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Insulae Indiae Orientalis Praecipuae, In quibus Moluccae celeberrime sunt

Stock#: 32387bp
Map Maker: Hondius
Date: 1630 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 19 x 13.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine Example of Decorative Map of the East Indies from the Mercator-Hondius Atlas

This map showcases European knowledge of the East Indies, an area of increasing importance to Europe from the early-sixteenth century onwards. The focus is on the lucrative Spice Islands, a region of great importance, but one about which little was known at the time. The map was the most detailed rendering of the East Indies at the time and one of the only regional maps to mention Francis Drake's landings there.

The map's coverage extends from the Philippines to Timor and from Sumatra to New Guinea. The title cartouche in the upper right corner covers part of China. A quarter compass rose is tucked into the lower left corner, which is connected with rhumb lines to a complete compass rose in the eastern portion of the map. A lively battle is being carried on in the upper right corner. Two European ships are firing upon each other, a visual representation of how hotly contested this area was in the early modern period.

The sandbanks and shoals around islands are marked, as are major settlements on the islands. The New Guinea coast is partially obscured by a scale in the lower right corner, while a decorative text box in the sea east of the Philippines proclaims the rich spices available on the Moluccas Islands, including cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and ginger.

In the lower right corner, next to the scale and a sea monster, is a note about Java Minor, discussing the various locations chosen for the island by geographers. Java Minor was first mentioned in European literature in the *Travels* of Marco Polo. Polo identified Java Minor and Major; the first referred to the island of Sumatra (or Sumbawa) and the latter described Java as the largest island in the world. However,



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due to a scribal error in Book III of Polo's *Travels* in the 1532 Basel and Paris editions, Java Minor was recorded as 1,300 miles south of Java Major. This caused confusion and debate on the part of geographers until the early eighteenth century with some using the name *Java Minor* (*Petite Jave*) for New Holland and others choosing it for Sumatra, Sumbawa, or Java.

Polo is not the only explorer mentioned on the map. Of particular note is the comment *Huc Franciscus Dra. Appulit*, which appears by the unknown southern coast of Java, representing Drake's landing during his circumnavigation in 1577-80. Hondius knew of Drake's voyage first hand, as he was a religious refugee in London from 1583 to 1592 and an acquaintance of the navigator.

Another historical note is a cross mark in the interior of Borneo, showing one of the places traversed by the Portuguese Dom Manuel de Lima. This betrays Hondius' Portuguese source base, in this case the portolan charts of Portuguese cartographer Bartolomeu Lasso.

European trade and the East Indies

As indicated by the sources used for the maps, the Portuguese were some of the first Europeans to exploit the resources of the Spice Islands. They were joined by the Spanish, who were interested in stretching their empire from the eastern to the western Pacific. The Moluccas, discussed in a text box here, were considered a particular prize, as they were the world's only source at the time for nutmeg and cloves. Spain and Portugal eventually agreed to grant Portugal control of the Moluccas in the Treaty of Zaragoza in 1529, but the islands remained hotly contested for the next two centuries.

By the early seventeenth century, the Dutch and English were jockeying for position in the region. In response to the Dutch Revolt, the Spanish King Philip II closed the Lisbon spice market to Dutch and English traders in 1585, spurring both countries to seek direct trade with Asia. The English East India Company (EIC) was founded in 1600, followed in 1602 by the Dutch equivalent, the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC). More heavily capitalized than its English counterpart, the VOC aggressively moved into areas of Portuguese influence. This map reflects that Dutch influence at its impetus.

The VOC's charter granted it power over trade with lands from the Straits of Magellan to the Cape of Good Hope. The Company closely guarded geographic knowledge about this area, but it also needed maps of its new territories, a cartographic catch 22 that led commercial mapmakers, like Hondius, to gain privileged information they then published in their works.

The Mercator-Hondius Atlas



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One of Hondius' most successful commercial ventures was the reprinting of Mercator's atlas, where this map appeared. Gerard Mercator died in 1594 without having completed his most ambitious project, an atlas of the entire world. His son and grandsons completed the work and released its final volume in 1595. The younger Mercators released another edition in 1602, but they then sold the plates to Hondius in 1604. Hondius included this map in his first edition in 1606 and in subsequent editions; there were roughly 50 editions in various European languages in the seventeenth century.

Jodocus Hondius the Elder (1563-1612), or Joost de Hondt, was one of the most prominent geographers and engravers of his time. His work did much to establish Amsterdam as the center of cartographic publishing in the seventeenth century. Born in Wakken but raised in Ghent, the young Jodocus worked as an engraver, instrument maker, and globe maker.

Hondius moved to London in 1584, fleeing religious persecution in Flanders. There, he worked for Richard Hakluyt and Edward Wright, among others. Hondius also engraved the globe gores for Emery Molyneux's pair of globes in 1592; Wright plotted the coastlines. His engraving and nautical painting skills introduced him to an elite group of geographic knowledge seekers and producers, including the navigators Drake, Thomas Cavendish, and Walter Raleigh, as well as engravers like Theodor De Bry and Augustine Ryther. This network gave Hondius access to manuscript charts and descriptions which he then translated into engraved maps.

In 1593 Hondius returned to Amsterdam, where he lived for the rest of his life. Hondius worked in partnership with Cornelis Claesz, a publisher, and maintained his ties to contacts in Europe and England. For example, from 1605 to 1610, Hondius engraved the plates for John Speed's *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*. When he acquired the Mercator plates, he added 36 maps, many engraved by him, and released the atlas under Mercator's name, helping to solidify Mercator's reputation posthumously.

Hondius died in 1612, at only 48 years of age, after which time his son of the same name and another son, Henricus, took over the business, including the reissuing of the Mercator atlas. After 1633, Hondius the Elder's son-in-law, Johannes Janssonius, was also listed as a co-publisher for the atlas.

Detailed Condition:

Old Color example. Minor soiling and offsetting.