



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(World - First State!) Benedict Arias Montanus Sacrae Geographiae Tabulam ex Antiquissimorum Cultor. [Pre-Dutch Discovery Depiction of Australia]

Stock#: 93232
Map Maker: Montanus
Date: 1572
Place: Antwerp
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 21 x 12.5 inches
Price: \$ 24,500.00



Description:

Extremely Rare First State of One of the Earliest Printed Maps to Hint at Australia.

First edition, first state, of the Arias Montanus map of the world, engraved in 1571, and published in 1572.

Shirley (125) notes that most (almost all?) of the examples of the first state were lost at sea in transit to Spain from the Low Countries.

The present map is one of the most recognizable and finely-composed World maps of its era. With text written variously in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, its primary purpose was to show the Biblical concept of the distribution of the Twelve Tribes of Israel throughout the world, repopulating the earth following the Great Flood by the descendants of Noah. This double-hemisphere map was widely admired in its time for its artistically virtuous design, with its Mannerist strapwork cartouches and the encircling Renaissance-style windheads. Geographically, Montanus depicts a land bridge between Asia and the northwest coast of America, supposedly used by the biblical figure Ophir, who was said to possess endless treasures (in this case referring to the vast amounts of gold and silver found in the Americas).

Australia?

A large landmass roughly occupies the position of Australia, making the first issue of the map one of the earliest to depict an image that has been claimed by some scholars to be a depiction of Australia based upon sources pre-dating the known Dutch discovery of Australia in 1603.

Publication History



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The map was engraved in 1571 and first published in 1572 by Antwerp's preeminent printer, Christoph Plantijn, who famously published Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570), the first modern atlas. Antwerp, which was then in the Spanish Netherlands, was on the fault line of the religious schism between Catholicism and Protestantism. Plantijn, who was rumored to harbor Protestant sympathies, was concerned that the Spanish authorities would censure him. In an effort to head off the government's suspicions, he worked with a Spanish prelate, Benito Arias Montano (Benedictus Arias Montanus), to publish a polyglot bible dedicated to Philip II titled *Biblia sacra hebraice chaldaice, graece et latine* (known as the *Biblia Regia* or the *Plantijn Polyglot Bible*). The world map, which its strong religious overtones, was prepared to accompany this work.

States and Rarity

This is an example of the first state of the map, without the word "gentes" engraved below "IEKTAN" in the cartouche in the lower-left corner. The dramatic loss of most examples of the first state in a shipwreck has necessarily rendered its appearance on the antiquarian market to almost zero; we are aware of only a few examples having traded in the last thirty years; for instance, Martayan Lan offered it for \$20,000 in 2003 and Arkway had it for \$18,000 in 2006.

Shirley (125) provides the following fascinating note about the first two states of the maps:

The map from the first edition, of which the greater number of impressions were lost at sea on route for Spain, has printed on the reverse Orbis Tabula. Ben. Aria Montano. Auctore. In state 2 the word gentes has been added below the word Iektan in the lower left panel. Mr Tully of Australia has advised me of a second plate with minor but significant differences in treatment. The date (1571) is now placed centrally to conclude the title, Iektan is spelled Ioktan, and the cherub at the head of the western hemisphere is unambiguously gazing to the left compared to the frontwards look of the same cherub in plate 1. The map was widely admired throughout the succeeding century.

Around 1660, the map was entirely re-engraved in London, and included in an important biblical work, *Critici Sacri, sive doctissimorum virorum in SS. Biblia annotationes & tractatus*, which appeared in several editions from between 1660 to 1690.

A fine example of this noteworthy rarity.

Detailed Condition: