

MAPS IN HISTORY



SEPTEMBER 2025
Newsletter No

83

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Portolan Charts in Mallorca: The Palau March



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Intro

Dear Map Circle Members,

This issue marks a significant transition for *Maps in History*. After ten years of dedicated service, Paul De Candt is retiring from his role as layout editor. His contribution has been nothing short of remarkable, and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks for his unwavering commitment. From this issue onwards, I have taken on the task of preparing the layout.

Another important change, as decided at our latest Annual General Meeting in March 2025, is the move from three to two issues per year. This adjustment aims to ease the workload on the Editorial Committee and reduce publication costs, while continuing to offer our Members the same rich content. The next issue of *Maps in History*, No 84, will thus be published in March 2026.

Today I am particularly pleased to welcome two new contributors to this edition. Bram Calcoen, Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, cultural heritage consultant and egyptologist, introduces us to the fascinating world of very early maps—a subject rarely explored in our magazine. Hannah van Wymeersch has kindly written the report on our latest Map Afternoon, at which she made her debut.

In addition, this issue features three reports on visits to map-related exhibitions and collections in France, Belgium and Spain.

Enjoy your read!

Luis A. Robles Macías
Editor

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Cover: Fragment of the Turin 'Mining Papyrus'. Photo courtesy of Marco Chemello via Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 1. Portrait of Jean-Dominique Cassini, Cassini I. Clermont city hall.

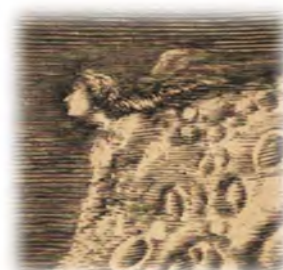


Fig. 2. Map of the Moon by Jean-Dominique Cassini, 1679. On this map, the engraver Jean Patigny has maliciously concealed a female profile, hair in the wind, which is assumed to be that of Geneviève de Laistre.

With the Cassini family

From the planets and the Moon to the *Carte générale de la France*

— By CHRISTIANE DE CRAECKER AND JACQUES MILLE

Two exhibitions, one in Clermont-de-l'Oise and one in Cassis, celebrated the 400th anniversary of the birth of Jean Dominique Cassini, known as Cassini I, founder of the Cassini dynasty.

On 8 June 1625, Gian Domenico Cassini was born in Perinaldo — then in the County of Nice, now in Genoese Liguria.¹ His reputation as an astronomer was already well established in Bologna when he was called to France in 1669 by Louis XIV and Colbert to direct the newly created Paris Observatory. The goal was to define and measure, together with Abbé Jean Picard (1620–1682), a section of the arc of the Paris Meridian passing through the Observatory, between Sourdon, near Amiens in the Somme, and Malvoisine, southeast of Paris, in Essonne. This was the beginning of what Monique Pelletier called ‘the extraordinary adventure of the map of France’ (*L'extraordinaire aventure de la carte de France*, 1990) and what others called *The Cassini Saga*.

With events at the Paris Observatory in particular and in addition in Italy, the ‘Cassini Year’ thus opened. It is set to continue in 2026 in Paris, under the aegis of the Archives nationales, the

Observatoire de Paris and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

So why these events in Clermont (known as Clermont-de-l'Oise or Clermont-en-Beauvaisis) and in Cassis, near Marseille? In 1673, in Clermont, Gian Domenico Cassini (who had ‘Frenchified’ his first name to Jean Dominique) married Geneviève de Laistre, a Clermont resident and daughter of a royal advisor. From this union, a dynasty of scholars heading up the Paris Observatory was born. Jean Dominique also acquired the Château de Thury, near Clermont.

All these factors justify holding an exhibition on the Cassinis.

In Cassis, however, there is no such justification, except for the coincidence of a homophony (Cassis/Cassini) and the city hall holding an exhibition of all the Cassini maps of Provence, in colour, from the collection of Jacques Mille, an active member of the Brussels Map Circle.

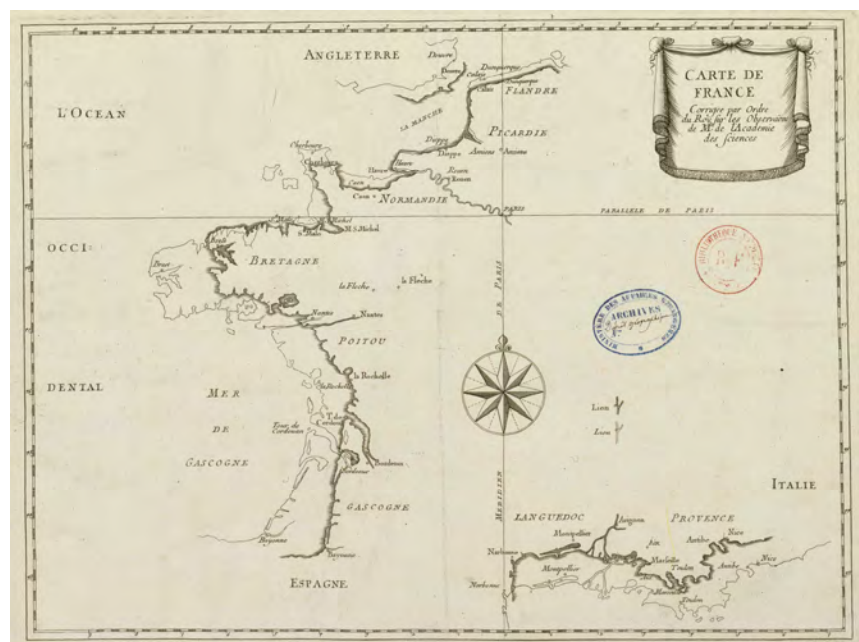


Fig. 3. *Carte de France corrigée par ordre du Roy sur les observations de Messieurs de l'Académie des Sciences*. Image courtesy of the BnF.

¹ See Jean-Louis Renteux, ‘The G.D. Cassini Museum in Perinaldo (Italy)’, *BIMCC Newsletter* No 29, September 2007, p. 5.

Les Cassini, une dynastie de savants au service de la science

[The Cassinis, a dynasty of scholars in the service of science]

Exhibition at the city hall in Clermont (Oise, France). From 25 April to 15 June 2025.

The Clermont exhibition was curated by Olivier Néron de Surgy, who has a PhD in Astronomy. It mainly showed the activity of Jean Dominique Cassini (henceforth Cassini I, 1625–1712) and his three descendants, Jacques Cassini II (1677–1756), César François Cassini III (1714–1784) and Jean Dominique Cassini IV (1748–1845), all directors of the Paris Observatory. The first Cassini, Cassini I, founder of the line, was renowned for his research into the Moon, the planets (notably Jupiter and Saturn) and comets, whose trajectories he described. He is also said to have developed a means of determining the longitudes of places on Earth from eclipses of Jupiter's satellites. These studies would later prove useful in creating the map of France.

In addition to his portrait (fig. 1) and that of his wife, one could admire the reproduction of a painting by Henri Testelin: *Établissement de l'Académie des Sciences et fondation de l'Observatoire* [Establishment of the Academy of Sciences and foundation of the Observatory], 1666. Also on display was the original of an extremely rare map of the Moon (1679) made by Cassini I which was the authority on the subject until the advent of photography (fig. 2). The map was given to Clermont, along with other archives, by Jean Dominique Cassini IV shortly before his death.

Visitors could also contemplate maps of France prior to that of Cassini: Oronce Fine (1553), Abraham Ortelius (1587), and Nicolas Sanson (1632). But King Louis XIV was no longer satisfied with these maps; he wanted more accuracy. The work of Abbé Picard (1620–1682), Philippe de La Hire (1640–1718) and Cassini I thus resulted, in 1693, in a very different map. It showed Louis XIV the new drawing of the Kingdom 'correcting Sanson's errors'. The King reportedly said that 'These gentlemen of the Academy, with their expensive work, have cost me a part of my kingdom', as its surface area of France had been 'reduced' by the accuracy of latitude and longitude

calculations obtained from astronomical surveys (fig. 3).

Also on display were manuscripts and writings on astronomy (descriptions, surveys, calculations, trigonometric measurements) demonstrating the importance of the work accomplished by the Cassinis. This is particularly the case for the definition of the meridian arc in the Paris region, which would lead in 1678 to the *Carte particulier des environs de Paris* at scale 1:86 400, which would in turn serve as a model for the map project started in 1747 by César François Cassini III.



Fig. 4. Second *Carte des triangles*, complete with all chains of meridians and perpendiculars, dated 1744 but actually published in 1783.



Fig. 5. Cap Camarat, sheet 182, with post-1802 numbering.



Fig. 6. Mathias de Hessel, map of the Oise department made by cutting and assembling Cassini sheets, 1789. Clermont city hall. We only know of two other maps of the same type by De Hessel, from his widow, including the Seine et Marne dated 1789 and the Bas-Rhin.

These are only the beginnings of a general triangulation of the Kingdom carried out up to 1744. It led to the *Carte des triangles* (fig. 4) drawn in 1744 by Giacomo Filippo Maraldi and Cassini II and III, which was fundamental to the creation of the future map of the whole of France at a scale of 1:86 400, for which Louis XV gave the green light to César François Cassini III in 1747.

It was then necessary to carry out detailed topographical surveys, completed in 1789 on the eve of the French Revolution. Sheets of this map of France were shown in the exhibition, including sheet No. 2, Beauvais (1756) and that of Paris (No. 1), the first of some 170 originally planned, for 182 finally published in 1818 under Louis XVIII. (fig. 5)

Also shown was the large manuscript map of the Oise department (fig. 6) signed by Mathias Robert de Hesseln (1732–1789), with the new territorial demarcations (districts and cantons) based on history and not on geometry, as he had tried out a few years earlier with a map of France divided ‘geometrically’ or into ‘Quarrés’.

This map is all the more interesting as it is cut out and drawn on a Cassini map background at 1:86 400 and therefore very different from the departmental maps of the Atlas of Chanlaire and Dumez which would subsequently become the standard.

Throughout the exhibition visitors were also treated to beautiful scientific instruments: a sphere, objective lenses, an astronomical telescope (fig. 7),

sighting alidade, topographical board, goniometer, theodolite, graphometer, sextant, etc.



Fig. 7. Astronomical telescope.

It should be noted that Cassini I brought to the Paris Observatory one of the wooden towers of the Marly hydraulic machine developed by the Liège engineer Rennequin Sualem (1645–1708) for Versailles, to install objective lenses with long focal lengths, as shown on a panel in the exhibition.

Let us also mention the complete edition of the Cassini map: the 182 sheets from the BnF reproduced in colour, in the original format, produced in 2024 by Jean-Luc Arnaud.²

A statue of Cassini I closed this exhibition: made in plaster by Jean Guillaume Moitte (1746–1810) to serve as a model for the marble statue. Cassini IV presented it to the city of Clermont.



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Written with the help of Emmanuel Bellanger (Director of the Culture and Heritage Department at Clermont). With thanks from the authors to the Clermont city hall.

² See review by Jacques Mille, *Maps in History*, No 80 (September 2024), pp. 7–8

De Cassis à la Provence avec les cartes de Cassini en couleurs, et quelques autres

[From Cassis to Provence with Cassini's colour maps, and some others]

Exhibition at the Salles Voutées in Cassis (Bouches-du-Rhône, France), 8–19 May 2025. The 32-page catalogue is available upon request to Jacques Mille. EUR 5.00 + shipping costs.

The Cassis exhibition focused on the importance of the work of the Cassinis in cartography. Modest for Jean Dominique (Cassini I) and Jacques (Cassini II), who devoted themselves primarily to astronomical data and triangulation, but fundamental for César François (Cassini III), the true ‘father’ and creator of the map of France bearing Cassini's name, and for Jean Dominique (Cassini IV), who completed the project.

Concerning Cassini I, it is above all his participation in the survey of the *Carte des Environs de Paris* [Map of the Environs of Paris, 1678], at 1:86 400, of which two sheets (out of nine) were shown. This map would serve as a model for the future overall map of France, launched in 1747, on the orders of the King, by César François Cassini III de Thury.

With his son Jacques and Giacomo Filippo Maraldi, Cassini I then continued his work on the Dunkirk – Perpignan (Canigou) meridian and the Saint-Malo – Strasbourg perpendicular, while supervising the astronomical surveys carried out on the coasts of France with a view to producing an accurate, ‘geometrically drawn’ map of France. This map was presented to the King in 1693, as mentioned above (fig. 3).

Two copies of the *Carte de France des triangles* were on display: the one from 1744 and the edition published in 1783 under the same title and under the same date of 1744 (fig. 4).

These methods, involving Astronomy, Mathematics and Geodesy, having been mentioned, the exhibition moved from the first representations of the World, France and Provence to the fifteen Cassini colour maps covering the current region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur.

The Avignon nautical chart, from around 1300, thus introduced one of the first ‘modern’ maps to have come down to us, then Mercator's world map of 1587 revealing the results of the European Age of Discovery. And, with Barentsz' map of the Mediterranean of 1593 (fig. 8), the *Mappemondes* of Chatelain (1705) that include a map of the Moon by *Monsieur Cassini*, Delisle's map of 1714 and Eckert's 1800 hemispheres in original projections, it was the evolving vision of the



Fig. 8. Detail of a map of the Mediterranean by Willem Barentsz, 1593.

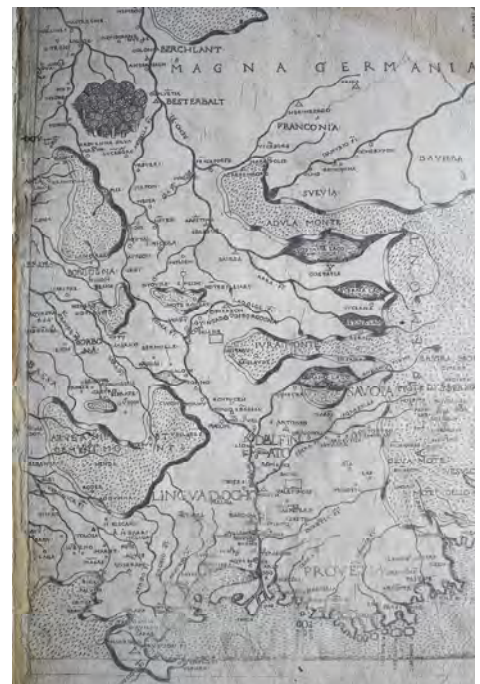


Fig. 9. *Gallia novella*. Atlas of Berlinghieri, 1482.

representation of the world that was offered to visitors .

Then came, among others, the first printed map of France, known as Berlinghieri's, from 1482 (fig. 9), and the extremely rare map of Provence by P. J. Bompar (1591), very quickly taken up by Abraham Ortelius (1594) in his *Theatrum*.

Then maps by Nicolas Sanson, including that of France from 1645, practically 'the official one' at the accession of Louis XIV in 1643, and which the King knew to be inaccurate because it had been made 'en cabinet [in his office].' This had then led him to order a 'geometrically exact' map of France, drawn up using astronomical methods. And for this, following the creation of the Académie des Sciences [Academy of sciences] in 1666, and then that of the Observatory in 1669, the call was made to Gian Domenico Cassini.

The 'rectified' map of the Academy was distributed very quickly and became the image of France taken up by cartographers in France and abroad, for example in England by John Senex and others.

Then, at the heart of the exhibition, visitors were able to see all of Cassini's maps of Provence.³ They were all in period colour except for the Briançon sheet, which has two interesting stamps for the history of the map (fig. 10). These stamps show that the map was confiscated by the military in 1793 and nationalised — Dépôt de la Guerre stamp — then put back on sale in the Year



Fig. 10. Briançon sheet. Detail with the stamps testifying to the vicissitudes of Cassini's map during the Revolution and the Empire.

VIII (1800) with an *Acquitted* stamp.

The exhibition continued with some unusual maps of Provence, contemporary with Cassini:

- one by Jacques Guénard, around 1690, the only known copy of a *Nouvelle carte de Provence* based on the 'astronomical data of the Gentlemen of the Royal Academy of Sciences' (fig. 13)
- 1757 map by Esprit Devoux and Cousin, more decorative than up to date;
- 1781 manuscript map with the coasts from the Rhône to Italy, very detailed, by Mr De Lafarge;
- 1781 large map of Provence by Denis and Jaillot based on field surveys 'by engineers of the Province', thus owing nothing to Cassini.

³ In the book *La Provence de Cassini* (2024) by the author of this article (reviewed in *Maps in History*, No 80, September 2024), the reader can find numerous extracts of Cassini's sheets of Provence as well as from other regions of France.



Fig. 11. One of thousands of possible excerpts to show the quality of the work done by the civil engineers surveying the map, the engravers working on the copperplates, and the illuminators colouring it before mounting it on canvas. Lorgues Sheet 154.



Fig. 13. Cartouche of Jacques Guénard's map of Provence.



Fig. 12. Special sheet for the Île d'Oléron. Map annotated for military purposes at the time of the Continental Blockade (1809) illustrating one use among others of the Cassini map.





Fig. 14. Handwritten geological map 'Strasbourg' on a Cassini background. Surveyed by Louis Voltz around 1837. One of three known copies of a minute geological map on a Cassini background, all the following being on a background of a General Staff map at 1:80 000, in hatching.

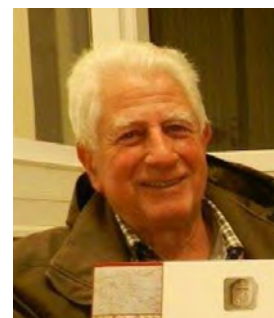
Contrary to Denis and Jaillot's map, the maps by Michel Capitaine du Chesnoy, an engineer who worked for Cassini, owed everything to him for those in reduced scale (Provence 1788 and 1790), and quite a lot for the large map of Dauphiné of 1787. In the beautiful cartouche of the latter, Capitaine is called 'Engineer of the King' whereas, in its ephemeral revolutionary version, he will become 'formerly citizen engineer of the Republic'. In fact, many maps did not survive the Revolution because, too marked by dedication cartouches testifying to the 'Ancien Régime', they were withdrawn from the market or pulped, and thus became rarities.

To close the visit, some maps presented several uses of the Cassini map: to draw the

boundaries of the new departments; as a reference for road maps (*L'Indicateur fidèle*, Desnos and Michel 1764); as a base map for the very rare first departmental geological surveys (1837, 1840) ordered by V. Legrand in 1835 (fig. 14) and, the only known case, as a base for a railway line project between Pontoise and Rouen (1832). By then, the Cassini map had become obsolete and had outlived its usefulness, but it continued to be used because the upcoming 1:80 000 map of France, which would be systematically used thereafter for such works, was not available yet.

With these two exhibitions, the 'Cassini Year' began in France, focusing on both the astronomical and cartographic aspects of the work of this family, which

constituted a major step in the history of these two disciplines.



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The author wishes to extend his thanks to the Cassis city hall.

The Oldest Maps in the World

— By BRAM CALCOEN

From time to time a new candidate emerges. History teaches us there will always be a next ‘oldest’ of something but as we delve deeper into the distant past, stretching back many millennia, the lack of written sources makes it harder and more enigmatic to understand what we see. Technological advances, such as radiocarbon dating and scanning techniques, have improved greatly since the 1950s, yet they do little to illuminate the ancient mindset.

This article discusses four of the oldest extant maps, each of them created on a different medium.

These maps — found, interpreted and understood or misunderstood by archaeologists and iconographers — may be known by map historians and archaeologists but generally stay out of the public eye unless they feature in some popular documentary. They fall ‘off the map’ discussions because, although ‘map making is perhaps the oldest variety of primitive art,’¹ they rather put the definition of ‘map’ to the test. Some were not even identified as maps until recently. Others were once considered maps, then dismissed, only to regain recognition. In their own way, they have a lot to

say about how we humans came to think of maps and map making.

The Çatal Höyük map is a good place to start because it has generated significant controversy among archaeologists and map historians, challenging how we define early mapping.

The Çatal Höyük mural (c. 6600 BCE)

The Çatal Höyük ‘map,’ an approximately three metre-long plaster mural often regarded as one of the oldest maps in the world, has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate.



Fig. 1. On-site reconstruction of the Çatal Höyük mural. Credit: Jed Wyrick.

¹ Lloyd A. Brown, *The Story of Maps* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1949), 32.

Due to its much-faded condition, it is difficult to interpret at first glance. One really needs to look at line drawings to get a better idea.

Çatal Höyük is an impressive Neolithic and Chalcolithic proto-city in the Konya plain, Turkey. The site flourished between c. 7500 and 5600 BCE, with later episodic reoccupations, including a small Byzantine settlement. It reached an estimated population of 5 000 to 7 000 people.

Çatal Höyük was first excavated by James Mellaart in 1958. Over several seasons in the 1960s, he uncovered large parts of the site, making it famous worldwide. His work, however, became controversial after disputes over other discoveries in Turkey, and he was banned from further excavation. In 1993, Ian Hodder from Cambridge University restarted work at Çatal Höyük. He introduced a 'post-processual' approach, which focuses on careful interpretation and understanding of social context. Unlike Mellaart, who excavated many houses quickly, Hodder's team often spent a full season on a single building, using methods such as microscopic soil studies, residue analysis, and detailed 3D recording, so as to better understand daily life, social structure, and symbolism. Mellaart's well-known ideas — for example that Çatal Höyük was a matriarchal society with goddess worship, special sanctuaries, and a role as a major trade hub — have

since been re-examined. His interpretations of wall paintings have likewise been reconsidered.

Subsequently, the 'Map' dated from c. 6600 to 6000 BCE, one of very many murals found there whose meaning we do not quite know how to interpret, was no longer a map. Mellaart had argued it depicted a ground plan of the village with, in the background, an explosion of the nearby twin-peaked volcano Hasan Dağı (Mount Hasan), which was active until the second millennium BCE and is now dormant. In fact, the interpretation of the lower register as a map came from Mellaart's colleague Pat Quin. But, nowadays, the image once viewed as one of the world's oldest maps and landscape painting is neither as far as a lot of scholars are concerned.

Mellaart was convinced that the inhabitants of Çatal Höyük obtained their obsidian from Mount Hasan. He argued that a cataclysmic eruption may have threatened their precious supply of the igneous rock, a shocking event that had economic repercussions and as such would inevitably be recorded. Scientific research in the 1990s has shown that the inhabitants did not obtain their obsidian from Mount Hasan but from another source.² That was to be one of the arguments against the identification of the stylised cone on the mural with Mount Hasan. Stephanie Meece believes the

decorative pattern represents a leopard's spots,³ and in this she is supported by Elizabeth Wheat.⁴ Meece argues that, viewed from Çatal Höyük, the heights of the cones are reversed in the drawing so it cannot be the volcano; and that the drawing in the lower register indicates spacing (small alleys?) between the houses which did not exist in the city. There were indeed no alleys, and one moved from house to house via the rooftops. In favour of her argument, the other murals at Çatal Höyük depict images of animals, interpreted as the now extinct aurochs, vultures, leopards (fig. 2), lions and even decapitated humans.

There is however no convincing argument to interpret the pattern at the base of the mural as a leopard skin and it does nothing to explain the image above. Maybe the harshest criticism is that Meece assumes Neolithic people lacked the conceptual framework for cartographic representation, a view that underestimates cognitive



Fig. 2. A relief from Çatal Höyük that actually depicts leopard skin. Credit: Jed Wyrick.

² Tristan Carter, 'A True Gift of Mother Earth: The Use and Significance of Obsidian at Çatalhöyük', *Anatolian Studies* 61 (2011), pp. 1–19.

³ Stephanie Meece, 'A Bird's Eye View – of a Leopard's Spots: The Çatal Höyük 'Map' and the Development of Cartographic Representation in Prehistory', *Anatolian Studies* 56 (2006), pp. 1–16.

⁴ Elizabeth Wheat, *Terrestrial Cartography in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Doctoral thesis submitted for Birmingham University, 2012.

capacities of early societies. It reminds us of the time when the Benin and Ife bronzes were discovered in the nineteenth century. It was thought such beautiful ‘bronze’ portraits displaying high quality metallurgical lost wax techniques, couldn’t possibly be made by primitive Africans.

When a modern artist like Anselm Kiefer paints a series of massive artworks vaguely depicting brick work factories in India that in fact end up looking like paintings of ancient ziggurats in Iraq, do we question his accuracy, his motives? And yet a Neolithic mural is subjected to intense scrutiny, looking for ‘failure’ and lack of accuracy in every detail. Even Mellaart tried to match the houses on the mural to areas of the city as if these people would be concerned with such details. The map has no navigational purpose nor one of land ownership. In my opinion, it simply tells the story of where they lived and the cataclysmic event they witnessed and as such required only an impression of their village/city and the event and not a detailed realistic representation.

Slowly but surely, Mellaart’s interpretation of the mural being a map is increasingly being supported. Mount Hasan, at 3268 m, is the second highest mountain in Anatolia and is clearly visible from Çatal Höyük. A study of the geological record

has shown that a cataclysmic eruption of the volcano occurred within the date range of the mural.⁵ Around 253 BCE, an explosion of Ercyes Dağı, Anatolia’s tallest mountain, was found impressive enough to mint coinage commemorating it. Is it then so hard to believe that a Neolithic society without writing or coinage, would attempt to depict such an impressive natural event, regardless of whether it was the source of their obsidian?

How to explain then the strange juxtaposition of a bird’s-eye view of the town with a landscape view of the volcano above it? It’s not hard to find parallels in ancient art, once one understands the intention. For example, in Ancient Egypt one would depict on wall paintings in tombs an image of a casket in frontal view, and above it a pile of objects as seen from above. It was a way of laying out precisely to the viewer what was inside the casket. It was not understood how to create depth in ancient art so if you wanted to show what was there, you laid it out as clearly as possible. Whether you are an ancient Egyptian artist that was stacking objects on top of each other that in reality would have been all next to each other, and even inside a box; or you are a Neolithic inhabitant in Çatal Höyük trying to show what your town looked like near a volcano, it makes perfect sense as an effort to communicate a story rather than a topographic plan.

Despite continuous disagreements, the Çatal Höyük mural is now increasingly recognised as a map; a non-utilitarian map for sure, one that finds its purpose more in the realm of storytelling than as a tool for town planning or navigation

The Saint-Bélec slab (c. 2150 - 1600 BCE)

The Saint-Bélec slab (Breton: Taol San Beleg) has been proposed as the oldest known topographical map in the world. The slab, made of grey-blue Pre-Cambrian schist thought to have come from a rocky outcrop some 55 km away from Douarnenez in Brittany, is an enormous affair: 2.2 m long, 1.53 m wide, 0.16 m thick, and weighing around a tonne (fig. 3). The Saint-Bélec slab was part of the Armorican tumuli culture and re-used as the wall of a cist in a circular Early Bronze Age barrow at the site of Leuhan, Finistère.⁶ The age of the map is assumed to be early bronze age between 2150 and 1600 BCE. This would make it roughly contemporaneous with the famous Nebra Sky Disc, a celestial map which is not examined here because that type of map is for another discussion,

The Saint-Bélec slab has historically been largely overlooked.⁷ It was not on the academic radar until 1994, when researchers re-examined collector Paul-Armand du

⁵ Axel K. Schmitt et al., ‘Identifying the Volcanic Eruption Depicted in a Neolithic Painting at Çatalhöyük, Central Anatolia, Turkey’, *PLoS ONE* 9, no. 1 (2014): e84711; doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0084711.

⁶ A stone-built, coffin-like box or ossuary for housing human remains.

⁷ It did not appear in the ‘List of Prehistoric Maps’ compiled for Volume 1 of *The History of Cartography*. Catherine Delano-Smith, ‘Cartography in the Prehistoric Period in the Old World: Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa’, in *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, The History of Cartography 1 (University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 54–102.



Fig. 3. The Saint-Bélec engraved slab taken shortly after its discovery in 1900. Credit: Jean-Marie Abgrall, via Bretania.bzh.

Châtellier's drawings.⁸ Du Châtellier discovered the slab in 1900 and it formed part of his private prehistoric museum at Château du Kernuz in Pont-l'Abbé, France. After his death, the collection ended up in the National Archaeological Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where the slab was rediscovered in the cellar in 2014. Previously, it had been stored in the moat until 1990. Du Châtellier wrote in his notes: 'Some see a human form, others an animal one. Let's not let our imagination get the better of us and wait for a [Jean-François]

Champollion to tell us what it says.' It is clear that the stone slab did not spark the idea of a map in his imagination. Once more we were faced with the 'To be a map or not to be a map' question.

Its status as a map was not established until scholars rediscovered the slab and Du Châtellier's notes. It has now been identified by French and British scholars as an 80% accurate topographical map of the Odet Valley, covering some 545 km².⁹ It depicts a 29-km stretch of the Odet River, which forms a lake

past Finistère, hits the Anse de Bénodet (not far from the Château de Kernuz) and ends at the Bay of Biscay.

That is only the recovered broken part. It is estimated that the complete slab would have measured 3.9 m. Whilst they may not have dragged this slab as far as the builders of Stonehenge, who sourced their stones from 290 km away, pulling a stone slab of a couple of tonnes through 54 km of countryside is no mean feat. Most striking is that the makers of the map seemingly

8 Jacques Briard et al., *Les tumulus de l'âge du Bronze des Monts d'Arrée* (Rennes: Institut Culturel de Bretagne, 1994), pp. 57–60.

9 Nicholas Clément, Yvan Pailler et al., 'La Carte et le territoire : la Dalle gravée du Bronze ancien de Saint-Bélec (Leuhan, Finistère)', *Bulletin de la Société préhistorique française*, tome 118, n° 1 (2021), pp. 99–146. Nicholas Clément, 'An Early 3D Map of a territory? The Bronze Age carved slab from Leuhan. (Brittany, France)', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, Volume 40, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 367–390. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ojoa.12196>



Fig. 4. The forgotten slab being moved from storage in the National Archaeological Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Credit: Nicholas Clément and Yvan Paillier.

tried to recreate the landscape's undulations, making it possibly the oldest known 3D relief map in the world. Popular online press has hailed the map as a 'treasure map for archaeologists' that will yield clues to yet undiscovered tumuli. Excavations have indeed turned up missing broken parts of the slab. When more understanding of the object is gained in the future, it may indeed be one of those 'X marks the spot' moments where interesting burials are found, though one shouldn't hold one's breath.

Speculation as to its purpose is still rife. While it more or less represents the rivers and mountains of the Roudouallec municipality, much like the Çatal Höyük mural it was clearly not

made for the purpose of navigation. Yvan Paillier argues the map was never used for travelling because ancient people would navigate the landscape in the form of a story. In other words: 'To get from A to B you need to pass the great oak... then cross the river...'; much like modern Australian Aboriginals use 'songlines' to map and navigate their world and sacred places. As a form of iconoclasm, it is at odds with itself because, according to the researchers, it shows the location of the burial mound in which it was found. This is rather enigmatic as Nicholas Clément suggests that breaking it was a purposeful act of deconsecration. Clément also suggests that it might have been a kind of cadastral map, a way to affirm ownership of a territory, as

a show of land controlled by one power. Its size suggests it was probably put up somewhere in an important public place. The lack of wear implies however that it was barely exposed to the elements. Maybe it was displayed in a bronze age hall?

Unfortunately, the oldest extant topographical map in the world looks to the untrained eye just like a lot of squiggles and circles. Only time will tell what additional information can be derived from it.

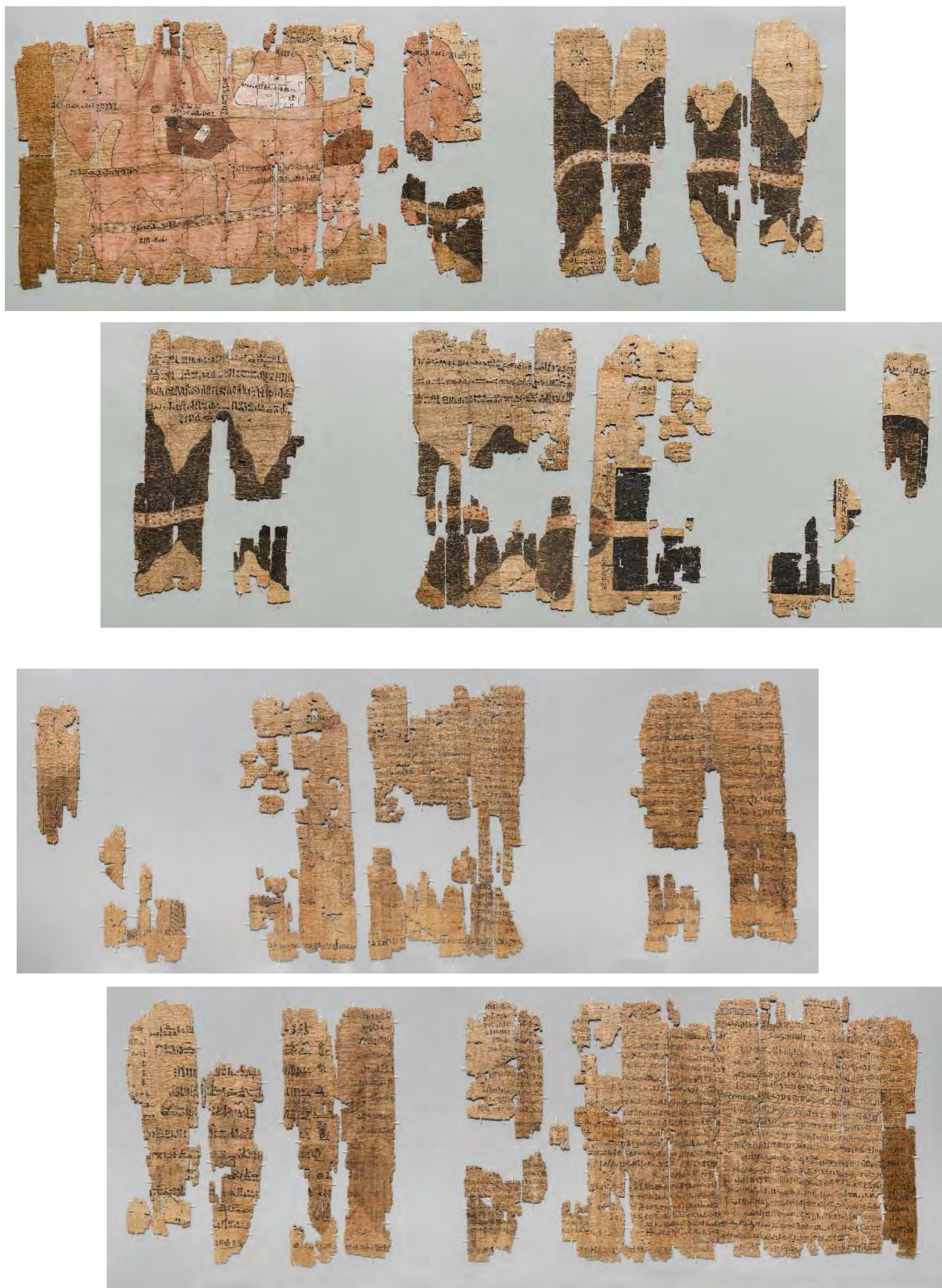


Fig. 5: Recto (top) and verso (bottom) of the Turin 'Mining Papyrus'. Photo courtesy of Marco Chemello via Wikimedia Commons.

The Turin Mining Papyrus (c. 1150 BCE)

Until the discovery of the Saint-Bélec slab (and debatably the Çatal Höyük mural), the title of oldest map in the world was held by the Turin ‘Mining Papyrus’.¹⁰ It is not to be confused with the ‘other’ infamous Turin papyrus (Cat. 2031 = CGT 55001), which is a display of ancient Egyptian scenes of sex and alcoholic debauchery. The ‘Mining Papyrus’ map may be one of the most enchanting maps ever. It measures 2.82 m long and 0.41 m wide (fig. 5), which is impressive even though the longest extant Egyptian papyrus (the Papyrus Harris) reaches 41 m. A full description has recently been published.¹¹ It was reportedly discovered in Deir el-Medina in 1820 by Bernardino Drovetti, an Italian diplomat and avid antiquities collector, as so many diplomats of his time were. Deir el-Medina was a small town on the West Bank of the Nile in Luxor where the artists that built and decorated the tombs of the pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings lived.

The map was created by the well-known ‘Scribe-of-the Tomb’ Amennakhte, son of Ipuy, under Pharaoh Ramesses IV (1151 – 1145 BCE) as a guide for a quarrying

expedition undertaken around 1150 BCE. The verso of the papyrus is inscribed with different texts, in particular a letter addressed to Pharaoh Ramesses VI regarding a cult statue. It should be noted that papyrus was a very expensive commodity and therefore reused for its verso side, so the verso of many papyri often carries texts that have no relevance to the recto.

In true Egyptian spirit, the ‘Mining Papyrus’ is rich in detail and looks more map-like to our eyes than the former two. It fairly accurately represents a 15-km stretch of the Wadi Hammamat (Valley of Many Baths), a breathtakingly beautiful dry riverbed connecting the Nile to the Red Sea. Unfortunately, the map has suffered a lot of damage. Transportation of fragile papyri was not mastered by early collectors. For example, the Turin Royal Canon Papyrus (Cat. 1184) was transported on horseback and upon arrival had completely disintegrated into over 160 small fragments and dust, regrettably losing 50% of its content. Five adjoining fragments of the ‘Mining Papyrus’ have survived, and there is some controversy as to the order of the fragments, although this does not change

their interpretation significantly.¹²

Egypt is not reputed for its ancient maps.¹³ The vast number of papyri found in Egypt tends to give us the false impression that many texts and drawings survived. In fact, what we have is just the tip of the iceberg; much more has been lost than found. While it is possible that more maps once existed, they appear to have played a limited role in Egyptian culture, as they never appear on temple or tomb walls. Until Claudius Ptolemy wrote his *Geography* around 150 CE, we know of no other ancient Egyptian maps, which is not to say they didn’t exist. It seems Egyptians didn’t have a great need to explain how they built, moved large stones, or navigated. They did explain how they produced arts and crafts – from goldsmithing to making wine – by depicting their production on tomb wall paintings. They left us written economic accounts, instructions on how to interpret dreams, love poems and so on, but architectural plans and maps are scarce. Only a handful of examples exist: the tomb plan of Ramesses IV (fig. 6),¹⁴ an ostrakon of the tomb plan of Pharaoh Ramesses IX,¹⁵ the Ghurob Shine

10 Museo Egizio, Turin, Cat. 1883, 1879, 1899, 1969 and 2095.

11 Martina Ladrino, ‘Papyrus Turin Cat. 1183 + Cat. 2095. A New edition of an Already Known Papyrus’, *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 6 (2022): pp. 100–123.

12 James A. Harrell and V. Max Brown, ‘The World’s Oldest Surviving Geological Map: The 1150 B.C. Turin Papyrus from Egypt’, *The Journal of Geology* 100 (1992): pp. 3–18. The Turin Museum has not changed the order of the fragments according to Harrell and Brown’s research.

13 A.F. Shore, ‘Egyptian Cartography’, in *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, The History of Cartography 1 (University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 117–129.

14 Turin, Cat. 1885.

15 A pale limestone piece about 66 × 20 cm that lays out the plan of the tomb and its dimensions. It was found inside the tomb itself in the Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Egypt and dates to about 1100 BCE. The word *ostraca*, singular *ostrakon*,

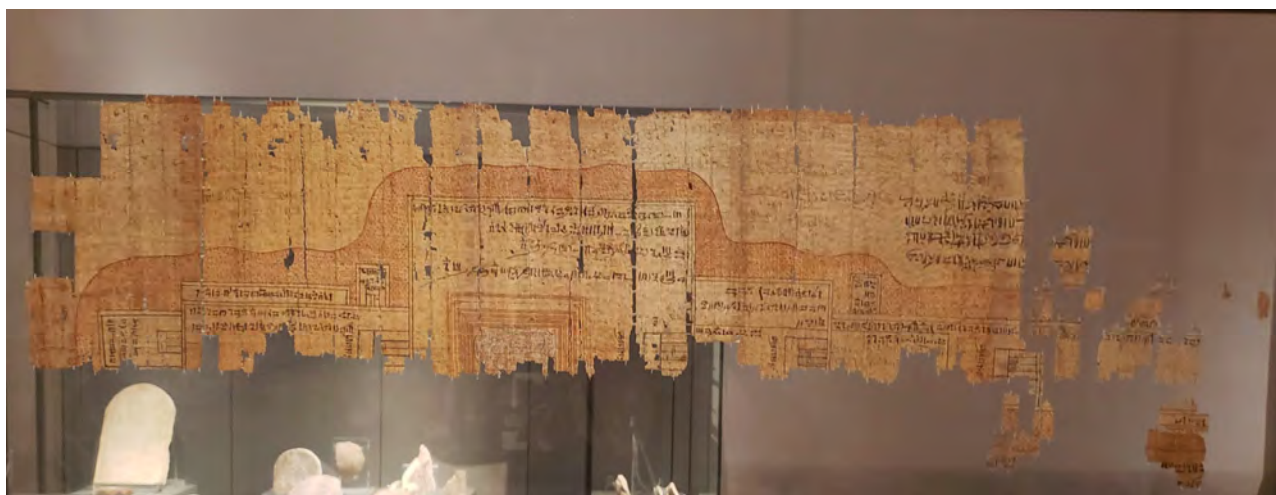


Fig. 6. Ramesses IV tomb plan as on display in Museo Egizio, Turin. Credit: author.

papyrus,¹⁶ and one wall painting showing how they moved a monumental statue.¹⁷

There is an endearing account by an Old Kingdom official called Harkhuf, whose biography is written on the walls outside his tomb.¹⁸ He was a native of Elephantine and governor of the South, and he undertook four expeditions to Nubia, which is now Sudan. The text is so delightful it is on the curriculum of every student of ancient Egyptian language. Harkhuf travelled south and brought a pygmy back as a gift to the king. The king at that time was Pepi, a little boy aged 6 who got terribly excited about the news. Pepi urged Harkhuf to take care of the pygmy at all times and to ensure that he would not fall overboard during the journey. Now, we assume it was a pygmy but the vocabulary is a little unclear: 'Deneg, Daneg, Dag' could also denote a dwarf or a midget, but it

is certain that Harkhuf travelled deep into Africa. How exactly is uncertain, and many articles have been written about his possible routes. Wherever the destination was precisely is anybody's guess. One would expect such an arduous journey would merit a map. Of course the Egyptians followed the Nile, laboriously dragging their boats overland whenever they reached the 'cataracts' (shallow whitewater rapids) between Aswan and Khartoum, but how they proceeded further through the desert and by what route will remain a topic of discussion.

It then comes as a great surprise to encounter this long road map. While no longer the 'world's oldest topographical map', it still holds the title of world's oldest geological map for this is clearly its purpose: to indicate the different lithological deposits rather than a tool for navigation. The route through the wadi is

easy to follow and was well known and travelled, as can be seen from the thousands of graffiti that date all the way back to prehistoric times. There is for instance no map of the much more complicated route to the copper and turquoise deposits of the Wadi Maghareh and Serabit el Khadem in Sinai. As mentioned above with regard to the Saint-Bélec slab, ancient people travelled using oral tradition, and the ancient Egyptians likely travelled the same way, mostly using the Nile and obvious recognisable landmarks to navigate. The colourful details of the Turin map clearly denote the different lithological compositions of the wadi that even the untrained eye can identify: the pink and black hills (that are igneous/metamorphic rocks), green stretches, and different gravels represented as dots. The goal of the expedition was apparently to quarry 'bekhen stone', a metagraywacke greyish

originally denoted potsherd but in Egyptology it is also used for pieces of limestone, a cheap material used for sketches, writing exercises, docketts and so on.

¹⁶ Petrie Museum, University College London. UC27934.

¹⁷ In the tomb of local nomarch Djehutihotep in Deir el Bersha, dated to 1880 BCE.

¹⁸ A translation of the text can be found in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature. The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley California Press, 2006), p. 23.

green sandstone for sculpting statues for the Pharaoh. The quarry is clearly indicated on the map.

The map is surprisingly detailed and shows not only the location of where the 'bekhen stone' can be quarried but also shows where this wadi meets the watering place and the stone quarry of Bir el-Sid, and the gold mine and settlement at Bir Umm Fawakhir. Though it is not exactly to scale, 1 cm represents something between 50 and 100 m. The map has hieratic (i.e. cursive hieroglyphs) annotations about the gold mines. It is a bit disturbing that changing the order of the map's fragments around does not make a huge difference, as it completely defeats the idea of a map in a

navigational sense. As mentioned afore, you cannot get lost in the Wadi Hammamat: it's one long straightforward trail though the desert. A donkey could find its way and, as a matter of fact, many donkeys did in Roman times. There is no doubt the Turin 'Mining Papyrus' is the world's oldest geological map.

The Babylonian Mappa Mundi (9th - 6th century BCE)

This is arguably the best-known map in the series as it is the oldest known world map. The most famous Babylonian clay tablet, The British Museum BM 92687, is known as the Babylonian Map of the World, *Imago Mundi* or *Mappa Mundi*. Many readers will

recognise it as the logo of the map-history journal *Imago Mundi*.

Excavations in Mesopotamia yielded over 170 maps. The majority depict agricultural plots and irrigation canals, fragments of city plans and ground plans of buildings.¹⁹ The exception is the 'Mappa Mundi', a Babylonian clay tablet from Iraq that is dated as early as the ninth century BCE. The mention of Bit Yakin and Urartu firmly places it in the 7th century BCE with some scholars even suggesting a date as late as the sixth century BCE. It measures a rather small 12.2 × 8.2 cm. It is incomplete and consists of several fragments. In 1995 a new fragment was discovered amongst the c. 150 000 tablets and fragments housed in the British Museum by museum



Fig. 7. Obverse (left) and reverse (right) of the Babylonian Mappa Mundi.

¹⁹ Wheat, *Terrestrial Cartography in Ancient Mesopotamia* (note 4).

volunteer Edith Horsley, a student of Irving Finkel.²⁰ The colophon, a statement at the end of the text identifying the author, is unfortunately broken but the name of his father is still legible: He was called 'Iššuru', which in Akkadian means 'bird' – a highly unlikely personal name.²¹ Finkel interprets this as implying the map is a bird's-eye view of the world. It was excavated by Hormuzd Rassam (1826–1910) in Sippar, a site near modern Tell Abu Habbah, some 70 km north of Babylon on the East bank of the Euphrates River, though it is thought to have originated in Borsippa (Birs Nimrud), some 17 km southwest of Babylon. It was bought by the British Museum in 1882 and first exhibited in 1899.

It is quite remarkable that the tablet survived. Most clay tablet libraries in Mesopotamia consisted of very fragile unfired clay tablets. If the tablets didn't get destroyed in natural disasters, fires, warfare, or abandonment of the city, some were simply lost in excavations. Early archaeologists, in an attempt to guarantee their preservation, as some were so fragile they crumbled upon being touched, started firing them in on-site ovens. Unfortunately, tablets got lost in the process because they exploded or suffered other mishaps.

The 'Mappa Mundi' tablet consists of three parts: the world map, a small text above it, and a text on the reverse written in Akkadian.

The text above the map is a brief summary of the creation of the world by the patron god of Babylon – Marduk – who dismembered Tiamat, the goddess of the primeval ocean, and thus created land and sea. It mentions an array of animals and how they were put in the land and the sea, two mythical creatures and three heroes, notably Utnapishtim, the Babylonian equivalent of the biblical flood hero Noah. There is a strong line drawn under the text separating it from the map. Finkel views this as a clear indication the text has nothing to do with the map, yet he argues for a link to the Ark narrative. The debate continues.

The most important feature of the map is the double circle on the drawing. The cuneiform 'mar-ram-tum' in the circle translates as 'The Bitter River' or, according to Wheat, 'The Bitter Ocean'. This was regarded as the water that was thought to surround the known world. Inside the double ring is Ancient Mesopotamia, or at least the part of it that the map maker deemed important for representing their way of life: waterways that provided means of transportation, irrigation canals that watered the fields and the southern marshes. The vertical parallel lines represent the Euphrates river and the rectangle across the city of Babylon. The small circles represent cities except perhaps one labelled 'Der' that may refer to a tribe. The half circle at the top saying 'mountain' is

interpreted as being the Zagros mountains. Three star-shaped triangles all containing the word 'nagu', translated as region, have been interpreted as islands or districts but Finkel suggests they are mountains. Again, we are dealing with issues of perspective: how to represent something 'upright' like mountains' on a bird's-eye view image of the world?

The map is incomplete, and the diagram suggests there must have been eight of those triangles. The inscription on the reverse of the tablet explains what those triangles contain. The text, which is full of lacunae due to damage, describes a six-league great wall, a place where the sun is never seen, trees that bear jewels instead of fruit, giant birds unable to fly. Magical stories related to each of these 'nagu' of places no-one has ever been to, all in all an imaginary world based on inherited traditions of cosmology and mythology.

Having only three triangles, it was impossible to figure out what part of the text on the reverse went with which triangle, and it is here that Edith Horsley comes in. The minuscule fragment she found carried the words 'Great Wall'. This triangle could now finally be matched to what the scribe wrote about the Great Wall: 840 cubits high (i.e. 448 m), trees 120 cubits high (i.e. 64 m), one has to travel seven leagues past the 'Bitter River'. Thanks to the newly discovered fragment, it was also

²⁰ Irving Finkel, 'A join to the map of the World: A Notable Discovery', *The British Museum Magazine: The Journal of the British Museum Friends* 23 (1995): pp. 26–27. Irving Finkel is without doubt the most delightful, entertaining and witty academic still roaming the planet.

²¹ One is reminded of some lines in the Legend of Etana, legendary King of Kish: The eagle spoke onto him to Etana, saying: 'Look my friend, how does the land appear?' From Wilson J.V. Kinnier, *The Legend of Etana: A New Edition* (Chicago: Bolchazy – Carducci, 1985). An online edition: <https://www.ebl.lmu.de/corpus/L/1/9>

understood that the triangles are to be read anticlockwise. All triangles mention seven leagues, which is a magical number in many cultures. One triangle mentions seeing something 'as massive as a *parsiktu* vessel'. That is a breathtaking discovery for any Assyriologist because the word *parsiktu* is known from only one other tablet: a tablet describing the construction of the Ark,²² theoretically built in 1800 BCE by the aforementioned Utnapishtim. Interestingly, on the edge of this map, next to the triangle in question, is Urartu. This was a kingdom that extended over the modern borders of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Armenia. The biblical Noah stranded his ark on the 'mountains of Ararat', a term that refers to the ancient kingdom or region of Urartu. The Babylonian flood story, of many flood stories that have come to us from the ancient world, comes closest to the biblical story and finding it on this tablet shows that for the ancient Babylonian the Ark that saved humanity was truly important and in a mythical place you could in theory visit to see its remains.

One interesting observation is that, outside a relatively small world that covers more or less the territory of Iraq circumscribed by 'The Bitter River', there lies a world of magic and imagination. The Mesopotamians are not known for their positive outlook on life, to put it bluntly. Mesopotamian stories often show unpredictable gods and a fragile human existence, while Egyptian writings focus more on order, stability, and a hopeful view of the

universe. It is a little surprising then that, beyond the known world of the 'Mappa Mundi', there are magical, wondrous things to be found but no sign of evil darkness. No such thing as 'Hic sunt dracones',²³ so maybe the 'Mappa Mundi' shows us that, if we look carefully enough, ancient cultures will never cease to amaze and surprise us.



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Making *Maps in History*

This issue of *Maps in History* was edited by Luis Robles.

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Luis Robles did the layout.

²² Irving Finkel, *The Ark before Noah. Decoding the Story of the Flood* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2014).

²³ Meaning 'Here are dragons', this often-cited legend appears on the Hunt-Lennox terrestrial globe dated to 1508.

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Portolan Charts in Mallorca

The Palau March

— By LUIS A. ROBLES MACÍAS

Mallorca is one of the most popular holiday destinations in the Mediterranean. Northern Europeans flock there in search of sun, beaches and night life. Nevertheless, the capital city of the island, Palma, also offers the visitor a rich array of historical buildings, museums and art galleries.

One of the gems of Palma's cultural life, located in the heart of the old city, is the Palau March [March Palace]. I found it thanks to an article published in this magazine ten years ago by Jean-Louis Renteux.¹ This palace was home to the March family, who in the twentieth century rose to become one of Spain's most powerful financial companies. Since 1975 it has belonged to the non-profit Fundación Bartolomé March and has been turned into a museum. It now hosts an out-of-the-ordinary diversity of works that includes paintings by Salvador Dalí, a gorgeous Neapolitan nativity scene and — the jewel in the crown — ancient maps.

The visitor can enjoy eight portolan charts from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, which are hung on the walls of the museum (fig. 1). They are all



Fig. 1. General view of one of the rooms of the museum, with three portolan charts adorning its walls.

manuscripts on parchment that show the Mediterranean Sea and, in some cases, also the rest of Europe. In addition, the museum preserves three bound nautical-style atlases which are available only on a consultation basis at the library. These items are part of the large book collection assembled by bibliophile Bartolomé March Servera (1917–98). All the charts and atlases have been reproduced in a book, now out of print, written by Antoni Ginard.² The same author had earlier published a text-only

description of each work that is available online.³ No digital scans of the Palau March charts and atlases are available online. The visitor therefore has every reason to photograph the charts extensively, which is authorised but not easy due to the glass screen that (understandably) protects them.

Three of the exhibited works were made in this very city: one chart by Mateo Prunes in 1561 (fig. 2) and two by Miquel Prunes around 1640 (fig. 3). Indeed, Palma de

¹ 'The Bartolomé March collection of portolans, Palma de Mallorca', *Maps in History*, No 51, January 2015, p. 7.

² Antoni Ginard Bujosa, *La cartografía mallorquina a Mallorca*, 2nd edition (José J. de Olañeta, 2006).

³ Antoni Ginard Bujosa, 'Breve aportación al catálogo español de documentos cartográficos', *Anales de Geografía de la Universidad Complutense*, núm. 7 (1987): pp. 647–53. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/38823504.pdf>



Fig. 2. Detail of Mateo Prunes' chart of 1561 showing a unicorn and a giraffe in East Africa (south at top).



Fig. 3. The Balearic Islands and the cities of Valencia and Barcelona in Miquel Prunes' chart of c. 1640.



Fig. 4. Signature of Jaume Olives' chart of 1564.



Fig. 5. The colourful Red Sea of Jaume Olives' chart of 1571.

Mallorca was one of the most active centres of portolan chart production throughout the Low Middle Ages and Renaissance, rivalling Genoa and Venice. The Prunes were particularly prolific. Dick Pflederer's *Census* of portolan charts and atlases lists 24 extant works made by six different mapmakers who bore this family name in Mallorca.

Two other charts acquired by Bartolomé March were made in Naples in 1564 (fig. 4) and in Barcelona in 1571 (fig. 5) by a Mallorcan, Jaume Olives, who also signed works in Marseilles and in Messina, Sicily.⁴ Another chart, by Joan Oliva, was drawn in the Tuscan port of Livorno in 1620. Oliva also authored two of the atlases in the Palau's library, which he signed in Messina. All this attests to the geographical mobility of Catalan-speaking mapmakers within the Western Mediterranean of the sixteenth century.

The remaining cartographic works in the collection were authored by local mapmakers in Italian ports: Gratiósius Benincasa in Venice; Jacobo Russo in Messina and Giovanni Battista Cavallini in Livorno. This may make the visitor wonder why these three charts are part of a Mallorca-focused collection. The explanation lies in an influential



Fig. 6. Detail of the chart signed by Jacobo Russo in Messina in 1535 depicting the Virgin Mary and the Azores.

work published in 1960 by Julio Rey and Ernesto García that defined the stylistic features of what they called 'the Mallorcan School' of portolan charts and established a list of its members.⁵

The oldest chart in the Palau is one authored by Gratiósius Benincasa in 1468 that depicts the Atlantic façade of Europe from Scotland to the Canary Islands. Giuseppe Caraci provided a thorough description of the chart when it was still owned by Ernesto Bertollo of Genoa.⁶ Its style does not align with what is considered typical of Mallorcan charts.⁷ Its association with the 'Mallorcan school', and therefore its acquisition by Bartolomé March, likely stem from Rey and

García's debatable claim that certain works by Gratiósius Benincasa and his son Andrea display 'evident influences of Mallorcan cartography'.⁸

The chart signed by *Jacobus Russus* in Messina in 1535 (fig. 6) is likewise included in March's collection because Russo's works were said by Rey and García to have 'a marked influence on the Mallorcan School'.⁹ Ginard wondered whether this chart was the 1535 chart that Rey had mentioned as belonging to Count San Martino di Valperga.¹⁰ I can say with confidence that this is not the case because the Count's chart was bought by the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of

⁴ Simonetta Conti, 'La cartografia della famiglia Olives-Oliva durante il XVI secolo', in Varela Marcos, Jesús (ed.), *Descubrimientos y Cartografía IV: Grandes viajes descubridores* (Valladolid, 2001), 109–137.

⁵ Julio Rey Pastor and Ernesto García Camarero, *La cartografía mallorquina* (CSIC, 1960).

⁶ Giuseppe Caraci, 'An Unknown Nautical Chart of Grazioso Benincasa, 1468', *Imago Mundi*, Volume 7, Issue 1 (1950): pp. 18–31.

⁷ Ginard, *La cartografía mallorquina a Mallorca*, p. 73.

⁸ Rey and García, *La cartografía mallorquina*, p. 47.

⁹ Rey and García, p. 93. Ginard agrees (p. 77).

¹⁰ Ginard, *La cartografía mallorquina a Mallorca*, p. 73.

Rome, where it is catalogued as CNMD\0000426366.

Giovanni Battista Cavallini was a Genoese active in Livorno, but he was counted among the members of the ‘Mallorcan school’ because he allegedly co-authored several atlases with Joan Oliva, which led Rey and García to call Cavallini ‘a disciple’ of Oliva.¹¹ In fact, only one such co-signed atlas seems to be extant, dated 1636 and kept at the Newberry Library in Chicago (call number Ayer MS map-29). The other, said by Rey and García to be dated 1630 and at the British Museum, appears neither in the British Library catalogue nor in Pfleiderer’s *Census*. I find nothing in Cavallini’s atlas that would justify calling him ‘Mallorcan’. Ginard argued that the map of the Aegean Sea in Cavallini’s atlas is ‘very similar to that in Joan Oliva’s atlas of 1614’. However, comparing the two maps side by side shows substantial differences in the style of compass roses, in the absence or presence of a decorative frame, in the use of colour and even in the depiction of certain islands such as Rhodes.

Let me now go back to the two atlases by Joan Oliva at Palau March, which I believe are the most remarkable works in the collection. I was not able to consult them at the library, but I

have made use of the high-quality reproductions included in Ginard’s book.

The atlas signed in Messina in 1582 consists of four nautical-style charts and an oval world map. The part that caught my attention is the cover page, which includes, besides religious scenes, a large shield that has unfortunately faded or been scraped and two annotations that point to former owners of the atlas: *Ex Libris Familie Vinciorum* and, near the bottom of the page, *Equiti Francisco Paccarono donatum* [given to the Knight Francisco Paccarono].¹² The Vinci and the Paccaroni (also written Paccarone and Paccarone) were two powerful families of the city of Fermo, in the Papal Marche. Their genealogies remain to be researched, but a cursory search reveals a Francesco Paccaroni who lived in Fermo in 1574,¹³ a ‘Franciscus de Paccaronis’ who dedicated a funerary inscription to a brother who had died in 1643 fighting against the Turks as a Knight of Santo Stephano; a Count Francisco Maria Paccarone who must have died in 1651, and an Antonio Francisco Paccarone, Knight of Malta, who died at age 20 and his father dedicated him a funerary inscription in 1583.¹⁴ Sorting out the relationships among the cited men is beyond

the scope of these notes, but these references help explain the presence of a Francisco Paccarone in Messina in 1582 and/or his interest in an atlas that depicts the theatre of naval operations against the Ottoman Empire.

Oliva’s atlas of 1614 stands out for its large number of maps: fifteen, which means it contains almost as many maps as all the other charts and atlases of the March collection combined. It is also the only one at the Palau with nautical-style maps of the Americas, Africa and Asia, i.e. beyond the traditional scope of Mediterranean portolan charts.

One remarkable feature of this atlas is that it includes two different versions of the Mediterranean Sea. First, on sheet XIII, it shows the traditional portolan-chart shape of the Mediterranean axis with its counter-clockwise tilt, which leaves the Nile Delta roughly east-west with the Strait of Gibraltar. Then, on the following sheet, the axis appears corrected so that the Nile Delta lies further south, close to its real latitude (even though no latitude scale is provided).¹⁵ It looks as if the mapmaker wanted to show he was aware that the axis of the Mediterranean had been corrected over the previous

¹¹ Rey and García, *La cartografia mallorquina*, p. 164.

¹² Already transcribed by Ginard as well as by Simonetta Conti, ‘La cartografia della famiglia Olives-Oliva durante il XVI secolo’, in *Grandes viajes descubridores*, ed. Varela Marcos, Jesús, Descubrimientos y Cartografía, IV (Instituto Interuniversitario de Estudios de Iberoamérica y Portugal, 2001), p. 127.

¹³ Massimo Spagnoli, ‘Ancora su fonte Fallera’, n.d. https://www.italianostra.org/wp-content/uploads/A10_2-Ancora-su-fonte-fallera.pdf

¹⁴ Raffaele De Minicis, *Le iscrizioni fermane antiche e moderne con note* (Fermo: Gaetano Paccasassi, 1857), notices 192, 256 and 427 respectively.

¹⁵ The double depiction of the Mediterranean in this atlas was described by Corradino Astengo, ‘The Renaissance Chart Tradition in the Mediterranean’, in *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward, The History of Cartography 3 (University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 197.

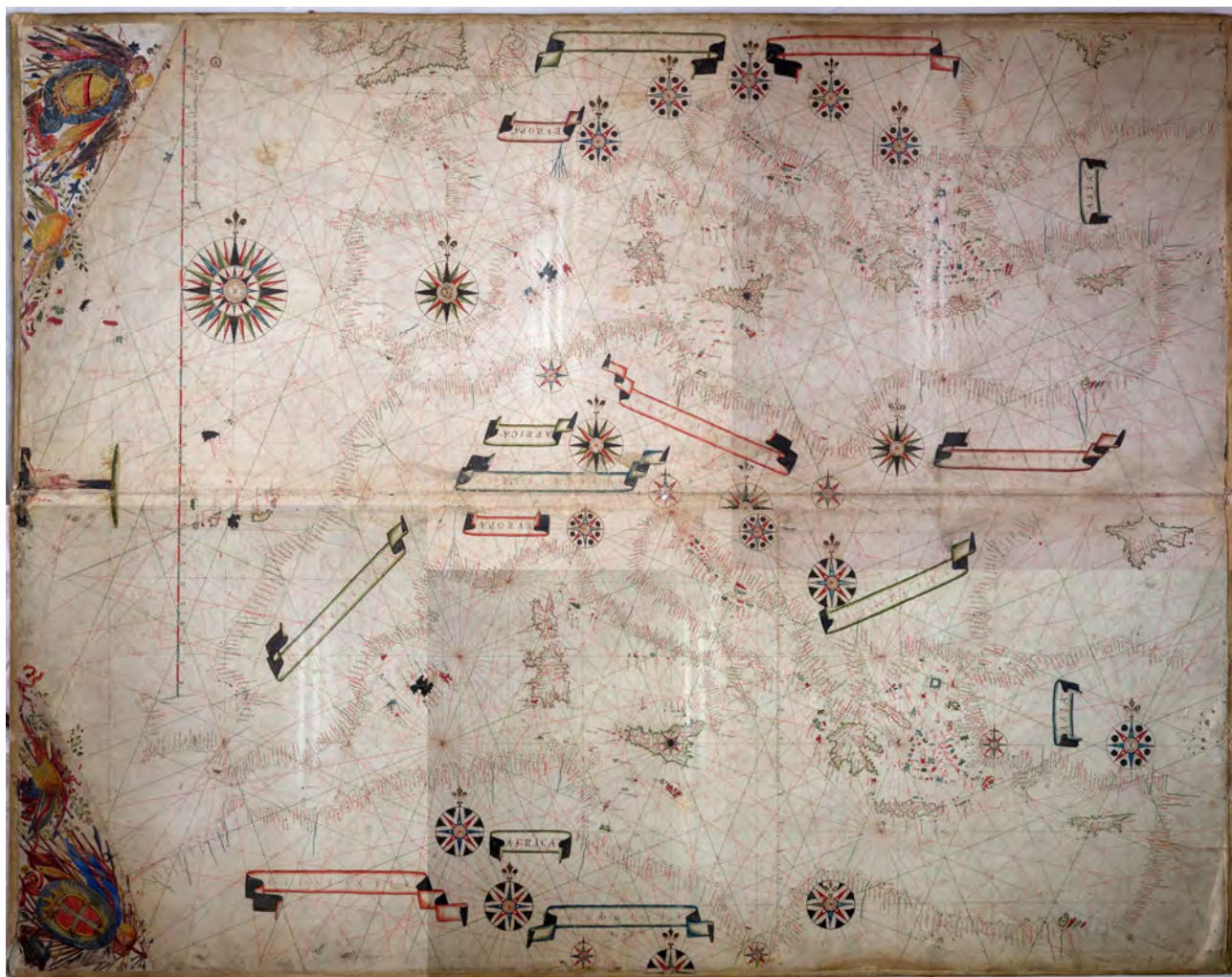


Fig. 7. Chart signed by Joan Oliva in 1618 in Livorno. Public-domain image courtesy of MEDEA-Chart.

decades as mapmakers took into account magnetic declination and measured latitudes, but he still provided the traditional version given that his customers might be more familiar with it. Oliva adopted this same ‘choose your Mediterranean axis’ approach in two other atlases he signed in 1616 and in 1622;¹⁶ and even more clearly in the map from 1618 now in Rimini.¹⁷ In the latter, the two models of the Mediterranean are drawn one at the top and the other at the bottom of the same

parchment (fig. 7). The only other mapmaker who visually counterposed the traditional and ‘new’ models of the Mediterranean in this manner was Placido Caloiro e Oliva in his 1617 chart.¹⁸

A visit to Palau March is a rare opportunity to inspect manuscript charts at leisure, enjoying every colourful detail at real size. For me, it sparked an interest in the men who maintained the portolan chart

tradition around the Mediterranean, moving from port to port, serving mysterious customers and occasionally experimenting with innovative representations.

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¹⁶ Kept respectively in Florence, Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza, Antico G.f. 25 and in Piacenza, Biblioteca Comunale Passerini Landi, Ms. Com. 6, Atlas 5.

¹⁷ Civica Biblioteca Gambalunga, Sala Manoscritti, Chart 1.

¹⁸ Sold by Christie's in October 2020. Described by Simonetta Conti, ‘Le carte nautiche “doppie” della famiglia Olives-Oliva’, in *Momenti e problemi della geografia contemporanea – Atti del convegno internazionale in onore di Giuseppe Caraci. Roma, 24-25-26 Novembre 1993* (Centro italiano per gli studi storico-geografici, 1995).

The 2025 Map Afternoon

Saturday, 29 March 2025

Map Room – Royal Library of Belgium

— By HANNAH VAN WYMEERSCH

Just one day shy of summertime, it was time for the Annual General Meeting of the Brussels Map Circle on 29 March 2025. A diverse public gathered for the Map Afternoon to admire some unusual and fascinating maps. As always, the Map Room formed an agreeable backdrop to a surprising Afternoon expertly directed by Henri Godts.

Kicking off, **Jan de Borchgrave** presented a fascinating early view of Toledo after Braun and Hogenberg, printed on reused vellum (fig. 1). It seemed like the saying ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ was already on the mind of the printer when he gave the vellum sheet from a Spanish antiphonary a new destination. Jumping many centuries in time, Jan also showed us a German map of the Western Front during the First World War: *Flemmings Große der Westfront – Nordhälfte* [Flemming’s Large Map of the Western Front – Northern Half]. It is a true historical tool indicating various offensives and changing frontlines, offering a visual overview of the Great War (fig. 2).

His namesake **Jan De Graeve** followed with a summary of his reconstruction of Gerardus Mercator’s library. He has already collected an impressive percentage: no less than 155 of the 172 titles from the renowned



Fig. 1. Top. View of Toledo presented by Jan de Borchgrave. Bottom. Fragment of musical score on the verso of the parchment.



Fig. 2. Jan de Borchgrave with his German map of World War I frontlines.



Fig. 3. Carl Dierickx showing his very rare Arctic map.



Fig. 5. Pouring over the cadastral map of Loenhout brought by Jan Delauré.

cartographer's library. Soon it will be exhibited in the renewed Mercatormuseum in Sint-Niklaas, Belgium.

Rounding up the sixteenth century, **Carl Dierickx** (fig. 3) brought the very rare Arctic map by Willem Barents (1550–1597), depicting for the first time Spitsbergen as 'Het Nieuwe land' [The New Land]. It was engraved by Baptista van Deutecum for the Latin edition of Linschoten's *Itinerario* (= *Deliniatio cartae trium navigationum per Batavos* [...] in *Navigatio ac itinerarium Johannis Hugonis Linscotani in Orientalem sive Lusitanorum Indiam* [...]).

Making my debut at a Map Afternoon, I (**Hannah Van Wymeersch**) presented a part of a manuscript cadastral plan on vellum from 1617. It probably depicts a part of Leuven, in

Brabant, as it mentions the border of the jurisdiction of a prelate: 'Tot hier compt de jurisdictie van den prelate van Perck' [The jurisdiction of the prelate of Perck reaches to here]. Van Perck was more than likely the prelate of the Premonstratensian Park Abbey (fig. 4). I also brought along a collection of six British escape and evasion maps, printed on silk, from the MI9's mapping programme in the Second World War. They were intended to aid British soldiers and 'downed' airmen, specifically pilots, so they could find their way back to safety if they got caught behind enemy lines.

As third and last Jan of the Afternoon, **Jan Delauré** showed us a unique manuscript cadastral plan of Loenhout, Wuustwezel (fig. 5). Consisting of no less than six parchment sheets, this very



Fig. 4. H. Van Wymeersch presenting the 1617 cadastral map of Leuven.

large plan was made for Jean Joseph Walckiers de Gamarage (1740–1799), owner of the castle of Loenhout and local large landowner. Jan has donated this special testimony of local history to the Royal Library.

Then we travelled to another continent when **Alex Smit** presented the map *Aegyptus Antiqua*. Engraved after Abraham Ortelius, Johannes Janssonius (1588–1664) published this rather rare map for the first time in 1652 in his historical atlas *Accuratissima orbis antiqui delineatio*, with an introductory text by Georgius Hornius. This historical map made us travel in time!

Rick Smit brought the second immense map of the Afternoon with the very large *Neueste General- Post- und Strassen Karte der oesterreichischen Monarchie*



Fig. 6. Cartouche of the *Neueste General- Post- und Strassen Karte der oesterreichischen Monarchie* (1839).

[Most recent post and road map of the Austrian monarchy] by the cartographers Max de Traux and Franz Fried. It was the first state of the map, published in 1839 in Vienna by Artaria (fig. 6). Originally known as one of the most important music publishing firms in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Artaria later also focused on publishing maps.

The Map Afternoon was closed by **Hans Kok**, who showed us six maps spanning five centuries. We started our time travel in the sixteenth century with a first state of the map of the Seventeen Provinces by Lodovico Guicciardini, dated 1567. Skipping the seventeenth century, we directly jumped to 1706 for a rare German town atlas of the Southern Netherlands by Gabriel Bodenehr (1673–1765), published by the Stridbeck family in

Augsburg. The last manuscript map of this Afternoon was a French chart of the Cape of Good Hope (fig. 7). It probably dates from around 1785 and includes the firing range of the onshore artillery battery at Cape Town and the distance their cannon could cover. Luckily, we now know where to take cover if we were to travel in time! A Japanese pocket size map brought us to the late

nineteenth century. It covers Japan, Korea and China and foreshadows the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. An atlas showing Japan, Korea and China in one binding is rather unusual. The 1940 Spanish propaganda map *La victoria de Franco* by López Rubio and Ortega Pichardo reminded us all of the fascinating Map Circle Conference in December 2024, where Carme Montaner discussed this map. Almost catching up to the present day, the pictorial map *Europe as seen by Sabena* was a promotional tool, with ticket prices for a number of destinations surrounding the map, as ticket prices changed only twice a year. This however has changed significantly, as nowadays prices change constantly!

Many thanks to all the presenters and to Henri for a fascinating Map Afternoon. We are already looking forward to next year's pick of maps!



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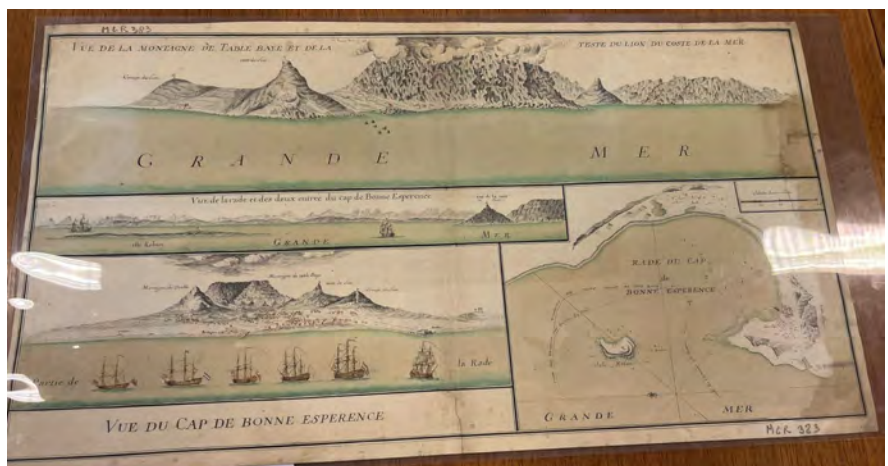


Fig. 7. French manuscript chart and view of the Cape of Good Hope.

All roads lead to Vodgoriacum, again

— By DIRK STANDAERT

Reading about ongoing map exhibitions in the latest *WhatsMap?* newsletter, Dirk Standaert and Jan De Graeve set out to follow ‘tous les chemins mènent au VODGORIACUM’ to visit the small but fine exhibition near Binche in Waudrez.¹ The site is situated on a former Roman *vicus*. An archeologist and a land surveyor prepared this exhibition.

We first visited the permanent archaeological part, where the reconstitution of a groma is on show in front of the 6,80-metre long version of the Peutinger map, as published by Abraham Ortelius in 1598 from the thirteenth-century original

(fig. 2). This is the largest copy we have ever seen, and all names are very readable.

In the second part of the ground floor (fig. 3), Cécile Anseau and Bernard Waterlot joined forces to exhibit these fifteen remarkable maps of our region, all of which mention Vodgoriacum. *Gallia Belgica, La ligne de Brunehaut* ‘qui traverse nos campagnes’ [which crosses our countryside] and the other maps we invite you to visit in situ. The maps are all in prime quality and well illuminated and equipped with a spyglass to help you read the small print more easily.

The exhibition catalogue is handy, with good colour illustrations of all the maps in double quarto, and at a reasonable price of EUR 25.00.²



Fig. 1. Dirk (left) and Jan (right) at the exhibition.

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Fig. 2. Ortelius' version of the Peutinger map.

¹ The authors had not yet received *Maps in History*, No 82, which contains a description of the exhibition written by Jean-Louis Renteux, p. 41.

² The catalogue was reviewed by Christiane De Craecker-Dussart in *Maps in History*, No 82, pp. 36–39.



Fig. 3. The map exhibition.

WERELT CAERT

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The Brussels Map Circle

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*) twice a year and a monthly electronic news bulletin *WhatsMap?* It also maintains a website.

Information on events and exhibitions to be placed on the calendar of our website and announced in *WhatsMap?* should be sent to webmaster@bimcc.org

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Members receive three issues of our magazine 'Maps in History' per annum and have free admission to most of the Circle's events.

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MAPS IN HISTORY

The Brussels Map Circle currently publishes two 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 16 different countries. Please submit articles and contributions to the editor by the following deadlines:

- 15 January for the March edition.
- 15 July for the September 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.



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