

Full-page map with contemporary hand-colour in full.

THE FIRST MAP TO FOCUS ON “AUSTRALIA”

Novae Guineae Forma and Situs.

Author
DE JODE, Cornelis

Publication date
1593.

Publisher
Arnold Corunx for the widow & heirs of Gerard de Jode,

Publication place
Antwerp,

Physical description
Full-page map with contemporary hand-colour in full.

Dimensions
346 by 215mm (13.5 by 8.5 inches).

Notes
“The first printed map of Australia” (Tooley), showing part of New Guinea, and a speculative Australian coastline. New Guinea was named by the Spanish explorer Íñigo Ortíz de Retes in 1545, who thought that the landscape and people were similar to those of the Guinea region of Africa: the Latin text on New Guinea explains this. Australia is populated by a hunter chasing real and mythical beasts.

It was still a largely unexplored part of the world, with only the reports of a few Spanish and Portuguese voyages to draw on. The text on New Guinea warns that observers are still not sure whether it is an island or continent, but calls Australia “a fifth continent”, indicating an awareness of its size.

The map appeared only in the second and final edition of the De Jode family atlas, the ‘Speculum’ in 1593, and juxtaposes “a fairly conventional treatment of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands with an unannotated southern land and seas filled with strange and mythical creatures. In this respect, it is reminiscent of the Dieppe School maps, themselves believed to owe much to now-lost Portuguese mapping. While most of the annotations, and all the accompanying text, are in Latin, several terms used are Spanish, including ‘Islas de Salamon’, the Solomon Islands. The representation of New Guinea has significant text, both on the map and on its reverse. Text appearing on ‘Nova Guinea’ explains that it was given this name by sailors because the shore was thought to be similar to that of Guinea in Africa. The mapmaker ends by stating that it is not known whether New Guinea is joined to the southern land” (Helman).

The mapmakers
The ‘Speculum’ was first published in 1578 by Gerard de Jode (1509-1591) with text by Daniel Cellarius. It was designed to compete with Abraham Ortelius’ atlas, ‘Theatrum Orbis Terrarum’, which had been published eight years earlier. Ortelius used his influence to disrupt de Jode’s application for a royal privilege. By the time this was finally granted, seven years after the publication of the ‘Theatrum’, Ortelius’ work had become so popular that de Jode’s atlas did not sell well, despite the accuracy and clarity of his maps.

His son Cornelis (1558-1600) continued his father’s publishing business after studying at Douai. He produced an enlarged edition of the ‘Speculum’ in 1593, which Gerard had been planning before his death. Either Cornelis or Gerard was the first person to make a globe following the geography of Mercator in the southern hemisphere; no copies of it survive to provide evidence.

Although sales of de Jode’s work were less than ideal, the atlas was evidently held in high regard, with several contemporaries citing its importance alongside the atlases of Mercator and Ortelius. Few examples of either edition of the ‘Speculum’ have survived, making the maps within a rarity.

Bibliography
Literature: National Library of Australia, Helman for ‘Mapping our World: Terra Incognita to Australia’, page 92; Schilder, ‘Australia Unveiled’, 13, image page 269; Suarez, ‘Early Mapping of the Pacific’, pages 60-61; Tooley, ‘Landmarks of Mapmaking’, page 247; Tooley, Mapping of Australia, 385.

Provenance

Price: £18000

Inventory reference: 23185

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