

CARTOGRAPHY AND POWER IN THE CONQUEST AND CREATION OF NEW SPAIN*

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Abstract: With the so-called linguistic turn, historians have begun to study the ways in which a multitude of cultural forms are imbricated in the colonial and imperial project. In analyzing the infinite ways in which power is exercised and manifested, historians are turning a critical eye toward a myriad of cultural productions for a better understanding of how culture, politics, and power work in concert. One example is the increasing scrutiny given to geographical conceptions and representations. In Latin American colonial studies, a number of recent works have analyzed the ways in which deep, culturally rooted structures of spatial perception and representation have influenced the colonial process. This essay attempts to bring a number of those works into meaningful dialogue with one another with respect to the cultural and political facets of cartography. It also introduces work by scholars studying other regions of the world that may push the field farther and the work of the "new cultural cartographers" who have problematized traditional notions about the mimetic quality of maps and their presumed objectivity. In sum, this essay surveys recent literature pertaining to colonial cartography in Latin America, analyzes a number of comparative and theoretical studies that may broaden future research, and suggests that cartography and maps offer a fruitful avenue for further study and analysis of colonialism, imperialism, and state formation.

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper-real. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory—
Precession of Simulacra—it is the map that engenders the territory. . . .
Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*

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Jean Baudrillard's choice of the map as an example is highly appropriate—no other image has enjoyed such prestige of neutrality and objectivity. In a burgeoning era of postmodern thinking and debate, every image is open to question, deconstruction, and attack. The current "crisis of representation" means that even the most presumably neutral of objects, such as maps, need to be analyzed carefully with skepticism. The most oppressive and dangerous of all cultural artifacts may be the ones so naturalized and presumably commonsensical as to avoid critique. Like any other production, a map is contingent on its sponsor and its producer and on their cultural, social, and political world and desires. Cartographic products, replete with power and with potential that is both emancipatory and repressive, are thus particularly useful items for historical analysis.

In this article, I will survey recent works in Latin American colonial studies that have approached cartography as a potentially rich source for analyzing and grounding discussions of space, culture, and power. The essay will begin by discussing a number of recent works from other regions that have engaged cartography and power in provocative and sophisticated ways, along with the works of historian of cartography J. B. Harley and the developing field of critical cartography. Attention will then be turned to recent works by scholars of early modern Spain and early colonial Mexico. My concluding remarks suggest potential avenues for research.

Three caveats should be noted. First, my survey does not cover works that discuss how maps were made, advances in accuracy, and similar technical issues. Instead, I emphasize histories that use maps as texts and documents for analyzing the political and cultural meanings embedded in their production. Second, I focus almost exclusively on early modern Spain and New Spain. Finally, my emphasis here is on cartography. Although the new cultural geography of the last fifteen years has been important in tracing the intellectual trajectory and relationship between geography and history, a synthetic treatment of this body of literature would require a separate study beyond the scope of my undertaking.¹

MAPS, SPACE, AND PLACE

Jorge Hardoy, a prominent scholar of Latin American urban history, noted in 1983, "No history exists of the cartography of the countries that currently comprise Latin America" (Hardoy 1983). The gap was due in part

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1. For a critical and often brilliant overview, see Gregory (1994). A comprehensive intellectual history can be found in Livingstone (1992).

to the unavailability of maps from the colonial period. Maps live precarious lives. Like other documents, they are vulnerable to fires and other disasters and to being used for purposes other than those originally intended. Frequently, they are materials of only temporary interest to the consignee, and in requiring constant updating, they seem condemned to obsolescence. In addition, governments often set a deliberate policy of destroying maps due to their sensitivity in matters of national security and military control, as noted by Geoffrey Parker (1992, 124–25) and Armando Cortesão (1969). Scholars have nevertheless located and published collections of maps of Latin America over the years. For example, Hardoy has compiled an extraordinary collection of reproductions of urban maps from colonial Latin America, the product of more than twenty years of work. Before Hardoy, Cortesão (1969) published a three-volume work on Portuguese cartography featuring extensive biographical, archival, and technological data for cartographic researchers. More recently, Mexican scholars have produced collections of maps from the states of Mexico (José Luis Alanís Boyso in 1995), the Yucatán (Michel Antochiw in 1994), and Tamaulipas (Martín Reyes Vayssade in 1990).

The limited amount of scholarship on Latin American cartography also reflects academic trends. Historians have focused comparatively little attention on the socio-historical process of conceiving and structuring space along with its institutional and textual manifestations in geography and cartography.² Two decades ago, geographer David Robinson observed, “Though every Latin Americanist would probably readily agree with the notion that time and space are essential complementary dimensions of analysis, that is to say that nothing occurs outside of a time-space reference system, the fact of the matter is that to date the spatial element has been woefully neglected” (1979, 2).

Robinson’s criticism may be less trenchant now than before because Latin Americanists have begun to problematize spatiality in innovative ways by turning their attention to regionality, nationalism, borders, and boundaries, stressing indeterminacy, hybridity, and contingency. Yet history and geography remain distinctive analytical fields, so much so that geographer Edward Soja lamented in a recent collection that space (and its institutional personality, geography) has been consistently relegated to a position subordinate to time (and its institutional personality, history) in contemporary critical theory (Soja 1989). Social theory’s overarching concern with processes of social change, modernization, and revolution have

2. In Latin American historiography, thoughtful discussions of geography and history have been held most frequently by anthropologists. See Taussig (1987), Poole (1988, 1997), Wade (1993), and Rappaport (1990, 1994). The most sophisticated analytical attempt to deal with spatiality and history in a Latin American context is Van Young (1992), especially the introduction. See also Van Young (1995). Coronil (1997) provides an excellent discussion and application of the works of many of the new cultural geographers.

privileged “progress” as the object of study and time as its dimension, relegating space to a contingent, static category (Harvey 1989, 205). Thus although history is understood as dynamic, contested, and dialectical, space continues to be treated as “dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile.”³ Yet as Edward Said has argued, peoples make their own geography as well as their own history (1979, 5).

Ironically, as Paul Carter (1987) argued in a recent book on the exploration and construction of Australia, historians often tend to eschew any sense of spatial history when recounting the past, preferring instead to view space as a set stage on which historical events simply unfold.⁴ The stage convention fixes the spatial dimension by asserting the timelessness of place, leaving only the temporal dimension to analyze. This privileging of the temporal renders space neutral and static, potentially meshing the historical project into a network of imperial ideologies, legitimization histories, and apologetics. Such histories replicate the colonial fantasies of the colonizers by implicitly assuming, as Frantz Fanon commented, that “the settler makes history; his life is an epoch, an Odyssey. He is the absolute beginning: ‘This land was created by us’; he is the unceasing cause: ‘If we leave, all is lost, and the country will go back to the Middle Ages’” (Fanon 1963, 51). Thus “imperial history” assigns meaning retrospectively and from without, rejecting context, locality, and specificity. Moreover, in viewing space as a stage, historians deny subjects the agency that will transform an encountered and inhabited space into a colonial place. At the same time, preexisting places and alternative conceptions of space that preceded the colonialist enterprise vanish from view. As Carter observed, “what we see is what the firstcomers did not see: a place, not a historical space. A place, a historical fact, detached from its travellers; static, at anchor, as if it was always there, bland, visible . . .” (Carter 1987, xiv).

In lieu of an imperial history, Carter offered a spatial history that would portray space as dynamic rather than static, in which “space itself was a text that had to be written before it could be interpreted” (1987, 41). His spatial history reconstructed the ways in which European explorers and settlers translated the landscape into an object that could be comprehended, colonized, and consumed. He did so by analyzing the epistemologies of travel, exploration, and settlement revealed in processes of naming, writings of passage (such as logbooks), and records of travel and survey (such as maps). The historical significance of these “tools of the traveler,” Carter suggested, lies in “their open-endedness, their lack of finish, even

3. The quoted text was taken from Michel Foucault, as cited in Rajchman (1988). It is interesting to note that Foucault found sophisticated historical studies of space in the work of historians, particularly the social historians of the *Annales* school (see Rajchman 1988, 93–94).

4. My reading of Carter has been informed by conversations with Graham Burnett and by provocative discussions of the book in a seminar taught by Burnett at Yale in 1996 as well as by the analysis in Gregory (1994, esp. 171–76).

their search for words . . . , for it is here, where forms and conventions break down, that we can discern the process of transforming space into place, the *intentional* world of the texts, wherein lies their unrepeatability and their enduring, if hitherto ignored, historical significance" (1987, xxiii, his emphasis).⁵

In effect, European practices of mapping and naming provided a textual tangibility for a landscape in which their own history could begin to unfold and colonization could occur, a landscape where historical ambiguity would be reconciled through spatial order (see Gregory 1994, 171–72). As Carter concluded, "the country did not precede the traveller: it was the offspring of his intention" (1987, 349).

Carter was not suggesting that history began with the arrival of explorers and settlers—precisely the opposite. His reconstruction of the emergence of Australia from horizons of travel and pages of texts centered on the profound absence and elision of "other places" beyond the colonizers' inscriptions.⁶ Carter's analysis of European epistemologies of travel, naming, and mapping was designed in part to reveal the naturalized lexicon on which the contemporary Australian landscape has been built, a lexicon inextricably bound to the colonial social structure and its legacies.⁷ Carter's historicization of the spatial construction of colonial Australia thus offered an aperture for beginning to conceptualize alternative or absent forms of temporal and spatial understanding that preceded and coexisted with the colonial enterprise. Through this lens, scholars potentially can recognize "the suppressed spatiality of our own historical consciousness" and experience as well as "its form and its historically constitutive role" (Carter 1987, 350).

Similarly, the recent work of Thongchai Winichakul (1994) has offered a paradigmatic example of how representations of space as cartographic productions are complicit in contemporary imperial ideologies, domestic invented traditions, and the erasure of dispossession. Thongchai

5. Carter's distinction between space and place is intended to emphasize the ways in which individual spatial experience is systematized by the colonial social structure (see Noyes 1992, 12–14).

6. For a similar point relative to historical narrative and the creation of "active silences," see Trouillot (1995); on cartography, see Harley (1988b).

7. I say "in part" because Carter's analysis is also designed to differentiate among the epistemological perspectives of James Cook, Joseph Banks, and T. R. Mitchell—that is, among exploration, discovery, and surveying. One of Carter's significant contributions is his nuanced analysis of such epistemologies, recovering the subjects behind what is too often seen as a homogenous and mechanistic imperial machine. His focus on their perspectives, training, and subjectivity takes issue with such banal characterizations and examines the competing and often contradictory interests and ideologies within empire and its "agents." See the brilliant study on Robert Schomburgk and the surveying of British Guiana in Burnett (forthcoming). See also the "unpacking" of imperialism in the postcolonial context of U.S.-Latin American encounters in Joseph, LeGrand, and Salvatore (1998).

has argued that in conventional histories of Thailand, historians have projected a "Thai-ness" onto the distant past, in the process asserting that the making of modern Siam resulted from enlightened reform and modernization by Siamese elites, a patriotic process of national integration. Such facile interpretations ignore the aggressive pretensions of the Bangkok elite and write the history of Siam as if it has always been a single entity victimized by European colonialists. Thongchai suggested in sharp contrast that the Bangkok elite constructed Siam at the expense of numerous small territorial entities in the region (which had divergent notions of space, borders, territory, and identity). This process relied fundamentally on deploying specifically "Western" cartographic technologies and spatial conceptions. The supposedly primordial "geo-body" of Siam actually emerged from the nineteenth-century page, through the conscious use of cartographic traditions and the construction of maps that validated Bangkok's incorporation of these smaller territories into the confines of a strictly delineated national space. Thus, Thongchai contended, "if force defined the space, mapping vindicated it" (1994, 126). Western-style geopolitical maps, threaded together with sharp borders and precise lines, served as models for what was to become a nation that had clearly defined political boundaries, a history, and a certain essence with which all inhabitants would identify (what Thongchai calls the "We-self"). These appropriated cartographic technologies helped construct genealogical teleologies that led toward the end point of a defined, mapped unit of analysis in which "the prior existence of the geo-body, at least 'in theory,' directly prevent[ed] any recollection that it was in the process of being created" (Thongchai 1994, 147).

The works of Carter and Thongchai provide a substantive starting point for joining historical and spatial processes through a cartographic lens. These analyses also offer suggestive reference points for scholars of Latin American colonial and postcolonial history and geography. Yet they are just two of a growing number of scholars influenced by cultural studies, poststructuralism, and postcolonial theory who are concerned with the politico-imperial and cultural ramifications of geography and cartography as institutional disciplines and sciences. These scholars have now begun to use maps as sources and texts for reexamining issues of colonialism, imperialism, and state formation.⁸

The recent works of a burgeoning school of critical cartography have laid the groundwork for much of the recent demystification of maps. Perhaps the leading figure was the late J. B. Harley. In several thought-provoking essays, Harley challenged many of the prevailing assumptions

8. The literature is substantial. As well as the works discussed in this essay, excellent starting points can be found in Burnett (forthcoming), Craib and Burnett (1998), Edney (1997), Godlewska and Smith (1994), Helgerson (1986), Kain and Baigent (1992), Kashani-Sabet (forthcoming), Lewis (1998), Turnbull (1993), and Sparke (1995).

surrounding cartographic representation and production by bringing the techniques and strategies of poststructuralism and colonial studies to map analysis (Harley 1988a, 1988b, 1989, 1992).⁹ In the first place, Harley argued, one should avoid “the canons of traditional cartographical criticism with its string of binary oppositions between maps that are ‘true and false,’ ‘accurate and inaccurate,’ ‘objective and subjective,’ ‘literal and symbolic,’ or based on ‘scientific integrity’ as opposed to ‘ideological distortion.’ Maps are never value-free images; except in the narrowest Euclidean sense they are not in themselves either true or false” (Harley 1988a, 278).

Rather, maps are active, creative, and constitutive. More bluntly, they are implicated in creating the reality that they presume to reveal. Thus as well as exposing the troublesome binaries that permeated cartographic criticism and interpretation, Harley and other cartographic theorists (such as Denis Wood 1992), problematized the foundational notion that maps are mimetic and simply mediate between a spatial reality and human perception of that reality. Such an entrenched mythology assumes that the map (particularly the “modern, objective, rational and geometrical map”) lacks any ideological content. In contrast, they argue, maps must be understood as social constructions laden with value, as cultural and class productions that serve interests, express intentions, and naturalize a particular ideological position (Harley 1988a, 1989; Wood 1992). Harley observed, “Both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation, maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased toward, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of social relations. By accepting such premises it becomes easier to see how appropriate they are to manipulation by the powerful in society” (Harley 1988a, 278).

The claims of objectivity and neutrality have made maps powerful tools for colonizing spaces and minds. In a work published posthumously (1992), Harley turned his attention to cartography and the conquest and colonization of the Americas. Building in part on Carter (1987), Harley began outlining the forms in which cartography and “an anticipatory geography” helped “create what followed,” a “New Spain” for possession, settlement, and colonization (Harley 1992, 532). Harley zeroed in on the lack of analysis of the “ideological features of European maps and their role in the construction of a geographical space in which colonial societies could take root” (1992, 528). Harley’s call for deeper analyses of the ways in which geography and cartography were implicated in conquest and colonization has begun to resonate among scholars of colonial Mexican history, and it is to these works that I now turn.

9. Harley’s use of Foucault and Derrida is problematic and has been critiqued cogently by Barbara Belyea (1992).

CARTOGRAPHY, VISION, AND POSSESSION

Maps are powerful instruments that allow for the perception and conceptualization of totality, of macrospace, while aiding in the control of space and populations without requiring direct experience (Thongchai 1994, 52–55). At least theoretically, maps create a landscape of legibility and control, a simplified space amenable to a single set of eyes.¹⁰ Victor Segalen's fictional account of late Ch'ing intrigue in Peking captured the potential of the map: "And here, before my eyes, between my two hands spread at less than a man's full span, I see, unfurl, spread out, hold, and possess, at small financial cost, the plane representation of the city as a whole, this capital and all it contains—Pei-king" (Segalen 1988, 101). Such panoptic power makes maps highly attractive to any ruler eager to bring "the provinces" under control, establish a coherent and usable system of taxation, impose a property regime, set the real and symbolic boundaries of sovereignty and nationality, visualize military conquests and expansion, or imagine himself or herself ruler of it all. Segalen's breathless progression from "I see" to "I possess" points to the power encapsulated in such a document. Moreover, the use of maps helps make abstract social principles like nationality concrete and legitimizes them, transforming extractive and power-laden practices like taxation and conscription into enforceable norms. As Denis Wood has explained, the nation-state and cartography are reciprocally constitutive in that "the state, in its premodern and modern forms, evolves together with the map as an instrument of polity, to assess taxes, wage war, facilitate communications and exploit strategic resources" (Wood 1992, 43; see also Escobar 1997; Edney 1997). Thus maps were part of an economic and political project, and the state's institutional systems of knowledge and power were encoded on their surfaces. Consequently, historians can discern on maps' surfaces how lands were made visible, how the unknown was "shown" to power, and how the subject of interest to the sovereign was organized.

Scholars have long understood the implications of cartography for administrative, commercial, and imperial purposes. In 1967 R. A. Skelton asserted that the emergence of mapping as an instrument of national policy occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "partly conscious and officially inspired, partly spontaneous and actuated by private enterprise" (1967, 52). Governments of early modern Europe increasingly relied on cartography as a means for territorial expansion, facilitation of rule, and administrative control. Cartography was already a significant aspect of official policy in Europe by the sixteenth century, as evidenced in a number of recent works (Seed 1995; Buisseret 1992; Kagan 1989; Parker 1992).

10. On legibility and simplifications, see Scott (1998).

In recent essays, Richard Kagan (1989) and Geoffrey Parker (1992) have noted the support that Spanish monarchs Charles V and Philip II conferred on mapmakers for various reasons. Parker showed how numerous “special maps” were created for military purposes, like those drawn up for Philip’s planned invasion of England in 1588. State-of-the-art maps represented military, political, and economic capital in early modern Europe, to the point that secret agents of various European powers were employed to obtain by whatever means copies of Portuguese maps (Harley 1988b, 60–64). Maps were especially useful as tools for overcoming reliance on vernacular knowledge in military exercises. King Charles IX of France, in explaining the tight controls on cartographic materials, commented to a Portuguese cartographer, “maps are useful in war, enabling a foreign enemy to lead an army without the aid of a guide who knows the country across the terrain shown on said maps, utilizing only a quadrant and compass” (Parker 1992, 125). Meanwhile, laxity in producing updated maps could have devastating military and political consequences. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Spanish Hapsburgs evidently had stopped updating maps and supporting mapping projects. By relying instead on the maps of foreign cartographers and outdated domestic products, they hastened the decline of the Spanish Empire.

Cartographic interests were not motivated solely by military matters. They also served an aesthetic and imaginative purpose. Richard Kagan drew a compelling portrait of two monarchs enamored with viewing “true likenesses” of the world, surrounding themselves with cosmographers and geographers, astronomical instruments, globes, and maps (Kagan 1989). Vision constituted knowledge, and both Charles V and Philip II endorsed and promoted cartographic projects to enhance their knowledge of the regions over which they ruled and to visualize these places. For example, to supplement Philip’s knowledge of the increasingly vast realms over which he held sovereignty, he invited Flemish artist Anton van den Wyngaerde to Spain to “paint” the cities of Spain and simultaneously enlisted Spanish cartographer Pedro de Esquivel to survey the country and assemble a series of maps. The two projects fulfilled goals that were simultaneously competing and complementary: the chorographic works of van den Wyngaerde paid tribute to local power and tradition, while Esquivel’s atlas promoted an image of a unified nation-state, with Philip at its head (Kagan 1989; Mundy 1996, chap. 1)

Similarly, Philip ordered a series of *relaciones geográficas* produced for New Spain, to be composed of local chorographic and geographic maps produced by local officials and complemented by surveys conducted by Portuguese cosmographer Francisco Domínguez. The hope was that a geometric survey, combined with local descriptions and maps and a geometrical projection based on a Ptolemaic grid, would make the new lands com-

prehensible and provide tangible order for a developing empire. Such undertakings were designed to help conceptualize a unified empire and assume visual and symbolic possession of new spaces under its control.¹¹

Patricia Seed analyzed these processes of encounter and possession in a provocative recent work. Her account “examines the initial attempts to own the New World, to claim it for England, Spain, Portugal, France, or the Dutch Republic” (1995, 3). In attempting to disaggregate the five major European powers involved in conquering the Americas, Seed has delineated the different culturally rooted ways that these nation-states took possession of the lands they came upon. Her well-developed argument holds that each power conducted its own unique ceremonies to justify and validate the taking of territory and that such ceremonies expressed a specific cultural heritage.¹² Mere discovery did not legitimate dominion. Rather, rule was initiated and legitimated through these various cultural rituals and ceremonies. For example, the English planted hedges and created settled habitats, while the French staged parades. The Portuguese relied on mathematical equations and an abstracted vision of the earth’s surface, developed through sophisticated technological advances in astronomy and mathematics, to reach places previously deemed inaccessible and then to legitimate Portuguese claims to rule. The Dutch, “sailing in the wake of the Portuguese,” similarly based their notions of discovery and ownership on labor and capital, the outlay of intellectual and physical effort, and nautical rather than terrestrial exploration. Discovery and legitimation for the Dutch culminated in “geographical discovery,” and the recording of a place on a map became a critical sign of possession. In sharp contrast, according to Seed, mapping, naming, and description were not important to the Spanish, at least in justifying possession and claiming legitimacy.

While Seed’s argument is useful for understanding the immediacy of contact, the rituals of asserting possession of space, and the quotidian cultural foundations of such rituals, it is less helpful for the subsequent period of consolidation and establishment of rule—the arduous and lengthy process occurring between encountering space and creating and controlling place.¹³ Although it is important to note the relative weight given to

11. For a similar argument regarding Christopher Saxton’s county maps of England (published in 1579), see Helgerson (1986).

12. Jorge Hardoy earlier performed a similar task in differentiating among the various forms of city planning and location undertaken by the different European states (see Hardoy 1983, 128).

13. I am using the distinction made between *space* and *place* by Erica Carter et al.: “It is not spaces which ground identifications but places. How then does space become place? By being named; as the flows of power and negotiation of social relations are rendered in the concrete form of architecture; and also, of course, by embodying the symbolic and imaginary investment of a population. Place is space to which meaning has been ascribed” (Carter et al. 1993, xii)

mapping and description among the various nations, Seed overstates her case. Descriptions and maps were fundamental to the Spanish because, as Harley suggested, they symbolically invented a “New Spain” to be visualized, possessed, and controlled. As Mary Louise Pratt has explained, “the ‘discovery’ itself, even within the ideology of discovery, has no existence of its own. It only gets ‘made’ for real after the traveler returns home, and brings it into being through texts: a name on a map, a report to the Royal Geographic Society, the Foreign Office, the London Mission Society, a diary, a lecture, a travel book” (Pratt 1992, 204).

As Kagan has demonstrated, cartographic technologies were deployed to bring the New World to the sovereign. Under Charles V, “explorers, governors, and viceroys in those provinces [of the New World] were regularly instructed to provide Charles with maps, pictures, and other ‘descriptions’” (Kagan 1989, 41).¹⁴ As early as 1508, the Spanish Casa de la Contratación contained a special geographical and cosmographical department dedicated to revising perpetually a master map. In the 1530s, Alonso de Santa Cruz served as royal cosmographer for “fashioning a master map” from those created by returning flotillas, a map that “acknowledged new explorations and proved possession” (Harley 1988b, 61–62; Mundy 1996, 13). Although mapping may not have served in the same ritual capacity for the Spanish as it did for the Portuguese and the Dutch, maps were fundamental to creating the object to be possessed. Through textual exegesis—acts of toponymic reconsecration, spatial reinscription, and paper representation—what were previously spaces in a grid achieved a tangible and visual reality as a “New Spain.”

Cartographic projects were also part of a larger aesthetic project designed to bridge the distance between a multiplicitous reality and the desired goal of unity and wholeness. The maps produced would presumably improve understanding and prove possession but also provide an illusion of control from a distance, control of the periphery by the metropolis and control of the “empire” by a central authority. An empire is something of a fiction to begin with, an imagined entity much like Benedict Anderson’s famous nation (1993). While an empire is no fiction to those who are conquered, repressed, and killed by its coercive arm, it is a fiction in terms of the cohesiveness and singularity of its control—a control made problematic by great distance. Yet the totalizing vision of a map elided such inconveniences, suggesting to the monarch or reader an orderly and rational empire. Such a map then became part of the imperial archive, a unified body of catalogued texts that gave sense to an otherwise heterogeneous empire assembled from disparate territories (see Richards 1993).

14. On the various mediums that “brought” the Americas to Spain and the concomitant transformations wrought by the encounter in Spanish geography and intellectual life, see Butzer (1992).

If cartography proved crucial to the development of the early modern nation-state, the modernization of state power, and the gradual assembly of an empire, it also occupied a coveted position in the world of trade and commerce. Jerry Brotton's new book (1998) analyzes the crucial role played by cartography in the development of mercantile power in the early modern period. His focus on commercial rather than administrative elites demonstrates how forms of cartographic representation depended on the sponsor. While imperial patronage used maps to compose and validate far-flung territorial claims, commercial sponsorship obsessed over detailed and accurate representations fundamental to commercial interests. While imperial patronage tended to sponsor "imaginative geographies" that were speculative and aesthetic, commercial sponsorship required "precise geographies" that were strategic and functional, scientific endeavors that occasioned the gradual professionalization of geographers as skilled administrators assisting the advance of trade and colonization. Map production was thus inextricably entwined with the acquisitive and commercial ethos of the period as well as with the interests of the nation-state. In a world of expanding trading networks and global commerce, the developing ideology of capitalism required assurances of predictability, consistency, and uniformity—assurances that the modern map appeared to offer.¹⁵ According to Brotton, "Maps, charts and globes disseminated vital conceptual information on the changing territorial and commercial shape of the world they depicted" and as such "became prized possessions, not only keeping their owners informed of the latest discoveries and commercial ventures but also providing them with a sense of security as to their own identity within such an ever-changing world. To be aware of the changing nature of the world was to be able to position oneself confidently in relation to that world" (Brotton 1998, 75–76).

Just as important, Brotton draws attention to the role of "modern cartography" in developing a self-consciously styled "West" and its antithesis, "the East." He argues that the distinction between East and West developed at the end of the sixteenth century with the production of the Mercator Projection.¹⁶ Commercial expansion, long-distance trade, and competitive empires increasingly demanded quick and reliable navigation from point to point. Mercator's projection responded to these needs by en-

15. This point has been argued with clarity and force by Studnicki-Gizbert (1998). See also David Gugerli's new (1998) study of the rationalization of Swiss cartography and its relationship to the demands of a developing bourgeois public sphere for homogenous and therefore predictable space.

16. The Mercator Projection was a mathematically constructed map projection that mapped the sphere of the earth onto a flat plane. Lines of latitude were spaced further apart with distance from the equator and thus the projection gave a skewed version of the relative sizes of the world's land masses.

abling navigators to sail long distances by using lines of bearing while simultaneously taking into account the curvature of the earth. Crucially, it also elaborated a visual distinction between East and West: the well-known distortion of northern and southern regions on the projection proved unproblematic precisely because the “diplomatic and commercial preoccupations” of Charles V concerned the division of the earth on an East-West axis. This division arose primarily from the conflict between the Spanish and the Portuguese over the Molucca Islands and their respective spheres of commercial control. Once inscribed on maps, these hemispheric pretensions attained subsequent reality in law, commerce, and politics.

Brotton has stressed the impact of the Mercator projection on the visual bifurcation of the world because the notion of an “East” and a “West” has been misleadingly projected onto the past. Moreover, the bifurcation led to active suppression of the impact that non-Renaissance European countries had on geographical conceptualizations and understandings. This presence has been obscured by a present-day infatuation with the myths of a pristine, exclusively “Western” Renaissance humanist tradition as the supposed font of contemporary civilization. Such anachronistic perspectives marginalize the roles of the Portuguese, the Ottomans, and the “East” in general in the formation of Europe and in the geographical construction of the early modern world.¹⁷ They oversimplify a complex and polyvocal history by eliding the ways in which commercial and intellectual spaces blend and the myriad cultural influences that have affected map content, style, and production (Brotton 1998, 106–7).

Brotton’s work draws attention to two fundamental issues. The first is the role of commerce and trade as well as imperial power in cartographic representations and the use of cartographic technologies in sixteenth-century Spain and Portugal. Cartographic representation was thoroughly imbued with ideas about the economy, property, space, and culture. Second, Brotton points out the ways in which the contributions of categorically “othered” cultures are silenced in anachronistic reconstructions of the history of early modern Europe and European exploration, a significant point for any discussion of the conquest and colonization of the Americas. Harley (1992) observed that the contributions and impact of Native Americans and their cartography to European understandings and representations of the Americas and Europe have been consistently ignored in studying cartography

17. Brotton’s inclusion of the Portuguese here deserves mention. He included Portugal because the Portuguese were perceived as “devoid of the spirit invariably attributed to Renaissance Man, a spirit characterized by its intellectual curiosity, suspicion of worldly wealth and, above all, its humaneness. Within this purview the Portuguese were seen in their imperial and commercial dealings as essentially pragmatic, ruthlessly pursuing financial gain at the expense of a humaneness that was seen as the cornerstone of Renaissance civility” (Brotton 1998, 47).

and colonialism in the Americas. A number of recent works have begun to address such issues, and these will be discussed next.¹⁸

CARTOGRAPHY, PERSPECTIVE, AND POWER

Paul Carter has posed the question, "What was it about the uneven land that inspired our need to control it . . . , to possess it with maps as if it were flat. The very idea of invasion and colonization presupposed a theatrical conception of space foreign to non-Western peoples" (Carter 1996, 365).

While this dichotomization may seem extreme, certainly the ways in which European colonizers conceived of space as theatrical or scenographic were fundamental to expansion and the eventual colonization of much of the globe. One could argue that the rediscovery of Ptolemy and linear perspective during the Renaissance was a necessary prerequisite for the development of modern science and the nascent capitalist economic system. By assuming an ontological separation between subject and object and by ordering space in a uniform, infinitely repeatable fashion, perceived from above by a monocular eye, oceanic horizons could be crossed and land commodified.¹⁹ When overlaid with an abstract grid, land became a socially and historically flat surface for possession and control, a surface that was static and ahistorical.

The renaissance rediscovery of Ptolemy and linear perspective affected cartographic representation profoundly. As the eye was detached from the viewer, surveying the landscape from above, so was it presumed that the map itself was disembodied, free of human bias and prejudice, and merely mediating between a spatial reality and the viewer's perception of that reality. Mary Louise Pratt has created the neologism of the *seeing-man*, "an admittedly unfriendly label for the European male subject of European landscape discourse—he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess" (1992, 7). Similarly, one can imagine a *seeing-map*: a creation (and thus a creator) portrayed as innocent of imperial behavior or power, revealing what is out there and thus possessing it. The ideology of discovery seems at times to assume a world of dormant "facts" merely waiting to be found, classified, and brought home, one in which the ideological perspectives of

18. Recently published books not specific to Mexico include Brotherston (1992), Lewis (1998), and Warhus (1997).

19. See Jay (1993, 55–60), Hillis (1993), and Cosgrove (1985). On the rediscovery of linear perspective, see Edgerton (1975, 1987) and compare with Alpers (1987), who provides a different interpretation and opinion. Visuality and "visual regimes" have come under increasing scrutiny and criticism in academic literature. For a sharp counterpoint, see the nuanced defense of visuality in Rose (1992, chap. 9). See also the recent essay by Poole (1998) that deals with the notion of "visual regimes" with subtlety. A seminal examination of capitalism's spatiality can be found in Lefebvre (1991).

the observer are not implicated, and placeless spaces await the performance of a foundational imperial pageant.²⁰

Two important recent works by Walter Mignolo (1995, 1989) looked at the culturally loaded ramifications of such shifts in cartographic representation and its significance in the conquest and colonization of the Americas.²¹ Medieval Christian maps were considered to be overtly ethnocentric in their marginalization of non-Christian peoples “to the edges of maps that placed the Christian world, particularly Jerusalem, at the center” (Friedman 1994, 65). Renaissance mapmakers posited a conception of the world that supposedly replaced existing ethnocentric visions with a single objective one. Yet as Mignolo has argued, “the center of the world [is] not determined geographically but ideologically” (1995, 261). Nor did the shift from medieval forms of representation to those based on geometrical representation necessarily imply any concomitant transition to value-free imagery. Rather, this shift created an illusory dichotomy between an ethnic center (considered to be subjective, political, relative, and ideological) and a geometric center (considered objective, neutral, absolute, and scientific).²² What Harley called “subliminal geometry” ultimately legitimated and codified a worldview that has been culturally specific and power-laden.

Beyond providing or revealing knowledge, maps also served a creative function. As well as supplementing weaponry and force, they too were colonizing components that facilitated Europe’s imposition of its “ethnic center” on the rest of the world. As models of a specific way of conceiving and organizing space, maps were self-legitimizing and naturalized an arbitrary but established order. Maps possessed the power to socialize persons to certain standards and conventions, to colonize the mind, and potentially to reshape reality according to the desires of the individuals making maps.

How does the map (or the mapmaker) accomplish such feats? Mignolo posited that “a description of the world is what makes it relevant to us, not its mere existence” (1995, 227). That process of description is a selective one—the mapmaker cannot represent every relation or context on the map, or else it would become a mere mass of conflicting and overlapping images without coherent structure. The entire function of a map on

20. Thus God could tell Adam, in Pico de Mirandola’s *De Dignitate Hominis*, “We have set thee at the world’s center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world” (cited in Edgerton 1987, 10). On the ideology of discovery, see Carter’s (1987) analysis of Banks.

21. Mignolo’s (1995) book addresses issues of speech and writing as well as cartography. I focus on the final third of the book and on his (1989) article discussing cartography and colonization.

22. Fanon succinctly captured the ideological nature of such claims when he observed, “Objectivity, for the native, is always against him” (1963, 52).

one level is to simplify the real: to capture in usable fashion those aspects of a "territory" (whether political, social, economic, or geographical) that pertain to the reader's control and to create spaces for the articulation of control. As such, according to Mignolo, "maps are and are not the territory. They are not, because they do not reflect any essential reality of the shape of the earth or of the cosmos. They are because, once they are accepted, they become a powerful tool for controlling territories, colonizing the mind and imposing themselves on the members of the community using the map as the real territory" (Mignolo 1995, 237).

Thus in Mignolo's view, the products of power were not accuracy or "truth" but the acceptance and naturalization of representations: "European maps and Spanish territorial administration historically became the 'true representation' of a new world and the *Indias Occidentales*" (Mignolo 1995, 313). Such representations were "true" due not to any ontological priority but to the power of the Spanish, whose representations became the basis on which lands were understood and history was written. At the same time, Mesoamerican modes and forms of representing space were transformed, repressed, and replaced during the consolidation of Spanish rule. As Mignolo explained, "European territorial representations (maps, descriptions), helped by the printing press, silenced Amerindian ones, which were never printed during the colonial period, producing the effect that the former were more appropriate or truthful descriptions of space than the latter" (1989, 94).

Here lies the crux of Mignolo's work. He wants to problematize evolutionary histories (Carter's "imperial" histories), which he calls "monotopic." That is, they are history written from a single linear perspective that denies coevalness and erases the presence of alternative spatial and temporal conceptions, implying that history begins with the colonizer. Mignolo argues in favor of multivocality or a "pluritopic hermeneutics" that takes into account the multiple coexistent and conflictive semiotic interactions that inevitably occur in colonial situations.²³ Mignolo asks, "If America was a necessary European invention in order to make sense of a reality unknown to those who participated in the invention, how did Amerindians conceive the space in which they were living? And how could co-existing territorial representations be understood?" (1989, 95). To write the history of "New World" cartography as merely one in which Europeans applied specific technologies of representation and created a "New Spain" is to silence, all over again, the presence of indigenous groups and their territor-

23. Mignolo has created a number of neologisms that make the book hard going at times. The same criticism has been leveled at Carter, although more for his writing style than for the use of neologisms. In their defense, it should be noted that this difficulty arises partly as a consequence of the questions they are asking. Such questions disrupt the very lexicon in which scholars communicate and posit a critical self-awareness of how our own epistemological and intellectual vocabulary is itself historically conditioned.

ial representations that preceded, complemented, coexisted with, and competed with those of the Spanish.

Barbara Mundy's masterful *The Mapping of New Spain* (1996) has focused attention on these coexistent territorial representations as manifested in the *relaciones geográficas*. Composed of written descriptions and visual representations, the *relaciones* were sets of locally produced responses to a questionnaire dispatched by Spanish cosmographers under the auspices of Philip II. Each one was drawn by a local resident and described a different city, village, or small province of New Spain.²⁴ The Spanish official in charge of the project, Juan López de Velasco, had assumed that his primary respondents would be Spanish colonists. But disdain for pictorial representation led Spanish administrators in New Spain to devote their attention to the written responses to the questionnaires and generally to assign the pictorial responsibilities to local native mapmakers from the Nahua nobility (Mundy 1996, 32).

The results were disastrous for López de Velasco and the administration at court. Although the imperial administration may have hoped for maps that would help create a stable entity, it received instead the messy complexity of early colonial reality. What the crown imagined as untrammelled space was in actuality a place, a landscape with histories and meanings, well-traveled and resonant with inscriptions. Dreams of transparency and flights of Icarian fancy foundered on the shoals of an existing geography. Indigenous maps portrayed a far different lay of the land, one punctuated with logographic place-names and histories encoded in symbols. Unintelligible and consequently meaningless to López de Velasco, the maps were relegated to a forgotten corner.

Although they were not considered useful by Spanish cosmographers, the maps of the *relaciones* and numerous land-grant maps are rich sources for examining native perspectives and traditions of representing space and place. Because of the high level of participation by indigenous mapmakers, these maps provide a graphic portrait of the changing conceptions of reality and space among indigenous groups and the concomitant supplantation of Spanish conceptions of space, territory, and time. Unlike written descriptions, the maps were usually not redrawn or transcribed by Spanish authorities. While the representations may suffer from Spanish limitations imposed by the specificity and forms of questions (and occasional explanatory Castilian text), the integrity of indigenous visions and representations remains largely intact.²⁵ This vision reveals a profoundly different mode of perceiving and ordering space (Mundy 1996, 67).

24. *Relaciones* were produced throughout Spanish America, not just in New Spain. Mundy focuses only on New Spain, as does my discussion here.

25. This is a debatable proposition. For example, Mignolo has pointed out that the form of Spanish questions presupposed certain cosmological orientations that were likely foreign to

Study of the relaciones geográficas is not new. Numerous scholars have dedicated substantial time to studying this collection of documents intensively (e.g. Cline 1964, 1972; Robertson 1972). Yet Mundy's highly original study moved beyond previous works in a number of ways. First, she abstained from the traditional emphases and interpretations established among art historians. They have argued that indigenous art gradually took on European styles and was eventually subsumed by them—at the expense of any concomitant analysis of why such changes occurred and what they signified. Mundy argues that such a position neglects the special quality of maps, namely, that they are dependent on how a culture envisions and conceptualizes space. Thus it is not the changes in artistic representations on a map that should be the primary focus of attention but how those changes indicate larger transformations in cultural perceptions of space, landscape, and organization. Second, Mundy redirected attention away from concerns over geographical accuracy and technological “advances” in mapmaking. Accuracy must be understood instead as a subjective term, particular to the eye of the beholder. Spatial conceptions and representations are culturally and contextually specific, not universal, and the styles used and items included in a map are specific to a particular audience.²⁶

Finally, Mundy countered the prevailing emphasis on seeing New World cartographic history as primarily a history of attempts by European imperial powers to represent the “New World” through maps. Like Mignolo, she has focused instead on how this evolving cartography was predicated on the supplantation of one conception of space by another, on how “the dazzling story of possession is trailed by the dark shadow of dispossession, and to dispel the myth that the path of cartography in the New World was an ascent toward an apex of an ever more perfect and dispassionate rendering of space. In Mexico, the evolving perfection ascribed to European maps of the colony may have been little more than an effective suppression, indeed, a leveling, of all other points of view” (Mundy 1996, xx).

Mundy used the series of representations included in the relaciones

Amerindians, a situation that impacted their representations (1989, 121). Gruzinski (1993) has argued convincingly that the form of the questionnaires reflected certain conceptions of knowledge, society, politics, religion, and economy that were not necessarily understood by or applicable to the native population that the questionnaires purported to describe, even though they ultimately participated directly in the responses. The questionnaires of the relaciones were a simplified cutout of a Spanish reality reflecting presuppositions, explicit and implicit logic, tacit axioms, and unconscious organization. In consequence, the conceptual matrices within which answers to questions could be given were already preordained and structured, dramatically influencing the ways in which the local populations could order their own knowledge (Gruzinski 1993, 74).

26. Similarly, Mignolo has argued that while geographical “imprecision” in Amerindian pinturas has been usually interpreted as a negative feature (as what they lacked), these interpretations never ask why such forms of representation were not deemed necessary or useful in the first place (Mignolo 1989, 113–15).

geográficas to reconstruct this view and to analyze what happens when two divergent ways of conceiving and mapping space come together: one she terms *rational* (space represented as a set of points in relation to one another), the other *humanistic* (space as a world created out of and for human action). Spanish maps were geometrical (representing topographical space through the mathematical reduction of distances between points in space) and chorographical (in which space was seen as panoramic and from a single viewpoint). In contrast, indigenous representations were humanistic, portraying the social and human composition of space and stressing the importance of social relationships and their endurance over time. Native mapmakers, nearly always from the nobility, blended the temporal and spatial worlds to construct a historical and spatially relational representation of the community (*alteptl*) rather than a city or the topography. That is, they presented a community as a history and as a social structure and settlement (see also Leibsohn 1994, 1995, 1996; Gruzinski 1987; and Mignolo 1995).²⁷

These preconquest forms of representation began to change with the arrival of the Spanish. But rather than considering in the relaciones a mere blending or syncretism of styles, Mundy has argued that what appears on these *pinturas*, the iconography and styles, are products of self-conscious choices about forms and strategies of representation by native mapmakers. Indigenous respondents realized that they were presenting their communities to the king and simultaneously creating maps for their communities, mirroring the ambiguities of life after the conquest. As such, their maps reveal how indigenous elites oscillated between the colonial and indigenous worlds (Mundy 1996, 67). Map production created a way for indigenous elites to resolve that tension, to shape colonial society, and to “maintain an indigenous colonial identity” (Mundy 1996, 87). The images produced were not static portraits from the past but active images inscribed in a colonial situation. These images open “a window onto the reality that colonial indigenes were in the process of creating for themselves” (Mundy 1996, xx).

This point is one of Mundy’s major contributions. Amerindians, rather than being passive recipients of imposed spatial and temporal perspectives, were active participants in imagining and creating a colonial real-

27. Mundy’s observation that the province of mapmaking was under the purview of elites deserves elaboration. The maps indicate a certain cultural perspective but also a certain class perspective, and thus no absolute attribution of a specific cultural basis of spatial understanding or representation should be argued based on the maps of the relaciones. The forms and styles of representation of indigenous maps were deployed for many reasons, including legitimating and justifying power-laden practices, just as European maps attempted to do. Moreover, how the laboring classes understood and represented space cannot necessarily be inferred from elite maps. An Andalucian peasant in fifteenth-century Spain and a rural laborer in Mesoamerica may not have conceived of and represented the world they inhabited in diametrically different ways. I am indebted to Robert Holden for raising this issue with me.

ity. Indigenous maps reveal community leaders who were incisively aware of the political and legal ramifications and uses of land titles, territorial maps, and boundary narratives. Although the questionnaire may have been cut from purely Spanish cloth, as Serge Gruzinski has argued, colonial reality was not. It was a place constructed through multiple hybrid portrayals and competing representations. Moreover, these hybrid portrayals allowed Mundy to problematize any simple dichotomy of colonizer and colonized. In a poignant example (after careful examination of various pinturas), she described how “the provinces countered the empire” as Mixtec communities logographically wrote their community names in Mixtec rather than the imposed Nahuatl names of the Aztec Empire (Mundy 1996, 145).

More was at stake than transformations in representations. Indigenous maps, relaciones as well as land-grant (or *merced*) maps, reveal as much about the actual transformation of geographical territory under Spanish rule as about the interaction between European and pre-Hispanic systems of representation (see Leibsohn 1995). Indigenous maps and styles of representations changed as the legal requirements for land-grant maps forced them to comply with Spanish cultural and ideological norms regarding property and space.²⁸ As Spanish land-use programs and forced urbanization were imposed, new forms of representation were adopted to defend material interests, local power, and territorial control. Because maps were regarded as the quintessential legal document in cases regarding “resources” and land, native mapmakers adopted Spanish symbols and techniques to ensure the validity of their claims, frequently making maps for their own community leaders and groups. Significant changes in symbols used on maps occurred in part because the viceroy issued specifications for acceptable maps to be used in courts. For example, church glyphs replaced hill glyphs as the sign for “town” not merely because Spanish cultural practices invaded indigenous ones but because indigenous mapmakers understood that such a symbol would be recognized (ideologically and juridically) by the Spanish government (Leibsohn 1995).

It is important to note, as does Dana Leibsohn (1995), that the native elite learned to master the new juridical discourse to defend tenuously their rights and traditions. But the long-term consequences were dramatic. The political and social ramifications of revolutions in the structures of thought and representation were profound, and the political and social stakes of representation were high (Gruzinski 1993). As Gruzinski has observed, while “a reinterpreted feature, a concept, a practice, could strengthen a

28. While asserting that maps reflect spatial understanding, Mundy has shown how maps also created spatial understanding as indigenous peoples were forced to alter their maps according to Spanish legal dictates and codes. Representations did not change solely because spatial understandings had changed. The demands placed on communities in legal cases meant the use of certain styles and conventions, not because they were necessarily now understood as “fact” but because communities were learning the terms of a new system.

threatened identity . . . , in the long term it was likely to bring about a slow dissolution or a complete reorganization" (1993, 3). Thus land merced maps wrought substantial changes in indigenous forms of representation and spatial practice. Mundy has argued that land grants became the means through which Spanish notions of territoriality infiltrated the indigenous world (Mundy 1996, 210; see also Gruzinski 1987). Now land was to be made visible through the system of ownership and property, meaning that space would be considered a collection of land parcels.

Moreover, while Amerindians could represent their communities and histories pictographically on the *relaciones*, the Spanish ultimately controlled the meanings of such maps when they were sent to the king or viceroy, overlaying their own ideas regarding property, ownership, political organization, and individual domain through written additions to indigenous representations (Mundy 1996, 176). While native mapmakers represented a community, its history, and territory as a coherent unit, Spanish administrators and scribes inserted descriptions that connected the individual map to the imagined larger imperial place being created. Thus the maps were reinterpreted as relational, as parts of a larger series that would together help compose "New Spain" as an orchestrated script for the pleasure of the crown and the use of the colonizers. As Mundy ultimately showed, while an imperial project intent on capturing the lay of the land was doomed to failure, it simultaneously created the object of its attention.

In the end, the *relaciones* maps were of little immediate value to the royal cosmographer or the monarch. Yet the *relaciones* provide a stunning glimpse of the transformation of indigenous society and the establishment of colonial rule. These works and Mundy's exposition of them offer one aperture into that moment between contact and control, between encountering space and eventually controlling a place.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The studies examined in this article clearly demonstrate that maps need to be read in simultaneous ways: as documents that provide information to the sponsor and to researchers but also as documents worthy of analysis that possess internal coherence and structure. Thongchai argued that a map is "a model for, rather than a model of, what it purport[s] to represent" (Thongchai 1994, 130). Maps thus constitute a key component in understanding the political and cultural formation of colonial empires and nation-states. The early colonial era seems to be an ideal setting in which to work in providing a radical conjuncture of two or perhaps more divergent ways of perceiving space and time. Historians of colonial Mexico have begun to take up this challenge with significant success.

Needed now are studies that build on these firm foundations. My suggestions are general and are meant to point out possible avenues for fu-

ture research on both the colonial and modern periods. Just as maps refine scholarly understanding of the encounter and conquest, they can also help broaden conceptions of the formation of the modern liberal state. Maps are class-related as well as culturally premised tools of legitimation and control. At the end of the nineteenth century, elites awarded cartography an honored position in the hierarchies of symbolic modernity. Maps were produced to create property registers, garner knowledge about “national resources,” modernize and develop “the hinterlands,” and present the nation as a graphically real proposition for colonizing and investing.²⁹ Numerous survey teams, scattered across the Porfirian landscape, attempted to make the landscape comprehensible to a central bureaucracy. Modern maps were essential to the effective rule of vast and disparate regions, to international recognition of sovereign borders, and as tools for state bureaucracies and agencies to manage resources, determine land claims, and establish control without depending on local knowledge.

Campesinos and indigenous communities were all too aware of the possible negative and positive outcomes of mapping projects and quickly reasserted their historical rights to land and their own conceptions of land and territory. These assertions usually took the form of colonial documents, titles, and maps, which were carefully guarded in local archives. For example, Alicia Hernández Chávez (1991) has shown how the campesinos of Anenecuilco relied on colonial maps and land titles in post-Independence litigation and disputes over land. Emiliano Zapata had buried these same maps and titles under the floor of the church in Anenecuilco with the (perhaps apocryphal) words, “I may die someday, but my pueblo’s papers stand to be guaranteed” (cited from Womack 1968, 342). The colonial land merced and relación maps analyzed by Mundy and Leibsohn resurfaced in 1895 in an archive of a government agency commissioned by Mexican President Porfirio Díaz to map Mexico comprehensively and definitively. They were found side by side with large landowners’ surveys of their landed properties.³⁰ Mundy’s final words reflect on a relación map of a small town in Oaxaca that has “returned” to its community, where it hangs on the wall of the town hall as a visual affirmation of the illustrious and rooted history of the community represented (1996, 216). These examples suggest a relentless continuity to cartographic Mexico, one that elides traditional historiographical divisions and emphasizes the ways in which texts assume a life beyond the field of their original production. Through continual reinscription and selective appropriation, communities have drawn on a deep

29. See Tenorio-Trillo (1996), Holden (1994), and Cambrezy and Marchal (1992). On cadastral mapping and its relation to state-formation, see Kain and Baigent (1992).

30. I deal with the context and content of these maps and the state archive in which they appear in my dissertation in progress (Craib n.d.).

reservoir of maps and documents to express visually notions of rights, history, territory, and identity.³¹

A map is often an expression of desire rather than a summation of reality. As a result, more studies are needed of the consequences of mapping projects. State-sponsored maps offered an aesthetic of possession that portrayed an orderly fantasy in lieu of a complex reality. But only rarely did the inhabitants of that landscape neatly fit such maps' choreographed images. For example, Eric Worby (1994) has shown how the colonial practice of assigning ethnic names in northwest Zimbabwe by producing ethnic maps failed repeatedly at organized domination because colonial subjects refused to be categorized and mapped ethnically.³² What were the ramifications of such mapping projects? Did prescriptive renderings of the landscape actually aid or produce actual transformations? For example, if land or property was portrayed as divided into geometric parcels, was the state able to turn an orderly aesthetic into a grounded reality? Did the physical and human geography comply with the sponsor's plan? What kinds of knowledge did colonial or state maps purport to offer and why?

Answers to questions like these would also help create an alternate picture of life on the ground, a vernacular landscape intelligible to local eyes and practices but not to the authorities, despite the organized structure portrayed by maps.³³ For example, as Mundy has shown, indigenous maps depicted neither a regional manifestation of a larger coherent entity nor an interlocking series of abstract spaces. Rather, these maps revealed how indigenes understood the spaces they inhabited as places they had created through material practices, places with a history, an identity, and meaning. In contrast to an official cartography, the maps of the *relaciones* were vernacular and contextual. What do locally produced maps and narratives reveal about senses of place and identity? Were they antithetical to the colonial or national project, or did they work in conjunction with it? Who on the local level controlled these documents and determined their use, and how representative were such images of indigenous culture?

Vernacular representations, in addition to reflecting a context-specific mode of spatial understanding, were deployed consciously to evade the strategies of control that power attempted to impose. Thus a vernacular landscape was accompanied by what could be called "a fugitive landscape." While state cartography was a strategy for control, the fugitive landscape was a tactic: an attempt at conscious illegibility by subalterns who, through maps and titles, contested state and foreign capitalist intru-

31. See also the excellent work of Joanne Rappaport (1990, 1994) on indigenous communities in the Andes of southern Colombia.

32. For a similar analysis of post-revolutionary Mexico, see the detailed study by Koreck (1991).

33. See the powerful discussion in Scott (1998) as well as de Certeau's illuminating writings on spatial practices (1984).

sion and actually reordered images of the landscape to confuse the authorities, deter the gradual encroachment of property regimes, and frustrate the pretensions of would-be speculators.³⁴ Communities potentially could defend local claims and use rights by asserting an alternate conception of the landscape to that of state officials, technocrats, and capital, a landscape beyond the totalizing and reifying vision of the colonial or national state.³⁵ My use of the word *fugitive* here is meant to suggest that no geographical place has a single stable signification but is constantly shifting and contested.³⁶ Mapping and surveying are inherently political acts precisely because they attempt to “fix” or capture the landscape based on a specific and ideologically saturated set of criteria. Yet the resulting product is often read as reality, with dramatic consequences for local lives and livelihoods. How did subalterns use maps to defend their territorial, political, and economic interests? How and why have communities resorted to using state-produced maps as well as mapping techniques to defend their rights to land, claims to access and use, local forms of autonomy, and identity?³⁷ Did the use of such maps have significant consequences? When did they choose to employ different forms of representation and why?

The preceding questions suggest that the spatial formation of the colony or nation-state may not have been a product of a singular unidirectional process (from the top down).³⁸ The spatial construction of colonial New Spain and subsequently of modern Mexico was riddled with conflict and contestation among various groups over naming and claiming land and water, representing landscape, and producing and defining a sense of place. Such struggles have been waged in part across the planar surfaces of maps. For this reason, the mapping of Mexico has been a continual and profoundly political process resulting in perpetual struggle over documents, names, titles, survey methods, and maps among large landowners, indigenous communities, campesinos, foreign and domestic militaries, the central authority, foreign capital, *ejidatarios*, and *ayuntamientos*.³⁹ Only by

34. The distinction between “strategies” and “tactics” is de Certeau’s (1984).

35. As examples, see the articles by Orlove (1991) and Sparke (1995).

36. My use of *fugitivity* draws on analyses in Berger (1972) and Fritzsche (1997).

37. For examples, see Hernández Chávez (1991) and Watanabe (1995). Peluso (1995) adopted the term *counter-mapping* for these forms of appropriating both the state’s techniques and manner of representation to bolster the legitimacy of “customary claims” to resources.

38. The intersection of peasant politics and state formation has been analyzed carefully in the collection by Joseph and Nugent (1994) and in Mallon (1995). These important attempts to understand the confluence of popular culture and politics have recently come under increasing attack. See the recent exchange in the special issue of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (May 1999).

39. On any given day in the Archivo General Agrario or Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City, campesinos sit next to academics tracing maps and reading titles, searching for confirmation of their *bienes comunales*, copies of their *títulos primordiales*, or an elusive ejido map.

assessing such struggles can the politics of any map be discerned through the mirage of its own transparency.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the recent boom in studies of cartography and space among Australian scholars has resulted largely from recent legal decisions and larger cultural discussions about aboriginal land rights and occupation (see Carter 1987, 1996; Jacobs 1993; Turnbull 1993; Darian-Smith et al. 1996; Ryan 1996). In Mexico the importance of maps and titles in Mexican history, the centrality of the *ejido* and the legacy of the Mexican Revolution, and the current disassembling of that legacy under neoliberal reforms all make similar discussions of the social and epistemological construction of space and place in Mexico timely and important. The various works discussed in this essay provide excellent substantive and methodological starting points for such analyses.

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