



BREAKING THE PORTUGUESE MONOPOLY ON THE SPICE TRADE

Insulae Moluccae celeberrimae sunt ob Maximamaromatum copiam quam per totum terrarum orbem mittunt...

Cartographer	PLANCIUS, Petrus.
Date	1617
Stock #:	11609
Publication:	Amsterdam, C.J. Visscher, 1617. 380 x 540mm.
Condition:	A good example.

DESCRIPTION:

A Dutch chart of the islands of the East Indies, published in an attempt to break the Portuguese monopoly of the spice trade, engraved by Johannes à Doeticum c.1594.

Following the successful Dutch rebellion against their Spanish over-lords in 1579, the Dutch struck out to take a share in the lucrative trade in spices from the Far East. In 1592 Petrus Plancius, a cartographer and Flemish minister in the Calvinist Reform Church, sponsored a covert mission to obtain confidential Portuguese manuscript charts from Lisbon. The Houtman brothers, Cornelius and Frederick, acquired twenty-five manuscript charts by the Portuguese cartographer, Bartolomeu Lasso, from which Plancius compiled this map. It was first published as a loose sheet in 1595, but it was also bound into some copies of Linschoten's 'Itinerario'; this example was published by Visscher imprint (hidden in the scale cartouche) as a separate-issue in 1617.

Cartographically the map is a huge improvement on previous printed maps of Southeast Asia with the Sunda Islands, the Moluccas, and much of the mainland coast well-delineated. The large islands of the Philippines, such as Luzon and Mindanao, are well-drawn, and although the cluster of islands between them are crude, they are at least well placed and correctly named. Palawan is confused with the 'Calamianes' a group of small islands to its east. To the southeast a vast New Guinea has been tentatively assigned to the, theoretical, 'southern continent'; Plancius confuses its west coast, present-day Irian Jaya, with the island of Seram (Ceriam), upon which he places the Guinean port of 'Canam'. This confusion was to be compounded by Linschoten a year later and was depicted by Rossi on his map of 1680. On the mainland and the fictitious trans-peninsula waterway is shown, as is a phantom lake, dotted with islands, west of Siam. Plancius curiously omits Singapore. At the



Altea Gallery
35 St George Street
W1S 2FN, London
United Kingdom

www.alteagallery.com

info@alteagallery.com
+44 (0) 20 7491 0010

bottom of the map he depicts the various commodities that the islands have to offer - the key to any prospective Dutch investor. These include cloves (*Caryophylorum Arbor*), nutmeg (*nux Myristica*) and sandalwood (*Santulum fluvium*).