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** Translations from Italian to English are made by the Author*

THE ART OF GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION COMPARING CARTOGRAPHY AND ART IN THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

Abstract – The article aims at analysing the cartography in the Netherlands during the XVIIth century, starting from a comparison with the artistic production in the same period. Art and cartography will be shown as results of the same economic, social and political context, deeply changed since the independence of the late XVIth century. The contacts and interactions between the two areas of interest will be studied, in order to investigate the causes and peculiarities of the cartographic development occurred in the Netherlands in the XVIIth century, which was defined as an «happy industry» in the Golden Age. The article is based on Vermeer's and other Dutch artists paintings, hosted in the exhibition *Vermeer. Il Secolo d'Oro dell'arte olandese* [Vermeer. The Golden Age of the Dutch art]. In many of those artworks, the artists exemplarily reproduced maps and globes, giving a clear idea of which role the geographical elements have had in the Dutch development and the article will try to explain why they were distributed that much.

Introduction – This article was written based on reflections on the Exhibition, held in Rome at the Scuderie del Quirinale (since the 20th October 2012), entitled «Vermeer. Il secolo d'oro dell'arte olandese» («Vermeer. The Golden Age of Dutch Art»). This work finds its origin in arguments posed in another article (Ricci, 2010) and it is its aim to develop them, comparing painting art and cartography in the of the Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century. From this comparison, I will try to point out the most interesting aspects of the geographical knowledge and link these with the cultural background and political evolution of that time in the United Provinces which actively contributed to the scientific, technological, economic and artistic developing in that historical moment. It is not by chance that it was called the «Golden Age» of the Netherlands, but to underline the great role assumed by the United Provinces just after their independence, with their peak in the mid of the Seventeenth Century.

The two aspects compared in this article – the pictorial and the cartographic one – reveal a very particular moment for the European science and knowledge in general, that will be later affirmed with different styles in the Old Continent, just starting from the Seventeenth Century, following the formula well applied to the Dutch case: «the art of describing» (Alpers, 1983). In this formula, indeed, we can find the *forma mentis* of the artistic and cartographic production. In some cases, these two sectors coincide and interlace together, in a game of overlapping that offers many possibilities of interpretation, about the role and functions of the works, about the idea of the Authors about their times and their country, contributing to the great progress of European cartography in the Modern ages.

In order to better study the links and similarities in the Dutch context between painting and cartography, it is crucial to understand the social, religious, political and economic factors of the time. A basic component for a deep and aware reading of this kind of relationship is what Simon Schama called “The Embarrassment of Riches” (Schama, 1987), referring to the Dutch right in the XVIIth Century: ‘it was, in substance, of a social phenomenon derived from the capacity of producing profit much more than in the other European countries’ – starting from the Independence from the Spanish empire –, with a consequent wellness never felt before, making the Netherlands the first economic

power in the world. Consequently, «as previously seen in Italy, the prosperity of commerce gave prosperity to arts» (Praz, 1981, p. 3) and simultaneously, to cartography.

The situation was such as inebriation caused by richness, born from the enormous economic possibilities, mostly expressed in the production of grain, in the commerce of wood and then in the naval constructing, making possible the overtaking of the English rivals in the North Sea and the supremacy of the Dutch Company of the Eastern India (VOC) in the world traffics and, at the same time, to the development of the geographical knowledge and to the cartographic production necessary to these activities.

In this context, Amsterdam overtook all the other Dutch cities, and first of all Antwerp¹, which lived in the most prolific period of the XVIth Century, as centre of commerce and productive activities – not a last the cartographic one (with the Ortelius, Mercator and de Jode examples), both in a scientific and in a economic sense (de la Fontaine Verwey, 1967). Next to the social analysis, mixed with the economic factors, which have their roots in the political ones, we also have to consider Max Weber's reflections (Cfr. 2005) on the influence of Calvinist culture on capitalistic productivity in terms of the rise of capitalism.

The cartographic «felix industry». – The great scientific contribution given by Dutch geographers and mapmakers was parallel to the commerce and, most in general, to the Dutch economic power, in a biunique sense: on the one hand, thanks to maps and geographic knowledge, it was possible to open commercial routes; on the other hand the correct navigations of merchants and travellers contributed (economically and scientifically) to the updates that were necessary, to the development and to the enormous spread of the cartographic market², that was also favoured by the cosmopolitan character of Dutch civilization of the time, for the political-religious reasons that undertook the anti-Spanish revolt and for the processes of the Independence that followed. Dutch cities started to be considered points of income for the European reformats, places of religious «tolerance» and protestant openness, helping the development of arts and the mixing of interpretative styles:³ «There was indeed – underlines in the catalogue the Editor of the exhibition – a certain degree of religious freedom in the Dutch Republic, that was unique, so to say, in the whole of Europe, and that favoured the formation of a very artistically developed culture», (Bandera in Bandera, Liedtke, Wheelock, 2012, p. 81) and, more in general, of an enriched culture (even cartographic) thanks to the migration fluxes.

Expansion in the Dutch cartographic industry happened during the revolt period, when, while fighting the war against Spanish, it was necessary to have maps in order for the troops to know the territory. The «niewskaarten» for instance, maps made for informing the population about war campaigns, battles and for the anti-Spanish pamphlets, were very successful in the late XVIth Century. Since that moment the production of maps, intensified in the XVIIth Century, counted a heritage of 160.000 pieces (Koeman, 1961, p. 5; Van der Krogt, 2003)⁴. Besides the nautical maps, necessary for navigating, and the «niewskaarten», we cannot forget to mention the «waterschapskaarten», maps for the

¹ See, on the cartographic market, a recent work by Vladimiro Valerio (2012), about a map of Sicily published in Antwerp in 1553.

² de la Fontaine Verwey affirms that: «the strongest incentive was provided by the Dutch voyages to the North, the East Indies, Africa, and America [...]. The cartographers incorporated the new information in their globes, maps, and atlases without delay», (de la Fontaine Verwey, 1967, p. 7).

³ Se, for example, the history of mapmaker Johannes van Keulen from Koln, cfr. Quaini 2006, p. 109.

⁴ The cosmopolitan character was well explained by de la Fontaine Verwey: «Large maps, with an explanatory text in several languages, were hastily produced of all sieges and battles» (1967, p. 8).

management of the waters and further product of that moment in the Dutch geographical culture (Cfr. de Vrij 1967, pp. 30-42). They were a basic element in the Dutch history (Ciriaco, 1994), that will define the «moral geography» on which Schama wrote about, as a factor in the rise and development of the Dutch maritime power (Schama, 1987): Wallerstein will affirm that: «the process of pumping water out of the country in order to create land (poldering) led to the invention of windmills and the flourishing of the science of engineering, so that in many ways Holland became “the centre of the wood mechanical era”» (Wallerstein, 1982, p. 40).

It is important to describe first of all maps as a tool in the conducting of wars, for navigating and administrative management, however, globes must be considered in the industry of the geographical knowledge, on which Peter van der Krogt wrote a very important book, entitled *Globi Neerlandici*, where he quoted Edward Luther Stevenson: «the great development in Dutch globe manufacturing is explained by the great demand of mariners and not by the demand of educators», because globes were «conform and equidistant» (van der Krogt, 1993, pp. 224). Even if they were widely used in teaching (as we can see in the Olivier van Deuren's painting, *A young astronomer*, of 1685), teachers were not target of the globe's production, but mariners were. The author underlines the role – in this context of «felix production» as defined by Quaini, the productive competition, noticing that, in other territorial contexts, globes were not used for practical goals, like navigation⁵. The Author summarizes the causes for such a fast rising of that market as follows: the interest for the world outside Europe, the necessity of new cartographic instruments for navigation; the desire of reporting new knowledge; the freedom of producing globes and, finally, the competition between Hondius and Blaeu (van der Krogt, 1993, pp. 216-217).

As Monique Pelletier pointed out, «atlases, mural maps and globes [...] are not only didactical instruments for the acquisition of new acquaintances, but they give a precise measure of the extension of power for the ones who have it» (Pelletier, 2001, p. 81).

Realism and aesthetics in artistic and cartographic representation in the XVIIth Century Netherlands. – We just drafted the confrontation between Dutch art and cartography, because «there was perhaps at no other time such a coincidence between mapping and picturing» (Alpers, 1983, p. 119), that in the *representation* find their – not unique – meeting point.

We are going to try to make such parallelism starting from the basic idea of the two expressive styles, pictorial and cartography. For this purpose, Svetlana Alpers points out that there is a sort of «naturalness of representing» in the Dutch art (Alpers, 1983, p. VII-VIII), underlining the representative, realistic and «descriptive» character of this kind of art, that we also find in the cartographic context. It is not a case that the Dutch «school» gave a strong contribution to the realistic representation not only of the daily-life of the times, but also of the bible scenes: into the the Dutch art of XVIIth Century there is, in substance, «a fondness for the truth, a love for reality, giving a value that things seem to do not have» (Fromentin, 1943, p. 114). Giving relevance and attention to fidelity of reproduction, Alpers faces, from an artistic point of view, the studies of the times about the functioning of the eye by Keplero and about the human body, underlining the developing of scientific analysis, showing the strict link between artistic representation with the scientific context and, parallel to this, with the social reality of the time, that was indispensable for these developments.

⁵ The Author affirms that: «we may state that globes found on board ship were hardly used in actual practice» (van der Krogt, 1993, pp. 237).

The link between science and reality of the time is evident also in the geographic and cartographic context, making emerge the Dutch characteristic of focusing on the aesthetic forms, in the conscious that instruments are not only exclusively functional: they are not just an artistic expression for the contemplation of divine, as was in the Middle ages – when the representations of the world were «*imago mundi*» or «*pictura*» of that, in a clear coincidence of art with cartography⁶ – but its vivid expression of beauty and the continuous search for aesthetic and accuracy of details of the represented reality.

A clean cut with the Medieval past, but the religious factor – Calvinist and linked to the Reform – was not overpassed, but is fully present. This religious reality, with the artistic, scientific and in particular the geographic reality, is strictly connected to the political one, where the anti-Spanish and anti-Imperial rebellion coincided with the autonomist requests, not untied to the economic ones⁷. Respect toward the medieval past conserved an aesthetic character, even if in the Middle ages it had a different function from the Modernism. If in the past it was a symbolic representation for the contemplation, thanks to the religious reminder of the *mappa mundi*, not giving importance to the accuracy of the map's details, in the Modern age, the aesthetics, with a renewed sense of the functionality of the maps, started to affirm, even with the re-discovery of Ptolomeus. The same considerations, in a speculative way, could be made for the artistic sector, because it is the way of approaching a world that changes: the role of the centre in the artistic and cartographic Medieval works, the orienteering of the maps, the symbolic handling of the spaces in the canvases and maps, the use of colours, the perspective, where all these elements were used for the aims just mentioned.

Starting from the Alpers' book, that is also about the Dutch «cartographic vocation», will be of interest mention some further elements that the Author considers of importance in the study of the Dutch art. Then, it will be interesting to apply them from a cartographic point of view, showing the clear parallelism between these two fields, that are the products of a same social, religious, economic and politic reality, able to give a unique way of expressing. Some of the works of Vermeer are a clear example of this «coincidence» of forma mentis and artistic «attitude», in which these two elements perfectly coincide, and one includes the other one in a spectacular and organic way.

In the Vermeer's artistic production we can also find that adherence to reality, that was a peculiar characteristic of Dutch people: «even the mirrors, the maps and [...] the eyes» and «the represented world by the Dutch artists has the aspect and immediacy of reality» (Wheelock in Bandera, Liedtke, Wheelock, 2012, p. 21).

Right in the Vermeer artistic expression we can find that adherence to reality that we were pointing out, that was one of the most important Dutch characteristic: «since mirrors, maps, and, as in this chapter,

⁶ Ronald Rees rightly points out that: «the forms of maps and paintings were often so similar that no clear distinction could be made between practitioners or their products» (1980, p. 65).

⁷ As the editor of the exhibition entitled *Il secolo di Rembrandt. Pittura olandese del Seicento nelle Gallerie fiorentine [The Rembrandt's Century. Dutch Painting in XVIIth Century in the Florentine's Galleries]*, held in Palazzo Vecchio in the 80's, affirmed «The Netherlands, guided by the first European bourgeois [Cfr. Marjolein 1993], in its artistic production reflected, as nobody before have done, the social and spiritual freedom, conquered at a high price, reflected the image of an entire population, concentrated to the spiritual problems as well to the practical ones» (Chiarini, 1987, p. 9).

⁷ The same period Italian paintings are characterized by a frame of the canvases, like a window of the world, in which there are stable points of reference. In the Dutch case, instead of that, «had a basic role the Caravaggio example, base on the representation of reality: that was a source for Dutch artists, in the daily-life representations» (Chiarini, 1987, p. 12).

eyes also can take their place alongside of art as forms of picturing so understood [in a realistic sense]» (Alpers, 1983, p. 26).

It is very interesting to see what Alpers notices about the search for realism, when she points out the absence of a delimitation in the Dutch canvas, giving the impression of continuing the reality and vice-versa, like «the world staining the surface with color and light, impressing itself upon it » (Alpers, 1983, p. 27)⁸. As a demonstration of the absence of points of reference in the artistic works the Author takes the Vermeer's «View of Delft», example of the attempt of representing on canvas the landscape and the city, which was a determining element of the Dutch impressive evolution.

Fig. 1 – *Jan Vermeer, View of Delft* (1660)



The same basic idea of a particular interest for the concrete, for the coincidence between represented reality and the same reality, can be found in the cartographic context⁹. The intention seems to be right the coincidence of the map with the world, in a convergence of destinies of the most powerful State in that time with the global fluxes, that were dominated by the Dutch, not only from a commercial point of view. In the maps, seems to take form what Farinelli defined – referring to the Vermeer's work, the «first modern thought of globality» (Farinelli, 2009, p. 123)¹⁰.

We don't mention, in this occasion, the discussions about the use of the darkroom for painting aims, but it's important to underline the attempt of reproducing faithfully the reality, that was a characteristic

⁹ This fact led us to think how Dutch people were adherent to the world, and how maps were so important and useful: «what is of importance is the exact vision of reality, the chance to read the territory in which it is possible to get in» (Dubini, 1994, p. 5).

¹⁰ We can find this – almost medieval – coincidence of centrality, in the intense expression of force and vitality, power and fullness of the Dutch reality.

both the Dutch and the Italians, even with important differences¹¹. It is amusing to notice that many of the Dutch artists were sons of glaziers, and they were able to nurture the passion for the mirrors and for the faithful representation of reality (Alpers, 1983, p. 81)¹².

About the confrontation between cartography and art, between Dutch and Italians, Ronald Rees, in an article written for «Geographical Review», underlined that both in the cartographic and artistic contexts, the Dutch used much more the colours and they used to report many data about populations, in a different approach from the Italians, with plenty of accuracy for the aesthetic factors and not always for the distances and scales¹³. Even the measure of Bleau, that sardonically thought that he made an image book for principiants, he was one of the masters of Dutch cartography, important for the innovations of the representations and compositions, not mentioning the very cartographic industry, that was the first in Europe in the XVIIth Century.

Art and cartographic realism, with different characteristics, are the evidence of a power constructed and affirmed during the XVIIth Century and it was the result, at the same time, of a social reality experiencing deep change. Maps were only one of the different pieces of a same and very rich mosaic: as the Geographer W.W. Jervis said, maps «reflect the spirit of an age as faithfully as does its art» (Jervis, cit. in Rees, 1980, p. 64). This last declaration gives a basic support for these reflections, because that is the key to the exact knowledge of certain dynamics that were under the cartographic «discourse», otherwise hardly understandable.

Realism of representation it's even a result of the Calvinist affirmation and of a religious change occurred in the late XVIth Century as a consequence of the struggle against the (catholic) Emperors. Since the reformed Church was against the aberrant costumes of the Roman Church, that was considered as the Anti-Christ, proposing a clear and pure way of living, so in the canvases there's this sensitivity for the private, for the family intimacy. In the maps, they had to be adherent to reality and to the concrete. Some of the exposed works in Rome, point out the urban dimension of Dutch life – that was dynamic and cosmopolitan, with an active role in the development of the Republic -, characterized all the Dutch Golden Age.

The map in the Vermeer's Allegory of painting. – Interesting contributions to the cartographic works of Vermeer come out from James A. Welu, who wrote about it. In an article written for «Imago Mundi» in 1978, Welu deeply analyzes the map in the Vermeer's «Allegory of Painting», completed in 1667, at the zenith of the economic Dutch power. The Vermeer's work represents a woman – who's the muse of History, Clio – posing in an artist's studio, that it's maybe the one of Vermeer, from his back. Behind the woman, there's a detailed map of the Seventeen Provinces, that seems to be central in the painting, not secondary. The presence of the map «seems to underline how the muse of History can guarantee a eternal future to art» (Bandera in Bandera, Liedtke, Wheelock, 2012, p. 87). It is possible to find this

¹¹ The studies on the eye will be an important factor for the development of these techniques, and for the right Dutch painting: the studies of Leonard are famous for what concerns the Italian context, taking it to be considered as the principle of the «very certain sciences», in a evident Renaissance impulse.

¹² An example is Jan van der Heyden – son a glazier – of which was exposed in the exhibition in Rome even the *Veduta del Municipio nuovo di Amsterdam* (1667), «prelude of the born of the right landscape painting» (Chiarini, 1987, p. 13) – that «dedicated itself to the search of a right way to mix up the technique of perspective laws and optical» (Bandera, 2012, p. 128).

¹³ Rees states, in order to clarify, that: «In some of the exuberant Dutch maps, accuracy was an inevitable casualty, a lapse that prompted a contemporary of Willem Bleau to deride his atlas as a picture book for beginners» (Rees, 1980, p. 64).

positive point of view even in other contexts. The mixing of the historical and geographic elements, in a unique painting with such a representative and symbolic name – *The Allegory of Painting* – seems to lead us to a wide vision of reality, seems to be the positive prevision of a lighting future for arts, as well as economy, politics and colonialism, in which the Seventeen Provinces have had a significant history during the XVIIth Century.

Fig. 2 – Jan Vermeer, *Allegory of painting* (1667 ca.)



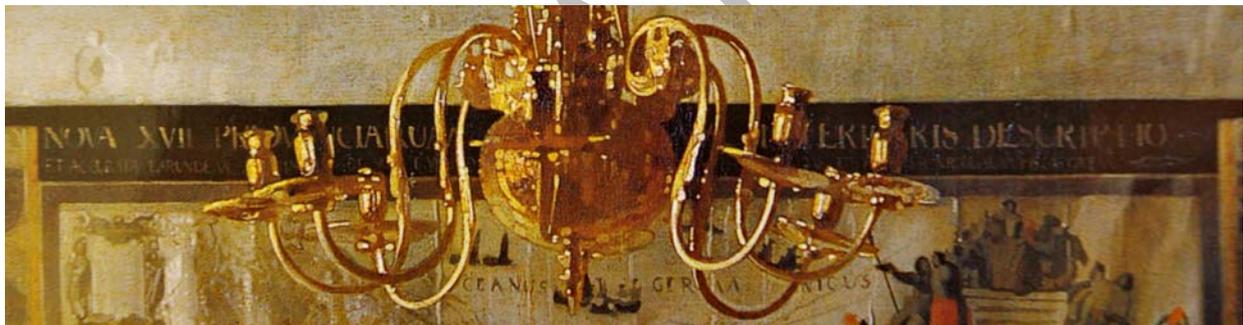
An «almost eternal life to arts», of course, but also to the whole Netherlands and to the knowledge of the world – a world lived, conquered and dominated by the Dutch. That is why Franco Farinelli sees the Vermeer's work in its mixing of cartographic and painting factors, giving a reading of the presence of the map as an important point of knowledge - «his painting is the very punctual, almost mathematic translation in art terms of the Leibniz's knowledge system» (Farinelli, 2009, p. 123) –, strictly connected to the development of geographical science: «What the painting represents is the comprehension of the pictorial image in the cartographic one: the position of this last one means exactly its function as an arrival point and extreme ending of the knowledge allowed to men (Farinelli, 2009, p. 118), because, quoting Alpers, «the woman's face is right next to the map», «almost pressed by it» (*Ibidem*). Disagreeing with Alpers, Farinelli points out that «it's not so important to wonder *what* the painter is looking at, as Alpers does, but it's necessary to wonder *if* the painter (bandaged), and Clio (as the Baptist off the ground) at the same time, are really looking at something. The answer is no: nor the blinded sight of the artist, nor the lowered eyelids of the muse allow us to perceive the world» (*Ibidem*, p. 119). Now, the

questions are about why they don't look at the world: for the faithful in it or for the perception of the imminent year of the disaster? It is impossible to correctly answer, even if «we can finally recognize in the Clio's sight to the models of the artistic creation that are on the table (sculpture, drawing, writing, weaving) the sight of the one who, at his sunset, lower the eyelids and retreat with them: in order to give way to the new imperious and totalitarian model, the cartographic one (*Ibidem*, p. 121). Or, maybe, to give way to new and rising political-economic forces.

Fig. 3 – *Visscher's map of the Seventeen Provinces, next to the one painted by Vermeer*



Fig. 4 – *Particular of the writing on the map in the Vermeer's painting*



What is the philological origin of the map, what is the source of this symbolic reproduction? The answer, even if not certain at all, was given by Welu, who well analyzed its origin, even through the study of the writing on it, that says: NOVA XVII PROV[IN]CIARUM [GERMANIAE INF]ERI [O] DESCRIPTIO/ET ACCURATA EARUNDEM ... DE NO[VO] EM[EN]D[ATA] ... REC[ITISS]IME EDIT[A] P[ER] NICOLAUM PISCATOREM. The key is in these last four words: published by Nicolaum Piscatorem, known as Claes Janszoon Visscher or Nicolas Visscher (that in Dutch means «fisherman»). Another element is of importance: the represented Seventeen Provinces, because the Republic counted just Seven Provinces. The other ten, were under the Catholic South, were maybe an aspiration for Vermeer and for part of the Dutch population. Indeed, Vermeer converted himself to Catholicism and that map represented an anachronistic view of the Dutch State. That was the representation of a unexisting State, maybe a «desired» State, with the other Provinces excluded by process for independence. Maybe desired, because would be a mistake to «align the different elements comprising the national personality with particular religious denominations or social categories» (Schama, 1987, p. 122).

Why are there maps in the artistic works? – It is important to notice that in Vermeer's and in other Dutch artists' productions maps are very often represented. The questions are: Why this custom? Were maps really important in Dutch's life? It is possible to answer these questions streaming from two main directions which will finally converge.

The first comes from Massimo Quaini, who points out that in those artistic representations maps are associated to daily-life scenes: «Vermeer well expresses, in his paintings – for instance when the subject are women reading letters or playing instruments – the new role of women in the rising bourgeois society». Then, Quaini explains this kind of association: «The letter and the music, indeed, can be interpreted as archetypes or symbols of the map: the first one because it reveals and makes evident through the writing what it is not present (as a map of a far away country does) , the second one because, like the map, it should decipher the harmony, the order and the beauty of the world» (Quaini, 2006, p. 99). One of the most important points identified by Quaini is that «rising bourgeois society» that was a crucial characteristic of the Dutch society of the XVIIth Century. This interpretation it is partial, but it gives us the image of the economic and social context: in the Netherlands, indeed, the productive factor it is everywhere, and that is why Max Weber (2005) said that the Dutch society was a fully example of the «spirit of capitalism»¹⁴.

Dutch people were the first to think cartography in bourgeois terms (v. Germain, 2012), not anymore just for the royal palaces. The waste cartographic production contributed to make the Netherlands a point of reference for the rising bourgeois context. In a bidirectional way, that kind of economy made possible the «embrassement of richness», to which contributed the commerce of the VOC. The bourgeois could even have access to the cartographic industry, because of the many travellers involved in the VOC. Representing women in their domestic mansions, with maps next to them, it is a demonstration of the possibilities of Dutch people to have access to an instrument of power as the maps were. It is furthermore a symbol of the social changes that were happening in that society. «Vermeer's art reflects the happiness [...] of the Dutch bourgeoisie after their aggressive spirit had somewhat calmed down, and they began to relax and enjoy the fruits of their fathers' and grandfathers' activities» (Rosenberg, Slive, Kuile, 1972, p. 187): a bourgeois character started to emerge, following a turbulent political period of the Independence.

This opened access to cartography does not contradict the consideration that maps are a symbol of power. What is that power? Is that the economic power? Before answering, it is maybe important to better understand the fact that maps were represented in artistic works. Of course, as Quaini said, those works wanted to represent a bourgeois reality in its daily-life. But the artists' aim was also to show the organic power of the Netherlands. They maybe would like to show the world dimension of the Dutch power, not only the bourgeois and the daily Dutch way of life. The world power in all the Dutch houses, in someway, demonstrating that it was the most economic and politic power of the world. It was not only economically, but also from a social, commercial, navigating, scientific and colonial and, of course, political point of view.

¹⁴ Max Weber affirms that the capitalistic «spirit» is based on some strong ideas: «Remember, that *time* is money», «Remember, that *credit* is money», «Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature» and «Remember this saying, *The good paymaster is lord of another man's purse*» (Weber, 2005, pp. 14-15). This spirit was characteristic of the whole society, in all its components, and the economic disaster of the 30's of XVIIth Century was caused by the tulips' bulbs bubble, in all the country was involved.

Maps were the symbol of power, because they attested the control of territories. It is particularly evident in some examples, like the *Leo Belgicus*¹⁵ one, in which the lion is a symbol of the revenge against the Imperial power, symbol of independence and autonomy (Cfr. Boria, 2012).

Fig. 5 - *Claes Jansz. Visscher, Leo Belgicus (1609)*



A version of *Germania inferior* is in a work exhibited in Rome: this is the Nicolaes Maes' *The Naughty Drummer*, of 1655 ca. In this canvas the map, not really viewable, it is on the wall, beyond the represented scene (with a child crying, whilst his mother says something to him): «the presence of this map in a painting made in the middle of the XVIIth Century, can point out that the artist saw with nostalgia at the period before the division, in the that the parts could get together again» (Bandera in Bandera, Liedtke, Wheelock, 2012, p. 150). Even in this case, like in Vermeer, as we have seen, comes out the same idea of a reconciliation and reunification of the two parts.

Fig. 6 - *Nicolaes Maes, The Naughty Drummer (1655 ca.)*



¹⁵ See, for instance, Pieter van den Keere, *Germania inferior. Leo Belgicus* (1617), or Claes Jansz. Visscher, *Leo Hollandicus* (1648).

Giving evidence to the fact that many parts of population had maps in their walls, it is a demonstration of power, reached through the economic world activities. Those activities seem to legitimate and justify the presence of globes and maps in the Dutch houses. In this context it is considered the role of women in the daily, domestic and bourgeois society.

Now we are going to try to answer to the first question: Why did Vermeer paint so many maps? We answered only partially: in order to show how accessible was an instrument that before was reserved to political power and, related to that, to show the dominant role of the Netherlands in the world. Another consideration is that: if Vermeer and other authors used to paint daily-life moments, with maps on the walls, it was because of the realism typical of Dutch and European art in XVIIth Century, and because those maps were really on the houses' walls. Maps, in that context, were both instruments and symbols of power: «The XVIIth Century [...] was not only the age of the big universal and terrestrial atlases, but also the one of the more practical instruments for navigation» (Quaini, 2006, p. 107).

Maybe, the idea of Vermeer and other artists' will of demonstrating the Dutch power through the maps in their paintings it is not totally adherent to truth, it is just an hypothesis. Because the main problem was to represent reality, and Vermeer was the main and most representative artist of Dutch national character (Cfr. Schama, 2000).

Conclusions. – The reference lines are now clear and the key points have just been defined: on one hand, the artist's will to become spokesman for whoever did not have the possibility to speak, such as the bourgeoisie which was contributing in making the Netherlands a very powerful nation; on the other hand, this information reveals how that bourgeoisie had a very precise social and economic relevance especially because it had enormously contributed to the welfare and growth of the Republic.

Now, the main point is this: the confirmation of Netherlands' huge power in the 17th Century- above all political (thanks to the political liberalism as well), but also social and scientific elements, as confirmed by the abundant production of maps – that transpires in the Dutch's day-to-day life, and that artists chose as a typical portrait in order to show that same reality of nationality¹⁶. In order to confirm what it has been said so far it can be affirmed that reasons for this vast production are the great sense of proud of the nation together with the desire of it being protagonist in a global context.

One cannot fail to notice an incredibly productive and prolific reality, right in that golden period, as it emerges from studies on art in the Netherlands – some distinguished scholars have been mentioned on this occasion – and from cartographic sources. If in the *The Pelican History of Art* it is stated that even Vermeer suffered from that artistic crisis that had its beginning in 1670, the same can be assumed about cartographic production and geographic knowledge, showing a very tight bond with the political factor, above all the foreign one.

Since 1672 with the trade war which for some years had taken place in France of Louis XIV and especially with Colbert's policies, the Dutch colossus began to falter. That same colossus which had put its bases on navigation, control and dominion of waters in order to establish the greatest example (maybe the actual first one) of mercantile capitalism applied to an entire country, with the full

¹⁶ Schama points out: «there is no shortage of evidence to suggest that maps were displayed in the grander patrician houses almost interchangeably with paintings. As cultural items they were at the same time reflexive and outward-looking, embodying both a pride in place and a curiosity to situate the Netherlands within a wider order of things» (Schama, 1987, p. 78).

participation of all social strata and which culminated in its success in the sixties of the Seventeenth Century.

Together with the political decline also a falling in the representation of that glorious time appears in art and cartography. It is like if that attempt of making reality of the time and artistic portraits coincide was somehow disappeared alongside the decline of the Netherlands started in the year of the «disaster», in 1672.

It is as if when the power emerged, desire of representation arose, because what was portrayed was fully expressed by the Dutch reality, in all its forms. In parallel, the dissolution of that power and of that capitalist-mercantile and political domain seems to have brought a similar fading in the artistic and cartographic expressive element in concurrence then with the economic and political one.

In this regard, and specifically when referring to Vermeer, Sandrina Bandera states: «When Vermeer died, in 1675 at the age of 43, that glory [cultural and artistic, in Delft], faded out: some of those painters was already died [...] and the city felt in that provincialism knew right as before the immigration contributed to the rising, one century before» (Bandera in Bandera, Liedtke, Wheelock, 2012, p. 80).

Surely the same consideration can be done in other contexts, but in this particular case the coincidence is unquestionably clear, especially when taking into account that same dynamics of rise and decline occurred in various areas of human knowledge. Besides, it is important to consider that in these different areas, as it has been seen, the Dutchmen expressed themselves in a very similar way, in a substantial freedom of expression – resulting from that multiculturalism, political liberalism and religious tolerance that were essential characteristics of the Seventeenth century Netherland – that in this finds one of the most significant elements of distinction with other States of the time. If it is true that at other times the art and scientific knowledge went hand in hand with the political and economic power acquired by a State often expressing a desire arising from an in some unique way and pre-established footprint, in the Dutch case we can witness an incredibly multi-faceted world, where trades were much favoured by a laxity in legislative matters and the presence of few loose rules in economic issues, but yet led to a large commercial development.

On both pictorial and cartographic “schools” some common aspects are shown, above all the realism of the representation of the bourgeoisie. This is the main reason for such an immediate parallelisms between pictorial art and geographical representation, which here we attempt to investigate and which, as we could see, displays several sources for reflection, distinguishing the Dutch case from many other examples of great powers.

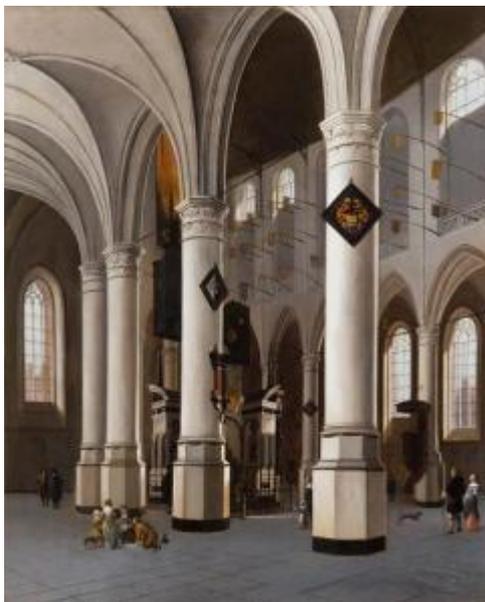
It also represents Simon Schama’s concern, when at the end of his piece he wonders if it is possible to refer to it, in such a diverse context – exemplarily portrayed in *Interior of a Church*, by Emmanuel De Witte, shown in the exhibition in Rome – as a one and only cultural identity (Cfr. Schama, 1987, pp. 617-622).

The answer to the issue pointed out by the author – on the actual consistency of an organic cultural framework – is the same one that could be applied to this study: «So I acknowledge a bias towards emphasizing those social and mental traits that tied Dutch men and women together rather than separated them [in this case, the artistic and cartographic representation]. I don’t believe it any more wicked than the alternative organizing concepts of “elite” and “popular” culture presupposing

division along the lines of social differentiation. If my view is somewhat idealist, the opposite view is often unreflectingly materialist» (Schama, 1987, p. 567).

Not a separation of representative areas, then, but their integration, for the understanding of a bygone era that saw the Dutch excelling in Europe.

Fig. 7 - *Emmanuel De Witte*, *Internal of a Church* (1664)



It is then true that Clio's slightly bowed head, in *The Allegory of Painting* by Vermeer, and the map behind her shoulders which looks almost too large compared with the human figures portrayed, seem to predict a reversal moment, a turning point in the History of Netherland, something that will actually happen only five years later: if it was mentioned earlier of the difficulty of interpreting this eyes looking down (is it because she is predicting the «year of the disaster» or maybe because she is not looking at the map because of too much confidence?), with hindsight, and maybe in a forced interpretation, it would appear right to choose the first option: those eyes looking down, besides being the portait of a passage of knowledge from art to cartography, as revealed by Farinelli, seem symbolize the awareness that once the pinnacle is reached it is only possibly to go down and that the Golden Century – of art cartography and of the Dutch society as a whole – was now, irretrievably destined to an end.

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