

MAPS IN HISTORY



MAY 2023
Newsletter No

76

The Pieter Pourbus-Master of Maps exhibition in Bruges
The Atlases of Louis XIV
Maps of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands



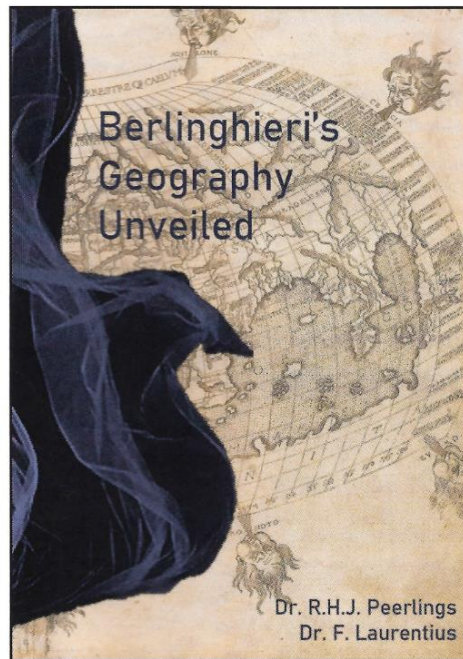
Berlinghieri's Geography Unveiled

Why were we interested in the story? It all began with the discovery of beautifully coloured maps from a Rome Cosmography edition, heightened with gold. The question was, to which edition do these maps belong to? We found no clear answers in the literature and among experts. Therefore, we decided to start a research project ourselves. It resulted in two publications about the different Rome editions of Ptolemy's Cosmography. At the end of this research, enthused by our findings and because of the diversity of opinions in the literature about Berlinghieri's Geography, we decided to study this work as well.

Already, much has been written about the many questions regarding the *Septe Giornate della Geographia* by the Florentine Francesco di Niccolò Berlinghieri. However, a lot remains unanswered. Several subjects and points of view are still controversial. These include the fonts, the paper, the watermarks, the timing of printing the text or parts of it, such as the title page, the first three leaves, and the register, the timing of engraving the copper plates and printing the maps, the engraver of the maps, the corrections applied to the text and maps during printing, the dedication, the number of different editions, and finally the relation between the two manuscripts and the printed edition of Berlinghieri's *Geographia*.

Firstly, we conducted a short pilot study and superficially studied three copies in Florence. It was practical, as these atlases could regularly be found in the same libraries and institutions that we were already visiting for our articles about the Rome Cosmography editions. The provisional findings and results were promising and called for further investigation. Another aspect of the pilot study concerned the comparison of the maps in two available facsimile atlases. This also led to new and promising findings. We have chosen to make the book available for free on our website (www.berlinghieri.eu) to promote rapid and wide dissemination of the knowledge gained.

We begin our book describing Ptolemy and the rediscovery of his work during the Renaissance, combined with some information about the manuscripts that resulted from it. Next, we give a summary of the atlases printed before



1500. Then we present Berlinghieri's *Geography*. Subsequently, the findings of our research are described step by step. We start by discussing the paper and the watermarks. This is followed by our findings about the text, the individual maps including the discovery of proof prints, and all the atlases studied. The book concludes with what we have discovered about both manuscripts, and the relationship between them and the printed version of Berlinghieri's *Geographia*.

We have established beyond doubt that Berlinghieri's *Geography* was printed in 1482. In the same period as the printed edition, two manuscripts were created,

one for Federico d'Urbino to whom the printed book is dedicated and one for Lorenzo de Medici with whom Berlinghieri maintained close ties. The text pages were printed in an edition of about 500. Initially, over 30 sets of maps were printed. At the end of 1482 and the beginning of 1483, approximately a double number of sets of maps was added. Around 1520, the Giunti printing office printed the last 400 sets of maps with the addition of a new title printed in red ink.

The watermarks made it possible to establish a very clear and identical structure for the text pages of all the atlases. For each printing phase of the maps different paper was used, which could be determined conclusively based on the watermarks in combination with the state of the map and the colouring. This use of paper was typical of the Florentine printing offices at that time. We were able to establish this by including several other books in our research, mainly printed by Tedesco and three other printers. The first thirty sets of maps are usually impressive and expensively coloured. In atlases with these maps the owner's coat of arms is often present. This contrasts with the second set of maps, which use more basic colouring and are less often personalised. Uncoloured maps of both types also occur. The maps printed by Giunti are mostly uncoloured. During the first printing phase of the maps, the copper plates were regularly adjusted.

Different fonts were used for the printing of the text, which are, however, very similar. By today's standards this seems

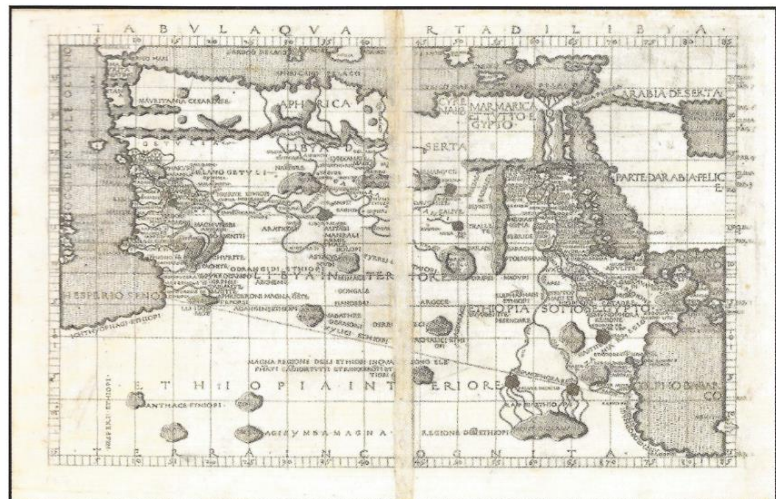


Fig. 1. Very rare example of TABVLA QVARTA DE APHRICA in the first state backed but uncoloured

incomprehensible. However, given the technological level of fifteenth-century printing techniques, it is completely plausible. Moreover, at the time it was quite common for manuscripts to be transcribed by several people with different handwriting. The different but almost identical fonts would probably not have been a problem at that time.

We have not been able to identify the engravers of the copper plates. However, we could establish the presence of several engravers, most of whom, judging by the result, were only moderately skilled. The maps in both manuscripts and the printed version are basically and for the most part traced from the same working template. For some maps, especially in Urbino's manuscript, another working template was used. The further completion and detailing of the maps appear to be based on multiple sources. The search for a master copy is, in our opinion, a dead end. It cannot be found, given the method of working that we discovered and described.

Many scholars wrote that the *Geography* was printed sloppily and with many errors, possibly due to haste. We have shown that there was no rush, but that it was printed at a quality that was common at the time in Florence, when printing was still developing and

improving every year.

We would therefore like to emphasise that the production of the *Geography* is evidence of both Berlinghieri's and Tedesco's great entrepreneurship and willingness to take on challenges. This applies specifically to the maps and the engraving and printing of the copper plates used for them, which were of an enormous size for that time.

We are convinced that new watermarks may turn up in the copies not studied by us. Our research will prove to be useful for future studies. The first maps were printed in a very limited edition and mostly bound into atlases intended for high-ranking persons and distinguished libraries of the time. These atlases are therefore well preserved. Loose copies of maps from this phase are very rare. This also applies to a large degree to the sets of maps that were printed at a second stage. The vast majority of Berlinghieri's maps that are found nowadays are from Giunti's edition from around 1520.

To summarise, through close analysis of fonts, watermarks, texts and maps as well as comparisons between both manuscripts and with other printed copies, we were able to establish the history of the creation of Berlinghieri's *Geography*.

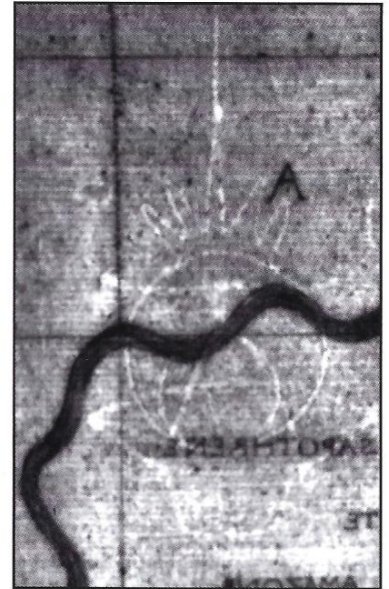


Fig. 2. Watermark consisting of a cardinal's hat [upside down?!], crescent, rays and a cross: on the backing of the map *TABVLA SECONDA DE ASIA*.

Robert H.J. Peerlings
 drp@xs4all.nl
 Frans Laurentius
 piranesi@zeelandnet.nl