

van Keulen

Paskaart van de Eylanden Cheuxan Lowang

Certificate of Authentication and Description

This is to certify that the item illustrated and described below is a genuine antique map, print or book that was first produced and published in 1753, today 273 years ago.

May 16, 2026

Cartographer(s)

van Keulen

First Published

Amsterdam, 1753

This edition

1753 first and only edition

Size

40.5 x 53.2 cms

Technique

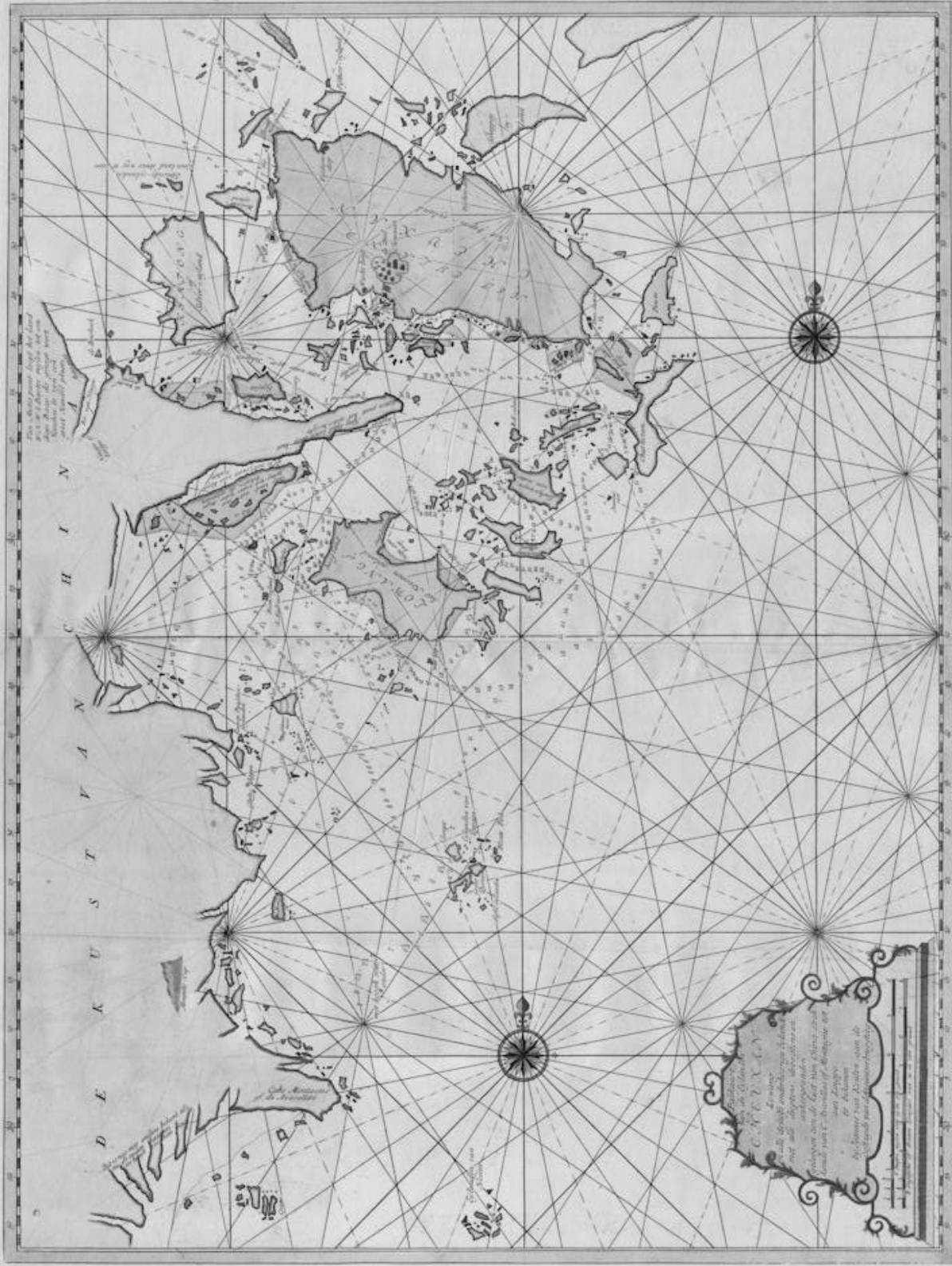
Copperplate engraving

Stock number

19203

Condition

mint



This chart is drawn by the late
Mr. J. B. Smith, and is the
most accurate and complete
yet published.

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C H E S E P E A K E
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Description

A highly important and exceptionally rare sea chart from 1753, and the first accurate map of these waters. The chart covers the important Chinese coasts and islands of Zhoushan (Chusan) located in the Yangtze River Delta, across the mouth of the Hangzhou Bay (Hangchow Bay). North is to the right of the chart, which means that west is on top of the map.

The chart is of great historical significance and a major cultural milestone in the history of the trade between Holland and China.

The chart is decorated with a very elegant title cartouche, two scalebars, and two compass roses. It has many details of shallows, shoals and reefs, depth soundings for safely navigating and approaching these harbours.

This chart was forbidden and secret from both Dutch and Chinese perspective.

It was forbidden from a Dutch point of view. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) printed it only for use on board of their own ships, it was a secret map from a secret atlas or chartbook that should not fall into the hands of the competitors from Europe, like England, France, Spain, etc. Each of the navigational officers (captain and steersmen) had to sign for the chart inventory upon receipt and was required to return all the material upon completing the journey to Batavia (Djakarta). In the event of missing or mishandled charts, they received severe fines and punishment.

It was also forbidden from a Chinese point of view. For centuries, Chinese waters were forbidden territory for foreign ships and foreigners were not allowed to do trade with China, except via Canton (Guangzhou).

When we consider that a certain amount of trade had always been carried on between China and Western countries by the overland route through Central Asia, it seems strange that so many obstacles were put in the way of trade by the new sea routes. The obstinate attitude of the Chinese Government was due to many causes. The area had been notorious for intrusion by Japanese pirates (permission for city walls was granted to Shanghai and Chusan in 1554). Undoubtedly the piratical incursions of the Portuguese traders along the coast injured the reputation of Western traders, and gave some excuse for regarding them as barbarians.

Another reason for the strong opposition was that these merchants from the West were demanding the privilege of trade as a right to which they were entitled, and asked that commercially and diplomatically they should be treated on terms of equality.

Furthermore, the trade of the overland routes had been very limited in scope, while that by the sea route was carried on on a much larger scale. In those days China regarded imports as an evil and thought that the purchase of foreign goods resulted in the outflow of money and in the consequent impoverishment of the country.

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) never did official trade in this area, and the inaccuracies in the chart show that there are many uncertainties about the geography. For instance, a legend in the upper left states that this area is hardly known. Also, a text near the Ningbo River entrance (near Zhenhai, there are several watch towers and guard houses indicated there) states that a famous trading city named Hangzhou is said to be about 6 seamiles further up the bay. Apparently it was too dangerous to go there, because the real distance is another 100 seamiles.

Some of the knowledge clearly comes from the Company's own chartings in the area (detailed depth soundings, bearings, coastal profiles, tide information, dangerous reefs, shallows and banks, etc). Some of the knowledge must have come from older Portuguese sources, as can be seen from some Portuguese names on the map (Cabo Montagne. Avarellas). In the 16th century, the Portuguese Jesuits had received permission to have several offices in China, under condition that no trade would be done. Especially Matteo Ricci was very successful from 1582 onwards, he managed to get Jesuit posts in Peking (Beijing), Canton, Chusan and several other cities. More than 200 high Chinese officials were converted at the time, and this map mentions that Chusan is also known as "Papen" island, a Dutch reference to the Jesuits still being there in 1753 when this chart was made.

Despite this area being forbidden territory for foreign traders, merchant ships from the East India Company must have entered these areas occasionally, to shelter from bad weather (many anchoring sites away from inhabited places are given in detail), and to secretly take in provisions and victuals (on the map there are many indications where fresh water can be found, and where exactly the fishing junks and fishing villages are located). Because the chart shows a tiny VOC flag near the city of Chusan, there is no doubt that they also did some forbidden secret trading here, most probably textiles, silk, porcelain, silver and gold. We know from the East India Company records that the Chinese were always keen on doing business, and the emperor and authorities in Peking (Beijing) were far away.

Owing to the difficulties under which trade was carried on in the trading posts at Canton, several attempts were later made in the 18th and 19th century by British merchants to open up new points of access. One of the requests of Lord Macartney's embassy to emperor Qianlong in 1793 was an acquisition of "a small unfortified island near Zhoushan for the residence of English traders, storage of goods, and outfitting of ships." Emperor Qianlong denied this request together with all the rest.

In 1832 the English East India Company despatched the ship "Lord Amherst" from Macao on a commercial mission in charge of Mr. Hugh Hamilton Lindsay. Wherever he called along the coast, he met a series of rebuffs. After failing to gain admittance into Amoy, Foochow, Chusan, and Ningpo, he proceeded to Shanghai. The officials of that port had been notified of his coming and were prepared to oppose his entrance into the harbour. He managed, however, to obtain an interview with the Taotai, the official in charge of trade, in the temple of the Queen of Heaven. Although received with scant courtesy, he was able to present his petition. He was told, however, that the right of trade could only be allowed at Canton and was advised to return there as soon as possible. Trade with the area being impossible, Mr. Lindsay left. The area was not opened up for trade until 1842. After that time, Zhoushan became a large and well known port while Hong Kong was only a fishing village.

Because this Dutch VOC chart of 1753 was secret and not officially published, it is now exceptionally rare, and only a handful of examples have survived.

The chart was included in an extremely rare sea atlas by Johannes (II) van Keulen, the Zee-Fakkel Part VI, issued in 1753, the so-called secret atlas of the Dutch East India Company, of this atlas only a few copies have survived.

For many regions in Asia and Africa, the printed maps from this atlas are the first, the best and the only accurate early maps.

These maps are never in the market, and they are beyond doubt the most desirable of early printed maps of the Far East and China.

For two centuries, from 1602 to 1799, the Dutch East India Company (the VOC) ruled the waters of Asia and Africa. Accurate charting of these waters was essential for successful and safe navigation.

The VOC had their own mapmaking office. During the first 150 years, only secret manuscript charts were used, to minimize the risk of spreading the knowledge to competitors. But from 1753 onwards, a printed atlas was used, the van Keulen Zee-Fakkel Part VI, with printed charts to navigate the waters from South Africa to Japan.

There was a variety of reasons for printing the VOC maps:

First, in the course of 150 years the knowledge of these waters had leaked out to other European nations and secrecy was of less importance.

Second, printed maps were more accurate and less prone to errors than manuscript copies.

Third, loose maps were impractical and sometimes lost despite the strict policies of use.

Fourth, in the course of 150 years the knowledge of these waters had leaked out to other European nations and secrecy was of less importance.

And last, but not least, printed maps were cheaper to (re-)produce than manuscript maps.

The atlas is known as the secret atlas of the East India Company, because it was not sold to third parties and only used on board of VOC ships. For this reason it is extremely rare, and only few have survived. Further, the number of charts in the atlas is often limited because ships that did not sail to India / Ceylon or China / Formosa / Japan were given versions of the atlas that did not contain the charts of these areas, making many of the maps even rarer.

APPENDIX:

transcription and English translation of all Dutch texts on the chart

Chart title, in elegant cartouche in lower left:

Paskaart

van de Eylanden

CHEUXAN

Lowang

en alle desselfs onderhoorige Eylande

met alle dieptens, droogtens en

ankergronden,

geleegen aen de kust van China strek=

kende van C. Avarellas of Montagne tot

aan Lingpo.

te bekomen

by Joannes van Keulen, aan de

Oostzyde van de nieuwe brug-steeg

Navigation chart

of the Islands

CHEUXAN

Lowang

and all the corresponding subsidiary Islands

with all depths, shallows and

anchoring grounds,

lying on the coast of China

stretching from Cape Avarellas or Cape Montagne to

Lingpo.

can be bought

from Joannes van Keulen, at the

East side of the new bridge alley in Amsterdam

Two scalebars:

6 Duytse mylen van 15 in een graad.

8 Engelsche of Franse Leagues van 20 in een graad.

6 German miles of 15 in one degree.

8 English or French Leagues of 20 in one degree.

DE KUST VAN CHINA

THE COAST OF CHINA

Dit is nog niet anders bekend als na de oudste kaarten en hoeft verbetering

This is not known other than after the oldest charts en needs improvement

Goese

Goese Island

Cabo Montagne of de Avarellas

Cape Montagne also known as Cape Avarellas

Monniks-Cap

Monk's Hood (coastal profile as seen from the bay)

De Beer

The Bear

met hoogh water onder [gevaarlijk rif]

at high tide flooded under water [dangerous reef or shoal]

Klumpe

Wooden Shoes [Clogs, after profile form of island]

Eylanden van Quesan

Eylands of Quesan

Groot Quesan

Greater Quesan

Tafel=eylanden

Table Islands [flat profile]

Blonte Piek

Blunt Peak

Eylanden van Hesan

Islands of Hesan

Gluks=klippen

Chance rocks

Kers=en Paaschen=eylanden

Christmas and Easter islands

Casteel=klip

Castle rock

Buffelows neus

Buffalo's nose

vers water

fresh water

de Corkers

the Corkers

de beste Passagie na Cheu-xan

the best sailing passage to Cheuxan

Boom=eyland

Tree island

S. Andries

S. Andrew

Foetosan

Foetosan

Dit is laag land, dat met spring=tyd onder water staat behalve de eylanden

These are low lands, that are flooded with sping-tide except for the islands

de 10 voet vaart voor kleyne Jonken

the 10 foot passage for small Junks

hoog land

high lands

LOWANG of het Kroonen-eyland

LOWANG or the Crown's island

Philipps klip en punt

Philipp's rock and cape

Witte klip

White rock

Caap Lowang

Cape Lowang

Witte coms baay

White basin bay

2 broeders

2 brothers [twin islands]

Vernoms eyland

Vernom's island

Towhys wayn

vers water

Towhys wayn

fresh water

Jansens rust

Jansen's grave

Van Mutes punt loopt het land W.N.W. 6 Duytse mylen, tot een diepe Baay, die gezegt wort Hansheu te zyn een groot Handel plaats.

From Mutes point the land continues West-North-West 6 German miles, to a deep Bay, which is said to be Hanzhou alarge Trading city

Mutes punt.

Mutes cape.

Riv. van Ningpo.

River of Ningpo.

Ningpo of Lingpo.

Ningpo also known as Lingpo.

de Driehoek

the Triangle

de Wacht toorens

the Watch towers

Edmonds-eylanden

Edmonds-islands

Geen land deeze weg te zien

No land to be seen this way

HIMTONG of Silver=eyland

HIMTONG or Silver island

dwars in de weg

standing in the way [island or rocks in the channel]

't vaar water voor schepen na Lingpo

channel for the ships to Lingpo

Tygesan

Tygesan

S.Georg

S.George

Hoog land langs deeze kust

High lands along this coast

Kittow punt het alder hoogste

Point Kittow the highest cape

anker grond

anchoring ground

Singlosan

Singlosan

Tower=hill

Tower hill

Oliphants Snevel

Elephant's trunk [after form of island]

Bell eyland

Bell island

Tingboo

Tingboo

Chuttatam

Chuttatam

Blakwall=eyland.

Black wall island

N.W. eylanden

North West islands

Geen land deeze weg te zien

No land to be seen this way

't lange eyland

the long island

5.5 voet met springtyden

5.5 foot during spring tide

klip bovenwater

rock above water

Pellican klip

Pelican's rock

HET EYLAND CHEUXAN of Het Papen-eyland

THE ISLAND CHEUXAN or The Island of the Jesuits

Foplar I.

Foplar Island

Modderbank met half ty droog

Mudbank dry at half tide

Vischers=dorp

Fisher's village

Vischers=eyland

Fisher's island

Wacht huys

Guard-house

de Stad Cheuxan

the City of Cheuxan

Vischers dorp

Fisher's village

Scheppey ey=land

Scheppey island

Dier=ey=land

Animal island

Vischer=huyzen

Fishermen's houses

Sinquamong eylanden

Sinquamon islands

Twee Susters

Two Sisters [twin islands]

met laag water droog

dry at low tide

Powto

Powto

Johannes van Keulen (1654-1711)

Gerard van Keulen (son) (1678-c.1727)

Johannes van Keulen II (grandson) (active 1726-1755)

The Dutch produced a remarkable number of enterprising and prolific map and chart makers but not even the Blaeu and Jansson establishments could rival the vigour of the van Keulen family whose business was founded in 1680 and continued under their name until 1823 and in other names until 1885 when it was from wound up and the stock dispersed at auction.

Throughout the history of the family, the widows several of the van Keulens played a major part, after their husbands' deaths, in maintaining the continuity of the business. The firm was founded by Johannes van Keulen who was registered as a bookseller in Amsterdam in 1678. In 1680 he published the first part of his 'Zee Atlas' which, over the years, was expanded to 5 volumes and continued in one form or another until 1734. More ambitious and with a far longer and more complicated life was his book of sea charts, the 'Zee-Fakkel', first published in 1681–82, which was still being printed round the year 1800. A major influence in the development of the firm was the acquisition in 1693 of the stock of a rival map publisher, Hendrik Doncker.

Although the firm was founded by Johannes van Keulen, he was primarily a publisher; it was his son, Gerard, a talented engraver, mathematician, Hydrographer to the East India Company, who became mainspring of the business which not only published charts but also books on every aspect of geograpy, navigation and nautical matters,

(Moreland and Bannister)

It was grandson Johannes van Keulen (II) who in 1753 produced Volume VI of the Zee-Fakkel for the VOC East Indiamen, containing printed charts for the navigation covering the waters from the Cape of Good Hope to Nagasaki . The atlas was not commercially sold and only for use on board of VOC ships, therefore it is also refered to as the 'secret atlas' of the VOC. The engraving quality and craftsmanship surpasses that of all earlier printed sea charts.

Sea charts from the secret atlas are among the rarest and most desirable sea charts for collectors.