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Chart of the Coast of China, Extending from Hong Kong to the River Yang-Tse. With Plans on a Large Scale of the Principal Harbours &c. Compiled chiefly from the Surveys made by Capts. Kellett and Collinson, R.N. . . . 1855

Stock#: 72470
Map Maker: Imray & Son
Date: 1855
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 49.2 x 38.4 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare first edition of James Imray & Son's large-scale sea chart of the coast of China, from Hong Kong to Shanghai, one of the most important maps of China published in the 19th century.

This large and finely engraved production is very rare, yet was one of the most important sea charts of China available during its era. It details the coastlines from Hong Kong and Macao up to the mouth of the Yangtze River, and includes Formosa (Taiwan). It is augmented by insets the River Min, Amoy Harbor (Xiamen), Tongsang harbor, Hoo-e-Two and Chimmo Bays, the mouth of the Yangtze (depicting Shanghai), and the Chusan Archipelago (Zhoushan), and Hong Kong, the latter being an especially fine early map of that harbor, which only became a British colony in 1843.

The present sea chart was the authoritative map of this critical stretch of the Chinese coastline used by the Royal Navy during the Second Opium War (1856-60). Much of this conflict was fought around the harbors depicted on the chart, and the war resulted in Britain gaining control of Kowloon, which was added to the Colony of Hong Kong. The work is based on the pioneering scientific surveys conducted by the Royal Navy, updated with new information supplied by British mariners. Notably, it features the surveys of Hong Kong and the Pearly River Delta executed by Captain Henry Kellett in 1840-1. Much of the rest of the coastlines are the result of surveys done by Captain Sir Richard Collinson from 1840 to 1845. Importantly, Collinson conducted the first accurate survey of the mouths of the Yangtze and Huangpu Rivers, including the passage into the port of Shanghai.



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James Imray (1803-1870) was the leading publisher of sea charts in Britain during the mid-19th century. Imray's charts were prized throughout the world by both naval officers and merchant mariners for their unparalleled accuracy and the precise, elegant style of their engraving. Imray was consistently able to source the most up to date hydrographic intelligence from the British Admiralty, as well from as commercial pilots and sea captains who had returned to Britain from overseas.

Imray first established himself as a bookseller and bookbinder at 116 Minories Street, London, where he shared premises with the chart maker Robert Blachford. In 1836, Imray and Blachford forged a full partnership as Blachford & Imray. During this period, the chart industry was dominated by the firm of Norie & Laurie, however, Imray proved to be a brilliant marketer, ensuring that his company quickly gained market share. In 1846, Imray bought out Blachford's and, in 1850, relocated to larger premises just down the street to 102 Minories. In 1854, Imray was joined by his son James Frederick, and the firm took the name James Imray & Son. By that time, the Imray firm was the world's leading private producer of sea charts. The present chart represents the first edition, with subsequent editions being issued in 1864 and 1886.

This chart is very rare and survives in remarkably fine condition for a working sea chart. To our knowledge, this is the third example of the first edition of the chart to appear on the market in many years. We are aware of only one example of a later edition (1864) appearing in dealer's catalog during the last 25 years, with no examples listed on OCLC. We previously sold the 1855 in 2013.

Detailed Condition:

Blueback chart. Long tear from the left edge of the map to about the midway section professionally mended on verso with closely-matched blue paper. Minor strip of toning at the right edge. A few scattered foxing marks. Good to VG.