



[Wilson, Horace Hayman]

1786 – 1860

The Oriental portfolio.

London, Published by Smith, Elder and Co. (Printed by Stewart and Murray), 1838; 1840

Two PORTFOLIOS (555 × 380 mm).

I: (6)ff. letterpress, plus frontispiece and five plates (numbered 1–5): (folio 1) part-title, stating contents and describing the vignette on frontispiece; (ff.2–6) leaf of descriptive letterpress for each of the five plates, headed respectively *Gateway at Deeg; A Nauch in the Palace of the Ameer of Sind; Zenana Futtehpoor Sikri; Fort of Mongir; Pavilion at the Tomb of Sufdur Jung. Ancient Delhi*. Frontispiece ■ a procession in front of a mosque through a curtained view, lithograph by J. Bacon, after T.H. Pitt. Plate ■ 1 *Pavilion at the tomb of Sufdir Junge-Delhi* [Safdar Jang], lithograph by Louis Haghe (1806–1895), after Thomas Colman Dibdin (1810–1893), after Thomas Bacon (1813–1892); plate ■ 2 *Scene in the Zenana at Futtehpoore Sikri* [Fatehpur Sikri], lithograph by W. Gauci, after David Roberts (1796–1864), after T. Bacon; plate ■ 3 *A Nauch in the Palace of the Ameer of Sind*, by L. Haghe, after James Stephanoff (1787–1874);¹ plate ■ 4 *Kunkhul* [Uttar Pradesh], lithograph by L. Haghe, after T.C. Dibdin, after T. Bacon; plate ■ 5 *Ancient Gateway at Deig* [Dig, Rajasthan], lithograph by Andrew Picken (1815–1845) after T.C. Dibdin, after T. Bacon.

II: (6)ff. letterpress, plus five plates (numbered 6–10): (folio 1) part-title, ...*Contents of the Second Number*; (ff.2–6) leaf of descriptive letterpress for each of the five plates, headed respectively *Kunkhul; Tomb of Hoomayoon's Vizier; Mausoleum of Sufdur Jung; Ruins at Deig; Market Place, Delhi*. Plate ■ 6 *Ruins at Deig* [Dig, Rajasthan], lithograph by W. Gauci, after D. Roberts, after T. Bacon; plate ■ 7 *The Fort of Monghir* [Monghyr], lithograph by W. Walton, after D. Roberts, after T. Bacon; plate ■ 8 *Mausoleum of Zufdir Junge. Delhi* [Mausoleum of Safdar Jang], lithograph by W. Gauci, after D. Roberts, after T. Bacon; plate 9 *The Chouk. Delhi* [Chandni Chauwk], lithograph by W. Gauci, after T.C. Dibdin, after T. Bacon; plate 10 *Tomb of Hoomayoon's Vizier. Delhi* [The Tomb of Humayun's Vizier], lithograph by W. Gauci, after T.C. Dibdin, after T. Bacon.

Some foxing, otherwise in very good state of preservation.

PRESERVED in two purple cloth portfolios, title and ornament gold-blocked on upper covers; cloth ties.

¹ The scene is based on drawings made by Captain Melville Grindlay of an interview between the British embassy in India and the rulers of Sind in 1808; see <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/other/019xzz000000724u00004000.html>.

RARE FIRST EDITION in original parts. The *Oriental Portfolio* set out to provide a comprehensive series of illustrations of Indian scenery and architecture, using lithography to keep its cost within the reach of general purchasers (each number was to be priced one guinea). Its promoter, Horace Hayman Wilson, had served in the East India Company from 1808 until 1832, when he was appointed to the chair of Sanskrit in Oxford; in 1836, he became Librarian of the East India Company. The work was dedicated by permission to the Queen.

The first number appeared in May 1838 and the second in July 1840.² The views were mostly taken from sketches drawn by Thomas Bacon (1813–1892), a Second Lieutenant in the Bengal horse artillery in 1835–1838. David Roberts (1796–1864) and Thomas Cole Dibdin (1810–1893) together

‘...transmuted Bacon’s charming originals into splendid designs of true 1830s orientalism, with towering domes and pavilions and archways and figures in exotic costume posed or grouped picturesquely and enlivened by touches of anecdote. Shadows of a velvety black contrast with highlights in opaque white in compositions that sometimes have a dream-like softness of outline, from the predominance of atmospheric tone over form. It is greatly to be regretted then that the *Portfolio* expired after its second number in 1840, for if completed Roberts and his associates might have left us an India equal in sensitiveness and suggestiveness with his Spain, Palestine, and Egypt’.³

In 1841, the two parts were reissued, on this occasion with Wilson’s name on title-page.⁴

REFERENCES Albert Reginald Corns, *A bibliography of unfinished books in the English language* (London 1915), p.172; Mildred Archer and Ronald Lightbown, *India observed: India as viewed by British artists, 1760–1860* (London 1982), pp.122–126, 149–150 nos. 183–184 (1841 reissue)

² *The Literary Gazette: A weekly journal*, no. 1112 (12 May 1838), p.301 (‘In the Press’) and no.1129 (8 September 1838), p.573 (reviewed); *ibid.*, no. 1227 (25 July 1840, p.484 (‘New Publications’).

³ R.W. Lightbown, in *India observed, op. cit.*, p.125.

⁴ *The Oriental Portfolio: picturesque illustrations of the scenery and architecture of India. Drawn on stone from the delineations of the most eminent artists, taken from original designs: and accompanied by descriptive notices by Horace H. Wilson* (London, Smith Elder and Co., 1841). A copy was offered by Sotheby’s, ‘The Library of Robert & Maria Travis: a pictorial record of India and the Far East’, London, 26 May 2005, lot 312.

