Images and Texts on the "Artemidorus Papyrus"

Working Papers on P.Artemid.
(St. John's College Oxford, 2008)

Edited by
Kai Brodersen and Jaś Elsner

Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart 2009

Richard Talbert (Chapel Hill)

P.Artemid.: The Map

The appropriate opening is surely an expression of excitement, even elation. Here (fig. 4, 7–11) is a contemporary specimen of cartography from classical antiquity, an extraordinary find despite its damaged state. We already possess maps preserved on stone[1] and a tiny piece of another on bronze,[2] but they are all large-scale. We also have a precious parchment find from Dura Europos, though it, too, remains a mere scrap.[3] The map in P.Artemid., by contrast, belongs to a wholly different league and has no match.

But it is also a Greek gift, of a type that classical scholars like to deprecate, even though it is familiar and in truth most welcome. The fact remains, however, that this map could hardly be richer in puzzles to tax and frustrate its viewers. My aim is to proceed methodically, therefore, with a concern above all to establish what may, and may not, be elucidated about it. I salute with gratitude the extensive and thoughtful presentation by the editors Profs. Gallazzi, Kramer and Settis,[4] although unlike them I shall stop short of formulating any specific interpretation of the map, even one as restrained and open-minded as theirs.

I share the editors' view that the map is genuinely ancient rather than a 19th or 20th century forgery. I base that conviction solely on my own competence, such as it is. If objective tests conducted at some future date turn out to demonstrate that the map must be modern work, then I stand corrected – and, frankly, I marvel at the forger's craft. If nothing else, I would have expected a forger to equip us with even one more clue however tenuous, so as to reduce the level of bafflement or *aporia* which in my view the map in its present incomplete state creates. Moreover a 19th or 20th century forger, I suspect, would have been all too liable to give the map at least some resemblance to the modern standard view of the Mediterranean or part of it, as is plainly evident in such often reprinted reconstructions as *The World according to Hecataeus* (or Strabo, or Dionysius Periegetes, et al.) from the works of E.H. Bunbury and others.[5] No such tendency towards the modern view

1 Among overviews, note Dilke 1987; http://formaurbis.stanford.edu with Trimble 2007.
2 See Brodersen 1995/2003, 221–22.
3 See Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 276–77 with fig. 3.1.
4 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 273–308.
5 For the three cited, see Harley/Woodward 1987, 135, 175, 172 respectively; cf. the collection of further examples in Brodersen 1995/2003, 12.

surfaces here, however. Familiarity with the character of modern maps might also lead an unwary forger to standardize the symbols more than appears to be the case; their nature and degree of variety will be considered below. Last in this connection, it may be noted as a caution that the signs of potential forgery just mentioned are all detectable in the allegedly 5th-century BC Soleto potsherd map.[6]

The map in the papyrus may be considered ancient, but still there is no knowing whether it is one that Artemidorus himself made or authorized to accompany the text of his *Geographoumena*, or whether it is a later, independent creation that came to be inserted. I see no means of resolving this issue, or by extension the issue of how accurately the original map has in fact been copied here. Conceivably, there is a connection in this respect with the puzzle that the map was abandoned abruptly when still far from complete. An extreme possibility, albeit implausible, is that the copyist eventually awoke to the realization that he was reproducing quite the wrong map here, and so at once halted work on it. Or maybe he did begin copying the correct map, but then he, or a third party evaluating his progress, so deplored the irredeemably poor quality of the work that it was just abandoned.

Dimensions and penwork

In attempting to comprehend any map, it is a basic step to establish its dimensions; but in this instance that is impossible. According to the *editio princeps,*[7] the length is to be reckoned as not less than 99 cm (almost 3 ft 4 ins), although it could have been as much as 113 cm or so (3 ft 9 ins). Where the map would have ended, or had to end, at the left is patently uncertain. Only the situation at the right is evident, and here the map seems to stop a few centimetres short of how far it could have extended in that direction. By contrast, the map runs notably, even perilously, close to the upper and lower edges of the papyrus, thus exploiting more or less its full height of about 32 cm (13 ins). A frame to enclose the map might be expected, but there is no sign of one. Conceivably, this was a component to be added later in a coloured ink, although it might seem more natural (and more prudent) to mark out a frame first.

The role that colour would play in the map's presentation is a further imponderable. To be sure, colour is not a requirement, but its use would be the greatest help to the mapmaker in engaging viewers and in rendering the presentation more versatile and more effective. Even sparing use of a single colour could prove a valuable enhancement, as the red on the Severan Marble Plan of Rome (*Forma Urbis*) well demonstrates.[8] In the present instance, there is good reason to

6 A photograph is readily accessible in *Wikipedia*, s.v. Mappa di Soleto; note the small size of this object (5.9 cm wide by 2.9).

7 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 275.

8 See references above.

imagine that some colour was to be added. At the least, one or more colours would complete the pictorial "vignette" symbols. At present these are just light sketches (a normal preliminary stage in copying), to which further elements were no doubt to be added. Hence, with the map in its present state, we lack an accurate impression of how some of the symbols would look once coloured. Otherwise in this connection, I am prepared to concur with the editors[9] in believing that the parallel lines which they identify as A, B, C, D and E are meant to be associated as pairs (fig. 66). I further agree that in all likelihood colour was to be added through each of these five pairs so as to form conspicuous broad swathes across the map.[10]

It is impossible to say whether colour was somehow to be added to any of the single lines – which are everywhere uniform in both type and weight – or, say, in the loop between the editors' *via* 8 and *via* 9. If nothing else, such enhancement could certainly dispel the current unsatisfying impression that the single lines all signify the same feature – all routes, or rivers, or boundaries, for instance. Colour would provide the handiest means for the mapmaker to create distinctions here. Comparison with the practice of the Peutinger map in this regard is instructive. Some of its linework is conspicuously coloured, but each line type is also distinct; even a colour-blind user could not confuse shorelines, rivers and routes on the Peutinger map (fig. 67).

One possible way in which the copyist of the map in P.Artemid. might have perpetrated errors beyond redemption is by failure to respect different types of linework adequately. A stage in the history of the Peutinger map offers a case in point. By 1591 the map was given up for lost again after its discovery early in the 16th century, and Marcus Welser (who had never seen it) imagined that the most he could ever publish would be two surviving drawings of a small part commissioned by Peutinger long before.[11] In so doing, Welser was not to know that both artists – although each had been instructed to *copy* – had misrepresented the route linework without justification, by allowing it to glide more or less smoothly across the map rather than rendering it as successive straight sections marked off with sharp downturns.

On the P.Artemid. map, it is again impossible to say whether there were to be features – wholly missing at present – that would be added only in a coloured ink. Possible such features might include, for example, lakes, mountain ranges, routes.[12]

9 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 287–89.

10 Such colouring must remain a matter of conjecture, however; as a result, in my fig. 15 there is no shading here.

11 See Weber 1976, fig. 3 and 4, with discussion by Talbert (forthcoming a), chap. 1 sect. 2 (a).

12 Routes are marked in red on the Peutinger map, as well as on the comparable medieval Gough map. For the latter, see the Queen's University, Belfast, project "Mapping the realm: English cartographic constructions of 14th-century Britain" (http://143.117.30.60/website/GoughMap/viewer.htm), with discussion by Millea 2007, 27–32.

Colour apart, another missing component that was no doubt to be added is lettering. Strictly speaking, it in turn is not essential, although the value of a map without it would be diminished, and there would be heightened risk that the significance of certain symbols might escape viewers. If lettering was to be added, the issue arises of how this would be achieved neatly in some instances, especially symbols 9 (fig. 35) and 13. For whatever it is worth in the present context, we may recall the principles which the maker of the Peutinger map evidently sought to maintain for the placement of lettering there:[13] the name for a place marked with a symbol should go immediately above the symbol, if at all possible; lettering should be kept clear of water or mountain range or any other feature; and lettering (other than display capitals sometimes) should be laid out as horizontally as possible. Quite clearly, to name the symbols in the P.Artemid. map according to such principles would not be feasible. Moreover, if its numerous tiny rectangular symbols (the editors' *piccoli quadrati*)[14] are also to be named, then by any reckoning the mapmaker faces acute difficulty at the top left. Elsewhere, he could just name each of those in the sequence down to the right from symbol 8 (fig. 35) if he were willing to slant the names almost vertically. For all we know, however, there was never the intention to name any of the *piccoli quadrati*, or only some at most; maybe some were to be numbered; or maybe different clusters of them were to share a "group" name.

Symbols

In any case, how are each of the components found on the map to be identified? The symbols without question have plenty of stylistic matches in other Roman artwork, and I agree provisionally with the editors[15] that the larger ones are urban settlements – 2, 9, 11, 13, maybe 7 and 12 also (e.g. figs. 35 and 38).[16] Likewise 8 (fig. 35) and 10 (fig. 37) could be settlements, smaller evidently. On the other hand, 4 (fig. 36) definitely seems rather different, but there is no saying whether it is a temple or monument, as the editors are prepared to consider. The same uncertainty applies more emphatically to 6, which may not even be preserved complete; stele, monument or milestone all seem very speculative identifications. Each clearly different again are 1 (fig. 35) and 3, but whether they even represent physical features like mountain or forest, as opposed to manmade ones, remains obscure

13 See further Talbert (forthcoming a), chap. 3 sect. 2 (e).
14 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 286.
15 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 282–87.
16 How uniform these symbols were to be when finished with colour must remain a puzzle. Perhaps some, or all, were to be individually distinctive, even reflecting the appearance of the place itself, like Portus on the Peutinger map or Jerusalem on the Madaba mosaic map. For some discussion of such identifications, note Bowersock 2006, 19–25, 65–82.

to my eye. I find 5 and 14 too scrappy to identify at all; neither appears to be a city.

The *piccoli quadrati* remain to be considered. The editors[17] suggest *villae rusticae* or farms or some sort of rural settlement; I am unsure. Do all these *quadrati* signify the same type of feature in fact, or would distinctions be introduced somehow with one or more colours? The varied distribution of the *quadrati* is striking. At the map's top left the makings of a checkerboard pattern are detectable, and there is another perhaps top right of symbol 11 (fig. 38). Above the broad swathe A down right from symbol 8 (fig. 39), however, there is only a sequence, and then just a few scattered *quadrati* above this symbol and to the left of 9, as well as a mere couple beyond 13. In every instance does each individual *quadrato* count, and is its specific placement deliberate? Or are the *quadrati* always to be interpreted as a generalized area-symbol, signifying no more than "dense rural population hereabouts" (or mine shafts, or other feature)? Clues are lacking. Equally, it is conceivable that some, or all, the *quadrati* are to be linked by coloured linework that would equip them with a meaning which at present eludes the viewer; but how this would be accomplished is anybody's guess.

Linework

Moving on to the linework, there is nothing on an ancient map – we may reckon – that it could realistically be expected to signify other than a watercourse (river, canal, even aqueduct) or route, or boundary of some kind. Accordingly, I think the editors[18] may be correct to interpret their five pairs of parallel lines (see above) as a large river (A-B-C) with two tributaries (D, E) – or branches, depending on the direction of flow, which remains indeterminable. This said, the uniformly exaggerated size of all these watercourses – with neither tributary/branch rendered a "lesser" stream to the main river – is curious; the issue of scale arises, and is addressed below.

As to the single linework, however, I think the editors[19] are mistaken in identifying it all as roads or routes. Routes can be expected to demonstrate greater connectivity and crossover than is visible here, and to link principal settlements more. On the ground, routes also typically run through ancient settlements instead of bypassing them, as the editors seem to envisage in the cases of symbols 13 and 14; the *minori raccordi anulari* that they associate with each are hard to credit. It remains entirely possible that some of the single linework does signify routes. At the same time it should also be recognized that the marking of any routes (not to

17 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 286.
18 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 287–89.
19 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 289–91.

mention a large number of them) can only surprise us, because the meager ancient testimony about the features to be seen on maps almost never notes routes among them.[20]

In my view, the feature that most, if not all, of the single linework seems more likely to represent is watercourses, not roads; but I hasten to acknowledge that in its current state this linework has manifest shortcomings as hydrography. How is *via* 12 (fig. 66) to be understood, for instance, which appears to flow from and into the same broad stream (A-B or B-A)? *Via* 25–19, too, even with its righthand end missing, appears to flow from and into stream E, as do *vie* 25–26 and 27–26 (fig. 66). Where are the sources of all these rivers great and small? Do we infer that the requisite mountains, lakes or springs are to be added in coloured ink? Why does stream C end so abruptly at the right? Where does the sea appear, if at all? "On the missing left" is no doubt the most plausible supposition; but equally the map's coverage may be limited to an inland area, without ever extending to the sea.

Orientation and scale

In order to comprehend any map, some sense of its orientation and of its scale is essential. No standard orientation emerged during antiquity,[21] and clues to the mapmaker's choice are lacking in this instance. Of course his observance of scale cannot be expected to match the precision and consistency that it routinely attains in modern maps. Even so, any map by its very nature has to reflect a sense of scale, but the scale in the present case is irrecoverable. To be sure, in map design those features which mapmakers choose to highlight will inevitably appear larger than they should in strict conformity with a map's overall scale. Here, this is true of the streams A-E (as noted above), and perhaps also of the most substantial symbols. The surprise is that both types of feature should appear so far out of step with the rest of the map's features.

It is a possibility – which I think can be neither confirmed nor refuted at present – that the mapmaker's design somehow selectively compresses the desired area for coverage, because he feels otherwise unable to accommodate it within the squat format of the standard papyrus roll for a text. Such selective compression is manifestly fundamental to the Peutinger map. Further instructive illustration of it occurs (with a different form) in two sketches drawn to guide the movement of Spanish troops through Franche Comté en route between Genoa and the Netherlands in the late 16th century (figs. 68 and 69). Each of these sketches aims to focus attention on the major river crossings in particular as the key stages on the

20 See further Talbert (forthcoming a), Conclusion sect. 1.

21 North, taken for granted today, was by no means standard in antiquity. See further Salway (forthcoming).

troops' march; in consequence the country to be traversed between one crossing and the next is largely omitted.

Purpose and scope

The perception that these Spanish sketches were made for a well defined purpose prompts consideration of our mapmaker's purpose. By their nature all maps are deliberate, selective presentations of data and ideas. What, then, is our map designed to achieve or to illustrate, and for whom? For all readers of the associated text? Or for an individual patron maybe, who was to be presented with this specially prepared copy? Or is the association between the map and the immediately adjacent text perhaps a looser one than the layout of the papyrus might lead us to imagine?

Unless the wrong map altogether has been started here in error, it does seem only reasonable to assume some relationship to the Iberian peninsula (Spain), given the map's placement just prior to the start of Artemidorus' treatment of that region in his text. But still the map's scope and perspective defy identification. Does the map somehow take in all of Spain, or at least a large part? Or is it focusing down on a smaller area in more detail? Is a major river the core of its intended scope, possibly the Ebro or the Baetis, as the editors conjecture?[22] Could the map's rendering of the landscape (both physical and manmade) be deliberately more idealized than realistic, making it comparable in this respect to the Palestrina Nile mosaic (c. 100 BC?), say, for a region,[23] or to the Colle Oppio fresco (late 1st century AD) for a city?[24] Alternatively, if realism is intended, is this a "snapshot" map – representing an area at a specific date, or during a limited period only? Or is the mapmaker less historically conscious, and thus content to set features side by side that were never in fact contemporary? Such merging is plainly visible on the Peutinger map, for instance, and even on Rome's Marble Plan to a limited degree.[25]

More and more questions arise, with no means as yet to answer them in my view. Hence my *aporia*; I feel unable to take this investigation further. Only by first hazarding a set of hypotheses about several of the key aspects identified above is it possible to formulate an interpretation of the map. Robert Knapp (University of California, Berkeley) did as much very ingeniously in a conference paper,[26] at a

22 Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 294–95.
23 See Andreae 2003, 78–109.
24 See La Rocca 2000.
25 In particular, the map shows both Dacia as a Roman province (annexed soon after AD 100) and Campania before the eruption of Vesuvius (AD 79); for the Plan, see references above.
26 Knapp 2004. My thanks to Prof. Knapp keeping me informed about his work and for discussing it on several occasions.

time (2003) when only a small part of the map had been published. He supposed it to be oriented East, and argued that it represents the area of ancient Onuba Aestuaria,[27] modern Huelva in south-west Spain (fig. 70). His claim is instructive, and it coincidentally gratified his hosts because the conference took place in none other than Huelva. However, the full publication of the map now only serves to underline the fragility of this reconstruction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, given all the disappointments expressed above, readers could be forgiven for wondering whether anything of value is to be learned from this damaged map, or whether its study must merely prove an exercise in frustration or delusion. There is indeed that risk, if we will only be content with answers to certain types of specific question that the map remains too incomplete to answer. At the same time, however, it needs to be recognized that the map can shed light on approach and process in ancient cartography, and varieties of both. These are themes which scholars have typically ignored to date, in part because of sheer lack of material. This map – a mature creation, for all its incompleteness – does now enlarge and sharpen our understanding of ancient worldview and the ways in which it came to be recorded.

27 *Barrington Atlas* 26 D4 O(sso)noba.

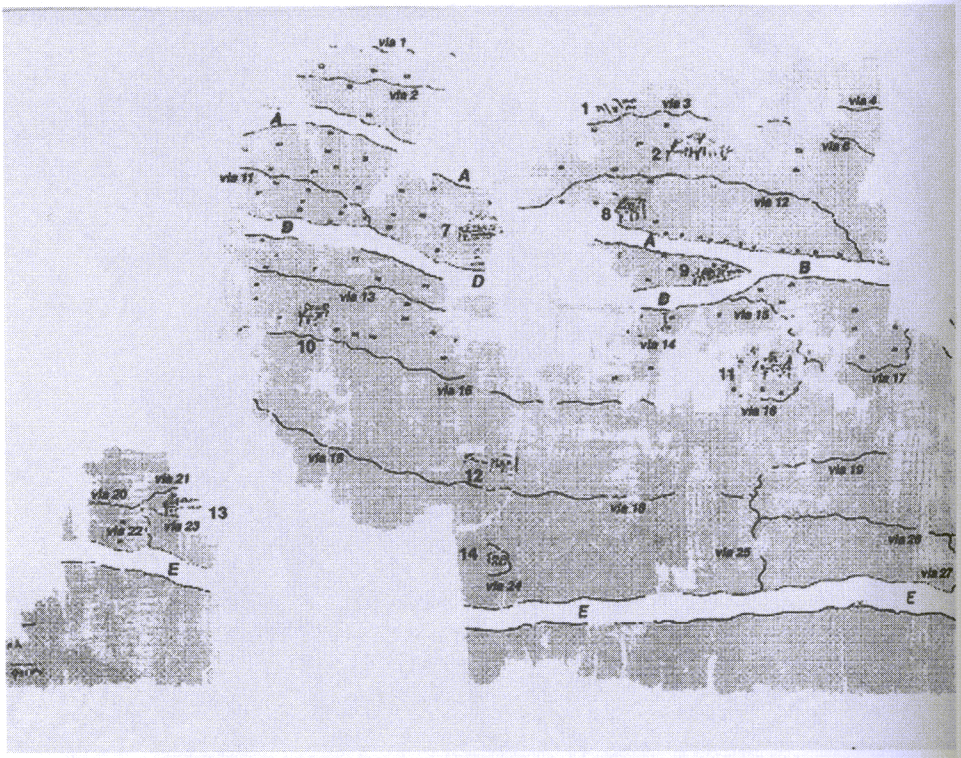


Fig. 66 (in two parts): Outline sketch of the map reproduced in monochrome from Gallazzi/Kramer/Settis 2008, 296–97. Note that the filler there for the pairs of parallel lines lettered A-E is removed here.


via 5
via 5
via 5
via 7
via 8
via 9
via 10
B
C
C
B
via 19
via 28
E
via 28
via 28
3
4
5
6

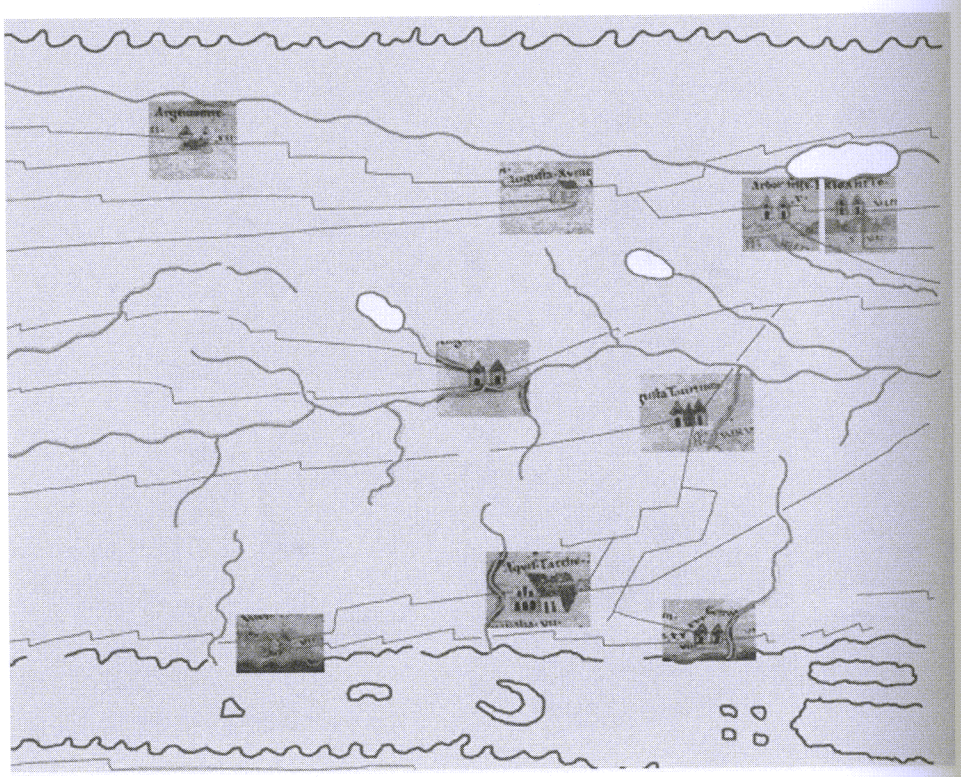
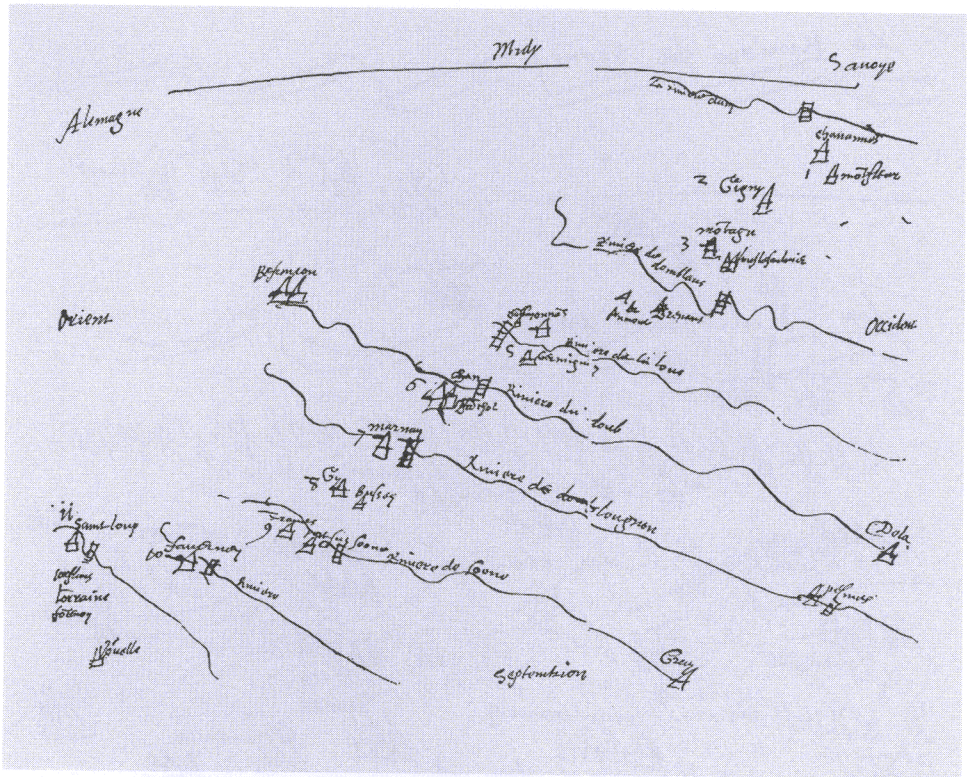


Fig. 67: Reproduction of linework for shoreline, rivers, and routes as presented on the Peutinger Map (segment 2), together with pictorial symbols [after Talbert/Brodersen 2004, fig. 16].



Figs. 68-69: Sketches drawn to guide the movement of Spanish troops through Franche Comté en route between Genoa and the Netherlands in 1573 [after Parker 1972, 102–104].

Fig. 68 (oriented South): Eleven successive supply points (étapes) and associated rivers.

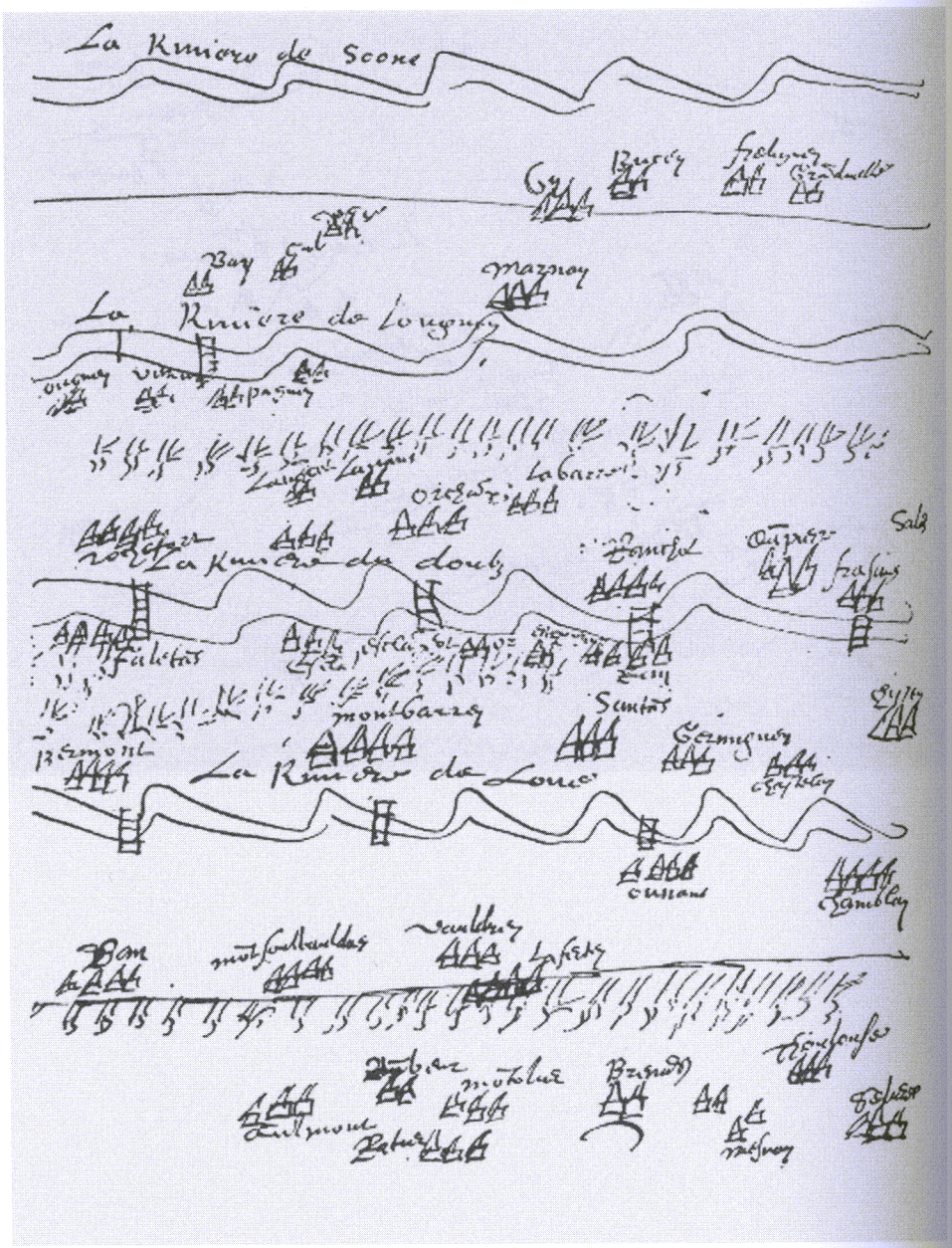


Fig. 69 (oriented North): Rivers, forests, bridges, and principal settlements, each marked by symbol and name.

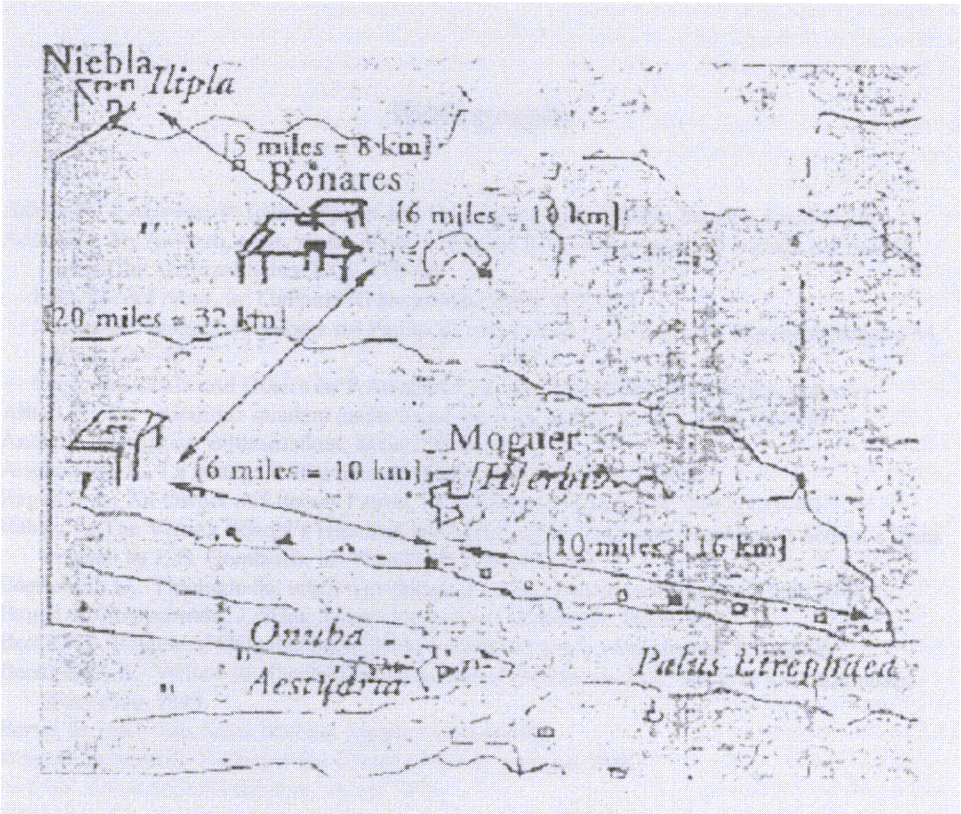


Fig. 70: Identification of the area covered by part of the map, and features marked there, as proposed by Knapp 2004, 293.