



16th century map of Taprobana

MAGINI, Giovanni Antonio.
Tabula Asiae XII.

Venice: Heirs of Simon Galignani, 1596, First edition. 135 x 180mm.

£250

A map of 'Taprobana', a semi-mythical representation of Sri Lanka, engraved by Girolamo Porro for Magini's pocket edition of Ptolemy's 'Geographia'. The Romans knew of Sri Lanka as the source of the cinnamon they used to burn as incense, but only through the Arab traders that brought the spice to markets of Egypt. The legend of a large island on the Equator with a powerful king built up but, by Magini's time, Sri Lanka was discounted as Taprobana and Sumatra became the main candidate (championed by Mercator), as described in the text box underneath the elephant to the left of the map. From the first edition, with text in Latin.

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