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Typus Orbis Universalis

Stock#: 14588
Map Maker: Munster
Date: 1554
Place: Basle
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 15 x 11 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Münster's 1550 Modern Map of the World, an Iconic Image of the Globe

Fine example of the second edition of Münster's map of the world, one of the most recognized and influential world maps of the sixteenth century. Today, it is one of the earliest obtainable world maps. This example is from the second woodblock, which featured in editions of *Cosmographia* from 1550 with significant revisions from the first edition.

The map is richly embellished with a dozen wind-heads blowing their gales from a cloud border. The blowing cherubs do not intrude into the oval of the projection, as they did in the first state. The other easily noticeable change is the inclusion of the letters DK in the clouds in the lower left corner. These are the initials of the engraver, David Kandel.

Sea monsters frolic in the Southern Ocean, where no large continent is hypothesized to hide. Instead, a small unlabeled landmass lies south of the Straits of Magellan, which were discovered less than two decades before this map was produced. Each ocean is labeled with a text block, made by inserting metal type into the woodblock, and this map contains one of the earliest namings of the Pacific Ocean (*Mare Pacificum*).

Münster here adds to the contemporary confusion over *Taprobana* and Ceylon. He depicts a Sumatra-shaped *Taprobana* on the west side of the Indian subcontinent, while Java is in the approximately correct size and position of Sri Lanka. *Taprobana* was what the Greeks had called Sri Lanka, but late-medieval and early modern geographers also applied the toponym to Sumatra and a phantom island. To add further to



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the confusion, farther south is *Calensuan*, which is spelled as *Callenzuan* on Waldseemüller's 1507 world map and *Calensuan* on Juan Vespucci's 1524 world map. The origin of this island is unknown, but it may too be a corruption of Ceylon, or Sri Lanka.

Münster seems to have hedged his bets and combined the various hypotheses while also placing the East Indies farther west than they really are. He also includes Gilolo, today known as Halmahera, the largest island in the Maluku Islands in Indonesia. The triangular island Porne denotes Borneo.

North America is broken up, with the bulk of the continent at the left and the west coast appearing briefly on the right side of the oval projection. Münster is non-committal as to the continuity of North and South America; an unbroken Central America is implied but is not clearly shown thanks to the curve of the projection.

Interestingly, all of North America is called *Terra Florida*. Also of interest, one of the main differences between this second state and the first is a lack of labels in North America. The first edition included *Francista*, a reference to the French efforts in the northeast, and the island of the *Bacalhos*, i.e. bacalao or salt cod, a reference to the Basque fisherman seeking cod in the area. Finally, a note in the northwest on the first edition explained that here lies a strait to the Moluccas, a hopeful reference to the Northwest Passage. No such ideas are shared on this second edition.

Münster's world map, the first and second editions

The first edition of this map debuted in Münster's revised edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia* published in 1540 (with later editions in 1542, 1545, and 1552). Münster wished to improve on the Latin translation of Willibald Pirckheimer with corrections by Servetus from 1535. Rather than work from Latin, Münster translated freshly from a Greek edition. The work contained 27 maps of Ptolemy's world, the ancient, and 21 of Münster's, the modern.

The work is known especially for the world map, as well as for the influential decision to feature a map for each continent, a concept later adopted by most atlas makers. The world map, made from a woodblock, was used in the four editions of Münster's *Geographia* and the pre-1550 editions of his *Cosmographia*.

This second edition, from a new woodblock, featured in editions of *Cosmographia* from 1550. All of these editions were printed in Basle, with the exception of two Italian editions printed in Venice (1571) and Cologne (1575), but using the same block. The map featured in the following editions:

1550 Latin and German



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1552 Latin and French

1553 German

1554 Latin

1556 German and French

1558 German and Italian

1559 Latin

1560 French

1561 German

1564 French

1567 German

1568 French

1569 German

1571 Italian (Venice)

1572 German and Latin

1574 German

1575 Italian (Cologne)

1578 German

The Basel editions from 1588 onwards contain a new world map, published by Sebastian Petri. Petri was the son of Heinrich Petri, who was Münster's son-in-law and the publisher of the *Cosmographia* from 1552.

Münster's sources

Münster's map is a fascinating mixture of information derived from the most up-to-date sources he could



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access. He maintained a large network of sources, written and printed, and informants who fed him information about the shape of the world. This map reveals several of his sources.

For example, close knowledge of Magellan's historic circumnavigation is evident. Münster most likely had access to the maps and manuscripts written by Antonio Pigafetta, partially published in Paris in 1525, as well as Maximilianus Transylvanus' published account based on Christopher Haro's interviews of survivors, published in 1523 in Cologne.

Access to other maps and geographies is also evident, including Martin Waldseemüller's 1507 map of the world as mentioned above. As a trained geographer, Münster clearly had studied Marco Polo, as evidenced by his placement of Japan (*Zipangri*) at roughly 20 degrees north latitude. He also was familiar with Ptolemy's ideas. For example, Münster follows the traditional Ptolemaic geography in Africa by depicting twin lakes on the same latitude near mountains. Ptolemy thought this configuration to be the source of the Nile River.

Münster's methodology of careful consultation of a variety of sources, old and new, was common for geographers of his time. Münster's work, first in his *Geographia* (1540) and later in his *Cosmographia* (1544), would have a deep, long-lasting effect on European geography. This world map was one of the most influential depictions of the world to date and would be studied by Ortelius, Mercator, and others.

Detailed Condition: