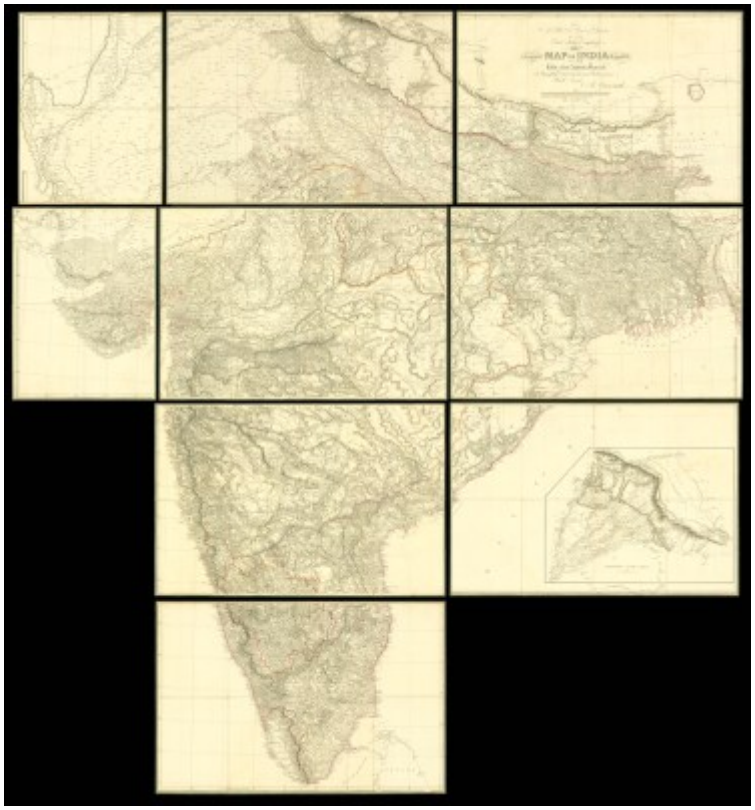

Large engraved map, on nine sheets, fine original full-wash colour, dissected and mounted on linen, inset of the Punjab, housed in original blue calf slipcase, defective.

THE LARGEST MAP OF INDIA PRODUCED BEFORE THE TRIGONOMETRICAL SURVEY

To The Hon[oura]ble the Court Directors of the East India Company This Improved Map of India Compiled from all the Latest & most Authentic Materials Is Respectfully Dedicated by their most Obedient & most Humble Servant A. Arrowsmith.

Author
ARROWSMITH, Aaron

Publication date
2nd January, 1816.

Publisher
Published by A. Arrowsmith, Hydrographer to his Majesty, No. 10 Soho Square,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Large engraved map, on nine sheets, fine original full-wash colour, dissected and mounted on linen, inset of the Punjab, housed in original blue calf slipcase, defective.

Dimensions
2400 by 2670mm (94.5 by 105 inches).

Notes

Arrowsmith’s monumental wall map of India on nine sheets.

With the growing influence of the British in India at the end of the eighteenth century, the need for an up-to-date general map of the sub-continent grew. The first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, employed Major Rennell who, in 1779, published his famous Bengal Atlas, followed up in 1788 by his map of India. The map itself was based upon D’Anville’s map of 1752, though enriched by much new material, supplied by the numerous “route surveys” carried out by the army.

As these “route surveys” began to become more numerous and accurate the need for a new general map of India soon became apparent. In 1816 Aaron Arrowsmith published his Map of India in nine sheets, on a scale of sixteen miles to an inch, which was the last great general map based on route surveys. His subsequent Atlas of South India, published in 1822, was based upon the trigonometrical surveys of Colonel Lambton, filled in by the officers of the Madras Institute.

Aaron Arrowsmith (1750-1823), ”easily the foremost cartographer of his time” (R.V. Tooley), was the founder of the Arrowsmith dynasty of cartographers. Born in County Durham, he was in London by 1777 when he witnessed the will of Andrew Dury, a mapseller and publisher, and was probably training with him; he may have trained with William Faden, Geographer to the King, but was certainly employed by John Cary in 1782, as he is credited with the survey work for ’Cary’s Actual Survey, of the Great Post Roads between London and Falmouth’, published in 1784; he is frequently credited with some of the survey work for Cary’s county atlas, ’Cary’s New and Correct English Atlas: being a set of county maps from actual surveys’ (1787), but the sources are silent on this and by this time Arrowsmith had established his own business.

Arrowmsith’s maps set a new standard; he was assiduous in analysing and verifying his sources, discarding not only the fictional but also the uncertain, going to printed and manuscript sources for his information, and engraved in a clear and highly legible style. Arrowsmith was also diligent in revising and improving his maps to keep them current, and served as an inspiration for the next generation of (particularly American) surveyors.

Bibliography

BLMC Maps K.Top.115.17.2.2 TAB.END.; Maps of India 269, Handbook to the special loan collection of scientific apparatus 1876. Prepared at the request of the Lords of the Committee of council on education, London, Chapman & Hall.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 3122

© Daniel Crouch Rare Books Ltd | 2025