Antique English Duplex Pocket Watch For The Chinese Market. Silver. Circa 1850



1 570 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Sterling silver

Diameter : 56 mm (2.20 in)

Description

This exceptional antique pocket watch, made in England around 1850 for the demanding Chinese market, represents a masterpiece of 19th-century export horology. It features a duplex escapement mechanism, one of the most refined and scarce technical variations of the period, appreciated for both its precision and structural complexity. The solid silver case is in excellent condition and presents a sober and elegant design that beautifully contrasts with the decorative richness of the interior.The glass front cover reveals the white enamelled porcelain dial, adorned with Roman numerals and fine minute subdivisions. The black pear-shaped hands are typical of the Georgian period and are complemented by a slim central seconds hand. The plain silver back cover displays a natural light patina and wear marks

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consistent with its age. When opened, it reveals an engraved circle enclosing two Chinese characters: ?? (Jin Mao), meaning "Golden Prosperity", likely a commercial mark used to identify the watch for the Chinese market.Beneath the rear cover, a second inner dust cover of embossed silver and glass protects the movement, allowing an unobstructed view of one of the most beautifully decorated mechanisms of its time. The gilt plate is entirely hand-engraved with scrolls and rosettes, highlighted by blued screws. One of the plates bears the inscription ??? (Jin Mao Tang), translated as "House of Jin Mao" or "Jin Mao Workshop", clearly identifying the brand or establishment responsible for its assembly or distribution.These watches were commissioned in England by Chinese merchants to be exported to Canton (Guangzhou) and other port cities during the Qing Dynasty. Their production required collaboration between English workshops specialised in duplex escapements and Chinese trading houses such as Jin Mao Tang.Currently in working condition, this piece not only preserves its aesthetic integrity but also beats with regularity, greatly enhancing its value as a historical and collectible timepiece. It stands out for its rarity, sober elegance, and richly decorated movement, making it ideal for enthusiasts of antique mechanical watches and collectors of Chinese export pieces. It is worth underlining that this is a unique example, unlikely to appear again easily. A one-of-a-kind opportunity to acquire a watch that embodies the meeting of two cultures through fine horology.It will look spectacular in a collector's display cabinet or as a special gift for someone special.Measurements: 56 mm (2.20 in)History of Jin Mao TangJin Mao Tang (???), translated as "House of Jin Mao" or "Workshop of Golden Prosperity", was likely one of the many Chinese workshops established during the 19th century that specialised in assembling and commercialising European watches for both domestic and export markets. During the Qing

Dynasty, especially from the mid-18th century to the fall of the empire in 1912, the port of Canton (Guangzhou) became the main entry point for foreign goods, including pocket watches from Switzerland, England, and, to a lesser extent, France.The taste for mechanical watches in China was not new. Since the 17th century, Qing emperors had shown great interest in European horology. This fascination also spread to wealthy and merchant classes, who acquired watches not only for their utility but also for their aesthetic and symbolic value. As a result, workshops like Jin Mao Tang emerged, acting as cultural and technical intermediaries. They bought movements made in Europe, locally assembled them in silver cases, and adapted them to local preferences.The inscription ??? is consistent with other period brands such as ??? (House of Golden Jade) or ??? (House of Prosperity), all active in coastal regions during the second half of the 19th century. These names indicated not only ownership but also artisanal quality. Many of these houses also offered repair services, sold jewellery and watches, and served as bridges between Western horological art and Eastern decorative taste.Jin Mao Tang likely operated between 1850 and 1900. These transnational assemblies are now highly valued by collectors not only for their technical merit but also for their role in the history of global trade and export horology.