Johannes Janssonius

Nouvel atlas ou Théâtre du monde
Amsterdam, Joannem Janssonium, 1658-1662

Cahier n° 26

New York Antiquarian Book Fair
Park Avenue Armory
March, 5-8, 2020
Booth C22

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JANSSONIUS, Johannes

Nouvel atlas ou Théâtre du monde comprenant les tables et descriptions de toutes les régions du monde universel

Amsterdam, Joannem Janssonium, 1658-1662

ONE OF THE ONLY TWO COPIES KNOWN TO DATE OF THE FIRST FRENCH EDITION OF THE ATLAS MAJOR.

COMPLETE WITH ITS TEN FRONTISPIECES AND ITS 624 ENGRAVED MAPS, ALL CONTEMPORARY COLORED AND ILLUMINATED.

“ONE OF THE GREATEST MASTERPIECES OF DUTCH MAPPING IN THE GOLDEN CENTURY” ACCORDING TO J. KEUNING.

COPY OF FERNAND POUILLON AND FRANÇOIS RAGAZZONI

FIRST FRENCH EDITION

10 folio volumes (510 x 320mm)

ILLUSTRATION: 10 FRONTISPIECES and 624 ENGRAVED MAPS, ALL CONTEMPORARY COLORED AND ILLUMINATED, 52 in-text engravings including 33 contemporary colored and illuminated

CONTEMPORARY BINDING. Vellum with yapp edges, sides decorated with a large central motif with a gilt armillary sphere, gilt flat spine decorated with roulettes and small gilt flowers, gilt edges

COMPOSITION OF THE COPY:

Tome I: Introduction à la cosmographie, 1658, 1 frontispiece, 6 in-text engravings including 5 in contemporary colors, 55 maps ; Tome II: Allemagne, 1 frontispiece, 115 maps ; Tome III: Pays-Bas, 1 frontispiece, 73 maps ; Tome IV: France, 1 frontispiece, 79 maps ; Tome V: Grande-Bretagne, première partie, 1 frontispiece, 29 maps, 3 gravures de paysage, 5 in-text engravings including 3 color enhanced, 38 pieces of numismatic including 22 pieces in contemporary color ; Tome VI: Grande-Bretagne, seconde partie, 1662, 1 frontispiece in the name of Jan Blaeu, 39 maps ; Tome VII: Italie, Grèce, 1 frontispiece, 63 maps ; Tome VIII: Espagne, Asie, Afrique, Amérique, 1 frontispiece, 22 maps relative to Spain, 25 maps of Asia, 14 of Africa, 23 of America ; Tome IX: Le Monde maritime, 1657, 1 frontispiece, 35 maps ; Tome X: Le Monde antique, 1 frontispiece, 64 maps


Volume I: 8 ff. slightly browned; Volume II: 7 ff. browned, 32nd map slightly torn at the bottom left, margin paper flaw on the 43rd map, 53rd map slightly torn; volume III: 1 ff. browned; volume IV: 6 ff. browned; volume V: 5 ff. slightly browned; volume V: 5th map torn at the bottom; volume VII: 13 ff. browned, 9th map torn at the bottom; volume VIII: 3 ff. slightly browned, 7th map lightly browned; volume IX: 13 ff. browned; volume X: 12 ff. browned
This innovative approach to cartography was marked by the appearance of a new generation of economic actors. Two dynasties installed a duopoly on the map market. The first family was heir to the Mercator with Jodocus (1593-1633) and Henricus Hondius (1597-1651) and their brother in law, Johannes Janssonius (1588-1664). The Hondius-Janssonius had a comparative advantage in the atlas market for they inherited the Mercator copper plates. However, from 1630, their activity was in competition with another dynasty, the Blaeus. The first person of this dynasty was William Jansz Blaeu. He settled in Amsterdam in 1599 after having been the pupil of the famous Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe. More sociable, W. J. Blaeu became the head of the guild of Amsterdam printers and official cartographers of the VOC in 1608. He specialized in globes, maritime cartography and the development of nautical instruments.

To use Andrew Pettegree’s expression, “the war of the Atlas” began in 1629 when the Blaeus came into possession of forty copper plates of the elder Hondius brother who died prematurely. Jodocus Hondius had either betrayed his brother Henricus and his brother-in-law Janssonius, or had forgotten to write into his
In his reference book “Cartography in the European Renaissance”, David Woodward, explains that the Atlas Major of the Blaeus, “the way that the maps were compiled made the analysis of their contents impossible”.

Blaeu managed to sell his goods at the Frankfurt Book Fair, but his inability to capture and process all the cartographic updates made his work less precise than that of Johannes Janssonius. The freshness of the colors in this copy and the good preservation of the pages of geographic description surpass a large number of Blaeu’s Atlas Major.

succession these forty unseen copper plates. The consequence of this error or betrayal was the publication by the Blaeus of an atlas of sixty maps, beginning in 1630.

The one-upmanship of the Atlas Majors began with three volumes in 1640, four in 1645, six in 1655, nine or twelve volumes in 1662-1663. In total, the Atlas Majors were printed in three hundred copies for around six hundred plates. Blaeu owes his success to his commercial flair and the quantitative power of his printing workshop. As for Janssonius, he opted for a more scientific quality of the maps and atlases that he produced.
“how is it that the Phoenicians made themselves masters of commerce of all the earth and that they enriched themselves at the expense of all the other peoples? “It is our homeland that has the glory of having invented navigation: the Tyrians were the first [...] who observed the stars far from the earth, according to the science of the Egyptians and the Babylonians.”

The most glaring example of this qualitative choice of Janssonius is in the production of the maps of the Pacific coasts. The way that Japan, the coasts of New Spain and of California are described is surprisingly rigorous. In light of the travels and topographic records of the time, present-day Indonesia is remarkably precise.

But Janssonius was not limited to qualitative work. He also wanted a clientele at the level of his cartographic productions. He explained this desire in the volume devoted to the ancient world: “so is there nothing more suitable to a gallant man, than to have a particular knowledge of his home, that we call heaven and earth, as of his own house.”

With the opening of distant horizons for the Europeans, geographical knowledge became essential for the education of gentlemen, like blood princes. The tutor of the Duc de Bourgogne, Fénelon, did not fail to highlight this importance in Les Aventures de Télémaque (1699) with the dialogue between the son of Ulysses and Narbal:
The French edition of the Atlas Major cost 450 guilders when the buyer chose to have his copy illuminated, bound and gilded. The average salary of a Dutch printer-worker was 2 guilders per week. He would thus have needed four and a half years of salary to buy the Janssonius work. Mercator’s cultural heritage spurred Jansson on in his quest for cartographic excellence.

The rarity of this copy today is due to the freshness of the colors of the maps and frontispieces. Some browning nevertheless appears but this are common in the atlases of Janssonius. The copy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France is in publishers binding, but is missing the frontispieces. In addition, the margins of some maps are trimmed which is not the case of this one.
Moreover, the Atlas Major in the French language has assets that distinguish it from other editions. Only 543 maps make up the German edition. This version is made up of 13 maps on the ancient world while the French edition contains 64. The Atlas Major in German however, has 17 maps of the Middle Empire that no other edition has. The Dutch edition excludes the two volumes devoted to Great Britain. It is made up of 489 maps. The Latin edition is certainly the one that comes closest to the French.

According to ViaLibri, no American library owns the first French edition of the Atlas Major by Jansson. In Europe, only the BnF keeps one but it is incomplete. As for the markets, RBH and ABPC note three occurrences and concern the three auctions for this copy.

REFERENCES: New Koeman, _Atlantes Neerelandici_, 2002, p.345-346. The copy described is the one, incomplete, kept at the BnF (Ge DD 1411-1419).


€430.000 / $477.300