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SLAVE PORTS ON THE AFRICAN COAST

A new & correct map of the coast of Africa from Cape Blanco, lat. 20° 40' N. to the coast of Angola, lat. 11° S.

Author

[SMITH, William] Royal African Company

Publication date

1744

Publisher

Publication place

[London],

Physical description

Engraved map with one inset, with fine original hand-colour, with manuscript annotations in ink, old folds, some with minor splitting, a few small repairs to nicks at extremities, the left margin reinforced verso, some handling creases and minor surface dirt.

Dimensions

490 by 660mm. (19.25 by 26 inches).

Notes

The present map is dedicated to the Royal African Company, an English mercantile company

established in 1660 by the Stuarts, and led by the Duke of York (later James II of England), as well as a number of City of London merchants. The company was founded in order to trade along the west coast of Africa, an important location for sourcing gold and ivory, but also a location utilised for the supply of slaves to the West Indies and America. The Royal African Company became insolvent in 1708, and ceased trading slaves in 1731. In 1752 the company assets were transferred to the new African Company of Merchants, which operated until 1821, although slave trading was prohibited by British law in 1807. It has been recorded that between the years 1662 and 1731, the Royal African Company transported approximately 212,000 slaves, of whom 44,000 died en route, around 3,000 per year.

Employed as a surveyor by the Royal African Company during the 1730s and early 1740s, William Smith published a number of works associated with the continent. These included an account of his travels entitled 'A New Voyage to Guinea', which was published posthumously in 1744, and a map of West Africa, published the same year. The map extends from Cape Blanco, in modern day Mauritania, to Cape Ledo in the Luanda Province of Angola.

Islands, ports, bays, rivers, hills and woodlands are represented along the coastline, with arrows besides the Gabon shore describing seasonal winds. Ships appear on the waters, and there is a compass rose above the dedicatory cartouche. On the chart, a key to the left of the land identifies the colours used to represent French, English, Dutch and Danish colonial bases, many of which were heavily involved with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. A large inset in the upper right shows details of the Gold Coast, including its roadways, settlements and colonial bases, also identified by national flag.

The map was originally published by E. Say in the second edition of Deputy Hayes's 'The Importance of Effectually Supporting The Royal African Company of England Impartially Considered...' in 1745. It was later expanded by R.W. Seale for Malachy Postlethwayt's 1755 'Dictionary of Commerce'.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £12000

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