

Four parts in one volume. Folio (285 by 180mm). Mostly black letter, double column. [6] leaves, blank, engraved general title-page by William Rogers (Johnson, p.2, Rogers no.3), dedication, 'To the Reader', pages numbered 1-197 'The First Booke', [1] leaf sectional vignette title-page with engraved map of the Congo, pages numbered [197]- 259 (ie 295) 'The Second Booke', [1] leaf sectional vignette title-page with engraved double- hemisphere map of the world, Shirley 182, pages numbered 307- 447 'The Thirde Booke', [1] leaf sectional vignette title- page with engraved map of Spain, pages numbered [451]-462 'The Fourth Booke'; double-page engraved folding map of the world 'Typus Orbis Terrarum' (Shirley 169), 8 large double-page folding maps, and 3 folding views of St. Helena and Ascension, 4 woodcut maps in text, woodcut initials, factotums and head-piece ornaments; full contemporary English calf, each cover ruled in blind with central gilt arabesque, the spine in seven compartments, citron morocco lettering-piece in one, the others decorated with a gilt ingot and pincer tool, upper hinge just starting at the head of the spine, endpapers renewed at early date.

Collation: blank, Engraved title, A(4), B-I(6), K-Q(6), R(8), *s(2), S-U(6), X-Z(6), Aa(6), Bb-Cc(4), Dd-(4), Ii(6), Kk-Pp(6), Qq(7).

"THE NAVIGATOR'S VADE MECUM FOR THE EASTERN SEAS" – ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ENGLISH TRAVEL BOOKS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

John Huighen van Linschoten his Discours of Voyages unto ye Easte & West Indies. Devided into Foure Bookes.

Author
LINSCHOTEN, Jan Huygen van.

Publication date
1598.

Publisher
John Wolfe,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Four parts in one volume. Folio (285 by 180mm). Mostly black letter, double column. [6] leaves, blank, engraved general title-page by William Rogers (Johnson, p.2, Rogers no.3), dedication, 'To the Reader', pages numbered 1-197 'The First Booke', [1] leaf sectional vignette title-page with engraved map of the Congo, pages numbered [197]- 259 (ie 295) 'The Second Booke', [1] leaf sectional vignette title-page with engraved double- hemisphere map of the world, Shirley 182, pages numbered 307- 447 'The Thirde Booke', [1] leaf sectional vignette title- page with engraved map of Spain, pages numbered [451]-462 'The Fourth Booke'; double-page engraved folding map of the world 'Typus Orbis Terrarum' (Shirley 169), 8 large double-page folding maps, and 3 folding views of St. Helena and Ascension, 4 woodcut maps in text, woodcut initials, factotums and head-piece ornaments; full contemporary English calf, each cover ruled in blind with central gilt arabesque, the spine in seven compartments, citron morocco lettering-piece in one, the others decorated with a gilt ingot and pincer tool, upper hinge just starting at the head of the spine, endpapers renewed at early date.

Collation: blank, Engraved title, A(4), B-I(6), K-Q(6), R(8), *s(2), S-U(6), X-Z(6), Aa(6), Bb-Cc(4), Dd-(4), Ii(6), Kk-Pp(6), Qq(7).

Dimensions
285 by 180mm. (11.25 by 7 inches).

Notes
The very rare English edition of Linschoten's 'Itinerario', first published in Dutch in 1595-1596, and translated from the Dutch by William Phillip.

Linschoten's was the first printed work to include precise sailing instructions for the East Indies. Its exposition of a route to the south of Sumatra through the Sunda Strait allowed Dutch and, later, English merchants to circumvent the Portuguese stranglehold on passage, and, therefore, trade, to the East through the Straits of Malacca. This enabled the British East India Company and the Dutch East India Company to set sail for the Spice Islands and, ultimately, China and Japan, and was of such economic utility that, according to Church, and others, "it was given to each ship sailing from Holland to India" and soon became "the navigator's vade mecum for the Eastern seas" (Penrose).

"This important work contains all the knowledge and learning related to the East and West Indies and navigations to those parts that was available at the end of the sixteenth century. It was held in such high esteem that for nearly a century a copy was given to each ship sailing to India as a guide to the sailing directions. The fact that most copies were in continual use is in no doubt the reason that fine copies, especially with all correct plates and maps, are so very rare" (Hill).

The work is made up of four parts. The first, provides the account of Linschoten's travels in Asia and includes accounts of east coast of Africa, Arabia and as far east as Japan. The chapter is accompanied by fine folding maps of the world, Arabia and India, the southeast coast of Africa, a superb map of east Asia and the East Indies and finally one of southwest Africa.

The second book focuses on the west coast of Africa, around the Cape of Good Hope to Arabia and India. It also details the New World accompanying which is a fine map of South America extending

northwards to Florida. The third book is derived from the discoveries of the Portuguese Royal pilot Diego Affonso, and details the navigation from Portugal to India, and onwards to the East Indies. Similar detail is also provided for Spanish America and Brazil. Accompanying this is the superb 'Spice Islands' map illustrated with spices of the region. The final fourth book provides economic details provided by the territories of the King of Spain.

In fact, until its publication, no other book contained anything like the amount of useful information on the East and West Indies, and it soon became required reading for all navigators sailing to the East, with chapters on the coast of 'Arabia Felix', ie., the southern coast of the Arabian peninsula, the island of Ormus, and Islamic India.

"This is the first work outside of Portugal and Spain to provide detailed practical information on how to get to and engage in trade with America and India. The work was indispensable to sailors on the route to the Indies [and] served as a direct stimulus to the building of the vast English and Dutch overseas empires" (Streeter).

Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563-1611)
Linschoten was a native of Enkhuizen who travelled to Spain in 1576 to join his two elder brothers. The family moved to Lisbon during the troubles of 1581. Through family contacts the young Linschoten became attached to the retinue of Vincente de Fonseca as he was sent to Goa as Archbishop. Arriving in September 1583 he spent time travelling through Malabar and Coromandel. All the while he compiled a secret account of his findings. In 1586 Dirck Gerritsz (1544-1604) passed through Goa returning from Japan having also been to China. He was probably the first Dutchman to visit the former. He passed much of his knowledge to Linschoten.

The archbishop returned to Europe in 1587 to report to Philip II but Linschoten remained. Expecting his return, he later found out that he had died at sea. He resolved to return himself and through the auspices of Dutch traders such as the Fuggers and Welsers in India obtained the position of a factor on one of their returning vessels in 1589. He remained on the island of Terceira in the Azores for two years and made his way back to Holland in September 1592. He continued to gather further information from Dutch sailors even accompanied William Barentsz's second voyage to the Kara Sea in 1594-95. In 1594 he received permission to publish his work. The 'Itinerario' was an instant success and combined his first-hand accounts with translations of Portuguese and Spanish documents.

The work provided accurate sailing information and detailed descriptions of how to trade in both Asia and South America and the nature of their commodities. Legend has it that examples were given to every Dutch ship sailing to Asia.

Translation
Word of the significance of the book reached the publisher John Wolfe ((fl.1579-1601) who records in the dedication:

"About a Twelvemonth agoe, a learned Gentleman brought unto mee the Voyages and Navigation of John Huyghen van Linschoten into the Indies written in the Dutche Tongue, which he wished might be translated into our Language, because hee thought it would be not onley delightfull, but also very commodious for our English Nation. Upon this commendation and opinion, I procured the Translation thereof accordingly, and so thought goo to publish the same in Print…'. That gentleman was identified in the address to the reader: 'Which Booke being commended, by Richard Hackluyt, a man that laboureth greatly to advance our English Name and Nation".

Wolfe was ideally placed to undertake the work, being "the first London bookseller to produce a

sequence of map-illustrated works. He clearly kept a rolling-press and was possibly the first regular London book-printer to do so" (Worms & Baynton-Williams). The translation was undertaken by William Phillip. The maps and plates were engraved by Robert Beckit, Ronald Elstrack and William Rogers. Most are re-engravings of those in the Dutch edition. "Wolfe's turbulent career, his clashes with his old master John Day and the Stationers' Company, his imprisonments, secret presses, and faked imprints have sometimes obscured his other achievements. He had an extensive international trade and was 'the father of news publishing' in London" (Worms).

"Financial help came from a group of London merchants who provided ten pounds to Hakluyt to see the book in print alongside a further thirty shillings towards the production of maps to accompany it" (Parker).

Illustration
The English edition did not include copies of the thirty or so illustrations of native peoples found in the Dutch edition.

List of maps
Most of the maps and views of the English edition are re-engravings of the plates of the original Dutch edition of 1595-1596, with captions in Latin and English.

1. [Anonymous after] ORTELIUS, Abraham, 'Typus Orbis Terrarum'. An English derivative of Ortelius' more up to date plate of 1587 and the earlier more decorative cloud border. Shirley (1993) 167.

2. [Mozambique], 'The description of the Islandes and Castle of Mozambique…', engraved by William Rogers.

3. [Arabia, the Indian Ocean and India], 'The description of the coast of Abex…' A much-improved depiction of the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Qasimi (1999) p. 32 Dutch edition only; Ankary (2001) pp. 74-6, 148-9 referring only to the Dutch plate; Gole (1978) no. 8 listing only the Dutch plate; Schilder (2003) pp. 220-3; Tibbets (1978) no. 51: "The surprising fact about the representation of the [Arabian] peninsula is the close resemblance of the outline to that of a modern map when compared with other engraved maps of the time. There is a vague suggestion of the Qatar peninsula, which is not seen again until the nineteenth century" (Tibbets).

4. [East Africa], 'The description or Caerd of the Coastes of the Countreys following called Terra do Natal…', engraved by Robert Beckit, including the western half of the Indian Ocean along the coast of South Africa, all of Madagascar.

5. [Southeast Asia], 'The Trew Description of All the Coasts of China…', extending from the island of Korea and Japan south of 'Beach' (Australia), Java, Timor, the Philippines, the Indochina peninsula, and most of the coast and much of the interior of China), Chang (2003) pl. 16, p. 147 Dutch only, p. 192 no. 134 English; Geldart (2017) p. 19; Hubbard (2012) p. 47, fig. 36; Schilder (1976) no. 18 Dutch; Schilder (2003) pp. 222-6; Suarez (1999) pp. 178-9; Suarez (2004) p. 79; Walter (1994) no. 12 Dutch.

6. [St. Helena]
a. 'The Island of St. Helena full of Sweet and pleasaunt ayre fructfull ground and fresh water…',
b. 'The true description, and situation of the Island St. Helena, on the East, North, and West Sydes', both engraved by Raygnald Elstrak.

7. [Ascention Island], 'The True Description of the Island of Ascention…', engraved by William Rogers.

8. [Southwest Africa], ‘The description of the Coast of Guinea…’. Norwich (1983) no. 239a Dutch; Schilder (2003) pp. 215-19; Tooley (1969) p. 67 Dutch.

9. [South America], ‘The description of the whole coast lying in the South Seas of Americae called Peru…’, displays the whole of South America, Caribbean and Florida. Schilder (2003) pp. 226-8.

10. [The Spice Islands Map], ‘Insulae Molucca celeberrimae…’, extends from southeast Asia to the Solomon Islands and northwards to include the Philippines. The famous Spice Island map, so called for its depiction of the spices nutmeg, clove, and sandalwood along the bottom after the original by Petrus Plancius who obtained his information covertly from the Portuguese maps of Bartolomeu Lasso. Schilder (2003) pp. 117-22; Suarez (1999) pp. 177-9.

Bibliography

Alden and Landis, 598:57; Borba de Moraes, I:417; Church, 321; ESTC, S111823; Hill, 182; Howgego, L131, G40; Luborsky and Ingram, 509; Parker, 159-161; Sabin, 41374; Schilder, 195-228; Shirley [World], nos. 167 and 216; Shirley [Atlases], G.Lin 2a; Streeter Sale, 1:31; Worms, 1705; Worms and Baynton-Williams.

Provenance

Provenance: 1. Large seventeenth century engraved armorial bookplate with motto in Latin and English: “Ostendo non ostento” – “In things transitory resteth no glory”, the Isham family, of Lamport Hall, probably Sir John Isham (1582-1651), 1st Baronet of Lamport, advanced by Charles I on the 30th May 1627. A scion of the family, Captain Henry Isham (c1628-1675) emigrated to America in 1656, where he settled in Henrico County, Virginia, and became the ancestor of, amongst others, President Thomas Jefferson; 2. With Bernard Quaritch, 1924.

Price:

Inventory reference: 23384

© Daniel Crouch Rare Books Ltd | 2025