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Tabula nova partis Africae

Stock#: 77370
Map Maker: Fries
Date: 1541
Place: Strasbourg
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 16 x 12 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Second Modern Map of the Northern and Western Parts of Africa

The exploration and mapping of Africa during the Renaissance era bore witness to the gradual unraveling of the mysteries of this vast continent by European explorers. The 16th century was a period of groundbreaking cartographic endeavors, with the Lorenz Fries map, first published in 1522 by Johannes Gruninger, standing out as a seminal work in this genre.

The Fries map, documenting the northern and western parts of Africa, has been heralded as the second "modern" printed map of the continent. In this context, "modern" refers to a map grounded in contemporary knowledge of the period in which it was created. The map's foundation lies in a slightly earlier map by Martin Waldseemüller, published in 1513, which is recognized as the first modern printed map of Africa.

Though Fries' map drew from Waldseemüller's larger print, it was not a mere replication. Fries adapted it, incorporating iconographic images and other new details. The sources for these maps were diverse, including Ptolemaic traditions, Portuguese maritime charts, and narratives of explorers and travelers. The west coast of Africa was a locus of intense European exploration up until 1520, especially by the Portuguese. Beginning with the efforts of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), often regarded as the patron of early Portuguese exploration, the Portuguese pushed deeper south along the coastal waters of Africa until Bartolomeu Dias became the first European mariner to round the southern tip of Africa in 1488, proving that the Atlantic and Indian Oceans were connected. These voyages transformed European understanding of the African continent. Previously seen as a mysterious landmass full of myths and



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legends, Africa began to take a more distinct shape in European cartography, and its resources and trade potential became increasingly evident.

Intriguingly, the Fries map presents several mountain ranges acting as a divider between North Africa and the largely uncharted southern regions. These mountains may be a blend of cartographic speculation and the transposition of certain real-world features, like the Atlas Mountains, across the map. They symbolically underline the boundary of the known and the unknown.

Fries' map stands out not only for its geographical details but also its anthropological features. The map showcases seated monarchs south of the mountains, with the king of Regnum Nubia being especially prominent. These representations highlight the existing powerful African kingdoms, suggesting a rich tapestry of political and cultural landscapes. A Latin notation on the map, correctly transcribed as "Hic sunt magnae solitudines et deserta; in his sunt leones, tigres, et elephantes," translates to "Here are great solitudes and deserts; in them are lions, tigers and elephants." This annotation encapsulates the European perception of a wild and exotic Africa.

Additionally, there are striking visual illustrations: the image of an elephant, indicative of Africa's rich biodiversity, and a depiction of a headless man. Accompanying this latter image, the note "Colopades sine monovalis homines grandes nigri et horribiles" can be translated as "The Colopades, headless men, are large, black, and terrifying." This depiction is a testimony to the fantastical and often erroneous beliefs held about Africa, revealing more about European perceptions than actual African realities.

Lorenz Fries

Lorenz (Laurent) Fries was born in Alsace in about 1490. He studied medicine, apparently spending time at the universities of Pavia, Piacenza, Montpellier and Vienna. After completing his education, Fries worked as a physician in several places, before settling in Strassburg, in about 1519. While in Strassburg, Fries met the Strasbourg printer and publisher Johann Grüninger, an associate of the St. Die group of scholars formed by, among others, Walter Lud, Martin Ringmann and Martin Waldseemüller.

From 1520 to 1525, Fries worked with Grüninger as a cartographic editor, exploiting the corpus of material that Waldseemüller had created. Fries' first venture into mapmaking was in 1520, when he executed a reduction of Martin Waldseemüller's wall-map of the World, published in 1507. While it would appear that Fries was the editor of the map, credit is actually given in the title to Peter Apian. The map, *Tipus Orbis Universalis Iuxta Ptolomei Cosmographi Traditionem Et Americi Vesputii Aliorque Lustrationes A Petro Apiano Leysnico Elucubrat. Anno Dni MDXX*, and was issued in Caius Julius Solinus' *Enarrationes*, edited by Camerarius, and published in Vienna in 1520.



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Fries next project that Fries was a new edition of the *Geographia* of Claudius Ptolemy, which was published by Johann Koberger in 1522. Fries evidently edited the maps, in most cases simply producing a reduction of the equivalent map from Waldseemüller's 1513 edition of the *Geographie Opus Novissima*, printed by Johann Schott. Fries also prepared three new maps for the *Geographie*: maps of South-East Asia and the East Indies, China and the World, but the geography of these derives from Waldseemüller's world map of 1507.

The 1522 edition of Fries' work is very rare, suggesting that the work was not commercially successful. In 1525, an improved edition was issued, with a re-edit of the text by Wilibald Pirckheimer, from the notes of Johannes Regiomontanus. After Grüniger's death in 1531, the business was continued by his son Christoph, who seems to have sold the materials for the Ptolemy to two Lyon publishers, the brothers Melchior and Gaspar Trechsel, who published a joint edition in 1535, before Gaspar Trechsel published an edition in his own right in 1541.

Detailed Condition: