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The Roman Sense of Place: Movement, Space, and Mapping in the Roman Empire

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THE ROMAN SENSE OF PLACE:
MOVEMENT, SPACE, AND MAPPING IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

By

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In

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Abstract

The field of Roman space studies has developed within the past three decades. Research has mainly focused on a debate regarding the level of "map consciousness" possessed by the Romans under the Roman Empire. However, the dominance of this debate has masked the issue of the value of the extant Roman maps as a cultural indicator for the Roman sense of place. Ancient commentary supplements the admittedly slim record of Roman mapping, further improving the understanding of the public's relationship and interaction with maps. An anthropological reading of these maps and their purpose, content, and context reveals that they helped to define the Roman sense of place – whether they were widely understood or not. This task is undertaken in an analysis of three of the most important and well-researched maps: the Map of Agrippa, the *Forma Urbis* (Severan Marble Plan of Rome), and the Peutinger Map.
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Introduction:
Imperialism in Roman Cartography

The empire of ancient Rome promoted interaction, movement, and trade across a vast area. Under Augustus (63 BC - 14 AD) and the Pax Romana, the Roman territory stretched from Spain all the way to Syria, allowing for relatively safe trafficking of troops, travelers, and trade goods (Image 1). As Lionel Casson claims in his book *Travel in the Ancient World*, “the first two centuries of the Christian Era were halcyon days for a traveller” (Casson 1974: 122). This climax of the Roman Empire and the safety it produced was built upon centuries of consolidation of Roman power (Laurence 1999: 11, 39). Moreover, Rome took careful aim to make sure that the entire empire could be policed and maintained, thus fostering a stable “national” identity (Casson 1974: 121). As Derek Williams writes in *Romans and Barbarians*, Rome outstripped its neighbors because “neither Germany, Sarmatia, nor Celtica resembled anything we might today describe as a country, an empire, or even a confederation” (Williams 1999: 68). The Roman Empire was truly unique in its unity.

The strength of the Roman state is evident in a speech given by the orator Aelius Aristeides in praise of the success of the Pax Romana and the first Antonine emperor. The panegyric (155 AD) not only acknowledges the unified state that the Romans had built but also emphasizes travel:

> Could not every man go where he wished, without fear? Are not all harbours busy, are not mountains as safe as cities? Is there not charm in all fields, from whence dread has vanished? There are no streams impassable, no locked gulfs. The earth is no longer iron, but clad anew for a feast. Hellenes and barbarians may wander from their own homes to arrive at their own homes; the Ciconian Gates, the narrow sandy roads to Egypt through Arabia present no terrors of mountain pass, torrents, or savages: to be the emperor’s subject, to be a Roman is the one talisman. Homer had
said, “The earth is common to all”; it was now realized. You have measured the earth, bridged the rivers, and made roads through the mountains, and ennobled all things. The world need be no more described; no laws or customs retailed; for you have been the leaders for everyone, have opened every gate and given every man his freedom, to see all with his own eyes. You have conferred equal laws on all, and repealed conditions entertaining to the mind, and intolerable in reality; and merged all nations into one family (Adams 2001: 2).

Romans achieved this level of sophistication because of the stability it ensured from militarizing its empire.¹ This was accomplished by instituting a complex and extensive network of roads, which were “crucial to Roman hegemony” in that they facilitated the travel of policing troops (Laurence 1999: 11; Casson 1974: 163). The practical benefit of roads also extended to the average traveler or trader, who could, as Aelius Aristides said, “go where they wished, without fear.” Additionally, the connectivity of the roads created movement that symbolically enhanced imperial ambitions and metaphysically altered space-time relationships (Lenski 2002: 204; Dyson 2003: 413).² But the existence of the roads and the troops would have been worthless had it not been for the accompanying system of mapping that allowed for efficient and predictable travel – without this no efficient campaign would have ever been launched. The Roman Empire thus owed its success, in part, to the map.

The Roman mapping system that aided the empire was not the sort of mapping which we are familiar with today.³ Though the Greeks had previously taken great strides

¹ The road network also positively impacted trade, too. However, trade by sea was generally believed to be much more cost effective and widely used than land transport (though Laurence challenges this position; Laurence 1999: 95-108).
² Movement was a central tenement to conceptions of Roman space. Discussed in relation to travel in Laurence 1999 in his discussion of kinetic space and the mobile culture of the Romans and with regards to landscape design in the compilation Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion (Michel Conan, Ed., 2003).
³ A discussion on the definition of a map follows below, page 12.
in geographical science and cartography, the Roman motive for mapping was initially motivated by a military necessity. As Strabo so aptly noted: “for the most part, geography exists for the needs of states” (Strabo 1.1.16). The military practicality at the root of Roman mapping has led it to be characterized as “bluntly pragmatic” (Martin 1989: 154). It is true that the army required an organized system of roads and maps, for the proper maintenance of the empire required constant reminder by the emperor who was in charge (Whittaker 2004: 32). Hadrian, for example, spent over half of his reign traveling from territory to territory, asserting the Roman imperium. For a properly functioning army, it was imperative to know how far away a destination was and how long it would take to get there. It was just as necessary for others to know the route and location of the troops so that proper rations could be supplied to them while they were on a tour. Thus an organized and clear compendium of routes and distances were integral to the functioning of the Roman army, and this information was recorded in itineraria — itineraries of routes with distances in between possible stopovers.

The simplicity of the extant itineraria compared to our modern conception of maps have caused many to assert that Roman mapping was based entirely on their practical need. In contrast, Greek cartography has been characterized more as an intellectual pursuit undertaken by thinkers trying to find their place in the world and give it more order. Yet to ascribe to such a hodological perspective, to relegate the Roman mapping to a purely imperial and practical nature, thus ignores the impact that these maps had on the people and how the public interacted with them (Salway 2006: 29).

Understanding this aspect of a map is the most difficult, according to Christian Jacob. In

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4 For a discussion on the development of the Greek image of the world, see Woodward 1989, The Image of the Spherical Earth.
his article, "Toward a Cultural History of Cartography," he claims that trying to understand maps in a society, "the way maps were used is probably the most difficult single aspect, since when people look at maps they leave no visible mark on the maps themselves. Their vision is invisible to us" (Jacob 1987: 192). A map has a reflexive relationship, and in looking at some of the Roman maps prepared that dealt both directly with imperial purpose and also non-imperial maps, it is clear that a dialectic formed which led to the promotion of cartography above and beyond its purpose as a purely imperial tool. Roman maps, regardless of how they were initially intended, came to have a social impact and, when read in their appropriate cultural context, reveal that maps were publically appreciated outside of the realm of Roman imperialism.

Maps as public spectacles contributed to general knowledge about the empire as well as awareness about the extent of its holdings. By reinforcing these principles, maps contributed to the Roman "sense of place." The sense of place is a geographic principle that focuses on the meaning of a place to its inhabitants. Edward Relph, author of Place and Placelessness, calls the sense of place an awareness and perception of a place. The more that this awareness contrives a feeling of belonging, the more the place develops in a defined and recognizable entity (Relph 1976: 47). This cyclical relationship helps a place grow while also encouraging the inhabitants’ affiliation to the place. Thus the sense of place developed by the empire contributed to the nationhood that set the Roman Empire apart from its neighbors, as shown by Aristeides.

The sense of place topic falls under a category of space studies that have recently become a popular topic in Roman studies. Claude Nicolet’s landmark Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire was one of the first to deal with the topic, which
has since sprouted a small coterie of followers (Nicolet 1991 (originally in French 1986, Talbert 2008, Whittaker 2004, Brodersen 2004, Laurence 1999). However, the only direct research on the sense of place is undertaken by Whittaker in his book *Rome and its Frontiers: the dynamics of empire*. Unfortunately, he mishandles the subject. He mistakenly asserts: “the only certain map, in any sense that we would recognize it, to survive almost complete from antiquity is the celebrated Peutinger Table, although only preserved in its medieval copy” (see Image 2; Whittaker 2004: 64). This statement commits multiple factual and anthropological transgressions. Firstly, there are more remaining maps than the celebrate Peutinger Table (also called the Peutinger Map) – a Roman *itineraria* famously illustrated. That Whittaker would make such a bold statement in 2004, in the face of recent research on other surviving maps, is unfortunate.\(^5\)

Secondly, in defining a Roman map by our own modern conceptions of a map, he breaks a cardinal rule of anthropology – cultural relativism. Cultural relativism urges removing learned cultural bias in order to understand cultures on their own terms. Operating under cultural relativism necessitates an awareness of your own cultural preconceptions.\(^6\)

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\(^5\) Specifically, research on the Artemidorus Papyrus had been released in 1997. The Artemidorus Papyrus is an *itineraria picta* – an illustrated itinerary, like the Peutinger Map – based off of the works of the geographer Artemidorus of Ephesus. Artemidorus wrote in the 2\(^{nd}\) and 1\(^{st}\) centuries BC. The remaining fragments of the document display calligraphy, some sketches of animals and parts of the human body, and finally, a map of what is assumed to be Spain. These fragments in total measuring 250cm in width and 32.5cm in height. The map itself would have measured 93cm in width, meaning that the lateral dimensions of the drawing would necessarily be skewed similarly to the Peutinger Map (see Section III for further discussion). The researchers that have examined the map, Barbel Kramer and Claudio Gallazzi, determined that the map represents the work of a cartographer working under the last Ptolemies or under the Romans (Kramer 2001).

\(^6\) While accurate political maps have existed for a long time, the exactness of cartography that has been developed with modern technology ushered in an entirely new perception of space. Satellite imaging and GIS technology have increased the availability of accurate knowledge about our globe. Furthermore, the accessibility of such information created by programs such as Google Earth has affected the global mental map to an astounding level. Woodward recalls the period in the 1960s when the first digital satellite images of our globe were made public and the affect that had on our collective mental maps (Woodward 1989: 3).
While Whittaker is unaware that he has a subjective view of what constitutes a map, he certainly does, and he inappropriately projects that onto the ancient Roman culture.

A more meaningful space study of the remaining maps from the Roman Empire would analyze the sense of place they helped to define within an appropriately anthropological context. For while the maps served an imperial purpose, that was not their only function. A holistic and culturally relativistic reading of the extant maps, the commentary upon mapping, and Roman space show that these maps amounted to more than mere tools of the Empire. This hypothesis follows in the footsteps of Nicolet, who noted the integral relation of space, the map, and the empire. As he states, “In order to set boundaries to their empire and to claim to have reached those that were marked out, the Romans needed a certain perception of geographical space, of its dimensions and of the area they occupied” (Nicolet 1992: 2). Integrating geographical and anthropological principles with the Classical corpus is important, because due to the nature of the disciplines there is often not much cross-examination. However the following examples from the physical record and the literary tradition prove that Classical realm is fruitful in an anthropological context.
Cartographic Historiography: 
Tracing the Development of the Understanding of Roman Space

There was once an age of innocence in which Geography was about Maps, whilst Biography was about Chaps, but Human Geography swallowed chaps long since, and maps have gone on to claim the entire cosmos on their own account. For the purposes of today’s cartographical history, cartography is concerned with the whole business of conceiving and making and using and assessing and acquiring and even, in respect of their aesthetic qualities, admiring maps.


The subject of imperialism and sense of place regarding Roman cartography is not only interesting because of the potential anthropological reading of Roman maps, but also due to the relative youth of the field of the history of cartography. The relevance of my research is partially due to the frame provided by the history of this particular field. Fifty years ago, the discipline did not even exist, and few recognized the importance of maps past the face value of the information that they presented. However, historian and eminent Islamicist Marshall Hodgson was prescient in his understanding of the important anthropological and cultural subtext of maps. In 1954 he stated that any attempt to make sense of the interrelations of societies throughout history “must begin with the map” (Hodgson 1993: 4). As Hodgson understood, to the educated reader, maps can provide a wealth of information about a community’s identity, ethos, prejudices, interactions, and movement. The anthropological value of a map can be seen through this modern example: Hodgson read maps in order to illuminate the tangled history of the Islamic and

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7 Hodgson died in 1968, but a collection of his essays were assembled and published by Edmund Burke in 1993. He was a pioneer in the field if Islamic history; many reviewers acknowledge that his understanding of ethnocentrism was ahead of his time (John Voll 1994, Ross E. Dunn 1999, Jonathan P Berkey 1995, Gladys Frantz-Murphy 1994).
Western worlds. He believed that the Islamic world should be viewed more comprehensively with the rest of world history, rather than being diminished under a Eurocentric view. The Mercator projection, specifically, was his target of contempt. He lambasted the misuse of this projection; it was originally derived for navigational use but was propagated in many irrelevant contexts (e.g. political maps). As seen in Image 3, the Mercator projection unfortunately severely misrepresents the continents and subliminally bestows upon Europe a “rank disproportionate to its relative size” (Hodgson 1993: 4). Such inferences are possible for any map, if it is read in its appropriate social context.

But Hodgson’s statement does not only stress the value of a map as a cultural artifact, it also reveals how recently the history of cartography developed as a field of research. In 1954, he spoke of an inchoate discipline that was not formally recognized. It was not until a decade later that the first official conference on the history of cartography was held (Sims 2001: 3). Then, in 1970, the field’s first research center—the Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography—opened, further raising awareness. During this period, research about maps and recognition of their power and importance both increased. However, controversy also remained as the field still lacked standards or authority. As Mark Monmonier chronicles in his book, *Rhumb Lines and Map Wars: A

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8 Hodgson criticized the senseless entities (and blatant cultural constructions) of the “continents,” particularly the loose configuration of Europe. Hodgson believes that by designating Europe a continent, even though cultural areas like Ionia and countries such as Turkey and Russia straddle the continental boundary, cultural lines are ignored. Such cartographic canon also leaves the Islamic world officially unrecognized (Hodgson 1993: 4-5, 33, 39).

9 The use of the Mercator projection was initially founded upon its usefulness as a nautical aide, for it preserved the correct angles between latitude and longitude, since it maintained all latitudes as parallel. Thus, sailors could chart a direct line on a Mercator map, check the angle, and sail along that angle to their destination. It increased distance, but enhanced the ease of navigation. However, the projection also caused the lands in the upper latitudes (above 40°N) to be enhanced, giving them the appearance of greater size while many areas in the tropics were unaffected (Monmonier 2004: 14).
Social History of the Mercator Projection, in 1973 Arno Peters launched a campaign against the Mercator projection and provided a purportedly “fairer” alternative (Monmonier 2004: 147). His map preserved equal relative areas between the continents. However, as seen in Image 4, it also severely distorted the shapes of the continents. It was unpopular with nonspecialists because of its unfamiliar shape, and unpopular with specialists due to a lack of scholarship on Peters’ part. Yet, he found a niche of fans: groups focusing on Third World aid. A 1986 study by Peter Vujakovic found that 69% of British groups directed at Third World aid had adopted the use of the Peters projection in some capacity (Monmonier 2004: 154). But does this mean the map is fairer, or better? Communities that accepted his map had the same agenda as any Eurocentric Mercator promoter: they all wanted a map that made their area of interest look larger and more important. Both parties were merely furthering their own self-interest. Thus, these “map wars” prove the strength of the map as a cultural artifact and indicator.

At the same time as these controversies were occurring, further scholarship revealed that the same sort of self-identifying (and sometimes aggressive) mapping was taking place millennia beforehand, in ancient Greece and Rome. Oswald A. Dilke, in 1985, published the first true survey of Classical cartography, Greek and Roman Maps. As he admits at the start of the work, “The part played by maps in the history and civilization of Greece and Rome has not received the attention it deserves” (Dilke 1985: 9). This work was widely considered a seminal attempt at a cohesive catalogue of the subject – the sort of reference that was entirely lacking to the field previously (Reinhold 1987: 319-320; Casson 1986: 891; Jacob 1986: 106; Knorr 1991: 722). His analysis of individual maps and objects was cogent; however, Dilke’s inability to successfully
associate the maps he analyzed with any greater themes was noted by the same reviewers that lauded his attempt to update the field. His treatment of the larger picture was called “less satisfying,” and a “failure” at dealing with larger “theoretical and methodological premises,” (Knorr 1991: 721; Jacob 1986: 106; Brodersen 2004: 183-190).

However, he would soon have a chance to revamp his work. Two men with even loftier goals than Dilke, Brian David Harley and David Woodward, invited Dilke to collaborate on a larger comprehensive overview of the cartographic tradition. Harley and Woodward’s estimable (and still unfinished) series, The History of Cartography, traces the development of mapping from the Paleolithic era to modern times. The first of the series, on “Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean” was just published in 1987. Dilke contributed five of twenty-one total chapters, and yet despite a more thematic approach, his work is nonetheless criticized for accepting some specious material as evidence for mapping (Harley ed 1987: 177-279; Talbert 2008: 13). Furthermore, he failed to reflect on the maps as a context of their culture.\(^{10}\) The field of Greek and Roman mapping was thus still lacking in comprehensive scholarship. Even worse, the conversation about the relationship of maps and space remained completely silent.

However, despite this shortcoming, the volume as a whole achieved success in the general promotion of the map. Their work placed unprecedented importance of the ability of a map to reveal qualities of the societies that produced them. Harley and Woodward’s desire to emphasize the map in its human context prompted them to adapt a radical new conception of maps as: “graphic representations that facilitate a spatial

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\(^{10}\) Some of Dilke’s research on individual objects is still used in this work because despite his shortcomings, the appropriate materials he catalogued were well analyzed.
understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, events or even the human condition” (Harley and Woodward 1987: xvi). This definition (to which Dilke, in short-handing the cultural context of maps, clearly fell short of fulfilling) promoted a new vision of maps as cultural functions. In addition, as reviewer Konvitz states, it “helped to shape the field internally as to provide a source of information to nonspecialists” (Konvitz 1998: 671). Thus Harley and Woodward took steps to counteract the situation that had first born the “map wars.”

So despite the efforts that went into these works, the largest value gained from them was their impact in prompting further discussion and research in the field. Though their research is outdated, the baseline set by Dilke, Harley, and Woodward catalyzed a new era of space studies that critically analyzed the meaning of these maps. Currently, Roman space studies is occupied by a debate over what Talbert describes as “map consciousness,” or the level at which Romans truly engaged with mapping and the nature in which they visualized their world (Talbert 2008: 14). One school of thought follows that espoused by Whittaker, which diminishes the Roman map consciousness to an entirely linear perception.11 In other words, the claim is that Romans lacked a three-dimensional view of the world. To echo the earlier criticism of Whittaker, an engagement with such an issue must be handled with cultural relativism.

In fact, many objects and instances from the literary tradition contradict the notion that the Roman spatial consciousness was merely linear. There are multiple pieces of evidence that warrant the belief that space was understood in two dimensions, and a scattering that suggests that space was beginning to be understood in three dimensions.

Incorporating this body of evidence into the flat maps of my study allows for a truer interpretation of the Roman map consciousness as well as sense of place.

Two-dimensional space was represented and implied in many objects that have been recovered from the Roman Empire. To start, Talbert, who is critical of the belief that space was exclusively linear, mentions a set of sundials in support of the claim of two-dimensional space (Talbert 2008: 22; Dilke 1987: 215). Previously, he had claimed that the layout of the provinces would encourage a spatial understanding that included relative directions, but this view is further supported by the set of sundials that uses province names to indicate latitudes (see Images 5, 6). Dilke assumes the sundials to be the tools of an agrimensores, or land surveyor, who needed accurate directions in order to plot property lines (Dilke 1987: 214).

In fact, the entire practice of the agrimensores could have been a factor in Roman map consciousness. There is an interesting parallel with this process in the Greek world. Due to the practice of land allotment, the entire public was familiar with the concept of mapping. Maps had permeated the social culture and were an object of commonality to an extent that it could be easily parodied. John Noble Wilford, in his book The Mapmakers, points out that by 423 BCE

The map idea was taking hold in Greek culture. Aristophanes, in his comedy The Clouds ... had a geometrical instrument brought on stage “to measure up the land.” One of the characters asked: “Do you mean the allotment land?” No, he was told, the whole world. His attention was then called to a world map that has also been brought on stage. Another character said: “Here you have the circuit of all the earth. D’ye see? Here is Athens (Wilford 2000: 12)

The processes of the Greek allotment and Roman centuriation carried out by

agrimensores were similar enough that it holds Romans could have experienced similar
exposure to mapping. Indeed, Brian Campbell notes a passage from Horace in which he details a Roman soldier inquiring about the location of the plots promised to the army (Serm. 11.6.51-8 in Campbell 1996: 74). Campbell further claims that “land distribution was a familiar and important aspect of Roman life” (Campbell 1996: 74). The agrimensores had a profound effect on the Roman landscape — plot lines can, even today, be seen from the air. Illustrations from surviving surveys show that space was certainly recorded in gridded areas, and likely with much accuracy due to the issue of ownership (see Images 7, 8, 9).

Three-dimensional space is seen in both textual and physical sources. First, two texts describe a global view that certainly prohibits a solely linear understanding of the globe to anyone who encountered them (though dissemination, is, of course, a factor). Geminus of Rhodes (fl. ca. 70 BC), in his Introduction to Phaenomena, describes both astral and terrestrial globes as teaching instruments. Cosmological globes were made to depict the constellations, only certain celestial bodies, or planets. Another surviving text also references a perspective on outer space, but from an entirely different angle — literally. Whereas Geminus speaks of didactic instruments, Cicero, in Dream of Scipio imagines that Scipio Aemelianus falls asleep and dreams that he is floating in the heavens. From his vantage — “a high place full of stars, shining and splendid” — he looks down upon the earth and notes the scale of Rome compared to the rest of the world. This passage proves that Cicero had an understanding of Roman’s relation to the Empire and that the practice of envisioning the earth as it would lay on the globe was not unprecedented.

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12 Their work has also survived in some maps, especially in the large compendium Corpus Agrimensorum. The mapping process is discussed by Campbell (1999: 90-99) as well as Dilke’s early work, Roman Surveyor’s Manuals (1995, 1997).
The image of the globe is found on many paintings and objects as well. In the Boscoreale villa a fresco of a globe dating to about 50 BC remains (see Image 10). Furthermore, at Pompeii a painting of the Muse Urania exists where she is pointing to a globe, as if she is teaching a lesson (see Image 11). Urania was the muse of astronomy and astrology, so it is no wonder that she would be associated with the globe if both cosmological and terrestrial globes were used together for teaching, as Germinius explains.

The globe is also found, miniaturized, on one of the Boscoreale cups (see image 12). The Boscoreale cups are silver skyphoi, created in the first century AD, portray the emperor Augustus holding a globe in his hand. This embodiment of the world in such a small version as well as the relationship that it suggests between humans and the world shows that the artist could conceptualize the world as a three-dimensional space. Additionally, the Gemma Augusta similarly personifies many cultures (see Image 12). As Rehak describes the gem,

Augustus is enthroned as Jupiter with Roma; the goddess Oikoumene (the inhabitable world), wearing her mural diadem, crowns him; Tellus/Italaia and Cœanus/Neptune or Saturn/Cronus are by her side. Framed against a solar disk directly above Augustus’s head is a Capricorn displayed against a star. To the left, Tiberius dismounts from a quadriga with the figure of Victory as his attendant. In the lower register, captive barbarians are grouped on either side of a trophy; one shield bears a Scorpion, Tiberius’s birth sign. The gem is usually interpreted as an allegory commissioned on the occasion of Tiberius’s triumph in 7BCE or 12CE (Rehak 2006: 73).

This suggests that Romans could disemboby the culture from a linear arrangement on an itineraria.

The final representation that indicates three-dimensional space is an Ephesian coin that features a relief map of Ephesus (see Image 14, 15). Though this coin is Ionian,
its rarity warrants acknowledgement. Dating to the 4th c. BC, not only is it the oldest
extant map known to the Classical tradition, but it also presents a technically
sophisticated map for that time. The area portrayed, representing about 90 square miles,
notably depicts the Tmolus and Messogis ranges in clear relief (Johnston 1967, 1971).
Plausibly, there was a precursor model to this coin, in order for the metalworkers to
create an appropriate die to cast the coin. It is reasonable to believe that it was modeled
after a three-dimensional model, or, at the very least, a detailed flat relief map. Thus, an
organized cartographic survey of the area must have preceded the creation of this coin
type.

Since coin symbology should generally be evaluated with the obverse and reverse
in tandem, it is crucial to note that opposite from the relief map was a depiction of a
Persian satrap. It is interesting to note that the obverse figure is running; this could be
alluding to the courier mail system that extended across all of Anatolia. This system was
supported by the Achaemenids, and extended from the Black Sea to central Iran. Thus
the iconography connects movement, travel, and mapping together.

The incorporation of these examples into the larger study of Roman space is
illuminating. Roman map consciousness cannot be simply relegated to a linear schema.
By approaching the matter from a culturally relativistic perspective—by analyzing the
culture from within by looking at its cultural products—the true nature of the Roman map
consciousness is revealed. Though, by no means does this conclude that the Romans
viewed the world in the same detailed, three-dimensional way that modern society
conceives of a map. Today, technology has allowed for us to have precise mapping
abilities with great accuracy, thus our definition of a map is much more specific. It is
precisely this inherent, modern point of view that hinders a truly culturally relativistic reading of classical maps, however, strides in the right direction are being made.

Attempts to bring sorely needed theory to the history of cartography have been made since the dawn of Harley and Woodward's series. Christian Jacob (1987) and Matthew Edney (.996) have both attempted to regulate to the field by instilling principles that all ring true to anthropology. Edney, in his abstract for "Theory and the History of Cartography" warns that "Historians of cartography need to be critical of their assumptions and preconceptions" (Edney 1996: 186). The statement certainly echoes the principle of cultural relativism. Edney wishes to deconstruct the objectivity with which our society views maps and regard them as a human practice – just the same ideals that Harley and Woodward wished for in their series (Edney 1996: 188).

Specifically regarding the Roman world, recent works by Kai Brodersen, Richard Talbert, Richard Unger, Janet Trimble, and Claude Nicolet, James Romm have probed at the meaning of space in ancient Roman culture as represented through the few maps remaining from that era. These studies have revolved around the debate regarding map consciousness, fueled by the recognition that Roman imperialism encouraged practice of Roman cartography. Kai Brodersen is the main proponent of this movement. However, Richard Talbert has been going against this trend in recognition of the true value of the Roman map (Talbert – Roman Hand and Head, Talbert). Future years will watch this dialectic play out. The pendulum has swung from one extreme – Dilke – to another – Brodersen. Yet an anthropological interpretation would find the place more in the middle, that recognizes the role imperial order played in providing the information for
these maps while also stressing the impact the resulting maps had on the public’s perception of space.

It is in this vein that I conduct my study. It seems that Brodersen’s school has gotten caught up in analyzing how Roman imperialism catalyzed cartography and thus forgets to remember the ensuing affect the product of that imperialist, ordered, information-gathering would have had on the public. It is in recognition of this that the anthropological background comes in and the holistic understanding of the map. Analyzing the ancient Roman “sense of place” and showing that the remaining Roman maps were designed for viewer’s pleasure as well as for imperial purpose.
The ability of maps to impart knowledge about space, a sense of place, and the empire derives from the inherent value of the map as a cultural indicator. The broader definition of a map given by Harley and Woodward recognizes this significance to the entire human condition. Yet how is it that maps convey such a wealth of material? What about their production causes them to be such a valuable indicator? In the face of this question, it is valuable to return to the example of the Mercator projection, whose modern saga resonates with the misinterpretation of ancient Roman cartography as purely imperialistic.

The key to the question lies in the recognition that although the projection was criticized for an apparent Eurocentric agenda, the Mercator’s creation was entirely innocuous. Many cartographic incongruities, in fact, are first developed out of practicality. As Monmonier states, “geopolitical motives were apparent in a few cases, but much of the projection’s misuse reflects a mix of comfortable familiarity, public ignorance, and institutional inertia. No one was hawking the Mercator brand, at least not overtly, but no one had to—many people who grew up with the map apparently believed this was how a flattened earth should look” (Monmonier 2004: 14). Mercator first devised this map for nautical navigation because it preserved angles between latitudes. Thus, travel was simplified and fear of the open seas was mitigated. The Greeks and Romans, in fact, shared the same fear of the ocean that had propelled the need for such a projection (Lindenlauf 2006: 416-433; Obregon 2002: 70; Mitford 2000: 130).

Furthermore, the Roman mapping tradition was similarly borne from utilitarian needs—
the preservation and maintenance of the empire. Yet both the Mercator projection as well as Roman maps came to be interpreted in different ways.

Acknowledging the transformation of the reception of a map is only one aspect of its value as a cultural and historical source. Equally important is recognizing the map as an authored work, with as much of a thesis as any editorial. The inherent bias is what gives the map the possibility of serving as a cultural artifact. Thus the map not only recognizes purpose – as in military organization – but also bias – like the Eurocentric Mercator. These qualities are inherent to maps due to their nature. For it is impossible to relate every feature in perfect detail. Each and every map undergoes a “process of subtraction” in which unimportant information is suppressed in order to better illuminate the desired subject (Wilford 2000: 15; Monmonier 1996: 18). Therefore, a map will carefully select which information to portray in order to present a specific, objectified narrative. It is necessary to acknowledge that maps are “authored collections of information” and are therefore dependent on the cartographer’s knowledge and awareness and also subject to individual or cultural bias (Monmonier 1996: 3). As Hodgson has shown, the innate subjectivity of maps can be detrimental, but, on the other hand, is a valuable quality because it also immediately transforms the map into a cultural artifact.

Thus the remaining Roman maps become an unmined anthropological aid in understanding Roman conceptions of space and place. It is easy to see, in paralleling the Mercator projection to the Roman maps, that both were created for one purpose but then had a secondary, subconscious affect on the public. The aesthetics of the maps overcame the original purpose. It is undeniable that the Roman mapping was, to an extent, “bluntly pragmatic,” as it has been previously labeled, but to not analyze the maps holistically in
an anthropological context is to deny a facet of their existence. The blatant imperial nature of the information Romans collected would always influence the maps that were made, merely because that was the available resource for information. However, just because it seems imperial doesn’t mean that that was the map’s only aim.

The following examples of Roman mapping prove that maps were valued for their aesthetic quality and were not solely used as an imperial tool. The Map of Agrippa in the Porticus Vipsanius, the *Formae Urbis*, also known as the Severan Marble Plan of Rome, and the famous Peutinger Map are all examples of how the imperial geographical data collection was transferred into the public sphere.
SECTION I: Map of Agrippa

The purpose, construction, and general location and context of the Map of Agrippa are all important facets of a cohesive understanding of how this public map would have affected the Roman populace and their collective sense of place (see Image 16). Understanding the monument fully is impeded by the fact that much of the history of the map is surmised. A legend concerning the map is relayed in the *Cosmographia Iulii Caesaris*, stating that the information was gathered by four geometers (measurers of the earth) that Julius Caesar commissioned to survey the land. Each was apparently sent in a different direction: Theodotus to the north, Polycletes to the south, Nicodemus to the east, and Didymus to the west. The story holds that each geographer, respectively, took 28, 32, 20, and 26 years to complete the task (Nicolet 1992: 96). Caesar died just as the task was apparently finished, and thus the work of the geometers was left to Augustus, Caesar’s successor. Yet Nicolet proves that due to irreconcilable dates as well as suspect names of the geometers, this tale is false (Nicolet 1992: 96-97). However, for a variety of impossibilities of the story, researches doubt that this is actually how the information was collected. Regardless, a profound final product resulted (Romm 1992: 70).

Further confusion about the monument is cast by the fact that the precise location of the map is still unknown and no fragments of the physical map have survived. In the study *Mapping Augustan Rome*, the building is classified as extant remains in an uncertain location (Gilman and Haselberger 2002). This unknown location has spurred some debate. Martial, in his epigram 2.14, associates the piers of the Aqua Virgo with the Porticus Vipsanius in the Campus Martius (see Image 18; Martial 4.18.1-2; Gilman
and Haselberger 2002: 72). However, despite Martial's description of his peripatetic path while on his search for a dinner invitation, it still does not provide a solid location for the portico. Some have tried to interpret his path and equate the Porticus Vipsanius with the Porticus Europa, but this has not gained traction (Prior 1996: 7). Rather, it is just assumed that the portico was aligned in the general area of the Via Lata, one of the roads that runs through the Campus Martius.

What does survive are accounts of the map. Though again, some of the information is clouded with confusion. For instance, Romer, in his new translation of Pomponius Mela's *De Chorographia*, claims that the title of the work was referring to Roman public maps, and thus to Augustus' work (Romer 1998: 21). However enticing this idea may be, Brodersen shows that Pomponius Mela was not, in fact, discussing the Map of Agrippa (Brodersen 1999: 576). Aside from the mention in Martial, Pliny the Elder also helpfully discusses the monument in his Natural Histories (Pliny NH 3.16-17).

As to the origins of the map, Pliny's account is most useful. He tells us that the Porticus Vipsania was a joint effort between Agrippa, his sister Polla (thus the eponymous naming after their shared family name Vipsanius), and Augustus. As Pliny states, Agrippa ordered the construction of the portico and wished for it to house his famous map of the world. His sister oversaw its construction, and when Agrippa died, Augustus saw it to completion. No confirmed pieces of the map contained inside have been recovered, but there is some surviving evidence that alludes to the nature of Agrippa's famous map.

One of the most illuminating passages about the map concerns an apparent mistake in the measurement of the Spanish province of Baetica. Pliny's passage alludes
to not only Agrippa’s personal investment in the work but also the relationship that the
monument was supposed to have with the Roman public. Pliny addresses the incorrect
boundary:

Who would believe that Agrippa, who was very careful and took great
pains over this work, should, when he was going to set up the map to be
looked at by the citizens of Rome, have made this mistake, and together
with the deified Augustus? For it was Augustus who, when Agrippa’s
sister had begun building the portico, carried it out from the intention and
notes of M. Agrippa (Pliny NH 3.2.17)

Pliny’s work goes further, however, in ratifying the geographical accuracy of Agrippa’s
work. When Pliny the Elder cites specific distances and measurements in his work,
eighteen times he directly cites Agrippa as his source. The eighty-year time lapse
between when Agrippa published the information and when Pliny wrote suggests that this
was a seminal work of geographical scholarship (Dilke 1989: 209).

What was the purpose of the map? Agrippa valued cartography and expended
serious effort and resources in seeing the map to fruition. Yet there is also a propaganda-
based camp. A solely imperialist reading would follow along with Williams’ theory: “the
main intention of the orbis terrarum was ... propagandist: to display the superposition of
Rome’s works upon the face of geography rather than geography per se” (Williams 1999:
84). The apparent aim of the map has been described even more graphically as a
“veritable billboard advertising Rome's progress toward world domination” (Brennan
2003: 2). However, pigeonholing all of the works of the Augustan period as merely
propagandist/imperialist again is denying the full scope of the importance of the work.
Another theory holds that the “map served as a memorial to Agrippa’s mastery of the sea
under the sponsorship of Augustus” (Connors 2001: 511-512). While these provide
plausible purposes for the construction, focusing solely on the imperialistic gain aided by
the map ignores its full context.

In fact, it was not unprecedented for this type of public monument to exist. In
Athens, Wilford notes a similar construction featuring a map. As noted in Aelian’s
Various Histories there was a place in Athens with a public plaque that showed the
circuit of the world. Wilford believes that this plaque served the “importance of putting
the world in perspective” (Wilford 2000: 12). As seen in Aristophanes’ Clouds, the
general populace was well aware of the concept of mapping, were likely map conscious,
so then the plaque definitely improved their sense of place. And, if the original story of
why the map was created contains any kernel of truth, it was Caesar’s desire to catalogue
the information, rather than Augustus’s imperialist propaganda, that spurred the project in
the first place.

It is still worthwhile to consider the propagandist viewpoint to see if, in fact, the
portico was merely serving personal interests. As Paul Rehak states, it was expected that
those that wielded military and domestic imperium (and thusly were remunerated) would
pay it forward in the form of public buildings that the entire city would enjoy (Rehak
2006: 4). Augustus took this responsibility seriously; Suetonius records the famous claim
of Augustus that he found a city made of brick and transformed it into a city made of
marble (Suetonius, Aug 28.3). And yet Agrippa was the one in charge of the map (even
if he was acting under Augustus’ orders) and it was he who took the project so seriously.
And yet none of the other projects of Agrippa’s tenure focused solely on imperial image;
in fact, he generally focused on public works such as sewer replacement (Gilman and
Haselberger 2002: 76).
However the purpose should also take into account the contemporaneous Res Gestae. Gallia critiques Rehak for not including a synthesis of the relation between these two monuments in his attempt to link imperium to Roman public monuments (Gallia 2007; Rehak 2006). The Res Gestae favorably documented the life of Augustus and his accomplishments and has been widely interpreted as a propaganda piece for the Empire.

In addressing the purpose of the map, it has to be considered within its different contexts: the building that housed it as well as its general location. The portico that displayed the map, as discussed, has not been recovered. Its general dimensions are still unknown. However, there is still plenty to be inferred from this map’s placement in a portico. The portico itself was a Hellenistic structure that was essentially a colonnades covered structure that created a “self-contained, inward-looking unit” (Rehak 2006: 15). This unit created an environment that not only provided a venue for the display of art but also encouraged viewers to explore that art at their leisure and perhaps have an intellectual discussion about the subject at hand (Rehak 2006: 16). Thus the placement of the map in a portico, rather than a temple, as in Varro, or some political functioning building indicates that its purpose was to be a public spectacle. To prove its commonality to the entire public, when it was completed, it was donated to the public (Gilman and Haselberger 2002: 76).

Despite the fact that the precise location of the Porticus Vipsanius is still a mystery, the general location also provides important context for the map. The Porticus Vipsania was located in the Campus Martius, west of the old walled city. The Campus used to be owned by Tarquinius Superbus, the ager publicus. It had been used for voting and for the census, so the land had a strong element of commonality (Gilman and
Haselberger 2002: 74). The public purpose of the land also meant that there was a large amount of foot traffic in the area despite its placement outside of the inner city.

The Campus was an open, greener section of the city, removed from the urban center of Augustan Rome. The Campus was originally publicly owned and bounded by a surrounding set of hills – the Capitoline, Quirinal, and Pincian – as well as the Tiber River to the west. From the time of the founding of the campus – when it was dedicated to Mars – to the Augustan age, the campus underwent many changes. Progressively the relatively empty space of the campus was encroached upon as private ownership of land in the area became available (Platner 2002: 92). What was once a mostly empty field was transformed by the addition of theaters, temples, porticos, parks, and monuments (Gilman and Haselberger 2002: 17). The new building projects undertaken in this area reflect, “a shifting center in urban splendor” from the old city (Gilman and Haselberger 2002: 12).

That a map was spotlighted in this new area of grandeur is significant. Within the Campus Martius, the Porticus Vipsania was likely constructed along the Via Lata, one of the major thoroughfares leading out of the center city. The Porticus was situated in such an area that it would be visible to many visitors. It was constructed as part of Agrippa’s plan to populate the western end of the Campus Agrippae. Before Julius Caesar, this area was a “patchwork” area that begged for “monumental exploitation” (Gilman and Haselberger 2002: 20).

Yet, significantly, despite this new population of monuments the landscape of the area remained very lush and verdant. The Campus Agrippae, particularly, was home to public parks and gardens. The Campus Martius as a whole contained swamps, ponds, streams, and hot springs, converting the Campus into a veritable garden escape (Platner
2002: 92). The area was also connected to its surrounding regions: the Via Lata ran through the Campus Martius from the center city. One of the few bridges in the city, the “Pons Agrippae” connected the Campus Martius with the Transtibertine region. In addition to simple foot traffic, the garden atmosphere extended into the mountains around the Campus Martius, which housed estates and gardens of rich, public figures (Gilman and Haselberger 2002: 17). This open and fantastical environment served as a subliminal monument in and of itself to the power of the Roman Empire, because the viability of such an area was dependent upon the fact that “Rome was an open city – protected by men rather than walls” (Gilman and Haselberger 2002: 19).

All of these facets have shown that the map was designed to be seen by the public as much as possible in a relaxed setting. Blatant imperial messages had certainly existed before. The Campus Martius was used as a propagandist vehicle by Pompey as well. In 61 BC, the Pompey complex, or opera Pomepiana, was begun. The ambitious complex (designed to serve as an arena for triumph celebration) consisted of the Theater of Pompey, the temple of Venus Victrix, and the Porticus Pompeiana (see Image 18).13 Along the top of the cavea in the theater there were “fourteen figures representing the nations he had conquered and the statues of the Muses” (see Image 19; Rehak 2006: 18). As Stamper states, in this monument complex “personal intentions and public purpose were combined” (Stamper 2005: 90). Yet his personal desire to self-aggrandize and the public purpose of providing a theater and temple is not quite paralleled in Agrippa’s portico, and the differences between the two illuminate trend in the acceptability of maps.

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13 Research has been conducted on the connection between triumphs, landscape painting, and by proxy, mapping. Nicolet holds triumphal painting as the key to the beginning of Roman cartography. Furthermore Peter Holliday connects the subjects in his article *Triumphal Painting: Its Function, Development, and Reception* (1997).
Assuming that the map was created purely for imperialistic promotion, then the choice to carry out this promotion through the use of a map represents a break with how it had been done in the past. The mere use of a map in this context speaks to an increase in the Roman’s map consciousness as well of to their sense of place. If Augustus truly only wanted to portray himself as a powerful ruler than he wouldn’t waste his time erecting a map that didn’t accomplish that task when the Roman public was clearly used to thinking about foreign cultures in a personified form. From Pompey’s statues to the Gemma Augustaeae to the Boscoreale Cups – the trend of personification of states was neither new nor dying out. The use of a map as a tool to potentially accomplish that same end goal indicates that the mapping culture had definitely increased to the extent that significant effort would be put forth into this map and that it would be worth it.

To take the track that potentially this was not a shameless billboard of the power of the empire, the same conclusion is reached. If Agrippa was so dedicated to the cause of erecting the map without thinking about it as homage to his domination of the seas, or anything of that sort, then it stands to reason that the map was to be something for general enjoyment. Again, this necessitates a familiarity with the mapping procedures and a general level of map literacy. Otherwise, the portico would have been filled with something else pleasant to regard: painting, carving, etc. In fact, there are contemporaneous porticos that were also erected in the Campus Martius at this time, the Meleagri and Argonautorum, both of which exuded Alexandrian influence (Rehak 2006: 20). The choice to showcase a map in this portico thus clearly indicates a conscious, calculated decision. Later examples will show that maps were appreciated aesthetically, and thus lends credit to the idea that the Map of Agrippa was truly a map on display in
the Porticus Vipsania, and one of the earliest tools that helped define a Roman sense of place.
SECTION II:
Severan Plan of Rome

The Severan marble plan of Rome represents an entirely different form of cartography compared to the Map of Agrippa. First of all, it conforms to our modern conceptions of mapping because it is a stylized city plan that clearly follows some conventions of scale, symbology, and survey methods. Additionally, the degree of knowledge about this map is much greater because of the detail of the information it presented as well as the existing pieces of the map that have been recovered. Compared to the other two main maps of this study, this is a major distinction. There are almost no remaining details concerning the Map of Agrippa, and while the Peutinger Map does relay a wealth of information it is a medieval copy, not an original as with the Severan Plan. Thus, the existence of actual fragments of the *Forma Urbis* bring a considerable amount of value to the piece as well as provide valuable information regarding the specifics of how Romans interpreted space and how space was represented to them by the state.

The *Forma Urbis* was created under the direction of emperor Septimius Severus (ruled 193-211 AD) between 203 and 211 BC. Both the large scope of the map as well as the large scale contributed to the monumentality of project. The map depicted, in bird’s eye view, the entire city of Rome to the limits of the *pomerium* – the sacred boundary of Rome that officially demarcated the city proper. At 1:240, the map portrayed every detail of every manmade structure in the city, all the way down to each doorstep and staircase. The result of both these factors – area and scale – was a map measuring 40 feet in height and 60 feet in width – over four modern stories tall. This gargantuan plan was carved
into 150 marble slabs that were hung in eleven rows for public display in the *Templum Pacis*, directly in the heart of Rome (Trimble 2007: 369).

Objectively, the record preserved upon the *Forma Urbis* is invaluable because of the architectural information it provides for many buildings that are otherwise only known through the literary record (Reynolds 1996: 16-19). Over 1,200 pieces of the original work have been found and analyzed. However, these fragments only represent about 12% of the entire city (Trimble 2008: 69). Yet notations on the map as well as archaeological corroborations with the plan have proven the *Forma Urbis* to be extremely useful despite its patchiness. But these techniques cannot be used to identify every building; over 650 pieces show unidentified buildings, inhibiting the plan’s utility as a reference guide to the ancient city (Reynolds 1996: 23). In order to better analyze those pieces that do remain, the Stanford Forma Urbis Project has digitally processed each of the remaining fragments (Talbert 2006: 17).

Though technological advancements may allow for new analysis of the plan in coming years, for now, much can be understood simply by analyzing the mapping conventions of the period and the *Forma Urbis*’ deviations from those standards. It is, to return to the principle of Monmonier, within the little white lies of the map where the true agenda of the cartographer can be found. The *Forma Urbis*’ agenda is notable through its selective adjustments of perspective, outlining, and notation. These diversions from the norm of mapping prove that the *Forma Urbis* was not designed to be an imperial tool or merely a proof of power; it was designed for viewer readability and pleasure (Reynolds 1996: 62).
The mapping practices of the time called for standard scale, symbology, and survey methods. Commonality of scales is noted across many maps of this era – 1:240 is the norm. For the most part, this scale is maintained throughout the map. However, when dealing with such sensitively scaled material, just a small difference on the map obviously translates to a much larger difference in real life. Thus, merely the carved outline used to demark all buildings can exaggerate or diminish the size of a building if the carver is even slightly off the plan. The standard symbology for walls called for a single carved line. Furthermore, representations of stairwells, doorways, and the like were common across all plans from this time (Reynolds 1996: 69). Finally, the survey methods represented illustrate the intense urban survey that was practice in Rome during the period.

This information was definitely collected by mensores aedificiorum, or the urban counterparts to the agrimensores. Though the positions undertake similar practices the urban survey was totally independent from the centuriation carried out by the agrimensores. While the rural surveyors parceled land, the urban surveyors were responsible for the accurate measurement of every built structure within the city. Alongside every property was a notation of ownership – these were updated as buildings changed hands. Though there is no record of how the urban surveyors proceeded, the detail of the information portrayed proves that the survey must have been extremely comprehensive.

The Forma Urbis diverged from these standards in a few telling ways. Notably, the scale remains fairly constant throughout the plan, except when issues of symbology practices interrupt the proper scale. The accuracy of the scale proves that the divergences
were purposeful efforts and thus were committed with the intent to project a certain message. This is clearly seen with aberrations in the outlining practices of certain buildings in the plan. Generally, in Roman urban plans a wall is indicated with a single line. In the Forma Urbis, walls are carved in a single line and filled in with the red pigment minium to increase visibility. However, select buildings on the plan are carved with lines that were doubled and recessed, in order to increase the thickness of the outline and draw more attention to the building (this would also clearly misrepresent the true size of the building, (Trimble 2008: 84; Petsalis-Diomidis 2007: 255). One of the buildings for which this technique was used was the Septizodium, which was a monumental façade fountain build by Septimius Severus in 203 AD. The symbology of the map was also manipulated with regards to the temples, for they were entirely filled in with minium in order to create focal points in the work (Reynolds 1996: 75; Trimble 2008: 89).

Furthermore, the standard plan representation was purposefully skewed in two distinct instances. First, the entertainment complexes were not accurately represented. Public structures, such as theaters, had features such as banked seating which, when represented in a plan format, are not readily recognizable (see Image 21; Reynolds 1996: 83-87). These buildings’ plans were manipulated so as to give an accurate indication of the type of space that it was rather than displaying it in the technically proper fashion. In a second instance of distortion from a correct plan view, the aqueducts are completely manipulated on this plan. The aqueducts are shown in elevation rather than in plan format, also to increase their recognizability. These distortions of the standard symbology of the plan represent calculated manipulations that all favor readability over convention (Reynolds 1996: 72).
The survey methods were certainly carried out appropriately by the urban surveyors, however, the correlating notations on the *Forma Urbis* are absent. In another move that seems to prioritize readability, the ownership notations of properties are left off of the map (Petsalis-Diomidis 2007: 255). Though this omission clearly increases readability, it can also be attributed to the practicality that in a few years all of that information would be outdated (Reynolds 1996: 125). However, it is also seen that in the case of the Septizodium, the name was not only included it was enlarged to almost twice the length of the building. Extending the label outside a building was nonconformist and additionally served to center the focus on this building (Trimble 2008: 89). The inconsistency of rotation serves, ultimately, to prove that this map was certainly not utilitarian, even if the source material was.

These alterations prove two things: the map was altered to appeal to its audience and the map was altered to serve the interests of the emperor. Readability was increased through the simplification of the entertainment centers and the notation standards and alterations in perspective and symbology. As only 10% of the population at this time could read, these visual adjustments communicated information on a more egalitarian level. Despite the fact that the map, especially at the top, was unreadable, the general layout of the city was simplified by highlighting the major landmarks of the temples, which would help orient the layman (Trimble 2008: 95). Aside from being merely an object of spectacle, the map also served Severus' interests by promoting the Septizodium - the only public monument he erected during his rule. The emphasis on his own building sets it up as being on par with the temples that were the landmarks of the city.
The map is noted for being “remarkable both in the sophistication of its cartography and in its general accuracy” (Reynolds 1996: 61). Truly, this map does prove that the Roman surveyors were capable of extremely accurate large-scale mapping by the start of the third century AD. The level of sophistication reached by this time also suggests that it was building upon an established tradition of mapping. Clearly there was a high “technical standard” amongst the mensores aedificiorum (Reynolds 1996: 106). Such a standard would indicate a long history of survey in order to reach this level of refinement.

Similarly to the Porticus Vipsania, the map’s context also impacts its ultimate message. Vespasian’s Templum Pacis, which housed the Forma Urbis, was built in order to celebrate the peace following the triumphal ceremonies of his latest war exploits. The building was sizable; the room that contained the Forma Urbis was only one small room in the complex (see Image 20). The temple has been damaged by a fire in 192 and when it was rebuilt this was incorporated. The Templum Pacis was also the home to many treasures of the empire. It contained the Jewish war spoils as well as multiple libraries. Following the pattern of buildings such as the Library of Hadrian at Athens, Reynolds surmises that the Templum Pacis could have served as the city’s archives as well (Reynolds 1996: 51). Thus the map’s display would have been a visual representation of the information contained in the archives. Reynolds believes that the map was created using information from cadastral records on scrolls that were already in existence (Reynolds 1996: 126). Who knows, perhaps the motivation for the map was merely preserving the information regarding the city after the fire threatened the archival record. A massive marble monument certainly would have more staying power.
So does the Severan Plan fall into the category of science, or art? Ultimately, Reynolds makes the claim that this map "belongs with the great monuments of Roman display rather than those of Roman utility" (Reynolds 1996: 62). Severan art in general is seen as an intermediary between classical naturalism and the abstraction or impressionism of the later period (Zahara 2007: 207; Reynolds 1996: 45). Yet despite the fact that this work was created for viewing purposes, it doesn't quite qualify solely as art because of its informational aspect. In the view of Alexa Petsalis-Diomidis, the overall change in style during this period is very pertinent to cartographic development. For, during this era "the increasing use of non-linear, bird's eye, and mixed perspective has long been recognized as an important feature of Severan art," adding, however, "this has sometimes been seen as a symptom of a 'decline' into Late Antique art" (Petsalis-Diomidis 2007: 254). Clearly during this era there was artistic experimentation of points of view, perspective, and most importantly, space. This development of understanding and properly perceiving space is actually directly visible in the *Forma Urbis* because of how the aqueducts are rendered. The aqueducts are drawn in elevation, rather than in plan, probably so that the viewer could better understand what was being represented. This is similar to how the entertainment centers were dealt with -- conventions were twisted around in order to better portray the space in a readable way. If such allowances were being made for the general public, then it holds that the normal urban conventions were familiar to the general populace because they were treated as being already readable material.

While this period shows experimentation in mapping because of its toying with new perspectives, there is one more innovation of the *Forma Urbis* that toys with
perspective further than simply using a bird’s-eye view. The map was oriented 43° east of true south. This orientation was in line with the orientation of the room, so that from the viewer’s perspective you did not have to mentally rotate the map to apply it to the natural vista. This experimentation with perspectives is also seen in the map sketches drawn into the Artemidorus Papyrus, which dates to the first century BC (see Image 22). This papyrus contains texts from the geographer Artemidorus of Ephesus as well as sketches of what could be Spain (Kramer 2001: 117). The unfinished drawings indicate that the ruined parchment was used for practicing and thus the differing perspectives, a “mixture of aerial perspective and something closer to elevation” (Elsner 2009:77).

All of these qualities show that the information used in this map was not collected solely for the purpose of its creation (Reynolds 1996: 124). Thus the product of the imperialistic order of the empire was capitalized upon in order to create an informative public monument that could be appreciated by everyone. Though it could not be read fully, the major public monuments were highlighted to the extent that they were recognizable. The private houses were not as important, since the vibrancy of the city was carried by the public monuments. Many of the rituals of daily life centered around the temples and other open public spaces in the city. By highlighting these select buildings, the process of orientation and identification of place were being taught. Any Roman who didn’t know or understand how to read maps, upon seeing the Forma Urbis, would learn to read a map in that aspect and alter their sense of place regarding Rome.
SECTION III: Peutinger Map

The essential debate over the Peutinger itineraria is revealed by the bifurcation of how it is referenced in scholarly works – Peutinger Table vs. Peutinger Map. Thus it is making a statement merely to refer to it as the Peutinger Map, which I shall follow. The demotion to “table” is mistakenly made under the pretenses of a narrow-minded, modern definition of a map. However, if the spatial information presented on the Peutinger Map is understood from a more liberal perspective, as Harley and Woodward attempted to promote, then it certainly qualifies as a map.

This naming issue arose due to the method of presentation of the information on the map. As an itineraria, the map presents itineraries of locations throughout the Roman Empire with notations of distances (in miles) between stops. Compared to the Forma Urbis, which displayed information on a large scale, this map preserves the entire scope of the empire, including the Near East, India (up to the Ganges), Sri Lanka, and China. However, the format of the map is such that the distances are measured from Rome, and while they depict distances between places along a route accurately, these routes are not presented in their correct orientation. Rather, all the routes are aligned horizontally. This lack of appropriately gridded information (as we would expect in today’s world due to the standards of latitude and longitude) has led some to contest that the Peutinger Map only represents space in one dimension, that is, linearly (Whittaker 2004: 76).

Though the distances are only rendered linearly, that does not mean that it did not have value as an aid to spatial understanding. Similarly to how the emphasized temples on the Forma Urbis allowed for viewers to orient themselves within the busy city plan of
Rome, a focus on Rome in the context of the entire empire allows the viewer to understand position and space from the most appropriate landmark. Antioch and Constantinople are similarly indicated as metropolises. Furthermore, the map itself referenced a complex system of roads that was reinforced in many other contexts.

Similarly to how the Porticus Vipsania embodied some of the meaning of the Res Gestae, the essence of the Peutinger Map was embodied in a public monument – the Golden Milestone. In 20 BC, Augustus was elected to the curator viarum – the curator of the roads. This official was responsible for routine road repairs, whereas major building projects (extension of the road system, bridges, tunnels) still fell to the jurisdiction of the emperor (Laurence 1999: 46). The curator viarum oversaw the creation of the major public roads, paid for by the state, constructed by private contractors. In addition to these major thoroughfares, there were smaller local and private roads which were overseen by local magistrates and landowning individuals (Laurence 1999: 52). Yet unnecessary to Augustus’ duties was his decision to erect the Golden Milestone of Rome.

This extremely public monument was on display in the Forum Romanum, one of the busiest areas of Rome. Upon it, lists of the distances from Rome to all the great cities in the Empire were listed, thus providing a physical monument that would aid in the public’s conception of the Empire and their sense of place. Milestones were constant reminders of the context of travel – they were placed along each mile of every road in the empire. Some milestones represented the works of the specific emperors. Laurence lists many milestones along roads such as the Via Appia, Via Flaminia, Via Salaria, Via Tiburtina et Valeria, Via Latina Fabricana and the Via Julia Augusta, which show the
work of Nerva and Trajan in their reparations (Laurence 1999: 27). The milestones served as physical commemorations and memorials to the emperors.

However, these milestones had a huge impact on the individual level as well. Firstly, it created a constant reminder of the concept of thinking about your location in relation to two other place – where you were going and where you came from. Secondly, roads were not just for the benefit of the state. Roads were valuable to the individual landowners who wanted better access to transport. As Laurence states, “a considerable extent of the road network of Italy was built by private individuals wanting to have access to the major public roads from their estates” (Laurence 1999: 57). Thus any large compilation of routes would not necessarily have been known automatically from road construction. Private endeavors to build roads not only show a personal interest in connectivity – indicating a sense of place that perceived the surrounding world – but also show how something that was originally developed for the needs of the state was later incorporated into daily life (similar to the course of the map). The arrangement of the Peutinger Map thus is more of an accomplishment that just reusing state records, as seen in the Severan Plan of Rome. The Peutinger Map not only indicates the repository of information available but also reveals that someone perceived the project important enough to undertake.

The achievement of the Peutinger Map can also be seen by comparison to other surviving itineraries. Other remaining itineraria are not illustrated in the same way as the Peutinger Map. The Antonine Itinerary is a well-known example of an unillustrated compilation of itineraries. The Antonine Itinerary is the exact opposite of the Peutinger Map in that while the Peutinger Map tries to represent a collection of itineraries in a
comprehensible, visual manner, the Antonine Itinerary represents a jumbled compilation “individual itineraries of distinctly different character, origin, and perhaps even date, with no secure connection to travel by emperors. Moreover the collection is patchy in its coverage, loose in organization, confusingly repetitive, and uninformative where it offers a choice of routes” (Talbert 2008: 19-20). Thus the Peutinger Map clearly exhibits a higher level of scholarship.

Further comparanda include other objects the make use of the itineraria information, showing that the concept of space and travel was a widely understood concept. They also show that a map itinerary didn’t have to be only practical. First, the Rudge Cups: these goblets show a circuit of Hadrian’s Wall. The Cup, which was recently found in 2004, commemorates forts along the western end of the wall and bears the inscription RIGORE VALLI (Talbert 2008: 25). The spatial arrangement and distances listed prove that the itinerary format was inculcated and adapted for common objects.

Another usage of the itinerary format shows the bluntly imperial potential of the material. In Patara, Lycia, a monument was erected around 45 AD in tribute to the emperor Claudius. Blocks from the statue’s base were recovered, upon which was inscribed an itinerary of all the roads Claudius constructed throughout Lycia. Similarly to the other itineraries, distances between about fifty different places are listed. Additionally, from this basis, the pronouncement is made that Claudius is effectively “autokrator tes oikumenes”, or emperor of the known world (Talbert 2006: 19).

Clearly the usage of the itineraria information was widespread, however, the Peutinger Map remains unparalleled. Amidst all these other interesting manifestations of
the *itineraria* information, the dimensions of the Peutinger Map have been called into question for the reasoning that it is not truly a map. The conventions of the *itineraria* and the scope of the Peutinger Map in particular influence the physical nature of the map. The itineraries featured in this depiction are drawn on a parchment that measures 34cm by 850cm. Upon this area the over 2,700 places and 70,000 miles of Roman roads are presented (Elliott 2008: 101; Albu 2008: 111). Regardless of how this information was presented, it truly represents a seminal accomplishment that would have affected the level of knowledge about the world and would have affected the sense of place.

This repository of information was probably the work of a single, experienced designer who had a background in cartographic representation. This cartographer would have been innovative and ambitious in order to attempt this experimental representation of land routes in such a shape (Talbert 2008: 17). The existing copy is a medieval version of a Roman original that was drawn by a monk in the 13th century.

In exactly the same process as the formation of the *Forma Urbis*, we see that the Peutinger map assembled information that had been collected for practical purposes but then transformed it into something that was designed for viewership and spectacle rather than a utilitarian need. If more information about the Map of Agrippa were available, perhaps we would know if it followed this pattern as well. As it is, we know that the Map of Agrippa – whatever form it took – was placed in a public place which normally held works of art or objects of interest. Thus, though we do not know what the Map of Agrippa was (Brodersen believes it to be merely an unillustrated itinerary), we do know that it, too, was designed for viewership and to be a spectacle as well.
This similarity is essential to understanding the true nature of Roman cartography and to free this discipline from the perception that it was solely used for the needs of the state. Kai Brodersen believes that the Peutinger Map existed for display and not for the aid of travelers, which he believes demotes its status (Albu 2008: 11; Talbert 2008: 17-18). However, the practicality of the map cannot be the only quality by which it is measured. As is seen with the previous examples, practicality does not necessarily translate to a person’s perception of a space. What is more important is that information was portrayed in a way that allowed Romans to appreciate and conceptualize the scope of their empire and of the world, which certainly would have placed Rome at the minimal level of importance as Scipio realized during his dream.
Conclusion

Of course, within all these monuments there were encapsulated issues of power, status assertion, and the Empire. Space, travel, and mapping were inextricably tied to these issues, so the works of others that connect these topics is paramount (Nicolet 1992 on space and power, Laurence 1999 on status assertion through travel and roads). However, the sole focus on maps as a tool of power neglects the deeper meanings and significance maps imparted to the public. Essentially this issue ties back around to the map consciousness debate: How common was the idea of the map in the Classical world?

Despite scanty physical remnants, there are encouraging instances of references to wall maps. Decorative wall maps are attested in many points throughout Roman history. The earliest mention is relayed by Livy, in which he speaks of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus’s victory at Sardinia in 174 BC:

During the year a tablet was placed in the temple of Mater Matuta with this inscription: “Under the auspices and command of the consul Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, the legions of the army of Rome have subjugated Sardinia. In that province there have been 80,000 natives either killed or made prisoners. He was most happy in his administrations; he liberated the allies of Rome; he restored the revenues and brought his army safely home laden with enormous booty. For the second time he entered Rome in triumph. Because of this he has given this tablet as an offering to Jove.” There was a representation of the island and pictures of the battles on the tablet (Livy History of Rome 41.28)

This record strongly associates the formation of early cartography with the tradition of Roman triumphs. Nicolet believes that the practice of the triumph was essential to the development of early Roman cartography (Nicolet 1992: 127). The representations that may have graced triumphs were certainly not marked by cartographic sophistication, however by providing context to human activity they certainly qualify as maps.
It is also possible that the triumph also created a market for cartographers: by 164 BC there is a record of the *topographos* Demetrius working and living in Rome. It is unclear exactly what the job of a *topographos* entailed—place-painting, perhaps? It is probable that it was similar to landscape painting, due to the increase in popularity in landscape depictions during this time.\(^4\) Regardless, it is indicative of the growing popularity of maps that a specialist related to the field could be independently supported by his trade. Demetrius’ line of work probably hailed from the line of Roman panel painting (Ling 1991: 212). Painting as a profession was not regarded with much respect in Rome at this time, so it follows that Demetrius was a Greek immigrant from Alexandria. However, for Demetrius to support himself as a painter proves that even if Romans weren’t painters themselves, they desire the end product.

Demetrius’ legitimacy is further proven by the record that he played host to Ptolemy VI when he was exiled from Egypt in a power play by his younger brother. Demetrius had previously stayed with Ptolemy in Egypt and thus when Ptolemy sought refuge in Rome Demetrius returned the hospitality (Diodorus Siculus *Biblioteka* XXXI.8). To have established such a relationship with a ruler of an empire as a painter is impressive, and as Donald Strong aptly summarizes: “he sounds an important person” (Strong 1992: 59). Demetrius hosted Ptolemy as he rallied for support from Roman officials; eventually, he allied Cato and returned to power in Egypt the next year. However, Ptolemy’s diplomatic meetings and machinations to gain support would have likely taken place in Demetrius house. Thus, it was probably a rich abode, again attesting

\(^4\) Some of the examples that are frequently cited include the Palestrina Nile Mosaic, the Rome Odyssey landscape, the *Argos* and *Io* picture in house of Livia, the iliadiac frieze in cryptoportico at Pompeii and mythic representations in the House of Menander at Pompeii, Ling 212.
to the increasing market for his type of painting and the desire for the works of a
topographos, whatever they may be.

Another famous wall map shows a progression from the triumphal map of
Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus. It is also, importantly, completely unrelated to a triumph,
act of war, or propagandist self-promotion. Varro references this map in his work De
Rustica. Varro writes for his relative Fundania, three handbooks on farming, since he is
80 years old and needs someone else to look after his farm (and will soon die anyways).
As he reflects, “On the festival of Sementivae I had gone to the temple of Tellus .... I
found there Gaius Fundanius, my father-in-law, Gaius Agrius, a Roman night of the
Socratic school, and Publius Agrasius, the tax-farmer, examining a map of Italy painted
on the wall” (De Rustica I.ii.1-2). Notably, these characters are all from varying social
classes. Varro himself, having held the offices of tribune, curule aedile, and praetor, and
served as a lieutenant under Pompey. As they wait for their host, they strike up a
conversation of this map. As the tax-farmer Agrasius questions, “You have all travelled
through many lands; have you seen any land more fully cultivated than Italy?” (De
Rustica I.ii.2-3).

These literary references show awareness of maps in earlier times. However,
going even further back, one of the earliest legends of Rome, that concerning its
founding, claims that generals drew lines in the sand while marking out. This sort of
figurative representation would qualify as a map, despite its ephemeral nature. However,
its inherent transience also raises the important point that simply because no remnants of
maps exist today doesn’t mean that they weren’t being used at the time.
These examples both reveal the potential for map consciousness, which tied together with the sense of place encourages the belief that Romans incorporated travel, movement, and mapping in order to better understand their world. In analyzing the purpose and context of the extant maps – and even lost maps, as in the case of Agrippa’s – it is possible to glean a lot of information from the subtext of its meaning. A map is not merely the information that is presented at face value. It is not simply a reading of the motivations behind its creation. It is also of the third order significance in its interactions with the public, which ultimately lead to an understanding of the sense of place. In the current field of Roman space studies, this understanding could lead to further research into how Romans conceptualized their world – an important and relevant topic.
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PLATE 5. THE PEUTINGER MAP: ROME. The Peutinger map, dated to the twelfth or early thirteenth century, derives ultimately from a fourth-century archetype, suggested by vignettes such as that of Rome in this segment, in which the city is personified as an enthroned goddess holding a globe, a ram, and a shield.

Size of the original: 33 × 59.3 cm. By permission of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (Codex Vindobonensis 324, segment IV).

Section of the Peutinger Map.
Figure 1.3 A Mercator grid with a ten-degree graticule. The map stops short of the poles because of increased north–south stretching.

Mercator projection, with graticule lines that show areal distortion at high latitudes.

Image: Monmonier 2004: 5
Figure 1.8 Proposed inappropriately as the only suitable substitute for the Mercator map, the Peters projection grossly distorts the shapes of Africa and South America. This example employs a thirty-degree graticule.

Peters projection, which distorts the shapes of the continents but maintains proportional areas. Image: Monmonier 2004: 15
FIG. 13.4. A PORTABLE SUNDIAL, DISASSEMBLED. This shows the individual parts of a bronze instrument said to have been found near Bratislava. It dates from after A.D. 120.

By permission of the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford (R. 40).

A portable sundial that could have been used by *agrimensores* for land allotment. Image: Dilke 1987: 215.
FIG. 13.5. A PORTABLE SUNDIAL, ASSEMBLED. The instrument is seen here in its actual form. It could have been used to lay out a centuriation scheme toward the south. Diameter of the original: 6 cm. By permission of the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford (R. 40).

Assembled sundial.
These images survive from the *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanum*, which was compiled by land surveyors. The illustrations clearly show, through the use of grids, a spatial context in two dimensions.

Detail from the *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanum*, also showing use of a grid system.

Image: Campbell 1996, 86.
PLATE 4. FRESCO FROM THE BOSCOREALE VILLA, NEAR POMPEII. This detail clearly shows a globe drawn in approximate perspective. The object has also been referred to as a sundial.
Size of the original detail: $61 \times 39.7$ cm. By permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Rogers Fund, 1903 [03.14.2]).

Image of the globe from the villa as Boscoreale.
Detail of the Muse Urania from a fresco at Pompeii, showing a representation of the globe.
Image: Pompeii By Richard Engelmann, Talfourd Ely pg 105
Detail of one of the Boscoreale cups, showing Augustus seated and holding the earth in his palm. Image: Kuttner 1993: 40.
The Ephesus coins show a relief that corresponds to a mountain region.
A topographical map of the area believed to be represented on the Ephesus coin.
Image: Johnston 1971: 76.
FIG. 18. Several scholars have drawn on Pliny’s references to Agrippa to reconstruct the visual appearance of Agrippa’s map. Sallmann’s reconstruction of Agrippa’s map.

Potential rendering of Agrippa’s map.
The Campus Martius, the propounded location of the Porticus Vipsania. Image: Rehak 2006.
Triumph procession in Ancient Rome through the Campus Martius, the supposed locale of the Map of Agrippa.

Image: Holliday 1997: 132
Wall of the Templum Pacis to which the Forma Urbis was attached.

Detail of the Severan plan, showing how the Theater of Pompey was not drawn to appropriate plan standards.
Image: Taub 1993: 14
Triumph procession in Ancient Rome through the Campus Martius, the supposed locale of the Map of Agrippa.
Image: Kramer 1997: 132