

ROMAN GEOGRAPHIES OF THE NILE

The River Nile fascinated the Romans and appeared in maps, written descriptions, texts, poems and paintings of the developing empire. Tantalised by the unique status of the river, explorers were sent to find the sources of the Nile, while natural philosophers meditated on its deeper metaphysical significance. Andy Merrills' book, *Roman Geographies of the Nile*, examines the very different images of the river that emerged from these descriptions – from anthropomorphic figures, brought repeatedly into Rome in military triumphs, through the frequently whimsical landscape vignettes from the houses of Pompeii, to the limitless river that spilled through the pages of Lucan's *Civil War*, and symbolised a conflict – and an empire – without end. Considering cultural and political contexts alongside the other Niles that flowed through the Roman world in this period, this book provides a wholly original interpretation of the deeper significance of geographical knowledge during the later Roman Republic and early Principate.

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ROMAN GEOGRAPHIES OF
THE NILE

From the Late Republic to the Early Empire

ANDY MERRILLS

University of Leicester



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For Mum and Dad

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Like the Nile, this book had several distinct points of origin and had to travel some considerable distance before it assumed a recognizable form. Like the Nile, in the final reckoning, it proved to be rather longer than anyone was expecting. On the simplest level, the project was an attempt to expand and develop some of the ideas laid down in my first book – an examination of the importance of ‘historical’ texts to the dissemination of ‘geographical’ ideas in the middle centuries of the first millennium CE. Where that study sought to show how important historical narratives were in shaping ancient assumptions about the wider world, I hoped that my next study would cast the net rather wider and approach similar questions by considering a whole range of different media. Flush with post-doctoral pride (and buoyed by the support of more than one funding body), I felt confident that the project would be a manageable one. But research projects are rarely so simple. Having chosen the River Nile as an appropriate object of study, two things rapidly became apparent to me: first that the later Republic and early empire would provide the most fruitful area for exploration, thanks to the sheer proliferation of different Niles that flowed through those troubled decades; and second that I was poorly equipped to stray into such a well-populated field of scholarship. As the project developed, these feelings intensified, even as the implications of the research became more intriguing. I slowly became aware of source materials that I hadn’t considered, and vast scholarly traditions that I hadn’t fully appreciated, while new publications presented a wealth of thought-provoking perspectives on all of this material. It was only through extensive conversation and collaboration with many colleagues and friends that these challenges were overcome and my unseemly post-doctoral hubris was transformed into something like a finished book.

I have benefitted greatly from the generous support of a number of institutions, during the slow gestation of this work. The earliest stages of research were undertaken as a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow on the

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This book is dedicated to my parents, John and Dariel. For everything.

Abbreviations

Ancient sources are cited using the abbreviations in the fourth edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

In addition the following abbreviations have been used:

Achilles Tatius	Achilles Tatius, <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> . S. Gaselee (ed. and tr.). <i>Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Clitophon</i> . Loeb. (Cambridge, MA, 1969).
<i>Ad Herr.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i> . Harry Caplan (ed. and tr.) <i>Cicero. Rhetorica ad Herennium</i> . Loeb. (Cambridge, MA, 1954).
<i>Alla ricerca di Iside</i> (1992)	<i>Alla ricerca di Iside. Analisi, studi e restauri dell'Iseo pompeiano nel Museo di Napoli</i> (Naples, 1992).
Ambrose <i>Ex in Ps</i>	Ambrose, <i>Expositio de Psalmo</i> . Michael Petschenig (ed.) <i>Sancti Ambrosii Opera. Expositio de Psalmo CXVIII</i> , Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1913).
Athanasius, <i>Contr. Gen.</i>	<i>Athanasius, Contra Gentes</i> . E. P. Meijering (tr.), <i>Athanasius, Contra Gentes</i> (Leiden, 1984).
<i>Carm. Bell Act</i>	H. W. Benario (ed. and tr.) 'The "Carmen de bello Actiaco" and Early Imperial Epic', <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (1983), II.30.3: 1656–62.
Chaeremon, <i>Fr, Test</i>	Pieter Willem van der Horst (ed. and tr.) <i>Chaeremon. Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher. The Fragments collected and</i>

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- translated with explanatory notes* (Leiden, 1984).
- Epiphanius *Adv. Haer* Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* Frank Williams (tr.), *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*. 2 vols (Leiden, 1987–1993).
- Eus., *Prep Evang.* Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*. Karl Mras (ed.), *Die Praeparatio Evangelica*. Die griechische christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. 2 vols (Berlin, 1982–1983).
- It Ant* Otto Cuntz (ed.) *Itineraria Romana*. vol. 1: *Itineraria Antonini Augusti et Burdigalense* (Leipzig, 1929).
- Lydus, *De Mens* John Lydus, *Liber de Mensibus*. Richard Wuensch (ed.), *Ioannis Lydi Liber de Mensibus*. Teubner (Stuttgart, 1967); Anastasius C. Bandy (ed. and tr.), *On the Months. (De Mensibus), by John Lydus* (Lewiston, NY, 2013).
- Origen, *Contra Cels* Origen, *Contra Celsum*. M. Marcovich (ed.), *Origenes Contra Celsum. Libri VIII* (Leiden, 2001).
- Pan Lat* *Panegyrici Latini*. R. A. B. Mynors (ed.) *XII Panegyrici Latini* (Oxford, 1964); C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers. (tr.) *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley, CA, 1994).
- Philae André Bernand (ed.), *Les Inscriptions grecques de Philae* 2 vols (Paris, 1969).
- Philo *VM* Philo, *Life of Moses*. in F. H. Colson (ed. and tr.) *Philo. On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses*. (Cambridge, MA, 1935).
- Pomponius Mela Pomponius Mela, *Chorography*. A. Silberman (ed. and French tr.) *Pomponius Mela. Chorographie* Budé (Paris, 1988); F. E. Romer, *Pomponius Mela's Description of the World*. (Ann Arbor, MI).
- Porphyry *De abst* Porphyry, *De abstinentia ab esu animalium*. Jean Bouffartigue, M. Patillon and Alain-Philippe Segonds (ed. and French tr.), *Porphyre. De l'abstinence* 3 vols., Budé

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- (Paris, 1979–1995); Gillian Clarke (tr.) *Porphyry. On Abstinence from Killing Animals* (London, 2000).
- Pseudo-Scylax* Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplous*. Graham Shipley (ed. and tr.), *Pseudo-Skylax's Periplous: The Circumnavigation of the Inhabited World* (Liverpool, 2011).
- Ptol. Geog.* Ptolemy, *Geography*. C. F. A. Nobbe (ed.) *Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia* (Hildesheim, 1966); J. Lennart Berggren and Alexander Jones (partially tr.), *Ptolemy's Geography: An Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters* (Princeton, NJ, 2001).
- Res Gestae* *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore (ed. and tr.), *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus* (London, 1969).
- Solin. Collect.* Solinus, *Collectanea rerum mirabilium*. Kai Brodersen (ed. and German tr.), *Wunder der Welt: Collectanea rerum mirabilium* (Darmstadt, 2015).
- Strabo* Strabo, *Geography*. S. Radt, *Strabons Geographika*. 10 vols (Göttingen, 2002–2011); Duane W. Roller (tr.) 2014. *The Geography of Strabo* (Cambridge, 2014).
- Varro Atac. Fr* Varro Atacinus, Fragments, in Adrian S. Hollis. *Fragments of Roman Poetry c.60 BC–AD 20*. (Oxford, 2007), 165–241.
- Xenophon of Ephesus* Xenophon of Ephesus, *Ephesian Tale*. Jeffrey Henderson (ed. and tr.). *Longus, Xenophon of Ephesus. Daphnis and Chloe. Anthia and Habrocomes*. Loeb. (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

Standard editions of all texts have been used throughout. Where appropriate I have used published translations of Latin and Greek texts. Where no publication is listed, translations are my own. Where I have deviated from published translations, this is marked in the footnotes.