

Geography in Early Judaism and Christianity

The Book of Jubilees

JAMES M. SCOTT



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1

THE *MAPPAMUNDI* OF QUEEN KYPROS

Introduction

A most interesting and enigmatic cartographic text has apparently escaped the notice of historians of cartography – an epigram of Philip of Thessalonica, who wrote in Rome during the reigns of Tiberius (14–37 CE) and Gaius (37–41 CE).¹ This epideictic epigram (*Anth. Pal.* 9.778) praises an artistically woven tapestry that was sent as a gift from a queen to an unnamed, reigning Caesar, presumably one of the aforementioned Roman emperors. The tapestry itself is said to display the inhabited world and the surrounding Ocean. We are evidently dealing here with a world “map” done in either wool or linen,² making it perhaps one of the earliest recorded *mappaemundi* in the literal sense of the term (i.e., “cloth of the world”).³ It should be noted here that the image of weaving is used extensively in connection with weaving narratives, so literary and visual productions, in which the world may be described, are neatly linked.⁴

Philip’s tantalizingly brief poem prompts several questions. Who was the queen who made the tapestry and sent it as a gift? What picture of the world are we to imagine on the tapestry? What is the cartographic source(s) for the “map”?⁵ In seeking to answer these questions, however provisionally, the present chapter opens our discussion of Jewish geographical conceptions with a cameo of the subject at hand. This will provide us not only with a fitting example of the kind of evidence that is available for our work, but also with a salient reminder of the difficulties inherent in the task.

Philip’s Epigram (*Anth. Pal.* 9.778)

We begin our investigation with the text of Philip’s epigram:⁶

Γαῖαν τὴν φερέκαρπον ὄσῃν ἔζωκε περίχθων
ὠκεανὸς μεγάλῳ Καίσαρι πειθομένην
καὶ γλαυκὴν με θάλασσαν ἀπηκριβώσατο [Κύπρος]

κερκίσιν ἰστοπόνοις πάντ' ἀπομαξαμένη
 Καίσαρι δ' εὐξείνῳ χάρις ἦλθομεν, ἦν γὰρ ἀνάσσης
 δῶρα φέρειν τὰ θεοῖς καὶ πρὶν ὀφειλόμενα.

Modelling all with shuttle labouring on the loom, [Kypros] made me, a perfect copy of the harvest-bearing earth, all that the land-encircling ocean girdles, obedient to great Caesar, and the gray sea too. We have come as a grateful return for Caesar's hospitality; it was a queen's duty, to bring gifts so long due to the gods.

Here, we read of a woman's skillful handiwork at the loom. Philip's description suggests that the resulting tapestry was a genuine work of art, for the participle ἀπομαξαμένη comes from a verb (ἀπομάσσω) which in the middle voice is used in the sense of "model" as a sculptor (cf. LSJ, s.v., 209). Moreover, the participle is construed with a main verb (ἀπακριβόομαι) which is likewise used of sculpturing, this time in the sense of "make exact."⁷ Hence, the tapestry is described not only as a work of art but also as an exact replica of the world that it sought to portray.⁸ Allowing for some exaggeration and poetic license, we may nevertheless conclude that the tapestry must have been quite impressive to behold.⁹ We will return to Philip's description of the tapestry after attempting to identify the "queen" who made it and the "Caesar" for whom she made it.

The identification of the queen and the reigning Caesar

It is difficult to ascertain who the maker and giver of this artistic tapestry may have been. We know that the artist must have been a woman, for in line 5 she is called an ἄνασσα ("queen, lady"). Furthermore, the name of the queen is undoubtedly to be found in Κάρπος, which is the reading preserved in line 3 of the manuscript. While the masculine Κάρπος is not usually a name for a woman, the text clearly presupposes that the name belongs to a woman, as seen by the feminine participle ἀπομαξαμένη, which takes its gender from the assumed subject of the main clause. Very likely, therefore, Κάρπος is a corruption for another name. The identification of this person is indeed the linchpin for the interpretation of the entire epigram.

As a solution to this problem, Conrad Cichorius made the ingenious suggestion that Κάρπος should be emended to the orthographically similar name Κύπρος, and that this Kypros should be identified as the granddaughter of Herod the Great and the wife of Agrippa I, another grandchild of Herod.¹⁰ Kypros, too, seems to be a relatively uncommon name for a

woman, which may perhaps explain why the textual corruption happened in the first place.¹¹ Indeed, we may note that apparently the only women of royal lineage who are known to have had this name belonged to the Herodian dynasty.¹²

Interpreting the emended name as a reference to Kypros, the wife of Agrippa I, is consistent with the description of the woman in Philip's epigram. First, the term *ἄνασσα* applies to a "queen" or a "lady" of a royal household.¹³ Used mostly in poetry rather than in prose (cf. LSJ, s.v., 121), *ἄνασσα* is not one of the most common terms for the queen of a Roman client kingdom.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is used apparently of Cleopatra Selene (*Anth. Pal.* 9.752.3), the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra VII whom Augustus married to King Juba II of Mauretania (ca. 20 BCE).¹⁵ Hence, the reference to Kypros as an *ἄνασσα* may signal that she belongs to one of the client kingdoms that stand in a vassal relationship with Rome.¹⁶ Upon his accession to the throne in 37 CE, Emperor Gaius declared Agrippa "king" (*βασιλεύς*) of the former tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias (*JW* 2.181; *Ant.* 18.237),¹⁷ thus making Kypros a "queen" of a Roman client kingdom.¹⁸

Second, the poem seems to suggest that the queen in question has some kind of rapport with the reigning "Caesar."¹⁹ Again, this fits Kypros, whose husband enjoyed a close, personal relationship with Emperor Gaius.²⁰ Like other sons of client kings, Agrippa had lived in Rome from childhood under patronage of the imperial family (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.143). He had, in fact, been brought up with Gaius (§191). When Emperor Tiberius later accepted Agrippa into his own inner circle, Agrippa deepened his relationship with Gaius and tried to impress him with extravagant spending (Josephus, *JW* 2.178; *Ant.* 18.166–7). Agrippa went so far in currying favor with Gaius that he expressed the hope that Gaius would soon replace Tiberius as emperor, a remark which provoked Tiberius and landed Agrippa in prison (*JW* 2.179–80; *Ant.* 18.168–9, 186–92). After Tiberius' death, Gaius released Agrippa from prison and appointed him king as a reward for his loyalty. If Agrippa's wife is the one described in Philip's epigram, then her gift pays tribute to the Roman emperor as an expression of the long-standing, personal relationship between Agrippa and Caesar.²¹

Third, Philip's epigram implies that the queen in question was politically involved for the sake of her husband. Again, this fits Kypros.²² As Josephus tells us, Agrippa had a particularly intelligent wife, who often intervened on behalf of her husband.²³ For example, when Agrippa was destitute and at the point of suicide, Kypros' intercession won for Agrippa the help of his sister's husband, Antipas (*Ant.* 18.147–9). On

another occasion, when he was again in dire financial straits, Agrippa begged Alexander the alabarch to loan him a large sum of money, but Alexander refused. Only when Kypros intervened did Alexander relent, “because he marveled at her love for her husband and all her other good qualities” (*Ant.* 18.159). If Agrippa’s wife is the one described in Philip’s epigram, then her gift to Caesar provides yet another example of how she intervened with a political benefactor on behalf of her husband. It could be argued that weaving was the ideal for Jewish women of high repute who enhanced their husbands’ political standing.²⁴ The epigram does not state the occasion for the gift to Caesar. If the queen is Kypros, then Josephus records an episode during the reign of Agrippa, probably in the summer of 39 CE,²⁵ which may have been the occasion for Kypros’ gift. Herod Antipas was urged by his wife Herodias, Agrippa’s sister, to go to Italy to petition Gaius for the status of king, to equal his brother-in-law (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.240–54). But Agrippa, when he learned of their plan and of the lavish gifts that they were bringing to Gaius, made his own preparations. “And when he heard that they had set sail,” Josephus writes, “he himself also dispatched Fortunatus, one of his freedmen, to Rome, charged with presents for the emperor and letters against Herod . . .” (§ 247).²⁶ Perhaps Kypros’ artistic tapestry was among the presents that were delivered to Gaius on this occasion. Certainty is, of course, impossible.

Nikos Kokkinos suggests another possible occasion for the queen’s gift.²⁷ If, as he believes, Agrippa I and Kypros accompanied Gaius to the western extremes of the Empire in 39/40 CE,²⁸ then Kypros may have wanted to commemorate this grand expedition with the production of a *mappamundi*. Kokkinos surmises that the tapestry must have been prepared in Rome, for Agrippa’s return to Palestine occurred only in the autumn of 41. Therefore, Roman influences, such as the famous “map” of M. Vipsanius Agrippa, may be relevant here (see further below). We may wonder, however, whether the emperor’s invitation to accompany the expedition was prompted by the gift, or rather the gift by the expedition. Moreover, the commonly accepted date for publication of the *Garland of Philip* (40 CE) seems to point toward the earlier date for the gift and the epigram, although the date of publication is disputed and may have been during the reign of Nero (see above).

The *imago mundi* of the tapestry

As befitting an epigram, Philip’s description is quite laconic, mentioning only the two most basic components of the world map depicted on the tapestry – land and sea. Nevertheless, by carefully examining the poem

line by line, we may be able to make some reasonable deductions about the nature of the image.

In line 1, Philip refers to the “harvest-bearing earth” (γαῖαν φερέκαρπον). Although an Orphic hymn addresses the “goddess Gaia” (Γαῖα θεά) as, among other things, “harvest-bearing” (φερέκαρπε),²⁹ we need not conclude from this that Philip also uses γαῖα as a proper noun. For the very next clause in line 1 – “as much as the land-encircling Ocean girdles” (ὄσσην ἔζωκε περίχθων ὠκεανός) – modifies γαῖα, thus showing that γαῖα is meant primarily in the geographical sense of “earth.” On the other hand, the whole concept may reflect Homeric mythology, for in the *Iliad* (14.200; cf. 301) Hera is made to say: “For I shall see the bounds of the fertile Earth, and Ocean, progenitor of the gods” (εἶμι γὰρ ὀψομένη πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης Ὀκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν).³⁰ Strabo, who defends the Homeric picture of the known world as substantially true, also refers to this passage in the *Iliad* (*Geog.* 1.1.7), showing that this conception persisted even to the first century BCE.

Philip describes *Kypros' mappamundi* in terms that would have been readily understandable in both Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures.³¹ The Homeric notion of Earth as an island landmass encircled by Ocean retained an astonishingly persistent hold.³² Homer conceived of Ocean as a great river that compasses the earth's disk, returning into itself (*Il.* 18.399; *Od.* 20.65).³³ Ocean is represented as wrought on the circular rim of Achilles' shield (*Il.* 18.607–8),³⁴ which provides a fitting parallel to *Kypros' artistic production*.³⁵ Anaximander (610–540 BCE) is reportedly the first to have mapped such a conception.³⁶ Already in the fifth century BCE, Herodotus (4.36; cf. 2:23) scoffed at this conception: “I laugh to see how many have now drawn maps of the world, not one of them showing the matter reasonably; for they draw the world as round as if fashioned by compasses, encircled by the river of Ocean . . .”³⁷ Nevertheless, this image of the world never really died out. In fact, it experienced a renaissance in the first century BCE precisely because it so well suited Roman imperial ideology and aspiration. Thus, Cicero (*Somn.* 20) describes the inhabited world which the Romans dominate as a “small island,” oblong in shape and surrounded by Ocean.³⁸ Strabo (*Geog.* 2.5.17) states that the “inhabited world” (οἰκουμένη) is “surrounded by water” (περίρρυτος), a view that he explicitly attributes to Homer as the first geographer correctly to describe the earth as surrounded by Ocean (1.1.3–10).³⁹ Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE) regards Delphi as the center of the earth (*Met.* 10.167–8), and holds the Homeric concept of the earth as a disk surrounded by Ocean (*Met.* 2.5–7). An epigram of Antipater of

Thessalonica (*Anth. Pal.* 9.297), which was probably addressed to Gaius Caesar when sent by Augustus to the East in 1 BCE, describes the Roman Empire as “bounded on all sides by Ocean” (ὠκεανῶ περιπέριμονα πάντοθεν). Writing in 43/44 CE, Pomponius Mela (*De chorographia* 1.3–8) likewise describes the earth in his pioneering Latin geography as encircled by Ocean.⁴⁰ Obviously, the Ocean as a definer of the Roman Empire was a crucial feature of the Roman mental map.⁴¹ In light of all the other strong Homeric echoes in our epigram, it seems clear that Philip describes Kypros’ tapestry map in terms of the Homeric geographic tradition that had recently been reinstated for use in Roman imperial ideology.

The Old Testament (OT) contains a similar conception of the world, whose closest Near Eastern parallel is the famous Babylonian world map from Sippar, dating to the late eighth or seventh century BCE.⁴² This celebrated, little map (ca. 90 mm in diameter), which is unique among ancient Mesopotamian maps, shows the world as a circular disk surrounded by Ocean (*marratu*). A hole at the center of the map is evidently the result of the compass used to carve the concentric circles; it does not seem to represent a city or other landmark conceived of as the center or navel of the world. Circles are used to indicate cities or countries, but none of them is at the center of the disk. Eight outlying regions, triangular in shape and radiating out from the outer edge of the world, are the home of strange or legendary beings. At the top the scribe has written, “Where the sun is not seen,” to indicate the north. The accompanying text, apparently describing these regions, mentions Utnapishtim (the well-known hero of the flood story in the *Gilgamesh Epic*), Sargon of Akkad (the famous third-millennium king who was remembered as the conqueror of the entire world), and the “four quadrants” of the earth’s surface. Evidently, we are dealing here with a map that is concerned to show the worldwide extent of the Babylonian Empire.⁴³

According to Job 26:10, God “has described a circle on the face of the waters, at the boundary between light and darkness.” This could be interpreted as meaning that the disk-shaped world is bounded by water all around. According to Gen. 1:9–10, describing the third day of creation, “God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.” *4 Ezra*, a late first-century pseudepigraphon, goes beyond Gen. 1:9–10 by adding that the ratio of earth-to-sea was six-to-one: “On the third day you commanded the waters to be gathered together in the seventh part of the earth; six parts you dried up and kept so that some of them might be planted and cultivated and be of service for you” (*4 Ezra* 6:42).⁴⁴

This suggests perhaps that the earth is composed predominantly of a landmass surrounded by a relatively thin strip of water.⁴⁵ According to the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, who wrote probably during the second century BCE in Alexandria, Moses dreamed of ascending a throne on Mt. Sinai, from which he beheld “the entire circular earth” (γῆν ἅπασαν ἔγκυκλον, line 77), i.e., “the whole earth or inhabited world” (γῆν ὅλην τὸ οἰκουμένην, line 87).⁴⁶ Rabbinic literature makes similar statements about Alexander the Great.⁴⁷

In line 2, Philip further describes the whole earth as “obedient to great Caesar” (μεγάλῳ Καίσαρι πειθομένην). To underscore the emperor’s claim to universal sovereignty, the text adds, as we have seen, that the whole earth, “as much as the land-encircling Ocean girdles,” is subject to Caesar. At this point, Philip is simply reflecting the grandiose Roman imperial ideology of his day, which held that the Roman Empire was coextensive with the inhabited world.⁴⁸ According to Plutarch (*Caes.* 58.6–7), Julius Caesar “planned and prepared to make an expedition against the Parthians; and after subduing these and marching around the Euxine by way of Hyrcania, the Caspian Sea, and the Caucasus, to invade Scythia; and after overrunning the countries bordering on Germany and Germany itself, to come back by way of Gaul to Italy, and so to complete the circuit of his empire, which would then be bounded on all sides by Ocean” (καὶ συνάψαι τὸν κύκλον τοῦτον τῆς ἡγεμονίας τῷ πανταχόθεν Ὠκεανῷ περιορισθείσης).⁴⁹ This plan failed to materialize. In the Preamble of his *Res Gestae*, however, Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire, announces that he has attained dominion over the whole *orbis terrarum* (“circle of the world”).⁵⁰ During the early Empire, the fiction of the emperor’s ruling the whole world was perpetuated in the imperial ruler cult. Thus, an altar inscription from Narbo dated to 11 CE honors Augustus, referring to the “day on which he received imperium over the *orbis terrarum* . . .”⁵¹ Likewise, Gaius Caligula was expected to become “ruler of the inhabited world” (ἡγεμὼν τῆς οἰκουμένης) when he acceded to the throne (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.187).⁵² Philo (*Legat.* 8) reports that after the death of Tiberius, Gaius succeeded to “the sovereignty of the whole earth and the sea” (τὴν ἡγεμονίαν πάσης γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης).

In line 3, Philip refers to the “gray sea” (γλανκὴ θάλασσα). Since he has already mentioned Ocean that encircles the earth (lines 1–2), a reference to the “gray sea” might suggest a different body of water. On the other hand, the idea that the earth is surrounded by the *Mare Oceanum*, as graphically portrayed in the maps of Macrobius and of Isidore of Seville, allows us perhaps to equate the “gray sea” with the surrounding Ocean.

Like other terms in Philip's epigram, γλαυκὴ θάλασσα has Homeric roots (*Il.* 16.34), although it is also found in the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* (1.11; 2.198; 7.5). In Hesiod (*Theog.* 440), "gray stormy" (γλαυκὴ δυσπήμελος) is used as a general epithet of the sea. The adjective γλαυκός ("gray"), the color of the sea, is often applied to water deities. For example, Glaucus Pontius or Thalassius is a sea-god with prophetic powers (e.g., Euripides, *Or.* 362–5; Aristotle frg. 490), located, at least since Aeschylus' *Glaucus Pontius*, in the vicinity of the Euboean strait. Like many sea-gods, he is regarded as an old man (Virgil, *Aen.* 5.823). Job 41:24 (32) uses "gray hair" (קַשְׁטָן) in a figurative reference to the sea. We have not found evidence that "gray sea" refers to a specific body of water like the Mediterranean, which, in any case, was often conceived of as an arm of the surrounding Ocean.

In sum, the terms that Philip uses to describe the map apply from Homeric times to a conception of the earth as a large disk-shaped landmass surrounded by a relatively thin strip of Ocean. The size of the image cannot be ascertained from Philip's description. Perhaps investigation into the nature and size of artistic tapestries in the ancient world would provide a basis for comparison.⁵³ The fact that Kypros' tapestry was singled out for special praise in an epigram may imply that it was of monumental size.⁵⁴

The source(s) of the *imago mundi*

Our investigation of the possible source(s) of the image of the world on the tapestry is hampered by the fact that the only description of it is extremely brief and comes from a Hellenistic court poet in Rome who is clearly writing from a Roman imperial perspective. Nevertheless, in view of the paucity of material evidence that survived from the ancient world, we cannot afford to overlook any shred of literary evidence. From what we have seen so far, the source(s) of Kypros' *mappamundi* could be either Roman or Jewish. We shall consider each of these possibilities in turn, without forgetting that both of these potential sources had undergone strong Hellenistic influence.

A possible Roman source

A Roman source for Kypros' map is particularly attractive, for it might explain why Caesar (Gaius) was so flattered by the tapestry. As we have seen, Philip writes that the tapestry displayed the whole earth "obedient to great Caesar,"⁵⁵ which conveys the universal sovereignty of the Roman

emperor. Thus, there may be a direct connection between Kypros' map and the famous world "map" of M. Vipsanius Agrippa (64/3–12 BCE), which was erected in the Porticus Vipsania in Rome after his death and was meant, like the aforementioned Preamble of the *Res Gestae*, to proclaim that Augustus ruled the whole inhabited world. The great and successful wars of conquest initiated by Augustus and M. Vipsanius Agrippa became one of the key sources of legitimacy and prestige of the newly founded Roman Empire.⁵⁶ In the years up to his death, Agrippa acted as almost coregent of the Empire. Therefore, a public memorial to Augustus' right-hand man was most appropriate, and Augustus himself saw to the completion of the project (Pliny, *HN* 3.17).

If, as seems likely, Kypros had lived in Rome,⁵⁷ then she may have seen the Agrippa "map," which became her inspiration at the loom.⁵⁸ Perhaps she would have taken special note of this "map" not only because her husband had been named after the famous M. Vipsanius Agrippa,⁵⁹ but also because the latter had been a close personal friend of Herod the Great and benevolent toward the Jews.⁶⁰ A Jewish community in Rome was even named after him (*CIJ* 365, 425, 503), although the reason is not clear. More importantly, however, M. Agrippa was Gaius' grandfather through his mother, Agrippina the elder. In honor of his grandfather, Gaius issued a vast coinage of asses with Agrippa obverse, which performed a major role of circulation outside Italy.⁶¹ According to Philo (*Legat.* 294–7), Agrippa I appealed specifically to the example of M. Agrippa as Gaius' maternal grandfather, in order to dissuade the emperor from violating the sanctity of the Jerusalem Temple.⁶² Hence, if Kypros was looking for a way to impress Gaius, she could not have done better than to model her tapestry after the memorial of M. Agrippa.⁶³ Indeed, when Philip extols the tapestry as an exact copy of the earth and sea, he may well be referring to the fact that Kypros imitated the Agrippa "map," which would have been regarded as the ultimate standard of world cartography in that day.⁶⁴ Just as M. Agrippa had been Herod the Great's model for the architectural and cultural responsibilities of a dynast,⁶⁵ so now Herod Agrippa's wife may have followed that model in order to ingratiate her husband with the emperor. If, as Kokkinos suggests, the tapestry commemorated Gaius' grand expedition to the western limits of the known world, which Kypros and her husband may have accompanied (see above), then the gift of a world map would have been all the more appropriate.⁶⁶

There is great doubt, however, whether the work set up in Agrippa's memory was really a "map" at all. Certainly, the map, if there ever was one, did not survive from antiquity. Based on the literary evidence, scholars have generally assumed that a map is being described.⁶⁷ However,

Kai Brodersen has recently called this whole assumption into question, arguing instead that the monument set up in the Porticus Vipsania was nothing more than a list of landmarks and the distances between them.⁶⁸ Brodersen begins by discussing the many vastly different reconstructions of the alleged map.⁶⁹

It was a mosaic, a mural, a bronze engraving, or a marble carving.

It was round, oval, or rectangular.

It was 9 × 18 m, 24 × 12 m, or 75 × 4.5 m.

It was oriented on the east, the south, or the north.

Brodersen's critique makes it abundantly clear that, whether or not there was a map, we have very little concrete idea what Agrippa's monument actually looked like.⁷⁰

Brodersen goes on to argue that the three pieces of literary evidence that are usually adduced to show that Agrippa's monument was a map fail to substantiate the case.⁷¹ According to Brodersen, neither of the passages in Pliny's *Natural History* stands up to closer scrutiny. In *HN* 3.17, the elder Pliny (23/24–79 CE) expresses astonishment at Agrippa's measurements for the southern Spanish province of Baetica: "Who would believe that Agrippa, who was very careful and took great pains over this work, should, when he was going to set up the world to be looked at by the citizens of Rome (*cum orbem terrarum urbi spectandum propositurus esset*), have made this mistake, and together with him the deified Augustus? For it was Augustus, who, when Agrippa's sister had begun building the portico, carried it out from the intention and notes (*commentarii*) of M. Agrippa."⁷² Brodersen contends that the expression *orbem terrarum urbi spectandum* refers not to a map but to a text, as Pliny's usage of *spectare* elsewhere shows.⁷³ The second text is *HN* 6.139, where Pliny writes that the Porticus Vipsania has Charax by the sea (*et maritimum etiam Vipsania porticus habet*). This passage has been thought to reveal a direct reference to the map on the portico wall in Rome rather than to the commentary, because on a relatively small-scale world map Charax – an unimportant town of Arabia – may have looked closer to the Persian Gulf than it really was. Brodersen points out, however, that Pliny's geographical commentary sometimes uses coastal cities as endpoints for measurements (e.g., Chalcidion, Byzantium, Panticapeum, Pelusium, and Arsinoe).⁷⁴ The third piece of literary evidence for the Agrippa map is found in Strabo, who repeatedly refers to "the chorographer" (ὁ χωρογράφος), and once to a "choreographic tablet" (χωρογραφικὸς πίναξ). While these are sometimes taken as references to Agrippa and his map, Brodersen points out that Strabo could not have seen a map in the Porticus Vipsania,

for the portico had not been completed by 7 BCE (cf. Dio Cassius 55.8.3–4), which is the year when Strabo's *Geography* was supposedly completed.⁷⁵ Thus, Brodersen completely dismisses the literary evidence for Agrippa's map.

Brodersen's case against the existence of an Agrippa world map must be seen in light of broader trends in the current discussion of the history of cartography. A debate is presently taking place among historians, geographers and cartographers over ancient conceptions of geography and the use of maps in antiquity. Two schools of thought have shaped discussion of this subject. Some scholars assume that ancient map use must be similar to our own, although limited by technology, and that any investigation of ancient geography should concentrate on ancient cartography.⁷⁶ On the other hand, a growing number of scholars contend that map consciousness and map use are almost totally absent in the ancient world.⁷⁷ "As pointed out by Fergus Millar, what we know about ancient map-making indicates that the Romans did not have a sufficiently clear or accurate notion of topographical realities to allow them to conceive of the overall military situation in global strategic terms."⁷⁸ Even more poignantly, R. J. A. Talbert remarks: "Up till then [i.e., the seventeenth century!], what we would consider accurate planning of long-term conquest could hardly have been feasible, while any army (or navy) operating away from 'home' (however you need to define that) must have been, to our way of thinking, 'lost.'"⁷⁹

So far neither side of the debate appears even to have seen Philip's epigram, let alone consider its possible significance for the discussion.⁸⁰ If, as we have discussed, the queen of a Roman client kingdom could have produced a work of art in the form of a world map, that would seem to indicate more "map consciousness" than is often admitted.⁸¹ Moreover, as we have seen, there is a possibility that Kypros' map may have been a reproduction of the famous Agrippa map, which she had seen in Rome. The symbolic significance of such a gift is readily apparent: the queen would be saying in essence that Gaius had achieved the domination of the inhabited world and thereby succeeded to the Empire of Divus Augustus.⁸² Indeed, this corresponds to the meaning that Philip's epigram attaches to the tapestry. Just as Agrippa's map of the tributary world had been made to honor Augustus and his universal reign,⁸³ so also Kypros' map was produced to honor Gaius and given to him in tribute. The very fact that the map was woven would have further underscored imperial values, for, according to Suetonius (*Aug.* 64.2), Caesar Augustus had his daughter Julia (the wife of M. Agrippa) and his granddaughters (including Agrippina, the mother of Gaius Caligula) taught the art of spinning and weaving.⁸⁴ Suetonius (*Aug.* 73) also claims that Augustus wore only clothing woven

by the women of his family.⁸⁵ Furthermore, Plato's *Politicus* (279b–311c) had long since made weaving a fitting analogy for the role of the consummate ruler. Seen in this light, Kypros' tapestry becomes a metaphor for Caesar's statecraft in weaving together every disparate aspect of Rome's world empire into a united and orderly whole under his imperium.⁸⁶

We may perhaps suppose that the Agrippa map was disk-shaped. Several lines of evidence can confirm this. First, we may consider numismatic evidence from the early Principate. A simple form of world "map" occurs regularly on Roman imperial coinage, in which the globe is portrayed as dominated by either Victory or the emperor. Many specimens of this coin type were minted during the reigns of Augustus⁸⁷ and Gaius.⁸⁸ Admittedly, however, the authenticity of a unique gold medallion, whose inscription dates it to the reign of Augustus, remains disputed: the obverse reportedly contains the image of Augustus with the inscription AUGUSTO DIVI FILIO COS XI TR P II IMP VIII; the reverse contains three circles representing the tripartite world with the entry EUR ASI AFR.⁸⁹ David Woodward regards the medallion as the beginning of the Roman tradition of representing the earth as a sphere on coins,⁹⁰ whereas Brodersen rejects it as a modern forgery, because the date of Augustus' TR P II (i.e., his second *tribunicia potestas* = 26 June 22 to 25 June 21 BCE) conflicts with the imprint by the III VIR (i.e., *tresviri monetales*), which began after 20 BCE.⁹¹ However, the chronology of the monetary *collegia* is not as certain as Brodersen seems to suggest. According to the numismatist, C. H. V. Sutherland, only one of the monetary *collegia* active under Augustus is specifically dated (i.e., that of L. Mescinius Rufus, L. Vinicius, and C. Antistius Vetus in 16 BCE), the rest of the chronology being largely a matter of conjecture.⁹² Nevertheless, the medallion in question is almost certainly a relatively modern confection, for it is quite out of place in Francesco Gnechi's catalogue of gold medallions.⁹³

In any case, the numismatic evidence demonstrates that an image of the world in the shape of a circle (or sphere) was used during the reign of Augustus and the rest of the early Principate to portray Roman domination of the world. In particular, the reverse of a coin of Faustus Cornelius Sulla (ca. 56 BCE) contains a globus surrounded by four wreaths: the large, jeweled wreath at the top represents Pompey's golden crown, whereas the plainer wreaths represent the three continents over which Pompey triumphed.⁹⁴

Second, the medieval *mappaemundi* may confirm that the Agrippa map was a disk-shaped landmass encircled by a relatively thin strip of Ocean. For on the basis of statements by a number of ancient and medieval writers, the Agrippa map is generally believed to be the prototype for a

succession of later world maps such as the thirteenth-century Hereford *mappamundi*.⁹⁵ These medieval world maps are also disk-shaped and encircled by Ocean. The main difference is that they depict Christ, rather than Caesar, as the one who dominates the world.⁹⁶ Like many medieval *mappaemundi*, the Agrippa map may have had a center. Although the medieval *mappaemundi* never put Rome in the center, we would expect the Agrippa map to have done so. Similarly, Strabo (*Geog.* 17.3.24) conceptualized the Roman Empire and the entire world as spreading in concentric circles around Rome: Italy, the regions around Italy in a circle (κύκλω), and the three continents (Europe, Libya, Asia).⁹⁷ Arrian's *Anabasis* begins with a description of the lands under control of the Romans, proceeding in a counterclockwise direction: beginning at the Pillars of Hercules, the account circumnavigates the Mediterranean eastward across North Africa, northward up the coast of Syria-Palestine, and across Asia Minor and Europe, and back to the Pillars of Hercules (Prooem. 1–3).

A possible Jewish source

A Jewish source for Kypros' world map is also possible, especially since Kypros is a Jewess who had intimate contact with Judea.⁹⁸ By the first century CE, Jews throughout the eastern Mediterranean had undergone Hellenization to one degree or another;⁹⁹ hence, it is not always possible to distinguish sharply a Jewish source from other contemporary influences.¹⁰⁰ Some Jews in Palestine read Homer,¹⁰¹ and, as *Jubilees* 8–9 (second-century BCE) demonstrates, even the most rigorous of Jewish groups in Palestine were influenced by Hellenistic conceptions of world geography.¹⁰² It is not surprising, then, to find that the mosaic floor in the third- or fourth-century CE synagogue of Hammath-Tiberias portrays Helios in the center of a zodiac circle, riding a quadriga and holding a globus containing a crossband.¹⁰³ The quadriga, the zodiac circle, and the globus are Greco-Roman motifs commonly associated with Helios.¹⁰⁴ Obviously, the synagogue appropriated these elements from the culture at large and adapted them to its own uniquely Jewish cult.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, acknowledging that Kypros was Jewish hardly settles the issue of cartographic sources for her tapestry.

Nevertheless, at least three pieces of evidence allow us to consider a possible Jewish source for Kypros' world map. First, Kypros' weaving activity itself may provide an important clue to the source of the image on her tapestry. Spinning and weaving was an art practiced already in ancient Israel. According to Exodus, the construction of the tabernacle involved considerable spinning and weaving, including many textiles with

images of cherubim worked into them (e.g., Exod. 26:1, 31). Women did some of the spinning for the tabernacle and the priestly vestment. Exod. 35:25 states that “All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linen . . .” Josephus (*Ant.* 3.107; cf. *JW* 5.213) rephrases this text to read that “Women themselves vied with one another in providing priestly vestments . . .” implying that the women not only did the spinning, but the weaving as well. Of particular interest for our purposes is Josephus’ description in *Ant.* 3.183–4 of the cosmological symbolism woven into the fabrics used in the tabernacle and the high priest’s vestment.¹⁰⁶

The tapestries woven of four materials denote the natural elements: thus the fine linen appears to typify the earth, because from it springs up the flax, and the purple the sea, since it is incarnadined with the blood of fish; the air must be indicated by the blue, and the crimson will be the symbol of fire. (184) The high-priest’s tunic likewise signifies the earth, being of linen, and its blue the arch of heaven, while it recalls the lightnings by its pomegranates, the thunder by the sound of its bells.

Since this description of the tabernacle and the high priestly vestment goes beyond Scripture, Josephus, himself a native of Jerusalem and a priest (*JW* 1.3), presumably reflects here an actual knowledge of the Temple cult in his own day which he has interjected into the biblical account.¹⁰⁷ In any case, it is significant that Josephus shows familiarity with tapestries and other woven goods bearing cosmological symbolism.¹⁰⁸

The *Wisdom of Solomon* contains similar comments about the high priest’s vestment, which may corroborate Josephus’ description. According to *Wisd.* 18:24 (alluding to Exodus 28), Aaron’s high-priestly vesture was endowed with symbolic and cosmic significance: “For on his long robe the whole world was depicted . . .” (ἐπὶ γὰρ ποδήρους ἐνδύματος ἦν ὅλος ὁ κόσμος).¹⁰⁹ Again, this may reflect actual knowledge of the Temple cult in the writer’s own day (in this case, probably the first century BCE). If so, we can only speculate what the image of the world may have looked like, although the collection of the Temple tax from the worldwide Diaspora would suggest that priestly circles in Jerusalem possessed an actual map of the world. This possibility is strengthened by several observations. (1) A priestly source forms the basic framework of the Table of Nations in Genesis 10.¹¹⁰ As we shall see in the next chapter, Genesis 10 is more than a genealogical list; it reflects an *imago mundi* that comes to expression in subsequent centuries. (2) *M. Sheq.* 3:1, 4 describes how the Temple tax was disbursed for Temple

expenditures in three separate drawings, according to the geographical area from which the tax had been collected, proceeding in concentric circles around Jerusalem: the first drawing was made before Passover, on the shekels from the Land of Israel; the second was made before Pentecost, on the offering from the neighboring countries; and the third was made before the Feast of Tabernacles, on the money from Babylonia, Media, and the distant lands. Hence, there is enough evidence from Judea during the Second-Temple period of hand-woven textiles containing cosmological symbols and perhaps actual images of the world worked into them that Kypros could have gained the inspiration for her tapestry directly from the Jerusalem Temple.¹¹¹ Given the fact that foreign envoys often brought the Roman emperor gifts displaying the exotic nature of their country (e.g., Strabo, *Geog.* 15.1.73), we might expect Kypros' gift to display distinctively Jewish characteristics, at least in part.

Second, archaeological evidence may provide a clue to the source of the image on the Kypros map. For example, in light of the Babylonian world map, it is tempting to compare a somewhat similar artifact found at Qumran:¹¹² a shallow bowl measuring 145 mm in diameter, with a hole in the center, four concentric furrows progressively further away from it, and three pairs of concentric circles in the flat spaces between the furrows. Each pair of circles is joined by a series of short lines that fill the interstitial space and radiate toward the center of the disk. It is estimated that there were approximately 60 of these lines between the inner pair of rings, 72 between the middle ones,¹¹³ and 90 between the outer ones. In addition, the artifact contains several striking orientation marks: a circle around one of the short lines in the first pair of concentric circles and a notch on the outer rim of the disk. The artifact has been tentatively identified as a kind of sundial or "astronomical measuring instrument," for which there is no known parallel.¹¹⁴ This hypothesis requires several assumptions, including (1) the original existence of a vertical post (gnomon) in the center hole that served the function of casting a shadow so that the user could determine the season and the hour of the day,¹¹⁵ and (2) the purpose of the shallow bowl was to hold water as a means of controlling the vertical position of the gnomon.¹¹⁶

If, on the other hand, the artifact is seen as a sort of schematic world map, then the center may represent the Jerusalem Temple, which the Qumran community undoubtedly considered the "navel of the world" (cf. *Jub.* 8:12, 19),¹¹⁷ the first furrow may separate the walled city of Jerusalem from the rest of Israel; the second furrow may separate Israel from the nations round about, symbolized by the series of 72 lines,¹¹⁸ and the outermost band or furrow may represent Ocean.¹¹⁹ The notion of

concentric circles around Jerusalem and the Temple is well documented in Jewish literature of the period (cf. 1 Chronicles 1–9;¹²⁰ the Temple Scroll;¹²¹ *m. Kelim* 1:6–9;¹²² and *m. Sheq.* 3:1, 4;¹²³ Midr. Tanhuma, *Qedoshim* 10¹²⁴). For the overall conception, it is interesting to compare qiblah world maps, and especially the qiblah chart prepared in 570/1562 by Mahmud al-Khatib al-Rumi, showing 72 sectors about the Ka'ba in the center.¹²⁵ Another qibla diagram dating to 958/1551 depicts the Ka'ba in the center of a thirty-two-division windrose, the outside perimeter of which is lined with the names of the lands of the world in groups of three.¹²⁶ Perhaps most important for comparison with our bowl from Qumran is a shallow, ceramic qiblah-bowl from Damascus dating to ca. 1516–20, which could have been filled with water and would have had a floating magnetic needle to establish the cardinal directions.¹²⁷ The outside perimeter of this bowl with concentric circles also contains 72 marks, corresponding to the 72-sector scheme of sacred geography in early Islamic tradition.¹²⁸

The Temple and Jerusalem contain many elements that point to a strong geographical orientation. For instance, the huge and highly ornamented “molten sea” or “bronze sea” that reportedly stood in the courtyard of Solomon’s temple. According to 1 Kgs. 7:23–6 (cf. 2 Chr. 4:2–5) this “sea” was supported on four sets of bronze oxen, with three oxen in each set. Each set of oxen faced a direction of the compass, with their hindquarters facing inward and supporting the basin. Similarly, according to both the OT (Ezek. 48:30–5) and a Qumran manuscript (4Q554 1 i:12–ii:9), the gates in outer walls of eschatological Jerusalem will be arranged in four sets of three, corresponding to the cardinal points, and named after the twelve tribes of Israel.¹²⁹ The same Qumran scroll (4Q554 1 i:3–6) describes the new Jerusalem as containing a broad main street running east–west and a somewhat narrower main street running north–south.¹³⁰ As to the molten sea’s symbolic function, Carol Meyers suggests:¹³¹

One of the features of ANE temples was their utilization of artistic and architectural elements relating to the idea of the temple as the cosmic center of the world. The great deep, or cosmic waters, is one aspect of the array of cosmic attributes of such a holy spot. The temple of Marduk at Babylon, for example, had an artificial sea (*ta-am-tu*) in its precincts; and some Babylonian temples had an *apsû*-sea, a large basin. Such features symbolize the idea of the ordering of the universe by the conquest of chaos; or they represent the presence of the ‘waters of life’ at the holy center. Ancient Israel shared in this notion of watery chaos being

subdued by Yahweh and of the temple being built on the cosmic waters. The great ‘molten sea’ near the temple’s entrance would have signified Yahweh’s power and presence.

Subsequent Jewish interpretation underscores the universal significance of the molten sea.¹³² As Josephus (*Ant.* 3.180–7) explains, every object in the Temple is intended to imitate and represent the universe in some way. We see, then, that the Kypros map would have had numerous possible sources in the material culture of Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

Third, a letter from Agrippa I to Emperor Gaius may provide a clue to the source of the image on the Kypros map. According to Philo’s vindictive treatise, *Embassy to Gaius* (§§276–329), Agrippa wrote the letter to Gaius when the latter ordered a colossal statue of himself to be introduced into the Jerusalem Temple. If, as many scholars suspect, Philo himself composed the letter,¹³³ then its value for the present discussion is negligible. If, on the other hand, Philo’s version reflects the substance of an actual letter to Gaius, then it may be relevant, for in his response to the enormity of Gaius’ order, Agrippa includes a geographic survey of the worldwide Jewish Diaspora, which had gone out from Jerusalem to form colonies in the mainlands, the islands, and the countries beyond the Euphrates (*Legat.* 281–3). The conception of the world presupposed here is distinctively Jewish, as seen particularly by the centrality of Jerusalem in it. By stating that colonies went out from Jerusalem (“the metropolis”) to form colonies in the rest of the inhabited world, Jerusalem is thereby indirectly compared to Delphi, which, in Greco-Roman thought, was often considered the omphalos of the world.¹³⁴ Agrippa’s wife Kypros may have been imbued with such an *imago mundi* when she set to work on the tapestry.

Conclusion

Enough has been said to give some impression of the diversity and richness of the evidence that is potentially available for any attempt to understand ancient Jewish geographical conceptions. By its very nature, the evidence is tantalizingly sketchy and highly evocative. As so often, if we try to generalize too confidently when confronted with the intermingling of languages, cultures, and forms of religious belief and practice that influence Jewish conceptions, the evidence will not quite fall into the patterns we would like. This is indeed partly because, when and if literary or documentary evidence from the period is particularly explicit, it in itself may constitute an observer’s interpretation, not a report which can be taken at face value.

It is precisely for these reasons that the epigram of Philip of Thessalonica is of such significance for our quest. Although our only glimpse of Kypros' tapestry is through the eyes of a Hellenistic court poet, whose description is too terse and enigmatic to support unequivocal conclusions, we are nevertheless ineluctably drawn to consider the scant evidence left to us by the ravages of time and to attempt an interpretation. The context is one where Jews and Romans interface on the basis of their respective cultural heritages, part of which is Hellenistic and shared and part of which is not. The result is not merely the coexistence of multivalent perspectives but the possible amalgamation of geographical conceptions. Unequivocal conclusions are hardly possible when the conceptions we are trying to describe are themselves equivocal. What seems virtually certain is that we have evidence for cartographic activity and geographical speculation among Jews during the first century. This is not at all surprising when we consider how fundamentally geography informs and shapes the historical imagination of Judaism, with its persistent contrast between the Land of Israel and other lands.¹³⁵

The Kypros map provides a convenient point of departure for further consideration of Jewish geographical conceptions. In Chapters 2–6, we shall examine the Jewish geographical tradition that probably most influenced Jewish and Christian geographical conceptions. In Chapter 7, we shall return to the Kypros map to explore the possible relevance of our investigation for understanding the medieval *mappaemundi*. With the discussion of Chapters 2–6 in view, it is almost inevitable that speculation should lead one to consider a possible connection between the Kypros map and the *mappaemundi*.