



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## **Aegyptus Antiqua Terra suis contenta bonnis non indiga mercis Aut Iois, in solo tanta est fiducia Nilo . . .**

**Stock#:** 51734  
**Map Maker:** Ortelius  
**Date:** 1624  
**Place:** Antwerp  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 20 x 14 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### **Description:**

#### ***Fascinating Map of Ancient Egypt from Ortelius' Parergon, The World's First Historical Atlas***

Gorgeous example of Ortelius' second map of Egypt, which was issued only in late editions of his *Parergon*. Ortelius' interest in ancient civilizations and the ways they interact is evident in what he decides to include on the map, making it a snapshot of not just Ancient Egypt but also Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire.

Oriented with west at the top, this map displays ancient Egypt and some of its surrounding regions, with a particular focus on the Nile River. It extends from Libya (*Libyae nomus*) in the west to the Gulf of Suez (here called the Arabian Gulf, *Arabici sinus*) in the east, and from southern Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea (here called the Egyptian Sea, *Aegyptium Mare*).

The map separates Egypt into regions. The largest, in the south, is Upper Egypt (*Thebaidis Regio* or *Aegyptus Superior*). A smaller region north of the last is Middle Egypt (*Heptanomia*), and the region on the coast of the Mediterranean, which includes the Nile River Delta, is Lower Egypt (*Aegyptus Inferior*).

Mountain ranges and trees dot the land. However, the real focus of this map is around the Nile River, each bend and fork is carefully rendered. These details help to orient the viewer and give a sense of the physical geography of the land.

The water bodies portrayed on this map, including the Gulf of Suez (*Arabici sinus*) and Mediterranean Sea (*Aegyptium Mare*), are filled in with simple stippling. This works to not complicate the map, as it is already



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heavily labeled. A few ships decorate the waters, but otherwise they are not the focus of the map.

Cities are picked out as miniature views, typical of Ortelius' style. Some of the more notable cities include Memphis and Alexandria, and the region around Alexandria is shown in more detail in an inset map at the top of the page. The inset contains an ornate strapwork border, making it one of three cartouches on this map.

A simpler cartouche near the inset contains a list of places whose locations are uncertain. Below this is a scale bar, indicating how to measure distance on the map. The final cartouche is the most elaborate, containing the title and a passage from the writing of the Roman poet Lucan, telling the reader that Egypt is a rich and bountiful country. This cartouche contains elaborate strapwork and some figural elements.

It is clear in looking at this map that Ortelius had less experience with and knowledge of Egypt than he had with some European countries and regions. Egypt was not as well mapped by European cartographers at the time of this map's printing, and Ortelius would have been relying on classical sources for much of the information on the map. This lack of knowledge of the area is clear in certain details, such as the two lakes in Lower Egypt, Lake *Moeris* and Lake Mariout (*Maria*), which are somewhat larger and much closer together than they are in reality. To make his map as legitimate as possible, Ortelius cites many classical sources—Ptolemy, Strabo, Seneca, Herodotus, Pliny, and more—in helping him to place various cities and landforms.

#### **Greek and Roman influence in Egypt**

The map contains many interesting and notable locations. The largest city on the map is Alexandria, known in part for its Great Library which was destroyed (likely burned) in the first century BCE during a conflict between Cleopatra and her brother Ptolemy XIII. Julius Caesar, who became involved in the civil war and sided with Cleopatra, set Ptolemy XIII's ships on fire, but the fire spread through the city as well and destroyed the Great Library.

Two other cities shown in the inset have been the subject of recent archaeological excavation and discovery. These are Canopus (*Canobus*) and Thonis-Heracleion (*Heraclium*), which sunk into the Mediterranean thousands of years ago and were nearly forgotten entirely, only to be rediscovered in the early 2000s. The excavation of these cities has taught archaeologists much about Egyptian holidays and rituals such as the Mysteries of Osiris. However, it has also solved the longtime mystery of the city of Thonis-Heracleion.

For many years, Thonis and Heracleion were thought to be two separate cities, and only recently was it



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discovered that they were the Egyptian and Greek names for the same city. On this map, the Latinized Greek name *Heraclium* is used, but the city of *Thonis* is mentioned as having once existed in Cape Zephyrium, just north of Canopus. The general location of the city was known, but Ortelius did not have the archaeological evidence we have today to tell him that Thonis and Heracleion were in fact the same city.

These cities are interesting examples of the profound influence that Greek and Roman cultures had in Egypt. Thonis-Heracleion (*Heraclium*) was a center of trade and clearly frequented enough by Greeks to have its own Greek name. Alexandria's library was visited by Greek and Roman scholars alike, and Egypt was ruled for 300 years by the Ptolemies, descendants of a general of Alexander the Great. This map, with its many Greek and Roman place names, is a powerful example of how Egypt was influenced by its Mediterranean neighbors.

#### **Parergon**

Although best known for his world atlas, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the *Parergon* was a project of personal interest and the work that Ortelius himself considered his greatest achievement. He had a deep curiosity about classical antiquity which spurred him to create the *Parergon* maps, and the amount of time and detail he put into each map is clearly evident. Ortelius hand drew each map of the *Parergon*, which required considerable skill and knowledge of the area's history and geography. It is considered the first historical atlas.

*Parergon* means supplementary and, accordingly, the first three *Parergon* maps were published as supplements to the 1579 edition of the *Theatrum*, which had already been in print for nine years. Over time, successive editions of the *Theatrum* were supplemented with more *Parergon* maps, and there are 55 known plates overall. The *Parergon* was also published as its own atlas separate from the *Theatrum* on two occasions, once in 1595 and again in 1624.

The *Parergon* was highly successful both as a supplement to the *Theatrum* and on its own. It was variously translated into French, German, Italian, and English and regularly printed until 1612. Further editions were more sporadic but still popular, such as the 1624 edition which was published twenty-six years after Ortelius' death in 1598.

This map, Ortelius' second map of Egypt, appeared on in later editions of the *Parergon*, adding to its relative rarity as compared to some other *Parergon* maps. It appeared in 1595 and was preceded by a two-sheet map of Egypt from 1565 dedicated to the humanist Scipio Fabio of Bologna.

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est fidcuia Nilo . . .**

This map is a beautiful depiction of Ancient Egypt at a time when Egypt was heavily influenced by outside forces. It would be an interesting addition to a collection of African maps, Ortelius maps, or maps of the ancient world.

**Detailed Condition:**