



**A CRITICAL VIEW ON THE ARGUMENTS OF STRABO AND PLINY ABOUT THE
FOUNDATION OF PRUSA**

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ABSTRACT

Prusa ad Olypnum, a settlement in south Bithynia was not a remarkable city throughout antiquity. It did not attract attention even its name is mentioned with the relentless enemy of Roman Republic, Hannibal of Carthage. Our knowledge about how the city looked like is very limited, if some orations of one of its citizens, Dion Chrysostomos are excluded. Very few authors mention it with very few sentences. Some authors confuse it with other cities carrying similar names, while others repeat what previous authors had written. Two authors, Strabo and Pliny the Elder express genuine views on the foundation of Prusa but they claim different founders and ages. According to Strabo it is founded by a Prusias who made war against Croesus, king of Lydia, while Pliny said it to be founded by Hannibal, who took refuge to king Prusias I of Bithynia. Since a founder named Prusias, contemporary of Croesus is unknown, attempts have been made to correct Strabo's sentence and Pliny is regarded as the correct source for the foundation of Prusa. However to make a fair judgment it is necessary to analyse the lives, styles, sources and historiography of two authors. Such an analysis leads to the conclusion that Pliny's statements about Prusa should be approached more skeptically. He is not considered as a reliable source on history and geography, the natural sciences sections of his work attracted more attention. Since Plinius' credibility was seriously damaged, the possibility that Prusa was founded in the 6th century BC should be reevaluated in the light of new findings.

Keywords: Bithynia, Hannibal, city foundation, historiography, Prusias I

**STRABON ve PLINIUS'UN PRUSA'NIN KURULUŐU HAKKINDAKİ GÖRÜŐLERİNE
ELEŐTİREL BİR BAKIŐ**

ÖZ

Güney Bithynia'da bir yerleŐim olan Prusa ad Olypnum, Antik Çağ boyunca dikkat çeken bir kent değildi. Adı Roma Cumhuriyeti'nin amansız düşmanı Kartacalı General Hannibal ile anılmasına karşın ilgi çekmemiŐtir. Kentin bir vatandaŐı olan Dion Khrysostomos'un bazı söylevleri hariç tutulursa kentin nasıl görüldüğü hakkındaki bilgimiz çok kısıtlıdır. Çok az yazar çok az cümleyle ondan bahseder. Bazı yazarlar onu benzer ad taşıyan diđer kentlerle karıŐtırır, bazıları da kendinden önceki yazarların yazdıklarını tekrarlar. İki yazar, Strabon ve YaŐlı Plinius kentin kuruluŐu hakkında özgün fikirler ifade etmiŐler ancak farklı kurucular ve çağlar öngörmüŐlerdir. Strabon'a göre Prusa, Lydia kralı Kroisos'a karşı savaŐmıŐ Prusias tarafından kurulmuŐtur. Plinius ise kentin Bithynia kralı I. Prusias'a sığınmıŐ olan Kartacalı General Hannibal tarafından kurulduğunu söyler. Kroisos'un çağdaŐı olan Prusias adında bir kurucu bilinmediği için Strabon'un cümlesini düzeltme denemeleri yapılmıŐ ve YaŐlı Plinius Prusa'nın kuruluŐu konusunda dođru kaynak sayılmıŐtır. Ancak adil bir saptama yapabilmek için iki yazarın hayatları, üslupları, kaynakları ve tarih yazımı anlayıŐları analiz edilmelidir. Böyle bir analiz Plinius'un Prusa hakkındaki açıklamalarına daha kuŐkucu yaklaŐma gerektiği sonucunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Tarih ve coğrafya konularında güvenilir kaynak sayılmamıŐ, eserinin dođa

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bilimleri bölümleri daha çok ilgi çekmiştir. Plinius'un güvenilirliği ciddi bir yara aldığı için Prusa'nın MÖ 6. asırda kurulmuş olma olasılığı yeni bulgular ışığında tekrar değerlendirilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bithynia, Hannibal, kent kuruluşu, tarihyazıcılığı, I. Prusias

Introduction

The Hellenistic Kingdom of Bithynia was founded by Zipoetes, who reigned 327-279 BC. His son and successor Nicomedes I founded Nicomedia on the east coast of Propontis and made it his capital. During the reign of Prusias I, the kingdom expanded towards east, south and west. Regarded as a Bithynian city, Prusa is thought to be founded during Prusias' reign.

Prusa shares the same fate with other cities of the kingdom: it has been a part of the silent history of a culture whose language, traditions and documents have not survived. We only know what is written about it. As it was not a Greek city, Greek authors may be less interested in its history. For the same reason, a fictional founding myth originating from the age of heroes was not created in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The lineage of the people of the city could not be attributed to the Hellenic gods or heroes. The people of the city who lived in the 1st century AD seemed to have forgotten their recent history (Dion Chrys. XLIV.8). Ancient authors focused more on its neighbours such as Cyzicus and Nicaea. Cius which is another neighbour of Prusa and the scene of Hylas myth, is known by many ancient authors. Prusa took part in a historical event twice: when it was liberated from occupation of Mithridates of Pontos (App. *Mith.* 77; Mem. 28) and when it was the target of Goth plunder with other cities of the region (Zos. I.35). Athenaius just mentions the hot waters of the city (Ath. *Deip.* II.17), while medieval authors generally mention Mount Olympus. We can find few more details about the city in the works of Dion Chrysostomus and Pliny the Younger.

If we do not take into consideration Arrian and Eusebius Hieronymus, who repeat what the previous authors said, there are only two authors who expressed genuine views about the foundation of Prusa: Strabo wrote that it was founded by a Prusias who made war against Croesus of Lydia; Pliny the Elder wrote that it was founded by Hannibal of Carthage. Since Strabo's statement had a chronological error, Pliny is regarded as the true source. During the reign of Prusias I, the kingdom expanded southwards and came into conflict with the Kingdom of Pergamon. Based on what Pliny the Elder said, the foundation of Prusa is placed in this context: Prusias I who needed a secure garrison close to Pergamene border founded a city by the help of Hannibal, who took refuge to his kingdom (Plin. *HN* V.43). We have little chance to date the foundation of the city archaeologically since very limited remains have come down to us. Even the Medieval Age of the city is barely traced. While we wait for new archaeological finds, we will try the conventional way of determining the reliability of historical documents. The backgrounds, lives and styles of these two authors can shed light on who is more reliable.

Strabo (63 BC-23 AD)

Strabo of Amaseia is one of the most brilliant geographers of antiquity. His only extant work *Geographika* consists of 17 books, three of which are about geography of Asia Minor (Book XII-XIII-XIV). He is the first to talk about Prusa ad Olympum. His

ancestors being eminent officials in Pontic Kingdom made the first impact on his historiography. One of his grandfathers was a high priest in the temple of Ma, which means that he is the second officer after the king (Pekman 1993: xiii). It's highly probable that Servilius Strabo, the governor of Bithynia-Pontus to whom Cicero wrote a letter in 50 BC, is a relative of Strabo, or may be his father (Pothecary 2016: 217-8; Richards 1941: 81). This probability can make Strabo a better source for the early history of Asia Minor.

Strabo's Greek tutors, teaching in the Greek way constitute the second impact on his style. Aristodemus, Menecrates (Aristodemus' father) and Poseidonius (Aristodemus' grandfather) were inclined to Homeric studies, and through them Strabo has become fond of Homer (Dueck 2000: 8). Even if he does not say directly, Greek culture is superior to all for him. After talking about the cities founded in South Italy in 8-7th cent. BC, he says that the people of those cities became barbarian in his time (Str. VI.1.2). Most of the sources he used were Greek. He names only eight Latin authors, none of whom are geographers. That's because he says Latin geographers are imitators of Greek geographers (Str. III.4.19). While counting eminent citizens of cities, he just mentions the Latin poet Ennius of Rudiae (Str. VI.3.5); on the other hand he names 66 Greek citizens from different cities. The same priority is seen through his *Geographika*: Asia (Books 11-16) and Greece (Books 8-10) comprise 9 books out of 17. There is a broad consensus that these are his conscious choices to emphasize the antiquity of Greek culture.

Having lived during Pax Romana (27 BC-180 AD), a period during which only one state has ruled the majority of the known world, is the third factor which determined Strabo's historiography. He was a member of a family which had close relations with Romans. We read from him that during the Third Mithridatic War, his grandfather collaborated with Romans. In return for his support Roman commander Lucullus gave promises to Strabo's grandfather, but these promises were not kept, because it was Pompey the Great who led the war to victory. We also read that Theophilus, a relative of Strabo, was executed by king Mithridates VI for losing a battle against the Roman commander Lucullus, during Mithridatic War (Str. XII.3.33). It has been suggested that this Theophilus may have been the commander who killed eighty thousand Roman citizens in Ephesus on the order of Mithridates VI (Gabelko 2013: 125; Richards 1941: 81). If this suggestion comes out to be true, it can be deduced that Strabo may have been influenced by his complex feelings for the Romans when he composed his work. His preference for the name Pontus, whose use became widespread thanks to Roman authors, rather than Cappadocia, the old name for his country, may be an expression of these complicated feelings. He was in the immediate vicinity of the Greeks who taught eminent Romans during his stay in Rome: his tutor Aristodemus was also tutor of the children of Pompeius Magnus (Str. XIV.1.48). Another tutor of him, Tyrannion was a friend of Titus Pomponius Atticus and Cicero (Str. XII.3.16; Cic. *Att.* XII.2; XII.6). Xenarchus of Calycadnus, who taught Strabo was among those who were close to emperor Augustus (Dueck, 2000: 9). He knew that within a century the Romans have captured most of Greece, Egypt and Asia Minor; while praising the establishment of a properly functioning administrative system in the places they had captured, he noticed

how this system has been corrupted in the hands of immoral governors and officials, and how it has crushed the local people. He must have been impressed by Poseidonios, whom he admired, saying that the Romans have developed culture, but were also cruel rulers (Dueck 2000: 65). However he does not want to annoy the Roman rulers of the period; he writes in such a manner that especially Tiberius, who is known for his interest in Greek culture, is welcomed (Str. VI.4.2). His avoidance of phrases such as “defeated”, “escaped”, “defected”, which would evoke Roman victory while talking about Hannibal, is another reflection of his view of the Romans. There is no indication that any Roman author has read *Geographika*, suggesting that the work was not printed in Italy. He would have his book published by the help of his friends if he wanted to. It is also striking that, unlike Romans, he used single name.

If we sum up, Strabo had to update his identity, while Pontic Dynasty disappeared during the turbulent first century BC. He had nostalgic ties with his homeland; on the one hand, under the influence of his education, his mind lived in the era of Homer and Greek epics, on the other hand, his body benefited from the blessings of Roman Peace as a Roman citizen. His name, meaning squint-eyed, defined his outlook on the world: his left eye wanted to see that stoic virtues prevailed, while his right eye saw Roman provincial governors who were taking bribes.

So what principles did Strabo follow in this mood when he wrote? First let us note that he previously composed a history work that has not survived to this day: *Historika Hypomnemata*. According to Strabo, geography is useful for statesmen and commanders because they gather people together and build cities, rule residential areas of the world and even places beyond it. He says that his primary purpose is to present a simple representation of the habitable parts of the world, and that he will do this based on his own observations and the older authors he trusts; while in doing so he will pay attention to the noble and the sublime, the useful in practice, and bypass the small and trivial (Str. I.1.23). Going one step further, he distinguishes between geography and corographias (Str. I.1.16): while the geographer reveals the whole world in general terms and determines the names of the cities, their locations and the distance between them, the corographos does this for a smaller region and does not care about the place of that particular region in the whole world (Dueck 2000: 155). Since the work he wrote covers all regions of the known world, it is a work of geography. But it also has a chorographic character in the regions he knows well. For example he says corographias for his work in the chapter he talks about Greece (Str. VIII.3.17). We can guess that he means something very likely to local historiography by saying corographias. But what he dreams of is the situation where one person is well-equipped enough to do local historiography for all regions (Str. I.1.16). This sensitivity, that is, not to get down in unnecessary details when showing the whole and not to make a very short summary when showing the small, is a sensitivity that he retains throughout his work: he does not want to skip miraculous stories and ‘cripple’ his work (Str. XVII.3.3); but he also wants to talk about great facts about important things, as a philosopher does (Str. I.1.23).

Strabo, writing in this mood, gained a generally accepted credibility. While talking about Hispania, Gallia and the northern countries he proceeds with the information he obtained from his sources. But he gives details that are first heard when

talking about Asia Minor and Egypt (Richards 1941: 84). “When we consider the mistakes in Ptolemaios’ lines, Strabo is above all praise... His short descriptions are wonderfully accurate and clear, we can not even accuse him of ambiguity”, says W. Ramsay (1890: 96). He is one of the most reliable sources especially for the northwest Asia Minor and south coast of Propontis (Kirk 1985: 254). His credibility can be checked from the work of another ancient author: Polybius talks about a painting which he saw during the capture of Corinthus by Romans (Pol. XXXIX.2). The same painting is described by Strabo when it is taken to Rome (Str. VIII.6.23). The main importance of Strabo is that he accomplished something, nobody has done before: to compose a work which includes natural science, politics, history, myths, his warnings and moral messages. This is a serious, monumental work (in his own words, a colossourgia) worthy of a philosopher (Str. I.1.23). Even if the *Geographika* contains some errors, it is not enough to stand out. Strabo’s critics point out that he exaggerated Homer’s geography knowledge; that he used the geographical knowledge of the 1st cent. BC inadequately; that he did not stress enough the distinction between what he has seen personally and what he has copied from others (Falconer, 1857: ix).

Strabo used too many sources while composing *Geographika*. When we filter these sources for Asia Minor, we notice that he not only used Artemidorus for northern regions of Mediterranean Sea but he also used him for Mysia, Bithynia, Aiolia, Ionia, Caria, Lycia, Pisidia and Cilicia (Str. XII.7.2; XII.8.1; XIII.3.5; XIV.1.22; XIV.2.29; XIV.3.3; XIV.5.3). For Mysia and Lydia he used the writings of Xanthus, who was described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus as an important historian (Dion. Hal. *Ant.* I.28). He also knew the poems and history work of Diodorus, whom he called ‘my friend’ (Str. XIII.4.9). His main source about Troas was the work of Demetrius, a citizen of Scepsis in Troas (Str. XIII.1.27; XIII.1.45). Another source he used was the work of Menecrates of Elaia on Hellespont (Str. XII.3.22; XII.8.3; Falconer 1857: xv). Apart from the authors mentioned, Strabo’s main sources were Eratosthenes, Polybius and Hipparchus of Nicaea. Polybius’ influence on him is quite evident. While composing *Geographika*, Strabo aimed to continue to tell events from where Polybius left off. His main goal in writing history is the same as Polybius’: to help Roman statesmen and commanders. He intended to depict the entire world just as Polybius intended to write the history of all nations. He ignored Herodotus just as Polybius did. He argues directly with Polybius as if he were with him (Str. X.3.5), even addressing him as “my dear Polybius” (Str. II.4.3). Both were admirers of Homer. Both lived in Rome, had high-level friends, participated in their military expeditions: Polybius accompanied Scipio Africanus the Younger; Strabo accompanied Aelius Gallus, the praefectus of Egypt.

Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD)

Since he is one of the few authors who mentioned Prusa and the only one of them who spoke about Hannibal and Prusa in the same sentence, he deserves a closer look. He is an example of soldier-statesman of the Imperial Era. He was born on the year Strabo died (23 AD). When Vespasianus, whom he knew during his official duties, crowned as emperor in 69 AD, Pliny became one of those in his inner circle. He composed his first works based on the experinences he had during his military services. His only extant work *Naturalis Historia* is published in 77 AD. The number of

topics he addresses in this work is so great that he cannot be expected to be competent in all of them: geography, ethnography, anthropology, mathematics, astronomy, zoology, botany, human physiology, agriculture, pharmacology, mining science, sculpture, painting etc. He talks about the history and geography of northwestern Asia Minor in the fifth book of this work, which consists of 37 books.

Pliny looks at his era as a mighty, proud Roman. According to him Italy is the ruler and second mother of the world: the dazzling genius of the Romans with their men, women, soldiers, slaves and their superiority in arts is indisputable (Plin. *HN*. XXXVII.77). However he complains that Latin culture begins to degenerate as the interaction with Greek culture increases. As a matter of fact, he is the living witness of the reign of Nero, who is the peak of degeneration and who annoyed everyone with his vagaries. He considers Cato the Elder as example of virtuous Roman life and opposition to Greek culture (Plin. *HN*. VII.27). However, his view on Roman rule is not one-sided. On the one hand he supports the spread of Roman domination on earth, on the other hand he thinks that this expansion has reduced freedom, restricted the development of knowledge /sciences and made life poorer (Plin. *HN*. XIV.1). Mining, pearl hunting (Plin. *HN*. IX.53), ornamentation with precious stones (Plin. *HN*. XXXVII.54), expensive, dyed clothes (Plin. *HN*. IX.63), exotic food, demand for birds (Plin. *HN*. X.68), luxury import from distant countries, are in conflict with Stoic doctrine, which was also adopted by Pliny, who thinks that human beings should live in accordance with nature. He is extremely prejudiced against the Greeks and uncomfortable with their influence in Italy. According to him the Greeks have conducted inhuman medical experiments (Plin. *HN*. XXVIII.2). They satisfy their insatiable learning curiosity with immoral methods.

Taking this point of view, Pliny states in the preface what he intended in his work: "as Domitius Piso says, it is not books but dictionaries (or source books – thesaurus, in Latin text), that are needed" (Plin. *HN*. praefatio, 17); no Roman or Greek before him have composed a work that covered all aspects of life (Plin. *HN*. praefatio, 14). That is what Pliny aimed. However he describes his work as a 'light' work, stating that his subject is a barren subject; it is difficult to be interesting without adding extraordinary words, dialogues, extraordinary events, miraculous accidents (Plin. *HN*. praefatio, 12-13). When we pay attention to the name he gave to his work, we notice that *Naturalis Historia* is translated as 'Natural History' in traditional sense. However, considering the usage of the concept of *historia* in Plato and Herodotus, the translation as "Studies on Earth / Nature", suggested by Beyet seems more reasonable (Healy 1996: 39). The distribution of topics in his work confirms this suggestion: only four books (3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th) out of 37 are about history and geography.

Pliny's working style is unusual. Although he says that he has studied two thousand books written before him, benefited from hundred authors and revealed twenty thousand 'remarkable facts' (Plin. *HN*. praefatio, 17), in fact, 146 Latin and 327 Greek authors are mentioned in his work. He was able to complete a work of this size by sleeping little and working long hours, thanks to a few helpers reading him notes. When we filter the sources of Pliny, Herodotus, Eratosthenes, Polybius, Alexander Polyhistor, Metrodorus of Scepsis, Poseidonius, Artemidorus, Xenagoras of Heraclea Pontica, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Licinius Mucianus, Isidorus, Pomponius Mela,

Cornelius Nepos and Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo stand out among the sources he has used for Asia Minor and especially for Troas and Bithynia.

Although he was regarded as a scholar equal to Aristotle and Theophrastus in antiquity, Pliny's authority is low today because he is perceived as an ordinary compiler (Laehn 2010: 210). Doody (2010: 1) takes so much scorn as to say, "If Pliny is famous for something, it's going too close to a volcano". Errors, ambiguities, pedanticities, superficial passages (one of which we will consider quite deeper), non-categorical classifications have reduced the value of the work to the simple pleasure taken from reading interesting events and respecting for the labor spent on it. Although he has stated in the preface that he would not include the miraculous events, he could not help himself and followed the tradition that was started by the scholars of Alexandria, and included such events for wide audiences to read. However he sometimes gives explanations about miraculous events, sometimes he does not, in order to convey the message of 'the power of nature' and to make people respect nature (Naas 2011: 66). He does not specify any distinction between sources based on local cultures and myths and sources based on scientific facts. As he proceeds linearly in the geography books of *Naturalis Historia* (in periplus style), he depicts some regions twice (on departure and return). Another disadvantage of the same method is that neighboring regions such as Thrace and Bithynia are described in different passages. Too many place names and folk names make the reader bored. He sometimes forgets to include the sources he has cited in the preface of that chapter.

Pliny did not work in an environment that has paved the way for the development of natural sciences like the authors who have worked at the Library of Alexandria. While performing his official duties, running around, taking notes for his other books, he has worked with little sleep, resulting in a work full of mistakes and confusions. He is considered as a compiler, not a real researcher. He did not use the information he has compiled to reach laws, as Aristotle did. He compiled and presented them, adding his sources for the relevant reader.

As the name suggests, *Naturalis Historia* does not claim to be an important work on the history of peoples and the foundation of cities. He is not regarded as a historian, although he wrote two historical works, *Bella Germanica* and *A Fine Aufidi Bassi*. Neither ancient authors nor contemporary researchers were interested in what Pliny has said on history. Tacitus criticizes the historians of the Flavian period, including Pliny, for distorting the events with patriotism and love of peace when writing about the Germanic Wars (Tac. *Hist.* II.101). Contemporary researches about Pliny examine his writings mostly on art history, metals and animals. Although he has never practiced medicine, he shows great interest in healing treatments because he wants to take the monopoly of medicine from the Greeks. The main theme of his work, as understood from XXXVI.24, is to make one feel that Roman domination brought order and prosperity to the world and made miracles created by humans possible. For Pliny, there is nothing miraculous about putting giant obelisks upright and writing on them, as in Egypt. The real miracle is building the ships and infrastructure that can carry them to Rome (Plin. *HN.* XXXVI.14).

Now let us move on to that sentence of Pliny that we need to examine deeply: “*Nunc reliqua in ora. a Cio intus in Bithynia Prusa, ab Hannibale sub Olympo condita*” = “*Inland from Cios, in Bithynia, is Prusa, at the foot of Olympus, founded by Hannibal*” (V.43). This sentence alone casts doubt on Pliny’s credibility. After being defeated at the Battle of Zama in 201 BC, Hannibal spent the following 15 years wandering in the East Mediterranean. It is not reasonable for the proud commander to establish a city of his own will after taking refuge in the king of Bithynia. He may have recommended the establishment of the city, or may consulted, controlled its building. However he could not have been effective enough to be called the “*founder of Prusa*”. The fact that the city was named after Prusias I is a proof of this. Since Pliny did not add any supporting explanation other than the expression “*founded the city*”, this shows that he is not sure about this issue and that he suspects the credibility of his sources.

Although we have doubts raised about this sentence, let us take it true for now and investigate its source. Pliny was the first to write that Hannibal had founded Prusa and then died in Libyssa (Plin *HN*. V.43; Doğancı 2013: 175). Before Pliny, Cicero noted that Hannibal was exiled at the court of Prusias (Cic. *Div*. II.24); Livy wrote that Hannibal committed suicide while staying at or near Prusias’ palace (Liv. XXXIX.51). However they did not mention Prusa or Libyssa. Pliny quoted Cornelius Nepos, who has lived several generations before him, eighteen times. He knows him well enough to know about his death (Plin *HN*. IX.63), but can not find any information to support his claims in Nepos’ *De Viris Illustribus*. Moreover, even if Pliny learned from him that Hannibal had founded Prusa, Nepos is of little value as a historian: he is said to be “*a hasty and careless compiler*”, aiming to moralize the reader by praising the people he talks about (Spawforth 2003: 396). The intensity of miraculous events also draws attention in Nepos’ geography work (Shingley et al. 2006: 611).

Pompeius Trogus, another author to whom Pliny has benefited greatly, is silent about the place where Hannibal died, although he gave abundant details about his last days (Just. *Epit*. XXXII.4). Moreover, Pompeius Trogus preferred to write the history of Macedonia, as it can be understood from the name of his work, rather than choosing the Roman history, which was a favorite subject among historians in his time. If we remember the kinship and alliance of the Bithynian kings with the Macedonian kings, if Pliny were right about the founding of Prusa, one of the people who would know this well would be Trogus. A historian who might know better than him, Lucius Flavius Arrianus of Nicomedia, either did not hear about the establishment of Prusa by Hannibal and his death in Libyssa, near his own city, or took it as rumor and did not write it. A contemporary of Pliny, Silius Italicus, who has been governor of Asia in 77 AD and composed a work about the Second Punic War, knows that Hannibal will first go to the rocky Taurus Mountains in Cilicia, then take refuge in the kings of Syria and Bithynia, but does not know where he dies (Sil. *Pun*. XIII.880-890). Lucius Cassius Hemina who has composed a work in annual style about the timespan from the oldest times of Italian Peninsula till the Second Punic War, is also silent about this topic (Pelling 2003: 300). About forty years after Pliny, when Plutarch wrote that an oracle has known where Hannibal was going to die, Libyssa has become an information that was received without questioning for subsequent authors (Plut. *Flaminius*, 20).

Let us take a closer look at Pliny's sources in book 5 as we search for the source of Hannibal's act of founding Prusa. He quotes Isidoros, who has written at the beginning of the 1st century AD, before and after the sections he mentions about Prusa. Before mentioning Prusa in V.43, he quotes the circumference of Lesbos in V.39 and the distance between Chalcedon and Sigeum in V.43. The fact that Isidoros is from the city of Charax in the Persian Gulf and has written on different topics such as pearl growing farms in that region and caravan routes in the Syrian Desert does not make him a reliable source about Bithynia and Troas (Purcell 2003: 768).

Another possible source can be Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, who has been proconsul in the eastern provinces of the empire between 23-21 BC (Most et al. 2003: 1602). During his missions, he helped advance the knowledge of geography with his records (*commentarii*) and included a map of the world in the portico he had built under his name in Rome. But it does not seem plausible that Strabo, who also benefited from Agrippa, has heard about the foundation of Prusa by Hannibal and did not mention it.

Licinius Mucianus, who has played an important role in the political events of 63-73 AD and has been decisive in Vespasian's becoming emperor, may also be one of Pliny's probable sources about Hannibal. Because he has been to many places in Western Asia Minor, served as proconsul and collected old documents. It is striking that he has been to Cyzicus (Baldwin 1995: 291). But the excerpts from him suggest that his attention has been on extraordinary events: water flowing from a spring in a temple on the island of Andros which always has the flavour of wine on January 5th (Plin. *HN*. II.106); dead bodies, when buried in the stone called sarcophagus in Assos in Troas, are consumed in the course of forty days, with the sole exception of the teeth (Plin. *HN*. XXXVI.27); in Argos and Smyrna, two women spontaneously have turned into men (Plin. *HN*. VII.4). When estimating size and distance, Mucianus' generally expressing the highest figures makes him unreliable (Baldwin 1995: 295-96).

Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, one of the sources mentioned in the fifth book, was proconsul of Asia under Claudius (Griffin 2003: 493). When Nero ascended the throne in 54 AD, he was sent on an expedition against the Parthians. Even if it is a slight possibility, he may be one of Pliny's sources on Hannibal.

After these evaluations, we have Marcus Terentius Varro as the most probable source for Pliny on Hannibal. We have reached this judgment because he was one of the naval commanders of Pompeius Magnus in Eastern Mediterranean expedition and had first-hand information due to his participation in the Third Mithridatic War (Plin. *HN*. VII.30; App. *Mith.* 95). Besides he composed two missing history works (*Antiquitates* and *Hebdomades vel de imaginibus*) and was given the title of 'the most learned men of all Romans' (Quint. *Inst.* X.1.95; Aug. *Civ.* VI.2).

When we trace Hannibal-Prusa relation after Pliny, we first encounter Gaius Iulius Solinus, who has become famous in the first half of the 3rd century AD. His geographical work *Collectanea rerum mirabilium* became widely read in the Middle Ages. In 1627, Dutch scholar Gerardus Iohannes stating that Solinus copied too much from Pliny, nicknamed him "Pliny's monkey" (Brodersen 2011:70). It is striking that Solinus, who has copied so much from Pliny, did say nothing about Hannibal and

Prusa, after writing about Hylas, Cius (Prusias in the text) and Hannibal's suicide in Libyssa (Solin. 42.2-3).

Another author who used *Naturalis Historia* very frequently is the last scholar of antiquity, St. Isidore. He quoted Pliny abundantly in his *Etymologiae*, which he composed between 615-630 AD. He knew that Nicomedia was founded by the Bithynian king Nicomedes (Isid. *Orig.* XV.1.41) and that his homeland Carthago Nova is founded by Carthaginians (Isid. *Orig.* XV.1.67), he talks about the accomplishments of Hannibal (Isid. *Orig.* XVI.20.4) but he has not heard about his relation with Prusa. Thanks to the writings of St. Bede (the Venerable), *Naturalis Historia* became a prestigious work in Carolignan Palace in 9th century (Eastwood 2007: 95). In 13rd century, Vincent of Beauvais contributed to the legibility of Pliny. The reason why we go beyond the time span of our subject is to show that important scholars have contributed to the survival of Pliny's work to the present day. The relation of Hannibal and Prusa has reached the present day through the writings of 18-19th century travelers such as R. Pococke, C. Texier.

To sum up, those who have written about the foundation of Prusa quote both Strabo and Pliny without adding any extra information. Since there is no Prusias who has been contemporary with Croesus, Strabo's claim was considered false, attempts have been made to correct it and Pliny's claim has been considered more accurate. Although Pliny had readers starting from the 3rd century, the fact that the first Latin translation of Geographika has been made in 1472 must have made Pliny a more reliable source (Özür 2015: 86).

Let us question Pliny's interest in Hannibal: has he wanted to tell about Hannibal's acts as a historical figure and give ethical messages to the reader? In *Naturalis Historia*, Hannibal is mentioned in 22 passages, a total of 24 times. Only four of them (%16) are in books 3, 4 and 5, which are about geography and history. In III.10, he describes a geographical landmark saying, "There is a harbour here, also called Hannibal's camp"; in III.11 he says "Salpi in Apulia is famous for Hannibal's love affair with a prostitute"; in V.43 he says "Hannibal founded Prusa... he committed suicide in Libyssa". In the books which are not about history and geography; in VII.3 he cites an unusual event that took place the year Hannibal captured Saguntum; in VII.28, there is a story of a man who, despite having injured both arms and legs, was captured by Hannibal twice and managed to escape twice. As can be seen, Pliny's interest is not on the acts of Hannibal or the course of history. While putting together what he has gathered from his sources, he sprinkles pieces of information about his current subject as fragmented sentences. It is also conspicuous that he did not state a judgment about Hannibal's acts.

Now, without getting stuck with Hannibal, let us look at what Pliny has written about this region. He names Gordiome / Juliopolis among the cities that were founded after the destruction of Attusa, which lies in the west of Prusa (Plin. *HN.* V.40). However the city bearing this name lies 300 km. far east, south of Nallıhan, Ankara. This location is also confirmed by ancient sources (Str. XII.8.9; Liv. XXXVIII.18; Procop. *Aed.* V.4; Pol. XXII.20; Ptol. *Geog.* V.1.4; Plin. *Ep.* X.77). The name Juliopolis was given because the emperor Augustus has the city repaired. In Bithynia there is no city

repaired by Augustus. Pliny says that the city of Apollonia ad Rhyndacum is included in the conventus of Adramytteion, which is unlikely to be so (Plin. *HN*. V.32; Ramsay 1890: 119-120). He is again wrong when he says that the river Rhyndacus rises in the marsh of Artynia, near Miletopolis (Plin. *HN*. V.40). Rhyndacus rises in Phrygia, near Aizanoi, some 140 km southeast (Str. XII.8.11). He states that the distance between Prusa and Nicaea was 25 miles (approx. 40 km), almost half the actual distance. According to him, Olbia and Prusias were the old names of Nicaea (Plin. *HN*. V.43). But Nicaea was never named Prusias, and Olbia was located near Astacus. Obviously Pliny confuses cities with similar names. Agripenses, which he counted among the cities of Bithynia, does not match with any city we know. Judging from its name, it must be related to Agrippa, but there is no sign that Agrippa came to Bithynia, founded a city, enlarged an existing city, or raised its status. A city close to this name is the city in Central Europe, now called Cologne. Since Pliny also served in the same region (Germania Superior), it comes to mind that he might have confused a city here as in Bithynia.

Let us evaluate these two authors, Strabo and Pliny. We know the names of four tutors of Strabo: Aristodemus, Xenarchus, Tyrannion, Athenodorus. When it comes to Pliny, we only have guesses about his tutors. Therefore, as Körte suggested (1899: 412, footnote 1), it is unfair to give Pliny more authority about the founding of Prusa than the "well-educated" Strabo. Although their works cover the whole inhabited world, the first-hand observations of both are limited. Pliny has not even approached Asia Minor whereas Strabo is the man of this land: we know for certain that Strabo has been to Ephesus, Nysa and Hierapolis; based on his narration, it can also be said that he has been to Nicaea and Cyzicus (Dueck 2000: 25). The fact that his grandfathers have been commanders and priests in Pontic Kingdom also helped him to know Asia Minor better. Their styles as authors are also different. We have said that Strabo distinguishes between geography and chorographias. He writes that he can give details about places he knows well, but that will not be appropriate for the places he does not know well (Str. I.1.16; VI.3.10). Since he cares to write about the facts, he criticizes some historians with their fondness of myths (Str. III.4.13; XI.6.2). On the other hand Pliny strives to inform on the whole earth, attract the attention of all readers; for this he includes lots of details, fragmented information into his work. His nephew Pliny the Younger quotes him saying, "no book existed so bad that somewhere in it was not useable" (Plin. *Ep*. III.5). Considering that he has composed his work named 'A Fine Aufidi' after 70 AD, and has ended writing *Naturalis Historia* in 77 AD, it becomes clear that while performing his official duties and writing his previous work, he has been also busy with taking notes for *Naturalis Historia* (Syme 1969: 210). The letters of Pliny the Younger reveal that his uncle could not even tolerate wasting the time spent for reading ten lines, and that he undertook the conduct of law cases in addition to his official duties (Plin. *Ep*. III.5).

They both wrote about the whole habitable World so errors are inevitable. For instance Strabo's statement in III.4.6 that the course of Pyrenees Mountains is from north to south is wrong. He is again wrong when he says (XIII.1.33) that the Trojan plain extends towards Mount Ida is wrong (Leaf 1916: 33). Pliny is wrong in saying that

Asclepiades of Bithynia left his profession as orator and started practising medicine and that he was a well-known physician in Rome (Plin. *HN*. XXVI. 7). He writes that the city of Lysimacheia in Hellespont disappeared, but Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote three centuries later, speaks of this city as if it was still standing (Amm. Marc. XXII.8.5). What matters is not who made more mistakes, but whose style and working style make it possible to make mistakes. This comparison goes against Pliny.

It may be illuminating to look at the Greek perception of history when the foundation of Prusa is questioned. According to the Greeks, the existence of a city would be consolidated, if it had a foundation myth. The presence of a god or demigod in the myth riveted its solidity. If there was no such myth, it had to be produced later. The name of the founder (oikistes) was proudly graved on coins, inscriptions, city walls (Okumuş 2020: 2). The foundation myths of Nicaea based on Dionysios (Nonnus *Dion*. XLVIII.865) and Cius based on Argonauts (Apoll. Rhod. I.1321) are examples of this. According to Strabo, the Trojans thought that their city has moved to its current location in the time of Croesus (Str. XIII.1.25). That means the people of Troia are not content with being the city of Homer but, want their city to be also touched by Croesus. This notion may have been on their minds when Strabo has Prusa founded by Croesus, and Pliny by Hannibal. Because, at the beginning of the 2nd century BC, the Punic War had taken its place in the memories of many peoples in the Western Mediterranean. When Livy completed his work 'Ab urbe condita libri' in 9 BC, Hannibal has already become a legend by being compared to Pyrrhos, King of Epeiros, and Alexander the Great (App. Syr. 10). When Roman emperor Septimus Severus, or his son Caracalla, had the tomb of Hannibal covered with marble, it was a place of interest for four centuries, and remained visible until the 11th century (Macdonald 2015: 390-1; 403-8).

On Hannibal, Polybius is the best source. Polybius was an active actor of history, both as commander and historian. He traveled freely and had the opportunity to conduct research in the official archives (Vell. I.13). Strabo was a follower of Polybius in many ways. Their aim was same in writing: to guide statesmen and soldiers. Strabon wrote about the whole habitable World just like Polybios wrote about the history of all nations. They were both Hellenes who had lived part of their lives in Rome and had friendship with eminent Romans. This gave them objective perspective. Thus Strabo can be considered more reliable about Hannibal than Pliny. For example Strabo heard that Hannibal had founded the city of Artaxata in distant Armenia (Str. XI.14.6; Plut. *Luc*. 31). There are other things Strabo knew well: he knew that after the defeat of king Antiochus, Hannibal withdrew from the Hellespontine Phrygia and that Zelas' son, Prusias I, who welcomed Hannibal was the same king who helped Philippos, king of Macedonia in capturing Myrleia and Cios. As can be seen, Strabo gives a lot of information about the history of Bithynia in three sentences that are compatible with what we know today. However such sentences of Pliny are very few. On the contrary he puts Hannibal's founding of Prusa in a three-word sentence, which makes the reader feel like it was accidentally written. Or it seems like one of those inevitable mistakes that are result of intense and hard work. There is no other information explaining or supporting what he said before or after that sentence.

Conclusion

A detailed analyses of two authors reveal that they are quite different from each other. Strabo, a member of the Greek sphere, is influenced by his Greek tutors and Greek epics. His model in historiography is another reliable author, Polybius. The accuracy of Strabo's sentences can be checked through Polybius' work.

We know where and when was Strabo educated, we knew his tutors. When it comes to Pliny we do not have that knowledge. It seems that Pliny is a self-taught person in life. This difference in their education level is also reflected in their style. Strabo proceeds slowly, caring the rules. He distinguishes between the subjects he knows well and the ones he knows less. When making a distinction between geography and corography, he says it would be best if everyone had written the subject he knew well. On the other hand Pliny is like a circus spectator who wants to enjoy the vast geography provided by the Peace of Rome, who seeks to devour every exciting object he encounters. He hopes to attract attention by including as many objects, stories and places as possible. Let us examine the sentences of both on the same subject: Strabo says, "There are 20 islands between Tenedos and Asia (Ephesus) according to one source, and 40 according to another source" (Str. XIII.2.5), whereas Pliny is not lazy and counts the names of 25 of them one by one (Plin *HN*. V.38). A little further, he counts six of the old names of the island of Lesbos (Plin *HN*. V.39). This shows us that Pliny did not act critically and included every information he heard in his work.

When it comes to writing about Asia Minor, we see again a big difference. Strabo is from this land while Pliny, who despises the Greek World, neither came nor approached here. Even if he received correct information from his sources, he is not competent to judge them critically. He already confesses that what he wrote about Asia Minor was very different from what previous authors wrote (Plin *HN*. VI.8). The fate of the books of both authors was also different. Just as Alexander complained of not having a Homer to write about his achievements, Strabo could not find a reader or, found it too late. His work is translated to Latin in 1472. But starting from the 3rd cent. Pliny had many readers. His work is copied many times and read by many scientists. But readers of *Geographika* are mostly limited to those who are interested in ancient geography.

If Prusa was really founded by Hannibal, someone else would have added a few more words to these three in the next 2200 years. While there are those more likely to know, no one but Pliny has heard of Hannibal founding Prusa. We mentioned that Pliny confused the cities named Prusias. So it is most probable that Hannibal helped Prusias I in rebuilding Cius, which was destroyed about twenty years ago (Körte 1899: 412, footnote 1). When Strabo's considering Prusias and Croesus to be contemporaneous was seen as an error, his writing that Hannibal came to Cius also escaped attention (Str. XII.4.3). This was followed by the repetition of Pliny's baseless three-word, ambiguous sentence by later authors.

We now can conclude that *Pliny is an unreliable source on the history of Prusa* and does not deserve the credit given to him. It would be more appropriate to see him as a *compiler* whose main interest is not history and geography. An indication of this is

the first Turkish translation of Pliny's work which includes books 1 and 2 on *cosmology*. The name of the founder, given by Strabo can be wrong but he drew our attention to the possibility that Prusa may have been founded in the 6th century BC. This requires considering completely different eras and actors. This possibility deserves to be taken more seriously.

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