



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Atlas Major, sive Cosmographia Blaviana, qua solum, salum, coelum accuratissime describuntur.

Stock#: 60249
Map Maker: Blaeu
Date: 1662
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 12 x 15.5 inches
Price: \$950,000.00



Description:

The First Edition of Blaeu's Atlas Maior.

Exceptional Unrestored Condition. With Unusually-Fine Contemporary Hand Color.

An exceptionally fine copy, with contemporary hand-color, of the first edition of the *Atlas Maior*, the crowning achievement of one of the most famous Dutch cartographers. This is the most lavish atlas ever produced, and certainly one of the most beautiful.

The Genesis of the *Atlas Maior*

Willem Janszoon Blaeu, the head of the Blaeu publishing family and the official cartographer of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), first published a world atlas in 1630, titled *Atlas Appendix*, with 60 maps. He steadily expanded the atlas in the following years, until in 1635 the book became so large that it would not fit in a single volume. The new atlas was to be known as the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (or *Theatre du Monde* in French). The history of this book, and its eventual development into the greatest atlas ever published -- Blaeu's *Atlas Maior* -- requires an appraisal of the rivalry between the firms Jansson and Blaeu.

In the middle of the 17th century, the firms Jansson and Blaeu were engaged in ongoing one-upmanship in the atlas market. If Blaeu published a two-volume atlas with 210 maps, Jansson would closely follow with a three-volume 300-map atlas. After the death of Willem Jansz. Blaeu in 1638, the competition sped up; both firms issued larger versions of their multi-volume atlas: the *Atlas novus*. By the end of 1658, Blaeu had published an *Atlas novus* with six-volumes and 400 maps, while Jansson had published a six-volume *Atlas novus* with 450 maps.



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Jansson attempted to solidify his primacy when he issued his 11-volume German-language *Novus Atlas absolutissimus*. The set had a huge compliment of maps, between 500 and 550, and when combined with Cellarius's celestial atlas, and Jansson's eight-volume town book, his firm was the first to realize a complete description of the countries, towns, oceans, and heavens.

Johannes Blaeu was not to be outdone, however. In 1662, Blaeu issued his *Atlas maior* (Major Atlas) in eleven volumes, with approximately 600 maps. He would follow it with French and Dutch editions and attempted to complete a Spanish edition. The Americas volume was the last volume included in the *Atlas maior*. The set was the largest, most impressive, and most expensive publication of the 17th century, and it stands as the pinnacle of printed atlases.

In 1672, a fire broke out in the Blaeu firm workshop, decimating the stock and the business, and bringing an end to the in-progress publication of the Spanish language edition of the Atlas Maior at 10 volumes -- it was originally supposed to run to 12. Johannes Blaeu died the following year, and the family business declined thereafter.

Volumes

Volume I: World, Northern Europe, Scandinavia. 1662.

Half-titles, engraved allegorical title, printed title with hand-colored vignette, 61 engraved maps and plates, including 5 plans and 9 plates of Tycho Brahe's astronomical observatory on the island of Haven in the Danish Sound. Includes the important world map, of which Shirley observes: "As with all productions of the firm of Blaeu, the engraving and layout are all of the highest standard." The world map which begins the atlas is a double hemisphere map. Shirley, 428.

Volume II: Eastern Europe, Russia, Sweden, Greece. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, half-titles, hand-colored woodcut illustrations, 39 engraved maps (38 double-page).

Volume III: Germany. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, 96 engraved maps (3 folding and 92 double-page).

Volume IV: Netherlands and Belgium. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, 2 engraved pictorial titles hand-colored and heightened with gold, with letterpress title over slip and 63 hand-colored maps (60 double-page).

Volume V: England. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, engraved architectural title dated 1662,



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hand-colored and heightened in gold, with letterpress title over slip, 58 engraved maps (57 double-page), 3 hand-colored engraved plates, woodcut and engraved illustrations.

Volume VI: Scotland and Ireland. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, engraved hand-colored architectural title dated 1654, with letterpress title over slip, half-title, 55 engraved maps (54 double-page).

Volume VII: France and Switzerland. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, engraved hand-colored architectural title, with letterpress title over slip, half-title, 70 engraved maps (67 double-page).

Volume VIII: Italy. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, engraved hand-colored architectural title, with letterpress title over slip, 59 engraved maps (58 double-page), and one half-page engraved map in text.

Volume IX: Spain, Portugal, and Africa. 2 printed titles with hand-colored vignette, engraved hand-colored architectural title, with letterpress title over slip, 41 double-page maps and views (3 folding) including 7 plates of the Escorial.

Volume X: Asia, China, and Japan. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, 2 engraved hand-colored architectural titles, first with letterpress title over slip, half-title, 28 double page maps.

Volume XI: America. Printed title with hand-colored vignette, 23 engraved double-page maps.

Provenance

F.C. Koch, Rotterdam

Jean R. Perrette, Brittany

Detailed Condition:

11 volume. Text in Latin. 10 engraved allegorical or pictorial titles some with letterpress text labels, 12 printed titles with hand-colored engraved vignette, 10 divisional half-titles, 593 engraved maps, plans, views, and plates, mostly double-page (some folding, full page or within text), including 9 plates of Tycho Brahe's astronomical observatory (one with his portrait) in volume one, views of Stonehenge and Avebury in volume 5, 7 plates of the Escorial in volume 9, all mounted on guards and very finely colored by a contemporary hand, printed index leaf at the end of each volume. Publisher's full vellum binding, covers paneled in gilt with central gilt arabesque and armillary sphere, large floral corner-pieces, smooth spines gilt in eight compartments.