

Latin text, two volumes, folio atlas (545 by 355 mm), engraved title-pages with fine contemporary hand-colour and heightened in gold, 227 engraved maps (the majority double-page) with over 300 maps and views, publisher’s vellum gilt, covers panelled with stylised foliate roll, and large centre and corner arabesques, with armillary sphere to centre, spine divided into eight compartments by horizontal rolls, decorated with foliate corner pieces around a central rose tool.

THE LOW COUNTRIES DIVIDED

Novum ac magnum theatrum urbium Belgicae.

Author
BLAEU, Willem and Joan

Publication date
1649

Publisher
Johannes Blaeu,

Publication place
Amsterdam,

Physical description
Latin text, two volumes, folio atlas (545 by 355 mm), engraved title-pages with fine contemporary hand-colour and heightened in gold, 227 engraved maps (the majority double-page) with over 300 maps and views, publisher’s vellum gilt, covers panelled with stylised foliate roll, and large centre and corner arabesques, with armillary sphere to centre, spine divided into eight compartments by horizontal rolls, decorated with foliate corner pieces around a central rose tool.

Dimensions

Notes
The second Latin text edition, with very fine contemporary colouring, of Blaeu's great work on the towns of the Low Countries.

"Of all the Blaeu atlases, the townbooks of the Netherlands are held in the highest esteem in the Netherlands. This is partly due to the fact that their composition is linked up with the struggle for independence from Spain of the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century. Bound up, by sentiment, with the most dramatic and heroic period of the shaping of the Dutch State it shows the proud and industrious cities of the North in their full splendour. Before the end of the battle with Spain, Joan Blaeu planned his town books which were to contain maps, evenly distributed over two volumes: the towns of the Republic in Volume I, the towns belonging to Spain in Volume II. In the planning stage of the atlas, some years before 1648, while the text had been printed and also most of the plates, Joan Blaeu could not know how the Peace treaty would turn out. In the last decades of the war, several towns and fortresses in the south had been or were besieged by the army of the Republic and Blaeu had to take a decision as to inclusion of these disputed towns into the two volumes of his atlas. The very first [Latin text] edition of his town atlas reflects the situation during the last years of the war: 26 maps of towns and fortresses are incorporated in the "Spanish" volume, but had to be transferred to the "Dutch" side. Consequently, apart from the very rare first edition, the volumes I and II are uneven in the number of maps, the first volume being the larger. At the end of the Index of the first edition, printed in 1649 after the Treaty of Westphalia, Joan Blaeu [gives a] notice to the reader explaining the arrangement of the maps" (Koeman).

The Blaeu family firm was founded by Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571-1638) in 1596. He was eventually joined by his sons, Cornelius (1616-1648) and Joan (1596-1673). The firm became the most productive cartographic establishment in the Netherlands until it was destroyed by fire in 1672. The elder Blaeu initiated the great series of atlases that culminated in the 'Atlas Maior', in which Joan Blaeu incorporated much of the geographical knowledge bequeathed to him by his father. The present example collates with Blaeu's second edition of the work, with 26 maps having been moved from the Spanish volume to the Dutch volume.

Bibliography
Koeman BL 68A and 68B; van der Krogt 43:112.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 12570

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