

Antonio Millo Isolario (Athens, Greece: AdVenture Publications, 2006), ISBN 978-960-87792-2-8, hardcover, lii + 300 pp, €75.00

We have few details about the life of Antonio Millo. He was born on the island of Milos in the Cyclades in the early part of the 16th century, and spent much of his life sailing in the Mediterranean, attaining later in life the rank of “Armiraglio dal Zante,” or the official Harbor Pilot of the island. He came to Venice and studied the art of cartography, and by 1557 was producing portolan charts. His career as a cartographer continued until at least 1591; in addition to portolan charts he received commissions for the creation of sumptuous atlases, and also made *isolarii*, or island-books illustrated with maps. Until now Millo’s beautiful *isolarii* have been available only in manuscript at a few research libraries and in private collections; this book makes his work available to a much wider audience.

Itself a sumptuous and ambitious production, this book presents Millo’s work to a very wide audience indeed, for it contains not only Millo’s Italian text (transcribed by Agamemnon Tselikas), but good translations into Greek (by Tselikas) and English (by Eleni Agathou), trilingual introductory material about Millo and his *isolario* (by Tselikas and George Toliás), and trilingual geographical indices. The publishers have generously printed Millo’s work on superb paper and it is beautifully and strongly bound. The book is based on a manuscript in the collection of Sylvia Ioannou; the dedicatory letter is dated 1582, and this is probably Millo’s earliest surviving *isolario*. The manuscript includes a *portolano* (a list of distances between ports and instructions for entering them) following the *isolario*, but only the *isolario* is published here.

Glancing at a page of the book, one might think that it is a facsimile edition of the manuscript. However, this is not the case, and the nature of the edition bears clarification. It includes wonderfully clear reproductions of all of Millo’s maps, but the text is not in Millo’s handwriting. It has been transcribed and printed in a font which has the look of an antique script, but which is much more easily legible than Millo’s (samples of Millo’s handwriting may be seen on pp. xvi-xvii, l-li, 256-257, and 298). Transcriptions of the toponyms also appear in the margins of each map, and the Greek and English translations of the text usually appear on the page opposite the Italian text and map. Thus the purity of a facsimile edition has been surrendered in favor of utility, legibility, and accessibility.

Millo’s appealing maps, with their compass roses, depictions of the buildings of cities and towns, and indications of navigational hazards, rely on those of the *isolario* tradition, for example those of Bartolommeo dalli Sonetti whose *isolario* was published in Venice in 1485. But the texts are Millo’s own. The texts of other *isolarii* mention historical events and classical myths set on the islands they discuss, but Millo’s focus is on the practicalities of navigation. Here, for example, is his description of Brazza (today, Brac, an island (land area of 394 km²), off the Dalmatian coast in the Adriatic Sea, Croatia):

“Brazza is an island to which a Venetian nobleman goes as governor. And it has many villages and it is full of forests, with a good harbour called Milna on the northwest. Further north is Fava harbour which is good for galleys, and further northeast is the cape of San Pietro where small vessels can load timber. And then further east you find

the harbour of San Zuane, and before that there is a very good harbour called Pissopia, and then the cape called St Pietro. And on the southwest is the harbour of Brazza. And said island produces considerable honey, and its perimeter is 50 miles.”

His descriptions of more important islands such as Sicily (pp. 73-78) and Crete (pp. 243-247) are of course longer and more detailed—as is his account of his home island of Milos (pp. 145-148). Other isolario authors such as Benedetto Bordone expanded their works by including islands outside the Mediterranean, and in Millo’s isolario which is British Library Additional MS. 10,365, ff. 36r-96v, he includes descriptions (but no maps) of Cuba, Sumatra, Iceland, England, and a few other distant islands. But, in the manuscript reproduced here and in British Library Cotton MS. Julius E.II., ff. 1-60v, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana MS It. IV 2 (=5540), he confines himself to the Mediterranean.

One thing that one misses in the volume is a list of the known manuscripts of Millo’s isolario, and some discussion, however brief, of the development of the maps and text of his work over time. I have not studied this matter in detail, but there are certainly substantial refinements in Millo’s map of Meleda (Mljet, in Dalmatia) from his 1582 manuscript reproduced here and his map of the island in his 1590 manuscript which is Greenwich, National Maritime Museum, MS P/17, ff. 38r-109v. In his 1582 text he mentions the stagno or lake on the island but does not depict it on his map, but it does appear in the Greenwich manuscript, and there are other differences between the maps as well (images of the Greenwich manuscript are available through the Library’s online catalogue at <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/uhtbin/cgiirsi/abcd/0/49>). One also wishes that the bibliography on p. xxxix were a bit more ample.

The year 2003 saw the publication of a splendid facsimile edition of the isolario of Alonso de Santa Cruz (*Islario y cartografía de Santa Cruz*, ed. Mariano Cuesta Domingo, Madrid: Real Sociedad Geográfica, 2003); in 2005 the pioneering isolario of Christopher Buondelmonti was published in facsimile (*Liber insularum archipelagi: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf Ms. G 13*, ed. Irmgard Siebert and Max Plassmann, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005, reviewed in *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1). So these are good years for lovers of the isolario genre, and this beautiful presentation of Antonio Millo’s isolario makes them even better.

Antonio Millo *Isolario* may be obtained from the Moufflon Bookshop, Nicosia, Cyprus (www.moufflon.com.cy) or from the publisher, Ms. Artemis Scoutari (askout@ath.forthnet.gr).

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