



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Altera Generalis Tab Secundum Ptol

Stock#: 77361
Map Maker: Munster
Date: 1554
Place: Basle
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 13.5 x 10 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Influential Ptolemaic Map of the World by Sebastian Münster

Excellent impression of Claudius Ptolemy's map of the ancient world, from Sebastian Münster's edition of the *Geographia*, perhaps the most influential atlas issued in the first half of the sixteenth century. Produced by Münster as an ode to classical scholarship, this map adheres beautifully to Ptolemy's original descriptions.

In the decorative region outside the map, twelve classical wind heads are depicted among fanciful clouds. In Greek and Roman mythological tradition, the weather was often personified as deities, which these illustrations represent. Alongside each wind head is a banner label with their appropriate name from classical mythology.

Ptolemaic maps are characterized by their focus on the *ecumene*, the known world. In geographic terms, *ecumene* refers to the three continents known to be inhabited by Hellenistic society: Europe, Africa, and Asia. The map extends from the Atlantic to approximately mainland Southeast Asia, and from the Arctic to equatorial Africa. Latitude and longitude lines are labeled at the edges of the map, and included in a grid over the map itself, giving the map its recognizable half-dome shape.

As is characteristic of Ptolemaic maps, the Indian Ocean is enclosed by land. This land is labeled *terra incognita secundum Ptolemaeum*, Latin for "the unknown world, according to Ptolemy." *Taprobana* (an enlarged version of Sri Lanka) is included at the center of the Indian Ocean, known for its role in the ancient spice trade.



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Major rivers and bodies of water are clearly marked throughout this map. Mountains are illustrated on all continents, predominantly for visual interest rather than topographical accuracy.

Africa is anchored by the Niger to the west and the Nile to the east, although only the Nile is labeled. The Niger is shown as connected to the Mediterranean Sea, with a branch extending east across the Sahara.

In the Middle East, the Euphrates is labeled, shown emptying into the Persian Gulf alongside the Tigris. Looking eastward, the Ganges is labeled in India, depicted as running approximately parallel to the Indus and into the Indian Ocean. Both the Ganges and Indus rivers are shown as originating from the northern mountainous region of India. No rivers are included farther east than the Ganges, where land is marked *India extra Ganges*.

On the European continent, the Rhine and Danube appear to be included, with the Danube emptying into the Black Sea and the Rhine approximately centered between *Germania* (Germany) and *Gallia* (France.) Also connected to the Black Sea is the Dnieper, running north into mountains directly below the northernmost extent of the map. To the east, the Volga is shown connected to the Caspian Sea.

Claudius Ptolemy

Claudius Ptolemy was a Greco-Roman mathematician, astronomer, geographer and astrologer, considered to be the most influential cartographer of the ancient world. He is particularly well known for his work on map projections. Ptolemy's famed *Geographia*, a compilation of geographical coordinates of the world known to the Roman Empire, was rediscovered by Maximus Planudes in the fourteenth century. Planudes' rediscovery prompted a profound renaissance of mapmaking based on Ptolemy's contributions to the science of cartography.

Sebastian Münster published his edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia* in 1540, with other editions to follow due to its tremendous popularity. In addition to Ptolemy's work, Münster included several of his own maps in a separate, modern section of his *Geographia*.

First published in his acclaimed edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia*, Sebastian Münster's Ptolemaic world map is an outstanding example of its kind. The map is finely illustrated along its border with wind heads that harken back to classical mythology, and faithfully depicts Ptolemy's conception of the known world. This map is an excellent choice for anyone interested in European cartographic history, particularly Ptolemy's incredible influence on cartographic tradition.

Detailed Condition:



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