

Translation of Large Text Block on Sheet 9 of 1516 Carta Marina by Martin Waldseemuller

**John Hessler
Geography and Map Division
Library of Congress**

Iacomilus, Martin Waldseemuller, wishes to the reader good fortune.

We will seem to you reader, to have diligently presented and shown a representation of the world previously, which was filled with error, wonder and confusion. In this representation, we do believe that the reader disagrees with us in that we have represented irregular forms in our previous description of the land and sea (and these we certainly described with no deceiving rhetoric). Our previous representation pleased very few people, as we have lately come to understand. Therefore, since true seekers of knowledge rarely color their words in confusing rhetoric, and do not embellish facts with charm, but instead with a venerable abundance of simplicity, we must say that we cover ours heads with a humble hood. In the past we published an image of the whole world in 1000 copies, which was completed in a few years, not without hard work, and based on the tradition of Ptolemy, whose works are known to few because of his excessive antiquity. This representation took much effort to bring to light so that it would include the locations of the lands and the regions of peoples along with the manners and habits of men. We made it so that it would contain only the cities, the mountains, and the races of men along with their customs known to have flourished and to have been known by the people in the time of Ptolemy¹.

After the bold citizens of Venice, the great pontiffs Clement IV and Gregory X, and after both Christopher Columbus and Americo Vespucci, captains of Portugal, published the

¹ In this paragraph Waldseemuller appears to be describing his 1507 World Map. Several scholars have put forth other suggestions for the identity of the map discussed here such as the maps contained in the 1513 Ptolemy (See Peter Dickson's, *The Magellan Myth*, 2007, for more on this). The maps found in the 1513 Ptolemy however do not have any reference to particular customs and peoples found in the various locations as are found on the 1507 map and seemingly described here by Waldseemuller in this paragraph. The description is also problematic in relation to the 1507 world map as it of course it contains, as Dickson points out, much more than simply the lands known to Ptolemy.

accounts of their discoveries many things were added to our knowledge. Although it is well known that the machinery of the world has not varied since the time of Ptolemy, it is indeed a fact that the passing of time inverts and changes things so that it is difficult to find one city or region in twenty which has kept its ancient name or that has not been newly developed after his time. Because of this and because nothing in these matters is clear in hindsight, difficulties may arise in our understanding of very distant regions and cities. Where are now located Augusta, Rauricum, Elcebu, Berbetomagus, or, among the foreign maritime powers, Byzantium, Aphrodisium, Carthage, Ninive, whose names and locations have been transferred to us which great accuracy by Ptolemy? This is of course a difficult question. Are they close by, next to the Rhine River, or far away and concealed? Who has knowledge of, who can tell apart and who can make known to us the Sequani people, the Hedui, the Helvetians, the Leuci, the Vangioni, the Hagoni, the Mediomatrics, all of whom were so well known at one time. I acknowledge that it is possible that no one could now know the manners of the ancients and could come upon knowledge of Celtic Gaul and Belgium, Austrasia, Noricam, Sarmatia, Synthia, Thaurica and the golden Chersonses, the bay of Caticolphi, the bay of Ganges and the very well known island of Taprobane. Time is expansive; it renews, and brings change into the affairs of men.

Many years ago a traveler set upon a long and laborious journey and, as in more recent times explored the lands of men because even the lands whose names have not changed may have been carelessly reported as things in other zones and at the equator have been. It is obvious that the boundaries of Ethiopia and indeed the fortunate islands, now called the Canaries, could be more north, and the boundaries of India, by the persuasion of its leaders, could be more south than the locations passed on by Ptolemy. Is it not possible that Ptolemy did not judge the accounts of travelers so critically and that information from travelers who believed in some absurdity was transferred to him so that his work now persuades people that the new cosmographers rather than the ancient are to be imitated, lest some important change or alteration remain unknown or uncertain. Moved by these considerations, I have prepared this second image of the whole world for the benefit of the learned, so that as the representation of the whole of the land and sea by the

ancient authors stood together, not only would the new and present image of the world shine through, but also the natural change that has taken place in the intervening time would be so evident that you would have a unique view of what sort of things become perishable. These things whatever they may have been in the past and whatever they may become in the future are presented so this change may in no way be doubted as time goes on.

Therefore it has pleased us to create an image and description of the whole world as a marine chart after the manner of modern cartographers to the point that we copied their style in the descriptions of the sea from the most accepted nautical records. In consequence we have generally copied the accounts of journeys, chorographies and the reports of recent travelers in the description of the Mediterranean, of Asia and of Africa. We used accounts of the brother of Ascelius, who took care of many business affairs under the Supreme Pontiff Innocence, of the brother of Odoricus de Foro, of Julius de Parca Leonis, of Peter de Alaicus, of the brother of John de Plano Carpio, of Massius and Marcus, Venetian citizens, of Casper, the Jewish informer, whose book of travels was copied and dedicated to the King of Portugal, of Francis de Albiecheta, of Ianuensus Ludoicus, and of Vatomanus Bononien. All of these travels, experiences and descriptions of places found on the globe, communicated to us by the patrons and admirers of this affair, we have rendered into this single Marine chart. We took great care in making sure that not a single word of our description be embellished in some sweet style or adorned with some kind of festive arrangement. For it is always better to speak in a humble and truthful style. For this reason we ask you to look upon us with a benevolent spirit. Farewell.