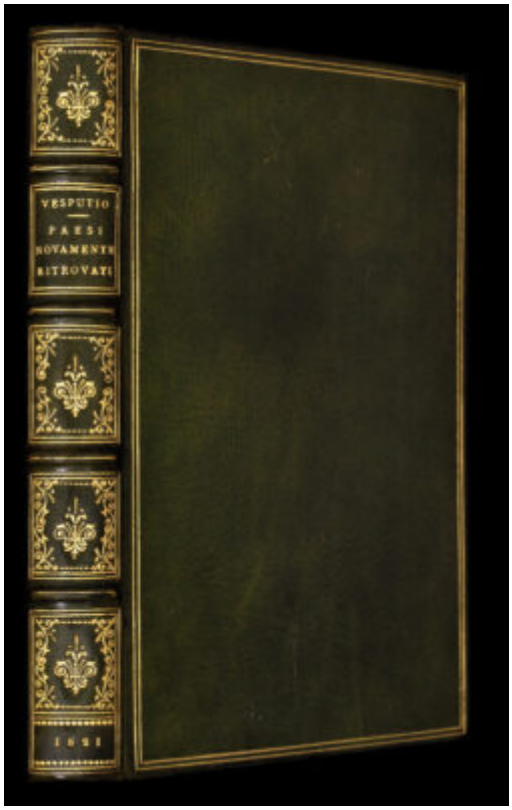

Octavo (150 by 100mm). Title-page with woodcut bird’s-eye view of Venice, woodcut diagrams in the text, woodcut initials; twentieth century full green crushed morocco, gilt, all edges gilt.

Collation: 124 leaves; A4, b-q8

WITH AN EARLY BIRD’S-EYE VIEW OF VENICE

Paesi nouamente ritrovati per la Navigatione di Spagna in Calicut Et da Albertutio Vesputio Fiorentino Intitulato Mondo Nouo. Nouamente Impresso

Author
MONTALBODDO, Antonio Fracanzano da

Publication date
1521.

Publisher
per Zorzo de Rusconi Millanese. Nel.M.D.XXI.adi.xy.de Febraro,

Publication place
Stampata in Venetia,

Physical description
Octavo (150 by 100mm). Title-page with woodcut bird’s-eye view of Venice, woodcut diagrams in the text, woodcut initials; twentieth century full green crushed morocco, gilt, all edges gilt.

Collation: 124 leaves; A4, b-q8

Dimensions
150 by 100mm. (6 by 4 inches).

Notes

The earliest surviving printed collection of narratives about the voyages to America is a little booklet of sixteen folios, published by Albertino Vercellese da Lisona at Venice in 1504, with the title: 'Libretto de tutta la navigatione de re de Sfagna de le isole et terreni novamente ritrovati', known in only two examples, at the Marciana Library in Venice and the John Carter Brown Library in Rhode Island.

The 'Libretto…' was then included by Antonio Montalboddo, along with additional accounts of Portuguese voyages to Africa and India, in his 'Paesi novamente retrovati…'. Almost immediately, that work was translated into Latin, by the Milanese monk Arcangelo Madrignano, after which it quickly became "the most important vehicle for the dissemination throughout Renaissance Europe of the news of the great discoveries both in the east and the west" (PMM).

The current version of the 'Paeis', in Italian, was first printed in Venice by Giorgio Rusconi (1500-1521) in 1517, with the first appearance of the bird's-eye view of Venice on the title-page, which would be reprinted several times over the next, more than, one hundred years in editions of Niccolò da Poggibonsi's, 'Viaggio da Venetia', first published in Venice by Rusconi's frequent collaborator, Niccolo Zoppino from 1518.

The work includes accounts of the voyages of: the 1456 voyages of Alvise de Cadamosto in Ethiopia and along the West African coast; Pedro de Sintra's expedition along the west coast of Africa as far as Sierra Leone in 1462; Vasco da Gama's epochal voyage to Africa and India (1497-99), which "opened the way for the maritime invasion of the east by Europe" (PMM), supplied by letters from Venetian spies in Portugal; and Pedro Alvares Cabral's discovery of the Brazilian, Guianaian and Venezuelan coasts in 1500, and of the voyage on to India; an account of Columbus's first three voyages (1492-1500), undoubtedly based on Peter Martyr's 'Libretto de tutta la navigatione de Re de Spagna de le isole et terreni novamente trovati'; as well as narratives of the expeditions of Alonso Niño and Vicente Yañez Pinzon along the northern coast of South America; Vespucci's letter to Lorenzo de' Medici describing his third voyage in 1501-1502; and a compilation of information derived from several sources concerning the Portuguese discoveries in Brazil and the East.

Montalboddo's collected voyages, called by Henry Harrisse "the most important collection of voyages", and asserted by Boies Penrose that "for news value as regards both the Orient and America, no other book printed in the sixteenth century could hold a candle to it", was the forerunner of the later compilations of Grynaeus and Huttich, Ramusio, Eden, Hakluyt, the De Brys, and Hulsius, "an auspicious beginning to the fascinating literature of the great age of discovery" (Lilly Library online).

The printer

Giorgio Rusconi, self-professed Milanese, was a profuse printer of more than 200 works, in Venice from 1500–1522. Between 1515 and 1518, he collaborated with Niccolo Zoppino, who published the 'Viaggio da Venetia' (from 1518), which reprints the woodcut image of Venice on the title-page of this edition of Montalboddo (from 1517).

Rusconi "seems to have begun his Venetian career in the workshop of Manfredo Bonelli, who had been printing since 1491. The names of the two men appear together in four editions of the year 1500, while Rusconi alone signs two editions in the same year. It is probable that Bonelli taught Rusconi the art of printing" (Gasperoni). After his death the business was continued by his sons Giovanni Francesco and Giovanni Antonio, and his widow Elisabetta.

Bibliography

Borba de Moraes II, 70; Church 41; Essling 1954; Fumagalli & Amat di S. Filippo 1003; Gasparoni,

‘Gli annali di Giorgio Rusconi (1500–1522’, 2009; Harrisse 90 and Add. 52; JCB I, 68; Penrose 277; Sander 4875; Sabin 50053.

Provenance

Provenance: 1. With the “Duplicate released” ink library stamp of the Lilly Library, Indiana University; 2. With Arthur Lauria, Paris, November 1967, sold to; Gregory S. Javitch (1898-1980), of Montreal, renowned bibliophile with an important collection of very fine books relating to Native Americans; his collection Jesuit Relations is housed at the University of Alberta. A Russian-born, Canadian leader in the land reclamation sector in Ontario, Javitch formed an important collection of 2500 items that he called “Peoples of the New World”, encompassing both North and South America, which was acquired by the Bruce Peel Special Collections at the University of Alberta. It was considered the finest such private collection in Canada at the time and formed the cornerstone of the library’s special collections. The present volume remained in Javitch’s private collection.

Price: £80000

Inventory reference: 21933

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