

Laudatio

*addressed by Professor Evangelos Livieratos
in the public Ceremony of Awarding
to Professor Ferjan Ormeling from Utrecht
the title of Doctor Honoris Causa
of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Faculty of Engineering
School of Rural and Surveying Engineering
Thessaloniki, 7 May 2015*

Rector of the Aristotle University, Deputy of the Rector, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, President of the School of Rural and Surveying Engineering, Presidents of Schools, Colleagues and Students, President of the Hellenic Cartographic Society, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a special honour, privilege and joy for me to address the Laudatio in the ceremony of awarding the Doctorate Honoris Causa to Professor Ferjan Ormeling. This is not only because the honouree is an important and distinguished personality in the international field of Cartography but also because in him the contemporary Greek cartographic community after its establishment in 1994, with centre in our School, found an experienced, valid and coherent associate and supporter on an international level.

Please allow me to underline from the beginning that this honorary recognition of Ferjan Ormeling as cartographer, by the Aristotle University, obtains also a **symbolic dimension** with particular meaning for us here, because it is held in a Greek city, Thessaloniki which, impressively, has continually been referred to, in the world history of cartography, the only one so from all other cities of today's Greece, as will be documented from the few points I will indicatively describe here, concerning Thessaloniki:

from its precise geographic latitude in Ptolemy's Geographia, as derived after eliminating the systematic regional trend in latitude, *to* its coordinates used by the 18th century French cartographers as a reference datum for the numerical reduction of the geographic longitudes of the Aegean Sea; *from* its representation as important location in the Roman Tabula Peutingeriana, *to* the discrete depiction in the 8th century Beatus map, as in the anonymous 12th century Orbis Terrarum manuscript of Turin with only the toponyms of Thessaloniki and Constantinople and the regional of 'Macedonia' written in the wider territory of the Byzantine empire and of the rest of the East; *from* its 9th century scholar bishop Leo the Mathematician referenced in historical texts as a possible contributor to the solution of Bagdad's caliph Al-Mamun astro-geodetic problems, *to* its also scholar 12th century bishop Eustathius of Thessalonica who commentated on Dionysius Periegetes and made critical reference on Ptolemy's Geographia especially concerning the coastline of India; *from* the only codex of Ptolemy's Geographia extant in Greece, in the nearby Holy Mountain (13th to 14th century), *to* the emphatic pictorial labelling of Thessaloniki (14th to 16th century) on the nautical portolan maps, with large symbols and flags, like the anonymous portolan of Dijon with the impressive symbol or in the Venetian portolan by Georgios Sideris, with the symbol for important city and a great four-edged banner, the only one with such dimensions in the whole represented area of Europe and the Mediterranean or in the anonymous map of the Correr Museum on which Thessaloniki is marked with a red flag, the only symbol on this rare portolan map; and further *from* the perspective depictions (17th and 18th century) of the amphitheatrical city within the walls, like that imaginary of the Dutchman Olfert Dapper (1688) and others later, *to* the representations of 18th century, when the French Hydrography is interested for the area producing important maps, among them the first map of the city (1784) in scale 1:15.000; *from* the numismatic geographical marking of the city on Rigas Velestinlis

Charta, with the figure of Kassandros wife Thessaloniki, the stepsister of Alexander the Great on the relevant coin, to the urban mapping of the 19th century and later in large scales, like those of 1880, of 1895 by the Dutchman Cuypers, those of 1898-99 in 1:500 scale, of 1900, 1910 and 1916 by the French Armée d'Orient as well as the wider unknown surveying work by the young Geodesy professor at the National Technical University of Athens Dimitrios Lampadarios a 'silent' contributor to the international urban planning reconstruction of the city after the Great Thessaloniki Fire of 1917. This remarkable and unique, for a Greek city, presence of Thessaloniki in the cartographic history is continuing also in our days, with the establishment in 1994, by AUTH members, of the *Hellenic Cartographic Society*, which represents Greek cartography in the international cartographic community, and of the country's unique *National Centre for Maps and Cartographic Heritage* in 1997, hosting our honouree in 2006, now the *Cartographic Heritage Archives* by the *General State Archives of Greece*.

I made intentionally this introductory historical recall, in order to demonstrate that the discrete presence of Thessaloniki in the world cartography, **embeds symbolically and justifies absolutely this today's ceremony** in an academic institution where is systematically cultivated in creative extroversion the cartographic science, technology and art, as it is performed in our School in the last decades, with international ambition and achievements followed and encouraged by our honouree.

The honouree then, Professor Ferjan Ormeling, was born in Utrecht in 1942, in a quite literally 'geographic environment', since his father was the prominent geographer Ferdinand Jan Ormeling Sr, the founder, among many other achievements, of the Geographical Department in the Topographic Survey in Batavia in the Dutch Indies, the today's Jakarta, Indonesia where the Ormeling family moved in 1948: a country receiving always our honouree's interest. Returning to his homeland, he concluded his basic and postgraduate studies in Human Geography at the University of Groningen in 1969, having worked simultaneously at a publishing house producing the monumental *Bosatlas*, with which entire generations of Dutch since 1877 were taught geography and being familiarised with maps; the *Bosatlas* remaining so far the most authoritative and best-selling multi-thematic Atlas in the Low Countries and abroad. From then on, Ferjan Ormeling gained a great experience in the planning, designing and producing Atlases, considered today as a top scientist in this issue, emphasising the proper placement and usability of maps in Atlases. Later on, as a member of the editorial board of Netherlands' National Atlas, his name was associated with this major work: a fact of Dutch culture and technology which is continuing the great cartographic legacy of the country, one of the greatest schools of world cartography thanks also to which territories of Greece were represented on old maps since 16th century.

Ferjan Ormeling defended his Doctorate at the University of Utrecht in 1983 under the tutorship of the well-known professor of cartography and geodesy Cornelis Koeman who contributed in the establishment of a separate programme in cartography making Utrecht a cartographic centre. The subject of his doctoral dissertation was the study of toponyms, in the minority areas of West Europe, on topographic maps. Since then he developed expertise in toponymy issues, which makes him today a United Nations expert on this field, chairing also, since 1995, the consulting committee for geographical names in the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences and in the committee for foreign language geographic names of the Dutch Language Union of the Low Countries. He is also the Dutch delegate in the UNGEGN – *United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names* elected vice chair, since 2007, with five-year mandates to 2017, serving also as the head of relevant educational projects.

His academic career starts in 1969 in Utrecht as a Lecturer in the Geography Faculty, elected in 1985 professor of the Chair of Cartography. He teaches up to 2009 a wide spectrum of subjects, like atlases, environmental cartography, history of cartography, map design and production, theoretical issues of cartographic composition and graphics.

In parallel to his scientific activities he develops his relation to the fieldwork, the direct experiential relationship in contacting the geographic space. The work in the terrain, the teaching in the field, the travelling for learning outdoors according the traditions of the accomplished geographers who are also cartographers, characterise among all other capacities a global scientist of cartographic description and representation of geospace. And of course the geodesy heritage of the teacher in Utrecht, Cornelis Koeman, brings Ferjan Ormeling closer to our engineering glimpse, since he feels comfortable moving between e.g. the satellite positioning systems and the modern digital processes in geospatial data acquiring and representation. This should also be the reason that he follows with interest our own Greek cartographic tradition, as it was grown and continue growing in the field of surveying engineering. I think that this is one of Ferjan Ormeling's basic scientific characteristics, his holistic perception about Cartography.

For 25 years, from 1973 to 1995, he has been visiting professor and member of the scientific board of ITC, the famous International Institute of Geoinformation Sciences and Earth Observation, known in many Greek scientists, AUTH graduates and academic staff members who trained, taught or are teaching there.

Ormeling's interests are not exhausted in academic activities but are expanded in much other collective cooperation. For 25 years, from 1975 to 1995 and from 1997 to 2003 he was the head of the cartographic journal *Kartografisch Tijdschrift* and in the same period he was a member of the board of the Dutch Cartographic Society (1975-1997) being its president 1995-1997. He is also member of the editorial board of *Geo-Info* and head of the editorial board of the journal on history of cartography *Caert-Thresoor*. In these journals he reported on activities of the Greek cartographic community.

Professor Ormeling was very active in the International Cartographic Association (ICA) continuing still his contribution, which makes him an ICA emblematic figure. From 1985 he is a member of the ICA Commission on National and Regional Atlases serving also as the Chair of the Standing Commission on Education and Training elected in three ICA General Assemblies for three consecutive four-year terms (1987-1999). In this long period he organised 20 thematic training seminars in various countries of the world especially in developing nations. He was elected ICA Secretary General and Treasurer for two four-year mandates (1999-2007) and from 2007 he is a member of the Committee for ICA Statutes and this year is one of the promoters of the *International Map Year 2015-2016* and member of the relevant Working Group under the aegis of the United Nations. Prof. Ormeling in his capacity of ICA Secretary General encouraged with his presence the work of the Hellenic Cartographic Conferences of our Cartographic Society, which has honoured his interest on Greek cartography awarding him a honorary membership in the 10th Conference at Ioannina, 2008.

As the ICA representative he addressed the pre-conference sessions 'Cartography Teaching' in the frame of the *Imago Mundi Ltd* series of International Conferences on History of Cartography (IHC). At the 18th Conference in Athens, Ormeling encouraged the plans for the 'Cartographic Heritage in Digital Environment' elaborated since 1997 in Thessaloniki, evolved later into the almost homonymous ICA Commission with its Chair here in AUTH, from 2006 onwards, assisted by our School, the Hellenic Cartographic Society and the then National Centre for Maps and Cartographic Heritage, all based here in Thessaloniki.

The Utrecht cartography group contribution, under Prof. Ormeling, was also important in the European competitive project *CartoTech* (Cartographic Heritage Enhancement Using New Technologies) for the promotion of Cartographic Heritage with the use of New Technologies, financed by the Directorate General X of the European Commission and finalised under our guidance here in Thessaloniki.

Our honouree stood by the Greek academic and scientific activities both in his duties in Utrecht and in the ICA. He supported our Thessaloniki guest students in Utrecht, he was member of the examination committee for the doctorate in the Delft University of Technology of a now colleague in our School and he strengthened with his presence the Hellenic Cartographic Confer-

ences around Greece; he cooperated in competitive research project and he spent part of his sabbatical leave in Thessaloniki (2006) studying historical maps paying a special visit at the *Vatopedi Codex* of Ptolemy's *Geographia* kept in Holy Mountain offering also lectures to our School's students and to the general public in Thessaloniki. In 2005 he supported our proposal to the ICA Executive Committee in the La Coruña International Cartographic Conference for the establishing of the ICA Working Group 'Digital Technologies in Cartographic Heritage' which, again with his encouragement had upgraded into Commission, in the 2007 Moscow International Cartographic Conference, receiving later a second mandate in the 2011 Paris Conference. Since then, thanks to Ferjan, this Commission based in our School, here in Thessaloniki, continued its work completing 10 years of international presence and establishing in the international cartographic community the issue of 'cartographic heritage' with a 'digital glimpse on it', thanks also to our web journal *e-Perimetron* and to the up to now 10 annual international conferences held since 2006 in Greece and in other six European cities (The Hague among them), feeling always Frejan's interest for all these initiatives and actions.

In all the above, we should add the great number of publications (almost 500 papers and books with international circulation) and lectures (almost 250 all over the world) which show the dimension and the intensity of his work. His book *Cartography, Visualisation of Spatial Information*, co-authored by Menno-Jan Kraak, was prized in the Netherlands and enjoyed wide circulation in English, translated also in Russian, Polish, Chinese and Indonesian.

His academic production covers a broad variety of subjects, which is a typical characteristic of our honouree. For the whole of his work he was awarded the highest national and international prizes of excellence (the Royal decoration of the 'Orde van Oranje-Nassau', the 'Plancius Medal' of the Royal Dutch Geographical Society, the ICA 'Carl Mannerfelt Gold Medal', the Dr h.c. of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest). A scientist with multifold and wide interests, an important personality of world cartography always expressing himself in an attitude, which recalls the combination of *homo universalis* with *homo viator* a type of intellectual known in the legacy of the humanistic and renaissance Low Countries of his origin.

Before closing the laudatio to Ferjan Ormeling, I will read a short part of a recent answer to an interview given by Ferjan about the future of cartography in the digital era. I think that his statement synthesises all his accumulated experience with a glance to the future. I am quoting what Ferjan believes for the future of cartography by the mid 21st century:

<< The digital generations have brought us ubiquitous cartography, that is spatial data that can be accessed anywhere, anytime. These generations will realise before long, that in order to be able to read and process and understand that spatial information, people want it to be designed in a form they can cope with. And they also will understand in time that people at large will need some coaching in map use, in order to understand what they see on their screens. So these two challenges, designing cartographic products for new platforms and explaining new user groups how the cartographic constructs work, will be the major issues for the next 20 years. I do not mind whether these new generations will name their occupation cartography or something different, although it will be easier for them if they stick to the name cartography (even if that has the connotation of the use of drawing pens and India ink) as that will enable them to retrieve relevant literature about all aspects of spatial visualisation, that were studied in the past, quicker. In many GIS journals people are inventing the wheel again as they are trying to find out aspects of colouring or generalisation that were described and solved decades ago for analogue cartography! >>

Dear Rector, Colleagues and students, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Professor Ormeling, Mrs Hanneke Ormeling and members of the Ormeling family,

We are honouring today an internationally distinguished personality who, in a *humanisticum-typus modum*, collects in one person the highest qualities of the scholar, the teacher, the researcher, the cartographer, the curious in science, the developer, the traveller for knowledge, the leader, the colleague, the associate. Let me close, with a short personal thought about you Ferjan, recalling a quote by a universal Dutchman: if it is true what the great Humanist Desiderius Erasmus has said, that **'the chief element of happiness is to want to be what you are'**, then you should be a happy man Ferjan; not only for what you are, but also because your path in life, we are honouring today, shows that what you have created with tireless work, awareness, mobility, enthusiasm and dynamism, all enveloped in a low attitude profile, was the result of strong will, curiosity, devotion and love for the subjects of interest, expressed always with exceptional decency of conduct and with deep respect and understanding for the next and the other!

On behalf of my colleagues, I wish to thank you, Dear Ferjan, and to welcome you in our academic community!



Ferjan Ormeling, Dr h.c. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 7 May 2015