CHAPTER 3

The Afterlife of Maps: Circulation, Adaptation, and Negotiation

Immediately following the land surveys, the Imperial Workshops began producing different editions of the resulting atlas, the Overview Maps of Imperial Territories, for which we have spent more than thirty years of mental effort, has finally been announced completed. Mountain ranges and river courses are all consistent with the Tribute of Yu. Together with the nine ministers, you will carefully look at this general map, and also at the provincial maps. Should there be inconsistencies, and there is someone among the nine ministers who know it, they should immediately point it out. After having looked at them, [you will] report back in person.

April 1st, 1719

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438 Kangxi chao shilu, juan 282. For a translation of the entire passage, see Fu (1966), 127–128. Jiang Tingxi (1669–1732) was one of the four earliest grand secretaries and would continue to serve under the Yongzheng emperor. Hummel (1943), 142–143. “More than thirty years” confirms that in retrospect the Kangxi emperor saw the preliminary work (Chapter 1) and the more intense period of land surveying (Chapter 2) as one and the same project. The Tribute of Yu (Yugong 禹貢) is the oldest known book on geography in East Asia and appears in the Book of Documents (Shujing 書經), one of the Five Classics of Chinese literature. This reference also confirms the emperor’s attention to ancient precedents in establishing new Qing cartographic practice (Chapters 1 & 2).
Territories or Huangyu quanlan tu 皇輿全覽圖. In later decades, these would form the basis for further adaptations and reduced maps in imperially commissioned compilations. At the same time, missionaries involved in the project sent a vast corpus of maps and descriptions back to Europe, igniting a period of intense broader exchanges relating to cartography. Much of the material eventually concentrated in Paris and inspired plans for a European incorporation of the Qing atlas. The young French cartographer Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville (1697–1782) undertook the commission, basing most of his adaptations directly on maps the missionaries had sent. After finishing these adaptations, d’Anville also produced four overview maps, based only loosely on the Qing atlas, following careful negotiation of cartographic data among Beijing, Paris, and Saint Petersburg. This triangular exchange of cartographic material in the 1720s and early 1730s also informed a revision of the Qing atlas under the Yongzheng emperor and shaped the mapping of Central Asia in Saint Petersburg.

In 1735, finally, more than fifteen years after the first maps had reached Paris, d’Anville’s forty-one regional and general maps of the Chinese provinces, Tartary, Tibet, and Korea appeared as part of an expensive four-volume description of continental East Asia entitled Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise. Immediately after publication, d’Anville’s collection of maps became the focus of much debate and enjoyed such wide circulation that still other cartographers would themselves later carefully rework these European adaptations from the Qing atlas. As a result of this long process of circulation, adaptation, and negotiation of cartographic data, both the Qing atlas and its European incorporation remained the authoritative cartographic works on continental East Asia until well into the nineteenth century.

With its main focus on the circulation of the Qing atlas and the process of its adaptation for the European reading public, this chapter discusses how maps gradually transferred between individuals, reworked and eventually adapted to fit new audiences’ visual and cultural expectations. Ultimately, this led to an eventful afterlife for these maps on both ends of the Eurasian continent. I initiate my analysis with an examination of the different printed editions and manifestations of the Qing atlas. Next, I conduct a detailed analysis of its

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439  I could not ascertain the Manchu name for the atlas.
440  du Halde (1735). The name “Tartary” referred at the time to almost the entire area lying between the Chinese provinces and Muscovy, much of it inhabited by nomadic peoples. It equates approximately with present-day northeastern China (or Manchuria), Mongolia, Xinjiang, and parts of Siberia and Central Asia.