



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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明末疆域形势 [Late Ming Borderland Situation]

Stock#: 36676
Map Maker: Mass Culture Society Publisher
Date: 1960 circa
Place: Taipei, Taiwan
Color: Color
Condition:
Size: 44 x 30.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Remarkable Series of Taiwanese Classroom Hanging Maps Covering the Modern History of China

Striking series of maps, The Modern History of China Hanging Map Series [明末疆域形势], published in the 1960s in Taipei. The colorful and graphically-compelling maps tell the story of China's modern history from a Republican perspective from the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the Second World War.

The map series was published by the Mass Culture Society Publisher [大众文化出版社], a short-lived publisher that specialized in educational materials, under the direction of Taiwan National University Professor Lin Shoukang [林寿康].

Used as teaching aids in Taiwanese schools and universities, the series constructs a narrative of Chinese history that supported the political project of the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek in the 1960s. Overall, the series includes small scale maps, depicting macro-level developments affecting the Middle Kingdom, while two large-scale maps and numerous insets provide local-level details.

This map: Late Ming Borderland Situation

This map shows the Ming empire during its slow but inexorable decline (1449-1661). The most significant features of the map are the major threats to the empire, depicted as lines and dots and labelled in the legend in the bottom left corner.

- The horizontal red lines that run the length of the China coast represent raids of the “wokou” or



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dwarf pirates, raiders of various nationalities that effectively controlled the waters and shoreline of China during the fifteenth-seventeenth centuries.

- The red hashmarks in China's northeast represent the areas harassed by the Manchus, who in the seventeenth century would conquer the Ming and establish the Qing dynasty.
- The red dots that cover much of northern China represent the extent of control of Li Zicheng, a peasant rebel who established his own short-lived dynasty in the 1640s.
- Finally, the black dots correlate to the region conquered by another peasant rebel, Sichuan-based Zhang Xianzhong.

Taken together, these features show the Ming dynasty's disintegration through internal revolt and external threat.

Publishing context of the series

The 1960s were a fascinating decade in the history of the Republic of China. Taiwan was on the front line of the global Cold War, and cross-strait relations were tense. The Chinese Nationalist Party, led by an aging Chiang Kai-shek, maintained martial law on the island, and the Modern History of China Hanging Map Series reflects the political climate in Taiwan at the time. The series had to be approved by the Ministry of the Interior, indicated by the registration number given in fine print at the bottom of each map.

Born in Henan on the mainland, Professor Lin Shoukong, the historical advisor to the publisher, fled with the Nationalists to Taiwan in 1949, becoming one of the Republic's most important intellectuals. He published several textbooks that were standard in Taiwanese schools, and it is likely that teachers used these maps in conjunction with one of these textbooks.

The keystone to the Nationalists' political project during this period was their assertion that they were the legitimate rulers of all China, and by extension of Taiwan's education system, and these maps in particular served to inculcate this notion in the minds of students.

Viewed in sequence, the series begin at the ethnically Han Chinese Ming Dynasty's high point, with an inset depicting Zheng He's Voyages throughout the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. The fall of the Ming and the rise of the Qing make up the second sub-section of maps. A majority of the maps depict developments during China's "Century of Humiliation" (1839-1945), when weak, ethnically Manchu rulers allowed foreign powers to chip away at Chinese sovereignty leading to fragmentation and immiseration of the once-mighty Chinese empire. The final maps in the series depict the rebirth of China under Sun Yat Sen and the heroic defense of the nation against Japan by the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek, omitting the victory of the Communists in the Chinese Civil War.



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The sequence implies a teleology in which the Han people, brought low for centuries by foreign oppression, would regain control of the Middle Kingdom. The maps thus reinforced the founding myth of the Chinese Nationalist Party in the minds of students facing the political uncertainties of 1960s Taiwan.

These maps are remarkable artifacts from a short-lived publishing house. They reflect an important period in Chinese and Taiwanese history.

Rarity

As these maps were ephemeral and used in a classroom setting, their survival is uncommon. We have located only three complete sets, two in Taiwan schools and one in the National Library of Australia.

Detailed Condition: