

**THE RHIPAEAN MOUNTAINS ON THE EARLY PORTOLANS:  
INFLUENCE OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL  
TRADITIONAL CARTOGRAPHY?<sup>1</sup>**

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The portolan charts belong to the cartographic products that show almost no continuity in comparison with the previous ancient and medieval maps. Naval maps contain accurate data on the configuration of the coasts of the Mediterranean, Black and Azov Seas with much realistic information about cities, ports, rivers, mountains and other cartographic objects. Portolan charts drastically break with medieval traditional cartography – with its religious, mythological and fantastic images. However, they include the Rhiphaean Mountains, which were one of the most important marker of the north of Eurasia in antiquity and the Middle Ages. It seems that the cartographical portolans could not get rid of this element that was so important in the mythological picture of the world; there exist several maps that show some mountains that could be Rhiphaean. It confirms the proposition that naval maps have some common features to traditional ones. In our paper we show, how the ancient and medieval geography represented the Rhiphaean Mountains and which traits in the portolan charts could be considered as echos of the traditional European cartography.

**Key words:** *portolan charts, the history of cartography, the Rhiphaean Mountains, medieval maps, ancient geography*

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One of the most mysterious concepts in ancient geography and cartography are the Rhiphaean Mountains that had for centuries been the object of mythological, cosmological, geographic, cartographic, and poetic discourses. Having originated as a designation of the northern (in relation to Greece) Thracian mountains, where king Boreas dwelt, the name in the course of time became attached to the mountains located allegedly in the extreme north of the oecumene. Many ancient geographers and cartographers tried to identify the legendary Rhiphaean Mountains with the real mountain ranges in Northern Eurasia from the Pyrenees through the Alps, the Carpathians, the Caucasus, the Ural, the Altai to the Tien Shan.

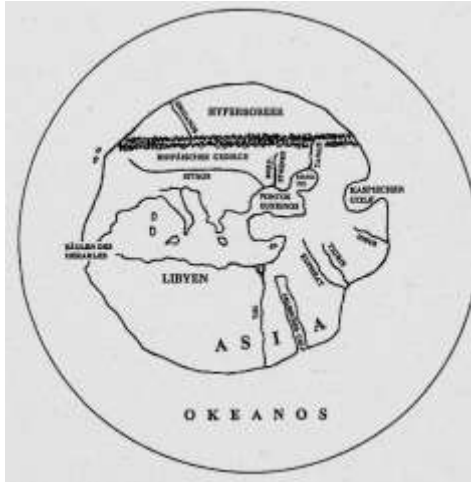
**The Rhiphaean mountains in the ancient geography**

In this part, we would like to consider briefly the main features of this mythopoetic and geographical concept in the antiquity.

Already the ancient Ionian scientists located these mythical (or semi-mythical) Rhiphaean (in the Latin orthography often Rhiphaean) Mountains (you can see different variants of the name: Ῥίπαϊ, Ρίπαια ὄρη, Ῥίπαϊα ὄρη, Ripaei/Riphaei montes, Riphei, Ripheus, Rifei, Rifrei, Riffei), in the north, most often the north-north-east of Europe (see for example the reconstruction of world map of Hekataios in the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC in ill. 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Работа выполнена при поддержке Российского научного фонда (проект № 14-18-02121).



Ill. 1. The reconstruction of the world map of Hecataeus from Miletus (after Geus 2001: 85)

For the first time the Rhipaeian name, without indicating their localization, we find in the poem of Alkman in the second half of the 7th century BC in the form of 'Ripas' (F 90 Page: 'Ρίπας ὄρος).

Where were situated the northern mountains in Europe, from the point of view of the archaic Greeks? Our analysis of the geographical and cosmological representations of the Homeric Greeks leads to the conclusion<sup>2</sup>, that Europe in this world picture was limited by Greece itself, washed from the east, south and west by sea (ill. 2). The North remained *terra incognita*; really it was the Balkan Peninsula.



Ill. 2. World picture of Homeric Greeks

<sup>2</sup> Podosinov 2015.

In this archaic world picture, the northern horizon of the Greeks was closed by mountainous regions – Pieria, Macedonia, Paeonia and Thrace. So, known then Europe ended in the north in a certain large mountain range. When the periphery of the oecumene was being gradually better acquainted, these mountains were moved to the north of Europe and began to stretch from the Alps to the Urals, preserving their neighborhood with the northern ocean<sup>3</sup>.

In close connection with the Rhipaeen Mountains, from which the northern wind Boreas is blowing, there is a blissful people of Hyperboreans living in the narrow strip of land between Rhipaeans and the Northern Ocean in a mild climate and revering Apollo<sup>4</sup>. As an example of the combination of these two names, we will quote the words of the Hellenistic poet Callimachus, who in his work "Reasons" speaks of "the sons of the Hyperboreans who accompany the gifts from the Rhipaeen mount" to Greece (Delos)<sup>5</sup>. The very name of the Hyperboreans could be transferred to Rhipaeen Mountains, which were sometimes called the Hyperborean mountains<sup>6</sup>. The ambiguous localization of the Hyperboreans supported in antiquity the idea of stretching Rhipaeans in Northern Europe and Asia from the Alps to the Tien Shan and even China<sup>7</sup>. In one of the first mentions of the Hyperboreans they and therefore the Rhipaeen Mountains were located in the North-Eastern Europe in connection with the very concrete peoples. This is how, for example, the Greek author Damastes (a contemporary of Herodotus) describes their location: "The Issedones live above (ἄνω) the Scythians, higher (ἄνωτέρω) – Arimaspians, above (ἄνω) them - Rhipaeen Mountains, from which Boreas blows and

<sup>3</sup> See about this "moving" Beckers 1914. P. 538: «Da im Laufe der Zeit die Vorstellung vom Bereich des Nordrandes der Erde eine vielfache Wandlung durchmachte, und die umgrenzende Peripherie sich der fortschreitenden Aufhellung nördlicher Erdräume von Fall zu Fall anpassen mußte, so wurden die Rhipäen in späteren Zeiten höher im N(ordnen) gesucht und angenommen als in früheren»; see also p. 548-549. Cf. Wikén 1939. P. 540-552; Stenger 2001. P. 992-993; Rausch 2013. P. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> The first detailed exposition of the legend is preserved in Herodotus (IV, 32-35), although some references to it are found in earlier writers. The legend of Hyperboreans is described in various ways by many ancient authors. On the significance of the Hyperborean topos for ancient geographic literature and on their localization, see more: Daebritz 1916. P. 258-279; Harmatta 1955/1956. P. 57-66; Dion 1976. P. 143-157; 1977. P. 260-270; Ramin 1979. P. 55-71; Romm 1989. P. 97-113; 1992. P. 60-67; Kyriazopoulos 1993. P. 395-398; Werhahn 1994. P. 967-986; Lazova 1996; Bridgman 2005. P. 27-98; Rausch 2013. P. 49-55; 77-80.

<sup>5</sup> Aitia, fr. 186, 8: νῆες Ὑπερβορέων Πρωτοῦ πέμψουσιν ἄρ' οὐραός.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Servius ad Verg. Aen. XII, 366: Certum sit eum (sc. Boreas) de Hyperboreis montibus flare... - Certainly it (i.e. Boreas) blows from the Hyperborean mountains; Schol. Bern. ad Verg. Georg. III, 196: Hyperborei montes in Scythia, inter quos Aquilo inflat - Hyperborean mountains are in Scythia, Aquilon blows there; Schol. ad Stat. Theb. V, 390: Hyperborei enim montes trans Aquilonem sunt - Hyperborean mountains are situated behind Aquilon. The Rhipaeen and Hyperborean mountains are identified or differentiated by Eusthatus, Aeticas and Stephanos from Byzantium (Eustath., ad Dionys. Perieg. 314; Aethicus 717; Steph. Byz. 654; см. Beckers 1914. P. 538).

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Bolton 1962. P. 1-2.

where snow never melts; above them Hyperboreans dwell til the other sea (ὕπὲρ δὲ τὰ ὄρη ταῦτα Ὑπερβορέους καθήκειν εἰς τὴν ἑτέραν θάλασσαν).

It should be noted that in the Roman geographical tradition the Rhipae-an Mountains take their place steadily in the extreme north-east of Europe. Valerius Probus in the commentary to Vergils *Georgica* III, 382, obviously arguing with supporters of the Alpine localization of Rhipaeans, notes that “some people took the Rhipae-an mountains for the Alps. But the Rhipae-an mountains proper are in Scythia.” The “Scythian” tradition was reproduced by Mela, Pliny, Solin, Julius Honorius, Paulus Orosius, other Latin authors and in this form was inherited in the Middle Ages.

In ancient geography, the idea, that all the rivers of oecumene have their origin in the mountains, was widely spread. The rivers, flowing from the Northern Europe, had to originate in the Rhipae-an mountains. Perhaps for the first time this idea was perfectly expressed in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD by the first Roman composer of geographic work, Pomponius Mela: according to him the Rhipae-an mountain rises behind the Aremphians, beyond this mountain is the Northern Ocean (I, 117); Rhipae-an mountain stretches through the north of Eastern Europe (II, 1); they are inhabited by Hyperboreans (III, 36); river Tanais (modern Don) originates from the Rhipae-an mountain (I, 115). The connection of the Don-Tanais with the Rhipae-an mountains very soon became as strong as the connection of Rhipaeans with the Hyperboreans.

As for the mapping of Rhipaeans in the ancient cartography, it should be noted that very few artifacts have been preserved from antiquity – practically two or three maps, and only on the map of Ptolemy the Rhipaeans are called by this name.<sup>8</sup> In the 3<sup>rd</sup> book (III, 5, 15) Ptolemy mentions several mountains in Eastern Europe (so called European Sarmatia), and among them the Rhipaeans: “Sarmatia is crossed also by other mountains [except Sarmatian ones], between which are called:

Peuce mount	51° - 51°
Amadoka mount	59° - 51°
Bodinon mount	58° - 55°
Alaunon mount	62°30' - 55°
Carpathes mount, as it is said	46° - 48°30'
Venedian mountains	47° 30' - 55°
<b>Rhipae-an mountains</b> , the middle of which is	63° - 57° 30'.”

On the reconstruction of the map (ill. 3) we see, that Ptolemy has placed the Rhipae-an mountains in the northeast corner of European Sarmatia on his map. The origins of Tanais on the map of Ptolemy are not related to the Rhipaeans, although they are near the mountains, somewhat north of them. Such localization breaks drastically with traditional concepts.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, we must not forget that there are only reconstructions based on the description of the map by Ptolemy. See new edition: Klaudios Ptolemaios 2006.



Ill. 3. Map of European Sarmatia after Ptolemy

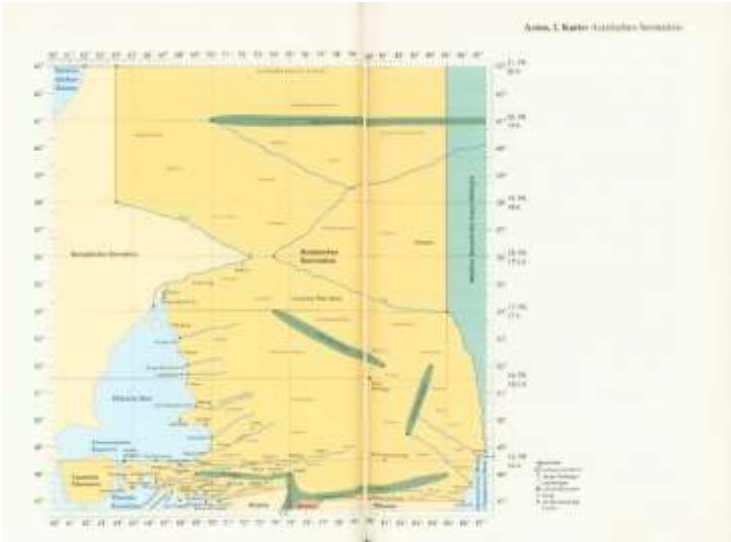
So, the mythical Rhipaeen mountains found their place on the purely "scientific" map of Ptolemy, although their existence was already doubted by Herodotus, Eratosthenes, Apollodorus and Strabo. This shows only one thing – the deep penetration into the mind of the ancient man of the idea, that certain Rhipaeen mountains existed somewhere in the north of Eastern Europe.

The Hyperboreans of Ptolemy were separated from the Rhipaeans and turned into almost an epithet: in the north of Asiatic Sarmatia, Ptolemy places the Hyperborean mountains (V, 9, 13: Ὑπερβόρεια ὄρη), the river Ra (Volga) flows down from them and about it Ptolemy told: "Hyperborean Sarmatians live in the areas adjacent to the unknown land" (V, 9, 16) (see ill. 4).

So, Ptolemy has depicted both mountains – Rhipaeen (in Europe), and Hyperborean (in Asia). If we consider that Ptolemy's Asiatic Sarmatia is a part of modern Eastern Europe from the Don to the Urals, then both these mountains are still in Eastern Europe.

The famous ancient map, where we can probably see the Rhipaeen Mountains, is the so called *Tabula Peutingeriana*, the Latin map from the first centuries AD<sup>9</sup>. The river Tanais (Don) takes its origin in some mountains without name (ill. 5). We can suppose, that these mountains are the Rhipaeans, because the whole ancient geography insisted, that Tanais originates just from Rhipaeans.

<sup>9</sup> See about this map: Podossinov 2002, 287–378.



III. 4. Map of Asiatic Sarmatia after Ptolemy



III. 5. Tabula Peutingeriana (above to the left are mountains, possibly Rhiphaean)

These theories were inherited by the Christian cosmological tradition. We mean the concepts of Cosmas Indicopleustes (6<sup>th</sup> c.) in the east and the Anonymous from Ravenna (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> cc.) in the west of medieval Europe. Cosmas wrote only about the elevation of the earth's surface (τὸ ὕψος τῆς γῆς) to the north and west of the oecumene, behind which the sun hides in the night<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Topogr. Christ. 88C-89C; 185C-188D. *Kiessling* 1914, 865-867; cf. 869 about influence of ancient tradition on Kosmas: «Kosmas hat als Grundlage seiner astronomischen Erdkunde die authentische Schrift eines altionischen Meteorologen benutzt...».

The manuscripts of his “Christian topography” contained the image of the mountain in the north of Europe, behind which the sun sets (ill. 6)<sup>11</sup>.



Ill. 6. Illustration from a manuscript of «Christian topographia» of Cosmas Indikopleustes

So famous Christian cosmographers, denying the sphericity of the Earth and the sky, the existence of Antipodes and other “achievements” of ancient science, retained the notion of the existence of the Rhipaeen mountains in the north of the flat Earth.

### **The Rhipaeen Mountains on the medieval maps**

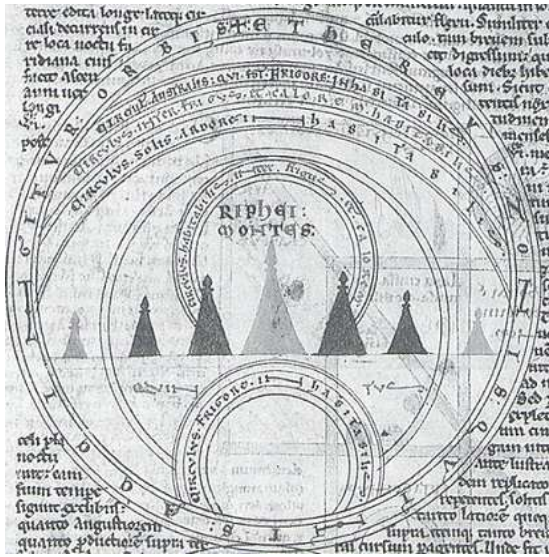
Throughout the Middle Ages and in the following epoch until the 16<sup>th</sup> century and even further the existence somewhere in the North-East Europe or North Asia of the Rhipaeen mountains was not particularly questionable. Many medieval maps<sup>12</sup> as we will see contain indication of the Rhipaeen mountains<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, these mountains were present even on very schemat-

<sup>11</sup> The same ideas were defended by Anonymus from Ravenna: *Cosm. I, 9*: *Nam alii philosophi et prudentes viri dixerunt quod in arctoam partem infra Oceani mare innumerabili spatio atque investigabili itinere dei iussu maximi sunt montes, post quos, quando sol occasum accipit, totam perambulat noctem, usque dum rediens secundum suum tempus mane post ipsos montes iterum hominibus apparet...* See in details: Podossinov 2002. 107–111.

<sup>12</sup> More about medieval maps see in: *The History of Cartography 1987*. P. 283–509.

<sup>13</sup> The simplest T-O schemes (for example, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 814, fov. 74v); diagrams contrasting the extreme North with the South (for example, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin 4860, fov. 166v); climate maps (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Philipps 1833, fol. 39v; Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, 448, fol. 76; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin 6415, fol. 69); maps with mixed structure of T-O and climate zones (for example, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, CLM 4612, fol. 103v); Anglo-Saxon *Mappa Mundi*; *Psalter World Map*;

ic maps with a small number of geographical objects, which indicates their importance in the minds of medieval cartographers (ill. 7).



Ill. 7. Climate mappa mundi, Baltimore, Walters Art Museum (end of 12th c.)

The Rhiphaean mountains were constantly depicted as one of the most extreme (or the most extreme) points of the oecumene in the north. On medieval maps, Tanais-Don almost always originates in the Rhiphaean Mountains (ill. 8). In most cases this mountain range is located directly in the North. Paulus Orosius wrote in 6th c.: “Europe begins, as I have said, under the northern zone from the Tanais River, where the Rhiphaean Mountains, standing back from the Sarmatian Ocean, pour forth the Tanais flood which passing by the altars and boundaries of Alexander the Great swells located in the territories of the Rhobasci Paludes Maeotidae, immense overflow of which goes widely into the Euxine Sea near the city of Theodosia” (I.2.4)<sup>14</sup>. And in another place about Europe: “It begins from the Rhiphaean Mountains, the river Tanais and the Maeotidae Paludes that are to the east...” (I.2.52)<sup>15</sup>.

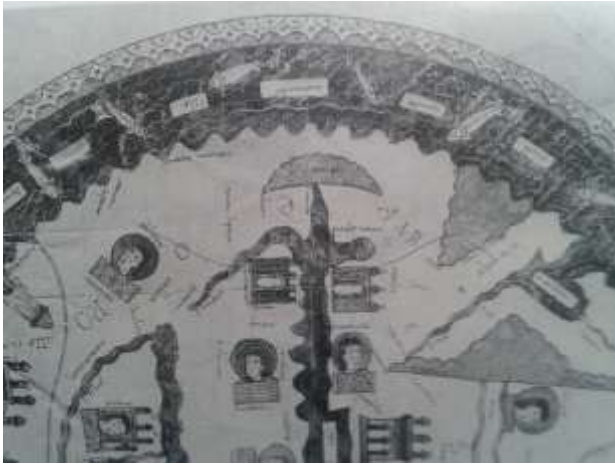
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Hereford Map and others. It seems that the Rhiphaean mountains are depicted without textual legend on Ebstorf map. These maps and all other monastery *mappae mundi* mentioned in this article are published in Chekin 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Oros. I.2.4–5: Europa incipit ut dixi sub plaga septentrionis, a flumine Tanai, qua Rhiphaei montes Sarmatico auersi oceano Tanaim fluiuium fundunt, qui praeteriens aras ac terminos Alexandri Magni in Rhobascorum finibus situs Maeotidas auget paludes, quarum immensa exundatio iuxta Theodosiam urbem Euxinum Pontum late ingreditur.

<sup>15</sup> Oros. I.2.52: Incipit a montibus Rhiphaeis ac flumine Tanai Maeotidisque paludibus quae sunt ad orientem...





Ill. 8. Fragment of the mappa mundi from the manuscript of In Apocalipsin by Beatus de Liebana (1086 or 1124)

According to Isidore of Seville: “The Rhiphaean Mountains are at the top of Germany (in capite Germaniae), they were called like that because of perpetual wind blowing; indeed  $\rho\acute{\iota}\omega\eta$  and  $\acute{o}\rho\mu\eta$  is inrush in Greek, from  $\rho\acute{\iota}\pi\tau\epsilon\upsilon$  – to throw” (XIV, 8, 8)<sup>16</sup>. However, on some maps this mountain range appears with a little deviation to the East, in the Asian part of the world<sup>17</sup>, or to the West, in the European one<sup>18</sup> (ill. 9). On the maps with climate zones the Rhiphaean mountains was almost always located in the northern inhabitable zone or close to the border between habitable and inhabitable ones<sup>19</sup>. John of Holywood (in Latin Johannes de Sacrobosco) told about the climate Dyrarpheos that goes through the Rhiphaean Mountains<sup>20</sup>.

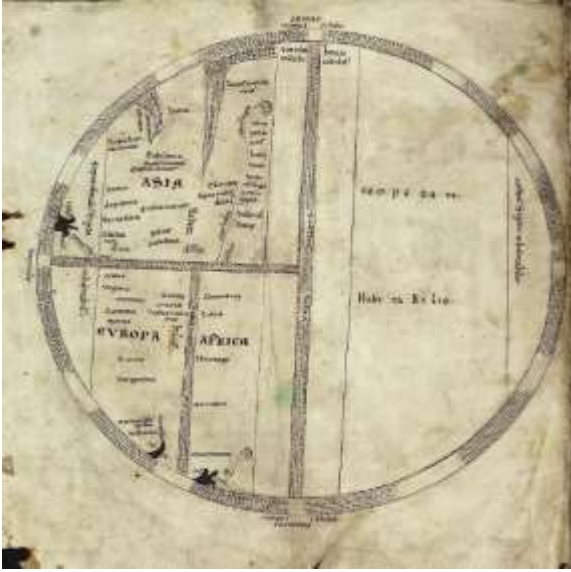
<sup>16</sup> Isid. Etym. XIV, 8, 8: Rhiphaei montes in capite Germaniae sunt, a perpetuo ventorum flatu nominati; nam RIFE Graece impetus et ORME dicitur, APO TOU RIPTEIN.

<sup>17</sup> Leipzig Map (Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Rep. I 4 (Leihgabe Leipziger Stadtbibliothek), fol. 184 v); Vatican Map (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 571-V, fol. 71v); Map from the Alexandreis (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin 8352, fol. 100v), Heidelberg Map (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Salem IX, 39, fol. IV); Lambert of Saint-Omer Maps (Gent, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, 92, fols 92v–93; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Gud. Lat. I, fols 59v–60; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin 8865, fol. 56; Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss. Lat. F 31, fol. 165v).

<sup>18</sup> Fleury Type of Maps (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Philipps 1833, fol. 39v; Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, 448, fol. 76) and some illustrations to Beatus of Liebana’s *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (New York, P. Morgan Library, M 644, fols 33v–34; La Seu d’Urgell, Museu Diocesà, 501, fols VIv–VII; Valladolid, Biblioteca de Santa Cruz, 433, fols 36v–37; available at URL: <https://www.facsimilefinder.com/facsimiles/beatus-of-liebana-valcavado-codex-facsimile#&gid=1&pid=8>; Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vitr. 14.2, fols 63v–64; London, British Library, Add. 11695, fols 39v–40).

<sup>19</sup> Chekin 2006. P. 93–120.

<sup>20</sup> Thorndike 1949. P. 112.



Ill. 9. Heidelberg map from manuscript of *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville, 13th c.

On the classical medieval maps the northern territories were reduced that is especially seen on the detailed ones, in particular of the Ebstorf-Hereford type. That's why the mountains often appear close to the Black Sea. It seems logical because there was little information about the North from traditional renowned sources from which the authors derived the data for their maps. Moreover, the northern parts of the world were populated by wild tribes and monsters in medieval perception. The exception was made in the case of the blessed people of the Hyperboreans who lived outside the area of Boreas blowing, that froze other nations, according to the ancient myth. One can see even the Hyperborean mountains on some of the maps (ill. 10).



Ill. 10. Fragment of Freising map, 11th c. with the Hyperborean mountains

### The Rhipaeen mountains on the portolan charts

The portolan charts have another purpose in comparison with the medieval monastery maps (see e.g. on the *Carta Pisana*, ill. 11)<sup>21</sup>.



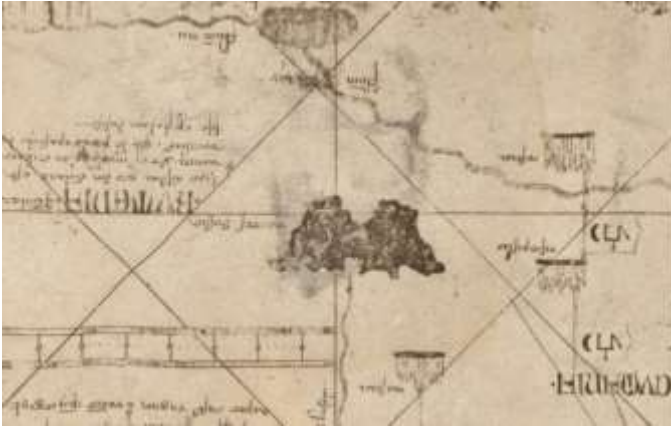
Ill. 11. *Carta Pisana* (c. 1290)

The coastline on naval maps is depicted accurately in order to use them in navigation. Makers of portolan charts use new methods of space representation based on mathematical calculations. Italian portolan charts show mostly the Mediterranean and related seas/ As to Catalanian ones, they included not only visited territories but also supposed ones. It is more than just a portolan chart and it often had a spherical form, usual for *mappa mundi*. So despite the coastline of naval charts is close to the real one, vast lands of continents could be influenced by the mythological data from traditional maps and contain the Rhipaeen mountains. There are several naval maps that show some mountains that are exactly or most probably the Rhipaeen ones. One of the variants of their representation on naval charts is a small mountain massive to the north of the Euxine Sea (ill. 12, 12a, 12b), as it is shown on 1325 and 1339 charts.



Ill. 12. Fragment of the portolan chart by Angelino Dalorto, 1325

<sup>21</sup> The History of Cartography 1987. P. 371–463; Fomenko 2011.



Ill. 12a. Fragment of the portolan chart by Angelino Dulcert, 1339



Ill. 12b. The Catalan Atlas by Abraham Cresques, 1375

There are mountains that are depicted very similarly in the Catalan Atlas by Abraham Cresques. This range is identified as mountains of Rossia. As on 1325 and 1339 portolan charts, they are located between Russia and Cumania. A river takes its origins in these mountains but it is not the Tanais as on many *mappae mundi*. The Tanais arises to the north from the lake, goes to the south-east approaching the Volga, and then flows to the west. These two rivers are close to each other in one place, it is similar to what Ptolemy has described. However, the Volga is straight that doesn't correspond to the depiction of the ancient geographer. Is it probable that Ptolemy had been able to influence mapmakers before his *Geography* was translated into Latin and he became well known in Western Europe?

Another variant of their depiction is a great mountain range stretching from the area to the north of the Black sea to the North-East (ill. 13, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, BSB-Hss Cod.icon. 131).



Ill. 13. The portolan chart, c. 1505, Italy

As it is seen, the Rhipaeen mountains are surrounded not by tribes of the Scythians as in traditional cartography but by Russian and Tatarian lands. By the way, on this map “rex Russie” and “rex Moshovichi” are different rulers despite Russia of that time was quite a united state with Moscow as its capital. Although the maker of this portolan chart tries to put realistic information about the lands to the north and east of the Black sea, he has not enough data to do it properly to the end. May be that is the reason for appearing on this map of the mountains that are most possibly Rhipaeen.

Six streams originate in this range and converge to three rivers. One of them is Tanais which traditionally begins, as we have seen, throughout the antiquity and the Middle Ages in the Rhipaeen mountains (that contradicts the point of view of Ptolemy) and flows into the Maeotidae Paludes, i. e. the Azov sea. The other river is the Rha fluvius, the Volga, that is known to be mentioned under that name by Ptolemy. Moreover, the influence of this ancient geographer reveals itself as follows: Tanais and Rha are very close to each other in one place as he has depicted. As we can observe, according to Ptolemy, Tanais originates in the Rhipaeen mountains, and the Volga in the Hyperborean. The mapmaker of this portolan chart combined these two ranges in one, that’s why the both rivers flowed now from one ridge. So the influence of Ptolemy is seen more than the one of monastery maps in this case. It is not surprising because *the Geography* written by this author was known in Western Europe from the beginning of 15th c. and earlier in the Eastern Roman Empire, many maps were made according to the instructions by Ptolemy during the final period of the Middle Ages<sup>22</sup>.

The maker of the portolan chart 1505 mixes the data taken from works of Ptolemy, traditional medieval cartography and quite realistic, but not very accurate, information about ethnic and political configuration in the region.

<sup>22</sup> Bagrov 2004. P. 78–91.

Such depiction of the Rhiphaean mountains had continuation in the next centuries cartography. For example, there is a gravure map by Abraham Ortelius made in 1590 according to ancient sources (ill. 14).



Ill. 14. Abraham Ortelius, *Pontus Euxinus*, 1590

Isidore of Seville as we know told that the Rhiphaean mountains were located “in capite Germaniae”. One can see them more likely “in capite Poloniae” on the map, mentioned above, new reality is considered. Orosius wrote that the Rhiphaean mountains make one part of the border between Europe and Asia. One can see such their location on many traditional medieval maps. May be on this portolan they perform the same function. Poland, Bohemia, Hungary and catholic Europe in the whole is located to the west of them. And the Tatars are observed to the east of the Tanais. Russian lands probably occupy the position on the border between two parts of the world.

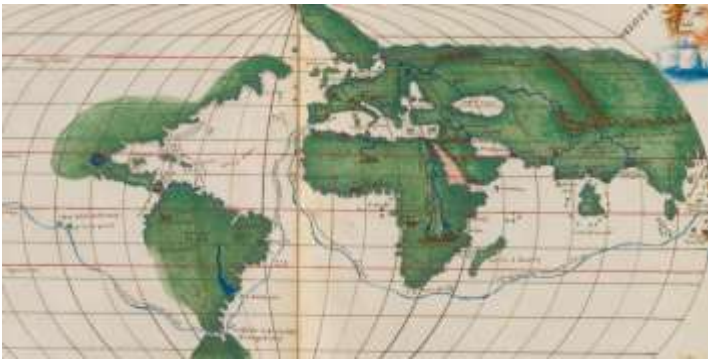
The work of the Polish historian and geographer Matthew Mehovsky (1457–1523) “On Two Sarmatias” (published in 1517) has great historical and symbolic significance for the fate of the myth about the existence of the Rhiphaean Mountains. He researches in his treaties the contemporary history and geography of Eastern Europe and, in particular, of Rus.

Matthew was in fact the first in Western European historiography to give readers relevant information about this region, vigorously protesting against the fantastic data of ancient and medieval authors about Eastern Europe. He rejects their stories about the blessed Hyperboreans, the Arimaspi and the griffins, about two-headed, dog-headed and one-eyed people, about

the horrors of winter, finally about the Rhipaeen and Hyperborean mountains. Here is what Matthew writes in the Introduction to his treatise<sup>23</sup>:

Many writers... claimed that in those northern regions are situated the most famous in the world mountains – Rhipaeen and Hyperborean, and from them no less glorious rivers flow, described and sung by cosmographers and poets: the Tanais, the Great and Small Borysthenes and the Volga – the greatest of the rivers. All this is far from the truth, and it will be not superfluous, basing on the experience (our universal teacher), to refute and reject this as an ignorant and unverified message... That there are no mountains there, called Hyperboreans, Rhipaeen and Alanean, we know this most precisely and see, that the aforesaid rivers arise and have their origins in the plain.

Thus, the ancient myth about the existence of the mysterious Rhipaeen Mountains in the north of Eurasia was dethroned. However, even after publishing of the treatise of Matthew Mehovsky the range of mountains, similar to the Rhipaeen ones, appears on the maps with meridians, e.g. in the atlases made by Battista Agnese in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. (portolan charts there represent information mostly about coastline of seas) (ill. 15, 15a, 15b). However, the mountain range appears not on all maps by this mapmaker.



Ill. 15. Map from Atlas by Battista Agnese, c. 1541–1542

<sup>23</sup> Sed et montes Alanos, Hiperboreos et Ripheos, in orbe terrarum nominatissimos, in illis regionibus septemtrionis affirmaverunt et ex eis non minus famosa erupisse flumina, per cosmographos et vates celebres scripta atque decantata, Tanaim, Boristenem Maiorem et Minorem, Volhamque, maximum fluminum, declararunt. Quod cum alienum sit a vero, non abs re, experientia docente, quae est magistra dicibilium, confutandum et reiendum est, tanquam prophanum inexperiteque promulgatum. Scimus quidem et visu cognoscimus praefata flumina tria, magna siquidem, Boristenem, Tanaim et Volham, ex Moskouia oriri et defluere, Minorem vero Boristenem, quem Aristoteles Hipanis, alias Minorem Boristenem appellat, ex Russia superiori cepisse et in Maiorem Boristenem decurrere et ei commisceri. Montes autem Hiperboreos, Ripheos et Alanos nuncupatos illic non existere certo certius scimus et videmus et iam praedictos fluvios ex terra plana consurrexisse ac emersisse conspicimus. Mechovskij 1936. P. 128. Cf. ibidem. P. 163: Accipe quarto, quod montes Riphei et Hyperborei non sunt in rerum natura non in Scythia, non in Moskouia, nec usquam locorum, et cum fere omnes cosmographi asserant Tanaim, Edel seu Volham, Dzwina et magnos fluvios ex praedictis montibus effluere, conficta conficte et potius fabulosa inexperiti scripsere.



Ill. 15a. Map from Atlas by Battista Agnese, c. 1544



Ill. 15b. Map from Atlas by Battista Agnese

In any case the influence of Ptolemy is evident. Moreover, the legend has remained – the warm and fertile land of Sannikov has been looked for during last two hundred years in the Arctic Ocean; modern people write books, make films and organize scientific conferences about this land.

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### **Рифейские горы на ранних портоланах: влияние античной и средневековой традиционной картографии?**

Карты-портоланы почти не демонстрируют преемственности по сравнению с предшествующими античными и средневековыми картами. Морские карты содержат точные данные о конфигурации побережий Средиземного, Чёрного и Азовского морей с большим количеством реалистичной информации о городах, портах, реках, горах и других картографических объектах. Карты-портоланы резко порывают со средневековой традиционной картографией – с её религиозными, мифологическими и фантастическими образами. Однако они включают в себя Рифейские горы, которые были одним из самых важных указателей севера Евразии в Античности и Средние века. Несколько карт показывают некие горы, которые могут быть Рифейскими. В статье показано, как античная и средневековая география представляла Рифейские горы и какие черты карт-портоланов могли бы рассматриваться как отголоски традиционной европейской картографии.

**Ключевые слова:** карты-потоланы, история картографии, Рифейские горы, средневековые карты, античная география

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