



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Asia

Stock#: 102810
Map Maker: Arrowsmith
Date: 1801
Place: London
Color: Outline Color
Condition: VG
Size: 49 x 58 inches
Price: \$ 7,500.00



Description:

Arrowsmith's Map of Asia—the Most Authoritative Map of the Continent in the Early Nineteenth Century

A large and vibrant antique map of Asia, tracking the routes of traders and explorers. Arrowsmith's use of the latest sources, attention to detail, and expertise put it a step above the work of his contemporaries, making it the most detailed map of Asia to that date.

Over a meter tall, this fascinating multi-sheet map shows almost the entirety of Asia. The westernmost part of the map containing any detail is *Anatolia* (present-day Turkey), though both Africa and Europe are labeled for reference and lightly outlined. The map covers everything from the Middle East (*Persia*, *Arabia*) to Japan and from Russia down to India (*Hindoostan*) and the Philippines.

Arrowsmith includes a significant amount of topographical detail, even in regions as remote as Tibet. Mountain ranges and winding rivers crisscross the map, giving the reader an impressive sense of the physical geography of the continent. At the same time, vast deserts break up the meticulously detailed and labeled lands, showing how difficult and long overland travel could be.

Most of the coastlines are recognizable to the modern eye, speaking to the amount and quality of cartographic surveys that influenced this map. Northern Japan and the adjacent island of Sakhalin (*Isle of Tchoka or Saghalien*) are perhaps the most misshapen and out of scale, which was not atypical of Western maps at this time.



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The cartouche in the upper left corner simply titles the map "Asia". It is surrounded by a mix of flora and weaponry, alluding to the dual imperial and trade interests that Western Europe had in the Asian continent. Below, Arrowsmith dedicates the map to James Rennell, surveyor-general for the East India Company.

As surveyor-general, Rennell conducted the first comprehensive geographical survey of India. He also published a number of atlases and historical writings later in life. He is known for his careful attention to detail, such as meticulously measuring distances and relying on some indigenous maps to fill in gaps in his knowledge. Rennell's maps were used for well over a hundred years due to their impressive quality, and the information published in Rennell's famous *Bengal Atlas* of 1779 certainly informed this map and bolstered its geographic accuracy.

European Empire and Exploration in Asia

Europeans had a presence in Asia long before this map was made. The Portuguese in particular maintained a powerful colonial and trade empire in South Asia in the sixteenth century, and others like the Dutch and the French had influence as well. But, by the late eighteenth century, the British were the strongest foreign power in Asia. They were most interested in maintaining trade access via the East India Company. Founded in 1600, the East India Company was able to use India as a source for many tradeable goods such as textiles, spices, and tea.

The map displays a variety of exploratory voyages and trade routes. For example, the Great Desert Route can be found on the northeast edge of Arabia, connecting goods in the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. Overland trade routes had been used for hundreds of years, but as sea routes became more widespread, ships were proven a faster method of moving goods, which allowed for more rapid accumulation of wealth. However, much of this trade still flowed through the Mediterranean, and some European countries like France and Britain searched for a Northwest Passage in the Arctic that would allow them direct access to trade with East Asia.

Another route visible on the map is the 1787 track of *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe*, the ships of the French explorer Lapérouse. Throughout his life, Lapérouse traveled much of the world, across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and from Alaska down to Australia. On this map, readers can see Lapérouse's route from Kamchatka in northeastern Russia down through the Sea of Japan and ending in the Philippines. At the northern end of Japan, the *Perouse Strait* can be found, named for Lapérouse. Though the rest of the route is not shown, Lapérouse and his crew continued on to Australia, after which they disappeared and were presumed shipwrecked.

Off the coast of China, readers can also find the route of Sir Erasmus Gower's ship, the *Lion*, on its 1793



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voyage to China. The expedition mostly followed the coast and eventually traveled into the Yellow Sea (also labeled here as *Whang Hai*). Gower, an experienced sea captain and explorer, was taking a British embassy led by Lord George Macartney to meet with the Chinese Emperor. This would be one of the first times the Emperor met with British ambassadors, and the trip was not overly successful. Macartney famously refused to kowtow to the Emperor, and the Emperor told Macartney that China was self-sufficient and had no need for British trade. However, the British did appreciate the information that Gower collected on the geography of the area and that Macartney brought back about the Emperor's court.

Having attempted and failed to secure trade with China, Britain would soon resort to other means. Chinese tea was in high demand in Britain, so they needed a product that the Chinese would demand just as much. A decade after this map was made, this product was found: opium from India, which caused widespread addiction and social and economic destabilization in China.

Arrowsmith's dedication to cartographic excellence means it is no surprise that this map stands as the most authoritative rendering of the whole continent of Asia available at the time of its publishing. It was impressive enough that Thomas Jefferson ordered an example of it, as records at Monticello reveal.

This large map is striking and is not always available on the market. It would be a strong addition to any collection of Arrowsmith maps or antique maps of Asia.

Detailed Condition:

Segmented and laid on 4 sheets of linen, as issued.