Finch & Co



AN INDIAN SILVER SPICE BOX SHAPED AS A FISH

AN INDIAN SILVER SPICE BOX SHAPED AS A FISH
WITH AN ARTICULATED BODY, HINGED MOUTH, FINS AND STONE SET EYES
LATE 19TH CENTURY
SIZE : 14.5 CM LONG – 5¾ INS LONG

LITERATURE

ORIGINALLY MADE IN HOLLAND AND GERMANY IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY THESE BOXES WERE MADE TO CONTAIN MYRTLE OR EUCALYPTUS LEAVES. IN JEWISH LORE IT IS CALLED A BESAMIN BOX AND IS USED DURING THE 'HAVDALAH' CEREMONY. THESE BOXES CAN BE SHAPED AS SUNFLOWERS, APPLES OR PEARS OR THEY CAN BE PLAIN, ENGRAVED WITH SERPENTS, MADE OF FILIGREE OR SHAPED AS ELABORATE TOWERS. THE SPICE TOWERS SEEM TO HAVE ORIGINATED AMONG THE ASHKENAZI OR NORTHERN EUROPEAN JEWS AND ECHO IN PART THE FORM OF THE CHRISTIAN MONSTRANCE.

ALTHOUGH THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FISH IS STRONG IN JUDAISM THESE BOXES WERE PROBABLY FIRST MADE AS NOVELTY CONTAINERS FOR SPICES OR AS SMALL ORNAMENTS AND HAVE REMAINED A POPULAR COLLECTORS CURIOSITY.