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## **BLAEU'S FIRST SEA PILOT**

**Het Licht der Zeevaert.**

### **Author**

BLAEU, Willem Janszoon

### **Publication date**

1630.

### **Publisher**

W. J. Blaeu,

### **Publication place**

Amsterdam,

### **Physical description**

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### **Dimensions**

265 by 300mm. (10.5 by 11.75 inches).

### **Notes**

The first cartographic work published by Blaeu, and of utmost rarity.

Willem Blaeu's 'Het Licht der Zeevaert', a coasting pilot of European waters, first published in 1608, was an early example of a Blaeu's expertise in maritime navigation, which would eventually lead to

his appointment as Hydrographer to the Dutch East India Company around 1633. It was produced to update Lucas Waghenaer's chart atlas 'Het Spieghel der Zeevaart' from the 1580s, mimicking the oblong format. 'Het Licht' not only amended Waghenaer's maps but also added new directions and charts. Like 'Het Spieghel', Blaeu's work was designed both as an aid to navigation and also as a primer of navigational skills. It included diagrams demonstrating techniques from using a cross-staff to calculating dates. Blaeu's apprenticeship at Tycho Brahe's observatory at Uranienberg is indicated by the inclusion of tables of declination of the sun, based on his work. The richly engraved title page contains two figures flanking the title; it has been suggested one of them represents a portrait of Blaeu himself.

Blaeu's aim with 'Het Licht' was to win over seafarers, who largely disliked printed manuals. They felt that printed chart books could not be updated with personal observations as easily as the traditional manuscript rutters, and were not as attuned to the concerns of sailors. To counter this, Blaeu introduced innovative new chart symbols for beacons, buoys and shoals to make navigating safer, and made sure that each successive edition of 'Het Licht' carried the most up-to-date information. The maps themselves were engraved to the highest quality, possibly by Joshua van den Ende, to emphasise their clarity and ease of use. Blaeu was successful, and 'Het Licht' underwent twenty successive editions in French, German and Latin, as well as English.

### **Bibliography**

Koeman, M. Bl. 7; Shirley, BL, M.BLA-1a; R.A. Skelton, 'Biographical Note to the facsimile of Blaeu's Light of Navigation', Amsterdam, 1612, Amsterdam, 1964.

### **Provenance**

**Price:** £160000

**Inventory reference:** 23912