en_Columbus's First Letter - Stemma Codicum - Carta Colom

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Columbus's First Letter

Bibliographical Summary - Stemma Codicum

The various editions of Columbus's letter are organized, and numbered, according to their logical groups. That is, their numbers have no relation to the sequence in which they were published. The sequence is instead indicated by the 'generation' of each edition; this relates to the genealogical table of the letters.The First Printed Letter: Barcelona, April 1493The first printed letter was derived from a letter which Columbus had initially written at sea on February 15th, 1493. The postscript, as copied by the printer, was dated Lisbon March 14th [should perhaps read 4th?], 1493, and was addressed to the "escriuano deració" (modern Spanish: 'escribano de Racion'), the secretary of the royal treasury, then one Luis de Santángel.; The postscript also indicates that this letter was enclosed in another which Columbus had addressed to Ferdinand and Isabella.item 1
Generation I[untitled] ([Barcelona: Pedro Posa, April 1493])
Spanish; folio; 2 leaves

There is neither heading nor title. The letter simply begins: "Senor por que se que aureis plazer dela grand vitoria ... ." There is no publisher's imprint. The attribution to Posa is made through the similarity of its typography to his known publications.
The dating of the publication is conjectural, but would have been very close to the receipt of Columbus's letter at Barcelona in late March, early April.
The only known copy was rediscovered in the middle of the nineteenth century and is now in the New York Public Library. Most recently, it has been completely reproduced in facsimile, transcribed, and translated (by Lucia Graves) in Obregón;, 51-73.
Other References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7171; Harrisse, no.7; Lenox, no.1; Morison, 180-87

item 2
Generation V[untitled] (Valladolid: Pedro Giraldi and Miguel de Planes, [after 1493])
Spanish; quarto; 4 leaves

This is a reprinting of no. 1 with the addition of a new imprint.
The only known copy is in the Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, Florence.
It appears to be the quarto edition cited by Lenox, no.2. Hirsch, no.17, and Morison, 181, date it to 1497.
Other Reference: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7172

The Second Printed Letter: Rome, 1493This Latin edition is from a translation by one Aliander (or Leander) de Cosco. Aliander's added introduction to the letter states that the translation was finished on "the third of the kalends of May," i.e., April 29th, 1493. (Harrisse, no.1, incorrectly states April 25th.) It is unclear whether the translation was undertaken in Barcelona or Rome, although the colophon by an Italian bishop and the specification of the Papal year (first of Alexander VI's reign) implies the latter site.

Aliander's introduction cites Ferdinand of Spain as Columbus' sole patron. This is a key characteristic of all derivative editions, with the exception of the two Rome editions of 1493 which comprise Latin Series D and which add Isabella.

The introduction states that the letter had originally been sent to Raphael Sanxis, the king's treasurer. The difference in name to Luis de Santángel; has led many to suppose that a second manuscript letter by Columbus had been sent to Rome (e.g., Harrisse, 6). It is now accepted, however, that the new name was a mistake on Aliander's part, and that only one manuscript was printed (Obregón;, 4).

A colophon was also added to the translation by "R. L. de Corbaria" (or Berardus/Leonard of Carninis), bishop of Monte Peloso (1491-98). De Corbaria dedicated the letter to "the most invincible King of Spain," Ferdinand.

item 3
Generation IIDe insulis Indiae supra Gangem nuper inuentis ([Rome: Stephen Plannck, 1493])
Latin; quarto; 4 leaves

Title imputed from Aliander's added introduction.
Transcribed by Lenox, 16-60.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7173; Hain, no.*54489; Harrisse, no.1; JCB, 16; Lenox, no.3

Series A:
BaselTwo Latin editions of the letter appeared in Basel in 1493-94. Both feature the abstract woodcuts representing Columbus's landfall. The first, lacking an imprint, is clearly a copy of no. 3, with similar contractions of the Latin text and with the introductory reference only to Ferdinand. The second Basel edition is in turn a copy of the first.item 4
Generation IIIaDe Insulis inuentis ([Basel, 1493])
Latin; quarto; 10 leaves

This edition is assumed to have been printed in Basel as the woodcuts were reused in 1494 in a text with an actual Basel imprint (no. 5). Different historians and bibliographers asign various printers, most probably Jacobus Wolff de Pforzheim or Michael Fürter; (on behalf of Johann Bergmann de Olpe). It was almost certainly produced in 1493.
There are today only four complete copies of this edition; the only one in North America being in the New York Public Library.
Reproduced in facsimile, transcribed, and given a literal translation in Lenox, 1-60.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7174; Hain, no.*5491; Harrisse, no.2; JCB, 18; Lenox, no.6

item 5
Generation IIIbCarolus Verardus, In laudem Serenissimi Ferdinandi Hispaniae regis Bethicæ & regni Granatæ obsidio victoria & tri&utildephus.; Et de Insulis in mari Indico nuper inuentis (Basel: Johann Bergmann de Olpe, April 21st, 1494)
Latin; octavo; 36 leaves

This is two works issued together. The first is a prose drama, entitled Historia Baetica by some bibliographers, in praise of Ferdinand on the 1492 conquest of Granada.
The letter, entitled De insulis nuper in mari Indico repertis, comprises the last 15 pages of the whole work.
The imprint, at the end of the play, bears the date "Undecimo kalendas Maii," or April 21st, 1494, and carries the initials "I[ohann] B[ergmann].
The contractions are less severe than those of no. 4. The woodcuts are the same as the earlier image, except for the title image which has been recut.
This is the edition owned by the Osher Map Library.
This website contains a reproduction, transcription, and translation of this letter.
References: Hain, no.*15942; Harrisse, no.15; JCB, 25; Lenox, no.11; Walsh, no.1254

Series B:
ParisAt about the same time as a copy of the first Roman edition (no. 3) reached Basel, another copy reached Paris. There, it was immediately reprinted by Guyot Marchant, a printer in the Champs-Gailliard, in no less than three editions.

That Marchant did not use the first Basel edition (no. 4) as his source is shown by the Paris edition's use of the Rome text without the subtle varients introduced in Basel. That Marchant used no. 3 is shown by the mention only of Ferdinand in the introduction.

Marchant's editions are easily identified from the woodcut image (fol. 1v) of an angel appearing to the shepherds, announcing Christ's birth. His third edition also bears his printer's device.

item 6
Generation IIIaEpistola de insulis repertis de nouo (Paris: Guyot Marchant, 1493)
Latin; quarto; 4 leaves

References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7175 varient a; Lenox, no.7

item 7
Generation IIIbEpistola de insulis de nouo repertis (Paris: Guyot Marchant, 1493)
Latin; quarto; 4 leaves

Lenox, no.8, assumes that this is a reprint of no. 6. Only two copies are known, one being at the John Carter Brown Library.
Other References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7175 varient b; Harrisse, no.5; JCB, 19

item 8
Generation IIIcEpistola de insulis nouiter repertis (Paris: Guyot Marchant, 1493)
Latin; quarto; 4 leaves

Unlike the slightly earlier Paris editions, this has Marchant's large, woodcut, "printer's device" on the title page, below the title. This is in addition to the woodcut of the angel appearing to the shepherds.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7175; Harrisse, no.6; JCB, 20; Lenox, no.9

Series C:
AntwerpAgain, another copy of the first Rome letter (no. 3) reached Antwerp, where it was reprinted in another Latin edition.item 9
Generation IIIDe insulis Indi[a]e supra Gangem nuper inue[n]tis(Antwerp: Thierry Martins, 1493)
Latin; quarto; 4 leaves

The title is imputed from the introductory statement.
The only known copy is in the Royal Library, Brussels.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7176; JCB, 20; Lenox, no.10

Series D:
Rome "Isabella" EditionsSoon after Stephan Plannck printed the first Latin copy in Rome (no. 3), two further editions appeared with changes to the introduction: Raphael Sanxis was changed to Gabriel Sanchez, and Isabella was added to Ferdinand as Columbus's patron. Bibliographers are unclear as to the order of these two editions. For example, Harrisse, 13-14, suggests that Silber produced the first corrected edition, which prompted Plannck to come out with his second edition; others indicate that the Plannck's second edition was issued before Silber's. For this reason, I do not specify their order within the generation. In other respects, such as their lack of a title, the two editions are very

much the same as no. 3.item 10
Generation IIIDe insulis Indi[a]e supra Gangem nuper inve[n]tis(Rome: Eucharius Silber [Argentius], 1493)
Latin; quarto; 4 leaves

The title is imputed from the introduction.
Transcribed by Lenox, 16-60.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7178; Hain, no.*15942; Harrisse, no.3; JCB, 19; Lenox, no.5

item 11
Generation IIIDe insulis Indi[a]e supra Gangem nuper inve[n]tis([Rome: Stephanus Plannck, 1493])
Latin; quarto; 4 leaves

Reproduced and translated (by Frank E. Robbins) in Clements, 7-18. It has been transcribed by Lenox, 16-60.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7177; Harrisse, no.4; JCB, 18-19; Lenox, no.4

Italian Verse EditionsA paraphrase or summary of Columbus's letter, derived from no. 3 or no. 10, was rendered into Italian verse by Giuliano Dati in 1493. According to the introduction, Dati made the translation at the request of Giovanni Filippo dal Legname (Delignamine), private secretary to Ferdinand of Spain. First published in Rome, it subsequently went through a series of printings in Florence.

Most of this group of publications featured, on their title page, a woodcut of King Ferdinand looking out over the ocean at Columbus's two caravels and at the longboat making the actual first landing on the distant island. The initial woodcut was done in Rome; the first two Florentine editions feature a copy, with substantially different layout; the final Florentine edition is a further copy, lacking the woodcut.

item 12
Generation IIIaGiuliano Dati, Lettera delle isole novamente trovata(Rome: Eucharius Silber [Argentius], June 15th, 1493)
Italian; quarto; 4 leaves

The title woodcut (with Ferdinand at upper left, in the background) is reproduced in Hirsch, 539.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.7, no.7999

item 13
Generation IIIbGiuliano Dati, La lettera dellisole che ha trouata nuouamente il Re disgagna (Florence: Laurentius de Morgianus and Johann Petri, October 26th, 1493)
Italian; quarto; 4 leaves

The title woodcut has been recut from the Rome original. Ferdinand is placed at lower left, in the foreground.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.7, no.8000; Harrisse, no.9; Lenox, no.13

item 14
Generation IVGiuliano Dati, La lettera dellisole che ha trouata nuouamente el Re disgagna (Florence: Laurentius de Morgianus and Johann Petri, October 26th, 1495)
Italian; quarto; 4 leaves

Republication, with same woodcut, from no. 13.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.7, no.8002; Harrisse Additions, no.3; Lenox, no.15

item 15
Generation VGiuliano Dati, Isole Trouate Nouamente Per El Re di Spagna (Florence, [after October 26th, 1495])
Italian; quarto; 4 leaves

This is a copy of either no. 13 or no. 14, in which the title page illustration has again been recut.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.7, no.8003; Lenox, no.14

item 16
Generation IVGiuliano Dati, Questa e la hystoria della inventiõe; delle diese isole di Cannaria in Indiane extracte duna Epistola di Christofano Colombo ([Florence?, after October 26th, 1493])
Italian; quarto; 4 leaves

Although Harrisse thought that this preceded no. 13 because of its lack of a woodcut on the title page, textual clues indicate that it was in fact a copy of no. 13.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.7, no.8001; Harrisse, no.8; Lenox, no.12

The 1497 German EditionA rather late edition was printed, in German, in Strasburg in 1497. The introduction implies that the translation was made in Ulm from both the Spanish and the Latin, although their is no indication when it was done. This has given rise to speculation that there was an early, German edition published in Ulm, but there is no known copy of such a printing.item 17
Generation VEin schön; hübsch; lesen von etlichen inßlen; die do in kurtzen zyten funden synd durch de künig; von hispania(Strassburg: Bartholomeus Kistler, September 30th, 1497)
German; quarto; 8 leaves

The titlepage woodcut, of Christ addressing Ferdinand and his followers, was also used in the same printer's edition of Johann Lichtenberger's Prognosticatio zu teutsch, printed in October 1497.
References: Gesamtkatalog, vol.6, no.7179; Hain, no.*5493; Harrisse, no.19; JCB, 29; Lenox, no.16

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