



A Ceylonese silver and brass presentation easel dedicated to The Honourable John Penry Lewis from senior village chiefs of the Central Province c.1910.

£7,500.00

A large, fine Ceylonese silver and brass presentation easel dedicated to The Honourable John Penry Lewis from senior village chiefs of the Central Province c.1910.

This beautiful object comprises a large ornate frame around a central tablet which is inscribed in Ceylonese and English. The frame is lusciously decorated with a border of intricate foliage ornamentation which includes mythical creatures along the base. The top is similarly decorated with three large representations of creatures from the legends of Ceylon.

At the apex we see the face of a lion, a representation of the Simha a symbol of mythical ancestry, power, majesty and dignity (called the kibihi-muna or lion face). From its mouth two dragon like creatures emerge in opposite directions, these represent the Makara a crocodile sea monster found in both Hindu and Buddhist art and mythology. The frame descends in a curve from this point, decorated with a frieze of stylised birds and terminating at the mouth of two more fully depicted Makara with ornamental bodies. The Makara on the left, as facing, has a roundel of the sun while that on the right has the moon.

The kibihi-muna and makara are often combined to form an ornamental arch, as here. The kibihi-muna acts as the keystone and is flanked by two makara which face each other. This arrangement is seen on carvings in temple as well as on ivory and silver articles.

The back is made from brass and is again intricately engraved with Makara in the same position as the front with two entwined birds at the apex above two human figures that appear to be dancing. The whole is surrounded with lush foliage with two confronted elephants at the base and a stylised pair of columns emphasising the silver struts of the easel.

The recipient of this splendid gift, The Hon. John Penry Lewis (1854-1923) was a civil servant who joined the Ceylon service in 1877 becoming the Government Agent of the Northern Province and then the Central Province before retiring in 1910 and returning to the United Kingdom. Lewis was a student of Ceylonese culture, art and archaeology and produced several articles and books most notably 'List of Inscriptions on tombstones and monuments of Ceylon, of historical or local interest, with an obituary of persons uncommemorated' published in 1913.

The language used in the inscription would indicate that Lewis was an able administrator as well as someone with a keen sense of responsibility and regard for the indigenous population. The use of mythological creatures resonant with Ceylonese history and legend as well as more tangible creatures that represent the island was a suitable gift to an individual who valued its history.

Measurements:

Height: 49 cms,

Width: 36 cms max

Origin	Asian
Period	Early 1900s
Condition	Excellent
Dimensions	Height: 49 cms, Width: 36 cms max

Antique ref: JC-CEYL-07235