
Review

Reviewed Work(s): Klaudios Ptolemaios: Handbuch der Geographie, Griechisch-Deutsch by Alfred Stückelberger and Gerd Grasshoff

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Ursprache, and I have also been thrilled by Dumézil and variously instructed by him and now by Woodard. Their method offers welcome glimpses into the cultic and social mist of time. But when they attempt to write a coherent narrative, their effort is akin to crafting tales in a hypothetical language on the basis of words with asterisks.

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ALFRED STÜCKELBERGER and GERD GRASSHOFF, eds. *Klaudios Ptolemaios: Handbuch der Geographie, Griechisch-Deutsch*. Vol. 1: Einleitung und Buch 1–4. Vol. 2. Buch 5–8 und Indices. With contributions from Florian Mittenhuber, Renate Burri, Klaus Geus, Gerhard Winkler, Susanne Ziegler, Judith Hindermann, Lutz Koch, and Kurt Keller. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2006. 1018 pp. 24 color and black-and-white ills. 29 maps. 1 CD-ROM. Cloth, €170.

Ptolemy's *Geography* is at the same time the only survivor of the ancient Greek literature devoted to the topic of drawing maps of the world and is the most extensive ancient list that we possess of names and locations of communities and physical features in the known parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia. It may seem astonishing that a document of exceptional importance for ancient history, geography, and the history of science should have had to wait until now for a complete critical edition. In fact the last complete edition, by C. F. A. Nobbe (1843–45), presents an indiscriminate text with no apparatus beyond a skimpy eighteen-page "Index Criticus" at the end. Two other editions, by F. W. Wilberg and C. H. F. Grashof (1838–45) and by C. Müller and C. T. Fischer (1883–1901), though furnished with apparatus, were vitiated by defective knowledge of the main lines of the textual tradition and besides were never completed. The twentieth century saw major progress in the sorting out of the *Geography*'s manuscripts, with important contributions by (among others) Joseph Fischer, Otto Cuntz, Aubrey Diller, and above all by Paul Schnabel, whose monograph on the subject was meant as a mere harbinger of an edition that he did not live to produce. Meanwhile, scholars in need of a reliable text have had to make do with a patchwork of intentionally partial editions limited to sections of Ptolemy's geographical catalogue covering specific regions.

The biggest obstacle in the way of restoring the *Geography* arises from one of Ptolemy's profoundest insights, that a graphical object such as a world map can be reproduced more accurately if its contents are translated into a collection of numerical coordinates representing each significant point of the drawing, in effect, a digitization. About two thirds of the *Geography* is thus dedicated to a list of some eight-thousand place names with the longitudes and latitudes of the corresponding localities expressed in degrees and fractions of a degree, ordered

so that one can reconstruct the map by plotting from point to point on a suitable grid of parallels and meridians. Ptolemy thus got rid of the analogue distortions inherent in the process of copying a picture, but he proposed no measures to protect the copying of the text and numerals of his list from errors giving rise to “noise” progressively obscuring the picture. Unfortunately, Greek alphabetic numerals, notations for common fractions, and exotic place names—many of them attested in no other document—were all liable to frequent misreading in ancient and medieval manuscripts. In such material, copying errors are difficult to detect and generally impossible to undo. The modern scholar, working with an abundance of manuscript copies (none older than the late thirteenth century), is incessantly confronted by variant readings of which at least one must be wrong but for which no rational basis for discriminating exists. To complicate matters further, many of the manuscripts contain maps, and the origin of these maps and their relation to the textual history are controversial questions for which the usual resources of textual criticism are inadequate. It is not surprising if editors’ appetites have been satiated with modest helpings of the *Geography*.

Now at last we have a complete and reliable critical edition of Ptolemy’s book, an accomplishment made possible in the first instance by a division of labor among a competent and well-organized team, and secondly by judicious choices about what the edition should and should not attempt to do. The team, the “Ptolemaios-Forschungsstelle,” affiliated with the Institute for Classical Philology of the University of Berne, comprises more than a dozen scholars led by a philologist, Alfred Stückelberger, and a historian of the ancient exact sciences, Gerd Grasshoff; its aim is a comprehensive study of the *Geography* in all its historical and scientific aspects, so that the new edition is actually just the first installment of a projected series of publications to be followed—let us hope soon—by a volume of studies of special problems as well as a collection of photographic images of manuscripts.

The Berne editors wisely decided from the outset not to undertake a complete reexamination of the entire manuscript tradition, an approach that with a text of this nature would probably have doomed the project. The consensus of the past century of textual studies of the *Geography* is that the manuscripts preserve two recensions, Ω and Ξ , which appear to have parted ways before the introduction of minuscule if not already in antiquity. Ξ is (almost) complete and (almost) unadulterated only in one copy, X (*Vat. gr.* 191), an immense thirteenth-century anthology of scientific texts. Its *Geography* is exasperatingly defective: a little more than halfway through the catalogue of localities, the copyists gave up writing the numbers for the longitudes and latitudes of the localities, so that from this point we have only lists of place names. Ω is represented by a group of manuscripts, most notably two lavishly produced thirteenth-century parchment codices in which Ptolemy’s text is accompanied by maps that approximately conform to his specifications; these are in fact the oldest sets of Ptolemaic maps in existence. (The Berne editors are the first to have directly examined and collated one of these, Istanbul *Ser. GI* 57, which has hitherto only been accessible

through highly unsatisfactory photographs dating from the 1930s.) In addition, a small number of manuscripts present features of both recensions, apparently through collation of multiple exemplars.

The rationale adopted by the Berne editors is perhaps the only defensible one possible for a complete text, namely, to aim at the sole coherent and complete version that can be reconstructed, which is Ω . Ξ , though in many respects its readings seem to bring us nearer to Ptolemy than Ω , cannot be satisfactorily restored on the basis of a single manuscript that is marred by numerous scribal errors as well as missing all the coordinates in its latter half; nor is it clear that the most judicious eclectic text, drawing from both Ξ and Ω , would resemble any version that ever existed in the history of the *Geography's* transmission. But Ω 's text is in some ways too free of superficial defects for us to be complacent with it at the level of the finest details. Each of the principal manuscripts of this group, taken by itself, presents a collection of geographical data exhibiting a degree of internal consistency (in effect, we can base on them maps that do not, for example, have coastlines that cross themselves or pairs of cities that share the same coordinates) that is too high to be attributable purely to repeated careful copying over the thousand years separating them from Ptolemy. Without doubt, data that would result in graphical inconsistencies are scarce in the manuscripts of Ω because corrupt numbers were detected and corrected in the process of constructing actual maps on the basis of the text. It is improbable that such corrections would always recover precisely Ptolemy's coordinates, though in the majority of cases the uncertainty would be on the order of a fraction of a degree.

The distinct readings of X are, however, reported, though the manner in which this is done is not uniform. Variants, such as spellings of place names and the longitudes and latitudes of localities that the editors judge to be characteristic of the recension, as such are inserted within parentheses in the text itself, immediately following the Ω reading. For other variants (e.g., divergences of wording, omissions), X is treated as just another witness to the text, whose readings may or may not be adopted but are in any case reported in the apparatus. In other words, the version of the *Geography* offered is not quite that of Ω but a compromise text in which the lists of localities and their coordinates represent Ω while the introductory and connecting prose seek to go further back in the tradition. It is moreover not clear how thorough the collation of X has been. For example, no indication is given at any but one of Ptolemy's many references to the geographically cardinal city Syene (Aswan) that the original copyists of X use the spelling σοῖνη instead of Ω 's σοῖνη; here, X's orthography, which is found also in the manuscripts of Ptolemy's *Almagest* and other writings, is surely authentic.

Whatever minor quibbles one may have about the textual basis of this edition—and it should be stressed that there is no ideal way of editing the *Geography*—the auxiliary materials in these volumes and their design stand as an exemplar of how a technical treatise from antiquity can be made accessible and intelligible. An accurate and lucid German translation faces the text pages, and both are formatted by means of indentations and line spacing so as to make the

structures of Ptolemy's lists of localities immediately clear to the eye. The geometrical diagrams in the text, which include some of the most complex constructions of the entire Greek mathematical literature, are excellently drafted. Most useful, as well as beautiful, are the full set of reconstructed Ptolemaic maps, which follow Ptolemy's technical instructions closely and incorporate all the geographical data in Ptolemy's catalogue of localities. Lastly, an accompanying CD-ROM contains searchable databases (as self-standing FileMaker documents openable on a current Macintosh or Windows PC), which contain essentially the entire body of geographical citations in the text, coordinated with the reconstructed maps.

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C. W. MARSHALL. *The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xiv + 320 pp. 2 black-and-white figs. Cloth, \$90.

C. W. Marshall's new book forms part of the productive trend towards treating ancient theater as performance. In 1991 David Wiles began *The Masks of Menander* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, xi) by commenting on the institutional divide between classics and drama studies. Marshall, as a writer, occupies the unusual position of being able to speak both as a classicist and a professional actor, with substantial credits in both improv and Shakespeare. His work is influenced by writers in theater studies, particularly Susan Bennett on audiences, Keith Johnstone on improv, and Jacques Lecoq on masking and physical movement. Among writers on ancient comedy, he shares with David Wiles a commitment to the serious study of masking, and with Timothy Moore a focus on the interaction between actors and audience. As a performer and director, he has often worked with Mark Damen and Mary-Kay Gamel towards an understanding of ancient drama through hands-on production. Above all, this book is based in Marshall's experience as an actor; having had the privilege of working with him on a production of *Persa*, I can attest that the physicality of his acting pops his sense of what happened on the stage of Plautus into vivid 3-D.

Marshall throughout prefers complex to simple models: the audience was not monolithic (no "Romans" here), venues differed in nature, the actors did not share a single status, literary influences on the plays were multiple (no tyranny of the "Greek original"). The introduction begins with a satisfyingly spiderwebby chart (2) laying out a stemma of influences on Plautus and, separately, Terence. As Marshall observes, audience members bring along their own performance codes, and "For Rome such codes are unlikely even to include knowledge of the play which the playwright claims as his source for the present entertainment" (109). (That is, to get a laugh out of *Strange Brew*, it is not necessary to know much