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L'Asie Dressee sur les Observations de l'Academie 1700

Stock#: 74655
Map Maker: De L'Isle
Date: 1700
Place: Paris
Color: Outline Color
Condition: VG
Size: 23 x 18 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

De L'Isle's Influential First Atlas Map of Asia

Fine example of an early state of Guillaume De L'Isle's first atlas map of Asia, one of the most significant maps of the continent published in the eighteenth century.

The map shows the continent in masterful detail, exhibiting De L'Isle's status as one of the most technically-skilled cartographers of this period. De L'Isle's map of Asia would become the source map for a number of other contemporary mapmakers, including J.B. Homann, Covens & Mortier, Nolin, De Fer and others.

The map stretches from European Muscovy—differentiated from Tartar Muscovy—to Japan in the north. In the south, the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are included and the geographic coverage continues westward to India, Maritime Southeast Asia, and the Marianas (*Isles des Larrons*).

The map is very detailed, with the Great Wall of China stretching across northern China. The "*I or C. de Sincapura*" (the island of cape of Singapore) dots the end of Malacca. The Philippines are shown with a nice, large treatment.

Korea is shown as a peninsula, rather than an island as it was included on some contemporary maps. It is separated from Japan by the *Mer Orientale*.

Japan is well-delineated for the period, although the north of the archipelago is exaggerated into the large



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Terre d'Yeco, a misunderstanding of the extent of Hokkaido. Two other islands lie east in the North Pacific, *I. des Etats* and *Terre de la Compagnie*.

North of these Pacific chimeras is the *Mer d'Amour*. While the reader might think this refers to a Sea of Love, it is actually a derivation of the nearby *R. d'Amour*, which is the Amur River. The tenth longest river in the world, the Amur separates Russia and Inner Manchuria. A note in the sea, near a promontory of land, reads, "we do not yet know where this point of land ends and if it does not belong to some other continent."

Farther south, the edge of an unlabeled shore is included in the southeast corner. The only toponym is *B. de Diemens*. This is the coast of what is today Queensland, Australia. This was the site of the first known European contact with the continent, the voyage of the *Duyfken* in 1605-06. Under the command of Willem Janszoon, the *Duyfken* explored the eastern shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria, just below the Cape York Peninsula. Later, at the behest of Anthony van Diemen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies from 1636 until 1645, other voyages also visited the area, leaving the toponym seen here.

De L'Isle's erudition is on display across the map, but especially with details like *L. de Kia* in what is today Burma. This Lake Kia is a reference to the fabled Lake Chiamay that was often included in the area. It was thought to give rise to four great rivers. However, upon reviewing all the extant sources, De L'Isle reduced the lake's size and importance, as seen here.

The map's decorative features are nestled into the left border of the map. At the top is a title cartouche set within a vignette of turbaned men in a caravan atop camels. Eight scale bars are just below. In the lower left corner is an advertisement, which explains that De L'Isle has introduced several geographic novelties and innovations in this map, which he explains at greater length in a separate publication.

The Mughal Empire, Arakan, and Tonkin

The map lays out the boundaries of the area's empires and polities, including the Persian Empire, China, and the political entities of India and Southeast Asia: the Mughals, Arakan, and Tonkin. The Mughal Empire began when Babur (r. 1526-1530), originally from Central Asia, established himself in Kabul, Afghanistan and marched south into India via the Khyber Pass. His descendants consolidated power and fought off rivals. Particularly under the rule of Akbar (r. 1556-1605), the Mughal Empire developed an imperial structure characterized by tolerance of religious differences and a competent administrative elite.

Later in the seventeenth century, the Mughal Empire developed not only as a center of arts and culture—the Taj Mahal was built during this time—but as a political and economic power house. By 1707, under the controversial ruler Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), the Mughal Empire reached its largest extent,



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encompassing much of the Indian subcontinent. A decade later, however, the empire entered into decline. Many of the areas that had been added by Aurangzeb were in open revolt and the dynastic line was in chaos. In 1719, four separate emperors ruled. The Mughal Empire began to lose land and influence, particularly in the face of Maratha opposition and the arrival of the British East India Company.

The kingdom of Arakan, or Ava as De L'Isle has it, was an Indianized kingdom nestled between the Indian subcontinent, the Bay of Bengal, and what was historically known as Burma. At a significant crossroads in trade routes to India, China, and Southeast Asia, Arakan was diverse religiously and ethnically. Islam came to the region in the eighth century. The Rakhine people migrated to the area around the ninth century; today, the area is Rakhine State in Myanmar. The area was also a site of conflict, with the Burmese and Bengal Sultanate just some of those who sought to control the strategic and economically-important region. Arakan was able to survive and had a formidable navy by the seventeenth century.

However, the Dutch and the Portuguese were also drawn to the trade center. The Dutch arrived in 1623; thirty years later, they completed a treaty that gave the Dutch East India Company duty-free trade rights. However, in 1665 the Mughals smashed the Arakan fleet, forcing the area into decline.

Tonkin (also Tongkin, Tonquin, Tongking) refers to the northern part of what is today Vietnam. It means "eastern capital," in reference to Hanoi. In the first millennium CE, the area for a time was under the control of China. After 938, however, it was independent and ruled by the Ngô, Đinh, Early Lê, Lý, Trần, and Hồ dynasties. Disputes with China continued, with Lê Lợi as a notable leader who fought the Ming dynasty and established himself in Hanoi in the mid-fifteenth century. By the seventeenth century, Westerners were frequent visitors to the area. They traded with the Trinh lords who were then in power. The French took the area as a protectorate from 1884 to 1945.

Lake Chiamay

Lake Chiamay first appeared on a map in 1554 when it was included on the *terza tavola* in the second edition of volume one of Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi*. Drawn by Giacomo Gastaldi, this map of South and Southeast Asia shows a massive lake from which four rivers flow; these are commonly interpreted as the Chao Phraya, Salween, Irrawaddy, and a branch of the Brahmaputra, but also sometimes include other rivers.

Reports of the lake came from two Portuguese sources: a geographer, João de Barros, and an explorer, Fernão Mendes Pinto. Pinto wrote letters describing a great lake. Barros likely saw these letters. He, in turn, compiled a history of Asia, *Décadas da Ásia*, that mentioned the lake; Ramusio included Barros' work in his own compilation of travel and exploration.



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Barros describes a lake that begat six rivers, but the map in Ramusio's work shows only four. However, Gastaldi's 1561 map, *Tertia Pars Asiae*, shows six rivers leaving and two entering the lake. After appearing in such an authoritative work, the lake was taken up by other mapmakers. Many used the Ramusio/Gastaldi model. Others innovated on the theme of this geographic chimera, as no such lake exists in the area.

Luis Jorge de Barbuda's 1584 map shows the lake farther to the north and with a different river pattern. His model was taken up by Hondius in *India Orientales* (1606) and thereafter by many others. The Jesuit Martino Martini gathered information from his travels in eastern and northern China to compile *Imperii Sinarum Nova Descriptio* (1655). Martini included the lake, but added the Red River and had the Chao Phraya originate from a different lake. Around 1570, other maps appeared that gave Lake Chiamay only two outlets.

As more Jesuit knowledge of Southeast Asia filtered back to Europe, mapmakers such as Guillaume De L'Isle began to question the veracity of the lake. It last was added to a map by Vaugondy in 1751; it was reprinted in map reissues, however, until at least 1783. By the early-nineteenth century, the feature was understood to be nothing more than a cartographic myth. By the early-twentieth century, expeditions had definitively proven that no such lake existed.

Detailed Condition: