



Lithograph with full original wash colour, segmented and mounted on linen as issued, minor foxing and soiling, seams reinforced on verso.

CARTOGRAPHIC GAME BOARD CELEBRATING THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN INDIA

L'Orient or the Indian Travellers, A Geographical Historical Game.

Author

BARFOOT, J[ames] R[ichard]

Publication date

[c1847].

Publisher

David Ogilvy,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

Lithograph with full original wash colour, segmented and mounted on linen as issued, minor foxing and soiling, seams reinforced on verso.

Dimensions

560 by 745mm. (22 by 29.25 inches).

Notes

An attractive, rare and mysterious game board, likely designed to capitalise on public interest following the successful conclusion of the First Anglo-Sikh War, of 1845-1846.

The central part of the game is a map of Europe, Africa, and Asia, with three sailing routes from England to India outlined, with the Atlantic Ocean route featuring tiny circular panels numbered 1-9. The map is surmounted by views of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, as well as six medallion portraits of British sovereigns from George I to Victoria, with the dates of their reigns indicated. Below and flanking the map, 36 dated vignettes depict important events from the history of the British in India, with each vignette framed in an unusual twining vine border. Scenes of interest include the Black Hole of Calcutta (1756) at the lower left corner, the burning fleet at the Battle of Yangon in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824) at the lower right, and the wives of the Sikh Emperor Ranjit Singh committing sati on his funeral pyre (1839) at the upper right corner. The latest date given is 1846, on a battle scene from the Anglo-Sikh War at upper right.

As with other games of this type, 'L'Orient' would have been accompanied by an instruction booklet, place markers for each player, and a "totem" (similar in function to dice, which were considered déclassé). The players would have used the totem to determine the number of squares to be moved. When they reached a new square, they would likely have been required to read aloud the details of the relevant event in the accompanying booklet and to identify the sovereign then on the throne. The role of the central map with its three routes to India is unclear, as are the requirements for victory in the game.

Between 1842 and 1879 David Ogilvy and family members produced and/or published at least 200 games, including "Games on Sheets" (board games and card games), "Games in Boxes" (mainly card games, charade games, question and answer games, word games, quartette games and domino games), and "Dissected Puzzles." (Richard Ballman, presentation abstract in the on-line program for Board Game Studies Colloquium XVIII, p. 25)

The British Museum describes James Richard Barfoot (1794-1863) simply as a "painter/draughtsman".

Bibliography

V&A, B.11-1997.

Provenance

Price: £6000

Inventory reference: 20539