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Cyprus qua olim (Macaria) id est Beata, Insula est in sinu Carpathij maris sita Veneri sunt sacra . . .

Stock#: 37756sms
Map Maker: Anonymous / Lafreri School
Date: 1559 circa
Place: Venice
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 11 x 8.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine example of this separately issued map of Cyprus

Historical Context: The Popular Fascination with Cyprus

During the 16th Century, the Mediterranean world, and the Italian audience in particular, were fixated on Cyprus, and maps of the island were much in demand. Cyprus had long occupied an outsized role in the politics and military affairs of the region. Located strategically near the coast of the Levant, it was used by the Crusaders as a staging point for their invasions of the Holy Land in the 12th Century. Since then, its largely Greek Orthodox population had been subject to a succession of Latin Roman Catholic rulers. In 1489, the island was formally annexed to the Venetian Republic. However, the Ottoman Empire, centered in nearby Turkey, made frequent raids on Cyprus, and notably in 1539, sacked the key port of Limassol. In response, the Venetians decided to heavily fortify the other main ports, such as Kyrenia and Farmagusta,



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as well as the inland capital of Nicosia.

In spite of this belligerent history, in the 1540s, the Venetians were able to mollify the Ottomans by agreeing to pay them an annual tribute of 8,000 ducats in return for leaving Cyprus alone. The Venetians highly valued the island's strategic location for trade, and the island's approximately 160,000 residents prospered under a flourishing economy.

However, by the late 1560s, a more pugilistic mood prevailed in Istanbul, and the Ottoman leadership decided that it was high time to strike their Christian enemies, who were considered to be divided and disorganized. This led to the Fourth Ottoman-Venetian War (1570-73), better known as the 'Guerra di Cipro', in Italy. This pitted an alliance of various Italian states, Spain, and the Knights of Malta, against the Ottoman Empire. On paper, the odds heavily favored the Ottomans, whose military capabilities were built up greatly during the recent rule of Suleiman the Magnificent.

The Ottomans, warning of much carnage if their demands were not met, formally asked the Venetians to peacefully cede Cyprus. They were rebuffed, and responded with what could only be deemed overwhelming, if not shocking, force. On July 3, 1570 an Ottoman army under Lala Mustafa Pasha, consisting of 80,000 men, who had sailed aboard 400 ships, landed near Larnaca and promptly marched inland to invest Nicosia.

Nicosia's newly-constructed fortified walls initially frustrated the Ottoman siege, but the city eventually fell on September 9, a prelude to much bloodshed. Kyrenia fell on September 15, and Farmagusta, the last Venetian stronghold, was besieged. Farmagusta held out for 11 months until August 1571, after which the Ottomans exacted terrible revenge on the garrison and the town's citizenry. By this time, all of Cyprus was in Ottoman hands.

Meanwhile, on October 7, 1571, at the Battle of Lepanto, in Greece, the main Ottoman naval fleet was annihilated by the Allied Christian fleet, under Don Juan of Austria. In spite of this turn of events, the Venetians had prosecuted the war against the Ottomans very badly, and were unable to mount a rescue mission to retake Cyprus. They were forced to end the war on a separate peace from their allies, and formally ceded Cyprus to Turkey. Cyprus would remain under Ottoman rule, of widely varying degrees of harshness, until 1878, when the island became a protectorate of Great Britain.

Detailed Condition:

Wide margins