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DID AGATHARCHIDES MENTION AN AFRICAN NAME OF THE GIRAFFE?

Abstract: The goal of this article is an attempt to answer the question posed in the title. In ancient literature, among the descriptions of the giraffe, there is merely one surviving information of its Ethiopian name: *nabun*. It is mentioned by Pliny the Elder, and later repeated by Solinus. The author of this article, analysing the text of Strabo, draws a conclusion that the profile of the giraffe delineated by this scholar is somewhat related to Pliny's description. Following this way of thinking, the author points out that both Strabo and Pliny drew on common tradition which, through Artemidorus of Ephesus, dates back to Agatharchides. Legitimising this assumption, there are various indirect proofs given in the article that, in all probability, make it possible to assign the usage of the giraffe's native name to the author of *On the Erythraean Sea*.

Agatharchides of Cnidus, the first ancient author who characterised the giraffe¹, was for some time also considered the first recorded writer to write down its Greek name – *kamelopardalis*². Today, following the analysis of the preserved sources, based on the testimony of Athenaeus, the first use of the name *καμηλοπάρδαλις* should be ascribed to Callixeinus of Rhodes³. It seems how-

¹ Some scholars claimed that the giraffe was mentioned already by Aristotle (*Zoology* 498b), Berthold Laufer is right in his statement: "Aristotle, the only great zoologist of antiquity, does not describe it. It has been supposed that the hippardion or pardion mentioned by Aristotle (*Historia animalium* II, 1) as having "a thin mane extending from the head to the withers", without further particulars, may be the giraffe, but this is highly improbable; at any rate, the evidence for such an identification is insufficient". (*The Giraffe in History and Art*, Chicago 1928, p. 58)

² See O. Keller, *Giraffe*, RE VII 1368; D. Woelk, Agatharchides von Knidos "über das Rote Meer", Übersetzung und Kommentar, Bamberg 1966, p.177; Josef Vágner, *Animals of Africa*, London 1989].

³ In his description of a great procession in honour of Dionysus organised in the times of Ptolemy Philadelphus, Callixeinus mentioned one giraffe among various exotic and unusual animals brought for this spectacle (ἄρκτος λευκή μεγάλη μία, παρδάλις ἰδ', πάνθηροι ιζ', λυγκία δ', ἄρκηλοι γ', καμηλοπάρδαλις

ever, that Agatharchides was the first to attest the African word for the giraffe – *nabus*. We believe that there is some indirect evidence which may point to the possibility that it was the Cnidian writer who recorded the native name for this exotic animal and this would allow us to date back the appearance of this zoonym in ancient literature almost two centuries earlier than it is acknowledged from surviving the oldest testimony that we currently know.

The problem is more complex because the works of Agatharchides himself have not been preserved, even though they were quoted and used by later authors (directly or indirectly). Today we can draw on his legacy only thanks to later summaries and excerpts.

In the 9th century Photios I, the patriarch of Constantinople, created a summary of Agatharchides's book *On the Erythraean Sea*, which contains, among other things, a description of the giraffe:

Ἵτι παρὰ τοῖς Τρωγλοδύταις ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ λεγομένη παρ' Ἑλλησι καμηλοπάρδαλις, σύνθετον τρόπον τινὰ κατὰ τὴν κλήσιν καὶ τὴν φύσιν λαχοῦσα. Τὴν μὲν γὰρ ποικιλίαν ἔχει παρδάλεως, τὸ μέγεθος δὲ καμήλου, τὸ πάχος δὲ ὑπερφυῆς, τὸν δὲ αὐχένα τοιοῦτον ὥστε ἀπ' ἄκρων ἀμέλγεσθαι τῶν δένδρων τὴν τροφήν. (Photios 72)

In the country of the Troglodytes there is also an animal called by the Hellenes by the name of Camelopard (camel-leopard) which stands out with its complex character according to its name and nature. which has in certain fashion a composite nature in accordance with both its name and its nature. It is covered by spotted, leopardlike skin while its shape resembles that of a well-built camel, its size is enormous and it has such a long neck that it can feed directly from treetops.⁴

This is a summary and the original description could have contained some more details that we can discover by looking at testimonies of other writers drawing on Agatharchides.

What deserves particular attention is the description by Diodorus (II 51) which contains information about the mysterious and complex appearance of the camelopard:

αἱ δὲ καλούμεναι καμηλοπαρδάλεις τὴν [μὲν] μίξιν ἀμφοτέρων ἔχουσι τῶν ἐντῆ προσηγορία περιειλημμένων ζώων. τῷ μὲν γὰρ μεγέθει μικρότεροι τῶν καμήλων εἰσι καὶ βραχυτραχηλότεροι,

μία, ῥινόκερος Αἰθιοπικὸς α' (*Ath* V32,35, 201C). See also Agatharchides of Cnidus, *Dzieje [History]*. Translation, preface and commentary by Gościwyt Malinowski, Wrocław 2007, p. 592.

⁴ Where it is not mentioned whose translation has been cited, my own has been used.

τὴν δὲ κεφαλὴν καὶ τὴν τῶν ὀμμάτων διάθεσιν παρδάλει παρεμφερεῖς διατετύπονται· τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ῥάχιν κύρτωμα παρεμφερεῖς ἔχουσαι καμήλω, τῷ χρώματι καὶ τῇ τριχώσει παρδάλεσιν εἰοικασιν· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὴν οὐρὰν μακρὰν ἔχουσαι τὴν τοῦ θηρίου φύσιν ἀποτυποῦνται.

The so-called camelopards have a mixture of both the animals. They are smaller than camels in size their head and eyes set-up recall those of a leopard. There is a bulge on their back resembling camel's hump but their marking and pelage look like leopard's. Like the latter animal, they also has a large tail and they mimic a predatory animal nature.

In the world of science it remains an open issue whether Diodorus's information comes from Agatharchides or Poseidonios⁵. It seems however that the news about the giraffe's nature of a predatory animal may have been included in the Cnidian's description.

This is confirmed by Strabo's description (XVI 4,16) which was taken from Artemidorus. Yet, it is beyond all doubt that Artemidorus used Agatharchides's accounts in his description⁶ and that it was him and not Strabo who disputed the information about the wild nature of the giraffe:

Γίνονται δ' ἐν τούτοις τοῖς τόποις καὶ αἱ καμηλοπαρδάλεις, οὐδὲν ὅμοιον ἔχουσαι παρδάλει· τὸ γὰρ ποικιλοντῆς χροᾶς νεβρίσι μᾶλλον εἰοικε ῥαβδωτοῖς σπίλοις κατεστιγμέναις· τελέως δὲ τὰ ὀπίσθια ταπεινότερα τῶν ἐμπροσθίων ἐστίν, ὥστε δοκεῖν συγκαθῆσθαι τῷ οὐραίῳ μέρει τὸ ὕψος βοῶς ἔχοντι, τὰ δὲ ἐμπρόσθια σκέλη τῶν καμηλείων οὐ λείπεται· τράχηλος δ' εἰς ὕψος ἐξηρμένος ὀρθός, τὴν κορυφὴν δὲ πολλὴν ὑπερπετεστέραν ἔχει τῆς καμήλου· διὰ δὲ τὴν ἀσυμμετρίαν ταύτην οὐδὲ τάχος οἶμαι τοσοῦτον εἶναι περὶ τὸ ζῶον, ὅσον εἶρηκεν Ἀρτεμίδωρος ἀνυπέμβλητον φήσας· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ θηρίον ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ βόσκημα μᾶλλον· οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἀγριότητα ἐμφαίνει.

In the area, camelopards are also brought to life but they are nothing like leopards. The colour of their fur resembles the speckled, stripe-patterned marking of a young deer. The hind part of their body is much lower than the front so it looks as if the animal was slumping towards the rear. And the height of a camelopard's hind part is the same as of an ox's rump. The front part of

⁵ H. Leopoldi, *De Agatharchide Cnidio*, Rostochii 1892, p.38 ascribed the entire Diodorus's description of Arabia together with the description of a giraffe (II 48-54) to Agatharchides. P. M. Fraser (*Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Oxford 1972, I 539) also allows for the possibility of such reference. Even though F. Jacoby attributes this passage to Poseidonios, he admits that Poseidonios might have used the accounts of Agatharchides (*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin 1926, IIC 211).

⁶ Agatharchides z Knidos, *Dzieje [History]* op. cit., pp. 26. 115; F. Susemihl, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur in der Alexandrinerzeit*, I Bd., Leipzig 1991, p. 395.

the animal resembles that of a camel. Its neck is long and upright and the top of its head protrudes over the head of a camel. Due to that asymmetry in its build, I do not reckon it could run as fast as Artemidorus describes it calling the animal unattainable. It is rather a domesticated than predatory animal because it does not show any signs of ferocity.

To sum up, Agatharchides's description was to some extent misleading and it distorted the information about the animal the Greeks could see with their own eyes around 275 BC⁷, during the procession in Alexandria described by the aforementioned Callixeinus. It appears that they became very well familiar with the nature of this creature, and the evidence for this is the LXX translated in this period and the fact that the giraffe was introduced into the Greek translation of the Bible⁸.

As he was writing *On the Erythraean Sea* (before 145 BC)⁹, Agatharchides (200–120 BC)¹⁰ made use of earlier accounts and because he was an armchair scholar, he did not verify them. What crept into the description was information partly based on the etymology of the name. This is probably how the reference about the extraordinary speed of the giraffe (cf. Strabo)¹¹ can be explained, because it is difficult to imagine where this attribute could have

⁷ Some scholars date back this event to the year 279/278. M. Miziur-Moździoch advocates a later date, ca. 270-268 BC (*Bestial rivalry: Animals propaganda in the hellenistic kingdoms*, Eos vol. CII (2015), fasc. 1, p.8)

⁸ Giraffe was mentioned only once in the Septuagint, which enumerates this exotic animal together with antelopes and gazelles, i.e. animals coming from the depths of the African continent: ἔλαφον καὶ δορκάδα καὶ βοῦβαλον καὶ τραγέλαφον καὶ πύγαργον, ὄρυγα καὶ καμηλοπάρδαλιν· (Dt 14:5). In contrast. the Hebrew text limits itself to the Palestinian fauna: אֵיל וצִבְיָה וְיִקְמֹר וְאֶקָו וְדִישָׁן וְנִמְרָה: (Dt 14:5); Here we have the following animals with horns or antlers, in the order of their appearance in the Bible: Fallow deer, Mountain gazelle, Hartbeest, Nubian Iber, Arabian oryx, Aurochs, Mouflon or Wild goat (Zohar Amar, Ram Bouchnick, Guy Bar-Oz, *Contribution of Archaeozoology to the identification of the ritually clean ungulates mentioned In the Hebrew Bible*, Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, Vol 10 (2010), p.21 including a camelopardalis would result from the ancient Bible translator's enchantment with this uncommon animal and his desire to record it in the sacred text.

⁹ Agatharchides z Knidos, *Dzieje [History] op. cit.*, pp. 33.34.51.128

¹⁰ O. Lendle, *Einführung in die griechische Geschichtsschreibung. Von Hekataios bis Zosimos*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1992, p. 247.

¹¹ Strabo argues with Artemidorus and indirectly with Agatharchides on the extraordinary speed of the giraffe. He relies not on empirical observations but on logical reasoning based on the build of this animal. "I suppose that because of this asymmetry, the animal doesn't have such a great speed as reported by Artemidorus who said that it is unexcelled in its speed." (*loc. cit.*). The information about the amazing speed of a giraffe could have come from one source, namely the indigenous people and hunters that came to contact with this animal in its natural environment and knew this quality from experience during hunting.

been verified. Such qualities are observed in the natural environment or during specially arranged races, and not in royal menageries in Alexandria or in a Roman circus (there are no accounts regarding races involving giraffes)¹². Because the speed is not the strongest point of the giraffe¹³, it would have been wrong to assume that the information came from giraffe hunters. It is possible that they were fantasising in order to show how difficult it is to catch a giraffe, but in our opinion the information about its great speed is the echo of etymological reflection on its name. Agatharchides's observation about the double nature of this animal, as a combination of a camel and a leopard, gave reasons to believe that also this quality of the leopard, i.e. the speed¹⁴ (confirmed by ancient writers) was characteristic of the giraffe.

Agatharchides's description was therefore far from accurate and it contributed to erroneous information appearing in later works¹⁵. It seems, however, that it is there that we originally find the African name for this animal, along with the Greek. The Cnidian writer could have come across it in Alexandria, while browsing documents and accounts from expeditions to the south of Africa undertaken in the times of Ptolemy Philadelphus and Euergetes.

¹² If anything, it would have been easier to observe the stately gait of the giraffe. The animal walks in a characteristic manner, using pace, which consists in raising two legs on one side and then on the other (R. Estes, *The Behavior Guide to African Mammals: including Hoofed Mammals, Carnivores, Primates*. University of California Press, 1992, pp. 202–207). In his *Aethopica* (X 27), which we consider the best ancient description of this mammal that was preserved, Heliodorus described pace in a dictionary manner: "The gait of this animal is different than that of any other land or water animals. It sways in a different way, because it does not put its legs crosswise alternately on both sides, but simultaneously raises both legs on one side, in this way lifting first one flank and then the other". The giraffes were brought primarily to take part in bloody animal fights. Even if we imagine that it was possible to observe a giraffe's escape from a predator within a limited area of the circus arena, the sad final of this tallest mammal that was recorded in ancient texts proves unequivocally that it wasn't a dizzying speed (cf. Dio, LXXIII.10.3).

¹³ It can be said that in this respect it is comparable with a camel and other ungulates and its speed differs from the speed of such animals as the leopard, which is known for its speed reaching up to 113 km/h (70 mph) (M. Carwardine, *Animal Records*. New York: Sterling, 2008, p. 11).

¹⁴ However, we have to remember that ancient writers emphasised the speed of wild cats. Apart from the tiger (animal velocitatis tremendae- Plin. VIII 66; velocitate mirabilili - Isid., *orig.* XII 2,7) great speed was the quality of the leopard (et volucrem pardum - Martialis 15,7;; celerem... pardum- Lucanus 6, 183; genus velocissimum - Isid. *orig.* XII 2,10).

¹⁵ Some tried to dispute it by verifying the information with observations from experience e.g. Strabo (Cf. G. Malinowski, *Zwierzęta świata antycznego. Studia nad Geografią Strabona* [The animals of the antiquity. Studies in Strabo's geography], Wrocław 2003, p. 126).

The possibility of the indigenous name for the giraffe being used by the Cnidian was pointed out by Gościwit Malinowski in his monograph devoted to Agatharchides: “He must have known or run into other foreign names for this animal in the sources (...) It would be tempting to assume that it was in Agatharchides’s work that Juba encountered the Ethiopian name for the giraffe – *nabun* – which is provided in Pliny in *NH* VIII 69 next to the Greek name”¹⁶.

However, he added immediately that this theory is difficult to prove: “This reasoning is not well-grounded and it is difficult to establish, where Juba derived his Ethiopian name for a giraffe from”¹⁷.

It came about that the first occurrence of the African name for the giraffe in ancient literature can be found only in Pliny, a Roman encyclopaedist from the 1st century AD. His description of the giraffe strongly distorts the image of this animal, similarly to the quoted Diodorus’s account.

In the eighth Book of the *Natural History* we read: *nabun Aethiopes vocant collo similem equo, pedibus et cruribus bovi, camelo capite, albis maculis rutilum colorem distinguuntibus, unde appellata camelopardalis, dictatoris Caesaris circensibus ludis primum visa Romae. ex eo subinde cernitur, aspectu magis quam feritate conspicua, quare etiam ovis ferae nomen invenit (VIII 69).*

The form *nabun*, which occurs in Pliny, suggests that we are dealing with a Greek accusative singular. For many centuries scholars have been trying to establish the form of the singular nominative. Very scant amount of information and discrepancies in codices did not make the task any easier¹⁸.

Pliny’s information about the giraffe and its African name was repeated by Solinus, a 3rd century CE writer. However, in the manuscripts of *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* the name was preserved in the form of *nabin*. Following Forcellini, Latin acc. sg. *nabum* was also taken into consideration: *Nabum Aethiopes vocant.*¹⁹

The scholars who analysed Greek and Latin texts came to the conclusion that Pliny’s *nabun* may be identical with the name

¹⁶ *Op.cit.*, p. 594 (supplementary note).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Cf. “In quibusdam libris pro Nabun est Nabin, unde formant primum casum Nabis” (J. M. Gesner, *Novus linguae et eryditionis Romanae thesaurus*, Lipsiae 1749, p.714).

¹⁹ *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon* opera et studio Aegidii Forcellini, Prati 1858–1860, vol. 2, p. 45, column a.

of Jupiter Hammon's priest, which appears in a historic epic *Punica* (Second Punic War) by a Roman 1st century CE poet, Silius Italicus: *Fatidicis Nabis veniens Hammonis harenis* (XV 672)

In the Parisian 1717 edition of *Caji Sili Italici Punicorum libri septemdecim*, Drakenborch tried to link these names and establish the right form of nominative singular: *Nec recte etiam Puteaneus codex Nabus. Fortasse enim Silius militia Africano id nomen imposuit a camelopardali, quam Aethiopes Nabin vocant, teste Plinio VIII, Hist. Natur. cap. XVIII. et Solin. in Polih. cap. XXX. Certe hinc constat, vocem Africanam esse.*²⁰

Only the comparison of literary testimonies with the inscription on the mosaic of Palestrina made it possible to conclusively establish the nominative form of this zoonym and thus confirm the accusative singular form.

The mosaic of Palestrina (ancient Praeneste, 35 km east of Rome) was discovered at the beginning of the 17th century and following numerous restorations and reconstructions it is exhibited in the top room of Museo Nazionale Archeologico Prenestino in a vertical position, i.e. different than original intended, which was to serve as a decorative flooring in the Fortuna Primigenia sanctuary in Praeneste²¹. The mosaic dates back to the period between 120 and 110 BC and it is most probably a copy of an easel painting from Alexandria²².

It depicts the Nile in its passage from the Delta to the interior of Africa during the flood. The top part, showing around 40 specimens of African fauna, features an animal with a caption in Greek *VABOYC*²³ - *nabus*.

Thanks to the nominative form preserved on the mosaic of Palestrina, it was possible to finally establish the Latin accusative form as *nabun* (not: *nabin* or *nabum*) and unambiguously deter-

²⁰ footnote 675, p.782. However, it seems that the name Nabis is related to *naabhi* – prophet and the similarity to the African name for the giraffe is purely coincidental. Cf. (...) Nabo interpretatur sessio vel prophetia (Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Commentaria in Isaiam*, PL 24, 0232C) and super Nabo, id est, prophetiam et sessionem, id est, magistrorum eorum, et super Medaba, (Hieronym. *op. cit.*, PL 24, 0232D).

²¹ P. G. P. Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina. Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy*, Leiden - New York - Köln 1995, p. 9.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²³ The name of the animal on the mosaic is distorted. The first letter was written down wrongly (V instead of N). This is a wider problem and concerns also other zonyms. Animal names contain errors with respect to their spelling and not attribution (cf. e.g. CATTYOC instead of CATYROC, bear ΔPKOC instead of APKOC, giraffe K..MEΛOIIAPAAΔI instead of KAMHΛOIIAPΔA-ΛIC). Regarding the issue if the *nabus* depicted on the mosaic is a giraffe, see: Meyboom, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

mine nom. sg. as **nabus** (not *nabis*; neither can we treat the word *nabun* as *indeclinabile* (sic!), as it has been suggested by the Latin-Polish Dictionary edited by Marian Plezia²⁴).

Greek accounts (confirming the nom.sg. nabus ναβουζ) as well as Latin ones (acc. sg. *nabun* from Greek ναβουν) allow us to reconstruct the declension of this name, which received the Greek “s” ending by analogy to the zoonym βουξ, βουδξ -ox and was declined accordingly to the irregular declension of this noun. Therefore N. ναβουζ, G. ναβουξ, D. ναβου, Acc. ναβουν.

The Greek form of the Ethiopian name for the giraffe, found in Pliny’s description, provides food for thought and encourages us to trace the journey this zoonym had made before it appeared in *The Natural History*.

It is considered that Juba II, the king of Mauretania who lived at the turn of the eras (around 52 BC – 23 AD) was Pliny’s source for the description of the giraffe. Juba wrote in Greek and he was a compiler and the author of natural and geographical works. He is believed to have provided the local name for giraffe, i.e. *nabu*²⁵.

A question that arises is whether Juba should claim credit for introducing the African name for the giraffe to ancient literature. In an attempt to answer this question, let us have a closer look at the name itself. In his *Hierozoicon*, Samuel Bochart, a 17th century French scholar, speculated (*fortasse*) that the Ethiopian name for giraffe provided by Pliny is related to the Arabic word *naba* meaning elevation:

*Veteres Aethiopes, auctore Plinio et Solino, Nabin vocabant. Fortasse ab arabico naba, quod elatum esse, et eminere significant. Nam, sublato collo, supra reliqua animalia multum eminet*²⁶.

Samuel Bochart tried to etymologise the word *nabus* on the basis of the Semitic languages. For a long time Bochart’s findings were generally accepted and quoted in various studies (taken into consideration). Examples include the works of H. Leitner²⁷, Th. Buquet²⁸, as well as König’s and Winkler’s edition of *The Natural*

²⁴ M. Plezia (ed.), *Słownik łacińsko-polski* [Latin-Polish dictionary], vol. 3, Warsaw 1998, p. 571.

²⁵ F. Münzer, *Beiträge zur Quellenkritik der Naturgeschichte des Plinius*, Berlin 1897, p. 416.

²⁶ S. Bochart, *Hierozoicon sive de animalibus scripturae*, vol. I, column 906.

²⁷ H. Leitner, *Zoologische Terminologie beim Alteren Plinius*, Hildesheim 1972, p. 67.

²⁸ Th. Buquet, *Pourquoi la Bible des Septante a-t-elle traduit le zemer du Deutéronome en kamelopardalis? Réflexions sur le statut symbolique et alimentaire de la giraffe*, *Anthropozoologica* 41, 1 (2006), p. 11, footnote 6.

History, in which both scholars refer to the French scholar as the authority:

Nabu [sic!- K.M.] *Die einheimische Bezeichnung kommt vom arab. naba hoch*²⁹.

However, it is worth pointing out that Bochart, an eminent expert in Semitic languages, refers to an example from Arabic, which cannot be equivalent to the Ethiopian name mentioned by Pliny. The discovery of a similarly sounding Semitic root in the Ethiopian name does not explain anything and it was purely coincidental. It would have been rather unusual for the African people to take the name for an indigenous animal from a Semitic language. Rather, we would have expected a reverse process, in which the indigenous name of an animal is adopted into a language that does not have such a name. The search for the root from which the name *nabus* originates should therefore be carried out among African languages.

In his description of the giraffe, Agatharchides himself points to the fact that the animal occurs in areas inhabited by Troglodytes (‘‘Οτι παρὰ τοῖς Τρωγλοδύταις ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ λεγομένη παρ’ Ἑλληνισι καμηλοπάρδαλις’’³⁰). Undoubtedly these are areas in the south of the continent. Herodotus mentions these people as living deep inside the continent. This is why areas inhabited by Troglodytes became an opposition to Scythia as the most northern inhabited frontier. Diodorus (III 33), who draws on information provided by Agatharchides, compares the frost of the north (Scythia’s climate) to the heat of the south (the border of Egypt and lands inhabited by Troglodytes) as two extremes. Even though the identification of Troglodytes from accounts earlier than contacts with the African peoples in the times of the Ptolemaic dynasty is debatable, for the purpose of our discussion it is important that they are located in the most southward point of the African continent.

As far as their occurrence is concerned, the information about the seasons in this region seems interesting: What is significant here is the fact that the seasons are different compared to Greek seasons. When Troglodytes have winter, Greeks enjoy the summer (Photios 454 A; DS. III 32,2). Could that point to the non-equatorial regions?

The search for potential connections between the name for the giraffe and African languages should focus not on the northern part of the continent, but on the south. However, the prob-

²⁹ C. Plinius Secundus d. Ä., *Naturkunde Lateinisch-deutsch Buch VIII, Zoologie Landtiere*, Herausgegeben und übersetzt von Roderich König [in:] Zusammenarbeit mit Gerhard Winler, München 1976, p. 195.

³⁰ Photios, *loc. cit.*

lem is more complex, because we need to remember about the migrations of various African tribes over the course of centuries.

The names for the giraffe recorded in southern African languages e.g. in the khoisan language family bear some relation to the word *nabu-s* (Proto-West 𐞀𐞁𐞂𐞃 𐞄𐞅𐞆𐞇 𐞈𐞉𐞊 ‘giraffe’).³¹ It seems then that this zoonym should be linked with expeditions to the south of Africa and contacts with the hunters from these regions and thus treated is originating from giraffe hunting areas.

As mentioned before, this animal was first discovered for the Hellenistic world in the 3rd century in Alexandria, during the famous procession under the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus³². It is likely that it was then that this hybrid description, based on the first association with better-known animals, appeared.

Apart from *nabus*, ancient Roman and Greek texts did not record (or at least such evidence has not been preserved) any other designations for this animal e.g. in Egyptian³³.

In the quest for the origin of Pliny’s information, we might refer to the Mauritanian Juba, whom the author of *The Natural History* listed among his source authors. Yet, neither Pliny nor Juba was an explorer – they were both armchair scholars. If Pliny had taken the testimony about the Ethiopian name for the giraffe from Juba, we should ask what Juba’s source was. We cannot as-

³¹ Cf. R. Vossen, *Die Khoe-Sprachen: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der Sprachgeschichte Afrikas*, [in:] *Quellen zur Khoisan-Forschung. Research in Khoisan studies*, Bd. 12, Köln 1997, p. 443. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Krzysztof T. Witczak for finding ‘giraffe’ attestations in languages belonging to the African Khoisan family.

³² It is significant that in the procession there was only one giraffe among numerous representatives of other wild animals (20 Euboean and 26 white Indian oxen, 8 Ethiopian... several dozen species of wild cats). That was also the case with the rhinoceros, which was brought for this occasion. The giraffe was thus a rare and unusual animal. (Ath. 5, 32; 201 c).

³³ “The giraffe is one of the animals which appears to have been known to the Egyptians from times of earliest antiquity. A pictographic sign for the animal appears in hieroglyphic writing (...), and is particularly employed to denote the verb “to dispose, to arrange.” The old word for the giraffe is sr (the vowels of Egyptian are unknown) which Brugsch connects with a Hebrew root and explains from the constantly swinging motion of the animal’s body when at rest. It seems more likely that this word bears some relation to Ethiopian zarat (compare Arabic zarafa), or may even be derived from the latter. The later Egyptian term for the giraffe is mmy. While there is apparently no written account of the giraffe preserved, presumably because it did not rank among sacred animals, we receive from the monuments of Egypt and Nubia the earliest sculptured and pictorial representations of giraffes which belong to the best known in the history of art. Moreover, the Egyptians show us also how the interesting figure of the giraffe may be utilized for the purposes of decorative art.” (B. Laufer, *The Giraffe in History and Art*, Anthropology Leaflet 27, Chicago 1928, s.15).

sume that as a ruler in a north African kingdom, he could have heard this zoonym from the indigenous people.

The name *nabu* comes from south African languages and it could have originated from areas populated by giraffes. There is one thing we can be sure of: as a compiler, Juba must have borrowed this name from an earlier Greek author³⁴. The form preserved in Pliny, *nabun*, with a Greek accusative ending is a persuasive proof. In an attempt to answer the question regarding Juba's source, let us take a closer look at Pliny's account.

The final part of the giraffe's description contains an interesting reference to the nature of this animal. It is provided in a polemical tone and Pliny explains that this is not a wild, but a very gentle-natured animal: *ex eo subinde cernitur, aspectum agis quam feritate conspicua, quare etiam ovis ferae nomen invenit*. Then it was noticed and it attracts attention more because of its appearance than wildness – and so the name wild sheep was invented for it.

This closely resembles Strabo's comment at the end of his description: *ἀλλ' οὐδὲ θηρίον ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ βόσκημα μᾶλλον· οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἀγριότητα ἐμφαίνει* (XVI 4,16); This is not a wild, but rather a domestic animal. It does not show any wildness.

Both descriptions feature a reference to the nature of the giraffe and a likely discussion with a view (that originated under the influence of the zoonym *camelopardalis*) that this animal resembles a leopard not only because of its colour, but also nature, i.e. that it is a predator. While reading Pliny there is an overwhelming impression that the word *feritate* is a translation of Greek ἀγριότητα.

Pliny's description resembles Strabo's account not only because of the aforementioned reference. The Roman encyclopaedist's mention of white spots on giraffe's coat (*albis maculis rutilum colorem distinguentibus*) in the context of comparison to the leopard's colour (*unde appellate camelopardalis*) provides food for thought.

It is difficult to assume that this detail about spotted fur was a result of logical reasoning, that is a conclusion that Pliny could have drawn from the popular ancient comparison between giraffe's colour and leopard's spots (*maculis ut panthera* - Varro, *Ling.* V 100).

If we were to follow this clue, then leopard's *maculae*, both in iconography and literature, were presented as black spots (sometimes diversified by dark blue or white spots), but never as me-

³⁴ The name *nabus* had been in fact known before Juba's activity as a writer, an irrefutable proof of which is the above-mentioned mosaic of Palestrina.

rely white³⁵. Leopard's fur was perceived as patchy and multi-coloured³⁶, which was reflected in the Latin term *varietas* and Greek *ποικιλία*. However, the spots were dominated by dark "eyes" – *oculi*. Neither Pliny nor other ancient authors mention white-only spots on leopard's fur.

In his description of leopard's fur, Pliny writes about spots on light colour, which means that the spots have to be dark (*pantheris in candido breves macularum oculi*)³⁷. Why then did he point out in his description of the giraffe that *maculae* on its fur are white?

Let us repeat. Drawing on the clue *spots like leopard's* (*maculis ut pantera*)³⁸, Pliny should have characterised giraffe's *maculae* as dark (as in descriptions of leopard's coat), unless he followed the information found also in Strabo, who disputed the widespread comparison of giraffe's coat to leopard's and claimed that it resembles the pattern on the coat of young deer: αἱ καμηλοπαρδάλεις, οὐδὲν ὅμοιον ἔχουσιν παρδάλει· τὸ γὰρ ποικίλον τῆς χροῆς νεβρίσι μᾶλλον ἔοικε ῥαβδωτοῖς σπίλοις κατεστιγμέναις (XVI 4,16).

The reference to the young deer's pelage might have contributed to the fact that giraffe's *maculae* were described as white. Pliny himself, in a different part of his work, describes the coat of some animal by the name of *axin*, which has many fair spots, and compares it to the fur of young deer *hinnulei*: in India (...) et feram nomine axin **hinnulei pelle pluribus candidioribusque maculis**, (VIII 76).

The presented examples are not the only similarities between Pliny's and Strabo's descriptions. Let us take a look at one more comparison present in both accounts that concerns the giraffe and another animal.

It is understandable to compare the giraffe to a leopard or a camel because such references explain the Greek name for cameleopard. They appear in different descriptions coming from various traditions (cf. Strabo, Diodorus, Heliodorus). However, it is curious that in his description of the giraffe, Pliny brings up a comparison to an ox. This strange, or at least very peculiar, comparison points us to an even stronger connection between Pliny

³⁵ Cf. *Pantherae* (...) *minutis orbiculis superpictae, ita ut oculatis ex fulvo circulis vel caerulea vel alba distinguatur tergi supellex* (Sol., 91,3). Cf. Isidor., *orig.* XII 2,8.

³⁶ Cf. *Physiologus* 16,2.

³⁷ *HN* VIII 61.

³⁸ This comparison also appears in Greek sources.

and Strabo because Strabo also invokes an ox for comparison. They obviously refer to different parts of this animal's body (Pliny – legs, Strabo – rump), but also here certain issues can be explained by means of textual criticism.

It needs to be pointed out that the analogy between giraffe's legs and those of an ox (*pedibus et cruribus bovi*) does not correspond to the facts and is highly misleading. What is problematic is the mention that the whole leg (*cruribus*) is similar to ox's leg. This comparison, which massively distorts the image of the giraffe, suggests that the text might have been corrupted.

The reading of *cruribus bovi* attested in the manuscripts of *The Natural History* does not correspond to any of the descriptions of the giraffe preserved in ancient sources. Greek authors who characterised giraffe's legs compared them to those of a camel (Strabo, Aristophanes of Byzantium). There are no sources confirming the similarity between giraffe's and ox's legs and it is also difficult to assume that this observation came from experience. We can safely assume that this information is a result of a mistake related to the transmission of the text.

It seems that the remark did not refer to the giraffe's legs but to its rump³⁹, so originally it was not *cruribus*, but *clunibus*. The similarity in the notation of these words makes this error very likely. The employment of a conjecture and the introduction of the reading *clunibus* would not only eliminate the problem of the inaccuracy of the description, but also highlight the fact that Pliny's text visibly corresponds to Strabo's remark that the rump of this animal lowers to the level of ox's rump: Τελέως δὲ τὰ ὀπίσθια ταπεινότερα τῶν ἐμπροσθίων ἐστίν, ὥστε δοκεῖν συγκαθῆσθαι τῷ οὐραίῳ μέρει τὸ ὕψος βοῶς ἔχοντι (XVI 4,16).

The hind part of their body is much lower than the front so it looks as if the animal was slumping towards the rear. And the height of a camelopard's hind part is the same as of an ox's rump.

Clunibus might have been easily replaced by *cluribus* due to the presence of the word *pedibus*. The combination of these two words (*pedes et clures*) is very common in descriptions⁴⁰ and

³⁹ Like in the description of leucrocotta, in which this body part is also characterised: Aethiopia generat (...) leucrocotam, perniciosissimam feram asini ferī magnitudine, **clunibus** cervinis, collo, cauda, pectore leonis, capite melium, bisulca ungula, ore ad aures usque rescisso, dentium locis osse perpetuo – hanc feram humanas vocem tradunt imitari. (HN VIII 72).

⁴⁰ This natural juxtaposition of these two words is noticeable also in the titles of discussed topics at the beginning of *The Natural History*, where, among other things, we read *de pedibus et cruribus* (I 11). See also: iidem ex Aethiopia quas vocant κήπους, quarum pedes posteriores **pedibus** humanis **et cruribus**, priores

constitutes a fixed idiomatic expression. It might have contributed to the fact that the copyist automatically changed *clunibus* to the reading *cruribus*, making it fit to the pattern.

Following these remarks, we can see that the description of the giraffe provided by Pliny is closest to Strabo's account. This is particularly evident in the dispute with the view about giraffe's wildness. The similarity of the descriptions can only be explained by the presence of a common source text because Pliny did not draw on Strabo's work.

The author of *The Natural History*, as mentioned above, took his description from Juba of Mauritania, who in turn relied on Artemidorus⁴¹, and it is this author who mediated between Pliny and Strabo (in his description of the giraffe Strabo makes it explicit that he drew on Artemidorus's account).

The aforementioned relations of dependence between authors allow us to place Pliny's description within Artemidorus's tradition. Following this lead, let us try to face the challenge posed by Malinowski: "it is impossible to establish where Juba derived his Ethiopian name for a giraffe from"⁴².

The key question is: do we have any evidence that the African name for giraffe appeared in Artemidorus's work?

We established that the descriptions of Pliny and Strabo coincide in many respects. This concurrence cannot be accidental and it proves their dependence on an earlier description, which could have been Artemidorus's account.

Let us return once again to the comparison between the giraffe's and ox's rump, characteristic of Pliny's and Strabo's accounts. We shall highlight and underline the comparison that was not recorded in any other preserved description of a giraffe.⁴³ This comparison may constitute evidence for the existence of the name *ναβους* (*nabous*) in Artemidorus. As mentioned before, the foreign name, after it received a Greek ending, was declined according to the pattern *bous*, *boos*.

The appellative *bous*, which is visible in the name *nabous* and which influenced the declension process, probably became a

minibus fuere similes.(*HN* VIII 70); *frictione uti diutissime in scapulis, proxime ab his in brachiis et pedibus et cruribus, leuiter contra pulmonem, idque bis cottidie facere* (Cels. IV 14,2); *Fit maxime in pedibus et cruribus* (Cels. V 28,5); *illius inuolatis pedibus cruribusque femina contudit* (Sen. *Controversiae* X 4,2).

⁴¹ F. Münzer, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

⁴² Agatharchides z Knidus. *Dzieje [History] op. cit.*, p. 594 (supplementary note).

⁴³ E.g. in Heliodorus's description (not connected with the Agatharchides's tradition) we find a comparison of a giraffe's rump to that of a lion (!).

point of reference also for the description of the giraffe. Just like the remark about its front legs resembling camel's legs (Strabo) was supposed to sanction the element *camelo-* (*kamelo-* 'camel') present in the Greek name, the comparison of the lowered rump of a giraffe to the height of ox's back might have been a reference to the name naBOYC.

A less significant proof, though worth discussing, is another name for the giraffe that appears in Pliny's account, namely a wild sheep (which is not known to exist in other sources with reference to this animal⁴⁴). Perhaps the author of *The Natural History* recorded this name again under the influence of the ox reference. It needs to be pointed out that this reference appears also in the word βόσκημα used by Strabo, where the appellative βοσ is also present, even though it generally refers to domesticated animals. A question that arises is whether *ovis ferae* did not replace the original *bovis ferae*. Both *ovis fera* and *bos fera* are inadequate for the giraffe. However, in the context of Strabo's and Pliny's descriptions and their references to an ox, the reading *bovis* would be justified.

Etymologising foreign names in a native language was not uncommon in the antiquity (cf. biblical aetiology etc.) For example, the name of the animal known as κῆπος/κῆβος (*kepos/kebos*; Lat. *cepus*) was etymologised in this way. It is a foreign, un-Greek name (cf. e.g. in the Bible *kophim* (pl)- some species of monkeys brought from the legendary land of Ophir; cf. also the Egyptian name for a monkey- *koph*), which, due to a Greek declension ending, resembled the Greek name for a garden—κῆπος. As a result, attempts have been made to explain this connection by referring to a garden.⁴⁵

Diodorus, Agatharchides, Aelian following Pythagoras (explorer of the Red Sea coast).

In the name for a *boa* snake the sound bo/bu, perceptible to the Greeks and Romans, was associated with an expression for a bull or a cow. It was appropriately explained and translated in the context of this animal. Similarly, the name of the town of Byrsa (though it is of Phoenician origin and refers to a "castle") was linked to the "bull's skin" because it resembled the Greek word βυρσα. A legend of this town was based on the Greek etymology: *Mercatique solum, facti de nomine Byrsam, taurino quantum possent circumdare tergo.* (Verg., *Aen.* 1,367).

⁴⁴ The term itself was recorded in ancient texts, but refers to a completely different animal (Ath, 221b)

⁴⁵ E.g. a description of an animal with this name in Diodorus: ὁ δὲ λεγόμενος κῆπος ὀνόμασται μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς περὶ τὸν ὄγκον ὄλον ὠραίας καὶ προσηνοῦς ἡλικίας, (III 35,6).

This kind of popular etymology (reading for certain meanings, usually in a native language) is noticeable in the attempts to etymologise the name for a panther – *panther* because omnium animalium amicus (Isid., *Orig.* XII 2,8), for a snake *coluber* – *colat umbras* (Isid., *orig.* XII 4,2) or a viper – *vipera* from *vi parit* (Serv., *Georg.* 3,416); an ant – *formica* – *dicta est ab eo quo miccas ferant* (Serv. *Aen.* 4,402)

Sometimes only the element or cluster of letters that brought up some associations was separated e.g. as in the case of the etymologised name for an elephant: *Elephantem Graeci a magnitudine corporis vocatum putant quod formam montis praeferat. Graece enim mons λόφος* (Isid. *orig.* XII 2,14), i.e. *λόφος* was isolated from *έλέφας*.

If we assume that the reference to an ox resulted from an attempt to etymologise the name (in Greek naturally), then many reasons suggest that the name *nabous* existed in Artemidorus's description. And even though Strabo omitted it, a trace remained in the form of the ox reference. Juba, and then Pliny, retained the remark about the African name together with the information about giraffe's bovine rump.

Yet, the question goes further because Artemidorus, as an armchair scholar, must have derived this name from some source. Today it does not raise any doubts that in his 11-volume work *Geographoumena* (Τὰ γεωγραφούμενα), Artemidorus drew information, among other authors, from Agatharchides. In particular, he made use of the Cnidian's accounts in Book VIII, which contains the description of the giraffe and which is devoted to Ethiopia, lands inhabited by Troglodytes.

Let us recapitulate some facts mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Agatharchides's description contained etymologising based on references to features of animals which appeared in the Greek name for the giraffe. These features were supposed to sanction and explain the name that referred to a camel and a leopard: this was the case with giraffe's speed, coat, body parts resembling these animals (e.g. head like camel's⁴⁶ or leopard's⁴⁷ or camel's legs⁴⁸), as well as their nature. A similar process might have involved the name *nabous*, in which the appellative *bous*, familiar in Greek, was explained.

Following Photios, let us quote the first sentence of Agatharchides's description of the giraffe again: Ὅτι παρὰ τοῖς Τρωγλο-

⁴⁶ Heliodorus, *loc. cit.*, Pliny, *loc. cit.*,

⁴⁷ Diodorus, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁸ Strab, *loc. cit.*

δύταις ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ λεγομένη παρ' Ἑλλησι καμηλοπάρδαλις (Phot. 72,2).

In his monograph devoted to Agatharchides (quoted above), Gościwił Malinowski commented on this fragment and made an assumption that Agatharchides might have additionally included a foreign name for the giraffe here.

We share this view. Indeed, the analysis of this sentence leaves the reader with certain obliqueness, some gap, as if a part of it was missing⁴⁹. If we juxtapose e.g. the fragment from Photios with the aforementioned 3rd century description of a giraffe from Solinus (who drew on Pliny's account), where the sentence is constructed in a similar way, we might notice more clearly that it is possible that Photios omitted the name *nabous*.

Ὅτι παρὰ τοῖς Τρωγλοδύταις ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ λεγομένη παρ' Ἑλλησι καμηλοπάρδαλις (Phot. 72,2).

Quae locorum Aethiopes tenent, feris plena sunt, e quibus quam nabun vocant nos camelopardalim dicimus (Sol. 133,14).

The similarity between these utterances becomes even more visible, if we are aware of Solinus's style, i.e. his use of personal or possessive pronouns (such as “we”, “our”) instead of the name of people or community he identifies himself with, e.g. while Pliny uses an objective proper name: Hoc animal [cephus – K.M.] postea **Roma** non vidit (VIII 70), Solinus expresses himself in this way: sed a **nostris** non amplius quam semel visa sunt (134, 2).⁵⁰

Thus the remark that Photios's description seems to be missing something is completely justifiable. The entire description will benefit in terms of style, if we supplement the description following Solinus's account with the name *nabous*:

Ὅτι παρὰ τοῖς Τρωγλοδύταις ἐστὶν καὶ [ναβοῦς] ἡ λεγομένη παρ' Ἑλλησι καμηλοπάρδαλις.

The above reconstruction of the sentence from Photios (that is from Agatharchides), in which we have incorporated the Ethiopian name of giraffe, would allow us to assume, judging from the context, that *nabous* is the feminine form. Also in the above-men-

⁴⁹ In the places where only the Greek name was given, it was not stressed by a special phrase: “The Hellenes call it this way”. Such emphases appeared, however, where the name, apart from the Greek one, was additionally given in a different tongue or only in a foreign language, e.g. : Ὅτι ὕστατοι, φησί, τῶν πρὸς μεσημβρίαν οἰκούντων εἰσὶν οὗς Ἑλληνες μὲν κυναμολγοὺς καλοῦσιν, οἱ δ' ἀστυγείτονες, ὡς ἂν τις εἴποι, ἀγρίους βαρβάρους (Phot. *Cod.* 250, 453b).

⁵⁰ See K. Morta, *Świat egzotycznych zwierząt u Solinusa* [The world of exotic animals in Solinus], Wrocław 2004, p. 9.

tioned Solinus's description, the phrase *quam nabun vocant*⁵¹ would indicate the feminine of the Ethiopian denomination⁵².

It is not likely a coincidence that the Solinus's phrase shows similarity to the sentence taken by Photios from Agatharchides. In spite of being considered Pliny's close imitator, every now and then Solinus transmits additional, surprising pieces of information which cannot be found in the *Natural History*. It would be difficult to perceive this occurrence as the practice of completing Pliny's text with information from other sources. It is thought-provoking e.g. how very alike to Pliny's description of rhinoceros is Solinus's depiction of this animal. There is only one extra piece of information concerning the rhino's curved horn⁵³.

This seemingly insignificant Solinus's addition is even more surprising and at the same time important since it derives from Agatharchides and this is testified by Photios.

It is not an isolated case of Solinus's relation to Agatharchides's accounts. We can see that more obviously in the descriptions of sphinges⁵⁴ and cynocephali (dogheads)⁵⁵. They are even more related to Agatharchides and drift away from Pliny.

⁵¹ Compare a similar construction by Cicero: Non faciam longius. Huc enim pertinet: animal hoc prouidum, sagax, multiplex, acutum, memor, plenum rationis et consilii, **quem** uocamus **hominem**, praeclara quadam condicione generatum esse a supremo deo. (*leg.* 1,22). Here also the relative pronoun agrees with the complement, i.e. the masculine *quem* was adjusted to the gender of *hominem*, despite the fact that in the main clause we can find *animal hoc*, which would suggest the neuter form: *quod*. Compare also: Ex perturbationibus autem primum morbi conficiuntur, **quae** vocant illi **nosh/mata** (Cic., *Tusc.* IV 10).

⁵² This is contrary to what we can find in dictionaries, e. g. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (1982) s.v., where in the entry *nabus* we can read that the name is **masculine** (!).

⁵³ Σιμὸν δὲ ἐπ' ἄκρων φορεῖ τῶν μυκτῆρων κέρασ, σιδήρῳ τὴν βίαν παραπλήσιον· (Photios 250,455a). **In naribus cornu** unicum et **repandum**, quod subrone attritum cautibus in mucronem excitat (Sol. 134,3).

⁵⁴ Compare: Εἰσὶ δὲ αἱ μὲν σφίγγες ταῖς γραφομέναις παρόμοιαι, πλὴν ὅτι **πᾶσαι δασεῖται** καὶ ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡμεροὶ καὶ πρᾶσι: καὶ πανουργίας κοινωνοῦσι πλείστης, διδασκαλίας τε μεθοδευτικῆς ἐπὶ ποσὸν ἄπτονται, ὥστε τὴν εὐρυθμίαν ἐν πᾶσι θαυμάζειν (Photios 250,455b). with: Inter simias habentur et sphinges, **vilosae comis**, mammis prominulis ac profundis, **dociles ad feritatis oblivionem** (Solin. 128,7-8).

⁵⁵ Compare: Ὁ δὲ κυνοκέφαλος τὸ μὲν σῶμα ἀνθρώπου δυσειδοῦς ὑπογράφει, τὸ πρόσωπον δὲ κυνός: φωνὴν δὲ ἀφίησι μυγμῶ παραπλησίαν· **ἄγριον δὲ ὑπερβολῇ καὶ τελείως ἀτιθάσεντον**, καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἐμφαίνον ἀπὸ τε τῶν ὀφρύων καὶ τῶν ὀμμάτων αὐστηράν. Περὶ μὲν τὸν ἄρρενα ταῦτα. Τῷ δὲ θήλει πρόσκειται καὶ τὸ τὴν μήτραν ἔξω τοῦ σώματος φορεῖν καὶ οὕτω διάγεσθαι πάντα τὸν βίον (Photios 250, 455b). with: Cynocephali et ipsi sunt e numero

Solinus's descriptions show both considerable resemblance with the *Natural History* (not only in content but also in lexis) and certain distinctiveness. Therefore, we cannot rule out the fact that he could have drawn from a source that was common for himself and Pliny. The differences would stem from the authors' individual attitudes to the source text. In the case of giraffe's description, Solinus's version differs somewhat in the composition from the Pliny's one (as we could see it above, Solinus uses opposition while giving the animal's name: the way we call it and the way the Aethiops did) which would have been close to the Photios based, reconstructed Agatharchides's version.

If we combine the feeling of something missing in Photios's sentence with conclusions reached after the analysis of Pliny's and Strabo's depictions (which also directed us towards Agatharchides's account), we shall see even stronger reasons to ascribe the use of the name *nabous* to the very Cnidian.

We know for sure that the oldest confirmed name *nabous* appears on the mosaic of Palestrina dated back between 120 and 110 BC. We know however that there had existed an earlier Alexandrian prototype in the 2nd century BC. As mentioned before, as far as Greek and Roman literature is concerned, we only have the attestation of this name from the 1st century AD in Pliny and from the 3rd century AD in Solinus. It is commonly considered that Pliny repeated the name after Juba, which takes us back by several decades⁵⁶. However, if we assume (based on circumstantial evidence) that the African name was recorded already by Agatharchides, then we are moving the date of its first use to the first half of the 2nd century BC. Still, we need to remember that Agatharchides was also an armchair scholar and he probably quoted this indigenous name from earlier sources which he accessed in Alexandria. Yet here we are entering an area of hypotheses without any substantial textual references.

Assuming that Agatharchides listed this African name for the giraffe, i.e. providing *terminus ante quem* – before year 145 BC and assuming *terminus post quem*, that is after pomp recorded by Calixeinus (around 275 BC) during which one giraffe was for the first time presented in Alexandria (probably as a gift from the rulers of Nubia), we can link this name to expeditions to the south

simiarum, in Aethiopiae partibus frequentissimi, violenti ad saltum, **feri morsu, numquam ita mansueti, ut non sint magis rabidi** (Solin. 128,4-6).

⁵⁶ Admittedly, on another occasion Pliny twice mentions Agatharchides as his source, but there are many reasons to believe that he drew on this author only indirectly among others via Juba II.

undertaken by the Ptolemaic rulers and to their participants, who wrote down accounts of what they had seen⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ Before Agatharchides, at least 12 authors had contributed to the descriptions of the African south and the explorations up the Nile. Today only names, works titles (not all) and some fragments are left: Dalion, Aristocreon, Bion of Soli, Simonides the Younger, Philo (mentioned mostly by Pliny), Timosthenes of Rhodes, Simmias, Pythagoras, Alexander, Nymphis, Denon and Leonidas of Byzantium. Some of them are quoted by Pliny the Elder. One example of the surviving fragment is e.g. the description of *kebos* in Aelian (*NA* XVII 8) taken from Pythagoras's work *On the Erythraean Sea* (the same title as Agatharchides's work). The preserved fragments show that these authors described also the African fauna and provided information on unknown and exotic creatures. Undoubtedly this is where we should be looking for the description of the giraffe with its African zoonym, on which Agatharchides based his account. It is also possible that the African name for the giraffe was recorded by one of the leaders of Ptolemaic elephant or research expeditions undertaken in the 3rd century BC, who, without doubt, also wrote down accounts of their journeys.