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La Descrittione Della Prima Parte Dell' Asia Con i nomi antichi & moderni Di Jacopo Gastaldi Piemontese comografo . . . L'Anno MDLXI

Stock#: 55880
Map Maker: Gastaldi
Date: 1561
Place: Venice
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 31.5 x 20.5 inches
Price: \$ 19,500.00



Description:

The Most Influential Map of the Ottoman and Persian Empires Published in the Sixteenth Century

Rare and highly influential two-sheet map of the Ottoman and Persian Empires by Giacomo Gastaldi, one of the most celebrated Italian cartographers of the sixteenth century. It depicts Turkey, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

The present map, the first in a set of three maps of Asia produced by Gastaldi between 1559 and 1561, comprises the westernmost section of the landmass. It is bounded by the Black Sea (*Mare Maggiore*) and the Mediterranean in the west, with Moscow and present-day Moldova (*Moldavia*) to the northwest and Egypt (*Egit*) and the northern Red Sea to the southwest. To the east the map is bounded by Central Asia, with Gujarat (*Guzarate*) to the southwest and a desert, *Care*, likely in present-day Kyrgyzstan, to the northeast.

In the Black Sea, the Crimean Peninsula (*Gazaria*) juts down from the north, and Constantinople can just be seen to the southwest. South of Turkey (*Natolia*), the island of Cyprus is prominent in the Mediterranean.

The Caspian Sea is depicted interestingly in an oval shape, as was common until the 1730s. In the north, the Caspian is named *Mare Chivaliscomoria*, after the Chwalis people who had populated this area; to the south it is named *Mare de Bachu*, after the coastal city of Baku (in present-day Azerbaijan), an important strategic and trading power in the Persian Empire at this time. To the east the Caspian is named *Mare Coruzum*, after the Turkic Khwārezm-Shāh Dynasty active in this area in the Middle Ages.



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Decorative elements are employed throughout the map. Both larger sailing ships and smaller vessels with many oars are depicted in each of the bodies of water. Some ships in the Black Sea have crescents on their sails, indicating the Muslim Ottoman Empire's control of this area. Along the northern border clusters of tents are depicted on the Steppes, indicating the nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Tatars and other neighboring peoples.

In the Caspian is also depicted a large compass rose of eight winds, a system developed by Medieval mariners on the Mediterranean. The eight wind names, shown here as initials, were expressed in an Italianate Mediterranean lingua franca primarily composed of Genoese (Ligurian) mixed with Venetian, Sicilian, Provençal, Catalan, Greek, and Arabic terms. Thus, *T*, or *Tramontana*, is north; *G*, or *Greco*, is northeast; *L*, or *Levante*, is east; *S*, or *Scirocco*, is southeast; *O*, or *Ostro*, is south; and *P*, or *Ponente*, is west. Southwest in this system would be *L* again, for *Libeccio*, but in the present map it is marked *A*, perhaps for *Africus*, the Roman name for this direction in the classical twelve-wind system.

In the top right is a large cartouche, which gives a thorough description of the map's contents and indicates that it was produced by Antonio Lafreri (Antoine Lafréry), a French publisher based in Rome, and engraved by the Belgian Jacob Bos.

Gastaldi's maps of Asia

As mentioned above, the present map was the first in a series of three maps of Asia by Gastaldi. While this first map was originally published in 1559, with slight differences, as *Il Disegno Della Prima Parte Dell'Asia*, the present state is from 1561, the year the second and third maps in the series were originally published. This map and the second in the series were each accompanied by a separate gazetteer listing the ancient and modern place names used, while in the third map in the series these place names were included in the map itself.

While each of the three maps were intended to be sold as separate sheets, they were sometimes bound into custom "atlases" made up for purchasers. These composite atlases are sometimes referred to as Lafreri atlases, after Antonio Lafreri, the publisher of the present map, as he was known for having gathered his prints into bound selections for collectors.

There is evidence that Gastaldi intended this series to be part of a larger set of maps of the four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. However, this ambitious project was never realized.

Gastaldi's three maps of Asia were perhaps the most influential of this region in the sixteenth century. At least three other important maps of the century were based off Gastaldi's series: Abraham Ortelius' 1567



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map of Asia, Gerard de Jode's 1578 map of Asia, and the ca. 1570 globe gores likely by brothers Giulio and Livio Sanuto.

Depictions of the Caspian

One noteworthy feature of the present map is its inaccurate representation of the Caspian Sea in a horizontal oval shape. This depiction originates with Ptolemy, whose world maps all show the Caspian in this oval shape. A few maps, mainly from the late fourteenth and from the fifteenth century, did show the Caspian much closer to its real shape, although not in its actual position. These include Abraham Cresques' Catalan Atlas of 1375 and the Fra Mauro world map of ca. 1450.

However, for the most part, most European maps continued to depict the Caspian in this distinct oval shape until the 1720s and 1730s. Finally, thanks to Russian charting of the Caspian completed by navy officer Karl van Verden in 1720, more accurate depictions of the sea began to appear in maps. Some early examples based on these new surveys include Johann Baptist Homann's *Geographica Nova ex Oriente Gratosissima* (1725) and Matthäus Seutter's *Magni Turcarum Dominatoris Imperium...* (1730).

This is just one of many fascinating details in this scarce and striking map, perhaps the single most influential map of the region published in the sixteenth century.

Rarity

This map is very rare on the market. We have only ever featured it once in over two decades.

Detailed Condition: