

Mediterranean Cartographic Stories:
Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century
Masterpieces from the
Sylvia Ioannou Foundation Collection



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from the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation Collection***

Edited by
Panagiotis N. Doukellis



2019

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Introductory Remarks on Three Mediterranean Cartographic Stories: Spatiality, Identity, Maps

Panagiotis N. Doukellis

Suárez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes*, Book IV, ch. XLV (Lérida 1658)

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.

Jorge Luis Borges, 'On Exactitude in Science', *Collected Fictions*, trans. A. Hurley (London and New York 1998)

There is multiple symbolism in Borges' narrative: let us note his most important remark, which seems to refer to the relationship between the signifier and the signified; between the real and the fictitious. Identifying the one with the other has led to the obliteration of the poetic magic of the map and the rejection of the abstract function of the human mind and of the symbolic value of things. What is left then? A univocal, one-dimensional, totalitarian world? A world of perpetual present-time experiences bereft of memories and visions?

The cartographic documents around which the pages of this volume revolve appear to highlight the opposite of the choice of the 'Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography' referred to in the excerpt above. Their makers – Ottoman, Genoese and an unknown French traveller – studied and then represented specific geographic areas, having previously gathered and evaluated, each in his own way, specific data. Paying the appropriate attention to each case, they proceeded to map the Mediterranean and Cyprus; they proceeded to elaborate a transition from the sphere of reality to that of abstraction and poetic magic. They created two-

Maps of Islands, Map of the World

Map collections existed during the Middle Ages in two main forms, books of nautical charts and isolarii, but were not called 'atlas' until Gerardus Mercator's work at the end of the sixteenth century. The use of the name 'portolan atlas' for Cavallini's work is somehow abusive, insofar as manuscript portolan charts have nothing to do with Mercator's printed maps. However, 'atlas' is now commonly used for any collection of maps in a book; moreover, Cavallini knew the work of Mercator and Ortelius, and he consciously put together different kind of maps, in a specific order, which is, indeed, the basic system of any atlas.²⁰

The *magnum opus* of Mercator, completed after his death, is entitled *Atlas sive Cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura* [Atlas, or Cosmographical meditations upon the creation of the universe and the universe as created].²¹ It was a collection of printed maps concerning the whole known world, aimed to enlarge and correct the famous antique *Geographia* of Ptolemy. Together with the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* of his friend Abraham Ortelius, Mercator completely renewed the art of mapmaking and the representation of the world. Even before the preparation of the atlas, the Flemish cartographer and mathematician conceived a *carta ad usum navigantium*, published in 1569. This 'map for sailors' was constructed, for the first time, with a mathematical projection (the famous Mercator projection) in order to solve the inaccuracies of portolan charts in the context of world maps and extensive oceanic navigations. Although printed charts, drawn according to map projections and related to geographical latitude and longitude, were adopted at least since the world map by Mercator in 1569, the tradition of manuscript portolan charts was not definitively superseded by them. Manuscript maps of the Mediterranean remained and were used for more than a century, both as tools for navigation and objects of graphic appeal. It is also possible that one of their functions was considered to be as a 'meditation upon creation', suggested by Mercator from a longstanding tradition.²²

After the first three maps drawn in the portolan chart style, the following nine maps of the Cavallini atlas together form a sort of isolario with a single rose in the centre of each map. Each island is surrounded by decorative vessels and sea monsters. Contrary to the portolan charts, devoted to coastal topography, the islands are full of a great number of inland place names and show details of the landscape, such as fortresses, castles and churches, as well as sketches of mountains, lakes and rivers. The first isolario, the *Liber insularum Archipelagi* [Book of islands of the Archipelago], was compiled by Cristoforo Buondelmonti around 1420-1430 (see fig. 2). A Florentine priest, he was also a humanist fond of Greek knowledge,

20. J.-M. Besse, *Les Grandeurs de la Terre. Aspects du savoir géographique à la Renaissance*, Paris: ENS Éditions, 2003.

21. U. Schneider and S. Brakensiek (eds), *Gerhard Mercator. Wissenschaft und Wissenstransfer*, Darmstadt: WBG, 2015.

22. Besse, *Les Grandeurs de la Terre*, pp. 309-336; F. Lestringant (ed.), *Les Méditations cosmographiques à la Renaissance*, Cahiers V. L. Saulnier 26, Paris: PUPS, 2009.



Fig. 2.
Rhodes. Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber insularum Arcipelagi*, c. 1465. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Département des Cartes et plans, GE FF-9351 (RES), f. 11v.



Fig. 3.
Detail of fig. B (pp. 172-173), showing the compass rose.

In the centre, the mapmaker drew an eight-point compass rose without the names of the winds or the four cardinal directions, except for a fleur-de-lis pointing north (see fig. 3). Latitude is shown in fine lines of red and longitude in double lines of grey. The lines from the points of the compass rose to the edges of the chart were also drawn in red and are intersected by others that correspond to compass roses that have not been included.

At the bottom right, the mile scale was drawn horizontally. It is 86 cm in length, with 19 subdivisions of 4.4 cm, without any metric conversion provided. The 2nd, 5th, 8th, 11th, 14th and 17th subdivisions are divided into 5 equal segments marked with dots (see fig. 4).

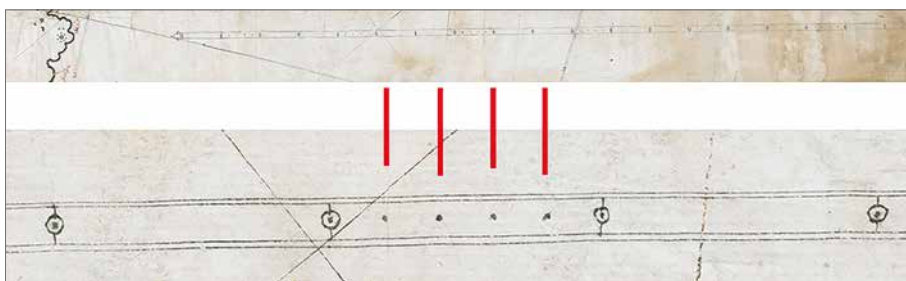


Fig. 4.
Detail of fig. B (pp. 172-173), showing the mile scale.

Drawing: The coastlines were drawn first in black ink, then inward in a thick line of a different colour by geographic area and then, at a short distance from the thick line, in a thin line of the same colour (see fig. 5). Shoals and shallow coasts are marked with small dots (see fig. 6). Reefs are marked with a cross, and large and dangerous rocky islets with a cross with four dots (see fig. 7). Rivers are marked in gold ink and lakes or lagoons by a circle enclosing a grid, also in gold ink. The depth is white (see fig. 8).

Drawing style: As in the maps by Piri Reis, the capes are emphasised using sharper peaks, as are even the slightest extensions of land into the sea. The bays are also rendered more vividly than in reality (see figs 9 and 10).

Script: The type of script used to write the place names is similar to the Naskh style of Arabic calligraphy, simplified and easy to read, without vowel symbols. The ink is red. Depending on what they are referring to, words were written in a different slant.

Labels: A slightly later user, perhaps even a contemporary one, pasted small paper labels next to the original names of large islands and major cities, on which, in the Latin alphabet and in black ink, he wrote the name of the respective place. Some

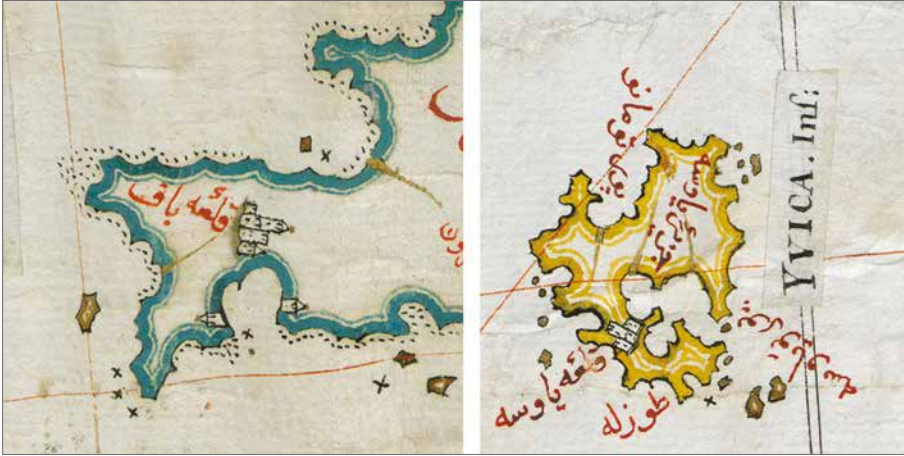


Fig. 5.
Detail of fig. B (pp. 172-173), showing the drawing technique.

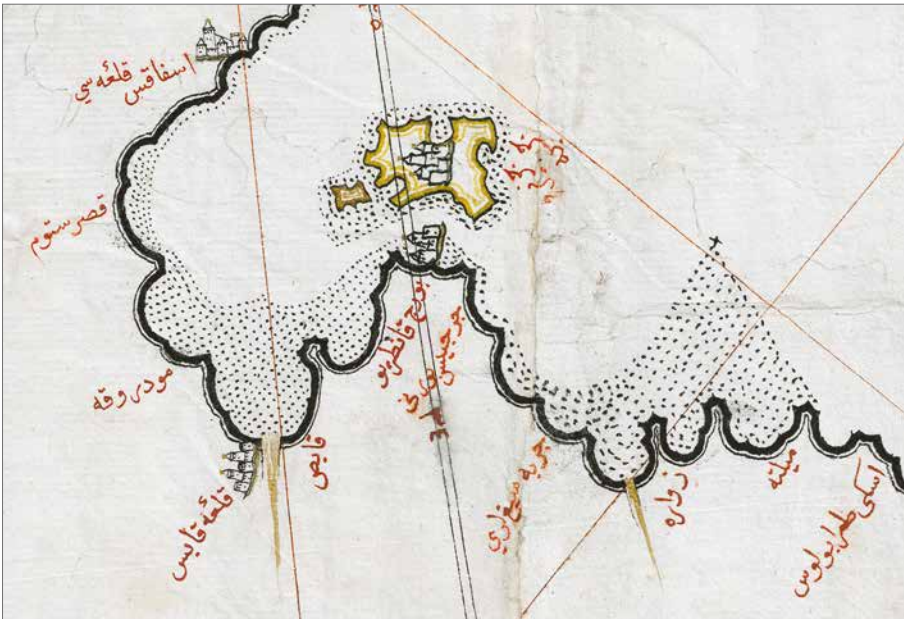


Fig. 6.
Detail of fig. B (pp. 172-173), showing the marking of shoals and shallow coasts.



Fig. 1.
Frontispiece of Alexander Drummond's *Travels through Different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece and Several Parts of Asia*, London 1754. Sylvia Ioannou Foundation.

From Book to Map: Power, Portability and Performance in an Eighteenth-century Anonymous French Traveller's Map of Cyprus

Veronica della Dora

The frontispiece of Alexander Drummond's *Travels through Different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece and Several Parts of Asia* (1754; see fig. 1)¹ presents the reader with the unfolding drama of a revelation. In the upper part of the composition the goddess Athena, flanked by two putti, soars on a smoky cloud, her mantle flying high in the air, her gaze and pointing hand directed to the world below. In the lower part of the image, in an almost mirroring fashion, wise men and other putti engage in the fine arts on the stage of ancient ruins. On the left, a young man absorbed in a mystical dialogue with the goddess forms a vertical axis linking the heavenly scene with the terrestrial. On the right, a vessel sails away towards the open horizon. On the top of the cloud, one of the two putti hides Medusa's head emblazoned on Athena's oval shield; below, a bearded man lifts his gaze towards the goddess while holding, this time in open view, another 'shield': the oval portrait of Drummond.

In ancient Greek mythology Medusa was said to turn into stone whoever would cross her frightening gaze. Perseus was able to behead her by looking at her reflection from a mirrored shield that he received from Athena (thus avoiding the direct gaze of the monster). On Drummond's frontispiece, however, knowledge is mediated through that other 'shield' which the old man at the bottom of the composition is holding: the reader is enabled to access truth and to travel vicariously to distant lands and to the past thanks to Drummond, the new Perseus and the new Pausanias. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, empowers Drummond; he, in turn, empowers his readers to dispel the dark clouds of ignorance and penetrate unfamiliar territories beyond their visual horizons, if only imaginatively.

By the time of the publication of the *Travels*, the places under Ottoman rule described by Drummond were indeed distant lands trodden by only few Europeans. Despite the centrality of that part of the Mediterranean to Western culture, until the

1. A. Drummond, *Travels through Different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece and Several Parts of Asia as Far as the Euphrates in a Series of Letters Containing an Account of What Is Most Remarkable in Their Present State, as Well as in Their Monuments of Antiquity*, London: W. Strahan, 1754.

