

The British  
Museum

Object in focus

# Echoes of empire Tipu Sultan's ring

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16 August 2024

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# Echoes Of Empire: Tipu Sultan's Ring

It is the 4th May of 1799. Chaos reigns in Srirangapatna, the capital of Mysore (in present-day South India). The ruler, Tipu Sultan (r. 1782–1799), lies dead on the battlefield while the soldiers of the British East India Company loot his palace. Among the spoils, a ring vanishes from Tipu's finger.

For decades, the Company had attempted to defeat Tipu, globally famous as the *Tiger of Mysore*. Their ultimate victory brought not only territorial expansion of British domains in India but also a bounty worth millions. This ring, part of the royal treasury, ended up in the hands of Arthur Henry Cole (British Resident in Mysore from 1812) who brought the ring with him to Northern Ireland.

Now, almost 200 years later, the ring demands attention.

What would have happened to her if Tipu had won the war?

What if Tipu had lost against a local ruler? Would she have survived?

We invite you to partake in the ring's daydream: listen to her voice from the past, ponder over how her story might have unfolded in changed circumstances.



# DISPLAY AND DESIGN



The exhibition blends digital interpretation with the element of surprise and fantasy. Visitors first see the introduction panel and will discover the ring behind. Encountering the ring, they will ‘hear’ its voice through a sound installation. Moving along the left alley, the visitor will then learn more about the ring’s journey from the Battle of Srirangapatna in Mysore to the British Museum in London. Exiting, they’re naturally drawn to revisit the ring. A **digital interaction game** near the exit connects back to the center- piece.



The cushion will float and spin slowly using the magnetic levitation technology.



The label panel has enough space to add tactile and sensory display.





## **Ring said to have belonged to Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore, India (r. 1782–1799)**

This ring came to the British Museum in 1997 with an accompanying note stating that it was “taken from the finger of Tipu Sultan” after his death at the Battle of Srirangapatna (1799).

It was taken to Northern Ireland by Resident of Mysore Arthur Henry Cole. The ring remained with the family until its donation to the Museum.

Ring

Gold and chrysoberyl

18th century, Srirangapatna, India



This display highlights the possibility of an alternate life for the object in focus. Through the relatable medium of storytelling, we aim to stress upon the multiplicity of historical narratives, aptly exemplified by the personality and life of its wearer, Tipu Sultan.

Pick a booklet from the box to see an alternative story of Tipu's ring.

*I am Tipu Sultan's ring.*

*You might miss me if you are not really looking.*

*But if you care to listen, you will know that I once adorned the fingers of a king.*

*A king that is remembered and revered even today.*

*I will share stories of his defiance and courage in fighting the armies of the East India Company, and of his death in battle.*

*I will tell you of my journey from Srirangapatna to London, changing many hands and many boxes, to arrive at the British Museum with a mysterious note.*

*I am Tipu Sultan's ring.*

*As you walk across this hall admiring bigger and brighter things, take a moment out for me. I have much to tell.*



# What if Tipu...?

## An interactive display

This display highlights the possibility of an alternate life for the object in focus. Through the relatable medium of storytelling, we aim to stress upon the multiplicity of historical narratives, aptly exemplified by the personality and life of it's wearer, Tipu Sultan.

We invite the visitors to select and explore the alternative stories might have happened to Tipu's ring. The audience are also encouraged to create their original stories for the ring and share them with us on social media.



Tipu Sultan wins the battle of Srirangapatna in 1799. From the royal treasury, I hear the sounds of celebration!



Tipu's rival, Asaf Jah II, wins the battle of Srirangapatna in 1799. I am taken out of the royal treasury among plunder and chaos.



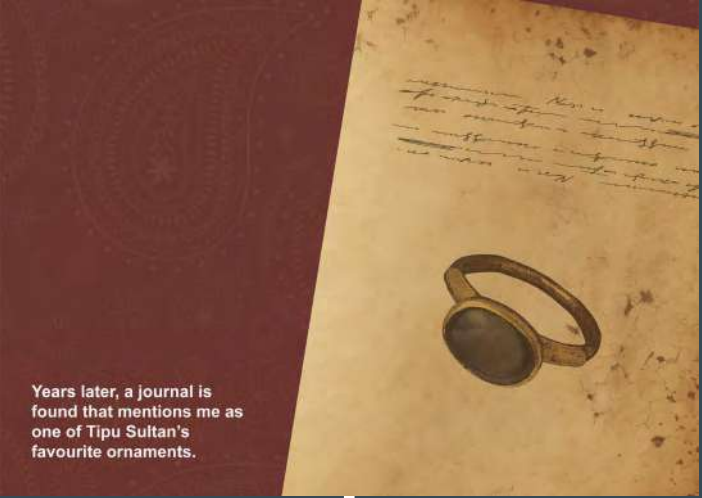
I stay safe with Tipu Sultan's family who continue to rule Mysore.



I am melted and become something else - perhaps a weapon? Or a tool?



I am donated to the National Museum of India in 1947, when the country became an independent republic.



Years later, a journal is found that mentions me as one of Tipu Sultan's favourite ornaments.



Tipu Sultan's Treasures

I am on display in the National Museum today. Come see me!



Today, I survive only in one's memory and imagination.



# What if Tipu...?

Tap an icon below to explore the alternative stories of Tipu Sultan's ring.







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I stay safe with Tipu Sultan's family who continue to rule Mysore.





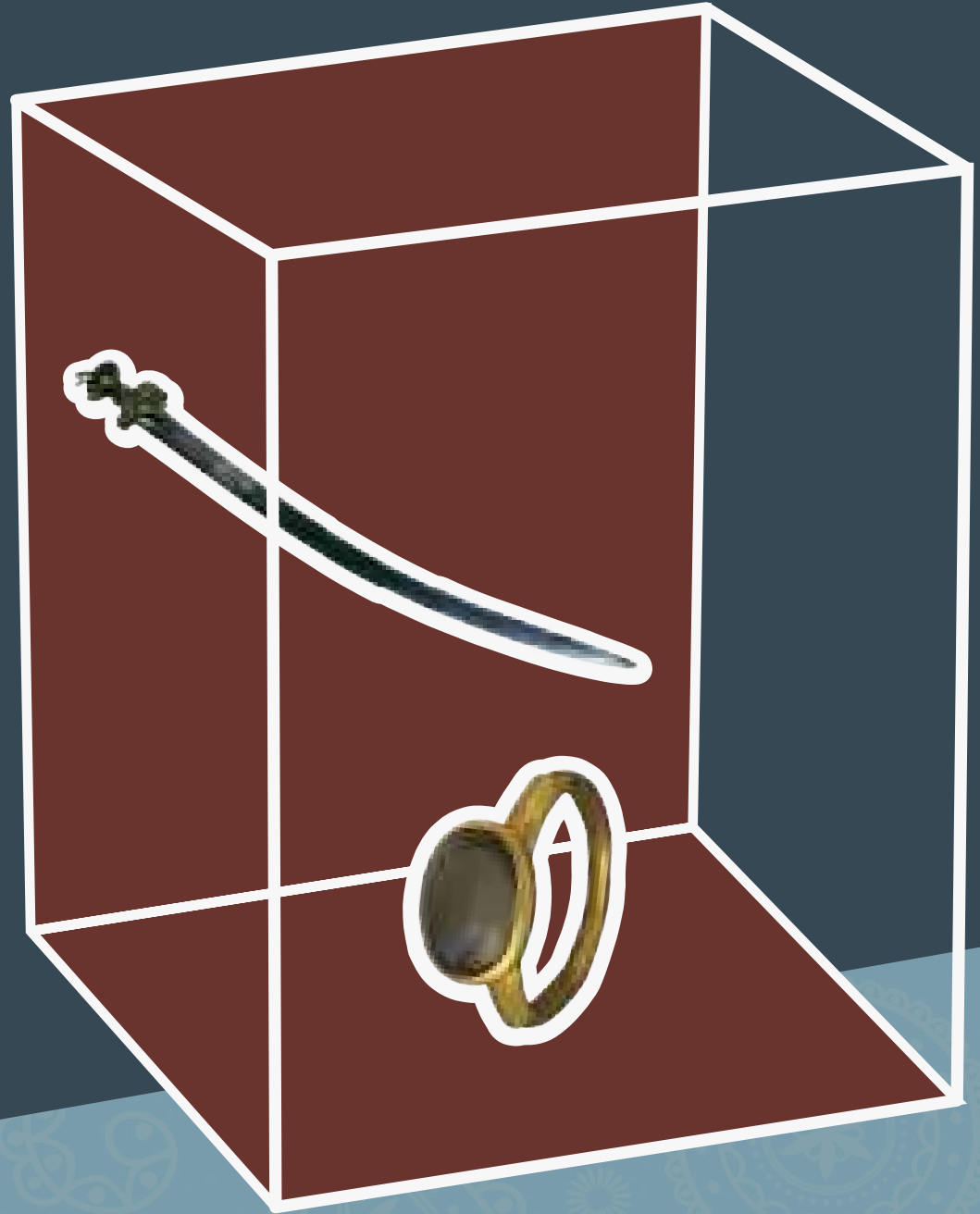


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# #WhatIfTipu

What if Tipu Sultan won the battles, formed new alliances, or took a different path? What would happen to his ring?

Join our **#WhatIfTipu** campaign on all social media platforms. Imagine and share alternate stories for Tipu Sultan's life and his ring. Share your creative scenarios and explore with us!



...four wars, Tipu's capital fell to the British  
1799, and he was killed defending his palace. Many  
of his belongings were seized as trophies. Tiger imagery  
adorned many of his possessions and he was popularly  
known as the 'Tiger of Mysore'.

- 1700s, Srirangapatna, South India
1. Silver casket containing bottles, funnel and ladle, 1904,1006.1.a-i, donated by Col. H Fraser
  2. Gold ring, 1997,0502.1, donated by N.H. Cole, Dowager Countess of Enniskillen
  3. Sword, 1878,1101.450, donated by Lt-Gen. A.W.H. Meyrick

