

Orbis Terrarum

Band 24 · 2026

Franz Steiner Verlag

Internationale Zeitschrift für historische
Geographie der Alten Welt

Journal of Historical Geography of
the Ancient World

Revue internationale de la géographie
historique du monde antique

Rivista internazionale di geografia storica
del mondo antico

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON

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IN VERBINDUNG MIT

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Frank Daubner



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Publikationsorgan der *Ernst-Kirsten-Gesellschaft. Internationale Gesellschaft für Historische Geographie der Alten Welt*

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Band 24 · 2026

Franz Steiner Verlag

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

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Maybachstraße 8, 70469 Stuttgart
service@steiner-verlag.de
www.steiner-verlag.de

Layout und Herstellung durch den Verlag
Satz: DTP + TEXT Eva Burri, Stuttgart

Druck: Beltz Grafische Betriebe, Bad Langensalza
Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-515-14232-8 (Print)
ISBN 978-3-515-14239-7 (E-Book)
DOI 10.25162/9783515142397

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Preface

Orbis Terrarum is the publication of the Ernst Kirsten Society and a forum for research in the field of Historical Geography of Antiquity. It provides an academic platform for studies by historians, geographers, philologists, and archaeologists, as well as other scholars of antiquity concerned with aspects of historical geography. The spectrum is deliberately broad: Studies on the geographic-topographic profile of the ancient world find a place here, as well as research on the historical interaction between humans and landscape and works on methodology or the history of science. Each volume also includes reviews of selected recent books within the field. *Orbis Terrarum* publishes articles in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

Orbis Terrarum uses double-blind peer review. For each article at least two expert opinions are anonymously obtained. For their collaboration on the present volume, I would like to thank the following colleagues: Manuel Albaladejo, Jochen Althoff, Ernst Baltrusch, Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen, Klaus Belke, Serena Bianchetti, Kai Brodersen, Camilla Campedelli, Luigi Capogrossi Colognesi, Omar Coloru, Altay Coşkun, Patrick Counillon, Edward Dąbrowa, Julian Degen, Silke Diederich, Tiziano Dorandi, Daniela Dueck, David Engels, Thorsten Fögen, Francisco J. González Ponce, Leonardo Gregoratti, Jean-Yves Guillaumin, Wolfgang Hübner, Ekaterina Iljushechkina, Askold Ivantchik, Hans Kopp, Philip G. Kreyenbroek, Ray Laurence, Johanna Leithoff, Charlotte Lerouge-Cohen, Salvatore Liccardo, Jens-Olaf Lindermann, Manolis Manoledakis, Christoph Mauntel, Christoph Michels, Peter Mittag, Sabine Müller, Mauro de Nardis, Oriol Olesti, Eckart Olshausen, Klaus Oschema, Eloisa Paganoni, David Paniagua, Silvia Panichi, Lee Patterson, Simonetta Ponchia, Sarah Potheary, Luisa Prandi, Giovanni Salmeri, Mustafa Sayar, Tassilo Schmitt, Ute Schneider, Daniëlle Sootjes, Michael Stausberg, Christian Wendt.

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AUFsätze

ORBIS TERRARUM 24 (2026), 9–29

DOI 10.25162/OT-2026-001

LUIS BALLESTEROS PASTOR

Pride, Prejudice, and Nostalgia

Strabo's View of Pontus

ABSTRACT: The fact that Strabo was born in Amasia, the former capital of Pontus, lends a distinctive character to his description of this kingdom and its ancient dynasty. He seeks to extol the virtues of the country, integrating it as far as possible into the Greek tradition, while softening the harsh image of its inhabitants attested in several sources. Thus, he aspires to be regarded as a member of the Hellenic community, despite the barbarian branches of his lineage. Strabo emphasises that his ancestors held important positions under the Pontic kings, and in particular under Mithridates Eupator. This pride stands in tension with his desire to present himself as a loyal subject of Rome, whose peaceful rule is portrayed as having brought prosperity to the region. He looks back with a degree of nostalgia on the glorious period of the Mithridatids, yet criticises them for having subjugated Greeks and for the calamities which Eupator's wars with Rome brought to his homeland and his own family.

KEYWORDS: Strabo, Pontus, Cappadocia, Mithridatids, Mithridates Eupator

1. Introduction

Writing about Strabo's perspective on his native land proves challenging. Indeed, much has been argued on a matter that, seemingly, concerns only a small part of a work as vast as the *Geography*, which, beyond its immediate purpose, raises a series of fundamental questions about the author from Amasia. It is difficult to add anything new to what numerous scholars—undoubtedly more specialised in Strabo's work than I am—have already written.¹ Therefore, in this paper, I shall primarily aim to offer my own reflections, which began back in 1987 when I started my doctoral thesis on Mithridates Eupator, the king of Pontus. The unfortunate loss of Strabo's *Historical Commentaries* forces us to rely solely on the *Geography* for any research concerning him. At first glance, this work appears somewhat neutral, making it often difficult to discern the author's ideas, which

1 This paper has been drawn up within the Research Project, "Los dioses de Anatolia y sus nombres en textos griegos de época helenística y romana" (PID2021-124635NB-C32), sponsored by the Ministry of Economy of Spain and the European Union. In general, on Strabo, see Dueck 2000; Dueck/Lindsay/Pothecary 2005; Dueck 2017b. On Strabo and Pontus, see in particular Syme 1995, 289–385; Ballesteros Pastor 1998; Gnoli 2000; Lindsay 2005; Bowersock 2000; Olshausen 2014, 40–4; Kuin 2017, 105–7; Panichi 2019; Paganoni 2024. A comprehensive commentary on Strabo's description of Pontus appears particularly in Olshausen/Biller 1984; see further Radt 2008, 359–405; Roller 2018, 698–718.

are at times expressed only indirectly.² Nevertheless, I believe that the *Geography*, apart from its connection with the worldview promoted by Augustus and its praise of the *Pax Romana*, harbours an underlying intention: to elevate the author himself and to present an image of him aligned with his personal interests.

2. Pontus, a remote barbarian land

Let us begin with Strabo's native land. The Kingdom of Pontus straddled Eastern Paphlagonia and the so-called Pontic Cappadocia, which is also referred to in the sources as Syria, Upper Cappadocia, or, at least in part, Lesser Armenia.³ We are thus in the vicinity of what for a long time was considered the eastern boundary of the *oikoumene* in the Greek view: this was the land visited by the Argonauts shortly before reaching their destination, and also a country located near the underworld. Pontus lay between the settings of two of Heracles' Labours: the abduction of Cerberus, according to certain traditions in Heraclea Pontica, and the theft of Hyppolyte's girdle, supposedly in Themiscyra, a village situated east of Amisus, to which *chora* it belonged.⁴ This was the fantastical realm of the Amazons, who lived alongside peoples regarded as savage, such as the Chalybes, the Mossynoeci, and the Tibareni.⁵

As we have said, the kingdom of the Mithridatids encompassed Eastern Paphlagonia and Pontic Cappadocia, on both sides of the mouth of the Halys. Even though, in Strabo's time, the inhabitants along both banks of this river shared similar features, Marta Sordi argued that the Halys had long constituted a cultural as well as a physical boundary. It had once marked the divide between barbarism and civilisation—between the flourishing kingdom of Croesus and the Persian world that would eventually defeat this renowned ruler.⁶ The image of remoteness and isolation associated with the lands surrounding the lower course of the Halys appears to have been transmitted through the centuries. Indeed, Alexander had reminded the Sinopeans that they did not belong to

2 On the *Historikà Hypomnēmata*, see above all ENGELS 1999, 76–113; ENGELS 2013; LINDSAY 2014; MALINOWSKI 2017. On the combination of Geography and History in Strabo's work, see OLSHAUSEN 2022, 140.

3 BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 149–150; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2016b, 273–5. On the boundaries of Mithridatid Pontus, see above all Strab. 12.3.1; 12.3.16; 12.3.18; cf. 12.3.28; LASSERRE 1981, 159 n.10; OLSHAUSEN 2014; OLSHAUSEN 2022, 138. It has been inferred from Strabo (12.3.1–2; cf. 6) that Heraclea Pontica was *de facto* incorporated by Eupator: NIESE 1883, 578; OLSHAUSEN 2022, 138; and for discussion MAREK 1993, 35–6; GNOLI 2000, 545–50; PAGANONI 2024, 124 with n. 37. In fact, Strabo begins his description of the Pontic kingdom from Amastris (12.3.9–10). He refers to the territories east of Side, at the easternmost point of the *chora* of Amisus, as “Lesser Armenia” (12.3.18, cf. 28–29, 37). However, as he states in 12.3.28, Mithridates expanded his realm as far as Trapezus, reaching the border with Colchis, which was likewise annexed: see OLSHAUSEN/BILLER 1984, 3–4.

4 For sources about these Labours, see GANTZ 1993, 397–400, 413–6. Allegedly, Sinope had been founded by Autolycus, one of the Argonauts: BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2026b (with further bibliography). Remarkably, Strabo records this tradition (12.3.11). On Pontus and the Underworld, see further BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2026b.

5 On these peoples, see MANOLEDAKIS 2017, 156–65; MANOLEDAKIS 2022, 154–218.

6 SORDI 1982. On these common features, see Strab. 12.3.25, 12.3.40.

the Hellenic confederation.⁷ All the more so, when we speak of Amasia, Strabo's birthplace, located beyond that river, we find ourselves unmistakably in a barbarian environment. Moreover, this was the former capital of Pontus, where the tombs of the ancient Mithridatid kings were still clearly visible. By the time of our author, these monarchs had almost become legendary characters, representing a distant past quite different from the firmly established Roman authority that now ruled the region.⁸

As Strabo himself states, largely following Aristotle's view, those who live in cities, that is, in *poleis*, are civilised.⁹ In this regard, we must bear in mind that Mithridatid Pontus was not a land of cities, and even after Eupator's efforts to give a civic appearance to certain indigenous settlements, and the subsequent Pompeian organisation of part of the country into civic districts, a predominantly village-like context still prevailed in the region. This, to a great extent, explains why Rome did not initially annex all the Anatolian territories formerly ruled by the Mithridatids.¹⁰

3. Pontus and Strabo's "patriotic" pride

Just as with other barbarians, such as the Carians—whom Strabo mentions when discussing the origin of this term—the Cappadocians and Paphlagonians were regarded as rough people, a view generally extended to all the inhabitants of the Black Sea region. The Paphlagonians were at times portrayed as a simple folk, with coarse habits.¹¹ As for Cappadocia, Diodorus asserts that this land had long been ignored by the Greeks. Lucan does not hesitate to describe the Cappadocians as "fierce", taking into account that *feritas* was considered a barbarian trait.¹² Thus, calling someone "Cappadocian" carried a certain pejorative connotation. For this reason, on the few instances when the sources refer to Mithridates Eupator as "Cappadocian", it is always with the intention of disparaging him: such is the case with the Ephesian decree on debts, in which the city retracts its earlier support for the king, and Posidonius' passage about the arrival of the pro-Pon-

7 *Arr. an.* 3.24.4; cf. *Curt.* 6.5.6; BOSWORTH 1980, 353–4; ATKINSON 1994, 133–4; BRIANT 1996, 719.

8 On Amasia as Strabo's birthplace, see *Strab.* 12.3.15, 38, 39. In general, on the city, see LINDSAY 2005, 180–99; and further OLSHAUSEN/BILLER 1980, 105; MAREK 1993, 19; SYME 1995, 295–301. On the royal tombs, see FLEISCHER 2017; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2021, 191–2.

9 *Strab.* 3.4.13; cf. *Arist. Pol.* 1.1.1253; THOLLARD 1987, 10. On Strabo and Aristotle, see in general ROSEMAN 2005.

10 For discussion, see SAPRYKIN 1992; GNOLI 2000, 561; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2006, 386–91; SØRENSEN 2017, 107–12; COŞKUN 2021b.

11 On the Paphlagonians and Cappadocians, see in general Aristophanes, *Knights*, and also Petron. 68–69; *Curt.* 6.11.4; *Lucian Alex.* 9, 17, 39; *Lib. or.* 1.85; MITCHELL 2010, 87–93; MANOLEDAKIS 2021; MANOLEDAKIS 2022, 126–9 (with further references), and below n. 21. Paphlagonia had traditionally been a country that supplied slaves: ATKINSON 1994, 238; MANOLEDAKIS 2022, 122. In general, the people of the Black Sea region were reputed as rough and ignorant: *Hdt.* 4.46.1; MITCHELL 2002, 40; HARLAND 2021, 83–7. On the Carians, see ALMAGOR 2005, 44–8; PONTANI 2023.

12 See *Luc.* 3.43–44; *Diod.* 31.19.8, respectively. On *feritas* as a barbarian attribute, see DAUGE 1981, 428–9; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 235 (with further bibliography). On this concept in Strabo, see THOLLARD 1987, 11, 38–9; CORDE 2005, 83–5.

tic tyrant Athenion in Athens, where the Athenians who sided with Mithridates are also disdainfully called “Cecropids”.¹³ The same contemptuous sense of the term “Cappadocian” would be taken up by Mommsen centuries later.¹⁴ Therefore, the passage, where Strabo speaks of the assistance to Rome against Aristonicus by “the kings of the Cappadocians”, in reference to both Ariarathes V and Mithridates Euergetes, we believe to be a slip by our author not repeated elsewhere in his work, as he consistently distinguishes between the kings of Pontus and those of Cappadocia.¹⁵ In this final phase of Hellenism, kings were officially associated with a specific territory over which they exercised authority, as can be inferred from the *Lex de Prouinciis praetoriis*.¹⁶

Flavius Josephus repeatedly refers to Strabo as “the Cappadocian”, possibly reflecting a well-established tradition in the Jewish author’s time.¹⁷ However, this label may not have been to Strabo’s liking, as he sought above all to be considered a worthy member of the Hellenic community, despite having barbarian blood in his ancestry. Indeed, Strabo always refers to the Cappadocians in the third person, never calls Pontus as “my homeland”, and instead refers to Amasia as “my city” or “my fatherland”, and to its *chora* as “my country”.¹⁸ In any case, no passage in the *Geography* echoes the negative stereotype of the peoples of Cappadocia and Paphlagonia.

Indeed, I believe that Strabo was interested—perhaps even obsessed—with being considered, above all, as a Greek.¹⁹ If we examine more closely the aforementioned passage from Book XIV of the *Geography* about the Carians, it seems to serve as a defense of the author, who, although he does not consider himself a barbarophone, seeks to make it clear that those peoples who do not pronounce Greek correctly are not hindered because of any

13 See respectively: *Syll.*³ 742; Poseid. *BNJ* 87 F 36; Athen. 5.212a, cf. 215b. For further sources referring to the Mithridatic kings or their subjects as “Cappadocians”, see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 148. The Pontic commander Archelaus, who possibly came from Sophene (BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2026a), is called ‘Cappadocian’ by Sulla, perhaps in a derogatory sense (Plut. *Sulla* 22.4, 23.2). The term “Cecropids” recorded in Posidonius’ fragment (*apud* Athen. 212b) would have aimed to ridicule the glorious past claimed by the Athenians (FERRARY 1989, 833; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2005, 390).

14 MOMMSEN 1889, 268. See BALLESTEROS PASTOR 1996, 304–7, for discussion.

15 Strab. 14.1.38. There are compelling reasons to hold this view: 1. Nowhere else in the *Geography* are the Mithridatids referred to as “Kings of Cappadocia” or “of the Cappadocians”, but simply as “Kings” (implicitly of Pontus: 12.3.9, 31, 34, 38, 40, 41, cf. 6.4.2). 2. Strabo clearly states that the kingdom of the Mithridatids, called Pontus, was composed of lands and peoples belonging to Paphlagonia and Pontic Cappadocia, divided by the Halys (see, respectively, 12.3.41 and 12.3.38). This kingdom must therefore be distinguished from the territory that Strabo calls Greater Cappadocia, Tauric Cappadocia, or simply Cappadocia Proper (12.1.4; 12.2.11; 12.3.12, 13, 32, 39). 3. Strabo differentiates the Ariarathids of Cappadocia (12.1.2; 12.2.1; 13.4.2) from the Mithridatids of Pontus, omitting any reference to the kinship between them attested in other sources (App. *Mithr.* 10, 12; Just. *Epit.* 38.2.5; cf. 38.7.2; see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 150–1). Similarly, the Ariobarzanids and Archelaus I are consistently referred to as “Kings of Cappadocia” or “Kings of the Cappadocians” (Strab. 12.1.2, 4; 12.2.1, 8–11; 12.3.29; 14.5.6; cf. 14.2.29). Regardless, Strabo occasionally conflates ethnic Cappadocia with political Cappadocia: PAGANONI 2024, 118–9.

16 MUCCIOLI 2013, 37. For the inscription, see CRAWFORD et alii 1996, 240, 249 (Delphi B ll. 8–9). As SYME pointed out (SYME 1995, 293), Strabo shows some surprising inaccuracies concerning Pontus. See above n. 15.

17 Joseph. *AJ* 13.284; 14.34, 104, 111, 114, 137; 15.8; RICHARDS 1941, 79; DUECK 2000, 3.

18 See Strab. 12.3.6, 15, 38. In 12.3.39, Strabo does not specify that he is referring to the region of Amasia, although such an interpretation may be inferred by analogy with 12.3.38.

19 See DUECK 2000, 2, 83; TRAINA 2022, 516.

intellectual or physical deficiency, but rather by the particularities of their respective native languages.²⁰ In this regard, it is worth recalling that the Paphlagonians, and, above all, the Cappadocians, had a distinctive accent and manner of speaking that provoked a certain perplexity in other parts of the Roman Empire.²¹ Likewise, Strabo was aware of his Persian, and possibly also Anatolian, family roots, alongside his Greek lineage. However, if not for the isolated mentions of his maternal great-uncle Moaphernes, the Iranian branch of our author's family would have remained unrecognised, and we might have believed him to be just another descendant of the Greeks who ventured to colonise the Black Sea—an ancestry to which we should also add the Cretan branch of his genealogy.²²

In this same sense, we can bring to light various aspects of Strabo's description of the Kingdom of Pontus, and thus observe how, in many cases, he attempts to Hellenise these elements, or at least to make them acceptable to a reader familiar with Greek culture. Undoubtedly, one of the most well-known passages from Book XII of the *Geography*, in which our author depicts his native land, is the lengthy digression on whether or not Homer mentioned peoples living east of the Halys. Strabo's fervent defense of the connection between the inhabitants of his homeland and the Homeric past is undoubtedly driven by a deliberate intention to associate himself with that tradition.²³ Just as Sinope preserved a copy of the *Iliad*, which represented a prestigious marker of the city's membership in the Hellenic community, being born in a land involved in the epic struggle between Achaeans and Trojans meant not being a rustic barbarian, but rather possessing roots worthy of consideration from a spiritual and historical perspective. This was particularly relevant in a cultural environment where Rome sought to position itself as a new Athens, and where Greek scholars and artists constituted one of the essential pillars of intellectual life in the *Urbs*.²⁴ Strabo also does not forget that Themiscyra was the legendary homeland of the Amazons, another motif drawn from mythic tradition.²⁵ Likewise the author's emphasis on the Eneti – supposedly of the same stock as those from Paphlagonia – as among the first Italic peoples to be regarded as Romans, seems

20 Strab. 14.2.28; ALMAGOR 2005, 44–8; TRACHSEL 2017, 270.

21 *Anth. Pal.* 11.436; Philostr. *soph.* 2.13; Greg. Naz. *or.* 43.27; Basil. *Spir. S.* 12.4.6 (PG 32.208). On the Paphlagonians, see above n. 11. By contrast, Strabo (12.4.6) states that in his time the inhabitants of north-western Anatolia had already lost their ancestral accents. He delimits Cappadocia by the language spoken by its inhabitants: 12.1.1; PAGANONI 2024, 116–7.

22 On Moaphernes: Strab. 11.2.18; 12.3.33; PORTANOVA 1988, 349–50. On Strabo's family, see further PORTANOVA 1988, 244–50, 402–403; CASSIA 2000; DUECK 2000, 5–8; KUIN 2017; BIFFI 2020, 211–3. Tibius and Theophilus, Strabo's relatives (12.3.33), have been considered Paphlagonians: see CASSIA 2000, 228; and especially GABELKO 2013, 117–27, who also notes that the name Sterope, the mother of Dorylaeus' children, is not Greek. The name of Philetaerus, brother of Dorylaeus the Tactician, may have been of Cappadocian origin: CASSIA 2000, 229–30.

23 Strab. 12.3.19–27; MANOLEDAKIS 2013, 25–7; MANOLEDAKIS 2021, 171; TRACHSEL 2017, 266, 269–70. See further, among others, CAMASSA 1984; RADT 2008, 371–85; MITCHELL 2010, 93–7; cf. OLSHAUSEN 2022, 138.

24 On the copy of the *Iliad* in Sinope, see HASLAM 1997, 70. On Augustan Rome as the revival of Classical Athens, see e.g. HIDBER 1996, 75–81.

25 Strab. 12.3.9, 14. On this site, see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2009.

far from accidental: indeed, he claims that those Eneti who did not march towards Italy with the Trojan Antenor had become Cappadocians.²⁶

Similarly, Strabo attempts to “Hellenise” certain barbarian aspects of his country. It is particularly telling that, when referring to sacred prostitution in the sanctuary of Comana Pontica, he compares it to Corinth. Clearly, through this analogy—which does not appear in any other ancient author—Strabo intended to frame this practice not as a mark of barbarism, but as something entirely acceptable from the perspective of the Hellenic community.²⁷ In a similar vein, the ritual of the Sacaea celebrated in Zela, of Persian origin, is described in the *Geography* as “a kind of Bacchic festival”.²⁸ Furthermore, the author from Amasia endeavours to adapt certain Persian terms into Greek terminology. Such is the case with **Khvarenah*, a concept that refers to the glory and splendour of Persian kings, exalting their legitimacy over false claimants. Following a long-standing tradition, Strabo translates this term as *tyche*, which is somewhat misleading, as anyone unfamiliar with the Iranian world might interpret it only partially. Thus, when Strabo describes the oath of the Pontic kings “by the fortune of the king and the Men of Pharnaces” (as the phrase is commonly translated), he is in fact alluding to this Iranian-rooted notion.²⁹ Notably, Men Pharnacou was in fact a designation for Zeus Stratios, which suggests that we are dealing with the adaptation of the name of an Anatolian deity.³⁰ Indeed, it is striking that no further references to Men have been preserved east of the Halys, with the sole exception of one from Comana in Cappadocia.³¹

4. Silences regarding Pontus

Just as with his own family, Strabo’s silences regarding Pontus are noteworthy.³² In my view, he deliberately omits—or at times reinterprets—many of the Iranian elements of Mithridatid Pontus. Some of these omissions may stem from the sources he relied on, from a desire to avoid repeating what had already been said in the *Histories*, or perhaps simply from another circumstance.³³ However, the lack of references to certain aspects of ancient Pontus may also reflect a conscious effort to convey a particular image of the country and its people. Strabo claims emphatically having witnessed the Zoroastrian Magi of Cappadocia, while he mentions nothing of those of Pontus, where Magi who would undoubtedly have been instructors of the young Eupator and other nobles of the

26 Strab. 5.1.1, 4, 9; 12.3.8, 25; MANOLEDAKIS 2021, 172.

27 Strab. 12.3.36; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2017, 49, with further bibliography.

28 Strab. 11.8.5; MITCHELL 2002, 57; SERGUEENKOVA/ROJAS 2017, 278–80; QADERI 2018, 176, 178.

29 Strab. 12.3.31; MELIKIAN-CHIRVANI 1993, 27–8; GNOLI 1999; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2025, 470–2. On **Khvarenah*, see, in general, DE JONG 1998; SOUDAVAR 2003, 88–101; BATTESTI 2011. On Men Pharnacou, see further OLSHAUSEN 1990, 1887–9.

30 BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2025, 467–9 (with further bibliography).

31 LANE 1975, no. A6; LANE 1976, 41; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2025, 465.

32 CLARKE 1997, 99: “We cannot do more than speculate on what Strabo chose *not* to tell us”. In general, on this issue, see POTHECARY 2002.

33 On Strabo’s inaccuracies concerning Pontus, see above n. 16.

realm were present.³⁴ The king's tiara is never mentioned, nor are sacrifices to Mithra, or other Zoroastrian deities and rituals that must have been practised in the country.³⁵ Despite being born in Amasia, Strabo does not mention Mithridates' sacrifices to Zeus Stratius, which bore certain similarities with those of the Persian kings and were celebrated, among other places, in the vicinity of that city. By contrast, Appian refers to them in two passages, and were it not for his testimony, they might have gone unnoticed, as the preserved remains of the *temenos* of this god and the coins depicting its altar date from the Roman imperial period.³⁶

There are other notable omissions in this section of the *Geography*: Strabo rarely mentions Pharnaces II, the son of Mithridates, and he does not refer at all to Dynamis, the daughter of the former, who successively married three Bosporan rulers: Asander, Scribonius, and Polemon, whose reigns are jointly mentioned by Strabo.³⁷ This influential woman is said to have had close ties with the family of Augustus, making her absence from the *Geography* particularly striking.³⁸ Similarly, Strabo appears to consider the Mithridatid dynasty as having been extinguished following Eupator's death, thus excluding his descendants. In addition to his rule over Bosporus, Pharnaces II reigned over Anatolian Pontus for barely a year (48/47 BC).³⁹ Moreover, Pharnaces' sons later governed certain districts of this territory.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Aspurgus, Dynamis' son, continued to rule in the Bosporus, an area considered part of the ancestral domains of the Mithridatids.⁴¹ Some time later, Mithridates VIII (or III of the Bosporus) proudly proclaimed his descent from Cyrus the Great, undoubtedly due to his lineage from Mithridates Eupator.⁴²

Several explanations –among others– could be presumed for this silence regarding Dynamis: Strabo's possible animosity towards this queen or one of her three husbands; the rather remote possibility that he merely reproduced sources, such as Polybius or

34 On Strabo and the Cappadocian Magi, see Strab. 15.3.15; DE JONG 2012, 121–56. On Magi at the Pontic court, see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2020, 4–6.

35 On Mithridates' tiara, see Plut. *Pomp* 33.3. The followers of Pharnaces II, Eupator's son, placed a papyrus sheet on his head, as if it were a tiara: App. *Mithr.* 111; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2021, 185–6. Remains of a Zoroastrian sanctuary and a fire temple were discovered 25 km southeast of Amasia: DÖNMEZ 2019.

36 App. *Mithr.* 66; cf. 70; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2003; CANEPA 2017, 218–9; WILLIAMSON 2014; MCGING 2014, 33. On the *temenos*, see in particular FRENCH 1996.

37 Strab. 11.2.11. See further Cass. Dio 54.24.3–4; Lucian. *Macr.* 17 (Asander and Scribonius); Cass. Dio 54.24.4–6 (Polemo I). On these familiar relations, see COJOCARU 2015. Pharnaces II is mentioned by Strabo on only six occasions: 11.2.11; 11.2.17; 11.5.8; 12.3.14; 12.3.38; 13.4.3.

38 On Dynamis and Augustus' family, see above all COŞKUN/STERN 2021.

39 Strab. 6.4.2. On the rule of Pharnaces II in Pontus, probably from August 48 to August 47 BC, see COŞKUN 2019; COŞKUN 2021c, 3–5; COŞKUN 2021d, 308–13; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2021.

40 After the battle of Philippi (42 BC), Darius, Pharnaces' son, ruled over part of Pontus for a brief time: App. *civ.* 5.75.1; OLSHAUSEN 1980, 909–10; SULLIVAN 1990, 160–1; MADSEN 2020, 88; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2021, 122. Arsakes, his brother, was appointed to govern there a few years later: Strab. 12.3.38; cf. 12.3.39; MAREK 1993, 50; SYME 1995, 172; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2023b, 110.

41 On Bosporus as the ancestral domain of the Mithridatids: Just. *Epit.* 37.1.7; cf. Plut. *Sull.* 11.2; App. *Mithr.* 15, 58, 112; cf. 107, 113; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 120–3; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2023c, 461; cf. Strab. 11.2.13. On Aspurgus, see COŞKUN/STERN 2021.

42 Tac. *ann.* 12.18.12; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2011. This descent is confirmed by Cassius Dio 60.8.2; cf. *contra* COŞKUN 2021c, 3–4 (with bibliography).

Theophanes, in which she was not mentioned; or that Pythodoris, likely a protectress of the Amasian author, could have harboured some kind of rivalry towards Dynamis, the former wife of her husband, Polemon – although there is no evidence for this.⁴³ Likewise, Strabo does not mention Agrippa's campaign in the Black Sea, which must have been significant in the pacification and administration of the entire area – notably, Phanagoreia, the capital of the Bosporan kingdom, changed its name to Agrippeia.⁴⁴ Lastly, it is difficult to determine whether this silence on Dynamis has any connection with the fact that Strabo refers to the Bosporan rulers after Mithridates merely as *dynastai*, although shortly afterwards he calls them *basileis*.⁴⁵ Except for Scribonius, there is evidence that all the sovereigns of Bosporus during this period bore the royal title, and even “King of Kings” or “Great King of Kings”.⁴⁶ In this regard, it is worth recalling that Dynamis was recognised as *basilissa*.⁴⁷

5. Nostalgia: Strabo and the kings of Pontus

All these reflections lead us to another crucial question: Strabo's attitude towards the Mithridatid dynasty in general, and Mithridates Eupator in particular. Just as we saw regarding the Pontic land, Strabo has conflicting feelings on this aspect. It was undeniable that Mithridates had been an important ruler, who had defied Rome for several decades and significantly influenced the politics of the *Urbs*. By the time Strabo was writing, this king must have already become a legendary, prestigious, and admired figure.⁴⁸ To some degree, we can say he was viewed in a manner similar to Hannibal, whom the Romans

43 On Dynamis' marriages, see above n. 37. OLSHAUSEN (2022, 141) proposed that Pythodoris might have aspired to maintain the Bosporan kingdom following Polemon, just as occurred with Pontus. We will not engage in the debate on whether Strabo wrote the *Geography* under the patronage of Pythodoris, although their relationship seems clear, as does their affinity on certain viewpoints: see, above all, BRAUND 2005b. For summaries of this controversy, see CLARKE 1997, 99, 103–4; DUECK 2000, 163–4; and further ROLLER 2018, 710. Strabo (7.4.6) mentions Hysicrates (supposedly Hysicrates of Amisus, *BNJ* 190 F 2) as a source on Asander, the leader who deposed Pharnaces II in 47 and would later marry Dynamis. Strabo regards Pharnaces and Polemon as *basileis* in 12.3.38 and 13.4.3, although, when mentioning them alongside Asander (11.2.11), he refers to them simply as *hegemones*. For Strabo's particular sources on northern Euxine, see BRAUND 2005a, 231–2.

44 On this change, see recently KUZMIN 2024. On Agrippa's campaign, see in general RODDAZ 1984, 463–8; POWELL 2015, 172–3.

45 See respectively Strab. 7.4.3: ἐξ ἐκείνου δὴ τοῦ χρόνου (*i.e.* Mithridates') τοῖς τοῦ Βοσπόρου δυνάσταις ἢ τῶν Χερρονησιτῶν πόλιν ὀπῆκοος μέχρι νῦν ἐστὶ, and 7.4.7: νῦν ὑπὸ τοῖς τῶν Βοσπορανῶν βασιλεῦσιν, οὗς ἂν Ῥωμαῖοι καταστήσωσιν, ἅπαντά ἐστιν. A contemptuous view of the Bosporan rulers can be found in Flavius Josephus (Joseph. *BJ* 2.366–367), an author who drew extensively on Strabo's work (on this influence, see *e.g.* GALIMBERTI 2007). See further above n. 43, and DUECK 2003, 265.

46 BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2017.

47 See IVANTCHIK/TOKHTAS'EV 2011; COŞKUN/STERN 2021, 201–4, for sources.

48 BRAUND 2005a, 233–4; BOWERSOCK 2013, 386–8. In general, on Mithridates Eupator, see REINACH 1890; OLSHAUSEN 1978; OLSHAUSEN 2000; MCGING 1986; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 1996; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013; DE CALLATAÏ 1997; MASTROCINQUE 1999; HØJTE 2009; ROLLER 2020, 97–216.

had incorporated into their national epic.⁴⁹ It is true that Mithridates was more recent, and there were Romans who did not forget the Mithridatic wars: recall, for instance, how Gnaeus Piso the Elder (*cos.* 7 BC), probably a friend of Strabo, reproached the Athenians for their betrayal of Rome in supporting the king of Pontus over a century earlier.⁵⁰ Similarly, the massacres of the Mithridatic wars, and particularly the so-called “Ephesian Vespers”, were remembered by writers of the Julio-Claudian period.⁵¹ Other disasters brought about by the king’s generals, such as the devastation of Delos, also remained present.⁵² However, to a large extent, this epoch was a relic of the past: in Strabo’s time, the territories of Anatolian Pontus were under the control of Roman emperors or client rulers, some of whom were descendants of the Mithridatids, and as a result those distant lands had become a part of the empire or its sphere of influence.⁵³

This same ambivalence is evident in Strabo himself. He seems to nostalgically recall the times of Eupator, when his country was significant in the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean, and also important to Rome, in some respects even decisive. In this sense, it would elevate Strabo’s barbarian origins. Our author claims to have read some “historians of the Mithridatic wars”, whom he finds particularly reliable, but this does not translate into an abundance of details about the great king of Pontus.⁵⁴ It is true that Mithridates appears in *Geography* as a *primus inventor* and, to some extent, as a civilising hero, having been the first to subdue the northeastern coast of the Euxine with his armies while uniting his Anatolian domains with Colchis, annexing a region inhabited by warlike peoples.⁵⁵

However, Mithridates and his dynasty are not particularly well treated in Strabo’s work. Unlike in the writings of Cicero, Sallust, Velleius, Florus, or Appian, not to mention other authors, the *Geography* offers no valuation, positive or negative, of this monarch.⁵⁶ Likewise, despite his fame as a great general, Mithridates is not described in any military action; even at the battle of the Amnias, which is commonly considered the beginning of the Mithridatic Wars, Strabo makes it clear that the king was not at the

49 On the comparison between Mithridates and Hannibal, see Vell. 2.18.1. Modern scholars have linked the king’s final plans to invade Italy from the North with Hannibal (MCGING 1986, 122, 165; SONNABEND 1998).

50 Tac. *ann.* 2.55.1; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2005, 386. On the presumed relationship between Piso and Strabo, see Strab. 2.5.33; DUECK, 2000, 88, 140; POTHECARY 2002, 397–8; CAMPANILE 2005.

51 Vell. 2.38.1; Val. Max. 9.2 ext. 3; Liv. *per.* 78. For further references, see below n. 62.

52 Strab. 10.5.4; cf. BOWERSOCK 2013, 385, who ascribes to Strabo a justification for this sack that the *Geography* does not record.

53 On the provincialisation of Pontus, see MAREK 1993, 33–41; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 1996, 394–5; SØRENSEN 2016, 107–82; MADSEN 2020; COŞKUN 2021b.

54 Strab. 11.2.14. Traditionally, οἱ δὲ τὰ Μιθριδατικά συγγράψαντες is interpreted as ‘writers on the Mithridatic Wars’, following Jacoby’s criterion (*FGrHist* IIIc 168, p. 65); however, one could also consider that it might refer to writers about Mithridates in general: cf. GOUKOWSKY 2001, CV; and further BIFFI 2010. Mithridates had historians in his entourage at least until his flight from Pompey in 66 BC: Oros. 6.4.6.

55 See, respectively, Strab. 1.2.1; 12.3.1; 12.3.18; 12.3.28; 12.3.29; BRAUND 2005a, 223; BIFFI 2010, 51–2, 118–9. On these peoples, *vd. supra* n. 5.

56 On these assessments, see Cic. *Mur.* 15; *Acad.* 2.1.3; App. *Mithr.* 113; cf. 114; Plin. *nat.* 25.5; cf. 23.149; Plut. *comp. Lysander-Sulla* 4; Flor. *epit.* 1.40.1–2; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 115–6.

head of the army as he was still on the way.⁵⁷ Diophantus' campaigns in Crimea and the Bosporan kingdom receive particularly detailed treatment in the *Geography*, but their protagonist is not Eupator but this Sinopean *strategos*, a dignitary of Greek origin.⁵⁸ Mithridates appears as a protector of tyrants of cruel and dishonourable conduct, such as the last ones who ruled Athens, and notably the tyrant who governed Sinope with the support of the eunuch Bacchides, commander of the royal troops during Lucullus' blockade.⁵⁹ Strabo states that the Sinopeans were being besieged both internally and externally: that is, the royal troops had constrained the will of the citizens, who would have been well disposed to surrender the city to the Romans. This *topos* also appears in sources concerning Heraclea Pontica and Athens, both of which suffered Roman sieges due to housing Pontic garrisons as well.⁶⁰ Similarly, the *Geography* tells us that the Chersonesites of Crimea had no other option but to side with the king's cause. Indeed, he had saved them from the Scythians, but according to Strabo, the decision of those Greeks was not very enthusiastic.⁶¹ We can therefore assert that, in general terms, Mithridates appeared as an oppressor of the Greeks, whom he had dominated and dragged into war against Rome, although it is also true that *Geography* does not mention the "Ephesian Vespers", which, as we have said, were recounted by most writers who dealt with Mithridates.⁶² Just as we see in Memnon, and less clearly in other authors, Strabo considers Eupator's campaigns in the Euxine as preparatory for the subsequent war against Rome. In other words, Strabo echoes the widely held view that this monarch had planned to confront the Romans from the very beginning of his reign, and thus the Mithridatic Wars would appear as an inevitable misfortune.⁶³

Alongside this, we observe that other Mithridatid rulers are not particularly well treated in *Geography*. Of Pharnaces I, Eupator's grandfather, it is said that he "enslaved"

57 Strab. 12.3.40; Memnon *BNJ* 434 F1, 22.6–7; Val. Fl., 22.6–7; App. *Mithr.* 17–18.

58 On this campaign, see Strab. 7.4.3–7, as well as the inscription from Chersonesus honouring this general: *Syll.*³ 709 = *IOSPE* I² 352; *SEG* 30, 1980, 963; CHANIOTIS 1987; BOFFO 1989; GAVRILOV 1996.

59 Strab. 12.3.11; PORTANOVA 1988, 219–20; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 1996, 58; Memnon (*BNJ* 434 F1, 37) and Plutarch (*Luc.* 23.2) do not mention Bacchides, which has led to presume that Strabo was mistaken: JANKE 1963, 117. Strabo tells about a tyrant in Sinope; LASSERRE 1980, 160 n. 3, identified him with Cleochares, probably a *phrourarch*, cited also by Orosius (6.3.2): cf. *contra* DAVAZE 2014, 739. Although Strabo refers by name only to the tyrant Aristion in Athens, he states that Mithridates appointed several tyrants in the city (9.1.18, 20).

60 Strab. 12.3.11; Memnon *BNJ*, 434 F1, 37; Plut. *Lucullus* 23.2 (Sinope); *Sull.* 11.1; Oros. 6.3.3; Vell. 2.23.4; Eutr. 5.6.1; cf. Paus. 1.20.5; App. *Mithr.* 28 (Athens); Memnon *BNJ* 434 F1 35.2–5 (Heraclea).

61 Strab. 7.4.3: αὐτῇ (sc. Chersonesus) δ' ἦν πρότερον αὐτόνομος, πορθουμένη δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων ἡναγκάσθη προστάτην ἐλέσθαι Μιθριδάτην τὸν Εὐπάτορα. On this point of view, see above all Boffo 1989, 237–40.

62 On the "Ephesian Vespers", see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 1996, 103–7; THORNTON 1998; ISAYEV 2017, 50–2.

63 Strab. 7.4.3; Memnon *BNJ* 434 F1, 22.4. This opinion was regarded as the result of the biased nature of Strabo's sources: BOFFO 1989, 328 n. 115. See further Just. *Epit.* 38.3.1, 38.3.7; App. *Mithr.* 13, 57; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 203–4, 216. In fact, Justin (37.1.7) suggests that Eupator fought with Rome during the whole of his reign (cf. *Commenta Bernensia in Lucanum* 2.581); SALOMONE GAGGERO 1979, 135. Nevertheless, some sources reveal that the swift expansion of Mithridates' power in 89/88 BC was unexpected (Poseid. *BNJ* 87 F 36 *apud* Ath. 5.212f–213a; Plut. *Sull.* 11.1; cf. Flor. *epit.* 1.40.5; Just. *Epit.* 38.5.1), which is confirmed by the significant increase of Pontic coins since the spring of 89 BC (DE CALLATAÏ 1997, 282; and for further arguments BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 204–6).

Sinope, and that his successors did the same: this undoubtedly portrays an image of despotism, elimination of freedom, and subjugation by force.⁶⁴ One of the very few mentions of Pharnaces II in Strabo's work says that he plundered the temple of Leucothea in Colchis.⁶⁵ We might speculate that this negative portrayal could be related to the aforementioned silence about Dynamis, Pharnaces' daughter, considering that this queen claimed her kinship with Mithridates Eupator.⁶⁶

It is equally noteworthy that the *Geography* makes no reference to the genealogy of the Pontic kings, a detail that undoubtedly enhanced the prestige of this dynasty and that had been noted by Polybius, as well as by Sallust, Trogus, Appian, and *De Viris Illustribus*.⁶⁷ It is true that the *Historikà Hypomnēmata* could have included the famous legend about Antigonus Monophthalmus' prophetic dream and the flight of Mithridates Ctistes, the founder of the Pontic house, to the mountains of Paphlagonia to save his life.⁶⁸ However, we do not know whether Strabo acknowledged the supposed Achaemenid descent of the Pontic rulers.⁶⁹ Lineage was one of the aspects that ennobled Eastern royal houses during this period, and many of them, such as those of Cappadocia, Commagene, and Pontus, developed official genealogies to bolster their claims of ancestry from Cyrus and Darius.⁷⁰ Strabo's silence on this matter may reflect either the possibility that he had addressed this topic in his lost *Historical Commentaries*, or that he might have held a sceptical attitude towards such a tradition: indeed, although the *Geography* mentions Hydarnes, one of the Seven Persians who did away with the Magus, and his descendant Orontes, who married a daughter of Artaxerxes II, our author makes no reference whatsoever to the supposed genealogy linking these Persian nobles with the kings of Armenia, Sophene, and Commagene, nor does he refer to any kinship between these aristocrats and the Mithridatids.⁷¹

Nevertheless, I believe that reading Strabo's account of his native land reveals a sense of nostalgia for the Mithridatid period. In a way, it is similar to what the Macedonians felt when recalling Alexander during the times of Philip V and Perseus.⁷² Strabo's home-

64 Strab. 12.3.11. Appian expresses a similar opinion regarding the subjugation of Amisus by Eupator (*Mithr.* 83) and Pharnaces II (*civ.* 2.91). Strabo (12.3.30) likewise regards the foundation of Eupatoria by Mithridates VI not as an act of civilisation, but of repression; see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 1998, 57 with n. 13.

65 Strab. 11.2.17. On the possible location of this sanctuary, see COŞKUN 2021d.

66 On this claim, see CIRB 31, 979; IVANTCHIK/TOKHTAS'EV 2011, 163–6.

67 Sall., *hist. fr.* 2.59 (ed. Ramsey); App. *Mithr.* 9, 112, 115; Just. *Epit.* 38.7.1; cf. Tac. *ann.* 12.18.2. Regarding the "Seven Persians", see Polyb. 5.43.2; Diod. 19.40.2; Flor. *epit.* 1.40.1; *vir. ill.* 76.1; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2012, 366–8; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 274–85.

68 Strab. *BNJ* 91 F 5 (*apud* Tert. *De anim.* 46); cf. Strab. 12.3.41; Plut., *Demosthenes.* 4; Diod. 20.11.4; App. *Mithr.* 9; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2012, 366–8; LINDSAY 2014, 11; DE HOZ 2017, 156. Nevertheless, MALINOWSKI (2017, 340, 348) highlights Strabo's overall rejection of prophetic dreams.

69 See above n. 67, and further BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2023b, 107–11.

70 BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 24, 234; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2023b, 111; LEROUGE-COHEN 2022, 257–312.

71 Strab. 11.14.15; LEROUGE-COHEN 2022, 264. On the kinship between Orontids and Mithridatids prior to the marriage between Tigranes II and Cleopatra, Eupator's daughter, see above all Just. *Epit.* 38.7.1; cf. Plut. *Lucullus* 14.2; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2023b, 107–8.

72 See, e.g. Liv. 45.7.3; Flor. *epit.* 1.23.2; Just. *Epit.* 29.3.8, 30.3.2, 4.10–11, 33.1.3; Plut. *Flam.* 7.3; Plut. *Aem.* 12.9–11.

land had not been merely a district of the Roman Empire that surrendered without resistance; rather, it had required epic campaigns for Rome to conquer this territory.⁷³ The Jugurthine War, which bears clear parallels with the Mithridatic conflict, was more limited in scope and duration, required fewer resources, and the enemy leader was ultimately captured and paraded in Marius' triumph.⁷⁴ In contrast, Mithridates had challenged the Republic for decades and could not be captured or killed on the battlefield.⁷⁵ He was thus an important king, the architect of an empire that, though ephemeral, was vast and powerful, stretching from the Caucasus to the Adriatic.

Of course, Strabo's view of Mithridates is significantly influenced by his family's connections with the Pontic dynasty, particularly with Eupator himself. Much has been written of the few sentences in the *Geography* concerning Dorylaeus the Tactician, Strabo's great-great-grandfather, and his nephew, Dorylaeus the Younger, who was a childhood companion of Mithridates, and one of his closest associates.⁷⁶ We also know of other relatives of Strabo, such as the aforementioned Moaphernes, and Strabo's own maternal grandfather, who offered Lucullus fifteen fortresses, resentful of the execution of his kinsmen, Tibius and Theophilus, at the monarch's command.⁷⁷ At the same time, Strabo alludes to other relatives who stayed with the king until the end, which we cannot definitively interpret as referring either to Pompey's Anatolian campaign or to the final days of Mithridates in Bosphorus.⁷⁸ Anyway, as Cassia noted, this suggests that Strabo did not exhibit a particular zeal for exclusively highlighting the pro-Roman tendencies of his ancestors.⁷⁹

It is indeed interesting to analyse how little Strabo comments on his family. He traces back to Dorylaeus the Tactician, yet he does not mention either the name of the latter's father or his homeland.⁸⁰ It is difficult to believe that Strabo was unaware of these data, suggesting that he might have been deliberately silent about something of which he was not particularly proud. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that Dorylaeus had a wife before entering into a relationship with Sterope, the Cretan woman from whom our author was descended, and that there may have been a branch of the family about which he deliberately chose not to speak.⁸¹ It should be noted that the genealogy of

73 Some sources stressed the fact that Mithridates fought against the most prominent Roman generals of his time: Just. *Epit.* 37.1.8; App. *Mithr.* 112; Flor. *epit.* 1.40.2; vir. ill. 76.5–7; cf. Iuv. 6.661; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 117–8.

74 For the comparison between the Mithridatic conflict and the Jugurthine War, see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2018, 282.

75 Just. *Epit.* 37.1.9: *non vi hostili victus, sed voluntaria morte*; cf. Just. *Epit.* 12.16.12 (Alexander); Tac. *ann.* 2.73.2, 2.88.2 (Arminius); Flor. *epit.* 1.33.17 (Viriathus); BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2013, 119–20 (with further bibliography); BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2024, 142. See also BRAUND 2005a, 224–6.

76 ID 1572; Strab. 10.4.10. In particular, see PORTANOVA 1988, 244–50; CASSIA 2000, 216–9, 224–8; KUIN 2017, 109–15; BIFFI 2020, 212–3; BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2023a, 195.

77 See above n. 22. Strab. 12.3.33; KUIN 2017, 110–1 (with earlier bibliography).

78 Strab. 12.3.33.

79 CASSIA 2000, 228.

80 Strab. 10.4.10.

81 Sterope appears only in Strabo (10.4.10), and there is no reference to her being Dorylaeus' wife. On the other hand, it has been suggested to identify Theophilus with the one responsible for killing the surviving

Greek-named dignitaries at the Pontic court remain largely unknown, and some of them may have been of barbarian ancestry. Therefore, we do not know the origin of Strabo's Anatolian family. In fact, he was born in Amasia, which ceased to be the seat of the Mithridatid dynasty during the reigns of Pharnaces I or Mithridates Euergetes.⁸² We are thus dealing with a local aristocracy of Greek roots, but with likely connections to lineages from other cultures. Had Strabo not mentioned his ancestor Moaphernes, the probable Persian branch of his family would have remained unattested forever. Similarly, it has been suggested that the aforementioned Tibius and Theophilus might have been of Paphlagonian descent.⁸³ However, Strabo silences most of his family members, as we do not know the names of either his father or mother. Furthermore, since no evidence exists regarding his original name, and assuming his father was not Roman, it is always possible that the number of Iranians or Anatolians in our author's lineage was greater than he implies.⁸⁴

6. Conclusion: Strabo's description of Pontus and his own personal experience

In general, Strabo describes Pontus in terms that we might consider positive, and even enthusiastic at times, as is evident in a passage about the wealth of the district of Amasia where the author corrects himself to emphasise this idea.⁸⁵ The country truly appears as a fertile land, with vineyards and olive groves, the cultivated crops proper of the civilised world, with mines, abundant fishing, and prosperous communication routes.⁸⁶ It is a region with ancient cities, some connected to Greek exploits, and colonised by Athenians.⁸⁷ However, if we look a bit closer, we will observe how Strabo is constantly comparing the past with the present. The past, not only of Mithridates Eupator, but frequently referred to in general as “the time of the kings,” is evoked as a flourishing yet

Romans and Italians in Tralles during the “Ephesian Vespers” (App. *Mithr.* 22; Cass. Dio fr. 101.1), although Strabo may not have stated this openly due to the abhorrent nature of the episode: OLSHAUSEN 1974, 169; GABELKO 2014, 124–7.

82 For the debate regarding the chronology of this change of capital, see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2021, 191 n. 39.

83 See above n. 22.

84 It was not uncommon in Hellenistic Anatolia for individuals with Greek names to be the offspring of barbarians. In fact, there are several examples in the history of Mithridatid Pontus: Diophantus son of Mitharos (possibly mentioned in *ID* 1574; Memnon *BNJ* 434 F1, 7.2), Antipater son of Sisis (or Sisinēs: Strab. 12.3.28), Lycomedes, a member of the Cappadocian royal house (*Bell. Alex.* 66.4), and Phoenix, Eupator's uncle (App. *Mithr.* 79). On this issue, see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 1996, 318. For the hypothesis that Strabo's father was a Roman, see CASSIA 2000, 222–4; TRAINA 2022.

85 Strab. 12.3.15: σπόρον δὲ πλείστον δέχεται τὸν ἐκ τῆς ἐλύμου καὶ κέγχρου, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀνέκλειπτον.

86 Strab. 12.3.11, 12, 15, 19, 30, 38.

87 Interestingly, Strabo (12.2.3) mentions the connection of the legend of Orestes and Iphigenia with Cappadocian Comana (12.2.3), but not with the homonymous Pontic sanctuary, in contrast to Cass. Dio (36.11.1–2): see BALLESTEROS PASTOR 2016a, 50 n. 11. On the different treatment of both sanctuaries in the *Geography*, see POTHECARY 2016, 209–10. For the Athenians in Sinope and Amisus, see respectively Plut. *Perikles* 20.2 and Strab. 12.3.14; Plut. *Lucullus* 19.6; App. *Mithr.* 8, 83; Steph. Byz. s. v. Ἀμισός.

remote period.⁸⁸ The kings built cities, palaces, and fortresses, and now many of these buildings are in ruins, with some regions having been devastated during the Mithridatic Wars, leaving a mark of that disaster still visible when Strabo wrote.⁸⁹ The present is undoubtedly the Roman province and the rule of Pythodoris, after a turbulent period in which various territories changed hands according to Rome's political strategy in the region.⁹⁰ The *Pax Romana* had undoubtedly brought prosperity, and the rich, productive land ruled by this queen stands as clear evidence of it.

Generally speaking, Strabo does not regard Roman power in negative terms, since he is a loyal subject of the Empire who consistently extols the benefits of the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. However, as is the case with other Greek intellectuals under Roman rule, he preserves a sense of pride in belonging to the ancient Hellenic culture. Thus, we occasionally find veiled criticisms of the Roman imperium, or qualifications to its universal reach.⁹¹ But in particular, he speaks of his country's earlier epoch not only with nostalgia but also with a certain melancholy. It is, of course, a way to exalt himself as well: to come not from a barbarian land, but from an important region, from an influential family, distant from the savage world and also from the plebeian one. This enhanced the status of the author from Amasia, and also of his own work, which represents an exaltation of both facets: Hellenic civilisation and the beneficent rule of Rome.

In this regard, it is worth noting that Strabo had likely been preparing his *Geography* for decades, and may have continued revising and adding information almost until the end of his life. His probable return to his homeland in this final stage seems to be the culmination of a career marked by travels and various vicissitudes, many of which remain obscured to us. As Campanile has pointed out, it is possible that our author was compelled to leave Rome due to his connection with the aforementioned Gnaeus Piso, who was forced to commit suicide after being prosecuted by Tiberius.⁹² Consequently, Strabo's perspective on Pontus is, to a large extent, a reflection on himself: who he is, who his ancestors were, what his native land represents, what its history was—undoubtedly glorious—and what the current reality is: undeniably vibrant, but also tinged with sad-

88 Strab. 12.3.32, 34, 37, 38, 39; cf. 12.3.1 and POTHECARY 1997, 236–7.

89 For the description of the abandonment and desolation of specific Pontic places and fortresses in Strabo 12.3, see 15 (Gaziura), 17 (Ischopolis), 31 (part of Caenum Chorium), 37 (Camisa), 38 (Icizari), 39 (the district around Amasia; cf. KUIN 2017, 106), 40 (Pimolisa). Strabo further mentions the royal palace of Cabira (30) and the former prominence of Comana under the kings (32).

90 On the possible relationship between Strabo and Pythodoris, see above n. 43. Regarding the expressions of contemporaneity in Strabo, see CLARKE 1997, 102, 107; CLARKE 1997, 108: On the locution “our times”: see CLARKE 1997, 108; POTHECARY 1997. On Pontus after the Roman conquest, see above all OLSHAUSEN 1980; SØRENSEN 2016; MADSEN 2020.

91 In particular, see Strab. 11.6.4. For a commentary of relevant passages: PRIMO 2001, 199–221. For these Greek intellectuals, see, e.g. GOLDHILL 2001; SCHMITZ/WIATER 2011.

92 CAMPANILE 2005; see above n. 50. Let us recall that Diodorus Siculus (1.4.1) claimed to have devoted thirty years to the elaboration of his “Library”. ENGELS (1999, 39–40) highlighted that the greatest concentration of data in the *Geography* concerns the early decades of Augustus' reign, although it is truly difficult to demonstrate that a first version had been completed by the end of the first century BC (cf. also SYME 1995, 292–3). On the date of composition of the *Geography*, see further, e.g. DUECK 2000, 146–54; DUECK 2017a, 1; POTHECARY 2002.

ness, invoking nostalgia for times that were fading from memory. Thus, Pontus serves as the backdrop for the final act of the author's life: a powerful family fallen from grace, subjected to Roman dominance, much like the land of Mithridates and his dynasty.

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Periploi und Portulane

Häfen und Schifffahrtsstationen an der westlichen Südküste des Schwarzen Meeres von der Spätantike bis zur frühen Neuzeit¹

ABSTRACT: Two distinct groups of sources enable us to reconstruct the series of harbours and sailing stations around the Black Sea: antique and late antique *periploi* on the one hand, late medieval and early modern portolans and so called portolan charts on the other. A high degree of congruence can be observed between them, which is due to the more or less unchanged natural features as well as to the constancy of towns and trading places. The aim of the present contribution is to locate or at least to propose possible or probable locations for those smaller stations, whose positions are more or less unknown. The author could draw on the distances given in the *periploi* and on personal knowledge of most of the bays and beaches of the area under consideration. Distances of the four portolans available for this coast differ so much from each other as well as from reality that virtually no use could be made of them.

KEYWORDS: Black Sea, coast, periploi, portolans, portolan charts, sailing stations

1. Einleitende Bemerkungen

Die Periploi der Antike, die Portulane und Portulankarten des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit hatten zumindest auch den Zweck, dem Seefahrer auf seiner Fahrt, die ja in der Antike und im Mittelalter, soweit möglich und sinnvoll, entlang der Küsten durchgeführt wurde,² ein praktisches Hilfsmittel in die Hand zu geben, mittels dessen er sich über die Abfolge der Häfen und einfacheren Schifffahrtsstationen und die Entfernungen zwischen denselben orientieren konnte. Bisweilen kamen Angaben über die Qualität der einzelnen Stationen, über besondere Schwierigkeiten bei der Einfahrt wie Klippen oder Sandbänke, über Wassertiefen, in einigen Fällen auch über die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung hinzu.

Neben diesen Übereinstimmungen zwischen den Werken der Antike und der Spätantike und denen des Mittelalters sind aber auch erhebliche Unterschiede festzustellen. Die antiken Periploi folgen literarischen Traditionen, die sich auf Form, Inhalt und

- 1 Herzlich gedankt sei ANCA DAN für die Einladung zu dem von ihr organisierten Symposium „*La mer Noire, IV^e–VII^e siècles apr. J.-C.: la fin du monde antique, début d'un ordre nouveau*“ (Paris, 23–25 mars 2015), auf dem eine frühere Fassung dieses Artikels präsentiert wurde, sowie für Anregungen und Korrekturvorschläge, MICHAEL RATHMANN für die Aufnahme in die Zeitschrift *Orbis Terrarum* sowie den anonymen Gutachterinnen und Gutachtern für substantielle Verbesserungsvorschläge.
- 2 Der Fernhandel nutzte stets auch direkte Verbindungen zwischen den wichtigen Hafenstädten über das offene Meer; für das Schwarze Meer s. ARNAUD 1992.