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(First Modern Sea Chart of Korea!) . Carte de la Presqu'Ile De Coree Dressee Mr. J. de la Roche Poncie . . . 1848

Stock#: 55680
Map Maker: Depot de la Marine
Date: 1848
Place: Paris
Color: Color
Condition: VG+
Size: 28 x 40 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

A Fine Example of the First Sea Chart of South Korea based on Scientific Surveys, by the French Dépôt de la Marine.

This fascinating large-format chart of what is now South Korea appeared at a critical time, when the Korean Kingdom was being opened up to foreign trade, and when a variety of world powers competed for influence over the strategic peninsula.

The chart reflects the leading role that the French Navy assumed in the modern mapping of Korea, the Dépôt de la Marine's work being the earliest chart of South Korea to be based on scientific surveys.



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The chart embraces the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, up to a point just north of Seoul, roughly comprising the territory of the modern nation of South Korea. Also shown, across the straits is part of the Japanese island of Kyushu and surrounding islands.

The overall outline of the coastlines is highly accurate, and much more so than on previous printed charts. The offshore areas feature copious hydrographic information, including bathymetric soundings, the locations of navigational hazards, and the marking of prominent coastal highlands. Emphasis was placed on approaches to ports that were potentially important for trade, such as the mouth of the Han River, while in other cases, good coaling or revictualing stations were sought out. In many places, such as on the south and east coasts, the quality and intricacy of the surveying is truly impressive.

Curiously, one will notice that in some inshore areas there is very little detail. This is due to the fact that in the 1840s, when most of the surveys on which this chart is based were conducted, foreigners (and especially foreign naval personnel) were essentially forbidden from visiting Korea. While European naval survey vessels sailing off shore, with their superior firepower, could be assured safe passage and the begrudging indulgence of local officials, it was usually too perilous to sail inshore, as running aground could have severe political consequences.

For the same reason, some locations have slightly absurd 19th century European names, like "Golfe de l'Imperatrice" (Gulf of the Empress), as having limited contact with the Korean people, the surveyors were generally ignorant of the long-standing Korean nomenclature. Moreover, the charting of the coasts of Korea was pieced together from a variety of different surveys, as the political situation made a systematic survey impossible.

Historical Overview

Korea had been ruled since 1392 by the Joseon Dynasty, which with great difficulty had preserved the kingdom's independence against China and Japan. The regime was understandably concerned about the growing presence of Europeans in East Asia, and largely forbade them to visit Korea or for Koreans to have direct contact with Westerners. However, the arrival of Christian books from Japan had caused Christianity to spread rapidly in Korea, and while the government frequently persecuted Christians, this largely proved fruitless. Western culture was permeating Korea, even in the absence of Westerners themselves.

The situation became more acute following the First Opium War (1839-42). The crushing British victory over China (which Korea had long placated by acting as a 'Tributary State') upset the established East Asian political order and emboldened Westerners to increase their presence in the region, even by force if



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necessary. It was in this context that European surveyors found the opportunity to map the coasts of Korea. The French, in particular, would frequently use the excuse of 'defending Christianity' to interfere in the internal affairs of Korea.

Charting The Coast of Korea in the 1840s

The "Nota" below the chart describes the various surveys on which the chart is based, although it would also have employed several sources not mentioned. In September 1846, French Admiral Jean-Baptiste Cécille sailed to Korea in order to obtain the release of an imprisoned Korean priest named Andrew Kim Taegon, although the priest was soon executed. However, this afforded Cécille's engineer, Jean de la Roche Poincé, the opportunity to survey significant sections of the west coast of southern Korea. The French vessel *Sabine* soon followed in its wake, continuing its work on these coasts.

Parts of the southern coasts and the island of Jeju (which the Europeans called 'Quelpart') were surveyed in 1845 by Edward Belcher, a British Royal Navy surveyor aboard the *HMS Samarang*, who had notably made the first ever survey of Hong Kong in 1841, and who would later go on to be a famous Arctic explorer. Belcher also located the port of Geomun-do off of the south coast of the mainland (called Port Hamilton by Belcher), which would be used as a coaling station by Europeans, and would later become the source of much controversy.

This chart was first issued by the Dépôt de la Marine in 1848, with the newly promoted Roche Poincé, working in the Dépôt's Paris drawing room, given the task of integrating the various surveys into a single chart (he would later become the Chief Engineer of the Dépôt).

Historical Importance and Rarity

This chart is a critical monument in the mapping of Korea, being the first sea chart of South Korea predicated on scientific surveys.

All editions of the chart are very rare. While we offered the 1887 edition of the chart in the past 10 years, this is the only example of the first state of the map we have ever seen on the market.

Detailed Condition: