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A Description of East India Conteyning th' Empire of the Great Mogoll

Stock#: 55173
Map Maker: Baffin
Date: 1619 (1632)
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 14 x 11 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Rodney Shirley Copy of the First Modern Map of India. One of Two Known Copies of the Map.

Fine dark impression of William Baffin's map of India, which is widely regarded as the first English map of India and the single most influential map of India published in the 17th Century.

Baffin's map represented a significant leap forward in the mapping and geographical understanding of India, significantly improving on earlier printed maps of India by Mercator and Linschoten. The differences are especially noteworthy in the interior of Baffin's map. The Indus River is shown in a relatively accurate fashion for the first time. Western and most of central India are mapped in a relatively accurate format for the first time. One of the most prominent features which first appears on the Baffin-Roe map is the *Longe Walke*, the route lined with trees between the palaces at Agra and Lahore.

This remarkable map was a result of the collaboration of Sir Thomas Roe, the East India Company's ambassador to the Mughal Empire and William Baffin (1584-1622), the famous explorer, who is best known for his two attempts to find the Northwest Passage while in the employ of The Company of Merchants of London. The work likely began during their time together on Roe's return to England following his time as ambassador. Following Baffin's final attempt to locate the Northwest Passage, he was employed as a surveyor by the East India Company from 1617 until his death in January 1622. In his initial assignment, he sailed to Surat in British India and received accolades for his charts of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.



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While serving as Master's Mate aboard the *Ann Royal* in 1619, Baffin and Roe were able to collaborate in the preparation of a manuscript map of India, the original of which is now in the British Library. The map was later printed in London by Thomas Sterne in 1620 (engraved by Elsracke). The original manuscript would have been completed prior to February 1620, when Baffin again left England aboard the *London*.

Baffin's map includes a representation of the Jahangir's dynastic seal at the top right hand corner. showing the geneology of the Mughal dynasty. The seal, consisting of the ruling emperor's name in the center surrounded by his Timurid ancestors, was an important symbol of Mughal imperial authority and was noted by several contemporary European travellers. It was used on official orders (farmans). Baffin's map provides a highly accurate English translation.

The preparation of a map of India had first been a directive given to East India Company sea captain Nicholas Downton in 1614. Downton had been instructed to discover information sufficient to prepare a map of India, but had not obtained the necessary information to complete this task. Sir Thomas Roe, arriving the following year, compiled geographical data on 37 cities between 1615 and 1617. In a letter to Roe, Lord Carew wrote

Let me entreat you, to be carefull to make the mappe of the Mogolls territorie, as you have intended; itt wil be a worke worthye of your selfe and adorne your travell and iudgement, and leave to the world a lasting memorie when you are dust.

By October 1617, Roe had created a geographical compendium of India. The resulting manuscript map, created by Baffin, would become the basis for most printed maps of India for the next 100 years. There is some question as to what role Roe played in the drafting of the map, as a number of the places located on the map do not correspond well to the information laid down in Roe's geographical compendium and at least one commentator has speculated that "Baffin had a hard--sometimes impossible--task in reconciling the statements occuring in the list and in locating his provinces from the meager information available . . ."

The Baffin-Roe Map, as it has now become known, was published in 1619 and was sold as a loose sheet upon Roe's return. One single, dated example has been preserved in the King's (George III) Topographical Collection, held in the British Library. It is not known who published it but an imprint on the lower left advertises that it was available for purchase at the premises of Thomas Sterne, Globemaker, in St. Paul's Churchyard.

The present example of the map is the second known example of the map, as described below. Samuel Purchas later included a reduced sized version of the map in his 1625 *Hakluytus Pothumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes*, a collection of travel writings, based on the work of the famous geographer, Richard Hakluyt



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(1552-1616). The first edition of the map includes a second title cartouche and credit, which reads as follows:

Indolstani Imperij Totius Asiae ditissimi descriptio: Ex indagatione Illust: Dom: Tho: Roe Equitis Aurati in Regia Mogollanica Legatum agentis Illustrata: Anno Sal: 1619. Vera. quae visa; quae non veriora. Are to be sold in Paul's Church yarde: by Thomas Sterne, Globemaker. William Baffin deliniavit, et excudebat. Renold Elstrack, Sculp.

Rarity

The first state of the Baffin map survives in a single example at the British Library (King's (George III) Topographical Collection, 115.22).

A second state of the Baffin, dated 1632, had been known to exist in the collection of Rodney Shirley, printed from the same plate as the 1619 state of the map, but "Printed for Henery Tombes and Beniamin Fisher and are to be sold at the Tablut without Aldersgate." As noted below, this is the Rodney Shirley copy.

Provenance: Rodney Shirley, purchased from Jonathan Potter in February 2018.

Detailed Condition:

Evidence of early rubrication and highlighting of towns, etc. Restoration in the top right corner, including some facsimile in the blank area about and to the right of the insignia. Minor restoration above Nartabam at the bottom right corner. Several minor printer's creases expertly flattened.