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The Classical Quarterly 70.2 792–799 © The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association.
doi:10.1017/S0009838820000890

EVOLVING ETHNOGRAPHIES IN PLINY THE ELDER'S TRANSDANUBIAN EXEGESIS (*HN* 4.80–1)

In sections 4.80 and 4.81 of the *Historia Naturalis*, Pliny the Elder describes the peoples living beyond the Danube River in his own day in the later first century C.E.:[1]

(4.80) ab eo in plenum quidem omnes Scytharum sunt gentes, uariae tamen litori adposita tenuere, alias Getae, Daci Romanis dicti, alias Sarmatae, Graecis Sauromatae, eorumque Hamaxobii aut Aorsi, alias Scythae degeneres et a seruis orti aut Trogodytae, mox Alani et Rhoxolani; superiora autem inter Danuuium et Hercynium saltum usque ad Pannonica hiberna Carnunti Germanorumque ibi confinium, campos et plana Iazyges Sarmatae, montes uero et saltus pulsi ab iis Daci ad Pathissum amnem. (4.81) a Maro, siue Duria est a Suebis regnoque Vanniano dirimens eos, auersa Basternae tenent aliique inde Germani. […] Scytharum nomen usquequaque transiit in Sarmatas atque Germanos. nec aliis prisca illa durauit appellatio quam qui extremi gentium harum, ignoti prope ceteris mortalibus, degunt.[2]

The standard English (Loeb) edition of these sections renders them as follows:

(4.80) From this point [at the Danube] all the races in general are Scythian, though various sections have occupied the lands adjacent to the coast, in one place the Getae, called by the Romans Dacians, at another the Sarmatae, called by the Greeks Sauromatae, and the section of them called Waggon-dwellers or Aorsi, at another the base-born Scythians, descended from slaves, or else the Cave-dwellers, and then the Alani and Rhoxolani. The higher parts between the Danube and the Hercynian Forest as far as the winter quarters of Pannonia at Carnuntum and the plains and level country of the German frontiers there are occupied by the Sarmatian Iazyges, while the Dacians whom they have driven out hold the mountains and forests as far as the river Theiss. (4.81) From the river Maros, or else the Dora if it is that which separates them from the Suebi and the Kingdom of Vannius, the opposite side of

[1] Pliny's Danubian ethnography more or less covers the territories of contemporary Romania, Moldova, and parts of Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine. The list of specific tribal groups reflects the latest in Roman military intelligence in the middle of the first century C.E., differing from Strabo's comparable account (7.3.1–19), penned some thirty years earlier, on several points, the most crucial difference being the location of the Sarmatian Iazyges. Whereas in Strabo's *Geography* these people inhabited the plains of Moldavia and the Dobrogea as well as regions further north along the Black Sea coast (7.3.17)—where Ovid also locates them in his exilic poetry (*Pont.* 4.7.7–12)—Pliny's ethnography clearly places them further west in the Hungarian Plain. This migration is well attested archaeologically, e.g. M. Párducz, *Denkmäler der Sarmatenzeit Ungarns [A Szarmatakor Emlékei Magyarországon]*, vols. 1–3 (Budapest, 1941–50); A. Vaday, 'Die sarmatischen Denkmäler des Komitats Szolnok', *Antaeus* 17–18 (1989), text 9–351, images 1–159; A.V. Simonenko, 'On the tribal structure of some migration waves of Sarmatians to the Carpathian Basin', in E. Istvánovits and V. Kulcsár (edd.), *International Connections of the Barbarians of the Carpathian Basin in the 1st – 5th Centuries A.D.* (Nyíregyháza, 2001), 117–24; E. Istvánovits and V. Kulksár, *Sarmatians: History and Archaeology of a Forgotten People* (Mainz, 2017); T.C. Hart, 'Beyond the river, under the eye of Rome: ethnographic landscapes, imperial frontiers, and the creation of a Danubian borderland' (Diss., University of Michigan, 2017).

[2] I follow the text of H. Zehnacker and A. Silberman (edd.), *Pline l'Ancien: Histoire Naturelle, Livre IV* (Paris, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838820000890 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the country is occupied by the Basternae and then other German tribes. […] The name of Scythians has spread in every direction, as far as the Sarmatae and the Germans, but this old designation has not continued for any except the most outlying sections of these races, living almost unknown to the rest of mankind.[3]

On this reading, Pliny's ethnography appears to be bookended by contradictory statements regarding the Scythians. Pliny begins 4.80 with a bold claim: beyond the Danube, *in plenum quidem omnes Scytharum sunt gentes*. In the author's day, there were no Scythians in the traditional Herodotean sense,[4] and yet his opening statement appears unequivocal. Looking to the other end of the passage, translators have generally read the final two sentences as a confused comment on this opening statement.[5] The sense of Pliny's final clause (*nec aliis prisca illa durauit appellatio quam qui extremi gentium harum, ignoti prope ceteris mortalibus, degunt*) has been correctly rendered in the major translations of the last century: only the most distant peoples were actually called Scythians in the first century C.E. However, the penultimate clause (*Scytharum nomen usquequaque transiit in Sarmatas atque Germanos*) has been repeatedly mistranslated. In Rackham's edition, echoed by most other translators, the geographer makes the seemingly paradoxical claim in 4.81 that the Scythian ethnic label has both 'spread in every direction, as far as the Sarmatae and the Germans', and at the same time 'not continued for any except the most outlying sections of these races'. The confusion here stems from translation, not from Pliny's Latin or from understanding

[3] H. Rackham (ed.), *Pliny: Natural History, Books 3–7* (Cambridge, MA, 1942). All further translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[4] Herodotus popularized, but did not invent, a picture of the Pontic Scythians as pastoral nomads who lived largely without cities or agriculture (i.e. Hdt. Book 4, especially 4.2 and 4.97). His observations were based on the actual peoples of his day, filtered through his own Ionian perspective (F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* [Berkeley, 1988]), but subsequent authors tended to build off of such paradigmatic stereotypes when describing Scythians (and other foreigners), rather than paint a wholly new picture: see further B. Shaw, 'Eaters of flesh, drinkers of milk: the ancient Mediterranean ideology of the pastoral nomad', *Ancient Society* 13/14 (1982), 5–31; B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, 2004), ch. 1, 55–168; Hart (n. 1), ch. 2, 74–130. For a succinct synthesis of the literary and archaeological evidence for Herodotus' original Scythians, see R. Batty, *Rome and the Nomads: The Pontic-Danubian Realm in Antiquity* (Oxford, 2007), 204–14. Herodotus wrote at a time when Scythian cultural and political influence was penetrating from the Pontic steppe into the Carpathian Basin, which may help explain the author's clear identification of the Danube as the divider between Scythia and the rest of the Oikoumene. As we shall see, by Pliny's day, population movements north of the Danube had changed the cultural landscape completely.

[5] Rackham (n. 3). The major translated editions in English, French and Italian offer similar readings:

A) 'The name "Scythian" has extended, in every direction, even to the Sarmatae and the Germans, but this ancient appellation is now only given to those who dwell beyond those nations, and live unknown to nearly all the rest of the world.' (J. Bostock and H.T. Riley [edd.], *The Natural History of Pliny*, vol. 1 [London, 1855])

B) 'The name of Scythians has spread in every direction, as far as the Sarmatae and the Germans, but this old designation has not continued for any except the most outlying sections of these races, living almost unknown to the rest of mankind.' (Rackham [n. 3])

C) 'Il nome degli Sciti si era espanso per ogni dove, sino ai Sarmati e ai Germani, ma tale originaria definizione ha resistito soltanto per una parte di questi popoli, che vive ai margini estremi, quasi sconosciuta al resto dell'umanità.' (I. Calvino et al. [edd.], *Gaio Plinio Secondo: Storia Naturale I: Cosmologia e Geografia* [Turin, 1982])

D) 'Le nom des Scythes s'est étendu de tous côtés aux Sarmates et aux Germains; mais cette ancienne appelation n'est restée qu'aux tribus les plus lointaines de ces peuples, qui vivent presque inconnues des autres mortels.' (Zehnacker and Silberman [n. 2])

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his topic. Rather, taken within the context of the evolving political world of the first-century Carpathian Basin, Pliny's ethnography can be correctly seen as reflecting a coherent world-view then emerging in support of Rome's military frontier along the river's course.

As I shall argue, reading *transiit in Sarmatas atque Germanos* as a claim of spatial expansion (that is, 'the Scythian name has extended in every direction as far as …') is incorrect, neither reflecting Pliny's usage of *transire in* elsewhere in the *Historia Naturalis*, nor making sense within the logic of the passage and the larger ethnographic world-view of Pliny's Transdanubian exegesis. Instead, we must read the passage as a statement about the history of ethnographic knowledge beyond the Danube frontier:

> The collective name of the Scythians has everywhere changed into 'Sarmatians' and 'Germans', nor has the archaic designation endured for any but the most distant of these [Scythian] peoples, living almost unknown to the rest of humankind.

Pliny is here acknowledging that, while the manner in which the Romans referred to the peoples living beyond the Danube had changed since the establishment of a military frontier along the river's bank, the underlying macro-level ethnographic divisions had not. Regardless of what they might call themselves, or what terms the troops on the ground might employ, in Pliny's view, the Transdanubian peoples remained, at their core, Scythians.

Looking at the text, the crucial element is the verb *transire* plus the preposition *in*. The English, French and Italian translators have all advanced readings that make a spatial claim, and while rendering *transire in* as 'to spread as far as' is a valid translation in the abstract, it is not a feature of Pliny's Latin.[6] At his most literal, Pliny uses *transire in* to describe movement from one position to another, such as when Alexander's loyal steed Bucephalus prevents the conqueror from changing to another horse: [*Bucephalus*] *Thebarum oppugnatione uulneratus in alium transire Alexandrum non passus* (8.154).[7] Such an interpretation of 4.81 (that is, 'The name of the Scythians has everywhere passed into [the lands of] the Sarmatians and the Germans') would reflect actual Plinian usage, but none the less presents an inversion of what the author is actually trying to say.[8] Usage of the Scythian label had not spread to new areas, as Pliny makes clear in the final clause. Rather, it had done the opposite, changing to something else in all but the most remote areas of 'Scythia', on the edges of the Roman knowledge-horizon.

[6] The closest Pliny comes to using *transire* in this manner is at 11.73, when he explains that the lifespan of wasps 'does not extend beyond two years', but notice that the preposition *in* is not used in this instance (*uita bimatum non transit*).

[7] See also 3.100, 7.206, 15.77, 18.161, 18.235, 30.42, 31.22, 35.15, 36.189.

[8] The standard German edition of G. Winkler and R. König (edd.), *C. Plinius Secundus: Naturkunde: Lateinisch-Deutsch: Bücher III/IV* (Munich, 1988) follows this closer but still incorrect reading of *transire in* at 4.81: 'Der Name Skythen ist überall auf die Sarmaten und Germanen übergegangen, und jene alte Bezeichnung ist keinen anderen Stämmen geblieben als denen, die als äusserste dieser Stämme leben und den übrigen Menschen beinahe unbekannt sind.' Batty's translation also falls somewhat closer to this reading: 'The name of the Scythians has spread everywhere, both amongst the Sarmatians and the Germans; but the original designation has not endured for any except the most outlying peoples, living almost unknown to the rest of mankind' (Batty [n. 4], 204).

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Rather than reading *transire in* as a statement of spatial extent or movement between physical position, we should read the phrase as indicating a change from one state to another. This usage is also common within the *Historia Naturalis*:

A. (14.30) sed et **austera** [**uua**] **transit in dulcem uetustatem**, et quae dulcis fuit in austeritatem.
But even a bitter grape turns sweet when aged, and one that was sweet becomes bitter.

B. (17.242) mutantur arbores et colore fiuntque ex nigris candidae, non semper prodigio, sed eae maxime, quae ex semine nascuntur. **et populus alba in nigram transit**.
Trees are also changed in colour, and from black become white, not always by miraculous means, but most often those which are grown from seed. Also, the white poplar changes into a black one.

C. (19.61) sed cucumis cartilagine et carne constat, cucurbita cortice et cartilagine; **cortex huic uni maturitate transit in lignum**.
But the cucumber consists of cartilage and flesh, while the gourd consists of rind and cartilage; the rind of which [the gourd] alone changes into wood upon maturity.

D. (29.13) mox a saeuitia secandi urendique **transisse nomen in carnificem**.
Soon, on account of the savagery of his surgery and cautery, [Archagathus'] name changed to 'the butcher'.

In examples A through C, above, we see Pliny using *transire in* to make concrete statements about physical transformations, and given the content of the *Historia Naturalis*, the frequency of purely physical uses should not surprise us. Although the transformation in 4.81 occurs within the realm of language rather than the physical world, it represents the same linguistic usage—transformation from one state into another—and is directly paralleled by Archagathus' change of title in example D.[9]

Our revised reading of 4.81 is further justified when considered within the larger political and intellectual contexts of the mid first century C.E. Pliny composed his encyclopedia during the reign of Vespasian,[10] about a generation after Rome finished consolidating its military frontier along the Danube river, but before the Transdanubian Wars of Domitian and the annexations of Trajan. This was a period of ethnographic realignment as the Romans changed the way in which they thought about the peoples of the Carpathian Basin to fit the new realities of a Danubian borderland divided in half along the course of the river. We can see these changes most clearly by briefly considering how the geographer Strabo described the same region a generation earlier. Writing at approximately the moment of Roman political consolidation (*c*.30 C.E.), Strabo's ethnographic survey of the Danubian world focussed on the Getic/Thracian nature of its population, painting a very different picture of the lands beyond the river (7.3.1):

εἶτ' εὐθὺς ἡ τῶν Γετῶν συνάπτει γῆ, κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν στενή, παρατεταμένη τῷ Ἴστρῳ κατὰ τὸ νότιον μέρος, κατὰ δὲ τοὐναντίον τῇ παρωρείᾳ τοῦ Ἑρκυνίου δρυμοῦ, μέρος τι τῶν ὀρῶν καὶ αὐτὴ κατέχουσα, εἶτα πλατύνεται πρὸς τὰς ἄρκτους μέχρι Τυρεγετῶν· τοὺς δὲ ἀκριβεῖς ὅρους οὐκ ἔχομεν φράζειν.

[9] For further examples, see also *HN* 13.11, 14.83, 18.85, 21.15, 22.112, 23.54, 25.103, 29.139, 31.95.

[10] The semi-completed work was dedicated to Titus in 77 or 78 C.E. (G.B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, transl. J.B. Solodow [Baltimore, 1994], 498).

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Abutting [Germania] is the land of the Getae, which, although narrow at its beginnings [in the west], following the Danube on its southern side and on the opposite side along the mountains of the Hercynian forest (for 'Getia' also includes a portion of the mountains), afterwards widens towards the north as far as the land of the Tyregetae; but I cannot tell the exact boundaries.[11]

Scythians and Sarmatians appear in this landscape, but they are peripheral figures, either dwelling in the north beyond the Euxine Sea or representing transient nomadic communities, which, although disruptive, could not fundamentally upset the author's picture of Getic cultural hegemony.[12]

Speaking of both the Getae-proper and their kindred, the Dacians, Strabo repeats the general Greek consensus that they were a subset of Thracians since they spoke dialects of the same language.[13] Furthermore, Strabo considers the Getae to be identical to the Mysians/Moesians living just south of the Danube, and explains that communities of each group existed on both sides of the Danube (7.3.2):

οἱ τοίνυν Ἕλληνες τοὺς Γέτας Θρᾷκας ὑπελάμβανον· ᾤκουν δ' ἐφ' ἑκάτερα τοῦ Ἴστρου καὶ οὗτοι καὶ οἱ Μυσοί, Θρᾷκες ὄντες καὶ αὐτοί, καὶ οὓς νῦν Μοισοὺς καλοῦσιν.

Previous Greeks identified the Getae as Thracians and noted that they lived on both sides of the Ister, together with the Mysians, who are also Thracians and identical to the people now called Moesians.

The blurry boundaries between Getae, Dacians, Moesians and Thracians apparently continued down to Strabo's own day when 'the migrations [the Getae] make to either side of the Ister are continuous, and they are intermingled with the Thracians and the Moesians'.[14] This is an extremely important observation. Sometime after Herodotus, for whom the Danube was seen as the outer boundary of the knowable world, the river came to be seen not as marking the boundary between discrete worlds but rather as running through the middle of a greater Thracian world which was, by Strabo's own admission, characterized by great mobility and no small degree of ethnic confusion in his own day (7.3.2):

[11] Strabo's description seems to encompass the entire Carpathian Basin as well as the Wallachian Plain and Moldavia. The narrow beginnings of 'Getia' probably fall within modern Slovakia, east of the river Morava between the Danube and the westernmost tip of the Northern Carpathians. The southern edge of Strabo's zone is clearly set at the Danube, while the northern margin seems to follow the arc of the Carpathians north and east before dipping south to merge with the Tyregetae, presumably in the plains around the mouth of the river Tyras, known today as the Dniester. A further example of Strabo's 'Geticization' of Herodotus' Scythian landscape can be seen in his brief discussion of the coastal plain running north from the Danube to the Dniester. The geographer calls this corridor the Desert of the Getae, but notes that it is the same place 'where Dareius, the son of Hystaspis, was caught, when he crossed the Ister to attack the Scythians, and ran the risk of dying of thirst, army and all' (Strabo 7.3.14).

[12] For the transient Sarmatian communities on the Wallachian and Bulgarian Plains, see Strabo 7.3.17. For the persistence of 'Herodotean' Scythians north of the Crimea, see Strabo 11.2.1, 12. Strabo notes, however, that his knowledge gets spotty in this trans-Euxine region, the further east he goes, forcing him to rely on old stories and myths (11.62–4). This is a somewhat unusual admission for an ancient author, although by no means unique. For similar qualification, see Tacitus' concluding statement in the *Germania* (46.6).

[13] Strabo 7.3.10 […] πέντε μυριάδας σωμάτων παρὰ τῶν Γετῶν, ὁμογλώττου τοῖς Θρᾳξὶν ἔθνους, '50,000 individuals of the Getae, a people speaking the same language as the Thracians'.

[14] Strabo 7.3.13 παρὰ μὲν οὖν τοῖς Ἕλλησιν οἱ Γέται γνωρίζονται μᾶλλον διὰ τὸ συνεχεῖς τὰς μεταναστάσεις ἐφ' ἑκάτερα τοῦ Ἴστρου ποιεῖσθαι καὶ τοῖς Θρᾳξὶ καὶ τοῖς Μυσοῖς ἀναμεμῖχθαι.

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καὶ γὰρ νῦν ἀναμέμικται ταῦτα τὰ ἔθνη τοῖς Θρᾳξὶ καὶ τὰ Βασταρνικά, μᾶλλον μὲν τοῖς ἐκτὸς Ἴστρου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐντός. τούτοις δὲ καὶ τὰ Κελτικά, οἵ τε Βόϊοι καὶ Σκορδίσκοι καὶ Ταυρίσκοι.

But currently, these tribes [the Sarmatae and the Scythians], as well as the Bastarnae, are mixed together with the Thracians, and more indeed with those beyond the Ister, but also with those inside. And some Celtic tribes—the Boii, the Scordisci and the Taurisci—are also mixed with them.

Strabo's Hellenistic conception of the Danubian world as essentially Thracian was, however, fundamentally incompatible with the Roman political order in the region because the *res publica* generally conceived of its rule as over cities and peoples (*ciuitates*, *gentes*) rather than as dominion over specific territory.[15] For the Romans, geographical features frequently served as markers of political boundaries, but only when they were thought to follow the border between different peoples.[16] Thus, the Nile, despite its great cultural and economic importance, is absent from Seneca's first-century list of natural political boundaries, because it flowed through an ethnically homogenous region.[17]

For evidence that Roman officials of the mid first century did, indeed, view the Danube as a boundary between peoples, we can look beyond Pliny's opening statement in 4.80 to the relevant parts of the *res gestae* of a certain Ti. Plautius Silvanus Aelianus (*ILS* 986), who served as governor of Moesia during the reign of Nero (61–6 C.E.). Silvanus' impressive military and diplomatic achievements beyond the Danube included checking the eastward aggression of the Sarmatian Iazyges (*motum orientem Sarmatar.* | *compressit*, lines 13–14), who were then in the process of pushing the Dacians out of the Hungarian Plain and into Transylvania, negotiating treaties with the Bastarnae, the Roxolani and the Dacians (*regibus Bastarnarum et* | *Rhoxolanorum filios Dacorum fratrum* | *captos aut hostibus ereptos remisit; ab* | *aliquis eorum opsides accepit per quem pacem* | *prouinciae et confirmauit et protulit*, lines 18–22), and discouraging a certain 'king of the Scythians' from his siege of Olbia on the Black Sea coast (*Scytharum quoque rege{m}*[18] *a Cher*[*s*]*onensi* | *quae est ultra Borustenen opsidione summoto*, lines 22–4).[19] Silvanus' crowning accomplishment, however, was the settlement of 'over 100,000' *transdanuuiani* south of the river (*Ti. Plautio M. f. Ani.* | *Siluano Aeliano* […] [8] *legat pro praet. Moesiae* | *in qua plura quam centum mill.* | *ex numero transdanuuianor.* | *ad praestanda tributa cum coniungib.* | *ac liberis et principibus aut regibus suis* | *transduxit*, lines 1–2, 8–13).[20] Although Silvanus does

[15] S.P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley, 1999), chs. 2 (24–80) and 5 (162–210).

[16] B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1990), 394–9.

[17] Sen. *QNat.* 1 Prl.9–10.

[18] For analysis of the emendation of *regem* to *rege*, see T. Sarnowski, 'Ti. Plautius Silvanus, Tauric Chersonesos and the *classis Moesica*', *Dacia. Nouvelle Série* 50 (2006), 85–92, at 85.

[19] The same sense of the Danube as a divider between worlds (i.e. Scythia and us) can be seen in Tacitus' brief description of a Roxolani raid into Moesia (*Hist.* 1.79). On this passage, see R. Ash, 'Rhoxolani blues (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.79): Virgil's Scythian ethnography revisited', in J.F. Miller and A. Woodman (edd.), *Latin Historiography and Poetry in the Early Empire: Generic Interactions* (Leiden, 2010), 141–54, who points out that the description of the slaughter of the snowbound Sarmatians offers a playful inversion of Scythian tropes explored in Verg. *G.* 3.367–75 (Ash [this note], 147–50).

[20] While the numbers given by Silvanus are fantastical, the act of settling suppliant barbarians inside the Roman frontier was not uncommon. For a useful list of literary evidence for resettlements,

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not identify these refugees as Scythians, the group label he employs does, crucially, define them by their relationship to the Danube. The ideological importance of the river appears again in Silvanus' treaty with the tribes, the central element of which involved the barbarians paying homage to the Roman military standards on the bank of the great river (*ignotos ante aut infensos p*[*opulo*] *R*[*omano*] *reges signa | Romana adoraturos in ripam quam tuebatur perduxit*, lines 16–18).

Despite cutting through the middle of Strabo's pre-Roman Getic world, the Danube was too useful as a military highway for Rome to establish its frontier anywhere else. Such a division of the Carpathian Basin, however, could only be justified if it could be seen as matching natural divisions between peoples. Silvanus illustrated Rome's changing perceptions of the Carpathian Basin by labelling people from outside Rome's zone of control by their physical relationship to the river, and by using the river as a potent symbol of Roman power during diplomatic negotiations. In the same historical moment, Pliny the Elder accomplished an identical rhetorical task in his Carpathian ethnography by hearkening back to the world-view of Herodotus: a world where, beyond the river, *in plenum quidem omnes Scytharum sunt gentes*. At the same time, the reality on the ground, again illustrated clearly by the Silvanus inscription, was that the Romans knew a lot about the tribes beyond the river with whom they had military, diplomatic and economic relations. Expert opinion identified them as Roxolani, Iazyges, Bastarnae and Dacians, that is, tribes of Sarmatians, Germans and, tacitly, Thracians. Within this context, our reading of 4.81 represents the only correct translation. In the lands beyond the Danube, the traditional Greek Scythian label had given way to newer, specific designations, but in a world where the Danube was actively being forced to stand as a divider between peoples, Pliny offered reassurance that, at their cores, all the Transdanubian barbarians remained Scythians: the eternal Other, unworthy of incorporation within the Roman Empire.

Even after Trajan's Dacian Wars and the establishment of provinces beyond the Danube, Pliny's generalization that, for the most part, the peoples beyond the river were Scythians remained true for later authors writing about Danubian matters. In the early third century, Cassius Dio could casually refer to the affairs of Rome's entire Danubian theatre during the Marcomannic Wars as τὰ Σκυθικά,[21] while simultaneously relying on recent military intelligence to describe the actual events of the conflict. Less than a century later, Herennius Dexippus employed the Scythian label when chronicling the events of the late third-century Gothic troubles.[22] Themistius in the fourth century,[23] and Priscus in the fifth,[24] continued the trend, and the pattern of labelling the people beyond the Danube as Scythians would endure far into the Middle Ages.[25] In every instance, use of the archaic group label was designed to slot specific contemporary

see G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca, NY, 1981), 509–18. See, also, Strabo 7.3.10 (n. 12 above).

[21] Cass. Dio 72.33.1: ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὰ Σκυθικὰ αὖθις αὐτοῦ ἐδεήθη, γυναῖκα τῷ υἱεῖ θᾶττον δι' αὐτὰ ἢ ἐβούλετο Κρισπῖναν συνῴκισεν, 'when Scythian affairs once again required [Marcus Aurelius'] attention, because of the political situation, he gave his son the woman Crispina in marriage more quickly than he wished.'

[22] Dexippus entitled his history the *Scythica*, and uses that term in the text when referring to raiders from beyond the Danube and the Black Sea.

[23] e.g. Them. *Or.* 14.181b, 15.185b, 16.207c, 16.210d, 16.211d, 16.212a.

[24] e.g. Priscus, frr. 2, 6.2, 11.1.43–4, 15.4.1–2.

[25] Most notably in the writings of Menander Protector (sixth century C.E.), Maurice (seventh century), Constantine Porphyrogenitus (tenth century) and Anna Comnena (twelfth century): see Hart (n. 1), ch. 6, 279–311.

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barbarians into the correct category within the inflexible pantheon of Graeco-Roman ethnographic thought. While Herodotus' original topographic and ethnographic divisions stand at the ultimate head of this long intellectual tradition, a correct reading of Pliny's Carpathian exegesis (4.80–1) provides us with the first clear articulation of the world-view after the establishment of Rome's Danubian *limes*. His notion that all the people beyond the Danube were, at their heart, Scythians, despite what other names they might possess, reflects a conservative Roman outlook which must be considered in any analysis of Roman political, military and economic actions within the Carpathian Basin.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838820000890 Published online by Cambridge University Press