



Folio (276 by 195mm). Letterpress title-page with large woodcut map, vignette star charts and initials; contemporary panelled blind-stamped vellum over boards, decorated in blind, gilt lettering-piece on the spine, remains of two pairs of clasps and catches.

Collation: A8, aa2 (index), B-C8, D6, E-F8, G6, L-M8, N6; leaves 98: foliation [10], LXXVIII (leaf XIX misfoliated XVII, leaf XLVII misfoliated XLVI, leaf LII misfoliated LI, leaves LX and LXI unfoliated, leaf LXXXIII misfoliated LXXIII).

THE HENRY HUTH - JAMES C. MCCOY COPY OF THE FIRST PRINTED COLLECTION OF VOYAGES; THE EARLIEST MENTION OF THE 'ARABIAN' GULF; AND, "AFTER COLUMBUS'S LETTER, THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE EARLY HISTORY OF AMERICAN DISCOVERY"

Itinerarium Portugallensium e Lusitania in Indiam & inde in occidentem & demum ad aquilonem.

Author

MONTALBODDO, Antonio Fracanzano da; translated into Latin by Archangelo MADRIGNANO

Publication date

1508.

Publisher

Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler],

Publication place

[Milan,

Physical description

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Dimensions

Notes

A magnificent example, with a superb provenance, of the extremely rare first edition in Latin of the first printed collection of voyages, written by Fracanzano da Montalboddo, and considered “after Columbus’s letter the most important contribution to the early history of American discovery” (Sabin).

The work was first printed in Italian in 1507 under the title ‘Paesi novamente ritrovati’, and it was translated into Latin the following year 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).

With the woodcut map, which appears for the first time in this Latin edition, is the first large map of Africa, the first known map in which that continent is depicted as surrounded by the ocean, as well as the earliest “modern” printed map to show Mecca. This is the second issue, distinguished by naming The Gulf as ‘Sinus Arabicus’, as opposed to ‘Persicus’.

Also with the rare two-leaf index, which is of crucial importance to the ‘Itinerarium Portugallensium’ as it gives an outline of the subsequent contents, identifying individual voyages and discoveries, whereas the text of the book runs continuously from section to section without distinguishing where a new one begins. These leaves were apparently printed after the publication of the work, and so inserted into the few available copies after the fact, and are therefore almost invariably missing.

The work, which contains six nominal sections, commences with the 1456 voyages of Alvise de Cadamosto in Ethiopia and along the West African coast, which appeared for the first time in this work. Cadamosto traveled to Senegal, Gambia, and the Cape Verde Islands in 1455 and 1456. This is followed by accounts of: 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. The third section is a continuation of the Cabral narrative of the voyage on to India. The fourth is 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. The fifth is Vespucci’s letter to Lorenzo de’ Medici describing his third voyage in 1501-1502. The sixth is 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 Grynæus and Huttich, Ramusio, Eden, Hakluyt, the De Brys, and Hulsius, “an auspicious beginning to the fascinating literature of the great age of discovery”

(Lily Library online).

Provenance:

From the distinguished libraries of two titans of the book collecting world:

Henry Huth (1815-1878)

From an exceedingly wealthy family, Huth shunned a career in the Indian Civil Service, and instead joined the family banking firm. His "interest in old books went back to his schooldays, and he was said to have been fired with enthusiasm by seeing "a curious old book" in Baldock's Holborn bookshop. In Mexico in 1840 he acquired a number of rare Spanish books and a Chinese Bible from a man who stopped him in the street, but it was in the later 1840s that he began collecting in London with his brother Louis (d. 1905) from whom he bought a copy of the 1512 Burgos edition of the 'Cronica del Cid'. Louis later became a well-known collector of oriental porcelain. In 1852 Huth met the bookseller Joseph Lilly, who exercised a good deal of influence on his purchases over the years and was generally his agent, but Huth bought throughout the trade and made it his practice on his way from the City to his home at 30 Princes Gate, London to stop at a number of leading booksellers. Books of American interest he acquired from Henry Stevens of Vermont. Several of his grandest purchases were through Bernard Quaritch, including, in 1874, a copy of the 42-line Bible of Johann Gutenberg (Mainz, c.1455) which had been bought at the sale of the Perkins library from Hanworth Park in 1873. From Quaritch also, and from the same sale, he obtained the magnificent 1462 Fust and Schoeffer Bible on vellum... In the late 1860s Huth conceived the idea of a catalogue of his collection, a work he began himself, but which from 1871 was worked on by Hazlitt and F. S. Ellis, though Huth himself read the proofs. The work lasted some years, eliciting adverse remarks from Huth about its cost, and he did not live to see its completion in five volumes in 1880. Huth was found dead on 11 December 1878, having had a stroke on the stairs of his house at 30 Princes Gate, and fallen backwards, fracturing his skull. His wife and family were away for the weekend and he was believed to have died the previous day. His son Alfred took over the care of the collection, which was finally sold by Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge between 1911 and 1920, raising over £350,000. Before the sale the British Museum was allowed to select fifty volumes. Of the remaining books many found their way into the British Museum's library and other institutional libraries, especially in the United States" (Quarrie).

James Comly McCoy (1862-1934)

Once described erroneously by F.D. Cooper, in a review, as "a rich American living in Paris", he in fact lived for much of his life in Graesse. However, McCoy was rich enough to acquire a considerable and important library of books related to the Jesuits in North America, about which he, and others, wrote: 'Canadiana and French Americana in the library of J.C. McCoy: a hand-list of printed books from 1508 to 1928' (1931); 'Jesuit Relations of Canada, 1632-1673. A Bibliography' (1937).

Bibliography

Alden and Landis, 508/4; Borba de Moraes, I:580; Brunet, III:474; Church, 27; Cooper, 'The Library', 4th series, iii, (1922-23), page 53-54; Fumagalli, 985; HARRISSE [Discovery], 58; Hattendorf, 111; Németh, 175-198; Quarrie for ODNB online; Sabin, 50058; Streeter, 3.

Provenance

Provenance: 1. Early ink library stamp of 'Bibliothecte Monasterii' on the map; 2. Henry Huth (1815-1878), collector of Americana, his sale Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, The Fiftieth Day, 11th July, 1919, lot 7731, morocco, gilt library label on the inside front cover; 3. James Comly McCoy (1862-1934), collector of Canadiana and French Americana, morocco, gilt library label on the inside front cover; 4. with Sotheby's 10th November, 1959.

Price: £550000

Inventory reference: 24455

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