Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[The Great Lightning Strike upon Istanbul (1490) and the Fall of a Meteorite in Alsace (1492)] [on verso:] [Jews burned alive in Sternberg, Mecklenburg (1492)]

Stock#: 70945
Map Maker: Schedel

Date: 1493
Place: Nuremberg
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 9 x 15.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

An especially interesting leaf from the 'Nuremberg Chronicle' (1493), the most famous 'Incunabula' book, depicting a powerful lightning strike in Istanbul in 1490 and the fall of a Meteorite in Alsace in 1492, as well as the burning alive of Jews in Mecklenberg in 1492.

This finely executed woodcut depicts the heart of Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) as it was beset by a fantastic lightning strike on July 12, 1490, which resulted in much damage to the city. The view is dominated by the great dome of Hagia Sophia, built by Roman Emperor Justinian I (527-565 A.D.) as a

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Christian church. When the Ottomans took over the city in 1453, they converted Hagia Sophia into a mosque. The building, considered to be one of the greatest wonders of ancient architecture survives today and is now a museum.

The lightning strike is shown here to destroy the massive bronze statue of Justinian which had stood upon a high pedestal on the former Augustaion, a great square in the old Roman city. The author of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, Hartmann Schedel claimed that he heard about the story of the statue's destruction from a Venetian merchant who had witnessed the event. In reality, the statue had been taken down and melted decades before on the orders of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, in order to make cannonballs for use during the Siege of Belgrade (1456).

The lightning strike did, however, make a direct hit on a former church called by the Turks, Giin Gormez Kilisesi, which was being used as a powder store. The church blew up in a spectacular explosion, causing great carnage. Another large lighting strike, which occurred the same year, destroyed a Turkish army encampment near Istanbul and the combination of these two incidents was considered by commentators in Christian Europe to represent divine retribution against the Ottoman "Infidel".

The smaller view in the lower right of the leaf depicts the fall of a meteorite near Ensisheim, Alsace on November 7, 1492. The phenomenon was observable from as far as 100 miles away. The famous satirist Sebastian Brant, the future author of the bestseller *Das Narrenschiff* [translated as 'Ship of Fools'] (1494), observed the meteorite's fall from nearby Basle. This inspired him to write the poem, *Loose Leaves Concerning the Fall of the Meteorite* (1492). During the late medieval period, meteorites were generally viewed as ill omens by the populous and their appearance resulted in much social commentary and introspection.

The present work represents the 257th leaf of the Latin edition of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* and is one of the most engaging depictions of natural phenomena from the era.

On the verso is a woodcut illustration of Jews being burned alive for alleged host desecration in Sternberg, Mecklenburg, in 1492. Host desecration is a form of sacrilege in Christian denominations that follow the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It involves the mistreatment or malicious use of a consecrated host—the bread used in the Eucharistic service of the Divine Liturgy or Mass (also known by Protestants simply as Communion bread). During Medieval times, accusations of host desecration were a common pretext for pogroms against Jews.

Detailed Condition: