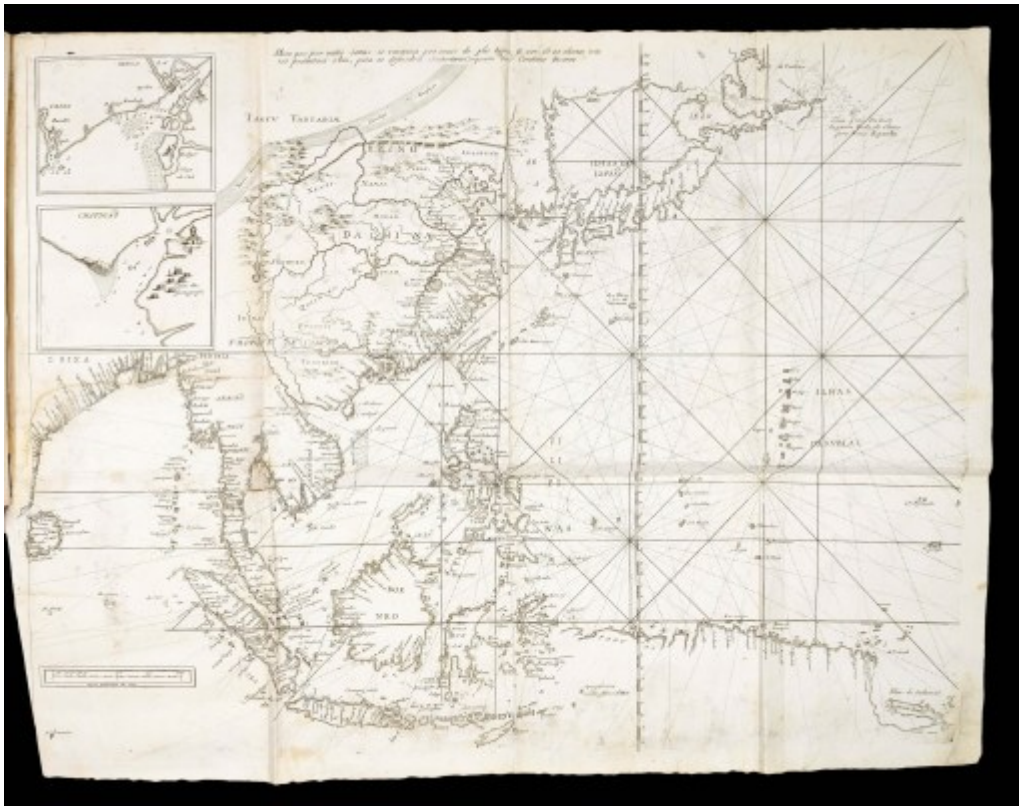


4 volumes in 2. Folio (334 by 230mm). Text in French and Greek, title-pages printed in red and black, 3 of the 4 title-pages match those for the fourth part, and are dated 1672 (see Brunet V, 810), with original Roman numerals (1663 and 1664) altered in early manuscript; full vellum over paste-board, title in manuscript of the spines, some minor restoration.

Collation

Part I: [4] leaves, 52 pages, with map of Colchide; 1-26; 17-40; 12 pages with map of India under Mogol; 80 pages; 30 pages; 1-10; 19-24; 17-24; 35 pages; [1] page; 56 pages with map of Australia; XXV; [1] with two plates of Egyptian mummies; bound without 2 plates with Caldean characters, and one map of Bassora. Part II: [8] leaves, 20 pages; 60 pages with 4 plates of Arabic coasts; 128 pages with map of Serloine; 40 pages with map of China and Philippines; 16 pages; 48 pages with plate justice en iapon between pages 45 and 46; 4 pages; 26 pages; bound without, 1 map of Arabia, 1 map of Pegu et Japon, and 2 leaves of text (pages 27-30, last part on China).

Volume two, part IV: La science des Chinois with its own title-page; pp. [4] 14, 24, 16, 16, 8, [4] 58, 40, 23 [1], 24, 4 with one folding engraved plate; part III: engraved frontispiece titled Ambassade des Hollandois a la Chine (1666); pp. [8] 68, 216, 12 with 15 engraved plates, including 2 large folding maps, and one folding table.

Part IV: [2] leaves, 14 pages; 24 pages; 16 pages; 16 pages; 8 pages; 4 pages; map of the Red Sea; 46 pages with 63 plates and pages 47-58 of text; 23 pages; 24 pages; 4 pages, 2 plates with animals and plants from China; bound without: frontispiece particulier du voyage du sieur Acarette, ??? 23 of 24 pages of Viaggio del P. Grueber including the plate of the Chinese alphabet, with only the French translation of the account and map of Ethiopia. Part III: 1 leaf; [3] leaves; 28 pages; pages 31-68 with plate of the route (bound between pages 26 and 27 of following work); map of China; 216 pages; 12 pages; 10 plates not called for by Brunet, from the Voyage des ambassadeurs bound at the end; bound without the frontispiece to the part III, 2 leaves of text at the end of the first avis, 2 plates from the Voyage des ambassadeurs.

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Relations de divers voyages curieux, qui n’ont point esté publiées, ou qui on esté traduits d’Hacluyt, de Purchas, et d’autres voyageurs Anglais, Hollandois, Portugais, Allemands, Espagnols, et de quelques Persans, Arabes, et autres auteurs orientaux.

Author
THEVENOT Melchisédec

Publication date
1666-1672.

Publisher
chez André Cramoisy,

Publication place
A Paris,

Physical description
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Dimensions

Notes

Thevenot's monumental collection of voyages and exploration: a continuation of Haklyut and Purchas, and with the addition of accounts of exploration in the southern oceans, the East Indies, China and Arabia. His compilation was issued in five parts over more than thirty years: part I in 1663, part II in 1664, part III in 1666, part IV during 1672-1674, and part V in 1696. During the course of publication, the parts of the collection already printed were reissued with new title-pages in 1664, 1666, 1672 [as here], 1683, and 1696. Some sheets were reprinted for these reissues, and any two examples, issued before 1683, are rarely the same, with some "inserts" being more scarce than others. The current example is as originally issued, and seems to be composed of sheets for the 1666 re-issue, with new title-pages to parts I, II, and IV. It has been bound without some maps and inserts found in other examples, but is with others not so commonly found (see 'Collation').

Of all the truly legendary voyages undertaken in perilously small open boats, Pelsaert's voyage from the Abrolhos to Bavatia in June and July of 1629 is an extraordinary feat of endurance in extremis. The current set includes the very rare 'La Terre Avstrale decovverte par le Capitaine Pelsart, qui y fait naufrage': just seven pages that recount the tragedy of shipwreck, the bloody savagery of mutiny, Pelsaert's extraordinary journey, and the viscious aftermath of just retribution. The account is illustrated with the large folding map 'Terre Avstrale decouverte l'an 1644', after Tasman, here in its third state, with the Tropic of Capricorn and rhumb lines, 1672.

Other important maps include: the second printing of an important untitled map of the East Indies, after Teixeira's chart which had been prepared in the 1640s for Portuguese cartographers. Drawn in the same style as a portolan, with no inland details, there are two insets showing the Ganges Delta and Chittagong, Hokkaidō is shown as an island north of Japan ("Iezo"); 'Imperii Sinarum Nova Descriptio, a map of China', including Korea, Taiwan and Japan, drawn after the work of Martino Martini as published by the Blaeus, but showing Hokkaidō joined to the mainland; and 'Ioao Teixeira Cosmographo de Sua Magestade Afex em Lixboa O Anno de 1649', an important chart of the entire east coast of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, the west coast of India and adjacent Indian Ocean islands, one of the few printed charts taken directly from Portuguese sources, based upon a 1649 portolan chart by João Teixeira, royal cosmographer of Portugal.

One of the great driving forces behind 'Divers voyages' was Thévenot's desire to help France achieve her aim to increase colonial trade to compete with other European nations. The book aimed to gather together the most up-to- date practical knowledge on navigation and information on foreign countries.

Melchisedech Thévenot (1620-1692) was a French diplomat, scientist, and travel writer. He was a scholar with interests in mathematics, physics, and medicine, acting as the patron of several early scientific societies and most notably contributing to the formation of the Académie des Sciences. His early career included two missions to Italy in the 1640s and 1650s, and it was there that he first developed an interest in the study of Oriental languages. In 1663, he published the first part of his 'Relations de Divers Voyages', a work that would secure his reputation as one of the most important travel compilers of the seventeenth century. He would go on to publish a second and third part in 1666, a fourth in 1672, and a final fifth part was being assembled in 1692 when Thévenot died, and would not be published until 1696.

Bibliography

Brunet, t. V, col. 810-813; Sabin 95333.

Provenance

1. With the Ex libris on two frontispieces of the convent of the Discalced Carmelites in Como (suppressed in 1792).

2. Early manuscript purchase annotation on the verso of the top board of Vol 1 of the Como bookseller Pasquale Ostinelli (1804).

Price: £35000

Inventory reference: 17492

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