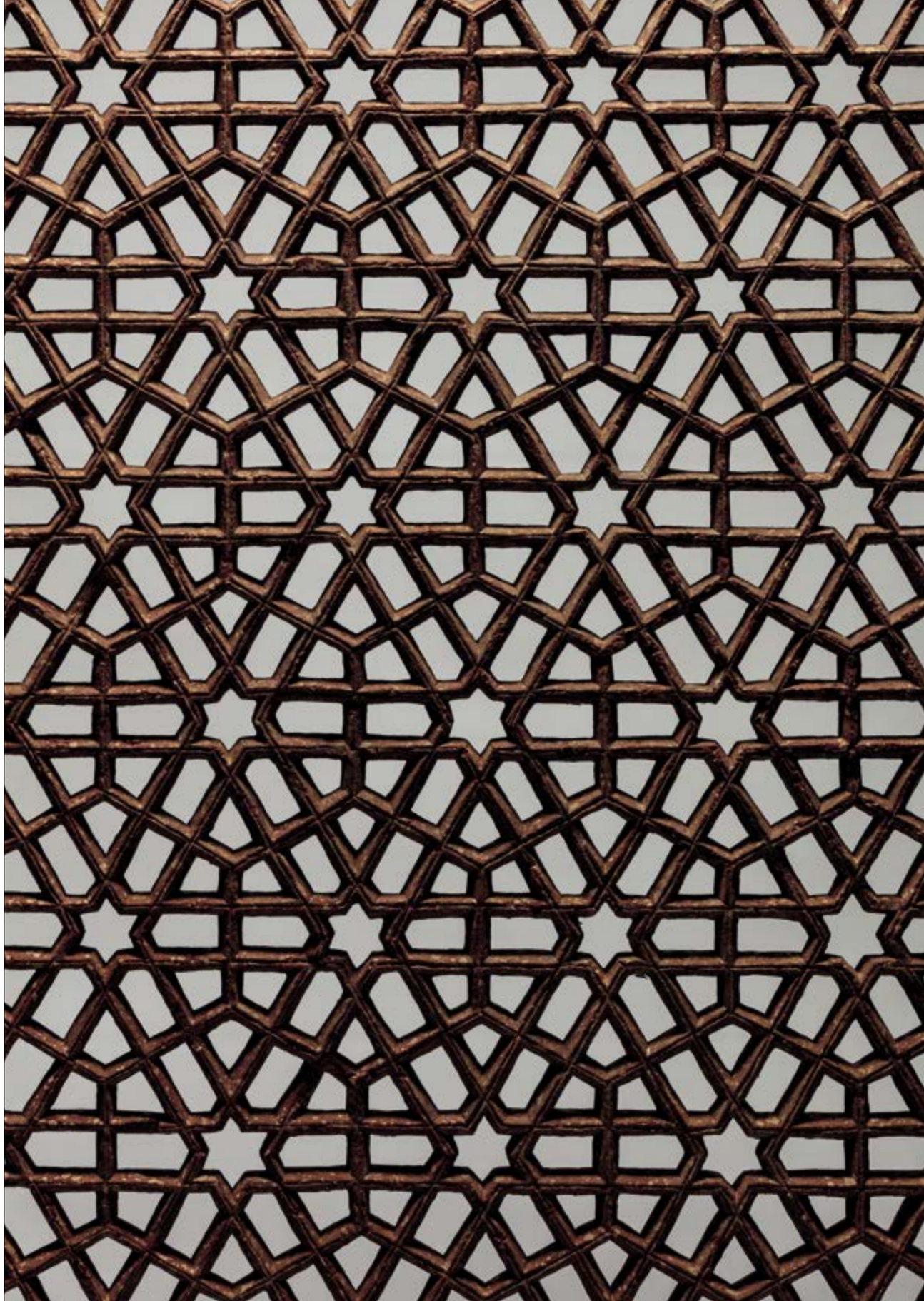
Provenance: Purchased from Sotheby's New York, March 1988

This red sandstone *jālī* or screen of arched form features latticework in a design that combines different geometric patterns. The design consists of hexagons with central six-pointed stars, which are the intersections of horizontal and diagonal parallel lines. The border is plain and frames the entire central design panel.

Jālīs were commonly found in Mughal Indian architecture, serving as windows or dividers between rooms. They had the practical function of keeping the interior of a building cool, as the holes in the screen allowed for air to circulate. Additionally, the light passing through the carved geometric decoration resulted in beautiful shadows displayed across the walls and floors, which would move and shift throughout the day. The use of red sandstone was particularly favoured from as early as the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1550-1605).

The geometric design used for this screen finds its parallel in the panels from Dīwān-e Khass, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra as well as the panels from the Red Fort, Delhi.

S.L.



20

Bhairavi Ragini (A Miniature of Ladies Worshipping a Lingam)

18th century (c. 1760-70)
Provincial Mughal, possibly Awadh, India

Gouache heightened with gold on paper
18.4 cm high, 12.7 cm wide

Provenance: From the collection of Betsy Salinger

A charming rendition of *Bhairavi Ragini*, depicting a maiden kneeling before a simply decorated *lingam* shrine resting on a marble platform dedicated to the god Shiva, also known as Bhairava, in a terrace during the early hours of the morning with her attendants. The painting is set within stunning gold arabesque margins and border. According to some, Bhairavi is a manifestation of Parvati, the wife of the god Shiva. The raag Bhairava and *Bhairavi ragini* are traditionally performed in the morning and can be associated with certain devotional songs. The music from this raag is considered peaceful, soulful and devotional. All these themes are reflected in the imagery in this painting, as discussed below. Extraordinary attention to detail has been lavished on the trees in the background and the flower beds in the foreground.

The maiden is adorned with pearl, gold and gemstone jewels across her bare chest, wrists and head, and is wrapped in a simple yellow sari with a red and gold chevron border. The jewellery indicates her high status along with her multiple female companions. Her hands are seen folded in prayer to the black marble *lingam* set in a white marble *yoni*. In front of her lie a bowl of flowers, a bottle, a saucer and an incense burner, all accoutrements of ritual worship. Bhairavi's handmaidens are beautifully dressed in patterns and pearls and can be seen holding sweet offerings for the icon, and a *haar* or *maala* of white flowers; they are clearly dressed differently from Bhairavi. Her clothes symbolise both her piety and the fact that she is the main subject in this painting, separating her from the handmaidens. As a manifestation of Parvati, she is serene, beautiful and distinct from them, and it is only she who is depicted having a clear relationship to and interaction with the *lingam*. The painting clearly captures the devotion, the tranquillity of the early hours of the morning on the candlelit terrace and a world just waking up, a morning yet undisturbed. "It blurs the boundaries between romance—as experienced by the ideal lovers Shiva and Parvati—and piety toward the divine."[1]

A painting by Fateh Chand c. 1735 in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum in Jaipur has an almost identical composition (see Randhawa and Galbraith 1968, p.10).

The figures in the present painting bear similarities to those in the *ragamala* painting in the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.42-1996), signed by Fateh Chand. This painting and the *ragamala* illustration in the Victoria & Albert Museum have identical gold arabesque margins. *Bhairavi ragini* paintings in varying styles and degrees of quality can be found in addition to the Victoria and Albert Museum, in the British Museum (1920,0917,0.12.29; 1973,0917,0.3), the Metropolitan Museum (58.1.1), the Harvard Art Museum (1972.358) and the Yale University Art Museum (1939.546), to name but a few.

On the reverse of the painting is a Persian quatrain in *nastaliq* set in a gold background with floral decorative work and within blue and orange margins with floral scrollwork in gold.
The Persian quatrain reads:

ای نسخه نامه الهی که تویی
وی آینه جمال شاهی که تویی
بیرون ز تو نیست هر چه در عالم هست
در خود بطلب هر آنچه خواهی که تویی

'O you who are the transcription of God's scripture
And the mirror of his majestic beauty,
Whatever exists in the world is not outside of you.
Seek in yourself anything you want, for you are that.'

(Translation by Reza Saberi, *A Thousand Years of Persian Rubáiyát: An Anthology of Quatrains from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century along with the Original Persian*, Ibex Publishers, Bethesda, 2000, p. 214).

The quatrain is attributed variously to Majd al-Din Baghdadi (d. 1211) (see *ibid.* and Jamal Khalil Shirvani, *Nuzhat al-majalis*, ed. M.A. Riyahi, Maharat Publishers, Tehran, 1375/1996, no. 1, p. 141) and Jalal al-Din Rumi (Jalal al-Din Rumi, *Kulliyat-i Shams ya Divan-i kabir*, ed. Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar, vol. 8, 4th edition, Amir Kabir, Tehran, 1378/2000, no. 1921, p. 323).

Below the quatrain, a signature:
ذره بی مقدار نور الله
'The worthless speck, Nurullah'

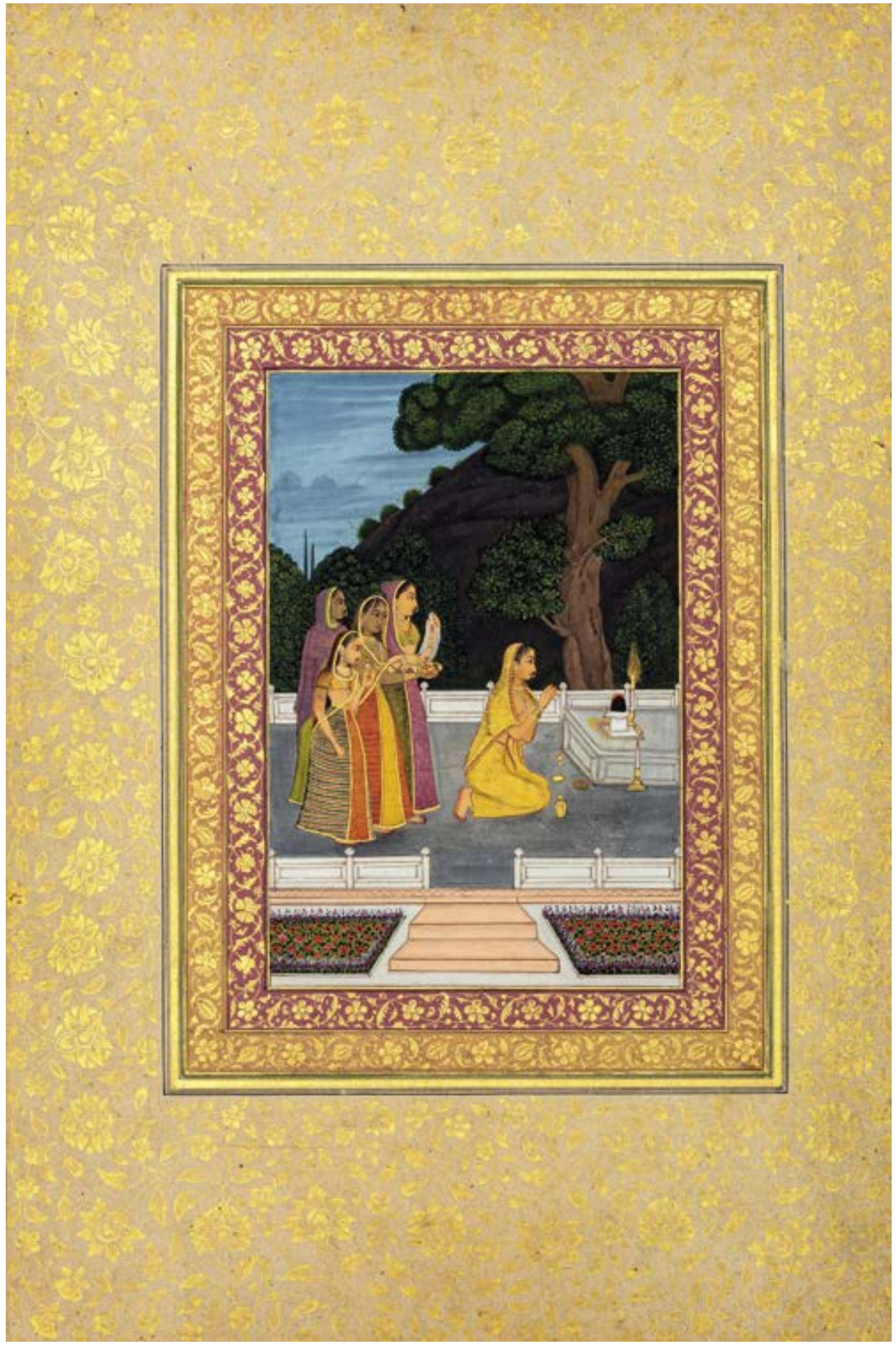
Ghulam Muhammad Dihlawi Haft-Qalami reports in his biography of Indian calligraphers, *Tadhkira-yi Khushnawisan*, that Hafiz Nurullah was a calligrapher unmatched in the style developed by 'Abd al-Rashid Daylami. The author in fact met him in the calligrapher's house in Lucknow during the reign of Nawab Asaf ud-Dawla (1775-1797) and was deeply impressed by his humility and the purity of his character as well as by his calligraphic mastery. Nurullah showed him a copy of the Haftband of Mulla Hasan Kashi that he was copying from the hand of 'Abd al-Rashid for Asaf ud-Dawla. About it, Ghulam Muhammad reports:

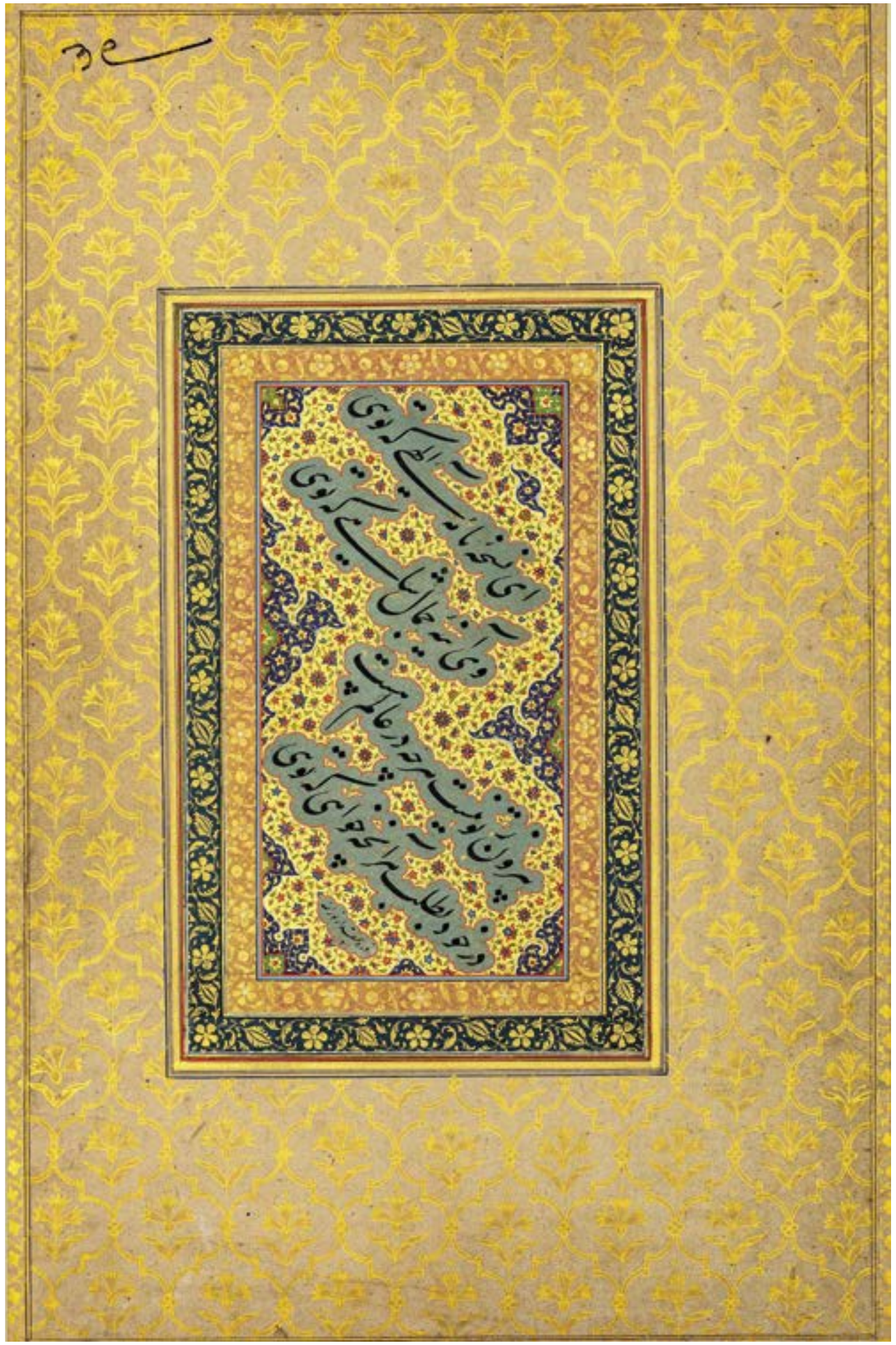
"What should I say? He had wrought in it such calligraphic magic – it was a garden and a springtime, the sight of which the viewer could never be sated of.'

A.S.

Notes:

1 https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/38907





21

A Silver Overlay Bidri Ewer

17th century
India

Silver and brass overlay
26cm high

Provenance: UK private collection

Rising from a circular foot through the round bulbous belly, this ewer has a tapering neck with “S” shaped handle and slightly curved spout. It has a pronounced collar that connects to a flaring mouth. The ewer retains its original, hinged lid which has a bud-shaped finial. The decorative scheme comprises an overall pattern on the body made up of intersecting dark straight lines with silver dots, which create lozenge shapes that are inlaid with silver. As the lines extend to the wider circumference area, the lozenge shapes also become bigger. Inside each silver lozenge is the same stylised flower motif, highlighted by brass inlay. The decoration on the foot and spout are identical to that of the belly. The neck and mouth have more floral and leaf silver inlaid motifs, while the pronounced collar exhibits a silver inlaid chevron pattern. The form of the object, its high-quality craftsmanship, in addition to stylistic comparisons with several Bidri ewers, including a seventeenth century set consisting of a Bidri ewer and basin (Zebrowski, p.168, cat. 238), indicate that our ewer was produced in the seventeenth century.

The bidri technique first appeared in the early seventeenth century, although its origin is so far uncertain. An account suggests the technique was introduced to the Bahmanī kingdom of the Deccan from Iran. Although by the eighteenth century, many bidri-producing centres can be identified, it is still difficult to assign most objects to a specific production centre. Bidri is the adjectival form of Bidar, a city that was a part of the Bahmanī kingdom and also where the first reference to this craft was documented. Bidri objects are mainly composed of zinc, a soft metal that can be easily engraved to receive complex inlay patterns. Once the object is engraved, the piece would be inlaid with silver or brass, sometimes both.

S.L.

Reference:

Zebrowski, Mark. *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India.* London: Alexandria Press in association with Laurence King, 1997.

Stronge, Susan. *Bidri Ware: Inlaid Metalwork from India.* London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1985.

22

Indian Glass Huqqa Base

18th-19th century
India

Glass with silver and coloured glass appliqué
17cm high, 14cm diameter

Provenance: An English stately home at least from the 19th century

This huqqa base is made of transparent glass, which has a bell-shaped body, a slim neck, a drip-guard and a slightly flaring rim. Apart from the lower neck, which is free of decoration, the entire surface has a decorative scheme containing silver appliqué that forms distinctive shapes. The rim has vegetal motifs pieced together by silver beads framing red and green glass, while the central band of the body is made up of repeating shapes called "peacock feathers" with circular green or red glass beads set in the centre of each shape. The shoulder and foot have concentric bands decorated with leaf patterns attached to a wavy stem. The leaves have teardrop shaped green and red glass beads set in the centre.

Although the shape on our huqqa base was commonly produced in India in the eighteenth or nineteenth century (see the comparative material below), the decorative scheme involving the silver beads seems to be unique.

S.L.

Comparative material:

Corning Museum of Glass, New York (69.6.5).

Carboni, Stefano. *Glass from Islamic Lands*. London: Thames & Hudson in association with the al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait National Museum, 2001. (Cat.104c, LNS 11 G, p.382.)

Dikshit, Moreshwar Gangadhar. *History of Indian Glass. Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji Endowment Lectures*. Bombay: University of Bombay, 1969. (Plate XIII, NMD 8:67)

23

Gujarat Mother-of-Pearl Dish

17th century
India

Mother-of-pearl
18cm diameter

Provenance: Belgian private collection

The mother-of-pearl dish is of shallow rounded form with a short foot and cusped edges. Both the interior and exterior of the dish are comprised of pinned sections of mother-of-pearl fashioned from both lobed and rectangular pieces. The central well of the dish forms a stylised rosette while the reverse of the dish has a geometric pattern. The rectangular and lobed pieces are secured by brass bands and pins.

There are two similar objects in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Accession Numbers 4283-1857 and 4282-1857. According to Jaffer, when the museum acquired these mother-of-pearl pieces in 1857, they were assumed to be Italian in origin because of their European form (Jaffer, p. 39). Documentation from The Green Vault in Dresden, Germany, proves that Gujarati dishes of this style were imported to Europe from Gujarat as early as the second quarter of the sixteenth century (Jaffer, p. 39). The commissioning of these particular wares is generally associated with Portuguese traders who were the earliest European merchants in western India (Jaffer, p. 39). One of the examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Accession Number 4283-1857, shows a very similar rosette in the central well. However, ours has a concentric band between the flower-head and the petals.

S.L.

Literature:

Jaffer, A. *Luxury Goods from India: The Art of the Indian Cabinet-Maker*, V&A Publications, London, 2002.

24

Floor-Spread or Coverlet with Floral Embroidery

18th century, Probably Deccan, India

Cotton, silk and metal thread
204cm long, 130cm wide

Provenance: From the collection of Henry-Rene d'Allemagne

This rectangular floor-spread or coverlet with elaborate floral designs is embroidered with long floats of coloured floss silk, with the entire ground hidden by a couched metal-wrapped thread to create a shimmering effect. The outer band of the spread is made up of undulating foliage of inward and outward facing flower heads, followed by a thin border of smaller floral motifs in a similar manner. The central lozenge-shaped cartouche as well as the four corner spandrels contain large compositions of carnations, with further floral motifs densely applied throughout the background. The red and blue flower outlines strike a balancing contrast against the golden background, creating a refined overall composition.

This type of embroidery was made in the Deccan in the eighteenth century for both the local courts and for export to Europe. The embroidery is noticeably different in style and technique from its Mughal counterparts, which are predominantly in fine chain stitch done with tightly twisted silk thread on a cotton ground. This piece contains distinctive Deccani elements, including the satin stitch in floss silk and the background covered completely with metal-wrapped thread embroidery. It is likely that this coverlet was made for the local courts, as it is in a format ultimately derived from Islamic book covers, with a central medallion and corner motifs (Crill:2015). A slightly larger embroidered textile of identical composition in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, is said to have belonged to Tipu Sultan of Mysore, who died at the battle of Seringapatam in 1799.

S.L.

Comparative materials:

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London (784-1864; IM.2-1912); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (05.25.2); The Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto (T94.0829); The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (95.79)

Reference:

Crill, Rosemary, ed. *The Fabric of India*. London: V&A Publishing, 2015. p. 123 & Illustration 134, p. 129

25

A Gold Overlaid Punch Dagger (Katar)

18th century
India

Steel, gold and ruby
46cm long

Provenance: UK private collection since 1975

The triangular blade of this punch dagger has a watered-steel centre with bright steel edges and a slightly reinforced point. There are raised gold flower motifs at both sides of the forte. The hilt of iron has gilt trellis pattern throughout; it is of an "H" shape with two slender, straight arms attached to the double baluster-shaped grip. In between the double grip are two interlocking semi-circles ending in droplets that connect the two grips at the thinnest points. Precious stones, rubies, are set in the arms and the grip of the hilt and arranged in the shapes of three-, four-, five- and seven-petal flowers.

This type of punch dagger originated in the sixteenth century in the Indian region. It remained a popular style of accessory for armed men in India for several centuries; the punch daggers were depicted in manuscript paintings between the sixteenth and nineteenth century. This particular dagger was most likely produced in the eighteenth century as the raised flower motif at the forte and the fine decorations at the hilt can be best compared to *katars* from the eighteenth century (e.g. The Furusiyya Art Foundation, Catalogue entries 192 and 193).

S.L.

Comparative Material & References:

Folsach, Kjeld von, Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel. *Fighting, Hunting, Impressing - Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500-1850*. Copenhagen: Strandberg Publishing, 2021. Cats.41, 100, 101, 127 and 128.

The Arts of the Muslim Knight: The Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection. Milano: New York: Skira, 2008. Cats.192 and 193.

26

Indian Quiver with Arrows and Bow Holder

18th-19th century
India

Leather, textile, wooden arrows
with steel tips
73cm long

Provenance: European private collection
(The painter Joules Larcher 1849-1920,
thence by descent)

The leather bodies of the quiver and the bowcase are covered with cloth, which is in turn embroidered with silver threads and sequins. The embroidery pattern forms a lattice design, which contains circular shapes bordered by foliated bands. To the side of the leather cases are suspension cords and loops. The bamboo arrows are dyed in green and red bands towards at both ends and have steel points.

Archery was commonly practised in Mughal India, as seen from Mughal manuscript paintings that depict hunting and battle scenes. For example, in the scene depicting "the Battle of Shahbarghan" in a Padshahnama (Chronicle of the Emperor) at the Metropolitan Museum (1986.283), a group of archers is shown aiming at their opponents, where the quivers are also tied to the archers' waists.

An almost identical quiver with a bowcase is illustrated in Missillier (Paris, 1988; pp.108-9, Cat.103). It has the same green colour cloth with silver thread embroidery. A series of embroidered Indian quivers, with similar shape and decorative scheme as ours, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (3309:1/(IS); 889-1852; 3437&A/1toA/4/(IS).

S.L.

Reference:

Missillier, Philippe and Howard Ricketts. *Splendeur des armes orientales*. Paris: ACTE-EXPO, 1988.

27

A Fine Chiselled Gold Overlaid Indian Shield

17th century
India

Chiselled steel shield with four fretted bosses
and gold damascene decoration
52cm diameter

This shallow bowl-shaped shield of dark grey watered steel has a wide border filled with floral arabesques in fine gold *koftgari* (steel overlaid with gold) work. A smaller *koftgari* circle in the field encircles four bosses and is attached to four lozenge-shaped gold cartouches with floral arabesque designs.

Stylistically, the shield's vegetal and floral arabesque pattern resonates with a seventeenth century Rajasthan shield in the National Museum of India (58.45/13). The four bosses on both shields are almost identical, surrounded with the same gilded relief designs. Additionally, the borders on both shields are divided in the same way, with three different types of floral arabesques filling each section.

For other comparative examples, see the seventeenth century shield from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2015.509); and three seventeenth century shields, the Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection (Inv. RB-131, Inv. RB-132 and Inv. R-876).

S.L.

Reference:

The Arts of the Muslim Knight: The Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection.
Milan: New York: Skira, 2008.

28

A Twelve-Panelled Kangxi Lacquer Screen with a Dutch Hunting Scene

Kangxi period (1662-1722)
China

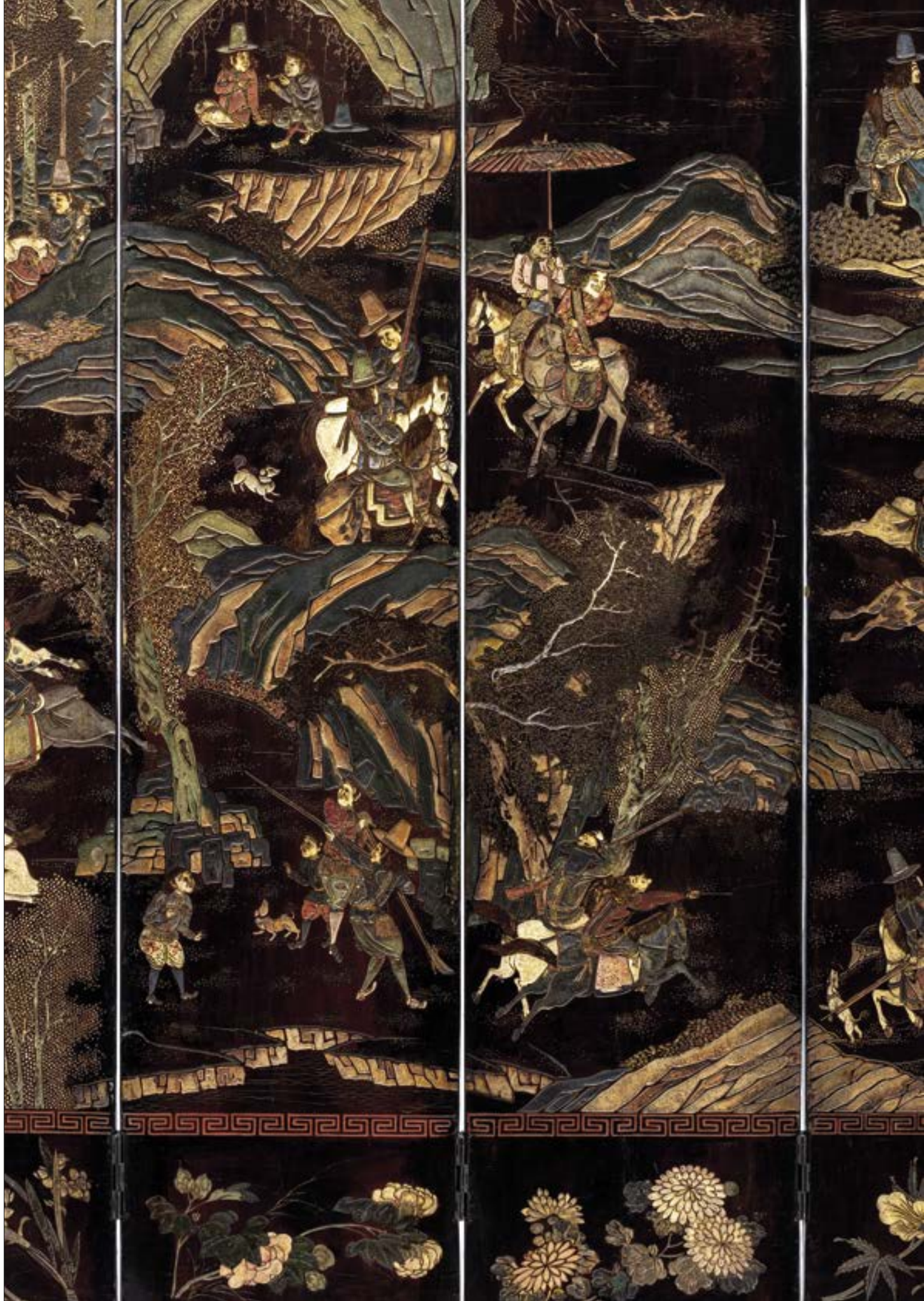
Carved, incised and lacquered wood, painted; brass fittings
119.4cm high, 266.4cm wide (open), 22.2cm wide (each panel)

Provenance: From the Collection of Dalva Brothers
New York City, USA

This unique twelve-leaf folding screen, made in late seventeenth-century in South China for the local market, belongs to a rare group of about eight other known lacquered screens depicting Dutchmen. Of medium size, it is finely carved and vibrantly decorated on the front with a continuous scene depicting male figures, mostly on horseback, in European attire pursuing leisure activities (hunting tigers) on a rocky landscape, framed by the "one hundred antiques" motif. Screens such as this were made using the *kuancai* lacquering technique; the iconographic elements were carved through the built-up coats of dark lacquer (or in previously reserved areas) on each of the twelve wooden screen leaves, usually made from teak. Tinted lacquer and oil paints were then applied to the cut areas, producing a brilliant, polychromatic effect on the dark background. Made from twelve wooden panels joined together by hinges, the continuous landscape of this folding screen indicates that it was intended to be viewed from a distance. Like other known examples, the outer borders of the present screen are decorated with the "one hundred antiques" motif interspersed with floral arrangements. The "one hundred antiques" is the most common decorative motif found on lacquer screens of this type, as may be seen on a twelve-leaf screen in the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (inv. Bc.1260), depicting a scene of Dutchmen in a tribute procession. The border of the present screen is framed by narrow friezes; a Greek fret in red bordering the central panel and an outer frieze with floral scrolls and stylised lotus flowers. The back of the screen is undecorated and thus, probably intended to be set against a wall. A mention should be made of a much smaller ten-leaf screen (55.5 x 158.5 cm) which also has an undecorated back, in the collection of the Casa-Museu Medeiros e Almeida in Lisbon.

The production of the so-called 'Coromandel lacquer', or *kuancai*, emerged in sixteenth-century China. Aimed primarily at the domestic market, such screens were frequently gifted to high-ranking Chinese officials. Producing large and highly decorative screens more economically was both an innovation and a challenge for Chinese lacquer craftsmen as these were intended to replace the more expensive and time-consuming screens with inlaid mother-of-pearl decorations. The sixteenth-century Chinese handbook on lacquering techniques titled *Xiushilu*, refers to the technique as *kuancai*, literally "cut out colour" or "engraved polychrome", which goes back to the Song dynasty. Up to thirty coats of lacquer could be applied, each layer decorated with pictures, incised and painted to create a design contrasting against a dark background. With a relatively short manufacturing history, it enjoyed its heyday from ca. 1650 to ca. 1700, declining thereafter. This type of lacquerware was flourishing during the reign of the Kangxi emperor (1662-1722), and was exported to Europe, referred to as "Bantam work" (Bantam was a Javanese port) in late seventeenth-century Britain and as *vernis de Coromandel* or "Coromandel lacquer" in French sources of the late eighteenth century. Both large and smaller highly decorated screens, alongside cabinets and other pieces of lacquered furniture, were shipped to European markets via the Coromandel Coast of south-east India, where the Dutch East Indies Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC) and its European rivals had their commercial bases. The term "Coromandel lacquer", which is used to identify *kuancai* lacquers, thus derives from the mistaken assumption that this trading port was the source of these objects. Rather, the screens seem to have been produced in South China where several traditional lacquer manufacturing centres were located.

The majority of the surviving screens are either decorated with figures in pavilions, based on popular Chinese themes, or feature landscapes or animals and birds amongst trees. Rare examples such as the present screen show European rather than Chinese figures. Their iconography has been identified as depicting a delegation of the VOC which was sent to China in 1666 to petition the Kangxi emperor for a new trading post on the Chinese mainland. Like the Namban screens made in pairs depicting the arrival of the annual Portuguese carrack in Nagasaki, Japan and their procession into the city, the Dutch are portrayed almost as caricatures, with their long curling hair, oval eyes and hooked noses. There seem to be two iconographical types within this production: one which depicts the Dutch delegation hunting in the hills among trees, with Dutch ships and Chinese junks at one side, and the other depicting the tribute procession of the Dutch delegation. Examples of the first type include a large twelve-leaf screen (321.0 x 624.0 cm) in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. BK-1959-99) and another (244.0 x 552.0 cm) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (inv. 1975.333); both have depictions of Dutch trading vessels. Examples of the second type include the aforementioned screen in Copenhagen (267.0 x 583.0 cm) and the small screen in Lisbon. It is likely that the two types, forming part of the same story, were produced as pairs. The absence of Dutch vessels depicted in the present screen may suggest that it was not intended to portray a specific Dutch delegation, but probably made in the wake of the actual event as a general depiction of leisure activities by Europeans in South China during this period of intense cultural and artistic confluence. Their shared iconography, decorative repertoire and high level of craftsmanship suggest that all the screens in this group depicting Europeans were made in the same region or workshop. The much smaller, ten-leaf screen in Lisbon, mentioned above, and the present screen provide us with a better understanding of the different sizes available and the diverse intended uses of these screens. Unlike other Coromandel screens, they were most likely produced for the Chinese market, ending up in European collections



between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It should be emphasised that the Namban screens were made for Japanese merchants and ship owners. It has even been suggested that two screens with European figures, one in Copenhagen and the other in a private Belgian collection, probably formed a pair, and may have been produced for the imperial court in Beijing.

In contrast to the Namban screens, exotic and colourful Coromandel screens made for export were in high demand by the European upper classes hungry for novelties from the East in the late seventeenth century. Alongside their use for decorating and partitioning domestic spaces, European cabinetmakers often cut the screens into smaller panels and inserted them into pieces of locally made furniture following fashionable shapes or mounted them on wooden wall panels. A fine example of such "lacquer cabinets" is the medal cabinet made in France around 1730 and bought in 1784 for the "Cabinet des médailles" of the French Royal Library, now part of the Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (inv. 55.701). A panelled room incorporating such lacquered panels, known as "The Frisian stadholders' lacquer room", made before 1695 for the Court of the Stadholders' at Leewarden is on display in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. BK-16709). It formed part of the apartment of the consort of the Frisian stadholder, Princess Albertine Agnes of Orange and Nassau.

H.C.

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29

Mother-of-Pearl Inlaid Lacquered Box

Early 19th century
Bangkok, Thailand

Mother-of-pearl, lacquer
19cm high, 21cm wide, 15cm deep

Provenance: UK private collection

This lacquered wood box is elaborately inlaid with opalescent mother-of-pearl on a black background, depicting natural landscape scenes all over the surface of the box. The landscape includes trees, fantastic rocks and many types of animals. We observe bulls, goats, rabbits, squirrels and birds, alongside the more regionally specific animals such as monkeys and elephants. Within the landscape are also pairs of local hunters, either hiding behind rocks or running across the field with weapons in hand. The top of the lid not only continues the landscape theme, but also represents a fortress enclosing a pillared architectural structure. Inside and outside the courtyard are human figures dressed in distinctively European outfits, some at leisure, while others are engaged in conversation. There are also domestic animals such as geese and a horse depicted inside the courtyard.

It is likely that the architectural depiction on the lid represents one of the factories where foreign traders used to reside. The fortified walls, as well as the small domed pavilion seem to recall the architectural design of the Bangkok forts. Built at the end of the 18th century, forts were built along the Chao Phraya River to protect the old city when Bangkok was first established as the capital in 1782. The Phra Sumen and Mahakan forts are the only two remaining from that period; the battlements on walls from such forts probably lent inspiration to the artist who produced the box.

The combination of lacquer and mother-of-pearl as a technique can be traced back to as early as the eighth century, and was widely used throughout China, Korea, Japan and Thailand. In Thailand specifically, architectural elements, furniture and containers of various sorts were made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for use at court, in temples and as diplomatic gifts.

A box produced with the same technique, but depicting trade along the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok, is in the collection of The Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. It has the same style of border as our example, though it also has additional leaf details.

Most mother-of-pearl boxes made in this period feature floral motifs, making our example a rare item. Boxes of this type would have been used for jewellery, betel-chewing paraphernalia, cigars or other small objects.

S.L.

Reference:

Chong, Carvalho. *Devotion and Desire: Cross-Culture Art in Asia, New Acquisitions of the Asian Civilisations Museum*. Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, 2013, p. 53, Cat.45.

30

Two Men in White

José María Escacena y Daza (c. 1800-1858)

1839
Spain
Oil on canvas
With frame: 53.5cm high, 47cm wide
Without frame: 33.5cm high, 27.5cm wide

Provenance: UK private collection
Purchased from the Fine Arts Society in 1964

If a painting could bring continents together, it would be this one, "Two Men in White". Bridging the narrow gap between Southern Europe and North Africa, this work has been ascribed to José María Escacena y Daza. Although not signed by the artist, the attribution is confirmed by a very old and worn label on the back of the stretcher. The spelling of the artist's name is appropriately imprecise for the time. The writer may have been an English speaker confused by Spanish orthography or pronunciation, adding a 'y' and imagining the letter 'ñ' (*eñe*) where it could never have been. The inscription does, however, follow this artist's practice of using only one part of a long name.

Escacena is barely known today. Two centuries ago, he was given some recognition, mainly as a link between his Spanish homeland, the anglicised world of Gibraltar, and what was then regarded as the mysterious Orient. His output is equally varied. Along with British military and Iberian picaresque subjects, there are formative views of Morocco and its people. The diversity of his oeuvre makes it difficult to establish whether these men in white were sitters of sufficient renown to justify having their portraits painted or were examples of the "types" that Orientalist artists revelled in recording. The faded label on the back hints at them being "two persons well known".

Little is known about Escacena's life. There is uncertainty about details such as the year of his birth (probably 1800), making him unlikely to have been from an esteemed dynasty of painters. He did win awards, mainly in his native Valencia, and held teaching positions. The greatest honour of his career came after his death, when his work was seemingly displayed at the 1862 International Exhibition in London.

Escacena's real significance is as an early exponent of Orientalist art. He was a pioneer in Spain and within the entire genre he should be placed in the vanguard. Marlène Lespes, a French authority on Orientalist art, praises him as a painter who took Orientalism in a new direction. Taking the "*costumbrismo*" approach, he combined realism and romanticism to produce views of everyday life in the relatively fresh surroundings of the Orient as well as in his native Spain. The latter was viewed by much of Europe as being the same thing as the Orient anyway.

As with so many other artists at the time, Escacena must have fallen at least partly under the spell of Delacroix who was himself so captivated by North Africa. Not that Escacena's sitters rely as heavily on the props that other Western artists used to aggrandise their subjects. In our painting there are, instead, clues. They might be red herrings, but the eye is led away from quizzically self-assured faces by details such as prayer beads and a *nimcha* sword. The man on the right has all the accessories, including what appears to be a *taweez* talisman hanging round his neck. Encasing Qur'anic or other invocations, it is of a type that is still popular in much of the Maghreb and disapproved of by religious purists in many other locations.

The sitters' clothing is entirely authentic for the region. Worn by everyone from Moroccan kings and religious leaders to most of the male population, these superbly rendered burnouses are not very informative about their wearers. The colour, rather than the cut, indicates that they are from the higher end of the social spectrum. It also tells us that the artist relished the traditional painterly challenge of using white, or close to it, to show off his brushwork. Escacena has surpassed himself here. Few of his other paintings have the same extent of simple fabric put to such a sumptuous effect. Typically, Escacena painted more colourful costumes or scenes with people accompanied by architecture as a visual diversion. Few of his works are still extant, and they seldom appear at auction or in exhibitions. For an artist of some repute in his day, the physical legacy is slight. The known works include vibrant Spanish peasants, military figures, bunches of grapes and still lifes. Most important are his street scenes of Morocco.

Despite the enigma of Escacena's life, it is almost certain that he knew David Roberts (1796-1864). As the great Scottish Orientalist was travelling in Spain before Escacena went to North Africa, it is possible that he encouraged Escacena to venture south too. Among the few scholars who have tried to piece together Escacena's career, Enrique Arias Anglés has suggested the two artists may have travelled to Tangier together in 1833. There is a further possibility that he may have been in the company of another legendary British Orientalist, John Frederick Lewis (1804-1876), who was in Spain and Tangier around that time. Alternatively, Escacena might have journeyed by himself a year later. Whatever the chronology, he painted a number of Orientalist subjects. It is also apparent that he sought a semblance of realism over the romanticism that prevailed in Europe.

Escacena turned his back on the Spanish tradition of strong contrast between light and shadow, combined with volume that is almost sculptural. In this painting he comes closer to the soft weightlessness of British watercolours, despite using oils. He had many creative contacts in common with Britain's two great early Orientalists, the aforementioned Roberts and Lewis. Whether he worked with them or not, the influence of these legendary figures is visible in the work of a man who has received none of their acclaim. Escacena deserves more. Spanish Orientalists have, in general, been neglected. In their own day they often moved to Italy to enhance their careers; scant attention has been paid to them in comparison with their French and British counterparts.

Unlike Roberts – who rarely painted human subjects unless they were part of the scenery – or Lewis – who was so desperate for

sitters he tried to palm himself and his wife off as locals – Escacena spent time among the people and produced what appear to be convincing portraits. "Two Men in White" not only adds significantly to the output of an overlooked Spanish artist, but it also nudges the entire Orientalist field into new territory. Without knowing anything about the two subjects, we are witnessing an early, sympathetic psychological study. These two men are not exotic specimens of decay or "noble savagery" to be used as conversation pieces in a Victorian home. There is an intimacy in this painting that transforms the sitters into individuals, without the remoteness or implausible heroism of so much portraiture at the time. These men in white do not lose any of their dignity in the process. They are not so different from a portrait of Lieutenant-Colonel McCleverty, attributed to Escacena, although the two men in white have a more penetrating gaze than that of McCleverty, the British empire builder who served in Gibraltar circa 1852. Fortunately for the artist, McCleverty's uniform has prodigious amounts of white cloth with which to display his virtuosity (National Army Museum, London, ca. 1852, Accession Number NAM. 1982-05-137-1).

Whilst many portraits of North African sitters can border on caricature, the two men in white radiate a sense of the real. In the same year this painting was executed, Delacroix was working from memory on a composition that could not be further from Escacena's impression of the Islamic world. Delacroix's "Convulsionists of Tangier" (Minnesota Institute of Art, USA, Accession Number 73. 42. 3) shows a veritable frenzy of religious devotion, in contrast to the composure of the "Two Men in White". Much later, Escacena's compatriot José Tapiro took up a similarly ecstatic theme while living in Tangier. The rational calm of "Two Men in White" was truly ahead of its time.

The identity of the two men in our painting is a mystery. Both figures resemble the anonymous subjects of Escacena's "In front of a Moroccan House" and "Entrance to a Moroccan Coffee House."[1] These are both signed works that mention the artist and the place of painting, Gibraltar. The panels have identical dimensions: 46 x 36cm, somewhat larger than "Two Men in White", an unusual size for a double portrait as it is too big to carry around as a keepsake and too small to hang on a wall.

The artist would have been less concerned with the consistent placement of his signature than with making a direct association between himself and the British outpost. He seems to have been there in the company of Roberts in 1833, and again in 1839 – without his Scottish companion. As with Escacena's posthumous showing in London, it is another indication that the market he sought was in the UK rather than his homeland. During the mid-19th century, with Britain at the zenith of its power and wealth, Spain was enduring civil war. The money was no longer in the Iberian Peninsula.

Other paintings by Escacena were inscribed with Tangier. One intriguing work from 1834, now lost, was titled "Two Arab Chiefs". Could "Two Men in White" be a later version of the same subject? They are much more likely to be chieftains than religious leaders. In addition to the presence of an amulet, portraiture was a low priority in a region that had been contending with Wahhabism. A member of the 'Alwawi dynasty, Mawlay Sulayman bin Mohammed, had ruled for 30 years and died in 1822. He had set a precedent for combining military, religious and political expertise. Only one tentative portrait of him is recorded. His nephew Abd al-Rahman bin Hashim was the ruler at the time of "Two Men in White". Portraits of rulers were rare, although there is a fanciful, grand and unofficial scene painted by Delacroix, "Moulay Abd-er-Rahman, Sultan du Maroc, sortant de son palais de Meknes, entouré de sa garde et de ses principaux officiers" (Musée des Augustins de Toulouse, France, Inventory Number 2004-1-99).

At the time, portrait photography was so experimental as to be non-existent.

The era of Abd al-Rahman saw tense relations between Morocco and the European powers. The Moroccan king was a supporter of the Algerian resistance hero Abd al-Qadir, and Tangier provided a warm welcome to Algerian refugees from the conflict with France. "Two men in white" might fall into this category. Their clothing is common to Morocco and Algeria, as is the *nimcha*. Escacena's connections, however, were all with Morocco.

There is an air of command about the two sitters that indicates a position of importance which could be royal, military or diplomatic. For example, there was a long history of recording Moroccan ambassadors in England. The first image of a Muslim painted in Britain was of Abd al-Wahid bin Masood in 1600 ("The Moorish Ambassador", University of Birmingham, BIRRC-A04207). "Two Men in White" is among the earliest portraits of two Muslim men painted by a Spanish artist in the British territory of Gibraltar, or anywhere else. Fifty years later such paintings were ubiquitous, usually by the hands of Austrian and German artists. With a work dated to 1839, Escacena was in the avant-garde. This is a remarkable painting of unknown sitters for an unknown purpose, by an artist who deserves to be better known.

L. de G.

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1 Dizy Caso, E., Les Orientalists de l'Ecole Espagnole, ACR Editions, Paris, 1997 pp. 80-81

31

Ottoman Terra Lemnia Jug

17th-18th century
Ottoman Turkey

Unglazed ceramic with monochrome decoration
15cm high, 11cm diameter

Provenance: Dutch private collection

This unglazed earthenware jug of cream colour body is burnished and painted in monochrome brown. The shape of the jug, with its thick and slightly flaring neck, bulbous body and elegantly curved handle, is very similar to that of the Iznik jugs, yet it is much smaller than a standard Iznik jug. More interestingly, at the neck, inside the jug, there is a delicately carved filter in the shape of a blossoming flower. The painted decoration on the body is divided into four registers, where the top two registers contain poetry verses, and the lower two registers have flower and leaf motifs.

This type of jug is generally known as water filter jug and they are believed to have originated in the Sasanian Empire, but were widespread throughout the Middle Eastern regions, including Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Iran, by the second half of the eighth century. Porous water jugs were designed to keep water cool by means of evaporation. The filters, which kept out insects, were generally perforated with a variety of designs made up of ornamental, calligraphic, figurative and animal motifs.

Due to the delicate nature of the extremely thin wall of the jug, very few examples of this type have survived. One example of similar size in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (EA.X.1787), has fine, carved decorations throughout the body. There are some painted examples in the British Museum (1878,1230.353; 1878,1230.355; 1878,1230.356). It should be noted that filter fragments, especially from Fatimid Egypt, are not uncommon.

Inscribed with two separate but rhyming verses.

The upper verse:
نوش جان اولسون چاموردن افندم

'May your soul be nourished by clay, Sir!'

The lower verse:
ای عاشقنی اولدرجی شاه لوندم

'O my Brigand King, who murders his lover!'

The lower verse is from a quatrain attributed to the musician and poet Buhûrîzâde Mustafa Itrî (d. 1712).

S.L.

32

Iznik Border Tile

16th century
Ottoman Turkey

Ceramic decorated with underglaze polychrome
15cm high, 31cm wide

Provenance: Belgian private collection

This underglaze fritware tile is painted in colours on a white slip. The decorative scheme consists of a cobalt blue background, on top of which are compositions of *saz* leaves, a central flower, as well as half of a lozenge shaped cartouche at each end of the tile. The white *saz* leaves are embellished on top with red flowers and turquoise leaves, while the cartouches are outlined in red and painted in turquoise blue, embellished with *īslīmī* compositions in white and red.

This tile would have been a part of tile revetment used for decorating bathhouses or palaces in the Ottoman empire. Using tile revetment to decorate buildings became fashionable in the mid-sixteenth century for Ottoman elites. For example, the Ottoman admiral Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa (better known as Barbarossa) commissioned the *Çinili Hamam* (the Tiled Bathhouse) and employed the famous court architect Sinan (d.1588) to design the bathhouse, and also possibly the royal workshop for the tile patterns. The intricate designs of tile patterns were made to emulate manuscript paintings, meant to be seen from a close distance. Originated from fourteenth-fifteenth century Iran, the *īslīmī* pattern used for this tile is one of the oldest decorative schemes for manuscript illuminations.

Our tile is identical to a group of tiles (AD6015.1) in the Musée du Louvre, as well as a single tile (426-1900) at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

S.L.

33

An Iznik Tile

16th Century
Ottoman Turkey

Ceramic with underglazed polychrome
26cm high, 22.5cm wide

Provenance: French private collection

This rare tile of grey fritware is painted in colours on a white slip and covered with a clear glaze. Painted in red, blue and green, outlined in olive-green, with an ogee-shaped compartment bordered by serrated leaves and enclosing sprays of carnations, hyacinths and other flowers. In the four corners there are sections of the same decorative device.

Two tiles with the exact design are in the V&A Collection (405-1900 and 405A-1900). Tiles of a similar design are in the Louvre (AD 8368/1 -2) and the Pergamon Museum, Berlin (1877,512 a, 1877,512 b, 1877,512 c).

A.S.

34

Iznik Jug

Second half of 16th century
Ottoman Turkey

Ceramic decorated with underglaze polychrome
19cm high, 15cm diameter

Provenance: Prominent European private collection, active 1940s and 1950s.
Ex-Adda Collection, published in Rackham, Bernard. *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica: Illustrated Catalogue of a Private Collection.* London: Faber and Faber, 1959, pp. 26, 186, plate 34.
Atasoy, Nurhan and Julian Raby. *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey.* 2nd ed. London: Alexandrian Press, 1989. pp. 114-15.

A vibrant Iznik jug of baluster form rests on a profiled foot. The jug has a slightly flaring mouth, nearly cylindrical neck and scrolled handle, decorated in tones of cobalt-blue, turquoise and white. With a white base and cobalt blue outline and scrolled lines, the "S"-shaped handle ring connects to the jug from the rim to the shoulder. The jug is decorated in underglaze cobalt blue and turquoise, featuring *cintamani* motifs, pairs of white tulips and is punctuated by repeating medallions in turquoise with an arabesque design in cobalt. The jug is divided into three main sections, in terms of decoration – the stem, the body and the foot. The rim of the stem features an interlacing zigzag pattern with dark blue above and turquoise below. The stem and the body are separated by a white border decorated with diagonal strokes while the foot features a band of marbling in cobalt.

Turquoise had entered the Iznik palette by the 1520s. The turquoise and cobalt-blue palette was used throughout the sixteenth century as can be observed in the present jug. The floral decoration of this jug is typical of Iznik ceramics. By the 1530s, small sprays of tulips and other recognisable flowers were a common motif on vessels made in Iznik in north-west Anatolia. The second half of the sixteenth century witnessed an increasing diversity in Iznik ceramic forms, combined with high artistic achievement. Jugs such as this were often painted with a rich repertoire of motifs on a crisp white ground, clear transparent glaze and vivid colours, creating a harmonious decorative scheme. However, our example seems to have followed the colour scheme from the earlier period, that of 1535-40.

A.S.

Comparative material:

British Museum (G.137, G.11, 1878,1230.514)

Victoria and Albert Museum (C.2006-1910)

Musée du Louvre, Paris (AD 27735)

35

An Iznik Tile with Red Background

End of 16th century
Turkey

Ceramic with underglaze decoration
24.3cm high, 12cm wide

Provenance: Belgian private collection

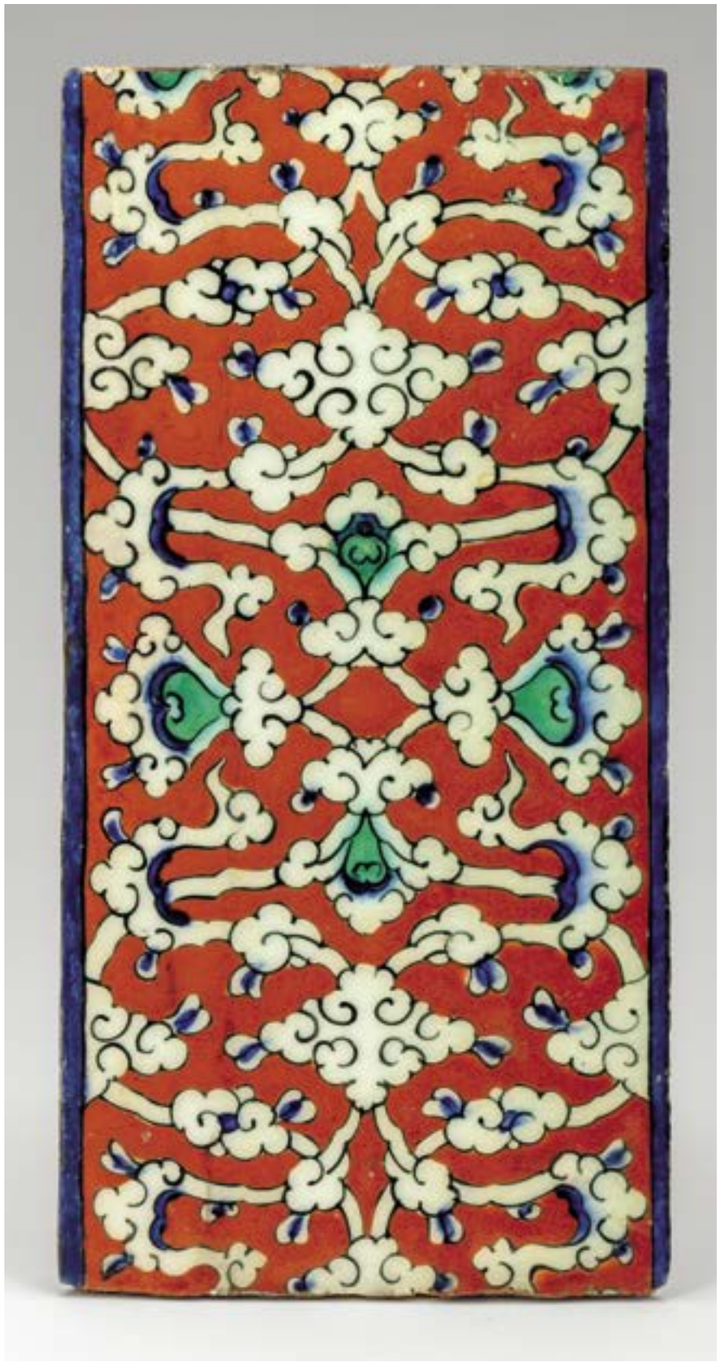
A rare Iznik border tile made of white paste and decorated over a white slip in coral red, green and cobalt blue with black outlining under a transparent glaze. The pattern of cloud scrolls linked by clips is reserved on a coral red ground and is outlined in black. Narrow cobalt borders run along the vertical edges of the tile.

A.S.

Comparative material:

A tile with the same design and colours can be seen in Bilgi, Hulya. *The Ömer Koç Iznik Collection*. Istanbul, 2015, p. 140.

Tiles with this design but with the colours in inverse can be seen in the Louvre (AD5967.23, AD5967.24) and a similar design executed in blue and white is to be seen in *The Ömer Koç Iznik Collection*, p. 141 as well as on the façade of the Circumcision Chamber at the Topkapi Palace.



36

Iznik Tile

c. 1540-1550
Ottoman Turkey

Ceramic with underglaze decoration
19.6cm high, 26.5cm wide

Provenance: Scandinavian private collection before 1965

This fritware tile is painted underglaze in dark and light cobalt blue and turquoise *īslīmī* patterns and outlined in dark cobalt blue. The top panel has a band of white flower-and-leaf motifs embellished with turquoise dots, while the bottom panel has blue flower-and-leaf motifs strung together by dark blue spiralling branches. The cartouche in the middle of the bottom panel has a turquoise outline and light blue background, completed with white flower-and-leaf motifs.

This item was part of the tile revetments that once decorated a bathhouse in the Zeyrek district of Istanbul, which came to be known as the *Çinili Hamam* (the Tiled Bathhouse). The bathhouse was commissioned by the Ottoman admiral Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa (better known as Barbarossa), the Ottoman Empire's famous naval commander who carried out a series of successful campaigns against the Spanish and their allies in the 1530s-1540s. As a grand admiral (*kapudan-ı deryâ*), Barbarossa had access to state resources for realising his building projects. For example, he was able to employ the famous court architect Sinan (d.1588) to design the bathhouse, and the tiles used for the building were probably designed by the royal workshop. The bathhouse was sold off in the nineteenth century, and during restoration work, the remaining tiles were sold to a dealer called Ludvic Lupti, probably in 1874, who resold them in Paris.

Using tile revetments to decorate buildings became fashionable in the mid-sixteenth century for Ottoman elites. The intricate designs of tile patterns were made to emulate manuscript paintings, meant to be seen from a close distance. With its origins in fourteenth-fifteenth century Iran, the *īslīmī* pattern used for this tile is one of the oldest decorative schemes for manuscript illuminations. This tile is in the same style as a group of tiles now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which have all been identified as coming from the *Çinili Hamam*.

S.L.

Comparative material:

Victoria & Albert Museum (221-1896)

Reference:

'Tile 1540-1550', Victoria & Albert Museum, 24 June 2009.

Walter B. Denny, *Iznik: The Artistry of Ottoman Ceramics*. London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004, p. 79.

37

Iznik Jug

Second half of 16th century
Ottoman Turkey

Ceramic decorated with underglaze polychrome
23cm high, 13cm diameter

Provenance: Previously in the collection of Émile Tabbagh

This polychrome overglazed jug has a flared neck, ovoid body, ring foot and curved handle. It is painted in cobalt blue, tomato red and turquoise, and outlined in black under transparent glaze. It contains swaying carnations, saz leaves containing delicate tulips and small sprigs of flowers close to the base. Similar decoration is repeated on a smaller scale on the neck. Around the rim is a narrow cable border, and round the base of the neck is a narrow band of pairs of short black lines. On the front of the handle are horizontal broken lines in cobalt blue.

The second half of the 16th century witnessed an increasing diversity in Iznik ceramic forms, as well as high achievement. Jugs such as this were painted with a rich repertoire of motifs on crisp white ground, clear transparent glaze and vivid colours, creating a harmonious decorative scheme. The court design studio, headed by Kara Memi, provided a repertoire of naturalistic motifs, including tulips, roses, hyacinths, narcissi and other flowers, cypress and pomegranate trees, and branches of prunus blossom. They became the principal motifs of Ottoman art.

S.L.

Comparative material:

Bilgi, Hulya. *Dance of Fire: Iznik Tiles and Ceramics in the Sadberk Hanım Museum and Ömer M. Koç Collections*. Istanbul: Sadberk Hanim Museum, 2009. Cat.147, p.262.

38

Iznik Dish

Second half of 16th century
Ottoman Turkey

Ceramic decorated with underglaze polychrome
26cm diameter

Provenance: Prominent French private collection

The circular polychrome dish is painted with an asymmetrical composition of one central cobalt-blue *saz* leaf with meandering stems and foliage, red carnations, a blue tulip and a red tulip on a white ground. The central *saz* leaf is enhanced by bright tomato red, and extends into a second, smaller *saz* leaf at its tip. More peculiar is the cobalt blue flower with thin petals to the right hand side of the dish – this flower has not been identified as there is no comparative material. The rim is decorated with alternating red flowers and cobalt-blue pairs of tulips sprigs. The style of the rim can be compared to a series of dishes in the Sadberk Hanim Museum and Ömer M. Koç Collections (Bilgi, 2009; see pp. 267, 270,274 and 275).[1] The reverse of the dish has a black, everted outline, with a flower motif alternating with a bunch of three flowers motif, all painted in cobalt blue and enhanced with turquoise. A hole is pierced in the foot of the dish for hanging.

This type of dish, with depictions of various kinds of flowers and leaves principally in red, blue and turquoise, was developed in the 1570-80s by Kara Memi, an illuminator and the head of the workshop at the Ottoman court. From then on, floral designs with certain degrees of realism became the principal motifs of Ottoman art.

S.L.

Reference:

1 Bilgi, Hulya. *Dance of Fire: Iznik Tiles and Ceramics in the Sadberk Hanım Museum and Ömer M. Koç Collections*. Istanbul: Sadberk Hanim Museum, 2009.

39

Iznik Border Tile

Second half of 16th century (c.1575)
Ottoman Turkey

Ceramic decorated with underglaze polychrome
12cm high, 26cm wide

Provenance: From the collection of Professor Phillip Gould, NYC, USA

The fritware tile is painted over white slip under a transparent glaze in cobalt blue and tomato red with black outlining. It has light cobalt blue borders on the long sides, within which is decorated with a repeating pattern of undulating rumi scrolls and split palmette motifs in blue and white on a red ground.

Border tiles with a similar design can be found in situ in the Chamber of Murad III (1578) and Topkapı Palace and in Ramazan Efendi Mosque (1586) in the district of Kocamustafapaşa, Istanbul. However, the tiles in the Chamber of Murad III have additional border details compared to our example. Tiles with similar designs can also be found at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1645-1892), as well as the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon (Ribeiro, 2009, Cat.70, p.121). Multiple fragments are at the Museum für Islamische Kunst (1877,556.5, 1877,556.2 1877,556.3, 1877,556.1, I. 6508), and similar fragments are in the Fitzwilliam Museum (C.42-1924) and the Metropolitan Museum, New York (Accession no. 1971.235.2)

After the imperial court renewed its patronage of Iznik ceramics for the construction of Süleymaniye Mosque between 1550 and 1557, using tile revetments to decorate buildings became fashionable in the mid-sixteenth century for Ottoman elites. For example, the intricate designs of tile patterns in the *Çinili Hamam* (the Tiled Bathhouse) were made to emulate manuscript paintings, meant to be seen from a close distance.

S.L., A.S.

Reference:

Bilgi, Hulya. *Dance of Fire: Iznik Tiles and Ceramics in the Sadberk Hanım Museum and Ömer M. Koç Collections*. Istanbul: Sadberk Hanim Museum, 2009, pp. 319-22, Cat.190-191.

Ribeiro, Maria Queiroz. *Iznik Pottery and Tiles in the Calouste Gulbenkian Collection*. Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2009.

40

An Ottoman Kütahya Incense Burner

18th century
Ottoman Turkey

Pottery
18cm high, 14cm wide

Provenance: Private Australian collection

This rare spheroid incense burner comprises a lid and a stemmed cup placed in a saucer. A polychrome floral decoration is applied on a white background. The lid and the cup are hinged together with two circular engraved metal mounts. Metal chains, attached to two bone beads on each side, ensure the lid stays in place when opened.

The lid is surmounted with triangular panels with circular holes for the incense smoke to flow out. These panels are separated by elongated lozenges with floral patterns in blue, yellow, green and orange. The lid is further mounted with a decorative metal finial. The pattern on the base has larger floral motifs which are separated by vertical floral patterns. The conical base and the saucer are also decorated with floral motifs.

Kütahya is a town located 200 km south-east of Istanbul and is famous for its pottery production. Garo Kürkman states that blue and white pottery fragments have been found in excavations in Kütahya, which indicates that this was another centre for blue and white pottery production, apart from Iznik. Evidence of the early Armenian presence in Kütahya is confirmed by the colophon of a manuscript dated 1391 stating that it was a gift to the church of that town (see Crowe).

According to John Carswell, it is likely that the pottery in Kütahya was started by a group of displaced artisans who moved there from the east of the Ottoman empire in the 16th century. By the 18th century, Kütahya was a well-established manufacturing centre for fine quality pottery. Patterns on multiple pieces show that the potters were clearly inspired by the Chinese floral designs on pottery that was available on account of trade. The pottery production flourished in Kütahya through the patronage of the Armenians; commissions from them included the pictorial tiles used in the cathedral in Jerusalem. Items such as incense-burners, ewers, bowls, dishes and plates were also often donated to churches there. It is possible this incense-burner was used similarly in a church context. In Ottoman sources, incense burners were called *buhurdan* and were used in Muslim places of worship, mausolea and residences. Yolande Crowe points out that apart from "catering for the Armenian community, the potters of Kütahya understood the requirements of a Mediterranean market," particularly in terms of pattern and design.

According to Ergin, the incense used in these burners may have been small balls or small candle-like shapes of myrrh, frankincense, oud, musk, ambergris, hyacinth or storax brought through trade with Arabia, South and Southeast Asia, which were either used on their own or mixed together, combined with items such as beeswax, resin or wood.

Similarly formed incense burners made of gilt copper or *tombak*, featuring filigree work have been found from the 16th to the 17th century. These either rest on a decorated flat plate or on an engraved flat plate raised on a tripod. Sometimes, these *tombak buhurdan* have long stemmed legs or shorter S-shaped legs. Ergin highlights that certain paintings, such as Nakkas Osman's "Procession of the guild of buhurcus", from *Surname-i Hümayun*, ca. 1582, in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul, H. 1344, fols. 112b-13, show examples of these metal incense burners. However, a pottery incense burner with a finial, that too a metal finial and an attached saucer, such as this one, is extremely rare. We believe there are currently only 15 known Kütahya pottery incense burners, of varying designs and shape, not including the present example.

A.S.

We would like to thank Dr Yolande Crowe for her valuable input and expertise.

Comparative material:

Benaki Museum: Kürkman, Garo. *Magic of Clay and Fire A History of Kütahya Pottery and Potters*. Istanbul: Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Publication, 2006, pp. 160-61.

Carswell, John, and C. J. F Dowsett. **Kütahya Tiles and Pottery from the Armenian Cathedral of St. James, Jerusalem**. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 33.

Armenian Museum of America

Dallas Museum of Art K.1.2014.921

Sadberk Hanim Museum: SHM 4019-HK956

Bibliography:

Carswell, John, and C. J. F Dowsett. *Kütahya Tiles and Pottery from the Armenian Cathedral of St. James, Jerusalem*. Vol. 1 and 2. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Ergin, Nina. "The Fragrance of the Divine: Ottoman Incense Burners and Their Context", *The Art Bulletin* 96, no. 1 (2014): 70-97. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43947707.

Kürkman, Garo. *Magic of Clay and Fire A History of Kütahya Pottery and Potters*. Istanbul: Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Publication, 2006.

Yolande Crowe http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-03/kutahya-ceramics-and-international-armenian-trade-networks/

41

Ottoman Zafar Takiya

19th century
Mughal India (handle and tip),
Turkey (scabbard and blade)

Jade, silver gilt and steel
51cm long

Provenance: French private collection
Collection of Sultan Abd-ul-Hamid, by repute

This *zafar takiya* is a composite piece, with an Indian jade chin rest and tip, fitted with an Ottoman cane and sheath. This handle is made of grey-green jade with rounded ends curved downwards. This handle is decorated, with small rubies and emeralds in the form of flowers, set on a gold background. The collar is studded with pink rubies. Further down, the upper section of the scabbard features openwork ribbons set with rose diamonds, rubies, emeralds and, at the ends, a small flower set with three sapphires; in the middle, on each face, a flower set with rose diamonds with a blade and sheath in the shape of a cane.

The blade is entirely damascened with gold on the upper part, decorated with inscriptions on all four sides. In a large, inscribed cartouche, decorated with foliage is the date: "1127" Hijri, ca. 1715. The scabbard is round in section, enhanced with silver gilt and bears embossed decoration of flowers, foliage and geometrical figures. The scabbard ends in a jewel encrusted crown above a carved jade flower bud with a small, gilded silver tip that forms petals. Above the tip lies a small ring in gilt inlaid with flowers.

A *zafar takiya* was a chin or arm rest set on a cane used by Sufi followers and mendicants. The concealed blade could be used for protection from wild animals the followers might encounter while travelling and meditating. The note attached to the case attributes this *zafar takiya* to Sultan Abd-ul Hamid. Sultan Abd-ul Hamid II is said to have been a follower of Shadhili Sufism. "On Thursday evenings he would accompany Sufi masters in reciting the *dhikr* (rhythmic repetition of the name of God)."[1] It is said that he would attend the lessons of Shadhili Madani Sheikh, Muhammad Zafir al-Madani in disguise before he became Sultan. After becoming Sultan, Sheikh al-Madani became his close religious and political confidante. He was also trained in the Naqshbandi and Helveti orders, which had a significant following in the empire.[2]

A number of crutch armrests from Mughal India and the Deccan were made of jade and in some cases carved in the shape of rams or floral motifs. A Mughal jade crutch handle together with its jade shaft is illustrated in Teng Shu-p'ing, *Exquisite Beauty: Islamic Jades*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2012, p. 116, pl. 137. Two other jade examples are in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (36.25.734 and 36.25.1001a,b). The scabbard and the sword are Ottoman in design. Such cross cultural hybrids have been seen in many noted public and private collections, where the hilt of a dagger is in jade, set with precious gems in a manner typical of India, and the sword and scabbard are from Ottoman Turkey. An example of this can be seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (36.25.994a, b). Their dagger, a set of daggers (23.232.1) and this *zafar takiya* were possibly from the same "group of flamboyant, gem-studded edged weapons that were possibly made in Istanbul during the second half of the nineteenth century. Common features of this group include the use of repousse silver-gilt or gilt coper sheet worked with dense designs of strapwork and split-leaf arabesques for sheathing scabbards; a lavish display of faceted gems or coloured glass set into applied filigreed strapwork settings; the frequent use of Indian hardstone hilts; and blades of crucible steel."[3]

A.S.

Notes:

1 https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2015/12/16/straddling-two-worlds

2 https://historyofislam.com/contents/resistance-and-reform/sultan-abdul-hamid-ii/

3 *Islamic Arms and Armor*, p. 205

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42

Ottoman Ebony Dagger

19th century
Ottoman Turkey

Carved ebony scabbard,
matching shaped handle
47cm long, 51cm long (cased)

Provenance: UK private collection since the 1970s

This *jambiya* dagger has a gently curving double-edged pattern-welded blade with a median ridge. The hilt is of typical H-shape commonly found in Ottoman *jambiyas*. What makes this one unique, however, is that the hilt and scabbard are made of carved ebony. Both feature finely carved designs such as a floral spray or floral sprays?, grapes and grape vines, and geometric patterns. The sheath ends at an elegant rosebud preceded by carved designs. The beautiful design on the grip depicts a quiver filled with arrows and a single arrow crossing each other surrounded by floral scrolls, placed in an oval medallion, in the style of Osmanli coat-of-arms. The base of the hilt features an ornate vase with rose stems resting in it, surrounded by vegetal motifs. The rose motif is seen once again on the hilt; this time, set in a central medallion, on the top. Above this is a grooved bronze finial. The dagger rests in a 19th century fitted-case.

A.S.

43

Ottoman Silver Gilt Jambiya

18th century
Ottoman Turkey

Silver gilt hilt and scabbard, pattern-welded blade
39cm long

This *jambiya* dagger has a gently curving double-edged pattern-welded blade with a median ridge. The hilt is of typical H shape commonly found in Ottoman *jambiya*-s. The hilt and sheath are chased with highly detailed silver gilt repousse, filled with designs of flowers encircled by undulating vines. The slightly curved sheath features at the top a band of delicate chain design, followed by a band of split-palmette openwork. The flower and undulating vine design that dominates the sheath is framed by a border of vegetal motifs visually similar to four-leaf clovers. The sheath ends in an elegant chape.

A dagger in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (36.25.1041a, b), has a hilt and sheath design that is almost identical to our example, with flowers surrounded by undulating vines, and the same motif at the edges of the sheath. Additionally, the flowers in both examples have cross-hatched centres. However, there are also differences between the two daggers: the Metropolitan dagger has a gold damascened design at the forte of the blade but lacks the intricate chain and split-palmette bands at the sheath. It is also less well-preserved when compared to our example.

S.L.

Comparative material:

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (36.25.1041a, b).

44

Crested Penbox

Dated 1594
Nuremberg, Germany

Brass
24cm long, 3.5cm high, 6.5cm wide

Provenance: William K. du Pont Collection

In the form of an oval box with hinges over, engraved with arms, date, vases of flowers and strapwork, the compartmented interior has a removable inkwell and sander. The lid has the initials *HR* and *VW* within a Coat of Arms, flanked by the date *1594*. The shape of this penbox is commonly found in Islamic penboxes, and is unlike the boxes typically found in Nuremberg, which are hexagonal. The oblong shape of our penbox was popular under the Ottomans, and it is thus likely that this style of penbox travelled to Europe through contact with the Ottoman Empire; there was a transmission of ideas and iconography between civilisations through the conquests in Europe.

Larger, oblong pen boxes with angular or round ends, such as this one, provided space to hold both inkwell and pens, with the inkwell portion typically on the right. Muslim metalworkers produced large numbers of pen boxes, many of which were richly decorated with inlays of gold, silver and copper. Apart from the likely borrowing of the shape, this penbox bears great similarity to contemporaneous pieces in the positioning of the crest, date and design.

S.L., A.S.

Comparative materials:

1. Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (MW.221)
2. https://www.deutsches-uhrenmuseum.de/en/museum/collection/single-pointer-travel-clock.html
3. http://www.bildindex.de/bilder/MI07835d05a.jpg
4. http://www.bildindex.de/bilder/MI07835d04a.jpg
5. Jewel encrusted oval penbox: *Topkapi à Versailles - Trésors de la cour ottoman*, Réunion des musées nationaux, 1999, p. 287.
6. Christie's https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6308164

45

Hispano-Moresque Albarello

Second half of the 15th century
Manises, Spain

Glazed and lustre-painted earthenware
20cm high, 11cm diameter (max.)

Provenance: Italian private collection

This tin-glazed earthenware jar has a waisted-form with a thick foot ring and cylindrical neck. The body of the jar is coated on the interior and exterior with a creamy off-white glaze ground. The exterior is decorated with four horizontal registers of alternating cobalt-blue and copper-lustre patterns of vine-leaves, ferns and dots.

Albarello jars with this kind of vine-leaf pattern are generally attributed to Manises and may have been used in stately homes for storing dried fruits such as raisins. They are quite similar to the "drug jar albarello" used in pharmacies during this period as the waisted-form of these jars makes their handling easier.

An albarello of similar form and with a vine-leaf pattern, dated ca. 1450-1475, can be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (10-1907); there is also another similar one in the Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait (CER0706TSR). Two further comparative examples are in the Islamic Arts Museum, Malaysia. A fifteenth century dish with a vine-leaf decoration and depicting a Sicilian coat of arms, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (56.171.129).

S.L.

Comparative Material:

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London (10-1907);
The Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait (CER0706TSR);
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (56.171.129).

Reference:

Dectot, X. *Céramiques Hispaniques: Xiiè-xviiiè siècle*, RMN, Paris, 2007.

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

46

Two Persian Torchstands *Mash'al*

Late 16th to early 17th century Western Iran

Cast brass, decoration engraved and inlaid with black composition
30cm high, 10cm diameter rim, 20cm diameter base

Provenance: From the collection of S.E. Claude Achille Clarac (1903-1999), Ambassador of France to Iran (1934-1942). "Purchased with André Godard in Tehran between 1935 and 1937."

Torch-stand A: (left)
This piece is the standard model for Safavid *mash'al*, or "pillar-candlestick". The base has a wide flan with inverted edge that is engraved with a vegetal border. The spreading base supports a tapering central shaft framed by two strong mouldings. The chamfered central shaft has 12 facets. The upper section has an everted rim with an S-shaped profile on the underside and a flat or slightly dished lip sloping gently inwards on the upper side. The engraving on the lip, which is believed to be of later date, reads "Owned by Abū Ṭālib." Although their direct association is not yet certain, a cast brass bowl now stored in the Kabul Museum has an engraving of a similar name, Muḥammad Abū Ṭālib, dated 1604/1605.[1]

According to Melikian-Chirvani, the layout of this torch-stand is typical of the period of Shāh 'Abbās (r.1588-1629).[2] Both the upper and lower sections are divided into three horizontal bands, with the epigraphic band in the middle. The lower part of the spreading foot is undecorated, and the short slanting rim of the base is engraved with a floral design. A band of upside-down lobed palmettes is above the inscriptional band. In the upper section, there are three-petal flower bands above and below the inscribed register. The epigraphic bands in the upper and lower sections are framed by bands of plain metal, emphasised by two narrow fillets on either side. The inscription in the upper section is divided into four parts enclosed by identical cartouches with trilobed frames, while the inscription in the lower section is framed in the same way, with the exception that between each cartouche there is a quatrefoil with pointed left and right lobes. The main area on the central shaft is decorated with a repeated encircling foliage pattern, with a zig-zag epigraphic band in the middle.

A

B

Western Iran and Khorasan were the centres for metalwork production in Shāh ‘Abbās’ reign. This piece can be compared to a group of torch-stands in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Accession Nos: 481-1876; 44-1870; 483-1876;790-1901), which are attributed to the period of Abbas’ reign. They share similar features, with engraved patterns throughout the shaft, similar choice of poetry on the caligraphic bands and a strong emphasis on the architecture of form. The patterns create a strong rhythm that in the earlier period has no equivalent. The inverted base can be compared to an example from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession No: 91.1.554a).

Inscriptions:
Upper section:
شبی یاد دارم که چشمم نخفت
شنیدم که پروانه شمع گفت
که من عاشقم گر بسوزم است
تو را گریه و سوز باری چراست؟

I remember one night as my eyes wouldn’t close
I heard the butterfly tell the candle
I am stricken with love, if I burn ’tis but right
But you why do you weep, why burn yourself out?[3]

(Sa‘adi, Chapter 3, Būstān, 13th century.)

Main shaft:
گه دل از عشق بتان گه جگرم میسوزد
عشق هر لحظه بداغ دگرم میسوزد
همچو پروانه بشمع سروکاراست مرا
که اگرپیش روم بال و پرم میسوزد

Sometimes my soul burns with love for the beautiful ones, sometimes my heart bleeds
Passion burns my heart with a new brand every moment
Like the butterfly I am looking for a candle
If I move forward I burn my wings

(Mollā Ḥeyratī Tūnī, a Khorasanian poet who spent a long time in Marv, central Khorasan, before settling in Kāshān, in Western Iran, where he died in 961/1553-1554.)

Lower section:
شبی که ماه رخت شد چراغ خلوت ما
گداخت شمع نیاورد تاب صحبت ما
دمی که از رخ چون مه نقاب بر فکنی
بود بر آمدن آفتاب دولت ما

On that night when Thy Moonface became the light of our solitude
The candle melted unable to bear our companionship
The moment Thou tearest off the mask from Thy moon-like Face
There rises the sun of our good fortune.

(Kātebī Torshīzī, a Khorasanian poet from Torshīz who died in 838 or 839/1434-1436.

This verse also appears on three dated torch-stands:
the Metropolitan Museum torch-stand of 986/1578-1579
the Hermitage 987/1579-1580
Musée des Arts Décoratifs 996/1587-1588.)

S.L.

Notes:

1 Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8th-18th Centuries* (London: HMSO, 1982), 268.

2 Melikian-Chirvani, 309.

3 Melikian-Chirvani, 309.

Torch-stand B (right)

The base of this torch-stand is unique for its wide flan with inverted edge that is engraved with a vegetal border. The flan is engraved with three-lobed half palmettes, all pointing towards the centre. The shaft is divided into three sections by two strong mouldings, with the central part being chamfered with 12 facets and upper and lower section in cylinder form. The lower moulding has an engraving that reads "'Ali". The upper section has an everted rim with an "S" shaped profile on the underside and a flat or slightly dished lip sloping gently inwards on the upper side.

Both upper and lower sections are divided into three horizontal bands by plain metal rings, with the epigraphic bands in the middle. The epigraphic bands in both upper and lower sections are divided into four sections enclosed by identical cartouches with trilobed frames. In the lower section, the inscriptional part is framed by two bands of lobed palmettes pointing at the calligraphy. In the upper section, the two bands of lobed palmettes that frame the epigraphic band point in the opposite direction compared to those in the lower section. The chamfered shaft is encircled by four rows of zig-zag epigraphic bands. In between the zig-zag bands are triangular or lozenge shapes engraved with lotus blossoms and foliage patterns.

Inscriptions:
Upper section:
شبی که ماه رخت شد چراغ خلوت ما
گداخت شمع نیاورد تاب صحبت ما
دمی که از رخ چون مه نقاب بر فکنی
بود بر آمدن آفتاب دولت ما

On that night when Thy Moonface became the light of our solitude
The candle melted unable to bear our companionship
The moment Thou tearest off the mask from Thy moon-like Face
There rises the sun of our good fortune.

(Kātebī Torshīzī, a Khorasanian poet from Torshīz who died in 838 or 839/1434-1436. This verse also appears on three dated torch-stands:
the Metropolitan Museum torch-stand of 986/1578-1579
the Hermitage 987/1579-1580
Musée des Arts Décoratifs 996/1587-1588.)

Lower section:
شبی یاد دارم که چشمم نخفت
شنیدم که پروانه شمع گفت
که من عاشقم گر بسوزم است
تو را گریه و سوز باری چراست؟

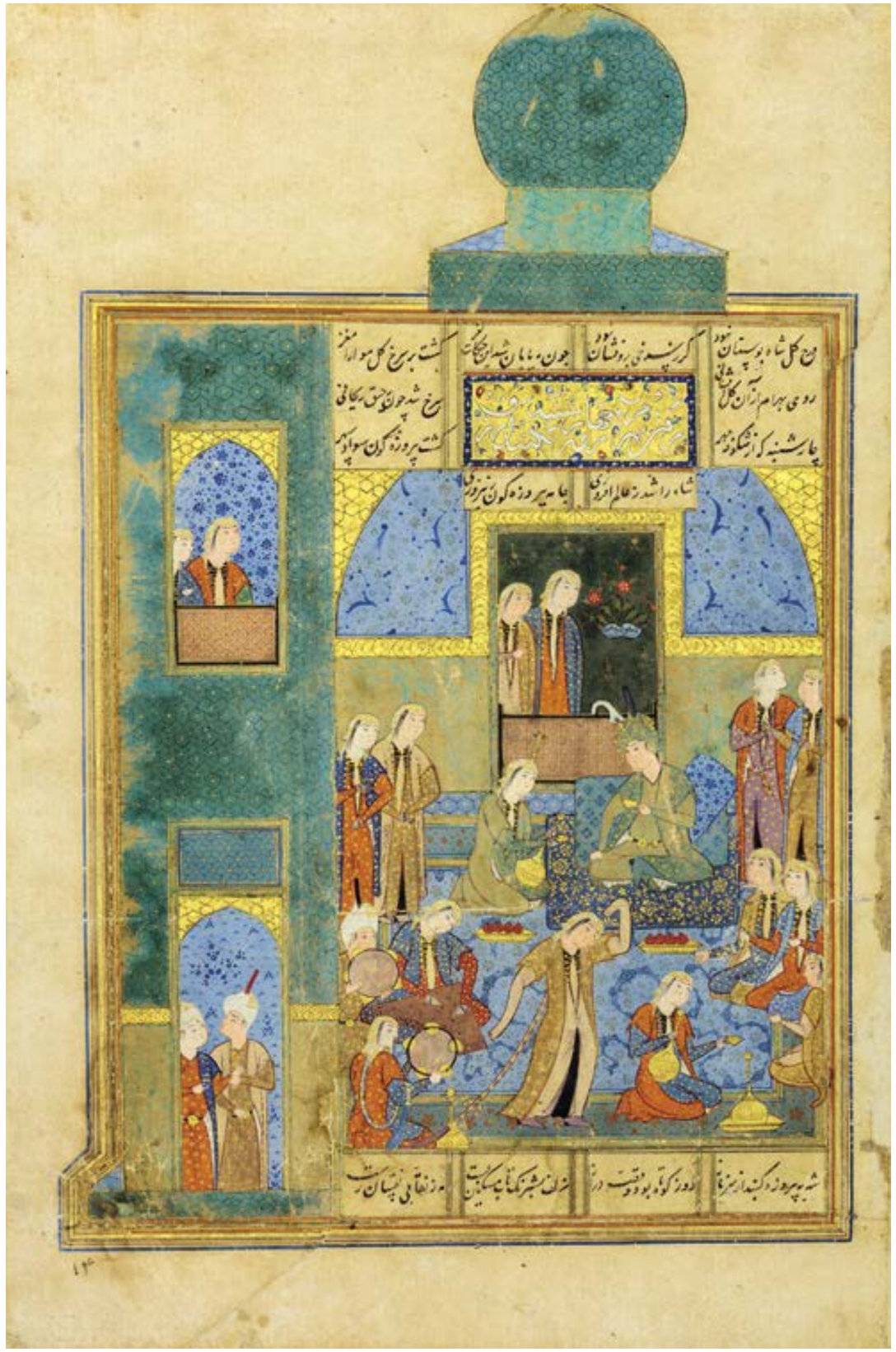
I remember one night as my eyes wouldn't close
I heard the butterfly tell the candle
I am stricken with love, if I burn'tis but right
But you why do you weep, why burn yourself out?

(Sa'adi, Chapter 3, Būstān, 13th century.)

S.L.

Notes:

1 Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8th-18th Centuries* (London: HMSO, 1982), 309.



47

One Illustration from the Haft Peykar (Bahram Gur visits the Turquoise Pavilion)

c. 1560-80
Shiraz, Iran

Opaque watercolour, ink and gold on paper
29cm high, 19cm wide

Provenance: Previously in the collection of a European family since the mid-19th century

This painting depicts an episode of the Haft Paykar, an epic romantic poem which is a part of a Khamsa (a collection of poems) from the renowned Persian poet, Nizami Ghanjavi (d.1209).

In the illustration, the Sasanian king Bahram Gur sits in an architectural setting of turquoise hue, reflecting Timurid architecture and is surrounded by courtly companions who are entertaining him with music and dancing. The main illustration is framed by verses above and below. The title of the illustration, written in white thuluth and illuminated with a gold background, is directly above the painting. It reads "raftan-e Bahrām rūz-e chahār-shanbe be gonbad-e azraq (Bahram's visit to the Turquoise Pavilion on Wednesday)." The turquoise dome of the pavilion is in the top margin of this folio, while onlookers in a turquoise building look through a set of doors and a window. This scene is finely illustrated and illuminated, as seen from the individualistic depictions of facial features and clothing, as well as the rich array of patterns on various surfaces of the building. The reverse side of the folio continues the verses from the illustrated page. The illuminated cartouche is inscribed with "qeṣe-ye guftī-ye dukhtar (the girl's story-telling)," which leads the reader onto the following portion of the story. The Haft Paykar is an epic romantic poem that tells the story of the Sasanian king, Bahram Gur (r. 420-38 AD). The story relates how the king had an architect construct seven domed pavilions, one for each of his seven beautiful brides who came from different parts of the world. The craftsman tells him that each of the climes is ruled by one of the seven planets and advises him to assure his good fortune by adorning each dome with the colour associated with the clime and planet of its occupant. On each day of the week, the king visited one princess and enjoyed her company, and in turn, the princess would tell Bahram a moralistic story. In this scene depicting Wednesday (the day ruled by the planet Mercury), Bahram is accompanied by the bride from the Maghrib who lives in the turquoise pavilion and is dressed in turquoise.

The high quality of the manuscript is attested by the quality of the illumination, calligraphy and the highly detailed illustration. They all point to a likely origin of a royal workshop in the early Safavid period. A folio from the same manuscript, illustrating the Iranian Princess and the White Pavilion, is in the Cleveland Museum of Art (2006.146).

The text on the illustration reads:

سرخ گل شاه بوستان نبود — گر ز سرخی درو نشان نبود
چون به پایان شد این حکایت نغز — گشت پر سرخ گل هوا را مغز
روی بهرام از آن گل افشانی — سرخ شد چون رحیق ریحانی
چارشنبه که از شکوفه مهر — گشت پیروزه‌گون سواد سپهر
شاه را شد ز عالم افروزی — جامه پیروزه‌گون ز پیروزی
شد به پیروزه گنبد از سر ناز — روز کوتاه بود و قصه دراز
زلف شب چون نقاب مشکین بست — شه ز نقابی نقیبان رست

S.L.

Reference:

Blois, François de. 'HAFT PEYKAR', in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, XI:522-24, 2002. https://iranicaonline.org/articles/haft-peykar.

48

One Illustration from the Haft Peykar (Bahram Gur visits the Sandalwood Pavilion)

c. 1560-80
Shiraz, Iran

Opaque watercolour, ink and gold on paper
29cm high, 19cm wide

Provenance: Previously in the collection of a European family since the mid-19th century

This illustration depicts the Sasanian king Bahram Gur sitting with a princess in a pavilion and surrounded by courtly companions who are entertaining him with food, music and dancing. The main scene has verses above and below it, and is framed by a building on the right-hand side. The onlookers in the building peep through the door and the window onto Bahram's banquet. The title of the illustration is below the dome, in the middle cartouche in the top margin, and is written in white thuluth and illuminated with gold background. It reads "raftan-e Bahrām rūz-e panj-shanbe be gonbad-e ṣandalī (Bahram's visit to the Sandalwood Pavilion on Thursday)." On each side of the title there is a verse.

This painting depicts an episode of the Haft Paykar, an epic romantic poem which is a part of a Khamsa (a collection of poems) from the renowned Persian poet, Nizami Ghanjavi (d.1209).

The scene is finely illustrated and illuminated, as seen from the individualistic depictions of facial features and clothing, as well as the rich array of patterns on various surfaces of the building. The reverse side of the folio continues the verses from the illustrated page, with fine illuminations embellishing the page.

The high quality of the manuscript can be reflected in the illumination, calligraphy and the highly detailed illustration. They all point to a likely origin of a royal workshop in the early Safavid period.

The text on the illustration reads:

قصه چون گفت ماه زیبا چهر — در کنارش گرفت شاه به مهر
روز پنجشنبه است روزی خوب — وز سعادت به مشتری منسوب
چون دم صبح گفت نافه گشای — عود را سوخت خاک صندل سای
بر نمودار خاک صندل فام — صندلی کرد شاه جامه و جا

S.L.

Folios from the same manuscript are dispersed among American institutions:

- Bahram Gur Visits the White Pavilion, Cleveland Museum of Art (2006.146);
- Bahram Gur Visits the Black Pavilion, National Museum of Asian Art, Washington D.C. (S1986.182);
- Bahram Gur Visits the Yellow Pavilion, National Museum of Asian Art, Washington D.C. (S1986.180).

Reference:

Blois, François de. 'HAFT PEYKAR', in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, XI:522-24, 2002. https://iranicaonline.org/articles/haft-peykar.

چون دم صبح گشت نافه گشا | خود را چون که ساخت صندل فام | بر نمود از خاک صندلی گردشاه جامه و جام

49

A Large Gombroon Ware Bowl

Late 17th – early 18th century
Safavid Iran

Ceramic with underglaze decoration
18.5cm diameter, 7.1cm high

Provenance: UK private collection

This delicate bowl of exceptional size is finely decorated around the wall with pierced ("fenestrated") design based on reciprocal trefoils. In the centre is a small dome (omphalos) decorated with black and cobalt blue designs. There are further black decorative dots in groups of three on the rim. The base is glazed, and in the centre is a recess below the omphalos.

The term "Gombroon ware" refers to a group of Iranian ceramics dating to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They are instantly recognisable by their plain white body, which is sufficiently vitrified to become almost glass-like in its translucency. The glassy appearance of this object is owed to the use of very fine fritware (a mixture of crushed quartz, small amounts of white clay and ground-up glaze) which 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, (a technique that first became popular in Iran during the twelfth century). Hence, 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 that Iranian potters aimed to emulate.

Gombroon ware is similar to contemporary Chinese export wares from the Dehua kilns, in Fujian province, also in plain white. The increasing popularity of producing white ceramics in Iran during the seventeenth century was likely a response to the discontinuation of porcelain exports from China between 1643-83. However, the shapes reflect objects used by the local market, especially small shallow dishes with incised decorations, wine cups, rose water sprinklers, bases for water pipes, multi-necked flower vases, dishes, and spittoons or sand pots.

Historically, Gombroon was the name used by English traders to identify the strategic trading port Bandar-e Abbas on the Persian Gulf. Hence, Gombroon was a point of export rather than a place of production. Suggested possible centres for the production of Gombroon wares are Shiraz, Yazd, Kirman or Isfahan, however, there is no archaeological evidence to support these claims.

S.L.

Comparative examples:

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Accession Number C.7-1909);

The British Museum, London (Accession Number 1878,1230.609);

Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1389-1876; 1399-1876; 1962-1910; 424-1872; and 1401-1876)

References:

Géza Fehérvári. 2000. *Ceramics of the Islamic World in the Tareq Rajab Museum*. New York: I.B. Tauris. p. 292.

Maryam D. Ekhtiar and Kendra Weisbin. 2011. *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. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Golombek, Lisa, Robert B. Mason, Patricia Proctor, and Eileen Reilly. *Persian Pottery in the First Global Age: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

50

Two Safavid Cuerda-Seca Tiles

Second half of the 17th century
Probably Isfahan, Safavid Iran

Ceramic painted in polychrome
23cm high, 45cm wide

Provenance: French private collection

These underglaze polychrome fritware tiles depict rare fish and bird compositions. On a golden yellow background, three birds are standing among a group of fish, all painted in cobalt blue, light blue, green and yellow, and outlined in black. The style of the three birds depicted here is consistent with that shown on other seventeenth century Safavid tiles, characterised by the birds' multi-coloured wings. Fish form a rare subject matter on Safavid tiles – in this composition, many of the fish are decorated with circular motifs, seemingly an attempt by the artist to imitate fish scales. All the coloured elements are separated from each other by black outlines using the cuerda-seca technique.

The cuerda-seca (dry cord in Spanish) technique was widely used for ceramics produced in the Islamicate world from the 10th century onwards. The black outlines, painted using a greasy substance and dark pigments, prevent different glaze colours applied on the same tile from running into each other, particularly during firing.

During the Safavid period, members of the upper echelons of the society decorated their houses, and especially their gardens, with ceramic friezes depicting various leisure and hunting scenes. This practice was recorded in contemporary travel accounts, where western travellers noted such decorative schemes in private gardens along the Chahar Bagh avenue in Isfahan.

S.L.

Comparative materials:

For examples of birds painted in a similar fashion, see tiles from the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (976.298.60 976.298.10). For tiles with a similar colour scheme, see a tile panel in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (EA1979.16).

51

A Gold-Overlaid Steel Safavid Helmet (*Kulāh-Khūd*)

18th century
Iran

Steel overlaid with gold
73cm overall height, 19.5cm diameter

Provenance: A Princely private collection
Christie's London, 2006

This type of helmet is commonly known in Persian as a "*kulāh-khūd*". The watered-steel hemispherical bowl ends at the top with a protruding spike. Riveted at the front of the bowl is a screw bracket that secures a sliding nose protector (*damāghak*) with flattened, lobed finials. Above the bracket on each side are riveted two small plume holders (*jā parī*) with flattened lobed bases. A long mail aventail, made of very fine riveted rings to protect the neck and face, attaches through holes around the rim of the bowl. The mail's lower edge ends in four longer triangular points and multiple shorter points between them.

The spike is damascened with foliate scrolls, while the base of the spike has steel openwork that carries inscriptions. The lobed finials of the nose protector also have steel openwork with inscriptions. The bowl is decorated with radiating ridged lines damascened in gold, which lead to the lozenge-shaped palmettes. These in turn, are connected to the triangular palmettes that form a band encircling the rim. All the palmettes are gold damascened, with the lozenge-shaped palmettes carrying inscriptions of the invocations to names of God. A helmet of the same type, dated to the Safavid period, is housed at the Military Museum in Tehran, Iran. (Inv.No.3).

On the lower finial of the nose-guard:
نصر من الله وفتح قريب

"Help from God and a speedy victory" (part of Qur'an 61:13).

On the upper finial of the nose guard:
انا فتحنا لك فتحا مبينا

"Verily We have granted thee a manifest victory" (Qur'an 48:1)

Around the base of the spike, invocations of Attributes of God:
يا حنان يا منان يا ديان يا برهان

O Beneficent! O Compassionate! O Requiter! O Proof!

In the cartouches around the base, invocations to further Attributes:
يا علّام الغيوب / يا غفّار الذنوب / يا كاشف الكروب / يا مقلب القلوب / يا طبيب القلوب / يا منور القلوب / يا انيس القلوب / يا مفرج الهموم / يا منفس الغموم / يا معين الضعفاء / يا صاحب الغرباء / يا ناصر الاولياء / يا قاهر الاعداء / يا رافع السماء / يا انيس الاصفياء / يا حبيب الاتقياء / يا كنز الفقراء / يا اله الاغنياء / يا اكرم الكرماء

O Knower of mysteries! O Forgiver of sins! O Remover of worries! O Converter of hearts! O Physician of hearts! O Illuminator of hearts! O Companion of hearts! O Easer of troubles! O Expeller of grief! O Supporter of the weak! O Companion of strangers! O Helper of the (God's) friends! O Vanquisher of enemies! O Raiser of the sky! O Friend of the pure! O Beloved of the pious! O Treasure House for the poor! O God of the wealthy! O Most Generous of the generous!

S.L.

Comparative material:

For similar examples, see the Hermitage Museum and the Wallace Collection

Reference:

Moshtagh Khorasani, Manouchehr. *Arms and Armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period*. Tübingen: Legat-Verlag, 2006. P.716, Cat.407.

52

A Pair of Qajar Lacquer Doors

Second half of 19th century
Isfahan or Tehran, Iran

Panelled wood with raised papier-mâché relief
Each 162cm high, 36.5cm wide

Provenance: French private collection

This pair of finely painted and illuminated lacquer doors, filled with Safavid-revival figures in narrative and at leisure, is a wonderful example of high-quality Qajar craftsmanship. Each door consists of one vertical panel with two horizontal panels above and below, all within a wide frame. The panels all have arabesque corner-pieces, with central figural cartouches decorated in relief. In the vertical panels, there are additional raised pendants above and below the central figural cartouches, filled with inscriptions and split-palmette motifs. Various types of exquisitely painted animals, including lions, bulls and birds, fill the background of the vertical panels. Figures at leisure in a garden landscape occupy the background in the horizontal cartouches. The outer frames contain a narrow geometric border, followed by a wider arabesque one. The space above and below each panel has narrative compositions, some with figures engaging in a scholarly debate, while others seem more dramatic.

Lacquer doors were produced as early as the end of the sixteenth century, during the Safavid period, and continued to be made in the Qajar period, up until the early twentieth century. Finely executed examples such as this would have been used in Safavid and Qajar palaces, as well as in the pavilions of members of the upper echelons of Persian society. With their decorative scheme based on a combination of manuscript paintings, lacquer work, book bindings and even contemporary Persian metalwork, producing these doors would have required collaboration between craftsmen with different skills. For example, the figural and animal depictions on the doors would have been executed by painters who were well-versed in the repertoire of seventeenth-century Persian manuscript painting, while the papier-mâché relief appearance, such as that on our example, would have needed the skills of lacquer workers.

Although most of the known surviving doors of this type date to the nineteenth century, when the painting tradition in Iran had shifted dramatically, the style of painting applied on the doors remained largely the same. This has caused problems for art historians in dating the doors, especially when coupled with the fact that sometimes calligraphers inscribed apocryphal dates on the finished products. Indeed, our example bears such a date of 1032 AH/ 1622-3 CE at the bottom of one of the cartouches which also contains a line of poetry. Two characteristics from our doors, however, suggest they were most likely produced between the mid-nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Firstly, the papier-mâché relief effect, which does not appear on original seventeenth century doors, can be found on a group of mid-nineteenth century lacquer doors including ours. Secondly, and perhaps the most telling evidence for a later date, is the size of the turbans worn by the figures – generally, the later the painting, the bigger the turban.

However, the earlier artistic influences are also clearly visible on our doors. The composition of the cartouches and depiction of the figures strongly recall a double frontispiece from the "Vignier Album" dated to ca.1590-1610 in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution (S1986.277, S1986.278). The embracing couple inside the central cartouche in the left-hand vertical panel on our doors, for example, is almost a mirror image of that on the left-hand side of the frontispiece, except for the difference in headgear and outfits. The marginal paintings on the Vignier frontispiece, depicting figures at leisure and also some fighting scenes, are similar in ideas to the border paintings on our doors. Scholars have recently refocused on the "Safavid-revival" style, recognising the artistic value of lacquer works produced in the Qajar period in their own right. Eva Baer (1995), for example, recognises the "revivalist tendencies" as a conscious attempt by the Qajars to create a visual bridge between the tradition and their own world.

The inscription in the vertical panels, below the central figural cartouches, is a *ghazal* by Hâfiz (No.366, *Ghazaliyât*):

ره رو منزل‌ما بدین در نه پي حشمت و جاه آمده ایوز بد حادثه اینجا به پناه آمده ایم
تا به اقلیم وجود این همه راه آمده‌ایم‌عشقیم و ز سرحد عدم

We have not come to this door looking for glory or grandeur
Seeking refuge from bad fortune has brought us here
From nothingness to existence, we have come all this way
As we are travellers of love, and to love we adhere

S.L.

Comparative material:

A double frontispiece from the Smithsonian Institution (S1986.277, S1986.278).

Reference:

Fehervari, G. 'A Seventeenth-Century Persian Lacquer Door and Some Problems of Şafavid Lacquer-Painted Doors', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 32, no. 2 (1969): pp. 268-80. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00055300

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