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Georg Balthasar Probst

De Reede van Batavia

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 1760, today 265 years ago.

December 10, 2025

Cartographer(s)

Georg Balthasar Probst

First Published

Augsburg, 1760

This edition

Size

31.5 x 45.5 cms

Technique

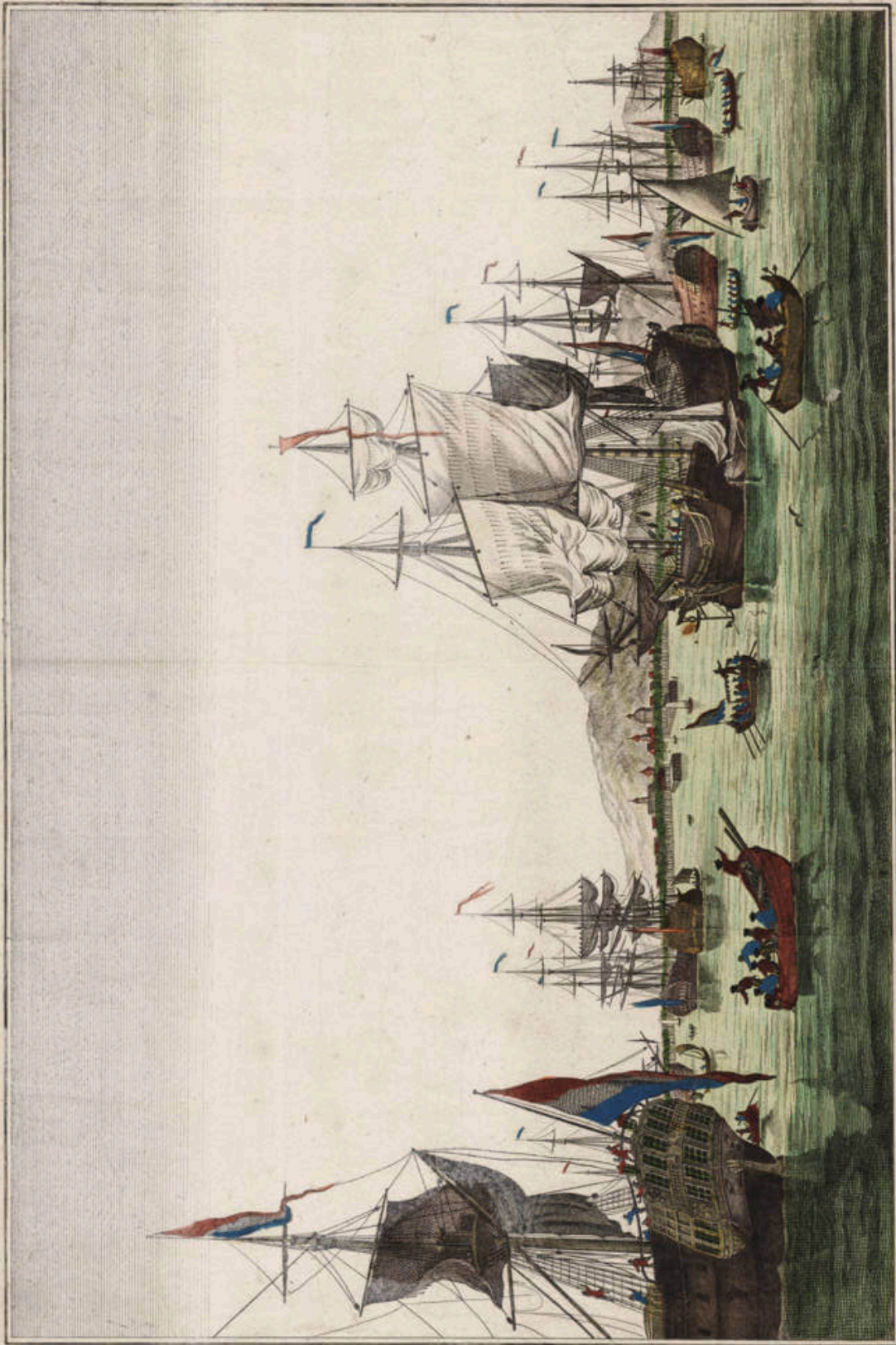
Copperplate engraving with period hand-coloring

Stock number

19801

Condition

excellent



BATAVIA .

DE REEDE VAN



Com. Gratia et Privilegio, Sive. Cens. Imperatoris.

J. Muller. Drecht. weelder. Georg. Balthasar. Drecht. weelder. 1719.

Description

This finely executed copperplate engraving captures the bustling roadstead of Batavia, the principal Dutch East India Company (VOC) settlement in Southeast Asia, as it appeared in the mid-eighteenth century. Batavia, established in 1619 on the northwestern coast of Java, served as the administrative and commercial hub of the VOC's vast trading network across the Indian Ocean and beyond. The title, 'De Reede van Batavia' ('The Roads of Batavia') reflects the anchorage's role as a vital maritime crossroads where East Indiamen, fluyts, and smaller craft converged to load spices, textiles, porcelain, and other commodities before embarking on the perilous return voyage to Europe via the Cape of Good Hope.

The print is after a famous painting by Hendrik Kobell. Viewed from a slightly elevated vantage point offshore, the scene unfolds left to right across a serene expanse of turquoise waters under a pale blue sky lightly brushed with clouds. Dominating the foreground are a cluster of large merchant vessels at anchor, their hulls richly detailed with gunports, lanterns, and rigging. Prominent Dutch tricolor ensigns flutter from mastheads, underscoring the VOC's hegemony in the region. Smaller boats—rowing pinnaces and sloops—ply the waters, ferrying personnel and goods between ships and shore, their oars captured mid-stroke to convey motion and activity.

The middle ground reveals a dense throng of additional shipping: brigs, barks, and hoys interspersed with local prahus, hinting at the multicultural maritime traffic that characterized Batavia's roads. Flags of various nations, including English and Danish, add to the international flavor, though Dutch vessels predominate. In the background, the low-lying Javanese coastline emerges with warehouses, dwellings, and the fortified walls of Batavia Castle faintly discernible amid palm groves. Distant volcanic silhouettes, likely Mount Salak and adjacent peaks, provide a dramatic, if somewhat idealized, topographic backdrop, their contours softened by atmospheric perspective.

Georg Mathäus Probst (?-1788) engraver, and his father Georg Balthasar Probst (1673–1745? attributions vary), operating from their Augsburg studio, produced this view circa 1760. Probst's atelier specialized in panoramic cityscapes and harbor scenes derived from traveler accounts, VOC charts, and imported sketches. While not topographically precise—elevations are exaggerated for pictorial effect, and proportions stylized—the print demonstrates meticulous attention to nautical detail: belaying pins, capstans, and sail configurations reflect authentic mid-century shipbuilding practices. The hand-applied color enhances depth and vibrancy, with subtle greens and blues evoking tropical luminosity.

Central to the lower margin bearing the Dutch title around a cartouche with the Batavia arms and a variety of maritime objects. Imprint credits Georg Mathäus Probst as the engraver and Georg Balthasar Probst as the publisher. They were famous for exotic imagery in Enlightenment Europe. Such prints informed public understanding of global trade empires. This example offers a snapshot of colonial maritime infrastructure before the VOC's decline post-1780.