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**[Ebstorf Mappa Mundi] Monialium Ebstorfensium mappamundi - quae exeunte saeculo  
XIII. videtur picta, Hannoverae nunc adservatur. edidit Conradus Miller.**

**Stock#:** 46532  
**Map Maker:** Eckstein & Stahle  
**Date:** 1896  
**Place:** Stuttgart  
**Color:** Color  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 47 x 42.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



**Description:**

***The Ebstorf Mappa Mundi -- 13th Century World Map***

Fine 19th Century chromolithographic facsimile of the Ebstorf Mappa Mundi, one of the most famous 13th Century World Maps.

The Ebstorf Map is the 13th Century Mappa Mundi, the term used to describe Medieval European maps of the world. It was made by Gervase of Ebstorf, who was possibly the same man as Gervase of Tilbury, some time in the thirteenth century..

The Ebstorf *mappamundi* was drawn in 13th century Saxony and depicts the Christian worldview within the body of a crucified Christ. The map illustrates both the "known world" as well as significant landmarks and points of interest for the curious pilgrim.

Christ's head is in the East, at the top of the map, the direction of Paradise. His hands mark the northern and southern limits of the known world, and his feet are at Gibraltar where the Mediterranean meets the



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Atlantic. In the middle of the map we see Jerusalem, the spiritual center of Christendom, located at Christ's navel. Europe is in the bottom left quadrant of the map, Africa in the bottom right, and Asia dominates the upper half. In the East, near Christ's head, is the Garden of Eden surrounded by mountains. Just west are the Chinese (note the two figures bent to gather silk) and the Indians. In the Indus Valley we see opium eaters, people who stare at the sun all day (gymnosophists), as well as that strange tribe who subsists only on the scent of apples. Alexander the Great is consulting the Oracle of the Sun and the Moon.

At the center of the map, near Jersulaem, the Tower of Babel, Bethlehem (marked with the Star of David), Sodom and Gomorrah, and Mt. Sinai are shown. Africa and northern Asia both are hinterlands illustrated with mythical creatures and legends. In Africa, a tribe of dwarfs ride crocodiles. In Asia, two Amazonian women guard their citadel.

The Ebstorf map was unknown until it was found in a convent in Ebstorf, in northern Germany, in 1843. The map was painted on 30 goatskins, which had been sewn together to form a canvas of approximately 12 feet x 12 feet.

There was text around the original Ebstorf map (some of which is copied in this example), which included descriptions of animals, the creation of the world, definitions of terms, and a sketch of the more common sort of T and O map with an explanation of how the world is divided into three parts. The map incorporated both pagan and biblical history.

The original Ebstorf map was destroyed in 1943, during the Allied bombing of Hanover in World War II. A set of black-and-white photographs of the original map survives, taken in 1891, and several colour facsimiles of it were made before it was destroyed, including the present example by Eckstein & Stahle.

The arguments for Gervase of Tilbury's being the mapmaker are based on the name Gervase, which was an uncommon name in Northern Germany at the time, and on some similarities between the world views of the mapmaker and Gervase of Tilbury. The editors of the Oxford Medieval Texts edition of Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* conclude that although their being the same person is an "attractive possibility", to accept it requires "too many improbable assumptions".

The facsimile editions of the Ebstorf mappa mundi are coveted objects in institutional collections. The following is an excerpt from the Duke University Library Newsletter, September 1982.

#### **MONIALIUM EBSTORFENSIIUM MAPPAMUNDI**

*For years rolled tightly, dusty and forgotten, a map that was given to the Public Documents*



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*and Maps Department was pulled this summer from its seclusion and displayed. Apart from the printing identifying the map, it bears a signature. As interest grew in the map because of its size and beauty, it became obvious that some research on the map and its story was needed. The map, printed in Stuttgart in 1890, is a reproduction of the famous Ebsterf map which was destroyed in 1943. This large, circular "mappa mundi," . . . is an exceptional specimen of the historic map. The original map, discovered in the Benedictine convent of Ebsterf, Germany, in 1830, dates from around the thirteenth century. Various dates have been given by authorities ranging from 1270 to 1350. Although the authorship is unknown, it is attributed to Gervase of Tilbury, a thirteenth century provost in Ebsterf. It represents one class of map referred to in the history of cartography as the "T - O" maps. . . . It has been written that the Ebsterf map on the whole displays a "confused notion" of the geography of the world. Rather, it reflects the contemporary religious ideas of the medieval map maker and represents cosmography and not cartography. By definition cosmography is the science which teaches the constitution of the whole order of nature, or the figure, disposition, and relation of all its parts. As such, the map visually portrays the Greek concept of the earth as a flat, circular disc, popularized by the addition of Christian dogma.*

*The probable purpose of the map was to show the popular Crusade routes through Europe to the Holy Land and Egypt. The world is centered on Jerusalem, depicted with a gold, eight-sided medieval wall. Paradise is represented in the East (top of the map), complete with figures of Adam, Eve, the serpent, and the symbol for the four great rivers, the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, and Ganges. Some highly stylized topographical features are easily recognizable: rivers, mountains, and lakes. Towns are shown by towers, a common medieval manuscript symbol and the medieval forms of place names are used, making this map particularly noteworthy.*

*The cartographer drew upon medieval works, itinerary accounts and legends as well as the geography in Etymologiae, an encyclopaedic work on the sciences compiled by the seventh century Spanish theologian and scholar, Isidore of Seville. But, as Tony Campbell, author of Early Maps writes, "One of the chief fascinations with old maps is the extent to which they are wrong." Africa, for example, has been curiously elongated. G. R. Crose of the Royal Geographical Society writes about Africa on these early world maps: "There was . . . the difficulty of fitting its length into the restricted area allotted. . . by the cosmographers" after representing the rest of the known world. Some areas are empty, either by design or because of the condition of the original itself. One area at the extreme south (right side) beyond the Nile is filled with exotic and fabulous animals. Also depicted are figures of "strange and*



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*monstrous races" taken from Solinus and Pliny ... "the men who go on all fours" and the "four-eyed men, so called for their proficiency with the bow and arrow."*

*. . . The library is truly fortunate to have been the recipient of this copy. Even the collection of the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress does not contain one of this beauty and quality. . . .*

**Detailed Condition:**

Dissected and laid on linen, as issued.