



Thandatti and pampadam gold brooches.

H. 3,5 cm - W. 3,8 cm

Gold (18/20k) ; Total weight: 57,52 gr

Tamil Nadu, South India, early 20th century

Shaped like a curved spring, the circular earring, known as 'thandatti', is made of meshed wires. The locking screw is a round blob with a squarish studd. The 'pampadam' earring comprise hollow balls and squares. The various pieces are soldered together to form an abstract arrangement.

Thandatti are worn exclusively by Vellala Nadar class women in Madurai area while Kondayan Kottai Maravar women wear both thandatti and pampadam earrings. They are both designed in geometric shapes over a lac filling, which makes them lighter to wear. From childhood, women are made to wear rings in their ears, which are gradually added on to increase the length of their earlobes. This is an ancient practice that carries on amongst village folk. Traditionally, it was a sign of nobility and respectability among men and women of high caste to wear earrings on elongated earlobes. This practice now, however, is disappearing. Today in Southeast Asia, some tribal societies wear similar earrings.

Converted in a brooch by MAISON AUCLERT, Paris.

Literature

For similar earrings see the Roots Museum, Singapore, acc.number 1998-00554