

Title: *The Nancy Globe*

Date: 1530-1540

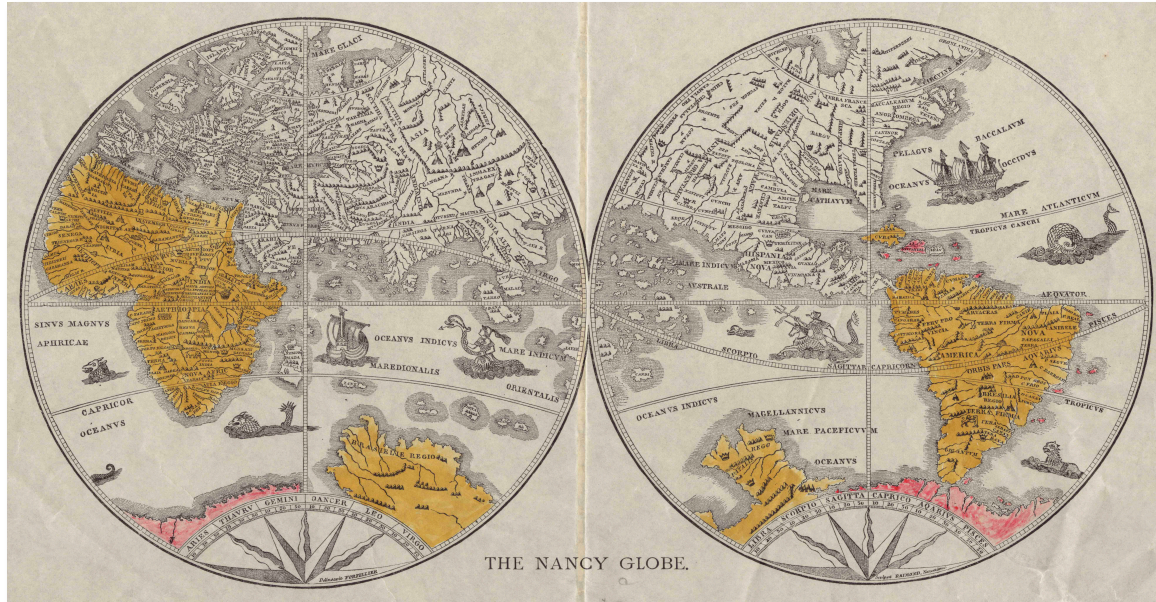
Author: (unknown)

Description: The Lorraine Museum of Nancy possesses this fine globe, neither signed nor dated, but which usually is referred to as the *Nancy globe*, and is thought to have been constructed during the years 1530-1540. It is a silver ball 16 cm (six inches) in diameter, divided on the line of the equator into hemispheres, and is supported on a small statue of Atlas. The equator, the tropics, the polar circles, the zodiac, and one meridian circle passing through the western part of Asia in the Old World and through the peninsula of Florida in the New World, are represented. It is an object of interest not only for its scientific value in giving us a geographical record of the period, but it is also of interest for its fine workmanship, having its land areas gilded and its seas blue enameled, in which sea monsters and ships of artistic design appear. We have the record that in the year 1662, Charles IV, Duke of Lorraine, presented it to the church of Notre Dame de Sion in his residence city, and that by this church it was long used as a *pyx* (i.e. a goblet). There is a striking resemblance of its land configurations, and of its geographical nomenclature to that of the *Gilt globe* (#344), of the *Paris Wooden globe* (#357), and of the world map of Orontius Finaeus of 1531 (#356). The New World is represented as a part of the Asiatic continent, and the central section of that region, to which we may refer as North America, is designated *Asia Orientalis* and *Asia Major*. To the east of these names are numerous regional names, conspicuous among which are *Terra Francesca*, *Hispania Major*, and *Terra Florida*. The Gulf of Mexico appears as *Mare Cathayum*. Mexico bears the name *Hispania Nova*, while the sea to the west is named *Mare Indicum Australe*. The South American continent is called *America Nova*, and very numerous names have been given to each of the regions, among which we find *Terra Firma*, *Papagelli*, *Terra Canibale*, *Parias*, and *Peru Provincia*. The large austral land bears the name *Brasielie Regio*, which name is placed southeast of Africa, and the name *Patalis Regio* appears southwest of South America.

The *Nancy globe*, in rich silver gilt, is perhaps the most beautiful of all the ancient globes. However its origin is not known. It appears to have been alluded to for the first time by Pere Vincent, who, in his *Histoire de l' Ancienne Image Miraculeuse de Nortre Dame de Sion* says that among the precious objects offered to the Virgin of Sion by Duke Charles IV was a very rich cup, in the form of a globe, which had been converted into a *Ciborium* [drinking cup]. Pere Trouillot, in a similar work published at Nancy in 1757, speaks of "a very rich cup representing the terrestrial globe, six inches in diameter, in which are perfectly cut and described all the countries, lands, kingdoms, seas, and rivers, as on a *mappemonde*, the lands being distinguished from the waters by a beautiful gilding and a celestial blue representing the waters". The writer goes on to say: "This cup is surmounted by an armillary sphere, with all the circles representing the heavens, the earth being in the middle, about the size of a walnut, the whole being supported by a nude Atlas, eight inches high, posed directly at the foot of the globe, this Atlas holding in his hands a Horn of Plenty, of his own height, the top being charged with all kinds of fruit around his head, which, together, support the globe and the sphere; the whole is of silver, properly gilt within and without, having the height of about eighteen inches."

The globe was presented at the shrine of the Virgin upon the occasion of the King's happy return from Germany to Lorraine. It was borne in solemn procession from Nancy to Sion, and there deposited with the Tiercelins. Upon the suppression of the religious houses it was carried back to Nancy and placed in the public library. Some one

having proposed to melt the instrument down for coinage, a commission was appointed to decide upon its value. The committee, however, wisely declared that it was worthy of a distinguished place among historic monuments and provided for its careful preservation.



A 1914 facsimile of the Nancy globe by Forfillier, Raimond and Nanceianus from the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

About the year 1835, Guizot, then Minister of Public Instruction, issued a *Circular to the Scientific and Literary Societies in the Departments*, urging the study of neglected or forgotten relics of this kind; whereupon certain members of the Royal Society of Science, Literature and Arts of Nancy turned their attention to the globe. Eventually the subject was specially committed to M. Blau, an Honorary Inspector of the Society, who had admired the globe as early as 1794, when it was in the possession of the Tiercelins. Securing the cooperation of M. Forfillier, who had constructed a very perfect globe, about ten feet in diameter, for the Public Library of Epinal, M. Blau had a careful representation of the *Nancy Globe* made on the stereographic projection, which was published in connection with his paper given in the "Memoires" of the Society for 1836, and separately during the same year. It is to the drawing made by M. Forfillier that we are indebted for our representation of the contents of the globe proper, though the general view of the instrument was made from an excellent photograph.

M. Forfillier's sketch does not vary at all from the globe, except where it was necessary by the transfer of designs from a gold or silver surface to paper. The work is very accurately done, and gives the orthographical errors of the original, which are of the class common to all the ancient globes, and, upon the whole, inevitable. M. Blau says that the gilding within and without, the arabesque designs, and its general beauty, leave nothing to be desired. The globe opens horizontally in two hemispheres, and may without difficulty be converted into a *Ciborium*, by the removal of the sphere of Ptolemy, and the substitution of a cross. Evidently the instrument has served this double purpose, and if so, it is easy to explain the loss of the globe of the size of a nut that was described as suspended within the armillary sphere. M. Blau observes that this loss is all the more

to be lamented, from the fact that, though he dismounted the instrument and searched carefully into every recess, he was unable to find anything to indicate its origin or the date of its publication. It has been conjectured that the date and name of maker were engraved on the little globe within the armillary sphere; but if this were so, the inscription is lost, like the belief in the astronomical system that the armillary sphere was designed to illustrate.

The only clew to the nationality of the maker of the globe is found in the names of the cardinal points engraved in small Roman capitals on the horizon of the Ptolemaic sphere. The resemblance of the names and characters to those of the cardinal points as given in Sherz's *German Glossary of the Middle Age* (Strasbourg, 1781), leads to the conjecture that the globe was made at Nuremberg, and that Charles IV when in Bavaria acquired it. It was evidently intended for some important person. M. Blau thought that it was a copy of a globe of the same size, for the reason that the maker does not appear to have been capable of reducing a large design. Charles must have taken an interest in such works, as would appear from the fact that his engineer, Jean L'Haste, dedicated to him *Sommaire de la sphere artificielle* (Nancy, 1624), in which he states, that after eight years of labor, he had engraved for his Highness both a celestial and a terrestrial globe in bronze of a large size.

The gilding of the globe, as already stated, separates the water very distinctly from the land. The water was formerly of a deep blue, and even today it appears a superbly chased brown, imitating the undulations of the sea when slightly agitated. The polar circles and the tropics are figured without graduation. The ecliptic, the equator and the colors are divided into 360 degrees, though they are not numbered.

The ornamentation indicates the taste of the earlier mapmakers, the ships and sea monsters being quite remarkable. *Zanzi*, for Zanzibar, in the Indian Ocean, betrays the influence of the earlier globes. The islands of the East are in a state of primitive confusion, several having been thrown in where no islands exist. In the countries bordering the Indian Ocean there are no indications of the progress of the 16th century

enterprises, which also helps to give the globe the appearance of an age that it does not possess. Much of this, however, may be referred to what appears to have been the ruling desire of the engraver, namely, the desire for artistic beauty, to secure that many words are abbreviated.

Around the South Pole is the great imaginary continent of the 1515 and 1520 *Schöner* (#328) and 1542 *Ulpius* (#367) globes and the 1569 map of Mercator (#406), which indeed forms so striking a feature on many of the early geographical representations. The origin of this representation is lost in the dim antiquity, when men exercised fancy in such a remarkable manner. In the east it extends northward to the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope, while in the west it reaches to an equal distance. At the Straits of Magellan Terra del Fuego is welded on to this vast continent, which would appear to be under the rule of crowned heads, whose subjects dwelt in tents.

Turning to the western world, it is found that, while the globe honors Vespucci, whose name is given to the New World, it is drawn in accordance with the



Columbian idea as respects those features that are false. Northern and Central America are represented as parts of Asia, while the rivers of India empty into the Gulf of Mexico, called *Mare Cathayum*. This region, as well as the east coast of North America, fails to show the progress of exploration. Yucatan, as on many maps, appears as an island. *Terra Florida* and *Baccalearum* are therefore still in Asia. In Florida there is no indication of the exploration of Cortes, while Cartier has no recognition in *Terra Francesca*, notwithstanding his voyages of 1534 and 1542.

The globe, according to B.F. de Costa, must have been made subsequent to 1540, since the Amazon, explored in 1539, is indicated, though, like the La Plata, still more definitely shown, it is given without the name. The *Sea of Parima* also appears to be indicated in connection with the Amazon, which would bring the date of the map down somewhat beyond 1540. The western coast of South America shows no explorations later than 1538-40, the rivers emptying into the sea south of the Tropic of Capricorn being the offspring of the imagination, in common with other features of the globe. The representation of Newfoundland, called *Corterealis*, is very poor, like the coastline from that point to the Gulf of Mexico, but the outlines of Greenland are quite tolerable, in addition to being interesting. Iceland lies in its proper position with respect to Greenland. The most of early geographical representations show the Northeast Passage, but on our globe the *Mare Glaciale* forms a *cul de sac*, and the land spreads over and around. In *Hispania Nova* the Spanish and Asiatic names are mixed together. Lower California is not indicated, yet it is clear that at the time the globe was made a great deal was known about the Pacific coast.

The ideas respecting the North Atlantic are, however, very backward, and nothing of striking interest is presented. In 1511 the maker of the *Lenox* globe (#314) repudiated the Columbian idea, yet upon the *Nancy* globe, which may be placed towards 1540, the theory of Columbus dominates. When Columbus, June 12, 1494, forced his companions to declare, under oath, that Cuba was a part of Asia, he struck a heavy blow at the progress of geographical knowledge. As respects himself, he proved that he was slow to accept original ideas. The engraver appears to have been acquainted with the Ptolemy maps of 1513, and he has drawn from it such names as *Caninor* and *Costal*, the latter being put for *Costa Alta*, the high coast, which is found on the so-called Cabot map as *Cesta Alta*. The only name of real interest is *Anorombega*, or *Norombega*, which first appears as *Aranbega* on the map of Verrazano, 1529 (#347). Many of the names are so disguised that a formal study would prove tedious. We may observe, nevertheless, that the great Antarctic continent, which was seldom wanting in such representations, appears in full proportions on the globe; while Africa has the customary lakes and rivers, showing that modern explorations are simply rediscoveries. In the North Polar Region the ideas of the period are indicated. As mentioned, the northeastern passage, which on the *Lenox* globe is open, in accordance with modern discovery, is closed up on the *Nancy* globe, and the designer indicates his belief in the *Pygmies* and the *Hyperboreans*.



As indicated, however, the maker of the globe appears to have been more deeply concerned in the artistic character of this semi-religious instrument, than in its true geographical character. Hence many very interesting discoveries are neglected, though well known at the time. In conclusion, we may say the most prominent feature is found in its embodiment of the false geography of Columbus, which was relinquished with the unwillingness that attended the abandonment of the Ptolemaic system of astronomy.

Location: Lorraine Museum of Nancy, France

Size: 6 inches/16 cm diameter

References:

Blau, M. *Memoires de la Societe Royal de Nancy*. Nancy, 1836. pp. xi-xiv, 107.

An excellent reproduction of the globe in hemispheres accompanies this article; Vincent, R. P. *Histoire de l'ancienne image miraculeuse de Notre-Dame de Sion Nancy, 1698*. This work contains the first description of the globe.

De Costa, B. F., *The Nancy Globe*. (In: *The Magazine of American History*. New York, 1881, pp. 183-187.) A representation of the globe in hemispheres is presented with this article, being a slightly reduced copy of the Blau illustration.

Nördenskiöld, A.E., *Facsimile Atlas*, p. 82.

*Nördenskiöld, A.E., *Periplus*, p. 159, Figure 74.

*Stevenson, E.L., *Terrestrial and Celestial Globes*, pp. 100-102, Figures 50 and 50b.

Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History*, Vol. II, p. 433, Vol. III, p. 214.

*illustrated







