



Zedeck Siew @zedecksiew Thu Jul 14 14:22:07 +0000 2022
■FANTASY CARTOGRAPHY DISCOURSE■

Valid to point out that west ocean / cold north / castle-y centre / orientalist south & east is Eurocentric, kinda lazy.

But could we go further? And consider that a definitive non-diegetic map of a fantasy world is lazy worldbuilding?

1/ <https://t.co/EF3l6g87La>



Cartography is always political. The ones we know best tend to be part of wider imperial projects:

Mappa mundi reify religious cosmologies;

Kingdoms order maps to claim demesnes;

Maritime empires commission charts to ease logistics and plan force projection.

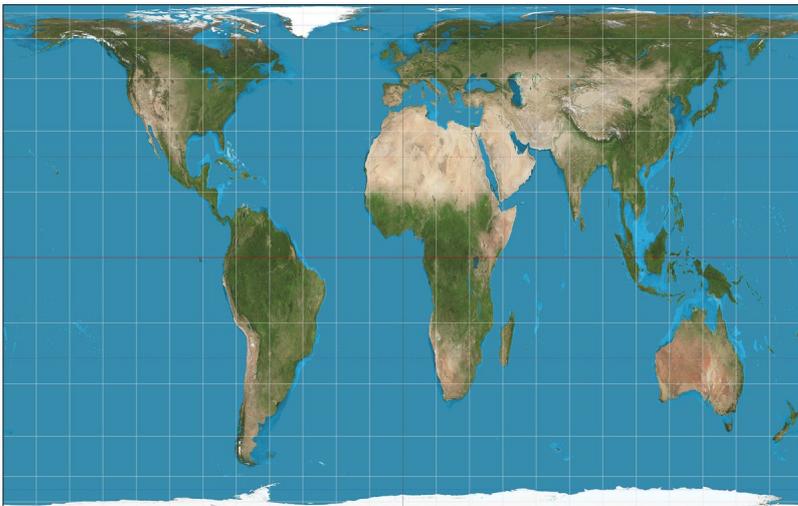
2/ <https://t.co/QLd4fqduRB>



There's a reason why the Mercator projection (and every subsequent projection) is so intensely contested.

Mercator's map says as much (and perhaps more) about Gerardus Mercator and his socio-political reality as the supposed shape of the Earth.

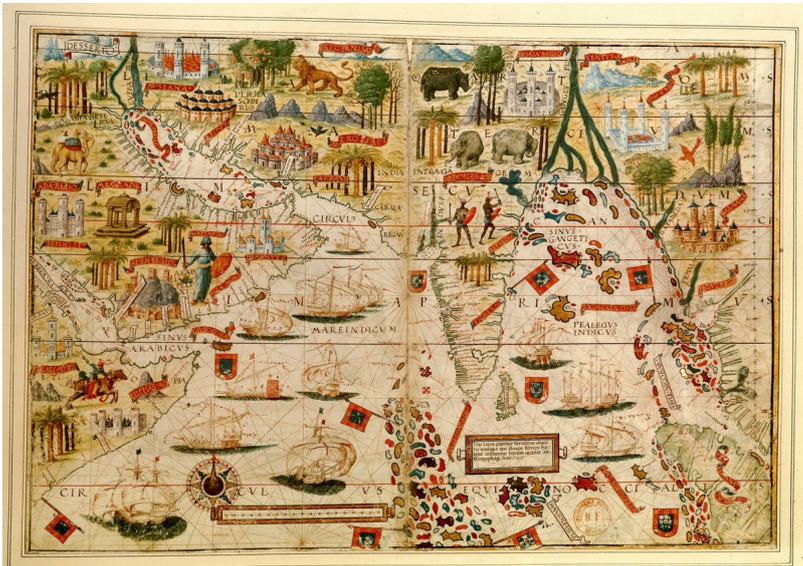
3/ <https://t.co/DFT3hZQFMg>





I vaguely remember reading that Portugal, one of the first European powers in SEAsia, used to publish intentionally convoluted maps of the region, signalling to other Europeans: "it's a confusing fuckin mess of islands, you need our help navigating that shit!"

4/ <https://t.co/Nnon1emfNQ>

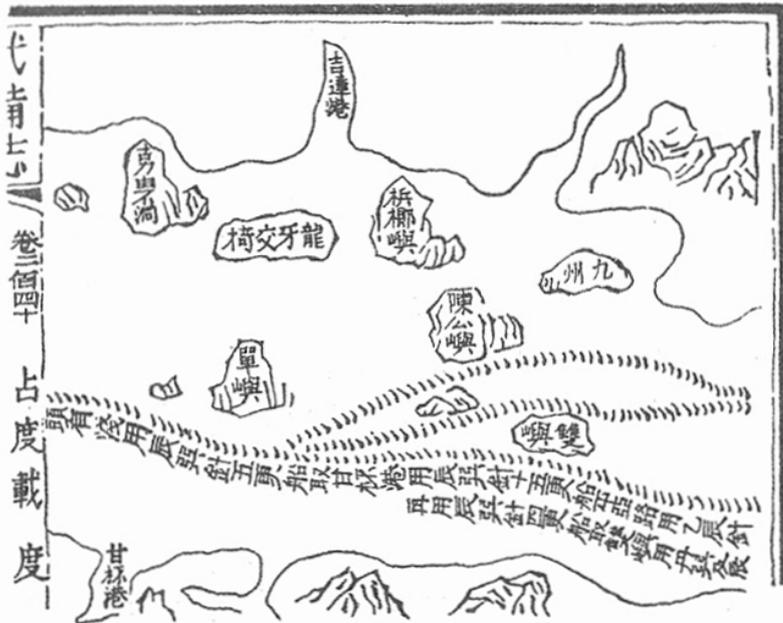


The Mao Kun map is a strip map said to be based on the treasure voyage -ie: military expedition to project Chinese Imperial power- of Zheng He.

This screenshot is a detail from the Malaccan Straits portion of the map; here's an interactive link:

<https://barbierilow.faculty.history.ucsb.edu/Research/ZhengHeMapZoomify/ZhengHe.htm>

5/ <https://t.co/BXBmk5lkCz>



What did maps look like, outside the purposes of Imperial power? They probably looked like this:

Practical maps, trade / pilgrimage routes, detailing days and tides between islands. Relationship maps, meant to be used in tandem with local folks:

6/

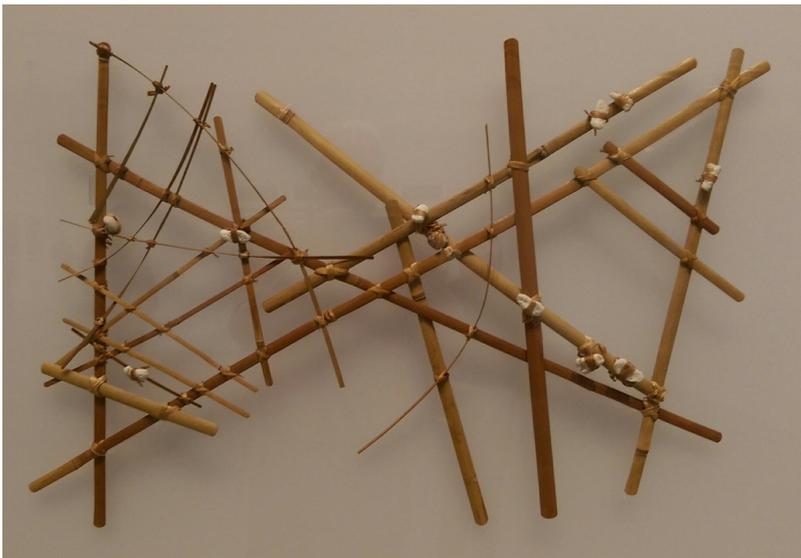
<https://twitter.com/harbowoputra/status/1429305732852195337>

We don't see these everyday maps much, because they were made to be used-

A navigator's personal stick chart; a palm-leaf book; in textile motifs; as a sailor's song; a mnemonic set to the contours of your hand.

They weren't preserved to awe a potentate's vassals.

7/ <https://t.co/MAwPxZnOed>



I've talked before about maps vis a vis [#AThousandThousandIslands](#) -or, rather, ATTI's *lack* of maps. If we ever make maps, they will be diegetic ones- they will come from someplace, reflect somebody's specific perspective:

<https://twitter.com/zedecksiew/status/1429295793165410304>

8/

They will be full of inaccuracies, intentional or not. They will exist as objects with histories; memories with agendas.

They will certainly contradict other maps. They will reify a culture's values; Other its enemies.

Like all other maps ever made.

(This map by Mun Kao.)

9/9 <https://t.co/kJV9Ds2yfe>

