**Title:** *De Orbis Situ ac descritione* 

Date: 1526-1530

**Author:** Franciscus Monarchus [Francois Le Moyne/Francis the Monk]

**Description:** Each of these two colored spheres measures 6.6 x 6.6 cm, and were engraved on separate wooden blocks. They belong to the treatise *De Orbis Situ ac descriptione ad Reuerendiss D archiepiscopum Fanormitanum, Francisci, Monachi ordinis Franciscani, epistola sane qua luculenta . . . [A very exquisite letter from Francis, a monk of the Franciscan order, to the most reverend Archbishop of Palermo, touching the site and description of the globe]; with a colophon reading <i>Excudebat Martinus Caesar, expensis honesti viri Rolandi Bollaert* . . . [Martinus Caesar prepared this at the expense of the upright man Roland Bollert]. Wherein the misconceptions of Ptolemy and other geographers are dispelled. This work also concerns the newly-discovered lands, seas, and islands which was written during the period between 1526 and 1530, by a Belgian monk called Franciscus Monachus, but whose real name seems to have been Francois Le Moyne, and who is said to have been from Malines.

Its two small woodcut maps representing the world in hemispheres, respectively the Old and the New World, are of striking historical interest, while the text contains many references that are of importance for the light they cast upon the geographical opinions of the time respecting the New World. Here, as noted, the New World is first represented on a map as having distinctly an Asiatic connection, the southern continent (South America) being separated from the northern only by that narrow strait which we find so prominently represented on the *Maiollo* map of 1527 (#316), and there called *stretto dubitoso* [doubtfully close]. It is also the first printed map to show the Strait of Magellan.

On his map, Monachus divided the world into two separate imperial hemispheres according to his understanding of the *Treaty of Tordesillas*. Across the top of the eastern hemisphere is the heading *Hoc orbis Hemisphaerium cedit regi Lusitaniae* [This hemisphere of the world falls to the King of Portugal] and, across the top of the western hemisphere, *Hoc orbis Hemisphaerium cedit regi Hispania* [This hemisphere of the world falls to the King of Spain]. It was in this hemisphere that Monachus had positioned the Moluccas.

In *De orbis situ* Monachus justified this placement by drawing attention to a passage from Maximilianus Transylvanus's (ca. 1490–ca. 1538) *De Moluccis insulis* [Of the Moluccas Islands], published in Cologne in 1523. Monachus explained that, according to Transylvanus, the Moluccas 'are in the sea called variously the *Mar del Sur* [South Sea]' and were all 'in the portion and dominion of the King of Spain, except for Java and Porne or Borneo, of which a part toward the west is subject to the King of Portugal, the part which faces east being subject to the King of Spain'.

Beyond his placement of the Moluccas, Monachus also addressed another area of potential territorial significance – the southern continent. Early in his treatise, Monachus contradicted the fifth-century Christian theologian Saint Augustine (354–430 AD). In Book 16, Chapter 9 of his *De civitate dei* [City of God], Augustine was uncertain about whether the southern hemisphere was covered by water or was dry land. In contrast, Monachus insisted that despite Saint Augustine's acumen, 'experience and the sense of our eyes clearly prove the contrary'. Monachus argued that the other side of the world was vast and unlikely to be covered in water.

The rest of the austral coasts are still hidden in obscurity, however to me it seems very likely that that part of the Earth is not covered and overspread by the Ocean. Indeed, it is conjectured and argued that vast and extensive regions and islands lie there, but because

of the distances between places and the infertile nature of the soil, they are less frequented.

Has it ever been heard of since the creation of the world that a fleet has circled the whole Earth? But this has been allowed to come to pass by the gods above under the auspices of Charles Caesar. It went so far as to glimpse the Antarctic pole, unknown lands, seas, people beyond the Equator, the very existence of whom was not long ago a matter for continual conjecture. But by the explorations of our Caesar a huge part of the world has been uncovered, laid bare and revealed itself.

In addition, to the South, land has been found in two places south of America toward the South Pole, stretching in longitude 43 degrees westward, to latitude South sometimes to 54, sometimes 53, sometimes 55 degrees as the topography reveals. Moreover, in the year 1526, a land was discovered at 0 degrees longitude and 52 degrees South latitude, parts of which are empty of inhabitants.

For the boundaries of this entity, he used a straight line to represent Antarctica's unknown coastline and, where he had some information, an undulating line – thereby creating the visual illusion of a complete landmass, part of which is adjacent to the passage representing the Strait of Magellan. The unknown landmass is shown in both Spain's and Portugal's parts of the world.

Centered under the straight lines is an inscription 'hec pars or[b]is nobis navigationibus detecta nundum existit' [This part of the world has been brought to our knowledge through voyages, but is not yet fully revealed]. Beginning with 'hec pars or[b]is' [this part of the world], the reader's attention is directed to the unknown part of the land. The use of the words 'nobis navigationibus detecta' [brought to our knowledge] implies that, through certain voyages (e.g., the expeditions of de Hoces and Magellan), we know 'this part' of the world exists. The expression 'nondum existit' [not yet revealed] suggests that the land is known but it has not yet been seen. The word 'nondum' or 'not yet' is important to the whole statement as it signals the possibility of something that is expected to happen at some future time.

While these hemispheres cannot themselves be referred to as a "globe", they may serve to give us a general idea of the geographical representations on the globe, which, as appears probable, was at that time constructed by the author of the text. To the Ecclesiastical Prince, to whom Franciscus dedicated his little volume, information was sent concerning his globe on which he had drawn by hand a map of the world as he said, the reply to his letter containing the following statement, Orbis globum, in quo terrae ac maria luculenter depicta sunt, una cum epistola accepimus [We accept the globe of the world on which the land and the seas are elegantly depicted, together with the epistle]. Being a gift it would seem reasonable to conclude that the globe was not duplicated and offered for sale and that the example referred to was therefore probably unique. The text of the De orbis situ . . ., as it appears, was printed because it was thought there was much contained therein that was new and not in harmony with geographical ideas hitherto expressed. The first edition was undated, nor was the second dated, but it agreed in practically all particulars with the first excepting a slight alteration in the title. A third edition was issued in the year 1565, and is still known in many copies, of which Gallois gives an excellent reprint in his biography of Orontius Finius. It is in the first and second editions that the hemispheres appear; they are wanting in the third, but as a substitute therefore a small globe resting on a base appears on the verso of the title page, which in its general features may be a representation of Franciscus' globe.

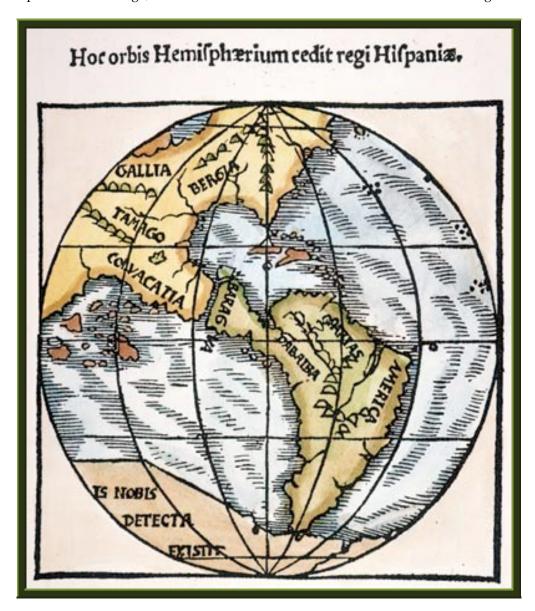
In the mappamundi both North and South America are depicted from the Arctic regions to the Strait of Magellan, and westward; with no other break than a narrow strait which severs the Isthmus of Darien [present-day Panama]. But near the equator, the coastline, instead of continuing its course towards the north, is carried westwardly until the "New World" discoveries are made to merge with Asia. This small and simple mappamundi is of some importance in the history of American maps, even though it is based upon retrograde notions which are so unexpected and was prompted by motives much more hypothetical than scientific. It must be said at the outset that Franciscus Monachus expresses his opinion, as regards the absolute connection alleged by him to exist between the New World and the Old, north of the equator, in opposition to the geographical configurations which are exhibited in the Lusitano Germanic maps of Caveri, Waldseemüller and Ruysch (#307, #310, #313) for the land area between Greenland and Central America. Monachus, for instance, describes the cartography of the German geographer Ruysch (as commented upon by Marcus Beneventanus) to be entirely erroneous with respect to the relationship between Asia and America, as well as the separation of North and South America about the Tropic of Capricorn. The following is an excerpt from the *De Orbis Situ*, in translation:

Then we have Marcus Benevent. Although he pretends to have taken into account the new discoveries and data, and to have endeavored to complete and correct diverse accounts of voyages, I do not share his opinion; for he exhibits the sea as separating the lands situated beyond the zone of the Capricorn from the regions lately discovered. The majority of people entertain the same belief relative to the western countries recently found, which they think are separated from the eastern regions by a sea. I hold a contrary opinion, and in the present description, I demonstrate that all navigations which start from the west, lead to the eastern countries, and that, in general, Asia, Africa, Europa, and particularly the Culvacanian India [that is, the country discovered by Hernando Cortes], as well as at the north, Sweden, Russia, Tartaria, the Baccalaos and Terra Florida, all of which [although] vast regions separated by very great distances, are connected with each other by a continuous tract of country, and an uninterrupted route; and that America itself is joined to the eastern regions and to Calvacania; though the latter fact is not yet proved absolutely. Perhaps this is not today unknown to the Spaniards.

In other words, Franciscus Monachus rejects the configurations set forth by the *Lusitano Germanic* map tradition outlined by the historian Henry Harrisse, and especially as expressed by Ruysch in his *mappamundi* (#313); furthermore Monachus reproves Ruysch for separating North from South America in the latitude of the Tropic of Capricorn; and for placing an ocean between the west coast and the Asiatic regions. He further says that this disconnection between the two American continents, and the existence of a sea between the New World and the Old, are notions shared by the majority of people.

The erroneous idea that America was only a prolongation of Asia, sprung, according to Harrisse, not only from Columbus' initial proclamations, but also from Peter Martyr's descriptions, which Monachus at once interpreted as proving that the countries lately discovered by Cortes were not only connected westward with the Old World, but also at the north with the *Baccaalaos*. As to the identity existing between those new regions and the east coast of Asia, in the opinion of the Belgian monk, it is an absolute fact that:

The *Culva* or *Culvacana* of Hernando [Cortes] is the province in which is situated the residence of the Emperor of the East. In other accounts of voyages, it is also called *Cataya* or *Cathay*. Its modern name is *Themistetam*, or *Tenostica*, formerly *Quinsay*, which Odoric calls *Themisan*. This author is nearer the truth.... North of *Culvacania* spreads *Thamacho*, formerly called *Tangut*. In former times, *Tevis* was known as *Tebet* or *Cibet*. The name of the province of Messigo, was celebrated when the ancestors of Mansus were living.



We now understand why Mexico (i.e., *Culvacana*), in the family of maps initiated by Franciscus Monachus, forms part of the Asiatic world, and is placed between *Cathay* and *Mansi*, adjoining *Tamacho* and *Tangut*.

The western hemisphere contains nine names, two of which belong to Asia, viz.: [Mon]gallia, and Bergia, which is the Bargu of Marco Polo, placed by the Venetian traveler in the northeastern extremity of Cathay. The others are Tamago [Tamaho], Covacala [Calvacania, a name borrowed from Anghiera's account of Yucatan], Barag [Veragua, from Columbus' fourth voyage near present-day Panama], Dabaiba, and America.

Small and incomplete as the map is, it presents considerable interest as being one of the earliest maps now existing that shows North America, south of the parallel of Newfoundland, represented as a mere prolongation of Asia and where the northeast coast, according to true geographical conceptions, exhibits an unbroken coastline from Labrador to Florida.

In contrast to the previously outlined disagreement between Monachus and Ruysch, the former states on numerous occasions his conviction that Ruysch was his source for much of his cosmographical data, particularly for the northeastern regions. Harrisse also proposes that Monachus was familiar with and influenced by the now lost globe of 1523 by Schöner (#328), which doubtless united at the east, the entire coastline with the seaboards of the Gulf of Mexico, as that was a necessity after joining westward America with Asia. It should be added, however, that Schöner derived the idea of the connection imagined by him to exist between the two worlds from the account recently published of Magellan's voyage; while Franciscus Monachus clearly says that the details of the conquest of Mexico just made known, are the source from which he inferred the identity supposed by him to exist between Asia and America.

On the verso of the 14<sup>th</sup> leaf Monachus presents the following passage: (in translation) Moreover, in the year 1526, a land has been discovered by 0 degrees longitude, and 52 degrees south latitude, which is not inhabited. The other parts of that austral country are yet in the dark. What is that austral country beginning on a line with the initial meridian, and in such extreme southern latitude, which Monachus says was discovered in 1526? The latter date can only be a lapsus pennae, according to Harrisse, as no such discovery in that year is on record. As to the country itself, we have only to compare its delineation and position in Franciscus' woodcuts with the Antarctic land in the various globes of Schöner, to see at a glance that it can only be the region on which the Nüremberg mathematician Schöner has inscribed, in 1533, the legend: Terra Australis recenter inventa, sed nondum plene cognita [Terra Australis recently was found, but not yet fully known] (#328).

The difference is that Franciscus makes another *lapsus* in inserting in his map the following statement: *This part of the world has not yet been discovered in our navigations*. Franciscus evidently meant that the country had not been entirely explored or made known, since he says so explicitly in his text, adding even a latitude and a longitude, and configures the region in his map. That austral land is the one which Schöner had already depicted in his globes of 1515 and 1520, and named, first *Brasilie Regio*, and then *Brasilie inferior* (#328); but on which, in consequence of Magellan's discovery, he inscribes afterwards - apparently so early as 1523 - the legend conveying the information that the country had been recently discovered, and was yet imperfectly known. Now, Schöner must have constructed a number of globes between 1523 and 1533; and it may be that Franciscus saw one, made in 1526, which led him to adopt the latter date as his interpretation of the *recenter inventa* in connection with the austral land. If so, says Harrisse, the *De Orbis situ* may have been printed in or shortly after 1526.

This small production seems in more ways than one to have influenced Oronce Fine, whose *Nova*, et integra universi Orbis Descriptio, dated 1531 (#356), is normally found in the

Grynaeus, *Novus Orbis*, of Paris, 1532 (#353). In that beautifully executed double-cordiform map of Fine, the southern continent is given the name by which it was to be generally known for more than two centuries, *Terra Australis* [Land of the South]. In many particulars, as in the portrayal of a *Terra Australis*, the double-cordiform Mercator world map of 1538 followed the example set by Fine, as at a later period did the great Mercator nautical chart of 1569 (#406). To realize the extent to which belief in the Antarctic continent renewed itself in the imaginations of geographers after the Magellan voyage, it is necessary only to run through Nordenskiold's *Periplus* and *Facsimile-Atlas*. An extraordinary statement of the theory at a relatively early period is found in its portrayal in the *Periplus* in the great world map of Pierre Desceliers, of 1546 (#378), formerly known as the *Mappemonde de Henri II*. In the *Facsimile-Atlas* one observes an extensive representation of the continent in the maps of Thomaso Porcacchi, 1572, Mercator, 1587, Joannes Myritius, 1590, Cornelis de J ode, 1593, and Matthias Quadus, 1608.

In the wake of Magellan's voyage, among the first wave of printed maps incorporating the new data was this map by Franciscus Monachus of 1527. The most arresting element of the map is the southern section between Africa and South America where the southern continent is tentatively delineated by means of straight lines. By sectioning off this enormous grid of space Monachus is asserting that it is within this region that the southern continent exists, but that the necessary information to sketch the contours of its coast is yet to be attained. This message is conveyed visually as well as through the inscription annotating this part of the map, which translates as: "This part of the world, not yet discovered by navigators, exists." If yet undiscovered, how does Monachus know it exists? The answer is in the image. Flanking the strait lines are the familiar irregularities of a coastline. In particular, the southern continent is depicted as the land to the south of the strait discovered by Magellan, clearly communicated by the fact the coastline is here contiguous with South America. It is that one piece of information that allowed Monachus to extrapolate an entire continent, occupying up to 50° of latitude and 360° of longitude. Thus, though Monachus adopts a cautious cartographical approach to depicting the unknown regions, the presence of that single item of empirical data transforms the southern continent from cosmographical fancy to geographical reality. Indeed, that single piece of empirical data was capable of standing in for the entire southern continent—it was a proxy for the rest of the southern continent's geography then unavailable to Europeans.

As stated by Alfred Hiatt, to understand further the ambiguities of the situation of the hypothetical *Terra Australis* on the brink of exploration, evangelization, and colonization it is necessary to turn to a political tract of a more narrowly propagandistic kind, Franciscus Monachus' *De orbis situ ac descriptione*, printed in Antwerp c. 1527-30. The title page of *De orbis situ* is illustrated by this rough woodcut world map in two hemispheres, divided so as to show the demarcation of the globe between Spain and Portugal according to the *Treaty of Tordesillas*. A discrete southern landmass appears on both hemispheres, with the legend: 'this part of the world revealed to us by voyages is not yet manifest' [hec pars orbis nobis navigationibvs detecta nundum existit]. The work itself originally accompanied a globe made in the atelier of Gaspard van der Heyden for Franciscus' patron Joannes Carondelet, the Archbishop of Palermo and counselor to Maria of Hungary, who was resident in Mechelen. *De orbis situ* is a mixture of geographical treatise and imperialist propaganda in support of the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, Charles V. Its ostensible task is to explain the differences ('dissonantia') between

Franciscus' image of the world and the texts and tradition of previous geographers. He therefore explains that the description of Ptolemy has been corrected in 'our region' and in the Indian sea by virtue of Portuguese exploration, and that 'whatever remains of the world in the east or the south either needed to be corrected or supplemented' [[qluicquid restat terrarum orbisque in ortum, aut austrum, vel castigandum fuit, vel supplendum]. Franciscus is also at pains to explain the overturning of the practice of centering maps on Jerusalem, contending that this practice was metaphorical and symbolic. At the same time, the treatise presents contemporary geographic debate as fluid and ongoing, arguing that America is in fact connected to Asia, a formation represented on the accompanying map, and attempting to reconcile the reports of the far east by authors such as Marco Polo and Mandeville with the accounts of western explorations provided by Hernan Cortes and Peter Martyr. Towards the end of the work its imperial agenda becomes manifest: Franciscus launches into a paean to Charles, the essence of which is that, in conquering the antipodes, the Emperor has excelled Alexander the Great, Pepin, Charlemagne, and a host of other classical, biblical, and medieval rulers; this achievement, Franciscus suggests, was prophetically announced. Of particular importance here is Franciscus' insistence that the Moluccas, subject of intense conflict between Spanish and Portuguese, fall on the Castilian side of the line of demarcation, a belief represented on his map, and presumably also on the accompanying globe.

The issue of demarcation was of at least theoretical importance for that part of the world as yet unexplored. Thus Franciscus notes the emerging contours of the southern land, and laments the lack of knowledge of this region:

the remainder of the southern coast lies even now in darkness, however to me it seems very likely that that part of the earth is not covered and enveloped by ocean. Indeed conjectures and arguments hold that vast and open islands and regions lie there, but less renowned on account of the distance between places and the infertile nature of the soil.

The implication of the imperial interest in this territory has been well established by the passages that precede it in the work, which extol the greatness of the emperor in terms of geographical achievement and territorial conquest. Charles' power is destined to stretch to the ends of the antipodes, to achieve, in other words, the ultimate imperial ambition:

has it ever been heard said since the creation of the earth that a fleet circumnavigated the entire world? But God permitted this to occur under the guidance of Emperor Charles. He reached so far as to see the Antarctic pole, unknown lands, seas, people across the middle limit of the world, the very existence of which was not long ago a matter for continual conjecture. But by the explorations of our Caesar a huge part of the world opened far and wide, laid bare, revealed itself.

The key word in the description of the southern continent becomes, then, one absent from the above passage, but unambiguously present on Franciscus' world map: 'nondum'. The word signals delay, an element of future time within the representation of space. Mediating between the blankness of terra incognita and the seemingly inexorable progress of European exploration, nondum announces the provisional, incomplete status of the New World map. The imperial advance is underway, lands are invitingly baring themselves to the Emperor's gaze, but he and it have yet to reach out and incorporate the southern continent.

Just how long a land could remain 'not yet mapped' was to become a subject of some sensitivity in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Yet far from disappearing as a result of the

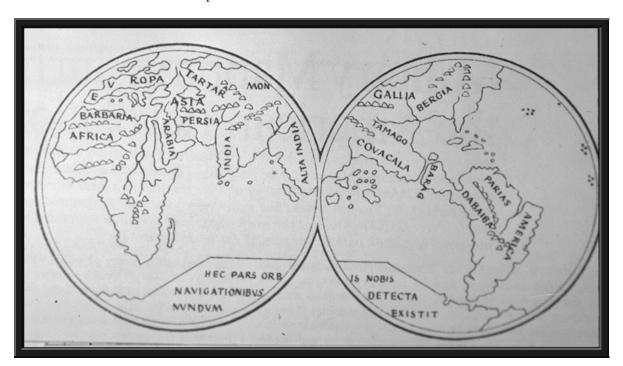
absence of secure reports of its existence, the fiction of the unknown southern land flourished. Representations of *Terra Australis* after 1530 increasingly seized upon the opportunities for signature, digression, and explanation offered in the a-cartographic space of unknown land. They also increasingly used unknown land as a site for opposition to the very practices of European expansion expressed on and by the world map.

Location: BL 568.b.23(1), British Library, London

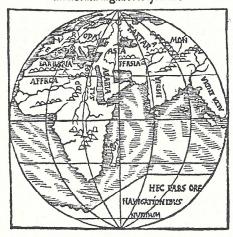
**Size:** two spheres measuring 6.6 x 6.6 cm each

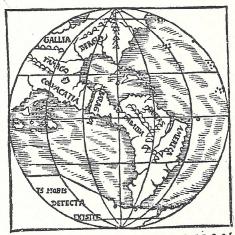
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- \*Skelton, R.A., Explorers' Maps, p. 73, Figure 45.
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SITV AC DESCRIPTIONE. AD REuerendiss. D. archiepis copum Panormitanum, Francisci, Monachi ordinis Fraciscani, epistola sanc qua
luculenta. In qua Ptolemæi, cæterorumás, superioru
geographorum hallucinatio refellitur, aliaís præterea de recens inuentis terris mari insulis. De ditione Papæ Ioannis. De situ Paradisi, co dimensione mi
liarium ad proportione graduum codi, præclara co
memoratu digna recensentur.





CVM PRIVILEGIO INVICTIS SI:
mi Romanorum imperatoris Caroli quinti, ad quin:
quenni u ne quis uel typis excudat, uel excudendos cu
ret hos codices geographicos, una cu globis, sub mul
eta amittendorum exemplari u, aliag, pæna Princi:
pis seueritate inserenda.

A 2

