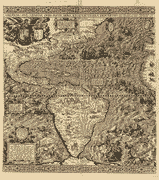
AP Euro: Chapter 14 – Europe & the World, New Encounters 1500-1800 – Intro Cartography Activity

**The 1562 Map of America -** Created by Diego Gutiérrez, 1562

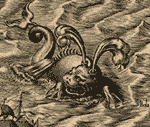
The late fifteenth-century landfall by Christopher Columbus on the island of Guanahani, in the Bahamas, forced open the gates to a whole new world for the Spanish and other European explorers. America, as it came to be called, became the destination for numerous expeditions and adventures from 1492 onward. Through papal bulls in 1493 and the famous Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal in 1494, the two Iberian powers laid claim to the entire Western Hemisphere, although to them the newly found lands were extensions of Asia, or islands off its coasts.

[](https://www.loc.gov/item/map49000970)During the next seventy years, a veritable avalanche of individual and state-supported efforts ensued to discover, explore, and understand the fullness of America, although initially the efforts were concentrated along its extensive coastlines. Exploratory forays continued well into the eighteenth century until every segment of America, from Canada to Tierra del Fuego, was visited and studied.

Entitled *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima descriptio. (Auctore Diego Gutiero Philippi Regis Hisp. etc.*

In sixteenth-century Europe, authoritative knowledge of the geography of America was based upon the observations of primarily Spanish- and Portuguese-sponsored explorers and navigators, as interpreted and plotted by official cosmographers and cartographers of the crowns of Spain's new overseas empire. As Europe's vision of trade and land acquisition shifted from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, the information that this institution acquired about its new territories was vital to Spain's world power status. Comprehensive changes in long-held geographical concepts were produced as practical observation countered time-honored ideas about the shape of the world and the areas that comprised it.

In 1562 Diego Gutiérrez, a Spanish cartographer from the respected *Casa de la Contratación*, and Hieronymus Cock, a noted engraver from Antwerp, collaborated in the preparation of a spectacular and ornate map of what was then referred to as the fourth part of the world, America. It was the largest engraved map of America to that time. Substantial mystery surrounds this map more than four hundred years after its creation. Confusion over its authorship, the location of its printing, and the reasons even for its preparation remains. The fact that only two known copies of this printed map are extant, one located in the Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.) and the other preserved in the British Library (London) no doubt contributes to our lack of knowledge about this valuable and authoritative depiction of Spanish dominion in its new world, America.

*Sea creatures in the North Atlantic*

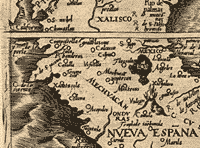
*Cosmographo. Hiero Cock Excude. 1562*, the map depicts the eastern coast of North America, all of Central and South America, and portions of the western coasts of Europe and Africa. While only a longitude scale appears, it is clear that the map covers an area bounded between 0° and 115° longitude west of Greenwich, and 57° north and 70° south latitude. While a latitude scale does not appear, the Equator and the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn are clearly shown and measurements between these fixed latitudes can assist in determining distances for the entire map. Six engraved sheets are neatly joined to form a single map which measures 93 by 86 centimeters. Because this map ends abruptly on the east and the west and the ornamental border on the Library of Congress copy appears only at the top and the bottom of the map, one might believe that a world map was planned, of which only the American part was completed. However, this map contains a unique title identifying America as the fourth part of the world. It seems logical that only a map of the Western Hemisphere was intended and rendered. It is apparent that one of the intentions in preparing the map was to define clearly Spain's America for the other European powers who might have designs on the region.

*Giants of Patagonia*

The map provides a richly illustrated view of an America filled with images and names that had been popularized in Europe following Columbus's 1492 voyage of discovery. Images of parrots, monkeys, mermaids, fearsome sea creatures, cannibals, Patagonian giants, and an erupting volcano in central Mexico complement the numerous settlements, rivers, mountains, and capes named. According to Ruth Putnam, in *California: The Name* (Berkeley, 1917), the Gutiérrez map contains one of the earliest references to California, for on it " C. California" is located on the southern tip of Baja California. The map correctly recognizes the presence of the Amazon River system, other rivers of South America, Lake Titicaca, the location of Potosí and Mexico City, Florida and the greater southeastern part of the United States, and myriad coastal features of South, Central, North, and Caribbean America. It was to be the largest printed Spanish map of America to appear before the late eighteenth century.

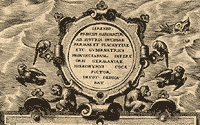
There are three coats of arms on the Gutiérrez map: in the lower right, in the Atlantic Ocean east of Argentina is the coat of arms of the crown of Portugal, and Portuguese interests in India are noted in the Eastern Atlantic "La Flota De Portugal Que Va Par Calicute". In the southeastern and southwestern parts of what is now the United States are two coats of arms: the one on the left is that of the Spanish Habsburg Empire; to its right is that of the French crown. Gutiérrez's *Americae* is an official map, recognizing both Philip II, King of Spain from 1556 to 1598, and his half-sister Margarita de Parma, Regent of the Netherlands from 1559 to 1562.

The following inscription (in Latin on the map) gives evidence, seventy years after Columbus's historic voyage, of the popular belief that Americus Vespucius discovered America in 1497: "This fourth part of the world remained unknown to all geographers until the year 1497, at which time it was discovered by Americus Vespucius serving the King of Castile, whereupon it also obtained a name from the discoverer."

*Early reference to California*

The map has been used as evidence in two South American boundary disputes. It was reproduced in part in *Frontières entre le Brésil et la Guyane Française. Mémoire présenté par les États Unis de Brésil. Atlas* (Paris, 1899) and *Juicio de límites entre el Perú y Bolivia. Prueba peruana presentada al gobierno de la República Argentina* por Víctor M. Maurtua. *Atlas* (Barcelona, 1906). A tracing of it was made in the nineteenth century by Johann Georg Kohl for his hand-copied collection of maps in European libraries and archives for the study of the discovery, exploration, and mapping of North America, now in the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

The Library of Congress's copy of the Gutiérrez map was formerly in the collection of the Duke of Gotha in Germany. Sold at a 1932 auction in Munich, it was subsequently acquired by an American book dealer who sold it to Lessing J. Rosenwald, the well-known collector of illustrated books. The Gutiérrez map was among the items received when Mr. Rosenwald gave a portion of his collection to the Library of Congress in 1949.

*Detail of the fine engraving of Hieronymus*

Diego Gutiérrez was a cosmographer at the *Casa de la Contratación*, in its office of Pilot Major. His father, also named Diego Gutiérrez, was the head of a Sevillean family map- and instrument-making business from the early part of the sixteenth century until his death in 1554. The elder Diego Gutiérrez, also a map maker of note, became associated with the work of the *Casa de la Contratación* and catered to the navigational information needs of navigators and pilots engaged in that extraordinary time of exploration and travel to America, practically at its inception in the early part of the sixteenth century.

The mapmaker Diego Gutiérrez had been named cosmographer in the *Casa de la Contratación* by a royal appointment on October 22, 1554, following the death of his father Diego in January 1554. He received a salary of 6,000 maravedis because of his known ability to make navigational charts and other nautical instruments. On the famous 1562 map of America he is identified as the "Auctore Diego Gutiero Philippi Regis Hisp. Etc." That is, "Diego Gutiérrez, cosmographer at the time of the reign of Philip II of Spain." He served as a cosmographer in the *Casa de la Contratación* from 1554 to at least 1569, according to documents in the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville. He was among a number of cartographers in the *Casa de la Contratación* known as cosmographers, including Alonso de Chaves (Pilot Major), Francisco Falero, Jerónimo de Chaves, Sancho Gutiérrez (Diego's brother), and Alonso de Santa Cruz. Diego Gutiérrez was distinguished from the rest as "oficial de hacer cartas de marear" ["an official who makes sea charts"]). Diego's brother, Sancho Gutiérrez, became a cosmographer in the *Casa* on May 18, 1553.

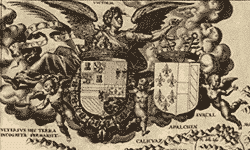
The engraver of the map, Hieronymus Cock, was a Flemish artist of recognized talent who worked in Antwerp. He has been considered one of the most important engravers and printmakers in Europe in the sixteenth century. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Antwerp became the major center for the production of prints and books in the Low Countries. Cock was the son of Jan Wellens or Willems, alias Cock, and had a brother, Mathias Cock; they were both noted painters. Born at Antwerp in 1510, Cock was admitted to the Guild of St. Luke as a master painter in 1545 and later engaged in engraving and print selling. Between 1546 and 1548 he studied in Rome, where he was influenced by the work of the noted artists and printmakers Antonio Salamanca and Antonio Lafrery. In Antwerp in 1548 Cock established the shop *Aux Quatre Vents* [To the The Four Winds]. Between 1548 and the time of his death in 1570 he carried on a very successful business, popularizing art through his engravings of the finest works of the Dutch masters.

In 1550 Cock prepared his first engraving of ruins of Ancient Rome, followed by twenty-four plates of the ruins in May 1554. He engraved various works in honor of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, including the "Pompa funebris" in 1559, depicting the funeral cortege organized in Brussels in 1558 by Philip II in honor of his father. Cock in 1555 engraved portraits of Philip II and Maria and Maximillian II of Austria. He engraved a portrait of Charles V in 1556 and produced the *Divi Caroli V imp. opt. max. victoriae*, in 1563, a series of twelve engravings illustrating the triumphs of that emperor.

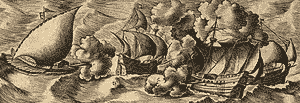
Cock engraved several maps, including those of Leiden (1550), Piedmont (1551), Sicily (1553), Turkey and Persia by Castaldo (1555), Siena (1555), Ostia (1557), an Antwerp bird's-eye view (1557), Siege de Saint-Quentin (1557), Ypres (1562), Hableneuf (1563), Malta (1565), Bourgogne by Ferdinand de Launoy (1562), and the Holy Land by Petru Laicksteen (1562) in addition to the 1562 America map. He engraved several of the maps for Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, published in 1570 by the Plantin Press in Antwerp and is cited in Ortelius's *Catalogus Auctorum Tabularum Geographicarum*. His engravings also appeared in Jacob van Deventer's *Nederlansche Steden*, Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, and Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*.

In order to invest his business with an official status and obtain privileges, Cock had as his patron the powerful Antoine Perrenot, Cardinal de Granvelle (1517-1586), to whom some of Cock's prints are dedicated. His widow carried on the business after his death in 1570.

Facts concerning the distribution of the 1562 map of America or the number of copies prepared are not known. It would seem that a substantial number of copies of the map must have been printed since it was intended to define authoritatively boundaries of Spain's sphere of influence in America while, simultaneously, recognizing the French and Portuguese presence. It is ironic that in the 1560s, following the issuance of the map, Spain was forced to reinforce its presence along the northern Atlantic coast in North America. In 1562 France began to colonize sites in what are now South Carolina and Florida, threatening Spain's exclusive control in the area.

*Coats of arms of Spain and France*

It is possible that the map was produced, at the request of official Spain, through Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle who was the Spanish negotiator of the 1559 Treaty of Cateau Cambrésis. As was mentioned earlier, Granvelle was the patron of much of Cock's printing in Antwerp. That treaty between France and Spain, and a separate one by the same name between France and England brought to a close nearly thirty years of constant warfare in Western Europe. And the recognition of Philip II on the map, to whom Gutiérrez was cosmographer, indicated that the map itself probably was prepared after 1556, when Charles V abdicated the throne in favor of Philip II and retired to the Monastery of Yuste in Extremadura. Charles died on September 21, 1558.

*Fleets fighting for dominance in the South Atlantic*

The April 3, 1559 Treaty of Cateau Cambrésis between Spain and France is a key event in the map's preparation. That treaty and another signed on April 2, 1559 between France and England are known collectively as the Peace of Cateau Cambrésis. Those treaties contained the most comprehensive agreements drawn up before the Peace of Westphalia in the seventeenth century, thus effectively establishing legal and political status quo for Western Europe for ninety years. Concluded with the treaty was a French-Spanish agreement, namely the marriage of Elizabeth of Valois, daughter of Henry II, King of France, to Philip II in the summer of 1559. The marriage alliance between the two kingdoms is possibly an explanation for the very close positioning of the coats of arms of Spain and France on the Gutiérrez map.

An apparent oral agreement between French and Spanish negotiators at Cateau Cambrésis concluded that the geographical parameters of the treaty were not to extend to non-European areas, for example, in America, where the French claimed the right to trade, which Spain denied.

One of the noteworthy omissions in the Gutiérrez map of America is the absence of the famous line of demarcation. This hypothetical vertical line in the Atlantic Ocean served as the division between Spanish and Portuguese possessions in America. West of the line were Spain's areas of influence. In the Gutiérrez map the most prominent line of demarcation is not a vertical line but rather a parallel or horizontal line, representing the Tropic of Cancer at 23° 30' N. One would have expected instead the parallel of Cape Bojador at 26 ° N, which passes south of the Canaries, and was used by Pope Martin V in the fifteenth century to grant exclusive privileges to the Portuguese southwards down the African coast, and by Pope Nicholas V in *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) and in all subsequent bulls on the subject of spheres of influence. But the latitudinal line mentioned in the 1559 Treaty of Cateau Cambrésis and prominently shown on the Gutiérrez map was that of the Tropic of Cancer.

But why was the famous vertical line of demarcation, that line separating Europe from America, not referred to in the treaty of Cateau Cambrésis and on the map? Diplomatic documents after the 1559 treaty state simply that Spain's sphere of influence is south of the Tropic of Cancer and west of the prime meridian. But not knowing what prime meridian creates a problem with ascertaining the location of the line of demarcation. Was it to be the line given in the Papal Bull of 1493 or that in the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494; and for that matter which island in the Atlantic Ocean was to be used as the eastern terminus from which the distance to the line of demarcation was to be determined? There was no agreement upon which privilege was to be accepted, and even individual treaties remained unclear when references were made to the easternmost starting point, whether west of the meridian of Ferro or Pico in the Azores or one of the Cape Verde Islands.

*Portugal's coat of arms*

In the sixteenth century, no one could determine longitudes across the oceans with more than a rough approximation of accuracy. From the outset of the diplomatic history of the Americas, it was concluded by diplomats, as well as distinguished Spanish jurists and theologians, that the Pope in Rome had no right to give away what did not belong to him, and that the only valid claim that Spain could assert to any part of America was to those areas it effectively occupied. In their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century relations with Spain, other European powers, with the exception of Portugal, recognized only one line, and that was the Tropic of Cancer. And Spain had chosen to use that line without regard for papal donations, for practical reasons. Navigators could easily ascertain the location of the Tropic of Cancer. What made it particularly useful was that Cancer ran through the Straits of Florida with the safest channel well on its Cuban, or southern, side. So no ship could enter West Indian or Caribbean waters, not even the Gulf of Mexico, without crossing the Tropic of Cancer. Spain was vitally interested in preserving the monopoly of its American trade and the safety of its silver and gold fleets. Until 1559 the only serious threat to its monopoly was France, and no sooner did French interlopers and corsairs begin to be a nuisance than measures began to be taken to pursue and eliminate them anywhere below the Tropic of Cancer. The normal relation between Spain and France, especially before 1559, had been war.

: The long snaking path of the Amazon River Above the Tropic of Cancer, Spain's interests and ambitions were more limited. It at times lay claim, through expeditions and colonization attempts, to that area and its offshore islands on the grounds of Pope Alexander's 1493 bull. But its primary concern was to safeguard its treasure fleets and prevent the establishment of potentially hostile bases.

With the map and the treaty of Cateau Cambrésis, Spain and France acknowledged areas of possession in America. At the time of the map the ill-fated French settlement of Nicolas de Villegaignon in Portugal's Brazil, following France's 1555 establishment of its "La France Antarctique" in Guanabara Bay, was under continuous attack by the Portuguese until it was removed in 1567. South of the Tropic of Cancer. Spain had firm control in its America. But from the Florida Keys northward Spain had not effectively placed its flag. In the 1560's in present-day South Carolina and Florida, the most ambitious effort to test Spanish resolve occurred. In 1562 a new French colony was established in Florida under Jean Ribaut and René de Laudonniére only to be destroyed by the Spanish in 1565 with the subsequent establishment of the first permanent settlement in what is now the United States, Saint Augustine, as a protective station for the Spanish gold fleet returning from America to Spain.

Gutiérrez's magnificent 1562 map of America was not intended to be a scientifically or navigationally exacting document, although it was of large scale and remained the largest map of America for a century. It was, rather, a ceremonial map, a diplomatic map, as identified by the coats of arms proclaiming possession. Through the map, Spain proclaimed to the nations of Western Europe its American territory, clearly outlining its sphere of control, not by degrees, but with the appearance of a very broad line for the Tropic of Cancer clearly drawn on the map.

*Animals of Africa*

The Gutiérrez map of America has rarely gained the recognition and the study that it deserves. Perhaps its uniqueness, with only two known copies extant, has contributed to its relative obscurity in cartographic literature. Or, it is possible that the controversy over who actually made the map, whether the father or less well-known son, has confused researchers. But, for whatever reason that limited information is known about this large map of America, it is hoped that this facsimile of the map in the Library of Congress's Geography and Map Division can generate interest in further research on Diego Gutiérrez and his 1562 map of America. Perhaps then this magnificent map can enter its proper rank among the cartographic treasures of the early years of European exploration of America.

Dr. John R. Hébert  
Chief Geography and Map Division  
Library of Congress  
Washington, DC

**Ortelius Atlas**

**Abraham Ortelius:** [](https://www.loc.gov/item/2003683482)[*Theatrvm orbis terrarvm.*](https://www.loc.gov/item/2003683482)

An important part of the Geography and Map Division holdings is its atlas collection, consisting of more than fifty-three thousand atlases. One of the most valuable components of the atlas collection is the numerous editions of the revolutionary mapbook *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* by Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), a Flemish scholar and geographer. Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Theatre of the World) is considered the first true atlas in the modern sense: a collection of uniform map sheets and sustaining text bound to form a book for which copper printing plates were specifically engraved. The Ortelius atlas is sometimes referred to as the summary of sixteenth-century cartography. Many of his atlas's maps were based upon sources that no longer exist or are extremely rare. Ortelius appended a unique source list (the "Catalogus Auctorum") identifying the names of contemporary cartographers, some of whom would otherwise have remained obscure. More than an original concept, the *Theatrum* was also the most authoritative and successful such work during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Because it was frequently revised to reflect new geographical and historical insights, contemporary scholars in western Europe praised the *Theatrum* highly for its accuracy, even as they embraced the atlas's concept. The *Theatrum* atlas first appeared in 1570 and continued to be published until 1612. During this period, over seventy-three hundred copies were printed in thirty-one editions and seven different languages-a remarkable figure for the time.

The original 1570 Latin edition of the *Theatrum* mapbook consisted of seventy maps on fifty-three sheets with accompanying texts. In the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress, there are copies of each of the four imprints from that edition. The online collection presents images of the entire third imprint. This particular volume was unbound for conservation treatment, thus making individual maps and narratives in the atlas available for scanning.

Abraham Ortelius, maker of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, is regarded as one of the most prominent geographers of the sixteenth century. Before the publication of the *Theatrum*, Ortelius was a respected student of classical history and a collector of books and old coins but had found only modest acclaim for his cartographic skills. Yet, he had made a living as a professional illuminator after 1554, illustrating hundreds of maps, and making at least six single- and multi-sheet maps of his own between 1564 and 1570. Still, it was the *Theatrum* that firmly established his reputation as a cartographer and made him a wealthy man.

When the *Theatrum* appeared, European map production was shifting from Italy to Antwerp, Ortelius's home town and a center of entrepreneurial activity in Europe. "Mapbooks" had appeared in several formats well before Ortelius first started preparing the *Theatrum* project. Portuguese discoveries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were documented by manuscript charts bound together in volume format. Some wall-maps were also bound. In the 1560s, many so-called "I.A.T.O." (Italian atlas assembled to order) or "Lafreri" volumes had been printed, flooding the market but not necessarily unifying maps and text into a single context or printing format. Rather than appearing as a single edition, Italian atlases were assembled to suit the needs of the individual customer.[**1**](https://www.loc.gov/collections/general-maps/articles-and-essays/general-atlases/ortelius-atlas/#one) Ortelius departed from the Italian model by placing far more emphasis on the explanatory quality of the text while giving nearly equal weight to all elements of the atlas. Cut to uniform size and printed as a single-sized compilation of maps, historical narratives, and source references, the *Theatrum* was from the outset an encyclopedic description of the world like none before it.

*[](https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/ortpic.jpg)*Encyclopedic also was Ortelius's method of paying homage to existing sources. The *Theatrum's* maps were a careful selection of the best available cartography. They were logically organized to represent continents, groups of regions, and nation-states, with the text (one or both halfsheets on the backs of the maps) providing relevant information and further references.

*Abraham Ortelius*

The first edition's bibliography or "Catalogus Auctorum"-a separate section in the atlas-lists not only all thirty-three cartographers whose maps Ortelius consulted, but all eighty-seven geographers known to him. The "Catalogus" was thus the first critical attempt to provide readers with a historical context for published maps.[**2**](https://www.loc.gov/collections/general-maps/articles-and-essays/general-atlases/ortelius-atlas/#two)Â Â In an era when naming references was the exception rather than the rule, Ortelius was one of the best bibliographers of early cartography.

Earlier mapbooks (after ca. 1400) had been based on the work of Claudius Ptolemy, whose *Geographia* recorded classical Greek geographic knowledge in the second century A.D. and was the chief source for cartographic publications in the early Renaissance era. Ortelius's *Theatrum* definitively freed cartography from the influence of Ptolemy although convention still demanded that the new form of map presentation and illustration pay homage to the classical writers.

While not a scientific innovator, Ortelius is best remembered for his ability to gather an immense body of existing geographic knowledge and to publish it in a consistent and high-quality cartographic format: the atlas. As a synthesis of many existing maps, the *Theatrum's* world map, for example, was influenced by the cartography of Jacobo Gastaldi (world map, 1561), Diego Gutierrez (portolan map of the Atlantic, 1562), and, not least, by Gerardus Mercator's 1569 world map. The map of Europa found its inspiration in the work of Mercator (wall map, 1554), Olaus Magnus (Scandinavia map, 1539), and Gastaldi (first map of Asia, 1559, and Africa map of 1664). The Asia map was based upon Ortelius's own wall map of 1567, which was in turn made after Gastaldi's 1559 Asia map.[**3**](https://www.loc.gov/collections/general-maps/articles-and-essays/general-atlases/ortelius-atlas/#three)Compiling, refining, and reducing maps and multiple maps of other geographers to folio pages measuring approximately 57.6 by 42.6 cm was the essence of Ortelius's atlas-making labours.

The single most crucial source for much of Ortelius's mapping was the influential 1569 world map of Gerardus Mercator (1512-1594). At least eight plates in the *Theatrum* were directly derived from this map.[**4**](https://www.loc.gov/collections/general-maps/articles-and-essays/general-atlases/ortelius-atlas/#four)Mercator, Ortelius's contemporary, who coined the word "atlas" for a book of maps, could boast maps and atlases of superior accuracy and comparable influence. The original idea of fitting maps to size and binding them in a smaller format may also have been his. Throughout successive editions of the *Theatrum*, Ortelius often modified and even replaced maps based on advice, findings, and encouragements from Mercator. It has been suggested that Mercator deliberately delayed the publication of his own atlas in order to accommodate Ortelius, but no clear evidence substantiates the claim. Much more an original empirical scientist than Ortelius was, Mercator drew many of his own maps and redrew them for use in his 1585 *Atlas*. By reducing the texts and further increasing the integration of maps, Mercator gradually refined Ortelius's atlas concept. In the*Theatrum*, Ortelius did not forget to pay special homage to Mercator, whom he had befriended as a young man in the early 1550s.

In evaluating the importance of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, one must also consider its circumstances of publication and the sheer length of its publication history. Ortelius was neither wealthy nor without competition in his field of scholarly activity. Even as he was preparing the first edition of his atlas, contemporaries in Antwerp, such as Hieronymus Cock (c. 1507-1570), Gerard de Jode (c. 1508-1591), and Gerardus Mercator, were formidable rivals. In the late 1560s De Jode began compiling his competing world atlas, *Speculum Orbis Terrarum* (whose publication was considerably delayed and did not occur until 1578). The two men had collaborated on an earlier world map (1564) but had then become estranged. Meanwhile the Cologne humanist Georg Braun (1541-1622)-an acquaintance of Ortelius-was planning the publication of his city atlas *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, which was first published in Cologne in 1572.**[5](https://www.loc.gov/collections/general-maps/articles-and-essays/general-atlases/ortelius-atlas/" \l "five" \t "_blank)**

In this competitive atmosphere, the *Theatrum*, while representing Ortelius's deep understanding of geography, came into being as a commercial venture and partnership. While undertaking to pay for its early printing himself, Ortelius involved numerous business and scholarly connections-engravers, printers, and merchants-he had met as an illuminator. Crucial to the eventual success of *Theatrum* was his connection with the Antwerp printing house of Christoph Plantin (or Christoffel Plantijn, c. 1520-1589), which assumed responsibility for printing the atlas in 1579. Commercial success nevertheless appears to have come as a surprise. An emerging, well-to-do middle class in the Netherlands was taking an active interest in education and scientific matters and the *Theatrum's* format, like that of earlier atlases, was far less cumbersome to use than sets of loose sheets. The atlas's popularity, and the many reactions and encouragements he received to continue printing his "manual," may in part explain why Ortelius immediately began revising errata, verifying and adding source references, and changing less conspicuous textual elements.

All editions of the *Theatrum* have a common structure. The single-volume atlas opens with an allegorical title page depicting the five continents then known as native goddesses. There follows a dedication to Philip II, King of Spain and the Netherlands; a poem by Adolphus Mekerchus (Adolf van Meetkercke), on the title page; a portrait of Ortelius by Philip Galle (in editions of 1579 and later); an introduction by Ortelius himself; a letter of recommendation by Mercator; the list of sources ("Catalogus Auctorum"); an index of regions and place-names ("Index Tabularum"); the atlas proper, consisting of maps with accompanying text on the verso; a register of place-names in antiquity ("Nomenclator"); a treatise ("De Mona Druidum", by Humfred Lhuyd); and finally the privilege and a colophon. [**6**](https://www.loc.gov/collections/general-maps/articles-and-essays/general-atlases/ortelius-atlas/#six)

After *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum's* initial release, Ortelius regularly revised and expanded the atlas, reissuing it in various formats until his death in 1598. From its original seventy maps and eighty-seven bibliographic references in the first edition (1570), the atlas grew through its thirty-one editions to encompass 183 references and 167 maps in 1612. Only after 1610 did the atlas's accuracy begin to be called into question by more recent findings, such as those found in the works of the Blaeu family and Jodocus Hondius. Throughout its publication history, however, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* was the undisputed leader in the field of European atlas-making.

Text compiled by Frans Koks

Footnotes:

1. Peter H. Meurer, *Fontes cartographici Orteliani: das "Theatrum orbis terrarum" von Abraham Ortelius und seine Kartenquellen* (Weinheim: VCH, 1991), pp. 10-11.
2. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
3. Marcel P.R. van den Broecke, *Ortelius atlas maps: an illustrated guide* (Netherlands: HES Publishers, 1996), pp. 39-289.
4. Meurer, p. 21.
5. Meurer, pp. 35.
6. Ibid., pp. 27.
7. van den Broecke, p. 20



