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[Great Comet of 1264]

Stock#: 98753
Map Maker: Schedel
Date: 1493
Place: Nuremberg
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 9 x 13 inches
Price: \$ 275.00



Description:

The Great Comet

A leaf from Hartmann Schedel's famous 1493 publication Nuremberg Chronicle (*Liber Chronicarum*) which related the history of the world from biblical to contemporary time. Perhaps one of the more famous leaves from the work, the pictured engraving entitled *Cometa insignia* (The Remarkable Comet) depicts the artist's representation of the Great Comet of 1264 C.E. The text describes how in 1264 a "new star appeared in the sky," brighter than all the others. This corresponds with contemporary reports from across the globe that record a new or "guest" star in the sky during this period. With this new star supposedly came three months of rain and storms, culminating in a plague that decimated the populace. The text at the bottom describes contemporary beliefs about the comet and the reason why it vanished:



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"It appeared in the sky with remarkable size for over three months, rising from the east with great light. And for a long time in the western part of the sky, it sent forth its rays. Before it appeared, Pope Urban IV fell ill, but on the same night that Urban died, the comet was extinguished; thus, its appearance faded away."

A popular opinion of the period believed that the comet heralded bad tidings for Christendom and that Urban's death was a necessary sacrifice to break its curse. Due to the prominent role Pope Urban IV played in this tale, it is unsurprising that this leaf also illustrates the pontifical line of Popes Urban and Clements.

This mention of comets heralding bad tidings is a similar theme echoed through other appearances of comets in history, namely 1066 and the Battle of Hastings where King Harold Godwinson was defeated by William the Conqueror, effectively losing control of England to the Normans. Hally's Comment is depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry which shows fearful advisors and King Harold watching as the comet passes overhead. The theme of comets heralding great change in the world is an ancient motif with this leaf reflecting the continued power of this belief on human society.

Stanford University holds a copy of this leaf in [their Special Collections](#).

Detailed Condition:

One sheet, printed verso-recto. Some toning, mostly unaffecting the text and images. Light foxing as pictured.