

[China and South-East Asia] [De Indische Noord].

Author
[DOEDSZ, Cornelius (attrib.)]

Publication date
c1598].

Publisher

Publication place
[?Edam,

Physical description

Manuscript chart on vellum, with “China” in liquid gold, hand-coloured in outline in red, purple, and green, three decorative compass roses, and two scale bars, each heightened in gold, the chart has been folded in the past, with a vertical and three horizontal fold lines, the work has been cut a few centimetres short on the right-hand side, the margins are a little creased with pale water stains, small holes in the corners from a former mounting, margins partially strengthened on verso with archival paper.

Dimensions
935 by 715mm. (36.75 by 28.25 inches).

Notes

A large and beautiful manuscript portolan chart of China, Japan, and the East Indies, produced by the leading Dutch ‘caert-schrijver’ (map scribe) Cornelis Doedsz; with exceptional hand-colouring

and heightened in gold.

The chart is the first to record Dutch activity in the area, with the inclusion of information brought back by Cornelis de Houtman's voyage (1595-1597), the first Dutch expedition to the East Indies. The chart attaches Dutch toponyms to the Island of Sumatra and updates much of the charting of the East Indies, and China.

Of the five extant 'Indische Noord' charts produced before the inception of the Dutch East India Company's (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie or VOC*) chart office, this is the only example in private hands.

The 'Indische Noord' charts would be the last time that Dutch chart makers would show the whole of the Far East and China on one chart.

The chart

One of a group of charts made before the establishment of the VOC chart office, in c1619, categorised as 'Indische Noord' (North India) that show Sri Lanka, the East Indies, Japan, Korea, and the whole of the Chinese coast.

The chart itself extends west to east from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) to Papua New Guinea (Nova Guin[ea]), and north to south from the Gulf of Bohai to south of the Tropic of Capricorn (though shows no southern land mass).

The chart is produced in the classic portolan style, with only information relevant for the navigator retained; all land detail is stripped away, with coastlines coloured and outlined in great detail; cities and ports are marked at right angles to the coast, in red and black; rhumb lines radiate from 17 compass roses – the main one situated in the Philippines; of the 16 secondary roses, the three in Asia are richly adorned, and three have been lost where the right portion of the chart has been cut. Two scale bars, one in China, and the other below Papua New Guinea are marked in German miles.

Reading the coast from left to right, the chart begins with Sri Lanka (Ceylon) moving up India's east coast Odisha (Orixa), then Bengal (Bengala), and Myanmar (Pegu), and hence down the Straits of Malacca. The Gulf of Thailand is well drawn (though not named), with both Thailand (Sian) and Cambodia (Camboia) marked. Vietnam (Cauchin) is named, with the Gulf of Tonkin depicted as a narrow inlet, with Hainan Island attached to the mainland. China is divided into provinces: Guangdong (Cantan); Fujian (Foquim); Zhejiang (Chequiam); Jiangsu (Nanquim); and Shandong (Xantum). The Pearl River Estuary is well defined with both Guangdong (Cidade de Canton) and Macao (Macao) clearly marked; further up the coast Nankin (Enseada de Nanquin) is shown, the Chinese coast terminates at the Bay of Bohai, though unnamed on the chart. The land above the bay is named Tartaria.

The Philippines (Philippinae) is well delineated, as are Borneo (Bornea) and Sumatra (Samatra). Java is drawn with no south coast, and both Borneo's and Celebes' east coasts are depicted by a faint line. Manila (Manilha) on Luzon is clearly marked.

Japan and Korea are partly based on Luis Teixeira's seminal manuscript chart of 1592. Korea is clearly labelled "Corea Isthmus", though it is depicted as an island, and Taiwan is drawn as three separate islands.

It should be noted that the layout of the 'Indische Noord' chart, with its broad overview of the East Indies, would not survive the creation of the VOC chart office in 1619, with subsequent charts on a larger scale concentrating on Indonesian waters, and those of the East and South China Seas. Thus

the present chart – together with the four other extant charts of the area – would be the last time that the Dutch chart makers would depict the Chinese coast in its entirety.

Attribution of Chart

Although the chart is not signed, it bears all the hallmarks of the North Holland School of Dutch cartography; a loose association of chart makers including Corenlis Doedsz, Evert Gijsbertsz., Jan Dircksz. Rijckemans, Augustijn Robaert, Claes Pietersz., Joris Carolus, and the brothers Harmen and Marten Jansz – active between the 1580s and 1620s – who produced manuscript navigation charts to the nascent Dutch navy, and decorative charts for adorning rich merchants' walls. Later their influence would wain following the setting up of the chart division of the Dutch East India Company.

Günter Schilder suggests that the work can be attributed to Cornelis Doedesz (d1613), arguably the most prominent of the school. Schilder bases the attribution not only on the overall style, but also on the appearance of two boys' heads above and below the scale bar, placed on the Chinese mainland. A similar head appears on the cartouche of Doetsz's chart of the western part of the Indian Ocean. The motif may be a sly reference to Doetsz's house in Edam – which he lived in between 1593 and 1607 – and bore the name 'De Vier Heerskinderen' ('The Four Sons of Aymon').

So sought after was Doedsz's work that he soon attracted the attention of map publishers in Amsterdam, such as Cornelis Claesz, and Willem Blaeu, who would print and publish several of his charts (again predominantly on vellum) throughout the early 1600s.

Sources for Doedsz's Chart

Although Schilder argues correctly that Doedsz relied heavily on the works by Petrus Plancius and Hugo van Linshouten, most notably Plancius's chart of the 'Spice Islands' (1595), and Linschoten's chart of the East Indies, published in his 'Itinerario' (1595), the chart is no mere slavish copy, and Doedsz clearly used information gleaned from other sources.

One such source could have been the Englishman Martin Llewellyn, who it is believed, sailed on Cornelius de Houtman's voyage to the East Indies (1595-1597) – the first Dutch expedition to the area. His manuscript chart book, based on observations made (or charts acquired) during the voyage is now housed in Christ Church, Oxford (Christ Church MS 709). Consisting of 16 large scale charts, they bear a remarkable similarity to the present work, especially in the rendering of the Philippines, Korea, Japan, and the general outline of the Chinese coast.

One of the most striking similarities is in the depiction of Japan, which although clearly influenced by the manuscript chart of Luis Teixeira of 1592 (and published by Abraham Ortelius in his 'Theatrum Orbis Terrarum' of 1595), renders the island of Honshu in a completely novel way.

One major new addition by Doedsz is the inclusion of Dutch place-names to the southern and southwestern coast of Sumatra: 'Varkens Eylant' (off the west coast), 'I. de gode fortune' (Good fortune Island), 'Vlacke Hoeck', 'gebroken landt', and 'Grote Bay'. These were cleared garnered from returning Dutch merchant vessels, and as such represent the first time Dutch place-names appear on a chart of the East Indies.

It is more than likely that Doedsz gained this new information from Houtman's voyage. Certainly, the obvious similarity of the Llewellyn charts, and the fact that Houtman's fleet passed through the Sunda Straits – between Sumatra and Java – would suggest a strong link.

Also it should be noted that Doedsz's and Llewellyn's work differs markedly from the chart of the Sunda Straits and environs, produced by Willem Lodewijksz – another member of Houtman's

expedition – which was first published by Cornelis Claesz, in 1598. Although quickly suppressed, the chart would subsequently be published by De Bry, in his 'Petits Voyages', in 1599. This may suggest that Doedsz's chart was produced before that of Lodewijksz's was disseminated i.e. no later than 1598.

Survival of VOC and Dutch charts.

Schilder and Kok, in their monumental work on pre-VOC and VOC manuscript charts, estimate that between the inception of the VOC, in 1602, and its demise, in 1799, somewhere in the region of 55,000 charts were produced by or for the Company. Of this number only 356 complete charts and fragments (of which 11 cover the period before the inception of the VOC chart office, i.e. 1619, and eight are decorative), are known to have survived. This is approximately a survival rate of six charts in every thousand produced.

Apart from the natural ravages of time, the principal reason why these works suffered such a high mortality rate, was their very nature as working charts. These were not charts bound into an atlas, or that took pride of place on a ship owner's wall but were rather used by pilots to navigate the route between Amsterdam and the Spice Islands in the Far East.

Voyages, in the early modern period were treacherous, with numerous ships either being wrecked or taken by enemy action. In order to avoid the wrecking, if not the plundering, the charts were constantly updated – one of the VOC navigator's principal tasks was recording any new hazards in logbooks and on charts, which would be handed into the VOC, in either Amsterdam or Batavia (Jakarta), at the end of their voyage. This drive for constant improvement meant that many out-of-date charts were simply destroyed or repurposed as vellum bindings, on the quite reasonable grounds that older charts would be a danger to VOC shipping.

Even after the demise of the VOC in 1799, the remaining charts would undergo a further winnowing out. In 1810, the newly installed French government in the Netherlands ordered all colonial charts to be transferred to the Depot de la marine in Paris. Following the fall of Napoleon, in 1815, the Dutch government demanded their return. Unfortunately their list of charts was not comprehensive, and numerous works never made it back to The Netherlands – this is the main reason why French institutions hold over a third of the known extant examples, almost as many as The Netherlands.

Alas, on their return, many of the charts were deemed to be inferior to contemporary English material, and between 1817 and 1822 a systematic effort was made to get rid of the older charts and many were simply thrown away or used for scrap.

Rarity

As detailed above, surviving charts are exceedingly rare. The present work is one of only five of the 'Indische Noord' charts to have survived, and the only one in private hands. Of the surviving charts none is in an American, Chinese or Middle Eastern institution.

The other examples are housed in: Tokyo, National Museum (dated 1598); University of Kyoto (c1600); German National Library (c1600); and Halle University (1615).

Bibliography

Medea-chart database, 5367; Schilder, G., Early Dutch maritime cartography, X.11; Schilder, G. & Kok, H., Sailing for the East, 0.09; cf. Campbell, "Portolan Charts" in Woodward, The History of Cartography, vol. I, pp. 371-463; Hulskemper, K., 500 jaar Edamse cartografie, pp. 29-37.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference:

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