Portuguese place-names in SE Asia and Australia on early maps

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Abstract

Three aspects of attempts to prove pre-Dutch discoveries of Australia will be examined:

1. Claims by some wishful thinkers that a number of Portuguese names on the modern map of Australia provide proof that Portuguese mariners were the first Europeans to discover it.
2. Claims by others that the landmass of Jave-la-Grande south of Indonesia on the mid-16th century Dieppe maps is a misplaced Portuguese map of Australia, on account of the French, Portuguese and Gallicised Portuguese elements in its place-name inscriptions.
3. Claims made two years ago, by another wishful thinker, Gavin Menzies, a retired British submarine captain. In a best-seller published two years ago he ‘rewrote’ history, asserting that the Chinese discovered and charted the coastlines of Australia in the 1420s. He uses just two maps, dated 1542, by Jean Rotz, one of the Dieppe cartographers, and selected place-name inscriptions on them, in an attempt to prove it.
4. Finally, a few of the elements involved in place-name research are enumerated, with examples taken from elsewhere in the world.