

Second issue. Full-page engraved chart.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE IN AN ENGLISH ATLAS OF ANY PART OF THE AUSTRALIAN COASTLINE

Carta particolare della costa Australe scoperta dall'Olandesi. La longitude.ne Comin:ca da l'Isola di Pico d'Asores d'Asia Carta XVIIII.

Author
DUDLEY, Robert

Publication date
1661.

Publisher
Giuseppe Cocchini,

Publication place
Florence,

Physical description
Second issue. Full-page engraved chart.

Dimensions
475 by 380mm (18.75 by 15 inches).

Notes
This, the first chart in an English atlas to show any part of the Australian coastline, includes one of the earliest representations of Cape York in Northern Australia, showing the western coastline of the Cape, as discovered and charted by the Dutch expedition led by Jan Carstensz. It is joined on the

chart to New Guinea by the “Golfo Incognito” – Unknown Gulf. The current chart is an example of the second edition, which differs from the first by the the addition of the longitude “Lo 20” to the title cartouche.

“In 1623 Dutch explorer Jan Carstensz with fellow explorer Van colster were assigned by Herman van Speult, Governor of Amroyna, to lead a voyage to New Guinea in the ships the ‘Pera’ and the ‘Arnhem’ to search for gold on the south coast of New Guinea and check the previous reports of the area made by Willem Janszoon in 1606. Thinking they were still sailing down New Guinea’s south coast, the expedition missed Torres Strait entering the Gulf of Carpentaria mistaking it still for New Guinea but actually landed on Cape York Peninsula.

“The placenames given by Carstensz are labelled as follows on the southeast corner of Dudley ‘s map:- ‘Hogelondre’ (high land), ‘R.Van Speult’, ‘R.Batavia’ and ‘Water Plaets’ (fresh water), and he named Cape York “Nova Guinea”. The captain and several crew from the Arnhem were later killed by natives further south and Arnhem Land is named after his ship” (NLA)

The first serious challenge to Dutch hegemony of chart-making came from Robert Dudley, and his ‘Dell’arcano del mare, di D. Ruberto Dudleo Ducadi Nortumbria e conte di vvarvich, libri sei…’, one the “greatest atlases of the world” (Wardington). First published in 1646 when its author, Robert Dudley, was 73, it was not only the first sea atlas of the world, but also the first to use Mercator’s projection; the earliest to show magnetic deviation; the first to show currents and prevailing winds; the first to expound the advantages of ‘Great Circle Sailing’ – the shortest distance between two points on a globe; and “perhaps less importantly the first sea-atlas to be compiled by an Englishman, albeit abroad in Italy” (Wardington).

In his own words, as a young man, Dudley had yearned to travel to “India and other parts to which navigation should take him,… [however, Queen Elizabeth] “would not allow such a mere youth to break his maiden lance in an enterprise requiring so much knowledge of the world, in which many veteran Captains had fared so ill… Not being able to take the desired voyage to China,… [he] sent ships and men there under the command of Captain [Benjamin] Wood” who was ultimately shipwrecked off the Burmese coast.

In spite of Francis Drake’s successful circumnavigation at the end of the 1570s, “English voyages were generally disappointing” (Suarez). The English East India Company was chartered on the last day of 1600, and it was not long before the Company had established factories in Banten (Java), Ayuthaya, and Patani, and was conducting limited trade with Cambodia and Cochin-China. However, the “Massacre of Ambon” and other less tragic difficulties, precipitated the English withdrawal from the Southeast Asian arena, to concentrate on establishing their presence in India instead.

The mapmaker
Robert Dudley (1573–1649) was the son of the Earl of Leicester (the one time favourite of Elizabeth I) and Lady Douglas Sheffield, the widow of Lord Sheffield. Although born out of wedlock, Robert received the education and privileges of a Tudor nobleman. He seems to have been interested in naval matters from an early age, and in 1594, at the age of 21, he led an expedition to the Orinoco River and Guiana. His success upon the high-seas was not matched, unfortunately, by his luck at court, and at the beginning of the seventeenth century he was forced to flee, along with his cousin Elizabeth Southwell, to Europe. Eventually he ended up in Florence at the court of Grand Duke Ferdinand I of Tuscany, where he not only married his cousin and converted to Catholicism, but also help Ferdinand wage war against the Mediterranean pirates. In his spare time he set about his great life’s work: the ‘Arcano del Mare’.

For the beautifully engraved charts, Dudley employed the services of Antonio Francesco Lucini.

Lucini states in the atlases that the work took him 12 years to complete and required 5,000lbs of copper. The charts are by English and other pilots, and it is generally accepted that the work was both scientific and accurate for the time. It is assumed that Dudley used the original charts of Henry Hudson, and for the Pacific Coast of America used his brother in-law Thomas Cavendish's observations.

Bibliography

Literature: Clancy, 'The Mapping of Terra Australis', 6.10; Clancy, 'So Came They South', pages 100-101; Schilder, 'Australia Unveiled', 41; Suarez, 'Early Mapping of Southeast Asia', pages 205-206; Tooley, 'The Mapping of Australia', 483.

Provenance

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