



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Universalis Orbis Descriptio

Stock#: 48198
Map Maker: Myritius
Date: 1590
Place: Ingolstadt
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 16 x 11 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Classically Styled, Boldly Engraved Sixteenth-Century Map of the World

This scarce map of world published in Joannes Myritius' geographical and astronomical treatise, *Opusculum Geographicum Rarum*.

The map is on an oval projection and embellished with sixteen cherubic windheads and an impactful decorative border of scrollwork, geometric patterning, and botanical adornments. Although published in 1590, stylistically it harkens to the world maps of mid-sixteenth century.

One of the most interesting features of the map is Myritius' depiction of Asia and America joined as one land mass, reminiscent of the early work of famed Italian cartographer Giacomo Gastaldi. Greenland is similarly shown as part of the American landmass, a trait also found in Gastaldi's early work and work influenced by him.

Much of Southeast and East Asia is not shown on this map, including Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and the Straits of Malacca, although mainland Southeast Asia is shown, and one island appears between it and California.

At the bottom corners of the map, two rectangular panels include quotes from Cicero. At top, the map corners contain circular insets of the globe, with Europe, Africa and Asia on one and the Americas on the other.

The engraving style and skill used to make this map is evident, with bold and artful contrast and fine



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decorative embellishments including sailing vessels and sea creatures. A merman can be spotted near *Terra Australis*, and a large, sword-nosed sea beast swims off the southern coast of Africa. Mountains and rivers define land masses. The encircling wind heads are all named in text circling the projection.

Terra Australis and toponomy

In antiquity, Greco-Roman scholars and cosmographers such as Ptolemy posited that the Indian Ocean was enclosed by land, and that the continents of the globe should be balanced, in that the amount of land found in the Northern Hemisphere should also exist in the Southern Hemisphere. Ferdinand Magellan's 1520 discovery of Tierra del Fuego (here, *Terra Ignis*) was thought to support claims of the southern continent, and many prominent mapmakers, including Gerard Mercator, strongly believed in the continent's existence. The Strait of Magellan is labeled clearly on this map. New Guinea is shown as part of the southern continent, as was believed in the sixteenth century.

On the large southern continent (*Terra Australis Non Dumbe Ne Cognita*), some of the place names are primarily based upon Marco Polo's accounts, namely *Luchach*. Lucach originally referred to a region in Java. Sometimes placed alongside Beach and Maletur, also Javanese regions, and Java Minor, an island, Lucach was commonly placed in a southern continent in maps of this period. This conflation of Java with the southern continent stemmed from an error. Initially, Polo used Arabic usage of Java Major for Java and Java Minor for Sumatra. After a printing mistake made Java Minor seem the largest island in the world in the 1532 edition of Polo's *Travels* (Paris and Basel), mapmakers started to make a landmass to accommodate Java Minor, Beach, Lucach, and Maletur.

The southern continent here also includes a late usage of *Patalis Regio*. Patala was a region in what is now Pakistan well-known to mariners and traders of the ancient Mediterranean. However, by the Middle Ages mapmakers were no longer sure of its location. *Regio Patalis* or *Patalis Regio* appeared on late fifteenth and early sixteenth century maps and globes in a variety of locations, further and further east and south of India. Beginning in the late 1520s, *Regio Patalis* began to appear on some maps in *Terra Australis*.

The use of the name *Regio Patalis* in maps is typically attributed to Pierre D'Ailly's *Ymago Mundi* (1410), which served as the standard text book on cosmography during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It popularized the view that there was a part of India, or of what was later called Indo-China, where the sun's shadow always fell southward at noon: the region of Patala. This theory found expression on Martin Behaim's globe of 1492, where *India potalis* is located south of the Equator on the *Hoch India* peninsula on the eastern side of the *Sinus Magnus*, actual Indochina.

In 1523, the globe of Johann Schoener of Nuremberg included a southern continent titled *Terra Australis Recenter Inventa Sed Nondum Plene Cognita* (*Terra Australis*, recently discovered, but not fully known),



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which showed *Regio Patalis* as a promontory on *Terra Australis*. In 1531, the cordiform world map of French mathematician and cosmographer Oronce Fine also showed a large promontory attached to the continent of *Terra Australis* and extending northward almost to the Tropic of Capricorn, which was named *Regio Patalis*.

The use of *Regio Patalis* in *Terra Australis* began to lose its currency in 1538, with the publication of Gerard Mercator's world map, modeled after the Oronce Fine cordiform. The outline of Fine's *Regio Patalis* is unnamed by Mercator. The practice was not entirely dead, however, as seen here. In 1564, Abraham Ortelius published his *Typus Orbis Terrarum*, on which he identified *Regio Patalis* with *Locach* as a northward extension of *Terra Australis*. He notes, in Latin, "This tract is called by some Patalis" and "The Region of *Locach* seems to be placed here by Marco Polo the Venetian." The great promontory terminated in the north with New Guinea, "recently discovered, so called because its nature and climate do not differ from the African Guinea; apparently this tract was called *Terra de Piccinacoli* by Andrea Corsali." The use of the toponym on this world map is one of the oldest uses of the term.

Asia and America as a singular landmass

Patalis Regio is not the only reference to earlier maps. Whereas most maps of this time depicted Asia and America separated by the Straits of Anian, considered to be the Pacific Ocean's connection to the fabled Northwest Passage, Myritius' work harkens back to maps of the mid-sixteenth century which depicted the two continents as one massive landmass.

European maps with this singular landmass supported the popular hope of interconnected trade between the Americas and the Far East. Similar motivations led to the cartographic popularity of the Northwest Passage and Straits of Anian as a shorter alternative route to China and Japan, so while cartographic depictions of Asia and America changed, trade motivations to support further exploration and the ways in which mapping reflected those motivations remained the same.

Influence of Giacomo Gastaldi

According to Rodney Shirley, Myritius' choice of place names indicates reliance on Italian, rather than Ortelian, sources, in accordance with the clear influence of Gastaldi's early work on this map. Giacomo Gastaldi (1500-1566) is considered the foremost Italian cartographer of the sixteenth century, alongside Paolo Forlani.

Gastaldi was born in Villafranca, Piedmont, but had established himself in Venice by 1539. He originally worked as an engineer, but turned to mapmaking from the 1540s onward. It was in Venice where he made his reputation as an engraver, geographer, and cosmographer; for example, he was asked to fresco maps



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of Asia and Africa in the Palace of the Doge, or the Council of Ten, Venice's governmental body. He even had his own distinct style of copper engraving that made him a pioneer in his day and makes his works iconic today. His contemporaries also recognized his skill, as he was named cosmographer to the Republic of Venice and was a major source for other geographers and mapmakers including Cock, Luchini, and Ortelius.

This map was also made with a skilled hand and is a stylized and unusual map of the late-sixteenth century.

Detailed Condition: