



Early map based on the Zeno chart of the North Atlantic

RUSCELLI, Girolamo.
 Septentrionalium Partium Nova Tabula.

Venice, Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1561, First Latin edition. 200 x 260mm.

£550

Ruscelli's version of the Zeno map of the North Atlantic, one of the most successful cartographic hoaxes. In 1558 the Venetian Nicolo Zeno (1515-65) published what was supposed to be the account of a voyage by his ancestors, Nicolo and Antonio Zeno, across the North Atlantic in 1380. It tells of their visits to the islands of 'Frisland' & 'Icaria' and the coast of Greenland, reaching 'Estotiland' and 'Drovia'. These two places appear on the borders of the map, suggesting that they part of America, probably Labrador and Newfoundland. Knowledge of these places would mean that it was a Venetian, not the Genovese Columbus, who had first discovered America. The publication of the book, 'De I Commentarii del Viaggio', was a sensation, and Ruscelli published this version only three years later, the only correction being the removal of the land bridge from Scandinavia to Greenland. Other cartographers who published details from Zeno include Mercator, Ortelius, Blaeu & Speed, with Frisland appearing on maps as late as the 1657 world map by Nicolaas Visscher. However in 1898 F.W. Lucas pinpointed the real sources of the map, Claudius Clavus and Olaus Magnus, and called it 'one of the most ingenious, most successful, and most enduring impostures which has ever gullied a confiding public'. Published in Ruscelli's 'La Geographi di Claudio Tolomeo', first state. A feature of this state is that no map has



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a platemark at top: two maps were engraved on the same plate and the resulting sheet halved.

BURDEN: 29; GINSBURG: Scandinavia 26; LUCAS: 'Annals of the Voyages of the Brothers Nicolo and Antonio Zeno'.

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