The East India Company at Home, 1757–1857

Edited by

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Contents

1
Prize possession

The 'silver coffer' of Tipu Sultan and the Fraser family

Sarah Longair and Cam Sharp Jones [1]

Amongst the myriad treasures in the British Museum is an intricately decorated filigree casket, displayed for many years in the museum's Addis Gallery of Islamic Art (see Figure 1.1).[2] Inside are six small bottles, a ladle and a funnel bearing a minute Persian inscription on the rim. Two documents written by one-time owners of the casket – one an undated letter, the other an incomplete note – give tantalizing details about the casket's provenance.[3] These fragments of evidence describe how General Hastings Fraser (1771–1852) obtained the object from the palace of Tipu Sultan (1750–99), the celebrated ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore, after the dramatic defeat of Tipu's army and his death at Seringapatam (present-day Srirangapatna) on 4 May 1799. As we learn from the second letter, the Frasers believed the Persian inscription on the funnel referred to Haider Ali (d. 1782), father of Tipu Sultan.[4]

These documents contain further intriguing references to the casket's subsequent journey until its donation by Colonel Henry Fraser to the British Museum in 1904. The first letter, dated 11 August 1846, is from an unspecified correspondent:

> At the taking of Seringapatam in 1799 my Uncle Mr Fraser was present and afterwards appointed Prize Agent to the treasures, jewels, etc there found. This silver coffer was in Tipoo's own room and with a silken carpet and coral chaplet was sent by HF to his mother at Mt Capper and were by her given to her youngest daughter Charlotte Catherine, From whom the boxe was given to her son J M Heath who

> wished his youngest cousin H Fraser to have it as a family relic. His surviving sister Isabella A Heath now transfers it to HF as d...

The second, subsequent letter dates from c.1876 and was composed by Isabella A. Heath:

> Dear Henry I believe you are the discoverer of Hyder's name on the casket, & of course to an outsider who did not know its history it increases its value as a genuine historic relic. There was an article in a recent no. of 'The World' on Mr Lowe, there they spoke of two of the few relics of Tipoo's time preserved at his house, got by someone who had them at the siege of Seringapatam, one was a small drinking horn or flask of Rhinocerous horn found in his private apartments and both highly valued by their possessors. With love ever your affect. cousin Isabella A Heath

In this chapter we untangle the history of this object and the associated individuals to shed light on several wider questions about how material culture from India operated within the homes of East India Company (EIC) families, of which the Frasers – a Scottish Highland family and branch of Clan Fraser of Lovat – represent a useful example. These questions include: how does the domestication of spoils of war represent family identities, dynastic legitimacy and imperial legacies over generations across the empire?[5] When was the association with Tipu Sultan mobilized and to what end? How did this connection shift in and out of view as the casket's meaning and value changed in different contexts? The enduring significance of Tipu Sultan in nineteenth-century Britain and the particular attention paid by family members to transferring the casket between generations both in India and England make this object's biography particularly revealing.[6] It was not an explicitly martial object, offering possibilities for domestic reinterpretation.[7] We remain mindful of the risks associated with isolating a specific object for investigation to draw wider conclusions, as it was likely to be one of many produced.[8] However, the associations embodied within this particular object merit further scrutiny.

While the documentary evidence connected to the casket remains minimal, we can usefully situate it within different historical and material contexts to establish the significance of its history. Large numbers of objects from Seringapatam remain in the private collections of the descendants of army officers present at the battle.[9] For this reason their changing locations, uses and meanings remain concealed. Evidence of the casket's treatment therefore offers a window into these hidden histories. The chronology of the

Figure 1.1 Openwork silver and silver gilt filigree casket, H: 9 cm; W: 12 cm; D: 8.5 cm. 1904,1006.1.a. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Frasers' entanglement with India is also notable. In contrast to the Scottish elite 'sojourners' of the late eighteenth century whose relatively short periods in India were devoted to the rapid acquisition of fortunes leading to accusations of 'nabobery', families like the Frasers established a form of family 'seat' in Cuddalore. Subsequent generations lived mobile lives maintaining connections across the empire and in the metropole.[10] This case study indicates that for this group, material culture was and remained a source of pride, and a symbol of imperial identity and status. The timing of this object's donation to the Museum and the scant but illuminating documentary and material evidence therefore offer a view into the domestication of Tipu's legacy in Company family homes across time and space.

The casket's origins in eighteenth-century India

The casket, measuring 12cm long, 9cm high and 8.5cm deep, is made entirely of fine, openwork filigree. The filigree consists of silver wire in the form of florets and volute-like patterns imitating scrolling foliage, contained within frames of flattened silver gilt wire that creates a panelled

effect across the sides of the casket. The scrolling foliage design continues across the hinged bevelled lid in smaller panels and bands whilst the top of the lid is decorated with a central six-petal flower surrounded by a scalloped diamond in gilded, flattened wire which develops into a trefoil design. The base is decorated with a radiating rosette motif surrounded by volute curls that is raised up on four feet and can be closed using the loop and palmette-shaped hinged hasp. Interestingly, no evidence is visible (wear or scratching) on the casket or hasp, suggesting it was not repeatedly locked shut. Both the feet and the hinged lock are decorated with the same scrolling foliage pattern found on the rest of the casket. Inside the casket is an inserted silver panel with eight circular holes that separate and hold six 7cm-high silver bottles.[11] The two smaller holes in the panel hold a small silver funnel and ladle. The bottles, ladle and funnel are made of highly polished silver, whilst the inserted panel is decorated with the same scrolling foliage seen on the exterior of the casket, indicating that the interior insert was made at the same time as the casket and was not a later addition.

Dated to the eighteenth century, the casket's decoration and form combine both European and Indian motifs and designs. As with many examples of early filigree, it contains no maker's marks to identify the locality of production. The shape of the casket is found in European examples of filigree and silver work as well as Mughal and Iranian examples of this period, whilst the tightly scrolling decoration is common to Indian and South-East Asian-made articles of this type.[12] During the eighteenth century, growing global engagement resulted in increasing levels of artistic exchange, not just in metal work but also painting, sculpture and architecture. Filigree production flourished in various centres in South Asia during the eighteenth century, including cities such as Goa and those in the Deccan as well as South East Asian centres such as Batavia and Macau.[13] Increasing trade links and mobility between such localities created an environment in which artistic styles were transmitted from place to place, making the attribution to a specific centre problematic. Susan Stronge suggests that the casket was possibly produced in the Deccan, although the shape bears a strong resemblance to boxes and caskets known to have been produced in Goa. A recently acquired and stylistically similar casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection is attributed to Karimnagar, India.[14] The donor of the V&A casket intriguingly also stated that it was said to come from Tipu Sultan's palace. Other examples of silver filigree work attributed to the collections of Tipu Sultan are found in the Clive collection at Powis Castle and are ascribed an East Asian origin – highlighting the influence expanding trade routes had on the ability to collect material goods from wide-ranging localities.[15]

The use of silver filigree throughout the construction of the casket, including the base, makes the casket lightweight and easy to handle and as such to transport. Whilst in many examples the function of such caskets or 'dans' (meaning box) is unknown, in this case the presence of the funnel and ladle indicates that the casket was an 'attardan' or scent holder for storing perfumed oils and waters. These fluids, such as rosewater, were typically used during festivals, dinners and social events to create a luxurious and fragrant atmosphere as well as having specific social functions such as the sprinkling of rosewater to indicate the end of formal gatherings.[16] Perfumes also had a more intimate use for both men and women through the perfuming of the body and clothes. Although the use of perfumes was not limited to the elite, the combination of the silver filigree casket with such liquids, indicates that the casket was most likely regarded as a luxury item both within the Mysorean court and European society.

We know from the transcribed letters which accompany the casket that Henry Fraser identified a minute stamp on the silver funnel, translating the Persian inscription as 'Hyder' which he read as a reference to Haider Ali, Tipu Sultan's father. This reading reinforced the Frasers' belief in the connection between the casket and the family of Tipu Sultan. Interestingly a reappraisal of the inscription has highlighted that what Fraser read as 'Hyder' can also be transliterated as 'Haider' or 'Haydar'.[17] Haider can be both a personal name, meaning lion, or as Stronge states, is the title given to the Prophet's son-in-law 'Ali (the first Shi'ite Imam).[18] Stronge argues that the writing, stamping or inlaying of 'Haider' (حيدر) or more simply a 'H' (ح) onto items from Tipu Sultan's court, provided a multi-layered association to both the Prophet's son-in-law as well as Tipu's father.[19] This association was further enhanced by the 'Haider' being surrounded by a stylized tiger stripe which appeared on numerous objects associated with Tipu, including guns, textiles, swords, painting and architectural decoration.[20]

The tiger motif became so closely associated with Tipu Sultan that he was often referred to as the 'Tiger of Mysore' within contemporary literature.[21] This use of the tiger as a symbol was not only a reference to the Islamic and Iranian belief in the tiger and lion being interchangeable symbols of power and religion, for these creatures also had spiritual significance for Hindu communities.[22] Although Tipu Sultan and Haider Ali were Muslim, the kingdom they ruled was predominantly Hindu. The use of the tiger was open to multiple interpretations and may have produced a positive association with the local populace towards these new rulers. Richard Davis argues that the use of the tiger motif created a

visual connection between earlier dynastic rulers of the region, such as the Colas who had also used the tiger stripe as an official insignia.[23] In this regard, the use of 'Haider' within the tiger stripe produced multiple allusions and associations on both a local and global level.

These varied meanings not only allied Tipu Sultan and his kingdom to the local population and so helped to maintain a stable populace, but also demonstrated his religious devotion. This is also mirrored in the 'Haider' stamp. When transliterated by Henry Fraser, he took it to mean 'Hyder 'Ali' and so confirmed a dynastic connection, through Tipu's inheritance of the casket from his father. Although Henry Fraser most probably missed the religious association that Stronge argues was one of the meanings behind the stamp, the fact that he was researching and studying this casket shows an attempt to understand the object in his possession, not just as a decorative item but also its history and the significance of its inscription.

Material culture from Seringapatam

Tipu Sultan, born on 20 November 1750 to Haider Ali's second wife, Fatima, or Fakr-un-Nissa, was well-known during his lifetime as one of the most formidable opponents of the East India Company, and his reputation endured throughout the nineteenth century.[24] Both his and his father's resistance to European expansion effectively kept the Company at bay for decades through their command of large and well-resourced armed forces in battle. The fall of Mysore and Tipu's death at the battle of Seringapatam in 1799 became symbolic of EIC domination in the subcontinent, all the more potent as Tipu was a respected leader who had resisted for so long and died heroically defending his city. According to Denys Forrest, while politicians' pride in the success was tempered by their suspicion about the ambitions of Lord Wellesley who led the attack, it was a time for celebration for the wider population: 'on the demotic level, among the ordinary John Bull patriots of market place and farm and tavern, there was a robust and enduring sense of triumph over the terrible Tiger of Mysore. Beating Tipu might not be quite the same thing as beating Boney, but it was a step in the right direction!'[25] This sentiment is entangled with a sense of admiration and awe. Walter Scott remarked in 1814 that Tipu possessed greater resolve and 'dogged spirit of resolution' than Napoleon, dying 'manfully upon the breach of his capital city with his sabre clenched in his hand', an assessment written at the time of Napoleon's abdication.[26] Comparison between these enemies brought

home the serious threat that Tipu had posed to Britain's empire in India and the nobility of his death.

Beyond the inevitable political shifts which occurred in the wake of the defeat of Tipu Sultan, the impact of the battle was transmitted tangibly to Britain by the dissemination of images and the material legacy of the encounter. Artists in Britain were inspired by the dramatic events, imagining key moments in the battle in paintings. Prints of such images were popular and circulated widely.[27] Robert Ker Porter created one of the most spectacular renditions of Seringapatam in the form of a 21-foot high and 120-foot long semi-circular painted panorama, first displayed in the Lyceum in London, which then toured Britain and the United States.[28]

The seizure of material from the palace and city by the East India Company army had an even wider resonance. The extent of the looting and plunder of the palace was vast and unprecedented. As Moienuddin writes, 'The manner in which Tipu's palace was pillaged for his priceless possessions, handkerchiefs and footwear included, has no parallel in Indian history.'[29] The Prize Committee, officially charged with the task of allocating Tipu's possessions and the contents of his treasury, noted that: 'There was everything that power could command or money could purchase.'[30] General Hastings Fraser, acquirer of the casket, was a member of this Prize Committee. The most celebrated of such objects is of course the so-called Tipu's Tiger – the mechanical organ which when wound creates a roaring sound as the wooden tiger mauls an English soldier, which went on public display at the EIC's India Museum in London.[31] The vast majority of the material from the siege and the Prize sales, however, was not presented to the Company but remained in private hands, as with the casket.[32] As Anne Buddle notes, 'Any Seringapatam souvenir was carefully preserved.'[33]

A large number and wide variety of pieces were taken. Manuscripts, jewellery, armour, cabinets, silverware, porcelain and weaponry were amassed in Britain, many of which were described as the personal property of Tipu Sultan.[34] Jasanoff vividly assesses the quantity of objects said to come from Tipu's body: were these attributions genuine, 'the king had staggered into battle swaddled in turbans, padded jackets, helmets and sashes; slung around with pistols, muskets, daggers, and sabres; and packed up with a baffling assortment of trinkets and bibelots – from a folding wooden telescope to a gold European pocket watch'.[35] She highlights the importance of direct connection to Tipu's body to objects gaining specific value as relics. In the second letter above, Heath specifically notes the Haider stamp as proof of its being a 'genuine historical relic'.

The careful preservation of these objects in many families, evidence of which can be seen in the exhaustive work of Moienuddin, indicates how attachment to Tipu Sultan remains significant to this day.[36] 'Hero relics' – such as those associated with Nelson – similarly captured the imagination of Victorians.[37] The element of nobility in battle associated with these objects serves as a contrast to the criticisms surrounding the material culture of nabobs in the late eighteenth century, whose finery and conspicuously 'eastern' possessions represented their new wealth and suspicious exotic lifestyles.[38] The connection with Tipu Sultan trumped such negative connotations.

Myths establishing the pieces as personal possessions of Tipu Sultan, whether asserted by the soldiers who seized them or later embellished within family folklore, indicate the particular significance of proximity to the great ruler and the family's direct involvement in the iconic battle. Such objects authenticated these narratives. Interestingly, Moienuddin notes that Wellesley ordered all Tipu's personal belongings to be returned to England to prevent them 'from being distributed as "sacred relics of Tipu Sultan the Martyr" lest they be used to mobilize the people against the expansionist policy of the British'.[39] In Britain, Tipu's possessions ensured that his legendary status endured: it was vital that he was seen as a powerful foe in order to maintain the significance of the British victory and justify an expansionist policy in India. At the level of individual objects, their return to Britain transformed them into relics of a different kind: moving from a Mysorean palace to British domestic settings, they embodied ancestral service to the expanding empire.

Such objects and the memory of Tipu remained significant throughout the nineteenth century, a phenomenon which prompted Isabella Heath to write her letter to Henry Fraser.[40] She was inspired by 'an article in a recent no. of "The World" on Mr Lowe' which referred to 'two of the few relics of Tipoo's time preserved at his house'. This refers to a 'through the keyhole' style article about the home of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Robert Lowe (1811–92), later Viscount Sherbrooke.[41] Articles such as this underline the interest in possessions, display and domesticity of the Victorian era.[42] Lowe's distant cousin, Sir John Sherbrooke (1764–1830), who rose to become Governor General of British North America in 1816, had earlier in his career led one of the battalions at Seringapatam. Throughout his life he retained 'the curved sword of Tippoo Sultaun, with its blade inlaid with mother-of-pearl; and his rhinoceros-horn drinking-cup, known as the "poison cup", a short, flat bottle, which he exclusively used to avert being poisoned. Also Tippoo's bridle, saddle, and holsters'.[43] These items evidently passed to Lowe, who, as a boy had referred to Sir

John as 'Uncle'.[44] Reading this description impelled Isabella Heath to put pen to paper and proclaim the 'genuine' history of the casket stamped upon its surface and assert her family's similarly distinguished global history.

The Fraser family and the casket: between Britain and India

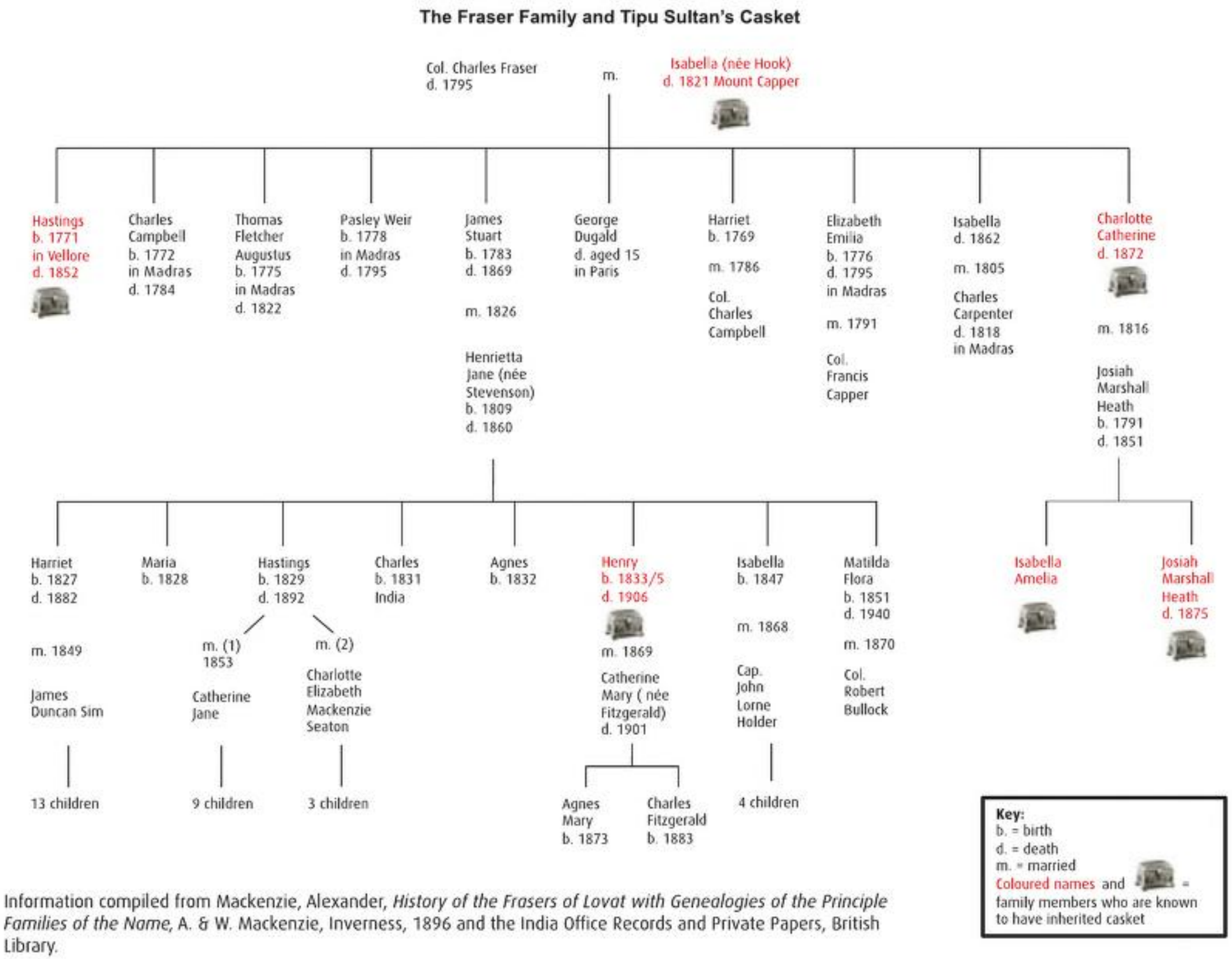
Colonel Henry Fraser donated the casket to the British Museum in 1904, and the references in the letters allow us to trace its journey from Seringapatam to the Museum via various members of the Fraser family. The history of the family is worth exploring in full as it reflects the complex nature of imperial families from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries (see Figure 1.2). The 'Uncle Fraser' to whom the first letter refers and who acquired the casket is General Hastings Fraser (1771–1852), mentioned by Major Alexander Allan in his account of the battle.[45] Fraser was one of 10 children of General Charles Fraser (c.1737–95) and Isabella Hook (1755–1821). The Frasers of Ardachy were members of the Scottish elite, descended from a branch of Clan Fraser of Lovat on Charles's father's side, while his mother was daughter of the ninth Earl of Argyll.[46] Charles Fraser had previously served in the Marines and joined the East India Company in 1762 taking his first post in Madras.[47] He returned on leave in 1768 when he and Hook married and they returned together to Madras the following year for 10 years residence in India, thereby establishing themselves as an expatriate family rather than the more typical individual male 'sojourners'.[48] Their eldest child, born in 1771 at Vellore, was named Hastings 'in acknowledgement of several acts of kindness rendered to the father by Warren Hastings', then member of the Council at Madras.[49] The future Governor General wrote to the parents thanking them for this honour, offering the gift of a shawl. The whole family moved back to Britain around 1779. Charles returned to India without his family, dying in 1795 as General of Division of the Company Army. His widow Isabella lived for a further 26 years, returning herself to India and dying at Mount Capper, Cuddalore, in 1821.[50]

Of their ten children, three died before reaching adulthood – one, Pasley Weir, drowning on the way to join his father as a cadet in India. Their eighth child, Elizabeth Fraser, aged only 15, married Colonel Francis Capper in 1791. Although Elizabeth died without issue in 1795 the families appear to have remained closely connected. Mount Capper in Cuddalore (just over 100 miles south of Madras) seems to have been

the centre of family activity. Evidence indicates that the villa was built by a member of the Capper family in 1798 and passed to Hastings Fraser in 1805.[51] The first letter suggests that Isabella Fraser moved into the house during her widowhood as she was resident there when Hastings presented the casket to her. The weddings of Charles and Isabella's ninth daughter, also named Isabella, to Charles Carpenter in 1805, and of their youngest daughter, Charlotte Catherine, to Josiah Marshall Heath in 1816 both took place at Mount Capper.[52]

We return now to the original acquirer of the casket, Hastings Fraser, who joined the army in 1788, serving in several campaigns in the East Indies, and rose to a high rank by the late 1790s. He was only 28 when he led his regiment against Tipu Sultan in 1799. He was nominated as one of the Prize Agents who were tasked with distributing the treasury of Tipu Sultan. The first letter records that of the items he himself received, he sent this 'silver coffer … from Tipoo's own room', a silk carpet and a string of coral beads (the 'chaplet') to his mother at Mount Capper. Later in his career, Hastings Fraser's fine leadership at the taking of the Island of Bourbon (Réunion Island) in 1810 was recognized by his own corps, who presented him with a valuable sword, and by the 'native' regiments, who gave him a silver plate. These were the first items mentioned in his will, in which Hastings Fraser bequeathed them to his brother James (see below) with instructions that they were to be passed on to his nephew and namesake.[53] He died unmarried in London in 1852, aged 83, after receiving several military offices.[54] It is clear, therefore, that objects associated with military victories held particular significance to the family.

Charles and Isabella Fraser's fifth son, James Stuart Fraser (1783–1869), who inherited the estate on Hastings's death, was also a distinguished East India Company officer, who at one stage was responsible for transporting the Princes of Mysore, the descendants of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, to Bengal in 1807. Rising to the position of British Resident at the Court of the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1839, he remained in India until 1853 after resigning the previous year due to a disagreement with the Marquis of Dalhousie over the Company policy of expansion into Berar. His marriage to Henrietta Stevenson (1809–60), daughter of another significant Company family, had also taken place at Cuddalore. Of their eight children, Hastings was the eldest son, named after his uncle. Their third son Henry (c.1833–1906) was the final family member to possess the casket before he gave it to the British Museum.[55] Their eldest child Harriet (1827–82) had 13 children – several of whom served in imperial territories. In maintaining and benefitting from a close connection to the Company over generations, the Fraser family mirrored the



Information compiled from Mackenzie, Alexander, *History of the Frasers of Lovat with Genealogies of the Principle Families of the Name*, A. & W. Mackenzie, Inverness, 1896 and the India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library.

Figure 1.2 Family tree of the Fraser family showing casket's passage between family members, designed by C. Sharp Jones.

experiences of other imperial families, such as the Melvill family (discussed in Section 5 of this volume).

Before the casket came into Henry Fraser's hands, the first letter indicates that Josiah and Charlotte Heath's son, also named Josiah Marshall Heath (1827–75), received it from his mother.[56] It was Josiah who felt it appropriate that Henry Fraser, his cousin, receive the casket, an act, we learn from the letter, undertaken by his sister Isabella Heath. This Isabella was the author of the second letter, which reveals the intriguing detail that Henry Fraser translated the Haider Ali inscription. As discussed earlier, this stamp is minute and would have required a magnifying glass and expertise in reading Persian script to decipher. We can then infer that the object was not only a 'family relic' with anecdotal history but also one which was subject to close scrutiny by its new owner, a source of fascination and perhaps pride, beyond being an exquisite piece of craftsmanship. Heath specifically noted the significance of the Haider Ali stamp. While clearly of eastern origin, its particular direct link to Tipu Sultan was not evident to the naked eye. This allowed the violence surrounding its acquisition to be silenced or disclosed at the will of the owners. While it is an undeniably aesthetically impressive artwork, Heath in this letter underlined the wider value of such items and their provenance, reinforcing its meaning to the next generation. Its enduring association with the celebrated Indian rulers and its particular passage between different family members – both male and female – suggest that it came to symbolise the family's lengthy connections with the empire in India.

Henry Fraser did not donate any other objects to the British Museum, and within the scope of this research, we have found no other references to donations to other institutions. We cannot therefore draw conclusions about his motivations. Within the longer history of the casket, however, certain elements stand out. This treasured possession was not simply passed down from one generation to another but presented specifically to relatives to whom it was deemed of interest or relevance – indicating that it had heightened importance.[57] Unlike a sword which might have automatically been passed between male relatives, this object was given first from son to mother, then mother to daughter, to her son, to his sister and finally to their male cousin. The enthusiasm by Lady Clive to acquire objects after Seringapatam suggests that collecting this material was taken up by men and women alike. The casket seems not to have acquired a specifically gendered meaning – a delicate and exquisite piece of craftsmanship designed to hold scented oils, it was also bound up with a narrative of battle, bloodshed and empire-building.[58]

The casket in the British Museum

Whilst it is not possible to determine how the casket was displayed or used by the Fraser family either in India or in Britain, we can explore aspects of the casket's history as a 'social' and 'exhibited' object in the British Museum. As already mentioned, it was donated to the Museum by Henry Fraser in 1904, and the register records that on 6 October 1904 Colonel Henry Fraser gave an 'attar khana, taken at siege of Seringapatam 1799, the native forces being under Tipoo Sultan, whose father's name (Hyder 'Ali) is on the silver funnel'.[59] Although brief, this record highlights that even when the casket was donated, its intended use, as a holder of perfumes and, most importantly, its historical connection to Tipu Sultan and his father, were intrinsic elements of its value to the Museum and possibly the reason for its donation. The casket was initially deposited in the collection of the British and Mediaeval Antiquities and Ethnography department and then transferred to the new Oriental Antiquities and Ethnography department in 1933. This department was renamed the Asia department in 2003.[60]

When put on display in 2002, the casket was housed in a cabinet containing Mughal-era objects in the Addis Gallery of Islamic Art as a fine example of South Asian artistry. As with other material goods taken from Tipu Sultan's palace on display in public collections around the country, the casket's accompanying label refers to its link to Tipu Sultan and the siege of Seringapatam.[61] In the limited word-count of museum labels, only one aspect of the casket's history can be highlighted. The brevity of the label veils the casket's position as a colonial 'prize' and its symbolism of the dynastic connections between the Fraser family and the East India Company. The familial connections that the Fraser family wove around the casket exposed in this essay offer perspectives on the 'colonial moment' in the lives of objects, elements of the continuing history and social life of the object from its creation to the modern day, which are rarely given space in museum labels.[62] The casket is soon to be moved from the British Museum's gallery devoted to Islamic art to a newly-curated case in the South Asia gallery exploring colonial India, a recontextualization which brings the object's connections to imperial expansion to the fore.

Conclusion: shifting meanings

Different aspects of the casket's history continue to be mobilized. In this paper we have traced the earlier relocations of the casket and discussed the changing and simultaneous meanings it held. To augment

the fragmentary evidence about the casket's history, we have located it within three contexts: its production and connection to the dynasty of Tipu Sultan, its role as one of spoils of Seringapatam, and its place within the Fraser family. While the casket's story fits within the broader pattern of South Asian material culture coming to Britain in the Company era and during Crown rule, we have revealed several remarkable elements about this particular object. In the first instance, the presence of the Haider Ali stamp gives a direct link to Tipu Sultan's palace, which other similar caskets do not have. As we have shown, however, the meaning of this stamp is not only of interest for asserting provenance. As Moienuddin states, all objects from Tipu's palace 'define very clearly the personality of Tipu and his tolerant religious perceptions and practices'.[63] The multiple interpretations of the stamp support this view of Tipu and his possessions.

The casket is notable in the dispersal of material from Seringapatam for its retention in India for several decades. The Frasers are significant in the late eighteenth century-history of the Company for establishing a family home in India. Characteristics such as large numbers of children, some of whom perished young, others who led transient lives between Britain and the subcontinent, and relocating for education, marriage and career prospects, would become more common throughout the nineteenth century. Perceptions of imperial service had shifted by the mid-nineteenth century when the casket came to Britain. Members of the Fraser family were evidently proud of their involvement in the early history of the Company, as made clear by the naming of one of their children as Hastings in 1829. This name not only honoured the boy's uncle but also recalled the family's connections to the late eighteenth-century grandees of the EIC. The casket was a material representation of such personal and political tributes. No longer did Indian material culture prompt accusations of 'nabobery', and therefore this object could unequivocally celebrate the long and distinguished history of the Frasers as early participants in the subjugation of the subcontinent and establishment of the empire.