

*The History of World Trade in Maps*

Philip Parker, Collins, London, 2020, 224 pp, ISBN 1397800008409296, £25.00 hardback

An attractively produced collection of maps, that profitably employs an interesting theme, but certainly does not exhaust the topic, either cartographically or analytically. It can be difficult to interest publishers in new ways to present old maps, and Parker is to be congratulated for doing so, but, precisely because such books only appear infrequently, there is a degree of responsibility on the part of the author to offer a coverage of the topic that throws considerable light on it, not least on the issues involved in the past in mapmaking, including gaps in the cartographic record. The selection of maps here is interesting, but too few of them relate directly to trade, and many of the historical ones are precisely that, old maps that have nothing specific to do with it. The Hereford *Mappa Mundi* is a good example of this, while some of the later maps, for example the Bertius' 1623 map of the Carolingian empire, the Ortelius map inserted to illustrate Rome's Eastern trade, the Burckhardt map of Petra designed to show the Frankincense Route, the 1923 map of Greek and Phoenician settlements in the Mediterranean, and the modern Russian map from the Amber Combine in Kaliningrad used to illustrate 'The Amber Road,' add little and are, if anything, confusing. Thus, to present knowledge as in 1923 does not capture what we have since ascertained, not least Phoenician bases further up the Iberian coast, including in the Algarve and at Lisbon (*Alis Ubbo* of calm harbour), as well as further down the coast of Morocco, certainly to Mogador, and possibly further. In addition, the Phoenicians traded, as the text notes, further afield, including with Cornwall, but that does not appear in the map.

In this respect, there is a falling between stools. If later maps are to be used, they should be as accurate as possible, which tends to mean taking note of recent archaeological research and providing therefore recent, not historic, historical maps. Moreover, if historical atlases are to be employed, there are excellent ones, for example the three-volume one on Canada.

Many of the maps offered by Parker on recent trade are interesting, with good sections on oil in the North Sea, Electronics and the Internet, and Banking and Finance. However, major modern trades that are ignored include drugs, money laundering, and modern slavery. There are maps of these, notably the first, in other sources.

Although perfunctorily mentioned in the section on tourism, trade by air is also ignored, with the sole map being 'The Air Age Map of the World,' a 1945 work essentially of distances. This omission is remarkable because, although relatively low bulk, air travel is high value, and has also opened up areas to production as well as transformed marketing. Thus, Madrid, despite being in the centre of the country, prides itself on the quality of the fish served which is airfreighted in each morning from Spain's oceanic ports. Longer-range air freight takes, for example, Kenyan flowers to

Britain and Zambian meat to Saudi Arabia. The routes, volume and value of UPS air travel provides a relatively easy as well as important topic for mapping.

Other current trade routes underplayed by Parker include those opened up by the recent expansion to the Panama Canal, which enabled larger vessels, but also then ensured that only upgraded ports could handle them. The opening up of routes to the north of Asia and North America should also have been covered, as well as the Chinese attempt to develop a global maritime system with key ports, which is far more consequential than the map offered of the European Union.

Turning to the past and to both texts and maps, Parker offers a very Eurocentric account. There are some worthwhile sections on Ottoman maps, and spreads on the voyages of Zheng He and on Aztec trade, but the rest of the world, thereafter, is essentially organised in terms of the West. Moreover, the mechanism of trade is transoceanic, with an addition of railways in the nineteenth century. This is unfortunate in many respects. Parker downplays or ignores the range of other maritime and land milieux and mechanisms, such as deltaic, lacustrine, riverine, estuarine and inshore trade, which made up the bulk of world trade by water. As far as maritime traders are concerned, the Maya, the Omanis, and the Polynesians are the most obvious of the many who do not feature. There are of course problems with finding any contemporary mapping for them, but there is material for Polynesia and, since Parker includes historical maps, modern scholarly works could have been used. At the very least, there is a place for contextualising the West in the text.

So, more generally, with the need for a discussion of the issues involved in mapping trade, as for example in the map of the spread of Covid that ends the book, one that is innocent of any suggestion of problems with the data. An attractive work, that Parker, a fluent writer, can hopefully greatly improve in a second edition.

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