

Introduction

1. The life of Strabo

All that is known about the life of Strabo is the information that he himself provided in his *Geography*.¹ Not even his full name is preserved, only “Strabo” (actually “Strabon” in the Greek of the sources).² Strabon/Strabo could be either a Roman cognomen or a Greek personal name, meaning, in both languages, “Squinter.”³ Yet early citations of the Greek name are rare and dubious, and do not predate the third century BC,⁴ when Roman names were already becoming known in the eastern Mediterranean. Although there is the remote possibility that “Strabo” was the geographer’s Greek birth name, this seems unlikely. It is more probable that he had a typical Anatolian Greek name, perhaps one of the seven other male names extant from his family (Dorylaos, Philetairos, Lagetas, Stratarchas, Moaphernes, Tibios, and Theophilos).

The geographer’s known name was probably from the common Roman cognomen Strabo, first documented with M. Licinius Strabo, military

¹ The bibliography on Strabo and his *Geography* is enormous, and only works relevant to the overall composition are cited in this Introduction. The modern editions of the text are discussed below (p. 29). See also Katherine Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* (Oxford, 1999), esp. 193–336; Johannes Engels, *Augusteische Oikumene Geographie und Universal-Historie im Werk Strabons von Amaseia* (Stuttgart, 1999); Strabo, *Géographie* (ed. Germaine Aujac, François Lasserre, and Raoul Baladié, Paris, 2003), 1: “Introduction générale”; Germaine Aujac, *Strabon et la science de son temps* (Paris, 1966), 221–309; Strabo, *Geographica: Strabon von Amaseia 4* (ed. Wolfgang Aly, Bonn, 1957); E. Honigmann, “Strabon von Amaseia” (#3), *RE* 2. ser. 4 (1931), 76–155; E. H. Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography* (London, 1883), esp. pp. 209–337.

² *PIR* S673. For convenience, the form “Strabo” is used throughout this edition. References to the *Geography* appear in parentheses in the introduction and in square brackets in the translation.

³ Pliny, *Natural History* 11.150. But the Greek term seems later than the Latin, and was first documented in medical terminology of the second century AD (Soranos 1.9.52), whereas the Latin was cited as early as the first century BC (Cicero, *Natura deorum* 1.80; Horace, *Satires* 1.3.44). Thus it is probable that the Roman cognomen entered Greek as a descriptive adjective.

⁴ The earliest known is from Thasos (*IG* 12.8.294): *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (ed. P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews, Oxford, 1987–), vol. 1, p. 413; vol. 3a, p. 403; vol. 4, p. 317.

tribune of 178 BC.⁵ Others with this cognomen included Cn. Pompeius Strabo (consul 89 BC and the father of Cn. Pompeius Magnus; cf. 5.1.7), and Julius Caesar Strabo (quaestor in 96 BC and the great-uncle of the Dictator). It is impossible, however, to determine with certainty where the geographer might have fit into the inter-related families (which, in the Roman fashion, were not limited to blood relatives) that used this cognomen. The most likely branch was that of Seius Strabo, whose members included Aelius Gallus, prefect of Egypt in the 20s BC, under whom the geographer Strabo served. Aelius Gallus seems to have adopted Seius Strabo, himself prefect of Egypt during the reign of Tiberius and father of the notorious Sejanus (actually L. Aelius Seianus). It is by no means certain, but there is a high degree of probability that the geographer Strabo was adopted by Aelius Gallus,⁶ yet took part of his name from the family of Seius Strabo, an example of the common procedure of using names from two closely related families. Thus, assuming that “Strabo” was the geographer’s Roman cognomen, his full name would have been his unknown Greek name coupled with Aelius Strabo.⁷ Yet it is ultimately impossible to tell whether the geographer had the name Strabo as his birth name or as an adoptive Roman cognomen,⁸ or indeed both, although it would be an odd coincidence if his birth and adoptive names were the same.⁹

Strabo’s birth date falls within a narrow range in the latter 60s BC. He saw P. Servilius Vatia Isauricus (consul 79 BC), who died at the age of ninety in 44 BC.¹⁰ Strabo’s acquaintance with Isauricus (12.6.2) suggests that he was an adult – or at least well into adolescence – by that year. Isauricus spent his last years in Rome, and thus Strabo was probably in the city by the early

⁵ Livy 41.2.9. For others with the name, see Iiro Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (CHL 36.2, 1965), 239.

⁶ Interestingly, however, he had little favorable to say about the man who seems to have been his patron: Aelius Gallus was not only responsible for the disastrous Arabian expedition – something perfectly obvious in Strabo’s account despite attempts to blame it on the Nabataean Syllaios (16.4.22–4) – but the expedition itself caused a revolt in Aithiopia (due to the lengthy absence from Egypt of so many Roman soldiers, 17.1.54). Moreover, Gallus had a charlatan, a certain Chairemon, in his entourage (17.1.29).

⁷ On this issue, see G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford, 1965), 128–9. There are numerous precedents for taking names from two connected families: M. Antonius Lepidus and C. Julius Lepidus, among others, are documented from the Augustan period.

⁸ Sarah Potheary, “Strabo the Geographer: His Name and Its Meaning,” *Mnemosyne* 4th ser. 52 (1999), 691–704.

⁹ The name occurs in Greek from the Bosporan city of Gorgippia (Fraser and Matthews, *Lexicon*, vol. 4, p. 317), one of the most remote Greek settlements, in AD 41, a little more than a decade after the geographer’s death. Gorgippia was well known to him (11.2.10) and was part of the kingdom of Mithridates VI, whom his family served for many years: it is possible that the existence of this rare name at this locality reveals a descendant of the geographer.

¹⁰ For details of his career see Karl-Ludwig Elvers, “P. S. Vatia Isauricus,” *BNP* 13 (2008), 331.

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40s BC. Although his use of “saw” (rather than “knew”) to describe the encounter is weak, he probably “saw” many famous people, and it is hard to imagine why he singled out Isauricus unless the contact were of particular importance.¹¹

Therefore Strabo was born no later than around 60 BC, perhaps a few years earlier. He frequently used the phrase “our times” to indicate an era after the late 60s BC. These years, which included the eastern campaigns of Pompeius in 65–62 BC and the death of Mithridates VI in 63 BC, with the resultant collapse of the Pontic kingdom, were great turning points in the history of Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean and seminal events in Strabo’s world view: Pompeius is mentioned over fifty times in the *Geography* and Mithridates VI over thirty. “Our times” is not a precise datum for events in the *Geography*,¹² but it is clear that Pompeius’ campaigns in the east and the death of Mithridates VI served as a convenient dividing line between the past and the present, the latter being, among other things, Strabo’s own era. The best evidence, then, is that he was born between 65 and 60 BC, and thus was close in age both to the emperor Augustus and Kleopatra VII.¹³

There is no doubt as to his place of birth: he told his readers more than once that his hometown was Amaseia (modern Amasya) in Pontos (12.3.15, 12.3.38–9), which had served as a royal residence for the duration of the original Pontic kingdom and had been turned over to Roman control about the time of Strabo’s birth, events in which his family was involved. Strabo’s description of the city (12.3.39) remains vivid today, and the modern visitor cannot fail to be impressed by its location deep in the dramatic canyon of the Iris River (modern Yeşil Irmak), with the royal tombs rising up the steep slopes opposite the city.

Strabo’s background was distinguished.¹⁴ His family had lived in Amaseia for many years, and can be traced back four generations to the brothers Philetairos and Dorylaos (Strabo’s great-great-grandfather). Dorylaos was a military tactician and a close associate of Mithridates V Euergetes (ruled 152–120 BC). Relatively late in his reign, the king sent Dorylaos to Thrace, Greece proper, and Crete to enlist mercenaries. While on Crete, Dorylaos

¹¹ On the problems, see Katherine Clarke, “In Search of the Author of Strabo’s *Geography*,” *JRS* 87 (1997), 92–110, esp. 101.

¹² Sarah Potheary, “The Expression ‘Our Times’ in Strabo’s *Geography*,” *CP* 92 (1997) 235–46.

¹³ Potheary, “Our Times,” 235–46, would argue for a later date, but fails to take into account the matter of Isauricus.

¹⁴ See the stemma on p. x, and Margherita Cassia, “La famiglia di Strabone di Amaseia tra fedeltà mitridatica e tendenze filoromane,” *MediterrAnt* 3 (2000) 211–37; G. W. Bowersock, “La patria di Strabone,” in *Strabone e l’Asia Minore* (ed. A. M. Biraschi and G. Salmeri, Naples 2000) 15–23.

was chosen to lead Knossian forces in a war against Gortyna, which he prosecuted successfully. Shortly thereafter he learned of the king's death and decided not to return to Pontos. He was greatly honored in Knossos and chose to stay there, marrying a Makedonian woman named Sterope. They had three children: Lagetas (Strabo's great-grandfather), Stratarchas, and a daughter (10.4.10).

Dorylaos' nephew, also named Dorylaos, was a close companion of the new king, Mithridates VI Eupator, who came to the throne in 120 BC. Mithridates was only a boy when he inherited the kingship, and he and Dorylaos were raised together, with the latter becoming an important member of the court: he was both the king's secretary and priest at the famous sanctuary of Pontic Komana (12.3.33).¹⁵ In the First Mithridatic War (89–85 BC), Dorylaos was detailed to take 80,000 men to Greece and to give assistance to the king's commander Archelaos, who was badly pressed by L. Cornelius Sulla.¹⁶ Dorylaos landed at Chalkis and occupied Boiotia, and provoked Sulla into battle, but before long the Romans defeated the Pontic forces at Orchomenos. Dorylaos was also assigned to bring the island of Chios under control, but no details are known and the evidence is contradictory.¹⁷ He continued in the service of the king, but in time allegedly attempted to revolt. The account is confused, and in fact this revolutionary spirit may have been a family myth, because Dorylaos seems still to have been with the king at the battle of Kabeira (near Amaseia) in 71 BC, where he was killed.¹⁸

His three cousins, the three children of his uncle Dorylaos, had been favored by Mithridates VI after their father's death and had moved from Knossos to Pontos. Little is known about the unnamed daughter or the second son Stratarchas, but the elder son, Lagetas (Strabo's great-grandfather), suggested to the Romans that he would lead a revolt against Mithridates VI if he were made ruler of Pontos (10.4.10), demonstrative of the deteriorating conditions of the last years of Mithridates VI and the abandonment of him by the local aristocracy. Yet this did not happen, and the family survived in reduced circumstances.

Also important at the court of Mithridates VI was Moaphernes, a great-uncle of the geographer, who had been made governor of Kolchis and was involved in mobilizing naval forces during the wars (11.2.18), but after the king's death he was not retained in his governorship. Strabo's grandfather,

¹⁵ OGIS 372. ¹⁶ Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 49.

¹⁷ Memnon (*FGrHist* #434), F23; see also Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 46. ¹⁸ Plutarch, *Lucullus* 17.3.

whom the geographer did not name,¹⁹ also revolted in the last years of the Pontic kingdom, evidently because the king had killed his cousin Tibios and the latter's son Theophilos (12.3.33). Strabo's grandfather caused fifteen fortresses to revolt from the king, but he never received recognition for this from the Romans. The family believed that the matter became tangled in the rivalry between L. Licinius Lucullus, who had been given the command against Mithridates in 74 BC, and Pompeius, who succeeded him in 65 BC. Pompeius, it was felt, would not support anyone who had been associated with Lucullus, and, moreover, convinced the Senate not to ratify Lucullus' acts, which would have included recognition of those who had helped him.

Strabo was born around the time that the Pontic dynasty collapsed with the death of Mithridates VI in 63 BC. As a boy or young man he was able to visit with his great-grandfather's brother Stratarchas, who was very old and was probably the major source for family history (10.4.10). The family seems to have survived the regime change, but did not retain its status under the Romans and left Pontos. Strabo was only an infant at the time of the Roman takeover, and accompanied his family in moving to Nysa in Karia, where they may have had relatives.²⁰ Nysa was an important cultural and intellectual center, and it was here that Strabo began his education, perhaps in the late 50s BC.

At Nysa Strabo encountered the extremely elderly Aristodemos (14.1.48), from a family of scholars whose patriarch was Menekrates, a student of Aristarchos of Samothrake, the notable philologist who had been librarian at Alexandria in the 150s BC. Aristarchos was one of the first to make critical editions of Greek poetry, especially Homer, a talent that he passed on to his student Menekrates, and the latter to his son Aristodemos, Strabo's teacher. Aristodemos taught Strabo rhetoric and grammar, and, one suspects, Homeric criticism. He may also have given Strabo some connections in Rome, as he had been tutor to the children of Pompeius.

Another teacher was Xenarchos of Kilikian Seleukeia. He left Seleukeia early in his career, and most of his teaching was in Alexandria, Athens, and Rome (14.5.4). At Rome he would become a member of the Augustan

¹⁹ Oddly, Strabo named neither his father nor either grandfather, and, in fact, did not mention anyone on his father's side, unless one accepts a variant reading at 12.3.33. All the distinguished ancestors he enumerated were on his mother's side, an unexplained hint at family dynamics.

²⁰ A certain P. Servilius Strabo, who was a friend of both Cicero and of Ti. Claudius Nero (the father of the emperor Tiberius), was associated with Nysa and was in the city in 51 BC (Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 13.64; see G. C. Richards, "Strabo: the Anatolian Who Failed of Roman Recognition," *G&R* 10 [1941], 79–90, esp. 81–2). If Servilius Strabo were a relative, it raises the interesting possibility that early in life the geographer had a contact with the future imperial family.

intellectual circle. A Peripatetic in outlook, he critiqued the works of Aristotle and developed his own ideas about motion. There was also Athenodoros (16.4.21), almost certainly the Stoic scholar from Tarsos who was the teacher of Octavian,²¹ and who would have been a primary source for the Stoicism that pervades Strabo's writings.²² Strabo also studied Aristotelian philosophy and Stoicism with Boethos of Sidon (16.2.24).²³

Obviously Strabo did not list all his teachers, and the places and dates of study are uncertain, as are many curriculum details. But as a young man he had wide-ranging association with the Greek intellectual elite of the era, many of whom would teach, or had taught, the most prominent people in Rome. Strabo's studies began at Nysa and then continued in Rome: his contacts would have eased his ability to move into Greek and Roman intellectual circles when he came to that city. In Rome he may have come to know Timagenes of Alexandria, the outstanding Greek historian of the era (4.1.13, 15.1.57), as well as a younger generation of developing scholars, such as Nikolaos of Damascus, Dionysios of Halikarnassos, Krinagoras of Mytilene, and Juba II, the future king of Mauretania, all of whom were mentioned in the *Geography*.²⁴ There was also Tyrannion of Amisos (12.3.16), a grammarian and the cataloger of the library of Aristotle and Theophrastos (13.1.54). Tyrannion had been established in Rome and well connected to the Roman elite since before Strabo was born. Of particular interest is that Tyrannion had some reputation as a geographer, as Cicero had noted as early as 59 BC,²⁵ and thus he might have been one of those who pointed Strabo in that direction. Another academic acquaintance was the poet and historian Diodoros of Sardeis (13.4.9).

Strabo also took advantage of the cultural opportunities of the city, including a visit to the temple of Ceres, admiring its painting of Dionysos by Aristeides of Thebes (8.6.23), one of the works of art that L. Mummius had brought from Corinth a century previously. The temple of Ceres, on the lower slopes of the Aventine at the edge of the Circus Maximus, was a

²¹ Dio 52.36.4.

²² On Strabo as a Stoic, see Jérôme Laurent, "Strabon et la philosophie stoïcienne," *ArchPhilos* 71 (2008), 111–27; Alexander Jones, "The Stoics and the Astronomical Sciences," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood, Cambridge, 2003), 328–44, esp. 342–4; Germaine Aujac, "Strabon et le stoïcisme," *Diotima* 11 (1983), 17–29; W. Aly, "Der Geograph Strabon als Philosoph," in *Miscellanea critica* 1 (Leipzig, 1964), 9–19.

²³ Diogenes Laertios 7.54, 143, 148–9.

²⁴ Dionysios (14.2.16), Krinagoras (13.2.3), and Juba were cited in passing (6.4.2, 17.3.7, 12) and Nikolaos was actually quoted (15.1.73). See also Bowersock, *Augustus*, 126–7.

²⁵ Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* #26.

notable depository of art.²⁶ Strabo's visit was before 31 BC, when both the temple and the painting burned.²⁷

Exactly when Strabo moved from Nysa (or elsewhere in Anatolia) to Rome is uncertain. He was probably in the city by 44 BC (the death of Isauricus). He may have seen some of the events surrounding the death of Julius Caesar in March of that year²⁸ and he obviously was there before 31 BC, as well as when he witnessed the execution of the brigand Selouros (6.2.6), an event of the latter 30s BC.²⁹ Whether these datum points manifest continuous residence in the city from the mid-40s BC into the late 30s BC cannot be proved. He studied there, became acquainted with the core of Greek scholars and students there, and probably gained some access to the Roman elite. Perhaps at this time he also came into contact with Aelius Gallus and was formally adopted into his family. And during these years he completed the education that he had begun in Anatolia, becoming well grounded in philology (especially Homeric studies), history, geography, and philosophy (oriented toward Stoicism but with extensive Peripatetic training). These were disciplines that would determine his future career. And probably by the 30s BC he had begun to write. He started with a biography of Alexander the Great (2.1.9), parts of which ended up in Books 11, 15, and 16 of the *Geography*.³⁰ This was a good beginning for a young scholar, and it certainly assisted him in learning geography. He then wrote a history of events "after Polybios," his *Historical Commentaries*. "After Polybios" meant both intellectually and chronologically (after 146 BC). It was forty-three books long. Nineteen fragments survive, the latest describing events in Judaea during 37 BC, and its terminal date may have been 29 BC, the end of the civil war.³¹ This work, over twice the length of the *Geography*, serves to remind one that Strabo was in many ways more historian than geographer, something apparent in the historical nature of much of the latter work, especially its valuable material about Anatolia in the first century BC.

²⁶ L. Richardson Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore, Md., 1992), 80–1.

²⁷ Dio 50.10.3. ²⁸ Strabo, *Historical Commentaries*, F19 (= Plutarch, *Caesar* 63).

²⁹ K. M. Coleman, "Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments," *JRS* 80 (1990), 44–73, esp. 53–4.

³⁰ For example, at 15.2.3 there is an abrupt change from the ethnography of Asia to details of Alexander's expedition, lasting through Section 7. For the *Deeds of Alexander*, see Paul Pédech, "Strabon historien d'Alexandre," *GB* 2 (1974), 129–45.

³¹ *Historical Commentaries*, T2 (= *Suda*, "Polybios"), F18 (= Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.8). Josephus identified the author as "Strabo of Kappadokia" (F6, 10, 13, 14, 16, 18), but this is probably not particularly significant, as there was a tendency to use "Kappadokia" to mean much of Anatolia.

Strabo travelled extensively although his scholarly activities may not have been the ultimate reason for his travels. Yet they certainly assisted in his research. He told the readers of the *Geography* about their range:

Now I will speak of where I have gone by land and sea, and what has been entrusted to the accounts or writings of others. I have gone west from Armenia as far as the regions of Tyrrhenia opposite Sardo, and south from the Euxeinos as far as the boundaries of Aithiopia. You could not find another among the geographers who has travelled over a much farther extent than I have said, for those who have covered more of the western portions have not touched as much of the east, and those in the opposite situation are behind in the west. It is the same in the case of the south and the north [2.5.11].

Although there is a certain polemic tone – one has the feeling that he is commenting on a specific author who is not identified – if the passage is to be taken literally it means that Strabo had visited the entire eastern Mediterranean from Italy east, and far into the interior of western Asia. Travels in Tyrrhenia and the Upper Nile are reflected in the text (5.2.6, 17.1.50). There is no specific reference to having visited the Euxeinos (Black Sea), but such was hardly necessary, as the sea was only a short distance from his hometown of Amaseia and most of its littoral had been part of the Pontic kingdom that his family had served for so long.

Armenia is the most problematic. In Strabo's day, much of the Greco-Roman contact with the territory was military. The region was unstable during most of his lifetime, beginning with the expeditions of Pompeius at the time of his birth, and then Antonius' difficulties in the 30s BC, followed by a lengthy period of rival territories and dynasts. Strabo was fully acquainted with the literature on the region: he made extensive use of Pompeius' chronicler Theophanes (11.2.2, 11.5.1, 11.14.4, 11.14.11, 12.3.28), as well as the notorious Quintus Dellius (11.13.3), who recorded the expeditions of Antonius. Yet it is likely that his personal experience with Armenia was limited to the extreme western regions around the upper Euphrates, the so-called Lesser Armenia, which during his later years was part of the Pontic kingdom of Pythodorus (12.3.28–9).

Some of his travels, such as those in southern Anatolia, occurred early in his life. But most of them were probably after he finished his education. The few that can be dated were in the 20s BC. Yet analysis of them is difficult, because of a lack of diagnostic criteria for determining whether a descriptive passage in the *Geography* is from autopsy or merely from an uncredited source which itself was autoptic, a difficulty in analyzing travel accounts in

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Greek literature since that of Herodotos.³² All topographic authors reflect autopsy without the use of the first person. Strabo's discussion of Egypt is a case in point. First there is a vivid and full description of Alexandria (17.1.6–10), a town that he lived in “for a long time” [2.3.5]. It is hard to imagine that the account is not Strabo's own, but the first person is never used. A voyage up the Nile follows (17.1.14–54), clearly an eyewitness report throughout – although with occasional citation of other sources – but the first person is not introduced until Section 24, in a discussion of lengths of measurement, and then not again until Section 29, when Strabo is at Helioupolis. In fact the first person seems to have been dropped into the narrative irrelevantly and idly, something apparent throughout the *Geography*. Strabo saw the art in the temple of Artemis at Ephesos (14.1.23) but did not record a visit to any other Ionian city, an improbability. His account of Armenia – scattered through Book 11 – has no first person. Thus first person may be valuable in telling where Strabo was but its omission has no meaning at all, and one must assume that the specifics of Strabo's travels were far more extensive than he revealed.

Notices of other journeys are scattered throughout the *Geography*. Strabo was on the obscure Kykladic island of Gyaros when his ship took on a local fisherman whom the villagers had chosen to petition Octavian, who was at Corinth at the time, returning from Egypt to Rome after the deaths of Kleopatra VII and Antonius (10.5.3). This was in the summer of 29 BC.³³ But as is usually the case with Strabo's personal anecdotes, the incident lacks context and the reader never learns why Strabo was crossing the Aigaion that summer. He too may have been on his way to Corinth, a city that he spent time in, climbing Acrocorinth (8.6.19).

Another datable part of his career concerns Egypt. He lived in Alexandria a long time – one would expect this from a scholar – part of which was on the staff of Aelius Gallus, the second prefect of Egypt and probably his Roman patron (2.5.12, 17.1.29–50). C. Cornelius Gallus, the first prefect, had run into difficulty for a variety of reasons and was removed from office, probably in 27 BC.³⁴ He was then replaced by Aelius Gallus, who made the voyage up the Nile and then a futile Arabian expedition (16.4.22–4) that took over a year: eight months' travel time as well as many additional months sitting at White Village. The Nile voyage would have been a normal

³² For the problems in determining autopsy in an ancient author, see Paul W. Wallace, *Strabo's Description of Boiotia: A Commentary* (Heidelberg, 1979), 168–72.

³³ Dio 51.21.1; Meyer Reinhold, *From Republic to Principate* (Atlanta, Ga., 1988), 155.

³⁴ Dio 53.23; A. Stein, *Die Präfekten von Ägypten in der Römischen Kaiserzeit* (Bonn, 1950), 14–17.

reconnaissance for a new official, so it was probably in the latter part of 27 BC or early in the following year. Strabo's participation in this expedition, providing so rich an exposure to geographical and cultural lore, may have given him the idea to write about geography. The Arabian expedition was dated to Augustus' tenth consulship (24 BC), but since it took longer than a year, it could have begun as early as the summer of 26 BC.³⁵ Nothing else is known about Aelius Gallus' career, although his term of office ended soon thereafter because his successor P. Petronius undertook two campaigns in Aithiopia by 21 BC (17.1.54). These were against the Aithiopian queen, Kandake, who sent envoys to Augustus on Samos, where the Princeps spent the winter of 21–20 BC.³⁶ Strabo stayed in Egypt into Petronius' tenure, perhaps not in any official capacity: the relatively short period that Aelius Gallus was in office (27–24 BC) seems hardly to qualify for the "long time" that he lived in Alexandria.

The only other datable personal vignette was a few years later, when Strabo saw Hermas, a man without arms, who was part of the presentation of Indian ambassadors to Augustus at Daphne in Syria in 20 BC (15.1.73).³⁷ Yet Strabo did not record where his encounter with Hermas occurred, and there is no indication that he was with Augustus in Daphne.

No other events in Strabo's career can be dated. But the *Geography* repeatedly provides glimpses of the scholar travelling through the eastern Mediterranean and the interior: witnessing the effects of a tidal wave on the eastern Egyptian coast (1.3.17), visiting a glass-blowing establishment in Alexandria (16.2.25), and seeing a very large snake in that city that had come from India (15.1.45). At some time he visited Kyrene, providing a description of his ship approaching the port (17.3.20). There were numerous cities and places in Anatolia familiar to him, as one might expect: Nysa (14.1.48), the sacred city of Komana in Kappadokia (12.2.3), the unusual geological phenomena at Hierapolis in Phrygia (13.4.14), and the striking Pyramos Gorge in Kataonia (12.2.4). He saw Persian rituals somewhere in Kappadokia (15.3.15), left a detailed description of his home town of Amaseia (12.3.15, 12.3.39, 17.1.34), and visited Ephesos (14.1.23).

Strabo also returned to Rome, probably a number of times. His description of the city has an eyewitness flavor (although the first person is absent):

³⁵ Dio 53.29; Shelagh Jameson, "Chronology of the Campaigns of Aelius Gallus and C. Petronius," *JRS* 58 (1968), 71–84; at 77.

³⁶ Dio 54.7.4; Jameson, "Chronology," 75; Helmut Halfmann, *Itinera principum* (Stuttgart, 1986), 158.

³⁷ Dio 54.9; Halfmann, *Itinera*, 158.