

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS DELIVERED AT THE 1982 ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF DISCOVERIES

First Session

The Flemish Contribution to Early Portuguese Overseas Activity

By James H. Guill

A close relationship had existed between Portugal and Flanders since the time when Julius Caesar, who had previously been Governor of Lusitania (the Roman name for Portugal) led his legions across the channel from Flanders to attack Britannia. The historic ties were strengthened after the creation of modern Portugal in 1143 by marriages between royal families of Portugal and Flanders and by increased trade. In 1415 two seemingly unrelated battles, at Ceuta in Morocco and at Agincourt in France, set up a chain of events that within 20 years brought a large number of Flemish nobles and citizens into expanding Portuguese overseas adventures.

Rebellions in Flanders were put down very ruthlessly in 1438, causing much suffering and distress in the populace. Through the sister of Prince Henry the Navigator, who was Duchess of Burgundy and Countess of Flanders, an appeal was made to Henry that displaced Flamands be used in his endeavors in the newly discovered Azores Islands, thus beginning a movement of Flemish noblemen and their followers to the islands. Over the centuries Flemish names disappeared into their Portuguese equivalents as the new arrivals adopted the language and identity of their new country, and Flemish contributions of customs, festivals, architecture, shipbuilding knowledge and navigational knowledge were incorporated into Portuguese and Azorean culture.

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The Last Frontier: The Boer Settlements in Southern Angola

By David L. Niddrie

Nobody was more determined in their search for a new frontier than a renegade party of Transvaal Boers, who in 1879 decided to seek new pastures further afield. Two major waves of Boer Trekkers turned northwestward through the Kalahari Desert into Southern Angola, where the Portuguese had only recently established their own settlement frontier with the help of Madeiran immigrants.

In the midst of a Lusitanian culture to which they failed to adapt themselves, the Boers reverted to their nomadic pastoralist ways and soon turned to transporting goods between the coast and the interior by ox wagon, an ecological niche they had always occupied.

The Boers finally withdrew from this alien culture and in the 20th Century retreated to South West Africa there to seize upon yet another open frontier. They left behind in Angola the old trek road between Mocamedes and Humpata, some graveyard headstones and a few relatives who had married Portuguese.

Oscar MacCarthy, a.k.a. The Most Knowledgeable Man in North Africa

By Sanford H. Bederman

This paper recounts the Saharan adventures of Oscar MacCarthy, one of the most important yet least remembered explorers of the Maghreb. After a distinguished career as a literary savant in Paris, MacCarthy migrated to Algeria in 1849. Only thirty-four at the time, he proceeded to become a local legend for his exploits in the Sahara Desert. He wandered around the French Colony for twelve years, familiarizing himself with virtually every corner of the territory. MacCarthy later wrote dozens of articles and books about Algerian geography, ethnology, and archaeology. He became the model for a fictional character created by the artist-writer, Eugene Fromentin, a man he befriended during his desert wanderings. More than anything else, he wished to become the fourth European to visit Timbuctoo, but his desire went unfulfilled. In 1869, he became the Director of the Algiers Library and Museum, a position he held for twenty-two years. During that time, he had the reputation for being the most knowledgeable man in North Africa.

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Second Session

Isla Fuerte on the Juan de la Cosa Mapamundi of 1503: A Key to Interpreting the Historical Ethno-Geography of Colombia's Caribbean Coast.

By Paul S. Anderson

On the first Mapamundi showing the New World, Juan de la Cosa drew an island on the Caribbean coast of Colombia with nearly exact conformal characteristics of Isla Fuerte. However, if we use his drawings of Cuba and Hispaniola as a scale, he drew Isla Fuerte approximately 50 times larger than its actual minuscule 2.5 km. length.

The reason for this extraordinary attention and grossly exaggerated size is interpreted in relation to reviewed historical facts and probable events which suggest that Juan de la Cosa used Isla Fuerte as a major argument in 1503 to convince Queen Isabel of Spain to permit slave taking and looting in the New World. As mapped, Isla Fuerte, which means "strong island", dominated the area between Cartagena and Panama.

A further conclusion from the data is that the Indians at Cartagena, famous for their fierce resistance to the Spaniards, were directly linked via the Islas de San Bernardo and Isla Fuerte to a larger stronghold of "Caribs" in the Costa Brava area between the Sinu basin and the Gulf of Uraba.

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The Impact of the La Salle Expedition of 1682 on European Cartography

By Louis De Vorsey, Jr.

The true course of the lower Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico remained a matter of conjecture and speculation until 1682, when Rene-Robert Cavalier de La Salle led a party of French and Indians to its deltaic mouth. For reasons discussed in this paper, La Salle deliberately misrepresented the

location of the Mississippi's mouth as being in Texas several hundred miles west of its true position. In so doing he perpetrated the greatest geographical hoax in the history of North American exploration. It was a hoax which arrested the development of European cartography depicting the continent for two full decades. It also led La Salle to found his ill-fated settlement on Matagorda Bay and meet his death in the swamps of East Texas.

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### Third Session

#### The Rhumb Grid of Early Portolan Charts: Speculations Regarding Origin and Construction

By Thomas R. Smith

Less than a dozen "normal" portolan charts of the Mediterranean have survived from the XIII and XIV centuries. Most of these have two "compass circles" carefully drawn with a single point of tangency near the center of the chart and their own centers, respectively, near Barcelona in the west and western Anatolia in the east. The charts are not embellished with decorations or compass roses. Each compass circle has the customary 16 rhumb-line intersections, equally spaced on its perimeter. From these wind roses the rhumbs extend only inward to other points on the perimeter, usually in quadrants of 9 rhumbs. This restriction adds to the spare and uncluttered appearance of the chart. Particular attention appears to have been paid to the central section of the chart on each side of the point of tangency. With the exception of the E-W rhumb through the point of tangency, few, if any rhumbs are drawn from one circle to the other and a pattern of arrangement is common to several of the surviving charts.

The Carta Pisana presents a different solution to the problem of areas lying outside of its twin circles. Four blocks of diagonals and squares occupy four coastal areas on each side of the two circles. These have been regarded as squares for the guidance of draftsmen in delineating the coast line, but such an interpretation must account for the lack of this pattern inside the circles. An alternative explanation is that since the lines of this square-diagonal grid are all extensions of the rhumbs of their respective circles, they may be regarded as navigational aids for the substantial coastal areas outside of the rhumb-circles.

We have here what appear to be sophisticated solutions to design problems and further support for the view that these early charts represent a substantial cartographic tradition for which there are no known survivals. Also, the examination of grids for these and later charts presently pose more questions than answers.

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#### Polar Points of View: Historical Trends in the Orientation of Azimuthal Maps of the Arctic Region

By Karen S. Pearson

This paper surveys polar azimuthal maps (16th-20th centuries) from the University of Alaska Library's northern research collection. Exempt from the modern north-at-the-top convention, azimuthal maps have remained free

to express the orientational outlook of the mapmaker. Contrasting approaches to lettering on the maps surveyed range from horizontal labels readable from a single fixed position to curved labels readable from changing points of view as the map is rotated. On most of the maps, though, there are some orientational cues which emphasize a particular point of view. The shifting placement of the central meridian over time reflects the transition from a Europe-centered world perspective to the global one of the present day.

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#### Fourth Session

#### Clues Concerning the Provenance of the Vinland Map

By Ardell Abrahamson

New evidence on the provenance and ink of the Vinland Map may prove that the map is really a genuine 15th-century document and not a 20th-century forgery, as has been claimed by the McCrone Report of 1974.

This paper will show that there is a strong connection between early manuscript and printed books in the National Library of Spain, an important paleographer - Dr. Pedro Roca - who worked with this material, and Dr. Laka Jelic, a Yugoslavian scholar whose name has been linked to the map as a possible forger. It will show the likelihood that Dr. Roca had access to the map in a national collection in Spain, and that he supplied information from the map to Dr. Jelic, who used it as background information for several papers he wrote at the close of the 19th-century. Roca died in 1903, and there is evidence of sales of related material by his widow, 1904-1920. Furthermore, a closer look at evidence of the McCrone report on the ink shows a number of weaknesses. An ink based on indigo could satisfy all the requirements of the Vinland Map ink and possibly prove the map to have been drawn ca. 1440 as originally claimed.

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#### Scientific Inquiry into the Vinland Map has Many Facets

By Robert Anderson

The authenticity of the Vinland Map has been challenged because of the identification of the titanium oxide compound called anatase in the ink. The size and shape of these anatase particles appear to be similar to those of a 20th-century commercial product. This finding may not be valid in light of the observation that old ink formulas also reproduce a synthetic anatase. This refutation of anatase questions requires that further scientific procedures be applied to assist in the evaluation of the document. These would include carbon dating the parchment and non-destructive ion beam analysis of the inks associated with the map and the Tartar Relation.

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The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation: Were They  
Lettered by the Same Hand?

By Robert H. Power

The purpose of this paper is to establish that there is no valid evidence extant supporting a delineation date of A.D. 1920, and there is probable cause to believe that a broad-base study of the Vinland Map by scholars and scientists may definitely establish its date of delineation as ca. A.D. 1440.

New information promises to shed light on the authenticity of the map, and to disprove the assertions of Walter C. McCrone, of McCrone Associates of Chicago, that "The Vinland map was made by a very, very, very clever hoaxer." A study of the calligraphy of the map and the Tartar Relation, made by Professor Thomas E. Marston of Yale University, showed that the hand is identical in both. Marston's study has not been duplicated, and has never been disproved.

It is urged that Yale University Library allow the Smithsonian Institution to work with the FBI Documents Section of the FBI laboratory to see if they can professionally render an opinion as to whether these two documents were written by the same hand, and that this laboratory test be augmented by a three-member panel of European paleographers familiar with texts of the region and date of the Tartar Relation. In this way there will be an evaluation based both on modern techniques and the work of traditional scholars.

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Fifth Session

Old World-New World Cultural Differences: The Maritime Connection

By D. K. Abbass

Anthropologists and historians explain the cultural differences between exploration period Europe and her New World colonies by considering the cultural traits found in the various regions from which the original colonists arrived, the period of their arrival, the different physical environments encountered in the New World, and the varying levels of cultural complexity and resistance found among the American Indians encountered. Using Spanish examples, this paper will suggest that exploration period maritime technology and culture was another variable in the Old World-New World cross-cultural transfer. Material goods, people and other living things had to survive the sometimes lengthy and dangerous voyages. The demands and rigours of maritime transport were not only critical factors in the success of the exploration and conquest, but also provided a common background to all early colonial developments and influenced the cultural selections from the donor mainland cultures to their colonial offspring. In fact, some colonial culture traits may have been derived directly from the maritime heritage. Therefore, the study of exploration period maritime technology and culture is a necessary adjunct to

important to the understanding of the cultural differences between Europe  
and her New World colonies.

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### Exploring the Bahamas with Ponce de Leon

By Arne B. Molander

The fragmentary account of Herrera provides only a limited foundation on which to reconstruct the 1513 voyage of Ponce de Leon. Those who have used this source to argue that he entered the Gulf of Mexico are ignoring the objectives of his charter and the precise, if fragmentary, clues recorded by Herrera. This paper will present a new reconstruction of his route which provides a better fit to the clues, increases our confidence in the ability of Ponce de Leon to make latitude measurements, and precisely supports the argument for a Columbus landfall near the northern end of Eleuthera.

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