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Tabula Britanniae

Stock#: 34861
Map Maker: Munster
Date: 1571
Place: Basle
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 14 x 10 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

A rare variant of Sebastian Munster's Ptolemaic map of the British Isles.

The present map is a rare variant edition of Munster's map of Great Britain and Ireland, as conceived by the great ancient Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemy (90-168 AD). While the version of this map which appeared in the various editions of Munster's *Geographia*, first issued in 1540, are entitled *Europa Tabula I*, this rare edition is distinctively titled *Tabula Britanniae*. This edition appeared within an issue of Strabo's *Geography*, entitled *Strabonis rerum geographicarum libri septemdecim*, printed in Basle by Heinrich Petri, 1571.

True to Ptolemaic form, the map depicts the British Isles within a trapezoidal border. While no settlements are marked on the landscape itself, the map labels the territories of the various ancient tribes that occupied the islands, as well as delineating major rivers. The table to the right of the map lists not only the tribes, but also the various cities and towns as they appeared in Great Britain during Roman times, most notably 'Londinium' (London). Faithful to ancient misconceptions, Scotland projects dramatically to the east and features the mysterious Caledonian forest. To the north are the '30 islands' of the Orkneys and the apocryphal island of Thule. England and Wales are vaguely recognizable to the modern viewer, although the West Country takes on an exaggerated form. The depiction of Ireland is also accompanied by a table that details the major tribes and settlements of Hibernia.

Sebastian Munster (1488-1552) was one of the 16th century's three leading mapmakers, along with Ortelius and Mercator. Munster was a linguist and mathematician, who initially taught Hebrew in



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Heidelberg. He issued a call to scholars across Europe for geographical information, and received a phenomenal response. This led Munster to produce his *Geographia*, a cartographic landmark, that not only included Ptolemaic maps, but also a number of landmark modern maps, including the first separate maps of the 4 continents, the first map of the British Isles and the earliest obtainable map of Scandinavia.

The present rare variant edition of Munster's Ptolemaic map of the British Isles, *Tabula Britanniae*, very seldom appears on the market, and this is the first example we have handled in our 20 years in business.

Detailed Condition:

Title offset as issued, some light browning at margins.