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Chili

Stock#: 63846op
Map Maker: Blaeu
Date: 1640
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 19 x 14.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The First Large Atlas Map of Chile, from the Dutch Golden Age

Fine, old-color example of Blaeu's map of Chile. This is the first large atlas map of the Spanish colony, although it also shows land controlled by the Mapuche and never conquered by the Spanish.

As with several other of Blaeu's atlas maps of South America, this map is oriented with east at the top, showing the considerable length of the coastline of this thin country. The Andes dominate the visual field, emphasizing just how mountainous is this area.

The map stretches from the north (left) with the river and valley of *Copayapo*, or Copiapo, which is in the Atacama Desert, the driest desert in the world. Farther south is the port of La Serena and *Val Parayso* (Valparaíso), the sea port linked to the capital, Santiago, which is in the fertile Central Valley, along the Mapocho River. Much farther south are other settlements including Imperial, Valdivia, and Osorno. On the island of Chiloe is the town of Castro, the southernmost outpost of the global Spanish empire. In all, there are more than 50 place names included on the map.

In addition to the geography, there is a pleasing decorative aspect to the map, as was typical of Blaeu productions. The cartouche is large, with ribbons, curving strapwork, and fruit peeking out the bottom—a reference to the rich agriculture that dominated the Chilean economy at this time. In the center is a large compass rose, with another half-rose and rhumb lines out to sea. The triple scale bar in the upper right is also framed ornately, with a legend situated just below it. At sea, there are two ships and two sea monsters; the latter appear ready for a duel. Finally, a small cartouche in the bottom left declares this to



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be a work by Willem Blaeu.

Along with the Hondius map of Chile, Blaeu's map is the earliest large format atlas map of Chile to appear in a commercial atlas. The atlas was Willem Blaeu's *Atlas novus*, one of two series of expanding atlases developed by the Blaeu publishing family. Blaeu first released his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, sive, Atlas novus* in 1635, achieving a career-long ambition of releasing a competitor to the Mercator-Hondius-Jansson atlas. After Willem's death in 1638, his son Joan continued to add to the *Atlas novus*, until this was eclipsed by his monumental *Atlas maior* (1662-1672).

The Spanish in Chile

Chile was initially settled 10,000 years ago; these people became several indigenous groups, including the powerful Mapuche. The Mapuche, while without central organization, successfully resisted Inca incursions, just as they would resist later Spanish efforts to take their land.

The Spanish first came with Ferdinand Magellan, in 1520, and Diego de Almagro, in 1535. Both were in search of gold and resources and both left quickly. Formal colonization began in 1540 with Pedro de Valdivia. He founded Santiago in early 1541, acknowledging a shift from a search for precious metals to an emphasis on the rich agricultural potential of the Central Valley (although gold and silver would never be far from their minds).

The Spanish made slow gains to the south, but they faced fierce and sustained resistance from the Mapuche and Huilliche, among other groups. While the Spanish did manage to establish weak fortified towns in the south, including Imperial and Valdivia, these were isolated outposts. Insurrections in 1553 and 1598 were huge threats to Spanish rule. The latter resulted in the abandonment of all Spanish settlements below the Bio Bio River (number 3 in the legend) except Castro.

Indeed, when this map was published in the 1630s, the towns of Valdivia, Imperial, and Osorno had been abandoned for three decades. They were little more than ruins. This map, therefore, projects Spanish power where there effectively was none. Eventually, the Spanish returned to their former towns—to Valdivia in 1645, for example, but to Osorno only in 1792.

This map, therefore, shows a fascinating and tenuous moment in the history of the Spanish in Chile and was also the first large atlas map to show the colony to a European audience.

Detailed Condition:

Old Color.