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geographical. I wish at this point to move away from the terminology of my title and to avoid separate discussions of 'geography' and 'history' in the *Geography* because *everything* that I am about to consider was 'geography' in Strabo's view.

STRABO AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL TRADITION:
SPATIAL SYSTEMS

The fact that periplus texts occupy most of Müller's first volume of *Geographici Graeci Minores* suggests that for him they lay at the heart of Greek geographical writing. The relationship between such texts and real exploratory voyages has been the subject of some debate, and I have already discussed in chapter I some of the links between geography and fiction. Jacob's assertion that these texts were simply literary constructs examining the nature of non-Greek *alterité* is countered by Cordano's belief that the literary periplus texts were firmly rooted in the accounts given by sailors of their voyages, and that there were probably, in addition to the long journeys of the extant texts, also descriptions of much shorter stretches of coastline.⁵ Given the long history of exploration and the resultant literary output, it is hard to be convinced by Jacob's theory, which in any case still needs to provide a motive for the periplus form given by authors to their constructions of 'the other'.⁶

⁵ C. Jacob, *Géographie et ethnographie en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1991), 73–84; F. Cordano, *La geografia degli antichi* (Rome, 1992), 29. Jacob sees also Agatharchides' *On the Erythraean Sea* as an intellectual exploration of *alterité* and a questioning of what constitutes civilization (p. 146); this view may be supported by the observations by S. M. Burstein, *Agatharchides of Cnidus: On the Erythraean Sea* (London, 1989), 17, that Agatharchides does not mention autopsy as a requirement for a potential successor to his project, and that his contacts with the élite of second-century BC Egypt must have given him 'access to documentary sources on a scale almost unparalleled among major Greek historians'. A much later, anonymous, account of the same sea, edited by L. Casson, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei* (Princeton, 1989), gives much of the same material as Agatharchides, but the perspective is that of a merchant, rather than that of an ethnographer, and the reality of the author's experience is not in doubt.

⁶ P. M. Fraser, 'The World of Theophrastus', in S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography* (Oxford, 1994), 167–91, illustrates a quite different medium through which the opening-up of the world could be expressed.

The form of the coastal voyage entails that this kind of account was dominated by linear space, prone to calibration, in so far as it is liable to have built into it distances, expressed numerically.⁷ Although Strabo did not include periplus authors in the 'canon' at the start of his work, the *Geography* was itself organized largely according to a periplus structure. By starting his description of the world in Iberia and continuing round the Mediterranean in a clockwise direction, finishing in north-west Africa, Strabo was following the structure adopted, for example, in the periplus texts attributed to Scymnus of Chios and Scylax of Caryanda, and, as far as can be discerned from the extant fragments, in Hecataeus' *Periegesis*.⁸ In any case, the literary nature of Strabo's project necessitated some kind of linearity in the description. Unlike pictorial accounts, which could give a sense of contemporaneity, Strabo's written account of the world had to have a clear sequence. In this section I shall start by discussing aspects of the periplus texts which are shared by Strabo's *Geography*, as well as considering how limited or varied are the spatial concepts associated with this technique.

Strabo announces that, just as Ephorus used the coast as his measuring-line (τῆ παραλίᾳ μέτρῳ χρώμενος), he will use the sea as his guide around Greece (8. 1. 3).⁹ This immediately conjures up a linear image, an impression which is reinforced

Fraser explores how Theophrastus' botanical works can be seen as a 'mirror of the great changes that the world had recently undergone' (p. 169). The variety of ways in which the East became known to the Greek-speaking world is endless. T. S. Brown, 'Suggestions for a Vita of Ctesias of Cnidus', *Historia*, 27 (1978), 1-19, discusses how Ctesias came to know and write about Persia through his time there as court-physician, having been taken prisoner by Artaxerxes. M. Cary and E. H. Warmington, *The Ancient Explorers* (London, 1929), 140-9, stress the growth in knowledge which resulted from the campaigns of Alexander.

⁷ The same obviously applies to road itineraries. It is striking quite how interested Polybius was in milestones and distance—preoccupations which are relatively absent from Strabo's text.

⁸ For Scymnus and Scylax, see *GGM I*; for Hecataeus, see *FGrH I*. An example of a modern periplus which follows precisely the same structure, as indicated in its title, is P. Theroux, *The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean* (London, 1995).

⁹ He calls the sea his τόπων σύμβουλος (guide to places).

by the allusion to measurement. It is, however, interesting that when Ephorus is invoked as a source for the Peloponnese in the second-century BC periplus of the Mediterranean attributed to Scymnus of Chios, what results is not a linear perspective, but a two-dimensional one, in which space is defined according to dominant peoples.¹⁰ The Peloponnese is treated as a microcosm of the world, with the area divided into the celestial coordinates and the dominant people of each quadrant recorded. The Sicyonians live in the north, the Eleans and Messenians dominate the west, the Laconians and Argives hold the south, and the Acteans the east. So we are left uncertain as to how Ephorus' own geographical conceptions were formulated. There is, however, some reason to believe that the geographical view of Ephorus given by Scymnus may be closer than the linear approach suggested by Strabo. Earlier in the periplus Scymnus departs suddenly from the linear structure to give his text a global aspect in a way which foreshadows the description of the Peloponnese. The Celts are said to be the largest people in the west, the Indians to hold almost all the land in the east, the Aethiopians to dominate the south, and the Scythians the north. Each quadrant of the celestial coordinates is characterized by a dominant set of inhabitants, and astronomy and anthropology combine to define the world. Although Scymnus does not cite Ephorus as a source here, the similarity with Ephorus' world-view as noted by Strabo elsewhere is striking. Strabo says that Ephorus in his treatise on Europe divided the heavens and the earth into four, and gave each section of the world a dominant population group—Celts, Scythians, Indians, and Aethiopians (1. 2. 28). So our original apparently simple allusion to a linear structure may be more complex than it at first seems.

One of the main features of the linear periplus texts is the calibration of distance, expressed in terms of both space and time. In the periplus attributed to Scylax of Caryanda, for the first few chapters all distances are given in terms of the number of days' and nights' sailing. When the Tyrrhenian coast is reached, this is partly replaced by a measurement in stades, although the temporal method of giving distances remains

¹⁰ See *GGM I*, Scymnus l. 472 for Ephorus; ll. 516–23 for the Peloponnese.

common.¹¹ This author refined the 'day-and-night' system to the degree where small fractions of a day were used, as in the case of the crossing from Sason to Oricus—a sea-journey of one-third of a day. Similarly, the journey time from the Bulini tribe of Illyria to the river Neston is given as 'a long day'.¹² The section on Europe ends with an exposition of the author's method for reckoning up the total sailing time along that coast. It is suggested that we take a night's sailing to be equal to that of a day and that we assume 50 stades' travel in a day, giving a total for the journey of 153 days.

These expressions of distance are interesting in terms of the interaction of time and space, for their preoccupation with space as well as place, and for their sense of 'experienced' space and of relative position.¹³ The notion of distance over space being measured in temporal terms counters the argument of some social geographers that the conceptual precedence of time over space is a modern phenomenon. I have already mentioned Harvey's argument that modern society has placed a high value on time, so that it must be privileged over space, making us sacrifice the experience of travelling through space.¹⁴ The use of time to measure space in the ancient periplus texts may simply reflect that 'time taken' was the most straightforward way to measure journeys at sea; but it also shows that the conceptual privileging of time over space does not necessarily result from the need to speed up time. Indeed, the very fact that the space between places is represented by a measure of time stresses the act of journeying.

The distinction between *temps vécu* and *temps mesuré* (and their spatial equivalents) is one which, as I shall argue, does not correlate exactly with a division between ancient and modern ways of viewing the world, in spite of those who argue that the ancients had no notion of abstract space and time. However, in the case of the periplus texts, the 'lived-in' nature of both space

¹¹ *GGM I*, Scylax §17.

¹² *GGM I*, Scylax §26, §22.

¹³ We may recall Y.-F. Tuan, 'Space, Time, Place: A Humanistic Framework', in *Making Sense of Time*, 14, who defined place as 'pause in movement', which fits the periplus scenario extremely well. But space, as it gains in familiarity, is scarcely distinguishable from place.

¹⁴ D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, 1989), 265. See above, p. 14 and n. 26.

and time *is* brought out by the use of the first person to refer to those participating in the voyage. The experience of passing through space is central to the exposition. This creates problems for the idea that place alone can be defined as 'lived-in space', as discussed by modern geographers, although the 'places' too have a strong sense of being lived in, owing to the amount of ethnographical material. Langton's distinction between 'spatial geography' and 'place geography' provides a useful way of describing the different approaches taken by Polybius and Strabo.¹⁵ But the periplus texts represent something between the two. Merrifield's suggestion that space and place could be bound by 'emplotment'—the narrative binding our experiences of different places to cover space—is perfectly exemplified in the periplus texts, whose main concern is precisely with the narrative of travelling across space from place to place.¹⁶

Albeit in a way which is dimensionally limited, the periplus authors reveal a conception of relative location through their interest in plotting out a real or imaginary journey between fixed points, with places defined primarily through their position in the list.¹⁷ One of the strongest impressions of travel comes in Dicaearchus' description of Greece, a periegesis rather than a periplus, and extant in only three substantial

¹⁵ J. Langton, 'The Two Traditions of Geography. Historical Geography and the Study of Landscapes', *Geografiska Annaler*, 70B (1988), 17–25. Both types of approach are, he concludes, equally valid; both are found in the ancient material.

¹⁶ See A. Merrifield, 'Place and Space. A Lefebvrian Reconciliation', *TIBG* NS 18 (1993), 516–31, cited above, p. 37 with n. 97. Jacob's argument for the fictional nature of some periplus journeys might have implications for the idea of 'espace vécu', except that the intended impression is of a real journey in which space is crossed through time, whether or not the journey actually took place. But, on the relationship between fictional and 'real' space and time, see above, pp. 23–5.

¹⁷ I have already mentioned Brodersen's paper, in which he discussed the connection between written lists and visually conceived space, and argued that the map of Agrippa was not a visual representation but a list of places along itineraries. The list was, he argued, the predominant way of conceiving space in the ancient world. Although his point is partially vindicated by the periplus texts, this does not entail that there was no notion of visual space in antiquity. I have already set out in chapter I some of the evidence for visual representations of the world, and argued in chapter II that Polybius' geography was strongly visual. I shall argue, furthermore, that such visual space is evident in the periplus texts themselves.

fragments.¹⁸ The first fragment deals with Athens, Oropus, Tanagra, Plataea, Thebes, Anhedon, and Chalcis. The reader is taken along this pleasant route to Athens and shown everything of interest both on the way and in the city itself. We are told of the great buildings in Athens, the produce of the area, and the characteristics of the Attic people as opposed to those of the Athenians themselves (1. §1-4). The route from Athens to Oropus is described as a journey of one day for a person without baggage and the steepness of the route is compensated for by plenty of resting places (1. §6). By contrast and inexplicably, the distances between Oropus, Tanagra, and Plataea are given in terms of stades rather than days' travel.

Strabo's language is sometimes reminiscent of that of the periplus writers. Expressions such as 'as one sails from Nisaea to Attica, five small islands lie before one', and 'the voyage, starting from the country of the Chaones and sailing towards the rising sun' evoke the immediate experience of real travel (9. 1. 9; 7. 7. 5).¹⁹ The extent to which Strabo adopted the interests of the periplus writers both in the journey along linear space and in distance is of relevance to the purpose of the *Geography*, and also to the type of spatial conceptions which dominate his description. In fact, if we recall Polybius' interest in distance, Strabo 'the geographer' is surprisingly silent. Strabo is expected to be concerned with distance and linear space not only because those are fields which we assign to modern geography, but also because some scholars have assumed that he was writing a manual for Roman governors, who might indeed find a literary version of itinerary maps useful. If Strabo set out to write this kind of geographical manual, then he failed. In a memorable sentence he describes negatively the type of geography which might be most useful to commanders and officials, namely, the distance between places, regretting that 'in the case of famous places it is necessary to endure the tiresome part of such geography as this' (14. 1. 9).²⁰

¹⁸ For Dicaearchus (or Athenaeus), *Periegesis of Greece*, see *GGM I*. All following numbers in the text refer to Müller's chapters.

¹⁹ The use of the phrase 'towards the rising sun' (*πρὸς ἀνίσχοντα ἥλιον*) is particularly striking. See also 16. 4. 2: 'The whole journey is towards the summer sunrise (*πρὸς μὲν ἀνατολᾶς θερινᾶς*).'

²⁰ The case in question is the difference in distance between Miletus and

Scholars, such as Jacob, have been reluctant to accept this non-utilitarian nature of Strabo's account, arguing that geography must provide dimensions since 'elle est l'instrument de la conquête, mais aussi d'une politique d'administration'.²¹ The justification for this view can be derived from Strabo's own preface, in which he aims the work at Roman rulers and strongly advocates the practical usefulness of geography. 'The geographer should take care of these [sc. the useful] matters rather than those [sc. the famous and entertaining]'; 'The greater part of geography is directed at political requirements (τὰς χρείας τὰς πολιτικός)'; 'Geography as a whole has a bearing on the activities of commanders (ἐπὶ τὰς πράξεις . . . τὰς ἡγεμονικός)' (I. I. 19; I. I. 16). But Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* should introduce a note of caution into any attempt to place narrow limitations on what kind of geography might seem appropriate to a military commander. Caesar's account incorporates military and strategic information together with ethnographic and geographical descriptions, confounding certain assumptions about what might have appealed to generals and officials. His purpose in writing, namely to gain support in Rome for his own political career, may have been quite different from that of Strabo, but the readership of the two works, the cultured member of the Roman élite, the potential commander or governor, remained the same.

Syme, however, expected Strabo to provide detailed information on routes, strategic points, and communications, only to be disappointed. Syme's own interest in this kind of geography comes through in his account of Anatolia. His sense of large-scale geography, strategic points, and communications is nowhere better exemplified than in his account of Termessus.²² But Syme was constantly frustrated when he

Heraclea, and between Miletus and Pyrrha, which is considered τὸ περισκελὲς τῆς τοιαύτης γεωγραφίας. περισκελὲς means 'hard', or 'difficult', with a connotation of 'unpleasant' or 'irritating' when used of medicines (LSJ).

²¹ Jacob, *Géographie et ethnographie*, 149: 'It [sc. geography] is the instrument of conquest, but also of a political system of administration.'

²² See Syme, *Anatolica*, 193: 'Termessus occupies a strong and secure position at the head of a valley on the southern flank of the defile through which passes the road out of Pamphylia to Isinda and Cibyra—the main road to the valley of the Maeander. That would be enough to explain the strategic

turned to Strabo for help on these points. Strabo's spatial misconceptions were inexcusable to Syme. Strabo's inadequate account of the river Tigris, for example, was a result of his 'clumsily combining, or rather juxtaposing, heterogeneous and often incongruous information'. His knowledge of the Tigris compared unfavourably with that of other authors, was 'elementary and archaic', and these limitations led to his overlooking 8,000 square miles of land.²³ I shall return to Strabo's lack of a sense of two-dimensional space, which Syme was right to attribute to the *Geography*, but for the moment simply suggest that the work could still be 'useful'. Strabo's statement of intent is mismatched with the work itself if we take it to refer to itineraries and strategic positions, but the intention might still have been fulfilled if we allow for a different interpretation. By presenting a picture of the world as it was now, as well as its transformations into that state, Strabo could claim to be educating the ruling Romans on the nature of their subjects and potential enemies, providing an account of the lands and peoples which were of interest to the Roman ruling élite.²⁴

We shall see in the next section how Strabo rewrote the world by transforming the use of linear concepts of space in conjunction with a different spatial model. First, however, I shall examine ways in which even the periplus texts departed from a strict linear sequence, thus themselves providing alternative spatial models. I have already mentioned the remarkable passage of Scymnus in which a picture of the whole world is suddenly

importance of Termessus. There is something more. The defile is also an exit from Pamphylia into central Anatolia.'

²³ Ibid. 29; 39.

²⁴ G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford, 1965), 123–8, suggests that Strabo was part of the general influx of Greek literati towards Rome, which included Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Timagenes and formed a group around the aristocracy. This situation may encourage the view that Strabo's work was primarily intended to be useful for those who would govern the empire. The addressee is seen as the 'man of state' (ὁ πολιτικός), engaged in politics, but in the broad sense of 'the cultured and superior men who managed the affairs of state' (p. 128). C. Van Paassen, *The Classical Tradition of Geography* (Groningen, 1957), 9, supports this view of the dualistic nature of the intended reader, but he adds that 'one could read for φιλόσοφος Greek, and for πολιτικός Roman', a notion to which I shall return in chapter VI.

evoked. The periplus attributed to Scylax of Caryanda shows one way of breaking the linear progression to incorporate islands into the account, simply inserting them into the description of the coast as they occur, and invariably ending with the formula 'I shall return to the mainland from which I digressed'.²⁵ Scylax also foreshadowed the clearly ethnographical geography of later writers such as Agatharchides of Cnidus, revealing an interest in people rather than places, and so with whole areas rather than individual cities or villages. As we shall see, Strabo's concern was predominantly with the cities (*πόλεις*) of the world, although he did devote some attention to the treatment of non-urban peoples, and these non-*πόλις* occasions are precisely when he became interested in space as opposed to place.²⁶ Scylax, at the end of his description of Europe, departs again from the linear sequence, and also broadens the scope of spatial conceptions from the city-to-city scale to a comparison between the size of the Palus Maeotis and the Pontus.²⁷ The broad horizons, well beyond the scope of the periplus, are maintained in a description of the Scythians as reaching from the outer sea beyond Taurica to the Palus Maeotis. Finally we are told of the Syrmatae, a race which lived by the river Tanais and, with it, bounded Asia and Europe. Thus the periplus gives rise to a vision of such large-scale geographical areas as continents.

Dicaearchus' periegesis of Greece, in spite of its strong sense of travel along a linear journey, is not devoid of wider geographical ideas. His detailed account of Mount Pelion links the mountain to the surrounding area. One of the rivers flowing off the mountain connects it via the Pelian grove to the sea and the views from the summit are used to orientate the mountain. One side faces Magnesia and Thessaly, the west and the Zephyr; the other looks towards Athens and the Macedonian bay, a method of description (that is, by orientation) which recalls Polybius on Media.²⁸ In the third fragment the boundaries of Hellas are

²⁵ ἐπάνειμι δὲ πάλιν ἐπὶ τὴν ἡπειρον, ὅθεν ἐξετραπόμην: *GGM I*, Scylax §13, §53, §58.

²⁶ But Strabo rarely shows a real interest in terrain, one of the first topics to feature in modern geographical accounts of a region. By contrast, see Polybius 5. 22. 1-4 on the terrain around Sparta; 5. 59. 3-11 for Seleuceia.

²⁷ *GGM I*, Scylax §68.

²⁸ *GGM I*, Dicaearchus 2. §7-9; Pol. 5. 44. 3-11.

discussed, raising the issue of defining geographical units, a problem which was to tax the brains of geographers throughout antiquity and beyond.²⁹

I shall discuss the question of focus more fully in the next section, but it is already worth mentioning that the broadly linear form of the periplus and its apparently internal and ever-changing perspective do not exclude the idea of viewing the world from a single point. The notion of standpoint accounts for one of the less obvious ways in which the periplus perspective coloured Strabo's description. He treats the coastline of the area facing Euboea before moving inland, and uses a similar technique with the coast of the Troad and Aeolia, keeping the interior as the second element of the description (9. 2. 14-15; 13. 3. 6). This ordering is made explicit—'since I have gone through the Trojan and Aeolian coasts together, it would be next in order to run through the interior'. The use of the sea as the point of reference from which the land is described has been discussed by Nicolai.³⁰ He assesses the possible location of the Aorsi and Siraci tribes on the basis of the meanings of *ἄνω* and *κάτω*, rejecting the possibility that these could refer to high and low-lying areas, in favour of the meanings 'inland' and 'near the sea'. By pointing to other instances in Strabo's text where the adverbs take the latter meaning, such as 1. 3. 22 where *ἡ ἀνωτέρω πᾶσα μέχρι τοῦ ἰσημερινοῦ* ('all of the "higher" region as far as the equator') clearly refers to the whole of Africa moving *inland* as far as the equator, Nicolai puts forward a convincing interpretation of the use of these words with regard to the Aorsi and Siraci. The argument is important for two reasons. Firstly, it stresses the periplus viewpoint adopted by Strabo in many of his descriptive passages. Secondly, it brings out the centrality of the Mediterranean in Strabo's view of the inhabited world (*οἰκουμένη*), reminding us that affiliation to periplus texts did not have a linear spatial

²⁹ As C. Bearzot, 'La Grecia di Pausania. Geografia e cultura nella definizione del concetto di *Ἑλλάς*', *CISA* 14 (1988), 90-112, discusses, the boundaries of Hellas were still debatable in Pausanias' day. One of the problems was the discrepancy between administrative, political, and cultural limits.

³⁰ R. Nicolai, 'Un sistema di localizzazione geografica relativa. Aorsi e Siraci in Strabone XI 5, 7-8', in *Strabone I*, 101-25.

view as its only consequence. For Strabo to describe Asia Minor from the Mediterranean viewpoint required a deliberate decision since, as a native of Amaseia, he would naturally have seen the Aorsi and Siraci from a quite different angle.

The other main strand of Hellenistic geography known to us was the so-called scientific tradition represented by figures such as Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, and Strato of Lampsacus. I have discussed in connection with both Polybius and Posidonius the view that it is misleading to think of scientific geography as divorced from ethnography or periplus literature; but for convenience I shall isolate some of the concerns revealed in the extant writings of these authors, and consider Strabo's treatment of these themes. His debt to the scientific geographical tradition is obvious from the prologue to his work, in which Hipparchus is one of the prominent figures. The fact that Strabo devoted Book 2 to a discussion of mathematical geography reveals a considerable degree of interest and knowledge in this type of research. But what would affiliating his *Geography* with the authors listed above entail? Strato's sea-level debates are known to us from the *Geography*.³¹ The theories of Eratosthenes and Hipparchus are expounded and criticized at length. But how did Strabo's practice through the rest of the text relate to them?

The use of geometrical figures as aids to geographical understanding, so important to Eratosthenes and Hipparchus, was taken up by Polybius, as we have seen. Strabo too used such figures, but only to a limited extent. Britain, Italy, Sicily, and the Nile Delta were, for example, triangular, although Strabo expresses some reservation over the possibility of describing Italy by means of a single figure (4. 5. 1; 5. 1. 2; 6. 2. 1; 17. 1. 4); India was shaped like a rhombus (15. 1. 11). But more crucially, the whole scope of Strabo's world was different from that of the scientists. The quest to measure out the globe was explicitly rejected by Strabo in favour of studying the inhabited world. While Eratosthenes discussed the shape not only of the inhabited world (*οἰκουμένη*), but of the whole earth (*ἡ σύμπαση γῆ*), and Posidonius extended his sphere of interest to the outer Ocean, Strabo contested that 'geographers

³¹ Cited at 1. 3. 4-5 and discussed by J. O. Thomson, *History of Ancient Geography* (Cambridge, 1948), 155.

need not concern themselves with what lies outside our inhabited world' (2. 5. 34).³² This zone of study was reduced even further elsewhere: 'The geographer seeks to relate the known parts of the inhabited world, but he leaves alone the unknown parts of it—just as he does what lies outside it' (2. 5. 5). Strabo was interested primarily in the inhabited parts of the world because they formed the stage for, and even influenced, human action, in a way which was consistent with his concentration on places rather than the uninhabited space between them.³³ As I have discussed in chapter I, the concern with the world which humans have made for themselves is shared by both geographers and historians, and is perfectly illustrated by the Herodotean *histoire humaine*.

One of the theories inherited by Strabo from the Hellenistic geographical tradition and treated in the *Geography* concerned the climatic zones formed by the equator and parallel lines of latitude. Posidonius attributed the five-zone scheme to Parmenides; Polybius added a sixth, according to Strabo, giving a neat symmetry to the hemispheres. Posidonius himself complicated the conception of climatic zones by introducing ethnic criteria (2. 2. 2-3, 2).³⁴ This was another geographical model discussed by Strabo in his introductory books but scarcely taken up in his own account of the world. Hipparchus' attempts to determine which places lay on the same lines of latitude find no place in Strabo's view of the world, although they are included in his summary of the geographical tradition (2. 1. 20).³⁵

³² Strabo gives the limits of this field as the parallels through the Cinnamon-producing country and through Ierne in the north. When talking of Laconia, Strabo puts a limit to how much should be said 'about a country which is now mostly deserted' (8. 4. 11).

³³ 1. 1. 16: *χώρα γὰρ τῶν πράξεων ἐστὶ γῆ καὶ θάλαττα, ἣν οἰκοῦμεν* ('for the location of events is the land and sea which we inhabit'). I shall return to the problem of how this statement can be reconciled with my view that Strabo saw nature as more than a passive backdrop for history.

³⁴ I have discussed the contributions of Polybius and Posidonius to the theory of zones above, pp. 112, 145-7, 182-3.

³⁵ Hipparchus took as a basis for his system of lines of latitude and longitude a principal latitude through the Pillars of Hercules and the Gulf of Issus, and a main meridian through Alexandria. He then drew parallels of latitude through well-known places and thus created zones called *κλίματα*. Strabo, however, used the term *κλίμα* to refer to the lines of latitude themselves.

The continents offered yet another way of dividing up the earth and were also discussed by Strabo. I have mentioned the influence of Eratosthenes on ideas about continental divisions, and also Strabo's objections to the artificiality of Eratosthenes' system of vertical seals. In the introduction to his treatment of Asia Strabo favoured the division according to natural boundaries, which Eratosthenes had applied to the inhabited world as a whole (II. 1. 1). As I have noted (p. 205), the notion of continents was of interest to the periplus authors. Both Scylax and Scymnus gave the river Tanais as the boundary of Asia and Europe.³⁶ But a geography describing the individual places in the known world would have little cause to make much of huge continental units.

One occasion on which Strabo *does* refer to the continents is in the penultimate chapter of the whole work, picking up on the kind of geography which he discussed at the start. In the meantime Strabo has set out his own vision of the world in which geometry, continents and wide-scale geography are subordinate. Jacob has argued that Strabo adopted *all* preceding traditions, and in a sense this is true. He sees the general, wide-scale geography of the first two books followed in the rest of the work by a periplus structure. But Jacob skews the picture by deliberately 'dégageant simplement le fil du parcours au détriment des informations apportées sur chacun de ces lieux'.³⁷ Of course, by removing the extensive historical descriptions of each place, we shall be left with something approaching a bare linear structure. But this entirely distorts the overall impression, which is predominantly of a world made up of individual and discrete places. As I discuss in the next section, these places are linked not so much to each other as to Rome.

Of course Strabo was not hopelessly ignorant when it came to the broader geographical conceptions of the tradition. His first two books set out the 'scientific' geographical framework for the rest of the work; the description itself follows a broadly periegetic order. But I shall now move on to consider what was really distinctive about the way Strabo constructed his world.

³⁶ Scymnus called the river τῆς Ἀσίας ὄρος. See *GGM I*, Scymnus l. 874.

³⁷ Jacob, *Géographie et ethnographie*, 154: 'simply separating the thread of the journey to the detriment of information adduced on each of these places'.

The end of the work gives a clue as to the model for which I shall argue. When Strabo finally returns to the continental divisions, having scarcely mentioned them since the second book, it is in a way which is transformed to reflect his preoccupations. Strabo's interest in the continents is entirely related to the extent of Roman rule. After describing the initial spread of Roman influence through Italy, Strabo then tells what parts of each continent Rome does and does not rule (17. 3. 24).³⁸ As with every other spatial conception in the preceding tradition, the continents are brought into play in the *Geography*, but as part of a fresh vision of the world, dominated by a new spatial model, to which I now turn.

STRABO'S CIRCULAR MODEL: A WORLD BUILT
AROUND ROME?

In the following two sections I examine the conception of the world as a whole which emerges from the *Geography*. Having considered some of the spatial models which were part of the preceding geographical tradition, and which Strabo largely neglects after the introductory books on the theory of geography and its scholarly tradition, I shall now try to describe what Strabo's own spatial world-view might have been. I argue that his world was constructed according to a circular model in a way which was historically determined by the consolidation of the Roman empire. I use the term 'circular' not to refer to that specific geometrical shape as opposed, for example, to an ellipse, but rather to suggest that the world of the *Geography* was, by contrast with the wandering linearity of the periplus tradition and with the mathematical abstraction of the scientific treatises, a world constructed with a periphery and a primary centre. This picture will necessarily be subjected to considerable modification, in particular through the incorporation of other focal points besides Rome itself, but I shall deal first with the broad conception of a Romanocentric world.

The question of circularity is not dependent on an understanding of the spherical nature of the earth among the

³⁸ Interestingly, the continents are introduced here in an anti-clockwise direction—Europe, Libya, Asia—the opposite of the progress of the work as a whole, although, in each instance, Europe is given precedence.