



A PINCH OF SPICE

A SMALL COLLECTION OF ANGLO-INDIAN FURNITURE, OBJECTS & PICTURES

*'India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things.
She had the first civilisation; she had the first accumulation of
material wealth; she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle
intellects; she had mines, and woods, and a fruitful soul.'*

(Mark Twain 1835-1910)

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1

IVORY-INLAID CIRCULAR SHISHAM OCCASIONAL TABLE

Hoshiarpur, Punjab, North West India, circa 1870.

Shisham (*dalbergia sisoo*), ivory, engraved and highlighted.

Height: 23 ½" (59.5cm); diameter: 23 ½" (59.5cm).

The circular top formed as radiating circles of zigzags, balls, chevrons and bars, surrounded by shaded topiary trees in pots, another circle of arabesques and an outer border banded with a diamond-patterned edge, raised on a turned stem, inlaid with a repeated vignette of a tall tree in a pot flanked by a pairs of birds set within a cusped arch, supported upon three paddle-form feet, each with conforming inlaid decoration.

The symmetrical treatment of precisely placed trees in pots follows imperial Mughal court fashion of the seventeenth-century and relates to cabinets produced in Gujarat and

Sindh at that period¹. The grey-stained shadowing over the profusely engraved ivory ground is a nineteenth-century technique.

Hoshiarpur work was shown at several international exhibitions including *The Colonial and Indian Exhibition* of 1886 in London, following which Liberty's of London exhibited articles from at least 1896².

A variant of this distinctive ivory-inlaid shisham (Indian rosewood) table, with a similarly decorated circular top, indicating it originated from the same workshop, was on the London art market in 2009³.



¹ Amin Jaffer, *Luxury Goods from India*, V&A, 2002, no. 15, pp. 44-45.

² Liberty & Company, London, *Eastern & Western Wares*, 1896.

³ Christie's London, *The Ismail Merchant Collection*, 07.10.09, lot 26.

2

REGENCY ROSEWOOD CABINET INLAID WITH SPECIMEN TIMBERS & SADELI

England or Anglo-Indian, circa 1810, the *sadeli* work originating from the Bombay Presidency.

Rosewood (*Dalbergia*), satinwood (*Chloroxylon swietenia*), calamander (*Diospyros spp.*), variegated grey & white marble, brass, *sadeli*.

Height: 54 ¼" (138cm); width: 36 ⅞" (93.5cm); depth: 14 ¾" (37.5cm).

The rectangular rosewood-veneered cabinet having a variegated grey and white marble slab top, above a sadeli-inlaid frieze, over a pair of specimen wood doors, each having rosewood frames inset with incuse-corned satinwood panels, surrounded by a thin calamander cross-banding and a wide outer cross-banding of specimen burr wood within a knurled border, the rebated stiles inset with sadeli panels, raised on a plinth base.

This cabinet is constructed with exotic hardwoods indigenous to India, including satinwood, calamander and rosewood. The distinctive inlay of *sadeli*, or 'Bombay work', a delicate and intricate geometric micro-mosaic of ivory, green-stained ivory, tin, horn, ebony and sappan wood, bound together, sliced transversely and veneered¹, was principally produced in the Bombay Presidency by Parsee workshops in Bombay,

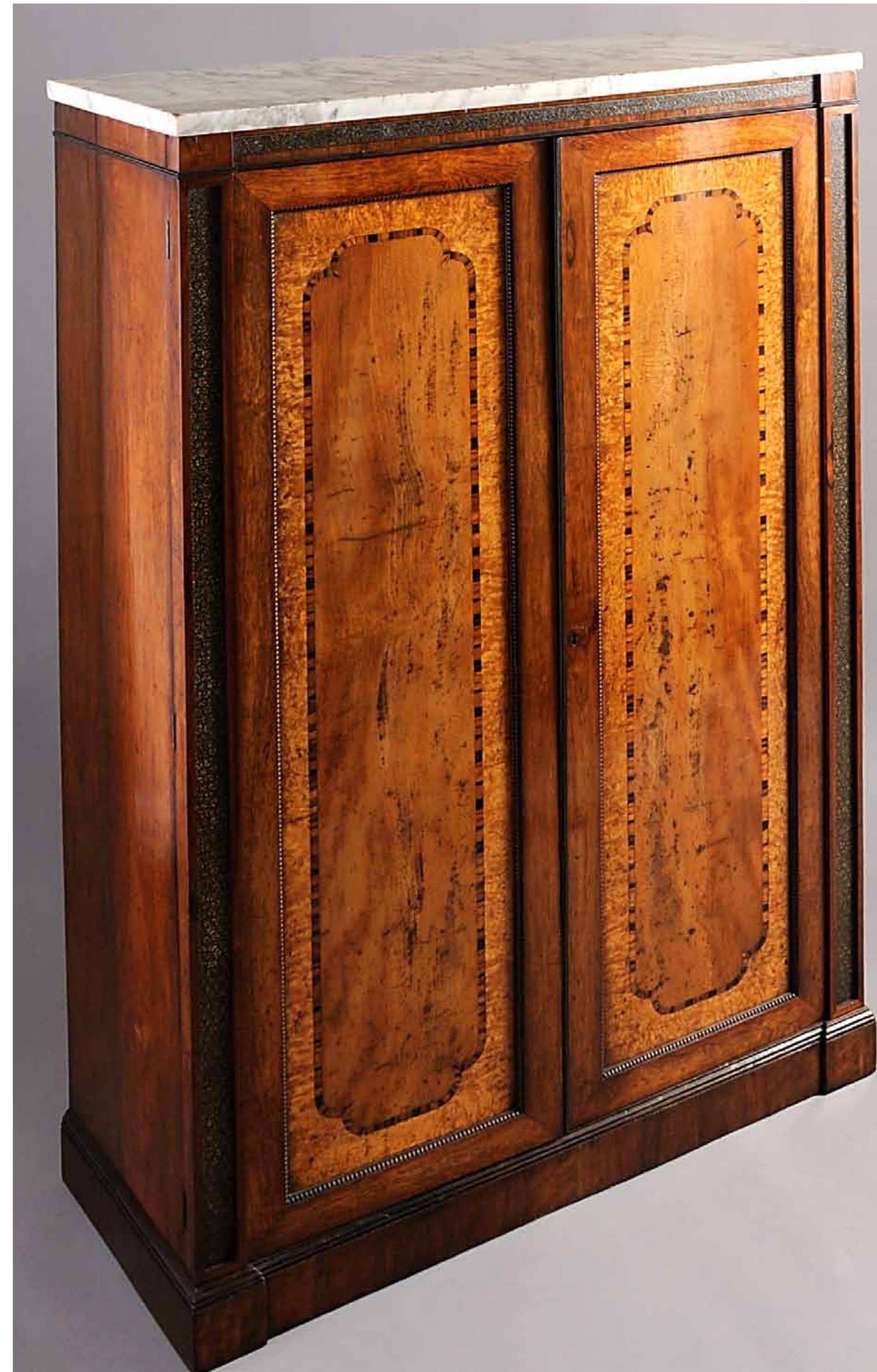
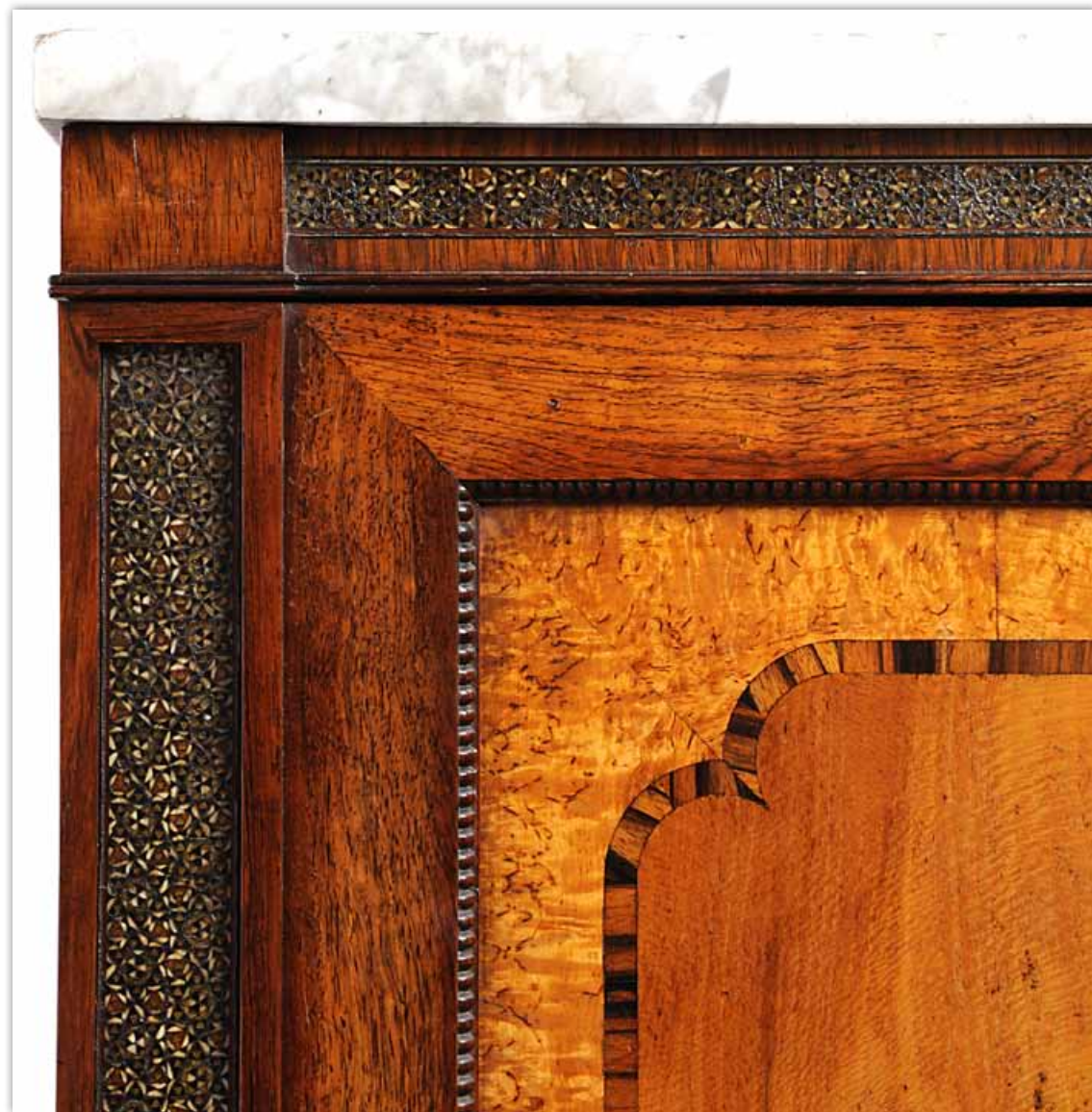
Surat, Amedabad and Bilmora. This craft is known to have been produced in the region from the late eighteenth-century and several pieces with illustrious provenance are recorded from the Regency period onwards, including a workbox at Powis castle supplied to the 2nd Lord Clive in 1802² and three *sadeli* boxes recorded in the 1819 sale catalogue of Princess Charlotte's possessions³.

The technique of *sadeli* has been in use since Antiquity, but is particularly associated with the Near and Middle East, whence it spread both west to Italy and east to Persia, where it is known as *kbatamakari* and then onward to Bombay, via *Sindh* and Gujarat. The Italian variety of this work was known as *alla certosina*, after the Certosa (Charterhouse) of Pavia, one of many places where such work was executed' (Jaffer *q.v.*)³.

¹ Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, pp. 313-315.

² *Treasures from India: The Clive Collection at Powis Castle*, ed. M. Skelton, R. Skelton, *et al.*, exh. cat., Powis Castle, London, 1987.

³ Amin Jaffer, *Luxury Goods from India*, V&A, 2002, no. 4, pp. 20-21.



3

CARVED EBONY CENTRE TABLE INSET WITH A PIETRE DURE TOP

Galle District, Ceylon, or Coromandel Coast, India;
the inset top Italian, early nineteenth-century.

Ebony (*Diospyros ebenus*), labradorite, coloured marbles & hardstones.

Height: 28" (71.5cm); diameter: 19 5/8" (50cm).

The octagonal top inset with a pietre dure top of black marble, edged with giallo marble around a geometric perspective border, surrounding a radial geometric pattern of 128 specimen marbles & rare hardstones including porphyry, agates, alabaster, malachite, lapis lazuli, with a central circular specimen of labradorite, supported on a turned and fluted trumpet-form stem with an acanthus-wrapped knop and conforming socle, raised on a carved-edged quatrefoil base with boldly carved lion-paw feet.

From the seventeenth-century to the late nineteenth-century there was a huge demand for Italian inlaid marble table-tops, which were often carefully selected from Imperial Roman fragments, (or said to be), thus perpetuating the link with antiquity that was the quintessence of the Grand Tour. These tops were usually sold separately and mounted on mahogany, rosewood or gilded bases back in England.

This Sinhalese or Indian ebony example is a rare exception of the type described in early nineteenth-century inventories as 'richly carved' from the celebrated jet black *Diospyros* ebony in the fashionable Regency taste, following leading pattern books such as *The Modern Style of Cabinet Work Exemplified* by Thomas King, published in 1829, and *The Practical Cabinet-Maker*, 1827, by Peter & Michael Angelo Nicholson, who comment, 'the tops of tables are often ornamented with beautiful mosaic work'¹.

The sumptuous top, inlaid in *trompe l'oeil* around a radial geometric pattern of specimen marbles &

rare hardstones, is clearly influenced by the most celebrated mosaicist working in Rome, Giacomo Raffaelli (1753-1836), whose illustrious clients included Napoleon, many of the crowned heads of Europe and Baron Demidoff & Countess Orloff in Russia. Examples of Raffaelli's work are in the Gilbert Collection², the Hermitage St Petersburg, Syon House, Château de Fontainebleau and Temple Newsam.

The centre tablet of labradorite, a rare gemstone resembling a butterfly wing, is intriguing and plausibly suggests that this top may have been commissioned for Russia, from where some of the finest specimens of this rare stone originally came. This curious semi-precious feldspar was discovered in St Paul Island, Labrador province, Canada in 1770 and is also found in Finland, Madagascar, Newfoundland, Norway, Russia and India. The iridescent interplay of colours in the surface is unique to this stone and known as labradorescence, with the silvery blue of specimen stones described as shiller.

The fashion for ebony furniture was at its height in the early nineteenth-century, driven by the Prince Regent's love for ebony, whether 'Tudor' in the antiquarian manner, seventeenth-century French by André Charles Boulle or Indian & Singhalese pieces³. The latter followed the taste expressed by his Mother, Queen Charlotte, who was an avid collector of Indian furniture and created an 'Indian Room' for her collection of ivory furniture at Frogmore; (see previous item, *cat. 2*, for reference to Princess Charlotte's sale).

¹ Peter & Michael Angelo Nicholson, *The Practical Cabinet-Maker*, 1827.

² H Gabriel, *The Gilbert Collection, Micromosaics*, Appendix, pp. 263-274.

³ Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, pp. 372-4.





4

HARDWOOD & BRASS-MOUNTED PLANTERS CHAIR

India or Canton, late nineteenth-century.

Hardwood, brass, woven cane.

Height: 35 ½" (90cm); length: 56 ¼" (143cm); width: 27" (69cm).

The caned, serpentine back hinged to fold into the seat rail, flanked by curved arms with moulded outer rests, raised on turned supports fitted with countersunk brass screws, above swing-out leg rests, the seat rail sweeping-down into integral back legs; the turned front legs with conforming incised decoration on peg feet.

The profile of this stylised armchair, its deeply raking back legs combined with the incised detail to the turnings, is reminiscent of the reclining armchairs designed by Phillip Webb and retailed by Morris and Company. This example does not recline but, instead, almost folds-up: the hinged back falls forward and the swing-out leg rests return underneath the arms.

Variants of this form of chair with extending leg rests, known variously as a Planter's or Indian chairs, were sold in England including models known as the

'Watherstone' through the Army & Navy store and the 'Lucknow' from Harrods¹. This example however is undoubtedly of colonial manufacture evidenced by the choice of timber, possibly padouk, Chinese elm or huali, combined with the pegged construction. Although related versions were exported by The Bombay Art Furniture Company at the end of the nineteenth-century, it is impossible to determine whether this example was made in India by Chinese craftsmen or in Canton by Indian chair-makers.

Amin Jaffer, states that the earliest-known depiction of such a chair is in 1855, noting that Heal & Son's catalogue of 1866 describes them as suitable for 'India, China and the Colonies'². He also illustrates a carved rosewood Planter's chair of similar raked form with fold-out leg rests, attributing its manufacture to India or Zanzibar, noting its primary use was for the veranda³.

¹ Christopher Clarke, *The Captain's Kit Bag*, exh. cat., 2007, no. 117, p. 44.

² Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, no. 156, pp. 339-341.

³ Jaffer, *op. cit.* no. 198, pp. 391-2.







5

IVORY- INLAID TABLE FOLLOWING REGENCY DESIGNS

Probably Hoshiarpur, Northern India,
middle of the nineteenth-century.

Shisham, (*dalbergia sisoo*), ivory.

Height: 21" (53.5cm); diameter: 24" (61cm).

Provenance: Private collection, London.

The circular top inlaid with three radiating circles on a ground of tiny floral sprays, edged with a pierced and fretted leaf-carved frieze, supported on a turned and carved leaf-wrapped column with a wrythen knot, raised upon an inlaid triform base with carved lion-paw feet.

This table is unusual for its pure Regency form, suggesting that the pattern was compiled from various English pattern books or examples taken out to India. The inlaid decoration has not been restricted to the traditional, and usually modest, British brass or ebony stringing but instead is profusely inlaid with delicate ivory flowers and a carved frieze indicative of Hoshiarpur work, (see *cat. 1* for another inlaid table from this region).



6

CARVED EBONY & HARDWOOD STOOL IN THE ANTIQUARIAN MANNER

England, circa 1825-30 in the manner of Edward Holmes Baldock;
the carved elements Coromandel Coast, Southern India.

Ebony, (*Diospyros ebenus*), hardwood, suede.

Height: 18 ½" (47cm); length: 31 ¼" (81cm); depth: 17 ¼" (44cm).

The rectangular upholstered close-nailed suede seat, above a leaf & flowerhead-carved hardwood frieze with framed corner blocks, over solid ebony wrythen-turned legs, raised on pipped brass castors; the carved sections possibly of earlier date.

Conceived in the manner of so-called 'Elizabethan' ebony chairs collected by connoisseurs from the eighteenth- & nineteenth-centuries, notably Horace Walpole (1717-1797) at Strawberry Hill, this pattern of carved furniture originated from the Coromandel Coast in the seventeenth-century and was subsequently produced in Ceylon and the Dutch East Indies¹. Examples could, and in a few cases still may, be seen in many of the major collections of the day including Longleat, Arundel Castle, Berkeley Castle, Boughton, Charlecote Park, Cotehele, Fonthill Abbey, Penrhyn Castle, Stowe, Warwick Castle and Hamilton Palace. However it was the Prince Regent, later King George IV, who further fuelled the craze by choosing ebony chairs for the Library at Carlton House. Indeed the treatment of the spirally-turned ebony legs and framed corner blocks of this stool, in particular, may be compared to a suite of furniture sold to the King in 1828 by Edward Holmes Baldock (1777-1845), which was similarly constructed to display earlier carved panels².



¹ Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, pp. 130-142.

² *ibid.* pl. 58, p. 131.

7

TURNED EBONY & IVORY OIL LAMP

England, or India, *post* 1865.

Ebony (*Diospyros ebenus*), ivory, bronze, glass, brass.

Height: 29 ½" (75cm); diameter: 7 ½" (19cm).

The circular turned and fluted ebony socle mounted with three fluted ivory columns below a bronze-lined ebony cradle, supporting the original slice-cut glass oil reservoir and patented brass oil lamp; the nozzle and collar stamped 'Hink's Patent'.

The art of ornamental turning dates from at least the fifteenth century when it is believed to have originated in Bavaria. By 1792, the passion for mechanical hobbies encouraged the Alsatian John Jacob Holzapffel (1768-1835) to set up his lathe-manufacturing business in London at 118 Long Acre. Many of his clients included the monarchy and nobility of Europe, notably the Empress Maria-Feodorovna, wife of Emperor Paul III of Russia, whose collection of decorative objects remains at the Palace of Pavlovsk, St Petersburg¹.

While the original Hink's patent fitting provides a *terminus post quem* of 1865, it does not necessarily mean that this lamp is English, as ornamental turning was also an Indian specialty. A pair of 17" high ebony, ivory & hardwood urns on similar triple column supports, described as Anglo-Indian, was on the art market in 1996².



¹ Pavlovsk: *The Collections*, Paris, 1993, pp. 9-13, figs. 1, 14-24.

² *Important Furniture*, Christie's, King Street, London, 04.07.96, lot 209 (£18,000).



8

PAIR OF NEO-CLASSICAL CANDLESTICKS

Eastern India, probably Murshidabad, Bengal, middle of the nineteenth-century.

Hardwood, possibly sandalwood (*Santalum spp.*).

Height: 10 1/8" (26cm); diameter: 4 1/2" (11.5cm).

Each campana-shaped vase cup having a beaded rim, raised on a wrythen scrolled socle, on a deeply spiral-turned tapering column, supported by a conforming plinth, set on a hexagonal foot.

The turning techniques of this pair of intricately turned neo-classical candlesticks relate to ivory pieces produced in Murshidabad, the Nawabi capital of Bengal, a centre of ivory-turning which catered for East India Company officials and British residents in the colonial settlements along the Hooghly river. The first documented commission recorded was for the celebrated suite of ivory furniture made for Warren Hastings, British Governor General of India (1745-85), presented by Mani Begum, widow of Nawab Mir Jafar¹.

Whilst ivory formed much of their trade, and indeed is what the area is remembered for, other materials were sometimes used for turning notably sandalwood, an expensive indigenous timber, which was otherwise only usually used in veneer form for boxes and other small items due to its prohibitive cost.

It is interesting to note the distinctive scrolling detail of the socles, which resembles rolled paperwork of the eighteenth-century, a distinctive craft that may have originated in France².

One of the grandest examples of Murshidabad ivory turning is the spectacular candelabra in the collection of the Victoria Albert Museum, London, (W17-1960); (see the previous item. *cat.* 7 for further information on ornamental lathe-turning).

¹ Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, p. 238.

² Jane Toller, *Regency and Victorian Crafts*, 1969, pp. 42-46



IVORY & LAC-INLAID SANDALWOOD GLOVE BOX

Vizagapatam, Southern India, early nineteenth-century.

Ivory, lac, sandalwood (*Santalum spp.*), silver-coloured metal, velvet.

Height: 3 ½" (9cm); width: 10 ½" (27cm); depth: 5" (13cm).

The rectangular sandalwood box applied with floral arabesque lac-inlaid ivory banding to all the edges; the rising lid having a chamfered rectangular scrolling-inlaid banded panel with a central oval plaque, opening to reveal a conformingly decorated inner edge, silver-metal hinges and lock-plate; the underside inset with the original raspberry velvet; raised on flattened, lobed melon-form ivory feet.

The distinctive design of these floral-engraved ivory panels, incised and in-filled with lac for contrast, relate to the patterned chintzes produced along the Coromandel Coast for export to Europe from the seventeenth-century. These decorated panels were then veneered on sandalwood, a timber selected for its pleasant aroma as well as for its antiseptic, insect-repellent qualities. Small, high-quality silver and ivory-mounted boxes such as this example were sold separately, as well as fitted *en-suite* within dressing-cases and bureaux produced for the passing traveller in the coastal town of Vizigapatam, located between Calcutta and Madras, an outpost of the East India Company from 1668.



10

JAPANNED TIN CIGAR BOX INSCRIBED 'CHEROOTS'

Height: 5 7/8" (14.7cm); width: 13" (33cm); depth: 10 3/4" (27.5cm).

The rectangular deep burgundy, tan and gilt japanned box, having two carrying handles and a lockable rising lid inscribed CHEROOTS, the interior with a brass makers' plaque.

**'MANUFACTURED BY
JH FARWIG & CO
LONDON
EXPRESSLY FOR
HALL OF ALL OF NATIONS
CALCUTTA'.**

The 'Hall of all Nations' was a nineteenth-century Christmas Eve celebration in the huge hall of the Auckland Hotel, Calcutta, where,

*'It was the custom to hold a carnival on Christmas Eve in the large central hall, which, for that one special occasion, was dubbed the "Hall of All Nations," and it was for the time being divested of all its former paraphernalia of miscellaneous goods which were replaced by a varied collection of confectionery and cakes of different designs and sizes made on the premises, bon bons, crackers, sweets of all sorts, and a variety of fancy articles suitable for presents. The hall was beautifully decorated and festooned with flags of all nations and brilliantly illuminated. Shortly after dark the whole of the elite of Calcutta society trooped in from their evening drive to exchange pleasant Christmas greetings with each other and to make mutual little gifts.'*¹

In 1840, David Wilson, or Dainty Davie as he was popularly known, set up the Auckland Hotel on the premises in the corner of the road running parallel to the British India

Street and the Old Court House Street². The hotel was named after the Governor General at that time, Lord Auckland (1784-1849), despite being known locally as Wilson's. In 1851, a project to expand the hotel began, 'David Wilson purchased land on the Old Court House Street with existing shops and carried on the business of a hotel keeper under the name of Auckland Hotel and Hall of All Nations.'³ The hotel continued to grow in popularity, changing its name to the Great Eastern and so exalted was its reputation that it was even referred to as the 'Jewel of the East'³ and mentioned in Rudyard Kipling's short story 'City of Dreadful Night'⁴,

'The Great Eastern hums with life through all its hundred rooms. Doors slam merrily, and all the nations of the earth run up and down the staircases. This alone is refreshing, because the passers bump you and ask you to stand aside. Fancy finding any place outside the Levee-room where Englishmen are crowded together to this extent! Fancy sitting down seventy strong to table d'hote and with a deafening clatter of knives and forks! Fancy finding a real bar whence drinks may be obtained! And joy of joys, fancy stepping out of the hotel into the arms of a live, white, helmeted, buttoned, truncheoned Bobby!'

It is interesting to note that while Indian policemen patrolled most of the other areas of that part of Calcutta, British policemen were stationed outside the Great Eastern - an indication of the kind of people who would frequent it and thus their specific demands for special Christmas gifts, such as this 'British' Cheroot box.



¹ Montague Massey, *Recollections of Old Calcutta for over Half a Century*, 1918.

² The *Englishman and Military Chronicle*, November 1840.

³ *Calcutta Monthly Magazine*, June 16, 1862.

⁴ Rudyard Kipling, *The City of Dreadful Night and Other Places*, 1891.

11

A RECTANGULAR BIDRI TRAY INLAID WITH SILVER

Bidar, the Deccan, Southern India, circa 1800.

Zinc, copper, tin & lead alloy, inlaid with silver & copper.

Height: 2" (5cm); width: 9" (23cm); depth: 7" (18cm).

Provenance: Private collection, London.

The recessed central panel of leaves surrounded by Ottoman-inspired poppies within a raised palmette border, supported on four corner feet.

Bidri, named after the City of Bidar around 120 miles north of Hyderabad, is the art of inlaying silver, copper and gold into a dark metal alloy of zinc, copper, tin and lead. There are several techniques, of which this is *tabnashin*, or *te-nishan*, in which the design has been deeply engraved and inlaid with contrasting metal. The technique of Bidri is thought to have been brought to India by the Persians, from the time of the Bahmanis Dynasty (1347-1518) and Baridi Dynasty that followed. The links of Deccani kingdoms with Persia, Turkey and Arabia were very close, as the same motifs may be seen on Mughal textiles and inlaid marble floors. Zebrowski notes that the poppies, which are traditionally considered to be a Bidar decoration, are identical to those depicted in nineteenth-century Hyderabad paintings, which supports a date of the early 19th century.

Rectangular trays are less common than circular and may have had a specific use, indeed the form and squat legs have affinities with the bases of *paan* boxes of this period, thus it is conceivable that these trays form part of that tradition.

An identical tray is in the Permanent Galleries of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

References

Susan Stronge, *Bidri Ware: Inlaid Metalwork from India*, London 1985.

K. Lal, *Bidri Ware: National Museum Collection*, New Delhi, 1990.

Mark Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, no. 268, p. 183.



12

A BIDRI FLASK INLAID WITH SILVER

Bidar, the Deccan, Southern India, circa 1890-1900.

Zinc, copper, tin & lead alloy, inlaid with silver.

Height: 5 7/8" (15cm) ; diameter: 3" (7.5cm).

Provenance: a descendent of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta KCIE (1845-1915).

The spherical body inlaid with poppies on a single spread foot, having a flared collar inlaid with a woven trellis motif, below a long turned neck inlaid with stylized leaves below similar trelliswork, flaring out to support a domed lid with a ball final.

The long-necked water flask (*surahi*) is an important vessel in both Islamic and Indian culture and often illustrated in Mughal miniatures as well as painted, inlaid or carved in low relief as a repeated design on seventeenth-century palace walls, such as Sikandra, the Suraj Bhan ka Bagh and the Kanch Mahal¹.

The pattern dates from the seventeenth-century²; a similarly shaped example to this, dated to that period, with exceptional silver and brass inlay of poppies, is in the British Museum³; another, of similar form and decoration, in the National Museum collection, New Delhi⁴.

Others were collected by Robert Clive, (1725-1774), the legendary Clive of India, who defeated the Nawab of Bengal at the battle of Plassey in 1757, part of whose collection, is exhibited at Powis Castle, Welshpool. This includes an eighteenth-century silver-inlaid example⁵ and, until its sale, a spectacular emerald and ruby-mounted seventeenth-century jade flask, believed have been one of the treasures looted from the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah by the invading Persian monarch Nadir Shah in 1739, which relates to another in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, Russia.

Bidri work was shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, which brought a renewed interest to the craft, (see the previous item *cat. 11* for further information on *bidri*).

¹ Mark Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, 1997, p. 185.

² Susan Stronge, *Bidri Ware: Inlaid Metalwork from India*, London 1985, 18-24.

³ Zebrowski, *op. cit.*, no. 284, p. 181.

⁴ K. Lal, *Bidri Ware: National Museum Collection*, National Museum of Delhi, 1990, p. 88.

⁵ *Treasures from India: The Clive Collection at Powis Castle*, ed. M. Skelton, R. Skelton, *et al.*, exh. cat., Powis Castle, London, 1987, no. 92, pp. 76-7.



13

A MUGHAL BRASS PANDAN

North India, eighteenth-century.

Brass.

Height: 3 1/8" (8cm); diameter: 5 1/4" (13cm).

Provenance: Purchased in Pondicherry.

The circular, lidded, box of moulded, lobed form; the base lightly cross-hatched.

This betel or *paan* box, known as a *pandan*, is of circular form with deeply ribbed sides and a tightly-fitting domed lid, that can be opened and closed at a small, serrated section, uniting the two halves. The underside is lightly cross-hatched, perhaps to grip the table covering beneath.

Paan is a quid of chopped areca (*areca catechu*) palm nuts or supari, mixed with lime paste (*chunam*) (obtained from crushed seashells) and aromatic spices, which may include clove or cardamom, wrapped-up in a betel (*piper betel*) leaf and chewed after a meal. This provides welcome digestive qualities through the alkaloids and a mild stimulant, as well as playing an important role in the ceremonial attached to visiting in the higher *echelons* of Indian society¹.

Edward Moor wrote in 1794, 'Visits in India are very important and intricate: presents are given and received, offered and accepted, and declined, in a hundred different ways, which must be observed with the greatest nicety. Nor is the giving and receiving a birree (*bira*, a mouthful, referring to the quid) simple as it may seem, without a variety of formalities, according to the rank of the parties; an infringement or omission in any one of which, would be deemed an indecorum'².

It has been suggested that boxes of this ribbed form originated from hollowed-out melons or gourds and were relatively 'common in the Indo-Gangetic plain during the eighteenth century. Although not rare, this type is often lively and gracious; it is clearly evocative of the grand ribbed domes of Indian architecture.' (Zebrowski, *q.v.*³, who illustrates an image of the seventeenth-century tomb of Shah Shuja in Burhanpur, with its similarly ribbed profile.)

¹ *Treasures from India: The Clive Collection at Powis Castle*, ed. M. Skelton, R. Skelton, et al., exh. cat., Powis Castle, London, 1987, nos. 86-7, pp. 73-4.

² Edward Moor, *A narrative of the operations of Captain Little's detachment, and of the Mahratta Army, commanded by Purseraw Bhow; during the late Confederacy in India, against the Newab Tippoo Sultan Bahadur*, London 1794, p. 377.

³ Mark Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, 1997, no. 464, pp. 272 & 276.



14

AN ENGRAVED MUGHAL BRASS EWER

Hyderabad, the Deccan, Southern India, eighteenth-century or possibly earlier.

Brass, infilled with black lac.

Height: 10 ¾" (27cm); width: 9" (23cm); depth: 7" (17.7cm).

Provenance: A descendent of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 1st Baronet, (1783-1859).

The spherical body with circular flattened cartouche sides, raised on a circular foot, the serpentine, tapering and faceted spout with engraved detail, terminating in a flower-head, the faceted handle joined to the body by a stylized poppy and a lac-incised double fish thumb-piece, the waisted, engraved neck with a boat-form lidded opening engraved with a pair of fish.

This elegant Mughal brass ewer (*Aftaba*), has a limpid, golden colour achieved over centuries of use, evidenced by several dents. It is of a rare form and unusually retains some of the black lac decoration to the Persian-influenced engraving, the original flower-head end to the spout and the original lid and finial.

These vessels were of crucial sociological and religious importance and used for the ritualistic washing of hands with clean, often, scented, water.

This ewer has never before been on the market, having come directly from a descendent of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 1st Baronet, (1783-1859), the Bombay-based opium-trading partner of Jardine Matheson and first Indian to receive a knighthood, (from Queen Victoria in 1842), followed in 1852 by a baronetcy.



References:

Dye, J.M., *The Arts of India*: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2001.

Mark Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, 1997, pp. 134-167.



15

AN ENGRAVED BRASS INCENSE BURNER IN THE FORM OF A DUCK

Indo-Persian(?), perhaps the Deccan, early nineteenth-century.
Height: 4 ¼" (11cm); length: 4 ¾" (12cm); width: 2" (5cm).

Engraved and possibly originally damascened, now worn, indistinctly signed in Persian (?) beneath the central air vent at the joint of the removable folded wings.

Zoomorphic aquamaniles, incense burners and oil lamps have an ancient history. Persian or Iraqi aquamaniles, in the form of animals, are known from the early Abbasid period (750-1250 AD), when trade between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire brought the idea to Europe.

Following this there are several distinct styles of zoomorphic brasswares, which could have each influenced the design of this duck: from the angular and stylised, twelfth-century Persian Khorasan zoomorphic incense burners^{1&2}, the engraved brass oil lamps, incense burners and scent bottles made in the Deccan from the fifteenth-century onwards³, to the Qajar damascened birds of the nineteenth-century. The engraved detail of the feathers may be seen on a sixteenth-century bronze finial from a dovecote, made in Gujarat⁴.

¹ JM Rogers, *The Arts of Islam, Treasures from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, ex. cat., 2007, no. 76, p. 83.

² Geza Fehervari, *Islamic Metalware of the Eighth to the Fifteenth Century in the Keir Collection*, London, 1976, no. 110.

³ Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, no. 93-101, pp. 98-99.

⁴ Zebrowski, *op. cit.*, back cover.



16

SILVER-MOUNTED HORN VESSEL

Indo-Persian(?), early nineteenth century.

Buffalo horn (*bos bubalas*), silver-metal.

Length: 13 ¾" (35cm); width: 3" (7.5cm).

Provenance: Private European collection, London.

The curved horn having a flattened base and a silver edged hollow opening running most of the length, the sharp end mounted with a silver cone-shaped cap and star final, the other end having a stylized floral mount inscribed Golshan.

The purpose of this curious vessel is unknown; it may however be purely decorative, following late Renaissance European *Kunstkammer* objects, such as the sixteenth-century enamelled and silver-gilt-mounted buffalo horn in the collection of the Silver Museum, at the Pitti Palace, Florence which, itself, may have been deigned after Asian examples.

The horn is probably that of the Asiatic buffalo (*bos bubalas*), a beast common, both in the wild and domesticated, in the plains and lower hills of India. The horn was used in numerous small articles including: combs, cutlery handles, hookah mouthpieces and for veneers and details on boxes¹.

The larger end is mounted with a shield-shaped silver cap decorated with scrolling leaves and buds, inscribed *Golshan* in Persian, meaning flower garden.

¹ Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, pp. 130-142.





17

COQUILLA NUT, PORCUPINE QUILL, & IVORY LADLE

Galle District, Ceylon or Vizigapatam, Southern India, early nineteenth-century.
Coquilla nut, porcupine quill, ivory.
Length: 10 ½” (26.5cm).

The coquilla nut is the fruit of the Brazilian feather-leaved piassava palm (Attalea funifera), which is closely related to the coconut palm, (Portuguese: coquilho). Being extremely hard, it is ideal for carving and polishes well to a deep, streaky, lustrous brown.

The use of coquilla, ivory and porcupine quill encapsulates the mania for articles made out of unusual materials, from exotic countries, from the late eighteenth-century. Its use is likely to be decorative, despite these articles invariably being described as punch ladles.

In the early nineteenth-century porcupine quill, buffalo horn and elk horn, were imported from Jeypore Zamindari¹ into Vizagapatam to supply the market for smallwork, as well as to ameliorate the shortage of local materials, notably ivory which was at this stage coming from Mysore or Africa².

This ladle is equally likely to have originated in the Galle District, in Ceylon, as porcupine quill was used by local cabinetmakers and exhibited at international exhibitions³.

¹ *A Manual of the District of Vizagapatam ...*, 1869, p. 156
² Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, p. 174.
³ Jaffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-7.



18

AN EBONY-HANDLED PUNCH LADLE

Presumably India, late eighteenth-century.
Ebony, silver metal.
Length: 16” (41cm).
Provenance: Private European collection, London.

The turned ebony handle having a ball final, joined to a turned tapering silver metal stem and a large side-hung bowl having a deep spout opposite a small cusp.
This ladle was specifically designed used for serving punch, a popular party drink introduced in the middle of the seventeenth-century. The punch bowl, punch goblets, sugar dredgers, bottles with silver or enameled labels, lemon or orange strainers and ladles were all punch paraphernalia and, as such, essential for the elegant household, even to the point of dedicating a specific room to a ‘punchery’¹.

Seventeenth-century punch ladles were of much heavier-gauge with silver handles but by the middle of the eighteenth-century the scale was smaller, the bowl was shaped out to the side to facilitate pouring, and other materials were being used for the handles, for reasons of cost as well as fashion, notably wood, ivory, whalebone or ebony.
Although this ladle closely resembles an English example of around 1780-90, there is no hallmark. It was found amongst a collection of Indian and Persian miniatures in a private European collection and likely, from the source, to be Indian, as perhaps indicated by the idiosyncratic tiny Islamic cusp on the bowl.

Interestingly, the name punch is derived from the Sanskrit *panca*, meaning five and pointing to the five key ingredients: water, sugar, limes or lemons, spices and spirit².

¹ Hughes & Therle, *Three centuries of English Domestic silver 1500-1820*, New York 1968, p. 235.
² Christopher Hartop, *The Huguenot Legacy. English Silver 1680-1760 from the Alan and Simone Hartman Collection*, 1996, p. 35.

19

AN ELEPHANT CHESS PIECE

India, late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century.

Stone.

Height: 3 ¾" (9cm); length: 4 ⅜" (11cm); depth: 2 ¼" (5.5cm)

This small carving of a caparisoned Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*), striding purposely forward, is almost certainly a chess piece portraying a rook or a bishop; Kings are traditionally portrayed as Maharajas in *howdas*.

The game of chess is generally considered to have originated in India in the sixth-century, despite related games having been recorded elsewhere at a much earlier date. The Sanskrit for chess *Chaturanga*, which is similar to the Persian *Chatrang*, means four limbs and refers to the four members of the Indian army: chariots, elephants, cavalry and infantry.

The elephant was used as a war machine of extraordinary scale and power with fearful consequences to an enemy; regiments of the behemoths, known as elephantry, were often armoured and in certain cases the tusks were replaced or tipped with steel weapons causing hideous damage to any opposing force.

Although earlier chess pieces depicting elephants exist, those depicting the Indian army were produced from the late eighteenth-century and throughout the nineteenth-century and are known colloquially as 'John Company', after the prevalent East India Company.

Sets were traditionally carved from sandalwood, painted wood, stained ivory or ebony however this small and sensitively-carved stone example, imbuing the pachyderm with a sense of vigour and movement, is unusual. It is likely to have originally been gem set, as the small drill-holes in the richly-detailed caparison and anklets attest and would have formed part of an exceptional chess set of princely quality.

A carved ivory chess piece in the form of an elephant, catalogued as possibly Mysore sixteenth-century, is in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, (IS.851963).



20

A LARGE HARDSTONE-INLAID CASKET IN IZNIC TASTE

Agra, late nineteenth-century.

Alabaster, hardstones.

Height: 3 1/8" (8cm); width: 12 1/8" (31cm); depth: 12 1/8" (31cm).

The octagonal lidded box inlaid with hardstones and other materials including cornelian, agate, lapis lazuli & glass, in the form of a vase with sprays of flowers, surrounded by geometric borders; losses to inlay.

This inlaid stone box is profusely inlaid in a method known in Italy as *pietre dure*, also used in India by Shah Jehan and his Mughal successors to ornament buildings but probably introduced by European craftsmen¹. The choice of flowers and the way they are placed follows Iznici pottery of the 16th century.

The body of these inlaid Agra wares are invariably described as marble however analysis indicates that many are of Calcite alabaster².

¹ J. Leoshko et al, *Romance of the Taj Mahal*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989, pp. 63-67.

² Joseph M. Dye III, *The Arts of India*, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, no. 183, p. 411 & p. 520.





21

ENAMELLED & GILDED LIQUEUR DECANTER & FOUR GLASSES

Bohemia, for the Indian market.

Glass, enamel, gilding.

Height: decanter: 11 ½" (29cm); glasses: 4" (10cm).

Provenance: a descendent of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, KCIE, (1845-1915).

The decanter of elongated proportions, the base profusely decorated with gilding and black enamel, inset with a large flower-filled oval, the faceted, gilt-lined neck rising to a shaped spout and angular handle, retaining the original conformingly-decorated stopper; each of the four glasses similarly decorated and raised on a faceted foot; in exceptional condition throughout.

This extraordinary liqueur set is richly gilded and enamelled with coloured flowers; the scrolling black detail with gilded flowers appears to resemble *kofrigari*, a method of damascening incised steel with gold, favoured in Persia and India. Edward Balfour wrote¹ in 1885, 'kofrigari work, or steel inlaid with gold, was in former days carried on to a considerable extent in various parts of Northern India. ...' however it was also practiced in Travancore in Southern India, as discussed by Amin Jaffer², who illustrates a box made in Trivandrum around 1895-1900 inlaid with similarly intricate foliate designs, which belonged to Lord Curzon³, commenting, 'The intricate foliate designs on this box recall South Indian ivory carving. According to Watt⁴, designs of a strongly 'Dravidian type' were being made by Travancore *kofrigars* in the early twentieth century, precisely when Curzon would have acquired this piece' (*q.v.*).

Examples of enamelled and gilded glassware of this lavish detail were produced in Bohemia for the Turkish, Middle Eastern, Russian and Indian markets, such as the pair of Islamic market oil lamps of coloured, gilded and enameled glass, decorated with portraits of Nasir al-Din Shah, recently on the London art market⁵.

The set has come directly from a descendent of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, KCIE, (1845-1915), a Parsee political leader, activist, leading lawyer and the Commissioner, and subsequently President on four occasions, of Bombay Municipality, who was made Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire by the British Government for his services to law.

The family recall that this liqueur set was known colloquially as 'The Schnapps set'.

¹ Edward Balfour, *The Cyclopædia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia: Commercial*, 1885.

² Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India & Ceylon*, V&A, 2002, no. 30, pp. 170-171.

³ *Eastern Art Objects: Catalogue of a Collection lent by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, exb. cat.*, Bethnal Green Museum, London, 1910.

⁴ G. Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi, 1903, being the official catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition, 1902-1903*, Calcutta.

⁵ A Window on The Orient – A Distinguished Private Collection, Christies, King Street, London, 04.11.10, lot 310.



MORTIMER MENPES (1855-1938): THE JAMA MASJID, DELHI

Dry-point etching; *sadeli* frame.

Height: frame: 14 5/8" (37cm); width: 12" (30.2cm).

Jama Masjid of Delhi is the largest mosque in India and stands opposite the Red Fort. Originally called the Masjid-i-Jahan-Numa, or 'mosque commanding view of the world', it was built out of red sandstone between 1644 and 1658 and one of the last architectural works of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.

Mortimer Luddington Menpes was born in Australia, came to England in 1875 and studied at the School of Art in London. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1880, and, shortly after became a pupil of James McNeill Whistler, who taught him etching. From 1902 he visited Japan, South Africa, Burma, Egypt, France, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Spain, Kashmir & India, where he produced a book on the Delhi Durbar, an illustrated record of the commemoration in Delhi of the coronation of King Edward VII. He exhibited 35 paintings and etchings at the Royal Academy and illustrated many books on India, including:

Dorothy Menpes, *The Durbar*, London, A&C Black, 1903.

Flora Annie Steel, *India*, A&C Black, 1905.

John Finnemore, *India*, A&C Black, 1910.

G.E. Mitton, *The people of India*, A&C Black, 1910.

John Finnemore, *Home life in India*, A&C Black, 1917.

The artist's work is in many museums and institutions including: the British Museum, Tate Gallery, National Library of Australia, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Arthur Ross Gallery at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Carleton College Art Gallery, Northfield, Minnesota, Christchurch Art Gallery / *Te Puna O Waiwhetu*, New Zealand, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana & University of Glasgow, Scotland.

The frame is inlaid in *sadeli*, a delicate and intricate geometric micro-mosaic of ivory, green-stained ivory, tin, horn, ebony and sappan wood, made in several regions, notably the Bombay Presidency, (*see cat. 2* for information on *sadeli*).



**‘KING GEORGE’S OWN 26TH’:
IN THE MANNER OF ‘SNAFFLES’**

British India, *post* 1922.

Watercolour and gouache, in a slim ebonised frame.

Sight: height: 5 ½” (14cm); width: 3 ½” (9cm).

Provenance: Sir Charles Kelvyng Greenway, 2nd Baron, 1888-1963
(b. Calcutta, W. Bengal),
Sir Charles Paul Greenway, 3rd Baron, 1917-1975,
(b. Bombay, Maharashtra, India),
thence by descent.

The 26th King George’s Own Light Cavalry was originally raised as the 5th Regiment Madras Native Cavalry on 23 October 1787 as part of the Madras Presidency Army. In 1788, it was re-designated as the 1st Madras Native Cavalry and in 1816 its name was changed to 1 Madras Light Cavalry. The Regiment was yet again re-named as the 1st Regiment of Madras Lancers in 1886, and was known by that title till the turn of the century, when it was changed to 1st Madras Lancers. In 1903 it was re-named as the 26th Light Cavalry and three years later it became the Prince of Wales Own Light Cavalry and in 1910 the 26th King George’s Own Light Cavalry. During this time it participated in the Third Mysore War, 1789-1792, the Fourth Mysore War, 1793-1798, campaigns against Dhoondia Wagh and the Polygars, 1799-1830 and campaigns in Afghanistan and Burma, 1880-1914. In 1922, the regiment was amalgamated with the 30th Lancers to form the 8th King George’s Own Light Cavalry, inheriting in the process, the traditions of both Regiments, thus the 26th Light Cavalry were known as ‘King George’s Own’.

Sir Charles Kelvyng Greenway, 2nd Baron Greenway was born in Calcutta, W. Bengal in 1888. After Charterhouse, Sandhurst and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, he joined the 68th Durham Light Infantry in 1908, transferred to the 26th King George’s Own Light Cavalry in 1908, made Captain in 1915, (see *The London Gazette*, 28th July 1916), served in Mesopotamia in World War I, then with the Aden Field Force 1915-16, returning to India to become Military Secretary to the Governor of Bombay and Commandant of his Body Guard 1917-18.

This vivacious and highly stylised watercolour, although unsigned, is in the manner of Charlie Johnson Payne, known as ‘Snaffles’, one of the greatest sporting and military artists of his time. The classic series of prints in India in the 1920s are perhaps the images for which he is best known and his depictions of military life in the Raj are second to none.



**'26TH LIGHT CAVALRY':
INITIALLED & DATED G.H.B. '09**

British India, *post* 1922.

Watercolour and gouache, framed with a modern print depicting an officer of the regiment.

Sight: height: 10 ½" (27cm); width: 7 ½" (19cm).

Provenance: Sir Charles Kelynge Greenway, 2nd Baron, 1888-1963
(b. Calcutta, W. Bengal),
Sir Charles Paul Greenway, 3rd Baron, 1917-1975,
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The artist G.H.B. has not been identified however another caricature, similarly initialled, of an officer in the 60th Rifles also depicted in watercolour and gum Arabic, is recorded.

It is interesting to note the caricaturist has emphasised the casual, almost *louche*, poise of the sitter, cigarette smoke drifting, as opposed to the usual ram-rod straight portrait.



25

COMPANY SCHOOL: A SNAKE CHARMER IN A SADELI FRAME

Company School, Lucknow, mid-nineteenth-century;
paper watermarked 'G. WILMOT 1830'.

Watercolour, gouache; *sadeli*.

Height: frame: 15 ½" (39.5cm); width: 14" (35.5cm).

The bearded figure dressed in a turban, robes and striped pajamas, his ears hung with earrings and ankles with cowrie shells, standing on tall stilts in a landscape playing a gourd flute; painted in gouache on European paper, watermarked 'G. WILMOT 1830'; now within a gilt, black and white-detailed sadeli frame, bearing a small label with an inscription in Arabic or Persian script.

This minutely-detailed painting depicts a member of either the *Sapera* or *Sapuakela* castes, dressed traditionally for the task. His craft is indelibly associated with Bengal and specifically the Hindu religion, which reveres snakes as sacred. He is playing a flute-like instrument made from a hollowed-out bottle gourd, called a *pungi* or been, that produces a tone that is believed to allow the player to commune with the supernatural and thus calm the snake. This depiction, showing the figure raised-up on stilts in a landscape rather than sitting cross-legged in a village surrounded by onlookers, is curious and suggests a ritualistic element, as well as the search for dangerous serpents in the wild to be tamed for his show.

The frame is inlaid in *sadeli*, a delicate and intricate geometric micro-mosaic of ivory, green-stained ivory, tin, horn, ebony and sappan wood, made in several regions, notably the Bombay Presidency, (see *cat. 2* for information on *sadeli*).



26

A PRINCE AND HIS COURTESAN

Rajasthan, Jaipur, nineteenth-century, in Mughal taste.

Watercolour, gouache & gold on paper.

Height (sight): 5 1/8" (13cm); width: 3 1/2" (9cm).

Provenance: private collection, London.

The prince embracing the seated girl, watched by a peacock at her feet, set upon a rose-pink floral sprig-patterned carpet, over a white marble floor.

This delightful painting, set against a vibrant sky-blue background, is full of evocative detail and hidden promise. The Prince, standing on a rose-pink sprigged carpet, wearing a pearl-set turban and dressed in a floral-embroidered *jama* and orange slippers, looks lovingly at his courtesan or mistress, one hand protectively on her shoulder, the other cupping her left breast, as she meets his eye. She is seated on a crimson-upholstered stool, her diaphanous *peshwaz* muslin top and Mughal-inspired crimson poppy-embroidered *paijamas* gathered at the waist by an orange *patka*, wearing rows of pearl and gold necklaces, earrings and a head ornament, her wrists hung with rows of gold bangles, highlighted in gold leaf.

The peafowl is the national bird of India and was often found in private menageries of the period, however the specific choice of this particular bird also has a hidden meaning. In the middle of the nineteenth-century, the likely date of this painting, the Anglo-Indian usage of the word 'peacock' indicated making visits to ladies and gentlemen in the morning¹ hence, one assumes, the bird's quizzical glance upwards towards the embracing couple.

¹ Advanced Learners Dictionary, Cambridge University Press.



COMPANY SCHOOL: STUDY OF A PINEAPPLE

India, late eighteenth, or early nineteenth-century, possibly after a painting by Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770).

Watercolour on paper, within a George II style giltwood frame.

Height: 12 ½" (32cm); width: 11" (28cm).

This botanical watercolour of a pineapple, (*Ananassa sativa*, the cultivated variety of the plant order *Bromeliales*, indigenous to the Americas), is in the manner of Georg Dionysius Ehret, (1708-1770), a German-born draughtsman and painter who started his career as a gardener becoming one of the most influential botanical artists in Europe. In Holland he met Linnaeus (1707-78) and George Clifford, a wealthy Dutch banker and governor of the Dutch East India Company, contributing illustrations to their *Hortus Cliffortianus* (Amsterdam, 1737-8).

Ehret later moved to England where he illustrated many of the more spectacular plants in cultivation. He also illustrated the three-volume *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* in 1756, the major work by Patrick Browne (1720-1790), an Irish physician and botanist, who settled as physician in Jamaica in 1746. His work may be found in the collections of the Natural History Museum in London, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, The Royal Society, London, the Lindley Library at the Royal Horticultural Society, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and at the University Library of Erlangen.

There is a hand-coloured nineteenth-century lithograph of an *Ananassa sativa*, which appears to be an immature version of this pineapple, in the collection of the University of Hawaii at Manoa.



28

‘INDIAN PRINCE’

Probably Rajasthan, late nineteenth-century.

Carved, painted and gilded wood, bearing a hand-written label ‘Indian Prince’.

Height: 8 ¼” (21cm); base: 3 ⅛” (8cm).

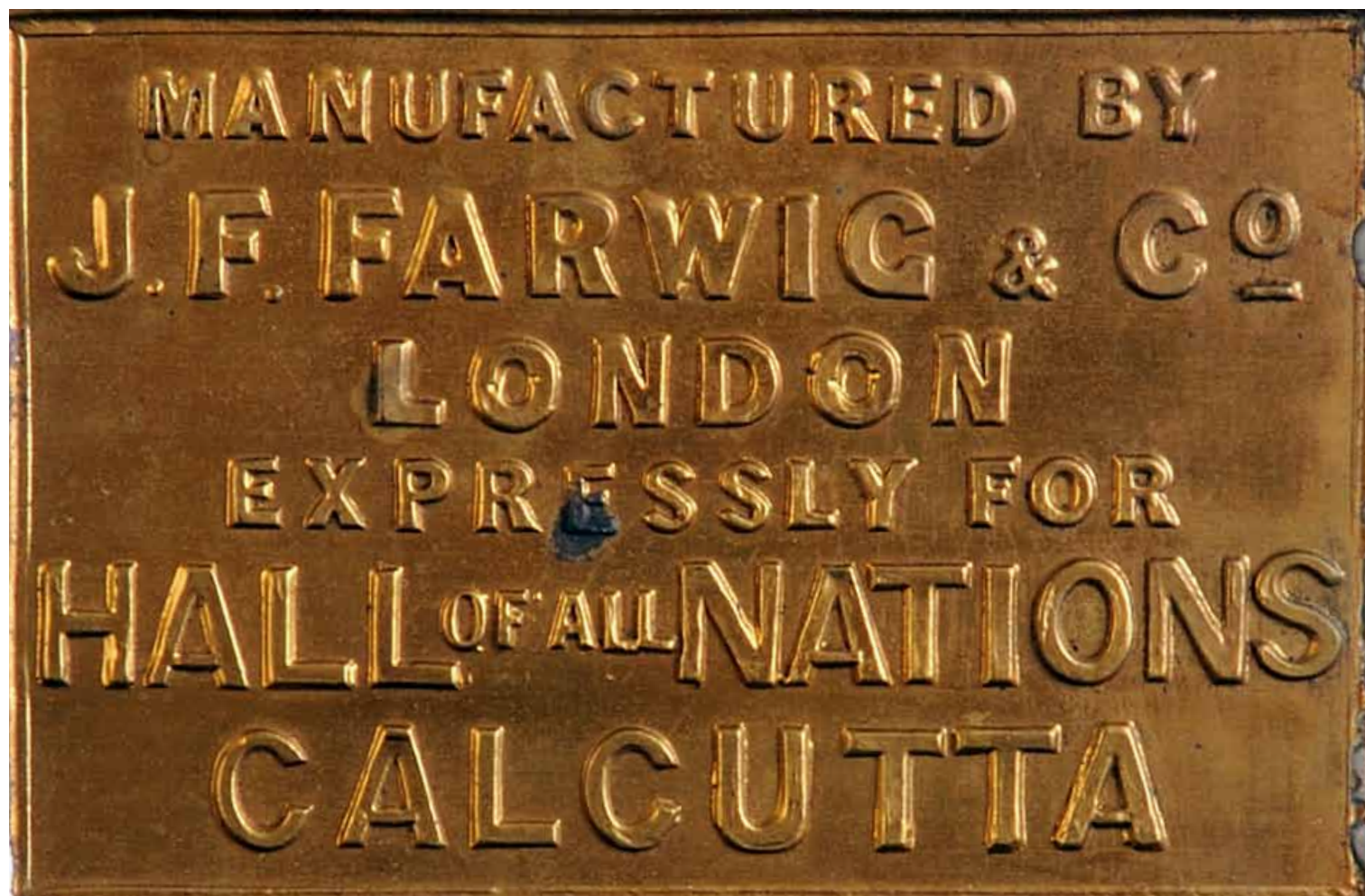
Provenance: Richard, Assheton Cross, 1st Viscount Cross, GCB, GCSI, PC, FRS, (1823-1914), Secretary of State to India 1886 – 1892, thence by descent.

The figure standing, holding a dagger in one hand and a staff in the other, dressed in a full length crimson-sprigged gown, with a gilt-embroidered short-sleeved tunic, a red undershirt and a tiered cap or turban above his large moustache.

Groups of Indian figures, in painted wood or terracotta and stucco, were produced to supply the substantial export trade from the eighteenth-century onwards. They usually depict various trades seen by East India Company officials, their families and visitors.

This example came directly from a descendent of Viscount Cross, Secretary of State to India 1886 – 1892 and, it is recalled, was one of a set of perhaps a dozen similar.





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