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Parte Del 'Africa

Stock#: 70331
Map Maker: Ramusio / Gastaldi
Date: 1556
Place: Venice
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 14.5 x 10.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Striking Gastaldi Map of West Africa, Included in a Significant Travel Collection

Finely-wrought early map of West Africa, compiled by Giacomo Gastaldi for Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Navigazioni et Viaggi*. This is an example of the first state, which was first published in 1556.

The map shows the western portion of the African continent from just north of the Tropic of Cancer to the island of St. Thomas in the Gulf of Guinea, where the equator intersects the landmass. The deep interior is filled with mountains and trees, although Europeans actually knew very little of this area when the map was made. There is also a menagerie of animals wandering the countryside, including lions, elephants, monkeys and camels.

Closer to the shores of the African coast, where Europeans conducted their trade in posts called castles, is much rich imagery. One of these castles, the earliest on the Gulf of Guinea, Elmina, features prominently on this map. The castle survives today and is the oldest European building in existence south of the Sahara. Established in 1482, the castle was originally a trading factory; later, it was used to hold enslaved people bound for the Middle Passage and then plantations in the Americas.

Even more imagery dots the coast. For example, a lion stares at a burning mound in the west, while a pair of Africans approach a group wearing plumed hats and holding spears. Behind them is a hut in an enclosure where people genuflect to a leader. East of Elmina are children playing with monkeys, and a group of hunters conversing.

Out to sea, four canoes with pairs of rowers are near shore. There are two European ships. The larger is



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displaying the five dots of the Portuguese Crown's coat of arms. It is bound for Elmina, according to a note nearby. Farther west is another vessel, this one with the three fleur-de-lis of the French. Amongst these man-made vessels are many sea monsters, some with remarkably mammalian heads.

States of this map

This map is known in two states. One appeared in volume three of Ramusio's travel collection, first published in 1556. The second state, of the 1606 edition, is recognizable by evidence of woodworm damage to the printing block and the pagination numbers "370" and "371."

Detailed Condition: