

Spatio-temporal regimes have undergone a series of significant changes in the past 150 years or so, from the classically modern implication of a standard world time with its grid of 24 time zones in 1884 to the time-space compression ushered in by global capitalism and the more recent inauguration of a logic of global imperial interventionism. Historically, theoretical and performative resistances and counter-aesthetics to the modernist regime of empty homogeneous time (and space) are well documented. While this kind of critique is in many pockets still very much on the agenda, the hegemonic doctrines and realities of neoliberalism engender the necessity of new oppositional forms of practice and agency while simultaneously rendering such new forms impossible. The contributions in this volume engage critically and from current theoretical perspectives with questions of spatio-temporal regimes and subjectivities, both recent and historical.

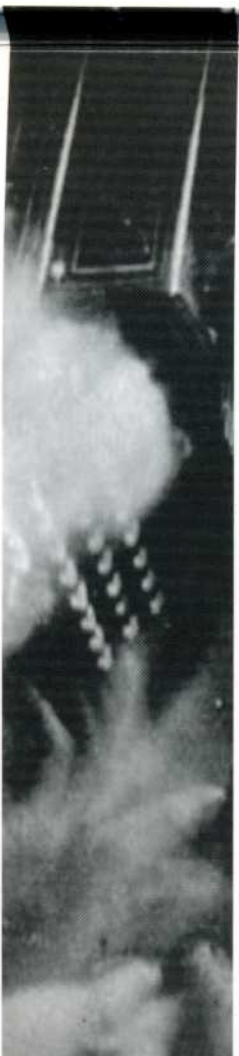
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(eds.)



# Re/defining the Matrix



Reflections on Time – Space – Agency

transspekte // transpects

Dagmar Reichardt

## Mapping Sicily

### From Postcoloniality to Neo-Metaphorization

Where and how do you map Sicily? For those who think that they readily have a clear picture of the island, most of the time knowing Sicily primarily means looking up Sicily in an atlas. Demarcating or imagining a (foreign) territory in picture form, i.e. on a map, is a process with a long tradition dating back to 1585, when Gerhard Mercator published his extensive *Atlas, sive cosmographiae meditationes de fabrica mundi*.<sup>1</sup> That procedure constantly pursues the (distant) goal – even when only mentally – of taking hold of a certain area, of occupying it, conquering it, capturing it for oneself, exploiting it and/or to dominate it as well.

Yet Sicily can also look like a woman who becomes an allegory for the *Regnum Siciliae*.<sup>2</sup> This is the case in a depiction that dates back to 1640. It was drawn up by the renowned Dutch cartographer Johannes Jansson, who publicized the figure that same year in a French compilation of maps bearing the title *Le nouveau théâtre du monde ou Nouvel Atlas*.<sup>3</sup> Here the land receives a likeness, it's being personified. It not only has outlines, it has an incarnate shape with a three-dimensional effect. I'll return to this body of a woman later on.

So there are two ways of imagining a place on this globe: mathematically-spatially, or three-dimensionally-humanly. I call these principles of human fantasy occupying/power-oriented versus symbolic/metaphoric. I would like to use the example of Sicilian cartography in the following to illustrate how the op-

<sup>1</sup> The notion of *atlas* derives from this title published on the frontispiece of his work (cf. Dufour/La Gummia 1998: 38/39) and defines in the 17<sup>th</sup> century a domain over which the Dutchman held the unchallenged supremacy. Schneider (2004: 54) indicates 1595 as year of publication of Mercator's *Atlas*. Dufour/La Gummia (1998: 38) distinguish between maps of Sicily that originate from an atlas and such that were published as loose leaves.

<sup>2</sup> The representation of a land, state or continent as a woman has a long tradition in the history of maps (cf. Ueckmann 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The frontispiece of the French edition from 1640 shows, among other things, allegorical representations of the continents.



fig. 1: Johannes Jansson: *Sicilia Regnum*, 1640 [detail]

pressive status of postcoloniality on the one hand and the opposing tendency towards metaphorization on the other have characterized the image that we associate with Sicily today. Before delving into that, I am going to deal briefly with Sicily's postcolonial status, a point closely linked to the island's history; so that I can follow up with a more in-depth examination of the historic backgrounds of cartographic development. A concluding step is to assess the value of the cultural representation emerging from the maps. This is intended towards answering the question – To what extent can Sicily together with Leonardo Sciascia be regarded as a metaphor for Italy, Europe or even the whole world from a postcolonialist point of view?

### *Postcoloniality*

“Eppure da duemila cinquecento anni siamo colonia” (Tomasi di Lampedusa 1996: 170) – “And yet we have been a colony for two thousand, five hundred years”: In Tomasi di Lampedusa's world-famous novel *Il Gattopardo* (1958; Engl. *The Leopard*), this is how Sicilian nobleman Don Fabrizio Salina sums up the problems Sicily had to face in the course of Italy's unification process

around 1860. As a matter of fact, when relying on Tomasi's account one can say that Sicily has been forced to lead an existence as a “colony” for what has meanwhile become 2,600 years, since the post-Hellenistic era began cultivating a postcolonialism *avant la lettre*. The so-called *Continente Sicilia* had been colonized by the Greeks since the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC,<sup>4</sup> and experienced its last foreign invasion under the rule of the Spanish Bourbon dynasty during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, postcolonialist discourses on the island's society, politics and culture continue to have an effect to the present day. Viewed from this standpoint one can say that the island is in a permanent state of decolonization, involved in other words with the renunciation of both foreign invaders and external influences on power.

As I have already explained elsewhere (cf. Reichardt 2006a; Reichardt 2006b: 92), and even though I cannot go into more detail here, due to Sicily's special nature it seems to me to be appropriate in this case to principally refer less to *postcolonialism* as a topic, and instead to speak rather more of real *postcoloniality* on the part of Sicily.

### *History of Cartography*

Let's move on to the history of cartography, particularly Sicilian cartography: To all intents and purposes, the historic development of the art of map-making is marked by the functional change away from the historically divine *Mappae mundi* – maps drawn up in monasteries offering orientation in a realm historically mandated by God's saving grace – to the topographic maps of modern times (cf. Schneider 2004). Among other aspects, these have formed the basis for references to science and for using geography as a spatial science. Since then, such things as satellite photos or orientational guides via GPS (*Global Positioning System*) are being measured in terms of their purported realistic correctness and the degree of their geographic precision.

A clay tablet from Mesopotamia is regarded as one of the oldest maps of the world handed down over the centuries. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Babylonians etched the world into it as a circle with Babylon as its center. Analogously, the drafter of the Ebstorfer World Map dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century AD shifts Jerusalem into the center of his manuscript: Only two cities are emphasized through the symbol of a flag – Jerusalem and Lüneburg in today's Germany. In accord with the message of this map, the royal house of the Lüneburger Welfen ought to promptly set off on a crusade to liberate Jerusalem (to the east). In the drafter's view, the Holy City is midpoint for the world, a

<sup>4</sup> The first wave of Sicily's colonialization by the Greeks lasted until 688 BC when a mixed group of Rhodians and Cretans founded the Sicilian colonial town of Gela (cf. Finley 1994: 38/39).

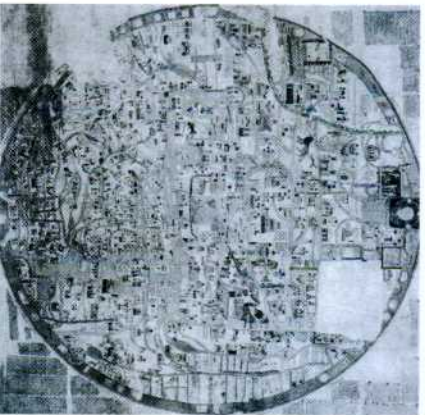


fig. 2: *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century AD [total view]

place where order reigns. Chaos lies in wait at its margins, symbolized by the man-eating Gog and Magog to the north, and by birdmen or humans without ears to the south. Sicily too is clearly recorded to the southeast in the shape of a heart, the precise contours of the island still being unknown.

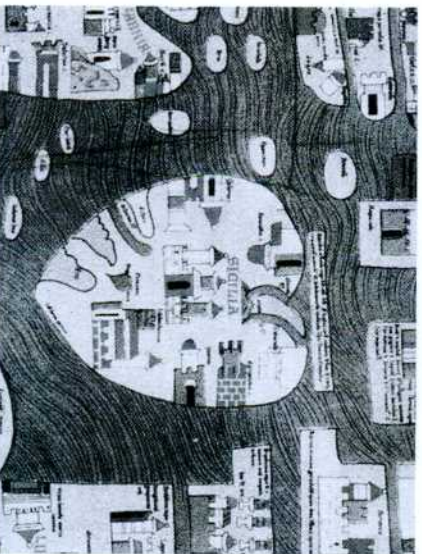


fig. 3: *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century AD [detail: Sicily]

In other words, medieval maps had a dogmatic-religious background (representation of the power of the church) or pursued a theological-philosophical finality. Seen in a formal sense, they primarily possessed a mythical, symbolic value. Although Sicily does figure as a bridge between Africa and Italy in such medieval documents, i.e. as a strategic base for Byzantium, the spatial mapping

and drawn profile accorded to the isle belong without a doubt in the realm of fantasy (cf. Dufour/La Gurnina 1998: 15).

#### *Maps of Sicily*

As regards the historic development of maps of Sicily, that development is to be considered within this general framework: The first printed map of Sicily reiterates a draft of Sicily and Sardinia drawn up by Ptolemy (i.e. the Alexandrian-Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemaios, approx. 100-180 AD),<sup>5</sup> and dates back to 1478.

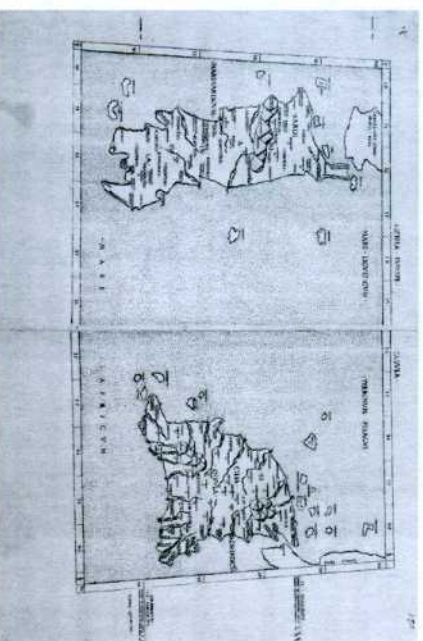


fig. 4: Claudius Ptolemaios: *Septima Europe Tabula*, 1478 [on the right: *Sicilia Insula*]

On Sicily that map was considered to be just as much a "bestseller" as the map of Sicily by Sebastian Münster that followed. Münster's map was published in his *Cosmographiae Universalis* in 1550 (cf. Dufour/La Gurnina 1998: 36).

During the Renaissance of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the rebirth of geography from ancient times builds upon the fundamental Ptolemaic period (as is the case with Münster). The focal point for this work shifted slowly but surely from the center of Flemish cartography (Abraham Ortelius and Gerhard Mercator) in Antwerp to Leiden and Amsterdam, where Dutch production assumed leadership. After the invention of letter-press printing in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, maps circulated at first in the form of xylographies (woodcuts), then as copperplate engravings (cf. Dufour/La Gurnina 1998: 36). These production techniques were

<sup>5</sup> Ptolemy's world system considered the earth to be the center of the motions of the sun, moon and all other planets. Until the Copernican shift at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century which fixed the sun as such a centre, Ptolemy's major work entitled *Almagest* formed the basis of the astronomical knowledge.

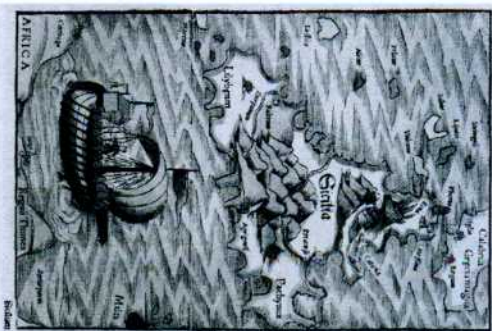


fig. 5: Sebastian Munster: *De Italia Siciliae Insulae* [...], in: id.: *Cosmographiae Universalis*, 1550

replaced by lithography during the *Seicento* (17<sup>th</sup> century). Cartography now experiences its Golden Age, a time in which it is increasingly regarded as a science in the spirit of 18<sup>th</sup>-century enlightenment, especially in England and France: What became particularly well-known were the maps of Sicily by Frenchman Guillaume Delisle, the map by Austrian General Samuel von Schmettau (who submitted a geographically individualized map of Sicily in 1809/10 on the orders of Emperor Karl VI), and the 1823 *Map of Sicily* by British Royal Navy Captain William Henry Smyth.



fig. 6: William Henry Smyth: *Sicily, Schmettau's Map Corrected* [...], in: id.: *The Hydrography of Sicily, Malta and the Adjacent Islands*, London, 1823

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, land maps eventually served more and more for purposes of warfare and military personnel. With the founding of the Topographic Institute in Palermo in 1808 (cf. Dufour/La Gumina 1998: 34), the new land map of Sicily from 1866 which had been produced in Italy, and as a result of the emerging improvement of surveying techniques, this situation rang in the end of historically drawn maps of Sicily (cf. Dufour/La Gumina 1998: 5).

#### *Cultural Representation*

What can we deduce? – As Liliane Dufour (cf. Dufour/La Gumina 1998: 42) concludes in her article from 1998 on the “*Imago Siciliae*”, even today maps represent a never-achievable approximation of the island’s reality, and thus an infinite work in *progress* phenomenon posing a basic postmodern principle *par excellence*. Even a satellite photo freezes only one of infinitely many potential moments. What is symbolized thereby is the postmodern view oriented on plurality, i.e. that there is not an absolute reality unto itself, but many realities in their plural instead. So, in the end maps themselves are mostly not any form of text, yet they are a weighty means towards causing the readers to write a text of their own or towards leading them to art. The maps thus take on an ambivalent, hybrid position as hinge or interface between reception and creation. The favorizing of the visual corresponds completely with the thesis of the *iconic turn*.<sup>6</sup> According to that thesis and pursuant to Horst Bredekamp, that turn marks our Western societies of today as a cultural shift from text to image, and in turn tills a fertile, receptive soil for the map genre (cf. Burda/Maar 2004: 15).

However, no map can make do without text, and maps are frequently the basis for texts: whether literary or academic texts, speeches or political agreements, journalistic or didactic commentaries etc. (cf. Buzan 1993). Our rapid study of the history of Sicilian cartography demonstrates clearly that two moments have made their mark on it: an empirical recording on the one hand, i.e. mapping bound to reality, and the cultural representation of the respectively prevailing view of the world (*Weltbild*) on the other. As Nicholas Visser’s world map from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century shows, a complete picture is given only through the interplay of geographical calculation and fantasy-filled

<sup>6</sup> I am taking over the notion of *iconic turn* from the programmatic title of a transdisciplinary lectures series held at the University of Munich in the period ranging from summer 2002 to summer 2003. The series dealt with the increasing importance of visual expressions within social communication in the fields of medicine and culture, i.e. science and humanities. The lectures were published under the same title (Burda/Maar 2004). In the introduction to this book the German art historian Horst Bredekamp explains how the formulas of a *pictorial* or *iconic turn* derive from the notion of the *linguistic turn* (cf. Burda/Maar 2004: 15). For further details on Visual Culture Studies cf. the basic texts by Mitchell (1994), Boehm (1994) and Mirzoeff (1999).

