



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[Mauritius] Kaart van het Eyland Mauritius.

Stock#: 98417
Map Maker: Valentijn
Date: 1726
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 21 x 17 inches
Price: \$ 1,200.00



Description:

The First Detailed Map of Mauritius

Finely colored large-scale chart of Mauritius from François Valentijn's *Oud en Nieuw Oost Indien*, engraved by Joannes van Braam.

This map is the first detailed mapping of the island. It features key Dutch landmarks, notably the fortress Frederik Hendrik in the southern region, emphasizing the island's strategic importance to the Dutch East India Company during the early 18th century. It is notable for its detailed rendering of two key natural harbors: Port de Warwick (now Port-Louis) in the Northwest and an unnamed harbor in the Southeast. The map also documents the island's natural resources, which made it an attractive location for Dutch expeditions.

Mauritius became a crucial stronghold for the Dutch East India Company, particularly during its Golden Age. Wybrant van Warwijck was the first Dutchman to set foot on the island on September 18, 1598, after straying from the rest of the Tweede Schipvaart fleet on its way to Madagascar. He named the island after Prince Maurice of Orange-Nassau and reported it as an ideal refreshment station for the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The VOC initially took advantage of the island's two natural harbors for their larger ships. The Northwestern harbor, Port de Warwick, was a sheltered bay, while the Southeastern harbor was protected by islands and reefs. Moreover, Valentijn recorded that Mauritius had a particularly stormy season around February.



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Although the island was abundant in natural resources like birds (most notably, the dodo), turtles, and manatees, it was not until the 1630s that the VOC found it necessary to establish a permanent settlement, largely to prevent colonization by the French or British. Forests of ebony trees and plantations of lemon and orange trees—initiated by Cornelis Matelief—added to the island's appeal. However, Dutch colonization also had its adverse effects. Ships inadvertently introduced rats to the island, leading to the release of cats as a countermeasure. Despite these efforts, a string of challenges, including cyclones, droughts, and food scarcity, made the island increasingly untenable for permanent settlement.

Valentijn's map serves as a detailed and informative record of this period, capturing both the island's natural endowments and its geopolitical significance. Valentijn, a VOC officer, likely had access to the Company's manuscript records, making his map a particularly accurate representation of the island during Dutch colonization.

By 1710, the Dutch chose to abandon Mauritius, conceding the territory to the French East India Company, which later renamed it Isle de France. The island would eventually pass to British control in 1810. Valentijn's map encapsulates this period of Dutch occupation, marking a complex era defined both by maritime exploration and colonial challenge.

Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien

After spending sixteen years in the East Indies over the course of several voyages, Valentijn returned to his native Dordrecht. There, he finished his history of the East Indies, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*. The book was divided in five parts spread over eight volumes. It had over a thousand illustrations, including some of the most accurate maps of the region published to that date.

For the text, Valentijn borrowed heavily from contemporary works. To create such detailed maps and descriptions, Valentijn most likely also had access to the VOC's archives. These archives were closely watched and very few scholars or officials gained entry, particularly if they were likely to publish the contents of the repository. Indeed, Valentijn was lucky to see his work published at all.

Today, Valentijn's work is regarded as a veritable encyclopedia on maritime Asia. It is considered a useful collection of sources, from the eighteenth century and earlier, drawn from the VOC and personal papers. Some of his maps, particularly those of Australia, are drawn from manuscript sources now lost, making his history the lone surviving record of endangered knowledge.

Detailed Condition:

Folding map. Few repairs to the rightmost vertical fold.