CHAPTER THREE

CARTOGRAPHY, CHOROGRAPHY AND PATRIOTIC SENTIMENT IN THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LOW COUNTRIES

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The oldest surviving map of the Low Countries produced by a native Netherlander is Hieronymus Cock’s map of 1557 [fig. 3.1]. Along the edge of the map itself, Cock explained the reasons for producing this representation of the Low Countries. ‘Studying, dear reader,’ he wrote, ‘some descriptions of the Netherlands which have been published, I realized that none of these is as complete as this country deserves’. He expressed the hope that the map and the additional information presented in the margins would encourage the viewer to love his patria or vaderland.2

In recent decades, historians have drawn attention to the way in which, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, maps and chorographies were used to express and to encourage a love of the patria.3 During the early modern period, maps began to be drawn more accurately and came to be recognized as having a more wide-ranging purpose and significance. The development of the printing press meant not only large scale production of books but also that

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1 This article draws upon chapter 4 of my, ‘The Construction of Patriotic Sentiment in the Sixteenth-Century Low Countries: Cartography, Calvinism and Rebel Propaganda’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Southampton, 1995), which was supervised by Alastair Duke.
2 H.A.M. van der Heijden, The Oldest Maps of the Netherlands (Utrecht, 1987), 55, 57. The English translations are by Van der Heijden.
illustrations, including maps, could be reproduced in significant numbers. As governments began to realize how valuable maps could be for governance and in war, they encouraged the technological developments which made the production of scale maps possible.⁴ Maps ceased to be just one-off productions designed to resolve specific problems and became objects of beauty and more general utility for ever wider audiences. It is the conviction of a growing number of historians that, as well as bringing pleasure, many of these maps expressed and stimulated a sense of pride in cities, regions and countries by providing visual displays of the viewer’s homeland.

Some historians have tried to link this development with the political events of the period. Richard Helgerson has argued that, in England, maps and chorographies played ‘their part in the long, slow movement of thought and action that brought the king’s enemies to the field... Maps let them [sixteenth-century Englishmen] see in a

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