

BENOÎT LAUDENBACH, *Strabon, Géographie, Tome XIV, Livre XVII, 1<sup>re</sup> Partie, L'Égypte et l'Éthiopie Nilotique*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2015, cx+327 pp., 78 of which are double. ISBN 978-2-251-00598-0; ISSN 0184-7155.

BENOÎT LAUDENBACH *Strabon, Géographie, Tome XV, Livre XVII, 2<sup>e</sup> Partie, L'Afrique, de l'Atlantique au Golfe de Soloum*, Texte établi et traduit par Benoît Laudenbach, Commenté par Jehan Desanges, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014. xxviii+263 pp., 36 of which are double. ISBN 978-2-251-00588-1; ISSN 0184-7155.

Volumes XIV and XV of the Greek-French edition of Strabo's *Geography* in the Collection Guillaume Budé, which is the subject of this review, spell out the resumption of a work that began more than 50 years ago. The first item of the series, corresponding to volume II, appeared in 1966, although the work has remained interrupted since 1981, when volume IX, dedicated to *Geography* Book XII, came out. In a more than welcome effort, Benoît Laudenbach takes over from Germaine Aujac, François Lasserre and Raoul Baladie, offering us the critical edition and translation of Book XVII of Strabo's work, as well as the detailed commentary of Sections 1 and 2 – Egypt and Nilotic Ethiopia – while that of Section 3, Africa from the Atlantic coast to the Gulf of Sollum, is authored by Jehan Desanges, an unquestioned expert on the geography and ethnography of Africa as transmitted by Greek and Roman sources. After the 2016 publication of Volume XII of the series, on Book XV – India and Ariana, also by Laudenbach –, only Volumes X and XI, containing Books XIII and XIV, are pending to complete the entirety of Strabo's work.

Thus far, on this one occasion one of the books in the *Geography* was divided into two different volumes of the Budé series. It must be pointed out that each volume corresponds to one of the two “natural” sections of *Geography* XVII, as against the three traditionally established “scholarly” sections into which the book has been divided since the edition of Kramer (1852). As Laudenbach explains in his introduction to Volume XIV, Strabo did not actually make a distinction between Egypt and Ethiopia, but rather considered them a larger unit – the Nile and its valley as a whole – defining the border between Asia and Libya and, at the same time, belonging to Asia. Volume XIV of the Budé series, thus, corresponds to Strabo's treatment of the Nile, while Volume XV, on its side, is devoted to the geographer's chapters on Libya, the third continent of the inhabited world, regarded as the smallest, to which Strabo only dedicates 25 chapters.

As is customary in the Budé collection, each volume opens with an introduction to the text and the translation, respectively written by Laudenbach and Desanges, with Desanges' introduction also including a last paragraph by Laudenbach. Both introductions are independent, inasmuch as they focus on diverse text sections of the *Geography*, but each has clearly taken the other into account: for instance, Desanges' essay (vol. XV, p. XV) makes reference to Strabo's dependence on written sources when dealing with Libya, in contrast to his direct experience of Egypt, a topic extensively developed by Laudenbach (see Vol. XIV, pp. X-XX, on Strabo's voyage along the Nile, while accompanying his friend Aelius Gallus, then prefect of Egypt; id. pp. XXXV-XL, on indications of first hand experience in the text, etc.). To summarise, both introductions are coherent with and complement each other; it is even possible to point out some overlapping between them. In particular, the idea that Strabo did not write his work at once, but reviewed and updated it several times, adding new information and correcting old data, is explained in both the introductions by Laudenbach and Desanges, when the authors deal with the composition dates of their respective sections of the *Geography*. Moreover, the nature of *Geography* as an unfinished work, as well as its value as praise and tribute to Rome and to its supreme leader, Augustus, are aspects Laudenbach deals with in both a long section of his introduction to Volume XIV (pp. LXVII-LXXXVIII) and in the small appendix written by him at the end of Desanges' introduction (vol. XV, pp. XXII-XXIV).

Laudenbach's introduction is divided into two main sections, the first of which deals with aspects pertaining to the elaboration of Strabo's chapters on the Nile: the way the author obtained the information (the aforementioned voyage to Egypt, the consequent first-hand testimony, the written sources he mentions as authorities), the composition date of the text section concerned, its structure and content, work plan, references to *realia*, both in the nature of the place and in the local customs, the style and literary features of the *Geography* (this aspect is only rarely treated by scholars dealing with Strabo) and the intention of the author in writing this section of the *Geography* (praise of Rome and Augustus as its leader through praise of Egypt and Alexandria, the possible practical use of the text, and the coexistence of such practical use with a scholarly approach, etc). At the same time, Laudenbach also includes an explanation of some facts of language, as well as some peculiarities of the Egyptian place names in *Geography* XVII, which influenced some of the decisions he made in his critical edition of the text (see below).

Volume XV – i.e, the item of the Budé collection corresponding to the last section of the book – appeared one year before the first. Therefore, it was only with the publication of Volume XIV that readers of the chapters on Libya could come to know the editorial criteria that Section 3 had followed. In his essay, Desanges focuses on the composition date of the description of Libya,

its structure and plan – influenced mainly by Artemidorus and Posidonius – and its sources, which Strabo very likely updated, probably thanks to the access he had to the most recent information, due to his friendships in the Roman upper class. The readers of volume XV, however, were unable to read at the time the detailed description of the manuscripts taken into account, their stemmatic relationships, and their relative value as testimonies of the text, information that Laudenbach offers in his introduction to Volume XIV. The editor explains he has directly checked all of them except for W (*Athous Vatopedii* 655) and the manuscripts from Heidelberg – all of these available online in digital format. Particularly valuable is Laudenbach's direct examination of the palimpsest *Vaticanus gr.* 2306 + *Vaticanus gr.* 2061A + *Cryptensis gr.* 849 (Π), even if, as he acknowledges, the poor condition of the manuscript only allowed him to confirm some of the readings of his predecessors (e.g. vol. XV, p. 21, apparatus on l. 12; id. p. 22, apparatus on l. 1; id. p. 32, apparatus on ll. 16-17 and 18), rather than find new readings of his own (e.g. vol. XIV, p. 48, apparatus to l. 8).

With respect to other editors of Strabo, Laudenbach is distinguished by a close contact with the field of papyrology. He has had extensive experience as the author of papyrological editions and his doctoral dissertation, which served as the germ and origin of the present edition of *Geography* XVII, was supervised by Jean Gascou, one of the most renowned authorities in France in the field of papyrology. Laudenbach's expertise in papyrology, in our opinion, might have influenced him as critical editor of Strabo: apart from his awareness of the information transmitted through papyrological sources, to which he frequently refers in the commentary, he shows a will to respect the text transmitted avoiding every correction not absolutely necessary as much as possible. See e.g. vol. XIV, p. 17, l. 8, where he accepts the reading σῶμα of δ, referring to the tomb of Alexander, instead of the conjecture σῆμα, suggested by Casaubon; id. 18, l. 19; id. 20, l. 6, maintaining the reading ἄλλαι attested by δ, instead of the corrections of Casaubon, Meineke, Lumbroso, Kramer, Maricq and Knight; id. p. 45, l. 5. See also vol. XIV, p. 27, l. 20: Laudenbach conserves the reading of the manuscripts ἐλαττόνων, without accepting Radt's suggestion of adding οὐκ or μικρῶ before it, as well as id. p. 35, where a similar correction by Kramer is also rejected. Further examples abound.

Sometimes Laudenbach makes this attitude explicit (e.g. vol. XIV, p. 129, n. 11: “avec Jones, je crois que le texte n'a pas forcément besoin de correction”; id. p. 110, n. 12: “dans le doute, je conserve la leçon des manuscrits”).

Such an approach of “non-intervention”, on the one hand, seems to respond to the most recent trends among critical editors of classical texts, who tend to avoid the standardisation of the Greek and to conserve the text without correcting its possible defects if they have solid attestation in the manuscript tradition. But it also agrees with the mentality common to

papyrologists, who usually regard the peculiarities and irregularities of the texts transmitted in papyrological documents as sources of information with regard to the linguistic reality of the scribe, to the practical circumstances of the copy and, perhaps, to the original text as it was created.

The editor's respect for the transmitted text also leads him to frequently relegate his own proposals for correction and conjecture to the critical apparatus, only rarely placing them in the main text (e.g. vol. XIV, p. 34, l. 7: he suggests, in apparatus, a reading *Φαρβαιθίτης*, but in the main text he respects the *Φαρβητίτης* of the main manuscripts; id. p. 55, l. 8: he respects the *Ἀφροδίτης* of the manuscripts, but expresses his suggestion *Ἀφροδίτη* in apparatus; vol. XV, p. 11, l. 5: he keeps his suggestion to read the name of the historian quoted by Strabo as *Τανύσιος Γεμίνος* in the apparatus. Moreover, this reading is explained palaeographically in the corresponding critical note, p. 104. This attitude is not only visible with regard to Laudenbach's own conjectures; it also appears when he accepts suggestions from other scholars. Furthermore, it can be observed that, when Laudenbach formulates a conjecture that appears in the main text, he tends to explain it in the commentary (e.g. vol. XIV, p. 55, l. 11: *Πτολεμαῖς ἡ πόλις*, explained on palaeographical grounds in p. 226).

The "conservative" spirit is also visible when Laudenbach deals with variants of place names (vol. XIV, p. 38, l. 16, maintaining the *Φαγρωρίοπολις* of the ms. instead of Radt's correction to the regular *Φαγρωρίων πόλις*; id. p. 33, l. 5: *Λεοντόπολις*, instead of the standardisation *Λεόντων πόλις*; *Λατῶ πόλις* corrected by Radt into *Λάτων πόλις*) and ethnic names (e.g. *Τρωγλοδύται* vs. Radt *Τρωγοδύται*): rather than searching for a norm in their expression, he regards the readings received from the most authorised manuscripts as possible sources of information about phonetic phenomena, or even peculiarities of Strabo's speech, which he attributes, in the case of place names, to his contact with Latin sources, as well as Latin-speaking oral informers during his voyage along the Nile accompanying the Roman authorities of his time.

Laudenbach's reluctance to modify the extant text is also visible both in his refusal to accept the existence of lacunae (see vol. XIV, p. 17, l. 6, where he denies the lacuna and supplement suggested by Grosskurd; id. p. 20, l. 6, respecting the reading *ἄλλαι* of *δ*, without any addition, instead of the diverse conjectures and supplements provided by Casaubon, Meineke and Kramer, among others; vol. XV, p. 24, l. 14) and in his reserve regarding the elimination of text sequences if they are not absolutely proven superfluous additions by later hands (see vol. XIV, p. 26, l. 12).

The editor's choices among the various manuscript testimonies are, in our view, mostly to the point and well explained. However, in some cases they might perhaps deserve further explanation or be susceptible to discussion. E.g., it is not clear why his reading of the palimpsest *κατά τε τὴν τοῦ ἀέρος*

εὐφύταν, regarded as correct in the apparatus (vol. XV, p. 33, l. 12-13), is not accepted in the main text.

The commentary, based on an extensive and properly updated bibliography (which, on Str. XVII 1-2 extends to 2014, and on Str. XVII 3 to 2013), occupies the greater part of the volumes in both the case of Volume XIV (pp. 79 to 292) and Volume XV (pp. 40 to 247). Once again, the drift both scholars take is diverse and complementary: Desanges' notes deal mainly with geographic problems – the measurement of the continent, its orientation, Strabo's references to the geographic concepts of his sources, etc. – and details of Strabo's ethnography on Libyan peoples. However, very frequently Laudenbach adds brief philological notes to Desanges' comments, explaining details of the translation, difficult meanings of particular terms, parallels in other authors, etc. For its part, Laudenbach's commentary focuses, on the one hand, on the philological problems of the edition and the corresponding translation, and, on the other, the explanation of the geographic and historiographic content of that section, its corresponding *realia* and its comparison with other extant sources of information on ancient Egypt, whether Greek, Latin or Egyptian, taking literary texts as well as documentary information into account. Among Laudenbach's notes, his explanation of the meaning of Ptolemy IX's nickname, Λάθουρος, usually construed as "grass pea", is remarkable: a term normally spelled λάθυρος. He interprets it, however, as a compound of λάθρα + οὔρος, i.e. 'incontinent' (vol. XIV, p. 138, n. 2), a construction that has been received with some scepticism by other scholars, but which in our opinion is a clever reading of the term and its orthographic peculiarity.

Volume XIV offers three indexes at the end, respectively containing personal names and god's names, place names and ethnic names, and Greek words. Volume XV, for its part, also includes indexes of personal names and god's names, and of place names and ethnic names. Moreover, a series of maps illustrates the geography of the territory concerned in each volume. Finally, Volume XIV also offers a diagram of the genealogy of the Ptolemaic dynasty, which helps the reader situate Strabo's references to the Egyptian kings over time.

The translation is both accurate and easy to read. I did not systematically look for typos in reading the work, although some minor errors in the Greek text caught my eye (for instance, the breathings on ἐτησίαι and ἐτήσιοι are erroneously written in apparatus to l. 4, vol. XIV, p. 16). Still, the misprints I could point out are very few and never detract from the general value of this edition and its accompanying commentary, clearly the result of a careful, attentive and trustworthy effort.

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