



Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture
& Travel Items

A Vizagapatam Sarcophagus Sewing Box

Sold



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REF: 82507

Height: 15.5 cm (6.1")

Width: 27 cm (10.6")

Depth: 19.5 cm (7.7")

Description

An exceptional quality ivory veneer on sandalwood Sewing or Work Box from Vizagapatam in India.

The decorative shape of the top imitates the shape of the leather sewing boxes which were popular in Georgian Britain. The box is further enhanced by the engraved floral borders which have been coloured black to contrast with the colour of the box. Although not marked, the gauntlet handles and lion paw feet are likely to be Indian silver.

The interior is fitted with various compartments to take spools of thread etc. Some contain dividers and some two have removable pots that may have been for needles or pins. All the compartments have lids decorated with geometric and floral engraving. The interior of the box's lid has a hinged compartment which probably once held a small mirror.

A good looking, decorative box which would of made a fine gift when first purchased. Circa: 1820.

Vizagapatam became a renowned centre for work such as this box. It was ideally placed with a good port and fine timbers available locally. Ivory and sandalwood from Southern India was also easily available. An English factory was established in 1668 and eventually the region was ceded to the East India Company. The work from the area enjoyed a good reputation and eventually grew to encompass a strong souvenir trade for the Europeans passing through. It is probable that this box was intended for that market. Amin Jaffer notes that James Johnson, an officer on HMS Caroline observed at Vizagapatam in the early 1800s that the 'natives, besides their cloths are very expert in their ivory works, imitating with some success the Chinese in making curious little boxes and work baskets of ivory and bone, which are brought home by the Europeans to take home as presents'.