Studia Humaniora Tartuensia

REVIEWS

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Talbert, Richard; Brodersen, Kai (eds.) (2004) *Space in the Roman world: its perception and presentation*. Münster: LIT. (*Antike Kultur und Geschichte*; 5.) 154 p. ISBN 3-8258-7419-2. Price: €14.90.

The reviewed book consists of five original articles in English divided into three sections: 1) the tradition of scientific geography, studied by Klaus Geus and Alfred Stückelberger; 2) Roman itinerary literature, explored by Benet Salway and David Hunt; and 3) cartography and taste in *Tabula Peutingeriana*, discussed by Richard Talbert.

In the first article, "Measuring the Earth and the Oikoumene: zones, meridians, *sphragides* and some other geographical terms used by Eratosthenes of Cyrene," Klaus Geus discusses the concepts of Eratosthenes, which unfortunately are known only through other authors and may be controversial. Eratosthenes calculated the circumference of the earth mathematically and astronomically, but the *oikoumene* he measured hodologically, based on travelogues, diaries and *periploi*. Although he was the first to draw parallels and meridians, the system was determined by the most famous cities of early Hellenistic times and the ancient shipping routes. Thus it did not form a completely abstract and geometrical set of coordinates. He also divided the *oikoumene* into a northern and southern "division" and then subdivided them into irregular sections called *sphragides* or "seals". Geus thinks these meant regions marked by distinctive lines (i.e. parallels and meridians) and landmarks (e.g. rivers, routes). From Strabo we know that Eratosthenes used even smaller subdivisions, which he named by different shapes (e.g. triangle, galley, *chlamys*). Geus concludes that while the framework of Eratosthenes' map was more geographical or hodological than astronomical, his goal was not an organic division of the *oikoumene*, but rather a geometrical one. Thus he could determine better the size of the inhabited world and the position, shape and size of its parts.

The second article is "Ptolemy and the problem of scientific perception of space" by Alfred Stückelberger. In order to organize the massive amount of knowledge about the *oikoumene*, Ptolemy was the first one to give the locations of places in a uniform system of coordinates. He also used the lengths of a longest day to calculate the geographical latitude; longitudes were defined by lunar eclipses. Stückelberger also discusses the reasons of errors that occur in the map of Ptolemy — overstretched longitudes, old maps put together wrongly, mixed-up names, etc. He thinks that, although Ptolemy was eager to practice the principles of scientific geography, he was hindered by being compelled to use unscientific sources.

Benet Salway in the article "Sea and river travel in the Roman itinerary literature" thoroughly analyzes five different itineraries: the *Periplus* of Menippus and *Stadiasmus Maris Magni* in Greek; the *Itinerarium Antonini* in Latin; and two maps — the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and the Dura Parchment. He concludes that there are different types of itineraries depending on the needs of the audience: The *Stadiasmus* and the *Periplus* of Menippus are

representatives of technical literature with quite a narrow circulation; the *Itinerarium Antonini* and *Tabula Peutingeriana* were meant for independent travellers and focused more on land routes; the Dura Parchment was a maritime itinerary, and Salway proposes that it could have been commemorated to a specific journey, perhaps taken by a Pontic Fleet.

In the article "Holy Land itineraries: Mapping the Bible in Late Roman Palestine," E. D. Hunt compares two itineraries: the *Bordeaux Itinerary* and the *Itinerarium Egeriae*. They are quite similar in composition, using the pattern of administrative geography of the contemporary Roman Empire by measuring distances in *mansiones* or stops. The major difference between these two works lies in referring to Biblical events: in *Itinerarium Egeriae* there are practically two concurrent itineraries — one of the contemporary Roman world and the other connected to the Bible — whereas the *Bordeaux Itinerary* is mostly a bare catalogue of places and distances, referring to Biblical events only while travelling in Palestine.

The last article in this collection is "Cartography and taste in Peutinger's Roman map" by Richard Talbert. He argues with other scientists that this map is not as simple and primitive as it has been thought until now. He declares that the Peutinger Map reflects rather the author's purpose and taste than an accurate cartographical image. The author of the map has reduced bodies of open water to a minimum, separating clearly different land masses and gaining space for depiction of land routes, and he could have intended to put together all the written itinerary lists and other such documents of his time. Talbert makes an interesting suggestion: although as a practical route map it was for the most part misleading and required previous knowledge of the geography, the mapmaker could have made it for the well-educated aristocrats of the Western empire, who left the practical arrangements to their staff whenever travelling. Its main goal may have been to show the greatness of the Roman Empire. In addition, to stress the artistic and intellectual side of it, the map was obviously a colourful one and could originally have been a wall-painting or tapestry made to resemble a papyrus roll. In any case, the Peutinger Map is a great achievement in Roman cartography. In the appendix to the article, Talbert also has written a thorough and informative overview about the reproductions of the map since 1753.

As a whole, this book gives a nice survey about perception and presentation of space in the Roman world, discussing the itineraries, maps and scientific geography (i.e. measuring and dividing the earth and *oikoumene*) of this time.