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[Manuscript Portolan Chart of the Mediterranean]

Stock#: 46947
Map Maker: Prunes
Date: 1559 (19th Century)
Place: Spain
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 31 x 20.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

19th Century Hand Drawn Copy on Vellum of a Mallorcan Portolan Chart of the Mediterranean

Well executed manuscript copy of Matteo Prunes' Portolan Chart of the Mediterranean, originally executed in the middle of the 16th Century.

The chart demonstrates many characteristics of the Mallorcan style, almost certainly created in the first half of the 19th Century, at a time when the Spanish were undertaking a broad based effort to copy their most important maps of antiquity.

Sometimes labeled as a 1559 portolan by Mateo Prunes held by the Library of Congress, this example is actually a copy of the 1563 chart in the permanent collection of the Museo Naval in Madrid. The Museo acquired the chart, hand-drawn on vellum, in 1926. The Prunes family were active from 1532 to 1649; Mateo was the second generation to practice. Mateo is credited with 13 nautical charts and one atlas, with the majority held in European and American institutions.

The 1563 original is signed by Prunes on the west (left) portion of the vellum, near what was the neck of the animal. Beneath his signature is a picture of the Virgin Mary, a common element in Mallorcan charts. However, the western portion of the chart-signature, Virgin, two large ship drawings, and a portion of the Canary Islands-is omitted in the copy. It has retained the decorative elements characteristic of the Mallorcan style of chart making, as seen particularly in the rippling flags, elaborate compass roses, and recognizable cityscapes, including Barcelona, Genoa, and Venice. Also typical of nautical charts from earlier centuries is a Red Sea the color of its name (faded but visible) and a Nile River that extends farther into the interior than any other river. This copy now serves as a fascinating historical document in its own right, one connected to the legacy of the object it resembles and to the circumstances of its own creation



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three centuries later.

It is impossible to pin-point the exact date the copy was made, but handwriting on the back indicates sometime before 1850. This coincides with concerted efforts by the Spanish and French governments to copy rare maps in their various repositories. However, some mysteries remain. For example, certain of Prunes' cities in Asia Minor, Southern France, and Southern Spain, seem to have been removed incompletely from the chart; for what reason we do not know. There are also signs of an institutional stamp and at least two other stamps, indicating that this chart has passed through several hands in its 200 years of existence.

Portolan charts on vellum are very rare on the market.

Detailed Condition:

Hand drawn Portolan map on vellum.