

36 playing cards, coloured silk and brocade laid between paper.

A LUXURY SILK AND BROCADE DECK

[Silk and brocade playing cards].

Author
[ANONYMOUS].

Publication date
c1680].

Publisher

Publication place
[?Germany,

Physical description
36 playing cards, coloured silk and brocade laid between paper.

Dimensions
93 by 65mm. (3.75 by 2.5 inches).

Notes
The Maker

There is no information on the present deck of cards about its maker, but the nature of the materials used demonstrate that he or she must have been working for some extremely wealthy clients.

The Cards

The present cards are uniquely luxurious, each one being comprised of layers of coloured silk and brocade laid between two sheets of paper. The different layers of fabric give the images added depth, which reinforces the sense of meticulous craftsmanship.

The janiform eagle, which had been a symbol of the German emperors since the fifteenth century, points towards a German origin for these cards. Indeed, Hargrave records another deck of silk trappola cards from the seventeenth century which appear to have been made in Germany.

It has been tentatively suggested that hearts represent France, with Louis XIV as King; spades Russia, with Peter the Great as Tsar – the jack bears the double headed-eagle of the Russian Empire; clubs, the Holy Roman Empire, with Leopold I as Emperor – he holds a shield bearing the imperial eagle; and diamonds, the Ottoman Empire with – possibly – Mehmed IV as Sultan; the jack holds a falcon: falconry was one of the most popular pastimes in the Ottoman court.

Bibliography
Hargrave p.108; van den Bergh pp.36-37.

Provenance

Price: £75000

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