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INDIAN AND ORIENTAL ARMOUR

By
Lord Egerton of Tatton
[^]
Wilbraham 1832-1909

Introduction by
H. Russell Robinson, F.S.A.



DAGGERS FROM THE ZARKOE SELO COLLECTION

1-4. Sent by the Shah of Persia to the Czar of Russia.

5-7. Indian Daggers.

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stocks of guns are lacquered and often painted with sporting scenes, nautch girls and animals coloured and gilt. In the Prince of Wales's Collection there is a gun with a stock of ebony inlaid with ivory carved in relief with rams, antelopes and goats butting at one another, tigers and elephants fighting, cranes and bustards. In the Windsor Collection there is a matchlock the stock of which is painted with gilt flowers and birds on a white ground.

Lac.—In an ancient Khándá in the E. Collection a pattern is chiselled in relief on the blade, and the interstices filled up with red lac, forming the background. Lac is also employed for colouring the lettering in the sacrificial axes and Koras of Nepal (Nos. 350–352).

Tortoise Shell.—The handle and scabbard of a Cingalese sword (formerly in Sir E. Tennent's possession, now in the author's) is richly carved, the handle with a grotesque dragon head overshadowing the seated figure of Buddha, and the scabbard with rich floral arabesque. A similar specimen is at South Kensington.

Papier Mâché.—This material is in common use in the Punjab, and in part of the Presidency of Bombay, for making shields, which are richly lacquered with the varnish obtained from *Rhus Vernix*, a shrub from which it exudes like gum.¹ The shield No. 448, from Bikanír, Rájputáná, is an unique specimen of work with raised flowers gilt in the Japanese style.

Leather.—The leather sword straps in Sind are richly embroidered. A leather quiver from the Bhil country in the Amherst Collection is covered with coarse woollen embroidery. In Persia the scabbards are ornamented with embossed patterns on leather. That most prized is "shagreen."² It is made from the hide of a donkey's back, dyed green, and roughened by means a grain called "Castria," black, hard, and rather larger than mustard seed. In India rhinoceros, elephant, and sámbar hides are used for shields. In Kach the hides are boiled so as to make them transparent, and they are then gilt and painted, and in the Meyrick Collection there was a suit of armour made of rhinoceros hide, painted and covered with quotations from the Koran in gilt letters. In the Prince of Wales's Collection there is a suit of armour, presented by the Maharajah of Datiah, made entirely of the horny scales of the Indian pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*), ornamented with gold, turquoises, and garnets encrusted on it.³

Velvet is used for covering the scabbard. One belonging to a Khándá in the E. Collection (Fig. 14), is red on one side and green on the other, and a rich floral pattern with border is embroidered on each in silver and gold thread respectively. The powder flasks and bullet cases are likewise embroidered in the same material. Velvet, padded and studded with brass nails called "Jazerant" work,⁴ is sometimes used in combination with leather for armour, as in No. 573. Horse trappings are also frequently made of it. The umbrella taken from Bandula, now in Lord Amherst's possession, is a fine specimen of this work in geometrical patterns.

¹ See Digby Wyatt's "Industrial Arts," quoted by Lieutenant Cole.—"Cat.," South Kensington.

² Shagreen or Chagrin comes from the Persian "Saghrí" which means back.—"Chardin," Vol. III. p. 112. *Voyages en Perse*.

³ "Hand book, Indian Court, 1878."—Dr. Birdwood.

⁴ *Archæo. Journal*, XIV., 345.

GROUP VII.

NEPAL.

This group forms a link between the Turanian and Aryan type of arms. The *Nepalese, Gorkhas, and Parbatiyas* are a mixed race, containing more or less Turanian blood, qualified by the introduction of Rajput immigrants in the 14th century. Some of the former, like the Newars, are Buddhists, others are largely composed of the descendants of the Aryan settlers, and have adopted the Hindu religion. The character of their origin is well shown in their weapons, some of which are of a purely Aryan, others of a more barbarous, type.

It is worthy of remark that Nepal is the only part of Northern India which has never fallen under Mahomedan rule. It is therefore, as Ferguson well remarks of its architecture, a complete microcosm of India as it was in the seventh century, when Buddhists and Brahmins flourished side by side.

The *Gorkhas* claim to belong to the Kshatri or warrior class, and therefore to the ancient military division of Hinduism. They are a warlike race, and, as already remarked, made a determined resistance to our arms, but now form some of the best of our native infantry. Their national weapon is the *Kukri*, originally a kind of bill-hook, for cutting through small wood in the dense low jungles of the Terai and the Himalayas. The Gorkha Kukri is generally ornamented with Aryan designs and sometimes even bears the figure of a Hindu deity inlaid in gold on the blade.

The Nepalese use a larger knife, or sword "Kora," with an inner cutting edge, with which those who use it skilfully are enabled to cut a sheep in two at a single blow. They also use broad-bladed swords, three or four inches in breadth. Their swords and sacrificial axes are generally inscribed at the end of the blade,¹ with Buddhist symbols the use of which seems to extend to Bengal.

In addition to the aboriginal tribes of *Chepang, Kusanda* and others, the chief tribes in Nepal are the *Gurungs*, a military tribe of Rajput extraction, who use the Kukri and Kora with a small shield; the *Magars*, excellent soldiers, who formed one of the first native regiments enlisted by Sir Charles Napier in 1850. They use the bow and other Gorkha weapons. The *Nepalese Brahmins*, of purer Aryan stock than the preceding tribes.

In the Himalayas there are thirty-one hill States whose rule the English Government has reinstated after their conquest by the Gorkhas. The inhabitants are a simple and unwarlike race. Many of the hill chiefs are Rajputs of good lineage.

The *Parbatiyas*, of Garhwál, generally carry in their belts a light broad-bladed hatchet, "dangra." Some substitute for it a Gorkha knife, wearing it in front, while the Gorkhas wear it behind.

NOTE.—The ornamental arms belonging to this group will be found in Case 70. They are distinguished in the Catalogue by an asterisk.

298. QUIVER AND ARROWS; the quiver of leather ornamented with hemi-spherical metal bosses, and *appliqué* embroidery of coloured leather. *Nepal*. L. of arrows, 2 ft. 6 in. (8763.-'55.)

299. QUIVER; similar to the preceding specimen. *Nepal*. (Pl. IX., No. 299.) (8777.-'55.)

300. QUIVER; similar to Nos. 298, 299, together with a leather case with waist strap for carrying the bow. *Nepal*. (Pl. IX., No. 300.) (8778.-'55.)

301. QUIVER AND ARROWS; the quiver of leather, green on one side, red on the other, stamped with a diaper pattern of small concentric rings. *Nepal*. L. of arrows, 2 ft. 6 in. to 2 ft. 9 in. (8764.-'55.)

334. SWORD; "Kattí Talwár;" curved blade; steel hilt, with a spike projecting from the pommel. *Nepal*. L. 3 ft. 2 in.; W. 1½ in. (8795.-'55.)
335. DAGGER; "Katár Bánk;" slightly curved blade, grooved on both sides, the grooves once filled with seed pearls; silver-plated hilt, embossed with floral decoration. *Nepal*. L. 15½ in.; W. 1½ in. (Pl. IX., No. 335.) (8811.)
336. DAGGER; small curved blade; agate hilt. *Nepal*. L. 10 in. (Pl. IX., No. 336.) ('55.)
337. *SMALL DAGGER; generally worn with a "Kukri," of which it is a miniature copy. *Nepal*.
338. DAGGER; "Chilanum;" flamboyant blade of Damascus steel, deeply channelled; the hilt covered with simple geometrical ornaments, embossed and silver-gilt. *Nepal*. L. 15 in.; W. 2 in. (Pl. IX., No. 338.) (8801.-'55.)
339. DAGGER; curved blade, thickened at the point, and ribbed; steel hilt, with knuckle-guard. *Nepal*. L. 14 in. (Pl. IX., No. 339.) (8792.)
340. DAGGER; "Katár;" forked blade, embossed; hilt shaped like the letter H. *Nepal*. L. 14½ in. (Pl. IX., No. 340.) (8790.-'55.)
341. *DAGGER; "Katár;" fluted blade, with waved edges; a rib, damascened in gold, runs up the centre from the hilt; hilt and side-guards with conventional foliage in perforated and damascened work. *Nepal*. (8791.-'55.)
342. *DAGGER; "Katár;" short, broad, nearly triangular blade, strongly ribbed, much thickened at the point; hilt and side guards damascened with gold. *Nepal*. L. 9 in. (8802.)
343. *DAGGER; curved two-edged blade, damascened with gold near the hilt; hilt of curious shape, of steel damascened with gold; velvet sheath, with gold-damascened steel mounts. *Nepal* (?). (8534.)
344. DAGGER; "Jamdhar Katárá;" plain steel blade; the hilt similar in shape to that of the preceding example; bears traces of gilding. *Nepal*. L. 13½ in. (Pl. IX., No. 344.) (8803.-'55.)
345. DAGGER; "Jamdhar Katárá;" *Nepal*. L. 14½ in. (Pl. IX., No. 345.) (8806.-'55.)
346. *DAGGER OR HUNTING KNIFE; "Peshkabz;" pointed one-edged blade; broad, straight back, to which the edge gradually slopes; hilt of rock crystal. *Nepal*. Presented by the late Sir Jung Bahadur. (8707.-'55.)
347. KNIFE; straight blade; ivory hilt, the pommel carved with conventional dragon head. *Nepal*. L. 14½ in.; W. 1¾ in. (8813.-'55.)
348. KNIFE; abruptly curved, grooved blade; silvered hilt. *Nepal*. L. 11 in. (Pl. IX., No. 348.)
349. ELEPHANT GOAD; "Ánkus;" embossed steel hilt. *Nepal*. (Pl. IX., No. 349.) (8800.-'55.)
- 350, 351. SWORDS OR AXES; "Rám dá'o;" broad, heavy, incurved blades, ornamented along the back with scroll patterns, and each bearing a representation of the human eye incised in the steel, and coloured; chequered ebony handles, with brass mounts. *Nepal*. L. 2 ft. 3½ in. and 2 ft. 5 in.; L. of blades, 19 and 20 in.; W. of blade, 2½ in. to 4 in. (Pl. IX., No. 350.) (11908.-'72.)
352. SACRIFICIAL AXE; "Rám dá'o" or "Kharga;" broad, heavy, massive blade, terminating in a kind of axe-like projection, and bearing scroll ornaments, inscriptions, and the Buddhist emblem of the human eye incised in the steel, and coloured; chequered ebony handle, brass mounted. Used chiefly in the sacrifice of goats and buffaloes. *Nepal*. L. 2 ft. 7 in.; L. of blade, 23 in.; W. 3 in. to 5 in. (Pl. IX., No. 352.) (9150.-'74.)
- One in the E. Collection, formerly in the Meyrick Collection, has an inscription in ancient Hindi which, from the character of its writing, must be more than 200 years old.
- The use of the sacrificial axe is thus described in the sanguinary chapter translated from the "Calica Purana," by W. C. Blaquiére (Asiatic Researches, Vol. II., p. 1039):—"With regard to the sacrifices to the goddess Chandra and other gods, the sacrificer is directed to use a 'Chandra-lasa,' or 'Catrí,' two sorts of axes, as the best mode, a hatchet or knife, or saw or a sangleul, as the second best, and the beheading with a hoe, 'Bhalloc,' or sort of spade, as the inferior mode.
- "Exclusive of these weapons, no other of the spear or arrow kind ought ever to be used in performing a sacrifice, as the offering is not accepted by the god.
- "The 'Kharga,' or axe, being invoked by the text called 'Calatriya Mantra, Calatri (the goddess of darkness) herself presides over the axe uplifted for the destruction of the sacrificer's enemies.
- The animals to be sacrificed are birds, tortoises, fish, buffaloes, wild bulls, he-goats, ichneumons, wild boars, rhinoceros, antelope, guanias, reindeer, lion, and tiger."
353. BAYONET-SWORD; "Sangín;" attached as a bayonet to the muzzle of a gun. *Nepal*. L. 21 in. (8719.-'55.)
- In the Windsor collection there is a small State axe, with short bayonet introduced at the head.
345. MATCHLOCK; octagonal barrel; ebony stock, with brass mounts; short butt. *Nepal*. L. 5 ft. 7 in. (12536.)
355. MATCHLOCK; heavy octagonal Damascus barrel, inlaid with silver, attached to the stock by broad bands of embossed silver plate; stock of ebony, inlaid with brass ornaments. *Nepal*. L. 5 ft. 11 in. (Pl. IX., No. 355.) (8891.-'50.)
356. POWDER-FLASK; "Batwál túmbí;" (powder-gourd), of leather, embroidered with coloured thread and strips of porcupine quill. *Nepal*. (8726.-'55.)
357. POUCH; leather, embroidered with strips of coloured quills in pine pattern. *Nepal*. (8731.-'55.)
358. POWDER-FLASK; black leather. *Nepal*. (8732.-'55.)
359. HUNTING BELT, WITH POUCHES (4); black leather embroidered with silk; one of the pouches contains a shot flask. *Nepal*. ('55.)
360. HELMET; "Tóp;" hemispherical, of polished steel, surmounted by a plume-holder, and fringed with padded lappets of Chinese brocaded silk. *Nepal*. H. 6½ in. (8648.-'55.)