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Calibrating Cartographic Horizons for Today's Ancient History Classes

Pleased and honored though I was by the invitation to contribute to today's panel, I do confess that once I came to write the paper (rather than just the abstract), the embarrassing thought struck me that reflections on cartography might not fit so well when the main focus here is intended to be the incorporation of ancient material culture into our classes, and more specifically into my own classes as an ancient historian. I think this hesitancy does have some justification. Maps, after all, are a Pandora's box with every imaginable variable – ancient, modern, differences of type, scale, orientation, and so on. At the history survey level for students new to our field, it seems to me that the need is primarily, if not exclusively, for modern map materials that help to orient them in a challenging strange environment and to familiarize them with it. Beyond the introductory level the same need for such modern map materials remains, but the opportunity is then ripe to examine ancient maps in addition, and to integrate them into consideration of ancient worldviews. It is this latter double opportunity that I really want to devote my time to today, but it seems only right to begin with some words about basic maps for students at the introductory level.

Naturally enough, such maps can be expected to conform to the long-established modern conventions for orientation, projection, graticule, symbols, and so forth. If they are issued in traditional print format there is the inevitable prospect that scope or content or both may not satisfy the specific interests of users. Digital technology, however, offers the potential to overcome this limitation, and for some time now the Ancient World Mapping Center in Chapel

Hill has been working to develop it for the benefit of both instructors and students in ancient history. The “Maps for Students” section of the Center’s website [www.unc.edu/awmc] makes available free for private use a variety of maps for regions, themes and periods that regularly feature in ancient history surveys. For the most part these maps are small-scale, uncolored, and only able to show landscape elevation impressionistically. But they can be downloaded easily and in a range of different formats, often including ‘physical landscape only’; hence users who wish to make this their base for then adding cultural content exactly according to their own specifications can do just that. In principle, I realize, it would be possible to do the same using ‘Googlemaps’; but where the Center offers the required region, I expect it would normally be more convenient to use its base, especially as this will already reflect the ancient landscape rather than the modern. Even when a more or less suitable map is available, it still may benefit students at the introductory level to take a ‘physical landscape only’ base and to mark on it themselves the main locations, features, routes – for the Persian invasions of Greece in the early fifth century, say – as an effective way of familiarizing themselves with territory and episodes quite new to them.

In 2008-09 the Center, after overcoming innumerable technical obstacles, was able to mosaic together satellite physical landscape images in the public domain with a scope that encompasses the entire Roman empire as well as everywhere traversed by Alexander the Great. With the *Barrington Atlas* as guide, ancient shorelines and river courses have been restored throughout – a huge, painstaking labor. The result is that the Center now has excellent materials to form the base for all manner of maps with different sizes and scales cropped from these images and best rendered in color, although grayscale is also satisfactory. This is the base used for the advanced drafts of four large maps – “classmaps” – displayed at the Routledge booth in the book exhibit.

Their coverage is: the Aegean in the fifth century BCE at 1:750,000; Greece and Persia in the time of Alexander at 1:4,000,000; Italy in the mid-first century CE at 1:775,000; and the Roman Empire around 200 CE at 1:3,000,000; all are 5 to 6 ft wide, and from 3 to 5 ft tall. Routledge will be issuing these maps both individually and as a set, along with three others not displayed – two of Egypt and the Near East at successive periods, and one of the World of the New Testament and the Journeys of Paul. All seven maps are pitched at students new to antiquity taking introductory courses. Accordingly, the concern has been to ensure clear, uncluttered presentation of places and features most likely to be encountered at this basic level. Except in the case of the Roman Empire map, familiar English forms for names are used where they exist. There is no accompanying text or gazetteer. However, a thumbnail locator map is always provided, showing the scope of each map in relation to others in the set, as well as the boundaries of the modern countries covered by the map together with these countries' names in standard three-letter-abbreviation format.

These are maps for instructors to hang on a wall and point to; but equally they are for laying on a (large) table, or on the floor, and coming to close quarters with, even crawling over. Mosaic and rug versions can no doubt be custom orders. What *will* be offered in addition to print are pdf versions for Powerpoint and private study – so it becomes possible to pan, and to zoom in and out. In this format, too, users will be able to add layers of their own making to supplement or adapt each map as it stands. Do please take the opportunity to view the four displayed, and pass on comments. Also be assured that the Center certainly does not regard these seven as all the maps it would ever produce of this type. While we hesitate to proceed much further without first gaining a sense of how instructors and students find the seven, future possibilities are at least already surfacing, not necessarily all of them designed just for basic survey courses. The Aegean

and Italy at other periods are obvious prospects. Also likely to attract users, surely, are regions of major importance yet so extensive that for anything more than the smallest scale a book must spread its presentation over several doublespreads – Asia Minor, for example, or the Iberian peninsula.

In its turn a related goal on the part of the Center now comes closer to becoming a practical possibility – namely the provision of the cartographic tools that would offer users the principal components to create their own maps digitally. I am well aware that this is a labor-intensive and technically complex goal, which it would no doubt be prudent to attempt in the first instance only for a region that gains exceptional attention such as the Aegean. But the Center can now provide a suitable physical landscape, and it has the capacity to accompany it with a list of principal names with co-ordinates, perhaps even the facility for a given name to appear correctly placed on the map when that name is clicked. The names on the Aegean “classmap” could serve as the basis of such a list. The format of the name-entries and any associated symbol should in any case allow for spellings, fonts, sizes and symbols to be altered as desired. There would also be the means to mark additional symbols, names, features, linework, patterns on the map direct. In short, users would be equipped with a base to crop from and to establish a scale and orientation, as well as with cartographic data from which to select conveniently. At the same time they would still retain ample flexibility to create a map reflecting their particular purpose or vision or moment of significance, no more, no less – a facility that should appeal equally to scholars, instructors and students at any level. Although it will require major effort and experiment to implement, I think this may be the most useful direction for the design of textbook ancient history atlases to take during the next decade. In other words, I would say it still makes sense to offer a range of maps of certain regions or themes for information and guidance; but

alongside these there now can be, and should be, a digital toolbox which equips students with the kit to craft their own adaptations independently.

Moving on now to consider the use of ancient maps as material objects in the classroom, there is obviously a limit to what can be achieved, given the dearth of such survivals, and given the fact that at least some prior acquaintance with ancient history and culture is essential in order to appreciate these undoubtedly strange and incomplete items. So I imagine that for best results the class has to be small enough to allow for plenty of student input and interchange (students with some classical background, even if no knowledge of the languages), and the maps need to be considered not just in their own right but also in relation to larger themes of enquiry. My most rewarding experience to date of attempting such an approach was a History class in Spring 2008 for UNC's undergraduate honors program – capped at fifteen students. As you see from the handout [below], I gave it the title *Travelers' Tales from the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond: Context, Character, Meaning*. Very early on I brought to class without warning the entire Peutinger Map – each of its eleven 2 ft by 1 ft parchments separate, I admit; but because we met in a windowless rectangular room with blackboards lining three sides and small sills for chalk running below them, I could rest the parchments (laminated scans !) all around in order. I then simply told the class the lie that here was a new 22 ft-long discovery recently come to light, and would they please serve as experts to determine what we were seeing, how it was designed, with what purposes in mind, for what context, and so on. I told them that for the next fifteen minutes or so I would like each of them to marshal their first impressions independently – though they were welcome to confer with each other as they did so, and very much encouraged to move around in order to examine as much as possible of the curious object close-up.

Fortunately, after recovering from the initial shock the whole group were intrigued, and between them they raised all kinds of ideas which led to a long, productive discussion. Among much else, they gained a strong sense of how an object like this needs to be *interpreted* because it reaches us entirely detached from the ancient context it once had. Moreover in this instance what survives is in fact only a copy of a copy of a copy (and more) of the ancient original itself – another important consideration to think about. For most of the students it was a surprise to realize how many different (and often conflicting) interpretations it is possible to argue for – ideas which each participant in the debate has to evaluate pro/con for her/himself, and typically there is no single ‘right’ answer. Even those students in the group who were History majors were prone to think of primary sources for history – insofar as they had ever engaged with them direct – as texts of one kind or another; for them it was especially instructive to engage with a large ancient map that expanded their familiar range of source-types. There are names and numbers all over the map, so to this extent it has a ‘text’ component. At the same time it is very clearly a material object, reflecting principles of cartographic design, and artistic concerns, and (again, clearly) a distinctive and altogether bizarre worldview.

From a cartographic perspective, this introduction of the Peutinger Map early in the course allowed it to serve from there on as stepping-stone to all manner of related aspects and issues, and also as a fertile source of comparison and contrast with other maps or map-like images and geographic materials. Above all, the Peutinger Map’s shape and character served to undermine students’ assumptions (conscious or unconscious) that the design and purpose of maps somehow ‘ought’ to conform to established modern Western cartographic norms, and that any maps which do not are therefore automatically to be regarded as inadequate or inferior. It jolts students to be confronted with maps that are not oriented North or drawn to a consistent scale, let alone

necessarily intended by their makers to be very ‘useful’ in a practical sense even though they may give the appearance of being so. But if an instructor is lucky, as I was with this Honors class, students can become fascinated to pursue the issue of how, say, Romans developed their worldview and by what means, especially in a cultural environment where mapping norms of the type we take so much for granted never came to be established – a limitation that is hard even to grasp today, let alone account for. This is where the opportunity arises to introduce the debate of recent years about the extent to which the Roman view of space was merely ‘linear’ or one-dimensional, or ‘hodological’ as it has been termed – in other words, heavily reliant on itineraries. In this context dreary lists like the Antonine or Bordeaux Itineraries can actually be rendered interesting in ways that no-one could be expected to imagine until questions about space and worldview are raised !

As I had hoped in planning the Honors course, discussion of the nature, context and purpose of the Peutinger Map led on smoothly to doing much the same for Rome’s Marble Plan, which has such an accomplished and versatile digital presentation from the Stanford Forma Urbis Project [<http://formaurbis.stanford.edu>], and such valuable discussion of many aspects by Jennifer Trimble (for instance, in Talbert/Unger 2008 listed on the handout). True, in this case it is not practical to heave in actual blocks of even faux marble and clamp them high up on the wall of your institution’s largest auditorium. But still there is no difficulty in conveying to a small class that what they are seeing are fragments of a monster plan of Rome with (in this case) a known date and known context – a plan mounted c. 200 CE in a great hall, high up on a wall that even survives. I asked some members of the class to imagine her/himself as a visitor to Rome [decide on where from, naturally, and when] and to formulate what struck them when they had the chance to view the Plan in its great hall. I wanted to learn not only what features caught their

attention and how and why, but also what psychological impact the sight of the Plan made – awe, pride, fear, disgust, incomprehension, or whatever (and again, why). I asked other members of the class to consider the Plan from its maker's perspective: what was this/these makers trying to achieve? to what extent did they succeed or fail? what principles and choices can their cartography be seen to reflect? Probing further, in terms of principles and choices how similar, or how different, are the cartography of the Marble Plan and that of the Peutinger Map? This makes a rewarding discussion topic because the obvious first impression is that the two are very different (given how different the subject of each map is), but with a little prompting it is possible to foster the realization that even so the principles and choices of both cartographers in fact have a surprising amount in common; in particular, neither of them, perhaps, meant their map to be of practical use to any traveler or visitor. A similar comparative exercise that can engage a class once they have begun to grasp the actual steps of Roman mapmaking is to present them with Konrad Miller's well-known and universally accepted reconstruction of the Peutinger Map's lost Western end, and to ask them to evaluate its plausibility when they compare Miller's cartography to that of the map itself. In all these discussions some input and steering from the instructor are called for predictably enough, but to a remarkable degree if the group is lively and smart the nature of the material really permits them to take the initiative in developing ideas and approaches.

An ancient map only published in summer 2008 that I would present to a future Honors class is the one in the so-called Artemidorus papyrus – a focus of much controversy to be sure. But still it seems to me entirely feasible to summarize for students what the main issues surrounding it are, and to foster group discussion of how this puzzling unfinished map should be interpreted,

again taking into account an appreciation of cartographic principles gained from the Peutinger Map and the Marble Plan: what and where does this map represent ? why should it appear where it does in the papyrus ? what is the mapmaker trying to accomplish, and by what means ?

A type of cartographically related material object that I did not discuss with the class in 2008 because I had not done enough work on it then, but that I would discuss now because I have made some progress since, is the portable sundial. A dozen or so of the type that interests me survive, and traditionally the attention paid to them has been confined to the accuracy of their timekeeping. Overlooked have been the listings of places or regions with their latitudes on the reverse of the circular baseplate. To me, the choices of places and regions here, and the figures given for their latitudes, are precious indicators of worldview, indeed of ‘latitudinal thinking’, that repay investigating and relating to other relevant testimony. Again this is material that can readily engage students, and the dials themselves are potent objects, tiny items no more than a few centimeters across that can give you the feeling you hold the world in your hand. I have a little to say about these dials in Raaflaub/Talbert 2010, but I plan a fuller study in a future book on neglected dimensions of worldview.

Because our panel is devoted to material culture in the classroom, I have concentrated on how ancient maps were (or might be) treated in my Honors course, but I should not end without assuring you that this course did integrate the study of maps with the study of texts of all kinds. Either as a group, or hearing the reports made by class members about their major paper for the course, we traveled with (and discussed) [not necessarily in this order] Odysseus, Jason, Aeneas,

Herodotus, Alexander in fact and fiction, Horace, Theophanes, Egeria, and others that you can infer from the handout. I gratefully acknowledge recommendations and insights furnished by Grant Parker¹ and Philip Stadter, both of whom had been involved in an earlier graduate seminar on “Space and Place in the Roman World” that I co-taught with Grant when he was my neighbor at Duke. For the wrap-up final group discussion in the Honors course we made Lucian’s *True Histories* our starting-point, a truly ideal text for the purpose. Looking to the future, Grant and I are collaborating on a sourcebook for classroom use which we mean to entitle *Travel in the Roman Mind*.

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¹ See further his “Narrative dimensions of Roman travel,” *OPCoAH* 3 (2006) 21-35.

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Selected items (with updates) from the booklist for Richard Talbert's UNC Chapel Hill Undergraduate Honors Program course "Travelers' Tales from the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond: Context, Character, Meaning" (Spring 2008)

Ancient maps:

Artemidorus map: K. Brodersen and J. Elsner (eds.), *Images and Texts on the "Artemidorus Papyrus"* (2009)

Madaba map: <http://www.christusrex.org/www1.ofm/mad/index.html>

Marble Plan: Stanford Digital Forma Urbis Romae Project (<http://formaurbis.stanford.edu>)

R. Talbert, *Rome's World: the Peutinger Map Reconsidered* (Cambridge UP, 2010, print/online).

Online offers a database and the entire map reassembled; in addition, its routes and those of the Antonine and Bordeaux Itineraries are traced over a mosaic of Barrington Atlas maps.

Ancient authors:

Agrimensores: B. Campbell, *The Writings of the Roman Land Surveyors* (2000)

Greek Alexander Romance: R. Stoneman (Penguin, 1991)

Cosmas Indicopleustes: J.W. McCrindle (1897) <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers>

Egeria: J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (ed. 3, 1999)

Eratosthenes: all fragments in D. Roller, *Eratosthenes' Geography* (Princeton UP, 2010)

Lucian, *True Histories*: in K. Sidwell's Lucian, *Chattering Courtesans...* (Penguin, 2004)

Arrian, *Periplus of the Black Sea*: A. Liddle (Bristol Classical Press, 2003)

Anon, *Periplus of the Red Sea*: <http://www.tamilnation.org/heritage/periplus.htm> ; for

commentary and more recent translation, see L. Casson, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei* (1989)

Pomponius Mela: F.E. Romer (Michigan, 1998)

Ptolemy, *Geography*: A. Stückelberger and G. Grasshoff, German translation and reconstructed maps (2 vols., 2006), and *Ergänzungsband* (2009). Consult also J.L. Berggren and A. Jones,

Ptolemy's Geography: an Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters (2000)

Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon (*Hellenika*): editions by R. Strassler in Landmark series.

Reference tools:

Ancient World Mapping Center: www.unc.edu/awmc

Mapping History (European): <http://mappinghistory.uoregon.edu>

Rome reconstructed: earth.google.com/rome

D. Buisseret (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to World Exploration* (2 vols, 2007)

J.B. Friedman and K.M. Figg (eds.), *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: an Encyclopedia* (2000)

P.T. Keyser and G.L. Irby-Massie (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Natural Scientists: the Greek Tradition and its Many Heirs* (2008)

J.P. Oleson (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World* (2008)

H. Selin (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures* (1997)

R. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World & Map-by-Map Directory* (2000)

[cartographic fundamentals of the atlas are discussed in *Cartographic Perspectives* 46 (2003) 4-27]

A.-M. Wittke et al., *Historical Atlas of the Ancient World* (2010; Brill's NP Supplement 3) [Review of 2007 German ed. in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2009.07.22]

Books:

- C. Adams and R. Laurence (eds.), *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (2001)
 Adams, *Land Transport in Roman Egypt: a Study of Economics and Administration....* (2007)
 J.R. Akerman (ed.), *Cartographies of Travel and Navigation* (2006); note esp. C. Delano-Smith, "Milieus of mobility: itineraries, route maps and road maps"
 --- (ed.), *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire* (2009)
 S.E. Alcock et al. (eds.), *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (2001)
 C. Atherton (ed.), *Monsters and Monstrosity in Greek and Roman Culture* (1998)
 N.J.E. Austin and N.B. Rankov, *Exploratio* (1995)
 A.B. Bosworth and E.J. Baynham (eds.), *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (2000)
 F. Braudel, *Memory and the Mediterranean* (2001)
 D. Clay and A. Purvis, *Four Island Utopias* (1999)
 P.A. Clayton and M.J. Price, *The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World* (1988)
 D. Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: a Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (2001)
 O.A.W. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps* (1985)
 J. Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World* (1975)
 J.B. Harley and D. Woodward (eds.), *The History of Cartography*, esp. vols. 1 (1987) and 3 (2007)
 W.V. Harris (ed.), *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (2005)
 T. Harrison (ed.), *Greeks and Barbarians* (2002)
 F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: the Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (1988)
 P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: a Study of Mediterranean History* (2000)
 E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire* (1982)
 C. Jacob, *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical Approaches to Cartography Throughout History* (2006)
 D. Kennedy and D. Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air* (1990)
 A.D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (1993)
 N. Lozovsky, "The Earth is our Book": *Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West, ca. 400-1000* (2000)
 M.J.T. Lewis, *Surveying Instruments of Greece and Rome* (2001)
 S. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (1999)[review: *AJP* 122(2001)451-4]
 J. Matthews, *The Journey of Theophanes: Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East* (2006)
 [review: *BMCR* 2007.02.31]
 M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300-900* (2001)
 J. Morton, *The Role of the Physical Environment in Ancient Greek Seafaring* (2001)
 T. Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: the Empire in the Encyclopedia* [review: *BMCR* 2004.12.23]
 C. Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (1991)
 I. Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Pro-*
 G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India* (2007) cession (2009)
 T. Perrottet, *Route 66 AD: on the Trail of Ancient Roman Tourists* (2002)
 K. Raaflaub and R. Talbert (eds.), *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)
 E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (1985), esp. chap. 17
 D. Roller, *Through the Pillars of Herakles: Greco-Roman Exploration of the Atlantic* (2006)
 J. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (1992)
 S. Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (1995)
 T. Severin, *The Ulysses Voyage: Sea Search for the Odyssey* (1987)
 A. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (2007)
 N.H.H. Sitwell, *The World the Romans Knew* (1984)
 R. Talbert and K. Brodersen (eds.), *Space in the Roman World: its Perception and Presentation* (2004)
 --- and R. Unger (eds.), *Cartography in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Fresh Perspectives, New Methods*
 --- (ed.), *Ancient Perspectives: Maps and their Place in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome* (2010/11)
 M. Wood, *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great* (1997)