

4 sheets joined, engraved wall map, with contemporary hand colour, edged in blue silk, supported by original rollers.

“... ONE OF THE GREATEST MAPS EVER PUBLISHED.”

Africa To the Committee and Members of the British Association for Discovering the Interior Parts of Africa. This Map is with Their Permission most respectfully Inscribed, by their most obedient and humble Servant A. Arrowsmith A. Arrowsmith.

Author
ARROWSMITH, Aaron

Publication date
November, 1st, 1802.

Publisher
Rathbone Place,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
4 sheets joined, engraved wall map, with contemporary hand colour, edged in blue silk, supported by original rollers.

Dimensions
1275 by 1600mm. (50.25 by 63 inches).

Notes
A truly groundbreaking map. Arrowsmith, with characteristic attention to detail, describes all the

latest discoveries within the interior, as well as alluding to some of the earlier myths. A striking example of this is the vast mountain range running east to west, which Arrowsmith names as the “Mountains of Kong” and, further east, the legendary “Mountains of the Moon”. However, the most notable feature of the map is the vast unknown interior of the continent, which Arrowsmith has left blank, and which must have been so inviting to the later British explorers of the Upper Nile and Central Africa. Arrowsmith’s Africa is:

“… one of the greatest maps ever published. Arrowsmith simply stripped away centuries of accumulated myth, misconception and unsustainable guesswork, and took the mapping of Africa back to the bare bones of substantiated fact, leaving the interior as a blank canvas, a challenge to a new generation of explorers. As a picture, many of his predecessors of a century earlier would not have thought of publishing it, as a statement of intent it raised the standard for geographical accuracy above that practised by the vast majority of his contemporaries” (Mapforum, 2005, Issue 5, p.23)

Aaron Arrowsmith (1750-1823), ”easily the foremost cartographer of his time” (R.V. Tooley), was the founder of the Arrowsmith dynasty of cartographers. Born in County Durham, he was in London by 1777 when he witnessed the will of Andrew Dury, a mapseller and publisher, and was probably training with him; he may have trained with William Faden, Geographer to the King, but was certainly employed by John Cary in 1782, as he is credited with the survey work for ’Cary’s Actual Survey, of the Great Post Roads between London and Falmouth’, published in 1784; he is frequently credited with some of the survey work for Cary’s county atlas, ’Cary’s New and Correct English Atlas: being a set of county maps from actual surveys’ (1787), but the sources are silent on this and by this time Arrowsmith had established his own business.

Arrowmsith’s maps set a new standard; he was assiduous in analysing and verifying his sources, discarding not only the fictional but also the uncertain, going to printed and manuscript sources for his information, and engraved in a clear and highly legible style. Arrowsmith was also diligent in revising and improving his maps to keep them current, and served as an inspiration for the next generation of (particularly American) surveyors.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 11705

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