

The Vallard or Gandille atlas (1547), a reexamination

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The Vallard Atlas is one of the most famous so called “Dieppe maps” from the mid-sixteenth century. The Atlas, housed in the Huntington Library (HM29) is named after its presumed first owner, a certain Nicolas Vallard, of Dieppe. In this presentation, I claim Nicolas Vallard was probably just the mapmaker, and I offer a new identity for its original owner, Pierre de la Gandille, a Normand galley captain living at the time of Francis I and Henri II.

While scholars of the Atlas have been mostly interested in its Portuguese sources and the question of whether it documents early Portuguese knowledge of Australia, I show that some of the atlas sources were actually German, and examine the French context of production of the atlas. De la Gandille was personally linked with Guillaume Prudhomme, Francis I’s *Trésorier de l’épargne* (Treasurer) – who probably acted as his patron, and later, during the rule of Henri II, he was personally linked to vice-admiral Villegagnon (who was a galley captain and later lead French colonial efforts in Brazil) and became a client of admiral of Coligny, the leading backer of French colonial efforts in the 1550s–1560s, and the leader of the French protestants in the late 1560s. This allows me to illuminate the pro-colonial discourse the atlas’s iconographical elements contain, and explain how Portuguese elements are translated into a French context to celebrate the accession of Henri II in 1547.

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