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Tabula Geographica Hydrophylacium Asiae Majoris exhibens, quo Omnia Flumina sive proxime sive remote per occultos maeandros Originem suam Sortiuntur

Stock#: 68661
Map Maker: Kircher
Date: 1665
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 16.5 x 13.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine, Distinctive Map of Asia by Polymath Athanasius Kircher

Fascinating map of Asia, illustrating the theories of the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher, from his *Mundus Subterraneus*. It was one of the earliest thematic maps.

This very unusual map depicts southern Asia from the Arabian Peninsula to the Philippines (with Manila named, one of the few cities to be named on the map). It includes the East Indies—Borneo, Celebes, Java, and Sumatra—which were major hubs for trade with European overseas empires. It extends north to show part of the Caspian Sea and Japan.

A simple compass rose lies in the Indian Ocean, but in the lower left corner there is a more elaborate title cartouche. It features angels, putti, and the god of the sea, Neptune. A distinctly fishy frame explains that this map is concerned with the hydro-geography of the continent.

While the map includes terrestrial details—like trees and hills—and place names (especially in Ceylon, or Sri Lanka), its primary purpose is to share hydrographic information, specifically to illustrate subterranean hydro-networks. These include surface rivers and lakes, fed by a huge subterranean lake in the area of Nepal and Tibet.

Mundus Subterraneus



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The map comes from Kircher's famous work, *Mundus Subterraneus*, which explored the subterranean world. Kircher was deeply interested in the unseen workings of the underground world. He had researched volcanoes extensively, observing eruptions at Etna and Stromboli. He also had himself lowered into the crater of Vesuvius to view the effects of an eruption, only years after the volcano had killed over 4,000 people in an explosion.

These observations led Kircher to develop theories about the world's underground, arguing that subterranean passages fed the world's volcanoes via sulphurous spirits. There were supposedly rivers and streams under mountains ranges; these linked with the world's oceans. The swirling waters fed the fires of the volcanoes, while the fires kept the water from freezing; mountains were reservoirs for these forces.

The center of this global network was a massive whirlpool off of Norway (there actually is a whirlpool system in this area, the *Moskenstraumen*), where water entered the system. It exited near the South Pole. Giants had once lived in these underground chambers, and dragons still supposedly dwelled there.

These ideas were gathered in *Mundus Subterraneus*, a two-volume treatise and atlas published in Amsterdam in 1665. Vol. I explained "the admirable structure of the terrestrial globe", while vol. II told people how to capitalize on the world's resources. Together, the books laid "before the eyes of the curious reader all that is rare, exotic, and portentous contained in the fecund womb of Nature."

In addition to ideas about spontaneous generation of animals and diatribes against mendacious alchemists, as well as ideas about the location of the lost island of Atlantis and the source of the Nile, there are charts showing the currents of the subterranean passages. These were some of the first charts to show oceanic currents, albeit in a fantastic way. The books also included a series of lunar maps and continental maps like this one that showed the connections between subterranean and surface waterways.

Detailed Condition: