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Set of Three Antique Indo-Chinese Export Reverse Glass Painting of a Sikh Cavalryman

£3,600

A rare and characterful set of three 19th-century reverse painting on glass depicting equestrian portraits of North Indian nobleman or Sikh *Sardar* (cavalry officer), produced in China for the Indian export market.

Set against a graduated atmospheric sky and distant blue mountain landscape, the bearded riders are mounted on spirited chargers with raised forelegs. Wearing a turban (*dastar*) adorned with jeweled ornaments (*sarpech*) and plume (*kalgi*), vibrant tunic (*chogha*), a dark green waist sash (*kamarband*), and loose white riding trousers. Armed for battle or ceremonial display, he carries a long bamboo cavalry lance (*bhala*) in his right hand, a convex hide buckler shield (*dhal*) slung across his back, and a curved *talwar* sword at his hip. The horses are richly caparisoned with a scalloped patterned saddlecloth (*jhul*) and decorative breastplate and crupper straps hung with tassels.

Along the dark blue lower border is a centered line of painted pseudo-script. During the 18th and 19th centuries, workshops in Canton (Guangzhou) specialized in producing reverse glass paintings for the Indian and Persian luxury trade, working from South Asian miniatures and prints. Unfamiliar with Persian, Urdu, or Devanagari scripts—and facing the technical challenge of painting characters in reverse on the back of the glass—Chinese artisans frequently rendered the original sitter's title as rhythmic, decorative calligraphy.

Blending European-influenced landscape depth with traditional Indo-Persian royal portraiture and military dress of the Sikh Empire period, this piece is a compelling example of cross-cultural trade art.

Presented in gilt-wood frames.

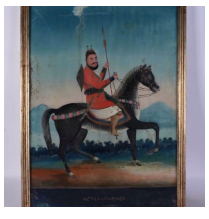
SKU: B5239
Height: 52 cm (20.5 inches)
Width: 38 cm (15 inches)
Year: China (Canton), for the Indian Export Market. Mid-19th Century







Adam Calvert Bentley
and
Ardgowan Antiques







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