

## New Observations on the Dura-Periplus Map

This paper will offer the results of most recent research conducted in the Manuscript Department of the National Library of France, aiming at the comprehensive re-examination of the original of one of the most puzzling artifacts that have ever been unearthed in Dura Europos at the Middle Euphrates: the *Dura Periplus-Map*. This is dated to before the destruction of the settlement by the Persians in the winter of 256-257 CE. Based on a detailed inspection of specific features of the parchment fragment and accompanied by a photo documentation of all map entries, this paper announces extensive additional and revised material. It will display newly discovered and first-time documented lines, corrected readings and orthographies, which now are making up one third of the legible fragment. Addressed will be an introductory analysis of spatial perception, geographical common-sense misconceptions, cartographic techniques, and interaction between several media such as ancient geographical works, Greek *peripli*, Roman *itineraria* and the military need to be good at making and reading maps in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Roman Empire.

The study pays particular attention to the most problematic, three-line section which is situated at the bottom of the Dura fragment, to the right of the outermost vignette for a settlement that has not yet been successfully identified (there are speculations about partly preserved and, as it will turn out, mostly wrongly identified letters). There are many factors adding to the longstanding difficulties regarding the reconstruction of the lettering. This may allow us to develop a deeper understanding of the nature, form, content, and utilization of that one-of-a-kind artifact. First of all, this is the most poorly preserved section. Secondly, this section provided the mapmaker with the very limited space for five entries and four vignettes following *Chersonesos*. In the third place, and this affects the interpretation of the genuine content, the last two entries, ΤΡΑΠΙ(Ε) and ΑΡΤΑ, which have so far been suggested in the two most commonly used reconstructions, are not

only incomplete, but they also invite ambiguity. Last but not least, all attempts to discern single letters and restore genuine entries in the aforementioned problematic section, following TPAΠ(Ε) and APTA, remain mere hypotheses: these have heavily drawn on Cumon's verbal descriptions of hardly perceivable and partly preserved letters before the cleaning and conservation of the parchment, and in most cases also on the beautiful watercolor drawing by Léon Marotte (Paris, 1925).

The consultation of the original resulted, however, in the introduction of three completely new entries concerning Theudisia, Akrai/Akra and the Bosporos. This was above and beyond all expectations. The most spectacular discovery was the fragmentary ΒΓΔΠ standing for Βώσπ[ορος] in the place of the hypothetical μσν, μετ, μητ, and Κιμμ. Most importantly, the entry of the Βώσπ[ορος] has the potential to considerably change our notion of ancient cartography and use of *peripli* or *itineraria*. More than ever, the military need to be good at making and reading maps in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Roman Empire necessitates the systematic and analytical comparison with specific literary sources, including geographical treatises, Greek *peripli*, and Roman *itineraria*. This may allow us to discern parallels in cartographic techniques, onomastic material, orthography, space perception, geographical common-sense conceptions and misconceptions, cultural historical context and chronology.

As a focus of attention, this study will document striking correspondences between Pseudo-Arrian's *Periplus of the Euxine Sea* and the *Dura Periplus-Map* as regards form, orthography, and content. Not least, this procedure will permit us to advance questions on the date of the core text of the so-called *Pseudo-Arrian* and on the text-map interaction in its cultural context.

## Bibliography

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