

Pictorial atlases revisited - the didactic narrative approach of Cläre With and Walter von Dreesen

Eric Losang^a

^a Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig

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Between 1930 and 1935, Müller & Kiepenheuer Publishers in Potsdam published a series of geographical school atlases under the title 'Länder und Völker - Ein Bilderatlas in Einzelheften (Countries and Peoples - a pictorial Atlas in single volumes)'. The simple atlases, illustrated in black and white (except for the cover) (Table 1) took on approaches to adopt regional geography for primary schools. Unfortunately, the approach was not continued due to National Socialist school policy but was partly taken up again in the post-war period.

Volume	Editions
North Amerika	1930
South Amerika	1930
Mexico	1930
Australia	1930
America (Anthology containing the volumes North America, Mexico and South America)	1931, 1935
India	1930
Egypt	1930
Japan	1931, 1935
Germany (Niedersachsen)	1933, 1934, 1952
Germany (Schleswig Holstein)	1933, 1934, 1952

Table 1. Editions overview "Länder und Völker - Ein Bilderatlas in Einzelheften"

Not much is known about Cläre With. Her Wikipedia entry only contains a few key details, which is partly due to the different spelling of her name. Born in Bremerhaven as the daughter of a doctor, she initially worked as a teacher in Berlin and later ran a primary school in the north-east of the city.

During this time, she maintained close contacts with educationalists who established alternative forms of schooling - particularly in the working-class district of Berlin Neu-Köln - such as the concept of the gardening school. Through her brother Karl With (director of the Cologne Museum of Decorative Arts and the Cologne Werkschulen), she gained access to the Bauhaus Colegium in Weimar and maintained a long-standing friendship with László Moholy-Nagy. This contact resulted in significant collaboration with the illustrator Walter von Dreesen, with whom she published several volumes of her illustrated atlas series 'Countries and Peoples' in the 1930s.

The basic idea of the series was to 'give a pictorial impression of the face of the earth' (With 1930, preface), employing 'pictorial language as a deliberate medium of expression' to integrate cartographic, pictorial, and textual information through various representational frameworks (Fig. 1).

The employment of these graphic means adopted diverse didactic approaches, which were subsequently employed in the atlas productions by Karel Raisz (Atlas of Global Geography, 1948) and Herbert Bayer (World Geo-Graphic Atlas, 1953) (Losang 2021).

The plates consistently adhere to the principle of maximum visualisation, a concept further reinforced by the integration of concise explanatory texts. This approach facilitates the elucidation of individual facts and processes, such as the geological formation of the Japanese islands (Fig. 2), in a simplified form. Additionally, elements of contemporary storytelling methodologies (Roth 2020) have been adopted.

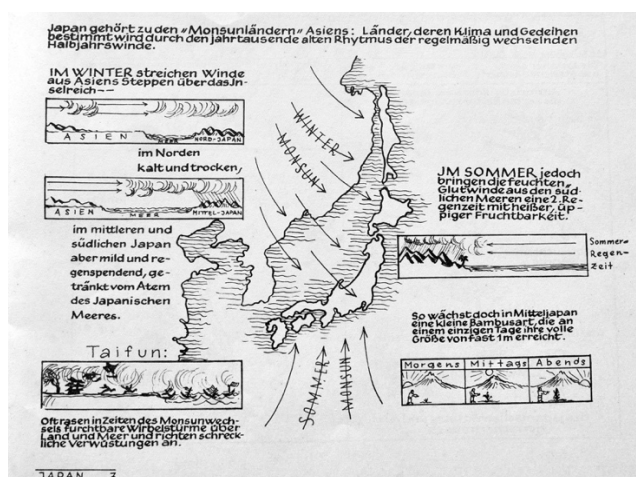


Figure 1. Weather regimes of the Japanese Islands (With 1931:7)

However, the scarcity of the inexpensive atlas booklets (especially in libraries) has thus far prevented the subject from being the focus of a systematic and comparative study. In particular, the merging of alternative didactic concepts and the Bauhaus school's approach to merging function and aesthetics has not yet been explored cartographically. This paper aims to address this gap by incorporating current storytelling concepts in atlases (Sieber 2021) and identifying structural and syntactic elements still focussed in modern atlases projects.

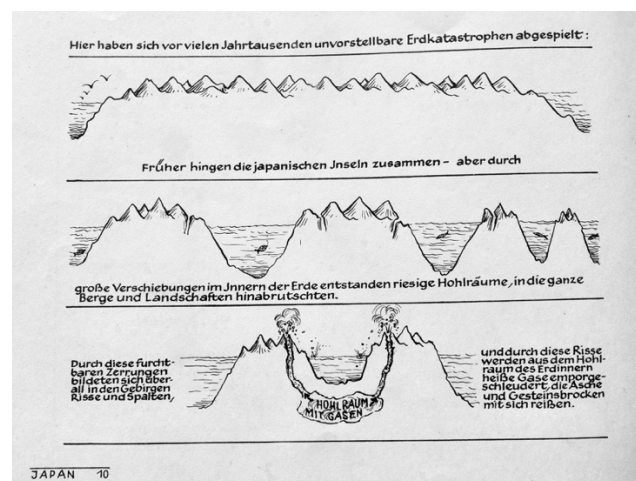


Figure 2. The geological development of the Japanese islands (With 1931:10)

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