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Iaponiae Nova Descriptio [Korea as an Island]

Stock#: 10761
Map Maker: Jansson
Date: 1636
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 18 x 14 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Jansson's Early Map of Japan, Showing Korea as an Island

Fine example of one of the earliest European atlas maps of Japan, which also shows Korea as an island.

The Jansson Japan is a delicate and skilled reworking of the Mercator-Hondius atlas map of Japan. It is based on the first separately-published map of Japan in Europe, by the sixteenth-century missionary Luís Teixeira.

The present map depicts Japan in a recognizable yet distinct form. The country emphasizes the horizontal thrust of the archipelago, lacking its northeasterly curve and the entire northern island of Hokkaido. Such a longitudinally-stretched representation of Japan was common in maps of the seventeenth century, showing Europe's limited amount of geographic information about the islands.

To the west of Japan is Korea, depicted here as a long, thin island. Pyongyang is to the north, labeled as *Tauxem*. The southern point of Korea is indicated as *Punta dos ladrones*, or Cape of Thieves; the *Ilhas dos ladrones*, below it, are similarly named for the rumored heavy pirate presence in the area. The Korean interior, lacking the place names, rivers, and mountains present in Japan, instead has a note explaining that the geographic status of the place is unknown, but the people are cruel and barbarous.

Japan's main landmass is surrounded by smaller islands as well as the large southwestern island of Kyushu (*Fongo Bungo*) and its neighbor to the east, Shikoku (*Tonsa*). On the Chinese coast, there are more recognizable locations, such as Nanjing (*Nanquin*), Laizhou (*Laicheu*) in Shandong Province (*Xanton*), and



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Ningbo (*Nimpo Liampo*).

Jansson also includes decorative features that set the present map apart from those it is based upon. Detailed engravings of sailing ships are present both northwest of Japan and south of it. These ships differ from Jodocus Hondius' edition of 1606, as the ship northwest of Japan sails in the opposite direction, and the European ship to the south replaces Hondius' Chinese junk. Jansson also depicts a sea monster south of Korea that is more finely detailed than Hondius' rendition.

Early mapping of Japan in Dutch atlases

As stated above, the present map is based on a 1592 manuscript map by Portuguese Jesuit Luíz Teixeira, *Iaponiae Insulae Descriptio*, which was published in Abraham Ortelius' famed atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, in 1595. It was the first map of Japan to be separately published in Europe and, later, the first map of Japan in an atlas.

However, the direct predecessor of this map is Jodocus Hondius' 1606 map, *Iaponia*, which Jansson reworked to include the features discussed above. This 1606 map was published in the first Amsterdam edition of Gerardus Mercator's important atlas. Mercator's atlas was published in various forms for nearly a century. The atlas was published for the first time in 1595, the year after Mercator's death.

At first, the atlas was not extremely successful, as it competed with *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. However, after Jodocus Hondius got possession of Mercator's plates from his heirs, he published the 1606 edition of the atlas with thirty-six new maps, including *Iaponia*. New editions in various languages were published regularly over the next several decades, with control passing to Jodocus' son Henricus after the former's death in 1612.

Jan Jansson became joint editor of the atlas in 1633, and gained sole control after 1638. It was around this time that the present map was published in the atlas, whose name was changed under Jansson to *Novus Atlas*, and later, as volumes were added, *Atlas Major*. After Jansson's death in 1664, his son-in-law Johannes van Waesberghen assumed control of the atlas, which continued to be published until 1681.

Korea as an island

One of the most striking features of the present map is its depiction of Korea as a long, narrow island. This reflects Europeans' lack of knowledge of the peninsula in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While Portuguese missionaries and traders were active in both China and Japan by the middle of the sixteenth century, they had little to no direct interaction with Korea.



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For his 1592 manuscript map, Teixeira likely had direct access to Japanese sources who provided accurate geographical information for that country. He also likely drew on the letters of Jesuit missionaries in Japan at that time. He may have had access to the sketches of Portuguese cartographer Ignacio Morera (or Montera), who visited Japan in 1584 and after. However, sources for information on Korea were even more scarce. The first European to visit the country was Father Gregorio de Cespedes, accompanied by a Japanese friar, in 1593, a year after Teixeira drew his map.

There are a few European maps of this period that correctly identify Korea as a peninsula—a 1588 map by Diogo Homem and a 1630 map by Luíz Teixeira's son, João Teixeira. A much more accurate map of this entire region by Martino Martini was published by Joan Blaeu in 1655, by which time the Portuguese trading presence in neighboring areas allowed for increased knowledge. Despite this, Korea continued to be depicted as an island on many maps until the late eighteenth century.

European Interaction with Japan

The fact that the present map replicates the same limited geography of Japan and Korea more than forty years after Teixeira's original map demonstrates the decreasing contact between Europeans and Japan starting in the late sixteenth century.

European navigators, mainly from Spain and Portugal, first arrived in Japan in 1542 or 1543. Portuguese Jesuit missionaries were active in the country beginning in 1549, with the arrival of Jesuit priest Francis Xavier. While the missionaries were at first tolerated by the Japanese, their forceful proselytizing made it increasingly difficult for Christianity to coexist with existing religions. Thus, the first expulsion of missionaries took place in 1587.

With their presence again leading to conflict in the early seventeenth century, shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu issued an edict in 1614 to suppress Christianity in Japan. With the issue still not settled, a series of three Exclusion Decrees issued in the 1630s to diminish non-Japanese influences effectively banned Christianity and isolated the country from Europe. The first decree, issued in 1633, only allowed licensed Japanese ships to trade overseas. The second decree, issued in 1635, prevented Japanese nationals from leaving Japan or returning from other countries. The third decree, issued in 1639, expelled the Portuguese from Japan completely, limiting entry to Chinese and Dutch merchants. This isolation would continue for more than two hundred years, until the end of the Edo period.

These historical events contribute to the present map's depiction of a fascinating, if flawed, geography that includes Korea as an island.



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Detailed Condition:

A bit of extra creasing and some tape residue from an old framing on the verso, but still a very nice old color example with wide clean margins.