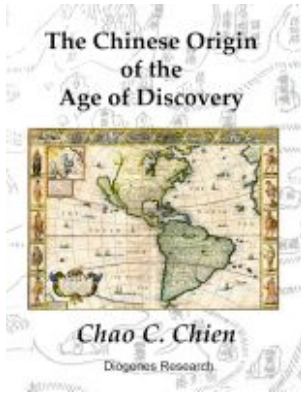


The Chinese Origin of the Age of Discovery



Chao C. Chien

Diogenes Research



The likely real history of the Age of Discovery has been recovered in this startling 300+ page volume. Extant maps and documents of the period are meticulously researched and analyzed to arrive at the unexpected but clear reconstruction. The evidence is shown in over 300 illustrations. Debates on the subject have raged for years. The new research promises to settle the dispute once and for all, or inflame the issue in a big way.

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The Chinese Origin of the Age of Discovery

By
Chao C. Chien
錢肇昌

Diogenes Research

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Preface

The Chinese being the originators of the Age of Discovery, admittedly, is a preposterous suggestion *prima facie*. Anyone who is even peripherally familiar with history would echo this same sentiment. Yet this is precisely the central theme of the present work, an honest effort of historical reconstruction. Let me state it as plainly as possible: this is not a work of fiction. This is not a work of speculation. This is a serious work of historical investigation into the possibility that China—to be specific, Chinese maritime traditions—may have been the true cause of Europe’s modern worldwide expansion.

When I use words such as “serious” and “honest” to describe this undertaking I am not referring to my state of mind; rather, I am describing the attitude and approach to the research. In a speculation one freely ponders what might have been or might not have been with or without the underpinning of sound reasoning. In a serious research, logic is the intellectual neuro-framework. In this book you will find startling assertions being made, but they are drawn from rational thinking, not muckraking.

Thus, my aim is to coax you into giving the ensuing material a fair reading with the benefit of your open-mindedness. After all, the opus does challenge one of the most sacred dogmas held by history. To present as unambiguous a thesis as possible I have arranged the material to give the line of reasoning well-defined structures and developments. This way you can focus on one issue at a time and deliberate its merit, assess the facts and evidence presented, challenge them, verify them, and decide if the conclusion is warranted. Most of all, I hope that it will foster as dispassionate a frame of mind as possible for an otherwise contentious allegation.

This work is the culmination of years of research spurred on by a lifelong curiosity. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that the researcher; that is, I, may have developed an emotional attachment (read: bias) to his efforts. Therefore it is also to minimize this aspect that a systematic and methodical approach to the presentation is adopted, and it is my earnest wish that such precautions would not mask the inherent excitement that such controversial materials promise to deliver.

Historical Background

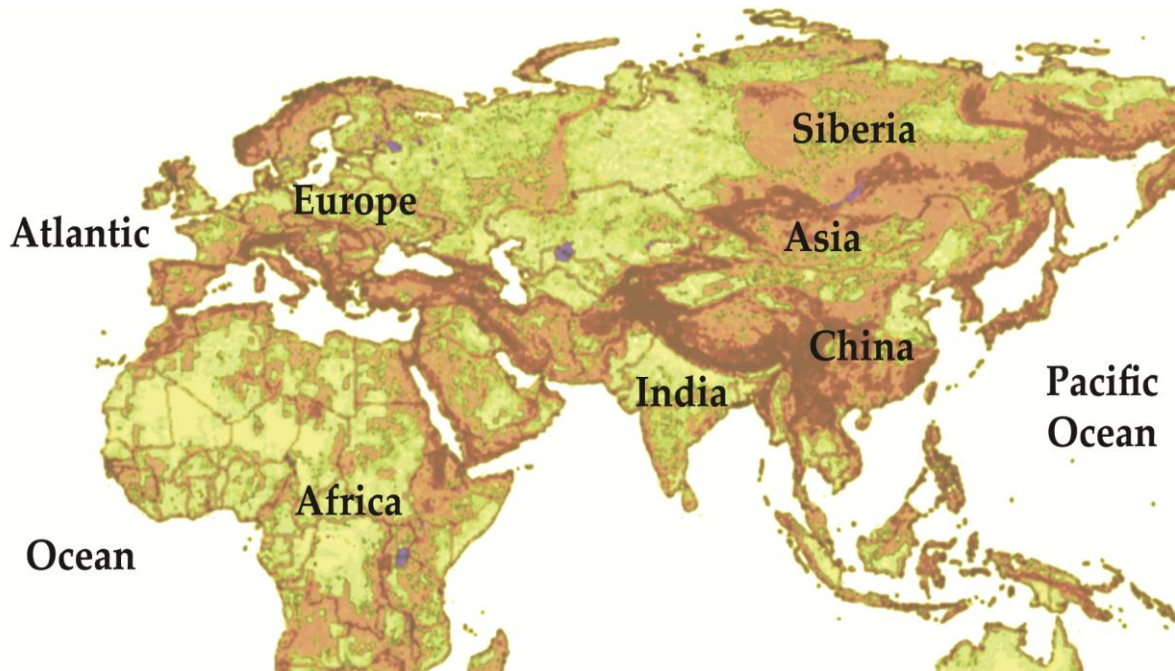


Figure 1
The Eurasian Landmass

There are three components to the present research, each one to be investigated independently of one another:

1. Were Europeans in fact the initiators of the Age of Discovery; did they independently chance upon the notion that there were new lands in the world unknown to be explored?
2. Did the Chinese precede the Europeans in having surveyed the world?
3. Did the Chinese visit the Americas before Christopher Columbus?

The stories of the European Age of Discovery have enjoyed the status of accepted history for a long time. It is understandable that any challenge to such an accepted view

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will be regarded as being absurd, or in polite company, at least incredible.¹ It therefore follows that should the claim of a Chinese survey of the world before the Age of Discovery fail to pan out, it would be taken as proof that the conventional view stands. However, the case is not that simple. In such a case it still must be independently determined that Europeans did not inherit its geographical knowledge from another source, regardless of the orthodox historical positions. Such is the nature of research; any research.

Between the years 1405 and 1433 the Ming Dynasty Chinese government launched a series of naval expeditions of unprecedented scale led by the legendary Admiral Zheng He.² Their exact motives as well as destinations, however, had not been fully and properly documented officially. As a result, various writers have speculated about where the Ming fleets had gone, with some conjecturing that they might have reached as far as the Americas, and perhaps even circumnavigated the world. Thus, it has been asserted that European explorers of the fifteenth century had benefited from Zheng He's experiences. The present researcher/author is keenly aware of the controversy surrounding such allegations, as they infer that Columbus might have had sailing information to his discoveries tied to the Ming Chinese voyages. In recent years these claims have precipitated heated debates which were astoundingly contentious; almost acrimonious in character, and in the process tainting an otherwise legitimate discussion.

One of the purposes of the present work is to restore a sense of propriety to the discussions. For one, the quarrel is not simply over who discovered America, because, if that were the issue, we would have to include Eirik the Red and others in the discussion, not to mention the natives who had discovered the continents tens of thousands of years ago. The discussion is indeed multilayered, for at the end should one fail to prove that the Chinese had reached America, it still does not infer as a matter of course that the Columbus legend is indeed historical fact. That still must be assessed on its own merits, even though the Columbus allegory has been generally accepted as fact for a long time. Also, even if the "Chinese First" claim turns out to be bogus, it does not directly follow that Columbus had not benefited from someone who had preceded him in his discoveries. And, should such be the case, we need to find out who these predecessors were.

This research will maintain a focused eye on these separate facets of the problem and attempt to deal with them in a logical fashion.

To give meaning to our work, let us begin with a brief account of the background events that frame the present inquiry.

¹ I titled the first version of this book *The 1421 Heresy*.

² 鄭和, Zheng He, sometimes Cheng Ho, is pronounced Jeng (or Jung) Huh. Zheng rhymes with the English word "sung."

The Place and the Time

The Ural Mountains divide the Eurasian landmass into two continents: Europe to the west and Asia to the east (Figure 1). Asia is much larger than Europe, but only a small southerly part of it is truly hospitable. There the temperatures are moderate and the river-irrigated soil is fertile. From time immemorial, the people living there, known today to the world as the Chinese, practiced agriculture; their mainstay being rice, a crop that grew in waterlogged mud fields. The people who lived by the coast, called Yue today in the Chinese Mandarin pronunciation (and Yuet in the local dialects or “Viet” as in “Vietnam”), derived their living from the sea. According to ancient Chinese text these people cut their hair and tattooed their bodies so as to mingle with the fishes in the ocean. Today this tradition is carried on in the Pacific islands by natives such as the Hawaiians, the Samoans, and the Maori from New Zealand.

It is said that in olden days their mode of transportation was by the water because the hilly country made road-building difficult, while naturally there were many rivers and streams. These people developed advanced skills in canal and ship building.

In northern Asia, delimited by the Ural Mountains to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Himalayan Mountain and the Tibetan Plateau on its southwest and the Arctic to the north, the weather is bleak and cold the greater part of the year, and the land mostly consists of deserts and sandy plateaus. The grasslands and oases that exist allow a mobile lifestyle that is primarily limited to life stock breeding and herding. There live the nomads. During bleak times these roving tribes would be forced to migrate in search of sustenance, which often spelled trouble for their more sedentary and more developed neighbors.

For thousands of years China, situated in southeastern Asia, had withstood the worst of the northern nomad-warriors who were fierce and strong with their swift horses and fast arrows. Great battles waged between these peoples had been forever memorialized in oral and written traditions. For example, during the second century B.C.E. the Huns, after being defeated by the Han Chinese, took leave for Western Asia, and in the fourth century invaded and settled in Europe via the great steppes of Eurasia. They were in turn followed by the Avars, the Bulgars, the Magyars, and the Mongols in the thirteenth century.

The Yuan Empire

In the early thirteenth century the Mongol chieftain Temujin, conferred the title Genghis Khan (roughly meaning “The Supreme Ruler” or in Western parlance, “The Great”) by his Siberian tribesmen after having unified them into the greatest fighting force on horseback

The Chinese Origin of the Age of Discovery

the world had known, took out Xixia,³ a Tangut kingdom situated to the northwest of China, and the Jin,⁴ the other nomadic nation that occupied the northern half of Song⁵ China. He and his warrior sons then advanced against the West, subjugated every nation of Central Asia on their way, and threatened to overrun Europe.

The disaster was averted fortuitously upon the timely death of Ogotai Khan, son of Genghis Khan, in 1241. By 1258, the western Mongol army under Hulagu, grandson of Genghis Khan, had taken Baghdad, while his brother Kublai Khan conquered Southern Song China in 1280. Thus for the first time China fell to a foreign overlord and became a part of the vast Mongol Empire, which consisted of four khanates, each bequeathed to one of Genghis Khan's sons. The eldest son, Juchi, formed the Golden Horde (Kipchak) Khanate, which controlled today's Russia and a large part of Persia. Chagatai was given the Chagatai Khanate, which occupied the present day Chinese Turkestan. Ogotai inherited the Mongolian homeland, and Tului's son Kublai founded the Chinese Yuan Dynasty.

Growing up thoroughly steeped in the Chinese culture by choice, Kublai Khan, the Great Khan of all the Mongols, abandoned the Mongol capital at Karakorum and established his throne at Yanjing (Beijing today), which he had renamed Dadu, meaning "The Great Capital." He set up his summer capital at Shangdu, which means "The Upper Capital." European writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who wrote *Kubla Khan*, would later refer to it as *Xanadu*.

At that time (late thirteenth century and fourteenth century) the Mongol Empire stretched from Hungary to the Pacific Ocean and from Siberia to the Indian Ocean, although internally the empire was not exactly in unity. The branching of the Khan's family had splintered the empire due to the great distances between their assigned fiefdoms and thus their ever-diverging cultures. The Golden Hordes in the west had adopted the Islam faith while Kublai Khan's Yuan leaned toward the Chinese culture. In a few years the Il Khanate, founded by Kublai Khan's brother Hulagu, which also had embraced Islam, would fall into Turkish hands and turn onto the Mongols themselves.

³ 西夏.

⁴ 金, a forerunner of the later Manchu.

⁵ 宋.

History Background

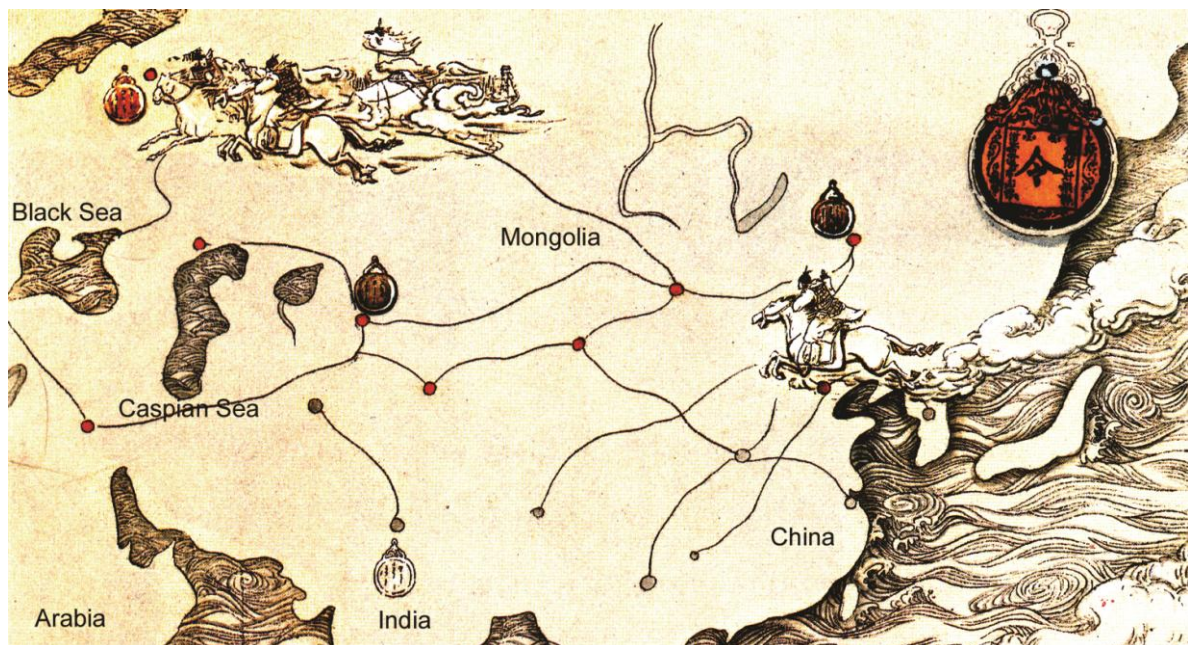


Figure 2

An Ancient Chart of Yuan Dynasty Pony Express System

In any case, because of the network of roads established under Genghis Khan and Kublai Khan's relatively enlightened rules, open trade between Europe and Asia flourished and intercontinental travel was encouraged. As a result, European historians dubbed the Mongol period of thirteenth century *Pax Mongolica*, or The Period of Mongolian Peace, just as the Roman Empire at its peak was called *Pax Romana*.

Figure 2 shows a modern rendition of an ancient chart identifying Yuan Dynasty post stations (pony express) stretching from China on the right to the Middle East on the left. The medallion at the upper right corner shows a Mongolian brass pass that would accord its owner free and safe passage throughout the empire.

Despite Kublai Khan's sincere attempt at an administration, the Mongol occupation of China was doomed to failure. Because of the steadfast Chinese resistance against the conquest, the Mongol invasion of China was exceptionally protracted in comparison to the relatively easy conquest of the rest of the world. For that, the Mongol conquerors held an exceptionally deep resentment toward the defeated Chinese, with the southern Song Chinese even more despised than the northern Chinese who had subsisted under the Jin, who were considered Chinese by the Mongols. To rule China the Mongols introduced people from the West; that is, mostly Central Asia, to serve in the government. Indeed, the Mongol rulers instituted a sort of caste system in China, with Mongols ranking supreme,

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followed immediately by people of “colored eyes;”⁶ that is, Persians, Turks, and Europeans,⁷ then the northern Chinese; that is, the Jin and their Chinese subjects, and at the bottom the southern Song Chinese. For this last group the Mongols even adopted the Chinese derogatory label that the Chinese had applied to the alien people of their own south, *Man Zi*,⁸ loosely translated as “the savages” or “the uncivilized.”

After Kublai Khan, the succeeding Mongol monarchs were given to debauchery and paid little attention to the affairs of state, which they relinquished to their ministers, who almost as a rule were non-ethnic Chinese. Indeed, it has been said that the refusal to be Sinicized, as did the later Manchu, contributed to the failure of the Mongols in China.

The upstart nomadic rulers were fascinated by paper money. They could not believe the riches these pieces of paper could fetch. As a result they abused the system thoroughly by printing money at will. Finally, this irresponsible use of paper money, invented by the Song Chinese to the great success of their economy, eventually plunged the country into financial chaos. That the Yellow River changed its course and devastated the irrigation canals bringing on massive famine in the 1340's did not help Yuan's cause. By 1355 China was in turmoil, ultimately degenerating into a state of warlordism.

The Ming Dynasty

When it finally settled, Zhu Yuanzhang,⁹ a commoner of humble station, alone remained standing, having distinguished himself in battle and vanquishing all rival contenders. He took Dadu (Beijing) in 1368 and founded the celebrated Ming Dynasty, driving the Mongols out of China the following year. He dubbed himself the Hongwu Emperor; “hong wu” meaning “immeasurable military might,” or, in Western equivalence, “The Great” or “The Invincible.” Upon his death he was honored with the temple title of Taizu, which means “Supreme Progenitor;” that is, “Dynasty Founder.” Under his reign China's place in history as a mighty empire was restored.

Taizu Zhu Yuanzhang rose from modest beginnings. In his youth he had been a monk, a vagabond, a soldier of fortune, and members of various religious sects, secretive organizations, and others just to survive. When rebellion broke out Taizu joined in the

⁶ 色目

⁷ It is interesting to note that there is no Chinese historical record on Marco Polo.

⁸ 蠻子

⁹ Pronounced “yuen-jahng.” “Zhu” is the family name, which according to Chinese custom is placed first.

History Background

fray, gradually rising up in military ranks, and ultimately founded a new Chinese dynasty after centuries of foreign incursion and subjugation.

By all accounts Taizu was an able ruler—he is universally hailed as one of China’s preeminent emperors. He brought groundbreaking initiatives to Chinese government that served the country well. He recognized that eunuchs and imperial females—empresses, concubines, and court ladies—could do immeasurable harm to the state and the security of the throne, and introduced measures to preclude the members of such groups from holding power. They were denied education so they could not meddle with government affairs.

As with all founders of empires, Ming Taizu was concerned with the stability and longevity of his dynasty. He was also keenly aware that although the Mongols had been expelled from China proper, they remained a real threat in the north. To safeguard the northern and western frontiers he dispatched his more capable princely sons to key military posts in command of legions.

Taizu had twenty-six sons. The first and fourth born were his favorites. He designated the eldest, who was well schooled and showed a penchant for politics, crown prince. The fourth prince, Zhu Di, whom he posted to the erstwhile Yuan Dynasty capital Dadu, now named Beiping (Northern Peace)¹⁰ to foster a notion of a peaceful north, excelled in affairs military. Taizu made him the Prince of Yan.¹¹ As the Prince of Yan he held perhaps the most important defense post, the frontline facing the Mongols in the north.

As it happened, the crown prince died young due to illness. For a time Taizu considered anointing the Prince of Yan the new heir. However, the ministers made a case for the crown prince’s son, the royal grandchild and nephew of the Prince of Yan, on the ground that by going back on the Emperor’s own device he would surely precipitate the kind of future family bloodletting that he had sought to preclude in the first place. The royal grandchild had displayed no trace of brilliance that would have impressed the great dynasty founder, and Taizu had expressed misgivings about a possible threat from the visibly more capable and powerful, and perhaps more deserving uncle, the Prince of Yan. Despite the reservations, reluctantly Taizu abided by his earlier decision.

Upon the death of Taizu in 1398 the royal grandson assumed the throne as scheduled. He was known in history as the *Jianwen*¹² Emperor, “Emperor of the Reign of the Jianwen Period.” Because of his youthful age of twenty-one, his two royal mentors took up the actual duties of government administration, as the positions of Prime Minister had been abolished by Taizu earlier.

¹⁰ 北平. Today’s Beijing.

¹¹ Yan, 燕, being the ancient name for the area around Beijing.

¹² 建文

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Approximately fifteen hundred years prior the great Chinese Han Dynasty had suffered a debilitating blow by the *Rebellion of the Seven Princes*.¹³ Somehow these Ming royal mentors had gotten into their heads that the same drama would play out again if the princely powers were left uncurbed. It is clear that they were merely using history to urge the young emperor on to act against his powerful uncles. For this they advised the young emperor to take steps toward curtailing their influences. Within a year of the new reign five princely uncles were removed from office and jailed or driven to suicide on pretexts.

Perhaps it was epiphany that the Prince of Yan had been spared from this initial purge. Historians reasoned that he might have been too powerful to be provoked directly. Instead, his power was to be gradually reined in. For this, as a first step the court took the best of his three legions (numbering about fifteen thousand troops) for special assignments, and redeployed his military allies for remote duties. Then government action was taken directly against him. As a first stroke Emperor Jianwen placed Beiping under siege on the pretext of extraditing criminals.

To allay suspicion, the Prince of Yan feigned madness, wandering in tattered clothing around the streets of Beiping like a tramp, all the while paying keen attention to the goings-on at the royal court. When the occasion presented itself, he broke out of the siege and marched on the capital, ostensibly to “champion the emperor” by “cleansing the court of evil counsel.”

The Ming Civil War lasted four years. The final breakthrough came from a group of eunuchs seeking refuge from the young emperor on criminal charges. They sought asylum with the Prince of Yan and presented him with secret information on the layout of the capital and royal palace compound. With this intelligence the Prince of Yan breached the imperial defense and captured the capital city of Nanjing (Nanking). The Prince declared himself victorious and took the throne, changing the official calendar to the Period of *Yongle* (pronounced Yung Luh), which means “Eternal Bliss.” The clans of the royal mentors and all those who had connived with the “pretender” were summarily executed. Emperor Jianwen, however, disappeared, never to be found. To date, Emperor Jianwen’s disappearance remains a mystery of Chinese History.

Prince of Yan’s throne or temple title was Chengzu,¹⁴ which means “The Achiever” or “The Accomplisher.” The year of his ascension was 1402. Historians, virtually to a voice, regard Emperor Chengzu (r. 1402-1424) of the Ming Dynasty as one of China’s most illustrious emperors. Under his stewardship Chinese imperial prestige in the international community reached a new height. Chinese military prowess rose to its most potent in centuries. Some scholars would even go as far as comparing him with the near legendary

¹³ 七國之亂

¹⁴ 成祖

History Background

Emperor Tai Zong¹⁵ of the seventh century Tang Dynasty, or the mighty Han Dynasty Wu Di¹⁶ of the first century BC. However, amid the general exaltations, often little is discussed about the specifics of his reign but for one event.

Seven Voyages to the Western Ocean

Emperor Ming Chengzu was a man of grand visions and extraordinary abilities. His accomplishments were larger than life in all regards of the description. The first thing he did upon ascending the throne was to initiate a project to relocate the capital to Beiping and rename the city Beijing.

“Beiping,”¹⁷ City of “Northern Peace,” was so named to give meaning to the hope that the north, perpetually ravaged by nomadic invaders from Siberia, would be peaceful. “Beijing”¹⁸ simply means “Northern Capital,” thus distinguishing it from Nanjing, “Southern Capital.” Beiping was Chengzu’s home district when he was the Prince of Yan, the location of his core support; his base. “Yan” was the name of the ancient state which territories included that of Beijing.

Nanjing, in contrast, was the home of the official Ming court and Confucian ministers, who would have had Chengzu flailed and quartered had they been successful in their conspiracy. Now that Chengzu had gained the upper hand, it was these ministers and their families that were the losers of the gambit.

With the capital relocated to Beijing Chengzu found himself closer to “home” and to the Mongolian and Turkic enemies that dwelt in the northern desert—the Gobi. From the new capital the Emperor could strike out at his foes with greater efficiency to ensure the security of the nation.

For his new capital at Beijing Chengzu would also build a brand-new palace, today’s Forbidden City, one that would befit his stature and tower over all such edifices of the past. The project would take years to finish, and cost the treasury a pretty penny, but it would appropriately reflect his special status as one of China’s preeminent leaders.

Yet, despite such accomplishments Emperor Chengzu is best remembered in posterity for the legendary maritime adventures initiated under his administration known as “the Seven Voyages of Zheng He to the Western Ocean.”

¹⁵ 唐太宗

¹⁶ 漢武帝

¹⁷ 北平

¹⁸ 北京, at one time spelled Peking.

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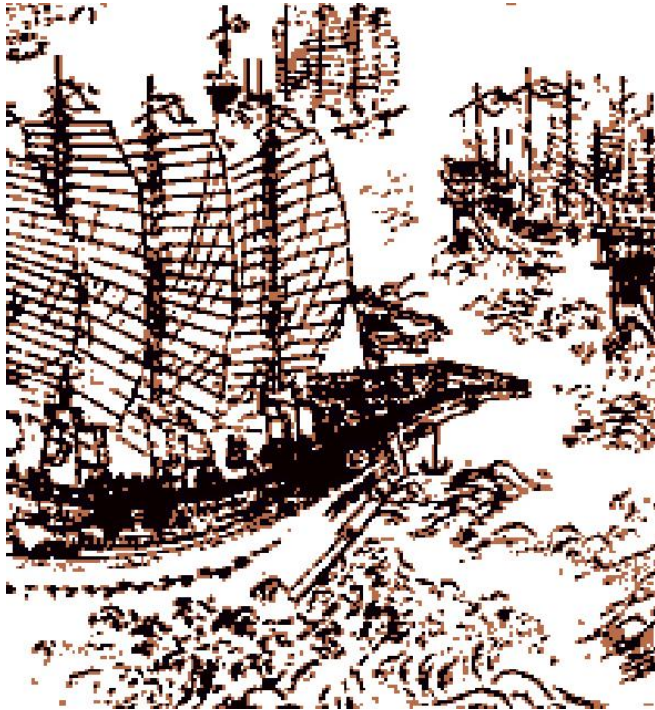


Figure 3
Treasure Fleet at Sea. Ancient Woodcut Copy.

Upon assuming his reign Chengzu immediately put in motion a series of naval initiatives in the form of overseas expeditions which were to last his entire period in office. These maritime expeditions were conducted on an unprecedented scale, with ships that were the mightiest the world had ever seen. Beginning in 1405, the fleets were reported to have made seven trips—some counted eight—around the “Western Ocean”—*Xi Yang*¹⁹ in Chinese. Figure 3 shows a tableau of the Ming fleets at sea copied from an ancient artist’s woodcut impression.

Thus in early fifteenth century hundreds of magnificent tall ships swooped across the high seas and made calls at foreign ports. It proved to be quite a sight to the natives. Out of these surreally towering vessels

would come ornately garbed emissaries from the *Heavenly Realm* bearing luxurious gifts. Such a sight would most certainly have made indelible impressions on any onlooker. Some natives must have even thought that the sailors—soldiers garbed in brilliantly colored uniforms—were gods descending on their humble soils. For this, they erected temples to commemorate the visiting leader Zheng He, a eunuch of the Ming court. Today there are still Zheng He temples scattered around towns and villages in the Indian Ocean. Sailors go there to pray for safe passage, while mothers and wives pray for their safe return.

After Emperor Chengzu’s death, the expeditions were abruptly and inexplicably canceled by his successor, and with a singular exception Ming China permanently abandoned its foreign maritime enterprise, and forever laid waste to its innovative marine technology.

After sustaining a few hundred years of cultural weather battering, the accounts of the Ming maritime adventures in due course eroded into the stuff of legends. While little known in the West, the naval exploits of Zheng He had become folklore, well told

¹⁹ 西洋

History Background

throughout China and the lands of Southeast Asia. As is the way of mythology, from the Greeks' sacking of Troy to King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, the plotlines have become complacent through repeated telling. Embellishment and fiction have seeped in, integrating with the few facts that have been retained, serving to shore up the heroism of the protagonists and at the same time vilifying the evils of the scoundrels. Soon even gods began participating in the action, and no one could tell the real story apart from the invented any more. As a result of this, much of this history has become piquing; many questions yearn to be answered.

Prince Henry the Navigator

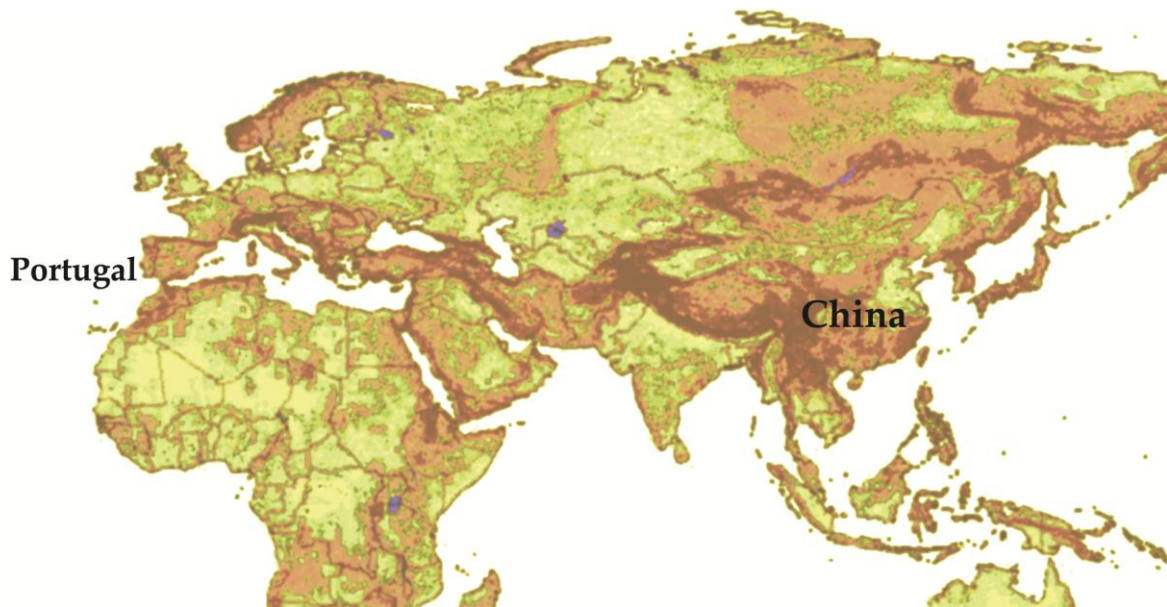


Figure 4

The Geographical Location of Portugal

As the Ming Chinese navy was blazing the oceans, Portugal, seemingly at the same time, was battling her way down the western African coast. Because of the chronological proximity of the two events taking place on the two opposite ends of the Eurasian landmass, we need to review the Portuguese history of the period as well.

Portugal is a country situated at the far western edge of Europe, which Europeans used to consider the end of the world (Figure 4). At one time it was believed that if one were to sail past the Pillars of Heracles (Gibraltar) into the Western Ocean outside Portugal, one

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would fall off the edge of the world and never return. Compared with the other European nations Portugal was a little country. Throughout the greater part of history up to the fifteenth century the rest of Europe probably was never truly conscious of it being there. Yet, tiny Portugal was the very nation that was to thrust Europe into world dominance.



Figure 5

A Barca

When Ming Taizu Zhu Yuanzhang was establishing the Ming Dynasty in China, King John I The Good (João I), founder of the House of Aviz, was on the throne in Portugal. In 1394, four years before the death of Taizu and eleven years before Zheng He's treasure fleets first put to sea, a third son, after princes Duarte and Pedro, was born into the royal household. His name was Henry. In history he is known as Prince Henry (Infante Dom Henrique) or Prince Henry the Navigator, as he is credited with having virtually single-handedly ushered in the European Age of Discovery. Using today's

psychology jargon Prince Henry would be an overachiever. When he was twenty-one years of age he led a military force and captured the North African Muslim stronghold of Ceuta on the opposite side of the Strait of Gibraltar.

His most acclaimed triumph, however, was the founding in 1418, while Zheng He was at sea, of a royal naval research center at Cape Saint Vincent in southwestern Portugal, the Institute at Sagres.²⁰

The institute was the first all encompassing European facility of its kind—a sort of fifteenth century naval high-tech center. It supposedly housed libraries, an astronomical observatory, a shipyard, staff quarters, and even a chapel, as the prince was a devout Catholic. It was designed as a research and training facility for Portuguese seafarers, to collect and preserve geographical knowledge of the world, to develop naval gears and equipment, and to launch naval expeditions.²¹ Thus under a single sponsorship one could find would-be sailors learning from some of the most prominent geographers, cartographers, cosmographers, and mathematicians of the day.

²⁰ Recently some scholars have expressed doubt on the existence of an actual institute.

²¹ Portugal was a relatively poor country at the time. It has been written that in 1420 Prince Henry was made the governor of the Order of Christ, the Portuguese branch of the Knights Templar, a wealthy and powerful Christian paramilitary organization, which could easily have funded the projects.

History Background

One notable product of the institute was the development in 1440 (The Ming voyages were terminated in 1433) of a new kind of ship—a caravel, one that was to be used later by Christopher Columbus in the discovery of the Americas.

Up to that time the principle Portuguese sea vessel was the barca (Figure 5). The barca (the English word *bark*) was in essence a single-sailed boat or barge. It possessed little maneuverability, and was ill suited for open-sea navigation. What Prince Henry's designers came up with was an advanced contraption that could support multiple sails, with a prominent bulkhead, and hind living quarters. Most important, for the first time in European maritime history it was equipped with a sternpost rudder, the very device that allowed the Chinese to sail the high seas for over a thousand years earlier. The Portuguese called the carvel, or caravel, the *nau*; "nau" or "nav" being the etymological root of the word "navigate," thus the name *nau* simply meant "ship."



Figure 6
A Caravel

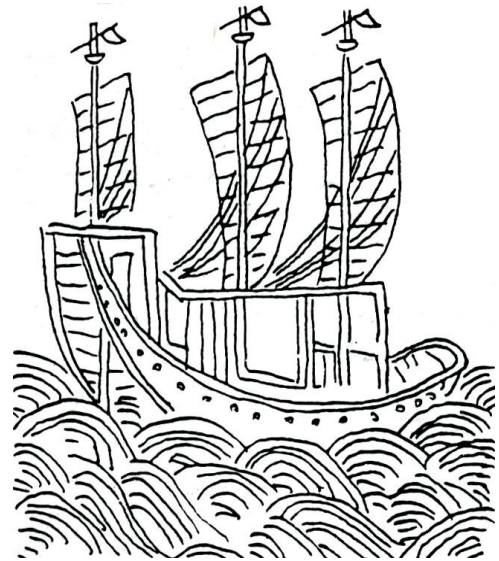


Figure 7
Woodcut Image of a Chinese Junk

If you look at a typical caravel (Figure 6), you can see that above water it is a dead ringer for a medieval Chinese junk (Figure 7).

For the rest of his life Prince Henry dedicated himself to the development of Portugal's overseas naval expansion; specifically, the systematic exploration of the West African sea coast and, allegedly, the discovery of a sea route from Portugal to India.

Starting from 1424, for ten years Prince Henry's sailors attempted to negotiate down the western African coast. At first they could not steer their barcas past Cape Bojador (Figure

The Chinese Origin of the Age of Discovery

8), but in 1434 Captain Gil Eannes maneuvered his boats westward out to sea to go around the cape, and the Portuguese were able to move further south, reaching Rio de Oro in Western Sahara in 1436. Since then it had become a Portuguese procedure to first sail west into the Atlantic for hundreds of miles and then sail south, thus avoiding the West African Atlantic counter currents. In 1441 they learned from the West African natives about territories to the south, and succeeded in reaching Cape Blanco in Mauritania. By 1445 they reached Cape Verde, and they made it to Sierra Leone by 1460, the year Prince Henry died. After half a century of tenacious hard work the Portuguese sailors finally made it round the bulge of Africa.

Incidentally, in 1444 the Portuguese sailors brought back a group of Africans they had captured, marking the beginning of the European African slave trade.

Heroes of Exploration

After Prince Henry's death Prince Henry's nephew King John II took over the Portuguese naval program and carried on the maritime enterprises. Soon the Portuguese acquired the Canaries (which later went to Spain) and the Azores. By 1481 the Portuguese had reached the Gold Coast, present day Ghana. Thus by the last two decades of the fifteenth century Portugal enjoyed a monopoly in African gold and slave trades, greatly enriching the royal coffer.

One of the Portuguese ships in the 1481 expedition to the African gold coast was commanded by a captain named Bartolomeu Dias. Under order from King John II, in 1487 Dias sailed toward the southern tip of Africa. Dias' squadron for this outing consisted of three ships, and the trip proved treacherous, as they were sailing against ocean currents. Nonetheless, with the help of an opportune storm they rounded the southern tip of the continent. Dias then pushed up the southeastern African shore until the enterprise was cut short due to exhausting supply and a spent crew. It was during the return trip that the Portuguese discovered the Cape of Good Hope that Dias originally named the Cape of Storms. King John later changed the name to the Cape of Good Hope. The rounding of the Cape of Good Hope allowed the Portuguese to sail into the Indian Ocean and reach the Orient for the first time.

By the end of the century King John II was dead and was succeeded by King Manuel I, who in 1497 organized another expedition bound for India around the Cape of Good Hope. This time the fleet consisting of four ships and a crew of about 170 men was commanded by a captain named Vasco da Gama.

By this time new astronomy-based navigational techniques and modern nautical instruments such as the astrolabe had become available. da Gama set sail from Lisbon in

History Background

July 1497 and, as almost a hundred years of sailing down the West African coast had taught the Portuguese, the fleet first swung in the southwesterly direction to pick up a favorable current and wind. In November the fleet reached Santa Helena bay where the explorers stopped to make repairs and take on fresh provision. They also got into a skirmish with the natives. By late November, they had rounded the Cape of Good Hope.

At Mossel Bay the Portuguese again got into a fight with the natives over a cross they tried to erect there. In January the next year the Portuguese ran into two Bantu chiefs who wore silk and satin. They told da Gama of large sailing ships that had visited them before, so he knew India was within reach. From there the Portuguese sailors made stops at East African trading posts that included Mozambique, Mombasa, Malindi, and Kenya, battling the natives at every turn. In May 1498 the Portuguese finally reached Calicut, India, where they failed to establish friendly trading relationship with the Indians. In August da Gama returned home, arriving in Lisbon in September 1499.

The Chinese Origin of the Age of Discovery



Figure 8

West African Geography

Commercially, the trip could not be regarded as a success because of cultural differences between visitors and hosts. Historians often cited the curious fact that the Portuguese brought gifts of poor quality that unimpressed the local dignitaries. In hindsight, it would be unreasonable to hold the Europeans responsible for not knowing about the precious gifts that the Chinese officials had lavished on the local leaders less than a century earlier.

History Background

In addition, due to lack of experience in long distance sailing at sea, the majority of the crew died of disease.²² Despite all this, the voyage did technically initiate a sea trade route between Europe and Asia.

To impose trade with the Indians (of India) King Manuel arranged for a second expedition in 1500. In 1502 da Gama made a follow-up voyage to officially set up trade with India. It was during this trip that true colonial brutality showed its colors, and established Portugal as the naval power in the Indian Ocean. Later da Gama was named Viceroy of India and made many more trips to that country where he died.

The maritime efforts ultimately led to a vast Portuguese overseas empire, and in less than one hundred years the Portuguese sailors had gone from essentially unknown saltwater fishermen to pioneering open sea navigators. In the course of this short adventure many sailors had become legendary, such as Dias, da Gama, and Magellan.

Ferdinand Magellan (Fernaõ de Magalhaes in Portuguese), who was credited with being the first person to circumnavigate the world, was not a part of the Sagres School that developed the sea route to India. Born in 1480, he was aristocratic. Orphaned at ten, he became a page at Queen Leonor's court, where he was given a good education. By the time he took to sea Christopher Columbus had already reached the Caribbean and Vasco da Gama had reached India. His first turn at sea was in 1505 when he went with Viceroy Francisco de Almeida to India. Subsequently he helped fortify the Portuguese outposts in East Africa, fought the Turks in naval battles in the Indian Ocean, the Malays in Malacca (Melaka today), and was wounded in military campaigns in Morocco, giving him a permanent limp.

In the early sixteenth century Magellan approached King Manuel I for an expedition to the Spice Islands by sailing west, perhaps to establish a name for himself. How he got the idea for the project we are not told. Perhaps Columbus, who sailed west, had inspired him, Columbus not having reached India notwithstanding. It was rumored that Magellan had come into a map or geographical information that convinced him Asia could be reached by sailing west past the southern tip of South America. It was an odd hypothesis because supposedly the Spaniards and Portuguese had yet to chart that part of the newly discovered continents. In any case, King Manuel I turned him down on the proposal. Some commentators suggested that it was due to personality conflict—King Manuel simply disliked the would-be explorer. As a result, Magellan turned to the monarch of Spain for support, pointing out that the Spice Islands actually lay within her overseas territories.²³

²² Employing lime to provide vitamin C to counter scurvy on the high sea was yet to be introduced by the British, the limeys. The Chinese sailors, in contrast, supplied themselves with fresh fruits and vegetables from their stops.

²³ In 1494 Pope Alexander VI had divided the world into two, awarding half to Spain and the other half to Portugal. The treaty of Tordesillas will be discussed below.

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Charles I agreed to a contract with Magellan and in 1519 a fleet of 5 ships and about 240 men was launched for the South China Sea.

After crossing the Atlantic Ocean to what is today the Brazilian coast, Magellan's fleet went south shadowing the South American coastline. It is uncertain if there was a problem with the sailing charts, but Magellan failed to locate the passage to the west side of the continent, and the fleet stalled in what is now southern Argentina. It was not until October 1520 that he finally located the passage to the Pacific—the Strait of Magellan would eventually be named in his honor. The Pacific Ocean was so-called because it appeared to Magellan to be calm compared to the Atlantic, so we are told by history.

The crossing of the Pacific took 98 days. Finally, in March 1521 the fleet of three remaining ships hobbled into the harbor of Guam, where the Europeans battled the natives. Afterward, Magellan sailed on to the South China Sea islands that are now known as the Philippines where the party was welcomed. As bad luck would have it, Magellan was killed when he intervened in a local conflict.

When the expedition realized that they only had enough crewmembers to operate two ships they abandoned the caravel Concepcion. The two surviving ships then went on to the Spice Islands where they loaded up with spice goods and then sailed in opposite directions to return home, one heading east and the other west, perhaps to enhance the chances of success. Ironically, the eastbound ship could not make it and had to return to the Spice Islands, where they were captured by the Portuguese.

The westbound ship, Victoria, captained by Juan Sebastian del Cano, made it back to Spain in September 1522, circumnavigating the globe.

Today, we attribute the first European circumnavigation of the world to Magellan, who did not complete the trip, and accord him the glory of a conquering hero. Back in the sixteenth century he was considered a traitor by the Portuguese and loathed by the Spanish for his cruelty toward his crew and navigational errors.

By the time all this happened, Zheng He had been long gone. By 1522 the Ming already had arrested its overseas naval program for almost a hundred years. The two great seafaring nations of China and Portugal never met each other on the high seas; at least that is the impression one gets from established history. It is as if they had passed each other in the dark of night, not knowing the other ever existed. One obliterated its own achievements while the other went on to lead the Renaissance European imperial nations to world dominance.

Christopher Columbus conquered and colonized the West Indies by the end of the fifteenth century. Soon Italian Amerigo Vespucci and his fellow Spanish explorers were charting out the South American east coast and the area of Brazil specifically. Balboa was checking out Central America, while the Portuguese were establishing strongholds in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. A few years later the British, the Dutch, and the

History Background

French were penetrating the northeastern seaboard of North America. By the middle of the sixteenth century the Spanish had surveyed many parts of the American Continents and conquered Mexico (the Aztecs) and Peru (the Incas). By the end of the sixteenth century they were surveying the North American west coast all the way up to what is Canada today, and Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the world a second time. At the same time Henry Hudson was exploring the North American east coast for the Dutch.

Is this true history? The monumental events that occurred at the two ends of the Eurasian landmass being so close in time, was there really no connection whatsoever between the two? This research finds that not only were they connected; one was in fact the cause of the other. This book is the report on the investigations.

Europeans Did Not Do It

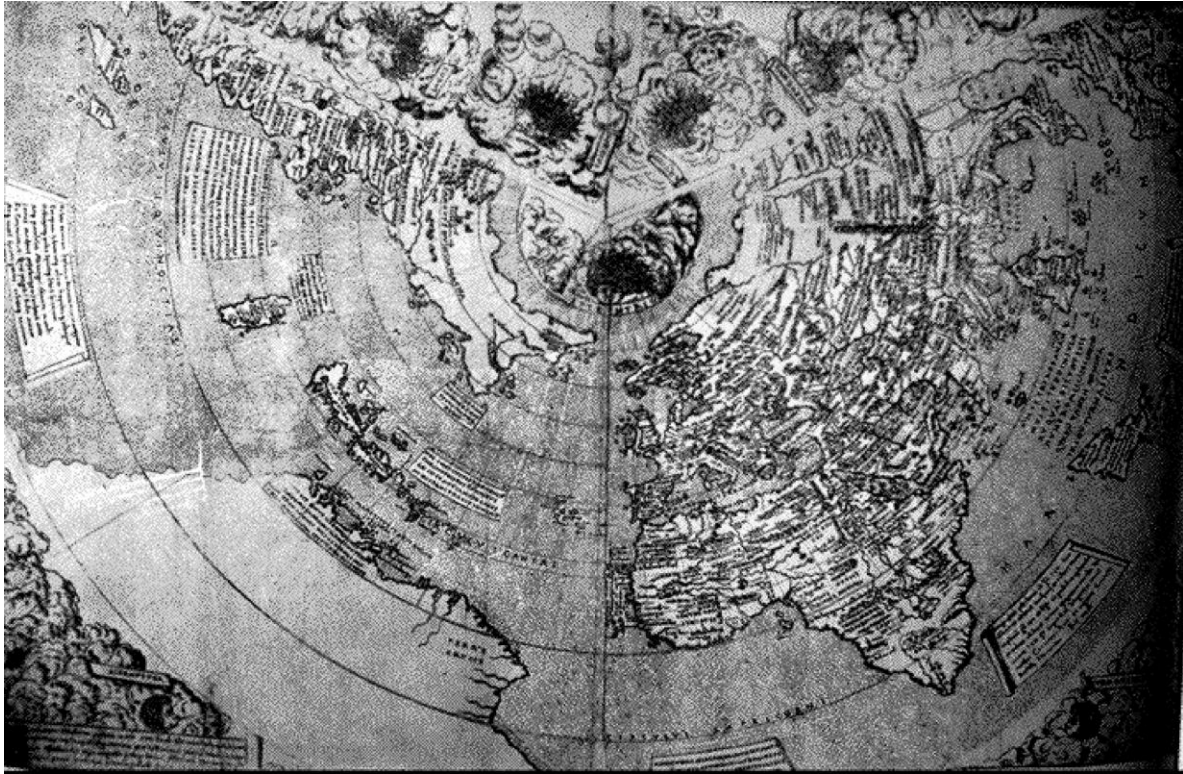


Figure 9

1506 Giovanni Matteo Contarini Map

Against such stalwart, long established European tradition, an assertion that the Chinese had instigated the Age of Discovery is a serious one. One must have ample evidentiary support to make such a bold claim. As it is, the argument for it is necessarily complex, therefore I shall simplify the process by breaking the analysis into two distinct parts. First, if we were to assert that the Age of Discovery was brought on by the Chinese, we must show that the Europeans did not do it as history has proclaimed it. It turns out this task is rather simple and straight forward.

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The fact is, there is clear evidence showing that European cartographers and writers had access to information about the geography of the world outside Europe way before the Age of Discovery; that they were describing and drawing maps of places in the world that they had yet to visit, explore, and survey. Now then, one cannot very well be a pioneering explorer if one already possesses information about the places one is to explore.

Critics may object to this assertion at this point (as they often have done so without having read the theses they attacked) on the ground that one or two old relics do not a case make, but then, that is precisely the point. In historical investigation one old relic is as good as one million, provided that the specimen is authentic. The antiquity of the human lineage is determined by one single, indeed, partial skeletal sample, famously named Lucy, from Africa. If even just one old map drawn before the Age of Discovery that shows the geography of the world exists, it demonstrates that at least one European cartographer was drawing a map of places in the world before European explorers had explored them, and therefore he had access to that knowledge, which had to have been provided by people who had explored those places.

Yet there is not just one such historic antique map in existence. There are literally hundreds of such unlikely maps, carefully preserved in the World's literary institutions. Scholars have even studied them, and then abandoned their efforts, or provided untenable explanations for them, innocently or otherwise.

The sample catalog of such unlikely records presented here is not meant to be exhaustive, but the numerous entries demonstrate that European cartographers in fact drew their maps based on external sources.

The Poles

One of the last places surveyed by European explorers is the North Pole. John Ross reached the magnetic North Pole in 1831, but the geographical North Pole was only reached by Robert Peary and Matthew Henson in 1909. The fact is, the poles were the last places Europeans explored in the long history of the Age of Discovery.

When Christopher Columbus discovered the *New World*; that is, the Caribbean, there was no talk of places such as the poles. Indeed, modern literature continues to argue that Europeans at the time still thought the Earth was flat, which highlights Columbus' genius in thinking that he could reach Asia by traveling West, a feat that could only have been accomplished if the Earth was round. Thus nobody could have been thinking that there were lands at the two tips of a spherical world. Yet European cartographers were drawing maps of the North Pole as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, virtually coeval

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with Columbus' exploration of the Caribbean. The following are a few such masterpieces that are still in existence.



Figure 10
1507 Ruysch World Map

The Giovanni Matteo Contarini map (Figure 9), reportedly drawn by Francesco Roselli in 1506, attempts to show the geography of the North Pole region. A similar intent can also be found in the 1508 Francesco Roselli map (Figure 63) in which the pole areas were shown

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in a world projection. Remember that not five years earlier Columbus was still bumbling around the Caribbean wondering where he was.

In the early sixteenth century Ruysch world map four pieces of landmasses are shown to make up the North Pole (Figure 10).

The same North Pole is shown in the 1521 Oronce Fine map (Figure 11 on the left).

Figure 12 shows a 1538 map of the North Pole region by the German cartographer Gerard (Gerardus) Mercator.

In 1595 the mapmaker updated his map (Figure 13), reaffirming that he knew about the North Pole.

Then he did it again in 1569 (Figure 14), and the map was no more accurate than its predecessor. In the lower right quadrant of the map you can see “unfinished” features indicating that either the mapmaker had difficulty tracing the landmasses or precise information was lacking. Regardless, where the mapmaker obtained his information on the area is undocumented.

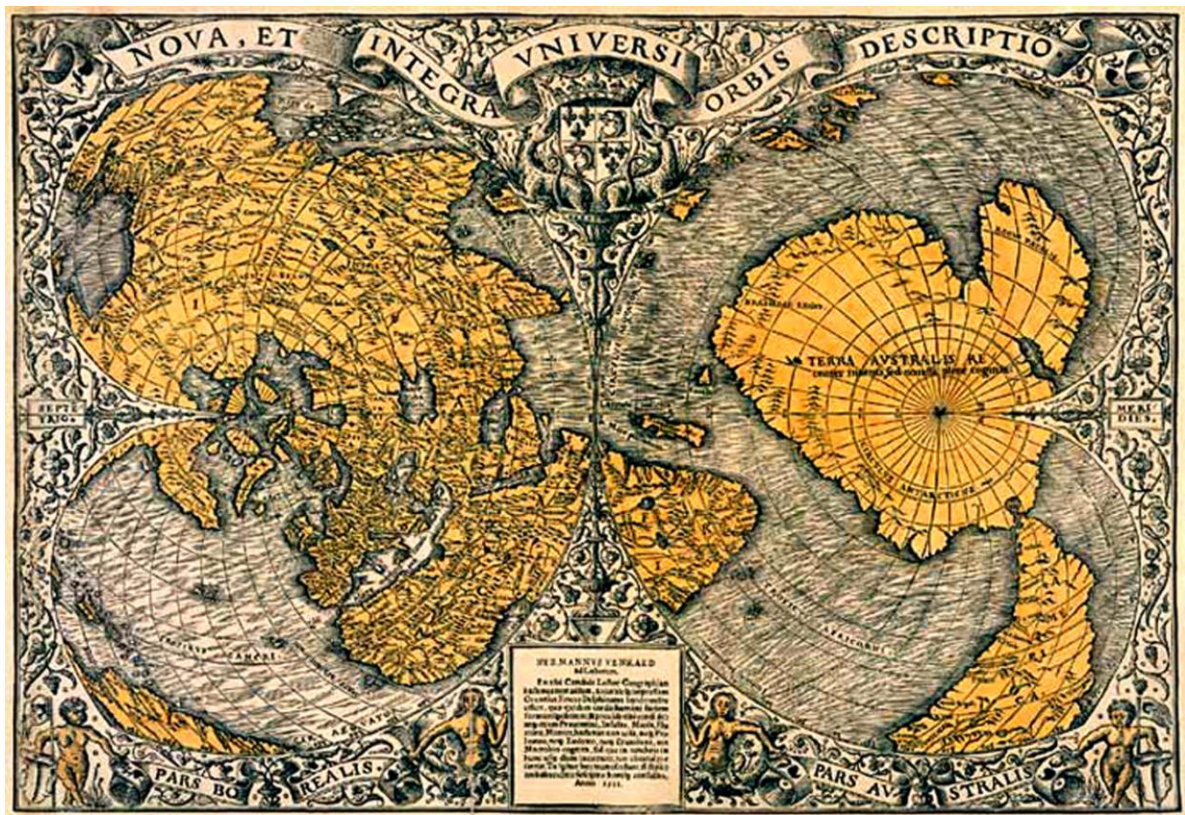


Figure 11

1521 Oronce Fine World Map

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Figure 12

A 1538 Gerard Mercator Map showing the North Pole Region

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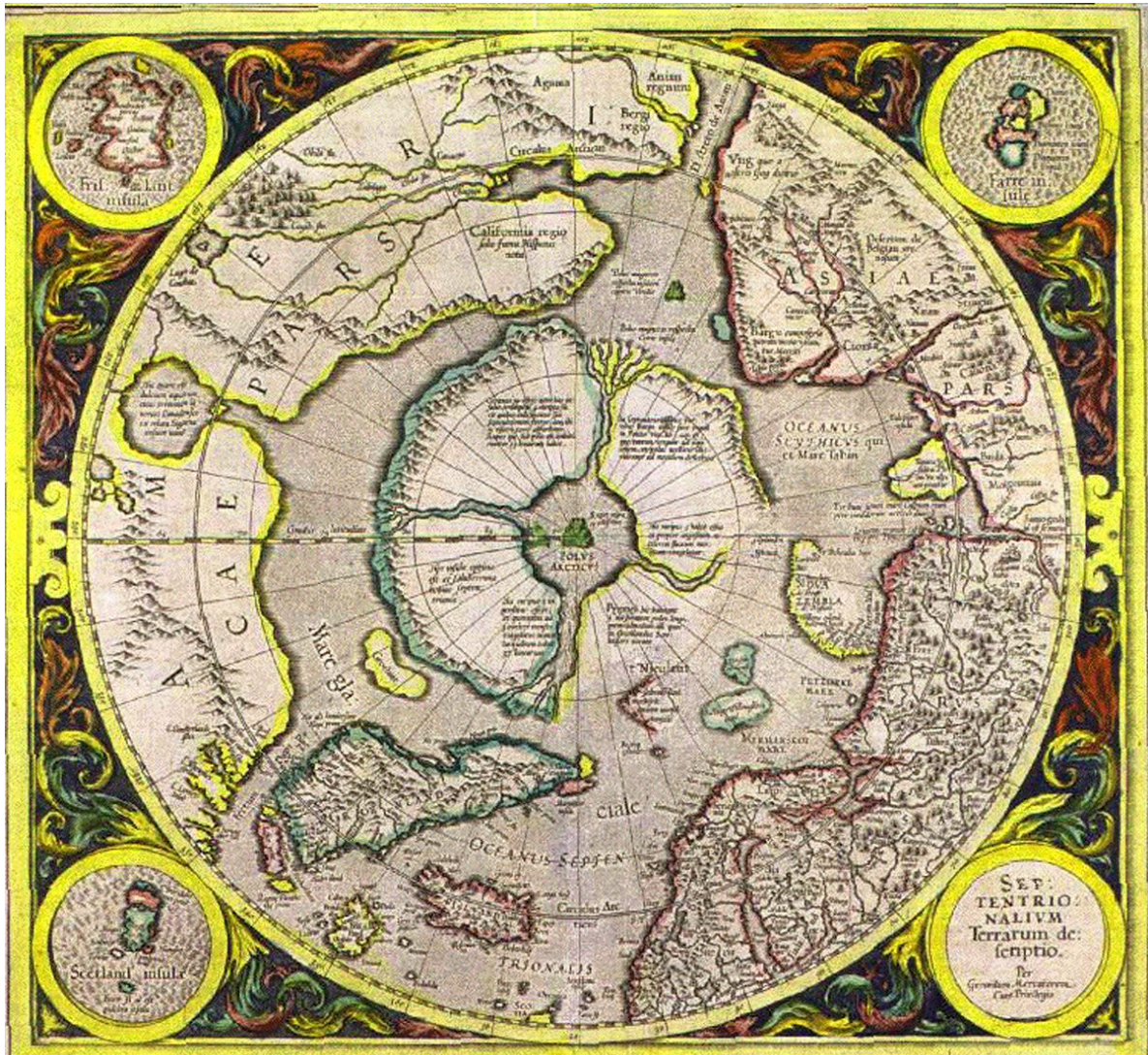


Figure 13
1595 Mercator Map of North Pole

Incidentally, at the center of North Pole (Figure 14) is an island called *Rupes Nigra*. It is told that a fourteenth century monk had described it in a work titled “*Inventio Fortunata*.” Clearly it was meant to say that the magnetic North Pole was a rock, perhaps of iron—*Nigra* means black. How a fourteenth century monk came to know about such things history does not explain.

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Figure 14
1569 Mercator Map North Pole Region

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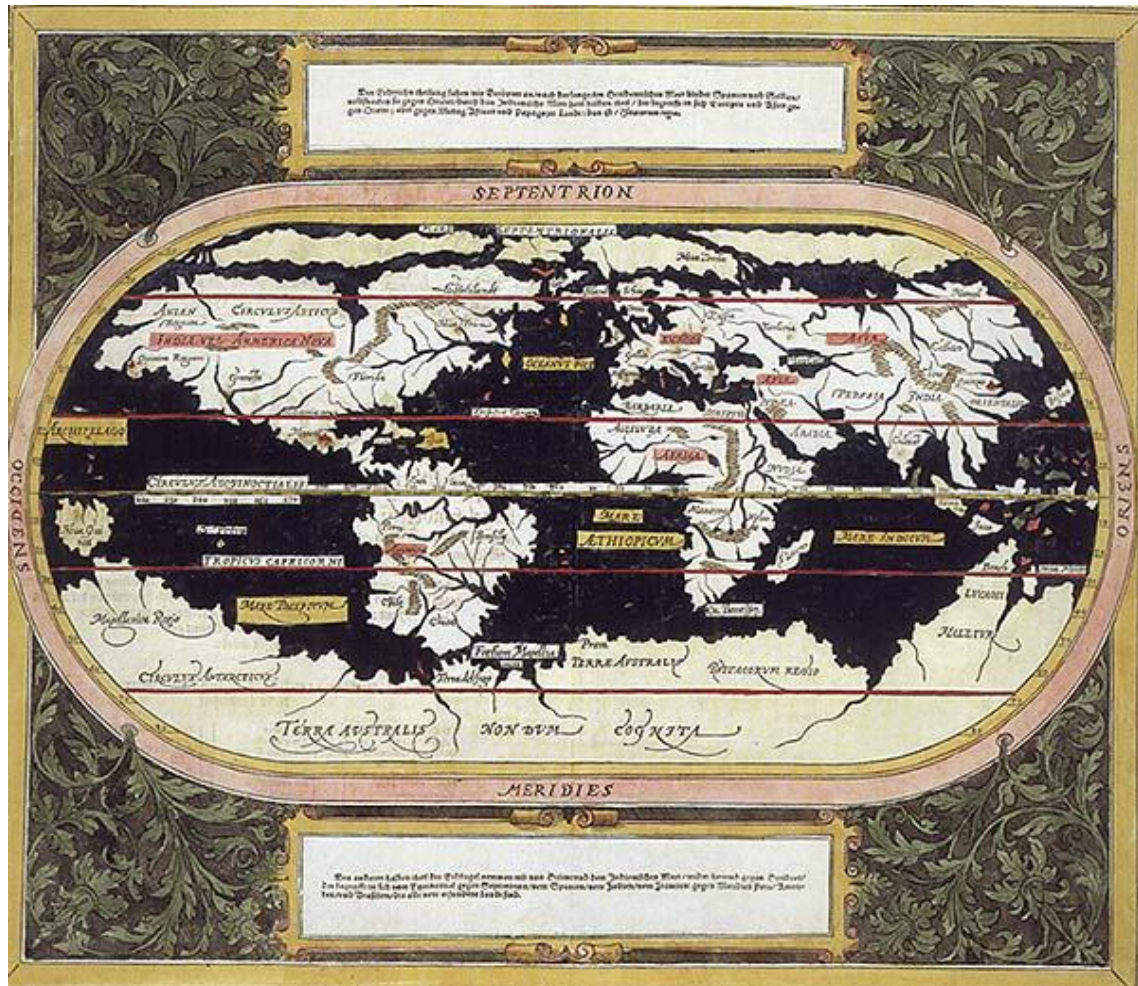


Figure 15
1544 Sebastian Munster Map

In 1593 Antwerp cartographer Gerard de Jode produced his entry for the polar catalogues with the map depicted in Figure 16.

The 1544 Sebastian Munster map (Figure 15) showed the Polar Regions with great confidence, even though he was off in his interpretation.

In 1582 English cosmologist John Dee also tried his hands at North Pole, again struggling to mesh the now familiar four gigantic ice blocks (Figure 17).

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Figure 16
1593 Gerard de Jode Map

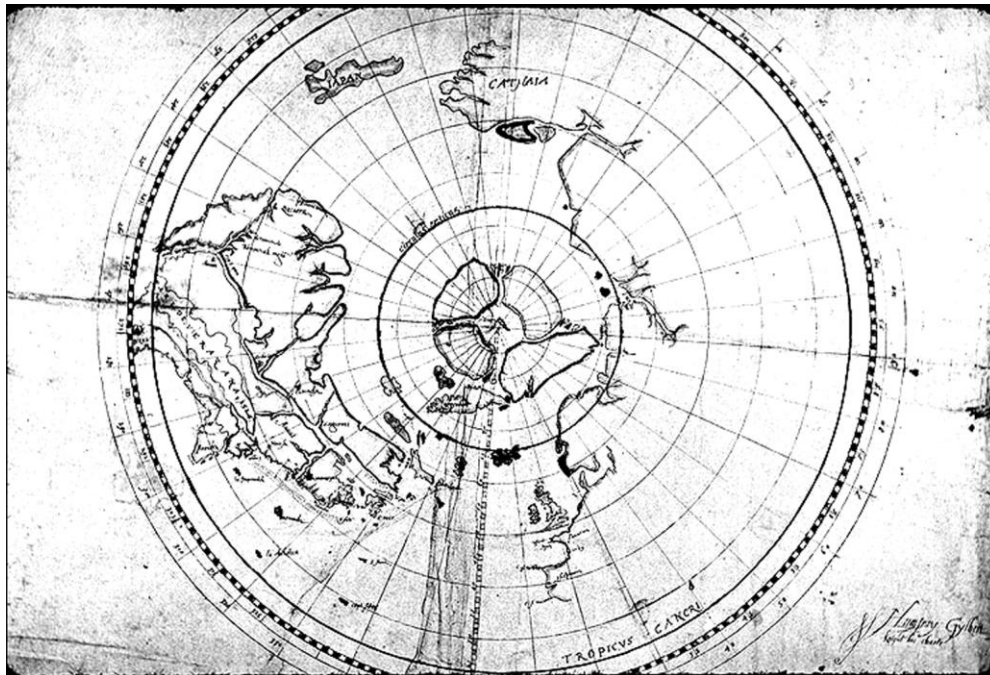


Figure 17
1582 John Dee North Pole

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Figure 18
A 1587 Mercator Map



Figure 19
1600 Quad Matthias Map

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Figure 20
1606 Blaeu Map

Figure 18 shows a 1587 Mercator world map at the British Museum in London. This map is trying to show the two polar areas. The interest in these “unexplored” areas is manifest.

In the 1606 Blaeu map of the world (Figure 20) the mapmaker noticeably attempted to show that he had the latest on the two poles, as shown in the two circular insets at the two lower corners of the layout.

The chase for the phantom North Pole lasted well into the seventeenth century. In 1618 the famous ice masses made an encore appearance in the Bertius map (Figure 21), with reindeer, sea lions, polar bears, and monsters in the supporting cast.

Europeans Did Not Do It

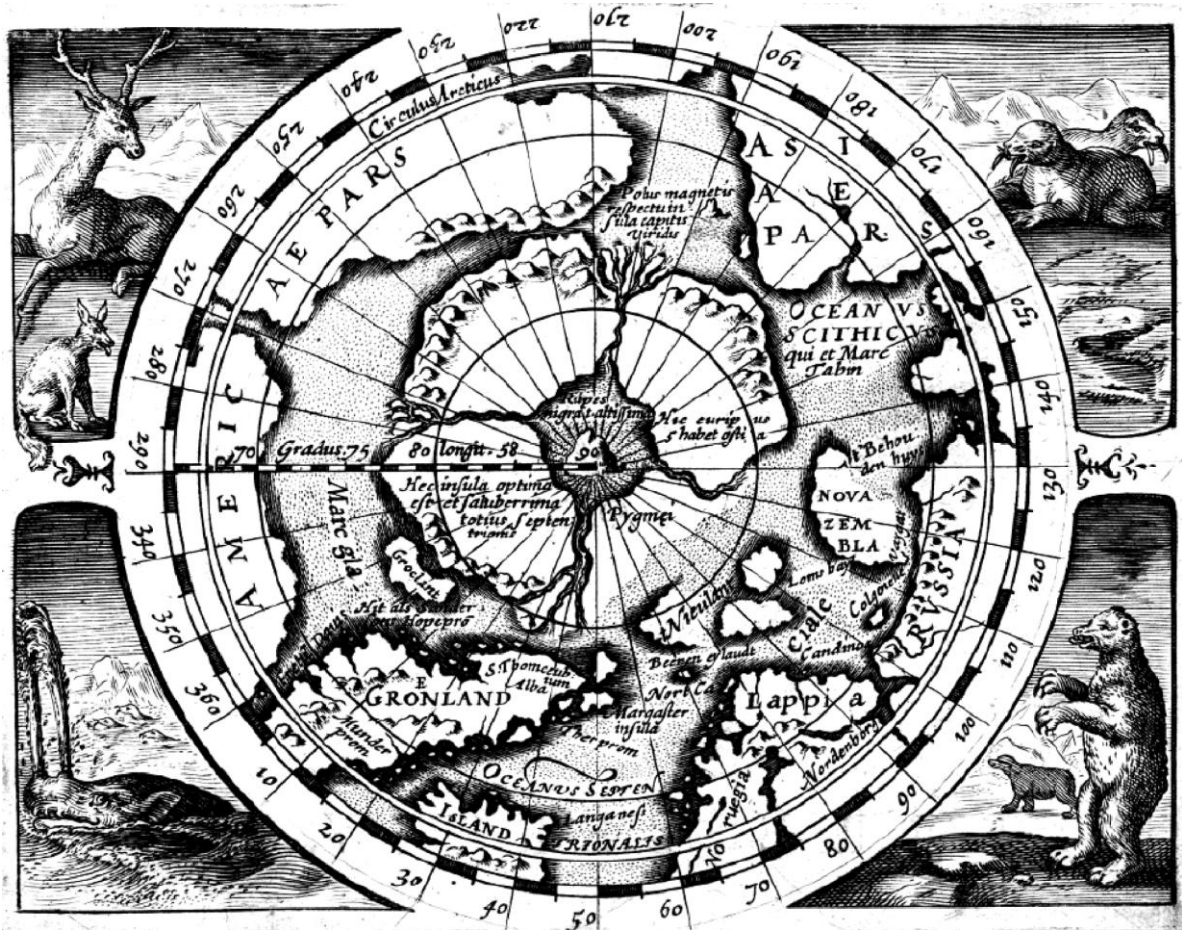


Figure 21
1618 Bertius North Pole

The Antarctica was reportedly first sighted by Americans in early nineteenth century, and the newly discovered continent was immediately surveyed and circumnavigated. Norwegian Roald Amundsen only finally reached South Pole in 1911.

Although Amundsen was credited as the first human to reach the South Pole in 1911 (Robert F Scott arrived slightly later in 1912), James Cook was supposed to have circumnavigated the Antarctic continent in 1820, even though he found the shorelines difficult to pin down because of ice. In 1840 James Clark Ross broke through the ice blocks and reached land. In any case, real surveying of Antarctica by Europeans did not begin until the Sixth International Geographic Congress in 1895.

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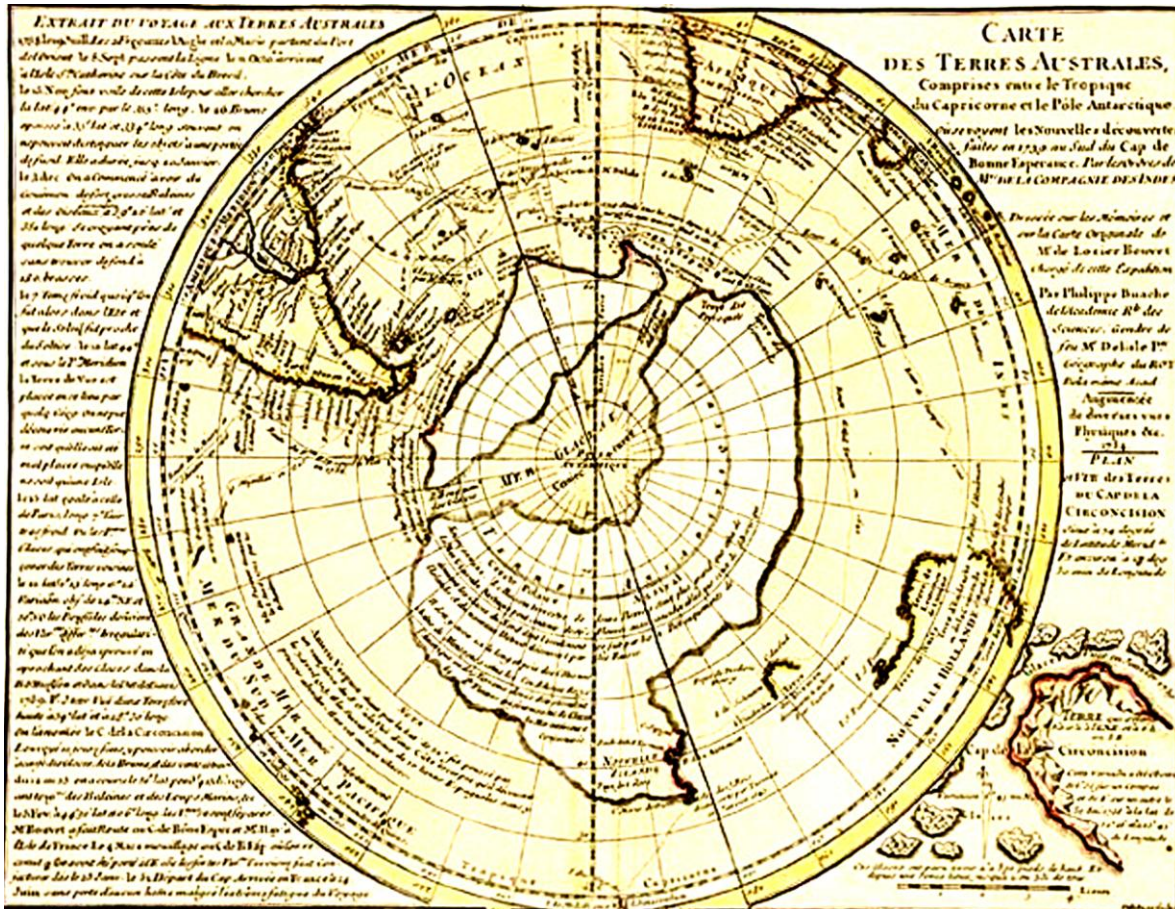


Figure 22

1739 Philippe Buache South Pole

Thus the South Pole was officially unexplored before the twentieth century. In spite of all this, this fact clearly did not deter our very determined medieval cartographers from trying their hands at charting the region.

Notwithstanding, in 1538, almost four hundred years earlier, Gerard Mercator produced a map of Antarctica (Figure 23). In 1600 the German cartographer Matthias Quad produced his Antarctica, *Terra Australis*, as shown in Figure 19, and the French geographer Philippe Buache his in Figure 22.

Europeans Did Not Do It

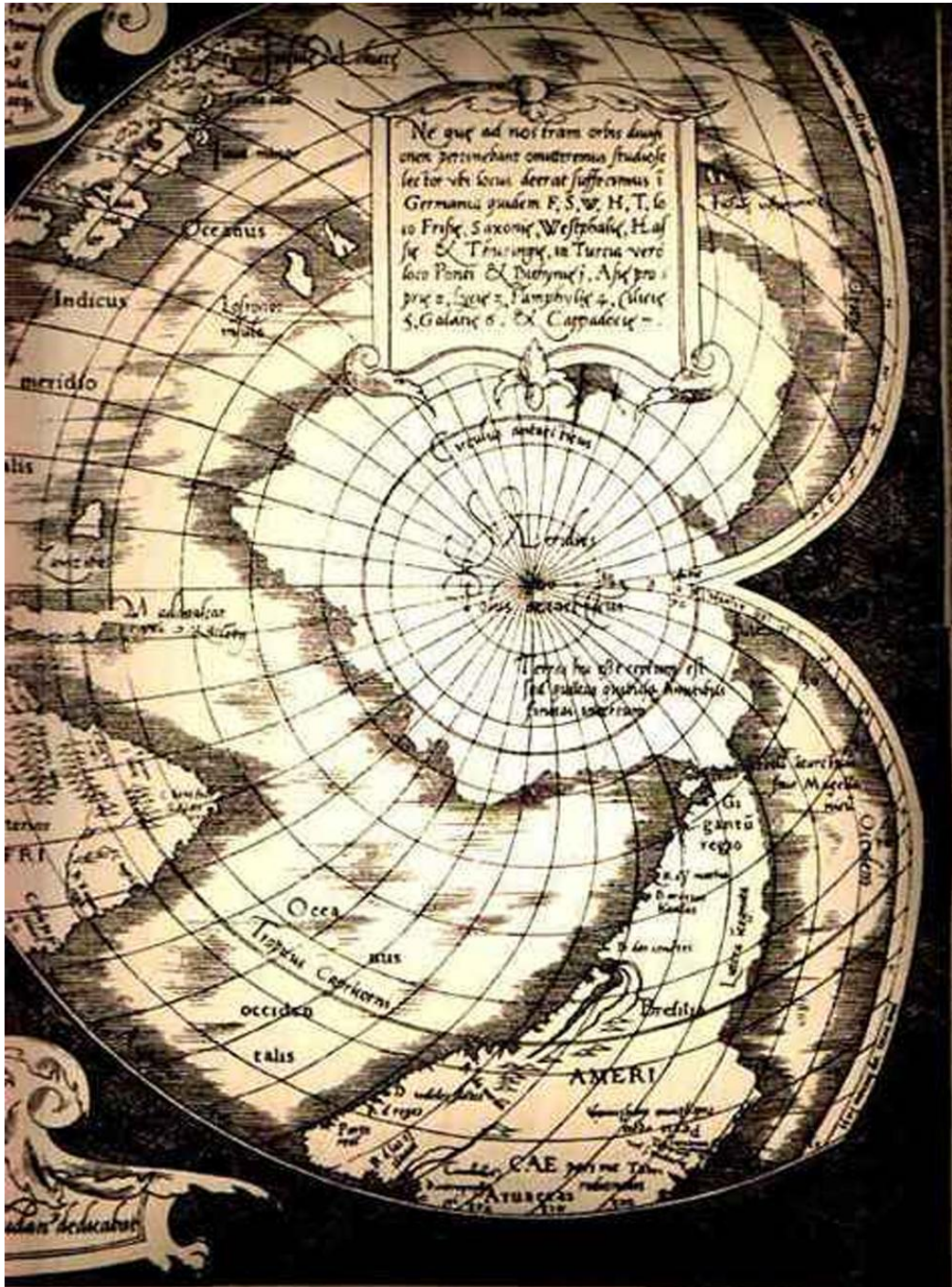


Figure 23
1538 Gerardo Mercator Map of Antarctica

Australia

All students of exploration know, Captain Cook studied Australia in 1770, and a few years later he surveyed the Hawaii islands. Yet European cartographers were depicting Australia on their maps way before then. Let us look at a number of maps of Australia published before this time.

The northwest corner of Australia shows up in the 1520 Peter Apian (Petrus Apianus) world map (Figure 24, right hand side) just ten years after Columbus began colonizing the Caribbean.

In the Dauphin Chart of 1530s (Figure 25) Australia is identified as Grand Java, *Jave la Grande*, positioned just southeast of Java. The shape of the northwestern Australian “horn” is clear. A later version is shown in Figure 27. Likewise in the 1550 Desceliers World Map, currently at the British Library (Figure 28), the left horn of the huge landmass of Australia south of Java is officially identified. It should be clear by now what that landmass below Asia is in Figure 27.

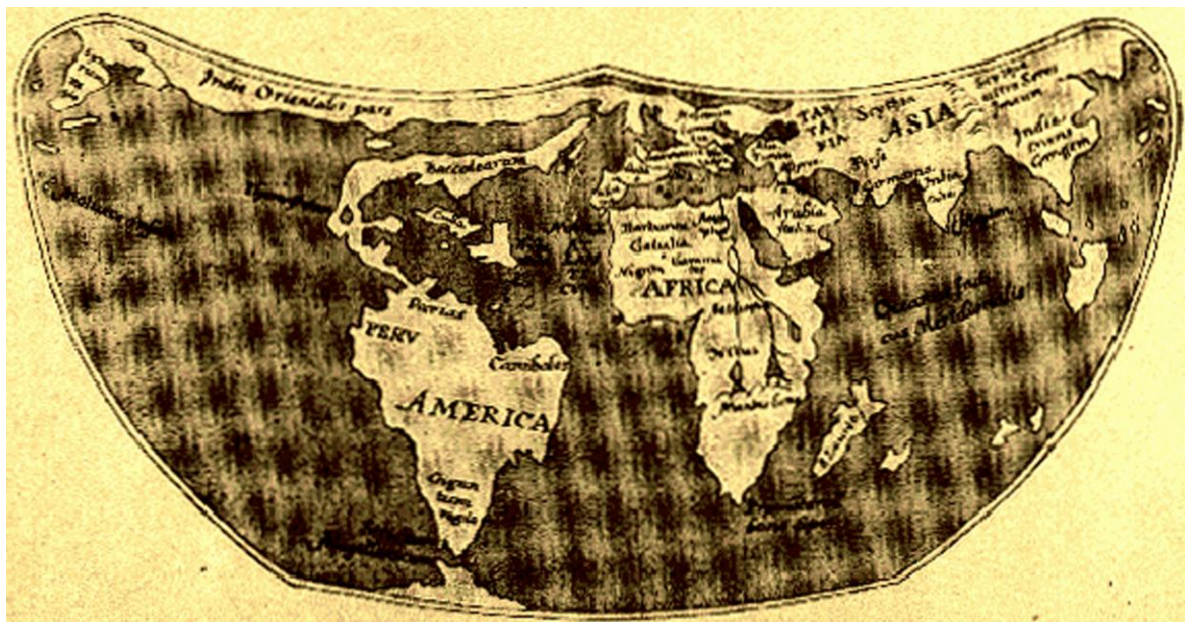


Figure 24
The 1520 Apian World Map

Europeans Did Not Do It



Figure 25

The Dauphin Chart of 1530 or 1536

These mapmakers should have no business with the poles in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. No European had surveyed those regions at that time. Obviously they had gotten their information for the maps from some external source or sources.

In Ortelius' 1570 map (Figure 29, allegedly by Gastaldi), Australia is hinted at. The same material also found its way into the 1595 Mercator map. Desliens had a 1556 version shown in Figure 30, with south pointing up. Australia is also visible in the 1598 Ruscelli world map (Figure 32 right hand side), and the 1600 Ribero map of New Guinea (Figure 32) shows the island attached to the northwestern tip of Australia.

Even as late as early eighteenth century European cartographers were drawing Australia without having surveyed it, as demonstrated in the 1667 Joan Blaeu Australia (Figure 33), the 1682 van Keulen map featuring Australia (Figure 33), the 1701 Mortier map (Figure 35), and the 1715 Louis Renard version (Figure 36).

The 1719 Henri Chatelain map shows a partial Australia (Figure 36), but also a southern land block that is detached from the rest of the continent. If European sailors had surveyed this land it was a unique piece of survey work; one that could selectively survey a portion of a continent by blinding oneself to a portion of the coastline. How did the sailors do it,

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did they blindfold their eyes, sail past the portion of the coastline that they did not want to chart, then open their eyes again?



Figure 26
Northwest Australia Today

Europeans Did Not Do It



Figure 27

1547 Harleian Dauphin Map

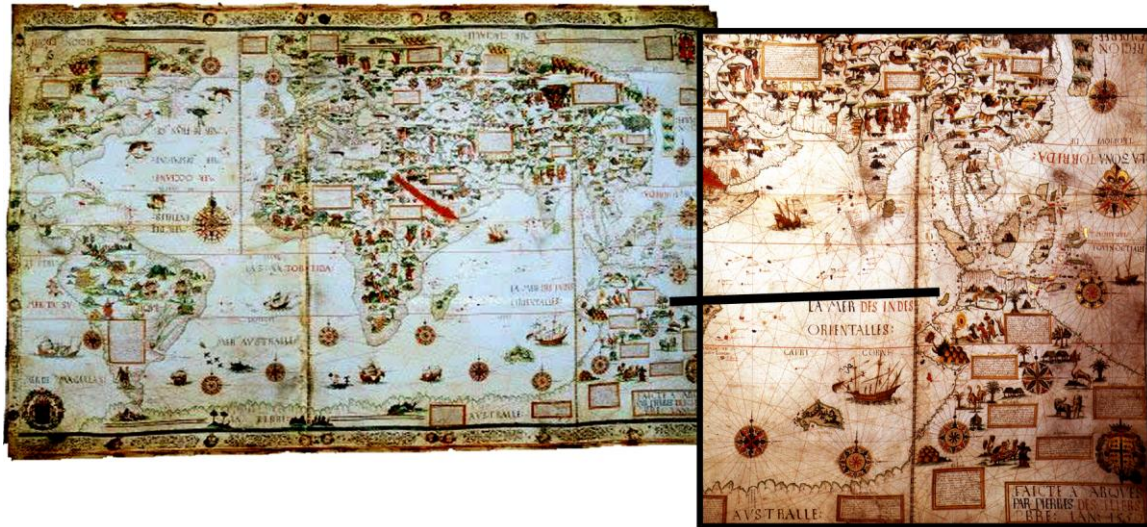


Figure 28

1550 Desceliers World Map

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Figure 29
1570 Ortelius South China Sea

The 1720 Weigel world map also features a partial Australia (Figure 38).

In 1726 Wells was still drawing a partial Australia (Figure 39 right hand side).

In 1735 Henri Chatelain renewed his effort and produced the map version shown in Figure 40. This time he had Australia attached to Antarctica, which did not exist in his earlier version (compare with Figure 36).

All the way until the eve of Captain Cook's historical voyage European mapmakers continued to turn out various interpretations of Australia (Figure 41 to Figure 44). In 1766 Bowen decided to simply amputate Australia (Figure 45). It appears that would be the best approach to solving the problem of eastern Australia. This method is apparently favored in the 1776 Gentlemen's Magazine edition as well (Figure 46).

Europeans Did Not Do It



Figure 30
1566 Desliens World Map

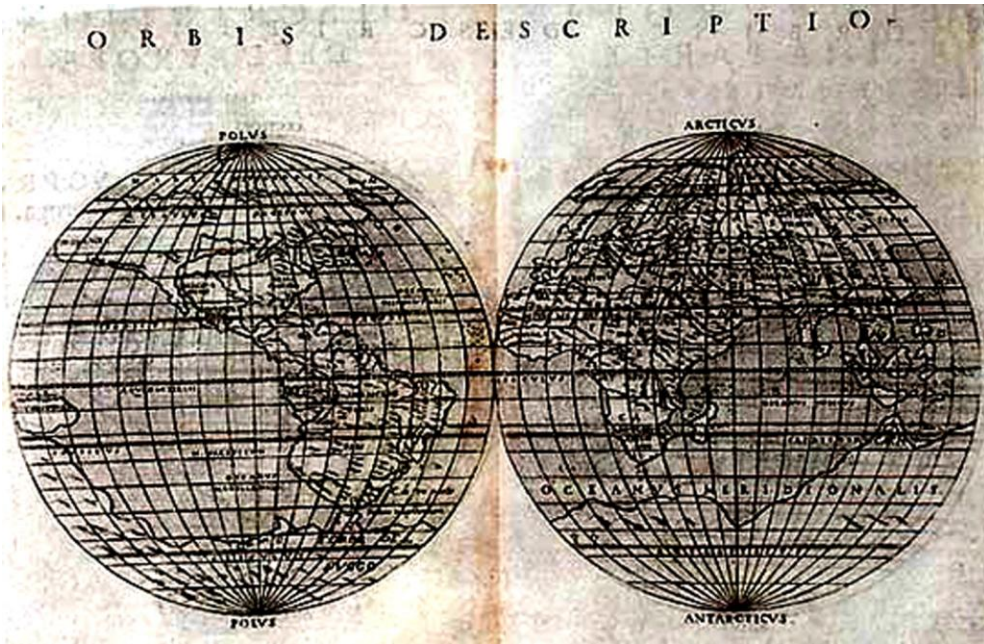


Figure 31
1598 Ruscelli Australia

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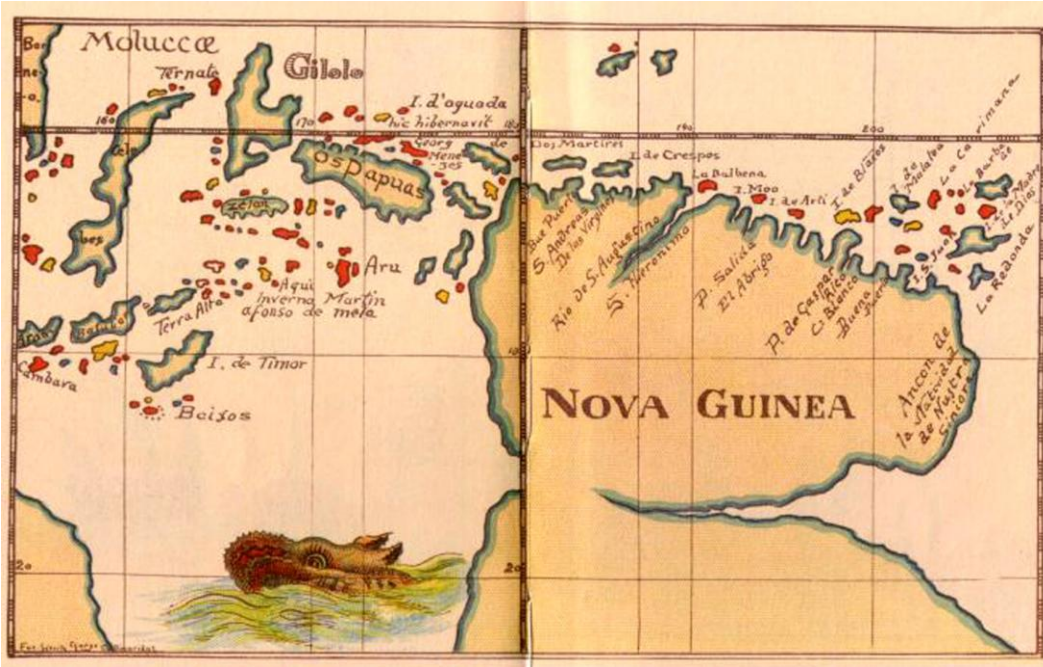


Figure 32
1600 Ribero New Guinea

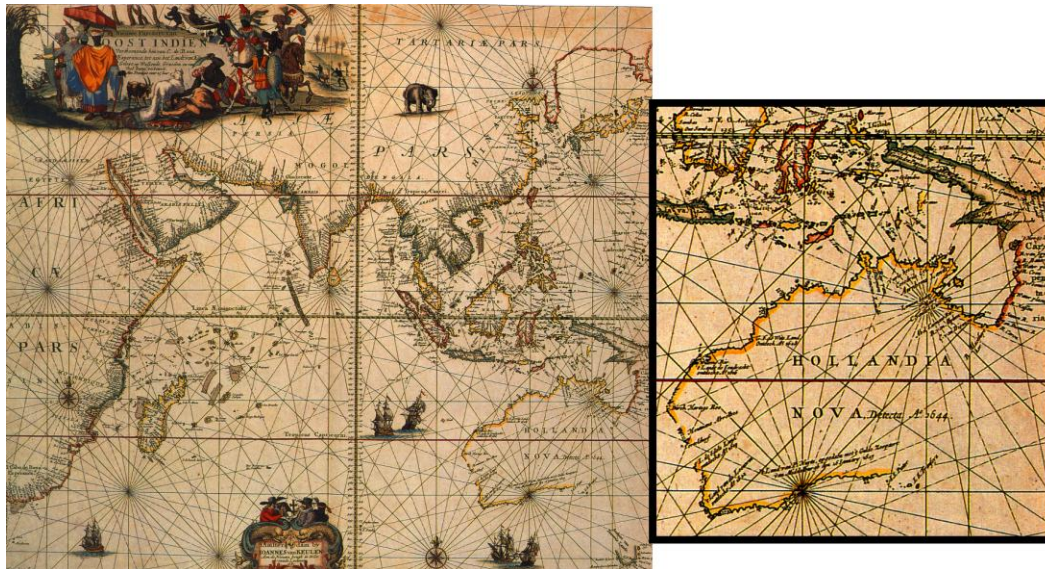


Figure 33
1682 Van Keulen Australia

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Figure 34
1667 Joan Blaeu Australia

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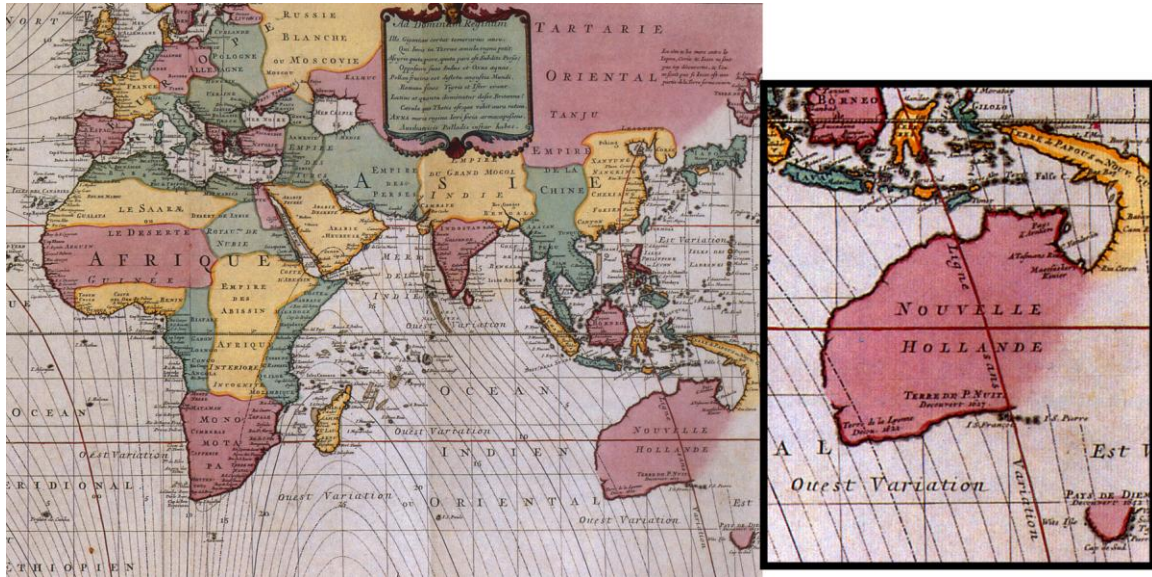


Figure 35
1701 Mortier Australia

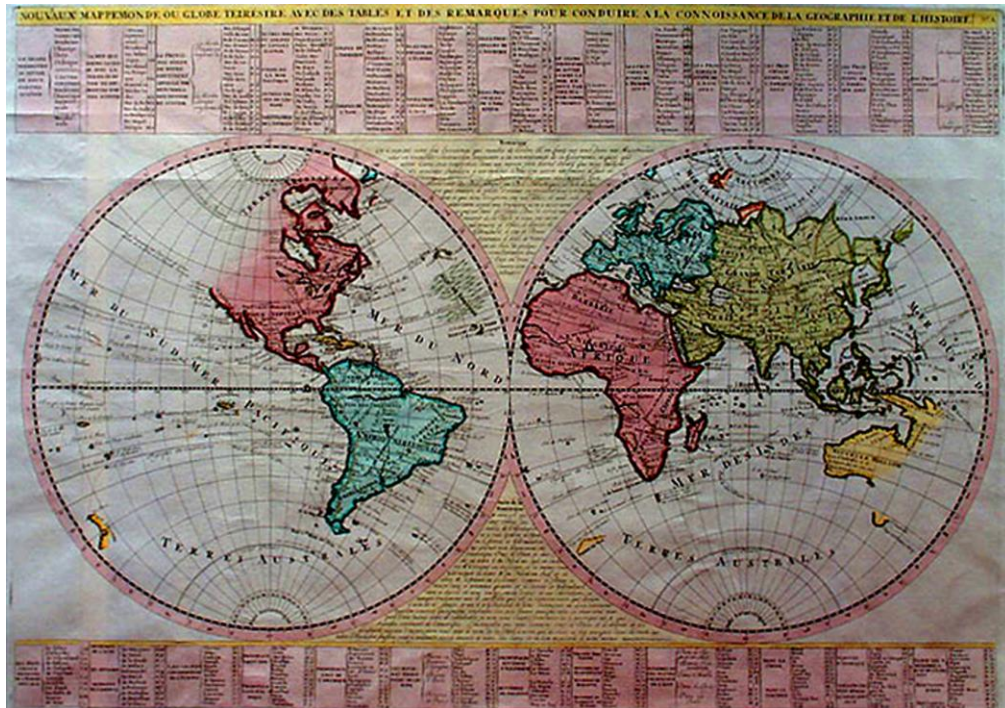


Figure 36
1719 Chatelain Australia

Europeans Did Not Do It



Figure 37
1715 Louis Renard Australia

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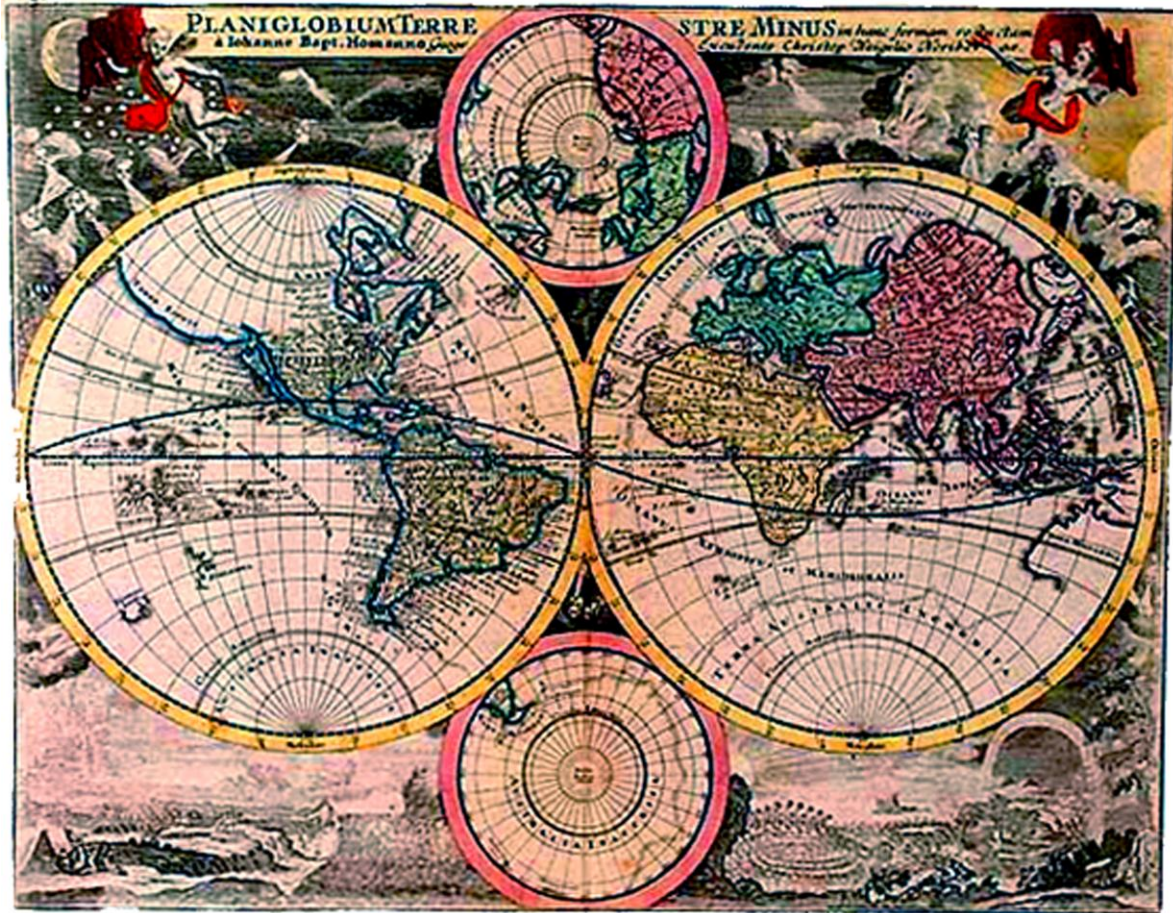


Figure 38
1720 Weigel Australia

Figure 47 shows the 1768 Bougainville version of Australia. Remember that the first person allegedly to chart Australia, Captain Cook, only surveyed Australia two years later. He obviously had seen or possessed this map, and he did. On this map Cook penciled in his own route. Note that in all these “pre-Cook” maps Australia and New Guinea were linked together, as if there was an isthmus between them. This tells us that the cartographers were creating maps by interpreting a source, not drawing directly from survey data. Clearly European mapmakers had a tradition of drawing partial Australias before they had reached the place.

These maps cannot all be completely baseless. Evidently someone had surveyed Australia, at least a portion of it, and the data became available at about the time Columbus visited the Caribbean.

Europeans Did Not Do It

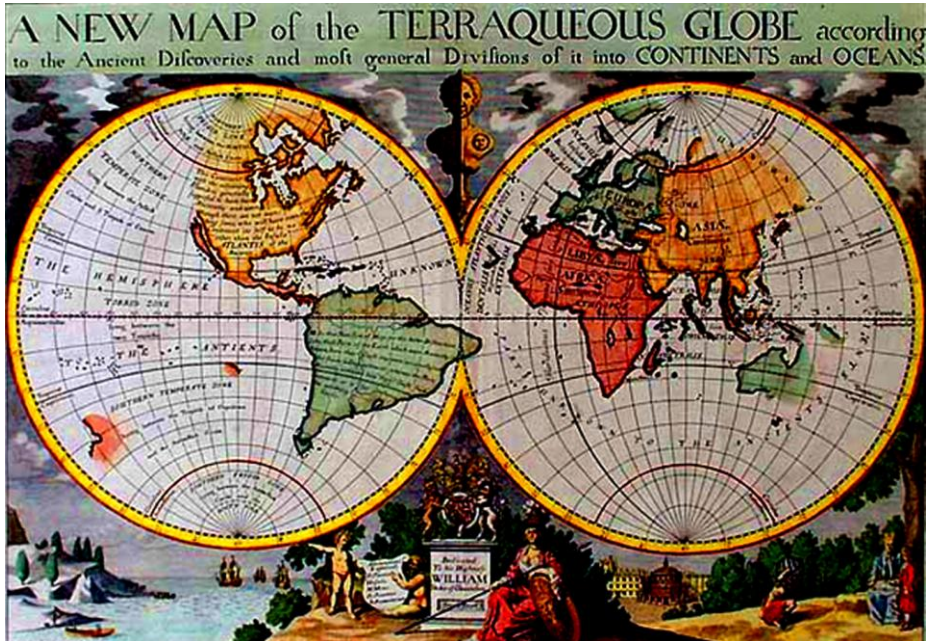


Figure 39
1726 Wells Australia

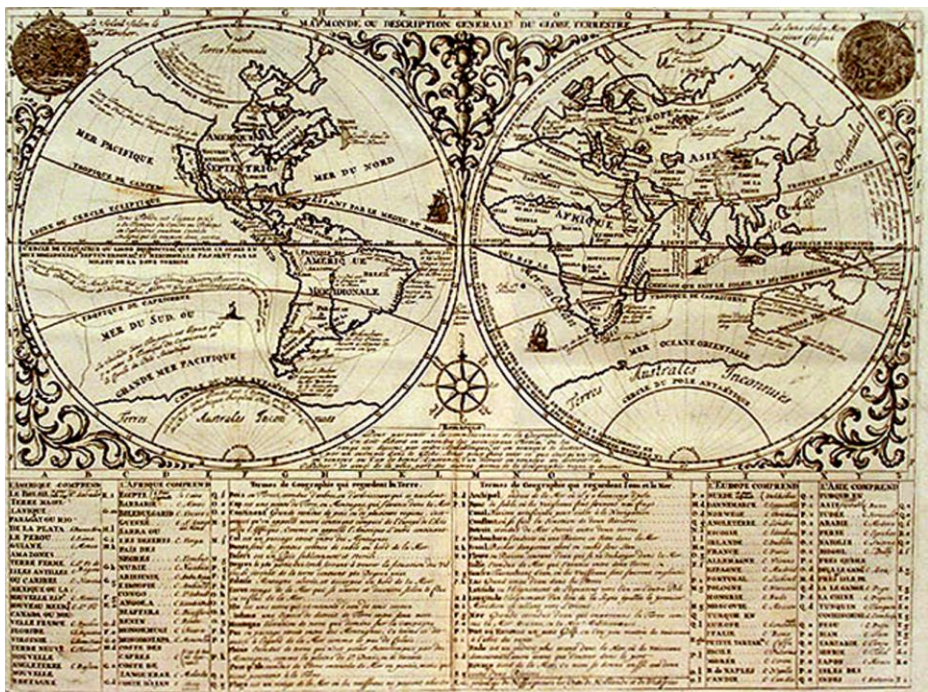


Figure 40
1735 Chatelain Australia

The Chinese Origin of the Age of Discovery



Figure 41
1750 Bellin Australia

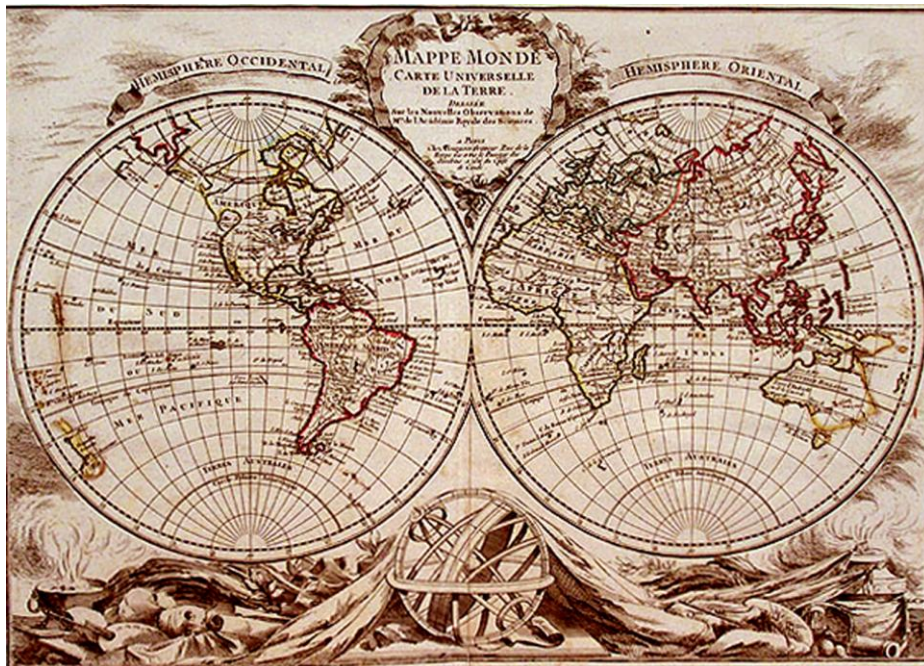


Figure 42
1750 Pierre Bourgoïn Australia

Europeans Did Not Do It

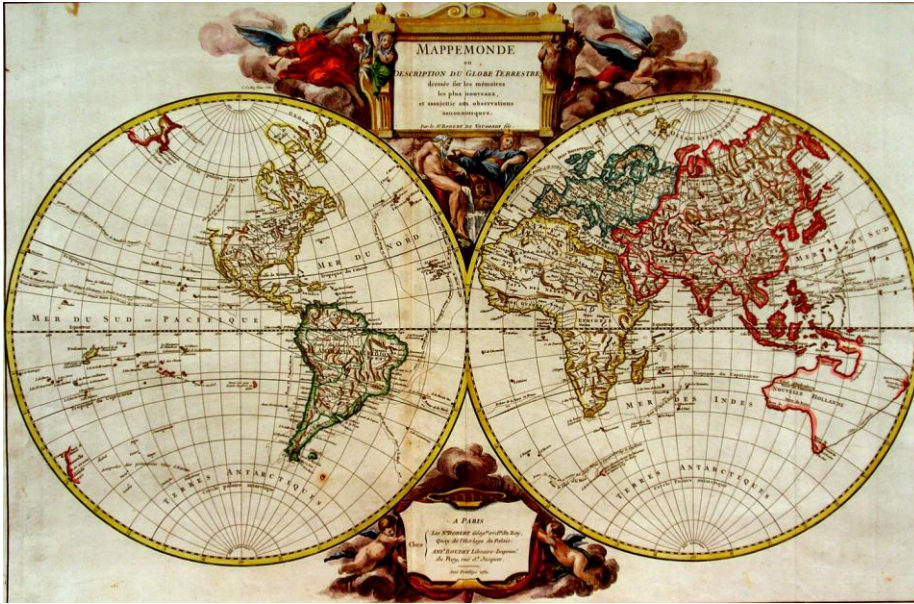


Figure 43

1757 de Vaugondy Australia

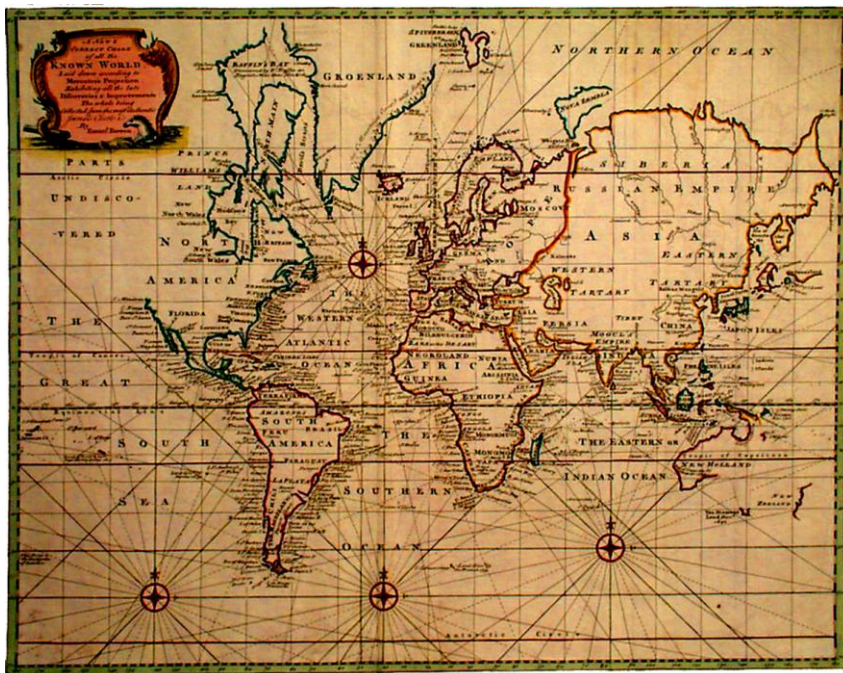


Figure 44

1760 Emanuel Bowen Australia

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Figure 45

1766 Bowen Australia

It is clear that the mapmakers were unclear about what they were drawing. Some solved the problem by linking obviously what is Australia to Antarctica, but they were drawing Australia. Just review the “world” maps above, Figure 20, Figure 27, Figure 15, Figure 18 (clearly showing Australia as a distinct landmass), Figure 22 (showing the southwestern portion of Australia), and so on.

Christopher Columbus set sail in 1492 and promptly ran into the Caribbean. He then proceeded to investigate the north shores of South America, but he never set foot on North America. Yet featured in the Museo Naval of Madrid, Spain is a portolan world map drawn on ox hide in 1500 (Figure 48) by the cartographer Juan de la Cosa, Columbus’ comrade on his trips. The map was reportedly lost, then rediscovered by the Dutch Ambassador Baron Walckenaer in a Paris shop in 1832, and was subsequently purchased by the Queen of Spain in 1853.

Europeans Did Not Do It

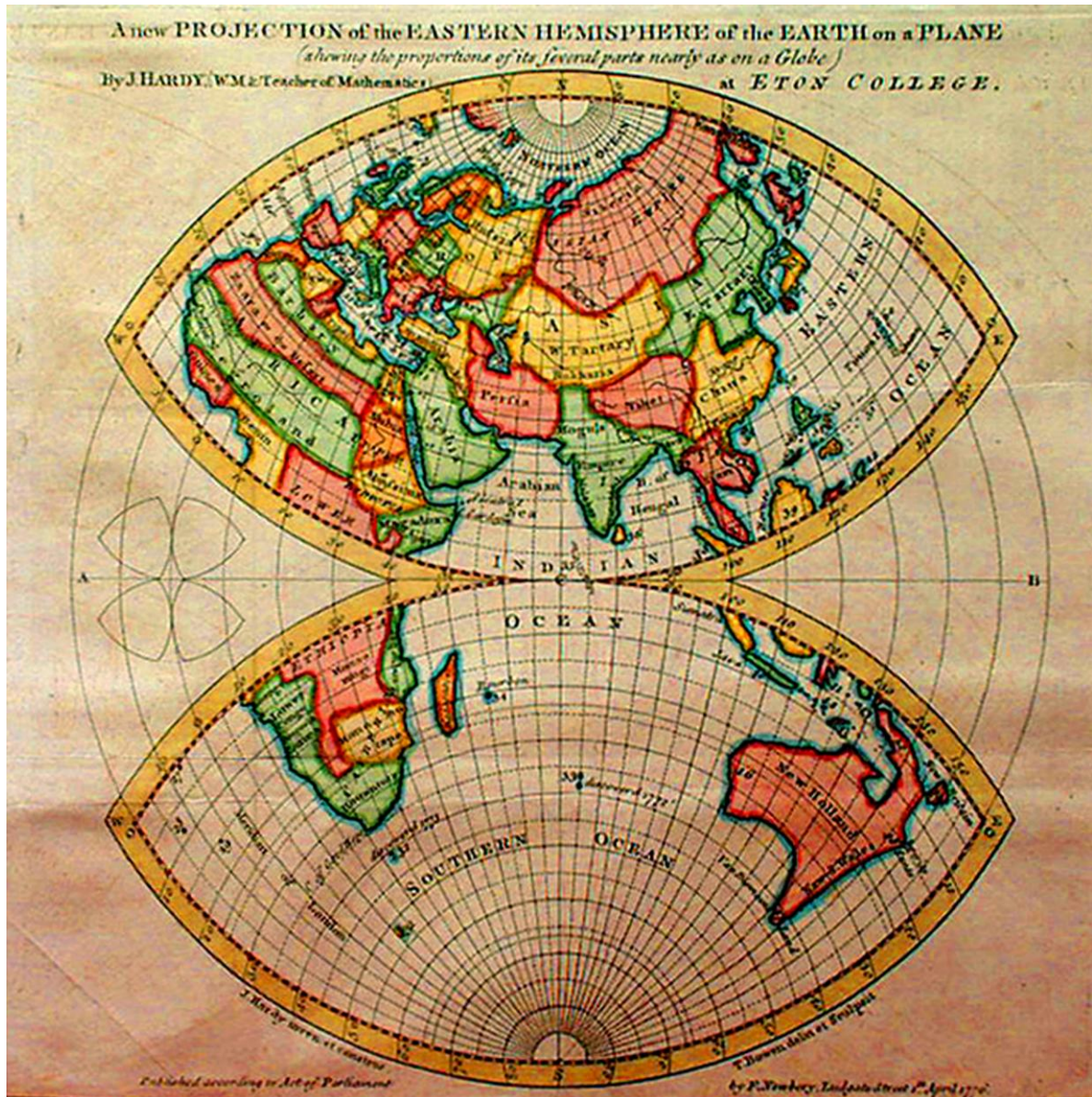


Figure 46
1776 Gentlemen's Magazine Australia

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Figure 47

1768 Bougainville Australia

The Americas

The maker of the map, de la Cosa, was the owner of the Columbus flagship of his first voyage, the *Santa Maria*, and served as its mate. He also was the official cartographer and captain of the *Niña* on the second voyage, thus he was intimately associated with the Columbus voyages. During the first decade of the sixteenth century he made several trips to the Americas, and he explored the northern coast of South America in 1499 along with an Italian explorer named Amerigo Vespucci.

The de la Cosa map shows a continent—including parts of North and South America, and Brazil—all of which were not yet surveyed in 1500. de la Cosa and Rodrigo de Bastidas had reached the American mainland only in 1501-02. Columbus himself did not hit the South American coast until 1502-03. On the map Cuba was drawn as an island, contradicting the "facts" as recorded in 1500. Because of these impossibilities some experts believe the map was actually made after 1508 and not 1500 as indicated by the inscription on the map: *Juan de la cosa la hizo en el puerto de S: ma en año de 1500*. The last "0" was fuzzy enough to be legitimately construed as an "8."

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Figure 48

The 1500 Juan de la Cosa Map of the Caribbean

Even so, giving the map a date of 1508 does not resolve the problem, because many of the new discoveries, especially those by de la Cosa himself that should have been on the map are conspicuously absent. For example, the Gulf of Uraba and the coast of Darien, which were explored by de la Cosa in 1501 to 1502, are absent from the map. In addition, by 1508 the coast of Brazil by the equator was on the way to being surveyed. Yet its rendition on the map is blatantly poor. In short, the suggested dates do not commiserate with the contents of the map.

To most researchers, perhaps the more puzzling element of the de la Cosa map is the portrayal of Cuba as an island. Columbus had insisted that Cuba, which he called “Iuna,” was part of the Asian mainland, and forced his fellow explorers to sign an affidavit to that effect. In this map de la Cosa named it Cuba, and drew an extremely accurate shape of it without having surveyed it. In any case, there is another matter about de la Cosa’s Cuba that is even more intriguing. The names of places on the island cannot be corroborated. They were not located anywhere else, on any other map at the time or since. Where de la Cosa got his information about Cuba remains a puzzle.

To me, the more baffling aspect of this map is the rendition of Southeastern North America (Figure 49), specifically what must be interpreted as Florida. Florida was not visited by Europeans until at least 1513.

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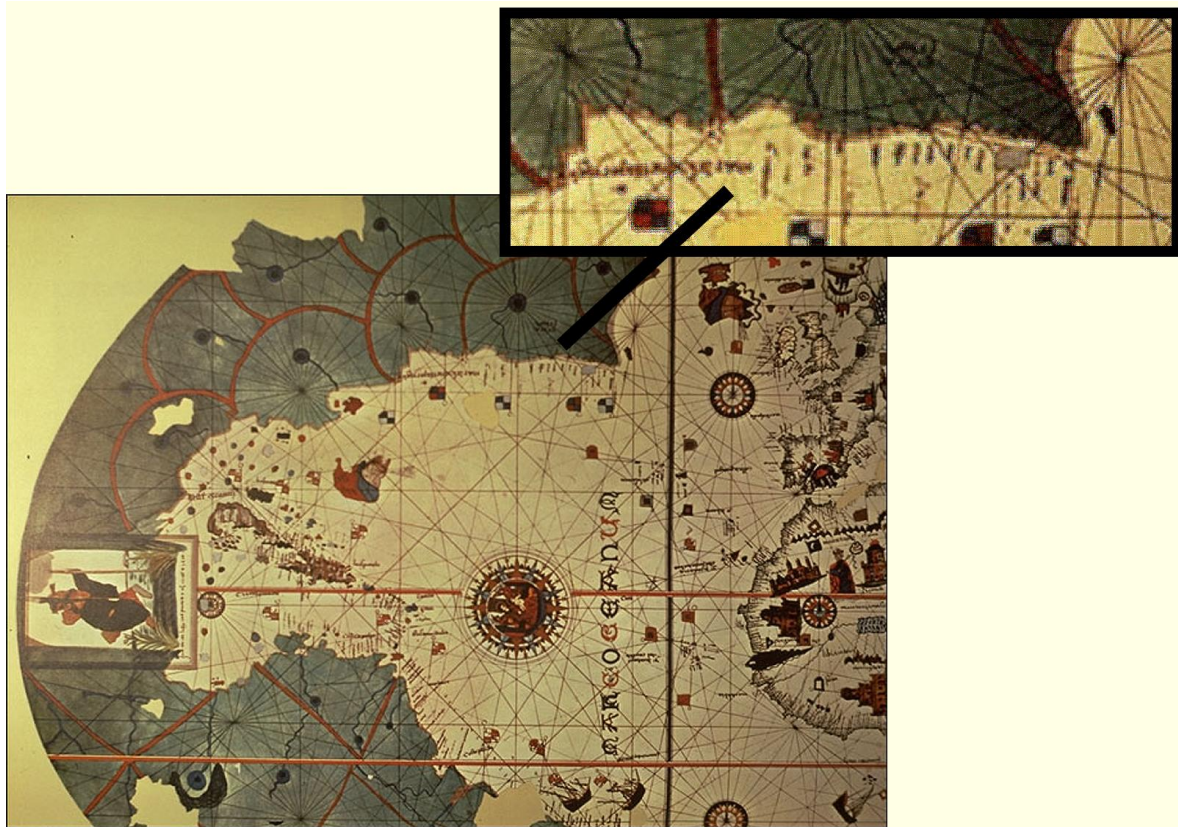


Figure 49

Florida in 1500?

In this portion of the map there are some twenty names, almost all now undecipherable (Figure 51). Then there is a river named Longo (r. longo), a name that is uncannily Asian. Europeans generally do not name rivers Long River. The river known in the West as the Yangtze River is generally known in China as the Long River, *Chang Jiang*²⁴. One suspects, therefore, that somehow de la Cosa mistook the North American Continent for Asia, or that he was following the notations of some source material that is now lost. Indeed, de la Cosa should not even have known that there was a river in China for he did not know China.

Figure 51 shows the de la Cosa map lined up in comparison with modern maps of the American continents and Europe and Africa in corresponding proportions. As can be seen, the de la Cosa Caribbean is immense as compared with Europe. It is like two separate maps drawn to different scales pieced together. It appears that the American portion of the map is three to four times larger than the old world part (Europe and Africa).

²⁴ 長江

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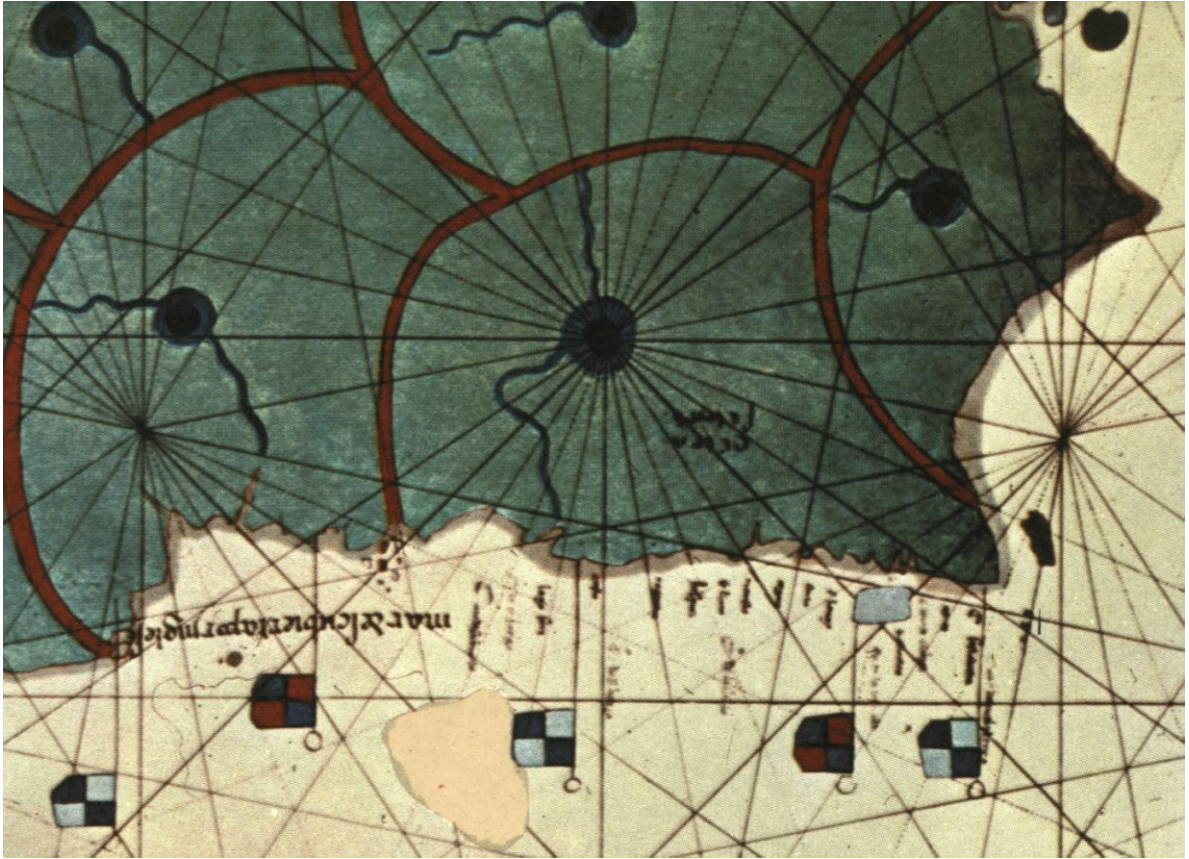


Figure 50

Undecipherable Place Names on De La Cosa Map

The de la Cosa map shows Atlantic islands that were not even known to have existed in 1500, and place names that were entirely unrecognizable. The mystery of how de la Cosa obtained the information “ahead of its time” is extremely vexing, so vexing that commentators had noticed the improbabilities, mulled over them, failed to provide satisfactory answers to them, and walked away. Overall, the New World portion of the map is not to scale in respect to the rest of the map. It looks like de la Cosa had a separate map of the Americas and simply pieced it onto an existing map of the old world. It is almost as if he was working with an unknown or uncredited reference source.

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Figure 51

Juan de la Cosa Map Compared with Modern Map Equivalents

For the some twenty place names, including Long River, along the North American seacoast, because they identified places the Spanish explorers had never been to, some scholars concluded that someone had indeed visited the coast before 1500 and left records for it.

Preserved in the Biblioteca Estense of Modena, Italy is a famous Portuguese world portolan map called the Cantino map (Figure 52), and the history of this map reads like a “whodunit.”

In those days of European rivalry on the high seas, maps were hot commodities. Competing nations went to great lengths to safeguard their cartographical possessions while exercising all means to acquire new information in order to enrich their collections. Because of this, countries held on to their navigational charts as we do today with national classified documents. The Portuguese protected their charts so tightly that outsiders could not manage to peek at, let alone make copies of them.

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Figure 52
The 1502 Cantino Map



Figure 53
The 1504 Visconte Maggiolo World Map

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The creator of the “Cantino” map is unknown, but the date attributed to its creation is year 1502. It is told that one day in late nineteenth century Signor Boni, the librarian of the Biblioteca Estense, passed by a butcher shop owned by a certain Giusti in the Via Farini. He noticed that an ancient map was being used as a lampshade and purchased it. On the backside of the map was a Latin inscription that said: “This navigation chart of the islands recently discovered in the parts of the Indies is presented to the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole d'Este, by Alberto Cantino” (*Carta de navigar per le Isole nouam trovate in le parte de India: dono Alberto Cantino al S. Duca Hercole*).

Alberto Cantino was a Lisbon-based agent of Hercules d'Este, Duke of Ferrara of the powerful Italian Este family. In response to the Duke's yearning to acquire a map illustrating the latest Portuguese and Spanish maritime exploits, Cantino had one made secretly by a Portuguese cartographer. Who this hired hand was is still being debated, but his or her identity is of no bearing to the present research. In any case, the job took ten months to complete and cost Cantino twelve gold ducats. Cantino took the finished map back to Italy and presented it to his master, who saved it in his archive. Unfortunately, in 1592 the Duke suffered the most unpleasant fate. His entire family and estate were plundered by Pope Clement VIII, who transferred the Duke's holdings to his palace in Modena. In 1859 the palace was ransacked by mobs during an uprising and the map disappeared. How it eventually became a lampshade in a butcher shop probably will never be known.

Several features of the map make it unique. The map showed a long, startlingly accurate, but inexplicably broken South American coastline that had yet to be explored. Similar to the de la Cosa map, a long stretch of land to the northwest of Cuba running north and south was unmistakably Florida, a land that had not even been discovered by Europeans, let alone explored and surveyed. (Florida was not formally discovered until 1513.) Then Greenland and Iceland can be seen by the upper left corner of the map, again drawn before European explorers discovered these landmasses.

The Cantino map is not the only early sixteenth century map that includes a highly accurate, albeit incomplete, South America. In the 1504 Visconte Maggiolo world map a partial South America, almost exactly where Brazil is, completely out of scale, is also depicted (Figure 53, faintly shown in the lower-left corner). Even more interesting, the same section of the continent as in the Cantino map is depicted.

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Figure 54
The 1505 Canerio World Map



Figure 55
The 1507 Martin Waldseemüller World Map

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Figure 56

America from the 1507 Martin Waldseemüller Map Inset



Figure 57

America from the 1507 Martin Waldseemüller Map

The 1502 Portuguese world map (Figure 54) by the Genoese cartographer Nicolo Caveri (whom historians called Nicolay Canerio)²⁵ now at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, France, shows a similar treatment of the South American Continent as the Cantino and Visconte Maggiolo maps, suggesting they either copied from each other or used the same data source or sources. The Brazilian coastline is just as incomplete, and South America is just as out of scale.

In the tradition of the Cantino and Canerio maps, the 1507 Martin Waldseemüller world map (Figure 55), currently at the Wolfegg Castle in Württemberg, Germany, shows all the same features of the New World as the previous two maps, except that its version of the partial South America is slightly different. This map was rediscovered in 1901 by the person accused of forging the Vinland Map (discussed below), Father Joseph Fisher, in the

²⁵ Or perhaps created by a Portuguese cartographer and copied by a Genoese.

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library of Prince von Waldburg zu Wolfegg-Waldsee at the Castle of Wolfegg, Württemberg Germany.

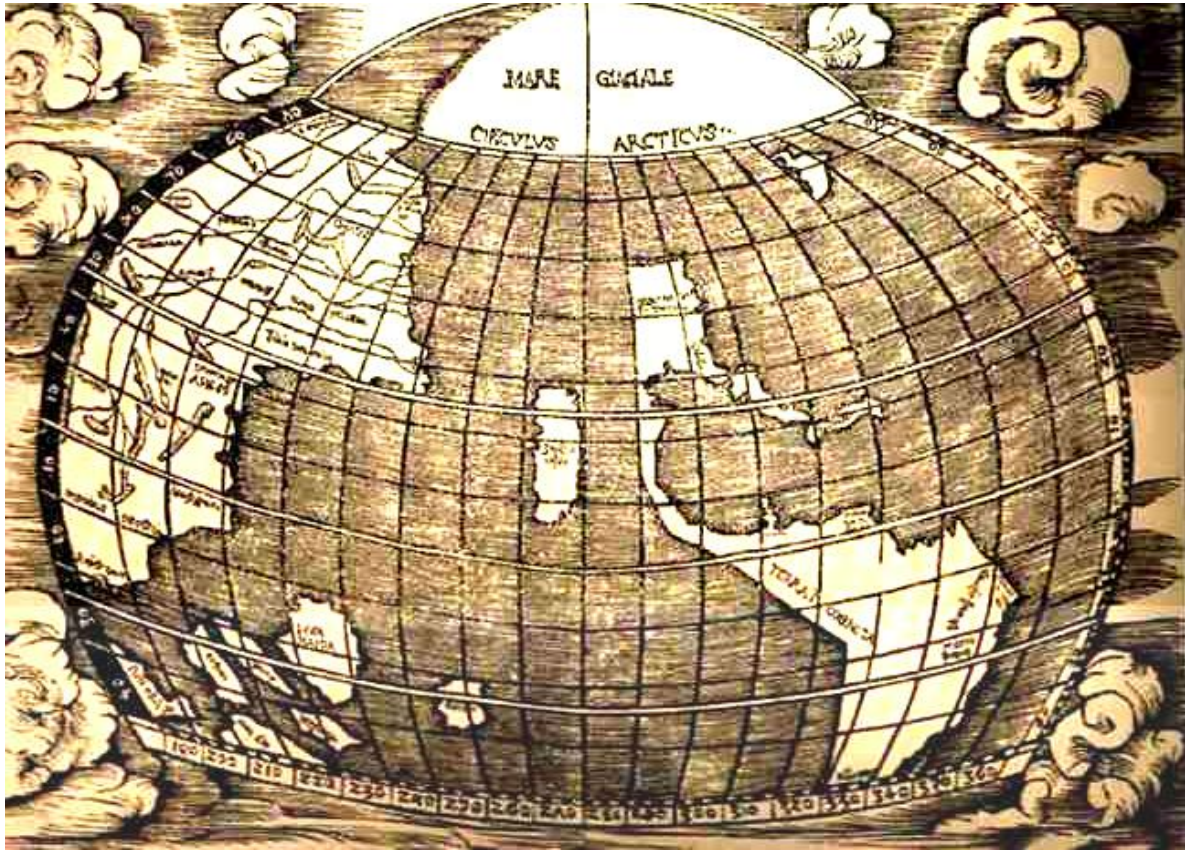


Figure 58

The 1512 Johannes Stobnicza of Cracovia Map

If you inspect the right inset at the top of the map (reproduced in Figure 56) you will see Central America represented as an isthmus, which, inexplicably, is missing in the main portion of the map (reproduced in Figure 57), which shows a completely different interpretation of the American continents. It has a passageway to the Pacific. How the explorers knew about the west side of the Americas at the time is most troubling. No European had yet reached the west side of the new American continent. For all we know, whether they knew the new land was a continent was still under debate. This explicit assertion of the existence of the Pacific Ocean is unsettling. The different readings represented on the same map are downright unnatural. One explanation for this

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peculiarity is that the mapmaker came into two entirely different source maps for the same landmass. Not knowing what to do with them he simply placed them both on his creation.

Commentators generally describe the representation of the eastern South American coastline as “surprisingly correct general contour.” They also conclude that unknown navigators must have sailed along the coast of Florida to be able to produce its outline.

Both the inset and the world map illustrate another important feature: the body of water to the west of America (the unnamed Pacific Ocean) is even broader than the Atlantic. The mapmaker could not possibly have known about this fact in 1507, when the “discoveries” of Magellan and Balboa were still pending.

Now compare the Waldseemüller map with the 1512 Johannes Stobnicza of Cracovia map (Figure 58). We wonder if one mapmaker should be blamed for his errors, or be credited for his brilliance.

If you think these are but a few maps that display the New World before their time, look further.



Figure 59

The 1525 Salviati Map

At the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Italy is a map of Brazil called the Salviati map produced in Seville, Spain around 1525-1526 (Figure 59). Its first owner was Cardinal Salviati, the papal nuncio to Spain from 1525-30, thus the name of the map. The Salviati map shows a partial of the eastern sea coast of South America and the eastern seaboard of Central and North Americas. The contour of the unfinished South America is chillingly familiar.

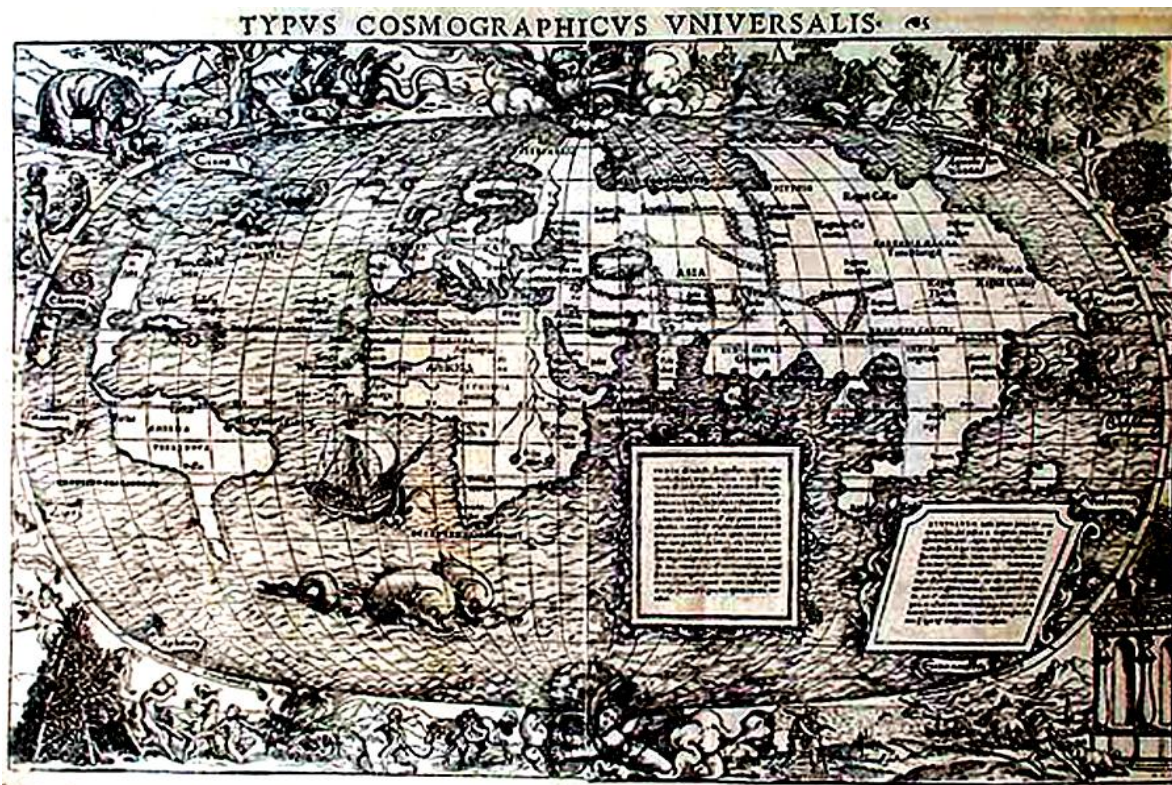


Figure 60

The 1532 Simon Grynaeus Map

By 1525 Magellan already had passed through his strait, although whatever new information he had of South America his crew had yet to bring home. However, Magellan already had information about the south of the continent in order for him to set sail, yet the Salviati map still shows only the northeast corner of South America. The southern portion is absent. The two events are incongruent.

Note the partial South America on the 1532 Simon Grynaeus map (Figure 60).

Figure 61 (right hand side) shows that cartographer Batiste Agnese was having an equally difficult time handling the mid section of the eastern South American coast.

From these cartographical relics we can surmise that apparently the European geographers of the early sixteenth century were either obsessed with a partial South America but possessed prescient minds to draw such realistic portraits of the continent, or they had recently come into “real” but incomplete, or even incomprehensible survey data of the place.

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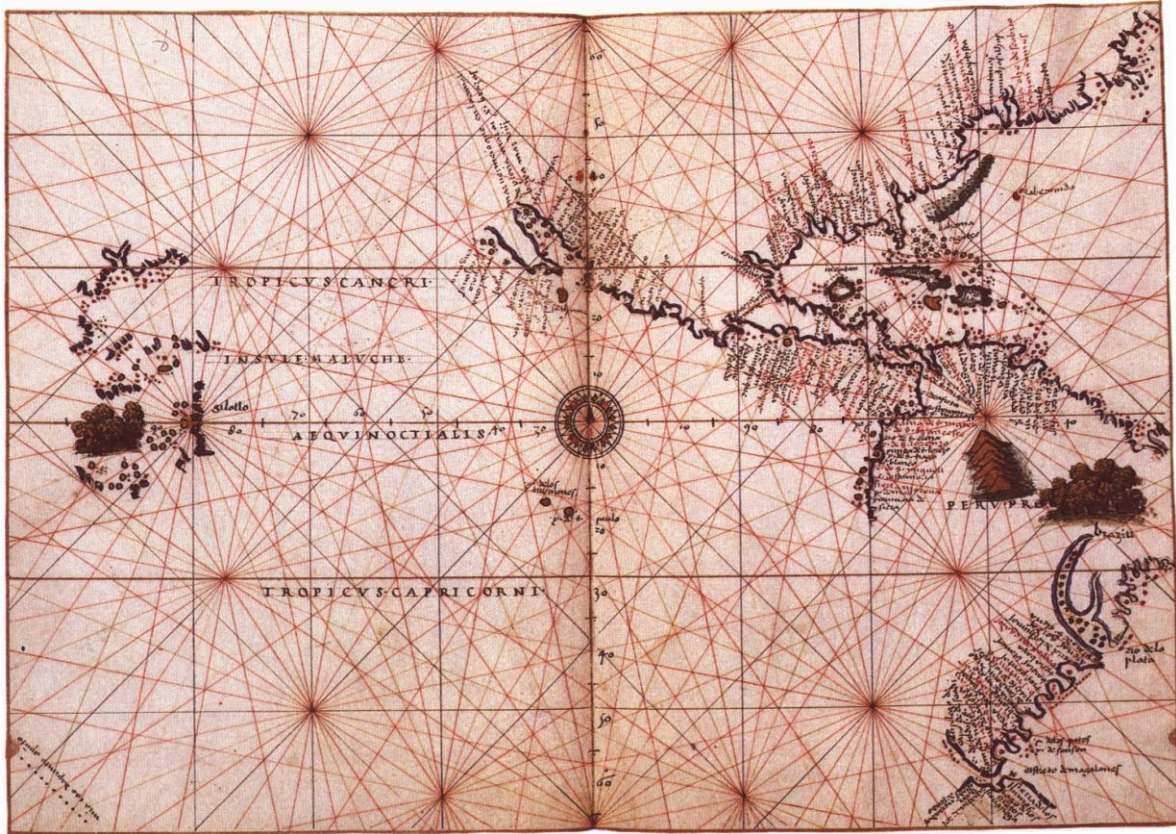


Figure 61
1542 Batiste Agnese Map

The Oceans

The European geographers' pre-Age of Discovery fascination with the world was not limited to just the major continents. They were quite familiar with the landscapes—or seascapes—of the world's oceans as well.

The Pacific Ocean

We already have looked over Australia, but these geography enthusiasts were also quite into the Pacific as a whole.

For instance, on Johannes Stobnicza of Cracovia's 1512 world map (Figure 58) not only was Japan clearly suggested west of a partial North America, but also a distinctly

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representative group of landmasses—lands?—in southeast Indian Ocean or southwest Pacific.



Figure 62

1529 Girolamo da Verrazano Map



Figure 63

1508 Francesco Roselli Map

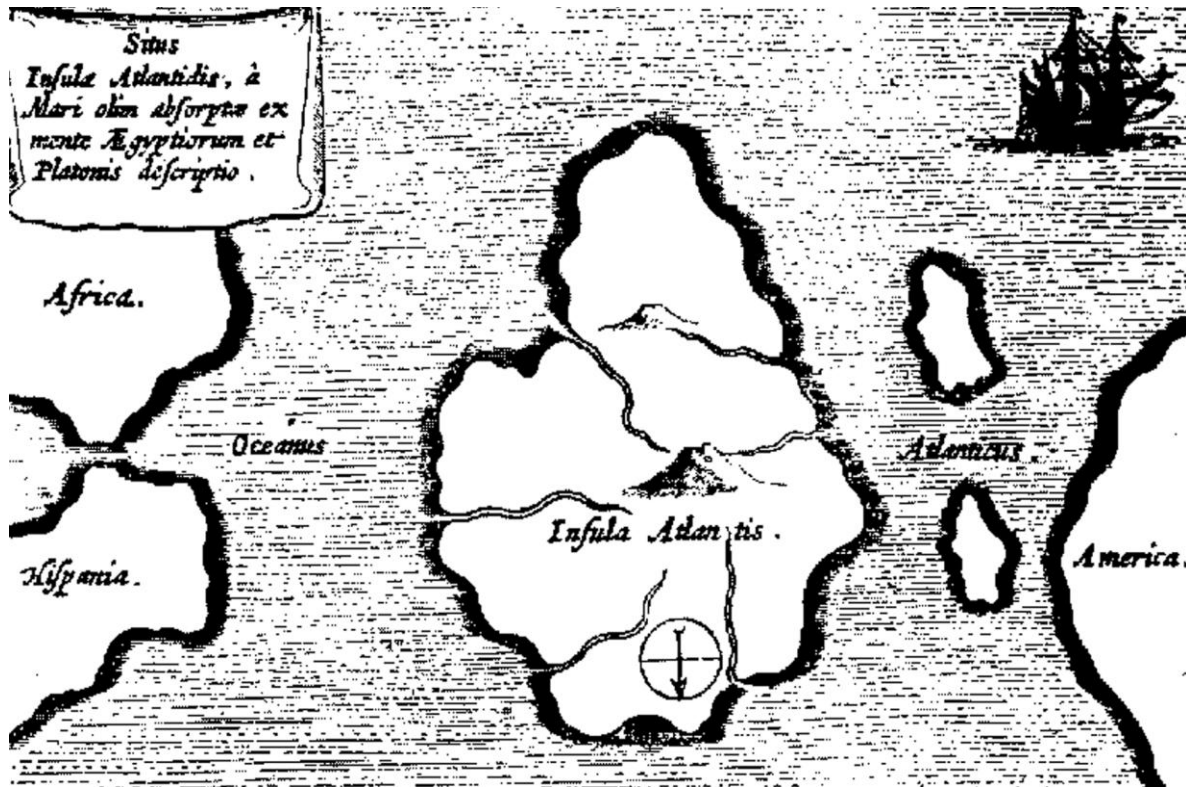


Figure 64

Atlantis on 1666 Athanasius Kircher Etching

The 1529 da Verrazano world map shows the same Japan while North America is unfinished. The same is with the 1520 Johann Schoner Globe (Figure 238).

Whether Roselli was trying to draw Japan (Figure 63 right hand side) in 1508 is unsure, but an attempt on the southeast Indian Ocean islands (today's Borneo, Sumatra, Java, Australia, New Guinea?) is plain.

The Atlantic

Most impressive of all is that while we extol the genius of Christopher Columbus for crossing the Atlantic before people even thought it possible, European mapmakers were drawing the lands of the Atlantic in detail.

I mentioned Greenland and Iceland on the Cantino map (Figure 52), but see also the 1569 Mercator map of the North Pole in Figure 14. Greenland shows up at the lower corner. Not only did he draw Greenland at a time before European explorers had surveyed it, how he knew that Greenland was an island is even harder to explain.



Figure 65
1570 Abraham Ortelius Map

In a 1666 Athanasius Kircher etching, which had north pointing downward (note the compass arrow in the chart, Figure 64), Atlantis was firmly wedged between Europe and America in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Yet the discerning eye can see that the “Atlantis” recorded here is none other than Greenland, enlarged, of course. Again, Greenland was being drawn before its time. Why, the mapmaker did not even know it was Greenland. He called it Atlantis.

The World

The fact is these maps suggest that by no later than the second half of the sixteenth century all the landmasses and major islands in the world had been discovered and surveyed, without European explorers doing the work. Indeed, this all can be summarized by a couple of famous Renaissance/Age of Discovery European maps.

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These are the 1570 Abraham Ortelius world map (Figure 65) and the Mercator map of 1569 (Figure 66), which are basically reproductions of each other. Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas, Australia (the lump on the left hand side of the maps), the North Atlantic islands, and the poles are all there.



Figure 66
1569 Mercator Map

Conclusions

It must be born in mind that history teaches us that the Age of Discovery or Age of Exploration began with the Portuguese taking to sea in the fifteenth century. Bartolomeu Dias commanded a Portuguese ship in 1481 to the African gold coast and subsequently went beyond the southern tip of Africa to enter the Indian Ocean. His feat was followed by Christopher Columbus in 1492. If we need to stretch it, we may push back all the way to Prince Henry who began to sail down the western coast of Africa in early fifteenth century.

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These historic events post-dated many of the documents presented above and many more to come; that is, the maps were drawn before European explorers went to sea.

The cartographical masterpieces presented above, and many more of the same ilk that are still in the world's collections, leave no doubt that European mapmakers knew about the geography of the world, no matter how flawed their interpretations, before the Age of Discovery surveyors had mapped them; someone or some people had sailed and surveyed the world in ancient times before the great European discoverers. This conclusion is based on tangible facts therefore is not up for debate. If this conclusion, based entirely on facts, cannot be accepted, there is no reason to proceed further. The entire research would be meaningless.

Thus, as we move on, we proceed with the conclusion, now a given, that Europeans were not the first to explore the world. Some other people else did and, whoever they were, provided the geographic data of the world for the European Age of Discovery explorers. We will not need to prove this point again.

The issue that now confronts us is who these early surveyors were, and where such geographical data came from.

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European mapmakers had access to geographical information of the world before the commencement of the Age of Discovery. This is affirmed. We now seek the source or sources of such data. This process is an investigation of its own standing, and any speculation on Europeans having learned it from the Chinese is premature. No matter how much one may be tempted to draw such a conclusion merely because China happened to be the only civilization in the world at the time to have possessed the wherewithal to accomplish such a task—not the Norse, not the Muslims, not the Indians, and not the Africans—and that Admiral Zheng He's expeditions had just taken place only a few years back, we must establish the source on its own merit, based on evidence. For this we shall return to the same historical documents for signs of identifiable ownership signatures.

It is a fundamental truism that a copy cannot surpass the original in accuracy, or it would not be a copy. A copy also often retains some fragments of the original which show up out of context in the copy. From such fragments the identity or identities of the original specimen can be ascertained, and such data residues from the antique European Age of Discovery maps unequivocally point to China as the origin of the world geographic data.

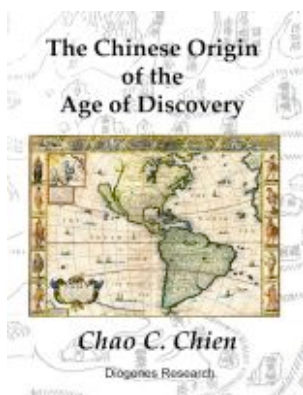
The Americas

One of the distinctive characteristics of the early pre-Age of Discovery European maps presented above is an overt fascination with the American continents before their time (See Figure 52, Figure 53, Figure 54, Figure 55, Figure 60, and Figure 58, among others). It is interesting to note that these early renditions were almost uniformly incomplete, with indications of initial familiarity confined to northeast South America and southeast North America, at best. Although the later maps show a gaining of awareness toward southern America, they do not suggest the mapmakers knew they were drawing continents. Eventually a complete South America emerged, but it was a long time before North America was complete.

The Chinese Did It



Figure 67
1507 Ruysch North America



The likely real history of the Age of Discovery has been recovered in this startling 300+ page volume. Extant maps and documents of the period are meticulously researched and analyzed to arrive at the unexpected but clear reconstruction. The evidence is shown in over 300 illustrations. Debates on the subject have raged for years. The new research promises to settle the dispute once and for all, or inflame the issue in a big way.

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