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Jeffrey C. Anderson (ed.), *The Christian Topography of Kosmas Indikopleustes: Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, plut. 9.28. The Map of the Universe Redrawn in the Sixth Century. Folia picta: manoscritti miniati medievali, 3.* Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2013. Pp. 118; 79 p. of plates. ISBN 9788863724028. €62.00 (pb).

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This volume provides a welcome and thorough introduction to one of the few surviving illuminated manuscripts that presents an extraordinary argument for a Biblical understanding of the universe written, revised, and expanded in the mid-sixth century. The author of the *Christian Topography*, still commonly identified as Kosmas Indikopleustes, argued against the weight of knowledge and tradition in ancient cosmography (notably the work of Ptolemy), instead proposing an understanding of the shape of the cosmos that was based on the Biblical tabernacle and upon a strong distinction between the divine and the human domains. One of the contributions of this publication is that it contextualizes his thought and thereby demonstrates why the dismissal of this undoubtedly flawed treatise as the work of a fool needs some reconsideration. For, as the contributors argue, this work provides further witness to a current in sixth-century thought that sought to contest the legacy of Greco-Roman knowledge and to propose a thoroughly Christian understanding of the world. Nonetheless, the quality of Kosmas' thought does not compare to that of his Christian contemporary, John Philoponus. While there has been a need to re-evaluate and advocate for the intellectual contribution made by this treatise, the work has long been an object of discussion among art historians. Much of this conversation has focused upon the relationship between the iconography of the *Christian Topography* and the imagery found in the illuminated manuscripts of the *Octateuchs*. There has also been more limited analysis of the role that images played in the development of Indikopleustes' argument. For the author required that images be included in his treatise, using these both to demonstrate his points and to provide the very ground from which to argue his case. It is a use that remains undervalued in our discussions of late antique art.

The volume reviewed here includes contributions from seven authors. The essays are written in either English or Italian and appear intended for an expert audience. Massimo Bernabò's Prologue (v-viii) provides a brief but helpful introduction to the manuscript's publication history. In so doing he reminds the

reader that this eleventh-century Florence manuscript is the less well known of the three Greek illuminated versions of the Indikopleustes text. In his Introduction (ix-xi) Jeffrey C. Anderson, the editor of this volume, reiterates that this publication will be the first to offer all of the manuscript's images in full color. These images, found on 62 plates between pages 64 and 65 of this book are large, clear, and accurate. Anderson also points to an interesting conundrum in that while the treatise in which "[t]he author aims to prove, against the vast accumulation of Hellenistic observation and theory, that the earth is flat, enclosed within a rectangular vaulted space (ix)," was not well received in Byzantium, it has nonetheless bequeathed three luxurious illuminated manuscripts (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 699 – ninth century; Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine, gr. 1186 – eleventh century; Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 9.28 – eleventh century) and an extensive Slavic tradition.

Following these introductory chapters, two substantial and careful contributions then provide the reader with a thorough understanding of the contents of the manuscript. First, Margherita Losacco has written a chapter on codicological and paleographic aspects of the work (1-17). Among the many notable contributions found in her study is the close approximation of the script found in this manuscript with that used to copy a chrysobull prepared in the imperial chancery in Constantinople and dated to 1074 (10-11). She also shows that the manuscript was in Florence in the home of Pietro de Medici by the end of October 1495. Second, Jeffrey Anderson's discussion of the illustrations in the manuscript unfolds across two chapters. The first addresses some of the key issues that have circulated around the imagery found on this work (19-31), while the second offers an extensive description of the images (33-63). The descriptive section is especially rich, as the author has not only shown the relationship between the images found in the Florence manuscript and those in the Vatican and Sinai manuscripts, but he also carefully identified how these images are related to the text and arguments of the Indikopleustes treatise. In this regard, the reader is greatly helped by Anderson's brief summary of the contents of each of the twelve books within this work. The more discursive chapter on the illustration in this manuscript compares the miniatures in the three illuminated versions of the *Christian Topography* in order to characterize the specific nature of the illumination found in the Florence manuscript. In so doing, Anderson re-affirms that the Sinai and Florence manuscripts should be distinguished from the Vatican manuscript, that the Florence manuscript is the work of a single artist (28), that this artist was at work in Constantinople (31), and that the date of this work can be related to manuscripts produced in the 1080s (29-31).

A further three contributions are found beyond the plate section. The first of these is a single page report (65) on a spectrophotometric analysis of three miniatures in the manuscript that was carried out by Marcello Picollo and Bruno Radicati. Plate XLIII shows the points examined. The next contribution is Maja Kominko's discussion of Kosmas Indikopleustes' intellectual context (67-81); a topic also discussed in her *The World of Kosmas: The Byzantine Illustrated Codices of the Christian Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). The essay argues that we should understand the *Christian Topography* as a work intended "to launch a new and fully Christian

understanding of the universe" (67). In making this case Kominko identifies a wide array of sources that Indikopleustes adopted and adapted to his own ends. The final contribution reminds us of the numerous (ninety-nine) surviving Slavic witnesses to the Indikopleustes text (83-89). The essay that Francesca Romoli presents here is preliminary and focuses upon thirty-seven manuscripts that can be dated between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. She places these into eight groups and in so doing holds out the hope of organizing this significant trove of witnesses into a semblance of useful order.

This publication provides a broad and thorough introduction to an unusual and interesting work. The quality of the essays, descriptions, and reproductions is high, as befits the series to which this book belongs. The editor and his team are to be congratulated for providing such a comprehensive and reasonable introduction to this manuscript.