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Recovering Imperial Space in Juan Bautista Muñoz's *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo* (1793)

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Geography during the Enlightenment comprised more than scientific knowledge: in the political realm, it justified empire, and in philosophical terms, it shed light on crucial questions such as rationality and the understanding of the human condition as located and constructed in space.¹ Occupying a special place in the history of modernity, eighteenth-century cartography experienced profound methodological and conceptual changes and, consequently, geographical knowledge refocused its interest with a positivist perspective on the unknown territories (i.e., the colonies in the Americas, Asia, and Africa). Large-scale and state-funded expeditionary voyages by European explorers and cartographers demonstrate not only the influence of the scientific revolution in the charting and mapping of the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans but also how imperial power was projected across the ocean into distant unexplored lands.² James Cook (1769–1780), Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1766–1769), the Count of La Pérouse (1785–1788), and Alejandro Malaspina (1789–1794) led some of the most important expeditions of the period. As David Livingstone has underscored, geographical knowledge had close ties with navigation, exploration, and imperial expansion (*The Geographical Tradition* 103). Thus, the cultural and intellectual history of the European Enlightenment must be studied in conjunction with the perceptual representation of territories, the history of imperialism and the development of capitalism in Spanish America's late colonial history. As is often recognized, these events were marked by the Bourbon economic reforms and the foundation of new colonial institutions to tighten control over the Spanish territories.

Late-eighteenth-century Spanish cartography is a fundamental locus for the analysis of the interplay between space, the inner workings of the transatlantic political economy, cultural and intellectual history. Here I explore these interrelations to deepen our understanding of how mapping was at the core of the

I would like to thank David Slade for his kind bibliographical suggestions on Muñoz while I developed the idea for this essay.

¹ My interest on historical geography during the Enlightenment has been inspired by the important work of David N. Livingstone and Matthew H. Edney.

² For a study on the history and representations of the ocean from 1450 to the present, see Steinberg's *The Social Construction of the Ocean*.

Spanish Enlightenment's political discourses. First, I focus on Juan Bautista Muñoz's *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo* to see how geography, or what Ó Tuathail has called "geo-graphing," was situated amidst political, religious, and cultural practices.³ These were ideological discourses that shaped Muñoz's historical writing as he aimed to interpret the world by making sense of its past as represented by original documents found in Iberian archives. Second, this project underscores the importance of Bartolomé de las Casas's *Historia de las Indias* and his massive *Apologética historia sumaria* by focusing on his influence on Muñoz.⁴ I am interested in how this representation of geographical knowledge benefits from the intellectual work of Las Casas, legendary in the promotion of the Spanish Black Legend, and how his *Apologética* was intertwined in eighteenth-century discourses that defined Spanish political modernity and, paradoxically, defended Spanish imperial power.

Muñoz, Humanism and Geographical Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Spain

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cartography served to inscribe empires, and maps were considered bearers of truth (Edney 165). Furthermore, as Mary Louise Pratt has suggested, eighteenth-century natural histories and maps were instruments of imperialism an "attempt to 'naturalize' the myth of European superiority" (32).⁵ Representing unknown spaces was a form of appropriating them. While flags, coats of arms, crosses, place-names or even portraits of discoverers formed part of the visual record that demarcated new domains, letters, accounts or histories of discovery and exploration included maps or charts. Besides the work of mapmakers such as Alberto Contarino, Martin Waldseemüller, and Battista Agnesse—who by the mid-sixteenth century placed the Americas in world maps and atlases—some less-studied maps appeared in historical accounts and letters crucial to the understanding of the contact period. Foundational figures who included maps in their accounts include Columbus, Pedro Mártir de Anglería, Hernán Cortés, Francisco López de Gómara, Pedro Cieza de León, Juan López de Velasco, and Antonio de Herrera. As Ricardo Padrón discusses in his study *The Spacious World*, cartographic literature has not only a central place in the understanding of the history of Spanish colonialism, but it also

³ By "geo-graphing," Ó Tuathail highlights the dynamic nature of geographical thought. With its hyphenation, he underscores its writing, or "scripting [. . .] global space by state-society intellectuals and institutions" (66–67). His work is centered in a critical theory that recognizes geopolitical maneuvers for power control. He analyzes spatial assumptions of political discourses, questions them and challenges the role and vision of modern state governments.

⁴ Muñoz had access and copied a significant portion of Las Casas's writings for his own use and collection. The Real Academia de la Historia published in 1875 the *Historia de las Indias*, however the *Apologética* was not published until 1919.

⁵ In the second chapter of *Imperial Eyes*, a crucial critical text for the understanding of comparative European imperialism, Mary Louise Pratt underscores how natural histories and travel writing supported imperial expansion by providing the much-needed knowledge of unknown territories.

demonstrates how earlier visual traditions shaped the disseminated idea of the New World.

Geography had a long-standing place within the humanities in the Early Modern period that continued well into the eighteenth century. For several centuries, historians considered geographical knowledge by describing landscapes, coastlines and social, cultural and economic aspects found in the spaces explored.⁶ This practice began with early modern historians who redefined their works with the classical views of Ptolemy, Pliny, Strabo, and Solinus. For example, Strabo found the need to add the description of flora and fauna to the measurements of the Earth based on mathematical equations and astronomy. He established a strong link between geography and natural history that we later find in historical accounts written by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, José de Acosta, and Bartolomé de las Casas (Capel 46–47).

The commercial purposes of geographical knowledge for Spain during the reign of Charles III are evident in the contributions by Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes (1723–1802), director of the Real Academia de la Historia (1764–1791/1798–1801)⁷ and the appointed Royal Cosmographer of the Indies, Juan Bautista Muñoz (1745–1799).⁸ For colonial scholars, Muñoz is linked to the recovery of the most important corpus of colonial manuscripts and the founding of the General Archives of the Indies in Seville in 1785. However, in his role as official cosmographer, his most important accomplishment was the publication of the first six books contained in the first volume of his *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo*.⁹ This polemical volume, as with many other European histories of the period, connected geography, politics, and imperial aspirations in an historical account that brought to the forefront the national defense and patriotic agenda of Imperial Spain.¹⁰

Muñoz's contemporaries judged his role as cosmographer a failure because

⁶ During the Enlightenment, geography was considered a subfield of cosmography, a field formalized during the Middle Ages that synthesized both geography and astronomy to offer physical and metaphysical interpretations on the place of Earth in the cosmos. On the topic of cosmography and global geography, see Cosgrove's *Apollo's Eye* (8–14).

⁷ See Carmen Manso Porto on Campomanes's role in the creation of the cartographic collection of the Real Academia. Here she underscores his interest in geographical knowledge as evidenced by two books he authored and his endeavors in the creation of the *Diccionario histórico-crítico universal de España*.

⁸ As Rómulo Carbia clarified in the 1940s, Muñoz is mistakenly identified as Royal Chronicler of Indies (247). However, the Real Academia and its members had received that responsibility by royal decree in 1755 (Nava Rodríguez 147). When Muñoz requested to Charles III in 1779 to write his *Historia*, the members fretted at the attempt of the Royal Cosmographer, who was a nonmember of the Academy at that time, to take on the important task that they were struggling to complete (Manso Porto 119–21).

⁹ Because of the emphasis on the Island of Hispaniola, a fragment of the second volume was published in the *Boletín General de la Nación* in the Dominican Republic in 1940. The complete second volume is available in manuscript form in the Obadiah Rich Collection housed at the New York Public Library.

¹⁰ Muñoz has not received much critical attention with the exception of the work by the Spanish historian Nicolás Bas Martín, who has published two important books on him. In addition, see doctoral dissertations by David Slade, "Enlightened Archi-textures: Founding Colonial Archives in the Hispanic Eighteenth Century" and Carlos W. de Onís's "Juan Bautista Muñoz. Ensayista de la Ilustración."

he lacked formal training and authored what some members of the Real Academia de la Historia considered to be weak treatises on the subject (Bas Martín, *Juan Bautista Muñoz* 25). Nonetheless, as in William Robertson's *History of America* (1777), which Muñoz clearly tried to emulate, he described and interpreted early years of exploration, focusing on Columbus's experiences and the physical geography of the unknown territories. For such an enormous task, he depended on the recovery of colonial documents, histories, and accounts that he transcribed with the support of several *escribientes experimentados* who traveled with him around Spain and Portugal. As the works of Cañizares-Esguerra and Bas Martín have noted, Muñoz represented a new form of scholarship that evolved in Valencia, particularly in the circles of Gregorio Mayans and Francisco Pérez Bayer. Their intellectual work, as a form of neo-Christian humanism, was inspired by the works of Golden Age scholars Juan Luis Vives, Fray Luis de León, and Fray Luis de Granada. In fact, Muñoz edited the works of Granada, Vives, and, later in his life, Antonio de Nebrija. However, Muñoz's critical scholarship was strongly opposed to scholasticism and favored pedagogy, empiricism and forms of modern philosophy then in vogue among Madrid intellectuals (Bas Martín, *Juan Bautista Muñoz* 20–23).

Muñoz, Pérez Bayer, and Mayans advocated a form of historical criticism that sought the truth in original sources to serve God and their country, a nationalistic and teleological drive that shaped their view of history and approach to historical writing. In the *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo*, Muñoz explains: "Por lo que á mí toca, no he perdonado á desvelo ni fatiga para juntar y preparar el material y aparato [. . .]. He escrito la verdad pura, como dicen, según mi leal saber y entender; y he dicho todas las verdades de importancia sin callar alguna por respecto del mundo" (XXVI). However, to find the truth, historians needed academic freedom, an intellectual license that was limited by neoclassical precepts of prudence, good taste, the public good, and religion: "[E]sta libertad tiene sus leyes prescritas por la prudencia y el buen gusto, por la honestidad y utilidad pública, por la caridad, en una palabra por la razón y la religión" (XXVI). In his *Idea de la historia general de América i del estado de ella* (1783), Muñoz made it clear that his critical history would encompass "lo moral i lo físico, lo espiritual i lo temporal, lo civil i lo literario" (Real Academia LXII). His intellectual perspective has been attributed to Cartesian philosophy (Bas Martín, *Juan Bautista Muñoz* 34); this search for an interdisciplinary history, however, also included practical knowledge that filled the aesthetic and spiritual demands of the period in Spain. We must remember he believed in science, but he was also a modern Catholic who rejected manifestations of popular religion, such as apparitions or superstitions, as he demonstrates in his polemical tract *Memorial sobre las apariciones . . . de Guadalupe de México* (1794 [1817]).¹¹

Juan Bautista Muñoz's interest in geography also had to do with the *nuevo sistema* to liberalize mercantilism and expand new routes for trade.¹² Thus, there

¹¹ His negative review of Bartolomé y Cosme Bueno's *Descripción del Perú* is another example of his position on popular religion. Specifically, Muñoz denied the argument and evidence on the preaching of the Apostle Saint Thomas before the arrival of the Spanish (Ballesteros Beretta, "Historia" 595).

¹² The *nuevo sistema* was outlined by José del Campillo y Cossio in 1743, later published in 1789 with the title *Nuevo sistema de gobierno económico para la América*. See Pagden (120–25).

was a great need for documents and maps to illustrate rival imperial boundaries and the expansion of the Spanish possessions in times of war. Muñoz planned for an “Atlas de América” that he left incomplete.¹³ He was the first Royal Cosmographer to continue the job left by the Jesuits who left Spain after their expulsion in 1767, and he was the last one, since the responsibilities of mapping territories were passed on to the Spanish Navy in 1783 (Bas Martín, *El cosmógrafo* 56). According to Ballesteros Beretta, the title of Cosmographer was eliminated so that Muñoz could dedicate himself to writing his history. However, questions pertaining to cosmography kept Muñoz occupied, slowing down the process of completing his commissioned history (“Historia” 594).

The lines between the Royal Cosmographer and Geographer (*Geógrafo de los Dominios de su Majestad*) were certainly blurred. Muñoz was asked by the Council of Indies to write a report that he titled *Informe sobre el origen de los cosmógrafos*, which clarified their role. Charles III, coincidentally, appointed Tomás López de Vargas Machuca (1730–1802) as the Royal Cosmographer and Geographer in 1770. While the tasks of Tomás López consisted in the supervision of the development and correction of Spain’s geography and its possessions, Muñoz dealt with geographical knowledge from an intellectual perspective by writing numerous reports and treatises that justified Spanish colonial practices (Bas Martín, *Juan Bautista Muñoz* 28).¹⁴ Major histories written during the eighteenth century, particularly in France, consisted of accounts of events carried on in spaces that needed to be understood; as Godlewska has argued, in historical geography “history added depth to place and could stimulate memory of place” (118).¹⁵ Muñoz’s outline of his *Historia* as presented early on in his *Idea* was in conflict with Campomanes’s geographical projects and the assignment of responsibilities to Tomás López de Vargas Machuca, who had just returned from Paris after a nine-year period of intense training in cartography with France’s Royal Geographer, Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville (1697–1782).¹⁶

Writing the *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo*

Writing a new critical history of the early years of exploration and settlement was not an easy task for Muñoz. He had available what had arrived in Spain of Lorenzo Boturini Benaducci’s collection (Bas Martín, *Juan Bautista Muñoz* 36), but

¹³ Campomanes, who opposed Muñoz’s writing of a New World history, also had a great interest in geography, supported several projects from purchasing of maps, to development of a significant map collection that launched the current *Colección Cartográfica* at the Real Academia.

¹⁴ Some of the most important treatises dealing with his role as cosmographer were: “Informe sobre el origen de los cosmógrafos” (1797), “Sobre la navegación del Mar del Sur” (1779), “Sobre la empresa de unir el océano Atlántico con el Pacífico por el Istmo de Panamá” (1786), and “Dictamen sobre la pretensión de los angloamericanos a la navegación del Misisipi” (1788). Among others, see Bas Martín, *Juan Bautista Muñoz* 28.

¹⁵ For an excellent study of eighteenth century geography in France, see Godlewska’s *Geography Unbound*.

¹⁶ Tomás López de Vargas Machuca was also named member of the Real Academia de la Historia in 1776. On his contributions to Spanish geography during the reign of Charles III, see Liter Mayayo.

most of the primary sources needed were diffusely located in government repositories, private collections, and libraries across the country. Furthermore, the issues at stake were crucial in the defense of Spain as an imperial power. In the mid-eighteenth century, indigenous populations still controlled half of the Spanish American territories (Weber 79), and Spanish colonial practices were under attack, creating discontent with how New World history had been neglected by Muñoz's predecessors.¹⁷ The cosmographer's recovery and ordering of New World knowledge, part of a larger patriotic project, had to respond to European historians who denounced Spanish ignorance and the horrific consequences of the conquest of the new territories.¹⁸ As he stated in his proposal to write a history: "logrará indemnizar al gobierno de tantas censuras injuriosas, desagraviar a la Nación de los injustos cargos de los extranjeros, disipar las nubes que han opuesto a la verdad, la ignorancia y la preocupación, vindicar las verdaderas glorias de España, haciendo ver el valor de sus héroes, la benignidad del Gobierno" (Real Academia XLIII).

The negative and inferior representation of the Americas and the Spanish conquest by European thinkers such as George Buffon, Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, William Robertson, and Cornelius de Pauw infuriated not only the Creole intelligentsia in the colonies but the Court and members of Spanish institutions, who defended their country's colonial record.¹⁹ For the Real Academia de la Historia and the Bourbon Crown, the interest on setting the record straight on geographical knowledge of the Americas at the time of contact became imperative. The Spanish had abandoned the history and cartography of the Americas while the Dutch, British, and French had placed a priority on these territorial constructions and sponsored major reconnaissance and scientific expeditions.

Mapping the New World

When reading Juan Bautista Muñoz's *Historia*, it is clear that he viewed historiographical writing in spatial terms. It is interesting to see how even in his portrait he holds a compass with his right hand over a New World map (see Fig.1).²⁰

A rational geography was at the core of Muñoz's work, authorized by the early descriptive accounts of exploration that were informed by classical concepts of the world inherited from the Renaissance. Muñoz describes his first book to Charles III as "una exposición del estado físico y moral del globo terráqueo antes que se conociese la América y de la transformación ocasionada [. . .] por los descubrimientos y colonias occidentales"; while his second "se da una idea de los progresos de la náutica y geografía desde la invención de la aguja de marear hasta fines del siglo quince" (Real Academia XCV). As with many histori-

¹⁷ On the debates and role of the Real Academia de la Historia concerning the much-needed new history of the Indies, see Cañizares-Esguerra (160–203).

¹⁸ For a detailed account of Muñoz's archival work, see Bas Martín's *Juan Bautista Muñoz*.

¹⁹ See Gerbi for a comprehensive discussion on this topic.

²⁰ The original, often attributed to Goya, has recently been deemed to be a work of Mariano Salvador Maella (1739–1819). It was donated to the Archivo General de Indias by the Cuban writer and historian José María Chacón y Calvo in 1933.



Figure 1: Juan Bautista Muñoz's portrait, Archivo General de Indias, Ministerio de Cultura de España.

cal accounts of the colonial period, Muñoz placed Spain's accomplishments within a universal framework that was both historical and geographical and surpassed that of any other western nation since antiquity.

Muñoz shed light on how from classical times to the fifteenth century, the physical idea of the world was a static one dominated by the Ptolemaic world view. He then acknowledged the advancement in geographical knowledge since Columbus: "Desde el inmortal Colón hasta el incomparable Cook, la geografía, la historia natural y todas las ciencias experimentales han logrado aumentos superiores á los que habían tenido desde el origen de la remota antigüedad" (21). He reasserts that the nautical skills and empirical descriptions by Spanish explorers displayed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries made possible modern critical inquiry. He states "Aun más que el conocimiento del globo, se agrandó la esfera de nuestras ideas" (7); "La aritmética universal, la geome-

tría sublime, la náutica, la economía civil, la química, y otras varias ciencias, ó se han creado nuevamente, ó han adquirido su verdadera constitución y dignidad” (21). Here he is pointing to all the scientific and general knowledge achieved with travel and exploration. Indeed, he elevates geography to a master discipline with Spain as major force behind the Enlightenment’s encyclopedic epistemology.

Placing maps in the *Historia* was crucial since competing histories of America, such as those of Robertson and Raynal, had detailed maps prepared by the renowned cartographer Thomas Kitchin, who marked the boundaries of the European powers. In an unpublished preface to the *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo*, Muñoz states that his multivolume *Historia* will include three maps:

El primero se intitula Idea del Nuevo Mundo: representa al continente y las islas de América con los dos grandes mares grandes, o sea, océanos Atlántico y Pacífico, terminados de un lado por las extremidades de Europa y África, del otro por las de Asia [. . .] El segundo demuestra el grande archipiélago de América desde las bocas del río Orinoco hasta la Península de la Florida, con las costas fronteras del Continente. El tercero contiene la isla Española de tamaño suficiente para expresar sus particularidades geográficas más notables. Con este auxilio, y las descripciones de mares, terremotos y pueblos insertas tendrá el lector todas las luces necesarias de la Geografía. (Beltrán de Heredia 333–39).

The final product of his first volume included only the projected first one with the third map inserted into it. These had been commissioned to the artist and engraver from Valencia, Tomás López Enguídanos, who completed them in 1786.²¹ What role do these maps play in Muñoz’s recovery of the Spanish past? What is Muñoz adding to his detailed account of Columbus’s journeys? According to Muñoz, the details given are a product “de su lectura y conocimiento práctico de Indias para ensalsar aquellas regiones y gentes” (xxix); moreover, he also emphasizes that the map will help give an idea of the location and extension of the New World and its parts (see Fig. 2).²²

Muñoz underscores his use of “Nuevo-Mundo” in the title of the history and in his map since he intends to highlight Spanish exploration and “discoveries”: “estos son los descubrimientos occidentales de los españoles con ciertos apéndices: este [es] el Nuevo-mundo de los modernos, digno de tal nombre, no solamente por haberse ignorado en la antigüedad, sino también por las singulares novedades que ofreció y produjo en lo físico y en lo moral” (6–7).²³ His map,

²¹ Not to be confused with Tomás López de Vargas Machuca, Tomás López Enguídanos, was a renowned artist who engraved one of Las Casas’s most popular portraits published in *Retratos de los españoles ilustres, con un epítome de sus vidas* (1791).

²² The map of Hispaniola and the portrait of Columbus were included the 1797 English translation that praised in its introduction Muñoz’s contributions. The English translation is available through Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

²³ Noteworthy, in his proposal and in the *Idea* of his history, he calls the project “Historia de America,” just as Robertson’s.

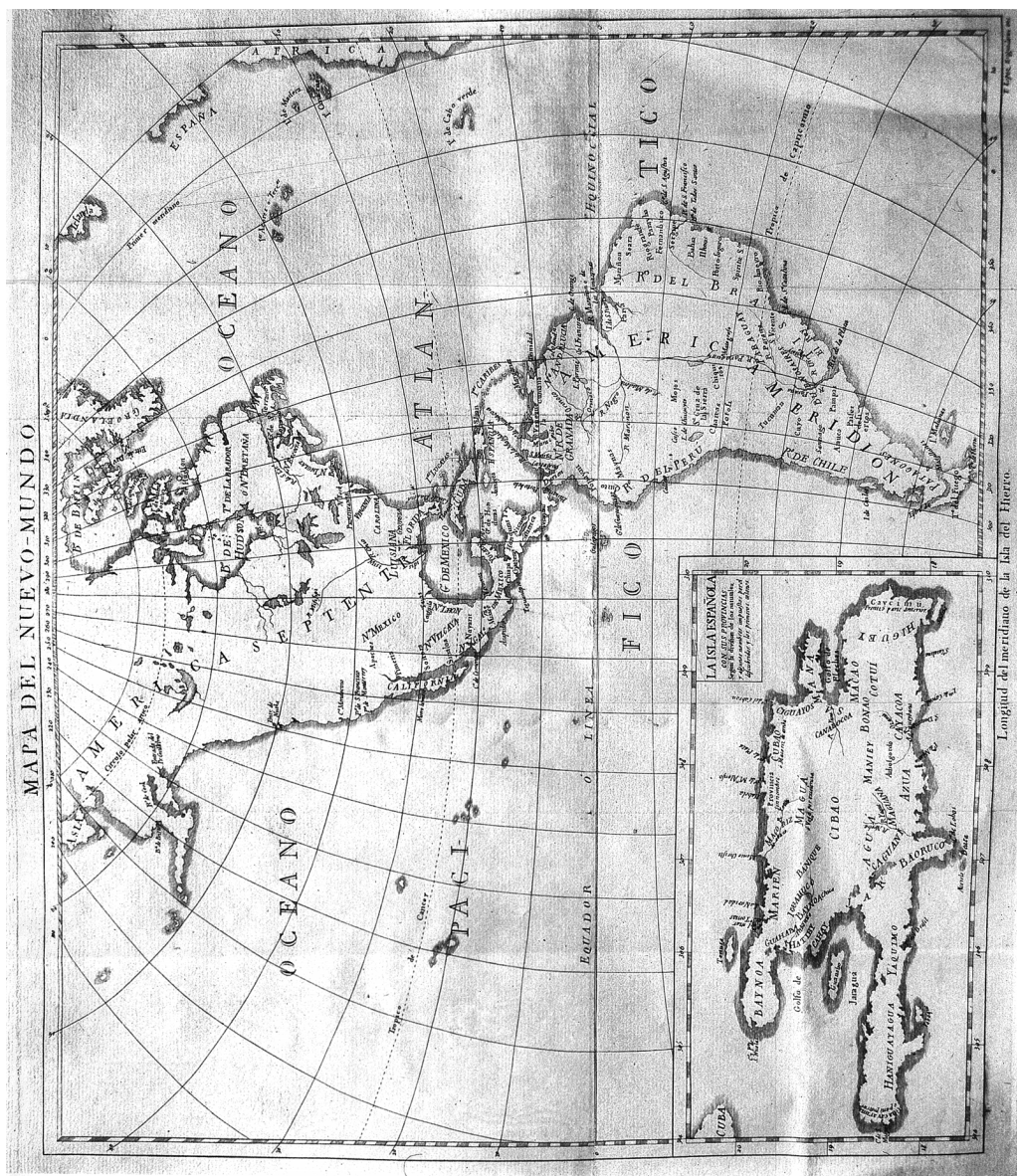


Figure 2: Muñoz's Mapa del Nuevo-Mundo. An insert in his *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo*. Rare Books Collection, Strozier Library, Florida State University

clearly within the tradition of the cartography of the Enlightenment, is pristine, clean of emblems or pictorial representations of anthropological, astronomical, or natural interest. The lack of decoration, classical emblems or images of secular power situate this map between two traditions of cartography, the emblematic maps of the seventeenth century and the scientific maps of the nineteenth. His work shows the influence of significant strides in cartography such as the solution of longitude that improved the measurement of the earth and offered a more accurate shape of the western hemisphere. Muñoz places the prime meridian on the Island of Hierro (Canarias), whose Punta de Orchilla was used for several centuries before the Observatory of Greenwich was officially accepted in 1881 during the third International Geographical Congress in Venice. The Island of Hierro was the farthest western point of the known world until 1492; for Spanish navigators it represented the end of the world and the beginning of *el mar tenebroso*.²⁴

In Muñoz's map, continents (Asia and Africa) and European countries (Spain and Ireland) surround the New World as a massive extension running north to south. In terms of the shape of the continents and islands, the map does not add anything to those published earlier by British and French cartographers. It is obvious that López Enguídanos, whose other known maps are those of Valencia, as a cabinet-bound cartographer worked from old maps and interpretations, perhaps those same ones that Muñoz was trying to correct. When Muñoz's map is compared to others, such as Louis Brion de la Tour's *Carte de la Partie de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (1785) or those by Thomas Kitchin (1777), we find greater detail and accuracy in the French and British attempts at locating rivers, harbors, settlements and main regions of the Spanish territories. Muñoz, in order to correct history, took a few steps back, and omitted identifying important regions well placed in other maps of the period.²⁵ However, taking into account the results of James Cook's third expedition, his portrayal of the contours of the hemisphere was relatively more accurate since most maps of the 1770s did not represent the northwest coast of North America.²⁶

David Weber explains "Bourbon officials moved vigorously to locate natural boundaries that could be measured, marked, and clearly separate their holdings from those of other powers" (89). Muñoz's historical and geographical description of the New World, however, supported Charles III's imperial ambitions differently. Instead of showing the political reconfiguration of territories with lines demarcating the possessions of the competing empires—as Kitchin did in the maps drawn for Robertson and Raynal's histories—he presented a modern map inspired by the colonial past. His vision harnessed eighteenth-century geography to Spanish colonial power. In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht formally divided the conquered territories among European powers. Nevertheless, for Muñoz, borders, topography and chorography (those representations of places made popu-

²⁴ Louis XIII decreed in 1634 to use this location as the prime meridian; for two centuries, Spanish maps gave this privileged location to the Island of Hierro (Brown 283).

²⁵ See map collections by Francisco Vindel and Egon Klemp.

²⁶ In 1785, just a year before López Enguídanos completed his map for Muñoz, "A general chart: exhibiting the discoveries made by Capt. James Cook" by Henry Roberts was published. See "General Chart of Cook Voyages."

lar in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps) were placed aside in favor of significant place-names, political divisions of the Spanish viceroyalties, rivers, harbors, or established urban centers. His concern was not with a representation of American space as known in the late eighteenth century, but an interpretation of the past to engage and legitimate the present. Mapping as a metaphor pointed to the vast expanse of land suited for commerce and trade that could have belonged to the Spanish crown.

Muñoz's Relational Space

Muñoz inserted within his “Mapa del Nuevo-Mundo” a map of Hispaniola (see Fig. 3). He states “Semejantes mapas del antiguo estado de la Española, pero muy diminutos, confusos é inexactos, dieron en el siglo XVI Ramusio y su copiante Porcacchi, y en el nuestro los geografos d’Anville y Bellin” (xxix). The reference to Giambattista Ramusio’s map of Hispaniola, which he included in the second edition of his monumental *Delle Navigazione e Viaggi* (1550–59), points to the genealogy of Hispaniola’s inscription in the European imagination. Ramusio’s map recovers the first complete topographical map of Hispaniola prepared by Andrés Morales, an obscure sixteenth-century cartographer. When compared to Morales’s map, included in Pedro Mártir’s *Décadas*, Ramusio’s appropriation shows representations of sea monsters and sailing ships that reflected the aesthetic of the period.²⁷

Besides Ramusio and Porcacchi’s collaboration, Muñoz refers to the Hispaniola maps by Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville and Jacques Nicholas Bellin, two major figures of eighteenth-century French cartography. By the late eighteenth century, Hispaniola had become a heated contested space between Spain and France. Because of the importance of the island to the French, several cartographers published maps of Hispaniola for state documents and histories that justified their presence. With its rich sugar production, the western part was considered the jewel of the French crown (Shaeffer 46).²⁸ Among the maps of Hispaniola, those of Bellin’s and d’Anville certainly got the Royal cosmographer’s attention. Bellin was a cabinet geographer who drew the map “Isle de Hayti” (1754) for Antoine François Prévost’s *Histoire Generale des Voyages*, dividing it into its five *cacicazgos*. As in d’Anville’s earlier map, he pointed to the indigenous regions and first Spanish settlements. His map was titled “L’Isle Espagnole sous le nom indien d’ Hayti, ou comme elle estoit possedee par ses habitans naturels lors de la decouverte, avec les premiers etablissements des espagnols” (1731) prepared for François-Xavier Charlevoix’s *Histoire de l’Isle espagnole ou Saint Domingue*. Muñoz’s map followed these French examples by stating in its

²⁷ Morales’s map and account are lost, and only a couple of copies of the map can be found, including the one in Pedro Mártir’s *Décadas*, with an outline of the expedition. Morales’s map identifies the five main indigenous regions (Guacayarima, Bainoa, Cayabo, Huhabo, Caizcimu), the mountain range, and four main rivers that divide the Island north to south and east to west. In Muñoz’s history, there is no reference to Morales; nevertheless, he refers to Pedro Martir’s *Décadas*.

²⁸ See also Gutiérrez Escudero on the impact of the Bourbons’ reforms on Santo Domingo.

description that he adds “sus señoríos y provincias al tiempo del descubrimiento, añadidos algunos nombres por el descubridor y los primeros colonos” (xxix).

As John Brian Harley has underscored in his key essay “Deconstructing the Map,” maps have to be interpreted as texts that need to be deconstructed to reveal meaningful voids. It is clear that geography is relational and maps are cultural and social products framed by experience, political agendas, and ideologies, all of which are embedded in explicit and implicit ways.²⁹ For religious conversion, economic trade or military expansion, colonial maps represent a “geo-coded” world, “a world where boundary objects have been inscribed, literally written on the surface of the earth and coded by layer upon layer of lines drawn on paper” (Pickles 5). This is clear when we read Muñoz’s critical historical account. His account of Columbus’s experience is influenced by the need to justify economic trade reforms, and to respond to Spain’s detractors by reconstructing its past. Juan Bautista Muñoz’s history deals mainly with Columbus’s experience (1492–1504). The account includes Columbus’s exploration of the Caribbean (particularly Hispaniola), his confrontations with Francisco Roldán and Francisco de Bobadilla, and a review of the government of Nicolás de Ovando. We come across essential sections on commerce and the environment, however, that are clear intertexts of Las Casas and, in turn, of Las Casas’s summaries and editions of Columbus’s writings.³⁰

In the introduction to the first volume, Muñoz critically reviewed earlier colonial histories, praising González Fernández de Oviedo’s *Historia*, Fernando Colón’s *Vida del Almirante*, and Bartolomé de las Casas’s *Historia de las Indias* and *Apologética historia sumaria*. His *Historia* was described “en rigor historia cronológica, escrita con bastante copia de documentos” (xix). Why is Las Casas saved in this apology for Spanish colonialism? Las Casas in the *Apologética historia sumaria* offers an empirical description of American space that proved useful for Muñoz’s contribution to eighteenth-century geographical knowledge.³¹ The Dominican historian provides the recovery of Columbus’s accounts with one of the most appealing justifications for trade expansion that competes with hegemonic historians of the period. In the *Apologética historia sumaria*, deep harbors, wide navigable rivers, fertile soils, and islands full of gold dominate the landscape.

²⁹ John Pickles’s *A History of Spaces*, the compilation of essays by John B. Harley’s *The New Nature of Maps* (that includes his well-known essay “Deconstructing the Map”) and Christian Jacob’s *The Sovereign Map* (recently translated into English) are key works that present a poststructuralist perspective on practices and critical thought on cartography. For a comprehensive overview that goes beyond cartography, see Jonathan Murdoch’s *Post-structuralist Geography*.

³⁰ As Margarita Zamora has highlighted, Columbus’s first impressions of the encountered lands are available only through the versions of Las Casas and his son Fernando. When reading Columbus, it is fundamental to stress that Las Casas, who had access to the original journals, made a summary he used while writing the first volume of the *Historia de las Indias*, dedicated to Columbus and the first decade of exploration and settlement.

³¹ Referring to Las Casas as a source during this period was extremely controversial. We have to remember that Las Casas’s *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* circulated in several translations all over Europe since the sixteenth century, firing up the Black Legend against Spain. Because of this polemic, Muñoz could not just praise Las Casas and ignore the *Brevísima*; right from the beginning he dismissed the text as a product of an imagination “que algunos han creído indigno de tal padre” (XVIII).

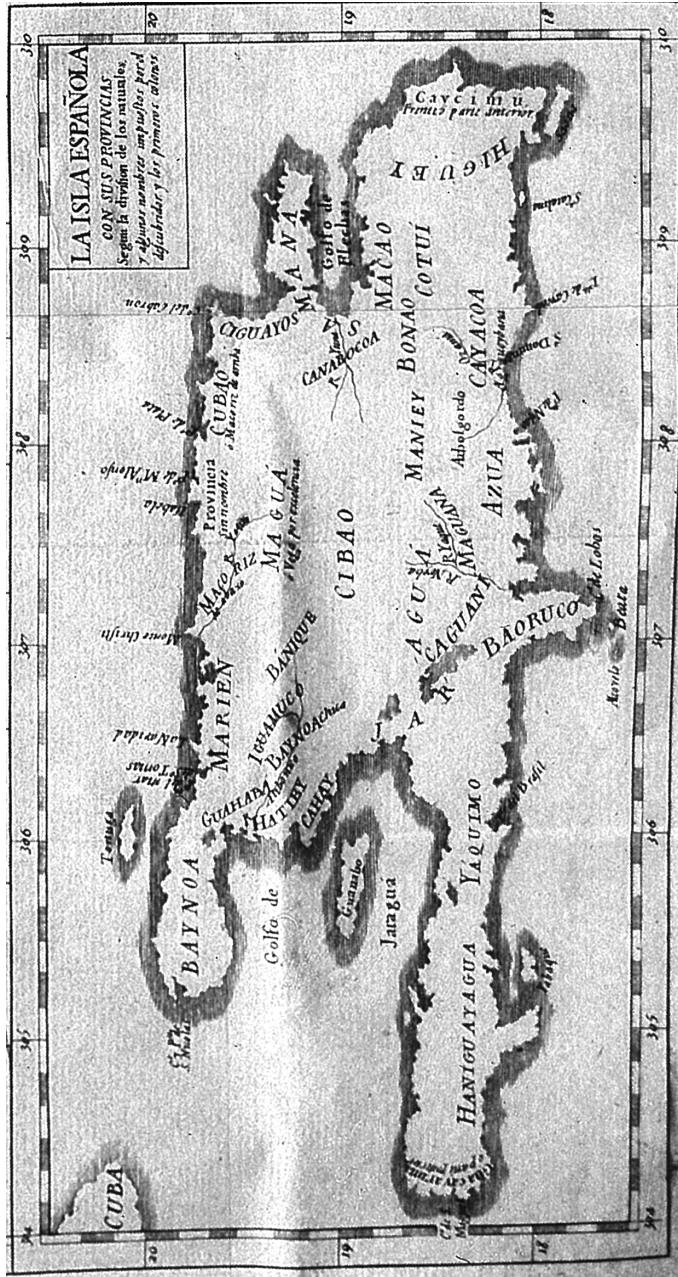


Figure 3: Insert of the Island of Hispaniola in Muñoz's Mapa del Nuevo-Mundo. Rare Books Collection, Strozzer Library, Florida State University

Among Las Casas's texts, the *Apologética* has received scant attention. In order to defend the Amerindian subject, he put away his ongoing *Historia de las Indias* and wrote an extensive treatise that can be regarded as the first comprehensive geo-ethnographical account of Amerindian space and cultures. Carl O. Sauer, in his *Descubrimiento y dominación española del Caribe*, was one of the first scholars to state that Las Casas's reputation and aggressive defense of Amerindians obscured his own intellectual work as historian and geographer: "Conoció de punta a punta, antes y mejor que nadie las dos islas principales. [. . .] describía con claridad; discrimina las identificaciones que hace y ubica con sumo cuidado lo que describe. Su contribución a la geografía física y humana es considerable" (67–68). Las Casas based his arguments in the *Apologética* on empirical data, Classical and Renaissance sources, observation, and experience to argue for the rationality and human rights of the Indians. Furthermore, he used a comparative approach to demonstrate the superiority of Amerindian civilizations over classical European cultures familiar to the European reader.

For readers of Las Casas's texts, it is surprising how his critique of Spanish colonialism encompasses a geographical description and a survey of the harbors of Hispaniola as found and named by Columbus. Beyond description of the wonders of the new space, as recorded in Columbus's journals, Las Casas points to the depth and security of each harbor:

Puertos tiene esta isla Española excelentísimos algunos, y otros buenos para algunos vientos y para otros no muy seguros. El puerto de Sant Nicolás es muy bueno y el puerto de la Concepcion y otro maravillosísimo puerto al cual llamó el Almirante el puerto de la mar de Sancto Tomas, y otros más que por allí había, y de aqueste dice el almirante que es el mejor del mundo; y éste creo que está frontero de donde esta o llega la gran Vega Real [. . .]. (12)

These descriptions are evidence of how Las Casas became one of Muñoz's key sources in support of Spanish imperial claims and its far-ranging impact on geographical, historical, cultural and environmental understanding.

The *Apologética*'s first nine chapters describe Columbus's exploration of Hispaniola. Las Casas begins with a physical description of Hispaniola because of its "excelencia, bondad, fertilidad y grandeza." The depiction of the island, considered during the eighteenth century to be one of "las tres llaves del Nuevo Mundo" along with Puerto Rico and Cuba, serves as a prelude to the rest of the territories: "mas que de alguna otra, su sitio, su grandeza, su altitud, su longura, sus provincias, sus calidades, fertilidad y felicidad, amenidad, mas que otro, a lo que creemos, por muchos años de experiencia de propósito y mirando en ello, penetramos y cognocimos" (10–11). Las Casas describes the island in an introduction and "cuatro vueltas," where he maps the Atlantic and Caribbean coasts, as well as the rich region of La Vega Real, described as "las provincias del riñon de esta isla."

Columbus, after exploring Cuba (and naming it Juana), first arrived in Hispaniola at the harbor of San Nicolás.³² According to Las Casas's narrative, he

³² Named San Nicolás because he arrived on December 6th.

continued his journey until the Santa Maria shipwrecked on the coral reefs on the 25th of December. This forced him to establish fort Natividad, the new place-name that refers to both the region and the harbor. Columbus continued in the Niña and the Pinta, naming the best harbors and rivers he found. The last area explored is what has been identified as the present Samana Bay, a peninsula located in the extreme Northeast of the Dominican Republic. Because of the unfriendly reception upon approaching the coast, he named the bay “Golfo de Flechas,” referring to the rain of arrows that forced him to sail away back to Spain. Beyond the initial survey by Columbus, Las Casas also details his second expedition when he circumnavigates the island.

Las Casas enhances Columbus’s geographical descriptions of Hispaniola and expands them with his own impressions of the different regions. We must recall that Las Casas was first an *encomendero* who lived for several years in Hispaniola and Cuba observing the land as a personal commodity.³³ These experiences allowed him to develop and correct Columbus’s survey of the island. In his texts, Las Casas’s most notable accomplishment was to make a generalization about the abundance of goods of the island and the kindness of its inhabitants, based on every detail he observed. Muñoz reinforced Hispaniola’s strategic geographical importance, a valuable possession for Spain during the eighteenth century.

The map of Hispaniola denotes cultural exchange by representing different harbors named by Columbus and settlers, as well as Taíno regions. Topographical detail is disregarded in favor of the place-names found in Las Casas’s *Apologética*. Barbara Mundy points out that “naming is at the heart of mapping [. . .] naming is the principal means humans use to filter the raw material of space into the sphere of their cognition: once given a name, an otherwise undistinguished space becomes a place” (138). The map clearly distinguished Spanish place-names such as the harbor of San Nicolás, the Island of Tortuga, La Natividad (the first settlement after the shipwreck of the Santa Maria), and, what later became a main harbor, Monte Christi. Regions in the interior included original Taíno names relevant in Las Casas’s depiction of Hispaniola. He stated that when Columbus arrived to the harbor and region that he named Santo Tomás, he received a great welcome and news of a rich mining region called Cibao. For the *Almirante*, Cibao is synonymous with the Island of Cipango (Japan) as pointed out in Paolo de Toscanelli’s famous letter, crucial reference during his initial exploration. In the *Apologética*, we find a mediated representation between Columbus’s original description and his own creation of a third space that juxtaposes both original Taíno place-names and new Spanish ones. While the French maps by Bellin and d’Anville projected the Amerindian past and the Spanish experience, Muñoz’s new map erases the *cacicazgos* by relying upon Las Casas’s accounts of the time of contact. Here Muñoz demonstrated acceptance and invention, integration of the known and the unknown, a vision of Columbus past and Las Casas’s present, elements that authorized Muñoz’s narrative and its spatial representation.

³³ The geographer George Lowell highlighted this point when I first read a portion of this paper at the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers in Morelia, Mexico in 2006.

Conclusions

Colonial foundational texts such as those by Las Casas both reflected and contributed to the political modernity of the late eighteenth century as it is defined, on the one hand, by its struggles for equality, social justice, and civil society, and on the other, as it reordered space and the understanding and circulation of scientific knowledge. It is not because of Las Casas's views of Spanish colonial policies, but because of his recovery of Columbus's discourse and empirical knowledge of the Americas that Las Casas's writings were able to support Bourbon imperial reforms. We must remember that the late eighteenth century marks the fall of mercantilism and the emergence of the ideology and practice of free trade, hence maps were considered constructions that purported to represent reality. Furthermore, as Muñoz's work demonstrated, eighteenth-century cartography represented another form of colonial rhetoric that revealed empirical truth, but, like any other representation of European power during the period, it was replete with nationalist ideology. Muñoz's *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo*, as a form of intellectual imperialism, reinscribed the Spanish empire, subsuming in its maps original and new spaces within the totalizing projection of his Nuevo-Mundo. Las Casas's influence on Muñoz's work demonstrates that those new spaces inscribed by Columbus in the European imagination are a product of interrelations. These texts (here we are reading maps as texts) cannot be viewed as closed and contained "works," as Murdoch would explain in *Post-structuralist Geography*, they are instead "open and engaged with other spaces and places" (18) and, as literary critics know quite well, with other texts. Murdoch clearly states in his discussion on relational space that "space is never closed, never fixed"; it is "a meeting place" (21). In historical geography and, in particular, in the work of Muñoz—as he uses Las Casas to construct his defense of Spain—the representation of colonial space is contingent on the multiple relations between the past and the present, religion and secular power, and Spain and its colonies.

The impact of the Spanish presence in the Americas is an important subtheme of Juan Bautista Muñoz's *Historia*. However, his focus was not the negative ecological or demographical devastation that we immediately think of, but rather the positive impact of European civilization on the human and physical space of the Americas. "La gloriosa España" is represented as bestowing Spanish civilization on barbarous nations, and positive ecological change is the result of new forms of land use with the introduction of agriculture and the eradication of natural ecosystems. Imperialistic in its own way, Muñoz's depiction of Hispaniola offered a sense of space (and place), as experienced by Columbus and recounted by Las Casas, to present a historical narrative that structured changes in newly conquered spaces. The spatial nuance that Muñoz added to this early historical geographical representation reoriented the imperial vision from present needs to a glorious colonial past that had been distorted by his contemporaries. Recovering its truth was to reclaim the American expanse of land that Spain had "discovered" but kept losing as decades passed by. Mapping, as a form of "geo-graphing," with its orientation in the past, made the *Historia del Nuevo-Mundo* an account that justified Spanish colonialism and, metaphorically, extended the empire to the entire hemisphere.

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