Engraved map with fine original hand colour.

KATIP CELEBI'S RARE MAP OF JAPAN

[Japan].

Author
CELEBI, Katip

Publication date
1732].

Publisher

Publication place
[Istanbul,

Physical description
Engraved map with fine original hand colour.

Dimensions
130 by 165mm. (5 by 6.5 inches).

Notes
Fine example of Katip Celebi's rare map of Japan, from his Jihan-numa, published in Istanbul in 1732, which also included the first map of America published in the Ottoman Empire.

Kâtip Çelebi, Mustafa bin Abdullah, Haji Khalifa or Kalfa (1609 – 1657), was an Ottoman scholar, historian and geographer, who is regarded as one of the most productive authors of non-religious scientific literature in the 17th century Ottoman Empire.

Kâtip became an army clerk and took part in many campaigns in the east, meanwhile collecting material for his historical works. As a child he was taught the Qur'an and Arabic grammar and calligraphy, but his later education was irregular; he attended lectures between military campaigns. An inheritance allowed him to settle permanently in Constantinople, where, except for his duties as government clerk, he was able to devote all his time to collecting books, studying, and writing.

He was an avid bibliophile, an industrious scholar, and a prolific and straightforward writer. Celebi began work on an atlas of maps, which was not completed and published until 1732, by Muteferrica, due to the continuing ban on printing in the Ottoman Empire.

The Cihannüma of Katip Celebi from the printing house of Ibrahim Müteferrika was printed in Istanbul in 1732. Müteferrika's press was the first Islamic printing house. The introduction of printing in moveable type was slow to develop in the Middle East. The very earliest examples of printing in Arabic script date from early 16th century Europe, where religious texts were printed, especially by Italian printers. Some early Arabic religious texts were also printed from presses in Christian communities in the Middle East, but it was not until the early 18th century that printing in Arabic script by Islamic printing houses in the Islamic world was officially authorized.

The initiative came from Said Efendi, son of the Ottoman Ambassador to Paris who accompanied his father on a diplomatic visit there in 1721. There he had learned about printing and on his return to Istanbul he requested the support of the Grand Vizier in the setting up of a printing press. His chief collaborator was Ibrahim Müteferrika, a man with many interests including astronomy, history, philosophy and theology. He was born in Hungary in 1674, probably a Christian who converted to Islam. The name 'Müteferrika' is derived from his employment as a bureaucrat and diplomat under Sultan Ahmed III.

Together with Said Efendi he was granted permission to print books in Ottoman Turkish in Arabic script. The presses and type fonts were obtained from local Jewish and Christian printers and later imported from Europe. Ibrahim Müteferrika became director of the first Turkish printing press. The first book, a dictionary, was printed in 1729. Religious texts were officially excluded as they continued to be copied in manuscript form only. There was a vested interest among the local scribes and calligraphers to prevent the growth of printing. The cursive design of Arabic script lent itself particularly well to manuscript production and the manuscript workshops presented a constant opposition to Müteferrika's enterprise.

Important among his printed works was the world atlas, the 'Cihannüma' of Katip Celebi printed in 1732. This is a world atlas, or cosmography, loosely translated as 'The mirror of the world'. Celebi (1609–1657) was an Ottoman historian, bibliographer and geographer and the most conspicuous and productive scholar, particularly in the non-religious sciences in the 17th-century Ottoman Empire.

Müteferrika has himself added a significant introduction to his printing of Celebi's work in which he discusses the Copernican view of astronomy. He is considered to be one of the first people to introduce the Copernican view of the solar system to Ottoman readers.

The diagrams and maps within the volume, of which there are over forty, cover the countries of the Middle East, the Mediterranean and areas farther afield.

Back in Istanbul, however, the printing activities did not last and came to an end in 1743, due to strong opposition of the local scribes to Müteferrika's enterprise. He died in 1745, after printing works on grammar, geography, maths and above all, history; books from his press are often known as the 'Turkish incunabula'. But this change was not long-lasting and printing houses eventually grew up in other Middle Eastern cities. Eventually even the ban of printing religious texts was lifted

and the first printed Qur’an texts appeared in the 1860s.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 1747

© Daniel Crouch Rare Books Ltd | 2025