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## Table ronde on Graeco-Roman cartography (Paris 1987)

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A three-day colloquium on Graeco-Roman cartography was held in Paris from September 2 to 4, 1987. It was organised by Christian Jacob of the Centre de Recherches comparées sur les Sociétés Anciennes. Papers were given by 23 scholars, and on the last day Professor Josef Babicz, of the Warsaw Academy of Sciences, and Professor George Kish, of the University of Michigan, joined the deliberations. Many of those present also attended the 12th International Conference on the History of Cartography, which followed from September 8–11 under the auspices of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The colloquium was not only very representative but well timed, coming at a period of much publication on the subject and coinciding with the publication of Vol. 1 of *The History of Cartography*, edited by J.B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago University Press). This covers early, classical and mediaeval cartography, the Graeco-Roman sections being contributed by Germaine Aujac and the present writer, and the mediaeval sections by P. D. A. Harvey, Tony Campbell and the editors.

The first section was devoted to general problems, cartographic technique and scientific thought. Germaine Aujac (Toulouse), "Ptolémée et la technique cartographique," explained how Ptolemy's astronomical expertise enabled him to make enormous improvements on his predecessors for the projection of world maps. He took the degree, used by Babylonians and some Greeks, as his linear unit, and adapting Hipparchus' table of chords, devised his first projection with straight meridians converging on a theoretical point 115 'parts' north of the equator. By making (a) Thule 52 'parts' south of this, i.e. 63°N, (b) the longitude/latitude ratio on the parallel of Rhodes, 36°N, as 93:115, Ptolemy achieved an approximate ratio of 5:4:2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> for his figures 115:93:52, as well as a division of the northern hemisphere by multiples of 9°. For his second projection, involving curved meridians, he gives very detailed geometrical instructions.

Yves Janvier (Orléans), "Les problèmes de la métrologie dans l'étude de la cartographie antique," claimed J. B. B. d'Anville as the scholar who first stressed the importance of studying ancient itinerary measurements; these at least are based on milestones or other road measurements. When we try to evaluate ancient world measurements in kilometres, we encounter difficulties. The stade was in use long before any Greek attempts to measure the earth's circumference, but ancient writers seem unconscious of problems caused by its different measurements in different cities. In China the *li* varied (around a mean of about 300 m.) from area to area and century to century; and modern translations which replace *li* by stades or miles are untrustworthy. Ancient equivalents between Near Eastern and Greek measurements tend to over-simplify. Strabo uses different lengths of stade in different passages. Discussion on this paper centred round the stade used by Eratosthenes in his measurement of the earth's circumference. Granted that the stade existed long before Eratosthenes' calculations, Bremner, supported by Aujac, held that one could speak in this case of an "effective" stade; true, it relied on measurement of some sort in the first place, but it was, so to speak, manipulated to suit Alexandrian theory; and a round figure of 10,000 stades could well be kept when Posidonius had suggested reducing the circumference from 250,000 or 252,000 to 180,000 stades. The only ancient writer on metrology who mentions Eratosthenes is Julian of Ascalon; ought one not, the present writer suggested, to have some credence in his statement that Eratosthenes had 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> stades to a mile, even if (a) he says the same of Strabo, which is not always true, (b) Eratosthenes did not think in terms of miles? It was perhaps a pity that no German scholars were present to contribute to this discussion, following the very detailed discussion over 100 years ago by F. Hultsch, *Griechische und römische Metrologie* (2. Bearbeitung, Berlin 1882).

Giorgio Mangani (Ancona), "Procédés conjecturaux dans la géographie grecque ancienne," stressed the influence on ancient geographical writers of ideas of analogy and symmetry. The sphere appealed to them because of its perfect shape, and they tended to argue that similar climates must belong to similar