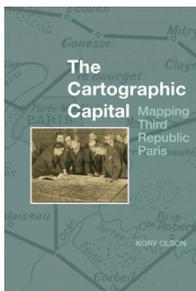


Kory Olson
Stockton University

A Scientific Approach to Making Maps: Parlier's *Méthode de cartographie, cartes à main levée et de mémoire tracés rapides*

At the start of the twentieth century, French geography was at a crossroads. The traditional method of teaching children the subject focused on learning and memorizing the names of villages, cantons, departments, etc., but did little to help future citizens situate France within a changing Europe or even find it on a map. A new generation of geographers, epitomized by Vidal de La Blache, promoted geography and brought maps to the classroom. In one man's bid to help the French become more comfortable with cartography, Jacques Parlier, a former artillery captain in the French army, published his two *Méthode(s) de cartographie, cartes à main levée et de mémoire tracés rapides* that focused on France and then the world. Via these texts, Parlier shows readers here how to draw accurate maps of France, European countries, and five continents at a time when few Frenchmen could. He encourages them to focus on simple lines, eliminate secondary details that may complicate or overburden a budding cartographer's work, and eschew free-hand drawing in favor of his more scientific process.

This paper will examine Parlier's manuals to uncover how he presents the cartographic craft to his audience. Parlier's goal was simple, he wished to guide French students towards "une géographie scientifique" that engages "essential graphic operations" (12). Parlier bases geographical entities, such as a continent or country, on geometric forms and includes "helpful diagrams" that readers can use to complete their maps. Yet the process may not be as elementary as Parlier suggests, as it requires a certain comfort with both math and science. To draw North America, for example, a reader should start with an equilateral triangle. Next, he or she must complete numerous additional steps: create multiple parallelograms, extend vertical based on calculated angle gradients, and then notice and fill in river basins. Italy, another example, requires a reader to draw and connect a trapezoid, an isosceles triangle, right angles, an additional separate triangle for Sicily, and place straight lines for the Po River and its tributaries. Through an examination of Parlier's maps and method, we will see how he sought to standardize the cartographic process, render it more accessible to a greater French public, and present the world in an orderly manner to a nation eager to see and recreate it.



Kory Olson is Associate Professor of French at Stockton University. He recently published *The Cartographic Capital: Mapping Third Republic Paris with Liverpool University Press* (2018) as well as articles on French geography, travel guides, geographic education, and French urbanism among others.

Contact Info: olsonk@stockton.edu
[@olsonkory](https://twitter.com/olsonkory) (twitter), [@kory.e.olson](https://www.instagram.com/kory.e.olson) (instagram)