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Constantakopoulou, Christy (2016) (A.V.) Podossinov Ed. The Periphery of the Classical World in Ancient Geography and Cartography (Supplements to the Journal Ancient West and East 12). Leuven: Peeters, 2014. Pp. 216. 68. 9789042929234. - (K.) Geus and (S.A.) Thiering Eds Features of Common Sense Geography. Implicit Knowledge Structures in Ancient Geographical Texts (Antike Kultur und Geschichte 16). Zürich: Lit, 2014. Pp. 371. 59.90. 9783643905284. [Book Review]

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HISTORY

PODOSSINOV (A.V.) *Ed. The Periphery of the Classical World in Ancient Geography and Cartography* (Supplements to the Journal Ancient West and East 12). Leuven: Peeters, 2014. Pp. 216. €68. 9789042929234.

GEUS (K.) and THIERING (S.A.) *Eds Features of Common Sense Geography. Implicit Knowledge Structures in Ancient Geographical Texts* (Antike Kultur und Geschichte 16). Zürich: Lit, 2014. Pp. 371. €59.90. 9783643905284.

The first edited volume reviewed here, by Podossinov, addresses an important, yet relatively neglected, aspect of ancient geography and ethnography: that of the representation of the limits of the ancient (that is Graeco-Roman) known world in ancient literary sources and maps. The volume includes ten articles in English, French and German, plus an introduction written by the editor. The emphasis, as outlined in the introduction (3), is to discover the ‘real facts’; indeed, this positivistic approach is evident in a number of the articles in the volume.

N.N. Kazansky attempts to explain the name of the eastern wind Kaikias; this, he links with river Kaikos. While the suggestion is not implausible, the argumentation here is quite weak, as it depends on a number of assumptions of continuity from the Greek Bronze Age down to the time of the Homeric scholia. F. Prontera examines the concept of centre and periphery in Greek maps; the circular depictions of maps, he argues, are the result of a Greek conceptual understanding of the world as rotating around a visible centre that is Greece. It is good to see the argument that the history of cartography is central for our understanding of the ancient Greek world and its culture; this is argued particularly well here. P. Arnaud focuses on the actual processes of representation in ancient maps. Mapmaking, it is argued, lies between geometry and painting. The great diversity in maps is linked to a considerable diversity in their purpose and function: maps depicting the whole world clearly had a different purpose from maps depicting specific regions. I.V. Pyankov examines the Amu-Darya river and the region of the Aral and Caspian seas. He examines carefully the ancient evidence, but it was less clear to me as to what exactly is argued here. P. Janni explores the representation of maps of Africa; he

stresses the visual importance of coastal geography. D.A. Shcheglov argues convincingly that there was a now lost Greek source behind Pomponius Mela. A careful textual analysis of the key passages of Mela, Plutarch and Pausanias shows the similarities and differences between these key authors. The argument is that the now lost source for Mela shared an understanding of the world with Ptolemy’s *Geography*. What is unfortunate, however, in this elegantly-written contribution, is the insistence that there was such a thing as ‘scientific geography’ with clearly outlined disciplines. M.J. Olbrycht examines some of Alexander the Great’s foundations in northern Iran. He stresses the importance of foundations for Alexander’s rule, particularly their role in maintaining a military cohesion for the empire and their function as centres of trade. L.I. Gratsianskaya looks at the northern Black sea region in Strabo’s work, and examines how this section fits with Strabo’s overall aims. The focus is an examination of Strabo’s sources; the conclusion is that the inclusion (and exclusion) of various locations in this specific littoral was linked with their importance in terms of politics and relationship with Rome. The article is a very useful summary of previous work by the author, published in Russian. While it is very useful to have it here in a more accessible (for a Western audience, at least) language, I regretted the lack of engagement with K. Clarke’s important work (*Between Geography and History. Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World*, Oxford 1999). Podossinov explores a particularly fascinating episode, narrated in Pomponius Mela and Pliny the Elder, about some ‘Indians’ who were cast ashore in Germania. Podossinov identifies them with the Vindi or Venedi, a Slavonic tribe of the southeast Baltic coast, mentioned in the Verona copy of the List of Roman Provinces. The later identification of these people with Indians is the result, it is argued, of the understanding of Asia as essentially a region shaped by the presence of the Ocean, which linked, in this way, India with Scythia and Germania. Finally, G.V. Bondarenko examines some toponyms in Ptolemy’s description of Ireland and links them with specific locales known in early Irish literature and myth.

As I have already mentioned, it is very useful to have here a collection of articles that makes accessible work previously published in other languages. However, I did find problematic the occasional insistence on ‘scientific’ aspects of ancient geography; what exactly made some

ancient geography (such as that of Eratosthenes) 'scientific' is never explained. The positivistic emphasis on the discovery of 'facts' in relation to the periphery of the world is equally occasionally misleading. Ancient narratives about geography and ethnography, especially in relation to such little-known areas such as the northern littoral of the Black sea or Scythia, India, Ireland and so on, are interesting as narratives and as articulations of the ancient understanding of space beyond the cultural centre of the Graeco-Roman world, i.e. the Mediterranean. I do not find it necessarily worthwhile to attempt to discover the real facts; for me, such narratives are fascinating exactly because 'real facts' are beyond our grasp. Nonetheless, as this neat volume shows, there are still more interesting things to be said about the periphery.

Geus and Thiering's edited volume is certainly more exciting, as it introduces a fascinating new methodological approach and challenges many established assumptions. I certainly enjoyed reading it and learned a lot from it. This volume can be seen as the second installment of a project that has already produced *Common Sense Geography and Mental Modelling*, also edited by Geus and Thiering (Berlin 2012). The editors offer us a summary of their approach in the introduction, by discussing fully how they understand common sense geography. The emphasis is on 'common', as in 'lower' geography, to be distinguished from what they term 'professional' or 'higher' (tellingly, they avoid entirely the term 'scientific', precisely because of the methodological issues associated with such a term), and on 'sense', which is understood as perception, an 'intuitive' understanding of geographical contexts and space. Geography, in this context, is also understood as essentially the ancient literary texts concerned with knowledge of the geographic surroundings. The biggest methodological contribution of this approach is the use of modern cognitive linguistic and psychological methodologies in the examination of ancient texts. Another useful term/category used throughout the book is that of 'mental modelling', as cognitive ways of representing knowledge in long-term memory. This interdisciplinary approach, as well as the use of the mental model as a methodological tool, provides many fascinating insights. I do not have the space here to discuss all the contributions; rather, I shall focus on what I believe are the most noteworthy.

The contribution by A. Dan, K. Geus and K. Guckelsberger uses the scene from Aristophanes'

Clouds (200–17) where Strepsiades attempts to understand a map to show how a distinction between the mathematical geography of maps and other forms of literary geography cannot be sustained: cartography, rather, was an essential element of geographic texts, not a discipline in its own right. The scene in Aristophanes is particularly crucial as it highlights different registers of spatial recognition. They end their contribution with a detailed table listing texts according to different categories, which they term 'intuitive' geography, 'scholarly' geography and 'fully reasoned geography' (interestingly, only Ptolemy is listed under the final heading). There are considerable overlaps between categories, with many texts occupying the middle space between them. This is certainly a useful exercise, but I did wonder to what extent such a relatively rigid categorization advances our understanding of ancient geographic knowledge, as this is reflected in literary texts. T. Poiss' contribution examines the bird's-eye view in ancient literature. He rightly observes that Greek authors preferred the hodological view of itinerary; he concludes that the relative absence of the vertical view in historiography and ethnography is linked with the literary conventions of the genre. T. Bekker-Nielsen turns his attention to 'soft' spaces in the Roman world, that is spaces that should be understood as informal or relational. I found the discussion of the sea littoral in Roman law and culture as essentially a 'soft' space particularly rewarding. Geus examines what is a day's journey in Herodotus; the focus here is on subjectivity. In other words, Herodotus did not use averaging as a system (the author is very convincing in arguing that no such system existed in antiquity), but rather chooses whichever measurement is most useful to him in each particular passage. A. Dan, in a long-winded article which would have benefitted from some editing, looks at the different geographical registers of understanding in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, such as those between soldiers and leaders. M.J. Geller makes the intriguing suggestion that Berossos wrote in Aramaic and that he never visited Cos; rather, this text at a later stage was translated into Greek and taken to one of the education centres of Cos. E. Ilyushechkina, G. Görz and M. Thiering apply an interdisciplinary approach to Dionysius Periegetes' poem; by using cognitive linguistics, corpus construction and parsing, they attempt to highlight the different strategies for space recognition. The results may not be surprising, but the

methodological approach is certainly worthy of attention. Thiering's contribution is a worthy ending to this fascinating volume; he fully explores the concept of mental modelling, while stressing the interplay between the 'real world' and the experience of the observer.

It is clear to me that common sense geography is a fruitful new approach to ancient texts. The volume is of high standard, and the insights it provides are remarkable. While there is some degree of variation in the engagement with common sense geography and mental modelling in the various contributions, on the whole, this is a highly coherent volume. It clearly shows that it is the product of an innovative research environment. My question is this: after reading the volume and having observed the different approaches to applying common sense geography to a large and varied corpus of ancient texts (Greek and Roman), I was less clear as to what specifically common sense geography taught us in relation to these texts. I should rephrase this: is there any other geographical knowledge in the texts that we have that is *not* common sense geography? Can we really take out (even) Eratosthenes and Ptolemy? This is perhaps an unfair comment, but it shows how convincing this book's approach is.

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