

RUNJEET SINGH

ARMS & ARMOUR FROM THE EAST



CONTENTS

Edged Weapons	3
Firearms	22
Helmets	26
Shields	34
Works of art	38

Written by Runjeet Singh
and Olivia Allan
March 2023

All prices on request





1

HEAVY KATAR

RAJASTHAN, INDIA
18TH-19TH CENTURY

OVERALL 485MM (19 INCHES)

This *katar* (punch dagger) is a rare find. The fullered blade has a thick diamond section, making it not just capable of splitting chainmail links, but also able to pierce heavier armour. It is perhaps one of the heaviest blades on a *katar* that we have seen to date. Also of note is the fact that the original scabbard has survived. Indian scabbards don't always survive due to the lightweight construction employed by the craftsmen of the day, however here, a large silver chape and locket, pierced to show peacocks and parrots among vegetation, have helped maintain the integrity of the wood. The scabbard is covered with green velvet, which is pleasingly worn, but the original pile—which can be seen peeking from the edges and underneath the mounts—hints at how splendid it would have looked.

The hilt is decorated with a repeating pattern of scrolling foliage that runs all along the frame in gold *koftgari*. The deeply sunken fullers are decorated with a benedictory couplet in gold calligraphy.

Of note, are the three bars that form the grip, their ends protruding through the side-bars. Similar examples have been published by Jens Nordlunde¹ and dated to the 18th century; while earlier varieties can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art² and in Robert Elgood's indispensable book about the Rathores³. Both the Met's and Elgood's examples are dated to the 17th century (the former being from South India, the latter being from Ahmadnagar in the Deccan), pre-dating any known Rajput specimen. It is likely that these earlier *katars* informed the Rajput design of which ours is an example.

This weapon is much larger and heavier than most of its kind and so it must have been made for a Rajput who possessed not just high social status but also great stature.

Provenance

European art market

References

- ¹ J. Nordlunde, *A Passion for Indian Arms*, 2016.
- ² <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/31733>
- ³ R. Elgood, *Rajput Arms & Armour: The Rathores and their Armoury at Jodhpur Fort*, Niyogi Books, 2017, p.678 (SSP/213E).





2

LARGE CHILLANUM

DECCAN, INDIA
17th Century

OVERALL 460MM (18.11 INCHES)



A large and handsome 17th century example of a double-edged dagger (or *chillanum*) from the Deccan with unusual features.

A bell-shaped pommel sits atop the waisted hilt, leading into sweeping pommel arms, terminated on one side with a dragon head tip, which is repeated as a pair on the quillons at the base of the hilt, and is a feature developed from Timurid and Safavid weapons. Attached is a curved knuckle guard which has some old repairs. An oval hand guard exhibits two bands of delicately pierced circles and lotus bud finials at each end.

A lobed palmette cuff sits at the top of a long, slender blade with a double medial ridge, which then disappears into the dagger's reinforced tip.

A 17th century sword, or dagger hilt from the Deccan in the Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection displays drooping dragon quillons similar to those shown here.⁴

References

- ⁴ Bashir Mohamed, *The Arts of the Muslim Knight – The Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection*, 2008, p.222, cat.no.213.

3

AGATE HILTED KARD

RAJASTHAN, INDIA
19th Century

OVERALL 350MM (13.77 INCHES)



A 19th century *kard* dagger from Rajasthan, India. The hilt is carved from a single piece of lustrous toffee-like agate which, in certain conditions, is translucent enough to be able to see an extended tang from the dagger blade which runs almost the entire length of the hilt.

The blade is forged from high quality wootz steel and displays a vibrant, grey-blue, water-like pattern. The heel of the blade and the bolster is richly decorated with gold *koftgari*, in a style indicative of swords and daggers that were being produced in certain workshops in Rajasthan in the 19th century.

The knife is undeniably 'Indian' but the wootz steel looks very Persian. An Indian dagger⁵ sold by us in 2018 was made by a Persian smith named Muhammad Ibrahim, who was working in Alwar (Rajasthan) in the second half of the 19th century. It shares some characteristics with the dagger shown here, particularly the quality of the wootz and the rich gold *koftgari*. A sword⁶ in the Royal Collection Trust, also made by Ibrahim, displays the same hallmarks. A third example, a dagger,⁷ sold by us in 2019, had no markings, much like the one being offered here, which has all the hallmarks of a Persian production in Rajasthan.

References

5. https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/175/ibrahim_dagger
6. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/11238/sword>
7. https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/267/gold_kard





MINANGKABAU STATE KERIS

SUMATRA, INDONESIA
18th-19th Century

OVERALL 480MM (18.9 INCHES)



An important and fine *keris* dagger from the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. While *keris* with wooden scabbards and hilts are commonly found, those with gold mounts such as this one, are exciting discoveries. Only dignitaries and high-ranking officers of the Sultanate were allowed to use precious materials such as gold; *keris* with gold fittings were used as an indicator of rank and social status. This combination of a gold clad scabbard, gold ferrule (*mendak*) and hippopotamus ivory hilt indicate the use of this *keris* in royal courts known as *Kraton*.

The hilt, *ukiran*, is a type found in Eastern parts of Indonesia, in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, here it is in the form of an abstract, anthropomorphic figure, *jawa demam*, representing a half-human, half-bird figure. The cup-shaped ferrule in which the hilt sits is called a *selut* and is made of gold, with a fine filigree pattern depicting foliage, raised on a decorated stem.

The scabbard is made of wood, covered in embossed gold, depicting typical Sumatran decoration. The scabbard mouth, *warangka*, depicts three cartouches on each side: the front depicts the tree of luck, or tree of life, accompanied by two cartouches on each side depicting floral motifs. The back depicts a similar variety of cartouches of which the centrepiece depicts another auspicious symbol. The scabbard sheath, *pendok*, is embossed with typical Sumatran floral designs surrounded by filigree outlines on the front. The back shows a chiselled lozenge pattern, with filigree borders and a stylistic crown inside each lozenge. The embossed endpiece of the scabbard, known as a *buntut*, is typically found in Minangkabau and shows a similar decoration of fine gold filigree (some minor dents and a small dark mark). At the top of the *pendok* there is a round amulet dress loop known as a *toli toli*, made of fine rods of gold forming the outlines of the amulet. At the centre, it is mounted with a stone called a *hematite*, which has a metal glaze, cut in an attractive faceted form. These amulets are meant as status symbol and are only suitable for the highest social ranks. Genuine *toli toli* like these are very hard to find on today's market.

The blade, *wilah*, is older than the 19th century dress, dating from the 17th or 18th century it shows seven, *luk*, waves. The blade has a traditional structure and shows a linear and segmented forging pattern which is commonly seen on Sumatran blades. The cutting edge is a little darker, indicating this was made of a high-carbon iron. The blade is made in two pieces, the blade with the *peksi*, which is the tang supporting the hilt, and the *ganja* guard, which is placed separately on the blade. The *ganja* flows nicely into the forte of the blade which is decorated with a small protrusion called *kembang cacang*. This represents an elephant trunk, derived from Lord Ganesh the Hindu god, which represents flexibility and the ability to adapt and change with time, connecting the *keris* to the owner.



5

'JADE-BAMBOO' KNIFE

CHINA
19th Century

OVERALL 270MM (10.62 INCHES)



A Manchu-style eating knife made in China in the 19th century. The hilt is cleverly carved from a single piece of spinach-green jade in the form of bamboo. The blade has a single groove, and a silver bolster sits between the blade and the hilt.

The scabbard is carefully crafted from a single piece of hollow buffalo horn; both sides are carved with scenes of gardens with streams and bridges, small boats, and what appear to be a two water buffalo at the top of the back of the scabbard, and at the front, two men on another buffalo. Two figures are standing on a bridge, one greeting the other. There is also an elephant with a vase with plants on its back, a common rebus in China symbolising peaceful times. The scenes are reminiscent of the canals and gardens of the old town of Suzhou and may well refer to them.

A heavy silver locket sits at the top of the scabbard and is chased with floral designs over a stippled background, a carved dragon at the back holds silver suspension rings.







6

STILETTO DAGGER

EUROPE
19th Century

OVERALL 245MM (9 ½ INCHES)

A beautiful, but mysterious, short stiletto knife. I consulted numerous friends in the field of arms and armour and had many debates and interesting discussions, nearly all of which were inconclusive. Some say Ottoman, others Italian or Spanish (with influences from Zuloaga, or Hispano-Arab work). However, one discussion seemed to provide the best evidence. It is most likely this is a French prostitute's dagger or '*dague de prostituée*'. The size and shape of the dagger, and the blade cross-section, which is in a diamond shape, are all good indicators.

The grip is made from a beautifully polished piece of pinky-brown agate, with bands of various shades running through the stone. A central window frames a crystallised section of stone. The russet iron pommel and bolster are chiselled with an endless knot pattern and highlighted with gold. The iron scabbard is overlaid with detailed gold grapes and vines on a stippled ground.



7

RARE EXPANDING SHOT

DECCAN, INDIA
18th or 19th Century

OVERALL 1080MM (42 ½ INCHES)



An extremely rare item, believed to be an expanding shot, designed to be fired from a cannon. Entirely made of steel, comprising two spherical, cast iron balls, both of different weight and size, each joined via a swivel to five articulated, double-edged blades of flattened diamond sections, secured together by rivets on petalled washers.

It is likely that the shot would be loaded into the cannon in a compacted or folded state, and once fired, the different calibre balls (67mm and 58mm, or 2.63" and 2.28" respectively) would allow the shot to open up mid-flight creating a spinning blade,

with the intention of inflicting horrific damage on the intended targets and causing panic and horror.

A similar one is published in the book *Islamic And Oriental Arms And Armour* by Robert Hales, 2013, p. 314, fig. 765.

Provenance

The Mark and Peter Dineley Collections





A SIKH CHAKRAM (QUOIT)

LAHORE
19th Century

OVERALL 272MM (10.7 INCHES)

With a blued steel body of rounded form with a gilt inner edge and sharpened outside edge. It is decorated identically on both sides with gold *koftgari* cartouches filled with scrolling tendrils and a central flower head, all within a double line border.

Ultimately, the Sikh chakram is an object of war, designed to be thrown at the enemy, whether gripped between the thumb and index finger and thrown like a frisbee, or twirled on the index finger and launched at speed. It is an ancient Indian weapon but popularised by the Sikhs, particularly the Nihangs, members of the warrior branch of the Sikh faith, (the word is from the Persian, meaning crocodile, signifying ferociousness). An assemblage in the V&A museum demonstrates how an Akali Nihang would have worn them stacked on a tall turban. An Akali Nihang is a high-ranking warrior, the word Akali derived from *Akaal*, the timeless one, in reference to God. Due to the lavish decoration on the example shown here, it was probably made for someone of status and wealth and designed to be worn on the turban, or around the neck, like the V&A example.

A similar example was offered at Sotheby's, London in 2008 .

Mounted on a custom-made stand.

References

⁸ <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O72384/quoit-turban-unknown/>

⁹ <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/arts-of-the-islamic-world-l08220/lot.268.html>



A SILVER PHOENIX GUOM

VIETNAM
19th Century

OVERALL 950 MM (37.4 INCHES)

This unusual and fine 19th century Vietnamese *guom* sword has a silver guard which depicts a resplendent mythical phoenix with its wings functioning as a hand guard, and the tail forming a knuckle bow, the end being held in the mouth of lion whose head, in silver, sits as a pommel on the top of buffalo horn grip.

The sturdy and high-quality blade is a nice change from other *guom*, which are often fitted with flimsy and low quality blades. It is decorated with traditional

Vietnamese floral decoration. The forte has a silver ferrule which is commonly known in Chinese as *tunkou*, which was originally shaped as a dragon's mouth, but was more stylistically shaped in later periods.

The heavy scabbard is crafted from two pieces of hardwood, with mother-of-pearl inlay depicting floral vines and squirrels. Silver scabbard mounts are embossed, with a stippled background, depicting a cockerel, cranes, and a parrot, surrounded with floral motives and foliage. Small

suspension rings are attached to the two upper fittings.

The fine workmanship and materials suggest this sword was made for a high-ranking official or man of considerable wealth and status. The unusual phoenix design feature is, as yet, unexampled; perhaps it was made as a special commission for an occasion such as the announcement of a new emperor.

The sword is mounted vertically on a custom-made display stand.





10

PUNJABI TORADOR OR BANDOOR (MATCHLOCK MUSKET)

LAHORE
19th Century

OVERALL 1790MM (70.5 INCHES)

A lacquered wood, matchlock gun of long and slender Punjabi form, the wooden butt and stock elaborately covered in polychromatic decorations with red, pink, and blue-green petalled flowers and green foliage on a gold background. The metal side-plates are treated with the same *motifs*, although they are affected by flash damage, indicating that the gun has been fired.

The butt is straight, slender, and five-sided; the D-shaped trigger is cut and pierced. When the trigger is depressed, the match-holder (serpentine) would have lowered a lit match towards the pan. The pan cover is retained, and still working to keep the pan dry when not in use. The octagonal barrel is forged from pattern-welded, Damascus steel with traces of gold *koftgari*. The barrel is held to the stock with three barrel bands, one of which is a later replacement.

There are two matchlock muskets from the Royal Armouries, Leeds, UK, illustrated in the 1999 book, edited by Susan Stronge, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* (pages 140–141). They are believed to have been made in Lahore in the early 19th century, and between them, they share many similarities to the gun shown here. A third was displayed as part of the 2015 Metropolitan Museum exhibition *The Royal Hunt: Courtly Pursuits in Indian Art*¹⁰ and this originated from the same smith as the two mentioned above: Haji Sha'ban. A fourth was sold by me in New York in 2018.¹¹

References

¹⁰. <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/objects?exhibitionId=880a3c1a-7292-4ba0-b8b8-189cc938cdf5#!?perPage=20&offset=0>

¹¹. https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/193/matchlock_musket



11

TORADOR OR BANDOOK (MATCHLOCK MUSKET)

RAJASTHAN?, INDIA
18th Century

OVERALL 1680MM (66.25 INCHES)

An unusual and fine matchlock musket with sighted barrel, deeply chiselled in low relief over its entire surface with flowers and foliage, finished with chased decoration detailing the plants. The breech and muzzle are similarly chiselled and enriched with gold *kofgari*, the breech end incorporating an inscription, perhaps in Telegu or Kannada. A slender, wooden full stock with a beautiful grain structure and a leather-like finish, embossed along the edges with a simple floral pattern.

A large iron panel on each side of the action is chiselled en-suite with the barrel and flanked with peacock heads. It has a pair of gilt brass belt-swivels and iron ramrod.









12

A SIX-PLATE KABUTO (HELMET)

JAPAN
Mid-Edo Period circa 1700-1750

OVERALL: 370MM (14.5 INCHES)
DIAMETER: 190MM (7.48 INCHES)

A six-plate *kuro urushi kabuto* (helmet) in the Kaga style, Kaga being an ancient Japanese province. The helmet is lacquered in plum-black *urushi* and topped with a four-stage iron *tehen kanamono* (fixture on the top of a helmet). Nine iron *shinodare*, or decorative fixtures, extend from under the *tehen kanamono*. Both the *tehen* and the *shinodare* have *sawari*, a decorative finish created by splashing droplets of a silver alloy onto the russet iron, resulting

in a pleasing finish that is said to represent early morning dew drops, and is a feature of good quality Kaga armour.

The functional iron peak (*mabizashi*) is covered in textured, gilded leather. At the rear, secured to the *koshimaki* (iron band at the base of the helmet), is a four lame *shikoro* (neck guard). The top lame has two, protruding ears (*fukigaeshi*) which along with the lowest lame are also covered with

gilded and textured leather. This feature, like *sawari*, is generally associated with armour produced by smiths from Kaga. The neck guard (*shikoro*) is laced in dark green silk *odoshi*.

The later, circular *maedate* (fore crest) is made from brass and takes the form of a crescent moon. The helmet has an original *ukibari* (helmet liner) and *shinobi-no-o* (chin cords).



13

RUSSET IRON RYÛBU MEN-PÔ

JAPAN
Edo Period 1615-1868

OVERALL 210MM (8.26 INCHES)

Tetsu sabiji (russet iron) *men-pô* (below eye-level face armour) in the *Ryûbu* style.

Ryûbu men are described as having a serene appearance rather than the more commonly encountered *Ressei-men*: a mask with a snarling, aggressive expression.

This mask has two *odayori-gane* (flanges continuing down the cheeks) which are designed to stop the helmet cords being cut. Gilded copper *ue-ba* (teeth) and a striking bristle *kuchihige* (moustache) are distinctive features of this mask and provide a confident and handsome visual.

An iron tube juts from the underside of the chin to allow perspiration to drain away. The large ear guard plates (*mimi*) have been decorated with inverted heart cut outs called *inome* (boar's eye).

The four-lame throat guard (*tare*) is made in the *kiritsuke ko-zane* (simulated small-scale) style with closely spaced lacing (*kebiki odoshi*), finished in dark blue silk.







14

TIBETAN HELMET WITH LEOPARD FUR TRIM

TIBET
15th-16th Century

DIAMETER: 240MM (9.5 INCHES)

The fifth Dalai Lama, writing in 1643, said that armour was first brought to Tibet from a district in Kham (*smar khams*) during the reign of the semi-legendary, ancient king, Trigum Tsenpo (*gri gum btsan po*). We now have a recognisable Tibetan tradition of lamellar plate armour and helmets to which this helmet conforms.

The bowl of this helmet is formed from eight overlapping iron plates, which have been attached together with rivets, the heads of which are visible on the external surface of the helmet. Fitted along the brim of the helmet is a cylindrical band of leopard fur which is strongly secured by thick thread, which

is interlaced through twenty-one holes, visible only within the interior of the helmet. At the base of the helmet, binding the leopard fur, providing additional stability, is a thin layer of red and white painted ribbon securely tying either end of the trim in place. It is a wonderfully preserved piece of accoutrement that gives us an insight into adornment in the Tibetan tradition of decorating armour.

The finial plate at the top of the bowl is convex with an attached, multi-level, pagoda-shaped plume holder. A small Tibetan inscription can be found on this finial plate Xia Da Ba 335 which is thought

to be an inventory number. An armoured infantryman (*zimchonpa*), wearing a Tibetan helmet with a fur trim is shown as the subject of a photograph in the important book by Donald J LaRocca 'Warriors of the Himalayas.....', 2006, p.3, fig.2.¹²

References

- ¹² Photograph taken at the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa, 1943, by Ilya Tolstoy. Ewell Sale Stewart Library, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.



15

PLATE HELMET WITH BRIM

TIBET
15th-16th Century

DIAMETER: 215MM (8.5 INCHES)

The bowl of this helmet is formed from twelve overlapping iron plates, which have been attached together with twenty-four domed rivets, which are visible on the external surface of the helmet. The outer plates are cusped, drawn to steep points. Along the base of the helmet are a series of fourteen rivet holes which may have been used to attach a nape defence of some kind. At its front, the helmet is fitted with a concentric brim, riveted at three points. At the top of the bowl is the convex finial plate with a central hole for a missing plume tube, which is secured by six rivets. At the top of the bowl is the convex finial plate with a central hole for a missing plume tube.

The helmet shares design features with a Tibet helmet now in the Metropolitan Museum¹³, notably the cusped plates, which are very similar. It also shares some features with a Korean or Mongolian helmet used in Tibet, which is also in the Metropolitan Museum¹⁴, in particular, the shallow bowl and the brim. This could be a coincidence, or it could be that they were both fitted with brims at the same time, or one merely being an inspiration of the other.

References

- ¹³. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/748369>
- ¹⁴. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/26606>





SHIELD FROM THE BHUTANESE ROYAL GUARD

BHUTAN
LATE 19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER: 470MM (18.50 INCHES)

This 19th century shield is of the distinctive type carried by the Bhutanese Royal Guard, however the quality and detail are more superior than most examples and suggest that perhaps, it was made for a higher-ranking man from within the royal guard. Made from animal hide, it has a black lacquer finish with a bright red, rolled border.

Mounted with four brass bosses, each is surrounded by a key pattern at their edges and elegantly engraved with matching scrolling cloud patterns. At the crest of the shield is a silver-coloured *ad-chand* (half-

moon) with a gilded copper *surya* (sun), both of which represent *upaya* (method) and *prajna* (wisdom). Centrally anointed with a red *tilak* dot for protective luck.

At the rear of the shield can be found an attractive leather cushion with a bold green trim and metal fastenings at each four corners, securing two leather straps with red, plaited leather inserts, again a nice touch of detail not usually found on guards' shields. Wrapped delicately around these holders is a long-wearing strap, weaved in traditional vibrantly coloured Bhutanese fabric.

Near-identical shields can be seen in a photograph dated 1905, being carried by the bodyguards of Ugyen Wangchuck, who would later become the first King of Bhutan, (see Schicklgruber & Pommaret, Pg225).

A similar shield is also kept in the Royal Armouries, Leeds, UK, currently on display in case 2 in the Oriental Gallery (No. XXVIA. 107); and another in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (No.36.25.630) see Stone, fig.69, p53.





A CARVED LEATHER DHAL (SHIELD) WITH SILVER BOSSES

INDIA, PROBABLY DECCAN
1700-1701 AD

DIAMETER: 585MM (23.03 INCHES)

This unique 17th or 18th century leather *dhal* (shield) mounted with attractive silver bosses with floral motifs, is probably from the Deccan, India.

Of circular form, with some slight distortion, the outer surface is intricately and profusely carved with traces of red pigment. At the centre, four mirrored cartouches sit within a circle, with the words:

'There is no hero like 'Ali, and there is no sword like dhul'faqar'

With the Islamic date 1112, which corresponds to 1700-1701 AD.

Two circular borders surround the cartouches, the first, containing flower heads within hearts, and the second, a long trailing Arabic inscription. The main body of the shield has eight larger, complex

inscriptions within cartouches, each separated from the other by floral arrangements which almost appear to have an *alum*¹⁵-like structure. A floral border runs along the circumference, with traces of restoration, the edge being slightly upturned.

Carved leather shields are rare, and one with Islamic inscriptions, such as this one, is especially significant. A lacquered leather shield with gilt decoration, focusing on four inscriptions such as those on the present example, is in the Furusiyya Art Foundation¹⁶, attributed to the 17th century. Another is held in our own inventory¹⁷ and is also attributed to the Deccan and dated as 17th century.

Further research is needed, especially in translating the

inscriptions, this may lead to more concrete attribution and to finding out more about this small group of leather carved shields.

My thanks to Arthur Bijl for his assistance with the inscriptions.

References

- ¹⁵ hAn Islamic standard, usually made from metal, popular in the Deccan.
- ¹⁶ Bashir Mohamed, *The Arts of the Muslim Knight: The Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection*, 2007, p.377, no.357, inv. no.R-877.
- ¹⁷ https://www.runjeetsingh.com/inventory/283/carved_leather_shield







18

PORTRAIT OF A SIKH

NORTH INDIA
18TH-19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER: 204MM x 137MM
(8 x 5.4 INCHES)

From the foothills of the Punjab, an intriguing 18th or 19th century Pahari portrait in opaque pigments on paper. It portrays a Sikh man, represented in a fashion that became popular in this period to depict Sikh chiefs, seated on a blue and white rug, placed upon a terrace. Bearded and moustachioed, the subject is shown wearing a very fetching pink turban and a simple white *jama* secured with a cummerbund, the ends draped on one side. A *chaddar*, bearing a checked pattern hangs loosely over both shoulders. In his left hand there is a recurved bow, which the subject tucks under his right arm, and in

his left hand, he gracefully holds up a single arrow between his thumb and index finger. On his left hip sits a sword, which would be secured to his body with a belt, it is only partially visible.

A very closely-related painting of the Sikh Chief 'Bhag Singh Alhuwalia' ca. 1785¹⁸, is kept in the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh and is attributed to the family workshop of Purkhu of Kangra. Both the subjects in our painting, and the Chandigarh painting, sit on identical carpets, wearing almost identical clothing, and both hold a bow and arrow—albeit in different

hands. The backdrop is different, but more significantly, the turban style is different, and the blue-grey skin tone of our subject is quite unusual. Another difference is that the subject of our painting is sitting in *bir-asan* (warrior pose) which is probably a nod to his martial prowess.

References

- ¹⁸. Goswamy, Smith, I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion, 2006, p.174-175, cat.no.5.5



1.

19

STUDY OF A SIKH WEDDING PARTY & THREE VIEWS OF INDIA

BRITISH SCHOOL
1868 – 1869

DIAMETER:

1. W 310 x H 210MM
(12.2 x 8.26 INCHES)
2. W 355 x H 220MM
(13.97 x 8.66 INCHES)
3. W 205 x H 350MM
(8.07 x 13.77 INCHES)
4. W 355 x H 180MM
(13.97 x 7.08 INCHES)

One study and three views in India by the same hand, titled as follows: 'A Sikh Wedding Party', 'Well at Hydraghur, Ray Bareilly', 'Mahim Fort, Bombay', and 'Dalmau Ghaut, Ray Bareilly'. Within this collection we have four watercolours on cartridge paper that depict a range of fascinating scenes from India.

In our first watercolour entitled 'A Sikh Wedding Party', we see a two-wheeled Indian cart (*rath*) drawn by two bullocks transporting five figures to, or from, a Sikh wedding. The *rath*, or *gaddi* forms an important part of Punjabi and North Indian culture, it formed part of the celebratory wedding entourage, with the vehicle and the bullocks usually decorated with fine *bagh* and *phulkari* textiles, as shown here. On the reverse of

this painting, written in pencil is an excerpt from the poem 'When I Roved a Young Highlander' by Lord Byron.

"When I see some dark hill point its crest to the sky,
I think of the rocks that o'ershadow Colbleen"

Also inscribed on the back of this painting is the location of the poem 'The Burn of the Vat, The Vale of Colbleen' alongside the date Aug 14th, 1880.

The following three watercolours illustrate three landscapes, two located within Raebareli, Uttar Pradesh and another of Mahim Fort, Bombay (Mumbai). All three of these paintings have inscriptions written on the back confirming the location and date of the scenes.

The inscriptions are as follows:

"Indecipherable Well & indecipherable. Built by Chandry S indecipherable Ahmed.

1865 at Hydraghur.
Well at Hydraghur. Ray Bareilly
15 December 1868"

"Mahim, Bombay"

"Dalmau Ghaut, Ray Bareilly.
January 4th, 1869
Indecipherable – 2, 5, 6, 7"



View of the Mosque. Badshahi
15 October 1908.



*Salween River, Burmah
Jan. 9th 1860*





20

GOLDEN TEMPLE BRACELET

PUNJAB
19TH - 20TH CENTURY

DIAMETER: 25 x 33 x 3MM
(0.98 x 1.29 x 0.11 INCHES)

STRAP SIZE, NOT INCLUDING CLASP:
150 x 40 x 2MM
(5.90 x 1.57 x 0.078 INCHES)

CLASP: 15 x 20 x 2MM
(0.59 x 0.78 x 0.078 INCHES)

TOTAL LENGTH OF WHOLE BRACELET:
180MM (7.08 INCHES)

Opaque pigments on ivory, a company school, architectural miniature painting of Harmandir Sahib sits in a gold mount with a twisted rope edge. Commonly referred to as the Golden Temple, one of the most important Sikh shrines, situated in Amritsar, Punjab, India, the pendant has an en-suite gold clasp which is secured to 9 strands of restrung natural pearls.





21

NOBLEMAN'S WRITING BOX

WEST JAVA (CIREBON?), INDONESIA
19TH CENTURY

DIAMETER: 380 x 175 x 180 MM
(14.96 x 6.88 x 7.08 INCHES)

A carved wooden writing box from West Java, probably the Sultanate of Ciberon. Of rectangular form, it sits on its own integral stepped base, and has three drawers to one end which are well concealed by the carving, which seamlessly covers the front of the drawers. Decorated in cinnabar red lacquer, the four side-faces are profusely carved with scrolling clouds, and each has a four-sided cartouche filled with calligraphy in a mix of Arabic and Javanese languages.

The inscriptions describe the traditional story of archangel Gabriel (*jibrā'īl*), delivering a revelation to 125,000 prophets. It also contains an important dictionary (or probably an encyclopaedic work) including almanacks of the Arab and Persian/ non-Arab languages (probably Javanese too). The calligraphy has been deciphered as follow, and is a work in progress:

Side 1 – Agung Aziz/Kanjeng p. .
al-'azīm/[probably a proper name]/
zaman Walanda.

(Great and noble Prince/...../
during the Dutch [colonial]
period)

Side 2 – Hādhā makān al-Mu'jam
(min) yaday al-shaykh faqir/al-
hākīm al-shāfi fī balad al-akbar
shaqī (?) tārikh al-'arabī wa-l-'ajamī
– huwa al-nabī haram/ghaniyyun
rabbī kashafanī Allāhu
fa-akhadza fadā'ila kalimahu.

(This is a place [or repository]
of the dictionary from the poor;
wise Shaykh in the great country
[containing] the Arabic and non-
Arabic almanack – He is the noble
Prophet/Oh My Lord the Almighty,
God revealed me, so he took the
virtues of His word)

Side 3 – bayna (?) ajmal al-ghulām
- Seribu (?) ke-wulan Jumād al-ākhir
tahun ālāf al-jibrā'īl (?)

(... the best child - [on the month
of] Jumād al-ākhir in the year one
thousand [of Hijri]....)

Side 4 – Nuzūl jibrā'īl 'alā al-
anbiyā' 'alayhim al-salām alfay
'ishrūna wa khamsu mi'ah/ishruna
khamsa 'ashar mi'ah alfān
(the Angel Gabriel delivered
[divine revelation] to 125,000
prophets.....)

There is a small piece missing from
the corner of one of the drawer
fronts, and some general wear,
but otherwise it is a handsome
and rare object, worthy of further
research.

