

Double-page engraved map with hand-colour.

SPEED'S MAP OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

A New Mappe of the Romane Empire newly described by Iohn Speede.

Author
SPEED, John

Publication date
[1676].

Publisher
are to be sold by Tho: Bassett in Fleet Street, & Ric: Chiswell in St. Pauls Churchyard,

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Double-page engraved map with hand-colour.

Dimensions
405 by 515mm. (16 by 20.25 inches).

Notes
A map showing the historical extent of the Roman Empire from the 1676 edition of the first atlas compiled and published by an Englishman, Speed's 'Prospect'.

The decorative border along each side depicts men in regional costume from former imperial countries (for example, 'A Spainyard'), with 'His Wyfe' illustrated in the panel below. Along the top

of the map is a series of city views. Among these is Venice, despite the fact that it was not founded until 421 C.E. and, as such, post-dates the heyday of Rome. A cartouche at the lower edge provides a potted history of the foundation and expansion of the Roman Empire. In the top left-hand corner is a medallion portrait of Roma, the personification of Rome, and in the top right-hand corner is Romulus, legendary founder of the city.

Accompanying text in English, 'The Description of the Roman Empire', is printed on the reverse.

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 'Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World', from which the present work is drawn, appeared in 1627, bound with the 'Theatre', 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.

This map is from the 1676 edition of the 'Prospect', published by Thomas Bassett and Richard Chiswell. While not as rare as the earlier publications, this edition is perhaps the most important, given that it is the first to include the nine new maps: among them, Virginia and Maryland, Barbados, and Russia. It is also the last time that the 'Prospect' was printed as an atlas.

Bibliography
Shirley [Atlases], T.SPE-2f.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 21916

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