

Appendix 3

English Translation of *Opera Breve*

Short work, which illustrates and clarifies, or provides an easy way to understand the map of the frigid Northern Lands, beyond the German Sea, and in which are contained the most extraordinary facts of those countries, until now not known, neither to the Greeks nor to the Latins.

It is ordered by the strictest decree of the Supreme Pontiff and of the Venetian Senate, that no one for ten years is allowed to print the Geography of the Northern Kingdoms, or the books which describe it, nor, if printed by others, sell it without the permission of Olaf the Goth.

To the most Serene Prince, Master Petrus Landus, doge of Venice, and to the most illustrious gentlemen governors of that State, happiness and health from Olaf Magnus the Goth.

Most serene Prince, and most illustrious Lords, those who are in charge of administering the Republic, have had the custom of studying two things above all: history and geography. From these, they are sure to derive not a little wisdom in governing the Republic. I will not strive to bring more confirmation to what is sufficiently clear: because who is more suitable to lead kingdoms and nations than the one who saw for himself the customs and the cities of many men?

Because of this, the very wise ancient rulers of lands took great care and incurred great expenses in sending their messengers through many regions of the world, so that they could observe the customs of those lands, which they could not visit.

Since I know that not a small part of Europe is subjected to your most illustrious leadership, I thought I would do something useful if I illustrated the geography of the Northern Lands, which until now has been unknown to the Greeks and to the Latins, and I did it under your most illustrious names, so that the most powerful enemies of your Republic could realize the importance of this Europe, which you defend with every effort, with advice and arms; and so that they might consider that from the North can come men who could put to task the whole of Asia, as it has already happened, according to the chronicles.

Because of this, I would prove myself ungrateful, if I did not leave a recollection of my studies to you, to whom I owe everything, because of the great paternal liberality which your most Reverend Patriarch D. Hieronymus Quirinus deigned bestow upon my most Reverend Master Johan-

nes Magnus, Archbishop of Uppsala, and because of the great welcome and the gracious assistance, which I myself have experienced, and which I confidently expect from this most illustrious Government.

Thus, your most illustrious Lordships will accept gratefully this very short summary of my Geography, until the moment when it will be possible to show the book on the extraordinary matters of the Northern Lands, which I am now composing, and in which I will try to describe more widely the subject I leave with you now.

At this moment, may the Divine Majesty be propitious to you, and to your most illustrious Republic, and may good health be granted to you.

Venice, in the Patriarchal palace, in the year of the Lord 1539, the 21st of June.

The same Olaf the Goth to the reader.

Thus, gracious reader, the Geography shown in the present treaty, is divided in nine parts, according to nine capital letters: A, B, C, etc. The first of which

A contains the island of Iceland, which by its great size surpasses the two Sicilies, and is distinguished by unusual and unbelievable miracles. This letter **A** is divided into many letters. The first of those:

A indicates the extraordinary mountains on whose summit there is eternal snow, and at whose feet, is a dreadful abyss. There is also everlasting fire, similar to the Sicilian Etna with its horror, and also to Vulcan's cave, mentioned when talking of punishment of the soul. One of them is commonly called Heclafiel, the other Crucis, the third Helgafiel, or holy mountain. On those mountains there are upright stones, put there in memory of the deeds of the ancestors, and on which are inscribed the feats of the ancient populations. [It also indicates] the Scalholdensis Episcopal Church.

B is put near four springs, distinguished by their opposite nature: one is marvelously warm, one frigid, one suitable to quench human thirst, the fourth deadly. Around those springs the inhabitants extract a great quantity of sulfur, which they sell at a very low price, a thousand pounds for a tenth of a florin.

C is between two marvelous sights, that is between a fire, which not having wick to burn, continuously consumes the water, and a certain abyss, whose depth one cannot perceive by sight, but that can be perceived with difficulty by dropping a rope from the edge, where are painted scenes of dead people. Because it happens often that the men drowned in the sea appear to their kin the same day, as if they were alive, and when one asks them to enter the house, sighing they reply that they must go to the mount Hecla.

D is put there to show mostly bears, foxes, hares, and the whitest crows, which here are found everywhere.

E is ice, which emits the most unhappy moan and cry in a human voice: this proves that the souls of men are tortured there.

F shows stones carried by violent exhalations, so that they are sent through the air as if they were flying without anybody throwing them.

G shows such abundance of fish that is put for sale in great mounds, because the inhabitants are almost all fish eaters, since they sow little wheat, and because of this, they reap little. I do not doubt that if they sowed more, they would have more bread, which now they buy brought in from elsewhere. I do believe that they are not so interested in agriculture because of the immense quantity of fish, which they trade for other things.

H contains a very high mountain, considered holy, and the Abbey of Helgafiel, whose great entrance is made of butter, abundant everywhere and distributed in the land.

I shows the Holensis cathedral, and here the pasture is so rich that if the oxen were not taken from the meadows, they would burst because of fatness.

K [shows] great whales similar to mountains, [which] overthrow ships: they are not frightened or slowed by the din and noise of trumpets or by round, empty vessels thrown in the water.

L Inexperienced sailors are at times in danger, as they often cast anchor on some part of the whale's body, as if they had found an island.

M shows the fights of merchants to obtain the best anchorage, because the lords of these lands do not usually control what happens on high seas.

N has the ensign of the kingdom of Norway, and of Iceland, which belongs to the same kingdom. Besides this, [the letter shows] a knight next to the Norwegian ensign, thrown on the ground by the forces of wind.

O shows here great churches, and houses built with the bones of fish and of sea whales. There are also caves, which are used by the inhabitants against the cold, as Africans hide in similar places against the heat of the sun. And armed knights are shown fighting the cruelest wars against each other, often for unimportant reasons. The citharist attracting birds and fish with the sound [of his instrument], proves also that in the extreme frontiers of this land, music is appreciated, and sometimes is used in fishing and bird catching. Besides this, in the Arctic sea, on floating slabs of ice, which last eight months, one can see on the ice, bears diving, capturing fish, and devouring them: this could not happen if there weren't great abundance of fish in the pools of water. The circle, which shows the different winds, is self-explanatory. The small fighting dwarf in Greenland shows that here one finds men with a very small body but of great spirit and perseverance. On Huitsarch, or I should say White Mountain, there is a clock with lead letters made by sea pirates, which guides those who navigate the sea around the cliffs of Greenland, and can thus avoid shipwrecking. But every learned man will be able to figure out the parallels and degrees of longitude: I do not doubt that my labor will be approved by scholars, and accepted with benign gratitude.

The title on the front of the whole map is the following:

Marine map and description of the Northern Lands, and of extraordinary things, in it depicted with great diligence.