

The earliest accurate depictions of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, still valuable today

Bernardino Amico, *Trattato delle Piante & Immagini de Sacri Edifizi di Terra Santa*. Florence: Pietro Cecconcelli, 1620. 11 5/8 inches x 7 15/16 inches (295 x 202 mm), 168 pages, 34 double page plates with 47 figures.

Bernardino Amico's *Trattato delle Piante & Immagini de Sacri Edifizi di Terra Santa* (Treatise on the plans and images of the sacred edifices of the Holy Land) is a series of measured (exactly observed) drawings of buildings in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Cairo, executed by Amico, a member of the Friars Minor of the Observance, between 1593 and 1597. The work was first printed in Rome in 1610; a second edition, extensively revised by the author, was published in Florence in 1620 with masterful etchings by Jacques Callot.

Although the tradition of drawing the Christian holy places stretches back at least to AD 685, the modern era in illustration properly begins with Amico's drawings; no artist before him aspired to record Jerusalem and its monuments systematically and with topographical precision. Indeed, when the scientific investigation of ancient remains in Jerusalem began in the middle of the nineteenth century, Amico's drawings were especially influential, and many scholars attested to his accuracy. Even today their value in the historical reconstruction of the shrines, and as witnesses to the former state of holy places since altered or destroyed, has not waned. Among the sites depicted are the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of Ascension on the Mount of Olives, the Via Crucis, and the tomb of the Virgin at Gethsemane. Also included are maps comparing Jerusalem in Amico's time and at the time of the New Testament.

In his etchings, Jacques Callot — well known for his ingenious illustrations of the *commedia dell'arte* — introduced scenery and ornamental elements (notably figures of friars and pilgrims). The illustrations are integrated with the text, and the majority have descriptive text printed on the reverse of the sheet, emphasizing their interrelation with Amico's descriptions of the sites.

This is a fine copy from the Bridwell Library at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, bound in contemporary limp vellum; the spine, which has been rebacked, has the author's name in gold.

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