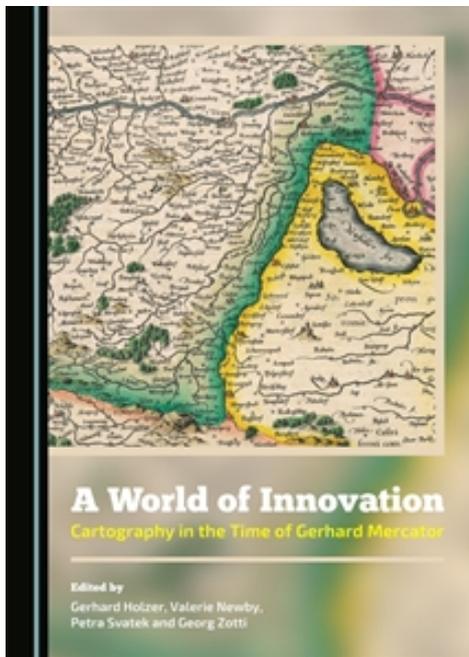


Gerhard Holzer, Valerie Newby, Petra Svatek, and Georg Zotti, eds. *A World of Innovation: Cartography in the Time of Gerhard Mercator*



Gerhard Holzer, Valerie Newby, Petra Svatek, and Georg Zotti, eds. *A World of Innovation: Cartography in the Time of Gerhard Mercator*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015. xvii, 261 p., ill. ISBN 9781443871532. £47.99 (hardcover).

The scholarship contained in this book was convened by the editors at a conference held in Vienna in 2012 in celebration of the 500th anniversary of Gerhard Mercator's date of birth. The thirteen chapters of this edited collection are spread over four thematic sections, the most substantial of which houses five chapters that examine the Hapsburg Empire in light of this cartographer's lifespan. Ultimately, many of these essays struggle to realize their potential, and some representative examples will demonstrate this point. The purpose of the first chapter is to provide an overview of the geographic materials to which Mercator may have been exposed prior to the year 1550. For whatever reason, however, the author decided to confine her insights to the collections of the Austrian National Library, which is curious because Mercator was a Flemish cartographer and some work has been done already on the types of books he owned or likely was exposed to, either in first- or second-hand fashion (i.e. via correspondence). It would have been more valuable to study literature of this period in general and not restrict oneself to the holdings of a particular library today. Similarly, the second chapter engages with the emergence of Vienna on chorographic maps in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The logic of this essay's inclusion in a book about Mercator eludes me. Several other chapters focus on Vienna as a locus of cartographic knowledge and



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production. The strongest connection Mercator may have had with this city is in the fact that the conference from which these edited proceedings emerged took place in Vienna.

The strongest essays are placed in the middle of the book, which includes an enjoyable chapter by Marica Milanese about the intersection of cosmography and geography, and Mercator's discussion of these subjects in his published and private writing. A second notable essay, by Patricia Seed, about surviving copies of Mercator's 1569 map provides useful insight into the map's afterlife that will aid future scholars who study the representation of his now-famous map projection across all copies and states. Marcel van den Broecke's meditation over the similarities shared by and intersections between Mercator and Ortelius is engaging if not the most original contribution in this collection, as much of this material has been explored adequately by the sources listed in the chapter's bibliography. Another solid essay was prepared by Peter van der Krogt; it deals with the development of the atlas, which was greatly credited to Mercator. His essay explores the composition of this form of publication as well as Mercator's objectives for the cosmography that later was acclaimed as one of the first published atlases. The author also studies the meaning of the name (atlas) that Mercator assigned to his work. Despite the pertinent subject matter, however, the essay is not an original work of scholarship but rather is based on some well-known articles that have previously appeared. Several other contributions in this volume also have been previously published in full or adapted form.

Some defects can be noted, first in the curious introduction provided by the chairperson of the International Map Collectors' Society, one of the sponsors of the aforementioned conference, whose framing of the book reads more like an introduction of the Society's terms of reference and has very little to do with the book's subject matter. The second introduction, this time penned by the editors, outlines the book's organization and purpose but provides no critical or theoretical apparatus, and not even a biography of Mercator or representative literature (primary or secondary) so that the reader might apprehend the quality of the book's genesis. It would have been useful here to thoroughly explain the book's organization and particularly its evident interest in Vienna, and just how this relates to Mercator.

Finally, some praise should be given to the publisher because it continues to support the inclusion of visual material in the form of maps and illustrations. This material is vital for scholarship on the history of cartography. That being said, the little care that has been invested in this volume prior to its arrival at the publisher is apparent in other ways beyond



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the book's conceptualization: the inconsistent use of italics (indeed, many book titles in the notes are not italicised whereas others are); a lack of basic punctuation like periods, which are occasionally missing altogether from sentences; a need for more thorough copy-editing of non-native authors' prose for grammar and style; and a preponderance of numbered lists, including one that starts at 5 rather than 1.

In summary, this book has its defects and most of them should have been easy to avoid had the editors invested more time and effort into the volume.

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