

# 47 • Maps and Descriptions of the World in Sixteenth-Century France

FRANK LESTRINGANT AND MONIQUE PELLETIER

In sixteenth-century France, cartographic representations of the realm and the world seem to have been predicated on the needs of the monarchy—a link that is suggested by the titles of *géographe du roi* or *cosmographe du roi* held by André Thevet and Nicolas de Nicolay and is obvious in the missions devoted to the mapping of France that the Crown entrusted to the priest Jean Jolivet, the geographer Nicolay, and probably to François de La Guillotière.<sup>1</sup> However, the royal requirements of cartography changed according to the needs of the moment, which themselves varied with an uncertain political situation. Whereas projects for new maps of France—such as that drawn up by La Guillotière—may have been the fruit of a desire to reform the administration of the kingdom, the civil wars of the period both hampered the work of cartographers on the ground and undermined whatever protection they enjoyed (depending upon which side they supported).

Traditionally, the sixteenth century is divided into two periods. The *beau siècle*, coinciding with the reigns of François I (r. 1515–47) and Henri II (r. 1547–59), is followed by a period of civil strife referred to as “the Wars of Religion” (it actually involved not only religious questions, but also conflicting ambitions and rivalries of coterie and clan). Although this strife did not unduly disturb the creative forces at work in French cartography—which can be identified with Oronce Fine, Nicolay, Guillaume Postel, Thevet, and La Guillotière—it did affect the diffusion of their work, as one can see from the fate of Thevet’s “Le grand insulaire et pilotage” and La Guillotière’s *Charte de la France*. In the unsettled social context of the day, engravers, printers, and booksellers were not capable of meeting the requirements of the mapmakers themselves. One might, therefore, see a certain symbolism in the last product of sixteenth-century French cartography being Maurice Bouguereau’s 1594 publication of *Le theatre francoys*, an individual enterprise that brought together maps of all the provinces of France and thus expressed the unification of the kingdom that had been achieved by Henri IV (r. 1589–1610).

The wars of the first half of the century and the disturbances of the later part certainly were not propitious to France’s colonial expansion, which in this period was marked by adventures of very short duration. In 1524,

Giovanni da Verrazzano, born of a Florentine family that had settled in Lyons in the fifteenth century, undertook reconnaissance missions on the east coast of North America from Florida to Nova Scotia. This marked the beginning of a series of four voyages, in which the last two—led by Verrazzano’s brother Girolamo—would lead to the establishment of regular relations between France and South America from 1529. On 10 May 1534, Jacques Cartier reached Newfoundland, where he entered the St. Lawrence Gulf without going beyond the island of Anticosti. During a second voyage (1535–36), he sailed up the river as far as Montréal. Thereafter came the voyages of Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon, who was the founder of a short-lived France Antarctique (1555–60) in Brazil, as well as the Florida expeditions of 1562–65 led by Jean Ribaut (Ribault) and René Goulaine de Laudonnière, which, again, were isolated efforts at colonial expansion. However, while the French monarchy derived little from these undertakings, the imagination of its cosmographers was stimulated, as can be seen in the practical work produced by the Dieppe hydrographers or in the works of such *cosmographe de cabinet* (erudite cosmographers) as Fine, Thevet, and Postel. Was not the very act of drawing up a map intended as an experiment with physical space that could mold the future by giving orientation to the present?

In discussing the representations of the world produced in sixteenth-century France, this chapter concentrates on three issues: the two world maps produced by Fine (in 1531 and 1534/36), the actual role of the *cosmographe du roi*, and the interchange between France and its Italian and Flemish neighbors. However, the discussion of these points should be preceded by a few words on the editions of Claudius Ptolemy’s *Geography* produced in France. The first edition to be published within French borders was that produced in 1535 in Lyons, which was followed by a second edition published in Vienne in the Dauphiné.<sup>2</sup> The driving force behind this enterprise came from the

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1. See pp. 1483–87 and 1493–95 in this volume.

2. Mireille Pastoureaux, *Les atlas français, XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Répertoire bibliographique et étude* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Cartes et Plans, 1984), 380–85.

brothers Melchior and Gaspard Trechsel, the Lyonnais printers and booksellers who had purchased the woodcuts from the 1525 Strasbourg edition produced outside the kingdom by the printer Johann Grüninger. There were no innovations in the cartographic contents of the Lyons editions; although they were enhanced with geographical and decorative details designed by Lorenz Fries for the 1522 Strasbourg edition, most of the Grüninger maps were, in fact, smaller versions of the maps produced by Martin Waldseemüller for the famous Strasbourg edition of 1513. The Fine world maps were more original in content.

### ORONCE FINE AND THE PTOLEMAIC TRADITION

Oronce Fine, born in Briançon in 1494, was the son of a doctor with an interest in astronomy, who himself was the son of a doctor.<sup>3</sup> Oronce went to Paris to complete his studies at the Collège de Navarre, and then we hear of him being imprisoned in 1524, although the reason is unclear. Some claim that he had been caught trying to erect a bridge over the river Ticino during the Italian wars; others assert that he made some sort of unwelcome prediction or else was simply a victim of Paris University's opposition to the Concordat recently concluded between the French king and the pope. We do know, however, that in 1531, he received 150 écus for his work as a *lecteur de mathématiques*. Distant precursor of the present-day Collège de France, the institution of these *lecteurs royaux* had been the decision of François I acting upon the advice of Guillaume Budé. The king intended to initiate a course of education, distinct from the Sorbonne (which was considered too conservative), with a body of teachers who depended directly upon him. The students for these courses came from all social levels, and the same lecture hall was described as containing "all sorts of people, who differ in their manners, culture, nationality and habits."<sup>4</sup> The lessons given by the *lecteurs* were quickly appreciated, and their courses in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, mathematics, and surgery even attracted members of the king's court.<sup>5</sup>

### THE WORKS OF FINE

In their article on Fine's planetary clock, Hillard and Poulle review the entire oeuvre produced or published by this scholar, drawing up a list of 103 titles.<sup>6</sup> As early as 1515, Fine published the *Theoricarum novarum textus* by Georg von Peurbach, who was astronomer to King Ladislaus V of Hungary and taught astronomy, mathematical calculation, and classical literature at the University of Vienna. The following year, Fine edited *Mundialis sphere opusculum* by Johannes de Sacrobosco, which had been written in Paris during the early part of the thirteenth century. Based on Ptolemy's *Almagest* and Arabic commen-

taries thereon, this short treatise set itself the task of initiating "novices" into the fundamental truths of astronomy and cosmography—in particular, the spherical form of the Earth and the heavens. The first published work written by Fine appeared in 1526 and was a Latin treatise on the *équatoire*, an instrument that could be used to determine the position of the planets in accordance with the schema drawn up by Ptolemy.<sup>7</sup> More treatises on other instruments would follow: on the new quadrant (1527), the meteoroscope (1543), the astronomical ring (1557), and the astrolabe. Fine is also credited with having produced the clock in the Sainte-Geneviève library (Paris) that shows the positions of the planets. However, the mathematician was only responsible for replacing two of the face dials (the astrolabe and the clock-face proper).

Since the Middle Ages, astronomy had been divided into two distinct domains of study: the daily movement of the heavens and the movement of the planets. It was in the former field that one used the astrolabe and related instruments (such as the new quadrant), in the latter, such instruments as the *équatoire*.

In a period of transition heavily influenced by the legacy of the Middle Ages, when astronomy and astrology were inseparable, Fine was hardly an innovator in astronomy. For example, he owned a copy of Ptolemy's *Liber quadripartiti*, an important work of astrology that was intended to show how the stars influenced human destinies. Such astrology enjoyed great favor at the time among the educated public, and Fine himself engaged in it with *Les canons et documens très amples touchant l'usage et la pratique des communs almanachz que l'on nomme éphémérides* (1543), and in his discussion of the theory of the mansions of heaven and the inequality of hours (1553).

3. The sections on Oronce Fine are based on Monique Pelletier, "Die herzförmigen Weltkarten von Oronce Fine," *Cartographica Helvetica* 12 (1995): 27–37. The original French text accompanies the facsimile of the cordiform world map published in the same year by *Cartographica Helvetica*, based on the copy now in the BNF (cf. note 11). Fine was called "Finé" by Thevet, who rhymed his name with Dauphiné; historians also added the accent in their translation of *Finaeus*. However, "Fine" rhymes with the French "*doctrine*" in the piece of verse accompanying Fine's manuscript on the geometric square (BNF, Manuscrits, français 1334, fol.17). The fundamental work on Fine is still Lucien Gallois, *De Orontio Finæo gallico geographo* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1890).

4. Quoted by André Chastel, *Culture et demeures en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Julliard, 1989), 33. See also Marc Fumaroli, ed., *Les origines du Collège de France (1500–1560): Actes du Colloque international* (Paris, décembre 1995) (Paris: Collège de France and Klincksieck, 1998).

5. Chastel, *Culture et demeures en France*, 36.

6. Denise Hillard and Emmanuel Poulle, "Oronce Fine et l'horloge planétaire de la Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance: Travaux et Documents* 33 (1971): 311–51.

7. Emmanuel Poulle, *Les instruments de la théorie des planètes selon Ptolémée: Équatoires et horlogerie planétaire du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 1:89–93, 179–83, and 249–53.

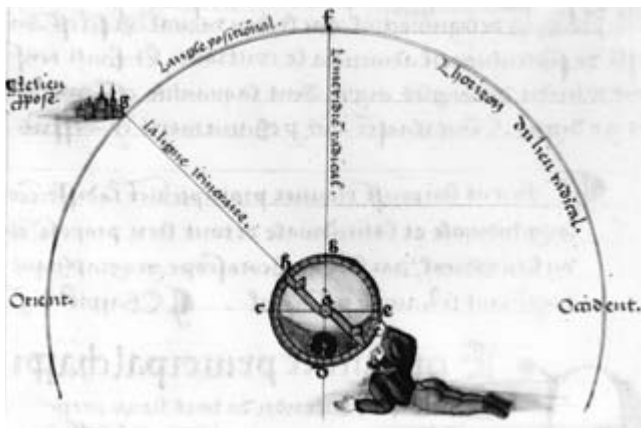


FIG. 47.1. ORONCE FINE, “LA COMPOSITION ET USAIGE D'UN SINGULIER MÉTHÉOROSCOPE GÉOGRAPHIQUE,” 1543. Measurement of the meridian of Paris. Size of the original: 8.3 × 12.7 cm. Photograph courtesy of the BNF (Manuscrits, français 1337, fol. 19).

In geometry and arithmetic, Fine would also produce numerous works that were not original. His most important work, the *Protomathesis*, was dedicated to François I and outlines the essential contents of his teachings in arithmetic, geometry, cosmography, and the work of the gnomics; it is adorned with woodcuts by the author. Fine was also interested in the liberal arts, especially music; he is credited with developing a method of lute playing.

The Frenchman's universe was essentially that of Aristotle and Ptolemy: the fixed heavens were assimilated within the model of a sphere turning in uniform motion about an axis that ran diametrically through it, and at the center of that celestial sphere was the immobile sphere of the earth. At the same time, however, daring navigators were reaching new lands. In his two world maps—the bicordiform of 1531 and the cordiform of 1534/36—Fine set out to describe these new worlds, both those that had already been discovered and those that were yet to be explored.

#### THE WORLD MAPS OF FINE

It was in cartography that Fine showed himself to be the most original, moving beyond the Ptolemaic works that were his initial model. For example, in his 1530 *De cosmographia*, which was to be published with the 1532 *Protomathesis*, the scholar gives coordinates for the main cities in Europe that are different from those given by Ptolemy and such disciples as Francesco Berlinghieri, Martin Waldseemüller, and Peter Apian. In fact, Fine proposes the measurement of new geographical coordinates using the recently invented *méthéoroscope géographique*, an astrolabe modified by the addition of a compass (fig. 47.1).<sup>8</sup> As for the calculation of longitudes, he

recommended that they be based on the observation of the course and movement of the moon, rather than on infrequent lunar eclipses.

Before his two world maps of 1531 and 1534/36, Fine presented his new map of France, the *Nova totius Galliae descriptio*, in a first edition printed in Paris in 1525 by Simon de Colines, and the methods used in its production are described in his *De cosmographia*.<sup>9</sup> Fine started off with the known points of the map, then drew in the hydrography, and completed the work with a rendition of relief and coastline. He would later include this Gaul-France in his two world maps: the first, in bicordiform projection, was titled *Nova, et integra universi orbis descriptio* and printed in Paris in 1531 by Chrétien Wechel (the extant prints known to us are inserted in books; fig. 47.2);<sup>10</sup> the second, in cordiform projection (1534/36), was titled *Re-cens et integra orbis descriptio* (plate 57).<sup>11</sup>

These two maps are part of a group of some eighteen such world maps on cordiform projections published between 1511 and 1566.<sup>12</sup> For the first of these—printed in two colors in the 1511 Venice edition of Ptolemy's *Geography* (*Liber geographiae*)—the editor Bernardo Silvano took his inspiration from one of the two types of projection described by the Greek geographer: the projection with curved meridians that had already been used by Nicolaus Germanus for the 1482 edition of the *Geography* published in Ulm. The cordiform projection proper would be outlined systematically by Johannes Werner in his *Libellus de quatuor terrarum orbis in plano figuratioribus* (Nuremberg, 1514), in which the author pro-

8. “La composition et usaige d'un singulier méthéoroscope géographique,” 1543, in two manuscripts: BNF, Manuscrits, français 1337 (manuscript dedicated to François I), fols. 15–22, and français 14760. In the two manuscripts, “La composition” follows “L'Art et la manière de trouver certainement la longitude de tous les lieux proposez sur la terre par le cours et le mouvement de la lune.” This treatise was published in Latin in 1544 after the *Quadratura circuli*.

9. See pp. 1480–83 in this volume.

10. Pomponius Mela, *De orbis situ libri tres* (Paris: C. Wechel, 1530 and 1540), and Simon Grynaeus, comp., *Novus orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum* (Paris: A. Augereau for J. Petit and G. Du Pré, 1532).

11. One of the two known copies is in the BNF, Cartes et Plans, Rés. Ge DD 2987 (63). The other copy, in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, enables us to date the copy in Paris. In effect, it bears two dates: one—*Cal. Maii MDXXXVIII* (1 May 1534)—lower-left, at the end of the text; the other is included in the address given to the right of the map—*Hiero. Gormontius curabat Imprimi Lutetiae Parisiorum Anno Christi MDXXXVI* (Paris: Jérôme de Gourmont, 1536). Note that Fine says he had drawn up this map in the form of a heart fifteen years earlier for François I, but that he had to update it for publication. See Pelletier, “Die herzförmigen Weltkarten von Oronce Fine.”

12. George Kish, “The Cosmographic Heart: Cordiform Maps of the 16th Century,” *Imago Mundi* 19 (1965): 13–21. Also Rodney W. Shirley, *The Mapping of the World: Early Printed World Maps, 1472–1700*, 4th ed. (Riverside, Conn.: Early World, 2001), 72–73 (no. 66) and 77 (no. 69 and illustrated as book frontispiece).



FIG. 47.2. ORONCE FINE, *NOVA, ET INTEGRA VNIVERSI ORBIS DESCRIPTIO*, 1531. Extract from Simon Grynaeus, comp., *Novus orbis regionum ac insularum vete-*

*ribus incognitarum* (Paris, 1532).

Size of the original: 29 × 42 cm. Photograph courtesy of the BNF (Cartes et Plans, Rés. Ge D 6440).

posed three possible variants.<sup>13</sup> The first of these only covered 180 degrees of longitude, whereas the second covered the entire globe, with degrees of the same extension on the central meridian and the equator. It is this second type of projection that Peter Apian used for his 1530 Ingolstadt map (see fig. 42.14) and that Fine used for his bicordiform world map (a work that was much more detailed and harmonious than Apian's). The second world map produced by the Frenchman employed the third type of cordiform projection, in which the extension of a degree at the equator was slightly larger than that of a degree at the central meridian. Werner depicted the equator by the arc of a circle whose center was the North Pole (the South Pole being shown the same distance away on an extrapolated radius). The small circles—all centered at the North Pole—corresponded to the parallels, and the meridians were formed by curved lines that ran from pole to pole, cutting through the parallels in such a way that they divided them into arcs of a circle that were in proportion to the corresponding arcs of the sphere. However, Werner should not be credited as the real author of the texts on projections, because they reflect what he had

learned from Johannes Stabius. Gallois argues that neither of the two men, however, knew the 1511 Venice edition of the *Geography*; both of them must have worked directly from Ptolemy's text itself.<sup>14</sup>

Quite apart from its use in cartographic projection, the heart had become a recurrent image in European iconography from the middle of the fifteenth century onward. Used quite early on in booksellers' labels, it became the symbol of both profane and sacred love—a relatively late vogue, which is perhaps to be explained by a change in *mentalité* toward greater individualism and inward piety.<sup>15</sup> In the famous *Emblematum libellus* published in

13. Johannes Keuning, "The History of Geographical Map Projections until 1600," *Imago Mundi* 12 (1955): 1–24, esp. 11–13.

14. See Lucien Gallois, *Les géographes allemands de la Renaissance* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1890), 118–30, esp. 128.

15. Anne Sauvy, *Le miroir du cœur: Quatre siècles d'images savantes et populaires* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 48–49. See also Giorgio Mangani, *Il "mondo" di Abramo Ortelio: Misticismo, geografia e collezionismo nel Rinascimento dei Paesi Bassi* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1998), and idem, "Abraham Ortelius and the Hermetic Meaning of the Cordiform Projection," *Imago Mundi* 50 (1998): 59–83.

1531 by Andrea Alciati, the heart does not even figure among the symbols described. However, it does make its appearance in the 1539 *Théâtre des bons engins* produced by Guillaume de la Perrière, the eighth symbol of which shows a man eating his own heart. More interestingly, in the same author's *Morosophie* (published in 1553) is a symbol in which the tree of wisdom is rooted in a man's heart and bursts forth at his mouth.

As Hervé has shown, Fine's world maps are part of that group of maps and globes that resulted from the circumnavigation of the world by Ferdinand Magellan and Juan Sebastian del Cano and the conquest of Mexico by Hernán Cortés.<sup>16</sup> The oldest work in this group is said to have been the globe made by the monk Franciscus Monachus (François de Malines), in which Eastern Asia (Mongallia, India alta) is linked to the newly explored lands of America, and there is a depiction of one vast austral continent. Although this geographer's globe has not come down to us, there are two works that perfectly illustrate his treatise *De orbis situ ac descriptione* (Antwerp, 1526/27): the large copper-plate engraved gores now in the Stuttgart library and the gilded globe (ca. 1526–30) now in the BNF (which, after the studies of Hervé, can no longer be attributed to Johannes Schöner). In his study of Dutch globes, Van der Krogt underlines the importance of Monachus, whose work was capable of rivaling that of Schöner, the only geographer in the 1520s who was producing printed globes in southern Germany.<sup>17</sup> Even accepting the influence of Schöner's *Luculentissima quaedam[m] terrae totius descriptio* (1515) and Apian's 1524 *Cosmographicus liber*, Monachus seems to have produced a work of some originality, which he then had engraved by Gaspard van der Heyden. Fine's account of Africa was partially derived from Ptolemy, which would account for the abundance of place-names in the north. However, the outline does show that the Frenchman acknowledged the Portuguese expeditions. So Fine's Africa is very close to the depiction on the gilded globe and the globe gores.

Nevertheless, the two different projections used by Fine offer different visions of the world. The bicordiform projection emphasizes the depiction of the poles, and the austral lands include two regions, which Fine identifies as Brasielie regio and Regio patalis (names that had appeared in Schöner's *Luculentissima quaedam[m] terrae totius descriptio*). The other difference between the two maps arises from the choice of the central meridian and the resultant "cut," which inevitably affects the areas shown toward the edges of the map. In the 1531 map, Africa, Europe, Asia, and part of present-day South America (which Fine names America) are seen clearly. But this is not the case with present-day North America, which Fine links with Asia. However, in the 1534/36 map, it is Africa and North America that are most clearly placed on the map, with Asia extending into the upper section from the Gulf of Mexico to the East Indies.

## FINE AS DRAFTSMAN AND ENGRAVER

Like so many other learned figures in the Renaissance, Fine was both an artist and a scholar. The elegant frontispiece to *Protomathesis* makes this clear: "This author himself painted the figure without help." This same artistic quality is found in the manuscript text on "L'art et manière de trouver certainement la longitude" of 1543, which is dedicated to François I and adorned with striking illustrations.<sup>18</sup> When one compares the elaborate frames enclosing the two world maps with similar contemporary works, one again sees specific signs of innovation. The foliage motifs around the 1531 map incorporate small heart-shaped leaves, something that Fine would use unobtrusively throughout his work. As for the architectural frame used for the 1534/36 world map, it recalls the frontispiece to *Protomathesis*. Like his map of France, these two works were woodcuts, which was the case with most of the maps published in France at this time.

Part of a wide-ranging and varied oeuvre, Fine's cartography reveals an attempt to reconcile past and present by identifying the lands revealed by recent discoveries with those that were supposed to exist in classical antiquity and the Middle Ages. Within a mathematical structure, the scholar tried to give harmonious expression to facts that not only differed but that contradicted one another. His aim was to provide the king, his patron, and his Collège Royal students with new geographical knowledge, and thus he tried to equip himself with the necessary teaching aids, such as maps and scientific instruments. The end results are attractive cartographic works that show the mathematician-geographer's keen appreciation of the beauty of form.

## ANDRÉ THEVET AND NICOLAS DE NICOLAY: COSMOGRAPHES DU ROI

## THEVET: COSMOGRAPHY AS A LIFE MISSION

In 1526, the youngest child of a family of barber-surgeons in Angoulême, ten-year-old André Thevet was sent against his wishes to the Franciscan monastery in that city. He would, however, escape to travel widely, especially in Italy and the Levant, where he would stay from 1549 to 1552 for the traditional pilgrimage to Jerusalem and for a diplomatic mission to the Sublime Porte. Upon his return to France, Thevet published his first work in Lyons in 1554, *Cosmographie de Levant*, in which the trip to the Mid-

16. Roger Hervé, "Essai de classement d'ensemble, par type géographique, des cartes générales du monde—mappemondes, globes terrestres, grands planisphères nautiques—pendant la période des grandes découvertes (1487–1644)," *Der Globusfreund* 25–27 (1978): 63–75.

17. Peter van der Krogt, *Globi Neerlandici: The Production of Globes in the Low Countries* (Utrecht: HES, 1993), 40–48.

18. BNF, Manuscrits, français 1337. See p. 1465, note 8.

dle East became a pretext for reeling off commonplaces about morality and good government, mixed with the most heterogeneous archaeological, botanical, and zoological oddities.<sup>19</sup>

The following year, Thevet would be part of the expedition led by Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon, a Knight of Malta with sympathies for the Reformation, who was setting off to found the short-lived Brazilian colony of France Antarctique. Thevet himself would only be on American soil for ten weeks—from mid-November 1555 to mid-January 1556—and he never left the small island at the entrance to the bay of Rio de Janeiro where Villegagnon had set up his fortified base, Fort Coligny. Eventually Thevet returned to France on his sickbed on board the very ship that had taken him to America. The brevity of his sojourn, however, was no hindrance to the late-1557 publication of *Les singularitez de la France antarctique, autrement nommée Amerique*—Thevet's most representative work, a compilation like *Cosmographie de Levant*. Drawn up by a ghostwriter, the scholar and Hellenist Mathurin Héret, *Les singularitez de la France antarctique* offers the first complete ethnographic account of the Tupinambá Indians, who at that time populated the coast of Brazil. The success of the book with the humanist public was in part due to the elegant woodcuts that illustrated it.

Having been released from his Order at his own request (January 1559), Thevet courted favors across the religious spectrum. As a result, he enjoyed the enlightened patronage of the Procureur Général Gilles Bourdin, a most intransigent Catholic, and the Royal Chancellor Michel de L'Hospital, who was one of the figures pushing for some agreement between the Catholic and Protestant camps. Now resident in Paris (at Rue de Bièvre in the Latin Quarter), Thevet became *cosmographe du roi* in 1560 and one of the chaplains to Catherine de' Medici by the beginning of 1576 at the latest. High-ranking patronage enabled him to finance such costly publishing ventures as *La cosmographie universelle* (1575), a geography of the four parts of the world, and *Les vrais portraits et vies des hommes illustres* (1584), a prosopographic work in the manner of Plutarch, the main merit of which is the presentation of modern discoverers and native American kings—Atahualpa, Moctezuma, and Nacol-Absou, “king of the Promontory of Cannibals”—alongside the great military leaders of classical antiquity.

Exposed to ever greater mockery for his limits as a self-taught scholar and his bullish pretensions to a monopoly over geographical knowledge, Thevet would see scholars from all over Europe form a “cabal” against him. He was, moreover, criticized for supporting Spain in an era when the Protestant powers of Northern Europe—England and Holland—were trying to impose their own empire on the seas. The *cosmographe du roi* would eventually die a sick man in 1592 in a Paris ruled by the Catholic

League—an extreme Catholic alliance that he had openly supported—without being able to complete his last projects: a final version of his voyage to Brazil and “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” which would have included descriptions and maps of all the islands of the known world.

#### NICOLAY AND THEVET: CONTRASTING RIVALS

The role of *cosmographe* does not seem to have existed in France before Thevet. Perhaps he created it himself, taking Spanish and Portuguese counterparts as his model. Certainly, in his case, missions were not defined and payment was irregular. He never became a master of nautical science equal to those so highly prized by the monarchs of the Iberian peninsula, nor did he know state secrets that would have conferred the status of a *de facto* equivalent of a minister or privy councilor to the king. As there was no coherent maritime policy during this period—with projects inspired either by Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, a leading Protestant, or the Guise family, leading Catholics—Thevet never occupied a role of central importance. And although his position at court, with both the king and Catherine de' Medici, was such that he was able to collect firsthand information regarding expeditions to Canada, Brazil, and Florida, he never exerted a direct influence over royal policy. What is more, he had an obvious rival in the performance of his duties: the more competent and efficient figure of Nicolas de Nicolay, cartographer and military engineer.<sup>20</sup>

In the frontispiece to the bulky 1584 in-folio edition of *Les vrais portraits*, Thevet is described as *premier cosmographe du roi*—a preeminence that was due neither to promotion nor re-acquisition of favor with Henri III (r. 1574–89) but to a pure stroke of luck. On 25 June of the previous year, Nicolay died, his health having been undermined by a chronic case of gravel (kidney stones). As a result, Thevet could enjoy a sort of post mortem victory over his rival. It was a purely symbolic victory, however, because there is no evidence that the annual pension of twelve hundred livres tournois paid to Nicolay was ever paid to his rival.<sup>21</sup>

A retiring figure, whose discretion enhanced his political influence, Nicolay remained far from Paris during the

19. Frank Lestringant, *André Thevet: Cosmographe des derniers Valois* (Geneva: Droz, 1991), 259–99.

20. On sixteenth-century cosmography and Thevet's original role therein, see Frank Lestringant, *L'atelier du cosmographe ou l'image du monde à la Renaissance* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1991), and idem, “Le déclin d'un savoir: La crise de la cosmographie à la fin de la Renaissance,” *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (1991): 239–60.

21. According to “L'Etat des pensionnaires du Roy en son espargne pour 1578” (BNF, Manuscrits, Dupuy 852, fol. 66), Thevet's name does not figure in this partial list. The record of Nicolay's pension for 1578 survives.

latter part of his life and avoided the place where Thevet flaunted works that were, in fact, the labor of others. From October 1561, he took the royal château of Moulins near the very center of the kingdom as his base. It was there that he began an important project of topographical and statistical research.<sup>22</sup> On 22 January 1570 Nicolay took on the titles of *premier cosmographe* and *valet de chambre du roy*.<sup>23</sup>

A first contrast between the former Franciscan friar and the discreet geographer became clear during the first War of Religion in 1562–63, when Thevet distributed a few loose sheets celebrating the Catholic victories of Bourges, Rouen, and Dreux, and later in 1568, the battle of Saint-Denis. Nicolay's *generales descriptions* of French provinces, kept as manuscripts for the king and his immediate entourage, were in fact intended as instruments of territorial control to complement the royal tour of inspection through the realm in 1564–66. Unlike Thevet, Nicolay published very little, and tended to ignore the vast public desire for printed works. His *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales* waited over ten years before being published by Lyons printer Guillaume Rouillé in 1568.<sup>24</sup> The *Navigations du Roy d'Escosse Jacques cinquieme du nom*, although completed in 1547, was not published until 1583, the year of Nicolay's death. In both cases, the apparent banality of the title belies a work containing strategic information of great importance, hence—by order of the king himself—publication was long delayed for reasons of state. The *Navigations et peregrinations orientales* describes a fact-finding mission to the Sublime Porte, and Nicolay gives accurate and precise information regarding the fortresses of Formentera, Algiers, Bône, Malta, the Dardanelles, and Constantinople. The *Navigations du Roy d'Escosse* is a precious book on sailing directions (rutter) that Nicolay managed to obtain in England (fig. 47.3). Given the Valois interests in Scotland, it was of prime political importance.

One of the geographer's first publications (1554) was a translation of Pedro de Medina's *Arte de nauegar*. Dedicated to Henri II, this volume was a technical work intended for those navigating the oceans, especially all those who traveled under the king's authority.<sup>25</sup>

Nicolay showed equal command of the techniques of navigation and the requirements of military engineering. It was the latter ability that enabled him early in his career to make important contributions to various military operations, including the 1542 siege of Perpignan and the 1549 recapture of English-held Boulogne, where he undertook a survey of the fortifications and started his map of the Boulogne country, *Nouvelle description du pais de Boulonnois*. However, he gave fullest proof of his talents as both a military engineer and a collector of information during the wars in Scotland. During his time in England from June 1546 to the spring of 1547, he managed to

gain the confidence of the great English admiral Lord John Dudley, learned of a secret expedition against the Scots, and obtained the book on sailing directions written by the pilot Alexander Lindsay. Nicolay subsequently published it under his own name. This rutter would enable the squadron of Leone Strozzi to capture the castle of Saint Andrew's and carry off the young Mary, Queen of Scots, who was being held there.<sup>26</sup> Nicolay believed in the claim that Lacoste would make later that cosmography "serves, above all, in warfare."<sup>27</sup>

One of the controversial yet stimulating distinctions that Lacoste applied to contemporary geography was that there is a geography of military and political power, which is primarily and directly operational, and a scholarly geography, which claims to be neutral and uninfluenced by political considerations. In the sixteenth century, these two geographies ignored one another, or at least tried to make it appear that they did so—just as Thevet and Nicolay made a show of ignoring each other. For example, in the preface to his *Navigations et peregrinations orientales* "in praise of travel and the observation of foreign lands," Nicolay lauds various of his predecessors on these routes to the Levant—Guillaume Postel, Pierre Gille d'Albi, and Pierre Belon du Mans—but makes no mention of Thevet. Yet there is nothing surprising about that omission, given that Thevet's first publications were far from being works of applied geography; his *Cosmographie de Levant* merely recites what might be learned from Pliny, Herodotus, or modern compilers about the lands of the Middle East, which had been so abundantly described since the days of classical antiquity.<sup>28</sup> And

22. See p. 1485 in this volume.

23. Facsimile of the letters patent of 22 January 1570 sent by Charles IX to governors, municipal authorities, and royal officers of justice and finance, commanding all doors be open to the geographer, in Nicolas de Nicolay, *Description générale de la ville de Lyon et des anciennes provinces du Lyonnais & du Beaujolais*, ed. Victor Advielle (Lyons: Imprimerie Mougins-Rusand, 1881), 279–80.

24. Nicolas de Nicolay's *Navigations et peregrinations orientales* is reprinted in Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud and Stefanos Yerasimos, *Dans l'empire de Soliman le Magnifique* (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1989).

25. Pedro de Medina, *L'art de naviguer par Pedro de Medina*, trans. Nicolas de Nicolay (Lyons: Guillaume Rouillé, 1554), fol. \*2v°. The license to publish is dated "the XIth day of September of the year M.D.L." and the completion of the printing of the first edition is the "ij. of March MDLIII before Easter" (1554 in the new calendar).

26. Roger Hervé, "L'oeuvre cartographique de Nicolas de Nicolay et d'Antoine de Laval (1544–1619)," *Bulletin de la Section de Géographie du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques* 68 (1955): 223–63, esp. 227.

27. See Yves Lacoste, *La géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre*, rev. ed. (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1985), 19.

28. André Thevet, *Cosmographie de Levant* (Lyons: I. de Tovrnés and G. Gazeav, 1554; rev. ed., 1556), is a mish-mash of borrowings. On this somewhat disconcerting compilation from a range of sources, see the critical edition by Frank Lestringant, *Cosmographie de Levant* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1985).

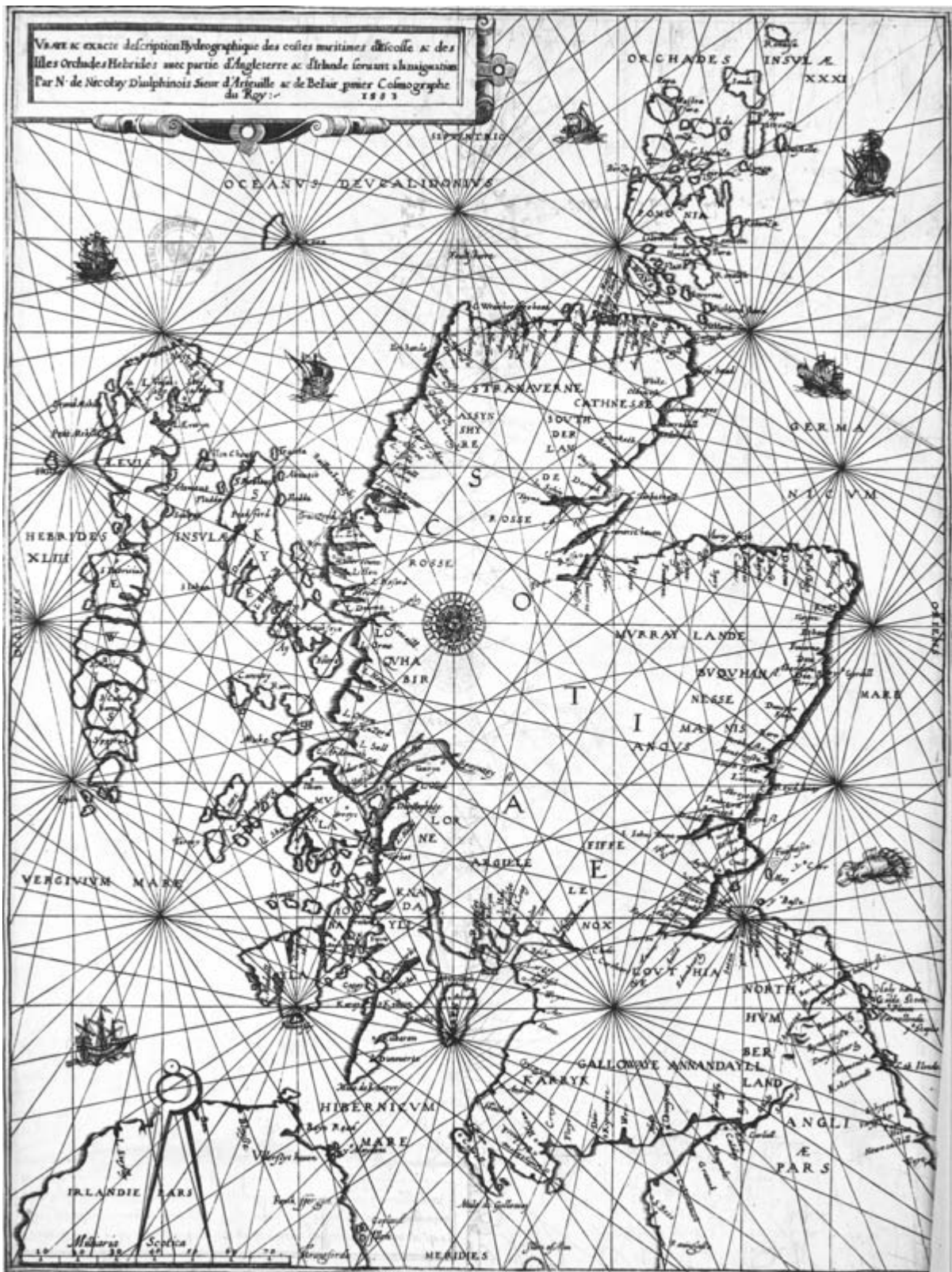


FIG. 47.3. NICOLAS DE NICOLAY, *VRAIE & EXACTE DESCRIPTION HYDROGRAPHIQUE DES COSTES MARITIMES D'ESCOSSSE & DES ISLES ORCHADES HEBRIDES*, 1583. This map compiled after the sketches of Alex-

ander Lindsay appeared in Nicolay's *Navigacion du Roy d'Escosse . . .*, published in Paris in 1583. Size of the original: 39 × 28 cm. Photograph courtesy of the BNF (Cartes et Plans, Rés. Ge D 4930).



to a large extent, apart from its first-hand account of the Tupinambá of Rio de Janeiro, *Les singularitez de la France antarctique* belongs to the same genre: pleasantly written and sumptuously illustrated compilations of curiosities intended for a wealthy and semi-scholarly public who demanded little else.

Nicolay and Thevet fall into this distinction quite readily, as both needed to keep to the right “scale” in their work. If Thevet tried for too close a scale, he seemed like a plagiarist and an impostor; if Nicolay aimed for the general view, he ended up wandering into fields that lay outside his expertise.<sup>29</sup> In a sense, this division of intellectual tasks also echoed a social and political separation. There is a clear difference in position between Nicolay, whose works were intended primarily for the consultation of Catherine de’ Medici and her son the king, and Thevet, who produced works for the larger court entourage that was excluded from state secrets. Whereas Nicolay continued to serve as a faithful servant of the Crown during the tribulations that accompanied the end of the Valois dynasty, Thevet in his later years turned his back on his royal master and threw his lot in with the Catholic League.

However, for all the limits on his court career, Thevet did win a decisive point on status. Cosmography was more valuable than geography, as it encompasses a more extensive area—the most extensive one. Implicitly, Nicolay seems to have acceded to this point of view as he clung to a title that earlier had little if any importance to him. And, like Thevet, Nicolay would see his field of inquiry at the end of his life embrace both large-scale regional descriptions and very small-scale accounts of ocean navigation. Alongside the minute chorographies of Berry and the Bourbon and the Lyons areas, Nicolay also focused his attention on the “happy and fortunate enterprises” of the “English Captain Drach [Drake]”<sup>30</sup>—of whom the hispanophile Thevet totally disapproved<sup>31</sup>—and included within his “Extrait des observations de Nicolay d’Arfeuille, Daulphinois, premier cosmographe du Roy” descriptions of trading networks that extended from Bayonne to the Baltic.

#### THE NEW DIRECTION IN THEVET’S “LE GRAND INSULAIRE”

Thevet, too, would gradually begin to move in another direction. From being a compiler producing the leisure volumes that first made his name, he would become a geographer of the colonies. Drawing on the memoirs of Villegagnon, Cartier, and Jean-François de la Rocque de Roberval as well as Laudonnière’s description of Florida and the Mexican accounts of such Spanish missionaries as Andrés de Olmos,<sup>32</sup> the central section of Thevet’s *Singularitez* and, even more so, the last volume of *La cosmographie universelle* (which immediately attracted the

attention of Martin Frobisher and Sir Humphrey Gilbert) would take a much more pragmatic approach and thus become more political in content. It was in his last works, “Histoire d’André Thevet Angoumois, Cosmographe du Roy, de deux voyages par luy fait aux Indes australes, et occidentales” and above all “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” that Thevet would achieve the same sort of blend that Nicolay had achieved in *Navigations et peregrinations orientales*: the combination of the humanist tradition with the knowledge of new discoveries and the aesthetic pleasures of curiosity with the practical benefits of technical information. In combining the supposed narration of the “Deux voyages” and the interminable lists of “Le grand insulaire” with fragments of rutters and Iroquois-French or Muscovite-French phrasebooks,<sup>33</sup> Thevet created works that are undeniably piecemeal but nevertheless exemplify that ideal of practical geography championed by Nicolay. To do so, he plagiarized freely from the unpublished “Cosmographie” drawn up by Jean Alfonse de Saintonge (João Afonso) and the account of his voyage to Muscovy by Jean Sauvage of Dieppe.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, he borrowed extensively from Mexican *codices* and the accounts drawn up by Laudonnière and Roberval (careful not to mention the existence of these works to his

29. This distant viewpoint is common to the sixteenth-century cosmographer and the modern-day anthropologist. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le regard éloigné* (Paris: Plon, 1983).

30. Nicolas de Nicolay, “Extrait des observations de Nicolay d’Arfeuille, Daulphinois, premier cosmographe du Roy, faictes durant ses navigations, touchant la diversité des navires, galleres et autres vaisseaux de mer,” manuscript dated in Paris, 8 July 1582 (BNF, Manuscrits, français 20008), 7.

31. On Thevet’s criticisms of Sir Francis Drake, see Frank Lestringant, *Le huguenot et le sauvage: l’Amérique et la controverse coloniale, en France, au temps des Guerres de Religion*, 3d ed. (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 336–44.

32. “L’histoire de mechique” (BNF, Manuscrits, français 19031), attributed by Édouard de Jonghe to Friar Andrés de Olmos in Andrés de Olmos, *Histoire du mechique: Manuscrit français inédit du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle publié*, trans. André Thevet, ed. Édouard de Jonghe (Paris: Société des Américanistes de Paris, 1905), 4, was used by Thevet in drawing up book 22 of *La cosmographie universelle*.

33. André Thevet, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” vol. 1 (BNF, Manuscrits, français 15452), fol. 158r–v: (“Langage des habitans des terres neuves”), and vol. 2 (français 15453), fols. 213–24: (“Dictionnaire en langue moscovite”).

34. BNF has two manuscripts from Sauvage’s voyage; see Manuscrits, français 704, fols. 89–93, and Dupuy 844, fols. 416–17. The latter manuscript, “La route et saison qu’il faut prendre pour faire le voyage de St Nicolas pays de Moscovie par le Nord,” is dated 1586. Jean Sauvage’s voyage took place in June of that year. Thus the manuscript is practically contemporary with the voyage, as is the often sloppy copy made by Thevet in his “Description de plusieurs isles” (français 17174, fols. 1r–3v and 45r–48r), which is his partial fair copy of his incomplete “Grand insulaire.” On this “moscovite” corpus, see the study by Paul Jean Marie Boyer, *Un vocabulaire français-russe de la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle; extrait du Grand insulaire d’André Thevet, manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1905).

readers). Thus, Thevet was moving toward what Febvre would call “open air cosmography.”<sup>35</sup> He did not undertake new voyages himself (he was too old for that), but drew on the materials usually neglected by historians of the period. Late in his career, he accomplished the practical task he had set himself in the 1575 letter to the king prefacing *La cosmographie universelle*.<sup>36</sup>

As described in a letter of about 1586 written to Abraham Ortelius,<sup>37</sup> Thevet’s “Le grand insulaire et pilotage” would have been one of the most considerable achievements of late-sixteenth-century cartography because it was ultimately supposed to contain some 350 maps of all the islands of the known world.<sup>38</sup> Written before the above-mentioned letter, the “Deux voyages” shows the author so caught up in the euphoria of his new project that he speaks of “five hundred islands collected by myself from various places of the four continents.”<sup>39</sup> However, the extant manuscript has only 263 chapter headings, which leads one to conclude that the work was left far from completed (plate 58). For these 263 chapters, only 131 of the engraved maps have come to light, with 84 of them glued into the two volumes of the manuscript.<sup>40</sup>

There may be various explanations for this incomplete state. Among other things, the country was wracked with political instability. In May 1588, King Henri III fled Paris as a result of the “Day of Barricades” and Henri de Lorraine Guise, head of the Catholic League, took power. Instead of following the king to Tours, Thevet stayed in the capital, but even the protection of the triumphant Guise was not enough to guarantee the completion of a publishing venture of this magnitude. The booksellers and printers of Paris were busy turning out works of political and religious propaganda, and scientific projects on the scale of “Le grand insulaire” just could not get completed. Furthermore, Thevet, already “very old,” was periodically ill and incapable of working without the assistance of his ghostwriters, whom he paid irregularly and who probably disappeared as a result of the 1588 crisis. However, the difficulties he encountered at this date were not new. In June 1587, his study had been impounded and placed under seal because of his insolvency, so he was denied access to his papers and the engraved plates that were awaiting the production of the great work.<sup>41</sup>

The project for “Le grand insulaire” predates the 1584 publication of *Les vrais portraits et vies des hommes illustres*. However, the partial compilation of the work that has come down to us under the title “Description de plusieurs isles” dates from 1588 and contains fifty-one chapters covering the islands of the North Sea, the English Channel, and the Atlantic.<sup>42</sup> None of the abundant corpus of extant Thevet manuscripts bears any later date than 1588. Thevet would die four years later, on 23 November 1592, seventy-six years old, just before Henri IV abjured Protestantism and returned to Paris.

“Le grand insulaire” can be seen both as the product of chance circumstance and determination. The determination can be seen in Thevet’s express desire to leave “an entirely accomplished body of cosmography” at his death.<sup>43</sup> *La cosmographie universelle* (1575) was mainly restricted to the description of the four known continents: the newest—and also the slimmest—section on America, “the fourth part of the world, on which light has been cast in our day.”<sup>44</sup> In the later project, the relation between the Old World and the New World is reverse; the ocean, which encompasses an entire range of new horizons, now occupies pride of place. Clearly, “Le grand insulaire” was intended to be the crowning glory that would complete the earlier cosmographical work.

35. Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: La religion de Rabelais*, rev. ed. (Paris: A. Michel, 1968), 357. Lestringant, *L'atelier du cosmographe*, 27–35.

36. André Thevet, *La cosmographie universelle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Pierre L'Huilier, 1575), vol. 1, fol. a ij recto.

37. The letter is published and commented upon in Lestringant, *André Thevet*, 357–58.

38. André Thevet, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” BNF, Manuscrits, français 15452–53. For a description of this two-volume manuscript, see Frank Lestringant, “Thevet, André,” in *Les atlas français, XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Répertoire bibliographique et étude*, by Mireille Pastoureau (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Cartes et Plans, 1984), 481–95. Complementary comments can be found in Lestringant, *André Thevet*, 386–91. See also Robert W. Karrow, *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century and Their Maps: Bio-Bibliographies of the Cartographers of Abraham Ortelius, 1570* (Chicago: Published for The Newberry Library by Speculum Orbis Press, 1993), 536–45.

39. André Thevet, “Histoire d'André Thevet Angoumois, Cosmographe du Roy, de deux voyages par luy faits aux Indes australes, et occidentales,” BNF, Manuscrits, français 15454, fol. 135v.

40. The most recent and one of the most considerable discoveries was made by Philip Burden in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Nineteen maps of the islands of North and South America, twelve of them previously unknown to us, were incorporated in a composite atlas attributed to Henricus Hondius and arranged two or three per page. They are the following numbers in Lestringant’s “Thevet, André”: 58–62, 65, 67, 68, 70, 71, 78, 80, 83, 86, 92, 96, 101, 104, and 111. This discovery increased the number of known maps intended for “Le grand insulaire et pilotage” from 119 to 131—one short of half the total chapters in the manuscript. The description of the Canadian archipelago is now almost complete. See Philip D. Burden, “A Dozen Lost Sixteenth-Century Maps of America Found,” *Map Collector* 74 (1996): 30–32, and idem, *The Mapping of North America: A List of Printed Maps, 1511–1670* (Rickmansworth: Raleigh Publications, 1996), 73–77, figs. 58–62.

41. Enea Balmas, “Documenti inediti su André Thevet,” in *Studi di letteratura, storia e filosofia in onore di Bruno Revel* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1965), 33–66. See, in particular, the third document, dated 18 June 1587, from the Minutier Central des Notaires de Paris, now in the Archives Nationales, 60–66.

42. André Thevet, “Description de plusieurs isles,” BNF, Manuscrits, français 17174 (fonds Séguier-Coislin; Saint-Germain français 655).

43. Thevet, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” vol. 1, fol. 6r.

44. Thevet, *La cosmographie universelle*, vol. 2, “tome quatrième,” fol. 903r.

In this period, geographical descriptions of the world traditionally treated islands separately from mainland continents. Thevet explained this decision in terms of different elements. Continental geography concerned itself with the element earth, whereas nautical geography (which included the description of islands) concerned itself with the element of water—or in Thevet’s words, “the interweaving” and “mixture of water and earth.”<sup>45</sup> An erroneous contemporary etymology for the Latin word *insula* (island) derived it from *in* and *salo* (in the sea), a verbal allusion borne out by Thevet’s definition of his subject matter. The *insulaire*, therefore, makes it possible to bring together the two constituents of the terraqueous globe to restore the unity of the world. Without this description of the islands, the body of his work would, in Thevet’s own words, have been left “defeated, full of erasures and half imperfect.”<sup>46</sup> The paradox is that his attempt to achieve a perfect cosmography results in its fragmentation: the body of work is undoubtedly full, but left in pieces, scattered in separate sections. What is more, “Le grand insulaire” is a repetition: it is made of material drawn from Thevet’s previous books. The description of the world through its islands also involves a reference to the mainland territory. Canada, for example, might be described from the starting point of Newfoundland (fig. 47.4), Assumption Island (the name Cartier had given to Anticosti), or even the tiny Damoiselle Island off the coast of Labrador. Even a simple cliff or uninhabited reef might be the starting point for comments on the continental mainland. But Thevet’s descriptions were far from achieving the coherence and continuity of terrestrial itineraries.

A series of previously unpublished documents from the Thouars cartulary recently brought to light by Vissière reveal how Thevet set about making up “Le grand insulaire.” As when compiling *Les vrais portraits*, he solicited material from those around him. His correspondence with Jean Rouhet, a lawyer in the Paris Parlement and business agent for Jeanne de Montmorency, duchesse de La Trémoille, reveals that his letters could be a mix of reproaches and promises of eternal glory.<sup>47</sup> Rouhet, in fact, was guilty of delay in meeting Thevet’s requests, as we can see from a letter that Madame de La Trémoille wrote to her business agent on 31 January 1588: “and as for the plan or portrait that he [Thevet] requests of the islands belonging to our House, *as you say*, it is difficult to get artists over there. It will have to be done when the season is more clement.”<sup>48</sup> The La Trémoille family, in fact, were lords of the islands of Ré and Noirmoutier, as well as having interests in other islands on the Atlantic seaboard (in particular, the islands of Yeu and Oléron), but they had no maps of their possessions.<sup>49</sup> The bad weather mentioned by the duchess was probably only a pretext. The real reason for her reluctance to meet Thevet’s requests was certainly the very troubled political situation. Furthermore, Thevet’s



FIG. 47.4. ANDRÉ THEVET, “TERRES NEVEVES OV ISLES DES MOLUES.” From “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” engraving. Island is reversed laterally. Size of the original: 14.8 × 18.1 cm. Photograph courtesy of the BNF (Manuscrits, français 15452, fol. 142 bis).

reputation as a scholar was hardly brilliant, and his constant solicitations with heavy doses of self-satisfied toadying would have been more than enough to irritate most people. Religion came into play as well. The La Trémoille family was Protestant and thus would have had no great desire to meet the demands of the Catholic cosmographer (particularly when the islands of Ré and Oléron were one of the theaters of the conflict between the two sides).

Rather than a systematic description of the world, Thevet’s last work consists of a collection of individual components within a very lax framework. “Le grand insulaire” has no more overall structure than *Les vrais portraits*, shifting from point to point in an almost interminable list of the islands of the world. This lack of structure reflects the rather haphazard way the work was put together through the random accumulation of material and appeals for assistance from various individual sources. Thevet had no overall plan and simply gathered together anything he could from his contacts at the court, in Paris, and in different ports. His entire project is a fine example of obstinacy with little planning or systematic thought.

45. Thevet, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” vol. 1, fol. 6v.

46. Thevet, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” vol. 1, fol. 6r.

47. Paris, Archives Nationales, 1 AP 636, doss. A. Thevet; 1 AP 284; 1 AP 632, doss. Ogier. Dossier transcribed and commented upon in Laurent Vissière, “André Thevet et Jean Rouhet: Fragments d’une correspondance (1584–1588),” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance: Travaux et Documents* 61 (1999): 109–37.

48. Vissière, “André Thevet et Jean Rouhet,” 132. The emphasis is ours.

49. Vissière, “André Thevet et Jean Rouhet,” 121.

The patchwork that resulted quickly became the object of ironic comment. For example, it was said that Thevet simply drew his islands as he saw fit, choosing simplified forms—triangles, circles, or squares—according to the whim of the day. One person to make such sarcastic observations was Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, an astronomer and humanist. He recounts that, to keep the sport up Thevet continually had to alter his maps due to the reproach that if “the outline as drawn was not agreeable to the eye, and it would look better if it was slightly rounder or squarer in shape, or more like a triangle or a pentagon; and he [Thevet] would immediately change everything, innocently adapting his drawings to instructions.”<sup>50</sup>

However, Thevet was not the only one in his day who gave a stylized rendition of islands. As Washburn has pointed out, this was the general practice among cartographers. Euclidean geometry was a predominant influence in the depiction of islands, and they were generally shown with simplified outlines.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the main imperative behind this convention was not aesthetic but symbolic: the islands were depicted according to a lexicon of basic and interchangeable forms.

Another criticism of Thevet advanced with particular indignation by the magistrate and historian Jacques-Auguste de Thou was his use of unworthy sources: road guides and rutters, which supposedly had no place in the library of a true scholar.<sup>52</sup> Of course, this type of material from the field now motivates contemporary scholars’ interest in Thevet.

As one can see from the second part of its overall title, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage” also aimed to be a *pilotage*, or *roteiro* (rutter). The remnants of what might be called his “ship’s library” show that Thevet collected nautical manuals. Alongside the work of Antonio Pigafetta, there is Manuel Álvares’s *Roteiro de navegação daqui pera y India; Le grant routtier, pillotage et encrage de mer*, produced by Pierre Garcie (Ferrande); two copies of Jean Alfonse de Saintonge’s *Voyages aventureux*; Olivier Bisselin’s *Tables de la declinaison ou esloignement que fait le soleil de la ligne equinoctiale*; and the *Instruction nouvelle des poincts plus excellents et necessaires touchant l’art de naviguer* by Michel Coignet.<sup>53</sup> Thevet’s manuscript annotations to these works are often feverishly intense. He is continually sniffing out his predecessors’ “howlers” and “idiocies,” when picking up any mention of islands, which he identifies with obsessive thoroughness in the margins as “Isl[e]s.” Undoubtedly, he first started to trawl for islands here, in his Rue de Bièvre study, as he compulsively annotated the margins of this print and manuscript collection.

Put together with a bit of this and a bit of that, was Thevet’s *pilotage* of any interest to the practical navigator? Some islands are shown laterally inverted (for example, Newfoundland and Majorca), whereas others are badly oriented, or have no feasible scale. In addition,

there are no overall maps that would make it possible to synthesize the disparate parts. Although Thevet certainly intended to produce such maps as his preface announced “four maps serving for all that is contained in the world,” he only produced two: the “Northern part” (fig. 47.5) and the “Austral part of the world,” which depict the two hemispheres in polar projection. The other two overall maps—a “Map serving to understand terrestrial and maritime maps, and the size of the entire earth” (probably a world map) and a “Map of wind rhumbs” (which he considered “the most difficult” of the four and may have lifted from the works of Tommaso Porcacchi)—are not with the manuscript, and we do not know if they were ever produced.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, one should not dismiss Thevet’s *pilotage* too quickly. For all their imprecision, such works did have their uses (unusual or improbable as they may seem to us). Often the ingenuity of those consulting the work would make up for the poor quality of the document. Using what we consider very inadequate maps, people might make very important discoveries. Thevet based “Le grand insulaire” on sailing directions plotted by Lindsay (known via the work of Nicolay), Pigafetta, and Alfonse de Saintonge. It was only just that “Le grand insulaire” should be of some use to the men who actually traveled the seas. Such would undoubtedly have been the case, if France had not been going through one of the violent upheavals that seem to occur regularly throughout its history. A result of that turmoil was that one of the most extraordinary geographical undertakings of the early modern age came to naught.

## CONTACTS WITH ITALY AND FLANDERS

The two-way traffic in printed maps over the borders with Italy and Flanders had a great influence on French mapmaking. It meant that national cartography became known outside the realm and at the same time was influenced by models imported from abroad. For example, Fine’s bicordiform projection was imitated in 1538 by Gerardus Mercator, who in turn was imitated by Italians Antonio Salamanca and Antonio Lafreri (Antoine Lafréry). Indeed, Fine’s own cordiform world map was reproduced in Northern Italy up to 1587; the first copy—

50. Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, *Lettres*, ed. Philippe Tamizey de Larroque, 7 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1888–98), 5:304, letter XVI to Lucas Holstenius (Holstein). On the context of these rumors, see Lestringant, *André Thevet*, 306, n. 19.

51. Wilcomb E. Washburn, “The Form of Islands in Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Cartography,” in *Géographie du monde au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance*, ed. Monique Pelletier (Paris: Éditions du C.T.H.S., 1989), 201–6.

52. Lestringant, *L’atelier du cosmographe*, 154.

53. See the list of geographical and nautical works in Lestringant, *André Thevet*, 397–400.

54. Thevet, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage,” vol. 1, fol. 9r.

# MIPART SEPTENTRIONALE DV MONDE.

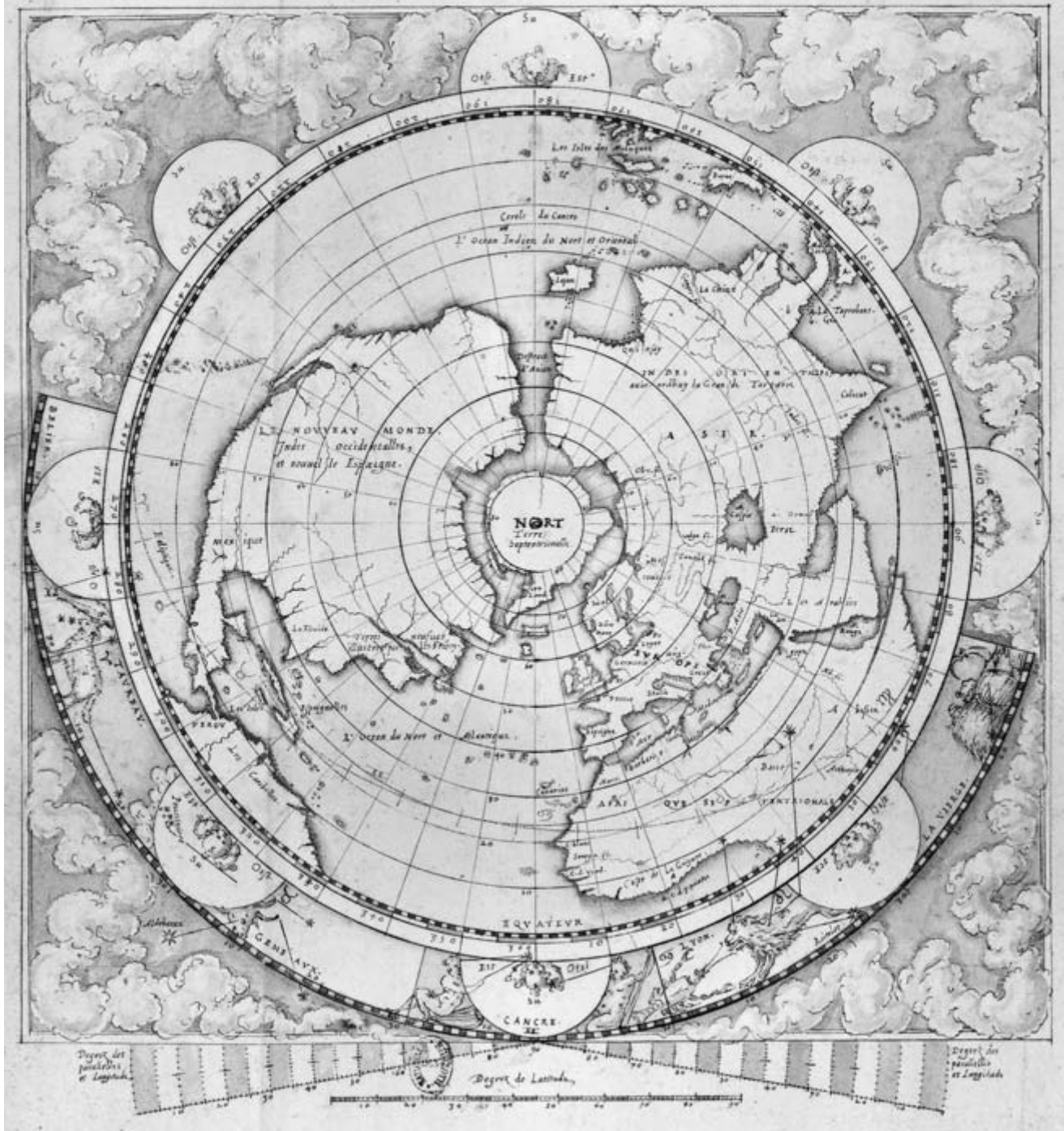


FIG. 47.5. ANDRÉ THEVET, "MIPART SEPTENTRIONALE DV MONDE." From "Le grand insulaire et pilotage," manuscript.

Size of the original: 23 × 22.9 cm. Photograph courtesy of the BNF (Manuscrits, français 15452, fol. 3 v°).

intended for distribution in the Middle East—was made in Venice in 1559, complete with a text in Turkish. As a symbol of Christian charity, the heart shape of Fine's map made it into a vehicle of religious propaganda. Mangani has argued that as the intermediary between Paris and Venice, Guillaume Postel—Fine's colleague at the Collège Royal—may have played a part in this transformation of the work.<sup>55</sup>

#### GUILLAUME POSTEL

Although less well known than the cartography of Fine, Guillaume Postel's is no less important.<sup>56</sup> Like Fine, Postel would successively publish a map of France in 1570, *La vraye et entiere description du royaume de France, et ses confins*, dedicated to Charles IX,<sup>57</sup> and a large map of the world, *Polo aptata nova charta universi* (the title being an indication of the use of the polar projection) whose first (no longer extant) edition dated from 1578. Both of these documents were woodcuts. The blocks for the world map were cut by Jean II de Gourmont,<sup>58</sup> an engraver and print merchant who occasionally worked for Christoffel Plantijn. During the reign of Louis XIII, the plates would be taken up again by Nicolas de Mathonière, who was continuing the work of his father Denis (which explains the presence of the monogram DDM on the map published in 1621). The Postel world map consists of two hemispheres in polar projection. There is a large northern hemisphere and a smaller southern hemisphere that is divided into two parts and shown, in reverse, as if viewed from inside the earth (fig. 47.6). The map is highly (though unevenly) detailed, with 2170 place-names in the northern hemisphere and 540 in the two southern hemisphere sections. Postel also provided some thirty legends in Latin and French. All these elements were put together inside an elaborate frame. The central meridian of the northern hemisphere passes through Paris, "because, more than any other, this is the place in which learned men become more numerous," and an index pivots around the North Pole. The unequal division of the two hemispheres gives expression to an old theory that Postel had revived in his *De universitate liber* (Paris, 1552). On the third day of Creation when "God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place," he raised part of the earth by separating it from the waters. The Creator's intention was "that almost all the land should lie to the north, and almost all the seas to the South." Postel would adapt this theory to new geographical discoveries. Certain slight extrusions of land did exist in the southern hemisphere (which was predominantly marine), but this was to compensate for the existence of some seas in the northern hemisphere.<sup>59</sup>

Postel also had an exact location for the earthly paradise: at the center of the northern hemisphere—the pole.

He expressed his overall vision of the world in his 1553 *Des merveilles du monde, et principalement des admirables choses des Indes et du Nouveau Monde*. The purpose of the world map was to give an immediately comprehensible visual account of the plan of redemption. Throughout the world, God had distributed various marvels as intelligible reminders of the laws at work in the construction of the universe. Thus, one can see a difference between Postel's work and the other geographical studies produced during the Renaissance, the latter being more concerned with the marvelous qua marvelous, as something unusual and wondrous.

In drawing up the map of the world, which he began in the 1570s, Postel borrowed freely from Ortelius's 1564 world map and Mercator's work. Although Postel cannot be credited with having invented polar projection—it was used in the diagram drawn up by Walter Lud (Gautier Ludd) that is part of the 1512 compilation *Margarita philosophica* put together by Gregor Reisch—he was the first to employ it in a large separate map. As for the inversion he used in depicting the southern hemisphere, it was used in one of the world maps (the work of the Le Havre pilot Guillaume Le Testu) that introduce the superb manuscript atlas, "Cosmographie universelle selon les navigateurs tant anciens que modernes" (1556).<sup>60</sup> Thevet himself also used a polar projection in creating the two hemispheres that come at the beginning of the manuscript of "Le grand insulaire."<sup>61</sup>

Like Fine, Postel had his imitators outside France. Greatly appreciated by the cartographers of the Antwerp School, Postel's map of the world was used between 1581 and 1587 to produce the engraved gores for a globe of the Earth.<sup>62</sup>

#### COPIES OF MERCATOR AND ORTELIUS

The success enjoyed by Ortelius's 1570 atlas of the world had a great effect on the works of cartography printed in France. Because his maps of the world and its continents

55. Mangani, "Abraham Ortelius."

56. Marcel Destombes, "Guillaume Postel cartographe," in *Guillaume Postel 1581–1981: Actes du colloque international d'Avanches, 5–9 septembre 1981* (Paris: Éditions de la Maisnie, 1985), 361–71.

57. See figure 48.5 in this volume.

58. On the Gourmonts, see Maxime Préaud et al., *Dictionnaire des éditeurs d'estampes à Paris sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Promodis, 1987), 142–45, and chapter 53 in this volume, esp. pp. 1574–75.

59. Frank Lestringant, "Cosmologie et mirabilia à la Renaissance: L'exemple de Guillaume Postel," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16 (1986): 253–79.

60. For more on Le Testu, see chapter 52 in this volume.

61. Thevet, "Le grand insulaire et pilotage," vol. 1, fols. 3v–4r.

62. Marcel Destombes, "An Antwerp *Unicum*: An Unpublished Terrestrial Globe of the 16th Century in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris," *Imago Mundi* 24 (1970): 85–94.

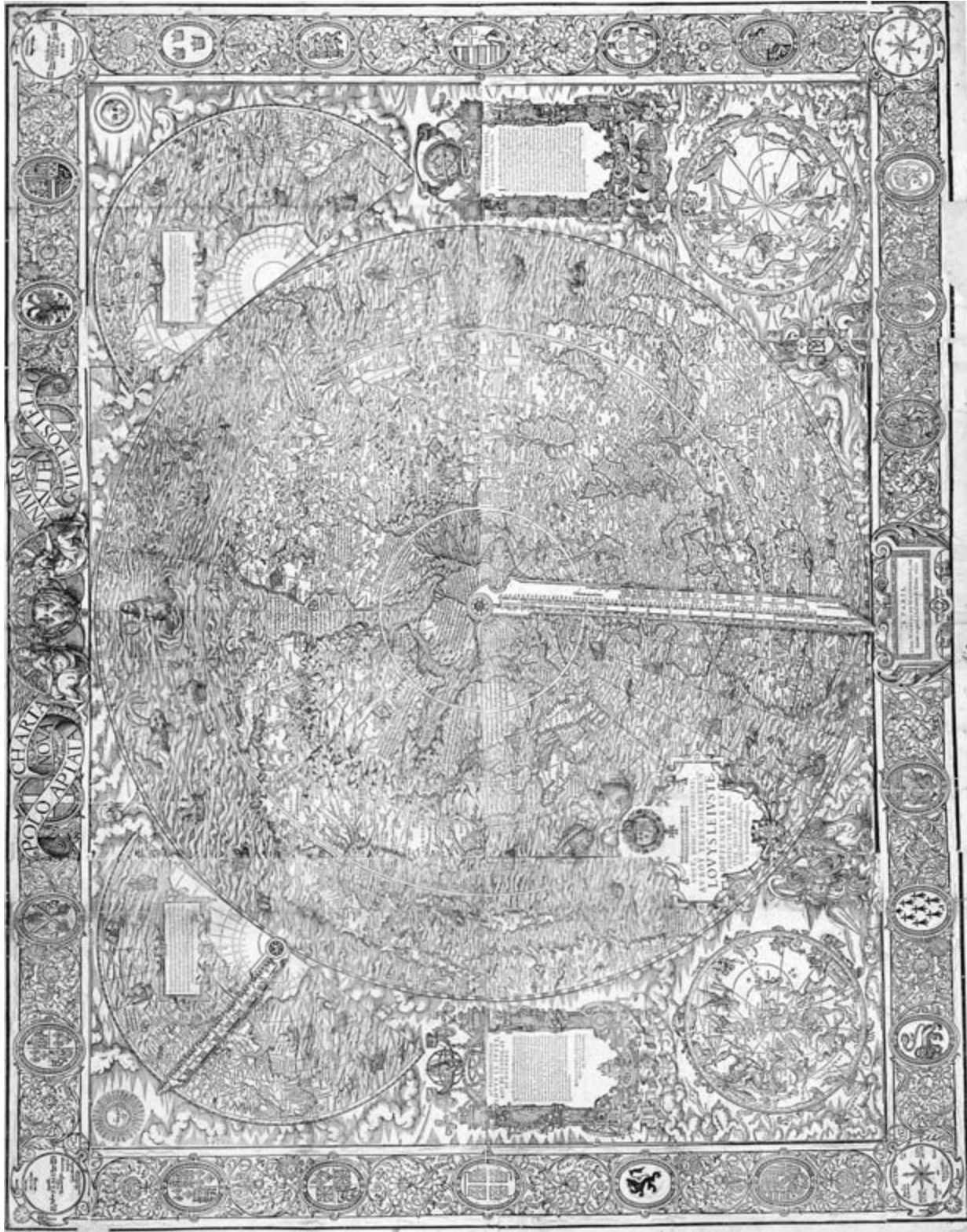


FIG. 47.6. GUILLAUME POSTEL, *POLO APERTA NOVA CHARTA UNIVERSI*. Paris: Nicolas de Mathonière, 1621.

Size of the original: 97 × 122 cm. Photograph courtesy of the Service Historique de la Défense, Département Marine, Vincennes (Recueil 1, map no. 10).

were so often copied, cartographers and publishers were free to dedicate themselves to other, more original, works of cartography. This was the case with *La cosmographie universelle de tout le monde* produced by François de Belleforest, a former scribe or ghostwriter in the employ of Thevet.<sup>63</sup> An adaptation of the work of Sebastian Münster, in which history tended to take pride of place over geography, Belleforest's *Cosmographie universelle* was published in 1575, the same year as Thevet's *Cosmographie*,<sup>64</sup> by two Parisian booksellers, Nicolas Chesneau and Michel Sonnius, who bought out the Paris shop of Plantijn in 1577. Because they wanted to publish Münster's work in French, Chesneau and Sonnius turned to Belleforest, a versatile and prolific writer involved in the official history of France. As one might have imagined, Thevet did not look with favor on this assistant-turned-competitor. In *Les vrais pourtraits*, he wrote: "Belleforest rather immodestly aimed at rehashing Münster's *Cosmographie*, cutting out snippets from an overall text that he thus mutilates, so that his large book is made up of nothing but gathered bits and pieces."<sup>65</sup> The most original part of Belleforest's work was undoubtedly the views and maps of French cities (some of which had not been previously published). In the production of this part of the work, the booksellers sent out a circular to all the major cities of the realm, commissioning them to produce a perspective plan and a short description.<sup>66</sup> Chesneau and Sonnius also made use of Ortelius's maps, copying them in their original format (those that were too big for the volume were bound in as folded sheets). These reproductions included the maps of the world and Europe, France, and the islands of Sardinia, Corfu, Crete, Cyprus, and Malta. Thevet based the four maps of the continents in his *Cosmographie universelle* on Mercator's 1569 world map and used the same map with the 1583 edition of Ortelius's atlas in "Le grand insulaire."<sup>67</sup>

The 1570 Ortelius world map was also used by the wood engraver Jean II de Gourmont for the first map of the world in the form of a fool's head map, dated around 1575.<sup>68</sup> The map, with the device "happiness only comes after death," depicts an earth that is nothing in comparison to the universe, because it is only "a point in the world." In *Les trois mondes* published in 1582, the Gascon Huguenot historian Henri Lancelot Voisin, sieur de La Popelinière, also copied Ortelius to illustrate his arguments about a third world, the Terra australis nondum cognita indicated by the Flemish cartographer (knowledge of which would complete the knowledge of the Old and New Worlds).<sup>69</sup> This work was an encouragement to exploration, because "there is still more of the world to learn about than we Moderns have yet discovered." La Popelinière preferred the outlines given by Ortelius to those produced by Norman hydrographers in works that remained unpublished and with which he was perhaps unfamiliar. Nevertheless, the Normans had already im-

agined the existence of such lands at the end of the world like that of Java-la-Grande, which they linked with Terra Australis.<sup>70</sup>

#### CORRESPONDENCE WITH ORTELIUS

The relations between French and Flemish cartography may have given rise to rather inglorious works of plagiarism, but they also stimulated fruitful exchanges between geographers. In his account of the Northwest Passage, Thevet criticized Ortelius and a whole range of modern and ancient authorities (from Magellan to Münster and Apian) when he commented that they "did not plow or sail this great ocean as I have done."<sup>71</sup> However, he would, around 1586, write a letter to the "Geographer and Cosmographer to the Catholic King" in which he expressed regret that he could not send Ortelius the "350 engraved copper-plates" from "Le grand insulaire."<sup>72</sup> And, probably while he was working on his 1578 world map, Postel wrote to Ortelius to thank him for a map of Asia and discuss the plotting of the course of the Niger and the position of the Moluccas.<sup>73</sup> Postel went as so far as to decry the lack of access to information. It comes as no surprise that Postel's letters often mention religious matters. In a 1579 letter to Ortelius, Postel establishes a link between the representation of the world and the glorification of God and says that the atlas produced by Ortelius is the most important work since the Bible.<sup>74</sup> In an earlier letter, Postel asked Ortelius to pass on his greetings to Christoffel Plantijn and to tell him that he was acquainted with the main members of the "Family of Love," the Paris branch of which was headed by Plantijn's close friend (they called each other "brother") Pierre Porret.<sup>75</sup>

63. Pastoureau, *Les atlas français*, 55.

64. Lestringant, *André Thevet*, 189–230. Unlike Thevet and Nicolay, François de Belleforest was never *cosmographe du roi*.

65. Quoted by Pastoureau, *Les atlas français*, 55.

66. On this point, see Michel Simonin, "Les élites chorographes ou de la 'Description de la France' dans la *Cosmographie universelle* de Belleforest," in *Voyager à la Renaissance: Actes du colloque de Tours, 30 juin–13 juillet 1983*, ed. Jean Céard and Jean-Claude Margolin (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987), 433–51 and pl. 7.

67. Lestringant, *L'atelier du cosmographe*, 239, n. 63.

68. See figure 53.4 in this volume.

69. Shirley, *Mapping of the World*, 171 (no. 148).

70. See plate 62 in this volume.

71. Quoted in Lestringant, *André Thevet*, 15.

72. Quoted in Lestringant, *André Thevet*, 357–58.

73. Abraham Ortelius, *Abrahami Ortelii (geographi antverpiensis) et virorum eruditorum ad eundem et ad Jacobum Colivm Ortelianum . . . Epistulae . . . (1524–1628)*, ed. Jan Hendrik Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Archivum*, vol. 1 (1887; reprinted Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1969), 42–46. The letter was dated 9 April 1567.

74. Ortelius, *Epistulae*, 186–92.

75. Ortelius, *Epistulae*, 46–49. The letter was dated 24 April 1567. See also Mangani, *Il "mondo" di Abramo Ortelio*, 90–94.



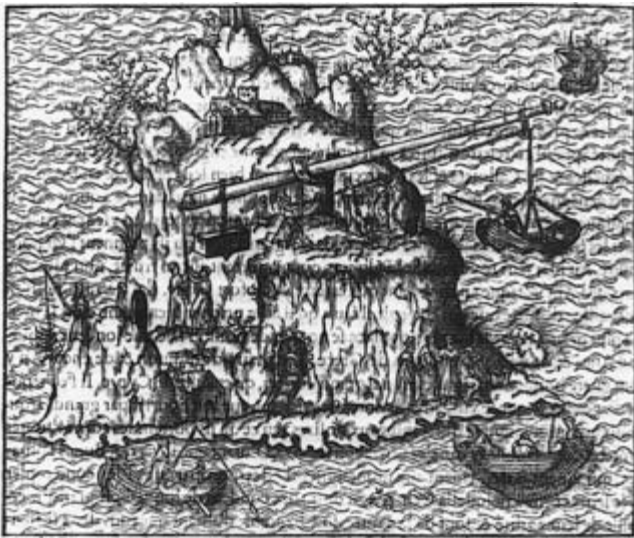


FIG. 47.7. LE “CALOIER DE NISARE” AND ITS “ENGIN À BARQUEROTTES.” Woodcut from André Thevet, *La cosmographie universelle*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1575). The subject of various histories, this island with steep slopes had already been represented by Bartolommeo dalli Sonetti (Venice, 1485). It was to become a necessary part of the mediterranean *isolarii*. Size of the original: 13.5 × 16 cm. Photograph courtesy of the BNF (Cartes et Plans, Ge DD 1397, fol. 217 v°).

## CONCLUSION

Turning from the various models of all-embracing cosmography described in this chapter—embodying either the mathematical rigor of Oronce Fine, the religious vision of Guillaume Postel, or the intellectual attempts of André Thevet—French geographers of the sixteenth century inclined toward more practical forms of knowledge to produce such works as Nicolas de Nicolay’s *Naviga-tion du Roy d’Escosse* or even the unfinished dream of André Thevet’s “Le grand insulaire.” The end of the century saw the arrival of Flemish engravers fleeing religious persecution, and their mastery of the technique of copperplate engraving was put to good use in “Le grand insulaire” (compare the woodcut from *La cosmographie universelle*, figs. 47.7 and 47.8). Nevertheless, the difficulties of the French printing industry, greatly aggravated by the political troubles within the country, would encourage the importation of Dutch maps and, ultimately, atlases that were much appreciated by the French public.

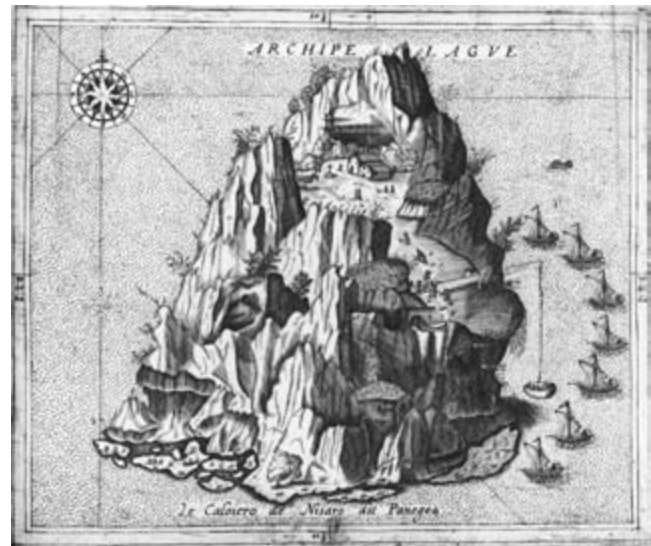


FIG. 47.8. “LE CALOIERO DE NISARO DIT PANEGEA.” From André Thevet, “Le grand insulaire et pilotage.” Engraved version of the previous wood block. Size of the original: 14.9 × 17.9 cm. Photograph courtesy of the BNF (Manuscrits, français 15453, fol. 56 bis).

By definition, an atlas offers an all-embracing picture of the world, indispensable for an overall view, plus larger-scale maps that provide detailed knowledge necessary for those actually interested in specific terrain. But French cartographers lagged behind in the production of such a tool, which required great investment of both intellectual and financial resources. It was not until 1658 that France saw the publication of *Les cartes generales de toutes les parties du monde* by Nicolas I Sanson d’Abbeville, *géographe ordinaire du roi*. Before the tardy advent of this publication, there were attempts to bring together cartographic depictions of the world and nation. For example, in 1634, Christophe Tassin opened his atlas of France, *Les cartes generales de toutes les provinces de France*, with a world map by Jodocus Hondius, Jr., and four maps of continents by Petrus Bertius (Pierre Bert), a Flemish emigrant who had been appointed *cosmographe du roi* by Louis XIII in 1618. In effect, Tassin’s aim was to publish maps that might serve in consolidating the borders of the realm. And thus we come back to the sort of utilitarian cartography that might earn a reward from a grateful monarch.