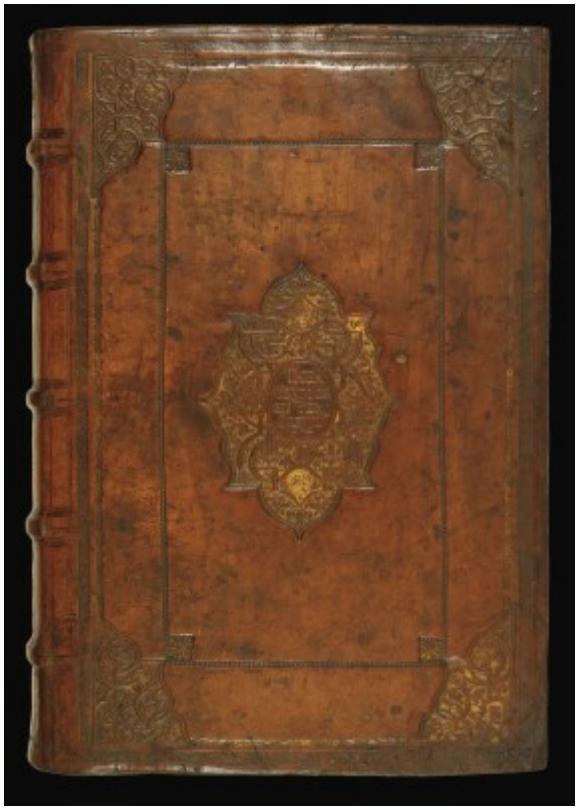


Folio, (450 by 310mm) three parts in one volume, title, with full-page engraving of the arms of Philip II of Spain on the verso, memorial to Ortelius incorporating a small circular portrait, portrait of Ortelius by Phillip Galle, section-title to the Parergon with architectural surround, uncoloured vignette on letterpress section title to the Nomenclator, 156 double-page hand-coloured engravings on 151 mapsheets (including 38 in the Parergon, two costume plates, three views), numerous woodcut initials, fine original hand colour throughout, contemporary brown calf by Plantijn, gilt and blind tooled panels and borders, spine in seven compartments divided by raised bands, gilt, title and date lettered in gilt to spine.

“THE FIRST TRUE ATLAS” IN A CONTEMPORARY PLANTIJN BINDING

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum.

Author
ORTELIUS, Abraham

Publication date
1603.

Publisher
Jan Baptist Vrients,

Publication place
Antwerp,

Physical description
Folio, (450 by 310mm) three parts in one volume, title, with full-page engraving of the arms of Philip II of Spain on the verso, memorial to Ortelius incorporating a small circular portrait, portrait of Ortelius by Phillip Galle, section-title to the Parergon with architectural surround, uncoloured vignette on letterpress section title to the Nomenclator, 156 double-page hand-coloured engravings

on 151 mapsheets (including 38 in the Parergon, two costume plates, three views), numerous woodcut initials, fine original hand colour throughout, contemporary brown calf by Plantijn, gilt and blind tooled panels and borders, spine in seven compartments divided by raised bands, gilt, title and date lettered in gilt to spine.

Dimensions
450 by 310mm. (17.75 by 12.25 inches).

Notes
A fine example of one of the most complete versions of the first printed atlas to be so called, sumptuously bound in a contemporary Plantijn binding.

Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) took an active interest in cartography from an early age. He began his career as a “kaarten afzetter” (illuminator of maps) purchasing maps from booksellers and colouring them for resale. He travelled extensively in his search for new material and was a well-known face at the Frankfurt book fairs. It was whilst travelling that Ortelius built up his unrivalled web of contacts, which included many of the leading historians, scientists, and cartographers of the day.

These contacts would prove invaluable in the compiling and completion of his ‘Theatrum Orbis Terrarum’, first published in 1570. The work was “the first true atlas” (van den Broecke): all the maps were of a uniform size and style, with an engraved title, accompanying text, and – hitherto unheard of in cartographic publications – a list of the source material. With its comprehensive scope, the atlas was a huge step forward compared with the contemporary ‘Lafreri’ atlases, which were bound up to order and so reflected the whims of the customer. Even though it was the most expensive work published at the time, it proved an instant success with four versions of the first edition being printed in 1570 alone. The work would go on to be published for 42 years, with some 31 editions being produced.

The present work was issued by Jan Baptist Vrients (1552-1612), another Dutch cartographer and publisher. He had acquired the stock printed by Christoffel Plantijn from Ortelius’ heirs in 1602. Vrients expanded the edition to include a number of new maps after Hessels, and he also added an introduction to cosmography written by Michel Coignet. One further Latin edition was issued in 1608 and an Italian edition was issued in 1612 when Vrients sold the plates to the Officina Plantiniana shortly before his death.

Bibliography
Marcel van den Broecke, Ortelius Atlas Maps: An Illustrated Guide (Netherlands: HES, 1996); van der Krogt 31:053.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 12845

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