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Eridanus

Stock#: 41354
Map Maker: Hevelius

Date: 1687
Place: Gdansk (Dantzig)
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 14.5 x 12 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine example of Johannes Hevelius's chart of the constellation Eridanus and surrounding environs, from his highly influential work, *Firmamentum Sobiescianum sive Uranographia*.

The Hevelius *Firmamentum* was the first star atlas to rival Bayer's Uranometria in accuracy, utility, innovation, and influence. Hevelius was perhaps the most active observational astronomer of the last half of the seventeenth century. His star atlas is notable for many reasons. It contains fifty-six large, exquisite, double-page engraved star maps. The star positions for the charts were derived from Hevelius's own star catalog, based on his own observations, which was first published along with the atlas. It is unique among the Grand Atlases in choosing to depict the constellations as they would appear on a globe, that is, from the outside looking in, rather than from a geocentric point of view, as Bayer and most others adopted. So Aquila and Antinous swoop down to the right, rather than to the left as in Bayer.

Johannes Hevelius (1611 - 1687) was a Protestant councilor and mayor of Danzig, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. As an astronomer he gained a reputation as "the founder of lunar topography" and described ten new constellations, seven of which are still recognized by astronomers.

In 1641, Hevelius built an observatory on the roofs of his three connected houses, equipping it with splendid instruments, including ultimately a large Keplerian telescope, with a wood and wire tube he constructed himself. This may have been the longest "tubed" telescope before the advent of the tubeless aerial telescope.

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This private observatory was visited by Polish Queen Marie Louise Gonzaga on 29 January 1660, and in 1678 by Polish King John III Sobieski. In May 1679 the young Englishman Edmund Halley visited him as emissary of the Royal Society. Since 1664 Hevelius had been its first German fellow. Malgorzata Czerniakowska writes that "Jan Heweliusz was the first Pole to be inducted into the Royal Society in London. This important event took place on 19th March 1664."[6]

Halley had been instructed by Robert Hooke and John Flamsteed to persuade Hevelius to use telescopes for his measurements, yet Hevelius demonstrated that he could do well with only quadrant and alidade. He is thus considered the last astronomer to do major work without the use of a telescope.

Hevelius made observations of sunspots, 1642-1645, devoted four years to charting the lunar surface, discovered the Moon's libration in longitude, and published his results in Selenographia, sive Lunae descriptio (1647), a work which entitles him to be called "the founder of lunar topography."

He discovered four comets, in 1652, 1661 (probably Ikeya-Zhang), 1672 and 1677. These discoveries led to his thesis that such bodies revolve around the Sun in parabolic paths.

In late 1683, in commemoration of the victory of Christian forces led by Polish King John III Sobieski at the Battle of Vienna, he invented and named the constellation Scutum Sobiescianum (Sobieski's Shield), now called Scutum. This constellation first occurred publicly in his star atlas *Firmamentum Sobiescianum*, that was printed in his own house at lavish expense, and he himself engraved many of the printing plates.

Detailed Condition: