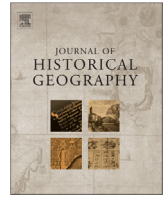




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# Naming places: voyagers, toponyms, and local presence in the fifth part of the world, 1500–1700



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## Abstract

Combining the history of ideas with the ethnohistory of encounters and an original method, this paper reconfigures early modern constructions of a major portion of the globe as more than a linear process of European 'discovery' and naming. The zone is the 'fifth part of the world' or 'Oceania,' defined broadly to encompass Island Southeast Asia, New Guinea, the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Australia, and Antarctica. Using maps and pictures as historical texts, together with written materials, the paper correlates emergent European toponyms with the existential impact of voyagers' engagements with certain exotic sites, people, or knowledge, in subtle relation with prevailing metropolitan ideas about geography and human difference. After briefly surveying early Spanish encounters and place-names in New Guinea, I focus on two Dutch expeditions in search of *Terra Australis* which shaped contemporary geographical knowledge – those of Schouten and Le Maire (1615–1616) and Tasman (1642–1643) whose encounters with places and indigenous inhabitants left shadowy imprints or 'countersigns' in the travellers' representations, including toponyms.

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By the end of the fifteenth century, the Antipodes or *terra incognita* (unknown land) had been variously imagined in Europe for two thousand years, most often as a necessary counterweight to the great known northern land masses.<sup>1</sup> Over the next 300 years, as the southern Antipodes slowly became European reality, the only consistent label for this vast zone was the numerical descriptor 'fifth part of the world.' Otherwise, from an oceanic perspective it was variously called *Mar del Sur*, *Zuyd Zee*, or South Sea, *Mare Pacificum* or Pacific Ocean; and from a terrestrial or insular viewpoint, *Terra Australis*, *Zuytlandt*, *Terres australes*, or South land. The name *Océanie* (Oceania) was proposed in the early nineteenth century to encompass what are now Island Southeast Asia, Papua New Guinea, the Pacific Islands, Aotearoa-New Zealand, Australia, and Antarctica.<sup>2</sup> 'Oceania' is used in this

sense in this paper. Parts of that immense space have been occupied for up to tens of millennia by modern human beings who named the places they dwelt in and knew of.<sup>3</sup> However, I do not consider indigenous place names, except as they were recorded by voyagers and inscribed on charts and maps. Rather, I sketch particular histories of European naming, focussing on early Spanish and Dutch voyages.

After the Portuguese capture of Malacca (Melaka, Malaysia) in 1511, direct European encounters with actual places and persons in the fifth part of the world complicated theory, myth, and wisdom borrowed from Arab or Malay maps and pilots. Henceforth, European geographical knowledge of Oceania was increasingly formulated at the interface of metropolitan ideas and agendas with *in situ* experience. In the process, travellers' representations – in charts,

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<sup>1</sup> A. Hiatt, *Terra incognita: Mapping the Antipodes before 1600*, Chicago, 2008, 1–183; A. Rainaud, *Le continent austral: hypothèses et découvertes*, Paris, 1893, 11–167; L.C. Wroth, The early cartography of the Pacific, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 38 (1944) 91–125.

<sup>2</sup> B. Douglas, *Terra Australis* to Oceania: racial geography in the 'fifth part of the world', *Journal of Pacific History* 45 (2010) 179–210.

<sup>3</sup> The length of human settlement in Oceania as estimated by archaeologists, historical linguists, and bioanthropologists ranges from about 60,000 years in island Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Guinea to fewer than 800 years in New Zealand. See G. Hudjashov, et al., Revealing the prehistoric settlement of Australia by Y chromosome and mtDNA analysis, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104 (2007) 8726–8730; P.V. Kirsch, Peopling of the Pacific: a holistic anthropological perspective, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010) 131–148; A. Pawley and M. Ross, Austronesian historical linguistics and culture history, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22 (1993) 425–459.

maps, journals, reports, narratives, and drawings – were infused with overt signs of local spatial and human presence and ambiguous traces of indigenous agency. This paper bridges the history of ideas and ethnohistory by paying systematic attention to the generation of place names in action during encounters in place. Representations of such encounters fed a prolific state cartography, avid for empirical detail, that was produced in western Europe to serve royal, imperial, or commercial interests in the wake of Iberian overseas expansion.<sup>4</sup>

## Histories and method

Explicit concern for the history of cartography emerged only in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, in close liaison with a celebratory history of European exploration and the rise of geography as an academic discipline.<sup>5</sup> For more than a century, this historiography lacked a clear conceptual frame but generally took for granted that maps could objectively mirror geographic reality. In the late 1980s, a series of provocative articles by Brian Harley pushed historians of cartography to embrace the discursive turn inspired by poststructuralist critique. He reconstituted mapmaking in all its manifestations as the representational outcome of a ‘social practice’, no longer transparently empirical. Maps were texts, to be read ‘as rhetoric’.<sup>6</sup> An ongoing stream of critical studies in this vein have since deconstructed cartography as a quintessential imperial science, created in European metropolises and diffused to colonized peripheries to suit imperial and colonial ends.<sup>7</sup>

The zeal to unmask cartographic complicity in the anticipatory rhetoric of colonialism is entirely proper but risks taking at face value the teleology of inevitable conquest, domination, and effacement of indigenous occupation. Without denying the ominous colonial equation of power and knowledge, more nuanced approaches also recognized the prevalence and power of indigenous spatialities and cartographies, before and in the context of colonialism. The Columbian quincentenary saw an explosion of interest in indigenous mapmaking, especially in the Americas but also in Oceania.<sup>8</sup> Increasingly alert to local agency, cartographic historians began to excavate traces of indigenous contributions to surveying and mapping undertaken through encounters.<sup>9</sup> In two late papers, Harley himself acknowledged ‘a

hidden stratum of Indian geographical knowledge’ and a ‘conscious strategy of resistance’ in early American colonial maps – now refashioned as ‘an epitome of the encounter’ and an outcome of ‘reciprocal relationships’ between Native Americans and Europeans.<sup>10</sup> Important recent work has reconfigured imperial cartography as a dialogic, if usually unequal process of knowledge co-production by global and local, metropolitan and colonial, colonizing and colonized agents.<sup>11</sup>

The heuristic strategy underpinning this paper resonates with the latest of these approaches but is applied to contexts that are in no sense colonial, set in the first phase of fleeting coastal or seaborne encounters between Oceanian people and European voyagers. I am not primarily concerned with the social and political roots of geographical and cartographic knowledge or with indigenous mapping *per se*. Rather, in exploiting European charts and maps as ethnohistorical texts, alongside other written or visual representations, I position local people as potent but more or less unintentional contributors to the formulation of European knowledge in the context of encounters. By ‘encounter’, I do not mean a general clash of two reified, homogeneous cultures but rather a fluid, embodied, situated episode involving multiple personal relationships between varied indigenous and foreign agents in a particular spatial setting. The meanings or understandings thereby created were sometimes opposed and often mutually ambiguous but, for all concerned, they provided stimuli for acting, including representing. Representations of encounters are thus in part products of the encounters they represent.

Agency in such meetings was usually incommensurate – it operated in different registers, some participants exercised more or less than others, and indigenous varieties were usually unacknowledged as such by Europeans. However, building on the notion of encounters as stimuli for acting, I propose an oblique linkage between indigenous agency in specific engagements and foreigners’ perceptions as expressed in the language, content, iconography, and tone of their representations. The powerful emotional impact of exotic experience imbued representations with both explicit and obscure traces of indigenous presence, actions, and agency, filtered through observers’ preconceptions, prejudices, and feelings. I deploy an original method to differentiate such traces into, on the one hand, consciously processed, if often

<sup>4</sup> D. Buisseret (Ed), *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, Chicago, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> J.B. Harley, The map and the development of the history of cartography, in: J.B. Harley, D. Woodward (Eds), *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 1, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, Chicago, 1987, 12–34.

<sup>6</sup> J.B. Harley, Maps, knowledge, and power, in: D. Cosgrove, S. Daniels (Eds), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, Cambridge, 1988, 277–312; J.B. Harley, Silences and secrecy: the hidden agenda of cartography, *Imago Mundi* 40 (1988) 58, 71; J.B. Harley, Deconstructing the map, *Cartographica* 26 (1989) 1–20; J.B. Harley, Historical geography and the cartographic illusion, *Journal of Historical Geography* 15 (1989) 80, 84–87. For critical appraisals of this work, see J.H. Andrews, Introduction: meaning, knowledge, and power in the map philosophy of J.B. Harley, in: J.B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, Baltimore, 2001, 1–32; R.B. Craib, Relocating cartography, *Postcolonial Studies* 12 (2009) 481–483.

<sup>7</sup> For example, M.H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843*, Chicago, 1997; A. Godlewska and E.H. Dahl, The Napoleonic survey of Egypt: a masterpiece of cartographic compilation and early nineteenth-century fieldwork, *Cartographica* 25 (1988) 1–171; S. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, Cambridge, 1996. Some contributions to two recent collections continue to follow this pattern: see J.R. Akerman (Ed), *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire*, Chicago, 2009; N. Etherington (Ed), *Mapping Colonial Conquest: Australia and Southern Africa*, Crawley, WA, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> G.M. Lewis (Ed), *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use*, Chicago, 1998; D. Woodward, G.M. Lewis (Eds), *History of Cartography*, Vol. 2, book 3, *Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies*, Chicago, 1998; D. Turnbull, Mapping encounters and (en)countering maps: a critical examination of cartographic resistance, *Knowledge and Society* 11 (1998) 15–44; D. Turnbull, *Masons, Tricksters and Cartographers*, London, 2000, 133–163.

<sup>9</sup> M.T. Bravo, The accuracy of ethnohistory: a study of Inuit cartography and cross-cultural commensurability, *Manchester Papers in Social Anthropology* 2 (1996); M.T. Bravo, Ethnographic navigation and the geographical gift, in: D.N. Livingstone, C.W.J. Withers (Eds), *Geography and Enlightenment*, Chicago, 1999, 211–232; G.M. Lewis, Misinterpretation of Amerindian information as a source of error on Euro-American maps, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77 (1987) 542–563.

<sup>10</sup> J. Brian Harley, Rereading the maps of the Colombian encounter, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82 (1992) 524–528; J.B. Harley, New England cartography and the Native American, in: E.W. Baker, et al. (Eds), *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of the Norumbega*, Lincoln, NE, 1994, 288–296.

<sup>11</sup> B.K. Beamer and T.K. Duarte, I palapala no ia aina – documenting the Hawaiian Kingdom: a colonial venture? *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009) 66–86; Craib, Relocating cartography (note 6); F. Driver and L. Jones, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching the RGS-IBG Collections*, London, 2009, 11–20; K.H. Offen, Creating Mosquitia: mapping Amerindian spatial practices in eastern Central America, 1629–1779, *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007) 254–282; K. Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900*, Basingstoke, 2007, 60–94; N. Safier, The confines of the colony: boundaries, ethnographic landscapes, and imperial cartography in Iberoamerica, in: Akerman, *Imperial Map* (note 7), 133–183; J.R. Short, *Cartographic Encounters: Indigenous Peoples and the Exploration of the New World*, London, 2009.

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