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An English translation of Pliny's geographical books for the 21st century

Аннотация. Цель статьи — рассказать о предпринятом ее автором совместно с коллегой проекте, направленном на пересмотр и замену давно устаревшего перевода на английский язык географических книг «Естественной истории» Плиния Старшего в серии «Loeb Classical Library» (1940). Обсуждаются проблемы определения целевой читательской аудитории нового перевода (в отношении не владеющих латынью, объем (книги III–VI и предваряющая их II книга о строении космоса вкупе с последующими географическими пассажами в книгах VII–XXXVII), привлекаемые издания (серии «Budé» выборочно и «Tusculum» полностью), необходимость соблюдения баланса между точностью и удобочитаемостью перевода. Большое значение уделяется выразительным средствам языка для передачи топонимов и этнонимов наряду с надлежащей передачей особенностей языка Плиния, особенно его сокращенного стиля staccato, со списками, в которых отсутствуют глаголы, и с пространными предложениями. В статье также идет речь о дополнительных разделах издания — о примечаниях, сопровождающем текст географической карте обитаемого мира (цифровой) и комментарии.

Ключевые слова: Центр картографии античного мира, география, Г. Рэкхэм, перевод с латинского на английский, «Естественная история», Loeb Classical Library, Плиний Старший, Римская империя

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Articles

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An English translation of Pliny's geographical books for the 21st century

Abstract. The author's aim, in collaboration with a colleague, is to supersede the standard English translation of Pliny the Elder's geographical books in the *Natural History*, one produced for the Loeb Classical Library around 1940, but with clear limitations (explained here) and long outdated. The article discusses the challenges of determining the intended audience for the new translation (broad, without knowledge of Latin), the scope (Books 3–6, preceded by 2 on the universe and its elements, followed by notable geographical passages in 7–37), the editions of the Latin text to follow (Budé where available, otherwise Sammlung Tusculum), and the need to balance accuracy with readability. Close attention is paid to effective means of handling toponyms and ethnonyms, as well as to appropriate replication of Pliny's style, especially its staccato shorthand, with lists lacking verbs, as well as loose rambling sentences. How far the descriptive terms in Pliny's Latin can, and should, be consistently translated by the same English word gains attention. The matter of aids — notes and an accompanying map (seamless, digital) — is also addressed; a commentary separate from the translation is planned, to be contributed by a further colleague.

Keywords: Ancient World Mapping Center, geography, Harris Rackham, Latin-English translation, *Natural History*, Loeb Classical Library, Pliny the Elder, Roman empire

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The project in progress discussed here stems from a perception that Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* has untapped potential to advance understanding of ancient geographical knowledge and thought; an English translation could usefully assist that purpose. The project's initial impetus and its design relate primarily, therefore, to the geography in the work's opening books rather than to a preoccupation with its author himself.

For many years past there has been widespread recognition that the sole usable English translation of Pliny's geographical books — made for the Loeb Classical Library over eighty years ago (see further below) — is long overdue for replacement.[1] My former pupil and Ancient World Mapping Center director Brian Turner, now associate professor of history at Portland State University, Oregon, first resolved to meet this need. At the outset he consulted me, and I agreed to help. But as this informal help continued, he then insisted that I become his full partner. I consented, on the two conditions that he should have the final say on any disputed issues, and that his name should precede mine on the title-page of the book we now have a contract to publish with Cambridge University Press.[2]

Devoted admirers of Pliny might interject that Turner and I should be reprimanded for separating the geographical books from the rest of the *Natural History* and then limiting our translation to them. To be sure, the objection has merit. Even so, it may be considered utopian in character as well as impractical, given the exceptional length of the work and the great diversity of its aspects.[3] Moreover, we readily acknowledge the need to keep in mind Pliny's own conception of the work as a single whole, as well as the important fact that its different parts do inter-relate rather than remaining merely self-contained. This is particularly the case with the geographical books, because they come first. They lay the foundation for the treatments of peoples, animals, plants and minerals that will follow. Notably, for example, in Book 7 on the human animal (immediately *after* the geographical books) Pliny expands on the character and lifestyle of Scythian cannibals, northern Arimaspi and numerous extraordinary peoples on all three continents first mentioned in Books 3 to 6.

What books should our translation cover? Books 3 to 6 without question, but we think it essential to include Book 2 also (on the universe and its elements). Throughout, at the appropriate points, we shall insert the subject headings listed in Book 1, and we shall also reproduce its listing of each book's sources. In a substantial appendix we mean to translate notable 'geographical' passages that occur in later books of the *Natural History*. The draft list of such passages in the Appendix below is no more than a provisional selection, but it serves to demonstrate our thinking as well as to underscore our concern to recognize that Books 2 to 6 form an integral part of a much larger whole in which geography continues to feature constantly.

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[1] In personal communication Graham Shipley has mentioned to me that when he approached the Loeb Classical Library editors in the late 1990s with a proposal to revise its translation of these books, no interest was shown.

[2] My thanks to Brian Turner for commenting on a draft of this article and confirming that it reflects our joint thinking to date; any error is mine alone.

[3] The choice to focus on just one aspect of Pliny's work is of course far from novel: note the length of the section "Subject Areas in the *Natural History*" in [Doody 2015].

Which editor's Latin text should we translate, or should we prepare our own edition? To address the second question first, without hesitation we resolved not to prepare our own edition. This would be an unavoidably herculean task, given (on the one hand) the mass of manuscripts and their difficulties, not to mention our lack of qualifications for editing texts, and (on the other hand) the fact that satisfactory editions are already available. Admittedly, no single editor since Carl Mayhoff for Teubner in 1906 has published a text of Books 2 to 6 in their entirety. But today there are volumes in the (French) Budé series for all but the latter two-thirds of Book 5 and the first and third quarters of Book 6. Our decision, therefore, has been to translate the Budé text where there is one — all of it published since 1980, except for Book 2 which dates to 1950: see Table 1.[4] Otherwise we turn to the (German) Sammlung Tusculum text; everything we need from this series was published in the 1990s. By this means we leave decisions about textual matters to experts alone.[5] We also divide and number the sections of text as in Budé and Tusculum only, while noting in our Introduction that some older editions divided and numbered differently.

One of the anonymous evaluators of our project proposal to the Cambridge University Press urged emphatically that we should follow Mayhoff's text because it — unlike the ones we favor (as yet anyway) — is available free online and so can be consulted more conveniently. But to us, this argument does not give sufficient cause to set aside all the work done on the text during the past century and more (since 1906), and thereby in effect to devalue the expertise of specialists such as Jehan Desanges, who has edited the first part of Book 5 and the final part of Book 6 (both on Africa) for the Budé series. Both this series and the Sammlung Tusculum are well known and readily available in research libraries; we do not intend to reproduce the Latin texts of either.

The matter of which Latin text to follow links with the equally fundamental issue of who we mean to be translating for. Our aim, we have resolved, should be to present a scholarly translation, but at the same time a readable one, accessible to a broad audience that knows Latin barely, if at all, and so has minimal concern to examine any edition of the Latin text. In these respects our approach differs very distinctly from that of Harris Rackham (1868–1944), a member of the University of Cambridge Faculty of Classics,[6] who produced what has remained the standard English translation of Pliny's geographical books (and many more) ever since it was published in two volumes of the Loeb Classical Library around 1940,[7] conforming to the regular format for the series — Latin text on each lefthand page, and English translation of it on the corresponding righthand. In a curt Prefatory Note to the volume for Books 3 to 7 (1942), however, Rackham unapologetically warns his readers that "this translation is designed to afford assistance to the student of the Latin text; it is not primarily intended to supply the English reader with a substitute

[4] Observe our use of the volume dated 2004 for Book 3. It in fact incorporates considerable revision and enlargement (with new pagination) of the 1998 edition, although not presented thus by Budé and in consequence easily assumed to be no more than a reprint of that edition.

[5] All Budé texts are presented with an apparatus criticus; Sammlung Tusculum volumes record editors' variant readings in an extensive appendix.

[6] Obituary in *The Times* March 21st 1944.

[7] Books 1–2 (1938), 3–7 (1942), also 8–11 (1940), and posthumously 12–16 (1945), 17–19 (1950), 33–35 (1952) (see [Rackham et al. 1938–1963]).

for the Latin."[8] This Note summarizes a slightly fuller statement about his approach as a translator that forms the Preface (p. v) to the volume for Books 8 to 11 published two years earlier: here he maintains that, because the translation is to be printed facing the original text, its purpose should be "to assist the reader of the original to understand its meaning."[9]

Rackham's translation of Books 2 to 6 has proven long-lasting, but really by default, because a replacement in English has yet to appear. The lack of one for this important text has become all the more frustrating when such a wealth of new English translations of Greek and Latin geographical works has appeared during the past 20 years. In the circumstances it is a further disappointment that Rackham evidently showed minimal concern for how his translation of Pliny's geographical books might be framed to last. I say this with particular reference to his practice in one prominent respect vital for these books: the rendering of place-names. If Rackham did in fact formulate methodical principles by which to render the names of places and also of peoples (as any translator of Pliny should), he never explains them; instead he proceeds with a surprising and unfortunate degree of inconsistency. His practice seems more puzzling still in the light of his warning that he did *not* intend to supply a substitute for Pliny's Latin.

In this event, his logical course would surely be to reproduce a name just as Pliny records it in Latin, even when the place or feature is identifiable and its current equivalent modern name readily established. In fact Rackham duly does just this in the case of Lixus and the others underlined in the following specimen passage (5.9, as presented in both Latin and English by him):

> Ad flumen Anatim CCCCXCVI, ab eo Lixum CCV Agrippa, Lixum a Gaditano freto CXII abesse; inde sinum qui vocetur Sagigi, oppidum in promunturio Mulelacha, flumina Sububum et Salat, portum Rutubis a Lixo CCXXIV, inde promunturium Solis, portum Rhysaddir, Gaetulos Autoteles, flumen Quosenum, gentes Velatitos et Masatos, flumen Masathat, flumen Darat, in quo crocodilos gigni.
>
> Agrippa says that to the river Anatis is a distance of 496 miles, and from the Anatis to Lixus 205 miles; that Lixus is 112 miles from the **Straits of Gibraltar** and that then come the gulf called Sagigi Bay, the town on Cape Mulelacha, the rivers **Sebou** and **Sallee**, the port of **Mazagan** 224 miles from Lixus, then **Capo Blanco**, the port of **Safi**, the Gaetulian *Free State*, the river **Tensift**, the Velatiti and Masati tribes, the river **Mogador**, and the river **Sous**, in which crocodiles are found.

This prudent choice of retaining what is in the Latin eliminates the risk to be incurred by substituting the modern current name instead; sooner or later there may be some change to it, rendering the translation increasingly out of date and hard to comprehend. Even so, in other instances (set in bold type here) Rackham

[8] A more restrictive purpose in fact than that articulated by James Loeb when he initiated the series in 1912. The Note has been dropped from reprints issued after 1969.

[9] This 1940 Preface is reprinted (p. vi) in the volume for Books 12 to 16 (1945). The first volume to appear (1938) begins with a concise Introduction, but this makes no reference to the character of the translation.

opts for exactly that alternative: he dispenses with Pliny's name and substitutes a contemporary one of the post-World War I period. By now, up to a century later, predictably enough this is often a name superseded decades ago, so that today's readers are liable to find its use variously disorienting, quaint, or offensive for its association with a rejected colonial past. To create further bafflement, the choices that Rackham makes between use of a name's ancient form or its equivalent in his day seem merely random. Thus he could just as well have substituted a modern name for ancient Lixus (Larache, say) but for whatever reason he did not, and equally he could have retained ancient Rhysaddir instead of substituting modern Safi.

In other instances still — again at random, it seems — Rackham chooses to set aside Pliny's form of the name and to use instead an English translation of its meaning in Greek or Latin. Here he could have done this for promunturium Solis ("Sun's cape"), though he preferred to substitute its modern name Capo Blanco. But the "Gaetulian Autoteles" are rendered as the "Gaetulian Free State" (set in italic type here),[10] and elsewhere Hierasycaminos is rendered as Holy Mulberry (6.184), Zeugma as Bridgetown,[11] and so on.

To add to the sense of confusion, Rackham acts to mislead his readers by the way in which he translates a sentence eight sections later (5.17), where Pliny names the Autoteles again and then refers back to them with the pronoun *horum*:

> Gaetulae nunc tenent gentes, Baniurae multoque validissimi Autoteles et horum pars quondam Nesimi, qui avolsi his propriam fecere gentem versi ad Aethiopas.

Rackham translates:

> The country is now occupied by the Gaetulian tribes, the Baniurae and the Free State, by far the most powerful of them all, and the Nesimi, who were formerly a section of the Autoteles, but have split off from them and formed a separate tribe of their own in the direction of the Aethiopians.

So here Rackham in the first instance renders Autoteles (consistently) as the Free State. But then at once, when he considers it necessary to specify the name of this people again in order to clarify *horum* in Pliny's compressed Latin, he opts instead for Pliny's own Autoteles without any indication that these are in fact the Free State just mentioned rather than an entirely different people, as readers of this English translation would reasonably infer; only a painstaking check of the Latin could correct that impression.[12]

The manifestly unsatisfactory nature of Rackham's practice has convinced us that, so far as seems practical, our translation should methodically retain the form of each name in Pliny's Latin. We do so even when Pliny names an *oppidum* or the

[10] It may be relevant to recall that the Republic of Ireland was officially named the Irish Free State between 1922 and 1937.

[11] 5.67, 86, 90; 6.119, 120, 126. But Rackham retains Pliny's Zeugma in his translation of 34.150.

[12] Rackham's predilection for mixing ancient and modern names produces an especially bizarre effect in his translation (5.37) of the African peoples and towns whose names and images were featured in the triumph of Cornelius Balbus (19 BCE).

like by its ethnic adjective rather than by its toponym: so in 5.29, for example, we translate Simittuensian and Uchitanian rather than converting to Simittu and Uchi.[13] If within a list Pliny should vary his usage between ethnic adjective and toponym — as in 5.29 with Canophicum — we reflect the variation. By the qualification "practical" I mean that we do not abandon our concern for readability and for modern English usage, although we still expect readers to recognize that Pliny's world in the distant past must inevitably appear unfamiliar in multiple respects. Accordingly, for a limited number of frequently used names we have opted to use the common anglicized forms rather than Pliny's Latin ones: for example, Rome instead of Roma, Egypt instead of Aegyptus, Nile instead of Nilus. Pliny's Aethiopia, however, we retain as a repeated reminder to readers that the part of Africa Pliny has in mind when he uses this name is by no means equivalent to modern Ethiopia.

In plenty of other instances, however, where the Latin name-form may not sound instantly familiar but still can hardly be a source of confusion, we have resisted the temptation to anglicize. Hence we keep, for example, Alpes, Danuvius, Europa, Gallia, Hispania, Italia, Euxinus and Pontus, although for this last pair we do add in square brackets after the name's first appearance "= Black Sea." Where the name of a physical feature is a noun such as *mare* or *oceanus* and adjective, we favor using the latter's common anglicized form if there is one: so, for example, Atlantic ocean instead of Atlanticus, Caspian sea instead of Caspium, Aegean instead of Aegaeum, Egyptian instead of Aegyptiacum, Indian instead of Indicum. By the same token we readily anglicize Latin ethnic forms if there is a common English equivalent: so, for example, Amazons instead of Amazones, Greeks instead of Graeci, Indians instead of Indi, Macedonians instead of Macedones, Numidians instead of Numidae, Romans instead of Romani.[14] We acknowledge that in all our choices of whether to anglicize a name or not there is an element of subjectivity, but this is unavoidable; rather, the goal should be to strike a practical balance between retaining Pliny's usage and making the translation readable.

We strive to avoid repeating a name where Pliny uses only, say, a pronoun or adjective to refer to it again. In some instances, of course, the name simply has to be repeated for the sake of achieving clarity in English, and we then enclose it in square brackets to signify that it does not recur at that point in the Latin. So we handle *horum* as follows in the compressed sentence quoted earlier (5.17):

> Gaetulae nunc tenent gentes, Baniurae multoque validissimi Autoteles et horum pars quondam Nesimi, qui avolsi his propriam fecere gentem versi ad Aethiopas.
>
> Nowadays Gaetulian peoples dominate, Baniurae and Autoteles (by far the most powerful) and Nesimi, who were once a sub-group of theirs [Autoteles] but split from them to become a people in their own right located in the Aethiopians' direction.

[13] However, if the location of the community is known, it is to be named with its toponym on the map in preparation (see further below), not its ethnic adjective.

[14] In addition, where readers of English are likely to find use of *v* rather than *u* more familiar, we opt for that choice: so, for example, Arverni instead of Aruerni, Ubii instead of Vbii. When unsure, we follow the choice made by *Barrington Atlas*. We also normally follow its choice where the Latin text is liable to create confusion with variant spellings of a name (Rhodos / Rhodus and many others).

Similarly, we use square brackets to identify any other words that must be introduced to make Pliny's Latin meaningful beyond routine minimal additions that a readable translation into English calls for.

Another practice we have adopted stems from concern to present most effectively the long lists of features, peoples and places that Pliny offers. Rackham, with ample justification, presents them for the most part in a normal way for English prose — using "the" frequently, and also "of", as in "Straits of …", "port of …":

> Agrippa says that to the river Anatis is a distance of 496 miles, and from the Anatis to Lixus 205 miles; that Lixus is 112 miles from the Straits of Gibraltar and that then come the gulf called Sagigi Bay, the town on Cape Mulelacha, the rivers Sebou and Sallee, the port of Mazagan 224 miles from Lixus, then Capo Blanco, the port of Safi, the Gaetulian Free State, the river Tensift, the Velatiti and Masati tribes, the river Mogador, and the river Sous, in which crocodiles are found.

However, we have concluded that such repeated use of "the", "of" and the like is unnecessary in this context, and that their omission (for the most part) permits better replication of Pliny's staccato shorthand with its frequent lack of a verb. So we translate this passage in leaner fashion as follows (from the Budé Latin, which marks lacunas at the start):

> …. as far as Anatis river ‹…› 496 ‹…›. Agrippa says that Lixus is 205 from it, and that Lixus is 112 from the Gaditanian strait. Then the bay called Sagigi, a town on cape Mulelacha, Sububus and Sala rivers, Rutubis harbor 224 from Lixus, then Sol's cape, Rhysaddir harbor, Gaetulian Autoteles, Quosenum river, Selatiti and Masathi peoples, Masath river, Darat river in which crocodiles are born.

In Rackham's translation "miles" occurs four times, because he automatically follows each distance figure with the unit; but in no instance here does Pliny's Latin state it, and we see no merit in adding it in instances like these where the unit is beyond all doubt. We never convert Roman miles, or any of the other units of measurement stated by Pliny, into a modern equivalent; instead, our book's front matter includes an explanatory note about such conversions and the difficulties they pose. Likewise, we just translate Pliny's directional indicators — *adversus*, *ante*, *contra*, *infra*, *sub*, *super*, etc — literally, without substituting a compass direction.

Observe that we do not capitalize the initial letter of physical-feature nouns such as cape, strait, etc. This practice is indeed contrary to regular English usage and may act to disconcert some readers at first, especially in the cases of, say, an ocean, sea or mountain. Even so, no obstacle is introduced to comprehension of Pliny's material, and the practice curbs the number of capitalized words in a text already teeming with them. Observe, too, that we do not convert Pliny's long list beginning "Then the bay called Sagigi …." into a normal sentence by introducing a main verb, as Rackham does unnecessarily; we simply leave it as a list. Nor do we insert "and" before the mention of the last name, as Rackham does in accordance with regular English usage, but again unnecessarily in our view. We also do not retain Rackham's repetition of the river-name Anatis, but refer back to it only with a pronoun, as Pliny does; what "it" refers to here in our translation can hardly give readers any doubt.

There can be no avoiding the delicate perennial problem for translators of whether a Latin word used by their author should always be rendered as the same English word. In tackling Pliny, we have again sought to strike a balance. In some instances we find no sound reason to maintain consistency: for example, *nobilis* can as well be translated, say, "outstanding" or "splendid" (depending on the context), *clarissimus* as "very well known" or "famous". This said, we are concerned not to translate such adjectives either in a distinctly more muted way than Pliny does, or in an even more effusive way.

More generally, too, we reject going to the extreme adopted by Tony Woodman in his painstaking, but provocative, translation (2004) of the *Annals* of Tacitus — a great stylist of course, quite unlike Pliny — where he was determined to translate a Latin word with always the same English word. This was a heroic effort on his part that produced some curious choices, such as "dene" for *saltus*. To be sure, he admitted defeat in some instances [Woodman 2004: xxiv], and we share his conviction with reference to readers: "…. it is positively valuable to be reminded constantly that ancient Rome was an alien world" [Ibid.: xxvi]. Even so, we heed the verdict of Barbara Levick in her thoughtful review, which declared Woodman's approach to be unduly rigid; hence her summing-up: "This is a book that is useful to have and an irritation to read." [Levick 2005: 28].

Common ethnic and geographical terms used throughout by Pliny pose a problem for his translators in that for the most part there seems no knowing how far each represents a deliberately precise choice on his part. For certain, he does evidently treat *desertum/deserta* ("desert") and *solitudo* / *solitudines* ("wilderness") as the same.[15] However, is he consciously differentiating when, for example, he uses *litus* in some contexts and *ora* in others, or may these two Latin terms be also considered interchangeable ? Turner and I cannot say, but since a pair of alternates in common English use is ready to hand, our view is that we may as well differentiate between *litus* always to be translated "shore", and *ora* "coast" likewise. By contrast, when the same issue arises with regard to *amnis*, *flumen*, *fluvius*, again any differentiation that Pliny may have in mind eludes us, as do also three acceptable alternate words in English; so without more ado we just translate all three as "river." Terms that Pliny does seem to use with at least some degree of deliberation (even if the basis for his choices remains obscure), and that we are able to translate consistently with the same word, include *castellum* "fortress", *civitas* "state", *gens* "people", *iugum* "range", *locus* "place", *oppidum* "town", *populus* "community", *portus* "harbor", *sinus* "bay", *urbs* "city." This said, allowance must also be made for the fact that general Latin usage for a term may itself rule out such consistency: *mundus*, for example, in Pliny as in other Latin authors can signify either "universe" or "world".[16]

At the same time, even when consistent translation of a term can be achieved, we recognize that occasional exceptions should be accommodated nonetheless. In the specific case of *Persicus sinus*, for example, "bay" jars in modern English, because its term "Persian gulf" for this well-known body of open water is standard usage. In a different instance, when *gens* / *gentes* is translated as "people", this choice creates difficulty if Pliny also speaks of *natio* / *nationes* in the same context (as he does occasionally), because the translation "nation" may well encourage readers to

[15] Cf. 6.73, 77.
[16] Cf. *sidus*, *vapor*.

conceive that term in misleadingly modern terms (just as "race" for *gens* is to be avoided for the same reason). When this problem arises in 6.14–15, for instance, we have chosen "tribes" for *nationes*, albeit with reluctance, because this word too has its undesirable connotations (Sammlung Tusculum Latin text, my italics):

> deinde multis nominibus Heniochorum *gentes*.
>
> V regio Colica et *gentes*, Achaeorum *gentes*, ceterae eodem tractu *gentes*
>
> 15. Subicitur Ponti regio Colica, in qua iuga Caucasi ad Ripaeos montes torquentur, ut dictum est, altero latere in Euxinum et Maeotium devexa, altero in Caspium et Hyrcanium mare. reliqua litora ferae *nationes* tenent Melanchlaeni, Coraxi ….
>
> Then Heniochian peoples (*gentes*) with their many names.
>
> V Colica Region and Peoples (*gentes*). Achaean Peoples (*gentes*). Other Peoples (*gentes*) in the Same Region
>
> 15. Colica region lies below Pontus where the Caucasus range veers towards the Ripaean mountains (as already mentioned [5.98]), one side sloping toward Euxinus and Maeotis, the other to the Caspian and Hyrcanian seas. The rest of the shoreline is occupied by the savage Melanchlaeni and Coraxi tribes (*nationes*) ….

In showing respect for Pliny's prose, we try to preserve his sentences where possible. We do this even at the risk of taxing our readers, who will often have to remain alert to the punctuation if they are to comprehend the annotated lists satisfactorily, as in this typical instance (3.32, Budé Latin text):

> In ora regio Sordonum intusque Consuaranorum, flumina Tecum, Vernodubrum, oppida Illiberis, magnae quondam urbis tenue vestigium, Ruscino Latinorum, flumen Atax e Pyrenaeo Rubrensem permeans lacum, Narbo Martius Decumanorum colonia XII p. a mari distans, flumina Araris, Liria.
>
> On the coast the Sordones' region and inland that of the Consuarani, Tecum and Vernodubrum rivers, towns Illiberis (mere vestige of a once-great city) and Ruscino Latinorum, Atax river flowing from Pyrenaeus through lake Rubrensis, Narbo Martius a colony of the Tenth legion 12 miles from the sea, Araris and Liria rivers.

However, there are passages where Pliny rambles so breathlessly that, for comprehensible translation into English, we find it essential to introduce a break or two into an interminable sentence. In this challenging instance in Book 4, where we introduce two breaks, observe that even Budé's Latin places a semi-colon after *Rhoxolani* in 80:

> 80. Ab eo in plenum quidem omnes Scytharum sunt gentes, variae tamen litori adposita tenuere, alias Getae, Daci Romanis dicti, alias Sarmatae, Graecis Sauromatae, eorumque Hamaxobii aut Aorsi, alias Scythae degeneres et a servis orti aut Trogodytae, mox Alani et Rhoxolani; superiora autem inter Danuvium et Hercynium saltum usque ad Pannonica hiberna Carnunti Germanorumque ibi confinium, campos et plana Iazyges Sarmatae, montes vero et saltus pulsi ab iis Daci ad Pathissum amnem, 81. a Maro, sive Duria est a Suebis regnoque Vanniano dirimens eos, aversa Basternae tenent aliique inde Germani.
>
> 80. From this point all the peoples are generally Scythian, although different groups have occupied coastal areas, in one instance Getae (called Daci by Romans), in another Sarmatae (called Sauromatae by Greeks) and those of them called Hamaxobii or Aorsi, in another Inferior Scythians (including ones of slave origin) or Trogodytae, and then Alani and Rhoxolani. In the uplands between the Danuvius and Hercynian forest as far as the Pannonian winter-quarters at Carnuntum and the German borderland there, Sarmatian Iazyges occupy the plains and lowland, while Daci — expelled from there by them — occupy the mountains and forests up to Pathissus river.
>
> 81. From the Marus (or if it is the Duria separating [the Daci] from the Suebi and Vannius' kingdom) Basternae hold the opposite side and thereafter other Germans.

Observe here our deliberate placement of phrases within parentheses and dashes to encapsulate what would otherwise be separated by commas. Also note our separation of one section from the next with a line left blank, a layout that we see as invaluable assistance to the reader's comprehension. By its very nature Pliny's text is dense, and the Loeb Classical Library's space-saving format does little to relieve its rebarbative character: only the start of some sections is accompanied by a slight line-indentation, and the marking of section numbers beside the Latin text is not repeated beside the translation.

* * *

A discussion of plans for a translation of Pliny's geographical books would be incomplete without consideration of two aids that must surely accompany it: notes and maps. Turner's initial intention was to provide concise footnotes on the modest scale that Frank Romer, for example, did in his 1998 translation of Pomponius Mela's *Description of the World*. As Romer explains: "The notes to the translation are motivated by items that stand out in Mela's narrative. These notes include cross-references within Mela's text, references to other ancient writers, selected bibliography, and other useful information that suits his miscellany" [Romer 1998: ix].

However, in due course we learned that Duane Roller was investigating prospects for achieving with Pliny's geographical books what he already had with Strabo's *Geography*: a complete translation of its 17 books published by Cambridge University Press in 2014, followed in 2018 by a historical and topographical *Guide* over 1,000 pages in length from the same Press [Roller 2014; 2018]. It emerged

from discussions that Roller would welcome the opportunity to prepare a similar *Guide* to Pliny's geographical books on the basis of the translation that Turner and I were making, without needing to make his own. Turner and I were agreeable, and Cambridge University Press has committed to publishing first our translation and then later, when ready, Roller's *Guide*.

For our translation, the notable consequence is that the already modest scale of notes envisaged becomes further reduced. Certainly, we still mean to supply cross-references to other passages in the *Natural History*, as well as the years of consular dates, brief explanation of technical terms like *conventus*, and so forth. Everything else in need of comment, however, we now leave to Roller's *Guide* — with regret, naturally, that inquiring readers will be temporarily ill-served during the unavoidable interval between the appearance of the translation and that of the *Guide*.

As to a map or maps, with 21st century digital cartography at our disposal and data from the *Barrington Atlas* and its *Map-by-Map Directory*, today we are empowered to transform the quality of what was offered when printed paper was the only possible format and cartography for antiquity remained in disarray. Notably, of the latest three Budé volumes, the fourth quarter of Book 6 (2008) does include a grayscale foldout map with inset, but neither Book 3 (2004) nor Book 4 (2015) has any map. Sammlung Tusculum offers some (small, grayscale) for Books 3, 4 and 5, though none for Book 6. For us, by contrast, there is already an instructive model in the color digital map made by the Ancient World Mapping Center to accompany Roller's translation of Strabo.[17]

Consequently, the Ancient World Mapping Center[18] is preparing a matching digital map for Pliny's geographical books. Like the one for Strabo, it extends seamlessly all the way from the British Isles to India, using the Center's *Map Tiles* as its base and conforming in style to the Center's mapmaking tool *Antiquity-A-La-Carte*. The map is georeferenced, and the modern physical landscape is returned — so far as can be achieved — to how it is likely to have been in antiquity. Users can pan and zoom as they wish. The scale at which the map may be displayed is of course variable, with a zoom possible up to about 1:50,000. All features, peoples and places mentioned by Pliny that can be located are to be marked, following his form and spelling of the name.

The marking of each name on the map offers a link to the relevant "Pleiades" project entry,[19] where fuller information — including the modern equivalent name, if any, and bibliography — may be found. Where applicable, the map is also to indicate a community's official Roman status as specified by Pliny (colony, with Latin rights, ally, tax-exempt, free, tribute-paying), as well as to outline the approximate extent of Roman provinces, *conventus* districts, and the Augustan regions of Italy. Each type of data is entered on a separate layer which users of the map can introduce or remove as they wish. Distances may also be calculated on the map.

* * *

As is only to be expected, this paper has focused on aspects of translating Pliny that are especially important for achieving a sound, lasting English version

[17] Accessible gratis: awmc.unc.edu/applications/Strabo.
[18] awmc.unc.edu/wordpress.
[19] pleiades.stoa.org.

of the geographical books for the 21st century, one that strives to balance accuracy with readability. Even so, our translation cannot always flow smoothly. Yet should readers express dissatisfaction on that score, the appropriate response must be that this limitation merely reflects Pliny's material and his manner of presenting it; our translation has not rendered these books harder to comprehend. The temptation to adapt and supplement the translation further is one that we have resisted. Fortunately, Pliny is not an author who requires these efforts in the way that another (anonymous) one I have translated does.[20] This mid-4th century work *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*,[21] mercifully short, is written in Latin so execrable, with syntax so opaque (no doubt worsened by copyists' slips), that the need repeatedly arises for the translation to become a conjectural reconstruction of what may be meant; otherwise the translator will deliver unsatisfying gibberish. As a result, readers of a translation are offered prose more meaningful and more readable than the Latin original. Pliny is often hard to comprehend, but he is seldom so mystifying that his translators are called upon to resort to such uncomfortable speculation.

Appendix

Notable Geographical Passages in *Natural History* Books 7 to 37

7.95–99	Extent of Pompey's conquests
7.191–206	Inventions: Who made them, and where
8.225–229	Localization of animal species
9.44–46 and 49–53	Tunny-fish
10.74–79	Migration and localization of birds
10.132–135	Unusual birds
12.51–57 and 63–65	Frankincense and its export to the Mediterranean
12.82–84	Arabia and the value of Rome's eastern imports from beyond the empire
12.107–109	Gums and mosses
14.59–76	Vineyards and the quality of their wines
16.2–6	Germania, with and without woodland
16.159–162	Reeds and bamboo for arrows
16.238–240	Trees of great age in Graecia and Asia Minor
18.210–217	Difficulties of forecasting the seasons
19.2–15	Flax: Importance, cultivation, processing
27.1–3	Roman peace permits worldwide transport and use of plants
31.5–6 and 9–30	Whereabouts and nature of waters, healing and deadly
32.15–19 and 21	Remarkable fish; coral
37.30–46	Amber
37.201–205	Conclusion, with highest praise for Italia

[20] For [Shipley (forthcoming)].
[21] Attributed to Iunior Philosophus by *FGrHist* V.2023.

Table 1: The Latin Editions

Book, Sections	Budé	Sammlung Tusculum
2	Beaujeu, J. (1950). *Pline L'Ancien. Histoire Naturelle. Livre II.* Paris: Belles Lettres.	
3	Zehnacker, H. (2004). *Pline L'Ancien. Histoire Naturelle. Livre III.* Paris: Belles Lettres.	
4	Zehnacker, H., Silberman, A. (2015). *Pline L'Ancien. Histoire Naturelle. Livre IV.* Paris: Belles Lettres.	
5, 1–46	Desanges, J. (1980). *Pline L'Ancien. Histoire Naturelle. Livre V, 1–46 (L'Afrique du Nord).* Paris: Belles Lettres.	
5, 47–151		Winkler, G., König, R. (1993). *C. Plinius Secundus d. Ä., Naturkunde. Lateinisch-deutsch. Buch V.* München: Artemis & Winkler.
6, 1–45		Brodersen, K. (1996). *C. Plinius Secundus d. Ä., Naturkunde. Lateinisch-deutsch. Buch VI.* München: Artemis & Winkler.
6, 46–106	André, J., Filliozat, J. (1980). *Pline L'Ancien. Histoire Naturelle. Livre VI 2e partie (L'Asie centrale et orientale, l'Inde).* Paris: Belles Lettres.	
6, 107–162		Brodersen, K. (1996). *C. Plinius Secundus d. Ä., Naturkunde. Buch VI.* München: Artemis & Winkler.
6, 163–220	Desanges, J. (2008). *Pline L'Ancien. Histoire Naturelle. Livre VI. 4e partie. (L'Asie africaine sauf l'Égypte, les dimensions et les climats du monde habité).* Paris: Belles Lettres.	

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