RESEARCH SURVEY:
Space, Topography, and Cartography in the Ancient World, Part I

INTRODUCTION

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Being a Review of Rathmann, M. 2022. *Tabula Peutingeriana. Die bedeutendste Weltkarte aus der Antike*. 4th fully rev. and augmented ed. Darmstadt: WBG. ISBN: 978-3-8053-5350-2, pp. 128 with 41 col., 33 b/w, and 33 col. ills. of parts of the Tabula Peutingeriana, €100.00.

The "spatial turn" is shattering the often still-commonplace notion and framework that every culture views, structures, organizes, and narrates space, environment, and related maps in a bird's eye fashion by means of neutral (cartographic) symbols, pictorial elements, and fix-points.[1] Even the apparently objective digital maps of today only pretend to display realities and truth; rather, they are subject to manipulation: for instance, political maps provided by business companies depict disputed boundaries differently in different country's versions, arguably to fit the political ideas of the targeted customers and/or of the controlling regimes.[2] Street or city maps display realities different from touristic maps of the same area. In turn, we, of course, all know that our mental maps of places, regions, or countries which we have visited are different from printed or digital maps, as we link them with our own experiences, expectations, and knowledge, and thus talk and write about these spaces within an self-created cognitive structure.[3]

Within this framework of perception, cognition, and awareness, Critical Space Theory and related post-structuralist approaches have successfully gained ground within the Social Sciences and Humanities from the 1980s onwards; these approaches have revealed and questioned the political, legal, social, and cultural constructions, negotiations, and power relations involved in space, topography, and cartography, among other topics. These critical approaches have also

[1] On Spatial Humanities, see the introductory webpage: https://spatial.scholarslab.org (05.03.2023), with further information, literature, and resources for different disciplines.

[2] See, e.g., Müllner 2012, 85–94, with some examples.

[3] Mental Space Theory within cognitive semantics analyzes such created "worlds." The building and use of such "maps" could arguably also described by means of frames and framing theories: see E. Günther and S. Günther 2022 for a method-focused application to ancient studies.

JAC 38/1 (2023)
doi: 10.16758/j.cnki.1004-9371.2023.02.017

enriched historical studies over the past decades, both on the source-critical level of re-examining the past notions, narrations, and use of space, topography, and cartography, and on the methodological level of defining critically reflexive ways for studying these pasts.[4] In a series of survey articles appearing from this issue of *JAC* onwards (this short introduction is followed by the article on Ancient Egypt by Hannah Pethen), we intend to provide an overview of current research and discussions within the various disciplines of Ancient Western Studies and regions of the ancient world, ranging from the Ancient Near East and Egypt by way of the Greco-Roman periods to Late Antiquity.

A prime example for the successful application of elements of Critical Cartography to ancient studies is certainly presented by the recent swell of academic interest in the Tabula Peutingeriana (hereafter: TP), named after its Humanist-era owner Konrad Peutinger (1465–1547), housed since 1738 in the Wiener Hofbibliothek, today the Austrian National Library in Vienna (Codex Vindobonensis 324), and part of UNESCO's Memory of the World Register since 2007.[5] This well written and nicely produced book by Michael Rathmann, Professor of Ancient History at the KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, is a product of the re-evaluation of this medieval map which is, in fact, ultimately a copy of an ancient map displaying the Roman Empire and related territories, namely, the *oikoumene*; as a popular science book, it accompanies (so to speak) the DFG-project "Commentary on the Tabula Peutingeriana" (project number 319254113), led by PD Dr Silke Diederich (University of Cologne) and Rathmann, who, together with their team, have built an excellent webpage to study the individual toponyms in the TP, based on an interactive digital version of the map with extensive commentaries on the origin, design, and geographical reliability of a respective entry, in what way other ancient authors and geographical sources have positioned and described the respective localities, and how the respective toponym fits into the overall scope and purpose of the TP.[6] While the basic story about the discovery of the map and the notion of it being a copy of an ancient map has long prevailed within research, there is not yet a full scholarly consensus on several questions: what kind of map is this parchment scroll which has survived in 11 sections (a 12th section of the westernmost part was reconstructed by Konrad Miller at the end of the 19th century), measuring ca. 6.75 m in length and ca. 0.33 m in height? how many copy stages and "updates" can we detect and reconstruct from the extant medieval copy? how has the development of

[4] On the spatial turn in historical studies, see: https://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/the-spatial-turn-in-history/index.html (05.03.2023).

[5] A digitized version of the original can be found here: https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_2764184&order=1&view=SINGLE (05.03.2023).

[6] See: https://tp-online.ku.de/index_en.php (05.03.2023).

ancient, medieval, and modern cartography influenced the layout as well as the interpretation of the TP?

To all these questions, Rathmann offers prolific answers based on his and his team's detailed study of the TP. After an introduction to the discovery and (early) modern treatment of the *rotulus*, as well as the possible origin of this medieval copy of the TP (Reichenau Abbey?) (pp. 6–8; on the latter, cf. pp. 33–34 on the subdivision of labour in producing the medieval copy) – the state of research is not treated in a discrete chapter, but rather is interspersed in the chapters where appropriate (cf. pp. 34–35 on the current DFG-project) – Rathmann embeds the TP within the history of ancient geography and cartography, and begins to challenge the idea that the TP ultimately descends from a public representative map of the Roman Empire going back either to the only literarily attested Map of Agrippa from the Augustan era (advocated, e.g., by Ekkehard Weber[7]) or to the period of the Diocletian Tetrarchy (Richard Talbert[8]) (cf. pp. 8–11). The wealth of inconsistencies and the lack of updates to the geographical knowledge attested for imperial times in the TP points rather to successive processes of formation and selective updates, with its ancient final state most probably being achieved in or around AD 435, for which we have a poem testifying to the production of such a map (*Anth. Lat*. 724: *Hoc opus egregium, quo mundi summa tenetur* …; see the discussion of the pros and cons on pp. 8–9). At this point, Rathmann introduces the notion that the TP is not based on a map of the Roman road network (in form of the *cursus publicus*) or an *itinerarium pictum* for travel purposes, but rather was originally a depiction of a chorographic textual description of the *oikoumene* (that is, the then-known world) from Hellenistic times which was selectively supplemented and updated with information (including Roman roads) at the different times of the copying process necessary due to the perishability of the writing material (in ancient times, papyrus) (pp. 11–15). Within this framework, he explains the overall layout of the map which is stretched in its length and compressed in its height, deriving from the idea of Greek geographical principles of order (initially based on the *diaphragma* line; see pp. 28–29), and the occasionally rather conservative information-handling which was distinct from ancient up-to-date scientific mathematical-physical geography research, a niche and specialized discipline (cf. the differentiation in Ptol. *Geogr*. 1.1.1). By relating the TP to the Artemidorus papyrus fragment as well as an illustration of North Italy in the *Historiae Ferrarienses* by Pellegrino Prisciani

[7] Most recently in Weber 2016, where, however, the Hellenistic origin of the Map of Agrippa is acknowledged.

[8] Talbert 2010, esp. 133–161; for further discussion of literature and an up-to-date bibliography, see, e.g., Rathmann 2014 and 2020, and the article by Diederich 2021, mentioned below.

(ca. 1435–1518), Rathmann reconstructs a complex transmission process in several stages, beginning somewhere around 200 BC (cf. ills. 18 and 19 on p. 21 and 22, respectively).

With this process-oriented approach, he also assesses the plentiful geographical information and pictorial elements of the TP, in particular the 555 location vignettes (pp. 31–33): these are mainly explained as cultural-antiquarian information clusters which could either be transmitted untouched or modified, supplemented, or updated by the respective copyists (also in medieval times), and thus must first be examined individually before drawing conclusions as to any internal logic for the overall map, a less than viable prospect for Rathmann.

This brief but rich and concise analytical section will certainly provoke and promote discussion about the character of the TP, especially since the diachronic, processual approach which Rathmann favors is convincing in its inner argumentative circle, but possibly impossible to substantiate by means of a comprehensive and cohesive set of outer extant evidence due to the fragmentary state of Hellenistic geographical literature; the probably developing discourse over the difference between mathematical geography and chorography has been pointed out by Christian Hänger in his review of an earlier edition of the book.[9] In future research, one may focus more on the cultural framework and the possible audience/viewers of the map – Rathmann places the Roman copy of the TP in a possible senatorial context (p. 28) – which could have served as starting point for narrations;[10] it could, and should, be compared also with further ancient works, for instance, with the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* (as well as the *Descriptio totius mundi*) which displays interesting analogies in terms of distance information, emphasis on certain centers (also besides Rome), and cultural narrations enriched with ethnographical topoi.[11]

As the book's popular science character demands, the second and greater part of the work consists of the tables of the TP, the 11 sections being each split into three parts (the respective part of the section is indicated on the lower part of each left page and placed within a modern map). On the left side of each double page, one finds a b/w reproduction of the colored original image placed on the right. Selected modern geographical units and a selection of the ancient place names, landscapes, and cultural information (if identifiable with the modern German translation) within the TP are equally provided at the left margin and linked to the position in the b/w reproduction with white broken lines. Together

[9] Hänger 2019, pointing to the non-strict use and differentiation in Strabo.

[10] On such a reading of the TP as mirroring Roman imperial landscape, see Diederich 2021.

[11] On the *Expositio* / *Descriptio*, see Rougé 1966. Further updates will follow in Kai Ruffing's entry in *Brill's New Jacoby*. In the meantime, see Hächler 2021 with updated bibliography.

with the other rich illustrations of the analytical part, this makes the work an attractive read (not only) for bibliophiles. The ensuing endnotes along with the bibliography and the indices (toponyms and legends on the TP, with exact positioning within grid; ancient and modern place names) renders the book more accessible for those with scholarly or regional interests.

In sum, the TP and the ongoing research on and discussion about it is a good indicator of the degree to which the spatial turn and Critical Space Theory have entered the sphere of ancient geographical and cartographical studies.

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