

CROSS-CURRENTS



EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

Introduction to “Maps and Their Contexts: Reflections on Cartography and Culture in Premodern East Asia”

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The historical depth of cartographic ideas and practices in East Asia is unusual in world history and deserves more interdisciplinary scholarly attention than it has received. There are many questions that have not been explored enough: What is the range of materials identifiable as maps in East Asia? What kinds of messages have they conveyed? What are the techniques and circumstances that have shaped them, and how have they intersected with other textual and visual media? What are their cultural contexts in material, political, and social terms? What historical insights emerge when we analyze East Asian maps today? Answering these questions requires a capacious conception of cartography capable of crossing disciplinary, historical, and national boundaries. This special issue of *Cross-Currents* fosters that capaciousness by considering the meaning and materiality of maps, broadly defined, in a variety of Chinese and Japanese cultural objects made over the course of several hundred years. The goal here is to enliven debate about the forms, messages, and uses of cartography in the East Asian past by grappling with the particular properties of spatial representation in the Sinosphere.

This is an auspicious moment to pursue this goal because of the increasing interest in spatiality as an organizing principle of inquiry among scholars of East Asia in disciplines throughout the humanities and social sciences. In the past two decades, the steady publication of general cartographic histories of individual East Asian countries in English has contributed

mightily to an expanded and more inclusive world history of maps. Particularly noteworthy demonstrations of the diversity and complexity of East Asian maps have been made in *Chinese Maps: Images of "All under Heaven,"* by Richard Smith (1996); *Korea: A Cartographic History*, by John Rennie Short (2012); and *Cartographic Japan: A History in Maps*, edited by Kären Wigen, Sugimoto Fumiko, and Cary Karacas (2016). Each of these seminal studies has also made plain how much more there is to document, analyze, and appreciate in these three traditions and the links among them. *Cartographic Traditions in East Asian Maps*, by Richard A. Pegg (2014), is an example of a study that puts Chinese, Japanese, and Korean maps into conversation with one another in ways worth emulating. The Internet has, of course, played a major complementary role in conventional academic publishing on geospatial topics in China, Japan, and Korea, in part because so many more maps originating in East Asia can now be seen and analyzed with relative ease, providing inspiration for more scholars and map aficionados to add their voices to the conversation. Recent special issues from *Cross-Currents* exploring maps at the margins of East Asia have fueled this scholarly momentum. For example, "Mapping Vietnamese-ness" (June 2014), edited by Hue-Tam Ho Tai, and "Cartographic Anxieties" (December 2016), edited by Franck Billé, have taken critical aim at the role played by maps and cartographic discourse in international territorial disputes, some of which remain contentious. The panel I co-organized with Stanford historian Kären Wigen for the Association of Asian Studies 2016 annual conference, out of which this special issue grew, was itself a multidisciplinary expression of enthusiasm for the irreducible otherness of East Asian maps among an international group of young scholars still in graduate school, or just embarking on their first academic posts.

Channeling this scholarly momentum into an energetic exploration of the alterity of cartographic representation and practice in East Asia is critical for broadening writing on the world history of maps, which has long been Eurocentric in its assumptions. In addition to the recent scholarship already mentioned, surges in theoretical and artistic daring among geographers regardless of national purview suggest that the time is ripe for East Asianists to be assertive in accounting for the full range of objects and practices understandable within a comprehensive and inclusive conception of maps. If Dennis Wood, an enterprising cartographer who taught design at North Carolina State University, can reasonably if impressionistically represent barking dogs in a neighborhood of Raleigh, North Carolina, with nothing but twenty-one star-like shapes, then who is to say what a map can and cannot be, now or in the past (Wood 2013, 112–113)? During the last forty years, scholarship in English has paved the way for more conceptually adventuresome approaches to maps simply by taking increasing notice of cartographic traditions and achievements in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, Oceania, and the Americas. In *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World*, James R. Akerman and Robert W. Karrow Jr. acknowledge the progress made in this regard as well as the work that remains, doing their own part by considering the rich history of mapmaking around the world in all historical periods (Akerman and Karrow 2007, 9). One can only hope that studies with such a broadening purview as theirs will be increasingly nourished by specialists narrowly focused on East Asia. This can only increase the likelihood of writing a fine-grained overview of the world history of maps that is truly inclusive and balanced—a possibility for which the stage was set by the groundbreaking *History of Cartography* published nearly thirty years ago. In this work, Cordell Yee, John B. Henderson, Gari Ledyard, Kazutaka Unno, John K. Whitmore, F. Richard Stephenson, Kazuhiko Miyajima, Joseph E. Schwartzberg, and Henrik Herb collectively

endeavored to write comprehensively in English about East Asian maps under the editorial leadership of J. B. Harley and David Woodward (Harley 1987–present).

“Maps and Their Contexts” contains four such fine-grained historical perspectives, which collectively offer up food for thought about how a handful of cartographic objects from China and Japan can be acknowledged, conceptualized, and historicized. In contrast with the previously mentioned special issues about maps in *Cross-Currents*, this special issue is more antiquarian in its search for mapping activity in unrecognized forms and marginal geographies. But it is no less critical on this account, for it also advances a conceptual capaciousness for cartography that calls into question normative Eurocentric notions of what maps should be. To accomplish this, each of the articles sheds light on the material formats and sociopolitical circumstances in which we find East Asian maps. In doing so, we heed the call of Akerman and Karrow to pay closer attention to the immediate contexts of maps, not only to comprehend the meaning and function of maps as cultural objects, but to recognize the mapping aspects of cultural objects that might not be exclusively cartographic in nature, and thereby to identify maps where they might not have been thought to exist (2007, 12).

The contributors are positioned well for this issue’s exploratory approach, since each is at a different phase of a burgeoning academic career. A heartfelt thanks goes to Kären Wigen for encouraging us to involve ourselves publicly in the scholarly conversation about maps, especially since none of us is formally trained in geography. Two of us are trained in art history, one in literary history, and one in history. That our relative greenness, both in terms of publishing track records and cartographic expertise, can find voice in these pages owes everything to the broad-minded vision of *Cross-Currents*, which fosters intellectual boldness at all ranks. It also owes something to the relevance of cartographic topics to any academic field

and to the openness of geography as an academic discipline to accommodate—and, we hope, benefit—from our essays on such a vast subject as East Asian maps. Although the subjects of the four articles tilt the orientation of this special issue toward Japan, we hope that the different disciplines and fresh approaches that they represent can make up with intellectual diversity what they lack in regional coverage. If nothing else, we hope that the articles, individually and collectively, are thought provoking to anyone with an interest in the relationship between East Asian maps and premodern cultures.

Fan Lin, a lecturer in art history at Leiden University, sets the stage with insights into the material, political, and social contexts for local maps produced during the Southern Song period (1127–1279). The maps in her article accompanied textual regional information in regularly updated dossiers that provincial government officials produced collaboratively to support effective administration. Lin characterizes the material contexts of such dossiers recently brought to light from Huaining County in Shu Prefecture, reminding us that maps in East Asia are often contained in text-image formats that are challenging to classify. Her article documents the intensification of governmental mapmaking during the Southern Song by showing how these dossiers formed the source material for map guides and gazetteers made concurrently as monographs by individual elite local scholars under the supervision of local officials. A particular kind of local map featuring the “Four Extremes and Eight Directions” was common to administrative dossiers and literati books alike, and defined provincial jurisdictions in terms of distances to the central capital, Lin’an (present-day Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province). The multiple layers of information and the alternative viewing strategies that these maps prompt suggest the cosmological dimensions of an imperial purview. As such, these maps are a linchpin in Lin’s broader claim about the political context for geospatial representation in the period: the

bureaucratic system of a centralized imperial state constituted an omnipresent geopolitical context for representations of local geography. In other words, the maps and the writings with which they are associated depict local geography, but they are nonetheless saturated with an imperial prerogative emanating centrally from Lin'an, the capital of the Southern Song. Lin's discussion of maps of the "Four Extremes and Eight Directions" also sheds light on the material and social contexts of cartography insofar as the particular imperial logic in the maps is reproduced in commercially made itinerary maps, and through this broadly circulating material format penetrated everyday life with a powerful affirmation of the central state's authority.

We move forward to the sixteenth century and shift to Japan with an article by Talia Andrei, a Burke Postdoctoral Fellow at Columbia University. Andrei focuses our attention on the mapping properties of pilgrimage mandalas (*sankei mandara*), a genre of painting used by itinerant monastics in fundraising campaigns for Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Andrei establishes that these paintings function as maps that depict the physical contours and historical origins of religious sites, and thus served as guides for travelers. In doing so, she asks us to consider visual art as a material context for cartographic practice, and thereby raises questions about what counts as a map in East Asia and about the possibility of one object simultaneously deploying the conventions of more than one genre. Shedding light on the social context of cartographic objects as well, the article shows that a jockeying for power lurks within the mandalas' schematic depiction of landscape, demonstrating as Lin does in her article that maps can be viewed in compound ways due to their multiple semiotic layers. But unlike the maps Lin analyzes, in which a centralized state's authority is made manifest, pilgrimage mandalas make manifest a local drama near Mount Fuji in which Murayama Temple and Asama Shrine compete with each other for institutional advantage. While this mapping of prestige indicates intensely

local geospatial configurations, it also paradoxically accommodates spaces much larger in scale, since the mandalas also compose a numinous world view of cosmic Buddhist proportions. With intensely local physical and social contexts blending with metaphysically universal contexts in the same expression of space, pilgrimage mandalas are like the maps analyzed by Lin insofar as they stage a tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces, but they do so in a very different material artifice.

My own article shifts to eighteenth-century Japan for a consideration of why illustrations in popular geographic encyclopedias known as *meisho zue* can and should be thought of as pictorial maps. The argument is grounded in a visual analysis of *Miyako meisho zue*, a multivolume book that surveys “famous places” (*meisho*) in and around Kyoto through a combination of landscape views and textual commentaries. As individual compositions and in the aggregate, the book’s hundreds of illustrations function as a panoramic map that conveys a message of prosperity in economic, social, and cultural terms. As with the objects analyzed in the articles by Lin and Andrei, the sociopolitical context for this map of prosperity is not readily apparent, but it is unmistakable nonetheless. “Famous places” had long been a category of landmark conventionally defined by the cultural elite, but in *Miyako meisho zue* that category is leveraged by the entrepreneurial literatus Akisato Ritō as a geospatial rubric for redefining geography according to the values of his social status as an urban commoner. Like Andrei, I see maps where other scholars have not conventionally or primarily seen them, and thereby raise my own questions about conventional book genre categories limiting our understanding of how visual representations of space function within the contexts of commercially printed formats. Given the somewhat technical orientation of my article in demonstrating the cartographic features of book illustrations in *meisho zue*, my argument, compared to those made by Lin and

Andrei, is focused more narrowly on the formal characteristics and material contexts of maps. Characterizing the techniques of the visual language in *meisho zue* stems from my abiding interest as a literary historian in conceptualizing the form and function of quasi-literary representations of space in text-image formats.

Jonas Rüegg, a PhD student in history in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilization at Harvard University, returns us to the overarching theme of Lin's article: the relationship between maps and the territorial reach of states in the context of empire. But in this case, the imperial context is Japan on the eve of full-scale modernization in the Meiji period (1868–1912). Rüegg's article showcases a variety of Tokugawa-period (1603–1867) maps of the Ogasawara Islands, an archipelago located approximately 1,000 kilometers south of Tokyo in the Pacific Ocean and more commonly known in the English language as the Bonin Islands. By describing how some of the maps were produced officially for navigation and administrative purposes, while others were made privately with political agendas in mind, the article provides a sense of the scope of cartographic practice and imagination during the period. While this makes for an appreciation of the material contexts and formal properties of the maps, Rüegg is ultimately more concerned with the shifting social and political contexts that maps grow out of and indicate. This is because Rüegg uses the maps and other archival sources to tell a largely unknown story of exploration and human settlement of the Ogasawara Islands that culminates with formal territorial expansion directed by the shogunate in 1862. As with all the maps featured in this issue, the geopolitical space coded into these local maps is much bigger than it might seem at first glance, since these maps of Ogasawara not only suggest expansionist programs pursued by the Tokugawa shogunate, but also reflect broader geopolitical circumstances involving Western whaling enterprises. The innovative argument made by Rüegg

reconsiders the timing of Japanese imperial expansion into the Pacific insofar as the Japanese engaged in settler colonialism in Ogasawara prior to the modern empire associated with the Meiji period. This new claim on Ogasawara as a part of Japan, as the maps show, prompted nothing short of a reconfiguration of the very boundaries that defined the Japanese archipelago.

The case studies featured in this special issue provide a glimpse into the complex relationship among maps, culture, and history in premodern China and Japan. By illuminating the many contexts where we find East Asian maps, both in terms of the material forms they took and the social and political circumstances in which they were embedded, these contributions offer insights into the inseparability of cartographic ideas and practices from the complexity of human affairs. As a multidisciplinary effort reflecting the methods of history, art history, and literary history, these insights demonstrate the value and ultimate compatibility of approaching maps with multiple perspectives and goals. In doing so, this special issue makes it possible to appreciate and understand the variety, uses, and alterity of East Asian spatial representation in the past just a little bit more.

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