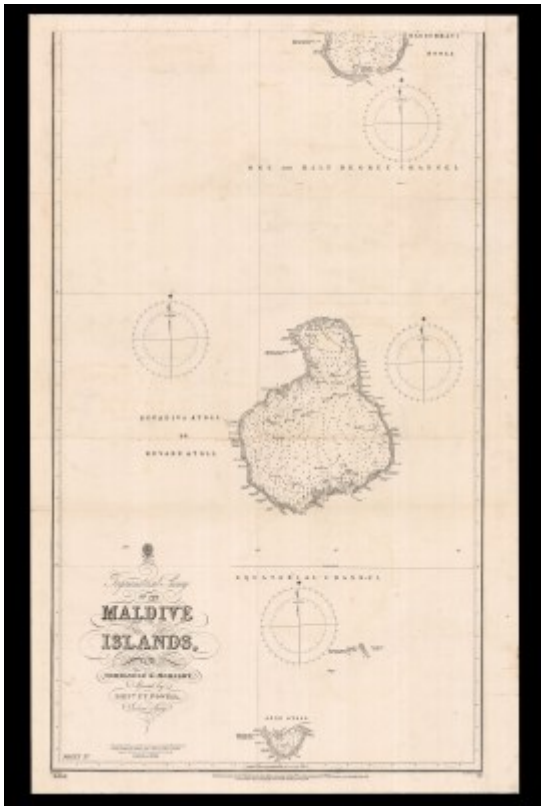


Three engraved charts.

THE FIRST MODERN CHART OF THE MALDIVE ISLANDS

Maldives 3 charts

Author
MORESBY, R[obert]

Publication date
1839 (corrections to 1866).

Publisher
John Walker,

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Three engraved charts.

Dimensions

Notes
The first modern chart of the Maldive Islands, from the surveys conducted by Captain Robert Moresby in 1835.

Moresby (1794 – 1854) was a captain of the East India Company's Bombay Marine/Indian Navy who distinguished himself as a hydrographer, maritime surveyor and draughtsman. Best known for conducting the first modern survey of the Red Sea (1829-32), he was later sent to chart various coral

island groups lying across the track of India-to-Cape trade.

In 1834–36 Moresby, assisted by Lieutenants Christopher and Young, undertook the difficult cartographical challenge of the Maldive Islands, drawing the first accurate maritime charts of this complicated Indian Ocean atoll group. These charts were printed as three separate large maps by the Hydrographic Service of the Royal Navy.

The growing importance of European Oriental Trade during the 1800s made it imperative that sailors should have a good knowledge of the Maldivian Sea, which straddles the trade routes from Europe and Africa to the East. Moresbury's letter from the Admiralty stated that his survey of the waters' reefs, sand banks and depth would facilitate the movements of vessels calling at Male, thus expanding the local overseas trade.

However, when considered from the perspective of the native Maldivians, there were innumerable issues which could arise from the survey: the reefs and the shallows of the islands was their first line of defense, with the submarine topography kept a closely guarded secret of the Maldivian militia for centuries.

Therefore, if the Maldivian territory was to be thoroughly charted by the British, their natural defensed would become obsolete. Therefore the Radhun, the islands' leader, strove to hinder Moresby in his work, refusing to cooperate with his team, and also creating all sorts of passive obstructions. Although these obstacles mean that Moresby left the Maldives with his intentions unfulfilled, he was still ultimately able to complete the first modern survey of the region.

In fact, so accurate and detailed were Moresby's charts that they were favored by Maldivian pilots navigating through the treacherous waters of their atolls until the 1990s, when satellite images appeared. In the Maldives a channel locally also known as Hanikandu, between Northern Maalhosmadulhu Atoll and "Fasdhūtere" Atoll, is still known as 'Moresby Channel'.

The present chart, in three parts, shows all of the Maldive islands, with longitude and latitude around the border and compasses roses across each sheet. The islands and certain locations on them are identified by name, and soundings are given in the surrounding waters, along with short notes to sailors and several routes between them. Since they were produced by the Admiralty for the very serious purpose of charting treacherous seas, the charts do not displaly any superfluous decorative detail.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £6000

Inventory reference: 18446

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