# Barry Lawrence Ruderman
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## Asia ex magna orbis terre descriptionie Gerardi Mercatori Desumpta studio et industria G.M. Iumioiris

**Stock#:** 57016
**Map Maker:** Mercator

**Date:** 1610 circa
**Place:** Amsterdam
**Color:** Hand Colored
**Condition:** VG
**Size:** 18.5 x 14.5 inches

**Price:** SOLD




**Description:**

***Fine Map of Asia from Mercator's Famous Atlas***

Mercator's map of Asia showing the continent in detail and offering a fascinating cartographic snapshot of late-sixteenth century geographic thought.

The centrality of the continent is emphasized in the map's composition; parts of Europe, Africa, North America, and Australia are all featured. There are also two islands near the North Pole, part of Mercator's four-island Arctic theory.

Asia itself is thickly blanketed with towns and cities, rivers, mountains, and political entities. Perhaps one of the most interesting details is an absence; Korea is not included here, a reflection of how little was known of the region by Europeans.

Southeast Asia highlights the spice islands, especially the Moluccas, and the rich trade opportunities so valued by Europeans. Farther south, two peninsulas of *Terrae Australis Pars* loom near the frame of the map. New Guinea is depicted as a large island to the east, incomplete in its outline.

In America there are several place names. Anian is a transfer of a toponym first mentioned by Marco Polo; the nearby Strait of Anian was thought to separate Asia and America. Another place name, Quivira refers to the Seven Cities of Gold sought by the Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1541. In

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1539, Coronado wandered over what today is Arizona and New Mexico, eventually heading to what is now Kansas to find the supposedly rich city of Quivira. Although he never found the cities or the gold, the name stuck on maps of southwest North America, wandering from east to west.

The curved projection also features a handsome strapwork cartouche and a large sailing ship.

The map is based on Mercator's celebrated world map of 1569 and was included in his atlas, which debuted in 1595. The map was later updated when the plates were acquired by Jodocus Hondius in 1606. Most notably, he added Korea as an island.

**Taprobana and Sumatra**

Sumatra is also labeled as Taprobana. Taprobana was what the Greeks called Sri Lanka, but late-medieval and early modern geographers also applied the toponym to Sumatra and various phantom islands that wandered the Indian Ocean. Some of the confusion stemmed from the caginess of merchants with the location of many islands. Sri Lanka and Sumatra, for example, were both rich in resources, especially spices, and those who had access to these resources were loath to share the bounty.

There were also many rumors about the island in Europe. The author of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* said that Taprobana was part of the kingdom of Prester John, as well as that the island had mountains of gold guarded by man-eating ants. He went on to explain that the island was the home of the Sciapodes, or men with only one large foot, a detail he borrowed from Greek sources.

By the mid- and late-sixteenth century, however, when this map was published, Sumatra was in frequent contact with European traders. The Portuguese were the first to arrive, in 1512, followed by the Dutch and the English at the turn of the century. The Dutch managed to convince the English to give up their claims in treaties in 1824 and 1871. While resistance was a constant, especially in Aceh, the Dutch only left the island after WWII.

**Detailed Condition:**
Old Color. Minor toning and foxing, primarily in the blank margins.