Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture & Travel Items

Captain Erskine's China Trade Desk

Chinese Export Furniture

Sold

Christopher Clarke Antiques
The Fosseway, Stow on the Wold, Gloucestershire, GL54 1JS
clarkeltd@btconnect.com • 01451 830 476 • www.campaignfurniture.com

REF: 7384

Height: 21 cm (8.3")

Width: 53 cm (20.9")

Depth: 28 cm (11")

Description

This large portable desk or writing slope is made in huang huali wood which gives an indication of its origin.

It was made for the European market by a Chinese cabinet maker, probably in Canton. It is heavily edged and bound in 3/4 inch thick brass strap with skeletal campaign handles. The the baised writing surface to the interior is edged in ebony with the rest of the interior edges, including those to the dividers of the desk tidy, edged in brass.

Of course a box of this quality has secret drawers and these are accessed by turning the main lock, when the desk is open. A pin can then be pushed into the lock to release a sprung facia board to the front of the tidy, underneath the writing surface. Behind the facia are four secret drawers. When the facia is completely removed the base board to this large storage area can also be removed. The area below this board is lined in red leathered paper and to one side are two wells. In one of these wells another facia can be removed to reveal a further secret drawer. To the side of the box is a lockable drawer which is brass edged to the top, bottom and sides for the first 3/4 of an inch. The shaped name plate to the top of the box is worn but suggests that it belonged to a Captain Erskine. It is very possible that it was purchased by its owner on route to India.

There were certainly many Scots working for the East India Company in India. The design is English, copied with an Oriental flavour by a Chinese cabinet maker by his choice of timber. The quality, as is often the case with Chinese Export furniture, is good. Early 19th century.

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