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Geographia Universalis, Vetus et Nova, Complectens. Claudii Ptolemaei Alexandrini Enarrationis Libros VIII.

Stock#: 86707
Map Maker: Munster
Date: 1542
Place: Basel
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size:
Price: SOLD



Description:

With the First State (Second Issue) of the First Map of the Americas and the Last Appearance of the Schonlandia Map.

In an Attractive Arts & Crafts Binding by Cockerell.

The very rare second edition of Sebastian Munster's *Geographia*; a nearly exact copy of the 1540 edition and the last edition to include a number of important maps.

Munster's *Geographia* represents one of the most important publications of Ptolemy's work. The *Geographia* revolutionized the concept of how a book of maps should be structured and, as such, was the first book to include a suite of continental maps. Munster's work is full of the Renaissance quest for knowledge that intermixed scientific endeavor and exploration with superstition and bias.

Munster first published his *opus* in 1540, and there are only two (possibly three, though the third is today untraced) editions to contain the original suite of maps. In addition, less some decorative changes, the text remains identical to the 1540 issue before numerous changes were made in 1545. This rare preservation of Munster's original structure provides an important glimpse into the nascent aspect of his work that would remain in print for nearly one hundred years.

The Sources of Münster's *Geographia*

First compiled by Greek polymath Claudius Ptolemaeus in the 2nd century, the *Geographia* was a



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gazetteer of the geographical and cartographical knowledge of the Roman Empire. It passed in manuscript form, almost entirely lost to history, until, in the 13th century, it was rediscovered and the maps for it were redrawn by the Byzantine Greek monk Maximus Planudes.

Münster's text has its origins in the Latin translation of Ptolemy by Willibald Pirckheimer, who in turn relied on the notes of Johannes Regiomontanus. Pirckheimer's translation was first printed in the 1525 "Fries" Ptolemy. The text for the Fries Ptolemy was substantially corrected by Michael Villanovanus (Servetus) in 1535, and it is that corrected edition from which Münster took much of his text.

Münster's 1540 rendition of Ptolemy's *Geography* is a continuation of the tradition of map-illustrated printed Ptolemy atlases that began in Bologna in 1477. In the 16th century, that tradition was advanced by the 1507-08 Rome Ptolemy and the woodcut-illustrated atlases of Bernardus Sylvanus (1511), Martin Waldseemüller (1513 and 1520), and Lorenz Fries (1522, 1525, 1535, and 1541) all of which augmented the ancient cartography of Ptolemy with modern maps. Münster continued this practice and extended it still further, publishing for the first time a set of continental maps, including a specific map of the Americas (the first such printed map). He also included a number of maps from other authors including his maps of Switzerland, Scandinavia, and Germany.

The Influences of Münster's *Geographia*

Writing in *Imago Mundi* in 1962, Harold L. Ruland had the following to say of Münster:

When the name Sebastian Münster (1489-1552) is mentioned in cartographical writings, it is frequently connected with some superlative, such as:

- 1. The first to introduce a separate map for each of the four then known continents, Europe, Asia, Africa, America,*
- 2. The first separately printed map of England,*
- 3. The earliest map of Africa available,*
- 4. The quaintest map of America of the 16th Century,*
- 5. The oldest woodcut obtainable of Scandinavia,*
- 6. The first to quote his authorities for the "modern" maps,*
- 7. The first cartographer to copy the Carta Marina of Olaus Magnus,*
- 8. Münster, Mercator, and Ortelius, three of the greatest cartographers of a great age*

Leaving aside the redundancy and subjectivity of some of Ruland's statements, the broad thrust is true, and even incomplete.



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Münster's *Geographia* also contains the first appearance of a fundamental cartographical convention in print; namely, the use of minutes and seconds to denote fractional degrees of latitude and longitude.

Nordenskiöld (Facsimile Atlas, page 24) provides the following commentary on that issue:

*In his introduction Münster further declares that he changed the old Ptolemaic manner of denoting geographical latitude and longitude, so far as to replace the fractions of degrees by minutes and seconds; as for instance $40^{\circ}\frac{1}{2}$ or $38^{\circ}\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{3}$, by $40^{\circ} 30'$ and $38^{\circ} 50'$. This very useful reform had already been introduced for astronomical data in manuscripts of the *Almagest*; but so far as I know, it is first employed for the indication of geographical latitudes longitudes in the text to the map of Scandinavia of 1427 by Claudius Clavus.*

Interestingly, Münster did not include latitude and longitude graduations on many of his new modern maps (latitude is rendered on some but not all) an oversight which was briefly and crudely remedied in the 1552 edition of the *Geographia*.

History of Publication

The 1542 edition of Münster's *Geographia* follows the 1540 first edition, which today comprises the rarest and most desirable of any edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia*. This was possibly followed by a 1541 edition, which a number of contemporaneous authors have tried to unsuccessfully locate, but which is thought to have been published. Following this was the present 1542 edition, which can rightly be considered as the last of the early editions.

After the 1542 edition, Münster devoted himself to completing a separate project, the *Cosmographia*, in which he only used modern maps and was first published in 1544. He would reissue his *Geographia* several more times, in 1545, 1551, and 1552, but with a different and updated complement of maps. Following his death, the *Geographia* would be merged with the *Cosmographia*, which, in varying editions, would be published into the 17th century.

The longevity of Münster's publication was a testament both to its flexibility of content and to its impact on the Renaissance world. Münster's introduction of modern maps and geographical information to a wider audience helped shape the way people throughout Europe perceived the globe and is, without a doubt, one of the most important publications of the 16th century.

Münster's Map of the Americas

Münster's map of America is the earliest map to show all of North and South America in a true continental



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form. The first edition of the map appeared in Munster's *Geographia*, first published in 1540. However, it was the map's inclusion in the 1544 edition of Munster's *Cosmographia* that forever caused America to be the name of the New World, perpetuating Waldseemuller's choice of names in a popular and widely disseminated work.

Munster's map is the earliest map to show all of the continents of America and the first to name the Pacific Ocean (Mare Pacificum). The depiction of North America is dominated by one of the most dramatic geographic misconceptions to be found on early maps-the so-called Sea of Verrazzano. The Pacific cuts deeply into North America so that the part of the coastline at this point is a narrow isthmus between two oceans. This was the result of Verrazzano mistaking the waters to the west of the Outer Banks, the long barrier islands along North Carolina as the Pacific. The division of the New World between Spain and Portugal is recognized on the map by the flag planted in Puerto Rico, here called Sciana.

The map includes a host of firsts, too many to include in this description. It includes a very early appearance of the Straits of Magellan, along with his ship *Victoria* in the Pacific. It also includes the earliest appearance of Japan on a map, predating European contact and basing its presence solely on the legends of Marco Polo and others. The Yucatan Peninsula is shown as an island. Lake Temistan empties into the Caribbean. The map depicts cannibals in South America and names Florida. The misinformation provided by Verazanno is perpetuated. The map depicts cannibals in South America and names Florida.

This is the first state, second issue of the map that differs from the first issue only by the addition of the printer's mark to the left of the title.

Munster's Map of Schonlandia

Munster's map of Schonlandia, or Scandinavia, is the earliest obtainable map of the region and only appears in the first three editions of his *Geographia*.

The map's geography is fantastic and full of myth. The most notable feature is the landbridge between Lapland and the *Terra Nova sive de Bacolhos* (Canada) through Greenland. In the North Atlantic, the Island of Thule represents the mythical northernmost landmass known to the ancients. Scandinavia contains a number of early placenames and geographical features.

Munster derives his map from the Jacob Ziegler map of 1532. Ginsberg says of the Ziegler model of Scandinavia that it:

represented the first different type of representation of Scandinavia in the fifty years since the



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publication of the Ulm atlas of 1482. The depiction of the Scandinavian peninsula showed considerable improvement, and many names and features can be readily identified.

Provenance

Samuel Ashton Thomson Yates (1843-1903), with his armorial bookplate (*Nosce Teipsum Sit Quieta Coeli*)
Cecil Thompson, with his armorial bookplate (*Nosce Teipsum*)
Binding by Douglas Cockerell, 1900 (signature in tooled monogram).
Sotheby's London, June 21, 1977, lot 344 (£3,800)
Pickering & Chatto, purchased in the above sale
Private American collection

Collation

aa4; *6; a-c6; A-N6; 48 double-page woodcut maps; Aa6; Bb6; Cc8.

Detailed Condition:

Quarto. Full brown crushed morocco by Douglas Cockerell, 1900 (tooled signature). Spine in six compartments separated by raised bands. Second compartment reading, in gilt, "PTOLE- | MAEUS" and sixth compartment, again in gilt, "BASILEA | 1542". Cockerell's blindstamped foliate decorations to boards with gilt "PTOLEMAEUS. GEOGRAPHIA | BASILEA. 1542." Armorial bookplates. Complete with 48 double-page woodcut maps. Minor bumping and rubbing to covers. Lower left corner of E1 torn and reinstated. Small closed tear in E6. Small repaired tears to map 25 (Tabulae Asiae IX).