



Engraved chart.

DUDLEY'S CHART OF ICELAND, THE FIRST MAP OF THE ISLAND ON MERCATOR'S PROJECTION

[Chart of Iceland].

Author

DUDLEY, Robert

Publication date

1661

Publisher

Publication place

Florence,

Physical description

Engraved chart.

Dimensions

540 by 833mm. (21.25 by 32.75 inches).

Notes

Robert Dudley's map of Iceland and the Faroe Islands, from his great atlas 'Arcano del Mare'.

The map shows Iceland in beautifully engraved detail, enlivened by an erupting Mount Hekla. To the lower left is Frislandia, a phantom island that often appeared on maps of the area. The term "Frisland" may have originally referred to Iceland, but after the Zeno map of 1558 it was often

shown as a different landmass, with totally fictional place names.

The 'Arcano del Mare' is 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).

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 to Europe, along with his cousin Elizabeth Southwell, a beautiful heiress. 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 pilots of various nationalities, and it is generally accepted that the work was both scientific and accurate for the time. It has been suggested 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

Provenance

Price: £9000

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