

Nova et integra universi orbis descriptio

Description: Caspar Vopel, born at Medebach near Cologne, in the year 1511, was of that group of German cartographers and globe makers active in the second quarter of the 16th century in giving to the general public a knowledge of the great geographical discoveries of the day. Though much of the information through the maps that they constructed was strikingly inaccurate, their work is none the less interesting to the student of historical geography. It appears that Vopel entered the University of Cologne in the year 1526, that at a later date he became a professor of mathematics in a Cologne gymnasium, and that he continued to reside in this city until his death in the year 1561. During these years he became well known as a maker of maps and globes. Of his very large and important world map, issued in the year 1558, and which so admirably sets forth his geographical notion of an Asiatic connection of the New World, an original copy may be found in the collection of Prince Liechtenstein, which is reproduced, after

Giriva's redraughting, in Nordenskiöld's *Facsimile Atlas* In the history of cartography his map of Europe and his Rhine map especially merit a place of prominence.

Nine of his globes are known, most of which are constructed as armillary spheres, having within the numerous armillae or circles a small terrestrial globe, or at least that which passes as a representation of the same. His first work of which we have knowledge, now belonging to the city of Cologne, and to be found in the collection of its archives, is inscribed *Caspar Medebach opus hoc astronomicum fecit 1532 Martii*. It is a credit to the youthful artist and cosmographer, suggesting, says Korth, the possession of a technique resembling that of Dürer. This is a celestial globe 28 cm. in diameter, having its star map drawn by hand, which is now somewhat discolored with age.

Four years later Vopel constructed a second celestial globe, apparently a reproduction of the first but having its map printed on gores which he pasted on the surface of the sphere. It bears the inscription *Caspar Vopel, Medebach, hanc Cosmogr. faciebat sphaeram Coloniae Ao 1536*, has the same diameter as the one of 1532, and is now its companion in the city archives of Cologne.

The National Museum of Washington possesses a fine example of Vopel's work, concerning which Mr. Maynard, curator of Mechanical Technology, writes that "the globe in this Museum is an armillary sphere of eleven metal rings, 4½ inches in diameter, with a very small globe in the center. The rings are elaborately inscribed with astronomical signs and scales, with names in Latin. On one of the rings is the inscription, *Caspar Vopel, Artium Professor, Hanc Sphaeram Faciebat Colonia, 1541*.

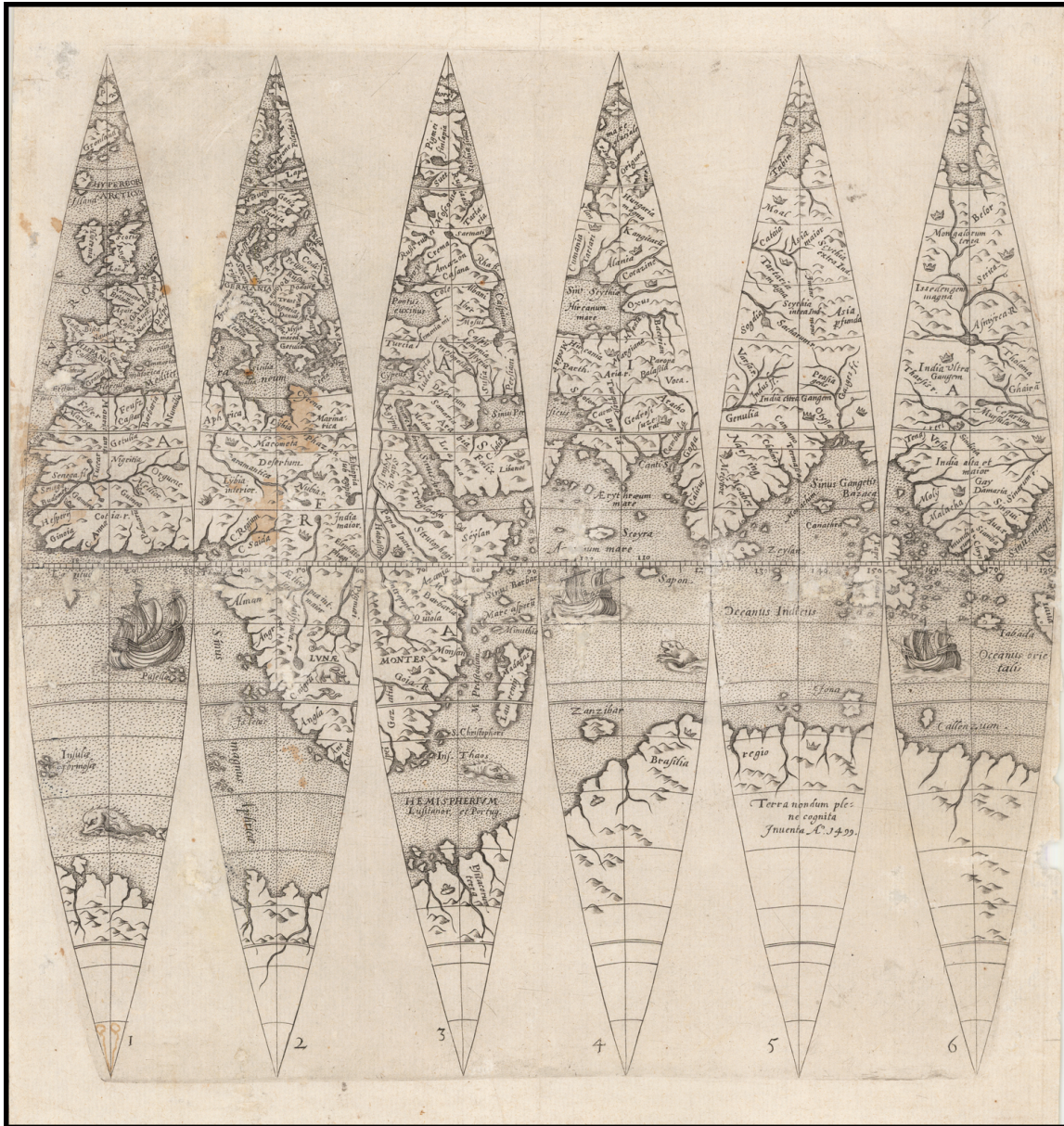
In 1542 he constructed his first terrestrial globe, a copy of which is to be found in the Cologne archives. It has a diameter of 28 cm., its map gores, as in the case of the celestial globe of 1536, being printed from an engraved plate. Excepting the discoloration of age and a slight indentation near the north pole, it is well preserved. The title legend reads *Nova et integra universi orbis descriptio* [A new and complete description of the entire globe]. A second legend, placed in the middle Atlantic, reads *Caspar Vopel Medebach geographicam sphaeram hanc faciebat Coloniae A. 1542* [Caspar Vopel of Medebach made this globe in 1542 at Cologne]. His terrestrial map assures us of his acceptance of the idea that the American continent could be but an extension of the continent of Asia; that is, like his predecessor Schöner and others of the second quarter of the 16th century, referred to above, he had concluded after Magellan had found a termination of the newly found transatlantic region at the south, and no passageway from the Atlantic to the Pacific north of the equator had been found though search had frequently been made for the same, this country could therefore no longer be considered as an independent continent. The river *Cham*, which on his map he made to empty into the Gulf of Mexico, he gives as the dividing line between *Hispania Nova* and *Cathay*. There is striking evidence that Vopel was acquainted with Orontius Finaeus' map of 1531 or its source, as, for example, he writes across the great austral continent, *Terra Australis recenter inventa, sed nondum plene cognita*, adding the words *Anno 1499*, which also appear on the Paris Wooden globe of 1535 (#357).

In the Old Nordiske Museum of Copenhagen is an armillary sphere of Vopel, composed of eleven brass rings representing the equator, the ecliptic, the tropics, the polar circles, etc., within which is a small terrestrial globe, on the surface of which is a manuscript world map. Quad refers to this globe in the following words: *Item ein Astrolabium novum varium ac plenum das auff alle Landschaften (kann) dirigiert werden beide den Mathematicis unnd Medicis sehr nutz, in funffzehen Stöck und auff acht bogen 115gedruckt, darunder auch ein kleine artige Mappa Mundi ins runde gelegt ist.*

In the Library of Congress, acquired from L. Friedrichsen of Hamburg, is a fine example of the work of Vopel. This armillary sphere of eleven rings, encircling a terrestrial globe 7.2 cm. in diameter, is mounted on a copper base. On the circle representing the Tropic of Cancer is the inscription *Caspar Vopel artiv profes. hanc sphaeram faciebat Coloniae 1543* [Caspar Vopel professor of arts made this globe in Cologne in the year 1543], while on the remaining circles are engraved numerous cosmographical signs and names. The terrestrial globe is covered with a manuscript map in colors, and bears the title legend *Nova ac generalis orbis descriptio*, and the author legend *Caspar Vopel mathe. faciebat*. Most of the regional names on the map are in red, and a red dot is employed to indicate the location of certain important cities, the names in general being omitted. The globe is remarkably well preserved.







Extremely rare set of 6 globe gores, comprising the Eastern Hemisphere by Johann Oterschaden. The gores depict the world based upon the cartographic details prevailing in about 1540 to 1550. Among the more noteworthy features of the gores are:

- *Hemispherium Lusitanor et Portug.* is the title shown southeast of the southern tip of Africa (a reference to the Treaty of Tordesillas).
- Massive *Taprobana* is shown (Sumatra), opposite the coast of "Malacha"
- The names *Pigmei Finlapia* and *Pilapia* appear in the modern Finland.
- An Early Discovery of Australia?

Perhaps the most significant detail on the map relates to the discovery of a southern continent in 1499. The words *Terra nondum Plene cognita Inventa Ao. 1499* are shown in the southern (Antarctic) continent (Translation: Land not yet fully known, recently found 1499).

These words would seem to derive from the Oronce Finaeus world map of 1531 (#356) and the *Paris Wooden* globe of 1535 (#357) and the *Hartmann* globe gores of 1535 (#359). The inscription also appears on these Caspar Volpel's globe gores of 1536. In his book *The Discovery of Australia . . .*, George Collingridge attributes this phrase as confirmation of the discovery of the Australian continent. Referencing the nearly identical globe gores of Willem Nicolai referenced below, Collingridge states at page 88:

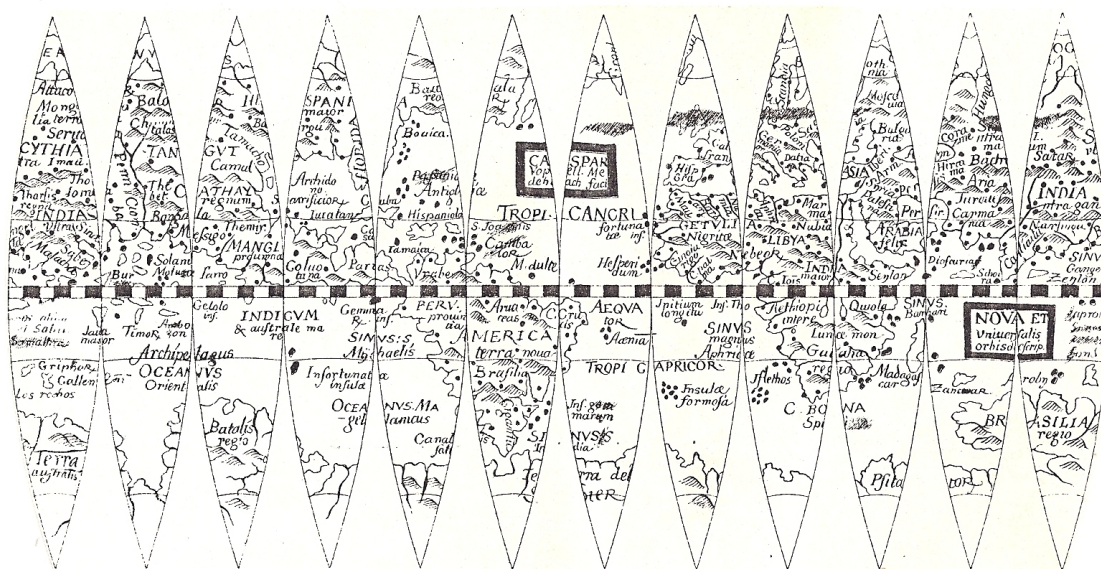
"The legend--*Terra nondum plene cognita, Inventa Ao. 1499*-- is set down in a more correct position than on the Paris wood globe of 1535, and to the west of it, on the margin of the Australian Continent, may be noticed the inscription *Brasilia Regio and Psitacorum terra*."

While Collingridge's theory received endorsements in the following decades, modern writers have generally rejected his conclusion that the Portuguese discovered Australia in the late 15th Century.

Elements of Oterschaden's geography almost certainly derive from Francois Demongenet's terrestrial globe of 1560 (#387.1), both were in Southern France, Demongenet in Vejoul in Franche Comté. In addition a copper engraved globe diameter 21 cm ascribed to Christoph Schlepp, 'the *Welserglobus*' now in Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris is almost identical with Oterschaden. It seems likely that a group of globe makers in France, Germany and Leiden namely Oterschaden, Schniepp, and Willem Nicolai were using a similar source of geography.

The gores have been dated 1603 because of their similarity to the gores of Willem Nicolai (Shirley 241), which bear the date 1603, although it is not known which gores were engraved earlier. Shirley notes that the work also resembles the globe of Christoff Schniepp, published in Augsburg in about 1600.

The title is on the sheet not present (*Nova et integra universi Orbis descriptio*), as is the signature of the maker (Joanes Oterschaden Belga) and dedication to the Bishop of Cominges, who occupied his see from 1580 to 1613.



Globe goes by Caspar Vopel, 1543 (from Nordenskiöld)