Typus Orbis Univeralis [from: Geographia Universalis vetus et nova...]

Cartographer: Sebastian Münster, Basle
Date: 1540.
Size: 10.5" x 13.5" [including title].
The world as viewed in the mind of educated, mid-16th century Europeans is perhaps best preserved in Münster's classic map. The books where it appeared, his *Geographia* and *Cosmographi*a, would have been found in any library of quality of the period. Though Münster lacked the sophistication of many of his contemporaries, his world map is adventurous in some important respects. Of cartographic significance is his use of Bordone's oval projection *(#343)*, which would later be used in such world maps as those of Ortelius [1570] and Le Maire/Spilbergen [1618]. Further, Münster's is the first world map to name the Pacific Ocean with the use of the term *Mare Pacifi*cum.

Following Verrazano's pattern, the Pacific Ocean cuts deeply inland into North America from the north, leaving only a narrow isthmus on the east coast at 40 degrees north latitude. Verrazano actually believed as he gazed over the Outer Banks off of North Carolina, that he was seeing the sea that would lead him to the China coast. Off the California coast, Japan, still derived solely from Marco Polo, appears arbitrarily shaped and misplaced to the southeast. Africa is quite accurate in basic out-line and, characteristic of the period, shows two lakes in t*he Mountains of the Moon* as the Nile's source. Greenland hovers above Canada, stretches over Europe, and connects to Asia, which in turn extends north of America and nearly meets Greenland again, on the west. This was the result of thinking that Iceland, Newfoundland, and some northern areas of

Canada comprised a single land mass.

The map is richly embellished with a dozen wind-heads blowing their gales. Sea monsters frolic in the Southern Ocean, or *Oceanus Australis,* where no large continent is hypothesized to hide. Instead, a small unlabeled landmass lies south of the Straits of Magellan, which were discovered less than two decades before this map was produced. Each ocean is labeled with a text block, made by inserting metal type into the woodblock, and this map contains the earliest naming of the Pacific Ocean (*Mare Pacificum*).

Münster here adds to the contemporary confusion over *Taprobana* and Ceylon [Sri Lanka]. He depicts a Sumatra-shaped *Taprobana* on the west side of the Indian subcontinent, while Java is in the approximately correct size and position of Sri Lanka. *Taprobana* was what the Greeks had called Sri Lanka, but late-medieval and early modern geographers also applied the toponym to Sumatra and a phantom island. To add further to the confusion, farther south is *Calensuan*, which is spelled as *Callenzuan* on Waldseemüller's 1507 world map *(#310)* and *Calensuan* on Juan Vespucci's 1524 world map *(#335)*. The origin of this island is unknown, but it may too be a corruption of Ceylon, or Sri Lanka.

Münster seems to have hedged his bets and combined the various hypotheses while also placing the East Indies farther west than they really are. He also includes *Gilolo*, today known as Halmahera, the largest island in the Maluku Islands in Indonesia. The triangular island *Porne* denotes Borneo.

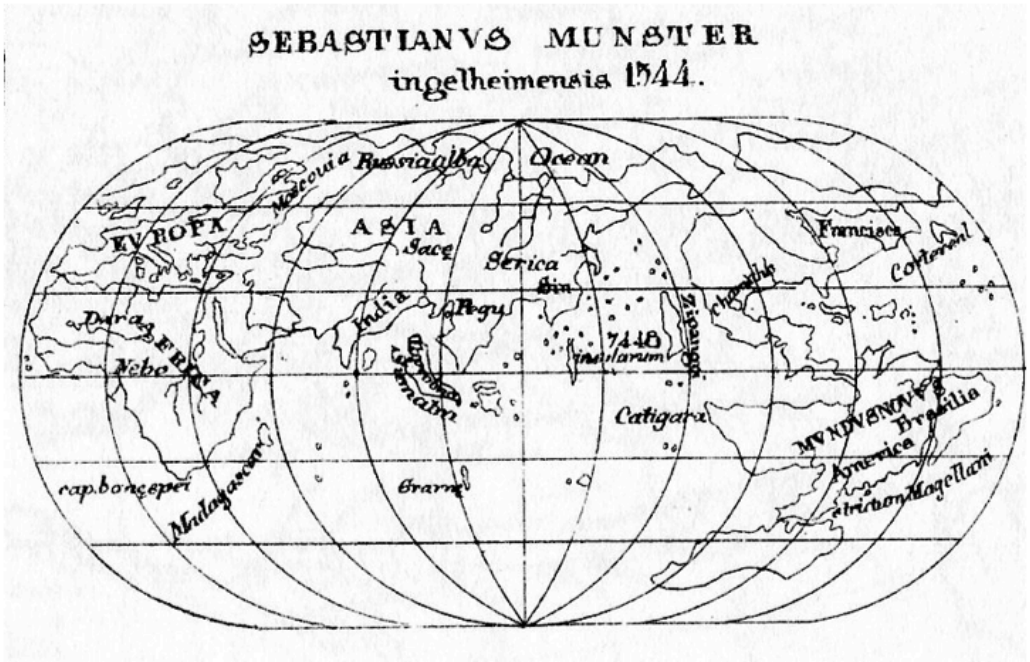
North America is broken up, with the bulk of the continent at the left and the west coast appearing briefly on the right side of the oval projection. Münster is non-committal as to the continuity of North and South America; an unbroken Central America is implied but is not clearly shown thanks to a wind head and the curve of the projection.

Interestingly, all of North America is called *Terra Florida*. The northeast is labeled *Francista*, a reference to the French efforts there. To the northeast is a large island referring to the land of the *Bacalhos*, i.e., *bacalao* or salt cod, a reference to the Basque fisherman seeking cod in the area. Finally, a note in the northwest explains that here lies a strait to the Moluccas, a hopeful reference to the Northwest Passage. Münster follows Verrazano with the pacific cutting deeply into North America from the north, leaving only a narrow isthmus on the East coast at 40 degrees north latitude.

Münster's woodcut map is handsomely decorated with windheads embedded in clouds. Since the direction of the wind was more vital to navigation during this period than in later ones, each direction was given a name and took on a personality of its own. This is the first edition of the map, with the east and west windheads contained within the perimeter of the oval ma*p.*

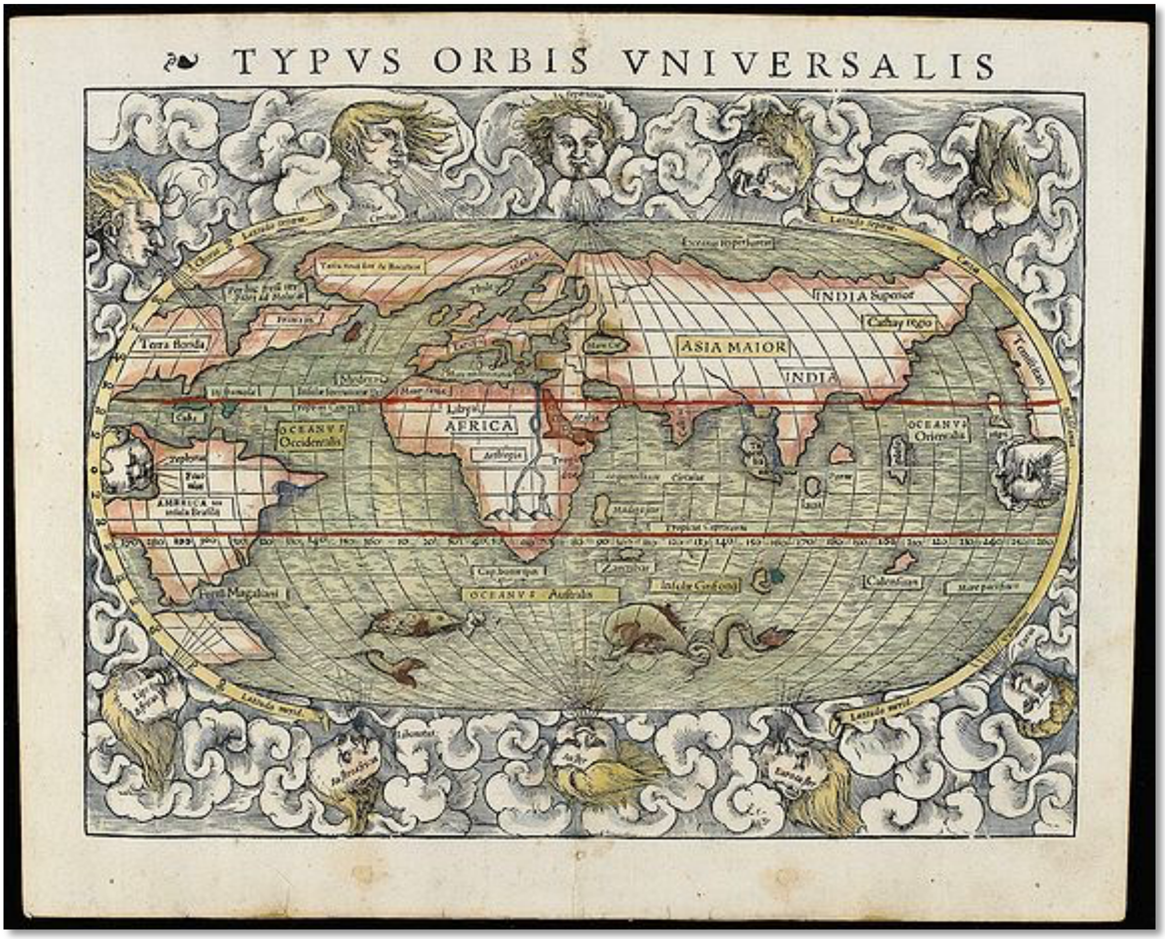
Reference:

*Lelewel, Joachim, *Geographie du Moyen Age*
*Shirley, R.W., *The Mapping of the World,* #77, plate 67.



Joachim Lelewel in his Geographie du Moyen Age

#377


TYPVS ORBIS VNIVERSALIS
Terra florida
ASIA MAIOR
INDIA Superior
INDIA
AFRICA
Libya
OCEANVS Occidentalis
OCEANVS Orientalis
OCEANVS Australis