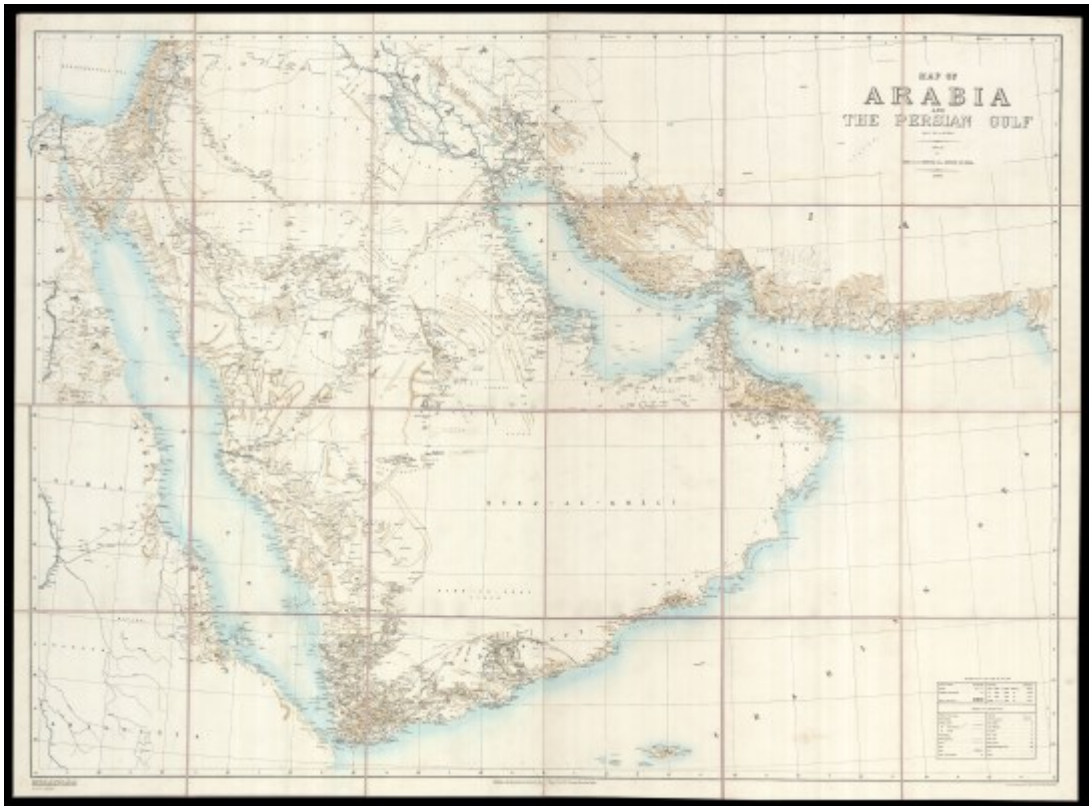


Heliozincograph map, in twenty four sheets joined, print and hand-colour in part, mounted on linen, university library stamp on verso

EXTREMELY RARE FIRST EDITION OF HUNTER'S MAP OF ARABIA, COMPILED FROM SECRET SOURCES

Map of Arabia and the Persian Gulf

Author
HUNTER, F[rederick] F[raser]

Publication date
1908.

Publisher
the Survey of India Offices,

Publication place
Calcutta,

Physical description
Heliozincograph map, in twenty four sheets joined, print and hand-colour in part, mounted on linen, university library stamp on verso

Dimensions
1335 by 1825mm (52.5 by 71.75 inches).

Notes
First independently issued large-scale wall map of Arabia and the Persian Gulf, instantly recognised as superior in detail to its contemporaries.

Displaying a huge range of important features, including roads, routes, rivers, telegraph lines, and railways, both completed and under construction. Relief is shown by hachures and the names of numerous towns, cities and other settlements are to be found across the map, mostly congregated around the peripheries of the huge peninsula. In the bottom right corner, an extensive index gives toponyms in both English and Arabic, providing a key to the symbols, abbreviations, and even typeface used across the map.

Drawn meticulously from details supplied by both travellers, earlier official surveys, and local political agent enquiries – most of these sources were considered secret at the time. This information, collected over three years, led to an unprecedented degree of accuracy in depicting the interiors of Arabia, especially on such a grand scale.

Seeking to strengthen its links with India at the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain took measures to better understand and explore the Persian Gulf. In 1903, Lord Curzon visiting the region, and the same year British authorities commissioned John Gordon Lorimer to compile a handbook for British agents there. Lorimer, who had previously served as a member of the Indian Civil Service, was given six month to complete the project, which was supposed to produce a portable and easily accessible manual.

Twelve years later, his ‘Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia’, a five-thousand page document divided into two volumes. The first detailed the region’s history, while the second contained an extensive description of its geography. This second volume had actually been completed first, and was available from 1908. It contained information uncovered by Lorimer’s own research missions, 56 images of the region, and two maps. One of these showed the distribution of the peninsula’s pearling sites; the other was a depiction of the whole region.

Lieutenant Frederick Fraser Hunter (1876-1959) served as a liberal politician in Ontario, Canada. Hunter went on to become a major figure in British India’s Intelligence Service. Upon joining the Army in 1905, he was ordered to produce an up-to-date map of Arabia, which was growing in strategic significance. This mission involved twice traversing the interior of Arabia, disguised as an Arab. Although completed in 1905, disagreements over transliteration allowed Hunter to redraw and improve the map for a further three years.

When first published in 1908, Lorimer’s ‘Gazetteer’ was classified ‘for official use only’; there were under one hundred copies in circulation until its declassification in 1955, upon which its detailed historical and geographical description of the peninsula was met with great praise. Hunter’s map was instantly acknowledged as superior to any previous work of the kind and recognised as a valuable research tool. The Times Literary Supplement declared the ‘Gazetteer”s geographical section as “without modern substitute” in 1971.

Rare: we have traced this map in two auction sales, but only for the 1914 edition (Christie’s in 2012; Sothebys in 2013). Not in Al-Qassimi.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £120000

Inventory reference: 22090

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