



## Europe as seen by the Homann publishing firm in Nürnberg in the 18th century

By Markus Heinz (Berlin)

### Abstract

Three hundred years ago Johann Baptist Homann published his first atlas. It was the first of a series of more than fifty different atlases issued by this most important German map publishing firm of the eighteenth century during its lifetime of 147 years (1702-1848). These atlases were collected out of a continually increased pool of folio maps comprising in ca. 1800 more than 600 cartographic items. This impressive programme together with a comparatively high quality helped the firm to attain a leading position in the German-speaking area for the time span from 1715 to 1785 and considerable influence further into eastern Europe as well as into northern and southern Europe. Homann maps – being in some instances almost a synonym for

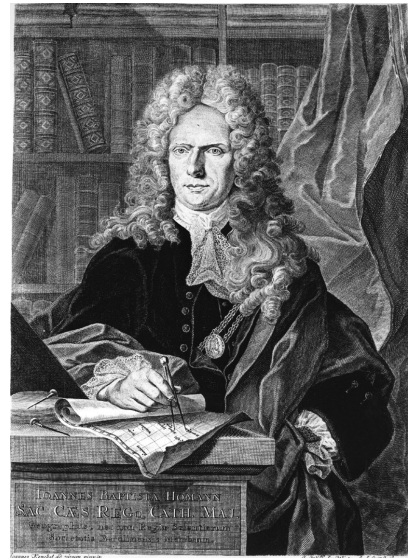


Johann Baptist Homann, Map of Europe (Nuremberg 1702/07)



maps – therefore are a key to the ideas learned people in a major part of Europe had towards the cartographic image of the world. Thus this paper will not focus on the scientific concepts of Europe, but rather on general knowledge.

When looking for the image of Europe as a spatial idea, the maps of Europe as a whole and those of its parts can be looked at in a sequence similar to turning over the pages of the firms atlases. We will find a couple of different maps of Europe offered at the same time, defining different aspects that they thought worth mapping depicted as the general theme of the sheet or as one information to be read out of its map signs. When looking in a similar way at maps showing territories at the border of Europe or colonies of European powers overseas, it will give additional insight in their definition of Europe. None of these maps should be studied without constant reference to accompanying texts or contemporary books on geography and cartography.



Portrait of Johann Baptist Homann (Nuremberg 1715/22)

In so doing we will find geographical definitions and touch on the question of European standards, there will be hierarchical structures of the territories and a rather basic interpretation of religion. Maps of the 18<sup>th</sup> century have a maybe unsuspected attitude towards tradition versus topicality. On the one hand the title text of a map stresses the importance of being new and up to date, on the other hand the area depicted on the map is usually designed according to the border and shape of traditional territories rather than the political situation of the day. The borders between the possessions of one or the other power are not always marked and if they are, they form a minor feature in the general appearance of the map. Geography was one of the eyes of history – besides chronology. Geography was the ancillary science and therefore it is important to find out the extent to which the definition of Europe has historical legitimacy and what we can learn from historical maps. Finally it is worth considering which themes we do not find in Homann maps. Some of these were already out of fashion – such as the allegorical representation of the continent – others were not yet considered relevant and others still could not be mapped for lack of data (e. g. maps showing the physical geography). ■

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Born in Salzburg (Austria), studied history and history of art in Salzburg and Vienna (PhD in 2003). Worked on the Homann firm since 1991 and published numerous articles on different aspects of the history of cartography. In 2002 he curated an exhibition in Nuremberg: *'Auserlesene und allerneueste Landkarten – Der Verlag Homann in Nürnberg 1702-1848'* [*Selected and most recent maps – The Homann publishers in Nuremberg*].



Since 2002 he is leading member of the commission on the history of cartography of the German Cartographical Society (DGfK) and in the same year he was appointed deputy director of the Map Department of the Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage.