



First edition, engraved map with original hand colour, dissected into 36 sections and laid onto linen, minor spotting, folding between publisher's card covers into original brown cloth slipcase with publisher's label affixed to one side.

THE BRITISH NORTH BORNEO COMPANY

A Map of British North Borneo compiled from the English Admiralty Charts and from the Surveys & Explorations of Messrs. F.X. Wittl, W.B. Pryer, F. Hatton, H.J. Walkder and D.D. Daly in the service of the British North Borneo Company.

Author

STANFORD, Edward

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Physical description

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Dimensions

760 by 1665mm. (30 by 65.5 inches).

Notes

Rare map of North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak surveyed by the British North Borneo Company.

The equatorial island of Borneo, the third largest island in the world, is politically divided between Malaysia and Brunei in the north, and Indonesia in the south, which occupies by far the vastest territory. Due to its important position at the centre of Southeast Asia, and its natural resources such as gold, Borneo historically served as an important trading hub between India and China from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries. Its significance also meant that it was hotly contested, coming under the power of the Indonesian, Chinese and Sulu empires before being declared the independent Sultanate of Brunei.

In the sixteenth century, European influence began to be felt, with the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English all recognising the island's value. After various attempts to seize control of the island, the sultan ceded his certain forts to the English East India Company in 1812. Twenty years later, large swathes of land in Sarawak in the northwest were granted to the British adventurer James Brooke, who had helped quash a local rebellion, and the Brooke dynasty subsequently ruled Sarawak for the following century. During this time, further areas were acquired for Britain and in 1888 Brunei and other northern regions of the island was made a British protectorate. British Borneo was overseen by the British North Borneo Company, which had been established in 1881 and maintained administration of the protectorate until 1946.

The present map represents the knowledge uncovered during the pioneering explorations of Witt, Pryer, Hatton, Daly, and Walker, who explored the territory after the Company took power. Admiral R.C. Mayne, who wrote a summary of their journeys, describes their explorations: "In a country so utterly unknown, every step the pioneer takes is a small exploration, every mile from the beach, on land or by river; every shooting or fishing excursion is exploration". At the time of writing, he predicted that, "complete terra incognita as Borneo is to most English people now, it is not likely to remain so long, but will shortly prove itself one of the best tobacco countries in the world". Aside from tobacco, the discovery of oil in 1929 would bring the region enormous wealth in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The map extends across the northern reaches of the island, encompassing Brunei, Sabah and northern Sarawak, as well as showing parts of the Dutch-governed land further south. Land available for sale, or sold, is indicated across the map, and relief is shown by hachures and spot heights, soundings in fathoms. Geographic and topographic detail is naturally more dense around the coast, but explorations into the inland are also in evidence, with the explorers seeming to have followed the path of rivers deep into the island. A later edition of the map was issued in the early twentieth century, updated with a great deal more information about the interior, an example of which is held by the Library of Congress.

Extremely rare. We can trace no copies in commerce and just three institutional holdings.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 18229