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Orbis Terrae Novissima Descriptio Authore Gerardo Mercatore . . . 1602

Stock#: 90164
Map Maker: Hondius / Le Clerc
Date: 1602
Place: Paris
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 20.25 x 13 inches
Price: Not Available



Description:

Early Jodocus Hondius-Engraved World Map. Rare First State. "Copies with the original date of 1602 are rare." - Shirley 233

Rare double-hemisphere map of the world, engraved by Jodocus Hondius and published by in Paris by Jean Le Clerc.

The map is one of several maps engraved by Hondius which survive only in examples published in 1602 and thereafter by Le Clerc, including a second world map, a set of 4 continental maps and a map of England. The map of America is dated 1589. This world map and the map of America have fascinated scholars for nearly a century, both for their remarkable content which can only be ascribed to a contemporary knowledge of the voyage of Sir Francis Drake and the mysterious path travelled by the copperplates from Hondius to Le Clerc in Paris.

The present map is modeled after Gerard Mercator's world map of 1587, but with one remarkable difference, the inclusion information from Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation in the area south Tierra del Fuego. Here Hondius clearly refers to Drake with the note: "Insulae Reginae Elisabethae (The Islands of Queen Elizabeth). This is a reference to islands which Drake believed he had discovered in 1589, and which are known to appear only on the Hondius-Le Clerc maps and on several extremely rare maps directly attributed Drake (and engraved by Hondius during his time in England between 1584 and 1593), discoveries which the English worked diligently to conceal, as it would show both a breach of the heavily guarded Spanish control of the passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific and reveal the existence of open seas south of Tierra del Fuego, a passage which would not be formally "discovered" until Le Maire and Schoten's voyage of 1617 formally announced this southerly route.



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Jodocus Hondius as the Map Engraver

Jodocus Hondius was resident in London from 1584 to 1593. During this time, it is well known that Hondius had contacts with Sir Walter Raleigh, John Smith and Francis Drake among other English explorers and mapmakers. Toward the end of his time in London, Hondius engraved the gores for the Molyneux Globes, as well as his small world map (*Typus Orbis Terrarum*) of 1589, which shows both the route of Drake's circumnavigation and the islands and open water south of Tierra del Fuego. The same details also appear on his later "broadside" map dated 1589, but believed to have been engraved in the early 1590s.

While the map has been described by some as having been re-engraved by Le Clerc, the evidence to suggest that the map was not originally engraved by Jodocus Hondius in London is circumstantial. Most recent scholars have concluded that this map is in fact the work of Hondius in London. Most recently, Gunter Schilder makes the case for London in *Monumenta Cartographica Neerlandica* Vol. 8 (2007).

It should also be noted that while Le Clerc was active as a printer and engraver in Paris in 1602, there appear to be no extent maps actually engraved by Le Clerc until 1617, other than the 2 world maps, 4 continents and map of England, all of which are dated between 1602 and 1605. Le Clerc and his cohort of French printers and engravers in this period are known to have had contact with Hondius prior to his departure from London. At least one modern scholar has opined in correspondence with this firm that Hondius likely sold the plates shortly after 1600 in anticipation of buying the Mercator atlas copper plates, and, in fact, a number of other plates attributed to Hondius began to circulate in France with other engravers and printers shortly after 1600.

Francis Drake Information via Jodocus Hondius

The map is most noteworthy for its identification of Sir Francis Drake's theories of Islands off the south coast of South America, 15 years before its actual discovery. The present map does not show the "Estrecho di Magellanes" as a narrow strait between two continents, but instead shows a large group of islands, including the "Insulae Reginae Elisabethae" (Islands of Queen Elizabeth), the names used by Drake. All other maps of the period showed the straits of Magellan as the only navigable watercourse from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with a massive southern continent below the Strait. The path around the Horn was critical to European powers eager to circumvent Dutch claims of control over the Strait and therefore access from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Hondius not only includes the islands of Queen Elizabeth off the tip of South America, he also notes that Nova Albion on the far west of coast of North America was so named by the English in 1580.



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According to Norman Thrower, the plates were likely engraved by Jodocus Hondius between the two Drake reports

Although the map was probably initially prepared in England, it was never given a privilege there (almost certainly because of the sensitive Drake content), and so Hondius was forced to sell it to someone in France who would have been free to print it.

A panel at the bottom contains a quote from the Psalms which was one of Hondius' favorites. The upper corners include circles showing the wind names in Italian and Dutch. The lower corners have circular diagrams showing the phases of the moon and the climatic zones. An astronomical sphere and compass rose are also included. Wonderful large unknown southern continent, narrow passage between South America and the unknown continent, excellent treatment of Japan and Southeast Asia and marvelous early cartography in the Pacific Ocean and along the Northwest Coast of America.

Rarity

Shirley notes that examples of the map bearing the original 1602 date are very rare. This is one of the earliest obtainable world maps published in Paris.

Detailed Condition:

Minor soiling.