



ANTIQUES BY THE SEA

ARMS & ARMOR - ORIENTAL ARTS



Spring 2023

CONTENT:

Africa	3/4
Europe	5/8
China	9/11
Japan	12/15
South East Asia	15/19



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Africa



Region: Central Africa, Azande people.

Period: 19th century.

Materials: Iron, Vegetal fiber.

The '*Kpinga*' or locally called '*Hunga Munga*' is a unique and deadly weapon which was used within the Zande tribes. During the 18th and 19th century it was used as a weapon among elite warriors. Only certain man of status and capability in combat were aloud to use these throwing knives. Later on, during the turn of the century, the '*kpinga*' became a more ceremonial dowry and status symbol and was kept and cherished in order to preserve and honoring their ancestors. The '*kpinga*' is a multi-bladed knife which requires training as only the most experienced warriors were aloud to use them. Besides being a lethal instrument, the throwing knife resembles great symbolism such as manhood and masculinity, regarding the fallus shaped lower blade.

'*Kpinga*' throwing knives were used in battle and tucked inside their shields. The decoration varies in every region and is only permitted for warriors and high ranked tribesmen. The blade was locally forged, shows a very fine laminated forging pattern, some forging flaws and is sharpened on every edge.



Europe



Region: West-Europe

Period: 18th century

Materials: Iron, Brass, Leather, Velvet, Silk, Cotton, Straw



Among the art or war, chivalry is an unmissable feature when it comes to the connoisseurship of equestry and knighthood. In medieval Europe, a man who was aloud the title of knight started his career as page and after he proved his skills, he could receive the title of squire. A squire was the right hand of the knight and had to prove himself in battle and in capability of providing the knight's necessities such as taking care of the horses and carrying the knights shield. In cases of high rank, a nobleman would have paid a knight to be his squire.

In later periods, after the medieval period, until the 19th century, knighthood was only ceremonial since the battlefields had significantly changed since the invention of gunpowder and firearms. During ceremonies, noblemen still had squires on their sides who were equipped equally with their lords. A fine example of this tradition, is listed here.

A squire's parade saddle, dating from the late 18th century, originating from Europe, either France, Spain or Italy. It has a wooden frame with leather billets, covered with silk and velvet. The gullet and cantle are covered in purple velvet with small brass studs. The seat and seat jockey are decorated with fine embroidered thread. The panels, which makes the sale comfortable to the horse, are padded with straw and have cotton outlines.



Region: France
Period: 18th century, ca. 1750
Materials: Iron, Steel, Silver, Wood

The smallsword was the weapon of choice among gentlemen and slowly replaced the traditional rapier during the late 17th century. It was worn by the military, but also among civilians, in first instance for self-defense or dueling, but later on more as a status symbol to show their social rank. In addition to the rapier, the smallsword was shorter, light weighted and therefore much easier to thrust with.

Smallswords were often heavily decorated with precious materials to show the owners social rank. The basics of the hilt are made of steel, silver or bronze and often show a decoration pattern custom to its age. British smallsword hilts are often made of plain steel and decorated with steel beads or pearl rims, usually made in the region of Woodstock and Birmingham. The Dutch hilts were mostly made of chiseled steel and show French influence. The French hilts were commonly made of chiseled steel, depicting military or fashionable figures. What all origins have in common is that in many cases, the blades were imported from Germany and especially Solingen. Our example shown here has a typical chiseled steel hilt with an imported Solingen triangular blade.





The hilt is of classical form, consisting of nothing but steel. The hollow openwork pommel is revised to the blade and has a knuckle guard which ends in the ricasso with a single quillon and two '*pas d'âne*' rings. The guard consists of one piece which has a shell-form and the entire hilt is chiseled in rocaille motifs, a French courteous fashion design which was seen in the mid 18th century and is known by the name 'rococo'. The grip is made of steel, bound in fine braided metalwire.

The blade is of triangular form, a feature that was adopted in the early 18th century, usually seen as an improvement compared to the double edged blades, early and transitional smallswords had. However, both type of blades including experimental blades were made during the entire 18th century and beyond. This example has an unusually wide forte and ends in a spiked triangular tip. The blade is decorated with an etched floral design, but is not marked with a makers mark. I assume this blade was made either in France or Germany. The blade is protected with the original scabbard which is made of wood and parchment and features plain iron fittings.



China



Region: South China

Period: Mid 19th century

Materials: Steel, Iron, Bronze, Brass, Wood.

A single Chinese *'Hudiedao'* (蝴蝶刀) sword with carved wooden grip and bronze D-shaped guard. These side-arms were originally used within the Qing military, while holding a rattan shield and were mainly manufactured in Southern China. Often described as pirate swords or butterfly swords, but the *'hudiedao'* seems to be a notable weapon of the Chinese Qing military.

This *'Hudiedao'* is a single version of the double butterfly knives and dates from around 1860.

Besides the military, a large number of militias were also equipped with the *'hudiedao'* or so called *'eight cutting knives'*. The knives were also highly appreciated by martial arts practitioners, who preferred the wide bladed types, due to their capability of handling and practice skills.

The bronze knucklebow seems to have a mixture of alloys to harden it and make it capable to ward off strikes. The handle is made of precious wood and decorated with typical Southern Chinese carved *'rolling thunder'* cartouches within scenes of a magpie and deer, which are considered auspicious symbols, surrounded in floral motifs and flower petals. The ferrules are made of brass and show a faceted pattern.

The blade is rather thick, heavy and narrow instead of more common flat, wide bladed examples and is in excellent condition. A closer inspection of the blade shows that it is of high-quality forged steel. It has a slightly rounded spine and is rather long and slim which makes it suitable for both thrusting and cutting.

Region: South China

Period: Qing Dynasty (1668-1912) ca. 1900

Materials: Steel, Iron, Brass, Wood

A fine example of a classic 'Jian' (劍) shortsword. Most likely carried by a scholar or brought back by an officer, decorated with brass fittings and good quality forged blade. Mistakenly considered as only curio-trade examples, many were actually made for self defense, with good quality forged blades and were known in Chinese culture as far back as 500BC.

Many collectors see these *Jian*' short swords as tourist quality souvenirs. While some were made for the export market indeed, they turned up during the latest part of the Qing Dynasty when scholars and gentlemen started to carry short swords as status symbol and to protect themselves when necessary. They come in different qualities, some with tortoise shell covered scabbards, sometimes with ivory hilts, or like this example, with wooden grip and wooden, with brass covered scabbard.

The blade is a standard semi-short blade with double cutting edge and rounded tip, well forged with a central ridge running down the entire blade ending up in the tip. A fine laminated pattern of tempered steel is visible near the edges. Not suitable for thrusting, but made for fast melee strikes while being attacked.

The scabbard consists of two wooden slabs held together by brass fittings depicting Buddhism auspicious symbols. The simplified 'Shou' (壽) character which stands for longevity and double happiness, surrounded by four bats and auspicious objects, which stand for happiness as well. The center fitting depicts a crouching dragon, which is considered the most powerful animal known. Some fittings show old traces of silver-plating.





Region: South China

Period: Qing Dynasty, 19th century

Materials: Iron, Fabric cord

The 'Sai' truncheon appears in East Asia, including China, Okinawa and Indonesia. While the Japanese term for 'Sai' means 'hairpin', the Chinese word for hairpin is 'chāi' (釵) or sometimes referred to as: '鐵尺' which stands for 'iron ruler'. In Indonesia, a wide variety of terms is used including 'tekpi' and 'chabang'.

The 'Sai' is a trident inspired weapon created for constabulary forces to disarm and control and later on preferred among martial arts practitioners. They come in several varieties, the regular trident shape with two bars pointing forward functioning as guard. The other, like this example, is generally referred to as the 'manji sai' which points to the swastika symbolism integrated in the guard. One bar pointing forward, the other pointing backwards which at the same time functions as a knuckle bow. The cross section of the rods are often segmented, octagonal or round and both bronze as iron was used.

A well patinated example which dates from the early to mid 19th century and of Chinese manufacture. The typical octagonal rod tapers towards the tip and the riveted 'manji' shaped guard tapers towards the ends of the quillon featuring a small curve which functions as sword catcher. The pommel has a truncated cube form and is riveted to the bar. The grip consists of the same iron bar and is wrapped in red cord, with interlooping brown cord. This traditional style of hilt wrapping was commonly found on Chinese arms and was recently restored. besides providing a firm grip, the red color is associated with battle and power which was meant as auspicious intention.



Japan



Region: Japan

Period: Edo period (1603-1868), Ca. 1800

Materials: Iron, Gold.

The front:

The general outlines of the tsuba are quite typical, slightly oval and the 'nakago-ana' is decorated with a cartouche. The outlines of the cartouche are gilded, including the 'kozuka hitsu ana' and the 'kogai hitsu ana'. The bottom depicts a 'Tera' (寺) a Japanese temple. The background shows an chiseled iron 'arabesque' or 'Karakusa' pattern, which stands for prosperity and longevity.

The back:

Decorated with a fierce 'Shishi' (temple dog) which is a Buddhist auspicious symbol of protection against evil. The sides feature two 'Shishi' facing down, a double sign of warding off evil. The side is decorated with a 'Raimon' pattern which is chiseled throughout the entire rim.



Region: Japan or Korea

Period: Edo period or Joseon Dynasty ,
18th century

Materials: Iron, Silver, Gold

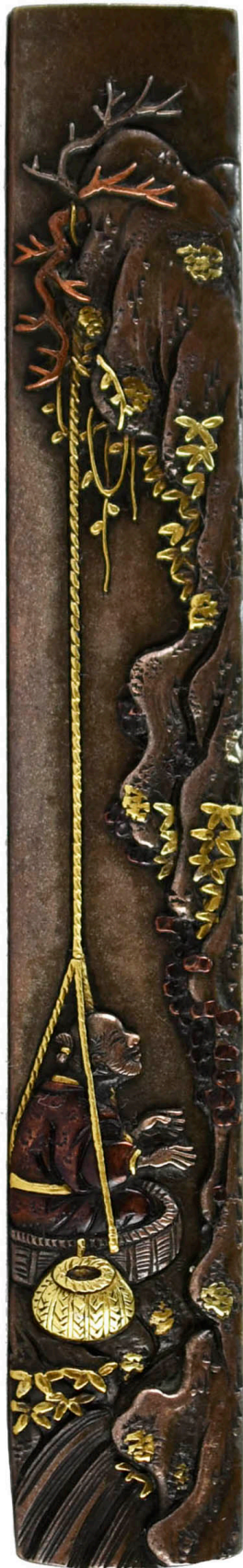


The decoration on this tsuba is likely Japanese made, but has strong Korean influence, especially with the overlay silver decoration and general shape. The front depicts two mirrored waterdragons which are considered water gods in the Japanese Ryujin Shinkou (竜神信仰) belief. One is decorated in overlay gilding, the other in overlay silver. Dragons are a commonly chosen motif on Samurai sword parts due to their auspicious reputation. The borders are decorated with a design called 'Raimon' (雷文) pattern which represents a rolling thunder and lightning pattern giving rain, which keeps everything alive. The 'Raimon' motif is everlasting and therefor stands for longevity and prosperity. The background is decorated with a silver 'Karakusa' (唐草) pattern which can be translated as 'Chinese plants' and is another auspicious symbol for longevity and prosperity.

The back of the tsuba is decorated with wide range of auspicious symbols, with again, a 'Raimon' and 'Karakusa' background. From the top right, clockwise can be seen: *Makimono* scrolls (巻物), *Fundou* (分銅), *Kinnou* (金囊), *Chouji* (丁子) and *Shippou* (七宝).

The '*Makimono*' scrolls stand for knowledge and wisdom, the '*Fundou*' is a coin weight, which stands for wealth. '*Kinnou*' means a wonderful cloth purse which contains coin, herbs or amulets, '*Chouji*' is a well sought after spice in the 17th and 18th century and which is known for its medicinal characteristics. The '*Shippou*' pattern is a circle shaped pattern with an auspicious meaning in Asian culture. The combination of a wide variety of symbols is called 'Takara Dukushi' (宝尽くし) which is believed to bring good fortune.





Region: Japan

Period: Late Edo period (1615-1868), 19th century

Materials: Iron, Copper, Gold

The *'kozuka'* is the hilt of a small knife carried within the *'koshirae'* (fittings) called *'kogatana'* and is integrated in Japanese *'nihonto'* culture, as both object of status and as utensil. The *'kozuka'* is generally integrated within the *'koshirae'* of the sword, being tucked in the scabbard and within a recess in the *'tsuba'* (hand guard). The *'kozuka'* is an implement which was added for functional use, sometimes next to a *'kogai'* hairpin. During the rather stable Edo period, the decoration of the *'kozuka'* and other sword fittings underwent a large extension and many hilts can be found in a wide variety of decorations and materials such as bronze, iron, gold and silver.

This example:

A fine well made example which consists of a brass base, deeply embossed and decorated with gold. The scene depicts an older man seated in a basket hanging on a mountain. Probably harvesting the flowers for his golden basket. The scenery is very detailed and show natural shapes of rocks, vegetation such as plants and branches and a waterfall down below. The clothing of the man is treated with a metal alloy giving it an iridescent appearance. All considered a very well made example.

Region: Japan

Period: Late Edo period (1603-1867),
19th century

Decorated with fine gold inlay (*nonume zogan*) technique Shaped like a sword scabbard with a locket and 'kojiri' (chape). The mid section is decorated with a decor of grapevines and leaves. The vines show a similarity with the 'Karakusa' (唐草) pattern. The back is decorated with a cloudy pattern in cross-hatched overlay silver.



Region: Japan

Period: Late Edo period, 19th century

Materials: Iron, Copper, Silver

A fine elegant and subtle design with a traditional background. The centipede 'mukade' (百足) is a symbol of aggression and braveness in battle. The centipede only moves forward and therefore it was considered a powerful symbol of courage among the Samurai. During the 'Warring States' period (Sengoku) from the 15th til 17th century the centipede was seen as a symbol of victory due to its aggression. The 'mukade' is also known among civilians as a sign of fast growing wealth, good sales and an extensive amount of costumers. The 'mukade' was therefore favored by both Samurai as merchants.

South-East Asia

Region: the Philippines, Luzon district

Period: 19th century, ca. 1884

Materials: Steel, Iron, Copper, Silver, Brass, Horn

The *'bolo'* or in Tagalog *'Guloc'* is a general type of knife or sword found in the Philippines. Shapes, sizes and names vary in every district and the *'bolo'* is used as both weapon as utility tool in the dense forests. The term *'bolo'* is Spanish and means 'knife'. In Luzon, the Northern region of the Philippines, a small group of high-quality examples can be found. Often with engraved blades, elaborately carved horn hilts, silver fittings and horn scabbards with wonderful carved openwork details. Many of these bolo's are attributed to the 'Katipunan' a revolutionary movement which fought against the Spanish colonials to prevail the independence of the Philippines.

Officers and high ranked members carried bolo knives with chiseled blades with brass inlay or silver-plated floral designs. The manufacturing of these knives was most likely manufactured independently in the area of Quezon and Manila, however they were also purchased and ordered by Spanish colonials.





This example seems a very uncommon type, with a very scarce type of hilt. Most found hilts are rounded, slightly curved downwards compared to the blade to create an optimal slicing effect. The hilts of this quality are usually decorated with floral motifs, but in rare cases depicted with animal heads such as parrots. This hilt features resemblance with a dingo or civet cat, both found in the Philippines. The grip is carved in overlapping scales to provide a firm grip. The pommel is well carved with protruding ears, copper inlaid eyes and very decorative carved fur, nose and muzzle. An embossed silver collar piece divides the horn hilt from the brass ferrule which tightens the blade. An indicator for the Luzon area is that the hilt was riveted on the blade with a nice silver nut, a European feature which was inspired from the Spanish colonials. Filipino indigenous sword hilts were usually attached with resin or tightened with cloth or fiber.

Even the blade seems to be of a different shape than we commonly see. The blade is single edged and shows a curve towards the tip. The spine starts out straight and tapers halfway ending in the curved tip. The right side of the blade is decorated with an engraved cartouche filled with brass inlaid foliage. The left side is engraved with the name of the owner 'Francisco Vigil' and dated 1884, which was a couple of years before the '*Katipunan*' was established.



Attribution:

The name Fransisco Vigil emerges in José Nieto Aguilar's *Mindanao: su historia y geografica con un prologo* of don Fransisco de Martin Arrue where a certain señor D. Fransisco Vigil seems to be the principal of the 'Overseas Museum Library' in Mindanao. This might be the referring to the person who ordered this knife. By my knowledge, this is the first dated example of this small group of knives found.





Region: South-East Asia, Laos

Period: Late 19th to early 20th century

Materials: Iron, Silver, Wood

The exact origin of these Hmong muskets, seems to lay in the border regions of Yunnan, Vietnam and Laos. Called after the Hmong people who live in these areas. The muskets were used for hunting monkeys, however, journals of American military advisors who operated in Laos during the 1960's and 1970's were often confronted with these muskets being still in use. Karl Döhring writes in his book *'Der Indische Kulturkreis: Siam 'Land und Volk', Band I-III'* that the Karen people who lived in the mountain regions of North Siam also used these rifles.

The construction of these muskets is quite simple, it features a matchlock or flintlock and is equipped with a long, smooth bore barrel. The wooden stock has a distinguished pistol grip and is decorated with numeral silver bands. Jacques Lemoine shows a blueprint of the Hmong musket in his *'Un village vert du Haut Laos'* which clearly shows the muskets function. The lock was usually covered with a piece of hide, to protect the firing mechanism from the elements, keeping the gunpowder dry. The flintlocks were attached with resin, in contrast to their European counterparts which had the flint screwed on to the cock.

A fine antique example dating from the late 19th to early 20th century, showing a wonderful dark patination and features a functioning mechanism, which I left untouched due to its frangibility. A piece of cultural importance and despite its simplicity, a wonderful piece of ethnographic handicraft.

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