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[Capture of Mahdia in 1550] Vera urbis Africae descriptio, p Illust. D. Viceregum Siciliae, & Antonium Dorian, Caroli. v. Imper inuictiss. Duces iam expugnatae. 1550

Stock#: 78592
Map Maker: Cock
Date: 1550
Place: Antwerp
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 11 x 8 inches
Price: \$ 6,500.00



Description:

The First Printed Map/View Engraved by Hieronymus Cock -- The Capture of Mahdia in 1550

The second known example this broadside of the Capture of Mahdia, the first map or view engraved by master engraver Hieronymus Cock and the only example to include a printed title.

Cock's view shows a circular building representing the city's main mosque. Invading troops at right have begun to damage the defensive walls, but Ottoman crescent flags still fly from the towers. The European forces are identified by flags with Habsburg double-headed eagles, as shown on two ships in the left foreground and an a standard carried by ground troops at the right.

At the right margin, cavalry bearing a crescent flag charge an infantry group that carries flags emblazoned with Christian crosses. This vignette may refer to a sortie that Ottoman forces made in the vicinity of the olive groves during the siege of Mahdia. Cock clearly distinguishes Habsburgs from Ottomans whereas Forlani's later 1562 view shows unidentified cavalry arrayed in the foreground who approach Mahdia from all sides, whether friend or foe.

Between 1550 and 1570, Cock engraved 27 maps and topographic views. This view is the earliest surviving example of a map or topographical view engraved by Cock in the style of a map or view, depicting a current event and one of two published by Cock in 1550, the other being a large 2-sheet view of Lyon engraved for Cock by Balthasar Bos.



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In describing this image, Serebrennikov notes:

No privilege, nor even identification, accompanies an etching which is signed 'Hieronymus Koek Ffecit] et Excudebat 1550' . . . From land and sea, imperial troops and their allies besiege a fortified town flying the Turkish crescent. The inscription sechagne at the entrance to the interior port indicates the presence of shoals and not, as has been suggested, the name of the settlement. Rather, this is the Siege of Mahdia, or Afrika as it was known to Europeans. . . .

By mid-December of 1550 the French ambassador to the court at Constantinople had written back that imperial accounts of the fall of Mahdia had been available in print there for two months. Indeed, the earliest published account that has survived is an eye-witness report of the situation as of the thirteenth of September, which appeared that same month in Nuremberg. A similar account was probably intended to accompany Cock's etching, given the blank area reserved at the upper margin and the numeral '17' just above the interior port. Certainly it was an eyewitness who provided the model that Cock used for his view of the besieged town. . . .

Capture of Mahdia

The Capture of Mahdia was an amphibious military operation that took place from June to September, 1550, during the struggle between the Ottoman Empire and the Spanish Habsburgs for the control of the Mediterranean.

A Spanish naval expedition under the command of the Genoese condottiero and admiral Andrea Doria and the Spaniard Bernardino de Mendoza, supported by the Knights of Malta under their Grand Master Claude de la Sengle, besieged and captured the Ottoman stronghold of Mahdia or Mahdiye. Mahdia was defended by the Ottoman Admiral Turgut Reis, known as Dragut, who was using the place as a base for his piratical activities throughout the Spanish and Italian coasts.

Sancho de Leyva remained in Mahdia in command of a Spanish garrison until 1553. Charles V offered the charge of the town to the Knights of Malta but they refused it, so he ordered it to be dismantled despite it being a strategically important stronghold. Shortly after Mahdia was reoccupied by the Ottomans. The town remained under Turkish rule until the 19th century. Sultan Suleiman, meanwhile, considered that Charles had broken the Truce of Adrianople and ordered Turgut Reis to resume the war against the



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Christians. After summoning up Turkish reinforcements he returned to the Barbary coast in August 1551, and succeeded in capturing Tripoli from the Knights of Malta. In 1560, he helped to defeat a Christian fleet at the battle of Djerba, but failed in an effort to take Malta, a failure that, together with that of the Ottoman governor of Algiers before Oran and Mers El Kébir, allowed the capture in 1564 by Spain of Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera, a Christian success which was followed in 1565 by the decisive defense of Malta against the fleet of Turgut Reis.

Rarity

The present example includes a title at the top in Latin, which is printed on a separate piece of paper.

We locate only a single surviving example (no title) at the Rijksmuseum.

Detailed Condition:

Paste down title. Minor soiling.