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LOS 77
PTOLEMAEUS, CLAUDIUS
COSMOGRAPHIA (TRANSLATED BY JACOBUS ANGELUS; EDITED BY NICOLAUS GERMANUS). ULM: LIENHART HOLLE, 16 JULY 1482
First Ulm edition, super-Royal folio (410 x 292 mm.), 133 leaves, type 1 : 140R, with woodcut historiated and Maiblumen initials, ornamental woodcut borderpieces, woodcut diagrams in text and 32 woodcut maps (all but the last double-page), rubricated and coloured throughout by a contemporary hand, seventeenth-century Italian gold-tooled vellum, with small-tooled supralibros of Cardinal Altieri, the future Pope Clement X (see provenance), a few early annotations, the first page with marginal finger stains and two marginal tears, inner margin repaired, other scattered light stains, the indigo of the maps rubbed in places, and dark-stained in others, nine of the maps with shaved marginal captions, and long closed tear in the fourth Africa map, new endpapers and some restoration to binding

SCHÄTZUNG 600,000-800,000 GBP

PROVENANCE
A fine copy with an important papal provenance.

The 1482 edition of Ptolemy’s Geography, printed at Ulm, is the most sought-after of all the Ptolemaic atlases. It is the first atlas printed outside Italy, and the first printed atlas to include a corpus of “modern” maps.

All fifteenth-century printed editions of Ptolemy were based on the work of Nicolaus Germanus (c.1420–c.1490), a Benedictine monk from the diocese of Breslau, who prepared a series of magnificent vellum manuscript atlases in Florence in the 1460s and 1470s for presentation to various Italian dignitaries.

Two Ptolemy editions preceding Holl’s, Bologna 1477 and Rome 1478, used copperplate engravings reproducing only the twenty-seven traditional maps based on Ptolemy’s second-century AD descriptions. The Ulm edition incorporated for the first time the five modern maps by Nicolaus Germanus – Spain, Italy, France, Palestine, and Scandinavia (including Iceland and Greenland).

The direct model for the Ulm edition was the manuscript atlas that Nicolaus Germanus made for presentation to Pope Paul II (d. 1471), which seems to have been carried from Rome to Ulm for the purpose, and then never returned. It is preserved at Schloss Wolfegg.

The 1482 Ulm Ptolemy was one of the finest and most ambitious printing projects of the fifteenth century: its colours are stunning, especially the rich blue of the seas and oceans, made using lapis lazuli, one of the most expensive pigments of the middle ages, and reserved only for the most important paintings and works of art; its highly distinctive, elegant roman type was the largest Antiqua font to be cut in the fifteenth century, and served as the source for the second type of the Ashendene Press. The world map was signed at its head as the work of Johannes Schnitzer de Armsheim, who may have cut all the maps, and the colophon specifically credits the contribution of Donnus Nicolaus (”Opus donni Nicolai Germani secundum Ptolomeum finit”).

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