

Yannis Z. Tzifopoulos* and Evangelos Livieratos**

Mapping Cartouches in Rigas' *Charta* and Gazis' *Pinax*: The Elaborately Symbolic Narrative of a Map

Summary: The design of cartouches on maps, since their appearance in the 15th c. and until their simplification in the 19th c., is an added artistic feature of the map, a synoptic and symbolic version, as it were, of the map itself. Although the artistic beauty of a cartouche's design is more or less self-evident, as is also its ornamental purpose, nonetheless its iconography is not as straightforward. The cartouche in Rigas Velesinlis' *Charta*, published in Vienna in 1797, and the cartouche in Anthimos Gazis' *Pinax*, also published in Vienna three years later in 1800, are extraordinary: they not only present an elaborate and symbolic narrative of the map according to their composers' ideas and goals, but they also enter into a dialogue about the nature and the goal of a map, i.e. a dialogue about the map's potential as a useful educative tool, a map's true didactic force.

Introduction

The term cartouche, borrowed from the Egyptian hieroglyphic system of writing, describes a separate (oblong, rectangular or oval) frame or panel on a map, where the cartographer records the title and other technical information, but also sometimes his personal outlook of his product and his goal. According to map historian Edward Lynam,¹ “cartouches that frame titles first appear on Italian maps in the 16th century [and t]hey persist on maps until the middle of the 19th century, going through many stylistic changes.” These stylistic changes follow the tastes from one generation to the next, as a perusal of the online David Ramsey Map Collection testifies to the artistic beauty of a cartouche's design and its ornamental purpose. Nonetheless, a cartouche's iconography is not always as straightforward as one expects, and stylistic changes may also be due to the map composers' worldview. In what follows, two derivative cartouches are compared and contrasted: the one on Rigas Velesinlis' *Charta*, published in Vienna in 1797, and the other on Anthimos Gazis' *Pinax*, also published in Vienna three years later in 1800, in order to discuss the composers' elaborate and symbolic narrative of their cartouches and the ideas and goals behind them.

Charta and Pinax

The two maps, the *Charta* and the *Pinax*, published within a period of three years have been the object of research in Cartography at AUTH since the 1990s,² and thanks to digital humanities the results have set the record straight: the two derivative maps are not the same in terms of size,

* Professor of Classics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece [tzif@lit.auth.gr]

** Professor Emeritus of Geodesy & Cartography, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece [livier@auth.gr]

¹ David Ramsey Map Collection, Cartouches, or Decorative Map Titles:

<https://www.davidramsey.com/blog/2010/2/25/cartouches-decorative-map-titles>.

² Cartographic research at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Faculty of Engineering, School of Rural & Surveying Engineering, Dept. of Cadastre, Photogrammetry and Cartography; now Laboratory of Cartography and Geographical Analysis (CartoGeoLab AUTH).

prototypes followed, and cartographic details.³ Their monumental cartouches, however, have the same physical dimensions and follow their prototype more closely, as they both seem to rely heavily on the cartouche by Guillaume Delisle on his map *Graeciae Antiquae tabula nova* of the early 18th century. Moreover, it seems that in the *Pinax*, printed only three years after the *Charta*, Gazis alters a number of key features in the cartouche so as to reply to Rigas' symbolism and propose his own.

All three cartouches betray almost the same themes with minor but crucial differences: the left part depicts athletic competitions; the right the sea, trade, and an ox-sacrifice with incense burning; and in the middle section a seated and dressed female figure, under her the title, and below another scene. It is in this central and dominating section that all three maps differ from one another.

In Delisle (Fig. 1), the female holds in the right hand a palm-branch (alias pen?) and wreath and below at her feet an open book with geometrical shapes; in the left hand she holds a scepter rather than Mercury's caduceus and a large oblong tablet depicting four ancient pillars crowned with Corinthian capitals; below the brief title two old males are discussing, each with an open book whose text is not readable.

Rigas Velestinlis in his *Charta* (Fig. 2) has enlarged the female seated figure with right foot projecting, made the palm-branch (alias pen?) in the right hand disproportionately bigger than the wreath, and moved the open book with geometrical shapes below closer to the right foot. Also, in the left hand of the female the scepter is brought in front of the large tablet, which is now blank and in the background, as if part of the seat/throne; and at the lower part of the tablet and leaning to it he added an open book with a line from Homer's *Odyssey* A, 3 (Fig. 3):⁴ πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω, "many cities did he see with his eyes, and many were the people with whose customs and thinking he was acquainted."

Delisle's scene below the title of two old males discussing was probably meaningless to Rigas and so, except for the written book, he replaced it with the mythical labor of Hercules fighting with his club an Amazon on horseback. He chose, however, to employ the open book with a readable Homeric verse from the *Odyssey* by moving it at the left foot of the enthroned female.

³ Livieratos 2007, 2008, and 2017, 54-61 and 109-113 where previous bibliography.

⁴ This technique is not an innovation of the Renaissance but has a long history since antiquity; for an example see Sider 2010 and Tsantsanoglou 2017.



Figure 1: The cartouche of the 18th c. (multiple versions) Delisle map "Graecia Antiqua"



Figure 2: The cartouche of Rigas' Charta (upper part) 1797



Figure 3: Detail of cartouche on Rigas' Charta: "many cities did he see with his eyes, and many were the people with whose customs and thinking he was acquainted."

The educated elite would certainly recognize the hexametric verse from the beginning of Homer's *Odyssey* as referring to Odysseus, but Rigas' choice of this verse in a new context remains cryptic. For it is not clear if this elaborate introduction of the hero Odysseus by Homer is used by Rigas for himself, the female figure or somebody else.

Anthimos Gazis in his *Pinax* (Fig. 4) seems to follow not Delisle's original cartouche but that of Rigas and in fact accepts some of his innovations, although through his choices the end-result strongly suggests a rather different reading, which to some extent elucidates even Rigas' cartouche (Fig. 5).



Figure 4: The cartouche of Gazis' *Pinax* (upper part) 1797

The female figure has the same posture as in the *Charta* but wears a helmet; in the right hand she carries, as in Rigas, a more proportionate palm-branch and a wreath but above the open book with geometrical shapes a sphere is added which represents either the globe or a canon-ball; in the left hand intertwined with the scepter is added a spear, and the oblong tablet is changed into a rounded shield with Medusa's head as emblem in order to turn the watching enemies into stone; and below the shield and leaning to it, as in Rigas, the open book is retained but another line is employed from the prologue of Sophocles' tragedy *Ajax* 35 (Fig. 6): τὰ τ' εἰσέπειτα σὴ κυβερνώμαι χερσί, "and in all matters of the future, it is your hand that steers me." As his text is by far smaller than the one in the *Charta*, Gazis retains Rigas' mythical scene of Hercules' Labor with the Amazons.

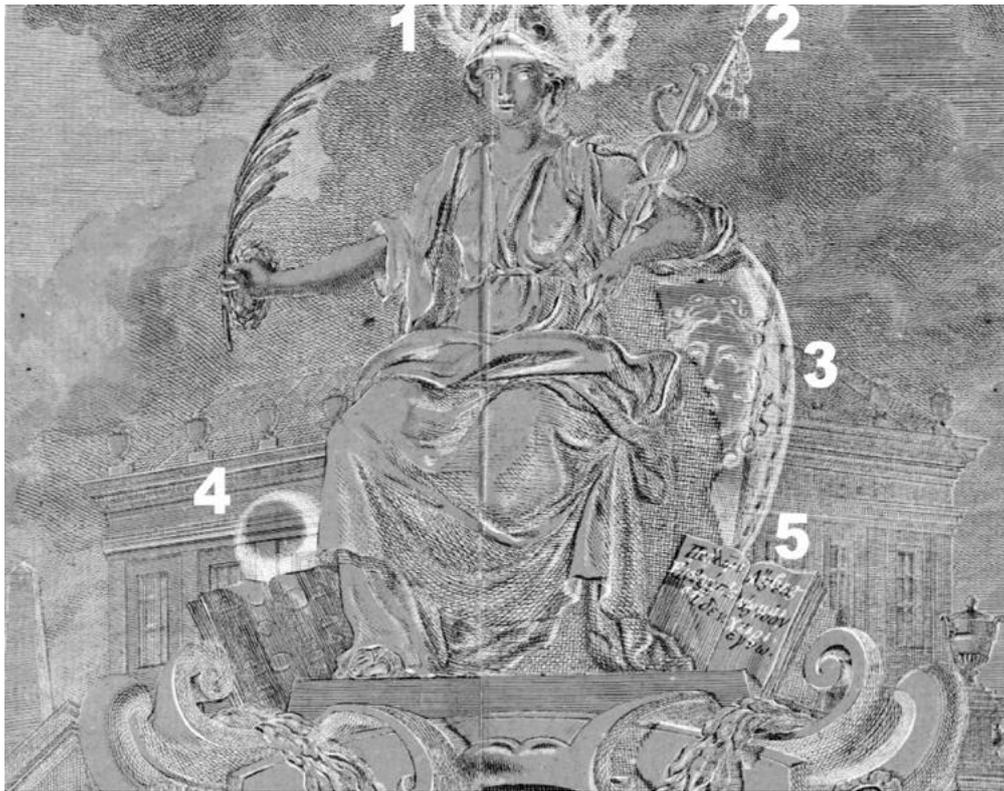


Figure 5: Comparison with digital transparency of the cartouches on Rigas' Charta and Gazis' Pinax. In white, the additions and changes in Pinax: (1) the female figure wears a helmet; (2) the addition of a spear in the left hand; (3) the oblong tablet is changed into a rounded shield with Medusa's head as emblem; (4) the addition of a sphere and (5) the text on the open books is changed and another line is employed from the prologue of Sophocles' tragedy Ajax 35.



Figure 6: Detail of the cartouche on Gazis' Pinax: “and in all matters of the future, it is your hand that steers me.”

Focusing on Gazis' Pinax

It is noteworthy that Gazis divides this line not in the way it should be read from left to right as is required also by its rhyme (as the Homeric verse in the *Charta*), but so as the words “your hand” to appear in a separate third line of his book. In the original verse these two words frame the verb and rhyme, and so in Gazis' book the verb should have been written in the left page, because, as is, the line's rhythm is destroyed. It is therefore beyond doubt that the way the line is written is Gazis' choice, a choice that lays emphasis on the line's meaning. He placed the words “your hand” emphatically in a separate line, so as to be read together without the semantic interruption by the verb. Likewise, the chosen line includes not a common verb, κυβερνῶμαι; its original meaning of “to steer a ship, act as helmsman, drive a chariot”, has also led to its metaphorical sense of “to guide, govern”, a meaning which nowadays has turned into the science of cybernetics. Interestingly, this line is taken out of the prologue of Sophocles' tragedy *Ajax*, where Athena and Odysseus converse about their relation so far, and Odysseus concludes his address to his patron deity in lines 34-35 as follows: “Your arrival (Athena) is timely; for truly in all matters, both those of the past and those of the future, it is your hand that steers me.”

If in the case of Rigas' *Charta* the symbolism was covert, in Gazis' *Pinax* it is unmistakably transparent. In the former the seated female must in some way be correlated with the Homeric verse, i.e. to see with his/her own eyes many cities and comprehend customs and way of thinking of many people. In other words, the female figure, most probably the personified Freedom, is the one who facilitates so to speak the activity proclaimed in the verse which refers to nothing more and nothing less than travelling for the purpose of seeing and learning. One may go so far as to propose that Rigas' proclamation in the cartouche is not limited to himself or the Greeks but to all human beings, as his other writings attest, most notably the revolutionary march *Thourios*. Gazis, a contemporary reader of Rigas' *Charta*, begs to differ from this interpretation and probably from Rigas' intended message as well. He dresses up the female figure with all the war-accoutrements so, as to be clearly identified as the warrior goddess Athena: helmet, spear, shield with Medusa's head; and just in case this was not clear enough, he employs the truncated verse from Sophocles' *Ajax*, in which the same hero Odysseus, as in Rigas, suggests otherwise: he entrusts to Athena (alias to divinity) all his future matters, fighting included. As an alter ego of Odysseus, Gazis brings to the fore the simple fact of life, that the future cannot be foretold; and, in order to come to terms with it, one should not simply imagine himself as a travelling Odysseus, eager to see and learn, as Gazis understands Rigas' symbolism; but one should start acting, as in Aesop's proverbial fable of the shipwrecked man and Athena:⁵ “while you pray to Athena, start moving your arms.” Gazis follows through his own message in the cartouche: he acted by printing the map with the central theme being the preparation for war, but at the same time he was well aware that the success or failure of his own message in the *Pinax* is beyond his control, except that what his *Pinax* depicts cannot be achieved without war.

Taking shape and form

Things begin to take shape and form, thanks to the digital synergy of cartography and classics. Both Rigas Velestinlis and Anthimos Gazis were well educated and wealthy Greeks of the Diaspora, Rigas a businessman and Gazis an Orthodox archimandrite. Both were privy to

⁵ Aesop, *Fable* 53 ed. Chambry = 30 ed. Perry.

developments in Europe, and both were ardent supporters of the Greek renaissance and uprising that could come only through education. To that end, they both conceived of printing in Vienna, among other educational tools, maps. Rigas printed the *Charta* in 1797, an encyclopedia of sorts for a four sq m wall, which covers a large geographical area extending to the Danube in the north and to the western and eastern areas where once existed Greek colonies; he also depicted on the map ancient Greek coins and highlighted certain places followed by concise captions that were significant according to his reading of history. Gazis printed the *Pinax* in 1800 for a one sq m wall, whose geographical coverage is limited to Greece proper and areas of the Greek Diaspora's concentration (e.g. the island of Cyprus which is absent from the *Charta*). Both printed extensively abroad tools for the education of the Greeks who, once educated, would start acting for their freedom. The powerful image of a map and its didactic force could not be left out of such a project, even though the end-result turned out the way it did because of the chosen hero Odysseus: Rigas' more enthusiastic vision conveys in the cartouche his message of Freedom for all people; in his reply, Gazis' more sober outlook of what the future may bring communicates his message of war and prayer for what is to come. The less scientific and less systematic but visually imposing *Charta* became popular; the more scientific and more systematic *Pinax* turned out an item for the library; as more often than not, sobriety seldom wins.

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