



Japanese iron sukashi tsuba (sword guard with openwork detail) POA

Japanese iron sukashi tsuba (sword guard with openwork detail), of circular 'marugata' form, carved and pierced with an asymmetrical openwork pattern of autumn leaves (momiji) around one central aperture.

Condition: Slight pitting

Notes: The tsuba is a protective guard fitted between the hilt and blade of a Japanese katana. Originally they were simple iron disks, sometimes decorated by piercing or hammering in low relief. Later sword guards often incorporated copper alloys, or various decorative techniques including gold, inlaid enamels and intricate pierced openwork, as seen here. Designs featuring seasonal imagery, traditional motifs and well-known scenes from tales such as the Ise Monogatari were popular. The rather abstract design on this tsuba includes several pointed star-shaped 'momiji' (maple leaves), prized in Japan for their flaming red colour during the Autumn months and much depicted on ceramics, lacquerware and even, as seen here, metalwork. Like other animals and plants typically associated with a particular time of year, momiji represent the changing of the seasons, harmony with nature and the beauty of impermanence (mono no aware).

Material and Technique	Iron with openwork detail decoration
Origin	Japanese
Diameter	7cm. (2 5/8in.)

Antique ref: R753