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Hong Kong surveyed by Captn. Sir Edward Belcher, in H.M.S. Sulphur 1841

Stock#: 61663
Map Maker: British Admiralty
Date: 1843 (1857)
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 36 x 24 inches
Price: \$ 12,000.00



Description:

The First Printed Chart of Hong Kong

Rare edition of the first printed chart of Hong Kong, first published in 1843 by the British Admiralty, based upon the surveys of Sir Edward Belcher. This rare edition is from 1857.

Belcher's survey is the first large format map or sea chart of Hong Kong. On January 26, 1841, during the First Opium War, Edward Belcher and his men were the first of the British fleet to land on Possession Point at the north shore of Hong Kong. He subsequently made the first British survey of Hong Kong harbor. While the map is dated 1841, the first state of the map was not published until May 1843.

The map focuses on the waters around the island of Hong Kong and its surrounding islets, with the mainland to the north. Soundings blanket the waters, providing ample information for the navigator. There are also depth isolines to show safe waters, as well as tidal notes. Inland, high points are marked.

In comparing the map to an earlier 1846 state, we note changes in the following areas:

- Naming and improved coastline for Taihowan Bay and Sandy Bay
- Staunton's Valley named and improved
- Settlements in Victoria Bay are nearly doubled
- Settlement shown in Happy Valley
- Taitoo Id. is now Taitoo or Junk Island
- Adrich Bay, Sywan Bay and Little Sywan Bay are named with better detail along the coastline.
- Shicko and Tootewan are shown.



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European trade with China and the Opium Wars

The Portuguese made their way to China in the early sixteenth century. Previously, Europeans had traded with China via middlemen and over the Silk Road, although a few, like Marco Polo, supposedly visited China in the late medieval period. After a half century of tension and conflict, the Portuguese were eventually allowed to trade with select Chinese ports, but with severe restrictions. From the late seventeenth century, the Qing Dynasty loosened their restrictions on foreign trade somewhat, allowing a few ships each year from several Western Empires. However, Westerners were still not allowed within the walls of port cities and were restricted to factories near the waterline.

From 1757, the Chinese employed what became known as the Canton System, which made Canton the sole port of entry for Western goods into China. A cohort of Chinese merchants, the Cohong, mediated between the Chinese government and Western traders. Though the Western empires tolerated the Canton System, they did not like it and wanted more open access to Chinese goods, especially tea, and markets. By the late-eighteenth century, the British had accumulated a massive trade deficit as China had no interest in Western goods; they only accepted silver as payment. The East India Company began to bring opium from its Indian plantations to China instead of silver, causing a massive increase in the number of Chinese addicted to the substance.

Although the Chinese banned the import of opium, the trade continued. When China attempted to halt the trade in 1839, the British responded with force. During this conflict, the First Opium War, the British captured the factories in Canton in March 1841. The war ended with the Treaty of Nanking (1842), which forced the Chinese to allow British, and eventually other, traders to live in several Chinese ports unmolested. It also granted them the liberty to trade with whomever they chose. Additionally, Britain was granted a colony at Hong Kong.

Unsurprisingly, the Chinese government was dissatisfied with the Treaty of Nanking. The British too were not entirely satisfied, as they still did not have the ideal open trade conditions they desired. In 1856, the powers went to war again.

The Second Opium War began in Canton, where Chinese marines seized a British-registered ship, the Arrow, in October 1856. The British bombarded Canton in late 1856, causing many fires, and they took the city in late 1857, with the support of the French.

By mid-1859, the British and French had failed to take the important forts. However, by June, they were in the final stages of negotiating a treaty. The British insisted on signing the treaty at Tientsin (Tianjin), which meant passing up the Pei-ho river by the Taku forts. The Chinese suggested an alternative signing venue, but the British tried to force their way into the entrance of the Pei-ho. They lost three ships in the



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process.

The treaty was eventually signed, ending the first phase of the war, but fighting continued into the next year. Eventually, Anglo-French forces advanced and burned the Summer Palaces near Beijing, forcing the Chinese to capitulate. In January of 1860, just as this chart was published, at the Convention of Beijing, China granted diplomatic presence in Beijing to the Russian, French, and British. They also agreed to the payment of an indemnity and the cession of Kowloon to Britain. The opium trade was also declared legal and Christianity recognized.

Britain and Hong Kong

During the First Opium War, Britain occupied the Hong Kong area starting on January 26, 1841. This was also when naval surveyors began their work on an extensive survey of the waters nearby. The harbor was formally ceded to Britain on August 29, 1842. It was named a Crown colony on June 26, 1843. It became an important port from which Britain and its allies could harry the Chinese, including during the Second Opium War.

The city grew rapidly in the nineteenth century. In 1898, the British negotiated to extend the boundaries of the colony for defense. In the Second Convention of Peking, the British secured a 99-year lease on the extension. This lease began on April 16, 1899.

During World War II, the city was occupied by the Japanese. Under the oppressive regime the city's population more than halved, going from 1.7 million to 750,000. However, many returned after 1945, rebuilding and revitalizing the colony.

Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997. It remains an area of intense interest to geopolitics today.

Sir Edward Belcher

This chart was surveyed by one of the most notable surveyors in the Royal Navy in the nineteenth century. Belcher was born in Nova Scotia in 1799. His merchant father moved the family to Surrey in 1811. Young Edward joined the navy in 1812, serving in the English Channel and on the Newfoundland station. He was a midshipman on HMS *Superb* at the bombardment of Algiers in 1816.

Belcher made lieutenant in 1818. His surveying career began with his appointment as assistant surveyor in HMS *Blossom*, which sailed for the Bering Strait in 1825. He spent three years in the Pacific. Upon his return, in 1829, Belcher was promoted to commander and he led the HMS *Aetna* from 1830 to 1833, and



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in which he surveyed the coasts of west and north Africa. He then served on the home survey in the Irish Sea before being appointed to HMS *Sulphur*, which spent three years on the west coasts of North and South America.

He arrived at Singapore in 1840, when he was ordered to China as part of the First Opium War. In 1841, Belcher led one of the first surveys of the waters near Hong Kong. Belcher returned the *Sulphur* to England in 1842, after seven years away. During this cruise, Belcher was promoted to post rank and awarded a CB and a knighthood. He also published an account of his circumnavigation in 1843.

The now celebrated Belcher was given command of HMS *Samarang*, from which he was to survey the coast of China, now open to British trade. He was diverted to Borneo, the Philippines, and Taiwan, where he surveyed and fought pirates. En route back to England, he surveyed near the Cape of Good Hope as well. Back in England again by 1847, he published another voyage account the following year.

In 1852, Belcher was commanded to join the search for Sir John Franklin. This proved to be a mistake for Belcher, as his abilities as a survey commander did not translate well to the demands of the largest Arctic voyage to date. Belcher was given a squadron of five ships—HMS *Assistance*, HMS *Resolute*, HMS *North Star*, *Pioneer*, and *Intrepid*.

Belcher quickly became nervous about his men and ships. He ordered four of the five ships abandoned (all but the *North Star*) and returned to England in October 1854 with *Phoenix* and the *Breadalbane*, who had come to assist them. Upon his return, Belcher was court martialed for the loss of the ships and never received another command. He did, however, publish another account of his time at sea, this time bombastically titled *The Last of the Arctic Voyages* (1855).

While no longer in active command, Belcher did reach flag rank by seniority in 1861, vice admiral in 1866, and admiral in 1872. He was made a KCB in 1867. In retirement, Belcher turned to writing. He died in 1877.

Rarity

The chart was re-issued on a number of occasions over the next 40 years; however, all states of the map are scarce on the market.

This is the first time we have ever seen the 1857 state offered for sale.

Detailed Condition:

Dissected and laid on linen, with pastedown title on verso.
