



An Exquisite and Important Pair of  
Chinese Paintings on Silk of a  
Portuguese Couple, c. 1760

**Inventory Number :**180-111

**Size:** 12 ½ ins. high and 10 ins. wide

From the renowned Mottahedeh Collection these illustrations came from two eighteenth century volumes depicting Westerners and Chinese provincial traders and artisans. Probably commissioned by a wealthy and powerful Chinese merchant in Canton to record the vast diversity of the population these pieces are unique in having applied captions describing the people and commenting on their appearance and habits.

The captions can be translated as follows;

Portuguese Male:

“He is a Westerner who has a white skin. He does not have a heavy beard but plaits his hair. He wears a triangular black hat, short jacket, leather shoes and long stockings. After about seven months he will leave Kuangtung (Canton) by water. At present he is living in the district of Aomen (Macao)”

Portuguese Female:

“This woman comes from the country over the great western seas (Portugal). She has curled hair that is tied into a bun. Gold, pearls and jewels hang from her collar. She wears a tunic and skirt made of brocade and drapes a shawl over her back. It is the custom of her country to value women over men so she can inherit her family's fortune. If she inherits property a man would marry into her family.”

Gouache on silk

Canton, China. c. 1760

Illustrated:

The male figure only,  
*China for the West*

, vol. I, p. 24 by David Howard and John Ayers, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London and New York, 1978.

Provenance:

Mottahedeh Collection

With Martyn Gregory, London, probably by mid 1980s

Private collection, New York by late 1980s.

**For more information please contact us**

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