



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Plan of Calcutta Reproduced From The Map Published in 1854 for the use of the Conservancy Department Corrected up to 1874

Stock#: 58589
Map Maker: Smyth
Date: 1874
Place: Calcutta
Color: Color
Condition: VG+
Size: 27 x 40 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare Plan of Calcutta (now Kolkata, India) at the End of East India Company Rule

Colored version of the detailed plan of Calcutta commissioned by the Conservancy Department. Corrected to 1874, this is the third edition of the plan and the only known example of this edition.

The plan is extensively detailed, offering a minute view of the growing city. The Conservancy Department hoped to use this plan to better organize and surveil Calcutta, creating wider, more aligned streets, as well as uniform and impressive buildings.

Through the growth and changes the city underwent, Fort William, Calcutta's citadel, remained prominent



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and striking, as seen on this plan. It was constructed in 1690 and named for King William III of England; it became the primary Bengal trading station of the East India Company. It was reconstructed in 1773 as it stands in this plan.

The map shows the extent of the city of Calcutta up to the year 1874. The Hooghly River cuts through the left side of the map, with much of the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) to its east.

It includes a scale represented graphically and in ratio form (6 inches = 1 mile). The left side of the map includes a numbered list of hundreds of streets in Calcutta, divided into the Northern and Southern Divisions. On the right, there is a small legend with symbology for map features including town boundaries, metalled roads, unmetalled roads, hauts/bazaars, police stations, public buildings, post office receiving houses, and burial grounds.

The map also notes how some of the information presented on the map was compiled. Captain Smyth's survey of streets and principal objects is used here in conjunction with the *Dhee Punchanogram* report. The interior sector of the town was taken from Schalch's map of Calcutta and corrected by the Surveyor to the Commissioners. The map also uses a survey made for the Railway Terminus of 1851, as well as Mr. Daniell's Survey of 1846. The Plan of the Fort (Fort William) derives from the plans of Colonel T. Call, Chief Engineer in 1786, Lieutenant Schalch in 1825, and Rushton's *Gazetteer* in 1841-42.

East India Company rule in India and Calcutta

This plan of Calcutta was originally drawn up in 1854, during the final years of East India Company (EIC) rule in India. The EIC was established in 1600 in order for the English to enter the flourishing spice trade centered in the eastern Indian Ocean. While spices were what drew the English in, the company also dealt in cotton, silk, indigo, saltpeter, and tea, and even eventually opened a slave and opium trade. More broadly, the East India Company acted as a force of British imperialism in India throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and much of the nineteenth centuries, spurring the growth of new cities throughout the region.

In 1698, the EIC acquired three Indian villages: Sutanuti, Dihi Kolkata, and Gobindapur, which would then become the city of Calcutta. An agent for the Company, Job Charnock, established a vital trading post in the area of the villages in 1690. The location was protected by natural barriers, including the Hooghly River, on all sides, yet was easily accessible for sea trade.

In 1772, Calcutta became the capital of British India during the height of the East India Company's trading regime. By the mid-nineteenth century, most of northern India had become hinterland supporting



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the trade at Calcutta's port. It also became a center for civil and political unrest from its earliest days, as exemplified most infamously with the Black Hole of Calcutta of 1756.

As hinted in the legend, the city is divided into two distinct districts—one British and one Indian, or one white town and one black town—an attempt at keeping the Company officials and their families separate from Indian culture and everyday life. The white town was established in south-central Calcutta, near Fort William, where British settlers had built their houses. The black town was situated in the northern portion of the city.

Though the white and black sections of Calcutta were separate and carefully delineated by mapmakers of the early nineteenth century, the accidental diffusion of western culture from the white town's British elite had a great effect on the Indian population. The British were adamant on maintaining their style of living, which provided a stage for Indians curious about the west to absorb this new culture. Similarly, and despite the attempt to maintain strict adherence to British traditions, some Indian customs, styles, and ideas also affected the white inhabitants of Calcutta.

As the Company amassed more power throughout the nineteenth century, Indian workers and soldiers became increasingly discontented with their working conditions and the lack of respect for Indian customs exhibited by British officers and colonists. In response to a rumor that Enfield rifle cartridges were coated in a mixture of pig and cow lard, an affront to both Muslims and Hindus, soldiers rose up in March 1857, an event known as the Sepoy or Indian Rebellion or Mutiny. The EIC, supported by the British Army, retaliated by killing thousands of Indians, but they could not recover from the instability caused by this violent event.

In 1858, the EIC effectively lost control of India, transferring power directly to the British Crown and beginning the reign of the new British Raj. The Company formally dissolved in 1873 with the passage of the East India Stock Dividend Redemption Act. This edition of the map (1874) was published just after the formal close of the East India Company.

The Conservancy Department

This map was made for use by the Conservancy Department, essentially the sanitation department for the city. The Conservancy Department functioned to administer sanitation laws, organize cleaning crews, and generally keep the city hygienic. It was run with an overseer for each of Calcutta's five divisions. The overseer's role was to keep his division clean and lawful.

Policing of the city through the East India Company had begun earlier, in 1720, when an officer was



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appointed to monitor criminal activity, assisted by an Indian deputy to help monitor the south-central portion of the city. In 1785, the Commissioners of Conservancy were appointed as additional watchmen.

According to a "Report on Sanitary Measures in India...1873-4," the town then employed 764 Indians to attend to sanitation, with additional workers during certain months of the year. As this report explains, open stagnant drains throughout the city emitted an offensive stench and were a health hazard to city-dwellers. The southern division of Calcutta had been improved by a Health Officer Clark's drainage schemes, but the northern (and native) division of the city remained filthy. Up until the publication of this map, the city remained unsanitary and, in some quarters, dangerous, which necessitated the plan of action detailed in this map, with police stations, cemeteries, and other facilities highlighted.

Crime and Sanitation in Calcutta

It was not until late in the eighteenth century that the white population in Calcutta exceeded even 1,000 people. During Warren Hasting's governorship, which began in 1773, he attempted to create policing commissions to deal with crime and to supervise drainage and road repairs. The Justices of the Peace were appointed in 1793 to begin working to solve these issues, but their work was widely regarded as ineffective.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the city, and especially the white town, experienced a building boom that catalyzed its growth. The "streets" were, by and large, skinny dirt roads and the buildings were starkly different from each other.

By the time of this map's creation in the late nineteenth century, Calcutta was a substantial city, with a population of about 450,000 people throughout its seven square miles. According to the same report, the Conservancy Department was not sufficiently organized or staffed to suit this magnitude and sprawl.

With the building boom came attempts from various lottery committees, including the Conservancy Department, to organize and align the streets, embank the river, and dig tanks (between 1809 and 1833). However, there was still a large portion of the population living in swamp-like conditions with a polluted water supply and high mortality rates.

The Department was largely ineffective because the new laws they created targeted the lower-class populations who did not have the means to follow them. Some examples of violations listed from Act VI of 1863 included the failure to enclose privies, construction of privies without permission, the throwing of nightsoil into public drains, and the construction of thatched huts with flammable materials. The problem with these enforcements was that most of the people affected by these laws came from rural India where



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these habits were socially acceptable. Since they did not have the financial means to build privies or toilets, they had no other choice than to use open public drains in the streets. They also did not have the money to construct houses with anything other than the flammable straw used for thatched houses, which subjected the city to fire hazard. This vulnerable population was forced under the new administration to adhere to norms of urban living without being provided the means to do so.

Rarity

The map is extremely rare. We are unable to locate another example of this edition of the map.

OCLC locates only the 1854 map by Captain R. Smyth in two examples, at the British Library and Oxford University.

This map provides a unique glimpse into a city that rose from Britain's global trade network and thanks to the hard labor of Indian workers. Those interested in the East India Company, the British Empire, and the transformation of Calcutta would find this map intriguing.

Detailed Condition: