



Three lithograph maps.

THE CHINESE-RUSSIAN FRONTIERS

Russian Chinese Frontiers [and] Russian Province of Fergana.

Author

[ANONYMOUS]

Publication date

1880.

Publisher

Publication place

[Shanghai],

Physical description

Three lithograph maps.

Dimensions

400 by 530mm. (15.75 by 20.75 inches).

Notes

The growing number of expatriates, servicemen and foreign workers based in China during the late-nineteenth century prompted numerous publishers to set up foreign-language periodicals to cater to the international community. Several English newspapers appeared, including the 'Evening Gazette', the 'Shanghai Courier', the 'China Gazette', the 'Mercury', and 'The Celestial Empire'. These publications documented an important period in Chinese history, as incursions from Japanese, Russian, British and Ottoman forces each took their toll.

During the mid-nineteenth century, the Chinese and Russian empires expanded into what is now Kazakhstan and Western Xinjiang. Upon meeting, the powers both signed the Treaty of Kulka in 1851, which legalised trade between both countries in the region. During the Second Opium War, however, Russia took advantage of China's weakened position and annexed the north bank of the Amur River and the coast down to the Korean border, while also gaining control of Sakhalin Island alongside Japan.

Tensions remained high throughout the 1860s and 1870s. In 1868, Russia launched its first attempt to expel the Chinese from the territory, resulting in the Manchu War, in which they were ultimately unsuccessful. The Chinese General Zuo Zongtang called for war against Russia, and in 1878 began to amass troops, causing his opponents to retreat from the city of Kuldja which they were besieging, and demonstrating that the Chinese had built up a modernised arsenal of weaponry since their last conflict. In fact, in 1880 huge quantities of military equipment were shipped to China from Europe.

It is this period of tension shown on the present maps, which were included with editions of 'The Celestial Empire' and the 'Shanghai Courier' in 1880, as noted in red beneath the images. The first is a map of the Chinese-Russian frontiers, with Mongolia and Manchuria clearly identified in the centre, and many other important cities, rivers, mountains and roads represented. The second shows the Kuldja Triangle, in modern-day Kazakhstan, which was the centre of the conflict in which Chinese troops forced out the occupying Russians. The contemporary frontier, according to Russian sources, is contrasted against the frontier of ten years earlier. The final map focuses on "The Russian Province of Fergana and the Pamir Plateau showing the adjacent Chinese Territory and Indian Frontier (according to Russian Surveys in 1878 and 1879)". Mountains, cities, rivers, roads and lakes are represented, with elevation given in feet.

Bibliography

Scott, David. China and the International System, 1840-1949: Power, Presence, and Perceptions in a Century of Humiliation. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008.

Provenance

Price: £1200

Inventory reference: 15229