



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Typus Cosmographicus Universalis

Stock#: 48989
Map Maker: Munster - Grynaeus
Date: 1532
Place: Basel
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 22 x 14.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

One of the Most Interesting World Maps of the Sixteenth Century

This is a fine example of the Munster map of the world, considered "from the artistic point of view one of the most interesting of the many world maps turned out in the sixteenth century". The map is by Sebastian Munster, the era's most prolific mapmaker, and the map's exquisite border decorations are attributed to Hans Holbein the Younger. It was published in the 1532 Basel edition of Johann Huttich and Simon Grynaeus' *Novus Orbis Regionum*, for which Munster wrote a long introduction.

The oval projection, following Bordone, depicts a somewhat dated geography for the publication date of 1532. As Shirley hypothesizes, the map was most likely prepared roughly a decade prior to publication, based on its similarity to Apian's map of 1520 and other maps. Japan peeks out of the western border and is quite near a skinny North America, labeled as "Terre de Cuba", and a squat South America. Cuba is retained along with the place names of Isabella (Hispaniola) and Spagnola flanking one island in an attempt to reconcile Columbus' insistence that Cuba was part of Asia with more recent map depictions like Waldeseemuller's 1507 and 1516 works. Africa, Asia, and Europe sprawl to the east, flanked by a wind-buffed galleon and a glaring sea monster. Near the Chinese coast a mermaid lounges. Two large text boxes fill the southern Indian and Pacific Oceans. Interestingly, Munster has chosen to include no southern continent at all.

To quote Shirley, "What the Munster-Holbein map lacks in precision it gains in richness of artistic decoration." The above mentioned mermaid, sea monster, and galleon are the first indication of this artistic element, but the real wealth of imagery is in the border. In the upper left corner, indigenous peoples with giant lip rings stare at the viewer while an elephant hunts its human hunters and winged



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serpents devour a goat. In the upper right, archers run through woods and spices of the East Indies are shown in detail.

The vignette labeled "Vartomanusi" in the lower right corner refers to the explorations of Southeast Asia conducted by the Bolognese adventurer Ludovico di Varthema (1470-1517). Varthema was the first Christian known to have visited Mecca and, from 1502 to 1507, he extensively explored India, Indochina and the Indonesian Archipelago. His account of his travels, *Itinerario de Ludouico de Varthema Bolognese* (Rome, 1510), was one of the most captivating travel accounts of the century.

In the final corner, the lower left, is a vignette called "Canibali." It shows a group of indigenous peoples busily chopping up a body to roast. The tepee at left is made of twigs and adorned with body parts. All of these illustrations were derived from popular, but largely fictitious and/or exaggerated, travel accounts of the era, notably Amerigo Vespucci's *Mundus Novus* (1503).

At the poles, two industrious cherubs labor to turn large cranks, as if to turn the world on its axis. Some have theorized that this represents the first published depiction of the Copernican conception of the Earth pinned on its axis as it orbits the Sun (predating the publication of Copernicus' work in 1543). In reality this was probably only an artistic conceit, albeit an intriguing one.

Sebastian Munster (1489-1552) was a professor of Hebrew who taught at Heidelberg and Basel. He settled in the latter in 1529 and died there, of plague, in 1552. Münster made himself the center of a large network of scholars from whom he obtained geographic descriptions, maps, and directions. He is best known for his *Cosmographia universalis*, first published in 1554 and released in forty editions by 1628.

Hans Holbein the Younger (1497 ca.-1543) was one of the greatest artists of the Northern Renaissance. Born in Augsburg, Hans was taught his craft by his father and became a member of the Basel artists' guild in 1519. He specialized in woodcuts, frescoes, and panel paintings, especially portraits. Holbein was working in Basel at the time of publication before moving to London to become the official court painter to Henry VIII. He spent two extended periods in the Tudor court, from 1526-8 and from 1532-43. He died in London of the plague.

The map is one of the most decorative and sought after of all early world maps that are reasonably obtainable to most collectors. This is due to the tremendous success of the Huttich-Grynaeus text. This map was in the 1532 Basel edition, as well as in the 1537 and 1555 Basel editions.

Detailed Condition:

Two sheets joined. Minor repaired tears on verso.