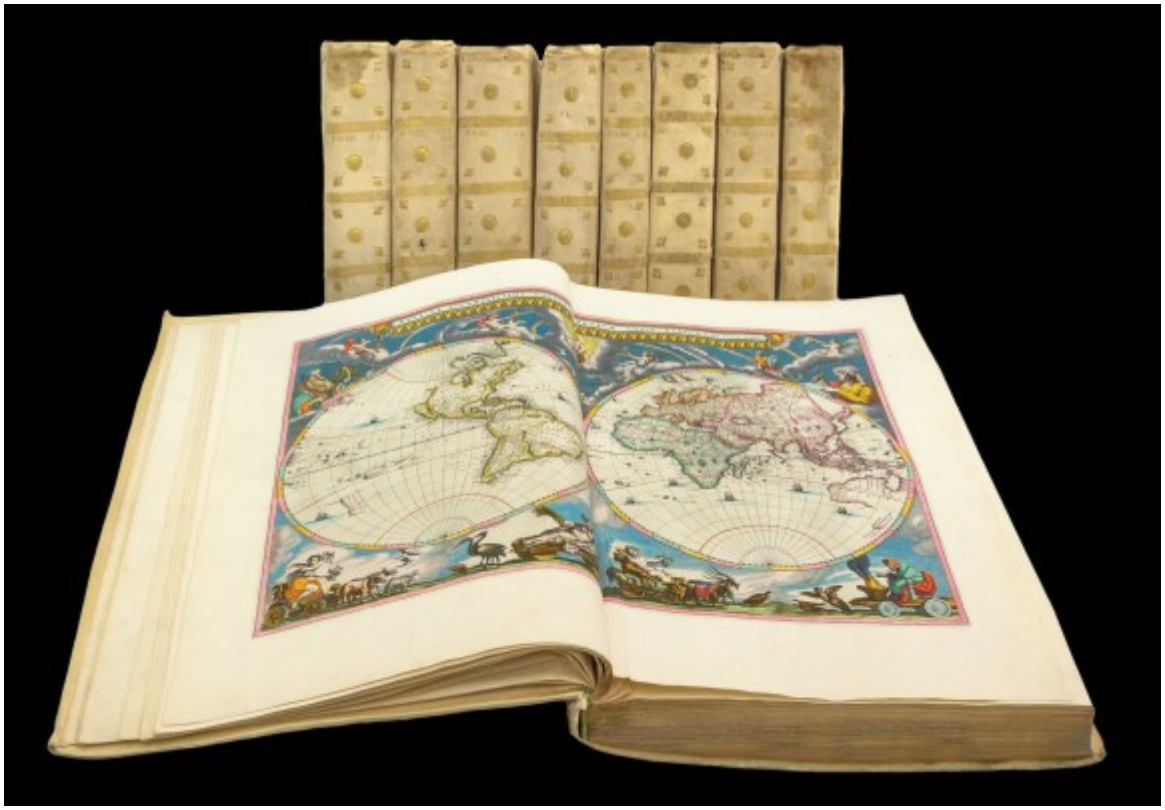


9 volumes, folio (540 by 340mm), engraved allegorical or architectural frontispieces, printed titles with engraved vignettes and divisional half-titles, 595 engraved maps and plates, mostly double-page (some folding), engraved illustrations, coloured throughout in a contemporary hand, heightened in gold, small hole to map of Lyon in , the Italian volume (vol. VII) from an earlier edition, containing 62 maps (whereas a 1664 edition would contain 67 maps), entire text block of this volume has been extended to size, publisher's vellum gilt with yapp fore-edges, covers panelled with stylised foliate roll, and large centre and corner arabesques, gilt edges, spine divided into eight compartments by horizontal rolls, decorated with fleur-de-lys corner pieces around a central rose tool, with original ties.

BLAEU'S GRAND ATLAS

Grooten Atlas, oft werelt-beschryving, in welcke t' aerdryck, de zee, en hemel, wort vertoont en beschreven.

Author
BLAEU, Johannes

Publication date
1664-5.

Publisher
Joan Blaeu,

Publication place
Amsterdam,

Physical description
9 volumes, folio (540 by 340mm), engraved allegorical or architectural frontispieces, printed titles with engraved vignettes and divisional half-titles, 595 engraved maps and plates, mostly double-page

(some folding), engraved illustrations, coloured throughout in a contemporary hand, heightened in gold, small hole to map of Lyon in vol.VI, the Italian volume (vol. VII) from an earlier edition, containing 62 maps (whereas a 1664 edition would contain 67 maps), entire text block of this volume has been extended to size, publisher's vellum gilt with yapp fore-edges, covers panelled with stylised foliate roll, and large centre and corner arabesques, gilt edges, spine divided into eight compartments by horizontal rolls, decorated with fleur-de-lys corner pieces around a central rose tool, with original ties.

Dimensions

Notes

A Dutch edition of "the greatest and finest atlas ever published" (Koeman).

The 'Atlas Major' in its various editions was the largest atlas ever published. It was justly famed for its production values, its high typographic standard, and the quality of its engraving, ornamentation, binding and colouring. The atlas frequently served as the official gift of the Dutch Republic to princes and other authorities. It is one of the most lavish and highly prized of all seventeenth-century illustrated books. "In its sheer size and scale it surpassed all other atlases then in circulation, including the efforts of his great predecessors Ortelius and Mercator." (Brotton). The work was published simultaneously in five different languages, Latin, French, Dutch, Spanish, and German. What Blaeu managed to achieve was to contain the world in a book – an endeavour that in many respects would never be equalled.

Publication History

The birth of Blaeu's great work originated in 1630, when he published his first atlas, the Atlas Appendix. The book consisted of 60 maps, and was billed by Blaeu as a supplement to Mercator's Atlas, whose work by that time had been greatly expanded and was being published by his greatest rivals Henricus Hondius and Johannes Janssonius. So frightened of the Blaeu's move into the publication of atlases that Hondius and Janssonius published a rival Appendix by the end of 1630.

Over the preceding 30 year this great publishing rivalry would be the spur to the production of ever larger and more lavish atlases. In 1634, Willem Blaeu produced his 'Atlas Novus', containing 161 maps, this was expanded in 1635 to two volumes, containing 207 maps. So successful was the house of Blaeu that, in 1637, they moved into the larger premises; with its own print foundry and nine letterpresses the new building was the largest printing house in Europe. Unfortunately, Willem did not live long after the move and he past away the following year. He was succeeded in his business by his son Joan, whom also inherited the lucrative and influential post of hydrographer the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C.).

The next twenty years Joan expanded the Atlas Novus, in 1640 he added a third volume, which included maps of Italy and Greece; in 1645, he published a fourth volume on the British Ilses; and in 1654 a further volume upon China – the Atlas Sinensis – the first western atlas of China, based upon the work of the Jesuit Marteo Martini. Janssonius during this time had almost kept pace with his more illustrious rival – in 1646 he published a four volume atlas, adding a fifth – the first folio sea atlas – in 1650, and in 1658 a sixth, which consisted of 450 maps, some 47 more than Blaeu's similar work.

In 1662, Blaeu announced that he would auction his bookselling business in order to finance the imminent publication of his great atlas. From a brief look at the statistics it is clear to see why Blaeu needed the capital. The creation of the five editions took six years (from 1659-1665). It is estimated that 1,550 copies over all five editions were printed, with Latin the longest print run of 650 copies. If

one totals up the entire print run, it comes to just over 5.4 million pages of text, and 950,000 copper plate impressions! Such a vast undertaking in capital and man hours, was reflected in the price of the work. The Latin edition fully coloured retailing for 430 guilders, with the larger French atlas the most expensive at 450 guilders. These prices made the atlas not only the costliest ever sold, but also the most expensive book of its day. To give us some idea of comparative value, the average price of a house in Amsterdam at the time of publication was 500 guilders.

The Maps

The maps are embellished in the Baroque style, and many rank among the most beautiful ever made. Of particular note are the famous side-panelled maps of the continents, the 58 maps devoted to England and Wales (volume IV), Martini's Atlas of China, the first atlas of China published in Europe (vol. IX), and a series of 23 maps of America, including important early maps of Virginia and New England (vol. VIII).

One should also mention the twin hemisphere world map, which Joan had newly prepared for the atlas, which has been suggested by Jerry Brotton as the first world map in an atlas to portray the Copernican solar system.

Contents

Volume I World, Arctic and Scandinavia. 90 maps.

Volume II Germany and Switzerland. 107 maps.

Volume III The Low Countries. 65 maps.

Volume IV England. 58 maps.

Volume V Scotland and Ireland. 55 maps.

Volume VI France. 66 maps.

Volume VII Italy and Greece. 62 maps.

Volume VIII Spain, Africa and America. 64 maps.

Volume IX Asia. 28 maps.

Bibliography
Van der Krogt 2:261.

Provenance
1. Knights Templar seal to title, indicating a previous Masonic owner.
2. Library stamp reading "Bibliotheca Abbatiae" to verso of title, with manuscript addition, indicating inclusion in a monastic library.

Price:

Inventory reference: 11584

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