



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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### **(Blaeu Atlas) Le Theatre du Monde Ou Nouvel Atlas Contenant Les Chartes et Descriptions De tous les Pais de la terre Mis en lumiere Par Guillaume et Jean Blaeu.**

**Stock#:** 51690  
**Map Maker:** Blaeu  
**Date:** 1635  
**Place:** Amsterdam  
**Color:** Outline Color  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 19.75 x 12.5 inches inches  
**Price:** SOLD



#### **Description:**

***An Early Issue of the First French Edition of the Multi-Volume Blaeu Atlas, in a Superb Original Binding and Hand Color. A Handsome Set.***

Two volumes. Folio (19.75 x 12.5 inches), publisher's full vellum, covers gilt-tooled to panel design with large arabesque in the center and strapwork designs in the inner corners, spines in eight compartments separated by raised bands, numbered "1" and "11" respectively in the lower compartments. (Some minor soiling and bumping.)

208 engraved maps, some of which folding, most double-page. All maps with original hand-color in outline. Two engraved titles, each with original hand-color, heightened in gold.

#### **The Development of the Multivolume Blaeu Atlas**

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.



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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. The present set is an early product of that competition.

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.

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.

The present two-volume atlas is a wonderful early product of that competition.

#### **Overview of the Atlas Contents**

As an atlas of the world, the present set contains important maps of diverse subjects.

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**Early Issue**

This issue varies slightly in signature lettering when compared with Koeman BL 11 and 12. In a number of cases, the signature numbering is amended by a contemporaneous hand, this suggests that the present set is an early issue before the corrections in Koeman. The maps are the same as those listed in Koeman 11 and 12.

**Rarity**

This is the earliest multivolume Blaeu atlas we have encountered.

**Detailed Condition:**

Generally very good to very good plus. Some scattered toning and very few minor repairs.