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## MOTIVATION

Artistic decorations have been an integral part of the content of maps for many centuries during the early modern history. Throughout the centuries, these decorations may very often be merely random and are just iconography bearing an ornamental function, of course. In many occasions, however, a deeper look on them can lead to an insight about the historical context of the era in which they were made and about the culture of the creators and users of the maps. Regarding the map itself, Harley states that every map is linked to the social order of a particular period and place. Regarding its iconography Harley accepts Panofsky's definition of iconography which articulates it as that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art. In this context, the aim of this research is to find out why decorations looked the way they did and in case there is a substantial reason behind this question, then how the image connects to the time and the people who made it, is asked.

The Dutch Golden Age is regarded by the Dutch themselves as the seventeenth century, albeit extending for some decades before and after its span. That is



mostly because of the cultural achievements of the period. Those cultural achievements were made possible due to the economic domination, great power status and colonial expansion that happened before the golden era, which in combination with the fact that the Dutch society was built in more free and fair foundations than other contemporary societies, made it the ideal place for a revolutionary society to be created. This particular time and place during the whole span of the history of early modern cartography is ideal for its cartographic iconography to be studied because the maps there, are distinguished by their richness of ornamentation, a combination of science and art that has rarely been surpassed in the history of mapmaking.

## QUESTION

By studying maps produced in the Low Countries before, during and after the Dutch Golden Age, this research is an attempt to see why artistic decorations were used, why they looked the way they looked and where they were placed and why. Another goal is to trace down the sources of the iconography in the decorations and how it has developed through the years. Can a look upon the historical, social, cultural context of the society that made those maps, be the means of interpreting the decorations? If by taking into account how these decorations changed throughout the years one can conclude about whether their evolution went hand in hand with the evolution of the society that produced them, then this research has accomplished its goal.

## METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a historical analysis consisting of a literature review along with interpretations and it is separated in two sections: the first section is about the context in which the maps were created and the second is about the decorations found on the maps.

## MAP SOURCES

Maps studied in this research come from the Osher Map Library, Wikimedia Commons, David Rumsey Map Collection and The Woldan Collection from the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

## RESULTS

All the scientific and exploration outburst in the 16th century Europe led to a great knowledge accumulation. This deeper knowledge of the physical world allowed the cartographers to fill the previously blank spaces on the maps with images of everything that the new discoveries revealed the world contained. Therefore imaginary and real sea and continental monsters, ships, savages, native inhabitants wearing their traditional clothes, flora and fauna flourished in maps. At first they were spread all over the map surface, but then, as information coming from navigation journals was becoming greater and more precise and the cartographers were able to have more accurate shorelines and assign more place names and more conventional geographic signs to a certain map area, these images were



shunned. It was there, roughly at the middle of the 17th century, that the Dutch took up the leading place in European cartographic publishing after the Italians left off and this is why that kind of decorations is not present in the Dutch Golden Age Cartography. By that time, the Italians had already created the cartouche and had decorated it with Renaissance art. Sea monsters' careers on maps were heading towards their end thus, it was the cartouche and marginalia that the enamoured with Renaissance Dutch cartographers would celebrate. And they did: All the aquatic and continental figures previously shunned from the face of the map found refuge near the Dutch cartouche and mythological and moral narratives were placed in marginalia.

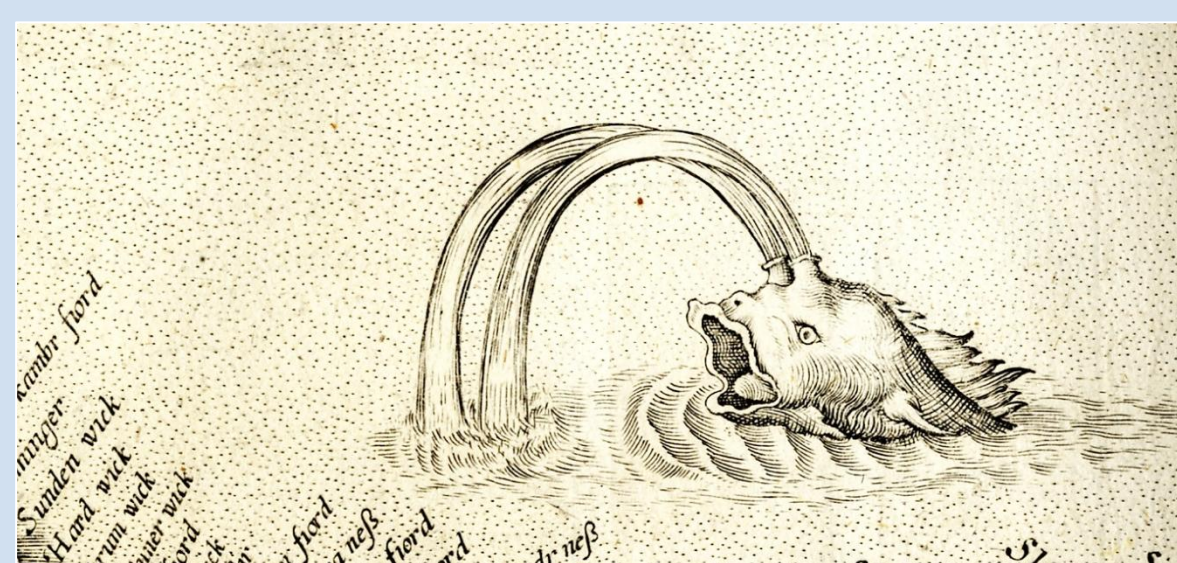
However, rectangle marginalia was not so much of decoration. It played more of an informative role as its vignettes, full of figures of native inhabitants and of views of the depicted country or city, were always relevant with the geographic content of the map. It was the cartouche that was the main decorative element of the map with its sometimes extravagant design and irrelevant figures that distracted the viewers' eyes from the map content.

## ABSTRACT

Cartographic decorations of all kinds have been an integral part of maps since the beginning of early modern cartography. However, cartographic decorations reached their peak in cartographic publishing during the Dutch Golden Age because of the sociopolitical, cultural, artistic, scientific and technological context of the Low Countries in that time. In this study, this particular context is brought forward in order to explain the evolution of the cartographic decorations throughout the Dutch Golden Age span. Afterwards, decoration genres are studied separately. Decorations structured in cartouches and marginalia and decorations spread all over the sea surface are analysed through a visual description and an iconographic and historical analysis. Cartouches and marginalia illustrations in two-hemisphere maps were mostly decorative but rectangle marginalia imagery was informative. Decorations spread all over the sea surface were abundant in the beginning of the Dutch Golden Age but became more and more rare towards its end. The evolution of artistic decorations in cartography of the Dutch Golden Age took place in accordance with the evolution of its society.

Nevertheless, marginalia on world maps with two hemispheres was a feast for the Renaissance eye which was trained to see through the symbolism of the art. There, paraded from robust putti standing for winds to ladies for continents, seasons and sciences, and from men representing cartographers to many gods and goddesses of mythology.

The presence of structured cartographic ornamentation was abundant in cartography throughout the whole Dutch Golden Age and the marvelous maps produced within its span remind us vividly still in our days the link between cartography and the graphic arts.



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