



The History of Cartography, Vol. 2, Book 2
J.B. Harley & David Woodward, Eds.

Bibliographical Details:

Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies, Joseph E. Schwartzberg, Associate Editor; Cordell D.K. Yee, Assistant Editor, ISBN 0-226-31637-8 (v.2, bk.2), Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1994; 969 pp, 40 colour plates, figures and black-and-white illustrations, 16 tables; 21 Appendixes.

The History of Cartography on East and Southeast Asia (volume 2, book 2) is a *tour de force* in its breadth and scope of information. This latest book in a series maintains the high standards of scholarship and writing set by the two preceding volumes. Besides being an indispensable reference source for historians, the general reader who seeks further knowledge about maps will find it both interesting and informative. Because of its far-reaching appeal, it is regrettable that the size and heftiness of the book make it somewhat unwieldy. The advice of this reviewer is: do not be put off by the physical awkwardness of the book but forge ahead, as it provides insightful reading on many levels and a broad range of topics on the mapping of East and Southeast Asia.

Before beginning this tome, the reader should be aware of the authors' definition of a map. In the context of this book, it goes beyond the traditional meaning and is defined as 'an illustration of the spatial relations, actual or symbolic, of a place, an event, or a concept.' A substantial part of the book is concerned with

the metaphysical world, the cosmographical, celestial, and religious-derived maps of the defined region.

The book comprises twenty-one chapters, which the editors strove to organise in a way that was 'coherent both geographically and historically.' The text begins in a chronological manner with prehistoric 'Cartography in Asia', followed by an 'Introduction to East Asian Cartography.' Except for a chapter on 'Celestial Mapping in East Asia', the remainder of the book is divided into four sections based on areas in Asia: (1) China, (2) Korea, Japan and Vietnam, (3) Tibet and Mongolia, and (4) Southeast Asia.

Generally, each chapter begins by discussing the scope of the work, the sources used, the traditionally accepted views on cartography of the area, followed by presenting the extant material in chronological order. The authors have reached out to examine a broader context than has ever been done before, and there is a concerted effort throughout the book to place maps in a social, cultural, and historical context.

The scarcity of early extant cartographical material and literary and archaeological reference, particularly for Southeast Asia, is a drawback pointed out by several authors. In search of links to unveil the mapping of the region, scholars have looked to art as a source. Catherine Delano Smith, for one, has been amply rewarded in her search by finding symbolical representations that depict celestial elements on Neolithic pottery and tombs of the Han period. In her text, she uses images that 'lend themselves to cartographic analysis, such as pictorial elements like human or animal figures, citing them as early forms of maps. Further images from rock and cliff paintings, petroglyphs, and grave plans provide evidence. A surprising discovery in her research was the similarity between the rock art of Asia and that of Europe.

In 'Cartography in China', Cordell D.K. Yee, Assistant Editor of the book, also draws on the visual and literary arts such as pottery, bronze, and painting, for examples of early map forms. He covers indigenous maps before the westernisation of China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Evidence is given for the existence of a 'science of cartography' in China, at least by the Han period, and continuing through the early Qing. The author points out that the western model of scientific cartography applied to Chinese maps in the past is inappropriate, and its use should be abandoned. The Chinese perceived maps as having 'intellectual value', and while early examples may have lacked information about distances and locations, they conveyed more abstract qualities such as 'power, duty, and emotion.' The chapter also discusses maps in a political environment and their relationship to the arts and culture.

The oldest surviving indigenous map of Korea dates from A.D. 1402, and surviving evidence is sufficient to trace the tradition of mapping in Korea from the sixteenth century onwards. The chapter is divided into four categories, proceeding from the 'general world and

national maps to the more particular regional and local ones'.

In the chapter on 'Cartography in Japan, a case is established for archaeological and literary evidence of maps before the Edo Period (1603-1867). Early surviving material is richer for Japan than for any other country in this volume, and includes several extant cosmological maps based on a Buddhist tradition. Japanese efforts to survey and map the provinces began in the late sixteenth century, and its development is traced. The impact of western maps and map-making techniques as introduced by the Jesuits to Japan is discussed.

The study of Vietnamese maps is a nascent concept hampered by the lack of existing material. The changing borders of the country, the separation of the two regions, and later their reunification had an impact on mapping. Vietnamese cartography from the seventeenth century onwards reflects these changes.

'Cartography in Greater Tibet and Mongolia' is dominated by Buddhism, the prevailing religion. By definition, the region encompasses not only Tibet but also Bhutan, Ladakh and Sikkim, Nepal, and parts of five provinces in China, running from north to south along the western borders. Joseph E. Schwartzberg stresses that the debt to religious influence cannot be over-emphasised in indigenous cartography of Greater Tibet. Precepts of Tantric Buddhism figure prominently in this text, and are discussed in cosmological, astrological, and mythological terms.

The chapter on Southeast Asia does not adhere strictly to the geographical delineation of the region. Vietnam, for example, which is part of Southeast Asia is discussed in the chapter with Korea and Japan, presumably because of its cultural affinity to China. Countries included in this chapter are: Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines. Early indigenous material is practically unknown and there is no surviving map of the region earlier than the sixteenth century.

Research of this region, perhaps more than others, is thus limited by the paucity of both cartographical material and literary references. While cosmographic symbolism is discussed using the great temple-mountain monuments of Borobudur and Angkor as models, of particular interest in this section is the amount of indigenous material Schwartzberg has uncovered. Surviving evidence, though, is not equal in either quantity or quality. Maps from Burma, for example, far outnumber those from Thailand, and early indigenous maps of Cambodia, Laos, and the Philippines are non-existent.

The study of non-European cartography is still in its infancy, as noted in the Concluding Remarks but the findings published in this volume have proven convincingly that the previously held idea of virtually no indigenous tradition of cartography in East and Southeast

Asia is erroneous. The groundwork has been laid for future interpretations on Asian cartography that can move us closer towards an understanding of the relationship between maps and the cultural and social environment in which they were created. One cannot but admire the publisher, editors, and authors for undertaking such a work. The breadth and depth of scholarship in this book are of great magnitude.

Volume 1 in the series covers cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean. Volume 2, Book 1 includes mapping in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies. Forthcoming volumes will cover cartography in the traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies; the European Renaissance and Enlightenment; the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

ASEAN ART EXPO

Endorsed by The ASEAN Secretariat

***Exhibition * Symposium *Book *Documentary**

Asean Art Expo, with the endorsement of The ASEAN Secretariat, has been launched to promote Asean contemporary art in the new century. The event consists of exhibitions, a symposium and the production of a series of books and documentaries.

Participating in the exhibitions will be a group of about 80 Asean's top contemporary artists. National exhibitions will be held in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and The Philippines, culminating in the regional exhibition, **AseanART 2001**, to be held at The National Art Gallery, Malaysia, from September 15 to October 31, 2001. The exhibition will also be simultaneously shown in the virtual gallery at <www.aseanARTexpo.com>.

There has always been a very active and vibrant art community in most of the major Asean countries even before the grouping was founded some 33 years ago (Asean now has 10 member countries including Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar with a total population of about 500 million). The works of Asean artists who have achieved world fame are sought after by collectors, art museums and galleries in the region and around the world. The establishment of more offices by Sotheby's and Christie's in the region attests to the great interest shown by the world's collectors and art patrons in artists from Southeast Asia.

Asean Art Expo aims to promote and showcase the best of Asean art. Participating artists are all invited artists who have achieved a high degree of success in their own chosen styles, themes and media. All artists invited to the exposition have been recommended and selected by members of an advisory board panel consisting of a group of eminent curators, critics and academics from the region including *Pg. Hj. Hashim bin Pg. Hj. Mohamad Jadid* and *Pg. Hj. Mohd. Yamin* of Brunei, *Muan Ingrid* of

Cambodia, *Jim Supangkat* and *Rizki Zaelani* of Indonesia, *Emmanuel Torres* and *Cid Reyes* of the Philippines, *Wairah bt Marzuki*, *Zainol Abidin Bin Ahmad Shariff (ZABAS)* and *Wong Hoy Cheong* of Malaysia, *T.K. Sabapathy*, *Binghui Huangfu* and *Susie Lingham* of Singapore, *Panya Vijinthana-sam*, *Damrong Wong-Uparaj* and *Itthi Khongkhakul* of Thailand, and *Nguyen Xuan Tiep* and *Vi Kien Thanh* of Vietnam.

The success of Asean Art Expo will undoubtedly stimulate more interest in Asean art, consequently enhancing the lifestyle of the peoples of Asean countries, and projecting a better image of Asean to the world.

ASEAN ART EXPO will also include a major publishing event – the production of a very high quality series of books featuring the profiles of the participating artists and incorporating samples of their works. ASEAN ART EXPO is organized by Asean Art Associates, a subsidiary of Info Media Asia Limited incorporated in Thailand and Hong Kong.

A two-day symposium co-organized by SEAMEO-SPAFA focusing on promotion and resources will be held in Bangkok at The Siam Society on March 8–9, 2001. There are also plans to produce a series of documentaries for regional and international broadcasting, in co-operation with independent film producers based in Singapore and Australia.



For more information, please visit <www.aseanARTexpo.com> or contact Mr Jaffe Yee at:

Asean Art Associates

InfoMedia Asia Limited GPO Box 701 Bangkok 10501, Thailand
Tel: (+662) 7220548, 7193688 Fax: (+662) 7220549, 7193689
Email: info@aseanartexpo.com URL: www.aseanartexpo.com

