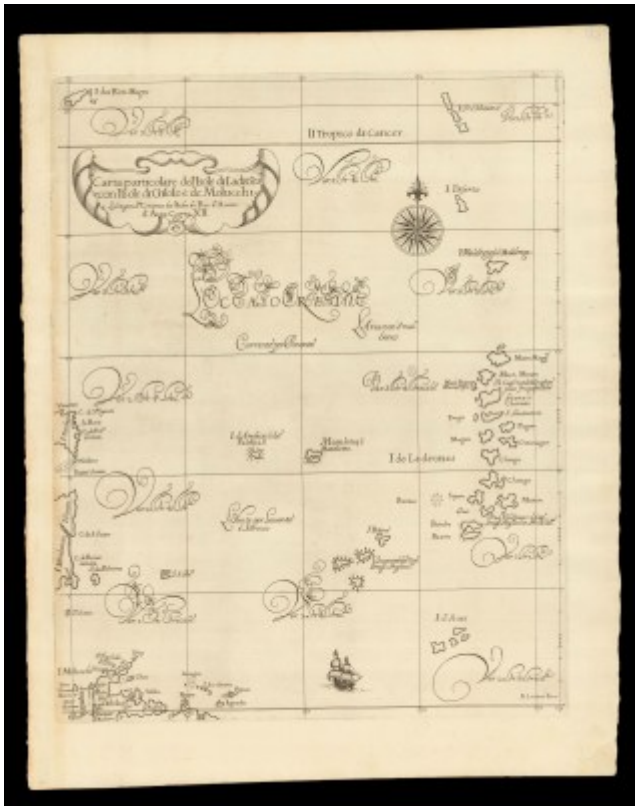


Engraved chart.

DRAKE’S “ISLAND OF THIEVES”

Carta particolare del’Isole di Ladroes con l’Isole di Gilolo e de Molucchi Lalongitud.no Comincia da l’Isola di Pico d’Asores. d’ Asia Carta XII. L.o 6.o.

Author
DUDLEY, Robert

Publication date
1661].

Publisher
Giuseppe Cocchini,

Publication place
[In Firenze,

Physical description
Engraved chart.

Dimensions
550 by 430mm. (21.75 by 17 inches).

Notes
Chart of the eastern coast of Mindanao, the southernmost island in the Philippines, extending eastward to the present-day Marianas Islands, and the legendary Spice Islands of the Moluccas, now Maluku Islands, showing coastal towns, harbours and islands. This is a very early chart of the area by an Englishman, paying tribute to the voyage of fellow Englishman, Francis Drake. At the centre of

the chart is a little archipelago to the east of Mindanao captioned “I Scoperte dal Cap.o Drago Ingilese” – “discovered by the English Captain Drake”, now thought to be the islands of the westernmost Carolines, and including that called by Drake “the Island of Thieves”. From these islands, Drake sailed west for thirteen days, reaching “four islands”, now thought to refer to the islands and peninsulas at either side of the gulf of Davao.

Even further to the east are the Marianas, then the Ladrones Islands,of which Robert Morden famously wrote in his ‘Geography Rectified’ (1688), “I find nothing memorable,… except their names in some maps”. However, they were of increasing value to the Spanish, who used them as a way-station for their voyages between their outposts in Acapulco and Manila.

In about 1512 the Moluccas were discovered by the Portuguese, who thereafter colonized them and established a trading center on the island of Ternate. Volcanic in origin, the islands are lush and mountainous and important for being the origin of the spices nutmeg and cloves. During the following century, the islands reverted to Dutch control and, during the height of the VOC, a monopoly in the clove trade was established. The British gained a foothold twice in the islands, but they became official Dutch colonies, once again, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

From the second edition of ‘Dell’arcano del mare, one the “greatest atlases of the world” (Wardington), first published in 1646 when its author, Robert Dudley, was 73. It was not only the first sea atlas of the world, but also the first to use Mercator’s projection; the earliest to show magnetic deviation; the first to show currents and prevailing winds; the first to expound the advantages of ‘Great Circle Sailing’ – the shortest distance between two points on a globe; and “perhaps less importantly the first sea-atlas to be compiled by an Englishman, albeit abroad in Italy” (Wardington).

Robert Dudley (1574-1649) was the son of the Earl of Leicester (the one time favourite of Elizabeth I) and Lady Douglas Sheffield, the widow of Lord Sheffield. Although born out of wedlock, Robert received the education and privileges of a Tudor nobleman. He seems to have been interested in naval matters from an early age, and in 1594, at the age of 21, he led an expedition to the Orinoco River and Guiana. He would later, like all good Tudor seamen, sack Cadiz, an achievement for which he was knighted.

His success upon the high-seas was not matched, unfortunately, by his luck at court, and at the beginning of the seventeenth century he was forced to flee, along with his cousin Elizabeth Southwell, to Europe. Eventually, in 1606, he ended up in Leghorn, Italy, which he set about turning into a great international naval and commercial seaport, in the service of Ferdinand I. Dudley, successful at last, married his cousin, converted to Catholicism, helped Ferdinand wage war against the Mediterranean pirates, by designing and building a new fleet of fighting ships for the Italian navy, served as Grand Chamberlain to three Grand-Duchesses of Tuscany in succession: Maria Maddelena, widow of Cosimo II; then Christina of Lorraine, widow of Ferdinand I; then to Vittoria della Rovere, Princess of Urbino, and wife of Ferdinand II, who created Dudley Duke of Northumberland.

Bibliography

Suarez ‘Early Mapping of Southeast Asia’, pages 205-207

Provenance

Price:

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