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Tabula Prima di Libya quale Aphrica

Stock#: 94858
Map Maker: Ptolemy / Berlinghieri
Date: 1482 (ca. 1503)
Place: Florence
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 19.25 x 12.25 inches
Price: \$ 6,500.00



Description:

One of the earliest obtainable maps of Morocco and the Straights of Gibraltar.

This is *Tabula Prima di Libya quale Aphrica*, the first of four Libya (i.e. North Africa) maps issued in Francesco Berlinghieri's ground-breaking atlas *Septe Giornate della Geographia* from 1482.

The map depicts the westernmost part of North Africa, constituting Morocco and most of Algeria today. The scope stretches from the Atlantic coast to the 28th parallel in the eastern desert of Algeria.

Comparing this map to other editions of Ptolemy, it is clear Berlinghieri drew on additional sources. This difference is most evident in the number and density of coastal place names, which significantly exceed its Rome and Ulm counterparts. Berlinghieri's map also offers stylistic differences. Both Rome and Ulm depict a rugged coastline with deep bays and numerous promontories, whereas Berlinghieri carves the coast out in circles to form an elegant cloverleaf-like border.

The Iberian Peninsula extends from the top of the map to form the iconic gateway between the Atlantic and Mediterranean - the Gibraltar Strait (*Freto Herculeo*). Once again, Berlinghieri departs significantly from his peers, drawing a longer and more rugged course for this passage. It is worth noting the inclusion of a small pictogram of a column on the east side of the Moroccan promontory extending up towards the Strait of Gibraltar. This illustration is labeled *Colona di Phebo*, meaning the 'column of the illuminated,' a well-known reference to the Greco-Roman god Apollo. We have yet to confirm the exact meaning of this term - *Column of Apollo* - and relevant publications do not discuss it. Nevertheless, this misnomer is likely a reference to the 'Pillars of Hercules,' as the Gibraltar Straits were known in Antiquity.



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Much of the toponymy is unrecognizable today, drawing as it does on Ptolemy's original lists and suffering centuries of slow linguistic corruption through translation and transcription. A few places are nevertheless both identifiable and worth mentioning. Following the annexation of western North Africa by the Roman Emperor Claudius in 44 CE, it was divided into two Roman provinces, each with its own provincial capital. The Roman provincial capital was Volubilis in the westernmost province of *Mauretania Tingitana*. Volubilis was also the old capital of the Kingdom of Numidia, which Claudius had "integrated" into the Roman Empire. To this day, it remains one of the most impressive Roman ruin fields in North Africa. Volubilis can be seen almost directly south of Apollo's column, just southwest of the singular peak labeled *DIOR MOT*.

The eastern half of Mauretania became *Mauretania Caesarensis* and was ruled from the coastal hub of Jol Caesarea (modern Cherchell in Algeria). On Berlinghieri's map, this is labeled *Casarea*. Immediately north of the city, and partly obscured by the centerfold, is the island of *Julia Caesarea*. This island was named after Julius Caesar's favorite daughter, whom he married to Consul Pompey to keep the friendship pact between them alive. Once Julia died in childbirth, however, the path to civil war lay open.

Two other small islands, Pena and Erythia, are depicted on the Atlantic. It is unclear precisely what these islands represent, although they figure in all three mentioned editions of Ptolemy. The southern island most likely represents Mogador, the largest of the Essaouira Islands (or *Iles Purpuraires*), which have been harvesting grounds for purple dye since Antiquity.

A notable feature of the North African interior is the elaborate mountain ranges that cut across the entire map. One of the characteristic features of Berlinghieri's map is the ornamental nature of mountain ranges, delineated by bold wavy lines and hatched in the middle. The depicted ranges represent real and imagined mountains in Morocco. Thus, the Atlas and Ante-Atlas ranges are shown, but the map also includes an extensive and mythical southern range, which continues east out of the map and cuts across most of the Sahara.

States of the map

For a long time, most scholars agreed that much, if not all, of the *Septe giornate* was completed by 1479, including the maps, which were interpreted as having been printed in a single large batch and then subsequently bound and published in 1482 (Skelton 1966; Campbell 1987). A significant number of extra sheets were left over from the original printing. After Berlinghieri died in 1501, these were purchased and bound into a new edition with a new title page issued around 1503-1504.

Nevertheless, a new and comprehensive study by Peerlings and Laurentius (2023) has identified subtle distinctions in many of Berlinghieri's maps, denoting that amendments were made and that different states thus exist.



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For *Tabula Prima di Libya quale Aphrica*, Peerlings and Laurentius identify two distinct states. The current example is the second state, identified by overprinting on the first word in the label *GARAPHA MONT* in the lower half of the left page, close to the centerfold. In addition, the second state includes a C-shaped blotch immediately below the mountain, and just southeast of it, another place name, *Macur*, has also been overprinted, affecting legibility (Peerlings & Laurentius 2023: 179).

Detailed Condition:

Second state (letters printed over *GARAPHA*, c-shaped character/structure below *GARAPHA MONE*, 'N' and 'C' and 'V' and 'I' combined in 'MACVR').