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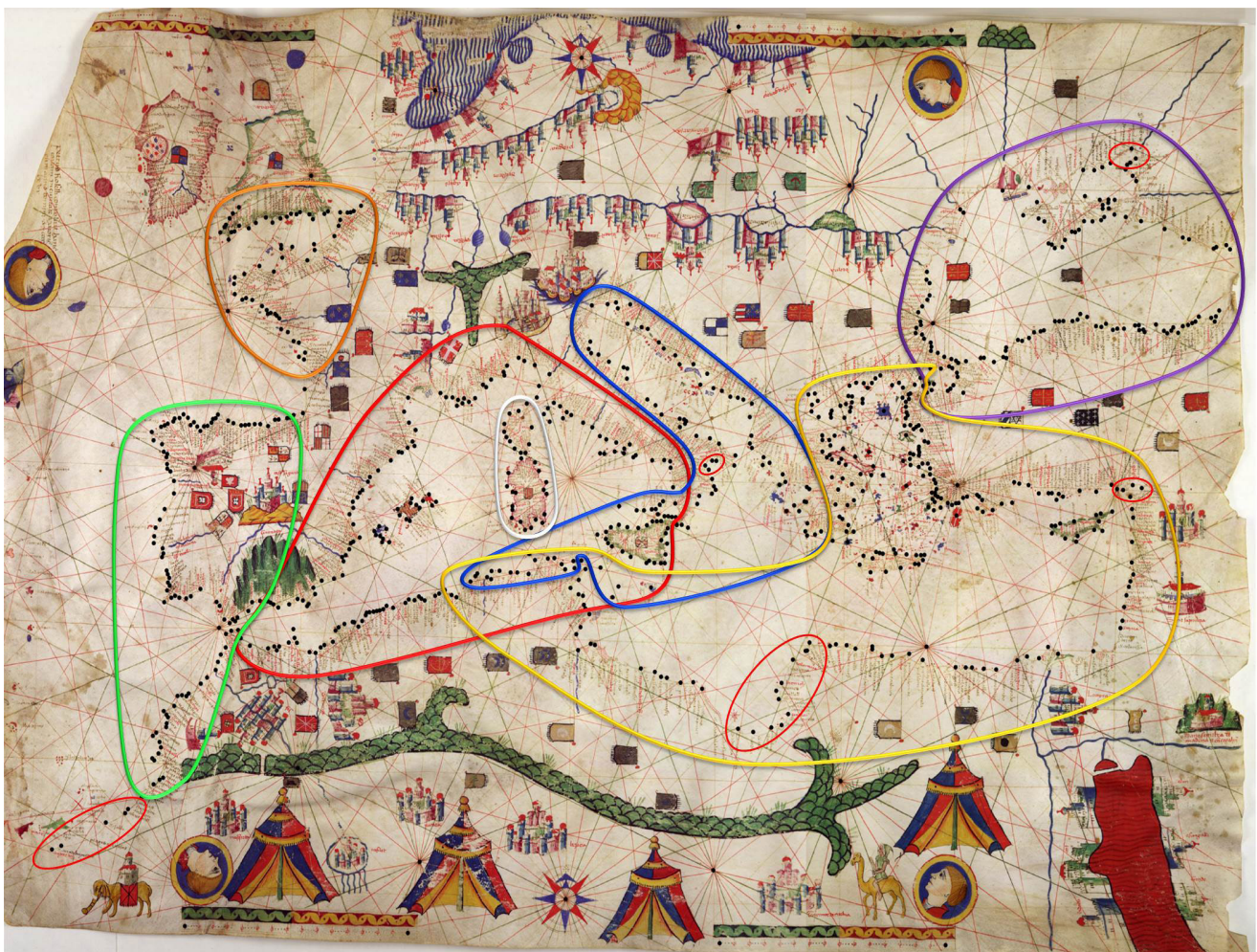
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# MAPS IN HISTORY

## Portolans revisited



**In this issue:**

- How old are Portolan charts really?
- Mechlinia Dominium, the smallest of the XVII Provinces
- Lafreri: Italian Cartography in the Renaissance



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## EDITORIAL

Dear Map Friends,

Last year, our friend Tilly Widdershoven noticed an intriguing article in a Dutch newspaper, entitled 'The Riddle of the Portolan'. It was based on a doctoral dissertation presented by a geodesist engineer, Roel Nicolai, to the University of Utrecht. Tilly made a résumé in English of this article. But the conclusions of Dr Nicolai's research were so challenging that we preferred to ask him to present them himself, rather than rely on a newspaper article. Roel has kindly agreed to make an 8-page summary of his 500-page thesis, thus enabling us to grasp in some measure the extent of his cartometric research. His conclusions are quite revolutionary as they turn conventional wisdom on the origin of portolans on its head. And they are already raising controversy within our editorial team! I expect some of our readers will also respond.

Less controversial is the article on the Mechlinia Dominium by Herman Deijnckens, co-authored by our Honorary President Eric Leenders, which highlights the place of one of the lesser known of our XVII Provinces.

Another novelty of this issue is also very important – at least for me: I did not do the layout of this publication! Paul De Candt volunteered to help me and took over this part of the editor's job. That's quite a relief for me, and I am sure it can only be beneficial for you, dear readers.

Cartographically yours,

Jean-Louis Renteux  
Vice-President & Editor  
editor@bimcc.org



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**Cover:** Portolan chart by Petrus Roselli, 1466, with division into coherent subsets of identical points (black dots) and rejected points in red ellipses – as per Roel Nicolai's research discussed in the article on page 16. (Image Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota)



## PLACES WITH MAPS

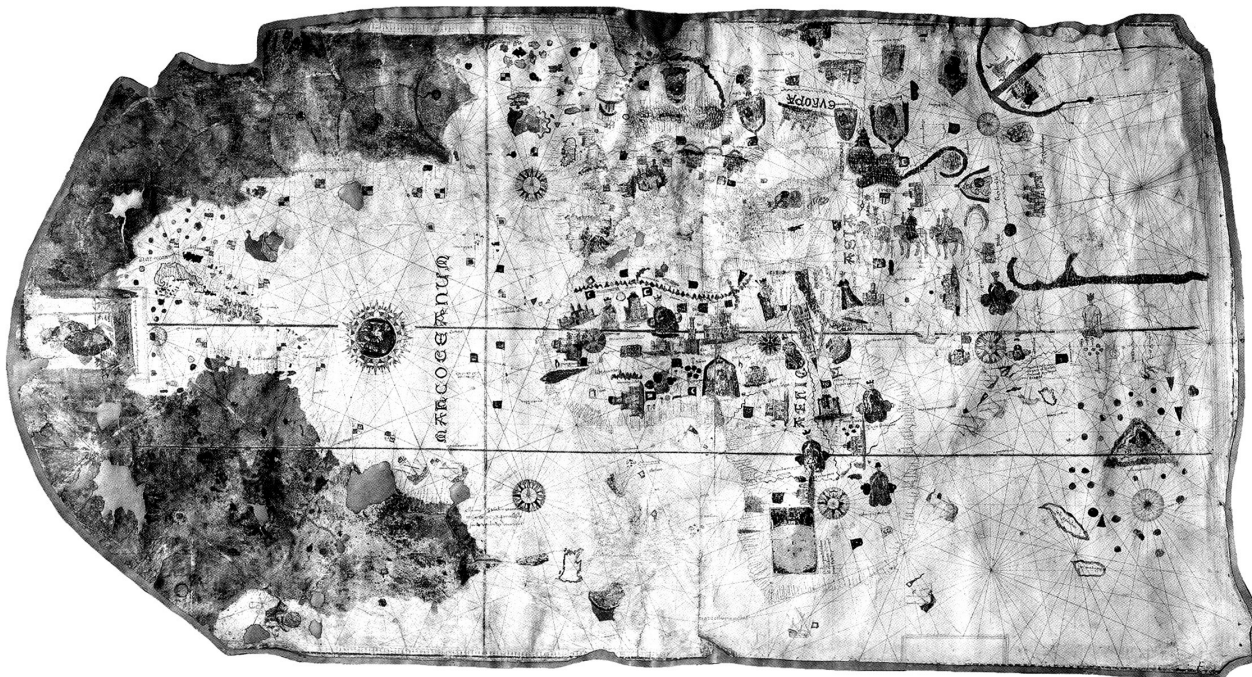
### Museo Naval in Madrid

Museo Naval de Madrid, Paseo del Prado, 5 – Madrid  
<http://www.armada.mde.es/museonaval>

When in Madrid, you should visit the Prado and Thyssen museums: all guidebooks agree on this. But hardly any of them mentions the Museo Naval, close to

by the Oliva family (Marseilles, 17<sup>th</sup> c.).

In this room there is also, in a simple showcase, the star of the museum, a large (93 x 183 cm) manuscript



Manuscript map of the world by Juan de la Cosa - 1500 (93 x 183 cm)

the Prado. Nevertheless, map lovers should not miss it.

This museum naturally contains a lot of models of ships, old navigation instruments, paintings of naval battles and many other exhibits reminiscent of the armadas which explored the world and conquered an 'empire on which the sun never sets'. Among the memorabilia there are, of course, maps and plans of former Spanish possessions represented on large wall maps.

Of special interest is a small room devoted to the early discoveries of Columbus and his followers. On display are a few nice portolans: a nautical atlas of Europe by Diego Homen (ca. 1559) and charts of the Mediterranean by Mateo Prunes (Mallorca, 1563) and

map on parchment, the original world map by Juan de la Cosa dated 1500. It is generally considered to be the first map to show the New World, or at least what de la Cosa had discovered during his voyages with Columbus in 1492, 1493 and 1498, and with Alonso de Ojeda and Amerigo Vespucci in 1499. The map also shows quite accurate shorelines for the Mediterranean and the west coast of Africa, reflecting the recent discoveries by Portuguese navigators. On the other hand the representation of Asia is more inspired by travel accounts from explorers like Marco Polo than on firsthand experience.

Jean-Louis Renteux  
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## EXHIBITION

### Lafreri, Italian Cartography in the Renaissance

*Mercator Museum at Sint-Niklaas (Belgium), till 19 July 2015*

In 1994 the Museum's former curator Fred Van der Gucht found a volume with 'old maps', as he was preparing to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gerard Mercator's death. On that occasion he had the volume unbound and the plans and maps restored.

This volume is a true IATO (Italian-Assembled-To-Order) atlas. From the beginning these maps were sold separately, but the idea of assembling collections to meet the particular desires of a customer and binding them all together in atlas form evolved somewhere between 1565 and 1573. No two of these atlases are alike, neither regarding number of maps nor their content, be they Roman or Venetian. Venetian and Roman dealers borrowed from each other, sometimes using a map without alteration, at other times procuring the copperplate and erasing the original imprint and substituting their own. For this reason, IATO atlases are found with a mixture of Venetian and Roman imprints. The assembly of such collections resulted in the preservation of some maps that would otherwise have perished if they had been issued separately.

The Sint-Niklaas atlas collection of maps was brought together around 1567, so this makes it an early example of the Italian composite atlas. The question when it was bound is difficult to answer as the parchment cover is fairly timeless and as such hard to date. Whether as a map collection or as an intended atlas, the volume groups about 90 maps and city plans of different periods and origins, by Italian artists and engravers, assembled on demand of a given customer.

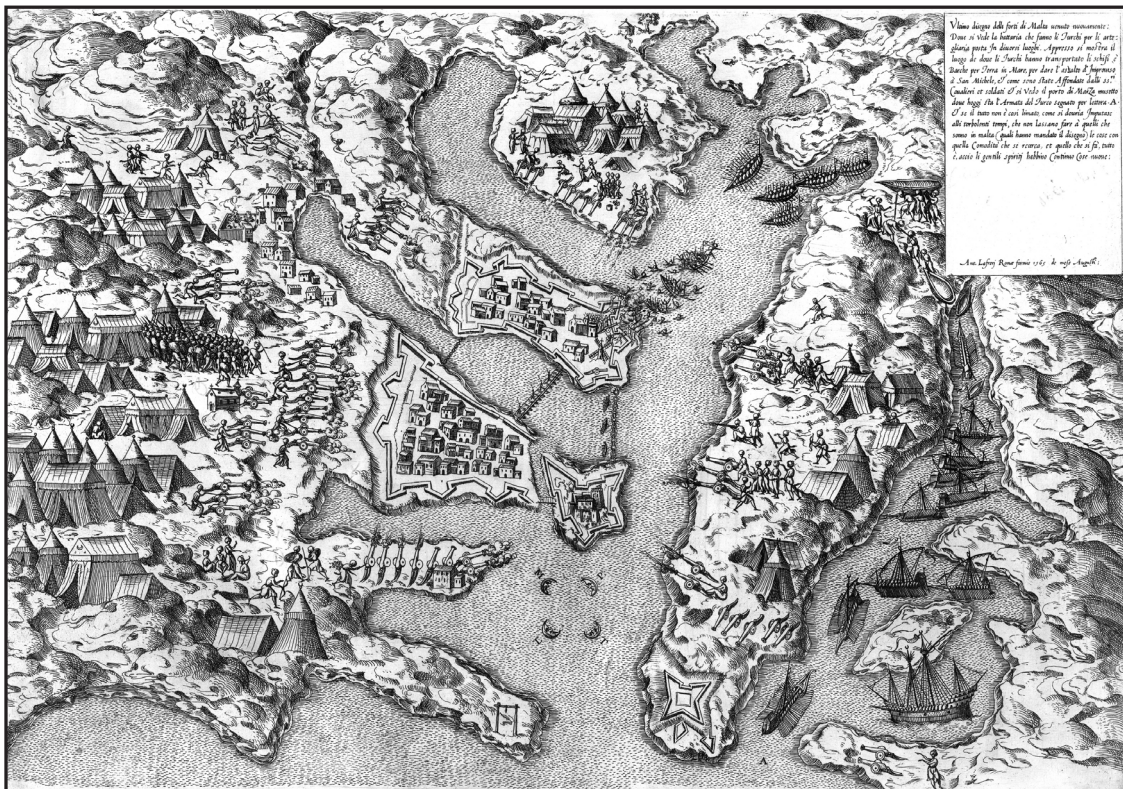
Today a larger part of this collection is on display in the renovated Mercator Museum: 49 items are framed

on the walls and protected, but easily accessible. This exhibition shows cartographic plans and maps by Lafreri, Gastaldi and other contemporary cosmographers and printers. Lafreri was primarily a dealer and publisher, rather than a cartographer. He stocked prints made not only by his own establishment, but by others as well. Their maps are equally present in the Italian atlases. Nevertheless the Sint-Niklaas' atlas contains quite a lot of maps from Lafreri himself. Due to the restoration, the parchment cover and the strips of parchment used to bind the collection of loose sheets were well preserved and are exhibited as well. Parchment was expensive and old manuscripts were often cannibalised, their parchment being recycled for repairs or binding work. In this case a music manuscript has been used.

The opening ceremony of the Lafreri exhibition on 13 November 2014 was attended by many members of the Brussels Map Circle. The Museum director introduced Eddy Maes, the keeper of the collection, Professor De Maeyer (Ghent University) and the city representative for culture.

The permanent collection and the redesigned museum are also well worth a visit as now four items are considered as official 'treasures of Flanders' culture' (in particular the original terrestrial and celestial globes by Gerard Mercator, and the Lafreri collection now on display). A catalogue with high resolution illustrations is available in English and in Flemish (see the review on page 6).

**More info on <http://www.lafreri.ugent.be> and <http://www.kokw.be/lafreri.html>.**



Lafreri - Malta Siege 1565



## LOOKS AT BOOKS I

### **Lafreri: Italian Cartography in the Renaissance**

*Edited by: Karen De Coene, Eddy Maes, Wim Van Roy, Philippe De Maeyer*

*Published by KOKW and the University of Ghent: 154 pages – black, cream and white text, graphics, maps – Soft cover, 280 x 210 mm EUR 25.00 ISBN 978-90-822-9481-1*



# LAFRERI

*Italian Cartography in the Renaissance*

The book, published on the occasion of the exhibition at the Mercator Museum, consists of a foreword, an introduction to the concept and context of the Lafreri Atlas followed by notes, summaries of the maps, a hundred pages showing the maps and/or details of the maps and town plans, some of which form the exhibition, a bibliography and an index. The book and the exhibition concern 'a sixteenth-century Italian atlas in the cartographic collection of the Society of Antiquaries of the Land of Waas' (KOKW). Shortly after the founding of the KOKW, this association was presented with a collection of maps described in the register of donations as an 'Atlas de vieilles cartes', an atlas of old maps.

I found this elegant book quite delightful. The foreword gives a very neat overview of what is to come; of immediate interest is the emphasis on the information the maps and plans provide in terms of historical events.

The chapter entitled 'Entrepreneurship and Networks in the Italian Map Trade. The Creation of the Atlas' by Karen De Coene and Philippe De Maeyer is stylishly illustrated with details from the maps and provides highly useful context to the collection. The authors point out that a 'Lafreri' atlas is not necessarily from Lafreri at all, as the name has become a generic term for 16<sup>th</sup> century composite atlases. Moreover map-making was only a sideline for many printers, at a time when prints – both copperplate and woodcut – of artists' paintings had become very popular. The Lafreri atlases were not new in terms of maps being

bound together into a book, as this fashion had started in 1477 with the publication of Ptolemy's *Geographia*, and the 'Books of Islands' and Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* followed. But what was new was that individual prints were selected by the buyer and then bound into a single volume. Thus no atlas was the same, although customers generally followed the Ptolemaic order: world maps, maps of Europe, Africa and Asia, and then the maps of the New World which by Lafreri's time had started to appear. The atlases end with town plans and news prints. This new book format for maps boosted business for booksellers.

The theme then moves on to where the KOKW atlas might have originated – Venice or Rome – and makes comparisons with the maps in other atlases of similar dates. In twenty-six cases there was a choice available between Venetian or Roman maps; in twenty-one cases that from Rome was chosen, making it more likely that the atlas originated in Rome. The next section deals with the players in the map/prints world in Italy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and a very useful diagram illustrates the interconnections between them. This analysis shows that Lafreri in Rome has the highest number of connections; the preponderance of Roman printing makes it more likely that the atlas originated with him. A second diagram takes into account the watermarks on the paper used for the prints. The discussion moves on to an analysis of the binding of the atlas which has not helped the detective work; more analysis is needed. A comparison of similar



atlases is not very helpful either; however it raises a useful question of whether these atlases were bound when they were compiled, or sometime later.

Lafreri probably advised his customers on what should be included in their personal atlas, and he was very much in favour of news prints showing current events – examples in the KOKW atlas being the depiction of the volcanic eruption in Pozzuoli (near Naples) in 1538, and a print of Mirandola (in the province of Modena), a town occupied by Pope Julius III in 1551. Other examples are given, one being Nicolas Beatrizet's engraving of Thionville after François de Guise had captured the town, and the news prints illustrating the progress of the Great Siege of Malta.

The authors conclude that all evidence points to the KOKW atlas being a 'collection created by Lafreri and Gastaldi as a joint enterprise'. The compilation in around 1567 makes the atlas one of the four earliest Italian composite atlases.

My only criticism of the book is that I am unclear about the target audience. It is written in a very straightforward, almost pedagogical – but still very entertaining – style, but for the lay reader sometimes a little more explanation would be helpful. For example a reference to the 'Brederode mansion' required several minutes of 'Googling' to find out who Brederode was, and the 'mansion' remains a mystery. And I am out of time on looking up 'Rotta di Granvellinges'. A succinct title for the highly useful, and in my case novel, diagrams would also be helpful.

I really enjoyed the book; it is a very neat summary of a large body of work, as evidenced by the notes that follow the text. Thank you!

#### To order the book:

The English publication 'Lafreri. Italian Cartography at the Renaissance' can be purchased at the Department of Geography (Ghent University) at the price of EUR 25.00. Please bear in mind that the shipping costs depend heavily upon the destination. The final charge will be quoted at the invoice that will be sent to you on receipt of your order. You may place your order by sending name, address, email and VAT identification number (if applicable) with subject LAFRERI to Ms. Helga Vermeulen (Helga.Vermeulen@ugent.be). You will obtain an invoice with payment instructions. On receipt of payment, the book will be sent to your address.

The map exhibition at the Mercator Museum in Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, runs to 19 July 2015



Nicola Boothby  
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## TERRARVM ORBIS 10

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History of the Representations of Space in Text and Image  
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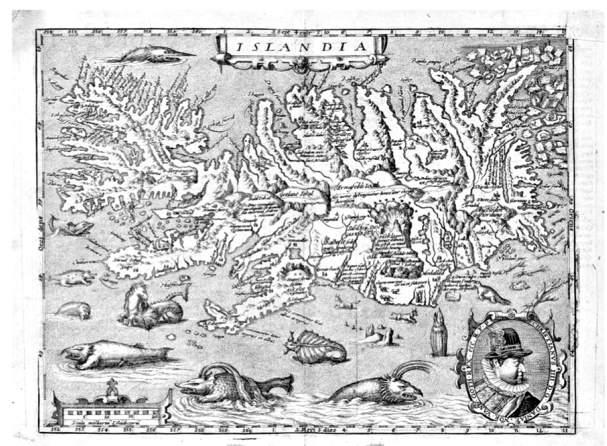
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## LOOKS AT BOOKS II

### Body Worlds - Opicinus de Canistris and the Medieval Cartographic Imagination

by Karl Whittington, *Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies*  
*Department of Publications (PIMS), Turnhout, 2014, 224 pages*

Opicinus de Canistris is certainly one of the most fascinating medieval artists. His drawings are closely related to contemporary maps and sea charts as well as to cosmological diagrams, but they cannot be assimilated to any of these categories. Karl Whittington starts his extraordinary story about the cartographic imagination of this remarkable man with the illness he suffered from on 31 March 1334. In his diary Opicinus relates how at that moment 'his interior eyes were opened to discern the images of the earth and the sea'. These 'images' were visions of continents and oceans transformed into human figures, Whittington calls them 'body-worlds', thus referring to the wide interest within recent medieval studies for the culture of the body.

Although this 'body' aspect is of prime importance for Opicinus' work and Whittington's interpretation, the first chapter in the book discusses the cartographic content of the eighty surviving drawings, now kept in the Vatican library. Not without reason. Opicinus makes use of the most recent achievements of his time: portolan charts. This brings Whittington to an interesting résumé of the abundant discussions lately on medieval portolan charts. Combining research results from the ruling authorities Ramon Pujades and Tony Campbell,<sup>1</sup> Whittington introduces the reader in a clear way to the connection between portolan charts and so-called portolani, pilot books listing the distances between different places. Both appeared at the same moment, they were both designed as aids for navigation and cover the same geographical data. Probably – just as in the case of the more philosophical mappae mundi - the text served as a manual to construct maps. At least this is what Jonathan Lanman tried to prove.

According to Lanman the first portolan charts were plotted on a square grid from the distances and courses listed in the pilot books. Whittington summarises: 'To prove this hypothesis, Lanman set about constructing a map of the Mediterranean region based solely on the data contained in one example, the 13<sup>th</sup> century *Compasso di Navigare*. He initially plotted the chart on graph paper, using the distance and bearing segments for the perimeter of the Mediterranean (the *Compasso di Navigare* contains point-to-point data for travelling the perimeter of the Mediterranean, and also for selected

'pelagic', or open-sea routes). He drew these courses around the perimeter of the sea, starting and ending at Gibraltar, a total distance of 7824 nautical miles. He used no modern tools or techniques, though he did leave out fourteen entries (out of a total of 426) because they were missing a measure for either distance or direction.

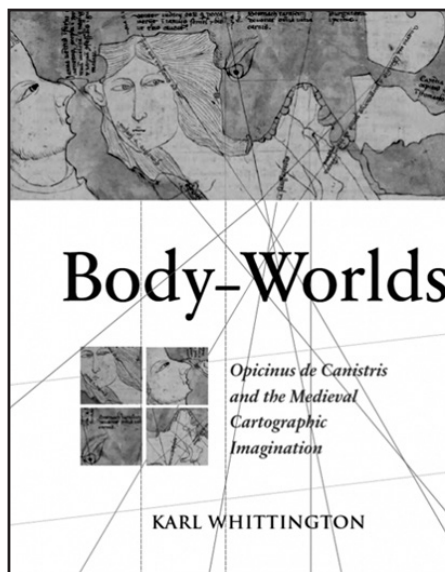
The resulting diagram is strikingly similar in scale, shape, and orientation to the earliest charts, particularly the 'Carte Pisane'.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the connection with portolani may be, portolan charts are no didactic tools like the more scholarly mappae mundi, instead they are real sea charts with a network of navigation lines, even with scale bars that should have made it possible to measure not just angles, but – and this is new -- distances as well. Through square grids, Whittington argues, the space of the chart became finally quantifiable.

Although the author does not mention the study of Roel Nicolai,<sup>3</sup> that demonstrated the similarity in positioning with the Mercator projection as an argument for foreign or antique

influences, Whittington would certainly not agree concerning the origin of the portolan charts. Opposed to the opinion of the Dutch author, Whittington emphasises quite convincingly the medieval origin of the charts, and denies all classical, Arabic or Byzantine origin. More precisely, clerics often acted as notaries and chaplains on naval voyages, and would have been the only ones with access to the erudite ecclesiastical culture and academic writings necessary to create the charts. Only they possessed the intellectual background and necessary practical maritime knowledge for obtaining the chart's core data.

Only one question remains: how can these charts be so accurate? Pujades, the leading authority, discusses the relationship between the magnetic compass and the portolan chart, stating firmly that their histories are 'indissolubly linked' and Whittington agrees.<sup>4</sup> No foreign origin should be looked for in the similarity in positioning with the Mercator projection, rather one should question the characteristics of the projection itself. When paths with constant compass bearing in navigation are represented as straight lines on a map, the Mercator projection is obviously never



<sup>1</sup>Ramon J. Pujades i Bataller, *Les cartes portolanes: la representació medieval d'una mar solcada*, Barcelona: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya; Institut d'Estudis Catalans; Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània; Lunewerg, 2007. Tony Campbell's is available on the web as an addition to his contribution in the *History of Cartography, Portolan charts from the late thirteenth century to 1500. Additions, Corrections, Updates to Volume 1. The History of Cartography* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 371-463.

<sup>2</sup>Lanman J.T., *On the Origin of Portolan Charts*. Chicago: Newberry Library, 1987. Whittington K.P., *The Body-Worlds of Opicinus de Canistris, Artist and Visionary (1296-ca. 1354)*, PhD Berkely, 2010, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolai R., *A critical review of the hypothesis of a medieval origin for portolan charts*, Universiteit Utrecht, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>Pujades 2007, p. 457.





far away. In that case the design of the coastline can have resulted from combining past navigation experience with measuring angles and distances. Further research will certainly shed new light on this matter.

Interesting from a historical viewpoint is that the grids on portolan charts illustrate space that is or can be measured, thus giving the viewer a way to perceive and conceptualise space. In fact, Whittington suggests that grids and rhumb lines on portolan charts render a God's-eye view. The cartographic gaze has indeed been compared to a transcendental positioning combining an elevated bird's-eye-view and an all seeing eye that sees everywhere at the same time.<sup>5</sup> Post-modern philosophers criticised this so-called cartographic 'God's Eye View' in so far as it defines our approach to governance, identity and knowledge today.<sup>6</sup> But in fact the God's eye view that now seems to have had a restraining influence, used to be a catalyst for cartographic innovation resulting in portolan charts – if this conclusion from Whittington's assumption is not too straightforward.

Whittington's thoughts on medieval portolan charts deal with many fundamental questions, to name only one: the difference between a map and a diagram. 'The map and the diagram are shifting concepts' thus the author. And indeed, unlike its function as a didactic diagram, a mappa mundi is for the medieval mapmaker a true map. On the contrary a portolan chart is rather a diagram that we in this case would define as a true map.<sup>7</sup>

As in all medieval epistemology, Opicinus reconciles and unites former authorities with new forms of knowledge. He combines portolan charts with medieval visual theory, links the earthly to the celestial world and so on. Opicinus' ideas are surprisingly modern. 'The most solid demonstrations' come 'from a visible proof' instead of 'from [spiritual] authority'.<sup>8</sup> Whittington might not mention it in this context, but Opicinus' words echo 12<sup>th</sup> century preponderance of nature above the Bible in revealing spiritual knowledge. His portolan charts embody the spiritual truth and make from geography a first class authority on the spiritual world.<sup>9</sup>

However intriguing portolan charts may be nowadays, however many discussions they may evoke, a man such as Opicinus used them for a bigger purpose: the creation of his Body-Worlds. How are these drawings structured? Let's hear Whittington. 'Maps are piled on top of other maps, sometimes transparent and sometimes opaque, in a seemingly endless play of permeability and superimposition'. The medieval Opicinus was clearly working with map layers, to use a more modern cartographic vocabulary. The meaning behind the use of multiple overlapping maps is allegorical with popular binary oppositions between Europe (spatial personification of Christianity) and Africa (Babylon). But this is only one of the multiple levels of reality that contain some of his drawings.

Whittington's attention focuses especially on the large

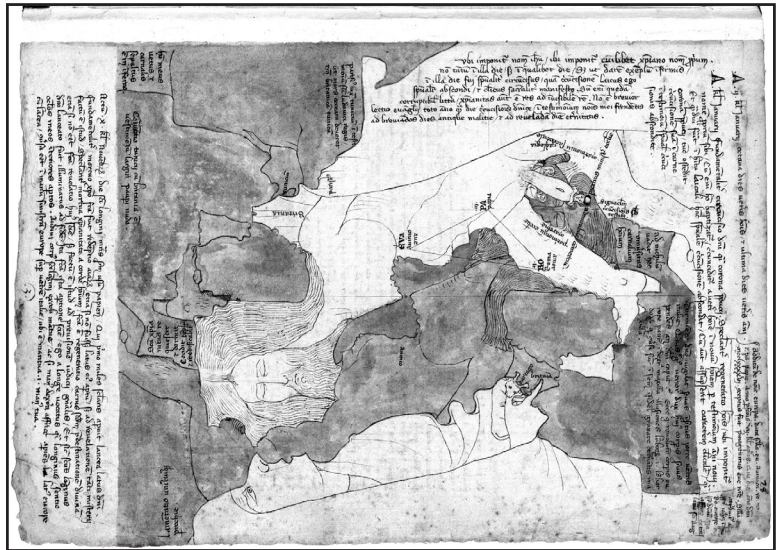
<sup>5</sup>Pickles J., A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World, 2004, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup>See debate on 23 October 2014 at Universiteit van Amsterdam: Beyond the Map: Telling Stories across Borders.

<sup>7</sup>De Coene K., Continuity or innovation? No dilemma in the Liber Floridus of Lambert of Saint-Omer (1121), Caert-Thresoor, to be published.

<sup>8</sup>Whittington 2014, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup>De Coene K., Martine De Reu & Philippe De Maeyer (eds) (2011), Liber Floridus 1121: The World in a Book. Tiel: Lannoo.



Opicinus 'representing himself as the penis of the church'

number of sexual representations. Their presence may surprise a modern reader, but the interest in the sexual is not particularly exceptional in medieval culture.

To mention just one example: Europe's figure has between its legs, somewhere near Venice, male genitalia. The power of sexual metaphors in the medieval world is not easy to explain. They are abundantly present in biblical language and correspond to the high focus on fertility, both in man and nature, within agrarian communities. As in initiation rituals, birth and rebirth became easily part of religious experience. 'Sexual reproduction became a metaphor for all creation of worlds and beings, both good and evil' Whittington writes in his PhD<sup>10</sup>.

But it goes even further and this is extremely interesting. Opicinus' visual statements were closely connected to his own person, spiritual rebirth was in the first place his own. Opicinus identifies with Europe's circumcised penis naming it: 'Opicinus, minister of the church'. 'Representing himself as the penis of the Church (...) visualises the idea that all clerics wore the marks of Christ's circumcision (and thus sacrifice) on their heads.'<sup>11</sup> While disseminating God's word in the world, they were spreading the seed of faith so that it may grow among the believers. This free play with concepts of sex and self is very unusual in a medieval context and make from Opicinus' work a unique piece of medieval heritage.

As the title Body-Worlds suggests, it is the bodily character of Opicinus' maps that prevail in Whittington's study. Just for the sake of the map lover your reviewer spent quite some attention to Whittington's résumé of portolan charts. But this is not his greatest achievement. His approach to the bodily in Opicinus' work is fascinating. Moreover Body-Worlds is so well-written, Opicinus is so intriguing and his charts so fascinating that one can only weep the moment you have finished the book unless ... you postpone the end forever.

Karen De Coene  
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<sup>10</sup>Whittington K.P., The Body-Worlds of Opicinus de Canistris, Artist and Visionary (1296-ca. 1354), PhD Berkely, 2010, p. 106.

<sup>11</sup>Whittington 2010, p. 110.



## LOOKS AT BOOKS III

### **Autour de Philippe Vandermaelen. Répertoire biographique des collaborateurs de l'Établissement géographique de Bruxelles et de l'École Normale (Inventaire raisonné des collections cartographiques Vandermaelen conservées à la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, Vol. VI)**

**[Around Philippe Vandermaelen. Biographical repertory of collaborators of the Etablissement géographique de Bruxelles and the Ecole Normale (Inventaire raisonné of the Vandermaelen cartographic collections preserved at the Royal Library of Belgium, Vol. VI)]**

by Marguerite Silvestre

*Brussels : Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 2014. 584 pp., 107 ill. in colour, incl. 27 portraits and 9 maps.*

*Cloth cover, dust jacket, 27 x 21 cm. ISBN 978-2-87093-173-8, EUR 45.00.*

*To order: Royal Library of Belgium, Boulevard de l'Empereur 4, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium, or contact francoise.lebon@kbr.be . Also available in the Library's bookshop.*

About the time Belgium became a state in its own right, Philippe Vandermaelen (1795 - 1869), a self-taught geographer and cartographer, embarked upon an adventure that was to have a lasting impact on his native country and on the cartography of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1830, following the resounding success he obtained internationally with his *Atlas Universel* in six volumes (Brussels, 1825 - 1827)<sup>1</sup>, he created his own private *Etablissement géographique de Bruxelles*. This was soon expanded beyond the production of maps, atlases and globes to include a school for lithography, an *Ecole normale*, a natural science and ethnographic museum, a library and an important collection of maps. In addition, Vandermaelen organised and financed scientific expeditions to different parts of the world.

Until the closure of this *Etablissement* in 1878, hundreds of employees and collaborators had been engaged by Vandermaelen for longer or shorter periods as gardeners, clerks, storekeepers, draughtsmen, lithographers, printers, colourists, biologists, explorers, teachers, and in many other occupations. A good number of these, 273 altogether, have been identified by the author, although many workers, apprentices and other helping hands had to remain in the dark due to lack of usable records.

In the pleasantly fluent, narrative style we have become accustomed to, Marguerite Silvestre explains, in the Introduction, the method employed to write the history of the Institute from a rather unusual angle, that

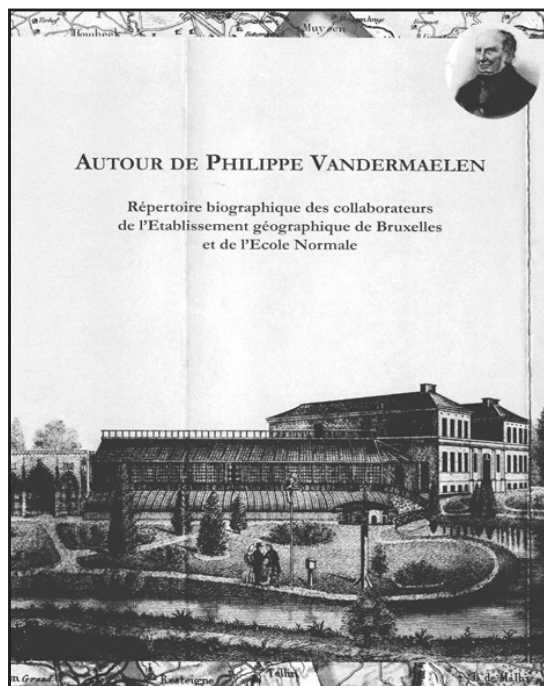
of its multiform physiognomy, leaving the chronicle of its physical existence to the forthcoming Volume VII. Viewing the *Etablissement* from the inside, she says, allows the story to become illuminated by the lives of those who shaped it and who contributed to its growth and fame, ranging from modest workmen to distinguished academics.

Their biographies, arranged in alphabetical order, constitute the central part of the book, in two main sections, one for the employees and collaborators of the *Etablissement géographique*, the other for the faculty of the *Ecole normale*, the *School for Higher Education*. An impressive supplement of 155 pages of notes amplifies on these entries with source references and additional details.

There follows a most useful alphabetical correlation table of names of persons in the inventory, cross-referenced to the different branches they were engaged in, such as the production of atlases, other cartographic works, administration, colouring,

research and exploration, or teaching. A list of bibliographical sources and indexes completes the volume.

Obviously, one expects a fairly wide-ranging diversity of individuals to appear in this catalogue spanning nearly half a century of activities, but reality shows this to be well beyond anything one may have imagined. The actors on the scene come from all over Europe, exiles or fugitives, from all walks of life and all strata of society. Upper and lower middle class bourgeois rub shoulders with proletarians, scientists mingle with illiterates, crooks and impostors with law-abiding citizens. Some most surprising vocational combinations come to light,



<sup>1</sup> See the review of Vol. V in this series, describing the *Atlas Universel*, in BIMCC Newsletter No 43 (May 2012), pp. 13-14 and in *Imago Mundi* 65/1 (2013), pp. 125-126



as for example with Louis Bulens, fishmonger and engraver of lithographic maps for the Atlas universel and the Atlas de l'Europe, François De Rademaeker, lithographer and producer of postage stamps, and Pierre-Joseph Pitseys, wine merchant, decorated army officer and lithographer.

More fascinating still are the voyages of botanists and zoologists who were sent off to South America, Mexico, the West Indies, or the islands of the Pacific. Take Charles Désiré Jacquot, for instance, son of a hatter and educated at Vandermaelen's school. In 1835, at the age of 16, he was dispatched by Vandermaelen together with other naturalists on a mission to Brazil, from where he embarked on a French training ship for a trip around the world, but was shipwrecked on the Chilean coast. Having barely survived he travelled to Java and Batavia for the Belgian Navy, and upon returning to Flanders devoted the rest of his life to the production of ... corsets.

What transpires from these stories is that the body of workers Vandermaelen gathered around him developed a singular attachment to him as a protector and leader, and this undoubtedly accounted for the outstanding performance of the Etablissement in so many different domains.

Some important actors in this field merit a particular mention. There is Hippolyte Ode (1796-?), lithographic draughtsman and printer responsible for the Atlas Universel (1825-1827), with Augustin Delavault (1768-1849) signing the descriptive notices in the blank spaces

of the atlas maps. Then there is Pierre-Joseph Doms (1801-1858) who, under the direction of Jean-Baptiste Collon (1798-1875), was the principal lithographer of the 165 maps of the Atlas de l'Europe (1828-1833), followed by Jean-Baptiste Delahoese (1816-1911) who developed lithographic techniques to perfection and then had an outstanding career with the Dépôt de la Guerre, successor to the Etablissement géographique.

The sum total of the kaleidoscopic episodes of the lives linked to Vandermaelen's enterprise offers a novel, unfamiliar view of the Institute, against the background of the social, political and intellectual realities of that time. Seen from the perspective of history of cartography we learn how maps and atlases were made and marketed, how new printing techniques were developed and optimised, and can appreciate the role the Institute played in the evolution of cartography in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

This is a remarkable work on cartographic Europe of about 200 years ago, solidly researched to the most minute detail, as instructive as it is entertaining – a pleasure to read. Highly recommended.



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## LOOKS AT BOOKS IV

### Le Dauphiné. Une représentation des territoires à partir des cartes géographiques anciennes

[The Dauphiné. A representation of its territories based on ancient maps]

by Jacques Mille, with André Chatelon,  
Christian d'Aboville and Jean-Marc Barfétý

*Tourriers: Naturalia Publications, 2013. 336 pp., 373 colour ill., hard cover. 30 x 21.5 cm. ISBN 978-2-909717-92-0. EUR 40.00.*

To order: Transfaire S.A.R.L., Naturalia Publications, Immeuble Wanad, F-04250 Turriers (France), [www.naturalia-publications.com](http://www.naturalia-publications.com)

The Dauphiné, a former province in the south-east of France, is a region that corresponds to the present-day departments of Hautes-Alpes, Isère and Drôme. Ceded to France in 1349, it became the traditional apanage of the king's eldest son, the Dauphin.

Conceived as a catalogue raisonné of maps of the Dauphiné, both in manuscript and printed form, this book comprises two main parts: a carto-bibliographical listing of ancient maps of the Dauphiné as such, and a line-up of maps of the Hautes-Alpes, included here as a complement to a previous publication in 2011, devoted to that department.

Starting off, a 'petite histoire de la cartographie' takes us from symbolic T-O maps via Ptolemy to Berlinghieri's first modern map of France (1482), and then on to the Dauphiné on maps of France by mapmakers such as Fine, Jolivet, Ortelius, Mercator, and further to miniature maps derived from these.

A very important chapter covers manuscript maps of the region by Jacques Fougeu (fl.1595-1606, d.1646) and Jean de Beins (1577-1651), both in the employ of King Henry IV and engaged as much in warfare as in surveying and mapmaking in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The author acknowledges previous studies of de Beins's work, notably by map historians François de Dainville (1968) and Monique Pelletier (1980), but here offers, for the first time, colour reproductions of all twenty-eight ms. maps of the Dauphiné by de Beins (or attributed to him). The significance of these, compiled in a 45-page dossier, resides in the fact that, on the one

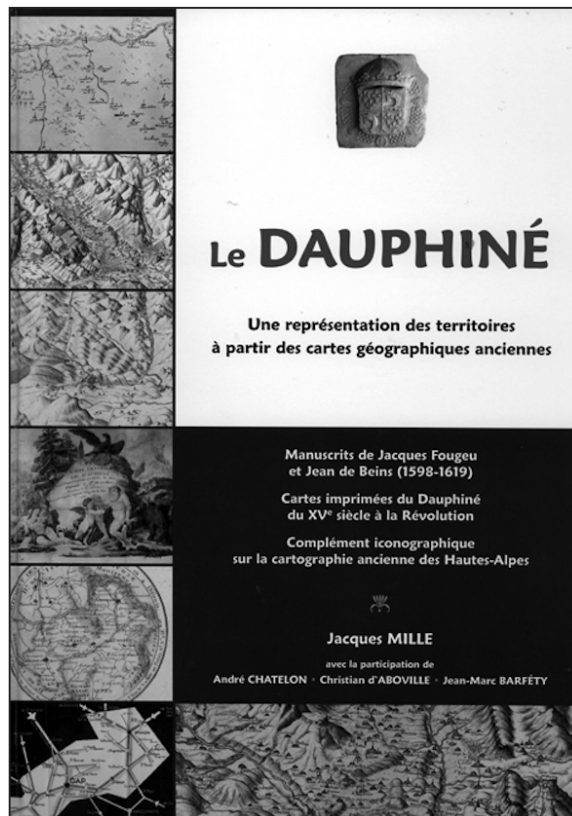
hand, they were drawn at an unusually large scale, of ca. 1:110 000, and on the other they served as source material for a vast range of printed maps, published from 1617 onwards.

Jean Leclerc was the first to issue, in the 1622 edition of his *Théâtre géographique du Royaume de France*, an atlas map of the Dauphiné based on de Beins, creating a model that became a prototype for maps drawn by other French and Dutch mapmakers well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including Boisseau, Berey, Tassin, Hondius, Blaeu, Janssonius, and copied again by many others. This series was interrupted by Nicolas Sanson in 1652 with a new map of the region derived from a manuscript of ca. 1630 which the authors have discovered and reproduced here. This in turn became the basis for maps by Jaillot, de Fer, Merian, Valk, Mortier, to mention just a few.

There follows a chapter on printed maps of the Dauphiné of the last period under

review, up to the French Revolution, with an emphasis on those produced by Cassini, Capitaine and their contemporaries. As is well known, the territorial reorganisation of France into departments in 1790 put an end, at least in administrative terms, to the regions that existed under the ancien régime. A brief discourse on maps of a larger geographical coverage carrying the Dauphiné in the title brings us to the end of the first part of the book.

The second part focuses on the mapping of the Hautes-Alpes, as a department or a region, as the case





may be, complementing a previous carto-bibliographical study by Jacques Mille. No fewer than 113 maps are shown, starting with enlargements of maps already shown in the first part, and then covering manuscript and printed maps in a wide iconographic spectrum from 1750 to 1946. Alpine panoramas alternate with cadastral plans, and bird's eye views of fortifications give way to departmental maps, the series ending with thematic illustrations of road and railway networks as well as map guides for tourism and fishing.

The last eighteen pages form an Annex that contains chronological tables of regional history and of the history of cartography, a brief lexicon of terms, a list of illustrations, an index of names, and a bibliography.

One cannot but admire the immense research effort that has gone into compiling this work of reference, one of the most thoroughly documented catalogues of regional maps of France known to this reviewer. Although its appeal is clearly directed to those familiar with this beautiful province of south-eastern France, the book offers an enormous amount of base-line cartographic information on mapmakers and their art that is valid for anyone interested in the early cartography of that country. The map reproductions are of rarely seen, excellent quality throughout, and the interspersed synthetic diagrams of local history and map coverage are an essential aid towards understanding the complex pattern of regional cartographic history.

From the carto-bibliographical point of view, however, the map descriptions accompanying the illustrations show some regrettable weaknesses. Whilst much space is devoted, quite understandably, to the analysis of significant toponyms and configurations of terrain, the elaboration of specific map features is wanting in detail and precision. Occasional misspelling of foreign mapmakers' names, as well as errors in transcriptions of map titles, are irritating imperfections. Moreover, there is much speculation about the origin and dating of Flemish, Dutch and German maps, with question marks punctuating the notes. Clearly, a consultation of commonly available literature, such as Peter van der Krogt's new edition of Koeman's *Atlantes Neerlandici*, Peter Meurer's *Atlantes Colonienses*, or Marcel van den Broecke's *Ortelius Atlas Maps*, would have avoided such uncertainties, unbecoming for a work of this standing.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the foregoing, the book before us is a most valuable contribution to the unveiling of the cartographic history of the Regions of France, a subject that promises many a revelation yet.

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## Special edition of Malta Map Society's Newsletter

In January 2015, on the occasion of its fifth anniversary, the Malta Map Society (MMS) published Volume 3 Issue 1 of its Newsletter in a special edition extended to 76 pages. MMS Secretary Joseph Schirò in his Introduction retraces the short but eventful history of the Society and cites congratulatory letters received from the International Map Collectors' Society (IMCoS), the Washington Map Society (WMS) and, of course, from ourselves.

The nine articles that follow, address various aspects of Maltese cartography from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, admirably complementing what we already learnt about this subject from reviews of previous publications in our columns. Dr Albert Ganado, MMS President, describes an early 19<sup>th</sup> century spy map by George Grognet, Joseph Schirò presents a fortification plan of Malta in a Venetian pamphlet of 1798, while the core article by Bernadine Scicluna (Curator, National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta) examines three versions of a map of fortified Valletta by Sebastiano Ittar (ca. 1790). Dr William Zammit brings to light two sets of administrative maps of France of the 1780s produced by Hessel and donated to the Grand Master for the Order's library by,

presumably, King Louis XVI himself. Rod Lyon then looks at a German WW II map of Malta prepared for an invasion that finally did not materialise, and a team of geographers and historians from the University of Malta and the National Archives analyse topographical sketches of villages in Malta and Gozo of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In evaluating nautical charts from the portolan era to the present day, R. Gauci and D.C. Smith of the Geography Department of the University of Malta develop a cartographic analytical model for the study of such charts, and Matthew Zammit offers a note on Leopoldo Brocktorff's naval career (see BIMCC Newsletter No 47, September 2013, p. 8-9). A listing of 37 cartographic studies published in the eight previous MMS Newsletters completes this remarkable brochure. (Visit also [www.maltamapsociety.com](http://www.maltamapsociety.com)).

## Bayerische Staatsbibliothek acquires Lafreri Atlas

News about this acquisition had been circulating on the cartographic grapevine, but we now have confirmation of the transaction in an article published in the *Bibliotheks Magazin*, the Journal of the German State Libraries of Berlin and Munich (No 1/2015, February 2015, pp. 15-21).

Dr Claudia Fabian, Head of the Manuscripts and Old Prints Department of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, reveals that this unique atlas was bought from the Haas Family Consortium in August 2014, for nearly 1.4 million Euros, largely financed by grants from the Cultural Foundation of the German Länder and the Giesecke & Devrient Foundation.

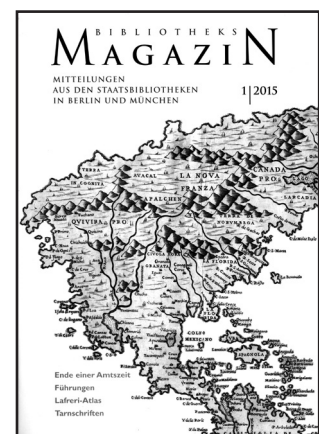
Dr Fabian points out that the real value of this compilation of 191 maps dating from 1545 to 1571 is not so much their cartographic status but resides in the fact that they are still contained together in this volume. To emphasise this she quotes some enormous prices such maps could fetch if sold separately.

The current census of existing Lafreri atlases stands at 70, of which three others are held in Bavaria (two in the Dillingen Library, and one in the Benedictine Abbey of Metten) – and one is in Sint-Niklaas (see page 5). Usually, Fabian explains, this type of atlas is composed of between 20 and 100 maps, making their new treasure an exceptional addition to the Library's already very rich holdings. Of particular importance is the relatively large number of maps and plans relating

to Bavaria.<sup>1</sup>

The atlas has previously been described by Peter H. Meurer in a book published by the Haas Brothers, Le Bail and Weissert in 2004, entitled 'The Strabo illustratus atlas: a unique 16<sup>th</sup> century composite atlas from the House of Bertelli in Venice'. This is a work of outstanding importance for the documentation of what Meurer calls the 'Golden age of Italian map publishing in Rome and Venice.' A review appeared in BIMCC Newsletter No 20 (September 2004) and this may be read on our website [www.bimcc.org/newsletters](http://www.bimcc.org/newsletters).

<sup>1</sup> The link given to view this atlas is [www.digitale-sammlungen.de](http://www.digitale-sammlungen.de), >Karten und Bilder, >Karten und Pläne, > enter shelf mark 2Mapp.464.





## Atlas mural Vidal-Lablache – Les cartes de notre enfance [Atlas of wall maps by Vidal-Lablache – The maps of our childhood]

edited by Jacques Scheibling and Caroline Leclerc

Paris: Armand Colin, 2014. 158 pp., 2 b/w and 121 colour ill. (72 full-page maps), hard cover, 29 x 25 cm.  
ISBN 978-2-200-60011-2. EUR 29.00.

Generations of school children in France and her overseas territories have been learning geography from large classroom maps designed by French geographer and cartographer Paul Vidal-Lablache (1845-1918) and published by the Paris publisher Armand Colin between 1885 and 1960. It would appear that these wall maps have become collectors' items in their own right, and it is not surprising that the subject has now been addressed, and nicely illustrated, in a book devoted to them. With dimensions in the order of 117 x 89 cm, one imagines collectors' concerns over adequate storage facilities for them.

Born under the name of Vidal, his family in 1877 obtained a nobiliary particle derived from property owned in the hamlet of La Blache (in the Auvergne), and he henceforth called himself Paul Vidal de la Blache. Possibly, under the influence of his publisher, he simplified this to what has become the almost generic term of Vidal-Lablache for wall maps in schools. A bound atlas, *Atlas général Vidal-Lablache*, was first published in 1894 with 420 maps and similarly enjoyed a long life in many editions.

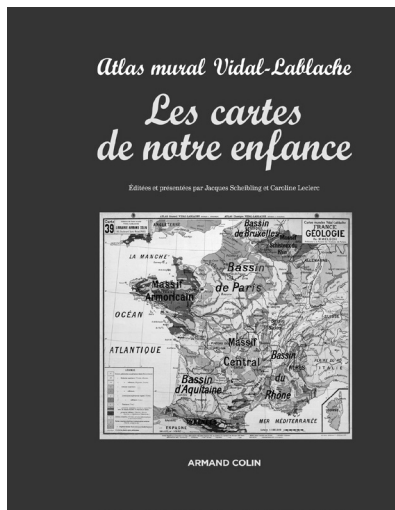
The book is not, and does not claim to be a cartobibliography of such classroom maps. Based on the collection of an amateur, Fred Perrin<sup>1</sup>, the maps are grouped in two parts: Part I, France and the French Empire (28 maps), and Part II, the Continents (41 maps). A double page is devoted to each map, with a historical and geopolitical account on the left-hand

page, and the corresponding map on the opposite page. In view of the difficulty of dating maps from different editions (no publication dates being marked on the maps), a laudable attempt has been made in an Annex to list them in order of publication, with an indication of type of map produced on the verso of some of them (mute, political).

In their conclusion, the authors raise the question as to why one would want to reproduce maps that are so obviously outdated. As any map collector would expect, their answer simply is because they bring back images of the past, they permit to gauge the enormous changes the world has undergone, and, last but not least, because they merit being documented, in all their beauty, as objects of our cultural heritage. Produced in good quality, in a commodious, map-friendly format, this book offers a useful introduction

to the subject, at a reasonable price.

*P.S. Since drafting this Note, I have had contact with another collector, Julien Poirret, a specialist on the subject. He is willing to share his knowledge, and also his views on this book, with anyone interested (<http://cartesscolaires.blogspot.be/?m=1, blog.vidal.lablache@gmail.com>).*



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## HISTORY OF CARTOGRAPHY

### How old are Portolan charts really?



by Roel Nicolai

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#### Abstract

Portolan charts are realistic, accurate charts that appeared suddenly in the Mediterranean world of maritime commerce in the thirteenth century. Their origin is entirely unclear despite an abundance of hypotheses. Recent research, based on geodetic analysis of a number of charts has provided evidence that these charts cannot have a medieval origin, but must be pre-medieval. Their high accuracy and underlying map projection make their construction in the Middle Ages impossible.

#### Setting the scene

The sudden appearance of portolan charts in the late medieval Mediterranean world of maritime commerce at the end of the thirteenth century ranks as one of the most significant events in the history of cartography. Their extraordinary realism contrasts sharply with the qualitative character, often with religious overtones and classical elements, of the contemporary mappae mundi. They represent an unprecedented step forward in cartographic practices, which set the tone for mapping in the Age of Discovery and beyond. Portolan charts are the first maps, perhaps after Ptolemy, to have been drawn to scale.

Apart from their evident significance for the history of cartography, they also constitute a historical, geodetic and cartographic mystery that has so far proven to be unsolvable, notwithstanding claims to the contrary, often made by historians and historians of cartography with a confidence that is unwarranted. Tony Campbell was probably the first who, in 1987, openly admitted that we simply do not know how these charts were made and even who made them:

*'Among the research problems connected with portolan charts, the question of their origin is perhaps the most intractable. ... Despite the thousands of scholarly words expended on the subject, most of the hypotheses about portolan chart origins have remained just that. In the absence of corroborating data they often appear to be less explanations than creation myths'*<sup>1</sup>.

Whilst conceding that it is not understood how these extraordinary charts were constructed, experts on portolan charts show an understandable reluctance to question the postulated medieval origin of the charts. Understandable, because the charts contain no trace of a possible antique origin. The same is true of a possible Arabic-Islamic or a Byzantine origin. They share no characteristics with Ptolemaic maps and only

<sup>1</sup>Tony Campbell, 'Portolan Charts from the Late Thirteenth Century to 1500', in *The History of Cartography, Volume 1 – Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*. Ed. J.B. Harley and David Woodward, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p380.

a few Arabic-Islamic portolan charts, which appear to be copies of fifteenth century European charts, are extant. So, by a process of elimination, a European medieval origin is what remains. However recent research documented in my PhD thesis has proven the consensus view incorrect<sup>2</sup>. By applying (numerical) geodetic analysis methods, I have been able to prove that these charts cannot be medieval. Rather than being relatively primitive medieval cartographic products they are geodetically constructed charts of a higher accuracy than has been acknowledged until now. The construction of such sophisticated charts is far beyond the capabilities of medieval cartographers. The charts cannot be falsifications of a later date; too many survive for that to be an option. Additionally the impact they had on later cartography is too clearly visible.

#### Why are portolan charts 'strange'?

Portolan charts are manuscript charts drawn on vellum, a fine quality of parchment. Their dimensions are often dictated by the size of skin, typically about 100 cm by 75 cm. Their scale is approximately 1:5.5 million, i.e. 1 cm on the chart equates to 55 km in the real world. The earliest portolan charts show the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and often the Atlantic coasts between Cape Drâa in Morocco and the south coast of England with remarkable accuracy. Although the North Sea and the Baltic Sea are also often depicted, these areas lack the realism and detail of the core area described above. Portolan charts are clearly nautical charts and as such constitute a new genre of maps. Their characteristics became the hallmarks of all nautical charts until well into the eighteenth century. The names of ports and landmarks are written at right angles with the coastline, important names in red ink and the remainder in black.

<sup>2</sup>Roel Nicolai, A critical review of the hypothesis of a medieval origin for portolan charts, PhD Thesis, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, (Houten, The Netherlands: Educatieve Media), 2014. This thesis is expected to be published, with revisions, as *The enigma of the origin of portolan charts. A geodetic analysis of the hypothesis of a medieval origin*, (Leiden: Brill) in October 2015.



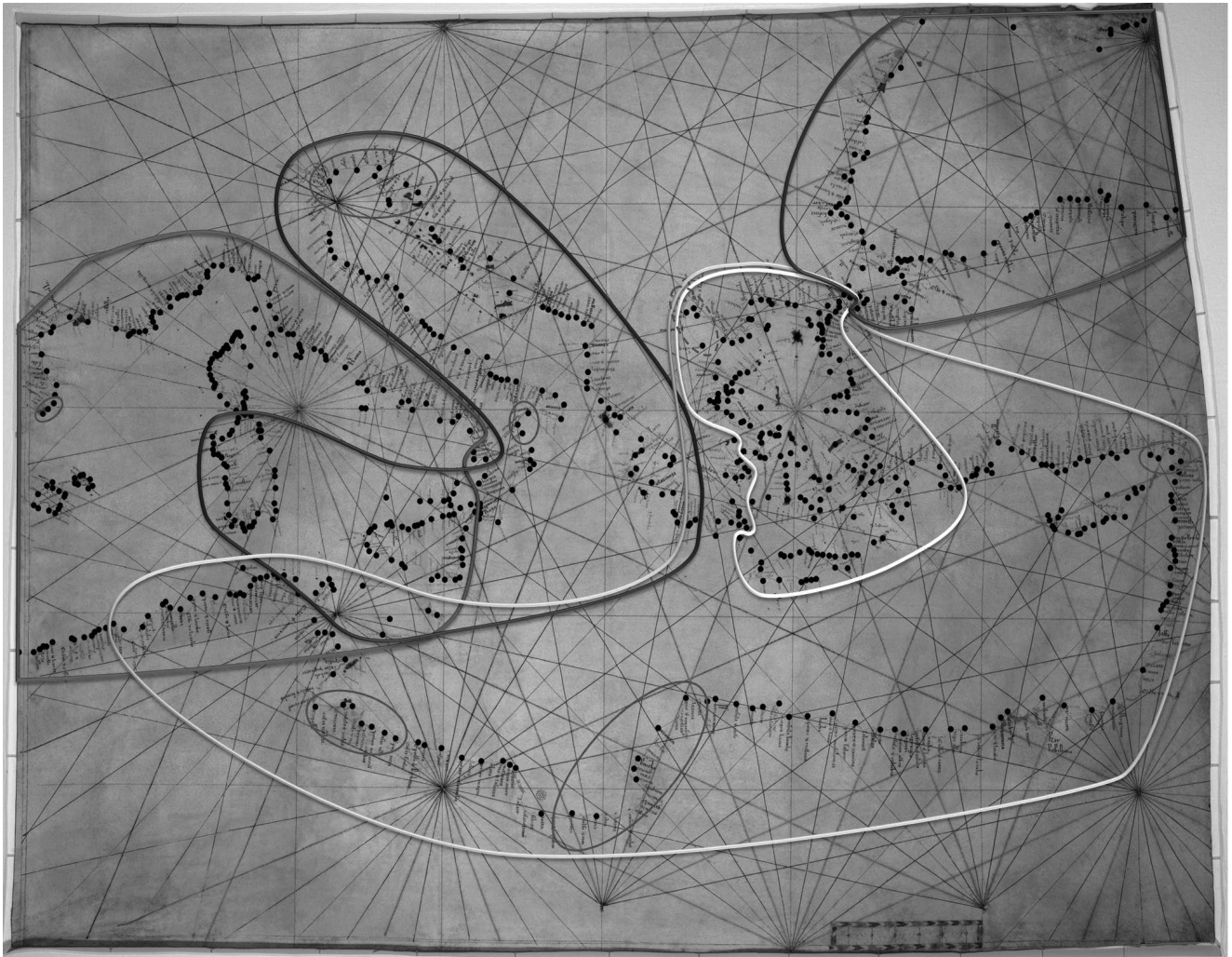


Figure 1 - Anonymous portolan chart from the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, believed to be of Genoese origin  
(Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.- Catalogue nr G567)

A striking characteristic of these charts are the straight lines drawn apparently at random across the entire chart. On closer inspection they form a regular, ingenious pattern, known as a wind rose. This is created by interconnecting sixteen regularly spaced points on a circle, which covers the larger part of the chart.

The wind rose lines were colour coded and named after the eight main 'winds' that the medieval sailor distinguished: the main winds are drawn in black, the eight so-called 'half-winds' in green and the sixteen 'quarter winds' in red. This results in a total of 32 directions, as shown in Figure 2. The intermediate 'winds' were indicated by names such as 'between Greco and Levante' and 'a quarter wind from Greco to Levante'. The colour-coding would have facilitated the identification of the correct compass bearing when laying out a course. The availability of the wind rose on the charts provides an absolute orientation to the charts and reveals that the entire coastline image is rotated anticlockwise by about 9 degrees. This angle remains more or less constant until about 1600, when portolan charts oriented to true north begin to appear. Most surviving charts were decorated with colourful city vignettes and pennants and were probably intended for

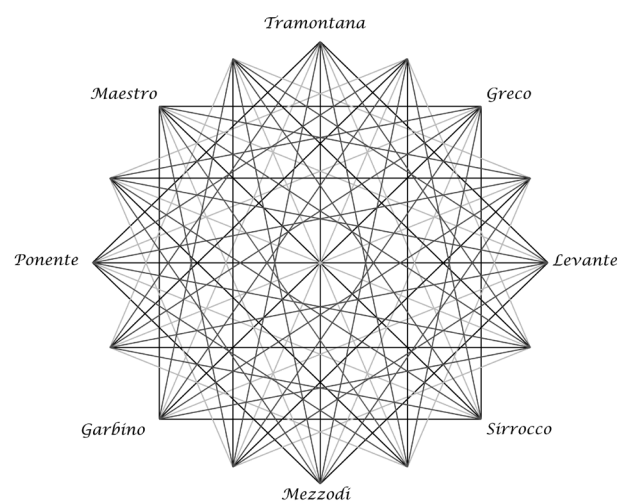


Figure 2 - Wind rose with the names of eight main 'winds'  
prestige and display by their (wealthy) owners. But there is sufficient evidence of on-board usage of portolan



charts, presumably as a navigation aid<sup>3</sup>. Most of those would have had a limited lifetime in the damp and salty offshore environment and they would probably lack the decorative elements mentioned. The chart shown in Figure 1 may well be a rare survivor from this category; it appears to have been trimmed back, possibly as a result of water damage around the edges.

Portolan charts have a number of curious characteristics. They appear out of nowhere, almost fully developed. No cartographic products are known that might have served as precursors or prototypes. Consequently there is no 'breadcrumb trail' in the historical record that might shed light on how these charts were constructed and how they acquired their high level of accuracy. Equally strange is that hardly any development appears to have taken place after their first appearance: their key characteristics do not change. It is clear that they were copied from chart to chart. Portolan charts did not become gradually more accurate, nor were their typical shortcomings and defects resolved over time. Shortcomings they do have: they exhibit regional scale and orientation differences that are subject to some change, but no gradual improvements are visible. Other shortcomings concern persistent errors in the details of the coastline. This is strange, because if medieval cartographers were capable of making such accurate charts, why did not the same skills permit them to resolve these shortcomings? The strangest property of these charts, apart from their accuracy, is the fact that the image of the coastlines of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Atlantic coasts closely resembles the map image of a modern map or chart on the Mercator projection. The Mercator projection was invented by Gerard Kremer in the middle of the sixteenth century, whilst the oldest extant portolan chart, the so-called *Carte Pisane*, is dated to the end of the thirteenth century. Moreover, the accuracy of portolan charts is much higher than that of any contemporary or earlier map. It is even higher than the accuracy of maps from the centuries that followed. It would take until the eighteenth century before new maps of comparable accuracy were produced.

### **Consensus elements on the origin of portolan charts**

Despite the abundance of different hypotheses on the origin and the construction method of portolan charts – these two aspects are interrelated – experts do agree broadly on a number of things. Firstly there is unanimous agreement that portolan charts are based on actual measurements, rather than on a mental image of the world. Their accuracy leaves no room for other explanations. Contemporary maps, the European *mappae mundi* and Arabic-Islamic maps, are based on a mental model of the world. There is almost unanimous agreement that portolan charts are original products of medieval European culture; only a small minority regards Greek-Roman antiquity as their origin.

<sup>3</sup> Ramon J. Pujades i Bataller, *Les cartes portolanes: la representació medieval d'una mar solcada*, trans. Richard Rees, (Barcelona: Lunwerg Editores, 2007), p 439.

Because the charts appeared in the maritime-commercial milieu the commonly accepted hypothesis is that medieval mariners made measurements of distance and course direction during their trading voyages. The data collected in this way is assumed to have provided the geometric basis of chart construction. Most authors find support in the fact that the anticlockwise rotation angle of about nine degrees that all charts exhibit roughly agrees with magnetic declination in the Mediterranean in the thirteenth century, estimated from paleomagnetic models. Some researchers even consider this to be incontrovertible proof that the charts were drawn from magnetic compass measurements. After this point most hypotheses become more vague. Those that are specific enough usually postulate central collation of all data somewhere along the Ligurian coast of Italy. Genoa and Pisa are prime candidates, because it is from this area that the oldest extant portolan charts originate. Additionally some unspecified schema of accuracy improvement is assumed, often expressed in vague terms such as 'progressively better estimates of distances became available over time', but some authors explicitly mention a process of averaging.

Whatever the process of accuracy improvement might have been, the next step that is assumed is the drawing of the first portolan chart from these improved estimates of distance and direction. This presumes organisation and perhaps sharing of the body of marine measurements. It is assumed by many that an intermediate role was played by so-called portolans, written sailing instructions containing navigation information of the form: 'From A to B, so-many miles along such-and-such a course'. This assumed causal relationship has given portolan charts their name, which is therefore a modern invention. In the Middle Ages they were known under a variety of names, but not as 'portolan charts'. More recently some authors have become more cautious regarding the relationship between the two and some, including myself, deny that the charts were drawn from data, collated in portolans.

Only the so-called plane charting technique may be assumed for the construction of the chart: distances and bearings were transferred to the map as if the earth were flat. More sophisticated methods cannot be assumed to have been available in the Middle Ages. Furthermore it is assumed that some form of graphical adjustment was carried out by the cartographer in order to deal with the contradictions in the data due to the inevitable random errors in the measurements. The effects of ignoring earth curvature are generally downplayed as 'negligible' or 'relatively minor'.

David Woodward was courageous enough to be fairly specific on how he thought this process of chart making might have taken place (please note he doesn't mention directions):

*'The cumulative experience of several centuries of coastal and other shipping in each of these (sub-) basins could have led to the independent recording of traditionally known distances. The average distances derived from both coastal traverses and cross-basin routes could then have been used in the construction*



of a series of separate charts of the individual basins. If these routes were plotted to form networks in each of the basins, each network might have assumed the form of a self-correcting closed traverse of each basin. The rigidity of this structure would, however, have depended on the availability of cross-basin distances, acting as braces to the framework. It is thus postulated that some system of empirical or stepwise graphic method of correcting these frameworks was used to achieve a 'least-squares' result.'<sup>4</sup>

to be established first. Only then can the deviations of points on the portolan chart from corresponding points on the Mercator chart be considered to be representative of the accuracy of the portolan chart. This accuracy can be captured in the concept Mean Square Error (MSE), or rather the square root of that, the RMSE.

Table 1 - Five portolan charts analysed

Name	Cartographer	Date of creation	Location	Catalogue Number	Identical points
Carte Pisane	Anon. Genoese	End 13 <sup>th</sup> c.	BnF, Cartes et Plans, Paris	Ge B 1118	444
Ricc 3827	Anon. Genoese	1300-1325	Bib. Riccardiana, Florence	3827	1015
Dulcert 1339	Angelino Dulcert	1339	BnF, Cartes et Plans, Paris	Ge B 696	836
Ristow- Skelton No 3 (RS-3)	Anon. Genoese	1325-1350	Library of Congress, Washington	G5672.M4P5 13	742
Roselli 1466	Petrus Roselli	1466	James Ford Bell Library, Minneapolis	bell001281466 mRo	860

A recent trend appears to be to deliberately avoid any specific statements about the charts' origin and construction method<sup>5</sup>. Portolan charts are then seen as the 'products of medieval Mediterranean culture in its entirety, characterised by multiple cultural exchanges'. The accuracy of the charts is downplayed and the close agreement with the Mercator projection is glossed over, as are other historical facts that do not fit in this picture.

Controversial aspects of the charts that cry out for a rational explanation are firstly their accuracy and secondly the regional scale differences on each chart. Finally, for me, as a geodesist, the key characteristic to be explained is their agreement with the Mercator projection. As explained above, the consensus explanation of the accuracy of the charts is that some form of averaging took place, either as the calculation of the arithmetic mean of series of observations of the same distance or bearing, or the averaging was integrated in the assumed graphical adjustment of all data when the first chart was plotted. There is considerable consensus that the scale differences exist because the sub-basins of the Mediterranean were charted first and the resulting partial charts were stuck together in a second step. The Mercator projection is almost unanimously considered to be an accidental by-product of the plane charting process.

#### **The accuracy and composition of portolan charts**

The close agreement of the coastal outlines on portolan charts with the Mercator projection also enables the accuracy of these charts to be estimated. A best-fit of the portolan chart with a modern Mercator chart needs

<sup>4</sup> Campbell 1987, 388. Campbell states that Woodward wrote the relevant section.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Gautier Dalché, 'Cartes marines, représentation du littoral et perception de l'espace au Moyen Âge. Un état de la question.', in *Castrum VII. Zones côtières et plaines littorales dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Age* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2001), p20.

Many researchers have performed numerical ('cartometric') analysis of one or more charts, but all have approached the charts as single, coherent units. If portolan charts are mosaics of partial charts, each with its own different scale, that approach is methodologically incorrect. In my own PhD research I subjected five early charts to cartometric analysis as described above, but treated them as mosaics. All cartometric analyses begin with the identification of a large number of 'identical points', i.e. pairs of points on the portolan chart and the reference Mercator chart where the position differences are measured. I established the boundaries of the partial charts empirically, by identifying groups of identical points that formed coherent subsets. I associated each coherent subset with a partial chart.

This yielded some surprising results:

- the accuracy (RMSE) of each subset was surprisingly good; on average an RMSE of 10-12 km was computed;
- there are differences between the scales and orientations of the subsets;
- the boundaries between the coherent subsets of points did not align with the boundaries between the sub-basins of the Mediterranean;
- there were overlaps, but also some gaps between adjacent subsets of identical points.

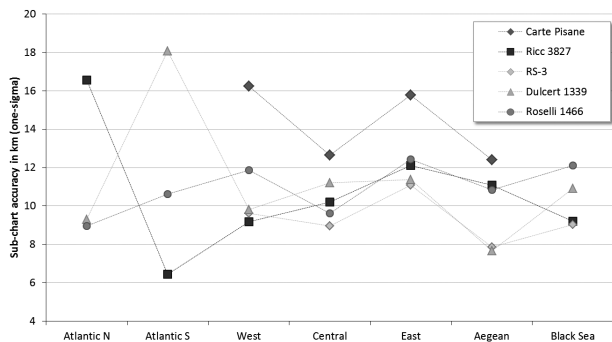


Figure 3 - Mean accuracies per sub-chart for the five charts analysed

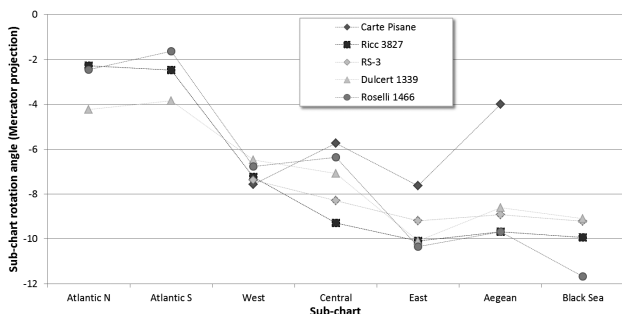


Figure 4 - Mean rotation angle per sub-chart of the five charts analysed

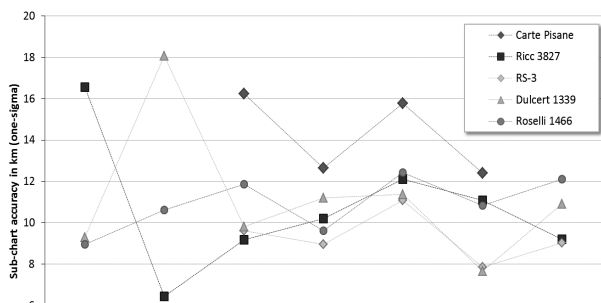


Figure 5 - Mean scale per sub-chart of the five charts analysed

The consensus opinion that portolan charts are mosaics of partial charts can therefore be confirmed, but their accuracy leads to a renewed question.

The assumption of most researchers is that distance was measured by estimating the speed of the ship at regular intervals, for example at every change of watch, i.e. about four hours. As no instrument was available to measure speed objectively until the sixteenth century, it is generally assumed that a wood chip was thrown in the water at the bow of the ship. The navigator, positioned near the stern, would estimate the time it took for the wood chip to pass a marker, by taking his pulse, saying a rhyme or pacing up and down the deck. Two markers on the bulwark, at the bow and stern respectively and at a calibrated distance apart, might have been used as baseline. It will be clear that to convert this to a distance

estimate for the whole journey would have involved enormous extrapolation. And how accurately can one estimate time in this way? I developed a statistical model for medieval navigation, taking into account all relevant phenomena that would have influenced this process of distance estimation. The result is that, even when many effects are ignored and highly optimistic assumptions are made, one cannot estimate distance in this way better than about one third of the distance traveled (95% confidence level). Available space prevents me from discussing this subject in more detail, but it will be clear that averaging a significant number of measurements of the same journey (i.e. distance) would have been required to get anywhere close to the accuracy of portolan charts. At this point I must introduce an aspect of the history of mathematics that has simply been overlooked or ignored until now. The calculation of the arithmetic mean of a series of measurements of the same variable with the intention of improving its accuracy was not known in the Middle Ages: it was not introduced into scientific practice until the end of the seventeenth century!<sup>6</sup>

Accurate direction measurements from one coastal point to another constitute an entirely different problem. The only possible instrument for measuring such directions would have been the magnetic compass. For the last one and a half centuries it has been a matter of debate whether the magnetic compass, in a form that could have been used to obtain meaningful direction measurements, was introduced in the Mediterranean early enough to have allowed collection of a large number of direction estimates covering the entire Mediterranean and Black Sea. A simpler form of compass, consisting of a magnetised needle made to float in a bowl of water by sticking it through a piece of straw or cork, had been used for a long time to provide some directional help to mariners when the sky was overcast. In medieval documents this is referred to as 'the needle' ('acus'). Later the needle was placed on a spindle so that it could pivot freely and placed in a wooden box on which a compass card with the thirty-two 'wind' directions was engraved. Presumably later still the compass card was attached to the needle so that both could rotate freely. The latter innovation concerns the development of the mariner's compass. The resulting compass was treated as a unit and indicated with the term 'bussola' ('little box'). Only such a compass would in principle have been suitable to measure course directions. The transition of the name from 'acus' to 'bussola' is widely accepted as indicating the adoption of the compass as a single unit in the maritime world. Most researchers simply ignore the vital question whether the magnetic compass was introduced in time to have contributed to the development of the portolan chart, but recently (2007) Ramon Pujades showed that the first use of the of the term 'bussola' in a medieval notarial document

<sup>6</sup> Robin L. Plackett, 'Studies in the History of Probability and Statistics: VII The Principle of the Arithmetic Mean'. *Biometrika* 45 (1958), 131, p 132.  
Stephen M. Stigler, *The History of Statistics. The Measurement of Uncertainty before 1900* (Cambridge MS: Harvard University Press)



Figure 6 - Tracing of the portolan chart known as Carte Pisane with identical points and outlines of sub-charts. (Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France)

occurs in 1349.<sup>7</sup> Before him Peter Pelham had shown that the description of the compass in literature shows a transition 'well into the fourteenth century'.<sup>8</sup> The conclusion must therefore be that the charts were already in existence before the mariner's compass became firmly established in the maritime community.

### **The 'accidental' map projection**

The information presented above justifies the conclusion that portolan charts cannot be original medieval creations. However, the idea that the map projection can be an accidental by-product of the plane charting technique does not make sense to a geodesist such as myself and I felt obliged to investigate that. My approach was to describe a hypothetical network consisting of directions and distances between coastal points that might conceivably have been measured in medieval times. This implies that I have taken into account the established trade routes in the Mediterranean. I created three networks, two for the western and eastern Mediterranean and one for the Black Sea. I calculated the true values of the directions and the distances on the sphere and factored in estimates for magnetic declination, i.e. the deviation of the compass needle from true north, for 1250 using a

paleomagnetic model. I then computed the positions of all coastal points from these 'measurements' by plane charting, as a hypothetical medieval cartographer might have done, except that I used a computer to do this. The resulting positions of points along the Mediterranean coast may be seen as the framework or outline of a synthetic portolan chart, generated by ignoring the earth's curvature. Next I subjected this synthetic chart to the same cartometric analysis as the five real charts I analysed. If the synthetic portolan chart would correspond automatically to the Mercator projection, its Mean Square Error (MSE) would have to be zero or nearly zero, because I used error-free values of distance and directions.

If a real portolan chart were drawn by plane charting, its accuracy, as evaluated by cartometric analysis would have two main components: the propagation of the accuracy of medieval navigation into the charted positions of coastal points and the influence of ignoring earth curvature.

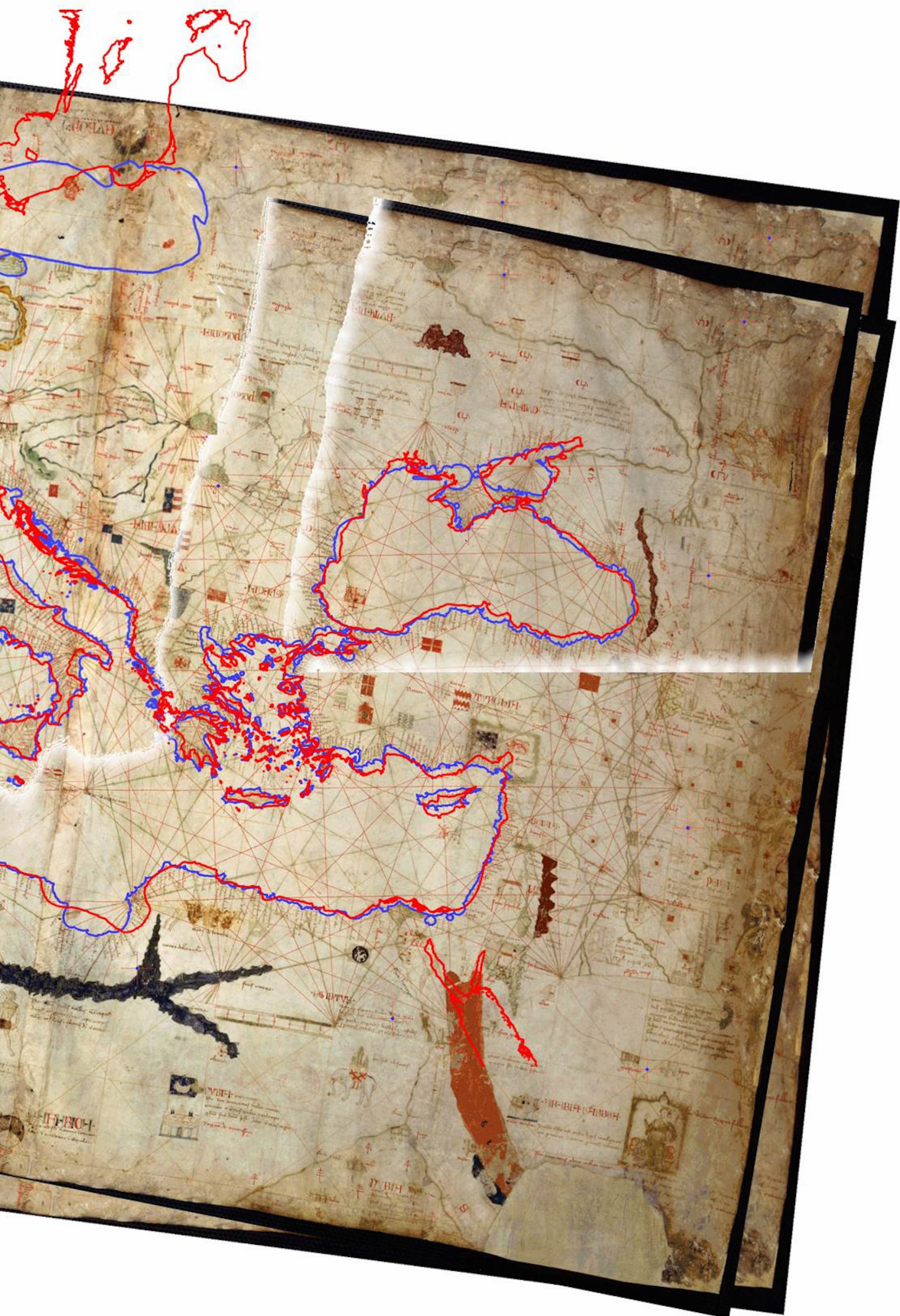
I calculated the latter effect as the MSE of the synthetic portolan chart described in the previous paragraph. In fact there is a third component. A characteristic of all portolan charts is that all significant coastal features, such as capes, promontories and bays are shown larger than they would have been when drawn to scale. I have estimated this effect of feature exaggeration to be about 4 km, which, squared, amounts to the figure shown in table 2. The accuracy of a portolan chart can

<sup>7</sup> Pujades 2007, 444.

<sup>8</sup> Peter T. Pelham, *The Portolan Charts: Their Construction and Use in the Light of Contemporary Techniques of Marine Survey and Navigation*. Master's Thesis, (Manchester: Victoria University of Manchester, 1980), p 58.



*Piecewise rectified portolan chart by Angelino Dulcert, 1339, with coastline traced in blue and a modern Mercator map (red outline)*





	Western Mediterr.	Eastern Mediterr.	Black Sea
MSE navigation accuracy	...	...	...
MSE plane charting	100	256	39
MSE feature exaggeration	16	16	16
MSE portolan chart	121	121	121

Table 2 - Mean Square Errors in km<sup>2</sup> based on a nominal chart RMSE accuracy of 11 km

therefore be described as the sum of three components, which are all greater than zero:

MSE portolan chart = MSE navigation accuracy + MSE plane charting + MSE feature exaggeration

Table 2 shows the results of this computation. A nominal RMSE value of 11 km has been assumed for the total accuracy of a portolan chart (the square of which is 121 km<sup>2</sup>). The real values of the five charts analysed are shown in Figure 3.

The large figures for the effects of ignoring earth curvature, the second component, indicate that plane charting results in a significantly different shape from the Mercator reference chart, hence a different shape from a portolan chart. It is clear from Table 2 that the summing of the three components can never result in the accuracy figure of 11 km (= 121 km<sup>2</sup>) of a real portolan chart. For the eastern Mediterranean the contribution of plane charting alone is larger than the entire accuracy of the real charts. For the western Mediterranean no room is left for a realistic estimate of vessel navigation. The conclusion is therefore that the Mercator map projection does not automatically emerge as an accidental by-product of plane charting. In the absence of any realistic alternative explanation the conclusion must be that portolan charts were designed to be drawn on the Mercator projection. This is one more powerful piece of evidence that portolan charts are pre-medieval.

### **Analysis and conclusions**

Rather than being simple, relatively realistic charts, as they are often described, portolan charts are copies of sophisticated, accurate charts, intentionally drawn on the Mercator projection or a similar map projection. The construction of these source charts was well beyond the means of medieval mariners and cartographers.

It appears that the original portolan charts consisted of a collection of separate partial source charts, from which a mosaic was created by medieval Italian cartographers. These cartographers appear to have had only a vague notion of the real scale of the charts. The overlaps of the subsets of identical points indicate that the mosaic chart was created by overlaying common sections of coast on the partial charts. This accounts for the regional differences in scale and orientation in each chart.

### ***The intriguing question is: where do these charts come from if they are not medieval?***

I cannot answer that question, but I consider it to be the duty of science to re-evaluate the possibility of an origin in Greco-Roman antiquity. One should not 'default' to the conclusion that if their origin cannot be medieval, it must therefore lie in antiquity. This has to be carefully investigated.

### **Ulla Ehrensvärd 1927 – 2015**

We just learnt about the death, on 17 April, of Ulla Ehrensvärd, aged 88. A well-known map historian, formerly of the Military Archives in Stockholm, she received, among many other distinctions, the prestigious Helen Wallis Award from IMCoS in June last year – see our congratulatory note in our BIMCC Newsletter No 50, September 2014. Lisette Danckaert, who knew her quite well, adds: *She will be remembered through her many significant contributions to the History of Cartography as 'La Grande Dame du Nord'.*





# HISTORY OF CARTOGRAPHY

## Mechlinia Dominium, the smallest of the XVII Provinces

Herman Deijnckens – Eric Leenders

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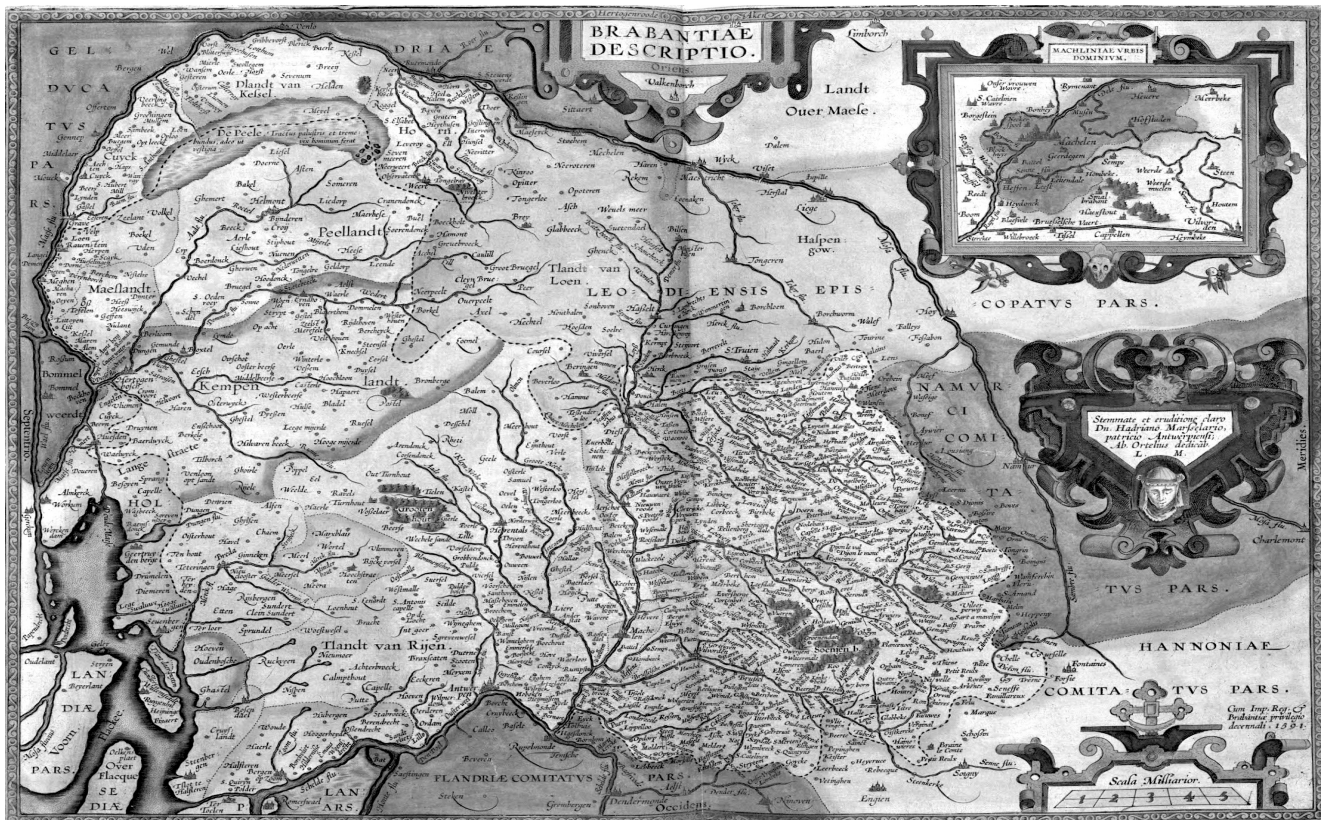


Fig. 1 : Brabant. Abraham Ortelius. 1591. Inset map Mechlin

Looking at 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century maps, one can only wonder at the seemingly disproportional presence of maps about the Mechlin<sup>1</sup> Dominium. This province was the smallest but, at a given time, also the most important of the XVII Provinces.

The Dominium was the focus of the administrative, financial, judicial and religious power during the first years of the reign of Charles V. With the presence of Jacob van Deventer it was also the centre of cartography during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

At first Mechlin was a large piece of land whose ownership was disputed between a powerful landowner, the Barthol family, the church of Liège and the Emperor. The matter was finally settled by Charles V, who made it an independent Dominium.

Mechlin gradually became a fortified city with its own

rights and customs. The Dominium comprised the city of Mechlin, the district containing the surrounding villages, and the resort of Heist situated at a short distance from Mechlin.

In fact the city was and remained an enclave within the Duchy of Brabant, in contrast with the Marquisate of Antwerp which was absorbed by the Duchy.

In 1507, Margaret of Austria was named regent for her nephew Charles, aged 6, who later became Emperor as Charles V. She governed the whole of the Netherlands with the High Council and the High Court, with Mechlin as capital until 1515, at which time Brussels became the capital.

In 1559 Pope Paulus IV granted the city the 'Super Universas' bull creating an independent Archbishopric with Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle as first Archbishop. Thus the religious Low Countries were divided into three Archbishoprics: Cambrai for the French speaking regions, Utrecht for the Dutch provinces and Mechlin for the centre.

The concept of the XVII Provinces can be debated. Geographically it covers all the Low Countries, north and

<sup>1</sup>On the maps several cities are written differently: Mechelen (Mechlin in English.) as Machelen or Mechelinia(e) or Mechlinia(e); Heist, Heyst or Heist; Haynaut as Hannonia; Artois as Artesia; Gelderland (Guelders in English) as Gelria.



south. Charles V, born in Ghent, inherited them all but this did not mean that he was Emperor or King of these Provinces. In order to see his power become effective he had to accept historically established judicial and financial rights of the people and, in return, he received the appropriate titles of Duke of Brabant, of Limbourg, of Luxembourg and of Guelders, Count of Flanders, of Hainaut, of Namur, of Artois, of Holland, of Zeeland, of Zutphen, Marquis of Antwerp and Lord of Mechlin, of Utrecht, of Frisia, of Overijssel, of Groningen and of Drenthe. Certain provinces required military pressure to recognise the authority of Charles V, for example Guelders which was the last province to do so in 1543.

The *Dominium Mechelinia*, although being small, survived until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The province was abolished in 1795 by the French Revolution, and was incorporated in the new department of the Two Nèthes.

**How is this special status of an independent Province and enclave in Brabant reflected in the old maps of Brabant?**

The first regional map of Brabant was based on surveys by Jacob van Deventer in 1536. Mechlin is pictured as any other city with no special borders. So is Heist. The map of Flanders, ‘faciebat Mercator’, shows the coats of arms of neighbouring provinces such as Artois, Hainaut, Brabant and also Mechlin, indicating indirect recognition of its independence. So does the first known map of Flanders by Peter van der Beke, 1538.

The Brabant map in the ‘Theatrum Orbis Terrarum’ by Abraham Ortelius (1570) is the first map to trace the Mechlin Dominium with a barely visible dotted line. Heist, which is part of the Dominium, is pictured as any other locality. This map is a copy of that by Van Deventer of 1536. Neither Van Deventer, Sgrooten nor De Jode paid any attention to the Dominium and showed Mechlin in the same way as any other city. In 1591 Ortelius published a new version of Brabant (Fig.1), still based on the Van Deventer map. The boundaries of Mechlin and also Heist are marked by a dotted line.

To enhance the importance of the Dominium, Ortelius added an inset map of Mechlin in the upper right-hand corner of the map. Were it not for the presence of the Brussels-Vilvoorde-Rupel canal, built in 1561, one would, in view of the style, easily attribute this small map to Van Deventer. From this moment the importance of the independent province was recognised by most cartographers. In 1598,

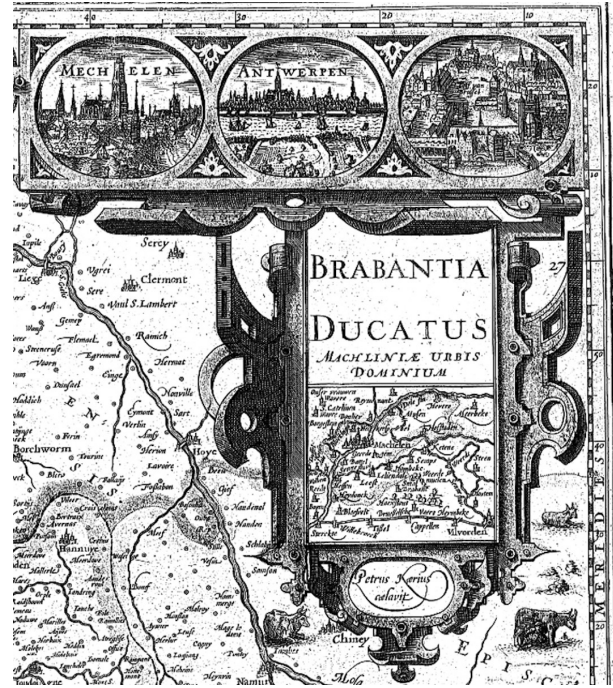


Fig. 2 : Brabantia Ducatus - Inset map. Machliniae urbis Dominium. P. Kaerius. Germania Inferior 1617. 34.5 x 50 cm.

Zacharias Heyns published ‘Miroir du monde’. This pocket atlas is partially based on Ortelius’ Epitome. It contains some continental and some regional maps of the Low Countries. Despite the restricted edition, he added a map *Mechliniae Territorium* containing two delineated areas, the Mechlin Dominium and Heist.

Jodocus Hondius did the same in his *Nova Brabantiae Ducatus Tabula*. Of interest is the ‘Brabantia Ducatus’ by Peter Kaerius (1617) who also added an inset map

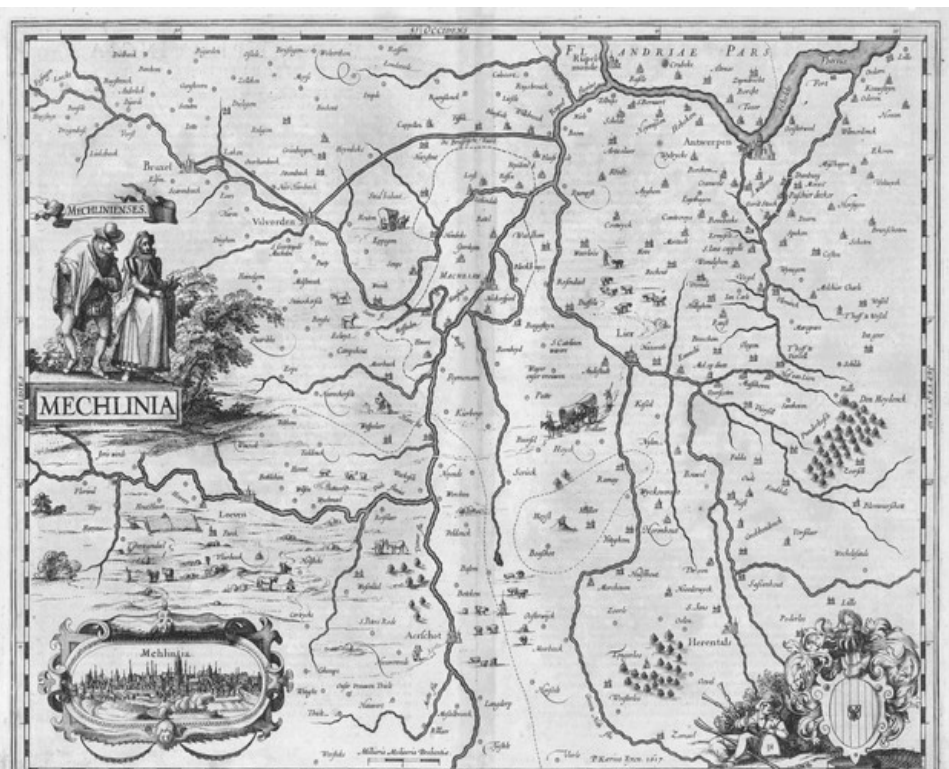


Fig. 3 : Germania Inferior, Mechlinia. Petrus Kaerius. 1617

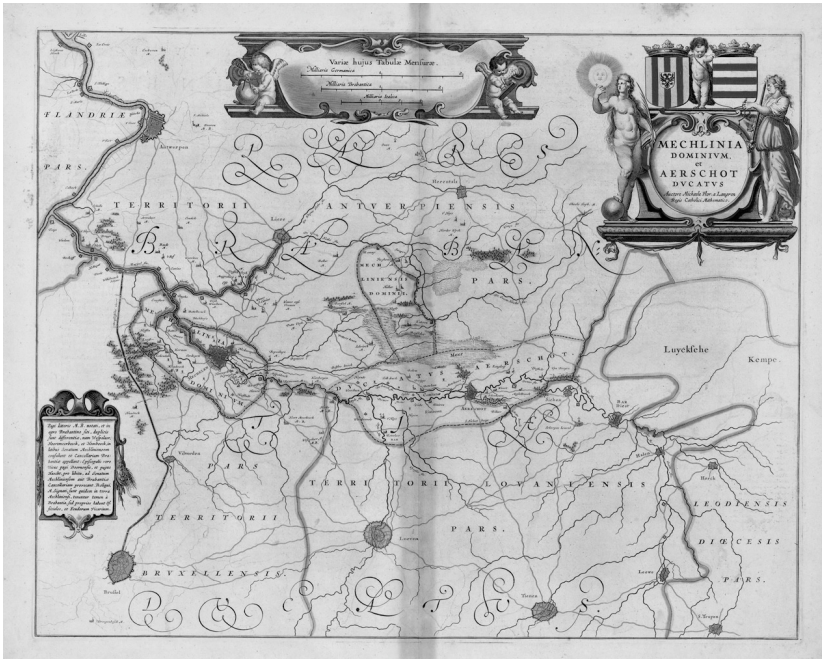


Fig. 4 : *Mechlinia Dominium et Aerschot Ducatus*. Van Langren. W. Blaeu. *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* 1635. 41 x 52 cm.

'Machliniae urbis Dominium' (Fig. 2) which is a copy of the inset published by Ortelius in 1591. The same year, Kaerius also published, in his 'Germania Inferior' (Fig. 3), the first map exclusively dedicated to the Dominium and named 'Mechlinia' (with west at top). The map is decorated with a cartouche showing two peasants, covered wagons, animals, shepherds and farmers. The right-hand lower corner shows the coat of arms of Mechlin. In the left lower corner is a cartouche with a panoramic view of the city and its cathedral.

#### **Michael Florent van Langren.**

A most significant map (Fig. 4) solely dedicated to the Dominium itself is the 'Mechlinia Dominium et Aerschot Ducatus'. The map was published in successive Blaeu's atlases, starting with Willem Blaeu's 'Novus Atlas' 1634/35 German edition and in his 'Theatrum Orbis Terrarum' 1635 Latin edition; other German, Dutch, Latin and French editions followed.

The author of the map is Michael Florent van Langren, cartographer and mathematician. He was a member of the Catholic branch of a family of cartographers and globemakers. During the religious war of independence he fled to the Catholic Spanish south. He was also the author of a map 'Descriptio dioeceseos Archiepiscopatus Mechliniensis' (1644)<sup>2</sup>. He produced the maps Prima, Secunda and Tertia Brabantiae, with respectively Louvain, Brussels and Antwerp as capital. The Tertia map contains a well marked Mechlin. He was given credit for engraving a map of the moon and also drew plans of the 'Fossa Eugeniana' canal project, which was never completed.

<sup>2</sup> In 1644 M.F. van Langren made a map entitled 'Descriptio, Dioeceseos, Archiepiscopatus, Mechliniensis'. The map, dedicated to J. Boonen, was described by Peter van der Krogt in the IMCoS Journal number 91, 2002. Unfortunately we were not able to find a copy of this map.

The Mechlin map contains a cartouche with three scales: milliaria Germanica, Brabantica and Italica. The right corner contains a cartouche with two figures, Truth and Justice symbolising the high Council of all the Netherlands. On the left side is a Latin text quoting judicial and religious rights. The beauty of this north oriented map is its simplicity. This enables the viewer to analyse the contents of the Dominium Mechlin-Heist and the Duchy of Aerschot. The Taschen facsimile edition of the Low Countries in the Atlas Maior by Joan Blaeu gives an enlarged picture of the area. The fortified city is crossed by the river Dyle joined by the river Senne. Both rivers end in the Nete which becomes the river Rupel. The Dominium contains about 19 surrounding villages.

#### **Blaeu's comments in the Atlas Maior**

The text on the verso of the map in the 1663 French edition of Joan Blaeu's Atlas Maior was used and translated for this article:

'Since 1006 the territory around Mechlin was an object of dispute between the powerful family Berthold, the counts of Flanders and afterwards the Duke of Brabant. Mechlin was located in the middle of Brabant within a triangle formed by Antwerp, Louvain and Brussels.

Charles V decided to make it an independent enclave. Nevertheless the people received some privileges from Brabant. When pregnant women were ready to give birth, they were allowed to move to Brabant where they would receive certain privileges. The beauty of the Saint Rumold Cathedral is described, as well as the large visibility it offers to the surrounding villages. Many chose to live in the city for it was the place where Philip I and Charles V grew up. The citizens were not obliged to pay taxes either on their houses or on their incomes. Charles V (this is a historical error: it concerns Charles the Bold) installed the High Council in 1473, governing the Southern provinces. Heist and seven surrounding villages were placed under the jurisdiction of the Dominium. In 1559 the Pope created an independent Archbishopric in Mechlin. Cardinal A.P. Granvelle became the first Archbishop.'

Joan Blaeu cites many scholars, such as Rembert Dodoens the botanical specialist, and several Archbishops, for example J. Boonen who played a large role in reforming the clergy. He was a highly respected theologian, Doctor from Louvain, Bishop of Ghent. He later became Archbishop and co-founder of the Oratory Congregation which expanded all over Flanders.

The text also quotes the typical feudal contract. 'In peace or war the people and the Dominium remain under the protection of the King. The nobles and inhabitants offer the King military assistance. The people retain their privileges and the nobles rule the Dominium as they see fit.'

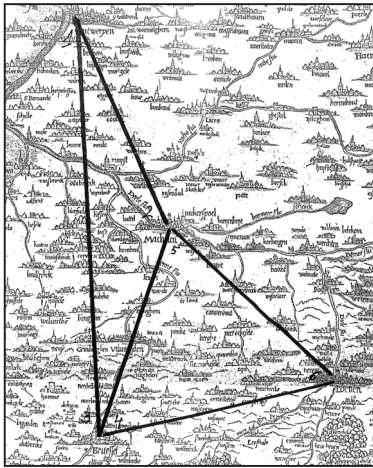


Fig. 5 : Significant triangle on the Brabant map. Jacob van Deventer. 1536.

### Van Deventer's Heritage

The Mechlin Dominium is mostly incorporated in the Van Deventer type map of Brabant. Van Deventer surveyed Brabant and engraved it oriented to the north. His map was copied over and over again. Often only the orientation changed.

The map uses his survey to offer an interesting topographical clue which forms the basis of all further copies namely the Mechlin, Brussels, Louvain triangle, with an extension to the north towards Antwerp (Fig.5). This triangle forms the basis of the survey and forms the central part on most maps of Brabant. The almost equal distances between the three cities were already described by Gemma Frisius. The survey by van Deventer is based on angular measurements. A comparison of these angles between different maps offers an opportunity to compare the copies made by other cartographers. Six basic angles were compared between the Brabant map by van Deventer, the one in the Ortelius Atlas, the map by Kaerius and the one by Van Langren.

The six angles on the Van Langren map are equal to the ones measured by van Deventer. This map is a faithful copy, for Van Langren used an identical triangle area. The angles on the Kaerius map are way out of line.

Angle	Van Deventer	Kaerius	Van Langren	Ortelius
1	19°	24°	19°	21°
2	137°	134°	138°	138°
3	18°	22°	20°	21°
4	58°	62°	58°	58°
5	65°	61°	66°	67°
6	55°	62°	54° <td 55°	

In fact Kaerius enlarged the surface of the triangle area by 1/3 and was probably unaware that angles remain the same, for indeed several angles on his map are enlarged. The Brabant map in the Ortelius Atlas is an engraved copy of the original van Deventer map with identical angles by Frans Hogenberg.

### Plagiarism later on

In the period following the publication of this standard map of Mechlin it is interesting to look at the cartographic fate of the Dominium. The pocket atlas 'Belgicae Liber', 1636 by Pieter Verbist (Fig. 6) contains the 'Germaniae Inferior' map with its XVII Provinces.

The 'Mechlinia Dominium' is one of them. It is a clear copy (west on top) of the left part of the Van Langren map (north on top).

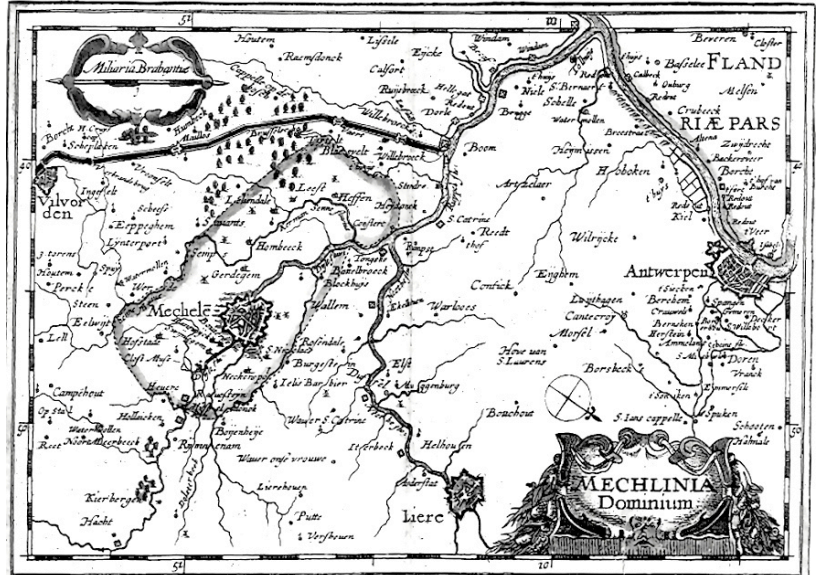


Fig. 6: Mechlinia Dominium. La Germanie Inférieure. Pierre Verbist. 1636. 19 x 14 cm.

Nicolaas Visscher edited in 1648 his 'Kaert-Boeck van de XVII Ned. Provinces', with a map entitled 'Mechlinia Dominium et Aerschot Ducatus'. This map is a copy of three quarters of the Van Langren map. Visscher extended his map north towards Bergen op Zoom including parts of the river Scheldt.

Even the Leo Belgicus by Claes Piscator (Visscher) 1650 recognises Mechlin as a separate entity. During the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century cartographers, such as Petrus Schenk and Pierre Husson, pictured the same enclave within Brabant.

### Conclusion

An overview of several Brabant maps proves that small is not insignificant. The Mechlin Dominium was indeed the smallest of all the XVII Provinces, but was at a given time also the most powerful. Its significance remained recognised by most cartographers despite the fact that the political power of the Dominium faded slowly away, and was abolished in 1795 by the French revolution.

A comparison of angles on several maps sheds some light on how plagiarism does not guarantee a correct copy of a map.

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## INTERVIEW

### How I Got Into Cartography

*Benjamin Sacks*

*PhD Candidate in the Department of History at Princeton University*



*bsacks@princeton.edu*

#### **Biography**

Benjamin Sacks is a PhD Candidate in the Department of History at Princeton University, where he examines the intersection of urbanisation, cartography, and socioeconomic history in the Enlightenment Atlantic. He holds a BA summa cum laude in History from Tufts University. His article-length study on surveyors' eighteenth-century professionalisation won the Society for American City and Regional Planning History's 2013 Montequin Prize for best paper on North American colonial planning history. He has co-authored, with Felipe Fernández-Armesto, articles with a geographical emphasis for *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* and *A Companion for World History*. A fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, this fall Benjamin will be Princeton's inaugural digital humanities fellow.

#### **What does 'cartography' mean to you?**

Cartography is deeply personal to me. It describes not only 'maps and map-makers' (to borrow R.V. Tooley's remark), but also the exciting opportunity to see the world's richness come alive on paper in ways that text cannot accomplish. By visualising the world's expanses, cartography continually provides me with the questions, clues, and mysteries that have driven my career.

#### **How did you get to where you are today?**

Cartography and I have a long history. My fascination with atlases, maps, and geography more generally began when I was in primary school. I loved anything related to the world: maps, flags, photographs, and historical artefacts. I still own and cherish my first atlas: the Dorling Kindersley Children's Atlas of the World.

Geography and cartography, unfortunately, are not usually taught in the United States. Most of my 'cartographic education' occurred at home, after school, and on weekends. In high school I pursued extracurricular projects with a cartographic focus, delving into local and state spatial history, and promoting geographic education. I became deeply interested in international radio, the lives of geographers, cartographers, and explorers, the history of books – anything with a connection to cartography.

My college years proved to be an extraordinary experience, and set the direction for my current focus. At Tufts University, Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Lawrence Bacow embraced my passion for cartography and geography, providing research grants, conference opportunities, and advising me on a three-year research investigation into how neighbouring Harvard University expanded from its central Cambridge, Massachusetts location to the Charles River and into Allston, another Boston suburb. Using a combination of manuscripts, financial statistics, and maps, I uncovered how an intimate alumni network secretly purchased over a

hundred properties over a ten-year period to forever change the city landscape. The *New England Quarterly* (MIT Press) published this research in June 2011.

In 2009 Tufts provided me the opportunity to teach an undergraduate seminar entitled 'The History of Geography'. This eight-session seminar examined the use of cartography as a vital investigative tool in approaching the past. Students scrutinised case studies in world history, from classical Greece to Victorian India, from the perspectives of geographers, cartographers, and surveyors.

#### **What exactly does your current job and research involve?**

I am a fourth-year PhD candidate in the Department of History at Princeton University. For some years I have been fascinated by two problems at the intersection of history and geography: the origins of the colonial city, and the professionalisation of surveyors and cartographers as a respected career in European empires. My dissertation examines the role of the outpost, or non-traditional settlements, in the development of colonial cities, through the perspectives of the surveyors, planners, and entrepreneurs who actually explored, designed, and built them. Using analogue methods and digital software, I am analysing the maps and plans, reconstructed maps from textual surveys, and land grant enquiries used to experiment with these urban landscapes.

Existing studies of pre-1800 urbanisation tend to focus on single colonial cities, with little reference to their relationships to other communities. By following the global journeys of surveyors and their patrons, I intend to uncover the networks of circulation that gave rise to similar urban features in outposts as geographically distinct as Gibraltar, Minorca, Saint Christopher's (Saint Kitts), Cap Français (now Cap Haitien), New Orleans, and Grenada. I hope that this project will go some way to explain the origins of the concepts behind such later, famed colonial cities as Adelaide and Cape Town.



I am concurrently involved in the Liechtenstein Institute for Self-Determination's Digital Interactive Regional Mapping and Information System (DIRMAIS) project, the first concerted effort since the 1950s to bring geography back into the humanities and social sciences at Princeton. DIRMAIS is an ArcGIS-based program that will, when completed, allow students and faculty alike to visualise historical and contemporary information onto world maps, enabling them to see the past in an entirely new light.

***In your experience, are there a lot of young people interested in cartography?***

I have found that maps, mapmakers, global cultures, and space fascinate many young Americans, but few actually realise that what they're interested in is cartography and geography. Much of the problem lies with the lack of national geography funding in the United States, and the poor use of maps in primary, secondary, and university-level education. America is ripe for cartography to become a mainstream study – but it requires strong, consistent funding at all educational levels.

***Are there any careers to be made in cartography?***

Recent digital humanities initiatives at universities and institutes have finally begun providing financial resources and career positions for cartography specialists. Beyond academia, the rapid growth of GIS and geospatial analysis in both the private and public sectors is creating new opportunities for professionals with a geographic and cartographic background

***What is the 'best thing' about your cartographical life right now?***

I get to experiment with how cartography can be used to examine the world's past and present in new, different, and creative ways.

***Forthcoming Events***

**ICHC 2015 (Antwerp, Belgium, 12-17 July)**

I will be presenting a paper entitled 'Airwave Cartography: Mapping British Radio Relays and Propaganda Power, 1947-1991'. This presentation, part of an on-going, book-length research project, will shed light into how the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Diplomatic Wire Service, and General Post Office used cartography in fascinating and diverse ways to combat Radio Moscow and Voice of the Arabs during the Cold War, elucidating both the collapse of Britain's formal empire and the rise of its soft-power empire of influence.

**The Transformation of Global History, 1963-1975 (Princeton, USA, 9-10 October)**

This two-day conference, co-hosted with Natalie Berkman (Department of French and Italian), will examine the historians who experimented with post-war global history, including Fernand Braudel, Natalie Zemon Davis, Jacob Bronowski, William McNeill, and others. Notable confirmed speakers include Sanjay Subramanyam, Felipe Fernández-Armesto, and Dominic Sachsenmaier.

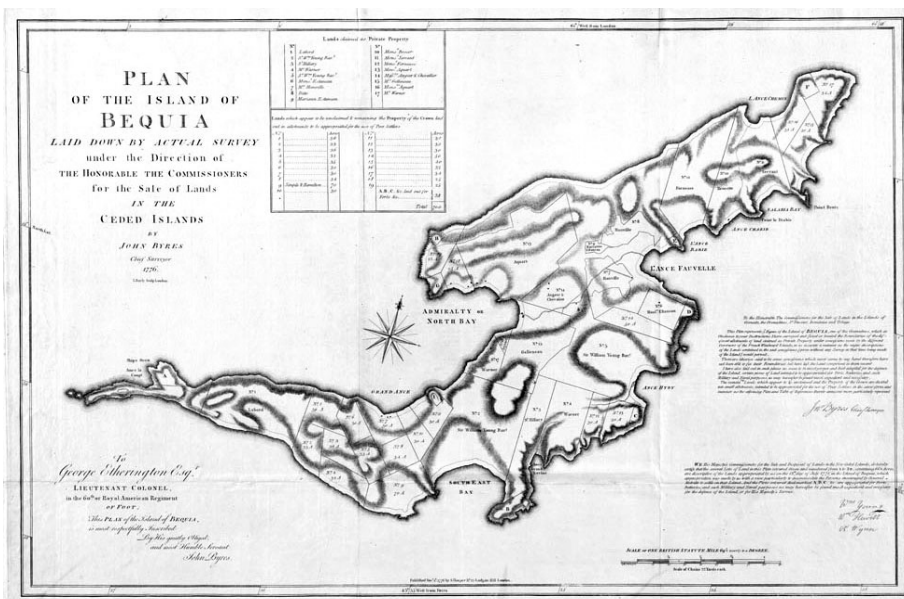
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The island of Bequia - J. Byres 1776

Interview by Nicola Boothby  
nicola.boothby@telenet.be



## BRUSSELS MAP CIRCLE - NEWS

### Annual Activity Report, March 2014 - March 2015

#### The Executive Committee

The EC held four meetings to organise the Circle's activities: 14 June – 18 October – 20 December – 17 January 2015

Among the most important items decided were:

- Further establishing of the matrix with all tasks in the Circle and of the responsible members to find a nice balance in the workload of the EC members; we now have someone responsible for all main activities; only a PR person is lacking
- Introducing an assistant editor for 'Maps in History', to help Jean-Louis Renteux with this heavy task
- Further establishing good links between the registration forms on our website and the list of participants to events, to help Eddy Masschalk

#### Excursion to Bruges, 18 February 2014

- We visited the Culture Library of the Sint-Lodewijkscollege in Bruges, which hosts a very nice cartographic collection. In the late afternoon, Ludo Van Damme presented some maps of the Biekorf collection. After the visits, participants could enjoy a meal together, in a good restaurant on Bruges' market square.
- At 20.00, in the Public Library of Bruges, our member Jan De Graeve gave a lecture introducing the cosmography of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the book *Cosmographia* by Sebastian Münster. A full colour copy of this *Cosmographia* (Basel: Henricus Petri, 1552) had recently been acquired by the Library and was exhibited.



#### AGM and Map Evening, 15 March 2014

Both were held at a venue in the Rue Royale, Brussels.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Map Evening provided a nice overview of the many approaches from post card maps to digital cartography, with nice maps from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the Channel to the Caspian Sea, mapping time as well as space. The day was smoothly organised by Jean-Christophe Staelens.

For full reports: see our Newsletter No 49.

#### Joint event with ICA (International Cartographic Association): 2-5 December 2014 International symposium 'Cartography in Times of War and Peace'

Held at Ghent University, many of our members participated (some as speakers) and were present. Our Circle became more widely known through this cooperation and gained some valuable new members!

#### Conference, 6 December 2014:

##### 'Mapping in times of war — Military cartography through the ages up to World War I'

The Map Circle's Annual Conference took place in the main auditorium of the Royal Library in Brussels. A nice programme organised by our president, Caroline De Candt, attracted over 60 participants; five speakers from three different countries studied war cartography from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For a full report: see Newsletter No 51.



#### Cooperation of the Map Circle in the project 'Flanders in old maps' (working title)

Eric Leenders worked with the Royal Library of Belgium and the Davidsfonds (the biggest cultural organisation in Flanders) for publishing a book on Flemish cartography, due for 2015. Some 15 of our members wrote one or several articles for this book. To be followed!

#### 'Maps in History'

Throughout the year contact is maintained with all our members thanks to 'Maps in History' which is published three times a year by Jean-Louis Renteux. The September 2014 issue, of what is now more than a 'newsletter', bore No 50; that was the opportunity to look back at the progress achieved since its creation in 1998 by Wulf Bodenstein.

#### www.bimcc.org

Pierre Parmentier took care of the renovation of our website that now provides open access to a pdf version of 'Maps in History' one year after its publication on paper. The site keeps news and the event and exhibition calendar up to date, it handles registration forms easily and there are many plans left for future improvements... So please, do contact Pierre, when you have a cartographic bit of news to share!



Caroline De Candt  
president@bimcc.org



## BRUSSELS MAP CIRCLE - NEWS

### 18<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

Saturday 21 March 2015 at 11:00

Fifteen active members gathered for the Map Circle AGM in the boardroom of the Royal Library in Brussels. Caroline De Candt, President, opened the meeting, welcoming everyone and thanking Jean-Christophe Staelens for providing the venue.

The meeting first held a moment of silence in memory of Pierre Mattelaer, a beloved member whose funeral was taking place at the very moment of the AGM. Pierre's presence was vividly felt in our Circle. He participated in most events of the Circle, even at our last conference in December (as shown on the slideshow of last year's activities). For sure, his memory lives on among Map Circle members!

The time had come to accomplish the necessary formalities. The agenda was adopted, elections and resignations of active members were listed.

The President thanked the members of the Executive Committee for the many responsibilities they take on in the yearly activities of the Map Circle. It was an item that was repeated later on in the agenda.

Then we looked back over last year's events with the Activity Report (see previous page), illustrated by a slideshow.

Eddy Maeschalk took the meeting through the accounts. The statutory auditors concluded that the financial data provided an accurate picture of the real situation and that throughout the years EC members took care of healthy finances. Because of the constant risk of revenue loss, it is advised to keep the present financial reserve for the future. The AGM approved.

Plans for the future: Following up last year's advice of the AGM, the EC established a mentorship for new members. EC members will try to provide them guidance.

As requested by many members we have tried to plan the Annual Conference during the same weekend as the International Antiquarian Book Fair in Mechelen. Therefore the Annual Conference on Turkey will take place on 12 December 2015 (not on the 5<sup>th</sup>, as erroneously indicated previously!). The date of the Book Fair is however provisional, so in spite of our efforts, success is not guaranteed.

Once again, many thanks to everyone for making it a very good meeting!

Karen De Coene  
karendecoene@yahoo.com

#### In memoriam: Pierre Mattelaer (1931-2015)

The BIMCC is deeply saddened to announce that active member Pierre Mattelaer has passed away. He was born in a medical family in Courtray. After attending the Jesuit College in Aalst, he studied medicine at Ghent University and specialized in paediatrics and child psychiatry at Oklahoma and Leiden Universities. He was the first children's doctor (paediatrician) and child psychiatrist in Ghent and Courtray. He was a founding member of the Belgian and Flemish Associations of Child Psychiatry and was active in the Julie Renson Foundation, managed by the King Baudouin Foundation.

He was awarded the Belgian honorary distinctions of Officer of the Order of Leopold and Officer of the Order of the Crown.

He published articles on local history and a work on the genealogy of his family ('De familie Mattelaer ca. 1540 - 2013, geschiedenis en genealogie').

He grew especially fascinated by the history and technique of mills. Studying the mill as a landmark on maps drew him to geography and he became an active member of the BIMCC from the first 'Study Session' in 1999.

He often contributed to the BIMCC Newsletter, producing articles such as 'Windmills on the Flanders maps of Mercator and related maps', writing book reviews, contributing to 'Looks at books' and providing reports of many excursions and exhibitions in Flanders.

He was also treasurer of the Map Circle for many years (from 2001 until 2007).

All those who knew him well remember the kindness with which he brought people together, and the way in which he shared his knowledge with others.

Our Map Circle wishes to pay tribute to his memory and to present its condolences to his wife Marie-Ange, their children, grandchildren and the rest of the family.







## BRUSSELS MAP CIRCLE - NEWS

### Brussels Map Circle - Map Afternoon

Saturday 21 March 2015 12:30 - 16:30

On Saturday 21 March, after the AGM, the annual Map Evening changed into a Map Afternoon attended by around 20 members of the Map Circle. This time it was the Salle du Conseil of the Royal Library of Belgium that was suddenly turned into the Brussels headquarters of our map enthusiasts. Well-organised by Jean-Christophe Staelens, the whole event ran smoothly, starting from the convivial drink and sandwich lunch to the nicely balanced programme with interesting map presentations, as follows.

#### Triangulation exercise on a reprint of Mercator's map of Flanders (1540)

Jan De Graeve provided the audience with a Dutch edition of Gemma Frisius' 'De Locorum Describendorum Ratione' (1533) to demonstrate a triangulation exercise. 'If you have to measure a large country', wrote Gemma Frisius to introduce his method, and while reading this, Jan was ready with brightly coloured text markers and Mercator's Map of Flanders. Fortunately, and of course only to soothe our feelings, the original remained in the Antwerp Museum Plantin-Moretus, and in exchange a nice reproduction became subject of the exercise.

'... You need two cities,' Gemma continued, 'like Antwerp and Brussels...' And indeed, to make the map of Flanders the cartographer drew the distance between both places. Jan followed Frisius' instructions precisely, taking first the meridian between Antwerp and Brussels, then the angles from Ghent, Mechlin, Dendermonde ... Gemma mentioned the use of a double circle to



indicate measured places on the map, and as has been recognised by Eric Leenders, many places on the map of Flanders are indeed indicated by this same symbol. The more Mercator's map of Flanders became scribbled over, the more it became clear how it was presumably made in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As summarised by Paul De

Candt: 'After the distance between Antwerp and Brussels was plotted on the paper, the map maker used angles to draw the rest of the map.' A huge step forward in Dutch cartography had been taken.

But progress can be very cautious. Jan De Graeve went back in history, showing us – as at the last Map

Evening – Peregrinus' letter on the magnet. Although this detailed discussion of freely pivoting compass needles was composed in 1269, the first English translation dates from the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Newsletter No 49, May 2014).

#### Three times Blaeu and Broedelet's Saint-Petersburg

Willem Blaeu's 'Map of the Arctic' is currently on show at the Museum aan de Stroom in Antwerp, so Hans Kok could only present it on screen. From 24 April the map is part of an exhibition on world maps in the Antwerp museum ('De Wereld Gespiegeld. Wereldkaarten van de Middeleeuwen tot nu' until 16.08.15). Participants of the map excursion on Saturday 9 May 2015, 14.30 h. will have the occasion to see it during Jan Parmentier's guided tour of the exhibition. The beautiful map with the North Pole in its centre contains plenty of rhumb lines and provides an overview of discoveries in the area of Hudson Bay and Baffin Bay as well as Davis Strait.

In the discussion of the second map, Hans Kok focused on Archangelsk, the chief seaport of medieval Russia until 1703. Due to the five months of ice cover this sole link to the northern sea trade obviously suffers from some limitations. The Russian Czar Peter the Great therefore founded St. Petersburg in 1704, and from then on Archangelsk gradually declined in the eighteenth century and it would take until the end of the nineteenth century before an economic revival took place.

Saint-Petersburg, the new capital for the Russian Empire, soon became a delightful subject for mapmakers. Hans showed a detailed early overview map of the city in 1755 by the Utrecht publisher, Johannes Broedelet (fl. 1728-1771).

The last map Hans Kok presented was Willem Blaeu's edition of Jodocus Hondius' map of the Straits of Magellan. Hans reminded us that Cape Horn, the southernmost headland of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago of southern Chile, was named after the city of Hoorn in the Netherlands. On the map a massive Patagonian is shown next to a smaller European man. He represents the Patagonian Giants, first mentioned by Antonio Pigafetta, one of the few survivors and the chronicler of the voyage of Ferdinand Magellan. He wrote in his account about their encounter with natives twice a normal person's height.

Map of the Arctic by Willem Blaeu with dedication by his son Joan Blaeu: 'Regiones Sub Polo Arctico'.

Map of Muscovia/Russia by Blaeu/Hessel: 'Tabula Russiae'.

Map of the entrance from the White Sea into Archangelsk by J. Loots: 'Caerte van Archangel om 't Nieuwe Diep op en af te zeylen'.

Map of Saint-Petersburg by Broedelet: 'Afbbeelding van Saint-Petersburg (1755)'.  
Map of Strait Magellan/Cape Horn by Blaeu: 'Freti Magellanici ac novi Freti vulgò le Maire exactissima delineatio'.



### Lafreri introduced

The novel factor in Italian sixteenth-century cartography was that individual prints selected by the buyer were assembled into a single volume. The maps were bound together regardless of size: large maps were folded to fit and small maps had paper margins added, so that a more or less uniform book format was created. The so-called 'Lafreri atlas' was born. Karen De Coene presented the volume of the Society of Antiquaries of the Land van Waas (KOKW). Due to the exhibition of the KOKW atlas in 2014 (twenty years after it was restored and the binding was removed), the maps were digitised by Ghent University and research of the atlas continued. Its maps were engraved between 1532 and 1567 and, on the assumption that the bookseller or collector who assembled it included the most recent maps, it is supposed that the atlas was compiled in or shortly after 1567. This makes it an early example of the Italian composite atlases. Next to classic map analysis, 86 watermarks have now been identified, while the most interesting results came from a historical network analysis (HNA) of cartographers, printers, publishers and paper makers involved. This combined methodological approach makes the KOKW research significant for a better understanding of the early development of the Italian composite atlases.

The research will be presented at the International Conference on the History of Cartography in Antwerp in July 2015.

### The island of Gotland

Francis Herbert began and ended with Belgian connections. The Circle's former Scientific Advisor, Lisette Danckaert, like him, contributed to a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary 'Festschrift' for Swedish colleague, Ulla Ehrensward (Stockholm, 2003). His presented map, dissected and mounted on cloth, was the 'Karta öfver Gottland eller Wisby-Höfdingdöme, utgifwen af Frihre. S.G. Hermelin. Författad af C.P. Hallström Premr. Ingeniör; Graverad af E. Åkerland och C.G. Lundgren. [Stockholm] 1805'. On its verso is an anonymous pencil portrait sketch, captioned 'Hobergs-Gubben, ritad 2/9/ [18]59 i närvaro af Prins Oscar'. Francis commented that this 1859 'Prins Oscar' (King Oscar II of Norway & Sweden from 1872-1907), a successor of Jean Bernadotte, was the great-great-grand father of Belgium's present King Philippe – whose portrait was on the Map Afternoon's venue, the Salle du Conseil.

For his contribution to Prof. Ehrensward's 'Festschrift' Francis had chosen to write on a Swede, Jacob Gråberg af Hemsö, whose home village (shown as 'Hemse') and birth-place Gannarfve, are both engraved on the Hallström/Hermelin map; the whole map's pencil itinerary encircles 'Hemse'. Pointed out, too, were three manuscript additions (of two islands!) to the southeast of 'Hoburgs Ting'. Francis is investigating the identification of who made the September 1859 pencil portrait ('in the presence of Prins Oscar'), itinerary, and other annotations. The map dates from an era in which geometric accuracy was more important than nice colours, and its meridian is from 'Ferrö 20° vester om Paris'.

### The 'Old Map Quarterly'

TJ Kim, a new member of our Map Circle presented the bilingual journal: 'Old Map Quarterly' which he created last year. Published in Korean and English, every issue contains about 100 pages in colour, with a nice map facsimile inserted. TJ Kim invited participants to subscribe (see: [oldmaps.co.kr](http://oldmaps.co.kr)) and promised to bring original maps to the next Map Afternoon.



### Dutch toponymy on the Labrador coast

Claire Dejaeger presented the participants with a huge enigma. When deciding upon a souvenir from a diplomatic mission in Canada, she chose something that would represent the foreign guest country but still reflected her own Belgian origins. A map was an obvious choice, a map by Blaeu even more. Striking however is the presence of Dutch toponymy (kardinaalshoek, schildpadde, slapershoek...), instead of the usual French on the Labrador coast (Nova Francia). This remarkable fact resulted in a long quest for clarification. Although the map was based on Samuel de Champlain's Map of New France (1632), this one could not provide any explanation, neither could maps or publications of Johannes de Laet, Cornelius de Jode, Petrus Plancius etc. Claire suggested that Henry Hudson while searching for the North West Passage, under orders of the VOC, might provide the answer to the question, without sources to prove it. From the attendees came finally the clarification. It was once again Hans Kok who provided a valuable explanation. Dutch fishermen sailed to the Labrador coast for whale and cod fishing, they named the region in their way and their journals should contain Dutch toponymy as well.

Another issue is the name Flemish Cap for one of the Grand (fish) Banks east of Newfoundland. Claire's oral sources suggested that the origin of the word could go back to a Flemish settlement in Saint-Nazaire, the French port from which many ships went westbound. The presence of Antwerp financiers, insurers and Flemish sailors may have given the name Flemish Cap to one of these banks.

Blaeu's map of the Extreme American North, *Extrema Americae Versus Boream ubi Terra Nova Nova Francia - Atlas Maior -1663* (or 1662)



## Amsterdam

The organiser of our Map Afternoon, Jean-Christophe Staelens, kept up with all his speakers in presenting maps of Amsterdam, as follows:

Map of Amsterdam, Andries & Hendrik de Leth: 'Nieuwe en zeer Naekleurige Kaerte der Stad Amsterdam'.

Map of the IJ in front of Amsterdam: 'Der 'Y' Strom vor Amsterdam und der hydrografische Gründrifs dieser Stadt'.

Set of seacharts of Gerard van Keulen, Amsterdam : Fowey, Cornwall, Sussex, Eyland Man, Isle of Anglesey, Falmouth, British Sea (Channel), Vertoninghe der Lande aan de Zuijd Kust van Engeland....

## 'Who am I?'

'Who am I?' was the introducing quote of Eddy Masschalck's both intriguing and tragic story about the Tree of Ténéré in Niger. The acacia tree growing near a well in the middle of the desert was the last surviving tree as the region's climate grew hotter and dryer. For decades it remained the most isolated tree on earth and it is the only tree present on a map of 1/4 000 000! If that was not a great thrill for the map loving attendees!

Carte Michelin 153, AFRIQUE (Nord et Ouest) AFRICA (North and West) au 4 000 000e, 1969, 5th edition.

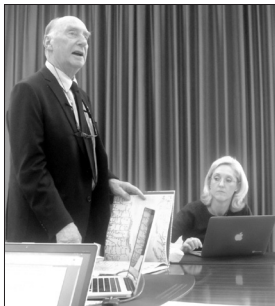
## Jacob von Sandrart

Alex Smit provided us with a 17<sup>th</sup>-century map of Northern Italy, Southern Switzerland and the French Alps by Jacob von Sandrart. After having served his apprenticeship under Cornelis Danckaert and Willem Hondius, the engraver (1630-1708), he settled permanently in Nuremberg, where he opened an art shop and was most noted as a portrait painter. Information on the specific map Alex showed, is scarce and hard to find. However, Van Sandrart belonged to a dynasty of engravers, so that it should not surprise that his daughter, Susanne Maria von Sandrart, was also an artist and engraver. Van Sandrart, moreover, was the founder and first director of the Nuremberg Academy of Fine Arts (est. 1662), and he commissioned maps that were engraved by Johann Baptist Homann (20 March 1664-1 July 1724).

'Nova et Accurata Ducat, Sabaudia, Principat. Pedemont. Et Monferat, Ducat Mediolan et Reipub. Genuensis Tabula, Cum Adiacentib. Regionibus' ca.1650/1670,

## The world on a leaf

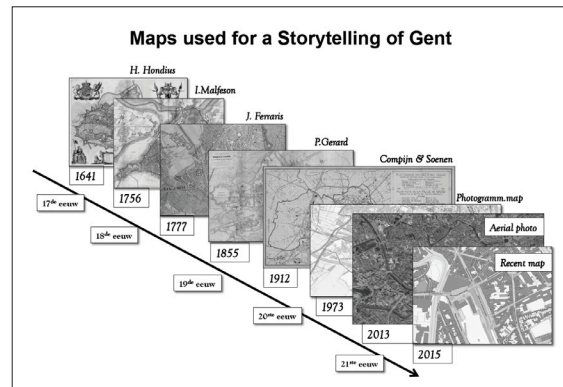
Or 'Le Monde sur une Feuille' is the title of a new publication presented by Wulf Bodenstein and edited by Jean-Christophe Bailly, Jean-Marc Besse and Gilles Palsky. The book, with subtitle 'Les tableaux comparatifs de montagnes et de fleuves dans les atlas du XIXe siècle', brings the reader representations of geographical phenomena from simple diagrams to fantastic landscapes (FAGE éditions, 2014). More about it in a future 'Looks at Books'.



## Latest digital cartographic trends

For the 'Latest digital cartographic trends' we could as usual appeal to Paul De Candt. The Ghent company Aquaterra created an on-line application\* with an overview of old maps of the city of Ghent on the occasion of the exhibition 'De Zaak 1534' at Ghent City Museum (STAM, from 26 February until 24 May 2015). The earliest painted vista of the city, the Panoramic View of Ghent 1534, was claimed to be a romantic 19<sup>th</sup>-century painting rather than a 16<sup>th</sup>-century work. For STAM, this was the opportunity to subject the work to an in-depth scientific study. The Museum is now presenting the results of the investigation in the form of an exhibition. The application made use of maps from Hondius (1641), Malfeson (1756), Ferraris (1777), Paul Gerard (1855), Compijn & Soenen (1912), as well as from a photogrammetric map (1973), an aerial photo (2013) and a recent map (2015).

\* [www.aquaterra.be/nl](http://www.aquaterra.be/nl) > select 'interactieve erfgoedapplicatie'



Once again, the Map Afternoon delivered the participants a mass of map knowledge, for which Jean-Christophe was very grateful and we, in turn, are most grateful to him. All of us are looking forward to a next event, and the organiser hopes to show instruments and globes next year...

Karen De Coene  
[karendecoene@yahoo.com](mailto:karendecoene@yahoo.com)

## Cartographica Neerlandica The Ortelius Specialist

Soestdijkseweg 101  
NL - 3721 AA Bilthoven  
Tel. +31 30 220 23 96  
E-mail: [info@orteliusmaps.com](mailto:info@orteliusmaps.com)  
[www.orteliusmaps.com](http://www.orteliusmaps.com)



## BRUSSELS MAP CIRCLE - NEWS

### Brussels Map Circle Programme for 2015

#### Saturday 9 May 2015, at 14.30: Excursion to Antwerp's MAS

Our yearly outing will take us to this new museum on the bank of the Scheldt river, to visit the exhibition 'The World in a Mirror'. The exhibition will focus on the evolution of the European world view as it was presented in maps, manuscripts, prints, visual art, but also objects from the 15<sup>th</sup> until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each century saw more and more of the world being mapped out, and the way in which that world was presented different in each century too. A few contemporary artists add their own reflections of the world to this story.

The members of the Map Circle will be guided by curator Jan Parmentier. No fee for members

After the guided walk, those who would like to can join us for a drink in a nearby café.

Venue: Museum aan de Stroom (MAS), Hanzestedenplaats 1, B-2000 Antwerp. Rendez-vous at 14.30 at the entrance of the exhibition. <http://www.mas.be> 03 338 44 00



#### Saturday 23 May 2015, at 10.30: Guided visit of the exhibition

##### 'Travels through my library'

Our member Jan De Graeve will guide us through this exhibition which he organised, as President of the Royal Bibliophiles and Iconophiles Society of Belgium, at the Royal Library of Belgium (in the Nassau chapel). Although not strictly cartographic, this exhibition is highly recommended to map lovers!

Venue: Mont des Arts et boulevard de l'Empereur 2 | Kunstberg en Keizerslaan 2, 1000 Brussels Telephone: +32 2 519 53 11

Free of charge. E-mail: [info@kbr.be](mailto:info@kbr.be) URL: <http://www.kbr.be/>

#### Saturday 5 December 2015: International Conference, 'Mapping the Ottoman Empire'

Our next Conference will take place in the framework of the Europalia festival devoted to Turkey ([www.europalia.eu](http://www.europalia.eu)). In the next issue of 'Maps in History', we will give you an introduction to the cartography of the Ottoman Empire, so important in Europe's history. Don't miss it: it will give you a foretaste of the Conference to come!

##### Draft programme

###### Morning

1. General introduction: Prof Dr Günsel Renda Koç University, Istanbul
2. Piri Reis and Mercator: Jan Parmentier, MAS, Antwerp
3. Hispanic and Mediterranean sources of the *Kitab-i Bahriye* .. Dr Dejanirah Couto, Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, Paris

###### Afternoon

4. Kâtip Çelebi and Cartography in the Ottoman Empire
5. Humanist culture and diplomatic issues: French Ambassador Choiseul-Gouffier at the Ottoman Court, and the French cartography of the Straits and the Black Sea: Emmanuelle Vagnon, Université Paris 1
6. Beyond Kiepert - German mapmakers in the Ottoman Empire (1835-1895): Ségolène Debarre, Université Paris 1

Admission is free for members, non-members pay EUR 10.00 at entrance.

Lunch is being arranged in the Library's cafeteria with catering services. Price: about EUR 35.00.

Venue: Royal Library of Belgium, Keizerslaan 2 Boulevard de l'Empereur, B-1000 Brussels, (near the Central Station).

**Please register on our website ([www.bimcc.org](http://www.bimcc.org)) as from 1 September 2015**



L'Empire des Turqs en Europe- Jaillot 1696



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Charta Geographica – A New Italian Journal for the History of Cartography

Vladimiro Valerio, well known to our readers as the leading map historian in present-day Italy, has undertaken to launch a new cartographic journal, the *Charta Geographica*. As Director of this publication he has engaged for the *Comitato editoriale* five Italian scholars who will widen the scope of the approach to history of cartography, a declared aim of this new journal: Annalisa Battini (Librarian at the Biblioteca Estense, Modena), Claudio Cerreti (Geographer, Rome), Laura Corti (art historian, Renaissance and Baroque, Florence), Daria Perocco (historian of Italian language and travel accounts in the Renaissance, Venice), and Alessandro Scarsella (historian of modern literature, Venice). Two map historians of international standing, Mary Pedley and Wouter Bracke, also form part of the team. In anticipation perhaps of some possible eye-brow raising as to 'why a new journal, and what for?' Valerio has written a *communiqué* soon to be seen on their website (visit [www.bimcc.org](http://www.bimcc.org) for the link to come). The following rationale transpires:

- In Italy there is currently no map-oriented journal that deals with maps as a product of material culture which is worthy of study 'in itself'.
- In pursuit of this objective, the journal intends to draw the attention of as many people as possible, both inside and outside the walls of academy, to share the study of maps in a wider context and approach.
- 'This magazine has neither academic ambition nor a desire to be a bulwark of specific theoretical positions. Its sole purpose is to highlight the discovery and understanding of maps through simple, clear writing and engaging exposition and illustration.'

The journal will appear three times a year, starting this coming October, and will also host articles in English and French – a real novelty. The suggested length of texts is between 10 000 and 20 000 characters, plus two images for every 2 500 characters. The contact address for submitting an article is Redazione di Charta Geographica, Guidecca 671, 30133 Venezia ([charta@novacharta.it](mailto:charta@novacharta.it) and [vladimir@iuav.it](mailto:vladimir@iuav.it)). For further information and subscription contact [diffusione@novacharta.it](mailto:diffusione@novacharta.it).

*A vos plumes*, dear map friends!

### Paint over Print : Hand-Colored Books and Maps of the Early Modern Period.

Chet Van Duzer whose enlightened article on Sea Monsters appeared in *the BIMCC Newsletter* No 46, was the co-organiser of a conference at the University of Pennsylvania (Kislak Center, 19-20 February 2015). Its goal was to bring together scholars and experienced authorities to address different aspects of hand-coloured books and printed maps from the 15<sup>th</sup>

to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was believed that the subject of colour as an agent that alters the meaning of a printed work has not received the critical scholarly attention it deserves. You can find links to high-quality videos of all ten presentations (which Chet has kindly transmitted) on our web site: [bimcc.org](http://bimcc.org). Enjoy!

### Ortelius and De Jode online

The library of the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp has an outstanding collection of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century atlases. In particular, atlases by Abraham Ortelius are well represented. Some of these copies were part of the private library of the Moretus family and were given as a present by Ortelius himself to Christopher Plantin or his successor, Jan Moretus. A number of the atlases only entered the library after the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Press had stopped all its printing activities and had become a museum. All together, they provide an excellent source for studying the evolution of editions of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum*.

The museum's library is catalogued in 'Anet' which is the online joint catalogue of all Antwerp research libraries, including all university and municipal libraries. An increasing number of the rare books have been digitised and are available online. Some of the atlases from the collection of the Museum Plantin-Moretus were recently added to this number of digitised books. At the moment, two complete coloured Ortelius atlases are available: the French edition from 1581 and the *Parergon theatri* from 1624. In addition, the coloured Latin edition of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* from 1601 from the Special collections of the University Library is also available online. Recently, the two volumes of Gerard de Jode's 1578 edition of the *Speculum orbis terrarum* from the collection of the Museum Plantin-Moretus have also been digitised.

Because copies of atlases are not always present in the same library, digitised images enable researchers to compare the various maps in different editions by different cartographers. We are planning to continue to digitise more atlases from our library which will hopefully enhance further research.

To find these atlases online go the Anet catalogue for access to these digital images:

<http://anet.ua.ac.be/desktop/mpm> or <http://anet.be/desktop/mpm>

and make your choice for a language (tab in the upper left corner).

- Select the tab 'quick search' and type the name of the cartographer ('Ortelius', 'Jode, de', ...)
- In the left column, click on 'MPM' in the list 'Institution' and on 'Internet/intranet' in the list 'Carrier'. You will then see a list of the digitised atlases.
- In the description of the atlas click on the link next to 'Digital platform' to see the digital images.

or search via the 'simple search' on author or title.



## EVENTS CALENDAR

All our readers are invited to send announcements of cartographic events and exhibitions to [webmaster@bimcc.org](mailto:webmaster@bimcc.org)

For up-to-date News and Events, see : [www.bimcc.org/bimcc-newsevents.htm](http://www.bimcc.org/bimcc-newsevents.htm)

### 10<sup>th</sup> International Workshop - Digital Approaches to Cartographic Heritage

27 – 29 May 2015

Corfu, Greece

Organisation: ICA Commission on Digital Technologies in Cartographic Heritage

Venue: Ionian University Aula Magna, Ionian Academy and Historical Archives of Corfu / General State Archives of Greece, Corfu

URL: [http://xeee.web.auth.gr/ICA-Heritage/Corfu\\_2015.htm](http://xeee.web.auth.gr/ICA-Heritage/Corfu_2015.htm)

### 'Maps and Society' lectures series

London, UK

Lectures in the history of cartography convened by Catherine Delano-Smith (Institute of Historical Research), Tony Campbell (formerly Map Library, British Library), and Alessandro Scafi (Warburg Institute):

#### Putting Tibet on the Map: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cartographic Depiction by a Local Artist

28 May 2015

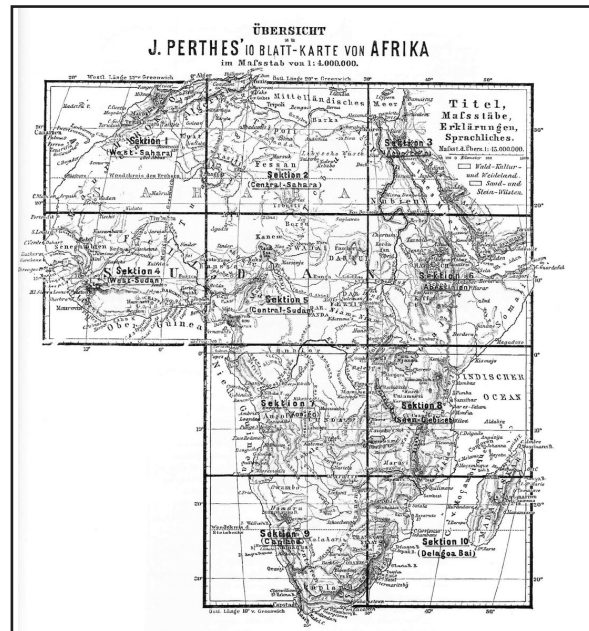
Lecture by Dr Diana Lange (Institute for Indology and Central Asian Studies, University of Leipzig).

Venue: Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, University of London, Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AB

Contact: telephone +44 20 8346 5112, e-mail [info@tonycampbell.info](mailto:info@tonycampbell.info)

At 17.00. Admission is free and the meeting is followed by refreshments. All are most welcome.

URI: <http://www.maphistory.info/warburgprog.html>



### The Oxford seminars in cartography, 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Series

From cosmopolitan exploration to colonial penetration: Germany and the colonial turn in the cartography of Africa

11 June 2015

Oxford, U.K.

By Imre Josef Demhardt (University of Texas at Arlington)

The seminar will be held at the Weston Library, Broad Street, Oxford, OX1 3BG, from 17.00 to 18.30.

### 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Historical Geographers

5 – 10 July 2015

London, U.K.

Organisation: Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers)

E-mail: [admin@ICHG2015.org](mailto:admin@ICHG2015.org) URL: <http://www.ichg2015.org/>

### Society for the History of Discoveries -

#### 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

8 – 11 July 2015

London, U.K.

For the first time since 1987 the Society for the History of Discoveries will convene in Europe and hold its Annual Meeting 2015 in London, United Kingdom. The scope of the Society's activities encompasses the discovery, exploration, and mapping of the earth's land and sea surface from earliest times to the present - the explorers and the explored. Fields of specialisation thus include the history of European expansion, cartography, navigation, colonial settlement, biography and bibliography.

URL : <http://www.sochistdisc.org/>



### De oudste stadsplannen van Antwerpen [The oldest city plans of Antwerp]

31 May 2015

Antwerpen, Belgium

Conference by Piet Lombaerde

Venue: Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience, Hendrik Conscienceplein 4, 2000 Antwerpen Language: Dutch Contact: [consciencebibliotheek@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:consciencebibliotheek@stad.antwerpen.be). Time schedule:

11.00 - 13.00. Entry fee: EUR 5.00 / EUR 2.50

URL: [http://www.consciencebibliotheek.be/Museum\\_Erfgoedbibliotheek\[... \]](http://www.consciencebibliotheek.be/Museum_Erfgoedbibliotheek[... ])

note: the events are listed in chronological order (in case of series or events, according to the first event in series).



## 26<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the History of Cartography (ICHC)

12 – 17 July 2015  
Antwerp, Belgium

Organised by the city of Antwerp in cooperation with the University of Antwerp and Imago Mundi. Main theme: Theatre of the World in Four Dimensions.

Contact: Joost Depuydt, FelixArchief / City Archives Antwerp  
E-mail: [info@ichc2015.be](mailto:info@ichc2015.be) URL: <http://www.ichc2015.be>

As sponsor of the Conference, the Brussels Map Circle will welcome ICHC participants visiting the Museum Plantin-Moretus on Tuesday 14 July 2015 from 18.00. They will see a demonstration of printing a map from a 17<sup>th</sup> century copper plate, receive information on the activities of the Circle and be invited to refreshments

## 27<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the International Cartographic Association And Pre-Conference Symposium on Atlases, Topography and the History of Cartography

20 – 30 August 2015  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The 27<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the ICA will take place from 23 to 30 August 2015. In order to foster local interest and provide delegates visiting Brazil with the opportunity to meet local colleagues a two-day pre-conference Symposium will be held at the Brazilian Foundation of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in Rio de Janeiro on 19-20 August 2015.

URL: <http://www.icc2015.org/>

## 13<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the International Coronelli Society for the Study of Globes

23 – 26 September 2015  
Dresden, Germany

The symposium will take place in cooperation with the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon in Dresden (Germany). Themes: all aspects of the study of globes— especially the history of globes and globes in their historical and socio-cultural context, as well as globe related instruments such as armillary spheres, planetaria, telluria and lunaria.

Language: German and English Telephone: +43 1 53410 298  
E-mail: [vincenzo@coronelli.org](mailto:vincenzo@coronelli.org) URL: <http://www.coronelli.org>

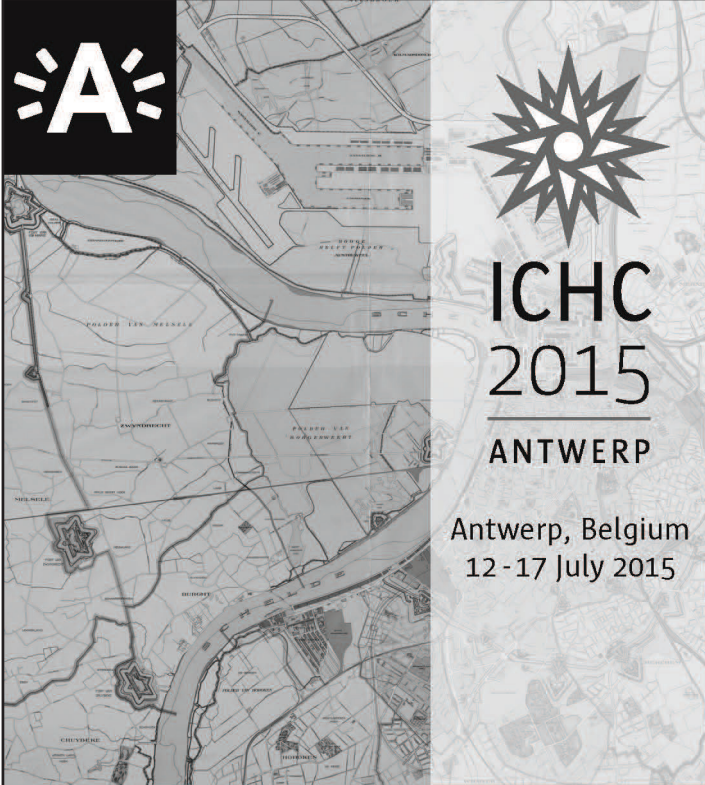
## The Brussels Map Circle International Conference – Mapping the Ottoman Empire

12 December 2015  
Brussels, Belgium

The Ottoman Empire, so important in Europe's history, will no doubt allow us to show splendid cartographic specimen. Don't miss our contribution to Europalia-Turkey this year!

IMPORTANT - The date of the conference is 12 December 2015 and **not** 5 December 2015 as announced in *Maps in History* - No 51 of January 2015.

Venue: Royal Library of Belgium, Boulevard de l'Empereur / Keizerslaan 2, 1000 Brussels  
Language: English  
E-mail: [info@bimcc.org](mailto:info@bimcc.org)  
Time schedule: 09.30 - 16.30



The 26th International Conference on the History of Cartography



Organized by the City of Antwerp in collaboration with the University of Antwerp and Imago Mundi Ltd.

**THEATRE OF THE WORLD IN FOUR DIMENSIONS**

SPACE - TIME - IMAGINATION - SPECTACLE

[www.ichc2015.be](http://www.ichc2015.be)

The registration is now open.  
The deadline for early bird registration is **15 March 2015**.  
The final deadline for registration is **15 June 2015**.

 CITY OF ANTWERP  Universiteit Antwerpen  [info@ichc2015.be](mailto:info@ichc2015.be)



## EXHIBITION CALENDAR

### Voyages dans ma bibliothèque | Reizen in boeken [Travels through my library]

3 April 2015 – 30 May 2015

Brussels, Belgium

Although this is not strictly a cartographic exhibition, it should interest map lovers. It is highly recommended by our member Jan De Graeve, who also chairs the Royal Bibliophiles and Iconophiles Society of Belgium which organised the exhibition!

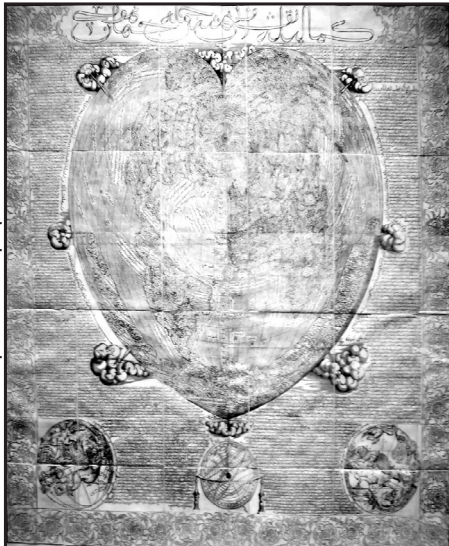
Venue: Mont des Arts et boulevard de l'Empereur 2 | Kunstberg en Keizerslaan 2, 1000 Brussels Telephone: +32 2 519 53 11 E-mail: [info@kbr.be](mailto:info@kbr.be) URL: <http://www.kbr.be/>

### The Sultan's World

Until 31 May 2015

Brussels, Belgium

This exhibition currently running at Bozar presents 'The Ottoman Orient in Renaissance Art', that is, viewed from an Occidental perspective in the context of conflicts and prejudices but also of cultural cross-fertilisation, and also through the accounts of travellers and artists. Many exhibits are very rare and seldom seen outside their home museums in Austria, Hungary, Germany or Poland. They include a dozen or more spectacular maps, battle plans and views. Apart from the usual 1482 Ptolemy and 1493 Schedl,



both de rigueur, there are major names like Lafreri and Vavassore with early plans of Constantinople, the first siege of Vienna 1529, obscure fortresses in Hungary, Zündt's Grodno and a stunning Ottoman cordiform map of the world. This is quite a good introduction to the Europalia festival which will be devoted to Turkey at the end of the year, and to our annual Conference

Bozar, Rue Ravensteinstraat 23 B-1000 Brussels [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be). Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00 - 18.00 – EUR 12.00 - Catalogue

### Drawing the city

24 April 2015 – 19 July 2015

Antwerp, Belgium

Organisation: The Museum Plantin-Moretus

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Antwerp developed into an international commercial capital. The city's appearance changed very quickly. Enormous population growth led to the rapid development of the city centre. One crucial change to the urban space was the construction of the Spanish fortifications from 1542. At the same time, the city was extended northwards in order to develop a

new district and port area (the Nieuwstad or 'New Town') there. In 1567, a citadel was added to the fortifications, reconfiguring the cityscape once again. Prestigious public and religious buildings were also constructed in the city during the Golden Age. Using maps and city plans, the exhibition follows the main construction drives and contributions to the city's development. It considers the underlying functions and intended purposes of the maps: to glorify the city and draw attention to its special qualities. The map's orientation can also reinforce the message the mapmaker wishes to convey. Two extraordinary city maps are compared: Antwerp by Virgilius Bononiensis (1565) and the oldest known hand-drawn city map (late 16<sup>th</sup> century). A computer module assesses the accuracy of the two maps, and investigates to what extent they correspond to the current situation. The exhibition additionally features historical prints depicting Antwerp during dramatic events such as the destruction of religious images known as the Beeldenstorm (1566) and the Spanish Fury (1576). Artists also provide a detailed picture of the city in peaceful scenes, such as Joyous Entries and ice scenes.

Venue: Museum Plantin-Moretus, Vrijdagmarkt 22, 2000, Antwerp Telephone: +32 3 221 14 50 E-mail: [museum.plantin.moretus@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:museum.plantin.moretus@stad.antwerpen.be) Time schedule: Tuesday to Sunday 10.00 - 17.00 URL: [http://www.museumplantinmoretus.be/Museum\\_PlantinMoretus\\_EN/](http://www.museumplantinmoretus.be/Museum_PlantinMoretus_EN/) [...]

### Lafreri - Italiaanse cartografie in de Renaissance [Lafreri - Italian cartography in the Renaissance]

13 November 2014 – 31 July 2015

Sint-Niklaas, Belgium

See the reports on the exhibition and the catalogue in this issue (page 5).

Venue: Mercatormuseum, Zamanstraat 49, 9100 Sint-Niklaas (entrance Zwijgershoek)

### Abraham Ortelius under the spell of classical antiquity

24 April 2015 – 16 August 2015

Antwerp, Belgium

Ortelius is generally recognised as having created the first modern atlas, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Theatre of the World), published in Antwerp in 1570. He is also believed to be the first person to have questioned the early historical maps, proposing instead that the continents had been joined together before drifting apart to their current position. Ortelius also had a passionate interest in the history of classical antiquity and Biblical history. In his first edition of the *Theatrum*, he already refers to place names in Antiquity, and this subsequently results in a separate publication in 1587, the *Thesaurus Geographicus*. And again in his *Parergon*, a collection of his historical maps that he had previously published in various editions of the *Theatrum*, he portrays ancient history, sacred and secular, and shows the extent of the Roman Empire in Europe.

This exhibition will include a range of these historical maps together with some printed works showing Ortelius's reconstructions. Visitors will be





able to follow how Ortelius collected his knowledge and then visualised it in map book form.

This exhibition in the Rockox House is a joint venture with the Museum Plantin-Moretus / Print Collection in Antwerp.

Venue: Rockoxhuis, Keizerstraat 12, 2000 Antwerp Telephone: +32 3 201 92 50

E-mail: [inforockoxhuis@kbc.be](mailto:inforockoxhuis@kbc.be)

Time schedule: Tuesday to Sunday 10.00 to 17.00

URL: <http://www.rockoxhuis.be/en/exhibitions/coming-soon>

## The world in a mirror

24 April 2015 – 18 August 2015

### Antwerp, Belgium

The Earth's surface area is 510 million m<sup>2</sup>. For centuries, humans all around the world have tried to make Earth's massive size comprehensible in a smaller format, namely in maps of the world. Maps of the world, from past to present, show us what we know about the world. World maps are reflections of a spirit of the times. In the Christian Middle Ages, Jerusalem was the centre of the world maps. The unknown parts of the world were populated with monsters and fairy-tale figures. Explorations later expanded horizons. Eastern and Western knowledge came together. Globes were created. Now, thanks to Google's satellite maps, it seems like we know practically everything about the world. But is that true?

'The World in a Mirror' depicts the history of the Western view of the world using unique maps and globes. Each century saw more and more of the world being mapped out, and the way in which that world was presented different in each century too. A few contemporary artists add their own reflections of the world to this story.

Venue: Museum aan de Stroom,

Hanzestedenplaats 1, 2000 Antwerpen Telephone: +32 3 338 44 00

E-mail: [mas@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:mas@stad.antwerpen.be). Time schedule: Tuesday - Friday 10.00-17.00. Saturday- Sunday 10.00-18.00. Monday closed.

[http://www.mas.be/Museum\\_MAS\\_EN/MASEN/On-Display/The-world-i\[...\]](http://www.mas.be/Museum_MAS_EN/MASEN/On-Display/The-world-i[...])

## De Zeven Zeeën [The Seven Seas]

13 June 2015 – 13 September 2015

### Antwerp, Belgium

Organisation: Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience .

From the fifteenth century onwards explorers sailed the Seven Seas in search of new lands. Europeans swarmed across Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania. These new continents, and the way to them, were carefully charted. In Antwerp, Abraham Ortelius invented a new type of book, the atlas. Henceforth travellers could map their route before their departure. Those who stayed at home could also let their eyes wander across remote regions, tracing distant coasts with their finger and dreaming about pristine areas that had yet to be discovered.

Above all, maritime atlases appeal to the imagination. The seemingly endless oceans were filled with ships and sea monsters, compasses and course lines form intriguing networks, and phantom islands appear and disappear again. Navigation books, maritime maps and atlases as well as the renowned globes by Blaeu are just some of the masterpieces used to develop the story of these heroic mariners.

In the Middle Ages, the main port cities of the Low Countries were part of the Hanseatic cities network, which stretched from the North Sea to the Baltic Sea, from Bruges to the Novgorod Republic. Sailors that travelled this route stayed close to the coast (coastal navigation) and used penned handbooks (pilot books or rutters). Starting in the sixteenth century, these were gradually replaced by portolan-like charts, which offered a visual representation of the coastline accompanied by written notes. One of the most spectacular examples is the unique Seabook in the Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library, a manuscript that consists of an illustrated description of the coastline from Heligoland to Lisbon.

One of the most influential maritime cartographers of all time was Lucas Janszoon Waghenaer from Enkhuizen. He had acquired considerable experience as chief officer on Dutch ships and knew exactly what sailors required. In 1584, he published his *Spiegel der Zeevaart* (Mariner's Mirror) with Christopher Plantin. It was the first printed mariner's guide in the world and the book remained the standard publication for centuries - the English term 'waggoner' is a bastardisation of the author's name.

One of the highlights of maritime cartography in the seventeenth century was the atlas *Le Neptune François*. It was compiled by scientists of the Académie Royale des Sciences (French Academy of Sciences) in Paris and was commissioned by Minister Colbert. The objective was to map the Atlantic coastline of the whole of Europe. The first edition was printed in Paris in 1693, and a few months later a pirate edition was published in Amsterdam by the renowned map publishing house Mortier.

The two stunning globes in the Nottebohm Room are masterpieces by Willem Janszoon Blaeu (c. 1571-1638), who was primarily known for his atlases. These globes, with a diameter of no less than 68 cm, are the largest he produced and with which he conquered the market. The two globes belong to the Heritage Library's collection and decorate the Nottebohm Room. They date from the period 1645-1648 and include additions by Johannes Blaeu, Willem's son. The terrestrial globe features new discoveries in Australia, based on travel accounts by the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman. The celestial globe is also exceptional. The positions of the stars largely originate from the great Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, to whom Blaeu was at one time apprenticed. These observations, of the highest possible quality at the time, were supplemented with 300 positions from southern constellations, measured by Frederick de Houtman.

### The Nottebohm Room

The historical Nottebohm Room offers the ultimate decor for the exhibition 'The Seven Seas'. The Nottebohm Room is a hidden gem in the centre of Antwerp and is known as one of the most beautiful library rooms in Belgium. It is not only an exhibit space and a stack room, but is also the repository for a number of masterpieces from the collection.

Venue: Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience Hendrik, Conscienceplein 4, 2000 Antwerpen Telephone: +32 3 338 87 10

E-mail: [consciencebibliotheek@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:consciencebibliotheek@stad.antwerpen.be)

Time schedule: Tuesday - Sunday 13.00 - 17.00

URL: [http://www.consciencebibliotheek.be/Museum\\_Erfgoedbibliotheek\[...\]](http://www.consciencebibliotheek.be/Museum_Erfgoedbibliotheek[...])



## AUCTION CALENDAR

This calendar is limited to those antiquarians and map dealers who support the BIMCC.  
For details please contact: [president@bimcc.org](mailto:president@bimcc.org)

De Eland  
Weesperstraat 110,  
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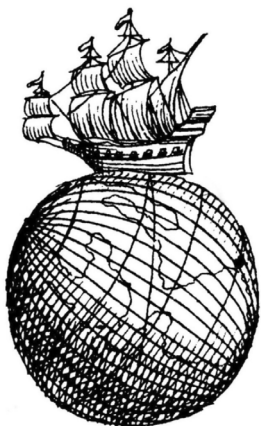
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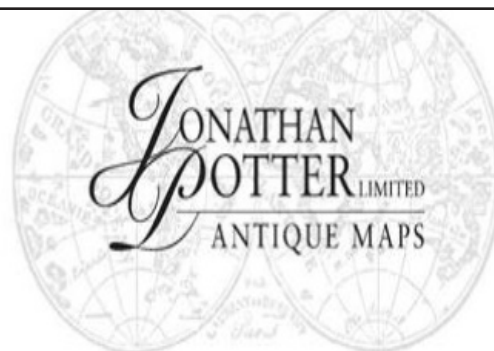
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**BRUSSELS MAP CIRCLE**  
(BIMCC asbl/vzw)

<http://www.bimcc.org> - [info@bimcc.org](mailto:info@bimcc.org)

### Aims and functions

The Circle was created, as the Brussels International Map Collectors' Circle (BIMCC), in 1998 by Wulf Bodenstein.

Now known as the Brussels Map Circle, it is a non-profit making association under Belgian law (asbl/vzw 0464 423 627).

Its aims are to:

1. Provide an informal and convivial forum for all those with a specialist interest in maps, atlases, town views and books with maps, be they collectors, academics, antiquarians, or simply interested in the subject
2. Organise lectures on various aspects of historical cartography, on regions of cartographical interest, on documentation, paper conservation and related subjects
3. Organise visits to exhibitions, and to libraries and institutions holding important map and atlas collections.

In order to achieve these aims, the Circle organises the following annual events:

- A MAP Afternoon in March or April, bringing together all those interested in maps and atlases for an informal chat about an item from their collection – an ideal opportunity to get to know the Circle.
- An EXCURSION to a map collection or exhibition.
- AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on a specific major topic in December.

The Brussels Map Circle also publishes *Maps in History* formerly known as '*BIMCC Newsletter*', three times a year and maintains a website.

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### Becoming (and staying) a Member

Members receive three Newsletters per annum and have free admission to most of the Circle's events.

Non-members pay full rates.

Annual membership: EUR 30.00,  
Students and Juniors  
under 25: EUR 12.00.

To become (and stay!) a member, please pay the membership dues EXCLUSIVELY by bank transfer (no cheques please) to our bank account:

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and notify the Membership Secretary ([treasurer@bimcc.org](mailto:treasurer@bimcc.org)) indicating your name and address.

### Maps in History (BIMCC Newsletter)

The Brussels Map Circle currently publishes three issues per year. It is distributed, not only to members of the Circle, but also to key institutions (universities, libraries) and to personalities active in the field of the history of cartography, located in 26 different countries.

Please submit calendar items and other contributions to the editor (e-mail: [editor@bimcc.org](mailto:editor@bimcc.org)) by the following deadlines:

- 15 **March** for the May edition.
- 15 **July** for the Sept. edition.
- 15 **Nov.** for the January edition.

Items presented for publication are submitted to the approval of the Editorial Committee.

Signed articles and reviews reflect solely the opinions of the author.

Books for review should be sent to Nicola Boothby (Uwenberg 13, B-1650 Beersel, Belgium, [nicola.boothby@telenet.be](mailto:nicola.boothby@telenet.be)) who will arrange for their review by a member of the Circle.



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