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THE COMTE DORSENNE'S MAPS USED IN HIS NAPOLEONIC CAMPAIGNS

[Collection of maps of Spain, Italy, Germany, and Europe from the collection of the Comte Dorsenne].

Author
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Publication date
1780-1810.

Publisher

Publication place
Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Vienna,

Physical description
48 engraved maps on 126 mapsheets, all dissected and mounted on linen, some with outline hand-colour and full wash colour, all housed in 17 red morocco pull- off slipcases, lettered in gilt to spine, with the name of the Comte Dorsenne to upper cover in gilt.

Dimensions

Notes
A set of maps owned by the Comte Dorsenne (1773-1812), one of Napoleon's most trusted Lieutenants, during the French Revolutionary Wars.

The collection consists of some of the most up-to-date cartography of the Napoleonic Era, concentrating on the main theatres of operation, including Italy, Spain, and Germany, together with a general map of Europe.

Napoleon's extensive campaigns had led to the need for accurate military mapping in order to aid logistics and strategy. One of Napoleon's most trust cartographers was Baron Louis Albert Bacler d'Albe (1761-1824), whose monumental maps of north and south Italy appear in this collection; published between 1798 and 1802 – following France's successful Italian campaign – on a total of 54 sheets, the map would be the most detailed and accurate survey Italy to date.

Balcer d'Albe "served Napoleon with hardly a break from 1796 to 1813 … He was responsible for performing all the staff duties connected with Napoleon s planning sessions. He was entrusted with the task of amending maps and the maintenance of a large daily situation chart, on which every formation was marked by pins of different colours" (David). Bacler d Albe "joined the army as a volunteer on 1 May 1793, and served with the Army of the Alps. He was promoted captain of artillery, and was wounded at both the sieges of Lyon and Toulon. He then served with the Army of Italy. He was made captain of the 56th Line on 20 March 1794, then became assistant to the adjutant-majors of the artillery park. With Bonaparte's arrival, he was employed as a topographical officer and draughtsman, making maps of the coast from Nice to Savona. He was made chef de bataillon and head of the Topographical Bureau of the army. On 23 September 1804, he became head of the Emperor's topographical office, and proceeded to follow Napoleon through all his campaigns".

Interestingly the other maps in the collection are not French but by indigenous cartographers such as Thomas Lopez de Vargas Machuca (1730- 1802) – Spain; and Daniel Frederick Sotzmann, Frederick Wilhelm Ohsen, and Johann Pongratz – Germany and Europe.

The mapmaker Tomas Lopez de Vargas Machuca (1731-1802), was the only important Spanish cartographer of the eighteenth century to publish extensively, and the collection includes 41 on his regional maps of the Iberian peninsular.

Lopez spent his early years in Paris as the pupil of the great French cartographer Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville, but in 1760 was recalled to Spain. During his career, Lopez published several atlases, including one of America in 1758, and a miniature atlas of Spain. He became Royal Geographer to King Charles III in 1780, with the task of mapping all the different regions of Spain. In preparation for such a great undertaking he sent out a questionnaire to individual parishes, asking them for information on their local area. These regional maps (41 of which are present here) were intended to accompany his ambitious work 'Diccionario Geográfico-Histórico de España', which was never completed. In 1795, Lopez was authorised to create a geographic agency for the secretary of state.

After Lopez's death in 1802, his sons Juan and Tomás Mauricio published the folio-size 'Atlas Geographico de España', compiled from the best maps their father had made of each Spanish province (dated 1804, 1810 and 1830). Additionally, a number of composite atlases by him (and his sons), including maps of the overseas territories of the Spanish Empire are known.

The mapmaker Daniel Frederick Sotzmann (1754-1840) – whose maps of Prussia, and Poland and western Russia appear in the collection – was one of the leading mapmakers working in Berlin at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He had joined the Prussian Royal Academy of Science in 1786, becoming their geographer, and by the turn of the century was the most prolific cartographic publishers in Berlin. By 1816 he had joined the Royal Prussian Statistical Bureau and would later be appointed to the Prussian State Survey.

The penultimate map in the collection is a post road map of Lower Saxony by the little known German mapmaker Friedrich Wilhelm Ohsen (fl 1777). Although the map was first published in 1774, the present map has been updated to 1805, and provides a detailed view of the area a year before the creation of the Dutchy of Saxony following the the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806.

The final map by the German mapmaker Johann Pongratz, published in Vienna, provides a detailed overview of Europe in 1810, when much of the continent's political geography had been dramatically altered by Napoleon and his loyal lieutenants, such as the Comte de Dorsenne.

Comte Dorsenne (1773-1812)
Jean-Marie-Pierre-François Doursenne, called Dorsenne, count Lepaige (30 April 1773 – 24 July 1812) was a French military officer of the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars. He eventually became one of the senior commanders in the Imperial Guard.

Dorsenne's military career began in 1791, when he joined the army as a volunteer. He quickly rose through the ranks of the Armée du Nord and became captain, subsequently joining the Armée du Rhinand then the Armée d'Italie. With the Army of Italy at the crossing of the Battle of Valvasone (16 March 1797), Dorsenne's heroic conduct was noticed by commander-in-chief, general Napoleon Bonaparte, who promoted him to the rank of chef de bataillon (battalion commander). Bonaparte then enlisted Dorsenne's services for the Egyptian campaign, where the latter would display his usual bravery and would receive several battle wounds.

In 1805, after Emperor Napoleon created the Imperial Guard, Dorsenne was admitted in this elite unit as a major and displayed remarkable bravery at the Battle of Austerlitz, which would gain him the rank of colonel, on 18 December 1805. Only a week later, he was once again promoted, to the rank of brigadier general. By the end of 1806, Dorsenne had taken command of the prestigious Foot Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard, which he soon had to lead in combat at the bloody Battle of Eylau. An impeccable officer, Dorsenne was created Count Lepaige in 1808. His elegance and robust physique brought him the nickname "le beau Dorsenne" (the handsome Dorsenne). After serving briefly in Spain, when the War of the Fifth Coalition broke out, Napoleon called him back to the newly created Armée d'Allemagne and was given command of the Old Guard Infantry Division. After fighting at the battle of Ratisbon, Dorsenne had two horses killed under him at the battle of Aspern-Essling, subsequently receiving a serious head wound from a cannonball while he and his men were valiantly covering the retreat. He was promoted general of division soon after the battle and, after being present at the great battle of Wagram, was once again sent to Spain. There he was named governor of Burgos and then of Old Castile.

On 25 July 1811, Napoleon recalled Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bessières as commander of the Army of the North because of his negative reports of the situation. Dorsenne was Bessières's replacement. Paul Thiébault later wrote that Dorsenne was a "conceited imbecile", but in the opinion of Charles Oman his record does not match with the accusations of his jealous subordinate. In particular, Dorsenne had the good sense to cooperate with other French commanders more than was normally seen in Spain.

However, by the beginning of 1812 Dorsenne began to suffer from violent headaches, an effect of the severe wound he had received at Essling. He was forced to come back to France, where he had to undergo a trepanation. General Dorsenne, comte Lepaige died soon after the operation. His name is inscribed under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

Contents
1. BADER-d'ALBE, Louis Albert Guislan 'Carte Generale du Theatre de la Guerre en Italie et dans Les Alpes Depius le passage du Var…
Bacler Dalbe'.

2. BADER-d'ALBE, Louis Albert Guislan 'Carte Generale Des Royaumes de Naples, Sicile & Sardaigne…'

3. LOPEZ, Thomas [Maps of Spain].

4. SOTZMANN, D[aniel] F[rederick] 'Topographisch Militaerische Karte vom vormaligen Neu Ostpreussen oder dem jetziger Nördlichen Theil des Herzogthums Warschau nebst dem Russischen

District’, Berlin 1807.

5. SOTZMANN, Daniel Friedrich; and JACK, Carl. ‘General Karte von den Konig: Preussischen Staaten nach den neuesten und zuverlässigsten Hülfsmitteln auf das genaueste entworfen, und herausgegeben im Jahre 1799’.

6. OHSEN, Friedrich Wilhelm. ‘Neu Vermahrte Post Charte der Chur Braunschweigischen und angrenzenden Lande… 1774’, Verbessert 1805.

7. PONGRATZ, Johann ‘Neueste Allgemeine Postkarte von Europa… Nouvelle carte des routes des postes dans les diffrens Etats de l’Europe’. Vienna, Mollo, 1810. ”

Bibliography
David, ‘The Campaigns of Napoleon’ page 372.

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