



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Die eigentliche und warhafftige gestalt der Erden und des Meers

Stock#: 57700
Map Maker: Bunting
Date: 1581 circa
Place: Magdeberg
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 10.5 x 14 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Striking Early World Map with Apocryphal Appearance of the West Coast of Australia

Decorative example of Heinrich Bunting's unusual map of the known world: Europe, Africa, much of Asia, the tip of the Americas, and the Indian Ocean. It depicts the fast-changing geography of the sixteenth century, which was being altered by the European voyages to the Americas and beyond.

Shirley refers to Bunting's "strange geographic license;" indeed, his woodcut maps are often unique representations with few predecessors or descendants; for this reason they would make a special part of collections of world maps or biblical maps. This license stems in part from Bunting's purpose. As a theologian, not a geographer, he sought to use the maps as illustrations of the movements of biblical actors.

This world map was included in Bunting's *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae*, one of the bestselling books of the sixteenth century. Although the precise number and content of the maps in the volumes shifted over time, this map was included from the very first edition, published in Magdeburg in 1581. This interesting map focuses on the *oikumene*, or the ancient known world, showing Europe, Asia, and Africa in outline with the locations of the principal cities.

However, these continents have been updated. For example, the Portuguese discoveries have been integrated as to the extent and shape of Africa. Additionally, America, the New World, peeps out of the western border, while a bit of the East Indies, shaped tantalizingly like Western Australia, are in the lower right corner. South of the Indian subcontinent is a large island labeled *Taprobana*. *Taprobana* was what



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the Greeks had called Sri Lanka, but late-medieval and early modern geographers also applied the toponym to Sumatra and a phantom island. Here Bunting seems to follow the Greek example. At sea, several sea monsters patrol the waters.

In Africa, the Nile originates from tributaries in the *Montes Lunae*, or Mountains of the Moon. While this follows the conventional model set out by Ptolemy, Bunting has improvised with the placement of the large lake attached to the Nile. Contemporaries like Ortelius, himself following Gastaldi, also believed a large central lake fed the great rivers of Africa, including the Nile. However, they placed this lake in far southern Africa. Bunting is nearly unique in putting his lake farther north.

While the main cities are placed in the Middle East, closer to the epicenter of biblical events, it is in Africa where Bunting seems to have added the most detail. In northern Africa, he includes the label, *Der wiessen Moren*, or the White Moors, while farther south is *Der Schwartzten Morenland*, Land of the Black Moors. He has been sure to include Meroe in the center of a large island in the Nile River. This refers to the mythical tombs of the Nubian Kings. Just southeast of Meroe is the kingdom of Prester John, the famed Christian King was thought of as a hero for holding out against the Muslims who surrounded him.

An Early Appearance of the West Coast of Australia?

Bunting's map charts a landmass, *India Meridionalis*, in the far southeast of the Indian Ocean. To modern eyes, it strikingly resembles Australia's west coast. Shown to be in roughly the correct position of Australia, its presence is thought by some to indicate the possible Portuguese knowledge of Australia prior to the Dutch discovery in 1606. However, this theory has not been widely accepted and the more likely explanation is that the land mass is either a depiction of the southern part of the Malay Peninsula, based upon maps such as those by Martellus and Cantino, or perhaps Tierra del Fuego, as described in Tramezzino's world map.

This map contains several interesting geographic constructions and is a strikingly original representation of the sixteenth-century world. It would make a significant contribution to collections of African, world, biblical, or early Americas maps.

Detailed Condition:

Minor restoration. Margins reinstated.