

A pair of lithographed maps with original colour, laid on linen.

RARE PAIR OF SERIO-COMIC MAPS IN PERSIAN

[Pair of Serio-Comic Maps in Persian]

Author
ROSE and KORDIG

Publication date
1880].

Publisher

Publication place
[Iran,

Physical description
A pair of lithographed maps with original colour, laid on linen.

Dimensions

Notes
A previously unrecorded set of Persian serio-comic maps issued around 1880 in Iran.

The octopus map is a copy of Fred Rose's 'Serio Comic War Map', published in 1887 in response to the Balkan Crises. It shows imperial Russia as a menacing octopus, reaching out into Europe, forgetting the lesson learned during the Crimean War: although not the first to use the octopus to represent a power-hungry state, Rose's map popularised it in propaganda maps from then on. The map appears to be a copy of a French variant, as a Farsi inscription at the bottom reads "Replica of a

map which was published and illustrated in Paris". This may explain the variations from Rose's original; for example, France is shown as Marianne in Phrygian cap holding a scroll with a heart rather than as Marshal MacMahon, suggesting an Iranian sympathy with France. It therefore no longer attracts the attention of Germany as in the Rose map; Germany looks east towards Russia instead.

The other map is derived from an obscure Russian serio-comic map drawn by K.I. Kordig in response to Rose's map. Only one example of Kordig's map has been traced, printed in a handkerchief in an 1883 reprint, sold at Dreweatts in 2014. Kordig's map reverses the anti-Russian sentiment expressed by Rose. Instead of being a grasping octopus, Russia appears as an heroic maiden, Mother Russia, shielding her people from the chaotic feuds of western Europe. In Germany, Otto van Bismarck struggles to support a house as Marianne tugs at it from France, while England as a dog keeps its neighbours Scotland (a quivering peasant) and Ireland (cat) in line.

At the time these maps were printed, Persia was ruled by Naser al-Din Shah Qajar. Naser al-Din's reign saw conflict with both Britain and Russia; the Anglo-Persian War from 1856-7 forced him to renounce the Persian claim on the city of Herat, and Russia has conquered Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in 1881. Those within Iran were aware that the Qajar dynasty was financially dependent on both countries, even as Naser al-Din tried to regain power over Persian territories and exploit the enmity between them. This pair of maps was clearly issued together, and were intended to illustrate and satirize conflicting perspectives of the political atmosphere in Europe for an educated Iranian elite.

Both maps are laid down on linen with a manuscript annotation on the verso. The inscription on the octopus map reads: "From the library of his excellency Adib the head of education [unreadable text] Mirza Ahmad Khan Motazed Dowleh Saba, the tutor of Crown Prince Mozaffar ad-Din. Tabriz, 1210 AH." Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar (1853-1907) became the fifth Qajar King of Persia reigning between 1896 and 1907. The tutor is most likely Mirza Ahmad Khan 'Motazed-Dowleh' Vaziri (1869-1924). Mozaffar was a powerful Iranian political figure with a keen interest in education, founding numerous modern schools in the first part of the 20th century.

The Russian map also bears an inscription on the verso that reads, roughly: "This is a remembrance of me to my dear son Mr. Niv. I hope it would be a memento of my love to him and his respectable family. This belonged to my grandfather, the head of education of Tabriz, His Excellency Mirza Ahmad Khan Motazed Dowleh Saba who was the tutor of Mozaffar el Din Shah and it is about 150 years old. I gift it to my son, god willing he does not forget me. – Amir Houshang Mohtasham, 1384 hijri khorshidi."

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 11912

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