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(Hong Kong) Attack on the Pirate Squadron of Chuiapoo, Off Tysami, China, on the night of the 28th of Septr, 1849. By H. M. S. Columbine. J. C. Dalrymple Hay, Esqr.

Stock#: 50774
Map Maker: Cree
Date: 1850 circa
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 21.5 x 15 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Well-Executed Lithographic View of the Battle of Tysami (now Mirs Bay), Between the British Navy and Chinese Pirates

This lithograph depicts the Battle of Tysami, the opening salvo in a brief conflict between the Royal Navy and the pirates near Hong Kong in 1848. The view shows a battle line of Chinese junks. Two of the vessels surround the British sloop *Columbine*, which is firing both broadsides at the surrounding enemies. Although seemingly alone, the *Columbine* seems to be holding its own.

Chia-a-poo and his pirate fleet

Pirates had marauded in South East Asia for millennia. After the European empires began trading in the East Indies and China, the pirates began preying on global, as well as local, trade. A large part of the piracy was fueled by the smuggling of opium. In 1799, the Chinese Emperor banned opium from being imported into his country. However, the British East India Company (EIC) illegally smuggled the drug into China in order to make up their trade deficit. The Chinese repeatedly requested that the practice be stopped by the British Crown, but the government refused to halt the lucrative trade.

Events came to a head in 1838, when war broke out. The First Opium War was devastating for the Chinese; 20,000 Chinese died as compared to 69 British. Scores of Chinese junks, made of wood and reliant on sail power only, were destroyed by British steamships. Humiliated, China had to agree to the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. The Treaty expanded foreign trade from one port to five, forced China to pay for the opium earnings lost during the war as well as the war itself, and gave Hong Kong to the British. In



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the wake of the conflict, piracy thrived.

Several pirate leaders emerged, including Shap'ng Tsai. His fleet patrolled the waters of Guangdong and Fujian Provinces. One of his lieutenants was Xú Yàbǎo. Also known as Chui Apoo, both men gained a reputation for ruthlessness and violence. Shap'ng had a large network of informants in the treaty ports and Hong Kong that sent news of rich cargoes and the locations of the Royal Navy ships. As long as the naval vessels did not directly witness an act of piracy, they were ordered not to interfere with pirates in foreign waters, a beneficial situation for the buccaneers.

The situation changed, however, when American and British ships began to be targeted. In addition, in February 1849, Chui killed two Royal Naval officers. The British in Hong Kong demanded a response. Commander John Charles Dalrymple Hay of the *Columbine* pursued the pirates and engaged them in several skirmishes. Hay was later joined by the naval steam ship *Fury*, boats from the *Hastings*, and two ships from the trading companies.

The British ships caught up with the pirates northeast of Hong Kong. The *Columbine* attacked first near Tysami on September 28, 1849, depicted here. Then, the *Columbine*, *Fury* and *Hastings*' boats renewed their assault at Bias Bay on October 1, 1849. For a view of that fight, see { { [inventory_detail_link\('50773','here'\)](#) } }. They destroyed 23 junks, some boats under construction, and two dockyards with stores. One British sailor was wounded, while 400 pirates were killed. They captured 100 junks which the pirates had been holding for ransom. 1,400 others fled, including Chui, who was wounded.

Hay and his ships were not done. They wanted Chui and his boss, Shap'ng Tsai. They were joined by a Chinese squadron under General Wang. On October 18, 1849 the combined forces attacked Shap'ng and his men again. Dr. Edward Cree, the artist who drew this illustration, said of the battle:

The firing of shot, shell and grape was too hot for the rascals and all the junks were in a blaze, and as many of the pirates as were able were swarming over the sides and swimming to the shore. Twenty-seven junks with a number of small vessels were destroyed. It is supposed that 400 of the pirates perished and the rest, upwards of 1,000 escaped to the shore...

Our old General, Wang, showed some pluck in jumping overboard from one of the boats and swimming to a junk and capturing three of the pirates himself. They were so frightened at seeing one of their mandarins that they made no resistance.

Although Chui was wounded again, both he and Shap'ng escaped. Many of those they left behind were murdered by the local peoples who had long suffered at the hands of the pirates.



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The pirate leaders did not continue their activities for long, however. Shap'ng accepted a pardon from the Chinese government. He received immunity for all past crimes and became an officer in the very Chinese navy he used to terrorize. Chui did not meet such an illustrious end. He was betrayed in exchange for a reward from the British by his own men. Facing transport, he hung himself in a Hong Kong prison in March 1851.

The antics of the pirates had a lasting effect on the region. Thanks to the battles between the Royal Navy and the Chinese pirates, the British set up a permanent China Station at Hong Kong. The Station was always manned by a fleet of vessels ready to pursue pirates.

Edward Hodges Cree

Dr. Edward Hodges Cree (1814-1901) was born on January 14, 1814 in Devonport, in southern England. Hodges studied medicine at the Universities of Dublin and Edinburgh. He graduated from the latter in 1837 and received his M.R.C.S and M.D. ten years after.

Cree joined the Royal Navy in 1837. His first post was as assistant surgeon to the *Royal Adelaide*, which was ordered to the Naval Hospital, Stonehouse near Plymouth. He then continued his career as a surgeon on board the *Volcano*, *Ceylon*, *Firefly*, *Rattlesnake*, *Vixen*, *Fury*, *Spartan*, *Eagle*, *Russell*, *Orion* and *Saturn*.

Throughout his career he visited many parts of the world, including China, where he witnessed some of the battles of the First Opium War (1839-42). Later, he participated in the campaign against Chui Apoo, which resulted in the painting upon which this print was based. He also saw action against the Russians in the Baltic and in the final days of the Crimean War, where he was present at the Siege of Sevastopol and the Battle of Kinburn.

Cree's journals begin when he joined the Royal Navy in 1837; they continue until 1861. He illustrated his journals with remarkable water color illustrations, which became the subject matter of printed illustrations, including this example. The journals are now held by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, UK.

This lithograph is a testament to an important moment in the history of British-Chinese relations, in the history of the British Empire, and in the work of a skilled painter whose works are now highly sought after.

Rarity

We locate only a single example of this view at the Royal Museums Greenwich and no auction or dealer



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Detailed Condition:

Minor foxing and soiling.