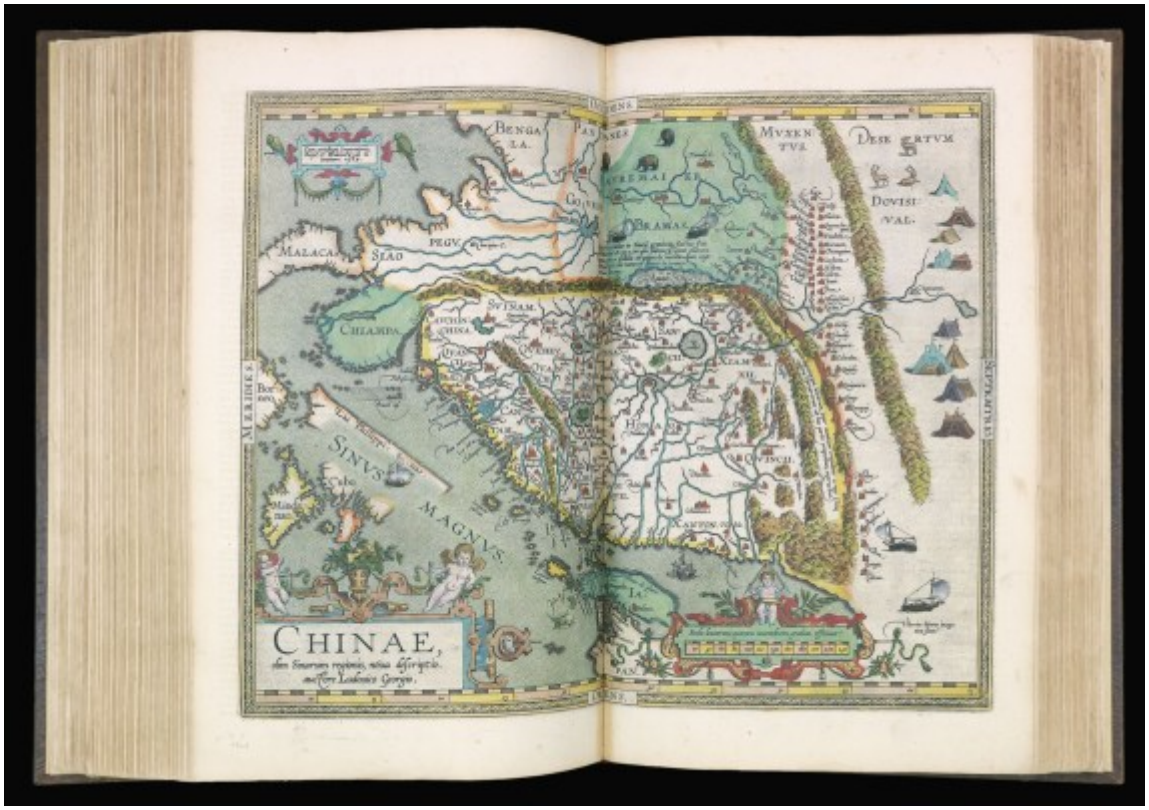

First edition in English. Folio (440 by 280mm), engraved architectural title with the arms of James I to verso, dedication with engraved epitaph to Ortelius on verso, full-page portrait of Ortelius within cartoche, separate engraved title to the Parergon, small engraving of a globe printed upside down on verso of colophon leaf, 161 double-page engraved maps (including five double-page engraved plates showing views of the Escurial, the Temple of Delphi, and the costume of the Holy Roman Empire), slight agetoning to gutter, all in fine original hand-colour, title with minor loss to right margin, folding map of England with small tear a foot, bound to style, full calf, gilt fillet borders, and printers device to upper and lower board, gilt, spine in seven compartments separated by raised bands, gilt.

THE FIRST PRINTED MAP OF CHINA IN ORTELIUS'S 'THEATRUM' IN ENGLISH WITH ORIGINAL COLOUR

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. The Theatre of the Whole World: Set Fourth by That Excellent Geographer Abraham Ortelius.

Author
ORTELIUS, Abraham

Publication date
1606

Publisher
Printed by John Norton; Printer to the Kings most excellent Maisetie in Hewbrew, Greeke, and Latine,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
First edition in English. Folio (440 by 280mm), engraved architectural title with the arms of James I to verso, dedication with engraved epitaph to Ortelius on verso, full-page portrait of Ortelius within cartoche, separate engraved title to the Parergon, small engraving of a globe printed upside down on verso of colophon leaf, 161 double-page engraved maps (including five double-page engraved plates showing views of the Escurial, the Temple of Delphi, and the costume of the Holy Roman Empire), slight agetoning to gutter, all in fine original hand-colour, title with minor loss to right margin, folding map of England with small tear a foot, bound to style, full calf, gilt fillet borders, and printers device to upper and lower board, gilt, spine in seven compartments separated by raised bands, gilt.

Dimensions

Notes
The scarce and only edition of Ortelius's Theatrum in English.

"The earliest world atlases to be published with English text were two editions of Ortelius's 'Epitome', published in 1601 and 1603, one from the text of Pieter Heyns, and the other from the text of Michael Coignet. But this folio edition of 1606 was the first 'proper' world atlas to be printed and published in England with English text. It is a very interesting atlas from a number of points of view. It had more maps than any other edition of Ortelius, whether before or after. The book was the largest ever printed and published in England up to that date, measuring at least an inch more than uncut copies of the Bishop's Bibles of 1568, 1572 and 1602, or the Genevan versions in black letter of 1578-83. It was a particularly small edition [i.e. print run] and not sold through the house of Christopher Plantin; no surviving copies re known of to exist on the European continent (i.e. excluding copies in the British Isles)" (Wardington Catallogue).

The English edition was based upon the 1603 Latin edition published by Vrients. Although the pause in printing of the Antwerp edition between 1603 and 1608 might suggest that all the plates were used in London for printing; the maps were in fact printed in Antwerp, most probably at the Plantin press, and then shipped to London where the text was added, and the work bound.

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 single (generally wall) maps from booksellers and colouring them for re-sale. He travelled extensively in his search for new material and was a well-known face at the Frankfurt bookfairs. It was whilst travelling that Ortelius built up his unrivalled web of contacts, which included many of the leading historians, scientists, and cartographer's 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 der 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.

Bibliography
van der Krogt 31:551; Koeman III Ort. 37;

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 2682

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