

## A NEW COPY OF GERARDUS MERCATOR'S "ORBIS IMAGO" (1538)

by

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(Translated from the Italian)

A short article by Gilbert A. CAM (*Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, May 1937, pp. 371-81) gives interesting information concerning a second copy of G. MERCATOR'S "Orbis Imago" (1538) which recently came into the possession of the New York Public Library.

After a few brief notes on the life of the illustrious cartographer, the writer gives a short review of MERCATOR'S well-known celestial and terrestrial spheres preserved in the various libraries of Europe, laying particular stress on two globes discovered in France (1932) by Dr. A.S.W. ROSENBACH. Among the numerous existing copies, those preserved in Italy at the Municipal Library of Urbana, at the Government Library of Cremona, at the Astronomical Museum of Rome and at the Adamont (?) Convent, in Istria, are recalled. CAM thereafter deals particularly with the "Orbis Imago" compiled in 1538 which is, chronologically, the second work executed by MERCATOR, and of which, as stated, only a single copy, that in the possession of the American Geographical Society, has so far been known. This important copy remained unknown till 1878 when it was discovered by James Carson BREVOORT in a Ptolemaic edition published by MERCATOR himself in 1538 (not 1578 as CAM writes).

In his article CAM proposes to give some information on a second copy of this valuable MERCATOR work, a clear reproduction of the original of which, now in the possession of the New York Public Library, accompanies the article.

The copy was recently found by James LENOX in a volume of the "Novus Orbis Regionum" published in Paris in 1532 by Simone GRYNÆUS. In this volume the Mercatorian detached map was placed beside the well-known map (1531) by FINEO with which it shows remarkable similarity, both being double-cordiform world maps. Composed of two sheets joined in the middle, the new "Orbis Imago" is in an excellent state of preservation, there are missing only some external borders, cut, probably, by a reader to adapt its format to the format of some other book: in each of the two sheets a water-mark in the shape of a calice, not very distinct, is distinguishable.

In the centre of the map, close to the lower margin, may be read a dedication to Giovanni DROSIO, a friend of MERCATOR, while in the vicinity of the upper margin is given the date (1538) and a legend which informs the reader of the merits of the map, which is newer and more accurate than those preceding, because it represents America, Sarmatia and India.

After having described the exterior characters of the map, CAM examines rapidly the origin and characteristics of the double-cordiform projection adopted in this copy, emphasizing, in passing, the particular representations of the single continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, Southern and Northern America, the Polar Lands) placing in evidence the innovations brought about and attempting to precise the possible sources upon which the cartographer drew.

For Europe the Ptolemaic influence appears evident, and the same holds good for north-central Africa (to the Barditi westwards, and to the Passu promontory eastwards), whereas for the southern extremity the Portuguese discoveries are used. For the Asiatic continent the two most evident sources are Ptolemy and Marco Polo.

Of major interest is the representation of North and South America in which the care and attention with which the cartographer followed the progress of the recent discoveries appear clearly. The author justly stresses the importance of the fact that the "Orbis Imago" carries for the first time the name "America" in both continents, and indicates a passage between Asia and America (*Fretum arcticum*), whereas SCHÖNER, RUYSCH and FINEO represent America adjoining Asia. To be noted also is the absence of the dividing canal between North and South America which appears in numerous contemporary maps.

In the Polar regions the Arctic is adjacent to Asia and is separated from America by means of a *fretum arcticum*, while the Antarctic presents a considerable extension.

After having thus brought out the most evident features of the Mercatorian map, the writer finally recalls a few copies of the "Orbis Imago" printed in Rome towards 1558 by Antoine LAFRÈRE (LAFRERI) and Antonio SALAMANCA. These copies, which do not mention the name of the real author, but that of SALAMANCA and LAFRERI, being copper engraved, are superior even to the original. The graphical variations, in reality trifling, between the MERCATOR map and the copies of SALAMANCA and LAFRERI are set out by CAM in a small table drawn up for comparison.

The article is accompanied by a good bibliography in which, however, the omission of FIORINI's remarkable study "*Gerardo Mercatore e le sue opere cartografiche*" (*Boll. Soc. Geograf. Italiana*, 1890) is to be noted.

