



display 3

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A/M 1425 | Άγνωστος Καλλιτέχνης, Χάρτης της Κύπρου (Μεσαιωνικό) (χ.χ.)

### Ortelius (Abraham)

**INSVLAR, ALIQVOT AEGAEI MARIS ANTIQVA DESCRIP. Ex Conatibus geographicis Abrahami Ortelij Antverpiani// [insets:] CYPRVS, Insula laeta choris, blandorum et mater amorum / Cum privilegio decennali. 1584./ EVBOEA, Insula / SAMVS, Ionica / CIA, et CEOS / LESBOS / LEMNOS / CHIOS / RHODVS / ICARIA/ RHENIA/ DELVS.**

**Copper engraving. 360X470 mm, coloured in outline possibly contemporary, Latin.**

***Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. Antwerp, first published 1584.***

In St. Michael's Præmonstratensian Abbey in Antwerp, among the moss-plagued tombstones, a modest epitaph commemorates the life and achievements of Abraham Ortelius (1527-1798), a man who "served quietly, without accusation, wife, and offspring." Referred to today as one of the founding fathers of historical cartography and publisher of "the first modern atlas," the Flemish scholar, publisher and collector is responsible for unifying his geographer peers under one common pattern of making maps, thus allowing for their work to be more effective and for new ideas to be able to take off from a greater understanding of the whole.<sup>1</sup>

In 1570, eighty-seven maps produced by various cartographers were collected and arranged in what is considered one of the greatest publishing successes of the sixteenth century. *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Theatre of the World), was probably the first collection of maps in the shape of a book, published twenty years before Mercator's own atlas. *Theatrum* went through forty-one editions between 1570 and 1612, and appeared in seven different languages, including Latin, German, English and French, growing to more than double in volume by 1601.

Cyprus, which has existed in manuscripts since 23 B.C.<sup>2</sup> and has been, undeniably, one of the most popular islands favoured by map makers, was presented in the very first edition of the *Theatrum* on the same plate as Crete. This was the earliest of three maps of Cyprus to be published by Ortelius

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<sup>1</sup> Ortelius included a reference section at the back of his first edition of *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. This was an innovation in scholarship, and so we owe to Abraham Ortelius, the very idea of a bibliography and reference section to serious works of scholarship.

<sup>2</sup> According to C. D. Cobham, one of the first geographic manuscripts mentioning the name of Cyprus is Strabo's *Geographica* dating back to 23 B.C. and Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographice Hyphegesis* written in Greek, from 160 B.C. (*Excerpta Cypria*, Cambridge University Press, 1908, p. 1). Both define the names of cities and capes of Cyprus, but over the next 2500 years of Cypriot cartography, more than one thousand variations of namesakes appear across European maps and publications, largely due to language differences among travellers and scholars.

and it was based on the best map of the island available at the time, published by the Venetian engraver Giovanni Francesco Camocio in 1566.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1573 edition of the atlas, Ortelius introduced a second, much updated map of Cyprus, coupled with a medallion inset of Lemnos,<sup>4</sup> that was published in the *Additamentum I*, a supplement to the *Theatrum*.<sup>5</sup> This second edition is an ample proof of the geographer's continuous research and updating. Barely three years after the publication of his first map, Ortelius adopted a completely new model, and in doing so he preserved a new map made by the Venetian engraver and publisher Giacomo Franco, which seems otherwise to have gone unnoticed.<sup>6</sup>

This admirable cartographic specimen, which replaced completely the prototype,<sup>7</sup> became, thanks to Ortelius, the new model map of Cyprus. It remained unsurpassed, in terms of both outline and contents, until Cyprus came under British rule and H. H. Kitchener conducted a trigonometric survey of the island, publishing his maps in London in 1885.<sup>8</sup>

A third version of the map of Cyprus was published by Ortelius in *Additamentum III*, 1584. This is a reduced version of the 1573 map, which depicts the sea by wavy lines, contains ancient toponyms and is accompanied with nine insets of other Greek islands (Euboia, Samos, Cea, Lesbos, Lemnos, Chios, Rhodes, Icaria, Rhenia, Dhelos).<sup>9</sup> A copy of this third version of Ortelius's map was acquired by the State Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1995, for a total of £700 (approx. €1,400) and is currently on display at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism in Nicosia.

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<sup>3</sup> L. Navari, *Maps of Cyprus*, (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> The inset of Lemnos is taken from Pierre Belon du Mans, *Les observations de plusieurs singularitez & choses memorables, trouvées en Grèce, Asie, Judée, Egypte, Arabie, & autres pays estranges* (Paris, 1533).

<sup>5</sup> Ortelius's second version of the map of Cyprus was published alongside the earlier map, which continued to be included because it was engraved on the same printing plate with the map of Crete. The outdated map of Cyprus was withdrawn in 1584 when a new, separate map of Crete was engraved.

<sup>6</sup> Franco's map (produced c. 1570), which was not recognised and disseminated as one might have expected for such a cartographic achievement, was based on new and advanced surveys, which must have been carried out towards the end of the Venetian period – possibly when the Signoria of Venice felt the need to step up the defence of Cyprus in view of the Ottoman threat.

<sup>7</sup> Camocio drew two very different maps of Cyprus. The first map, referred to above, was printed in 1566, a few years before the Turkish invasion, and is a recension of a very rare map by the Venetian engraver Matteo Pagano published in Venice in 1538, which remained the most important and accurate map of Cyprus until 1570. If Pagano was able to produce the prototype map it was in all probability because he had access to contemporary (possibly official) cartographic surveys of the island, which must have been carried out in the first decade of the sixteenth century – in any case, before 1538. Camocio's map circulated in loose-sheet form and had enjoyed a wider circulation than the Pagano map, and hence represented the most up-to-date cartographic information on Cyprus until the very end of the Venetian period, in 1570.

<sup>8</sup> Navari, 2003, p.86. In a study of early maps of Cyprus, E. Livieratos distinguishes between the Ptolemy type of maps, the 'almost flat north coast' type and the 'almost actual shape' type, where Ortelius's 1573 version clearly falls under the third category, it unsurprisingly became the dominant model for the cartographic representation of Cyprus throughout the seventeenth century, with recensions executed by Hondius (1606), Blaeu (1635) and Janssonius (1652), among others. See Livieratos, E., *Cyprus on Historical Maps: Placement, Shape and Orientation From a Digital Point of View*, Cyprus Cartography Lecture Series No. 8, (Nicosia: The Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Navari, *ibid*, p. 106.

The presence of the map in the Gallery's collection is ambiguous to say the least, for it exists in isolation among thousands of paintings and sculptures acquired from Cypriot or Cyprus-based artists over the twentieth century. This singular acquisition, for which the Gallery's Register holds no information other than the year and value of purchase, reiterates controversies surrounding the Gallery's acquisitions and besides this point, it poses questions, if not challenges, as to the permissibility of conceptualizing historical maps as works of art within the Gallery's contemporary arts framework.

There is of course another way to interpret Ortelius's map, this time in the context of the *Theatrum* and how that body of work may relate to current archival and curatorial practises. Within the *Theatrum*, Ortelius's map of Cyprus is indisputably part of a collection yielding geographical knowledge about the world, and its three versions provide solid proof of the *Theatrum's* function as a living archive with attention to scholastic vigorousness. Within the Gallery's collection, the map is completely disassociated from the rest of the artworks, thus it cannot be considered in a comparative manner either in terms of authorship, genre, technique, historical style, content or significance.

As part of two collections differentiated between them by distinct organizing principles, in the *Theatrum's* case, Ortelius's map is an impressive aesthetic item stemming from a post-Medieval culture of knowledge. It can be examined in terms of a genealogy that gave rise to this admirable cartographic specimen, in turn influencing the evolution of Cypriot cartography in the centuries to come. In the Gallery's case, the map appears as an overlooked error, a bad call, or a glitch within an apparatus of the State that presents itself as a benefactor of national artistic production. It fails to connect to the rest of the collection under any possible categorization, thematic or retrospective. Despite the fact, the paths we can follow to discuss the map need not to be limited by this unmistakable failure.

The map of Cyprus, the third version by Ortelius to appear in the 1584 edition of his atlas *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, a copy of which was acquired by the Cyprus State Gallery in 1995 and here selected for *displays*, in a twist of fate, will serve as reference point for interdisciplinary approaches to art and power. Both as an artwork and as a tool of power, it will appear alongside a varied selection of art pieces from the Gallery's holdings which, each in its own way, can contribute to the aforementioned debate. Under this light, it brings to the roundtable issues of historical cartography and prevalent of modes of knowledge, where maps appear as tools and symbols of power. Furthermore, by examining the genealogy of precedent and subsequent maps it associates with, Ortelius's map may be considered having in mind socially induced processes which favour dominant aesthetics and forms of representation in the wider art world.