CONSTRUCTING A DIGITAL EDITION FOR THE PEUTINGER MAP

Tom Elliott

The preparation of scholarly editions of primary sources has long been a fundamental activity of classical scholarship. For literary and documentary works, an edition comprises the systematic presentation of a text, carefully constituted from available exemplary manuscripts and variously augmented by scientific apparatus, textual and historical commentary, translation and imagery. Without proper editions for seminal works, historians and philologists are hobbled in their inquiries, whether the goal is synthetic historical analysis, thematic literary study or linguistic reference. A surprising number of works from classical antiquity still lack satisfactory modern editions.

An outstanding example of a work too long ill-served is the large-format, small-scale world map known commonly as the Peutinger map (see Fig. 1). A seamless cartographic composition, it originally spanned the limits of Rome’s claims (or dreams) of control and influence from the Atlantic Ocean to Sri Lanka. This precious artifact, held since 1738 in the Austrian National Library in Vienna, constitutes the only extant evidence for Roman mapping at this combination of scale and geographic extent. The surviving copy was probably produced around AD 1200. No statement concerning the identity of

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2 The Latin moniker “Tabula Peutingeriana” is a modern invention. Whatever title and summary components might have originally accompanied the map were lost before its modern appearance.

Fig. 1. A small extract from the Peutinger Map, from the 1888 photographs by Carl Angerer and Alexander Göschl. *Peutingeriana tabula itineraria in Bibliotheca Palatina Vindobonensi asservata nunc primum arte photographica expressa* (Vienna, 1888).