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Aevi Veteris, Typus Geographicus

Stock#: 67242
Map Maker: Ortelius

Date: 1603
Place: Antwerp
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 18 x 12.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Stunning Ortelius Map of the Ancient World, Based on the Work of Claudius Ptolemy

Decorative map of the ancient world based upon the work of Claudius Ptolemy from the second century. This map was published in Ortelius' *Parergon, the first historical atlas.*

Ptolemy's influence can be seen in the place names as well as the limited size of the map, as Ortelius includes only what Ptolemy knew of the world. The map shows Europe, Africa, and Asia, from Scandinavia (*Scandia Thule*) to Madagascar (*Menuthias*) and as far east as Indonesia (*India Extra Gangem*). It is set into a much larger empty oval projection which indicates the limits of geographical knowledge from the classical period as compared to the sixteenth-century understanding of the world. The Americas, southern Africa, Australia, and much of East and Southeast Asia are not included on the central map.

The shape of the included continents and coastlines is fairly accurate, reinforcing that these regions were part of the known world and therefore well mapped. Some of the world's larger rivers are carefully rendered, such as the Nile River (*Nilus flu.*), and throughout the map mountain ranges and forests give the land texture. These details give the viewer a sense of the physical geography of the land. Large water bodies are filled in with stippling.

Only a few cities are picked out and labeled, such as Jerusalem (*Hierasalem*), *Alexandria*, Rome (*Roma*), and Paris (*Lutetia*), but they are drawn as miniature views in typical Ortelian style. There are also a number of labels related to classical myths and religion. A group of islands off of the coast of West Africa are labeled as home of the Gorgons or Hesperides (*Gorgones, sive Hesprides*) figures of Greek mythology, thought to be from far west of Greece. Mount Sinai (*Synai mons*), where Moses received the Ten

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Commandments, can also be found in the Middle East.

In the larger oval, the different zones of the world are separated by the five major parallels of latitude and labeled by temperature and habitability. The Arctic and Antarctic regions to the north and south (*Zona frigida et inhabitabilis*) are noted as freezing and uninhabitable, and the hottest region near the Equator (*Aequinoctialis*) is labeled as dry and hot (*Zona torrida*), considered uninhabitable according to the ancients. The temperate regions (*Zona temperate et habitabilis*) lie in between, with a livable climate.

The entire map is enclosed in an ornate strapwork border, with several cartouches containing additional information. In each corner, a small medallion contains an inset map of the four continents known at the time of this map's creation, in the late sixteenth century.

There is also a title cartouche at the top, one indicating the cartographer and date below the map, and a final cartouche at the bottom of the page. This final cartouche notes that the map shows the entire world from the view of the ancients, before the year 1492 (when European views of the world were expanded as they came in contact with the Americas). The strapwork and other decorations around the map are some of Ortelius' most ornate, speaking to the work put into creating it and the overall importance he placed on this map in particular.

Unlike Mercator, Ortelius never produced an edition of Ptolemy's influential *Geographia, which was reintroduced to Europe in the fifteenth century. Instead, he compiled his own atlas of the ancient world, the Parergon.*

Here, the landmasses depicted are largely in their modern configurations, although the place names on the map are based upon Ptolemy. The effect of the work is to show not just the world as geographers knew it in the second century but also how much farther geographic knowledge had progressed from Ptolemy's time to Ortelius'.

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

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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 intricate map successfully blends geography and history. It would be a valuable addition to a collection of world maps, Ortelius maps, or maps of classical antiquity.

Detailed Condition:
Minor marginal toning.