

A museum quality, late-17th/early-18th century, Italian, scagliola, trompe l'oeil table top, uniquely figuring Asiae IIII and V, from Gerhard Mercator's Latin edition of Ptolemy's Geographia, dated 1584 & the cartouche from Frederick de Wit's, map of Persia, dated 1660 alongside navigational instruments

Sold



REF: 10908

Height: 45 cm (17.7")

Width: 152 cm (59.8")

Depth: 81.5 cm (32.1")

Description

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MAPS : Mercator's Ptolemaic atlas was printed in Cologne in 1584. It comprised 28 maps based on the original mathematical co-ordinates of Claudius Ptolemy (d.168 A.D.), from which the first printed maps were published in 1477. Through research I have discovered that the two maps shown on this scagliola are Tabula Asia IIII and (to the right) the western half of Tabula Asia V. The ornate title 'cartouches' correspond precisely with the decoration on the Mercator versions.

The two maps are depicted as a trompe l'oeil. The first map shows territories bordering the Mediterranean Sea: Cilicia, Cappadocia, Armenia, Cypress, Syria, Palestine & Egypt; this includes modern day Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. It moves east into the Arabian Desert, Arabia Foelicis, Mesopotamia, Assyria & Babylonia; modern day Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq. The second map overlaps the first, repeating parts of Assyria, Mesopotamia and Babylonia, before moving east to show the Caspian Sea, Media, Susiana, Persis and the Persian Gulf; modern day Iran. The maps are naively penned and annotated throughout with illustrations of lighthouses, forts, mountain ranges and rivers.

CARTOUCHE : A cartouche which presents depictions of the national identities of the different regions of the two maps, and the inscription 'Persia, Armenia, Anatolia and Arabia' is shown projecting from underneath the two maps. Through research I have discovered that this reproduces, almost exactly, the cartouche of Frederick de Wit's Map of Persia, of 1660.

INSCRIPTIONS : The westerly map is headed with a decorative cartouche inscribed in Latin, ' Medius meridianus 72 ad quem reliqui inclinatur iuxta rationes parallelorum 31.36. id circulum maximum '. The easterly map is also headed with a decorative cartouche inscribed in Latin ' Medius meridiemis 88 reliqui ad hunc indinantur iuyta rationes parallelorum 34.&.40 '.

These inscriptions clearly relate to the co-ordinates of the maps and were likely to have been copied or adapted by the artist from the same or a similar source as the maps.

INSTRUMENTS : The corners are decorated from left to right with navigational instruments that most likely belonged to the person who commissioned this top in his cabinet of curiosities (wunderkammer). It is also conceivable that he owned the maps. The top left shows a pair of dividers for measuring distance and use as a drawing compass. A 30-60 set square, for drawing parallel and perpendicular lines accurately, is overlaid on the map. On the top right is a quill, and lower right shows an ivory diptych dial for parallels 37 to 40 degrees north (circles of latitude which cover part of the area shown on the right hand side map) with a table of latitudes listing 24 Spanish cities inferring that this top is either of Spanish origin or was made for a Spaniard. Diptych dials (sundials) are portable instruments, usually made from ivory. They were ma...