



**Set of six Japanese gilt-steel knives and forks with kozuka handles, circa 1880
POA**

Set of six Japanese gilt-steel knives and forks with kozuka handles, circa 1880, the kozuka handles with gilt and engraved low relief decoration in shibuichi (copper silver alloy) with various motifs including birds perching upon blossoming boughs of prunus, sprays of camellia, a flock of birds in flight, a cockerel underneath bamboo, a crustacean amongst waterweeds, figurative scenes, marigolds, an old man looking up at the moon, waterfowl and three boys amongst autumn foliage.

Notes:

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 'shibuichi', a type of copper silver alloy which can be patinated to result in a variety of different colours.

Material and Technique	Gilt-steel knives and forks with kozuka
Origin	Japanese
Period	19th Century
Dimensions	Average length of one knife: 21cm. (8 ¼ in.)



Antique ref: U957