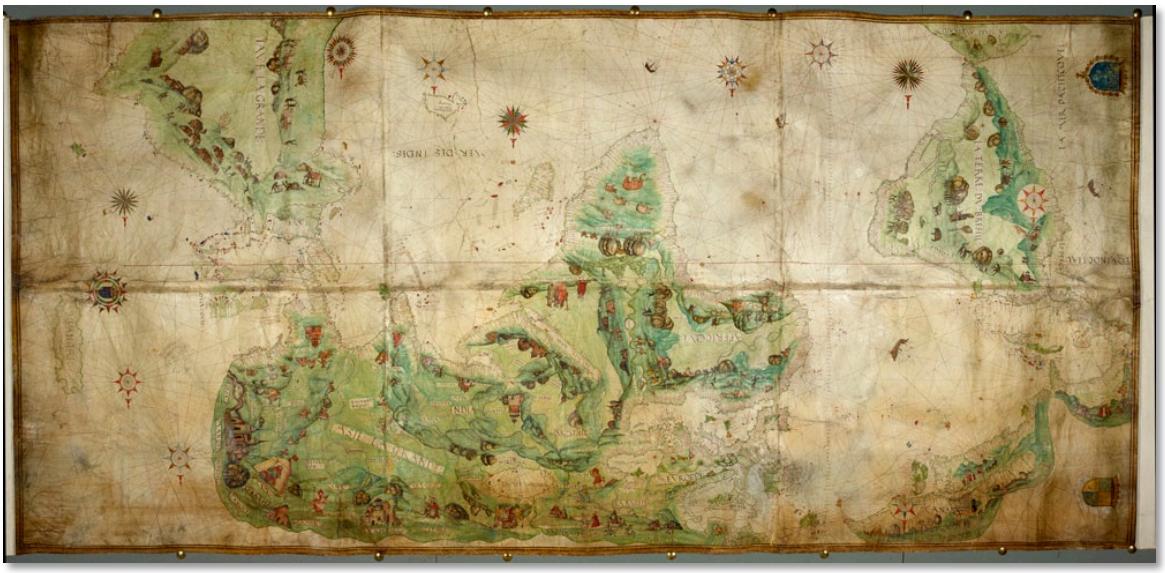


Harleian Map (oriented with South at the top), 1547

This large undated, unsigned manuscript map, oriented with South at the top, measuring approximately 4 x 8 feet, derives its name from a former owner, Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford. Its style is that of the Dieppe school of mapmakers; and, based upon that distinctive style, it was probably made about 1544 by either Pierre Desceliers *(#378)* or Jean Rotz *(#343).* The St. Lawrence River shows the discoveries of Jacques Cartier on his second voyage of 1535; it may be based on Cartier's own map, now lost, of that expedition. The river and Chaleur Bay are represented too large; the Gulf of St. Lawrence too small; thus indicating that possibly the maps from which they were drawn may have been of different scales. The older assumption that the central figure in the group below the river is an actual portrait of Cartier is now disputed. The coastline from Cape Briton to the south of Cape Cod is probably based upon a copy of the lost *pardon general* of Alonso de Chaves, 1536. So strong was the hope among European merchants and sovereigns that a convenient passage be found connecting an easy sea route from Western Europe to the *Spice Islands* and *Cathay*, we find the cartographer of the *Harleian* map obliging this desire by going beyond previous representations by Maggiolo *(#340)* and Girolamo da Verrazano of a false *Verrazanian Sea (#347).* The *Harleian* map provides the belief that an actual strait had been discovered cutting through the north isthmus to the broad waters of an unnamed gulf recognizable as the aforementioned *Verrazanian Sea* (another false strait had appeared on earlier maps, farther to the south, on the Darien peninsula). The strait on this map carries the legend, *Gofanto mer osto*, which may be freely translated as "Gulf before [or leading to] the South Sea". Another manuscript map, *La Virgenia Pars*, by John White in 1585, shows a similar strait *(#370).*

In the history of cartography, the Harleian or Dauphin map stands midway between Oronce Fine's world map of 1531 and Gerard Mercator's of 1569. It is one of the so-called Dieppe maps, produced in the northern French port of Dieppe in the 1540s-1560s, that have fuelled speculation about a continent resembling Australia, apparently charted by the Portuguese in the 1520s. The *Harleian* map's most outstanding feature, a huge landmass south of Indonesia, is named '*lave (Jave) la Grande*'.

The map was prepared during the reign of Francois I of France (1515-1547). It was perhaps commissioned by or for-his son the Dauphin, who later became Henri II, and whose interest in the great discoveries was well known. The Dauphin's heraldic arms in the shield at the bottom left have been painted over with the royal arms, suggesting that the map was completed at the time of his accession to the throne. The map enticingly depicts a new world that awaited maritime enterprise at a moment when Normandy had become the centre of trade with Brazil and the East Indies. The Norman ports developed a flourishing trade in brazilwood to supply the cloth-dyers of Rouen, and Norman seafarers under Jean Parmentier had ventured as far as Sumatra, while in 1524 Italian navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano, leading a French expedition, thought he had found a northern sea passage from the Pacific to the Indies (shown on the map as '*Gof an to Mer osto*'[Gulf into the South Sea].

The rediscovery of *Jave la Grande* [Greater Java] on the *Harleian* and other Dieppe maps may be attributed to the hydrographer Alexander Dalrymple. In 1786, after examining the *Harleian* map, Dalrymple published a memoir in which he noted: "The East Coast of New Holland as we name it, is expressed with some curious circumstances of correspondence to Captain Cook's MS." Dalrymple drew the conclusion that Cook had apparently not been the first to chart the east coast of Australia.

The *Harleian* map had earlier come to light within the collections of Edward Harley, second earl of Oxford. Dr Daniel Solander, the botanist on Cook's first voyage and Keeper of the Natural History Department of the British Museum, lent the map to Dalrymple, who saw an opportunity to challenge Cook's priority of discovery of the east coast of Australia. The London newspaper *The Argus* of 4 February 1790 said that the map "lays down the coasts of New-Holland as described by Cooke and Bougainville" and "most probably it has been translated from the work of some Spanish Navigator, whose discovery being forgotten, left room for the new discoveries of the English and French navigators".

It was a great temptation to equate the east coast of the landmass depicted on the map with that of Cook's New South Wales. Matthew Flinders, in *A Voyage to Terra Australis* (1814), concluded that the '*Greater Java*' of the Dieppe maps "should appear to have been partly formed from vague information, collected, probably, by the early Portuguese navigators, from the eastern nations; and that conjecture has done the rest. It may, at the same time, be admitted, that a part of the west and north-west coasts, where the coincidence of form is most striking, might have been seen by the Portuguese themselves, before the year 1540, in their voyages to, and from, India."

What exactly is depicted on the *Harleian* map remains contested. Richard Henry Major, first and only Keeper of Maps in the British Museum (1867-1880), asserted the case for a Portuguese discovery of Australia, then changed his stance in preference for the French. In his *The Discovery if Australia* (1922), Arnold Wood, Professor of History at the University of Sydney, concluded:

> On the whole, I am so impressed by the difficulty of explaining these maps as the product of voyages of discovery, and the easiness of explaining them as the product of the imagination working on scientific theories and Marco Polo narratives, that nothing would induce me to accept *Jave la Grande* as the equivalent of Australia save resemblances in detail of a very undeniable nature.

While there have been attempts since to match the coastal features and place name inscriptions on its east and west coasts with already discovered lands (such as western Java and Sumatra or Java's south coast, Vietnam and Papua New Guinea), it is the correspondence with Australia that remains the most tantalizing option, although there

is no record of any voyages reaching Australia before those of Willem Janszoon along Cape York in 1606, Jan Carstenszoon in the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1623, Dirk Hartog on the Western Australian coast in 1616, or James Cook along the east coast of Australia in 1770.

It must be borne in mind that in the absence of reliable reports of actual discovery by navigators, 16th century cartographers trying to locate remote lands on their maps often did so in accordance with cosmographic theory, and were reluctant to erase the mapping of their predecessors without good reason. Some, driven by 'a horror of the void', depicted not only lands known, but also those remaining to be discovered. Or, as Arnold Wood noted, at that time it was the fashion to fill vacant spaces in the South with continents that were the result not of discovery but of philosophical speculation. This could result in fortuitous resemblances to real geographical features, such as with *Jave la Grande* and *Australia*, that were misunderstood by Dalrymple and others as evidence of otherwise unrecorded discoveries by unknown navigators.

Java had for centuries enjoyed the reputation of being the largest and most magnificent island in the world, ranging from nearly 5,000 km to over 11,000 km in perimeter. To the south of Java, Marco Polo had been understood to say, was "an extensive and rich province that forms a part of the mainland". And Ludovico di Varthema had brought home stories of people who navigated by the Southern Cross, who lived in lands so far south that the day did not last more than four hours and where it was colder than in any other part of the world. To the Norman cartographers who were aware that the Portuguese had actually visited Java, it may have appeared that Polo and Varthema had not only spoken of a continent south of Java but also of Java itself as *Java Major*, the greatest island in the world.

As mentioned, the *Harleian* map is neither signed nor dated but, based on Canadian geographical references sourced to Cartier's voyages, a date of 1542–1544 has been suggested. In the top west corner near Canada are the arms of the Dauphin, which appear to have been partly altered to the royal arms of Henri II. The shield in the bottom west corner 'are the arms of nobody' according to the historian Henry Harrisse (1829–1910). There are two incomplete shields drawn in top and bottom eastern corners, and elsewhere on the map some of the imagery is also unfinished.

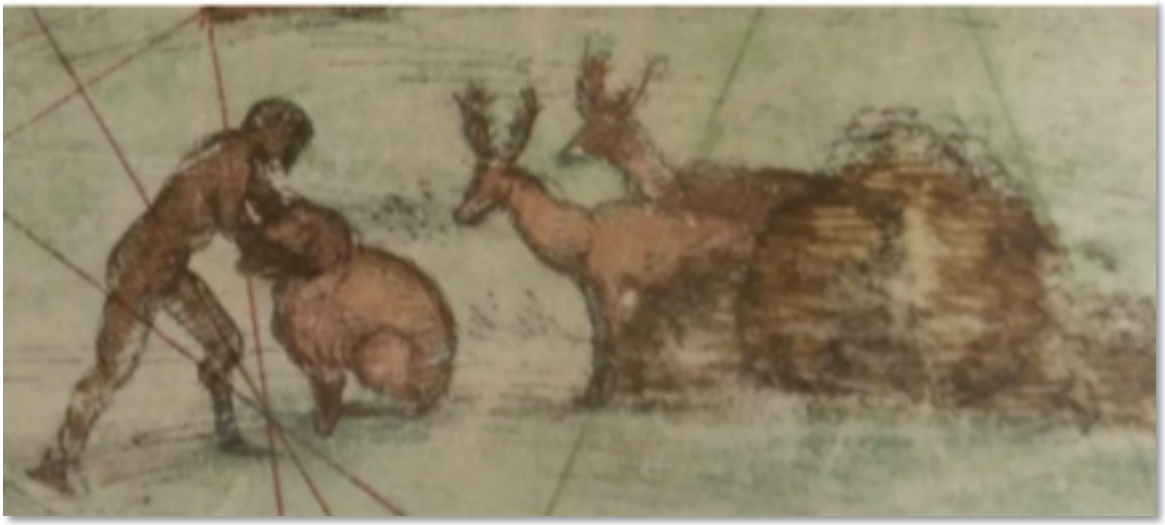
The map is very large (4 x 8 feet), requiring a long table for viewing. Its contents, including toponyms, are mainly orientated for side viewing. For example, the imagery in the south is best read from the southern side of the map. In acknowledging that not all was known at the time, the mapmaker imaginatively presented its 'unknown' coasts as a continuous, undulating line without toponyms. Within its continental interiors, different shades of green were employed to present the world as possessing a verdant landscape. A darker shade provides a background for imagined images of what existed or might exist within a continent's interior. A light shade in the centre provides the background for the continental toponyms.

Towards the west of the map and south of the Strait of Magellan, the tip of a notional continental landmass labeled '*La Terre Australle*' exhibits an unknown coastline tapering at both ends to the bottom margin of the map. Its presence thereby assures the viewer of its existence but avoids any estimation of its size. Only trees are shown in its interior.

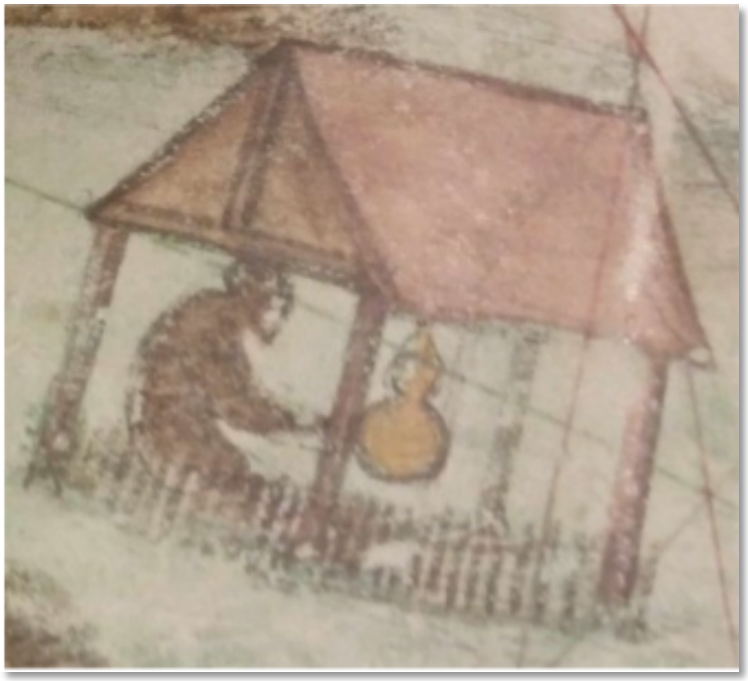
This map is the earliest from Normandy presenting ethnographic imagery in Jave la Grande. Perhaps it was the first large-scale cartographic representation to introduce the genre. Within its interior, the imagery represents communities of dark-

skinned naked indigenes going about their daily tasks who dwell in ground level wooden huts alongside seemingly unthreatening animals.

At the north there are two small scenes positioned for northern edge viewing. One shows two deer-like animals observing a naked inhabitant apparently grasping the head of a large animal possibly balanced on its haunches, perhaps intimating an intention to consume or domesticate it. The other depicts an inhabitant within a roofed shelter kneeling either on the ground or a mat attending to what might be a calabash (bottle gourd) suspended from the roof.

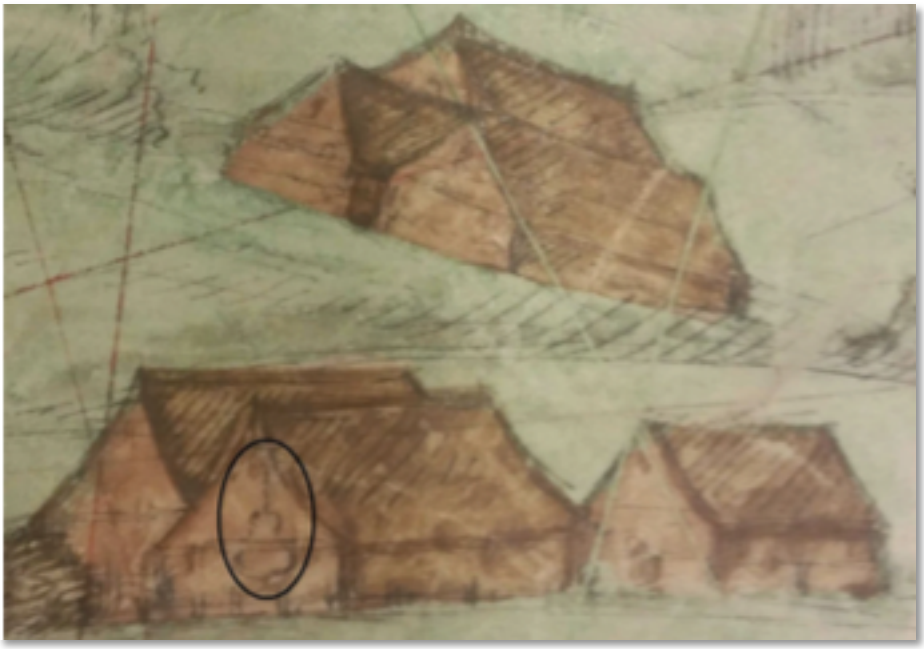


Detail of two deer and a native holding an animal.



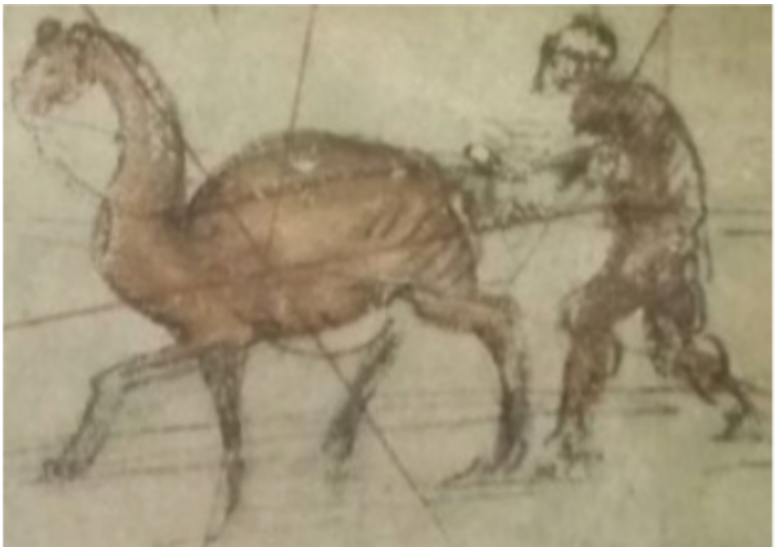
Detail of a native in a roofed shelter.

On the east coast is imagery of nearly thirty ground level wooden huts. Many are in groups reminiscent of indigenous communal living. Some huts also appear to show food hanging inside, suspended like the calabash (see elliptic), suggesting the huts also served as storehouses.



Detail of grouped huts and a storehouse.

On the west coast, an indigene is depicted using reins to control the progress of a camel-like animal (see Figure 3.7). The reins tend to suggest the animal has undergone domestication.



Detail of a camel-like animal.

Some scholars have posited that this imagery was based on descriptions in travel accounts about other parts of the world and that *Jave la Grande* offered a convenient space on which to present such aspects. Some have suggested that the natives, the huts

and animals evoke the descriptions given by Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512) and Antonio Pigafetta (ca. 1480–ca. 1534) of what they saw in Central and South America. Whether or not the imagery was sourced from one or more travel accounts, it is clear that portraying *Jave la Grande* populated by naked 'others' hunting, gathering and living a primitive existence characterized the 16th century European view of a people living without an awareness of God, similar to those described by King Duarte over hundred years earlier. At a time when the French crown sought to establish an overseas empire not possessed by another European monarch and in light of Francois I's recent views regarding the possession of newly discovered land both *La Terre Australle* and *Java la Grande* are depicted as awaiting possession. Recognizing the French king's duty to spread the Catholic faith, the imagery in *Jave la Grande* suggests there was a political intent. As a Catholic monarch, it was the French king's duty to civilize the barbarous people and extend the realm of Christianity and in so doing, take possession of the vast landmass in the vicinity of Portugal's highly envied East Indies.

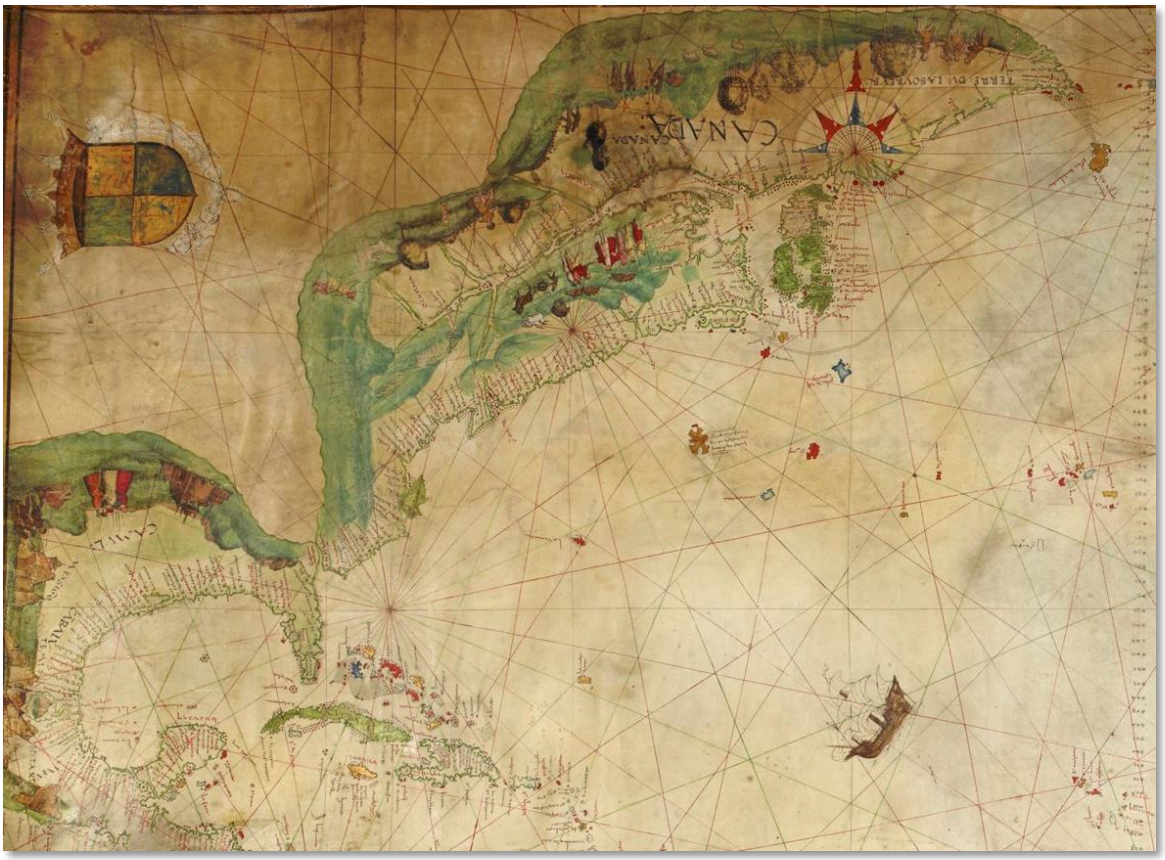
Date: 1542-4

Location: British Library Add. MS 5413

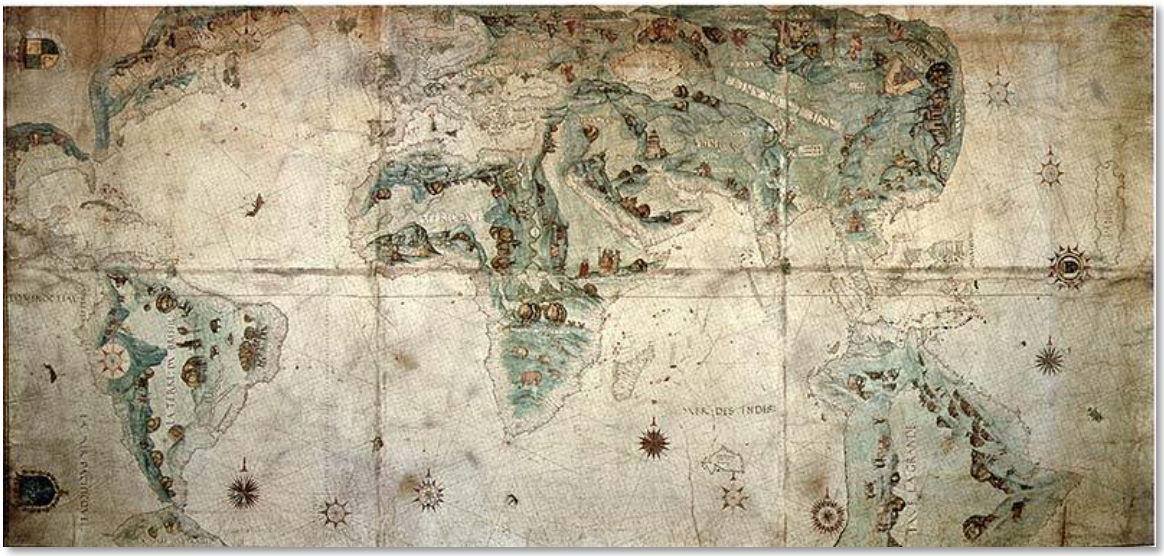
Reference:

*Akeroyd, Catherine, "Southern Continent Imagery: World Maps, 1527–1619", Dissertation, August 2022. Doctor of Philosophy at The Australian National University, pp. 101-106.

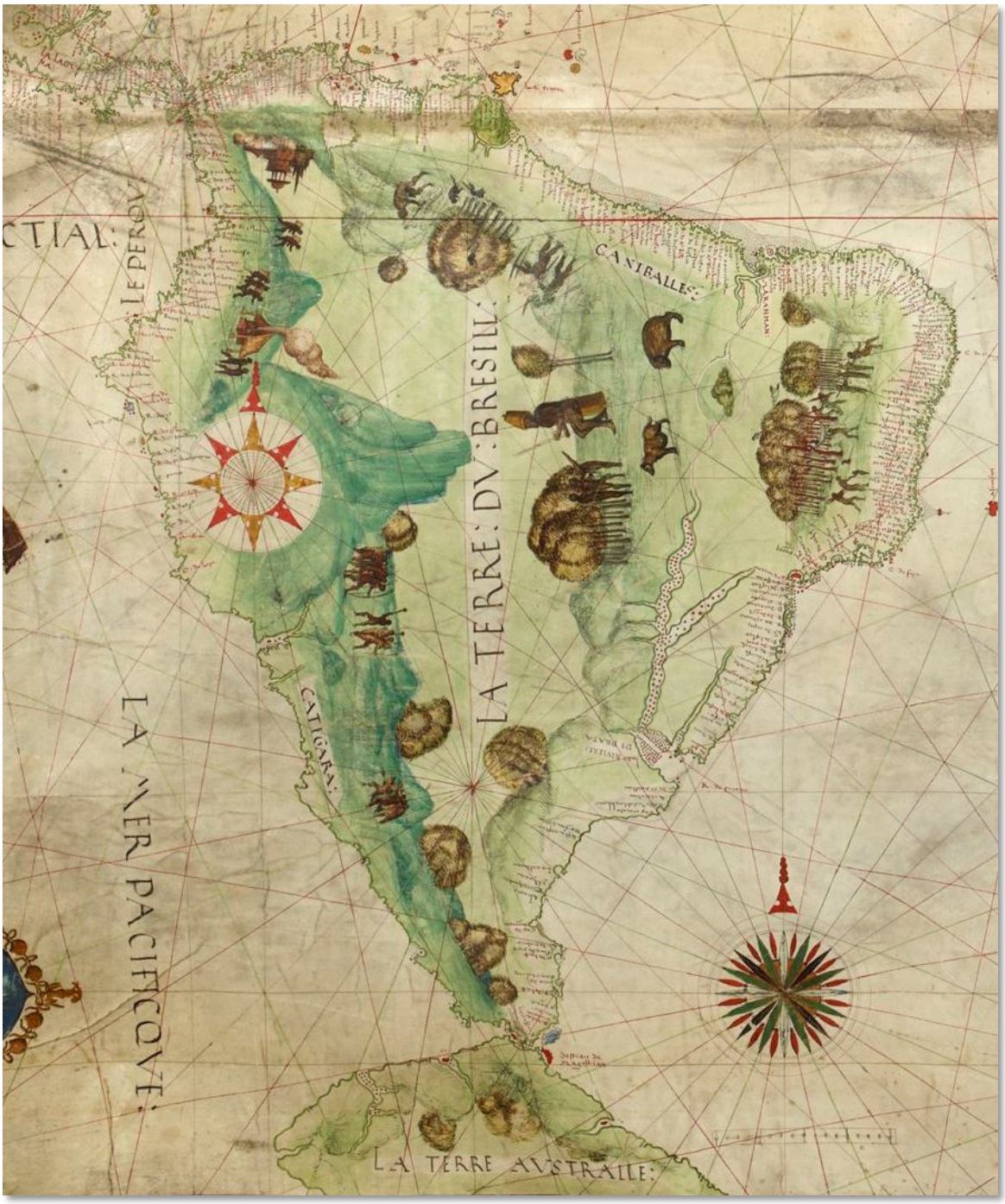
King, Robert, *Mapping Our World, Terra Incognita to Australia,* National Library of Australia, 2014, pp. 7881.



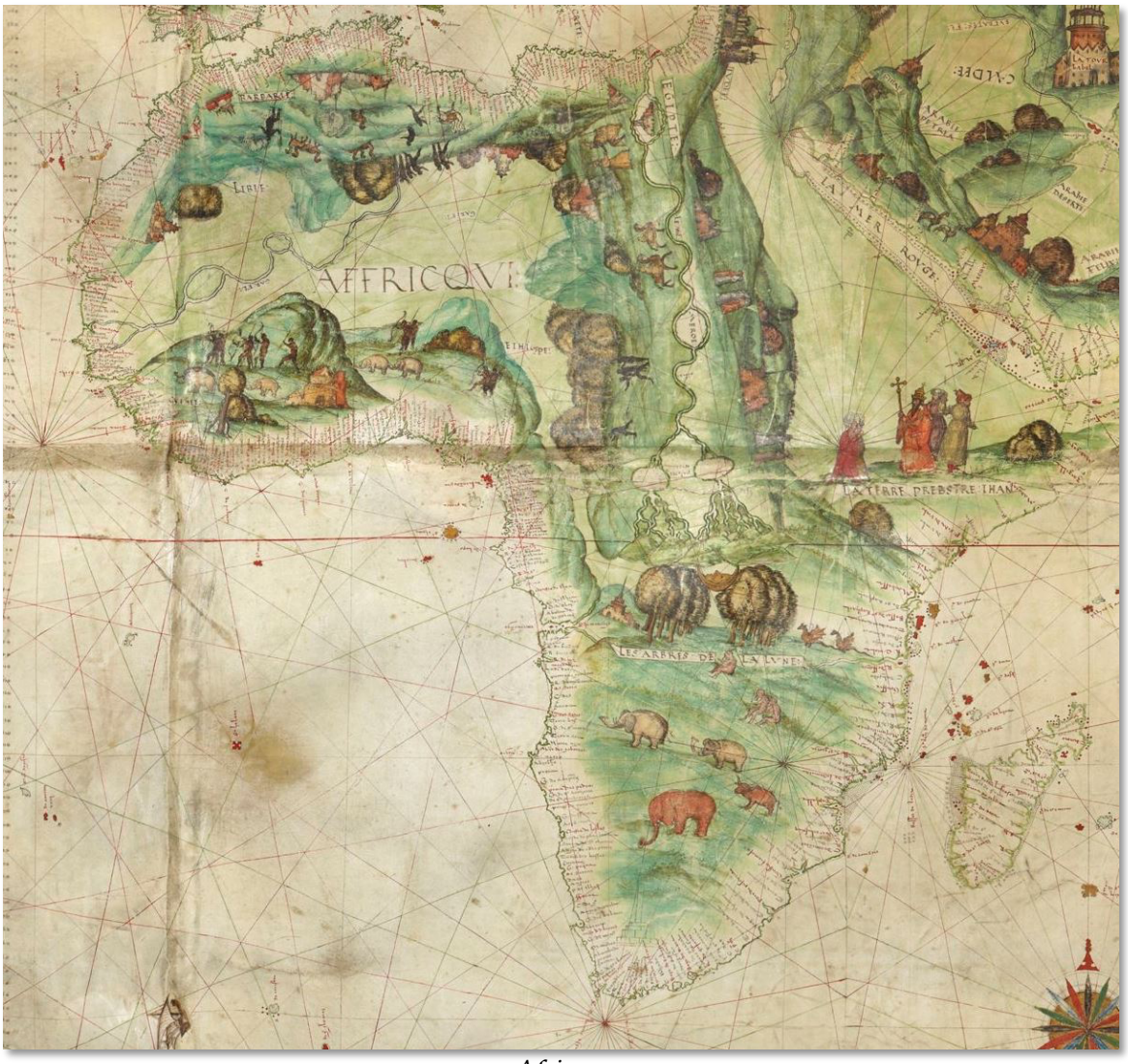
Detail: North America, Sea of Verrazano (re-oriented with North at the top)



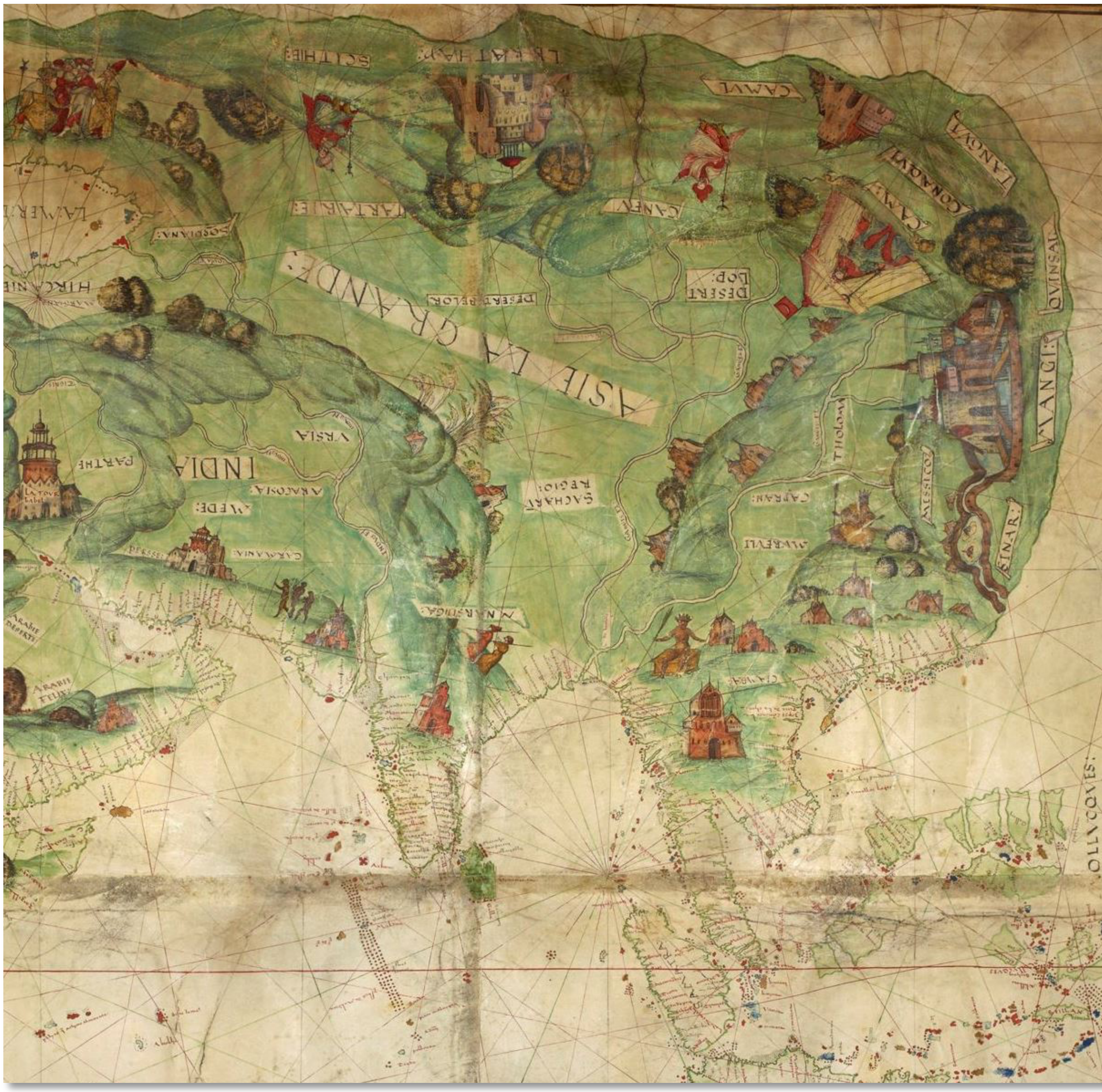
Re-oriented with North at the top



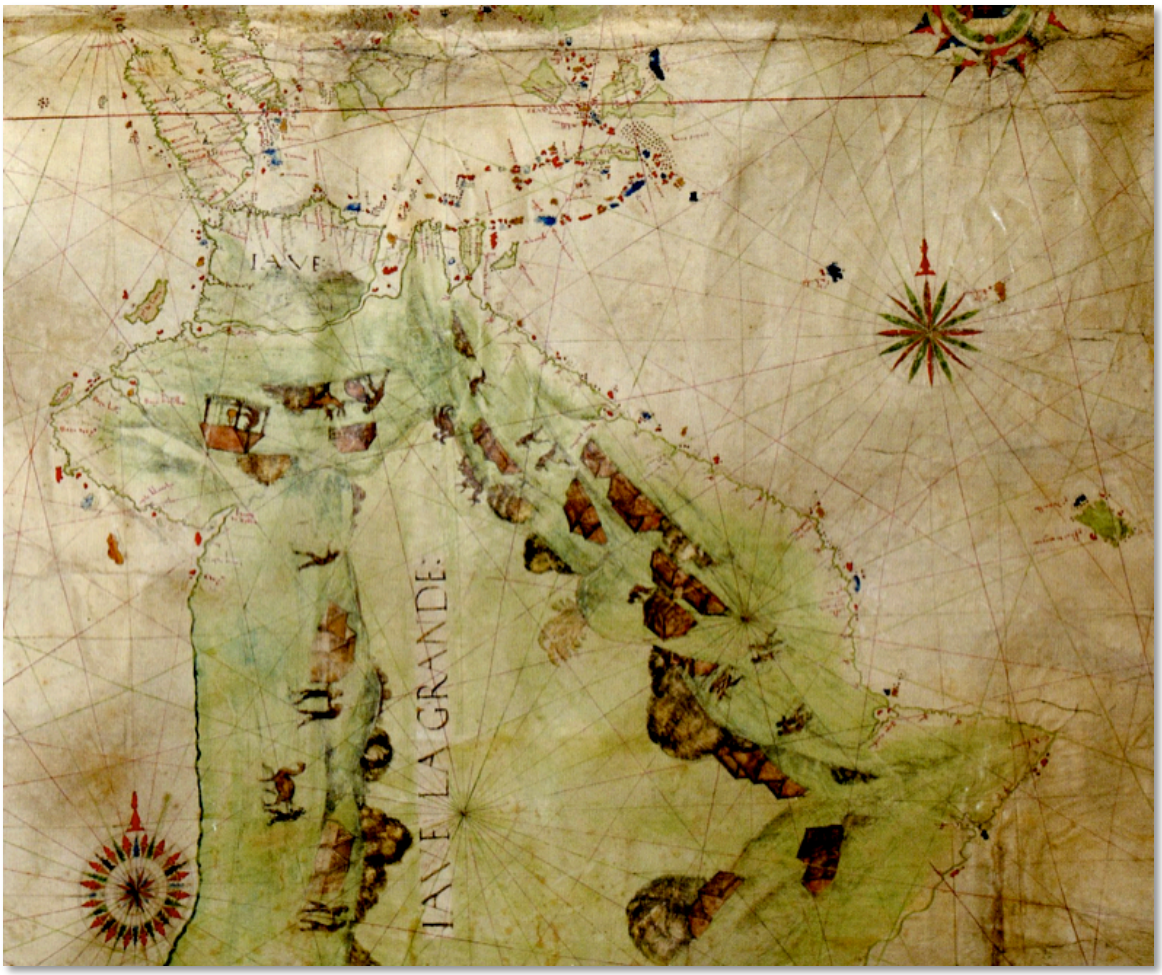
South America



Africa



Asia



Java La Grande