



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

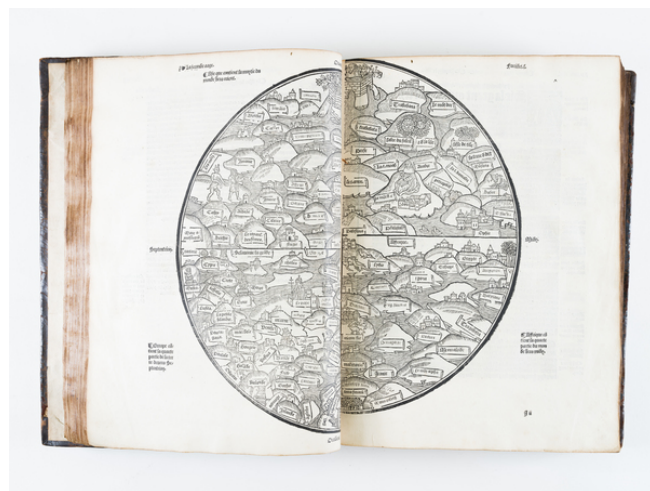
7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

**[La Mer des Hystoires] Le premier [-second] volume de la mer de histoires auquel et le second ensuyua[n]t est contenu tant du vieil testament que du nouveau toutes les hystoires, actes et faictz dignes de memoire, puis la creation du monde jusques en lan mil cinq cens. xxxvi [With a medieval map of the World and a map of the Holy Land]**

**Stock#:** 82600  
**Map Maker:** Anonymous  
**Date:** 1491 (1536)  
**Place:** Paris  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 11 x 14 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



**Description:**

***With an Important Circular Woodcut Medieval World Map and a Famous Early Map of the Holy Land***

This edition of the *Mer des Hystoires*, the monumental encyclopedia of world history that first appeared in 1475 as the *Rudimentum Novitiorum*, was issued in Paris by Nicolas Couteau for Galliot du Pré. It expands the text to the year 1536, and includes a rare and intriguing medieval world map - one of the first printed world maps - as well as an important early map of the Holy Land. The two maps are those first used in the Lyons 1491 edition, which follow closely on the original 1488 edition of *Mer des Hystoires*. These two maps are notable as they stand among the first printed maps that try to show land forms and countries in topographical relation to each other: the circular world map, 12" in diameter, and the other map is a version of the first printed map of the Holy Land (see below for a discussion of the maps).

The *Mer des Hystoires* enjoyed great popularity in the first half of the 16th-century. The book retraces the legendary and historical events from the creation of the world onwards. The chronicle also contains an account of a journey to the Holy Land made by the Dominican friar Burchard at the end of the 13th century. The second part deals with the history of France up to the reign of Francis, with fascinating genealogical charts depicting popes, emperors and kings.

In the preface to this edition the author is identified as a theologian Brochard, causing some historians



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and bibliographers to erroneously attribute the work to the Dominican Burchardus de Monte Sion, who was responsible solely for a description of the Holy Land.

### The World Map

The world map is fundamentally medieval, with the world portrayed pictorially and compressed into the circular frame of the T-O form. And while it does bear an overall resemblance to T-O style maps, it does not have an encompassing world ocean. Jerusalem, shown by a formidable castle, is near the center. The Pope is nearby, enthroned at Rome, while other figures—rulers, a scholar, and, curiously, a faun—are tucked in amongst the rolling hills. There are also dragons, deer, and a raven. Over 100 places-names and geographic features are identified, with towns and countries named. Each country is represented as a separate hill accompanied by either a figure of the sovereign or several small buildings representing towns. Many of the hills are surrounded by water, and there are numerous trees, buildings, historical and religious figures scattered throughout. Each of the hills is labeled with a settlement or polity, including India, Persia, and Libya. The Pillars of Hercules guard the entrance to the Atlantic Ocean, at the bottom of the map.

At the top, in the east, is a high-walled castle. Rivers spill from it, filling the rest of the world. Inside are two figures. These are most likely Enoch and Elijah, the only two men in the Bible that were so righteous as to be taken up by God without having to die. According to Christian texts, both men were transported to Paradise. Other theories for these two include the Jew and the Christian, holding the olive branch and living in mutual wisdom and love. Another involves the fable of poppies that Darius sent to Alexander and the peppercorn that Alexander returned. Finally it has been proposed that they represent the master and the novice, as the book is an instructional compendium for students.

Tony Campell notes that while the earlier *Mer des Hystoires* map of 1488 remained close to the *Rudimentum Novitorum* prototype (described by Shirley as "a vivid piece of early cartographical design"), this second derivation of 1491 betrays the work of "a thinking individual" (Campbell):

*It is unlikely that the mapmaker intended his readers to treat too literally the relationship of distance and direction between one country and another... Crete and Cyprus, for example, are shown to the northeast of France and Rome is to the south of it*

Nevertheless, this remarkable map provides us with one of the earliest, and certainly the most complete,



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depictions of medieval Europe's conception of the world.

The publication history of the woodblock world map is summarized by Shirley:

*New woodblocks were cut in Lyons in 1491, closely copying those prepared in Paris three years earlier for the Mer des Hystoires [1488]. The same picture of the medieval world is presented but within a smaller circular frame so that the detail is somewhat crowded. The publisher was Jean Dupré. There was a second Lyons edition in 1506 and the blocks were then used to illustrate subsequent editions published in Paris in c.1517, 1536, 1543-44, c.1550 and c.1555. As with the earlier Paris editions, there are variations in lettering between one printing and another.*

### **The Holy Land Map**

The Holy Land map is among the earliest of printed modern maps. It has been called "an extraordinary relic in the history of maps of the Holy Land" (Tishby). The map presents a bird's eye view over the hills and seas with Jerusalem in the center and is based on the map drawn by the 13th-century Dominican monk Burchard of Mt. Sion. It originally appeared in Lucas Brandis's *Rudimentum Novitiorum sive Chronicarum Historiarum Epitome* (Lübeck, 1475), and was the first printed map of the Holy Land. The depiction is east-oriented, with Jerusalem in the middle, as it was the spiritual epicenter of Judeo-Christian life. Radiating outward in all directions are hills with the names of cities, towns, and geographical features of biblical and medieval significance. The pathways that pass between the hills are crowded with small figures walking or riding. Ships are sailing in the Mediterranean, to the west (bottom of map), and eight wind-heads blow their gales across Palestine and the wider region. The map is full of biblical imagery. In the upper right is Mt. Sinai, where Moses is receiving the Ten Commandments. The Red Sea snakes down to Egypt, in the bottom right corner, and is filled with armor and a drowning king. This is perhaps a reference to the Pharaoh's army, lost after the waters swept in after the Israelites had passed. The Dead Sea, to the east, has spires peeking from its depths, the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus is being baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Near to Jerusalem, at Calvary, Jesus is hanging on the cross.

### **The Woodcuts**

Beyond the two notable maps described above, the *Mer de histoires* is profusely illustrated with woodcuts. Ruth Mortimer has provided an extensive description of the woodcut illustrations, though based on the



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incomplete copy at Harvard, which lacks the 12 preliminary leaves, including the title page:

*The title begins with an initial L in the style identified with Antoine Vérard. Beginning with leaf A1, the text is illustrated with seventy-eight woodcuts, by repetition of fifty-seven different blocks. Several blocks may be traced to the 1488 and ca. 1503 Paris editions, but the majority, including two double-page maps and the full-page scene of the battle of Fornovo, are the Lyons blocks which were used in the Davost-Genevey edition of 1506. The Clovis block (volume 2, leaf h6 verso) is a third version, reversed, of the double scene; it is closer to the Lyons block, with the baptismal font in the foreground, than to that in the Paris editions. This third block is found earlier in the Michel Le Noir-Du Pré edition of La Mer de hystoires & croniques de france, 1517-1518. The scenes of the Creation at the beginning of the first volume have been reduced to blocks measuring 1 3/4 x 1 1/2", and a few other subjects have been supplied from a set of small blocks with ornamental frames. The more elaborate of the genealogical tables are also Lyons blocks. Those composed of separate medallions of emperors, kings, and churchmen, cut from other tables and variously combined to form new tables, are principally Paris blocks. A few of the medallions also occur as illustrations. The tables total fifty-three full pages and sixteen half pages in this edition. Among the initials, in a wide range of styles, should be noted a set with figures of the popes, beginning on leaf e2 verso of volume 2. Du Pré's "galée" device (Renouard 261) on leaf kk4 verso of volume 2. Lettres bâtarde, small lettres bâtarde marginalia, dates in inner margin.*

**Provenance**

Engraved armorial bookplate of French royal historian Denis II Godefroy (1615-1681), with his coat of arms containing three boar's heads. Early manuscript owner's name on first title page: Jaspar R. Doublet or Jaspar Droublet.

**Detailed Condition:**

Folio. 17th century full dark brown paneled calf, raised spine bands, with single gilt fleuron in each compartment. Gilt arabesque device on front and back covers. Hinges reinforced, some gentle restoration to small portions of the spine backing, corners and edges expertly restored. Free endpaper excised at front and back. Pagination: Two parts in one volume. Part I: (12) ff. 231 ff. (1) ff. blank; Part II: (4) ff. 184 ff. Complete. First title printed in red and black, and with grotesque initial. Printed in French Gothic type. Woodcuts and maps: 52 full-page and some 150 in text woodcuts, and two double page: the map of the



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World (verso of I1 and recto of I2) and the map of the Holy Land (verso of X6 and recto of Y1). Internal condition is very good, with the leaves generally clean and crisp, and with sufficient margins. The final two leaves of the volume exhibit some unobtrusive dampstaining to edge extremities. First title page with very early manuscript ownership name (Jaspar Droublet?). Marginalia: early manuscript manicules in margins of verso of leaf Aiiii. Housed in a felt-lined clamshell box of full burgundy morocco.