



Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World (Picturing History)

Jerry Brotton

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Trading Territories is a beautifully illustrated book that offers a new account of the status of maps and geographical knowledge in the early modern world. Focusing on how early European geographers mapped the territories of the Old World – Africa and Southeast Asia – Trading Territories contends that the historical preoccupation with Columbus's 'discovery' of the New World in 1492 has tended to obscure the importance of the mapping of territories that have been defined as 'eastern'.

The book situates the rise of early modern mapping within the context of the seaborne commercial adventures of the early maritime empires: the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Ottomans, the Dutch, and the English. It explores the fascinating ways in which maps and globes were used to mediate the commercial and diplomatic disputes between these empires – empires that came to value the map for what it told their powerbrokers about their place in the world, over and above its objective depiction of the world. Trading Territories argues that it was trade, diplomacy, and financial speculation that shaped the development of early maps and globes, rather than the disinterested intellectual pursuit of scientific accuracy and objectivity.

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