

Quarto (215 x 150 mm). Letterpress title-page, woodcut map and three illustrations, floriated initials abundantly throughout; later grey paper boards, title printed on spine, bottom margins untrimmed, later endpapers, small tears in final two leaves skilfully restored, very small loss to text in upper left corner of D4.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF CARTOGRAPHY

Erklerung des newen instruments der Sunnen Nach allen seinen Scheyben und Circkeln.

Author
MÜNSTER, Sebastian

Publication date
1528.

Publisher
Jakob Kobel,

Publication place
Oppenheim,

Physical description
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Dimensions
215 by 150mm. (8.5 by 6 inches).

Notes
An era-defining landmark in cartographic ambition.

Previously, cartography had been a patchwork affair. Whether through collaboration or plagiarism, multiple sources, measurements, and methods were used to create maps. Münster's 'Instrument of the Suns' changed the game. He called on leading cartographers – including Apianus, Tansterrer, and Glareanus – to submit maps of their duchies created using a standardized method. From Austria to Switzerland, Bavaria to Franconia, Münster's ambition was to create the first accurate map of the German Empire.

The pamphlet opens with a practical guide to fashioning an 'instrument of the sun'. This was intended for the surveying of topographical and horological data needed to create an accurate map. The bulk of the text describes its construction and use, and is illustrated with a woodcut of the semi-circular tool. The project is concluded with a near-full-page map of Heidelberg, surveyed by Münster himself to instantiate his method.

Having thus demonstrated the principles of scientific map-making, Münster employs energetic rhetoric to plead for co-operation in producing what would be the first accurate cartographic depiction of the German-speaking lands.

"Please, O dear Germans, help us to raise this common German fatherland to a just and honourable end. To bring its hidden ornamentation to light, so that you and I will gain eternal praise and memory among our descendants". Driving home the nationalist fervour, Münster promises "The strong German nation will not let you down in any way".

Several cartographers rose to the challenge, and the fruits of this labour culminated in Münster's 1544 Cosmographia – the most widely-read general atlas of the sixteenth century. It drew on 120 reports submitted to Münster, using the method detailed in the present pamphlet. Such systematic co-operation constitutes a landmark in the history of cartography – Münster had stamped scientific rigour into the map-making world.

Rare. This edition is not held in any institution outside of Europe; later editions are owned by Harvard (1529) and Minnesota (1534).

Bibliography
Burmeister Münster, 31; Karrow 58/BI; Woodward, The History of Cartography, p1211

Provenance

Price: £18000

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