

A HISTORICAL AND  
TOPOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO  
THE *GEOGRAPHY* OF STRABO

Strabo's *Geography*, completed in the early first century AD, is the primary source for the history of Greek geography. This *Guide* provides the first English analysis of and commentary on this long and difficult text, and serves as a companion to the author's *The Geography of Strabo*, the first English translation of the work in many years. It thoroughly analyzes each of the seventeen books and provides perhaps the most thorough bibliography yet created for Strabo's work. Careful attention is paid to the historical and cultural data, the thousands of toponyms, and the many lost historical sources that are preserved only in the *Geography*. This volume guides readers through the challenges and complexities of the text, allowing an enhanced understanding of the numerous topics that Strabo covers, from the travels of Alexander and the history of the Mediterranean to science, religion, and cult.

DUANE W. ROLLER is Professor Emeritus of Classics at the Ohio State University. He has published numerous books and articles, including *Cleopatra: A Biography* (2010) and *Ancient Geography* (2015). His publications also include *The Geography of Strabo* (Cambridge 2014), the first full English translation of Strabo's only complete work in many years.

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## Preface

The purpose of this guide is to illuminate historical and topographical issues in the *Geography* of Strabo. It is based on the Greek text of Stefan Radt, as well as the present author's own translation (*The Geography of Strabo*, Cambridge 2014), but is designed to be effective with any text or translation of Strabo.

It is organized by sections, the 1410 divisions into which the work is divided. Because the text is repetitious, toponyms, sources, and personalities are usually explained only at their first major citation, with later cross-references. Readers of this commentary are referred to the author's *Geography of Strabo*, pp. 1–34, for information about the life of Strabo as well as the history of the creation of the *Geography*. Briefly put, Strabo was born in Amaseia in northern Anatolia in the 60s BC and was primarily educated at Nysa in Karia. He survived into the AD 20s. The long and complex treatise that is the *Geography* shows a compositional history dating from perhaps the 20s BC until the time of Strabo's death, and probably was never published during his lifetime. It is one of the longest surviving works in Greek literature, citing nearly two hundred sources and thousands of toponyms. All the toponyms that can be identified appear on an online map (<http://awmc.unc.edu/awmc/applications/strabo/>), freely accessible, which can be used as a companion to this guide.

As with any commentary, there is always the question of what to include. Each of the hundreds of sections of the *Geography* could be worthy of one or more articles, and the bibliography on the work is enormous, but there has been no full commentary in English previous to this one: the closest is the footnotes in the Loeb edition (1917–32), which are brief and often nearly a century old. The most thorough available is the Budé edition, edited by Germaine Aujac and others (started in 2003 and still in progress), which at present only covers Books 1–12, 15 and 17. There are Italian analyses of Books 5–6 and 15–17 by Nicola Biffi (1988–2005). The only previous commentary to the entire *Geography* is in the German

edition by Stefan Radt (2002–11), which is exceedingly valuable, but is largely a philological and linguistic analysis. The present guide is seen as a complement to Radt’s monumental work, and emphasises the topographical and historical material. Its goal is accessibility, an attempt to make the complete *Geography* more understandable to the modern reader.

Needless to say, there are also hundreds of articles on particular aspects of the *Geography*, especially by Italian scholars: the relevant ones are cited in the text and bibliography. Moreover, there are important reference tools that were used to complete this guide, most notably the essential *Barrington Atlas* (*BA*), the still-useful *Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (*PECS*), and the texts and analyses in *Brill’s New Jacoby* (*BNJ*) and Jacoby, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (*FGrHist*) on historians cited by Strabo. Of particular value was the *BNP* (*Brill’s New Pauly*) *Chronologies* volume. The present author has drawn on his previous commentaries to the *Geography* of Eratosthenes (2010), the *Historical Commentaries* of Strabo (*BNJ* #91), and the *Indika* of Megasthenes (*BNJ* #715), as well as personal visits to many of the localities examined by Strabo.

The *Geography* of Strabo is a richly layered work that is difficult to classify, at least by the rubrics that seem to pervade classical scholarship. Despite its title (documented at 17.1.1 and 17.1.36), the treatise is much more, including extensive discussions of cultural history (especially that of the eastern Mediterranean, Anatolia, and the Black Sea regions in the first century BC), natural history, and cultic practices, as well as an autobiographical memoir. But it is the toponyms and ethnyms that pervade the work, several thousand in number, of which over 2,500 appear on the map noted above. Others may be located in future years – the map will be updated as necessary – but many will remain obscure, places only remembered through “traders’ special lore which is transmitted by word of mouth” (Joseph Conrad, *Victory* [London 1915], part 1, chapter 2).

Multiple spellings of toponyms appear throughout the *Geography*; some of this may be due to the vagaries of the manuscript tradition, but the variables most often represent Strabo’s own use of different source material and changes in spelling over the hundreds of years of geographical history represented in the treatise. Respecting these variants is an essential part of comprehending the whole of Strabo’s treatise, and ignoring or “correcting” them does violence to the very nature of the *Geography*. Generally, the spelling used by Strabo is that used in this guide, including the variants, although some toponyms are expressed in familiar English forms (e.g. Athens, Rome).



Modern equivalents to ancient toponyms are provided as much as possible, but this is more problematic than one might think. There is the basic issue of locating an ancient site, especially since many of those named by Strabo are mentioned nowhere else in ancient literature. Moreover, many places, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean, have been renamed with the supposed ancient name; this is particularly common in Greece (an effort largely of the nineteenth century) and in Italy (from the 1920s); there was a similar, but more limited, process in Spain. Often this was done incorrectly (ancient Tanagra in Boiotia is not at the village renamed Tanagra), and there is also the constant accumulation of new evidence which may demonstrate that the renaming was in error. Moreover, modern toponyms in the Mediterranean world are often quite erratic. Many places today have multiple names and multiple spellings of those names; the “official” name of a locality may not be the one used by its inhabitants. Transliteration from another modern alphabet (Greek, Arabic, Cyrillic, or Hebrew) adds its own issue. These are realities that have long frustrated topographers, and which have no easy solution. Generally the *Barrington Atlas* has been used as a guide, but the variants of both ancient and modern toponyms are many and no one form may be definitive.

Strabo cited over two hundred sources in the *Geography* (for a complete list and their sources, see the present author’s *Geography of Strabo*, 2014, pp. 782–8 and 793–810). Cross-references to other parts of Strabo’s *Geography* are merely cited by the normal tripartite numeration (e.g. I.I.I) without attribution.

Strabo used, for the most part, the stadion as his basic length of measurement, roughly equivalent to 200 m. He also used Roman miles (1,480 m.) in Italy and the west. Other distances, such as the Persian *schoinos* and *parasang*, appear occasionally. But it must be remembered that, except for the Roman mile, modern equivalents of these distances are approximate and variable.

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*Abbreviations*

<i>ActaClDeb</i>	<i>Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis</i>
<i>ActaHyp</i>	<i>Acta Hyperborea</i>
<i>AEph</i>	<i>Archaiologike Ephemeris</i>
<i>AFLM</i>	<i>Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Università di Macerata</i>
<i>AFLPer(class)</i>	<i>Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia di Perugia 1: Studi classici</i>
<i>AHB</i>	<i>Ancient History Bulletin</i>
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>AION(archeol)</i>	<i>Annali di archeologica e storica antica</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AK</i>	<i>Antike Kunst</i>
<i>AKB</i>	<i>Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt</i>
<i>AnatSt</i>	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
<i>AncSoc</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>AncW</i>	<i>Ancient World</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>AntAfr</i>	<i>Antiquités africaines</i>
<i>AntCl</i>	<i>L'antiquité classique</i>
<i>AR</i>	<i>Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>ArchPhilos</i>	<i>Archives de philosophie</i>
<i>ASCL</i>	<i>Archivio storico per la Calabria e la Lucania</i>
<i>ASP</i>	<i>Archivio storico pugliese</i>
<i>AUFL</i>	<i>Annali dell'Università di Ferrara. Sezione Lettere</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World</i>
<i>BAMMD</i>	<i>Barrington Atlas Map-by-Map Directory</i>
<i>BAR-IS</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports, International Series</i>

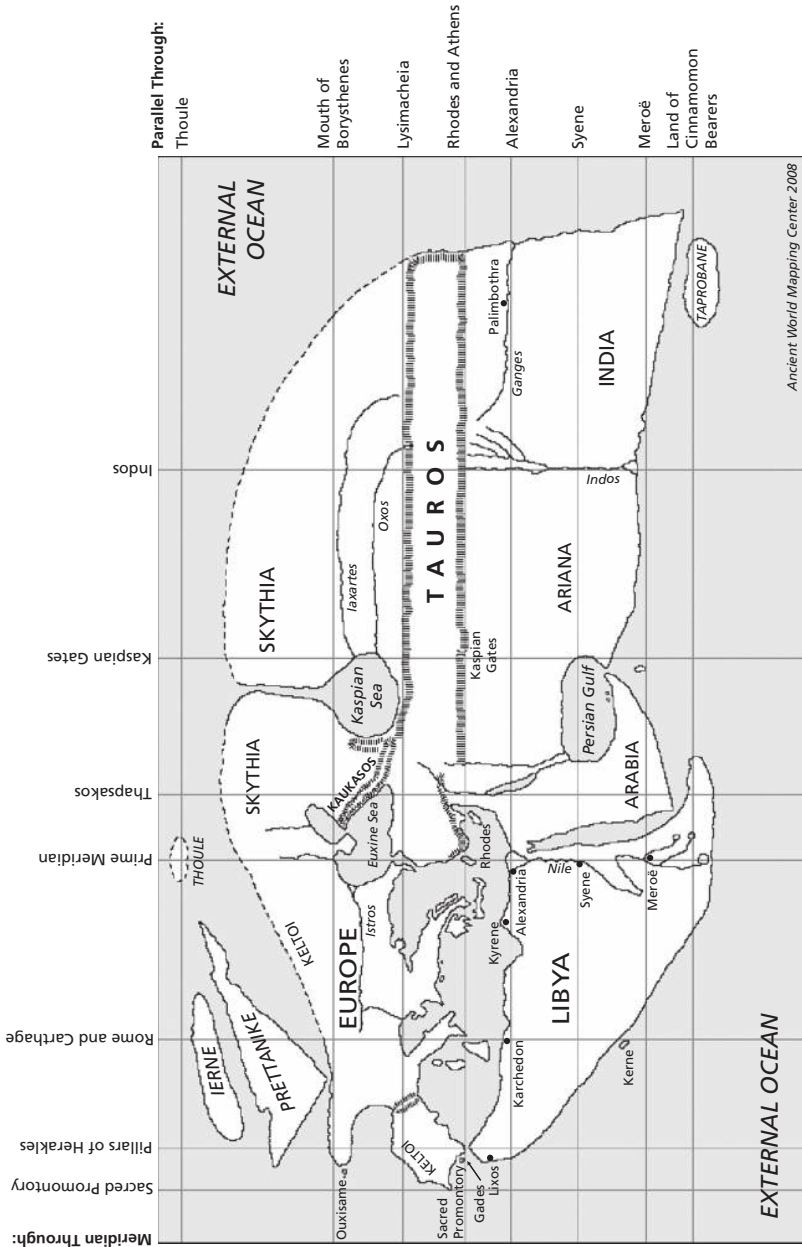
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
<i>BGSG</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Geological Society of Greece</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
<i>BIFAO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale</i>
<i>BMC</i>	<i>British Museum Catalogue of Coins</i>
<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i>
<i>BNP</i>	<i>Brill's New Pauly</i>
<i>BNP Chronologies</i>	<i>Chronologies of the Ancient World (BNP Supplement 1, ed. Walter Eder and Johannes Renger, Leiden 2007)</i>
<i>BSA</i>	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>C&amp;C</i>	<i>Classica et Christiana</i>
<i>C&amp;M</i>	<i>Classica et Mediaevalia</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CB</i>	<i>Classical Bulletin</i>
<i>CE</i>	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>
<i>CÉFR</i>	<i>Collection de l'École française de Rome</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>ClAnt</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CSCA</i>	<i>California Studies in Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical World</i>
<i>DHA</i>	<i>Dialogues d'histoire ancienne</i>
<i>EANS</i>	<i>The Encyclopedia of Ancient Natural Scientists</i> (ed. Paul T. Keyser and Georgia L. Irby-Massie, London 2008)
<i>EchCl</i>	<i>Echoes du monde classique</i>
<i>EtCl</i>	<i>Les études classiques</i>
<i>ETF(hist)</i>	<i>Espacio, tiempo y forma, Serie 2</i>
<i>FGrHist</i>	<i>Felix Jacoby, Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i>
<i>FHG</i>	<i>Karl Müller, Fragmenta historicum graecorum</i>
<i>FRH</i>	<i>The Fragments of the Roman Historians</i> (ed. T. J. Cornell, Oxford 2013)
<i>G&amp;R</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GB</i>	<i>Grazer Beiträge</i>
<i>GeogrAnt</i>	<i>Geographia Antiqua</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>

*List of Abbreviations*

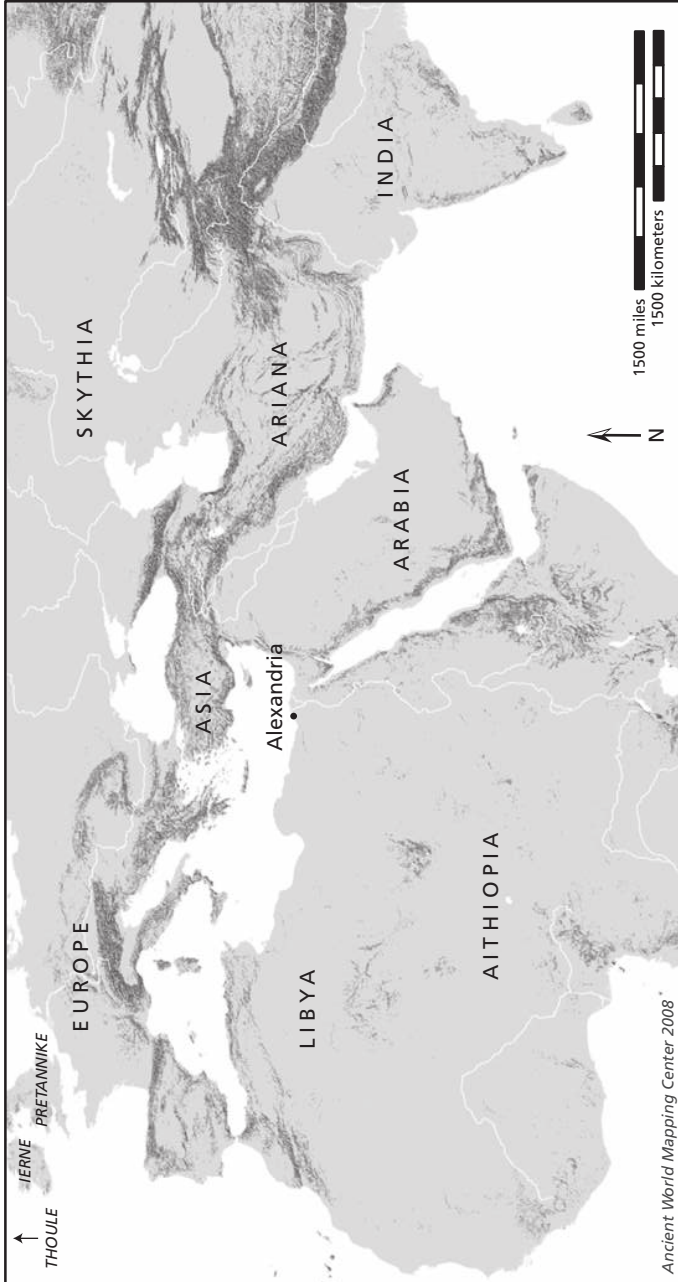
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<i>HistMet</i>	<i>Historical Metallurgy</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>IJNA</i>	<i>International Journal of Nautical Archaeology</i>
<i>InvLuc</i>	<i>Invigilata Lucernis</i>
<i>IrAnt</i>	<i>Iranica Antiqua</i>
<i>JAF</i>	<i>Journal of American Folklore</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JDAI</i>	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>JFA</i>	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JÖAI</i>	<i>Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRGZ</i>	<i>Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JS</i>	<i>Journal des Savants</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>LCM</i>	<i>Liverpool Classical Monthly</i>
<i>LSJ</i>	Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, <i>A Greek– English Lexicon</i>
<i>MediterrAnt</i>	<i>Mediterraneo Antico</i>
<i>MedSec</i>	<i>Medicina nei secoli arte e scienza</i>
<i>MÉFRA</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome Antiquité</i>
<i>MusHelv</i>	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
<i>NEAEHL</i>	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i>
<i>NGIA</i>	National Geospatial Intelligence Agency
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Oriens Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> (ed. Wilhelm Dittenberger, Leipzig 1905)
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>Orom</i>	<i>Opuscula Romana</i>
<i>OT</i>	<i>Orbis Terrarum</i>
<i>PBSR</i>	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
<i>PECS</i>	<i>Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites</i>
<i>PIR</i>	<i>Prosographia imperii romani</i>

xvi	<i>List of Abbreviations</i>
PP	<i>La Parola del passato</i>
QAL	<i>Quaderni di archeologia della Libia</i>
QS	<i>Quaderni di Storia</i>
QUCC	<i>Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica</i>
RE	<i>Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertums Wissenschaft (Pauly-Wissowa)</i>
REA	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
RÉG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RhM	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
RIL	<i>Rendiconti Istituto Lombardo</i>
RN	<i>Revue numismatique</i>
RÖ	<i>Römisches Österreich</i>
RPA	<i>Revista portuguesa de arqueologia</i>
RSA	<i>Rivista storica dell'Antichità</i>
SCI	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
SCO	<i>Studi classici e orientali</i>
SHHA	<i>Studia historica. Historia antiqua</i>
SIG	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i>
LLRH	<i>Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History</i>
SO	<i>Symbolae Osloensis</i>
ST	<i>Studia Troica</i>
StudClas	<i>Studii Clasice</i>
StudRomagn	<i>Studi Romagnoli</i>
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Society</i>
TI	<i>Terrae Incognitae</i>
TPhS	<i>Transactions of the Philological Society</i>
VDI	<i>Vestnik drevnej istorii</i>
YCS	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
Zphy	<i>Zeitschrift für Phytotherapie</i>

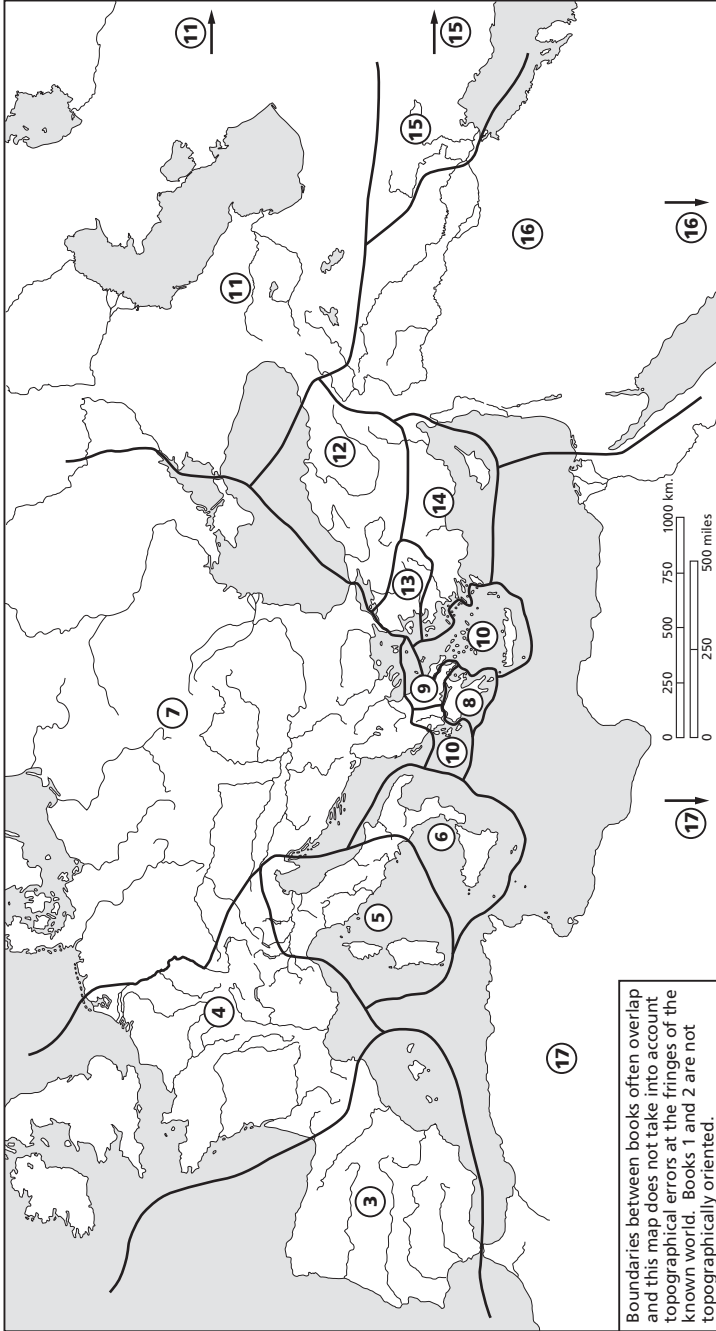


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