



Folio (460 by 290mm), three parts in one volume, including the Parergon, engraved allegorical title, with letterpress title overslip with full-page engraved portrait of Pope Clement on verso, architectural border to Parergon title, large Plantin device on Nomenclatur title, engraved dedication, portrait of Ortelius, and five diagrams in the text, 194 engraved maps on 154 mapsheets, five double-page plates of landscapes, all on guards, mostly double-page, fully coloured by a contemporary hand and many heightened in gold, numerous woodcut ornamental initials, some browning and spotting, title, final leaf and five early leaves with margins neatly restored, several small repaired tears, some offsetting, seventeenth century Italian red morocco, central gilt ruled panel with cardinal's arms at centre and floral cornerpieces, spine gilt in seven compartments, gauffered gilt edges, spine neatly re-backed, edges restored, lightly rubbed [together with] autograph letter from Joannes Vryfpenninck (Terenumus) to Abraham Ortelius, in brown ink on paper, Lisbon, 15 June 1561, folio (310 by 210mm), one and a half pages of text in Latin and Dutch, addressed on lower half of the page, attached to a stub, some paper reinforcing over black areas on verso, wax seal, small tear, slightly affecting three words of the text.

## **THE 'VRIENTS' ATLAS WITH A LETTER TO ORTELIUS EXPLAINING HOW TO SMUGGLE HERETIC AND EROTIC PRINTS PAST THE INQUISITION**

**Theatro del Mondo di Abrahamo Ortelio: Da lui poco inanzi la sua morte riueduto, & di tauole nuoue, et commenti adorno & arricchito, con la vita dell'Autore. Translato in Lingua Toscana dal Sigr. Fillipo Pigafetta. In Anversa, si vende nella nella libreria plantiniana M.DC.XII.**

### **Author**

ORTELIUS, Abraham

### **Publication date**

1608

**Publisher**

Jan Baptist Vrients,

**Publication place**

Antwerp,

**Physical description**

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to Abraham Ortelius, in brown ink on paper, Lisbon, 15 June 1561, folio (310 by 210mm), one and a half pages of text in Latin and Dutch, addressed on lower half of the page, attached to a stub, some paper reinforcing over black areas on verso, wax seal, small tear, slightly affecting three words of the text.

**Dimensions****Notes**

A magnificent example of one of the most complete versions of the first printed atlas to be so called, sumptuously bound and with glorious full contemporary colour.

The present work was issued by Jan Baptist Vrients c.1608 using the stock printed by Christoffel Plantin, and acquired by Vrients from Ortelius' heirs in 1601. 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. The present example is bound without Hessel's maps of Genoa and Ferrara, which is often the case. The Vrients atlas is significant for the inclusion of several new maps, all of which are extremely decorative, uncommon, and beautifully engraved. One further Italian edition was issued in 1612 when Vrients sold the plates to the Officina Plantiniana shortly before his death.

A rare atlas; Koeman records only eight examples of this edition. The colouring of the present example is particularly fine with careful gold highlighting to many of the maps, particularly on the cartouche tracery, titles, and decorative detail.

**The letter**

A signed autograph letter to the book dealer and future cartographer, Abraham Ortelius, by a Low Countries colleague in Lisbon (Hassels). Vryfpenninck begins in Latin, thanking Ortelius for his letter, referring to lucrative dealings and warning him to be careful what he sends, noting that many things are prohibited as heretical or erotic. With perhaps deliberate vagueness, he notes he is only allowed to trade under certain conditions and is prohibited from dealing in these matters. He then switches to Dutch for one sentence (no doubt so the Inquisitors can't read it): "One wouldn't begrudge me as much of that as I can!".

He then goes on in Latin, noting that the Inquisitors examine pictures, engravings and images as well as than books. What they like is Old and New Testament history prints, portraits of

distinguished Catholics (here Vryfpenninck notes, they even regard Erasmus as a heretic), Christ's Passion; in short, anything not too scandalous. He then switches back to Dutch for a long passage: "the best thing is to have all those papers of similar format put in a parchment (binding) like a book and trim the edges so they will be taken for books, on which there is no duty... [Unbound books in sheets were often shipped rolled, so Vryfpenninck suggests an alternative technique as well:] you can make rolls of them and put them in the packing cases with the books, but in the corners, because otherwise they will be examined one by one and charged duty. [Finally, he offers a third technique]... you can lay pictures on the bottom of the case, after first laying down some paper to protect them from the damp ship, and then more paper on top to protect them from the fastenings of the books lain on top of them".

He then returns to Latin for the remainder of the letter, and asks Ortelius to remember him to Willem Silvius.

Although the long Dutch passage only mentions avoiding duty charges, the fact that it directly follows the discussion of prohibited prints strongly suggests that Vryfpenninck is urging Ortelius to smuggle them as well. Although he refers to books and prints in packing cases ("coffers"), he also refers to the examination of cases, barrels, and packets ("Coffers vaten ende packen").

Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) began his career as a map colourist, but soon began dealing in prints and books as well, specialising in cartography. He made his first known map in 1564. Little is known of the author, who signs the letter with both his Latin and Dutch name (there was a Vryfpenninck family in Frankenthal fifteen years later), but he was clearly on intimate terms with Ortelius and Willem Sylvius (first recorded in Antwerp in 1559) at the beginnings of their careers.

Watermark: Trefoil above PB, similar to Briquet 9616 (found in Udine 1565). With page numbers 615-616 from an early album.

### **Bibliography**

Jan H. Hassels, ed., *Abrahami Ortelli Epistulae*, (Cambridge, 1887), no.10.; Koeman 31: 651.

### **Provenance**

### **Price:**

### **Inventory reference:** 3188