

TITLE: *Rudimentum Novitiorum*

DATE: 1475

AUTHOR: Lucas Brandis de Schass

DESCRIPTION: It should be emphasized that most of all of the previous maps discussed in these first three volumes have been one-of-a-kind, manuscript maps. Maybe there might have been multiple copies made of individual maps and the reproductions/facsimiles were printed, but the overall number was small and the distribution obviously very limited. Beginning with the invention in Europe of the printing process and the publication of the first printed map in 1472, the traditional T-O map in the *Etymologiae* of St. Isidore (#205), the distribution, and survival, of maps increased significantly. However, in the 15th century, and even occasionally in the 16th, woodcut and printing presses continued to produce copies of the hand-drawn cartographic works of an earlier age. The first printed editions of the manuscripts writings of the Church Fathers, Roman historians, and medieval cosmographers were often illustrated by T-O maps, climate-zone maps and the like. So too were the works of contemporary scholars such as Pierre d'Ailly, who used a typical climate map in his *Ymago mundi*, which was written about 1410 and printed in Louvain in 1483 (#238).

The conservatism of the Higden maps (#232) can be explained by their 14th century model, but in the late 15th century a world map appeared in print which was extremely peculiar and whose antecedents we do not know. Printed in Lübeck in 1475, the map was an illustration for a universal history in Latin entitled *Rudimentum Novitiorum sive chronicarum historiarum epitome* [A Handbook for Beginners]. According to its publisher, Lucas Brandis, it was designed so that “poor men unable to afford a library can have a brief manual always on hand in place of many books.” The paupers of whom Brandis spoke may have meant poor preachers or friars minor but also may have referred to a growing number of book owners among the merchant class in a thriving commercial city such as Lübeck. Like Higden, the anonymous author of *Rudimentum* included several lengthy geographical digressions, one on the world and one on the holy land. The *Rudimentum* is a fascinating



world history and encyclopedia structured on medieval Christian theology. He condensed the Bible and the history of the popes and rulers of Europe and added the best contemporary geographical description of the Holy Land, Burchard's *Prologus*. The publication was one of the earliest illustrated books to appear in Lübeck and one that was also widely known in its French translation, *La Mer des Hystoires*, the first edition of which was printed in Paris in 1488-89. In the *postscriptum* or long

colophon it is stated, that the book “*with the aid of the art of printing newly invented by the special grace of God to the redemption of the faithful*”, was published to serve as a manual to students, and to dispense the poorer of them with the necessity for buying other books.

Among the numerous fine woodcut illustrations and genealogical tables are two double-page maps: one of Palestine and one of the world. These two maps illustrating this book are the first printed European maps that are not mere diagrams but actually attempt to try and show land-forms and countries in topographical relation to each other. The circular world map, measuring 38 cm in diameter, is essentially derived from a Christian medieval tradition known as the *Sallust* type, without any reference to either Ptolemaic or *portolan* [nautical] sources. It gains vivacity by scattering its place names over a myriad of little hills. There are water features around and between the hills; however, apart from one gulf, the *Sea of Amazons*, and the ocean at the *Pillars of Hercules*, this world map shows no seas.

The world map is oriented to the East with Asia on top and the other two continents below, T-O style, though the three water divisions (Don, Nile, Mediterranean) are not shown (#205). The province of Palestine is more or less in the center, where Jerusalem, unnamed, is represented by a formidable castle. In the west, three columns stand for the *Pillars of Hercules* at the entrance of the Mediterranean. The map's most striking feature is its conformation of the land as a succession of “hillocks”, each surmounted by a castle or tower and bearing the name of a province or territory. It is really a “list-map” with a decorative base. Rivers flow plentifully among these hillocks but are unlabelled and unidentifiable. There is no encircling ocean, and the only labeled sea is “*Mare Amasorieo*” in the north, possibly intended for the Caspian Sea. Geographical locations are somewhat confused. Of many examples, *Nicomedia* (from Asia Minor) is shown next to the Pope near Rome and again in Africa, perhaps an error for *Numidi*. India is north of Persia, which is next to *Taprobana*. There are a number of misspellings, leaving some inscriptions incomprehensible. Printing was, of course, in its infancy and woodblock printing was still rather crude. The challenged typesetter, working backwards, probably had some problems with the difficult geographical names.

At the top of the map are two figures in an enclosed garden. They are not, however Adam and Eve, but two men, each holding what may be an olive branch in his hand, apparently having a conversation. Various identifications have been suggested. The scholar Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken thinks they might be a Jew and a Christian having a harmonious discussion, thus symbolizing the unity of the Old and New Testaments. Another idea is that they represent Enoch and Elijah, Old Testament characters who went directly to heaven without suffering death. *Paradise* is not labeled, but near one of the streams is the word *Evilath* [Havilah], one of the regions watered by the four rivers mentioned in the book of *Genesis*. Or these may be the Master and his Novice, source of rivers and all knowledge; alternatively according to Winter they may represent ‘. . . two men of marvelous wisdom, Jew and Christian . . . united in love of God in one law and one road to wisdom’, as propounded by the medievalist Lull. In an article by Carmelo Ottaviano there is a reproduction of a theological treatise “*De Adventu Messie*” taken from a manuscript which is attributed to Lull. The prologue of the treatise shows that the idea on which the drawing in *Rudimentum Novitiorum* is based is not original. The prologue runs (*inter alia*) as follows, after a brief invocation of God (the bombastic Middle-Latin text is simplified and abridged):

“Two men of marvelous wisdom, a Jew and a Christian, lived in a great city and esteemed each other in glowing love. They undertook to unite themselves in the pleasures

of (worldly) goods and the love of God in one law and in one road to wisdom. (Having made this decision)... they went from the city to a grove, highly graced with trees, leaves, flowers, fruits, springs, grass and rivers. In this grove for a long time they disputed in friendly conversation the advent of the Messias”.

This description corresponds completely with the picture on the map and the olive branches also are now clear. One may however ask whether the idea or only its expression originates with Lull. The first alternative is predominantly a question for religious history. If, however, the second is true, it would be interesting to know why the words of the Majorcan scholar (born 1235) found an echo precisely in Lübeck.

This leads to another question: who was the author of *Rudimentum Novitiorum*? This question is interesting also for the cartographer, considering that it is the first reliably dated printed map. Schwarz arrives only at the conclusion that the author had been a cleric, and infers from the word *noster* at a specific place that the author was of Lubeck or its vicinity. We must however note that this would be true only for the version printed in Lubeck but not of possible of the earlier manuscripts.

At the western end of the earth (bottom of the map) lie the *Pillars of Hercules* (Strait of Gibraltar), entrance to the western ocean. The southernmost point (i.e., 3 o'clock position) is *Ophir*, the Biblical place from where Solomon's ships brought gold and other riches. Just east of *Ophir* is the *Phoenix*, a bird believed to live in Arabia which regenerated itself after its five-hundred year lifespan by setting itself aflame on a pyre.

In the northeast (about 10 o'clock position) is a man who has just lost one arm to the devil. Travelers' stories warning of devils circulated in several variations in medieval lore. Most popular were the writings, circa 1360, of Sir John Mandeville (as he was known; he was doubtfully a knight, did not travel beyond Western Europe, and may not have been English). Mandeville described a "valley perilous" in *Mistorak* (Armenia?) where the traveler, encountering tempests, thunder, and the sound of drums, entered a realm of devils. The story appears to have been plagiarized from Friar Odoric's account of his journey to China earlier in the 14th century, in which similar impressions were described in less sensational terms. Odoric's account was probably an honest but uncomprehending portrayal of natural phenomena: modern travelers have noted the huge (and devil-like) imposing rock figures in the highlands of Central Asia, and the apparent sound of drums which the acoustic nature of its topography seems to create. Some scholars insist that "Sir John Mandeville" was a pseudonym for either Jean de Bourgogne or Jean d'Outremeuse, both of Liege. Others argue that the name was genuine, that a novelist named John Mandeville was born in St. Albans in the late 13th century and passed much of his life on the Continent, and that his book was only intended as a travel romance rather than as a factual account. The book, perhaps completed by 1356, was in any event commonly construed as a legitimate travel log.

Directly to the west (below) lies a "sea of the amazons" [*mare amasoneorum*], an embodiment of an old tradition of a land in which only women dwell. Columbus would soon transplant the myth to the New World, and it would be recorded on such maps as that of Ruysch (#313).

The influence of the Crusades is found in the placement of the Holy Land at the center of the map, a common feature of post-Crusades *mappaemundi*, and in the figure of a king, holding a book, to the northeast of *Ophir*. This man is Prester John, whose mythical Christian stronghold was a brilliant hoax that became the focus of a search which helped motivate Renaissance exploration.

In the extreme northwest (at about the 7 o'clock position) lies the country of *viland* (or *vinland* on the 1475 block). Rather than a record of pre-Columbian Norse settlement in North America, however, this *viland* more likely represents "Finland." Although extant textual references to *Vinland* date back to the 11th century, its appearance on maps is otherwise unknown until the late 16th century. Finland does not otherwise appear on printed maps until the Ziegler map of Scandinavia (1532), but it is found on manuscript maps antedating the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* and *Mer des Hystoires* by more than three centuries. The world map of the Arabic geographer al-Idrisi (middle of the 12th century, #219) shows Finland near Russia and describes it as a most cold region having snowfalls of long duration -- clearly Finland rather than our American *Vinland*. The *Hereford mappamundi* of circa 1290 (#226), to whose non-Ptolemaic geographic tradition the present map belongs, shows a group of three Baltic countries lying north of a bear representing Russia, of which the middle one is Finland, spelled the same as in the present map (*viland*). This *Viland* is almost certainly the child of these medieval Baltic traditions, not of pre-Columbian American landfalls.

Other pictures on the map include two dragons in *Libya*, crowned kings and a queen in various kingdoms, the Pope in Rome, a figure in the holy land which is perhaps Saint Jerome (a major source for the book), and a phoenix in flames in Africa. A man-eating devil in northern Asia is already in the process of devouring a victim's severed arm.

The textual description of the world in the *Rudimentum* is based on Isidore. *Judea* and *Palestine* can be seen in the center of the map, which is oriented with East at the top, and *Anglia* [England] can be discerned to the left of the *Pillars of Hercules* at the bottom (West). The rough outline of Europe and the Mediterranean lands can be made out with the names of individual countries marked on the cluster of hills. The Pope is prominent in the walled city of Rome. The Asian and African countries are all represented by hills surrounded by water. Numerous towns, throned-kings and mythical animals are depicted, and extend to *Taprobana* [beyond Persia and India, Ceylon/Sri Lanka?], *Ethiopia* (beyond Egypt) and to *Tartary* and the *Sea of Amazons* to the north.

This world map is often described as "the first modern printed map", in that it bears no relation to Ptolemy and it is not of medieval schematic type. Other medieval-type world maps similar to those in the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* may well have been printed less formally as unsophisticated broadsides. Occasional fragments of such maps (e.g., forming part of simple calendars) have been reported, and further examples may come to light.

Of more convincing pictorial quality is the map of Palestine, which, measuring 58 x 40 cm, presents a bird's eye view over the hills and seas of the Holy Land. This map is believed to be based upon an important lost delineation of Burchard of Mt. Sion, the 13th century Dominican from Magdeburg whose account and map of his pilgrimage (*Prologus*) were widely known throughout late medieval and early renaissance Europe. Burchard's narrative account appears in its entirety in the same third section as the map of Palestine in *Rudimentum Novitiorum*. The map shows *Jerusalem*, the most prominent city, presented in its center and the *Sea of Galilee* and the *Dead Sea* at the top, that is, the East; the Red Sea is on the right. *Acre* is the second most prominent city depicted, from which all distances are calculated. The entire Holy Land appears as a network of linked mountains from *Mt. Lebanon* to *Mt. Sinai*. Like the world map, names are inserted in moveable type with the name of each geographical feature inserted atop a stylized hill. Around the outer edge Brandis included eight wind boys, or personifications of the winds, to indicate the compass directions by which he had organized his account. There are ships in the Mediterranean, and the spires of Sodom and Gomorrah are visible breaking the surface of the Dead Sea. At

Mt. Sinai are the burning bush and Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law, and, on *Calvary*, the Crucifixion. This map of Palestine is considered *the earliest printed regional map*.

The *Rudimentum* had only one printing in Germany, and by 1500 its printer was broke. It must have sold fairly well, however, as numerous copies survive today in libraries. We do not know if there was a manuscript version that formed its base, as none has ever been found, but there are a great number of universal histories of this type, which were very popular in the late Middle Ages. Von den Brincken notes that the twenty years before the book's publication are barely covered in the history and opines that the printer updated an older work. The book was, however, translated into French, maps and all, under the title *Mer des Hystoires* in 1488. This work had greater success, as it came out in three more editions: Lyons, 1491; Paris, 1500; and Paris, 1536. The French editor added material on French history and some new illustrations, including a woodcut of the baptism of Clovis. On the re-cut map a few new images appear—ships, birds, and trees—but the basic format was unchanged.



Over 100 places-names and geographic features are identified, with towns and countries named. Each country is represented as a separate hill accompanied by either a figure of the sovereign or several small buildings representing towns. Many of the hills are surrounded by water, and there are numerous trees, buildings, historical and religious figures scattered throughout. "It is unlikely that the map-maker intended his readers to treat too literally the relationship of distance and direction between one country and another," according to Tony Campbell, "Crete and Cyprus, for example, are shown to the northeast of France and Rome is to the south of it." Nevertheless, this remarkable map provides us with one of the earliest, and certainly the most complete, depictions of Europe's medieval conception of the world. Wesley A. Brown has studied and published a detailed monograph on the map. He cites a number of possible sources for the geography. As with all Christian-based models, much information was taken directly from the Bible, but additional place names derive from sources such as Herodotus, Pliny, Solinus, Bartholomaeus, Chrysostomes, Isidore and the 14th century manuscript *Book of Sir John Mandeville*.

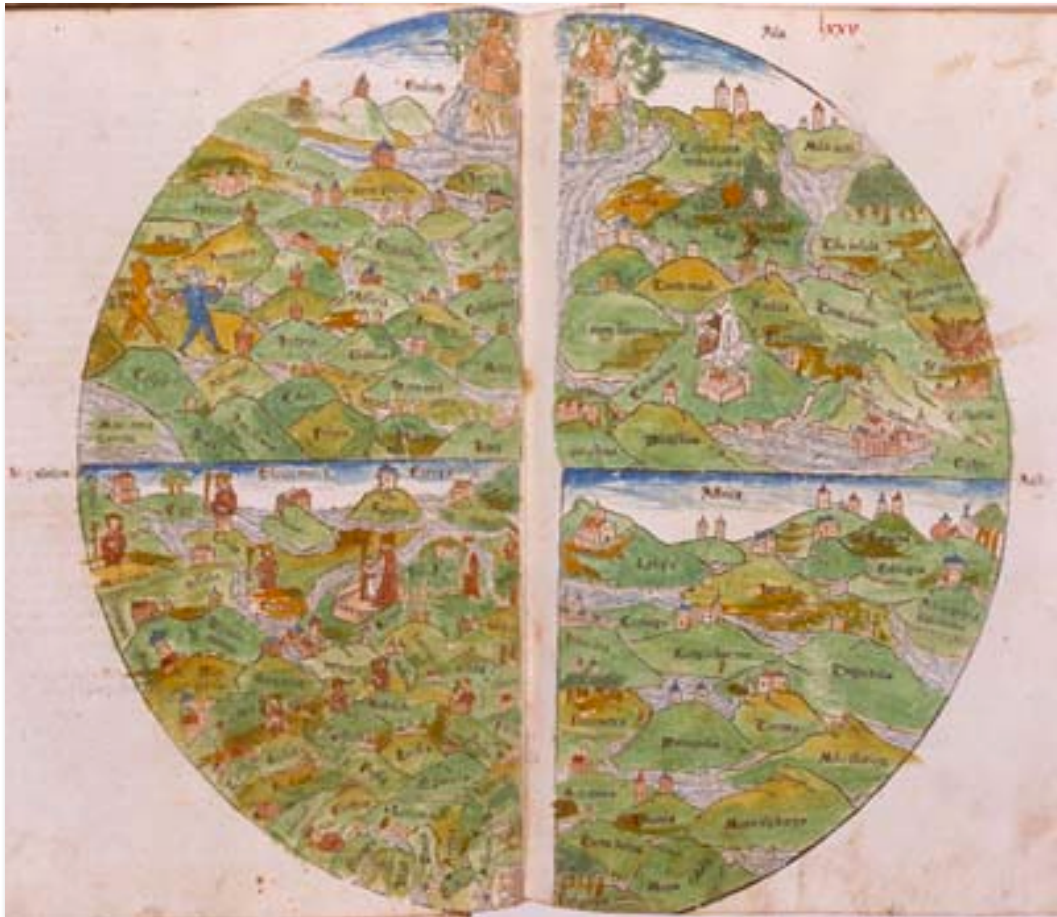
Arguably the greatest technical advance in human history was the invention of printing, and it is ironic that the first use of this invention in the service of cartography marked "the end of an era rather than the beginning of a new one" – Tony Campbell. The *Rudimentum* map is clearly medieval in character and after its printing, no new maps of the medieval or *mappaemundi* tradition were published. "This map represents the conclusion of a millennium of geographical thought based on the biblical dictates of Isidore. Interestingly, this representation of the end of an era of geographic thought was published the same year as the first printing of Ptolemy's *Geographia* [without maps], which ushered in a new era of geographic thought based on the order and reason of Ptolemy" – W.A. Brown.

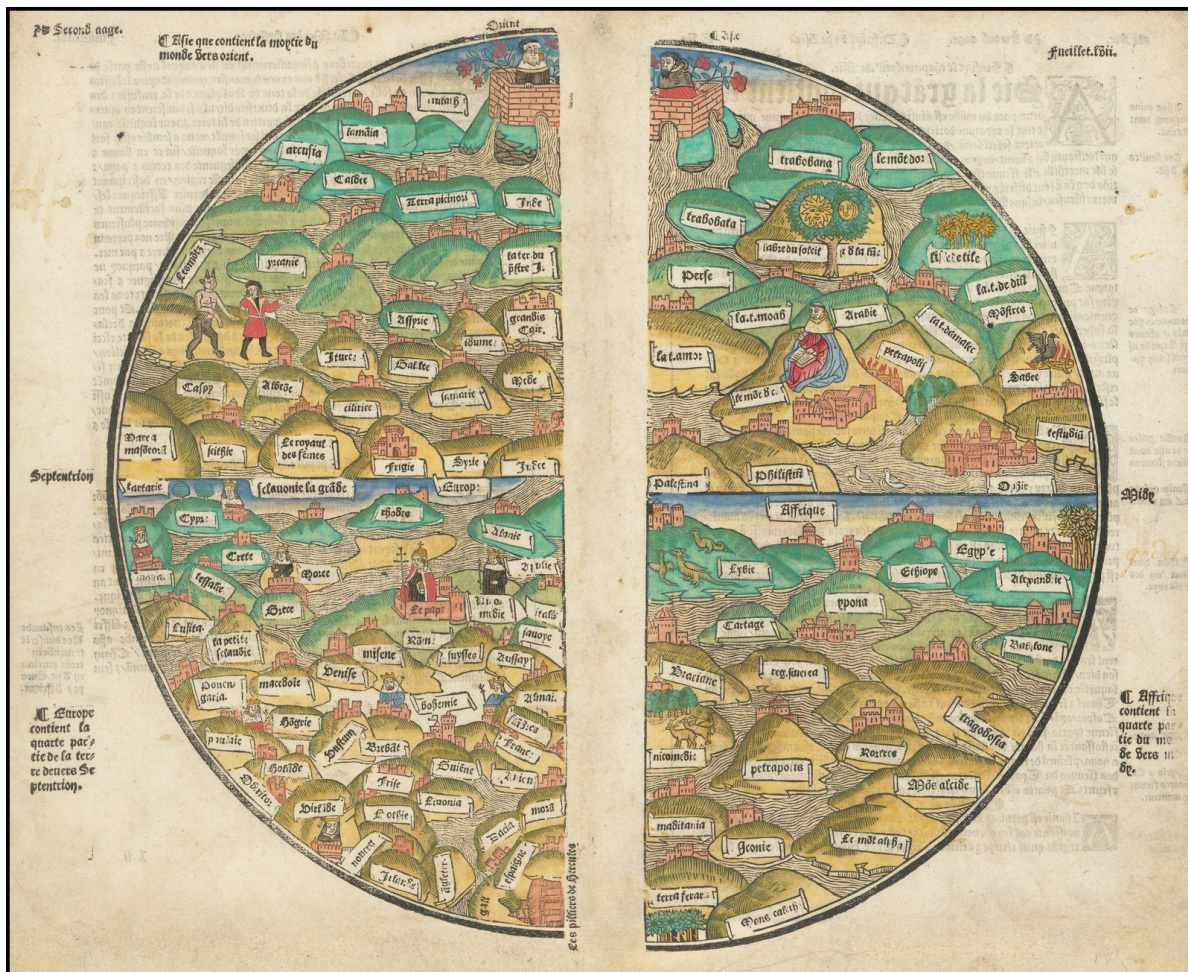
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British Library, London, Rare Books C.3.d.7, ff74v/75r

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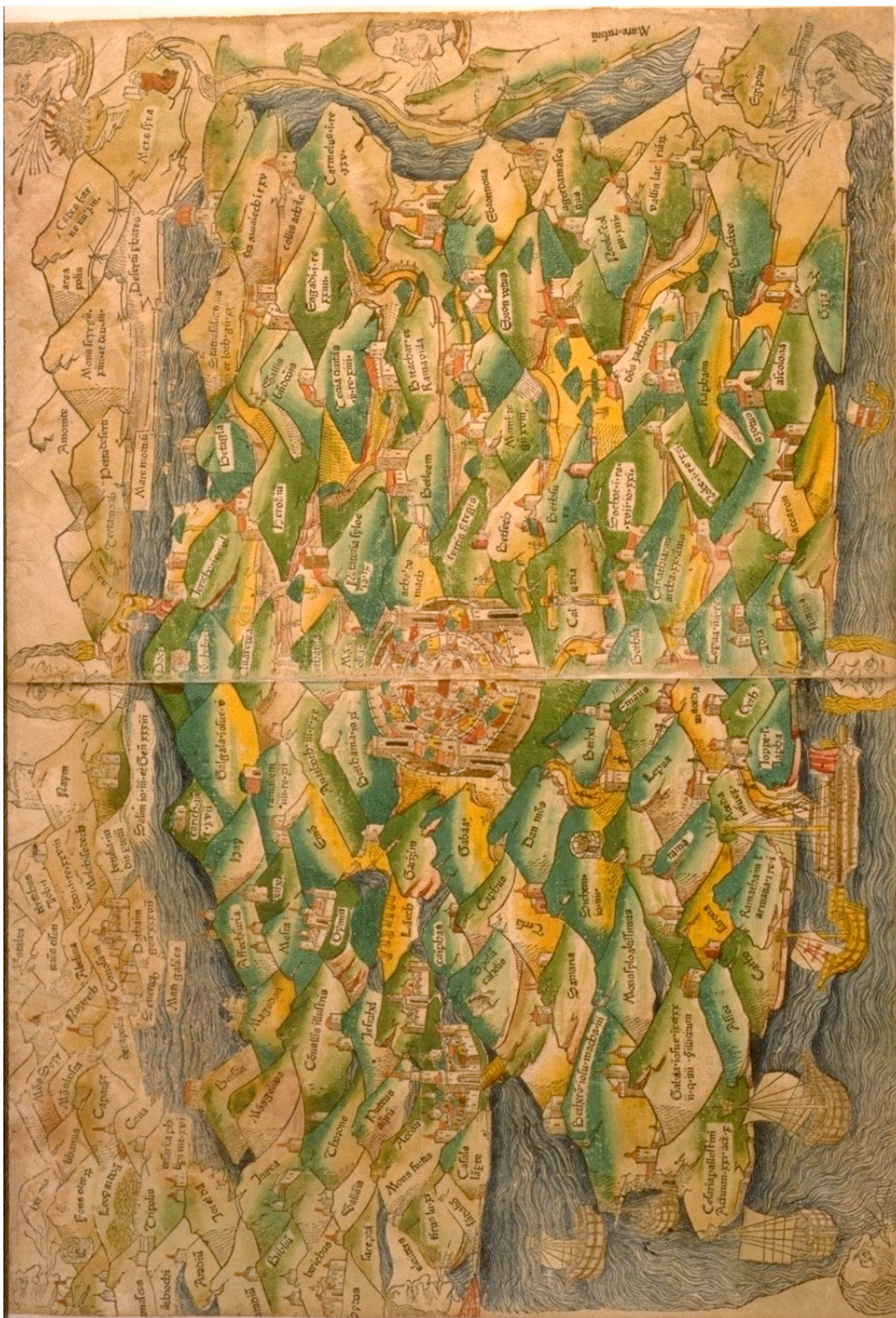
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- *Brown, L.A., *The World Encompassed*, #42, Plate XV.
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- *Shirley, R., *The Mapping of the World*, plate 3, pp. xxi, 1-2.
- *Suarez, Thomas, *Shedding the Veil*, pp. 10-13.
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*illustrated





Medieval world map from *Le mer des hystoires*, the monumental encyclopedia of world history first published in 1475. This example, from the 1491 Lyon blocks, is one of the first printed world maps. The map is arrayed in a disc with east oriented at the top. While it does carry some similarities to T-O style maps, it does not have an encompassing world ocean. Jerusalem, shown by a formidable castle, is near the center. The Pope is nearby, in Rome, while other figures – rulers, a scholar, and, curiously, a faun – are tucked amongst the rolling hills. There are also dragons, deer, and a raven. Each of these hills are labeled with a settlement or polity, including India, Persia, and Libya. The Pillars of Hercules guard the entrance to the Atlantic Ocean, at the bottom of the map. At the top, in the east, is a high-walled castle. Rivers spill from it, filling the rest of the world. Inside are two figures. While one might expect them to be Adam and Eve, closer inspection shows them to be two men, a scholar and a monk. Their precise identification and relationship is a matter of scholarly debate, but they are thought to be the representations of the Master and his Novice, as the book is an instructional compendium for students.



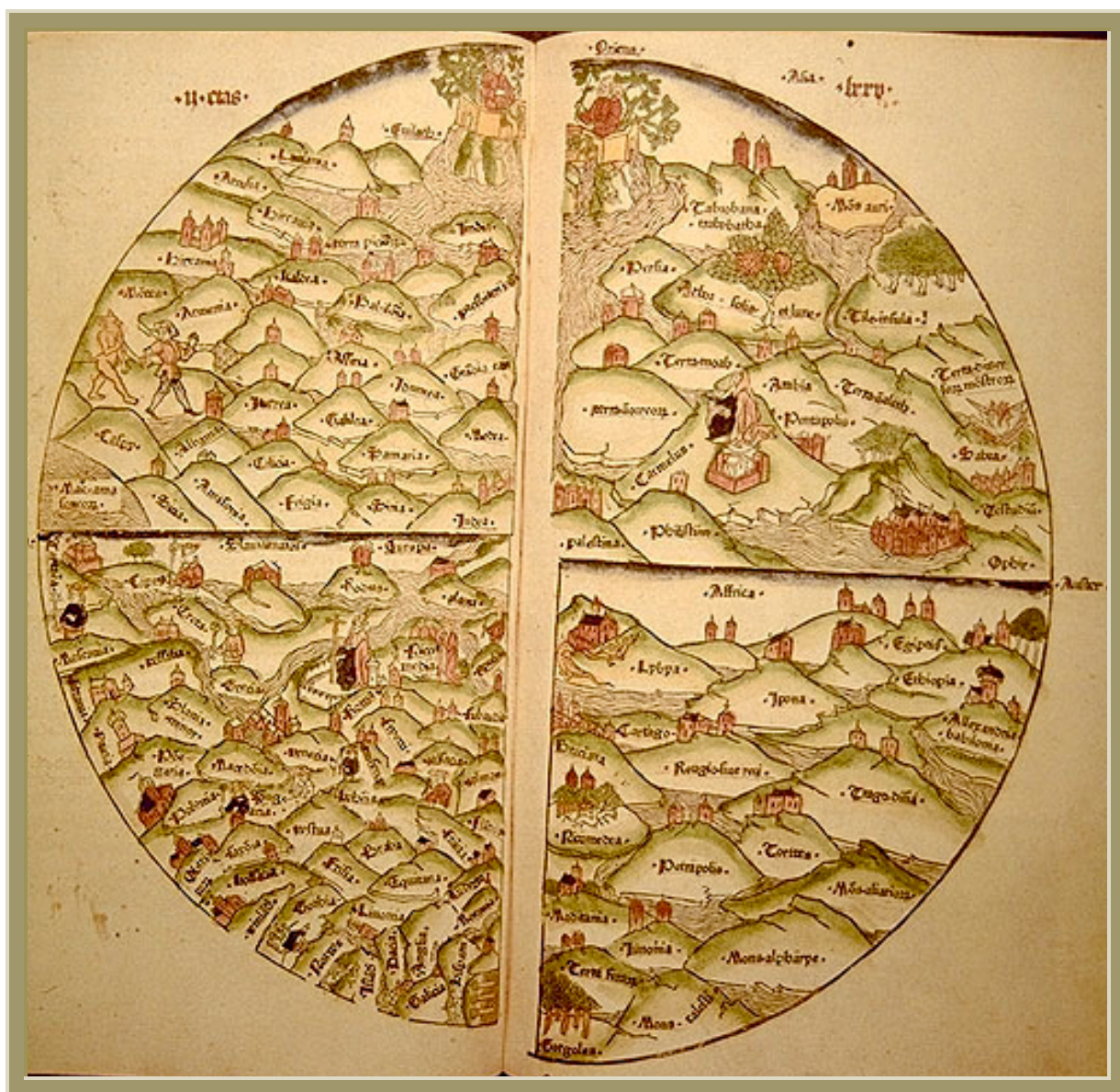
Rudimentum Novitiorum sive chronicarum historiarum epitome



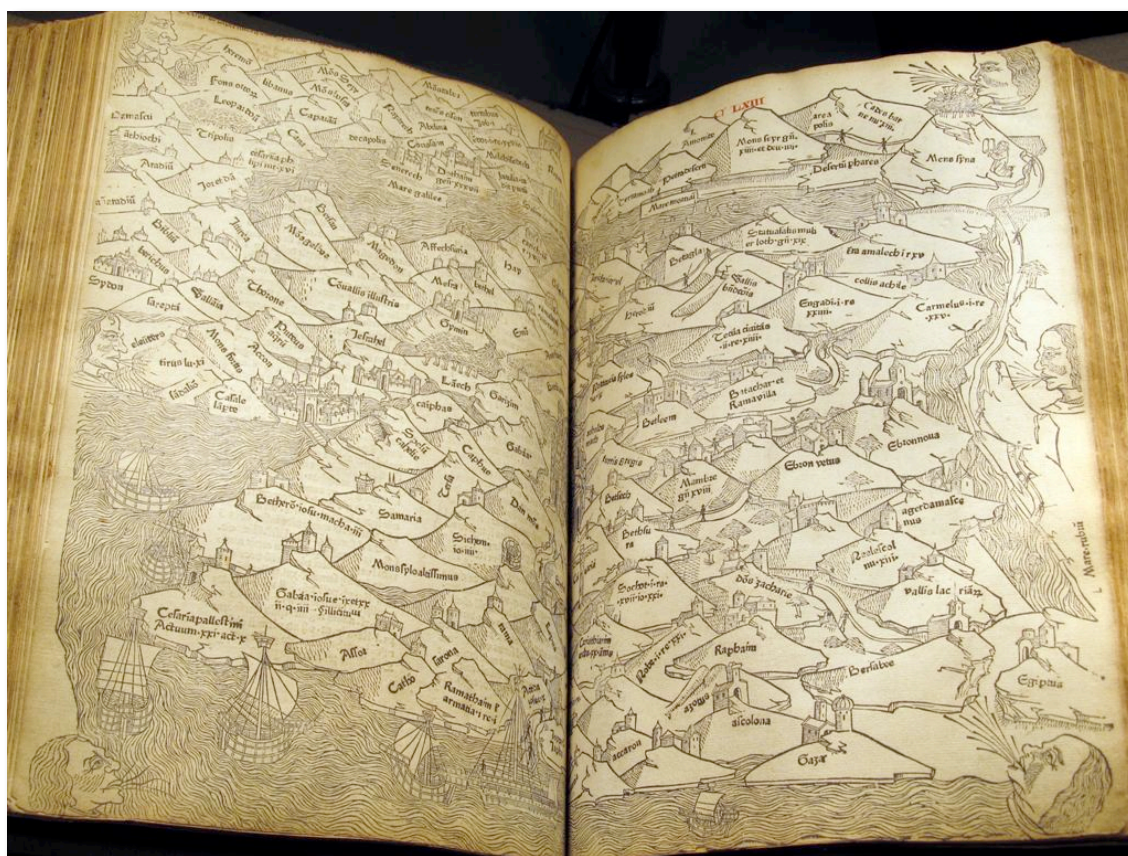
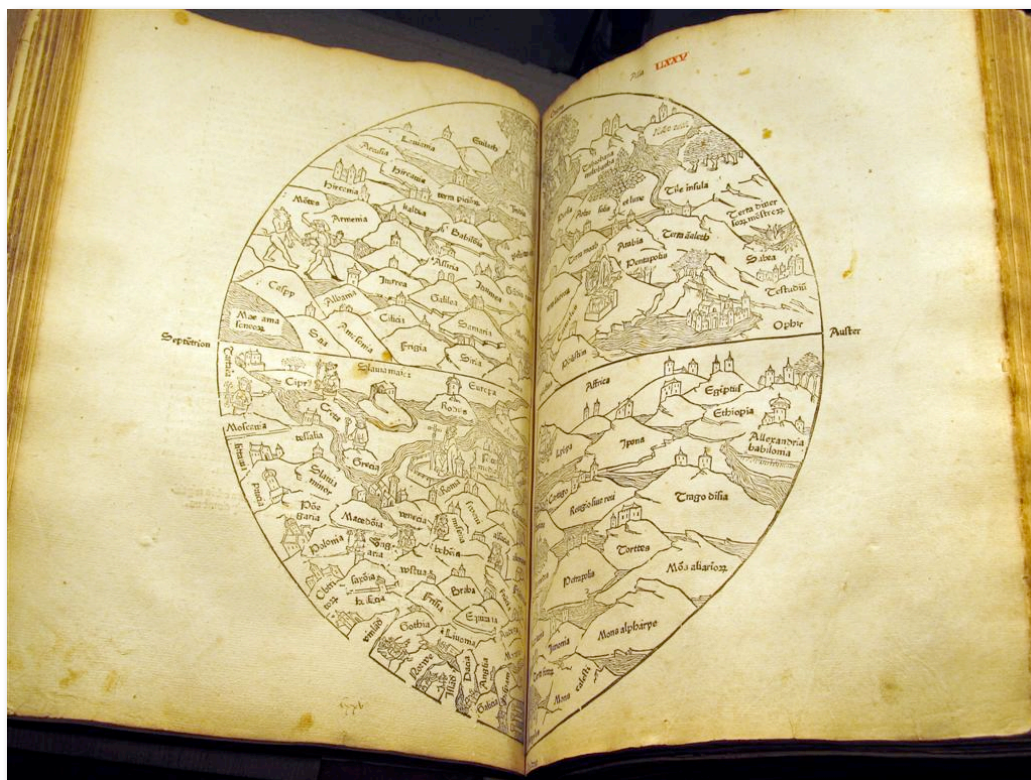
*Rudimentum Novitiorum, Map of Palestine, 1475, 24 x 36 inches
detail: Jerusalem*

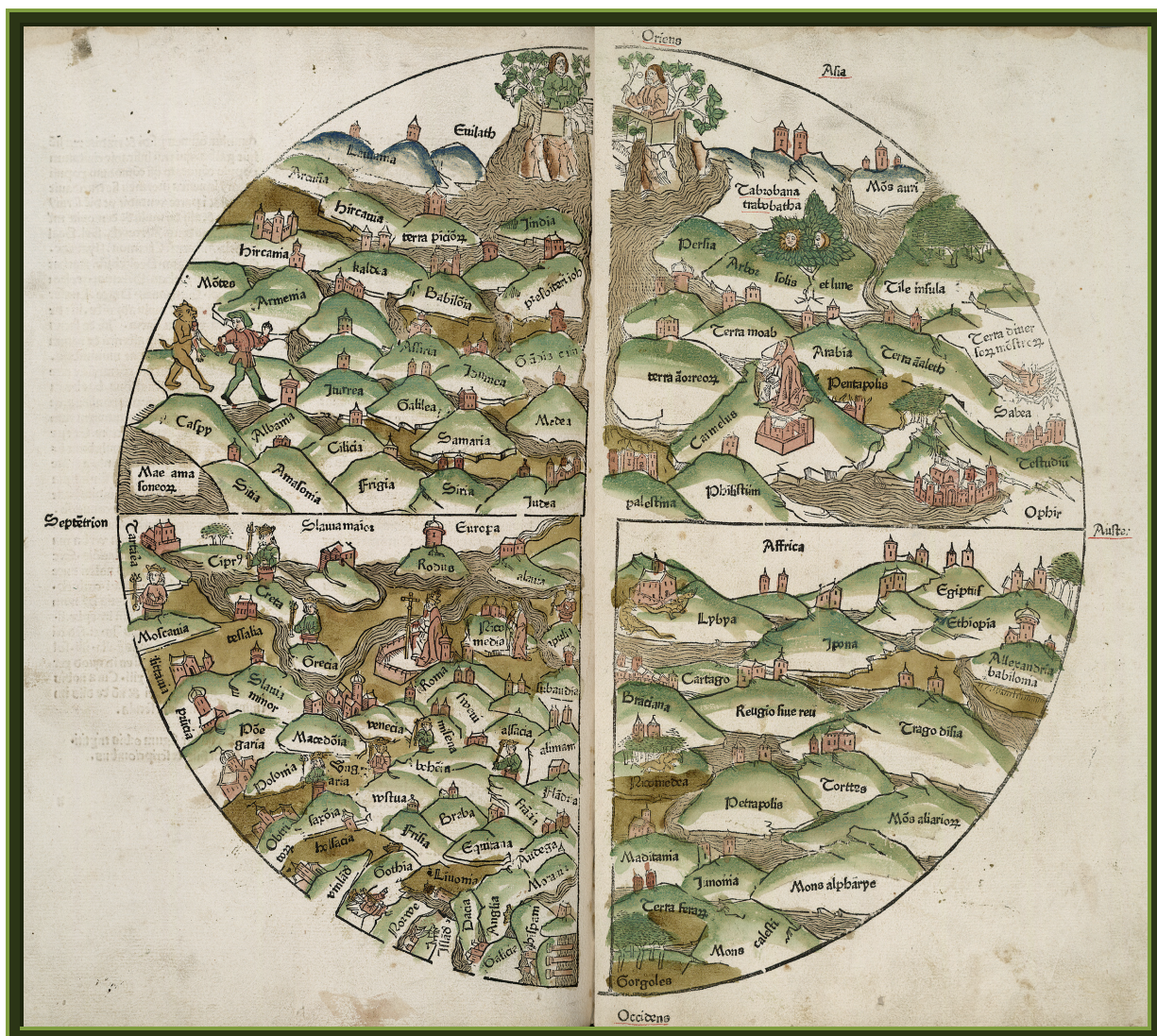


Six ships depicted in the map of the Holy Land from the Rudimentum Novitiorum, 1475

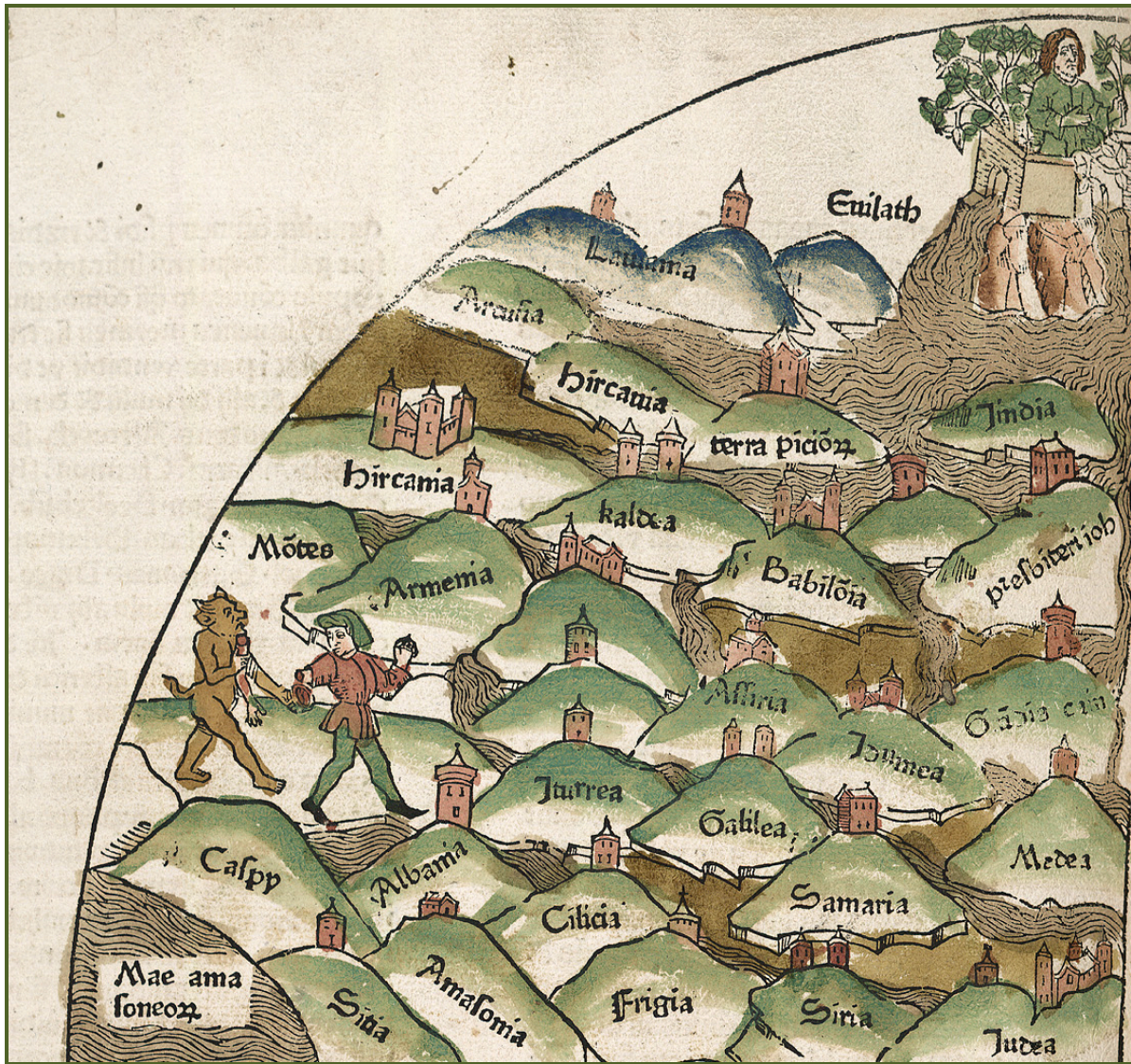


Rudimentum Novitiorum, world map, 1475, 38 cm diameter





Rudimentum Novitiorum, world map, 1475, 38 cm diameter



Detail: Armenia, Albania, Frigia, Samaria, Babilonia, India, man-eating devil

In the northeast (about 10 o'clock position) is a man who has just lost one arm to the devil.

Travelers' stories warning of devils circulated in several variations in medieval lore. Most popular were the writings, circa 1360, of Sir John Mandeville (as he was known; he was doubtfully a knight, did not travel beyond Western Europe, and may not have been English). Mandeville described a "valley perilous" in Mistorak (Armenia?) where the traveler, encountering tempests, thunder, and the sound of drums, entered a realm of devils. The story appears to have been plagiarized from Friar Odoric's account of his journey to China earlier in the 14th century, in which similar impressions were described in less sensational terms. Odoric's account was probably an honest but uncomprehending portrayal of natural phenomena: modern travelers have noted the huge (and devil-like) imposing rock figures in the highlands of Central Asia, and the apparent sound of drums which the acoustic nature of its topography seems to create.



Detail: Europe - Roma (the Pope), Grecia, Macedonia, Creta, Macedonia

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the middle one is Finland, spelled the same as in the present map (viland). Our Viland is almost certainly the child of these medieval Baltic traditions, not of pre-Columbian American landfalls.



Detail: Affrica, Egypt, Ethiopia, Lybia, Alexandria



Detail: Asia, Taprobana, Arabia, Persia, Palestine, Ophir

The southernmost point (i.e., 3 o'clock position) is Ophir, the Biblical place from where Solomon's ships brought gold and other riches. Just east of Ophir is the Phoenix, a bird believed to live in Arabia which regenerated itself after its five-hundred year lifespan by setting itself aflame on a pyre. Directly to the west (below) lies a mare amasoneorum [sea of the amazons] an embodiment of an old tradition of a land in which only women dwell. Columbus would soon transplant the myth to the New World, and it would be recorded on such maps as that of Ruysch (#313).

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Just east of Prester John is the Tree of the Sun and Moon This is apparently a variation of the "Arbre Sec" [Dry Tree], which was believed to have died upon the crucifixion of Christ. It was held that someday a prince from the west would travel to the Holy Land and sing a Mass beneath the dried tree, causing a miracle to occur: the tree would turn green once again and bear fruit, and many Jews and other "infidels" would embrace Christianity.

This oracular tree was shown to Alexander the Great while far into his conquest of the East. At dusk, the Sun Tree (which was masculine) and the Moon Tree (which was feminine) spoke to Alexander in an Indian language. He ordered the townsfolk to translate the trees' words, but they refused, for the trees had foretold of Alexander's death. In another version of the story, the two trees also spoke Greek, and told Alexander that he would die in May in Babylon by the hand of one of his own people, but refused to alter fate by revealing the name of the traitor.

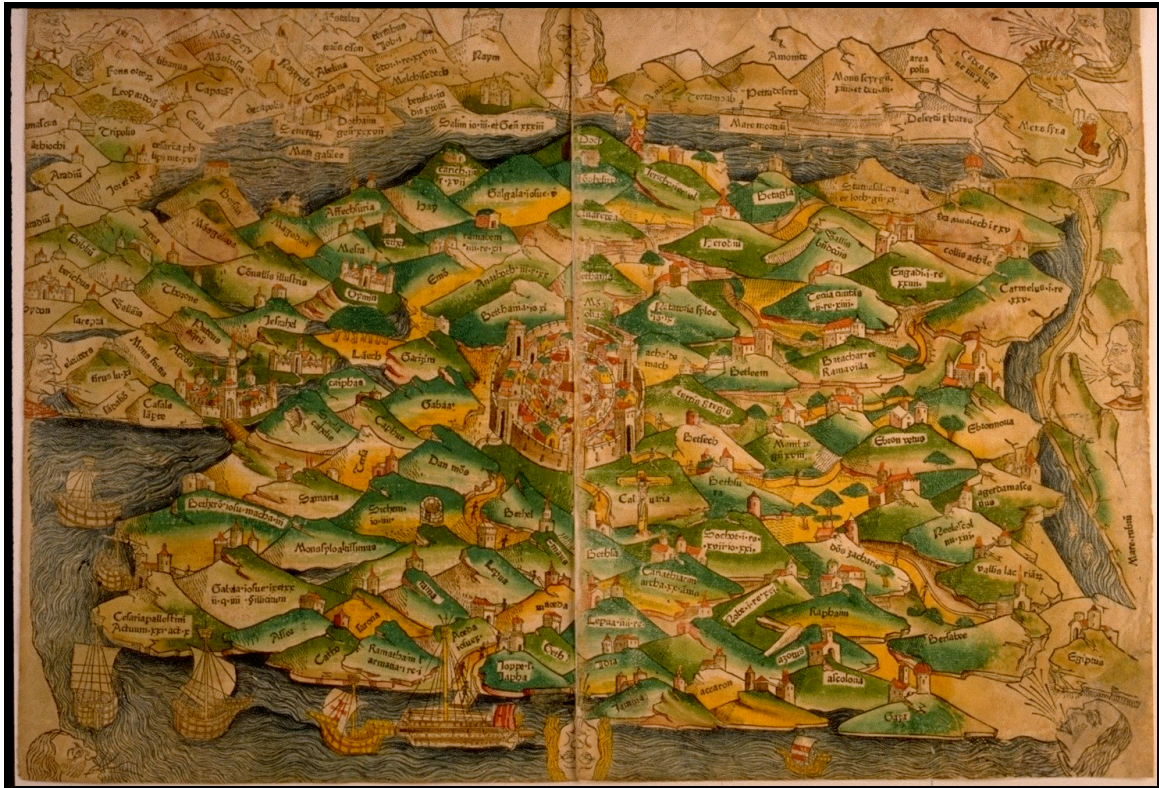
omnem vite societatem prius homi-
nibus tractabilia. secus est de anima
libus terrestribus scilicet asino boue & cane
Sed tunc dicit **Aug.** tercio super gen.
ad leam quod non solum animalia terrestria
sed & aquatica habere memoriam cer-
tissimum est. ca. x. ubi notat francis.
maro. ex dictis **Aug.** quod sicut in ani-
ma intellectiva **Aug.** ponit intellē-
memoriam & voluntatem. ita & in sen-
sitiua ponit tres potencias scilicet ymagi-
tiua memoratiua & appetitiua.
Item certum est ex hoc dō quod omnia
animalia possunt somnare sicut homo
cum fiat somnū ex discursu fantasima-
tum quod remanent in memoria. **C**re-
dit **Aug.** ut recitat comestor quod pis-
ces videntur habere animas & memo-
riam. Nam dicit fontem esse in bullen-
si regione plenum piscibus qui cum ho-
minibus super gradibus gregatim na-
tando eunt & redeunt. stantque cum stu-
tibus. expectantes ut eis aliquid iad-
ant quia sic assueverunt. dicit tamen aristo-
teles li. i. de animalibus quod quedam ani-
malia sunt tenaces memorie sicut canis
camelus asinus & quedam sunt debiles
memorie ut struccus & colubus. In solis
tamen hominibus est memoria prout me-
mona subiacer rationi. hec aristoteles ibi
Item idē li. iij. dicit quod pisces odorant &
audiunt & ideo ob delectationem odo-
ratus ad vasa noua quibus venantur ei-
cius accedunt quod ad vetera delphin etiā
notabiliter odorat. **S**ocius tho. loquens
de eadem materia dicit in prima parte
q. lxxix. ar. vii. tractans illud **Aug.**
xij. de trinitate memoria est homini-
bus pecoribusque communis nam pecora
per corporis sensus corporalia possunt
sentire & ea mādare memorie. Que me-
mona prout est cōseruatiua specierum
non est nobis pecoribusque communis
nam species cōseruantur. non in parte
anime sensitiue tamen sed magis in cōm-
cto. cum vis memoratiua sit actus or-
gani cuiusdam. sed intellectus sui seip-

sui est cōseruatiua specierum preter
cōcomitantiam organi corporalis. vñ
philosophus dicit in. iij. de anima. anima est locus
specierum non tota sed intellectus. **C**on-
cluditque moyses op. 9. quinte diei dicens
Et vidit deus quod esset bonum benedixit
que eis dicens crescite & multiplicamini
& replete aquas maris. auis que multi-
plicentur super terram & factum est
vespere & mane dies quintus.

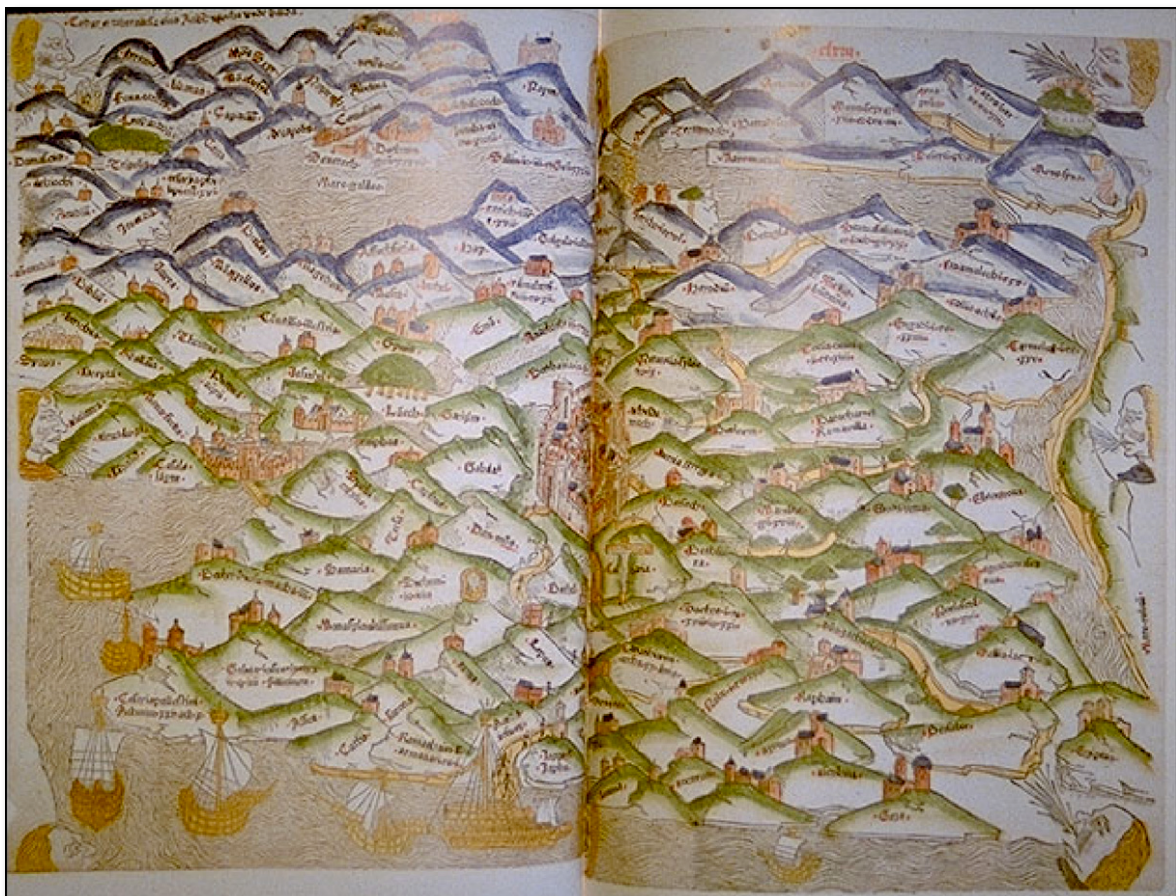


Sequitur capitulum vnde cūm.
De opere sexti diei.

Sexto die gen. i. ornavit deus
terram produxit enim terra ma-
gna animalium. Iumenta rep-
tilia bestias. sciens hominem per pecca-
tum casurum in penā dedit ei in reme-
dium laboris iumenta id est iugamenta
ad opus ut sunt equi boues cameli &
huiusmodi. quedam ad laminitū ut oues
& ircos & cetera hominibus. quedam ad esū
ut carnem omnīa bovina ferina fūilla
sue porcinam & sic de singulis. **R**epti-
lia vero & bestie sunt ei in exercitium.
dicuntur autem bestie quasi vastie a vastā-
do id est ledendo & feriendo. **R**eptilium
vero tria sunt genera scilicet trahentia ore

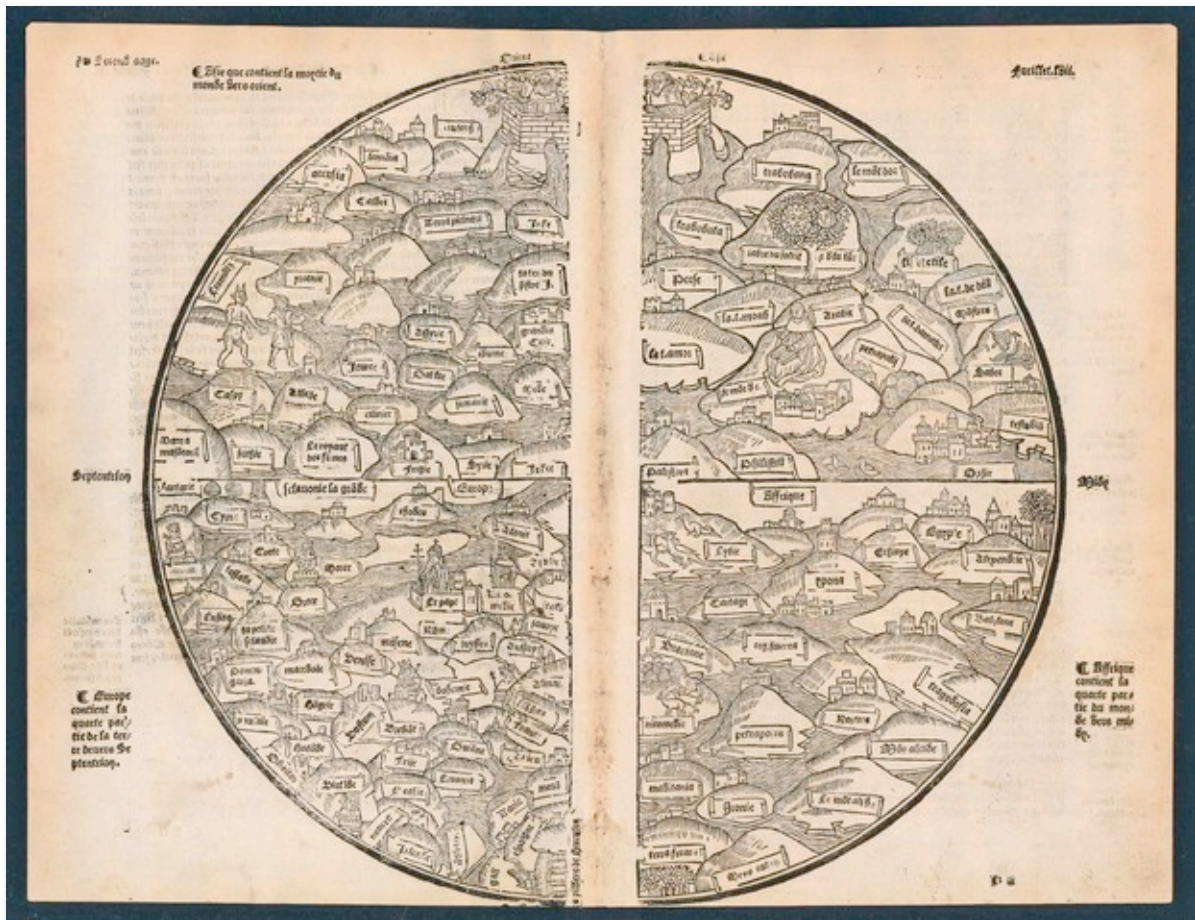


Rudimentum Novitiorum, Palestine, 1475

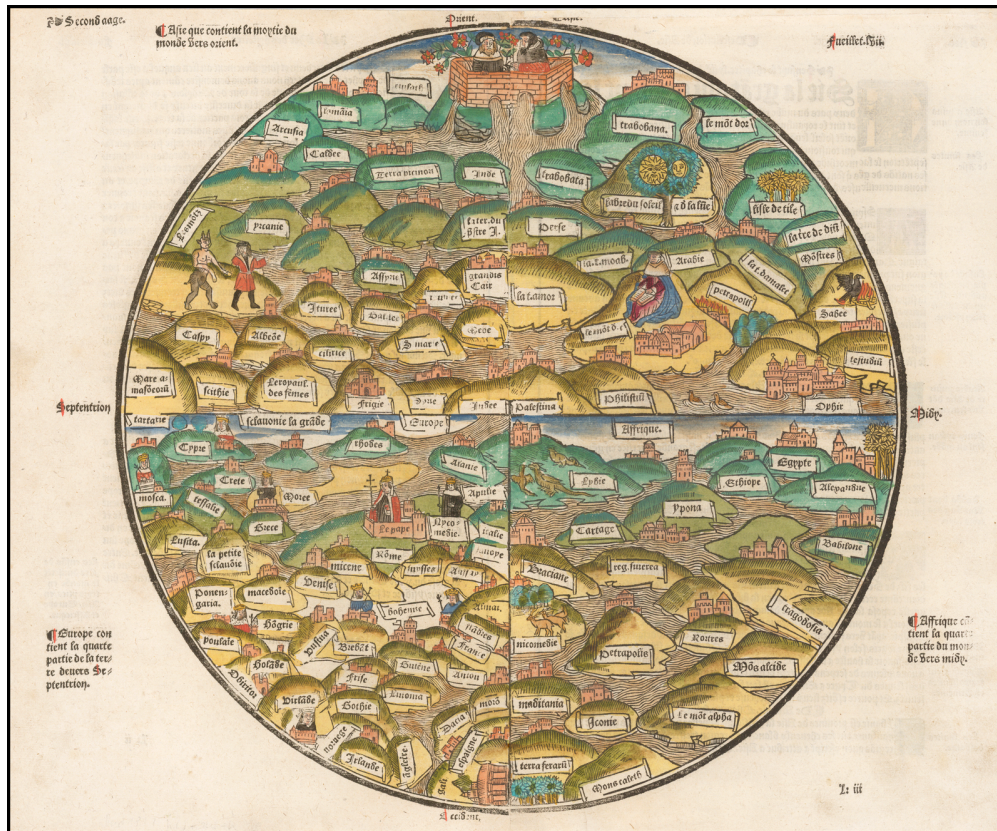








World map from the French printing of *Mer des Hystoires* [Holy Land], 1491-1517. Circular woodcut map printed from 2 woodblocks on 2 sheets joined 32 x 42cm (12.5 x 16.4 inches). First published in 1488. In 1491, new slightly reduced woodblocks were cut in Lyons for the "*Mer des Hystoires*", a French translation of the "*Rudimentum Novitiorum*". Later published in Paris from 1517 until 1555.



This medieval World map is from Le mer des Histoires, the monumental encyclopedia of world history issued in 1475, which contained the first printed maps.

The map is oriented with east at the top and Jerusalem in the center. The Pope is shown in the walled city of Rome. Asian and African countries are noted by hills surrounded by water. The extent of the known world reaches to Taprobana, Ethiopia, Tartary and the Sea of the Amazons. The Pillars of Hercules are shown at the bottom of the map. In lieu of Adam & Eve, two priestly figures are shown in a garden at the top of the map. The outline of Europe and the Mediterranean, along with the names of several countries, appear in a rough outline.

The work was translated into French under the title Mer des Hystoires in 1488, by Pierre Le Rouge, in Paris. Two separate blocks can be identified for these French translations; the first in Paris in 1488, and the second in Lyon in 1491. The version printed in Lyon is clearer and includes several corrections to the earlier works. Tony Campell notes that while the earlier Mer des Hystoires map of 1488 remained close to the Rudimentum Novitiorum prototype, this second derivation of 1491 betrays the work of a thinking individual (Campbell). The map derives from a Christianized medieval traditions without any reference to Ptolemaic or Portolan sources.