



Facsimile edition

Tabulae geographicae after Ptolemaeus

Between 2007 and 2013 all 32 maps will be published by Verlag Rothe Drucke in a numbered edition of 100 copies each. The maps are hand-tinted relief prints on handmade paper Canson Arches, 200 g/m², measuring 50 × 65 cm. In addition, there are a title page and six sheets with a commentary on selected cartographical aspects written by Dr Florian Mittenhuber.

The maps can be seen on the publishers' website under www.rothe-drucke.ch.

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Verlag Rothe Drucke

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Tabulae geographicae after Ptolemaeus

Published in Ulm in 1486. 32 woodcut maps (27 Ptolemaic, 5 modern)



In about 150 A.D. the Alexandrian mathematician, astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemy created his "Geography", a work of global historical significance in which he attempted the correct geographical classification of peoples and places. Ptolemy was the first classical scholar to sum up contemporary geographical knowledge on the form of our earth, whose surface he probably knew in broad outlines but not in its real shape.



Ptolemy's fund of geographical knowledge, which had fallen into oblivion for over 1,000 years, was rediscovered in Constantinople by Maximos Planudes in around 1300 and arrived in the Latin West a century later. The Byzantine humanist Emanuel Chrysoloras and his pupil Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia translated the text of "Geography" from Greek into Latin. In 1409 the latter dedicated his translation to Pope Alexander V. This was followed, somewhat later, by the reproduction and translation of the maps by Francesco di Lapacino and Leonardo Buoninsegni. The Bavarian Benedictine monk Nicolaus Germanus made copies showing the maps of the countries in a trapezoidal projection. The borders between the provinces and the outlines of the different countries are marked as dotted lines. In 1466 Germanus presented a first copy to Duke Borso d'Este of Ferrara. A few years later Pope Paul II also received a copy, with a slightly modified dedication. The manuscripts of the first version were used as the basis of the first printed editions with maps (Bologna 1477, Rome 1478). Germanus added three non-Ptolemaic maps of Northern Europe, Italy and Spain to the manuscripts of the second version; the copies of the third version were supplemented by two more maps, i.e. those of France and Palestine. They show the direct influence of land surveying and sea charts at that time. Thus the Ptolemaic view of the world began to change.



The edition printed in Ulm in 1484, the first-ever Ptolemaic edition in the German-speaking world, is based on a manuscript of this third version. The woodcut blocks for the atlas were produced by Johannes Schnitzer of Armsheim. Both the first edition of 1482 and the second of 1486 were printed from these blocks.



The world map shown on the title page, depicted in a modified conical projection, is framed by heads symbolizing the most important winds. North is located at the top, a convention that is still employed worldwide in atlases today. The network of latitude and longitude lines is exactly defined according to the information provided by Ptolemy, who was the first to introduce a system of co-ordinates in degrees for geographical maps. The names on the map refer to the seas, countries, rivers and mountainous regions as identified in "Geography".



The atlas used for this facsimile came into the possession of Canton Glarus through the bequest of Walter Blumer in 1975. Unfortunately a former owner had the individual sheets pasted onto cardboard so that the text on the verso is no longer legible. The effect of acid from the underlying cardboard and damage due to normal deterioration have rendered the restoration of this important atlas unavoidable. In order to fund the preservation of this unique incunabulum, Glarus cantonal archives and cantonal library decided, with the help of the publishing house Verlag Rothe Drucke Berne, to publish the atlas in a limited, hand-tinted edition of 100 copies. The new edition will not only give a lot of pleasure but also represents a precious atlas of lasting value.

Hans Laupper, Florian Mittenhuber
Glarus/Berne, February 2006/May 2008