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*Printing a Mediterranean World: Florence, Constantinople, and the Renaissance of Geography* by Sean Roberts

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Francesco Berlinghieri's Italian vernacular verse edition of Ptolemy's *Geography* (1482) is at the heart of *Printing a Mediterranean World*. Roberts uses this single text to tease out a variety of conclusions about late 15th-century diplomacy, geography, print, and the Renaissance. He takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the text and its wider relevance, looking at the poetic words and format, illustrations, printing and readership; and provides a masterly demonstration of the way in which the study of a single text can give lessons about a whole epoch.

The first chapter of the book is a discussion of two presentation copies of Berlinghieri's *Geography* given to the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II and his half brother Cem. Here Roberts examines the value of the text for Ottoman and Florentine societies, pointing out that 'Ptolemy's *Geography* provided a salient point of contact to an admired past perceived as common to both Florentines and Ottomans' [32]. Roberts downplays the revolutionary nature of the rediscovery of Ptolemy's *Geography* in the Renaissance, which has dominated discussions about the text until recent years, but admits that the *Geography* 'acted as a catalyst for new kinds of maps and texts' [41] and sets out to examine why this was the case. He argues that the production of new editions of the *Geography* was a reinvention rather than a rediscovery of the classical past. The ensuing text looks at various aspects of this reinvention.

In the following chapter, 'The Rebirth of Geography', Roberts examines how Berlinghieri's own life and intellectual environment shaped the way in which he reinvented the past in his version of the *Geography*, and how he drew on his cartographical, mathematical, and poetical skills in its creation. Roberts also looks at the way in which the process of creation in turn influenced Berlinghieri, since 'emulation of Ptolemy's project was a significant

part of Berlinghieri's self-fashioning as a geographer' [51]. This mutual interaction, though fundamental to the book, is not the most successful aspect. The self-fashioning at times seems slightly incidental. Nevertheless, the examination of the relationship between Berlinghieri's narrative and Ptolemy's rather dull original is extremely interesting—particularly, the former's use of more up-to-date sources to create a more politically and historically relevant geography, and his syncretic use of Christian and pagan material.

Chapter 3 studies the actual printed book, looking at the limitations imposed by the state of the technology for printing and etching, and the apparent shoddiness of some of the extant copies of the printed book. Here Roberts' close study of different copies of the same edition of the work provides valuable insights that have far wider implications than for Berlinghieri's *Geography* alone. He argues that the poor quality of some of the maps may have been the result of a limited knowledge of how to correct etchings, for instance, but also that these defects were overcome in some copies of the book. Prestige copies printed with the intention of gift-giving (such as those for Cem and Bayezid) were augmented by hand-coloring and illumination which obliterated defects in depiction and etching. The section on painting maps is fascinating, as is Roberts' use of copies of the *Geography* to show the continuing relationship between the manuscript tradition and early printed books in this period. From there, Roberts moves on to examine how the use of prestige books in gift-giving could be part of community formation and shows how the subject of geography was peculiarly suited to this. Roberts demonstrates how Berlinghieri consciously included various European nobles and royalty in his work, thereby forming a community and creating a pool of interested influential people who might buy or be given prestige copies of the work. In the creation of these hand-illuminated copies, Berlinghieri blurred the distinction between a book published for an open market and a book created for specific individuals. Such individuals, as Roberts demonstrates, included Cem and Bayezid who must always have been among the intended recipients. Roberts gives a useful case study of how these Ottoman readers were included and must have read the book. This chapter is the meat of the book and is full of detailed, thoughtful information, providing the reader with many ideas about how to approach this and other works.

The final chapter links to the rest but in some ways stands alone. Roberts takes on the categories of Turcophilia, Turcophobia, and toleration; and

shows their limitations by relating them to Berlinghieri's work. He also examines some of Berlinghieri's intellectual community in this context, particularly discussing the role of Marsilio Ficino and his Neoplatonist ideas. This chapter focuses on the Florentine relationship with the Ottomans, the Ottoman reception of a work that equated Christianity with modernity, and questions of diplomatic interchange. Roberts once again introduces bigger questions by relating them to the case study of Berlinghieri and his book.

As a reader, I would have liked a little more detail on the actual geographical content of the book itself and on the kind of knowledge that it transmitted. I also found unhelpful the placement of the images in a single group separating the final chapter (which already had a slightly different theme) from the rest of the book. They would have been easier to use and contributed more to the flow of the thesis had they been better interleaved. This is nitpicking, however. Overall Roberts has produced a very readable and interesting contribution to early modern scholarship which, by focusing on Berlinghieri's *Geography* with its literary, cartographic, classical, and diplomatic content, has necessarily involved an interdisciplinary approach and ought to appeal to a wide variety of readers.