

УДК 91:94(210.7)

**LEGENDARY ISLANDS OR PHANTOM ISLANDS: IN THE SEARCH OF
MYTHICAL LANDS IN OLD FOLK TALES, ON HISTORICAL MAPS
AND IN WEATHER PHENOMENA ON OPEN SEA**

Christensen C.S.

What is the meaning of legendary or phantom islands? A phantom island is a purposed island which was included on maps for a period of time, but was later found not to exist. Most of these phantom islands appeared on maps from the 1200s until the early 1800s. Some of islands did not disappear on maps until our time. But is an island simply falsely mapped and then turned out to be not existent. This paper analyses the histories, meaning of and the etymologies of these phantom islands in different parts of the world ocean. It can be argued that these mysterious lands were almost all found in the Middle Ages and some centuries later. To which depictions of sea monsters, dragons and Cyclops on various maps from the Middle Ages bear witness? Or these fantasies and hallucinations are in the minds of sailors? This paper also tries to put these legendary islands into a far much larger perspective. Be it in the world of mythology or in the world of fantasy, in the inexplicable universe or simply in weather phenomena under extreme conditions both among the sailors and in the world of nature.

Keywords: phantom island, Ну-Brasil, historical cartography, Bermeja, Fata Morgana (Mirage), Antillia, Island of California, Thule, Atlantis, mythical place, Celtic mythology, Robert Peary, Crocker Land, Satananez, Mayda.

**ЛЕГЕНДАРНЫЕ ОСТРОВА ИЛИ ОСТРОВА-ПРИЗРАКИ:
В ПОИСКАХ МИФИЧЕСКИХ ЗЕМЕЛЬ В СТАРЫХ СКАЗКАХ,
НА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИХ КАРТАХ И В ПОГОДНЫХ ЯВЛЕНИЯХ
В ОТКРЫТОМ МОРЕ**

Христенсен К.С.

Что такое легендарные или призрачные острова? Остров-призрак – это предполагаемый остров, который был добавлен на карты в определенный

период времени, но позже было обнаружено, что его не существует. Большинство из таких призрачных островов появлялись на картах с 1200-х до начала 1800-х гг. Некоторые из островов не исчезли с карт до нашего времени. Но разве возможно, чтобы остров был ложно нанесен на карту, а затем оказалось, что его не существует? В этой статье анализируется история, значение и этимология таких призрачных островов в разных частях мирового океана. Можно утверждать, что почти все такие таинственные земли были обнаружены в средние века и несколькими столетиями позже. О чем свидетельствуют изображения морских чудовищ, драконов и циклопов на различных картах средневековья? Или это – фантазии и галлюцинации в сознании моряков? В данной статье также предпринята попытка представить легендарные острова в гораздо более широкой перспективе. Будь то в мире мифологии или в мире фэнтези, в необъяснимой вселенной или просто в погодных явлениях и в экстремальных условиях как среди моряков, так и в мире природы.

Ключевые слова: остров-призрак, Хай-Бразил, историческая картография, Бермеха, Фата-Моргана (Мираж), Антилия, остров Калифорния, Туле, Атлантида, мифическое место, кельтская мифология, Роберт Пири, Земля Крокера, Сатананез, Майда.

Prologue

Even in today's society in 2024 many people share view that there may well be some form of existence or inexplicable reality beyond the material world that we can see and touch. Indeed, this has formed the basis for a number of the world's religious thoughts. But is imagination alone the driving force in the scenario where land areas appear on maps from the 11th century until the early 19th century?

Place is often thought of as something physical and material, a purely spatial and real construct, but this concept is evidently more complex and multi-dimensional. Humans endow place with special meanings that vary from one individual to the next. There are stories behind every place, and some localities are not “physical

places” at all, but exist only in the minds of the believers who, thus, sustain their abstract, fragile existence.

Humans always hunger for place and all that comes with it – exploration, adventure and mystery. People want to journey to remote destinations and uncover mythical places because they are seized by a need to discover a strange world, or at least, a world they want to believe is stranger than they know it to be. But is it the whole truth about the many phantom islands that have existed through history?

Maps and historical cartography

From earliest times, man has been both intrigued and fascinated with what lies in the horizon or the distance, beyond the field of vision. What lay beyond that far horizon – lost lands, islands of hope, treasure islands or forgotten realms? Curiosity of course is a human trait but so is imagination, too. Early man was curious about what might lie on the other side of the distant horizon. To explain the inexplicable, it populated unseen places and regions with all sort of fabulous creatures. As well creatures and beings like himself but also very different from himself. Some call it imagination but it is also a way to maintain some form of normalcy in his existence [12, p. 32-34].

Maps are visual representations of how humans understand the world. Products of social belief, they reflect existing powers and believes. Referencing the well-known Italian writer Italo Calvino, the British author Travis Elborough writes that maps “presuppose the idea of a narrative because they are conceived on the basis of a journey, an odyssey” [8, p. 8].

Every place on a map has an underlying story to tell. However, that is not the whole truth. A cartographic map is recorded in a specific time period and is therefore subject to the time’s perception of reality. At one time there existed sea monsters and Cyclops, that is, in man’s understanding of reality. Superstition is, of course, a situation in which actions occur for which the person has no proper explanation. Maps do not just illustrate the world; they also describe it [12, p. 34].

Yet, the relationship between maps and the cartographers producing them goes both ways: people create maps based on existing knowledge and beliefs, but

also the maps create new beliefs. Some lands are added to maps as a result of ancient myths and historical legends, while others arise from tales that have been spun in modern times. No matter the context in which the places are conceived, these lands forge flows of belief. And, regardless of whether these newly constructed beliefs are founded or not, whether they are borne of certain fact or illusionary fiction, they are certainly real to the believers [8, p. 7-9].

Combining humans' insatiable hunger for the mysterious unknown and their innate love of place, especially islands, we arrive at the focus of this paper – phantom islands. These are islands that were found on maps for centuries, but that were ultimately found to be non-existent.

Tales from the other worlds

There are a variety of reasons why these phantom islands were drawn into maps, roughly falling into two categories: error and imagination. Human error causes sailors and seafarers to mistake mirages, low clouds, rock formations, and other misleading visual phenomena for land. Imprecise navigational and charting equipment can also deceive seamen. These, thus, result in the creation of phantom islands. Sometimes, the “mistake” is not an error at all, but a deliberate imaginative construct. Phantom islands may also emerge from purposeful deception by those with specific reasons to invent an entire island – cartographers guarding themselves from copyright traps or creative writers whose fantastic tales of adventure claim to have discovered new and exciting lands [7, p. 11-12].

Over time, with modernization and globalization, technological advancements and other improvements in navigation and mapping have slowly, but surely, uncovered the world's secret places and mysterious destinations, including debunking the mythical existence of some phantom islands.

No longer do explorers have mysteries to solve – in fact, no longer do we even have explorers. Instead, we have comprehensive navigational databases, free and accessible maps on our computers and phones, and satellites circling our planet to tell us exactly where we are and what is around us. As more and more data and details are discovered and documented about the furthest reaches of our planet, little

is left unknown or unusual. The result is a world that feels “flatter”, a world today that is not quite as extraordinary, not quite as thrilling, as it was for those before us. To put it simply, but crudely, globalization is making places feel “too familiar”, and our world is becoming “all-discovered”. On the flipside, this does not necessarily mean that technology and globalization will definitely ruin discovery for humankind and starve human beings love of place [7, p. 12-14].

Fata Morgana (Mirage)

Fata Morgana is a complex form of superior mirage visible in a narrow band right above the horizon. The term *Fata Morgana* is the Italian translation of “Morgan the Fairy” (Morgan le Fay of Arthurian legend). These mirages are often seen in the Italian Strait of Messina, and were described as fairy castles in the air or false land conjured by her magic. Fata Morgana mirages significantly distort the object or objects on which they are based, often such that the object is completely unrecognizable. A Fata Morgana may be seen on land or at sea, in polar regions, or in deserts. It may involve almost any kind of distant object, including boats, islands and the coastline. Often, a Fata Morgana changes rapidly. The mirage comprises several inverted (upside down) and erects (right-side up) images that are stacked on top of one another. Fata Morgana mirages also show alternating compressed and stretched zones [15].

The optical phenomenon occurs because rays of light bend when they pass through air layers of different temperatures in a steep thermal inversion where an atmospheric duct has formed. In calm weather, a layer of significantly warmer air may rest over colder dense air, forming an atmospheric duct that acts like a refracting lens, producing a series of both inverted and erect images. A Fata Morgana requires a duct to be present; thermal inversion alone is not enough to produce this kind of mirage. While a thermal inversion often takes place without there being an atmospheric duct, an atmospheric duct cannot exist without their first being a thermal inversion [15].

A Fata Morgana is most commonly seen in polar regions, especially over large sheets of ice that have a uniform low temperature. It may, however, be observed

in almost any area. In polar regions the Fata Morgana phenomenon is observed on relatively cold days. In deserts, over oceans, and over lakes, however, a Fata Morgana may be observed on hot days [15].

Old folklore, legends and divine land

The first of the six categories under which phantom islands can be classified is under the category myths and legends. One of the oldest phantom islands is the island of Antillia (33 parallel north/54 parallel west) half way from the Azores to the USA. Antillia (Ante-Ilha) means the Opposite Island or Fore-Island, its origins go back to the year 711, the year the Moors conquered large parts of Spain, when they beat the Visigoths, who had lived for hundreds of years on the Iberian Peninsula. According to an Iberian legend, seven Catholic bishops with treasures fled to Antillia or the Isle of Seven Cities. Around 1424 Antillia began to appear on maps again, because of the Spanish legend of the Seven Cities of Gold. Many a sailor sailed towards Antillia, but after just 100 years the number of disappointed treasure hunters, among them we find Christopher Columbus, was so great that the island disappeared from maps from the end of the 17th century. The reasonable explanation, at that time, was that it was confused with an island in the Caribbean Sea [1, p. 70-71; 2, p. 465].

Two much more famous phantom islands are Hy-Brasil (51 parallel north/17 parallel west) west of Ireland and St. Brendan's Island (28 parallel north/23 parallel west) west of the Canary Islands. In Celtic mythology it teems with unknown and fabled islands. And people who lived on the west coast of Ireland around Galway and Limerick told of the clan of Breasel, who went west and lived on the Island of Breasel (the original name of Hy-Brasil). Every seven years, the Irish stood at the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and saw the island of Hy-Brasil, as it appeared on the horizon. The myth would not die and from the 1600s the intensification of searches in the Atlantic began on the island that has been on maps since 1325. Many a story about a small island with black rabbits and an old castle where a druid lived was in circulation for several hundred years. Right up to the 1800s sailors were looking for Hy Brasil. In the 1870s and 1880s British cartographers recognized the island's existence. Hy-Brasil has also been identified with Porcupine Bank 200 kilometres

west of Ireland, until now nothing is clarified nor the black rabbits [1, p. 50-51; 4, p. 200; 5, p. 438].

St. Brendan's Island goes back to 500s. The island is named after the monk St. Brendan, who arrived together with 14 other monks on the island in the year 512. The following years St. Brendan's Island was remained concealed behind a thick curtain of mist. Many sailors travelled the 200 kilometres from the Canary Islands to the west. When they reached the place, they were enveloped in fog. In the 1300s and 1400s the locals on the Canary Islands and the sailors referred to St. Brendan's Island as the lost island discovered by St. Brendan, but nobody found it since. The fear of giant whales, sea monsters and other creatures meant that it took until the end of the 1700s before the search for St. Brendan's Island. But all travellers returned disappointed with undone business. Further expeditions were organised in the search for the island, but from the 1800s onwards, reported sightings of St. Brendan's Island and the mysterious fog became less frequent. And the island disappeared from the map [1, p. 35].

The most famous of all phantom islands are without doubt Atlantis (35 parallel north/39 parallel west) half way between Europe and North America in the Atlantic Ocean. Since 600 BC, when the Greek philosophers of Solon and Plato mentioned Atlantis, people all over the world have searched for the legendary island. The fabled civilization that should have been at a very advanced stage is the focal point of myths in all religions and several countries, including Greece, which claims to have evidence of the existence of Atlantis in their waters. The facts are, however, that the myth of Atlantis has had an influence on almost all cultures here on earth. In its yearning for progress, one has always been able to refer to Atlantis and the mythical people of Hyperborean's – a people beyond the realm of the north wind. No evidence of Atlantis has ever been found, nor under water [3, p. 24-26].

Despite all its associated Irish legend and lore, there was never any mention of Hy Brasil and St. Brendan's Island or any variant neither in any of the oldest Irish myths nor in the earliest Irish literature. Yet, the island connection with Irish mythology was never called into question, much less the existence of the island, in

the first place. With this in mind, limited mainly to classical literature and archaeology, Freitag concludes that this lack of appearance in old Irish mythology means an ancient Irish belief in Hy Brasil should not be considered at all. Curiously, although there is no evidence Hy Brasil has anything to do with Irish tradition, a surprising amount of Irish legends and mythology has become associated with the island.

Islands that should explain the incomprehensible

The second category includes islands that should explain the incomprehensible. At the origin of the appearance of phantom islands, large parts of the globe were unexplored, and when you drew a map there had to be something on the entire map. The white spots testified to the cartographer's lack of knowledge. Especially three islands are important: Thule, Java la Grande and the Cassiterides.

Around 500-400 BC the Greek geographers fought a lot with their maps of the world. Greek and Persian explorers were travelling a lot, but they had to understand what they were seeing, and it could be a problem. The Island of Thule (60 parallel north/28 parallel west) – 500 kilometres southwest of Iceland is such an island that should explain the incomprehensible to the Greeks. Around 325 BC, Pytheas of Massalia travelled to the British islands as far north as the Shetland Islands and further north after days of travel to Thule. The sun was rarely in the sky and the people were living of grains, grass and vegetables. Thule was situated at the end of the world. The island was invented to understand the northern parts of the world. Thule disappeared from the maps in the 1600s. Nowadays scientists are discussing where Pytheas of Massalia really was. Iceland, Greenland and the island of Saaremaa near Estonia have been mentioned.

Java le Grande (12 parallel south/124 parallel east) was according to Marco Polo (1254-1324) the largest island of the world. Java Minor was Sumatra and Java le Grande was situated near Australia. Aristotle first mentioned a massive land mass on the southern part of the globe. Terra Australis Incognita actually means unknown land of the south. Around 350 BC the actually areas of Indonesia and Australia were complete unknown land to the Europeans. But something has to be drawn. And was

Java la Grande a lucky choice to place a large land area where Australia is or did the Greeks know more than we know today. And yes, Australia is in a way the largest island of the world. In the 1600s, Java la Grande disappeared from the maps, when the Dutch found Australia [3, p. 134-136].

The islands of Cassiterides (means Tin Islands) (50 parallel north/8 parallel west) just west of Cornwall. Around 430 BC the Greek geographer Herodotus mentioned the Cassiterides and again by the Greek geographer Strabo around 60 BC. The Tin Trade of Europe was dominated by the Phoenicians and the Greeks were very jealous at the people living in nowadays Lebanon. In fact the Greeks had no idea about where the Phoenicians got there tin from. But it was a weakness and therefore the Cassiterides was placed on the map. Scientists have a little knowledge, like the Greeks, of the secret place of the Tin Islands. The Phoenicians managed to keep their secret tin stocks for several thousand years. From the 1600s we could find the Cassiterides on maps anymore [3, p. 69].

Mystical Islands (Land of hope and treasures)

In modern times the earth has almost been geographically described 100%. But in man there still lives a hope that there is something unexplored. Something that gives hope of more wealth or that there are still areas that are unexplored. In the third category two islands are interest, the Island of California and Sandy Island on each side of the globe.

The European explorers dreamed of the Californian utopia long before the gold rush in the 1800s. The Island of California (30 parallel north/115 parallel west) – just west of the Californian coast is such an example. The first known evidence of the legend of the Island of California was in the 1510 published romance novel “*Las Sergas de Esplandian*” and its sequel “*Amadis de Gaula*” by the Spanish author Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo. In the last-mentioned book, the author placed the island close to the side of the Terrestrial Paradise (nowadays California) and peopled by black women, who lived in the manner of Amazons on an island with an abundance of different resources.

In 1602 the Spanish explorer Sebastian Vizcaino acknowledges the existence of the island. The Carmelite friar Antonio de la Ascencion, who had been on the routes of the Spanish adventurer Sebastian Vizcaino, confirmed the island's existence and specified that the Island of California and the island of the state were separated by the Mediterranean Sea of California. Later in the 1600s the Spanish Jesuit missionary and cartographer Eusebio Francisco Kino revived the fact that Baja California was in fact a peninsula and not an island. While studying in Europe, Kino had accepted the insularity of California, but when he reached Mexico he began to have doubts. He made a series of overland expeditions from northern Sonora to areas within or near the Colorado River's delta in 1698-1706. Jesuit missionary-explorers in Baja California who attempted to lay the issue finally to rest included Juan de Ugarte (1721), Ferdinand Konščak (1746) and Wenceslaus Linck (1766). The matter was settled beyond all disputes, when the expeditions of Juan Bautista de Anza traveled between Sonora and the west coast of Alta California in the period of 1774-1776. Furthermore, in 1747 the Spanish King Ferdinand VI declared that California is not an island [3, p. 64-65; 6, p. 263].

Sandy Island (19 parallel south/159 parallel east) was situated just northwest of New Caledonia in the Pacific Ocean. Sandy Island appeared on German maps in the 1880s discovered by James Cook in 1774, and was on maps until the early 2010s. As late 2012 an Australian of marine scientist used maps with Sandy Island. The last written observation took place in 1876 in high sun, when the whaling ship "Velocity" sighted the island in the horizon. The island roughly the size of Manhattan (60 km²) was on its first original map in 1908, where the British admiralty chart plotted an island 500 kilometres northwest of New Caledonia. However, the reality was that nobody have ever read a written report of the island or even seen a photo or drawing of it. In 1999 Sandy Island appeared in of the most recognized atlases of the world, "The Times Atlas of the World" and on Google Maps until 2013. But what did James Cook and the whalers on "Velocity" seen? One of the most plausible and more accepted suggestions is that the mariners saw a large pumice sea raft. This theory gains weight due to the fact that Sandy Island was supposedly located on a "pumice

raft” created by wind and sea currents in the region. Pumice rafts refer to lava that has been ejected into the sea from an underwater volcano and that has cooled rapidly, sealing in bubbles of gas in the rock that make the entire raft light enough to float on water [3, p. 206-207] ; 10].

Strategic islands (Land of power)

Marking an island on an international map can have severe political consequences for the country that claims rights over the area as well as for the countries and neighbours around the area. The fourth category is called strategic islands. Today there is a law on 200 nautical mile rights. Exclusive Economic Zone, a sea area up to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the coast, which a coastal state has the exclusive right to exploit the resources of the sea, the seabed and the subsoil. Where there are oil and gold in the subsoil it is very important. The first real political strategy in modern times took place in the 1780s in the United States and Canada. The fight between the English and the French and from 1776 the local Americans was deadly.

At the behest of King Louis XVI of France, the French in North America had to come up with a brilliant strategic move. And that was done by drawing phantom islands in Lake Superior between the USA and Canada. On maps from 1783 onward you found Isle of Phelipeaux, Ile Royal, Ile Maurepas, Ile Pontchartrain spread all over Lake Superior (the size of Austria). The 1783 Treaty of Paris describes a portion of the boundary as running through Lake Superior northward of the Isles Royal and Phelipeaux to the Long Lake. During the 1820s, when surveyors were attempting to more precisely stake out the international boundary from Lake of the Woods to Lake Superior, it was determined that “Isle Phelipeaux” did not exist. Surveyors were also unable to determine what body of water was meant by the “Long Lake” referenced in the treaty, and instead followed the Pigeon River from Lake Superior into the Boundary Waters.

In public the most famous strategic island is Bermeja or Vermeja (22 parallel north/91 parallel west) situated around 660 km north of the peninsula of Yucatan. Bermeja means red in Spanish, which should have been the colour of the rocks on its

coasts. Bermeja was first mentioned by Alonso de Santa Cruz in *El Yucatán e Islas Adyacentes*, a list of islands of the region published in Madrid in 1539. Its precise location is given in *Espejo de navegantes* (Seville, around 1540) by Alonso de Chaves, who wrote that from a distance, the small island looks blondish or reddish. According to Michel Antochiw Kolpa, a French-Mexican well-known cartographer, since 1844 several British maps have reported of the phenomenon of the sinking of the island some 60 fathoms (360 ft.; 110 m) below. But it has never been proven [10].

Some attribute the island vanishing to simple cartographical mistakes carried forward erroneously in the maps of past centuries. Others, such as the President of the Mexican Geographical Society Julio Zamora theorize that Bermeja was an imaginary island purposely charted incorrectly in the Gulf of Mexico in some sixteenth and seventeenth century maps to dissuade enemies from traversing these waters, which were routes of navigational interest – already in the 1700s and the 1800s [3, p. 39-40].

So-called Donut Holes are legal loopholes created by the passing of a 1982 UN convention on the Law of the Sea. The ownership of the Donut Holes might not have been as hotly disputed had the Gulf of Mexico not been rich in oil reserves, an important source of economic wealth for both countries. In a bid to determine who had control over these waters, ancient maps were brought out and Bermeja was discovered to be the northernmost Mexican land to the area of contention. Bermeja was, therefore, Mexico's best chance to claim ownership of the international waters.

The disappearance of the island in the Gulf of Mexico around the year 2000 fuelled the conspiracy theory that the CIA had blasted the island off the surface of the ocean. In doing so, the USA still had the right to large oil-rich areas in the gulf. Resolutions were also passed in the Mexican parliament to examine the blasting theory in more detail [13].

Thus, in 1997 Mexico deployed a vessel to prove the existence of Bermeja, but no sign of any island in the charted location was found. Although in 2000, Mexico signed the treaty it had been negotiating with the US, another attempt to find Bermeja was made in 2009, this time by a team of expert researchers from the

National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Despite searches by both sea and air, no trace of the island could be found⁴⁰. In fact, based on analysis of the ocean floor, the team from UNAM concluded that there had not been an island at the given coordinates [13].

200 km north of Greenland, near the North Pole, we find the area of Crocker Island (84 parallel north/100 parallel west) at least on maps in the 1910s. Following his 1906 expedition that failed to reach the North Pole, the American explorer Robert E. Peary reported in his book that he had sighted distant land from the heights of the north-western shore of Ellesmere Island. He named it Crocker Land, after San Francisco banker George Crocker, one of his financial backers. It is now known that Robert E. Peary's claim was fraudulent, as he wrote in his diary at the time that no land was visible. The invention of Crocker Land was apparently an attempt to secure further support from Crocker for Peary's 1909 expedition. If so, the attempt failed as Crocker had diverted all of his available resources to the rebuilding of San Francisco following the 1906 earthquake [3, p. 72-74].

The Crocker Land Expedition took place in 1913. Its purpose was to investigate the existence of Crocker Land, a huge island supposedly sighted by the explorer Robert Peary from the top of Cape Colgate in 1906. It is now believed that Peary fraudulently invented the island. The geographic South Pole was reached on December 14, 1911 by the Norwegian Roald Amundsen. Amundsen had actually planned a North Pole expedition, but when he learned that Robert Peary on April 6, 1909 had reached the North Pole, he quickly changed plans and headed south. In doing so, he overtook the British explorer Robert Scott.

Cartographer's Island (Islands of copyright)

During the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries there were no definite copyright arrangements for cartographers theft of others notes and cartography were very normal. After all, every sailor, seafarer and adventurer could draw a map of as yet undiscovered areas and then turn to any cartographer. Therefore, it was not unusual for cartographers to put a small watermark on the map or maps that were theirs. The phantom islands thereby functioned as a kind of copyright for the cartographers. That

is why you could also find phantom islands right up to the beginning of the 20th century, which very few had heard of and only a single person or no one at all had seen on the horizon.

The island of Satananez (40 parallel north/48 parallel west) not far away from the Azores is an example of such a cartographer's island. According to the Venetian cartographer Zuane Pizzigano, the words Satananez is Portuguese for Satan or devils. You would find the words of Satanagio or Satanaxio for Satan in Liguria or Venetian dialects. Zuane Pizzigano depicted the island on a map in 1424. The island disappears from the maps after 1436 and reappears only in 1462, the Italian cartographer Grazioso Benincasa switches to the name of Salvaga, meaning savage. Salvagio, Salvaje, Salirosa and Salvatga were other names of Satananez on different maps of different. An all the users of the maps knew who has written the different names. Later the island of Satananez wandered to the coast of Newfoundland. Despite all these conjectures, nobody ever agreed where the island was placed. Satanaez has been as a legendary island in need of a legend. A watermark does not need a legend. [3, p. 211].

Another example is the magnetic rock island of Rupes Nigra (90 parallel north). Situated on the North Pole and at the same at the Magnetic North Pole, the Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator marked on his maps, where the North Pole was situated, firstly as a vignette and secondly as a phantom island, or a highly magnetic phantom rock. It was also the reason why the term magnetic North Pole was mentioned. When science discovered that there was both a North Pole and a magnetic North Pole, the phantom island disappeared from the maps [14, p. 60-62].

A third example is the island of Frisland (63 parallel north/20 parallel west) near Iceland. Frisland was depicted as a roughly rectangular island with promontories on its west coast. The theories about this island are that it is actually Iceland. But when the famous Italian cartographer Nicolo Zeno made the famous collection of maps in the so-called Zeno map in 1558, Frisland was found. But since Zeno didn't just want to copy other maps of the time, he simply moved Iceland further south, also a kind of watermark, because Nicolo Zeno was the first and only cartographer who

placed Iceland at exactly that place in the Atlantic Ocean. Just under 250 years later the island had disappeared from the maps, although it had wandered to the southeast coast of Greenland.

A fourth example is Pepys Island (47 parallel south/58 parallel west) near the Argentinean coast and 400 km north of the Falkland Islands. In January 1684 a British journalist William Ambrose Cowley sighted the Pepys Island. Later in the 1680s the island was mentioned on a map edited by the British cartographer, William Hacke, also as the pirate's cartographer. Around 1840 Pepys Island was forgotten. Nobody had ever seen the island which is now among some scientists believed to have been a misidentified account of the Falkland Island. The island was found on different maps but both misspelled in other places and nameless. An obvious case of putting a cartographer's mark the Pepys Island on the map [3, p. 186-187].

The fifth and last example is Mayda or Isle of Mam (52 parallel north/33 parallel west) is half the way between Ireland and Canada. Nobody has sighted the island, but it suddenly appeared under the name of Brazir on the map of the Venetian brothers Domenico and Francesco Pizzigano's map in 1367. Several cartographers depicted the island in following centuries, but under different names and different spellings. After 1650 Mayda disappeared from all documentation. Nobody has ever seen anything and its location from Brittany in west to Labrador in the east made it untrustworthy and the possibility of a watermark is high [1, p. 83].

Weather phenomena and nature made islands

The sixth and final category is weather phenomena and their impact on both the psyche and the eyesight of individual sailors. Above in a previous section is the actual technical nature of a so-called Fata Morgana or Mirage. A weather phenomenon that is not even that rare. In the Mediterranean area the reflections of the Rif Mountains are so detailed that with the use of binoculars you can even see people on the slopes, when you add the fact that the sailors are mentally stressed to the breaking point since they had no idea that a sea storm was coming, fighting, dragging and attacking them. Yes, then you have a cocktail of possible visions of phantom

islands and land areas on the horizon. And the characteristic of a Fata Morgana is that the closer you get to it, the more it dissolves into a light mist (the heat haze).

It is in polar regions that the Mirage phenomenon most often occurs. Therefore, it is also respectively in the Arctic and near Antarctica that these kinds of phantom islands occur. Three examples occur in the Arctic Zones. The first is simply Fata Morgana Land (80 parallel north/14 parallel west) between Svalbard and Northeast Greenland. In 1907 the island was sighted by two Danish explorers J.P. Koch and Aage Bertelsen [11]. In the next 30 years explorers tried to get an eyesight of the island. But in vain Fata Morgana was hereafter named after a type of mirage very common in the Arctic Zone. The assumption is the mirage sighted at its location was actually Fata Morganas of Tobias Island. The position of Tobias Island roughly 70 km from the north-eastern coast of Greenland was determined with accuracy only in 1993.

Sannikov Island (78 parallel north/147 parallel east) in the Arctic Ocean north of the Kotelny Island near Russia's northern coast (west of the mouth of Lena). Named after the Russian geographer Iakov Sannikov after an expedition in 1809-1810, the island got a special status, because it should be impossible that land area could be sighted so far north in this area. The "Zarya" expedition in 1901 disappeared and none of their notes described Sannikov Island. An expedition in 1937 did not find any trace of the island either. Some historians and geographers, judging from other successes of Sannikov and the presence of shallow sand shoals at Sannikov Land's mapped location, postulate that it indeed once existed, but was destroyed by coastal erosion and became a submerged sand shoal, like many other islands formed either of fossilized ice or of permafrost. Other scientists say that Iakov Sannikov was a victim of a complex mirage of the coast of Bennett Island [9, p. 189-190].

The third and last example in the Arctic is Buss Island (62 parallel north/29 parallel west) in the outskirts zones of icebergs near Greenland. It was recorded as discovered during the third expedition of the English seaman Martin Frobisher in September 1578 by sailors aboard the ship (a buss) Emmanuel of Bridgewater. As Atlantic traffic increased, the island's existence was less certain among the

cartographers. Furthermore, the size of the Buss Island was reduced. By 1745 it was renamed the Sunken Land of Buss, because there was no land at the site claimed. In the 1800s it was forgotten. Today it is agreed that Mar Fobisher probably made a mistake in dead reckoning and mistook optical effects near Greenland for a new island [1, p. 177-178].

Near Antarctica we find Dougherty Island (65 parallel south/120 parallel west) and New South Greenland (68 parallel south/44 parallel south) both in the outskirts of the Antarctic Zone. The first one sighted in 1841 and the second one in 1823. Dougherty Island was discovered and recorded by captain Dougherty – therefore the name. Two other explorers Keates and Stannard confirmed the sight in the 1860s. Since then nobody saw the island. However it appeared on international maps in the 1930s. They had all been deceived by special fog banks or icebergs [3, p. 90].

New South Greenland was an unknown island near Antarctica's north coast (Peninsula Graham Land), which captain Benjamin Morrell of the ship Wasp saw while traveling north from Antarctica in 1823, but his reported location during the voyage, while perfectly copying the expected path for traveling up the peninsula, was over 500 km to the east and 97 km to the north of the actual position of the Antarctic Peninsula, suggesting either a huge miscalculation in location or sightings of icebergs and fog, typical of phantom islands in the Antarctic Circle [3, p. 207].

Conclusion

Can an island be “undiscovered?” Apparently, it can. Throughout the centuries, explorers have mapped thousands of islands, some of which turned out to never have existed. These glitches in the cartographical matrix are called phantom islands. Here, we explore five such elusive specks of land. The world is full of hints, rumours and speculations, the world is also full of unanswered questions, and still are. In early days, men and women looked out toward the horizon and wondered what lay beyond it. Sometimes when an answer on a question was not possible the imagination took over or the missing knowledge was answered although it was not the correct answer. However, as can be seen from this paper, what at first sight

looked like an irrational action had an ulterior motive or a rational answer. The six categories in this paper show us that apparently irrational thoughts have a rational background anyway.

The phantom islands were secret islands and they were shifted around wherever and whenever they needed to be, whether they were used to explain the old legends, had a strategic purpose, was a watermark to prevent theft, pave the way for colonialism, should represent land of hope and treasures or they simply should explain the incomprehensible. They were used to stimulate exploration, as moving targets or baits for explorers and adventurers eager to seek fame and fortune. They were also used to reassure explorers, sailors and others at the sea that the islands were there, available, just in case sailors would not be setting off into a lonely expanse of nothing at all, but would be guided by these saving islands in the middle of nowhere. Conveniently located at strategic points of the journey, like and equivalents of the navigational stars in the sky. The phantom islands were simply a kind of reminder of the flexibility of the geographic imagination and the inconstancy of the international maps.

Bibliography:

1. Babcock W.H. *Legendary Islands of the Atlantic: A study in Medieval Geography*. New York: American Geographical Society, 1922. 196 p.
2. Beazley C.R. *The dawn of Modern Geography*. Vol. 1. London: Murray, 1897. XVI, 538, 32 p.
3. Brooke-Hitching E. *The phantom atlas: the greatest myths, lies and blunders on maps*. London: Simon and Schuster, 2016. 256 p.
4. Cantarino G. An island called Brazil: Irish paradise in Brazilian past // *Abeij Journal*. 2005. No. 7. P 193-210.
5. Chisholm H. Brazil or Brasil // *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 11th ed. Vol. 4. New York: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1910. P. 438.
6. Cook J. *A voyage to the Pacific Ocean: undertaken by command of His Majesty for making discoveries in the northern hemisphere: performed under the*

direction of captains Cook, Clerke, and Gore, in the years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780: being a copious, comprehensive, and satisfactory abridgement of the voyage written by Captain James Cook, F.R.S., and Captain James King, LL. D. and F.R.S. Vol. 2, London: Printed for John Stockdale, Scatcherd and Whitaker, John Fielding, and John Hardy, 1784. XII, 359, [1] p.

7. Curran D.B. Lost lands, forgotten realms: sunken continents, vanished cities, and the kingdoms that history misplaced. Franklin Lakes, N.J.: New Page Books, 2007. 271 p.

8. Elborough T. Atlas of improbable places: a journey to the world's most unusual corners. London: Aurum Press Ltd, 2016. 224 p.

9. Gavrilov A.V., Romanovskii N.N., Romanovsky V.E., Hubberten H.-W., Tumskoy V.E. Reconstruction of ice complex remnants on the Eastern Siberian Arctic Shelf // Permafrost and Periglacial Processes. 2003. Vol. 14. P. 187-198.

10. Haigh Ch. The "Phantom Islands" that appear to have vanished into the ocean: Did these islands ever even exist? [Web resource] // IFLScience. 13.04.2023. URL: <https://goo.su/GzAG> (reference date: 10.12.2023).

11. Koch L. Survey of North Greenland: plates 1-21. København: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1940. 1 atlas (21 kort).

12. Nah V.E.M.Y. Ex-Isles; Islands that Disappeared // Review of Historical Geography and Toponomastics. 2018. Issue XIII. Vol. 25-26. P. 31-58.

13. Sturkell E. Den försvunna mexikanska ön har aldrig funnits [Web resource] // Dn.se 13.02.2009. URL: <https://goo.su/CAQyqDT> (reference date: 10.12.2023).

14. Taylor E.G.R. A letter dated 1577 from Mercator to John Dee // Imago Mundi. 1956. Vol. 13. P. 56-68.

15. Young A. An introduction to mirages [Web resource] // San Diego State University. 2022. URL: <https://goo.su/axhFRD> (reference date: 10.12.2023).

Data about the author:

Christensen Carsten Sander – Doctor of History (PhD), Independent Researcher (Billund, Denmark).

Сведения об авторе:

Христенсен Карстен Сандер – доктор истории (PhD), независимый исследователь (Биллунд, Дания).

E-mail: arroyoinfancia74@gmail.com.