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## Indo-portuguese Pearl Bowl With English Silver Mount Gujarat 16th/17th Ce



22 500 EUR

Period : 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Nacre

Description
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A silver mounted Indo-Portuguese mother of pearl bowl.

The bowl is from Gujarat and dates to the 16th / 17th century, the silver mounts of English manufacture and dating to the first half of the 17th century.

The deep bowl of a round form with thick pieces of mother of pearl forming the body and secured by a silver rim engraved with dog's tooth decoration. The centre of the bowl is set with a circular piece of mother of pearl. The base of the bowl is mounted with a silver foot with further dogs tooth decoration where the foot meets the bowl and repoussé egg and dart decoration to the edge of the foot. There is an indistinguishable

Dealer
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mark to the underside of the silver foot.

The bowl measures 12 x 7.2cm.

Mother of pearl came from *Turbo marmoratus*, a marine snail from the West Pacific. The goods were often made in India, their mounts being added when they arrived in Europe.

Gujarati dishes of this design are known to have been imported to Europe from as early as the second quarter of the 16th century, a documented example can be found in the Green Vaults in Dresden which bears Nuremberg silver mounts datable to c.1530-40.

The commissioning of Gujarati mother-of-pearl wares is particularly associated with the Portuguese in India. It is probable, however, that such novelties were brought to Britain by merchants in the 16th and 17th centuries, both as high-value presents and as luxury imports. Gujarati pieces were also being imported from other European centres, such as Paris, where the Scotsman John Clerk of Penicuik is recorded buying plates and dishes of mother of pearl in the 1640's. Mother of pearl articles are listed in 16th century English royal inventories, although it is difficult to know whether such pieces were of Indian manufacture and if so, how they arrived in the country. The courts of Francis I of France (r.1515-1547) and Henry VIII of England demonstrated a passion for goods from 'the Indies', and mother-of-pearl objects featured frequently in New Year gift exchanges, for instance, a mother of pearl fountain and basin set with precious stones is listed in the contents of the Tudor Jewel House in 1550. In 1534 Thomas Cromwell presented Henry VIII (r.1509-47) with a mother of pearl ewer set in gold as a New Year's present, while in 1585 Lord Burghley gave Queen Elizabeth I (r.1558-1603) a ewer and basin of mother of pearl richly mounted in gold. A Gujarati lobed mother of pearl bowl was by

repute given to Mary, Queen of Scots (r.1543 - 1567), it can be found in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Accession no.EA1998.1.

In the early 16th century mother-of-pearl was unusual outside court circles. By the mid-17th century, however, it had become a regular item of trade from East Asia and was more common down the social scale. Mother of pearl was favoured for display ewers and basins, but also for accessories such as caskets, spoons and sweetmeat boxes.

For a discussion on these garnitures of Gujarati mother of pearl articles, see Amin Jaffer, *Luxury Goods From India: the art of the Indian Cabinet-Maker*, London : V&A, 2002, pp.38-43.

The Victoria and Albert Museum has a Gujarati, mother of pearl bowl and casket with similar English silver mounts in their collection, accession numbers: M.17-1968 & M.245-1924. Also an alabaster casket with similarly decorated mounts (24-1865) and a nautilus cup with a similarly decorated foot (M.51-1972). Another bowl but with different English silver mounts can be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection: LOAN:GILBERT.993-2008. Comparisons can also be made with the decoration on the silver gilt mounts of a pair of rock crystal candlesticks in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Accession Number: 1946-24-1a,b.