CARTOGRAPHY AND POWER IN NEW SPAIN

Lindsey Foss, Department of International Studies

"As much as guns and warships, maps have been the weapon of imperialism." - J.B. Harley

The map, created by one culture, can be a powerful tool to suppress a nation and assert power. Maps were used to "legitimize the reality of conquest and power. Maps were used to impose colonial rule," says Lindsey Foss, a scholar of cartography and power in New Spain.

Maps allowed for the visualization of land as well as its division, surveillance, and commodification. The map, created by one culture, can be a powerful tool to suppress a nation and assert power. Maps were used to "legitimize the reality of conquest and power. Maps were used to impose colonial rule," says Lindsey Foss, a scholar of cartography and power in New Spain.

"Maps have been the "weapon of imperialism,"" says Foss. "By creating maps with features from both European and indigenous styles, Amerindians, rather than being passive recipients of imposed spatial and temporal representations, were active participants in imagining and creating a colonial reality."

The evolution of techniques in cartography was shaped by Spanish priorities. Detailed maps of the coast line were made extremely conspicuous in these maps. "Silent spaces" are areas "which were left to the imagination of the observer," says Foss.

The map, created by one culture, can be a powerful tool to suppress a nation and assert power. Maps were used to "legitimize the reality of conquest and power. Maps were used to impose colonial rule," says Lindsey Foss, a scholar of cartography and power in New Spain.

The first known map with intricate borders was created by Linschoten in 1594, and is demonstrative of how important decorative iconography was to European cultural perception and power. The portrayal of America and the Americas as naked, savage women is indicative of the mindset of Europeans in the New World for those still in Europe.

The evolution of techniques in cartography was shaped by Spanish priorities. Detailed maps of the coast line were made extremely conspicuous in these maps. "Silent spaces" are areas "which were left to the imagination of the observer," says Foss.

Religious iconography played an important role in maps. The Spanish map above portrays Christopher Columbus carrying the Christ Child. Religious iconography played an important role in maps. The Spanish map above portrays Christopher Columbus carrying the Christ Child. The Spanish map above portrays Christopher Columbus carrying the Christ Child.

The evolution of techniques in cartography was shaped by Spanish priorities. Detailed maps of the coast line were made extremely conspicuous in these maps. "Silent spaces" are areas "which were left to the imagination of the observer," says Foss.

The Spanish map above portrays Christopher Columbus carrying the Christ Child. Religious iconography played an important role in maps. The Spanish map above portrays Christopher Columbus carrying the Christ Child. The evolution of techniques in cartography was shaped by Spanish priorities. Detailed maps of the coast line were made extremely conspicuous in these maps. "Silent spaces" are areas "which were left to the imagination of the observer," says Foss.

The evolution of techniques in cartography was shaped by Spanish priorities. Detailed maps of the coast line were made extremely conspicuous in these maps. "Silent spaces" are areas "which were left to the imagination of the observer," says Foss.

By creating maps with features from both European and indigenous styles, Amerindians, rather than being passive recipients of imposed spatial and temporal representations, were active participants in imagining and creating a colonial reality. By creating maps with features from both European and indigenous styles, Amerindians, rather than being passive recipients of imposed spatial and temporal representations, were active participants in imagining and creating a colonial reality.

The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer. The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer.

The evolution of techniques in cartography was shaped by Spanish priorities. Detailed maps of the coast line were made extremely conspicuous in these maps. "Silent spaces" are areas "which were left to the imagination of the observer," says Foss.

The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer. The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer.

The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer. The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer.

The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer. The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer.

The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer. The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer.

The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer. The itinerary map (left), one of the few maps in the Relaciones Geograficas which was made by a European. The itinerary maps were "silent spaces" in the sense that they were left to the imagination of the observer.