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Mappe-Monde Geo-Hydrographique, ou Description Generale du Globe Terrestre et Aquatique en Deux Plans-Hemispheres . . . Suivant les Relations Les Plus Nouvelles . . . et Principalement sur la Carte que Monsieur N. Witzen Bourgemaistre . . .

Stock#: 38785
Map Maker: Mortier

Date: 1705 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 38 x 22.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Very Rare - the Earliest obtainable printed map to depict the 'Mer de l'Ouest' - a fascinating large-format World map published by Pierre Mortier.

This rare and highly detailed double-hemisphere map of the World is one of the greatest historical works of theoretical cartography and the earliest obtainable printed map to depict the 'Mer de l'Ouest' (Sea of the West), one of history's most consequential cartographic myths. The map is also noteworthy for its extraordinary treatment of New Zealand, Australia, Baja California, the Northwest Passage and the supposed land bridge between North America and Asia. Present here is one of the two early states of Mortier's map (one known only for a single surviving example), which is cartographically based on the highly controversial wall map of the World by Jean-Baptiste Nolin, which is itself considered to be virtually unobtainable.

Mortier's World Map in Focus

Focusing on the map itself, the two large hemispheres are set aloft amidst highly elegant cartouches and diagrams and above a picturesque maritime scene. The most cartographically important aspect of the map is its bold depiction of an enormous 'Mer de l'Ouest' entering deep into the western portion of the North American mainland. This recently-conceived cartographic misconception was to have a prominent role in geography for the next 3 generations. It was also of practical consequence, as it posited that the North American landmass was much narrower than otherwise thought and could perhaps be traversed overland without great hardship.

The map also includes an especially clear depiction of the 'Strait of Anian', or the Northwest Passage,

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shown as a wide open channel flowing nearly due northwest from the Mer de l'Ouest to the upper part of Hudson Bay. This was a most welcome feature to mariners and while first conceived in the 1560s, the concept of the strait had recently been revived with great vigor.

To the west of the Northwest Passage, is a vast, yet ambiguous, landmass, 'Terres Inconnues ou Terres de Jesso', which represents a virtually unbroken land bridge between Asia and North America. Broken only by narrow straits, it seems to connect North America with the 'Terre de La Compagnie' (the Kurile Islands of Japan) and the Asian mainland.

Further south in North America, one observes two distinct peninsulas, which appear to be an oversized projection of Baja California along with a second smaller example of Baja California to the North. We know of no other map that includes this curious anomaly.

Crossing to Oceania, the map depicts the outlines of the western two-thirds of Australia, based on the discoveries of explorers working for the Dutch East India Company (the VOC). These include Willem Jansz's discoveries in the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1606; the encounters of Dirk Hartog in 1616, the crew of the Leeuwin in 1622 and Pieter Nuyts in 1627, in Western Australia; Jan Cartensz and Willem van Colster discoveries in North Australia in 1623, as well as Abel Tasman's encounters in Tasmania and New Zealand in 1642-44. Most interestingly, the map presents a bulging conjectural eastern coastline for Australia, an area not explored by Europeans until Cook's First Voyage (1768-1771).

Another curious feature is the treatment of New Zealand, with its northernmost coastline nearly attaching itself to a massive unknown Southern Continent, 'Terres Australes et Inconnues ou Antarctiques', suggesting that New Zealand was either part of Antarctica or separated from it only by a narrow strait.

The Indonesian Archipelago is a well-formed base on VOC knowledge, except that the shape of New Guinea still remains ambiguous. Notably, the map features the discoveries of the pirate-circumnavigator William Dampier above New Guinea, after his voyages conducted during the 1690s.

The Philippines assume their shape prior to the publication of Padre Pedro Murillo Velarde's map in 1744. Continental Southeast Asia assumes a refined form and includes the intelligence gathered by the French embassy to Siam, made shortly before western contact with the kingdom was cut-off in 1688.

Further north in Asia, the coasts of China are relatively well formed, based on the surveys conducted by the Jesuit Martino Martini in the 1640s and 1650s. Korea is correctly shown as a peninsula, albeit of a somewhat nebulous form. The southern main islands of Japan are relatively well formed, based on the

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charting of VOC mariners operating out of Nagasaki.

The southern main islands of Japan are relatively well formed, however Hokkaido ('Terre de Jeço') and the Kurile Islands ('Terre de la Compagnie') are vaguely and only partially delineated, after the discoveries of Maarten de Vries in 1643. A related annotation on the chart questions whether 'Yedso' is an island or part of Mainland Asia, a query that would not be answered until the voyages of the Comte de la Perouse in 1787. Further to the northwest is the mysterious 'Mer de Tartarie' and the near land bridge to North America, taking the observer full circle.

According to Tony Campbell, the former head of the map collection of the British Library, the featured Mortier map of the World is known in three states, all of which are undated. There is disagreement among modern scholars as to whether the David Mortier state or the Pierre Mortier state of the map appeared first. Campbell believed the maps were created in the following order.

- State 1. With the imprint of both Pierre Mortier and his brother David, known in only a single example at the British Library (slightly after 1700, perhaps 1702 to 1704).
- State 2. With the imprint of Pierre Mortier, the state of the present map (*circa* 1705).
- State 3. With the imprint of Covens & Mortier (*circa* 1721).

By contrast, Rodney Shirley opined that the Pierre Mortier imprint was the first state of the map.

The Sources for Mortier's World Map

The source of the modern myth of the 'Mer de l'Ouest' are generally regarded to be manuscript maps by Guillaume De L'Isle (1675-1726), the Royal Geographer to the King of France, made in the 1690s. Curiously, however, there is a map in Yale's University Library's map collection which depicts a 16th century Thames school map of North America featuring a large "Branch of the South Sea", which closely resembles De L'Isle's Mer de L'Ouest and may well be the source of De L'isle's conception. There are De L'Isle manuscripts in the Bibliotheque Nationale as early as 1696 (dated) that depict this cartographic myth. Ironically, De L'Isle never depicted this sea on any of his printed maps.

The first printed map to show the 'Mer de l'Ouest' was Jean-Baptiste Nolin's, *Le Globe Terrestre Represente En Deux Plans- Hemispheres* (First State, Paris, 1700). This very large wall map measures approximately 3 x 5 feet. Nolin's map is today known with only three copies, all in institutions.

The geography on Nolin's map was copied, at least in part, from a Guillaume De l'Isle manuscript globe

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given by De l'Isle to Louis Boucherat, French Minister of Justice, in 1699.

Because of this cartographic plagiarism, De l'Isle sued Nolin in the French courts. De l'Isle won his case and Nolin was ordered to stop using De l'Isle's image. All copies of Nolin's map were ordered to be destroyed, while the offending areas of the copperplates were to be rubbed clean. Nolin was thus compelled to issue a very different, smaller depiction of the Mer De L'Ouest on the subsequent states of his map, which interestingly somewhat resemble Puget Sound.

Pierre Mortier (1661-1711), was one of the most commercially successful map publishers of his time. A Dutchman of French Huguenot extraction, he maintained elite contacts in the cartographic community in Paris and found ways to find commercial advantage from groundbreaking French innovations. Operating in Amsterdam, Mortier benefitted from the Dutch Republic's highly developed print market and exceedingly lax censorship laws. Mortier formed a partnership with his brother David but maintained a dominant role in the relationship. After his death, the business was continued by his heirs who later forged a partnership with Jean Covens, forming the firm of Covens & Mortier, which operated until 1774.

The Mortier family issued the present reduced version of Nolin's controversial first state of his World map not long after Nolin's map was first printed. The Mortier brothers were able to do this with confidence, as operating in Amsterdam, they were exempt from French copyright laws.

Curiously, although the names of the French royal cartographers Alexis-Hubert Jaillot and Nicolas Sanson appear on this map, they have little to do with the geography presented. Likewise, the name of Nicolaas Witsen, a Burgomaster of Amsterdam, as well as a mapmaker, is also included. It seems that Mortier featured these prestigious names on his map in an effort to legitimize his publication, so augmenting its appeal to the commercial map market.

For many years following the first decade of the 18th Century, with no relevant exploration occurring in the North Pacific, the view of the nature of the region remained conjectural, yet relatively static. The belief in the existence of a viable Northwest Passage was sustained by one of history's most audacious geographical hoaxes. This emanated from a story about Admiral Bartholomew Fonte, an apocryphal Spanish naval officer, who claimed to have discovered the Northwest Passage. A letter supposedly by Fonte, dated 1640, was first published in London in the *Memoirs of the Curious* (1706). In this letter, Fonte claimed that he was ordered by his king to sail from Callao, Peru, northwards up the coast. Upon his journey, he claimed that he encountered a ship from Boston that had traversed the Northwest Passage. While Fonte's letter is now universally considered to have been a hoax, the story it told proved to be highly

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influential throughout much of the 18th century.

Epilogue

Interestingly, almost 50 years after the present map was issued, a pamphlet was published that reignited one of history's most heated cartographic debates, centered on the nature of the North Pacific and the existence of the Northwest Passage. Joseph-Nicolas De L'Isle (1688-1768), Guillaume De l'Isle's younger brother, published *Nouvelles Cartes des Découvertes de l'Amiral de Fonte, et autres Navigateurs* (Paris, 1753). Contaning four maps, it represented a startling blend between revealing the recent groundbreaking discoveries of Russian explorers, such as Vitus Bering and Alexei Chirikov and the utter fiction that was the product of the Fonte hoax.

De L'Isle provided a few different cartographic interpretations of Fonte's passage, supposedly acknowledging that the passages existed, while remaining unsure as to its exact nature.

The subject of the pamphlet and the remarkable cartography it advanced was of great consequence, as the discovery of Northwest Passage promised to revolutionize international commerce and navigation. Britain, France, Spain and Russia dedicated vast resources to solving the mystery and Europe's greatest intellectuals pondered the question. While the cartographic theories postulated by De L'Isle met with the support of many leading figures, others vehemently disagreed with his assertions.

Meanwhile several of the period's leading mapmakers, such as Robert de Vaugondy and Thomas Jefferys, sought to portray the apocryphal western American sea, the Mer de l'Ouest and its supposed connection to a transcontinental passage. Denis Diderot focused heavily on the debate in his monumental *L'Encyclopedie* (1751-1772), the single most influential publication of the Enlightenment era.

The Third Voyage of Captain James Cook (1776-1780) and the subsequent expeditions of George Vancouver and various Spanish navigators definitely disproved the existence of any passage running through the interior of the North American continent.

Mortier's map is unquestionably one of the most fascinating large scale maps published in the 18th Century and one of the best examples of the depiction of cartographic myth and conjecture at the beginning of the 18th Century.

Detailed Condition:

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Old color. Minor fold splits, repaired on verso.