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Carta da Navegar de Nicolo et Antonio Zeni Furono In Tramontana Lano MCCCLXXX

Stock#: 86105
Map Maker: Zeno
Date: 1558 (1819)
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 14.5 x 11.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Zeno Brothers Discoveries in the North Atlantic in the 14th Century

Fine dark impression of this fine large format example of Nicolo Zeno's map of the North Atlantic, based upon the legend of a 14th Century Venetian family and their reported travels to the New World, which flourished as a factual account and was incorporated into a number of maps in the second half of the 16th Century.

The first modern description of the Zeno family travels in the new world appeared in a 1558 travel book describing a pre-Columbian voyage to the New World in 1380 by Venetians Nicolo and Antonio Zeno. The map was later copied in 1561 by Ruscelli in his edition Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographia*, which introduced the map and legend to a significantly broader audience. Notably, Ruscelli revised the original 1558 map, which showed a continuous coastline from Norway to Greenland. Ruscelli in turn showed Greenland separate from Scandinavia, with a large sea separating the two land masses.

This edition of the map, issued in *Nouvelles des Voyages et des Sciences Geographiques*, published by J.B.Eyries and Conrad Malte-Brun, faithfully reproduces the original map and incorporates an inset map showing full journey of the Zeno brothers reaching across the Atlantic to Canada.

Most historians regard the map and accompanying narrative as a hoax, perpetrated by the younger Zeno to make a retroactive claim for Venice as having discovered the New World before Christopher Columbus. The evidence against the authenticity of the map is based largely on the appearance of many non-existent islands in the North Atlantic and off the coast of Iceland. One of these non-existent islands was Frisland,



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where the Zeno brothers allegedly spent some time.

In addition to propagating the myth of the Zeno voyage, the map depicted many of the fictitious islands of the Atlantic in remarkable detail, including Frisland (with 32 places named), Deogeo, Estotiland, Estland, and the monastery of S. Tomas in Greenland.

Many of these mythical islands and places were depicted on maps for centuries, mainly because Gerard Mercator accepted the account of Zeno's voyage as authentic and adopted much of it in his famous large 1569 world map and his 1595 map of the North Pole. Ortelius in turn used the map as a prototype for his map of the North Atlantic. Frobisher and Davis accepted the map for their explorations in the 1570's and 1580's, respectively. Nice example of the first state of this historically important map.

The Zeno brothers, Nicolo (1326-1402) and Antonio, (d. 1403) were noted Italian navigators from Venice, who flourished in the second half of the 14th century. They were brothers of the Venetian naval hero Carlo Zeno. The Zeno family was an established part of the aristocracy of Venice and held the franchise for transportation between Venice and the Holy Land during the Crusades.

The Zeno map of the North Atlantic first published in 1558 in Venice by Nicolo Zeno, a descendant of Nicolo Zeno, of the Zeno brothers. Zeno published the map, along with a series of letters, claiming he had discovered them in a storeroom in his family's home in Venice.

The letters are divided into two parts. The first letters (from Nicolo to Antonio) tell how Nicolo set off in 1380 on a voyage from Venice to England and Flanders. Evidence exists that such a voyage took place, and that Nicolò returned to Venice around 1385. In the letters, Nicolò describes being stranded on an island between Great Britain and Iceland called Frislanda, which is described as being larger in size than Ireland. Nicolo is rescued by Zichmni, who is described as prince who owned some islands called Porlanda off the southern coast of Frislanda, and who ruled the duchy of Sorant, or Sorand, south-east of Frislanda.

Nicolo invites Antonio to come to Frislanda and the pair remain for fourteen years. Under Zichmni's direction, Antonio attacks "Estlanda", (perhaps the Shetland Islands), as indicated by the similarity of place names mentioned in the letters. Zichmni then attempts to attack Iceland. After finding it well defended, he attacks seven islands along its eastern side: Bres, Talas, Broas, Iscant, Trans, Mimant, Damberc. All of these islands are fictitious. Zichmni then builds a fort on Bres and leaves Nicolo in charge of it. Nicolo makes a voyage to Greenland and finds a monastery with central heating. He then returns to Frislanda, where he dies, having been in the north for four or five years.

After Nicolo's death, Zichmni receives word that a group of lost fisherman from Frislanda have returned after an absence of over 25 years. The fisherman describe having made landfall in the far west in unknown



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countries called Estotiland and Drogeo. The fishermen describe having encountered strange animals as well as cannibals, from whom they escaped only after teaching the cannibals how to fish. Inspired by the tales of the fishermen, Zichmni undertakes a voyage to the west with Antonio in charge of his fleet. To the west of Frislanda, they encounter a large (mythical) island called Icaria.

According to the letters, the inhabitants of Icaria greet them before they can make landfall. Only one person among the Icarians is able to speak a language that Zichmni understands. The inhabitants state that visitors to the island are not welcome and that they will defend the island to the last man if need be. Zichmni sails along the island looking for a place to make landfall, but the inhabitants chase him and Zichmni abandons the effort. Sailing west, they make landfall at a promontory called Trin on the southern tip of "Engrouelanda". Zichmni likes the climate and the soil, but his crew find it inhospitable. The sailors return home with Antonio, while Zichmni stays on to explore the area and build a town.

The present example of the map was published at the conclusion of a period in which the Zeno legend was again in currency. The map was originally used by early English explorers in search of the Northwest Passage. Thereafter story remained dormant for about a hundred years until it was revived by Forster and Buache in the late 18th century. The Hakluyt Society published an English translation in 1873 and in 1883 Baron Nordenskiöld argued in favor of the validity of the narrative. Finally in 1898, Frederick Lucas concluded that it was a hoax after an extensive study in which he identified its main source to be Olaus Magnus' Carta marina, along with other 15th and 16th century maps.

Since that time, the legend has been the subject of additional intrigue and debate, with more than one scholar strongly advocating in favor of the Zeno story.

This 19th Century example of the map is extremely rare on the market. We know of only 1 example of the map which has changed hands in the past 25 years.

Detailed Condition: