

Double-page engraved copperplate double-hemisphere map of the world, with hand-colour in full, false margins added to all but the right side.

FIRST EDITION, FIRST STATE OF SPEED'S ICONIC WORLD MAP

A New and Accurat Map of the World Drawne According to ye Truest Descriptions, Latest Discoveries & Best Oberservations y.t have beene Made by English or Strangers. 1626.

Author
SPEED, John

Publication date
1626, [but 1627].

Publisher
Are to be sold in pops-head Alle by Geor. Humble,

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Double-page engraved copperplate double-hemisphere map of the world, with hand-colour in full, false margins added to all but the right side.

Dimensions
415 by 520mm. (16.25 by 20.5 inches).

Notes
Superb impression of Speed's iconic world map. The 'Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World', from which the present work is drawn, appeared in 1627, and is the first world atlas

compiled by an Englishman to be published in England.

Speed's world map bears some similarities, both geographically and decoratively to William Grent's extremely rare broadsheet map of the world, published in London in 1625, as evidenced by the fact that Speed's map also shows California as an island, includes the same four portraits of the circumnavigators, the same English legends, and similar astronomical drawings of eclipses and diagrams of the heavenly spheres. The four allegorical figures representing the elements, and celestial hemispheres are based on Jodocus Hondius's world map of 1617.

There are a number of significant differences though, chiefly on the Northwest Coast of America and Japan. Speed has also rendered the coastlines of the vast conjectural "Magellanica or "The Southerne Unknowne Land" considerably less emphatically than Grent. One of the several claims to fame for the Speed, is that it is the first available world map to represent California as an island. Speed has followed Grent in this but has adopted the shape for the "island" from Henry Briggs' map of North America, published, like the Grent, in London in 1625. It was the popularity and influence of Speed's maps, both World and Americas, which did so much to insure the persistent longevity of this misconception.

The actual engraver of the map remains unknown, as "unlike most of the other foreign maps it carries no attribution and may have been prepared by the publisher of the work, George Humble, whose imprint appears on the map… The style is not inconsistent with that of Abraham Goos who worked on several other maps in the 'Prospect' and he may have been primarily responsible" (Shirley).

John Speed (1552-1629) was the outstanding cartographer of his age. By trade a merchant tailor, but by proclivity a historian, it was the patronage of Sir Fulke Greville, poet and statesman, that allowed him to pursue this interest in earnest.

His 'Theatre of Great Britain', first published in 1611 or 1612, was the first large-scale printed atlas of the British Isles. The maps in the 'Theatre' became the basis for subsequent folio atlases until the mid-eighteenth century. The 'Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World', from which the present work is drawn, appeared in 1627, and is the first world atlas compiled by an Englishman to be published in England. Engraved in Amsterdam, many of the maps are anglicized versions of works by Dutch makers in distinctive carte-à-figure style, featuring borders with figures in local costume and city views.

Much like the 'History' and 'Theatre', the 'Prospect' is as much a work of history as it is of cartography. Accompanying the maps is extensive text describing at length the geography, geology, history, culture, government, people, customs, and resources of the lands shown. The first atlas to be published by an Englishman, the work set a high standard to which future generations of British mapmakers could aspire, and remains an invaluable source of information about the seventeenth-century European understanding of the world.

Bibliography
Chubb, XXV; Shirley [Atlases], T.SPE-2a; Shirley [World], 317.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 22153

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