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Indigenous Peoples In the European Cartographic Imaginary¹

Since they are deeply rooted in history and most cultures develop them, maps offer a vision of the world as a whole, or at least of a specific territory in evolution. Every map is a tributary of knowledge, of the tools and aims collectively sought after in a given era. Not only do they offer us an image with geographical details, but they also reveal a series of social, geopolitical, and semiological conventional implications, that is, signs that are the heritage of this or that community and whose graphic presentation plows the life of society. Thus, depending on the graphic language of their own, they show and understand the world around us. Very few maps of antiquity have come down to us. By contrast, a considerable number of cartographic productions have survived from the Middle Ages and later centuries. Maps of the world, maps of continents and countries, maps of dioceses and governmental districts, of cities, topographical and hydrographical maps, nautical maps, maps of islands and estuaries, celestial maps: all of these are valuable crystallizations of our imaginary, the terrain in which social movement and political discourse come together; in other words, how word and deed come together. The initial lines of the article “Amérique” in Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédia* affirm that no other historic event was as singular as the discovery of the New World. On a par with the chronicles and logs of travels and conquest known as the Chronicles of the Indies, other chronicles and stories written by French and English explorers would begin to feed the European imaginary with news about hitherto unknown regions and the aboriginal peoples of North America. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, works would be published that would have such an impact that they would become classics in their own time and, unfortunately, be forgotten in ours. Lafitau, La Hontan, Charlevoix, and Champlain are only a few of their authors. So, multiple philosophical and political discourses would proliferate touching on the American savage, constituting a critique or a defense, depending on the case, of European colonial expansion.

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HARTMANN SCHEDEL

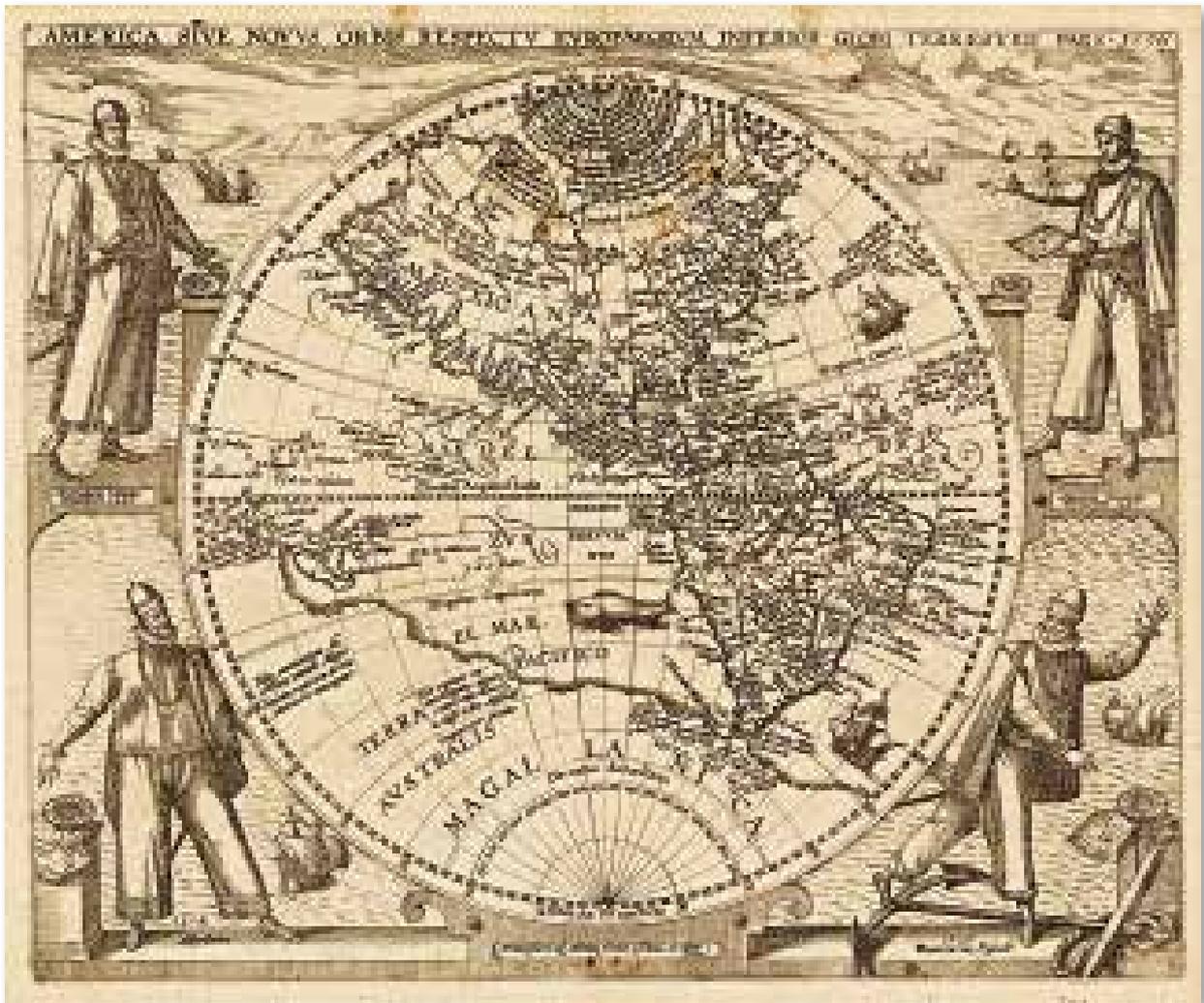
Secunda etas mundi. Nuremberg, 1493. Schedel's is one of the first maps ever printed in the world. Published only 40 years after the invention of the printing press, it was inspired by Ptolemy's *Geography*. It omits Scandinavia and the southern part of Africa, and the Indian Ocean appears almost completely surrounded by land. Including the figures of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah who repopulated the world after the Flood, reveals the importance that the theological world view prevailing during the Middle Ages still had at the beginning of the Renaissance. We can also observe the 12 heads of the winds, a very common decoration on the first printed maps. On the left are different fantastical creatures whose appearance comes from the imaginary universe that generally fed medieval chronicles. One such example is *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, a book written by a supposed traveler who journeyed to the Far East and met up with a large number of outlandish beings described in his work: a man with six arms, a centaur, a man with four eyes from a coastal tribe of Ethiopia, a strange hermaphrodite, etc. This imaginary representation often motivated Europeans to identify the native peoples of the New World with those beings who were not very human but were very close to beasts.

JAN JANSSON

Mexico and Cuzco. Amsterdam, 1657. These views of the two cities are among the oldest printed images of American cities. The engraving is from the work by Jansson, *Theatrum Urbium Celebriorum*. It offers an excellent panoramic view of Texcoco Lake. One detail that stands out is that the urban architectural style in the sketch makes Mexico City look more European than American.



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THEODOR DE BRY

America Sive Novus Orbis Respectu Europæorum Inferior Globi Terrestris Pars. Frankfurt, 1596. This map's circular shape makes it an unusual map of the New World, surrounded by portraits of Columbus, Vesputius, Magellan, and Pizarro. It offers a noteworthy update of the Western Hemisphere using the geographical data available at the end of the sixteenth century. The multiple annotations are related to discoveries; one is that of the Americas in 1492. The west coast of North America stretches in a far-fetched way to include Quivira and the Strait of Anian. De Bry copied Mercator's description of the North Pole and the Northwest Passage. Perhaps the most important aspect is that it incorporates information about the southeastern coast gathered by Huguenot Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, a member of Jean Ribault's expedition to the New World, and whose sketches of the natives, colonial life, and flora and fauna were an extremely important historical legacy. The extreme southern part of the continent, Terra Australis Magellanica, is exaggeratedly large, as is the width of South America. Undoubtedly, this map is a successful combination of decorations and informational cartography based on experience. **MM**