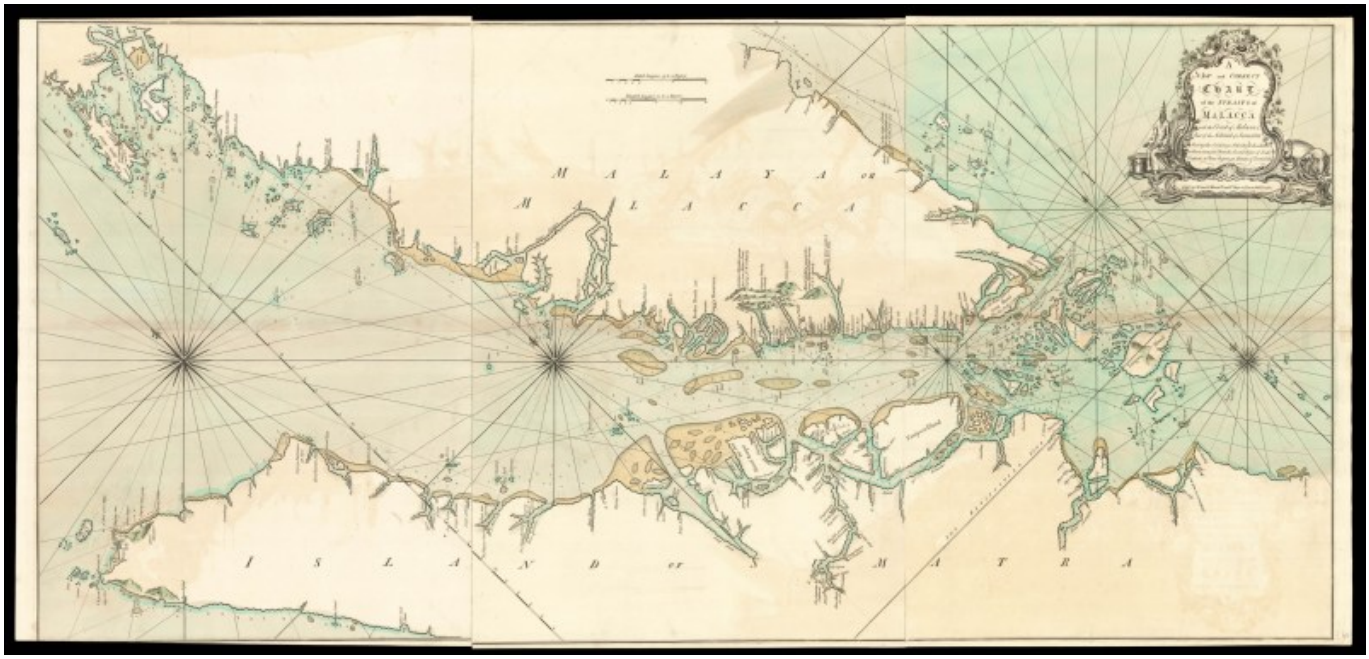

Engraved chart on three sheets, with fine original hand-colour, sheet 3 with split to centre-fold skilfully repaired, watermark of Lubertus van Gerrevink and Jean Villedary, dated by Churchill 1766 (Churchill 411).

THE LARGEST CHART OF THE MALACCA STRAITS PRINTED IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A new and correct chart of the straits of Malacca, with the coast of malacca & part of the Island of Sumatra. Showing the Soundings, Islands, Rocks, & Sands, in the Straits from the Second degree of South Latitude, to degrees 30 Minutes of North Latitude.

Author
[?LARKEN, James or James MYNDE, after HERMANUS OHDEN, Pieter, and Gerrit de HAAN]

Publication date
[1754-1761].

Publisher
W. and I. Mount and T. and T. Page,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Engraved chart on three sheets, with fine original hand-colour, sheet 3 with split to centre-fold skilfully repaired, watermark of Lubertus van Gerrevink and Jean Villedary, dated by Churchill 1766 (Churchill 411).

Dimensions
722 by 1587mm. (28.5 by 62.5 inches).

Notes
The largest separately-issued chart of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore published in the

eighteenth century; based on Dutch East India Company manuscript information, thus making it the most accurate chart of the region published to date; and a graphic illustration of growing English interest in the region, which would come to full fruition by the end of the eighteenth century.

The chart

The chart is on the unusually large scale of approximately 20 English Leagues to 11.5cm or approximately 5 miles to 1cm, thus making it the largest chart published of the Straits in the eighteenth century. The chart depicts the whole of the strait from Penang Island (Hojong Salangs) to the Tudjuh Archipelago (Is. Toejoe); Singapore and the islands to her south are shown, as is a large portion of the east coast of the Malay peninsula; the scale allows for great detail, with many toponyms and geographical features appearing for the first time.

Although the chart is neither dated nor bears a surveyor or ship's captain's name, we can be reasonably confident that it is based on a Dutch, most probably a Dutch East India Company (VOC), manuscript chart dating from the mid-eighteenth century. This is because many Dutch toponyms are used, there are both Dutch and English League scale bars, and 'The Company's Settlements' (ie the VOC) are mentioned on the chart. Further, the sinking of the Dutch East Indiaman Rysdam in 1727 is marked off the east coast of the Malay peninsula.

A search of the Dutch National Archives, has revealed an almost identical Dutch manuscript chart (4 Velh 156, 1,6) by Pieter Hermanus and Gerrit de Haan, dated 1759. The manuscript chart is on the scale, covers the same geographical area, and bears the same nomenclature and information on VOC activity, as the present work.

"Pieter Hermanus Ohdem, Naval Lieutenant and 'instructor in mathematics and navigation' at the 'Académie de Marine' in Batavia

[Jakarta], was appointed as examiner of sea-charts on 17 January 1753. In this position he was expected among other things, to compare all the copies of maps that were given to the ships [i.e. VOC vessels] with the officially approved originals and to confirm this with his signature. This map was afterwards included in the first volume of Gerrit de Haan's 'Ligtende zeefakkel'" (De Roever). Hermanus held the position in Batavia until 1760, when Gerrit de Haan took over the role. It is possible that on Hermanus' return to Amsterdam the chart or a copy similar was acquired or seen by the English, eventually finding its way into print through the firm of Mount and Page.

The copying and publishing of, especially Dutch, manuscript charts of far eastern waters was not uncommon in England during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. John Thornton, the publisher of 'The English Pilot, The Third Book (Oriental Navigation)'; the first English pilot devoted to Oriental navigation, relied heavily on Dutch material for his work. A record from 1703 reports that 17 manuscript charts by Thornton were taken from an English East Indiaman, the Canterbury, by two French ships off the coast of Malacca. The charts, now housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, show clear signs of direct copying from Dutch material, including the nomenclature.

The chart bears very little direct association with any other printed charts published at the time. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Dutch dominance in chart production was beginning to wane, with the likes of the English and French beginning to issue sea pilots for the orient: John Thornton had issued the first English attempt in 1703, with the firm of Mount and Page (the publisher of the present chart), continuing to issue his work, with minor variations, for the remainder of the century. In 1745 the French hydrographer J. B. Après Mannevillette issued his 'Le Neptune Oriental', a highly influential work for navigating the waters of the Far East. The work includes a chart of the Malacca Strait 'Plan Particulier du Détroit de Malaca…'. A further French hydrographer, Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, issued his own chart of the strait in 1755, 'Carte reduite des detroits de malacca, sincapour, et gouverneur…. MDCCLV'. The lessening of Dutch control over the East India trade was epitomized by the publication by Johannes van Keulen (II) in 1753, of the sixth part of his seminal sea pilot the 'Zee Fakkel': the so called 'Secret Atlas'. This contained many charts of far eastern seas that the VOC had endeavoured to keep away from their rivals, such as the English and French East India Companies, for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The pilot contains the 'Zee-Caart van het Eyland Sumatra Met de Straaten Malacca, Sincapoera, Banca en

Sunda…', which covers much the same area as the present chart. Of all the charts listed above only van Keulen's work – having evidently been drawn from similar Dutch sources – bears some similarities to the present map (especially to the Malacca and Sumatran Straits).
The chart's Dutch lineage is not only marked by the delineation of coasts and nomenclature, but also in the recording of Dutch activity. This is demonstrated in the marking of VOC settlements, most obviously Malacca. However, two other sites are also highlighted: a legend to Penang Island (Hojong Salangs) – the island that would, later in the century, be chosen by the British as their base in the straits – states "The Company [ie VOC] had formerly a settlement here"; and to Sumatra on the river Siak, "The Company's last Settlement" is marked, (the "last" in the legend is most likely a mistranslation from the Dutch and should St Laurence, 1759'. The 1761 edition of their, 'English Pilot. The Third Book… Oriental Navigation', still bears the imprint: 'W. & J. Mount and T. Page & Son [ie Thomas Page [III]', however, 'A chart of Havana Harbour', dated 1762, bears the later imprint of John Mount and Thomas Page only.
The firm of Mount and Page is often characterised by stasis, lazily reissuing the same navigational works, especially the English Pilot, throughout the eighteenth century, eventually losing market share to the more innovative chartmakers, such as Robert Sayer, Thomas Jefferys, and William Heather. However, the present chart and others published by the firm in the 1750s and 1760s belie that narrative.
The present chart would appear to be a companion piece to two other separately issued charts by Mount and Page of Far Eastern waters:
1. A New Correct Chart of the Coast of China from Latitude 12 o North to 26 o Including Formosa, Hayman and the Philippine Islands Sold by
W. & J. Mount and T. and T. Page on Tower Hill.
2. A Chart of the Island of Sumatra and Java with those of Banka, Billiton &c. Likewise the Straits of Banka, including the Rocks, Sands, Soundings, from the degree fifty Minutes, to Six degrees ten Minutes of South Latitude.
All three charts bear stylistic similarities: in the treatment of coastline and nomenclature, and are all clearly derive from similar Dutch manuscript charts of the area. The first of these, the chart of the coast of China, shows both Lantao and Hong Kong Island as clearly separate. A Dutch manuscript chart dated "1759" has recently come to light at Christie's auction house, showing just one island in the area occupied by Hong Kong and Lantao. Assuming the three Mount and Page printed charts were produced at roughly the same time, this together with manuscript chart of the Malacca Straits in the Dutch National Archive, gives a tentative terminus post quem of 1759. Each of the three charts bear a large elaborate cartouche, which are all engraved in the same style. Although the engraver's imprint is not present on any of the charts, the engraving may be attributed to either James Mynde (1702-1771) or James Larken (1732-1774). James Mynde had a large studio on Tower Hill, and engraved several charts for the Mount and Page firm in the 1750s and 1760s, for example 'This draft of the Bay and Harbour of Gaspee in the Gulf of St. Laurence taken in 1758… [1759]' – the earliest of Captain Cook's published charts; Mynde would later become engraver to the Royal Society. James Larken was taken on as an apprentice by James Mynde on February 7th, 1749 for £35 and made Freeman of the Stationers Company on September 5th, 1758. He would later engrave charts for Mount and Page's, 1764 work, 'A Compleat set of new charts… of the Coast of Portugal and the Mediterranean Sea', the charts for which bear a striking resemblance to the present work.
Rarity
We have been unable to find an example of the present chart appearing at auction or in a dealer's catalogue since World War Two, and we have only been able to trace three institutional examples: two in the British Library, and one in the National Library of Spain. One of the examples in the British Library is contained in a folio, together with the two companion charts – those of the China Seas, and Sumatra and Java. The three charts would appear to have never been incorporated into any of the firm's English Pilots. The British Library holds a composite atlas of 16 charts (M.M&P-11a), the majority bearing the imprint of W. & J. Mount & T. & T. Page, which cover the sea

coasts of North and South America. It is conceivable that the present chart and others which bear the same imprint were intended to be part of a new maritime atlas or pilot of the world, which never came to fruition.

Bibliography

C.A. Gibson-Hill, “Notes on the History of the Old Strait, 1580-1850, Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. 27, No. 1 (165), pp. 163-214; Malacca chart: Cartographic Items Maps K.MAR.VI.34.; China chart: Cartographic Items Maps K.MAR.VI.(33.); Sumatra and Java chart: Cartographic Items Maps K.MAR.VI.35.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 15387

© Daniel Crouch Rare Books Ltd | 2025