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Plan of Singapore Town and Adjoining Districts from actual Survey by John Turnbull Thomson, Govt. Surveyor, Singapore . . . 1846

Stock#: 45642am
Map Maker: Thomson

Date: 1846
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 28 x 23 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

The First Modern Survey of Singapore Town -- Known In One Recorded Example

Fine example of John Turnbull Thomson's exceptionally rare map of Singapore, the first large map of the city based on modern surveys. Published in 1846, Thomson's Plan shows the development of the town and the land use of the adjoining districts in exceptional detail.

John Turnbull Thomson was an accomplished British civil servant, surveyor, and topographical artist. He began his career at 17, working for the East India Survey, and only three years later he was appointed Government Surveyor at Singapore. There he was responsible for allotment and topographical surveys of the island of Singapore and its dependencies, and the hydrographic survey of the Straits of Singapore. He was also the architect of the Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca, and several other iconic buildings around Singapore.

Thomson's *Plan of Singapore Town* is incredibly detailed. Buildings are depicted in three classes: Grounds containing Contiguous Houses, Grounds containing detached houses, and Grounds containing wooden and thatched houses. Bio-geography is pictorially represented, divided into Nutmeg Trees, Cocoonut [sic] Trees, Fruit Trees, Mangrove Swamp, and Coral Reefs. The map also communicates the local agriculture; expansive sugar plantations and young coconut groves occupy the areas north of the city, Blakan Mati Island has large "Pine Apple Gardens", and in the west is a smaller "Coffee Garden."



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Very many public and ecclesiastical buildings are noted. On the southern edge of town a Chinese temple and "Mahomedan Mosque" stand next to one another, and farther north is an "English Church" and "Catholic Church". Interestingly, Thomson was the architect of the Masjid Hajjah Fatimah. Malay and Chinese burying grounds are noted. Many government buildings are also noted.

Thomson's "Remarks" provide a very helpful view of the status of Singapore at the time:

Singapore Island on which this Town is situated was taken possession by the British on the 8th of February 1819, and it then contained 100 to 200 Inhabitants who subsisted by fishing and piracy. Under British rule the Settlement rapidly rose in importance and has now become the great Emporium for European trade in the East India Archipelago.

He goes on to note the population, imports and exports, and number of houses.

John Arrowsmith's name is in the lower right corner of the map. John was the inheritor of the Arrowsmith mapmaking dynasty, which he took over in 1839. During the 1840s he was perhaps the most important mapmaker in the United Kingdom.

The map was followed by a large manuscript plan of the city in 1849, titled: Map of Part of the Island of Singapore comprising the Town and Districts, surveyed into Allotments. That map gained worldwide attention when, in late 2015, Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, presented Singapore Premier Lee Hsien Loong with a reproduction of the map, as a state gift.

Thomson's *Plan* represents an absolute treasure trove of information about early Singapore. In its beauty and quality of execution, the map stands alongside the most important urban cartography of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Rarity

The map is extremely scarce. No originals recorded in OCLC.

We have uncovered no records of the map ever appearing on the market. Another edition was issued two years earlier, in 1844, and it is equally rare.

Detailed Condition: