



Folio atlas in ten parts (580 by 370mm), 30 double-page engraved maps, with original hand-colour, in ten parts, each part with three maps and accompanying text, loose, with wrapper, with title and explanation, each part housed in original blue paper envelope, with title, final volume with title, index, and dedication to completed work, housed in modern quarter black morocco over buckram boards clamshell case, spine in seven compartments, separated by raised bands, gilt.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

The Physical Atlas; A Series of Maps Illustrating the Geographical Distribution of Natural Phaenomena.

Author

BERGHAUS, Henry; and Alexander Keith JOHNSTON

Publication date

1845-1848.

Publisher

John Johnstone, W. & A.K. Johnston, and Cowan & Co.; T.W. Saunders, Charing Cross, and R. Groombridge & Sons, Paternoster Row; James Lumsden & Son; John Cumming,

Publication place

Edinburgh, London, Glasgow, and Dublin,

Physical description

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Dimensions

580 by 370mm. (22.75 by 14.5 inches).

Notes

First edition of the first English thematic atlas, Alexander Keith's Johnston 'Physical Atlas', issued in parts, in their original envelopes.

Johnston's atlas finds its genesis in the scholarship of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), one of the most influential scientists of the nineteenth century. In effect the founder of geography as an independent discipline, Humboldt was the first to recognize the interconnected, systemic nature of environmental factors; to probe their expression across continents, quantifying such patterns as climate, terrain, seismic activity, meteorology, and magnetism; and to present such data cartographically, using a map not to represent a literal place, but as a medium through which to communicate a more invisible kind of geography.

It was with the work of German geographer and cartographer Heinrich Berghaus (1797-1884), however, that von Humboldt's biogeographical maps would reach their full expression. Berghaus published, between 1838 and 1848, the 'Physikalischer Atlas', an illustration (loosely plagiarized version) of von Humboldt's 'Kosmos' - and the first thematic atlas. Across eight sections (comprising meteorology and climatology, hydrology and hydrography, geology, terrestrial magnetism, botany, zoology, anthropology, and ethnography), Berghaus presented the physical geography of the Earth graphically in maps.

Following the success of Berghaus's venture, a plan formed for an English-language version to be published, in collaboration with renowned Scottish cartographer and geographer, Alexander Keith Johnston (1804-1871). This venture was never realized, with Johnston, instead, publishing, alone, his own 'Physical Atlas' - the first English thematic atlas. While indebted to Berghaus, Johnston's atlas enriches and develops his work, enlarging and revising Berghaus's 15 maps, and complementing them with 15 new maps, which reflect cutting-edge research.

How innovative Johnston's publication was is not to be underestimated. As the "Communications Regarding the Physical Atlas", printed on the back of the first part of the present example, quoting the address of the President of the Royal Geographical Society of London, in 1843, states:

"The Physical Atlas of H. Berghaus has nothing equal or similar to it in any country; it renders the progress of Geographical Science visible..."

In the present example each of the ten parts of the atlas is presented unbound, in their original wrappers, as issued, the conditions of publication being as follows:

1. "The work will comprise Thirty Maps, imperial folio size (25 inches by 20), engraved and coloured in a style similar to the Maps in Johnston's "National Atlas."
2. It will be issued every alternate Month, at One Guinea each - Three Maps to form a Part.
3. Suitable letter-press descriptions will be inserted in each Part.
4. The Maps will not be published in any consecutive order, as regards selection of subject, but the paging will be so arranged as to admit of being properly bound at completion; and a copious Index will be given with the last Part.
5. The work will be completed in Ten Parts, the periods of publication being strictly adhered to".

Alexander Keith Johnston (1804-1871) was a renowned geographer, cartographer, engraver, lithographer, and publisher, who together with his brother, William (1802-1888), ran one of the major UK publishing houses of the nineteenth century. The Johnston firm was known for their high-

quality, accurate maps, atlases, and globes, among them the first physical globe, which was exhibited at the Great Exhibition, in 1851, where it won a gold medal. Johnston was appointed Geographer Royal, in 1843, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, in 1849, and became a founding member of the Meteorological Society of Scotland, in 1862.

Bibliography

Provenance

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