

**Title:** *World Map of Hanns Rüst*

**Date:** c. 1480

**Author:** *Hanns Rüst*

**Description:** A similar map was circulating in broadsheet in Germany in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Only a few copies survive, those which happened to get pasted into books, and it is difficult to date them exactly. One bears the name of Hanns Rüst, a printer of playing cards in Augsburg, who was dead by 1485. The block was sold before 1500 to Hans Sporer in Erfurt, who re-cut it to make some additions, including his own signature symbol, a pair of spurs. The text is in colloquial German. A ribbon floats above the map with the words, "*This is the mappamundi of all the lands and kingdoms which there are in the whole world.*" The maps are round, with east on top, showing Adam and Eve in a walled enclosure. Four rivers flow out of this *Paradise*, and Jerusalem is in the center. The three continents bear the names of the sons of Noah, and the twelve classical winds surround the map. In the encircling ocean a sequence of islands appear, some of which are populated by assorted monsters. The rest of the map is arranged very much like the one in the *Rudimentum* (#253), with castles and buildings shown in circular vignettes above which banners float inscribed with their names. Even some of the details are the same: the devil in northern Europe and three (instead of two) *Pillars of Hercules* at the western end of the Mediterranean.

Below the *Rüst/Sporer* map are two circular diagrams, one showing the four elements (water, earth, fire, and air) and the other showing a T-O division, with an urban and a rural landscape above and the sea below. Some historians suggest that this vignette is modeled on a north-oriented zone map, with the uninhabitable sea to the south, a European town on the northwest, and the habitable but relatively empty landscape to the east.

Like the *Rudimentum*, the broadsheet map contains mostly information that had been in circulation since the days of Isidore (#205) - the Medes and the Persians, the apple smellers, the tree of the sun and moon, the pygmies fighting cranes. An exception is a scattering of German town names on the *Sporer* version. The geographic organization is somewhat chaotic: Flanders is in the Mediterranean, the Ganges river is between the Tigris and Euphrates, and the city of Augsburg is next door to Jerusalem. The map's legends are somewhat mangled, perhaps due to the woodcut artist or the difficulties in translating from a Latin model map. An interesting source of at least a few of the map's oddities may be German folklore, such as the adventure tales of "Herzog Ernst."

The appeal of these old-fashioned maps is interesting to us. As illustrations for histories, which covered the world from the *Creation* to the present, or as histories in themselves, they served an obvious function. Their errors probably indicate a relatively uncritical audience, as well as a not very learned author.

Made for popular consumption, this map was sold as a single sheet (40 x 28.5 cm). It is only slightly more realistic than the *Rudimentum*. The four rivers (Ganges, Phison, Indus, Nile) are shown streaming from *Paradise* at the top, while boats and islands alternate in the ocean rim. As mentioned above, the small circles below contain more abstract visions of the world, the four elements (fire, water, earth, wind) to the left and the division between country, town and the sea to the right.

At the top left, by *Persepolis*, *Parthia* and the *Euphrates* is a mountain chain, from which a head topped by a pointed Jew's hat protrudes. The text reads "*Caspian*

*Mountains gog and magog enclosed*" [*berg Caspij verschlossen gog magog*]. A similar map by Hans Sporer, Nuremberg (?) c. 1480, survives and it is worth noting that precisely this detail survives when dozens of others had to be eliminated for reasons of space.

In 1927 Rüst's and Sporer's maps of the world were the subject of a thorough and well-informed monograph by Hugo Hassinger, who also brought to light the copy of Sporer's map which had formerly been in St. Gallen. This monograph would have left nothing more to be said had it not been for the confusion caused by an article by Leo Bagrow in 1950.

Bagrow writes "Comparison shows that all three (copies) have been printed from one block". Later he lays the following indictment at Hassinger's door: "Moreover he failed to compare carefully Rüst's print with Sporer's, and therefore the idea did not occur to him that the block for these two maps was in fact identical." This statement of Bagrow's that both maps are printed from the same block has since been repeated in various subsequent publications.

We now have at our disposal very good reproductions and a careful comparison shows that these two maps are quite definitely printed from two different blocks. Hassinger himself mentions the fact that in Sporer's map more than twenty additions are to be found (e.g. towns like *fussen*, *basel*, *lineburg*, *Auspurg*, *nurnberg*, *Kostnicz* = Konstanz, *koln*, *ingelstat*, *erfurt*, *wirczburg*, *bamberg*, *libe*, *wien*, *vim*, *rennsburg* = Regensburg, *mencz* = Mainz, etc.) as well as alterations in the scroll-work at the base. It is true that it would be possible, by inlaying, to make both additions and corrections on a block. This does not appear to be the likely explanation here, however, because these alterations, demanding much greater skill and expenditure of time than in the case of an engraving, have been made with such accuracy that they stand out in sharp contrast to the crudely cut lettering and wood-cutting of the rest of the map.

The fact that these two maps are printed from different blocks is proven however not by these additions but by differences of style. The expert may discern in every square centimeter differences of printing and morphology in the hatching and lettering, particularly in the upper strip of letters.

It is a simple matter to make so astonishingly exact a copy of an already existing block. A polished wood block is lightly waxed; a dry copy of the page to be copied is laid on top, printed side down; the page is then rubbed over repeatedly with a smoothing tool. A transfer is thus made on the block and, given skilful treatment; even the smallest details from the original will be discernible. From this impression, which is due to the fat content in the printer's ink, the block can be directly cut. Double tracing made with silver pencil was probably used much less frequently for the production of such copies.

Bagrow errs both in his identification of the blocks from which the impressions were pulled and in their dating. The maker of the Rüst map, according to all indications given by Hassinger, is Hans Rüst who occurs in the records of Augsburg from 1477 to 1484 and apparently died there in the latter year. He had no connection with Erfurt. Johann Ryst, known to have lived in Erfurt at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is never known to have written his name except with a "y".

The somewhat mysterious Hans Sporer printed mainly in Nuremberg and exclusively from wood blocks, an art he had learned from his father. Even after 1472, when movable type was in use in Nuremberg, Sporer still cut the text of his block books in wood. For these he copied almost exclusively old prototypes. In his printing of the *Biblia pauperum* in 1475, for example, he adhered faithfully to the Nördlingen edition of

1470. The Nuremberg court records report that in October 1479 he “so belabored his wife with his boot that she died of her injuries”. It is not known whether he was imprisoned or fled from the town after this. Eight years later he appears once again in Bamberg, now using movable type for his printing and employing woodcuts for only a few simple illustrations. In 1493 he had to leave Bamberg because he printed a political lampoon, and in the same year he setup a small printing press in Erfurt. We have no record of him after 1500.

Bagrow’s belief that the block passed from Hans Rüst to Hans Sporer is no more acceptable than his attempts at dating the maps from false premises.

Contrary to Bagrow’s assumption that both maps may be dated round 1500, everything points to the truth of Hassinger’s dating about 1480, which is founded on an analysis of style, printing technique and biographical data. Hans Rüst died in 1484, and Hans Sporer made no large blocks after leaving Nuremberg in 1479.

The history of the two maps as given by Hassinger is most illuminating. Hans Rüst had no connection with geography and certainly used as his model a manuscript, perhaps by a humanist, which has not survived. In Sporer’s map, with its addition of various German place-names, Augsburg rather than Nuremberg occupies pride of place near to Jerusalem which is set in the center. Rivalry between Augsburg and Nuremberg was keen at this time, and there was no reason why the Nuremberg-born Hans Sporer should relinquish of his own accord Nuremberg’s ascendancy in this way to Augsburg. Hassinger concludes from this that Hans Rüst made a second print of his map including the additional German towns and that Sporer used this second map, which has not survived, as the basis for his copy.

This is the only copy of the earliest woodcut world map printed on a single sheet of paper in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Two other maps, now in libraries in Germany and Washington, DC, were based upon this print, and all three were pasted into early printed books from the 1470s. On the edges of the then known world are the mythic and monstrous races, including dog-headed and two-headed people, while in the waters around the edge float islands, such as *Engenland* [England] at the bottom left. At the very bottom of the map, the left circle depicts the four elements: air, fire, land, and water, while the one on the right shows the three parts of the world: land, town, and sea. The artist/s name is in the banner in the middle.

**Location:** Pierpoint Morgan Library, NY

**Size:** 28cm/11 inch diameter

#### References:

\*Baer, E., Brown, L. A. & Miner, D. E., *The World Encompassed*, Baltimore, 1952.

\*Bagrow, L., “Rüst’s and Sporer’s World Map”, *Imago Mundi*, VII, 1950, pp. 32-36.

\*Edson, E., *Maps of the World, 1200-1492*, pp. 173-175, Figure 7.3.

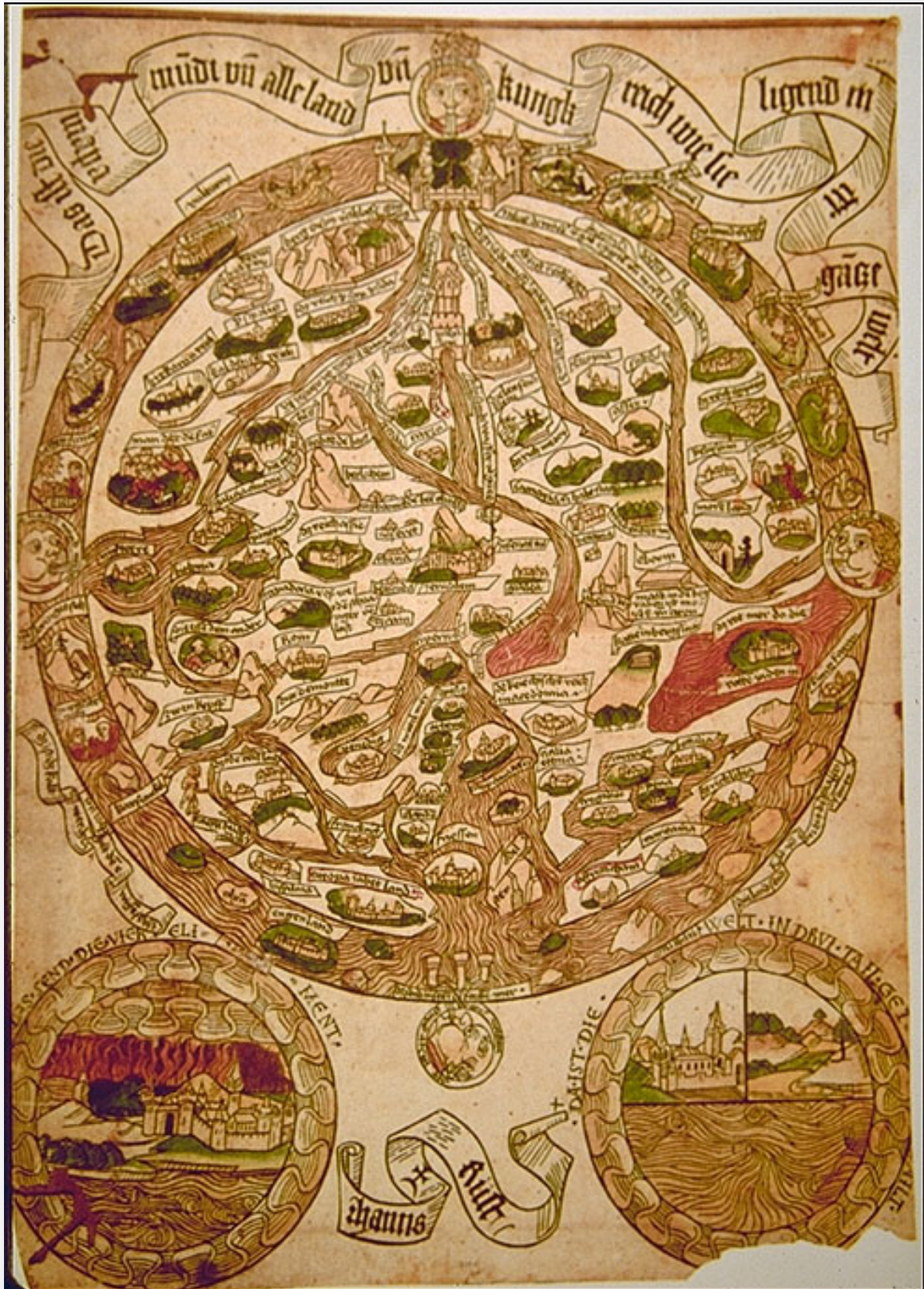
\*Goss, John, *The Mapmaker’s Art*, Plate 2.9, p. 39.

Hassinger, H., *Deutsche Weltkarten-Inkunabein*, Zeitschr. Ges. f. Erdk. Berlin, 1927, p. 455.

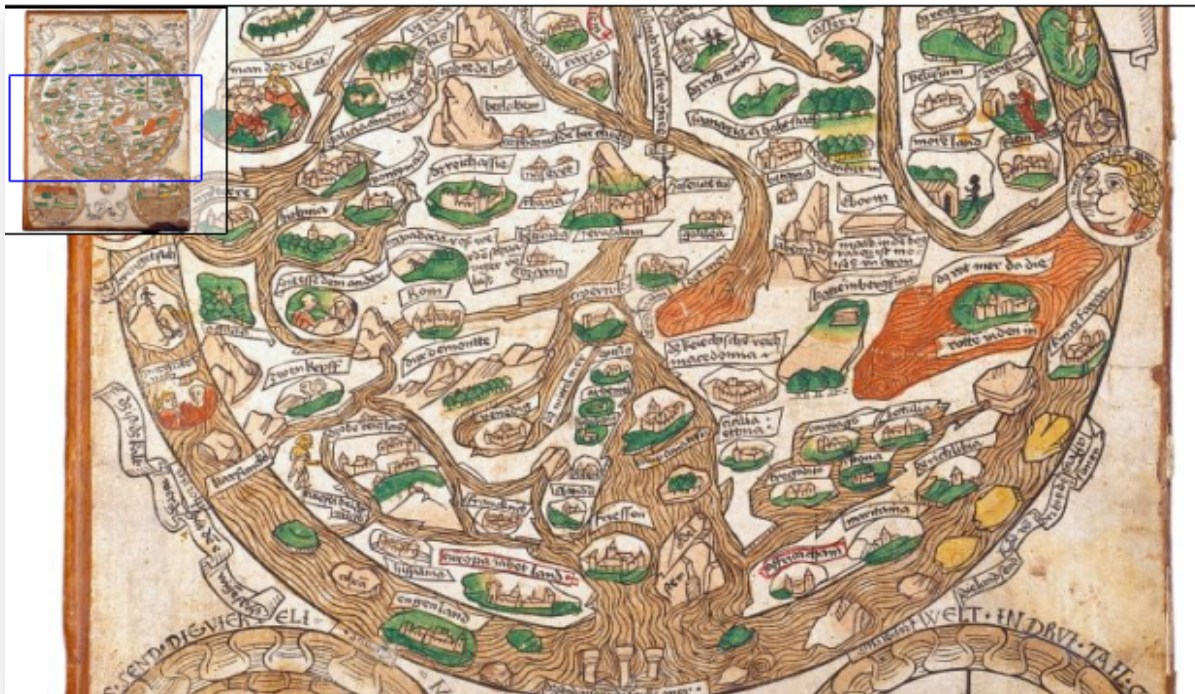
\*Shirley, R., *The Mapping of the World*, Plate 18, #6, p.7.

Stopp, K., “The relation between the circular maps of Hans Rüst and Hans Sporer”, *Imago Mundi*, Volume 18, 1964, p. 18.













Detail: The Garden of Eden, the four mystic rivers

