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Tartaria sive Magni Chami Imperium

Stock#: 67784
Map Maker: Merian
Date: 1638
Place: Frankfurt
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 14 x 10.5 inches
Price: \$ 275.00



Description:

An attractive antique map of China, Tartary, and Central Asia. This map covers a vast area in intriguing detail which reflects European knowledge about the world at the time during which it was made. The detail shown includes many rivers, mountain ranges, cities, and more. The Great Wall of China appears prominently. The map includes an attractive title and scale cartouche.

The locations of named features on this map are not always correct, and our modern idea of the world may be difficult to recognize in this work. Mongolia lies at the edge of a great northern sea, labeled the Oceanus Tartaricus. We can deduce that this body of water is the Arctic Sea, as we find St. Michael Archangel [Arkhangelsk] along its western portion at the mouth of the "Dsina" [Dvina]. It seems that Mongolia has simply been placed too far north, and Siberia completely omitted.

This transition from a relatively well-understood western portion of the map to a more inaccurate eastern portion can be found throughout the work. The Volga and Black Sea are well mapped, but then looking eastwards the Ganges is a long north-south river which originates in the Tian Shan, and China is far from accurately portrayed. The mythical Island of Korea is alluded to, with the northernmost tip of an almost unseen island stretching off of the Chinese coast.

The map provides many additional points of curiosity. Karakitay is shown, ostensibly representing the Western Liao empire. This dynasty had become extinct in 1218 with the Mongol conquests but was widespread in sixteenth and seventeenth-century European maps. "Turrus lapidea mons" is labeled, showing a tall mountain. This is a reference to Ptolemy's "Stone Tower," supposedly a prominent landmark on the silk road.



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These facets of the map make for a curious and fascinating depiction of northern Asia. The extensive annotations and depictions provide boundless historical insights into European mapping.

Detailed Condition:

Some toning spots along margin.