



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

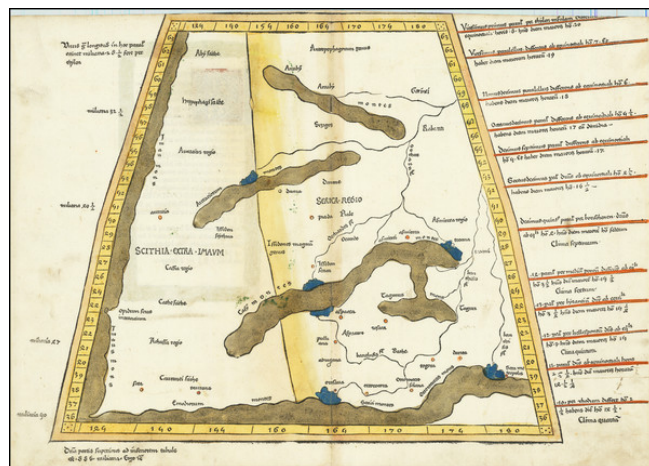
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(Silk Route Region / Western China) [Octava Asiae Tabula]

Stock#: 84174
Map Maker: Ptolemy / Holle
Date: 1482
Place: Ulm
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 22 x 15 inches
Price: \$ 3,200.00



Description:

Ptolemy's Map of Central Asia, from the Important Ulm Ptolemy (1482)

Striking Ptolemaic map of Central Asia, Tartary, and Western China, from the 1482 Ulm edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia*.

The map covers Central Asia between latitudes 36 and 63 degrees north, which includes most of Western China and much of the Silk Road, an ancient trade route that linked Rome and China.

The map is from the rare 1482 Ulm edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia*, the first atlas printed north of the Alps and the first to contain illustrated woodcut maps. It contains the traditional 27 Ptolemaic maps, of which this example is one, and five additional modern maps: Italy, Spain, France, Scandinavia, and the Holy Land. The Ulm Ptolemy was innovative as it was intended to be colored, with instructions from the publisher as to how to embellish the woodcut print.

The map highlights the mountainous nature of the area, with mountain ranges ringing two sides of the trapezoidal projection. There are rivers and lakes to the east, which is where the majority of settlements also lie.

To the west is Scythia, an empire from classical antiquity. Run by the Eastern Iranian Scythians, it stretched from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. Scythia was also the name Greeks gave to any land northeast of Europe and the north coast of the Black Sea.

In the right margin are notes about the climates. Greek thinkers hypothesized that there were seven



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distinct climates in the *oikumene*, or known world; these climates were grouped by similar weather and the length of the longest days at the solstice. At left are notes about distance measures.

Ptolemy in Europe in the fifteenth century

The fifteenth century is an important one for the history of cartography for two main reasons. The first is the re-discovery of Ptolemy's work by Europeans. The second, which roughly coincides with the re-encounter of Ptolemy, is the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in ca. 1440.

Ptolemy's ideas had been absent from western European intellectual history for roughly a thousand years, although Arab scholars interacted with his ideas from the ninth century onward. In 1295, a Greek monk found a copy of Ptolemy in Constantinople; the emperor ordered a copy made and the Greek text began to circulate in eastern Europe. In 1393, a Byzantine diplomat brought a copy of the *Geographia* to Italy, where it was translated into Latin in 1406 and called the *Cosmographia*. The manuscript maps were first recorded in 1415. These manuscripts, of which there are over eighty extant today, are the descendants of Ptolemy's work and a now-lost atlas consisting of a world map and 26 regional maps.

When Ptolemy's work was re-introduced to Western scholarship, it proved radically influential for the understanding and appearance of maps. Ptolemy employs the concept of a graticule, uses latitude and longitude, and orients his maps to the north—concepts we take for granted today. The *Geographia's* text is concerned with three main issues with regard to geography: the size and shape of the earth; map projection, i.e. how to represent the world's curve proportionally on a plane surface; and the corruption of spatial data as it transfers from source to source. The text also contains instructions as to how to map the world on a globe or a plane surface, complete with the only set of geographic coordinates (8000 toponyms, 6400 with coordinates) to survive from the classical world.

Early printed editions of Ptolemy's *Geographia*

Some of the most important, and the most numerous, early printed maps were in editions of Ptolemy's *Geographia* (*Cosmographia*); indeed, 31 editions of the work with the maps were printed before 1600. Some of the most important, and rarest, of these editions, including the Ulm Ptolemy from which this map originated, were the earliest editions of the work ever printed.

The text was first published in 1475 in Venice without the maps. An edition with the maps followed in 1477, printed in Bologna. These maps were another first—they were the first copperplate maps, in which an engraver scores copper, which is then inked and pressed. The Bologna edition included 25 of the original 26 regional maps (map XV was missing), as well as the world map.



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A second edition with maps appeared in Rome in 1478. The third edition with maps was printed in Florence in 1482, the first to be printed in a vernacular language, Italian. It included 31 copperplate engraved maps, making it the first to augment the traditional 27 Ptolemaic maps with *tabulae novellae*, or modern maps. The modern maps included maps of Italy, Spain, and France.

The next edition to include the maps was the one from which this map originated, the 1482 Ulm edition. As stated above, this was the first atlas to be printed north of the Alps, as well as the first to use woodcut, not copperplate, printing. Copperplate engraving is an intaglio method; it cuts into the surface of the printing plane in order to create an impression when the engraved lines are inked. Woodcut engraving is a relief method; the surfaces to be inked are left standing, while the blank spaces are cut away.

The Ulm edition is based on a manuscript original by Dominus Nicolaus Germanus, a German Benedictine monk who created the tome in the early 1470s. The manuscript is held in Wurtemberg. Other of Germanus' Ptolemaic manuscripts, of which there are five, most likely also served as the templates for the Bologna 1477 and the Rome 1478.

The Ulm is also important for its world map is the earliest printed map to be signed by its maker, Johannes Schnitzer. The publication was the first project of Lienhart Holle, who had previously worked as a woodcut engraver. He wanted the work to be grand. A new type was cut for the atlas, Johannes of Armsheim cuts the block, and Holle oversaw the coloring of deluxe examples of the print run. However, the expense involved in producing the book was a bit too grand; Holle went bankrupt after printing just one other book and his stock was taken over by Johann Reger, who re-issued the atlas in 1486.

States

The states of the map can be identified by the text on the verso. Two states exist of the 1482: a first with a lily-shaped border and a second with an overlain leaf-shaped border. The 1482 lacks any border.

This map is the second state of the 1482 Ulm map.

Detailed Condition:

Original hand-color. Trimmed at the top, with some browning at centerfold.