Folio (440 by 300 mm), title, Catalogus Auctorum with 152 names, engraved portrait of Ortelius by Galle, separate engraved title to the Parergon, 134 double-page engraved maps, all with fine original hand-colour, lower outer corner of first title slightly chipped not affecting image or text, early leaves a little thumb-soiled in same corner, rebound in seventeenth-century paneled calf boards rebacked to style with old gilt spine-panels laid down, red morocco label and gilt board-edge decoration skilfully added to style.

“THE FIRST TRUE ATLAS”

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum.

Author
ORTELIUS, Abraham

Publication date
1592.

Publisher
Christopher Plantin,

Publication place
Antwerp,

Physical description
Folio (440 by 300 mm), title, Catalogus Auctorum with 152 names, engraved portrait of Ortelius by Galle, separate engraved title to the Parergon, 134 double-page engraved maps, all with fine original hand-colour, lower outer corner of first title slightly chipped not affecting image or text, early leaves a little thumb-soiled in same corner, rebound in seventeenth-century paneled calf boards rebacked to style with old gilt spine-panels laid down, red morocco label and gilt board-edge decoration skilfully added to style.

Dimensions

Notes
A fine example of “the first true atlas”.

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.

The present atlas is the second Latin edition to contain Additamentum IV, the last edition before the fifth, and last, lifetime Additamentum was added in 1595. Though dated 1592 in the colophon, it was issued in 1591. The work also contains the ‘Parergon’ – Ortelius’ atlas of ancient geography. The maps, unlike those of the main atlas, were drawn by Ortelius himself. The work would later be issued separately and would influence the numerous historical atlases that would be produced in the seventeenth century.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 1231

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