

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the central concepts of this book is Hellenism. Here it is used in the restricted sense, to signify the period from Alexander the Great to the rise of Rome to supremacy. The conception itself is old and commonly, though often somewhat vaguely used. It does not have its origins in classical antiquity, but was, in this sense, an invention of the 19th century, when it was introduced in order to signify an opposite to the (Greek) classical period.¹ Politically, it is often defined as extending from the death of Alexander (323 B.C.) to that of Cleopatra (30 B.C.). Culturally, however, it is commonly used of the Greek element in the Roman empire, too, and occasionally its sphere has even been extended to Byzantium. In any case, it is very useful, but here its use demands some further considerations towards providing a definition.

For Droysen Hellenism meant a transitional period between classical Greece and Christianity. After him, we must note that the term has not always been used wholly consistently in the scholarly literature in different languages (such as English, French, German) and the ideas attached to it are not always the same. For a Wilamowitz, Kaerst and Tam² Hellenism may have been an essentially Greek phenomenon, but this was achieved by more or less ignoring its other constituent elements. We prefer therefore to follow such scholars as Momigliano and O. Murray.³

According to the definition accepted in the present volume, Hellenism is the mixed culture of the post-Alexander era, in which Greek civilization and the Greek (as well as Macedonian) people participated, but not alone. For instance in Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, local people and local traditions were as much a part of it as were the Greeks. In some fields, especially in religion, this led to mixed phenomena, which sometimes became known everywhere in the Hellenistic world (such as for instance the cults of Isis and Sarapis).

With this definition, I see no reason not to use the word Hellenism even east of the Tigris, in Parthia, Bactria and Northwestern India, as far as the Greeks⁴ were concerned.

¹ The word itself is Greek and was used in antiquity, not in the present sense, but only in the very special sense to signify the difference between the Greek-speaking, Hellenized Jews (Ἑλληνισταί) and the Aramaic-speaking, traditional Jews (Ἑβραῖοι), who still used Hebrew in their synagogue service (Momigliano 1975b, 112f.). The introduction of the modern term is generally assigned to the German historian J. G. Droysen (*Geschichte des Hellenismus* 1–2. 1836–43). See Momigliano 1975b, 109f. & 113f.

² For these three, see Momigliano 1975b, 125f. Tam, as he rightly notes, “saw his Graeco-Macedonians as precocious Englishmen and Scotsmen settling on colonial land.” For Tam’s own views, see e.g. Tam & Griffith 1952, 1ff. The spirit of Tam is also seen in Schneider 1967, 841ff.

³ See further e.g. Davies 1984, 263, Will in Will & Klein 1988, 387ff.

⁴ Here Greek also includes Macedonians, when not separately mentioned, as the original difference between the two peoples was rapidly disappearing everywhere in the Hellenistic world. For the

The fact that mutual interaction and influence with local people often took place to a great extent does not make the civilization un-Hellenistic,⁵ no, rather the exact opposite. Accepting the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms of Bactria and India as Hellenistic does not mean to deny or even belittle the Iranian and Indian elements in them, which were of course considerable.

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Now we must consider our sources. The literary sources for the Graeco-Indian relations of the Hellenistic period fall naturally into two major categories – Western (Greek and Latin) and Indian. Only occasionally can they be supplemented by others. In this connection it is perhaps also in order to mention that, as I fancy that my readers will include both Indologists and classical scholars, I feel myself entitled sometimes to state even such facts which for an insider in one field may seem rather trivial. I shall begin with the classical sources.

The great majority of Hellenistic authors have for the most part been preserved only in fragments quoted in later literature. For our purpose the most important are the historians of Alexander and the Hellenistic ambassadors in India. Further material is found especially in geography and the natural sciences (chapters IV and V).

The number of historians writing on Alexander's life and career is exceptionally large. In addition to later sources, we know of more than twenty more or less contemporary accounts. There must also have been several of which we do not have any knowledge.⁶ Quite a number of the known authorities had themselves participated in Alexander's campaigns. However, all their works are without exception lost and known only through fragments, and in a few cases only have we enough of them to form an idea of the author and of his work. I shall name only briefly these authors, as I have discussed them more fully on an earlier occasion.⁷

Let us begin with **Ptolemaeus**,⁸ the *Soter*, the king and general, who wrote an exact and factual account of military events during the campaigns. Nearly everything that we know of his book comes from Arrianus. In the *FGrH* (number 138) we have no less than 35 fragments from him (including 5 *incerta*). Nine of them refer to India, but they only

dichotomy in Greek opinion concerning the status of Macedonians in the time of Philip and Alexander see e.g. Will in Will & Klein 1988, 385ff.

⁵ As suggested by Narain 1957, 10f. There are parallels in other directions, e.g. Meroe in the south.

⁶ Pearson 1960, 7. Without Arrianus, we would have a very poor idea of Ptolemaeus, and the still extant history of Curtius is never mentioned at all in other classical sources (Brunt 1984, 543).

⁷ Karttunen 1989a, 89ff. with references, especially to Pearson 1960. See also Bosworth 1988a.

⁸ See also e.g. Kornemann 1935, Pearson 1960, 188ff., and Pédech 1984, 215ff. In order to avoid confusion, I refer to the members of the Macedonian dynasty of Egypt as *Ptolemaeus* and to the scientist of the Roman Imperial period as *Claudius Ptolemy*. For other names I have generally preferred the original (for Greek Latinized) forms and use modern equivalents only in a few cases (e.g. Pliny, but Aristoteles).

rarely contain any information about the country. The old general – probably he was writing at an advanced age – concentrated solely on military operations, and without omitting his own, often important, part in them. Questions of ethnography and nature, so common in the works of his colleagues, are completely lacking. His fragments are thus important for the history of Alexander (although they occasionally may elapse into propaganda),⁹ but hardly for India and Indo-Western relations.

Another companion of Alexander was the Greek **Aristobulus**.¹⁰ Of his history (*FGrH* 139) we have 58 fragments, 15 of them on India. It is valuable especially because of his many observations on ethnography and nature, for which he was much used by Strabo, and will be often referred to in the following pages.

Ptolemaeus and Aristobulus were the main authorities used by Arrianus in his *Anabasis*, and therefore have been held responsible for the most reliable historical account, in opposition to the so-called Vulgate tradition (of Diodorus, Curtius, Plutarch and Justinus), probably going back to Cleitarchus. Both wrote at an advanced age (Aristobulus was one of the famous long-livers), and apparently in order to correct their predecessors.¹¹

This was perhaps also the relation between **Nearchus**, the factual admiral,¹² and **Onesicritus**, the pupil of the Cynic philosopher Diogenes, whose work was often much criticized and despised, but also widely read.¹³ While Onesicritus wrote a full history, or rather a kind of account of development, of Alexander, Nearchus seems to have restricted himself to the summit of his own career in Alexander's service, the riverine and coastal voyage of Alexander's fleet under his command. At the beginning, a description of India was also given. It was an important source for Strabo and Arrianus. The remains of Nearchus are given by Jacoby in *FGrH* 133 (with 29 fragments and five incerta, more than twenty dealing with India), those of Onesicritus in *FGrH* 134 (with 39 fragments, approx. 21 on India). Both were leading figures in the naval venture on the Arabian Sea, and in chapter II.4 we shall meet them again and some of their lesser-known companions.

Another eye-witness of the campaign was **Chares** of Mitylene (*FGrH* 125),¹⁴ who held the office of chamberlain or officer in charge of Alexander's audiences. As far as his fragments (19, including some four on India) allow us to judge, he was neither particularly well informed nor much interested in facts of history or science. Instead, he wrote a collection of reminiscences and anecdotes showing an interest in such topics as the details of festivities, various items of food and drink, furniture and dress, and probably foreign customs. It seems illustrative that he is mainly known through Athenaeus and was never mentioned by Arrianus.

⁹ See Brunt 1983, 564ff.

¹⁰ On him see e.g. Pearson 1960, 150ff., and Pédech 1984, 331ff.

¹¹ Pearson 1960, 152, and Brunt 1983, 554f.

¹² Much has been written about Nearchus and his work. See e.g. Pearson 1960, 112ff., and Pédech 1984, 159ff., about his Indian fragments also Vofchuk 1982c.

¹³ For Onesicritus see e.g. Pearson 1960, 83ff., and Pédech 1984, 71ff., about his Indian fragments also Vofchuk 1986.

¹⁴ Pearson 1960, 50ff.

Cleitarchus (*FGrH* 137), the favourite of the reading public, had most probably not himself participated in Alexander's campaigns.¹⁵ It has even been suggested that he wrote considerably later, but Badian has shown that he was probably a contemporary.¹⁶ But even so, to quote Badian, "veracity is not his greatest attested virtue", in fact his history was mentioned as an example of the disreputed rhetorical style of historical writing. Nevertheless, his fragments (36 and some *incerta*, 10 or 11 on India) contain some interesting notes on India. It seems that they were partly derived from Onesicritus and Nearchus.¹⁷

India is also mentioned among the few fragments of such little-known authors as **Baeto the Bematist** (*FGrH* 119 with 5 certain fragments, 4 on India)¹⁸ and **Polycleitus of Larisa** (*FGrH* 128 with 11 fragments, 2 on India). Both accompanied Alexander, and the latter seems to have written a long history, as one fragment (F 1) refers to his book VIII, but the few fragments do not allow us to form any good picture of him. Pliny mentions him together with Nearchus and Onesicritus, and some of his fragments deal with geography and nature.¹⁹ From the rest of known Hellenistic historians of Alexander, nothing on things Indian is preserved.

It is something of a pity that we are so poorly informed on the (more or less) contemporary anti-Alexander literature. It was mostly written by Greeks, who still well remembered that Alexander and his father Philip had put an end to the freedom of Greece. The few fragments of **Ephippus** (*FGrH* 126) and **Nicobule** (*FGrH* 127) are thus extremely interesting, but at the same time do not reveal very much.²⁰ At a later period, Alexander was criticized mostly among certain philosophical schools.²¹

The rest of our other classical sources on India will be dealt with in later chapters: Megasthenes in chapter III, scientists (such as Aristoteles, Theophrastus, Eratosthenes, Hipparchus and Pliny) in chapter IV, later historians and other authors in VII.1. Instead, I must now discuss some general questions.

With these sources we must necessarily consider the peculiar philological problems encountered with fragmentary literature.²² The fragments cannot make up for a lost original, of which we at best can only have an approximate idea. Very often we have

¹⁵ A somewhat unclear passage of Diodorus (2, 7) has sometimes been interpreted to this effect, but see Pearson 1960, 229ff. (and on Cleitarchus in general *ibid.*, 152ff. and 212ff.) and Badian 1965, 7ff.

¹⁶ Badian 1965, late 4th century also in Pédech 1984, 343. See Karttunen 1989a, 92f., with further references.

¹⁷ Pearson 1960, 225.

¹⁸ Cf. Aly 1957, 145ff., and Pearson 1960, 261. Of other Bematists, such as Diognetus (*FGrH* 120) we know still less. See also Baeto's uncertain F 6-7 and Jacoby's commentary on them in the *FGrH*.

¹⁹ Pliny, *N. H.* 1, 12, 13. On Polycleitus, see Pearson 1960, 70ff. In his few fragments, a picture arises of an author who promptly recorded curious and sensational details.

²⁰ See Pearson 1960, 61ff. on Ephippus, and 67f. on Nicobule.

²¹ It seems that the Peripatetics, in remembrance of Callisthenes, were the most active critics, while the Stoics contributed much to the idealized conception of Alexander. Schachermeyr 1973, 609.

²² See also my discussion in Karttunen 1989a, 1989b, and 1991.

much less. Further, the value of fragments is not always the same. Some are exact quotations, some pretend to be such, but probably are not. Sometimes we only have a vague reference to the original source, and often it is difficult to say where the fragment ends, and whether it also contains some extraneous material. Generally ancient authors did not work in the same way as we do. Instead of having their desk full of books ready for checking references, they used to read the books first, and, when writing, rely on their memory for quotations. Occasionally they made notes, but often they seem to have relied most heavily on the author they happened to have read last.

But while we must always exercise our critical acumen with our attested fragments, we must also go beyond them. Sometimes we can reliably identify a fragment, though it is given without a reference. Keeping strictly to certainly attested fragments would often overly restrict our conception of an author. However, the scholarly literature of the 19th and 20th centuries is also full of examples where a fragment is confidently identified and ascribed to a particular author, although the case in fact might be very much open to criticism.²³ In the analysis, we must always consider two factors: the philological problems and peculiarities of the original work *and* of the work where the fragment is preserved. Often the matter is complicated by the fact that many fragments are quoted only indirectly, from some intermediate author, whose work is also lost to us. Often this intermediate source is not mentioned at all, and we can only surmise its existence.

Examples of both kind can be pointed out in the transmission of Onesicritus. Pliny quotes him quite openly through Juba, but only a comparison of corresponding passages of Strabo and Arrianus (*Indica*) shows that these two authors were probably quoting him (and others like Ctesias) through Eratosthenes.²⁴ However, a word of warning is again in place. Especially in late 19th-century philology it was often customary not to allow the slightest deviation or incongruency in a direct quotation. Therefore, a great number of intermediate sources were suggested in order to explain what were perhaps mere slips of memory on the part of the authors.

With all these words of warning the following table seems perhaps trivial. But allowing all differences between individual fragments it has the merit of indicating who might have actually read and used our Hellenistic authors and who only occasionally quote them, most probably through an intermediary. I have included Megasthenes, who will be fully discussed in chapter III.

²³ See e.g. Pearson 1960, 187.

²⁴ Brunt 1983, 445. This seems more likely than Pédech's claim (1984, 166) that Arrianus quoted Ctesias from Nearchus. It is questionable whether Nearchus knew Ctesias' work at all.

	Aristobulus	Nearchus ²⁵	Onesicritus	Cleitarchus	Megasthenes ²⁶
Fragments ²⁷	70	39	41	36	54
Fragments on India ²⁸	(16)	(28)	(27)	(14)	nearly all
Coming from:					
Aelianus	–	–	2 (2)	4 (4)	3
Arrianus	35 (4)	11 (10)	2 (2)	–	18
Athenaeus	5 (1)	–	–	4 (–)	1
Curtius	–	–	–	2 (2)	–
Pliny	–	4	9 (6)	5 (3)	7
Plutarch	11 (2)	–	6 (3)	2 (–)	1
Strabo	16 (9)	22 (15)	17 (12)	5 (3)	18

While the collections of fragments are very handy to use, they also contain some dangers. First, even with the best collections, we can never be certain that they contain all that is relevant. Even such a venerable work as Jacoby's *FGrH* can occasionally be added to. But there is also a more fatal source of error. Too often the fragments are taken as an equivalent of the work itself, too easily is their different transmission, their varying worth, exactness and reliability forgotten. One must always look at where a fragment was quoted, by whom it was quoted, and *why* it was quoted, to be conscious of all the philological problems and peculiarities of the authors who have preserved the fragments.

While the beginning of the Roman Empire forms the chronological limit for our study, though not always too strictly followed, later (Roman Imperial) authors are also important for us. In most cases only they represent the extant literature, and Hellenistic authors are preserved merely in fragments found in these later works. Also, they often refer to the earlier period so that we might be able to ascribe a certain piece of information to the Hellenistic period, although we might have no idea of the original source. The books on history (such as Diodorus, Curtius and Arrianus) and science (such as Strabo, Aelianus and Pliny) have preserved the major part of our knowledge of the historians of Alexander and of Megasthenes, though Diodorus and Curtius rarely name their sources. Scholars and antiquarians such as Pliny, Plutarch and Athenaeus are real treasure houses of fragments. Most of them will be discussed in later chapters, but some special cases demand our attention here. The other viewpoint, the position of these Imperial authors themselves as sources of information on India, in relation to their own time and audience, is purposely avoided here as it will be one of the themes in the next volume of our studies.

The history of **Diodorus**, like other works of the Roman period (e.g. Strabo, Pliny, and Arrianus) will thus be discussed on its own in the next volume. Even now, however,

²⁵ The long F 1, excerpt in Arrianus' *Indica*, makes the comparison here rather distorted.

²⁶ In addition comes the long F 4 from Diodorus, but one can never be quite sure whether all really goes back to Megasthenes.

²⁷ Parallel fragments (type 1a & 1b in the *FGrH*) are here counted separately.

²⁸ Including the Paropamisadae and the Gedrosian coast.

I must point out that though Diodorus most certainly was such a notorious compiler as he has been presented in scholarly literature and never better than his sources (in fact, few were, but Diodorus often succeeded in being much worse), the old tenet that he was always dependent on a single source in each particular passage, is untenable in its most rigorous form. A comparison of his excursus on India (2, 35–42) with the fragments of Megasthenes clearly shows that the Hellenistic ambassador's work was much used, though never mentioned by name. But at the same time there are passages which are incompatible with Megasthenes, but easily derived from some other author, e.g. Onesicritus.²⁹ I wholly agree that he never collated sources as did Strabo and Arrianus, not even glued together excerpts as did Pliny and Aelianus, but even the worst compiler, who nevertheless had read several books, could hardly always refrain from adding something from memory. And at least at one point we can, with Murphy (1989, 55), congratulate Diodorus' common-sense (which he did not always show elsewhere in his work) that he left out of his account all fabulous peoples, though Megasthenes could have provided ample material in this respect, too.

Among the sources for the Hellenistic period an important, although rather complicated, authority is Flavius **Philostratus**. In the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* he described at length the Indian travels of his hero, supposedly in 43/44 A.D.³⁰ At present we may leave aside the vexed question of the authenticity of the diary of Damis, the companion of Apollonius, to whom Philostratus refers as his main authority. On the one hand, a reading of the *Life* shows that it contains, in the form given to it by Philostratus, much that cannot come from a real travel journal.³¹ Some passages might be simply concocted by the author, but from our viewpoint it is more important that our text also contains much that can be traced back to earlier literature on India. There is also much material which clearly belongs to the first century A.D., exactly to the period when Apollonius is supposed to have visited India, and neither to Philostratus' own time in the early third century A.D., nor to the fourth/third centuries B.C., the time of Alexander's historians and Megasthenes.³² But in addition our text contains much that is derived from Megasthenes,³³ from Alexander's historians (who are sometimes even referred to by name), and even from

²⁹ See e.g. the note on the text in the new translation by Murphy (1989). This question will be discussed more fully in my future volume on India and Rome.

³⁰ On Apollonius' Indian travels, see Smith 1914 (331f. on the date) and Charpentier 1934 (with some additional notes by Johnson, 1935). Dani (1986, 69) suggests 46 A.D.

³¹ The pepper mountains between the Indus and the Ganges. Travel to the sea with the Ganges on the right and the Hyphasis on the left side. The Hyphasis pouring its waters directly into the sea through gorges and rapids. Not to speak of the marvels, which anyway are literary embellishment probably added by Philostratus, but often drawn from early Greek sources on India (such as Ctesias).

³² So e.g. the description of Taxila, dated with the help of the first-century earthquake (Marshall 1951, 63f.) and the fact that a prince with an apparently Parthian name, Phraotes, was ruling there (Smith 1914, 335). The Indian etymology (*apratihata*, actually met in a Kharoṣṭhī coin legend of Gondophares) suggested by Herzfeld (1932, 112f.) and, after him, Tarn (1951, 341) seems to me unconvincing. Wholly speculative is Breloer (1939, 290ff.), who sees in Phraotes a veiled account of Candragupta going back to Megasthenes.

³³ Breloer 1939, however, goes much too far.

Ctesias and Scylax.³⁴ The problem is that the sources are rarely named, and it is not always an easy task to find them out.

Another complicated case is the legendary literature on Alexander. Especially *Alexander's Letter to Aristoteles* clearly contains much Hellenistic material on India,³⁵ but in the present study it is only used rarely. Although Gunderson (1980) has made a good beginning with the *Letter*, it still needs a special study, which cannot be attempted here. The text of Pseudo-Callisthenes in its various recensions occasionally contains material going back to the Hellenistic age, but it is often hopelessly intertwined with later material. The interesting booklet of Pseudo-Palladius, incorporated in the *Alexander Romance*, belongs wholly beyond our period, and will be taken up only at a later phase of our studies.

For readers uninitiated into the peculiarities of classical literature I should like to point out some further facts, important for our understanding of them and thus for the present study. They are more or less connected with the age-old question of reliability.

Some ancient critics have liberally used the verdict on a writer generally translated by the word "liar". 'To lie' is one of the meanings of Greek *ψεύδειν*, indeed, but in the context of ancient literary and scholarly criticism a more exact rendering would be 'to write fiction'. And the boundary between fiction and non-fiction did not always run on the same lines as with us, and it was also not at all as distinct as with us. There was, for instance, a well-established, though also, and from our viewpoint rightly, criticized, school of writing history, "in which it was recognized that the author could tell lies for the sake of effect".³⁶ Among historians of Alexander it was represented by Callisthenes' and Cleitarchus' highly dramatized accounts. The criticism came only occasionally, from more sober authors. For a long time Cleitarchus was the most popular among the historians of Alexander. Ptolemaeus and Aristobulus in their factual accounts probably lacked elegance and the ability to win over their audience, at least they are only rarely referred to before Arrianus, who chose them as his major sources.³⁷

Even when the main purpose of writing history was not in dramatic effect and entertainment, but in a more or less factual account of what had happened, it was a part of literary routine to use certain stylistic means. The most important was the use of speeches in order to explain plans and motives. The purpose of these speeches was only to explain these and the idea of the author on them, and it was of no importance whether he actually knew what, for instance, Alexander had really said on a given occasion. What he wrote was his (or his source's) opinion of what could or should have been said on that occa-

³⁴ Wonder stories in *V. Ap.* 3, 1ff. and 3, 45ff., see Karttunen 1989a, 67f., and Reese 1914, 90ff.

³⁵ And even earlier, e.g. from Ctesias, see Karttunen 1989a, 95 (note) and Gunderson 1980. Gunderson dates the letter itself to the Hellenistic period. Personally, I like to stay on the safe side and accept no early dates without clear evidence. Of course, the possibility is there. See also Merkelbach 1954.

³⁶ Pearson 1960, 19.

³⁷ Pearson 1960, 20f. Among other early, and important, representatives of the dramatizing school were Duris of Samos and Phylarchus, whom we shall meet again in chapter VI.1. An account of classical ideas on historical style is given by Lucianus (*Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*).

sion. He wrote the speech in order to convey to his audience as good an idea as possible of the situation.³⁸

Another important fact is that the rules of reference were not the same as with us. A reference was generally given only when one was criticizing one's predecessors. When the author agreed, he could silently use them, and nobody was offended. Often it also seems that named criticism was meant to conceal the actual dependence of the critic on the work criticized. The concept of plagiarism, however, was only invented in a late period, and because of this earlier usage, it was very much used by the late critics of classical antiquity. An additional feature, already mentioned above, was that even when cited, the source was not necessarily, and needed not be, directly used, and an intermediary was only mentioned when there was a need to comment on his opinions.³⁹

The scholarly literature dealing with Greek and Latin historical, ethnographic and geographical accounts of foreign countries can be roughly divided into two categories. Some deal all the time with the classical world and its literary traditions and styles, while others refer to literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources of the country discussed. In the first case, everything can be seen as hardly more than exotic fiction, in the second, an ancient text often tends to come suspiciously near a modern report or study. This difference of interpretation depends on different viewpoints. When the ethnographic writings of antiquity are studied as a part of classical literature or science, read and cited by an educated audience, it is easy and important to stress their role as literary works in a classical context. It is easy to show their dependence on literary predecessors, the frequency of *topoi* and *interpretatio Graeca*, the importance of the theoretical framework, and the rarity of real objectivity and independent attempts at obtaining fresh knowledge. On the other hand, this kind of literary approach seems hardly adequate for a scholar who digs in the classical sources in order to cull at least some valuable scraps and hints of information about peoples and cultures otherwise very poorly known. A scholar interested in ancient Ethiopia, Arabia, India, Iran, Central Asia, Russia, or Germany can hardly be content solely with literary predecessors, *topoi*, *interpretatio Graeca*, and theory, when he is able to verify some part of the account from independent local evidence. But then he is also often too eager to accept as straightforward evidence something which can be truly understood only in connection with its literary context.

Both these viewpoints are inevitable. Both are important and useful, and can provide valuable results. Both are also defective, when used alone. Therefore, we should attempt to pay attention to both. Alone, the first tends to isolate the classical world wholly from its surroundings, but the conclusions drawn by the second without acknowledging the first can often be highly suspect.

³⁸ See Brunt 1983, 528ff. on speeches in Arrianus. A good occasion for such speeches was, for instance, the dramatic turning back at the Hyphasis (see Arrianus, *Anab.* 5, 25–27, and Curtius 9, 2–3).

³⁹ An interesting parallel, in a case where both original sources and the intermediaries are preserved to us in their entirety, as printed books, can be found in the dissertations of the 17th century. At least in Academia Aboensia (University of Turku) it was a common habit to give references only to the original sources (e.g. a classical author), though the sum of them clearly shows that they were just culled from a then modern handbook, where all these references were given together.

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The second major source of the present study is the Indian literary evidence. While detailed problems of interpretation will again be occasionally discussed in the following chapters, a general survey of these sources and the possibilities of using them as material for our period is given here. This is often a very complicated question indeed. It is well known that the literary chronology of ancient India is very vague, and often we cannot define the origin of a literary work even with the accuracy of a century. Nevertheless, in the historical context we should attempt to use contemporary sources and when not, always take into account the chronological problems involved with later (in India often much later) evidence.

An important dividing line is here the rise of the great Gupta dynasty in the 4th century A.D. The Indo-Greek, Saka, Indo-Parthian and Kushan rule in the Northwest, the flourishing trade of West and South India with the Roman West, the considerable development of Indian art, literature, science and religion during the centuries immediately preceding the Guptas make Gupta India an entirely different country from that of the Mauryas. Therefore, what is pre-Gupta is important to us, and what is not must be handled with great care.

The most ancient literary monument of India is the great religious corpus of the *Veda*.⁴⁰ The major part of it is certainly much older than our period, the bulk of it (most of the *Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇa* texts) seems to belong to the first part of the first millennium B.C. Therefore they do not concern us much here. But the Vedic period did not end abruptly; the last part of it, that of the *Sūtra* literature, went on even to the first millennium A.D. While the oldest *Dharmasūtras* (such as *Gautama* and *Baudhāyana*, perhaps also *Vasiṣṭha*) probably go back to the period before Alexander, some later ones (such as *Āpastamba* and *Viṣṇu*) often belong precisely to our period. But here we meet also the general difficulty of ancient Indian literary history. There are no exact dates at all, and a relative chronology, in addition to being often open to criticism, generally allows a fluctuation of several centuries. On the other hand, the manner of transmission, as oral material, with great weight put on preserving the exact wording, makes the Vedic literature an exceptionally good source for early India, while many other genres have been open to interpolation until a much later period.

The **great epics** of India, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, belong in their present form to a later period. The critical study of their text cannot easily or with any degree of reliability go beyond the recensions of the Gupta period, and even the attempt to reconstruct these archetypal recensions from the wide sea of manuscripts, dividing into many different, often geographical sub-recensions, by producing critical editions has not succeeded without attracting serious criticism. Nevertheless, the critical editions of both epics, published in Poona and Baroda, offer the best available texts for historically orien-

⁴⁰ See also Karttunen 1989a, 153ff.

tated studies, at least when read carefully, with one eye always on the *apparatus criticus*. One must bear in mind that even the Gupta recensions, however, were the end-product of a long formative process lasting many centuries. Moreover, while a recension of the Gupta period is supposed to be the ultimate form for our complete texts, the individual passages very often seem to refer to the period we are discussing here.⁴¹

Without going into the details, it can be stated that the epics as such are of course not history, but not myth, either. However, while the plot is certainly not historical, and is thus open to many kinds of interpretation – one method can hardly explain everything – the society described reflects in many ways that of the time of their formation. In a way, we may compare the situation to the Homeric epics. While they still to some extent reflect the Mycenaean age they purport to describe, the society and material culture actually described is that of the “Dark Age”. It is no more feasible to speculate on the historicity of Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira than on that of Priam and Agamemnon.⁴² In both cases the epics can and should be compared to the archaeological evidence of both periods, the period that the plots purport to describe and the period of the formation of these epics. It is the latter comparison that offers better results.⁴³

Most extant works of other kinds of Sanskrit literature belong to a later period, too. Thus e.g. from the classical **Dharmaśāstra**⁴⁴ (on Vedic Dharmasūtras, see above) we can accept only the most ancient work, the *Mānavadharmasāstra*⁴⁵ (and perhaps, with great reservations, also the *Yājñavalkyadharmasāstra*),⁴⁶ if not strictly speaking as contemporaneous, at least as pre-Gupta and thus near enough to our period. It also seems that a major part of early (but not necessarily early enough for our purposes) Dharma literature was slowly composed or rather crystallized from the loose traditions of a school, from a floating reserve of “Spruchweisheit”, gnomic verses going under the name of Manu etc.

⁴¹ See also Karttunen 1989a, 147ff. I take this opportunity to state that despite the critical remarks on my work in a review by Fosse (1991), I still think that in Graeco-Indian studies we are solely interested in possible historical elements contained in the Sanskrit epics and can thus more or less ignore the various attempts at mythical interpretation attempted by such scholars as Dumézil, Biarreau, von Simson, and Hildebeitel.

⁴² I am intentionally somewhat vague in order to keep my discussion on a general level. A more detailed analysis should take into account the fact that there are important differences between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* on the one hand, and the Iliad and the Odyssey on the other hand. Parallels between Indian and Greek epics (leaving aside early attempts at actual derivation such as Weber 1870) have been studied e.g. by Schwarz (1965 & 1966b) and Gresseth (1979).

⁴³ See e.g. Erdosy 1985 & 1990 on the descriptions of cities, and Vasil'kov 1982 on the possibilities of historicity in the *Mahābhārata*.

⁴⁴ See also Karttunen 1989a, 150f. The term Dharma(śāstra) allows no translation. Often it deals with legal questions, but even then from the viewpoint of the Brahmans and religion, while the concrete jurisdiction lay with the king and the state. But in addition, various religious duties, propitiatory and purificatory rites, questions of class and phases of life (the varṇāśramadharmā) often took a major part of it.

⁴⁵ It seems to have been in existence before the Gupta period as quite a large amount of it is included in the *Mahābhārata*. Kane (quoted by Lariviere 1989) suggested a period lasting from the 3rd/2nd century B.C. to the 2nd/3rd century A.D. More or less the same also by Renou in Renou & Filliozat 1947, 436f. (leaving out a few interpolations).

⁴⁶ According to Lariviere 1989, Nārada might have been contemporaneous, but the purely legal character of this text renders it less useful to us.

and known by the śiṣṭas. And when the śāstras had been collected, they remained open to correction, addition, revision and modification, and only the first commentaries turned them into closed recensions. Unfortunately, very little has been done to establish this development with the aid of critical editions (such as Lariviere's Nārada).⁴⁷

The earliest scholarly literature in Sanskrit, as much as has been preserved,⁴⁸ mostly belongs to the early centuries A.D. The most notable exception is **grammar**. The earliest extant grammarian, Pāṇini, is generally dated to the period before Alexander. In my earlier study, however, I tried to show that we cannot be quite certain of this.⁴⁹ But in any case he belongs at least to the third century B.C., and among his followers certainly Kātyāyana and probably also Patañjali belong to the period corresponding to Hellenism in the West. The rest of the grammatical literature is mostly of a much later date.

The extremely condensed and compact style of early grammatical literature, especially of Pāṇini, does not allow us to cull much of general information about the civilization. On the other hand, with his great antiquity (and the originality of his linguistic approach) Pāṇini's grammar has been one of the most eagerly studied texts of Old Indian literature, and what there is to be found has mostly been long since firmly established.⁵⁰ There is, however, the difficulty of establishing what was actually stated by Pāṇini himself. Too often cases derived from his rules by Kātyāyana and others as well as material contained in the Gaṇapāṭha word-lists, which are by their very nature open to interpolations, has been accepted as genuine Pāṇinean evidence.

Much less has been done with Indian **medicine**. Only lately has it become a field of study which at least to some extent has also been found interesting by others than its traditional practitioners. In spite of this the Āyurveda is without doubt one of the major systems of ancient medicine (beside Greek, Graeco-Arabian and Chinese), and in addition it is a mine of information on ancient Indian civilization.⁵¹ But again we are faced with difficult chronological problems. The evidence for dating the great classics of the Āyurveda (cf. V.5), Suśruta and Caraka, is rather meagre. Most likely they belong to the early centuries A.D. A tradition ascribes one of them (Caraka) to the time of Kaniṣka, probably in the late first century A.D. (luckily it is not my task here to date Kaniṣka), and the other might have been contemporaneous. In any case the Suśruta is quoted as early as the Bower Manuscript (c. 400 A.D.), but unfortunately the case is not so simple. The last part of the Suśruta, the *Uttaratantra*, is clearly a later addition, but in its present form the first part contains cross-references to it, and large parts of the Caraka, too, hail from a later

⁴⁷ Hopkins quoted, elaborated, and slightly corrected by Lariviere 1989, xff.

⁴⁸ It is somewhat vexing that these early works very often contain numerous references to still earlier authors, no longer extant.

⁴⁹ See Karttunen 1989a, 142ff. However, it was not and is not my intention to claim that he necessarily *is* that late, but still I cannot believe (despite Jong 1992) that an earlier date is settled. The scarcity of well established dates seems to have led Indology somewhat too easily to accept approximations as established facts (cf. Keith 1909b, 577, note 1).

⁵⁰ A comprehensive, though somewhat problematic survey was published by Agrawala (1963).

⁵¹ It would be very welcome, indeed, if someone were to take the Āyurvedic classics as the subject of a so-called "cultural study". At present, I have derived much from the chapters on food, Suśruta, Sūtra 46 and Caraka, Sūtra 27.

redaction.⁵² Works like these have been very open to interpolations, a physicians' handbook became only more useful when continually added to and corrected by practitioners, and a closed recension was perhaps again formed only by the first commentaries. Surely the many centuries of medical practice have added much to them in the way of interpolations. We need a critical analysis, which has thus far never been really attempted. There are not even critical editions of these works. All this advises us to adopt great caution, if Āyurvedic evidence is used for an early period. On the other hand, it is occasionally confirmed by other Indian (e.g. Buddhist) sources.

Next we must consider Indian **astronomy and astrology**. Their beginnings lie in the Vedic period, but early literary evidence is meagre. Direct Hellenistic influence came mostly later, in the Romano-Kushan period, but, according to Pingree, even the period corresponding to the Hellenistic in the West was not without western (mostly Mesopotamian) influence.⁵³ At the beginning of the Christian era, Hellenistic astrology and most probably Hellenistic astronomy, too, became known in India,⁵⁴ but this is already beyond our chronological limit. For cultural history these highly technical texts are not very useful. More can be culled from manuals of divination, such as the *Gargasamhitā* (unfortunately unedited),⁵⁵ the *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira (6th century A.D.) and the *Āṅgavijjā*.

Also the great classic of ancient Indian **statemanship**, the *Arthaśāstra* ascribed to Kauṭalya, is too late for our period. After a long scholarly argument over its supposed Mauryan origin, it is now more or less generally accepted that the work, at least as we have it, must go back only to the early centuries A.D.⁵⁶ Perhaps it contains quite a lot which ultimately goes back to the Mauryan period, as is often claimed, but here we must again be very careful in our analysis. And it is in passages containing information about foreign products (e.g. Alexandrian coral) and peoples that we find it very hard to believe in a Mauryan date.

Classical Sanskrit literature in the narrow sense, too, is rather late. Even the dramas and epics of Aśvaghōṣa and Bhāsa, which are most probably our earliest extant sources, seem to be no earlier than the first century A.D., and the majority of early authors (e.g. Kālidāsa and perhaps even Śūdraka) probably only came from the Gupta period (or even later). Often it seems that the great flowering of arts and literature and of Sanskrit

⁵² Filliozat in Renou & Filliozat 1953, 147 (Suśruta) & 150f. (Caraka).

⁵³ Pingree 1963, 1973 and 1981, 9ff.

⁵⁴ A certain Yavaneśvara translated c. 150 A.D. a Greek astrological work into Sanskrit. The work is lost, but a metric rendering, called *Yavanajāṭaka*, by Yavanarāja Sphujidhvaja (270 A.D.) is preserved as well as the *Vṛddhayavanajāṭaka* of Mīnarāja, also founded on the same tradition. See Pingree 1963, 229ff., 1964 & 1981, 81ff., and chapter VI.9 below.

⁵⁵ On this work see Pingree 1981, 69ff., and Mitchiner 1986.

⁵⁶ It would be so tempting to see in it a genuine testimony of the Mauryan age. Many scholars have yielded to this temptation. See, in addition to Indian scholars, who often have to some extent an understandable bias for more ancient dates in their national history, e.g. Breloer 1934, Schwarz 1968, 227 (more cautiously e.g. in 1970, 285f.). For the date, see Trautman 1971, Scharfe 1968 and Goyal 1985. See also Karttunen 1989a, 146f.

learning in the Gupta period is the major reason for the fact that the great majority of earlier literature, which certainly existed, has disappeared.

In the literature written in Middle Indo-Aryan languages we are able to find a greater amount of more or less contemporary material. Especially Buddhist sources are very important here.⁵⁷ The **Theravāda** canon, with the exception of some later additions and the whole of the *Abhidhammapīṭaka*, often offers an authentic source about India, though not in the period of the Buddha himself, at least of the Mauryan period (c. third century B.C.), when the written text was finally established in the great council held under the patronage of Aśoka.⁵⁸ A much later, but nevertheless valuable source is the Ceylon chronicles (the *Dīpavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa*), a rare example of historical literature in South Asia.⁵⁹ Among other post-canonical works of Pāli literature we are now especially interested in the *Milindapañha* (representing the Indo-Greek period, at least in its contents), and in some aṭṭhakathas (including the Jātakas). These are commentaries on canonical texts, in their present form originating in the middle of the first millennium A.D., but preserving some earlier material.

Buddhist Sanskrit sources are generally late, from our viewpoint, perhaps beginning with Aśvaghōṣa (probably in the first century A.D.). The remains of the canonical works of other schools offer great problems of transmission – generally they are only preserved in fragments and translations (Tibetan and Chinese) – and only rarely contain much that is useful to us.

Jaina texts are another important part of early MIA literature. In its origins the Jaina religion is as early as Buddhism,⁶⁰ and the sources of both affirm that the founders, Mahāvīra and the Buddha, knew each other personally. Jaina literature, however, seems generally to be somewhat later than Buddhist. According to Jaina tradition, the oral canon of the Śvetāmbaras was written down only in the 4th century A.D., and the final redaction was still later, while the earliest Digambara texts are supposed to have been written down as early as 150 B.C.⁶¹

Classical poetry in Tamil is, if possible, still more difficult to date than Indo-Aryan literatures. In any case, it seems that even the oldest works in the *Sangam* corpus only came from the early centuries A.D. or somewhat earlier.⁶² The Yavanas visiting the ports of South India and even residing there are thus most probably traders of the Roman period, and do not concern us here. I shall return to them in the next volume of these studies.

⁵⁷ See also Karttunen 1989a, 151ff.

⁵⁸ Hinüber 1986, 36ff., 1992, 25ff., and 1996, introduction and 31f. (an example of later addition).

⁵⁹ According to Hinüber 1996, 89ff., the *Dīpavamsa* was compiled soon after 350 A.D., the *Mahāvamsa* about a century later.

⁶⁰ But both are probably not as early as has been supposed. For the recent discussion about Buddhist and Jaina chronology, see Karttunen 1989a, 151ff. (with references), further Bechert 1982, 1983, 1986 etc. Eggemont 1991 (locating the Buddha only in the third century B.C.) seems too far-fetched.

⁶¹ Bechert 1983 and Hinüber 1986, 42ff.

⁶² According to Zvelebil 1992, 12, from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D.

All this has been said in order to ascertain which part of ancient Indian literature can be regarded as contemporaneous with the Hellenistic period in the West. The fact is, however, that later authors, too, are sometimes used in order to have at least some Indian evidence. This is to some extent permissible; in ancient societies many things went on for a long time without major changes, and often later works have also preserved material from earlier periods. But in this we must be very cautious, and always bear in mind the facts of chronology and their implications.

* * *

It remains for me to say a few words on some other kinds of sources. In addition to the classical and Indian, the most important literary sources are **Chinese**.⁶³ Our period is still much too early to allow us to cull much of use from *Chinese Buddhist pilgrims*. Still, especially Faxian as the first of them can be sometimes used, with the same precaution as Indian authors of the Gupta period. And in comparison to Indian literature, he has at least one great merit. Thanks to the good historical sense of the ancient Chinese his travels can be reliably dated. Their geographical outline, too, is quite clear, though details may pose problems. We thus know quite certainly that he left China in 399 A.D., reached India *via* Central Asia, travelled for 15 years in India, visiting the holy places of Buddhism and collecting manuscripts, and returned to his native country by sea in 414 A.D.⁶⁴ His colleagues, such as Xuanzang and Yijing, are still later.

More important for our period are *Chinese historians*. Sima Qian, who himself was nearly contemporary to the late Hellenistic period, and Ba Gu, somewhat younger than him, have preserved the accounts of the first Chinese travellers to the west and southwest such as Zhang Qian (at the end of the second century B.C.) and Wen-zhuang (first century B.C.).⁶⁵

An entirely different and extremely important source of evidence is **archaeology**, together with such related fields as *epigraphy* and *numismatics*. Here we have a great amount of more or less reliably dated material. With epigraphy, its use (although not always interpretation) is relatively uncomplicated. The inscriptions, too, are written sources, and as such often datable to an early period and thus even more reliable than the MS. tradition of the texts. Ever since their discovery in the 1830s the Aśokan edicts have been used for historical studies. Contemporaneous to Aśoka and soon afterwards, we have both Greek epigraphy in Northwest India and Bactria, as well as Indian inscriptions (in Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī), contributing to the study of eastern Hellenism. These will be dealt with in chapter VI.5 below. Important is also the numismatic evidence, which has always been a major source of information for the Indo-Greek kingdoms (see VI.3 and

⁶³ Unfortunately, I am myself wholly dependent on the work of others with the Chinese sources.

⁶⁴ Legge 1886, 116.

⁶⁵ See e.g. Hirth 1885 and Tarn 1951.

VI.6 below). The non-centralized monetary system represented by the punch-marked coins is strongly opposed to the supposed highly centralized system of Mauryan government.⁶⁶ Numerous finds of Roman coins (and a few Hellenistic ones) in South India and Sri Lanka attest to the history of trade (VII.2).

With archaeological material, however, we encounter greater difficulties when we attempt to combine them with literary evidence. The archaeological evidence is by its nature very different from the literary, and we are often warned by archaeologists of the problems involved. With good reason, without doubt, but still I think that we have here such important data that they can and should not be discarded.⁶⁷ However, great caution is certainly needed when it is used.

* * *

In this connection, it also seems useful to take up some special questions of method. Even at the risk of seeming trivial I should like to make a point connected with the references made to secondary sources. The principles of such quotations are generally taken for granted, but it is quite common for problems to arise. To begin with, it is not always that only specialists in the same field (and I have always two fields to keep in mind) are searching for information in a particular publication. Therefore, in the list of references, the names of periodicals *and* of memorial volumes should be given the full (or abbreviations clearly explained somewhere).⁶⁸ In this way a reference can be easily checked even in cases where it demands the help of interlibrary services. But while this should be self-evident, there is a further and more difficult problem: the ever-increasing number of reprints.

It has become customary to refer to secondary sources by the author's name and the year of publication. But this handy way is not only a way to proceed without repeating lengthy titles. The year of publication gives the reader an idea of how new or old the cited opinions actually are. In the case of a reprint referred to by the year of the reprint only, he is lost. I think that this kind of historical perspective is something worth preserving.

In this study, the year of the original publication is therefore always given as the main reference, and if an unchanged reprint is actually used, this is stated only in the list

⁶⁶ But this system is to a great extent based on the evidence of the *Arthaśāstra*, which, as we have seen, belongs to a later period. In addition to this, the *Arthaśāstra* does not describe an existing form of government, but paints a picture of what the author thought to be an ideal form of it.

⁶⁷ I have already attempted this in my earlier study (Karttunen 1989a), and I am much encouraged by the favourable review I received from an archaeologist himself engaged in excavations of the post-Alexander period in Pakistan (Callieri 1991). Luckily for us, some archaeologists such as P. Bernard, D. T. Potts and J.-F. Salles are also interested in this kind of combined evidence, often with extremely promising results.

⁶⁸ To take an example, for a classical scholar the letters *PW* signify Pauly and Wissowa, the great *Realenzyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (better abbreviated as *RE*), but for an Indologist it is the great "Petersburger Wörterbuch" of Sanskrit by Böhtlingk and Roth.

of sources.⁶⁹ Only in this way is the reader capable of forming the right historical perspective and of evaluating the opinions quoted, according to the amount of knowledge available to their authors. To show the dangers involved, I should like to mention (without a reference, out of mercy) the historian who sometimes in the 1970s found it advisable to censure Horace Hayman Wilson for not paying attention to the Indus civilization in his historical studies! Wilson died in 1860, sixty years before the discovery of the Indus civilization, but he was here quoted from a modern reprint.

Problems still arise with details. In the 19th century it was possible for Schwanbeck in 1846 to refer to the book we give as Lassen 1847, as this latter work was first published in small fascicles and only completed in the given year. Another kind of confusion arises with Otto Stein's major work on Megasthenes, variously referred to as Stein 1931 or 1932. This depends on the fact that this long article was actually published in the *RE* in *Halbband* XXIX in 1931, but this *Halbband*, together with the next (XXX), formed *Band* XV of the whole work with a title page printed in 1932. Both years are thus right, and one must make a choice.⁷⁰

A further point I should like to discuss here is my habit of referring to very old secondary sources, of the 19th century and even earlier. There are several reasons for this. Often it is useful to go back and find out when and by whom some commonly quoted opinion was actually originally suggested. This may sometimes give us a surprise.⁷¹ But there are also other reasons. The fact that we have more evidence at our disposal still does not mean that we are wiser than earlier generations of scholars.⁷² In some respects they were in an even better situation to understand ancient society than we are. Think about the revolutions in traffic and communications during the last 150 years. Before the railways, the sea was the only really practical way of transport.⁷³

For us, it is quite difficult to understand what the difficulties of distance meant. When Alexander was in India, those who were in charge at home did not know if the king was still alive, and if he was, where he was campaigning, and whether he was still victorious. They only knew where he had been many months earlier, and what perhaps had been his plans.⁷⁴ It is certainly worth while trying to imagine what it might have been like.

Still, with respect to Indology, our knowledge of ancient India is so recent that early scholars have not necessarily much to give us. But in classical philology the situation is

⁶⁹ On the other hand, when the reprint is actually reset, its year is given in the reference in brackets together with the original year (e.g. in the case of republication of collected papers and minor works). When it is a real new edition, with revisions or at least corrections, the year of the first edition is given only in brackets in the list of sources.

⁷⁰ I have earlier used 1932 and therefore adhere to this, although the earlier year might seem preferable. A related problem is often met with in journals, where the actual year of printing is different from the formal one.

⁷¹ For example, see Karttunen 1989a, 103ff.

⁷² Balsdon 1979, x.

⁷³ Casson 1974, 65.

⁷⁴ See also McCrindle 1896, 231, note 1, for an interesting note about the problems of communication and maintenance during Alexander's campaign. Unfortunately I have not been able to consult D. W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*. Berkeley 1978.

entirely different. Here the early scholars also had one more advantage in comparison to us. Nowadays, the classical languages are generally learnt only at a mature age at university, and therefore few can attain the same depth of linguistic skill as those early scholars, who were drilled in their Latin, and often in Greek, too, from childhood. Nowadays a classical scholar who really talks and writes fluent Latin has become something of a rarity. There are some, I know, but only a few, and unfortunately I am not one of them.