

Foreword

The study of cartography cannot be disassociated from a historical and symbolic dimension, since there is no such thing as a cartographic language that is unique, universal, and immutable. Every map is a combination of signs and symbols that can only be understood and decoded through an understanding of the elements of the culture in which it was created. For this reason, cartography and history are inextricably linked. A map is always a representation of the real and maintains an intimate relation with the space that it delimits, but it is not reality itself. If maps lose this characteristic of representation, they cease to have their recognizable function and become unintelligible. A map, after all, is a symbolic expression of a region, and even though satellite images are necessary today for the cartographic arts, these images do not stop being a kind of spatial representation.

To map a territory is, thus, not a neutral operation, one whose objectivity would be assured through the use of techniques with ever greater degrees of perfection. A map is always an expression of a territory, which implies that various filters separate the real thing from the represented object. Maps make the world smaller, giving it a graphic dimension that allows for innumerable readings. Over time, techniques of design, printing, and engraving have varied and their study allows for many interpretations as to their forms of production, reproduction, and distribution. Another aspect of the study of cartography allows for the analysis of the formation and consolidation of a territory, as it was understood and occupied over time. This can only be revealed to the scholars who possess analytical tools of other disciplines, such as history.

All human documents are part of a system of communication, and in order to unmask this system we need to understand these maps as they were read and understood at the time in which they were produced. Maps contain a language, a language that is necessarily symbolic and which must be decoded to be understood. However, a unique, universal, and invariable cartographic language does not exist. Maps are texts and each one has its own unique language. The study of Historical Cartography brings with it a series of other elements, such as techniques of measurement of space, notions of form and area, the spaces that the map fills and the ones that it leaves blank or that it fills with a drawing or an illumination. All of these elements

comprise the form in which man understands and represents the world, and requires from the historian of cartography a truly interdisciplinary effort.

Every map is a set of signs or symbols that are historically constructed. We can understand maps produced in the past, just as we make sense of textual documents, by understanding the elements that composed the culture in which they were formulated, despite not having lived at the same time. It is here that the work of the historian becomes necessary; it is here that cartography and history become indissociably linked, since it is through history that we can become lost in the fascinating project of decoding signs that cartography used in the past, some of which were intentional, others less so.

The title of the present volume owes its origins to the importance of history to the study of cartography, and is a parody of the great historian of Brazilian cartography Jaime Cortesão: *History in Old Maps*. The four articles that comprise this volume are part of the discipline of cartographic history and should be understood in this light. In *The Map Trade in France and Great Britain in the Eighteenth Century*, Mary Sponberg Pedley reveals the process of production for maps during the Enlightenment, distinguishing the specificities of each of these two countries. Among other topics, her article focuses on the intellectual environment in which the production of maps was carried out, the role of cartographers, publishers, and officials, as well as the taste of consumers. In *A publishing history of John Mitchell's 1755 Map of North America*, Matthew Edney brings to light the context of this famous map's edition and re-edition, a map that is regularly used by historians of North American colonial history. His article calls attention to the fact that a map can inform us far more about the cultural universe of its author and public than about the area represented. In *The Mapa das Cortes and the Treaty of Madrid: cartography and diplomacy in Portugal*, Mário Clemente Ferreira discusses the process by which the most important cartographic document produced by the Portuguese in the run-up to the Treaty of Madrid, in 1750, was created. By deconstructing its elements and identifying the sources used by the cartography, the author points out the intentionality of the errors on the map, which focused so much on longitudes that it did not accurately show the extent of Portuguese colonization in Spanish territory. Jordana Dym discusses the importance of maps to travel narratives from the sixteenth century to the present. In *More calculated to mislead than inform: travel Writers and the Mapping of Central America (1821-1945)*, she points to the different roles that maps played in relation to travel narratives and underlines the importance of studying these cartographic elements separately.

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