



**An early 19th century Chinese Export silver visiting card case with erroneous London Hallmarks.
£1,600.00**

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Visiting cards became popular in the late Georgian and Regency periods and became an indispensable article for members of the gentry or aristocracy, developing a whole etiquette of their own. Naturally cases were required for the cards and examples were produced in various materials from gold, silver and agate to tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, ivory, lacquered papier-mache and leather, as well as a diversity of decorative woods.

From relatively plain origins the cases became increasingly elaborate through the 19th century reflecting changing tastes and the affluence of society in general.

This example is interesting in that it ably demonstrates the demand for exotic decoration as well as the changing nature of Chinese Export silver during this period.

The case is decorated on all sides with traditional Chinese scenes of court ladies and officials at ease in landscapes with traditional buildings, trees and plants. The ladies wear elaborate dresses with ornamental head pieces and fans and are attended by servants bringing nourishment while the officials are engaged in conversation with attendants nearby.

Such card cases were not known in China before the wider trade with the West brought increasing numbers of western articles into the orbit of artisans in China and the Straights where trade had increased steadily as the various European powers encroached on the area. From copying western articles closely for export, the demand for more exotic articles and decoration increased from European traders and the trend to produce items decorated in a more traditional Chinese way rose to meet the demand.

Interestingly, although this card case is decorated with traditional Chinese scenes, the original, probably plain model, has been copied in shape and form along with the original hallmarks. The transposing of hallmarks was a feature of early Chinese Export silver where copying as precisely as possible the European artifact was desirable, and as there was no history of hallmarking they simply also copied the marks.

Origin	Chinese
Period	19th Century
Condition	Excellent
Dimensions	Height: 8.5cm Width: 5.4cm Depth: 1cm
Diameter	Weight: 46 grams

Antique ref: 10099