

Double-page engraved map, with fine hand-colour in full.

THE FIRST REGIONAL MAP OF THE “GREAT SOUTH LAND” (CLANCY)

Chica Sive Patagonica et Australis Terra.

Author
METELLUS, Johannes Matalius

Publication date
1598 [but 1600].

Publisher
Excudebat Stephanus Hemmerden typographus, anno à partu Virgineo MDC],

Publication place
[Cologne,

Physical description
Double-page engraved map, with fine hand-colour in full.

Dimensions
226 by 288mm (9 by 11.25 inches).

Notes
Two maps on one sheet: the upper section shows the Straits of Magellan; the lower, the unknown part of “Terra Australis” on a polar projection. Published in Metellus’s ‘America, sive novus orbis, tabulis Aeneis secundum rationes geographicas delineatus’ (1600).

More finely engraved, and also more scarce, but nevertheless based on Wytfliet’s map of the same

title, published in ‘Descriptionis Ptolemaicae Augmentum’ (1598) which was, as the title suggests, marketed as a supplement to Ptolemy’s ‘Geographia’.

The first regional map of the “great south land”. Divided into two compartments “the upper shows Patagonia and below a large continent Australis Terre Pars. The lower and larger compartment shows in a three-quarter hemisphere, Terra Incognita Terra Australis with a decorated title-piece on righthand side. It depicts a large Terra Australis separated from New Guinea by a narrow strait, shows Beach, Lucach and Maletur below Java and Psittacorum Regio below the Cape” (Tooley).

“There are few more important stretches of water in relation to Antarctic discovery than the Magellan Straits, the 350-mile navigable passage separating Patagonia from Tierra del Fuego or, as thought for nearly 100 years, Terra Australis. Ferdinand Magellan sought a connection between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and did so with confidence based on a map he claimed to be in the possession of the King of Portugal that showed such a passage! Magellan took 38 days to traverse this strait which is remarkable given the complex maze of its inlets and passages, a trip that took the next attempt four and a half months. This challenge was too daunting for Spain, who directed their commercial trade across the Pacific from Mexico. Antonio Pigafetta, supercargo on the ‘Victoria’ which was the only ship in Magellan’s fleet to complete the circumnavigation, which included a sketch of the Straits in 1534. He described the passage: “October 21, 1520. Setting the course to the fifty second degree toward the said Antarctic Pole, on the festival of the eleven thousand virgins, we found by a miracle a Strait which we called the Cape of Eleven Thousand Virgins”” (Clancy).

The mapmaker
Johannes Matalias Metellus (1520–1597) has one of the more mercurial biographies in the history of cartography. Born in Burgundy, he studied law under Andrea Alciat (1492–1556) at Bologna and, by 1552, appears to be employed assisting his fellow Burgundian Gilbert Cousin (1506–1572) with his ‘Brevis ab dilucida Burgundiae Superioris’, and in the publication of Lelio Torelli’s ‘Encyclopaedia’ (1553), and Benedict Aegius’s ‘Apollori Athenensis Bibliothecas, sive de deorum origine’ (1555). After leaving Bologna, he travelled to Rome, Venice and Florence, England (in 1554), and Antwerp (where, it is presumed, he met Abraham Ortelius and Christophe Plantijn), before finally settling in Cologne at some time before 1563.

This date marks his earliest recorded correspondence from that town – a curious letter to the Flemish humanist and theologian George Cassander (1513–1566) on the medical applications of sasparilla (!).

Metellus is known to have contributed material to a new edition of Ortelius’s ‘Theatrum’ in 1575, passed information to Gerard Mercator in 1577 concerning an expedition in Mexico and the spice trade in the East Indies, and he is thanked in the introduction to Michael von Aitzing’s ‘Leo Belgicus’. He also wrote the description of Lyon in the first volume of Braun and Hogenburg’s ‘Civitatis Orbis Terrarum’, and a preface to volume two of the same work. Whilst Metellus appears to have been of assistance to others, he was not, it would seem, particularly successful in getting his own output into print. The surviving works suggest that he planned ultimately to publish a small-format multi-volume world atlas, starting with France, Austria, and Switzerland (Meurer, MET1), and Spain (Meurer, MET2), although both of these were published anonymously.

Metellus’s cartography is distinctive from the atlases produced in the Low Countries in the same period in that it borrows heavily from the Italian cartographic tradition of the so-called “Lafreri School”.

Bibliography
Literature: Clancy, ‘Mapping Antarctica’, 8.2; Suarez, ‘Mapping Southeast Asia’ 81.

Provenance

Price: £3000

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