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[Africa] Prima Tavola

Stock#: 96586
Map Maker: Ramusio
Date: 1554
Place: Venice
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 15.5 x 11 inches
Price: \$ 3,600.00



Description:

Ramusio's Upside Down Map of Africa

Rare engraved map of Africa, based on the woodcut Ramusio map, and presenting the continent upside down. One of the earliest printed maps of Africa.

The information contained in the map was derived from reports of Arab Geographers and Portuguese voyages of discovery, as recorded by Ramusio.

Giovanni Battista Ramusio was Secretary to the Council of Ten in Venice for 43 years. His collection of reports on voyages is among the most important works of the period.

Ramusio's map is the first truly important published map of the African continent after the far more rudimentary map of Munster (1540). This map appeared in the second edition of Ramusio's *Della Navigazioni et Viaggi* in 1554. It was planned as the first of a three sheet map extending to SE Asia and China, compiled for Ramusio by the famous cartographer, Giacomo Gastaldi.

This map was engraved, as the 1554 woodcut map was destroyed in 1557, and a new map was needed for the subsequent editions of Ramusio's *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* in 1563, 1588, 1606, and 1613.

Leo Africanus

Joannes Leo Africanus (1494 - 1554) was born al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi.



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Leo Africanus was born as al-Hasan, son of Muhammad in Granada, Islamic Spain. He moved during early childhood to Fez, where he studied at the University of al-Qarawiyyin. As a young man he accompanied an uncle on a diplomatic mission, reaching as far as the city of Timbuktu (c. 1510). In 1517, when returning from a diplomatic mission to Constantinople on behalf of the Sultan of Fez Muhammad II, he found himself in the port of Rosetta during the Ottoman conquest of Egypt. He continued with his journey through Cairo and Aswan and across the Red Sea to Arabia, where he probably performed a pilgrimage to Mecca.

On his way back to Tunis in 1518, he was captured by Spanish corsairs and taken to Rome, then imprisoned in Rhodes, the headquarters of the Knights Hospitaller. When his captors realized his intelligence and importance, he was moved to Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome and was later presented to Pope Leo X. He was soon freed and given pension to persuade him to stay.

Al-Hasan was baptized in the Basilica of Saint Peter's in 1520. He took the Latin name Johannes Leo de Medicis (Giovanni Leone in Italian). In Arabic, he preferred to translate this name as Yuhanna al-Asad al-Gharnati (literally means John the Lion of Granada). It is likely that Leo Africanus was welcomed to the papal court as the Pope feared that Turkish forces might invade Sicily and southern Italy, and a willing collaborator could provide useful information on North Africa. Pope Leo X (center) was Leo's initial benefactor in Rome. His cousin, Giulio de' Medici (left) later became Pope Clement VII and continued the papal patronage of Leo.

Leo Africanus left Rome and spent the next three or four years traveling in Italy. While staying in Bologna, he wrote an Arabic-Hebrew-Latin medical vocabulary, of which only the Arabic part has survived, and a grammar of Arabic of which only an eight-page fragment has survived. He returned to Rome in 1526 under the protection of the new Pope Clement VII, a cousin of Leo X, who replaced Adrian. According to Leo, he completed his manuscript on African geography in the same year. The work was published in Italian with the title *Della descrizione dell'Africa et delle cose notabili che iui sono, per Giovan Lioni Africano*, in 1550, by the Venetian publisher Giovanni Battista Ramusio. The book proved to be extremely popular and was reprinted five times. It was also translated into other languages. French and Latin editions were published in 1556, while an English version was published in 1600 with the title *A Geographical Historie of Africa*.

Detailed Condition: