

## STRABO ON APELLICON'S LIBRARY<sup>1)</sup>

A remarkable tale, full of fabulous elements, appears in Strabo's *Geography* in the course of his discussion of notable figures from Scepsis<sup>2)</sup>. It relates to the history of the text of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*. The passage has been taken to contain an important discussion of the chain of events surrounding the fate of Aristotle's personal library between the time of Aristotle and Cicero. It certainly purports to deal with this topic, but there are good reasons for believing that it exaggerates the extent to which Aristotelian texts were unavailable in the interim<sup>3)</sup>. This has frequently

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1) My warmest thanks are due to Professor R. G. Tanner, who helped to improve an earlier version of this article.

2) Strabo 13.1.54 p. 608–9C. For a summary of the vast literature on this passage see H. B. Gottschalk, Notes on the Wills of the Peripatetic Scholarchs, *Hermes* 100 (1972) 335 n. 2, and further in 'Aristotelian philosophy in the Roman world from the time of Cicero to the end of the second century AD', *ANRW* II.36.2, 1079–1174, partially reprinted as 'The earliest Aristotelian commentators', in: *Aristotle Transformed: The ancient commentators and their influence*, ed. R. Sorabji (London 1990) 55–81 (henceforth Gottschalk 1990).

3) As emphasized by A. H. Chroust, The Miraculous Disappearance and Recovery of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, *C&M* 23 (1962) 50–67; D. C. Earl, Prologue form in Ancient Historiography, *ANRW* I.2, 851.

been noticed, but in this paper I shall suggest that Strabo had motives related to his own career for wishing to add to the mystique over the history of Aristotle's text, and for dismissing the value of earlier editions of Aristotle. It may be that Apellicon before him had started the process of making excessive claims over the importance of the documents that passed through his hands.

I shall begin with an outline of the main points covered by Strabo. He relates that the Scepsian Neleus, son of Coriscus, a pupil of Aristotle and Theophrastus, inherited the library of Theophrastus, which in turn encompassed that of Aristotle, bequeathed to Theophrastus along with his school<sup>4</sup>). Strabo credits Aristotle with being the first scholar to collect books in a systematic way, and also to provide the impetus for the Alexandrian library. This may be something of a simplification, but there is no doubt that the methods of Aristotelian research did promote careful library organisation.

Theophrastus handed down the library to Neleus, who is said to have taken it home to Scepsis. There it fell into the hands of his heirs, who are reported to have kept the books locked away and not to have cared for them properly. But they were prompted to hide the books in a crypt when they heard that the Attalid kings were searching out acquisitions for their library at Pergamon<sup>5</sup>). If nothing else, the heirs of Neleus are depicted as appreciating the commercial value of the library, which was subsequently sold to Apellicon of Teos for a large sum of money, but not before the library had been substantially damaged by damp and moths.

The whole story of the bequest to Neleus and his disappearance to Scepsis with the Aristotelian literature creates an unfavourable impression of his attitude to the Peripatos and its perpetuation. We should surely expect that at the time of the death of Theophrastus, who made careful provisions for the continuation of the school under his will, that a more serious attitude would

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4) The wills of six leading philosophers including both Aristotle and Theophrastus are preserved by Diogenes Laertius (5.11–16, 51–7). On their contents see Gottschalk 1972 (see n. 2) 314–42.

5) Galen also notes the eagerness of the Attalids and Ptolemies in obtaining additions to their libraries. He claims that this provided the initial incentive for forging manuscripts (Galen XV 105 K.). This passage has been discussed by C. W. Müller, *Die Kurzdialoge der Appendix Platonica* (Munich 1973) 12–17, who attacks the notion that the pseudo-Platonic works were a product of such a process. Nevertheless, manuscripts of some authors may have been forged for commercial reasons. On the library at Pergamon see E. V. Hansen, *The Attalids of Pergamon* (Cornell 1972) 71. For its size and location see pp. 272–4.

have been taken to the preservation of texts that were doctrinally important<sup>6</sup>). Surely the most important texts would have been copied before removal. Even though Strato, who succeeded Theophrastus, was less of an Aristotelian traditionalist than his predecessor, it seems unlikely that the Peripatetic school was deprived of texts of any importance at this time. When we strip away the dubious elements in the story the only secure fact is that Theophrastus bequeathed his books to Neleus.

Athenaeus relates a version of the fate of Aristotle's library which appears to be at odds with Strabo. He says that Ptolemy Philadelphus bought Aristotelian texts from Neleus, as well as others from Athens and Rhodes<sup>7</sup>). If the heirs of Neleus eventually sold this material to Apellicon then both versions of the story cannot at first sight be true. But it is again possible that copyists had been employed, and that versions of the texts were sold to the Ptolemaic ruler. This would correspond with the known presence of extensive Aristotelian and Theophrastean texts at Alexandria in the 3rd century BC, as illustrated by the catalogue of their works created by Hermippus<sup>8</sup>). But it also implies an overall environment in which more than a single manuscript of individual works was in existence.

Apellicon is dismissed by Strabo as a bibliophile rather than a philosopher, and his attempts to restore the gaps in the text are blamed for the publication of an edition peppered with errors<sup>9</sup>). Modern commentators have credited Strabo's view and even gone so far as to suggest that Apellicon's story about how he obtained the library was pure fabrication. It is certainly tempting to take this line when we review his reputation<sup>10</sup>).

He was a colourful character who had fled from Athens after being detected stealing official documents from Athenian arch-

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6) See Gottschalk 1972 (see n. 2) 320; 337.

7) Athenaeus 1.3a.

8) See Gottschalk 1972 (see n. 2) 339–40. The lists of the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus to be found in Diogenes Laertius (5.22–7; 42–50) may depend on Hermippus, although this is a controversial point. See Diogenes Laertius 5.1,2 for citation of this authority in relation to Aristotle.

9) On the career of Apellicon see Dziatzko, *Apellicon* (1), *RE* I 2 (1884) 2693–2694. A useful summary (without annotations) is to be found in L. Canfora, *The Vanished Library* (London 1991) 51ff.

10) See especially Gottschalk 1972 (see n. 2) 342, who not only refuses to believe in Apellicon's role, but doubts whether Neleus ever took texts of any importance to Scepsis.

ives<sup>11</sup>). Later he returned as a beneficiary of the rise to power of the tyrant Athenion, who shared his interest in Peripatetic philosophy. It appears to be under his aegis that Apellicon produced the edition so spurned by Strabo, and doubtless before him by his teacher Tyrannion<sup>12</sup>). Apellicon obtained honorary Athenian citizenship before becoming embroiled in Athenion's pro-Mithridatic political stance<sup>13</sup>). Apellicon's sponsor had engaged in anti-Roman demagoguery in support of the Pontic king, reported at some length by Posidonius. This new Athenian tyrant employed the bibliophile as an agent for an expedition to Delos, which ended with him routed by the Roman commander and taking flight<sup>14</sup>). He returned to Athens, where he may have continued to hold office as a mint magistrate under the second tyrant, Aristion<sup>15</sup>). The city was soon laid siege to by Sulla who took Athens on 1st March 86 BC.

The main problem with the story of the recovery of the library from Scepsis is the implication of a miraculous reappearance of the entire corpus of Aristotelian texts. But what follows in Strabo is his personal assessment of the situation, which contains further improbabilities. He claims that the successors of Theophrastus in the Peripatetic school had very few texts with the exception of the exoteric works. In his view this resulted in superficiality far removed from the intentions of Aristotle<sup>16</sup>). This was not remedied until the publication of Apellicon's edi-

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11) Athenaeus 5.214d–e.

12) Most of what we know about Apellicon is to be found in a passage from Athenaeus, which derives from Posidonius. See Athenaeus 5.213eff. = Posidonius F253 Edelstein – Kidd (Cambridge 1972). I doubt the argument of G. R. Bugh, Athenion and Aristion of Athens, *Phoenix* 46 (1992) 108–23, who tries to place most of Apellicon's career under Aristion. It makes far more sense for Apellicon to start his career with a fellow Peripatetic, as Athenaeus/Posidonius suggests. He may well have continued to hold a position under the Epicurean Aristion, but I accept the thesis of Niese that Aristion's career began after Apellicon's disaster on Delos. See B. Niese, *Die letzten Tyrannen Athens*, *RhM* 42 (1887) 574–81.

13) Athenaeus 5.213eff., based on Posidonius (see n. 12). I do not believe that Strabo himself depends on Posidonius for the material about Apellicon's library.

14) *ibid.*

15) See G. R. Bugh (see n. 12) 121, and note objections to the idea that Apellicon was operating under Aristion by H. B. Mattingly, *Some Third Magistrates in the Athenian New Style Coinage*, *JHS* 91 (1971) 85–93.

16) *θέσεις ληκυθίζειν*. This is interpreted to mean that in the absence of the exoteric works, Peripatetics were reduced to composing rhetorical essays. See Gottschalk 1972 (see n. 2) 336.

tion, which still left many propositions in doubt because of the unreliability of its text.

Strabo's next major point is that Rome contributed to the confusion through the seizure of Apellicon's library from Athens by Sulla as his personal prize from the First Mithridatic war. Once the library was in Rome it fell into the hands of Tyrannio, as well as of booksellers whose copyists perpetrated further damage to the accuracy of the text. This could be taken as a highly damaging critique of the methods of Strabo's former teacher<sup>17</sup>). But the notice on Apellicon's library in Plutarch's *Sulla* seems to derive from Strabo's sequel to Polybius<sup>18</sup>), and it presents a far more favourable impression of Tyrannio's role. In the *Geography*, Strabo probably only means to say that Sulla's seizure of the library from Athens assisted in the promulgation of further corrupt texts of Aristotle, not that Tyrannio in any way contributed to this<sup>19</sup>). According to Plutarch most of Apellicon's library was set in order by Tyrannio, and it was from him that the influential Andronicus of Rhodes received copies of the Aristotelian manuscripts. Gottschalk suggests that Andronicus never came to Rome for this purpose, and was already at Athens as the 11th Peripatetic scholar. This is a possibility, although it may never be proved<sup>20</sup>).

Some additions to the picture can be gleaned from other sources. After the death of Sulla, Apellicon's library fell into the hands of his son Faustus Sulla. By 55 BC he had hardly more interest in it than as security for some of his debts<sup>21</sup>). It may be

17) On Tyrannio see Wendel, Tyrannion (2), RE VII A 2 (1948) 1811–1819. For the idea that Strabo is hostile to Tyrannio see Chroust (see n. 3) 67.

18) Plutarch, *Sulla* 26. For the origin of this passage in Strabo's sequel to Polybius see I. Düring, Aristoteles. Darstellung und Interpretation seines Denkens (Heidelberg 1966) 39ff. For some hesitations over whether Plutarch does here depend on Strabo see Gottschalk 1972 (see n. 2) 338. For the fragments of Strabo's historical work see P. Otto, Strabonis ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΥΠΟΜΝΗΜΑΤΩΝ Fragmenta, Leipziger Studien Suppl. 11 (1889), esp. frags. 64–5, pp. 76–7. On the content and emphases of the sequel to Polybius see P. Pédech, Strabon Historien, Studi Cataudella 2 (1972) 395–408; id., Strabon historien d'Alexandre, GB 2 (1974) 129–45.

19) It seems to me that we are intended to see Sulla and the booksellers as the culprits. Tyrannio's role was to hand on the texts to Andronicus, although this is not spelt out.

20) Gottschalk 1990 (see n. 2) 60. The problem is partly bound up with the fact that Ammonius writing in the 5th century AD names both Andronicus and his pupil Boethus as the 11th scholar (Ammonius, in Int. 5.24; in An. Pr. 31.11). On Ammonius, see now the translation by S. M. Cohen, Ammonius On the Categories (London 1991).

21) Cic. Ad Att. 4.10; Plut. Cic. 27.

that Tyrannio had made use of the library before this development. Soon after we hear of Cicero enjoying it at Cumae in 55 BC, probably because of Tyrannio's involvement. Tyrannio had previously assisted Cicero by rearranging the books he saved from Antium. Atticus provided him with two slaves as assistants and Cicero was so pleased with the results that he tried to obtain the services of Tyrannio for the development of the library of his brother Quintus<sup>22</sup>).

Andronicus' relationship with Tyrannio is a complicated issue, since we have so few secure facts about his life<sup>23</sup>). Older studies of the subject have placed him as a student of Tyrannio who was set the task of ordering the Aristotelian corpus, and later became the leader of the Peripatetic school at Athens. But Gottschalk has suggested that he was a contemporary of Tyrannio for whom Tyrannio performed the service of collating materials that had become available in Rome. This view has the effect of pushing back the date of Andronicus' contribution to before 50 BC, perhaps as early as 60 BC<sup>24</sup>). Andronicus was responsible for a catalogue of the writings of Aristotle and Theophrastus, and an edition of at least some of Aristotle's works, which is associated with the contemporary revival of interest in the Peripatetic school<sup>25</sup>). The importance of his edition need not be diminished by the suggestion that the corpus never disappeared in the manner suggested by Strabo. That Strabo does not mention Andronicus' editorial role in this passage in the *Geography* is a peculiarity, but it is possible that he felt that the subject had already been adequately covered in the sequel to Polybius. His digression from his geographical theme is already as it stands lengthy, and reflects the geographer's interest in the subject because of his personal acquaintance with Tyrannio. He is obviously aware that major ad-

22) Cic. Ad Att. 4.4a.1; Ad Att. 4.8.2; Ad Qu. fr. 3.4.5; cf. 3.5.6.

23) Key discussions include F. Littig, *Andronicus von Rhodos I* (Munich 1890); II–III (Erlangen 1894–5); M. Plezia, *De Andronici Rhodii studiis Aristotelicis* (Cracow 1946); P. Moraux, *Les listes anciennes des ouvrages d'Aristote* (Louvain 1951) 283ff; id., *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen I* (Berlin 1973) 58ff; I. Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition* (Göteborg 1957) 472ff.

24) Gottschalk 1990 (see n. 2) 62. The older view was that Andronicus could not have become the 11th head of the Peripatetic school until after 44 BC since Cicero still names Cratippus as a teacher of Peripatetic philosophy in Athens in that year. But Gottschalk thinks it likely that his importance has been exaggerated (63), and sees evidence of the Peripatetic revival from about 60 BC.

25) Porph. Vit. Plot. 24. See Gottschalk 1990 (see n. 2) 56ff. for discussion of this passage.



vances have occurred in relation to the text of Aristotle in his own time, since it is implicit in his entire analysis that Aristotelian studies have emerged from previous vagueness because they can now be based on reliable texts. This is surely proof that he harbours no antagonism towards either Tyrannio or Andronicus<sup>26</sup>).

An examination of sundry aspects of Strabo's own career will help to consolidate this argument. Born at Amasia in Pontus in about 63 BC<sup>27</sup>), he studied at Nysa in the valley of the Maeander under the grammarian Aristodemus before his first visit to Rome in 44 BC<sup>28</sup>). Aristodemus earlier taught grammar to the children of Pompey the Great but was very old by the time Strabo became his pupil. Aristodemus' father Menecrates had been a pupil of Aristarchus and was married to a daughter of Posidonius<sup>29</sup>). It was doubtless under this tutelage that Strabo's interests in Homer and historical geography were first fostered<sup>30</sup>). Aristodemus also had connections on Rhodes, where he taught rhetoric in the morning and grammar in the afternoon<sup>31</sup>), and it is possible that Strabo met Andronicus, who was a Rhodian, through him<sup>32</sup>). A more substantial reason to believe that they were acquainted is the fact that Boethus of Sidon studied Aristotelian philosophy in the company of Strabo<sup>33</sup>). Boethus certainly was a pupil of Andronicus and may

26) This will make it clear that I believe Chroust is wrong to suspect Strabo of antagonism towards Andronicus. See Chroust (see n. 3) 67.

27) See B. Niese, *Beiträge zur Biographie Strabos*, *Hermes* 13 (1878) 38–45, accepted by G. Aujac & F. Lasserre, *Strabon: Géographie*, I 1 (Paris 1969) VIII. One dissentient was P. Meyer, *De Strabonis anno natali*, *Leipziger Studien* 2 (1879) 49–53, who settled for 68 BC. He has had few followers since Strabo refers to the settlement of Cilician pirates at Dyme in Achaia in 67 BC as an event occurring before his time (Strabo 8.7.5 p. 388 C.).

28) It must have been at Rome that the geographer met Servilius Isauricus (Strabo 12.6.2 p. 568 C.). He died at Rome at the beginning of summer 44 BC (after Caesar's murder, and before the return of his adoptive son. See *Cic. Phil.* 2.12; *Ad Fam.* 16.23.2). It is uncertain whether Strabo stayed at Rome throughout the period of the civil wars.

29) I accept here the late evidence of the *Suda* s.v. Ἰάσων.

30) Aristodemus had a brother named Sostratus, who is known to have written a geography of which fragments survive (see Bux, *Sostratos* [7], *RE* III A 1 [1927] 1200–1201; *FHG* IV, 504ff.).

31) Strabo 14.1.48 p. 650 C.; see Schwartz, *Aristodemos* (30), *RE* II 1 (1895) 925–926.

32) Strabo's comments on contemporary scholarly life on Rhodes give few hints of his links with the island. He does mention Andronicus, but he is named without any sign of personal acquaintance (Strabo 14.2.13 p. 655 C. Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ ἐκ τῶν περιπλάτων).

33) Strabo 16.2.24 p. 757 C. Dubois suspected that Boethus might have been Strabo's teacher rather than fellow student, but this makes little difference to the

have been Andronicus' successor as head of the Peripatos<sup>34</sup>). It cannot be proved that Andronicus was their mutual teacher, but this seems a probability.

Whatever Strabo's direct knowledge of Andronicus may have been, he undoubtedly was taught at Rome by Tyrannio. Like Strabo's earlier teacher Aristodemus, Tyrannio was a grammarian, born at Amisus, not far from Strabo's native Amasia. This may have been an influential factor in his choice as the geographer's teacher. The *Suda* claims Tyrannio was first educated in his homeland by Hestiaeus and later sat at the feet of the leading grammarian Dionysius Thrax on Rhodes<sup>35</sup>). After this training he is said to have returned to Amisus where he supplanted Demetrius of Erythrae before being captured by the Romans in 71 BC during the Second Mithridatic War, when they took Amisus. Tyrannio was sent to Rome sometime between 68 and 66 BC after being sought by Licinius Murena as a prize from Lucullus<sup>36</sup>). Once in Rome he acquired both wealth and reputation with an acquaintance which included Caesar and Atticus, as well as Cicero<sup>37</sup>). The date of his arrival at Rome will confirm that Tyrannio was aged when he taught Strabo, who, as already mentioned, first visited Rome in 44 BC.

Tyrannio was already apparently a devotee of Peripatetic philosophy before he became acquainted with Apellicon's library; indeed Strabo says that this was what attracted him to it<sup>38</sup>). As we have seen a date for the excerpts he produced on behalf of Andronicus is not easy to attain, and we can only note the date of his first arrival in Rome and the date when Cicero first seems to have some knowledge about the library. Tyrannio was also some sort of expert on geographical matters since Cicero is known to have consulted him in an attempt to settle a contradiction between

argument. See M. Dubois, *Examen de la Géographie de Strabon* (Paris 1891) 67. On Boethus see Gercke, *Boethos* (9), *RE* III 1 (1897) 603–604; J. F. Dobson, *Boethus of Sidon*, *CQ* 8 (1914) 88–90; P. M. Huby, *An Excerpt from Boethus of Sidon's commentary on the Categories*, *CQ* 31 (1981) 398–409.

34) See P. M. Huby (see n. 33) 398.

35) His original name is said to have been Theophrastus; Tyrannio was a sobriquet. See *Suda* s.v. *Τυραννίων*. If it is true that Tyrannio was taught by Dionysius Thrax, he must have been ancient by the time he taught Strabo. Dionysius Thrax died soon after 90 BC. See Hultsch, *Dionysius* (134), *RE* V 1 (1903) 977–983. On his importance as a grammarian see R. H. Robins, *Dionysius Thrax and the Western Grammatical Tradition*, *TPhS* (1957) 67–106.

36) *Suda* *ibid.*; *Plut.* *Lucull.* 19.

37) *Suda* *ibid.* See discussion in M. Dubois (see n. 33) 64ff.

38) Strabo 13.1.54 p. 609 C.: φιλαριστοτέλης ὢν.



theories of Eratosthenes, Serapion and Hipparchus when he was planning a geographical work in 59 BC<sup>39</sup>). One can presume that Strabo's geographical studies received some impetus from this quarter. Although Strabo does no more than say that he studied under Tyrannio<sup>40</sup>), there are in fact good reasons for believing that he had an impact on his development. Tyrannio was not his only Peripatetic teacher, since we know that he also studied under Xenarchus<sup>41</sup>). Strabo professes to be a Stoic and occasionally gives voice to Stoic precepts, but at least in early life it seems unlikely that he was influenced in any exclusive way by either Stoic or Peripatetic doctrine<sup>42</sup>). He was certainly an eclectic as far as his studies were concerned. One of his Stoic acquaintance was Athenodorus of Tarsus<sup>43</sup>), who wrote one of the earliest commentaries on the *Categories*<sup>44</sup>). This goes far towards showing that the philosophic sects of this time should not be seen as closed groups working in total isolation from one another.

With this educational background Strabo's interest in the history of the text of Aristotle can hardly be doubted. He himself had been taught by leading figures in the Peripatetic school, and had been a fellow student of Boethus, who was subsequently to become its leader. He could see that the quality of discussion in the field had vastly improved in his own lifetime, and he exaggerates the weakness of the school in the previous generation in order to accentuate the contribution of scholars with whom he had been actively involved. The story of Apellicon's library was probably initiated by the rogue politician Apellicon to enhance the reputation of his edition of Aristotle but it also gave Strabo scope for an anecdote which placed his own scholarly world at the forefront of contemporary developments.

Newcastle (Australia)

Hugh Lindsay

39) Cic. Ad Att. 2.6.1.

40) Strabo 12.3.16 p.548 C.

41) Strabo 14.5.4 p.670 C. Xenarchus taught in Alexandria, Athens and finally at Rome. Strabo does not say where he heard his course. On his background see P. Moraux, *Xenarchos* (5), RE IX A 2 (1967) 1422–1435.

42) See Dubois (see n. 33) 70. On Strabo's Stoicism see G. Aujac, *Strabon et le Stoicisme*, *Diotima* 11 (1983) 17–29.

43) Strabo 16.4.21 p.779 C.: ἀνὴρ φιλόσοφος καὶ ἡμῖν ἑταῖρος. For Athenodorus' career see P. Grimal, *Auguste et Athénodore*, REA 47 (1945) 261–73; id., REA 48 (1946) 62–79.

44) On his contribution see Gottschalk 1990 (see n. 2) 69.