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Das ander alter der Werlt

Stock#: 29021
Map Maker: Schedel
Date: 1493
Place: Nuremberg
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 20 x 14.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Old World, From the Famed Nuremberg Chronicle

Striking Ptolemaic-projection world map, one of the earliest obtainable world maps and certainly one of the most visually stunning. This example is from a German edition of the *Liber Chronicarum*, Schedel's encyclopedia of Christian history and geography and the most extensively illustrated book of the fifteenth century.

The map shows the *oikumene*, or the known inhabited world. This was the world based on the geography of Ptolemy in the second century CE and features Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa, with the Indian Ocean shown as an enclosed sea. Of course, when this map was made the world was changing rapidly in terms of what Europeans knew about geography, but news of Columbus' first voyage to the Americas had not been widely disseminated when this map was first published.

The map is dominated by the mesmerizing ripples of the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Indian Oceans. There are humped mountain ranges, including two that close off China from the west. The Ganges emerges from six rivers in the interior of Asia.

Another river, the Nile, finds its source in a lake and mountain range in central Africa. These are the Mountains of the Moon. Ptolemy describes such a lakes-and-mountains layout in his works, although the precise identification of the Mountains of the Moon may have been a fourth-century addition to his text. The configuration would survive on maps well into the sixteenth century and beyond, when mapmakers had jettisoned Ptolemy's coastlines but retained some of his ideas.



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A large island in the Indian Ocean is labelled as Taprobana. This is the Greek name for Sri Lanka. The author of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* said that Taprobana was part of the kingdom of Prester John, as well as that the island had mountains of gold guarded by man-eating ants. He went on to explain that the island was the home of the Sciapodes, or men with only one large foot, a detail he borrowed from Greek sources. Such a man is depicted in one of the illustrations on the verso of this map.

Off the coast of West Africa are the Fortunate Isles, a chimeric feature often associated with the wandering island of Hy Brasil. Here, they are roughly in the position of Cape Verde, which the Portuguese discovered in 1456 and began to colonize in 1462. Also shown on this map is a hint of the Gulf of Guinea with a large island. The Portuguese encountered São Tomé and Príncipe in ca. 1470. The map reflects these recent voyages, although it is based on a much older Ptolemaic projection.

The world map is anchored in place by three men, the sons of Noah, Ham, Shem, and Japhet, who repopulated the earth after the Flood. Inside a border are twelve fierce windheads.

To the left are one of the defining features of this particular map, the strip of monstrous humans that supposedly wandered the earth. These are continued from a discussion on the verso, which also has two additional strips. All of these peoples supposedly inhabited the lands outside of Europe; they were the Other to which Europeans could compare themselves.

Detailed Condition:

Minor flaw in lower left corner.