LOT 60

PTOLEMAEUS, CLAUDIUS

COSMOGRAPHIA (TRANSLATED BY JACOBUS ANGELUS; EDITED BY NICOLAUS GERMANUS). ULM: LIENHART HOLLE, 16 JULY 1482

FIRST ULM EDITION, Royal folio (415 x 290mm.), 133 leaves, double column, 44 lines, 32 woodcut maps (all but one double-page), final bifolium (containing map of Taprobana and colophon) supplied, contemporary hand colour, 4 woodcut diagrams in the text, 13-line historiated woodcut initial depicting Donnus Nicolaus Germanus presenting his book to Pope Paul II, 8-line historiated woodcut initial depicting Ptolemy, 142 6-line woodcut initials coloured in red, green and ochre, 3-line initial supplied in red ink, sub-headings highlighted in ochre, paragraph-marks and initial-strokes supplied in red, text ruled in red, later sixteenth-century annotations in ink, later sixteenth-century vellum boards, light waterstaining at upper corners, gutter of text and outside edges of maps, some maps with abrasion at fold or offsetting (due to old waterstaining), small hole at upper edge of first leaf, world map with old repairs to lower edge, shaved at 3 edges, map 3 (Secunda Europe tabula) strengthened at edge, map 15 (Decima Europe) with tear, last 2 maps loose, text with some worming in gutter, hinges weak, binding somewhat worn

ESTIMATE 350,000-400,000 GBP

Lot Sold: 506,500 GBP
CATALOGUE NOTE

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 Ptolemaic 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 Holle’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.

With its rich colours and its distinctive elegant roman type, the 1482 Ulm Ptolemy was one of the finest and most ambitious printing projects of the fifteenth century: a masterpiece of the printers’ art, with its bold, decorative maps.

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”).

The annotations are in three different hands, two of which are later sixteenth-century elegant italic hands. Notes at the end of the text before the maps refer to discoveries in the New World, and some of the maps have later place names added, such as Ungaria and Transylvania, Suebia and Bavaria. The notes alongside the listing of place names concentrate on Britain, Ireland and the Iberian peninsula, and mostly provide the vernacular equivalents of Latin names or provide additional places. On the map Quinta Europae, cathedrals and churches have been drawn above the names of the major cities in Italy.