

Jesuit Wanderlust: Travel and Corporate Geography



The incentive for Jesuits to travel—first and foremost as missionaries to remote and heathen lands—came of course from Ignatius himself. He had conceived of his order neither as monastic, and thus safely sequestered from the corruption of the outside world, nor as diocesan, and thus legally bound to bishop and parish. Rather, his order was to be itinerant, and its members not merely



Figure 2: Emblem 937. Image primi saeculi Societatis Iesu (Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640).

Obedientia velox "Swift Obedience" explains "The right hand has finished its work, the tongue not yet." Indeed that hand which points individual points with slow outline has the reputation of effort and of art. Nevertheless, because its own sluggishness often stands in the way of its efforts, it cannot be the first to arrive at praise. Remember to make haste, if with the pen you can run ahead of voice, and you can be beforehand in snatching the palm. Thus Loyola taught his Companions to "obey, with swift hand anticipating command."



Figure 3: Emblem 937. Image primi saeculi Societatis Iesu (Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640).

"Societas Iesu" proclaims the worldwide scope of the Jesuit enterprise through Ps 18: "There is no person who might hide himself from His heat."

This complex diagram in the form of an olive tree by the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602–80) represents the extraordinary geographic extent of the Society of Jesus, with different branches standing for the provinces of the Jesuit order. By the time this engraving was made, the Jesuits had foundations in China, the Philippines, India, West Africa, and Spanish and Portuguese America.

Figure 3: Hieronymus catholice Societatis Iesu. From Athanasius Kircher. *Atropa lucida et umbrosa* (Rome, 1646), p. 553. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

obedient but inventive. He had insisted from the outset that those who accepted the Jesuit vocation should be prepared at a moment's notice to go wherever they might better serve God, and readiness to travel at the behest of either pope or superior general was made explicit in the fourth vow of the fully professed.

"Obey, with swift hand anticipating command"

While the fourth vow has often been viewed as an extension of the traditional vow of obedience, which it surely was, it was essentially a commitment to an obedience bound to mobility and therefore often an obedience without direct supervision. That is, the professed was not only trusted, he was trusted to travel beyond the secured spaces of the Society and to use his own best judgment in achieving its ends.

The circulation of people and information

The extent to which the circulation of people and information was woven into the very fabric of the Society is nowhere more clearly evident than in the list of offices created and in the flow of administrative and "edifying" correspondence. Collectively, in the decades after the establishment of most of the major overseas missionary fields (after c. 1640), the Society at any given time had between eight percent and twelve percent of its members stationed in the overseas missions. In order to keep some measure of administrative control among so many members so widely dispersed and to maintain their morale, the Society operated an elaborate correspondence network.

"There is no person who might hide himself from His heat."

In other words, our emerging Jesuit map shows a strongly hierarchical organization of assistant, province, and town centrally governed from Rome yet spatially distributed across Catholic Europe and throughout the trading and colonial territories of France (eastern Canada and old Siam), Portugal (Brazil, the west coast of India, China, and Japan), and Spain (Central and South America and the Philippines). By about the middle of the seventeenth century, one could have said without exaggeration that the sun never set upon the Jesuit empire—or, as the authors of the *Imago primi saeculi* would have it, "There is no person who might hide himself from His heat."

Indeed, during the golden age of Jesuit expansion and beyond, the more artistically minded of the Society's members seized upon the motif of a tree to capture the rootedness of the order in Rome and its ongoing ramification into new territories. The most elaborate—though neither the first nor the last—example of the "Ignatian Tree" is from Athanasius Kircher's treatise on light (Fig 5). The trunk of the tree symbolized the diachronic link between the living Society and its roots in the person of Ignatius.

The History of the Company of Jesus, *Daniello Bartoli's* astonishingly popular book was one of the most influential ever published about the Jesuit missions, becoming the equivalent of a bestseller today—not only in Europe but in Latin America and European colonies in Asia.

The grandiose frontispiece, focusing on a globe of the world and four personifications of the continents, begins with the proclamation "The sun is set in the heavens, but dispersed to every land," implying that the sun never sets on the Jesuit mission empire.

Figure 4: Cornelia Blomart after Jan Miel, engraved frontispiece to *Daniello Bartoli, Della Vita e dell'Istituto di S. Ignazio: fondatore della Compagnia di Gesù* (Rome, 1659). Courtesy: the rare book collection, from Mercator Library, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, O'Fallon, IL.



Figure 5: Chinese Map Plate. *Nouvel Atlas de la Chine* (Paris, 1717). I.B. D'Anville, cartographer to Louis XV, King of France. Courtesy: Ron Anton, S.I., The Beijing Center for Chinese Studies.

The Society of Jesus was distinguished from its earliest days by the mobility of its members, and the experience gained collectively by the Jesuits through travel profoundly informed their character and self-understanding. If the image of the erstwhile peripatetic Ignatius never leaving Rome after he became superior general of the Society symbolizes the Jesuit centre, the image of Francis Xavier departing for "the Indies" never to return to Europe well captures Jesuit Wanderlust. Few other religious orders invested as deeply as the Jesuits both in an apostolate of education in Catholic Europe and in the overseas missions.



Figure 6: Chinese Map Plate. *Nouvel Atlas de la Chine* (Paris, 1717). I.B. D'Anville, cartographer to Louis XV, King of France. Courtesy: Ron Anton, S.I., The Beijing Center for Chinese Studies.

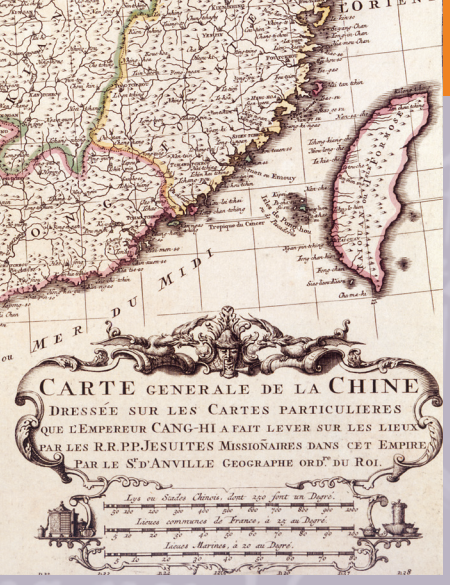


Figure 7: Map of Paraguay (detail). *Historia naturalis e morale delle Indie*. Venice: Bernardo Basa, 1596. Special Collections, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia.

This 18th-century map is part of a large group of maps of China, Tibet, and the western coast of North America. At the request of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing (Manchu) dynasty (1666–1722), the Jesuits in China were the first to map these lands using scientific methods.

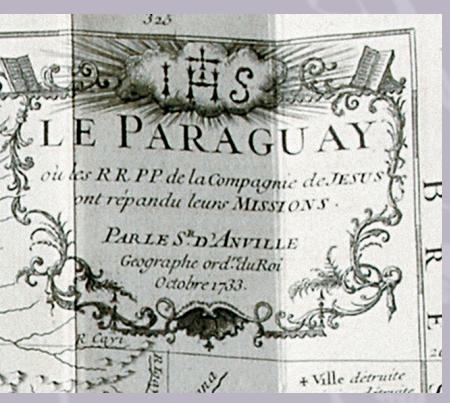


Figure 8: Emblem 937. Image primi saeculi Societatis Iesu (Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640).

"Sun in the Belgian Lion," refers to an IHS with starburst (monogram of the Society of Jesus) that appears at the center of the map of Belgium superimposed on the lion seen at right and in the full emblem illustrated to the right. The lion is the symbol of Belgium, and through this emblem the Society proclaimed its importance to the Belgians.

Figure 8: Emblem 937. Image primi saeculi Societatis Iesu (Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640).

Jesuit Map-making as an Art of Persuasion

Though cartography has not been systematically treated as an overall part of Jesuit history, it is clear that the Jesuits more than other religious orders of early modern Europe valued maps and geography for the control of missionary space. In all the provinces where the Jesuits had missions—such as China, Japan, India, the United States, Canada, and South America—they left a record in maps of their journeys. Many of these maps, transmitted through various channels to the map workshops of Italy, Germany, France, and the Low Countries, were published as landmark contributions to the geographical image Europe held of the world at large. And not surprisingly, the first atlas of the Holy Land [1532] was by the German Jesuit, Jacob Ziegler. The sustained Jesuit interest in mapping, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, merits study at several levels.

The Importance of Mathematics

That Jesuit cartography should have developed at all is linked to the training members of the order received in subjects that permitted them to make accurate geographical observations. Jesuit learning included astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, geography, and the study of spheres as well as training in the use of instruments such as the astrolabe and the quadrant. Taken together these disciplines provided many of the necessary skills for cartography.

The Discourse of European Overseas Expansion

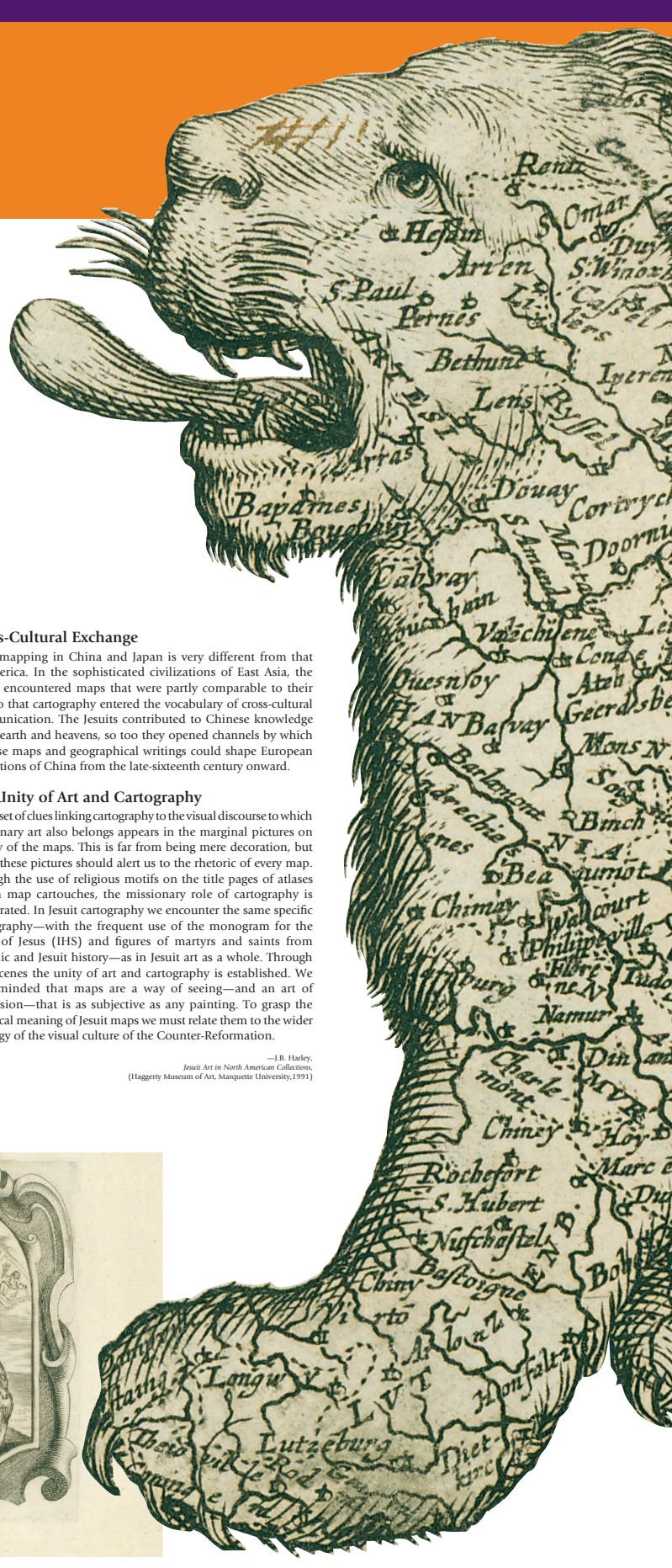
Maps were vital aids to priests dislocated in missions scattered in immense and little-known territories. To map the land was to possess it, and maps became visible persuaders accompanying the letters and *Relations* that the Jesuit Fathers sent back to Europe. If the patrons and superiors of the order had not traveled to America and Asia themselves, then maps, as accepted surrogates of geographical reality, made the journey believable.

In less well-developed areas of the world—for example in Canada and South America—the Jesuits were also explorers. Their mapping in these contexts, helping to open up new territories to settlement and economic exploitation, became part of a wider campaign of colonial promotion.

On the periphery of New France, the Jesuit contribution to the exploration and mapping of the Great Lakes region was an especially crucial one. The names of the explorers and mapmakers of the Midwest—Allouez, Brébeuf, Chaumonot, Dablon, Jogues, Lalemant, Marquette, Raymbault—are also a roll call of the Jesuit Fathers. By recording the geography of America first hand, the Jesuits also provided the raw material of the maps published in France that would become standard throughout Europe for over a century and that would help several generations of immigrants to envision the potential of the New World in advance of their arrival.



Figure 9: Emblem 937. Image primi saeculi Societatis Iesu (Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640).



Cross-Cultural Exchange

Jesuit mapping in China and Japan is very different from that in America. In the sophisticated civilizations of East Asia, the Jesuits encountered maps that were partly comparable to their own so that cartography entered the vocabulary of cross-cultural communication. The Jesuits contributed to Chinese knowledge of the earth and heavens, so too they opened channels by which Chinese maps and geographical writings could shape European perceptions of China from the late-sixteenth century onward.

The Unity of Art and Cartography

A final set of clues linking cartography to the visual discourse to which missionary art also belongs appears in the marginal pictures on many of the maps. This is far from being mere decoration, but rather these pictures should alert us to the rhetoric of every map. Through the use of religious motifs on the title pages of atlases and in map cartouches, the missionary role of cartography is consecrated. In Jesuit cartography we encounter the same specific iconography—with the frequent use of the monogram for the name of Jesus (IHS) and figures of martyrs and saints from Catholic and Jesuit history—as in Jesuit art as a whole. Through such scenes the unity of art and cartography is established. We are reminded that maps are a way of seeing—and an art of persuasion—that is as subjective as any painting. To grasp the historical meaning of Jesuit maps we must relate them to the wider ideology of the visual culture of the Counter-Reformation.

Figure 10: Emblem 937. Image primi saeculi Societatis Iesu (Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1640).