



*Mapamundi Realizado Por El Cartografo Real De Felipe Ii En 1588.*

**Author:** Christian Sgrooten.

**Location:** Biblioteca Nacional-Coleccion. Madrid. Spain.

Christian Sgrooten, 1532-1608, was a German cosmographer in the service of Philip II of Spain, who appointed him royal cartographer in 1557. Comparable to Gerardo Mercator, he was one of the most notorious geographers of his time. His most important work, the *Orbis terrestris*, consisted of 38 maps of the Netherlands and Germany.

Christian was born in Sonsbeck, son of a notary and notary public of the city, Peter Sgrothen - probably originally from Brabant. He worked as a painter and cartographer in Kalkar on the Lower Rhine, where he acquired citizenship rights in 1548 and bought a house on the market in 1553. There he married the daughter of an innkeeper, Agnes van Bedber, by whom he had at least two children. In 1555 Sgrothen made his first map of the Lower Rhine area, and on December 2, 1557 he entered the service of King Philip II of Spain as royal cosmographer "Geographus Regiae maiestatis Hispaniae". The Brussels government initially entrusted him with the mission of mapping the Dutch provinces and neighboring regions. Sgrothen wandered throughout Germany, and from 1568 he began with his main work, the map of the Holy Roman Empire, which he made in two versions, in 1572/73 and 1592, never published. He died in 1603 in Kalkar and was buried in the church of the Dominican convent.

The first time Christian Sgrooten's name is mentioned was in 1557 when he printed a map of *Gelderland*. In 1568, the Duke of Alba (1507-1582), commander of Philip



II of Spain for the Netherlands, ordered him to draw all the maps of the provinces, regions, cities which then belonged to the Spanish crown. .

He thus entered the service of the King of Spain and produced for him two atlases comprising maps of the Netherlands. The first atlas, dating from 1573, is now kept at the Royal Library of Belgium. This atlas contains 38 maps of European regions, from Ireland to Austria . The second made from 1592 is kept at the National Library of Spain in Madrid. This atlas, in addition to the maps contained in the previous publication, includes maps of other regions of the world.



The atlas *Orbis terrestris* is the most important work of Christian Sgrooten and one of the jewels of universal cartography. It was completed in 1592 and is dedicated to Philip II, King of Spain. It is composed of thirty-eight maps of the Netherlands and Germany. They are large format and reproduce, at different scales, the European lands of the empire.

Each map occupies two folios each and are accompanied by explanatory texts on separate sheets or in cartouches. The representation of the hydrographic network is numerous and very detailed, the relief appears by mounts of profile and shading, and the geographical accidents are indicated with great precision. The populations are indicated by sets of buildings, arriving in important cities to form small plans with representation of notable buildings in some cases. Toponymy, very abundant, uses local and Latin names.

The atlas is illuminated in green and ocher tones for the lands, and blue for seas and rivers, enhanced with touches of gold. Spread across the different territories there are small shields miniatures, and in the sea and the mouths of the rivers sail different types of boats. The cartouches, which appear on all maps, contain titles and explanatory texts, are very varied and brightly colored and are profusely decorated with floral and zoomorphic elements.

Two manuscript versions are known from this atlas: that of the National Library of Spain and that preserved in the Royal Library of Brussels, dated in 1573, with the same number of maps, but of smaller size and that could probably be a preparatory atlas of the preserved in Madrid.

One of the main sources on which Sgrooten relied for his work are the maps and plans of Jacob van Deventer. He made many corrections and clarifications as well as the description of routes. The maps contained in these two atlases possessed a high degree of precision.







China





Japan