Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Hispaniae Novae Sivae Magnae Recens Et Vera Descriptio 1579

Stock#: 74723
Map Maker: Ortelius

Date: 1592
Place: Antwerp
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 20 x 13.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Ortelius' Map of Mexico, One of the Earliest Printed Maps of New Spain

A nice example of Ortelius's map of western New Spain, showing the recently-created Spanish settlements, many rivers, and large lakes, including Lake Chapala and a mythical sea with islands in the northwest.

The map is heavily decorated, with a huge title cartouche dominating the upper right corner. The cartouche depicts interwoven pieces and is adorned with the fierce heads of creatures, somber faces, and a devil's leering visage in the top center. It surrounds the title, which translates to, "A recent and true representation of new or large Spain 1579."

Another cartouche in the lower left corner translates to, "To the reader; the beginning of the longitude on this map we have not, in the Ptolemaic fashion taken from the Canary Islands towards the East, but from the Spanish meridian in Toledo towards the West." Ortelius' atlas, the first of its kind, was also part of a new cartography that deviated from the Ptolemaic system, or rather that had to augment the Ptolemaic grid that only contained Africa, Asia, and Europe.

The lands depicted are thick with place names; there are so many, in fact, that some had to be indicated with a letter and named in lists at sea. Another list of names is in a rectangular cartouche in the bottom right corner. Two detailed ships are sailing in the western ocean. On land, cities and towns are marked with dots, a building, or a cluster of buildings according to their size and importance. Squares with a dot in the middle, most in the northeast, mark the location of Spanish barracks. A note there reads, "The encampments of the Spanish, where their armed soldiers roam."

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Scholars still disagree over the sources for the map, although one suggests that Ortelius used Jean Duran's map of Mexico from 1575. What is evident is the level of detail Ortelius felt confident in including about Spain's new colony and its indigenous people. In the northeast, near a mountain range, he writes, "This is a deserted region, where people live in the woods, who highly favor rotting meat, somewhat cooked in the sun. They often fight among each other while collecting harvests and fruits." Further west, he had heard of people who practice anthropophagy, "They who live in these mountains are cannibals."

True or not, Ortelius' map was highly influential for shaping how Europeans would view New Spain. During the late-sixteenth century, Spain tightly controlled all geographic information about its overseas empire. However, written sources did circulate, and it is these travel accounts and reports that Ortelius likely used for his map. Ortelius' map was one of the first to show New Spain and it helped to shape European ideas about the Americas, in this case, that they were large, wild, full of savage peoples, and in need of European intervention. This colonial view of the Americas would persist for centuries.

Oretlius's influence stems from the popularity and dominance of his atlas in the European market. In 1570, Ortelius published the first modern atlas; that is, a set of uniform maps with supporting text gathered in book form. Previously, there were other bound map collections, specifically, the Italian Lafreri atlases, but these were sets of maps-not necessarily uniform-selected and bound together on demand.

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, Ortelius' atlas, outperformed competing atlases from other cartographic luminaries like the Mercator family. Between 1570 and 1612, 31 editions of the atlas were published in seven languages. This map first appeared in the 1579 Latin edition and was included in 20 editions, including the 1606 English edition.

Detailed Condition:
Some foxing and toning. A small area of thinning on the verso.