

Antique Penwork Cabinet

£16,500

REF:- 166739

Height: 31.5 cm (12 1/2")

Width: 32 cm (12 1/2")

Depth: 18 cm (7")



Short Description

Intriguing and very rare Regency Penwork Cabinet. Decorated with various highly detailed scenes, the front of the cabinet open to reveal four drawers, each decorated with ancient characters and words. The scenes represent Indian culture - one of the front panels shows, we believe the Hindu goddess Kali. The top panel depicts Rath Yatra, the Chariot Festival celebrated by Hindus in which the three deities Jagannath, Balabhadra & Subhadra are carried on gigantic temple-like chariots by thousands of devotees..

However, the drawers tell a different story.

The characters and words decorated on them appear to be unrelated to the detailed scenes. The top two drawers show a combination of single Chinese (Kanji) words & characters which don't seem to form a sentence. The bottom two drawers show what we believe to be words written in Geez, an ancient language of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Possibly decorated to celebrate the owner's travels, or knowledge or different cultures, this cabinet is a rare mystery.

The following information is the opinion of a professional translator:

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The two top drawers show a combination of single Chinese characters with no coherent meaning. They are just single words and do not form full sentences or phrases.

The first drawer shows characters which are very difficult to read. The words 'stamp', 'also', 'no', and 'in' have been identified but with no apparent cohesion.

The second drawer includes the words 'light', 'sun', 'sky', 'water', 'wind', and 'shape'. The remaining words cannot be easily translated as they are written in ancient Chinese characters. The characters do not appear to form meaningful phrases or sentences.

The last two drawers are written in Geez (or Gitz), an ancient liturgical language of Ethiopia & Eritrea which is now extinct. A priest with some basic knowledge of the language was consulted and believes the writing to say something about 'safekeeping' and 'locked away' but is not certain of this.

This very rare penwork cabinet is the best penwork cabinet we have ever seen or had the pleasure of owning, the fine detailed penwork is almost photographic.

This fabulous rare penwork cabinet has a working lock and tasselled key.

Penwork, or Pen and Ink, was used on boxes to illustrate beautiful scenes and sometimes to record a visit to a foreign country or vacation. They can feature people, landscapes, birds, insects, plants, flowers, animals and some have prints of Greek mythology or of spa towns. These were all drawn very exact and beautifully finished with a shellac varnish. Some penwork would have been commissioned to professional artists, but the majority favoured a pastime of ladies (the ladies were often skilled in the technique as the professionals!) It's because of this that we see many different examples of Penwork.

More Information

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| Period | George III |
| Year | c. 1815 |
| Medium | Wood, Bone |
| Country | United Kingdom |