

# Mapping India in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*

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## Abstract

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 *Natural History* and its complexity

Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* is widely recognized as the earliest encyclopedia in the world, manifesting a pioneering effort in comprehensively cataloging the vast array of human knowledge from that era.

The work is thematically divided into 37 books, covering a diverse range of subjects including astronomy, geography, zoology, botany, medicine, and more. Pliny meticulously consulted a wide range of Greek and Roman references, totaling approximately 2,000 volumes<sup>1</sup>, and interwove his own literary interpretation or comments to the narratives.

Despite the carefully designed knowledge-ordering framework (Lao 2016), scholars have observed a paradoxical complexity in *Natural History*, evident in its linguistic style, narrative approach, and use of references. The work compiles inconsistent toponyms from Greek and Latin, includes digressions in descriptions (Roller 2022), exhibits changes in vocabularies and sentence structures (Pinkster 2005). However, it is precisely this complexity that makes the work more fascinating and not only a valuable source to the knowledge and worldview of the ancient world, but also a gateway into Pliny's conceptualization, imagination, and even the prevailing imperial ideology.

The complexity and interconnectivity of the general structure of *Natural History* is further highlighted in different aspects by refreshing approaches. In terms of content organization of the work, Healy (1999) vaudicated Pliny's original contribution in unveiling the technology and science engagement of the Rome Empire from the description about natural phenomena and scientific experiment to the development of scientific language in Latin, taking the historical, political and linguistic context into consideration.

<sup>1</sup>*Natural History* 1.5.1 (<https://topostext.org/work/148>)

And Naas (2002) discussed how Pliny formulated the the diversified materials into his encyclopaedic structure, revealing the work’s multifaceted nature as an epistemological, ideological, and moral project. By analysing Pliny’s employment of the historical exemplum in the work, Schultze (2011) argues how the specific literary device directed and teased the readers and established a profound connection between human beings and the entire spectrum of nature in *Natural Hisroty*.

In addition to the close reading methods used in the prior analyses of the context and references in *Natural History*, Rydberg-Cox (2021) employs network analysis method with different metrics to map the interrelationships between Pliny’s sources and the topics discussed in the work. Furthermore, Fantoli (2022) presents a comparative study of book 2 of *Natural History* and book 7 of Seneca’s work *Natural Questions*, both centered on astronomy, utilizing statistical analysis to identify Pliny’s unique stylistic features based on variations in their discourse distribution, and proved the encyclopedic authorial intent shown in *Natural History* with correspondence and tree analysis. These two studies also demonstrate how distant reading methodologies offer novel insights into the understanding of ancient treatises.

## 1.2 Spatial perspective in *Natural History*

As pointed out by Beagon (2011), differentiating from his pressedors, Pliny showed a “terrestrial curiosity” in *Natural History*, emphasizing a recognition of the physical, material world. In this regard, the vision of geography plays a pivotal role in distributing information, knowledge, and events throughout *Natural History*.

Drawing from the long-established topographical and ethnographic traditions, Pliny seamlessly connects volumes dedicated to geography (books 3-6) with broader elements, activities, and cultural, historical, and societal contexts(Roller 2022), exemplified in his portrayal of exotic plants, communities’ habitats, imperial expeditions, and trade ventures. In other words, geographical names occured in each book of *Natural History* served as signposts guiding readers through diverse lands, shedding light on how Pliny and his contemporaries perceived and conceptualized the world around them.

A normalized frequency of place name occurence in the work is calculated as the ratio of counts of the occurrences of place names in each book to the word lengths of the book (Table 1). The bar chart (Figure 1) depicted the comparison of distribution of place names in the books of *Natural History*. The observation is in line with content structure of *Natural History*, that books 3-6 centered around the themes of “Geography and ethnography”, contains the most mentions of location names, and place names are also frequently referred in books about agriculture and horticulture (book 12-14), aquatic life (book 31), and mining and mineralogy (book 34-37).

Table 1: Normalized distribution of place names in *Natural History*

Book	Total_length	Place_count	Place_freq
1	2778	1	0.000360
2	30570	406	0.013281

	Total_length	Place_count	Place_freq
Book			
3	18037	1007	0.055830
4	15434	1309	0.084813
5	18872	1112	0.058923
6	27891	1012	0.036284
7	21204	225	0.010611
8	24176	185	0.007652
9	19197	140	0.007293
10	20816	121	0.005813
11	27345	77	0.002816
12	13906	188	0.013519
13	13243	164	0.012384
14	15277	189	0.012372
15	14552	135	0.009277
16	25442	180	0.007075
17	29387	82	0.002790
18	35850	222	0.006192
19	18822	146	0.007757
20	22743	21	0.000923
21	17896	95	0.005308
22	16491	24	0.001455
23	15764	17	0.001078
24	17491	56	0.003202
25	16734	85	0.005079
26	15448	35	0.002266
27	12444	40	0.003214
28	26476	28	0.001058
29	13976	31	0.002218
30	14395	23	0.001598
31	12204	222	0.018191
32	14635	76	0.005193
33	17946	113	0.006297
34	18972	193	0.010173
35	21283	277	0.013015
36	21295	357	0.016764
37	22255	282	0.012671

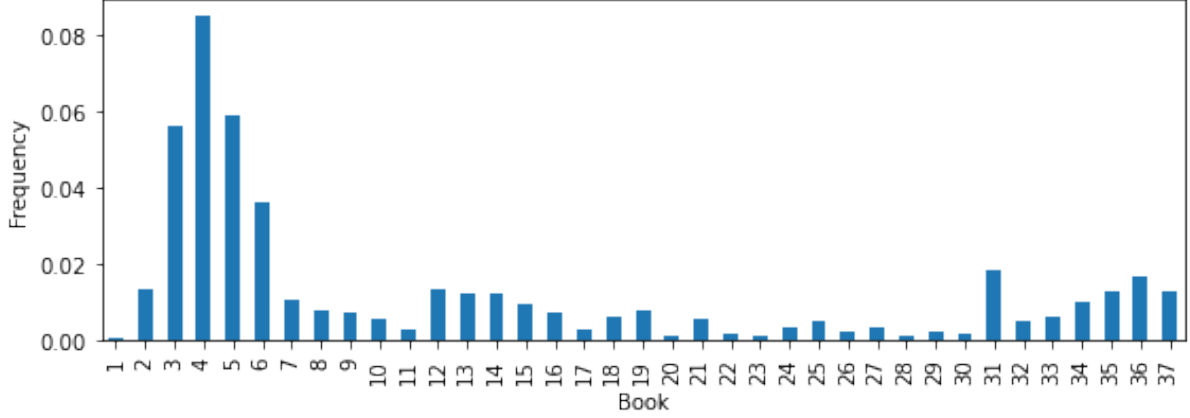


Figure 1: Normalized distribution of place names in *Natural History*

### 1.3 Text source for the study

*Natural History* is originally written in Latin. For the purpose of this study, an English translation conducted by Henry T. Riley (1816-1878) and John Bostock (1773-1846), which was first published in 1855, is utilized. The translated text is obtained in a digitized version from the [TOPOSText project](#), having been sourced from the Perseus Project and governed by a Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 3.0 U.S. License.

Annotations of people’s name, places’ name and geographical coordinates are available together with the text of *Natural History* ([Book1-11](#), [Book12-37](#)) on [TOPOSText project](#). This invaluable resource allows for the creation of a dataset that includes both the textual contents and geographical annotations, which can be utilized to investigate the distribution of place names in the entire text and examine the frequencies and patterns of geography-related content.

The extension of the extracted corpora and the workflow of the extraction will be further explained in the Methodology chapter (Section 3).

## 2 Research Question

### 2.1 Prominent mentioned places in *Natural History*

Based on the geographical annotations in *Natural History* provided by TOPOSText project, there are 2052 unique places mentioned in *Natural History*.

The top 20 most frequent place names mentioned (as 1% of total) in *Natural History* is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Top 20 mentioned place names in *Natural History*

ToposText_ID	Place_Name	Lat	Long	Count
1687	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a> Italy	40.6000	16.30000	292
2034	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a> Rome	41.8910	12.48600	269

	ToposText_ID	Place_Name	Lat	Long	Count
52	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Egypt	27.1000	30.70000	261
82	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	India	30.0000	74.00000	167
57	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Arabia	28.0000	40.00000	123
320	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Syria	35.5000	39.00000	109
255	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Cyprus	35.0000	33.00000	85
109	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Nile	30.0918	31.23130	85
2282	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Alps	44.1420	7.34300	82
766	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Sicily	37.6000	14.50000	71
275	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Crete	35.2052	25.18360	64
7	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Ethiopia	13.0100	35.01000	58
417	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Rhodes	36.4408	28.22440	56
966	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Athens	37.9718	23.72793	56
2043	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Capitol	41.8933	12.48300	52
298	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Euphrates	35.2791	40.27080	47
2241	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Pontus	43.5000	33.50000	47
1839	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Campania	41.1000	14.60000	46
1480	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Armenia	39.7020	44.29800	45
17	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Red Sea	19.5000	39.00000	42
545	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Carthage	36.8500	10.32000	42
602	<a href="https://topostext.org...">https://topostext.org...</a>	Cilicia	37.0100	34.01000	42

The place names referenced in *Natural History* are geographically mapped, with each location marked on the map using its corresponding coordinates. A dot is assigned to represent each place, with the size and color of the dot reflecting the frequency of its mention in the book. The larger and darker the dot, the more frequently the place is referenced within the context of *Natural History*.

An intriguing observation from the output, as depicted in Figure 2, is the prominence of India, a region outside the Mediterranean, despite its high frequency of mentions.

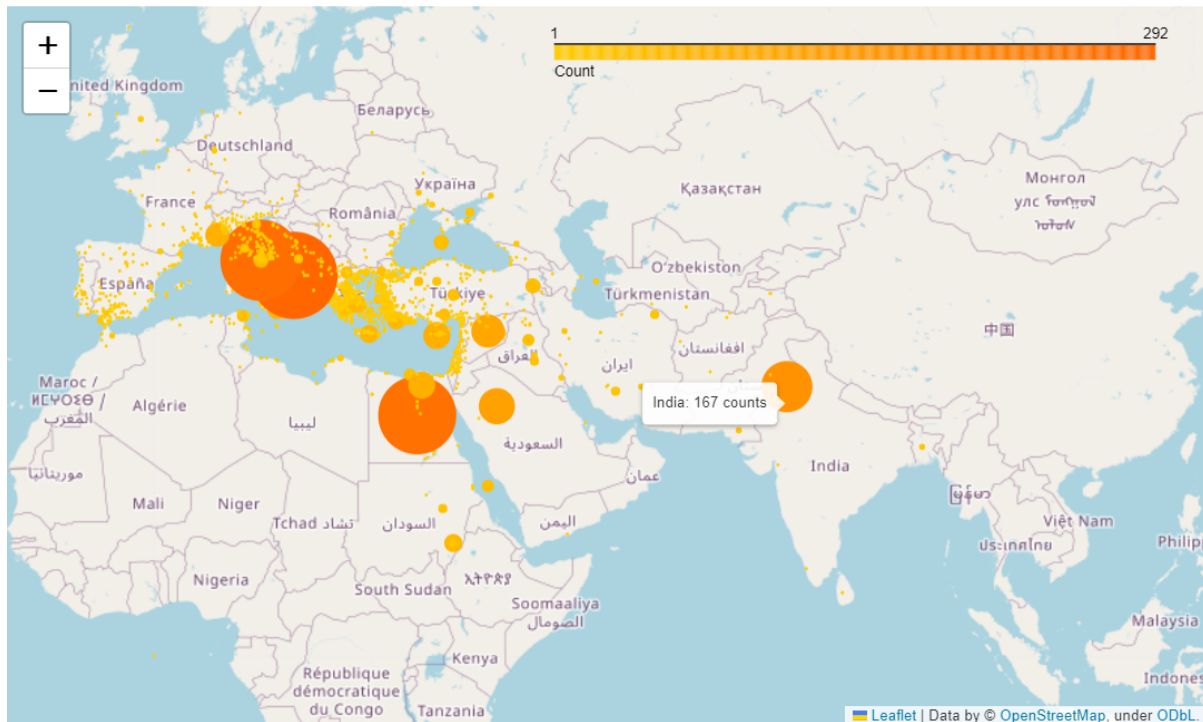


Figure 2: Place name distribution map

## 2.2 Why India?

Geographically, India presents itself as a distant and disconnected territory from the Roman Empire, lacking any direct aquatic or land routes with the Mediterranean region. Despite this apparent physical separation, the exotic curiosity Pliny attempted to integrate, as well as the Indo-roman goods exchange network reflected in the work, may contribute to an explanation of the prominent mentioning of India in *Natural History* as the broader context.

As suggested by (Murphy 2003), the *mirabilia*, encompassing accounts of extraordinary landscapes, peoples, plants, and animals, assumes a substantial proportion within the books of *Natural History*. Pliny's inclusion of such exotic elements not only catered to the prevailing curiosity of his Roman readers but also fostered a comparative perspective between distant locales, exemplified by his references to India, and their natural counterparts within Rome (Naas 2011). Within research framework of Roman Imperialism, the detailed portrayal of foreign lands, such as India, holds significant importance in shaping both Pliny's and his contemporary Roman readers' perception of their place within the global landscape (Pollard 2009).

In addition, *Natural History* serves as a valuable reference for tracking the Indo-Mediterranean network of exchange (Pollard 2009). Through the depiction of cities, ports, and rivers along the trade routes, the work provides substantive evidence of the flourishing trade relations between the Roman Empire and the Indian subcontinent (Neelis 2011). The extensive exemplify of diverse commodities, such as gemstones, glass, spices, textiles, plants, wine, along with the accounts of the currency *sestertii* involved in the merchandise exchange in the work shed lights to the compelling details and social and cultural implications of this long-distance trade (Székely 2006; Pollard

2009). Furthermore, the direct criticisms regarding the high cost for the luxury items imported from India implies both the magnitude of the trade volume and Pliny's stance towards this commercial interaction (Neelis 2011).

## 2.3 India-related text as a case study

In light of the observations and foundational research mentioned above, the present study centers its investigation on the spatial perspective within Pliny's *Natural History*, with a specific focus on the texts pertaining to India, seeking to delve into the discourse surrounding this region. To achieve this goal, distant reading methodologies, including statistical analysis, topic modeling, and social network analysis, will be employed.

The main aim of this study is to explore how is India described, and how is the information about India structured in *Natural History*, which may also contribute to a more profound comprehension of the inherent complexity and interconnectivity that permeates this monumental work.

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Workflow

The workflow for this study involved the following key stages:

### Data Collection:

As mentioned in the Introduction chapter (Section 1), the text employed for this study is obtained from the digitized English translation (by Henry T. Riley (1816-1878) and John Bostock (1773-1846)) of Pliny's *Natural History* available on [TOPOSText project](#).

The two parts of *Natural History* ([Book1-11](#), [Book12-37](#)) are scraped for their the textual contents together with the annotated information of the geographical coordinates of the ancient places mentioned in the work, and the book, chapter and paragraph affiliations with the function provided in [Beautiful Soup](#) library of Python.

### Data Preprocessing:

The information extracted from the html is structured into separate columns as [Pandas](#) dataframe, a dataframe for plain text of the entire work, and a dataframe for geographical-related text in *Natural History* with the geographical annotations are generated and stored in CSV format respectively.

After a preliminary exploration, the research focus is narrowed down to India-related text in *Natural History*. With a reference to the geographical territories in the consideration of ancient Greek and Roman world (Talbert 2000b), a dataframe for India-related text is filtered from the abovementioned dataframe for geographical-related text with the range of geographical coordinates of India subcontinent in the era of *Natural History*. The filtered India-related text dataframe is also stored in CSV format.

The location names mentioned in the India-related text is cross checked manually. For those have not annotated in the TOPOSText, they are appended to the dataset.



## Data Analysis:

Statistical analysis is conducted in the preliminary exploration of the extracted dataframes. A normalized frequency of geographical name occurrence in each book is calculated for an overview of the place name distribution in *Natural History*. And the top 1% prominently mentioned place names in the entire work are sorted out with the time of their occurrences. The specific attention on India-related text as a case study is drawn from this initial observation.

In the analysis of the India-related text (target corpus) in *Natural History*, three analysis methods are employed:

1. Word frequency: single word frequency and bi-gram collocation of the target corpus are measured with the functions in [NLTK](#) package for an overview of the keywords relating to India in *Natural History*.
2. Topic modelling: [Gensim](#) library is used for semantic vectorization and implementation of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model for the topic modelling of the India-related text, and the library of [pyLDAvis](#) is utilized for an interactive visualization. The output of this method shows the potential topics in the India-related text in *Natural History*.
3. Network analysis for Named Entities: Person names mentioned in the target corpus are retrieved from the tagging of the text given by the pretrained multilingual Named Entity Recognition model [Flair](#). The person name entities are cross checked with the annotation on TOPOSText. Stone names, river names, mountain names, person names and the book number are extracted as nodes, and the co-occurrence between the nodes are calculated as edges for network analysis. The output of this method is a graph showing the clusters of the nodes in the target corpus, indicating the structure of the content related to India in *Natural History*.

## Interpretation and Conclusion:

The workflow and parameter setting of each research method is explained in the beginning of each analysis section. The results acquired from each method is interpreted with a dialogue to the broader literature and close reading of the related text.

In the Conclusion chapter, the findings are illustrated comprehensively in the context of the research questions. And the limitations of each method is discussed and evaluated.

## 3.2 Data preparation

The present section provides an overview of the data preparation process, encompassing three sub-sections: HTML scraping from TOPOSText, creation of a filtered dataset of "India-related text," and data completeness checks. The tools and procedures employed in data collection and dataset generation for the study are elucidated in the subsequent content.

### 3.2.1 HTML scraping from TOPOSText

As previously stated, the textual contents of Pliny’s *Natural History* are available on the [TOPOSText project](#), presented in two distinct parts: [Book1-11](#), [Book12-37](#). Both parts are provided in HTML format, offering separate sections of the complete work.

To extract the relevant data, the [Beautiful Soup](#) tool, a Python library renowned for parsing HTML and XML documents, was employed. This process involved navigating the HTML structure effectively to retrieve essential information.

The text in the HTML documents is organized into paragraphs, each uniquely identified by an “id” attribute that specifies its corresponding book, chapter, and paragraph number. For instance, a typical paragraph has an “id” tag as follows:

**<p id=‘urn:cts:latinLit:phi0978.phi001:3.9.7’>**

Utilizing these “id” attributes, the paragraphs were meticulously associated with their respective book, chapter, and paragraph information.

As a result of this data extraction process, a reference dataset was obtained, comprising the plain text of *Natural History* divided into paragraphs, with each paragraph assigned a unique identifier, and separate columns indicating its affiliated book, chapter, and paragraph number. An illustrative example of the dataset’s structure can be referred as Table 3.

Table 3: Example for the reference dataset containing the plain text in paragraphs of *Natural History*

UUID4	Reference	Book	Chapter	Paragraph	Text
0 e9e67565-bb...	urn:cts:lat...	1	1	1.0	PREFACE IN ...
1 010b853d-b8...	urn:cts:lat...	1	2	1.0	But who cou...
2 2d10e332-9c...	urn:cts:lat...	1	3	1.0	But if Luci...
3 113e0b4c-5b...	urn:cts:lat...	1	4	1.0	My own pres...
4 19115032-9f...	urn:cts:lat...	1	5	1.0	For my own ...

There are a total of 3493 paragraphs in the English translated version of *Natural History* used in this study. The extracted text contains 713300 tokens and 31886 types.<sup>2</sup> This reference dataset has been saved in CSV format for record.

Moreover, the geographical annotations concerning the ancient places mentioned in the text are labeled with a class attribute denoted as “place”, exemplified by the following HTML code snippet:

**<a about=“https://topostext.org/place/419125LPal” class=“place” lat=“41.8896” long=“12.4884”>Palatine</a>**

To compile a comprehensive dataset encompassing all the annotated ancient places, along with their corresponding geographical coordinates and contextual information (such as book, chapter, and paragraph numbers), all annotations under the “place”

<sup>2</sup>The token and type counts were obtained by excluding punctuation marks.

class are extracted. This dataset enables an analysis of the distribution of place names within *Natural History*.

As certain places may possess multiple names, ToposText\_ID, which is the unique identifier assigned to distinct places available on TOPOSText is also extracted as a reference information. An example of the dataset presenting the geographical-related text in *Natural History* is provided in Table 4 for reference.

Table 4: Example for the geographical-related text dataset

UUID4	ToposText_ID	Place_Name	Reference	Lat	Long	Book	Chapter	Paragraph	Text
0 bf12...	http...	Academy	urn:...	37.9920	23.7070	1	8	1.0	For ...
1 f782...	http...	Pala...	urn:...	41.8896	12.4884	2	5	1.0	For ...
2 a0f9...	http...	Esqu...	urn:...	41.8950	12.4960	2	5	1.0	For ...
3 b8d8...	http...	Capitol	urn:...	41.8933	12.4830	2	5	1.0	For ...
4 f81b...	http...	Rome	urn:...	41.8910	12.4860	2	6	3.0	Belo...

According to the geographical annotations of the ancient places occurred in *Natural History*, there are 5595 occurrences of place names in book 1-11 and 3281 in book 12-37, adding up to a combined total of 8876 annotated places throughout the work. The geographical-related text in *Natural History* contains 415474 tokens and 26592 types.<sup>3</sup> This dataset including place names and their textual context in *Natural History* is saved in CSV format for record.

### 3.2.2 Filtered dataset of “India-related text”

As outlined in the Research Question chapter (Section 2), this thesis examines texts concerning the Indian region in Pliny’s *Natural History* as a case study. The objective is to explore how India is described, portrayed, and imagined within this extensive work, providing valuable insights into its complexity.

To ensure a comprehensive contextual analysis, the dataset creation considers not only instances where the word “India” is directly mentioned but also text related to the Indian region. This broader approach aims to encompass a wider scope of relevant information. Drawing from the research and mapping of the Indian region in the perception of the ancient Greek and Roman world, as explained and manifested in the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Talbert 2000a, 2000b), the approximate coordinates defining the target region are as follows<sup>4</sup>:

- Latitude: 5-35 degrees North
- Longitude: 65-95 degrees East

Utilizing the aforementioned dataset of geographical-related text in *Natural History*, the text having annotations with geographical coordinates falling within the specified range are extracted to construct a dataset relevant to the discourse about Indian region in the work. The filtering process ensures not only the text explicitly mentioning “India” but

<sup>3</sup>The token and type counts were obtained by excluding punctuation marks.

<sup>4</sup>As indicated in the map-by-map directory, the range spans territories of “modern states of India (minus the Punjab), Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Nepal, and Sri Lanka”.

also those including other place names situated within the defined boundaries of the Indian region were retained.

The new dataset comprises the textual content as well as the geographical coordinates of the mentioned Indian place in *Natural History*. An example of the structure of the dataset of India-related text is showed as Table 5.

Table 5: Example for the India-related dataset

	UUID4	ToposText_ID	Place_Name	Reference	Lat	Long	Book	Chapter	Paragraph	Text
85	261e...	http...	India	urn:...	30.0000	74.0000	2	75	1.0	Sim
92	5c49...	http...	India	urn:...	30.0000	74.0000	2	75	1.0	Sim
93	9955...	http...	India	urn:...	30.0000	74.0000	2	75	1.0	Sim
218	8199...	http...	Indus	urn:...	25.4487	68.3192	2	98	1.0	Nea
343	9a9f...	http...	India	urn:...	30.0000	74.0000	2	112	1.0	Our

There are 229 occurrences of paragraphs mentioning the places in Indian region with geographical coordinates annotation. And the distinct places mentioned are ['India' 'Indus' 'Ganges' 'Acesinus' 'Hydaspes' 'Taprobane' 'Arachosia' 'Muziris' 'Baragaza' 'Ceylon']. The textual content pertaining India region compiles 37591 tokens and 6048 types.<sup>5</sup> The dataset and corpus for India-related text in *Natural History* are saved respectively in CSV format for further reference.

### 3.2.3 Data completeness check

The paragraphs extracted from the India-related text dataset undergo manual verification for the completeness of Indian place name annotations. Each distinct paragraph in the dataset is individually extracted and stored in TXT format as separate files within a corpus folder. The file names contain information about the affiliating book, chapter, and paragraph numbers.

There are in total 146 distinct paragraphs mentioning India places in *Natural History* according to the annotations on TOPOSText.

An example of the exported file name can be referred as follows:

Exported india\_corpus\37.77.1\_text.txt

The text files are uploaded to [Recogito](#) platform, which offers a semantic annotation tool and automatic geographical annotation suggestions from its supported gazetteers. This process is used to cross-check the Indian place name annotations against the data from TOPOSText. Any unannotated Indian place names are identified and marked on the [Recogito](#) workspace for further analysis and evaluation.

<sup>5</sup>The token and type counts were obtained by excluding punctuation marks.

## 4 Data Analysis

### 4.1 Place name distribution in India-related text

The comparison between the total number of place names and the place names specifically related to the Indian subcontinent mentioned in each book, is depicted in Figure 3. The difference in numbers between the two categories is significant, as indicated by the large disparity.

To facilitate a more effective comparison of the referencing trends across different books, Figure 4 presents subplots with varying y-axis scales. This approach allows for a clearer visualization of the trends and patterns in place name references throughout the various books.

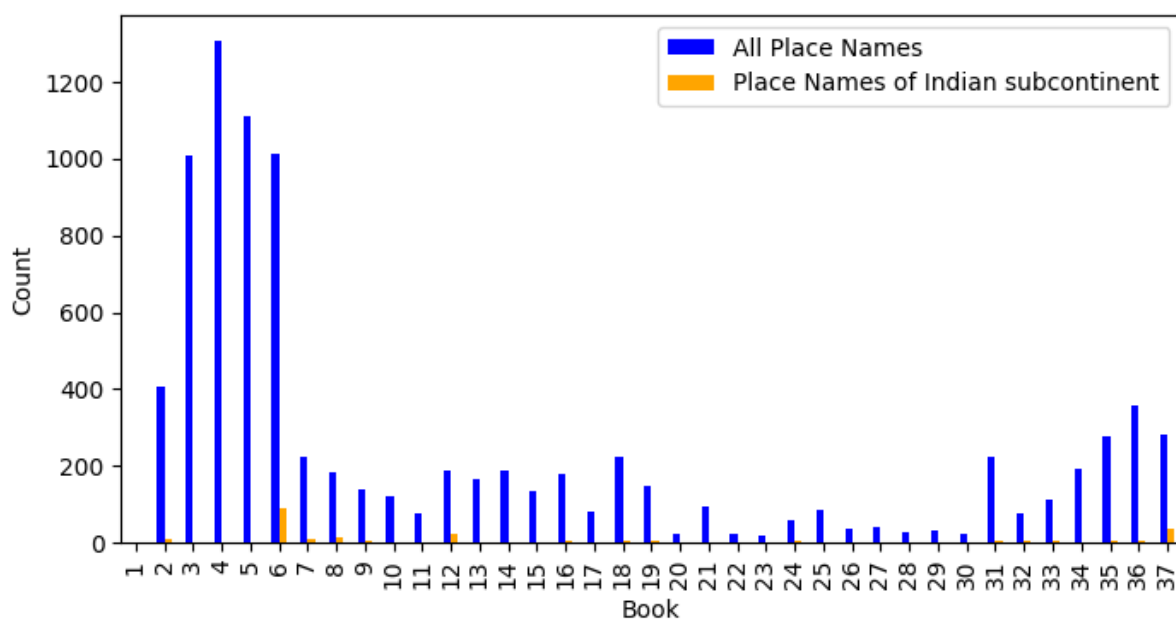


Figure 3: Occurrence count for all place names and place names of Indian subcontinent in each book

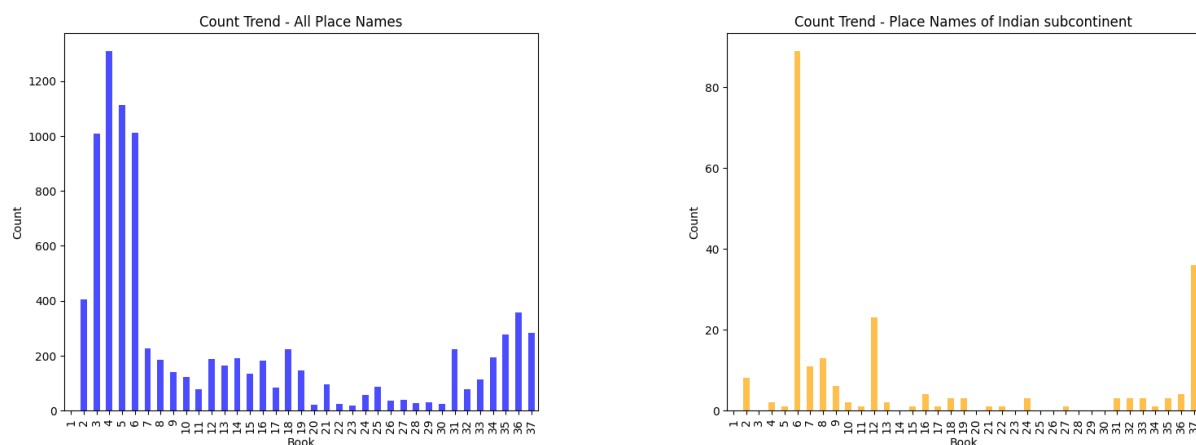


Figure 4: Occurrence count for all place names and place names of Indian subcontinent in each book\_different y-axis scales

The figures reveal a distinct difference between the occurrence trends of place names related to the Indian subcontinent and all place names collectively. Specifically, the referencing of the Indian subcontinent is highly concentrated in books 6, 12, and 37 of Pliny's narrative. This discrepancy indicates that the mentioning of place names from the Indian subcontinent is closely tied to specific themes and topics within Pliny's work.

In this regard, three methodologies have been employed to analyze the texts pertaining to the Indian subcontinent in *Natural History*, including word frequency and collocation analysis, topic modeling, and network analysis. The objective of these analyses is to delve deeper into the textual content, unraveling the intricate relationships and uncovering the underlying themes and connections associated with the place names of the Indian subcontinent.

Through word frequency and collocation analysis, the aim is to identify keyword and significant word combinations co-occur in the textual content about India in *Natural History*. This analysis provides insights into the specific linguistic patterns and contextual associations surrounding the Indian places mentioned in the work, providing an overview of the keyword in the discourse.

Topic modeling allows for a broader exploration of the thematic landscape within which the Indian subcontinent place names are embedded. By clustering related words and identifying prevalent topics, this methodology helps to discern the major themes and subject matters that emerge from Pliny's narrative, providing a comprehensive understanding of the broader context in which these place names are mentioned.

Furthermore, network analysis offers a visual representation of the interconnections among the place names of the Indian subcontinent and other entities in Pliny's work. By examining the relationships between different locations and named entities, this analysis uncovers the geographical and conceptual networks that exist within the text, revealing how the Indian subcontinent place names contribute to the overall structure and narrative flow of *Natural History*.

Together, these methodologies aim to provide a nuanced and comprehensive exploration of the texts related to the Indian subcontinent in *Natural History*. By delving into the linguistic, thematic, and network aspects of these place names, a deeper understanding of their role in shaping Pliny's narrative can be achieved.

## **4.2 Word frequency - To be re-organized from this part**

Through the utilization of measures available in the [NLTK](#) package, a word frequency list and a list of collocating bi-grams of the texts pertaining to the Indian subcontinent are generated to investigate potential keywords and themes of interest.

To enhance the relevance and descriptive nature of the frequency list, particular attention has been given to exclude two commonly encountered but less informative words, namely "india" and "also", from the token list.

Among 17661 tokens of the whole corpus for Indian subcontinent related text, 201 (the top 1%) frequent words is filtered out and shown in [Figure 5](#) and [Figure 6](#).





A higher likelihood ratio score indicates a stronger association or collocation between the words, suggesting that they are more likely to appear together in the given text.

The extracted collocations undergo a filtering process that specifically includes those involving keywords of place names within the regions of the Indian subcontinent, which enables a focused analysis of collocations directly relevant to the geographic context.

```
[('already', 'mentioned'),  
 ('present', 'day'),  
 ('alexander', 'great'),  
 ('father', 'liber'),  
 ('taken', 'drink'),  
 ('formerly', 'called'),  
 ('majesty', 'augustus'),  
 ('fifty', 'mile'),  
 ('late', 'majesty'),  
 ('next', 'come'),  
 ('roman', 'citizen'),  
 ('mile', 'circumference'),  
 ('human', 'being'),  
 ('greek', 'name'),  
 ('late', 'lamented'),  
 ('marcus', 'varro'),  
 ('one', 'hundred'),  
 ('hundred', 'fifty'),  
 ('rising', 'dog-star'),  
 ('emperor', 'nero')]
```

Interestingly, in the filtered bi-grams, 20% of them are referring to human names or names of gods in myths (e.g. Alexander III, the Great (king of Macedon); Octavius Caesar Augustus (Roman Emperor); Nero (Roman emperor); Marcus Varro (ancient Latin scholar), Father Liber (referring to Dionysus, Greek god of winemaking and wine)).

As shown in the quotation of Book 16, Chapter 62, Paragraph 1, the word “India” was mentioned in the context of an introduction of a plant, as a counterpart in the plant origin, and as a conquered land intertwining with the historical story about how the plant was brought to Rome by Alexander the Great.

16.62.1 It is said that ivy now grows in Asia Minor. Theophrastus about 314 BC. had stated that it did not grow there, nor yet in **India** except on Mount Meros, and indeed that Harpalus had used every effort to grow it in Media without success, while **Alexander** had come back victorious from **India** with his army wearing wreaths of ivy, because of its rarity, in imitation of **Father Liber**; and it is even now used at solemn festivals among the peoples of Thrace to decorate the wands of that god, and also the worshippers’ helmets and shields, although it is injurious to all trees and plants and destructive to tombs and walls, and very agreeable to chilly snakes, so that it is surprising that any honour has been paid to it.

##(More detailed analysis and illustration will be further conducted for the pattern of interactions between Indian subcontinent place names and human names in the book.



)

### 4.3 Topic modelling

Since the corpus size for text pertaining Indian subcontinent region is rather small, with certain tryouts, the the number of topics is set as 3 and the passes is set as 40 to get the most non-overlapping topic clusters.

The word “India” is excluded from the corpus in order to get more descriptive keywords which may contribute to a more concrete topic summary.

The top 30 keywords for each topic, along with their respective weights, which rank their contributions to the topic is shown and visualized as follows.

```
[(0,
  '0.011*"river" + 0.011*"hundred" + 0.008*"city" + 0.008*"mile" + '
  '0.008*"also" + 0.007*"island" + 0.007*"one" + 0.007*"sea" + 0.006*"nation" '
  '+ 0.005*"come" + 0.005*"called" + 0.005*"people" + 0.004*"distance" + '
  '0.004*"place" + 0.004*"name" + 0.004*"two" + 0.004*"thousand" + '
  '0.004*"alexander" + 0.004*"king" + 0.003*"country" + 0.003*"writer" + '
  '0.003*"upon" + 0.003*"even" + 0.003*"coast" + 0.003*"mountain" + '
  '0.003*"thence" + 0.003*"indus" + 0.003*"elephant" + 0.003*"day" + '
  '0.003*"stated"'),
(1,
  '0.011*"also" + 0.011*"stone" + 0.006*"like" + 0.006*"colour" + 0.005*"kind" '
  '+ 0.005*"one" + 0.004*"white" + 0.004*"salt" + 0.004*"found" + '
  '0.004*"called" + 0.004*"even" + 0.003*"name" + 0.003*"part" + 0.003*"water" '
  '+ 0.003*"black" + 0.003*"people" + 0.003*"leaf" + 0.003*"made" + '
  '0.003*"foot" + 0.003*"glass" + 0.003*"indian" + 0.003*"arabia" + '
  '0.003*"say" + 0.002*"used" + 0.002*"tree" + 0.002*"time" + 0.002*"among" + '
  '0.002*"plant" + 0.002*"day" + 0.002*"spring"'),
(2,
  '0.013*"stone" + 0.007*"also" + 0.006*"found" + 0.006*"colour" + '
  '0.006*"like" + 0.006*"one" + 0.005*"name" + 0.005*"amber" + 0.004*"tree" + '
  '0.004*"known" + 0.004*"called" + 0.004*"variety" + 0.003*"river" + '
  '0.003*"even" + 0.003*"gold" + 0.003*"kind" + 0.003*"part" + 0.003*"island" '
  '+ 0.003*"rock-crystal" + 0.002*"many" + 0.002*"sea" + 0.002*"day" + '
  '0.002*"people" + 0.002*"however" + 0.002*"king" + 0.002*"white" + '
  '0.002*"made" + 0.002*"gem" + 0.002*"well" + 0.002*"produce"')]
```

The three generated topics for the Indian subcontinent related texts can be summarized based on the dominant words as follows:

Topic 1: **Stones, Rivers, and Islands** - various elements related to stones, rivers, and islands. It also touches upon the notion of distance and the mention of gold and gems.

Topic 2: **Cities, Trees, and Natural Features** - cities, trees, and natural features. It also mentions amber, mountains, and the connection to Arabia.

Topic 3: **Salt, Sea, and Water** - salt, the sea, and water-related concepts. It also touches upon topics such as animals, Alexander the Great, and the notion of a country.

And Topic 1: **Stones, Rivers, and Islands** takes the forefront among the other topics.

Consistent with the findings in the frequency list of the corpus, it is evident that “stones” and “rivers” hold a significant presence in the narrative concerning the Indian subcontinent.

<IPython.core.display.HTML object>

The interactive visualisation of the 3 clusters of the topic modelling about India-related text can be accessed on the html version of this [thesis](#).

The static demonstration of the visuslisation can be referred as Figure 7, Figure 8 and Figure 9.

In the left panel of the above interactive chart, each bubble represents a topic, and the size of the bulbbble indicates the percentage of the texts in the corpus contributing to the topic. The distance between the bubbles implies the extent of difference between them. And a good topic model is expected to have big and non-overlapping bubbles scattered throughout the chart (Tran 2022).

And in the right panel, the blue bars represent the overall frequency of each word in the corpus. If no topic is selected, the blue bars of the most frequently used words will be displayed. When hovering on the bubbles in the left panel, there will be red bars in the right panel giving the estimated number of times a given term was generated by a given topic. The word with the longest red bar is estimated to be used the most in the texts belonging to that topic.

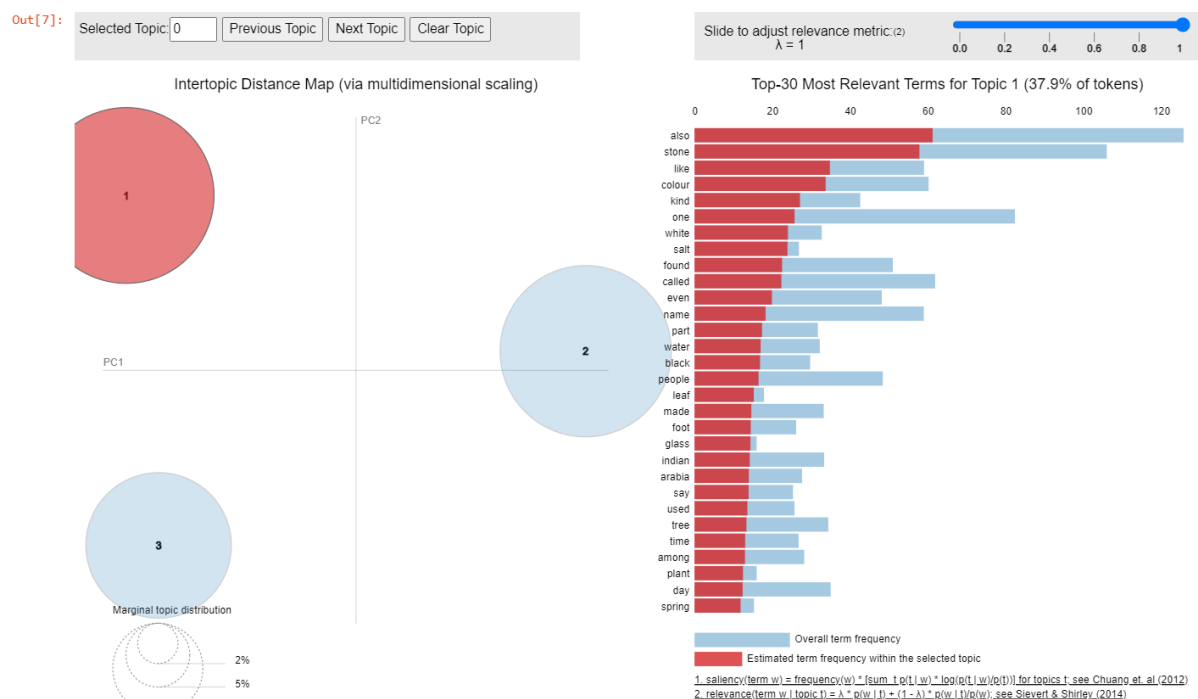


Figure 7: Topic cluster 1

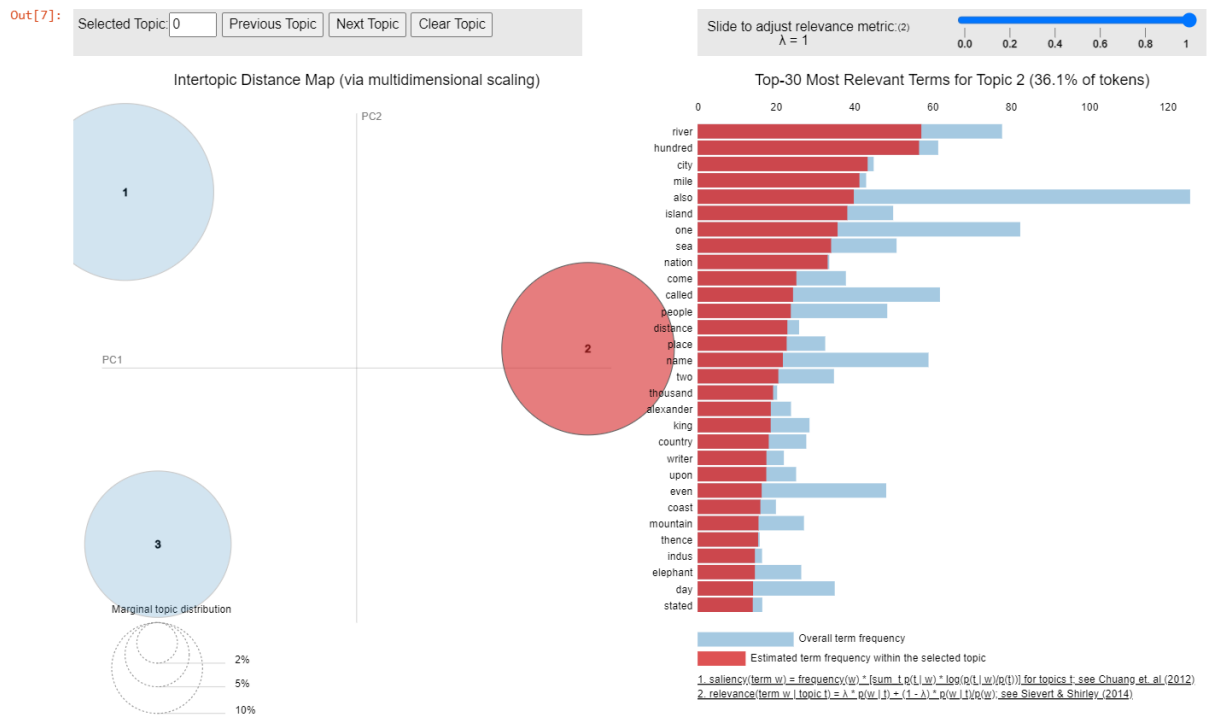


Figure 8: Topic cluster 2

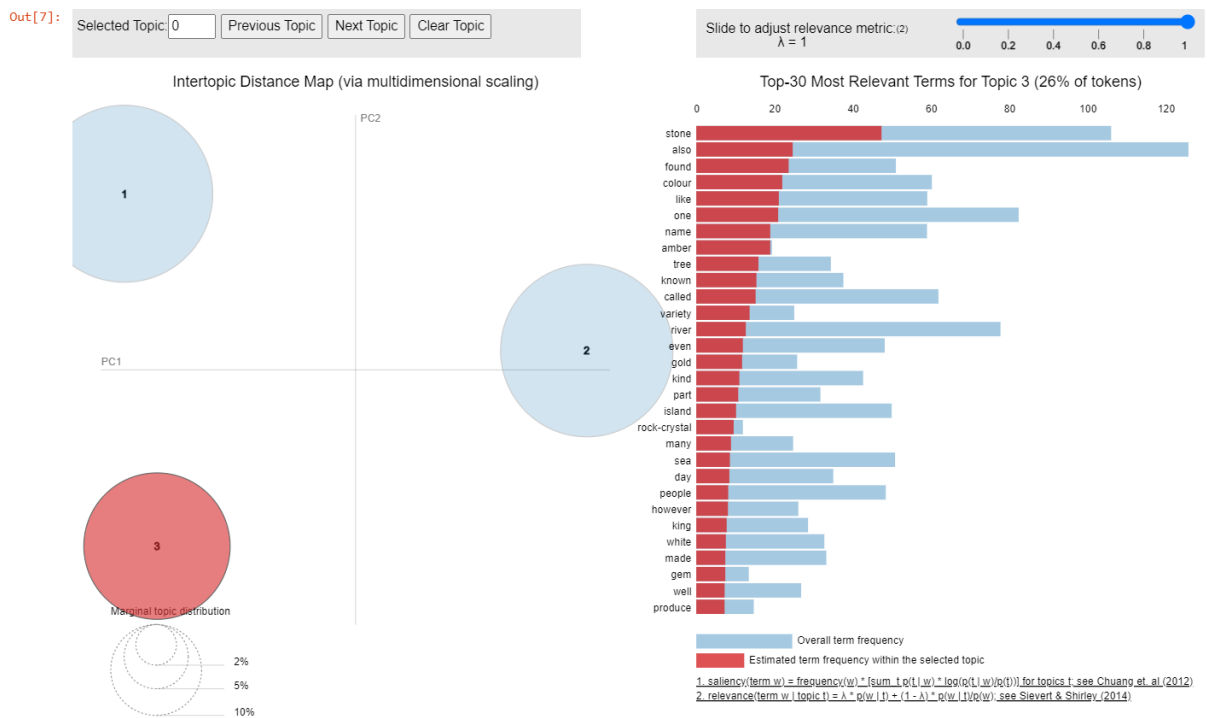


Figure 9: Topic cluster 3

## 4.4 Network analysis for named entities

# 5 Conclusions

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