ARTICLES

Andrew Beeby, Richard Gameson, and Catherine Nicholson
Illuminators’ Pigments in Lancastrian England • 143

Renate Burri
Ayer MS 743: New Light on a Greek Manuscript of Ptolemy’s Geography in Chicago • 165

Micah Erwin
Fragments of Medieval Manuscripts in Printed Books: Crowdsourcing and Cataloging Medieval Manuscript Waste in the Book Collection of the Harry Ransom Center • 188

Richard and Mary Rouse
The Abbey of the Trésor de Notre-Dame: Sixteen Thirteenth-Century Charters (Los Angeles, UCLA Special Collections, Rouse DOC/XIII/FRA/8) • 248

Index of Manuscripts Cited • 297

Color Plates • 301
Ayer MS 743: New Light on a Greek Manuscript of Ptolemy’s *Geography* in Chicago

Renate Burri

When Aubrey Diller, one of the greatest experts on ancient geographical literature, in 1936 presented a little known Greek manuscript containing Ptolemy’s *Geography*, now at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Ayer MS 743, he was not aware of the fact that he was writing about a manuscript that since at least 1923 until very re-

* I wish to thank the Newberry Library for granting me a Short-Term Fellowship that allowed me to study the manuscript intensely in May/June 2010. My special thanks go to Robert W. Karrow, then Curator of Special Collections and Curator of Maps, to whom I owe much information and help and numerous valuable suggestions. My sincere thanks are also given to Chet Van Duzer for his precious advice and for reviewing this article.

Abstract: Recent research on the only Greek manuscript of Ptolemy’s *Geography* in America, Ayer MS 743 (Newberry Library, Chicago, identical with Codex Romanus Monasterii Sancti Gregorii in monte Coelio 15, which until recently was thought to be lost), reveals that it was copied for the famous humanist Francesco Barbaro in Venice by two Byzantine scribes working for him in the 1410s. The manuscript is therefore the oldest extant document testifying to the presence of Ptolemy’s *Geography* in Venice. Its unusual and complicated structure provides insight into the beginnings of the transmission of the *Geography* in Western Europe. Later on, Ayer MS 743 belonged to Francesco’s grandson Ermolao and to the library of the Venetian monastery San Michele di Murano before moving to Rome, London, and finally Chicago.

Keywords: Ptolemy’s *Geography*, Greek manuscripts, Venice, Francesco Barbaro, Ermolao Barbaro, codicology/palaeography, textual transmission, Nikephoros Gregoras, monastery San Michele di Murano, Edward Everett Ayer.

Renate Burri

166

cently had been thought to be lost.¹ For his partial edition of Ptolemy’s *Geography* Otto Cuntz had been looking in vain for a Greek manuscript of this work, supposedly preserved in the monastery of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome, *Codex Romanus Monasterii Sancti Gregorii in monte Coelio* 15. His note on the missing Roman manuscript in the introduction to his edition, published in 1923,² has largely been adopted—although by the late 1950s the Italian palaeographer Elpidio Mioni had already shown that this “lost” codex was identical with the manuscript at the Newberry Library.³

Moreover, Cuntz was not aware that on the page preceding his note on the unknown whereabouts of the Roman manuscript, he had actually listed the very same manuscript with its old shelfmark “Venet. monast. S. Michael,” with-

out indicating a manuscript number. In fact the Newberry manuscript had been codex No. 15 in the library of the Venetian monastery of San Michele di Murano before arriving at the Roman monastery San Gregorio al Celio, where it bore the same number. Whereas the Venetian origin of the Newberry manuscript had soon been recognized by some (but not all) scholars, the fact that it had made an intermediate stay in Rome was not appreciated until recently, in spite of Mioni’s revelation. In the first volume of The History of Cartography, the Chicago codex and the Roman manuscript still both figure independently in the list of the Greek manuscripts of Ptolemy’s Geography, the latter with the annotation “present whereabouts unknown.”

Chicago, Newberry Library, Ayer MS 743 is a paper manuscript, measuring ca. 404 mm. in height and ca. 282 mm in width. It has no guard-leaves and consists of 143 folios, foliated continuously in pencil in the upper outer

9. For a systematic description of the manuscript see Renate Burri, Die ’Geographie’ des Ptolemaios im Spiegel der griechischen Handschriften (Berlin, 2013), 153–75.
corner of each recto. According to a note on fol. 143v this foliation was completed in 2007. Another, older foliation in pencil appears on every tenth folio only, in the lower outer corner of its recto: on fol. 10r we read “10,” on fol. 20r the number is missing, presumably because this folio lacks its lower outer corner, fol. 30r has “30,” etc. There are no such numbers on fol. 90r and fol. 100r, but the numbering continues with “90” on fol. 111r, goes on with “100” on fol. 121r and ends with “110” on fol. 131r. This foliation does therefore not appear in fols. 81–101, which, as we shall see, are blank.  

The manuscript exhibits a peculiar structure. It is made up of seven quires. Each of the first four quires (fols. 1–80) consists of 10 bifolia, or 20 leaves (in the table on p. 172 symbolized by X). The remaining three quires (fols. 81–143) have 21 leaves each, probably 10 bifolia and an additional single leaf per quire. In its present form the codex is composed of three codicological units (A, B, and C). Unit A includes the first and the last folios of the manuscript, and is thus divided into two blocks (A1 = fols. 1–60 = first three gatherings, and A2 = fols. 123–143 = seventh/last gathering). Before this unit was separated into two blocks, a scribe—let us call him copyist A (see color plate 6)—copied onto these folios Books 1–5 and roughly two thirds of Book 6 of Ptolemy’s Geography. He interrupted his work for unknown reasons in the middle of a sentence (Geogr. 6,14,9, des. οἱ κοινῶς καλούμενοι Ἀλανοὶ Σκύθαι “the commonly called Alani Scythians”) when he reached the end of a verso (fol. 10). For other foliations or fragmentary foliations, which do not, however, show irregularities worthy of mention, see Burri, Die ‘Geographie,’ 156–57. 

11. The precise structure of these quires is not recognizable, but the center fold of the first quire (fols. 81–101) is located between fols. 90 and 91; of the second quire (fols. 102–122) between fols. 111 and 112; and of the third quire (fols. 123–143) between fols. 132 and 133. 

12. The text of Unit A is presented in two columns and covers ca. 295 × 200 mm. The first gathering of A (fols. 1–20) has 44-line columns, while the other gatherings of A have 45 lines.
136v), which does not coincide with the end of the quire.\textsuperscript{13} The remaining folios of this unit are blank (fols. 137r–143v) but are ruled and were obviously meant to receive the continuation of the text.

Unit B consists of the actual fols. 61–80 (= fourth gathering of the codex) and fols. 102–122 (sixth/penultimate gathering) and thus is also split into two blocks (B1 and B2). It is intercalated into Unit A, between the second-to-last and the last gathering of Unit A. Unit B is written by a different hand than Unit A—let us call him copyist B (see fig. 1 and color plate 7)—and contains the second half of Book 5 and the remaining Books 6–8 of Ptolemy’s Geography.\textsuperscript{14}

Unit C consists of only one gathering (fols. 81–101). It is intercalated into Unit B, more precisely into the two blocks of Unit B (which match the two gatherings of Unit B). Unit C hence forms the center piece of the codex. All the leaves of Unit C are blank. The sequence of the codicological units and blocks thus is A1-B1-C-B2-A2. Unit C coincides with the folios that do not exhibit the foliation on the lower outer corner of every tenth recto, as noted above (p. 168). It is difficult to determine whether this feature indicates that Unit C was not a part of the manuscript when the foliation was added or whether the person adding this foliation simply skipped Unit C, maybe because it does not provide text. However, the modern appearance of the numerals in this foliation seems to point to the latter explanation.

It is remarkable that one longer portion of the text occurs twice in this manuscript. That portion (Geogr. 5,9,14, inc. Ἰβηρίας ἀνιόντα ὄρη, καλούμενα δὲ Καυκάσια “mountains running [through] Iberia, called Caucasian” through 6,14,9, des. οἱ κοινῶς καλούμενοι Ἀλανοὶ Σκύθαι “the commonly

\textsuperscript{13} For the structure of the quires, see above note 11.

\textsuperscript{14} The text of Unit B is also presented in two columns, each of 45 lines. The dimensions of the text block are comparable to those of Unit A (see above note 12).
Figure 1.

Chicago, Newberry Library, Ayer MS 743, fol. 74r (Unit B1): Copyist B
Damaged text area added by third hand (see p. 180).

(Photo Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago, Call No. Ayer MS 743)
called Alani Scythians”) appears in A2 (starting at the top of the first leaf of the block, fol. 123r, and ending at the bottom of fol. 136v, the last leaf of the block with text), and a second time in B1 (starting at the top of the first leaf of the block, fol. 61r, and ending on fol. 74r). The scribe of Unit B started to copy the text of the Geography exactly from where it ended abruptly in A1. Obviously he wanted to complete the text begun in A1, providing the remaining part of the work, and was unaware that scribe A had (or would later) take up the same task in A2.

As Diller brilliantly demonstrated, Unit B of our codex must have been directly copied from the famous Vatican manuscript Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Urb. gr. 82 (written around 1300), one of the oldest extant manuscripts containing Ptolemy’s Geography. The same is true of Unit A, as I was able to prove with a passage on fol. 15v in Urb. gr. 82, as well as in its sister manuscripts, Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı, MS (Seragliensis) G. İ. 57, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B. 46 some fifteen words are lacking in Geogr. 1,24,17 that must have been omitted from the antigraph of these three manuscripts. A fourteenth-century hand added the missing passage to Urb. gr. 82 (fol. 10v, above line 35), but the addition starts with the words καὶ τὸ κ δι’ οὗ γραφήσεται ὁ ἀφορίζων τὸ βόρειον πέρας (“and point K through which [the parallel] marking off the northern limit will be drawn”). Instead, the original text is τὸ δὲ

15. See also the table on p. 172. This duplicated section was for the first time briefly pointed out in Burri, Die ‘Geographie,’ Z 154 and 172.
16. See fig. 1 and color plate 7, column 2, sixth line from the bottom.
17. Diller, “Incipient Errors,” 238–39. Diller did not distinguish the codicological units of the Newberry manuscript, but his observation refers to block 1 of Unit B.
18. See also Burri, Die ‘Geographie,’ 123 and 171.
Renate Burri

κ δὲ οὖ γραφήσεται ὁ ἀφορίζων τὸ βόρειον πέρας (“on the other hand point K through which [the parallel] marking off the northern limit will be drawn”). In Ayer MS 743 the text of Geogr. 1.24.17 is complete and exhibits exactly the same variation καὶ τὸ κ etc. (“and point K …”), which only occurs here and in the additional note in the Urbinas manuscript. Hence, for both Units A and B, written by different hands, the Urbinas manuscript served as the direct model.

**STRUCTURE OF AYER MS 743**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit or Block</th>
<th>Folios</th>
<th>Structure of Unit or Block</th>
<th>Copyist</th>
<th>Contents (Geogr.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>1–60</td>
<td>3 × X</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1–5,9,14 des. (fol. 60v) εἰς ὃ περαιοῦνται τὰ διὰ Κολχίδος και τῆς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>61–80</td>
<td>1 × X</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5,9,14–7,2,12 inc. (fol. 61r) Ἰβηρίας ἀνιόντα ὄρη, καλούμενα δὲ Καυκάσια des. (fol. 80v) συμβάλλοντες πρότερον ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπερκειμένων τῆς Χερσονήσου</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>81–101</td>
<td>X + 1 (?)*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>102–122</td>
<td>X + 1 (?)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>7,2,12–8 inc. (fol. 102r) ράχεων ἀνωνυμῶν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>123–143</td>
<td>X + 1 (?)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>5,9,14–6,14,9 inc. (fol. 123r) Ἰβηρίας ἀνιόντα ὄρη, καλούμενα δὲ Καυκάσια des. (fol. 136v) οἱ κοινῶς καλούμενοι Ἀλανοὶ Σκύθαι fols. 137–143 blank</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See above note 11.
Analysis of the watermarks of Ayer MS 743 shows that Units A and B were produced around the same time, and very probably in the same milieu, as they are made of the same type of paper exhibiting the same watermark Tête de licorne, similar to Briquet 15822 (Brussels, 1420–22)\(^{20}\) and to the first sample of Harlfinger Licorne 5b (no place indicated, September 1422).\(^{21}\) We can therefore conclude that Units A and B were copied roughly within the first third of the fifteenth century.\(^{22}\)

Recent investigations on the two different handwritings in A and B now enable me not only to confirm the dating deduced from the watermarks as well as the Italian origin of this Greek manuscript, already suggested by earlier scholars,\(^{23}\) but also to shed new light on the history of its production.\(^{24}\) My paleographical analysis has proven that


\(^{22}\) See Patrick Andrist, “Règles de catalogage,” version 3.0, on accompanying CD-ROM of *Les manuscrits grecs conservés à la Bibliothèque de la Bourgeoisie de Berne—Burgerbibliothek Bern: Catalogue et histoire de la collection* (Dietikon-Zurich, 2007), 26, who recommends adding/subtracting approximately ten years to/from the date of a given sample for the dating of a similar watermark; for an online version of the “Règles” see http://www.codices.ch/catalogi/t_Bern_gr.html.

\(^{23}\) An Italian origin of the Ayer MS has already been suggested by de Ricci/Wilson, *Census*, 1:548 (“Written in Italy”), and Mioni, “I manoscritti greci,” 330 (“La scrittura rivela che il codice fu copiato in Italia”). Nevertheless, at least Mioni’s statement insinuates that he thought the handwritings to be those of humanist Italian scribes learning Greek rather than of well-trained Greek copyists. Such an interpretation is erroneous, see below p. 176.

\(^{24}\) I wish to express my gratitude and warmest thanks to Antonio Rollo and Fabio Vendruscolo who drew my attention to the codices listed in
the hand of scribe B is the same hand that appears in six other Greek manuscripts identified by the Italian scholars Antonio Rollo and Fabio Vendruscolo, namely, in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MSS Vat. gr. 1619 (fols. 56r–182r, with Xenophon’s *Opera minora*) and Reg. gr. 96 (wholly in B’s hand, containing Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* and *Anabasis*); in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 2012 (fols. 1r–41v, with Plato’s *Epistles*); in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Holkham gr. 95 (Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*); in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Suppl. gr. 51 (fols. 105r–107v, with Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*); and in Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Cod. B.P.G. 48 (fols. 64r–65v, also with Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*). Moreover, all six of these manuscripts exhibit marginal notes by the famous Venetian humanist, politi-

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25. Fol. 42r/v is blank; fols. 43r–52v containing Manuel Chrysoloras’s *Synkrisis* were copied by Ambrogio Traversari, see Antonio Rollo, “Dalla biblioteca di Guarino a quella di Francesco Barbaro,” *Studi medievali e umanistici* 3 (2005): 9–28 at 25 n. 2 (cf. *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800–1600*, ed. Ernst Gamillscheg, Dieter Harlfinger, and Herbert Hunger, 3 vols. [Vienna, 1981–97], 2A:no. 454 where the leaves in question are attributed to Palla Strozzi’s hand). The manuscript is fully digitized and can be viewed and downloaded at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85143886.r=Grec%202012.


27. For the first five manuscripts listed see Rollo, “Dalla biblioteca di Guarino,” 25–26 (where he writes by mistake Vind. Phil. gr. 51 instead of Vind. Suppl. gr. 51) with plates VI–XI, for the last manuscript see Fabio Vendruscolo, “L’Alcibiade di Francesco Barbaro,” in *Filologia, papirolo-
cian, and diplomat Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454).28 Leiden B.P.G. 48 additionally was annotated by Francesco’s grandson Ermolao Barbaro (1453/54–93),29 whose marginal notes can also be found in the Newberry manuscript, as I will discuss below (see p. 182). Furthermore, I can identify scribe A of Ayer MS 743 as the copyist who wrote, according to Vendruscolo’s investigations, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Vind. Suppl. gr. 55 (containing the First and the Second Alcibiades), a codex that also features annotations by Francesco Barbaro, as well as the bulk of the previously mentioned Cyropaedia codices Vienna Suppl. gr. 51 and Leiden B.P.G. 48, for both of which scribe A wrote all but the few folios copied by the scribe B indicated above.30 In both Cyropaedia manuscripts, copyist B obviously sup-


30. See Vendruscolo, “L’Alcibiade,” 120–21 with plates I–III for Vind. Suppl. gr. 55 and ibid. 121 with plate IV for the Leidensis, as well as Rollo, “Dalla biblioteca di Guarino,” 25–26 with plate XII for Vind. Suppl. gr. 51. Typical for A’s regular, delicate handwriting are a strong accentuation of the head line, occasional use of the genuine form of minuscule beta, minuscule nu (often) and mu (sometimes) showing a little curlicue at the bottom of their descenders (nearly in “minuscule bouletée” manner), and an expanded ligature of epsilon-upsilon (see color plate 6).
Renate Burri

implemented a longer (but not the same) passage of the text that had been omitted by copyist A.\textsuperscript{31}

The role of copyist B in Ayer MS 743 thus seems to be comparable to his interventions in the *Cyropaedia* manuscripts: he completed an incomplete text copied by scribe A. I can therefore, together with Rollo and Vendruscolo on the basis of their investigations of the seven manuscripts cited above, confidently deduce that the Newberry manuscript as well, like these seven other manuscripts either copied by scribe A or B or by both, was very likely commissioned by Francesco Barbaro and produced for his library by two Greek copyists who repeatedly worked for him and whose main activities can be located in the second decade of the fifteenth century, most probably in Venice.\textsuperscript{32} At this time, we do not know their names.\textsuperscript{33}

These conclusions agree with what we know of the history of Urb. gr. 82, of which, as we have seen, both Units


\textsuperscript{33} None of the three copyists that we know worked for Francesco Barbaro—George of Trebizond, John Symeonakes, and Girard of Old Patras—seems to me to be identifiable with our scribes A and B; see Marino Zorzi, “I Barbaro e i libri,” in *Una famiglia veneziana nella storia: I Barbaro*, ed. Michela Marangoni and Manlio P. Stocchi (Venice, 1996), 363–96 at 372. For the handwritings of the copyists mentioned, see *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten*, 3:no. 122 and Paolo Eleuteri and Paul Canart, *Scrittura greca nell’umanesimo italiano* (Milan, 1991), 136–38 (George of Trebizond); *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten*, 1:no. 184 (John Symeonakes); ibid., no. 80 (Girard of Old Patras).
A and B of Ayer MS 743 are direct copies: Urb. gr. 82 was brought from Constantinople to Florence by the Byzantine diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras in 1397 and was then (we do not know exactly when) acquired by the Florentine humanist Palla Strozzi.\(^{34}\) When Strozzi was forced to leave Florence for political reasons in 1434, he took his library with him into exile to Padua, where he spent the rest of his life.

But when and where did copyists A and B have access to Urb. gr. 82? Based on the watermarks of Units A and B, it is difficult to judge whether Ayer MS 743 was copied before Strozzi left for Padua or afterwards, that is, while Urb. gr. 82 was still in Florence or when it was already in Padua. Additionally, we do not know when exactly Chrysoloras left the Urbinas manuscript to Strozzi,\(^{35}\) that is, whether the Ayer manuscript was produced when it was in the possession of Chrysoloras or of Strozzi. Considering that scribes A and B were mainly active in the 1410s, it is very tempting to conclude that Ayer MS 743 was also copied in this period. At that time its exemplar was most likely in Florence and in Strozzi’s custody. Nevertheless, we must not exclude the possibility that Strozzi loaned Urb. gr. 82 to Venice for the process of copying, or that our two copyists were sent on copying missions to the place where the manuscript was stored. At any rate, Francesco Barbaro, who most probably commissioned the copy of Ayer MS 743, was in touch both


\(^{35}\) On Chrysoloras’s handover of his books to Strozzi, see Lydia Thorn-Wickert, *Manuel Chrysoloras (ca. 1350–1415)* (Frankfurt, 2006), 164.
with Manuel Chrysoloras and Palla Strozzi, and loaning and borrowing codices was very common among the humanists. Perhaps the copying of Ayer MS 743 can be linked with Barbaro’s journey to Florence in summer 1415 (thus within the main time of activity of copyists A and B), although there is no explicit evidence that would support this assumption.

Still, it is not easy to explain the coexistence of Units A and B and the double occurrence of Geogr. 5,9,14–6,14,9 within Ayer MS 743. We may conjecture a scenario as follows: on Barbaro’s behalf, copyist A started copying the Geography in the venue where Urb. gr. 82 was accessible, thus producing Unit A. He stopped working for Barbaro either for a certain period or even for good before he had finished the copy of the Geography, so he left behind only the three

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36. See Percy Gothein, Francesco Barbaro: Früh-Humanismus und Staatskunst in Venedig (Berlin, 1932), 36–37 (cf. 352–53 n. 22), 288 and 317–18. Barbaro was personally acquainted with Strozzi, but probably never met Chrysoloras in person. However, several friends of Barbaro were associated with Chrysoloras, for instance Guarino Veronese.


38. It cannot be ruled out that the Newberry manuscript was produced around the same time when the Venetian cartographer Andrea Bianco drew his nautical atlas (dated 1436), which contains a Ptolemaic plenisphere directly or indirectly deriving from Urb. gr. 82 (on this plenisphere, see Sebastiano Gentile, “Umanesimo e cartografia: Tolomeo nel secolo XV,” in La cartografia europea tra primo rinascimento e fine dell’illuminismo, ed. Diogo R. Curto, Angelo Cattaneo, and André F. Almeida [Florence, 2003], 3–18 at 8–10; Angelo Cattaneo, Fra Mauro’s Mappa Mundi and Fifteenth-Century Venice [Turnhout, 2011], 162–63). Gentile, “Umanesimo e cartografia,” hypothesized that Bianco heard of the arrival of Urb. gr. 82 in Padua after Palla Strozzi’s banishment from Florence (see above p. 177) and started studying and reproducing it, in view of being so close to its new whereabouts. It is also imaginable that Francesco Barbaro heard of the Geography manuscript’s arrival in Padua and that he took this chance to charge his scribes A and B with making a copy.
completed quires (fols. 1–60 = A1), but put aside the gathering with the continued text he was working on (today’s fols. 123–143 = A2), precisely because it was still a work in progress (the gathering is blank beginning with fol. 137r). Now copyist B was commissioned by Barbaro to complete the Geography text.\(^{39}\) In the venue where Urb. gr. 82 was kept, copyist B came across Unit A1 but did not notice Unit A2, or Unit A2 was not there. Therefore, he started copying the text in mid-sentence exactly from where it ends in Unit A1, thus producing Unit B. He used paper of the same stock, at hand in the venue, which probably had already been prepared for writing: the ruling pattern on Units A and B is essentially identical. The units were then assembled into a book. Since Unit B contained the complete remaining text of the Geography it had to follow immediately after Unit A1. Most likely the book at that time merely consisted of Units A1 and B and therefore differed notably from the present look of Ayer MS 743. When, sometime later, Unit A2 was found in the venue or afterwards provided by copyist A, it was decided to attach it to the end of the manuscript, perhaps because of the damage sustained to Unit B1. For at some point before being bound up with the other units, B1 was subjected to considerable damage: beginning at fol. 63 there is a triangular loss in the middle of the bottom of the leaf measuring about 65 × 30 mm. This damaged area continues to enlarge reaching a height of 170 mm. up the page by fol. 76 (see fig. 1 and color plate 7). The last four leaves of Unit B1 were even more seriously damaged, and on the final leaf of the unit (fol. 80) the entire outer column was lost. The cause for this damage to the middle of the leaves between the columns remains obscure. The lacunae caused by the damage were repaired with paper exhibiting indeterminable watermark

39. Maybe the completion by scribe B of the Cyropaedia manuscripts Vienna Suppl. gr. 51 and Leiden B.P.G. 48 copied by scribe A (see above p. 174) was made on the same occasion.
fragments, and the missing text was added in a third, rather clumsy hand (see fig. 1 and color plate 7), which has been attributed to the end of the fifteenth century. Curiously, on fol. 80, no attempt was made to preserve the text on the verso. Instead, a new sheet was glued over what remained of fol. 80v, thus covering column 2 of fol. 80v, so that column 2 on fol. 80r and both columns on fol. 80v are by this third hand. This same hand also added the commentary of Nikephoros Gregoras on Ptolemy’s Geography in marginal and interlinear notes throughout Book 1 and the beginning of Book 2 (see color plate 6). A recent study has clarified that neither of the two other extant manuscripts exhibiting Gregoras’s commentary as a whole served as the exemplar for this process; the manuscript from which the additions were inserted into the Newberry manuscript seems to be lost. I have suggested that this third hand intervened only after the manuscript was annotated by Ermolao Barbaro, but this suggestion, as well as the identity of the third hand

40. See Diller, “Incipient Errors,” 239 (who also dates the restoration paper—without mentioning its watermark fragments—to the same time); see also Tsiotras, Ἡ Ἐξηγητικὴ Παράδοση, 205 and 206. On the damage, see also Burri, Die ‘Geographie,’ 168–70.

41. On this commentary, see Tsiotras, Ἡ Ἐξηγητικὴ Παράδοση, 73–126 and 383–426 (editio critica). Before Diller’s study of 1936 the commentary was commonly regarded as an autograph (this possibility, however, must be excluded on palaeographical grounds), which suggested a date far too early for the manuscript: see, e.g., Giovanni B. Mittarelli, Bibliotheca codicum manuscriptorum Monasterii Michaelis Venetiarum prope Muria-num una cum appendice librorum impressorum seculi XV (Venice, 1779), 805 and 974; Catalogue of Manuscripts, Illuminated and Historical: With a Collection of Rare Bibles and Liturgies, January 1898, Bernard Quaritch (London, 1898), 13–14, no. 40 at 14; Tudeer, “Studies,” 10.

42. See Tsiotras, Ἡ Ἐξηγητικὴ Παράδοση, 207–8. The two other manuscripts are Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Coislin 173, containing the autograph of this commentary, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud. gr. 52.

43. See Burri, Die ‘Geographie,’ 173 with note 51. On Ermolao Barbaro’s annotations, see below.
and the circumstances in which Gregoras’s commentary was added, still need to be studied in more detail.

Unit C (entirely blank) exhibits a watermark *Tour* for which no equivalent could be found in the standard works on watermarks, though it has similarities with Briquet 15898 (Cologne 1452, with similar varieties recurring up to 1480) and 15899 (Nuremberg 1485, identical watermarks occurring from 1470 to 1493) as well as with Piccard *Turm* II 676–78 (Strasbourg 1472–78). We cannot say more about the paper forming Unit C than that it was probably produced in the second half of the fifteenth century, and therefore seems to be posterior to the paper of Units A and B. It is difficult to understand the reasons for this insertion of the blank folios of Unit C in the middle of the manuscript. Perhaps it can be linked with Ermolao Barbaro’s activity (see just below). It is possible that the additional leaves were meant to contain the maps that accompany the text of the Geography in some manuscripts, but there is no evidence to support such a conclusion. Thus, unfortunately, the information currently available does not allow us to reach a firm explanation about why these blank folios were inserted in the manuscript.

44. Briquet, *Les filigranes*, 800–1 (nos. 15898 and 15899). The watermark in our manuscript measures ca. 68 mm. in height and ca. 25 mm. in width; the distance between the chain-lines is ca. 44 mm. (see also Burri, *Die ‘Geographie,’* 158). See also the similar tower watermarks (Nuremberg, July, 12, 1493) at https://digitum.um.es/xmlui/bitstream/10201/3413/28/Torre.pdf.


The first firmly known possessor of Ayer MS 743 was Francesco Barbaro’s grandchild Ermolao Barbaro, who annotated our manuscript in the margins (see color plate 6). As demonstrated above, the codex must have been part of Francesco’s library, which he handed down via his son Zaccaria, Ermolao’s father, to his grandson. Ermolao was working on commentaries on Pliny’s *Natural History* and on Pomponius Mela’s *Chorography*, resulting in his last work, the *Castigationes plinianae et in Pomponium Melam*. He may have studied Ptolemy’s *Geography* in this context, but was obviously generally interested in works of a geographical nature. Ermolao’s notes, which are partly in Greek and partly in Latin, begin in Unit A1 and address the toponyms and coordinates starting in Book 2 of the *Geography*—he does not seem to have been particularly interested in map projections treated in Book 1 of the work. The notes are mostly short and either correct, add, comment, or discuss toponyms, a few of them making reference to Pliny or Pomponius Mela, as a cursory look at them has revealed. Two brief Latin notes on fol. 60v and fol. 123r referring to the arrangement of the text in the manuscript and a note on fol. 122v marking the end of the *Geography*, which all seem to be in Ermolao’s hand, imply that Units A and B at that time must have been assembled and arranged in the same sequence as they are now.

49. I plan to make a closer examination of these notes, together with an edition of them.
Ayer MS 743: New Light on a Greek Manuscript

For the following roughly 300 years Ayer MS 743 most probably stayed in Venice.\textsuperscript{50} It is also possible that this manuscript was the one Bernard de Montfaucon saw on August 6, 1698, in the library of Giovanni Carlos Grimani in Venice, as Mioni suggested.\textsuperscript{51} Montfaucon’s description (“In codice recenti, Ptolemaei Cosmographia mutila”) would seem to refer to a manuscript containing a Latin translation of the *Geography*, as his use of the term “Cosmographia” implies, but the reference to mutilations reminds us of the damage to B1.\textsuperscript{52} On the other hand, Montfaucon saw in Grimani’s Library another codex (Manuel Moschopoulos, *Erotemata grammatica*), which once belonged to Francesco Barbaro and later on belonged to the Library of San Michele Monastery, and which could have passed into Grimani’s ownership from the stock of books that Ermolao Barbaro took.

\textsuperscript{50} On the fate of Ermolao’s library, see Zorzi, “I Barbaro,” 381–87. It is definitely more likely that Ayer MS 743 remained in Venice with the main body of Ermolao’s library than being among the codices that Ermolao took with him to Rome where he lived from 1490 until his death. Nevertheless, we should not be surprised by the fact that no manuscript with Ptolemy’s *Geography* figures in the list of Greek works written by the Byzantine humanist Janus Lascaris (contained in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. gr. 1412, fols. 53r–54r, printed in Karl K. Müller, “Neue Mittheilungen über Janos Laskaris und die Mediceische Bibliothek,” *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 1 [1884]: 333–412 at 386–88) on the occasion of his visit to Ermolao’s library in Venice 1491: Lascaris obviously limited himself to titles of interest to himself; see Diller, “The Library,” 254.


with him to Rome and was dispersed after his death.\footnote{For this suggestion, see Zorzi, “I Barbaro,” 389.} We may hypothesize a similar detour for Ayer MS 743: Ptolemy’s \textit{Geography} might have been of use to Ermolao exactly during his last years of life in Rome when he completed his final work, the \textit{Castigationes}.

In any event, the manuscript was among Ermolao’s codices, which at an unknown date were acquired by the bibliophile Giovanni Benedetto Mittarelli (1708–77),\footnote{Mittarelli, \textit{Bibliotheca}, xviii.} monk, librarian, and abbot of the Camaldolese monastery of San Michele di Murano in 1760 and 1770,\footnote{Lucia Merolla, “La dispersione dei codici di San Michele di Murano,” in \textit{Il monachesimo italiano dalle riforme illuministiche all’unità nazionale (1768–1870)}, ed. Francesco G. B. Trolese (Cesena, 1992), 685–99 at 687.} who systematically bought books in order to enrich the library of his monastery. In his study of the Barbaro library, Marino Zorzi suggests that the Barbaro codices bought by Mittarelli belonged at that time to the Venetian family Nani, who came into possession of the Barbaro library through marriage.\footnote{Zorzi, “I Barbaro,” 385–86 and 388.} We may assume that Ayer MS 743 received its current binding with the wooden boards and a leather back in San Michele, as other manuscripts originating from the library of this monastery seem to have identical bindings.\footnote{Mioni, “I manoscritti greci,” 330. The binding should thus be dated to the eighteenth century. Cf. de Ricci/Wilson, \textit{Census}, 1:548 and, undoubtedly depending on them, Lucia Merolla, \textit{La Biblioteca di San Michele di Murano all’epoca dell’abate Giovanni Benedetto Mittarelli: I codici ritrovati}, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Rome, 2012), 1:58 (ca. 1700); Quaritch, \textit{Catalogue of Geography}, 139 (fifteenth century) (see also Burri, \textit{Die ’Geographie’}, 167 with note 39).}

The fate of the library of San Michele has been traced by Mioni and more recently by Lucia Merolla\footnote{Mioni, “I manoscritti greci,” 321–27; Merolla, “La dispersione,” (especially 690–94) and \textit{La Biblioteca}, 32–40; see also Tudeer, “Studies,” 10–11.}: when Napoleon in 1810 suppressed all religious orders and confiscated...
their property, the monks of San Michele started to hide or sell the most precious items in their library in an attempt to prevent them from falling into the hands of the French authorities. Moreover, a considerable number of the books, among them Ayer MS 743 containing Ptolemy’s *Geography*, were sent to the monastery San Gregorio al Celio in Rome run by the same monastic order. By 1821 at the latest, the *Geography* codex from San Michele must have arrived in San Gregorio.59 Evidently the last person who testified to its presence in the Roman monastery was Charles Müller, who was preparing a Greek edition of Ptolemy’s *Geography* and therefore consulted the manuscript in 1866.60 In 1873, when even Rome, the home of the Papacy, could no longer escape the suppression of religious orders as a consequence of Italian unification, the whole library of San Gregorio was supposed to enter the newly founded Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele. In connection with this transfer, which took place in 1875,61 some manuscripts of San Gregorio were malversated or stolen. Ayer MS 743 seems to have suffered exactly this fate.62 Some years later, as my investigations have shown, the codex reappeared “incognito” in two catalogues of the antiquarian bookseller Quaritch in London at the very end of the nineteenth century.63 So far it has not been possible to determine who sold the manuscript to

62. The exact moment of its disappearance is not retraceable, see Meneghin, *S. Michele*, 292 n. 77; Merolla, *La Biblioteca*, 39 with note 162.
63. Quaritch, *Catalogue of Manuscripts* and *Catalogue of Geography*.  

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Quaritch: an examination of the company’s records, which are incomplete due to damage caused by war, could not shed light on this question.\textsuperscript{64} But we can assume that Quaritch sold the manuscript shortly after the date of the second catalogue entry (May 1899, see above note 46), since otherwise he would have offered it in later catalogues. It was very likely Edward Everett Ayer (1841–1927) who bought the manuscript from Quaritch: he had purchased the Henry Stevens Ptolemy Collection in 1898 and he continued to enlarge it by new acquisitions.\textsuperscript{65}

Surprisingly, there is no evidence for when exactly the Ptolemy manuscript entered the Newberry Library. As the chronology of the manuscript’s odyssey precludes its arrival there before 1899, it cannot have come in 1895—as stated by Mioni—when Ayer gave a first portion of his collections to the Newberry Library.\textsuperscript{66} The year 1911, when a second portion of Ayer’s collection came to the Newberry, among them the above-mentioned Stevens Ptolemy Collection,\textsuperscript{67} is the most likely date of its accession.

\textsuperscript{64} I am very grateful to Bernard Quaritch Ltd, London, especially to Nicholas Poole-Wilson and to Katherine Spears, for their extraordinary cooperativeness and confidence in providing information to me and giving me access to Quaritch’s records in April 2011.


\textsuperscript{66} See Mioni, “I manoscritti greci,” 327 and 330, and Merolla, \textit{La Biblioteca}, 58, both referring to Clara A. Smith, \textit{List of Manuscript Maps in the Edward E. Ayer Collection} (Chicago, 1927), 101. I was not able to find any note of this event on the page indicated, nor could I find any mention of our manuscript in Smith, \textit{List of Manuscript Maps}. On Ayer’s donation to the Newberry Library see de Ricci/Wilson, \textit{Census}, 1:522.

\textsuperscript{67} See de Ricci/Wilson, \textit{Census}, 1:522; see also Gottlieb, “Early Editions,” 49. It is also possible that the manuscript entered the Newberry Library in 1920, when “several additional manuscripts, not of American interest, were obtained […] from Mr. Ayer” (de Ricci/Wilson, \textit{Census}, 1:522), but
Ayer MS 743: New Light on a Greek Manuscript

As a direct apograph of Urb. gr. 82, with Gregoras’s commentary added by a later hand from another manuscript, Ayer MS 743 “loses its chief interest” as a textual witness of Ptolemy’s Geography, as Diller concluded. But the manuscript is a perfect example of what one of the greatest specialists on Ptolemy’s Geography, Patrick Gautier Dalché, called “the essential,” by which he means “all those manuscripts that reveal traces of a real working study of the Geography.” That is, Ayer MS 743 offers important evidence about the interest in and the use and reception of the Geography in fifteenth-century humanist centers in Italy. Recently, Andrea Bianco’s Ptolemaic planisphere, completed in 1436, was claimed to be “the first documentary evidence of the presence of manuscripts of Ptolemy’s Geography and of the Ptolemaic maps in Venice.” But if Ayer MS 743 was produced in the second decade of the fifteenth century, like the other manuscripts copied by scribes A and B, as concluded above (see p. 176), the Newberry manuscript is even earlier and is thus the oldest surviving document testifying to the circulation of Greek manuscripts containing Ptolemy’s Geography in early humanist Venice.

University of Berne (Switzerland)

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the Henry Stevens Ptolemy Collection to which our manuscript clearly belongs seems to have entered the Newberry Library in 1911.

68. Diller, “Incipient Errors,” 239.
70. Cattaneo, Fra Mauro’s Mappa Mundi, 163.
Color plate 6.

Chicago, Newberry Library, Ayer MS 743, fol. 17r (Unit A1): Copyist A Decorated initial Alpha and interlinear and marginal notes with Nikephoros Gregoras’s commentary by third hand (see p. 180). Notes in smaller, more delicate handwriting in the outer margin by Ermolao Barbaro (see p. 182).

(Photo Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago, Call No. Ayer MS 743)
Color plate 7.

Chicago, Newberry Library, Ayer MS 743, fol. 74r (Unit B1): Copyist B
Damaged text area added by third hand (see p. 180).

(Photo Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago, Call No. Ayer MS 743)