

Engraved map, hand-coloured in outline, two shields cut out and replaced with blanks.

THE FIRST LEO BELGICUS

Leo Belgicus.

Author
AITZING, Michael von

Publication date
1586].

Publisher
Gerardus Campensis,

Publication place
[Cologne,

Physical description
Engraved map, hand-coloured in outline, two shields cut out and replaced with blanks.

Dimensions
370 by 455mm (14.5 by 18 inches).

Notes
The first Leo Belgicus was published by Michael von Aitzing (1530-1598) in his work ‘De Leone Belgico’ of 1583. Here the lion rampant, with right paw raised, faces right, with the lion’s back following the coastline. This is the second state of the map with the addition of two shields, albeit one is cut out: on the left paw the coat of arms of France and the name of ‘Elisabeth’ (Valois); and below the tongue the removed arms of the Holy Roman Empire, with the name ‘Anna’ (of Austria)

remaining. The coat of arms of the United Provinces, below the text on the author on the top right, is also replaced with a blank shield.

The text to the far right is both an introduction to the lion and an apologia. The lion is introduced “in such a form as it has never been seen before, in order that you will better understand the description of the various parts it comprises”. The text goes on to affirm Aitzing’s and the lion’s neutrality in the ongoing war, and reassures the reader that “you will find everything more truthful and acceptable since we personally observed and verified all the facts on both sides”. He finishes with a plea that his Leo Belgicus will not be studied “for the purpose of calumniation but to find out the truth”.

To the far left, in England, is Aitzing’s monogram; and next to it a table with a list of the Stadtholders of the Seventeen Provinces, together with each province’s coat-of-arms, and the number of towns and villages within each province. The upper part of the table bears the acronym M.A.R.I.A., which stands for the names of the five governors of the Provinces between 1559 and 1579. Between the lion’s feet is text relating to the wars between France and Spain; most notably that between Henry II and Philip II from 1558 to 1559, in which Aitzing himself fought.

Bibliography

H.A.M. van der Heijden, Leo Belgicus: An illustrated and annotated cartobibliography, 2nd ed., (Alphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto, 2006), 1.2.

Provenance

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