



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

## [Theatrum Orbis Terrarum]

**Stock#:** 77021  
**Map Maker:** Ortelius / Koler / Mack the Elder, and family  
**Date:** 1570 (with extra-illustration in 1572 and 1587)  
**Place:** Antwerp and Nuremberg  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 21 x 17.5 inches  
**Price:** Not Available



### Description:

#### ***The Finest Example in Private Hands of "the First Large Modern Atlas" (PMM)***

This is the finest example in private hands of Abraham Ortelius's 1570A *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the first edition, first issue, of the first modern atlas. This previously unknown example of one of the foundational books of the Western Canon is entirely hand-colored and illuminated in gold and silver by the most celebrated colorist of the 16th century, Georg Mack, or a member of his workshop. It stands as a triumph of 16th-century artistry and bibliophily, having been modified several times after its initial publication in 1570, with each iteration bringing a new element of craftsmanship to the object.

The initial configuration of the atlas was as a black and white "1570A" *Theatrum*, one of the storied rarities of cartographic collecting. This can be confirmed by reading the backlit text on the versos of the maps. Sometime around 1572, the atlas was disbound by the Nuremberg publisher Johann Koler, who had the Latin text translated into German, and the whole atlas reconfigured in oblong folio, so that the text page sat to the left of the map it described. Thus he created the only Ortelius edition in which the reader could consult the descriptive text while also looking at the maps themselves.

Perhaps most importantly, two of the four known copies of Koler's modified atlas (including this example and the one at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek), were given to the Nuremberg-based *Illuminist* (illuminator-colorist) Georg Mack the Elder to be elaborately hand-colored and heightened in gold and silver - well beyond the level encountered in any other Ortelius atlas. This attribution can be confirmed through the signing of the first printed leaf of the HAAB example with the initials "G.M." And while the coloring of the present example varies in some interesting ways (about which more later) it is clear that it was colored by the same hand or studio.



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

---

### [Theatrum Orbis Terrarum]

Unlike any of the three other known examples of the Koler atlas, in this example, the world and continents maps were updated in 1587. To do this, the early owner purchased separate examples of the maps from Ortelius, without text on their versos, and without fold lines, and had them colored and mounted to match the rest of the maps in the atlas. This indicates the owner's ongoing interest in cartographic advancements and engagement with map sellers, publishers, and colorists.

#### **Johann Koler and "the First German Ortelius"**

The story of the Koler Orteliuses was lost to history until the 1930s, when Leo Bagrow, one of the all-time great scholars of historical cartography, discovered an example among the recent acquisitions of the Prussian State Library. Bagrow published his findings in *Imago Mundi* in 1937 in an article called "The First German Ortelius", which he opens with the following observations:

*In 1926, the Prussian State Library bought for 480 Marks an interesting copy of A. Ortelii Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. Strictly speaking, it cannot be called the first German edition, because it was not a German edition in the real sense of the word but an adaptation of the first Latin edition for the German reader. It was made in the following manner. A Latin copy was taken, the whole text was translated into German, and this translation was pasted over the Latin text on the back of the maps. But as the copies of this edition had, as it seems, to be in oblong folio, the translated text was glued not on the back of the map to which it belonged, but on the back of the preceding map. In this manner, the reader opening the atlas had the text to the left and to the right the map to which the text belonged. On the maps themselves there are yet to be seen traces of the folding, because before pasting upon them the German text, they were folded in half. The atlas is bound in a hard embossed parchment. On the cover are the initials N/V/W. and the year 15/74. There remain yet traces of former sewing. The binding required some restoration.*

*There is no title-page, and it seems there never was one, for the atlas opens up on an empty page, on the back of which is pasted the text to the map Typus orbis terrarum. If there had been a title-page, it is clear it would have been glued on this empty page. Further follow coloured maps on 53 pages, in conformity with the first Latin edition (20 May 1570) and according to the list quoted in my A. Ortelii catalogus cartographorum, I, 13-15...*

As far as Bagrow knew, the Berlin copy was the only example still existing of this atlas. He mentions a possible example at the University Library of Vienna, though this has subsequently been disproven. According to Peter Van Der Krogt, there are presently three known examples of the Koler *Theatrum*. Two are based on the 1570A (Berlin SB and Weimar HAAB) and one is based on the 1575 *Theatrum* (Wolfenbüttel HAB). To the first group, we can add this example. The latter example is interesting because it suggests that Koler was not completely dissuaded in his efforts by the publication of Ortelius's own



---

**[Theatrum Orbis Terrarum]**

German-language edition, also in 1572. Initial analysis of the book suggested that the rarity of Koler's output could be accounted for by this development (he could not hope to compete with Ortelius on the basis of price), however, it now seems that he was producing bespoke objects for a very sophisticated group of bibliophiles in southern Germany. This theory is reinforced by one of the very few allusions to Koler that we have from the historical record.

In Hessel's compendium of Ortelius's correspondence with his friends (*Ortelii Abrahami et virorum eruditorum... epistulae*), there is tantalizing mention of someone, who is probably Koler, named in association with the Fugger family ("at the house of Fugger"). The letter dates from September 22, 1563, and is from Johannes Sambucus to Ortelius:

*...Itaque scribe Huberto, me si velit Augustam curru missurum, et illinc deinde Viennam per Dominus Fuggeros curaturum; sed tarde perferetur, ut vix ante tres menses eo perventura sit. Ego scripsi Antverpiam ac cistulam remitto ad Joannem Keller qui est in aedibus Fuggerorum, ut is si vos voletis occasione per currem data, Augustam mittat: sin Hubertus citius mittere volet, ut recipiatis ab Joanne Keller; is sarcinam vobis restituet. S(i) Huberto videbatur non incommodum expectare ut curru trans(vehatur) Augustam, ego mittam: et quoniam ego ipse, deo volente i(ntra) duos menses omnino Viennae in Curia Caesariae Majestatis er(o) ipsemet offeram postea, et de premio urgebo suam Majestatem et Regum Maximilianum. Quod si tanta mora nocere videretur saltem ut Caesarea Majestas suum exemplar ligatum aliquomodo habeat, et literas Hubertus addat, curet. Per deum ex animo doleo me equo, aut per postam non posse mittere; quod si Birkmanus unum tantum exemplum ad Caesarem mitteret, et per fratrem offeri curaret, bonum esset et significaret Caesari Hubertum propediem plura exempla missurum. Haec nollem Hubertus aliter, quam sentio, accipiret: expiscare tu ipse Antverpiae, intelleges neminem equo hanc, vel etiam minorem sarcinam recepturum unquam ut longè vehat. Itaque ut dixi haec statim Huberto significa: sarcina est in aedibus Fuggerorum apud Joannem Keller, qui si voletis, eam restituet...*

The Fuggers were, of course, some of the greatest bibliophiles to ever live, with a number of them (such as Marcus) doing their collecting in the latter half of the 16th century; so the association of the specialist German publisher Koler with that family should almost be expected.

In his continuation of C. Koeman's masterwork on Low Countries atlases, *Atlantes Neerlandici*, Peter Van Der Krogt (Volume IIIA, pages 173-174) writes:

*The Nuremberg printer Johann (Hans) Koler has a special place in atlas production. The success of the Latin edition of Ortelius's Theatrum Orbis Terrarum must have given him the idea that an edition in a vernacular language - in his case German - would be profitable. Unaware of Ortelius's plans for a German edition (published in 1572) Koler translated and printed all the text of the 1570 Theatrum.*



### **[Theatrum Orbis Terrarum]**

*Then he disbound a copy of the Theatrum and rebound it in plano, inserting the leaves containing his German text.*

*Making a new publication this way cannot be seen as a pirated or unauthorized edition, as Koler's atlas has been characterized in literature. Each of Koler's atlases was based on a copy the Theatrum, which had been acquired in the normal way.*

*Koler's German text has a colophon, dated 1572. Thus, his edition appeared almost simultaneously with Ortelius's own German edition. Koler cannot have had a large production of his atlases since it was cheaper to buy the German edition from Ortelius himself.*

*It is therefore peculiar that a second "edition" of Koler's atlas is known, with a 1575 Theatrum used as the basis.*

*Three copies of Koler's work are known: Berlin SB and Weimar HAAB were made from a 1570 Theatrum, and Wolfenbüttel HAB from the 1575 edition.*

*[...]*

*For this copy [Berlin SB, qu.2o 134/40; Weimar HAAB, L 1:73] Koler took a 1570 Latin edition apart and pasted the leaves with German texts on the versos of the sheets. He had his atlas bound in Plano in such a way that the left page has the text for the map on the right page. The Berlin SB copy has the new German text pasted on the verso of the preceding map, the Weimar HAAB copy has the maps pasted on blank paper and the text bound in separately.*

*The texts relating to the maps are translations of the Latin text in the 1570 edition (the Berlin SB copy could be identified as 31:001A). Following the maps, Koler added the German translation of the "Catalogus Auctorum," Llwyd's letter, the index of maps, and both the indexes of old and new names from the same 1570 Latin edition. Berlin SB has a cover with the inscription 'N.V.W.' and '1574'.*

### **The Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek Koler-Mack Theatrum**

In recent decades, a third example of the Koler atlas was rediscovered at the Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Weimar, Germany. That copy matches the one discovered by Bagrow in many respects, however, it surpasses the previous examples by virtue of its exceptional hand-coloring and illumination, and the association of that work with Georg Mack. The discovery of that atlas elicited enough excitement among the cultural authorities in Weimar, that the book was reprinted in facsimile in 2006 as part of the German National Bibliography project.



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

---

### [Theatrum Orbis Terrarum]

The Anna Amalia Library example, like the other known examples of the Koler-Ortelius atlas, has no title page. However, this example includes as a frontispiece an illuminated example of an engraving of costumes of the four parts of the world by the master engraver Jost Amman. The signing of this print by Georg Mack the Elder (i.e., "G.M." in gold), establishes the attribution of the present atlas to the same artist and his workshop.

#### **Jost Amman's Allegorical Engraving of the Four Parts of the World**

The present atlas also opens with a stupendous example of Jost Amman's allegorical engraving of the four parts of the world. This example is evidently a proof or first state of the image, before the engraving of substantial lettering in the image, which is thought to have occurred in 1577. Here, like in the HAAB copy, the hand-coloring is exceptionally fine and belongs to Georg Mack the Elder or his circle. Interestingly, the hand is different from but closely related to the one seen at work in the Anna Amalia Ortelius. Here there is less illumination in gold and fewer bright colors, but more nuance, artistry, and verisimilitude.

The present example includes the date "1574" in gold on a shield in the lower-left panel, to the right of the crowned figure (the King of Africa, or Prester John) in the tent. Interestingly, this predates the supposed original drawing of the print, which is in the Weimar Cultural Collections and is dated 1575. We have not examined that drawing, so we cannot speculate on this divergence.

The 1577 later state of the print, can be seen uncolored in the collection of the British Museum. There is another example of the Mack-colored print at the New York Public Library, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art (dated 1577, with the title block pasted on, and without the "GM" monogram).

Contemplating the present example, the NYPL example, and the HAAB example of the image, these three examples show a progression of execution over more than a decade; the coloring and illumination shift from more painterly (drawing on the palette of the end of the German Renaissance) to more aggressive deployments of gold as well as bright and contrasting pigments. Whereas the other two hand-colored versions of this print have both coats of arms filled in, the present example does not. This is interesting in the context of the image's proof-before-letters quality, as it indicates a prototype quality to the coloring as well as if the print were not a commissioned piece, but perhaps a colorist's template.

It should be noted that while we purchased the Jost Amman print from the previous owner of the atlas, we have reason to believe that it lived outside of the atlas for most of its recent life.

#### **Georg Mack the Elder and His Circle**

The NYPL example of the Amman world costume engraving is included in Susan Dackerman's *Painted Prints: The Revelation of Color* (2002) as an illustration of the output of Georg Mack. Dackerman's book



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

---

### [Theatrum Orbis Terrarum]

considerably advanced our understanding of the specialist print colorists of the 16th century, and a considerable portion of the book is dedicated to the work of the various members of the Mack family (at least three of whom were named Georg). In her essay on the Mack family, Dackerman comments specifically on the Amman image:

*The production of Georg Mack the Elder's workshop was diverse and included finely painted engravings and etchings." A printed tab pasted within a blank cartouche at the center of Jost Amman's 1577 etching Costumes of the World (cat. no. 34) reads, "Zu finden bey Georg Mack illuministen zu Nurmberg," and identifies Georg Mack, or a member of his workshop, as the source of the painted print. The remainder of the text functions as an advertisement describing the wonders of the colorful costumes worn by inhabitants of the world. The appended tab with Mack's name and address suggests a business arrangement between the printmaker and illuminator. Amman may have sold Mack the etchings to paint and sell, or he could have left them at Mack's shop on consignment, hoping to entice patrons to buy impressions painted by Mack.*

### **Conclusion**

Ever since first becoming acquainted with the work of Georg Mack the Elder through the writing of Susan Dackerman, we were enthralled with the prospect of his having colored an example of the *Theatrum*. It seemed impossible that the best colorist of the 16th century would not have illuminated an example of the best atlas of the 16th century, and yet there was no obvious evidence of that having happened. At that time, over a decade ago, the Herzogin Anna Amalia example was not well-publicized outside of Germany, and so our theoretical book remained a fantasy. When we were offered the present atlas, the dream manifested into the incomparable book you see before you.

Exceptional examples of Ortelius's *Theatrum* have traded in recent decades, even some heightened in gold, but to a book, these have been later editions in standard configurations by colorists working within established map-coloring traditions. To have seen the coloring of Georg Mack laid out on a 1570A reconfigured in plano by Johann Koler renders our atlas selling careers complete.

This is a triumph of cartographic primacy, book-making, print-making, and illumination. To quote an 18th-century Anglicism - it is the completest thing.

### **Provenance**

Private Swiss collection.



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

---

**[Theatrum Orbis Terrarum]**

**Detailed Condition:**

Oblong folio. Full antiqued calf elaborately tooled in gilt and ruled in blind to the style of the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek Theatrum (Kt 700 - 42 L). Engraved allegorical print of the costumes of the four parts of the world by Jost Amman, hand-colored and illuminated by Georg Mack the Elder or his circle, and 50 engraved maps (of 53; lacking 24, 25, and 31). All maps hand-colored and illuminated in gold and silver by George Mack the Elder or his circle. All maps cut to the neatline and pasted on Koler's double-sheet letterpress text pages (49, lacking the text leaf for the world map and the non-map text leaves). The suite of world and continents updated to editions of circa 1587, while the rest of the maps are from the 1570A Theatrum with the appropriate Latin text on verso (pasted over with the Koler text leaves, but legible with backlighting).