

On the Name of the *Hipbalus* (*Hippalus*) Wind in Pliny

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The evidence we possess about the routes which had begun to be opened up between Arabia and India during the Hellenistic and Roman periods includes not least the well-known passage of Pliny (*N.H.* VI, 100, p. 472, 15-18 M. = p. 53, 11-13 A.).¹ In this passage Pliny mentions what he claims to have been the first (in chronological order) of the various sea routes connecting Arabia to India: *ab Syagro Arabiae promunturio* it led to Patale(-a). On the reading of this passage there is now general agreement among scholars: *postea ab Syagro Arabiae promunturio Patalen fauonia, quem hip<p>alum ibi vocant, peti certissimum uidebatur** (after which the *aestimatio* of the distance from *Syagrum promunturium* to Patale, calculated as 1332 miles, is given). However, it seems to me that this current reading should be subjected to discussion and revision as regards *hip<p>alum*. The manuscript tradition presupposes an original reading *hipalum* or, more probably, *hyphalum*; and this reading *hipalum*, without the double -*p*-, is in my view to be preferred.

To illustrate this point (the original reading *hyphalum* or *hipalum* as implied by the Plinian manuscript tradition in VI, 100), a particular circumstance should be considered: none of the variant readings in the manuscript tradition (for which the reader is referred to the apparatus criticus in the editions by Delffsen, Mayhoff and André) retains the double -*p*- (*pp*), found in the common reading, *hip<p>alum*. This absence is not without significance. In fact, in nouns connected with ἵππος (or which may be assimilated to ἵππος in the linguistic consciousness), the Plinian manuscript tradition (either as a

whole, or in part) generally retains the double -*p*- (*pp*). I quote the following examples, where -*pp*- is in fact retained: in some cases we find other kinds of corruption, but never involving the double -*p*- (haplography of -*p*- in one or more of the codices, in contrast to others, is indicated; page-numbers refer to M.; the codices' siglae are also adopted from M. Double -*p*- will be highlighted in Roman type).

Hippomax et sim.: XXXVI, 12, p. 310, 8 and 5;

Hippocrates: XVIII, 75, p. 163, 9; XX, 230, p. 367, 20; XXII, 34, p. 450, 15; XXII, 136, p. 482, 19 and p. 482, 20 (-21);

Hippys: XXXV, 141, p. 281, 14 (-*pp*- is retained in *hyppus* of B, and in *hyppis* of d; in the r, haplography of *p*, with corruption in *hyppis*, *iphis*, v.);

Hipparchum: XXXV, 200, p. 305, 14 (thus the excellent B, as well as v.; in the r, corruption which substitutes, as regards -*pp*-, double -*p*- with double -*l*-);

hippos, *hippuros*, -*hippocampus*: XXXII, 149, p. 100, 13 (*hippus* and *hyppus*, partially corrupt forms for *hippos*, however retain -*pp*-);

hippocampi et sim.: XXXII, 58, p. 68, 17; XXXII, 67, p. 71, 16 (but V has a corrupt form with haplography); XXXII, 83, p. 77, 17; XXXII, 93, p. 81, 2; XXXII, 109, p. 86, 7; XXXII, 113, p. 87, 17; XXXII, 139, p. 96, 13; XXXVI, 26, p. 315, 8 (but V and R have haplography); for XXXII, 149, see *supra*;

hippopotamus et sim.: VI, 173, p. 501, 21-22; VIII, 95, p. 110, 13 (-*pp*- in all codices siglis notati with the exception of a); XI, 160, p. 334, 9 (again with the exception of a); XXVIII, 121, p. 316, 11 (with the exception of x);

hippolapathum et sim.: XX, 231, p. 368, 14; XX, 232, p. 369, 1; *hippomarathum* et sim.: XX, 255, p. 376, 8-9 and p. 376, 11; XX, 258, p. 377, 12 and p. 378, 1; XXI, 54, p. 398, 10;

hippophaes: XXI, 91, p. 410, 15; XXII, 29, p. 449, 1 (on p. 449, 5, among the four codices siglis notati, three have corrupt forms yet retain -*pp*-; in one, R, the word is completely deformed, reduced to *hae*).

The examples I have cited seem, therefore, to confirm that, despite all the different corrupt forms and variants, the manuscript tradition of Pliny tends for the most part to retain

the double letter in nouns beginning with *Hipp-* (*hipp-*). As I mentioned earlier, this does not occur in the case of the noun in VI, 100 indicating the name given to the West wind (*faunius*) in the region of the *Syagrum promuthium*², such a name being invariably spelt in the manuscripts with a single *-p-*. Once again readers are referred to the apparatus criticus (in M., cf. also p. 525, 8-9): particularly worthy of note are *hippalum* E* and G; *hyphlum* Fa; *iphlum* R; *pyphlum* D (where the first *p* derives from a misreading of an original *h*, most possible in the course of transcription); *hyphalum* r; *hippalum* v.a.H. It goes without saying that the interchange between *y* and *i* is quite common in the manuscripts: thus *hippalum* in E* and G may simply be considered as *hyphalum* written from dictation, or at any rate misunderstood, since *y* could have been heard as *u*, and written down as *i* by an inadvertent listener or copyist. As for the second *i*, found in *Far* (y in D), it is a corruption deriving from assimilation with the first vowel.

The absence of double *-p-* in the manuscript tradition of this passage must in itself lead us to have strong doubts about the standard reading *hip<p>alum*. How is the total absence within the tradition of any trace of double *-p-* in the reading *hyphalum*, which has however left evident traces in the above-cited examples of nouns beginning with *hipp-*, to be explained?

Moreover, while the manuscript tradition of this passage by itself gives no support to the emendation *Hip<p>alum*, all the evidence suggests instead that we should retain *hyphalum*, which is not only in the r, but is obviously implied by *hippalum* in E* and G. We say 'all the evidence' because it is precisely the reading *hyphalum* which is best suited to name a wind which - to borrow an expression used by Pliny himself (II, 128) in describing a totally different wind - *ex imo mari spirat* ". (So that the ship - to adopt in this case an expression of Joseph Conrad, which takes us back to voyages directed according to the monsoon - seems to be emerging from the steady and constant breeze of the monsoon). In the case of Pl. N.H. VI, 100, the West monsoon wind, which moves towards N/E from Syagrus to Patale, could indeed have been considered a "non-apogeus" wind, just as the other monsoon, blowing from N/E to S/W, was considered to be apogeus, i.e. blowing from the land, as the historians of Alexander the Great had rightly remarked

(Nearchus FGHist 133 F 18; Aristob. FGHist 139 F 35. Cf. Strabo 692₁₇; *δρογυλας δὲ μηδευίας πνοῆς ἐκδὲταμένης* ***). In short, the monsoon wind which blew on the route from Syagrus to Patale could be defined as *ἀπὸ τοῦ βορρῆος* (or *πνοῆς αὐτοῦ*) *ὑφ' αὐτοῦ*, "(under-) sea wind"; and the pronunciation of *ὑφ' αὐτοῦ* must in origin have sounded like *hyphalos* or *hiphalos* (proparoxytone), on account of the normal interchange between *ph* and *p* (in other words, of the rendering of *-φ-* with *-p-*)³.

My reading *hyphalum* in Pl. N.H. VI, 100 raises a problem in the interpretation of Pliny. If we are to read *hyphalum* in Pl. N.H. VI, 100, how then should we read the name of the same wind in VI, 104, p. 474, 8 M. = p. 55, 11 A.? In this passage the main variants are: *hippalo* E*; *yppalo* a; *hypha*-vel *hipa*-v.a.H. The current reading is *hippalo*; and this is the reading which I also believe should be adopted. The fact that *-ph-* is retained in the Vienna codex a is to a certain extent in itself a guarantee that in VI, 104 the name of the wind was indicated by the noun *hippalus*, with double *-p-*: as we have seen through the examples given above, the tradition (either all, or, as in this case, in part) retains the double *-p-* in other nouns which may be connected with *hipp-*. In short, the reading *hippalo* in Pl. N.H. VI, 104 is supported by the manuscript tradition (albeit only in part), just as the very different reading *hyphalum* is supported in Pl. N.H. VI, 100; and it would be a mistake to read *hyppalo* instead of *hippalo* in VI, 104. Similarly, in N.H. VI, 100, it is a mistake to read *hip<p>alum* instead of *hyphalum*. In both cases Pliny accurately transcribed the name he had obtained from his sources: in the first case it referred to a date almost four centuries before his time, whereas in the second case it was a contemporary reference. That is to say, in VI, 100 Pliny wrote *hyphalum*, just as he read it in Nearchus or Onesicritus, or else in Iuba, who derived from them: these sources were referring, in this regard, to the early Hellenistic period; in VI, 104, by contrast, Pliny wrote *hippalo* in a context obtained from an entirely new, personal source of information, as he himself says in VI, 105 (*quae omnia gentium portuumque aut oppidorum nomina cepit nomen prius reperiuntur, quo apparet mutari locorum status* ***); and naturally Pliny's fidelity to his sources would apply to such new information as well, not excluding even

such an almost negligible detail as the difference between the name given to the south-western monsoon during the early Hellenistic age and the one in use during the Roman period: *hyphalum* and *hippala*, respectively.

We need to insist upon *apud neminem priorem reperitur*. We must also abandon the old, conventional and superficial misunderstandings of how Pliny worked.

Pliny was a scholar who based his work on written sources (*autores*) - but also on direct information. The fact that the information from which VI, 104-105 is drawn is entirely new, is already evident from the toponym *Oecli* in VI, 104, which immediately precedes the reference to the *hippalus* wind: indeed, this toponym *Oecli* confirms that Pliny in such cases transcribes faithfully (which, from his point of view, means exactly) the different bits of information he has variously acquired without trying to reconcile them. In fact, the harbour which he calls *Oeclis* in VI, 104 is the very same as that which he calls *Acila* in VI, 151, and which he will subsequently call *Ocilia* in XII, 88 (in an extremely interesting passage, upon which attention should be focused: *hi recto cursu per sinus impellunt, atque a promunturii ambitu argestae deferunt in portum Gebbanitarum qui vocatur Ocilia. Quam ob rem illi maxime id petunt, produntque vix quinto anno reuerti negotiatores et multos interire*).

The notion of an "under-sea" wind, *hyphalos*, attributed to the monsoon a characteristic which can be illustrated through yet another expression used by Pliny, this great mariner who was also a great scientist: describing the sea's relationship with the winds he says: *intra se esse ventos fatetur* (XVIII, 359) (That Pliny was commander of the Roman fleet is too often forgotten.)

Such a combined scientist and admiral could not have failed to understand the nature and the development, variously characterized in its various stages, of the maritime relationship between India and the West. (Also in its economic repercussions: cf. De Romanis' remarks on *lucroque India admoda est*.) Pliny was perhaps unaware of (or, more probably, did not believe) the tradition adopted by the *PME*, according to which a seafarer called *Hippalos* had discovered the monsoon. This tradition, which had no doubt originated among Egyptian sailors (who must have known that the name *Hippalos* appeared,

e.g., in the Ptolemaic prosopography, and were spontaneously led to link it with the history of trade between India and the West), was already doubted, rightly so, by several modern scholars; and must certainly be rejected. If Hippalos the "discoverer" of the monsoon really were an historical figure, it would be difficult to understand how Posidonius could have regarded Eudoxus of Cyzicus as the person who, following the directions of an unnamed Indian, had traced and pointed out the "monsoonal" route to India. Posidonius' account of Eudoxus of Cyzicus (FG-Hist 87 F 28 = F 49 E-K. = F 13 Th. Cf. Strabo 98-102) shows, in other words, that he was unacquainted with the tradition of Hippalos the "discoverer" of the monsoon, or alternatively that he knew of it but denied its historicity. In either case we have an extremely important argument for repudiating the historicity of the account about Hippalos in the *PME*.

Posidonius, moreover, was extremely interested in the etymology and the explanation of the names (*τροπυόπλα*) of the winds - as the Stoá had generally been long before him. The etymological derivation of the Greek name for the south-westerly monsoon wind from the name of a *κρησπερήτης* Hippalos could not fail to draw his attention; the fact that he mentions Eudoxus, and not Hippalos is conclusive evidence that such a derivation is at the very least questionable, and indeed must be rejected.

To sum up: the original *τροπυόπλα* of the south-westerly monsoon wind as indicated by Plin. *N.H.* VI, 100, was *τροχλος* (scil. *αὔρα*, or *πνοή* or *ἀνεμος*), "(under-)sea wind": it was retained by Pliny in that passage and understood by him exactly as a scholar and an admiral of genius would.

NOTES

1. Hereafter M. refers to the edition by Mayhoff (1906). In the edition by Diefen (1904) the passage is on p. 150, ll. 20-21. The most recent edition (1980) is the one by J. André (J. Fillozat), hereafter cited as A.: here the passage in question is on p. 53, ll. 11-13.
 "Later on it seemed safest to head for Parale from the Arabian promontory of Syagrus, profiting by the West wind (*faunius*), which in that place they call *hi<p>-palus*".

2. *Ibi* in VI, 100, p. 472, 17 M. = p. 53, 12 A. obviously refers to *Syagro* (*Syagro* codd.), rather than to *Patulera*.
 ** "Blows in from the sea's depths".
 *** "As no wind from the land turned up".
3. Cf. e. g. E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik*, I, München 1934, p. 204. The interchange is well known in the case of Latin renderings in which normally, before the last century of the Republic, Greek aspirates used to be transcribed as unvoiced stops. Yet it was also possible in the Near- and Middle East area (cf. e.g., Schwyzler, p. 154). In the case we are concerned with, we may think of ὕψαλος as a Greek term circulating in its Hadramūt pronunciation (more precisely in the pronunciation of the *Syagrum promunturium*, if, as I have already mentioned above, n. 2, Pliny's *ibi* refers to *Syagrum promunturium*). Anyway, even if *ibi* were to refer to *Patale*, the rendering of -f- with -p- creates no difficulties.
 **** "And all these names of peoples, harbours or towns are found in none of the earlier authors, which shows that places change their status".
 ***** "They (the East Winds, *eur*) drive (the rafts on which the Trogodytæ carry the precious 'cinnamon') straight across the gulfs, then the South-West Winds (*argestæ*) push them back from the promontory's curve into the harbour of the Gebbantæ, which is called Ocilia. For this reason they (the Gebbantæ) most eagerly seek after it ('cinnamon') and relate that its merchants may not be back for as long as four years and that many of them meet their death (on the journey)".
 ***** "It (the sea) reveals that winds lie within itself".
4. Cf. F. De Romanis, *Rome and the Nôtia of India*, included in the present volume, pp. 80-160. The information that my former pupil has deduced from Tamil texts on Roman trade relations with India are also important.
5. In fact, if the first hypothesis is correct (that Posidonius had no information about a κνβερνήτης Hippalos as "discoverer" of the monsoon), it follows that the tradition about Hippalos as the "discoverer" of the monsoonal route is either later than Posidonius, or otherwise gained currency after Posidonius. If the second hypothesis is correct (that Posidonius was acquainted with the tradition about Hippalos as the "discoverer" of the monsoon, but denied the historicity of such a tradition), then we must attach the greatest importance to Posidonius' denial. He wrote, in fact, around the second decade of the first century BC, approximately one generation after the Indian adventure of

of Eudoxus of Cyzicus - and possessed all the data needed to establish whether there had been, prior to Eudoxus, a discovery of the monsoonal route by a κνβερνήτης Hippalos. The first hypothesis, as I have already mentioned, is to be preferred. In the account of Eudoxus by Posidonius there may be an element of fiction (the δριτλευν alluded to by Strabo), but as far as Eudoxus' journey to India is concerned, it is undoubtedly true.