

Presentation of: L. I. Gratsianskaya, *"The Geography" of Strabon. The problems of source - criticism*, Moscow 1986, pp. 175 [in Russian], by Eva. Drakonaki-Kazantzaki (University of Athens), with the closest possible collaboration of Assistant Prof. L. I. Gratsianskaya (Russian State University for Humanities [RSUH], Moscow)

The work was written in the eighties, so the bibliography on historiography-geography is given up until the middle of the eighth decade of the 20th century.

1. The "Introduction" (pp. 6-12) of the monograph formulates its aims. Among them, the main ones are the analysis of Strabon's creative method, his historical and historiographical views, the analysis of his outlook on the world, the analysis of genre and stylistic peculiarities of "The Geography", and the investigation into the method of compilation by Strabon.

The first period of the exploring of Strabon's text (from the 16th to the middle of the 19th century) was connected with the accumulation of the material and represented the uncritical attitude of the researchers to Strabon's information. They practically ignored the fact that "The Geography" is a compilation, which led, of course, to the uncritical use of Strabon's information. This period was quite natural. The next period, which continued until the middle of the eighties of the 20th century, was also natural: it was a hypercritical period during which the researchers came to the conclusion that the compilation had been mechanical. They began to look for a concrete source of every line in Strabon's "Geography" and, of course, found a lot of them. This "lot" varies in different researchers. All in all, the main aim of the strabonian bibliography of this period was to address and to readdress different pieces of Strabon's information from one source to another. The author thinks that Rostowzew was the best to formulate the "credo" of this period: "... in the contamination of his sources he (i.e. Strabon) does not show either particular talent nor particular will to conceal sources" [M. Rostowzew, *Scythia and Bosporus*, Leningrad 1925, p. 41 (Russian Edition); *Skythien und der Bosporus*, Bd. I, Berlin 1931 (German Edition)].

So, up to the middle of the eighties when the monograph was written, the main method of using it as a historical source was, if it can be so called, "the consumer's method". This method, which had been crystallised in the world bibliography for the previous one and a half centuries, was based on the concept of "The Geography", being a mechanical compilation,

consisting of different chronological and genre sources. This assumption gave the many generations of researchers the chance to at will dismember Strabon's work into isolated informational fragments, which supposedly belong to one source of Strabon, or another. Consequently, that gave the possibility of different chronological and ancient attributions of the same material of "The Geography".

The "Introduction" also gives a brief analysis of the bibliography about Strabon for the last three and a half centuries.

2. The "first chapter" of the monograph (pp. 12-33): "The Life and Creative Activities of Strabon", deals with the material about Strabon's life and creative activities. It discusses all the dates of his birth and death, his family, his studies and teachers, his travels, his philosophical, didactical and political views –and especially his utilitarianism lying in those views–, the time and the places of his literary activities as well as the syncretism of Greek and Roman principles in his world-outlook and his creative activities.

3. The "second chapter" of the monograph (pp. 34-93): "The Sources of 'The Geography' of Strabon", analyses the main principles and methods of the source-usage by Strabon and also deals with some of his concrete literary sources: Homer and poetical sources ("ancient authors"), Eratosthenes, Hipparchos, Artemidoros of Ephessos, Ephoros, Polybios, Poseidonios, Theophanes from Mytilene and Quintus, and some others. The criticism of the theory of *Hauptquelle*, the fullest variant of which may be found in the works of B. Niese, is the main content of the "first paragraph of this chapter". The problem of succession in the process of writing "The Geography" is also discussed. The author supposes that this succession was not strictly consecutive, as it had been silently supposed by the most part of the researchers of "The Geography" before, but in fact quite different: Strabon *gathers* his work out of many abstracts, notes, synopses of read outlines; he gathers it according to a previously thought-out and even written-down plan. He works simultaneously on different parts and completes the text not book by book but sometimes in different order. So, accordingly, the books I-II ("Prolegomena") were written after at least a rough variant of all the books had already been written (pp. 39-43).

In the "next paragraphs of the second chapter", devoted to the concrete sources of "The Geography", the author sometimes argues against some concrete attributions of Strabon's concrete materials or shows *how* it so happened that different researchers identified the same places of Strabon with quite different sources. However, the main aim of the chapter is to

show how Strabon used his sources, which principles, methods of writing and ideas Strabon had taken from his forerunners, i.e. his sources.

4. The “third chapter” is called “The Geography” of Strabon: The Creative Compilation” (pp. 93-134). The title of this chapter reflects its primary purpose: to reject the idea of Strabon’s “Geography” as a mechanical compilation and to demonstrate the creative character of Strabon’s compiling.

The “first paragraph” (pp. 93-112) discusses the genre, composition and language of “The Geography”. The character of the material, the completeness of the information included and its variety side by side with the systematic method of its presentation and with the wish to outline its basic features without going into details let the author define “The Geography” as a work following *a scientific-didactical plan*: a geographical, historical, ethnographical encyclopedia, the most ancient example of this kind of literature, brilliantly developed afterwards in Plinius’ “Historia Naturalis”. Moreover, the author supposes “The Geography” to be the first look at Antiquity of the popular scientific character. She further adds that “The Geography” also contains a lot of motifs, scenes, facts and feelings which cannot be restricted to the procrustean bed of an encyclopedia; it includes a lot of elements of commentary, grammatical work, folklore, novel, anecdotes, and some others. This non-canonical genre character makes “The Geography” a unique piece of literature and provides the historian with a lot of different facts, varying from wars, droughts, pestilences, deluges, and so on, to some information of spicy (piquant) character. If we ask ourselves –the author underlines– why Strabon decided to join so different and non equivalent subjects and facts together, what his aim was in doing so, who the addressee of such kind of work may be, we can receive the answer from the geographer himself: the addressee is a prospective or inexperienced, yet educated statesman of pro-roman orientation (Strab. I 1,16; 21-23). Hence Strabon’s main objective is *utilitarian-didactical*: to give the statesman of this kind more information which he might find useful in his future activities as the leader of “a super state”. So, Strabon’s “Geography”, despite belonging to the *scientific literature*, according to its content and manner of presenting it, yet comes *near fiction* with its aims: upbringing, training, education, which can hypothetically give us an explanation for the heterogeneity of its components [cf. L. I. Gratsianskaya, “The peculiarities of the Compilative Method of Strabon”. *Theory and Practice of the Source-criticism and*

*Archaeography of Russian History*, Nauka (Science) edit. House, Moscow 1978, pp. 6-16 (in Russian)].

The author thinks that P. Pedech has quite correctly defined the main concept of Strabon's "Historica Hypomnemata" (different from Polybios' idea) as a will to show the possibilities of saving the perspectives of existing of the super empire of the Roman kind. She supposes that Strabon developed the exact same idea in his "Geography", as he underlines himself, not only as far as their genre and composition homogeneity is concerned but also concerning the same addressee of both compositions. Therefore, everything that could –from Strabon's point of view – positively influence the educated future statesman is included in "The Geography". As a consequence, geographical or ethnographical information can be alternated with anecdotes. About some cities he offers a different kind of information of political, economical or industrial nature, comments on their fortification, trade, and the like, or gives merely cultural information.

The stories about some countries and districts contain detailed descriptions of natural conditions, potential and real possibilities of agriculture, cattle-breeding or mine-workings, whereas other places are only mentioned or there is reference to some of their characteristics.

The main idea about this situation in the previous bibliography –the author asserts– was that Strabon, when compiling his sources mechanically, managed to collect a lot of information about some places, and not so much about others; even so, he did not include everything he had in his "Geography". Nevertheless, as the analysis of the inner structure of his composition shows us, that was not the case. All the stages of this analysis: compositional –giving us the appropriateness of the composition as a whole and partially–, lexical –including terminological–, syntactical, semantic and others concur some clear appropriateness which is valid in the frames of the entire "Geography". The appropriateness in different levels is stipulated by different separate reasons, but the main reason remains the same: Strabon's composition of "The Geography" (and of the "Historica Hypomnemata" also) as a peculiar universal manual.

The author further underlines that "The Geography" envelops maximum material in all spheres of life necessary –from Strabon's point of view– for the upbringing, training and education of the educated statesman of pro-roman orientation, who will be able, rationally and successfully, to rule in peace and in war over peoples and lands which are enclosed in his sphere of influence or have a propensity for it.

The composition of “The Geography”, logical and rigid enough, belongs to the geographer himself. In different parts of “The Geography” he comments on his compositional principles. He speaks (Strab. IV 6,1) about the order of his descriptions as “natural ” depending on the nature of the land he describes. In the borders of local descriptions he structures his work rhetorically: from more known to less known (Strab. XVII 1,3, cf. I 1, 16). His notes about what he has already said and about what he is going to speak are numerous. If he has some sources which do not coincide, he does not consider it correct to simply reject some of them, but talks about the necessity to incorporate them in his story as a whole as different arguments (Strab. I 2, 14).

The author also adds that the structure of different parts of “The Geography” –describing the regions emphasized by Strabon as one whole– is well traced back by M. Rostowzew on “The North Black Sea” material [M. Rostowzew, “Strabon as a source for the history of Bosphorus”. *A Collection of Articles in Honour of V. P. Buseskul*, Charkov, 1913-1914, p. 368 (in Russian)]. She also adds that this structure –consisting of three parts: 1. periplus (i.e. the description of the shore as an enumeration of rivers, cities, towns, harbours and peoples); 2. the historical references about those cities, peoples, etc.; 3. the general description of the country, practically always with historical references– is typical not only to the North Black Sea’s shore, but to all the other regions. The author also adds that if periplus is impossible, periegesis takes its place or the description *by map*, for example, the places from Rhein to Istros, sometimes river-periplus (e.g. Strab. XVII 1, 22-33 refer to the Nile). The periplus periegesis of the large –simply distinguished by formally cartographical principate regions: Iberia, Italia, Sicily, all the oikoumene etc.– is always preceded by common mathematical-figurative characteristic –according to the form or perception of this region (cf. Strab. XIII 1,4 and II 1,30): oikoumene-chlamis (Strab. II 5, 14 etc.), Iberia-the skin of the taurus (Strab. III 1,3), Mesopotamia looks like a ship (Strab. XI 1, 22), Libya-rectangular triangle (XVII 3,1), the island of Meroe-an oblong shield, and so on. Sometimes this kind of characteristics is given to small regions (Strab. XVII 2,20; XVII 1,8; XIV 1,42; XIII 1,34, etc.). This structure of the description is very strict in “The Geography”.

The author notes that the semantic of those compositional elements of “The Geography” and their order may be paralleled (even correlated) with the disposition of material in speeches, as recommended by school-

rhetorics: narratio-periplus, tractatio (*propositio et argumentatio*) - historical references and common description of the country, conclusio - the conclusion about the perspectives of usage of the country described. In the frames of these constructions it is possible for us to find at least three methods of introducing the material into the text: association, analogy (or parallel) and proof. Such methods are traditional for Greek literature, which is developed to a considerable extent under the influence of rhetoric and despite originating at least from the 4th century BC, they are still typical of the Greek literature both at Strabon's time and in the Roman period. From every point of view this is well defined by S. Averinzew as "reflective traditionalism" [S. Averinzew, "Ancient Greek Poetic Literature". *Poetic of Ancient Greek Literature*, Moscow 1981, pp. 5 qq.; idem, "Rhetoric as an Approach to the Generalization of Reality", *ibidem*, pp. 16-26 (in Russian)].

According to the author, the associative character of thought peculiar to fiction constantly breaks the well-made, dry structure of "The Geography", making a lot of additional micro-subjects and bringing the aroma of the epoch in this piece of prose. It completely destroys the impression of absence of authorship's origin in "The Geography"; but in spite of the often used associations in the text, the geographer always "returns to the previous", even if this "previous" is separated by a long string of associative or some other digression, and practically always says that he is going to proceed his narration interrupted by the digression (Strab. X 1, 15; XIII 1, 45, etc.)

After this, the author gives a good lot of concrete associations, analogies, parallels and proofs in the concrete places of "The Geography" and analyses them textologically. Some pages of the work are devoted to the analysis of the language and style of "The Geography", where she tries to prove the rhetorical character of many sides of them. Special attention is paid to the usage of prepositions. About this subject she has written a special article: "Οἱ περί by Strabon. The problems of Ancient History and Culture". [A report at *The XIV International Conference of Antiquity in Socialist Countries's* εἰρήνη, Erevan 1979, Vol. I, pp. 433-440 (in Russian)]. Strabon's passion for etymologisation is also a subject which occupies the attention of the author.

The "second paragraph of Chapter 3" (pp. 113-126) is devoted to the Terminology. The usage of Terminology and so-called "Terminologising Words" ("near terminology") is rather strict in the theoretical parts of

“The Geography”, but not as strict in others. Some notes are also devoted by the author to ἔθνος, κύριος [cf. her separate article about the latter term: “Social- political Terminology in “The Geography” of Strabon (κύριος)”. // *The Eastern Europe in Antiquity and Middle Ages*, Nauka (Science) edit. House, Moscow 1978, pp. 84-92 [in Russian]; cf. also her work on “Οἱ περί, πόλις-κώμη”, and “The verbs with the meaning “to destroy”, as well as her article about “Βασιλεύς” (in Russian)].

The “3rd paragraph of chapter 3” (pp. 127-136) is devoted to “Literary Stereotypes. Repetitions”. The usage of literary stereotypes is one of the most characteristic features of “The Geography”, which happens partly because of Strabon’s same liking for systematisation and the simplest rhetorical scheme: “premise-effect (consequence)”, “premise-proof”. The most demonstrative one is the stereotypical representation of the barbarus in “The Geography”. In that aspect –the author underlines– we must also not forget Strabon’s special attitude to Homer’s representations: his idea is that the reader can believe in some of Strabon’s or anybody else’s information provided that it does not contradict Homer, because the reader has been familiar with Homer’s description since his childhood and believes in them (Strab. VIII 3,3; cf. VII 4). Strabon’s idea is that rudeness, wildness and uncivilised life have some causes; the main of them (the kernel of the stereotype) are immoderations of the climate, scarcity of sail, life in the mountains, nomadic life and long distance “from us”, that is from the civilised Greek-Roman world (Strab. XVII 2,1-theoretical discourse; II 5,8; 26;29; III 1,2; 3,5; 7; 8; IV 1,5; 6,7; VI 1,12; 14; VII 5,12; cf. VII fr. 47; XI 2,4; 3,3; XVI 1, 17-18; 2,18; XI 7,1; XVII 1,3; 3, 14, etc.). In the contrary variant, i.e. good conditions in a plane country defining the mildness of its inhabitants, the stereotype also exists (Strab. II 5,6-theoretical discourse; III 2,4-11; 15, etc.).

Further on in the monograph, the problem of different kinds of “barbarians’ stereotypes” in “The Geography” is discussed with reference to the concrete material. The author has also composed some specific works dealing with this problem as well as two reports at the Conferences in Erevan in 1984 and in Berlin in 1986, but only the summaries of them were published in Russian: (1) “The image of Barbarus in Ancient Greek Literature of the Hellenistic Time”. *The second All-Union Symposium on the Problems of Hellenistic Culture in the East*, Erevan 1984, pp. 17-18); (2) “Northern Barbarians in Hellenistic-Roman Literature: Tradition and Reality”. // *Die Antike und Europa. Zentrum und Peripherie in der antiken*



*Welt*, Berlin, 1986, SS. 74-75. (3) One of the works dealing with the problem is written by our author in German: "Zentrum und Peripherie: Der ethnopsychologische Befund und seine Widerspiegelung in der Literatur". *Hellenismus: Beiträge zur Erforschung von Akkulturation und politischer Ordnung in den Staaten des hellenistischen Zeitalters. Akten des Internationalen Hellenismus-Kolloquiums, 9-14 März 1994 in Berlin*, hrsg. v. Bernd Funck, Tübingen 1996, SS. 475-489). The author goes on to distinguish two kinds of the barbarians' idealization: the "positive" idealization and the "negative" one, and then elaborates on further material which Strabon also gives as stereotypical.

Finally she writes about the repetitions in "The Geography", showing on the concrete material that those repetitions are actually a conscious literary method and not something that happens by chance.

The "4th paragraph of the 3rd chapter" (pp. 136-141): "The Creative Character of Strabon's Compiling", gives new material showing this creative character of the compilation and generalizes the material of the previous part of the monograph, proving this idea. The author discusses the question on the reasons why Strabon's "Geography" is a compilation.

The "5th paragraph of the 3rd chapter" (pp. 141-154) is the last one and speaks about "The Historicism of 'The Geography'". Criteria of Trustworthiness of the Information in "The Geography". Here the author discusses some criteria of trustworthiness, among which we must take into consideration the problem of Strabon's sources and the problem of Strabon's method of using his sources, of their contamination, and also the problem of Strabon's own role in his work, which the author thinks to be rather active. Then some concrete places of Strabon are analyzed historically; a few things are also said about Strabon's idea of truth and falsehood; the dichotomy *ἱστορία-μῦθος* by Strabon is also analyzed. This is done in more detail by the author in an article published in Russian: "The Peculiarities of the Compiling Method of Strabon. The Identification of the Truth and the Falsehood". *The Methods of the Searching for the most Ancient Sources of the History of the Peoples of the USSR*, Moscow 1978, pp. 76-91.

The author is also engaged in explaining the reasons for the loss of trustworthiness by Strabon among which there are numerical differences in the different systems of measurements and some others. Based on that, not only the material provided by Strabon as regards literary stereotypes, associations, proofs and analogies is considered to be less trustworthy, but



also the information used by him in theoretical parts. The most trustworthy ones –from the historical point of view– are separate facts, which fall from the proof-system, association-system or stereotypical representation.

In the “Conclusions” the author presents her hopes of the possible ways of her further investigations into “The Geography”.

In pp. 157-175 she lists the Bibliography.

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