



The mythical kingdom of Prester John in Abyssinia

HONDIUS, Jodocus.

Abissinorum Sive Pretiosi Joannis Imperiū.

Amsterdam, 1613, French text edition. Original outline colour. 345 x 490mm.

£350

A highly decorative map of central Africa, with the Congo in an inset top left, and the title in a strap-work cartouche bottom left. The map marked the Kingdom of Prester John, the mythical Christian king descended from David and regarded as an important defence against the barbarians. Originally believing him to be somewhere in the Middle East Pope Alexander III sent John a letter to beg help against the Mongols (1177), but his messenger never returned. As Polo and other travellers opened the East without finding him, Prester John's kingdom retreated into the unknown. Although Waldseemüller's maps of 1507 places him in India, Fries moved him to Africa in 1522. Ortelius followed Fries, and dedicated his map of central Africa to John's son David! Hondius has followed Ortelius, with cities spread throughout the African interior.

KOEMAN: Me 23a

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