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# Cartography as Propagandist Design: From Company Maps to Virginian Masques (1613-14)

Louise McCarthy et Ladan Niayesh

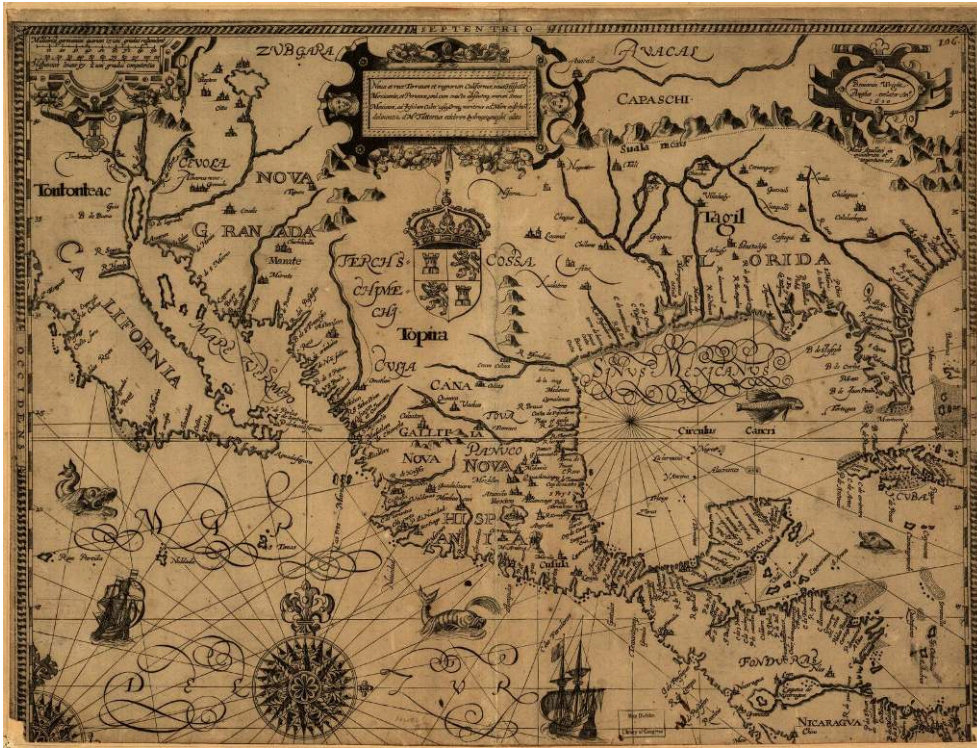
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A form of courtly dramatic entertainment, often richly symbolic, in which music and dancing played a substantial part, costume and stage machinery tended to be elaborate, and the audience might be invited to contribute to the action or the dancing.

- 1 This simple and straightforward definition of “masque” in the *OED* (sense 1.a) can mislead us into thinking that Stuart masques were primarily, if not entirely, self-congratulatory occasions organized by and for the court. Many generations of critics indeed addressed them in this manner in the past, focusing their attentions on the surviving printed texts of these entertainments and the sketches left by the court architect and stage designer Inigo Jones, who provided the sets and costumes for nearly all the masques produced in the period. Only over the past couple of decades have critics redefined their approach to masques as “courtly negotiations” – to use Martin Butler’s phrase (Butler 20) – that is to say a means for various influence groups to interact with king and court, sometimes lobbying and appealing to them, and sometimes contesting and competing with them in an array of direct or indirect ways. Yet, to take the full measure of these phenomena, we need to look not just at the masques’ surviving texts and sketches, but to consider the circuits mobilized around them, from those who sponsored and financed the entertainments to those who capitalized on the occasions post-production by printing and circulating the texts of the masques’ arguments, speeches, and songs. In this article, we wish to focus on a set of such lobbying activities connected to London’s international trade companies and their Inns of Court backers. To do so, we will take as our chief example the propaganda material produced by and around the Virginia Company, coming in the form of company-sponsored maps and Inns of Court-sponsored masque designs and costumes taking stock of the rhetoric and symbolism of those maps.

- 2 If England was still a cartographic backwater in pre-Armada years, the situation rapidly changed around the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This evolution is inseparable from the rise of English voyages of trade and settlement and the articulation of the country's imperial ambitions. Backed by militant protestant activists such as Richard Hakluyt and his circle, and largely sponsored by newly formed joint-stock trade companies such as the East India Company (hereafter EIC, chartered in 1600) and the Virginia Company (chartered in 1606, a prelude to the foundation in the following year of Jamestown, England's first permanent colonial settlement in the New World), the activity of map-makers in the period offers a fascinating meeting point between scientific and commercial charting, political agendas, and propaganda directed at potential investors, protectors, and recruits.
- 3 Even if there are overlaps between the EIC and the Virginia Company – with such nodal figures as Sir Thomas Smythe, successively governor of the EIC and treasurer of the Virginia Company – classical studies like Theodore Rabb's *Enterprise and Empire* remind us that the two projects did not offer the same appeal to merchants and gentry alike. Rabb schematizes the difference between the two sets in the following terms: “While merchants could be attracted to almost any undertaking that promised a profit, the gentry were particularly interested in colonization and spectacular explorations” (31). Taking the example of the EIC, Rabb attributes the relatively low proportion of non-merchants in that company to the latter's primarily commercial aim in the period (32). He contrasts this situation with that of the Virginia Company, which by itself concentrated half of the gentry's contribution to trade in the period, with a particular surge of investments between the years 1609 and 1615 (81-2). Those years correspond by no means to high profits for the Company, but to the height of its propaganda and recruitment campaigns in the face of fledgling conditions for the colony. The Company's propaganda took many forms, from organizing the transport and display of Virginians (mostly Algonquians) in London, to lotteries and ballads inviting all strata of society to invest in its activities, and masques and entertainments to lobby with court circles. Suffusing all these forms, cartographic rhetoric facilitated the convergence of the expectations of the various target groups, from merchants and speculators looking at commodities and mining prospects, to nobles and gentlemen looking at promises of conversion and colonization and opportunities to counter Spanish rivals in the New World. This multi-layered, cumulative discourse of propaganda is a characteristic which was already present in company-sponsored maps from the early years of the Virginia undertakings, before the official founding of the Company. To illustrate this point, we can look at some of the multi-directional promotional elements included in one of the most impressive achievements of company-sponsored mapping in relation to the New World around the turn of the century, that is to say the Tatton and Wright map (Figure 1).

Fig. 1: The "Tatton and Wright map", also known as *Nova et receterraum et regnorum Californiae, nouae Hispaniae Mexicanae, et Peruviae*, 1600.



PRINT, 40 X 52 CM.

WASHINGTON: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

- 4 The so-called "Tatton and Wright map", alternatively known as *Nova et rece terraum et regnorum Californiae, novae Hispaniae et Peruviae*, is the product of a collaboration between the "celebrem hydrogeographo" (celebrated hydrogeographer) Gabriel Tatton and the "Anglus caelator" (English engraver) Benjamin Wright. The document is a print of 40cm by 52cm, a copy of which is currently held at the Library of Congress in Washington. The full title of the map is provided in Latin by a cartouche towering over America, informing the viewer that the map reflects the current state of English knowledge of the New World whose visualisation is "exacta absoluta". The map was made in England in 1600, the same year the East India Company was chartered and six years prior to the chartering of the Virginia Company, which already enjoyed active encouragement from its early promoters. These pioneering supporters of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries included Richard Hakluyt, Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Thomas Smythe. Early promotional writings included Richard Hakluyt's *Discourse Concerning Western Planting* (1584) and Walter Raleigh's *Discovery of the large, rich, and beautiful Empire of Guiana, with a relation of the great and golden city of Manoa (which the Spaniards call El Dorado)* (1595). Those texts set forth a number of arguments designed to attract investment and to encourage settlement, appealing to individuals' thirst for material riches by emphasising the quantity and quality of commodities which may be found or grown in the New World. Alternatively, promoters resorted to moral and religious language to encourage people to envision Virginia as a promised land and its inhabitants as potential converts, the whole endeavour taking on the appearance of a Christian mission meant for the English to secure spiritual rewards. Though worded differently

from one text to the other, the substance of these appeals in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century rarely varied.

- 5 It is in that context of growing interest for the New World that Tatton and Wright produced the map under study. As a full-fledged part of the promotional literature leading up to the founding of the Virginia Company, the 1600 map itself is connected to the future Company on yet another level. Indeed, in her contribution to Harley and Woodward's *History of Cartography*, Sarah Tyacke observes that though Tatton himself was not directly employed by a company, company shipmasters were supplied with his work while aristocratic promoters in England backed and acquired his maps (Harley and Woodward, 1735 and 1746).
- 6 The first impression upon viewing the map is one of profuseness and confusion. As with other company-sponsored maps from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, this map blends practical knowledge deriving from experience with frozen worldviews inherited from tradition. While the structure, semiotics and design of the map cannot be said to be specifically English, they can be connected to established ways of mapmaking common to many cartographers and artists in Western Europe in the early modern period, including the Spanish whose influence is otherwise acknowledged in the toponyms and the coat of arms featured on the Tatton and Wright map. Besides, as Catherine Delano Smith demonstrates, English maps were becoming more and more standardised, with famous cartographers such as John Norden (1546-1625) working towards an increased abstraction of cartographic signs (Smith 10). It was he, in particular, who started symbolising urban settlements with a circle around a dot marked on the main door of a house metonymically representing the entire village or town, a symbol which can be found across Tatton and Wright's map of North America. Cartographic conventions of the time thus helped shape an image perceived as truthful, including structural features such as rhumb lines, indications of scale along with references to the "septentrio" (north), "occidens" (west) and "oriens" (east) in the frame lines. It is therefore tempting to read the map as a reliable guide for merchants and their seafaring envoys.
- 7 Yet, it seems difficult to account for the *raison d'être* of this map solely in pragmatic terms. The very scope and scale of the map are problematic, but telling. Though maps of areas which companies set their eyes on were usually limited in scope, the Tatton and Wright map offers neither a complete worldview (the way a world map would) nor a detailed regional mapping (as nautical charts usually do). Its intermediate scope precludes the map from showing key information on sea-routes across the Atlantic on a micro level, or on harbours and local geography on a macro level. The zone of interest delineated here includes the coastal area between northern French-held territory and vast swathes of land under Spanish control in the south. On the map, the threatening "Nova Hispania" looms large while space is saturated with Spanish toponyms and urban settlements. The upper part of the map however, characterised by a toponymic blank, calls for English initiative.
- 8 Why would an English map sponsored by an English company focus on an area dominated by the Spanish? The combination of the map's scope with the mention of mineral wealth points to the lingering hope of extracting ore in the New World in imitation of the Spanish throughout the sixteenth century. At the time, Walter Raleigh was still promoting an American Eldorado awaiting English entrepreneurs. In fact, Raleigh's idea made it to the map as Gabriel Tatton himself is known to have drawn a



chart of Guiana in 1613 (British Library, Add. MS. 34240N). The chronic shortage of bullion when trading with the East Indies probably motivated the labelling of the northern mountain range as the “mons Apallaci in quo aurum et argentum est” (the Appalachian mountains where gold and silver are). Vague as the description may seem, it entertained the hope of establishing lucrative mines in parts of America not yet covered in Iberian toponyms – a hope which persisted as long as Raleigh had a head on his shoulders. More specifically, the golden dream of a Virginian Eldorado lingered even as colonists were faced with the absence of any mineral resources. Captain John Smith himself, a leading adventurer of the Virginia Company in its early years, was misled by the advertising of gold mines in North America as he complained that the British had “chanced in a Land even as God made it, where we found only an idle, improvident, scattered people *ignorant of the knowledge of gold or silver, or any commodities, and carelesse of any thing*” (our emphasis, Smith 206). Other members of the Virginia Company sent to scout the Chesapeake expressed an interest in finding precious metals. Christopher Newport, for example, reported to the Company that he was determined to find the “head of this Ryver, the Laake mentioned by others heretofore, the Sea againe, the *Mountaynes Apalatsi*” (our emphasis; reprinted in Barbour 80), the latter geographical entity referring to the mountain range identified by Tatton and Wright and associated with gold and silver. To contend with a toponymy which recast the New World as an updated – and predominantly Iberian – version of the Old one (*Nova Hispania, Nova Granada*) as well as with the Spanish *imperium* emanating from the coat of arms of Castile and León stamped in the middle of the map, the mapmakers suggest that English *dominium* over the land and its resources might still be exercised by England in the New World.

- 9 The Tatton and Wright map showcases few obvious resources, but a careful observer may identify at least three different sources of wealth. The sea and rivers offered resources in fish which could be found in the “Sinus Mexicanus” (Mexican Bay) for example. This suggestion was later matched by Gabriel Archer who, reporting to the Virginia Company which had sent him, made enthusiastic comments on the “multitudes of fish, bankes of oysters and many great crabbs” he found in the Chesapeake (reprinted in Barbour 141). However, profit margins in the halieutic industry were limited. Mountains, as fountains of ore, offered more alluring economic opportunities. Less obviously so, but of equal interest to English investors, empty land was also an alluring asset. Its fertility and abundance are primarily suggested by the ornamental fruit hanging from the cartouches, but little is said of where and how exactly to find profitable raw commodities in America. Overall, the map seemingly dramatises an English dilemma: should maps represent abundance and fertility or promote an image of the virgin and empty land? This tension may be resolved if one interprets cartographic blanks differently. The notion of cartographic “silence”, first formulated by John Brian Harley (Harley 57-76), might help us retrieve the implicit messages of the cartographic text.
- 10 The American landscape is hardly envisioned for what it already has to offer. Indeed, though maps are usually understood as spatial representations of objects defined by a unique location, temporally constructed spatiality seems to define company-sponsored maps. Company interests and activities were inherently forward-looking, seeking to fulfil a potential observed in nature. Thus, aspiring investors and supporters at Court were not invited to gaze upon nature for what it was, but for what it *could be*. The map was designed not only to persuade but also to redirect a certain course of action –

spurring viewers into investing for example – and thus qualifies as a promotional, if not propagandistic, piece of discourse.

- 11 Like much of the promotional material produced by and around trade company circles, Tatton and Wright's map cumulates what Patricia Crouch calls "the nation's conflicted and in many ways incoherent vision of the Jacobean Virginia enterprise" (Crouch 395). Crouch uses that phrase, not about the 1600 map, but about a map-inspired court entertainment, George Chapman's *Memorable Masque of the Two Honourable Houses or Inns of Court; the Middle Temple, and Lyncoln's Inn* (hereafter *The Memorable Masque*), prepared as part of the 1613 marriage celebrations for Princess Elizabeth – James I's daughter – and Frederick V, the Protestant Elector Palatine. That masque belongs to a set of three aristocratic wedding masques produced in 1613-14 and including similar cartographic Virginian features. The other two are Thomas Campion's *Masque of Squires* and the anonymous *Masque of Flowers*, both performed at court for the wedding of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset and James I's favourite, and Lady Frances Howard. As Crouch explains about *The Memorable Masque*, three satellites of production and patronage meet here: 1) prominent members of the Virginia Company who sponsored the masques, especially through their Inns of Court circuit for *The Memorable Masque*; 2) the court of the recently deceased Prince Henry, James I's son and heir, unofficial patron of the Virginia Company from the start, supporter of the imprisoned Walter Raleigh, and chief-promoter of an anti-Spanish Protestant alliance through his sister's wedding; 3) the court of James I himself, the masque's "ideal spectator (...) who established the terms under which the Virginia Company of London operated" (395).
- 12 The central conceit of *The Memorable Masque* involves a group of would-be Virginian princes and sun-worshipping priests, travelling to Britain on an island made of a gold mine, to offer their riches to the sun-king James I and accept conversion at his hands. To get an idea of Inigo Jones' scenography, we can look at the text's description of the climactic moment of revelation in the masque: "This song ended, a mount opened and spread like a sky, in which appeared a sun setting, beneath which sat the twelve masquers in a mine of gold, twelve torch-bearers holding their torches before them" (quoted from Strong and Orgel 260, lines 509-11). Unfortunately, no sketch has survived for the scenery. The best we have to illustrate this moment is Jones' sketch for a torch-bearer's costume, placed on the set like a rich vignette on a map of golden islands and mines. The performance of that masque was preceded by a procession of the pseudo-Virginian visitors through the streets of London, from the Inns of Court sponsoring the entertainment to the royal palace of Whitehall and its Banqueting House where the performance proper took place. The text of the masque opens with an elaborate description of that procession.
- 13 *The Masque of Squires*, equally performed in the Banqueting House of Whitehall, involved a change of scenery, possibly through the use of a *periaktoi* (revolving machinery), first showing a sea coast and promontories where the spectators witnessed the antimasque. This typical feature of Jacobean court masques – sometimes referred to as "ante-masque" or "antic-masque" – was first devised by Ben Jonson for his *Masque of Queens* (1609) and used thenceforth as a foil or counterpoint enhancing the harmony and order of the masque which was to follow it. In the case of *The Masque of Squires*, the antimasque included a confused dance of the four continents, with America appearing in Virginian habits, complete with a red skin coat, and feathered hat surmounted by a small crown. The antimasque ended when this confused allegory of a world map shifted



and the scenery stabilized with a view of London and the river Thames for the final harmony of the masque and its restoration to order: “on the sodaine the whole Sceane is changed; for whereas before all seemed to be done at the sea and sea coast, now the Promontories are sodainly removed, and London with the Thames is very artificially presented in their place” (Sig B2v).

- 14 Antimasque was equally used in *The Masque of Flowers*, this time right at the opening of the entertainment, featuring a challenge between the satyre Silenus and an Amerindian god referred to as “Kawasha” on the respective merits of wine and of tobacco. The name “Kawasha” was likely derived from “Kiwasa” referenced as an Algonquian deity in Thomas Harriot’s *Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590, sig. D2r) and appearing in an engraving in Theodor de Bry’s edition of Harriot (details in Wood 133 and Working 189). Again, the scenery mapped the tension visually through the perspective view of a city, with battlements and temples on either side, dedicated to the two contenders:

AT the entrance of the King, at the lower end of the Banqueting house, appeared a Trauers painted in *Perspectiue*, like the wall of a Cittie, with battlements, ouer which were seene the Tops of houses. In the middle whereof was a great gate, and on either side a Temple, the one dedicated to *Silenus*, and the other to *Kawasha*. (Sig A4v)

- 15 Besides obvious common points in terms of costuming – with lots of gold and feathers involved in each case – what the three masques prominently share is their translational value, bringing a New World visual geography to London and/or revealing a recognizable London scenery underneath the map of alien-ness. Just as the annotations on the Tatton and Wright map translated geographical difference into familiar names – Nova Hispania, Nova Granada, Gallitia Nova – and reclaimed that novelty by stamping it with an imperial seal from the Old World, *The Memorable Masque* translates the geographic difference of its masquers by attributing their travelling gold-mine island to the classical god of wealth Plutus introducing the entertainment. The masque further calls their sun-worshipping priests Phoebades – after the classical sun-god Phoebus – and makes them parade through the streets of London like a printed map that would circulate among the population and reveal its promised riches to all citizens willing to invest in them. Britain, and more specifically London, are presented here as the fixed centre of knowledge and power towards which an animated map of Virginia travels. Likewise, in *The Masque of Squires*, the confused animation of the world map with the four continents dancing the antimasque, reaches stability and order once a perspective map of London and the river Thames is revealed as the destination where the riches of the New World should converge. Similarly, the contention between Old-World Silenus and New-World Kawasha in *The Masque of Flowers* eventually gives way to the generic flower garden of the masque’s title as a traverse is drawn to reveal this vision of abundance and harmony at the heart of the royal palace in London. The pedagogical value of these designs backed by the Inns of Court gentlemen cannot be denied in a London which, in the words of Coll Thrush, still “had to learn to be colonial” (Thrush 36). The Inns of Court’s mediation in this process was crucial, with their combination of urban civility and colonial involvement buttressed by their long-standing patronage of cartographic endeavours and designs. Traces of this trend are visible to this day in the Inns’ collections from the early modern period, with for example the pair of celestial and terrestrial globes by Emory Molyneux which are still exhibited in the Middle Temple library.

- 16 The translational value of the Tatton and Wright map extended to the conventions used in it to feature Indian localities, be they attested, or more or less fabled ones. Indian-sounding place names on that map came with generic images of towns and cities based on European representational codes, as if they were already claimed for Europe, like the cartouches of Indian heads used along with fruits and leaves as both decoration for the map's title and potential commodities put forward for advertisement. In the same manner, the Virginians of the different masques are right from the start translated and recuperated into European codes and hierarchies, with "Knights" and "Princes" placed in classically-looking architectural frames, complete with Greek and Roman divinities to allegorically redefine and claim their territory and possessions. The translational strategy employed in both promotional maps and company-sponsored masques thus amounts to having aliens and alien-ness "naturalized and thereby neutralized" as Rebecca Ann Bach puts it (Bach 220). In her words, such European recoding and reclaiming display colonized Virginia as "a wildness that can be tamed, harnessed, and though not completely erased, made completely English." Not for nothing are the spectators given to see mock-Virginians in *The Memorable Masque* riding through the streets of London with "cane darts of the finest gold" (Strong and Orgel 256, line 38) in their hands, blunting the very weapons of potential Indian resistance to colonization into further riches brought by them as visual proof that the Virginia enterprise was worth investing in.
- 17 One last feature that the Virginian masques share with promotional maps like the Tatton and Wright one is the anticipatory quality of their displays and their forward-looking argument. Just as the vague promises and the blanks on the map came as an invitation to take what was there for the seizing, court entertainments presented visions which were always on the verge of getting materialized for the spectators, chief among whom the King on whose central perspective the architectural device of the masque focuses by definition. Like a map in the process of getting drawn, the announced conversions of the Virginians and the final dances, in which masked and unmasked participants mingled, completed the masques' educational programmes in colonization and what Gavin Hollis identifies as the sponsoring Company's "powerful marketing strategy" (Hollis 121). Spectators were destined to become what they were looking at: the London crowds watching the processions and the Inns of Court gentlemen performing in them were meant to become investors and colonists shaping and fashioning what Lauren Working calls an "imperial polity" in the title of her book, while the King and court were invited to become backers and policy-makers completing both the theatrical illusion and the imperial ambition at one go.
- 18 *In fine*, how effective was the cartographic medium as a means of selling Virginia? It is true that both maps and masques brought a tangible version of Virginia to an audience of merchants and court members in London, theatrically relocating Algonquian Indians, the Chesapeake Bay, and fantasised mineral resources on an English stage. Their visual quality helped provide an enthralling image of America, conveying promotional messages in a distinctively emotional and aesthetic manner. Yet, for all their evocative power, maps and masques also left room for hermeneutical ambiguity and misinterpretation behind an overall façade of thematic unity, presenting different and at times contradictory colonial projects to their various target audiences, from the profit-seeking tobacco investors to gentleman colonists like the Earl of Southampton, director of the Company through its final years (1619-24). The cacophony of these

competing projects – and not just fierce Indian opposition materializing in the 1622 Jamestown massacre – may be one reason for the ultimate failure and dissolution of the Virginia Company of London in 1624, hardly a decade after the magnificent court displays of mock-Indian gold, tobacco and conversion.

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## RÉSUMÉS

Le développement de la cartographie anglaise au tournant du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle est indissociable de l'essor des voyages de commerce et de colonisation britanniques et de l'articulation des ambitions impériales du pays. Soutenue par les compagnies commerciales et des factions protestantes militantes, l'activité des cartographes de cette époque offre un point de convergence fascinant entre la cartographie scientifique, la propagande idéologique, les visées politiques et les entreprises commerciales. Partant de la carte du Nouveau Monde réalisée en 1600 par Gabriel Tatton et Benjamin Wright, nous étudions dans un premier temps l'enchevêtrement des activités de propagande et des circuits d'influence dans lesquels les compagnies s'engagent et qui sont matérialisés dans les cartes. Puis, nous nous concentrons sur certains des produits dérivés de ces cartes, notamment un ensemble de masques de cour produits dans les années 1613-14, et qui mobilisent l'alphabet cartographique et l'exotisme virginien pour cibler un public mixte d'investisseurs potentiels issus de la cour et de la ville.

The development of English cartography at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is inseparable from the rise of English voyages of trade and settlement and the articulation of the country's imperial ambitions. Backed by merchant companies and militant Protestant factions, the activity of map-makers in the period offers a fascinating meeting point between scientific charting, ideological propaganda, political agendas and commercial undertakings. Taking as our starting point the New World map of 1600 by Gabriel Tatton and Benjamin Wright, we first study the overlapping of international companies' propaganda and lobbying activities materialized in maps, before focusing on some of the by-products derived from those maps, notably a set of court masques produced in the years 1613-14, which enlist cartographic alphabet and Virginian exotica to target a mixed audience of court and city investors.

## INDEX

**Keywords** : Company maps, Virginia Company, Court Masques, propaganda, empire

**Mots-clés** : cartes, Virginia Company, masques de cour, propagande, empire

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