



(portolan chart , detail: Atlantic Ocean/Africa)

Description: Vesconte de Maggiolo was a prominent Genoese cartographer who produced important manuscript maps during the first half of the 16th century. From 1511 to 1518 he worked in Naples, where for a noble Corsican family he prepared the beautiful atlas that includes this map. It is signed and dated, *Vesconte de Maiolo, from Genoa composed it in Naples in the year 1511 on the 10th day of January.*

Maggiolo founded a school of chart makers for the Republic of Genoa. He had been summoned there by the doge of the city-state, who proclaimed that Maggiolo was “*skilful in the making of nautical charts and other things requisite for navigation.*” According to the scholar Henry Harrisse, it is the earliest known Italian *portolano* that delineates the northernmost regions of the New World, although they were already indicated in the *mappamundi* of Ruysch (#313)

published in 1508, but merely as Asiatic configurations of Ptolemaic origin. About twenty of de Maggiolo's *portolan* [nautical] charts and atlases have survived. His descendants were mapmakers for more than a century after his death.

This particular world map is drawn with a north polar projection that provides its distinctive fan shape. Its format resembles the maps of Contarini and Ruysch (#308 and #313), which are derived from conical projections. Maggiolo has not attempted to display the full 360 degrees of the sphere; less than 200 degrees appear, leaving East Asia and the Ocean Sea incomplete. His interpretation of longitude within this projection continues the elongated east-west dimensions for the Mediterranean, Europe, and African areas seen on earlier maps. The farther south the area, the more pronounced this effect becomes.

The single Arctic and North Atlantic landmass at the top indicates that the location of the new discoveries was still thought to be in far northeastern Asia. Maggiolo's map shows a solid Eurasian continent running from *Noruega* [Scandinavia] around the North Pole, including Asia's arctic coast, to Newfoundland-Labrador and Greenland. On the extreme northeast promontory of North America, Maggiolo place-names include *Terra de los Ingres* [Land of the English], and *Terra de Lavorador de rey de portugall*. Further south, we notice *Terra de corte reale de rey de portugall* [Land of the Corte-Real and of the King of Portugal] and *terra de pescaria*. Just westward the presence of the name *India Occidentalis* [West Indies] appears for perhaps the first time on a map.

South America is annotated *lands found by Columbus for Spain* in Venezuela. Below the equator on the coast are the words, *Cape of the Holy Cross of the King of Portugal* and *land of Brazille*. In the West Indies *Coba* [Cuba] is named, but Hispaniola is called *Isabella*. The Lesser Antilles continue from the Virgin Islands south to Trinidad without the hiatus in some earlier maps. Indications of small islands appear in the area of the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos. Drawn and decorated for a noble patron, signed and dated by the cartographer, this elegant production is a significant representation of the world just after Columbus's final voyage, which concluded the first phase of the Age of Discovery.

Location: John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island

Size: 39 X 56 cm

References:

*Caraci, G., "A Little Known Atlas by Vesconte de Maggiolo, 1518", *Imago Mundi*, 2:37-54.

Harrisse, H., *The Discovery of North America*, pp. 468-69, #83.

*Nebenzahl, K., *Atlas of Columbus*, pp. 58-60, Plate 18.

*Wroth, L.C., *The Voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano, 1524-1528*, No. 17, Plate 12.

*illustrated