

GIOVANNI BATTISTA RAMUSIO AND THE HISTORY OF DISCOVERIES: AN
ANALYSIS OF RAMUSIO'S COMMENTARY, CARTOGRAPHY,
AND IMAGERY IN *DELLE NAVIGAZIONI ET VIAGGI*

by

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I never intended to write on the subject of Ramusio. I had planned to do my research on the Italian Unification and American opinions on it. I was looking for information on the subject and came across a wonderful book by Howard Marraro entitled *American Opinion on the Unification of Italy*. It appeared that ground had already been covered. I guess I should acknowledge Marraro for sending me in a different direction. Once I discovered the Transatlantic program at UTA, thanks to much communication with Dr. Stanley Palmer, I was taken back several centuries while still clinging to Italian studies. I was familiar with the role of individual Italians in the field of exploration and became fascinated by the role of Italians in the field of cartography. That, combined with an interest in Renaissance art acquired while working in Italy, made this the ideal field of study.

Dr. David Buisseret helped nudge me in the direction of Ramusio. He was instrumental in helping me find information on the subject, and in encouraging me to take advantage of the opportunities at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Without his help and encouragement, I would not have completed the task. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee: Dr. Steven Reinhardt, Dr. Dennis Reinhartz, Dr. Douglas Richmond, and Dr. Stanley Palmer.

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ABSTRACT

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Giovanni Battista Ramusio was a sixteenth-century Venetian scholar who was very interested in the studies of geography and cartography. Ramusio's keen interest was in the findings of travelers and explorers to all parts of the world during the Age of Discoveries. He is remembered for his compilation of travel narratives entitled *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. *Navigazioni et Viaggi* is a massive work in three volumes that includes a comprehensive collection of travel narratives translated into Italian and published by Giunti in Venice. While this was a major accomplishment, Ramusio's original commentaries on these travels and on the history of exploration have been overlooked. The present work offers an analysis of the original work in *Navigazioni et*

Viaggi, including Ramusio's commentaries and original maps and images, and provides background information on Ramusio's life. Some of Ramusio's writings are presented for the first time in the English language, and the biography of Ramusio included in the introduction is the most complete to date in English. Ramusio's writings give insight into the immediate impact of early modern discoveries on scholars of the time making Ramusio an important historian and reporter of these events.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO RAMUSIO AND HIS WORK

The monumental work of Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485-1557) is too often viewed in its entirety. It is, indeed most often viewed *as* a monument. Occasionally images or maps are lifted and studied in isolation, but rarely is the work given the serious, in-depth analysis it deserves. Some have used it as a ready source for translating individual entries, such as the famous account of Marco Polo's travels. It has been inspirational to such individuals as Richard Hakluyt. The work is typically viewed apart from the man, and Ramusio who seems to be a background figure of lesser importance. The purpose here is to place Ramusio in the foreground – to view him and his life's work as an example of a contemporary historian of the great age of discoveries. We need to place him within the intellectual circles in which he operated. By doing this we can gain insight into the impressions being made upon individuals, the formation of their attitudes, and in particular how they were able to conceive and "contextualize" an entirely new world that had been revealed to them. In order to achieve this Ramusio is considered within the context of his time. Analysis of Ramusio's works will follow categorized by subjects and places of interest to him. Although we will initially attempt to address the three categories stated in the title – commentary, cartography, and imagery – in too many cases the image and word come together in Ramusio's work, and it is impossible to separate the study of the two.

An examination of Ramusio's work allows one to see how a Renaissance scholar interpreted the world through the accounts of explorers made sense of the new information about the world by placing it into the context of his classical training. Ramusio realized he was living in a new era He often himself referred to the previous age as a "dark night" and proudly proclaimed that scholars of his age had acquired knowledge surpassing even that of antiquity. Ramusio was fascinated by the reports of explorers from ancient to modern times, and he made known this fascination through the publication of his major work, *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. The work is best known as a compilation of travel narratives translated and edited by Ramusio, with Ramusio typically portrayed as the individual *behind* the work. The attempt here is to bring Ramusio to the fore by analyzing the work that is original to him and/or his associates who worked with him on the project. A study of the commentary, cartography, and imagery included in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* provides important insight into the thoughts of a contemporary observer of the Age of Discoveries.

With a work as large as *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, it is easy to look only at individual writing and subjects. To get a true understanding of Ramusio's work, it is important to try to look at it on the whole. As one looks at the work in its entirety, there are several themes or aspects to notice throughout. Ramusio's own discourses need to be studied together as well as on their own. In so doing, one has to see what they say about the specific subject upon which he is writing and the issues that are common to all his writings. Although the major themes in the different volumes are easy to distinguish, we must ask what is the overall message(s) that Ramusio is trying to relate? If one looks

at Ramusio's commentary throughout, there are some recurring themes that reveal much regarding Ramusio and, by extension, those associates with whom he discussed these matters, as well as his opinions and ideas as to what was happening in the realm of exploration and discovery. Some things that will be noted in the work relate more to Ramusio's methodology, some of these fairly groundbreaking in nature, as opposed to his philosophy.

One such matter of methodology in Ramusio's work is his manner of correlating word and image, and word and cartography. Ramusio had a long-standing interest in cartography, and it is obvious when one compares both the second-hand accounts of travelers *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* and Ramusio's own writings to the cartography in Volumes I and III that they were intended to work with in tandem. The woodcut images included serve the same purpose as the cartography, as do the visual images and artwork included on the maps and charts. Ramusio, in this regard, seems to have an appreciation for Ptolemy's distinction between the cartography and chorography included on a map.¹

The inclusion of cartography in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* was a gradual process throughout its multiple publications. The original edition of Volume I, 1550, had little cartographic material,² and Volume II, due to unfortunate circumstances to be discussed below, is free of any cartography. Subsequent editions of Volume I contained significant maps, and Volume III contains some very interesting cartographic material.

¹Lucia Nuti, "Mapping Places: Chorography and Vision in the Renaissance," in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion, 1999), 90-91.

One example of how text and map worked together that will be discussed is in Volume I, where Ramusio gives his personal history of the spice trade. The commentary by Ramusio corresponds well to the Gastaldi maps of the areas discussed, which are some of Gastaldi's finest work. Even in the original edition of Volume I there was a map of Africa provided to coincide with the inclusion of the travel accounts of Leo Africanus and the discourse of Ramusio regarding the flooding and receding of the Nile River. Also of interest are diagrams of the "Rock Churches" of Ethiopia, which are described in the Africanus account. Volume III has a famous map of New France by Gastaldi to coincide with the discussion of it, and other maps that have a questionable placement. The imagery of Volume III in the form of woodcut pictures of natives and buildings and artwork on maps is important to the discussion and description of both New France and New Spain.

There is an aspect of the cartographic work of Gastaldi and Ramusio that is an original effort in the field of cartography. It has been suggested that Gastaldi relied on information from Ramusio's sources for the production of the maps in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. These maps correspond to all, or at least several of the entries in the volume for which they were composed. Therefore, Gastaldi's task was to produce maps from a variety of sources that would relate back to those sources as a sort of visual guide to the reader. It was not uncommon to find maps that were produced from a variety of sources, or a map produced to accompany a particular journey or maybe a couple of journeys, but Gastaldi was producing for multiple journeys. Gastaldi did not

²*Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, ed., Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venice: Giunti 1550) 1. There is

draw lines to indicate the path taken by explorers, as occasionally done on a modern map³, but by following the placenames on the maps, and even following some of the imagery, one can easily follow the routes of the travelers. This is an excellent illustration of the cooperative nature of the work done by scholars during the Renaissance. There is no way this type of work could have been done in total isolation.

The best example of this coordinated work by Gastaldi and Ramusio is seen in the maps produced for Volume I. where the main subject is the activities Portuguese around Africa and into the Indian Ocean. The maps relate to each of the voyages, as opposed to being composed to illustrate a single voyage or to simply be a map of the region. The maps are also an excellent accompaniment to Ramusio's own history of the spice trade, which includes information from ancient to Renaissance times. The same phenomenon is apparent in Volume III with the use of maps that not only have corresponding placenames but also display a much larger amount of artistic illustration. As will be seen, Gastaldi's map of New France relates closely to the travels of Cartier and is a nice companion to Ramusio's discourse on New France. The cartography as well as the imagery on Gastaldi's map helps tell the story conveyed in the writing.

Ramusio had much help and encouragement in producing his great work. Apart from Gastaldi's help in cartography, he had several noted and learned friends in Venice. He mentions having discussions with them. There is extant correspondence with them,

an original copy of the 1550 edition in the British Library.

³ The practice of using a line to trace the travels of a voyage was in used by the sixteenth century as can be seen in the atlases of Battista Agnese which used a line to trace the route of the Magellan expedition around the globe, as seen on his planisphere painted on parchment, c. 1543, reproduced in Portinaro and Knirsch, *The Cartography of North America: 1500-1800* (New York: Facts on File, 1987), 72. Original in the Medicea-Laurenziana Library, Florence.

and the names of his friends appear throughout the three volumes of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. In such a massive work it is not surprising Ramusio would have to have help in its production. He had assistance with the gathering of materials, as well. Venice's position in international trade and politics was fortuitous for Ramusio when it came to gathering materials that may not have been available to him otherwise. Individuals directly involved in exploration also helped. He corresponded with individuals as far away as Spain, and was fortunate to have some interesting people come through Venice he was able to interview. Ramusio did do some traveling of his own, but for the most part, he had to rely on the experiences of others. While he simply reported on what was going on, not taking an active role exploration, he was considered by his friends and by Venetian officials to be Venice's leading authority on the subject of exploration and travel literature. Ramusio received some formal education, but it would be his personal study and his association with other scholars that would vault him to the position of being one of the greatest reporter/historians of the age of exploration.

Ramusio would have liked Venice to take a more active role in exploration. He took direct steps to try to get the Venetian Republic to sponsor an effort to explore the New World, and even had a candidate in Sebastian Cabot to lead the project. This is one of the more overlooked aspects of Ramusio's work. He was not a totally detached scholar with only an academic interest in the subject of travel and exploration. He included suggestions throughout the three volumes for further exploration, and in some cases, if one looks closely at Ramusio's personal writings there is the definite suggestion that Venice get involved. In one case he even suggested the precise

commercial benefit to Venice if they would become actively involved. He seemed to have the opinion that if the Portuguese were capable of benefiting from their entry into the world trade network, there was no reason why Venice could not benefit as well. Most of his suggestions regarding exploration are to Christian nations in general, and he is particularly interested in an intense search for the Northwest Passage. He had a significant influence in England, where Ramusio's work would have a profound influence on both the publication of travel literature and the actual promotion of English colonization of the New World. The English would certainly not lose Venice's lost opportunity.

Ramusio attempted whenever possible to relate things of the New World to that known in the old world. Especially in his writings regarding New Spain in the introduction to Volume III and his discourse on New France in Volume III, he makes great effort to compare the new species of animals and fish to ones already known to the European audience. He does the same with the new civilizations that he describes. This shows not only his fascination for other places but also his great ability to communicate to a reader in a way that could be best comprehended.

Ramusio's true motivation for his work was his fascination with the world about him. It was not just the New World or Portuguese explorations that caught his interest but accounts of travelers to all parts of the earth through all times. He was as equally interested in what ancient scholars had to say about the geography of the world as he was in the information obtained by his contemporaries, if for no other reason than to show the progress made in his time. He also showed a great interest in the commercial

travels made by the Romans. He gave much attention to this subject in his history of the spice trade, which appears in the first volume of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. The three volumes cover exploration to much of the earth, and there are hints that a fourth volume was in the plans had Ramusio lived long enough. One gets the impression that Ramusio had an insatiable desire for knowledge about the world. How else can one explain the incredible effort that would have been expended in the production of the three massive volumes of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*?

Ramusio's reference to the classics is prevalent throughout the entirety of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. He continually refers to the likes of Ptolemy and Strabo, and often mentions how Renaissance scholars surpassed their works. He mentions the role of ancient Rome in overseas trade, and includes some ancient accounts of overseas travel. He makes frequent reference to classical works in his own discourses especially as they relate to geographic and cosmographic matters. There is also evidence through his personal correspondence that the study of the classics was important to him. It is something that came naturally to him or at least was instilled in him at a young age. Ramusio's family had a strong influence on him in this regard. His association with other notable scholars of the time also attests to his knowledge of antiquity. It is no surprise that the ancient writers influenced him, as he was a Renaissance scholar. He had a real talent for making the connection from ancient to modern as if the Middle Ages had been a mere pause in the intellectual process.

We will argue that Ramusio was above all a scholar driven to acquire knowledge for its own sake, with his greatest satisfaction being that men in his time had

surpassed the knowledge of antiquity. Practical matters did concern him and he was intrigued about what the new discoveries might mean for Venice and all of Europe. Ramusio supported efforts of colonization of the New World, which would imply the inevitable exploitation of the potential wealth there, but even then his personal desire was more for the acquisition of greater geographic knowledge as opposed to the acquisition of wealth. In Ramusio one sees a sixteenth-century European who was able to have respect for a civilization foreign to his own. The impact of his work is evident by the influence it had on the English. It was not only the encyclopedic compilation of the accounts of explorers that were important, but also the considerable contributions of Ramusio himself. Ramusio's work was significant in the sixteenth century. It is now time that his work attracts more than the cursory glance it typically receives.

1.1 Review of Literature

There are not many works devoted solely to Ramusian study. It would stand to reason, then, that there is not a lot of biographical information available on Ramusio. The information included here is a combination of that included in R. A. Skelton, George Parks, Marica Milanesi, and Marchese Guglielmo Carradare. The root source of all the biographical information is Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, whose work on the subject included fifteen pages in his *Iscrizioni Veneziane*, II (1827). Skelton's introduction to the modern reprint offers a very brief biography, but is more concerned with the work itself as opposed to Ramusio's personal life. He does delve into Ramusio's professional career but says little about family and personal background. Parks gives more personal background in his account "Ramusio's Literary History,"

covering a little about the family, Ramusio's education, his career, and personal contacts. Milanesi offers the largest amount of total information on Ramusio and his family; however, these have yet to be translated from the Italian. The Milanesi information appears in both the introduction to the modern Italian translation of *Navigazioni et Viaggi* and *Tolomeo Sostituto*. Most of the information in the latter publication is a restatement of what appears in the former. Parks takes his biographical information from Antonio del Piero, "Della vita e degli studi di Gio. Battista Ramusio," in *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, n. s., IV (1902), which draws its information from Cicogna. Milanesi, too, uses these same sources as Parks for the biographical information used in her two works. There is consistency of information in these sources, and all seem to accept Cicogna's source as reliable. The Carradare account is most interesting as it not only gives the personal and family history but also informs us of the celebration of the Ramusio family in its original hometown of Rimini. Just as the others do, Carradare's *Monografia letta il 14 Marzo 1883...* relies primarily on Cicogna. The Cicogna account is not readily available, nor is the del Piero, but the Carradare information agrees with what is reported out of them by Parks and Milanesi. The Carradare account is also difficult to come by, but there is a copy of the monograph in the British Library. There is little publication information accompanying the account, but it does appear to be valid as it agrees with the other accounts. By combining the above accounts, the presentation here turns out to be the most extensive, though still limited, personal biography of Ramusio in the English language.

Skelton's "Introduction" and Parks' "Content and Sources," both appearing in the first volume of the modern reprint by *Teatrum Orbis Terrarum*, offer good background information on and an outline for exploring *Navigazioni et Viaggi*. The editorial work included in the reprint edition offers a modern table of contents and some indexing. Parks' "Contents and Sources" offers excellent lists of notable entries, lists of illustrations, along with bibliographic information on entries included in the work. Parks' "Ramusio's Literary History" gives a chronological account of Ramusio's publications and writings. It is not simply a listing, as it includes the circumstances surrounding Ramusio's writings and acquisition of many of the materials. In it, though, Parks seems to be so concerned about what not to infer from Ramusio's history that he goes to the opposite extreme. He is trying to make the point that Ramusio's interest in travel literature came later, rather than earlier in his life, based on the information available. His overly cautious approach to some of the information prevents him from venturing to assume that Ramusio was interested in travel literature, or to making greater assumptions that he was not. Regardless of this matter, it is invaluable for understanding Ramusio's work. Its importance is evident by the fact that Milanesi uses Parks' work extensively for her own discussion of Ramusio.

Milanesi's work is the most thorough to date on Ramusio and, more particularly on *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. Her monumental achievement is her editorial effort in the multivolume translation of the original, sixteenth-century Italian version of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* into the modern Italian version, *Delle Navigazioni e Viaggi*. The editorial notes provided by Milanesi offer insight into the individual entries and

historical perspective. The introduction in the first volume contains much information about Ramusio and his work. The most helpful aspect of the work is the modern translation, which, at times, helps in understanding the meaning of some of the more difficult passages. Modern maps and other visuals are also a helpful addition. The smaller print set, though, at times makes the reprint by Teatrum Orbis Terrarum with its large typeset preferable. Milanesi's other work, *Tolomeo Sostituto*, is an insightful work on geographic study of the sixteenth century, and offers a lot of information on Ramusio. Much of it is similar to the information already offered in her introduction to *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, but it is in a more "reader friendly" format, and there is some amount of new material.

The above are the primary sources of information on Ramusio and/or the work in its entirety. Other sources deal with particular works, or aspects of Ramusio's work, or make a little more than passing reference to Ramusio. Frederic Lane gives a nice tribute to Ramusio in his *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 1973. He gives a modest amount of information on Ramusio, though nothing unique, but the offering is interesting for the lovely prose Lane offers. His account does offer good information on the connection between Ramusio and Sebastian Cabot. James Williamson offers a strong critique of Ramusio's account of Sebastian Cabot. His book, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII*, a Hakluyt Society publication, discusses Ramusio solely regarding the Cabot issue. He is rather scathing in his comments not only of what Ramusio includes on Sebastian Cabot, but also of Ramusio's judgment in reporting the information.

Arthur Holzheimer and David Buisseret's publication of *The "Ramusio" Map of 1534* offers information on a pre-*Navigazioni et Viaggi* work by Ramusio. The map was published along with commentary by the two, other maps that relate to the work, and other pertinent information. Other information of interest included in the Holzheimer/Buisseret publication is the inclusion of a well-reproduced, easily read cartouche from the map, and similarly a *summario* from the account the map is said to have accompanied. They discuss the provenance of the map, and as it appears to be legitimate, this would bring into questions Parks' assertion of Ramusio's late developing interest in the publication of travel literature.

There have been some articles written dealing with specific aspects of Ramusio's work. Daymond Turner's article, "Forgotten Treasure from the Indies: The Illustrations of Drawings of Fernández de Oviedo" offers an intriguing comparison of illustrations included in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* and Oviedo's *Historia general*. Turner's main contention is that Oviedo's illustrations were of a more scientific nature while Ramusio's were of a more artistic nature. This becomes all the more interesting when one discovers the contact that Ramusio and Oviedo had with each other. John Headley discusses Ramusio and his role in the study of geography going on in sixteenth-century Venice. Barbara Mundy's "Mapping the Aztec Capital: The 1524 Nuremberg Map of Tenochtitlan, Its Sources and Meanings" offers insight into the map of the city included in Volume III, while Denis Cosgrove's "Mapping New Worlds: Culture and Cartography in Sixteenth-Century Venice" deals generally with the topic of maps and their meaning. David Woodward does not offer much specifically on

Ramusio, but his description of the printing process is in *The Panizzi Lectures, 1995: Maps as Prints in the Italian Renaissance: Makers, Distributors & Consumers* is invaluable for anyone doing research related to the topic. Ramusio receives cursory mention in many other articles and books, but the ones mentioned here are the most important on the subject to date.

What we hope to accomplish here is to provide some of the previously overlooked information on Ramusio crucial to understanding the purpose for his work. By providing the English-reading audience the first good, complete biography of Ramusio's life one can appreciate the inspiration behind the work. We also see the impact of his associates and contacts. His own works are introduced along with careful analysis. His writings are interesting on their own merits and, again, have received little attention in English. Ramusio's writings are not the only sources examined as the cartographic and illustrative information are important to understanding the work. The intention is that this work will offer a new and complete picture of Ramusio.

1.2 Biographical Information on Ramusio

Giovanni Battista Ramusio was a sixteenth-century Venetian scholar who was very interested in the study of geography and in reforming the then body of knowledge to incorporate the findings of travelers and explorers. He was born in Treviso, a town near Venice, in 1485, and lived and worked most of his life in Venice where he died in 1557.⁴ According to Cosgrove, Ramusio served as secretary to the Senate, or Council of

⁴ George B. Parks, "The Contents and Sources of Ramusio's *Navigazioni*," in *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi Raccolte da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio* I, ed. Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venice: Giunti, 1606;

Ten, and editor of reports on the discoveries.⁵ He is described by Lane as a “university man and closely linked to publishers and printer.”⁶ He is remembered for his compilation of travel narratives entitled *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. It is a massive work in three volumes. Volume I, published in 1550, contains travel narratives of Asia, and includes the accounts of notable figures such as Marco Polo. Volume II, published in 1559, three years after Volume III, includes travel narratives of Africa. Volume III, published in 1556, contains accounts of the early discoveries of the “New World,” which he generally refers to as *Indie Occidentale*, or West Indies.⁷

There is no satisfactory biography of Ramusio to date, but by using the sources available, one can put together an acceptable sketch of his life. The most significant English source for the life of Ramusio is Parks, particularly his article “Ramusio’s Literary History.” Milanesi provides the greatest amount of information regarding Ramusio in her modern Italian translation of Ramusio’s work, *Navigazioni e Viaggi*. Milanesi’s introduction provides much of the available information regarding Ramusio’s life. Other Italian sources are helpful including an interesting speech regarding the Ramusio family given at a ceremony in Rimini, recorded by Guglielmo Carradore, celebrating prominent families of that city. Ramusio’s association with other

reprint, Amsterdam: Teatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970. Parks reprinted by permission of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 59 (June 1959), 1: 279 ff.

⁵ Denis Cosgrove, “Mapping New Worlds: Culture and Cartography in Sixteenth-Century Venice,” *Imago Mundi* 44 (1992), 80.

⁶ Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 281.

⁷ R. A. Skelton, “Introduction” in *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi Raccolte da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio*, ed. Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venice: Giunti, 1606; reprint, Amsterdam: Teatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970), 1: v.

key Venetian Renaissance scholars is as telling as some of the actual information regarding his family information.

Carradare's account is most interesting as it was part of an event celebrating the lives of notable families of Rimini, a city on the Adriatic coast well to the south of Venice in the southern part of the region of Emilia-Romagna. In addition to the monograph that was produced in 1883, there was a monument erected in honor of the Ramusio family, and a speech about the family given at a dedication ceremony. The inscription on the monument reads

Il Municipio
Rivendica alla Patria
La Famiglia Ramusio
Chiarissima nel Secolo XV e XVI
Pel Giureconsulato Letterato
Paolo il Vecchio
Volgarizzatore del Valturio Nostro
Pel Medico Girolamo
Cultore felicissimo Delle Lingue orientali
Che Primo Diede Tradotte L'Avicenna
E Per GIOVANNI BATTISTA
Cosmografo della Republicca Veneta
E segretario del Consiglio Dei X
Che lascio la Grande Raccolta
DELE NAVIGAZIONI E DEI VIAGGI
Maravigliosa a quei tempi
TUTTORA AUTOREVOLE
Presso le Colte Nazioni.⁸

It is not surprising that the Ramusio family received the honor in such a fashion, as the late nineteenth century was a time of nationalistic feeling throughout the newly

⁸ Marchese Guglielmo Carradare, *Monografia letta il 14 Marzo 1883...* (Rimini, 1883),10.

unified country of Italy. This may have been part of an attempt by Rimini to portray itself as an important part of Italy's cultural/intellectual past.

Carradare states that the Ramusio family was an "illustrious" and "ancient" family of Rimini.⁹ The Ramusio family moved from Rimini to Venice, or actually the nearby town of Treviso, in the middle of the fifteenth century along with another important family of Rimini, the Augurelli.¹⁰ The reason for the move, according to Milanesi, was the unstable political climate in Rimini at the time.¹¹ Milanesi notes that Ramusio's father, Paolo (1443-1506) arrived in the Venice in 1458 where he was named criminal magistrate in Treviso.¹² It is obvious that the move would have been a "career move" for these two families. There was certainly much gained by a move from a more provincial town to the metropolitan area of Venice. This was a risky move as Venetian society could be somewhat closed to outsiders. The Ramusios must have been confident that they would prove their merit in Venetian society.

The influence of the father, Paolo, was significant in the life and career of Ramusio. Just as his father did Giovanni entered service to the state, and Paolo was also engrossed in humanistic studies.¹³ Parks writes that Paolo and his brother Girolamo took degrees from the University of Padua, where Giovanni would later attend. Paolo was a student of law publishing on the subject and publishing his translation into the

⁹ Carradare, 4.

¹⁰ Carradare, 5.

¹¹ Marica Milanesi, "Introduzione" in *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, ed. Marica Milanesi (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1978), 1: XIII-XIV.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Milanesi, 1: XIV.

vernacular of Valturio's *Precepta Militaria*.¹⁴ Giovanni's uncle, Girolamo was a medical doctor who was exiled from Venice the exact reasons unknown, other than as Milanese puts it "youthful intemperance," and relocated to the Levant. While there, he practiced medicine and made medical studies, but in keeping with the family's humanist interests, he wrote poetry, studied Greek and Arabic literature,¹⁵ and translated Avicenna.¹⁶ Girolamo died in Beirut in 1486, and Giovanni's father, Paolo died while still in service to the Venetian government in 1506, when Giovanni would have been about 21 years of age.¹⁷

Parks does not see any evidence of an early interest in the travel and geography on the part of a young Giovanni, but it is not imprudent to suggest that the family history had to have had some influence. Parks points only to the intellectual influence of the family, and to the mere fact that as a Venetian Ramusio would have had necessary interests in matters overseas.¹⁸ While he may not have been actively collecting travel at an early age, surely his family's transience must have piqued his interest in travel. Having an uncle banished to an exotic location would have certainly given him an extra interest in foreign places in addition to the natural tendency one would have had living in Venice. If that was true of all Venetians, why does *he* become the respected authority in Venice on travel and exploration?

¹⁴ Parks, George B., "Ramusio's Literary History," *Studies in Philology* LII, 1955, 128.

¹⁵ Milanese, 1: XIV.

¹⁶ Parks, 128.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Parks, 128-9.

Parks assesses Ramusio's interest in exploration through the work back to Ramusio, as opposed to looking at the person first and then to his subsequent publications. Parks states that Ramusio's interest in travel and exploration, or at least the gathering of literature on the subjects, comes late in his life. One could just as easily suggest that a lifelong interest in the subject led to his desire at a later date to start acquiring materials on the subject. One of the problems with Ramusian scholarship is that it focuses so heavily on the work itself and Ramusio's role as compiler, as opposed to trying to gain insight into the thoughts and opinions of Ramusio found by studying his work.

Giovanni Ramusio must have been someone of substantial ability as would be indicated by his appointment to serve the Venetian government, and he also benefited from the influence of his father in this regard. Carradare, along with others, states that he was profoundly well versed in the classic languages of Latin and Greek, and the modern language of Portuguese, Spanish, French, and all the Italian dialects.¹⁹ Parks writes that his ability in French was of great use in diplomatic matters and that he spoke "French like a Parisian."²⁰ Ramusio studied at the University of Padua, as had his father and uncle, but Parks speculates that he left his studies at Padua prematurely as there is no record of him receiving a degree.²¹ He would have apparently left his studies in 1505

¹⁹ Carradare, 6.

²⁰ Parks, 130.

²¹ Ibid., 131.

in order to enter service to the ducal chancellery. Part of his early duties (1505-7) included diplomatic missions to Rome, the Swiss Cantons, and France.²²

Milanesi writes that while at Padua he was “probably” making juridical studies, but it was his studies at the *Accademia Aldina* that would have more of an impact on Ramusio for it was there that he made strong friendships with Andrea Navagero and Gerolamo Fracastoro, both of whom he considered to be as close as brothers, and with Pietro Bembo, Bernardino Donato, and Raimondo and Giovanni Battista della Torre.²³ His association with these individuals is alluded to in the personal discourses of Ramusio in *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi*. As will be seen below he makes references of conversations and discussions with some of them, and dedicates some of his writing to Fracastoro. He also credits Fracastoro with helping provide materials and with helping on the actual work of the translating and offering insight. Parks suggests that Ramusio overemphasized the role his friends played in his work giving them credit at times for things he was responsible for himself.²⁴ Ramusio’s bond with Navagero must have been especially close as Ramusio would marry into the Navagero family – a marriage that produced Ramusio’s only son, Paolo, in 1532.²⁵

Parks gives Navagero a lot of credit for moving Ramusio toward a career in the publication of travel literature. He even states that the most important trip ever taken in Ramusio’s life was not one he took himself, but rather a trip taken by Navagero to

²² Milanesi, 1: XIV.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Parks, 130.

²⁵ Milanesi, 1: XVIII.

Spain in 1525, “which started both men on the study of travel literature.”²⁶ It is reported that Navagero had brought back with him from Spain copies of Peter Martyr and Oviedo which he was in the process of translating with the hope of publishing them. Upon Navagero’s death in 1529 Ramusio took up the work of Navagero which included the editing and publication of the mentioned texts, as well as a publication of the *Orations* of Cicero.²⁷

Parks seems to downplay the importance of the events earlier in Ramusio’s life; pointing out that his collecting and publication of travel literature came much later in his life. He points out that Ramusio may have missed opportunities to acquire materials through his diplomatic ties which could have begun his publishing at a much earlier date. This may be true of his actual publication of materials, but it eschews the larger picture one gets from looking at the life of Ramusio. As a younger man he must have been more concerned with advancing his career in the Venetian Republic as opposed to promoting his personal interests through publication. Milanesi points out that by 1530 Ramusio was considered the leading authority on travel literature in Venice.²⁸ One does not achieve that status without having taken an active interest in the subject.

1.2.1 Ramusio’s Associates and Informal Education

Ramusio’s real education came from his personal and from his association with other Renaissance humanist scholars. His father’s influence must have been important in this regard as his association with those interested in humanistic endeavors must have

²⁶ Parks, 129.

²⁷ Parks, 132-3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, XV.

carried over to his son. How else could someone from an “immigrant” family to Venice have operated in the circles in which Ramusio did? Ramusio’s personal abilities must have been notable, as well, and made him worthy of association with the elites of Venetian society. Milanesi notes that Venice, unlike other Italian Renaissance cities, did not lend much public support to the advancement of the humanities. There were few public academies, and the pursuit of studies was strictly a private matter of those individuals interested.²⁹ Milanesi goes on to state that actually many of the scholars in Venice were recent arrivals, including the Giunti family who had moved to Venice from Florence.³⁰ The reason may have been the overriding Venetian interest in the promotion of commerce above all else. It may also have been the result of the relatively stable government system of the Venetian Republic. Milanesi mentions that elsewhere in Italy scholars benefited from courtly sponsorship, and oftentimes this courtly sponsorship was for the purpose of self-promotion, or self-preservation. With the lesser need for this in Venice it may explain the lack of the official patronage.³¹

Perhaps most interesting from a purely humanistic standpoint is Ramusio’s association with Pietro Bembo. Bembo, who would eventually become a cardinal, was a regular correspondent of Ramusio’s. There are several letters recorded of Bembo to Ramusio from both Padua and Rome. Some of these letters are in publication, while others remain only in manuscript form.³² Unfortunately, the extant correspondence is only one-way. While several of the letters from Bembo to Ramusio are preserved there

²⁹ Milanesi, 1: XII.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

are no letters preserved from Ramusio to Bembo. There is not much direct relation from the information in the letters to Ramusio's work on *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, but there is some insight into the relationship between the two which might have had an influence on Ramusio. The span of time covered in the published letters extends from the 1520s to the 1540s, well before any actual work was done on *Navigazioni et Viaggi*. In a letter written from Rome on 27 December 1543, Bembo wrote to Ramusio regarding the translation of a letter of Oviedo showing some mutual interest in the discoveries and in travel literature.³³ The 1543 date puts the letter at a late date for the correspondence between the two, getting closer to the time of Ramusio work. There are frequent references in the letters to classic works by such authors as Pliny, Aristotle, and Livy.³⁴ It is only natural that these men would have had a strong interest in the classic works and in preserving and sharing copies of them. The personal writings of Ramusio in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* include many references to the works of ancient authors. Parks' hesitation to assume Ramusio's interest and work in travel literature began at an early date does not seem to agree with some of the evidence. It is not uncommon for scholars to publish late in their careers, and to rely on study and research completed earlier in their lives. This could be the case with Ramusio whose personal writings appear to be based on discussions he had had with his learned associates and his personal study of the classics. It is also accepted that Ramusio had help from his

³² Parks, 131.

³³ "Mio Ramusio lo farò tradur la lettera del signor Oviedo 'e scriverla e satisfere' il desiderio vostro..." in *Lettere Inedite di Pietro Bembo a Giovan Batista Ramusio* (Venezia: Tipografia Antonelli, 1875).

³⁴ Ibid.

associates in the collection and translation of materials, as may be indicated by the letter from Bembo.

Parks mentions that Ramusio assisted his friends in their scholarly endeavor. When Bembo served as the librarian in the Bessarion collection and then later the Marciani from 1531-42 Ramusio acted as kind of an assistant “lending and recovering books and looking up references and classical works.”³⁵ He also appears to have served a similar function for Fracastoro and Navagero. As noted, that Ramusio took over editorial duties for Navagero upon his death. Fracastoro sought Ramusio’s help in his study of fishes or “poisons known to the ancients.”³⁶ Parks mentions that the latter was a subject in which Ramusio had no particular interest. This is odd since Ramusio wrote at length on poisons in one of his discourses, and showed to have done extensive research on the subject with his references to the works of other scholars in the field. Perhaps it was at this time that Ramusio’s interest in the subject was piqued.

While these individuals were of significance regarding humanist studies, Ramusio’s most important working partner may have been Giacomo Gastaldi. It is well known that Gastaldi was the cartographer for *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, and it is also apparent that there was a personal relationship between Gastaldi and Ramusio. Gastaldi had in common with Ramusio the fact that he too was an immigrant to Venice as he was a native of the Piedmont.³⁷

³⁵ Parks, 131-2.

³⁶ Ibid, 133.

³⁷ “*ho fatto che M. Giacomo de’ Gastaldi Piamonese Cosmografo eccellente...*” Giovanni Battista Ramusio, “Discorso di M. Gio. Battista Ramusio sopra il Terzo volume...” in *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi Raccolte da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio* I, ed. Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venice: Giunti, 1606; reprint, Amsterdam: Teatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970) 3.

There are two interesting stories regarding Gastaldi and Ramusio and the “schools” in which they were involved. Parks writes that Bembo commended Ramusio for a school of geography he was holding in his household that included Ramusio’s son, and other boys he had taken in, one described as a protégé of Bembo’s. This was a “legend,” as Parks puts it, reported by Cicogna and continued in the *Encyclopedia Italiana*. Later discovered in a letter by Fracastor is that the instruction was actually provided by Gastaldi. Certainly, though, Ramusio supplemented their education through informal instruction.³⁸ Another episode involves what was known as the *Accademia della Fama*, a kind of intellectual club where members met to discuss their academic pursuits. Ramusio and Gastaldi may have been original members of this academy, but Woodward states Ramusio died soon after its establishment. According to Woodward, the purpose of the *Accademia della Fama*, whose name comes from the goddess *Fame*, “was to disseminate science with its own publications, purge the errors from works of all subjects, enrich books with annotation and discussions and translate them in various languages, and finally...to promote the Italian language.” It convened in 1556, just one year prior to Giovanni Ramusio’s death, and ended in 1561. Members included Gastaldi, Zorzi, Sanuto, Ruscelli, and Ramusio’s son, Paolo.³⁹

Parks’ assumptions regarding Ramusio’s work and lack of interest early on in travel literature just does not agree with what information is known. It does not consider Ramusio’s cartographic interests verified by the publication of his map sixteen years

³⁸ Parks, 128.

³⁹ David Woodward, *The Panizzi Lectures, 1995: Maps as Prints in the Italian Renaissance: Makers, Distributors & Consumers* (London: The British Library, 1996), 18.

prior to the first volume of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. It also does not agree with Ramusio's reputation in the Venetian government as an expert on the subject; moreover, from what we can glean from his association with other individuals, it seems there is more of a pattern of growing interest that ultimately culminates in the great work produced in the 1550s. Parks is correct, though, in his assessment that Ramusio's interests were varied and that "classical and contemporary travel literature engaged his attention interchangeably throughout his life."⁴⁰

A rather odd event seems to have had an impact on Ramusio, and possibly was another influence in his interest in travels and geography. A Jewish wanderer by the name of David, claiming to be of royal lineage, came to Venice in 1530 preaching for the return of the Jews to the Promised Land. Ramusio received the task of going to examine the situation and expose the person as a fraud. However, in his report to the Senate, recorded by Marin Sanudo, it appears that it was Ramusio who was won over by David.⁴¹ He described David to the Senate as being about 40 years old, emaciated, of oriental features, richly dressed in silk, and a knight well versed in biblical interpretation. He had had audiences with the pope and other European royalty and had been absolved by an inquisition in Provence. What had to be of most interest to Ramusio was the claim by David that he had visited the court of Prester John in Abyssinia and that he had descended all the way down the Nile to Cairo and Alexandria. His travels were authenticated by comparing them to the *Itinerario of Lodovico de Varthema*, and it is recorded that Ramusio spent long hours in discussion

⁴⁰ Parks, 128.

with David.⁴² As Milanesi mentioned that by this time, 1530, Ramusio was considered the leading expert on travel literature to the near east, this would explain why Ramusio would have been chosen for such a task.⁴³

Parks' greatest contribution to Ramusian study is his timeline of Ramusio's literary work and his correspondences regarding that same work. Parks' article leads one right up to the 1550 publication of Volume I of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, and so it gives the history leading up to Ramusio's major publications. The information in Parks' article will serve here as a kind of guide through the years of Ramusio's early literary career.

The early entries include responses to letters written by Ramusio. As was the case with the correspondence between Ramusio and Bembo previously mentioned the letters written by Ramusio are lost. Nonetheless, his responses still give indication of what interested Ramusio. The first record he gives is from 1519 and simply shows an acknowledgement of Ramusio's knowledge of the classics and geography. Then, in the following year, there is a correspondence recorded with the Venetian legate to Buda where Ramusio had requested some information on Eastern Europe and Russia, which was included in *Navigazioni et Viaggi*.⁴⁴ The most significant communication of the mid-1520s is with Ramusio's friend, Andrea Navagero. Navagero had been sent to Spain as an envoy and had been given a charge by Ramusio to collect as much information as he could in regard to the Spanish explorations. In letter from 1525,

⁴¹ Milanesi, 1: XV.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Navagero wrote to Ramusio “I can find no books here on the Indies; but in time I will send enough matter to weary you. I have means of learning everything from Peter Martyr, who is my close friend.”⁴⁵ Navagero returned to Venice in 1528 and apparently, he brought materials and books with him. Parks also notes that Navagero had already done some translation from Spanish into Italian, and that this work was published in 1529 through the efforts of Ramusio after Navagero had died.⁴⁶ Some of these materials obtained through Navagero would ultimately be printed, or in some cases reprinted, in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*.

Parks and Milanesi both point to 1534 as the year of Ramusio’s first important publication. The work was a culmination of that started by Navagero. The work included a version of Peter Martyr’s *Decades of the New World*, Gonzalo de Oviedo’s *Sumario*, and an anonymous account of the conquest of Peru. The last of these was solely of the initiative of Ramusio, done after Navagero’s death.⁴⁷ The official title of this compilation was *Libro primo della Historia de l’Indie Occidentali. Libro secondo delle Indie Occidentali. Libro ultimo del Summario delle Indie occidentali*, published in Venice.⁴⁸ Milanesi sees this publication as the launching of Ramusio’s career in travel literature, and the first of a progression of publications that led to the ultimate production of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*.⁴⁹ Parks notes that this would also mark an end to the “Navagero episode in the story of Ramusio.” Navagero’s influence was

⁴⁴ Parks, 134.

⁴⁵ Andreae Naugerii, *Opera Omnia* (Padua, 1718), 300-301, in Parks, 135.

⁴⁶ Parks, 136.

⁴⁷ Parks, 136-7.

⁴⁸ Milanesi, 1: XVII.

⁴⁹ Milanesi, 1: XVII-XVIII.

significant in the career of Ramusio, and certainly, one influenced the other when it came to their interest and work in travel literature

Throughout the 1530s and 1540s, Ramusio continued his correspondence with Bembo and with his friend Fracastoro. There are references made in these letters to different works being translated or studied, and exchanges of material back-and-forth between them, some related to travel literature and some not. In January of 1534, Fracastoro wrote regarding the Southern Cross and indicated that Ramusio was reading Portuguese narratives for information.⁵⁰ Parks mentions that Ramusio was consulting with Bembo regarding ancient weights and measures.⁵¹ Parks makes note of the fact that these responses to Ramusio's letters display a continuing interest in classical learning, and in particular "Greek editions of classical travelers."⁵² As noted, Ramusio had studied the classics, and as much as anything, his personal desire was to compare the Renaissance knowledge to the classics. It is hard to imagine Ramusio would have strayed too far from his copy of Ptolemy or any other classical works he may have owned. By 1539, though, Parks notes that in a letter from Fracastoro it had become keenly aware to his friends that he had become obsessed with literature regarding modern travels. Fracastoro apparently jokes with Ramusio regarding his correspondents from pole-to-pole.⁵³

Count Raimondo de la Torre of Verona is another of Ramusio's associates who apparently had a role to play in Ramusio's work. He is given credit with providing

⁵⁰ Parks, 138.

⁵¹ Parks, 139.

⁵² Parks, 140.

Ramusio with a copy of the description of a journey to the island of San Tomé, and an account of Hanno the Carthaginian. He also brought a cargo of sugar to Venice met de la Torre.⁵⁴ Parks writes that one can never be too sure when Ramusio gives credit to others for their help, as in some cases he is acting out of modesty.⁵⁵ The cargo of sugar being mentioned is interesting since, as will be noted, Ramusio would suggest this as a possible source of income for Venice to make up for whatever losses may be incurred due to the loss of the monopoly on the trade with the near east.

From 1534 onward, it is apparent that Ramusio had been in direct contact with Oviedo. We can ascertain this from information in Fracastoro's letters, where one learns that Fracastoro was also writing to Oviedo.⁵⁶ Oviedo was a resource for Ramusio and Fracastoro as they wrote to him in Hispaniola with questions regarding the Indies and matters of science and geography. On one occasion, Ramusio was actually the resource for Oviedo as he received from Ramusio an account of the mythical ancestry of Montezuma.⁵⁷ Oviedo mentioned his association with Ramusio in his *Historia general* where wrote about Ramusio stating, "without knowing me [he] sought my friendship, and in his letter sent me a new geography...about the description of the North in new maps..."⁵⁸ Bembo was interested in Ramusio's association with Oviedo and it was mentioned in the letters of Bembo to Ramusio. Parks relates an excerpt from one of these letters of October 29, 1541, where Bembo writes, "I have read the letter from

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi Raccolte da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio*, ed. Giovanni Battista Ramusio 1: 112-114.

⁵⁵ Parks, 140.

⁵⁶ Parks, 138-139.

⁵⁷ Parks, 142.

Signor Oviedo, which is very precious to me and which makes me long to see his Histories.”⁵⁹ The subject of Oviedo came up again in December 1543, in a previously mentioned letter, when Bembo replies to Ramusio that he would translate a letter of Oviedo’s to fulfill a request of Ramusio. He then uses the occasion to ask a favor of Ramusio about a book Bembo needed for his own work.⁶⁰ Parks notes that the letter to be translated was sent directly to Bembo from Oviedo while Bembo was serving in the Holy See. Apparently, Bembo had obtained “ecclesiastical favors” for which Oviedo wrote a letter of gratitude along with the information desired by Ramusio.⁶¹

The communication between Oviedo and Ramusio was more than just communication between two scholars, but also was on matters of business. An overlooked fact about Ramusio is that he was not only a pioneer in travel literature, but he was also a pioneer in overseas investment. There is little known about the details of his investment, but Ramusio was a part of an investment team that included Oviedo and Antonio di Priuli in the late 1530s to early 1540s. This was happening at a time when most Venetians were shifting investment to the mainland and were less inclined to make risky investments than they had been in the past. Milanesi writes that Ramusio was “among those few Venetians who invested in the world” and that the investment group with Oviedo and Priuli was “probably one of the first of a genre...”⁶² According to

⁵⁸ Gonzalo de Oviedo, “Prohemio,” in *Historia general*, Book 38, 636, in Parks, 142.

⁵⁹ Parks, 143.

⁶⁰ *Lettere Inedite di Pietro Bembo a Giovan Batista Ramusio*, “...Bisognerà hora che satisfacciate vio al mio. Io non trovo al mondo il Libro XIV dal Sanuto, del quale haveva bisogno a fornir la mia Istoria...”

⁶¹ Parks, 145.

⁶² Milanesi, Marica, *Tolomeo Sostituito: studi di storia delle conoscenze geografiche nel XVI secolo*, (Milano: UNICOPLI, 1984), 65, “*Il Ramusio è dunque tra quei pochi Veneziani che investono nel*

Milanesi, the business venture was set up with Ramusio and Priuli receiving a quarter of the investment and Oviedo half. The plan was to trade goods from Venice to Santo Domingo by way of Cadiz, and included sugars and liquors from the New World and a variety of products coming from Venice.⁶³ This would help explain the great interest Ramusio took in having Sebastian Cabot work on behalf of the Venetian Republic in carrying out exploration of the New World. It might also explain why Ramusio was willing to publish the very questionable information regarding Cabot in his history of the spice trade found in the first volume of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*.

Ramusio was probably supporting a lost on the issue of Venice taking a more proactive role in exploration. Venice's prior success had been helped by the weakening of the Byzantine Empire, but the void left by them was being replaced by the emergence of the Turks. The Venetians were encountering new obstacles in the eastern Mediterranean as a result of this new challenge. At the same time, the Portuguese, Spanish, French were in the process of surpassing Venice as maritime powers.⁶⁴ Lane calls 1503 the turning point in Venetian history as by that date they were in "total retreat" from the Turks. This point is highlighted by the fact that a treaty was signed in that year ceding many Venetian holdings to the Turks including the key bases of Modon and Coron, which had served as Venice's "eyes" on the Mediterranean.⁶⁵ These problems were intensified by the threats Venice faced on the mainland. Venice's

Nuovo Mondo. La società da lui fondata con Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo...è probabilmente una delle prime del genere; ne conosciamo poche altre..."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Alberto Tenenti, "The Sense of Space and Time in the Venetian World of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J. R. Hale (London: Faber, 1973), 17-18.

⁶⁵ Lane, 242.

expansion beyond the Veneto into Lombardy and the Romagna was creating resentment among other Italian states. This, coupled with the invasion by the French, drew Venice's attention away from potential seaward expansion.⁶⁶ The noted Venetian, Girolamo Priuli, warned that this excessive attention to landward expansion would diminish Venice's sea power. He did agree, though, that Venice must keep the peace with its *terraferma* neighbors in order to preserve its potential sea power.⁶⁷ For these reasons, Venice was probably incapable of sponsoring efforts as proposed by Ramusio.

The Middle Ages was not a subject Ramusio seemed to give much attention to, but in 1541 he did come across a manuscript of the *Conquest of Constantinople* by Villehardouin. Ramusio translated the work into Italian and his son, Paolo, in his own historical work, used it.⁶⁸ The one episode from the Middle Ages which did receive ample attention from Ramusio was the travels of Marco Polo. He included a lengthy commentary on these travels, which was included in Volume II of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. It was dedicated to Fracastoro, and entitled "Prefazione Sopra il Principio del Libro Del Mag. M. Marco Polo." It could be that Ramusio actually planned more to be included from the medieval period, but the fire that broke out in the printer's shop may have destroyed materials on the subject.

Pietro Bembo died in 1547, the second of Ramusio's close associate after having lost Navagero much earlier. This may account for why so much of the personal work by Ramusio in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* is dedicated to Fracastoro. It is

⁶⁶ Nicolai Rubenstein, "Italian Reactions to Terraferma Expansion in the Fifteenth Century," in *Renaissance Venice*, 197-198.

⁶⁷ Rubenstein, 209.

reasonable to think that had the others survived until the publication in 1550s their names would have appeared frequently in Ramusio's discourses. Fracastoro supported Ramusio's work as the others had, and it is in his letters we may ascertain the general dates of some of Ramusio's writings. In 1548, Fracastoro acknowledged receiving copies of Ramusio's discourses in the history of the spice trade and on the flooding of the Nile River.⁶⁹ The latter of these discourses was written as a discussion between the two and with a reply supposedly written by Fracastoro. Ramusio wrote other discourses as conversations between the two, but they were possibly based on conversations and correspondences Ramusio had had with his other friends. Parks points out that a letter from Fracastoro seems to be persuading Ramusio that it is time to start publishing his work as early as 1538, and that by 1545 most of the material were ready. Fracastoro is quoted as saying regarding those "fine voyages" that "If you have them printed with the other geographies, besides the benefit which you will give the world, everyone will receive as great pleasure as from things long printed."⁷⁰

1.3 Biography of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*

While the information on Ramusio's life may be scant, the work itself has been the subject of some amount of study. In fact, one can more readily find "biographical" information on the work than on Ramusio himself. The same sources provide the greatest amount of information regarding the genesis of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. Parks worked with Skelton on an introduction to the modern publication of *Delle*

⁶⁸ Parks, 143.

⁶⁹ Parks, 147.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Navigazioni et Viaggi. It is an excellent reproduction of the 1606 edition published by Teatrum Orbis Terrarum in 1970. Milanesi carried out the most important modern publication of the work in her multivolume translation of Ramusio into modern Italian with the modernized title *Navigazioni e Viaggi*. Milanesi's introduction to the work provides much insight into the life of Ramusio and much information on the production of the work.

The method used by Ramusio in compiling his work was to acquire the best primary sources available on exploration and discovery in all parts of the earth. He translated the texts into the Italian vernacular, and accompanied the texts with his own, brief commentaries and notes. His reason for choosing the vernacular over Latin, according to Skelton, was his realization of the popularity of travel literature. In fact, each volume went through at least two printings.⁷¹ The original motive for the gathering of these sources seems to have been a personal interest on the part of Ramusio. The time to accomplish such a task would have taken every waking hour. It was obvious, though, that such a resource deserved publication. Skelton states two other purposes for the work; one was to reform modern geography and cartography, and second to “offer the original documents recording the experience and observations of modern travelers, which were to furnish the data...required for the construction of correct maps.”⁷²

⁷¹ R. A. Skelton, “Introduction” in *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi Raccolte da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio*, ed. Giovanni Battista Ramusio, 1: xi.

⁷² Skelton, 1: vii.

We see the importance of Ramusio's work in the quotes of modern historians. Skelton and other scholars call him a pioneer of geographical literature.⁷³ Headley states that the *Navigazioni et Viaggi* "constituted the first such collection of historical documents," and that the "work presented for the first time a general synthesis of the experiences that had recently transformed the contours and dimensions of the earth." He goes on to state that Ramusio's work was an "earlier, better, and more extensive presentation than that later offered by Hakluyt to the English," as it "represented the culmination of the energies, enterprise, and learning of its accomplished editor, Ramusio."⁷⁴ The immediate impact of the work is evident by the importance placed on it by Ramusio's contemporaries. He had a profound influence on John Florio, Hakluyt, and Theodor de Bry. On the title page of Florio's translation of the travel of Cartier he mentions Ramusio calling him "that famous learned man."⁷⁵ Florio adds in his "Foreword" when encouraging the English to pursue exploration

thus much oute of the Third Volume of Voyages and Navigations, gathered into the Italian tongue by Ramusius: whiche Bookes, if they were translated into English by the libberalitie of some noble Personage, our Sea-men of England, and other, studious of Geographie, shoulde know many worthy secrets, whiche hitherto have beene concealed.⁷⁶

Hakluyt also has high praise for Ramusio in a simple, but significant, note in his list of authors. In listing the names of the authors he adds a brief statement after Ramusio's

⁷³ Skelton, 1: v.

⁷⁴ John M. Headley, "The Sixteenth-Century Venetian Celebration of the Earth's Total Habitability: The Issue of the Fully Habitable World for Renaissance Europe," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 1 (1997): 2-3.

⁷⁵ John Florio, in *Jacques Cartier, Two Navigations to Newe Fraunce, first translated out of French into Italian, by Gio:Bapt:Ramutius, translated into English, and forewad by Iohn Florio* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580), title page.

⁷⁶ Florio, "Foreward."

name, the only such in the list, stating “John Baptista Ramusius, hee gathered many notable things.”⁷⁷

Ramusio, as noted, did not work on his *major opus* alone as had been indicated. As was often the case in Renaissance Italy, Ramusio was surrounded by scholarly friends whose interests covered varying fields. Giorlamo Fracastoro, was a Venetian physician who was a pioneer in the study of venereal disease,⁷⁸ and to whom Ramusio dedicated his third volume, was a great source of inspiration to Ramusio. Andrea Navagero, while acting as Venetian ambassador to Spain, helped to acquire sources from Peter Martyr and Oviedo. Pietro Bembo, noted scholar and writer, was an associate of Ramusio’s with whom he shared discussions on classical studies. Giacomo Gastaldi, cartographer and geographer to Venice, also contributed to the work of Ramusio.⁷⁹ Skelton also mentions that Ramusio was also in direct contact with Oviedo, receiving information from him including documents and maps from Hispaniola.⁸⁰

Cosgrove mentions an intellectual club, the *Accademia della Fama*, where Ramusio would have enjoyed what he called the *docli ragionementi*, or sweet reasonings, and discussing the latest discoveries in geography and cosmography.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1582 reprint, *March of America Facsimile Series* no. 5, Ann Arbor, MI: Unviversity Microfilms, 1966), “List of Authors.”

⁷⁸ Skelton, 1: xi.

⁷⁹ Headley, 2.

⁸⁰ Skelton, 1: viii.

⁸¹ Denis Cosgrove, “Mapping New Worlds: Culture and Cartography in Sixteenth-Century Venice,” 81. Woodward, however, notes that it would have been Ramusio’s son, Paolo, who was a member of the. According to Woodward, the purpose of the *Accademia della Fama*, whose name comes from the goddess *Fame*, “was to disseminate science with its own publications, purge the errors from works of all subjects, enrich books with annotation and discussions and translate them in various languages, and finally...to promote the Italian language.” It convened in 1556, just one year prior to G. B. Ramusio’s death, and ended in 1561. Members included Gastaldi, Zorzi, Sanuto, Ruscelli, and Paolo

While the specifics of Cosgrove's assertion may be slightly off, the point is still quite valid as Ramusio certainly was involved in the described activity.

Lane is probably referring to the Venetian diplomatic corps ability to acquire documents when he mentions "Ramusio assembled for printing at Venice the first of the many systematic collections of travels through which Europeans were informed of the discoveries, including those which the Portuguese would have preferred to keep secret."⁸² Lane also states that Ramusio had direct contact with Sebastian Cabot, who was twice turned down by the city of Venice for proposed voyages.⁸³ Milanese notes that Navagero probably helped make the first contacts in Spain for Ramusio while on a diplomatic mission.⁸⁴ Considering what little interest the government of the *Serenissima* seemed to take in overseas exploration why would Ramusio go to such efforts to obtain and publish these materials? Why would Venice be a place so interested in geographic study?

While the Venetians were not actively involved in the overseas explorations, they were, according to Skelton and others, 'profoundly interested spectators' as scholars and geographers. This preoccupation with local hydrography may explain the great interest Ramusio and his associates took in the source of the Nile floods. It might be that this same phenomenon took place in the Netherlands, another country concerned with channeling, land reclamation, and geographic studies.

Ramusio. David Woodward, *The Panizzi Lectures*, 18. According to Marica Milanese, Ramusio became acquainted with the leading Venetian scholars as a member of the *l'Accademia Aldina*. "Introduction" to Giovanni Battista Ramusio *Navigazione e Viaggi*, 1: xiv.

⁸² Lane, 281.

⁸³ Lane 280-281.

⁸⁴ Milanese, "Introduction," in *Navigazione e Viaggi*, 1: xxi.

Whatever the case, it does appear that the Venetians had a natural interest in things geographic, both at home and throughout the world. Lane explains the work of Ramusio best when he states

Ramusio's absorption in collecting accounts of the discoveries was in no small part a desire to compare what had hitherto been known from ancient authors with what contemporaries were describing as seen with their own eyes. He translated the ancient Greek accounts of navigation between Africa and India, for example, and compared their information on spices and winds with that in the accounts he had of the Portuguese voyages. Ramusio took pride even in the Portuguese achievements. As in the 1960's men were proud of the conquests in space through rocketry, so Ramusio took delight in the enormous progress during his life time in the science of geography. He thanked God that he had been born in an age that was not only imitating the ancients but surpassing them in the acquisition of knowledge.⁸⁵

The work itself is of great interest, and provides considerable information. But of what significance is it other than as a novelty? All of the textual information contained in it is now readily obtained from other sources, or one could even go to the original sources rather than use what are actually secondary sources in Ramusio. There is merit to the study of Ramusio, not so much for the information held in it about the voyages of exploration, but from what the work tells about those who produced it. The real significance is in finding out what the scholars of the "Old World" thought of the "New World" and the events taking place about them. In a sense, one can see what the first impression was of those who did not make the voyages themselves. Skelton alludes to this when he writes that the work had the "formal completeness and unity which characterizes a work of art and enables it to satisfy the mind and eye."⁸⁶ It is in this

⁸⁵ Lane, 282.

⁸⁶ Skelton, iv.

sense the study here takes place. The purpose is to look at *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* and see how it can “satisfy the mind and eye.” To do so requires an examination of not only what Ramusio presented, but how it was presented as well. This is possible by looking at the maps and images that Ramusio chose to include in his work and looking at his commentary. Considering the great number of images, it would become tedious to analyze each one, but representative images are chosen based on their importance. The images and maps in Volume III offer key insight into the approach to the previously unknown, and make for some of the most interesting analysis. A key feature of this “mind and eye” concept is that in Ramusio, the “New World” and its inhabitants are seen in a positive light. The natives appear to be presented in a way that suggests a kind of association with the “Old World.” Instead of using symbols to portray the natives and the new civilizations as an “other,” the classical images used lead one to think that the Venetians thought of the natives as primitive versions of their own selves. As such, they were capable of achievements similar to ones that found in the ancient Greco-Roman world.

One of the more interesting features of the *Navigazioni et Viaggi* is the way that images were produced by artists who had never actually seen the newly discovered lands. It is interesting in looking at Ramusio to see how people tried to put into context something for which they had no real context. By using the written descriptions or simple illustrations, Ramusio’s artists tried to portray their fascination with the new subject while at the same time tried to communicate visually in a way easily understood. We also see this in some of the engravings that appear in Volume III. The

same is somewhat true with the maps presented by Ramusio. However, there is no clear consensus as to which maps were given to Ramusio by other sources, and which ones were made exclusively and originally for Ramusio's work by Gastaldi. The maps can be viewed, though, in an attempted expression of an idea.

It is difficult to know how to approach a study of a work as large as *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. It includes thousands of pages, hundreds of separate entries, and the language of the work is sixteenth-century Italian. As a result, it can be overwhelming when one first attempts to understand what it is all about. There are also irregularities regarding the text. The pagination changes with each new edition, and the numbering is at times irregular. It is published in folio form, with the number assigned to front and back, sometimes with lettering to denote position on the page, but sometimes not. In some cases, particularly in prefatory writings, there is no numbering whatsoever. There are occasional inconsistencies in the editing, as might be expected in such a large work where the volumes were completed with gaps of years between their publication. The subject of each volume is not totally consistent regarding the regions of the world discussed. One can say Volume I general covers the activities of the Portuguese, but there are definite exceptions to that. There are maps in Volume III that relate to the Portuguese voyages around Africa and into the Indian Ocean, even though Volume III is supposed to be dedicated solely to information regarding the New World.

This study will focus on differing subjects depending on the different topics discussed by Ramusio. There are two main parts to the study: The first contains the comments of Ramusio on the history of the spice trade, which includes information

from ancient times to the voyages of the Portuguese. The second area of study will be Ramusio's presentation of the New World. This section will be further broken down into a detailed look at the information regarding New France and New Spain. Ramusio's history of the spice trade is primarily from Volume I, with some inclusions from Volume II. Within these studies there will be similarity in the approach. The discourses of Ramusio will be used as a starting point and somewhat of a guide through the material. There will be necessary variations to this due to the fact that Ramusio does not always stay focused on a particular subject throughout a single discourse. The cartographic material will be closely analyzed, mainly in its relation to the text. It is not intended to be analyzed for its correctness regarding its geographic information. The images included on the maps and others included as artwork will be analyzed for their relation to the text, for what they say about the individuals who produced them, and what they say about the opinions being formulated regarding other places.

The intention is that this method will bring to light the work of Ramusio, and place him in a deserved position as an important historian of the age of discoveries. It is hoped that this presentation will allow readers, possibly for the first time, to be able to approach Ramusio's personal work with some amount of ease and organization. By extracting his personal work from the massive amount of material in *Navigazioni et Viaggi* it allows Ramusio and his work to be the focus of the study.

CHAPTER 2

RAMUSIO AND THE HISTORY OF THE SPICE TRADE

2.1 Historical Setting and Background Information

When the news arrived in Venice of the Portuguese rounding the Cape of Good Hope and entering the Indian Ocean trade, there was an air of anxious excitement around the Rialto. Some merchants dismissed the challenge of the Portuguese, though one must assume that this optimism was the mask of a brave face. Others, such as Girolamo Priuli viewed the events pessimistically, predicting the Portuguese would be able to sell spices at a fraction of what the Venetians were charging.⁸⁷ Lane states that the prediction of doom was quite premature, and that the events of the early sixteenth century would not lead to the cataclysmic destruction of the Venetian economy as some suspected. In fact, according to Lane, the sixteenth century would be a quite profitable one for the Venetians, but for reasons unforeseen early in that century.⁸⁸ For Giovanni Battista Ramusio, what would eventually unfold regarding the spice trade was a complete unknown. When he was working on his tome regarding worldwide travel, exploration, and trade he could only interpret things according to what was occurring, and what they knew at that time. Milanesi does a better job explaining how events must have appeared to Ramusio. Milanesi describes the early sixteenth century as a time of

⁸⁷ Frederic Lane, 285.

“change and of difficulty” in many areas.⁸⁹ Milanese also writes that Ramusio’s most important writing on the spice trade, “Discorso Sopra li Viaggi delle Spetiere,” was written in 1547, when there was still great uncertainty regarding Venice’s economic future.⁹⁰ Venice was involved in wars with the Turks and wars within Italy that carried European-wide implications. These matters only intensified what Milanese calls “la crisi del commercio” caused by the opening of the new routes to the Indian Ocean on the part of the Portuguese.⁹¹ It must have been this atmosphere that influenced Ramusio’s writings on the spice trade. The compilation of the activities of explorers and travelers around the globe could have been justified at any time of Venice’s history. Particularly in the milieu of the Renaissance the advancement of geographic knowledge would suffice as motivation of Ramusio’s work. However, when an analysis is done of the original writings in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* a uniquely Venetian perspective of the events taking place can be discerned.

Ramusio’s original writings in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* show a great deal of interest in the spice trade, and they reveal much original commentary by Ramusio on the subject. The overwhelming majority of the information in Ramusio’s three-volume work is found in the translations of explorers’ accounts, much of which involves the spice trade, but the original work of Ramusio has not received enough attention. He offers an important perspective on the history of the spice trade, how Venice fits into that history, and what the future could hold for Venetian fortunes. (It should be noted

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Milanese, 1: XIII.

⁹⁰ Milanese, 1: 961.

⁹¹ Ibid.

that the phrase “spice trade” is used here in the broadest possible sense. It does not imply that spices were the only product of interest, and it includes all related attempts to reach the Asian products, such as the search for a northwest passage.) Ramusio’s entire life, 1485-1557, was in the period of turmoil described by Milanese,⁹² and his position in Venetian society tells us he was more than a casual observer of the events around him. He was closely associated with the leading figures of Venice, a fact verified by his roles in the Venetian government as Secretary to the Council of Ten and editor of reports on the discoveries.⁹³ While some have described Ramusio as a scholar whose interest in the discoveries was purely academic, it is certain that the economic and political trials Venice endured during his life influenced his work. In his personal writings, then, there is the dual perspective of scholar and citizen.

What will be shown here is how Ramusio traces the spice trade to its most ancient roots, all the while trying to allude to the role of Venice in the trade. Many of his discourses begin by comparing the new geographic knowledge of the sixteenth century to the knowledge of the ancient scholars such as Pliny, Strabo, and Ptolemy. There is also an emphasis placed on the role of the Romans in relation to the trade with East Asia, possibly in an effort to make a connection between Venice and earlier Italian glory. A particular area of interest in the discussion of Rome is the ancient Suez Canal. This ancient shortcut to the Indian Ocean could have been allegorical of the attempt to find a new shortcut to the Spice Islands by way of a northwest passage. The travels of

⁹² George B. Parks, “The Contents and Sources of Ramusio’s *Navigazioni*,” in Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi Raccolte da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio Volume I* (Venice: Giunti, 1606), reprinted in Amsterdam: Teatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970. Parks reprinted by permission of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 59 (June 1959): 279 ff., 1.

Marco Polo relayed in Volume II offer the perfect opportunity for Ramusio to include his thoughts on the continuation of the trade during the Middle Ages. A rather long discourse by Ramusio includes such things as a brief history of Venice's involvement in the Fourth Crusade. The Portuguese, whose activities are included throughout *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, are frequently the subject of Ramusio's writings, and seem to be the example Ramusio would most like the Venetians to copy. Ramusio offers visual evidence to accompany his writing with several interesting maps and charts. There are maps included in Volumes I and III, and some interesting imagery as well. In this chapter, the information from Volumes I and II will be emphasized, and a closer examination of Volume III will be reserved for a later chapter. There are some materials from Volume III that will be included in the discussion here, and in the case of a few maps it seems odd that they were included in Volume III as opposed to Volume I.

The search for a northwest passage intrigued Ramusio as it did many others of his time, and he was eager to offer his opinion regarding the subject. Ramusio addresses this subject more fully when discussing explorations in Volume III, including the French, Spanish, and English, primarily in regard to the search for new and alternate routes to the Spice Islands. New France was of particular interest for Ramusio due to his desire to find out if there truly was a shortcut to be found. His handling of the subject of the Northwest Passage is an excellent example of the combination of detached scholar and keenly interested citizen. His great interest in geography and excitement about the discoveries being made during his lifetime are quite evident in his writing, even if these

⁹³ Cosgrove, 80.

discoveries meant the potential downfall of his own republic. He was not devoid of patriotism, though, as it is also apparent in his writing an admonition to the Venetians to be a participant in the events unfolding about them, not simply casual observers. There is even indication that Ramusio took real steps to try to encourage the entry of Venice into overseas exploration. Lane writes that Ramusio was in correspondence with Sebastian Cabot, and had been given the task by the Council of Ten of investigating the possibility of funding a voyage by Cabot.⁹⁴ It would be hard to imagine Ramusio would not have been in total support of such an effort; the chance to be actively involved in the type of endeavor he devoted his entire life to researching. Ramusio's interest in this particular subject will be discussed here as it relates to the access to the spices, similar to the way the Suez was used in Roman times. The discussion of it in relation to the exploration of the New World will, again, be reserved for a later chapter.

There is no shortage of primary source material in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. Ramusio's personal entries number about twenty, varying in length from less than a page to over twenty pages. They are usually placed in context with the translated secondary works of the same subject, and at times they are fairly specific introductions of or commentaries on the translated works to follow. Several of his writings deal with the spice trade, or more generally trade with Asia, either in part or in whole. The most important of these is the "*Discorso di M. Gio. Battista Rhamvsio sopra varij Viaggi per liquali sono state condotte fino à tempi nostri le spetierie & altri nuoui che se potriano vsare per condurle,*" or "Discourse of M. Gio. Battista Ramusio on various travels

⁹⁴ Lane, 280-281.

conducted up to the present to where the spices are located and other new, possible ways to conduct these travels.”⁹⁵ The shortened title, also used in the text, which will be used from here on is “Discorso Sopra li Viaggi delle Spetiere.” This discourse is Ramusio’s most focused study of the subject of the spice trade, as indicated by the title, and is probably Ramusio’s finest writing. Contained within this discourse is a section subtitled “Viaggio Verso La India Orientale Descritto da Plinio,” or “Travels in the Vicinity of the East Indies as Described by Pliny.”⁹⁶ The piece is included in Volume I of *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi*, which is mostly dedicated to travels to Africa and Asia. As with all of Ramusio’s work, there are no strict parameters limiting the scope of coverage. The discourse reads as if it is actually two separate, but related pieces. The first part of the discourse focuses more on the ancient aspects of the trade and relies heavily on Pliny as a source. It discusses the Portuguese in terms of how their activities were similar to the ancients. The second part of the discourse, nearly twice as long as the first part, references Pliny in the text and title, but does not use the ancient author any more than the previous pages. In fact, the second part is a complete overview of the spice trade from ancient to modern times, including medieval references, and it is also not limited geographically to the areas that are the main emphasis of Volume I. The two parts could easily stand alone, and it makes one question whether the two were written separately, and with some amount of time between the two writings.

⁹⁵ Giovanni Battista Ramusio, “Discorso di M. Gio. Rhamvsio sopra varij Viaggi per liquali sono state condotte fino à tempi nostri le spetierie & altri nuoui che se potriano vsare per condurle,” in *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi Volume Primo*, ed. G. B. Ramusio (Venice: Giunti, 1606 reprint; Amsterdam: Teatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970), 1:371.

⁹⁶ Ramusio, 1:372.

Other discourses of importance include the introduction/preface to Volume III, “Discorso Di M. Gio. Battista Ramusio Sopra Il Terzo volume delle Nauigatione, & Viaggi nella parte del Mondo Nuouo,” dedicated to Hieronimo Fracastoro, the introductions to the travels of Marco Polo in Volume II, and the discourse on New France in Volume III. The aforementioned are not the complete list of works to be referenced, but they are the most significant. The discourses will not be analyzed on an individual basis, but rather the approach will be by subject matter, as the information in the various discourses somewhat overlaps.

2.1.1 Maps, Charts, and Images

Maps and images play an important role in Ramusio’s work. Volumes I and III have a satisfactory amount of charts, diagrams, and pictorial woodcuts, but, sadly, the items prepared for Volume II were destroyed in a fire prior to publication.⁹⁷ A map of Africa is included in the first edition of Volume I, 1550, prior to Ramusio’s discourses on the Nile River.⁹⁸ There are also maps, or diagrams, of the “rock churches” of Ethiopia included with the description.⁹⁹ Maps relating specifically to the spice trade and the Portuguese voyages made their first appearance in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* in the second edition of Volume I, 1554. The table of contents of the 1554 edition includes in the table of contents a list of things “Newly Added,” and one of the descriptions is “Three geographic tables designed according to the navigational charts of the Portuguese” and of the lands described by “the writings contained in this

⁹⁷ Skelton, 1: xii.

⁹⁸ Giacomo Gastaldi, “Map of Africa,” in Ramusio, *Delle Navigazioni...*, 1: 280.

⁹⁹ Ramusio, 1: 228-232.

volume.”¹⁰⁰ On the page prior to the maps, Ramusio writes a more complete description of the maps. He addresses it to “the students of Geography” and alludes to the fact that the reader can get a brief description of what is included in the accounts of the explorers by viewing the maps, writing

To the students of geography: In the present three tables are the descriptions of the seascapes according to the navigational charts of the Portuguese, and the lands, according to the writers contained in this first volume, so they act for the readers as brief information of which they read, seeing the location of rivers, mountains, cities, provinces, and the principal capes of Africa, Arabia, India and the Malaccan Islands...bringing to light the printed material of the province of China, and those on Asia and Africa described by S. Giovan de Barros, we believe that a part of modern geography will be so illustrated, that it will be of little necessity to weary over the tables of Ptolemy.¹⁰¹

He seems to be particularly proud of the fact that China has been brought to light, and that these charts rely on the most recent and reliable evidence. In the introduction to Volume I he comments on the need to have maps that include the new information being gathered, and could be referring specifically to maps in that particular volume or more generally the overall need for updated maps. He states this in reference to the maps of Ptolemy that would have been widely viewed at that time, but as Ramusio points out “the tables of the Geography of Ptolemy, where Africa and India are described, are quite imperfect, in respect to the knowledge we now have of the regions.”¹⁰² The maps were intended as an accompaniment to the translations regarding expeditions to and around Africa, and those that relate to Indian Ocean trade. Their

¹⁰⁰ Ramusio, “Table of Contents,” 1, is written “*Tre tavole di Geographia in disegno secondo le carte da navigare de Portoghesi, et Fra Terre secondo, gli scrittori che si contengono in questo volume.*”

¹⁰¹ Ramusio, statement prior to maps at end of Volume I.

location at the beginning of the book seems to serve as a visual or graphic introduction the reader can use as a reference point throughout.

The original map of Africa is notable for its simplicity of style. It is in keeping with the majority of Gastaldi's work for Ramusio, and is also consistent with the cartographic style of Ramusio. It is notable for its lack of ostentatious decoration, and portrays a greater desire to relate scientific, geographic information. The map is neatly framed on the page, and the compass directions are printed around the frame. The map is oriented to the south, called "*Mezzo Di*," which seems to be natural since it highlights the location of the "*Fonti del Nilo*," and then one can trace the route of the Nile to its delta in Egypt and into the *Mare Mediterraneo*, which is located at the bottom of the map, referred to as "*Tramontana*." Although it is the focal point of the map, the interior is, of course, completely speculative. One might expect to see all kinds of interesting creatures and descriptive pictures of Africa on the map, but that is not the message intended to be relayed by this map. The main focus of this map is to highlight the source(s) of the Nile River, which are denoted also by a handy legend at the bottom of the page. If one had only this map to accompany Ramusio's information regarding the spice trade it would be of limited use. It is useful for the discussion of the Suez Canal, as "Sues" is identifiable near to Cairo, and access to the Indian Ocean from the Mediterranean via the Red Sea is quite apparent. It would difficult to trace the route of the Portuguese, though, as the entire western section of Africa is cut-off, as is the Cape

¹⁰² Ramusio, "All'Eccellentiss. M. Hieronimo Fracastoro: Gio. Battista Ramusio," 1, is written "*le tavole della Geografia di Tolomeo, dove si descrive l'Africa, & la India esser molto imperfette, rispetto alla gran cognitione che si ha hoggi di quelle regioni...*"

of Good Hope. This is in striking contrast to the maps included in the 1554 edition, which explicitly portray the route taken by the Portuguese. There is slightest section of the “*Mare Oceano*” on the upper right section of the map, and a long sliver of the Indian Ocean along the left side of the map, but it is not labeled.

The maps that coincide quite well with the description of the spice trade are the ones first appearing in the 1554 edition. The three charts are large enough to take up the entire side of a folio, and they are simply titled “Prima,” “Seconda,” and “Terza Tavola.” All three are framed in a Ptolemy-esque outline of latitudinal measurements, and are bisected by a bold, black-and-white band indicating the equator. Skelton writes that by 1531 Ramusio, as attested to in his correspondence, possessed a printed edition of Ptolemy’s *Geographia* with maps.¹⁰³ Longitudinal measurements are also included on the equatorial indicator. The tropics of “*Cancro*” and “*Caricorno*” [sic] are also indicated to help orient the reader. Each map is oriented to the south, labeled as “*Ostro*” in this case, which highlights the areas of interest, which lie mostly in or near the Southern Hemisphere. The subject of each map is dedicated to a different subject of the spice trade. The “Prima Tavola” emphasizes Africa, with the entire continent included on the map. Also included on the map are Arabia, the southern Mediterranean, and the Atlantic region, or “*Mare Oceano*,” off the coast of Africa. The “Seconda Tavola” focuses on the Indian Ocean, labeled “*Mare Oceano de India*” between the shortened sub-continent and the tip of Arabia. At the top the map is labeled “*Oceano Meridionale*,” and to the left is “*Golfo de Bengala*.” The landmass included on the

¹⁰³ Skelton, 1: XII-XIII.

second map begins with the southern tip of Arabia on the western (right) edge of the map, across Persia through India to the Ganges River. On the far eastern (left) side of the map is the first hint of the Spice Islands as the western half of Sumatra is visible. The “Terza Tavola” takes the reader to the Spice Islands proper with Sumatra, Java, and the Malaccan Islands being prominently displayed at the top (south) of the map. The map extends through the China Sea to “Cympagu,” Japan, in the lower left corner, and Southeast Asia is also displayed from the Ganges River east to the China Sea.

These maps are intended to accompany the text of Volume I, and it is interesting to view them in association with Ramusio’s writings on the spice trade. In fact, the maps can serve as a sort of outline for discussion of the text. The maps are quite large as they fill the complete side of the folio making it easy for the reader to make a close study of them. The maps, or tables, are all interconnected as they show the progression of exploration, particularly of the Portuguese, and they provide a very clear route to the Indian Ocean and the products available in that part of Asia. Ramusio’s, or possibly Giunti’s, placement of the maps at the beginning of the book suggests the intention of giving the reader a visual or graphic reference for the following entries. The focus here will remain on how the maps relate to Ramusio’s narrative on the spice trade. What is of interest here is Ramusio’s version of the history unfolding about him. His writings attest to what he saw as most significant, and the maps are reflection of what is in his text.

The main subject of “Prima Tavola” is Africa and Arabia. Much of the information for the map came from “*Delle Descrittione Dell’Africa...Per Giovan lioni*

Africano.” Some could suggest that the main focus of the “Prima Tavola” is the account by Leo Africanus, and strong case could be made for that suggestion. There are many place-names included from the Africanus account on the map, and the translation of his description of Africa immediately follows the charts. Ramusio also mentions in the Preface to Volume I his great delight, and the potential usefulness of the information on Africa. It must be remembered, though, that the map of Africa and Arabia in “Prima Tavola” did not accompany the original publication of the work. In addition, while many place-names do appear from the Africanus account, it is actually a limited number when compared to the many cities and landmarks included in the text. An example of this is the Canary Island group which does not appear in the text until the entry on Alvise Cadamosto. There is also the fact that other important subjects are obviously highlighted on the map, for example the Portuguese caravels seen in the Atlantic. The imagery on the map is quite limited apart from these boats. There are a couple of large cats on the equatorial west coast, a lone elephant surrounded by mountains in southwest Africa near the coast, and some cattle on the Cape of Good Hope. There are nondescript cities all over the map with no attempt to delineate between Christian, Muslim, or other association. There are also place-names of significance to other subjects discussed in Volume I, not pertaining to Africanus. It is more likely, then, that the map is intended to accompany all of the entries in the volume, just as would be the case for the following two maps.

Of importance to the discussion of the spice trade, we find illustration of the Red Sea route, and the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese. There is

much discussion in Ramusio's discourses of the ancient spice-trade, much of which flowed through the Red Sea. On the map, it is clear to see the area about which he writes, and it is also important to note the close proximity of Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. The ancient Suez Canal is given a lot of attention in Ramusio's discourse on the spice trade. It is possible that the discussion of the ancient canal that gave the Romans quick access to the Indian Ocean trade network was an allusion to the attempts in the sixteenth century to find a northwest passage, or some other quick link to the spice-islands. Since the most pressing issue in Ramusio's day was the issue of discovering a faster route to the spice-islands there must have been more to Ramusio's purpose than simply informing the reader of the events of the past. On the "Prima Tavola," it is plain for the reader to see the close proximity of the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean if one could gain access through the Red Sea. As noted, Ramusio made mention of the fact that there were vestiges of the old canal still visible on the trip from Cairo to Suez. It must have been frustrating for the Venetians to see how close they were to the Indian Ocean, only to be denied access to it. Certainly, they had their own means and connections to get the desired products, but some knew that their monopoly was in jeopardy in the sixteenth century. There is nothing to suggest, however, that Ramusio is trying to get the Venetians to try to reestablish the trade as it was in Roman times. It does appear, though, that he was trying to inspire some thought or idea, or trying to motivate the Venetians to match the efforts of the Portuguese and others.

Returning to the main subject of the map, it is best to start on the right side of the chart. The elongated western portion of Africa is certainly included to emphasize the

early stages of Portuguese exploration and discovery. The initial reference point is the *Streto di Gibiltera*, and just below it the tip of the Iberian Peninsula would indicate the point of the departure for the Portuguese. Traveling up the west coast one comes across Madeira and the Canary Islands, and then to Cape Verde and the Cape Verde Islands. Cape Verde is an important landmark for Ramusio, and it receives a fair amount of coverage in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. Ramusio writes about Cape Verde in his “*Discorso Sopra il Libro Di M. Alvise Da ca da Mosto Gentil’humom Venetiano,*” or “*Discourse on the Book of Alvise Ca da Mosto...*”¹⁰⁴ This is an important entry regarding trade and exploration for the Venetians. It is suggestive of the fact that Venice had a history of explorers who had exited the strait of Gibraltar and made it down the coast of Africa. It had not been unusual for the Venetians to travel and trade up to Northern Europe, so why would it not be possible for the Venetian Senate to approve explorations in the manner of the Portuguese. In the introductory discourse to Da Mosto’s travels Ramusio is quick to point out that in 1455 the Venetian was the first to discover the islands off Cape Verde.¹⁰⁵ The great discovery according to Ramusio was that the ancients, who he states had never ventured so far into Africa, had come to the conclusion that the territory was “*abbruciato dal sole, & senza habitationi*” (“scorched by the sun, and without habitation) but when explored by Da Mosto and the Portuguese proved to be “*verdissimo, & amenissimo, & da infinite genti habitato.*” (“extremely green and amiable, and infinitely inhabited by people”) He writes of the great riches to

¹⁰⁴ Ramusio, “*Discorso Sopra Il Libro Di M. Alvise Da ca da Mosta Gentil’huomo Venetian,*” *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi Volume, 1:* 96.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

be found in Niger, particularly the great amounts of gold. Salt is described so abundant there that the pack their legumes in it. He also writes of the ease of travel to the place, how the Niger is as large and navigable as the Nile, and that there are many products that the Europeans would want from there.¹⁰⁶ Ramusio is emphatic about the possibilities there for commercial trade, and he seems to suggest it over the trade in the East Indies. As he points out it is much less costly and time-consuming to travel there, and they could get involved in the economic activities in the West Indies, including the lucrative sugar trade. He makes note of the fact that the Portuguese king had already noticed this fact and was capitalizing on it.¹⁰⁷ The map is suggestive of this possibility. The task of rounding the southern cape of Africa may have been daunting, but the endeavor of coastal navigation around Africa would have appeared much more reasonable – particularly if a Venetian had accomplished the task a century earlier. The elongation of West Africa emphasizes the region, and the abundance of rivers penetrating the coast would allow for many potential trading outposts.

Continuing around the coast of West Africa one arrives at the Portuguese fort of La Mina, and the islands of San Thome and Fernando Po. These islands were noted as being important to the Portuguese sugar trade. Leo Africanus was an important source to Ramusio in this matter, and was used in his *Discorso Sopra il Libro Di M. Alvise Da ca da Mosto*. Parks comments on this subject writing that the discourse was “concerned with the sea voyage to the Niger area as compared with the journey by land described

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

by Leo, and on the value of a sugar trade with the San Tome' island."¹⁰⁸ Ramusio refers to the sugar trade again in his "*Discorso Sopra La Navigazione di Hannone Carthaginese fatto per un piloto Portoghese.*" Parks doubts the validity of this entry that relates the modern Guinea sea-route as described by Hanno, which extended to Fernando Po Island. The Portuguese had brought a cargo of sugar to Venice, and according to Parks, there became known to Ramusio and the Verona circle of Fracastoro and Raimondo della Torre.¹⁰⁹

The extreme top of the chart displays the islands of "g:Avarez" and "Tristan de cugna." Tristan di Cunha is mentioned in "*Discorso Sopra Alcune Lettere et Nauigationi fatte per li Capitani dell' Armate delli Serenissimi Re di Portogallo, verso le Indie Orientali,*" or "Discourse on some letters and navigations done for the Captains of the Navy of the most serene King of Portugal, toward the East Indies."¹¹⁰ In it Ramusio repeats his theme of the wonderful and amazing new discoveries of his age. What excites him the most is the discovery of places and things unknown even to the ancients. He is referring mainly here to the Portuguese discoveries, although he does make brief mention of the activities of the Castilians in the west. He refers to the close proximity of the Portuguese to the Spanish due to their discovery of Brazil. He is very concerned in this dialogue of the difficulty in finding literature regarding the Portuguese activities, perhaps hinting at the attempted secrecy regarding such voyages. Ramusio is trying to preserve the knowledge of the events for the future as he notes the details and

¹⁰⁸ Parks, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Parks, 11.

¹¹⁰ Ramusio, "*Discorso Sopra Alcune Lettere et Nauigationi fatte per li Capitani dell' Armate delli Serenissimi Re di Portogallo, verso le Indie Orientali,*" 1: 119.

accuracy of the story made fade over time. He even admits the reading may be a bit boring, but he is trying to offer the information in an attempt to allow a better, more orderly history to be written later. Parks notes regarding the discourse that it reports, according to Ramusio, one of the greatest events had been barely recorded, “and indeed the narratives which follow are quite inadequate.”¹¹¹ Ramusio defends the inclusion as offering a good description of the lands explored by the Portuguese, including useful information on their locations, which would certainly be useful in the preparation of the charts. Ramusio is apparently imploring the “Most Serene King of Portugal” to have the knowledge gained by his pilots preserved for posterity. He even states that he wished God would inspire him to have recorded the rare, unheard of things his sailors were discovering, which would preserve their memories with great glory for generations.¹¹² A specific example Ramusio cites is of Damiano del Goes and the siege of Diu. Ramusio comments, “And all that which Signor Damian di Goe, the Portuguese gentleman, has written of the siege of Diu is a minimal part of that which a man desires to read of such a grand thing.”¹¹³ He laments that if these events are not recorded by the Portuguese then all these great discoveries by their great captains might “rest in eternal oblivion” and in apparent exasperation adds, “And what must one say?”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ramusio, 1: 12.

¹¹² Ramusio, “*Discorso Sopra Alcune Lettere et Nauigationi...*,” 1: 119.

¹¹³ Ibid., “*Et tutto quello che'l Signor Damian di Goes gentilhuomo Portoghese ha scritto dell' impresa del Diu', e' una minima particella rispetto a quello che l'huomo desidereria di leggerer di cosi grandi...*”

¹¹⁴ Ibid., “*et infiniti paesi discoperti per diversi capitani, in diversi tempi. Liquali per non esserne memoria, restano in eternal oblivione, non altramente che erano per il passato. Et che bisogna dire?*”

It is significant that this chart does not extend any further to the west. While Ramusio does make references in his discourses to activities in the West Indies, and even is desirous of Venice to be involved in West Indies commerce, that region does not appear on any maps in Volume I. The search for a west/northwest passage may have been of concern to Ramusio, but the subject of these charts is the Portuguese entry into the Indian Ocean. In fact, one of the only decorative features of this chart is the inclusion of Portuguese carracks that, as one focuses on the left side of the folio, it is clear to see the ships rounding the *Capo de Bona Speranza*. The lack of extra, decorative features helps to emphasize the message of the map. The ships are not lost in a myriad of creatures and distracting scenes, but are plainly seen from the *Mare Oceano* rounding the Cape of Good Hope. It is also notable that the ships are south of the bold band demarking the equator. As previously noted, Ramusio delighted in the fact that the ancients had been proven wrong about the ability to navigate into the southern hemisphere, and was here providing a graphic portrayal.

Volume III includes maps that could have easily been included in the discussions of the Portuguese in Volume I. Three of the maps, “Brasil,” “Parte del Africa,” and “Sumatra,” actually seem to be out of place in Volume III. The maps of Africa and Sumatra are placed, in the 1606 edition, in the “Prima Relatione di Iacues Carthier” which has nothing to do with the places in question.¹¹⁵ These maps are in striking contrast to the ones found in Volume I. The chorography missing on the three Volume I charts is sufficiently made up for on these maps. These not only give the

¹¹⁵ Gastaldi, maps “Parte Delafrica” and “Sumatra,” in Ramusio, *Delle Navigazioni*, 3: 370-371.

geographic information of the locations reached by the Portuguese, but also give a description of the places and include graphic displays of the interaction between European and native populations. Gastaldi is credited with authorship of all the maps and charts, and there are noticeable similarities of style as well as the striking differences. Authorship is a difficult matter, though, as explained by Woodward. Just because one person is given credit for the map it does not mean that that individual was responsible for all aspects of it. There were several steps involved in producing a printed map, from drafting to engraving to printing, and it could be that Gastaldi had little to do with chorographic features of the maps.¹¹⁶ Woodward also points out that Ptolemy considered the “geography” of the map to be scientific, mathematic, while chorography was considered to be the work of an artist or painter and was “qualitative and unmeasured.”¹¹⁷ Woodward also quotes Gastaldi himself on the subject from his *opuscolo* to his 1561 World Map stating

This general description of the heavens, as with the earth and oceans, the Ancients called Cosmography. Others described in more detail the parts of the earth’s oceans, with the cities, castles, mountains, river, lakes, seas, gulfs, ports, headlands, and islands, and such description they called Geography. Others described more minutely the parts of that earth and sea as with the navigation charts, and the particular villas, rivers, torrents, streams, canals, woods, mountains, valleys between the mountains, countryside, passes and boundaries, seas, gulfs, ports, headlands, bridges, coasts, inlets, reefs, shoals, and other details. Such a description they called Chorography. And the even more detailed description of the site of a fortress, and the plan of that fortress, and private property – houses, palazzi, and other similar things they put in Topography.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Woodward, *The Panizzi Lectures, 1995*, 22.

¹¹⁷ Woodward, 5.

¹¹⁸ Woodward, 6.

Gastaldi, Ramusio, and even Giunti, all three may have been very involved in the total production of the charts in both volumes. From the previous statements mentioned by Ramusio describing and introducing the maps, it would make sense that he was very involved in the final work.

The placement of the three maps in Volume III does seem odd, though, especially as one takes a close look at them. The map of Africa coincides with the discussion of the Portuguese and their drive down the west African coast. In contrast to the map in Volume I this one is full of descriptive chorography and topography, and it is also oriented to the north, “Tramontana.” It focuses on the Guinea coast, but there is to the north “Libia Interior.” and what seems to be a greatly misplaced “Etiopia.” The map is on the full folio, and has a rectangular frame as opposed to the trapezoidal shape of the Volume I map, and does not include the latitudinal and longitudinal measurements. The southern border of the map is the equator, while the Tropic of Cancer is just below the northern border. The landmass makes up the majority of the map, and the ocean on the western edge and to the south is, oddly, unidentified. The interior of the map has the usual, speculative physical features, but also includes some scenes of a variety of animals, small villages, some herding, and on the eastern edge a couple of unidentifiable people on horseback, possibly depicting the overland route across Africa. The real action on this map is along the coast. Many places of note regarding Portuguese commerce are listed including Arguim, identified as Argin.; Cape Verde; the Senegal and Gambia Rivers, identified as R. de Gambia and Senega.; Cape Palmas, identified as C. d palmes;; Elmina, identified as CASTEL de la mina;

continuing around to Sao Tome Island, identified as I. S. Thome. A close inspection of the coastline reveals it to be somewhat more jagged than the nicely rounded shape of the coast in the Volume I map. The Gambia and Senegal River systems extend across the entirety of the map, which is consistent with the Volume I map, and are located in the correct general location, but the Niger River is absent from the map in Volume III. The centerpiece of the map is the Portuguese outpost of Elmina. It is represented by an interesting castle complex that is a lovely representation of a European walled city with domed corner towers, and the town within. Just above Elmina is a large depiction of an African village/plantation. Of the individuals shown the one in the middle is obviously in some kind of position of authority, and the others around him are either bowing in submission, or, more likely, carrying out some sort of task. The elephant nearby would be indicative of the ivory that was highly prized from the area.

There is an expression of ownership in the fact that above the African settlement is inscribed in bold letters “LAMINA DE PORTOGAL.” This is a definite allusion to empire as opposed to simply a commercial enterprise. The impression given by this map is that the Portuguese are overlords of the area, not just the trade going on there. The charts in Volume I do not convey the same sense of ownership, but the lack of other ships do indicate domination by the Portuguese. Other maps in Volume III do include imagery that conveys the message of empire. A map of Sumatra, to be discussed below, shows Portuguese ownership of an island in the heart of the Spice Islands. Another map of Brazil shows Portuguese ownership of a large area in the New World.

The map entitled “Brasil” in Volume III is, like the map of Guinea, a highly informative map on the commercial activities of the Portuguese in their colony. It is full of images describing the native populations and the interaction between the Portuguese and the native Brazilians. The main product of interest is brazilwood. There are images of the natives felling the trees and also trimming the wood. The wood is also being carried by the natives, but not to any specific locations. This is, of course reference to the valuable brazilwood trade in which Portugal was involved. There is no discernable representation of sugar production on the map, even though this was a known, important commodity for the Portuguese.

While sugar and brazilwood were the most important commercial products for the Portuguese, the map of Brazil also prominently displays images of parrots and monkeys. The parrots can be seen being held by natives and also perched on pieces of wood. There are a few monkeys frolicking on the map with one of them displayed very clearly at the bottom of the map. These were not just added as decoration to the map, but indicate their importance as collector items. A. J. R. Russell-Wood describes them as animals highly sought-after by collectors in Portugal. He writes that there was a market for such creatures, mainly as objects of curiosity.¹¹⁹ He also writes that they were popular as presents given by the wealthy and royal, and that orders were made for the construction of special cages to preserve the creatures on the voyages, although

¹¹⁹ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415-1808* (London: John Hopkins Press, 1992), 126-7.

many did perish along the way.¹²⁰ It makes one wonder if they cared more for the parrots and monkeys than they did the human cargo being transported across the ocean.

The map is oriented to the west, unlike the others oriented either to north or to south. This seems to frame the subject of the map neatly on the page as it is surrounded by water, which is once again unnamed. There are images of fish and sea-creature in the water, but it is difficult to assign any importance to them. Portuguese caravels and carracks appear in the ocean surrounding the land that is labeled Brasil in bold lettering. The ships surrounding the land certainly imply ownership.

The natives shown in all of the images on the maps and stand-alone woodcut images display people who are in subservience to superior Europeans, but there is no attempt to turn the natives into savages. Ramusio does refer to them as these “rough” races of people, but the kind of barbaric savagery one might see in later Dutch atlases is absent in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. Ramusio even appears to have certain amount of respect, or at least fascination for many of the natives he describes.

“Seconda Tavola” brings the visual traveler into the Indian Ocean. When viewing the maps according to the route taken by the Portuguese it makes more sense to follow them from right to left, so that the west to east so one can easily trace the progression. This map is a bit busier than the previous map of Africa, including bolder sea creatures, possibly to fill the space due to the greater amount of open sea depicted. The configuration of the map seems to de-emphasize the landmass at the bottom, and the eye is drawn to the water above. In this case, the southern orientation may have

¹²⁰Russell-Wood, 181-2.

detracted from the effectiveness of the map. The reason for including so much of the sea is probably so that the islands on the fringe of the chart – S. Francescho, Corpo Santo, Abriolbo, Isole de don Garcia, Isole doro, Sumatra – could be included. There is also the subject of the Portuguese, whose carracks are seen again making their way into the Indian Ocean where we see written “*Vado a Calicut,*” or “Going to Calicut,” and in the Gulf of Bengal we see a ship “*Vado a Moluche.*”

If one follows the narrative in Ramusio’s *Discorso Sopra Li Viaggi Delle Spetierie* one arrives where the Red Sea meets the Indian Ocean. On “Seconda Tavola” on the far right side of the map at 15 degrees latitude. When compared with the previous map there appears to be some inconsistency between the two regarding the mapping of the area. On the Seconda Tavola the Persian Gulf seems to have made a quarter counter-clockwise turn, while the Arabian Peninsula has straightened somewhat.

Ramusio ties the ancient spice trade to the modern when he writes of Pliny’s description of the ancient route from the Red Sea to India. It was possible said Pliny to sail from the “promontory of Siagro dell’Aarbia,” with favorable winds straight to Diu, then called Patale.¹²¹ In the very next sentence Ramusio speaks of “these Portuguese mariners” who were covering the same territory as the ancients.¹²² He writes that they emerge from the strait of the Red Sea and travel along the coast of Arabia to a cape called Sfacalath, on the map labeled C:Sfacalliac, and continue along the 17th parallel to Diu and the area of Cambaia. Diu is referred to as an island, triangular in shape, located at the “two mouths” of the Indus River, the distance being traveled from Sfacalath “900

¹²¹ Ramusio, “Discorso di M. Gio. Rhamvsio sopra varij Viaggi per...le spetierie...,” 1: 371.

miglia.”¹²³ On the map there appears to be the island of Diu, as well the city of Diu, located at the mouth of the Indus. The “two mouths” of the Indus are not depicted well, but there is what appears to be a bay at the mouth of the river, and what Ramusio may be referring to as the second mouth might be the channel between the mainland and the island of Diu, located to the right of the mouth. Ramusio also makes mention of the Portuguese pilots who sail direct from Arabia to the coast above Calicut, at the fourteenth parallel, arriving at the city of Anor and the island of Amiadiva.¹²⁴ Amiadiva does appear to be on the map, but it is very unclear due to its close proximity to the edge of the chart, and its miniscule lettering. These are located right in the vicinity of Goa, one of the most important outposts of the Portuguese Empire.

All of this information is delineated on the map, but curiously Hormuz is bypassed by Ramusio in the first part of the discourse, although it is labeled on the map. The same is true of Goa, which appears prominently on the map but is not mentioned in this part of Ramusio’s text. The focus in the discourse remains on Diu and Calicut, without mention of Hormuz or Goa. Another discourse deals briefly with the conquest of Diu, as an introductory to an entry on the event, but even Diu is only mentioned here for its geographic significance. The focus of this part of the text was the geographic agreement between the ancient author, Pliny, and the charts and reports of the Portuguese. This is another reason for assuming the discourse used here was written at

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ramusio, 1: 372.

two separate times. Hormuz and Goa receive mention in the second part of the discourse as having great importance to the Portuguese.

Well into the second part of *Discorso Sopra li Viaggi delle Spetierie* Ramusio returns to the subject of the Portuguese, and returns briefly to information that appears on the first chart. He writes that for fifty years the Portuguese, due to the “virtue and industriousness of the great captains of the most serene King of Portugal” have been rounding the Cape of Good Hope and planting “*castelli alle marine*,” which they call “*fattorie*,” all around the Indian Ocean.¹²⁵ As previously mentioned the Portuguese ships are seen on Prima Tavola rounding the cape, and here Ramusio lists Ethiopia, “Monzambique,” and the city of “Melinde” all of which appear on the map. “Ormuz” is mentioned as their location in/near Persia, and is located on both Prima and Seconda. Calicut, Goa, Diu, and Cochin, located on the west coast of India, are mentioned and also appear on the map. Continuing east, one sees the Portuguese activities in the Malaccans. One can note that they had established forts, trading posts, and contacts in Malacca and Sumatra, and again these are evident on the charts. The first hint of the Malaccans is on the Seconda Tavola by the ship with the writing underneath, “*Vado alle Moluche*,” and the islands of Sumatra and Nicobar are visible on the far-left edge of the chart.

“Terza Tavola” shows the “gold-mine” of the Portuguese findings. All of the great spice islands of Southeast Asia appear, including Java, Sumatra, and the Portuguese ships are even seen in the waters of the China Sea. While the focus of the

¹²⁵ Ramusio, 1: 373.

chart is the islands, there is a good depiction of the mainland of the Malay Peninsula, the Kingdom of Bengal, to the city of Canton on the east coast. Off the coast in the extreme southeast corner “Cympagu,” Japan, is also included. On the very bottom of the chart, the land of the Tartars is included, denoted as Tartari Mogori, possibly included from information in Marco Polo’s account featured in Volume II.

The map itself is silent regarding commercial activities, save for the ships indicating their destinations, whereas other charts, both within and without *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, convey more information through the use of chorography. On other of Gastaldi’s maps for Ramusio, particularly ones in Volume III, many native, commercial, and explorative activities are displayed that follow the text. An excellent example of this is the map the Sumatran island of Taprobana, which gives a more detailed description of the given location than is found on the larger maps.¹²⁶ The map, entitled Sumatra, is oriented to the south and surrounded by Portuguese carracks, possibly conveying a sense of possession. The chorography of the map appears to show the activities of the local spice business. The bottom of the map shows the locals using sticks to get something from the tree, and another at the bottom of the tree gathering the produce. To the right is an individual, possibly Portuguese, who appears to be a supervisor, or even a knight. This would imply the dominance of the Portuguese over the native Sumatrans. The ships surrounding the island also show dominance if not ownership by the Portuguese.

¹²⁶ Gastaldi, map “Taprobana,” in *Delle Navigazioni*, 3: 371.

There are what appear to be plantations with buildings resembling bamboo huts on the interior of the island. Individuals are evident inside one of the buildings, but their activities are unclear. There are fences around the lower complex, which would indicate some kind of possession. The products available from Sumatra, which included aloe woods, camphor, and gold, are not readily recognizable on the map. On the mid-left of the map is a person tending to either pigs or sheep. In the middle of the map there appears to be a knight taking a journey with a squire nearby. This map would have been an excellent accompaniment to the information given in Volume I. It could be used in conjunction with the entries of the Portuguese voyages, or as an accompaniment to the writings of Ramusio regarding the Portuguese and the spice trade. Ramusio writes that the island of Sumatra was one of the islands on which the Portuguese had established their factories. The greater significance is given in its role in the intra-Asian trade. He writes the traders from China bought their pepper from the Portuguese at ports in the Malaccans or on Sumatra.¹²⁷ This spoke to even a greater degree about the success of the Portuguese, Ramusio's emphasis that they were actually controlling the trade within Asia.

Russell-Wood supplies information regarding the locations of the spices that were prized by the Portuguese, and most of these appear on "Terza Tavola," and on the previous charts. Ceylon was the source of cinnamon and a source of cardamom, which on "Seconda Tavola" is identified as "Zeilã." The locations of the rest of the most highly sought after products are found on "Terza Tavola." These include cardamom

¹²⁷ Ramusio, "Delle Spetierie," 1: 373.

from Siam, labeled as Syam; cloves from the Malacca Islands, labeled “Isole de Maluc,” and also from Ternate and Tidor, found on the upper left corner of the map; mace and nutmeg from the Banda islands, labeled as Bandan.¹²⁸ The list continues to include more places throughout Southeast Asia showing the great extent of the knowledge held by Ramusio.

It could be that by the 1550s there was little hope on the part of the Portuguese to keep their activities in Asia a secret, but it certainly could not have made them happy to have this information printed, along with maps locating precisely where they were active. Ramusio fills the pages with glowing praise of the Portuguese, but there had to be more than simple admiration for them as his motivation. There was certainly an aspect of his writing directly related to Venice, and questioning how it should respond. As stated previously, no one knew what the repercussions would be of the Portuguese and other countries’ explorations and discoveries. Ramusio’s discourse on the spice trade continues with an exposé on the great products traded and the great riches being accrued by the Portuguese and others, and it has to be assumed that Ramusio wanted the Venetians to follow suit. Whether or not he had in mind for the Venetians to extend their efforts into establishing an overseas empire similar to the Portuguese is not completely clear, but there are indications he was in favor of such a venture.

2.2 Ramusio and the Ancient History of the Spice Trade

Ramusio puts all of his writings on the spice trade in the context of his study of the ancient scholars. This is not surprising considering the fact that he was a

¹²⁸ Russell-Wood, 127.

Renaissance scholar. His reference to the scholarship of the ancients should not be understood as deference to the ancient writers. While Ramusio often uses the names of Strabo, Pliny, Plato, and Ptolemy, he is more eager to publicize the way in which the knowledge of these scholars had been eclipsed by the discoveries of the Renaissance. Ramusio was not copyist of, or mere commentator on the knowledge of the ancients, but saw himself as one who was continuing their work, and even acting as critic and corrector. He wrote that only in their time had they revived the ancient methods of study, as they were not merely copyist transcribing the ancient works as many had done, but they had presented to the world many new things never before seen or even imagined.¹²⁹ It is as if with the rediscovery and translation of the ancient texts, the process begun by the ancients was revived and carried on by Renaissance scholars, sweeping away the centuries of the “dark age.” The first lines of these discourses were often devoted to this point. In one such writing, “Discorso Sopra Alcune Lettere Et Navigationoi fatte per li Capitani dell’Armata delli Serenissimi Re di Portogallo, verso le Indie Orientali,” Ramusio begins by writing, “One of the most admiral and grand things that our age has seen, has been the discovery of many things, and various country of this earthly globe, that were never known by our ancients.”¹³⁰ Writing about the

¹²⁹ Ramusio, “All’Eccellentiss. M. Hieronimo Fracastoro,” in *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi*, 1, “che sola a’ tempi nostri habbia rinovato il divino modo dello scrivere de gli antichi circa le scientie, non imitando, o’ da libro a’ mutando, & trascrivendo, o’ dichiarando (come molti fanno) le cose d’altri: ma piu tosto con la sottilita’ dell’ingegno suo diligentemente considerando, habbiia recato al mondo molte cose nuove, prima non udite, ne’ punto d’altrui imagnate.”

¹³⁰ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra Alcune Lettere Et Navigationoi fatte per li Capitani dell’Armata delli Serenissimi Re di Portogallo, verso le Indie Orientali,” in *Delle Navigationi*, 1, 119. “Una delle piu mirabili, & gran cose che l’eta nostra habbia veduto, e’ stato il discoprir di tanti, & cosi varij paesi di questo globo della terra, che mai per lo adrieto gli antichi nostri havean saputo.”

voyage of the Magellan crew he gloats, “and again as in many things we are superior to the ancients.”¹³¹

Ramusio begins his essay on the spice trade by mentioning the end of the Roman trade. He writes

It is a truly marvelous thing to think about, the great mutation and change that took place in all of the Roman Empire [with] the coming of the Goths, and other Barbarians into Italy...extinguished all the arts, all the sciences, and all the traffic, and merchandise, that went on in diverse parts of the world, and lasting for 400 years, and more, almost like the shadow of a dark night, such that no one endeavored to depart from one's own nation, and go to another...before the coming of the said Barbarians, when the Roman Empire flourished...in all of the East Indies, able to securely navigate over the seas, and it was done frequently, this renowned voyage, and now known, because of the navigations of the Portuguese.¹³²

From the beginning, he is associating the Romans and Portuguese who were traveling to the same areas in order to take advantage of the great potential wealth offered by the products there. Just as Ramusio and his associates had revived the scholarly endeavors brought to an end by the barbarian invasions, so were the Portuguese in regard to the spice trade. After this introductory statement that might lead one to think Ramusio was going to begin commentary on the trade with the Portuguese, he reverts back to the discussion of the ancient trade, and to the glory of the Roman Empire. He continues by writing, “And that this was true, it is clearly demonstrated in the writing of Strabo” who described the great riches the Romans obtained from their trade with Asia.¹³³ He writes, using Strabo as a reference, that Alexandria in Egypt was the receiving point of all the merchandise coming in by land and sea, and that King Ptolemy, the father of Cleopatra,

¹³¹ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra Il Viaggio Fatto da gli Spagnuoli intorno al Mondo,” in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 1: 346. “& anchor che in molte cose noi superiamo gli antichi.”

had millions in gold, only through his negligence to give the whole worth of this commerce to the Romans. The value of the ancient trade was much greater, Ramusio points out, than in his time due to the great duties that had to be paid. He then reports that of this “voyage of the Red Sea, and of India one can import infinite, and most precious merchandise,” much of which was the same in Renaissance Venice as it had been in Ancient Rome. Ramusio includes a list of the products including cinnamon, various types of pepper, cloves, ginger, myrrh, a variety of precious stones, pearls, jewels, ceramics, silks, eunuchs, and exotic animals. Ramusio adds that one can see from Strabo’s words just how commonplace the trade was, and probably even better known than in Venice.¹³⁴ This information given on the Roman trade might seem to be nothing more than a brief summary of the history, but not if put into the context of the entire discourse, or Ramusio’s larger work. He was greatly concerned about future voyages, and their implications, and there is certainly a message here for the Venetian reader. When the subjects are combined of the wealth obtained by Rome, the fact that the Venetian profits were limited by duties, and then his heralding the success of the Portuguese who had circumvented the duty payments, the conclusion must be that Ramusio wanted the Venetians to do the same.

Ramusio gets very specific in listing the exact locations of the Roman voyages making a direct comparison to the Portuguese voyages in the second part of his discourse on the spice trade entitled “Viaggio Verso La India Orientale Descritto Da

¹³² Ramusio, “Delle Spetiere,” 1: 371.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Plinio.” Pliny is used as the reference to describe the ancient trade to India by way of Egypt and the Red Sea. Ramusio uses precise measurements and distances to describe the ancient trade that is traced from Egypt through the Red Sea and Arabia to India and to the Malaccan Islands. He writes again about the merchandise the Romans obtained, the pearls, spices, and similar things, and its millions of worth in gold. All of this, though, was brought down by the barbarian invasions. He describes quite well in it how the Portuguese were following the many of the same ancient routes, again including measurements and the modern placenames. It shows once more the industriousness of the Portuguese who were reviving the ancient trade.

The ancient Suez Canal is something that truly fascinated Ramusio. Lane writes that the issue of rebuilding the canal was still alive in the sixteenth century. The Egyptian Mamluk rulers gave lip service to idea of rebuilding, but it was after the conquest by the Ottoman Turks that they made a real attempt. The effort ended unsuccessfully, though, with of the reasons given being the inability to overcome the problem of the shifting sands.¹³⁵ Any discussion of such a plan would have definitely been of interest to Ramusio. Maybe it was his inspiration for writing about the topic. It is possible that the discussion of the ancient canal, which gave the Romans quick access to the Indian Ocean trade network, was an allusion to the attempts in the sixteenth century to find a northwest passage, or some other quick link to the spice-islands. Since the most pressing issue in Ramusio’s day was the issue of discovering a faster route to the Spice Islands, there must have been more to Ramusio’s purpose than simply

¹³⁵ Lane, 293.

informing the reader of the events of the past. On the “Prima Tavola,” it is plain for the reader to see the close proximity of the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean if one could gain access through the Red Sea. It must have been frustrating for the Venetians to see how close they were to the Indian Ocean, but denied access to it. There is nothing to suggest, however, that Ramusio is trying to get the Venetians to try to reestablish the trade as it was in Roman times. He would have preferred, though, that they be more innovative in their thinking, and possibly copy the methods of the Portuguese, and, again, placed in the greater context it would seem to have had a greater significance.

Ramusio writes of the great efforts made by the ancient rulers of Egypt and the Romans to facilitate trade with the Indian Ocean. He writes at length about the attempt to build canals from a branch of the Nile to the Red Sea, and the effort to, and difficulty of, building roads from cities along the Nile to the coast. He quotes Pliny and Strabo as sources regarding the canal, but Ramusio adds his own proof of the existence of an ancient canal when he states that, “Of this canal truly spoken of by Strabo and Pliny, at the present time one can see a few vestiges, as is told by ones who have traveled from Cairo to Suez.”¹³⁶ Ramusio compares the ease of travel by water with the difficulty of the overland route when he writes how the camel caravans traveled by night, and navigated their way through the desert by means of the stars, as did the mariners at sea. He notes that it was necessary for them to carry their own drinking water at times, although there had been wells dug along the route. Ramusio then reminds the reader that the places described by Pliny and Strabo are the same in which the Portuguese were

currently plying their trade.¹³⁷ He spends the next several lines giving the detailed information on the similarity of locations between the ancients and the Portuguese.

The ease of a direct water route had to be on the mind of Ramusio when writing all he did on the ancient routes and particularly on the Suez Canal. It correlates to his interest in the search for a northwest passage. The Portuguese had found their route to the Spice Islands, achieving the success of the Romans, and it was time for the Venetians to find their own way to the spices. In Volume III Ramusio dedicates quite a bit of his commentary on exploration that could lead to the discovery a new route. One of the primary reasons given for New World exploration was to see if this was a means to quicker access to Asia. Ramusio will even suggest the planting of colonies, as will be discussed, as bases from which to send out more voyages of exploration. Portugal already commanded the coasts of Africa and Asia, but there were alternatives for Venice. This could be part of the reason why so much of Volume I is dedicated to the activities of the Portuguese. Maybe Ramusio is placing their activities directly in front of the Venetians, with the rhetorical question of “what is to be done?” Venice did have its heritage, as did all Italians, in ancient Rome. By following the example of ancient Rome, and in modern times the Portuguese, the Venetians could achieve the same level of success.

¹³⁶ Ramusio, 1: 371. “*Di questa fossa a veramente descritta da Strabone, et da Plinio a tempi presenti si veggono alcuni pochi vestigij, si come dicono quei che son stati di la dal Cairo al Sues.*”

¹³⁷ Ramusio, 1: 371.

2.3 Medieval Musings and Marco Polo

Ramusio wrote copious amounts about Marco Polo. His Preface to Marco Polo's account, *Di M. Giovanbattista Ramusio Prefazione Sopra il Principio del Libro del Mag. M. Marco Polo*,¹³⁸ begins with a reference to the ancients. He mentions the Greek writers who, beginning with Homer, had experienced many places and cultures, had a great scientific knowledge, and had written many enlightening things. He goes on to mention the progression of Greek to Roman scholars from Aristotle to Strabo to Ptolemy, and how their writings were of great influence up to his time. Ramusio points out, though, the limits of their knowledge, especially in regard to the lands nearest the poles. The Portuguese, he states, were the first to give information on the lower latitudes of the southern hemisphere, but it was Marco Polo who, three centuries prior, described the lands to the north and the east.¹³⁹ He writes, "It is a truly magnificent thing to consider the voyage that the father and uncle of M. Marco made to all the way to the court of the grand Khan, Emperor of the Tartars."¹⁴⁰ He goes on to marvel how well Marco was able to recreate their experiences in the East Indies considering the limited intellectual abilities of that age, and especially since the "barbaric" people they were traveling amongst were illiterate, and therefore there were no accommodations for writing. Because of these problems, Ramusio writes that for decades the stories of Marco Polo were thought to be nothing but fables, or as he writes, "*tutte fittioni et*

¹³⁸ Giovanni Battista Ramusio, "Di M. Giovambattista Ramusio Prefazione: Sopra Il Principio Del Libro Del Mag. M. Marco Polo," in G. B. Ramusio, *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi Volume Secondo*, 2: 3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

imaginationi senza fondamento alcuno.”¹⁴¹ He goes on to state that the findings of the previous century, including the commercial travels of the Italians and the explorations of the Portuguese, had proven the account to be somewhat accurate. Some having business in Persia and as far away as Cathay were finding places and cities of the same names as found in Polo’s account, lending credence to it. Ramusio backs his statements by referring to the *Geography* of Juan Barros. He compares the latitudinal measurements offered there to the locations described by Marco Polo and finds much agreement between the two.¹⁴²

It is interesting that Ramusio uses the same word, “*rozza*,” to refer to the Tartars as he does in describing the Native Americans at one point in his introduction to Volume III. “*Quella rozza nazione de Tartari*,” or “that rough nation of tartars,”¹⁴³ is how they are literally described. In describing the inhabitants of New France, Ramusio uses the phrase “*que’ poveri popoli rozzi*,” or “those poor, rough people.”¹⁴⁴ This is in contrast to the way Ramusio describes the Germanic invaders of Rome. In that instance the word “*Barbari*” is used to describe the ones who brought ruin to the Roman Empire, and “*levo’ via tutti i traffichi dell’Indie Orientali*,” or “took away the entire East Indian traffic.”¹⁴⁵ Neither “rough” nor “barbarian” is a flattering term for a race of people, but “rough” could be similar to describing people as primitive. It appears with Ramusio

¹⁴¹ Ibid. “Totally fiction and imagination without any foundation whatsoever.”

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra la Terra Ferma Dell’Indie Occidentali, Dette del Lavorador, de los Bacchalaos, & della nuova Francia,” in G. B. Ramusio, *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi Volume Terza*, 3: 438.

¹⁴⁵ Ramusio, “Viaggio Verso La India Orientale Descritto da Plinio,” 1: 372.

primitive people may have some redeemable qualities. In many of Ramusio's images the natives do appear rough or primitive, but they are not shown as savage, or barbaric.

Ramusio writes that he is honoring the memory and efforts of Marco Polo by including his book in Volume II of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*.¹⁴⁶ It is in keeping with his effort to include the best of extant travel narratives, and is consistent with the theme of bringing to light information that surpassed the knowledge of the ancient scholars. Since Marco Polo's book had been proven to be true according to Ramusio's summation, it was an important source to include in to Ramusio's overall work. It also serves as an important link from the ancient spice trade to the modern, sixteenth-century trade in which Venice was involved. One might even suggest that there could be seen a continuation of a Roman/Italian link from ancient to modern times regarding the spice trade.

Ramusio does make an apology for some of the things that may seem fantastic or unbelievable in Marc Polo's account. Certainly, he states, are not some of the things one reads in Strabo, Pliny, or Herodotus fantastic yet they were still considered authoritative sources? The reporting of the great amounts of gold and silver described by Christopher Columbus seemed unbelievable, as did the many varieties of new products described. When these products began pouring into Italy it became apparent these things were also true. Above all, he points to the examples of the great cities. He compares the "grandezza" of the city of Quinsai in the province of Mangi to the city of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Temistitan (Tenochtitlan) in New Spain with its many palaces and gardens as described by Cortés. Should not Marco Polo, a Venetian nobleman, be given the same respect?¹⁴⁷

Ramusio then shows a bit of hometown prejudice, and confesses to it, when he compares the achievements of Marco Polo to those of Christopher Columbus. He states that he must admit he finds the exploits of the Polos to be superior to those of Columbus. The dangers and difficulties of the overland route far outweighed the difficulties in navigating the sea. The necessity of dealing with animals to carry all the needed provisions, having to take sufficient amounts of water, the fatigue involved in a journey that took several months as opposed to several days on sea made the effort by the Polos much greater than that of Columbus and crew. He writes convincingly,

Columbus went by sea...carrying all he needed...and in thirty, or forty days with a favorable wind arrived where he desired. And [the Polos] took an entire year passing through deserts, and many rivers. And it was more difficult to go to Cathay than to the new world, and more dangerous and longer...twice they made the trip [and since]...no one from our part of Europe has attempted to go there: Whereas, the following year, they that discovered the West Indies, immediately returned with many ships.¹⁴⁸

Surely, a Venetian, who saw everything transported by water, and lived practically in water, was conditioned to consider travel by water to be more convenient than travel on land? Is it also possible that Ramusio was trying to promote the accomplishments of a Venetian over those of one from archrival Genoa? Whatever the motivation, Ramusio makes a strong case for the achievements of the Polo family.

Ramusio uses the activities of Genoa and Venice to make the connection from ancient to Renaissance in the “Discorso Verso La India Orientale Descritto da Plinio.”

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

While the ruin of the Roman Empire at the hands of the barbarians brought an end to the sea routes to and trade with the Indies, Ramusio reminds the reader of how the trade was revived by the Venetians and Genoese through the Caspian Sea trade, based mainly at Tana. He writes in a way that emphasizes the limitations of this trade by mentioning the difficulty of getting products to market due to the use of camel caravans and river traffic, and that the political climate also complicated the trade.¹⁴⁹ The chronology used by Ramusio in this case is interesting. He structures the essay in a way that juxtaposes the achievements of the Portuguese, which he discusses prior to the mention of Genoa and Venice, to the difficulties of the Italian medieval trade network. This highlights the successes of the Portuguese again suggesting that there may be something better for the Venetians to do.

2.4 Ramusio on the Renaissance Spice Trade

Ramusio's musings on ancient and medieval commerce are interesting and are important to review in order to come to an understanding of Ramusio's historical perspective. His work regarding the modern spice trade, though, is of greater significance since he is a contemporary of these important events. It is his insight into the opinions and impressions of a Venetian, or to a larger extent a European, to the opening of a new world that makes the study of Ramusio valuable. It might be more correct to refer to "new worlds" as opposed to just the New World, since it is more than the discovery of the Americas that interested Ramusio. Part of the "discovery" was the "rediscovery" of the ancient knowledge of the Indian Ocean, but the route taken by the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Portuguese led them to new discoveries that were as astonishing Europeans as were the westward discoveries.

The Portuguese are held up as an example of what can be achieved through industriousness and daring. They had re-achieved the commercial success of the Romans, and it is clear through Ramusio's writings that he wanted that example followed. This message is not as overt as it would be later for the English by Hakluyt, but it is there and understood. There is a tone of speculation in what Ramusio writes, and it is here where he is no longer historian, but prognosticator of future events. It is his desire that Venice join in the efforts to find new sources of commerce in the uncertain times in which they were found. He had established the Roman link. He gave examples of the involvement of Italians, and especially Venetians, in the process of discoveries over land and seas. The Portuguese routes and methods were there either to follow or copy. The Venetians could either take advantage of the Portuguese efforts for their own benefit, or they could forge new routes as others, such as the Spaniards, were doing. The Venetians had the resources, manpower, and need to follow the examples of other, but it seems, according to Ramusio's writings, what was lacking was the will to make it happen.

There is also the genuine satisfaction Ramusio displays in heralding the new discoveries and knowledge gained by Renaissance individuals, and particularly in the fact that they had surpassed the knowledge of antiquity. Here again we see the two sides to Ramusio. One, the scholar whose main interest is in the acquisition of knowledge,

¹⁴⁹ Ramusio, 1: 373.

and two, the interested Venetian wondering what are the implications for the material world of these events unfolding about him. The quote previously referred to linking the ancient spice trade to the Renaissance bears repeating here. Ramusio writes that the locations in Arabia and India “named by Pliny, are the same ones where today practice the Portuguese.”¹⁵⁰ It is interesting that he ties Renaissance scholarly pursuits to the ancients and does the same with the Renaissance commercial activities. The “barbarian” invasions of Rome had created a barrier between the Italians and direct access to the Indian Ocean products, as well as creating a “dark age” in scholarly pursuit and cultural advancement, as described by Ramusio.

The discussion in *Discorso Sopra li Viaggi delle Spetierie* of the modern spice trade begins with an account of how the Portuguese had come to dominate much of the Indian Ocean trade. The multiple implications are given of the enrichment of the Portuguese, their military superiority, the expansion of Christianity, and the advancement of the European culture. There is also discussion of the continuing efforts, some more successful than others, to find new and alternate routes to Asia. Ramusio gives his own opinions about what solutions are most feasible based on the information he had available to him. There is an aspect of this discourse that is an introduction to the translations, but the work can stand alone and be judged on its own merit. It also serves as a departure point for more pointed discussions on Ramusio’s specific thoughts and opinions regarding New France and New Spain. It also relates well to the maps included

¹⁵⁰ Ramusio, 1: 371.

in Volume I and in a couple of cases Volume III. These reasons make it worthy to take close look at the work.

After the dialogue on Rome and the similarities between the Roman and Portuguese trade, Ramusio writes exclusively on the modern activities with only vague classical references. He writes that the new era had begun in the past fifty years when the circumnavigation of Africa had taken them to the East Indies. He writes that the credit is due to the “virtue and industry of the grand captains and the most serene King of Portugal,” and that the culmination of these efforts was that the Portuguese had become overlords of all of the eastern seas.¹⁵¹ He writes in detail of the methods used by the Portuguese and how no one can make voyages or do commerce without their license. Those rulers that they did not own they made pacts with, and, of course, they were making incredible profits. He lists the products in which they were dealing, the metals, precious and semi-precious stones, natural resources, and above all spices. He mentions that factories set up all along the coasts in order to carry out their business, and how the commodities are kept there in warehouses. He writes of the ships coming to and from Lisbon and the great wealth being amassed by the king of Portugal.¹⁵² The Venetians could have related to this arrangement as they too had outposts, or *fondachi*, in other countries where they would trade with the blessing of the local rulers. The difference for the Venetian reader would have been the domination of trade described by Ramusio on the part of the Portuguese. It may have reminded the Venetians of earlier in their history when they had a greater mastery of their own trade. Ramusio also

¹⁵¹ Ramusio, 1: 373.

describes how Portugal was also an important player in the intra-Asian trade network. He describes how the Chinese, and those who lived farther to the east, would come to Portuguese possessions in places like Sumatra, where they would buy goods for resale in their countries.¹⁵³

How could a Venetian merchant not be jealous of what was going on, or worse worried about what might happen to the supply and price of available commodities? The Portuguese were seemingly establishing a monopoly in Asia, which would put the Venetians at the mercy of others in Europe, just as the Venetians had wielded total control in previous centuries. The situation was not as dire as it seemed for the Venetians, though, as explained by Lane. In fact, some Portuguese had begun acting independently in the intra-Asian trade, and were becoming the suppliers of the Venetians through Arab middlemen.¹⁵⁴ This was not yet the situation when Ramusio was writing prior to 1550. During the first half of the sixteenth century, the prudent thing to do may have been to expect the worst. Ramusio writes of discussions he had regarding these revolutionary changes with friends, including Fracastoro in the hills outside of Verona. Much of the rest of the piece reads as a discourse between these and others. Ramusio frequently references others as his sources of information, but the message comes through as equally Ramusio's.

He presented the aggressive means used by the Portuguese in order to achieve success in Asia in a rather positive light. He seemed to marvel at the fact that though the

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Lane, 292.

Portuguese were fewer in numbers, they were able to become masters of Asia. He references the accounts of Damiano de Goes and Iacobo Tevio of the two sieges of Diu in 1538 and 1546 respectively, stating that it surpassed anything achieved in Italy during their time.¹⁵⁵ Goes is the subject of Ramusio's writings again in "Discorso Sopra Alcune Lettere et Nauigationi fatte per li Capitani dell' Armate delli Serenissimi Re di Portogallo, verso le Indie Orientali." He states that it is one of the great accomplishments of their time, but regrets that there has not been more written on it, or made available. He writes, "And all of that which Signor Damian di Goes, Portuguese gentleman, has written of the siege of Diu, is a minimal part of that which a man desires to read of such a grand thing..."¹⁵⁶ Ramusio may be thinking in terms of a crusade when he points out that the Portuguese were going out and profiting off of non-Christian nations. He writes that the Portuguese had made a fortune by going out and discovering new countries, while taking the name of Christ with them, making their wealth without making war on other Christian nations.¹⁵⁷ The Roman comparison returns in this regard, as well, when Ramusio writes that the effort of Christian nations to explore the world to the expansion of the Roman Empire. He writes that the Romans took civilization to other lands just as the Europeans were taking their culture, religion, and knowledge of cultivating the land.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ramusio, "Discorso Sopra Alcune Lettere et Nauigationi fatte per li Capitani dell' Armate delli Serenissimi Re di Portogallo, verso le Indie Orientali," 1: 119, "*Et tutto quello che'l Signor Damian di Goes gentilhuomo Portoghese ha scritto dell' impresa del Diu', e' una minima particella rispetto a quello che l'huomo desidereria di leggerer di cosi grandi...*"

¹⁵⁷ Ramusio, 1: 373.

Ramusio proposes that the best way to spread their culture and religion was through colonization. He mentions the possibility of colonizing in the New World in more than one instance. In this instance he uses the phrase “*colonie ad habitari*,” or “inhabited colonies” giving the impression of permanent overseas dwellings.¹⁵⁸ He again holds up the Portuguese as an example as they received shipments of such items as wine and flour in order to domesticate these dwellings.¹⁵⁹ Ramusio in this case is leaving open the matter of what people should do this colonization. The work being written in Italian, published in Italy, and Ramusio being a part of an Italian government, he may be referring to Venetians or other Italians. It is also telling that at this point Ramusio changes the subject from the Portuguese and the East Indies to other areas of exploration and other nations. He appears to be addressing those who oppose overseas endeavors, or are hesitant regarding the costs, when he writes of the great wealth achieved by the Portuguese. The point is made that no one would have ever dreamed of the success that the Portuguese would have. Ramusio does identify whom he wishes would take the initiative, but only in the vague sense of “the Christian nations.”¹⁶⁰

The discussion of the men in the hills of Verona turns next to the search for a new, quicker route to the spices. It is not a discussion, initially, of the Northwest Passage, though, but rather of the prior efforts to establish the Northeast Passage. As they were talking, Ramusio writes that one of the men there took a ball and made the point that the northeast route would actually be quicker than the route around the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

southern tip of Africa, and one would end up in the lands discovered by Marco Polo.¹⁶¹ Another voice is brought into the discussion, that of an ambassador of the Duke of Muscovy. He is said to promote the idea of a trying the northeast route. Just as the Portuguese had conquered the southern route, disregarding the fear of the Torrid Zone, so they could overcome the cold that they had been born and raised in. He mentions that the ample wood from the forest could supply the building of ships in navigating the rivers and seas, and this individual demonstrated the potential route on maps. The ambassador avers that the difficulties of such a venture could be overcome, just as the Portuguese and Spaniards had overcome great obstacles in their efforts. Yet again, the suggestion made by this nameless ambassador, or as likely Ramusio himself, is that if only some Christian prince would take the initiative in this effort, consider the potential results.¹⁶² The idea, however, was not to gain footing among these gentlemen. The fact that the waters were frozen six months out of the year, then there was great heat the rest of the year, marshy and swampy conditions, forest that were too thick, made for a land that was uninhabitable and therefore not able to provide necessary provisions along the way. There was also reference of a Genoese named Paulo Centurioni, an ambassador from the court of Pope Leo, who wanted to see if a land route could be opened by way of the Caspian Sea in order to counteract the Portuguese.¹⁶³ This venture ended in failure, as mentioned by G. V. Scrammell,¹⁶⁴ and at this point, the conversation makes a pointed turn. The obvious implication was that the northeast route was not a viable

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ramusio, 1: 373-4.

¹⁶³ Ramusio, 1: 374.

option, the only real benefit relayed by such exploits was the acquisition of more knowledge unknown to the ancients.

Skelton points out that the conversation about which Ramusio writes may well have been complete fabrication. He suggests that this is an imaginary conversation, a literary device often used by humanist scholars. He writes, “The dramatic and personalized form in which the information is presented, with ‘the ostentatious disavowal of any pretensions to exact recollection’, have exposed the dialogue to suspicion as a literary device (of a type with which humanists were familiar), and the Mantuan gentleman as a mouthpiece for Ramusio’s own opinions. Nevertheless the passage, however artfully contrived, carries conviction as an echo of many occasions when he and his friends must have ‘tired the Sun with talking and sent him down the sky’.”¹⁶⁵ This makes the discourse even more important for the study here. It leads one to believe that in much of Ramusio’s writing where he frequently defers to the opinions and expertise of others, what are truly revealed are the opinions and ideas of Ramusio himself.

Ramusio writes that the gentleman suggested they leave the discussion of Muscavy and its cold and talk a little about parts of the New World explored by Carthier, specifically the area of Nuova Francia.”¹⁶⁶ He then gives the famous lines “why do not some princes send people to set up colonies to domesticate, to save and acculturate those that they find...to see if the land extends from pole to pole, or if it is

¹⁶⁴ G. V. Scrammell, *The World Encompassed: The first European maritime empires c. 800-1650* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 171.

¹⁶⁵ Skelton, 1: xi.

¹⁶⁶ Ramusio, 1: 374.

connected to Norway, or if there is some sea, similar to that which was found for off Germany that goes all the way to Cathay...”¹⁶⁷ This is one of Ramusio’s clearest statements regarding European expansion into the New World. The implication is that there is little opposition, or little to prevent setting up colonies on foreign soil. Put into the context of what had been previously relayed regarding the Portuguese it would appear to the reader that such a thing could be carried out effortlessly. The Portuguese had been able through industriousness, and some amount of violence, to dominate Asiatic waters against powerful and large opponents. How hard could it be to dominate lands peopled by natives perceived by Europeans as primitive? Some of the typical themes are detected in Ramusio’s writings. He conveys an air of Eurocentrism, he speaks of the financial benefits of overseas enterprises, and he also mentions the benefits to the native populations who, though losing their land, would be instructed in the ways of civilization and Christianity. The other aspect seen here in Ramusio’s statement is that of the interested scholar, who genuinely desires the increased knowledge for knowledge’s sake. The main reason he gives for setting up colonies is to use these places as bases for further exploration.

The Spanish become Ramusio’s example for his plan for further exploration. He writes of Signor Antonia di Mendoza, viceroy of Mexico, and how he sent out “of his own will and effort” captains to explore both by land and sea.¹⁶⁸ The Spaniards had set up their initial bases in the Caribbean, and now were doing what Ramusio was suggesting could be done in other parts. There is also the implication that the effort

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

could be done on a larger scale if some Christian prince, or princes, would take the initiative, instead of the effort and will of a singular person like Mendoza. He writes of the success of Mendoza's efforts when telling of a trip to Flanders where he was able to see letters written from Mexico in the court of Cesarea. The letters were of Fra Marco da Niza and the supposed discovery of the location of the Seven Cities of Gold, with Civola mentioned by name. An episode from Coronado is mentioned where he came across a sailing party of merchant vessels on the bows of whose boats were insignias of gold and silver birds. The sailors had to communicate through gestures, and in doing so indicated it had taken them thirty days to arrive at that port. Some among Coronado's group indicated that these sailors must have traveled from Cathay for it to take so long.¹⁶⁹ The obvious indication of this being that the way to Asia was within reach. The expert commentary of others with "practical knowledge" indicated that there was much more land to be explored and discovered before reaching the sea.¹⁷⁰ The fact that there was much more out there was of significance to Ramusio's ideas, and had to give him hope that he might spark someone's interest.

There is another important transition in the conversation at this point. If the progression of the essay is followed, we find the success of the Portuguese in Asia, who are considered to have tight control of trade there, and then there is discussion of an impractical, alternate route to Asia through the northeast. The focus then shifts to the western hemisphere where the Spaniards were exploring in Mexico and to the south and

¹⁶⁸ Ramusio, 1: 374.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

west, so the next area to be discussed is the northwest where there is still much unknown and where there are multiple claimants to the area. The fact that the one gentleman in the discourse had referred to the “ball” and had showed the shorter distance by traveling north and east would have held true for the passage north and west. The discourse flows naturally into a discussion of that region which is of much interest to Ramusio, and there can be a strong argument for Venetian involvement, though it is implicit rather than explicit. A quick survey of the map in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* attest to this. There is extensive mapping of Africa and Asia in Volume I, a map of West Africa in Volume III, there are maps pertaining to New Spain and Brazil in Volume III, and a map of New France. The map of the western hemisphere in Volume III, entitled “Universale della Parte Del Mondo Nuovamente Ritrovata,” or “Universal of the Part of the World Newly Rediscovered,” shows the greatest part of *terrae incognitae* to be off to the north and west of New France. So this is a land that, naturally, had great interest to Ramusio, and to which he devoted much of his personal commentary.

Ramusio takes his argument to a new level with the inclusion of an expatriate family in his apparent effort to get Venice involved in the effort find the Northwest Passage. He continues the progression of his argument by mentioning that “truly, if the French in their New France had wanted to penetrate overland toward the said northwestern wind, [they] would have been able to reach the sea and sail on to

Cathay.”¹⁷¹ Ramusio then gives a rather passionate plea, invoking the name of God, to encourage exploration to find the Northwest Passage, suggesting that it was maybe a burden given by God to go out and explore in order to evangelize these new places.¹⁷² At this point Ramusio could have chosen any number of individuals who had made explorative voyages to the northwest, but his choice is Sebastian Cabot. This is a very telling choice made by Ramusio. In it he is making a statement that not only should Venice be involved in the search for new Asian routes, but here in Cabot is the person with Venetians ties who can oversee such an effort. It has been mentioned previously that Ramusio had ties to Cabot, or had communicated with him, so maybe there is a personal reason for the selection as well. This may be one of the most overlooked aspects of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, in that it may have been used in part to encourage support of an expedition by Cabot funded on behalf of Venice. The next few lines of the discourse seem to be addressing the Venetians directly, making what could be interpreted as a strong plea for the Venetians to bring Cabot home to Venice so he could ply his trade for them. He refers to Cabot as a fellow Venetian, although it would be more correct, of course, to simply refer to his family’s Venetian heritage. He lists Cabot’s accomplishments and qualifications, the most important being named Pilot Major for Spain, and describes how he had total control over the Spanish fleets to the point that they could do nothing without his permission. He also emphasizes Cabot’s

¹⁷¹ Ibid. “*Et veramente se I Francesi in questa lor nova Francia havesero voluto far penetrar fra terra verso detto vento di ponente maestro, haveriano anchora essi trovato'l mare, & potuto navigare al Cataio.*”

¹⁷² Ibid.

abilities in cosmography.¹⁷³ Ramusio continues heaping praise on Cabot, and is definitely trying to advertise for him rather than simply relate his story.

Ramusio uses an interesting technique regarding Cabot, as well. He does not initially identify this person he writes of so highly. He writes glowing praise of the individual leading to a crescendo where he announces the name of this great gentleman working for years in Seville who has total knowledge of the Castilian navigations, Sebastian Cabot.¹⁷⁴ If there was any doubt as to whom this is directed Ramusio uses a phrase that asks “and are *we* responding?”¹⁷⁵ Ramusio then recounts the story of the Cabot family, and the personal contact he had had with Sebastian. Ramusio writes that Cabot was a courteous gentleman, who had enlightened him on many things regarding the Portuguese and Spaniards, and had shown him a grand *mappamundi* showing these things.¹⁷⁶ Ramusio writes of Sebastian’s own, though now questioned, exploits, and in particular the search for the Northwest Passage, which was considered a divine effort on the part of Cabot. His quick summary of Cabot’s exploits are “Sebastian said that he sailed in order to find the Northwest Passage, expecting to find Cathay, but instead explored the coast down toward the equator...always expecting to find the passage to the Indies...and on return to England he found much upheaval due to the war with Scotland, and due to this there was not the will to support such efforts, and that is why he left for Spain. There he was supported for a trip to explore the coast of Brazil where he found the Rio de la Plata...he traveled many leagues up the river where he saw great

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, “*desiderando di saper di quelle navigationi de Castigliani, gli fu detto, che v’era un gran valent’huomo Venetiano che havea’l carico di quelle, nominato’l signor Sebastiano Caboto...*”

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., “*& rispondendo noi,...*”

numbers of people who ran to see them out of wonder.”¹⁷⁷ In another discourse Ramusio writes that the reason Cabot was unable to make a more complete search for the passage in the north was due to the great cold that was encountered.¹⁷⁸ Ramusio reports that Cabot said he was too old for such activities at that point in his life, but the information and inspiration Cabot could have provided would have been of infinite value.¹⁷⁹

There are some problems with Ramusio’s account of Cabot. James Williamson writes that the information Ramusio relates from the “Mantuan gentlemen” is complete trite. It has no bearing to true chronology, some facts are completely wrong to the point that Williamson suggests that there must have been a lot of wine flowing the evening that the conversation took place. Williamson also places blame on the “Mantuan gentleman” as the source of inaccurate information, but it could be that the “gentleman” was an invention of Ramusio, as previously suggested by Williamson’s association Skelton. Williamson speculates that the difference in the Cabot accounts in Volumes I and III are possibly due to the information in a letter sent from Cabot to Ramusio. Ramusio did not reveal the total contents of the letter, and Williamson, again speculates that Ramusio was too embarrassed to reveal what must have been a rebuke by Cabot.¹⁸⁰ The fact that Ramusio continues to herald Cabot for the services of Venice would make one think that it was a mild rebuke at worst and possibly just a correction of the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra La Nuova Francia,” 3: 437-8.

¹⁷⁹ Ramusio, “Delle Spetiere,” 1: 374.

¹⁸⁰ Williamson, James, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) 151ff.

information in Volume I. It does explain the difference in the accounts by Ramusio, as will be seen. Ramusio's enthusiasm for Cabot did not subside and he would remain optimistic of the prospect that Cabot had actually found a northwest passage. It is impossible to know, but it could be that Ramusio's business venture into the New World may have influenced his promotion of Cabot as much as his desire for the discovery of a northwest route to Asia.

There can be no doubt Ramusio is suggesting the Venetians make use of Cabot and his knowledge for their own gain. The way in which he structures the argument, the fact that he refers to Cabot as one of their own, the way he identifies with the reader as "we," meaning we Venetians, and asking the rhetorical question of "what are we to do," all point to an effort on the part of Ramusio to promote Venetian exploration. Cabot is mentioned by Ramusio in other places throughout *Delle Navigazioni*, lending more credence to the argument that Ramusio was trying to promote him. One could take the argument a step further and state that because of the use of the Portuguese example, and the suggestion that colonies be established Ramusio was suggesting the possibility of a Venetian commercial empire in other parts of the world. He even invoked the name of God in justifying such actions. The repeated use of the phrase "some Christian prince" might also be interpreted two ways. Instead simply imploring some Christian prince to carry out such an effort, he may also be sending the message to the Venetians that if not them, someone else is certainly sure to do it. To suggest this is not to suggest that Ramusio was nothing but a crass propagandist, but it does reinforce the idea of the two sides of Ramusio, the scholar and the citizen.

Ramusio concludes his discourse on the spice trade by returning to the Portuguese and their rounding of the Cape of Good Hope. He introduces some of the entries to follow, and again discusses many of the commodities involved in the trade. He makes an interesting observation of how in his life he had noticed how some items, like silks, had in the past had been only for the wealthy, but due to the greater supply and correspondingly lower cost, had become quite commonplace.¹⁸¹ Ramusio speculates on the future, suggesting that some of the products imported from Asia may someday be cultivated in the Mediterranean, just as citrus had been introduced in the Roman Empire, noting that some things can flourish outside of an equal zone of latitude. He even holds out the hope of the re-opening of a Mediterranean route to the spices, though no specifics are given.¹⁸² His final statement is philosophical in tone, and he seems to turn from ambitious capitalist to concerned humanitarian. In the last line, he writes of the many changes taking place and contributes it to the fact that men were “more industrious, and willing to take great risks in the search of the world.” He goes on to say that those who do not give in to their “natural fragility and doubts, as if they were immortal, not deterred by any difficulties, not even the Torrid Zone, nor of the ice and cold, continue toiling, covering the entire rotundity of the earth, in order to satiate their immense greed and avarice.”¹⁸³ Or possibly the last line is simply an admission of collective guilt.

¹⁸¹ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra Li Viaggi...,” 1: 375.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

2.5 Conclusion to the Spice Trade

The significance of Ramusio's work on the subject of the spice trade for the modern reader is that in analyzing his work we are able to hear an authoritative, learned voice of a contemporary to the unfolding events. Ramusio's writings and the related works in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* regarding the spice trade give us excellent insight into his personal opinions and ideas about the amazing, and to some degree for a Venetian disturbing, developments unfolding about him. The things that are readily apparent regarding his analysis are the classical context in which all discoveries were placed, the ancient and continual role of Venice and Italy in the spice trade, the achievements and discoveries of the Portuguese, the possessive nature of Portuguese/European endeavors, and the greater significance of these events for the future of Venice and Europe.

The message of possession in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* may not be as blatant as later English and Dutch publications, but the Eurocentric attitude is conveyed by Ramusio. One might even suggest Ramusio extends the idea of possession to the past tense as well as the present and future. Ramusio's discussion of the Romans' involvement in trade with Asia does not convey a message of outright ownership, but contemporary readers would have assumed the superiority of the Romans to other peoples. If the Portuguese could take possession of such far-off places, then it would be logical for the Renaissance reader to think the Romans would have set the terms for interaction with obviously lesser races. The real importance for the Venetian reader regarding the Roman references is that it gave them an ancient link to their current

activities. As almost all Italian Renaissance republics tied their heritage to Rome in some way, the Venetians could have interpreted writings regarding the ancient spice trade as their own national history. The Venetians were even more closely tied to the Roman Empire due to their continuing association with the Byzantine Empire. Ramusio's many references to the works of antiquity, and more importantly his statements that he and his associates were an active part of the classical discussion, show he believed his time and place to be an active continuation of an ancient process. Ramusio believed he and his associates, for example Bembo, Fracastoro, and Gastaldi, were not simply studying and commenting on the writings of Plato, Pliny, Strabo, and Ptolemy, but were actively involved with these ancient scholars, and even critiquing and improving upon the ancient learning. There may appear to be a touch of arrogance in this attitude, that one could consider oneself the equal of these great scholars, but it was the importance of the advancement of knowledge that was foremost in Ramusio's work. Ramusio also makes it clear they were building on the work of the ancients, for example his charts of Volume I were made in Ptolemaic style, but stated to be an improvement upon the ancient works. This is, of course, what gave Ramusio such delight in the Portuguese discoveries that the information obtained from their efforts allowed scholars such as Ramusio to produce writings and maps that surpassed the works of antiquity.

Ramusio writes about this particular subject in the introductory discourse to Volume I. The discourse is addressed to Fracastoro, as are most of the discourses and it gives insight into the intellectual process of the Renaissance group of which Ramusio was a part. Ramusio speaks of the "*savi disccorsi, & dolci ragionamenti,*" or "wise

discussions and sweet reasoning” that he, Fracastoro, and Rimondo dalla Torre had together.¹⁸⁴ He admits that it is his desire to leave his work that would be of some benefit to future generations and to give his associates some measure of immortality.¹⁸⁵ He believed they had good reason to have their names entered in the pantheon due to the new learning being recorded through his work. His statement that only in their time the ancient methods of study had been revived, and that they had presented to the world many new things never before seen or imagined exhibits a great degree of excitement, and also an air of superiority. This was a true Renaissance statement being made by an individual. He was not ashamed to announce to the world and profess in print what new knowledge was achieved in his time. Ramusio appears to have taken personal pride in his role as disseminator of knowledge. He prided himself that he was not just a reporter, but also an analyst and historian.

The Middle Ages were a “Dark Age” according to Ramusio – an interlude in the intellectual process that he and his associate revived, but even in that dark time Ramusio gives evidence of Italian/Venetian involvement in the spice trade. He shows that the commercial link was never really broken for the Venetians. The reference to the Genoese and Venetian activity in Tana showed continual involvement in Asian trade dating back to about the year 1000. Ramusio’s lengthy discussion of, and defense of, Marco Polo showed not only Venetian involvement in trade throughout the Middle Ages, but also a great achievement made by a Venetian in a time where little was thought to have been achieved. It is clear in Ramusio’s writing that he equated the

¹⁸⁴ Ramusio, “All’Eccellentiss. M. Hieronimo Fracastoro,” in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 1.

travels of the Polos as equal to or greater than the discoveries made during his lifetime. The importance in relating possession to the Venetian reader in tracing this trade link to the past is not in showing actual ownership of a particular place, but to show Venice's ownership and involvement in the Asian trade. The Portuguese entry into the trade was taking this ownership and possession away from the Venetians. The idea by Lane that Ramusio reveled and found great satisfaction in the Portuguese discoveries is true, but it should be tempered a bit. There had to be some amount of trepidation in his glorification of what the Portuguese had accomplished. Ramusio was not simply a detached scholar with no material interest in what was happening. The admiration he portrayed for the Portuguese by presenting them so prominently in his work was also intended as an example for, and warning to the Venetians.

The maps give an excellent portrayal of the sense of ownership. The ships surrounding the locations depicted are a definite indication of ownership. Whether this was an intentional or not, the message to the viewer is the same. The natives portrayed on the maps have lost all appearance of independence. It is obvious in scenes where they are shown in subservience to the Europeans, but even in the less obvious sense when they are cultivating products that are intended for European consumption. The significance to the Venetian might be that these products were being stolen from them. The Portuguese had made to the sources of Venice's wealth, and they could possibly cut-off the supply. Ramusio was not naïve to this possibility, and the imagery of the maps gave visual proof of what was happening. The charts in Volume I that show the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

route taken by the Portuguese were not a definite admonition for the Venetians to follow suit, but a case can be made for that. Ramusio did specifically mention the possibility for the Venetians to go as far as the Guinea coast, re-emphasized in the Volume III map, and the tone of that argument could be taken as Ramusio suggesting to go at least that far. He also made the plea in the same instance that the Venetians could use this area as a way to get involved in West Indies trade.

Lane makes an analogy that rings true when he writes, “Ramusio took pride even in the Portuguese achievements. As in the 1960’s men were proud of the conquests in space through rocketry, so Ramusio took delight in the enormous progress during his life time in the science of geography. He thanked God that he had been born in an age that was not only imitating the ancients but surpassing them in the acquisition of knowledge.”¹⁸⁶ Ramusio certainly did admire the Portuguese, but Lane should have carried on with his analogy. When the first blastoff occurred in the twentieth century countries did not just sit back and admire the rockets as if they were a fireworks display, but a space-race ensued. The same was true in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the publication of the discoveries. A great race ensued for the nations involved to grab what they could. Ramusio is making his own plea to the Venetians to join in the race. Lane himself noted Ramusio’s own contact with Sebastian Cabot in hopes he would lead an effort for Venice in overseas exploration.

The nationalistic theme in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* is not blatant as in a work by Hakluyt, but it is present. The fact that it is written in Italian alludes to the fact that

¹⁸⁶ Lane, 282.

this work was written primarily for an Italian audience. Had Ramusio wanted to present a work solely for the intellectual and educational circles of Europe the obvious language choice would have been Latin. It does not mean that the choice of Italian was solely for the purpose of encouraging Venetian/Italian enterprises, but it is reasonable to assume that played a part in the choice of language. Ramusio points out throughout the work the important role played by Venetians in the history of discoveries and the spice trade. The support of Cabot indicates the continuation of this role, and that the Venetians should use this to their advantage.

CHAPTER 3

RAMUSIO AND THE “NEW WORLD”

3.1 Introduction and Discussion of Sources

The information included in Volume III highlights Ramusio’s great pride in the acquisition of new knowledge in his time. The most astounding of the new discoveries was that of entire continents previously unknown. It was one thing to make modifications to the works of Ptolemy or Strabo, or to correct the misconceptions regarding the hitherto unknown, but in the case of the Americas, this was literally a new world of knowledge. Giunti even bragged that had Ramusio completed his fourth volume, it would no longer be necessary “to read Ptolemy, nor Strabo, nor Pliny, nor any other of the ancient writers” regarding matters of geography.¹⁸⁷ In his discussions regarding Africa and Asia, Ramusio was commenting on places known since antiquity, and there was a definite frame of reference for both reader and writer. The Spice Islands were a great distance from Venice, and there was still much mystery about them, but they had been known to some extent since the time of the Roman Empire. Ramusio could easily place the findings in Volume I within the context of his personal, classical education. The New World, though, was a subject for which he had no such prior frame

¹⁸⁷ Tommaso Giunti, “Alli Lettori,” in *Delle Navigazioni*, Ramusio, 1, “...che egli averia fato ogni opera di averna le relazioni e li viaggi per potere un giorno dar fuori anco il quarto volume, talché non avesse fatto piú di bisogno leggere né Tolomeo né Strabone né Plinio né alcun altro degli antichi scrittori intorno alle cose di geografia.”

of reference. Ramusio was not inclined to approach the study of the New World from medieval myths and legends, as he was convinced of the value of an empirical approach to geographic study. It was impossible, though, for him to set aside his classical education in his approach to any subject.

Volume III is totally dedicated to the exploration of the New World, and it is the primary source of Ramusio's personal information on the subject. It will be the intention here, once again, to focus on Ramusio's personal work on the subject in order to understand his impressions and opinions of the places in question. Written and visual sources must be taken in tandem to achieve a full understanding of Ramusio's personal impression of the New World. The two main writings by Ramusio regarding the New World are the Introduction to Volume III entitled "Discorso De M. Gio. Battista Ramusio Sopra il Terzo volume delle Navigationsi, & Viaggi nella parte del Mondo Nuovo," and the "Discorso Sopra la Terra Ferma Del'Indie Occidentali..." also known as "Discorso Sopra la Nuova Francia." There are other, smaller discourses in Volume III, similar to those in Volume I, and some of the writings in the previous two volumes relate to New World discovery. As Ramusio's discourse at the beginning of Volume III serves as an introduction to that volume and to the New World, so an analysis of it will serve as the introduction to the present discussion of these subjects.

The introduction to Volume III is a discourse of Ramusio addressed to Fracastoro entitled, "*Discorso Di M. Gio. Battista Ramusio Sopral il Terzo volume delle Nauigationi, & Viaggi nella parte del Mondo Nuouo.*"¹⁸⁸ The first few paragraphs of the

¹⁸⁸ Ramusio, "Discorso Di M. Gio. Battista Ramusio sopra il Terzo volume...", 3.

discourse are devoted to Plato's dialogue, *Timaeus*. The selection of this writing that interests Ramusio is the relation of Critias regarding the lost continent of Atlantis, and the history of the war between Atlantis and Athens. The story of the island of Atlantis is then related as being a great power in the Atlantic, situated in front of the Pillars of Hercules, which was then navigable. The Mediterranean is described as being but a harbor in that greater sea, and the island of Atlantis is described as greater than Libya and Asia, and was the way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent (or *terra firma* as Ramusio says) which surrounded the true ocean. The great empire of Atlantis was said to have extended all the way to Egypt and Tyrrhenia, but the great earthquake caused Atlantis to sink into the sea leaving a shoal of mud such that it made it impossible to navigate the sea.¹⁸⁹ Afterward Ramusio writes that the story was considered to be a legend, or fable by many of the great philosophers, but it is no surprise Ramusio uses the classical source as an entry into this new subject. While the Americas had received some previous attention, it was now to be the primary focus.

Ramusio places the Atlantic basin in a classical context from the beginning of Volume III, and it is important to keep this in mind as one works through the volume. It could be that Ramusio uses the fabled ancient story to show the superiority of sixteenth-century knowledge to that of the ancients, reinforcing the idea of Giunti that this work made reading the ancient scholars unnecessary. Instead of fantastic stories created in the minds of individuals, or even through enlightened reasoning, in this volume one could

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

read fascinating stories verified by actual witnesses. One could also visualize what was in the New World by way of the maps and illustrations contained in Volume III. However, Ramusio does not discount the knowledge or abilities of the ancient scholars. He notes in the discourse the reasoning of the classic scholars in their summation of the balanced nature of the universe. He refers to the “planets and the earth,” “superior and inferior demons,” and other similar “chimeras.”¹⁹⁰ Ramusio notes the limitations of the knowledge of previous centuries as he points out the faulty reasoning regarding the habitability of the earth. The discovery that humans could exist in the far reaches of the north and well below the equator was possibly the most important fundamental discovery of their time, according to Ramusio, something about which the ancients were ignorant.¹⁹¹

The attention then turns to discussion of travels to the northern latitudes, referred to as the *Tramontana*, in apparent correlation to the discussion of hitherto unknown areas of habitation. It is mentioned that it had yet to be discussed, except for mention in Volume II of the voyage of Pietro Querini.¹⁹² Ramusio addresses Fracastoro in the discourse, as is his fashion, to lend a sense of extra credibility to his argument. He mentions how they had had many discussions on the subject, and thought it appropriate to mention the subject in this setting. We are then reminded of the polymath nature of the learning of these Renaissance scholars as Ramusio launches into a cosmographic

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., “...*che siamo chiari come sotto la nostra Tramontana, & sotto la linea dell’ Equinottiale vi siano habitatori, & che viuono cosi commodamente, come fano l’altre genti nel rimanente del mondo, laqual cosa gli antichi negarono.*”

discussion of the effects of the sun on the different parts of the earth, and differences in length of days and seasons. He begins this digression by stating “And, yet, here we strain, the best that we know how, to demonstrate the marvelous and stupendous effect, that one sees made by the sun, and above the line (equator), and below both poles in an instant, but diversely, and to the contrast of one to the other.”¹⁹³ He then gives the purpose of his cosmographic discussion in his explanation that humans are able to inhabit the different climates of the earth through their ability to adapt to the varying conditions. Ramusio writes of the evolutionary process of people adapting to their environment when he writes, “whether hot or cold, each is able to inhabit, and find refuge, in their natural settin [without having to] leave for somewhere else, but are contented to stay in their beloved place of birth.”¹⁹⁴ This discussion is pertinent to the time in relation to the recent discoveries of the earth’s inhabitability, for example disproving the theoretical torrid zones. Ramusio does not seem to indicate that the ability to adapt to different climates and environments necessitated the transformation of humans into the strange, mutant creatures as posited by earlier theorists. There were still contemporary publishers who were still printing such images in their works, but there is no indication that Ramusio believed such outlandish theories. This is an

¹⁹² Ramusio, “Discorso Di M. Gio. Battista Ramusio sopra il Terzo volume...” Ramusio meant the northern latitudes of the New World since there was also discussion in Volume I of the routes by way of the North Sea and Russia to reach the source of the spice trade.

¹⁹³ Ibid., “*Et però quì ci sforzeeremo, il, meglio che sapremo, di dimostrare il marauiglioso & stupendo effetto, che si vede far’ il Sole, & sopra la linea, & sotto ambedue I poli in vn’ istante, ma diuersamente, & al contrario l’vno dall’altro.*”

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. “*tutti gli habitanti sono stati formati, & disposti cò tal complessione, & fortezza di corpo, che ciascuno è proportionate al clima assegnatoli, ò caldo, ò freddo che sia, & vi può habitare, & ripararsi, come in luogo suo naturale, & temperato, non si lamentando, ò cercando di partirsi, & andare altroue, ma si contenta di starui per l’amor nauturale dil sito suo nathio...*”

important point as the portrayal of different races as being somewhat inhuman made it more plausible to subject them to inhumane treatment.

It is not surprising that adaptability to differing climates and environments would be of great interest to Venetian scholars. Venice itself is, of course, an incredible example of humans interacting with their environment. Cosgrove points to the very unstable nature of the Venetian lagoon as a constant matter of concern on the part of Venice. He writes of the *renovatio*, or renewal, of land constantly taking place. This would have been necessary for the very existence of Venice, and certainly a topic common to any learned person in Venice at the time. The diverting of canals and the reclamation of lands created a need for expertise in surveying and the ability to express this through maps.¹⁹⁵ Gastaldi was involved in these projects, according to Cosgrove, which would have contributed to his expertise as a cartographer.¹⁹⁶

Ramusio's proclamation that the entirety of the world was inhabited was noteworthy because it expressed the opinions of his associates, indicating the progression of thought in Venice. It is noted the association Ramusio had with other leading Venetian scholars and in his own writing he indicates that his ideas are consistent with what he had discussed with others. Within *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi* Giunti professes the same, stating "hence it is now clearly understood, that each part of this earthly globe is marvelously inhabited, neither is any part of it vacant, nor deprived

¹⁹⁵ Cosgrove, 70-72.

¹⁹⁶ Cosgrove, 74.

of habitation due to heat or cold.”¹⁹⁷ Ramusio had previously touched upon this fact in his discourse on the flooding of the Nile where he expresses much the same sentiment.¹⁹⁸ John Headley notes similar ideas from contemporary scholars, most notably Pietro Bembo. Headley refers to the sixth book of Bembo’s *Historia veneta* writing that Bembo “attacked the classical notion that only two of the five climatic zones were habitable.”¹⁹⁹ He relates a telling quote from Bembo that states, “It would be necessary [to believe] God to have been almost improvident in His having so constituted the universe [*mundum*] that by far the greater part of the earth on account of excessive intemperateness be devoid of humankind and of no human use. [In fact] the globe of the earth is of such a nature that to man has been given the capacity for going through all its parts – achieving their complete accessibility.”²⁰⁰

The ideas expressed by Bembo and Ramusio are reminiscent of similar conclusions reached by Francesco Guicciardini in Book Six of his *History of Italy*. The work, published posthumously in 1561, was written about the same time Ramusio and Bembo would have been writing on or discussing the subject, and the language used by the Florentine Guicciardini is quite similar to that used by the two Venetians. In the section of Book Six entitled “Importance of the Spice Trade, Discovery of the New World, Explorations of the Portuguese and Spaniards,” he writes, “These voyages have made it clear that the ancients were deceived in many ways regarding a knowledge of

¹⁹⁷ Tommaso Giunti, in Ramusio, *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 1, “onde si può chiaramente comprendere che d’ogni intorno questo globo della terra è maravigliosamente abitato, né vi è parte alcuna vacua, né per caldo o gielo priva d’abitatori.”

¹⁹⁸ Ramusio, “*Discorso del Ramusio sopra il crescer del fiume Nilo*,” 1: 261.

¹⁹⁹ Headley, 16.

²⁰⁰ Pietro Bembo, *Opere del Cardinale Pietro Bembo*, (Venice, 1729) 1:138 in Headley, 16.

the earth” and then proceeds to comment on specifics regarding the inhabitability of the earth.²⁰¹ It is unknown whether these individuals influenced each other, or arrived at a rather obvious conclusion simultaneously, but it is interesting that they shared a similar opinion.

The importance of Bembo’s quote is twofold. There is the implication that this was a subject of discussion between Bembo and Ramusio, as the two are known to have been friends and had frequent correspondences. This would include not just Ramusio, but all the mentioned associates of the two who were interested in the subject. Headley notes that the above quote by Bembo (and the work in its entirety) was written in 1530 even though the actual publication was not until 1551.²⁰² This would mean that the subject would have been one of the points of discussion during the formative time of Ramusio’s thoughts regarding the New World. It is unknown who had an influence on whom, whether the influence was mutual, or if these ideas were the result of long discussions on the part of Ramusio, Bembo, and associates. It is clear that there was agreement of the position. It is safe to say that it was a reasonably enlightened position, as well, that God had made for the entirety of the earth to be inhabited, by real people, even though they were out of contact from the Catholic Church. It is possible that Ramusio would have been the inspiration for these ideas as he was the one considered the expert on travels and exploration, and the others may have deferred to him on the subject.

²⁰¹ Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, trans. Sidney Alexander (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 182.

²⁰² Headley, 16.

The other important aspect of the quote, or probably more correctly of the discussion of the subject as a whole, is the moral dilemma created by the discovery of the fact that there were humans living in other places, particularly in the New World completely out of reach of the Catholic Church. Ramusio touches upon the great philosophical question of the time in the *Discorso*. He seems to suggest that divine providence allowed for the diversity of people, living according to nature of the differing climates in which they lived. He writes “as father, and Lord of all, because for this reason was each was fabricated, having given of that which is divine, and celestial parts, that is the soul...in some places imparting the gifts necessary to live more, or less, according to their divine providence is happiness.”²⁰³ This opinion reflects some writings in the New Testament regarding those who were unaware of God’s Law. In Acts 17:30 the author writes, “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”²⁰⁴ In Romans Paul alludes to the fact that God was made plain to all men through his creation, but some chose to ignore the obvious and turn after their own desires and idolatry.²⁰⁵ While there is no reference made to scripture in Ramusio’s writings or correspondences he received, there is definitely some similar sentiment in the writings. The problem, of course, is that in the scriptural references the allowance to ignorant people was pre-Christ. Afterward the

²⁰³ Ramusio, “Discorso Di M. Gio. Battista Ramusio sopra il Terzo volume...,” 1, “*come padrone, & Signor di tutti, per cagion del quale ella era stata fabricata, hauendolo dotato di quella divina, & celeste parte, che é l’anima, & apresso ha disposti, & in ciascun luogo compartiti I doni necessarij al vivere piu, & meno, fecondo che alla diuina sue pruidenza é paciuto*”.

²⁰⁴ Acts 17:30, *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible New International Version*, (Indianapolis, 1978).

²⁰⁵ Romans 1:18-25, specifically verse 25, “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator...”

charge is for all everywhere to repent. Indeed, Christ himself exhorted his disciples to go into the entire world and evangelize.²⁰⁶ Ramusio seems to be prescribing, in effect, the above teachings to the inhabitants of the New World. He accepts them as part of God's creation and having received His divine gifts. It sounds as though Ramusio sees those living according to their natural state as living within the will of God. This allows them to be seen as "worthy" of salvation, and possibly even ready recipients. Ramusio does express the desire in his "Discorso Sopra Nuova Francia" that the natives of the New World be taught of "our most holy faith."²⁰⁷ This is in keeping with the nonjudgmental approach to the inhabitants of other places. It is too much to say that he was completely void of Eurocentrism, but he does show an acceptance of other peoples.

The visual information in Volume III corresponds to the written presentation of the New World, and is presented in both cartographic and strictly illustrative formats. The maps included in Volume III provide a great deal of geographic and cultural information on the lands and people of the Americas, or of "*L'Indie Occidentali*," "West Indies," the label used by Ramusio. (In fact, Ramusio never once used the term "America.") Maps are important to Volume III, just as they were in Volume I, and in Volume III are typically of a more descriptive nature than those of Volume I. The chorography included on the Volume III maps provides the reader with much information regarding the flora, fauna, and natives to be found in the New World. Another very important part of Ramusio's story told in Volume III is the woodcut

²⁰⁶ Mark 16:15, "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.'"

²⁰⁷ Ramusio, "Discorso Sopra la Nuova Francia," 3: 438, "*alla nostra santissima fede.*"

images that are included. These give artistic, pictorial interpretations of the lives and civilizations of the natives, and the natives themselves. The imagery is informative and amusing at times, and tells as much of the ones creating the images as they do the subjects presented. It is in these images that we see the classical background from which Ramusio and his associates worked. When confronted with something for which Ramusio had no definite frame of reference, he placed the new learning within what he knew. They are, thus, more apt to have a less definitive interpretation.

There are eight maps in Volume III, and they are worthy of study. The maps vary in style, scale, and purpose. They appeared in the first edition of volume III in 1556, but by the time of the 1606 edition, from which are reproduced the maps displayed here, changes can be noted. They appear more ornate, or possibly just busier, than in the original publication. The woodblocks used for the later editions are actually reproductions of the earlier plates that were destroyed in the fire that destroyed materials that had been intended for Volume II. Another difference is the evident damage of woodworm to the plates. White, worm-shaped blank spaces are noticeable on the maps, which indicate such damage.²⁰⁸

The maps are credited to Giacomo Gastaldi, and there seems to be little doubt regarding this as Ramusio himself writes he had Gastaldi produce maps for him stating, “I have made for M. Giacomo de’ Gastaldi Piamontese the excellent cosmographer, of which he has reduced in small scale a universal, & after that in Four divided tables, with

²⁰⁸ Philip D. Burden, *The Mapping of North America: A list of printed maps 1511-1670* (Rickmansworth, England: Raleigh Publications, 1996), 30-31.

care and diligence.”²⁰⁹ Robert Karrow, Jr. notes a slight problem of discrepancy when he points out that Ramusio spoke of four maps of the New World in Volume III, but there are only three. Karrow suggests the possibility that the extra map might be one of the three city maps/plans included the production for which Karrow says Gastaldi had no role.²¹⁰ It is possible that the universal of the New World could be counted and/or the map of the island of Hispaniola. It is just as likely that Ramusio simply miswrote in this case as he occasionally did. Ramusio, as noted in the introduction, had his own interest in cartography, and while Gastaldi was the author of the maps, it is reasonable to assume that Ramusio had input regarding the production of the maps. These maps are interesting if studied as isolated objects, but they must be placed in context with the associated texts they accompany for full understanding.

There are several interesting maps included in Volume III. These include *Brasil*, *La Nuova Francia*, *Parte del Africa* (West Africa), and the islands of *Hispaniola* and *Sumatra* (island of Taprobana). Four of these maps are quite similar in nature, and are very descriptive of these places, with the map of Hispaniola having the least amount of information, and being somewhat different in style from the other maps it is grouped with here. Its placement in the book also differs as the other four are placed together toward the end of the volume. The maps of West Africa and Sumatra, and possibly even Brazil, may be somewhat misplaced. They are actually more suited to accompany information in Volume I regarding the Portuguese. Skelton suggests, though, they

²⁰⁹ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra il Terzo volume,” 3: 1, “*ho fatto che M. Giacomo de’ Gastaldi Piamontese Cosmografo eccellente, n’ha ridotto in picciol compasso uno universale, & poi quello in quattro tavole diviso*”

accompany the information in “Discorso d’un Gran Capitano di mare Francese del Luogo di Deppa sopra le naigationi fatte alla terra nuova dell’Indie Occidentali, chiamtat la nuova Francia...& sopra la terra del Brasil, Guinea, Isola do San Lorenzo, & quella di Summatra...” Skelton writes that this entry is of the Parmentier voyages, the only known French voyage to all of these stated places.²¹¹ Even so, this seems to be making a great deal of minor points, when they would have coincided with major themes of Volume I. The map of *La Nuova Francia* is placed in the discussion directly related to it, and much will be added regarding this map below. The map of the island of Hispaniola is located in the part of Volume III regarding New Spain.

Ramusio makes specific mention of the maps in his introduction to the third volume, “*Discorso Di M. Gio. Battista Ramusio Sopra il Terzo volume delle Navigationi, & Viaggi nella parte del Mondo Nuovo.*” The discourse was dedicated to “*All’ Eccellente M. Hieronimo Fracastoro,*” and reads like a discourse between the two. The inspiration for the maps was credited to a suggestion given Ramusio by Fracastoro, but it is hard to imagine the idea did not originate with Ramusio considering his obvious interest in the subject. The real inspiration, as expressed by Ramusio, was Ptolemy, or more likely the desire to “outdo” Ptolemy. Ramusio wrote that Fracastoro had written letters encouraging him to include four or five charts regarding the New World in imitation of Ptolemy. He writes in his introduction that Fracastoro had encouraged him to include some maps, in the imitation of Ptolemy, of the coastal places “made for the

²¹⁰ Robert Karrow, Jr., *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century and Their Maps* (Chicago: Speculum Orbis Press, 1993), 230.

²¹¹ Skelton, 1: XXII.

Spanish pilots and captains” and states, “I did not want to leave out any so as to obey your commandments.”²¹²

The places that are the subjects of the tables relate to the overall information in the texts, and serve as good visual accompaniment to the reading. There could be other reasons for the selection of these places. They seem to relate to the areas of discovery and discussion in Ramusio’s work. Africa was one of the first areas to be explored by the Portuguese and was being put to good economic use, as was Sumatra where the Portuguese controlled much of the trade. Brazil represented the southern hemisphere of the New World, and again a location being used to the benefit of the Portuguese. New France was out of the Portuguese and Spanish realms, but represented another important area of exploration and discovery. There was also the great interest in seeing if a sea-route to Asia might be found in New France. A northwest passage was something Ramusio gave much consideration, and the presentation of these maps, along with others in Volume I indicate Ramusio’s suggestion that a passage may be found. The map of the Western Hemisphere certainly allows for that possibility with its large amount of *terrae incognitae*. The maps mentioned briefly here will be revisited as they relate to the differing discussions.

²¹² Ramusio, 3: 1, “*Hora, perche l’Eccell. Vostra piúvolte per fue lettere m’ha esortato, che della parte di questo Mondo di nuouo ritrouato, ad imitatione di Tolomeo ne volessi far fare quattro ò cinque tauole di quanto se ne sapeua fin al presente, ch’erano iliti posti nelle carte da nauicare, fatte per li Pilotti & Capitani Spagnuoli...della Nuoua Spagna, & Isole del Mar del Nort, come della parte, che si chiama La terra del Brasil, & Perù nel Mar del Sur, non ho voluto mancar di non obedir a’ suoi comandamenti...*”

3.1.1 City Maps in Volume III

Volume III includes three city maps/plans of Hochelaga, modern-day Montreal, Mexico City, called Temistitan in Ramusio, and Cusco in Peru. All three of these city plans are of great interest and all three are unique. They give less visual evidence, though, of what these three places were truly like, as they do the impressions of Ramusio regarding these places. Hochelaga is a diagram map with information surrounding it in the form of an artistic portrayal of the natives and French explorers. The map of Mexico City is a bird's-eye view of the whole city with a lot of graphic information. The map of Cusco is a plan view of the city with monuments and buildings as main points of reference.

The city maps give us a glimpse of the culture and civilization, and what would be considered the highest achievement of the people of a different race. City maps were coming into widespread usage in the sixteenth century. The number of city plans and maps went up dramatically during the first half of the sixteenth century.²¹³ A European reader of Ramusio was as likely to form an opinion of these people he had never seen by the maps and images portrayed as opposed to the textual content. The city plans of Cusco and Mexico City may be the best examples in Ramusio of the attempt to Europeanize the New World, or, at least to make sense of the “New World” in an old world perspective. Cusco is set out in what might be considered Greco-Roman style, while Mexico City might be seen as a more modern setting patterned after Venice's

²¹³ P. D. A. Harvey, “Local and Regional Cartography in Medieval Europe,” in Harley and Woodward, *The History of Cartography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 1: 464-5.

hydro-locale. In fact, Milanesi refers to Mexico City as a “modification of Venice.”²¹⁴ Hochelaga is more primitive in presentation and thus gives the impression of being the most primitive of the settlements.

The reason for using a plan view for Cusco might be that the presentation is the city as a whole. As was the case in typical city maps of the Renaissance, the streets/street grid is not of primary importance. In the other two cases, there are specific buildings and things that need to be identified. In the case of Cusco, the major sites in the city are readily recognized. The landmarks may not be as famous as on a map of the city of Rome, for example, but one can detect certain buildings that would have had prominence, as well as entry gates into the city, main squares, and temples. In the case of Mexico City the detailed the waterways, causeways, and different sections of the city were of more interest. Individual sites, such as the great temple of Mexico City, were presented as independent works. One can also note that Cusco was not a city that developed due to happenstance. A well-planned, well laid-out city would be reminiscent of ancient Roman city planning. This is certainly consistent with Ramusio’s assessment of the inhabitants of the New World, particularly those of the southern areas, being on an equal standing with the ancient Greco-Roman civilizations.

Probably little excited Ramusio more than the discovery of Tenochtitlan/ Mexico City. Here was found, not just the Aztec capital laden with gold, but more interestingly quite possibly Venice’s’ twin city in the New World. Ramusio’s high regard for the civilization in New Spain must have been taken to an even higher level

²¹⁴ Milanesi, *Tolomeo Sostituto*, 183.

when he read of a city built on water with impressive architecture and advanced feats of engineering. The map of the city gives the reader visual information along with a few descriptions of important details.

The map is oriented to the south probably for aesthetic purposes as it seems to be framed better on the page this way. At the top there are flaming mountains which would indicate volcanic activity. The lake is separated into two sections with *Lago Dolce*, or “Sweet [Water] Lake,” at the top, and *Lago Salso*, or “Salt Lake,” the larger of the two at the bottom where the main city is presented. There are several causeways leading in and out of the city, which are marked by towers reminiscent of the fortified gates one would find in European cities. One of these on the left side of the map indicates it is the way to Vera Cruz and the North Sea. This too is reminiscent for European gates or roads that indicate the destination city of the road. It is interesting that there is no mention on the map of Cortes’ entry into the city. There are five named islands in the *Lago Dolce*, and a sixth, identified as *Messicalcingo*, that forms the border between the two lakes.

The city of Tenochtitlan is located in the larger *Lago Salso*. While Ramusio uses the name Temistitan when writing of the city it is identified as “Mexico” on the map. The city of Mexico is not laid out in the rational, well-organized manner as Cusco, but this would in no way imply a lesser degree of urban planning. If anything, its design would have been considered an engineering wonder on the same level with Venice. The city emanates from a center piazza that has as its focal point the temple. Mundy’s work has shown that not only the Venetians, but also others in Europe considered this to be

the “New World Venice.” One of the great engineering accomplishments of the city can be identified at the bottom of the map where above the dikes or gates in the water is written “*Arggeri [per] conserver le casé dalle onde del lago,*” or “dams/dikes to save the houses from the waves of the lake.” Another likeness to the city of Venice one could easily detect are the gondoliers that appear in much of the lake around the city.

The map by Gastaldi, or likely to be of Gastaldi, was based on the Nuremberg map of 1524 credited to Hernán Cortés. The map was reprinted in Venice in the same year, and then reinterpreted by Benedetto Bordone in 1528.²¹⁵ Much of the features of the city itself are similar, but the map in Ramusio’s work differs in the portrayal of the *Lago Dolce* at the top of the map. Bordone’s map may have had an even greater influence as some of the wording on the map is similar. The oddity of the Ramusio map is the inclusion of the lake at the top. It makes one wonder if the original map of Cortés that included a sketch of the Gulf of Mexico was misinterpreted, with the thinking being that it represented the other lake.

Some cartographic historians have been primarily interested in the “propaganda factor” on maps of the era of the discoveries. Their primary interest is in pointing out what has been included or left out in order to discover some underlying agenda for which a map was produced. For some maps this is appropriate, but in this case, and in the case of many Renaissance maps, the motivation was not so devious with the intention being to present what the author thought his audience would have found of interest. The city maps included in Volume III do not appear to promote any motive of

exploitation or empire. The map of Mexico City does not even have indication of its conquest by Cortes. The plan of Hochelaga depicts New World and Old World individuals on an equal standing. If there is any kind of propaganda factor on the maps it is in the positive promotion of these Native American civilizations, and particularly with the fascination of Mexico City.

3.1.2 Gastaldi's "*Universale della Parte del Mondo Nuovamente Ritrovata*"

The world map, or universal as it is called, produced by Gastaldi for Volume III is a fine centerpiece for the discussion of the New World. It would have made for a nice visual introduction for the volume, but it is presented in the 1606 publication after the material on the French explorations. According to Parks, this map appeared at the end of Volume III in the previous two publications, but there was extra information added to the 1606 version.²¹⁶ This is a shame as it takes away from the prominence of the work. It is called a *universale* by Ramusio, and it shows the "New World," or western hemisphere. The title given the work is, or "Universal of the Part of the World Newly Rediscovered." It was produced by Gastaldi, and it is stated by Ramusio that it was produced for the volume in which it appears, as previously mentioned in the quote from the introduction. While the map focuses on the New World, there are fringe references of the west coast of Africa and the Malaccan Islands. These not only give geographical reference, but also give the location of the New World in relationship to the other aspects of the spice trade and to the subjects of the other two volumes.

²¹⁵ Barbara Mundy, "Mapping the Aztec Capital: The 1524 Nuremberg Map of Tenochtitlan, Its Sources and Meanings," *Imago Mundi* 50 (1998): 32.

²¹⁶ Parks, "Contents and Sources," 36.

The continents of North America and South America are the central features, and in particular the claims of the Spanish that are identified as *La Nuova Spagna* and *El Peru*. At no time does one find the word ‘America’ used on any of the maps, or in the writings of Ramusio. To the north and south are the oversized *Circolo Artico* and *Circolo Antortico*, and both seem to merge into *terrae incognitae*. The Atlantic and Pacific oceans are labeled *Mare Oceano* or Ocean-Sea. Mexico divides the *Mar del Nort*, or North Sea, and the *Mar del Sur*, or South Sea. On the *Levante*, or eastern edge of the world map one can see only the westernmost parts of Africa and Europe. The west African coast is identified as Cape Verde, and the islands just off the coast can be seen. To the north the Strait of Gibraltar is labeled. The Portuguese part of the Iberian Peninsula is visible, and is labeled *Spagna*. To the north of Iberia is Ireland, which appears to be in too large proportion. Off the coast of Ireland are the isles of Man and Brasil. On the *Ponente*, or western side of the map, some of islands of the East Indies are seen, but there is nothing seen of the mainland of Asia. The islands of note that appear are *Giapam*, *Maluche*, and *S. Bartolameo*. One might find if of interest that Japan is located so near to the fringe of the *terrae incognitae*, suggesting that there could be a quick route to this location, and then on to China and the rest of Southeast Asia.

The decoration of the “Ocean-Sea” contains a restrained amount of imagery. There are four depictions of sea-creatures, or fierce-looking fish. Only the one off the east coast of *El Peru* is shown in full. There are three engravings of ships, one in the Atlantic and two in the Pacific. These are placed randomly on the map with no certain

identification of nationality or route. On the Volume I maps discussed it was obvious that the ships were Portuguese due to the obvious track of their journeys, for example around Africa, or the fact that the destination was written next to the ship. There is no type of cartouche as it would be unnecessary in a work to be published in such a manner. The style is not overly decorative. This is consistent with the Renaissance artistic ideal of restraint, and with much of the other charts by Gastaldi.

The majority of information is seen in the representations of *La Nova Spagna* and *El Peru*. At the southern tip of *El Peru* the Strait of Magellan is shown separating the mainland of the continent from Antarctica. The Andes are depicted along the west coast of *El Peru* leading to the city of Cusco. The *Rio Della Plata* is located on the southeastern side, and the mouth is given a very wide berth into the sea. Very little else is labeled on the eastern side. *Brasil* is as an appendage on the far eastern side of the continent. The mouth of the *Rio Maragnon* is located to the north of *Brasil* and “snakes” its way through the middle of the continent to the Andes. When compared to the map of Brazil there is little agreement of the coastline between it and the universal. This is not surprising since this kind of inconsistency tends to be the rule within the work. Inconsistency can be seen on just the universal itself as the word “strait” when referring to the Straits of Gibraltar and Magellan are spelled respectively “streto” and “stretto.”

The west coast of *El Peru* is given the name *Chili*, and there are cities other than Cusco identified, such as *Trugillo* and *S. Michiel* which is just south of the equator. Potosí, the location of the great silver mines, is not included on the map, nor is there

indication of any kind of commercial activity on the map. This could be due to the fact that the map may have been made well-before the publication date, and possibly before information regarding the silver mines was readily available. There is an unnamed river at the north of the continent which empties into the *Mar del Nort*, which bears a resemblance to the way in which the Nile is shown on the maps in Volume I that include Egypt. One of the noticeable features of the two continents is the mountainous terrain. Of the two-thirds of the continent that is depicted nearly all is shown to have hills or mountains. It can be assumed, of course, that Gastaldi was working solely on speculation concerning the terrain of the interior.

One area that is devoid of speculative terrain is the northwestern territories of the North American continent. Unlike other maps one might view there is no speculation of a large body of water connecting the two oceans. Nothing suggests a sea, such as the Sea of Verrazzanno, there is no land on which imaginary rivers might wind their way to the western coast – it is simply left blank. Considering the fact that Ramusio and his associates were well aware of the theories concerning the “New World,” and were keenly concerned with them, it is hard to imagine that differing possibilities of a Northwest Passage were not discussed. It is possible that by leaving the area completely blank a suggestion was made for further exploration.

There are no place-names labeled between the northeastern lands of the French and the Spanish settlements to the south. On the French lands of the northeast are located the *Terra del Laborador*, *Terra De Bacalaos*, and an island named *Orbelande*. It is interesting to compare this area to the map of *La Nuova Francia* which, according

to the *Discorso* and supported by Parks, accompanied the literature sent from Paris about New France.²¹⁷ The map of New France shows it to the south of Laborador, but instead of being called *Terra de Bacalaos*, or “Land of the Cod,” it is called *Terra de Nurumbega*. The only reference to Bacalaos on the New France map is on a small island in a group of islands just off the coast, which do appear on Gastaldi’s world map. The world map does follow the form of the regional map fairly closely. There is a bay and island in the same position, and coastlines are somewhat similar.

The east coast is rather nondescript with occasional rivers and bays that might appear to be the location of such places as the Chesapeake, but are more likely coincidental as no names are given. The coast slants to the southwest where *La Florida* is labeled, however, there is only the slightest peninsula. To the east of *La Florida* is *La Bermuda*, and to the south is Cuba, which is only half the size of the nearby *Spagnola*. These islands were of interest to Ramusio as he wrote of them in Volume I. He was interested in the fact that they had been used as a launching pad for explorations along the coasts and the interior of the New World. This is similar to what he suggested be done in New France, which as indicated on the map was next to a large amount of uncharted territory.

The Spanish lands of *Nova Spagna* offer some of the most interesting information. Mexico is similar to other maps of the mid-fifteenth century. The shape is very recognizable, and the Yucatan is attached to the mainland. The southernmost part of Mexico/Central America is labeled Nicaragua. Mexico City, simply labeled as

²¹⁷ Parks, “Contents and Sources. 36”

Mexico, is prominently located in the east central part of the peninsula. A building, probably a temple, in a large lake, marks the location. The outline of the city closely resembles the city map of Mexico City that is included in Ramusio's work. There is a river just to the north of the city which is the only river shown from Florida to the south that could be the Rio Grande. The Gulf of California is to the west. California is part of the mainland, but the Baja either is cut off, or is greatly widened at the tip. The gulf is depicted in an inverted-Nile image, with the river flowing down from the north. A few missions are located in California, but the land soon gives way to blank *terra incognita*.

This world map was not intended for any practical use. It was intended to be a conceptual piece, possibly patterned after Ptolemy, to give the reader a visual image of the lands of the new world. Its most useful purpose is to give the reader the latitudinal, and location reference in relationship to the rest of the world. It is an interesting mixture of the latest geographic knowledge of the day, but also of some missing known and theoretical items. While he correctly differs from some contemporaries in showing California and the Yucatan as mainland, there are others who give a better portrayal of the areas. It is more valuable to look at the work as a whole, and look for details of emphasis, not particular geographic features.

The two aspects of Ramusio previously mentioned are visible once again in his work on the New World. There is more of the aspect of interested scholar in much of what it presented, as opposed to the commercially minded citizen. He still exhibits interest in colonization, and what the future implications might be for these discoveries, but his fascination seems to be more evident in his work in Volume III. As previously

discussed, Venice was in a state of great economic uncertainty in the first half of the sixteenth century, and the New World held many possibilities. Ramusio's writings on the Portuguese activities in Africa and Asia show his great interest from a geographic and historical standpoint, and his greatest satisfaction seems to be in the acquisition and advancement of knowledge. This is certainly also true of his work in Volume III on the New World, but in discussing the New World there appears to be more fascination with the story itself. This fascination led Ramusio to present the people and civilizations of the New World in a somewhat favorable light. He did approve of colonization of the New World, and encouraged the continued settlement of the land and conversion of the natives, but he was not trying to build a case against a barbaric native populace for the purpose of proving them unworthy of their lands, as later authors would try to do. His arguments for colonization were typically proposed with an air of benevolence.

3.1.3 A Comparison of Ramusio Map of 1534 and the Universal Map of Gastaldi included in Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi

An interesting comparison can be made between Gastaldi's universal in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* and the Ramusio map of 1534. Gastaldi produced several maps that could warrant comparison here, but since the subject here is the works of Ramusio, it seems appropriate to take this course instead. The Ramusio Map of 1534 was produced to accompany a publication of Ramusio's *Summario de la Generale Historia de l'Indie Occidentali*...which was his publication that included selections from the works of Peter Martyr, Oviedo, and an anonymous historian of the conquest of Peru.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ J. B. Harley, *Maps and the Columbian Encounter* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, 1990), 89.

The map was printed two months after the publication of the book, which was published in October 1534, in Venice. Buisseret and Holzheimer have provided much useful information regarding the Ramusio map. According to Buisseret and Holzheimer the, “three surviving copies of the map show evidence of having been folded to fit the book, though no copies of the work have been found with the map bound into it.”²¹⁹ This fact makes the two maps worthy of comparison, as they both had the same purpose of accompanying information provided by Ramusio.

The subject matter of the 1534 map is the same as the map by Gastaldi in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, and both maps are called “*universale*.” The 1534 map has a modestly decorated cartouche with the legend, translated in Buisseret and Holzheimer, reading “The universal map of the mainland and islands of the West Indies, that is of the New World, made to explain the books of the Indies, drawn from two navigational charts made in Seville by the pilots of His Majesty the Emperor By grace and privilege of the most illustrious Signoria of Venice, for twenty years.”²²⁰ This is different from the universal included in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* which has no cartouche, nor need for one, as it was included within the publication. More information is provided regarding the map within the *Summario* itself, and again with the assistance of the cited work is translated, “...To explain these books, a universal map of the land of all the West Indies has been made, together with particular maps derived from two Spanish navigational charts.” The next line offers much insight into the purpose of Ramusio’s

²¹⁹ Arthur Holzheimer and David Buisseret, *The “Ramusio” Map of 1534* (Chicago: Newberry Library, 1992), 1, 6.

²²⁰ Holzheimer and Buisseret, 1.

work when he writes, “With these charts, the reader can inform himself of all this New World place by place, as if he himself had been there.”²²¹ The information regarding the map for the *Summario* is similar to the way in which Ramusio introduced his maps in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, but the final line given above applies to all of Ramusio’s work.

While the subject matter of the two maps is similar, the style differs quite a bit. That is not surprising since there were two separate authors, but these were two men who worked together, and it is reasonable to assume Ramusio had input into the map made for *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. The fact that Ramusio would have been keenly interested in the outcome of the map is plain by the fact he had produced his own version of it. The style used by Ramusio is reminiscent of portolan charts, though the map itself is not one. Rhumb-lines are used, for no other reason than design one should assume, and names of ports are written at right angles to the coastline, though unlike portolan charts there are very few ports labeled. Gastaldi’s universal is a planisphere with a circular, globe-like projection as opposed to the flat, chart-like projection used by Ramusio. Neither map is overly decorative. Buisseret and Holzheimer note that the Ramusio map “has often been praised for its elegant simplicity”²²² and the same is true of the Gastaldi map. The Gastaldi map does not include the rhumb lines used by Ramusio, but does have a longitude/latitude grid. The lines of the grid on the Gastaldi map are more delicate than the ones of the Ramusio map and are less intrusive to the viewing. There is also a difference in the use of hasher-like etchings on the Gastaldi

²²¹ Holzheimer and Buisseret, 6.

map indicating the waves of the sea whereas the Ramusio map is free of these markings. Neither map is cluttered with sea-creatures that often times distract the viewer from the map itself, although there are a few on Gastaldi's map and one on Ramusio's map.

The decorative features of the maps in general is useful for informational purposes, rather than simply for aesthetic purposes, and this is the case with the maps in question here. There are ships on both that appear to be a combination of carracks, cogs, and even galleys on the Ramusio map. The major difference seen here is that on the Ramusio map the ships indicate their destinations. On the far southeast corner of the map there is a ship that is labeled as going to the Malaccan Islands, or "*Alle Moluche*," there are two ships, one in the mid-Atlantic and the other nearing Bermuda, indicating they are going "*Alle Indie*," and another is off the uncharted, west coast of South America indicated it is going "*Al Peru*." There is another ship on the Ramusio map indicating showing the way to the Strait of Magellan, indicated at the bottom of the map, and one more approaching the Isthmus of Panama. Buisseret and Holzheimer note that this "must be one of the earliest uses of ships on a map not for merely decorative purposes, but to indicate emergent trade-routes."²²³ There are three ships on the Gastaldi map, none of which has labels like the Ramusio map. There is one ship sailing toward South America with no definite port-of-call, one is just below the *Circolo di Capricorno* wandering the Ocean-Sea, and the third headed straight for the *Isole Delle Maluche*. Two of the three ships on the Gastaldi map definitely suggest trade routes, though not specifically labeling them as such. It is a little surprising Gastaldi does not use this

²²² Holzheimer and Buisseret, 7.

technique as he does on the three tables of Volume I depicting the Portuguese trade routes around Africa and into Asia.

A comparison of the geographic information presented in the two maps provides some surprising results. The earlier map of Ramusio seems in some ways superior to the Gastaldi map, published more than twenty years later. The right side of each map includes the western edges of Europe and Africa. Ramusio's depiction of both seems more satisfactory as it has a more detailed delineation, of the African coast, a more complete Iberian Peninsula, and complete inclusion of the British Isles. Gastaldi gives little detail of these places, although he does include more of the eastern Atlantic islands. Gastaldi's Ireland appears to be completely out of proportion, and it seems as though little effort was made to produce an accurate representation. A negative point of Ramusio, though, is his portrayal of Scotland as a separate island, apparently believing the Firth of Fourth to be a channel. The two maps do agree on the latitudinal location of these places as, for example, one can find the Strait of Gibraltar at just above 35 degrees on both. The two do not agree on the name of the Atlantic Ocean. The Ramusio map refers to it as the "*Oceano Occidental over Mar Del Nort*," or the "Western Ocean or the Sea of the North," whereas Gastaldi uses the Columbus label of "*Mare Oceano*," or "Ocean Sea."

The title of the Gastaldi map tells the reader that his is the map of that part of the world newly rediscovered, and on the Ramusio map the same message is conveyed in bolder terms where in large, bold print the name "*MONDO NVOVO*" is stamped in

²²³ Holzheimer and Buisseret, 16.

the middle of South America. The large print would seem to indicate that this describes North and South America, as there are other identifiers for the two in similar, smaller print. Ramusio uses a curious method to indicate that the two continents are both part of the West Indies with a title running along the coasts from extreme south to north of “*Terra Ferma De Le Indie Occidentali*.” The major titles of the two continents on the Gastaldi map are “*La Nuova Spagna*,” and “*El Peru*.” Ramusio, too, uses these labels, but they appear much less prominently. The title of “*Nuova Spagna*,” can be found on the left edge of the map, and “*Castigli Nuova over Peru*,” is found in the middle of South America. There is a modest amount of agreement regarding place-names and geographic features of the mainland of the two continents. The Rio Maragnon though not consistently described is in the same location, Panama, Mexico City, Florida, and Terra De Bacalaos are all in similar locations. Gastaldi’s map includes more place-names, some due to increased knowledge of the western coast of South America, some due to speculation, such as with the inclusion of Cibola and Quivira. According to Burden the “*Universale* is the first map of America to show names from the travels of Francisco Vasques de Coronado, 1540-42,” and that “Quivera appears for the first time” as do the Sierra Nevadas.²²⁴

The representation of the Caribbean in the Ramusio map is definitely superior to that of Gastaldi’s. Regarding the Greater Antilles, the general locations of the islands do agree, but the accuracy of the islands on Ramusio’s map is surprisingly better than Gastaldi’s. The Ramusio map portrays Cuba in a very recognizable form with its

²²⁴ Burden, *The Mapping of North America*, 30.

narrowing, elongated western appendage, while on Gastaldi's map Cuba is devoid of its very characteristic shape. Just below Cuba Jamaica appears on each map, but again is more identifiable on the Ramusio map. The most striking error of note on the Gastaldi map is how the island of Hispaniola is nearly twice the size of Cuba. The Florida Peninsula has a realistic appearance just to the north of Cuba on Ramusio, and again Gastaldi's disappoints in comparison. The coastline of the Gulf of Mexico is similar between the two with little identified on either. The Yucatan appears on Ramusio's map, however it is an island, a common mistake, and while Gastaldi correctly portrays the Yucatan as a peninsula he does not give its name.

Mexico City is prominent on both maps. Gastaldi labels it as Mexico, and portrays it in the lake. Ramusio also portrays the city in the lake, but gives it the name "*Temistitan*," the name that is also used in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, and is a variation of the name Tenochtitlan. Ramusio may have "fudged" the location a bit in order to include the city on his map, but it would have to make an appearance on any map of his authorship when one learns of his great fascination for the city. Another city of interest that appears on the Ramusio map is that of Tumbez. Harley writes that the detail of the city shows a European flag flying over the city to commemorate the landing by Francisco Pizarro in 1527, however the city was in ruins by 1531 due to disease and civil war.²²⁵ Not surprisingly, the city is not included on the Gastaldi map – essentially being erased from history.

²²⁵ Harley, 87.

The Ramusio map was influenced by important maps of its time, and, in turn, influenced other contemporary maps. In the publication statement from the *Sommario* it was noted that information for the maps within the work was taken from a map belonging to Peter Martyr that was made by “master chartmaker Nino Garzia de Loreno” and that another map was “similarly made by an imperial pilot in Seville.”²²⁶ A portion of a map included in Peter Martyr’s *Angli Mediolanensis Opera*, Seville, 1511, is reprinted in Harley’s *Maps and the Columbian Encounter*.²²⁷ The map itself is given the title “Map of the Caribbean,” and when this area is compared to the Ramusio map there are noticeable similarities. Cuba, Jamaica, and Hispanola, are easily recognized on the two maps, and while there are differences of detail in the two maps there is not mistaking the islands. When Gastaldi’s map is included in the comparison the description of these Greater Antilles’ islands changes substantially, and for the worse. With his map we do not see changes in coastal details, but complete changes in shape, length, and size. It makes one wonder what access Gastaldi may have had to the Ramusio Map, or if he was less concerned with such details in favor of presenting a conceptual image of the new hemisphere as a whole.

The Ramusio map was also influenced by the work of a *cosmografo mayor* of Spain, Diogo Ribeiro. Ribeiro worked in the *Casa de Contratacion* and has five manuscript world-maps attributed to him from 1525 to 1532.²²⁸ According to Buisseret and Holzheimer they all generally resemble the “Ramusio” map, but are

²²⁶ Holzheimer and Buisseret, 6.

²²⁷ Harley, 74.

²²⁸ Holzheimer and Buisseret, 15.

identical to it. They also note that on the east coast of North America sites marked on the “Ramusio” map are much the same as the places in capital letters on Ribeiro’s map.²²⁹ Harley writes there is a link between Ribeiro and Ramusio noting similarities between the maps.²³⁰

The use of these sources made Ramusio an important disseminator of information regarding the holdings of Spain in the New World, and would make his work influential on others. Buisseret and Holzheimer note that, “This map, then summarized the progress of Spanish cartography at its most creative period...” and that “Some of its stylistic characteristics were taken up by subsequent printed maps. For instance, the map of the “Nuevo Mundo” accompanying the *Grandezas de Espana* by Pedro de Medina, published at Seville in 1549, closely follows the pattern of rhumb-lines found for the first time on the “Ramusio” map.”²³¹ It is also noted that a much later map by Diego Gutierrez, 1562, was in some ways inferior to the Ramusio map in presenting the coastal outline.²³² Later maps by Battista Agnese show characteristics similar to those of Ramusio. Henry Wagner mentions that Agnese was influenced by the 1529 planisphere of Ribeiro,²³³ but it could be possible that Ramusio was the second-hand source used by Angese. This becomes even more likely when an examination of geographic information, place-names, and stylistic tools is done. According to Wagner

²²⁹ Holzheimer and Buisseret, 15-16.

²³⁰ Harley 87.

²³¹ Holzheimer and Buisseret, 16.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Henry R. Wagner, *The Manuscript Atlases of Battista Agnese* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 9.

Agnese's work began about 1535,²³⁴ which places it just after the publication of Ramusio's *Summario* and his map. The similarities are in some of the New World cartography, for example in the definitive portrayal of the Yucatan as an island, but the best clue may be in Agnese's portrayal of the British Islands.²³⁵ Agnese must have used the same source as Ramusio as Scotland is mapped as a separate island from England, and because there is much similarity in the outline of the coasts in the two maps. Some of the place-names used in the New World on Agnese maps coincide more with Ramusio than with Ribeiro. Agnese uses "Terra" as opposed to "Tiera" on names like "Terra De Bacaloas," so he did not simply copy the Ribeiro map. Agnese uses a stylistic tool similar to the Ramusio map that is not on the Ribeiro map. He uses a grouping of dots in a particular area to indicate the location of dangerous shoals off the east coast of North America.²³⁶ The most striking coincidence between the two, and again not appearing on the Ribeiro map, is the almost identical way the two present the city of Tenochtitlan, or Temistitan. Agnese maps show the city prominently in an oval-shaped lake in Mexico. There is no doubt that on these maps that the city is intended to be highlighted. It is clear from Ramusio's works in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* he held a special fascination for the city, and as noted by Barbara Mundy the city was greatly admired by the Venetians²³⁷ and there had been as early as 1524, a map named

²³⁴ Wagner, 49.

²³⁵ Battista Agnese, maps of "Atlantic Ocean," c. 1543 and "Pacific Ocean" located *Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana*, Florence, Italy. Published in Pierluigi Portinaro and Franco Knirsch, *The Cartography of North America: 1500-1800* (New York: Facts on File, 1987), 71-72.

²³⁶ Harley, 87.

²³⁷ Mundy, 25.

Temixtitan printed in Venice.²³⁸ There may be no direct connection between Ramusio's map and Agnese's work, but there are too many similarities to dismiss the idea. It is odd that a better case can be made for Ramusio's influence on Agnese than for Gastaldi's planisphere that appeared in his own publication.

One point of agreement between the works of Ramusio and Gastaldi is the large amount of the "unknown" presented. Ramusio was certainly an advocate of increased efforts of exploration, and the vast amounts of *terra incognita* on the two maps were promoting this cause. Ramusio favored increased colonization of territory in the New World, even if for just bases of exploration for new sea routes. Harley supports this point when he writes regarding the Ramusio Map, "Like the *Summario* itself, the map gives an exclusive European view of New World geography. The land beyond the coast is "incognito" and it is an empty land. There is no trace of the Indian civilizations already living there. Such maps became a blank charter for further European colonial adventures."²³⁹ The Ramusio Map shows much uncertainty about the North American continent. There is the suggestion it may connect to Europe near the pole, and there is nothing to indicate where the western side of the continent extended. Even the west coast of South America is "*incognito*" in 1534. The "blank space" on the map of Gastaldi included in Volume III of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* is found to the north and west. This, then, may be the whole key to map included in Ramusio's work. The details were less important than the "whole picture," and the key focus of the picture was the remaining areas to be explored at the initiative of "some Christian prince."

²³⁸ Philip D. Burden, *The Mapping of North America*, 9.

3.2 Images of the New World

The images found in Volume III display the fascination Ramusio held for the New World and the inhabitants of it. This could also be indicative of the general view held by his associates as well. While we are often left with the impression that Europeans considered the Native Americans somewhat barbarous and even held them in contempt, one does not find this to be the case with what is presented in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. The images of individuals, architectural achievements, including those displayed on some of the maps show that Ramusio considered the inhabitants of the New World to be of a worthy, possibly even advanced civilization. A close analysis of the imagery can only lead to the conclusion that Ramusio thought the New World was a place that had wondrous civilizations that rivaled his contemporary European world, or that more likely were similar in nature to the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome.

The imagery is presented through woodcuts of an individual theme and through the use of chorography on maps. Most of the images to be discussed are subjects relating to Spanish holdings in the New World. These are the civilizations Ramusio appears to hold in greatest admiration, and it is no wonder why this would be the case. Who would not be fascinated by the wonders of ancient Mexico City, Temistitan to Ramusio, and the Incan city of Cusco, or Cushco as it is labeled in Volume III? Unlike New France, where Ramusio gives extensive personal commentary, there is no single treatise to compare for New Spain. The materials and imagery on New Spain are also

²³⁹ Harley, 89.

scattered throughout the very large portion of Volume III devoted to the subject, unlike the materials on New France where the information is grouped neatly together. There are so many images related to New Spain that a few representative works will be discussed.

There is an important point to be made regarding the method of production. Some might guard against being overly interpretive regarding Ramusio's impressions due to the fact that he himself did not produce the woodcuts. As Woodward pointed out the different processes taking place to produce such publications could be done independently.²⁴⁰ Ramusio could have commissioned an artist, given him the general idea of the subject, and then only seen the final product as it was ready for printing. It is always appropriate to be skeptical in such matters, but to be overly cautious is unwarranted. It would be just as unlikely that Ramusio had nothing to do with the production of the woodcuts, as it would to suggest he had no role in the mapping since it is certain Gastaldi was the chief cartographer. Ramusio had a keen interest in mapping, as previously shown, and it would be foolish to think he had no editorial input into the maps published in his work. The same could be assumed for the images, though maybe to lesser degree. Certainly, he wanted input into the production of the artist for his publication. We know that Ramusio was a close associate of Gastaldi and other intellectuals and scholars, and that he discussed the discoveries with these individuals. It is possible that he could have had the same relationship with the artist. The maps and images when compared to the accompanying texts show a very close relationship. This

²⁴⁰ Woodward, *Panizzi Lectures*, 22.

would seem to imply that Ramusio provided the written information to the artists and cartographers, and therefore must have had some kind of direct contact. Ramusio would not have allowed these images to be included in his work, one about which he was obviously passionate, had they not represented his personal viewpoint.

It is important to point out that the relation to reality is not what is important to this study. The concept of the New World as held by Ramusio and companions are what are central to the study, not the accuracy of the works, and coupled with that the purpose of the inclusion of such works. A comparison of the works to the actual objects portrayed will serve as a useful frame of reference. It is also interesting to look at some possible influences on the production of the work, for which Turner's article on the illustrations in Oviedo is of great assistance, and the meaning of illustrations in relation to the text as explored by Victoria Dickenson.

Victoria Dickenson addresses the approach to this type of study in her book, *Drawn from Life*, which deals with many subjects that relate to the work of early naturalists in the "New World," and the role images played in their work. Two important ideas that Dickenson's work stresses are the need to put the images in their proper context, and the need to study the relationship between the text and the image in these works. Dickenson points out that too often words and images are not used appropriately in scholarly works. At times images have been/are used simply as decoration, discounted as being irrelevant, or used totally out of context.²⁴¹ In almost all cases, it can be rightly argued that words have been given precedence over images in

academia. What Dickenson's work encourages one to do is to reassess the dual role of word and image in the interpretation of the "New World" as seen by people of the "Old World."

People of this age are often too quick to laugh at the preposterous images seen on maps of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The modern viewer considers her/himself to be superior to people of earlier ages due to the accumulation of knowledge, but this is an unwarranted opinion. The viewers of earlier ages may have been more aware of what images meant than people today. Michael Baxandall writes about the concept of the "period eye," and points out that the artists of the Renaissance considered themselves to be communicating to an active participant in the form of the viewer.²⁴² If the images of naturalists or cartographers are to be considered works of art, as well as scientific illustrations, then there might be more of an implied message than first appears. It is necessary to try to view the discovery images with a "period eye," since they can give insight into the existing body of knowledge at the time of the discoveries, and the way in which they were perceived.

Dickenson makes much of the concept that images became understood to be icons, or symbols of a particular place or idea, and it did not matter to the printer or the reader if the image was true to life. As is quoted in Dickenson's book, "Once their essence was known, there was little need to study them further or to draw them more

²⁴¹ Victoria Dickenson, *Drawn from Life: Science and Art in the Portrayal of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 7-8.

²⁴² Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 29-31.

accurately,” as long as they “called up the required associations.”²⁴³ The intention of the “New World” images drawn from life was to communicate the idea, or message, in a way that was understandable to the audience for which it is intended. If it was not exact, it was acceptable because the idea, concept, message was more important than the exact representation. If the image is the language, then it must be put in the “visual language” of the viewer in order to be understood. This would certainly be true of the images in Ramusio that certainly get across the message that these individuals were of a highly civilized, yet at the same time more primitive nature.

An excellent example of art versus “scientific” illustration can be seen in an examination of the images made for Gonzalo d’Oviedo’s history of the West Indies. Oviedo’s drawings give one the impression that they were intended as simple scientific illustrations. Turner writes on this subject as he compares the images produced by Oviedo with the ones that appear in the *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* of Giovanni Battista Ramusio. He mentions that the images in Ramusio lose all sense of scientific representation. It is primarily a work of art that happens to portray a native practice.²⁴⁴ Oviedo, however, wished he had had an artist to make more realistic renderings of what he found.²⁴⁵ He certainly saw the value of integrating text and image, but would Oviedo have approved of the finished product in Ramusio’s compilation? The inaccurate depictions in Ramusio bring up another important point, and that is the direct relationship of the text to the image. What is the result when image is supposed to relate

²⁴³ Dickenson, 46.

²⁴⁴ Daymond Turner, “Forgotten Treasure from the Indies: The Illustrations of Drawings of Fernández de Oviedo,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 48 (1985): 6.

²⁴⁵ Dickenson, 47.

directly to the text, but is not a true representation? Should the image be dismissed as pure folly? Or should it be understood as a means of communication which conveyed the message intended. Ramusio's purpose was to communicate an idea or message as much as representation. Yes, he would have preferred exactness, but that was not necessarily possible. In Ramusio's own writings, we have seen his use of imaginative devices, so he could not have been too opposed to artistic license in order to achieve the greater purpose of sending the message that the New World was populated by a civilized race of people.

Dickenson points out that some artists had little more than the written description to go by when producing their art. The famous depiction of a buffalo produced from the description by Cabeza de Vaca is certainly one humorous example of this. Dickenson mentions the rhinoceros created by Dürer from a textual description that became the accepted image of the animal. She implies that Dürer did an admirable job in capturing the likeness of the rhinoceros.²⁴⁶ While he may not have gotten it exactly right, he did convey the *message* of a rhinoceros. Examples of the creation of images from text can be seen in Ramusio's work. Two examples, one from the translation of Oviedo and one from the description of Tenochtitlan, show the artist trying to interpret the text, and create an image that communicates the message visually. The first is the image of a native using a fire drill. The image created by Ramusio's Italian engraver/artist was probably working from the textual description and the simple illustration in the work of Oviedo. Oviedo's image portrays only the arms of the native

²⁴⁶ Dickenson, 59-60.

and the fire drill itself. The version in Ramusio creates an entire scene. The man is standing in front of a tree in a generic natural setting. The classical pose and setting reveal the artist's attempt to put the primitive man, with whom he is unfamiliar, into a paradigm with which the artist is familiar. In order to present the man in a standing, classical pose, the artist has had to disregard the measurements given in the text. Oviedo refers to the wood stick being "*due palmi*," or "two palms" in length, and as thick as "the minor finger of the hand."²⁴⁷ The artist has made the stick long enough to reach the man's midsection, and at least as thick as the man's thumb. These are trivial errors, though, when compared to the bearded, bulging classical figure that is in no way a realistic presentation of a native of the Americas. The artist, though, has given the viewer an accurate idea of how fire was made.

It is quite apparent when Ramusio finds something to be extraordinary or of particular significance. This is the case with Oviedo's description of how the natives made fire, which Ramusio gives the heading "*Modo di acceder il fuoco*," or "The way of starting a fire." There is a woodcut presented with the text to help describe the process to the reader in *Sommario dell'Indie Occidentali del S. Gonzalo D'Oviedo*, and repeated in *Della Historia Dell'Indie, Lib. VI*. The text of Oviedo gives a detailed account of how the natives were able to make fire. He describes the type of wood, the size of sticks used, and the technique employed by the natives. He also notes that after rubbing the sticks together the fire is ignited in a short period of time. It can be assumed that the artist had the textual description, and an image provided by Oviedo. It is also

²⁴⁷ Ramusio, 3: 66.

likely that Ramusio would have given strict instructions to the artist as to how the image should be portrayed. The image provided in the text of Oviedo is a simple one. It is not to be considered a work of art, but an illustration of the concept. The image in Ramusio, as stated by Turner, loses all sense of scientific representation. It is primarily a work of art that happens to portray a native practice.²⁴⁸ With a basic knowledge of the native people in America, one actually finds the picture to be quite humorous.

The image portrays well the message of the text. The man is correctly shown making a fire drill. He is rubbing a long stick between his hands making enough friction to cause the heat to create a fire. The artist, presumably Italian, would have had the textual description of this manner of starting a fire, and he would have had the simple illustration from Oviedo's original. Oviedo's image portrays only the arms of the native and the fire drill itself. The version in Ramusio creates an entire scene. The man starting the fire is a Herculean native who is nude except for a conk shell-shaped codpiece. The man is standing in front of a tree in a generic natural setting. The classical pose and setting reveal the artist's attempt to contextualize the primitive man with whom he is unfamiliar into a paradigm with which he is familiar. In order to present the man in a standing, classical pose, the artist has had to disregard the measurements given in the text. Oviedo refers to the wood stick being "*due palmi*," or "two palms" in length, and as thick as "the minor finger of the hand."²⁴⁹ The artist has made the stick long enough to reach the man's midsection, and at least as thick as the man's thumb. These are trivial

²⁴⁸ Daymond Turner, 6.

²⁴⁹ Ramusio, 3: 66.

errors, though, when compared to the bearded, bulging classical figure that in no way is a realistic presentation of a native of the Americas.

The woodcut of the native man making fire displays a dual significance of the imagery in Ramusio. It shows not only what Europeans were learning about the “New World,” but also the way they tried to interpret it. It is interesting to note that the native is given a “noble” persona. This interpretation gives one the impression that the artist, or Ramusio, did not see the native as an uncivilized ‘other,’ but a primitive of his own Greco-Roman ancestry. Were this not the case, the artist would have likely portrayed the native as an African, or some other race that Renaissance men would have perceived to be inferior.

The same argument can be made for the image of the woman with the massive plantain leaf, presented in *Sommario dell’Indie Occidentali del S. Gonzalo D’Oviedo*. This image is, undoubtedly drawn by someone with no first-hand knowledge of the subject. Again, the Italian engraver has apparently used an image from Oviedo and embellished upon it. In this case, the only image in Oviedo is the plantain leaf itself. The plant is said by Oviedo and Ramusio to produce leaves described as “*le foglie larghe, & lunghe diece, & dodeci palmi,*” or “large leaves, and ten to twelve palms long.”²⁵⁰ The native female must have come from the imagination of the engraver, or from another scene in Oviedo. Whatever the case, there does not seem to be any resemblance of the image to a Native American. Again, it appears the artist relied on what was known and produced an image of a primitive of the Greco-Roman world. The

²⁵⁰ Ramusio, 3: 56.

woman, who is described as “buxom” by Turner appears to be an ancient Greek, or quite possibly representative of the mythical Amazonian tribe.²⁵¹ The woman is almost nude with bands around her arms and ankles that appear to be tattoos, something referred to by Ramusio in his own description of Native Americans in one of his own discourses. The enormous plantain leaf that she is carrying over her shoulder shades the classically drawn female figure. Next to her is another leaf as tall as she is, and apparently not suspended by anything. There is one interesting note that the text refers to the base of the leaf as being “*diventano grossi nel tronco, come uno grosso ginocchio d’un’uomo*”, or “becomes large at the trunk, like a huge human knee.”²⁵² When one looks at the base of the leaf image it does resemble a large human knee.

The same observations can be made of the image of a native standing and paddling his canoe in the Volume III inclusion of Oviedo’s *Della Historia dell’Indie, Lib VI*.²⁵³ Again, a classic figure represents the native. The shape of the canoe seems very odd to the unknowing viewer, but according to Turner even to this day such bathtub-shaped dugouts are found in the Panamanian jungle.²⁵⁴ Maybe this figure would remind Venetians of their founding by Romans fleeing the onslaught of the “barbarians”, as he is paddling his boat standing in the fashion of a Venetian gondolier.

None of the figures has stereotypical traits that are associated with negative qualities as were used by artists of the Renaissance. It is obvious when a Renaissance artist wished to portray a certain person, or group of people, in a negative way. Had the

²⁵¹ Turner, 6.

²⁵² Ramusio, 3: 57.

²⁵³ Ramusio, 3: 102.

²⁵⁴ Turner, 6.

artist and/or Ramusio wanted to present a pagan, savage being then the images of the natives would have been portrayed as ugly, crude, and vile. None of these qualities are evident in the natives. They appear to be noble and handsome, two traits that characterize “goodness” in Renaissance art.

The artist who produced the image of the temple of Temistitan must have been working from a textual or verbal description of one of the temple. The basic ziggurat form of the temple is somewhat correct, but the two towers atop betray the artist’s unfamiliarity with the subject. It is generally assumed, as stated by Parks, that this image came to Ramusio with the information he received from the Spanish. Parks writes “Ramusio included a map of the city of Mexico and a drawing of a temple: both were pronounced ‘pure caprice’ by Icazbalceta. [Joaqui’n Garci’a Icazbalceta translated the anonymous text *Relatione di Alcune cose della Nuova Spagna* in 1858.] Yet they must have come to Ramusio from Spain with the manuscript of the description.”²⁵⁵ It has similar features, though, to the images of the natives that were embellished by the Italian engravers. It could be that this is an Italian “improvement” on what was received, in the same way the images of the natives previously mentioned were based on simpler sketches.

The image is alongside the textual description of Temistitan in the *Relatione di Alcune Cose Della Nuova [sic] Spagna, & della gran citta’ di Temestitan Messico, Fatta per uno gentil’homo del Signor Fernando Cortese*, in which there is a detailed description of the temple. The text never refers to the edifice as a temple or pyramid.

²⁵⁵ Parks, 30.

The whole structure is called a *torre*, or tower, with a *piazzetta* where there are “another two towers in the middle that are the height of ten or twelve men, and at the top of them there are windows.”²⁵⁶ After reading this description it does not seem strange that the artist would produce such an image. In fact, the artist has done a good job of staying true to the written description. The way the image is such a close reproduction of the written Italian might give some indication that the work was done by an Italian engraver.

Even with its faults, this is quite an interesting woodcut. It is a challenge to try to imagine how the artist is trying to make his creation fit the description given him, and to try to postulate as to what preconceived ideas influenced the final production. The towers atop do have some similarity to bell towers in Europe, even those of the Veneto, but seem to be generic. The fact that the towers resemble European towers emphasizes the point that the artist, or artists, viewed these new people as a very legitimate. Barbarians or savages never could have produced such towers, but primitive people of a highly sophisticated civilization would have had the ability to do so. This image, when compared with the images of the natives, expresses a common idea. It is reasonable to assume that the image of the temple was produced in the workshop that produced the images of the natives.

The artist has evidently tried to keep the proportion true to the description. This is seen in the careful translation of the scale and size from the text to the reproduction.

²⁵⁶ Ramusio, 3: 257, “*altre due torri di dentro che vanno in alto dieci, o dodeci stature d’huomo, & nella cima vi sono le sue finestre*”.

The text describes the towers on top as being “the height of ten or twelve men.”²⁵⁷ If the arched doorways of the towers are considered just taller than the height of an average man then the towers are very close to ten or twelve men in height. The text describes the length to be just longer than the width, about 150 *passi*, or steps, by 115 to 120 *passi*. Again the artist is true to the stated proportions. Each level is said to be the height of two men. The steps or stairs are said to go around the temple, and are given the description of being 120 to 130 *gradi*, or degrees. This massive building would have been recognized as an imposing, landmark structure in the New World, possibly reminiscent of the Egyptian pyramids.

Another image of note is the ear of corn, or maize, that appears in Volume III in Oviedo’s *Della Historia*, and in Volume I in the account of Juan Barros. The two images are identical, and the size seems to emphasize the importance of the subject. The maize is shown attached to the top of a stalk. The grains of the ear are clearly visible and framed by the foliage. The image is quite realistic, and it is reasonable to assume the artist had an actual ear of corn from which to work, and would not have had to rely on a textual description. The text supports this as Ramusio states in a marginal note in the Barros account that maize was already well known in Italy at that time, and that maize was by then nourishment to half of the world.²⁵⁸ The same note mentions that the color of the maize known in Italy is “*bianco & rosso*.”²⁵⁹ It is also evident from reading

²⁵⁷ Ibid., “*in alto dieci, o dodeci stature d’huomo.*”

²⁵⁸ Ramusio, 1: 385, “*La mirabile e famosa semenza detta maiz nell’indie occidentali, dell’aquale si nutisce la meta’ del Mondo, I Portoghesi la chiama’ miglio zaburro, dl qual n’e’ venuto gia in Italia...*”

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

the text of Oviedo where he describes the grains of corn as similar to *ceci*, or chickpeas, and this is not the impression one gets from the picture.²⁶⁰

The Oviedo account of maize in the West Indies is found in Ramusio's translation of *Della Naturale, et Generale Historia dell'Indie, Dove si Tratta Del'Agricoltura. Libro Settimo*. It is in this section that the image of the maize is shown for the second time. There are no marginal notes given in this account to explain the significance of maize. This could be that it was not deemed necessary after being included in the earlier volume, or it may have been assumed that maize needed no further explanation at the later date of this publication. In it Oviedo describes the agricultural products of the West Indies, and goes into some amount of detail on the use made of them by the native population. Ramusio's heading for the section on maize is "Of the bread the Indians call Mahiz, & how this wheat is sown, & gathered along with other things on this subject."²⁶¹ In it he gives a detailed account of the uses of maize and casaba, or as the words are spelled in the Oviedo account 'mahiz' and 'cazabi'.

It is interesting to note Ramusio's word usage in this particular case. Ramusio does not change the spelling of 'mahiz' to 'maiz' to stay consistent with the marginal notes that he uses in the account by Barros in Volume I. He does stay consistent in the translations in that he uses a transliteration when using the terms. In the text of the Barros translation he uses *miglio zaburro*, which he explains in the margin is what the Portuguese call maize.²⁶² It is also interesting to note that the word *frumento* used by

²⁶⁰ Ramusio, 3: 109, "*il Mahiz, ... sono piene di granelli grossi, come ceci.*"

²⁶¹ Ramusio, 3: 109, "*Del pane de gl'Indiani chiamato Mahiz, & come questo frumento si semina, & raccoglie con altre cose a questo proposito.*"

²⁶² Ramusio, 1: 385.

Ramusio, which can be translated to mean wheat, becomes *frumentone*, or large wheat, in modern Italian when used to refer to kernels of maize.

The great impact made by this “New World” product in such a short period of time is made evident comparing different travel narratives in Ramusio. The section of the Barros account in which maize is mentioned is found in a description of the area of Cape Verde, and can be compared to the account of the same area by Alvise ca’ da Mosto. In the Barros account the land is described as “fat” and “very fertile” producing all kinds of products, and that the principal food of the populace is “*migli di mazzocca*,” or as Barros called it “Zaburro,” which Ramusio states is what the Portuguese called maize.²⁶³ Ramusio makes a cross-reference to the account of Ca` da Mosto to whom credit is given for discovering Cape Verde. The description of the agricultural products there less than a century earlier quite obviously makes no mention of maize. It is interesting to note how quickly a product can go from being totally unknown in a certain part of the world to being “well known,” and becoming the staple food product of a group of people.

One of the values of Ramusio’s work is the ease of comparison of the different texts. This is facilitated due to the translation into a single language, and the cross-references that Ramusio provides to assist the reader’s investigation.

Images obviously played an important role in Ramusio’s work. He knew the importance of the image in conveying greater understanding. Ramusio’s work here is an excellent example of text and image working together. While they were not always

accurate they were a complement to the text, they were not simply to be taken as decoration. The imperfection of the images is more useful in the interpretation of the thoughts and opinions of the individuals involved in the work. Had photography been available there would have been less interpretation by the individual involved. Through the use of classical figures to portray Native Americans and the recreation of classical architecture there may be indication of a level of respect given to the inhabitants of the New World.

3.3 New World Discourses

3.3.1 Ramusio on “La Nuova Francia”

La Nuova Francia, or New France, was a subject of much interest to Ramusio. He gave much personal attention to the subject and his interests were wide-ranging. He was interested in the land itself, including all aspects of physical and cultural geography, and in how *La Nuova Francia* fit into the larger issues of exploration, colonization, and trade. The purpose of the discussion here is to analyze Ramusio’s presentation and description of New France, and to see what inference he made regarding the role of New France in the future colonial and imperial expansion of European interests. A lot is revealed about Ramusio both in regard to his views on the New World and on his own work. Ramusio was thorough in his own research and analysis of the place, and used a variety of means in presenting his results. He tried to make the subject known to the reader as best he could by giving written, graphic, and pictorial description. It reinforces the sentiment expressed, and previously mentioned in

²⁶³ Ibid., “*La terra in se e’ grassa e molto fertile nel produr di tute le cose...Et per crear li migli*”

the *Summario* of 1534, where the reader could “inform himself of all this New World place by place, as if he himself had been there.”²⁶⁴

Ramusio also attempted to make the New World less alien by trying to show a relationship between the New World and the old where possible. Whether it was similar climate, flora and fauna, or the way people lived, the reader would find less of a bizarre or fantastic nature in Ramusio’s work than they might in other works of a more medieval influence. Ramusio’s support for settlement of this new land may have influenced the way in which he portrayed it. While some may have portrayed the inhabitants as barbaric in order to indicate their “unworthiness” to have ownership a particular land, one would not want to portray the land itself as inhospitable when trying to encourage colonization. Ramusio took the latter approach in trying to entice movement to the new world. The fascination and seeming delight Ramusio took in describing the land with its abundance of natural harbors, streams full of fish, lands full of game and all sorts of natural resources, would have given the reader the impression that this would be a hospitable land for settlers. It is not surprising, then, that his information on New France would later be used by the English to try to encourage their colonial efforts, as will be seen. Ramusio did not necessarily portray the inhabitants as barbaric, and definitely not the savages of other publications, which, again would serve to encourage potential colonists.

What role Ramusio saw for Venice in the effort is unclear, but as stated in

di mazzocca che noi chiamiamo Zaburro, che e' il commun cibo di quelli popoli.”

²⁶⁴G. B. Ramusio, *Summario de la Generale Historia de l'Indie Occidentali...*(Venice, 1534), in Buisseret and Holzheimer, 6.

previous discussion there is certainly indication that he favored a role for the *Serenissima*. Considering the personal stake he had in overseas investment he must have been pushing for Venice to become involved. The view of Ramusio, though, was always with double vision. The colonization he called for would no doubt lead to commercial success, as was the case with Spain and Portugal, but Ramusio's interest in exploration was inspired as much by the desire for increased knowledge of the world, and the desire to take his place among the ancient scholars. If commercial success was to come to Venice, and thereby for himself, then so much the better.

The transition from the general history of the spice trade to a study of New France shows how Ramusio would focus on a particular place, and how he attempted to do a deep study of all its aspects. It allows Ramusio to show its importance in the overall context of his work, but it also allows him to elaborate on some minor details and points of interest. An example of this can be seen in his discourse on New France where he takes up much space to discuss the native sea animals and fish, and how they relate to the marine life of the Mediterranean. The fact that the information on New France is more concise than other places discussed in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* also makes the study more approachable. The section on New France acts as a separate part from the rest of Volume III, with fewer translated accounts than other parts so it is also easier to grasp Ramusio's overall intent regarding the place. While it is fewer in the number of pages, it is highly insightful in the interpretation of the thoughts and opinions of Ramusio.

This discussion of New France can be seen as an elaboration of a particular part

of Ramusio's history of the spice trade. New France was closely linked to the subject of the spice trade in that it was an area of great interest in the search for a northwest passage. As mentioned in the discussion of the world maps, there was a lot of *terra incognita* surrounding the known lands of New France that suggested a need for extended exploration. The map of New France contained in Volume III is void of conjecture, as will be discussed, allowing for any possibility for the unexplored territory. This related to the search for new spice-trade routes in that there was a desire to know if New France would serve as a final destination, or simply a stop-off on the way to Asia.

Another important benefit of looking at Ramusio's discovery of New France is that it is possible to gain insight into the way a specific area of the New World was perceived or interpreted by someone of that time period. It should be reiterated that it is not Ramusio's accuracy of reporting that is in question here, but rather what he perceived to be reality. Ramusio can be viewed in one sense as a historian, but he is also a witness to things regarding the discoveries. While there are many voices included in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* describing New France, many of which can be found in alternative sources, it is Ramusio's voice that is of interest here.

The analysis of Ramusio's information on New France will bear out the three areas of emphasis: commentary, cartography, and imagery. Some specific matters of interest that will be analyzed include Ramusio's general description, how Ramusio tried to relate the old and new worlds, Ramusio's own impressions and thoughts regarding the New World, and the influence of Ramusio's presentation on contemporaries. While

the material referenced will come primarily from the section in Volume III devoted to New France, the subject is briefly mentioned in other places throughout *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi*, and so it will be necessary to pull information from other parts of the overall work. It is intended to stay within the framework given above, but there is some unavoidable overlapping of the subjects, but with subjects such as cartography and commentary it will be interesting to see how the two are interrelated.

Ramusio used a variety of sources in his portrayal of La Nuova Francia. One type of source is, of course, the first-hand accounts by explorers translated and edited by Ramusio. Other sources include maps and images, with the images at time independent works while other times included on the maps. The maps are important for both the cartographic and chorographic information, so they are able to communicate a variety of messages. Writings by Ramusio himself are also included in order to present his own ideas and opinions, and to highlight what he finds most interesting from the other authors.

The voyages regarding New France included in Volume III are by Giovanni da Verrazzano, an unnamed French captain, and two entries by Jacques Cartier. There are brief descriptions of the voyages made by Sebastian Cabot and Gaspar Cortereal to the area in Ramusio's own discourse, but there are not separate entries regarding these voyages. This information is grouped together near the end of Volume III, and in the index this part is given the title of "Della Nuova Francia."²⁶⁵ Ramusio adds his commentary in his "Discorso Sopra La Terra Ferma dell'Indie Occidentali, Dette del

²⁶⁵ Ramusio, "Table of Contents," *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 3: 3.

Lauorador, de los Bacchalaos, & della nuoua Francia,” or more simply “Discorso Sopra La Nvova Francia,” which is placed at the beginning of the section devoted to New France. He also offers commentary in the introductory discourse to Volume III. While most of the information regarding the New World is in Volume III Ramusio does make references to new discoveries in Volume I, particularly in his “Discorso Sopra li Viaggi Delle Spetierie,” which includes the history of the sixteenth-century spice trade. Some of what Ramusio writes acts simply as an introduction to the translated entries, but he was not just presenting the work of others. He did have his own message to convey, as would be expected of someone who had such a strong interest in the subject, and for someone who had spent the countless hours laboring over his work. Ramusio had definite opinions regarding New France, as well as other places in the New World, and came to his own conclusions and inferences regarding its place in the world.

The two sides of Ramusio come through quite clearly through the presentation of Ramusio’s work on the subject. While being extremely interested in the commercial and political matters concerning New France, he also shows his more academic interest in the place itself, including the natural geography of New France. A good example of this will be seen in his discussion of marine life in New France. Ramusio reveals his personal research on this subject as he frequently refers to two French authors considered experts in the field, Pierre Bellon and Guillame Rondelet, and includes images of the marine life described in the text.

There are two very important maps related to New France included in Volume III. Both are considered the works of Gastaldi and include the plan of “La Terra de

Hochelaga nella Nova Francia” and the other of “La Nuova Francia.”²⁶⁶ The map of Hochelaga is considered the first published plan of a village or settlement in North America²⁶⁷ and the map of “*La Nuova Francia*” is quite famous as being one of the first to give a detailed depiction of the place.²⁶⁸ It was not the first time he dealt with the subject though as he previously had printed a map including it in his map of the east coast of North America which appeared in a 1548 of Ptolemy, entitled *Tierra Nveva*. According to Philip Burden, this map was “the first produced of the east coast, and “relates the discoveries of the first of Jacques Cartier’s voyages to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and those of Giovanni di Verrazzano.”²⁶⁹ These maps follow precisely the description given in the *Seconda Relazione di Iacques Carthier*. The imagery related to New France is found mostly on these maps, and warrant some attention.

One of the most frequent labels used to describe Ramusio is that of geographer. This is certainly accurate, and if his work is studied with a few key terms of geography in mind, it helps the work make more sense. For example, it is helpful to make the distinction between the concepts of “location” and “place.” The two terms are used interchangeably in everyday language, but each has a particular meaning in geographic terminology. Location has two applicable concepts: absolute location and relative location. Absolute location refers to the precise spot on a map where a town, country, or geographic feature may be. Relative location refers to that same location in reference to

²⁶⁶ Robert Karrow, Jr., *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century and Their Maps* (Chicago: Speculum Orbis Press, 1993), 229.

²⁶⁷ Seymour Schwartz and Ralph Ehrenberg, *The Mapping of America* (Edison, NJ: Wellfleet Press, 2001), 64.

²⁶⁸ Burden, 30.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

something else. Place refers to the qualities that make that location unique, including such things as climate, physical features, and culture. Understanding these concepts is very helpful in comprehending what Ramusio is trying to communicate. In trying to make the new lands known to the reader, he must put it in a context that could be understood, so much of the writing regarding location is in relative terms to Europe. The exact locations are also important, and Ramusio includes the maps in order to insure the reader knows precisely where events are taking place. The concept of place permeates the entire work, as well as the work here, as it involves the overall description of the New World and in this case particular, La Nuova Francia.

Ramusio is precise in his description of the location of Nuova Francia. It is significant that in his “Discorso Sopra La Nuova Francia” he goes to great lengths to give latitudinal measurement of each of the places visited by the above-mentioned explorers even though it may just seem tedious to the modern reader. In so doing, he provides the European reader with both absolute and relative location. The measurements give the reader an idea of where the explorers were, and the reader can use the accompanying maps to pinpoint the described lands. Two maps that relate to this subject are Gastaldi’s “Vniversale della parte del Mondo nrovamente ritrovata” and the map of “La Nvova Francia.”

The two maps are indispensable companions to Ramusio’s text. It would not be hard to imagine Ramusio himself referring to his maps as he wrote of the following voyages. Ramusio places Cortereal’s 1500 voyage from 60° latitude, where there was

“*grandissimi* cold,” and down the coast 200 leagues to 56°. ²⁷⁰ *Terra del Laborador* and *Terra de Bacalaos* are labeled on the world map and it is easy to trace the voyage made from the western edge of Iberia, barely visible on the map, across the Ocean Sea (*Mare Oceano*) to the northeast coast of the New World. Ramusio states the purpose of the Cortereal voyage, the first known of such an attempt, was to find a “strait of sea” where a shortcut could be found to the spice islands making it unnecessary to travel around Africa. ²⁷¹ The prize, the spice islands, can be found on the eastern edge of the map where the *Isole delle Maluche* are labeled. Rather than speculate on the possible location of such a passage there is simply blank space on the *universale* indicating terra incognita.

Once the general region and locations are located on the world map one can turn to the map of *La Nuova Francia* for more detailed and illustrative information. Here the description changes from the geography of location to the geography of place. The map of *Nuova Francia* is oriented to the north, and is bordered there by *Terre de Laborador*. The map is full of descriptive imagery that will be discussed later. There are several waterways leading out of La Nuova Francia into “*Parte Incognita*,” again without speculation as to a possible passage. The commentary regarding the voyages of Verrazzano and Sebastian Cabot is similar to that of Cortereale, but less detailed in the discourse possibly because there is not an entry in Volume III from the Cortereale expedition.

²⁷⁰ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra La Nuova Francia,” 3: 437.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, “& il primo (per quell che si sà) fù Gasparo Corte reale Portoghese, che dell 1500. v’andò con due Carauelle, pensando di trouar qualche stretto di mare, donde per viaggio più breue, che non é l’andare attorno l’Africa, potesse passare all’Isole delle specierie.”

The possibility to inhabit, and perhaps to colonize, the New World is a primary concern of Ramusio's and an issue he wishes to impress upon the reader. It is addressed in the very first line of the "Discorso Sopra Nuova Francia" where Ramusio introduces the subject territory as being "in the part of the New World, that encounters the Northerlies and Northwesterlies, that is equivalent to our inhabitable part of Europe."²⁷² There appears to be some assurance to a reader here in including the word "*habitabile*" rather than just stating it was equal latitude to Europe. Just a few lines later he mentions that Cortereale came across extreme cold and a river full of ice, but the general description of the climate is favorable, and as the reader follows the narrative, it is indicated that the climate becomes milder the farther south one goes. Sebastian Cabot also ran into extreme cold, according to Ramusio, and was forced to retreat south. Ramusio writes that Cabot had explored the entire coast all the way to 67°, but for "the cold was forced to turn back."²⁷³ The reader can refer to the world map and note that Cabot was getting very close to the Arctic Circle when he encountered the extreme cold. The reader could then understand that once north of 60° latitude, the climate became less pleasant much the same as if one were to travel into northern Europe. It is also the beginning of the terra incognita on both maps.

It is interesting that, according to Ramusio, Cabot was familiar with the travels of the cod fishermen from Brittany and Normandy.²⁷⁴ The island of *Bacalaos* on the

²⁷² Ibid, "*Nella parte del Mondo nuouo, che corre verso Tramontana, & Maestro, all'incontro del nostro habitabile dell'Europa...*"

²⁷³ Ramusio, 3: 437-8, "*il freddo fu forzato á tornare a dietro.*" In somewhat of a contradiction Ramusio wrote in the prefatory discourse that Cabot had to turn back due to a "malicious" uprising of the crew," "*se la malignità del padrone & de' marinari solleuati.*"

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

map of Nuova Francia and of Terra de Bacalaos on the world map are stated in the text to be at 48° and one half. This would indicate to the reader that this location is not only fit to be inhabited, but also it is also a location for potential economic activity, or at the least, a good source of protein for those who might settle there. This could be a hint to the possibility to colonize the location, a concept that Ramusio deals with later on in his discourse. He also refers to Cabot as “our Venetian,” or as he wrote “il Signor Sebastian Gabotto nostro Venetiano.”²⁷⁵ There is the hint here also of potential Venetian involvement. Why else would Cabot, was not a resident of Venice, be called “our Venetian”? True, his father was a Venetian, but Sebastian did not really have close ties to the city.

The ability to locate precisely and systematically places on the globe must have given a scholar like Ramusio immense satisfaction. His interest in geographic matters began well before the publication of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* in the 1550s. His own universal of the New World was published in 1534. It must be remembered that Ptolemy’s Geography had been “rediscovered” barely a century before that, and its first printing just fifty years prior to the publication of Ramusio’s map. Ramusio would not have seen latitude and longitude lines as mere tracings on the paper, but that the usage of these lines was one of the great distinguishers between medieval and modern mapping. Ramusio must have relished the opportunity to make real use of the tools provided by the revered Ptolemy, and even more so to be able to make use of these same tools to locate a land unknown the Ptolemy himself. It is reminiscent of the

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

discourse from Volume I where Ramusio refers to the Middle Ages as a time where culture and learning had come to an end, and that a dark night had fallen over Europe.²⁷⁶ The knowledge provided by Ptolemy was part of the return of the “light” that overcame this “dark” that, ironically, was the triumph of the empirical, secular method of study over long-standing, accepted geographic knowledge based on religious myth.

Ramusio delighted in the enormous progress during his lifetime in the science of geography. Not only did Ramusio appreciate and learn from the reading of Ptolemy, he was able to add to and amend the work of the ancient scholar based on new information. Ramusio gives an example of how modern knowledge had surpassed that of Ptolemy in the case of Africa and India in a discourse entitled “All’Eccellentiss. M. Hieronimo Fracastoro” included in Volume I. He writes of the many errors in the geographic tables of Ptolemy regarding these two areas in respect to the “great knowledge that one has of these regions today.”²⁷⁷ Updated maps are provided for the reader with “*grandissima satisfattione*” due to their reliable information based upon the first-hand accounts of the Portuguese complete with place names, measurements, names of peoples of which not even the ancient scholars had written.²⁷⁸

The quote previously mentioned by Lane applies here where he wrote, “in the 1960’s men were proud of the conquests in space through rocketry, so Ramusio took delight in the enormous progress during his life time in the science of geography. He thanked God that he had been born in an age that was not only imitating the ancients but

²⁷⁶ Ramusio, “Delle Spetiere,” 1: 371.

²⁷⁶ Ramusio, 1: 372.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., “*gran cognitione che si ha hoggi di quelle regioni*”

²⁷⁸ Ramusio, “All’Eccellentiss. M. Hieronimo Fracastoro,” 1.

surpassing them in the acquisition of knowledge.”²⁷⁹ The spirit of the statement by Lane is certainly true, but, as shown, Ramusio emphasized that the explorations discussed took place in that part of the New World, or *Mondo nuouo*, that corresponds to the latitude of “our *habitabile dell’* Europe.” The fact that Ramusio was Venetian, and Venice had had contact with distant places, made him more open to accept a “new world” on somewhat equal terms. Ramusio shows in his writings the ease with which he could incorporate newly discovered lands into the framework of his global concept. It is not like the moon or some far-off planet that might not be a hospitable host to human inhabitation.

The narrative in “Discoro Sopra la Nuova Francia” reads like a travel guide. Ramusio traces the routes of the explorers and describes the places they pass by as if he was on the boat making notes along the way. The map of Nuova Francia is a handy companion to the reading that helps with the description of physical and cultural geography. The map and the discourse seem to have been based on the same source material, since so many of the place-names and descriptive scenes coincide with the narrative of Ramusio. The cartographic information for the Gastaldi map is said to have come mainly from information in the Verrazzano account,²⁸⁰ but it must have relied on the Cartier account, as well, if not only for the chorographic information. There is an interesting story relayed in the Second Relation of Cartier that describes natives dressing up as devils in an apparent attempt to dissuade Cartier and his men from

²⁷⁹ Lane, 282

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

visiting the settlement of Hochelaga.²⁸¹ On the map *La Nuova Francia* there are three devilish looking creatures on an island. Just above these demons are a ship and boats that fit the description of the Cartier expedition to Hochelaga. The name Hochelaga does not appear on the map, but the ship and boats are headed toward the mouth of a river that leads to the *terra incognita* and the location of Hochelaga. This would indicate the possibility of more than one source being used to produce the map.

The map of Hochelaga, previously mentioned, plays an important role in Ramusio's account of New France. The map is intended to accompany the accounts of Cartier's travels and it works in harmony with the textual description, and also fits well in the general discussion. It appears that the artist shows the different stages of the mentioned journey as a still life.

The text in "*Seconda Relazione*" gives a description of Cartier's men traveling to the city by way of a principal "paved street" and described the countryside as being as beautiful as any ever seen, full of oak trees, and acorns. Having walked "four and a half thousand paces", they encounter one of the principal *Signori* of the city, along with several of his companions. They were invited to rest themselves by a fire built along the main street.²⁸² This description is easily identified on the lower periphery of the map. It cannot be stated for certain, but there does seem to be a path that might be the paved road that is mentioned. The journey continues as they traveled further another mile and came upon the workers in the fields, a beautiful and grand land, full of grain, "which is

²⁸¹ Jacques Cartier, "Seconda Relazione," in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 3: 380, "il qual formento e' tale qual e' il miglio di Bresil e cosi grosso, e piu di quell che son I piselli: del qual miglio vivono si come viviamo noi del formento..."

similar to the grain of Brazil and is as big, more than the grain they grow peas: on which they [rely] as much as we do on wheat.”²⁸³ This description is well depicted on the left side of the map where there are fields of grain, although the workers are absent, as well as the inclusion of a few animals along the way. These scenes are of great interest, but they are the periphery scenes. The main subject is the settlement of Hochelaga itself.

The text continues with the entry to the town itself reporting that “in the midst of this country is positioned the *terra de Hochelaga* next to a cultivated mountain, very fertile, atop which one can see very far. We call it *Monte regal*.”²⁸⁴ This early reference to Montreal is made evident with the printing of “MONTE REAL” on the left side of the map. A detailed description is given of the town in the text including its main buildings, the wall, and how it was constructed and used for defensive purposes. The activities going on in the town receive attention. There is information given regarding food products and methods of food production, which was considered bland due to the lack of salt, how fish was stored in pots after having been dried. The style of clothing and the type of animal skins used to make it are described.²⁸⁵ Some of these activities appear on the map including the way the inhabitants defended themselves by throwing rocks over the sides of the walls. There is no mention of a conflict between the Frenchmen and the natives making this simply an illustration of how they would defend themselves.

²⁸² Cartier, 3: 380, “*il qual formento e’ tale qual e’ il miglio di Bresil e cosi grosso, e piu di quell che son I piselli: del qual miglio vivono si come viviamo noi del formento...*”

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

The described encounter between the Frenchmen and the natives is visually portrayed. Most of the encounters show the French and Indians on equal standing, and they both genuflect to each other. The native population appears to be happy, well fed, and docile. Their town is neatly organized, and has a relatively sophisticated defense system. The one aspect of the depiction that shows the Indians to be more primitive than the Europeans is the fact that the women and children are portrayed nude or partially nude. The consistency with other parts of Ramusio's work can be seen as the figures are classical, not barbarous, in nature. The only indication of European dominance is off to the side where one can see two Frenchmen apparently being carried on the backs of natives.

It is interesting how an informative table is provided on the map itself to give a written description of the town. Instead of the artist trying to project his concept of the appearance of the village, the table provides a written description of the place. The layout of the village is indicated, notably in a neat and rational fashion, and we note that there is a central fireplace in each building. This is not the only time in *Delle Navigazioni* where Ramusio, or whoever was responsible for the design of the maps, used similar tables and diagrams. The diagrams of the "rock churches" of Ethiopia in Volume I are presented in similar fashion, yet the other two city plans in Volume III are presented in completely different fashion.

The lack of conjecture regarding the edifices of the village makes a striking difference between this portrayal and that of the other two city maps in Volume III.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

There are no distinguishing landmarks within the city as is the case with Cusco and Temistitan. The chart stays true to the text, as there are no imagined places appearing on the map. No towers, palaces, or other types of structures are included making this chart less given to artistic license. The diagram of the house of the king and his courtly chambers is no different from any of the other houses diagramed, there is simply a letter E that corresponds to the description “the Court of the House of the King, and his fire.” So it might be said that it is a more reliable map as it stays true to the written description, even if it is not totally accurate.

Returning to Ramusio’s discourse, the first subject about which he writes is the Cortereale voyage. The description moves south of the *Laborador* coast and the text and Gastaldi’s map work together as a verbal and visual tour of the area, complete with depictions of the activities of natives, fishermen, mariners, and sea creatures. One of the first places mentioned by Ramusio is the “*Isola grande detta delli Demonij*,” or the “large Island of Demons.” If the reader is unsure of the exact location of this island, one needs only to find the three demons portrayed frolicking on the north part of the island. These demons, though the inspiration for these images has been explained, bring up an interesting point regarding Ramusio’s work. This is one of the few instances where strange or mythical creatures make an appearance on the maps, on other images, or in any of Ramusio’s personal writings in all of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*. There are instances where things are distorted or misunderstood, or obviously produced from the imagination of an artist, but they are in almost all cases based on some kind of reality. Even if one did not read the account by Cartier, the demons seen here on the map

appear to be nothing more than the whimsical inclusion by the artist intended only to be a reference point on the map. It is significant that on this section of the map there are images of natives carrying on very normal activities, such as hunting with a bow and arrow. The demons are obviously non-human, not to be misconstrued as representative of the native inhabitants. The artist has portrayed the demons as half-human and half beast with wings and devilish heads, and that is fitting of the description found in Cartier. It is highly unlikely that the suggestion was that demons actually existed in Nuova Francia, or that Ramusio or Gastaldi intended to convey such a thought.

The “tour” includes a favorable description of the natives who are said to be well proportioned, whose clothes are made of skin and fur (with lining out during summer, in during winter) decorated with precious and semi-precious metal straps, and with bodies and faces painted for gallantry.²⁸⁶ On the map, one sees images of natives, and though it is impossible to detect much detail on them, they do appear to be well adorned, and they exhibit good posture, or even classical poses. The clothing of the images on the map looks like robes, and are freer flowing than one might expect the skins described in the writing would be. A quick glance at the map would not give one the automatic impression that these are natives being portrayed. The images could easily be mistaken for Renaissance, or possibly even Greco-Roman figures. It would be presumptive to come to any serious conclusions regarding the appearance of the natives in this portrayal due to the small size of the images. The overall picture presents normal people going about daily activities.

²⁸⁶ Ramusio, “Discorso Sopra La Nuova Francia,” 3: 438.

Fish is said to be the mainstay of their diet, and on the map are many fish and fishermen in the water, and fish being hung to dry on land. Salmon is said to be their main source of fish, having it in great abundance, but then cod receives more attention in the discourse.²⁸⁷ The land is said to be full of animals and different kinds of birds, and there are several scenes on the land of natives hunting animals and birds with bows and arrows.²⁸⁸ Of the animals depicted, one can easily detect the hare in the center of the map, near to it what appears to be a boar with an arrow stuck in it. Just above there is what could be a deer being carried by two men, and above them one of the “*massimamente Orsi tutti bianchi*,” “very large, totally white bears.”²⁸⁹ White bears may have been unusual to Europeans, but the animals on the map are all very familiar. The deer, boar, and rabbits pictured suggest abundant game for meat, and would be animals Europeans would know how to hunt if they decided to go to the land presented. There are no signs of mythical or strange creatures of any kind, except, of course, for the demons, that were still appearing in the publication of some of Ramusio’s contemporaries.

There are several scenes of fishing activities on the map. Some are using nets and some are using lines to reel in their catch that are presumably the salmon Ramusio wrote of previously, or codfish that he gives special attention to in the discourse. He relates the fantastic stories of the *Bacchalaos*, or *molve* as he says the Bretons and Normans called them, as being so numerous that in some places the ships could not pass

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

through them.²⁹⁰ The name *Bacalaos* appears on the map of *La Nuova Francia* as a small island. On the *Universale*, however, the name *Terra de Bacalaos* marks an area of the northeast mainland. Ramusio treats this cod fishery as though it is nothing new. He writes of the *Bertoni & Normandi* who every year went to catch mass quantities of the valuable codfish, but does not make a time distinction of how long they had been going to the waters of *La Nuova Francia*.²⁹¹ This could imply an activity that had been known to be taking place before and after the initial discoveries. The fishery was a location of continuing activity before and during the sixteenth century, and Ramusio writing in the mid-sixteenth century could be referring to an activity still in process. The map indicates of the Britons and Normans presence as there are locations named for them.

There is an image of a codfish included toward the end of the *Discorso*, along with a paragraph describing it with some of the information detailed above. The image of the cod is easily recognized due to the little beard that hangs just under its mouth. The artist has tried to stay as close to the written description as possible. This is evidenced by the attempt to use hash marks to give a 3-D perspective to the bulging eyes. The distinctive back of the fish has pointed dorsal fins. It has very large scales that give to the viewer a sense of the large size of the fish.

There are several images of fish on the map of *La Nuova Francia*, and one appears to be distinctively a cod. It is at the very bottom of the map, and it is a fish being pulled by fishermen into a canoe. The fish has the characteristic large scales of the cod, and with close observation, one can detect the pointy dorsal fin. Ramusio

²⁹⁰ Ramusio, 3: 349.

addresses the cod in two places in the discourse, once early on in reference to the land and the French fishermen, and then toward the end of the discourse where he discusses some specific marine creatures that are accompanied by detailed woodcut images of them. In the second discussion, he references Pierre Bellon and Guillame Rondelet, or as he names them Pietro Bellon and Guilielmo Rondelletto, two contemporaries of Ramusio who were considered experts in marine life. He describes the cod, referencing mainly Rondelet, in coordination with the image of the fish appearing at the end of the paragraph. It is described as being a cubit long (and sometimes longer), weighing a foot, with a big mouth, with teeth...and a little beard, having great big eyes bulging out in front, and because of this it cannot see very far. He writes that in France they had a proverb that when someone has pupils that bulge out, and that do not work well, they say “*tu hai gli occhi della Molva,*” or “you have cod eyes.”²⁹² Ramusio’s varied interests are shown by his inclusion of food preparations and recipes that are included in the discourse, writing that “The meat of this very good fish is more delicate fresh than salted and dried, and because the fat is somewhat glutinous.” Bellon is referenced as stating in his books that he thinks this fish is the one that is taken everyday to Germany from parts of Norway, called *stochfis*, that “when salted become so stiff (*duri*) that one needs a hammer to break them apart...”²⁹³ What makes this of even greater interest is the fact that one can find such products in European markets today, and even find some served in fine restaurants.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ramusio, 3: 349.

²⁹³ Ibid.

Ramusio had an apparently keen interest in marine life as might seem natural for someone in Venice. Even in the twenty-first century, the traveler to Venice is amazed by the variety on display at the local fish markets. As a geographer, he would also have an interest in marine life. Whatever the case Ramusio digressed in the discourse on Nuova Francia from the discussion of exploration to a discussion on new and old world marine life. The purpose is not necessarily clear, but that does not seem to matter to Ramusio. A few pages are given to information relating to “some fish” including the previously mentioned cod, and dolphins, porpoises, and sea-wolves. He relays the information in coordination with Jacques Cartier’s discussion of fish and wildlife in his *Seconda Relatione, Breve, et Succinta Narratione Della navigatione...all’isole di Canada, Hochelaga, Saguenai...*, and again references the work of Bellon and Rondelet.

The dolphin is the subject of a long discussion. He writes at length of the fascination held by the French of the dolphin, how its image is used in many official and decorative ways, and how only the wealthiest of men can serve it on their tables. There is also comparison made with what appears to be a porpoise. The first two images are then included: the one on top is entitled *Delfino in Italia, Becco d’Ocha & Marsuin in Francia*, and the one below *Marsuin in Francia*.²⁹⁴ Dolphins are intricately described as sometimes having humps, but have the same body, straight and long, without some curvature. He also describes their length as being as long as a human can extend both arms touching with one hand the head, and the other the tail, and the “*grossezza*” is so

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

big as a

human can reach around with both arms...it has soft skin, without scales, and it is all of the color of lead, with a black tint, underneath they have two fingers of fat, like pigs have: under the belly it is white, its two fins/gliders, the tail, and the top of its back are black, its tail is turned unlike other fish to enable it to motor fast...the eyes are strong but small in comparison to the rest of its body, and can with eyelids cover the black of the eyes, as do all the animals of the land, and between the eyes has a windpipe, to breath and to expel water.²⁹⁵

He writes that the ears are so small you must know where to look for them and that it has 160 teeth...a mobile tongue, like that of the pig, and sends forth some shrieks, "*qualche strido*."²⁹⁶ The difference between male and females is that in the middle of the male's paunch there is a hole where his genitalia are located from which he can extend forward eight "deta di lungezza," and the female has a hole much closer to the tail, where the dolphin is born live, and where she lactates: and the breasts resemble two small sacks, wherein retains the milk, and the dolphin suckles.²⁹⁷

The difference in the two images appears to come from the textual description of the *marsuin*, porpoise, being fatter than the dolphin. The dolphin has somewhat of an extended snout with a little ridge in the middle of its head. Its mouth is open with its teeth exposed, presenting what was revealed in the text. The *marsuin* has a much rounder shape that is particularly noticeable in the rounder head that does not have the ridge. The portly "pig of the sea," appears to be a more docile creature. It has a much smaller mouth without as many teeth shown. Its entire body is slightly plump. The hash lines on the dolphin give it a sleeker look, and while looking more menacing than the

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

marsuin, it does appear to have somewhat of a grin. These creatures might be thought to have somewhat of an anthropomorphic face. This would be consistent with the stated superstition that dolphins were/are the friend of humans, and consistent with the tendency of images produced for Ramusio to be of a caricature nature.

There is significance to the name dolphin. It is noted that the French do not call it ‘*delfino*’ but as “*un’altro barbaro Alemanno [call it] marsuino.*”²⁹⁸ These “Germans sell the dolphin cut up into pieces similar to pork, and so it is called “*merchevein, cioe’ porco di mare, & I Francesi marsuin, gl’Inglesi Porchfisch.*” and because of its long *muso* (snout), some call it *becco d’Oca*, goose-beak.”²⁹⁹ He references Bellon stating that in places where the dolphin was well known, especially to fishermen, there was no desire to eat it. It was known as a friend to humans, and had on occasion given assistance to fishermen. This attitude was consistent throughout much of the Mediterranean world. He states that where the “superstitione” existed people did not eat the dolphin, but where it did not they did eat it, but had the different names for it.³⁰⁰ It was offensive to eat a majestic dolphin, but when something is referred to as “pigfish,” or “swine of the sea” it was easier to consume.

Eating a dolphin may have been unthinkable to a fisherman, but the lure of income from one was too much to overcome. Rondelet is referenced again as stating that in Provence on the Riviera no one wanted to eat the dolphin, but in order to make a living the fishermen would take live dolphins as far as Avignon and Lyons, pouring a

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

little wine in the blowhole everyday, and sell them all in these cities.³⁰¹ Ramusio points out how highly valued the product was by referencing Bellon regarding the delicacy of dolphin. Dolphins were reportedly sold in the fish markets of Paris, but called *marsuin*. They were cut up in pieces, and they were “well aware of the goodness of the fish, for having the best meat, and for the tastiness of these choice pieces, not too fatty, but usually leaner...their cost is 50 *scudi di oro*...”³⁰²

Ramusio also includes a brief cookery lesson on the dolphin as he continues his meandering discourse. Information from Rondelet tells how the dolphins were preserved, prepared, and eaten. They were preserved/pickled in liquid, salted in brine, and after a few days eaten *lesso*, or boiled with onions, leaks, parsley, and vinegar. He says this was to keep it fresh and easier to chew. Otherwise, “you put them on a spit and roast them, as you would the meat of pork with the juice of oranges, or with a flavored vinegar with sugar, cinnamon, or cut into pieces, and put on a grill and roasted covered with anise seed, fennel bulb, and coriander.” The wealthy would make them in “*pastelli*, in which are cloves, pepper, ginger, and noci moscate (nutmeg),” but the said author prefers it eaten “roasted, and cooked with vinegar, vino, and with a lot of parsley, hyssop, and oregano.”³⁰³ The culinary review continues with Ramusio stating that the best part of the dolphin, or pork of the sea, are the tongue, the liver, which is similar to pork: but the tongue for its tenderness is preferred over the liver.³⁰⁴ Other recipes by the French are given, not surprisingly including a sauce made with “nutmeg, cloves, mace,

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

ground cinnamon, butter, sugar, vinegar, and roasted bread. Also, in the city of Roan, while some are accustomed to throw away the tail and fins, these pieces are considered by some to be a great delicacy.”³⁰⁵ One might find the mixture of spices interesting in these recipes, as they are somewhat similar to the combinations used in Indian cuisine to create different types of curries.

Ramusio ends the description of dolphins by stating he has tried to relate the information by these men as briefly as possible, but if it has seemed “long and tedious” it was for the purpose of making known about these fish what was previously lacking in “our parts of Italy.”³⁰⁶ The fact that Ramusio steps out of the setting and back into the Mediterranean world is somewhat puzzling, but not surprising. It again reminds one of a Renaissance mind that was not confined to preset constraints. This information about dolphins was apparently as new to Venetians as the information of *Nuova Francia*. If Ramusio thought it was important to for reader to know, he would include whatever he saw fit. It also fits with the style in which Ramusio wrote, that of friends having a discussion. One get the sense in this discourse on New France that a discussion had begun on the topic of overseas exploration, but through the natural course of conversation had wandered to distant topics.

The last sea creatures discussed by Ramusio are the “*Vecchio Marino* of the Mediterranean” and the “*Vecchio Marino* of the Ocean or *Lupo Marino*,[sea wolf] of the Indies.”³⁰⁷ This time there is a direct comparison to be made between an animal of

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

the Mediterranean world and the newly discovered Americas. Again, he uses Rondelet's writings. He states that there are two types, one in the Mediterranean, and one in the ocean. The different names included are in Italy *Vecchio Marino*, *Vitello di Mare* in France, and in the West Indies *Lupo Marino*.³⁰⁸ It is described as an animal that lives on land and in sea, and when on land acts like other land animals. It is said to have tough skin, and fur with black hairs, some small white hairs on its belly, and if they have ears, they are very similar to *vitello* (calves?). It has the teeth of a sharp saw, strong and white, similar to a wolf. Its eyes are said to "sparkle and have a thousand colors, they do not have ears, but in the place have small holes...its head is small in proportion to its body, it has two types of arms, or feet in the back part with five digits, like bears have, that they tuck/bend, with sharp claws." He writes that it is an animal that can be domesticated, and have been seen to be in houses, and descending and climbing stairs.³⁰⁹ The meat of the *lupo marino* is not considered a delicacy, in fact it is described as having a nauseating effect due to its "*strano odore*,"³¹⁰ but the indication is that someone did try it.

The artist's interpretations of these creatures are interesting and amusing. The first image appears to be a cross between an otter and sea lion. It is leaner, a little fierce looking, and is quite hairy. The second image looks like a seal. It is rounder and fatter as indicated in the text, and appears to be hairless. The anthropomorphic qualities of the seal are certainly evident in the friendly face. The textual description of the animal

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

becoming a domesticated pet must have influenced the artist in this case. The map of *La Nuova Francia* may have images of the *lupi marini*, or sea-wolves, at the bottom-center in the water. What appears to be a dog or wolf is swimming in the ocean along with other creatures that vaguely fit the description given in the discourse by Ramusio. It is quite possible that these images are creative misinterpretations by whoever did the artwork on Gastaldi's map.

What could possibly be the purpose of Ramusio adding information regarding dolphins and other marine life in this discourse? He did not really have to have a purpose. He found it interesting and thought his readers might as well. One of his purposes in completing his work was simply to make known what was not known. The importance of this to a study on Ramusio's view of the New World is in how easily he switched back-and-forth between the two worlds. It made the marine life of the New World seem a little less exceptional when it was placed in the context of the Mediterranean. In this way Ramusio could use a common theme for comparison and show how the creatures of the New World might be somewhat different or unique, but in some ways were very similar to ones already known. This put the New World into the context of a realistic place, and not one full of strange creatures from the pages of Mandeville. One does not get the impression that Ramusio had the mindset that the discovery of the New World was akin to the discovery of a new planet. By making an empirical study of the location and place he made the New World seem not so far off.

Prior to his discussion, of the marine life Ramusio's discourse makes brief references to two Italian explorers, Giovanni da Verrazzano Fiorentino and Sebastian

Cabot. He writes that “our Venetian,” Sebastian Cabot, had a great knowledge of the cod fishery activities, and with the financial backing of Henry VII explored the entire coast, only to turn back, as had Cortereal, due to the extreme cold. The validity of what Ramusio reports regarding Sebastian Cabot might not be completely accurate, as Lane makes reference to the questionable accounts by Sebastian Cabot, but Lane does add the fact that Sebastian had been in correspondence with Ramusio.³¹¹ It is suggested that Sebastian Cabot made overtures to the Venetian Senate to back a voyage of exploration. Ramusio’s high regard for Cabot in Volume I’s history of the spice trade has been mentioned previously, and this opinion is expressed here.

Ramusio writes that he had been in contact with Sebastian Cabot in his introductory piece to Volume III. Ramusio states that up to that point it was not known whether or not New France and Florida and New Spain consisted solely of islands or if they were a greater land mass. The question was important for the possibility to find a shorter route to the “provincia del Cataio.” He writes that this is what Sebastian Cabot was trying to discover on his voyage to the New World, but as mentioned in the later discourse, had to turn back due to the cold conditions. Ramusio claims he had been in contact with Cabot and referred to his fellow Venetian as a “man of great experience, rare in the art of navigation, and in the science of cosmography.” According to Ramusio, Cabot was convinced that the sea was open.³¹² This would have had to have been intriguing information to Ramusio, and been a driving force in his pleas for further exploration, and possibly important to his own commercial investments.

³¹¹ Lane, 280-281.

He then describes the voyage of Giovanni da Verrazzano Fiorentino, who explored the entire coast of Florida for the King of France. The brief description of the ill-fated voyage of Verrazzano provides some interesting information to the reader. Ramusio refers to the information coming from a letter sent to the king, but laments the fact that other letters about his voyages were lost in the travails of Florence. Their attempt to go inland and explore is included, as well as their encounter with the local natives. Ramusio tells the gruesome, but exciting tale, of Verrazzano's last voyage, where having made landing with some companions, they were all killed: "and in front of those who remained on the ships, were roasted and eaten – this an unfortunate ending to such intelligent, valiant gentlemen."³¹³

Ramusio's presentation of New France may be the most interesting of the entire work. It is a combination of written historical record, travel commentary by Ramusio, and it is completed by the use of the visual evidence in the form of the maps and the images. The fact that it is a short section in comparison to some of the other subjects addressed in *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, but is so full of information helps to express the essence of Ramusio's work.

3.3.2 *Ramusio on New Spain*

The discourse of Ramusio at the beginning of Volume III, "Discorso Di M Gio Battista Ramusio Sopra il Terzo volume delle Nauigationi, & Viaggi nella parte del Mondo Nuouo: All'Eccellente M. Hieronimo Fracastoro," serves as an introduction to the volume, and it can be divided into three parts. There is a part of the discourse that

³¹² Ramusio, 3: 438.

acts as a general introduction to the volume focusing on the main subject that is the New World, another part that acts as an introduction to New Spain, and another part that defends the reputation of Christopher Columbus. The discourse is not divided into these different parts by Ramusio, and the different aspects are not clearly delineated. It might be better to refer to them as different themes of the discourse that are intertwined throughout. The discourse is supposedly a conversation between Ramusio and Fracastoro; of course this is simply the literary device used by Ramusio, but was probably based on real discussions had by Ramusio and Fracastoro and their friends. It begins with a discussion of Plato's work, *Timaeus*, and the implications, both factual and philosophical, of the new findings of explorers in relation to the knowledge of the classical authors. Ramusio then discusses the material presented regarding New World, and particularly New Spain discoveries – the most important being his translations of Peter Martyr and Oviedo. He then mentions a few specific matters of interest regarding New Spain. There is scant mention of New France due to the extensive discussion it would receive in a later discourse. He then goes into a lengthy defense of Columbus refuting the false stories that were being circulated against him. The discourse ends on an editorial note regarding the maps that Ramusio had produced for the volume.

Sebastian Cabot is once again mentioned in this section, continuing Ramusio's attempt to convince Venice to get involved in the overseas ventures. Ramusio certainly would have appreciated Skelton's assessment that "Venice remained a spectator, content with the territorial wealth of the Lombardy plain and with the trade through the

³¹³ Ibid.

Levant by which, after the sea route to the Indian Ocean was opened, she still offered a rich market for luxury goods, including spices. The want of enterprise displayed by the Republic is symbolized by the two rebuffs which Sebastian Cabot suffered when, in 1522 and 1551, he offered his services to the city of his birth.”³¹⁴ Ramusio gives the information regarding Cabot and then in the next lines mentions the great riches that Columbus had brought to the Spanish crown. There is the definite implication here that had the Venetians made use of their resource in Cabot, he could have accomplished something similar for Venice. The complacency of Venice was certainly something that Ramusio had to have regretted.

There is a lot to be gained from a close study of what Ramusio wrote in this discourse as it highlights things that interested Ramusio regarding the New World. It is also enlightening to see what a historian contemporary to these events was writing. Ramusio did not just report random documents regarding the travels, rather he was presenting the information in a well-ordered, meaningful fashion.

Ramusio turns to specifically New World matters writing,

Returning now to our main intention, I say, that this part of the New World discovered in 1492 by Signor D. Christoforo Colombo of Genoa, as one sees in the *Sommario* written in those times by Peter Martyr of Milan, who is now in Spain with the Catholic King, and also another who has written, Signor Gonzalo Fernando d’ Oviedo, who is a good friend of yours, your Excellency, whose *Sommario*...one reads in this volume...that contain the discovery of Mexico and New Spain...of the acquisition of the grand province of Peru.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ Skelton, 1: v.

³¹⁵ Ramusio, “Discorso Di M Gio Battista Ramusio Sopra il Terzo volume...,” “*Ritornando adunque al primo nostro proponimento, dico, che questa parte del mondo Nuouo fu trouata nell’ anno 1492. dal Signor D. Christoforo Colombo Genouese, come si vedrà per un Sommario che scrisse in quei tempi D. Pietro Martire Milanese, che all’ hora staua in Spagna co’l Re Catholico, & anco per vn’ altro, c’ha scritto il Sig. Gonzalo Fernando d’Ouiedo, ch’è tanto amico della Eccellenza vostra, ilqual*

It is interesting that he mentions they are “Returning” to their main intention as Columbus was not a matter of previous discussion. He is possibly referring to the subject of the existence of another continent, and the implications of this new knowledge. He introduces the subject by identifying for the reader two of the main authors included in Volume III, one of whom just happens to be a friend of Fracastoro. He does not mention here, though, the fact that Ramusio had also been in contact with Oviedo. It has also been noted that Navagero had been a good friend of Peter Martyr so Ramusio had a close connection to both of these sources.

One of the more striking features of Volume III is the large number illustrations included throughout. Natives are depicted in many different activities, and there are many illustrations regarding flora and fauna of the New World. Most of these images are interspersed throughout the Oviedo accounts. As previously discussed, the ones appearing in *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi* are likely based on the Spanish sources which they accompany. Ramusio once again addresses Fracastoro stating, “there were more than 400 illustrations taken from things natural [nature]: for example, animals, birds, fishes, trees, herbs, flowers, and fruits of the said two parts of the Indies.”³¹⁶ Ramusio writes that Spanish historians of the time were spending too much time focusing on the wars taking place during the reign of Charles V, focusing on such details of the personal lives of the soldiers, all driven by greed for gold, as opposed to focusing on the truly

Sómmario...come si leggerà in [que]sto volume...che contien il discoprir di Mexico, & la nuoua Spagna...dell' acquisto della gran prouincia del Perù.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, *Nelle qualil secóndoch'egli medesimo scrisse all'Eccelléza V. quest'anni, v'erano piu di 400. figure de' ritratti delle cose naturali: come animali, uccelli, pesci, arbori, herbe, fiori & frutti delle dette due parti dell' indie: il che è stato di gránde [per]dita a'studiosi, che desiderano di legger, &*

significant events of the time, that being the discovery of the New World. More specifically, he is writing about the great new knowledge gained of the natural world.³¹⁷ He seems to be at a loss for why these historians, who had all the resources available to them in Spain, could not see that they were missing out on the most significant historical event since time immemorial. All the new species of plants and animals, and the discovery of new races of peoples, and new civilizations were of much more significance than the never-ending wars that plagued Europe.

Ramusio then turns his attention to a specific part of the New World, and here we see an excellent example of Ramusio's total fascination with the new discoveries and the fact that he was able to admire a foreign race as opposed to placing judgment on them. It is clear too that although he did support the idea of colonization of the New World he did not suggest it be done to the detriment of the native inhabitants. Another aspect of Ramusio's is his effort to familiarize the reader with New World features by comparing them to what was familiar to them in the old world. He informs the reader of the location of Mexico as being "19 degrees latitude above the equator, and 100 from the Fortunate Islands, where Ptolemy began the longitudes."³¹⁸ One would have been able to reference the map of the western hemisphere toward the back of Volume III when reading so as to have a more precise image of where Mexico is located. He refers to "Signor Gonzalo," Oviedo, to give an idea of the distance Mexico is from Europe. He

intèder particolarmente, & piu volentieri le cose sopradette dalla natura [pro]dotte in [que]lle parti, dissimili da quelle, che nascono presso di noi..."

³¹⁷ Ibid., "che di saper le guerre civili c'hanno fatte mot'anni gili Spagnuoli...alla m> Cesarea di Carlo V. Imp. Per l'immensa ingordigia dell'oro, delle quail guerre tutti gl'historici Spagnuoli di [que]sti tèmpi s'hanno affaticato..."

uses Oviedo's information regarding the observation and timing of an eclipse to report that Mexico is eight hours behind Toledo.³¹⁹ It is interesting to read this as Parks notes that Ramusio wrote to Oviedo asking him to make note of the time of an eclipse so Ramusio could compare its timing to Europe. According to Parks, the letter did not arrive in time for Oviedo to make the observation.³²⁰ Regarding the climate of Mexico Ramusio describes it as being quite pleasant. He states that in the summer the heat is not of the extreme that causes one to have to go around unclothed, possibly a reference to other unclothed natives, and that overall it is a healthy and temperate country.³²¹

Ramusio makes an even closer comparison between Mexico City and Venice itself when he writes "And in the mountains surrounding the Mexican Lagoon, very much similar to our own, glorious city of Venice, there are many agreeable places to go for pleasure."³²² In this case, he not only writes of the climate as being agreeable, but a place that is quite livable for civilized people. There is some allusion here to Ramusio and his friends who, as mentioned, spent time at the country villas surrounding Venice. The reader could refer to the map of Mexico City to get a visual image of what Ramusio is writing here. The use of the word "lagoon" is significant for the definite intention to draw a close comparison to Venice. It would not have been unlikely for Ramusio to propose that Venice and Mexico City were to become "twin cities."

³¹⁸ Ibid., "*Che'l Messico, è in 19. gradi di latitudine di sopra la linea dell' Equinottiale, & cento dall'isole Fortunate, doue Tolomeo incomincia le longitudini.*"

³¹⁹ Ibid., "*che v'è differenza d'hore otto del Sole dalla città di Messicao a quella di Toledo in Spagna, il che è stato osseruato con gli ecclissi...*"

³²⁰ Parks, 142.

³²¹ Ramusio, "*...non vi è caldo di qualità, che alcuno sia sforzato a lasciare le vesti, Che'l paese è molto sano e temperato.*"

The subject then quickly turns dour as Ramusio addresses the issue of the eradication of much of the native population due to the effects of smallpox. He mentions that the disease had never been known in the New World, which led to its terrible impact. He alludes to the fact some mariners in the fleet of Narváez may have intentionally spread the disease to the local population of Hispaniola. He reports to the reader that of the original 1,600,000 inhabitants of the island only 500 remained due to smallpox. It is also pointed out that this was not an isolated case, and that all over New Spain one would find provinces totally depopulated due to smallpox.³²³

Ramusio's writes of the manner by which the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru recorded their histories. Regarding the Mexicans he writes,

as one reads, also, in the previously mentioned history of Gonzalez...some hieroglyphic images describe their [Mexican] history, and record the memory of their king, the king of Mexico, in which there are certain figures of animals, flowers, and people doing diverse actions...as one sees in these books, that Gonzalez sent to Your Excellency and myself...full of various illustrations and oddities.³²⁴

The "hieroglyphics" were certainly something would have piqued the interest of a scholar of antiquity such as Ramusio. There is a definite sense one gets from Ramusio that the more advanced civilizations of New Spain were in some way the equivalent to

³²² Ibid., "*& ne I monti, che circondano la laguna del Messico in gran parte simile a quella, di questa nostra gloriosa città di Venetia, vi sono molti luoghi ameni per andar a peacere.*"

³²³ Ibid., "*...il male delle varuole, che mai più non era stato veduto, nè vditto in quelle parti. Et furono alcuni marinari giovani dell'armata di Panfilo Narbaiz, a I quail venne detto male, & lo comunicarono con gl'Indiani della Spanuola in guisa, che d'vn milione & seicento mila anime, ch'erano sopra detta Isola, non se ne retrouano al presente intorno à 500...& non solamente nella Spagnuola, ma è passata questa contagione talmente alla Nuoua Spagna, & anco oltra il mar del Sur nel Però, che molte prouincie sono rimaste deserte & dishatitate da Indiani per cagione di quete varuole.*"

³²⁴ Ibid., "*si leggeua anco in detta historia del Sig. Gonzalo, la forma & modo come essi con alcune imagini hieroglifice descriuono le loro historie, & notano le memorie de I loro Re del Messico, che sono certe figure d'animali, fiori, & huomini fatti in diuersi atti & modi...che'l detto Sig. Gonzalo mandò a donare à V. E. & à me...pieni di varie figure & bizzarie.*"

the ancient Greco-Roman cultures. While they had not progressed the modern level of sixteenth-century, Renaissance Europe, they were the equal of a very worthy past civilization. Again, this becomes quite clear when one looks at the maps and images of these new world civilizations as produced in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*.

He then discusses the manner of record keeping in Peru, which seemed a bit odd, and less sophisticated, but interesting nonetheless. He writes, “in order to record the memory of their king, and of the years of his reign, there are those deputies that have grand houses, take account of the things considered of importance, with some cords made of [cloth], that the Indians call Quipos, they denote the number of knots made in different ways.” He goes on to explain how the cords have different meanings relating that, “one can find them in public houses full of these cords [as] we do with our writings.”³²⁵ The obvious correlation here is that this was the equivalent of their literature, though obviously of a lesser degree of sophistication. Both of the civilizations mentioned would, in Ramusio’s estimation, have been literate, which would have placed them in a superior state to what might be considered as barbarian. He certainly is not trying to make a case for the displacement of peoples due to their lesser state.

The subject of Sebastian Cabot is peppered all throughout the *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, and he is brought up again, briefly here. There can be no doubt that the recurring theme of Sebastian Cabot in Ramusio’s work is an intentional attempt to

³²⁵ Ibid., “*Oltra di questo si trattaua come nella prouincia del Perù, per hauer memoria de’ loro Rè, & de gli anni, che hanno regnato, fanno in questo modo, che hanno case grandi con alcune persone diputate, lequali tengono il conto delle cose segnalate, con alcune corde fatte di bombagio, che gl’Indiani chiamano Quippos, dinotàdo I numeri con groppi fatti in diuersi modi, & cominciano sopra una corda da vno, fino à dieci... & se ne truano case publiche piene di dette corde... come noi facciamo c[on] le nostre lettere.*”

promote Venetian involvement in exploration. The purpose for this is based in his interest in the advancement of geographic knowledge and his personal stake in New World projects. He is very interested in the discoveries in New Spain, but he has a greater interest in the potential of New France, of which less was known. In each volume of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* the issue of the Northwest Passage is brought up and usually with reference made to Cabot. By the time of the publication, it may have been too late for Ramusio to gain from Venetian exploration, and too late for Cabot to be much involved in a venture himself. Ramusio at the time of the writing of this discourse was still much interested in what could be gained from exploration of the northeast coasts of America. He mentions that much is known about New Spain, Florida, and the islands, but there is still much to be gained from exploration to New France to see if “it is possible to go to the province of Cathay,” due to the fact that it was unclear whether “the provinces of Florida and New Spain are *terra firma* or if they are all divided into islands.”³²⁶ He once again relates how Cabot sailed trying to find the Northwest Passage, which he was sure to exist, but Cabot had to return, according to this discourse due to a mutiny. He writes, “as I have written, [in the past] already many years past, of Sebastian Cabot our Venetian, a man of great experience, and rare in the art of navigation, and in the science of cosmography, he who has sailed to this land of New France in the pay of King Henry VII of England.”³²⁷ Ramusio again uses the

³²⁶ Ibid., “*se [per] quella parte si possa andare alla prouincia del Cataio...delle quail fin’hora non siamo chiari, s’ella sia cògiunta cò la terra ferma della prouincia della Florida, & della Nuoua Spagna, ouero s’ ella sia diuisa tutta in Isole.*”

³²⁷ Ibid., “*come mi fu scritto, già molti anni sono, dal Sig. Sebastian Gabotto nostro Vinitiano, huomo di grand’ esperianza, & raro nell’arte del nauigare, & nella scienza di socmografia: il qual*

phrase of “our Venetian” referring to Cabot, maybe even becoming somewhat desperate for Venice to become involved in exploration. The next line sounds as though Ramusio has become resigned to the fact that it will not happen as he wishes, writing, “But God, perhaps, has reserved yet...this voyage of discovery to Cathay...the shortest of all the routes...to some great Prince, as also the discovery of the other part of the land near Antarctica...” a feat, Ramusio writes, that if accomplished would thrust one into immortality, but he sees little chance of this in the present situation of a Europe plagued by wars among “these wretched Christians.”³²⁸

It is rather curious that Ramusio chooses to conclude his discourse with a defense on behalf of Christopher Columbus. He is speaking to Fracastoro, but here he is obviously trying to reach a broader audience in defense of the famous mariner. There were stories circulating, one might say conspiracy theories that were intended to steal the glory from Columbus for his discovery of the New World. Ramusio was determined to refute these stories. He wrote in conclusion that he felt obligated to defend Christopher Columbus. He describes him as the “first inventor of discovery, and brought to light this half of the world, which had been for many centuries, like it was buried, and in darkness up until our times.” He writes that Columbus’ valor helped him in “the greatest achievement made for many centuries,” and of the jealousy of the Spaniards that a foreigner had done caused them to “debase the glory of Columbus

hauea nauicato disopra di questa terra della Nuoua Francia à spese già del Rè Henrico vii. d’Inghelterra...”

³²⁸ *Ibid., Ma Iddio forse riserba ancora lo scoprir di questo viaggio al Cataio, per questa via, ilqual per condur le spetie sarebbe più facile & più breue di tuti gli altri, fin ad hora trouati, a qualche gran Prencipe, come fa anco il discoprir l’altra parte della terra verso l’Antarticao...per fare il suo nome*

with a story of maliciousness and sadness.”³²⁹ Ramusio appears to attribute the false accusations against Columbus to the fact that he was not a Spaniard, and therefore his achievements were a cause for jealousy among others.

One of the “fables” made up regarding Columbus, according to Ramusio was a “truly ridiculous invention, composed and formed with much malignity in prejudice of the name of this great gentleman.”³³⁰ He relates the story that a “master of a caravel navigating over the Ocean Sea, assaulted by a strong easterly wind...made it to the West Indies: and [he] returned afterward, due to hunger, and the travails, with only two or three mariners [who were] in ill-health.” In time, all these mariners died including the “master,” who had lodged with Columbus. Since this master knew how to make maps, he showed Columbus where the land was he had discovered by chance. He explains how the Spaniards claimed credit by claiming this “master” was from Andalusia making the discoverer of the New World a Spaniard rather than Columbus.³³¹ The implication

molto più eterno & immortale a tutti I secoli future, di quello che nò faràno tanti trauagli di guerra, che di continuo si veggono nell'Europa fra I miseri christiani.”

³²⁹ Ibid., “*Nel fine adunque di questo nostro discorso...parmi anco d'essere obligato à dire alquante parole accompagnate dalla verità per difesa del Signor Christoforo Colombo, ilquale fu il primo inuentore di scoprire, & far venire in luce questa metà del mondo, stata tanti secoli, come sepolta, & in tenebre, tal che à tempi nostri...hauendo il nostro Signor Iddio eletto, & datogli valore & grandezza d'animo per far così grande impresa: laqual essendo stata la più marauigliosa & la più grande, che già infiniti secoli sia stata fatta, molti maestri, pilotti, & marinari di Spagna, parendo loro in questa cosa esser tocchi pur troppo a dentro nell' honore...essendo palese al mondo, che ad vn'huomo forestiero & Genouese, era bastato l'animo di far quello, che essi non haueuano mai saputo, nè tentato di fare, s'imaginarono per abbassar la Gloria del Signor Christoforo, vna fauola piena di malignità & di tristitia.”*

³³⁰ Ibid., “*...fauola veramente & inuentione ridicolosa, còposta & formata con tanta malignità in pregiudicio del nome di questo gran gentilhuomo...”*

³³¹ Ibid., “*Che vn padrone di Caruella nauigàdo per il mare Oceano, fu assaltato da vn vento di leuante tanto sforzeuole...lo condusse nell'Indie occidentali: & che ritornato poi indietro, per la fame, & per li trauagli...iguali dapoi che furono giunti, incontanente morirono, & che anche il padrone mal conditionato alloggiò in casa del Colombo, ilquale era suo amico, & perche egli sapeua far carte da nauicare, gli voles mostrar la terra che esso hauea scoperta per la fortuna, & per qual vento haueua*

of this story is that not only would Columbus be discredited, but also a fellow Spaniard would replace his honor, and so the credit for bringing such great wealth to Spain would go to one of its own.

Ramusio did not approve of the above story, nor a couple of others he mentions. Another story involved one named “*Biscaino*,” presumably Vizcaino, who had made voyages to England where he had learned of the route to the New World, and had passed the information on to Columbus.³³² Another legend Ramusio relates is one involving the Portuguese. This “fable” said that a Portuguese sailor had met Columbus, and upon this sailor’s death, Columbus took his writings, which told him of the way to the New World.³³³ Ramusio is using some of the strongest language in all his writings to refute these stories about Columbus. It is interesting since in a previous writing he portrayed Columbus’ as being less of an achievement as Marco Polo’s travels to the East. In this case, he seems to be most disturbed by a belief in stories that had no basis in verifiable fact. He wrote that if one wanted to “confute” such a story it was easily done since “these other stories are known to be completely without foundation, with pretense and much confusion, they do not provide any of the following, the place, the time, the name of the author, but solely wanting to illicit faith in their simple words...all prudence and right judgment would reprove of this slander...”³³⁴ After dealing with

fatto questo pareggio. Alcuni dicono che questo padrone era d’Andaluzia, & facendo il viaggio delle Canarie, nel suo ritorno arrivò all’Isola della Madera, doue all’hora si trouaua Colombo.”

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid., “...essendo assai chiaramente per se medesima conosciuta esser senza alcun fondamento, & finta con molta confusione; non esprimendo alcuno di questi, nè il luogo, nè il tempo, nè il nome dell’Autore, ma solamente volendo che si porga fede alla loro semplice parola...appresso ogni prudente & giusto giudice sarebbono riprouati per manifesti calunniatori.”

conspiracy theorists Ramusio then turns his attention to revisionists. He writes that had Columbus accomplished this feat “200 years ago, the length of time perhaps would obscure part of the truth, and many similar, fictitious stories would also be believed, but this happened in 1492...right under the eyes of this reign.”³³⁵ Ramusio silently disproved of another New World myth, as already mentioned, by never using the word “America” to describe any part of the newly discovered continents.

Ramusio then lists Columbus’ unique qualifications that made him the one most likely to achieve what he did. These included such things as he was a great mariner, well-adept at use of navigational tools, he had a great knowledge of cosmography, had sailed all the Mediterranean, the ocean around England, the Canaries, Portugal, and that he had observed the winds in these parts. It was his knowledge, experience, and skill which “induced a will in him to make this voyage, having fixed his spirit, that going directly west, one would find the part of the east, where are the Indies.”³³⁶ Ramusio refers to his inclusion of Peter Martyr as one who wrote “clear testimony” of this, relates some of the heaping praise given him by Peter Martyr, as well as the esteem of the king and the important titles the king gave him, including the noble title of Don, and of the official Spanish proclamation that “Columbus found the New World for Castile

³³⁵ Ibid., “*se il Signor Christoforo Colombo hauesse fatta questa impresa già 200. anni, la lunghezza del tempo potrebbe forse oscurar qualche parte della verità, & molte fittioni di simili fauole potrebbero essere da alcuno credute, ma egli la fece del 1492. nel conspetto & ne gli occhi di tutto quel Regno.*”

³³⁶ Ibid., “*che tutte queste cose l’induceuano à voler far questo viaggio, hauendo fisso nell’animo, che andando a dritto per pnete, esso trouerebbe le parti di leuante, oue sono l’Indie.*”

and Leon”, and alludes to the fact that [had the rulers believed such fables they would not have given him these honors.³³⁷

He suggests that Columbus deserved to be immortalized by a bronze statue, as he had previously suggested be done for Pigafetta in Vicenza, and also suggested Genoa should do something to honor the memory of its great citizen. The discourse ends with a reminder of Ramusio’s great knowledge of the classics. He mentions that Genoa, like other great cities of the time, honored the memory classic figures, poets like Homer, but not native-son Columbus who had made one of the greatest achievements of all time. Ramusio then relates a very interesting, and telling verse from Seneca’s *Medea*. The quote is included and makes for a fitting end to his discussion of Columbus. He writes that he was dumbfounded to find written, 1500 years earlier by Seneca words stating

*Venient annis
 Secula seris, quibus Oceanus
 Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens
 Pateat tellus, Typhis [que] novos
 Detegat orbis,
 Nec sit terris ultima Thyle.*

The Italian translation is given

*Tempi verranno anchora 375
 Dopò lunga dimora,
 Che'l gran padre Oceano ad alter genti
 Delle cose mundane il fren rallenti,
 Che'l gran corpo terreno
 Tutto apparisca, e si dimostri à pieno,
 Che di tifi solcando à parte à parte
 De l'onde il vasto seno,
 Nuoui luoghi discopra il senno & l'arte,
 Nè sia tile del mondo vltima parte.³³⁸*

³³⁷ Ibid.

The quote is even more telling and apropos when one starts a few lines earlier where is written

The world is opened up to travel, and has left nothing
Where it was before:
The Indian drinks the icy Araxes,
The Persians drink the Elbe and Rhine.
In later years there will be generations 375
For whom Ocean will loosen the chains
Of nature, the earth will be revealed in its immensity,
Tethys will uncover new worlds,
And earth's furthest boundary will not be Thule.³³⁹

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Seneca, *Medea*, trans. H. M. Hine (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 2000), 69.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION TO RAMUSIO

4.1 Influence of Ramusio and *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*

The importance of a work is best measured through its influence on others. Ramusio's work has been an influence on several subsequent works, and the accounts translated into Italian by Ramusio have in turn been translated into other languages through the years. Ramusio has been an important source for information regarding Marco Polo in particular. S. H. Baron writes that Ramusio's account of Marco Polo is one of the three best sources in existence, and it was the best available resource when Purchas chose to use it as his source to translate for his publication.³⁴⁰ To go through all the cases of Ramusio's accounts being retranslated would be overwhelming and tedious, and not altogether useful. Ramusio's work had an impact on Hakluyt, but of more importance is the real impact Ramusio's work had on the process of exploration and discovery. Its impact was not very significant in Venice, which might have helped Ramusio's personal commercial investments, but it was influential in England.

The connection from Ramusio to Hakluyt is indisputable. Hakluyt himself gives high regard to Ramusio for his efforts in compiling information and for his own opinions regarding the New World. Ramusio, or as Hakluyt uses the Latin version of

the name Iohn Baptista Ramusius, is listed by name in Hakluyt's index for a few entries, but also is present throughout *Principall Navigations* by the translation of some of his works. It is obvious that Hakluyt copied Ramusio's methods for his own work. The impact Ramusio's work had on Hakluyt and his associates at Oxford was significant. It probably did not initiate the ideas of these individuals regarding exploration and colonization, but it did serve as motivation and documented evidence of the potential of the New World.

Ramusio's direct influence on the English can be seen in John Florio's translation of the Cartier voyages from *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi*. The work is entitled *A Shorte and breife narration of the two Navigations and Discoveries to the Northwest partes called Newe France*, and was published in London in 1580. Florio translated these narrations from Ramusio as is stated on the title page, "First translated out of French into Italian, by that famous learned man *Gio: Bapt: Ramutius*, and now turned into English by *Iohn Florio*: Worthy the reading of all Venturers, Travellers, and Discoverers." This is just one of several occasions throughout the centuries that *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi* has been a source for making translations of accounts of voyages. A little further investigation, though, shows that Florio did not carry out this project for the simple purpose of enlightening the English about the activities of French exploration.

Florio was an accomplished linguist, even if he so humbly states he is the

³⁴⁰ S. H. Baron, "Russia and Central Asia" in *The Purchas Handbook*, ed. L. E. Pennington (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1997), 289.

“leaste able to performe” the task he had before him.³⁴¹ He was the son of Tuscan immigrants to London, and his father had made his living as an Italian teacher to the nobility of England.³⁴² In one ironic note, Florio’s father had been highly critical of the writing style of Peitro Bembo who had a great influence on Ramusio’s writing.³⁴³ The younger published two works *Firste Fruites* (1578) and *Second Fruites* (1591) which were Italian phrase books primarily for the English merchant-traveler. The first of these was dedicated to Robert Dudley, an Englishman noted for his interest in overseas ventures. Florio took a position at Magdalen College in Oxford, and was there in 1580, the year of the publication of *A Shorte and breife narration*.³⁴⁴ It is in Oxford that Florio credits his colleagues, including Dudley and Hakluyt, with convincing him to carry out the translation. He felt as though he would be like the biblical servant who hid his talent in the ground if he were not to use his abilities which “may be an occa[s]ion of no smal commoditie and benefite to this our Countrie of Englande.”³⁴⁵ This association with Dudley and Hakluyt helps explain the greater purpose of the work.

Florio makes a strong plea in the introduction for the English to colonize the New World. Florio’s is one of the first English voices calling for colonization, and he uses Ramusio as his main source or expert witness for the cause of colonization. Florio, as already noted in the title of his translation, refers to Ramusio as “that famous learned

³⁴¹ Florio, John, “Epistle Dedicatorie” in Jacques Cartier, *Navigations to Newe France*, trans. John Florio (London: 1580, reprint in *March of America Facsimile Series*, No. 10, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966).

³⁴² Francis Yates, *John Florio: The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1934), 1, 7.

³⁴³ Yates, 24.

³⁴⁴ Yates, 53.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

man,” and there is no question of Ramusio’s “fame” in scholarly circles. It is an important point that Florio saw fit to use the name of Ramusio to give authority to his arguments. He is not simply using Ramusio’s work as a textual source for the purpose of translation or for its secondary resources. Ramusio is the expert, the primary source whose writings carry equal weight to the sources he presents. It would appear that the immigrant, Florio, had become quite the English patriot, but there may be some question as to who is making the plea. Florio may have been a strong proponent of colonization of the New World, but there do not seem to be any other writings by him on the subject. His association with Dudley and, more importantly, Hakluyt does indicate that he was aware of the possibility.

Hakluyt apparently encouraged or, what is more likely, even hired Florio to translate the narrations of Cartier found in the third volume of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* from the Italian into English, and is likely the true voice of the sentiments expressed in the introduction to the publication. It is noted by Foster Watson that in Hakluyt’s “Epistle to Sir Philip Sydney” in *Diverse Voyages*, 1582, Hakluyt writes “the last yeare, at my charges and other of friendes, by my exhortation, I caused Iagues Cartiers two voyages of discovering the grand Bay, and Canada, Saguiney, and Hochelaga, to bee translated out of my volumes.”³⁴⁶ So apparently, Hakluyt lent his copies of Ramusio to Florio and had him do the translation. The sentiment expressed by Florio is certainly similar to Hakluyt’s own writings, and Hakluyt also uses Ramusio’s name to support his views on colonization. It would seem highly likely, then that it is

Hakluyt making the strong plea for colonization in the introduction as opposed to Florio. The fact that Hakluyt's name does not appear in the publication prevents this from being a certainty, but it would be surprising if it were not the case.

The true intention of the work, then, was not to bring Cartier's voyages to light, but to promote the idea of English colonization and commercial exploitation of America. The information provided in Cartier's narrative was important with its detailed description of the land, flora and fauna, and its description of the inhabitants. It is in the dedication letter and the preface, however where Florio's true intention, and possibly even more so that of Hakluyt, can be seen. Florio makes his key statement encouraging the English to get their share of New World treasures when he writes "And herein the more to animate and encourage the Engli[s]he Marchants, I doe onely...propo[s]e unto them the infinite trea[s]ures (not hidden to them[s]elves) whiche both the Spaniardes, the Portugales, and the Venetians have [s]everally gained by their [s]uche navigations and travailes."³⁴⁷ Not only does Florio encourage the English merchants to go and do as the Iberians, but, also as he points out in the parenthetical statement that the treasures are there for the taking. They are not hidden. There is a definite agenda to this translation. This is an overt attempt to encourage English overseas activities. In the Preface, Florio turns to a renowned expert-scholar to help give support to his cause.

The information used by Florio to further his argument comes from two places

³⁴⁶ Foster Watson, *The Anglo-Italian Review III*, Jan. to April (1919): 7-21, 112-125, in Yates 55-56.

³⁴⁷ Florio, *Ibid.*

in *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi*. Volume I's "*Discorso Sopra li Viaggi delle Spetiere,*" and in the third volume in Ramusio's "*Discorso Sopra la Nuova Francia.*" What Florio appears to have done is to have taken two excerpts from separate discourses by Ramusio and combined the thoughts of the two into one. The quotation from the first volume is nearly exact, and is used as the basic structure to which he can add other thoughts, possibly from the discourse in the third volume. Florio is obviously familiar with the third volume of Ramusio, or has been instructed by Hakluyt which passages to use. The way Ramusio's words are presented in the preface by Florio makes it appear that the idea of colonization was also the main emphasis of these discourses by Ramusio when, in actuality, the subject presented was only one of several subjects addressed in the writings.

The preface to the Cartier translations is entitled "To all Gentlemen, Merchants, and Pilots" and states initially that his work is for the benefit of anyone attempting new discoveries to the "Northwea[s]t partes" of America.³⁴⁸ This reference to northwest parts in what would now be considered the northeast could be made in reference to their location based in England. Florio states that these parts are already known to many, but that a close reading of what he has presented would reveal the potential value of what is there. He writes that the country is "no lesse fruitfull and pleasant in al respects than is *England, France, or Germany.*" The people are simple and rude in manners, and, of course pagan, but are "of nature gentle and tractable, and most apt to receive the

³⁴⁸ Ibid., Preface.

Christian Religion, and to subject themselves to some good government.”³⁴⁹ In this single statement Florio has made favorable assertions regarding the land, the climate, and the people. The natives, according to Florio, are eagerly waiting to be shown a better way. These are sentiments also found in Ramusio’s discourses, and especially noteworthy is the similar attempt to relate the New World to what was known of Europe. Florio writes that in this new country one would find commodities “not inferiour to the Marchandize of *Moscovy*, *Danske*, or many other frequented trades.”³⁵⁰ At this point three good arguments have been made. North America is a good place; second, the natives do not appear to be a problem; and third, there are commodities to exploit that could be as profitable as existing trade networks. But what about getting there? Another point deals with this problem. The voyage is described as “verye shorte, being but three weekes sayling from *Bristowe*, *Plymouth*, or any commodious Porte of the Weast Country, with a direct course to the coast of the Newe found land.”³⁵¹

The previous points lead perfectly to the next and primary point of colonization. The New World is described as a good place, with favorable land and climate, gentle and receptive natives, potential profit. Since it is close, he asks, why not settle there. The English should not just trade with the inhabitants, Florio suggests colonization and possession of the New World “which was the judgement and counsell of *Iohn Baptista Ramusius*, a learned and excellent Cosmographer, & Secretary to the famous state of *Venice*, whose words, bicause they are not impertin[en]t to this purpose, I have here set

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

downe.”³⁵² Ramusio is Florio’s expert witness in support of colonization. He quotes at length writing

Why doe not the Princes (saieth he) whyche are to deale in these affaires, sende forth two or three Colonies to inhabite the Country, & to reduce this savage nation to some civilitie? Considering what a battle and fruitfull soyle it is, how replenished with all kinde of graine, how it is stored with al sortes of Byrdes and Beastes, with such faire and mighty rivers, the Captaine Carthier and his company, in one of them sayled uppe a hundreth and foure score leagues, finding the cuntry peopled on both sides in greate abundaunce. And moreover, to cause the Governors of those Colonies to send forth men to search and discover the North lands about *Terra del Lavorader*, and toward Weast northwest to the Seas whiche are to saile to the Country of *Cataya*, and from thence to the Ilands of *Molucke*, These were enterprises to purchase immortall praise, which the Lord *Anthony di Mendoza* Viceroy of *Mexico*, willing to put in execution, sent forth his Captains both by Sea and by Land upon the Northwest of *Nuova Spagona*, and discovered the Kingdome of the seaven Cities about *Civola*. And *Franciscus Vasques de Coronada*, passed from *Mexico* by lande towarde the Northwest 2850. Miles, in so muche, that he came to the Sea, whyche lyeth betweene *Cataya* and *America*, where he met with the Catayan shyppes. And no doubt, if the French men in this their newe *France*, would have discovered up further into the land towards the Weast northwest partes, they should have founde the Sea, and might have sayled to *Cataya*.³⁵³

This passage is taken from Volume I in “*Discorso Sopra li Viaggi delle Spetiere*”. It is almost a verbatim translation of the Italian that begins, “*perche non douean gli Principi che hanno questo maueggio, haverui mandate due, a’ tre colonie ad habitarlo...*” There are minor differences between the two. For example, Florio refers to civilizing the “savage nation.” Ramusio states that the effort should be to civilize and Christianize whoever might be found, or “*far domestico, di saluatico & inculto che egli si trova.*” The fact that the ones found are savage might be implied, but Ramusio makes no reference here to the natives being savage, barbaric, or primitive. In the discourse from Volume III, Ramusio does refer to the natives as “*que’ poueri popoli rozzi, &*

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

ignorant al culto divino” or these poor, rough, people, and ignorant of the divine church. Even in this case, though, Ramusio is referring the sentiments of Giovanni da Verrazzano and associates.

Florio paraphrases Ramusio’s sentiments by writing “Why doe not the Princes (saieth he) whyche are to deale in these affaires, sende forth two or three Colonies to inhabite the Country, & to reduce this savage nation to some civilitie?” This excerpt is similar to a statement in *Discorso Sopra La Nuova Francia*, where Ramusio writes “& molti, che l’hanno conosciuto, & parlatogli, mi hanno detto, che esso fermata haver in animo di cercar di persuader al Re’ Christianissimo a’ mandare da queste parti buon numero di gente ad habitare in alcuni luoghi della detta costa...”³⁵⁴ Note that here there is no mention of nationality, as was the case with Ramusio, who wrote of some Christian prince, or *Re Christianissimo*. There is here the suggestion that some Christian king send enough people to inhabit some parts along the coast which are the most suitable and desirable. In Ramusio’s mind this had the desired purpose of further exploration, as well as making whatever commercial profit possible from these colonies.

It is interesting that there would be reference to “Christianizing” the population of the New World. It is apparently permissible to use Ramusio as an admonition for this even though he was a member of the reviled Catholic faith. Anyone familiar with the writings of Hakluyt knows he had no good words for the pope, and Florio’s family had long dealt with Catholic “persecution” due to the fact that they were Italian Protestants.

That is what had brought Florio's family to England, where once again they had to suffer through Catholic oppression during the reign of Queen Mary.³⁵⁵

Florio uses Ramusio as expert testimony to back an English claim to the New World. He writes of the discoveries made by John Cabot in the service of King Henry VII in 1494, and states it was "first found out" by Cabot "as both by the foresaide Ramusius in his first Volumes, and our owne Chronicles..." It is expected that English accounts would verify the claim, but there is extra credence when a third party supports the claim. It is interesting that the same family of navigators is used by both the English and Ramusio to stake a claim for their respective countries to planting colonies in the New World. Florio then returns to the theme of urging colonization and the potential rewards by saying "so there is no nation that hath so good righte, or is more fit for this purpose, than they are, who travayling yearly into those partes with 50. or 60. saile of shippes, might very commodiouslye transporte a sufficient number of men to plant a Colonie in some convenient Haven, and also might yeeld them yearly succour, and supply of al things necessary, receyuing again such commodities as the country doth produce."³⁵⁶

Florio stresses the importance, and urgency, for the English to act quickly by reporting that the French had every intention of prospering from New France had they not been at war with Spain and had not been dealing with domestic issues. Again using Ramusio as a source, he relayed Verrazzano's desire to promote colonization on behalf

³⁵⁴ Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Delle Navigazione et Viaggi, Volume III*, Giunti (Venezia, 1606) 438B.

³⁵⁵ Yates, 1-3, 13.

³⁵⁶ Florio, "Preface".

of the French had he not met an untimely death. This information comes from the third Volume of Ramusio in his “Discorso Sopra la Nuova Francia” and is reprinted by Florio. Once again promoting the desirable qualities of the New World, he quotes Ramusio as stating that enough people should be sent to

inhabite certaine places of these coastes, where the aire is moste temperate, and the soyle moste fruitfull, with goodly Rivers and Havens sufficient to harborough any navie, the inhabitantes of which places might be occa[sion] to bring many good purposes to effecte, and amongst manye others, to reduce those porre rude and ignorant people to the true worship and service of God, and to teach them how to manure and till the ground, transporting over Beastes and Cattell of Europe into those large and champion countreys, and finally, in time they might discover up into the land, and search, whether among so many Ilands as are there, there be any passage to the Sea of Cataya.³⁵⁷

These words are a direct translation from Ramusio’s discourse in Volume III, but they are Verrazzano’s words, not Ramusio’s. It is impossible to discern Ramusio’s personal views on the subject, but it is reasonable to assume the idea was of great interest to him.

The comparison between the English writers and Ramusio is maybe best described by the subtle, yet important, difference between “could” and “should.” Ramusio makes his suggestions for colonization by saying “why doesn’t some Christian prince plant a colony?” That is quite different from Florio’s and Hakluyt’s bold suggestions that the English should go forth and colonize, and that they may miss out on something significant if they do not. The two English writers use Ramusio to present the possibility that exists, and it is their admonition that the English should act upon it. Ramusio did have a vested interest in overseas ventures, but the urgency does not come through in his writings as it does here with Florio. The nationalistic theme, while

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

present in Ramusio's suggestion for Venice to use the services of Sebastian Cabot, is also much stronger in the case of the English.

The value of Ramusio's information is reemphasized as Florio makes a plea for someone to finance a project to translate all of the third volume of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* for the good of England. Many secrets previously unknown to the English pilots and merchants would be revealed, according to Florio as he writes, "And thus much oute of the third Volume of Voyages and Nauigations, gathered into the Italian tongue by *Ramusius*: whiche Bookes, if they were translated into English by the liberalitie of some noble Personage, our Sea-men of *England*, and others, studious of Geographie, shoulde know many worthy secrets, whiche hitherto haue beene concealed." The project apparently was never undertaken, but English colonial efforts seem to have proceeded nonetheless.

4.2 General Conclusion to Ramusio

Ramusio is an important figure in transatlantic history. The work contained in the third volume of *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* is totally dedicated to the "New World." The first volume is transatlantic to a large degree with the discussion of the Portuguese and his discussion of the spice trade. By the simple assessment of his work, we see he was greatly interested in transatlantic matters. Yet, it is not enough to be interested in the subject to warrant being considered a major figure in the field. What sets Ramusio apart from others interested in the subject is the scope of the work and its influence. There were other cartographers and commentators whose work included some transatlantic matters, but Ramusio's contains literally thousands of pages on the

subject. Gastaldi was a fine cartographer of American subjects, but it is hard to say that he himself is a transatlantic figure. Agnese has wonderful maps of the world, including New World subjects, but, like Gastaldi, it is more accurate to say that he had some transatlantic works as opposed to saying that Agnese was a transatlantic cartographer. Ramusio can safely be called a transatlantic scholar.

Not only did he comment on transatlantic matters, he was involved in transatlantic activities. His association with Oviedo shows that he was actively involved in getting information from the Atlantic region. While most Venetians were likely more interested in information to the east, as that is where the majority of Venice's commercial activities were focused, Ramusio seemed to have a keen interest in matters to the west. His own investment ideas focused on trade in the Atlantic basin, so he was no mere commentator on transatlantic activities he was actively involved. His calls for Venice to get involved in exploration were specifically pointed to North America.

The Oviedo connection brings Ramusio directly into the Atlantic basin, but that is not even necessary for calling him a transatlantic scholar. Though he never traveled there personally he certainly brought the transatlantic world to many people in Europe. *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* brought accounts of travelers and explorers together into an accessible resource for all those interested in the subject. Readers were able to compare accounts of travelers of all nationalities and Ramusio had his own chance to present his vision of the Americas. When one asked in Venice who to turn to for advice regarding the Americas Ramusio was the answer. He was considered the leading expert. When

they considered the possibility of bringing Sebastian Cabot to Venice they, of course, turned to Ramusio.

Whether or not the images and maps were accurate they affected the people who saw and interpreted them, and put some of the first transatlantic visions in their minds. One of Ramusio's contributions during his own day was his ability to place things in a familiar setting. Ramusio's own commentaries show his concern with putting the "New World" into "Old World" context. He looked for similarities between the Americas and Europe concerning geography, flora and fauna, and civilizations. He understood that a concept was more easily grasped when put into a familiar context. Thus, we see many example of his trying to explain things in the Americas by comparing them to what was in Europe. We are not fully able to appreciate this, but in the sixteenth century, they certainly did. Imagine the first time Hakluyt was able to thumb through the thousands of pages containing what he considered priceless information. Instead of having to assemble random accounts from various sources, he had all the information one three well-organized volumes. Ramusio may have never made it to the New World, but he was certainly there in spirit with the English as they carried out his desired plans.

In the simplest terms, what makes Ramusio an important figure in transatlantic history is the fact that he, through his scholarly efforts, brought the Atlantic world to many in Europe. Therefore, the study of Ramusio, not just his work becomes a transatlantic study. When we study his background, we discover he did not produce what he did due to a casual or short-term interest. He was a life-long student of the subject, worked on the subject for decades, his interested in the subject developed over

time, and the influences on his life were directly related to the great work he produced on transatlantic subjects.

Ramusio's desire for knowledge matched the flood of information that became available in the sixteenth century. Ramusio must have felt like many in the twenty-first century regarding the sheer amount of information suddenly available. Brand new worlds were literally opening up to him. What distinguished Ramusio from others was that he put himself at the fore, did not let the large amount of material intimidate him, and he was able to systemize into a coherent fashion many of the documents available at the time, which enabled their practical application. The knowledge he gained from the accounts of travelers, his editorial abilities, his own analysis and writing on the subject, and the recognition he gained from his publication make Ramusio one of the most, if not the most, significant early modern historians of the discoveries. Ramusio may not have always "gotten it right," but considering the available resources, his occasional shortcomings are understandable.

If scholars of his own century held him in such high esteem, there is no reason why Ramusio should not receive the same recognition, as does a Hakluyt. The probable reason for Ramusio's lack of recognition is likely due to the language barrier. His personal writings have received almost no attention in the English language. The fact that they are hidden among thousands of pages of the translated entries may also account for the lack of attention. It has been the effort here to bring these to light at least to a small degree. It would be useful for the entirety of his writings in *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi* to be translated for the English reading audience. It may not add new

information about the events surrounding the history of exploration, but it would offer good insight into the immediacy of their impact.

Ramusio and his associates are in the second tier of Renaissance scholars. Their fame may not rival individuals like Machiavelli, Pico da Mirandola, or Guicciardini, but they were significant in their own right. It is important to remember that Ramusio's friends and fellow scholars had a great influence on his work. Bembo, Fracastoro, and Gastaldi were important to the work and were certainly the source of some of Ramusio's own ideas. One might think this diminishes the importance of Ramusio the individual, but it only makes the work that much more important. It shows we are not just getting the ideas and opinions of Ramusio, but rather the views of the intelligentsia of that time. This makes the reading of Ramusio's own words all the more rewarding and important.

The biographical information on Ramusio not only provides insight into the person but also highlights even more the influence of his associates. There is the possible influence of Bembo on his writing style, the influence of Oviedo with his scholarly and commercial contacts, and the major influence of Gastaldi as a partner in cartography. His official position in Venice allowed him to come into contact with individuals in the field. Contact with an individual such as the enigmatic "David" seems to have sparked his interest in the subject, while his correspondence with Cabot made him appear to want to be an active participant in the process of exploration. Without a look to his personal life, we could miss much of what inspired him to carry out his monumental work.

When doing the background research into Ramusio it is interesting to see just how much the work was a collaborative effort with his associates in Venice and abroad. Woodward's explanation, previously mentioned, of the problem of assigning authorship in the field of cartography is applicable here. Woodward portrays the task as a collaborative effort. The study of Ramusio sheds a little light on this problem. While it may not be certain exactly who did what, we do know that the inspiration for the work came from multiple sources. We know from the close relationship Ramusio had with individuals like Gastaldi, Fracastoro, Bembo that they influenced his work. The actual labor may not have been a cooperative effort, except for Gastaldi's part, but without the input of these other individuals, Ramusio's work would have been different.

Ramusio's work is primarily devoted to text. It is not in the same vein as De Bry or other producers of atlases. He did understand the importance of graphic illustrations to make his point clear, though. His association with Gastaldi helped produce some landmark achievements in cartography. It is impossible to know who influenced whom more, but it is clear they had a close working relationship. The maps produced for Volume I are works worthy of admiration on their own merits. Placed within the context the work they take on even greater significance. The ability of Gastaldi and Ramusio to use the maps and texts together was innovative. The production of a single set of maps from multiple sources intended to accompany multiple sources is possibly a first in cartography. Ramusio also appreciated the Ptolemaic concept of chorography as there is a lot to be learned from the details on the maps throughout *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*.

The images portrayed are interesting, informative, and often humorous. It is anachronistic to place too much judgment on them based on their artistic presentation. When coupled with what he wrote regarding the native inhabitants of the New World it is legitimate to conclude that Ramusio held the people of the other world in higher regard than some of his contemporaries. His view was to see their achievements which he held in fascination. Even with his admonition to go out and colonize, he did not look for reasons to demean native-Americans, or look for excuses to take their land.

Ramusio's humanity comes through in his work. He seemed to look at other cultures and peoples with interest and fascination first, reserving judgment for later. It is impossible to judge his true feelings about the Native Americans, but he never appears to condemn in any fashion. He may be aghast at some of their cruel practices, but the reporting of these appears alongside mention of cannibalism on the part of Europeans. He does refer to them as a "rough," or probably meaning savage race that could benefit from Christianizing, but this is rather mild and typical Eurocentrism. It would have been interesting to see his response to something of the nature of the Massacre of 1622 in Virginia. He might have had a strong reaction to it, but it does seem he was able to differentiate between different groups of Native Americans. He appeared to understand that those living in the Canadian regions were different from those in Mexico. This may have stemmed from his studies of Asian societies, and being aware of the diversity of peoples. He did know of the Aztec and their pension for blood sacrifice, yet when the temple of Tenochtitlan was displayed, it was not sensationalized. One does not see an altar covered in blood or human remains. He was aware of the terrible effects of

smallpox on the Native Americans and makes mention of it in his own discourse, lending one to think he had some amount of concern for their well-being. In this regard, any judgments need some amount of reservation, yet he seems to have had a similar interest in and respect for all inhabitants of the world regardless of where they resided.

Ramusio perceived the benefit of his work was to all who were interested, but he had hoped his own Republic of Venice would have been most interested. It is clear that Ramusio was one of the Venetians involved in investments in the New World. His enthusiasm for Sebastian Cabot betrays his personal wishes for Venetian involvement in overseas ventures, even to the point of using highly suspect portrayals of Cabot. His pleas made to a generic audience, though, show a greater interest in the acquisition of knowledge itself. The blank spaces on Ramusio's maps

Ramusio was an important person in Venice. Serving as Secretary to the Council was a key position in the government, and probably as high as Ramusio could have risen due the fact that his family was new to Venice and he himself was born in Treviso. He was obviously someone who was highly regarded for his opinions, and especially in his chosen field of interest. He was an academic and he was apparently politically perceptive enough to achieve his position in the Republic. He was a researcher and a writer, but he was also involved in international business investments. He had important connections both locally and internationally. These qualities helped him achieve notoriety in his century from individuals like Oviedo and Hakluyt, and his work has made him important through the subsequent years.

One must wonder, though, just why did Ramusio produce this great work. There may not be a single answer to this question. He was in the right position to do so. His personal interest motivated him from both a scholarly and monetary standpoint, but these are not reason enough alone to elicit such an effort. His desires for the Venetian Republic motivated him, though they did not commission the work, nor does his patriotic zeal permeate the work like that of Hakluyt. He was encouraged and assisted by friends and associates, but that did not necessitate such a massive effort.

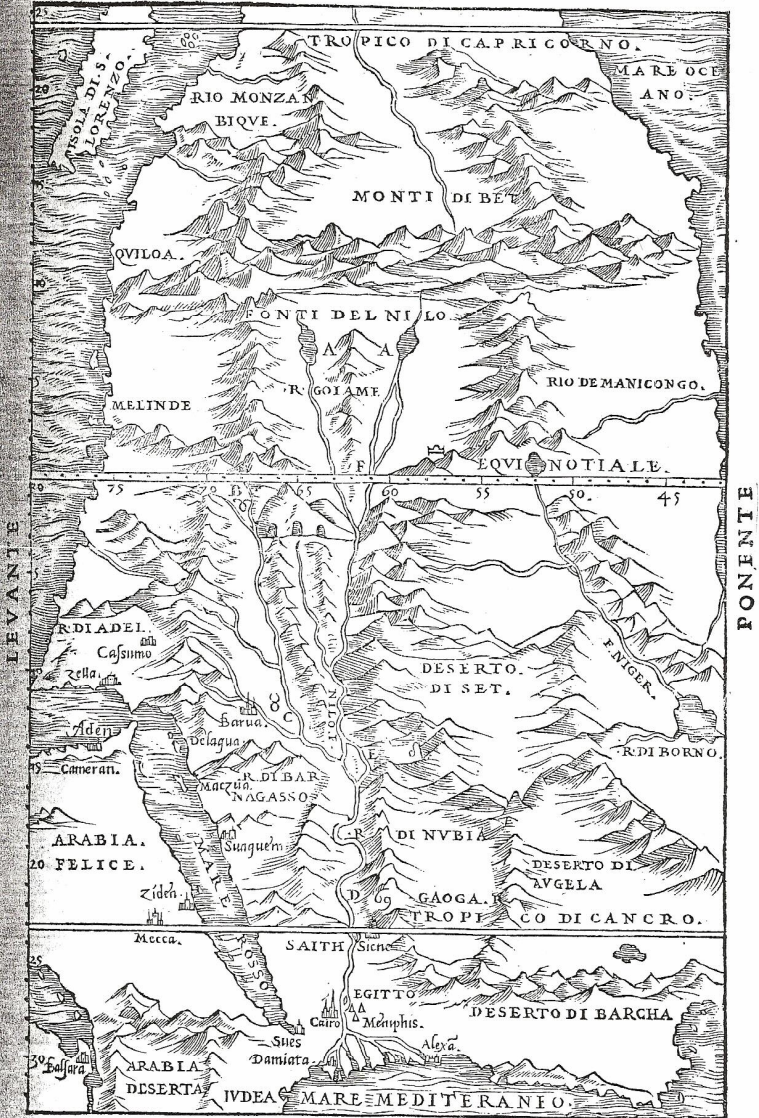
Above all, what seemed to delight Ramusio most was the recognition of the progress made in the increasing knowledge of the world. He knew that he was in an important time, and it thrilled him to be a part of it. He recognized that in his time they had surpassed the knowledge of the ancient, revered scholars. Rather than watch it take place, Ramusio was an active participant in the process. It was inconceivable that he could have greater knowledge than Ptolemy, Strabo, Pliny and Aristotle, yet it was reality, and as his publisher Giunti pointed out, these ancient scholars were becoming irrelevant in the field of geography. Ramusio described this well when he commented that the dark night had passed to a new day of learning. Maybe all of the factors above played a part in his motivation. No one can know for sure. However, his own comments, and those of Giunti seem to indicate that they were aware of what it might mean to posterity.

It is very hard to recreate the life of someone who lived five hundred years ago. There are no images of Ramusio, apparently, and practically all the personal information about Ramusio is revealed here. It is difficult, therefore, to create a personal

characterization of Ramusio. There are some things we do know that tell us a little about the person. We know, for instance, about him and his associates spending time in the hills outside of Verona having intellectual discussions. It is not hard to imagine this scene, especially if one has traveled by train through Italy and seen Paladio's villas on the hills on the outskirts of Verona. They were no doubt sipping wine on the terrace, overlooking rolling hills with vineyards and olive trees, enjoying the evening breeze, as so many did and still do on summer evenings, going out to the countryside to escape the heat of the cities. The discussion would have centered on the latest developments in the field of exploration and discovery, as well as other cultural and political events. There would have been maps that the gathered company would have been inspecting and analyzing, offering their opinions what might be in the spaces labeled *terra incognita*. There would have been questions of whether anyone had had any recent correspondences from Oviedo, Cabot, or other notables. There might have been some heated debate over the potential role of Venice in exploration, or the possibility of establishing foreign colonies, or at least *fondachi* as they had established to the east. One can easily see Ramusio promoting the idea that Venice should follow Portugal's example. That it was time to secure the future of Venice in such uncertain times. Little did he know he was looking at the very countryside that turn the attention of the Venetians from the sea to the land. Above all, they would have enjoyed the company of fellow friends and scholars, and as Ramusio put it the "sweet reasonings" of intellectual discourse.

APPENDIX A

MAPS AND IMAGES



- TRAMONTANA.
- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| A. Li fonti del Nilo | D. Cancro |
| B. Ariete | E. La metà di Leon |
| C. La metà di Tauro | F. Libra |

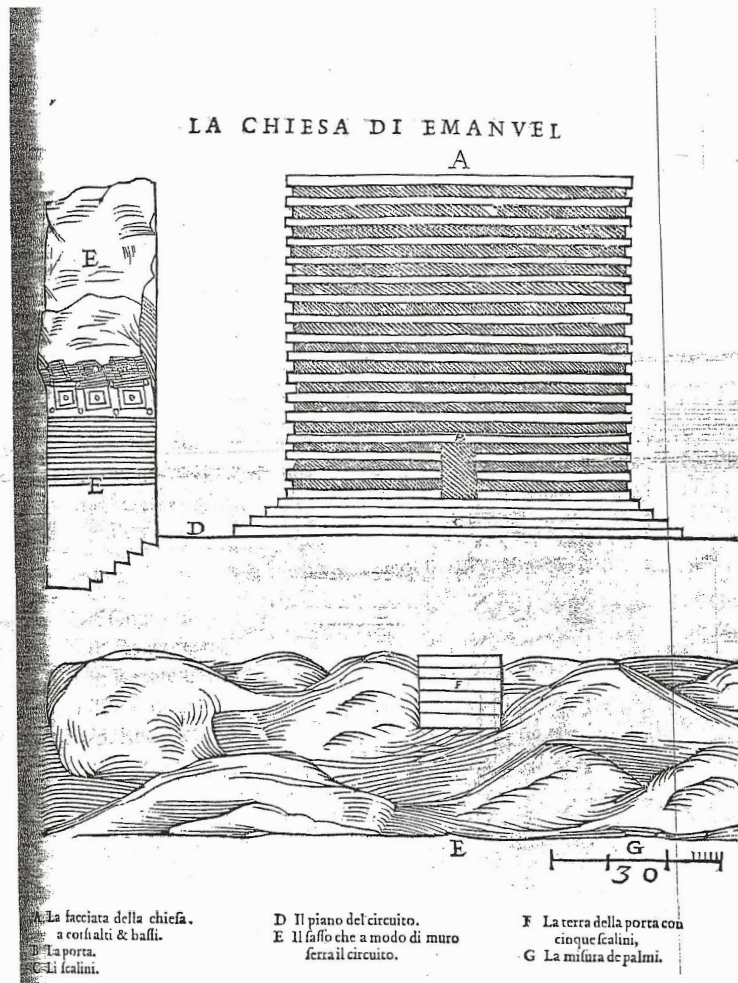
Viaggi.

kk üij

Figure 1

LA CHIESA DI EMANVEL

215



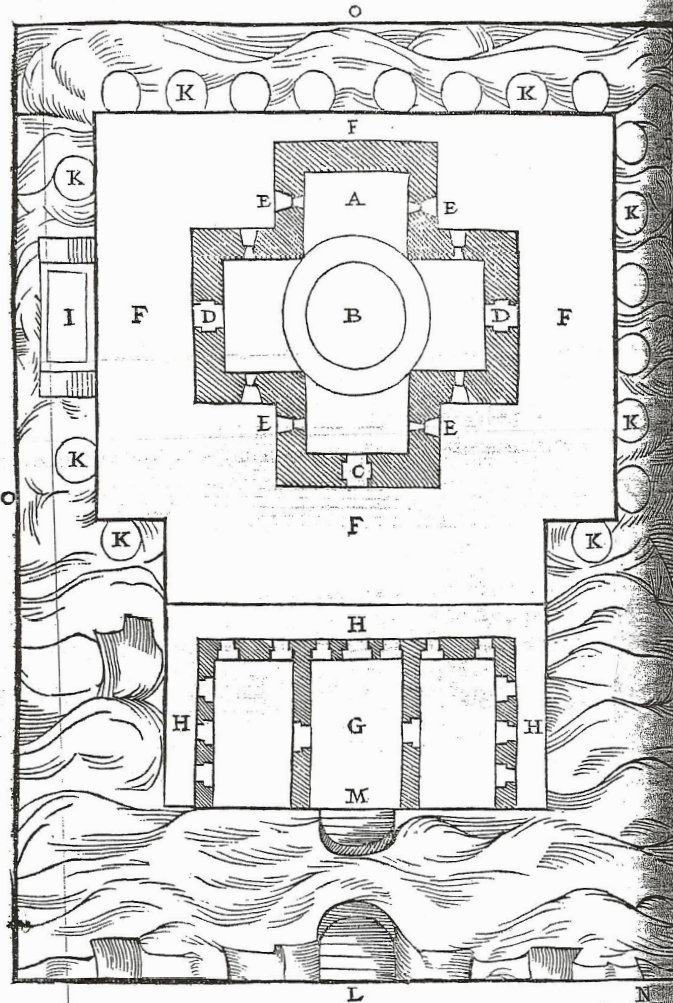
A La facciata della chiesa.
a costolati & bafli.
B La porta.
C Li scalini.

D Il piano del circuito.
E Il fasso che a modo di muro
ferra il circuito.

F La terra della porta con
cinque scalini,
G La misura de palmi.

Figure 2

LA CHIESA DI SAN GIORGIO



A La chiesa in croce.
 B Il luogo de'lo altare.
 C La porta principale.
 D Le porte fraueffe.
 F Le finestre.

F Il circuito o ver chiofro intorno la chiesa.
 G La casa per mezzo la chiesa.
 H Il poggio che va attorno la casa verso il chiofro.
 I La cassa de pietra doue è la fon-

tana.
 K Le sepolture.
 L La entrata sotto il fasso.
 M La entrata nella casa.
 N La misura de palmi.
 O Il fasso del monte che va attorno

Figure 3

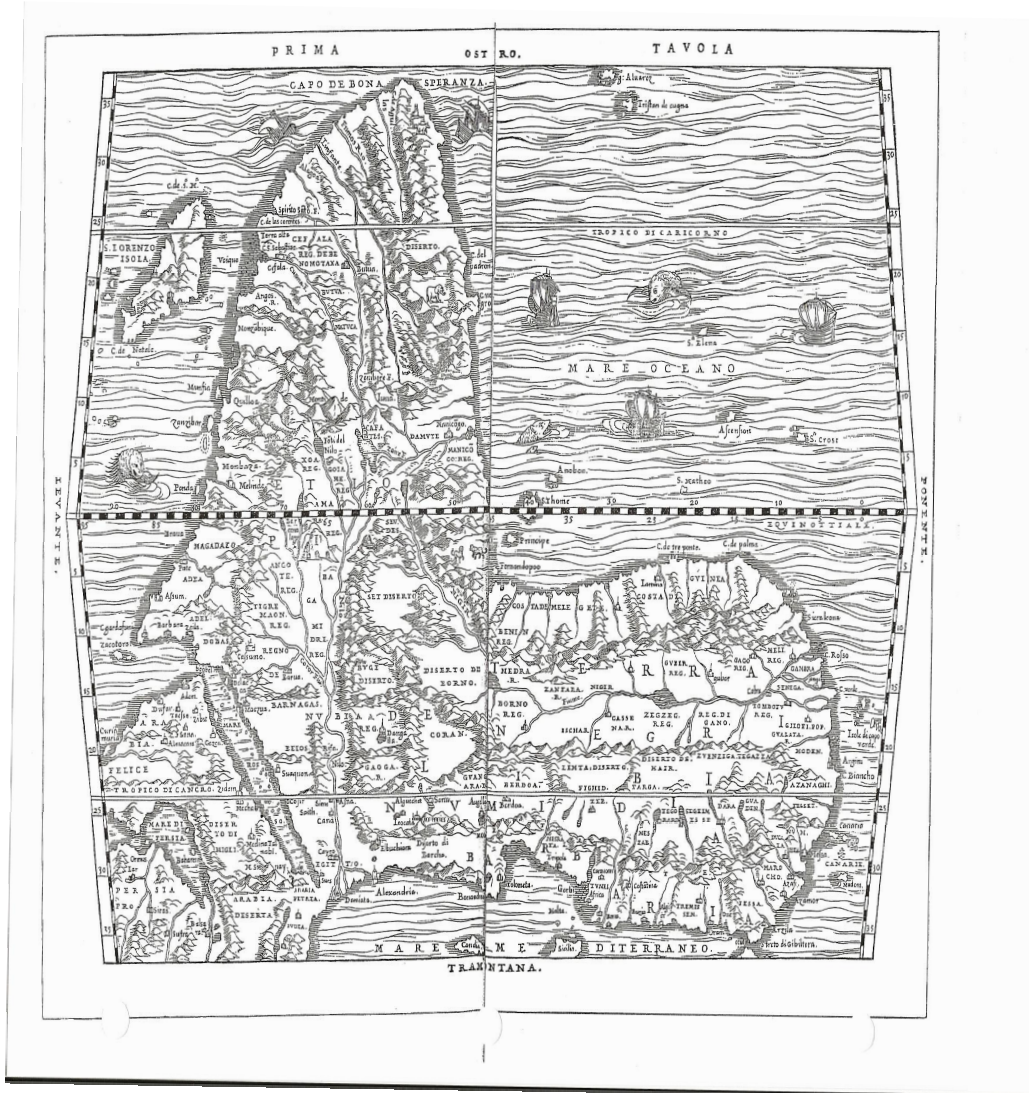


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

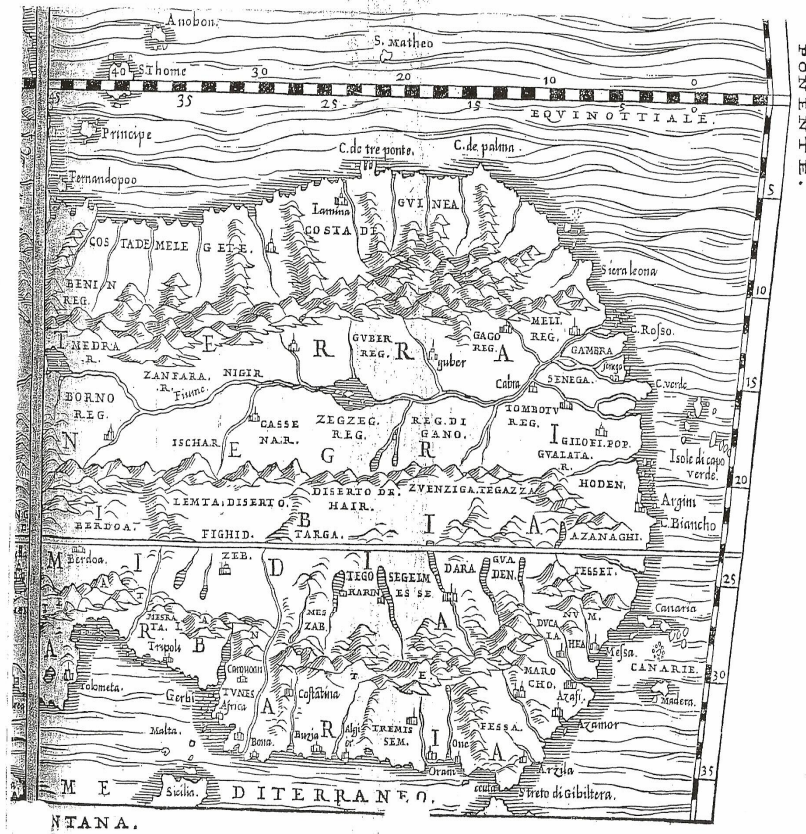


Figure 7

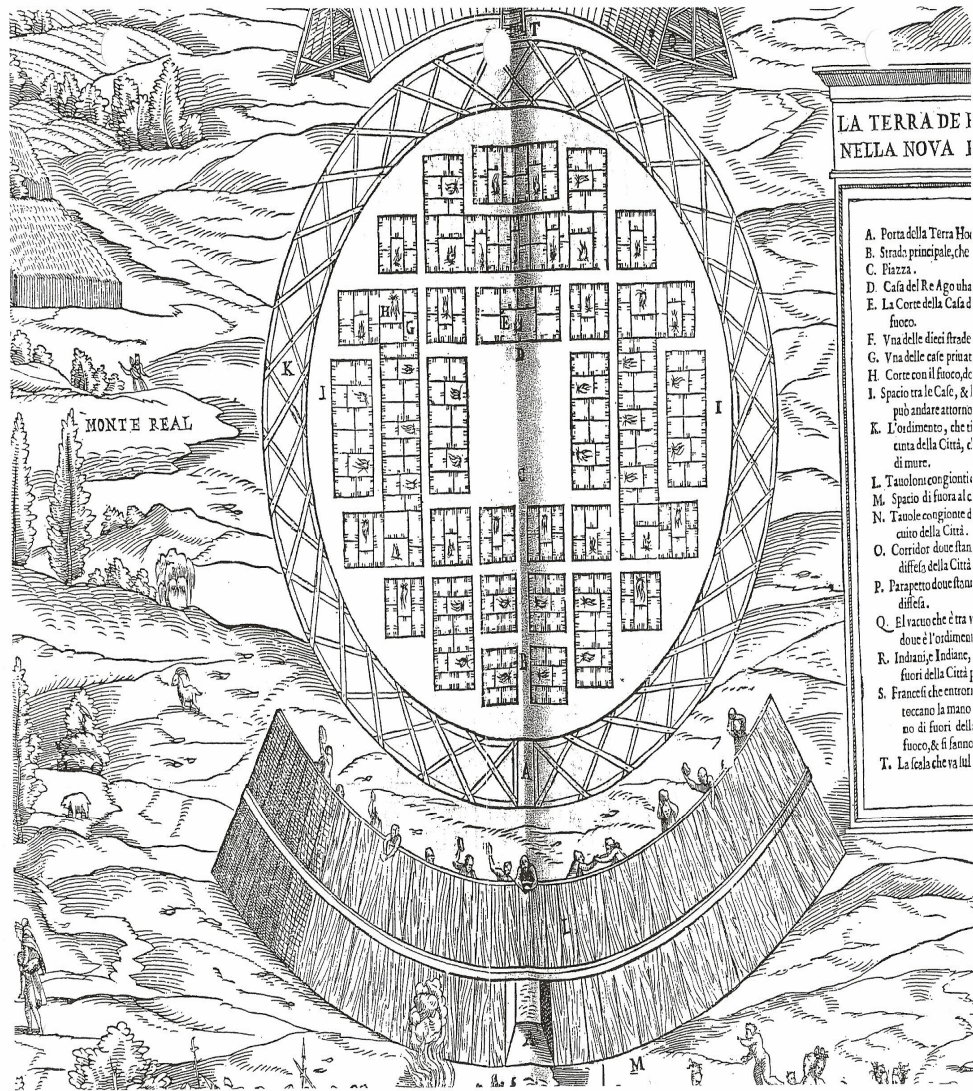


Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

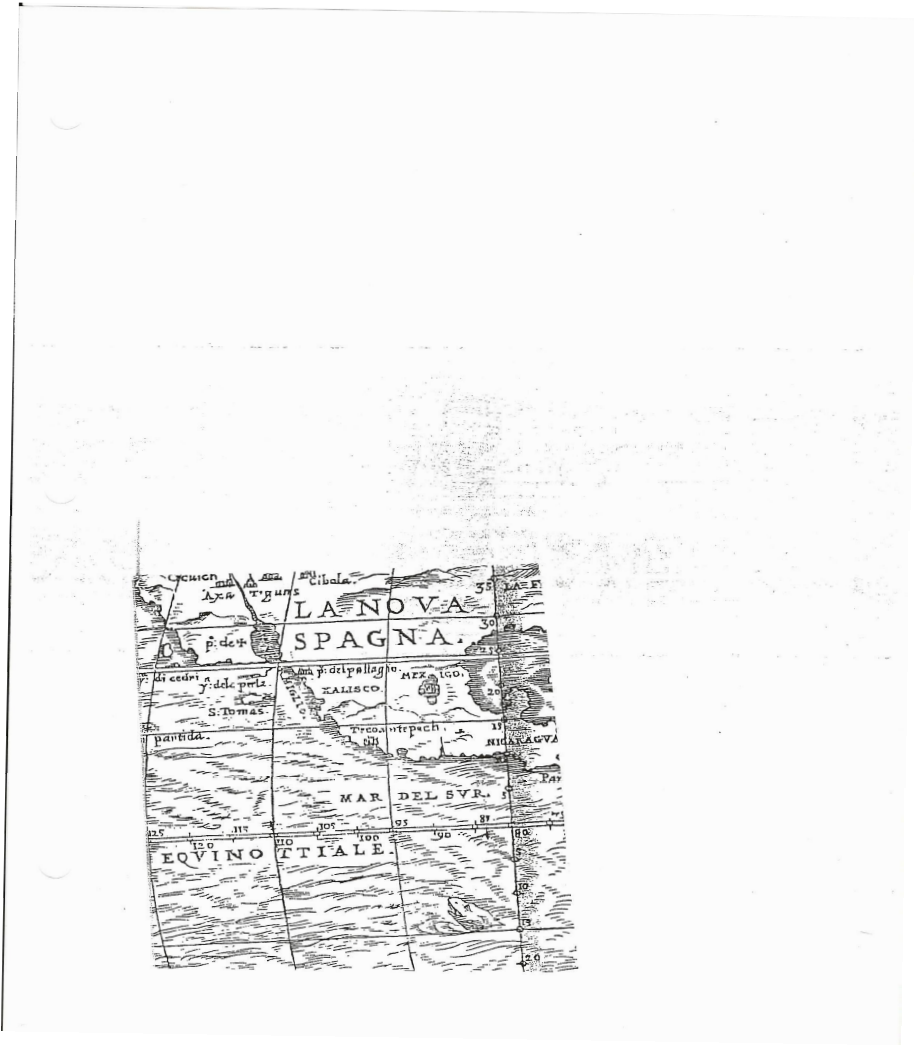


Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

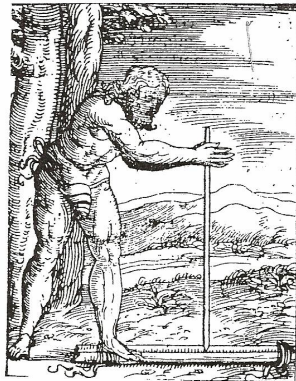
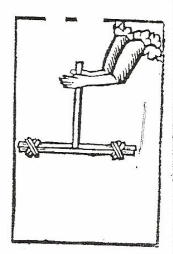
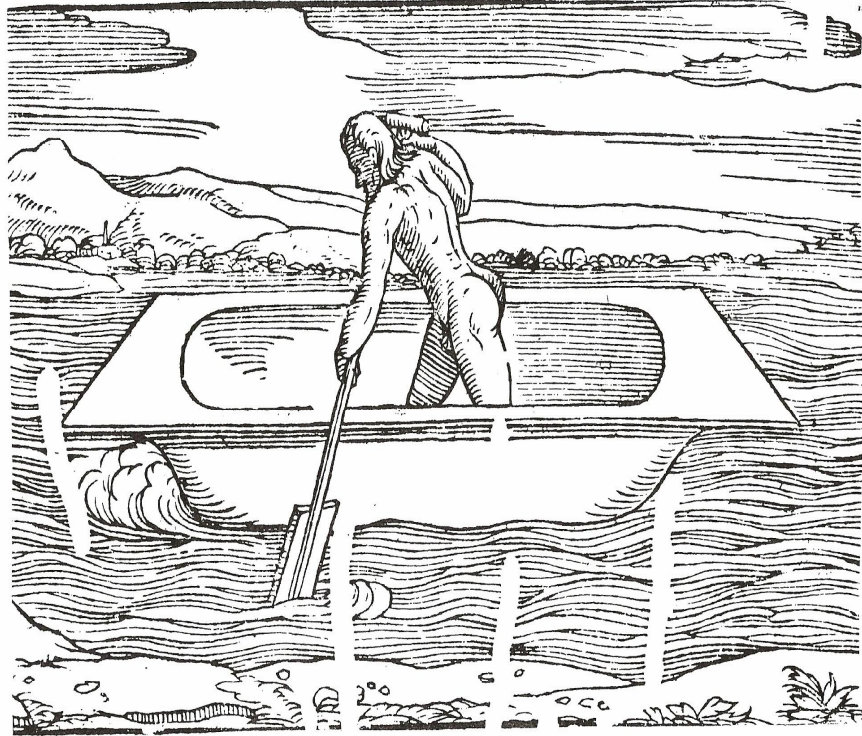


Figure 15



Figure 16



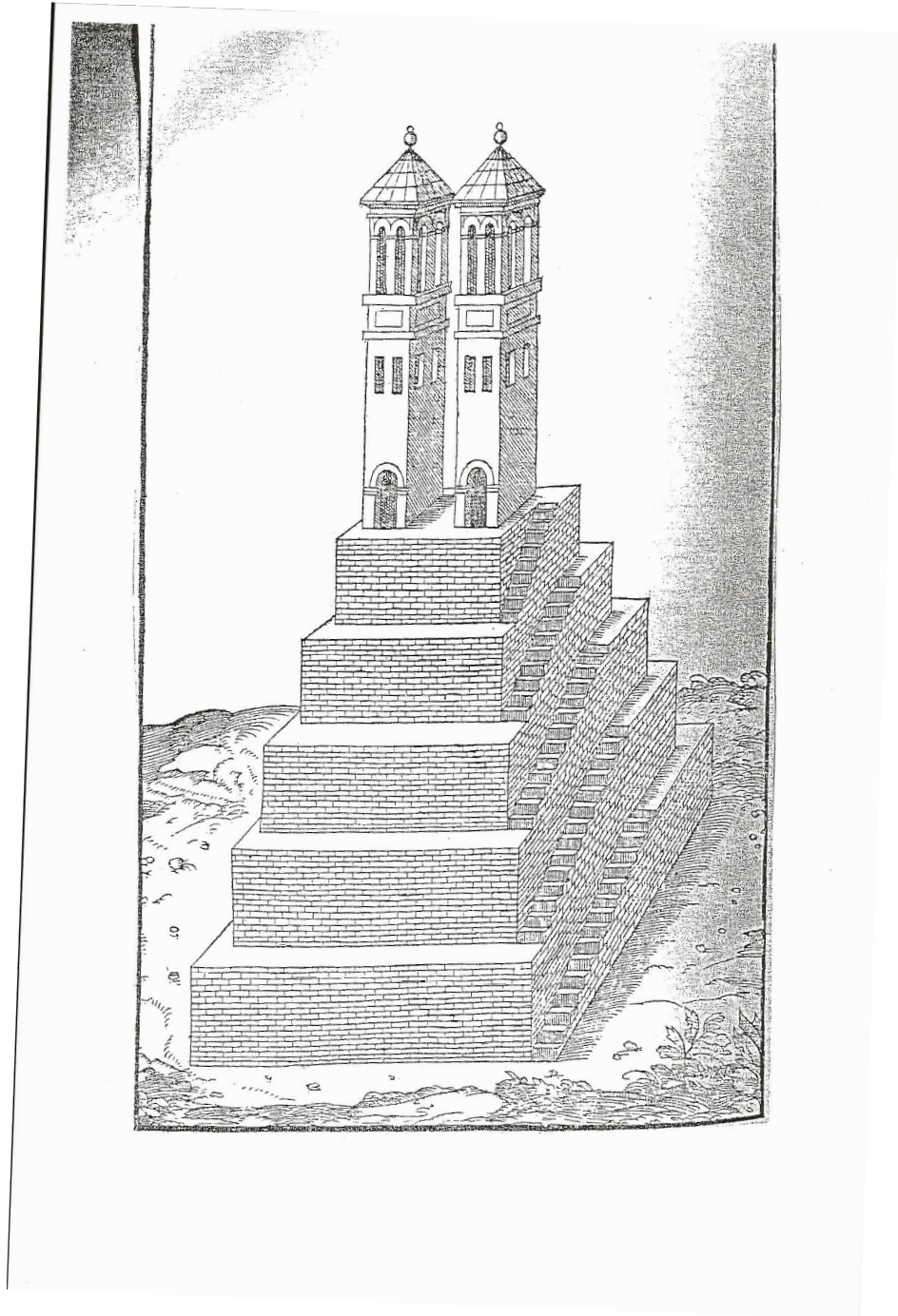


Figure 18

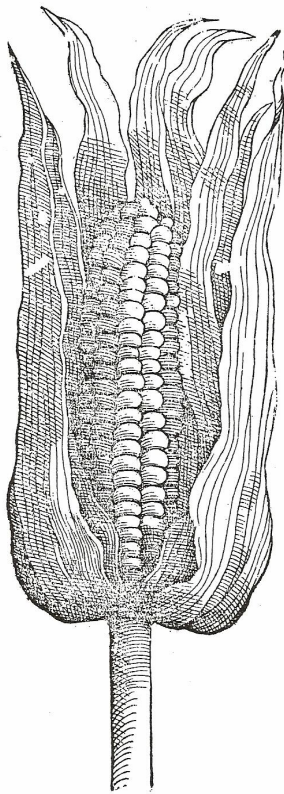
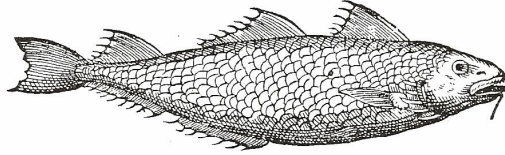


Figure 19

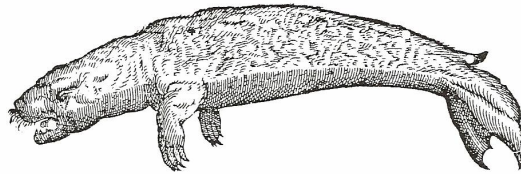


Figure 20

Molua in Francia.



Vecchio Marino nel Mediterraneo.



Vecchio Marino nell'Oceano, et Lupo Marino nell'Indie.

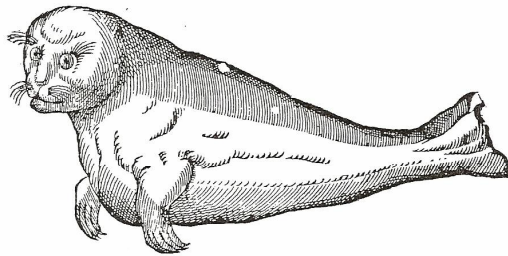
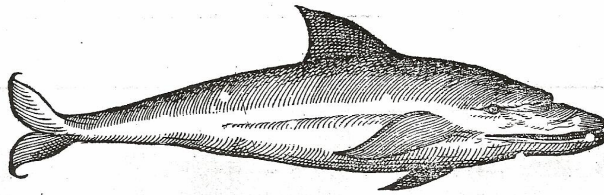


Figure 21

Delfino in Italia, Becco d'Ocha & Marfuin in Francia.



Marfuin in Francia.

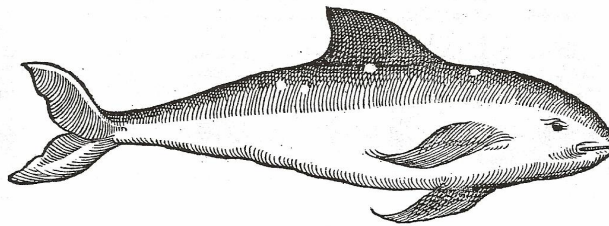


Figure 22

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