

An atlas of 20 sheets plus two cosmological pages which form two complete (nearly) charts, one being a *Portolan* and the other a *Planisphere*. The original atlas of *portolan* charts known as *Egerton MS. 2803* was purchased by the British Museum in 1895. In 1911 the famous historian Edward Luther Stevenson produced 110 facsimile copies in black and white. In the British Library's *Egerton Manuscript 2803* is the *Atlas of Portolan Charts*. The following is an excerpt from the 1911 paper edited by Edward Luther Stevenson for the New York Hispanic Society of America and the article by Arthur Davies: "The Egerton MS. 2803 map and the *Padrón Real* of Spain in 1510".

In 1895, through purchase, the British Museum came into possession of the *Atlas of Portolan Charts*. The original atlas is rich in colors, red, green, blue, and gold, is remarkably well preserved, and may justly be called one of the most interesting and valuable atlases of the early years of great geographical discoveries. However, I have not been able to find any example of the colored charts. It appears to be not only the oldest known *portolan* atlas on whose charts any part of the New World is laid down, but the oldest known atlas in which the coast regions of a very large part of the entire world are represented with a fair approach to accuracy (*see also* #250.1).

It is a well produced atlas using vibrant colors and containing the most up to date geographical knowledge available. This includes the possibility of the later voyages of Columbus in 1502/04 and the Pinzon and de Solis voyage of 1505/6 for the western extremity of the Gulf of Mexico; Vespucci's voyages to the South American coast; Corte-Real to Labrador; the Portuguese to Africa and the Indian Ocean with da Gama and Cabral, and with a touch of Claudius Ptolemy for the Far East. Although neither signed nor dated, the several charts exhibit certain features that suggest the authorship of Vesconte de Maiollo (*see* #307.4, #316, #340), and in the astronomical tables, on fol. 11b, an argument may be found for assigning it to the year 1508. The historian Henry Harrisse thought it might be 1507 but Johannes Denucé showed that the New World nomenclature was based to a considerable extent on the 1508-09 voyage of Juan Dias de Solis and Vicente Pinzon, which gives 1510 as the most probable date for such a map to have been made in Italy. There is no trace in the detailed charts of Balboa's discovery of the South Sea in 1513, which sets a limit to the time when the maps were made. Cortesao followed Denucé in dating it 1510 and there can be no doubt that this date is a close approximation to the year it was drawn. Whoever the author may have been, he must be credited as one possessing the skill of an expert draughtsman, the good judgment of an intelligent map-maker, and the knowledge of a geographer who endeavored to keep himself informed concerning the most recent discoveries.

The first sheet, the planisphere, along with Greek for the Poles has the Indian Ocean labeled *Mare Obscurum* and at the northern part of Russia we read of *Glaciera* and *Congelatum Mare*, *Mare Verde* and two capes on the Daule peninsula. The Caspian Sea has three lines of text in the center with the first line nearly obscured now but obviously consisting of Greek Letters; the second line is *baho anticum* and the third line *mare hycinum*. The Black Sea/Sea of Azov is called on the chart, *Mar Magor* and there is a mixture of Latin and Greek in that we read "*Fl. Inson sive Borythers*" and then "*Phidonisi alias Kuavea*" (but in Greek lettering) with "*Kuavea*" being the feminine form (to agree with "*vnso*"-Island) of the adjective "*Kuaveos*" meaning Dark Blue, Black or Mournful which refers to the fact that the remains of Achilles and Patroclus were placed in a sanctuary on the Island. However at the northern coast above "*constannopolis*" is the text; "*fregione omnifolium mantinas infestor pirundis*".

Many of the remaining sheets contain Greek Toponyms and historical additions to the toponyms such as "*Tunis alias Carthago vel Carshish*" (Carshish= kapxhson)".

The charts of Europe are unsurpassed for their time. A considerable part of the Atlantic coastline of the New World is represented in the somewhat roughly sketched world map on fol. 1b. Parts of this coast likewise appear, carefully drawn, with numerous place names on fols. 7b, 8a, 8b, and 49a. The several charts of the Mediterranean region, including the Caspian and Black Seas, to each of which a special page is given, the charts of the Iberian and of the French coasts, of Great Britain, Ireland, and Holland, are unsurpassed in their excellence by other known contemporary charts of the type to which they belong. The Indian peninsulas and the east coast of Asia bear striking resemblance to those regions as laid down by Cantino (#306), by Canerio (#307), and by Waldseemüller in his *Carta Marina* of 1516 (#320). Fols. 11b and 12a contain tables not unlike those to be found in the best copies of early *portolan* atlases. These tables, calculated from the year 1508, show how to find the days on which the new moon appears, how to determine the dates of movable feasts, and how to ascertain the position of the sun and moon in the signs of the zodiac.

The representations of the New World on folios 7b 8a 8b and 9a are carefully drawn, with very clear legends and a rich nomenclature, for Central and South America, of 171 names on the mainland, compared with 34 on the *la Cosa* Map (#305), 35 on the map of Reinel 1519 (#307.2) and 58 on the Freducci Map of 1515. The *Cantino* and *Caverio* Maps have a poor and sparse nomenclature save from Cape St. Augustine south. On folio 1b there is an outline map of the world drawn rather crudely. The nomenclature is cursive rather than formal and very sparse. The form of the letters seems to indicate the same hand as in the detailed charts and the same errors in spelling are repeated e.g. *terra de lebrados*. The only parallels on the world map are the equator and the two tropics. South America is shown as extending to about 30° South of the tropic of Capricorn i.e. to 52° South. This is a remarkable feature of the *Egerton 2803* representation of the New World for no other map before this time showed the continent extending so far south; the Ruysch map of 1508 (#313) has a legend indicating that Vespucci reached 50° south but does not show coasts beyond 35°. On the folios giving detailed outlines of South America the coasts are interrupted at about 12° south and the world map has no nomenclature south of about 28°. There is reason to think that Vespucci himself provided the information which extended the American coast on this world outline map to 52° South.

Yet the general cosmographic picture of the New World on the world map is accurate to an unexpected degree. It shows continuous continent from 70° North to 52° South. The Antilles are correct in latitude, as would be expected in a Spanish map of 1510: the Portuguese maps and even the Spanish map of Juan de la Cosa placed them too far north. The *Egerton* manuscript world map 2803 shows the great gulf of the Caribbean and of the Gulf of Mexico, but with no indication of the peninsula of Florida, first visited by Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513 according to Spanish records. The Gulf of Uraba, the peninsulas of Darien and Honduras are shown, as also that of Yucatan. Some knowledge of Balboa's crossing of Panama and discovery of the Great South Sea is shown on the world map by a sea gulf south and west of Panama. The implication of these outlines of the Americas is that this continental mass is joined on to Asia. In this concept the *Egerton* world map is utterly different from Portuguese cosmography and maps, all of which recognized from the beginning that the Americas were a new world

separated by a great extent of ocean from the coasts of *Cathay* and the East Indies. This concept of the *Egerton* map again indicates a Spanish and not a Portuguese origin.

Lastly the nomenclature, especially from Yucatan to Brazil, is infinitely richer and more complete than any other map of the Americas known to us until those of Diego Ribeiro of 1527 and 1529 (#346), which were undoubtedly based on the *Padrón Real* of Spain. This nomenclature was studied by Denucé in 1910 and he showed that it went far beyond all the names known from all other maps or documents taken together to the year 1510 and that in particular all the names recorded from the 1508-09 voyage of de Solis and Pinzon appear on the *Egerton* map with dozens more whose precise source is unknown. In 1511, in the publication of the *Decades of Peter Martyr*, the early edition included a woodcut map of the region of Central America and South America as far as Brasil. This map was probably drawn by Andrea Morales, pilot and cartographer of the *Casa de la Contratación* at Seville, charged with construction of the *Padrón Real*, the royal map of the coasts and harbors of the world. Denucé showed that the nomenclature of the 1511 map in the *Decades* is included, without omission, in the *Egerton* map. While the outlines of the coasts are almost identical in these two maps the nomenclature is infinitely richer in the *Egerton* map.

Though the *Egerton* coastal details for North, Central and South America differ from those of the *la Cosa* map of 1500 the general representation of these continental masses is sufficiently alike to indicate that the *la Cosa* map formed one source, and in particular the source of the idea of a continuous land mass from 70° North to the Southern hemisphere. The latitude locations of the major features of the American coasts are more accurate in the *Egerton* map, which did not slavishly copy the *la Cosa* map.


In North America the *Egerton* map has three names: for Greenland is written *terra de lebrados*; for Newfoundland-Labrador region is *terra de los bacalaos*; and for the region between Nova Scotia and the Gulf of Mexico is written, very clearly, *Septem civitates*, indicating the *Land of Seven Cities*; a *terra firme* which Dulmo claimed to have found when he obtained his charter from King John in 1486. John Cabot on his return in 1497 also stated to Pedro Ayala, the Spanish Ambassador, that the land he first saw, to the south of his landfall in 1497, was *the Land of Seven Cities*. This information of Cabot's 1497 discoveries was sent by Ayala to the Spanish Sovereigns and was used by Juan de la Cosa in compiling his map in 1500. On this *la Cosa* map, when it was reproduced for Jomard by Rambielinsky, the latter made out very faintly the name *terra septem*. It would seem certain therefore that the *Egerton* map used the *la Cosa* map as one major source for the representation of North America but the details of the coasts suggest that the *Egerton* map borrowed from a map of continuous land from Greenland to New England, such as that of Reinell 1504 (#307.2). In neither case does the name of *Corte Real* appear; nor are two separate lands shown for Greenland and Newfoundland-Labrador, *Terra de bacalaos* was the name given before the *Corte Real* discovery and points to the 1498-9 Cabot voyage as the source of this representation, probably sent on to Spain by Ayala as he had done in the case of the coasts found in the 1497 voyage.

The *Egerton* map has a phenomenal gulf of the sea penetrating 8° deep into South America in the position of the Amazon river and with an orientation which makes it beyond question that it is intended to represent the Amazon water entry. This great and wide gulf is a unique feature of the *Egerton* map. It appears on no other map nor in any documentary record. It shows a gulf some 100 miles wide throughout its length with a series of large islands (in black) throughout its extent, within about 15 miles or so of its northern or western bank. There is a unique nomenclature also for this northern 'coast'

of the Amazon, unknown in any other map or document, except for one name, *costa de paticura*, at its Atlantic end. This name was recorded by Vicente Pinzon in March 1500 when he penetrated about twenty leagues up the Amazon. It was the name given him by the native Indians to describe this north side of the Amazon. Denucé has suggested that Pinzon may have penetrated much further than has been thought and may have named the features as shown on the *Egerton* map.

Arthur Davies believes that such a view cannot be sustained because Pinzon named the Amazon water entry *Mare Dulce* which does not appear on the map at all: in its place is the name *colpho grando*, or great gulf. Secondly Pinzon reached Spain in September 1500 and communicated his major discoveries to Juan de la Cosa: the *la Cosa* map has no hint of this great gulf. When Pinzon was granted governorship of the land region to the south of the Amazon in 1501 by Ferdinand of Aragon the details of his discoveries therein included do not mention such a great gulf or its exploration. There is, in fact, no record of any considerable Spanish penetration of the Amazon before 1542, when Orellana sailed down the Amazon with a surviving party from Gonzalo Pizarro's expedition from Quito into the R. Napo region. The probings of Amerigo Vespucci in 1499 and of Pinzon in 1500 were in the mouth of the river only. This representation of the Amazon in the *Egerton* map is based on a hitherto unknown and very considerable exploration of that river from the ocean. It is more than doubtful whether such an exploration was carried out under the flag of Spain for the only known Spanish voyages in these regions occurred too late in Spring to fit the calendar feast days of Saints, which afford a particularly rich set of clues as to the season when this great gulf was explored.

From a central point in each chart thirty-two lines radiate in a manner characteristic of the type, but the usual sixteen crossing points, arranged in a circle, are wanting, and all compass- or wind-roses have been omitted. There are also numerous crossing lines which do not pass through the center, lines drawn as groups or systems of parallels, at wide intervals, blocking out the page in large rectangles.

The orientation of each chart is indicated in the border by those characters which on Italian *portolan* charts represent the four principal directions; that is, the north by the point of the compass-needle Φ (*Tramontana*), the east by the Greek cross  (*Levante*), the south by the letter **O** (*Ostro*), the west by the letter **P** (*Ponente*).

Fol. 1 contains the world map that includes a rough outline of the east coast of North America, and of South America to a point near 40° south latitude. A faint outline of a part of the Pacific coast appears as it was often conjecturally represented on very early charts of the New World. The Old World as sketched indicates the improvements made on the Ptolemy maps in the first decade of the 16th century, notably in northern Europe, in southern Africa, and in the Indian region of Asia.

The *Egerton map atlas MS. 2803* of about 1508-1510 represents the fruit of the vital first twenty years of Spanish and Portuguese discoveries in the New World and the Indian Ocean. In many respects it may prove to be the key map to much of the still imperfectly known record of the discoveries of America, for it combines Spanish and Portuguese discoveries of die New World for the first time. Of the men who formed the *Junta* at Burgos only one was not a Spaniard, Amerigo Vespucci of Florence. Yet he was elected to be Pilot Major of Spain and accepted as such without question by his Spanish colleagues. They could contribute sections of the coasts of the Americas from their own voyages of exploration, fragments of the new world. Vespucci had not only explored almost the entire coasts of South America himself, from C. de la Vela in Colombia to 52° South in Patagonia, but could also bring to the task of Pilot Major of Spain unrivalled

knowledge of Portuguese navigation and maritime science and of Portuguese explorations in the Americas and the Indian Ocean. Amerigo Vespucci was, in a sense, the human bridge between Portuguese and Spanish cosmography, cartography and nautical science from 1508 onwards. For as Pilot Major of Spain he had all Spanish records at his command and his four years service in Portugal from 1500-1504 gave him unusual opportunities to examine the secrets of Portuguese discoveries. He was made Pilot Major of Spain because by the end of the *Junta* at Burgos he was the only man in the world who knew the picture of advancing world discoveries from the Portuguese and the Spanish viewpoints. The *Egerton map atlas MS. 2803* reflects that knowledge and provides in its charts of the world the first complete and up to date summary of Portuguese and Spanish explorations to that time.

According to Michael Ferrar, the *Egerton 2803* manuscript is an unusual atlas presentation in that it can be argued its format is from copying separately a *portolan* chart and a planisphere chart onto sectional sheets with overlap to enable reconstruction. The single planisphere sheet is actually set out correctly and then a freehand coastline is drawn with toponyms squeezed into the land-masses. Some of the toponyms are in the Ligurian dialect; the curious spellings and the spurious H are probably confirmatory points.

That the cartographer is a Cleric is beyond doubt; that he is Genoese versed in the Ligurian dialect is also beyond doubt.

Which family he is from remains to be fully investigated by a qualified researcher in the subject who can scour the local Genoese records for possible candidates. This would also determine if he was Genoa's cartographer when both Vesconte Maggiolo and Salvat de Pilestrina departed for Naples and Majorca.

According to Michael Ferrar there are anomalous as it is unusual for Greek toponyms to be found contre Italian and particularly when combined with obvious historical references. We may therefore infer that Clerics were trained in the use of the Greek Language.

The first sheet, the planisphere, along with Greek for the Poles has the Indian Ocean labelled *Mare Obscurum* and at the northern part of Russia we read of *Glacica* and *Congelatum Mare, Mare Verde* and two capes on the Daule peninsula.

The Caspian Sea has three lines of text in the center with the first line nearly obscured now but obviously consisting of Greek Letters; the second line is *baho anticum* and the third line *mare hycinum*.

The Black Sea/Sea of Azov is called on the chart, *Mar Magor* and there is a mixture of Latin and Greek in that we read "*Fl. Inson sive Borythers*" and then "*Phidonisi alias Kuavea*" (but in Greek lettering) with "*Kuavea*" being the feminine form (to agree with "*vnsos*" - island) of the adjective "*Kuaveos*" meaning Dark Blue, Black or Mournful which refers to the fact that the remains of Achilles and Patroclus were placed in a sanctuary on the island. But the name "*Phidonisi*" is a transliteration of the Greek for Snake Island with Snake = "*to qiso*" or phonetically "to fee dee" and island to "*vnsi* = to nee see" and thus we have a double Greek toponym with the pronunciation "fee dee nee see".

However at the northern coast above "*constannopolis*" is the text; "*fregione omnifolium mantinas infestor pirundis*".

The most striking thing is the coast of South America and the abundance of its toponymy. It has 171 names, a quality far superior to any contemporary map, which indicates the richness of the sources used. The accurate profile of the coast and its details

is remarkable. It includes the map made by the Spanish in 1510 from Yucatan to Brazil, and if the tables of folios are added, a precision unequalled to date is verified. The Greater Antilles, with a modern design and an improvement in its latitude, although *Hispaniola* is still south of the Tropic of Cancer. The South American coast is well oriented and has an improvement in its longitudinal distance. The large gulfs formed by the promontory of Honduras and Nicaragua are seen for the first time, and it has a detailed indication of shallows, reefs and other dangers for navigation. The main error is the displacement to the east of the Amazon, which may respond to political theories, as do the Portuguese maps, which include the central one west of Yucatan. On the coast, as we have



Folios 7b, 8a, and 9a (facsimile by Stevenson)

We may suspect that his map, although possibly censored and rudely executed, displays in broad outlines the features of the official Spanish chart of the Indies, the *Padron Real*. It is possible therefore that Maggiolo derived his information from the first *Padron Real* (drawn up in 1508) or from a prototype thereof. If this is the case this map is of great importance (see Davies, 1954, for a similar argument on different grounds).

The Maggiolo chart represents both Cuba and *Spagnola* as islands, but has no definite information to offer concerning a westward land, an important point in any consideration of the *Cantino-Waldseemüller* type of map. Only two names appear on the Newfoundland-Labrador configurations, namely, *Terra de Labrados*, and *Terra de los bachalaos*. In the West Indies the major islands are, from west to east, *cuba insula*, '*Zamasha insula* [Jamaica], and *isabella*. The coast of South America is depicted from the Gulf of Honduras eastward and southward to about 30°S. latitude.

References:

- Corteseo, A., *Cartografia e Cartografos Portugueses*. Lisbon, 1935, 20.
 Davies, Arthur (1954), "The Egerton MS. 2803 map and the *Padron Real* of Spain in 1510", *Imago Mundi*, 11:1, 47-52.

Deleito, Juan Romero-Giron, *La Cartografía en la Era De Las Grandes Exploraciones De Colon A Magallanes*, 2023.

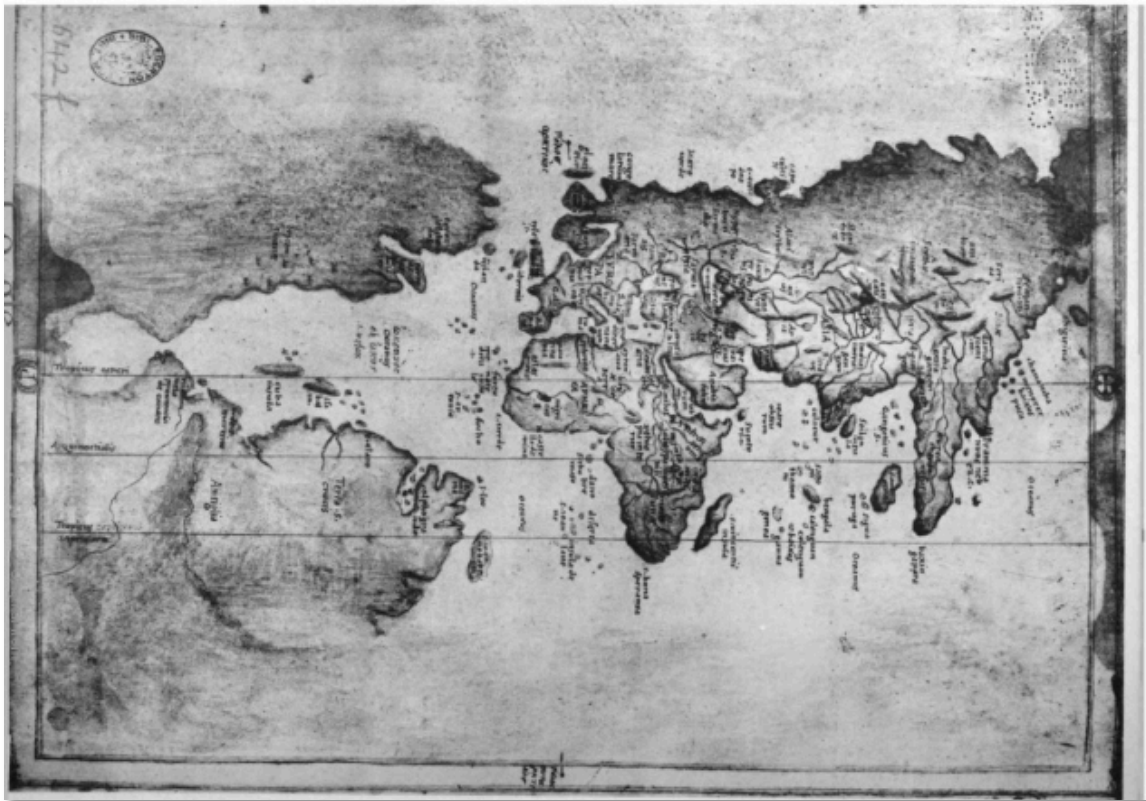
Denuce, J., "The Discovery of the North Coast of South America", *Geographical Journal*, 36, 1910, 65-80.

Ferrar, Michael, "ChEGE/1; B.L. Egerton Ms 2803 Atlas; Anon! The Construct and Possible Author"

Harrisse, Henry, *Decouverte et Evolution cartographique de Terre-Neuve*. Paris 1900, 70.

Stevenson, E. L, *Atlas of World Portolan Charts*, Hispanic Society of America, New York 1911.

Hoffman, Bernard G., *Cabot to Cartier, Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northwestern North America 1497-1550*, pp. 59-63.



Folio 1: a world map in the British Library Egerton MS 2803

On this map of the Atlantic in an atlas of sea charts usually attributed to Vesconte Maggiolo of Genoa and drawn about 1508, the fusion of new American discoveries and legendary island place-names is neatly illustrated. St Brendan's *Fortunate Islands* lie next to Madeira in the Azores, while the known islands of the West Indies lie off the coast of the mythical *Antiglia* (*Antilla*) and *Terra S. Crucis*, first called South America in 1507 after Amerigo Vespucci, whose coastal explorations as far south as the mouth of the river Plate are also shown. The Pacific coastline has been added later.

In North America the 'land of the Codfish' (*terra de los bacalos*), so named by the Portuguese who followed Sebastian Cabot to the fishing grounds off Labrador and Newfoundland, is set near the island of *Seven Cities* which has been transferred by the map-maker from the Atlantic Ocean to the American mainland. The origin of the *Seven Cities* legend was related by the globe-maker Martin Behaim in 1492 (#258). 'In 734 CE

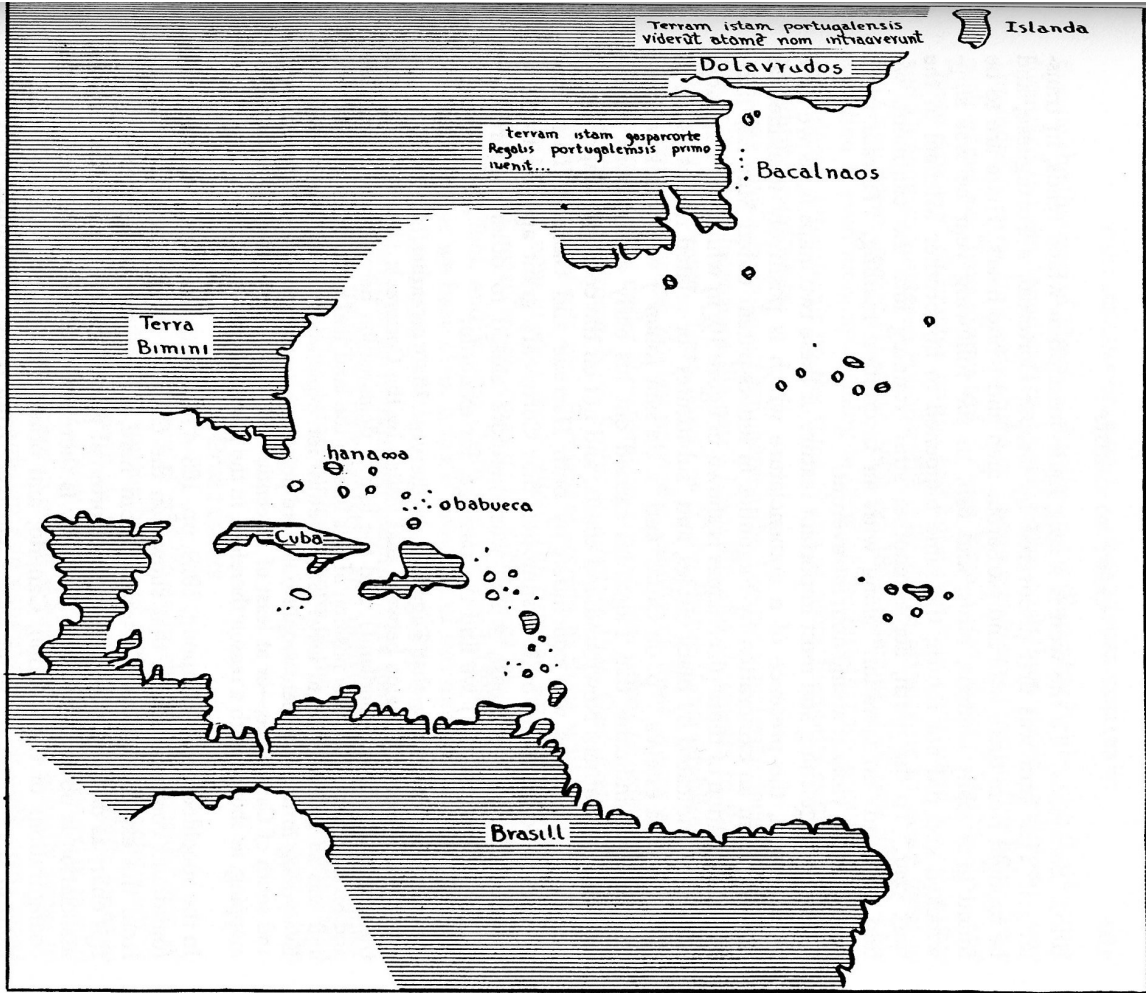
when the whole of Spain had been won by the African Heathen the above island Antilla called Seven Cities was occupied by an archbishop from Oporto in Portugal and six other bishops ... who fled thither from Spain. In 1414 a ship from Spain got nearest to it without danger'.

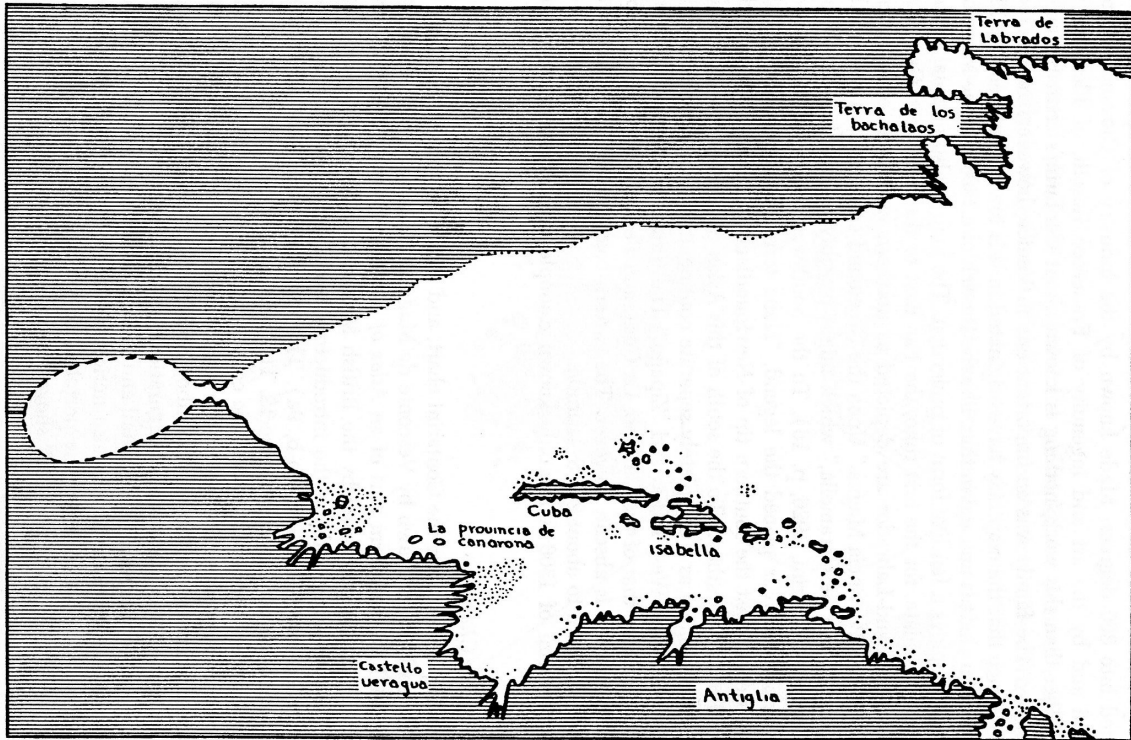


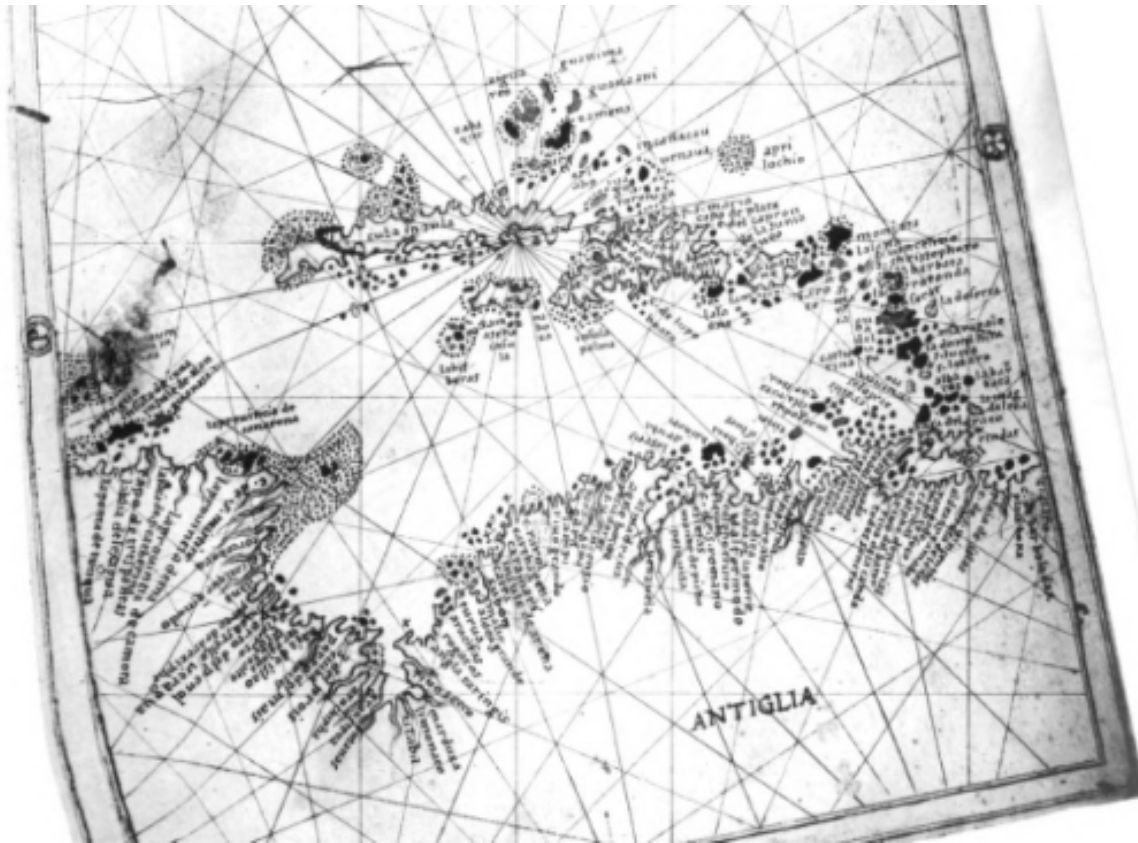
*The world map in the British Library Egerton MS 2803
Oriented with east at the top*



Displaying the "Seven Cities"







The Caribbean and the north coast of South America



The Indian Ocean and the "Tiger Leg" of Asia



When we study this Egerton 2803 chart for the British Isles it becomes abundantly clear the Genoese connection is correct as the toponyms echo the Genoese trade route to Bruges and Flanders. The English Channel is named "icanali de Flandria", the Godwin sands a hazard for sailors is named "Godoine" and the Dogger bank a very good fishing ground is named "banche di monachi" with its meaning "Monks" and this form is used often in the second half of the 1500's instead of Monaci.



World map by Vesconte Maggiolo, 1504 (#307.4) a.k.a. the Fano chart



Polar map by Vesconte Maggiolo, 1511 (#316)