



WILEY

Voyages and Map of the Zeni

Author(s): R. H. Major

Source: *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, New Monthly Series, Vol. 5, No. 12 (Dec., 1883), pp. 725-728

Published by: [Wiley](#) on behalf of [The Royal Geographical Society \(with the Institute of British Geographers\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1800034>

Accessed: 17/06/2014 04:19

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) and Wiley are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography.

<http://www.jstor.org>

October, 1879, unconscious that the Society's expedition was not far distant to the north, he reached Pambete, on the southern shore of Tanganyika, only a few hours after Mr. Thomson, and rendered great service to our traveller and to geography by taking a set of lunar observations to fix the longitude of the place. During a visit he subsequently made to England in 1880 he read a valuable paper on his discoveries, which was published, with a map of his surveys at the northern end of the lake, in the 'Proceedings' for 1881, p. 257. On his return to the scene of his labours in 1881, he was commissioned by Mr. James Stevenson of Glasgow with the important work of constructing the "Lake-Junction" road already mentioned, Mr. Stevenson generously furnishing 4000*l.* to defray the cost. He took with him a staff of artisans, and has since been labouring with varying fortune at this difficult task. A sanguinary attack by a neighbouring chief on his native workmen compelled him to suspend the work for a time, and he employed the interval in completing, on behalf of the Free Church Mission, the survey of the east coast, his charts of which accompanied the last letter he wrote to his munificent employer. Peace and good feeling among the natives along the line of his unfinished road having returned, he resumed his labours on the road, and soon made so much further progress that he was able to inform the London Missionary Society that the way was open for the steamer *Good News*, which they had ready for Lake Tanganyika, and the vessel has since been conveyed in sections viâ the Zambesi and Shiré to the head of the lake by the commercial "African Lakes Company," under the superintendence of the Messrs. Moir.

It is supposed that the fever which has robbed us of this indomitable and skilful pioneer, who was doing so much work of the best kind in the "Dark Continent," was contracted in the lower reaches of the Shiré, from near which the postscript to his last letter was dated. He was about forty years of age.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Voyages and Map of the Zeni.

51, HOLLAND ROAD, KENSINGTON,
November 10th, 1883.

In answer to Professor Steenstrup's theories noticed in the last number of the 'Proceedings,' I beg leave to make the following statements. The original of the Zeno map was laid down 500 years ago by Venetians, roughly to illustrate family letters and a book, describing northern countries, whose language was not only strange to them, but diametrically opposed to the genius of their own. These documents were not intended for publication, for printing was not known till half a century later, and, in fact, they remained unpublished for a full century after that. In 1558 a descendant of the family, who in his boyhood had torn and mutilated the papers, repaired his fault to the best of his ability, and putting his own blamelessly ignorant construction on the language of the text, endowed the map, then rotten with age, with *additions* which have since caused a great amount of perplexity. He then published extracts from the letters with the map as an illustration.

Now, of all the extraordinary phenomena exhibited in Professor Steenstrup's marvellous book, one of the most astounding to me, who for nearly forty years had our national collection of maps and charts under my care, is that a critic should expect a map such as I have described to be so microscopically correct in detail as to "correspond" (with respect to the contour of Frislanda) "with the modern map of the Færøe Islands." As not only the Færøes, but the Shetlands and the

Orkneys, all of them groups, are alike unceremoniously laid down on the Zeno map as single islands with a few islets near them, it is not surprising that "Frislanda," which is squeezed down into the shape of an ugly pumpkin, should not very exactly "correspond with the modern map of the Færøe Islands." Nevertheless there *are* names on the one which *do* correspond with names on the other, and which I invite Professor Steenstrup to reproduce collectively, if he can, in the *real, uninvited* nomenclature of any island or group of islands whatever. Monaco (the Monk) lies correctly at the south of the group, while Andefort (Andefjord), *pace* Professor Steenstrup, is remarkably near its right position in the north. Sudero Golfo (Suderöfjord) which does not (as is suggested) mean the Southern Gulf or Fjord, but the Gulf or Fjord of Suderøe (the southern island), takes its name from the southern island of the Færøes, which, then as now, bore the name of Suderøe. It is the channel between that island and Sandøe, the Sanestol of the text and map. *This could not be laid down in its right place on a map which did not divide the group into its separate islands.* The same with Ledovo (Lille Dimon) which lies in that channel. So also, of absolute necessity, was it the same with Streme (Strömøe), the name of which occurs at the spot where its south-east extremity would terminate, somewhat below the capital, Frislanda, which also is in its right place. And here I would call attention to the fact that the only town then and now existing in all this group lay on the south-east side of Strömøe, by far the largest and most important island, and, both in the map and text, this town, now known as Thorshavn, is named Frislanda, in accordance with a well-known custom in the middle ages of giving a capital the name of the country. This island would, therefore, naturally be the resort of Zichmni and of the Zeni when visiting the group, and one must be very difficult to persuade who cannot see the reasonableness of the name of Frislanda being used in reference to such visits, to the exclusion of that of Strömøe. This would account for Frislanda being twice spoken of in the text as an island. One thing is certain, that there is no mention of Streme in the text. That it should be placed on the map near a small island is very sad, but I, for one, am a very lenient judge of a map made 500 years ago, especially by Venetians among the Norse. Orkn-eyar (the Orkneys) was a sound very difficult to Italianise, but from their position, they are evidently the "little islands" forming the Porlanda of the text. The *superfluous* Porlanda, between the south of Frislanda and the Monk, is an obvious addition by the later Zeno from his reading of the text. The Orkney group of the early map contains no names beyond the clumsily transcribed general designation of "Porlanda" or "Podalida," but on Estlanda (Shetland) where Nicolò Zeno lived for a considerable time, there are a host of names unmistakably corresponding with those in the Shetlands; e. g. Cledere (Queendal), Sumbercouit (Sumburgh Head), St. Magnus (St. Magnus Bay), Scaluogi (Scalloway), Bristund (Brassa Sound), Itlant (Fetlar), Lonibies (Lambness), Onlefort (Olna Fiord) and Oloford (Onze Fiord). Nevertheless, Estlanda, like Frislanda, is laid down as a single island with a few islets near it. It is therefore childish solemnly to place the arbitrary and manifestly inaccurate contour of the Frislanda of 500 years ago, side by side with the modern accurate map of Iceland, in order to show a similarity of outline, and thereby to aim at proving a discrepancy between the map and the text of the Zeno publication. Yet on this basis Professor Steenstrup decides that "the Frislanda of the map is Iceland," although both Frislanda and Iceland hold their respective places on the map, and in the text also the two are mentioned together in the same breath, on three several occasions. As I shall presently show by quotations, the map and text are in perfect accord as to the position of Frislanda, yet, by way of injurious dislocation, Professor Steenstrup sends the Frislanda of the map to one limbo, and the Frislanda of the text to another.

Messrs. Krarup and Steenstrup have, of course, as much right to assume that the name of Van Siggem was the phonetic equivalent of Zeno's Zichmni as Johann Reinhold Forster, John Pinkerton, and myself, had to assume that said equivalent was supplied by the name of Sinclair. The verification of either assumption must lie in the movements of the assumed personage being in accordance with the time, localities, &c., mentioned in connection with Zichmni in the Zeno narrative. There is no discordance in placing the movements of Henry Sinclair, Earl of Orkney, in the Shetland, Færøe, and Orkney groups. The assumption of the name of Van Siggem, however, entails the transportation of "the Frislanda of the text" to that part of the continental Friesland which is described by M. Krarup as "North Friesland (western parts of the Duchy of Slesvig)" and by Professor Steenstrup as "North Friesland or 'Strand' Friesland." The authors of the text, however, Nicolò and Antonio Zeno, were clearly of a very different opinion. In one place their narrative states that "Estlanda (Shetland) lies between Frislanda and Norvegia," and in another that "Zichmni possessed certain islands called Porlanda, lying not far from Frislanda to the south, and beyond the said small islands he was lord, on the mainland, of the duchy of Sorano, lying over against Scotia." In accordance with these two geographical statements, the map places the Shetlands between Frislanda and Norway, while the northern point of Scotia (Scotland) lies south-east of Frislanda, with the other islands intervening. "*The Frislanda of the Zeno narrative*," therefore, lies north-west of the northern point of Scotland. To those accordingly, who, like myself, have never doubted that Norvegia was Norway, and Scotia, Scotland, it followed that "the Frislanda of the Zeno narrative" was, as regards longitude, west of Norway and the Shetlands, and, as regards latitude, north of Scotland, the two positions making the conversion of Scotia into any other country but Scotland as great an absurdity as it would be to tell us that Norvegia was not Norway. Yet this Professor Steenstrup has had the courage to do. Although, both in text and map, Norvegia is found in conjunction with Suecia (Sweden); although on the map it has Dania (Denmark) to the south of it; although it has laid down on its coast "Trondo" for "Trondheim," and down at the south "Bergen," correctly so given; although Engroneland is a great mainland lying opposite to Norvegia, with Islanda lying between them, as Iceland should lie between Greenland and Norway; yet for this gentleman Norvegia is not Norway, nor Scotia, Scotland. Having found a home for Zichmni in North Friesland, he asks the reader to believe that "Norvegia" may well be a misprint for "Norges Harda," and that "Scotia" is "Goesia or Goestia, answering to Goestherde," both in that country, while "Engroneland is a North Frisian marshland, probably the Eiderstedt Peninsula."

The geography is curious, but every one has a right to his own opinion. Let us then take Prof. Steenstrup's geography on its own merits. Frislanda is North Friesland, and Norvegia and Scotia are districts therein. Frislanda, consequently, is much greater than Norvegia, and there is no knowing what it may include in its comprehensive embrace. The Shetland Islands, according to the Zeno narrative, lie between Frislanda and Norvegia. Are they then outside or inside of North Friesland? If outside, which they must be to suit the Zeno geography, then Norvegia must be outside also. Therefore Norvegia is both inside and outside of Frislanda. If, however, the Shetlands are inside of North Friesland, whereabouts are they to be found? But again, Frislanda includes Scotia, and must be much greater than it. Meanwhile the Zeno narrative tells us that the "little islands" which form Porlanda lie south of Frislanda, and between it and Scotia. Are they, then, outside or inside North Friesland? If outside, which they must be to suit the Zeno geography, then Scotia must be outside also. Therefore Scotia is both inside and outside of

Frislanda. If, however, the Porlanda islands are inside of North Friesland, whereabouts are they? Again, Nicolò Zeno went northward from the Shetland Islands to Engroneland, but, according to Professor Steenstrup, "Engroneland is certainly not Greenland, but a North Frisian marshland, probably the Eiderstedt Peninsula." But the latter is the most south-western part of his Friesland: how far to the south then are the poor Shetlands to be looked for? The narrative tells us that "friars resorted to the monastery in Engroneland from Norvegia, Suecia, and other countries." I wonder whether Suecia, which most of us have been in the habit of taking for Sweden, went also with Norvegia into North Friesland. It must be confessed that, in Professor Steenstrup's company, Frislanda has become an uncommonly extensive country. The companionship, however, fails to commend itself to my sympathy on the score of justice and truth. Theories which are equally at variance with the ancient text and with the known geography of to-day, are misleading to the casual reader, and unjust to the Zeno document. Certainly they will not induce me to give up my old belief that Norvegia is Norway; Suecia, Sweden; Scotia, Scotland; Engroneland, Greenland; and that the Færøe Islands, called in old Danish (as Admiral Zahrtmann, himself a Dane, tells us), "Færøisland," and which lie between Greenland and Norway, and north-west of Scotland, are the Frislanda of the Zeno narrative and map.

The real interest of the Zeno document lies in this, that it is the latest in existence, as far as we know, treating of the lost East Colony of Greenland, so anxiously sought for; and it is also the latest, as far as we know, treating of the Norse settlers in North America, and showing from the narrative of a fisherman that they still survived at that period, which was 100 years before Columbus. Mr. Krarup gives it, in English, as his ultimate decision, that "the map of the Zeni is a forgery of the editor's (of 1558) intended to vindicate for the Venetian travellers, the Zeni, the first discovery of America" and that "the Zenis (sic) never visited any part of America." Professor Steenstrup echoes the opinion in other words. If either of these gentlemen had carefully *read* the narrative which they have taken upon themselves so injuriously to criticise, they would have seen that it did not contain one single word of pretension that either Nicolò or Antonio Zeno ever set foot either in Estotiland, or Drogio, or any other part of North America, or that they "explored both the east and west coasts of Greenland."

R. H. MAJOR.

The Athabasca District of the Canadian N.W. Territory.

MARSEILLES, 5th Nov., 1883.

SIR,—With regard to the note on p. 646 of the November number of the R.G.S. 'Proceedings,' I may observe that besides the T'altsan Desse of my map, there is another stream, the Thu-ban Desse (Des Seins, or River Round-the-breasts), not far to the east, which is, as suggested, the river spoken of in Sir G. Back's narrative under the name of Thu-wu-desseh. The Thu-ban Desse takes its name from the Great Slave Lake, which is called "Thu-t'ue" or Lake of the Breasts by the Chipewyans, because its eastern part is terminated by two extensive bays, in outline fancifully resembling the female bosom.

The T'altsan Desse (meaning Copper, i. e. Copper-Indians or Yellow-knives River) is known to the French Canadians as Rivière du Rocher, a name of which I did not make mention in my map. "T'altsan Desse" is the Indian name of five different rivers in the more northern parts of the North-western Territory: 1, the Copper River of Hearne; 2, the Copper River of the Bering Sea; 3, an affluent of the Mackenzie; 4, another tributary of the Great Slave Lake, below Fort Rae, on the