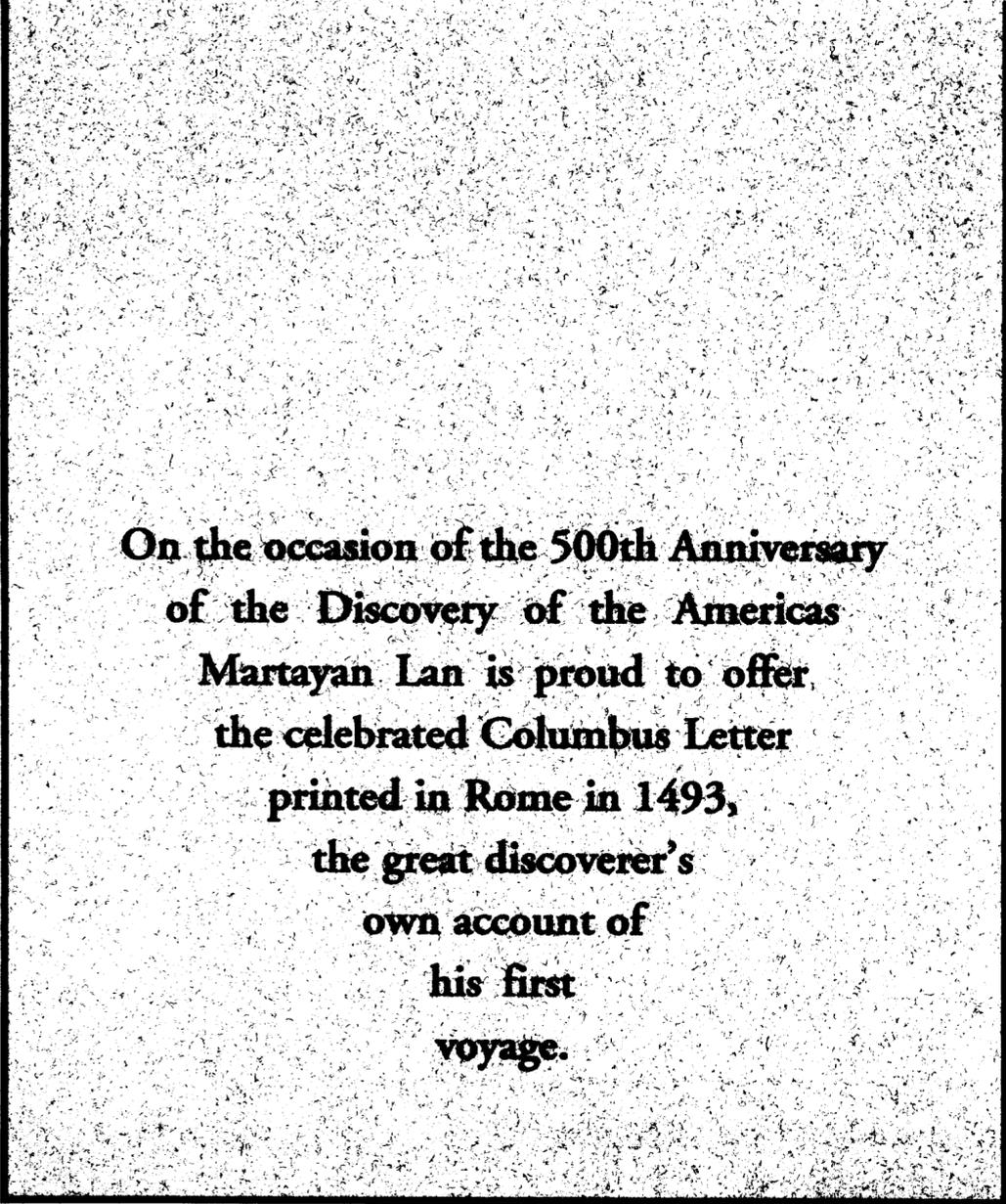


II Epistola Christofori Colom:



**On the occasion of the 500th Anniversary
of the Discovery of the Americas
Martayan Lan is proud to offer
the celebrated Columbus Letter
printed in Rome in 1493,
the great discoverer's
own account of
his first
voyage.**

The Celebrated Columbus Letter
The First Printed Document Relative to America

COLUMBUS, Christopher. Epistola Christofori Colom: cui etas nostra multu[m] debet: de Insulis Indie supra Gangem nuper inve[n]tis . . . in latinum co[n]vertit tertio kal's Maii M.cccc.xciii . . . [Rome, Stephan Plannck, after 29 April 1493]. Small, quarto, 8 printed pages. Gothic type. 33 lines. Bound in red morocco and preserved in a custom-made morocco box; minor restoration to last leaf touching several letters of text on verso. Generally excellent.

PRICE ON REQUEST

*A "COLUMBUS LETTER," as we ordinarily use that expression, is not a manuscript. It is a small printed book, or booklet . . . It is the printed version of the great discoverer's own account of his first voyage. It may properly be called "Americum Number One." In one sense it is more interesting, and more significant, than the surviving manuscripts of Columbus, because it was through the printed Columbus Letter that the news of the discovery of the Western continents was given to the world. It is possible that certain Norsemen reached America nearly five hundred years before Columbus did, but the written records telling of what they accomplished did not get into print until a hundred years after the publication of the Columbus Letter. [from Adams, *The Case of the Columbus Letter*, p. 5]*

This is the first edition, corrected issue, of the celebrated letter by Columbus published shortly after his return from his first voyage. This Latin edition is preceded only by the undated Spanish *editio princeps* produced in Barcelona around April 1493, known in one example (at the New York Public Library). Because wider publicity required a version of the "Letter" in an international language, it was this Latin edition, printed at Rome shortly after April 29, 1493, which was responsible for informing Europe of Columbus' epoch-making discoveries.

Epistola Christofori Colom: cui etas nostra multū debet: de Insulis Indie supra Gangem nuper inuētis. Ad quas pergrendas octauo antea mense auspiciis ⁊ ere inuictissimorū Fernadi ⁊ Delisabet Hispaniarū Regū missus fuerat: ad magnificū dñm Gabrielem Sanchis eorundē serenissimorū Regum Tesaurariū missa: quā nobilis ac litteratus vir Leander de Cosco ab Hispano idiomate in latinum cōuertit tertio kal's Maii. M.cccc.xciii Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti Anno primo.

Quoniam susceptę prouintię rem perfectam me ꝑsecutum fuisse gratum tibi fore scio: has constitui exarare: que te vnuscuusq; rei in hoc nostro itinere geste inuenteq; admoneant: Tricesimo tertio die postq; Gadibus discessi in mare Indicū perueni: vbi plurimas insulas innumeris habitatas hominibus repperi: quarum omnium ꝑo felicissimo Rege nostro ꝑreconio celebrato ⁊ vexillis extensis contradicente nemine ꝑossessionem accepi: ꝑimeq; earum diui Saluatoris nomen imposui: cuius fretus auxilio tam ad banc: q̄ ad ceteras alias peruenimus. Eam ho Indi Guanabanin vocant. Aliarū etiam vnā quāq; nouo nomine nuncupauī: quippe aliā insulam Sanctę Marię Conceptionis. aliam Fernandinā. aliam Dylabellā. aliam Joanā. ⁊ sic de reliquis appellari iussi. Cum ꝑimum in eam insulam quā dudum Joanā vocari dixi appulimus: iuxta eius littus occidentem versus aliquantulum ꝑocessi: tamq; eam magnā nullo reperto fine inueni: vt non insulā: sed continentem Ebatai prouinciā esse crediderim: nulla tñ videns oppida municipiaue in maritimis sita confinibꝫ ꝑzeter aliquos vicos ⁊ ꝑredia rustica: cum quorū incolis loqui nequibam. quare simul ac nos videbant surripiebant fugam. ꝑrogrediebar vltra existimans aliquā me urbem villasue inuenturū. Deniq; videns q; longe admodum ꝑogressis nihil noui emergebat: ⁊ bñōi viā nos ad Septentrionem deferebat: q; ipse fugere exoptabā: terris etenim regnabat bruma: ad Austrumq; erat in voto cōtendere:

Thanks to the Invention of Printing, the News Spread Fast

The printers of Europe were extremely effective in rapidly spreading Columbus' exciting and momentous news. Indeed, before the year 1500, at least seventeen editions of the eight-page "Letter" were printed. There were two editions in Spanish, one in German, five in Italian verse, and nine in Latin. They were printed in Barcelona, Valladolid, Strasbourg, Florence, Rome, Antwerp, Basel, and Paris. Pervasive as the distribution of these "Letters" was in the fifteenth century, because of their ephemeral nature as "newsletters," few of them were preserved. Of all the seventeen editions, only a mere handful exist outside public institutions in our day. A little more than one hundred years ago, the great Americana bibliographer Joseph Sabin was calling the "Columbus Letter" of the "highest degree of rarity."

Columbus' first expedition for China and Japan, in search of Marco Polo's lands of gold, left Palos on 3 August, 1492. Due to a miscalculation, based on Ptolemy, of the distance separating Europe from Asia, Columbus believed that the shortest route to the Indies was westward and so crossed the Atlantic to reach the Far East. On October 11-12 he sighted land—one of the Bahama islands—and over the next two and a half months he navigated through the eastern Caribbean, searching in vain for Japan and laying claim to various islands in the name of the King and Queen of Spain. Early the following year Columbus began the return journey back.

Relatively Few Copies Have Survived

Columbus composed his account of his first voyage to America on his return to Spain, on the high seas, somewhere off the coast of the Azores in mid-February, 1493. Not addressed to any particular individual, it was to serve as the public announcement of his discovery. The account was presented to the Spanish sovereigns who had several manuscript transcriptions made of it and distributed these to court officials. From one of these manuscripts, "Leandro de Cosco made a Latin translation, giving it the title *Epistola* or

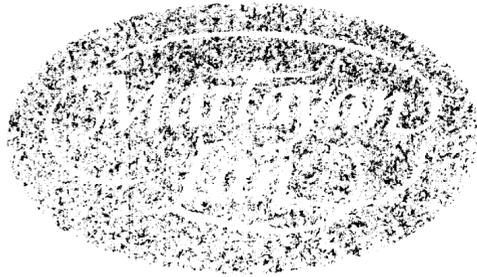
'Letter,' by which it has been known ever since. The translation was sent to Rome and in May the first Latin edition was published"—Hough. It is this publication, printed by Stephan Plannck, offered here.

Plannck published two Latin issues of the "Letter;" and their difference is significant. In the present, "corrected" issue, as in the original Spanish edition, the names of the royal patrons, Ferdinand and Isabella, appear together. In the slightly earlier issue printed by Planck at Rome, Isabella's name was omitted. This omission has long been considered a deliberate choice on the part of Cosco, who was of Aragonese origin, to praise Ferdinand of Aragon and not Isabella of Castile. The omission was quickly corrected and minor changes were made as well to the names of Sanchez, the royal treasurer, and Cosco, the translator; and the "Letter" was re-issued by Planck a second time.

Embodying the Two Greatest Events of the Fifteenth Century

The "Columbus Letter" embodies the two most significant events of the fifteenth century: the invention of typographic printing and the discovery of the New World. Because of this coincidence of historical factors, so inextricably intertwined in 1493, its importance as an Americanum takes on an added symbolic dimension deriving from its association with the new technology of printing in its emergent years. While the "Columbus Letter" is incontestably, as Randolph Adams noted above, "Americanum Number One," it is equally a cornerstone of any serious collection of books and artifacts attempting to represent the greatest achievements of western culture. It is today, as it has been for generations, one of the most precious printed documents obtainable and is rarely offered for sale.

* GW 7177; Goff C-758; Church 5; Harisse, *Vetustissima* 4; Sabin 14630; *Printing and the Mind of Man* 35; Hough, *The Italians and the Creation of America* 6.



MARTAYAN LAN

48 EAST 57TH STREET · NEW YORK NY · 10022

TELEPHONE [212] 308-0018

FAX [212] 308-0074

December 28, 1967

Mr. E. M. Dring
Bernard Quaritch Ltd.
11 Grafton Street, New Bond Street
London, W. 1
England

Dear Mr. Dring:

Mr. Posner would like you to send him the following book
from your Catalogue No. 883, just received:

No. 414 Christopher Columbus
The Latin Letter of Columbus printed in 1493 and
announcing the Discovery of America, reproduced
in facsimile, with a Preface. London, Bernard
Quaritch, 1893

Will you please send it by air mail, as he is anxious to
have it. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Ruth M. Sasala
Secretary to Mr. Henry Posner

COLUMBUS, CHRISTOPHER

THE LATIN LETTER OF COLUMBUS printed in 1493 and announcing
the discovery of America reproduced in facsimile.

With a preface.

London Bernard Quaritch 1893

Small quarto wrappers 1893

Purchased Quaritch 1967

1973

