

# *Copper Alloy Dagger Pair Ba Culture, Ancient China*



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*Priceless Past*

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## CONDITION REPORT



fig. 1

This is a pair of copper alloy daggers from the ancient Ba culture. They date to the Warring States period (475-221 BC) or earlier.

The Ba people are thought to have inhabited the vast area which today encompasses southern Shaanxi, Hubei and eastern Sichuan provinces and Chongqing Municipality. Depending on sources, the Ba are thought to have existed as a unique culture from as early as the 16th century BCE but many sources place the culture from the Spring and Autumn period (770 BC) to the end of the Warring States period (221 BC).

The Ba people were famous for their bravery and their reputation for being great warriors but the Ba people were also very mysterious. The Ba culture has remained an enigma, mainly because of a lack of related archaeological evidence and the fact that they left no written record of their culture. Their only form of writing was in a panoply of unique designs. Some were stylized depictions of animals, such as the famous Ba tigers, while others were interesting geometric designs.

The History of the Eastern Han depicts the totems and origins of the Ba people and their first king Lin Jun. Many historians regard it as an important source for solving Ba mysteries. The book says, "After Lin Jun died, his soul turned into a white tiger. The later Ba generations watered it with human blood and offered human bodies as sacrifices for it." This gives written evidence that the ancient Ba people took the white tiger as their totem and thought it to be their ancestors. In the minds of the ancient Ba people, the white tiger was the same as their ancestors and that's why the custom of offering sacrificial humans to the tiger was handed down. The Tiger was worshipped as the god of fighting and killing and oversaw the weapons and wars of mankind. After the Han unification, the Ba Tiger continued to be a central cultural icon.

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The first dagger is the largest measuring almost 30 cm while the second, smaller dagger is approximately 26.5 cm. The larger dagger has one of the Ba's mysterious geometric designs molded or carved into both sides of the blade. There is a repair to the tip of this dagger. The smaller dagger has what appears to be a depiction of the famous Ba tiger on both sides of the blade. It has a repair to the handle and a break to the tip that is repaired.

These daggers were purchased as a pair from the collection of the late John F. Piscopo. Dagger #1 (left image on figs. 1 and 2) was originally tagged as lot #4134a. Dagger #2 (right image on figs. 1 and 2) was originally tagged as lot #4001. Original images from the estate agent are visible on page 3, fig. 3 and page 6, fig. 8 respectively.

Dagger #1 weighs 147 grams. The average thickness along the centerline 4.5 mm.

Dagger #2 weighs 167 grams. The average thickness along the centerline is 8 mm.



# Ba Dagger #1 - Photographs

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The images to the left (figs. 2a and 2b) are closeup photographs of the geometric design that appears to be carved in to the surface on both sides of dagger #1.

The image below is an image of the same specimen as advertised in the estate files of Mr. Piscopo.



# Ba Dagger #1- Micrographs

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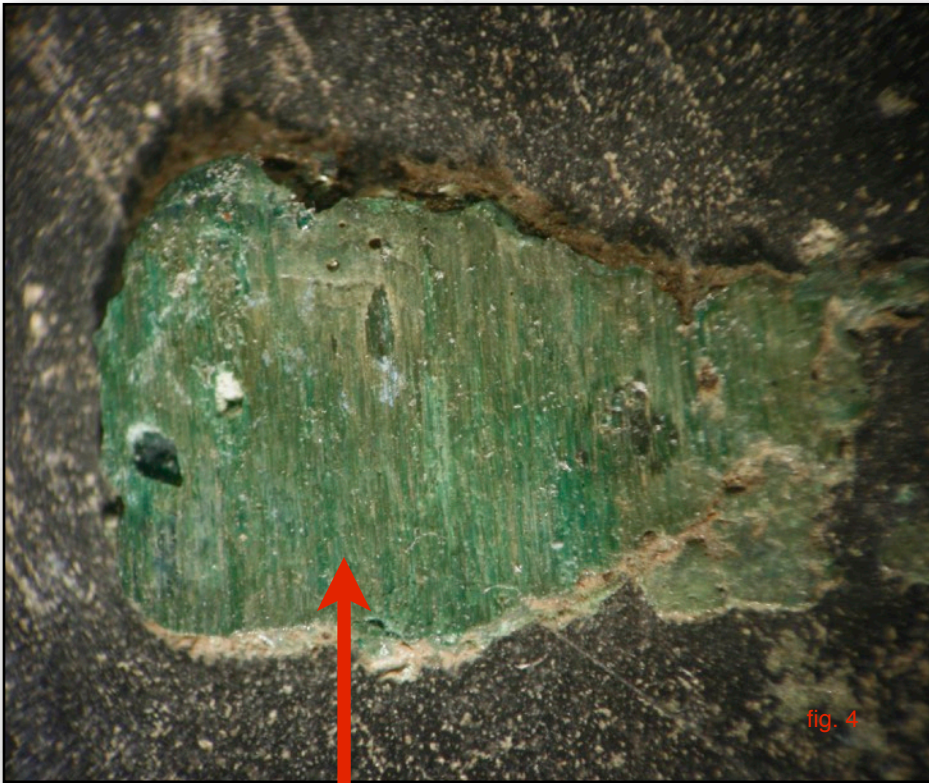
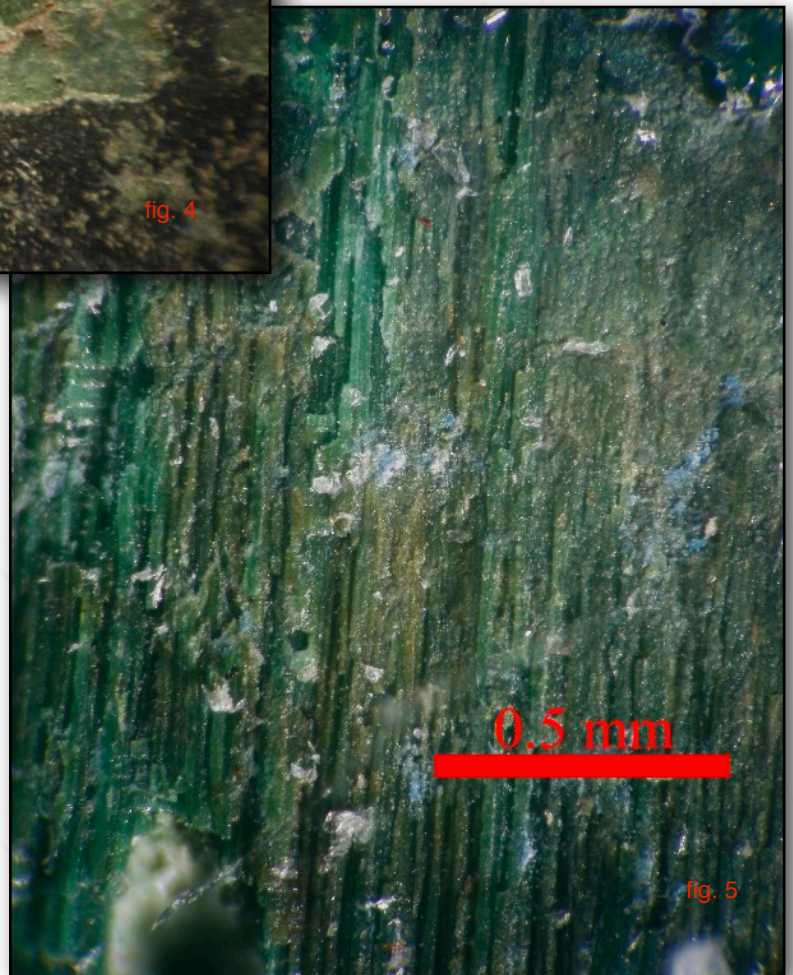


Fig. 4 shows a crystalline structure on the surface of the hilt area that could be mineralized fibers from the original grip or sheath. Magnification is 19X. Fig. 5 is 100X magnification of an area of the same deposit.



# Ba Dagger #1- Micrographs

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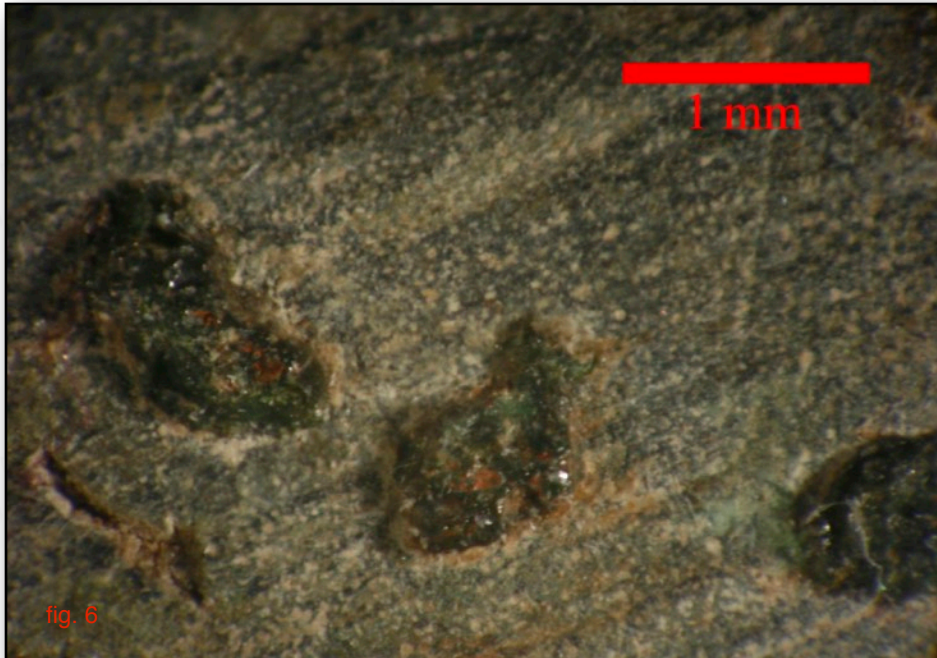


fig. 6



fig. 6b

These 45X micrographs show an area of the surface on the hilt where corrosion products appears as surface nodules. Fig. 6 shows the area undisturbed. Fig. 7 shows the same area after the removal of the crystal structure in the center. It is apparent that the crystals are naturally formed corrosion products (likely copper carbonite hydroxide, based on its appearance) that extend below the surface of the metal as expected.

## ***Ba Dagger #2 - Photographs***



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The images below (figs. 7a and 7b) are closeup photographs of the stylized animal decoration carved into both sides of the dagger.

The image at the bottom is an image of the same specimen as advertised in the estate files of Mr. Piscopo.



## Ba Dagger #2- Micrographs

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fig. 9

Fig.9 is a micrograph showing an area of the patina where several distinct types of corrosion products are visible in the same matrix. The blue area is likely azurite in a sea of green malachite. Both minerals are copper carbonate hydroxides that often appear together in nature, indicating a naturally-formed patina. White areas of what is probably tin oxide and red areas of what is likely copper oxide are also visible. Magnification is 9X.

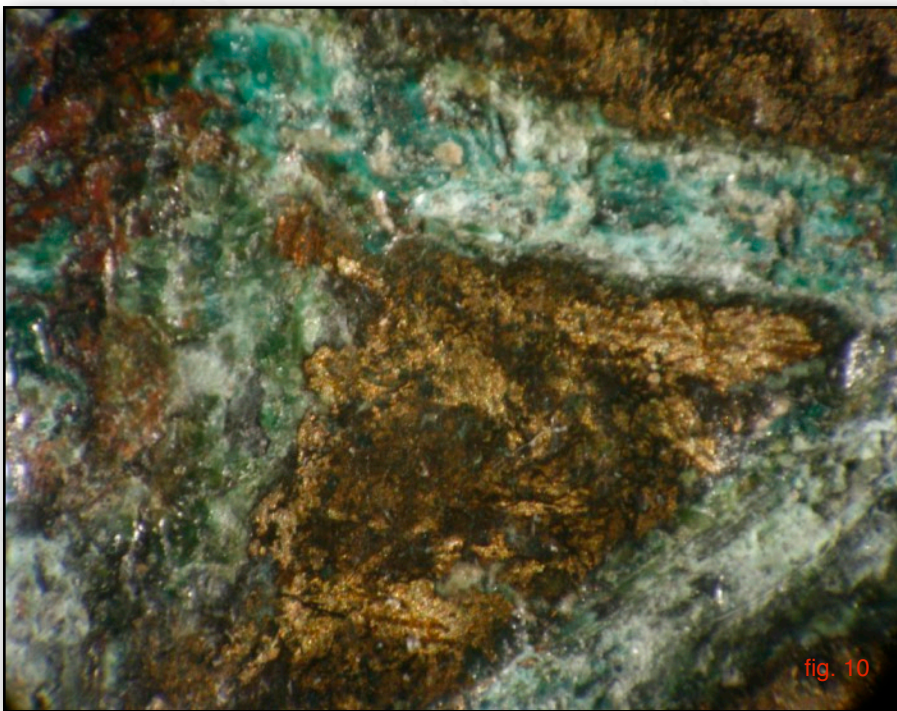


fig. 10

Fig. 10 shows an area in the decoration on one side where there is what appears to be copper oxide and copper carbonate hydroxide crystal structures interspersed with golden-colored areas which are possibly the somewhat rare occurrence of redeposited copper. The mechanism for the process is not fully understood but as part of a long-term corrosion process, pure copper atoms are redeposited on or near the surface. Magnification is 41X.



## *Ba Dagger #2- Micrograph*

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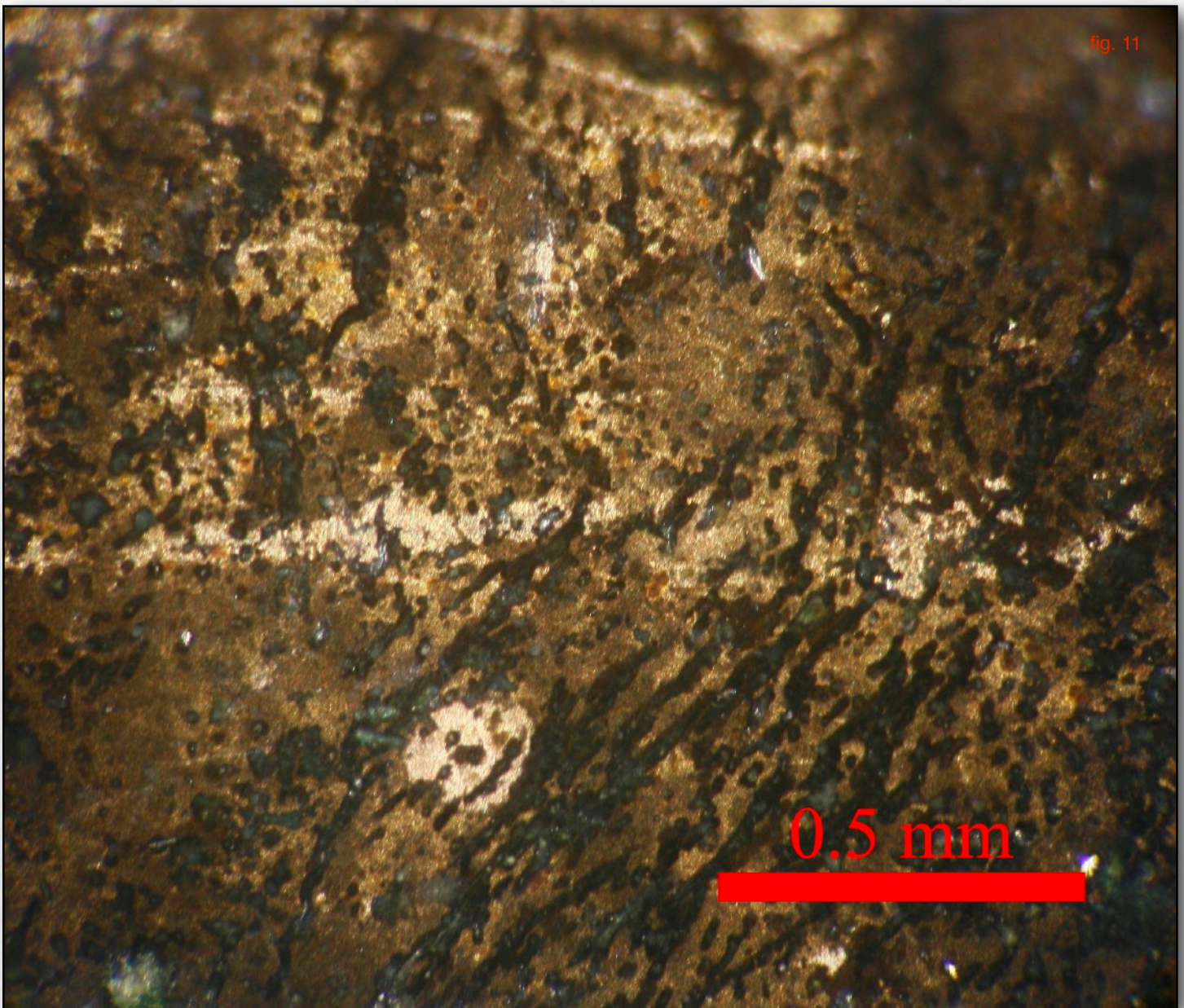


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This micrograph was taken from an area of the central rib that illustrates what I believe to be the phenomenon of redeposited copper appearing in contrast with the metal phases.



## ***Ba Dagger #2 - Micrographs***

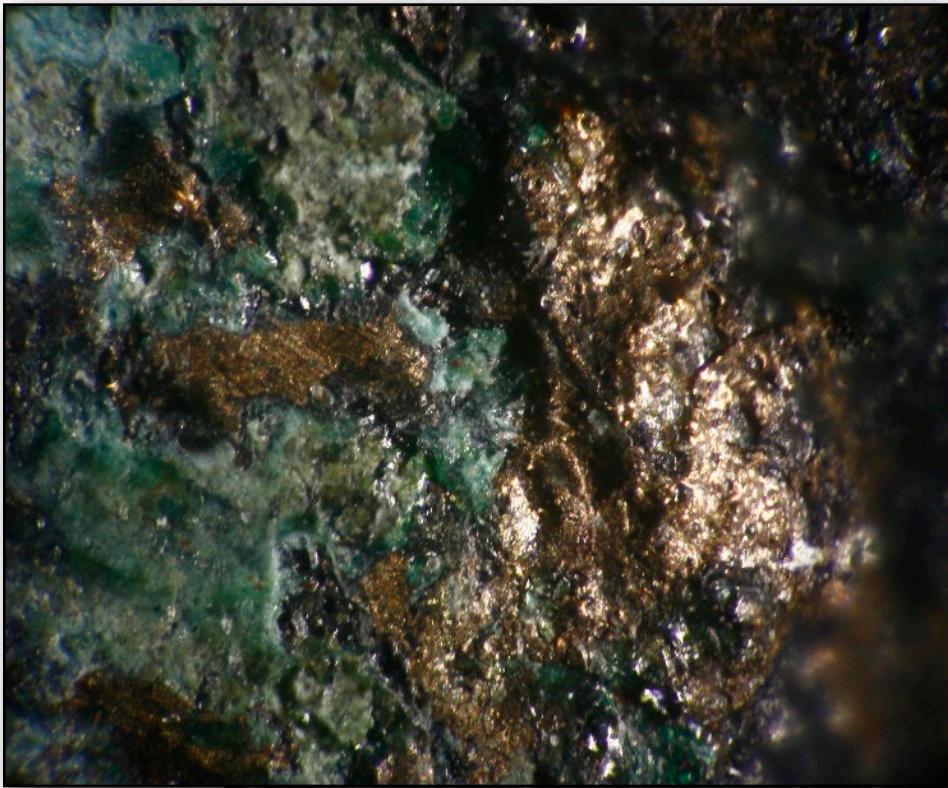
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These beautiful 100X micrographs show the lively nature of the patina on dagger #2. From the golden color of the pure, redeposited copper to the deep malachite greens, azurite blues, and cuprite reds.



## Ba Dagger #2 - Reference



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一六四 雙鞘劍 戰國  
164 Twin sheath jian Warring States

鞘長二八.五、寬一三.七厘米  
Sheath length 28.5, width 13.7 centimeters

劍長二九.八厘米  
Jian length 29.8 centimeters

一九七三年四川成都中醫學院出土  
1973 Capital of Sichuan Chinese Medical Institute  
excavation

四川省博物館藏  
Sichuan Provincial Museum

柳葉形劍'扁莖無格，基部二圓穿，劍身凸鑄一圓圈'  
上下有雙翼。鞘為袋  
Willow leaf shaped jian, surface of the stalk without  
pattern (maybe referring to the body of the jian?),  
bottom portion has two holes. Jian body has a  
protruding casted in a circle shape. There are 2 wings  
above and below. Sheath has the shape of pockets.

形'側附雙砵，中以凹槽分為左右劍室'蓋、府均飾卷  
雲紋。此種劍在四川多有發  
Adjacent cases resemble double bowls. A midline  
groove divides the left and right compartments. Cover  
casing has the ornament of curling clouds and lines.

This type of jian is frequently found in Sichuan.

現，说明此類既可遠擲、又可近搏的短劍是當巴蜀地躲的重要兵器。巴蜀

By definition this type can be flung a distance, as well as is a near striking short jian. It is an important  
weapon of the people of the state, Bashǔ.

From: "Zhong Guo Qing Tong Qi Quan Ji", Publisher: Wen wu chu ban she, 1993, photo p.151, text appendix p.  
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# Ba Daggers - Map and Certification

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This map shows the modern Chinese Provinces and their borders. The Provinces outlined in red are those where Ba culture artifacts have been located.

fig. 14

**Certification:** Based on a thorough analysis of both the specimens described in this report, it is my conclusion that both specimens are authentic antiquities and are accurately attributed with respect to general culture and time period.

Authorized signature Richard A. Nable Owner/Operator Priceless Past Authentications

Date

All of the information contained in this document is true, accurate and correct to the best of my knowledge.

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