

Evangelos Livieratos

Key coastline depictions of the Morea from Ptolemy to early 19th century cartography: relating maps with geo-strategy

From the mid-ages to the early 19th c. Peloponnesus (*Morea* or *Morée*), with a privileged shape in the Mediterranean cartography, was subject of a continuous, intense and dynamic interest of the main powers of their time, e.g. the Franks and the Venetians in early 13th c., the Ottomans (1458 – 1685, 1715 – 1821), again the Venetians (1685 – 1715), the French from early 16th c. to the Napoleonic period, the British and the Dutch from late 16th c., the Russians from the second half of 18th c. This interest was mainly related to all kinds and levels of geo-strategies and the struggle for maritime military and especially commercial dominance in Eastern Mediterranean. It is clearly reflected in cartography and mapping of the Peloponnesus' highly mnemonic shape. Cartographically speaking, the representations of Peloponnesus is undoubtedly of principal importance in history of maps depicting the regions of the Mediterranean and important items in the cartographic heritage of many European mapping traditions on a same level as e.g. the depictions of Crete and Cyprus.

In the classical culture and conception of the historians of cartography the approaches to the geometric (cartometric) analysis of maps (coastline shapes, scaled sizes, point-wise consistency with respect to geographic reference frames, issues on map-projections etc.) were always a more or less aimless or abstract exercise. Today, the expansion of modern digital and computational methods and techniques involving in-situ all necessary infographics-interfaces, make the geometric analysis of old maps a fascinating but also very substantial tool in the process of unveiling some interesting major and/or minor properties of historic representations offering thus the basis for a new understanding and revisiting of historic cartography.

In the paper, some emblematic cartographic representations of the Morea produced from the late 15th to the early 19th c., based on a variety of pre-geodetic cartographic models (e.g. Ptolemy and meta-Ptolemy models, scholar, hydrographic and semi-topographic models), namely maps (in chronological order) by De Turre, Ortelius, Coronelli, Venetian engineers, De Fer, Barbié du Bocage, Rigas Velestinlis, Leake, Lapie, are digitally analyzed, applying proper computational and visualization tools in order to show that geo-strategic interests and the dispatch for maritime military and especially commercial dominance in Eastern Mediterranean is clearly reflected in all maps used as far as their local coastline fitting is concern. The surprising results show that even maps produced far before the semi-topographic and the geodetic eras, carry higher quality coastline representation in areas of major importance in terms of military and commercial interest. The finding satisfies a rather systematic pattern confirming thus the importance of the modern digital analytic technologies in the research on historic cartographies.

Invited contribution, 2nd Workshop *The Mediterranean and its seas: Natural, social, political environments and landscapes, 15th-20th centuries*, Collaborative project University of Athens and the University of Minnesota, Athens 1-3 October 2009.