



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[Uncontacted Indian Ocean Stone Age Tribes.] Remarks on Different Bays, Coasts & Harbours; Taken on board His Majesty's Frigate Vestal.

Stock#: 50323
Map Maker: White
Date: 1787
Place: v.p.
Color: Pen & Ink
Condition: VG
Size: 12.75 x 8 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

A Fascinating and Important Early Ethnographic and Hydrographic Study in the Indian Ocean, including a Detailed Account of a 1790s Attempt to Contact the Stone Age Andaman Islands Tribes.

Unpublished autograph manuscript journal of two voyages in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, 27 December 1787 - 7 July 1791.

Folio (12.75 x 8 inches), contemporary vellum (foot of backstrip with loss).

4 folding manuscript maps; 58 manuscript coastal profiles (many to a sheet). 75 pages.

{{ inventory_image_link('50323c','Image+of+the+manuscript+map+of+the+Andaman+Islands.') }}

{{ inventory_image_link('50323b','Image+of+the+manuscript+map+of+the+Cape+Verde+Islands.') }}

Andamanese Contact

The most important and engaging part of this journal relates to Captain White's repeated, and eventually fruitless, attempts to establish contact with Andaman Island natives. The Andaman Islands are famous today for their still-"uncontacted" Stone Age tribe, the Sentinelese, who live on North Sentinel Island. That island is shown in this journal in a watercolor and ink profile and on one of the manuscript charts: "A Plan of the Islands to the South of the Grt. Andaman Taken in passing through by C White. 1790". Given that Great Britain had only established its first base in the Andaman Islands in the year preceding White's arrival, it stands to reason that this record of his interactions with Andamanese is one of the first ever.



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From the first Making the land to the time of Anchoring tho we passd very close to all the Islands we did not Perceive a Single spot clear of wood & jungle the whole face of the Country appears coverd with lofty trees closely rooted together & the space between their trunks covered with heavily(?) jungle which renders any Passage amongst them difficult. More particularly as the savage Disposition of the Natives makes it dangerous to land without being strongly armed as whenever they feel a superiority they do not fail to attack you and if inferior their activity and use to the Jungle makes their retreat(?) very safe.

Captain White recounts attempts to ply the islanders with gifts:

Sometimes they will come unarmed with vast Confidence to receive small presents of Knives, Nails, Ironwork & cocoa nutts of which they appear remarkably fond. Hence I conclude they have none growing in the Island.

In the following passage, Captain White recounts an attempt to kidnap two young islanders. It was common practice among the Royal Navy to capture uncontacted tribespeople, treat them well, offer them gifts, and release them after a few days so that they could relate their positive experiences to their compatriots. This attempt did not go so well:

A remarkable Instance took place while we were here which displays their character for Entreprize in a strong light. Mr Blair who resides chiefly on Chatham Island was in our baye with Sir Richard Thackan and XXX several of the Natives in the Rocks landed among them & After several attempts to understand them two Boys came into the Boat. In their way back supposing the Boys might be alarmed & to convince them that we meant no Injury to them they again landed, fronted(?), to the shore this however they did not seem inclined to and it was determined to carry them to Chatham Island for the night, excite their Curiosity, treat them with civility, make them presents & return them safe the following Day but during the Night the Boys made their Escape and tho several Canoes were on shore easy to get away in they took a large Europe boat with them which two Europeans accustomed to the oar would scarcely be able to pull ahead. In this they Escaped and tho we searched with all our Boats next Day in Every Part of the Harbour five miles up we could not find the least trace of the Boat. we observed however that the Natives universally fled ever where tho the Proceeding Day they had shown so great a Confidence. While the Boys remained on the Island they appeared Perfectly easy & happy, eating & drinking hearty of tea the European Custom & endeavouring to imitate the manners of the English they pronounced the English in repeatory (?) words very accurately, seated themselves in chairs, spread butter upon their bread, drank



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out of Tumbler Glasses and managed the Knife & fork as well as if they had been constantly used to it.

Captain White writes that he does not believe the islanders to be cannibals, as commonly asserted:

Notwithstanding the General Prejudice & XXX the very few Articles for eating which their Islands produce. I cannot give into the Idea that the Inhabitants are Cannibals. My reason for this assertion is a Circumstance which took Place previous to our arrival the Particulars of which We learnt . four Black men had gone fishing from the little Island & not returning the Second Day a search was made for them which terminated in finding two of the Bodys (so scarified as not to Distinguish them & particular Parts of the Flesh cut off & carryd away perhaps trappings of Victory like the Scalps in America. the others have not as yet (5th June) been heard of tho probably carryd up in the Interior Parts of the Country by the Natives had they been Cannibals as asserted they would have taken away the Bodyes also. The Natives are perfectly naked rubbing their Bodyes over with mud which gives them a most horrid appearance Not unlike the dead Body of a White man. Even the women are naked Except a few who have a leaf hung with a string over the Privities.

In the last account of the islanders, Captain White writes about another attempt to take young islanders on board, learn about their habits, show them technologies (apparently they were all fond of iron implements), feed them spirits, and release them. However, upon returning one boy, they see a young girl being beaten by older islanders for trying to interact with them. Captain White is disheartened about prospects of ever establishing a better relationship with the Andamanese:

...in one of Our fishing Excursions I landed to endeavor to have some intercourse with the Natives two of whom Calld to us & beckoned us to approach their Language appears Nervous but bore no analogy to anything I ever heard before having made them Presents of fish & two Knives I left them not doubting the Next Day they would appear in the Same Spot I accordingly again went & agreeable to my Expectations found a Girl & Boy there the same I had seen the preceeding Day. The Girl having now had a Basket & net which she held out for anything we had to give. I threw two brass rings into the net which she put on each little finger & fish which I gave the Boy the same to her having some spirits I poured some in my hand & drank it to convince them that it contained no harm. they immediately held out their hands & drank it with XXX satisfaction beating the stomach with an Exclamation of Pleasure. by this means I raised(?) the Boys spirits to such a Degree that he expressed a Wish to come with us & the Girl took her leave. We continued Our Course up the Coast & landing upon a



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Small Island hauld the Suni with great success the boy assisting with Eagerness to get it on shore after we had finished our fishing I again return'd to the spot where I took him up meaning to give him an opportunity of Landing if he pleased. but he didn't Appear to have the smallest Inclination to go away I therefore brought him on board. We were much surprised that on coming on board He shewd no sort of astonishment & curiosity at seeing any thing except Iron of which all the Natives are particularly fond. We sufferd him to walk about Unmolested & in his XXX I observed him much delighted with a Mauling spike. Not willing however to dispose of a piece of iron so large I with difficulty got it from him he now began to show signs of fear & to ease him we XXX the boat & giving him some Biscuit & old Iron nails landed him at the Place he XXX out not a little with his acquisitions Notwithstanding this treatment (end 29, start 30) which we XXX might open some kind of Intercourse with the Natives we never appear (?) and saw them but at a Distance the little Girl indeed one Day attempted to come to the boat but was severely beat for it by two of her Countrymen from whence I concluded that the visit we had was by stealth & not countenanced by the Elder People, their great backwardness will perhaps put an eternal bar to our ever being acquainted with their Manners Customs Religions Ceremonies or XXX Government The hats we saw were scarcely weatherproof and very poorly constructed in all their partys with arms they are headed by a man particularly marked having his Bow & Arrow, attended by a Boy carrying the remainder of his Arrows but of these Partys we saw but few.

Later, when contrasting the inhabitants of Nicobar with the Andamanese, Captain White refers to the manner of the Andaman inhabitants as "Savage if not inhuman".

Detailed Condition:

Backstrip with small loss at foot of spine; a few inconsequential excision from pages. Largest folding map with some clean separations at folds.