

## BOOK REVIEW

*Challenges of Mapping the Classical World*. By RICHARD J. A. TALBERT. London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2019. Pp. ix + 201. Hardback, \$140.00. ISBN: 978-1-4724-5782-0.

Since the mid-1980s, the cartography of the ancient world has been dominated by Richard J. A. Talbert, who has tirelessly interrogated both ancient mapping (especially the Peutinger Map, to which he has brought to bear fresh insights) and modern efforts to map the ancient world (notably, *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World and Map-by-Map Directory* [Princeton University Press, 2000]). The present volume is a collection of 14 short items that represent Talbert's work on modern maps and atlases of the ancient world, including three book reviews, two book introductions, six articles and several previously unpublished documents from the *Barrington Atlas* project (including the narrative description submitted as part of the 1990 National Endowment of the Humanities proposal plus instructions for contributors, and half-yearly reports to the NEH).

The book falls into four sections. In the first section (one item: a review of Goffart's *Historical Atlases*, 2003) Talbert examines the early (mid-16<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) efforts to map the ancient world. In the second section, Talbert has marshalled together six pieces in which he explores the atlases and maps of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the William Smith-George Grove *Atlas of Ancient Geography Biblical and Classical* (1872-74), whose cartographer was Karl Müller (among other things, Müller was editor of *Geographi Graeci Minores*); Pierre Lapie's *Orbis Romanus ad Illustranda Itineraria* (1845); Heinrich Kiepert's *Formae Orbis Antiqui* (1894-1914); and the false starts represented by the *Forma Romana Imperii* (FRI, 1921-) and O. G. S. Crawford's *Tabula Imperii Romani* (TIR, 1934-), among others.

A third section includes documents relating to the American Philological Association's *Classical Atlas Project* (#8-10) which culminated in the *Barrington Atlas*. Talbert here provides an intriguing glimpse into the development and progress of the magisterial *Barrington Atlas*; especially of interest are the half annual reports to

the NEH that outline concerns and solutions: “these positive summaries [were] crafted for a funding agency which expected timely progress, submitted by a project always fearful of foundering for lack of funds to continue” (5).

Selections #11-13 look ahead to the possibilities afforded by digital cartography and the *Ancient World Mapping Center*. Here Talbert reflects on the transition from the *Barrington Atlas* to the Ancient World Mapping Center (hosted by UNC-Chapel Hill). The *Barrington Atlas* is thus not an end in itself but rather the foundation of a larger, on-going initiative which finally addresses to satisfaction the dilemma faced by Müller in the 1870s as he had grappled with accelerating discoveries about the ancient world and its scholarship. For example, early readers of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* were advised that many of the published maps were “no longer accurate or complete in the light of findings published since its production” (15). Digitization was eventually brought to bear on the Barrington project, and nearly 60% of the maps were produced digitally, providing greater versatility.

The volume is richly illustrated with both historical maps and details from the *Barrington Atlas*. Talbert’s treatment of the historical material (especially #2) is enlivened by the inclusion of correspondence between cartographers, editors and publishers (reproduced in the original languages: English, French and German). The index focuses on cartographical matters, such as technical terminology (e.g., hachuring), important figures and organizations (Union Académique Internationale) and guiding principles (map bases).

Although there is some inevitable overlap (e.g., the details of Müller’s career, the challenges encountered by Kiepert, *aut sim.*), the pieces complement each other and collectively provide an intriguing narrative of the history of historical cartography of the Classical world from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the modern day. Talbert raises important issues, including the tensions between physical and historical/cultural geography; the challenges of technology (copper plates that eventually degrade, thus limiting the feasible print-run of any particular map), expenses, the importance of scale, sources of the base maps, restoration—insofar as it is possible—of the ancient landscape (apparently not even considered for the *TIR*: 174). While Kiepert might have lamented “ohne seine Karten könnten wir alle nicht arbeiten” (62), it has always been agreed that good historical maps are critical for scholars and students in understanding ancient history (and society). But these maps must be designed and produced. Who curates maps of the ancient world?

Classical historians or geographers/cartographers? It is (and was) agreed that such maps are essential, especially to the historian, but by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century those maps “were the prime concern of neither” (69). For whom are such maps produced? The scholar? The student? The “ordinary” user as on Crawford’s cartographic vision (80)? In this handy volume Talbert raises awareness of the methodologies that guide good map-making hand in glove with a survey of the advancement of technology and information that fueled cartographic initiatives from the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the digital age.

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