



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

China

Stock#: 74615
Map Maker: Hondius
Date: 1606 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 18 x 13.5 inches
Price: \$ 2,400.00



Description:

Highly Influential Early Map of China by Jodocus Hondius

Fine example of this important early map focused on China. Jodocus Hondius' map of China was part of the Mercator-Hondius atlas and was groundbreaking in its time as one of the first and most influential maps to focus on the region.

The map is full of intriguing details including the Great Wall of China, Korea as an island, an illustrated annotation about Chinese land sailing craft, a cartouche on Japanese crucifixion of Christians, and early information on the northwestern coast of North America.

The full extent of this map covers Japan, Korea, parts of India and the Philippines, and the northwestern edge of North America. Hondius most likely used Portuguese mapmakers Jorge Luis de Barbuda's 1584 depiction of China and Luis Teixeira's 1595 depiction of Japan to inform this map, executing it with his characteristic illustrative style, including the zig-zag moiré pattern engraved on the seas and engaging historical and cultural claims.

A large cartouche at top left contains the map title. A double set of scale bars in German miles and Spanish leagues are included at bottom right of this map, centered in a decorative cartouche. The map border contains cardinal directions in traditional Latin (*Septentrio*, *Oriens*, *Occidens*, and *Meridies*) oriented with north (*Septentrio*) at the top.

Another impressive decorative cartouche, at the righthand side of this map, illustrates the crucifixion of a



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Christian by the Japanese. The cartouche is fittingly embellished with a cross at the top. The accompanying annotation describes how Christians were persecuted for their beliefs in Japan, which would surely have fascinated Hondius' contemporary audience and contributed to the dramatic impact of this map. This cartouche most likely refers to the martyrdom of 26 Christians in Nagasaki in 1597, an event that eventually led to the closing of Japan to the West.

The body of the map is embellished with a fanciful sea creature, as well as a European sailing vessel and a Japanese sailing vessel. An annotation below the Japanese sailing vessel notes that it uses wooden anchors.

The map contains a number of place names in China, and portrays its physical geography, with special attention to mountains, rivers and lakes. There is a dramatic depiction of the Great Wall of China, which is noted as serving to separate China from Tartar invasions from the north.

To the north and northwest of China, the map notes a large region of Tartars, and to the west, India is described as "*India intra Gangem*", "*India extra Gangem*", and "*Bramas Regnu*" ("realm of the Bramas"). A large lake, Chiamai, is shown as the source for five rivers running into the Bay of Bengal.

At far left of this map a Chinese land-sailing vessel is shown, along with an annotation describing it as an "ingenious" form of travel invented by the local population. Although now understood to be a misunderstanding or exaggeration by early travel accounts—including that of Marco Polo—of wheelbarrows outfitted with sails that would help carry heavy loads with the aid of wind, the idea of these land-sailing ships particularly intrigued Europeans.

In "*Sancii*" province, a round lake is shown with a figure on a tree in the middle of it. An annotation to its left claims an incredible flood in 1557 submerged a city and several villages at the site of the lake, and the sole survivor was one child, found floating on a tree.

Korea as an island

Korea is depicted as an island, but the accompanying annotation questions whether it is insular or connected to the main continent. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to gain firsthand knowledge of Far East Asia in the sixteenth century, and Portuguese mapmaker Luis Teixeira's map of Japan with Korea as an island was a popular source of information on the geography of the region in the early seventeenth century, influencing what the rest of Europe believed. It is assumed that early European navigators in the region encountered the Yalu River, separating Korea from China, and thought it to be a strait between the Yellow Sea and Sea of Japan.



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Early information on North America

Popular on maps of this era, the mythical Strait of Anian appears between Asia and North America. Anian derives from Ania, a Chinese province on a large gulf mentioned in Marco Polo's travels (ch. 5, book 3). The gulf Polo described was actually the Gulf of Tonkin, but the province's description was transposed from Vietnam to the northwest coast of North America. It became common as a shorthand for a passage to China, i.e. a Northwest Passage. It appeared on maps until the mid-eighteenth century.

It is notable that several place names appear in North America, including Cape Fortuna, Anconde Island, Costa de los Tacbaïos, Costa Brava and Alcones. The annotation in North America references the indigenous inhabitants as Tartars. A stag and fox can be seen roaming across the open land beyond the coast.

The Mercator-Hondius atlas

One of Hondius' most successful commercial ventures was the reprinting of Mercator's atlas, where this map appeared. Gerard Mercator died in 1594 without having completed his most ambitious project, an atlas of the entire world. His son and grandsons completed the work and released its final volume in 1595. The younger Mercators released another edition in 1602, but they then sold the plates to Hondius in 1604. Hondius included this map in his first edition in 1606 and in subsequent editions; there were roughly 50 editions in various European languages in the seventeenth century.

Hondius died in 1612, at only 48 years of age, after which time his son of the same name and another son, Henricus, took over the business, including the reissuing of the Mercator atlas. After 1633, Hondius the Elder's son-in-law, Johannes Janssonius, was also listed as a co-publisher for the atlas.

Due to the rediscovery of Claudius Ptolemy's work and new reports from European merchants and missionaries, the Far East was just beginning to become known by European cartographers when this map was created. It is an excellent early example of European mapping of the region.

Jodocus Hondius' 1606 map of China is one the most sought-after maps of its kind, full of engaging and fanciful illustrations and interesting geographical information. It was decidedly influential as one of the earliest maps of China, making this map highly desirable.

Detailed Condition: