

Apianus, Petrus (1495-1552). *Astronomicum Caesareum*. Ingolstadii : in aedibus nostris [Petrus Apianus], 1540 mense maio [61] f.; 2°. Collation A-F4, G4+1, H-N4, O. Text in 2 columns, with printed marginalia. Imperial coat of arms of Charles V on verso of the title page. Author's coat or arms on colophon. Woodcuts throughout the text and hand-coloured moving disks. Ornate and historiated initials.

Original vellum binding, restored. Vellum jacket. Interior made of twentieth-century millboard. Old shelfmarks on inside of back cover: XXIV/1/12 ; g 44/1/9 ; 16/1/12 ; 1/3. Seals/Stamps of convent of Santa Caterina of Barcelona on title page, with the convent's firemark at the bottom. Restored March 1992.

The *Astronomicum Caesareum* is considered to be one of the most sumptuous printed books of the sixteenth century. The text and images throughout the entire volume combine colour with formal ingenuity. The extraordinary beauty of the illustrations prepared in the author's own printing workshop and the elegance of the typesetting make it one of the most outstanding products of the printing press.

The book's author, Petrus Apianus (Latin name of Peter Bennewitz, known in Catalan as Pere Apià) made a name for himself as an expert in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, geography and the art of printing. Born on 16 April 1495 in Leisnig (Saxony), Apianus showed great interest in mathematics and astronomy from an early age and later went to Leipzig and Vienna to pursue these studies. In 1527, he received an appointment as professor of mathematics at the University of Ingolstadt, where he devoted himself to teaching and the publication of his research, attracting fame and recognition for his works, including *Cosmographie*, printed in 1524.

In 1540, he produced *Astronomicum Caesareum* on his own press, dedicating the work to Emperor Charles V, who named him as court astronomer and mathematician.

In the work, Apianus collected a compendium of contemporary knowledge on astronomy. The book contains thirty-five moving disks, all hand-coloured. The disks are noteworthy for their ornamentation, including signs of the zodiac and a spectacular dragon similar to the one that appears on the title page (f. G4v). The disks enable the user to calculate astronomical, astrological and calendar data and the movements of the planets. With the disks, for example, the user can calculate the position of Mercury on any given day of a specific year.

The *Astronomicum Caesareum* offers documentation of the passing of a comet in 1531, which was later given the name Haley's comet. Apianus was the first astronomer to state that the tails of comets always point away from the Sun.

Finally, the latter part of the work is dedicated to an explanation of the construction of instruments for use in astronomical observation and measurement. The descriptions are illustrated with magnificent woodcuts. Of particular interest is the woodcuts of a torquetum (f. O4v).

The work exhibits a number of typographical oddities. Among them are the arrangement of the text into two concave columns (f. D3v) and the printing of some paragraphs, such as the colophon, in reverse.

Some copies of this edition were also ornamented with gold and silver. Probably, one of them must have been offered to the emperor Charles V, whom Peter Appian asked for patronage, devoting him his work. Two of these copies are in the Library of El Escorial and the Biblioteca Nacional of Madrid.

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