



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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[World]

Stock#: 94348
Map Maker: Reisch
Date: 1503
Place: Freiburg
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 17 x 13 inches full sheet
Price: SOLD



Description:

Striking Ptolemaic World Map with Distinctive Windheads

First edition of Gregor Reisch's untitled map of the world, widely regarded as the first printed map to provide information concerning Columbus' discoveries in the New World.

This is the first of four world maps by Reisch, which appeared in his *Margarita Philosophica*, an influential encyclopedia first published by J. Schott in Freiburg in 1503. The work was one of the most widely-read textbooks of the sixteenth century.

The map shows the *oikumene*, or the known world. This was the world based on the geography of Ptolemy in the second century CE and features Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa, with the Indian Ocean shown as an enclosed sea. Of course, when this map was made the world was changing rapidly in terms of what Europeans knew about geography. This map contains a hint of those changes, which is discussed below.

River systems are clearly marked, especially the Ganges in India and the Nile in Africa. Typically, mapmakers thought the Nile River rose from twin (here three) lakes south of the equator, which were near the Mountains of the Moon. Streams from the mountains fed the lakes. Ptolemy describes such a lakes-and-mountains layout in his works, although the precise identification of the Mountains of the Moon may have been a fourth century addition to his text.

In the closed sea of the Indian Ocean lies a large island, Taprobana. Taprobana was what the Greeks called Sri Lanka. There were many rumors about the island in Europe. The author of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* said that Taprobana was part of the kingdom of Prester John, as well as that the island had mountains of gold guarded by man-eating ants. He went on to explain that the island was the home of



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the Sciapodes, or men with only one large foot, a detail he borrowed from Greek sources.

The map is embellished twelve lively windheads, one of which includes what is believed to be the first printed depiction of eyeglasses. The stylized windheads are a significant departure from the traditional cherubic faces normally scene on fifteenth-century printed maps. They are based on the classical compass winds, which associate twelve directions with winds. These windheads use a combination of Greek and Roman names for the winds, but their distinction comes from the great detail with which they are drawn. They have neck ruffs, defining hair cuts (or no hair at all), wrinkles, and other details.

Hints of Columbus' voyages

Thomas Suarez in *Shedding The Veil* (p. 36), has hypothesized that the map includes "the first hint of Columbus' discoveries on a printed map." While the map is certainly Ptolemaic in its overall geography, there is a note that suggests knowledge of the New World, on the land bridge connecting Southeast Asia to Africa. Translated from Latin, it reads, "*here there is not land but sea, in which there are such islands not known to Ptolemy.*"

Reisch may be referring to several sets of islands, including Australasia or the Spice Islands of Maritime Southeast Asia. However, Suarez theorizes that Reisch is referring to the islands of the Caribbean. Columbus had sailed west in search of Asia; when this map was made, he was still actively promoting the idea that he had reached Asian islands, rather than American Islands. Hence, the location of the note concerning the discovery of the New World in the land bridge is consistent with Columbus' belief that he had made contact with the islands off the coast of Asia.

World Maps in Reisch's Work

This is the original woodcut map that featured in the some of the early editions of Reisch's textbook, starting in 1503. The map, with the twelve distinctive windheads, also appeared in the 1504 (Strasburg, J. Schott), 1508 (Basle, J. Schott and M. Furter), 1517 (Basle, M. Furter), 1520 (Strasburg), 1535 (Strasburg), and 1535 (Basle, H Petri).

Another, smaller Ptolemaic world map with only four wind heads also featured in several editions (1504, 1508, 1512, 1513, 1515, all published by J. Grüninger in Strasburg). A modernized map, based on the work of Waldseemüller, also ran alongside the reduced Ptolemaic map in the 1513 Grüninger edition published in Strasburg. Finally, a revised version of this modern world map, redrawn on a different block, featured alongside the reduced Ptolemaic world map in the 1515 Grüninger edition and alongside the original Ptolemaic map published in 1535 (Basle, H. Petri).



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Later in the sixteenth century, other world maps were often inserted in Reisch's text, as it was reprinted many times. This is the original map to feature in the important work, however, and it is a novel and exciting early woodcut world map.

Detailed Condition:

Old Color. Expertly restored, with wormholes filled, sides extended with minute amount of facsimile to the two side heads.