

Battista Agnese World Map, 1544

**Size:** 80 x 11 inches

**Location:** John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island.

**Description:** This beautiful *portolan* chart belongs to the *portolan* atlas, once the property of the Emperor Charles V and by him presented to his son and successor, Philip II. The author, Battista Agnese, was an Italian map-maker, who published charts in Venice from 1536 to 1564. His maps usually delineate a particular country only and map the coast with considerable detail; but the present world map, which may be dated roughly sometime after 1539, the date of the exploration of the Gulf of California by Ulloa, is necessarily drawn on a small scale and lacks details.

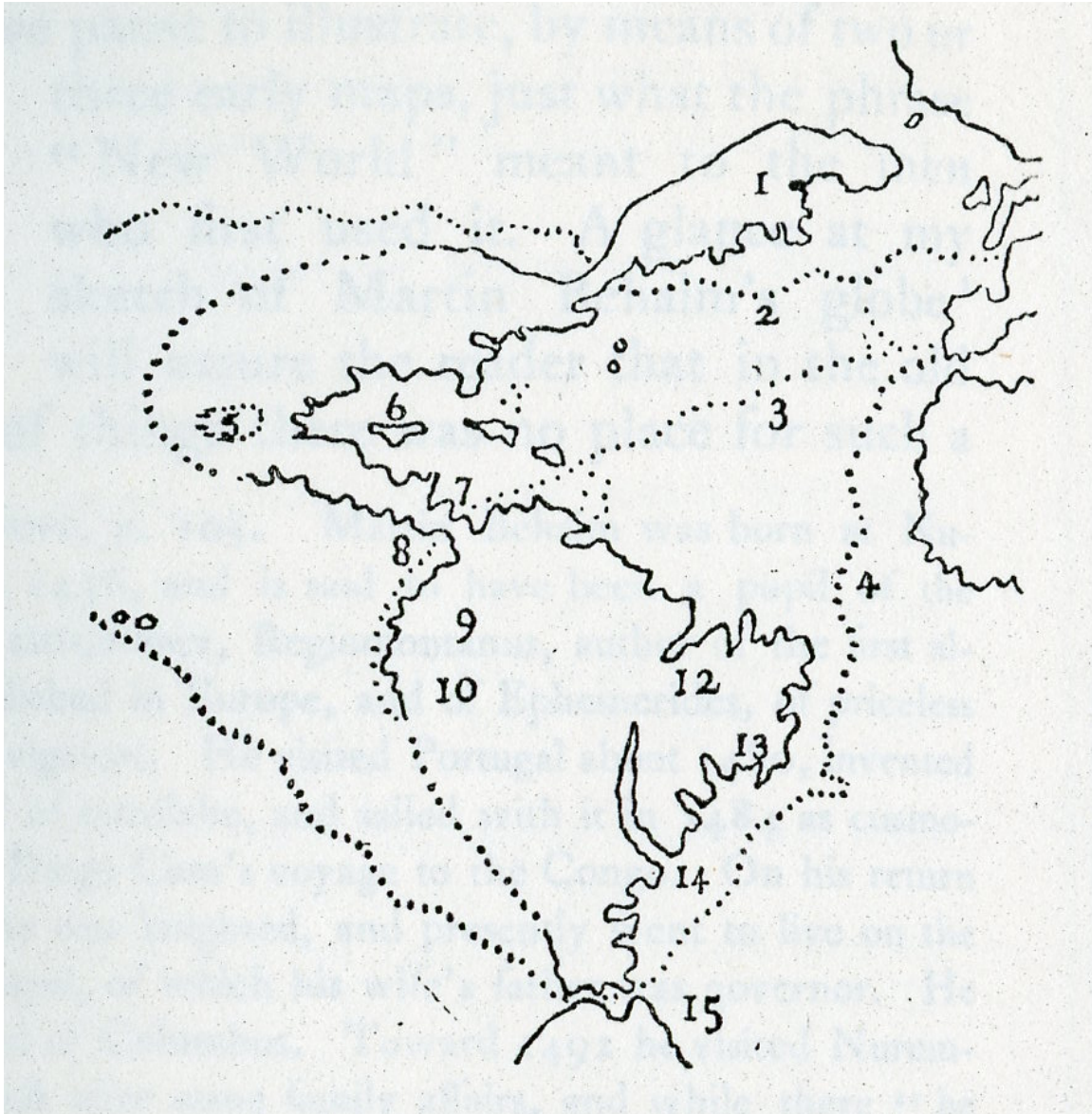
Agnese, according to Justin Winsor, was "one of the most prolific draughtsmen of the 16<sup>th</sup> century"; and of no other cartographer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century have so many specimens of work come down to modern times. There are in existence more than fifty atlases by Agnese, all commonly possessing a world map of elliptical shape, in which are traced the route from Spain to the East Indies via the Strait of Magellan, and to the west coast of South America byway of the Isthmus of Panama.

Of the few details on the map, in South America Agnese illustrates the La Plata River and the Strait of Magellan, and the *Maluche* (*Molucca*) Islands and *Cape de Bona Speranza*. There is no strait between South America and North America, as that conception, a requirement of the geography of Marco Polo, which was accepted as long as North America was thought to be connected with Asia, ceased to be represented in cartography after Europeans came fully to appreciate the difficulties in the way of finding a passage across the narrow isthmus on the way to Peru. But, as is indicated by *Cataio Provi* off California and by *Cataio P.* in China, i.e., the province of Cathay, America is still vaguely connected with Asia in the far north.

The scene of the conquests of the Pizarro brothers is named Peru; and the west coast of South America is apparently entirely traced, though there may be noticed a hesitation on the part of the draughtsman on the southwestern coast of South America. South America is called *Mundus Novus*, and no name at all is attached to North America. The fairly correct shape of Central America and Mexico, and the delineation of the Gulf of California, reflect the explorations of Cortes, Ulloa, and others in these regions. The Gulf of California and the peninsular character of Lower California go on the map as the result of the explorations of Ulloa in 1539, and remain on all the maps until the beginning of the next century, when Lower California begins to appear on the French, British, and Dutch maps as an island, and so remains for nearly a century.

The mariners of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in their satisfaction at finding a passage through America to Asia, did not stop to explore the land south of the Strait of Magellan. Cape Horn and the insular character of that land they never suspected, but rested in the belief that there was an unexplored Antarctic continent.





KEY: 1. Terra de bacalaos. 2. (dotted line) El viage es France. -3. (dotted line) El viage de Peru. 4. (dotted line), El viago a maluche. 5. Temistetan. 6. Iucatan. 7. Nom de dios. 8. Panama. 9. La provinria del peru. 10. La nvintia de chinagua. 11. S. paulo. 12. Mundus novus 13. Brazil. 14. Rio de la plata. 15. El Streto de ferdinando it Magallanas.

#### References:

- Fiske, John., *The Discovery of America*, Volume 2, pp. 328-329.  
 Fite, E. and Freeman, A., *A Book of Old Maps Delineating American History*, p. 59 #17  
 HARRISSE, H., *Jean et Sebastian Cabot*. Paris. 1883.  
 Martin, Lawrence, "A manuscript Atlas by Battista Agnese", *A la Carte*, Library of Congress, pp. 34-37.  
 Nebenzahl, K., *Mapping the Silk Road and Beyond*, 2.9, pp. 66-67.