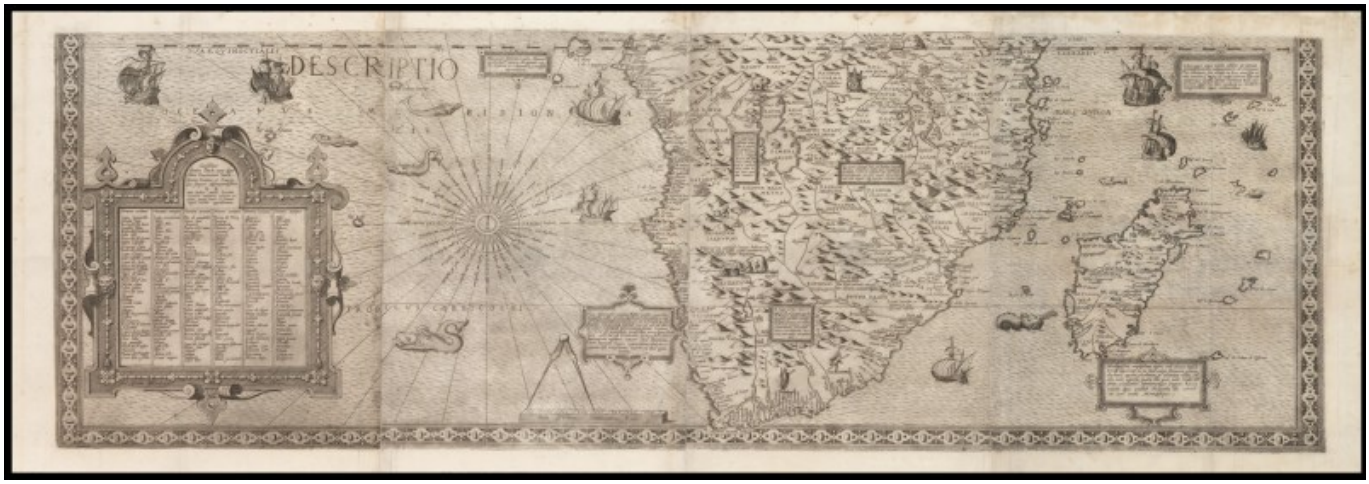


Large engraved wall map on 8 sheets joined in 2 sections.

GASTALDI'S LARGE WALL MAP OF AFRICA

Africae, quae veteribus tertia Pars Orbis censebatur, nova descriptio...

Author
GASTALDI, Giacomo

Publication date
1573

Publisher

Publication place

Physical description
Large engraved wall map on 8 sheets joined in 2 sections.

Dimensions
1130 by 1267mm (44.5 by 50 inches).

Notes
The map is in excellent condition but for few repaired small worm-holes with partial loss mostly affecting the borders, two repaired small tears on Madagascar and on the Lemta Desert, minor points of surface loss and some staining, four unidentified collection stamps with monogram C.I.M.O. and pen inscription dated 1940 on verso.

Nova Totius Africae Descriptio was compiled by Donato Bertelli after Giacomo Gastaldi, one of the most influent and outstanding cartographer of his time, cosmographer to the Republic of Venice. Gastaldi first worked at a small scale map of Africa in 1548 for Ptolemy's La Geografia printed in Venice by Niccolò Biscarini; in 1549 he was commissioned by the Venetian Republic to produce a tempera on canvas map for one of the walls of the "Sala dello Scudo" in the Doge's Palace. Based on the latest discoveries of the accounts of Cabot and Da Mosto and painted by Vitruvio Buonconsiglio, this map was so successful that the Venetian Council commissioned Gastaldi with a second wall map for that room, Asia. Unfortunately these 2 maps have not survived the re-decoration of the room by F. Griselini in 1762.
"The year 1564 was a landmark in the mapping of Africa, for this was the year the first really large-

scale map of the continent was published […] recognised by today's geographers as the finest and most important of the 16th Century".

In 1564 Gastaldi published anonymously a large wall-map on 8 sheets, based on his earlier works with the addiction of new discoveries drew from the accounts of African explorations as they appeared in Giovan Battista Ramusio's Delle navigationi et viaggi published in Venice by the heirs of Lucantonio Giunta in 1550 as well as from the accounts of Alvise Cadamosto, Leo Africanus, Francisco Alvares, Joâo de Barros, Duarte Barbosa. "Nova Totius Africae Descriptio [is] a faithful re-engraving of Giacomo Gastaldi's wall map of 1564" (02), enriched and improved by Donato Bertelli between 1564 and 1566 (03), and published probably around 1573, this time with the name of the cartographer in the upper cartouche.

Compared with the 1564 Africa, the present map is particularly important for its topographical additions and improvements. Bertelli completed the previously missing information on Arabia and the Holy Land and corrected the size of Mons Betsum, south of Lago de Zaflam. The coastline counts more than 650 names, Madagascar is correctly situated lying across the Tropic of Capricorn, the Nile rises, as Ptolemy suggested, in two great lakes, the Niger is separate and flows through two lakes into the Atlantic. The map is also richer in the decoration: Gastaldi published an almost bare map, whereas Bertelli added a scale-bar as well as animals and monsters, galleons, a larger compass-rose, kings, knights, merchants and the legendary figure of Prester John to the South of Abyssinia. He also added 14 cartouches on both land and seas that give important information about the inhabitants and the trade. On the Northern African desert a cartouche explains that "the Arabs together with their wives and children drive cattle in the desert; they are famous robbers, driving booty from all sides and not even keeping their hands off their own people. They have tents for houses, which are most unsafe for the natives and for merchants". On the Indian Ocean "the fishing for most precious pearls both small and large is very famous. The west wind blows continuously for six months in this sea – its vulgar name is Libeccio: for the same number of months the Eous or Greek wind blows, which splendidly serves those travelling to and returning from India". Further down the description of Madagascar explains that on the island there are several species of animals and spices – "aromata multa"- and that "frequentia illis commercia cum incolis Mozambique".

Donato Bertelli was one of the leading publishers and map sellers working in 16th century Venice. Born in Padua, he established himself in Venice as cartographer and engraver at the workshop of Fernando Bertelli, then on his own at the Merzaria, "all'insegna di San Marco". His business flourished from 1563 to 1592 and then passed onto Andrea Bertelli until 1601 (04). He issued maps by such important mapmakers as Paolo Forlani, acquired many of Giovanni Francesco Camocio's plates and his publications were often included in the composite works known as "Lafreri atlases". Among his production there are the 1569 series of Le vere imagini et descriptioni delle più belle città del mondo dedicated to J.J. Fugger von Kirchberg und Waissenhorn, and Civitatum Aliquot Insignorum et Locorum magis, a collection of 51 plates, 13 of which are by Bonifazio Natale. Borroni and Gori Gandellini ascribe to Bertelli also an important series of portraits of Roman Popes as well as several prints from original drawings by Giulio Romano (05). Betz, Karrow and Gallo (06) cite only two other copies of Nova Totius Africae Descriptio, one in the Ashburner Collection, now in the Florentine Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, and one in the Museo Correr in Venice, in a folder donated to the Museum by Girolamo Ascanio Molin at the beginning of the XIX Century.

Betz remarks that the Correr copy misses the left and right borders and that he was not "able to locate and examine the Florence example". The present example is the third known copy of this wall map of Africa that Caraci hails as "rarissima" (07), probably the most complete and almost certainly the only one still in private hands. A witness of great rarity of what Moreland and Bannister refer to as "the finest individual map of the 16th Century" (08) and Meurer calls "a fundamental map of Africa" (09).

Gastaldi’s Africa not only served as the source for many subsequent Italian maps of the African continent (e.g. Magini’s map of 1598), but its influence crossed the Alps to inform important editions made by Abraham Ortelius, Gerard De Jode, Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville and to became the basis for all the production of African maps of the XVII Century. The plates of Nova Totius Africae Descriptio later passed to Stefano Scolari, who re-published them, with the inclusion of a separately printed title strip across the top of the map and his imprint inserted, in 1655 and in 1662 (the dates on the companion map of Asia). Of the Scolari edition there apparently are only three examples in sets of the four continents, one in the University of Texas, Austin with the map of Asia dated 1655, and the other in private collections, both dated 1662.

Bibliography
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Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 1282

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