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(East Indies Atlas) The English Pilot. The Third Book. Describing the Sea-Coasts, Capes, Headlands, Straits, Soundings, Shoals, Rocks, & Dangers. The Islands, Bays, Roads, Harbors and Ports in the Oriental Navigation.

Stock#: 89182
Map Maker: Seller

Date: 1675
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 21 x 17 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Second Known Example of the True First Edition of the Rarest of the East India Chart Books--the Third Book of Seller's English Pilot

The present atlas is a newly discovered second known example of the true first issue of John Seller's *English Pilot The Third Book . . . Oriental Navigation . . .*, his sea atlas of the coveted East Indies and their spice trade. Intended at the time to be the third book of a comprehensive multi-part sea atlas of the world, this *Third Book* is now an exceptional rarity, so much so that until the discovery of this example, prior scholars have been unable to properly describe and collate the book.

The *Third Book* is the first English atlas devoted to the East India Trade, with maps and sailing instructions for transit between England and East Asia via the Indian Ocean and the Singapore Strait. Presented here in spectacular full original color (colored virtually identically to the only other known example in the British Library), the present example includes one additional color plate, which consists of eight views of important islands and the Cape of Good Hope.

Seller's *Third Book* includes a decorative engraved title page, letterpress title page (with date), a group of charts covering the route by sea from England to the East Indies, and a seemingly unfinished text, which abruptly ends with page 24. Seller's ambition had been to publish a sea atlas that covered the entire world. The *Third Book* was his attempt to delineate Asian navigation. As noted by Verner & Skelton, the *Third Book*:

comprises six folded sheets (24 pages) of text, gathered in twos and paginated 1-24. The contents are: pp. 3-10 (sig. A2^r-C1^v), "The Nature and Properties of the Winds and Moussons in the



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Navigation from England to the East Indies', and two chapters; p. 11 (C2^r), a table of latitudes in the Atlantic Ocean; pp. 12-14 (C2^v - D1^v), sailing directions to the Cape of Good Hope; pp. 15-24 (D2^r - F2^v), sailing directions from the Cape to Surat, thence to Sumatra (Achin and Priaman), the Sunda Strait and Bantam, and from Patani, on the east coast of Malaya, to Pulo Condor on the route to 'Firando' (i.e. Hirado, near Nagasaki, in Japan).

The "abrupt" ending is illustrated by the presence of the catch-world "this" at the end of the text in the copy at the British Library, indicating the intention to continue with another page of text. However, in the present example, the word "this" has been removed by abrasion of the paper and the word "FINIS" added as a pastedown to the bottom center of the text, apparently as a contemporary recognition that no further text was forthcoming in this example.

The two surviving examples of the *Third Book* include a selection of seven of Seller's sea charts. It would seem that Seller had intended to add more charts to the *Third Book*. However, the engraved title page was never used again. Verner & Skelton did identify several later atlases which incorporated the incomplete text (24 pages, with the same incomplete ending), as well as the letterpress title page, but these typically include a mix of later states of the Seller charts (bearing the imprint of Seller, Coulson, Atkinson, Fisher and Thornton) or entirely new maps issued by John Thornton. While the 1675 date is unchanged on the letterpress title page, the presence of the newly engraved John Thornton charts suggests that the atlases were created after 1695.

John Seller's production of an all English sea atlas was an historical milestone. When Seller began his project, English navigators depended on Dutch charts, including for their own shores. While Seller eventually adopted Dutch copperplates, the sea atlas was produced in London and used extensively by English sailors for decades. For example, the inventory of Alexander Dalrymple, the first Hydrographer of the Royal Navy, recorded that he owned two examples of the *Third Book* in his collection in the 1780s.

Charts

This example contains the following charts, **all in the first state:**

1. *A Chart of the Coasts of Barbarie Gualata Arguyn & Genehoa from C. Vincent Described by John Seller Regis Hydrographus*
2. *A Chart of Guinea Describing the Seacoast from Cape de Verde to Cape Bona Esperaca*
3. *[Plate of Coastal Profiles] The E: Side of S. Helena... [etc.]*
4. *A Draught of Cape BONA ESPERANCA By Iohn Seller Hydrographer to the King*



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5. *A Chart of the Seacoasts from the Landsend of England to Cape Bona Esperanca By John Seller Hydrographer to the King (with a Water Weg shown of the coast of Africa)*
6. *A Chart of the Western part of the EAST INDIES With all the Aejaent Islands, from Cape Bona Esperanca to Cape Comorin By Iohn Seller Hidrographer to the King and are to be Sold at the Hermitage in Wapping*
7. *A Chart of the Eastermost part of the EAST INDIES With all the Adjacent Islands from Cape Comorin to Iapan By Iohn Seller Hydrographer to the King and are to be Sold at the Hermitage in Wapping.*
8. *A Chart of the Tartarian Sea from Nova Zemla to Iapan By John Seller Hydrographer to the King At the Hermitage Stairs in Wapp & in Exchange Alley in Cornhill London*

The English Pilot

Seller's *English Pilot* project was a pivotal moment in the English history of cartography, as well as one of the most ambitious undertakings by a mapmaker in this period.

Seller wished to undermine Dutch dominance in the publication of sea charts. A navigational instrument maker, Seller also made charts at his shop at the Hermitage Stairs, Wapping, which was under the "Sign of the Mariners Compass and Globe." He intended to offer his customers English-made charts of the entire world, divided into regional volumes. He laid out the problem as he saw it and his intentions in a postscript to his *Praxis Nautica: Practical Navigation* (1669):

Courteous Reader, These may be to inform you, that whereas there being frequent complaints made that the English hath not as yet manifested that forwardness in the promotion of things of public concernment, for the general benefit of Navigation, as the Hollander hath done, in the making of Waggoners and Charts for the Sea, and things of that nature, although we come not behind them in any Theoretical knowledge, yet for want of the publick Informations of the Experiences of able men of our Nation, as to the Depths and Soundings, Dangers, and making of the form of the Land where they have been and things, of that nature, which doth much reflect upon the honour of our noble, spirited Countreymen, and gives advantages to our neighbours the Hollanders to be furnishing us with Waggoners, Charts and Draughts, and such things, whereby great treasure of Money is transported out of our Native Countrey to the enriching of them, and to the impoverishing of ourselves.

Therefore, (worthy Gentlemen) I do hear make known unto you, that I intend, with the assistance of God, and am at the present upon making (at my own cost and charge) a Sea Waggoner for the whole



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World, with Charts and Draughts of particular places, and a large Description of all the Roads, Harbors, and Havens, with the Dangers, Depths and Soundings in most parts of the World, which work was never yet performed by any; and therefore my humble request is to all ingenious persons, who are desirous for the promotion of the publick good, for the honour of our Nation, and for their own worthy commendations, that they would be pleased to communicate any of their Informations and Experiences of things of that nature above specified unto me, they faithfully exposed to the use and benefit of the public, and shall much engage him, whose desire is to be serviceable to his Country.

Seller enthusiastically started the project, releasing his first volume in 1671. It covered routes north and east of the Thames estuary. The book was well-received and earned Seller a royal privilege that granted him the use of the title "Hydrographer in Ordinary" and protection against Dutch waggoner imports for thirty years.

However, Seller's new atlas was still dependent on old Dutch charts. Daunted by the costs of compilation and copper, Seller instead acquired Dutch plates from de Wit, Danckerts, and Visscher, among others. He then altered their titles and text into English.

Even this cost-saving measure was not sufficient to keep Seller's dreams afloat. To continue with the project, Seller had to seek help from his colleagues in the map trade. In 1672, John Wingfield and William Fisher helped to issue *The Coasting Pilot*, for example, as well as the second volume of *The English Pilot*, which covered navigation south and west of the Thames estuary.

In 1675, Seller had a busy year. He published the *Atlas Maritimus*, a one-volume work, as well as the unfinished third and fourth volumes of *The English Pilot*. The third covered the route round the Cape of Good Hope to the East Indies, while the fourth covered the east coast of the Americas and the Caribbean.

Seller never returned to the fragments of the third and fourth books. It would be a number of years before John Thornton, and later Samuel Thornton and Mount and Page, would move the idea of an English sea atlas of the world forward and finally release their own third (East Indies), fourth (America), and fifth (Indian Ocean, China Sea, Australia, Pacific) sea atlas volumes.

Rarity

The atlas is exceedingly rare. The present example is one of only two known examples of the 1675 edition of the *Third Book* with Seller's early charts, with nearly identical original hand coloring.



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After consulting and verifying Verner and Skelton's 1970 census and the listings on ESTC, we can confirm that there are only two (and not five) known examples of the 1675 text with early Seller charts, forming a true first edition of the Third Book:

- The present example
- Maps.C.8.b.10. at the British Library. This example has seven colored charts, meaning the present example has one more chart and is the only one to have all first state charts.

We also note the following atlases, which include the letterpress title page, but lack the decorative title page and contain later maps (Only 1 chart, the Cape of Good Hope, seems to have been retained). These include:

- British Library (Maps.C.25.d.19., 14 charts, uncolored)
- National Maritime Museum (SEL 017.1, 11 charts, uncolored).

Verner and Skelton also list an example at the Admiralty Library, which we have confirmed is longer in their collection (This is almost certainly the NMM example, as they both are listed as having eleven charts, and the relevant staff indicated it was likely transferred to NMM). The example listed by Verner & Skelton in the collection of the Cruising Association (18 charts) is now held at the Cambridge University Library ("24p. : charts; (F⁰) Item no. 2 in volume Hanson.bb.46.").

As such, we can confirm that of the Verner & Skelton examples, 1 is a duplicate entry, 1 is the original 1675, and the others are later composite atlases with primarily different charts (and a few later states).

Relevant Auction and Dealer Records:

- RBH locates a single example of the 1675 edition at auction in the past one hundred years (Sotheby's, August 2, 1933, lot 395, "maps, boards; sold as an atlas, not subject to return").
- RBH also lists a much later 1711 *Third Book* (a Thornton publication), which was sold in 2010, at the Piasa sale of the Citadelle Vauban Museum Collections, for €155,438.
- Maggs of London recently offered a copy of the 1675 text of Seller's *Third Book*, but without the charts and without the decorative title page.

Final Summary

While the Verner & Skelton's bibliographic records created some confusion as the surviving examples of



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this work, the present example seems to have helped unravel the mystery:

- Only 2 examples of the 1675 John Seller *English Pilot, Third Book* survive, the present example and the example in the British Library.
- The 2 surviving examples are identical in content and color, with two noteworthy differences; (1) the present example has an extra plate with 8 island views and (2) the present example includes a pastedown at the bottom center of page 24 of the text with the word "FINIS" printed on the pastedown, and the catch-word "This" erased. By contrast, the British Library example (and all other later examples of the text) do not have the pastedown and survive with the catchword "This" untouched.

The foregoing suggest that the present example may have a greater quality of completeness and a bit more of John Seller's intentions for the book in 1675 than the example at the British Library. At a minimum, it is one of two surviving examples of the first British sea atlas intended for the East India trade.

Detailed Condition:

Folio. French, 19th-century ¼ vellum with gilt decorations over speckled paper boards.