



Japanese kozuka (small blade handle) POA

Japanese kozuka (small blade handle), inlaid with three galloping kirin in gilt relief, against a dark 'nanako' ground.

Condition: Good

Notes: Kirin are a Japanese variant of the Chinese mythical creature 'qilin', a hooved chimerical beast with antlers and mane, said to appear at the arrival or departure of a great ruler. In Japan they were revered as protective creatures and also known as the guardian of metal; an appropriate choice, therefore, for the decoration of the handle of a blade slotted into the fittings of a larger katana sword. A kozuka (??, literally 'small handle') is a decorative handle fitting for 'kogatana', a small knife stored inside the 'kozuka hitsu', part of the sheath of a Japanese sword. Many traditional Japanese swords have two holes in their handguard (tsuba) in which to store a kozuka and a 'kougai', a long skewer used by samurai to arrange their hair. Having a small, easily accessible weapon would be advantageous in certain situations where the large blade could not be drawn, and there is evidence that these small knives were also used for more everyday tasks. They are frequently decorated with 'shubuichi', a type of copper silver alloy which can be patinated to result in a variety of different colours. Another common technique in the decoration of kozuka is 'nanako-uchi' (????, literally 'fish-roe engraving'), in which a round chisel is used to produce a fine background pattern of small rings. The technique was transmitted to Japan through Chinese metalwork during the Nara period and features in both metalwork and lacquer design.

Material and Technique	Kozuka (small blade handle)
Origin	Japanese
Condition	Excellent
Dimensions	Length: 9.6cm. (3 3/4in.)

Antique ref: N732