



EDUCATION KIT

Ptolemy's *Geography* and Renaissance Mapmakers

A Newberry Library Exhibition Nov. 3, 2007—Feb. 16, 2008

PTOLEMY TRANSPARENCY #3

“*Secunda Europe tabula*” (Second Ptolemaic Map of Europe/Europe 2)

Ptolemy, Claudius. *Geographia*. Rome: Arnold Buckinck, 1478.

Newberry Library (Gift of Edward E. Ayer): Ayer *6 P9 1478

EXHIBIT TEXT:

This edition of the *Geography*, first published in Rome in 1478, was quite successful: three subsequent editions of it appeared in 1490, 1507, and 1508. One reason for its success may have been the superior quality of its map plates; the lettering was applied to the copperplates with punches, rather than being engraved.

Ptolemaic maps of regions that were part of the Roman Empire routinely indicated the names and extent of Roman provinces, such as “Hispania Lusitania” (modern Portugal). Clearly, this information did not correspond with fifteenth-century political geography, and many Florentine manuscript copies of the *Geography* added new maps (*tablulae modernae* or *tabulae novellae*) that incorporated new political and geographical information.

TEACHER NOTES:

- This is a Ptolemaic regional map that covers the Iberian peninsula (present day Spain and Portugal).
- This map was made in 1478 using the coordinates found in Ptolemy's tables from approximately 2 BCE.
- While having some errors, overall the appearance of the Iberian Peninsula on this map is not much different from its actual shape.
- The trapezoidal shape of the map is intended to help convey the round shape of the earth. The map widens at the bottom (its southern edge) because the distance between meridians of longitude is greater at the equator than it is at the poles.
- Some important translations [NOTE: this map is printed in Latin]:
 - Barcino = Barcelona
 - Fretum Herculeum = Strait of Hercules (present day Strait of Gibraltar; in ancient times, the promontories that flank the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar were named the Pillars of Hercules)
 - Maior = Majorca
 - Mare Ibericum = Iberian Sea

DISCUSSION PROMPTS/SUGGESTED CLASS ACTIVITIES:

- Identify as many places as possible through *relative location*, shape, symbol, or written identifications.
- Identify beliefs or geographic understandings of the time that have since been modified or changed.
- Identify *absolute locations* using the parallels of latitude and meridians of longitude displayed on the map.
- How has the use of latitudinal coordinates helped standardize *wayfinding*?