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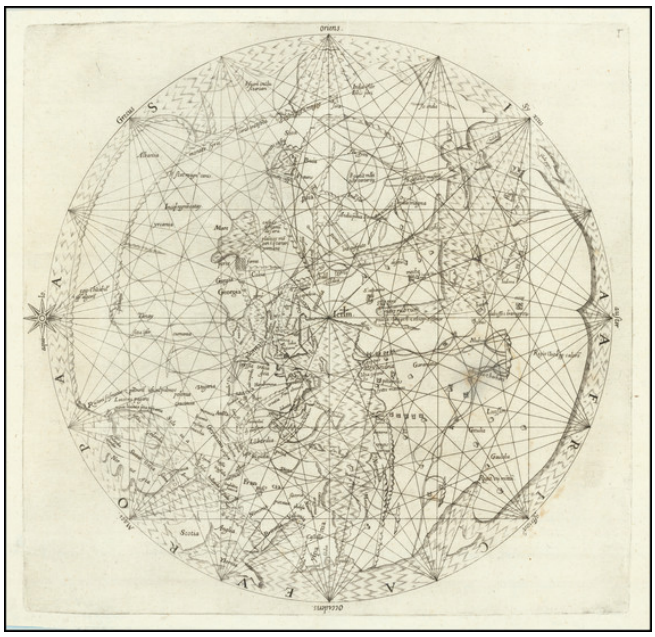
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[Medieval Portolan Map of the World]

Stock#: 82405
Map Maker: Bongars / Vesconte

Date: 1611
Place: Hanau
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 13.5 x 14 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare Medieval Mappa Mundi World Map

Nice example of this rare Medieval Mappa Mundi map of the World, originally dating at the beginning of the 14th Century.

Johann Bongars map is the earliest surviving printed evidence of Pietro Vesconte's World map (circa 1311), generally considered to be one of the earliest surviving examples of a modern map of the world drawn in Medieval times.

Vesconte's map, in its earliest form, survives in a 14th Century manuscript work by Marino Sanudo, which was reproduced for the first time in print in Bongars' *Orientalium expeditionum historia. Gesta Dei per Francos, sive Orientalium expeditionum, et regni Francorum Hierosolimitani historia* (Hanau, 1611). While not as broadly disseminated as the maps of Claudius Ptolemy, the Vesconte/Sanudo map is perhaps the single most important surviving cartographic artifact of the early 14th Century, providing great insight into the modern conception of the world, over150 years prior to the first printed maps.

As noted by Shirley:

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[Medieval Portolan Map of the World]

[Printed for the first time] by Johann Bongars in 1611, Sanudo's planisphere . . . is one of the few examples of medieval maps based on portolano sources in printed form. It is a circular map centered on Jerusalem with the Mediterranean relatively well defined. The ocean surrounds the whole of the known world, the outer parts of which are represented by conjecture. The authorship of Marino Sanudo is not definitively established and the original manuscript map has also been attributed to Pietro Vesconte.

This mappa mundi (circular world map) is, in essence, a portolano of the Mediterranean world combined with work of pre-portolan type in remoter regions. The shore-lines of the countries well known to Italian mariners, from Flanders to Azov, are very progressively delineated, although Africa, away from the Mediterranean, is conventional, with its south-east projected, after the manner of Idrisi, so as to face Indian Asia, and with a western Nile traversing the continent to the Atlantic and the Niger shown in its classical fashion, extending due west to the Atlantic. Chinese and Indian Asia show little trace of the new knowledge which had been imparted by European pioneers from the time of Marco Polo, and which appears so strikingly in the 'Catalan Atlas of 1375'.

Its basic form also conforms to fundamental Medieval conceptions of geography, in that it is oriented with east at the top and shows Jerusalem at the center of the world. The ocean surrounds the known landmasses of the world, while the outer parts are largely conjectural. True to the Medieval conception of the world, the landmasses are about equally balanced between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

This all being said, however, in key respects the map was revolutionary for its time. Notably, this map, along with Vesconte's other work, features the first broadly accurate conceptions of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Elsewhere In Europe, the appearance of Norvegia and Suecia (Scandinavia) are great advances from traditional cartographic sources attributable to Ptolemy, and Great Britain and the Baltic Sea appear in recognizable forms. The Arabian Peninsula, Black Sea and Caspian Sea are in a recognizable form, and the name Georgia appears above the Caucus Mountains. Some idea is also shown of the great continental rivers of the north, such as the Don, Volga, Vistula, Oxus and Syr Darya.

The present printed version of the map appeared in Germany in the early 17th Century. It was produced as part of the greater intellectual movement that flourished in Europe, and in Germany in particular, roughly from 1450 to 1650, during which scholars, heavily influenced by the enlightened ethic of Humanism, sought to acquire, preserve and learn from the most progressive elements of Classical and Medieval thought. These scholars sought to go "ad fontes", or 'to the original source' of the knowledge, or as close to it as possible. As is the case with the antecedent of the present map, most of these sources existed only in manuscript form, available in a single or with very few examples. The great achievement of this period was to preserve and liberate this knowledge through the printing press. The portolan tradition

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was perhaps the most technically advanced element of of Medieval geography, and early modern scholars held it in high esteem. It was thus of great importance that the Sanudo/Vesconte World map was here for the first time printed, so that it could be disseminated to a wider audience. While the present printed edition of the map is uncommon, it is nevertheless responsible for creating and maintaining the scholarly awareness of this important map throughout Europe and beyond.

As noted in the *History of Cartography*, Volume 1, the Sanudo/Vesconte map was one of the most important maps of former times reclaimed for an Early Modern audience:

> *During the European Renaissance . . . it is possible to trace an increasingly systematic attention to the maps of preceding centuries. The extent to which this represented a genuine historical feeling for maps as independent documents should not be exaggerated, especially in view of the general surge of interest in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in classical geographical authors and the fact that maps from the classical sources were valued as useful contemporary tools as well as vaunted as monuments of antiquity. . . . historical maps were also reproduced, continuing a medieval tradition of manuscript copying in the Renaissance, but it was printed facsimiles of such maps that did the most to stimulate their study and widen an appreciation of the cartography of earlier centuries. Notable examples, engraved from medieval manuscript sources, were the Peutinger map . . .* ***Marino Sanudo's medieval tract Liber secretorum fidelium crucial*** *. . . and . . . Richard' Gough's maps of medieval Britain, [along with Ptolemy's maps].*

Pietro Vesconte (fl. 1310-1330) was a Genoese cartographer and one of the earliest creators of portolan charts. He operated primarily out of Venice, and greatly influenced Italian and Catalan mapmaking throughout the 14th and 15th Centuries. He is widely regarded as having been the first professional mapmaker to habitually sign and date his works. Vesconte's portolan of the Eastern Mediterranean (1311), is the oldest known signed and dated map.

As evident on the present map, Vesconte was the first mapmaker to accurately maps the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and his depiction of Great Britain was a marked improvement over his predecessors. At least four of his multi-chart atlases survive, dating from 1313 to 1321.

Marino Sanudo (Sanudo the Elder of Torcello, c. 1260-1338) was a Venetian stateman and geographer. He is best known for his lifelong attempts to revive the crusading spirit and movement. He wrote his great work, the *Secreta* or *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*, also called *Historia Hierosolymitana, Liber de expeditione Terrae Sanctae, and Opus Terrae Sanc*tae, the last being perhaps the proper title of the whole

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treatise as completed in three parts or "books".

Sanudo's work discussed medieval trade and trade-routes as well as political and other history. In the work, he includes maps and plans which are of great importance in the development of cartography. Begun in March 1306, and finished (in its earliest form) in January 1307, the book was offered to Pope Clement V as a manual for true Crusaders who desired the reconquest of the Holy Land. To this original *Liber Secretorum Sanudo* added significantly. Two other "books" were composed between December 1312 and September 1321, when the entire work was presented by the author to Pope John XXII, together with a map of the world, a map of Palestine, a chart of the Mediterranean, Black Sea and west European coasts, and plans of Jerusalem, Antioch and Acre. A copy was also offered to the King of France, to whom Sanudo desired to commit the military and political leadership of the new crusade.

The maps and plans which illustrate Sanudo's works are probably the work of the great portolan chart draughtsman Pietro Vesconte. Sanudo was certainly directly acquainted with Vesconte, and it is likely that his maps were faithful to Vesconte's originals. Although Vesconte's original world map does not survive, Sanudo's version of the the world map corresponds almost perfectly with other maps by Vesconte.

Twenty-three surviving examples of Sanudo's manuscript work are known to exist, all of which date from the 14th Century.

A link to an example of the original map can be found here:
upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/26/Sanudo_1321_World.jpg

The present map is a fascinating artifact linking the best knowledge of the Medieval era to the Early Modern Intellectual world.

Detailed Condition: