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Decima et Ultima Europe Tabula

Stock#: 34698
Map Maker: Ptolemy / Swenheym
Date: 1478
Place: Rome
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 21.5 x 14.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare example of the second printed map of Greece, first published in Rome in 1478, augmented by early manuscript additions.

The present map is from the 1478 Rome edition of Ptolemy's Geography, created under the direction of Conrad Swenheym. As a printed map of Greece, it is preceded only by the map from the 1477 Bologna edition of Ptolemy, which is virtually unobtainable for collectors. Moreover, the plates used for the Rome edition are considered to be superior in quality and clarity to those of the Bologna edition.

The map shows the region based upon the writings of the Alexandrian mapmaker Claudius Ptolemy, who flourished in the second Century A.D. and whose geographical text was translated into Latin and later inspired manuscript maps using Ptolemy's table of geographical coordinates. The earliest surviving examples of such manuscript maps date to the beginning of the 14th Century. Ultimately these maps and Ptolemy's text would be compiled to form the most influential treatise on Geography in the 15th Century, concurrently with the advent of the printing press, resulting in its wide spread distribution in Europe, which ironically eclipsed the work of other Greek Geographers of the period, such as Strabo, whose work was probably more accurate than Ptolemy's calculations.

The map is enhanced by very early manuscript additions applied in pen, that include place names and islands in the Aegean Sea.

In the early 1470s, Conrad Swenheym resolved to produce the first illustrated printed edition of Ptolemy's Cosmographia. He is widely thought to have been present at the birth of printing while an apprentice of Johann Guttenberg in Mainz. Swenheym and Arnold Pannartz are famous for introducing the first printing



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press to Italy in 1464-5.

Pope Paul II became so enthusiastic about the new medium that he lavishly sponsored Swenheym and Pannartz's work, setting them up at the Massimi Palace in Rome. Unfortunately, when the pope died in 1471, the new pontiff, Sixtus IV, disavowed the project, so delaying its progress. However, by 1474, Swenheym is recorded as having trained "mathematicians" to engrave maps on copper. The work was eventually published by Arnold Buckinck in 1478, one year after Swenheym's death. The 1478 Rome edition of Ptolemy's work is of tremendous importance to the history of printing as the first set of maps to employ the "punched letter" printing process.

Swenheym's fine engraving of Greece is the earliest obtainable map of the region, preceded only by a map published in Bologna in 1477, which is essentially unobtainable for collectors. The map shows the region based upon the writings of the Alexandrian mapmaker Claudius Ptolemy, who flourished in the second Century A.D. and whose geographical text was translated into Latin and later inspired manuscript maps using Ptolemy's table of geographical coordinates. The earliest surviving examples of such manuscript maps date to the beginning of the 14th Century. Ultimately these maps and Ptolemy's text would be compiled to form the most influential treatise on Geography in the 15th Century, concurrently with the advent of the printing press, resulting in its wide spread distribution in Europe, which ironically eclipsed the work of other Greek Geographers of the period, such as Strabo, whose work was probably more accurate than Ptolemy's calculations.

Despite being beaten out by one year (for the honor of the earliest printed edition of Ptolemy's work) by Taddeo Crivelli, who published his edition in Bologna in 1477, the copper plates produced under Swenheym's close supervision, and finally printed just after his death in 1478, are considered vastly superior. The plates were then purchased by Petrus de Turre in 1490, who published the second edition, in which this map appeared. The only difference in the maps are the watermarks in the paper. A third edition was issued in 1507.

Detailed Condition:

Printed on two sheets. Minor soiling. Manuscript annotations in red in an ancient hand.