

Mappa Mundi

Dubravko Škiljan

Dubravko Škiljan, linguist and semi-otician presented in his latest book *Mappa Mundi* (World Maps) an interesting approach of historical development of cartographic presentations from the aspect of semiotics (semiotics is the science concerned with signs and sign systems, sign theory).

The book was published in Croatian, in 2006, by Antibarbarus from Zagreb. Its editor is Albert Goldstein. It consists of 151 pages, paperback, dimensions 17×28 cm, ISBN 953-249-010-8.

The book is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter, *Cartographers and Their Audience*, shows how the relationship between cartographers, maps and the public is constantly changing and developing. This relation shows how closely maps as representations of the world and peoples' comprehension of the world are linked. We comprehend a map of certain historical period as a representation of that time, a bearer of its characteristics.

In the second chapter, *Worlds and Sings*, each individual period of historical development of world maps is presented.

The third chapter, *Expressions and Content*, speaks about altering cartographic representation through history of cartography. Periods of our history have had different priorities of cartographic form and content.

The fourth and final chapter, *Meaning and Senses*, links cartographic display with its meaning from the first appearance of world maps until today. We also see how the meaning of world maps changed through history. This chapter also indicates that a map as a representation of today's world participates in shaping our reality. A map is not just a collection of present information about the world around us, in contrary, a map builds up identity of the society of cartographers and its audience. And it is a great misconception to think that this process has stopped. The process is in fact still going on. A map does not show the world as it is, it shows how we see it. What our reality is, what our perception of today's world is, that is in fact very subjective and changes through historical periods, and it is different for various societies.

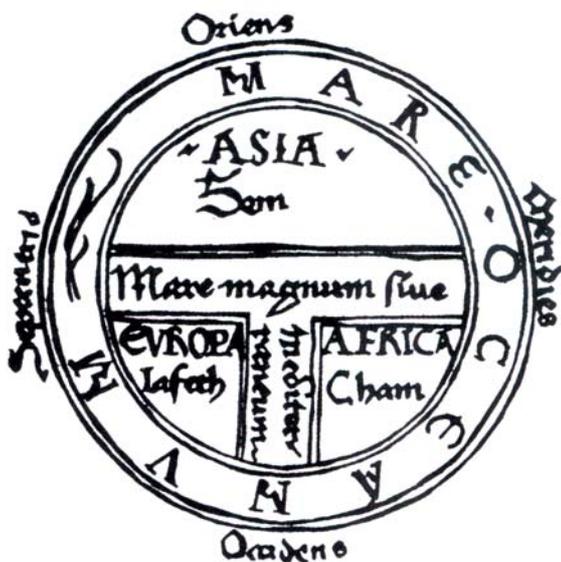
How signs are connected with our idea of reality and how we shape our

reality through signs are the themes of this chapter.

I would recommend this book to everyone interested in historical development of world maps. It was not written for a narrow circle of experts, but is understandable for a wider group of readers, although the writer uses somewhat longer sentences, which could be a little annoying for some people. The book is accompanied by interesting and beautiful illustrations of historical maps (altogether 48), without which this kind of publication cannot do, because they are essential for understanding the presented material.

At the end of the book, there is a list of references and sources of illustrations.

I only have one negative remark for this book, there is no information about the author of the book, professor Dubravko Škiljan. Due to sad circumstances, this is what the media have to say about recently deceased professor Dubravko Škiljan (Zagreb, October 31, 1949 - Zagreb, July 21, 2007), Croatian linguist and author of numerous scientific works. There are not many scientists in Croatian linguistics whose professional authority is acknowledged in global linguist circles. This precious group of highly-appreciated Croatian linguists has lost considerably on Saturday, July 21, when Prof. Dr. Dubravko Škiljan passed away. Originating from a family of great names of Croatian culture, Dubravko Škiljan was an intellectual of eruditic knowledge, which included not only his profession, general linguistics, but also classical Greek and Latin heritage, archaeology, semiotics, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, translation and writing arts. He was the head of the Department for General Linguistics of the Section for General Linguistics at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb and also one of the founders and the first head of departments for semiotics and applied linguistics. He wrote more than 250 works, among them about 40 books, including the unavoidable *Dynamics of Linguistic Structures*, *Reality Speech and Language Reality*, *Basics of Communication Semiotics*, *Everyday Linguistics...* His last professional work, *Croatian Language at the Threshold of the European Union* with which he participated at a recent linguistic conference in Split, is yet to be published in proceedings.



T-O type world map from 1472. Taken from D. Škiljan: Mappa Mundi.

Karta svijeta T-O tipa iz 1472. g. Preuzeto iz D. Škiljan: Mappa Mundi.

Maša Stojčić

