

# Two antique portolan charts

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*The two portolans on display, a 16th century nautical chart and a printed nautical atlas from the late seventeenth century, fall within the tradition of books and maps produced as practical aids to navigation and commerce; they therefore form part of the original vocation of the School of Commerce of Venice, created from the outset for the training of trade professionals who came into contact with different cultures in Europe, the Mediterranean countries, and the East.*

## **1. Portolan chart of the Mediterranean: Bartolomeu Olives, manuscript on vellum, 1538 (donated by Giovanni Battista Cadorin in 1868)**



Nautical map of the Mediterranean along with the North Atlantic to Iceland and Scandinavia and the African coast to the south of Rodeloto, and Atlantic islands. The map, measuring 60x92cm, is hand drawn on parchment and signed and dated in a cartouche by Bartolomeu Olives in Majorca 1538. It has two main centres, one marked in the center of the Tyrrhenian Sea by a compass rose along with 16 secondary centres (5 of which also with compass rose), the other located to the west of Spain. The coastline are circular arches and wedges, brown retouched in red; the toponyms are in brown and red. The ornamentation, rich and colourful, includes islands, banners, animal figures, ships and camp tents; at the cardinal points eight putti heads are inserted. The cartographer Bartolomeo Olives was active from 1532 to 1589 and belonged to a famous Mallorcan family of cartographers; around the middle of the 16th century he moved his business first to Venice and Palermo, then to Messina and in 1589 to Marseilles. This nautical chart was donated to the Scuola Superiore di Commercio [Higher School of Commerce] by Giovanni Battista Cadorin in 1868; it was exhibited at the national geographical exhibition held on the occasion of the Third International Geographical Congress in Venice in 1881, and in the exhibition held on the occasion of the Sixth Italian Geographic Congress in Venice in 1907. The chart was restored in 1980.

**Dutch portolan chart *De Nieuwe Grootte Lichtende Zee-Fakkel* ( *La nueva y grand relumbrante antorcha de la mar - The New, Great Shining Sea Torch*), Vooght / Keulen, 1695-1704**

The production of islands and portals, largely due to the Flemish and Venetian typography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had the main objective of providing detailed and functional information, closely linked to the practicality of navigation and increasingly necessary due to the new colonial activities and achievements of the East and West India Companies. Among the Flemish nautical atlases that appeared on the publishing market, an important and very detailed atlas was the monumental *The New, Great Shining Face of the Sea* by Claes Janszoon Vooght, a portolan of world seas published by Gerard van Keulen between 1681 and 1684 in five volumes in folio, which included nautical instructions, general and particular maps, port plans, and coastal views. It was translated into several languages and had various reprints with updates; many papers bear dates after the publication of the pilot book, because whilst the text did not require updates, the charts were replaced over time as needed. The van Keulen publishing house was founded around 1678 by the father Johannes, known in Amsterdam as a bookseller, his son Gerard (1654-1711) taking over in 1695, being a skilled engraver in the nautical, mathematical and hydrographic disciplines of the East India Company, who impressed the company with the cartographic specialization that made it famous in Holland and in Europe over the two following centuries. During the exhibition, the pages of the pilot book will be turned approximately every month in order to progressively exhibit the additional parts described here.

**2a. Frontispiece of the third part**



The exhibit shown here is the Spanish translation of the Vooght portolan, *La nueva y grande relumbrante antorcha de la mar* [The New, Great Shining Face of the Sea], with the third part translated into Italian (Of the new and great shining face of the sea), published between 1695 and 1704. The first volume describes the northern seas from Holland to the Strait of Hudson. The second volume is dedicated to navigation from the North Sea from continental European coasts to the Cape Verde Islands. The third volume describes the Mediterranean, which was of particular importance as a crossroads of trade between the East and the West; the Italian translation, published in 1695 with the title of the new and great shining face of the sea and reprinted in 1705, is due to the Padovan Mosè Giron.

## 2b. Summary Nautical Chart: the World



The fourth volume concerns the West Indies and the eastern coasts of North America. The fifth contains the maps of West Africa to the Cape of Good Hope and eleven maps of Brazil, as well as some papers from the Far East that prelude the compilation of the sixth volume. The sixth volume, published only in 1753, is dedicated to navigation along the Asian coast; since these were of primary interest to Holland, which had founded a commercial empire, the maps of those regions remained hand drawn for a long time so as to discourage their spread outside the fleet of the Dutch East India Company, until 1753, when the nautical atlases published by the British and the French had already been in circulation for a few decades.

## 2c. The Gulf of Venice: view of the coastline



The Gulf of Venice was geographically and politically extended to the whole Adriatic and to the Ionian islands. The drawings with the profile of the coasts have the aim of making the location of the

ship more immediate compared to the coast visible during navigation. These pages show the profiles of the coasts from S. Maria di Leuca, passing through Venice to Pula and the island of Cres; on the right page at the top we see the coast lines of Chioggia and Venice.

### 2d. The southern Aegean Sea with detail of the port of Rhodes



The nautical chart covers the navigation routes from Morea, the Venetian toponym used to indicate the Peloponnese, to the island of Candia, the Dodecanese and the island of Rhodes, up to the shores of Asia Minor. Above right, detail of the port of Rhodes.

### 2e. The Black Sea



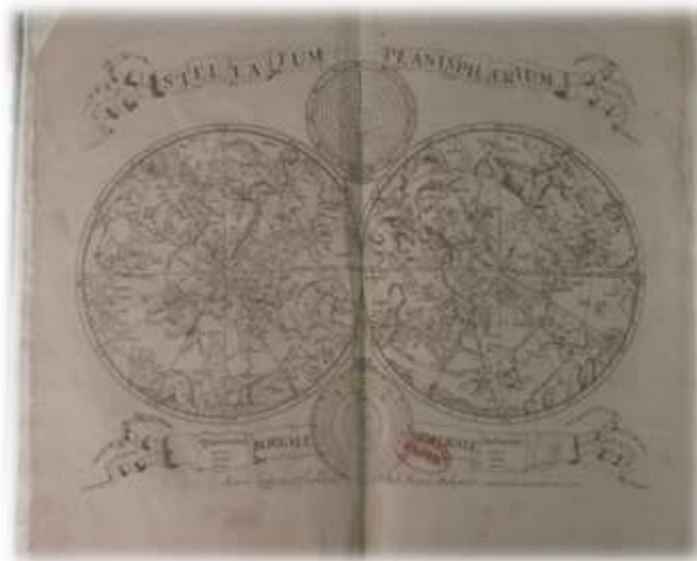
Note the beautiful engraving of a battle in the upper left (a battle between the Tartar and Russian cavalry).

## 2f. The Indian Ocean and the China Sea



This nautical chart is dedicated to the Arabian Sea and Madagascar up to the Cape of Good Hope, and India and the South China Sea including Indonesia up to Australia (New Holland).

## 2g. Planisphere of the stars



This double-hemisphere celestial chart by Louis Vlasbloem is derived from the celestial hemispheres already published by Joan Blaeu. The small spheres represent the geocentric and heliocentric configurations of the solar system. In the northern hemisphere one recognizes Chioma di Berenice (Coma Berenices) introduced in 1551 by the Dutch cartographer Gerardus Mercator. The great expansion of Dutch maritime trade in the late sixteenth century and the first two thirds of the seventeenth century provided new astronomical knowledge on the southern hemisphere that led to the addition of twelve new constellations first reproduced by Petrus Plancius in 1598, including Pavone (Pavo), Phoenix (Phoenix), Indian (Indus).