

*Cosmographia Universalis et Exactissima iuxta postremam neotericorum traditio[n]em. Giacomo Gastaldi, Venice, 1561 [British Library maps C.18.n.1.]*

Almost all of the conjectures generated by the Europeans' geographical discoveries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century - conjectures that would continue to be accepted for the next one hundred and fifty years - make their first appearance in this 'universal' map. The world is entirely knowable, and open to the conquest of man - for which exclusive use, all believed at the time, it had been created. The sea is inhabited by mermaids and sea monsters, but European sailing ships are already traversing the globe.

The 'Strait of Anian' separates the unexplored extremities of Asia from the New World to the north of the Pacific, resolving the fifty-year-old debate between those who believed that the two continents were separate and those who considered them a single mass: the strait is slim enough to have allowed animals and humans to cross, and propagate, after the universal flood. Navigation between different parts of the world is

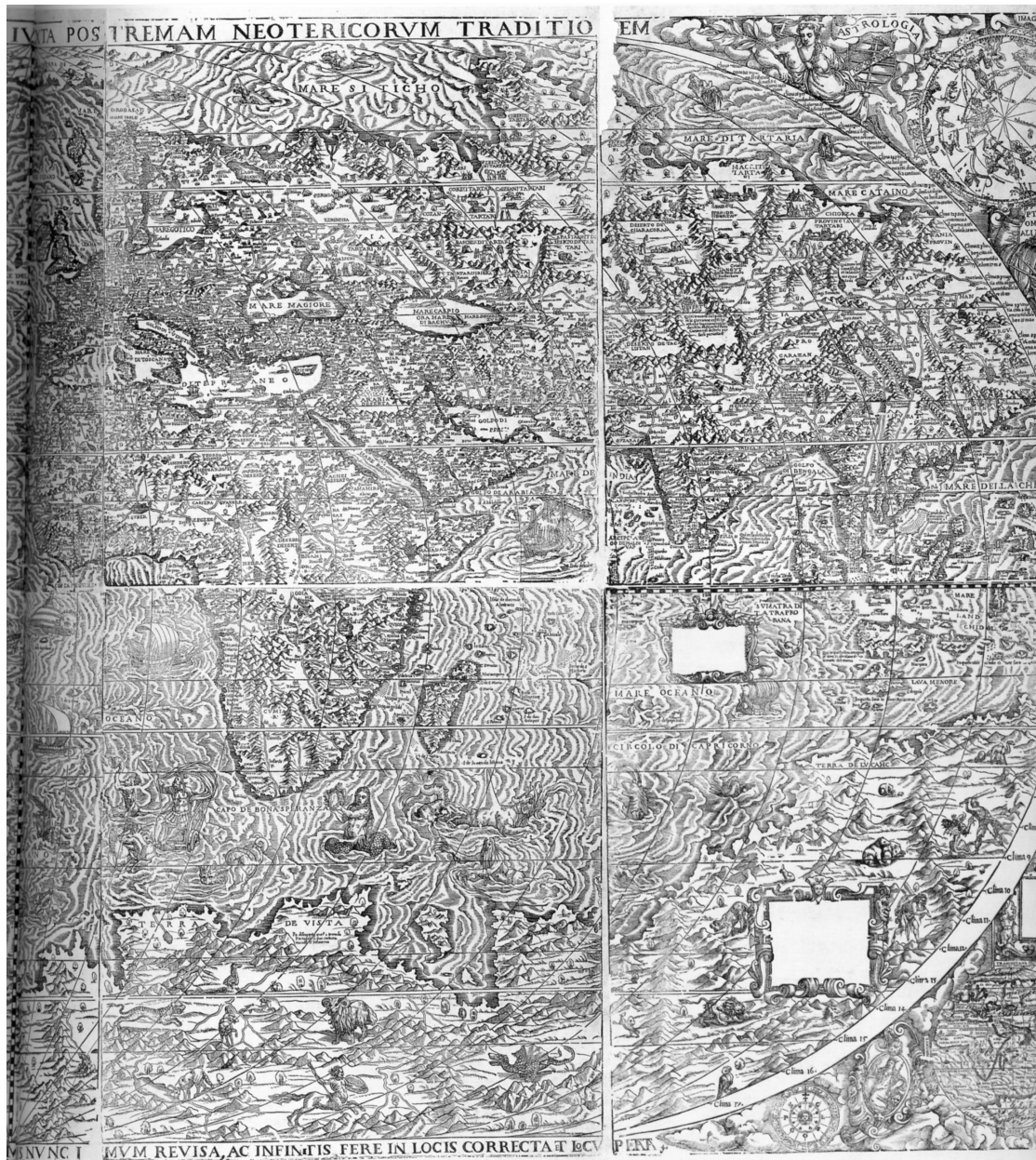
therefore possible and not too distant: the English have already started to search the northern seas for northwestern and northeastern passages towards the Pacific Ocean. A southern continent, still to be discovered but surely enormous, rich in exotic animals and monsters, is inhabited also by men, albeit savage, who could become Christians and subjects of the European kings, as had happened in America. In the unknown interior of central and southern Africa, the cartographer speculates on the internal structure of the vast river network, of which only the mouths are known.

The map is a synthesis of the opinions of the principal cartographers and geographers of the time, and based primarily on the works of that most important and prolific of the cartographers of the Italian Renaissance: Giacomo Gastaldi, active in Venice between 1546 and 1560. This map is technically very refined, and the conjectures it presents are based on the most recent geographical discoveries: its recognized sources, other than the maps drawn by Gastaldi himself in the preceding years, are the studies of non-European lands contained in *Nauigazione e viaggi* (1550-59), published in Venice by Giovanni Battista Ramusio.

In the four corners are small maps of the celestial hemispheres - including constellations - and of the terrestrial hemispheres: at the bottom right, a Mediterranean wind rose; at bottom left, an explanation of why Magellan's ships, circumnavigating the earth in a westerly direction, lost a day. The seven empty squares were probably destined for geographical symbols and stamps, and dedications.



*Creatures assumed to be in the unexplored Antarctica*



A culminating synthesis of Renaissance cartography is Giacomo Gastaldi's *Cosmographia universalis* [Universal Cosmography], published in Venice in 1561, a magnificent nine-sheet woodcut representing the Earth's globe. The Piemontese Gastaldi worked as a civic engineer for the Venetian republic and acquired a solid reputation for both the maps of his 1548 edition of Ptolemy's *Geography* and Ramusio's collections of geographical writings. For his world map he adopted Rosselli's oval projection, complementing it with other images. At the top, portraits of Strabo and Ptolemy stand symbolically for descriptive and mathematical geography, the two branches of ancient geography that were reunited in Renaissance maps, while personifications of cosmography and astronomy hold their respective instruments, an armillary sphere and a globe. Terrestrial globes and celestial charts adorn the corners, relating geography to cosmography. Gastaldi ordered this cosmographical representation of the world around

the city of Venice, represented with an allegorical personification and the lion of St. Mark, the symbol of the city's patron saint. Compiled from a multitude of published and unpublished sources Gastaldi had obtained from his friend Ramusio, this map made available to a large public coasts and islands mapped by Portuguese and Spanish sailors, relating them to ancient geographical knowledge. Similarly to Fra Mauro (#249), Gastaldi filled his world map with a plethora of qualitative details. Philip II's imperial ship crosses the Atlantic, marking Spanish ownership of Atlantic trade routes, while the *Strait of Anian*, a fictional sea passage between Asia and Africa, is prominently displayed for the first time (it will reappear in many later maps). Legends, cartouches, and inscriptions inform the viewer about the main geographic features of the mapped territory, the coordinates of its major cities, the main rivers and lakes, the mountain chains and the flat lands as well as the ethnography and history of their diverse peoples, their habits and beliefs, and the look of their dwellings and their costumes. These descriptive elements are represented on a larger scale than the mapped territory itself and are represented in perspective rather than in orthographic view.

Gastaldi's map was ostensibly different from Ptolemy's maps, but the difference involved not so much the cartographic accuracy of the mapped places or the extent of the known world (this would hardly be surprising), but rather its very content, which was both mathematical and descriptive.

#### References:

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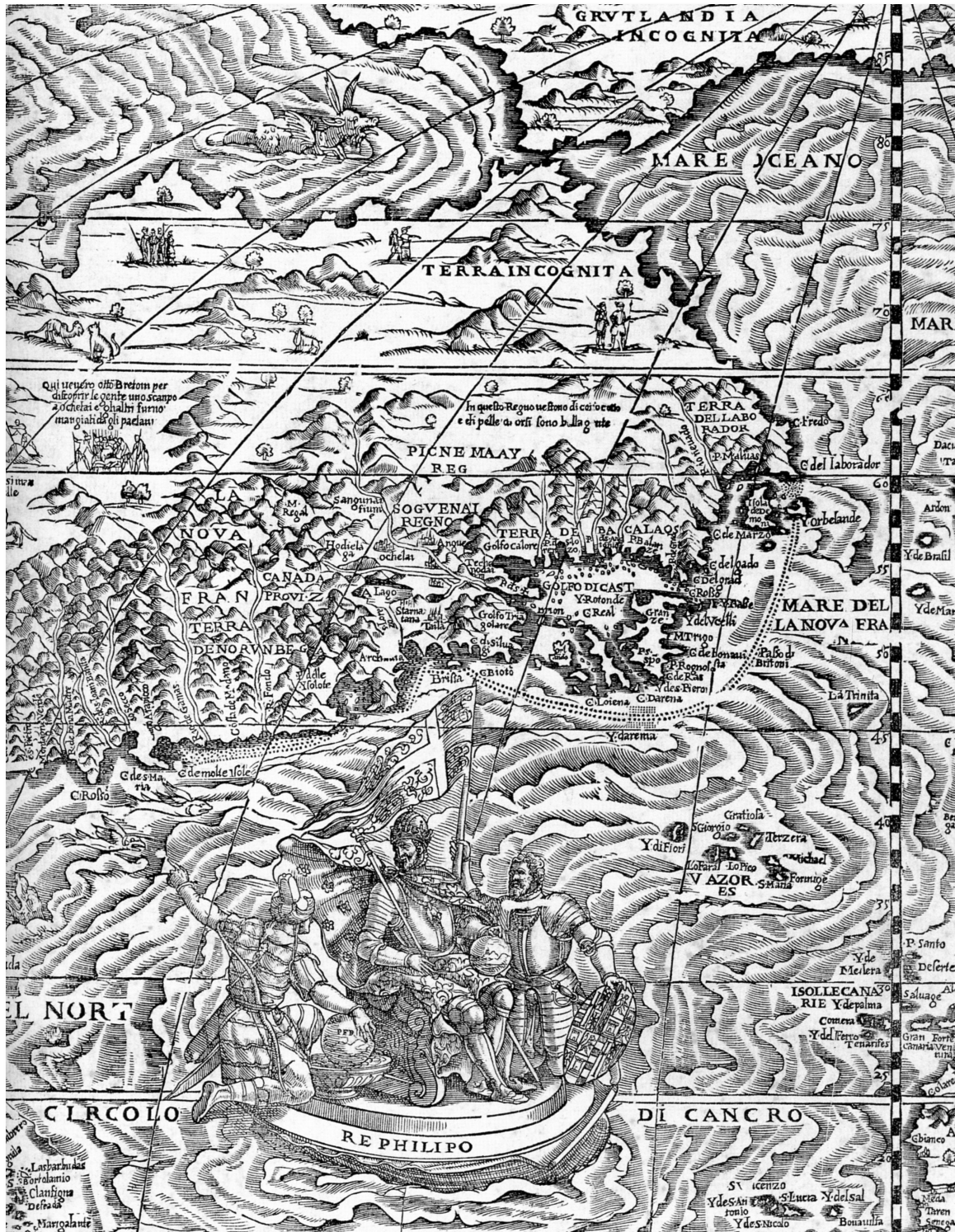




*The Strait of Anian and Isola di Giapan*



*Mythical Creatures; mermaid, minotaur, dragon, sea creatures*



*Detail: enthroned Philip II of Spain in the mid-Atlantic*