



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (1570B - First Edition, Second Issue, First Variant)

Stock#: 87103
Map Maker: Ortelius
Date: 1570
Place: Antwerp
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 12 x 16 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

First Edition, Second Issue. "A landmark in cartographic publication, for it is the first large modern atlas." (PMM, 91)

A wonderful example of the first edition second issue of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum*, one of the most important works in the Western Canon.

Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (or "Theater of the World") is widely considered to be the first true modern atlas. When it was published in 1570, the *Theatrum* was the best available summary of 16th-century cartographic knowledge, covering much of the exploration of the world in the century following the discovery of America.

The book's enormous importance in its own time is evidenced by its republication in 36 recorded editions, issued consistently from 1570 to 1612, and inconsistently to 1641. Its continued importance in more recent times has led to at least six facsimile editions being published. The broad appeal of the *Theatrum* saw demand from many consumers who preferred to read the atlas in their local language. Thus, in addition to Latin, the book was published with text in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and English.

Ortelius was the artist of all of the maps; he drew them by hand, and those drawings were interpreted into prints by his engravers Frans Hogenberg, Ambrosius Arsenius, and Ferdinand Arsenius.

After Ortelius's death in 1598, the copper plates for his atlas passed to his heirs. They, in turn, sold the collection to Jan Baptist Vrients (1522-1612) in 1601. Vrients added new maps and published the atlas until his death in 1612. Vrients's widow then sold the plates to the Moretus brothers, who were the successors of Christoffel Plantijn.



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The Printing of the First Edition of Ortelius's Theatrum Orbis Terrarum

Ortelius's *Theatrum* has its genesis in the 1550s when the merchant Gilles Hooftman was building a practical map collection. Hooftman had business concerns closely tied to international commerce and political and military events in Europe. Apparently, Hooftman found unrolling large maps to be unwieldy, so it was suggested to him by Jan Radermaker to bind his maps up in book form. When Radermaker befriended Ortelius in 1555, he evidently passed the task off to him. At the time, Italy was the center of global cartographic publishing, as only eight or nine maps had yet been published in the Low Countries. Therefore Ortelius ordered from Rome an "Italian Assembled to Order Atlas" (or "Lafreri School" atlas) with 38 maps. Radermaker recounted this story in a 1603 letter to Jacob Colius Ortelianus, who had wanted to know how his uncle came up with the idea for the *Theatrum*. (See, Peter van der Krogt, "The Theatrum Orbis Terrarum: The First Atlas?" in *Abraham Ortelius and the First Atlas*, page 61, 1998) Elsewhere it has been suggested that Gerard Mercator was the progenitor of the idea for the first standardized atlas, but that he held back from competing with Ortelius out of a spirit of friendliness. That being said, because of Mercator's work habits, he would not have been able to produce a work like the *Theatrum* by 1570, even if he had that in mind.

Van der Krogt (Abraham Ortelius..., page 65) further explains:

The first edition of the Theatrum is dated May 20, 1570 (vdK 31:001). It had been finished the year before, as appears from the privileges by the Brabant Council and the Privy Council from respectively February 21 and October 23, 1569. The basis for the first edition of the Theatrum, with 53 maps, is formed by the 38 maps of the atlas which Ortelius had composed for Hooftman.

The first edition of the Theatrum was printed at Ortelius' own expense by Egidius (Gielis) Coppens van Diest, an Antwerp printer who had experience with printing cosmographical and cartographical works. From 1539 onwards, Van Diest had printed various editions of Apianus' Cosmographia, edited by Gemma Frisius, and in 1552 he printed the small atlas of Honterus, Rudimentorum Cosmographicorum... Libri III.

It is interesting to reflect on the direct connection between Ortelius's *Theatrum* and the Italian composite atlases that preceded it. Those earlier works are often thought of as the spiritual antecedents of the Low Countries' atlas tradition, but this story of direct influence is not well known outside of a few scholarly works.

Differentiating the 1570B Edition

According to Van Den Broecke, the *Theatrum* was issued in at least four different configurations in its first



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year of publication. These are commonly categorized as the 1570A, B, C, D states. In addition to these, there are also hybrids, combining plates and text settings from multiple standard variations.

Van Der Krogt (IIIA, 31:001B) provides an extensive list of changes between these variants. The present atlas accords with all of the requirements for a 1570B first variant, except for two points noted below; the following is an incomplete list of those issue points:

- The colophon reads "M.D.LXX."
- The *Catalogus Auctorum* includes 92 author names. Interestingly, in this example, some of those author names have been carefully but comprehensively altered by a contemporary hand.
- The last line of text for f. A4r reads: modum... vel/mi-
- The last line of text for f. A4v reads: uania... qui/ est f
- The verso text for maps 18, 20, 23, 28, and 31 are all in the first variant of 1570B text settings.

Variations from 31:001B1

- The title page verso text matches 31:002, i.e., Epigram of 16 lines and Greek poem of 4 lines. Van Der Krogt notes that this is also the case with Brussel KB II, which is classed as a 31:001B
- The verso text for map 24 (Franconia), is the second of three variants seen in the 1570B. 4th line, 2nd word: Wirtzburg in roman type, not italic.

Rarity

Van Den Broecke states that 100 copies of the 1570B were printed.

In *Koeman's Atlantes Neerlandici IIIA*, Peter van der Krogt records the following examples of the 1570B: *Amsterdam UB II, 1802 A 14; *Antwerpen PM II, A 3802; *Berlin SB, 2° B 128 (31:001B+010); *Braunschweig SB, M 221 2°; *Brussel KB II, C.& P. IV 2262; *El Escorial, 69 V 4; Helsinki AEN, 163; *Leeuwarden PB, J 77 kluis; *London BL III, Maps C.2.c.3; *Madrid SGE, nr. 5; *Paris BMaz I, 4871A; *idem II, 4897 Rés.; *Portland USM, O-14; *Providence JCB, Z 077 1570 2 2-size; *Strasbourg BNU II, R 211; *Washington LC II, G1006.T5 1570b Copy 3 Vault (Phillips 374) (31:001B+010+020+030+040+050). Thus 15 examples, of which 3 are in the United States.

Detailed Condition:

Folio. Contemporary limp vellum (cockled, and somewhat stained, front hinge starting). 53 double-page engraved maps. Collation: aviii, 1-53, a-evi. Complete. (Title page repaired at the corners and loosely holding on. Very few earlier repairs scattered throughout. A few maps with areas of faint toning or foxing.



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A few very small wormholes. A few short edge tears. Overall Very Good.)