

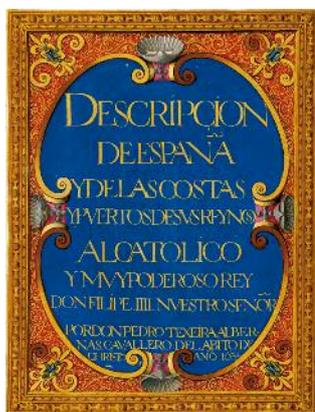
The Atlas by Pedro Texeira

One of the most valuable and beautiful atlases in the history of Spain.

Its enormous importance is attested to, for example, by the fact that 90% of the towns that appear in it would not have any other document that reproduced their image until well into the 20th century.

Pedro Texeira's atlas of the coasts of Spain, which we present here, is a work of great documentary and artistic luxury, the work of one of the greatest geniuses in the art of cartography. We are convinced that this Texeira's Atlas, as it is usually called, is and will continue to be one of the most original, detailed and rigorous contributions to Spanish cartographic science for a long time to come.

Texeira's atlas is carried out following a clear policy of discretion and is inscribed in the dialectics of power –which granted cartographic knowledge–, of the defence of the territory and of prevention against enemy threats, so typical of many European royal houses.



At the end of 2002, we had been struck by various press reports, which appeared intermittently, about the discovery in Vienna of a certain atlas of considerable value that had been missing for over three centuries. Our curiosity led us to delve deeper into this fortuitous rediscovery and, following leads, we discovered the magnitude and significance of this long-hidden Atlas. The piece in question had a long title: “**Descripción de España y de las costas y puertos de sus reynos. Al católico y muy poderoso rey don Filipe III nuestro señor. By don Pedro Texeira Albernas, cavallero del abito de christo, año 1634**”. (“**Description of Spain and the coasts and ports of its kingdoms. To the Catholic and most powerful king Phillip III our lord. By Mr Pedro Texeira Albernas, knight of the gown of Christ, 1634**”).

The truth is that the work thus announced not only does not detract in any way from such a pompous title, but it even seems modest in view of the depth and importance of the set of maps that comprise it. **This atlas has been catalogued as the most important cartographic project of the 17th century**, adding that, with it, **Spain entered the international world of map culture**. It has also been commented that it was the most ambitious cosmographic undertaking of the reign of Philip IV, and even the most notable of the entire 17th century in Spain.



Certainly, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, in Hapsburg Spain an unusual and little-known cartographic activity had developed, driven by that growing eagerness for the decoration of mansions and palaces with all kinds of maps. This activity was in turn reinforced by the peremptory strategic or defensive needs that international politics and their constant imbalances were giving rise to.

The origin of this superb work by Pedro Texeira is to be found in the royal commission mentioned above, which called for the preparation of a **detailed report on the state of the peninsular coast, with its main geographical and defensive characteristics**. Texeira was placed at the head of a remarkable expedition, equipped with all kinds of instruments, porters and sailors. However, in view of the result, it is clear that Texeira was not content with merely accomplishing his tasks, and that he intended to offer the king an exhaustive, rigorous and beautiful work, in which there is much detail relating to coastal defence and surveillance of the coastline.

But alongside this graphic work, in a separate document, there is also a curious and very interesting textual account of the vicissitudes of the journey which, in addition to identifying defensive elements, mentions the most common sources of wealth in each region or place, its main economic activity, and even its most outstanding traditions. As we consider it to be of the utmost interest –or even an indispensable work–, in this same volume we offer the complete textual version of the other manuscript, which, like the maps, is currently in Vienna, and which we reproduce faithfully in photographic form, in the book of studies, together with its corresponding transcription.



As far as the graphic element is concerned, the radical originality of this atlas lies in the oblique perspective used in its “bird's eye view” images, which simulate an aerial view, and in its obsession with realistic information. All of this is a kind of foretaste of what was to become the famous maritime routes, and even a precedent for photography.

In order to complement this presentation with some kind of curiosity or anecdotal data offered by the atlas, let us simply say that the wealth of Andalusia is described as the quintessence of the general Spanish wealth of the time, that the map of the territory of Murcia is the first one known of that region, and that the beautiful view of Alicante has all the status of a true work of art in which we find, along with various human figures, a delightful collection of vessels of all types that are worth observing carefully. Marcelino González, deputy director of the Naval Museum of Madrid, offers us a succinct and interesting analysis of this varied and rich typology of vessels that the atlas includes in the aforementioned volume of studies that complements the facsimile. These details and many more can also be seen throughout these pages in which Professor Ortega Valcarcel provides a masterly reading of this atlas. Lovers of heraldry will also enjoy the suggestive approach to the various coats of arms of Don Eduardo Pardo de Guevara y Valdes. And those who delve into the pages of Texeira's delightful textual account, impeccably transcribed by Professor Sonia Serna, will delight in its subjugating narrative.



There only remains for us to say that we are convinced that we are offering cartography lovers the recreation of an extraordinary document, original and rigorous as few others, and which stands as an exceptional witness of an Iberian peninsula. A peninsula which has drastically modified its contour, its populations and ports since those years. Its rediscovery will allow us to recreate more easily the exciting story of this great change.



The great Abraham Ortelius said that *maps are the eyes of history*. Few maps are as accurate as those contained in this atlas by Texeira with regard to our exciting modern history.

The time has come to invite you to move on. We repeat here our traditional motto: “come and see”. And we hope you are delighted in the spectacle we have in store for you with these marvellous views in the Atlas by Pedro Texeira.

