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Plaque, brass, Jaipur, late-19th century, 42 x 32.5 cm
Albert Hall, Jaipur, Acc No 2128
The scene engraved is executed with repoussé and depicts a tale from the *Ramayana*—the burning of Lanka by Hanuman with his tail, making the demons of the city flee in terror. The plaque was crafted by Raghunath, the 19th-century artist of Jaipur. It is based on a 16th-century painting by Basawan and Miskin, which was commissioned by Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605).



Above
Ornamental plate, metal, Jodhpur, 19th century, 36 cm (D)
Sardar Museum, Jodhpur, Acc No 29/161
The plate is ornamented profusely with colourful geometric designs that are intricately carved.



Choga (and detail), long coat, velvet, Bikaner, early-20th century, 132 cm (L) Ganga Museum, Bikaner, Acc No 582 BM Embroidered with kalabattu, metallic thread, this upper-body garment was worn by men as part of formal clothing, in court or on important occasions, in the 19th and early-20th centuries. The choga was often patterned on a loom or embellished with rich embroidery to give it the regal look. Detail shows intricate embroidery of tiny leaf motifs arranged between diagonal stripes and flowers, set beside the form of a paan, betel leaf.

Like in Mewar, historians in Marwar were responsible for setting up the Sardar Museum in Jodhpur in 1914. It has a rich collection of antiquities, like sculptures, coins, inscriptions, specimens of local arts and crafts, and educational apparatus. Pandit Bisheshwar Nath Reu, the historian who curated the museum, published the *Annual Report on the Administration of Archaeological Department and Sumer Public Library, Jodhpur* in 1924, which continued until he retired in 1948. He also produced a series of booklets on illustrated manuscripts of paintings done in Jodhpur style that were executed mostly in the reign of Maharaja Man Singh (r. 1803–1843).

Marwar's neighbouring state of Bikaner, ruled by the Rathores, invited an Italian scholar, Dr Luigi Pio Tessitori, to conduct a survey of historical



and bardic material in 1916. He discovered and collected very rich antiquarian remains and also noticed the proto-historic importance of northern Rajasthan—Ganganagar and Bikaner regions—which subsequently led to the discovery of Kalibangan, a metropolitan town of Indus Valley civilisation. He salvaged terracotta of the Gupta period (4th–5th century AD) from the mounds of Rangamahar, Badopal, Pir Sultan Ri Theri and Munda, which now adorn the Government Museum in Bikaner.

The unparalleled heritage of Hadauti region, which comprises Bundi, Kota and Jhalawar, was housed in the region's first museum established in 1915 at Jhalawar near the palace, under the patronage of Maharaja Bhawani Singh (1899–1929), whose great interest in both, visual as well as performing arts, was well known. Gopal Lal Vyas, the state pundit, chief scholar, was authorised to conduct surveys and collect objects of antiquarian interest like epigraphs and sculptures, in addition to illustrated manuscripts and miniature paintings, which formed the nucleus of the museum.

Nearly two decades later, in February 1936, the History Department of the erstwhile princely state of Kota invited Dr A S Altekar, the eminent professor from Benaras Hindu University, to conduct an archaeological survey. He was assisted by the state historian, Dr Mathura Lal Sharma. The outcome was the discovery of a number of important historical sites with monumental remains of forts, and temples studded with old

Gold muhar, Kalima type, issued by Akbar, Lahore, 16th century, 12 gm Ganga Museum, Bikaner, Acc No 27 BM

The coin was issued by Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), minted in Lahore and acquired by the museum from the Bada Karkhana in Bikaner.

Obverse: Name of the four caliphs—Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali—in the four corners and the kalima, pious wish, in the centre.

Reverse: Name, Mint and Hijri year: "Khalid Allah Talah Mulkah Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar Badshah Ghazi Zarb Urdu Zafar Qrin, Lahore, AH 988" (AD 1580).

RAJPUTANA MUSEUM AJMER



Rajputana Museum owes its rich collection to the generous contributions of antiquarian objects by the royalty, nobility and local chieftains. The region's archaeological findings added on later, enhanced the collection further.

Stone sculptures and icons of Shaiva, Vaishnava and Jain traditions are among the most valuable treasures of this museum. Architectural fragments, stone inscriptions, excavated copper plates, coins and objects belonging to Harappan culture are also priceless antiquarian resources found here.

The historical Ajmer Fort, where the museum is housed, was constructed by Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) in honour of Khwaja Moin-ud-Din Chisti, the famous Sufi saint. It was in this fort that Sir Thomas Roe presented his credentials to Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1628), marking the birth of British presence in India.

The British administration in early 20th century directed the establishment of a provincial museum of Rajputana. The planning fell upon Sir John Marshall, Director General of Archaeology in India, who prepared the necessary proposals for setting up a museum in Ajmer. Eventually, it was inaugurated by Sir Elliot Colvin, agent to the governor general in Rajputana, on 19 October 1908.

The efforts of many individuals resulted in putting together the collection. Most notable of these experts was Dr Gauri Shankar Hira Chand Ojha, the museum's founder–curator, who continued in that capacity until 1936. He was a historian, linguist and scholar of Sanskrit, with a deep interest in Indology. He had also trained under Kaviraja Shyamaldas, a renowned scholar and historian of Mewar region. Dr Ojha travelled extensively to collect artefacts for the museum and succeeded in collecting many precious objects. Sir Alexander Cunningham, A C L Carlleyle, Dr D R Bhandarkar and R D Banerjee—archaeologists at Archaeological Survey of India—also made significant contributions towards building the collection. Dr Ojha was succeeded by U C Bhattacharya, who remained the curator until 1961. He too surveyed the region extensively and collected objects of antiquarian interest.

Many prominent acquisitions augmented the museum's collection: the Sunga–Kushana terracotta unearthed from excavations by Dr D R Bhandarkar during 1915–1916 at Nagari, the ancient Madhyamika city, in Chittaur region; the big hoard of Kshatrap coins discovered from Sarvania, ancient Banswara; the unique and rare inscribed stone slabs; and icons from the site Adhai-din-ka-Jhonpra in Ajmer. Specimens of textiles, arms and local crafts were added later.

After the integration of Ajmer-Merwara into the newly created state of Rajasthan in November 1956, the museum became a part of Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Rajasthan.