

Carto-logik

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One of the keys to making the common human boundlessly powerful is to give her the tools to draw and articulate maps old and new!

Why is it that the ones in power are the ones who get to draw the maps? This type of paradigm creates a skewed perspective about the world that we live in. This is true because most of the maps we read were and continue to be created by the ruling parties.

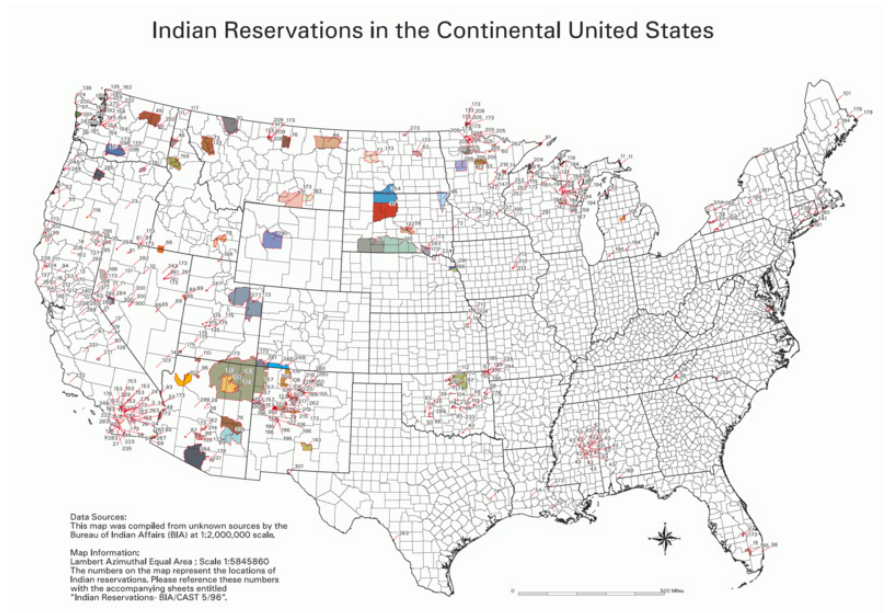
Mapmaking has a long history and as referred to in the Wikipedia is called:

“Cartography (in Greek chartis = map and graphein = write) has been an integral part of the human story for a long time (maybe 8,000 years - nobody knows exactly, but longer than written words).[1] From cave paintings to ancient maps of Babylon, Greece and Asia, through the Age of Exploration, and on into the 21st century, people have created and used maps as the essential tools to help them define, explain and navigate their way through the world (and beyond). According to some scholars, mapping represented a significant step forward in the intellectual development of human beings and it serves as a record of the advancing knowledge of the human race.”(Wikipedia: History of Cartography)

The ruling parties that conquered the North American Continent from the Native peoples, took no account for the way that the Native Americans used the land when the maps were drawn. There was no

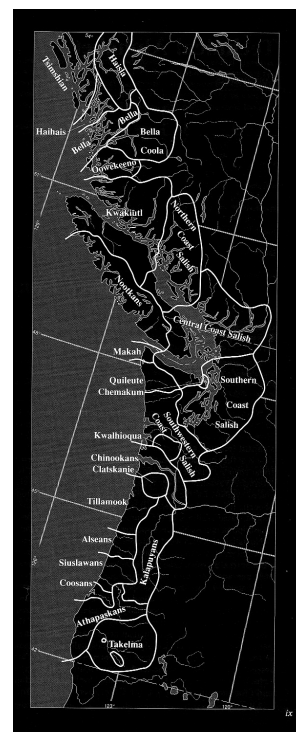


Wikipedia: Martin Waldseemüller map 1507

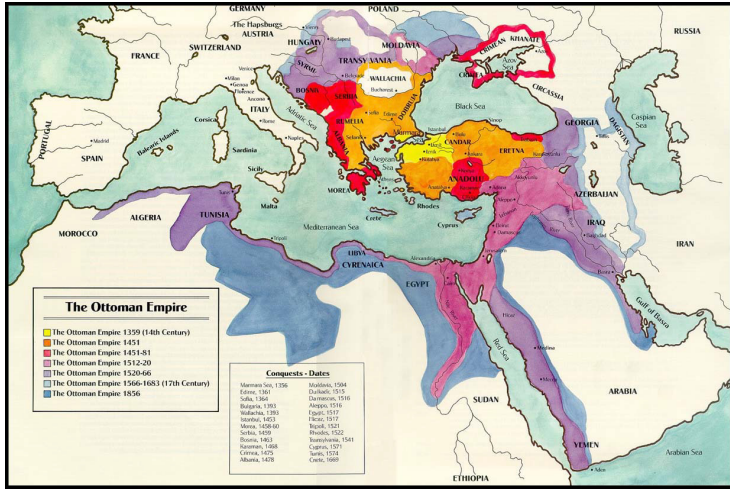


WIKIPEDIA: BIA MAP

consideration for native practices of living in different areas during different times of the year. These Native Americans were expected to move to the land that was deemed the least habitable by the mapmakers/conquerors. In this situation maps were used to separate the 'wheat from the chafe', divying up the spoils among the conquerors and leaving the leftovers for the conquered. A type of mapmaking that is more beneficial for the conquered, at least in retrospect is that practiced by anthropologists. Anthropological maps such as the one that diagrams the language phylums of Natives of the Northwest Coast say a lot more about the ways in which the Indians lived. A modern map showing where reservations are only shows containment, no inkling of the characteristics of the tribes. The tribes on a reservation are usually very different from each other in language, customs, migration patterns, craft, and means of sustenance.



The tribes of the Middle East had very different means of sustenance, but after the fall of The Ottoman Empire the British Empire quickly moved in to create distinct countries. These countries again did not represent the needs of the people who lived in them, but were abstractions created to maintain control. A lot of



The Ottoman Empire Map



Map of the Middle East

times the tribes that were put together were at odds. The Kurds in the North of Iraq and the Shia in the south are the modern representations of older groups that have been at odds for hundreds of years.

The insurance companies of our modern day have been around for a hundred years at least, and are some of the more powerful organizations. Insurance companies started as organizations that would provide a service to the people, now they use maps to the definite disadvantage of the customers. If a person lives on a flood plane they will either get a high rate for insurance or no insurance at all. When maps are used by insurance companies to pick and choose their customers I believe that this is a misuse of power and the main benefactors are the stockholders not the people who pay the tab. Possibly modern mapmaking can help balance the need for insurance with the need for profit.

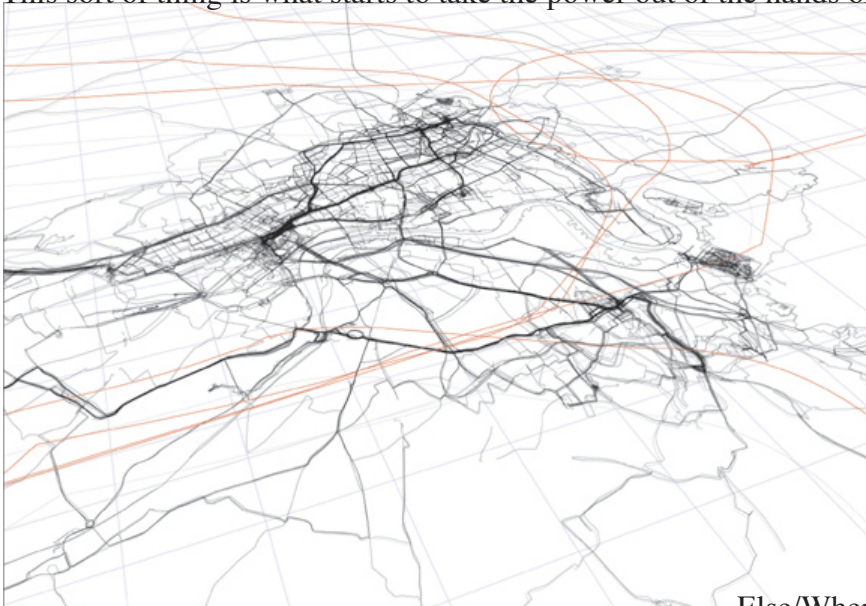
In our time people are making maps in very different ways and, they are not necessarily at odds with each other. One example of this sort of mapmaking is the Real Time Maps done by Der Waag society in Amsterdam. The Real Time map is what Esther Polak calls a “collaboratively-produced map”(p.188),



Else/Where Mapping: Real Time Map 40 day accumulation

made by a group of decidedly different people that carried GPS devices as they went about their daily activities. This is a powerful tool because it shows how people actually use the city of Amsterdam. This is a glowing example of the people on the ground drawing the maps. If the people on the ground are drawing the maps those in ‘power’ lose that power and society can become more democratic. When the democratically created maps are easily viewable by common citizens the society becomes even more free from the constraints of singular control.

Another example of new mapmaking in our day and age is the GPS Drawings that Jeremy Wood is making. Technically his work is similar to that which is being done by Der Waag Society, but his work is at a more artistic level. One thing he is doing is using GPS transponders to write words. For example he wrote ‘water’ through his GPS movements while paddling along the English Channel in a small inflatable dingy. The drawing below is of Oxford and is a compilation of all of Jeremy’s movements during 2002. To me this is very interesting because it makes mapmaking very personal and at the same time accessible to the common man. This sort of thing is what starts to take the power out of the hands of the ruling elite and give it to the public.



2km Grid

Else/Where Mapping: GPS Drawing Oxford(p.272)

The act of showing maps to the common citizens is antithetical to maintaining power and control. Most maps such as the ones that are being used by government organizations, corporations and private entities are used to maintain advantage over another person, group or organization. On a more rational note, some competition is important, but never when it takes advantage of the disadvantaged. For when the disadvantaged is taken advantage of the society as a whole becomes more disadvantaged, and atrocities become more common place.

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