

3 parts in one volume, folio (410 by 290mm), Latin text, 3 engraved architectural sectional titles, 51 engraved maps (all but one double-page), all with fine original outline hand-colour, map of Switzerland misbound, map of Hungary with minor loss skilfully repaired in facsimile, a few wormholes to the German index, original limp velllum, title in manuscript to spine.

THE FIRST THREE PARTS OF MERCATOR'S ATLAS IN FINE ORIGINAL COLOUR

Galliae Tabulae Geographicae; Belgii Inferioris Geographicae Tabulae; Germaniae Tabulae Geographicae.

Author
MERCATOR, Gerardus

Publication date
[1585].

Publisher
Gerard Mercator,

Publication place
Duysburg,

Physical description
3 parts in one volume, folio (410 by 290mm), Latin text, 3 engraved architectural sectional titles, 51 engraved maps (all but one double-page), all with fine original outline hand-colour, map of Switzerland misbound, map of Hungary with minor loss skilfully repaired in facsimile, a few wormholes to the German index, original limp velllum, title in manuscript to spine.

Dimensions

Notes
A fine example of the first three parts of Mercator's atlas covering France, the Low Countries, and Germany, in fine original colour.

Mercator would not begin his great 'Atlas' or 'Cosmography' until relatively late in life. The impetus for this came when he was employed as cosmographer to Duke William IV of Kleve, in 1563. Being the ever diligent subject, Mercator felt obliged to compile a cosmography for the duke. Mercator's intention was to produce a work that consisted of five books and covered the whole world. The first book would cover the creation; the second the heavens; the third geography; the fourth history; and the fifth chronology. He intended to draw all the maps, write all the text, and cut all the plates himself. Unsurprisingly, the ambitious project would require more time than he could afford to give it, and he was only able to complete a few of the parts: the creation; the maps for Ptolemy's 'Geographia' – part of the geographical section – in 1578; and four of the modern parts; the first three – the present atlas – were published together in 1585 and covered France, the Low Countries, Germany, with the fourth part covering Italy, the Balkans, and Greece, appearing in 1589. Mercator died on December 2, 1594, leaving the responsibility for completion of the cosmography to his son Rumold. The completed atlas, which included maps of the world and continents, together with the fifth modern part covering the rest of Europe, would be published by Rumold in 1595.

Gerard Mercator (1512-1594) was born on the 5th March 1512 at Rupelmonde near Antwerp. In 1530, he began attending Leuven University, where he studied philosophy and mathematics under the tutelage of the renowned scholar Gemma Frisius. He was soon recognised as an expert in land surveying and in the construction of mathematical instruments. However, his first recorded cartographic work would be as an engraver, when he worked on Frisius's celestial globe of 1537. In the same year he produced his first map: a six sheet map of the Holy Land. This was shortly followed by a cordiform world map the following year, with a nine sheet map of Flanders appearing in 1540. However, the majority of his income was derived from the production of scientific instruments, especially globes.

In 1552 he moved to Duisburg in the Duchy of Kleve. During his time there he would produce his most important maps, including his wall map of Europe, 1554; map of Lorraine, 1564; the wall map of the British Isles, 1564; and his seminal 21 sheet world map upon which he displayed his eponymous projection for the first time. His prodigious output soon came to the attention of the local lord, Duke William V, who, in around 1563, employed Mercator as the court cosmographer.

Bibliography
Me 9; Van der Krogt 1:001.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 1407

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