

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, (2022-2023) Flintlock Sporting Gun of Tipu Sultan	
Statement from Expert Adviser	Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the gun meets Waverley criteria one and three. See below
Statement from the Applicant	Statement from the applicant referencing the three Waverley criteria against which the Committee will consider whether an item referred to it is of national importance. a) <i>Is it so closely connected with our history and national life that its departure would be a misfortune?</i> b) <i>Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?</i> c) <i>Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?</i> Applicant did not agree that the object met the criteria
Note of case hearing	See below
Press release	A press release was issued by the Secretary of State on 26 May 2023: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/export-bar-placed-on-rare-18th-century-gun-made-for-the-sultan-of-mysore
Recommended price	£2,000,000
1st Deferral period	25 September 2023
2nd Deferral period	n/a
Note of outcome	At the end of the initial deferral period we did receive an offer to acquire the gun but that offer was subsequently withdrawn. An export licence was therefore issued.

RCEWA – Flintlock Sporting Gun of Tipu Sultan

Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the gun meets Waverley criteria one and three.

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1. Brief Description of item(s)** Flintlock Sporting Gun of Tipu Sultan
Hardwood stock, carved, with silver mounts, steel barrel chiselled and inlaid with gold and silver
L: 138 cm. L barrel: 97.8 cm.
Made in Srirangapatnam (Seringapatam) by Asad Khan Muhammad, dated 1222 M./AD 1793-4

2. Context

Provenance: Made for Tipu Sultan; presented to Lord Cornwallis after the 1799 Siege of Seringapatam; by descent to the Earls of Pembroke; Robin Wigington Collection; Sotheby's, London, *The Tipu Sultan Sale*, 25 May 2005, lot 54; Bonhams, London, *Islamic and Indian Art: The Tipu Sultan Collection*, 21 April 2015.

Key literary and exhibition references: *The Indian Heritage. Court Life and Arts under Mughal Rule*, V&A Museum, London, 1982, cat. 464; Anne Buddle, *Tigers around the Throne. The Court of Tipu Sultan (1750-99)*, Zamana Gallery, London, 1990; Robin Wigington, *The Firearms of Tipu Sultan 1783-1799*, Hatfield, 1992, pp. 24-25, 67-73; Anne Buddle et al., *The Tiger and the Thistle. Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India 1760-1800*, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 22, 25, pl. 25; Susan Stronge, *Tipu's Tigers*, V&A Publishing 2009, pp. 38-39 and pl. 41.

3. Waverley criteria

- The gun meets Waverley criteria I and III:
- (I) It is very closely connected with the history of the British in India. As Governor-General of India and Commander-in-Chief, Lord Cornwallis led the British army against Tipu Sultan, forcing him to cede half his territory in 1792. Cornwallis returned to England, leaving his successors to defeat Tipu Sultan in 1799. The capitulation of the Mysore capital was a major victory over a formidable enemy who was the most significant force of resistance to British expansion in India. This gun, the most unusual and elaborate of all Tipu Sultan's firearms, was sent to Cornwallis in recognition of the importance of his earlier campaign.

(III) The gun is acknowledged to be the finest of those made for Tipu Sultan. The gold inscriptions include the name of the maker, the date and

place of manufacture, and Persian verses in praise of the gun and the ruler. It incorporates iconic elements of the 'tiger style' seen on all Tipu Sultan's personal possessions and has several unique details. The gun exemplifies the advanced firearms technology that was brought to Mysore by European craftsmen and copied by masters in the royal workshops.

DETAILED CASE

1. Detailed description of item(s) if more than in Executive summary, and any comments.

What does it depict?

What does it tell us about that period?

Who made it/painted it/wrote it?

No. of comparable items by the same artist already in the UK, in both public and private collections?

This gun was described by Robin Wigington, the late collector who published it in his pioneering 1992 study, as 'the finest and most interesting of Tipu's personal firearms'. One of the silver mounts has two tigers biting a double-headed eagle, the emblem of the previous Hindu rulers of Mysore who were deposed by Tipu Sultan's father Haidar Ali. Another depicts a tiger mauling a European, identifiable by his brimmed hat. Both represent the major enemies of Tipu Sultan's state, threatened both by local rulers and foreign forces.

Persian inscriptions inlaid in gold on the barrel give the place of manufacture, 'Patan', indicating the royal workshop in the capital Srirangapatan. They also name the maker, Asad Khan Muhammad, whose name is found on only one other firearm of Tipu Sultan (its present whereabouts are not known to me). As with all the court gunmakers who signed their work, his name indicates that he was a Muslim.

The year the gun was made is given according to the idiosyncratic 'Muhammadi' calendar instituted by Tipu Sultan. This dates from the birth of the Prophet Muhammad rather than from 622 AD as in the conventional Islamic calendar. Persian verses praise the gun and the ruler, characterising him as the Khosrau of his age, and implicitly presenting Tipu Sultan as the equal of the Mughal emperors who were eulogised in the same terms. This is in line with Tipu Sultan's official adoption of the Mughal royal title *padshah*, or 'emperor', in about 1786.

2. Detailed explanation of the outstanding significance of the item(s). Significance of figures associated with the item(s):

maker/client/owners?

Significance of subject-matter?

Significance of materials/process/usage?

Is/are the item(s) of local/regional/national importance?

Summary of related items in public/private ownership in the UK

Under Tipu Sultan, Mysore became the most politically and economically important kingdom in the Indian subcontinent in the late 18th century. The objects made in his court workshops have their own highly distinctive style, characterised by their embellishment with tiger motifs and stylised tiger stripes. The animal is a metaphor for the king in his capacity as an invincible fighter who triumphs over his enemies. This gun, the most elaborately decorated of all Tipu Sultan's surviving firearms, strongly emphasises this theme. It has several unique features, including the wooden stock carved in the round with a tiger, and minute chiselled steel crouching tigers forming the foresight on the barrel and thumb-piece of the sliding safety catch. It is also the only one to be decorated from lock to muzzle gun with silver tiger stripes.

The ruler strongly encouraged technological innovation in the firearms made for him and for his army. The flintlock mechanism of this gun was introduced to Mysore by European, probably French, artisans and demonstrates the ruler's desire to improve the capabilities of his army. Here, Asad Khan Muhammad's mastery of the technology is demonstrated by an additional mechanism that allowed the gun to be fired twice out of the same barrel without reloading.

The connection between Tipu Sultan and Lord Cornwallis resonated in Britain long after the conclusion of the third Anglo-Mysore War in 1792. To ensure that Tipu Sultan complied with the terms of the Treaty of Mysore under which the ruler had to cede almost half his territory to the British, Cornwallis insisted that two of Tipu Sultan's sons be handed over as hostages. The scene of the young boys being welcomed by Cornwallis to his encampment was painted by the artist Robert Home, an eye witness. The many written accounts of the encounter inspired other artists in Britain, and their work was reproduced in engravings that were widely disseminated. This reminder in British popular culture of the link between the two men may partly explain why such a strikingly 'Tipuesque' gun was chosen from the firearms in the royal armoury after the Siege of Seringapatam to present to Cornwallis.

Robin Wigington published 21 sporting guns, blunderbusses and musketoons in his 1992 monograph, many from his own collection and sold at auction after his death. Five were then in public UK collections: Powis Castle, the Royal Collection, and Royal Armouries. All have their own particular features, but none compare with this flintlock sporting gun in the range and exuberance of their ornamentation.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, note of case hearing on Wednesday 12 December 2018: *A Flintlock Sporting Gun of Tipu Sultan (Case 18, 2018-19)*

Application

1. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA) met on 12 December 2018 to consider an application to export a flintlock sporting gun of Tipu Sultan. The value shown on the export licence application was £2,000,000 which represented an estimated value. The expert adviser had objected to the export of the sporting gun under the first and third Waverley criteria on the grounds that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it was so closely connected with our history and national life and it was of outstanding significance for study a particular branch of art, learning or history.
2. All of the regular eight RCEWA members were present and were joined by two independent assessors, acting as temporary members of the Reviewing Committee.
3. The applicant confirmed that the value did not include VAT and that VAT would not be payable in the event of a UK sale. The applicant also confirmed that the owner understood the circumstances under which an export licence might be refused and that, if the decision on the licence was deferred, the owner would allow the sporting gun to be displayed for fundraising [TBC BY APPLICANT].

Expert's submission

4. The expert adviser had provided a written submission stating that the gun was acknowledged to be the finest of those made for Tipu Sultan. The gold inscriptions included the name of the maker, the date and place of manufacture, and Persian verses in praise of the gun and the ruler. It incorporated iconic elements of the 'tiger style' seen on all Tipu Sultan's personal possessions and had several unique details. The gun exemplified the advanced firearms technology that was brought to Mysore by European craftsmen and copied by masters in the royal workshops.
5. Under Tipu Sultan, Mysore became the most politically and economically important kingdom in the Indian subcontinent in the late 18th century. The objects made in his court workshops have their own highly distinctive style, characterised by their embellishment with tiger motifs and stylised tiger stripes. The animal is a metaphor for the king in his capacity as an invincible fighter who triumphs over his enemies. This gun, the most elaborately decorated of all Tipu Sultan's surviving firearms, strongly emphasised this theme. It had several unique features, including the wooden stock carved in the round with a tiger, and minute chiselled steel crouching tigers forming the

foresight on the barrel and thumb-piece of the sliding safety catch. It was also the only one to be decorated from lock to muzzle gun with silver tiger stripes.

6. The connection between Tipu Sultan and Lord Cornwallis resonated in Britain long after the conclusion of the third Anglo-Mysore War in 1792. To ensure that Tipu Sultan complied with the terms of the Treaty of Mysore under which the ruler had to cede almost half his territory to the British, Cornwallis insisted that two of Tipu Sultan's sons be handed over as hostages. The scene of the young boys being welcomed by Cornwallis to his encampment was painted by the artist Robert Home, an eye witness. The many written accounts of the encounter inspired other artists in Britain, and their work was reproduced in engravings that were widely disseminated. This reminder in British popular culture of the link between the two men may partly explain why such a strikingly 'Tipuesque' gun was chosen from the firearms in the royal armoury after the Siege of Seringapatam to present to Cornwallis.

Applicant's submission

7. The applicant had stated in a written submission that they did not consider that the sporting gun met any of the three Waverley criteria. They observed that it may have historical value which was common to any nation that sympathised with the rule of Tipu Sultan. It was not made or used by the British but merely acquired by them.

Discussion by the Committee

8. The expert adviser and applicant retired and the Committee discussed the case. The sporting gun was found to be a beautifully balanced, delicately wrought weapon displaying fascinating iconography. The Committee considered the high quality of the weapon, noting the sophistication of Mysore's deeply entrenched steel industry. Although the pattern of the flintlock was French, the manufacture of the steel was Mysorean and representative of the technological innovation of the kingdom under Tipu Sultan.

9. The Committee considered the sporting gun's connection to Lord Cornwallis, a significant public figure present in India, Ireland and America in the 18th century, and the circumstances of the gun's creation. It was widely agreed that, as the only known work by the gun's creator, Asad Khan Muhammad, there was significant scope for research into the origins of the weapon. Furthermore, considering the gun's connection to the conclusion of the third Anglo-Mysore War and Robert Home's 1793 painting depicting the event, there was great opportunity for research into the practice of gift giving and the circumstances in which the gun was presented to Cornwallis after the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan in 1799, which ended the Fourth Mysore War.

Waverley Criteria

10. The Committee voted on whether the sporting gun met the Waverley

criteria. Of the 10 members, three voted that it met the first Waverley criterion. Nine members voted that it met the second Waverley criterion. Nine members voted that it met the third Waverley criterion. The sporting gun was therefore found to meet the second and third Waverley criteria for its outstanding significance to the study of Tipu Sultan and his court, Lord Cornwallis, the conclusion of the third Anglo-Mysorean war and the practice of gift giving.

Matching offer

11. The Committee carefully considered the information that had been provided. However, they were not content that the estimated value was adequately substantiated. Therefore, the Committee recommended that the Secretary of State obtain an independent valuation for the sporting gun.

Communication of findings

12. The expert adviser and the applicant returned. The Chairman notified them of the Committee's decision on its recommendations to the Secretary of State.

13. The expert adviser agreed to act as champion if a decision on the licence was deferred by the Secretary of State.

Subsequent developments

14. The Secretary of State agreed with the Committee's recommendation that the gun satisfied the second and third Waverley criteria and that an independent valuation should be obtained; however, the application was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant.

15. In 2022, the applicant applied again for an export licence. The details on the licence including the value were the same as on the previous licence and given the time that had elapsed since the previous decision the Committee unanimously reconfirmed its recommendation from that time without holding another hearing.

16. The Secretary of State agreed the Committee's recommendation to obtain an independent valuation. The process of establishing an independent valuation, which was agreed with the applicant beforehand, was that set out in paragraph 54 of the 2021 Issue 2 Arts Council's [Guidance for exporters](#) and in this case proceeded as follows:

- (i) The Secretary of State appointed Brendan Lynch as an independent valuer suitably qualified to advise on the gun. The owner was informed of his identity and the letter of instruction to him was agreed beforehand with the applicant.
- (ii) Brendan Lynch agreed with the applicant's valuation of £2,000,000. This was shared with the owner and submitted to the Secretary of State who agreed that as the fair market price for the gun.

- (iii) Having regard to this the Committee agreed to recommend to the Secretary of State that the decision on the export licence should be deferred for an initial period of four months to allow an offer to purchase to be made at the fair matching price of £2,000,000. At the end of the first deferral period the owner would have a consideration period of 15 Business Days to consider any offer(s) to purchase the gun at the recommended price of £2,000,000. The second deferral period will commence following the signing of an Option Agreement and will last for four months.