



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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[Holy Land]

Stock#: 82981
Map Maker: Bongars / Vesconte
Date: 1611
Place: Hanau
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 15 x 6.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Colored example of the earliest printing of Pietro Vesconte's celebrated circa 1320 map of the Holy Land.

Johann Bongars's rare map is the first true, or unedited printing of the Vesconte map of the Holy Land (circa 1320), one of the most important and influential maps of the region ever produced. It depicts the Holy Land with an orientation with the east facing upwards (taken from the Medieval European Christian tradition of praying while facing eastwards, towards Jerusalem).

Bongars map retains the grid shown on Vesconte's antecedent manuscript map, which was employed to draft the map. While by no means precise, the map maintains a basic planimetric accuracy which allows it to be understood by the modern viewer, and is a considerable improvement over the Ptolemaic perspective. The coast of the Holy Land is shown to run roughly flat along the Mediterranean Sea, and features several familiar names, including Gaza, 'Ascalona' (Ashkelon), 'Cesarea' (Ceasarea), 'Acon' (Acre or Akko), 'Tyr' (Tyre, Lebanon) and 'Sydon' (Sidon, Lebanon). Inland is 'Ierlm' (Jerusalem, denoted by the sign of a castle), 'Beetlem' (Bethlehem), 'Ebron' (Hebron), 'Nazaret' (Nazareth) and Damascus, amongst others. The land is divided into the territories of the 12 Ancient Tribes of Israel and the landscape is adorned with many lengthy inscriptions discussing important locations and events from the bible, including an entertaining passage where Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. It also shows the Sea of Galilee, with the River Jordan running into the Dead Sea, although it incorrectly shows a water connection between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean.

Pietro Vesconte's map of the Holy Land, in its earliest form, survives in a circa 1320 manuscript work by Marino Sanudo, which is reproduced, unedited for the first time in print, in Johann Bongars' *Orientalium expeditionum historia. Gesta Dei per Francos, sive Orientalium expeditionum, et regni Francorum Hierosolimitani historia* (Hanau, 1611). The Vesconte map is the single most important map of the Holy



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Land of the Late Medieval and Early Modern eras. The Vesconte-Sanudo map formed the basis for all of the early "tabulae moderna" ('new maps', meaning Post-Ptolemaic) of the Holy Land made during the first decades of printing. Around 1480, the cartographer Nicolaus Germanus created a map of the Holy Land which was based on the Vesconte map, but which contained notable revisions. Germanus's map was published in both Francesco Berlinghieri's edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia* (Rome, 1482) and Lienhart Holle's edition of Ptolemy (Ulm, 1482). Germanus's work was reissued on many subsequent occasions, including by Martin Waldseemüller in 1513. Importantly however, Bongars's edition was the first true, or unedited, publication of the Vesconte Holy Land map.

Johann Bongars created this finely executed printed version of the Vesconte map 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. So while Nicolaus Germanus had issued an altered version of the Vesconte-Sanudo map, Bongars felt that it was important that the map be duplicated as it was originally conceived, and which had hitherto remained available in only a handful of manuscript examples, to be printed and disseminated to a wider audience.

As noted in the *History of Cartography*, Volume 1, the Sanudo/Vesconte maps 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



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mapmaker to habitually sign and date his works. Vesconte's portolan of the Eastern Mediterranean (1311), is the oldest known signed and dated map.

Vesconte created a groundbreaking 'Portulano', or World Map, which contained many geographically progressive elements. He was also the first mapmaker to accurately map the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and (relatively) the Holy Land 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 statesman 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 Sanctae*, the last being perhaps the proper title of the whole 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 Sanuto* 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 the Holy Land, 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. Naturally the maps of the Holy Land and the Eastern Mediterranean assumed special significance, and it had even been suggested that their unprecedented accuracy ensured that they would have been considered to be vital practical military aids should any Crusade be undertaken. A very fine example of Vesconte's map, drafted by Sanudo, and which features the same details as the present map can be found at the British Library in a circa 1320 Sanudo atlas (British Library, Shelfmark: Ms. Add. 27376, ff. 188v - 189).

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 world map corresponds almost perfectly with other maps by Vesconte.

Johann (or Jacques) Bongars (1554-1612) was a French scholar and diplomat. He was born in Orléans and educated at the universities of Jena, Marburg, Orléans, and Bourges. He served Henry IV of France on diplomatic missions in Eastern Europe between 1593 and 1610. Bongars was an avid bibliophile and amassed a library of over 3,000 books and 500 manuscripts. His most significant work was the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, published shortly before his death.



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The present map is highly important as the earliest obtainable impression of the Vesconte map, the most important map of the Holy Land of the early modern era. It is a critical element of any serious Holy Land cartography collection. The map is rare and seldom appears on the market.

Detailed Condition:

Early color, possibly 17th Century. Minor staining.