

THE USE OF MAPS IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Characteristics of a map

A map outlines a connection between a historical phenomenon and its geographical spreading. These symptoms are of quantitative kind, for example:

- the results of regional elections in a particular year
- the spread of Universities in the Middle Ages
- the extend of an epidemic in a district or country around 1800
- the origin and development of businesscenters in the Middle Ages
- peasantrevolts in Russia after 1860 and the course of campaigns during the second world war.

From this, far from complete, enumeration it follows that a historical map is a thematical map which means that it is centered around an specific theme. Apart from that we may conclude that these themes can be derived from political, social-economical and cultural history.

For the reproduction of these phenomena on the map graphical symbols are used and we call this the second characteristic of a map. Out of this we may conclude that the user of a map must master the meaning of the symbols. Therefore it is also important that a map-editor uses clear symbols.

It isn't possible to express on an map all phenomena of the reality that surrounds us, no more than all aspects of one symptom. This makes a map too crowded and difficult to read. Only the most essential aspects of a theme must be mapped out. Therefore selection is necessary. It will be obvious that criteria for the selection of the contents of a historical schoolmap must be found the aims of history teaching, taking the target group into account in the same time. Thus a map for the older, more educated reader, may contain more aspects, than a map that is merely meant for the younger pupil.

When choosing a particular theme one should, as far as the contents is concerned, constantly bear in mind what will be the relationship with the aims of history teaching. If e.g. only political history is pictured then one aspect will be overexposed while many other aspects won't be paid any attention to at all.

The omission of dates, which is often the result of simplification and selection, also means that we generalise. A historical map deals with general rather than with the unique (The third characteristic of a map).

A historical map, which is used in teaching, must be accounted for didactically just as a historical schoolbook, This also means that a map should be easily readable, that it contains one relevant subject for the historical education and is accounted for scienti-

fically.

2. The use of maps in the classroom

With its specific qualities, a map can accomplish a lot of important functions in education. The following functions can be distinguished: - localising phenomena - coordinating phenomena - actualising phenomena - changing informations out of maps into another form of information and vice versa.

2.1 Localising phenomena

Localising has the purpose of making the pupils acquainted with the dates on the map that are relevant for our theme.

Suppose: we deal with the theme "Greek colonization" in the first form. We can now pay attention to the following aspects:

- the situation of Greece
- the physical-geographical position
- the scale of the map
- the period in which colonization has taken place
- the areas that have been colonized in that period
- the size of the colonized area
- areas, where not the Greeks have settled but other nations.

Calling attention to these aspects must happen on the basis of concrete reading assignments, otherwise we incur the risk that the attention of the pupils will be distracted by the number of place-names indicated on the map. Moreover the questions must be asked in such a way that from the map it will be clear for the pupils which factors may have contributed to the fact, that the Greeks left their country. A few possible assignments are then:

- in which climatical zone is Greece situated
- in which districts of Greece is agriculture possible
- how is the land-water relation in Greece
- Greece has carried on a lot of trade. Explain that this is due to the situation of Greece
- at what time approximately will Greece be overpopulated?

2.2 Coordinating facts

If we stick to our example of Greek colonization we may connect the following facts:

- the Greek settlements and the coastal regions
- the Greek settlements and the trade routes
- business and products in which trade was carried on
- the Greeks and the inhabitants of the settlements.

Noticing these facts we are invited to ask a few questions, such as:

- why have the Greeks left their country
- why have the Greeks settled especially there

- which products have they traded in
- how did the original inhabitants react on the arrival of the Greeks?

Why colonization took place cannot be read from the map, for a map reflects the consequences of a spacial structure but provides no information about the active processes which have lead to these specific spacial structures. The question raised can only be answered with the help of other material. Even information about the density of the population, which of course can be mapped out, doesn't explain why the Greeks have moved away. At best the hypothesis could be made that probably the Greeks have set out to other regions also because of overpopulation.

When using the map in the classroom, we therefore must be thoroughly aware of the restrictions a map imposes upon us.

2.3 Actualising the phenomena

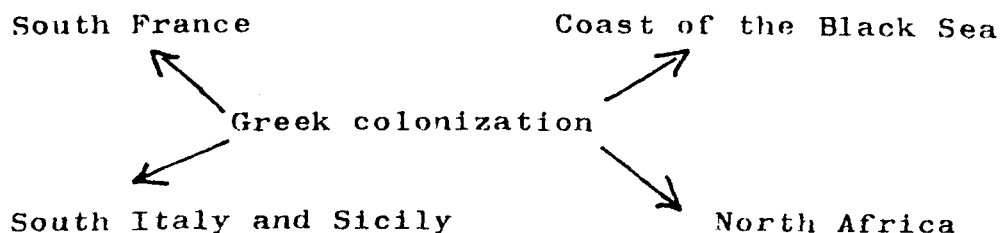
Reading and analysing historical schoolmaps also invites us to actualize the past for the pupils, which means that they experience the problems of the past as real problems. For this it is necessary that pupils acquire the skill of designing imaginary map-situations themselves.

Now it becomes possible to open up the discussion on a problem like colonization and its consequences in the following way:

- draw an imaginary country in which overpopulation threatens
- a great number of inhabitants must colonize
- show clearly on your map which problems may occur

2.4 Changing information out of maps into another form of information and vice versa

A map functions at its best in history teaching if a pupil is able to change information, acquired from a map, into textual or other graphic information. This skill appeals the pupil's ability to abstract. When dealing with the map: "Greek colonization" a possible assignment may be: make an outline or a diagram from which appears where the Greeks have especially settled down. Then one solution could be:



In this diagram an abstraction is made of a number of places and regions and only the essential aspects of Greek colonization are mapped out. By using this form regularly we not only teach the

pupils to read a map well but also show much more clearly what is important and what is unimportant with a particular problem.

Another way of appealing to the pupil's ability to abstract consists of the assignment to make a map with the help of textual and/or figure material. A few examples:

- Make a map based on a list of victors of the olympic games in antiquity (it also gives information about the spread of Greek colonization)
- A journal written by a king from the Middle Ages. The route must be mapped out: palaces, monasteries and cities. (This asks for questions like: how long did the king reign?)
- A chronological chart of the revolutions in Europe at the end of the 18e century and in the 19e century. The cities must be mapped out - the indicated dates show the course of the revolutionary movements.

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