



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

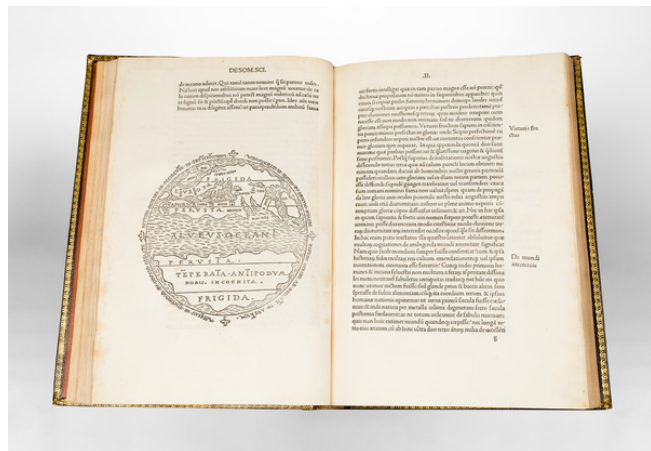
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## (Incunable World Map) In somnium Scipionis expositio. Saturnalia.

**Stock#:** 86723  
**Map Maker:** Macrobius  
**Date:** 1483  
**Place:** Brescia  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:**  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### *The First Incunable Appearance of the Macrobius World Map.*

A fine example of the 1483 edition of Macrobius's *Somnium Scipionis*, being the first printed appearance of his 5th-century world map.

The publication of Macrobius's text and map by the important Brescian publisher Boninus de Boninis reflects ongoing fifteenth-century Renaissance and Humanist interest in classical knowledge. In particular, the map represents a radical departure from the Ptolemaic worldview already in print as of 1477. The most notable difference between the Macrobius and the Ptolemaic maps is the connection between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans below Africa. Bartolomeu Dias would not sight the Cape of Good Hope until 1488. Other important features of the map include the presence of an unknown southern continent, which would influence cartographers for two hundred further years.

The map is located within Macrobius's commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, a semi-mythical telling of a dream by a Roman general during the Second Punic War. In the dream, the terrestrial and celestial spheres are revealed to Scipio, and he discovers that Rome is but an insignificant portion of the earth. Macrobius's first comments on Cicero's telling of the dream before interweaving the dream with extracts and interpretations of Neoplatonic thinkers, including Plotinus and Porphyry, in his *Saturnia*.

This Brescia printing of the book is the second overall after the 1472 Venice edition and the first to include the world map in print. It opens with Cicero's text, entitled *Somnium Scipionis Ex Ciceronis Libro de Republica Excerptum*, before proceeding to the *Commentario*, Macrobius's commentary, and the *Saturnaliorum*, his comparison with contemporary thinkers.

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#### **The Macrobius World Map**

Macrobius's map deviates strongly from those of other classical cartographers. When compared to a Ptolemaic world map, Macrobius's work is noticeably more mythical and also incorporates Judeo-Christian myths, such as Babylon.

Toponyms in Europe include Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Gallia, Hispania, Britannia, and Thule. The Atlas Mountains appear at Africa's western end. Eastwards, India is separated from the rest of Asia by an isthmus and has a Tabrobana much smaller than Ptolemy's. A peninsula between Jerusalem and Persia appears to indicate Arabia.

To the south, across the Alueuso Oceani, appears the "Teperata Antipodum Nobis Incognita," a mythical large southern continent. Macrobius proposed this continent to balance the weight of the landmasses in the northern hemisphere. This reasoning would be passed through to 16th- and 17th-century cartographers.

Research has failed to find a definitive meaning for the lines that appear in the ocean on the map. Traditionally, it was thought that this may represent predominant currents, an idea supported by the eminent 19th-century researcher Adolf Nordenskiöld. However, more recent scholars, including Tony Campbell of the British Library, have purported that the lines represent the Homeric stream thought to encircle the world.

The Medieval manuscript record for Macrobius's world map goes much further back than for its Ptolemaic equivalent. A world map appears in some 35 manuscripts renderings of Macrobius's text completed before 1100, and its presence is directly implied in the text. However, through the Middle Ages, different lineages of the map appeared, with many accompanying geographies, styles, and toponyms. These different lineages were recondensed into the geography seen on the present map, which was copied in all subsequent early editions.

#### **Provenance**

1. Discretely effaced 16th- or 17th-century inscription on the first printed page.
2. Messrs. Taylor & Son, Booksellers, Stationers, and Binders, North Street, Brighton. c. 1820.
3. Engraved armorial bookplate of Syston Park (before 1831). But not lot 1218 in the Syston Park Sale, 12 December 1884, which copy was described as "*red morocco extra*."
4. Sir John Hayford Thorold, 10th Baronet, (1773-1831), his monogrammed plate overlaid by that of Lord Dover (number 5, below).
5. George James Welbore Agar-Ellis, 1st Baron Dover (1797-1833), his bookplate, and an ink



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inscription, dated March 1831 (when assuming the title Baron), on front endpaper verso.

6. Sotheby's, 29 May 1900, sold for £16.5.
7. Charles Butler, (1821-1910), his bookplate.
8. Bookplate of Viscount Mersey, Bignor Park
9. Private American collection

Two private collector's ink stamps on the first printed leaf, one involving a complicated flourish initial "M" and possibly "A," the other a simple serif "F," neither located in Lugt.

**Collation**

Aviii; b-cviii; dvi; e-gviii; h-ivi; kviii; l-nvi; oviii; q-uvi; xviii; gvi; &vi; oviii; □viii; A-Cviii.

**Rarity**

The book has only appeared twice at public auction in the last two decades.

**Detailed Condition:**

Quarto. Early-19th-century straight-grained purple morocco gilt extra, with blind fillets and gilt dentelles, by Taylor & Son of Brighton (their label on the front endpaper recto). Spine in four compartments separated by double- or triple-raised bands. Second compartment reading "MACROBIUS | SOMNIUM | SCIPIONIS" and third compartment reading "EDITIO | PRINCEPS | BRIXAE | 1483." AEG. Sparse, discrete early marginalia. Some bumping and rubbing to edges and spine. Minor faint internal dampstaining to some edges and gutters. Very small marginal wormhole in ai-evi. Lacking initial blank.