



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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(Allegories of Continents) Africa. America [with:] Europa. Asia.

Stock#: 95743
Map Maker: Poncia & Co.
Date: 1815 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: Good
Size: 14 x 10 inches (each)
Price: \$ 2,500.00



Description:

Color Allegorical Prints of America, Europe, Africa and Asia

Two beautiful hand-colored prints with allegorical figures representing four continents: Africa and America paired together on one sheet, with Europe and Asia on the second sheet. The production of these prints is interesting: the same generic religious engraving appears on the verso of each sheet, very much in the manner of Dutch catchpenny prints (*centsprent*) of the early 1800s. It would appear that A. Poncia, who was active as a printmaker in Amsterdam during the first two decades of the 19th century, repurposed unsold catchpenny print sheets to produce the present two allegorical prints of the continents. The America/Africa image is largely a steal from a ca. 1807 print celebrating the end of the Atlantic slave trade (see below).



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America: an Updated Indian Maiden

America is depicted here as an Indian princess with an elegant feather headdress and dark cape. She holds a stylized American flag on a tall pole, which replaces the bow and arrow commonly associated with earlier Indian Maiden personifications of America. America does retain a suitably exotic setting, with a palm tree and leopard in the immediate background. The 13-star flag helps date these prints to sometime soon after the achievement of American independence.

Celebrating the End of the Slave Trade

Standing with America is a dark-skinned regal figure representing Africa. Instead of a flag the African wields a long spear. The pairing of America with Africa in this instance is more nuanced than mere Eurocentric fascination with exotic lands might suggest. Indeed, the composition appears to be taken from a British print by W.B. Walker which was issued to celebrate the 1807 abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. The present Dutch plagiarism omits the overt references to the slave trade found in the original print, i.e the portraits of William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, which had originally appeared below the leopard - here replaced with a blank panel - and the document held by the African prince has been erased - the earlier print version had a text announcing: "Slave Trade Abolish'd 1806".

The companion print depicting Europe and Asia, is of a piece with the America and Africa print and shows a stylized female Britannia figure holding a globe in one hand, with a fleur-de-lis-topped-scepter in the other, symbols of Europe's superior power and command of the seas. Her background is a ship docked near a fortress, with barrels and an anchor on the beach. Asia is represented by a turban-wearing Asian prince, perhaps from the Indian Subcontinent, holding an open book. An attendant holds an umbrella over the prince. A large elephant peeks in from the right side of the print, while a pagoda can be seen in the distance.

Rarity

As a pair these two allegorical prints are very rare in the market, particularly with such nice original color.

Detailed Condition:

Two mezzotint and engraved prints, with full original hand color. Versos each sheet printed with the same catchpenny Biblical scene print, by A. Teste. Some toning and a few stray holes (3 small holes in the Europa/Asia print in lower margin and upper left corner affecting background only; two tiny marginal pinholes in Africa/America print). The old color on the allegorical images is very nice indeed. Overall condition is quite good.