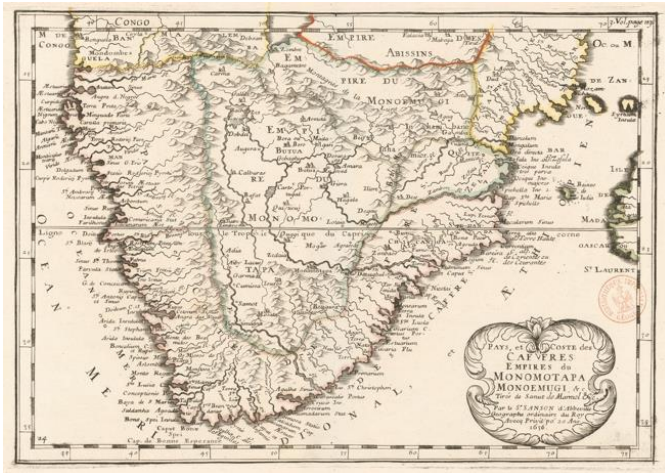


Map Information Sheet

Pays, et Coste des Caffres: Empires du Monomotapa Monoemugi &c



Author: Nicolas Sanson (1600-1667)

Date of Publication: 1656

Original Size: 28.5cm x 20cm

Description

Sanson's *Pays, et Coste des Caffres: Empires du Monomotapa, Monoemugi* (1656) is a landmark French map of southern Africa, published just after the Dutch settlement at the Cape. It depicts the Cape as the "Land of the Caffres," highlights the gold-rich kingdom of Monomotapa, and perpetuates the semi-legendary "Monoemugi." Combining Portuguese reports with early VOC knowledge, it exemplifies mid-17th-century European cartography - rational, scientific in style, yet still infused with myth and imperial ambition.

Features include:

Cartographic Content

The map covers southern Africa, extending from the Cape of Good Hope northwards to about present-day Mozambique and Zimbabwe, including the interior kingdoms Europeans associated with gold and trade.

Major Features:

- **Cape of Good Hope** (*Cap de Bonne Esperance*): Marked at the southern tip of the continent. The region around it is labelled *Pays des Caffres* ("Land of the Caffres"), the early European term for the Xhosa and other Nguni-speaking peoples.
- **Empires:**
 - Monomotapa* (Mutapa): Placed in the interior of present-day Zimbabwe and Mozambique, reflecting Portuguese accounts of the gold-rich Mutapa kingdom.
 - Monoemugi*: A semi-legendary polity often paired with Monomotapa on 17th-century maps, based on confused readings of African oral traditions and Portuguese reports.
- **Rivers & Lakes:** The Zambezi River is indicated, though distorted, and an inland water system is suggested. Some maps of the period even hint at the origins of the Nile being connected here, though Sanson avoids the most extravagant speculations.
- **Coastal Settlements:** Portuguese strongholds such as Sofala, Mozambique Island, and points along the east coast are identified, consistent with Portuguese dominance in the Indian Ocean trade in the 16th and early 17th centuries.
- **Interior Features:** Regions like *Caffrerie* (land of the "Caffres"), *Hottentots*, and other ethnonyms reflect European encounters along the southern coasts, though knowledge of the true geography remained limited.

Significance

Early Cape Cartography:

This map was produced just after the founding of the Cape Colony, and while it does not yet reflect detailed Dutch surveys, it situates the Cape within a broader geographic imagination of Africa.

Blend of Knowledge and Myth:

- Sanson's map embodies the transition from medieval speculation to empirical mapping.
- The placement of Monomotapa reflects genuine awareness of African polities, while Monoemugi reveals how myth persisted in European cartography.

Strategic and Commercial Relevance:

By including both the Cape and the east African kingdoms, the map connects the VOC settlement at Table Bay with the Portuguese trading empire further north, showing how Europeans conceived Africa as a landscape of both strategic harbours and legendary wealth.

Artistic Style

Sanson's map exemplifies the clean, scientific French cartographic style of the mid-17th century — minimal ornamentation, fine engraving, and an emphasis on rational geography over decorative flourishes, unlike the Dutch cartographers of the same era.

Historical Context

Nicolas Sanson (1600–1667):

A royal geographer to Louis XIII and Louis XIV, Sanson pioneered the French school of cartography, emphasizing accuracy and scholarly sources over baroque design. His work marked a turning point in the history of mapmaking.

Europe and Africa in the Mid-17th Century:

- By 1656, the Portuguese had long dominated the east coast of Africa and the Monomotapa trade, though their influence was waning.
- The Dutch East India Company (VOC) had established a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, just four years before Sanson published this map. Thus, this map is among the earliest printed European maps to appear after the Dutch settlement at the Cape.
- The Cape interior remained poorly understood; much of the inland detail came from Portuguese reports and African oral traditions transmitted through trade.

Monomotapa and Monoemugi:

- The Kingdom of Mutapa (Monomotapa) was a real Shona polity, famous in Europe for its association with gold mines and linked in legend to King Solomon's Ophir.
- "Monoemugi," however, is more obscure, a duplication or misinterpretation of regional rulers beyond Portuguese influence. Its persistence on European maps reflects how geographic myths and hearsay shaped cartography.

The Term "Caffres":

- Derived from the Arabic *kafir* ("non-believer"), the term was adopted by Portuguese and other Europeans as a broad label for Nguni-speaking peoples in southeastern Africa.
- Its use on the map reflects both early European ethnographic categorization and the colonial vocabulary of the time, not how these communities identified themselves.
- Today, "Caffre" and its derivatives are considered offensive and derogatory, and the term is used here solely in its historical context to explain how early European cartographers understood — and often misunderstood — African societies.

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