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# The Historical Atlas: Teaching Tool or Coffee-Table Book?

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THE OLD ADAGE THAT HISTORY is about chaps and geography about maps is of course seriously misleading. The historian needs to understand the spatial dimension if he or she is to appreciate all sorts of developments, but it is also relevant to address the question of the role of the map in teaching, and therefore the place of the historical atlas. Two related issues that need to be considered are what level of geographical knowledge can be expected from students and their teachers and what they should expect to find in an historical atlas, indeed what the educational purpose of such a book is. This article will focus on the second issue.

Turning to historical atlases currently available, two broad categories can be discerned, although, as is so often the case, many atlases should be seen as appearing along a continuum between them. The two categories are, first, atlases with a heavy proportion of the book, commonly well over fifty percent, devoted to text and pictures, and second, those that consist of maps with titles and short, if any, introductory comments. The contrast can be very striking. To take three British examples of the former, Donald Matthew's *Atlas of Medieval Europe* is 240 pages long but contains only 64 maps, far less than the number of pictures, while the text is about 75,000 words. The work was published by Phaidon as part of a series of atlases that

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are similarly strong on pictures and text, but weak on maps. In 1990, Mike Corbishley's *The Middle Ages: Cultural Atlas for Young People* was produced by Phaidon's sister-imprint Equinox. It contains 26 maps (excluding small insets) for 87 pages, far fewer than the number of illustrations. *The Atlas of the British Empire* edited by Christopher Bayly contains only 39 maps in its 244 pages, again far less than the number of illustrations. Such "atlases" are really illustrated popular history books of a slightly different kind. A prominent role for text in historical atlases is not of course new, as is demonstrated by Daniel Lizar's *Edinburgh Geographical and Historical Atlas* of 1831.

In contrast, most old and many modern historical atlases are dominated by maps. To give just a few examples, the *Atlas of Russian and East European History* by Arthur Adams, Ian Matley and William McCagg contains 101 maps in its 192 pages. As 45 of these are double-page spreads the sections of text are necessarily short and there are no illustrations. *An Historical Atlas of Scotland c. 400-c. 1600* edited by P. McNeill and R. Nicholson contains 117 maps, David Hill's *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, 260. Hill's atlas is a valuable example of how to present a wide range of themes, economic and cultural as well as political, in spatial form. In contrast to Bayly's *Atlas of the British Empire*, the *Atlas of British Overseas Expansion* edited by Andrew Porter includes nearly 140 clear black and white maps, as well as extensive text. Although, as the preface points out, the atlas does not include maps of paths of labor migration, the progress of Admiralty or geological surveys, the extension of consular appointments or patterns of aboriginal and Maori settlement, it is an excellent collection.

The first-rate historical atlases by Martin Gilbert are full of clear, simple black and white maps: *Recent History Atlas 1860-1960*; *British History Atlas*; *American History Atlas*; *Jewish History Atlas*; *First World War Atlas*; *Ancient History Atlas*; *Russian History Atlas*. The map depicting the Missouri Compromise Line in the *American History Atlas* is, however, wrong as it continues the line east of the Mississippi,<sup>1</sup> an unusual example of a major error in an historical atlas. Penguin publishes an excellent series of paperback historical atlases, *The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History*, *The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*, *The Penguin Atlas of Modern History*, *The Penguin Atlas of American History* and *The Penguin Atlas of African History* with numerous clear and thoughtful maps devised by Colin McEvedy. McEvedy uses the same base map throughout each volume, a valuable device that aids comparisons and helps to convey a visual sense of development to match his effective narratives. The major disadvantage is that there is no opportunity for the use of new projections. McEvedy's maps, with their preference for bold lines over precisely delineated

boundaries, a choice that reflects representation of an entire continent in a small map, are especially successful in his treatment of Africa and medieval Europe. McEvedy's works are examples of an important category, the narrative atlas. A more scholarly example of the same genre is V. J. Esposito and J. R. Elting's *Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*. This work, published in 1964, in which maps and narrative are integrated skillfully, is not, however, without its biases. It is really devoted to Napoleon. Thus, whereas eight maps are devoted to the campaign in Spain in 1808-9, only one is devoted to the campaigns in Iberia in 1809-14, after Napoleon had left Spain. This emphasis reflects the origins of the atlas, as a teaching tool for the West Point course in strategy, with its interest in Napoleon; a reminder of the need to consider the origin of particular works when judging them.

Historical atlases dominated by maps are essentially monochromatic, while the works already referred to that contain illustrations, but fewer maps, use color. Employing color, of course, makes it possible to convey more information in an individual map, although an examination of the use of color suggests that frequently it does not serve that purpose, providing no more information than could be obtained by using black and white with different shadings. Instead, color serves mostly to help in the production of a more attractive book. Essential for the illustrations, it is used to make maps more striking, rather than more informative. Given its cost, color often yields a surprisingly poor return in scholarly terms. Color is not essential. Good bold black-and-white may even be preferable; for example, color maps are difficult to photocopy well. In addition, many scholars, especially medievalists, require maps which primarily locate places, particularly those which have disappeared or changed their names, and many atlases fail to do this. Color is not necessary for this purpose, although it can be of assistance if different stages of locational development are to be shown on the same map. The *Grosser Historischer Weltatlas* illustrates the problem and does some good work in locating religious houses.

It would be misleading to imply that all historical atlases employing color contain few maps, still less that they are generally coffee-table books. Malcolm Falkus and John Gillingham's *Historical Atlas of Britain* contains 215 maps in its 202 pages, and still finds space for tables, diagrams and illustrations. *The Times Atlas of World History* edited by Geoffrey Barraclough similarly combines valuable text with numerous maps. An atlas may also contain numerous photographs although it does not employ color, as is shown by Barri Jones and David Mattingly's *An Atlas of Roman Britain*, a scholarly and valuable work whose numerous black and white maps reveal how effective that technique can be.

Because these and other atlases reveal that scholarship, attractive production and a high percentage of space devoted to maps are all compatible, it is necessary to query the value of those historical atlases that do not contain many maps. In a thoughtful and lengthy review of Matthew's *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, Paul Harvey argues that "we might reasonably think that an atlas in which maps do not predominate is not an atlas at all."<sup>2</sup> Although the text in such books can be of the highest quality, they often fail to offer sufficient maps to provide much real assistance to a student, and, in an important sense, the maps have been relegated to a secondary form of illustrative material. This is certainly the case in the Phaidon books with their gorgeous photographs. Possibly there are also cost considerations here: the production of maps is a specialized and expensive process and it must be very tempting to fill an atlas by other methods. It is also the case that in some atlases the maps are not tied in sufficiently closely with the text. This is a problem with *The Hamlyn Historical Atlas* which has long and perceptive essays to which the maps do not give any precise illumination.

There is a commercial distinction between essentially scholarly atlases which are, to some degree at least, new and different (usually being therefore more specialized in focus and more expensive, e.g., Hill, Jones and Mattingly) and atlases in color for the general market and book clubs. The latter are generally synthetic and broad brush, and depend for their viability on being marketed, usually at the Frankfurt Book Fair, for international publication in a string of different language editions. They demand an international perspective in order to enjoy worldwide sales. This contrast is not new. The introduction to the *Atlas Historique* published by Presses Universitaires de France in 1937, noted

En France, comme à l'étranger, les Atlas historiques existants n'étaient conçus ni dans le même esprit, ni dans le même but. Les uns visaient à donner des renseignements plus nombreux mais moins précis, les autres à fournir quelques compléments d'informations seulement, mais plus détaillés, et tous avaient pu être établis avec une richesse de moyens à laquelle les auteurs du présent ouvrage ne pouvaient même pas songer.

Indeed, in order to keep the price down, the maps were published in black and white.

Criticism does not, however, provide answers to the questions of what should be included in historical atlases in terms of coverage, detail and the approach to be adopted both in individual maps and in collections of them. First, it might be suggested that far more information needs to be included in maps, even at the risk of making them appear cluttered and using more detailed keys. It is far from satisfactory if students are obliged to supple-

ment their use of an historical atlas by turning to more detailed non-historical works. Many modern historical atlases contain surprisingly little detail, possibly in order to produce more attractive and easily read images. Little detail per map is relatively acceptable in atlases that contain many maps, the simple nature of individual black and white or, as in the *Historical Atlas of Great Britain*, small color maps, being compensated for by their large number, but it is unacceptable in volumes that contain very few. Atlases with few maps also often tend to present long periods, for example Roman Britain, on individual maps. In any event, the provision of a good index facilitating cross-referencing can be very helpful. Presentation by a sequence of maps is the most useful, especially if they have identical scales and projections, as in the McEvedy atlases. Absolute clarity is normally the essential thing to aim at, if necessary at the expense of a certain amount of detail.

As many maps as possible does not provide much of a guide as to what should be covered and how. As the historical agenda has been altered in western Europe this has become a more complex issue.<sup>3</sup> In some countries, especially Germany, the role of politics has been important in determining what maps portray,<sup>4</sup> and even in countries with a less stormy past there is need for a comparative study of how the historical atlas has been affected by the nationalist agenda of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with its stress on the territorial consolidation of nation states in Europe and a competitive international arena in Europe and in colonial territories overseas. Given the pedagogic purpose of such atlases and their development at a time of rising state provision of universal, or at least widespread, primary and secondary education, there was clearly a relationship that requires examination. In this period, and indeed until recently, historical atlases were mostly devoted to political topics, sometimes exclusively so as in the second volume of Edward Freeman's 1882 *Historical Geography of Europe*, though the ever-critical R. L. Poole argued that this work "laid no claim to the character of an historical atlas." Poole's *Historical Atlas of Modern Europe from the Decline of the Roman Empire comprising also maps of parts of Asia, Africa, and the New World connected with European History*, published in 1902, was a very influential work in the development of British historical atlases. Poole incorporated the advances of German scholarship, but also, as he pointed out, included maps on Byzantine, Asian, colonial and British history that were "in most respects independent of any previous atlas." Each map was accompanied by one or two pages of text that offered both description and sources.

Some older works stressed physical features. The first four maps in Grant Robertson and Bartholomew's *Historical Atlas of Modern Europe from 1789 to 1914* which appeared in 1915 were devoted to Europe from



the point of view of topography, density of population, ethnography and industry. R. F. Treharne praised the Muir historical atlases for “their demonstration of the physical basis of the subject.” Natural features, however, offer an implicit determinism, especially given the interest in the apparent relationship between state development and “natural frontiers.”

A substantial element in older atlases, such as the German Droysen and Putzger atlases, was the military interest: the Peloponnesian and Punic wars, the wars of Frederick the Great and Napoleon, the Franco-Prussian war and the First World War. This reflected the inherent interest of the conflicts, their role in state building (that of ancient Rome presumably prefiguring modern Prussia), and the need for maps to explain campaigns in eastern and western Europe in the eighteenth century and later. The relationship between campaigns on different fronts was a matter of especial interest. This is one of the justifications of this genre of historical atlas: it really does help to explain movement across country, and from one field of operations to another. This is as much true of twentieth-century campaigns (although including the aerial dimension poses problems), as for the wars of Greece, Persia and Rome. A valuable geopolitical dimension was added in J. Vicens Vives’ *Atlas de Historia de España*.<sup>5</sup>

Although political developments are generally easier to map than their cultural or social counterparts, they are not without their problems. The contrasting colors and firmly delineated frontiers of atlases do not describe adequately or accurately the problems of overlapping jurisdictions and complex sovereignty that characterized not only medieval Europe but much of its *ancien régime* successor. In his foreword to *The Atlas of the Crusades* Jonathan Riley-Smith notes,

It is well known that even when the course of a frontier can be accurately plotted — and that is rare for the Middle Ages — it meant less than it does now, being more often than not simply the boundary between the lands of two villages which owed returns to lords who were the subjects of different powers. In some regions, indeed, frontiers were characterized by broad belts of *condominia*, in which lords of different nationalities, and in Palestine and Syria of different religions, shared the ownership of great swathes of villages. Custom posts were sometimes to be found ... but they were often not on the border itself.

The use of race as a basis for territorial groupings also poses particular problems for mapping, not least in the early medieval period.

The implementation of firm frontiers was bound up with the existence of more assertive states and growing state bureaucracies, which sought to know where exactly they could impose their demands for resources and where they needed to create their first line of defense. For this reason the

late middle ages witnessed a burgeoning emphasis on frontiers throughout western Europe. The general trend towards more defined frontiers was responsible for much of the warfare in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, since lands whose status had been ill-defined for centuries were claimed and contended for by rival states. In Europe this struggle in time made it possible to draw maps with reasonable certainty that they corresponded to political reality at any given point. However, the Christian states in the Balkans, Serbia, Bulgaria and even Hungary were backward in this respect. Their boundaries remained vague, shifting according to the interests of the local powers: lords and towns.

Although it might seem that Turkish expansion into the Balkans would end this problem, since the Ottoman Empire was a state as sophisticated as those in the West, in practice the problem remained for the fifteenth century, because the Turks used “gradualist” methods of conquest.<sup>6</sup> Christian territories on the borders of lands fully assimilated into the Empire (in the sense that the provincial system of government was implemented) might be compulsorily allied to the Sultan, or endure tributary status to the Turks. The territories coming into the latter category were in practice under the Sultan’s control; he could move his armies there at will and demand resources and manpower on the same level as within the Empire proper. This state of affairs is very difficult to depict cartographically. The map “The Defense of Belgrade” in *The Atlas of the Crusades* shows that the tributary principality of Wallachia constituted a substantial part of the Ottoman presence in Europe. It would be necessary to give a large amount of detail about relations between the Prince of Wallachia and the Sultan to gain a realistic impression of how powerful the Ottomans were at any given point beyond the Danube. The same is true for the subsequent relationship between the Sultan and the Crimean Tatars.

The cartographers and geographers of early-modern Europe faced major problems. The devices of printed linear boundaries, different coloration and textual specification were only introduced slowly and were sometimes of limited applicability or inconsistent. The French 1695 and the Dutch 1696 and 1700 editions of Nicolas Sanson’s popular French world atlas of 1658 differed and, in addition, lines on plates contradicted the coloring and the national and continental maps were contradictory. The treatment of Alsace, Franche-Comté and Roussillon in these editions varied. Similar inconsistencies can be found in the maps produced by Pierre Du Val between 1663 and 1684. In the Holy Roman Empire, in particular, single maps, as opposed to specially composed atlases of base maps all showing the same area, were not a particularly good way of displaying princely territorial rights. It was usually beyond the ingenuity of even the most skillful cartographer to indicate on one map alone areas



of mixed jurisdictions, owing allegiance to different rulers for different aspects of their existence.<sup>7</sup> Given these problems it is not surprising that modern historical atlases face difficulties if trying to be accurate or may mislead by resorting to bold lines and the uniform sovereignty of single-tone colors within sharply demarcated boundaries. Thus many of the limitations of maps of medieval Europe can be seen in more modern periods.

Problems were encountered in past mapmaking even in areas where there was no shared sovereignty. In 1754, after two decades of work, the Russian Academy of Sciences published I. I. Kirillov's *Atlas Rossiiskii*, which contained one general map of the empire and nineteen maps of specific areas, but six years later the Senate called for efforts to accumulate geographical information and prepare a new, more detailed atlas.<sup>8</sup> Accurate measurement faced many problems and much of the information that *ancien régime* maps were based upon was inaccurate. In Saxony, for example, where a new standard mile was introduced in 1715, the geome-trician Adam Zürner carried out a cartographic survey, completing 900 maps which formed the basis of the Electoral Postal Map, first published in 1719. He discovered that many of the milestones on Saxony's major roads between Dresden and Leipzig were missing or placed at the wrong distance. Modern mapping of frontiers even in areas where there was no shared sovereignty can also be misleading if it implies precision in boundaries and control by different governments. This is illustrated by a recent historical atlas of the Ukraine noted for the map of Ukrainian lands after 1569, where "the international boundaries between the lower Dnieper and lower Donets rivers as marked on this map were really only symbolic, because this whole region was a kind of no-man's land dominated by nomadic and free-booting communities of Zaporozhian Cossacks and Nogay Tatars."<sup>9</sup>

The agenda of international politics as the prime subject for depiction has been somewhat set aside in recent years as historical atlases devoted to Britain and Europe have sought to address a wider range of topics, while those looking at the world have adopted a less Euro-centric perspective. This is also true of modern geographic atlases. The *Peters Atlas of the World*, for example, abandons Mercator's projection and thus gives visual prominence to the Third World. The expansion in scope is not of course entirely new. Poole felt it necessary to include a map of the South African situation in his atlas of Europe, while in 1962 Treharne pointed out in his preface to the ninth edition of *Muir's* that the last thirty years had "forced on our attention regions virtually ignored in common history teaching until today." If one of the functions of an historical atlas is to provide information about times and places that the reader knows little about, then

European and North American works should give due weight to other regions. A European reader can look with particular interest at maps devoted to China and South America, his counterparts from those areas to maps of Europe. The influential *DTV Atlas zur Weltgeschichte* which has been translated into English, French, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Swedish, the English translation appearing as the *Penguin Atlas of World History*, devotes a reasonable amount of space to extra-European themes.

On the other hand, the introduction to *The Hamlyn Historical Atlas*, a major historical atlas published in 1981 that sought to stress the dynamic processes of change, argued that it was necessary to concentrate on unifying themes, that "it is inescapable that any view of the development of human society must be dominated by the evolution, the achievements and simply the presence of the great civilizations," that "the impact of Europe on the rest of the world has been decisive," and that this thesis leads to "the inevitable omissions" of many societies especially "of Africa ... central and south east-Asia and Oceania, which have been the victims rather than the initiators of these unifying processes."<sup>10</sup> However, the inclusion of non-European topics in Eurocentric atlases can make points. Opposite a map of "Russian Expansion under Catherine the Great 1762-1796," Martin Gilbert, in his *Russian History Atlas*, offered one of "The Expansion of China 1720-1760." Aside from explaining why Russian expansion across the Amur was blocked, this map also indicated that Catherine's conquests were far less extensive than China's.

Historical atlases published recently in other European countries contain many maps devoted to economic developments. A. Do Carmo Reis' *Atlas de Historia de Portugal* devotes twelve of the twenty-six maps on the last three centuries to economic developments. One of Norbert Ohler's three valuable bibliographies of historical atlases is devoted to socio-economic history.<sup>11</sup> Considerable problems have to be faced, however, in making maps of this kind. It is often very difficult to illustrate social, economic and cultural history by maps. In the case of the first Australian historical atlas, older kinds of maps were employed, and, only with time was the range of subjects mapped increased. Yet, the early decades of the twentieth century government bodies were mapping hospitals, schools, recreational facilities and outbreaks of diseases.<sup>12</sup> Often the drawing of a good map of this kind involves a considerable research effort in its own right; and it may well be that sometimes the information can be better conveyed in a graph or chart, or even a table of figures.

Modern social and economic statistics are gathered largely on a national basis and this limits what can be presented in maps. Important regional variations are averaged out. To present, for example, literacy on a world scale in one map can be misleading, if countries such as America or Russia

appear without internal subdivisions. In his introduction to the *Atlas of British Social and Economic History since c. 1700*, Rex Pope suggests that “the end-product offers some support for those historians who question the usefulness of thinking in terms of *national* economic histories.” This is related to the growing interest in local and regional history. The first newsletter for the projected historical atlas of New Zealand argues that “the success with which the Atlas conveys a sense of regional dynamics will be one test of its effectiveness.” In addition, there are problems of data acquisition and standardization between countries. Even those with a partly shared history, such as England and Scotland, often have different legal and institutional frameworks, which affects the data. For England and Scotland the poor law and the religious census are two cases where national differences influence the collection of data.<sup>13</sup>

The time and costs involved in creating original maps using basic data must be understood in any survey of historical atlases, along with the fact that the stack of available maps used by historical atlases is remarkably limited. The *Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era, 1760-1790* published in 1976 took twelve full-time historians and cartographers more than five years to produce. Nine cartographers, as well as a large number of scholars, worked for six years to produce the first Australian historical atlas, *Australians: A Historical Library*. Most of the maps and diagrams had to be created for it.<sup>14</sup> It took more than a decade of scholarly work to produce the 650 well-researched maps in the 1978 *Historical Atlas of South Asia*. Financial and time pressures are, of course, by no means new. Planned in 1891, R. L. Poole’s *Historical Atlas* was not published until 1902.

Given the costs of such research, it is not surprising that most atlases reuse familiar material. For example, R. F. Treharne, in his preface to the ninth edition of *Muir’s Historical Atlas* admits:

Muir never claimed that the *Atlas* was in any sense a work of original research, save where, as on British India, his own special knowledge enabled him at one or two points to make it so.... To make an atlas of this kind a work of original research would entail employing a specialist to design each separate map.

Indeed, it is generally true that the same maps recur frequently, with very little variation in atlas after atlas. A resulting problem for historical cartography arises because maps copy each other, especially each other’s mistakes, which are terribly difficult to eradicate. Misleading impressions can also arise from the reuse of maps that were originally designed to serve particular political or other partisan interests. M. Monmonier’s *How to Lie with Maps* offers many examples of how maps can mislead.<sup>15</sup>

Apparently distinct atlases are often merely different imprints of the same work, translations, or largely similar works that add a few maps for the history of the country in which they are published. Thus, the American classic, *Shepherd's Historical Atlas*, was heavily based on Putzger's *Historischer Schul-Atlas*, which explains, for example, why the former includes two very detailed maps of Baden and Wurtemberg [sic] before and after the French Revolution. Thus, we have moved little in some respects from the seventeenth century, when expensive printing plates passed with little correction from generation to generation.<sup>16</sup> In addition, projections change rarely, although when they do change the impact can be very striking. In 1988 the National Geographic Society of America changed from the Van der Grinten to the Robinson projection, offering a flatter, squatter view of the world that dramatically shrunk Russia.

It would be interesting to study the publishing history of historical atlases in order to establish links, influences and borrowings, and assess their historical importance. A preliminary survey suggests three major themes. First, the influence of the Germans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is clear. Particularly important works were the *Historisch-geographischer Hand-Atlas zur Geschichte der Staaten Europas von Anfang des Mittelalters bis auf die neueste Zeit*, first published in 1846 by Karl von Spruner, a Bavarian army officer described by R. L. Poole as "the founder of the modern historical atlas," especially the heavily revised third edition edited by Theodor Merke which appeared in 1880; G. Droysens 1886 *Allgemeiner historischer Handatlas* issued in 1886, which drew heavily on Spruner; and F. W. Putzger's *Historischer Schul-Atlas* first published in 1877 and continuing to a 92nd edition of 1970. These works concentrated on the political fortunes of the major European states.

German historical atlases remain excellent. Both the *Grosser Historischer Weltatlas* and the *Westerman Grosser Atlas zur Weltgeschichte* are first rate. The excellent second edition of 1979 of the *Mittelalter* volume of the *Grosser Historischer Weltatlas* includes maps of the spread of religious orders, the German movement east, linguistic divisions, the Islamic world, medieval trade routes, missionary activity, the Mongols, China, India, and Indian cultures in America, as well as lots of town plans, including Toledo, Cracow, Florence, Bruges, Tunis, Mecca, and Chu-Hsien. The leading two volume East German historical atlas, *Atlas zur Geschichte* compiled by a collective of about 500 editors for the Zentralinstitut für Geschichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, is stronger on economic than on political history. Popular risings, such as those of Spartacus or early-nineteenth-century Europe, receive more attention than in other atlases.

A similar agenda can be found in the Polish historical atlas. First published in 1967, with an English edition, *The Historical Atlas of Poland*

following in 1981, this atlas appeared from the State Cartographical Publishers in Wroclaw. There are some very useful economic maps, including Polish Economic Life in the Fourteenth Century; Economic Life in Sixteenth Century Poland, Territorial Growth of the Entailed Estate of the Zamoyskis; Manufactures and Industry on Polish Territories in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century; The Old Polish Industrial Region c. 1840; Polish Economic Life c. 1900; Polish Industrial Regions; and a number of twentieth-century maps. Popular risings are a major theme in the atlas, not least in the map "Class Struggles and Attempts to Overcome Economic Weakness 1921-1939." Relations with Russia are also a major theme, and a political conclusion is clearly presented in the preface: "Maps, presenting territorial changes in the various historical periods permit the reader to learn about the evolution of Poland's frontiers, make [sic] it clear that it was after the Second World War that Poland returned to her historical state frontiers from the times of the Piast dynasty, frontiers that are most advantageous for our country." The last map, "Territorial Changes of the Polish State in the Course of its History," compares the frontiers in 1018, 1634, 1939 and 1967, in order to show that the first corresponded most closely to that in 1967, in short that Poland's eastward expansion in the meantime had been an aberration. The fifty-four pages of maps are followed by thirty-seven pages of commentaries on maps, but the preface makes clear that "the purpose of these explanations is not to take the place of a history textbook, but they serve only as a complement to the content of the map."

The Romanian historical atlas, *Atlas Istoric*, edited by S. Pascu, is an interesting work, making good use of color, that avoids too biased an approach. There are understandably several maps of Dacia, as well as maps of migrations across Dacia from the sixth to the eleventh centuries. There are also maps of the liberation of the Balkans by Russian and Romanian forces in 1877, the Romanian front in the First World War, interwar strikes, the anti-Fascist insurrection of August 1944 and the subsequent operations of the Romanian army in helping to liberate Transylvania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The atlas includes some good maps of eastern Europe and can be thoroughly recommended on that head.

A very different note is set in the *Saar-Atlas* of H. Overbeck and G. W. Sante. Produced in 1934 during the Nazi period, this was designed to support the German case in the Saar question. Map One offers on facing pages a territorial map that places the Saar on the Franco-German border, and a linguistic map that shows both the Saar and Alsace as clearly German.

Although the historical agenda is very different, there are partisan remarks in the text accompanying the clear maps in *Carta's Historical Atlas*



of Israel. While "Jewish groups embarked on anti-British acts," Arabs "committed terrorist actions" (pp. 20-21). The Six Day War is blamed on Egypt, without qualification. The continuity of Jewish settlement in Palestine is a major topic in the atlas.

Another major theme to emerge from a preliminary survey is that over the last half-century, alongside the continued importance of German historical atlases, the strength and importance of an Anglo-American link have become more apparent, with English-language historical atlases also being translated into other languages, such as French. The *Times Atlas of World History* appeared, for example, in a revised French edition in 1979 as *Le Grand Atlas de L'Histoire Mondiale*. In the preface Le Roy Ladurie argued that "L'extraordinaire puissance visuelle des cartes, coloriées et fléchées, permet, mieux qu'un long discours, d'énoncer une synthèse."

Modern historical atlases are also being produced in countries that hitherto have had to rely on those of other countries, on maps in more general works, on older works, or on specialized editions of other historical atlases, such as the Canadian and South African editions of *Philip's Intermediate Historical Atlas* and the Polish and Swiss editions of Putzger. Thus a Portuguese historical atlas appeared in 1987; the first Australian historical atlas, *Australians: An Historical Atlas* was published in 1987; while two volumes of a projected three-volume *Historical Atlas of Canada*, were published; and, after two failed attempts, an *Historical Atlas of New Zealand* is projected for 1995. In some cases governmental support has been important. The Canadian project benefited from financial backing from the Department of the Secretary of State and from four ministries of the government of Ontario. The New Zealand project is being assembled by an editorial team working within the framework of the Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs.

One of the major difficulties in assessing influences, other than in the case of a straightforward new edition or translation, is that, although many historical atlases include a list of acknowledgements (e.g., that of "especially useful" works in the excellent atlas companion volume to the *New Cambridge Modern History* comprising seventy-eight titles, among them thirty-two historical atlases), it is rare, especially in recent non-specialized works, to find any notes on the sources used for individual maps. This also reduces the pedagogic and scholarly value of historical atlases, both because it makes it harder for the scholar and student to pursue the material presented in an atlas any further and because it becomes difficult to establish what sources have been used in particular maps and therefore how accurate they are. The "sources and further reading" items after individual maps in Andrew Cliff and Peter Haggett's *Atlas of Disease Distribution: Analytic Approaches to Epidemiological Data* provide a



striking contrast, as do the notes after chapters in the *Atlas of British Social and Economic History* edited by Rex Pope.

The difficulty of producing new maps clearly restricts the range of material that atlases offer. An historical map is different from a text: it reveals lack of knowledge as bluntly as it provides information. If a map of European dioceses in 1500 has to be provided then it is as necessary to ascertain the boundaries of those in Lithuania as well as those in Lombardy. To this point, Hill argued (p. 5) in his *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* that,

the picture revealed in the mapping of Anglo-Saxon England is often distorted, a distortion to which two factors have contributed: first, the distortion imposed by physical and geographic factors, for England was not a flat plain, uniformly vegetated, watered and peopled; and secondly, the bias that comes from the available evidence. Thus, an apparently significant distribution of an artefact or an event may only reveal the survival pattern or the retrieval pattern of the evidence.

The compilers of the *Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era* assumed that new maps depicting conditions then could be compiled from existing scholarly work, but they found that textual information was virtually never complete enough to be mapped directly, a common problem. Contemporary texts are often flawed as a result of errors, contradictions or a lack of information on the part of their compilers. This is brought out clearly in the excellent chapter, "Britain and the Roman Geographers" in Jones and Mattingly's *Atlas of Roman Britain*, but is also true for far more recent periods. In his *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, Hill deals with a particularly acute example of the problem of the visual presentation of data when evidence for the precise layout of units and boundaries is often lacking. He also draws attention to the regional bias in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.<sup>17</sup>

The problem of providing sufficient accurate information has become acute as the agenda of historical atlases has changed in recent decades, especially where world atlases are concerned. New topics have emerged. Michael Dockrill's recent *Collins Atlas of Twentieth Century World History* covers desertification, sea pollution, acid rain and tropical forest clearance in two maps devoted to the global environment, and the incidence of AIDS cases in one of the maps devoted to health. In addition, the atlas is resolutely non-Eurocentric. In general, there has been a definite move away from Eurocentric atlases, in which the rest of the world appeared only to be discovered and conquered by European powers, a process that was easy to present in map form, towards atlases that are worldwide in conception and presentation. Thus the companion volume to the *New Cambridge Modern History* offers nearly as many maps dealing

with non-European lands and the world as a whole as those devoted to Europe, and in the *Times Atlas of World History* published in 1978 (with new editions in 1984 and 1989) a definite attempt was made to break away from Eurocentricity. The *Times Atlas* editors state:

our aim has been to present a view of history which is world-wide in conception and presentation and which does justice ... to the achievements of all peoples.... We have not neglected the peoples outside the historic centers of civilization — for example, the nomads of central Asia — whose impact on history was more profound than is generally appreciated.<sup>18</sup>

Such an approach is clearly necessary and can draw on an increasing number of specialized works such as C. L. and J. V. Lombardi (eds.), *Latin American History: A Teaching Atlas*, and J. F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder, *Historical Atlas of Africa*.

The thematic expansion of the historical agenda poses great problems for World maps. H. C. Darby and Harold Fullard, for example, wrote in the preface to the *New Cambridge Modern History* atlas:

A substantial number of maps showing economic and social conditions has been included. We wish we could have included even more, but, only too often, we have drawn a blank in our search for reliable economic information for some areas at a number of periods. To have increased such economic maps by even a small number would have involved extensive research programs impossible within the limits within which we worked.

Moreover, such a study research program would face the serious problem that prior to the nineteenth century most of the world can only be described as pre-statistical. Attempts to gather information were often resisted as their motives were usually financial, not scholarly. After the Austrians acquired Little Wallachia in 1718 they sought to reorganize the tax system and to that end gathered population figures. This was resisted by the nobility, who concealed the number of their serfs, causing the census figures to fall by over forty percent in 1724. The land register inaugurated in the Papal States in 1777 was hindered by landowner opposition. There were also significant problems of reliability, not least because of the role of seasonal migration. Although Sweden had a census in 1749, there were none in Britain until 1801, while the information available on the Balkan and Polish populations in the eighteenth century is limited. It was not surprising that in the eighteenth century many commentators believed wrongly that the European population was falling. A similar variety characterized information on land ownership, while that on agricultural productivity was very limited. There was no widely accepted system of

weights and measures in Europe, until the metric system was introduced after the French Revolution. The notion that policy should be based on statistical information really only developed in Europe from the late eighteenth century. Thus the mapping of economic developments as recently as the eighteenth century poses formidable problems, and this naturally affects the possible content of atlases because, as already mentioned, unlike text, they reveal lack of knowledge as clearly as they provide information.

In 1978 Geoffrey Barraclough noted in the introduction to the *Times Atlas of World History* that it paid particular attention to economic developments, but he added "cultural and intellectual history does not, unfortunately, lend itself satisfactorily to cartographic documentation, and there are some subjects which ideally we should have wished to include and were forced reluctantly to omit."<sup>19</sup> But more effort could be made in this direction. A map of world literacy would be as valuable an indicator of problems as the map which the *Times Atlas* printed of per capita income. Although the *Times Atlas* indeed broke new ground, it was curiously unimaginative in matters of race and gender. Race is notoriously difficult to define and thus depict, but there is, for example, a mass of information available on the position of the black population of the United States and much of this has been readily displayed in map form, for example in *We the People: An Atlas of America's Ethnic Diversity*. In *Changing a Landscape: A Geography of Ukrainians in Canada* edited by L. V. Luciuk and B. S. Kordan, we can find an excellent example of the possibilities of presenting the ethnic experience through an historical atlas. A critic might suggest that the *Times Atlas* was innovative as regards cartography, largely derivative in its history.

Returning to cultural and intellectual history, the powerful role of the culture of print as a force for and expression of social change, political consciousness and economic development could and should be displayed in maps. In addition, calls for a new world information order could be better understood if news agencies and television, radio and film activities were mapped. The recently published volume of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* covering 1891 to 1961 has a two-page spread containing four maps, as well as tables and pie-charts, devoted to national broadcasting systems.<sup>20</sup> *This Remarkable Continent: An Atlas of United States and Canadian Society and Culture* includes such topics as music and house types. Cultural and intellectual influences within Europe from the sixteenth century onwards could be readily displayed by maps concentrating on printing, publishing and translating; while maps indicating linguistic hegemony, for example, languages employed in law courts or secondary education, would be valuable.

Until very recently of course such material would largely relate to elite activity. There is little doubt that cultural consciousness and activity at the popular level is far harder to evaluate and thus map, and this is also true of other spheres. It is easier to map European (or World) religious affiliations in the early-modern period than to provide reliable indications of the strength of religious sentiment and, in particular, the nature of popular religion. Most historical atlases, for example that of Australia, map religious denomination, not fervor. Important works in this field include: *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World*, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, *An Historical Atlas of Islam*, and *Atlas of the Christian Church*. The *Atlas zur Kirchen-Geschichte* by H. Jedin et al. is a major work that gives due weight to non-European topics and incorporates both numerous photographs and impressive scholarship. The text includes information on the sources used. Norbert Ohler's 1980 bibliography of historical atlases and of works including many historical maps devoted to ecclesiastical history listed seventy-six items.<sup>21</sup>

Such atlases face many difficulties. Evyater Friesel's *Atlas of Modern Jewish History*, a revised and translated edition of an atlas first published in Israel in 1983, includes masses of material on the history of American Jewry, very detailed maps on, for example, the Jewish communities of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles and New York, as well as graphs on such matters as age distribution and mixed marriages, and extensive passages of text. The coverage is less detailed for other communities, the preface stating: "Under conditions of discrimination or oppression, Jewish communities were wary of informing the authorities about their true numbers or their economic situation. And later the principle of separation of church and state in many countries forbade censuses to include questions about religious affiliation."

As research on popular religion is actively pursued it will become more possible to include such material, although a new Eurocentric perspective may be introduced. Because most historical research is conducted by North American or European scholars, and in those regions, it will be difficult to match their findings by comparable work elsewhere. Similarly, most of the maps in Cliff and Haggett's *Atlas of Disease Distributions* are of northwest Europe, and of Iceland in particular, the country where they have both worked longest. Although methodologically advanced, this atlas is therefore illustrative, rather than comprehensive.

The *Times Atlas* was a departure from the traditional agenda for historical atlases in another respect. As Barraclough noted in his introduction:

We have sought ... to emphasize different historical situations by employing a variety of different projections.... The results may not always be

familiar, but we believe they may open new insights.... The plates in this volume are all original; not a few deal with topics which ... have not been treated cartographically before.<sup>22</sup>

The unfamiliar projections are certainly visually arresting. That used for the rise of the Ottoman Empire helps to stress the importance of trans-Pontine Europe and Turkish gains at the expense of the Mamelukes. Similarly, that of the resurgence of Muslim power, 1520-1639, whose scope stretches from Bengal to Morocco, offers a perspective that throws the centers of the Muslim world into prominence. The map of the Adriatic with the south at the top throws considerable light on Venetian strategic problems, and indicates the importance of John Cole's observation that by thinking of each country or region as having a right way up and a particular shape, we may limit our perception of past problems.<sup>23</sup>

Without a doubt the *Times Atlas* is a considerable success, but at £20 in 1978 it was certainly outside the price range of most students, and it is certainly not easily portable, convenient for frequent use or able to stand upon an average bookshelf, all surely important requirements, while the space available for maps was limited by a twelve-page world chronology, a thirty-eight page glossary, a generous amount of text and frequent, albeit small, illustrations. The text is valuable for subjects on which scholarly material is not easily accessible to the non-scholar, but less useful for more familiar topics, especially as it reduces the number of maps. The level of detail in many of the maps is possibly unsatisfactory from a scholarly point of view, although the resulting maps are not cluttered. For example, a student seeking to understand or a scholar wishing to explain Louis XIV's foreign policy would gain more from the map of the northern and eastern frontiers of France in this period in the *New Cambridge Modern History* atlas than from its counterpart in the *Times*. Clearly the latter has more to offer when it comes to non-European history, while the fact that the Cambridge atlas is devoted to the post-medieval period, for which information is more plentiful, in part explains its character.

Visually arresting and innovative, but too expensive and cumbersome and possibly encumbered by too much text, the *Times Atlas* suggests the way in which historical atlases could develop. If they are to be valuable to students they should be as inexpensive as possible and, therefore, employ as many black and white maps as possible, rather than a smaller number of glossy color maps. In addition, historical points can and should be made and new perspectives offered by employing unfamiliar projections and maps. Thus, *The Atlas of the Crusades* dramatically challenges the conventional view of the Crusades by devoting over forty maps to the period after the fall of Acre in 1291. It thus relates the struggles against the



Ottoman Turks in the Balkans to the earlier conflict for control of Syria and Palestine. In addition, the geographical scope of the Crusades and the nature of the movement are both demonstrated by the inclusion of maps of crusading in Spain and the Baltic and against Albigensians and Hussites.

Many new perspectives are already provided in scholarly maps, for example, the insurance maps devised by Frank Spooner.<sup>24</sup> Maps of the modern World from the perspective of the Soviet Union reflect her encirclement by American missile bases. Maps of military campaigns frequently reflect the strategic problems faced by contemporaries by using different projections.<sup>25</sup> It is also possible to provide a three-dimensional illustration of the topography of battlefields by the use of computer graphics.<sup>26</sup> Material available now in tabular form only requires mapping, for example the shrinking journey times across the Atlantic between 1675 and 1740 which helped to encourage integration between Britain and her North American colonies.<sup>27</sup> But statistical information presented in tabular form would be a more useful adjunct to maps than photographs for atlases dealing with the last two centuries.

Furthermore, because until the spread of the railway in the nineteenth century, landmasses were generally less easy to cross than seas, and water united rather than divided, it would be valuable to have maps that reflected the importance of maritime links by being centered on them. In that perspective the Vikings, for example, appear less like an alien intrusion on settled European states, which is a false perspective that is encouraged anyway by the unvarying use of blocs of territory and clearly distinguished frontiers whether the subject is ninth or nineteenth century Europe. Reviewing forty-two historical atlases produced in twenty-two countries since 1945, all European with the exception of works published in the United States and Japan, Armin Wolf has called for the reduction of the number of maps illustrating national history, in favor of maps showing Europe as a whole, in order to replace a conception of history based on different nations by representations of the history of Europe from a European aspect.<sup>28</sup>

The opportunities and insights presented by spatial analysis need to be grasped so that advances can be made in understanding and exposition. For example, isodemographic maps can present material far more vividly and clearly than any text.<sup>29</sup> The first Australian historical atlas used pie charts, computer mapping and flow-line maps effectively. It also included facsimilies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century maps in order to show how cartographic styles and techniques had changed. The geographical circumstances of historical processes were important, and they also throw considerable light on those processes, even if it is difficult to depict causality.



An example of what is possible is suggested by a major advance in another field, Cliff and Haggett's *Atlas of Disease Distributions*. Covering diseases both past and present, this offers a comprehensive exposition of epidemiological mapping techniques and analyses. A range of approaches to the mapping and statistical analysis of medical data is employed, as in the use of choropleth and isopleth maps and a block diagram to depict the deaths in London in the cholera epidemic of 1849. The authors advance a framework for critically evaluating the effectiveness of maps in medical literature. There is nothing comparable for the historian to turn to. There have, however, been significant developments in computer mapping packages, both to produce hard copy and to present on screen. This is an exciting and important new development, not least because computers are becoming so much more important in teaching.

Unless the historical atlas adapts to new possibilities and challenges, its value as a teaching and research tool will be overlooked, especially at the non-specialist level, and it will appear increasingly redundant, particularly to those concerned with local and social history. Equally, unless atlases are used, students will become increasingly spatially illiterate and geographically ignorant and this will seriously affect their knowledge and understanding of the past.

## Notes

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1. I am grateful to Donald Radcliffe for this point.
2. P. D. A. Harvey, "The Medievalists' Atlas," *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 30 (1986), 117.
3. Norbert Ohler listed 317 historical atlases in 1977: "Historische Atlanten-Tendenzen und Neuerscheinung Eine Auswahlbibliographie," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 2 (1977), 141-761.
4. A. Wolf, "100 Jahre Putzger — 100 Jahre Geschichtsbild in Deutschland (1877-1977)," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 29 (1978), 6702-18; M. Parisse, "L'Historien et ses outils. Les Instruments de Travail. Atlas historiques d'Allemagne," *Bulletin d'Information de la Mission Historique Française Allemagne*, 21 (Dec. 1990), 55-106. R. F. Treharne compiled a *Bibliography of Historical Atlases and Hand-Maps for use in Schools* (Historical Association Pamphlet no. 114, London, 1939).
5. J. Vicens Vives, *Atlas de Historia de España* (Barcelona, 1965) maps 3, 4, 26.

6. R. Bartlett and A. MacKay, *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford, 1990). H. Inalcik, "Ottoman methods of conquest," *Studia Islamica* (1954). I have benefited from the advice of Norman Housley in this section.
7. N. G. d'Albissin, *Genese de la frontière franco-belge. Les variations des limites septentrionales de la France de 1659 à 1789* (Paris, 1979); P. Solon, "Frontiers and Boundaries: French Cartography and the limitation of Bourbon ambition in seventeenth-century France" and D. Buisseret, "Cartography and Power in the Seventeenth Century," *Proceedings of the Western Society for French Historical Studies*, 10 (1982); J. Black, *The Rise of the European Powers 1679-1793* (London, 1990) pp. 195-7; P. Barber and Black, "Maps and the Complexities of Eighteenth-Century Europe's Territorial Divisions: Holstein in 1762," *Imago Mundi* (forthcoming); Black, "Maps Frontiers and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe," paper given at the International Boundaries Research Unit conference in July 1991, publication forthcoming in conference proceedings.
8. R. E. Jones, *Provincial Development in Russia. Catherine II and Jakob Sievers* (New Brunswick, 1984), p. 39.
9. P. R. Magocsi, *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas* (Toronto, 1985), map 10.
10. R. I. Moore, ed., *The Hamlyn Historical Atlas* (1981), p. 10. On the problem of European dominance and maps, J. A. S. Grenville, *National Prejudice and International History* (Leeds, 1968), p. 9.
11. N. Ohler, "Atlanten und Karten zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 67 (1980), pp. 228-50.
12. *Australians: A Historical Atlas* (Broadway, Australia, 1987), p. xiii.
13. J. Langton and R. J. Morris, *Atlas of Industrializing Britain* (London, 1986), p. xxii; R. Pope, ed., *Atlas of British Social and Economic History since c. 1700* (London, 1989), p. xi; *Historical Atlas of New Zealand Newsletter*, 1 (1991), 5.
14. B. B. Petchenik, "Cartography and the Making of an Historical Atlas: A Memoir," *American Cartographer*, 4 (1977), 12; *Australians: A Historical Atlas*, pp. xi, xiii.
15. M. Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: 1991).
16. W. G. Dean, "Sic enim est traditum," *Mapping History* 1 (1980), 8.
17. D. Hill, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 5, 21, 134-42, 156-64.
18. G. Barraclough, "Introduction," *Times Atlas of World History* (London, 1978).
19. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
20. D. Kerr and D. W. Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada III: Addressing the Twentieth Century 1891-1961* (Toronto, 1990), plate 65.
21. N. Ohler, "Atlanten und karten zur kirchengeschichte," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* (1980), 312-49.
22. Barraclough, "Introduction," p. 14.
23. J. P. Cole, *Geography of World Affairs* (London, 1966), p. 19.
24. F. C. Spooner, *Risk at Sea: Amsterdam Insurance and Maritime Europe, 1766-1780* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 201-35.
25. J. Black, *Culloden and the '45* (Stroud, 1990), pp. 75, 102, 108, 154.
26. J. McDonald, *Great Battlefields of the World* (London, 1985).
27. I. K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (Oxford, 1986), especially pp. 307-15.
28. A. Wolf, "Das Bild der europäischen Geschichte in Geschichtsatlanten verschiedener Länder," *Internationales Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Geographieunterricht*, 13 (1970-1), 90.
29. Kerr and Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada III*, plate 66.

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