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Accuratissima Totius Asiae Tabula . . .

Stock#: 86359
Map Maker: De Wit
Date: 1680 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 22.5 x 19 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Imagining the Boundaries of Asia

Fine example of De Wit's map of Asia.

When this map was published, the Dutch and English East India Companies had been trading in southern Asia for eighty years, while the Portuguese and European missionaries had been establishing entrepots in the area for a century. Their interactions built on centuries more of interaction across the Silk Road, adding to Europe's interest in and knowledge of the world's largest continent.

The map covers a vast landmass, from Bulgaria and the Black Sea to Japan, and sweeping south to the Maldives and Maritime Southeast Asia.

Much of the continent is familiarly shaped, but certain corners are intriguing. Northeast Russia is rounded, suggesting a Northeast Passage through Arctic waters. The vague outline of a large island, Yedso, is traced north of Japan. This island, a mis-portrayal of Hokkaido, was part of a series of fanciful lands that stretched across the North Pacific on early modern European maps (see below).

In the southeast, a large strait seems to separate New Holland (Australia) from Java, Timor, and Papua New Guinea. This would be a bold cartographic statement, as many contemporary mapmakers opted instead to suggest that Carpentaria, part of New Holland, and the islands of Southeast Asia were connected or separated by only the narrowest of passages. The Spanish knew there to be a strait between the lands, as



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Torres, a Spanish captain, had sailed through it in the early seventeenth century. However, the Spanish suppressed this information; it was only uncovered by Alexander Dalrymple following the British seizure of Spanish Manila in 1762.

An examination of [De Wit's world maps](#), made around the same time as this map, reveals this supposed strait to be something of an illusion. The eastern neat line cuts off Carpentaria, which elsewhere De Wit has nearly touch Papua New Guinea. All that is seen here of Australia is *Arnhems land*. This refers to the *Arnhem*, a Dutch East India ship, which sighted the area in 1623.

There is much detail inland, including towns and natural features. Some of these are quite distinct, including the Great Wall of China with a forbidding desert nearby. In what is today Bangladesh and northeastern India, there is a large lake called Chiamay, which, like Yedso, has mythical connotations (see below). Finally, there are also important political entities included here, such as the Mughal Empire (see below).

The seas have several ships in them, including Chinese junks and European sailing vessels. These decorative elements are accompanied by a large, ornate title cartouche in the lower left corner. At the center of the vignette is a turbaned man in rich clothes. Before him is a man offering him strings of pearls; around them are others unloading bales of trade goods while a camel, monkey, and parakeets look on. The cartouche shows some of the common associations that European made with Asia: trade, luxury, and exotic animals.

Detailed Condition: